November 2026

The Appleseed

La Crescent and Dakota-Riverside United Methodist Church

From the Pastor's Pen

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope the Breakthrough Prayer has been as powerful for you as it has been for me. When we invite God to help us see where He is working and where we can follow, it can have an effect on how we see the world.
I also hope that you have been blessed by our journey through *The Story*. As I write this, we are already almost 19 weeks in, and I am still discovering new things as we go. The study has also been a lot of fun. Hearing others' perspectives on God's grand plan is amazing.

With so much going on, I want to invite you to join me in a quiet and joyful Advent. I plan on doing a series I am calling *Making Room*. Advent and Christmas are times when we can so easily pack our schedules and get caught up in trying to make everything perfect. But I think this is also a time when God, during the season of the least sunlight, asks us to slow down and simply see the wonder of this beautiful season of lights.

I won't be doing a traditional study, but each week I'll prepare a handout you can take home and work through with your family or by yourself. It will include three readings, a simple question, and a few practices to try throughout the week. I want it to be simple and life-giving, something that can be done at the kitchen table or perhaps in your favorite comfy chair.

The joy of the season and its greatest gift are always about Jesus. He invites us to discover where His hope, joy, peace, and love break into our lives in big and small ways.

I always find that Advent goes by so quickly, and I pray that this year we can slow down and savor each moment. December 26 will come, as it always does, and although the Christmas season lasts longer than just Christmas Day, it often seems that this is when we begin to feel the cold and winter even more. With the warmth of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day behind us, we can find ourselves wishing the joy would last longer.

So, let's try to spend as much time cherishing this season as we can. Let's make it a *summer of the heart in December*. The busyness will wait, and the world won't go away if we choose to turn off a screen or set aside something that seems urgent for a little while. But the season that makes us all children again will pass quickly.

This series and study are meant to help us slow down. As Scrooge's nephew says in *A Christmas Carol*:

"And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that [Christmas] has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The season is meant to remind us that God has made peace through His Son. It warms us when the days turn cold and lights our paths when the days are dark. And this gift isn't meant for just one month. The bells of Christmas should ring all year long in our hearts and homes.

Slow down with me and soak it all in. Welcome the quiet and sacred moments we can find when we turn our hearts toward the truth of the season. That truth isn't found in a store, but in the faithfulness of a God who loves us and who was born in a place meant for animals on a night long ago.

Let this Advent prepare your hearts and help you make room for the Son of God, whose birth we celebrate anew on Christmas Day. Come what may, His light shines and will continue to shine.

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
Psalms 46

In the blessed assurance of God's love,
Pastor Chris Leistra

TRUSTEES UPDATE

By Cheri Olson

Trustee report:
It is easy to get depressed or feel overwhelmed with all the stuff that has to be done to take care of our church and parsonage. I hope my sharing of our needs doesn't make people feel that way. Like all buildings, we have things that go wrong and wear out and get used and we need to weigh and balance what are top priorities and what are things we can put off for a time period. We are blessed to have 2 great buildings that we own free and clear that are in overall excellent condition, so we need to start with that.

I want to thank Gary Hill for sitting down and helping me complete our annual accessibility audit. We do really well with that, we are "Silver Level Certified" mostly because of the foresight of our predecessors. In 1975 when the church was built, it was built on the level, and the addition in 1996 maintained that excellent design so we don't have to deal with stairs or elevators or dangerous steps. A large bequest around 2015 was thoughtfully used to install power assist main doors with automatic door entry, and a hearing loop system in the sanctuary. Furniture purchased by the United Methodist Women for the fellowship hall is the right height level and weight to be used by those with physical limitations. But Gary and others who care for those with access challenges have shared some issues that persist in the church and can be improved. The door to the women's bathroom is a challenge to enter with a walker or wheelchair; the doors to the fellowship hall are very heavy for someone in a wheelchair; we could improve our signage for everyone. The Trustees will take a look at some of these issues in 2027 and see what we can do to improve these barriers to comfortable participation of all of our members. If you have ideas or concerns, please bring them to Cheri's attention for us to review. But congratulations to us for being Silver Level Certified in our annual accessibility audit!

