

**DECEMBER 2023**

# THE EVANGEL

THE NEWSLETTER OF  **AUDUBON PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**



## Christmas Eve at **Audubon Park Church**



The culmination of the Christmas season at Audubon Park United Methodist Church is our Candlelight Christmas Eve service. Plan to share in one of the most beautiful and meaningful worship services of the year.

Each year our celebration of Christmas Eve includes beautiful music, a message of hope, and the cherished tradition of passing the candlelight as we sing Silent Night. Both services are family-friendly and will include a children's moment.

**IN-PERSON AND ONLINE AT 10AM & 8PM**



**Rev. Geoff Helton**

Lead Pastor

[geoff@audubonparkumc.org](mailto:geoff@audubonparkumc.org)

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# FROM THE LEAD PASTOR

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*“For good or ill, every Christmas Eve functions like a kind of time machine for us, taking us back to every other Christmas Eve we have spent on this earth.” (Barbara Brown Taylor, *Home By Another Way*, p. 21)*

For many, Christmas is a reminder of the “good old days” a better past when life seemed simpler, more put-together. All it takes is the smell of pine boughs, a vision of the twinkling lights, the taste of roast turkey and peppermint... and the memories rise up to meet you, swamping you with memories so sweet you can almost taste them in the back of your throat. The kids getting up early, shaking with excitement as they dig deep in their Christmas stockings while mom and dad sit in their pajamas quietly sipping their coffee.

For others, this is a difficult time of year. There’s the empty chair to deal with and the stocking that stays folded in the box. All the rituals that were designed for two or more are now up to you alone and nothing seems right, the holiday seems empty, like something essential has been lost. It is like the sound of one hand clapping...

For others, Christmas is a reminder of the way life should have been but never was—those who have looked with longing all their lives through at the scenes of domestic bliss depicted in movies, and Christmas cards, and Facebook posts. They so desperately want that bliss for themselves but can’t seem to attain it. Everyone is supposed to go home for Christmas, right? Only where is that, exactly? Some of us know and some of us are still trying to find home; still trying to find that perfect Christmas.

This year you may be desperately trying to create a perfect Christmas for yourself and those you love. You may be stuck in your memories of perfect Christmases past. You may be wondering what’s wrong with you that your Christmases never seem to live up to the hype. Whatever this Christmas looks like, be sure to be on the lookout for an encounter with Jesus. Because if Christmas is anything, it’s the time that Jesus shows up to reveal to us how faulty our memory is and how small our dreams are compared to the dreams God has for us.

It’s at Christmas that God is revealed not as the “God-Who-Is-Up-There-Somewhere” who lifts us up out of our ordinary lives, but as the “God-Who-Is-With-Us” who comes to us in the midst of our ordinary lives, however much or little our lives reflect the Christmas cards we send. That is where God is born, just there, in any cradle we will offer him, on any pile of straw we will pat together with our hands.

Our sanctuary is filled with greenery, trees and lights and we’re preparing for all of the special events and worship services associated with Advent and Christmas including a Christmas Pageant, Longest Night Service, Christmas Eve Services, and Flannel Sunday! I hope you’ll join us this advent and Christmas as we remember and celebrate Christ’s birth.

*Grace & Peace,  
Pastor Geoff*



NO REHEARSAL  
**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**



**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>, 3-5PM**

**ALL AGES ARE WELCOME!**

Following the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem we hear about visits from simple shepherds, heavenly angels and the wisemen from the east. In this year's Christmas Pageant adults and children will all work together to remember and re-tell the story of Christ's birth in a stable in Bethlehem.

Join us for an intergenerational and interactive Christmas event that will include a no-rehearsal Christmas pageant, singing the songs of the season, and cookie decorating!

## Flannel Sunday

Wear Your Favorite  
Flannel Shirt To Church

**NEW YEAR'S EVE**  
**Sunday, December 31**  
**at 10AM**

On New Year's Eve, we'll gather for one combined service at 10AM. It will also stream at 10AM on Facebook, YouTube, and our church website. Wear your favorite flannel and your comfiest jeans as we gather to begin the new year worshipping God!

