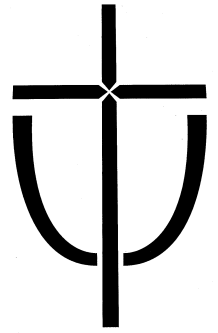




# Still Speaking



Indeed, the word of God is living and active...  
-Hebrews 4:12

December 2023

## No Room At the Inn

Sometimes you can't make this stuff up.

At the JOSHUA Spiritual Leaders' Caucus last week, our new JOSHUA community organizer, Sara Williams, informed us of a bill that was being proposed by members of the state legislature. The bill would withhold funding from organizations such as homeless shelters until the shelters demonstrated their success.

Under the bill, the state Department of Administration would be required to withhold 10 to 50% of grants to organizations for the purpose of alleviating homelessness for a period of six months. After six months, the DOA may issue the remainder if the organization meets the following performance requirements:

1. Increased the number of homeless individuals and families securing permanent housing
2. Increased the number of homeless individuals securing part or full-time employment
3. Reduced the number of homeless individuals and families returning to homelessness

On the face of it, these seem like laudable goals. We all want more people in permanent housing. We all want people to work. We all hope that people don't return to homelessness.

The problem with withholding funding from homeless shelters until they demonstrate success is that these benchmarks disregard the complexity of homelessness. A friend of mine who has made his career advocating and working with those who are unhoused reminds me often that there are people out there who just can't hold a job. There are often multiple chronic underlying reasons that someone returns to homelessness. At the end of the day, these people are human beings, Children of God if you will, and deserve somewhere to

*(continued on page 2)*

## The Inside Scoop

### Newsletter Deadline

*Our next newsletter will be published the week of February 7, 2024.*

*The deadline for that newsletter is Friday, February 2, 2024.*

- Interfaith Memorial Service .... 3**
- Service Opportunities ..... 3**
- Advent and Christmas ..... 3**
- Ties to Mexico News ..... 4**
- Your Church Library..... 4**
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- Seminary Secrets ..... 5**
- Blessing Box Food Drive ..... 6**
- Church Calendar ..... 7**
- Annual Meeting ..... back page**

**Lectionary Readings**

**Dec. 17—3rd Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or  
 Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Dec. 24—4th Sunday of Advent**

**Christmas Eve**

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 or  
 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27;  
 Luke 1:26-38

**Dec. 25—Christmas Day**

Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7  
 Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

**Dec. 31—New Year’s Eve**

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148  
 Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

**Jan. 1—New Year’s Day**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8  
 Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

**Jan. 6—Epiphany**

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
 Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

**Jan. 7—The Baptism of Christ**

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7  
 Mark 1:4-11

**Jan. 14—2nd Sunday after Epiphany**

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)  
 Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

**Jan. 21—3rd Sunday after Epiphany**

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12  
 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

**Jan. 28—4th Sunday after Epiphany**

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111  
 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

**Feb. 4—5th Sunday after Epiphany**

Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c  
 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

**Feb. 11—Transfiguration**

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6  
 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

*(continued from page 1)*

sleep. Furthermore, the prospect of withholding funding for six months shows blatant ignorance of how most of these social service organizations work. By and large, they’re not capital rich organizations that can pay ahead and be reimbursed. These grants pay the light bill, pay staff, and buy food. Without these grants, the shelters shut down.

And that’s really to say that, if passed, this bill will inevitably result in more people spending more nights on the streets.

Every year when we read the Christmas story, I marvel at Mary, Joseph, and Jesus’ vulnerability: walking the 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem late in her pregnancy, only to find no room at the inn. This year in our Christmas Pageant, our Biblical Mary did a perfect job of acting, giving her husband a look that said, “WHAT?” when the innkeeper offered that they could sleep with the animals out back. We sing sweet carols that ask, “What would I give him...” and imagine that we would treat this random pregnant teenager traveling far from home with more dignity and respect than did those of yore. All while the harsh irony is that some legislators in our state capitol are working to pass a bill that has no more immediate outcome than to result in more people sleeping on the streets.

Furthermore, the proposed bill would criminalize “camping” on public land except in designated places. Again, it’s important to understand that while homeless encampments have been springing up and efforts to ensure safety around those are important, criminalizing sleeping elsewhere ignores the complexities of the issue. What about someone whose abuser is already set up in the encampment? What about those with social anxiety? The reality is that many unhoused people live with multiple traumas, and the proposed bill does not take that reality into account.

