

# The Current of The River of Life

2345 Prairie Ave, Beloit, WI

January 2025

Vol. 42 Issue #01



God of the ages, you have blessed us with another year.

Help us to make room for the blessings that are in store for us in the coming months.

May we be open to learn the right lessons, even if they hurt a little.

Help us to be patient so that we won't miss divine opportunities.

Show us how to be fulfilled without material possessions, so that we will not miss what it means to be a blessed people.

Enable us to be a blessing so you will recognize us as the ones who gave you bread when you were hungry, drink when you were thirsty, and clothes when you were naked.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Adaptation of a prayer by the Rev. Kevin B. Smalls*

# River of Life United Methodist Church

*Loving People Into Taking Their Next Step With Jesus*

Worship Location - 2345 Prairie Ave, Beloit, WI 53511

Office Location - 2375 Prairie Ave, Beloit, WI 53511

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:00 am—2:00 pm

## STAFF

Brenda Whitford	Pastor
608-482-0021	<a href="mailto:pastorbrenda@rolumcwi.com">pastorbrenda@rolumcwi.com</a>
Kelly Lutzow	Office Manager
608-362-8866	<a href="mailto:Kelly.Lutzow@rolumcwi.com">Kelly.Lutzow@rolumcwi.com</a>
Lois Ulvin	Director of Music
David Newman	Pianist
Derek Bergh	IT-Production Manager
Keith Putney	Teaching Pastor
608-774-3162	

## LAY LEADERSHIP 2024

Ad Council Chairperson

Annual Conference Lay Members

Bob Scheets & Carol Scheets

Armed Intruder Chairperson

Barb Kuska

Board of Trustees Chairperson

Kathy Rodgers

Decorating Committee Chairperson

Tracy Maxwell

Finance Chairperson

Hospitality Chairperson

Diane Gemignani

Lay Leader

Pat Sands

Memorials and Wills Chairperson

Marietta Axmear

Missions Committee Co-Chairpersons

Diane Gemignani & Ellen Butchart

Staff Pastor Parish Relations Chairperson

Kelly Clark

Tech Team Chairperson

Derek Bergh

Youth Ministry Team Chairperson

Karen Parssinen



**Sick or out of town for the weekend?**

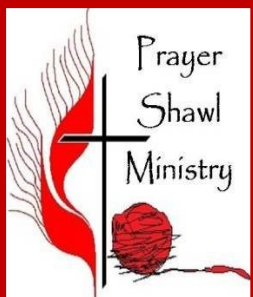
The Sunday morning Service is on the website, on Facebook, and also on our YouTube channel.

Remember to "Like" us on Facebook at

[www.facebook.com/theriveroflifeumc](http://www.facebook.com/theriveroflifeumc)

And on Youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/@riveroflifeumcbeloit4853/streams>



Please contact the office if you or a friend would like a prayer shawl. We have many shawls to share.

## From the Pastor's Desk...



I have an advent calendar made of felt. Each day Mary and Joseph move one Velcro dot closer to Bethlehem and the stable. On Christmas Day, other pieces are put on so the manger scene is completed.

This year, my granddaughter put up the pieces while we remembered the story together. But she didn't put the pieces where you might have expected.

She did not put the angels in the sky. She put them right in the field with the shepherds, so they could easily talk to the shepherds. She did not put the star up in the sky. She put it right next to the stable, so everyone could easily find Jesus. And baby Jesus? She did not put him in the manger. She put him in Mary's arms. She said that babies need to be held by their mothers.

There are many nativity sets that show Mary and Joseph praying to baby Jesus, or bowing before him in reverence. But I think Mary, being a real (teenage) woman and a real mom, would have wanted nothing more than to hold her new baby. And when she was ready to fall asleep, I'm guessing she snuggled him in close to nurse and they both fell asleep.

Our Christmas decorations will soon be put away. We will be leaving this magical time of the year to move on to other things. But I have a question for you: where will you put baby Jesus? Is Jesus being put away with the rest of the decorations? Will you put the real Jesus in a metaphorical box along with the wooden or ceramic or plastic Jesus?

Or, this year, will you keep Jesus close? Will you hold him in your heart? Will you feel like you never want to put him down?

Christmas is such an amazing time! Emmanuel, God-with-us, is here! I encourage you to keep God here, holding Jesus close.

