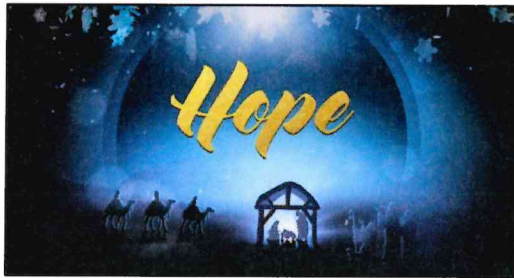


Finding Hope in the Midst of December



As the holidays arrive in Monroe, Ohio, many of us feel both joy and strain. The lights go up, calendars fill, but deep down, many of our neighbors feel tired, stretched thin, or lonely. At Monroe United Methodist Church, we believe that faith can speak into those everyday realities—and that hope is closer than you think.

1. When Finances Feel Tight

Rising costs and holiday expectations leave many families anxious this time of year.

The Bible reminds us: *“My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19)

Try this:

- Take a few quiet minutes to pray about your spending before each purchase.
- Simplify gift-giving—offer time, presence, or shared experiences.
- If you’re struggling, reach out to our church office for confidential support. Our outreach team can connect you with local help and prayer.

2. When the Holidays Feel Heavy

The season meant for joy can stir up sadness, stress, or memories of loved ones gone too soon. **The Bible reminds us:**

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.”
(Psalm 34:18)

Try this:

- Set aside one peaceful half-hour each week just to breathe, pray, and rest.
- Call or text someone who may be alone. One simple invitation can make a difference.
- Join us for our “Quiet Christmas” gathering—a gentle time of reflection and comfort for anyone feeling the weight of the season.

3. When You Long for Connection

Life in our growing community can feel busy yet isolating. Many people crave genuine friendship and belonging.

The Bible reminds us: *“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.”*
(Hebrews 10:24-25)

Try this:

- Pray for one person God might be nudging you to reconnect with.
- Invite a friend or neighbor to join you for a church event—it might be the encouragement they need.
- Consider joining our Giving Tree or donating to the local food pantry or Neighborhood Bridges through Monroe Schools.

At Monroe UMC, we don't pretend life is perfect. But we believe in a God who meets us in our struggles and leads us toward peace. This Advent, we invite you to discover that hope—through worship, fellowship, and shared acts of love. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5).

Join us for these upcoming events at Monroe United Methodist Church, 206 East Avenue:

- **Advent Worship:** Sundays at 9:30/11:00 am in-person, on Facebook and YouTube.
- **Pancakes with Santa:** December 6, 9:00-11:30 am – Food, fun, stories, and it's FREE!
- **Christmas Eve:** Wednesday, December 24, 4:30 Family service with pageant & carols; 7:00 Classic service with carols, choir & candlelight

No matter where you are on your journey, there's a place for you here. Let this be a season not of stress, but of rediscovering the peace, joy, and love that only Christ can bring.

Rambles of Roger

THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE

The year is 1914, Europe is involved in a World War, "A War to End All Wars." It was a war like no other. It was fought in trenches in very unhealthy conditions. They were cold, dirty and often full of mud.

Christmas season was upon the country, and the hope was that a truce could be called. Even Pope Benedict XV had called for a Christmas truce, but officially it was not going to happen.

Yet it seems that the misery of daily life in the cold, wet, dull trenches motivated troops on both sides to initiate a truce of their own. No one knows just how it started but it very likely started with the singing of a Christmas carol, like 'Silent Night' and having the other side join in.

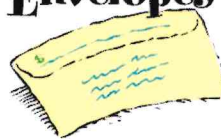
There are accounts such as this well written one telling of what went on:

"First the Germans would sing one of their carols and then we would sing one of ours, until when we started up 'O Come, All Ye Faithful' the Germans immediately joined in singing the same hymn to the Latin words *Adeste Fideles*. And I thought, well, this is really a most extraordinary thing – two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war."

The truce was widespread but not universal. It took in much of the line but there were places where the fighting never stopped. It was only a truce, not peace. In some places hostilities returned later on Christmas Day, while in other places it was New Year's Day before the fighting began again.

Roger Miller

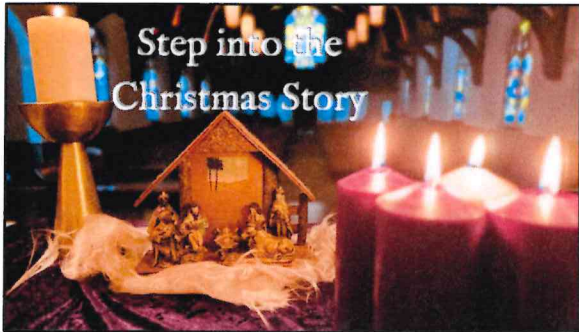
Offering Envelopes



The church giving envelopes will be in the Narthex on Christmas Eve.

