

The Community Messenger December 2025



Erica Extemporaneous

Alice Millar Chapel, at Northwestern University, had a wonderful tradition of a Lessons and Carols service on the first Sunday of Advent. The Chapel Choir was quite remarkable, a blend of music majors and chemistry majors, graduate students and first year students who shared a love of singing and perhaps what is more, making beautiful music. As happenstance would have it, my first Sunday service as Assistant University Chaplain fell on this most melodious morning.

Context is crucial. I started working at Northwestern in December of 2001, When as a country we were very much in the throes of the aftermath of September 11th. Evanston, Illinois, in large part due to the presence of the University, has a rather diverse community. It is comprised of folks from across the country and around the world, many of whom hold dear religious and faith traditions different from our own. It is certainly not without its challenges, but most of the time I remember relationships being respectful and curiosity and candor were the rule rather than the exception.

The chaplain and I were meeting with the choir director and our ministry interns from the seminary down the road. The processional music was to be a lively choral piece from somewhere in Africa... perhaps Ghana, I don't recall. In any event, it entailed what could only be described as whoops of what one might hope to be joy or excitement as the singers made their way forward. After a brief discussion we determined that it might be wise to give the congregation a heads up. We were all

living with a heightened level of alertness leaving us on edge to say the least. It fell to one of the interns to craft and deliver an announcement to that effect.

Sunday morning the sanctuary was filled with far more people than typically attended. The prelude drew to a close and Jason approached the lectern. “May I please have your attention,” he began, sounding somewhere between the angel Gabriel and the guy announcing the Blue Light Special at K-Mart. “This morning’s processional music contains shouts of joy and excitement. Please do not be alarmed. Thank you.” All very monotone and matter of fact, like a test of the Emergency Broadcasting System. It was hilarious! The written word simply doesn’t do it justice.

I laugh, because it was funny. I smile, perhaps gently, because it was also prophetic. During these ever-darkening days, as Christians we prepare our hearts and our minds for the birth of a baby all at once unassuming and altogether amazing. We hold fast to hope, with all that is within us. We pray for peace, passionately and perhaps impatiently. We juggle joy sometimes with strains of sadness, wrapping it around our shoulders even when, especially when, our eyes overflow with tears. We listen for love’s quiet call, as subtle as cattle lowing in a humble stable.

Indeed, do not be alarmed if the spirit of the season startles you with shrieks and sighs, whoops and whispers. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Take good care,

Erica



News from the Official Board

Your church leaders met this month as usual and reviewed the work of the various committees. Although there were no urgent matters to be discussed at this time, this Board remains vigilant in its stewardship of HCC's people and resources. Especially notable was Terry Gardlock's report on all the work the Trustees oversee on the maintenance and care of the buildings, grounds, and assets of the church.

Holiday Greetings from Gabby!

This is such an exciting time of the year, don't you think? There are pretty decorations and lots of lights... which is a good thing because the days seem to be getting shorter and shorter and the nights longer and longer. John Howland and I love the way the church looks at this time of the year. There are so many things to do, and even more things to look forward to. Sometimes it can be hard to be patient. But maybe, just maybe... the harder it is to wait, the more whatever we are waiting for is worth waiting for. I don't know that I understand that, but maybe you do. Maybe I will, too. We'll have to wait and see...

Your friends~ Gabby
and John Howland



CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS

Many thanks to those of you who are participating in preparing our annual Christmas Food Baskets. Whether you donate food or money or time...all are appreciated! With your help, we are planning to provide baskets for at least thirty Client Choice families, sharing a bit of Christmas cheer. There is a sign-up sheet available in the back of the sanctuary. We are asking you to help fill baskets with the following items:

Instant Mashed Potatoes

Gravy

Pineapple

Jello

Cake Mix

Frosting

Cereal

Peanut Butter

Jelly

Crackers

Bread

Rice

Tomato Soup

Chicken Noodle Soup

All items/baskets should be dropped off on **Sunday, December 14th** at the kitchen door (Door #3) before or after the church service. Volunteers will be available to assist in unloading your car.

We will be packing the baskets after the church service on the 14th for distribution to our families on Friday, December 19th.