New flooring in the parsonage.
Thanks to Terry Schoh who is helping to repair a small hallway section of flooring that flooded last summer from a plugged air conditioner. We'll be getting nice vinyl laminate flooring in the downstairs hallway and the basement bathroom to replace the ruined carpet.

Parsonage tour:
Another required activity the Trustees have to do each year is to tour the parsonage with a member of the SPRC. This action helps us stay on top of issues affecting our home and making sure we are providing a comfortable, clean, up to date, and lovely home for our pastor and his family. Our parsonage meets all of the requirements, but there are always little things we need to do like fix a faucet, repair some cement, replace a bush, redo some landscaping just like we need to do at our own homes. The Trustees have a small list of items to investigate and tackle in 2027 and will be working in the coming months to prioritize our work at the parsonage.

Energy audit:
Our gas company, Xcel energy, provides intermittent free audits which involve touring our building with an energy specialist and looking for opportunities to save money and energy. We did that in late August and are awaiting our report. Our specialist was very impressed with all the things we have in place: energy efficient furnaces and air conditioners when able, programmable thermostats, extensive LED lighting, etc. But he did have some recommendations and we are awaiting his full report for even more opportunities to save energy (and $$!!)

Finally, the Trustee team is a fun group of people who like to DO things. Even if you don't want to be on the committee, if you feel like you'd like to help with some simple chores or activities, it can really help. I can always find an activity that will help us care for our buildings!

On that note, I want to thank someone to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude. Tim Szobody is "retiring" this year as Trustee and he doesn't even know how long he has been one, maybe 20 years? I told him last year he could never retire, but I suppose it is time for him to take a break. However, Tim has been the most steadfast, helpful, go-to person for our church for those 20 years. From putting in new toilets, to replacing LED lights, to sanding the sticky doors to building a new parsonage deck to being an expert and a sounding board, Tim has been an enormous help and I literally could NOT have done this job without him. I am naming him Trustee Emeritus and told him he will still be the best advisor to the Trustee Chair ever. Thank you, Tim, and enjoy your well deserved time off the Trustees!!

Happy 170th Birthday to us!

Did you know that the first Methodist church meeting in La Crescent was held in 1856??! That means we are celebrating our 170th Birthday this year!! Happy birthday to us. Our first church was built in 1866 and christened in around 1872. Apparently there was a German Methodist Church in the Pine Creek area and eventually these 2 churches merged. . .

This year the United Methodist Church is asking us to be aware of and good stewards of our history. We HAVE a lot of cool history, but we haven't been very good at compiling it in a meaningful way. Hopefully in 2027, we'll find all the boxes tucked away in storage, digitize all the pictures under the books and in the cupboards, and share some great historical stories with you. Anyone who is interested in this kind of stuff, let Jessica know, and we can work together to dig through our old papers and photos and make all kinds of discoveries.

Just think, Minnesota didn't become a state until 1858 and La Crescent was incorporated as a city in 1857. So we have been present in this area since the very beginnings of our state and city. It is fun to imagine what was happening in our region when those first meetings were held. . .I hope we can find some clues in our old papers about what life was like for our "ancestors!". If you have old records or photos, be sure and share them with us as we work to pull this information together this coming year.

In the meantime, Happy 170th Birthday to us!

MISSION TEAM UPDATE – November 2026

"He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry."
Psalm 146:7

November is upon us – and while it is traditionally the start of the winter months and the holiday season here in the United States it may very well be one of my least favorite months. The trees have fully turned which means I probably have TOO many leaves to rake and the branches are bare; the weather is unpredictable which means I'm probably arguing with someone in my house about what they can wear to school each morning.

Man – do I sound ungrateful?? Sometimes we must be intentional in our thinking and do a bit of a gratitude switch. I love the trees in our neighborhood in the fall because they really are so beautiful in the fall. And while I want my children to be warm with the chilly weather rolling in I guess I need to give them this opportunity to learn to be independent; but sometimes mom might just know what she's talking about when she says it's important to wear layers on a crisp fall morning.

