

December 2023 Newsletter “Circuit Rider” for



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF MOUNT VERNON

304 1st Street SW, Mount Vernon, IA 52314

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Telephone: 319.895.6286

www.umcmv.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UMCMV>

Pondering on the Paha: When the Cold Arrives

Pastor's Letter

During that first cold snap in November, I was struggling to not be cranky. My feet were cold. I had gone months without noticing my feet, and not appreciating that they were warm, but I certainly noticed when they were cold! I finally dug out my warm socks and my boots. I grumbled when the time changed, and the long dark nights began. I reluctantly wore a sweater for the first time. I believe in the dangers of global climate change, but I was enjoying the mild fall. It's a strange thing, to be glad for warm fall days, but deeply concerned about their cause. I resist the cold, but sooner or later it arrives. With the cold comes a greater appreciation of being comfortable, of having warm feet.

Fisher has our Christmas decorations stacked up at the foot of the stairs in the parsonage. They are ready to go out after Thanksgiving. I resent the cold and dark, but I love having the house decorated for the holidays. Christmas celebrates the arrival of the savior, Jesus. God comes to earth. God becomes fully human. Suddenly, God experiences cold feet. A toothache. Stubbing his toe. Mud squishing under his feet. More than once, when I've had a challenging day, I have felt the Spirit whisper, "I know. I know what you are going through. I know the tears and the heartbreak. I know."

Israel – God knows.

Politicians – God knows.

Divisions in neighborhoods and families-God knows.

The things keeping us awake at night – God knows.

One of the names of Jesus is Emmanuel, which means God with us. My favorite Christmas hymn is "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." It names the longing of our hearts to find God's presence at work right here, right now. The message of Christmas is Christ has come. God with us. God knows.

You are loved,

Pastor Vicki



December 2023



For all who worship with us... we are so blessed to have
you with us on Sunday mornings

In person at 8:30 am or 11 am

Online at 8:30 & 11 am

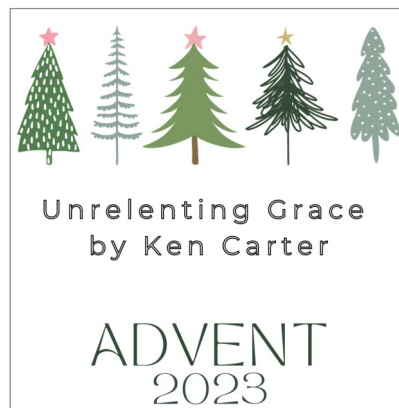
www.umcmv.com/online-worship

Coming this Advent: Unrelenting Grace: A United Methodist Way of Life - Plan to join us this Advent as we explore the United Methodist understanding of grace in light of traditional Advent stories.

Dec. 3: PREVENIENT GRACE: God is searching for us
Communion Sunday

LUKE 1:5-20, 57-80 & ISAIAH 40:3-5

God is at work before we care. God's Spirit is already present in the room we enter.



Dec. 10: GRACE OFFERS US CONNECTIONS: Mary
Healing service: Anointing with oil and prayer available if desired.

LUKE 1 & EPHESIANS 2:13-14

Mary might not get the savior she imagined, or the life she imagined. What she does get is connections. Relationships are everything. People need more than answers, they need our genuine connection and our willingness to listen to their stories.

Dec. 17: HOLINESS IS MARKED BY LOVE: Joseph

MATTHEW 1:18-25

1 CORINTHIANS 13

Joseph shows us holiness marked by love.

Dec. 24, Morning: PEACE ON EARTH: Shepherds

This service is on line only. No in-person morning worship

LUKE 2—Grace invites a connection, especially to the least, lost, lonely, and left behind.

Christmas Eve: Ten Fingers and Ten Toes

5:30 & 9 p.m. - Luke 2

Both services will include communion, candles, and carols. Freewill offering to support the FISH Fund, which helps needy people who come to our church for help.

