

Sunday Service is at 9:45 AM

- Dec. 7 Isaiah 11:1-10
 Romans 15:4-13
 Matthew 3:1-12
- Dec. 14 Isaiah 35:1-10
 James 5:7-10
 Matthew 11:2-11
- Dec. 21 Isaiah 7:10-16
 Romans 1:1-7
 Matthew 1:18-25
- Dec. 28 Isaiah 63:7-9
 Hebrews 2:10-18
 Matthew 2:13-23

HOW TO FIND US

United Methodist Church Of Grand Rapids

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2 blocks west of the Grand Rapids Airport

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secretary@umcgrmn.org

www.umcgrmn.org



<https://www.youtube.com/c/GRUMC>



December 2025

United Methodist Church
Of Grand Rapids
1701 SE 5th Avenue
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

*merry
christmas*

**RAPIDS
CONNECTION**



GROW
*in love of
God and neighbor*

REACH
new people

HEAL
a broken world

STAFF

Pastor
Rev. James Crecelius

Administrator
Jodi Martin

Accompanists
Susan Hoolihan

*Ready Set Grow
Preschool*
Mary Hanson
Shari Tverberg

Custodial
Louis Baumel

Office Hours
Jodi:
M-F, 9am-3pm

Pastor Jim:
M-F, 9am-Noon &
By appointment

Louie:
Mondays - and as
needed for special
events

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10

MISSIONS 

GRACE House: SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, December 4, 2025 – Annual GRACE House dinner fundraiser. As of 11/20/25, we have 6 UMC tables for 48 guests. Thank you one and all for your continued support of the homeless shelter. We're looking forward to a fun evening!

SHARON'S WIG CLOSET: Sharon has served 3 women this month. It is very helpful as well as saving \$ when guests bring back the wigs when they are done with them. Thank you to everyone for your help in making the Wig Closet a success!

CHRISTMAS FAMILIES: November 30 Missions will serve for Fellowship. We will have a basket out for donations for the Christmas Families. If you would like to contribute to this special mission, cash or check marked Christmas Families may be given during 11/30 Fellowship or in the offering or office at any time. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity to gift these families who often receive no more gifts other than the ones UMC provides.

As always, the gifts for the 7 families from Human Services will be determined by the amount of donations received from our congregation. The Youth will be doing their caramel roll fundraiser to buy gifts for 3 additional families.

There will be two volunteer opportunities for you to consider. We will need 3-4 "shoppers" and 8-10 "gift wrappers". We will be planning to do the shopping the first week in December. There will be sign up sheets at the Information Desk by December 1.

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING: We will be ringing the bell at SuperOne North Monday, December 8 through Saturday, December 13. There are 2 hour shifts beginning at 10:00 AM and running until 6:00 PM. There is a sign up sheet posted at the Information Desk. Let's see if we can fill all of the shifts!! Thanks for considering this opportunity.

TOYS FOR TOTS: We are hosting the annual Toys For Tots distribution on December 12-13. Their committee will be supplying cookies. If you would like to volunteer to help with the distribution, please use the following Link To Volunteer:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4AABAE2AA2FFCF8-53486875-itasca>

We don't expect everyone to donate and/or volunteer for every opportunity we present, but we hope that you will prayerfully consider missions that speak to your heart!



There are certain signals we all recognize that warn us Christmas is on its way. The day after Thanksgiving, the busiest shopping day of the year, reminds us that Christmas is near. Holiday advertising is everywhere we look and in everything we hear. Christmas jingles won't let us forget what's just around the corner. We're told of every financing plan imaginable to ensure that we can afford all the gifts we "need" to buy for all the people on our growing list. Websites assume their "Christmas look," and retailers put on their most elaborate displays.

Advent is a Church season of four weeks including the four Sundays before Christmas Day. Advent derives from the Latin *Adventus*, which means "coming." The season proclaims the comings of Christ – whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate. Each year Advent calls the community of faith to prepare for these comings; historically, the season was marked by fasts and preparation. Each Sunday of Advent has a distinctive theme: Christ's coming in final victory (First Sunday), John the Baptizer (Second and Third Sundays), and the events immediately preceding the birth of Jesus, the Christ (Fourth Sunday).

It is this season of Advent, however, that is the Church's signal for the coming of the Christ child. A special season is drawing near on our church calendar: the beginning of Advent. **The season of Advent is the time we prepare, not for extra expenditures of cash, but to remember the Christ child who came to live among us!** We attempt, once again, to consider that God actually assumed our humanity and was born and entered our world to secure our redemption.

