

December
2025

The Samaritan

Worship Themes

December 7 - Advent
2 / Communion /
"Prepare the Way"

December 14 - Advent
3 / "Fill the Hungry"

December 21 - Advent
4 / "God With Us"

December 28 -
Christmas 1 / Mary
Ellen Nielsen
preaching

Prayer

And so we take the ragged fragments,

the patches of darkness
that give shape to the light;
the scraps of desires
unslaked or realized;
the memories of spaces
of blessing, of pain.

And so we gather the scattered pieces

the hopes we carry
fractured or whole;
the struggles of birthing
exhausted, elated;
the places of welcome
that bring healing and life.

And so we lay them at the threshold, God;

bid you hold them, bless them, use them;
ask you tend them, mend them,
transform them
to keep us warm,
make us whole,
and send us forth.

from *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*
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OUR STAFF

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Pastor's Page

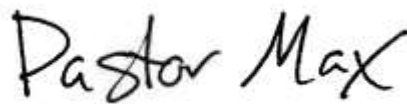
We begin the Advent season of hope, waiting and expectation in a new way this year as we move toward the final merger vote with Aldersgate UMC on December 14. God is doing a new thing among us!

There was an energy of excitement and anticipation as we gathered for worship on November 16 with both bell choirs and the Chancel Choir leading us. This excitement built upon our joy in worship as both bands led us in October to "Praise the Lord, All Ye Bands". In these days so full of screen time and to-do lists ramping up for the holidays, musical reminders from the choir that "It is Well with My Soul" and the resonance of the chimes and bells bring us back into the moment where God is present in community.

As we move from Advent into Christmas, we will experience the Word made flesh and dwelling among us in a new way. We will ring in the new year bringing two cultures together. Our common values of faith lived fully in social justice, love of music, life-long learning, and a commitment to be in ministry with all ages will ground us as we serve our community and world together.

What an exciting time as we anticipate becoming "the new Good Samaritan" in this Advent season! I ask for your continued prayers for the people of both Aldersgate and Good Samaritan, including our leadership and staff, as we continue on this path of hope and expectation in this Holy Season.

Yours together in ministry,



Please note that Pastor Max will be on vacation 12/25-1/2. Mary Ellen Nielsen will be preaching on 12/28 and on call for pastoral emergencies 12/25-12/28 at 612-910-6690. Pastor Linda McCollough of Eden Prairie UMC will be on call 12/29-1/2 at 612-978-2917.



Worship

Advent and Christmas at Good Samaritan

Hanging of the Greens

Sunday, November 30 @ 4:00 p.m.

Help decorate our Sanctuary for the Christmas season while singing seasonal carols in this family-friendly service. Toys for STEP and \$5-\$25 Target gifts cards will be collected. Join the Orchaband to rehearse at 3:00pm. A reception will follow with fellowship and cookies!

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.

Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 14 @ 4:00 p.m.

You are warmly invited to this beloved service featuring the Chancel Choir and the Chancel Chimes, as well as readings of the Nine Lessons and singing of traditional carols. Following the service, we'll gather for a festive reception featuring our Homeward Bound band. Bring your loved ones, invite your friends, and let's celebrate together the hope and joy that Christmas brings!

Family Christmas Eve Worship

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

Join the friendly woodland creatures as they welcome a new beginning. This family service for all ages features the book *All Creation Waits* by Gayle Boss and David G. Klein, and music by our band, Homeward Bound.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship

Wednesday, 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.

Congregational Care



Pastor Jim Beard
(he/him)

Director of
Congregational Care

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Nativity Set 2014. PJBeard

A King is Born

“Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews?
We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth.
We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.” Matthew 2:2 MSG

Matthew’s testimony about Jesus begins with a rock-solid accounting of his ROYALTY. Matthew gives us no commentary on justice, nor tales of the trials of giving birth, nor dialogues between women, nor anything of lower-class accommodations. None of this is from Matthew; Luke will tell us those stories. For Matthew, the important thing is to clearly make the case that Jesus was born AS A KING.

