November 2026

The Samaritan

Worship Themes

11/1 – All Saints' Day / Communion / "Rejoice in God's Saints"

11/8 – "Time to Stop Playing It Safe" / Pastor Jim preaching

11/15 – Bible Sunday / "Listening For God"

11/22 – Gratitude Sunday / "Grateful Hearts"

11/29 – Advent 1 / "Keep Awake"

GOOD SAMARITAN



Join us for this wonderful, long-standing tradition at Good Samaritan where we decorate our sanctuary for the Christmas season! Music will be provided at this family-friendly service by our own Orchaband.

We will be collecting unwrapped 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 or 952-452-9398.

Anyone who plays a band or orchestra instrument (young or old) is invited to join the Orchaband. Pick up the music ahead of time from the reception area by the church office. We will rehearse right before the service at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. It's great fun! Contact Sarah Kumagai with questions - 952- 944-2683.

OUR STAFF

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Pastor's Page



During the next eight months, we'll be working with Rev. Erica Koser, our Conference Director of Innovation to chart our course for the future. Below is a draft of the process that will launch us into 2027 and beyond as we lay this important groundwork before my sabbatical next summer. In the next month, I'll be recruiting the Renovation Team to help us in the priority areas of shaping family ministries, music ministries, and capital campaign readiness.

We have an exciting future ahead and the full support of the Conference to help us get there.

Please keep this process in your prayers.

Best, Pastor Max

Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Proposal for Flourishing for Good Samaritan UMC

This proposal outlines suggested steps for collaborative work with the Office of Strategy, Innovation, and Congregational Development of the Minnesota Annual Conference and Good Samaritan UMC.

As a recently merged congregation, this process will help identify who you are as a congregation going forward as one, how to align ministry and budget around a cohesive mission, vision, and values, and help you assess how your congregational assets can transform the community around you.

November/December:

- Creation of a "renovation" team of 8-10 leaders to help facilitate the process

(cont'd)

News & Events

January:

- Launch a CAT (congregational assessment tool) process with the congregation, paid for by the annual conference.
  - Questions around Capital Campaign readiness
  - Children, Youth and Family ministry
  - Music ministry
- Leadership completes 9 Foundations for Flourishing assessment from the conference

February:

- Share results of the CAT assessment and Foundations for Flourishing
- Congregational asset mapping
- Community needs assessments/ listening sessions

March:

- Gather data from listening sessions, asset mapping, community listening sessions
- Alignment work with budget, programs, staffing, community outreach

April:

- Goal setting for the next 6 months based on mission, vision, values and identified growth area

Apologies!



We're sorry that this newsletter did not get out at the end of last month as usual. The program that is used to make it, the bulletin, and many other of our documents (Microsoft Publisher) went away and many hours have been spent trying different programs to use instead. After much frustration, we finally found something that will work! A huge thank-you to Jan Russell for finding it!

New Staff Photos

Many thanks to Noemi Dooley for our lovely new staff photos! (not pictured: Kate Graber)



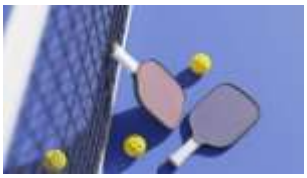


Thursday Afternoon Book Group

Our next meeting will be held in the Fireside Room on **November 12 at 1:00 p.m.** The discussion title is *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi. The arrival of a stranger in the quaint Southern town of Golden stirs curiosity and intrigue among its residents.

Please join us for the discussion, refreshments and fellowship! Contact Vicki Dunn with questions at victoria.dunn@myctl.net or 651-249-6948.

Join the Fun!



We welcome everyone to join the fun in the Good Samaritan Gym for Pickleball! We open the doors for play **every Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until around 1:00 p.m.** for all levels of play. Emergency contact information is required and a free will offering is accepted.

Contact Robin Strangis with questions - rstrangis12@gmail.com or 612-618-6730. We hope to see some new faces there!

Music

Music Survey Update

Thank you to the more than 100 members of the congregation who took the time to share their thoughts through our music survey! We distributed the survey in August and September and spent October reviewing your responses. We're grateful for your feedback, patience, and willingness to help shape the music ministry at Good Samaritan.

One thing we heard clearly is that our congregation appreciates the **variety of musical styles** offered in worship. Since reviewing the responses, there have been conversations about your feedback and how we can continue to grow and strengthen our music ministry.

So, what's next? We plan to continue offering a variety of musical styles while being more intentional about collaboration among our musical ensembles and deciding where to best focus our efforts and resources in consultation with the Finance and Staff Parish Relations teams.