As we get about the business of preparing in this wonderful season, maybe one of the best ways to do this is by doing the work of repairing! Let us be intentional and active in this work through acts of mercy and justice. Let us repair relationships worn down by schedules that are much too busy and our own apathy. Let us repair ourselves through prayer, scripture reading, gathering as the church in worship, and laughter with others. Let us repair our community with service, making sure all are included, compassion, and forgiveness. And let us repair our world in sharing Christ with each and with all.

As we go about the work of repairing, may we see the restoring work of God's grace. Our Annual Conference – and through it, our congregation itself – has declared what we prayerfully hope to see as desired outcomes of our mission and vision, our ministries and outreach: That our community; this place and area where God has planted us, would be transformed by the love of God especially through our congregational witness in word and deed. May our fellowship be and our ministries provide a place where wounds are healed, connections flourish, and every person finds belonging.

May you and all your loved ones be blessed and find joy in making ready for the coming of God's Great Gift: The Child in the manger; and may you and each and all have a most blessed and merriest of Christmases!

Be God's, (And again, have a very Merry, Merry Christmas!), Pastor Jim

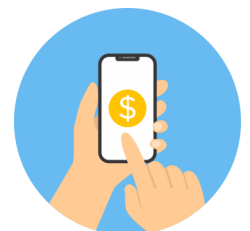
Advent at the Manger!

On the Sundays of Advent this year we'll be hearing from some of the objects at the Manger! Hear the tale of the birth of the Christ Child as related by a Shepherd's Staff, The Manger Itself, The Stable, and The Bridle of a Camel. In worship we'll be reminded of the simplicity, the holiness, the grandeur of the Nativity and how God's love makes the ordinary – extraordinary!



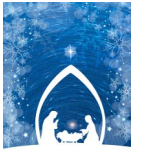
Online Giving - Change

Attention those that donate online or use the QR Code. During the month of December, we will transition to a new giving format. Please watch for more information coming soon! We will contact you directly if you have a reoccurring contribution, as you will need to set that up again. We apologize for any inconvenience.





SPECIAL SERVICES AND EVENTS IN DECEMBER



Save the Date for the Hanging of the Greens!

Sunday, December 7th following the service, join your faith family for a lunch of Sloppy Joes, chips and Christmas cookies. **Then stay as little or as long as you wish to help decorate your church home for the Advent & Christmas season.** There will be ornaments for the kids to make to decorate the tree in the Fellowship Hall and some to take home also. **Plan to join in the Fun!!**

There are sign-up sheets in the Narthex.

- ⇒ We are looking for 6 people to make and bring 2-pound batches of Sloppy Joes (6 batches needed – ready to eat).
- ⇒ People to help serve the meal and clean up after.
- ⇒ 2 or 3 people to oversee the kids crafting.

Thank you in advance for helping to make this a great day at UMCGR!



The Longest Night Service ~ Sunday, December 21st at 7:00pm at UMCGR

A contemplative service of healing and hope for those that are hurting this Christmas.



Christmas Eve Service ~ 4:00pm on December 24th

Again this year we will emphasize that “Christmas is Especially for Children”. We encourage families with children or grandchildren to join our 4:00pm service on December 24th. As children enter the building, they will be invited to choose a prop or costume item to wear. While the nativity story is told, as part of our traditional service, they will come forward to participate in a live nativity. No rehearsal necessary, just the work of the Spirit. As always, we’ll end our service by candlelight as we sing “Silent Night”!



Do you know of a family that does not have a church home? Invite them and share a flier about the event, which will be available at the information desk in the coming weeks.

Sunday, December 29th ~ Christmas Hymn Sing!

On the Sunday between Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, Join together in a Christmas Hymn Sing! We’ll gather at our regular time, in the Fellowship Hall and Sing our favorite Christmas songs and hymns! Everyone bring your left over Christmas cookies, pastries, snacks, crackers & cheese...whatever. We’ll enjoy our fellowship, read again the Christmas story, and join in the hymns of the Christmas Season!!





October 2025 Monthly Snap Shot			
	Income	Expenses	Net Income
General Fund	20,265	30,349	(10,084)
YTD - 2025	242,834	219,272	23,562
			-
Monthly average - 2025	23,054	21,927	1,127

Our Advance monthly offering YTD is \$49,904. The above monthly average amount has been adjusted to account for this. Thank you for your continued support of the day to day ministry of our church. We try to be careful stewards of your gifts.

