

December  
2024

# The Samaritan

## Worship Themes

December 1 - 1st  
Sunday in Advent /  
Communion / "Be  
Alert for the  
Unexpected"

December 8 - 2nd  
Sunday in Advent /  
Family Advent  
Worship / "Be Refined"

December 15 - 3rd  
Sunday in Advent /  
"Be Joyful"

December 22 - 4th  
Sunday in Advent /  
"Be Filled"

December 24 -  
Christmas Eve / "Be  
Born"

December 29 - "The  
Heart of Christmas"



## The Coming of God

By Ann Weems

**Our God is the One who comes to us  
in a burning bush,  
in an angel's song,  
in a newborn child.**

**Our God is the One who cannot be found  
locked in the church,  
not even in the sanctuary.**

**Our God will be where God will be  
with no constraints,  
no predictability.**

**Our God lives here our God lives,  
and destruction has no power  
and even death cannot stop  
the living.**

**Our God will be born where God will be born,  
but there is no place to look for the One who comes to us.**

**When God is ready  
God will come**

**even to a godforsaken place  
like a stable in Bethlehem.**

**Watch . . .**

**for you know not when  
God comes.**

**Watch, that you might be found  
whenever  
wherever  
God comes.**

## OUR STAFF

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# Pastor's Page

The Advent/Christmas season is here! Our staff and volunteer leadership are preparing a beautiful season of worship, music, and service opportunities for us. I'm excited to share this first holiday season with all of you.



During the first three weeks of November, we noticed an increase in worship attendance to approximately 120 people each week. This is up 22% from last year's November participation. As we began this appointment, I shared with our Staff Parish and Church Council teams that I thought our first worship goal was to reach 100 people consistently each week. So far in November we are ahead of that benchmark. That's great news!

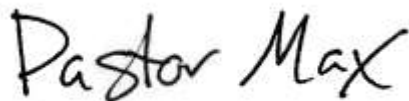
As our participation increases, the energy level is rising in the congregation. We received seven new adult members and celebrated a baptism in November. In case you missed this Sunday, you'll find pictures by Dandy Lewis in this issue of the Samaritan. New people are continuing to visit and some members who have not been back much since the pandemic are also returning. I will continue to offer new member classes periodically in the new year as people explore Good Samaritan as a potential church home.

Historically our special Advent Services of Hanging of the Greens and Lessons and Carols are very well attended. We have added an additional family service on December 8 that will be interactive and help us prepare for Christmas Eve. Throughout December, it's a great time to invite your kids, grandkids, neighbors and friends who may be looking for a church home.

We have so much to offer our community and world as we share the peace, hope, love, and joy of Christ in this special time of year. Thanks to all of you for your on-going support of all we do to make these ministries possible.

I wish you and yours peace and joy this sacred time of year.

Warm regards,



Pastor Max

\*Please note that Pastor Max will be on vacation 12/25-1/1. Pastor Jim will be preaching on 12/26 and on-call for pastoral emergencies at 763-300-9626.\*

# New Members

## A Joyous Day!

We had the joy of welcoming several new members to Good Samaritan during worship on Sunday, November 17.

- Abby and Jack Graber
- Linda Hammersten
- Sharon and Tom Kraus
- Kayla, Ryan and Ava Trapp



Jack & Abby Graber



Linda Hammersten, Kayla & Ryan Trapp, Tom & Sharon Kraus

Congratulations to the Trapp family on Ava's baptism on November 17 as well.



Sanctuary photos by Dandy Lewis

## Take Note

### Book Club Holiday Luncheon

Please join us for our Holiday Luncheon on Thursday, December 12 at 1:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Everyone is asked to bring a salad or dessert and a Christmas reading, poem, etc. to share with the group. Questions: Contact Vicki Dunn, [victoria.dunn@q.com](mailto:victoria.dunn@q.com).

### 2024 Offerings

Due to potential holiday mail delays and best practices for year-end accounting, please mail any 2024 offerings to Good Samaritan by December 10 so we may receive them by December 15.

# Worship

## *Advent & Christmas*

at Good Samaritan

### *Hanging of the Greens*

Sunday, December 1 @ 4:00 p.m.

