

First United Methodist Church

Welcome! We are a Congregation devoted to loving the whole city and loving the city whole!
December 21, 2025 - 10:00am - 4th Sunday in Advent / All Music Sunday

GATHERING AND PRAISE

Video Prelude: “He Is Born”

Nathan Bieber, Maggie Kasinger, Catherine McMichael

Bells on High Prelude: “Shepherd Song”

by Cynthia Dobrinski

Welcome and Announcements – Please sign in on the Attendance pads,
or use your phone and the QR Code to the right to sign in electronically
or use this link: <https://form.jotform.com/211785166356159>.



***Opening Hymn UMH #249:** “There’s a Song in the Air”

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|--|--|
| 1) There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire
While the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King! | 3) In the light of that star
Lie the ages impearled;
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame,
And the beautiful sing
In the homes of the nations
That Jesus is King! |
| 2) There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! The star rains its fire
While the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King! | 4) We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the heavenly throng.
Ay! We shout to the lovely
Evangel they bring,
And we greet in his cradle
Our Savior and King! |

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

Dr. Lou & Karen Constan

Based on “Almost Christmas” by Magrey R. DeVega, Ingrid McIntyre, April Casperson, and Matt Rawle

Week Four: Altogether Joy:

R1: In the summer of 1741, John Wesley Preached a sermon entitled “The Almost Christian”, which drew distinction between “the almost Christian” who has an outward appearance of godliness but little depth, and “the altogether Christian” whose deep inward conviction to love God and neighbor with their whole being is lived daily in thought, word, and action.

All: In Advent and beyond, we seek to grow into altogether Christians. We come to worship today to cultivate altogether joy within our spirit.

R2: Throughout the gospel narratives, Jesus would regularly go up the mountain to pray by himself. What he said or did in these private moments with God is not recorded. But we saw how those times fed His spirit as Jesus returned down the mountain. For Jesus, joy was not an emotional high experienced in moments of great triumph or achievement. Rather, joy was a gift he simply received in experiencing and knowing God's abiding presence. And deep joy stayed with him through adversity and suffering, sustaining his peace, hope and love when all else failed.

All: We come to worship today to follow Jesus in embodying altogether joy – one that cannot be manufactured or managed, but only received and treasured.

R3: We light four candles on the advent wreath today. The first for peace, the second for hope, the third for love, and the fourth to remind us of Christ's call to altogether joy – a gift given to us by a gracious God in silent nights, simple stables, angels' songs, and redeeming grace – a gift rediscovered in singing the old story, celebrating "God and sinners reconciled"!

All: Come, Lord Jesus, cast away our almost joy content with lights, glitter, and material goods, and fill us with altogether joy that only you can give – joy that recognizes in the manger the very real presence of God with us. Amen.

ALL SINGING:

Live - ly the can - dle we light this day in joy, as mu - sic re -

sounds thru God's peo - ple; And though mem - ories stir, we

cel - e - brate new birth, for the sake of the babe in the man - ger.

Time of Prayer — *During the silent meditation, ushers will collect your yellow prayer cards to deliver to the pastor.*

Silent Meditation and Lifting our Celebrations and Concerns In Prayer

The Lord's Prayer – Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Living Our Gratitude

♪ Please help support your church family. Enjoy the musical selection as a time to give thanks to God for all with which you have been blessed.

Use the QR code to the right or give online here:

<https://www.firstumcsaginaw.org/give/>



Offertory: “Caroling, Caroling”

by Alfred Burt, arr. Carrie Craft

Bryan Latimer and Catherine McMichael, 4-hand piano duet

***The Doxology:** Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; **UMH #94**

Praise God all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***The Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving:** Faithful God of unfolding plans, when our certainty falters and our expectations collapse, you are still at work, inviting us into grace that redefines and redeems. Like Joseph, we bring our gifts and lay down our plans, trusting that your Spirit can shape our offering into something greater than we imagined. Use these gifts to aid your work in our world, through Christ our Emmanuel—God with us. Amen.



Choral Anthem: “A Spanish Carol: Sons of Eve, Reward My Tidings” *arr. Noah Greenberg*

Bell Anthem: “Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella” *arr. Anna Laura Page*

Special Music: “Emmanuel (Hallowed Manger Ground)” *by Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash*
Bryan Latimer, Terry Moon, and Peg Wilken, Vocals
Catherine McMichael, Piano

The Sacrament of Baptism for Children

UMH pg. 39

Pastor: Beloved in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are initiated into Christ's holy Church. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price. This morning, it is our joy to present Shepherd Joseph Anthony Roberts for baptism.

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? *I do.*

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? *I do.*

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? *I do.*

Will you nurture this child in Christ's holy church that by your teaching and example, she may be guided to accept God's grace for herself, to profess her faith openly, and to lead a Christian life? *I will.*

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ? **We do.**

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround the Roberts family with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

Let us pray: Eternal Father, when nothing existed but chaos, you swept across the dark waters and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah, you saved those on the ark through water. After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.