News From The Finance Committee:



Again, we want to thank Dan Duffy for his many years as our Treasurer. Even though you are retired, we know that we can count on you to help us whenever the need arises. You and Marie have truly been a blessing.

The finance committee is working on the 2026 budget. We want to thank those who have submitted an Estimate Of Giving. It really helps with the process. The 2025 committee chairs have been very careful about staying within their budget while still accomplishing their missions.

The software conversion has begun and should be completed by the first of the year. We will keep you informed.

On a personal note, I want to share with you something special. On Sunday afternoon, I found a pink carnation on my doorstep with this note attached: "Mark 9:23: Everything is possible for one who believes." On the other side of the note it said : Jesus Loves You". Whoever did this, Thank You! It makes my heart smile whenever I think of it. June



I want to express my sincere appreciation for the wonderful retirement party assembled on my behalf. I truly treasure the many friendships I have made over the past 17 years. May God bless all of you. Dan Duffy

UMCGR Endowment Fund NEWS



Thank you everyone who contributed to the Endowment Fund during this past year. With an emphasis for Memorial Day and All Saints Day from the Endowment Fund Committee to invite your giving, \$34,831.30 has been given to increase the principal. Donations may still be received until December 31, 2025.

A formal report will be given at the Church Conference on January 26, 2026 with a final amount that has been received in 2025.. We will also present a recommendation for disbursements in 2026 that will be voted on at the meeting. Please be sure to attend.

Fireside Readers



We will be meeting Monday December 15th. Note that this is not the 4th Monday of the month-that is Christmas week.

We will meet at the church at 5:30 pm for a potluck meal. After that we will discuss the 2nd one in "12 Stories of Christmas" by Rev. Lindy Purdy. We will also have our annual book gift exchange.

Youth News!



What a powerful, interesting, introspective, and impactful time and discussion we had at Rowe Funeral Home at our meeting on Nov. 2nd. Thanks to David Huso and his staff for their sharing, answering questions and giving us a tour of their facility. At our Nov. 16th meeting we watched a video from Duke University (a United Methodist University) about how people can be stereotyped and put into “boxes” but that we need to respect each and all and hear their stories.

This December has big events for us: On the evening of Friday, Dec. 5th through Saturday morning Dec. 6th is our Winter Lock-In. We’ll begin at 7:00 on Friday evening and finish at 10:00 am Saturday morning. BRING A FRIEND! A surprise is given to each person who brings a friend and the friend they bring!! We’ll have places to go and adventures in the community! Plus pizza midnight(ish), guest panel, rolls to prepare, and movie(s) to watch!

On Wednesday, Dec. 17th is our Christmas Party! Games, Christmas Goodies, and gift exchange are planned! (Gift needs to be non-gender and cannot cost more than \$15).

Finally, The Take & Bake Cinnamon Roll packages we prepare during the Lock-In will be ready to be picked up on Sunday, December 14!

A Message Our Lay Leader:

O Holy Night— one of my favorite Christmas hymns. Words which were composed in 1847, yet hold truth through each century; the stars are still brightly shining (though one may have to travel outside city limits to see their brilliance), even though the world is still in sin and error pining; we do feel the thrill of hope even in our weary world and rejoice!



As the day of Christmas comes upon each of us, may we remember; 2 Thessalonians 3:13 But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary of doing good.

Let us be as Mary’s goodness in accepting God’s will (Luke 1:38), and Joseph’s goodness in doing as the Angel of the Lord’s command (Matthew 1:24). As God’s goodness in the birth of Jesus Christ. As Jesus goodness in his divine living, giving and sacrifice. May our goodness this season be their reflections as we serve, give and refill the love and joys of one Holy Night. . .the truest gift of Christmas.

Thank you for gifting me this time as your Lay Leader, I am humbled and blessed.

In the words of Tiny Tim; “God bless us, every one!”

Merriest Christmas ~ Teresa

Update from Boy Scout Troop 4041

Busy season as the days get shorter.

Our fall fundraising Popcorn sales are over. Troop 41 outsold last year and scouts put some funds away for their camping and scout accounts for next year. Once again a successful year. Way to go scouts.

Pack 51 held their Halloween party and the troop helped out running games and handing out awards at the Pack meeting.

The Troop 41 flag retirement ceremony was held in early November, and it was nice to see representation from the community. We retired 7 flags. We hope to conduct this annually, if you have a flag in need of retirement, we can hang on to it for next year, feel free to drop it off by the Scout's mailbox.

Five scouts assisted with ushering at UMC's Sunday's service and helped host fellowship afterward. Thanks again for your support of scouting in our community.