Join us for this wonderful, long-standing tradition at Good Samaritan as we join together to decorate our sanctuary for the Christmas season while singing seasonal carols in a family-friendly service. During the service, we will collect gifts for infants through 8-year-olds to donate to STEP (St. Louis Park Emergency Program). Target gift cards in amounts \$5 to \$25 will be collected as well. Bring items to the service or contact Jan at [jan@good.org](mailto:jan@good.org). We'll conclude our evening with fellowship time and cookies!



Music and carol leadership will be provided during the service by our intergenerational Orcha-band. Anyone (young or old) who plays a string or wind instrument is invited to join the Orcha-band. Pick up the music ahead of time from the reception area by the Church Office. We will re-hearse December 1 at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. It's great fun! Contact Sarah at [skumagai@comcast.net](mailto:skumagai@comcast.net) with questions.

### *Blue Christmas*

Throughout Advent & Christmas



The Advent/Christmas season may carry grief, heartache, or struggle amidst activity, joy, and celebration. Each week in December during our Sunday services, special ornaments will be available to add to our Blue Christmas Tree. You may write the name of "something blue" on each ornament as a prayer to add to our community tree.

### *Family Advent Worship*

Sunday, December 8 @ 10:00 a.m.

"Pathways to Peace"

The way to peace is not always easy. The road is often rough and winding. We make the road smoother as we travel together. During this service, we will create a variety of doves for our Christmas Eve service which will feature Tomie dePaola's book, *Birds of Bethlehem*. All ages are invited to participate in the no-rehearsal pageant. Arrive at 9:30 a.m. to receive quick instruction and a costume.



# Worship

## *Lessons & Carols*

Sunday, December 15 @ 4:00 p.m.



As we prepare our hearts for the Christmas season, we warmly invite you to join us for a beautiful evening of Lessons & Carols on Sunday, December 15 at 4:00 p.m. This beloved service will feature three of our music ensembles - the Chancel Choir, the Chancel Chimes, and Homeward Bound band - as well as readings of the Nine Lessons and singing of traditional carols. Following the service, we'll gather for a festive reception to share in the joy of the season and fellowship with one another. Bring your loved ones, invite your friends, and let's celebrate together the hope and joy that Christmas brings! We look forward to seeing you there!

## *Online Christmas Eve Worship*

Tuesday, December 24 @ 12:00 noon or later

Experience Christmas Eve Worship in the time and place that works best for you. This is a unique, meditative service, intentionally created for the online space. Story, message, music, poetry, and peaceful images of the season are woven into an intimate time of worship. The link will be available on our website - good.org.



Photo: Christian Nielsen

## *Family Christmas Eve Worship*

Tuesday, December 24 @ 4:00 p.m.



The birds are abuzz with news of strange happenings! Come join us for an interactive bird's eye view of the Nativity. This Family Service for all ages features the book *Birds of Bethlehem* by Tomie dePaola, and music by our band, *Homeward Bound*.

## *Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship*

Tuesday, December 24 @ 9:00 p.m.

Come welcome the joy and wonder of Christmas Eve with the beauty of candlelight, favorite Christmas hymns, the Chancel Choir, and a string quartet. We will celebrate Holy Communion as we gather in hope on this special night.



Photo: Dandy Lewis

# Congregational Care

## Inadequate Words

The Word was first,  
the Word present to God,  
God present to the Word.  
The Word was God,  
in readiness for God from day one.  
Everything was created through him;  
nothing - not one thing! -  
came into being without him.  
What came into existence was Life,  
and the Life was Light to live by.  
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;  
the darkness couldn't put it out.

~ John 1:1-5 MSG

The Gospel according to John opens as an epic novel would, full of imagery and meaning and veiled references. For example, these opening lines parallel the opening words of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, where God speaks a Word and life happens: land – plants – animals – and ultimately humans. Both begin with the creation of life and light; both reflect a benevolent God who is present with God's creation; both are speaking salvation into existence. "Life" is a reoccurring description in John's Gospel, used 42 times – as many times as all other Gospel references combined. What is John trying to emphasize? Life to John is not merely another word for existence, but rather a reflection of the ultimate quality and quantity of life intended by God. Life is eternal; life is to be abundant; life is the very life of God.