I suppose we are lucky and I'm grateful we have these first world problems to complain about. Late in October the missions team hosted a group mission opportunity to visit Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) in Eagan, MN. 15 people joined the adventure, and we spent about 90 minutes preparing food packs which are sent to many countries in the world which experience high levels of food insecurity. FMSC has now shipped more than 5 billion meals worldwide since it's founding in 1987. The original founder, Richard Proudfit, was inspired on his own mission trip in Honduras where he says he heard God say *"If you've seen my starving children, feed them".* In the 90 minutes that the 15 of us served alongside people from other churches we prepared over 30,000 meals! May we continue to be as inspired to serve the people of our community, and the world!

As we continue into the fall we are still pressing onward towards our Operation Christmas Child mission. This mission is another global service project which gives us the opportunity to not only provide a child with a gift when they may have never received one, but also an opportunity to attend a discipleship program called The Greatest Journey. We are continuing to collect donations of needed items for gifts such as crafts, small coloring or notebooks, toys, etc. We have another craft making day where we will be making matchbox car racetracks for the boxes for the middle age boys' boxes on November 8th before and after church, and the packing party will be held after worship on Sunday November 15th. Please be sure to join us.

If you have ideas or suggestions for a mission project please speak to a missions committee member. We look forward to having you join us for a future time of fellowship in missions for Christ.

Blessings,

Mandy

Missions In Action

Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus

November Breakthrough Prayer

Gracious God,

Open our hearts to You and to the life You are calling us to live.

Help us move beyond simply seeing where You are working. Teach us to respond with our whole hearts and lives. Let our faith be more than words we speak or beliefs we hold. May it shape how we treat others, how we serve our neighbors, how we care for those in need, and how we live out Your love each day.

Draw us closer to You, Lord. Help us grow in our trust of You and become more attentive to Your presence in our daily lives. When opportunities come to show kindness, offer help, speak truth, or stand beside someone who is struggling, give us hearts that are ready to respond.

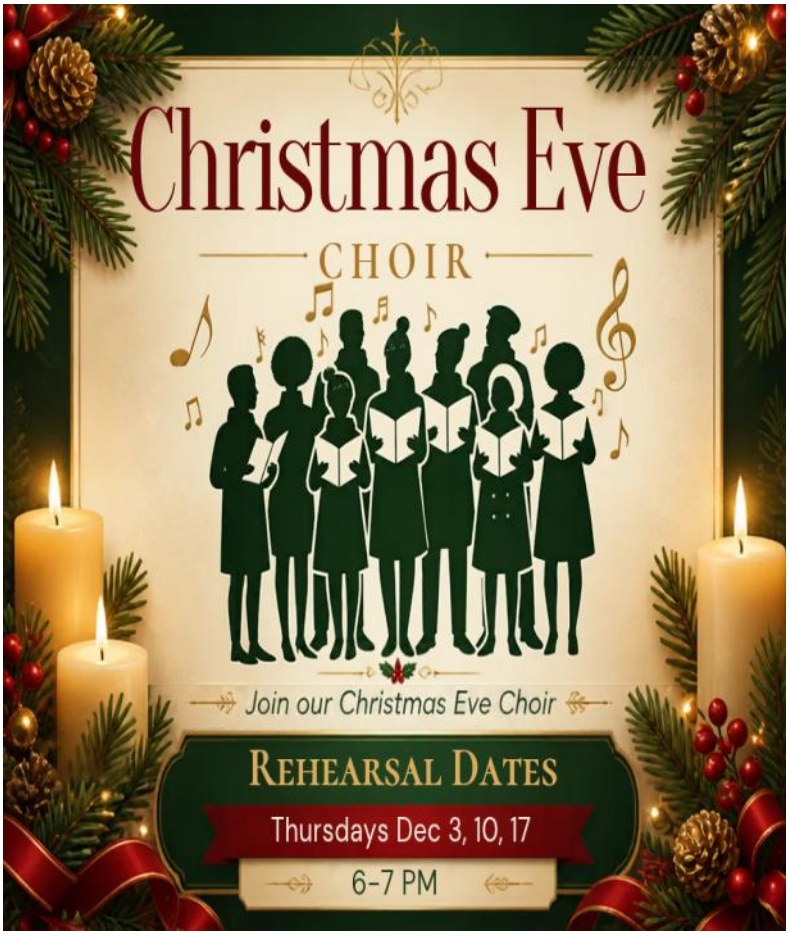
As a church, help us follow You together. Let our worship draw us closer to You, let our life together strengthen our faith, and let our service reflect Your love to the world around us. Show us how our faith can reach beyond these walls and become a living witness to Your grace.