When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt, you led them to freedom through the sea. Their children you brought through the Jordan to the land which you promised.

Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of God's mercy each day!

In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus, nurtured in the water of a womb. He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit. He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection and to make disciples of all nations.

Declare Christ's works to the nations, his glory among all the people.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, to bless this gift of water and he who receives it, to wash away his sin and clothe him in righteousness throughout her lives, that, dying and being raised with Christ, he may share in his final victory.

All praise to you, Eternal Father, through your Son Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS / PRAYER

Shepherd, I baptize you in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Pastor will offer prayer at this time, then:

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

Now it is our joy to welcome our new sibling in Christ:

Through baptism, you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into God's new creation and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood. We are all one in Christ Jesus. With joy and thanksgiving, we welcome you as a member of the family of Christ.

Members of the household of God, I commend this child to your love and care. Do all in your power to increase his faith, confirm his hope, and perfect him in love.

We give thanks for all that God has already given you, and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you in the body of Christ and in this congregation of The United Methodist Church, we renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

And now, may the God of all grace, who has called us to eternal glory in Christ, establish and strengthen you by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you may live in grace and peace. **Amen.**

Family is presented with baptismal certificate and a small gift at this time.

Please join in welcoming little Shepherd to the Saginaw First UMC Church Family!

Hymn UMH #228: *“He Is Born!”*

Refrain: He is born, the holy Child,
Play the oboe and bagpipes merrily!
He is born, the holy Child,
Sing we all of the Savior mild.

1) Thru long ages of the past,
Prophets have foretold his coming;
Thru long ages of the past,
Now the time has come at last!
[Refrain]

2) O how lovely, O how pure
Is this perfect child of heaven;
O how lovely, O how pure
Gracious gift to humankind! *[Refrain]*

3) Jesus, Lord of all the world,
Coming as a child among us,
Jesus, Lord of all the world,
Grant to us thy heavenly peace.
[Refrain]

Scripture Lesson:

Matthew 1:18-25

Pew Bible N.T. pg. 1

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.



Special Music:

“Mary, Did You Know?”
Kathy Jimenez, Soloist

by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene

Bell Anthem:

“Carol of the Bells”

arr. Kevin McChesney

Choral Anthem:

“Run to the Manger”

by Victor C. Johnson

Special Music:

“The Blessings of His Birth”
Mark Ode, Guitar/Vocals

by Michael Lille

Choral Anthem:

“And the Glory of the Lord”

by George Fredrick Handel

WE GO AS WITNESSES FOR CHRIST IN THE WORLD

***Closing Hymn UMH #246: “Joy to the World”**

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|--|---|
| 1) Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing! | 3) No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found. |
| 2) Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy. | 4) He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love. |

***Benediction:**

One: Advent people, go now into the world in joy to watch and wait, ready to lay down our tiny plans, receive the angels among us, and follow faithfully wherever God leads. Amen.

All: **We go in joy to love and serve the Lord and all God’s creation.
Thanks be to God. Amen.**

*** Postlude: “While By My Sheep”**

Traditional German; arr. John Leavitt, adapted for organ

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First United Methodist Church

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.....pastoralbt@outlook.com / (989) 274-6363 (cell phone)
Office Administrator/TreasurerDina Draper
Custodian..... Tina Castle
Organist Bryan Latimer
Director of Music & Chancel Choir Rod Bieber
Bell Choir Director Catherine McMichael
Nursery Supervisors Katie Moon and Karissa Schultz
Audio Visual Technicians Andy Sharrow, Angie Smith, Izzy Terhune

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS: Thank you for your service!! Liturgist: Carla Piazza-Wistehuff / Greeters: Stacy Sharrow, Angie Smith / Ushers: Tom Kraynak, Bill Cowdry, Bill Draper, Andy Sharrow / Welcome Desk: Dee Mills / Coffee Hour Host: Jacqui Kurtz / Sound System: Izzy Terhune / Nursery: Karissa Schultz

PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS: Marilyn Ashmall, Ed Babinski, Tom Brubaker, Bernie Buggia, Myrna Cammin, Sue Cooper, Bonnie Dole, Esther Cavendish Fisher, Wayne & Phyllis Henney, Marion Hoffman, Bill Johnson, Erlene Kimber, ZoAnn Kraynak, Barb Kropp, Mark Leffler, Jane MacQueen, Bonnie Markley, Kay Mertz, Trinity & Audri Miller, Merlyn Mondol, Bob & Sharon Mueller, Madge Richmond, Eugenia Shek, Noreen Southgate, Rita Taylor, & Dorothy Woods. Also, please pray for UMCOR, and for peace in Ukraine/Russia and Israel/Gaza.

