



EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

...to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

Connections

December 2017

Greetings!

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go..." the popular Christmas song begins. Decorations have been up in craft stores for months already and then the Halloween candy aisle is barely cleared before the Christmas candy appears. And now, Christmas music is playing through the store's speakers for all to hear to help get us in the "Christmas spirit."

The world tells us Christmas is a happy time, and often it is. But sometimes, it is not. Sometimes, Christmas is hard. Really, really hard. It is hard for people who struggle to buy groceries, let alone gifts. It is hard for people who are alone. It is hard for people who have to live without a loved one – for the 1st Christmas or for the 20th Christmas.

Since my Mom's death in early January 2005, Christmas has never been the same for me. Just a couple very short weeks before Christmas 2004, the doctors told us her cancer had returned and there was nothing more they could do to help her. It would be just a matter of time. Knowing it would be our last Christmas with her, we tried to celebrate the best we could. And she, very heroically, made it a good day for us as well. But that Christmas evening, she took a turn for the worse and we took her to the hospital for the last time.

I've always loved the sounds and sights of Christmas, but the pain of losing my Mom during a "happy" time of year erased much of the joy of the season for several years. Even now, there is the pain of emptiness when I think of her as I play with my grandchildren, whom she never got to meet.

You, too, may be feeling that the Christmas joy just isn't there for you this year. You may have lost a loved one, or you may have lost a job, a home, a marriage, a relationship, or experiencing a decline in health, or loneliness. Christmas just isn't the same this year. And as a congregation, we each feel deeply the pain from the deaths of several of our beloved members over the past couple of years.

If Christmas is really hard for you this year (or for someone you know and love), I invite you to join us for a Blue Christmas worship service on Saturday, December 16th at 6:00 pm. In this worship service, we come together to be comforted by God, who loves us so much He sent His Son into the world not just to save us from our sins, but to heal our broken lives.

This Blue Christmas worship service is sponsored by our Epworth UMC Care Ministry Team and will include Holy Communion and an opportunity to light a candle to remind us of God's gift of hope in Jesus Christ – the One who comforts us and heals us and fills us with His peace.

We can be comforted by the promise Jesus told his disciples on the eve before his own death,
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

Shalom,
Deb

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Christmas Eve Service Times

Come celebrate the birth of our Savior!

Sunday Morning @ 9:00am

Sunday Evening @ 7:00pm

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Service



{ Prayer Corner }

There are a few people of the church taking advantage of the prayer time on Wednesday evening from 6:15 - 6:45pm. We are praying in the Sanctuary for our church & our church family. If you would like to be a part of this, we would love to have you. If this time is not great for you we hope you are still taking the time to pray. God is listening.

Here is a prayer for the Christmas Season.

What better time & what better season, what greater occasion or more wonderful reason to kneel down in prayer & lift our hands high to the God of creation who made land & sky....And, oh, what a privilege as the New Year begins to ask God to wipe out our errors & sins, & to know when we ask, if we are sincere, He will wipe our slate clean as we start a New Year... So at this glad season when joy's everywhere, let us meet our Redeemer at the altar of prayer.



epworth green team

THANK YOU for bringing in your Styrofoam so it can be recycled!

Did you know that by reducing your energy use you can save \$1730 or more every year? Here are some tips to get the most savings:

- adjusting your thermostat +/- 2 degrees in the summer & winter
- Replace 4 light bulbs with CFLs (LEDS save 2X as much)
- Caulk windows and weather strip doors
- Wash your clothes in cold water
- Line dry clothes in summer / and racks in the winter
- Tune your cars regularly and keep the tires inflated
- Use Smart power strips for your electronics and appliances that turn off when not in use

Energy saved means less greenhouse gas emissions, less climate change and MONEY SAVED. Green stewards do caring things for the earth!