Lord, we want to follow You not only when it is easy or when the path is clear, but in the ordinary choices and moments that make up our lives. Shape our hearts so that loving You and loving our neighbors becomes more than something we do on Sunday. Let it become the way we live.

Open our hearts to Your leading. Fill our lives with Your love, strengthen our faith, and help us follow wherever You call.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.



BLANK NOTE

By Emma Blank

Our staff meetings at church are always a highlight for me. I have never worked somewhere where the staff gets along as well as we do here. Maybe it is because we really use the biblical principles Jesus taught or maybe we just like each other.

We discuss and even disagree on things sometimes but we always seem to talk it out and listen to each other. It is refreshing to have this gift. Coworkers who are also friends.

Pastor always starts the meeting with a weekly check in to see how we are doing that particular day and it gives us insight to each other and how we are as individuals. We learn about our families and what is going on in our personal lives. I think Pastor knows if we are struggling in our personal lives we will struggle at work. It is a safe place to talk and share our joys and struggles. So wonderful and amazing.

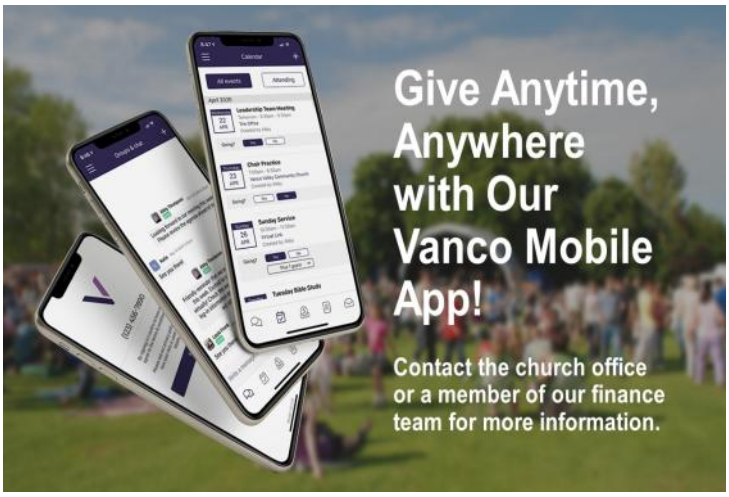
Thank you fellow staff and congregants for being not only great coworkers, but great parishioners as well. Be proud that we have a church that truly cares. I feel the love of Jesus each and every time I walk in these doors. We are very blessed.

Have a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Don't forget about the Christmas Choir starting Thursday December 3rd at 6 PM.

Please join us for singing and fellowship. Our performance on Christmas Eve will be Epic!

Emma

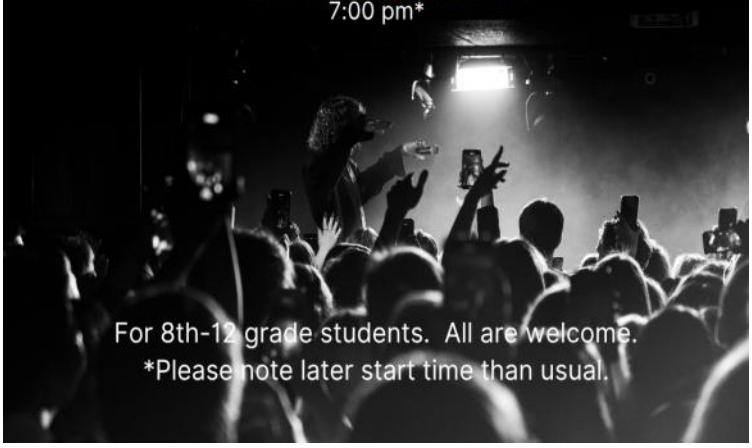


YNOW

Youth Night of WORSHIP

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

7:00 pm*



For 8th-12 grade students. All are welcome.
*Please note later start time than usual.

