



The bridge

winter 2024

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8:30 AM

SUNDAY SERVICE

Service is streamed live on Facebook. A recording of the stream will be made available on YouTube following the service.

9:30 AM

COFFEE HOUR

Coffee Hour and Fellowship will be held in the Fellowship Hall immediately following service. Join us for coffee, snacks, and conversation.



DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO YOU IN THIS MOST BRIEF BUT MEANINGFUL SEASON OF ADVENT! CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT IN JUST A MATTER OF WEEKS WE WILL BE GATHERING TOGETHER IN PRAYER AND SONG TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR?

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS ARE TWO OF MY FAVORITE SEASONS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND IN THE LIFE OF MY FAMILY. INDEED, IN THE LUEDER HOUSE, WE TAKE THESE SEASONS VERY SERIOUSLY, GOING ALL OUT WITH THE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR DECORATIONS, THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CARD, AND THE CHRISTMAS MUSIC PLAYING CONSTANTLY IN THE BACKGROUND AS SOON AS SIRIUSXM STARTS THEIR HOLIDAY MUSIC LINE UP ON NOVEMBER 1. WE EVEN HAVE A NIGHTLY ROUTINE WHERE ELVIN AND I VIDEO CALL MY PARENTS, AND WE LIGHT THE ADVENT CANDLES AND READ A DEVOTIONAL TOGETHER. THESE THINGS HAVE BECOME SOMETHING OF A TRADITION THAT I LOOK FORWARD TO AND TAKE COMFORT IN EACH YEAR.

AT THE SAME TIME, I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I WAS INITIALLY A LITTLE NERVOUS ABOUT THESE SEASONS THIS TIME AROUND. AFTER ALL, IT WILL BE MY FIRST TIME PREACHING ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE FOUR WEEKS OF ADVENT AND ON CHRISTMAS EVE. AS I BEGAN TO PREPARE, I WONDERED HOW I WOULD TAKE THESE SCRIPTURE LESSONS THAT WE READ YEAR IN AND YEAR OUT AND OFFER SOMETHING FRESH AND NEW TO YOU ALL.

BUT THEN IT HIT ME . . . I DON'T THINK FOLKS COME TO CHURCH DURING ADVENT OR ESPECIALLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING FRESH AND NEW BECAUSE READING THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH NEVER GETS OLD. LIKE OUR HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AT HOME, IT IS COMFORTING TO READ ABOUT THE BEWILDERED BUT BRAVE YOUNG WOMAN, MARY, AND HER HUSBAND, JOSEPH, MAKING THEIR WAY TO BETHLEHEM FOR THE CENSUS. IT IS COMFORTING TO READ ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS WANDERING IN THE FIELD WITH THEIR SHEEP BEFORE RUNNING TO FIND BABY JESUS WRAPPED IN BANDS OF CLOTH AND LYING IN A MANGER.

FOR ME, THAT IS BECAUSE OF THE ORDINARINESS OF IT ALL. THIS STORY THAT HAS BEEN READ EVERY YEAR FOR A COUPLE THOUSAND YEARS IS A STORY THAT FOLLOWS THE LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE, PEOPLE SIMPLY GOING ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS AS USUAL, PEOPLE DOING THE THINGS THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT REQUIRES OF THEM. THAT IS, UNTIL GOD BREAKS INTO THE SCENE WITH A MOST JOYOUS MESSAGE FOR ALL PEOPLE: THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD HAS COME!

I HOLD FAST TO THIS TRUTH WHEN LIFE BEGINS TO FEEL MUNDANE OR LACKING IN ITS LUSTER. WE HAVE A GOD WHO DOES EXTRAORDINARY THINGS IN THE MOST ORDINARY PLACES WITH THE MOST ORDINARY PEOPLE. WE HAVE A GOD WHO IS IMMANUEL, GOD-WITH-US. HOW WONDERFUL, HOW COMFORTING THAT IS.
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MY FRIENDS
REV. EMILY

"DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR SEE, I AM BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE..." -LUKE 2:10



**SESSION MEMBERS
&
MINISTRY TEAMS
SESSION
N HALL**

**PERSONNEL AND
MISSION/OUTREACH**

**MELISSA HARMON
MISSION/OUTREACH
AND LIAISON TO
DEACONS/MEMBER CARE TEAM**

**BETTE HOYTINK
CLERK**

**KRISTINA MOSLEY
WORSHIP/PERSONNEL**

**MARILYN PAULSON
WORSHIP/FAITH FORMATION**

**ROGER HOYTINK
BUILDING,
GROUNDS AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**DAVID STRUENSEE
BUILDING,
GROUNDS AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**JESSICA HARRISON
TREASURER**

DEACONS/MEMBER CARE
KAREN ANGELL
DEB BARTELT
PEGGY BALFANZ
LONNA NORTON
SANDRA BUSER

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The Session met on November 12th

- Approved the request from Bible Baptist Church to use the Fellowship Hall for a catered meal on November 17th, December 22nd, and April 13th.
- Designated November 24th as Stewardship Sunday. Information letters will be distributed in person on November 17th or by mail.
- Approved a motion for First Presbyterian to join the Winneconne Chamber of Commerce beginning in January 2025 at the basic annual charge of \$125.
- Heard the results of a meeting on November 6th with representatives from both Winneconne and Weyauwega Sessions. The purpose of the meeting was to negotiate the Terms of Call for Pastor Emily in 2025 based upon information from the Presbytery Commission on Ministry.
- Determined the date of December 8th for a congregational meeting for two items of business:
 - Election of Ruling Elders & Deacons to the Class of 2027.
 - Approval of the 2025 Terms of Call for Pastor Emily.

ADVENT

Sunday, December 1st, marks the beginning of a new church year and is the first Sunday in the season of Advent – the days leading up to the celebration of Christ’s birth on Christmas.