There has long been an interest in getting more youth involved in our music ensembles, and we'll be working with the directors to explore the best ways to make that happen. We also heard a desire for sheet music to support congregational singing, so we'll continue using our hymnals as the primary resource, with limited additional music introduced through sheet music. Finally, we'll work on better balancing sound levels and microphone volume for both speaking and singing so that everyone can participate more comfortably.

Carey Shunskis (she/her)

Director of Music Ministries/ Chancel Choir

carey@good.org



Thank you again for sharing your voices and for your continued support of the Music Ministry.

Warmly,
Carey Shunskis, Director of Music Ministries, and Pastor Max Richter

Raise your Voice in Song!

Folks who wish to sing with the Chancel Choir for Lessons & Carols and/or Christmas Eve are invited to Wednesday evening rehearsals 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the Choir Room on the lower level. Please reach out to Carey@good.org with any questions. The Lessons & Carols service is Sunday, December 13 at 4:00 p.m.

Community Building



A Fall Adventure

Eight of us from Good Samaritan went on an adventure to Crex Meadows Wildlife Area in Grantsburg, Wisconsin. We had a great time viewing several thousand migrating Sandhill Cranes. It felt like cranes just kept coming and coming. Besides viewing God's great outdoors, it was a wonderful way to get to know fellow Good Samaritans better.

One of the unique things about our trip this year was the effects of our warming planet and our huge lack of rain. Because of both of these situations, we had to make major adjustments. The long-time marshes where we've previously gone were dried up, and the timing of migrating cranes was somewhat delayed. Fortunately, we found cranes in new Crex Meadows locations where the decreasing level of the lake had provided new marsh areas.

- Tony Branch & Dandy Lewis, Sandhill Crane Adventure Coordinators









left to right: Katie Braddock, Tony Branch, Shirley Hammersten, Janet VanBenthuysen, Leigh Hamersten, Peggy Agen, Charles Agen, Dandy Lewis

Congregational Care

Weighty Matters

Pastor Jim Beard (he/him)

Director of Congregational Care

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"Gold. The total amount of gold used in construction of the Sanctuary, all of it contributed freely, weighed out at 1,900 pounds according to the Sanctuary standard. Silver. The silver from those in the community who were registered in the census came to 6,437 pounds according to the Sanctuary standard….
Bronze. The bronze that was brought in weighed 4,522 pounds."
- Exodus 38:24, 25, 29 MSG

These amounts shock me! After all, this is recorded in Exodus, the account of when the Hebrew people were freed from Egypt's tyranny and in the wilderness before settling in "the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey." My image is of poor, homeless people escaping from Egypt, wandering around a desert with a knapsack full of flat breads. Yet, as a collective people, they had almost a ton of gold, over three tons of silver, and an abundance of bronze; keep reading and we also hear of stockpiles of acacia wood, bolts upon bolts of fine fabric, equipment for their various trades, and more.

Did they have extensive camel caravans? Did they stop in towns along the way in order to earn all this extra money? Was this tabernacle built in their first year in the desert, or their 39th? Whatever the logistics, the record reveals extreme devotion to their faith, along with orderliness, precision, and a communal wealth worth … let's just say millions!

How rich are we? How much of our communal wealth do we devote to the adornment of God's temple and work in the world? Is our giving to the church simply based on OUR comfort needs alone? Is there anything we should change? How thankful are we this Thanksgiving?

Lord who sets us free, is our giving to you pleasing to you these days? Guide our hearts and our stewardship, we pray, so that it too reflects our faith in and gratitude to you. Amen.



Thanksgiving Table, 2018
Photo by PJBeard

Congregational Care

Upcoming Opportunities for Growth

Harvest Time Meets & Eats



Back by popular demand, Meets & Eats returns for a fall feast to share together. Like those which kicked things off last summer, this Harvest Time Meets & Eats will take place immediately following worship, and there is no need to register in advance. The "Meets" pattern will continue with "reserved seating" to aid in meeting new people, and a table game or activity to break the ice. And instead of cookout fare, the "Eats" this season will focus on warm bowls of deliciousness. People will need to help with set-up, cooking/serving, and clean-up duties, and half a dozen folks are sought to provide some delectable side dishes (soups and breads will be provided). If you are willing to help, sign up at the table in the Gathering Space, scan the QR code, or visit https://tinyurl.com/GSMeetsEats.

The Two Roads to Bethlehem
Journeying to the Christ Child



Which road will you take to the babe in the manger this year? The Gospels describe two distinct yet equally powerful routes. Instead of getting lost in the mall madness this Christmas, find your way to the Holy Child along the road that speaks most deeply to your needs. Registration is now open, and will continue until the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Sign up using the paper form in the Gathering Space, scan the QR code, or visit https://tinyurl.com/GSTwoRoads. Led by Pastor Jim, classes will meet after worship on each of the four Sundays of Advent, beginning November 29.