It is difficult to translate this concept with a mere word on a page. *The Message* version of the Bible attempts to convey this special quality by capitalizing both Life and Light. I like to take things even further; I tell people it isn't just ... life ... existence ... but rather it is ... *Life!* (capital-L-italicized-exclamation-point life) ... which Christ comes to share with us! And Jesus is the *Light!* of the world, not just the absence as in darkness but light as revelation, inspiration, colorization. And so, read the opening to John again beyond the inadequate words which are printed on the page; read it with the vitality with which it was intended. John wants to tell us more than the fact that Jesus was born; John tells us that the very essence of God, which created everything, was again coming to earth to bring *Life!* and *Light!* to all!

Prayer: *O Holy One of Bethlehem, to our world filled with spiritual darkness you came to bring our souls Life! Your Light! reaches the deepest recesses of my soul and nothing can stop it from bringing the essence of God to me. Help me to fully welcome this Life! into my essence and forever follow your Light! Emmanuel, be incarnate in me in this Advent season which is before us. Amen.*

Pastor Jim Beard  
(he/him)

Director of  
Congregational Care

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# Children, Youth and Family Ministries

## A Story We Know by Heart

As we gear up for another lovely Christmastide, think of your favorite moments in this amazing story. Is it when Mary visits Elizabeth and the baby in Elizabeth's womb jumps for joy? Or when the innkeeper shows extravagant hospitality to the holy family and allows them to stay even though the inn had no room? Maybe it is when the angelic host appears to the shepherds and brings them good tidings of great joy? Perhaps it is the wise ones from the East bringing gifts fit for royalty. We all seem to have a favorite passage. We have heard the story over and over; it has been embedded into our hearts and minds.



Photo: Jim Beard



Jan M. Russell (she/her)  
Director of Children, Youth  
& Family Ministries

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One of my favorite things about my job is introducing this story to people who have never heard it before - our children. We as a community get the chance to introduce one of our favorite stories to our youngest members. What do we want to make sure they understand about this story? Our God has a lived human experience? Joy can be found in family and community? Hospitality is a bedrock value? Sharing the news of Jesus to those who have not heard? Extravagant generosity to people we have not met yet is in our DNA?

As we make our way through this wondrous, hectic, beautiful time of year, take a moment to remember your favorite part of the story, and play it out to those around you.

I am praying for you and your family.

Grace and Peace,

Jan



ASP Sub Sandwich  
Fundraiser coming  
in January!



Vacation Bible Camp  
June 23-27, 2025



Dates for  
2025 Mission Trip  
July 12-20, 2025

# Missions

## A Busy November!

The Missions Team was involved in many projects during the month.

We collected furniture and other household items for a second Iranian teacher who has recently arrived at Stonebridge School to teach 4th grade, Farnaz Shateri. We delivered the items and helped her set up her apartment. She was delighted and very thankful! Farnaz and Ni-yousha, the first teacher we helped, came to pack at Feed My Starving Children, loved the experience, and are excited to offer field trips to Stonebridge students. Plans are in the works to bring the 6th graders in January!

Good Samaritans and friends who volunteered at Feed My Starving Children packed 21 boxes of meals, part of a total production of 86 boxes and 18,576 meals.

We supported VEAP's Golden Gala 2024 with two baby gift baskets that included lovely handmade items by a couple of our members.



Quilt by Sue Shaw  
Knitted items by Janet VanBenthuisen

In 2001 our congregation collected money to bring Said Ahmed's family from Cairo, Egypt. His daughter Manal Mohamed, now 36, contacted us a couple of months ago and thanked us so much for all we did for their family. She also said she knew we did a lot to help people, and felt she was in a position through her job at WellShare International to help us with that work. WellShare offers vaccination clinics. On November 14 they held a free vaccination clinic for students, their families, and the faculty of Stonebridge School. Good Samaritan collected coats and shoes to give to families as an incentive to come for the vaccinations. There are more vaccination clinics coming to be held at Stonebridge and with education and incentive gift cards, they hope the families will gain trust and overcome their fear of vaccinations. WellShare also is planning to offer some free after-school programming for the students at the school soon and will apply for a grant to provide busing so more students can participate. Stonebridge is helping WellShare to connect and offer services to other area schools.

