Reporter

December 2026

EVANGEL
WE CHOOSE THE JESUS WAY

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From the Pastor's Perspective

Journey to Bethlehem

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Christmas is about NOT being home!
We place a lot of value on being "home for Christmas." We enjoy the familiar traditions, the decorations, the family gatherings, the favorite foods, and the memories that make this season special. There is certainly something wonderful about gathering with those we love. But the story of the first Christmas was actually all about leaving home!
Our Advent and Christmas message series is, "Journey to Bethlehem." As we revisit the familiar Christmas story, we will discover that nearly everyone in the story was on the move! Mary and Joseph left their home in Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem. Shepherds left their fields to go see the newborn Savior. Wise men traveled from the East, following a star in search of the newborn King. Angels traveled from heaven to earth to announce the good news. And, most remarkably, Jesus Himself left the glory of heaven to come and live among us.
Perhaps we can make a commitment to travel this Christmas! We can do this, even if we are not physically traveling.

Christmas calls us to leave behind the familiar and follow where God leads. Sometimes we get so caught up in making Christmas just right that we lose sight of what God is inviting us to experience. We can become distracted by the shopping, preparations, celebrations, and endless activities. Like Mary and Joseph, we need to remember where we are headed. Like the shepherds, we need to be willing to drop what we are doing and go straight to Jesus. Like the magi, we need to disrupt our lives in order to encounter the Savior.
But there is an even bigger journey taking place. Jesus didn't simply travel from one town to another. He came down from heaven! The Gospel of John tells us that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us (John 1:14). Jesus entered our world, our struggles, our brokenness, and our humanity because we could not make our way to God on our own. He came to rescue us, restore us, and lead us into new life. God traveled for that first Christmas: God comes to us!



The journey doesn't end in Bethlehem. The angels reminded Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and others that the Lord was with them. The wise men went home by another road; and Joseph, Mary and Jesus even had to journey to Egypt to escape danger. Their journeys remind us that following God doesn't always mean traveling an easy or predictable road. But because of Jesus, we never travel alone. We are people who are highly favored, loved by God, and accompanied by His presence.
As we celebrate Christmas and prepare to step into a new year, I challenge us to resist the temptation to settle into the comfort of simply staying home (the way things are). Instead, let's be people who are willing to go where God sends us! Let's carry the arriving love of Christ into our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and community. Let's take a new step of faith, serve someone in need, encourage someone who is struggling or share the hope we have found in Jesus.
The journey to Bethlehem reminds us that Christmas isn't just a place we visit once a year. It's an invitation to a new way of living. So, wherever God leads you in the coming year, may you travel with confidence, faith, and the peace of Christ.
Merry Christmas, and may God bless you on the journey ahead!

Pastor David

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Evangel Family

Pastor David and the staff would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Evangel family for the many expressions of appreciation, encouraging cards, and thoughtful gifts shared with us during Staff Appreciation Month in October. We are truly blessed and privileged to serve alongside such a wonderful church family as we work together in service to our good God. Thank you for making us feel so appreciated and loved!

Custodian Needed

With Sue Long's retirement at the end of 2026, Evangel is seeking a part-time custodian. The position is approximately 20 hours per week. Interested in learning more? Please contact the church office at 507-289-4817. Someone will follow up with you to discuss the position's responsibilities, requirements, and answer any questions you may have.

Sign Up to Light the Advent Wreath

Each week we'll light a candle on the Advent wreath, representing the hope, peace & joy of the season. Individuals and families are encouraged to participate in a Sunday morning service to light the candle and read scripture. Sign up today in the Lobby or call the church office.

The 2026 Giving Tree Is Underway



Evangel invites you to share Christ's love with those families who are struggling and are in need this holiday season. Your generosity can make a meaningful difference! There are 2 ways you can participate in the Giving Tree:

Option 1: In-Person

1.) Choose a gift tag from the Giving Tree in the Lobby;
2.) Purchase the gift as described
3.) Wrap the gift & attach the gift tag on top
4.) Return it to the tree OR hand it to one of the Evangel staff. You may stop by during the day, on select evenings, or Sunday mornings.

