

ST. JAMES WEEKLY E-NEWS

December 2, 2020



Worship Announcements

Sunday worship this week will be found on our [Facebook](#) page, and posted to the website at umcsj.org on Sunday, and will remain on the website until Thursday morning each week.

For your convenience bulletins are now posted on the website home-page on Thursdays as well as emailed.

If you would like to make an online contribution to St. James, you can do so by clicking on this link, [online giving](#).

Reminder: Clicking on any blue underlined words, will take you directly to the site being referenced.

A Word About Worship Attendance...

Worship attendance is a challenge in this time of COVID-19. You can help! If you watch via Facebook, simply giving a thumbs up, or making a comment allows me to count you as being in worship. If you watch only via the website, perhaps drop the office a quick email indicating that you watched the service. It does not matter when you are tuning in to watch. It is great feedback, that we are making a difference on your spiritual journey with God. Your help is very much appreciated.



To all those who have been returning their stewardship cards and pledges. There is still time to mail these in. This helps us to plan our budget for 2021.

To Mary Schemm and Nancy Von Der Osten for being the ushers for the Parking Lot Worship Service.

To Nancy Von Der Osten for helping with the Advent mailing.

To Wendy Lind for setting out the Advent Wreath and to Deb Kraemer for picking up the candles.

To all who share of their time and talents being the hands and feet of Christ for the ministries at St. James and beyond.



Other Announcements

Reminder: Soup pick-up is this Saturday from 9am-noon.

Check out our [Facebook](#) page for weekly Sunday school lessons.

Notice: Charge Conference this year will be done virtually in conjunction with Emmanuel UMC on **Tuesday, December 8th at 6pm**. If you would like to attend, here is the zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9314977935>

If you know of someone who does something special at the church, please let the office know so we may mention them here. Phone number, 734-5371 or email the [office](#). Thank you.

Birthdays

12/08 Ella Genke
12/08 Audrey Genke
12/08 Darcie Lind
12/08 Julie Rimmel



Anniversaries

12/04 Rich & Bev Stewart (49y)

There are now 5 ways to give to St. James:

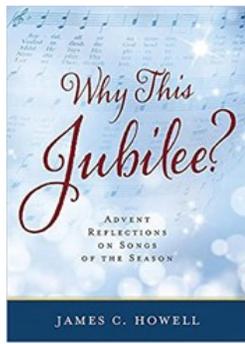
1. When you attend an in-person worship service.
2. Mail in your gift or pledge to:
St. James UMC
100 W. Capitol Drive
Appleton, WI 54911
3. Donate on our website by clicking on: umcsj.org
4. Give on your phone through the Give Plus+ App. Go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "GivePlus+ Church" to download for FREE. You can also find St. James on the Give Plus+ App on your smartphone or tablet! Search by our zip code (54911) and we are the 2nd church listed!
5. Set up auto withdrawal giving with LuAnn Van Handel.



Note: The same company that handles our auto withdrawals, also does the online giving.

Advent Bible Study

As part of our Advent journey, Pastor Ben is also planning a bible study using the book, "Why This Jubilee? Advent Reflections on Songs of the Season" by James C. Howell. You may purchase the book on Amazon for \$12.99 plus tax. There is one book available in the office, just let Deb know if you are interested.



In addition to this being a bible study, it is also an advent devotional that you can read, even if you are unable to join the study.

The study will be done via zoom on Tuesday afternoons at 2:30pm beginning December 1st for St. James, and Wednesday evenings beginning December 2, at 7pm with Emmanuel. Please let Pastor Ben, or the church office know of your interest.

Zoom link for the Tuesday, 2:30 class is:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8985653369>

A Note From Pastor Ben...

Our Advent Worship Series this year will be "Caroling through Christmas." Caroling through Christmas this year won't be the same, as we won't be in worship and singing these songs together in the same way. But these familiar songs that tell of the Savior's birth will always bring us comfort, whether we are listening to them as we bake cookies or singing with our family around the tree.



You can help be part of this series! Short videos of you and/or your family sharing about your favorite Christmas Carol would be very welcome; something that we could edit into our online worship service or share periodically throughout the month on the church Facebook page. Often a short video from a phone or tablet can be emailed. You can send these directly to me at wisconsinpastorben@gmail.com If you would like to participate but are not comfortable with technology, please contact me and we will work to make it happen. We could meet at the church, socially distance outside your home and find ways to help each other. I hope to hear your favorite Christmas Carols as we share this journey together.

Ben Morris, Pastor

Joys, Prayers & Concerns...

You can now submit your prayer requests at any time by using this link, [prayer request](#). The link goes directly to Pastor Ben. Let us know by noon on Thursdays, so we are able to mention it in worship.