Remembering OUR MISSION

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Our missional priorities (goals) for 2023:

1. Increased Discipleship
2. Strengthen relationship with Cornell
3. Community Outreach
4. Vibrant Circuit Ministry
5. Small Group Ministry



How to reach Pastor Vicki:

For emergencies, call her cell at 712-563-6094 and leave a message. Otherwise, leave a message at the church at 319-895-6286 or email vicki.fisher@iaumc.net. She will be taking Thursdays as her Sabbath, except in dire emergencies.

Did you miss worship? Check out our online worship at <https://tinyurl.com/weloveUMCMV>



Our Nursery is in its NEW Location! It's now located in the first Classroom on the left in the Main Floor Ed Wing — look for the signs!

Brown Bags and Bethlehem: An Advent Gathering

Join Pastor Vicki for lunch and a discussion of the stories of Advent. Bring a sack lunch and a Bible! Chapel Meeting Room 11:30-12:30 Monday, Dec 4, 11, and 18. Please RSVP so we have enough materials!

Special Church Conference and Potluck: On Sunday December 10, there will be a short special Church Conference at noon to vote on approving Alison Dix as a candidate for becoming a Licensed Local Pastor. Alison has started the discernment process to become a United Methodist Pastor. I have invited Pastor Terra to be our Presiding Elder at this Church Conference. All members have voice and vote. We will meet in the sanctuary for the vote, then adjourn to the Fellowship Hall for a potluck dinner.



Come and Go Christmas Party at the Parsonage:

**December 9,
2-4 pm**

Everyone is invited to stop by the parsonage for refreshments and fellowship!

**Please join us for
Christmas Eve
services at 5:30 &
9:00 PM.**

**Thanks to Alison Dix and Jim Baty
for being our Guest Preachers!**

Alison and Jim both stepped up to share the Good News from the pulpit this past month! We are delighted by their willingness to share their gifts!



Traditional Service Live Stream:

Thanks to the behind the scenes efforts of Clint, Kevin, and several others, we are now streaming the 11 o'clock service along with the 8:30 service. Find all of them at: <https://tinyurl.com/weloveUMCMV>

Who will you invite to Church in Advent?

What is the most effective outreach tool of the church? A personal invitation from you. Today, I'd like you to make a list of people you will invite to church during Advent. As the holidays approach, people are more open to exploring faith and trying church. Please join me, inviting your friends and neighbors to celebrate together!



Sign up to light the Advent Wreath

Individuals, couples, family, young, old, and in-between: We are looking for folks to light the Advent Wreath during worship and share a short reading. Can you help us? Sign up here:

<https://tinyurl.com/MVAdvent>



Are you on Facebook?

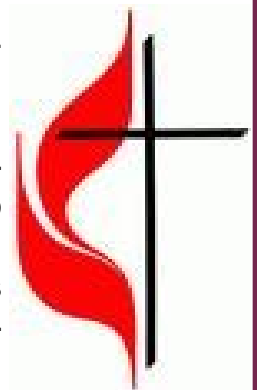
One way you can help the church is to like our page and share our upcoming events. Thank you!

www.facebook.com/UMCMV



Iowa Disaffiliation News:

The disaffiliation window has closed in Iowa with another 59 churches choosing to leave the denomination. This is in addition to the 83 who left in June. About 600 United Methodist churches remain in the Iowa Conference. Across the US, about 20% are expected to leave the denomination as disaffiliation ends. The overwhelming majority of these churches are choosing to leave because they are opposed LGBTQ persons in church leadership and to churches hosting same-sex marriage. While each church can create its own marriage policy, these churches wanted denomination-wide enforcement of a ban on same sex marriages and LGBTQ clergy. The denomination is steadily moving towards tolerance of differences.



