



## ***“The Voice”* Newsletter of The United Church of Mapleton**

201 Troendle Street SW; PO Box 413  
Mapleton, MN 56065

**DECEMBER 2014**

*Address Service Requested*

*“The United Church of Mapleton is a Christian fellowship  
of mission, worship, and faith formation dedicated to the  
Maple River community.”*



The United Church of Mapleton  
PO Box 413  
Mapleton, MN 56065

# THE UNITED CHURCH OF MAPLETON

www.unitedchurchmapleton.org

secretary@unitedchurchmapleton.org

9:00 a.m. Sunday Worship

9:00 a.m. Nursery Care

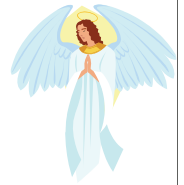
9:15 a.m. Children's Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship

10:00 a.m. Choir Practice

10:10 a.m. Youth Group and Adult

Sunday School for all ages



## DECEMBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 6:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast in Good Thunder	3	4 3:00 p.m. Bible Study	5	6 10:00 a.m.—Noon Baby Shower for Pastor Ashley and Jeff Whitaker 1:00 p.m. Kilties
<b>7 2nd Sun. of Advent</b> 9:00 a.m. Worship with <b>Comm. and Loaves &amp; Fishes Collection</b> 10:00 a.m. Children's Christmas practice 10:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 10:00 a.m. Choir 10:10 a.m. Sun. School	8 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve music practice 7:00 p.m. Women's Fellowship	9 6:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast in Good Thunder	<b>10</b> <b>7:00 p.m. Deacons</b>	11 3:00 p.m. Bible Study	<b>12</b> <b>5:00—9:00 p.m.</b> <b>Parents Night Out</b>	<b>13</b> 9:00 a.m. Kilties
<b>14 3rd Sun. of Advent</b> 9:00 a.m. Worship with <b>Children's Christmas Program</b> 10:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 10:00 a.m. Choir 10:10 a.m. Sun. School 1:00 p.m. Youth Group Service project	15	16 6:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast in Good Thunder 3:00—6:00 p.m. Youth Service Project	<b>17</b> <b>7:00 p.m.</b> <b>Board of Trustees</b>	18 3:00 p.m. Bible Study	19	<b>20 RECYCLE!</b> 9:00 a.m. Kilties
<b>21 4th Sun. of Advent</b> 9:00 a.m. Worship with <b>The Well Collection</b> 10:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 10:00 a.m. Choir 10:10 a.m. Sun. School 6:00 p.m. UCM Youth Group Fun & Fellowship Party	22	<b>23</b> <b>Voice Articles due!</b> 6:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast in Good Thunder	<b>24 Christmas Eve</b> <b>7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service</b>	<b>25 Christmas Day</b>	26	27
<b>28</b> 9:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 10:00 a.m. Choir 10:10 a.m. Sun. School	29	<b>30</b> 6:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast in Good Thunder	<b>31 New Years Eve</b>			

# The Voice

The Newsletter of The United Church of Mapleton



Phone: (507) 524-3141

October 2014

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Date:	December 7	December 14	December 21	December 28
<b>Greeters:</b>	Robert and Lisa Shubert	Randy and Linda Cumming	Delbert and Ella Conrad	Louise Webb
<b>Coffee Hour:</b>	Diaconate	Women's Fellowship	The Well Youth Center	Board of Christian Education
<b>Head Usher:</b>	Diaconate	Diaconate	Diaconate	Diaconate

## Annual Reports

Please submit your annual reports to the church office between **Wednesday, December 31st, 2014 and no later than Wednesday, January 7th, 2015**. Thank you for your consideration.

## Loaves & Fishes Food Shelf

**Sunday, December 7th, 2014** we will collect donations for the Loaves & Fishes Food Shelf.

Please consider giving monetary gifts and/or non-perishable items to this meaningful mission.

The United Church supports Loaves & Fishes in this way on the first Sunday of each month.

## The Well Youth Center

**Sunday, December 21st, 2014** our Coffee Hour and Collection jar will go towards helping support our local youth at The Well Youth Center.

The United Church supports The Well Youth Center in this way each month.

## Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request, please call Karen Stanton at (507) 327-8168 or Joyce Johnson at 524-3727. Please let them know your prayer request, including the name of the person to pray for if applicable, and whether or not you would like your request included in the church's public prayer list or if you'd prefer the request be kept privately within the prayer chain.

## Church Financial Envelope

For privacy and ease, please make a notation on the front of your envelope: **c/o Financial Secretary**. Thank you!