OUR SYMPATHY is extended to the families of Barry Brown (11/10), Jill Charlton (11/11), and Mark Abbe (11/25). Please hold their grieving families in prayer during this holiday season.

WELCOME to Shepherd Joseph Anthony Roberts, born 9/16/25, being baptized today! Parents are Justin & Taylor Roberts. Grandparents are Jay & Robin Schwellenbach and Dale & MaryJo Roberts. Godparents are Spencer & Shelby Schwellenbach.

THE CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK TODAY. Cookies will be \$5/dozen. All proceeds go to fund the Youth Mission Trip for this Summer 2026. Thank you!

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP will take place this Wednesday, December 24 at 7:30pm, with a half-hour of preservice music beginning at 7:00pm.

FREE COMMUNITY MEALS on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, continuing January 13. On the menu for January: Italian Night. Sign up to donate food and/or help with clean-up at the Welcome Desk

HELP NEEDED – the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan will deliver our next pallets of food for children's weekend backpacks on Wednesday, Jan. 14th. Sign up online to help out with:

- a) People to meet the truck between 10am-11am every other Wednesday, help organize the food, and then pack up the food bags.
- b) People to deliver 22 food bags to Westdale Elementary and 31 food bags to Arrowwood Elementary school EVERY Thursday morning. Larger delivery this week due to Christmas Vacation.
- c) Sign up to help out online at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044DAFAC2BA0FD0-44603782-backpack>.

BELLS ON HIGH MEMBERS: Catherine McMichael – Director, Ed Cunningham, Janet Rabin, Jami Kinzer, Ray Sturm, Madeline Curtiss, Barb Lumsden, Evie Kraynak, Lisa Burnell, Lisa DeVos, Laurie Sturm, Carolyn Gaus, Christine McGuinness, Tena Gray, Bryan Latimer

CHANCEL CHOIR MEMBERS: Rod Bieber – Director

Soprano: Dina Draper, Kathleen Jimenez, Mary Laffey, Terry Moon, Bethany Tomasino

Alto: Madeline Curtiss, Evie Kraynak, Jane MacQueen, Anne Gaertner, Amy Terhune

Tenor: Ed Cunningham, Josh Keeler, Bryan Latimer, Peg Wilken

Bass: Mike Curtiss, Brian Hatch, Larry Potter, Vincent Tomasino

THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE OFFERING will go to purchase gift cards and needed Christmas Meals for the families of our 53 Backpack Children. Use the **QR code** to the right or give online at <https://www.firstumcsaginaw.org/give/>



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Be sure to check in on Facebook! The more of us that do, the more people learn about who we are!

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Instagram: **saginawfume**

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Bluesky: **FirstUMCSaginaw.bsky.social**



Facing the Holidays with a Grieving Heart



The holidays are not always a happy, enchanting, joyous time for everyone.

As the holidays approach, many who have lost a loved one may experience a wide array of emotions, including anxiety, stress, fatigue, guilt, sadness/depression, and feeling isolated. These emotions, in turn, can affect our ability to cope with the pain and to utilize resources available to us. Following are some tips for facing the holidays in a time of grief:

- **Begin early to think about your holidays.** This is painful because we cannot help but to think about how things will be different this year without our loved one here. But putting it off doesn't allow time for us to process our thoughts and feelings or to grieve our loss. Talk to the family early about how you will observe the holidays this year.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Leave the words "I should..." or "I ought to..." out of your planning process. There is no right or wrong way to handle your celebrations.
- **Make your wishes known upfront.** There will be many people who may think they know what's best for you and want to make plans for you. This may be helpful to some and irritating to others. **Pay attention to what you are feeling and listen to your heart.** Be honest and make your feelings known before major plans get made. If you're not sure about something, give it a try. If it's too painful, that's okay. You can always step away. On the other hand, if you find yourself having fun, this does not mean you don't care about the loved one who has died. It's okay to go on with living.
- **Recognize that family get-togethers and certain traditions may be difficult.** Keep the memory of your loved one alive. Share stories and memories together. Spend time with people you find supportive and comforting.
- **Remember that everyone grieves in their own way.** What is right for you may not be right for someone else, and vice versa. Allow one another the freedom to feel whatever each is feeling, and to do what each needs to cope with the grief.
- **Be prepared** for the fact that well-meaning people who don't know your situation will wish you 'Happy Holidays!' or 'Merry Christmas!' All the standard décor of the season will be around you in stores and restaurants. There is no escaping the trappings of the season, so **pace yourself** when you're out and about during the holiday season.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Seek out professional services if you feel you need it.
- Keep in mind that **the anticipation of the holiday** is often worse than the holiday itself.
- **Take care of yourself.** Remember that grieving is both emotional work and physical work. Get plenty of rest, eat right, exercise, take a hot bath—do whatever you need to do to care for yourself. And allow the tears to come. This is a very normal expression of grief and can help with the healing.