Thoughts from the Chair >

Council Corner

The Administrative Council for UMC MV has been meeting on a more regular, monthly schedule leading into and out of Charge Conference. There are multiple reasons for this but one of them is to focus our energy at preparing for the new year. It is exciting and daunting to consider that 2024 is right in front of us. Building on our previous meeting where we identified a vision statement of Building a healthier faith community with trust, love and empowerment, our November meeting focused on our core values. In an energy-filled discussion, so many beautiful facets of this faith community were lifted. In the end, we have determined that the core values of this church, our non-negotiable traits if you will are; 1) embrace everyone as who they are, 2) quality worship with great music, 3) involvement of all ages both inside and outside the church, and 4) generosity. It is this set of core values that we see in you, the faith-filled congregation of this church. As leaders, we lift these up and hold them as our pillar strengths built on Jesus Christ as our foundation. - Jim Baty

YOU ARE SO GENEROUS!
We are feeling so blessed!

- Lord's Portion Auction
\$17,708 net profit
- Pledge Campaign for 2024
70 pledges
\$348,206 pledged



Give, and it
will be given to
you.

Luke 6:38

- Neighbors in Need Fund
\$1,005 donated

IT'S EASY TO GIVE SECURITIES TO THE CHURCH!

As we all think about our year-end gifts to the church, consider donating securities from your investment portfolio. The church can accept any negotiable securities: stocks, bonds, mutual funds. A gift of securities benefits the donor two ways: you receive the usual charitable tax deduction, and you avoid capital gains tax on the sale proceeds. This strategy is particularly useful if you have owned the assets for a long time and have a large unrealized gain.

To get this favorable tax treatment, it is important that the securities are given to the church before they are sold. The Iowa United Methodist Foundation (which manages part of our church endowment) will sell the securities at no cost to either the donor or the church, and write a check to UMCMV. Proceeds can be directed to whichever church fund you specify.

If you wish to learn more about donating securities, call the church office; they will connect you with the Foundation and provide the necessary documents.

If you are considering a yearend donation to the church, consider making a qualified charitable donation (QCD) from your individual retirement account (IRA). Here's how:

If you are 70½ or older, you can donate funds from your IRA to any qualifying charity (including UMCMV), and the donated amount is not taxable to you, as IRA distributions usually are. This is true whether or not you itemize deductions on your tax return. If you are 73 or older at the end of 2023, you **MUST** take a distribution from your IRA before yearend. You can donate all or a portion of this required minimum distribution (RMD) to charity, and avoid paying tax on the donated amount. Please note that, in order to avoid income tax, the donation must be made **DIRECTLY** from the custodian of your IRA to the church. That makes it a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) under IRS rules, and the distributed amount is not taxable to the IRA owner.

Every financial firm that offers IRAs has a process for doing this. Contact the custodian of your IRA for instructions on their procedure. Also, contact the church office, so they will know what to do with the check when it arrives.

This tax-saving strategy is only available to owners of IRAs that were funded with pre-tax dollars, not to owners of Roth IRAs, whose qualifying distributions are not taxable.

Women's Bible Study Tuesdays 9:30 to 11 am

"The Amazing Collection" study — Join us in the balcony classroom — All are welcome

People can call or text any questions to leader, Cathy Stoner, 319-551-6666



Education Corner



Sunday School

We are now on Unit 3. We have one more lesson in the unit, then it's Christmas time! Our unit 3 Faith Word is Blessing, which is all the things God provides. Our unit Bible Verse is Genesis 28:15: "I am with you now, I will protect you everywhere you go". We have been reading about Jacob and Esau, the birthright, and Jacob's ladder. The kids are working hard practicing for the Christmas pageant. After the Christmas pageant, we meet for the last time for 2023!