thank you

Thank you to all who supported the youth's annual food drive at Trick-or-Treat for Food. Your support is greatly appreciated!

THE BRIDGE

Youth Center

For all middle and high school students

NOW OPEN!

Mondays, 3-5 and Wednesdays, 2:30-5

Located within La Crescent United Methodist Church. 520 N. Elm St.
https://www.facebook.com/thebridgelacrescent

Can you help the Youth Mission Trip teams with their cookie box fundraiser?

COOKIE BAKING

Join us at the church at any of these times to bake Christmas cookies, all ingredients provided:

SUN. NOV. 29	5:00-8:00 PM
WED. DEC. 2	5:00-7:00 PM
THUR. DEC. 3	2:00-3:30 PM
SUN. DEC. 6	11:15-1:30PM
WED. DEC.9	5:00-7:00 PM
FRI. DEC. 11	12:00-6:00 PM

DECEMBER 12- ASSEMBLY OF BOXES; TIME TBD

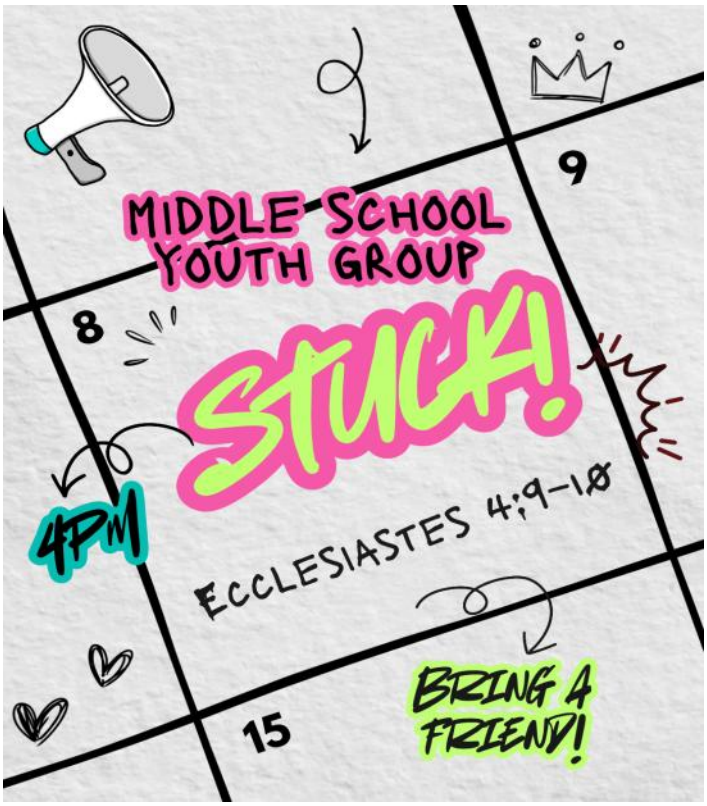
We would welcome your donations of cookies baked at home as well. We have a Thrivent grant to help cover the cost of supplies; please let Mindy know if you would like her to pick up ingredients for you. Thank you for supporting the mission trip!

GOOD FOOD. GREAT COMPANY.