## Baby Shower

An Open House Baby Shower will be held in honor of Pastor Ashley Whitaker on **Saturday, December 6th from 10:00 a.m.—Noon** in the Fellowship Hall of the United Church, 201 Troendle St SW.



Ashley and Jeff are having a boy! The Whitakers are registered at Target and Babies R Us.

**Pastor's Corner***The Voice* – December 2014

“O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord; for he is coming.”

*Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13*

What is Advent? How is it different than Christmas? What's the point of it, anyway?

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” or “visit.” In this sacred season of hope, Christians wait for the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, incarnated here on earth as a baby.

Advent begins the liturgical year, which is the church's worship calendar that guides us through the seasons of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. I think it only makes sense that Advent begins the liturgical year. The church year begins not with Christ's death, or even his resurrection, but instead as we look ahead to the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ.

However, if we look outside of the church during this time of year, it can be easy to confuse Advent with Christmas, since all the festivities surrounding Christmas begin in November for the rest of the world (if not sooner!). According to church tradition, Advent is *not* the same as Christmas. The first four weeks of December, leading up to Christmas Day, make up the season of Advent, a season marked by expectation, anticipation, and wonder. In the church, the Christmas season only begins after the birth of Christ.

The Psalmist knows about this sense of hopeful expectation. Luther Seminary's Advent Devotional, *Your People Long to Greet You*, says of this anticipation, “‘The Lord is coming.’ That's what the psalmist announces. The arrival is so close we can almost taste it. We are invited to sing and rejoice at the universal reign of God. The nations witness it. All of creation—heaven and earth, field and forest, sea and dry land—are called to join in praise of the Lord. This psalm is sometimes linked with God's return in glory to Zion after the exile. It speaks of God coming to judge the world in righteousness and truth.

‘The Lord is coming.’ Whether then or now, we wait and watch for signs of God's coming. We yearn for the day when God's kingdom will come in all its fullness and we will see the salvation of our God.” May we celebrate this Advent season in hopeful anticipation, declaring the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is coming indeed! Amen.

Blessings,  
Pastor Ashley

## Youth Group Updates

From Pastor Ashley

All families of youth should have received in the mail an updated schedule of events for November and December, which is copied below.

**We have three big events in December:** the Children and Youth Christmas Pageant, the Parents Night Out fundraiser/community service event, and our Christmas Party with White Elephant Gift Exchange. Please see the schedule below for more information about dates and times for these events.

**Thank you** to all the youth that helped out with packing Thanksgiving boxes for Loaves & Fishes on November 16<sup>th</sup>!

As always, if you have any questions or ideas for the Youth Group, let me know by email ([pastor@unitedchurchmapleton.org](mailto:pastor@unitedchurchmapleton.org)) or cell phone (381-8199)!

### UCM Youth Group December 2014 – Updated Dates & Times!

#### Upcoming Events:

Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>

10:00am (After Worship) – Children and Youth Christmas Program Rehearsal. Youth are needed to help with the program as narrators. Lines will not need to be memorized and will be handed out for review in advance.

Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>

5:00 – 9:00pm – Parents Night Out, a community service event benefitting Cows for Christmas (Heifer International). Parents are invited to drop off their children at The United Church for a kid-free evening of Christmas gift shopping or a date night. Free will cash donations will be accepted to support Cows for Christmas.

Youth are asked to help by playing with children at this event (decorating cookies, watching movies, making crafts, playing games, etc.).

Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>

9:00am (During Worship) – Children and Youth Christmas Program Presentation. Youth are needed to help with the program as narrators. Lines will not need to be memorized and will be handed out for review in advance. (Youth will not have costumes to wear, but “nicer” clothes would be good.)

1:00pm – Loaves & Fishes Christmas Box Packing Service Event, St. Teresa’s Catholic Church

Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>

3:00 – 6:00pm – Youth are invited to come back to St. Teresa’s Catholic Church to help distribute the Christmas Boxes to families.

Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>

6:00pm – December Fun and Fellowship Event – Christmas Party and White Elephant Gift Exchange. Youth are asked to bring a fun/funny, wrapped “white elephant” gift worth no more than \$10 to exchange. Pizza and snacks will be provided for dinner.