Finance Team

Finance Update

September was again a solid month for income. Highlights include $71.5k in pledged income and $11.8k in facility use fees. Thank you for remembering Good Samaritan! We would like to finish the year strong so we don't have to rely on our budgeted reserve fund. Details can be found in the table below.

We have been working on the 2027 Budget. Thank you to those who have already submitted pledge cards. You can submit a pledge anytime to the church office via pledge card (extras on the Welcome Table in the Narthex) or online at https://good.org/give/give/make-a-pledge. Thank you for your continued support of our church!

Children, Youth and Family Ministries

Dear Good Samaritan Families,

There is a lot going on in the world. I came across this poem and wanted to share it with you.

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

A Blessing for Uncertain Times

by Kate Bowler

Bless you who do not know what happens next,
who worry about the world we are walking toward.
May uncertainty remind you that you still have choices to make.
Bless you with courage
for the small, faithful thing that is yours to do: to vote,
pay attention, tell the truth,
care for your neighbors,
and keep showing up.
Bless you who cannot carry the whole future.
May you carry what is yours:
a responsibility, a neighbor,
a small corner of this beautiful, terrible world.
Bless you when you cannot see far ahead.
May you do the next faithful thing,
and then the next,
until our small acts make a path
where none was visible before.

A November Gratitude Calendar is available in the Narthex on the Welcome Table, or email Jan if you would like a copy emailed to you.

Bible Sunday

November 15

During 10:00 a.m. worship, 3rd graders and 9th graders will be presented with new, age-appropriate Bibles.



Looking Ahead

Youth Group Lock-Under

Sunday, January 17, 6:00-11:00 p.m.
Middle School through High School
Pizza, games in the dark, crafts!

ASP Mission Trip

June 19-27, 2027



Open Gym Time

Saturday, November 21
(Saturday before Thanksgiving)
12:30-2:30 p.m.

Families can drop in anytime and have free play in the Gym. Enter through Door 8. For our first get-together, it will be grown-ups and their kids. We will see how it goes and consider ding one in December with just the kids!

Minnesota Reconciling Congregations

Below is a submission from our own Rev. Dandy Lewis to the Minnesota Reconciling Congregations (MRC) devotional guide coming out in the new year. MRC is part of the Reconciling Ministries Network, which is committed to intersectional justice across and beyond the United Methodist connection, working for the full participation of all LGBTQ+ people throughout the life and leadership of the Church.

Great Things Grow When We Grow Together

I've always believed in the principle of "it takes a village" to do anything. I am personally grateful for Reconciling Congregations.

My brother, James H. Horn, was gay. He grew up in the years when there were not any, or maybe we didn't know of any, churches that supported persons or their families who were gay. On October 22, 1993, my brother died of AIDS. He was living in Texas when he died, and I personally led his memorial service as I did not want his service to be in a church or led by a pastor who basically "rejected" him.

Needless to say, serving as a Christian Educator and Ordained Deacon in two reconciling churches was a beautiful experience. It was the first place, and especially church, where people were heard, where questions could be asked, and all were loved and accepted.



Dandy at the Good Samaritan dedication on March 31, 2013.

For a long time, I'd wanted to have an "AIDS Memorial Quilt" made on behalf of my brother. I do not quilt, and I knew it would probably cost more than I could afford to have someone make a quilt for him. To my surprise, when a dear friend, Jean Justice, learned of my desire to have a quilt made on his behalf, she offered to make it.

Then, to my delight, my church, Good Samaritan United Methodist, also agreed to have a dedication of the quilt, as part of a Sunday morning worship service, before we shipped it to The National AIDS Memorial.



I share all of this as it's been this wonderful village of support that has been there for me and my family. It makes an enormous difference to have such support. Great things can and will grow when we grow together.

My remaining "Bucket List" prayer is that I can see a live display of my brother's panel.

Editor's Note: You can find Dandy's brother's quilt among the 50,000 panels on the National AIDS Memorial Quilt by going to https://www.aidsmemorial.org/interactive-aids-quilt and searching for "James Horn".

Missions & Reconciling

What have we been doing?

Feed My Starving Children: September 18 was the Friday evening event for this reporting period, with a total of 44 volunteers at the Chanhassen site. Eight of these volunteers were Good Samaritans and friends. The results were 47 boxes packed containing 27,072 meals, which is enough to provide 74 children with a daily meal for a year. The value of the meals produced was $7,850.88.