Option 2: Monetary donation

- By check: Make out to Evangel UMC and designated "Giving Tree" on the memo line.
- If donating with cash, place in an envelope labeled "Evangel Giving Tree."



All gifts will be distributed by the Connections & Growth Team to the families selected. If all tags are taken, you can still help by donating unwrapped toys, scarves, mittens, socks, or gloves for Christmas Anonymous and other local ministries. Thank you for making the Giving Tree a meaningful part of Evangel's mission and for being the hands and feet of Christ this Christmas!



Cookies for the Homebound

Saturday, December 5 • 1–4pm • Kitchen & Dinette •
Class size is limited to 12 participants

Join in to assemble festive cookie boxes to share with our homebound church family. Each participant is asked to bring 2 dozen homemade cookies without nuts. We'll frost and decorate cut-out cookies, enjoy holiday drinks and treats, and share a brief Christmas devotion. To sign up, click: **Cookies for Homebound** or sign up on the bulletin board next to Room 223.

The Chosen Season 6 Watch Party at Roger and Janet Guderians'

Sunday, December 6 at 4pm • Episodes 5 & 6 • call the church for address • Meal provided!

Financial Summary of Church Operations through October 2026

Year-to-date (YTD) income is slightly above estimated budget by $1,243.00. The monthly rent from the Good News Children's Center was not received early enough to hit the monthly report. This was an oversight by the Children's Center & therefore we do not consider this an issue, even though it impacted the expected monthly income.
Monthly expenses were near the monthly budget but YTD net operating expenses ended in the red (deficit) by $30,858. Although, we would like to be running in the black, this was expected.

Income from Church Congregational Giving	$492,910
Other Operating Income	$103,300
Total Income from Operations	$596,210
Total Expense from Operations	$627,067
Net Income/(Loss) from Operations	$(30,858)

For questions or more information, contact Arlene Morris, Chair of the Finance, at vammorris@gmail.com.

Sewing Circle

Mondays at 1:00pm in Room 223 **(No meeting on December 28)**.

A Bella Christmas Concert: Go Tell It!

Friday, December 11 at 7:30pm & Saturday, December 12 at 2:30pm
Trinity Lutheran Church - 222 6th Ave SW, Rochester, MN 55902
Christmas hymns and ballads, performed by the Bella Voce and Bella Fiore choirs, featuring Evangel's own Tessa Hull, Cambrie Evans and Gretchen Kroneman.

- **Tickets: Adult-$25.00**
- **K-12-$15.00**

Reserve your tickets here: Christmas_Concert_Tickets

Farm Share Boxes: Serving Our Community on the 2nd Saturday of Each Month

Saturday, December 12 • 10am–12pm • Evangel main entrance
Farm Share Boxes provide seasonal produce and locally made foods like fruits, vegetables, and bread. Our community will be nourished and local farmers are supported in their livelihoods. Not everyone has access to affordable, fresh produce, and by sponsoring farm share boxes, we can help make healthy food more accessible to those who need it most in our community.

- To purchase or donate a Farm Share Box, click or go visit: **https://www.mnfoodrescue.org/-farm-shares**
- To volunteer to help load and distribute boxes: **Farm Share Box Distribution Volunteers**

The more our Evangel family participates, the greater the impact we can make together.

Questions? Contact Jim Klepper or Stephanie Mettler.

A Journey to Bethlehem: A Women's Advent Gathering

All women are invited to join in on **Thursday, December 17 at 1pm in the Lobby/Narthex**
During this season of Advent, we will explore excerpts from Rev. Adam Hamilton's study, *The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem*. Each year, we celebrate the birth of Jesus with Christmas trees and lights, gifts and cards, carols and hymns. Yet the familiarity of these traditions can sometimes keep us from fully appreciating the richness and meaning of the Christmas story. Through this study, Rev. Hamilton sheds light on details we may not have considered, helping us discover the deeper meaning of Christmas.
Join in for a brief look at this journey and a fresh opportunity to experience the "good news of great joy for all the people." Questions? Contact Becky Pierce at 507-289-6802 or Pastor Susie at 507-316-4745.