I'll see you in church, where we love Jesus together,

Love, Pastor Brenda

**Pastor Brenda will be on vacation after worship on January 5<sup>th</sup> through January 19<sup>th</sup>. If you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Keith directly at 608-774-3162.**

# Sleeping Mat Work Days

We now have two looms to work on! One is the 6 foot loom we purchased from Midwest Mission, and the other is a 7 foot loom that Dale Gemignani made for us. Now we're working on our 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> sleeping mats! Volunteers meet every week in Fellowship Hall to cut bags or weave. We work from 9:30 - 11:30. It's okay to come a little later or leave a little earlier. If you are interested in working on sleeping mats, just show up! All ages and all abilities are welcome. We will show you what to do!

Weaving dates for January (at 9:30) are:

Fri., Jan. 3

Wed., Jan. 8

Fri., Jan. 17

Wed., Jan. 22

Fri., Jan. 31



Thank you to all the people bringing in plastic bags! **We have two bins in the coatroom for all the bags.** A lot of people thought you leave them by the loom, but very quickly, the loom area starts looking cluttered. We are trying to keep that area tidy for all the groups who use Fellowship Hall throughout the week. Thank you for all your help!



Thank you so much for the wonderful "party" for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday! The cards were delightful, and I always love cake! I was welcomed by several into "The 60s Club," and many called me "just a kid." You are all so very precious! I am grateful for you! ~ Pastor Brenda

Please cut out this Breakthrough Prayer Card and keep for your reference. People we prayed for this month will be conveniently listed on the back of the card once cut out.

**Holy Spirit, release your resurrection power. Break through our doubts and hesitations, bringing miracles of new hopes, new dreams, and new possibilities for our church and in our own lives. Empower us with boldness to follow where you lead us, beyond all that we could ask or imagine.**

## **WATR**

Join us for Wednesdays at the River for dinner beginning at 5:30

**\*Suggested \$5 donation**

<b>1-Jan</b>	OFF
<b>8-Jan</b>	Spaghetti & Meatballs
<b>15-Jan</b>	Chicken Nuggets
<b>22-Jan</b>	Sloppy Joes
<b>29-Jan</b>	Tacos

## ***Fresh Flowers for the Sanctuary***



Would you like to provide flowers for worship?

You may bring in flowers for no reason, or there can be a sentence in the bulletin that states the special occasion for which the flowers are being provided.

**Look for the flower sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall.**

## People we are praying for



† Ace	† Jim	† Nancy
† Ace	† John	† Ron
† Ann	† Kerri	† Rose
† Austin	† Kristen	† Sam
† Barb	† Linda	† Vern
† Charley	† Lyfe	
† Doug	† Marlene	
† Doug	† Matt	



Calvin and Azalea, children of Melissa and Adam Gordee, grandchildren of Sherri Colby and great-grandchildren of Bob and Patti Novy were baptized on December 24<sup>th</sup>. Welcome to the church family!

### Knit & Crochet With A Mission January 29th at 1:00 Office Workroom



All knitters & crocheters are invited!

Questions? Call Sandy Ovist at 608-362-6583



Betty Hannum wishes everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year! She says she misses everyone. Betty lives at the Suites on Pioneer Drive in Beloit.

## Hobby Club



Hobby Club will resume meeting on Sunday, January 19, 2025 at noon in Fellowship Hall. Our gatherings usually last about an hour and a half.

In January Pat Sands will lead in selecting a "word of the year" and present some options for planners and journals.

On February 9, Kris Bakke will share her artwork with us. You know Kris as a friend of Pastor Brenda's from school days. Kris has attended several of our services and turned the message into her artistic version of the sermon.

We will continue planning to meet the third Sunday of each month. Future leaders include Patti Novy, who will teach us a small quilting project, Kelly Lutzow will create something with rhinestones, Carol Connors will return in April, and we look forward to what she has in store for us as well!

If you have a craft to share and would be willing to lead, please contact Kelly Lutzow or Pat Sands to get on the schedule. We look forward to seeing you January 19th!

## Circle Calendar

All women are invited to become a member of a Circle. We encourage you to come and enjoy fellowship with the ROLUMC women's community. Here are the meeting times, dates and contact persons. Please join us for a time of joy, learning, and service.

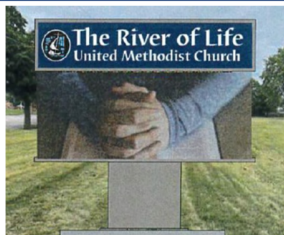
Martha Circle & Mary Circle will not be meeting in January.

**Martha Circle:** 3rd Wednesday, 9:30 a.m.  
For details contact: Carol Braukhoff  
608-299-8738

**Mary Circle:** 3rd Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.  
For details contact: Jacque Patch  
608-362-7729



A huge Thank you to Lois Ulvin for submitting The Knowledge Flows Tutoring program to receive donations from the Wright & Wagner Loft's residents. Snacks, school supplies, and gift cards were delivered by these men at the end of December. We are so thankful for all of the donations and they will certainly be put to great use!