So, Matthew tells the story as a king’s story should be told. Here are his royal roots (a genealogy tracing back through all of Israel’s kings, through King David, and all the way back to father Abraham); here is his divine conception (just like the other kings of the surrounding nations); here are his divine and earthly validations (special stars in the sky, scholars coming to recognize his special role, and current rulers feeling their power being threatened); and here are prophecies fulfilled (four prophecies in the first two chapters alone). This King is born with proper credentials from below and above. This King is born of Joseph, and the story plays itself through the male-dominant lens of its day.

There is no doubt upon reading Matthew that Jesus is born in royal fashion; a very old monarchy is resurfacing, that will take over and save its people. It is too easy for us to blend all the stories of Jesus together. In the process, we miss the purity of how Matthew writes. We miss **the message Matthew is clearly making ... Jesus was born AS A KING!** When Prince Charles and Princess Diana gave birth to a son, William, the world stopped and paid notice. Why? Because at the time, it was believed that this baby would likely one day sit in the seat of power. The only difference is that in Israel at that time, there was **a different family “on the throne” ruling over the people known as the Jews.** The firstborn son of Herod should be the one who takes over the position of king in the future (and Archelaus does – see Matt. 2:21). Matthew is setting the stage for a ROYAL drama to take place.

We need to remember this part of Jesus’ story so as not to reduce his stature to anything less. Jesus is not just a good man, not just a prophet, not just a nice guy who died a horrible death; Jesus was born AS A KING in every sense of the word!

God of glory and majesty, Your Son was the king, though he held no official earthly position with that title. Your Son is the king of us still today. We, too, come and pay him homage as we celebrate his birth. We, too, come and bow before his majesty with reverence and honor. Amen.

Congregational Care



Bible Study Holiday Tea

You are most welcome to join us for the annual Tuesday Bible Study Holiday Tea!

We'll gather for friendly fellowship and festive food on Tuesday, December 2, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room.

All are welcome!

Please RSVP to Lynn Timmer:
timmerlynn@gmail.com

Book Group Holiday Luncheon

The Thursday Afternoon Book Group will have our Holiday Luncheon on Thursday, December 11, at 1:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Please bring a dish (salad, dessert, etc.) and a Christmas reading, poem, or item to share with the group.

Questions: Contact Vicki Dunn (952-930-3431)
victoria.dunn@q.com

Short-Term Course Coming This January



Discover the best ways for YOU to connect with God! This series from Pastor Jim reveals why your friends may get filled by certain elements of worship, but you don't, or why certain music gives others a spiritual high but not you. It doesn't mean you aren't spiritual (or aren't spiritual enough); it probably means you have different types of spirituality. So, are you a Sage, Lover, Mystic, or Prophet? Knowing your spirituality type will help you to know how best to feed your soul! Class registration will open just prior to Christmas. Childcare will be available if needed. Choose the option which works best for you:

Two Extended Sessions after Worship
Sundays, January 25 and February 1 from 11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

One Half-Day Workshop
Saturday, January 31 from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Contact Pastor Jim with questions - jim@good.org or 952-452-9396.

Congregational Care

Storytellers Needed

Pastor Jim is already planning for a special Spiritual Growth series ... FOR LENT! It is entitled "Remember Who You Are." - important for both Aldersgate UMC and Good Samaritan UMC as we journey together into the unknown future. We will be sharing with each other what we are carrying forward from our pasts. Our Judeo-Christian faith, our United Methodist heritage, and our local churches all have critical and meaningful stories which have guided and shaped us along the way.

Pastor Jim needs people from BOTH congregations who are willing to tell a piece of their church's story:

Our Foundations – founding stories of why and how each church began

Our Calling – stories of being sent out into the world

Our Struggles and Trials – stories of difficult times, mistakes, failures, and falling short of our moral ideals as a church

Our Finer Moments – stories of impacting our communities and the world

Our Heroes – stories of people from the church known for their faith, sacrifice, and influence on others' spirituality

Our Evolution – stories of major transitions the church has gone through

If you are willing to be recorded for 5-7 minutes and share a story or two related to one of the above topic areas, please let Pastor Jim know now - jim@good.org. These recordings will need to take place the latter part of January up to Ash Wednesday, February 18.