Sincerely, The Troop 41 Committee

Congregational Care & Hospitality

WE CARE AT CHRISTMAS!



During December, the Care & Hospitality Committee is inviting people to reach out to shut-ins or others with special needs. A list of names and contact information will be available at church on Sunday mornings. You choose how many you want to contact. Please send a card/note, make a phone call, or plan to visit. You don't need to know the person to provide a greeting. Please identify yourself as someone from the United Methodist Church. It would be lovely if you included a few sentences about yourself, special memories of the person, or news/activities from UMCGR. Please record your name in the folder if you take a list and plan to participate.

NAMETAGS:

If you attend regularly, you should have a name tag so everyone can learn your name. Sign up at the Information Desk and one will be made for you. If you wish to reimburse the church, the cost is \$10.

APPLE PIE FUNDRAISER ~ UPDATE:



149 total pies made!!!

Total Pies Sold 147!!!

Any unsold pies will be used in January on Lumberjack Day.

Thank you to all that have helped or contributed in any way!

Christmas Quilt Silent Auction:

Please place your bid by December 14th. Starting Bid is \$100.

Proceeds will go to the General Fund of the church. The quilt and bid sheet are beside the nursery on the coat rack.



Family Ministry Coordinator Update

At our 2025 Charge Conference we decided as a congregation to seek to add a Family Ministry position. That position's job description was structured to be 20 to 25 hours a week. That person would do 50% of their time directed to Young Families, 30% of their time with elder members of the congregation, and 20% of their time supporting youth ministries with Pastor Jim. The position was advertised through several media both in the Grand Rapids area and throughout the state, also in coordination with our MN Annual Conference. We received no resumes, inquiries, or return contacts.

We are delighted to announce that we have a person who will work specifically with our young families! Jodi Martin, our own Administrator, mentioned interest in the position if it would be tailored to work specifically with Young Families / Children's Ministries. She has previously worked in such a position with another church. The updated job description moves her to full time! She will help our "more seasoned members" to schedule and get the word out on their events and ministries (think things like the "Keenagers" fellowship of yore) along with coordinating Young Families / Children's Ministries. This will include Discovery Zone, young family events and programs (i.e. movie nights and the like), scheduling nursery on Sundays, Vacation Bible Camp and like programs.

The Administrative Council unanimously approved the position on November 24, 2025. This will move Jodi to a full time/salaried position. Jodi will begin her new responsibilities beginning January 1, 2026. Please welcome her to her new combined position of Administrator and Families Ministries Coordinator.

Thank you, Jodi, for your servant's heart and passion for young families and children's ministries!!

Pastor Jim Crecelius & Skip Drake (AC & SPRC Chair)



December



- 1 Mack Buell
- 2 Jane Todd
- 3 Roni Skoglund
- 7 Sue Kolka
- 8 Keith Lightfoot
- 11 Audrey Selliers
- 14 Patricia Kutzorik
- 17 Madison Williams
- 20 Bill Hagenbuck

- 20 Jen Lund
- 21 Abigail Zimmer
- 22 Nancy O'Toole
- 23 Joni Namyst
- 23 Parker Buchacker
- 23 Nevaeh Sisco
- 26 Arnold Hietala
- 26 Deb Hagenbuck
- 29 Megan Sanchez

- 5 Ross & Margaret Cass
- 28 Matthew & Carlee Buchacker



Coordinator:
Carolyn Orlich & Stephanie Zimmer

The captain will contact you if there is a need for help serving a lunch, funeral or other event.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Margaret Cass | Sandy Hansen |
| Mary Hanson | Marva Jean Hutchens |
| Carol Kerr | Kathy Pliska |
| Cindy Ridley | Candice Kortekass |
| Margy Strock | Sheila Weeks |
| Lois Nelson | |



Audrey Selliers will be turning 2 on December 11th. Please join us after service in the fellowship hall on December 14th to celebrate!

Order Frozen Cinnamon Roll Dough for Christmas Morning:



8 rolls for \$10.00, pay & pick up on 12/14. Thank you - UMC Youth!



Orders are being taken for poinsettias and donations to the Senior Scholarship Fund.

Please fill out the lower half of this sheet and place it in the offering plate or mail it to UMCGR.

Please include payment, the deadline for ordering is Dec. 14th.

Thank You!
Worship Committee



NAME: _____

Yes, I would like to order:

_____ Poinsettias at \$11.00 each

_____ Donation toward Senior Scholarship Fund

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____