**United Church Youth helped pack Thanksgiving boxes for Loaves & Fishes—**



## In Our Prayers

### Our church prayer list includes:

- Those with ongoing health concerns: Norma Baack, Shirley Bowen, Hutch Cramer, Kathy Cox, Jodie Gerds, David Keller, Stan Solie, Alberta Samuelson, Marge Walters, Jonathan Ziert, Isaac Kolstad
- Family members and loved ones who are ill
- Traveling mercies for our members, family, and friends
- All those who are grieving and mourning
- The 2015 American Baptist Churches, USA Biennial Mission Summit, to be held June 26-28 in Overland Park, KS, including the many people and groups involved in its planning and leadership.
- The 2015 United Church of Christ General Synod 30, to be held June 26-30 in Cleveland, OH.
- Benjamin Brockmann of Lake Crystal, age 6, a family friend of the Allevens, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia. You can find more about Benjamin at [caringbridge.org/visit/benjaminbrockmann](http://caringbridge.org/visit/benjaminbrockmann)
- Dawn Dietz, who learned that her lymphoma has recurred and who has recently begun chemotherapy treatment.
- Kathy Cox, who had shoulder surgery in early November
- For Lee Severtson, son-in-law of Joe and Sheila Samuelson, who had a heart attack in late October
- Dan Prenzlów's niece, Shannon Prenzlów Blair, whose husband John Blair passed away in mid-November. The funeral was held in Phoenix. For those who know the Prenzlów family, Shannon is Dan's sister Kathy's daughter.
- Matt and Kelly Eberhardt, and their four-month-old son Logan, who lost their home in Kasota, MN to fire on November 18th. The structure of the home may be salvageable, but everything else has been called a "complete loss." Thankfully, the family was unhurt. Kelly's sister, Kari, is a friend of Pastor Ashley's.

The prayer requests and praises shared with the congregation during **November's** worship services include:

### Prayers:

- And praise to God for our daughter, Jeni, and her fiancé, Jeremy, as they start to plan for their new life together
- For our friend Marie-Lize and her fiancé, Jon, as they move to the Cities and start a new chapter in their life together
- For a dear friend in Mountain Lake, Annette Dick, who is suffering due to issues with heart trouble
- For Jon Klenk's mother, who lives in El Paso, TX, and who is having health issues
- For Bill Brice, Pam Foster's father, who had a minor stroke and is hospitalized
- Of sadness and joy in remembering Pam Foster's mother, Bernie Brice, who passed away on October 24, 2013
- For all deer hunters
- For Mary Jacob after a recent surgery
- For Colter Carey-Fritz, who received an injury to his mouth during a basketball scrimmage game last week that required surgery
- For the Army Ranger who was recently murdered and for all of his family and friends
- For the safe and healthy arrival of twin girls to be born Wednesday; their grandma is a friend of mine. The parents also have a one and two year old!
- For God's blessing on the chili-cook-off and auction

### Thanksgiving:

- To God for grandchildren and their energy!
- For two angels that showed up to take care of my leaves
- To God at the celebration of Laura Fritz's birthday
- And prayers of blessing for Patrick Pfeffer's birthday, which was on November 14th
- To God for giving the glorious white covering of the land in the same way that God has blanketed over our sins

*Continued*



**In Our Prayers continued...**

- To God for Pam Foster’s father’s speedy recovery after a recent stroke, and thanks to physical therapy he can now take steps again. Thank you to the church for all the prayers!
- And praise for two granddaughters for Brian and Deb Jaeger

The prayers and sympathies of The United Church of Mapleton are extended to the family and friends of Gwen McGregor, longtime United Church member, who passed away on Wednesday, November 12th in Mapleton. The funeral service was held at The United Church of Mapleton at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, November 24th, with visitation held one hour prior.

**How to Contact Pastor Ashley**

My office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to noon. In the afternoon, I may be in the office, or I may be out in the community for pastoral care or outreach. If you’d like to stop by to visit another time, just email or call. Monday and Saturday are my days off.

My email address is: [pastor@unitedchurchmapleton.org](mailto:pastor@unitedchurchmapleton.org). If I’m not in the office, my phone number is (507) 381-8199.

**Pastoral Care Connections**

If you or a family member is ill, in the hospital, is homebound, would like a pastoral care visit for any reason, or would like to be added to our weekly prayer list, **please let the church know!** Feel free to contact Pastor Ashley, a Deacon, or the church office to let us know so that we may serve you.

Pastor Ashley’s phone number is: (507) 381-8199 and the church phone number is: (507) 524-3141. Thank you!

**Sunday Morning Wheelchair Assistance**

If you are in need of wheelchair assistance on Sunday mornings, please let us know by calling the church office at (507) 524-3141 ahead of time to make arrangements **or** you may have an usher assist you on Sunday morning when you arrive at the church.

