

Currents

Newsletter of University Lutheran Church, December 2025

Christmas Worship

Christmas Eve, 12/24 6:30 pm

Christmas 1, 12/28, 10 am

Christmas 2, 1/4, 10 am

University Lutheran Church
110 Garfield Ave
(on campus, next to Hibbard)



 UNIVERSITY
LUTHERAN
at the Ecumenical Religious Center

110 Garfield Ave, Eau Claire, WI
(715) 834-8026
office@universitylutheran.org



PASTOR LETTER

Vision event report

In October the congregation gathered to think about our ministry– what we are called to do at this time, and how to best achieve those goals.

The relationships we have with campus, students, and Newman Parish were highlighted as unique opportunities and strengths of our ministry.

The focus areas that were prioritized by the group as a whole are:

1. Justice: standing up for LGBTQIA+ and immigrants, specifically, and against Christian Nationalism
2. Relationship building among ourselves and students through coffee hour and other fellowship times
3. Large group outreach and service projects, like Ray of Life
4. Learn & Grow education classes

The good news is, we already have ministries that can support these commitments. However, there are not people in these ministries right now! Will you consider how your gifts might best suit our mission, and whether you are able to commit to a project or process as we live into these great ideas? We already have the passion for this work– we will need leadership to make it happen. When you are ready to volunteer, please contact a council member, and we'll go from there!

You can see the full report here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rFV8CGvfyhiDsigB3V1Q8jeQgmrKR4W9/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110547636855783993053&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Changes in Pastor Lori's schedule

Thank you for all the ways you support this ministry at ULC. I really love being your pastor, and appreciate being able to use my God-given gifts as a pastor here. You have been incredibly flexible and supportive over the past 3 years as I have navigated caring for elderly parents who lived far away, and as I have switched to working part-time.

Two things are happening in 2026 that are requiring another change. The cost of medical insurance is increasing for everyone, and Portico is no exception. Also, the synod guidelines have been reorganized to calculate ministry beyond 25 years (I had formerly been paid 80% of 25 years' experience, though I have been ordained for over 30 years.) This means a big jump in salary expectations according to the synod guidelines.

This perfect storm is havoc on our budget, paired with a continuing decrease in active participants in our ministry. Consequently, two changes will take effect in 2026: I will shift from 80% to 75% work time, while receiving both a salary increase and my preferred insurance option (THANK YOU!!!); and we have a small group working on developing traditional fundraising options for campus ministries, which we have not utilized previously. We are still figuring out the shape of 75%, but likely I will be gone much of the summer and working full time hours during the semester.

Please believe me– **I love being your pastor and the ministry we do here!!** None of these changes are detrimental to me, and we need to plan ahead for a sustainable future. I appreciate the council's process and conversation around these shifts, which feel like a faithful response to our reality and a good way to move forward. When we have details about my on and off time, we'll let you know!

Pastor Lori

BISHOP HALOM'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: WHEN GOD SHOWS UP



As we approach the season of Christmas that so many of us adore, I'd like to address a few churchy words that theologians like to use and sound impressive when using them. The first word is *incarnation* and the second is *Emmanuel*.

If your church uses the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), you will again hear the passage from the first chapter of John on Christmas Day. The passage famously concludes in verse 14 with the words, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us..." This verse speaks directly to the concept of

incarnation. In other words, it speaks to a God who literally takes on human flesh and enters this world in the form of baby Jesus. It's in stark contrast to what some believe and experience - a God who exists far away, only to look down on us from God's heavenly throne. Instead, the incarnate God speaks to a God who is willing to take on the human experience with all the joys and sorrows that come with it. One can readily see that Jesus did indeed make his way through the human experience. He felt joy. He felt pain. His eyes teared up. And even if I can't recall a story when he laughed, I gotta believe that he really did!