If you are currently getting envelopes but no longer need them aren't getting envelopes but would like to have them, please call Anne Lapham at 513.539.8095. If there is no answer, please leave a message.

Step into the Story this Advent, Starting Nov. 30



This Advent season, we're diving deeper into one of our most beloved Christmas carols to discover the profound truth behind its gentle melody. "What Child Is This?" sets words of hope to the minor-key tune of "Greensleeves"—and there's something significant in that pairing of beauty and pathos.

While we often picture the nativity as a "silent night," the reality of that first Christmas was far more complex. The world into which Jesus was born was filled with political oppression, economic hardship, and the collaboration of religious and state powers that left the vulnerable struggling to survive. Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi all lived in precarious, even dangerous circumstances.

Yet into this trauma-filled world, God chose to enter as one of us—to know us, to be with us, and to show us how to bring Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love even in the hardest times.

- Advent 1, 11/30: "A Stable Full of Hope"
- Advent 2, 12/07: "A Cradle of Peace" (with Communion)
- Advent 3, 12/14: "Mary's Song of Joy"
- Advent 4, 12/21: "Courageous Love"
- Christmas Eve, 12/24: "Step into the Stable Tonight"
- Sunday After Christmas, 12/28: "A New year of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love"

Each week, we'll gather around the nativity scene—those familiar figures that have lived in our imaginations all our lives—and discover their real stories. We'll see how their experiences connect to our own struggles and questions in these troubled times. And we'll be reminded that the God who entered our world as a vulnerable child continues to be Emmanuel, God-With-Us, today.

We cannot wait to have hope—it is essential now. We cannot wait to work for peace—lives are at stake. We cannot wait to embrace joy or to love, because we are the ones who follow Jesus Christ, God-With-Us.

Join us as we look beyond the lullaby to find good news for all people, especially when we need it most. All are welcome. Sunday worship is at 9:30 or 11:00 am.

A Personal Note

Dear friends at Monroe UMC,

My family and I are so very grateful to God for all of you. You continually show us God's grace and love throughout the year. We always enjoy the delicious homemade cookies and candies you share with us at Christmas. They are signs of God's love through you.



Recently, I have been working with a therapist to overcome my unhealthy habit of overeating sweets. I have learned that when they are readily available, I am prone to overeat them. As a diabetic with high blood pressure, this is not a healthy combination.

Therefore, I humbly ask you: Please refrain from sharing gifts of sweets with my family and me at Christmas this year. Thank you for your support and prayers. With your help, God is helping me develop a healthier relationship with sweets and food in general.

Grace and peace at Christmas,

Pastor Jeff



Annual Church Conference Work Completed

The annual Church Conference of Monroe UMC met on Sunday, November 9th at 4:00pm. Guided by Rev. Becky Schofield Motter, Presiding Elder, the Conference completed some necessary work:

- Elected leaders and servants for 2026 (watch for an updated list in January)
- Reviewed our membership roll
- Set Pastoral Compensation for 2026
- Agreed to 2026 Breakthrough Goals for worship, faith development and hospitality
- Received Trustees Legal & Property report, annual Parsonage Inspection, and Safe Sanctuary reports
- Heard Pastor's vision and congregational goals for 2026

If you would like to receive a handout from the Church Conference, please visit the church office.



Please join us on Thursday, December 11th in Atchley Hall at 1:00pm. Our guest speaker will be Ann Copeland.

Please consider bringing hats and gloves for men, women and children for the tree in the Narthex. All women in the church are invited.

Christmas Social and Potluck

Please join us for a Christmas Potluck December 7th after the late service. We will provide drinks, pork tenderloin, mashed potatoes and gravy. Please bring a side or dessert to share. Feel free to invite a friend or family to join us after the service.



Reflections by Monica Bolton....

Thoughts



For when I'm grumpy or irritable....



Say....thank you God for the gift of life today. Wash away my grumpiness and irritability. Help me remember that tomorrow is not a guarantee and today is a gift from you. Help me to live today as if it is my last. What is it you have for me to do today? What can I do to further your kingdom? Help me get out of the way and let you work through me. Amen



Still Time to Submit your 2026 Estimate of Giving



Have You Turned In Your 2026 Estimate of Giving? If you haven't yet submitted your Estimate of Giving for 2026 from *Counterculture*, we invite you to do so as soon as possible. If you have already submitted it, thank you! Here's why it matters:

Practically speaking, your estimate helps our church leaders plan wisely for the year ahead. Knowing what resources we can count on allows us to budget responsibly for ministries, missions, staffing, and building needs. It's good stewardship that honors both your commitment and the church's calling.