Christmas Eve Worship Services - Thursday, December 24

Traditional Candlelight Services: 2:30pm, 4:30pm & 6:30pm
A cappella Candlelight Service: 11:30pm
We look forward to celebrating this special night of worship with you and your family!

Church Office Holiday Hours

The Church Office will be closed on Friday, December 25, for Christmas and Friday, January 1, for New Year's Day. We wish you and your family a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year!

Evangel's "Over 90" Club: Delores Robertson



Delores Robertson joined Evangel's Over 90s Club on June 4, 2024.
Delores is a Rochester native and grew up in the Homestead United Methodist (formerly EUB) Church. After graduation she was working as a receptionist in a local beauty shop when she met her future husband, Ross, on a blind date. They got married in 1954, moved onto a farm in Stewartville, and began raising their family of five children. Delores worked in the office of what is today Stewartville UMC. When their kids got older she worked at the school full-time. After 10 years of farming, Ross' health required him to pursue a different job. So, they moved into town and Ross worked at Mayo for 25 years in maintenance. Delores eventually worked at IBM for 10 years before they retired.
They then moved to Park Rapids but wintered in Arizona. They stayed involved in United Methodist churches in both locations. Delores stayed active by working at the Red Owl grocery store in Park Rapids and at a thrift store in AZ. In 2012 they moved to Rochester because of Ross' declining health. They became involved at Evangel because it was closer to where they were living. Until recently Delores offered samples at the Kwik Trip near Shorewood, where she lives.

Ross' health continued to decline and he passed to glory in 2020. They had been married for 66 years. Delores' five children take turns making sure she gets to worship each Sunday. She has 10 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.
When sharing her lived wisdom for 90+ years, Delores urges people to never give up. "Just keep going!" Even if things are hard, keep going and "you'll figure it out." Life isn't easy, she reflects. A lot of tough things get thrown at you. You need to push yourself, especially when going through hardships. Also, she encourages everyone to get involved. "Don't be afraid to go and do something." "Be willing to try."

Evangel's Annual Rummage Sale on Nov. 7 Brought In Over $20,000!

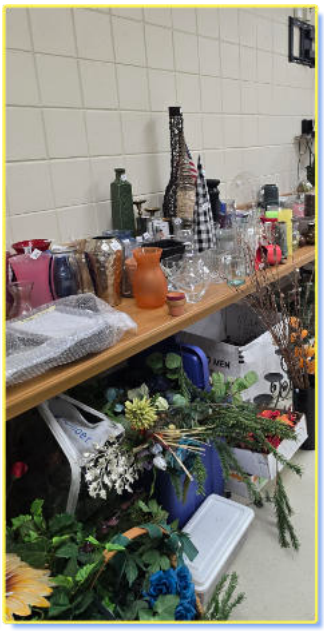














Jim Klepper, Director of Connections & Growth: jklepper@evangelum.org
Clancy Craven, Assoc. Dir. of Connections & Growth: ccraven@evangelum.org

Connections and Growth Calendar

Every Sunday	Sunday School for all ages at 9:30am
Every Sunday	Children's Church at 8:30am and 10:30am (children excused during service)
Every Thursday	Bible Story Time in Children's Library (Room 225)
Sunday, December 13	Giving Tree gifts due back
Sunday, December 13	Intergenerational Christmas Program
Thursday, December 24	Christmas Eve worship at 2:30pm, 4:30pm, 6:30pm and 11:30pm
Friday, December 25	Christmas Day - Office Closed
Sunday, December 27	No Sunday School

Preschool and Elementary Students Continue to Grow with GROW!

Our Pre-K and elementary Sunday School classes continue to thrive with our new GROW curriculum! Each Sunday, children enjoy two engaging parts of their Sunday School hour designed to help them learn, connect, and grow in their faith.