- For all the prayers shared with God on your personal journey each day.
- Prayers for all our shut-ins.
- Congratulations to the Price family on baby number 8, Hazel Rose, born 11-28-20. Mother and baby are doing great.
- Prayers for those who are suffering due to the isolation, stress, and illness caused by COVID-19.
- Continued prayers for Charlie Christenson's sister, Anne.
- Continued prayers for the essential workers and all who work in the medical and social services field.
- Continued prayers for Martina Olson's husband, Bob. He is currently at Manor Care. Also Bob lost his aunt Bev this week.
- Continued prayers for our teachers, students, and families, as they find ways to safely and effectively hold classes.
- Continued prayers for all in our church family.

Ongoing intercessory prayer ...

- Joys for those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this week. May you find a special way to celebrate.
- Continued prayers for this nation and the world.
- Continued prayers for all those who are going through various health issues.
- Prayers for national unity, for things that are both seen and unseen.
- For all who serve or have served in the military and other civil service areas.
- For those in the 'sandwich' generation and the challenges it can pose.
- For the United Methodist Church and its leadership.

Lord, hear our prayers. Amen.

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer."*

Romans 12:12

Our 4th Quarter Mission Offering

(October to December)

goes to **Salvation Army**



Hope

*“Let us walk in the light of the LORD”
Isaiah 2:5*

This past Sunday was the first day of Advent, the new year in the Church's calendar. Advent is a four-week time of preparation before Christmas, it is a time for hopes and dreams. In Advent, we are anticipating the arrival of the baby Jesus, as well as the second coming of Christ. As days grow shorter and darkness increases, we light Advent candles each week to remind us that we do not face the darkness alone. But that, indeed, the light of the world has come, shining on in the darkness to illuminate our lives and lead us forth not in fear but courage, joy and hope.

On this first Sunday of Advent we reflect on hope. This may be a hope in the promised Messiah, it may be a hope for a cure for this pandemic, or a hope that God's kingdom may be more fully visible, vivid in our actions. Advent reminds us of past miracles and present hope for the future event. The wreath and candles are a great visual tool to help us remember what we have and what we are hoping for. The circle wreath represents God. It is a circle that symbolize God's eternity, and endless mercy. God has no beginning and no end. It is green because green is a color of hope. The green reminds us of the hope we have in God, newness, renewal, and eternal life.

Advent is a season that invites us to think seriously about the meaning of time and how we use it. Time is a precious gift from God, which gives us the opportunity to live as people of hope, peace, joy and love. The scripture from Isaiah is one of the most hope filled passages of the Bible.

So what is hope? Hope is one of our central emotions, but we are often at a loss when asked to define it. Many of us confuse hope with optimism, a prevailing attitude that things will turn out for the best. But hope differs from optimism. Hope does not come from being told to think positively, or from hearing a rosy forecast. Hope, unlike optimism, is rooted in unalloyed reality. Although there is no uniform definition of hope, I found one that seemed to capture what my dad taught me. Hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see, in the mind's eye, a path to a better future. Hope acknowledges the significant obstacles and deep pitfalls along the path. True hope has no room for delusion.

I think we can all agree that hope is not something we can touch, see, smell or hear, rather it is something that we feel deep in our soul. The absence of hope can be life-draining. The presence of hope can be life-giving.

I believe that hope is a journey that we all take, supported by the presence of God. When we travel through difficult, confusing or uncertain times, our hope gives us that belief that there is a destination which is going to leave us in a better place than where we started. At those times of life when we run the risk of being overwhelmed by problems, trouble and worry, hope allows us to hold on to the promise of a blessing of God, even when we cannot imagine what kind of blessing might be possible.

Hope is confidence that something we desire will happen. Hope looks to the future and that our dreams will become reality. It may take awhile, but don't ever give up hope. Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness.

People need hope during times of darkness and that hope is Christ. So often hope is crippled by despair, the feeling that there is nothing more that can be done, no chance of improvement and little chance of healing family problems, financial problems, health problems, lack of civility, and the threat of wars and ceaseless conflict. Even we, whose life's foundation is the solid rock of Jesus Christ, may find at times, it difficult to find hope. That is okay, as long as we remember how important hope is, in that it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.

So where does real hope come from? Scripture tells us where to look for hope. The Bible tells us that despite the trauma and tragedies of life, God is still in charge. No situation is without hope. You don't need a ton of hope to get you through difficult situations, just a sliver will keep you going. Have courage and hang onto hope. Recall the evidences of God's grace in your life. Have there not been times when He has taken care of you, times when you had all but given up hope, only to have the cloud removed and the sun to shine once again. Don't give up on hope. There is reason to believe! As Martin Luther King once said, "Everything that is done in this world is done by hope."

We don't know how or when, but we trust that God will come again into our lives with love, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. That's what hope is. That's what Advent is about. When we live like Jesus (good stewards), we bring hope into the world. I challenge you during this season of Advent to have eyes that are open to those who could use the gentle touch of Christ's love. They need to know that there is hope. When we open our eyes to someone in need and fulfill that need, we are bringing the hope of Jesus into the world.

Tom Schemm, Stewardship Chair