It is hoped that as many people as possible from both congregations will take advantage of this Lenten series so that deeper levels of understanding and unity can be established. Class registrations will begin mid- to late-January.



Children, Youth and Family Ministries

Continuing from the book study of *The Hopeful Family*
by Ameilia Richardson Dress
Chapter 9 - **“Blessing - Healing the World with Love”**

Here is the best paragraph from this chapter:

“The relationship of adults to children is a sacred one. When we bless a child, we meet them in their deepest longing: to be seen, known and loved. A blessing, even one as simple as “you are a child of God,” reassures kids that they are not a mistake. Further, it signals to them our confidence that they have a power to live into God’s presence in this moment of re-creation.”

Some things to try: *Add an element of blessing to a family routine, bedtime, meal time, or on the way to school by asking your family, “Who would you like to bless today?” To simplify it, you can ask, “Who would you like to send God’s light to today?” or “Who would you like to send love to today?”*

A Blessing

Blessed are you who choose practices of faith, for you will know God’s presence.

Blessed are you who open your heart to a child, for you will love deeply.

Blessed are you whose prayers bubble over, for you will know peace.

Blessed are you who seek calm in the storm, for you will know safe harbor.

Blessed are you, Child of God, for you are beloved.

Hope is love plus courage.

I am praying for you and your family ~ Jan



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

jan@good.org
952-452-9398



It is Advent, leading us to Christmas!
You can pick up this month’s
resource at the Welcome Table in
the Narthex or Jan can email it to
you! Let her know at jan@good.org if
you would like a copy.



ASP Sub Sandwich Fundraiser
coming in January!

Mission Trip Dates
June 20-28, 2026

Missions

What have we been doing?

FOOD SECURITY: Feed My Starving Children – In November, we helped pack 75 boxes of food that translates to 16,200 meals - enough to feed 44 children a daily meal for a year. And Good Samaritan drivers delivered meals to home-bound folks for Edina Meals on Wheels.

In November, we visited Joyce Uptown Food Shelf, and then the following week, we requested food donations. Tony Branch was able to take almost 400 pounds of food and over \$800 in donations to Joyce. *Thank you!*



Education, Housing & Food: Good Samaritan has had a 30-year partnership with Stonebridge World School. Up to a third of the elementary students' families experience homelessness in any one year. With your assistance, the Mission Team helps many of them stay out of homelessness by helping with rent in emergencies, or we help them get back into housing by paying damage deposits. Since families often lose their belongings when they lose housing, with the help of the congregation and the community, we also furnish their apartments and provide things like bedding, towels, dishes, pots and pans, toys, books, and toiletries.

There are 225 students; 80% of them are on SNAP so food is an issue for the families. This month, the Mission Team provided \$1,000 in Aldi gift cards for the school's social worker to give to families in need. We will soon do a GoFundMe project open to the wider community to be able to purchase more gift cards. Watch for a link and spread the word! This will help the families enjoy the upcoming holidays.

RECONCILING: In November, Good Samaritan celebrated our 30th year of being a Reconciling Congregation by learning about how we be-

came reconciling, what it means for families in our church, and reaffirmed our commitment to being an inclusive and welcoming community.

The Reconciling movement is still growing. Good Samaritan supports both the Minnesota and national reconciling organizations. If you are interested in learning more about what is happening, check out the Minnesota Reconciling Committee website, <http://www.mnrcumc.org/>.

Coming Up in December

The annual Christmas offering letter will arrive soon. While the Missions team asks periodically for help through dollars, items, and service during the year, the bulk of funds used to support our outreach comes through the Christmas and Easter offerings. Some of the funds received at these times are sent out immediately, and some are held so we can respond to needs throughout the year. When making a donation for Missions, gifts can be designated to one of the organizations we support or left undesignated to be used 'where needed most'. **Thank you for supporting Good Samaritan's outreach through your prayers, your gifts, and your service.**

Upcoming Feed My Starving Children dates – Wednesday, December 10, 9:30-11:15 a.m., and Friday, December 19, 7:15-8:45 p.m. Sign up with Jane Heimerl at jane.heimerl@yahoo.com.