And so, as we sing and pray this Christmas about how we would treat Jesus and his family with more respect and human decency than did those in

times gone by, one gift we can give to Jesus in our midst today is to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable among us. Write your state representative (find their email address at [legis.wisconsin.gov](http://legis.wisconsin.gov)) and implore them to oppose Assembly Bill 689 in order not to deepen the current crisis of homelessness by withholding funding from shelters and criminalizing sleeping in public spaces.

What can we give the God who has everything this Christmas? Let’s start with providing for the basic human needs of those God loves so much.

Rev. Bridget Flad Daniels

**Our Attendance**

<b>November</b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>
1st Sunday	77	124
2nd Sunday	119	107
3rd Sunday	99	124
4th Sunday	79	93
<b>Totals</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>448</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>112.0</b>

## Homeless Persons' Interfaith Memorial Service



On December 21, the longest night of the year, the annual Homeless Persons' Interfaith Memorial Service will be held

to honor those who struggled with homelessness and have passed on. This prayer service will be held at 7 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church (413 Saint John St., Green Bay). Preceding the service is a peace walk led by the Open Heart Mindfulness Community at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome.

## Celebrate MLK: A Day Filled With Service Opportunities

We All Rise, the Rotary Club of Green Bay, and Union Church are working together to join the nation in honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by organizing a day (January 13) filled with service opportunities within the city limits of Green Bay. To learn more about the event, visit: [www.weallriseaarc.org](http://www.weallriseaarc.org).

Space is limited so we suggest you sign up quickly. Please feel free to share this email with other potential volunteers who would like to participate in this exciting project.

If you have questions, contact us at [GB.MLK.DAY@gmail.com](mailto:GB.MLK.DAY@gmail.com).

Our Core Planning Team:

- James McGee, We All Rise
- Barbara Davis, Kingdom Agenda Church
- Christie Reese, Union Church
- Renee Main, Rotary Club of Green Bay
- Rachel Westenberg, We All Rise
- Wendy Woodward, project coordinator

## Advent and Christmas at a Glance



### Sunday, December 17—Third Sunday of Advent

- 9:00 a.m. Adult Education in the Bagby Chapel  
Christmas Carols: the Meanings — We will discover how Matthew's and Luke's proclamations about Jesus were translated into traditional Christmas carols. We'll also consider how recent re-wording of some carols has obscured some of those messages.
- 10:00 a.m. In worship this Sunday, we reflect on Mary and her amazing part in the gift of God's love.

### Sunday, December 24—Christmas Eve

Our early service is more informal with special thought given to children's attention spans. Our later service of scripture, carols, and candlelight is preceded by wonderful Christmas music starting at 7:30 p.m. Join us!

- 10:00 a.m. Worship with a special welcome to our children
- 7:30 p.m. The Music of Christmas
- 8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight worship

### Sunday, December 31 New Year's Eve Worship

Our Sunday morning worship will usher in the new year with prayer and possibility.  
**NO FAITH FORMATION.**

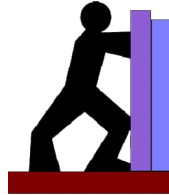


## Ties to Mexico: NO Sessions in January and February

The Ties to Mexico Blankets for Refugees project has produced 270 blankets. A closet at Union has been overflowing with the handiwork of the 8 to 10 volunteers who fringed and tied their way through stacks of fabric and enjoyed fellowship during monthly 2-hour sessions.

The blankets will go into the hands of migrants served by Centro de Esperanza, a resource center just south of the border. In Green Bay/Brown County, the ties project provides blankets to the Emergency Resource Network (ERN) which welcomes refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants who arrive here with little or no resources. ERN is a coalition hosted by the resource centers Casa ALBA Melanie and COMSA, and Migration Advocacy of Brown County. Union member Heather Collins serves on the Migration Advocacy board and is our contact with ERN.

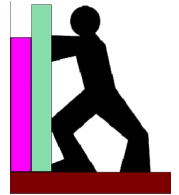
**Please Note:** Ties will NOT meet in January and February.



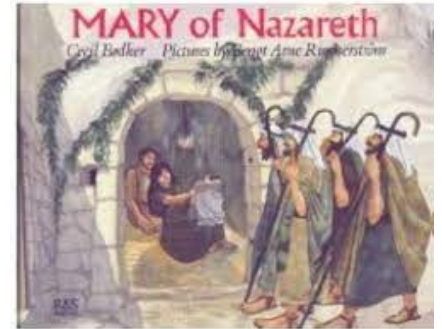
### Your Church Library

## MARY of Nazareth

by Cathy Putman



More frequently this year I have heard talk about women in the Bible: from Michael Luken's discussion of the Annunciation to the presence and more often absence of women figures in children's picture books and Bibles to the Women's Advent Reflection which featured the feminine divine.