Another passage found in the Christmas season comes from the gospel of Matthew, which references Isaiah 7:14: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" One of the most important lessons I ever learned in seminary was in a pastoral care class. I had hoped to learn what to say, especially to someone hurting or grieving. What I learned was much more important. Instead of learning what to say, I was taught to show up - to be present. As time passes, few will remember what I say, but will remember that I was there. That's precisely why the name *Emmanuel* means so much to me. It's a constant reminder that God is always with us. Consider the final words in the gospel of Matthew: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) Presence matters because God embodies it and teaches it.

Christmas is known for its gift giving nature. We share gifts with one another to reveal our love for them. This year, I hope that regardless of the quantity or quality of the wrapped presents that lay under the tree, you will recognize the gift of presence. Not only the presence of your loved ones, but particularly the presence of God. So many of you will grieve as you experience the lack of presence from a loved one due to death or distance. My heart grieves with you. My hope lies in a God who provides and will gift you all with someone who will be present with you in some way at some time. If nothing else, remember God's presence as you receive the body and blood of Christ in the worship services that you attend, for that's yet another way in which God shows up.

Fellow disciples, Merry Christmas to you all and may the presence of God incarnate, Emmanuel, embrace you in such a way that brings warmth to your heart!

Bishop Martin



Wed, Dec. 3, 5:30 pm, Young Adults in Global Mission at worship,
Holden Evening Prayer, followed by soup and sandwich

Sunday, Dec. 7, 10:00 am Worship

Annual Budget Meeting, 11:15 am, in person and on Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2828532087>

Wed, Dec 10 Potluck! This will be our last meal and Wednesday worship for the semester. Please bring a dish to share as we wrap up fall and send our students into finals and winter break. 5:30 pm worship, Holden Evening Prayer, supper to follow

Sun, Dec. 14, 10:00 am Worship, Graduation Blessing

Samara Gries, Megan Eilers, Danny Rupert, Rachel Thompson

Mon, Dec. 15 - Thurs, Dec. 18 Finals Week Hospitality

Meals served Mon-Thurs, 11 am - 1:30 pm

Tue, Dec. 16 , 4:30 pm, Council meeting, in person and on Zoom

Mon, Dec. 22, 5:00 pm

Vigil for people who have died of homelessness, Wilson Park

Wed, Dec. 24, 6:30 pm, Christmas Eve Worship

Carols, Candles, and Communion

Sun, Dec. 28, 10:00 am

Christmas (season) worship service

CAMPUS MINISTRY



Transgender Day of Remembrance Service on November 20 went very well and was well attended at the Dakota Ballroom. The speakers, names, music, and litanies came together for a powerful service, reminding us of the importance of our work in advocating for safety and human rights for transgender and nonbinary people. This is a great thing we do in collaboration with the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center on campus!



MINISTRY



FINALS WEEK HOSPITALITY

MON-THU, DEC 15-18

Meals served 11 am - 1:30 pm

To sign up for food and hosting options, click on this link:
[Newman & ULC Volunteers: December 2025 Final Exams Hospitality](#)

LEARN & GROW

Weekly Advent Devotional

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/IOKNyUuaUFvDbKaOvvXvuz4XVqkxBEI5_?usp=sharing



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

SUMUD is the ELCA's response to occupation and injustice in Palestine and Israel. Each year they provide resources for Advent (and Lenten) devotions. While we won't be meeting together for this, the above link includes several items prepared by SUMUD and Christians in Palestine, that we might learn more about the work of the church and the reality of life there for Christians. There are 4 devotions, an online children's book, a botanical guide, and a short article on the impact of American Christian voices on the situation in Palestine.

General information about SUMUD is here:

<https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/sumud>

JOYFULLY SERVE



Thank you to everyone who has helped with Wednesday meals this semester. Both the food and the conversations at dinner have been wonderful! Remember that the last Wednesday of the semester – December 10 – is a potluck. Please come and help send our students into finals week well-fed.