Unit 3: Blessing

11/26 – Jacob's Ladder Genesis 28:10-22

12/3 – A Peaceable Kingdom Isaiah 11:6-9

12/10 — Pageant Prep

12/17– Advent Celebration

Unit 1 (Winter): Blessing

1/7 – Jesus' Baptism Matthew 3:13-17

1/14 – Calling the Disciples Matthew 4:18-22

1/21 – Showing Love Matthew 5:43-48

1/28 – God's Kingdom Luke 13:18-21



Rooted Youth Group

AirFx was a major hit, as always! After AirFX, we did yoga again with Reverend Doctor Catherine Quehl-Engel. She walked us through yoga nidra, where the goal is to move into a deep state of conscious awareness sleep, which is a deeper state of relaxation with awareness. She also brought her sounding bowls again so we relaxed to the amazing resonance of brass and crystal bowls washing over us.

We take a break for Thanksgiving and this week we will be preparing for the Magical Night soup supper!

YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE

November

11/29 Magical Night prep

December

12/6 Watercolor cards

12/13 Christmas party

12/20 NO MEETING

12/27 NO MEETING

January

1/3 NO MEETING

1/10 Bowling

1/17 Mental health with Sami

1/24 Scavenger hunt

1/31 Sledding/games

Please contact Veronica or Pastor Vicki to volunteer at 319-895-6286. Regular youth leaders and helpers are always welcome. Thank you!

Also, did you know we are on social media? You can follow our pages at <https://www.facebook.com/UMCMVRooted/> for Facebook and <https://www.instagram.com/rootedumcmv/> for Instagram! These pages will include updates and pictures.



Mission Committee - December

We are in the midst of our traditional giving season as we share our blessings with others in the community. Our Mission committee is planning several opportunities for you to bless others as we celebrate the birth of Christ. Please consider the ways you would like to give to others this holiday season.

- *Bulk Food order for the SE Linn Food Bank
- *Angel Tree tag for gift through SE Linn or Willis Dady Agency in Cedar Rapids
- *Cap and Mitten tree item to SE Linn
- *Holiday Ham for SE Linn Christmas food baskets
- *Offering to the FISH Emergency Support fund on Christmas Eve

Thank you, generous congregation, for all your support to our community during this year. You have truly blessed many others with your gifts, prayers, and energy. Merry Christmas.

Your Mission Committee



Angel Tree 2023

This past Sunday and December 3 we have our Angel Tree up with in support 25 people through SE Linn Christmas gifts program. Please take a tag and bless a local family with support this holiday season. We will also be collecting coats for a local shelter as well.

After the Angel Tree—we will be collecting Hat & Mittens on the Angel Tree to help kids in our communities. We will distribute them to SE Linn, and the local schools!