## We Are Getting A New Electronic Sign!

Would you like to help pay for it?

Cost: \$29,164 Received: \$6,800

There is still \$400 remaining on the \$1,000 match.



LOOSE COINS  
Family Promise of Greater Beloit

Happy New Year to our generous church family, and many thanks for all you did in 2024 to help those in need!

Again we start the new year with January Loose Coins going to **Family Promise of Greater Beloit**. This is the organization formerly known as Hands of Faith which provides homeless families temporary shelter, along with extensive support services.

In their larger facility at 1006 Bluff St., Family Promise of Greater Beloit has nine guest sleeping rooms, two living room areas, a computer/resource room, and laundry and bathroom facilities. In addition to shelter, Family Promise focuses on three areas of support for families:

**Prevention** -- Family Promise aims to prevent families from spiraling into homelessness during a crisis. It is said that more than 40% of American families are one unexpected expense away from financial distress. Family Promise can help with government funded rental assistance, landlord mediation, and other community-based strategies.

**Emergency Shelter** -- While families are receiving emergency shelter and food, they receive case management and look for housing and jobs.

**Graduate Support Services** -- Homelessness has many causes, and housing stability involves many solutions. To make sure that families who secure housing remain housed, Family Promise taps into the resources of its business partners and volunteers for financial literacy mentoring, childcare and job training, food assistance, furniture and clothing donation, and health and wellness programs.

To support this worthy cause, you can drop your change in the offering plate, include a check or bills marked for Loose Coins, click on the Donate button on the church website (<https://www.rolumcwi.com>), or scan the QR code below with the camera on your cell phone. Thank you!

-- Ellen Butchart



# Cookie Walk

Thank you to everyone who donated and purchased items from the Cookie Walk to help support the Women's Ministry account.

We will be donating \$500 to Caritas, \$500 to Heifer International and \$400 to the Overflowing Cup (on Madison Rd.)

These donations are a direct result of the Cookie Walk income and Funeral Lunches. Thank you for your support and donations.






So far, 65 Estimate Of Giving Cards have been returned, totaling \$252,312 toward operating expenses and apportionments!

It is not too late to turn in your pledge card. Mail it in or drop it off today.

### Estimate Of Giving Card



**Beautiful Feet**  
*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*  
Romans 10:15b

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

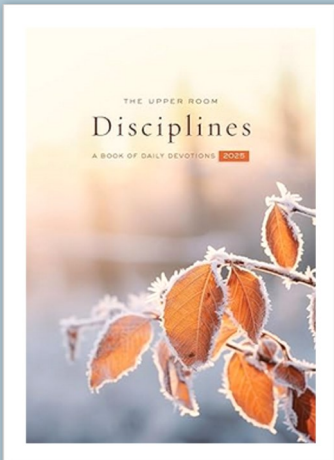
I/We choose to partner with God to help build the Kingdom of God by giving to our church:

General Fund	\$ _____	per	(week)	(month)	(year)
Building Fund	\$ _____	per	(week)	(month)	(year)
Apportionments	\$ _____	per	(week)	(month)	(year)

Please return on or before November 24th to River of Life UMC, 2375 Prairie Ave, Beloit

It's not too late to turn in your card. Bring it in or mail it in soon!

### Upper Room Discipline book for 2025



Thanks to a generous donation, there will be a few Discipline books in the book bin in coat room for FREE.

I am still able to order more if needed but once those are gone it will be \$14.

#### The Upper Room Disciplines features:

A focal scripture passage for each day of the year

Brief, insightful meditations from 53 thought leaders from diverse Christian traditions. A prayer or reflection to carry with you each day. Weekly scripture overviews. An index of scripture readings. A guide to daily prayer. A small group leader's guide



**Adult Mission Trip to  
Midwest Mission  
Chatham, Illinois  
March 2025**

Join our team volunteering at the Midwest Mission near Springfield, Illinois! We will have a Long Adult Mission Trip (Mar. 23 – 28) and a Short Adult Mission Trip (Mar. 26 – 28). In addition to the cost of the trip, we will have three dinners at economical area restaurants.

The cost of the Long Adult Mission Trip is between \$260 to \$385 depending on whether you share a dorm room or not.

The cost of the Short Adult Mission Trip is between \$125 to \$175 depending on whether you share a dorm room or not.