We will deliver Meals on Wheels on Friday, December 19. Interested in being added to the list of potential drivers or need a different date to participate? Contact Vicki Dunn at victoria.dunn@q.com. 952-930-3431 for more information.

Opportunities to Serve! Are you looking for opportunities to volunteer without having to serve on a committee?! We are looking for you!

From time to time, we need more hands. Helping a family move into new housing, delivering new furniture to a family who has found a new home, organizing our donation shelves, taking items from the donation shelves to an organiza-

Missions

tion, and serving a meal at Simpson Housing Services. These are just a few of the things that need more hands. Are you interested in being on an email list to know when there is a need? Please contact Brian Boysen, Janet VanBenthuisen or JoAnn Knutson to be added to our list of potential "Good Samaritans in Action."

Volunteers are needed to help in the Stonebridge library for 2 - 3 hours a week. Help students find books according to their interests or tutor reading. Just sit by them while they read and help them with words they don't know. Being able to read is so important in life! Contact JoAnn Knutson at 612-240-9372 or joannknutson@hotmail.com. ~ Janet VanBenthuisen

Food Security Highlight: Who Uses Food Shelves?

Good Samaritan supports two local food shelves: VEAP and Joyce Uptown Food Shelf. As well as donating food and dollars, congregation members also volunteer their time at these organizations. As families struggle with rising



food costs, the loss of SNAP benefits through the shut-down, and reduction in benefits, these organizations are be-

coming an even more vital resource for our communities. But the need started growing well before this year.



While VEAP primarily serves Bloomington, Richfield, South Minneapolis, and Edina, and Joyce primarily serves the Uptown area of Minneapolis, they both serve anyone who comes to them in need.

Both VEAP and Joyce use an appointment system for people to come in and shop. For households that are able to make appointments to visit the food shelves, their experience is very much like grocery store shopping with a cart going along the shelves of food and picking out the items they prefer. The number of items from each category of food they can select is based on the size of their household. Currently, both organizations are experiencing higher volume, and wait times for an appointment are three to five weeks out. But if food is needed immediately, they can get emergency bags which are pre-packed.

Over the past few years, the demand for emergency food bags has grown at both organizations. For VEAP, that need grew 118% from 2023 to 2024. At Joyce, the number of emergency bags increased by over 160%. And 2025 will far exceed 2024. The emergency bags include the shelf-stable items we collected and donated in March for VEAP and in November for Joyce, but also a second bag of fresh items, including veggies, fruits, milk, and bread. Both organizations have special emergency bags for people experiencing homelessness with foods that don't require cooking, or that can be made by just adding hot water.

Interesting Fact:

When Joyce buys paper bags, they pay 25¢ per bag, and they need to double-bag. That 50¢ per emergency bag sure eats into food purchasing power. So, bag donations are greatly appreciated!

Whether by appointment or emergency food bags, the people in need come from all walks of life: families, individuals, seniors, and veterans. Many are working, but not making enough to make ends meet. Many have disabilities and/or mental health issues. Some are just in a rough spot and may only visit once or twice. In 2024, the average number of household visits to VEAP was 6.2 times per year. ~Janet VanBenthuisen

Next month: Where does the money and food come from?

The Good Samaritan Foundation

A Good Year

The Board of The Good Samaritan Foundation met for its final meeting of 2025 on November 13. We awarded two grants and are happy to announce that the full amount available from The Outreach Fund, \$14,700, has been awarded for 2025. This is a review of the 2025 grants awarded:



- Oasis For Youth – supports youth in the Edina, Bloomington, and Richfield communities for basic needs of housing, food, transportation, education, and employment. \$3,500.
- Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative – Seeds of Hope/Aster Commons, housing for youth with autism and traumatic brain injury. \$4,000.
- Legado Initiative – Thriving Futures solar project in Ngilai, Kenya. \$3,000
- Joyce Uptown Food Shelf – serving the Uptown area. \$2,500
- Small Sums – a nonprofit that outfits individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability with the required work items needed to start and keep a new job. Based in St. Paul, serving individuals in Minnesota. \$1,700

We are also pleased to report that the Finance Committee drew its second half of the 2025 allotment from The Evergreen Fund in November for a total of \$17,500 that supports the annual operating budget.

