

Val Jelinek was kind enough to share this poem by Helen Steiner Rice called “What is Christmas?” Each year we ponder the depths of the meaning of Christmas as we await the Savior’s birth. We wrestle with all the cultural messages of what Christmas is and what will make the most “magical” Christmas. This usually involves the most popular gift idea of the year, over the top decorations, coming up with an additional tradition to add to the many we may already have and so much more. All these messages focus on striving for more or creating something bigger and better than we already have. Deep down, we know that this isn’t the way to experience what Christ intends during this season. After all, it is the season of waiting and anticipation. When I talk with people it feels more like the season of anxiety and stress. I invite you once again to spend some time thinking about “What is Christmas” and make some intentional decisions about what you will or won’t engage in. That may mean disappointing others, it may mean having a momentary feeling of guilt that you are not doing x, y or z. But what if you experienced this Advent and Christmas in a fuller way than ever before by choosing to live Christmas each day, with a spirit of generosity, kindness, love, joy and peace? Praying for all of you as we experience this Advent and Christmas and may the joy of Christmas stay inside of us every day of the year.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Laura

Hanging of the Greens

November 30th is the **Hanging of the Greens** during our 10:30 am worship service.
Please join us as we decorate the church to celebrate the 1st Sunday of Advent. **HOPE**

UWF Christmas Program

**Come and join United Women in Faith for:
A CHRISTMAS TREE TEA**

Saturday, December 6, 2025, 10am, Grace Place

Take part in our Christmas program as we create the tree of hope and faith. During our tea we will decorate a lighted Christmas tree with trims and ornaments of hope and faith. It will be displayed afterward by the nativities in the narthex.

Worship Service

Sunday, **December 7th** at 10:30 am join us for the 2nd Sunday in Advent. Worship and Communion.
PEACE

Blue Christmas Service

Friday, **December 12th** at 4:00 pm join us as we remember and celebrate those who have gone before us.

Christmas Cantata

As we enter the season of Advent, leading up to our celebration of the birth of our Savior, the choir, bells, organist, pianist, soloist, and our charming children, are preparing a Christmas Cantata for the third Sunday in Advent. It also includes a few Christmas Hymns that you know and love, so you can sing right along with us.

Join us at the 10:30 am service on **December 14th** for "Waiting for Christmas". **JOY**

Worship Service

Sunday, **December 21st** at 10:30 am join us for the 4th Sunday in Advent worship. **LOVE**

Christmas Eve Worship

Wednesday, **December 24th** at 7:00pm Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. A beautiful worship service with Communion served and the Silent Night Candle Lit closing.

Worship Service

Please join us on December 28th for our fun service full of Christmas Carols where everyone is invited to wear their pajamas and the kids can bring a toy to be blessed during the Children's moment.
Just a reminder there is no Sunday School.

Blue Christmas

One of my most favorite songs at Christmas is:

"Where Are You Christmas?" sung by Faith Hill

"Where are you Christmas
Why can't I find you
Where have you gone away
Where is the laughter
You used to bring me
Why can't I hear music play
My world is changing
I'm rearranging
Does that mean Christmas changes too"



I can get a little melancholy at Christmas. I think about years past, family members no longer around the Christmas table, traditions that have faded away. This song allows me to have a good cry. It does however end with the lyrics about finding Christmas once again. That it is deep down inside, found in the love and memories in your mind and heart.

Our world doesn't leave a lot of space to feel the range of human emotion especially at Christmas time. We are pushed to experience joy and glad tidings 24/7. It is one of the reasons I will always offer a Blue Christmas Service. It is a beautiful service that offers up liturgy, music and candle lighting in honor of the many situations that may bring us sadness at this time of year. Participants will be invited to light a candle in memory of someone they have lost or miss this time of year or in symbolism of a situation that brings them grief. This service is open to all and I encourage you to invite someone you know who might need a service just like this, to come. The service will be held Friday December 12th at 4 p.m. May we all feel the comfort and hope found in Christ this Christmas season.

Pastor Laura Barkley

Grace 4th Quarter **BIRD FRIENDLY COFFEE** Fundraiser.

Give the gift of premium coffee grown in an environmentally responsible way this Christmas.
Last Day to Order 12/07/25, Pick up Sunday 12/14/25. See Greg DuBois with questions.



Advent Class Offering December

Pastor Laura and Debi Shippy are offering an **ADVENT STUDY** starting Wednesday, December 3rd from 6-7pm. There is no book, but a handout will be available by the sign up sheet in the narthex for readings and questions to work on for each week.

FAITH AND WELLNESS

Upcoming Activities:

1. Sunday, December 7th: 1st Sunday BP checks in the library 10-10:25 am. (Between Sunday School classes and worship)
2. Tuesday, December 9th: Lunch Bunch 12:30p at Jameson's Pub, 2755 Black Road. RSVP to Pat Meyers or Barb Fisher.
3. Friday, December 12th at 4pm Blue Christmas Service. In the midst of the busyness of holiday preparation, this is a quiet service of holding space for all the emotions/feelings—both joy and sorrow, laughter and tears.