Please do NOT let the cost of the trip keep you from signing up! There is money available in a fund specifically to help people with the cost of participating in the adult mission trip. Please let Diane Gemignani know if you are interested in the assistance.

**If you have any questions, contact Diane Gemignani (608-290-5274 or [dianegem23@gmail.com](mailto:dianegem23@gmail.com)). If you would like to sign up for the trip, fill out the slip below, include the non-refundable \$50 deposit, and mail it to:**

**Diane Gemignani, 1005 Milwaukee Rd., Beloit, WI 53511.**

**\*\*\*Deposit is due by Jan. 15\*\*\***

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I am interested in joining the Adult Mission Trip to Midwest Mission.

Please circle the type of mission trip you would like:

Long trip (March 23 – 28)

Short trip (March 26 – 28)

(I understand the \$50 deposit is non-refundable, but it is transferable if someone else can take my place.)

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Name

---

Email

---

Address

---

Home phone

---

Cell phone

## Hospitality Fellowship

Thank you to all the people who helped with snacks this past December! This was such a busy month! Many people brought snacks to share for the Cantata and other Sundays, and I don't know everyone's name. We appreciate all the people who helped set up in the kitchen: Pat Sands, Sarah Parsons, Dalton Polzin, Diane Gemignani, Sheryl Horvath, and Carol Allen. Special thanks to Ron Schrader for his donation to help us continue our snacks and fellowship time after Sunday service.

People who signed up to bring snacks in December were Tracy Maxwell, Karen Parssinen, Diane Gemignani, and Lora Cawkins. There are lots of opportunities to sign up to bring snacks this winter. The Sign-up clipboard is either at the end of the snack table or on the counter by the recycle bin. When you sign up, it helps to pair up with someone. Or you can sign your name, and soon someone else will sign up to join you. You don't have to completely fill the table with food. Keep it simple. We will gladly eat and enjoy whatever you bring! Thank you for considering this!

# MCCI UPDATE

## Missional Church Consultation Initiative

During the month of January, our MCCI Implementation Team would like the congregation to fill out a Spiritual Gifts Inventory that they have adapted. There are questions that will determine whether you are a Spiritual Shepherd, Task/Organizer, or Vision Cryer. All three gifts are necessary in all areas of the church. Each committee, team and work group should have a variety of these gifts for optimum benefit. Also on this survey are three other questions: 1) Which former Beloit church did you attend before the merger; 2) What is your current or previous occupation(s); 3) What are your talents and hobbies. The inventory will be scored by the MCCI Implementation Team so as to not overwhelm people.

This inventory will be explained in greater detail during worship on January 5<sup>th</sup>. They will be available to fill out January 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Please return at your earliest convenience or by January 26<sup>th</sup>.

### How can you participate in MCCI?

- Fill out the upcoming Spiritual Gifts Inventory.
- It is not too late to join our MCCI Implementation Team. Connect with Pastor Brenda if you would like to be on this exciting team.
- Everyone needs to participate in our day with our consultants in 5-6 months.
- Pray our Breakthrough Prayer every day.

### WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Wednesday Morning Bible Study meets from 10:30-11:30 am via Zoom. **Contact Pastor Brenda for the Zoom link.**

This group will be choosing a new study soon.

### WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

The Wednesday Evening Bible Study meets at 6:00 pm in person, in the couch area of the Fellowship Hall.

***This group is watching and discussing "Jesus And His Jewish Influences" by Great Courses.***

### SATURDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Saturday Morning Bible study meets on Zoom at 7:30 am. Bob Parssinen leads the group using videos from *The Bible Project*.

**Contact Bob or Pastor Brenda for the Zoom link.**

### SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Sunday Morning Bible Study meets at 11:00 am in the Middle School Room. Video clips from *The Chosen* and *The Bible Project* combine with scripture to fuel lively discussions.



**Join us for tutoring on  
Wednesdays at 3:30!**

**Make a difference in children's lives!  
Wednesdays after school!**



**I would LOVE to be a tutor!**



**I would LOVE to provide snacks!**

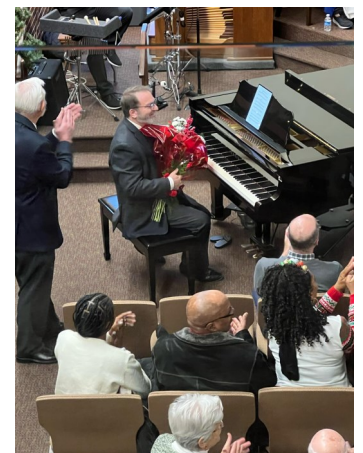
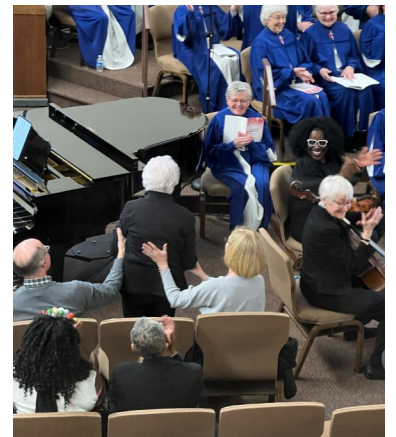
**Contact Karen Parssinen today!**