Blessings to All ~ "Little" Linda Raphoon



ADVENT AT HCC

NOVEMBER 30, 2025
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 AM WORSHIP

DECEMBER 4, 2025
CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE
6:00-8:00 PM

DECEMBER 7, 2025
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 AM WORSHIP
CAROLING TO FOLLOW

DECEMBER 14, 2025
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 AM WORSHIP
CHRISTMAS BASKET ASSEMBLY TO FOLLOW

DECEMBER 20, 2025
BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
4:00 PM

DECEMBER 21, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 AM WORSHIP
LONGEST NIGHT 5:30 PM

DECEMBER 24, 2025
CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT SERVICES
7:00 PM
11:00 PM (WITH COMMUNION)



Card Club

The Card Club will not be meeting in December.

However, it will be resuming on the second and fourth Thursday evenings in January! See you then at 7 pm in the John Howland Room.

Merry Christmas to all!

Craft Show Thanks!

On behalf of the Mission committee, I would like to give a great big thank you to everyone that assisted with the Craft Show. It could not happen without all of your help. A special thank you to Dawn for heading up the kitchen. From setting up tables, baking for the bake sale, assisting in the kitchen or dining room, donating and helping with the raffles, to attending the show, it could not be done without you. All proceeds benefit the mission work of the church.

~Patty DiGiacobbe



Sanctuary Advent Giving Tree!



Nov. 30th – Liquid Body Wash & Deodorant

Dec. 7th – Shampoo & Conditioner

Dec. 14th – Hats, Gloves, & Scarves

Operating Fund

	October Activity	YTD Balance	Budget YTD
Income	\$28,933.96	\$241,944.33	\$226,740.00
Expenses	\$18,615.34	\$225,079.29	\$230,035.00
Difference	\$10,318.62	\$16,865.04	-\$3,295.00

Diaconate and Elders' Schedules – December

Date	Elder	Diaconate Sanctuary (All Month)	Diaconate Kitchen (All Month)
December 7	Kathy Purdum	Barry Dunaway – Captain	Sanctuary Diane Hughes
December 14	Tom Hitmar	Leanna Dunaway	
December 21	Katy Kell	Gary Arblaster	JHR Susanne Shaulis
December 28	Gretchen Hrusovsky	Preston Thigpen Bryson Thigpen	Naomi Foster

Lectionary for December 2025

December 7, 2025

(Second Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

December 14, 2025

(Third Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalms 146:5-10

Luke 1:47-55

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

December 21, 2025

(Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

December 28, 2025

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalms 148

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

CLIENT CHOICE FOOD PANTRY

The Holidays often increase the need for necessities like food and well-being. We had over 50 families come into our November pantry. Many of them were first time clients. Our December pantry will be held the week before Christmas, Friday, the 19th, between 3-5 pm. We will be bringing in a food order on Thursday morning, the 18th. We anticipate a greater number of clients coming in and would appreciate seeing our usual volunteers, alongside any available substitutes. The Mission/Outreach committee appreciates your generosity during this Holiday Season. ~Linda Hitmar

Stewardship Wrap-up

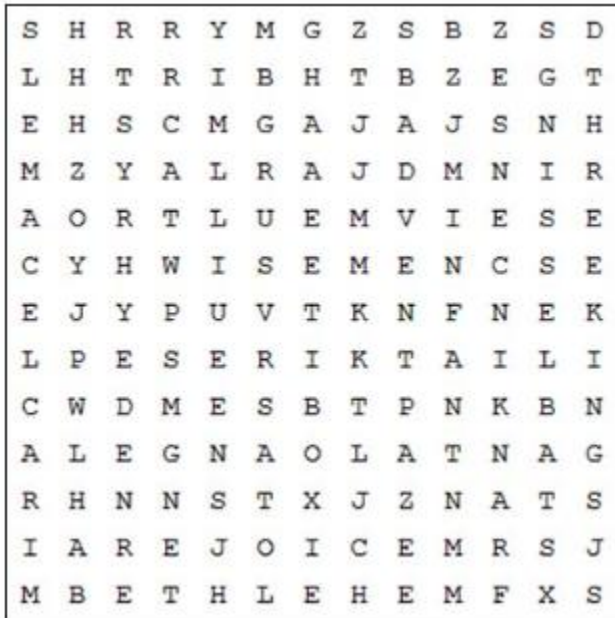
As we conclude our Stewardship Campaign, I want to offer heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make this season so meaningful.

Many thanks to our Stewardship Committee — Diane Andrews, Alan Purdum, Kyler Purdum, Linda Raphoon, Sarah Sanders, and Rev. Erica Brown— for their dedication and thoughtful leadership.

We are also grateful to our stewardship speakers: Sarah Sanders, Linda Hitmar, Terry Gardlock, and Preston Thigpen, whose reflections helped guide us through this important season.