Good Samaritans drove for Edina Meals on Wheels, part of the larger Twin Cities program that brings nearly 1.8 million meals to over 10,000 people.

The Ecuadorian family we have been helping has found housing and we are beginning to collect the items they need, especially winter gear.

**(cont'd)**





# Missions

Your Missions Team has purposefully dispersed most of the money you've entrusted to us. We know many of you volunteer to help these important programs and for that we also thank you. Here are the four categories that we concentrate on and the donations we recently made:

- Education
  - \$3,050 to OC Ministries for the Ormsby School in Baiwalla, Sierra Leone
  - \$1,000 to the Wesley Foundation for work on the University of Minnesota Campus
  - \$500 for an educational scholarship through the Camphor Memorial Fund
- Food Security
  - \$2,000 to Feed My Starving Children
  - \$1,000 to Meals on Wheels.
- Housing
  - \$500 to Hearts and Hammers
  - \$1,000 to Beacon Interfaith Collaborative
- Relief
  - \$600 to UMCOR (United Methodists Committee on Relief) for Hurricane Helene Relief, as stipulated by donors, with the remaining \$225 going to Relief for Ukraine.

The Missions Team invites all of us to be generous with others this holiday season by supporting these areas with your Christmas Offering. Watch for details in the mail. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

~ JoAnn Knutson, Pat Deckas Becerra, Brian Boysen



Serving  
Opportunity

Volunteer at the Chanhassen site  
(18932 Lake Dr E) for food packing:

Wednesday, December 11 - 9:30-11:15 a.m.  
Friday, December 20 - 7:15-8:45 p.m.

Sign up with Jane Heimerl at  
jane.heimerl@yahoo.com  
by two days ahead. Space is limited!

## Do You Remember our SaniNaps Project with Huldah?



Many women at Good Sam worked for months several years ago sewing SaniNaps (cloth menstrual pads) because of Huldah Hiltley. Since feminine products are basically non-existent in many

parts of Africa, girls stay home from school when they have their periods. After we met weekly to sew hundreds of SaniNaps that can be reused over and over, Huldah took them to Kenya. You'll be happy to know that Huldah was just elected State Representative for District 38A (Osseo and Brooklyn Center) and became the first Kenyan-born person elected in the U.S. to a state legislature! Huldah ran on the Democratic Farmer-Labor ticket and won by getting almost 65% of the vote!

~ Pat Deckas Becerra

## Reconciling News



On November 7, more than 80 persons participated in a webinar featuring Ellie Krug sponsored by Minnesota Reconciling Congregations. Good Samaritan hosted a gathering to watch and discuss "Welcoming LGBTQ+ Congregants". A recording

of the webinar is available by either completing the form on the MRC website [www.mnrcumc.org/1893-2/](http://www.mnrcumc.org/1893-2/) or sending an email to [minnesotareconciling@gmail.com](mailto:minnesotareconciling@gmail.com) that includes your name, church, and if lay or clergy.

# The Good Samaritan Foundation

## A Good Year



Thanks to the generosity of Good Samaritan members and friends past and present, good investment decisions by the Investment Committee, and judicious management of the funds by the Finance Committee, the Trustees and the Foundation Board, it has been a good year for The Foundation.

Here's a quick review:

The Trustees are in the midst of planning repair and maintenance projects but as of mid-November have not requested any funds from The Cornerstone Fund in 2024. The Finance Committee requested half of their annual draw (\$7500) in June and requested the second half in late November.