Thanks, Sandy Kaptain, Epworth Green Team

Current & Upcoming Events

- ✓ **FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY** is next **Sunday, December 3rd**. Please bring your donation of pork & beans, dried fruit and meat or any other non-perishable food items of your choice! Donations can be placed in the Food Pantry basket outside the sanctuary.
- ✓ **MEN'S FRIDAY BREAKFAST** - Come and enjoy a delicious breakfast, fellowship and discussion on topics of the day. We meet in M5 the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month. **We are now meeting at 8:00am instead of 7:00am.** On December 15th we will meet at Big Skillet Restaurant (90 Tyler Creek Plaza, Elgin) All are welcome to attend; this is a casual group and regular attendance is not required.
- ✓ **SPROUTS** – All children 0-36 months are invited to join us for SPROUTS! We meet on Friday mornings at 9:00am in the Nursery. Children spend about 35-40 minutes playing together and then spend the final time singing, moving and reading a story. This is a wonderful time to spend connecting with your child or grandchild. Invite friends and family to join you! **If your older children are home for winter break, please feel free to bring them as well. We will not meet on Friday, December 29th.**
- ✓ **SATURDAY MEN'S BREAKFAST**– Our next breakfast is **December 9th @ 8:00am.** Come for the food, stay for the fellowship. Stay if you can after breakfast for our monthly work project. Please RSVP to Tony Luzin in person or text/call him at 847-652-5710.
- ✓ **GIFTS FOR SENIOR SERVICES** - As we look ahead to the celebration of God's greatest gift, the birth of Jesus, our congregation has the opportunity to give gifts to those who otherwise may have none. Senior Services has given us a list of 25 local seniors that are in need this Christmas. Now through Sunday, December 10th, we will have a table in the Community Room after service where you can choose tags with a name and wish list. Gifts can be brought back there or to the church office, **but MUST be at church, wrapped and ready for delivery no later than Tuesday, December 12th.** Each year that Epworth has given to the Seniors, we've received a thank you note expressing great appreciation for the joy that our gifts have brought to the recipients. Please consider sharing in this wonderful ministry. Questions? Contact Mick or Janina Hoffman 847-717-4318.
- ✓ **HOLIDAY CAROLING** – Caroling, Caroling, Here we go! Come meet up **Sunday, December 10th at 2:30pm** in the upper parking lot to join your smile and voice! We will carpool to people's homes/care facilities to sing some carols and share Christ's love for a couple hours. It's a wonderful time to spend with your church family! Would you, or do you know someone who will enjoy some carolers?? Please call the office (847/931-5400) or Carole Burris (847/436-3246) by Friday, December 8th. Don't worry if you feel you don't sing so well, the more the merrier; it's a group effort! We would like to take a sweet treat to those we visit and would greatly appreciate anyone willing to bring cookies to church that morning. Cookie trays will be assembled after church.
- ✓ **FRIENDSHIP LUNCHEON** - Over 55? Join us for our next Friendship Club Luncheon at **12:30pm on Wednesday, December 13th** at Colonial Café (600 S. McLean, Elgin). Please sign-up on the Epworth bulletin board in the Community Room in the next week. You don't have to be a member of the church to come. Questions, call the church office at 847-931-5400.
- ✓ **BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE** – We will be holding a special “Blue Christmas” worship service on **Saturday, December 16th @ 6:00pm** for those struggling to find joy this Christmas season. Please read Pastor Deb's CONNECTIONS newsletter for more details.
- ✓ **SWEET TREAT SUNDAY EVENING** - Please join us on **December 17th from 5:00-7:00pm** in the Community Room for Sweet Treat Sunday Evening (in place of our usual Sweet Treat Sunday). In lieu of our usual potlucks, we are eating only sweets that evening! Bring a favorite sweet/dessert to share along with 2 cans of nonperishable food items to donate to local charities. In addition to everyone getting a sugar high, we will be playing fun holiday games and singing our favorite Christmas hymns. Help celebrate the birth of Christ by spending a couple of hours with your Epworth family. Any questions, contact Lisa Eby or Robin Luzin.



CATCH UP ON YOUR 2017 FINANCIAL COMMITMENT!

Please make sure all tithing you would like to include on your 2017 financial statement is mailed in time to be received by
Friday, December 29th.

DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH

Clara Midrula Biswas

Clara Midrula Biswas works in Phnom Penh, Cambodia with the poorest of the poor in slum areas and garbage dumps to facilitate their move to relocation and rehabilitation centers. She assists education programs, giving 620 public school students music, computer and art classes and she also assists health programs that refer patients to hospitals and local organizations. If you are interested in making a donation, please place in the offering baskets during worship; please mark for "Mission of the Month".

HATS & MITTENS TREE

There stands a tree outside the Sanctuary ready to be filled with winter hats and gloves to be taken to the Crisis Center to share warmth and God's love. Pick some up while you are out shopping and hang them on the tree the following Sunday. Let's hide the branches and warm the heads, hands and hearts of many who are in need this Christmas season! A variety of sizes will be appreciated!



2018 SPIRIT LAKE MISSION TRIP

The dates for next year's Spirit Lake Mission Trip are July 22-28th; we will leave very early on the 22nd to arrive in Spirit Lake in time for worship at 5:00pm. We will work Monday through Thursday doing whatever the Spirit Lake Nation needs done. On Friday, we will have a free day that ends with the Opening Ceremony of PowWow and the whole experience of Native American traditions. Then, we will leave early Saturday, July 28th, to travel back home. The cost is \$350.00 per person; a \$50 deposit will reserve your spot. Deposits are due by February 1st. Spots are limited to the first 5 who turn in their deposit so don't wait. We will be taking a group from Cornerstone UMC with us!