United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon Calendar December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 8:00pm AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall 8:00pm Al-Anon, Common Ground Meeting Room
3 Angel tree - take a tag 8:30am Praise Worship, Sanctuary 9:45am Sunday School Classes 11:00am Traditional Worship, Sanctuary 3:30pm Women's Ministry gathering, Common Ground Meeting Room 6:30pm Evensong worship, Sanctuary	4 11:30am Brown Bags & Bethlehem, Chapel Meeting Room 7:00pm Boy Scouts Meeting, Fellowship hall	5 9:30am Women's Bible Study, Balcony Classroom 1:00pm Staff Meeting, Common Ground Meeting Room 6:00pm Cub Scouts Pack 40, Fellowship Hall	6 6:00pm Praise Team practice, Sanctuary 6:30pm MS & HS Youth Group, Fellowship Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary	7	8	9 2:00pm Come and Go Christmas Party at the Parsonage 8:00pm AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall 8:00pm Al-Anon, Common Ground Meeting Room
10 Angel Tree- gifts due back by Dec 10 SE Linn Bulk Food Offering 8:30am Praise Worship, Sanctuary 9:45am Sunday School Classes 11:00am Traditional Worship, Sanctuary 12:00pm Special Church Conference in Sanctuary ; Potluck to follow in Fellowship Hall 3:30pm Women's Ministry gathering, Common Ground Meeting Room 6:30pm Christmas Children's program, Sanctuary	11 11:30am Brown Bags & Bethlehem, Chapel Meeting Room 7:00pm Boy Scouts Meeting, Fellowship hall 7:30pm Council Meeting, Common Ground Meeting Room	12 9:30am Women's Bible Study, Balcony Classroom 1:00pm Staff Meeting, Common Ground Meeting Room 6:00pm Cub Scouts Pack 40, Fellowship Hall	13 5:30pm Bell Choir practice 6:00pm Praise Team practice, Sanctuary 6:30pm MS & HS Youth Group, Fellowship Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary	14 MV Basketball Team prepare Mission of Hope Meal, Kitchen	15	16 8:00pm AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall 8:00pm Al-Anon, Common Ground Meeting Room
17 Bells playing at both worship services SE Linn Bulk Food Offering 8:30am Praise Worship, Sanctuary 11:00am Traditional Worship, Sanctuary 2:00pm Christmas recital, Sanctuary & Common Ground Meeting Room 3:30pm Women's Ministry gathering, TBD 6:30pm Evensong worship, Sanctuary	18 11:30am Brown Bags & Bethlehem, Chapel Meeting Room 7:00pm Boy Scouts Meeting, Fellowship hall 7:00pm Trustees Meeting, Common Ground Meeting Room	19 1:00pm Staff Meeting, Common Ground Meeting Room 6:00pm Cub Scouts Pack 40, Fellowship Hall	20 6:00pm Praise Team practice, Sanctuary	21	22	23 8:00pm AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall 8:00pm Al-Anon, Common Ground Meeting Room
24 10:00am ONLINE only Advent worship 5:30pm Christmas Eve Worship, Sanctuary 9:00pm Christmas Eve Worship, Sanctuary	25 Christmas Day, Church offices closed	26	27	28 MV Basketball Team prepare Mission of Hope Meal, Kitchen	29	30
31 10:00am Christmas Hymn Sing, Sanctuary						

Lift Up these Prayer Requests throughout the week...

Prayers for Healing:

- For Harold (friend of Susan and Terry Pisarik) who has a recently started cancer treatments
- For our friends & family members who are fighting the battle against cancer or other health issues

Prayers for Comfort and Strength and Safety:

- For Barb Neal (who is now at the Bird House Hospice Home) and for her family during this closing season of her life
- For the family and friends of Addison Ault, who passed away in September. A celebration of his life was held on November 11th. We lift up all who continue to grieve this loss
- For the Rik Smith family, as they mourn the loss of his stepfather's mother, Rosie
- For all who dread the holiday season, either due to depression, addiction or loss. Prayers for God's peace and love to cover these individuals and families
- For those concerned with health issues
- For all who are struggling: emotionally, physically or spiritually
- For all who are grieving

Prayers for Transition:

- For all college students as they maneuver college life and learn to live a life of balance
- For the leaders of UMCMV as they continue to work on behalf of our church
- For the United Methodist Church, the Iowa Conference and our Mount Vernon congregation

Prayers for our Nation and our World:

- For all who have had lives impacted by the trauma of gun violence
- For the people of Israel and Palestine; Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers
- For families and communities devastated by natural disasters
- For people caught in the tragedies of war in Ukraine and Russia; Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers
- Prayers for peace for all humanity

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Joy:

- We celebrate with Tim and Diane Legore the birth of their 10th grandchild, Jude Michael Legore. He arrived on November 9th, his parents are Ben and Kelsey Legore, and he has an excited big brother, Simon. Congratulations to all!
- With joy and thanksgiving, we celebrate our Lay Leader's 88th birthday! Happy Birthday Babs!!!
- What a joy to wish Bonnie Keith a blessed and happy 86th birthday!!!
- We are grateful for Alison Dix and the message she shared with us in worship
- With joy we welcome Emily Stoner Bell and her husband, Josh, as they get settled in the community of Mount Vernon. With thanksgiving we are grateful that Emily is doing well with her health.
- With thankful hearts we praise God for the blessings in our lives