The Wednesday daytime event was on October 14, with a total of 130 volunteers including 15 Good Samaritans and friends. The results were 163 boxes packed containing 35,208 meals, which is enough to provide 96 children with a daily meal for a year.

The meals in October contained rice and were bound for Haiti. This is a contrast with the meals packed in September that did not contain rice but had more soy so that the carbohydrates could be added at the destination and more meals could be packed in each box. This reflects FMSC's ability to adapt to the recipients' needs and local resources.

VEAP: VEAP held their annual Gala Fundraiser in October and Good Samaritan donated a basket with an emotional support chicken and chick (made by Janet VanBenthuysen) as well as a hand-made journal book (made by Charisse Litteken) for their silent auction. It sold for $275!



Coming Up in November

Wed., Nov. 4, 8:30–9:00 a.m.: Beacon Rent Is Due, - update and advocacy action on Zoom. https://www.beaconinterfaith.org/events/.

Wed., Nov. 11, 9:30–11:15 a.m. and Fri. Nov. 20, 5:00-6:30 p.m.: Feed My Starving Children meal packing at the Chanhassen site. Register with Jane Heimerl at jane.heimerl@yahoo.com.

Thurs., Nov. 12, 7:00–8:30 p.m.: Missions Meeting in the Conference Room.

Thurs., Nov. 12, 7:00–8:30 p.m.: Minnesota Reconciling Congregations meeting (on Zoom). contact Brian Boysen at bteambackup@earthlink.net or visit the reconciling website at https://www.rcumc.org.

Fri., Nov. 20, 10:45 a.m.: Meals on Wheels delivery. Contact Vicki Dunn at victoria.dunn@myctl.net.

Sun., Nov. 29: STEP toy collection at the Hanging of the Greens service.

Books and Beans for Baiwalla



For the last couple of months, there has been a display in the Narthex to collect beans for the Ormsby School in Baiwalla. The final push is on! In November, we will have an event after a Sunday church service to prep books for the school's library. They will then be loaded into two barrels for shipment to Sierra Leone. The bags of beans will be used as packing material around the books and other school supplies to protect them during shipment. The cost to ship the barrels is based on volume, not weight, so the beans, a great source of protein, are an added bonus for the school's lunches. Watch for details on our book labeling day and help fill up our barrels for bags of beans!

Missions

Funds Disbursed In October

Missions funds were distributed to UMCOR, Birdfeeder, Joyce Uptown Foodshelf, Edina ABC, and STEP. We also assisted a Stonebridge family with rent to prevent them from losing their home. When we can, we try to make donations during matching programs; this month, the $2,600 donation sent to STEP was matched to double the impact.

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope

STEP

ST. LOUIS PARK EMERGENCY PROGRAM

STEP Holiday Toy Program

The holidays can be a particularly challenging time for families struggling financially. Help ease this burden on our St. Louis Park neighbors by donating to STEP's annual Toy Distribution Program. This is a program that has been supported by both Good Samaritan and Aldersgate congregations for many years. At Good Samaritan, we collect items during our annual Hanging of the Greens service. Bring unwrapped gifts and gift cards to be placed under (and all around!) our Christmas tree.



This year, the STEP program will include in-person toy shopping for toys for infants to children up to 8 years old and Target gift cards for children ages 9 to 17.

How are the Missions Donations Funded?



As we have blended our two congregations into the new Good Samaritan this year, we've been learning from each other. At Good Samaritan, we have two primary fund drives each year through our Christmas and Easter offerings. These special offerings can be designated to a specific organization or undesignated, which allows the Missions Team to donate the money Where Needed Most. This includes funding our own Homelessness fund, which we use to assist families coming out of homelessness or to keep them from becoming homeless.

Aldersgate has a St. Louis Park Fund that can be used to support organizations in that community. We can distribute 5% of the fund balance each year.

In addition, we do reach out to the congregation at other times for money and/or items to respond to special needs such as during Metro Surge, the Helix fire, back-to-school drives and food drives.

And while Good Samaritan has done periodic hands-on work for our community right here at Good Samaritan, this was a more regular feature at Aldersgate. We are planning for more opportunities for hands-on service at Good Samaritan, starting with preparing books for the Baiwalla library, and we will create more activities in 2027, including filling art supply bags for local organizations and a loom to weave mats to keep people dry when sleeping outside.



Good Samaritan United Methodist Church
5730 Grove Street
Edina, MN 55436



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!

GOOD SAMARITAN OFFICE

Hours Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Phone (952) 929-0049 ext. 0
Email office@good.org