We will also start the spring semester meals with another potluck on January 28. Watch the announcements and January newsletter for suggested menus and special plans for Lent.

- Wendy Kinderman

Family Promise GIFT PROJECT

For the past 14 years, University Lutheran Church and Newman Parish have partnered with the Family Promise of the Chippewa Valley/Beacon House to distribute donated Christmas toys and gifts to families who are unhoused and low-income families in the Chippewa Valley. Parents/Guardians will “shop” for the toys and gifts for their kids on three dates in December.

You can help by:

Send a monetary donation

Family Promise of the Chippewa Valley
309 E. Lake Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701
Toy and Gift Project in the memo line

Shop for a gift and place in donation box

A box will be available for toy donations at the
ERC from November 1-December 7.

Volunteer

Make an online donation to Family Promise

Purchase from the wishlist



BEACON HOUSE



**Thanks to University Lutheran
and Newman parishes, the
Beacon House supply room is
overflowing!**

We delivered at least four different car loads of supplies to the families over the past two weeks of October. Your generosity was remarkable.

Family Promise (Beacon House) is so grateful for all of the supply donations for the unhoused for the coming fall and winter season.

In gratitude,
Sara Bryan and Lou Hoeschen

**BEACON HOUSE
SERVING DATES IN 2026**

Jan 29-31

May 7-9

Sept 24-26

Nov 19-21



EVENTS

December

Dec 3	5:30 PM	Young Adults in Global Mission at worship, soup & sandwich to follow
Dec 7	11:15 AM	Annual Budget Meeting, in person and on Zoom
Dec 7	2:00 & 5:30 PM	Holiday Concert at Pablo
Dec 10	5:30 PM	Last Wednesday worship of the semester, potluck
Dec 14	10:00 AM	Worship, graduation blessing
Dec 15-18	11:00 AM-1:30 PM	Finals Week Hospitality, Meals served Mon-Thurs
Dec 16	4:30 PM	ULC Council Meeting
Dec 22	5:00 PM	Vigil for people who have died of homelessness, Wilson Park
Dec 24	6:30 PM	Christmas Eve Worship

January

Jan 13	3:00 PM	Deadline to submit items for Feb newsletter
Jan 26		Spring 2026 classes begin
Jan 28	5:30 PM	Wednesday worship & meal resumes

The January newsletter will be published in mid-January

See our [calendar](#) for more ministry and event information

Here is a link to visit all campus-wide events:
<https://calendar.uwec.edu/all/groups/Campus-wide>



ULC Ministry Contacts

Gracefully Welcome

Joyfully Serve, Co-Chairs

Carol Rudd

715-456-1936

cjrudd52@gmail.com

Wendy Kinderman

715-456-9649

wendykinderman@hotmail.com

Learn & Grow, Dr. Kate Hale Wilson, Chair

715-829-8620

kate_hale@me.com

Thankfully Worship, Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones

JONAH ULC Core Team, Elecia Oleson, Chair

715-579-6712

olesones98@gmail.com

ULC Staff Contacts

Rev. Dr. Lori Ruge-Jones, Pastor

715-834-8026

pastor@universitylutheran.org

Joanne Erickson, Parish Assistant

715-834-8026

office@universitylutheran.org

Andrea Gapko, Parish Administrator

608-886-3148

gapkoam@uwec.edu

Council Contacts

Cindy Rasmussen, Council President

715-271-0727

cindyjhr@gmail.com

Sara Bryan, Council Secretary

715-829-1885

sarakdb808@gmail.com

Sue Diel, Financial Secretary

715-210-8896

sjdiel720@yahoo.com

Brad Bishop

715-651-3072

bradandsarabishop@gmail.com

Dan Behnke

715-697-9543

danbehnke@gmail.com

Elizabeth Packer

218-349-3793

ecpack304@gmail.com

Dr. Kate Hale Wilson

715-829-8620

kate_hale@me.com

Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones

715-834-8026

pastor@universitylutheran.org



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