Thank you to all who pledged, prayed, and participated. Your generosity strengthens the ministry and mission of Howland Community Church as we look ahead to 2026. Thank you for being a vital part of our church family!

~Patty DiGiacobbe



Joy to the World

ADVENT	INFANT	MYRRH
ANGEL	JESUS	NATIVITY
BETHLEHEM	JOSEPH	REJOICE
BIRTH	MAJI	STABLE
BLESSINGS	MANGER	STAR
CAMELS	MARY	THREE KINGS
FRANKINCENSE	MIRACLE	WISE MEN

From the Open and Affirming Committee: What Do all those letters mean?

God calls each person "Beloved", God's Spirit gives us a diversity of gifts, and Christ calls us all to work for justice. Therefore, we celebrate the gifts of LGBTQIA+ people. But all those letters can be confusing. Here is a short explanation:

L = Lesbian, a woman romantically attracted to women.

G = Gay, a person romantically attracted to persons of the same sex. Most often used for men.

B = Bisexual, attracted to both males and females.

T = Transgender, people whose gender identity is different than that assigned at birth.

Q = Queer. Once a pejorative, it has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQIA+ community as an umbrella term for any non-traditional lifestyle.

= Questioning. It is important to remember that discovering one's identity is a gradual process. For many, especially young people, this can be a scary process.

I = Intersex. A term covering persons whose bodies are neither entirely male or entirely female.

A = Asexual or Aromantic. A person not seeking a romantic attachment to another.

+ = Other lifestyles, including those not yet identified.

Remember that all gender labels are self-chosen. It is improper to give someone a label without their consent.

~Alan Purdum

December - HCC Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6 pm Trustees 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	2	3 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	4 Open House 6-8 pm	5	6 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
7 10 AM Worship 2 nd Sunday of Advent <u>Caroling after church</u>	8 6 PM Open & Affirming Comm. 7 PM Elders 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	9 6 PM Budget	10 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	11 4:30-6:30 PM Spaghetti Dinner Drive Thru 5-7 PM Boundless Wonders (SH)	12	13 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
14 10 AM Worship 3 rd Sunday of Advent Noisy Coin Offering <u>Christmas Basket Assembly after church</u>	15 6 PM Finance 7 PM Official Board 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	16	17 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	18 4:30-6:30 PM Spaghetti Dinner Drive Thru 5-7 PM Boundless Wonders (SH) 6-8 PM Girl Scouts (NH)	19 3-5 PM Client Choice Food Pantry Christmas Basket Distribution	20 11 AM - 12:30 PM Free Fellowship Meal (SH) <u>4 PM - Blue Christmas Service</u> 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
21 10 AM Worship 4 th Sunday of Advent <u>5:30 PM - Longest Night</u>	22 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	23	24 <u>7PM & 11PM Candlelight Service</u>	25 	26	27 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
28 10 AM Worship	29 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	30	31			

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

<i>Paul & Linda Howard</i>	4	<i>Judy & Jack Clifford</i>	16	Carly Casassa	22
Robin Sanders	5	John Bobco	17	Taylor Casassa	22
Lindi Talkington	5	<i>James & Nancy Janek</i>	19	Sarah Wilson Sanders	24
Pamela Boggs	9	Riley Talkington	19	Kathy Purdum	25
Madison Bickerstaff	11	<i>Sue & James Blosser</i>	20	Jane Walters	25
Matthew Vencel	13	Christopher DiGiacobbe	20	Fran Stroud	26
<i>Dr Dave & Mari-lee Yeropoli</i>	15	Nancy Heim	21	Evie Coe	28
Kate Wertz	15	Megan Whitsel	21	Gretchen Hrusovsky	28
Linda Mikula	16	Mary Kay Vencel	22	Sheree Pascale	30
				Ed Thompson	31

Please note: If you fail to see your birthday/anniversary listed, please contact the church office at 330-856-3628 so that we may update our information. Bless you!

HOWLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Reverend Erica L. Brown, Senior Minister
Andrew Purdum, Director of Music
Rebecca Shelton, Organist
Minta Pitts, Custodian
Diane Andrews, Office Coordinator
Alan Purdum, Chair of the Congregation
Sarah Sanders, Vice-Chair of the Congregation

The Community Messenger is the monthly newsletter of the **Howland Community Church** (affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Church of Christ, and the International Council of Community Churches). Our church is “**A House of Prayer for All People.**” We offer Sunday School for children and a fellowship gathering after Worship. Communion is served every Sunday.

Office Hours:
Monday – Thursday
9:00 am – 1:00 pm