There is a ramp located on the east side of the church which can be utilized by parking in the east parking lot. If it is too difficult for you to push a wheelchair up the ramp, please feel free to contact an Usher or Deacon for assistance.

**Pastoral Relations Committee**

The Pastoral Relations committee (PRC) exists to foster healthy and clear communication between pastor and congregation. PRC meetings are a regular and confidential means of support and accountability for the pastor.

PRC members keep their ear to the ground in the congregation to help keep the pastor in-the-know about possible issues or concerns, and they can bring constructive and addressable concerns to the pastor from the congregation.

Starting in January 2015 our PRC members are Laura Fritz, Warren Allevan, Joyce Johnson and Joe Samuelson.

**Children’s Christmas Practice/Program**

**Rehearsal will be held Sunday, December 7th** in the sanctuary after the worship service for all children grades PreK—5th and Youth Group.



Children and youth will be practicing Christmas songs during Sunday School time.

**The Children’s Christmas Program will be held Sunday, December 14th** during our worship service. Goodie bags will be handed out to the children/youth after the program.

### Parents Night Out!

Parents, take the night out to go Christmas shopping or get away for date night! Kids will enjoy dinner (6:00 pm), crafts, cookie decorating, games, movies, and more!



You may drop off your children, ages 2 and up, at the United Church of Mapleton, 201 Troendle Street SW on Friday, December 12th after 5:00 p.m. and then pick them up by 9:00 p.m. You may call to pre-register (not required) at 524-3141.

A Freewill offering will help support "Cows for Christmas (Heifer International). May we all pass on the gift!

**Adult or youth-age volunteers** are especially needed during Parents Night Out in these areas: Registration, Nursery Attendants, Craft Leaders, Playing Board Games, Floaters from area to area. Also, If you have big, comfy blankets or oversized pillows that could be used to sit or lay on that you'd be willing to lend for Parents Night Out, that would be great. They may be needed if we choose to show the movie on the projector in the Fellowship Hall (instead of the Youth Lounge).

### Holiday Boxes!

It's that time of year and in the holiday spirit, Maple River Loaves & Fishes will be handing out Christmas boxes. In these boxes are a complete meal.

We will be packing the boxes on December 14<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm at St. Teresa's and handing them out on December 16<sup>th</sup> from 3-6 pm at St. Teresa's in Mapleton. We can always use volunteers to help!

The cost for the boxes is \$40/box. Please consider sponsoring a box (or several) this holiday season.

### Loaves & Fishes

Loaves & Fishes open hours are from 3:00-6:00 p.m. Tuesdays and 9:00-noon on Saturdays. We are always in need of volunteers to work a few shifts at the food shelf. Contact your food shelf board member for details. They will be so glad to hear from you!



### Loaves & Fishes Love Item for December: Cereal

Each month, The United Church features a "love item" of special focus for members to donate to Loaves & Fishes. This helps stock the shelves at Loaves & Fishes Food Shelf and helps increase our giving to this worthy and much needed mission in our own town. There is one Love Item per month that you're encouraged to look for as you're out shopping throughout the month, especially if you see a coupon or a sale! Of course, this doesn't mean you can't bring other food items or cash donations. This is just a fun way to think about supporting Loaves & Fishes!



### **Our Love Item for December is cereal!**

This summer, Loaves & Fishes noticed they needed more breakfast and lunch items than during the school year to help feed kids who rely on schools for those meals. So, for December, let's help stock their shelves so they can be ready to help out families over the upcoming winter break!

In a two-year study, kids who regularly ate cereal for breakfast had healthier body mass index than those who didn't. Cereals can be an important source of nutrients, especially for kids in low-income households. One in every four American children lives in a food insecure household where breakfast isn't a sure thing. Cereal may help kids maintain a healthy weight and get enough of the nutrients they need. (*Source: NY Daily News, <http://nydn.us/1pk1Rzs>*)

Please bring boxes or bags of cereal to help fill the Loaves & Fishes cart throughout the month of November. Also, keep an eye out for our January Love Item, which will be featured in the bulletin beginning the last Sunday of December!

### Thank You!

Thank you to Marian Mallory, helpers, all the contestants, people who donated items for the silent auction and everyone who came to help make the Chili Cook-off/Silent Auction so much fun and such a great success! All proceeds will go towards Heifer International.





**Christmas Poinsettia's**

The Ambience Team is looking for donations of **poinsettia plants** to decorate our sanctuary area for the Christmas season.