Large Group Time – Children begin together in Room 224 for a 5–10-minute opening filled with music countdowns, art projects, and activities connected to the weekly Bible story. Jim Klepper and Clancy Craven, along with several Evangel youth, lead this energetic time each week. December's theme is "Christmas Vacation."

Small Group Time – Following Large Group, children move to age-based classrooms with their Sunday School teachers. Small Group time builds on the Bible story through questions, polls, personal stories, GROW videos, object lessons, hands-on activities, reflection, and prayer.

We're excited to see our children learning, growing, and discovering more about God each Sunday!

Children's Church Every Sunday!

Children from Pre-K through Grade 6 are invited to Children's Church every Sunday during both the 8:30am and 10:30am worship services. Children's Church is another opportunity for kids to experience and grow in their faith through engaging, age-appropriate lessons and activities.

Children's Church meets in Room 225 (the Children's Library) from 8:30–9:30am and 10:30–11:30am. The ministry is led by Jim Klepper, Clancy Craven, Nora Day, Gavin Hommerding, and others.

We look forward to welcoming your children each Sunday!





A Special Children's Moment on Christmas Eve!

Kids are invited to come up to the altar for a special Children's Moment during our 2:30pm, 4:30pm, and 6:30pm Christmas Eve services. Children will receive a special Christmas gift! This cherished Evangel tradition is a wonderful way to celebrate the joy of Christmas with our youngest worshipers. Spread the word and invite family and friends!

No Sunday School or Children's Church on December 27

There will be no Sunday School or Children's Church on December 27, giving our children, teachers, and families time to enjoy the Christmas season together. Both ministries will resume on Sunday, January 3.

5th Annual Intergenerational Christmas Program Is on Sunday, December 13

Evangel is committed to Intergenerational ministries! We are better together as we learn from each other across the generations! Please take a look at what's in store this year for our 5th Annual Evangel Intergenerational Christmas Program coming Sunday, December 13.

- **10:30am - Intergenerational Worship:** We will only have one worship service on December 13 so our church family, relatives and friends can be all together- across the generations! The Worship service will include: The Good News Worship Team, congregational singing of Christmas Carols, Senior Choir, Handbell Choir, Youth Choir, readings, scripture lessons, our 2026 Children's Christmas Pantomime, stunning visual images, lighting of the Advent Candles, and more!
- **11:30am - Brunch in the Multi-purpose Room**: After worship, please be sure to join in for Christmas Program brunch with eggs, orange French toast, fruit, pastries & more! provided by our kitchen crew. It's all you can eat!
- **12:00pm - Creation Stations -** After brunch, Creation Stations will be set up around the church in which we will mix intergenerationally to hear the Christmas story, decorate cookies, wrap presents for "The Giving Tree", make Christmas crafts and of course have our annual indoor snowball fight and more! This will be a time of awesome fun and creativity!
- **1:15pm - Christmas Caroling**: The day will conclude with Christmas Caroling to Evangel shut in's and homebound. All ages will spread out all across our city to individual homes as well as care facilitates. There is nothing more touching and inspiring than sharing the carols of Christmas with those who cannot travel to church for Christmas; young and old voices singing together to proclaim Jesus' birth!

To help our Evangel Intergenerational Christmas Program Day run smoothly, we have created a schedule to help all participants prepare for the day:

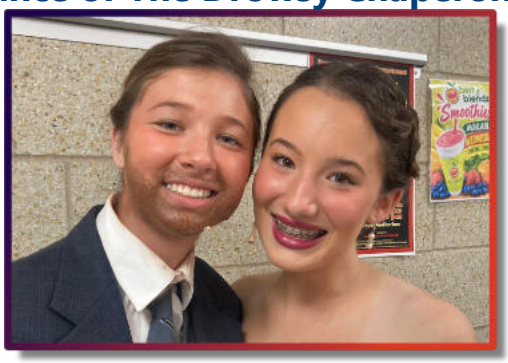


8:00am	Praise Team rehearsal (Sanctuary)
8:30am	Youth Choir rehearsal (Sanctuary)
8:45am	Youth Handbell Choir rehearsal (Sanctuary)
9:00am	Children get into pantomime costumes (Sunday School rooms)
9:15am	Pantomime rehearsal
10:00am	Senior Choir rehearsal (downstairs room)
10:30am	Intergenerational Worship Service
11:30am	All-church lunch (multi-purpose room)
12:00pm	Intergenerational Creation Stations (various rooms)
1:00 pm	church Christmas caroling around town (optional)