I thought an intermediate picture book, first written in Sweden, might be of interest. Mary of Nazareth by Cecil Bødker with illustrations by Arne Runnerström embeds Mary within an extended family including Elizabeth and Zacharias and in a community replete with the affections and suspicions of village life and the customs and lifeways of her time. The portrayal is sympathetic and down to earth, weaving the unusual aspects of this mythic origin story into a matter of fact narrative. It made me wonder how a Christmas pageant that foregrounds the realism of everyday life and backgrounds the politics and doctrine of the nativity story might feed our hunger for a God who is still speaking.

The book is in the basket under the window in the church library.

## Our Church Family

As we celebrate Christmas, let us be particularly mindful of those who are grieving:

- Grief shared is grief diminished. Call, write notes, visit; invite them out for coffee, to take a walk, etc. Contact the church office if you need a fellow church member's address.
- Talk about the deceased. Many people erroneously think that this is painful for the bereaved. On the contrary, it is part of the healing process to talk about the loved one.
- Let the griever know that you are praying for them; invite them to go to church with you.
- Amidst grief, it is often hard to know what will be good for you. Invite not only grieving people but also their grief to be part of your holiday. Allow people flexibility—it's okay to not make up your mind about plans until the day before. Allow for both joy and sadness—offer time together as well as space to be quiet amidst the celebrations.

## New Seminary Secrets Series Begins January 10

# Jesus' Bible

Leader: Julie Harder

Jesus was the first Christian, right? Wrong. Jesus was, thoroughly, a Jew. Moreover, all his disciples were Jews. After Jesus died, the early Jesus Movement was entirely composed of Jews. Most of the New Testament authors were Jews; even if they weren't Jews, their writings were still chock-full of quotes and allusions from Jesus' Bible—the Jewish Scriptures.

Yet most Christians tend to diminish the importance of Jesus' Bible—what they call the “Old” Testament. My own studies have, admittedly, focused more on the “New” Testament. Yet along the way I have discovered that I cannot fully understand Jesus without understanding his religion. Nor can I fully grasp the points that the NT authors were making without being able to recognize their many OT references.

And studying the OT is not just a dreary “eat your broccoli, b/c it will make you healthy” type of task. It's fascinating, enlightening, and often entertaining in and of itself! That is why, as I begin a new Seminary Secrets series, I have chosen to focus on some basic OT texts that tell the story of Jesus' people: the People of Israel. We'll discover how the Bible tells this story and also consider what history has to tell us about “what really happened.” As we read selected OT passages, we'll also be on the lookout for ones that enhance our understanding of specific NT passages.

No prior biblical experience is necessary for this series! If you're curious about Seminary Secrets, this would be an ideal series to check out.

If you are not familiar with what Union's “Seminary Secrets” classes are about, here is a short summary:

**WHAT:** In these sessions, we learn to interpret the Bible using the standard critical tools that mainstream biblical scholars employ. Biblical scholars employ those tools to discover what the original author of a biblical text was trying to say to his original audience. We then consider how (and if) this message is still relevant. During each session, there is a mix of presentation and discussion.

**LEADER:** Julie Harder. Julie holds a master's degree in theology/biblical studies and has taught religious studies at St. Norbert College.

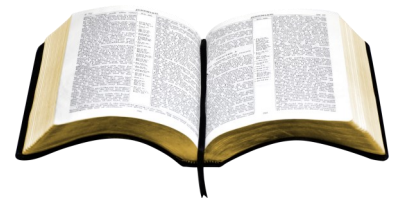
**WHEN:** Most Wednesdays during the school year, 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.

**HYBRID OPTION:** Since May 2022, Seminary Secrets classes have had both an in-person and zoom-in option, using a nifty piece of technology called the Meeting Owl Pro. Zoomers are shown on a large screen so that in-person people can see and hear them. Zoomers can also see and hear in-person participants, PowerPoint slides, and the blackboard.

**“HOMEWORK”:** Most sessions have a short reading assignment to be completed beforehand.

**WHAT IF I CAN'T COME TO ALL SESSIONS?** Naturally, you'll learn the most if you can come to all the session of a series, but life happens (!) and sometimes people have to miss. If you miss, you're encouraged to view or listen to the zoom recording.