## *The Longest Night*

Service of Reflection and Hope

**THURSDAY DECEMBER 21ST**

In-Person at Noon

Hosted Online at 7pm

For those who have experienced loss, no matter how recently, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways.

Our Longest Night service is observed on the Winter Solstice (which is the longest night of the year), and is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle.

The service will be held in-person in the Sanctuary at noon on December 21st, then will also be available on Facebook, YouTube, and our church website beginning at 7pm.



# NEEDLEWORK GROUP

**Our Needlework Group gathers in the Parlor each Wednesday at 1pm**, and you are invited to join us for a relaxing 2 hours of conversation, along with some knitting if you're so inclined. People of all ability levels are welcome. Contact the office if you have questions or want to join!

And for those keeping track, our donations of chemo hats this year totals almost 600!!



*Some of the knitters pose with just a PORTION of the hats that have been lovingly made and donated this year to cancer patients around Spokane!*

## AUDUBON PARK YOUTH GROUP

### GROG

**Sunday, December 3rd | 6pm - 7:30pm**

Bring your running shoes and get ready for a night of GROG! This is a Youth Group favorite and will not disappoint.

### Angel Tree

**Sunday, December 10th | 12pm - 2pm**

We will meet downstairs in the Youth Room & carpool over to Walmart where we will shop for presents for families in need. Then we will meet back at the church, wrap the presents, and place them under the Angel Tree to be delivered closer to Christmas.

### Christmas Party

**Monday, December 18th | 6pm - 7:30pm**

We will meet in the parlor for a Potluck dinner and games. We are asking parents to please prepare a dish for the event (we can coordinate in our YG chat). Thanks for all of your help and support!

## YOUNG(ish) ADULTS

*A fellowship group for those in their 20's, 30's, & 40's*

### Spokane Chiefs Hockey Game

**Saturday, December 2nd | 6:05pm**

Come and join our Youngish Adult Group at the Spokane Arena as the Spokane Chiefs take on the Prince George Cougars on Saturday (12/2) at 6:05pm. We will have our very own private PARTY POD reserved for our group thanks to a very special member of our church!

It's also Teddy Bear Toss night, where you can bring a teddy bear to donate and throw it onto the ice after the Chiefs score their first goal of the night. All teddy bears will be donated to those in need in Spokane community. Contact Hannah in the church office for any questions!

For more info on Youth Group or Youngish Adult events, contact Drew Homchick: [drew@audubonparkumc.org](mailto:drew@audubonparkumc.org)





**PLEASE NOTE:** Because Christmas falls on the 4th week this year, and of course 2nd Harvest won't be making deliveries on Christmas Day, **Daily Bread, Bare Necessities, and the Food Bank will all be held on December 12th and December 19th** instead of the 12th and 26th!

## Audubon Food Bank

Thank you to all who support our food bank! The funding and products you give stay right here at Audubon Food Bank, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to continue this ministry for our neighbors.

New ideas? See a sale somewhere? Let us know! We are always on the lookout for new recipes to share, and ways to stretch the food dollars.

Also, I am in need of technical support and ideas to create a more interesting website — all suggestions are welcomed, bonus points if you have (or know someone who has) technical experience.

Lastly, we are about to start some revamping of our Food Bank area! Our floor project in the computer room is about ready to start, just a few details to work out. Thank you for your continued support, and thank you in advance for your patience as we finalize everything.

*Sincerely,*  
*Karen Peacock*  
(Food Bank Director)

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### NEW FELLOWSHIP GROUP ALERT:

**PARLOR GAMES!**

Do you like playing games? Come join us in the parlor on the **1st and 3rd Thursday at 1pm** to play games with your friends, laugh, and enjoy a great snack!

PS. If you want to join, but the day or time doesn't work for you, please reach out to Karen Peacock or Retta Nickell to discuss other options.



# STEPHEN MINISTRY

at Audubon Park  United Methodist Church

Your Stephen Ministry team wishes everyone a safe and healthy Advent and Christmas season. We know that for some members of our congregation this is a difficult time of year. The hours of daylight are shorter, weather conditions may keep us more isolated and lonely. If you are struggling, perhaps the Stephen Ministers could pray for you or minister to you. We can pray for you at our supervision meetings, and we currently have one opening for a male care receiver.