Spiritually speaking, making an estimate is an act of faithful intention. It invites you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to give in the coming year and to make a covenant between you and God about your generosity. It's a spiritual discipline that helps us live out our commitment to put God first in all things.

There are three easy ways to submit:

1. **Drop your card in the offering plate** during worship
2. **Mail it to:** Monroe UMC, PO Box 310, Monroe, OH 45050
3. **Submit online at:**
MonroeUMC.org/Counterculture

Thank you for your faithful generosity and for helping us plan for a year of ministry together. If you need an Estimate of Giving card, they are available in the sanctuary or at the church office.

Children & Youth Ministry



Xtreme Kids Sunday School

is for kindergarten and up.

Every Sunday at 9:15.

Dismissal is at the end of the first service (usually between 10:30 and 10:45). Let your kids have fun while learning about Jesus! Invite friends too!

Engaging activities will help your child grow socially and spiritually.

Nursery: for newborns to 4 years old. Sundays during the 9:30 and 11:00 services.



The Amanda Outreach / Slinky Tutoring Center

Tutoring is on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the school year between 4:20 and 5:30. Amanda Elementary children and parents appreciate your Christian love and academic encouragement.

LINK Adult Readers

Help parents and grandparents become better reading role models for their children. As a tutor for an adult reader, you determine the schedule and meeting place (church or library).

Contact Gina for more details (gmatcraft@gmail.com/937-514-3793).

The Breakfast Club Christmas Show

(Dec. 14th at 9:30am)

Practice is every Sunday until noon

*Dress rehearsal is Saturday, December 13th from 10am - 12pm



Pancakes with Santa – Saturday, December 6th 9:00 -11:30am

Giving Trees – Choose a tag, go shopping, and make a child very happy!

No time for shopping? Ask Gina – she loves to shop! Please tape the original tag to the present (wrapped or bagged) and bring it to church by Dec. 21st.

Continued pg. 6

ENCOUNTER YOUTH MINISTRIES

(new logo coming soon)

On Wednesdays, 5th–12th Graders get to know Jesus through prayer, scripture, and service.

Holiday Schedule:

Dec. 3rd - Bible Study at church

Dec. 10th - Caroling in Amanda neighborhood

Dec. 17th - White Elephant Party at church

Dec. 24th - Jan. 7th - Winter Break

Jan. 14th - Bible Study

Jan. 21st - Mt. Pleasant

Jan. 28th - Bible Study

Tidings of Comfort and Joy?

Facing the holidays after bereavement

When you're grieving the death of a family member or friend, you may dread the holiday season. Thoughts of social gatherings, family traditions, and obligations leave you anxious and overwhelmed. Your sadness can seem unbearable. You may wish you could skip these next two months and go straight to the routine of the next year—but you can't. What *can* you do to lessen your stress and loneliness?



Holidays trigger tough emotions

You can start by learning what emotions are normal when facing the holidays without your loved one. “If you’re feeling overwhelmed as this holiday season approaches, that’s very normal,” advised psychologist Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge, whose husband died. “You’re probably wondering how you’re going to handle this and are unsure of what course to take. I want to assure you that you can get through these holidays, and hopefully you can even find moments of joy.”

When you know what to expect, you won’t feel helpless as holiday events trigger unexpected emotions. Make a point to spend time talking with people who have experienced a past loss and have already been through a holiday season without their loved one. They can help you have an idea of typical emotions and emotional triggers to expect. These people can also provide much-needed comfort and support.

This is a good start. So where can you find out what emotions to expect over the holidays, how to create a healthy plan and how to communicate with family and friends these coming weeks?

“Surviving the Holidays” seminar on Sunday, December 14

A GriefShare Surviving the Holidays seminar, held Sunday, December 14 at the Library at Monroe UMC, 2:30-4:30 pm, offers practical, actionable strategies for making it through the holiday season. At this two-hour seminar, you’ll view a video featuring advice from people in grief who’ve faced the holidays after their loss. You’ll hear insights from respected Christian counselors, pastors, and psychologists. You’ll receive a Holiday Survival Guide with practical strategies, encouraging words, helpful exercises, Q/As, and journaling ideas for daily survival through the holiday season. You’ll meet other grieving people who understand what you’re going through. They won’t judge you or force you to share but will accept you and will offer comfort and support.