**“Jesus' Bible” Series begins January 10 and will run for 5 to 6 sessions**  
**To sign up and get the readings, contact Julie at [jblackharder@gmail.com](mailto:jblackharder@gmail.com)**





### Women's Advent Event

Sue Tucker provided these photos from the event on Monday, December 4.



Libby Sievert and Jessica Lundgren



Kathy Baldwin and Sue Tucker



Peggy Welsh, Jean Smithback, Beth Spicer



### Christmas Pageant 2023

(photos by Sue Tucker)



## Blessing Box January Food Drive



The January Blessing Box Food Drive will be held on Saturday, January 13 as part of the Green Bay MLK Day of Service. Details to follow!

# Union Church Calendar

## December 17, 2023—January 30, 2024

### December 17 3rd Sunday of Advent

9:00 a.m. Faith Formation  
 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed: Christmas Carols The Meanings  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online

### December 18 Monday

11:30 a.m. Ladies Lunch Bunch at the Village Grille

### December 19 Tuesday

6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

### December 20 Wednesday

5:45 p.m. Dinner  
 6:15 p.m. Youth Groups

### December 21 Thursday

7:00 p.m. Homeless Persons' Interfaith Memorial Service

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### December 24 Sunday

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

10:00 a.m. Early Worship Service  
 7:30 p.m. The Music of Christmas  
 8:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship Service

### December 25 Sunday

A Blessed Christmas to All!

### December 25-26 Monday-Tuesday

CHURCH OFFICE is CLOSED

### December 28-29 Thursday-Friday

CHURCH OFFICE is CLOSED

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### December 31 Sunday

NO FAITH FORMATION  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online

### January 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY

CHURCH OFFICE is CLOSED

### January 2 Tuesday

6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

### January 3 Wednesday

7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast Group at Denny's on Oneida  
 NO YOUTH GROUP

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### January 7 Sunday

9:00 a.m. Faith Formation  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online

### January 8 Monday

3:45 p.m. Worship Ministry

### January 9 Tuesday

12:00 p.m. Bible Study  
 4:00 p.m. Education Ministry (Zoom)  
 5:00 p.m. Stewardship Ministry  
 6:30 p.m. Outreach Ministry (Zoom)  
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

### January 10 Wednesday

6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

### January 11 Thursday

5:00 p.m. Membership and Inreach Ministry  
 6:00 p.m. Common Ministry

### January 13 Saturday

Day of Service Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
 Blessing Box Food Drive

### January 14 Sunday

9:00 a.m. Faith Formation  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online

### January 15 Monday

11:30 a.m. Ladies Lunch Bunch at the Village Grille

### January 16 Tuesday

12:00 p.m. Bible Study  
 5:30 p.m. Bell Choir  
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

### January 17 Wednesday

5:45 p.m. Dinner  
 6:15 p.m. Youth Group  
 6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

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### January 21 Sunday

9:00 a.m. Faith Formation  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online  
 11:30 a.m. ALICE Training

### January 23 Tuesday

12:00 p.m. Bible Study  
 1:00 p.m. Priscilla Circle  
 5:30 p.m. Bell Choir  
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

### January 24 Wednesday

6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

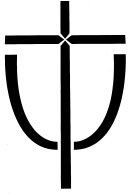
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### January 28 Sunday

188th ANNUAL MEETING  
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation  
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary or stream it online  
 11:30 a.m. Annual Meeting

### January 30 Tuesday

12:00 p.m. Bible Study  
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir



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# ANNUAL MEETING

## Call to the 188th Annual Meeting

The 188th Annual Meeting of Union Congregational United Church of Christ will convene on Sunday, January 28 at 11:30 a.m. We will conduct our business meeting and share a time of fellowship after our agenda is concluded. Reports concerning the ministry of Union Church in 2023 will be presented, outgoing ministry chairs and vice-chairs will be recognized, elections will be held for new leaders, and a budget for the ministry of Union Church in 2024 will be adopted.

Our annual report will be emailed to all households on our mailing list. Contact the church office if you would like a paper copy mailed to you.

### **Union Congregational United Church of Christ**

716 S. Madison Street  
Green Bay, WI 54301  
e-mail: [office@unionucc.com](mailto:office@unionucc.com)  
(920) 437-9266

### **Bridget M. Flad Daniels**

Senior Minister

### **Tim Harder, M.D.**

Moderator

### **Church Office Hours**

**Mon.-Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

For more information about us,  
visit our web page  
at <http://www.unionucc.com>