# Christmas Cantata

The choir is dedicating this year's cantata to  
*Louise Junig.*

Louise has sung in the Chancel Choir for at least 50 years (no one knows exactly!), and she was also a founding member of the Bell Choir. Her commitment and contributions to both groups were unflinching. Choirs were a family tradition over the years. Louise's children sang in youth choirs, and her husband Bob joined her in the choir in later years. Daughter-in-law Karla sang and soloed in the choir at one time, and now her grandson Josh Junig has been a frequent soloist and cantata choir member since his high school days.

During the celebration of her 90th birthday last year, Louise said that singing in the choir still brings her such joy. But she has had to retire finally and just celebrated her 91st birthday. Her clear, true second-soprano voice is missed. But more than that, we miss her warm presence and quiet, self-deprecating humor. Fortunately we still get to greet Louise every Sunday morning, as she finds her joy now in listening to the choir. It is our joy to honor her by dedicating this cantata presentation to Louise Junig!



# January Calendar

January 1		Office Closed
January 3	9:30 AM	Sleeping Mat Work Day
January 7	6:00 PM	Youth Ministry Team
January 6-19	<b>Pastor Brenda's Vacation</b>	
January 8	9:30 AM	Sleeping Mat Work Day
January 17	9:30 AM	Sleeping Mat Work Day
January 19		Human Relations Sunday
January 21	5:30 AM	Finance Meeting
January 22	9:30 AM	Sleeping Mat Work Day
January 27	5:30 PM	Trustees Meeting
January 29	1:00 PM	Knitting With A Mission
January 31	9:30 AM	Sleeping Mat Work Day
February 4	6:00 PM	Youth Ministry Team

## Sunday

9:30 am Sunday Worship  
 11:00 am "The Chosen" Bible Study

## Monday

12:30 pm Card Club (FH)

## Tuesday

9:00 am Exercise Group  
 10:00 am Men's Coffee Hour (FH)  
 1:00 pm Staff Meeting (O)

## Wednesday

10:30 am Adult Bible Study (Zoom)  
 3:30 pm Tutoring  
 5:30 pm WATR Dinner  
 6:15 pm Adult Bible Study (FH)

## Thursday

9:00 am Exercise Group  
 4:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

## Friday

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## Saturday

7:30 am Bible Study (Zoom)



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

## January 2

Eleanor Burnside  
Lora Cawkins

## January 4

Katie Ward

## January 11

Matthew Polzin

## January 12

Wilma Shultz

## January 15

Sandra Ovist

## January 18

Eric Stoner  
Steve Haas

## January 20

Shirley Sweet  
Tru Longman

## January 22

Doug Mitchell  
Nadine Stoner  
Kellyse Lutzow  
Marlene Erickson  
Albert Kohls

## January 25

Betty Kohls

## January 26

Elsie Lynch

## January 27

Donald Parish

## January 28

Mark Hammett  
Nancy Bryant

## January 30

Zachary Christensen

## February 2

Susan Kiser

## February 6

Bruce Cawkins

## February 7

Raven Strother

## February 8

Ann Hegge

## February 9

Patti Novy

## February 10

Savannah Barbian

## February 11

Emma Miller

## February 15

Tony Ward

## February 16

Shania Crandall

## February 17

William Churchill

## February 18

Stephen Wadle

## February 19

Candy Jacobson  
Charles Weiser

## February 22

Katie Parsons  
Mary Porter

## February 23

Clay Ward

## February 26

Stephanie Klett  
Linda Lyman

## February 27

Doris Davis-Gaustad

## February 28

Kelly Lutzow

## February 29

Mary Van Meter  
Cindy Peters

# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

## January 16

Don & Deanna Parish

## February 24

Dick & Anita Markley

## January 23

Bill & Kathy Rodgers

### Issue deadline:

**January 27**

The next newsletter  
will be available on

**February 2**

Note: If your name is not on our lists, please call the office so we can update our records.