Your holiday season won’t be easy; your emotions may ambush you and suck you under at times. But you can choose to walk through this season in a way that honors your loved one and puts you on the path of health and healing.

To register or find out more about GriefShare Surviving the Holidays, call the Church Office at 513.539.7290 or email MonroeOHUMC@gmail.com.



December Birthdays

1 – Steve McDonough
3 – Shelley Copeland
8 – Christina McElfresh
10 – David Sanvee
11 – John Osterman
20 – Paula Pierce
21 – Richard Fohl
22 – Rhonda Finley
23 – Sheilia Holbrock
24 – Mike Bresnahan
25 – Jeanne Berry
30 – Stan Seagle

December Anniversaries

1 – John & Pam Routson **(52 years)**
12 – Rick & Karen Gardner
21 – Rob & Pam Kilburn **(51 years)**
29 – Don & Sharon Warmoth

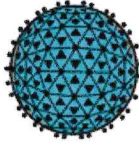
(Due to the Holidays)
The Deadline for the
January Newsletter
is
Sunday, December 14th



Christmas Eve Services

4:30pm
Christmas Eve for Families:
Carols, Candlelight & Pageant

7:00pm
Christmas Eve Traditions:
Carols, Music &
Candlelight

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	1 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	2 10:00am –12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	3 11:00am –12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	4	5 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	6  9:00am –11:00am Pancakes with Santa/AH
7  Holy Communion 12:15pm Church Potluck 4:30pm –9:00pm Emmaus Gathering/AH	8 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	9 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 10:30am –1:30pm Sewing Group Luncheon/AH	10 11:00am –12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	11 1:00pm UMW Meeting/AH	12 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	13 David Hall/AH
14  9:30am Children's Christmas Play 2:30pm –4:30pm Griefshare/Library	15 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	16 10:00am –12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 1:00pm Finance Committee/AH	17 11:00am –12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	18 7:00pm Trustees/Library	19 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	20
21 	22 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH	23 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	24  4:30pm Family Service: Carols, Candlelight & Pageant/AH 7:00pm Christmas Eve Traditions: Carols, Music & Candlelight	25  Church Office Closed	26 Church Office Closed	27 10:00am –4:00pm Norma Reed/AH
28	29 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH	30 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	31  New Year's Eve	1  Church Office Closed	2 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	3

A Christmas Wish List for Monroe UMC



In the life of every church, needs arise for equipment, materials, and other supplies to help support the ministry and life of the congregation. We'd like to take the opportunity to share some of these in the form of a "Christmas Wish List."

The items are listed below with quantity and cost. If you'd like to give that gift (or toward that gift), just fill in the form below and drop it in the offering or bring it to the church office (PO Box 310, Monroe, OH 45050).

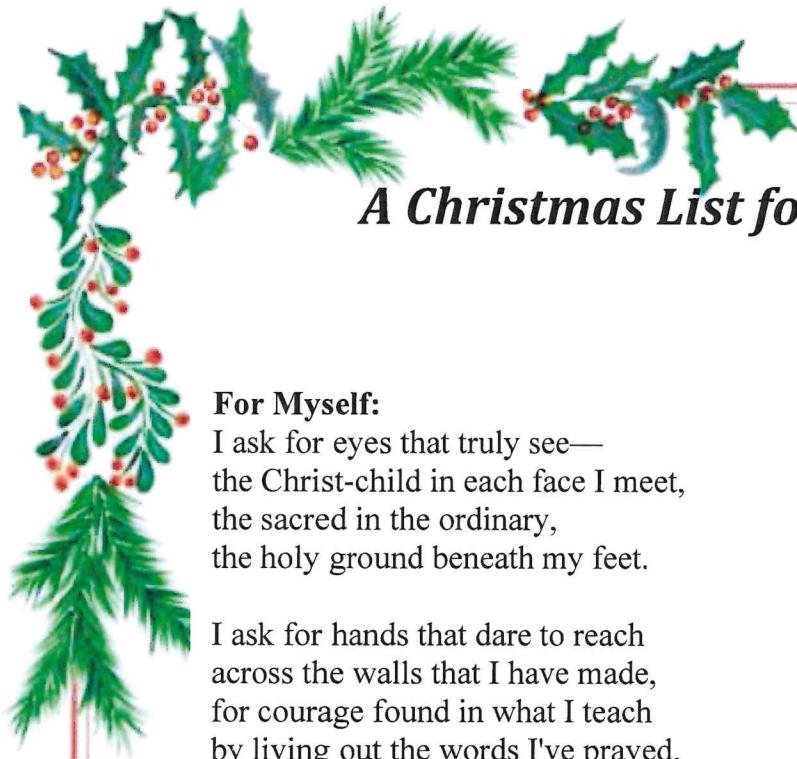
Be sure your method of payment clearly indicates what the item is.