A Friendsgiving Feast

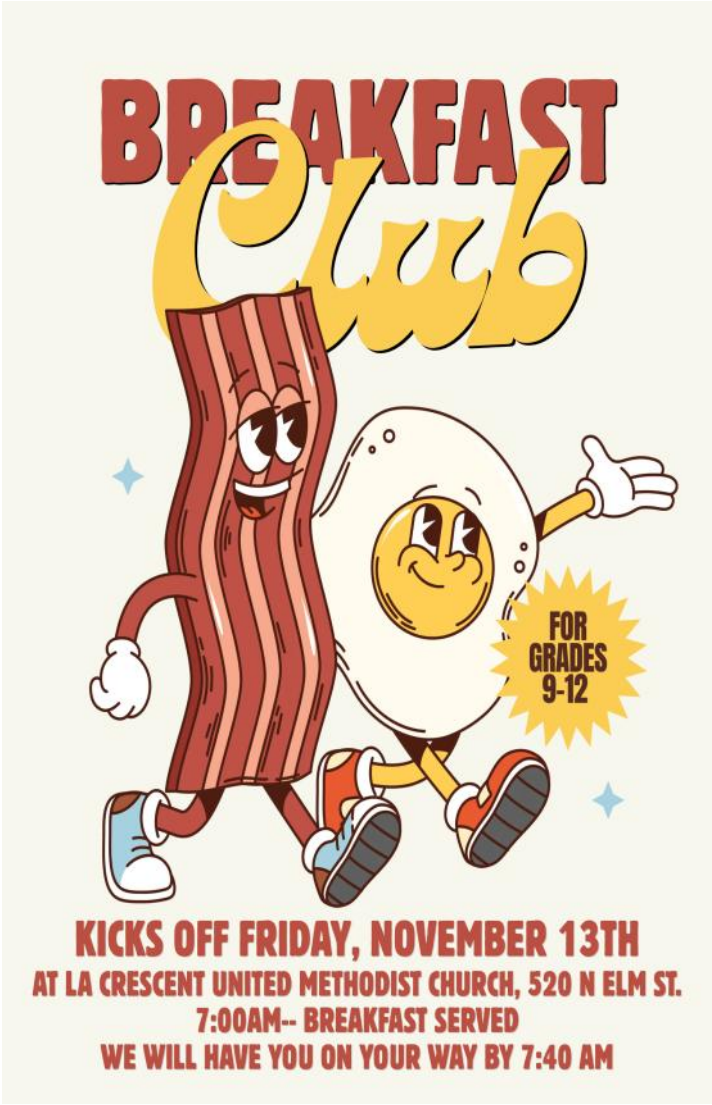
All 5th -12th grade youth are invited to our Friendsgiving Feast on Sunday, November 22 at 6pm at Mindy's house. Bring a dish to share, and a friend to share it with! Turkey will be provided.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND[TH] AT MINDY'S HOUSE


MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP
STUCK!
9
8
4PM
ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10
BRING A FRIEND!
15

WHO LIKES pancakes?
Youth Mission Trip Breakfast
Sunday, November 15
8:30-9:45 am

MISSION TRIP27
Wilmington, NC
June 18-27, 2027
All 8th-12th grade students are invited to join us on this life changing mission trip.
To reserve your spot, please return our mission trip contract and $100 non-refundable deposit to Mindy by November 16th. Fundraising opportunities are available.
Join us for our next meeting on November 15th after the shoebox packing party (around 11:45 am)


BREAKFAST Club
FOR GRADES 9-12
KICKS OFF FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH
AT LA CRESCENT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 520 N ELM ST.
7:00AM-- BREAKFAST SERVED
WE WILL HAVE YOU ON YOUR WAY BY 7:40 AM

La Crescent and Dakota-Riverside United Methodist Church
520 North Elm Street | La Crescent, MN 55947

Phone: 507.895.2373
Website: lacrescentumc.org
https://www.facebook.com/lacrescentumc
https://www.facebook.com/Riverside-Dakota-UMC-436563933430687

Pastor Chris Leistra
Music Director: **Emma Blank**
Office: **Jessica Wallace-Bialecki**
Youth Director: **Mindy Kearney**

When emailing the church office use:
office.lacrescentumc@gmail.com

The Appleseed

La Crescent & Dakota-Riverside United Methodist Churches

NOVEMBER 2026

Made Specially For