(check out the poster on the next page)

Unite@ Took a Trip to Dover-Eyota HS for a Performance of The Drowsy Chaperone











5th Annual

Intergenerational Christmas Program

Sunday, December 13

Come celebrate the joy of Christmas together!

10:30am	**Combined Worship Service** *(one service only)*
11:30am	**Brunch**
12:00pm	**Creation Stations, crafts, cookie decorating, and indoor snowball fight**
1:15pm	**Christmas Caroling** *for Evangel's homebound*



Evangel United to Rake Leaves for Our Senior Members on Sun., Nov. 15















CROSSFIRE NEWS

Stephanie Mettler, Youth Minister
507-289-4817; smettler@evangelum.org

NOVEMBER'S NEWEST

We held two Friday youth group gatherings in November, filled with Bible study, games, and plenty of food! During these meetings, we also found ways to serve others. We supported the Youth Café by helping set up the café space and price food items. We also partnered with Family Promise, learning about their work from the executive director and assembling birthday kits for children living in their Promise House.



YOUTH CAFÉ

On November 7, we hosted the Youth Café during the church Rummage Sale. Thanks to the generosity of our congregation and everyone who supported the café, we raised approximately $4,000 to support our 2027 mission trips!

We are especially excited to share that this single fundraising event raised enough to cover the trip costs for everyone who helped with the café for both the Appalachia Service Project and In-Town Mission in summer 2027. What an incredible blessing! Thank you to everyone who donated, purchased baked goods, volunteered, and helped make this possible.



DECEMBER EVENTS

We are looking forward to two Friday youth gatherings in December, along with the annual church Christmas program!

Please note that our December 11 late night will be our **Youth Christmas Party!** We will provide kabobs, and youth are invited to bring sides and desserts to share. We'll also have a White Elephant gift exchange! Participation is optional, but those who choose to participate should bring a youth-appropriate gift valued at $15 or less.

PRAYING FOR OUR YOUTH

Please keep our youth in your prayers this month as we enter the busy holiday season. Although this is often viewed as a long school break, it doesn't always mean our students get the rest they need.

Pray that our students experience the hope, joy, peace, and love of God throughout this season. Most of all, pray that they recognize and experience the nearness of God in their everyday lives.







Mission Team Update

The Mission Team met for the final time this year on Wednesday November 11, 2026. Four missionary disbursements were approved to complete the Mission Team's budget for 2026. The team discussed other missionary opportunities to support to replace the two missionaries retiring at the end of this year. Suggestions are welcomed!

Make sure to check out the Mission Team Bulletin Board (across from Room 223) for recent news of the missionaries and missions we support!

You Can Give to the General Mission Fund By:

1. CHECK: Write 2nd Mile Gift on the memo line and turn it into the Church Office or place in the Sunday offering.
2. ONLINE: Click Give (elexiogiving.com) and select Missions—2nd Mile.
3. QR Code: Scan the QR code to the left with your cellphone and select Missions—2nd Mile.

The Missions Team, with the guidance of Church Council, will distribute the funding.

The next Missions Team meeting will be Wednesday, January 13, 2027 at 4:00pm in the Fireside Room. Zoom will also be available. If you have questions, ideas, or would like to get involved with the Missions Team, please contact any of the Team members: Becky Pierce, Bev Morgan, Linda Gregg, Evie Ellenbaum, Carol Madsen, Colleen Stacey, Roger Guderian, or Pastor David Werner

EVANGEL CARES

CHRIST. COMPASSION. COMMUNITY.

You can email any comments you have to: evangelcares@evangelum.org or call 507-910-3230.