We continue to seek people who would be interested in serving as a Stephen Minister. I would like to hold a class to train new Stephen Ministers, but have not had many interested individuals. This is a valuable ministry of the church, but can only continue if we have people interested in training to be Stephen Ministers. This commitment should be prayerfully considered as it does involve a significant time commitment initially and 1-3 hours per week following the initial training. You must be a member of Audubon Park UMC to serve as a Stephen Minister. The initial training is 50 hours and once trained, Stephen Ministers continue with twice monthly supervision meetings (2 hours each) that includes continuing education as they work with assigned care receivers. You also meet with your care receiver for about an hour a week.

Our current Stephen Ministers have served for more than 10 years each and we are grateful for their faithful service. Each of them will tell you they have received numerous blessings from this work. We look to expand our numbers, but if there is no interest, this program may not be sustainable. If this ministry sounds like something you would be interested in, please contact me or Pastor Glenn for more information.

*Thank You,  
Carol Hendershot*



Ann Fritz has served on our church's Finance Team as Co-Treasurer since 2005, much of that time as a volunteer. **It is with bittersweet, yet joyful tidings that we share the news that Ann will be retiring from her work at the church at the end of 2023.** We'll share details soon regarding how we will celebrate her ministry with us.



We're so thankful for your financial support of our church and it's ministries as we strive to be a tangible presence of Christ in our neighborhood and world.

If made a financial commitment to the church for this year (2023), please do your best to fulfill that pledge. If you need a record of your current giving for 2023 please contact Debra Kraus or the church office.

If you have met your pledge for 2023 consider giving an extra year-end gift! We'll have details on our Annual Christmas Offering out soon!





### Advent Sermon Series | Nov 26 - Dec 24

There are four songs in the gospel of Luke that are sung in response to the news that a Messiah will be born. They each have become famous in their own ways and have their own special titles in church history. They are the songs of Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and the angels. They are also known by their opening Latin words: Magnificat, Benedictus, Nunc dimittis, and Gloria.

These songs are unique in the gospel text, because they're surrounded by prose. They are meant to interrupt our reading, and they call us to pay attention. This Advent, we'll explore each of these songs, both in remembrance of Christ's birth and in anticipation of his return. We'll ask ourselves: what do each of these songs have to teach us and how can we learn to sing them ourselves?

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 11 - Paul & Barbara Burns
- 20 - Jean & Jim Enzler
- 29 - Rich & Carol Hendershot
- 30 - Laura & Vince Velonza

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### Sunday

- 9am Children's Sunday School  
Youth Sunday School  
Worship Service In-Person  
Worship Service Online
- 10:30am Worship Service In-Person

### Monday

- 9am Art Group - 1st & 3rd Mondays
- 11:30am Bible Study (Melva Lohstroh)
- 7:30pm Alcoholics Anonymous

### Tuesday

- 8:30am Food Bank, Breakfast, & Daily Bread - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays
- 9am Quilting Group
- 10am Staff Meeting - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays
- 6pm Cub Scouts

### Wednesday

- 10am Overeaters Anonymous
- 1 pm Knitters
- 6:30pm Boy Scouts

### Thursday

- 11am Men's Coffee with Pastor Glenn
- 1pm Parlor Games - 1st & 3rd Thursdays
- 6pm TAPS Care Group - 1st Thursdays
- 6pm Choir Rehearsal

### Friday

- 10am Stephen Ministry - 1st & 3rd Fridays

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 8 - Genevieve Leger
- 9 - Clara Caley
- 10 - Tammy Dodson
- 13 - Estel Harvey
- 19 - Sandi Nicol
- 22 - Ann Sundgren
- 25 - Jan Cooper
- 26 - Chris Nicol
- 30 - Darius Strobeck
- 31 - Joe Hilderbrand  
Bill Strobeck

 **Audubon Park**  
**United Methodist Church**  
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**THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 25-29.**

**If you need pastoral care or assistance from our church staff,  
please contact Pastor Geoff or Pastor Glenn.**

**A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF**  **AUDUBON PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**