The fourth quarter meeting of The Good Samaritan Foundation Board was held on November 14. At that meeting the Board of Directors awarded the final grants of 2024 from The Outreach Fund. In total, \$13,900 was awarded in 2024. The awards for 2024 were as follows:

- Richard Ormsby School, Sierra Leone, Home Ec Lab, \$3000 - Kitchen appliances, gadgets, dishes, etc. – Global giving
- CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio), \$4000 – Teen Tech Center and Canasta Familiar Food Distributions – State & Local Metro giving
- Avenues for Youth, \$3000 – Supporting efforts for unhoused youth ages 16 to 24 - Local Metro giving
- Breakthrough Twin Cities, \$3000 – January Saturday Session Career Day for Middle and High School students - Local Metro giving
- UMCOR, \$900 - US Hurricane relief – National giving

Donations to The Foundation are vital to keep Good Samaritan financially strong. The impact of The Foundation is positive from every angle. It is a privilege serve on The Foundation Board of Directors as the Chairperson and to serve with the eight other dedicated members. If you would like to join the Board, please contact me in person or by email: [claudialboysen@gmail.com](mailto:claudialboysen@gmail.com).

## Finance Team

### Finance Update

We are thankful for all our members who have supported Good Samaritan so far this year. As we head into December, our last month of the year, we are a bit short on income, and can use your help if you are able.

- If you have fulfilled your pledge, and are able to give an additional gift, it would be much appreciated.
- If you have a balance on your pledge, please remember to give or let Cindy in the office know if you are not able.

This table reflects our financial state through the end of October.

We need YOU! The Finance Committee has openings for Committee members.

Join our great team: meet some fun people, learn more about the operations of our Church, and feel good about your service. The time commitment is only one to two hours per month.

	Oct Actuals	Oct Plan	Year-to-Date
<b>Income</b>	\$36,841	\$35,763	\$565,543
<b>Expense</b>	\$85,739	\$81,840	\$608,792
<b>Net</b>	(\$48,897)	(\$46,076)	(\$43,350)

# Trustees

## Maintenance Minute

Hello all Good Sam members! I hope everyone is having a good fall and getting ready for the inevitable. Winter!

I just want to share with you a couple of projects that have been done recently at Good Samaritan. The first big project that was completed in the past couple of months



was the outside of the garage getting a fresh coat of paint. It was in pretty rough shape. There was a lot of paint cracking and fading. I pressure washed, patched some holes in the soffit and siding then had few people help with the taping and painting. I'm very grateful and want to thank Joann Knutson,

Mike Olausen, and Brian Boysen for their help to accomplish this task!

Another big project we had done was getting a brand new air conditioner installed for the sanctuary.



We spent over four years dealing with the hail insurance claim and getting multiple bids on doing the repairs from multiple companies, figuring out what route we should take exactly on repairing or replacing the unit and multiple meetings in regards to it. It feels great to finally have it done! The claim from insurance originally said we should change our coil inside the unit and keep using R22 freon. We were made aware from our HVAC project manager that R22 has been being phased out since 2010 by the FDA and it will soon be illegal to have this in the U.S. unless you have a system still running on it built before 2010. The Chair of our Trustees Board, Rick Evans, brought this info

back to the insurance company and they approved us for a brand new unit and upgrading it to the current freon used, R410A. I want to thank Rick for all the time and hard work he put into going back and forth to the insurance company, the Trustees Board, our HVAC project manager and myself to get the best outcome we could have. I also want to thank the crew at Owens companies for their great professional work! Getting this approval for the new system versus just changing the guts out of an already 35-year-old system is a big win for us. The sanctuary now has the most up to date HVAC equipment among the 22 total units we have throughout the building to heat and cool spaces. Three years ago, the heating units were replaced in the Sanctuary due to a cracked heat exchanger as well.

Equipment can break down for many reasons at any time but knowing it was all replaced to along with the sanctuary roof being replaced a year ago, it sure feels great knowing this space should be free of leaks or HVAC issues for many years to come.

Dan Green  
(he/him)

Building Engineer

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**OUR VISION**

INSPIRING  
 Joyful Faith

BUILDING  
 a Loving  
 Community

SERVING  
 Neighbors Near  
 and Far

SUNDAYS

Worship  
 10:00 a.m. (In-person and Online)

Nursery  
 9:45-11:30 a.m. Infants - Age 3

**Children's Sunday School**  
 Held during worship following  
 Children's Time. All are welcome!

WEDNESDAYS

(Nursery care upon request)

6:00 p.m.

- Chancel Chimes Rehearsal

7:00 p.m.

- Chancel Choir Rehearsal

7:00 p.m.

- Youth Group

GOOD SAMARITAN OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
 Phone (952) 929-0049