Please purchase the plant/plants on your own. Place your name on the bottom of your plant and bring the plant to the church. Thank you for helping beautify our sanctuary!

**Stocking Stuffers for The Well**

There is a donation box available in the narthex for you to start placing stocking stuffer donations for the youth of The Well to receive at their Christmas party.



Suggested items include: lip balm, beanie babies or stuffed animals, socks, perfume body sprays, jewelry, candy, gum, bouncy balls, playing cards, etc.

**Free Community Breakfast**

On the second Saturday of each month, everyone in the community is invited to a free breakfast held at St. John Lutheran Church from 8:30—10:30 a.m. This is a great way to connect with friends, neighbors and meet people who are new to the community. Hope to see you Saturday morning **December 13!**



**Senior Dining and Meals on Wheels of Mapleton**

You are invited to dine at the Town & Country Leisure Center! Nutritious and delicious **Meals are served daily, Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m.** The cost of a meal is \$4.00, as a suggested donation for those 60+. Low-salt and diabetic meals are available. Stay afterwards to play cards or games and to enjoy the company of others.



Meals on Wheels is also available for those who wish to eat at home. Call Darlene at (507) 524-4868 for more information or to reserve your meal.

Meals on Wheels meals are furnished by Ecumen Country Neighbors.

**Community Closet**

The Closet is open Tuesdays and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m.-noon. If you have a non-profit group that would like to take advantage of profits from the Closet, please call Gay Rice at (507) 524-4040 for more information.



**Report of Deacons Meeting**

November 12th, 2014

The Deacons meeting was held on November 12th and began at 7:00 p.m. in the overflow room at the church. Those present for the meeting were: Ruth Cumming, Dawn Dietz, Pat Carter and Jodie Gerdt. Pat started the meeting with devotions.

**Old Business:** We discussed the supply of altar candles that we have on hand. We will need to order very soon. The new and renewed members were recognized in October. A reminder—Ruth Mooney will be here for the November 23rd service to give a message about her missionary work.

**New Business:** The Diaconate discussed the new committee members that would be joining in January 2015. With Ruth, Dawn and Doug finished serving their terms, the new members will be Chad Kunkel, Marian Mallory and Carolyn Becker. We also discussed the things that we need to accomplish at the December Deacon meeting in preparation for the Christmas Eve worship service. The Diaconate will be ushering for the month of December.

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 10th, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jodie Gerdt

**Report of Mission Committee**

We participated in collecting items for Treats for Troops. Kathy Kunkel and Linda Whitney helped pack Treats for Troops boxes at St. John Lutheran Church. There were 30 boxes packed and sent. Most of those receiving the boxes are from our local area. The persons receiving them are always very grateful and happy to get them. We want to thank everyone that brought in the donated items.

There is a box in the narthex to put items for the stockings at The Well. Every year the youth center has a Christmas party where all the youth have a stocking to hang. This year the Christmas party will be held Friday, December 19th. We ask you to please contribute and bring items for the stockings to the church by Sunday, December 14th. Thank you to our local churches for collecting these items for our youth!

Once again, thank you to everyone who gives to all of these worthy missions. Like I always say, we can make a difference in our world.

Respectfully submitted by Roberta Ward, Mission Chair

**The United Church  
Chili Cook-off winners!**

Darlene Fezler, Kathy Byram, Joyce Johnson



**Women's Fellowship**

November 10th, 2014

With nine members present, President Louise Webb called the meeting to order. Mary Beth Fritz gave devotions from Ephesians 6:17.

**Secretaries Report** was given and accepted as read.

**Treasury Report** was given.

**Cheer Committee** person, Mabelle Larson, gave the Cheer Committee report. She sent out five Thinking-of-You cards.

**Mission Report** was given. Kathy Kunkel and Linda Whitney helped with packing boxes for Treats for Troops, which included Bibles. The Women's Fellowship voted to give \$100 towards postage for mailing the troops boxes.

Next on the agenda was the planning of Pastor Ashley and Jeff's baby shower. Invitations have been sent. The menu will include fruit salad and breads. We will set up for the shower on December 5th. Discussion was held on Christmas gifts for Golden Members and others. This discussion was put to a vote and passed.

Women's Fellowship voted to give \$200 to the Heifer fund.

We will be in need of devotional leaders to take Mary Beth's place while she is away for the winter months. Linda volunteered for the month of December.

Coffee Hour will be hosted by Circle One on December 14th.

Respectively submitted by Darlene Fezler, Secretary