We're Always Looking for Volunteers

3 ways to become a volunteer 1.) click: Become Evangel Cares Volunteer 2.) go to www.evangelum.org > Scroll down > EvangelCares 3.) contact the EvangelCares Coordinator below.

3 Ways You Can Request Help

1.) click: Evangel Cares Request Help Form, 2.) Complete a request form at the church information center 3.) Contact the EvangelCares coordinator below. **Please allow for at least a 1-week turnaround time.**

We'd love to hear from you and answer any questions you have!

EvangelCares Coordinator: evangelcares@evangelum.org; 507-910-3230



DECEMBER 2026

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Tues., Dec. 1	6:30pm	SPR Team
Wed., Dec. 2	5:00pm 6:15pm 6:15pm 7:30pm	Wed. Night Meal Board Games Good News Team Practice Handbell Practice
Thurs., Dec. 3	9:00am 6:00pm 7:00pm	Bible Storytime Meal hosting at Dorothy Day House Choir Practice
Fri., Dec. 4	11:00am 6:00pm	Older Folders Youth Group
Sat., Dec. 5	1:00pm	Cookies for the Homebound
Sun., Dec. 6	8:15am 8:30am 9:30am 10:30am 4:00pm	Prayer for Worship Traditional Worship Children's Church Sunday School Contemporary Worship Children's Church The Chosen Watch Party
Mon., Dec. 7	1:00pm	Sewing Circle
Tues., Dec. 8	7:00pm	Trustees
Wed., Dec. 9	5:00pm 6:15pm 6:15pm 7:30pm	Wed. Night Meal Board Games Good News Team Practice Handbell Practice
Thurs., Dec. 10	9:00am 6:30pm 7:00pm	Bible Story Time Finance Team Choir Practice
Friday, Dec. 11	11:00am 6:00pm	Older Folders Youth Christmas Party
Sat., Dec. 12	10:00am	Food Box Distribution
Sun., Dec. 13	10:30am 11:30am 12:00pm 1:15pm	Intergenerational Christmas Program Brunch Creation Stations & Activities Christmas Caroling

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Mon., Dec. 14	1:00pm	Sewing Circle
Tues., Dec. 15	6:00	Tech Team
Wed., Dec. 16	5:00pm 6:15pm 6:15pm 7:30pm	Wed. Night Meal Board Games Good News Team Practice Handbell Practice
Thurs., Dec. 17	9:00am 1:00pm 7:00pm	Bible Storytime Women's Gathering Choir Practice
Fri., Dec. 18	11:00am	Older Folders
Sun., Dec. 20	8:15am 8:30am 9:30am 10:30am	Prayer for Worship Traditional Worship Children's Church Sunday School Contemporary Worship Children's Church
Mon., Dec. 21	1:00pm 6:30pm	Sewing Circle Church Council
Tues., Dec. 22	6:15pm	Good News Team Practice
Wed., Dec. 23	11:00am	Older Folders
Thurs., Dec. 24	2:30pm 4:30pm 6:30pm 11:30pm	Traditional candlelight service Traditional candlelight service Traditional candlelight service A capella candlelight service
Fri., Dec. 25	11:00am	**CHRISTMAS DAY - Office Closed**
Sun., Dec. 27	8:15am 8:30am 10:30am	Prayer for Worship Traditional Worship Contemporary Worship
Wed., Dec. 30	6:15pm	Good News Team Practice
Thurs., Dec. 31	11:00am	Older Folders

Evangel United Methodist Church
2645 North Broadway
Rochester, MN 55906



Christmas Eve Worship Services
Thursday, December 24

Traditional Candlelight Services:
2:30pm, 4:30pm & 6:30pm
A cappella Candlelight Service at 11:30pm

Sunday Schedule

8:30am - Traditional Service
9:30am - Sunday School for All Ages
10:30am - Contemporary Service
(Children's Church offered at both services)

Wherever you are on your journey, you are welcome here!

Phone: 507-289-4817 Email: office@evangelum.org Website: www.evangelum.org