UPCOMING:

Plans are underway for more educational programs in the new year. Programs include disaster/emergency preparedness and heart-healthy eating. Further information as details become available.

Wishing everyone a very merry and blessed Christmas!

Your Faith & Wellness Team



FMSC-Feed My Starving Children

There were 24 of us that went to FMSC on November 1 at the Aurora facility.

We packed 112 boxes, enough to feed
65 children for a year!

DECEMBER GRACE NOTES HIGHLIGHTS

ABOUT US

Lots have been happening recently...

Hanging of the Greens

ASP Christmas Décor Sales

UWF Soup Sales

Bird Friendly Coffee Sales

Meals-On-Wheels Candy Packs

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve to Order

UWF Christmas Tree Tea 12/6

.....and more!

Thanks for all the efforts,
and for all the generosity!



CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR GRACE CHILDCARE

Since Grace Child Care is one of our outreach ministries of the church, let's help them this Christmas by bringing the following items:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| “ Paper plates | “ Paper napkins |
| “ Paper towels | “ Clorox wipes |
| “ Baby wipes | “ Kleenexes |

Please put the donations in the decorated box by the church kitchen.

Thanks so much for your help!

Tis the Season

of Giving

We are collecting hooded and crew neck sweat-shirts for homeless men. Please buy dark colors in sizes Large to 4 XL.

Put the sweatshirts next to the Angel Tree by December 14th. Thank you
Contact Pat Meyers

CANDY DONATIONS NEEDED FOR MEALS ON WHEELS

Our Confirmation class is collecting candy donations to make holiday gifts for senior citizens and shut-ins being served by the Meals on Wheels program. More people are in need of assistance this year than ever before. These gifts with their meals are a real treat for them and a simple way for us to show them that Grace UMC cares.

About 300 pounds of individually wrapped regular and sugar-free candies are needed for this project. Your left-over Halloween candy is an ideal donation. Monetary donations are most welcome, too; let us buy for you!

Candy donations can be dropped off outside the church office in our decorative collection box; monetary donations can be mailed to the church or left in the mailbox. For more information contact Jim Morrow. Thank you in advance for your help.

ANGEL TREE

*Place the gift in a heavy paper bag, attach the Angel to the bag and place under the tree.

* Gift cards may be given in lieu of gifts. Gifts in price should be about \$35 per child.

* Higher amounts are up to the discretion of the donor. All items must be new. Wrapping paper can be included for the parents to wrap the gifts.

*All gifts are due back to Grace Church by Sunday, December 8th.

They ask that you do not use gift bags. Gift bags break easily when transporting.

Restaurant Club

We will meet on Sunday, December 7th at 5pm at Barrel and Vine in downtown Lemont. We all enjoyed their food and service last time we went there, so we'll go there again! I selected this restaurant because downtown Lemont has the most beautiful Christmas lights - small town charm all around. After dinner you can walk or drive around to see the lights. They truly are spectacular! RSVP must be made to Diane by text or phone before December 1st.



GRATITUDE CORNER

Grace UMC is filled with wonderful people willing to share in lots of ministries. We are thankful for generous hearts for participation in our many opportunities for sharing God's love with others.



On November 16th during worship service we honored Russ for his 20 years of dedicated grounds keeper of Grace UMC.



United Women of Faith

Making special bags of goodies for our friends in need.



Join our INSTAGRAM page

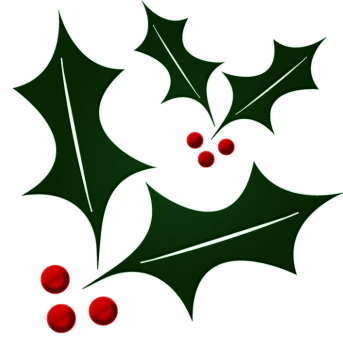
gmcjoliet

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Grace Umc

Join us on website:

Graceumcjoliet.org



DAYBREAK SHELTER

Dinner will be served Monday, December 15th
and Breakfast Tuesday, December 16th.

Sign up sheets for food donations are on the
bulletin board in the narthex.

Thank you in advance.

LUNCH BUNCH

Tuesday, December 9th: Lunch Bunch 12:30p
at Jameson's Pub, 2755 Black Road. RSVP to
Pat Meyers or Barb Fisher.

Big thank you to Cathleen Gray
for all the care to the flower
beds. They look beautiful and
ready for the winter season.



Payton & Shelby Fraser both received their
gift boxes sent by our church. They are very
appreciative.

Thanks for the boxes we received. So nice
to be remembered.

Payton & Shelby



Update on the Ridgewood Pantry from the RUCP Board

As the need in our community increases, and as the holidays approach, I wanted to provide an update on the financial health of our pantry. We are so grateful to our cluster churches and individual supporters as we collaboratively serve our neighbors through the Ridgewood United Community Pantry, located in the Ridgewood neighborhood on the East Side of Joliet. We are thankful to be able to serve out of the old Joliet Fire Station, which means we do not pay rent. All of our income is directed to either food and personal products for our clients, or the tools we need to serve. Through the third quarter of 2025, we have provided a total of 120,000 pounds of food to 300 families per month at a cost of \$13.95 per family.