“Advent” means “coming” or “arrival.” During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. In its historical origins, the season of Advent was patterned after the season of Lent, a six-week period of penitence and preparation for Easter. Similarly, the four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for communal discernment and personal examination, as the church prepares to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord and looks with hope for Christ’s return.

In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter’s season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the lighting of the Advent wreath. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ’s coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer. During the month of December there will be links in the midweek updates and in the December Bridge that will provide daily devotionals for the Advent season entitled “Patterns of Divine Possibility: An Advent Search”, written by Terry McDowell Ott, editor of the Presbyterian Outlook. A few printed copies will be available in the entry at church. We hope you will find time each day to consider the possibilities open to us this year.

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

In addition to the daily devotions, each Sunday in December and on Christmas Eve there will be a liturgy read as part of the service by various members who will also light the candles of the Advent wreath.

Our readers will be:

December 1 – Annie Leonard and Kristina Mosley

December 8 – Aaron and Peggy Thums

December 15 – Dave and Lonna Norton

December 22 – Jason, Melissa, and Ben Harmon

December 24 – Roger and Betty Hoytink

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

The Christmas Eve service at Winneconne will be at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, December 24. The service at Weyauwega will be at 4:00 pm for those who might want to attend an earlier service.

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

Our final worship of 2024 on December 29 will be our traditional Service of Lessons and Carols. Rev. Emily will be on a well-deserved vacation. If anyone has an interest in participating by reading one of the “lessons” please let Marilyn Paulson or Kristina Mosley know. Join us for a joyful morning of hymns and scripture.

THANK YOU FROM THE WORSHIP TEAM

A huge shout out is extended to all you faithful people who assisted in enhancing our worship experiences this past year – to those who preached prior to Rev. Emily’s arrival, to those who assisted as liturgists, to Deacons and others who arranged fellowship times, and for our dynamic greeters and ushers. Also, special thanks to Janis Hammond who shared her musical talents with us as a substitute for the Harmons. Special thanks are also in order for John and Linda Harmon and the choir for faithful presentations of beautiful music, to Kristina Mosley who tirelessly led us in hymn singing each week, to the artistic folks who kept our chancel area adorned, and to Jessica Harrison our media/technology guru for the weekly streaming and preparing the PowerPoints – and those who helped in her absence. And a huge thank you worshipers – at home and in person. We pray you felt the love and light of God as we worshipped together this year.

“...let your light shine

Mission and Outreach

The final numbers are in, and once again FPC Winneconne has knocked it out of the park! Our Peace and Global Witness Offering totaled \$779, which means that we got to give \$194 to the Winneconne School District Student Basic Needs Fund. By establishing this fund last year, our schools could quickly provide students with the very basics to come to school ready to learn: food and clothing. Imagine! A staff member feels helpless because they know a young person is hungry but their lunch account is empty. Or teachers notice that siblings wear the same clothes day after day. Now Winneconne staff have the means to quickly help families, without needing to ask around for donations. The need is real, and we made a difference.

This brings us to our last offering of the year:

Christmas Joy, which supports church leadership of the past, present and future!

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us. We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.





FROM YOUR MEMBER CARE TEAM

After a successful Chili Supper, the deacons turned their attention to the Christmas season. Two areas of focus were the Hanging of the Greens and blessing our community with gifts of funding.

Active and past deacons, along with a dedicated team of people who pitch in every year, make our church beautiful in time for Advent. Thank you to all who contributed their time and talents!

The Member Care team has three parts to their budget for the year: Agape Gifts, which is used to help others in times of need, Hospitality & Fellowship, which is used for things like special occasion cakes, and Supplies, which in the past has been used for study materials. Like last year, we have been fortunate to not have needed to take very much from our Agape gifts fund because our members haven't shared any needs for major assistance. So in the spirit of helping those outside the walls of FPC during Advent, your deacons have decided to share a portion (less than half) of the Agape Gifts fund with our neighbors. Three wonderful charities, Father Carr's, the Winneconne Area Assistance Center and our Winneconne Police Crusade will each receive \$200 this year.

Once again, your deacons are here for YOU! If you need a helping hand, comforting presence or prayer, please don't hesitate to reach out to Karen Angell, Peggy Balfanz, Deb Bartelt, Sandy Buser and Lonna Norton.

May God bless you!

HOW TO GIVE ONLINE
WINNCHURCH.ORG
CLICK THE LINK ABOVE
THEN CLICK "GIVE NOW"



OCTOBER 2024

TOTAL INCOME (w/o pass thru)	\$ 7,644.38
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 8,168.17
DEFICIT FOR OCTOBER	\$ 523.79

YTD INCOME (w/o pass thru)	\$ 77,126.95
YTD EXPENSES (w/o pass thru)	\$ 92,033.71
YTD DEFICIT	\$ 14,906.76

CHECKBOOK BALANCE 10/31/24 \$65,771.79



Visit our website often to get access to past sermons, musical selections from the Harmons, and stay up to date with our church calendar. Click the button below to be taken to our website. Click the "Online Giving" button to be automatically directed to the Online Giving page.

FPC WEBSITE

ONLINE GIVING



If you don't want to worship in person, please join us in live worship every Sunday, streamed from our Facebook page at 9:00am. FPC of Winneconne regularly posts pictures, videos, church information, and events on our page. Please "like" our Facebook page for updates.

FPC FACEBOOK



YouTube gives you access to all of the videos we have produced. Here you can find past worship services and musical selections from the Harmons. Missed our live Sunday Service? Recordings are posted for viewing following the service on our YouTube Channel.

FPC YOUTUBE



Various church-related meetings, special gatherings, and Bible Study will be held via Zoom. Links will be provided in our weekly email as scheduled.