Thank you for helping the work of Jesus Christ continue through our congregation in 2026 as you have in 2025 and years past! You are blessing lives and making a difference!

Instructions: On the list below, check the box you'd like to provide or contribute toward and then write an amount at the line on the right. Fill in the contact information below and return the list to the office or to the Offering. Thank you for your gifts! Direct questions to Pastor Jeff.

Item Description	Quantity	Cost each	Amount
Atchley Hall			
☐ Worship banner set	4	\$170 each	\$: _____
☐ Reversible altar table runners	2	\$120 each	\$: _____
☐ Projector cage w/installation	1	\$1800+up to \$1320	\$: _____
☐ Tripod microphone stand	5	\$60	\$: _____
☐ Headset microphone	1	\$230	\$: _____
Chancel Choir			
☐ Choral Music books	23	\$9 to \$20	\$: _____
Youth Ministry			
☐ High-top table w/ 2 stools	2	\$100	\$: _____
Building & Maintenance			
☐ Carpet cleaning – Sanctuary		Estimate: \$1,000	\$: _____
☐ Carpet cleaning – Atchley Hall		Estimate: \$1,000	\$: _____
☐ Security System update		Estimate: \$4,000+	\$: _____
☐ Tool kit for church		Estimate: \$100-\$900	\$: _____
Media			
☐ Website sponsor	1 month	\$19	\$: _____
☐ Website sponsor	12 months	\$228	\$: _____
☐ Livestream sponsor	1 month	\$41	\$: _____
☐ Livestream sponsor	12 months	\$490	\$: _____
☐ Church management program	1 month	\$72	\$: _____
☐ EasyWorship 7 presenter	1 month	\$26.50	\$: _____
☐ EasyWorship 7 presenter	1 month	\$280	\$: _____
☐ Updated media computer (AH/Sanct.) 2		\$1,470	\$: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____



A Christmas List for the Faithful

For Myself:

I ask for eyes that truly see—
the Christ-child in each face I meet,
the sacred in the ordinary,
the holy ground beneath my feet.

I ask for hands that dare to reach
across the walls that I have made,
for courage found in what I teach
by living out the words I've prayed.

I ask for heart enough to hold
both joy and sorrow, mine and theirs,
to welcome in both young and old,
to bear my neighbor's burdens, cares.

For the Church:

We ask to be the Body, whole—
not fractured by our fear or pride,
but unified in common goal:
to walk as Jesus walked, our guide.

We ask for prophetic voice to speak
when silence serves injustice well,
for strength to stand beside the weak,
for love that breaks through every shell.

We ask to be a house of prayer
where every weary soul finds rest,
where mercy flows and people care,
where stranger and beloved are blessed.

For the World:

We ask that weapons turn to plows,
that hatred's grip would finally cease,
that nations keep their sacred vows
and children everywhere know peace.

We ask that none should hunger more,
that none should sleep without a home,
that we might open every door
to those who wander and who roam.

We ask what seems impossible—
yet this is what the Christ-child brings:
Emmanuel, God-with-us still,
transforming everything.

*This is our grown-up Christmas prayer:
That we become the gift we seek,
That love would answer our despair,
That we would comfort those who weep.*

*For in the manger long ago,
God showed us how it all begins—
Not with the powerful's grand show,
But with Love entering in.*

MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
206 East Avenue, PO Box 310
Monroe, OH 45050

REQUESTED RETURN SERVICE

Mission Statement:

*Shining the light on the hill by connecting with Jesus Christ,
connecting with each other and connecting with the world.*



MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Phone: 513.539.7290

E-mail: monroeumc@cinci.rr.com

Website: www.monroeumc.org

Monroe UMC Staff

Rev. Jeff Motter, Senior Pastor: reviamotter@gmail.com

Edna Miller, Office Manager: monroeumc@cinci.rr.com

Gina Craft, Children's Ministries: gmatcraft@gmail.com

Larry Daniel, Choir Director

Melanie Flower, Organist

Linda Larkin, Nursery Attendant

Arlene Horton, Treasurer

Jerry & Anne Lapham,
Financial Sec'y

MINISTERS: CONGREGATION

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 9:00AM-4:30PM



FACEBOOK: *Monroe United Methodist Church*



C/*MonroeUnitedMethodist*



TWITTER: @MonroeUMC