This year, we have invested in new freezers, increasing our storage capacity and the reliability for our clients.

The funds for these capital expenditures are pulled from a generous bequest to the pantry. Our aim is to use that bequest to fund those capital expenses alone. However, due to the rising cost of food and the high numbers of clients, we have had to dip into that bequest to help fund our monthly food purchases. Through the third quarter, our expenses were \$36,700, but our income was only \$28,500. We have been fortunate to receive state and local grants totaling \$20,500 that have assisted us with additional resources. Unfortunately, even with the grants, our expenses were \$16,200 while income from donors was only \$8000. Donor income is consistent with past years, but expenses have been higher because of the increased number of people seeking food.



We continue to provide as much food and assistance as possible to our clients, particularly at a time when many are facing additional societal pressures, loss of resources, and increased need. We are grateful for the generosity of the past that allows us to purchase the supplies we need. However, in order to keep this ministry healthy long-term, we know that additional donations from churches and faithful individuals are needed. If you would like to support this local ministry, you can send donations through your local church designated for the Ridgewood United Community Pantry. Alternatively, you can write the check to Ridgewood United Community Pantry and mail it directly to the treasurer, Jay Wait, at 806 Colonade Rd., Shorewood, IL 60404. We thank you for your generosity, service, and love for our neighbors in the name of Jesus Christ!

Peace, Sherry Steele, President, RUCP Board of Directors

John Kabelis	December 01
Brianna Anderson	December 03
Debra Black	December 04
Quinn Kolodziej	December 04
Maria Pons	December 08
Patti Bailey	December 09
Jay Wait	December 09
Frieda Gray	December 10
Juda Gray	December 10

Emmett Barkley	December 12
Alice Jackson	December 12
Linda Jursinic	December 12
Kathryn Ray	December 13
Peg Tucker	December 14
Joan Krosnicki	December 15

Caryn Young	December 15
Elijah Gray	December 17
Gene Lockhart	December 21
Matthew Renzi	December 22
Reyna Guzman	December 23
Jay Caswell	December 24
Russ Ghilain	December 26
Ben Meister	December 27
Jacob Linko	December 28
Mia Bowen	December 30

Stephanie Butler	December 31
Jean Navin	December 31
Mia Bowen	December 30
Stephanie Butler	December 31
Jean Navin	December 31

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

Jeffrey & Michelle Ray	December 17
Henry & Clarise Boswell	December 31

United Methodist Men,

You are invited to the Prairie Central District United Methodist Men's Advent Service, to be conducted 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at the Barrington United Methodist Church, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington Hills, IL.

The morning will feature a breakfast cooked by UMM chefs, a brief business meeting, and an inspirational Advent Service with Rev. David Lagos-Fonseca. Advent is a season of coming together for intentional contemplation, anticipation, and acknowledgement of Christ's coming.

Please make plans now to participate and respond to this email with "Count Me In" and your name and church. John Maxson, President, Prairie Central District 312-933-3239, United Methodist Men



MISSION OF THE MONTH

December – Global Solar Oven Partners UMC (#418812)





The solar oven training and distribution program works in the Dominican Republic.

Holiday Envelopes 2025

Funds from the **Thanksgiving & Christmas** offering will go 75% to general budget with the remainder split between **ASP** and the **Lakota Indian Mission Trip**.

NOV ATTEND	WORSHIP 8:30AM 10:30AM	CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL	ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
Nov 2	91	26	19
Nov 9	60	26	14
Nov 16	79	21	17
Nov 23	91	28	21
Nov 30			

DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 6pm Advent Study 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir	4 7:00 am Men's Breakfast 6pm DayCare Christmas program	5	6 10am UWF Christmas Tea
7 PEACE 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10am Blood Pressure Check 10:30 Worship with <u>Communion</u>	8	9 12:30pm Lunch Bunch Jameson's on Black Road 6:30p Finance via ZOOM	10 6pm Advent Study 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir	11 7:00 am Men's Breakfast	12 4pm Blue Christmas Service	13
14 JOY 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship/ Cantata	15 5pm Daybreak 	16 5am Daybreak Breakfast	17 6pm Advent Study 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir	18 7:00 am Men's Breakfast	19	20
21 LOVE 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship	22	23 January Grace Notes <u>Deadline</u>	24 7:00pm Christmas Eve worship service	25 CHRISTMAS 	26	27
28 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 10:30 Worship/PJ Sunday, Blessing of the Toys NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	29	30	31 	1 NEW YEARS DAY Office Closed	2026 Goals <div>①</div> <div>②</div> <div>③</div> 	

Grace United Methodist Church
1718 Avalon Avenue
Joliet, Illinois 60435-5799



**December 24th
7:00 pm
Join us for our
Christmas Eve
Worship Service**