Questions? See Andy Lindstrom.

NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY

The new church directory will be coming out shortly. If you did not update your address, phone number and/or e-mail address when pictures were taken we ask that you please contact the church office ASAP with this information so we can update our records before the new directory is printed.

Support us when you shop this holiday season

Buy your gifts and holiday essentials at smile.amazon.com. You shop. Amazon donates.

amazon smile



Did you know that you can shop on Amazon AND support your church at the same time? It's simple and, with Christmas just around the corner, it's an easy way for Epworth to earn a little extra money, too. Simply log into Amazon Smile (www.smile.amazon.com) using your same Amazon user name and password, select Epworth United Methodist Church (make sure to select our church in Elgin, IL) as the organization you want to support and place your order.

Questions? Contact the church office to help walk you through it.

- *Closed for the Holidays* -

The church office will be closed from
Monday, December 25th – Monday, January 1st.
We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2nd.



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Please contact the church office for a list of
birthdays / anniversaries and the prayer list.

DECEMBER GIVING / SERVING OPPORTUNITIES

PADS - PADS of Elgin provides overnight shelter and coordinates support services for the homeless in Elgin and surrounding areas. The shelter is open 7 days a week to all individuals who have a non-felony record and can pass a breathalyzer test. For two hours one evening our servants help serve food to the residents of PADS.

When: Sunday, December 3rd @ 6:30-9:00pm

Where: 1730 Berkley Street in Elgin

Please contact Andy Lindstrom at andrewlindstrom@yahoo.com for more information.

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**FOOD FOR GREATER ELGIN** - Provides food assistance to 1200 low income families (approx. 5500 individuals, 1/2 of which are children) in the Elgin, South Elgin and East Dundee areas each month. The following times are available to serve at Food for Greater Elgin:

**When: Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> @ 8:30- 11:30am &**

**Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30-8:30pm.**

Please click on "Food for Greater Elgin" under the "Serve" tab on our website for more information on how to serve.

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SOUP KETTLE - Provides hot meals and warm smiles to 60-100 people in need every day. Epworth Church staffs the Soup Kettle at Zion Lutheran Church the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

When: Tuesday, December 19th @ 4:30-6:45pm.

Those wishing to serve, please see Janina Hoffman for more information.

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**CRISIS CENTER MEALS** - Epworth Mission Team provides meals for the Crisis Center on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month. We are in need of volunteers to make a main dish to pass, a vegetable or dessert.

**When: Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00pm.**

Please contact Mary Rees Freeman at [mrf647@hotmail.com](mailto:mrf647@hotmail.com).

### MANNA ORDERS!



The holidays are a big fundraising time for our church, and this year you can raise money just by paying for your holiday shopping with gift cards! Orders are being processed every week until Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Place your order on a Sunday and you'll receive your cards the following Sunday. How much easier can

shopping be! There are so many choices! Take a look at the order form and be amazed!

- Earn 2.5% on gifts from Amazon
- Earn 4% when you pay off your Kohl's card
- Earn 8% when you go see that holiday blockbuster
- Earn 14% on your holiday outfits from GAP or Old Navy
- You can even earn 4% when you're buying holiday meal supplies at Jewel!

## WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

You may not know what you are missing by not spending some time with others exploring the wonderful messages God shares with us through His Word!

### MONDAY MORNING @ 6:30AM

Join us on Monday mornings at 6:30am at the Centre of Elgin for our Walking Bible Study. Come be part of your church community, Walk to better yourself physically and mentally and Talk to grow spiritually! Meet others at the walking track on the upper level of the Centre, you'll be glad you made the effort! Questions, ask Mary Becker, Ginny Jensen or Carole Burris.

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WEDNESDAY MORNING @ 6:00AM

You are most welcome to come and sit at the South Elgin Panera Bread on the east side of Randall Rd. in front of Jewel to converse about the scripture for the upcoming Sunday. It's always great to get into the scriptures and really find a new understanding with others!

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### ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

We will be reading Rob Renfroe's & Ed Robb's *"The Wonder of Christmas: Rediscover the True Wonder of Christmas"* for our Advent bible study this year. This four week study takes a look at the Christmas story as well as the stories of real people today to find inspiration and ideas for reflecting the light of Jesus at Christmas time and throughout the entire year.

### Interested in participating?

There are three class opportunities:  
Sunday mornings @ 10:15 in L2  
Thursday afternoons @ 1:00pm in U1  
Thursday evenings @ 7:00pm in U1