The Trustees' request from The Cornerstone Fund for 2025 was \$3,600 for repairs to the fireplace in the Fireside Room. To date, all other expenses relating to the church grounds and building have been met through the Trustees' annual budget.

Gifts to The Foundation have been modest with gains coming largely through investment gains. A comparison of the fund balances from January 1, 2025, to November 10, 2025 (as reported at the November meeting) is as follows:

<u>01/01/2025</u>		<u>As of 11/10/2025</u>	
Outreach	\$292,658	Outreach Fund	\$313,150
Cornerstone Fund	\$77,550	Cornerstone	\$76,756
Evergreen Fund	<u>\$349,132</u>	Evergreen Fund	<u>\$382,527</u>
Total	\$719,340	Total	\$772,433

On behalf of the Board of Directors – Caroline Carlin, Pat Deckas Becerra, Mary Lewis, Mary Olson, Jane Kasiske, Lucille Grosch, Sam Verduci, Byron Olson, and Claudia Boysen - we thank the Good Samaritan congregation and friends who support The Good Samaritan Foundation.

Finance Team

Finance Update

Please turn in your pledge card for 2026 to the church office if you have not already done so. This is important so we can accurately plan Good Samaritan's finances for next year.

Actual financials for October YTD 2025 (going into the last two months of the year) are just slightly below breakeven at (\$5,678). This is in spite of a Net of (\$37,454) for the month of October. So we encourage everyone to fulfill their pledge by the middle of December, so we can end the year in good shape, without having to use Reserve Funds to do so. If you are able, please consider an extra donation in 2025. ~ Kent Holmes

Looking for a way to get involved in our Church? The Finance Committee is seeking a few more members – no financial experience needed! Contact Byron Olson at lolson6@comcast.net if interested.

Trustees

Maintenance Minute: Ready for Winter!



I think it's safe to say that winter is coming and before we know it, snow! There are many things that need to be done to

prepare for the cold weather. First is starting up the boiler and the many circulating pumps that are attached to the boilers, and testing all of our HVAC units that are forced air heat. Fellowship Hall, the preschool hallway, the pastor offices, the Choir Room and the Community Room are the only rooms heated by the

boilers. The rest of the church has forced air units. One forced air unit had a faulty gas valve when it was started for the Narthex and one boiler pump needed a bearing assembly changed. We typically have a few things pop up when starting all of our HVAC equipment.

Another task to be done is getting our outdoor irrigation lines blown out by our lawn care company. They bring in a high-volume air compressor, not like your typical one that fills a car tire. Those are considered low-volume. The high-volume provides the pressure and volume that is needed to blow out all of the water in the lines. If it did not all come out, you run the risk of water freezing and splitting the PVC pipes that are used in the ground. Our lawn care company, Driftwood Property Services, does the shutdown. They've always done a great job at taking care of our lawn, parking lot snow removal/salting, and they have also trimmed most of the trees you see around the building. They do most of their work around Edina, so if you are looking for a good lawn care or snow removal company, look up Driftwood Property Services and give them a call. I hope you all have a great holiday season!

Dan Green
(he/him)

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**OUR
 VISION**

INSPIRING
 Joyful Faith

BUILDING
 a Loving
 Community

SERVING
 Neighbors Near
 and Far

SUNDAYS

9:45-11:30 a.m.
 Nursery - Infants - Age 3
 10:00-11:00 a.m.
 Worship - In-person and Online
Children's Sunday School
 Held during worship following
 Children's Time. All are welcome!
 4:30-6:00 p.m.
 Youth Group - 1st & 3rd Sundays

WEDNESDAYS

(Nursery care upon request)

- 6:00-7:15 p.m.
 • Chancel Chimes Rehearsal
- 7:00-8:30 p.m.
 • Chancel Choir Rehearsal

GOOD SAMARITAN OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
 Phone (952) 929-0049