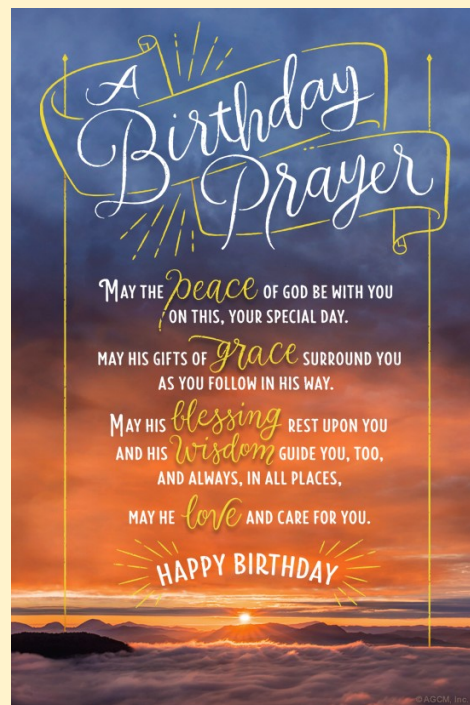


We, as the United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon, are here to say we are making spaces safe and affirming for all people to be themselves and that we are specifically in support of the LGBTQ+ community members. We affirm that those in the LGBTQ+ community are persons of sacred worth, full and whole members of the human family, and are beloved by God.

Gregg Glenn	12/01
Matthew Morrical	12/03
Claire Light	12/05
Bill Meyer	12/05
Mackenzie Kraus	12/07
Gary Briesemeister	12/09
Becker Reinken	12/10
Vern Sand	12/12
Carew Kamaus	12/14
Ben Krack	12/15
Joyce Loomis	12/15
Denae Mcgrath	12/16
Tyler Roos	12/20
Josef Briesemeister	12/22
Kim Schwiebert	12/23
Trevor Baty	12/26
Denise Havill	12/26
Stephanie Boggs	12/27
Brogan Meyer	12/28
Teresa Bothell	12/30
Russell Yeater	12/30
Isaiah Hanson	12/31

December Birthdays

Happy
Happy
Birthday!



COOKIE WALK
MAGICAL NIGHT NOVEMBER 30
4:30 TO 7:30 PM

@ UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF MOUNT VERNON

ALL DONATIONS TO SE LINN FOOD PANTRY

Mount Vernon Community Preschool Update: December 2023

The preschool year is going by quickly and we are so proud of how the children have grown socially and emotionally in these first three months. Children's independence is growing and they continue to form relationships with each other. We are constantly amazed by the excitement our young children bring to the classroom each day. The joy they show for learning, playing and being with one another is delightful!

A HUGE thank you to Warren, Kevin, Terry and Susan for their help and support during our water emergencies last month. The preschool is thankful for your quick thinking and expertise!

If you would like to support the preschool this holiday season, donations will be used for scholarships, new toys, books, art supplies and materials for the classroom. You can also purchase MV Community Preschool merchandise through CauseTeam. <https://www.causeteam.com/causepages/support/mount-vernon-community-preschool>

We wish you all a wonderful December and a Merry Christmas!



2023 Advent series to be led by Bishop Kennetha - Unrelenting Grace

Tuesday's at 7 pm on Zoom: Nov. 28, Dec. 5, Dec. 12 and Dec. 19, 2023

This Advent, explore God's Unrelenting Grace with the Iowa Annual Conference. Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai invites your congregation to join with others across the state as we continue to remember who we are. With a foundation of Bishop Ken Carter's new book, "Unrelenting Grace," we will have teaching sessions prepared by Bishop Kennetha, worship materials, and other resources for use in your church.

[Register](#) today to join the Advent Study Zoom Meetings.

For more information, check out: <https://www.iaumc.org/adventstudy>

Books are available for \$7 at the church.

Prayer: Let us go forth from this place, knowing that God has blessed us with so much and we are so thankful to be in a relationship with God. In God's name we pray, AMEN!

How to contact United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon

Office Phone # (319) 895-6286

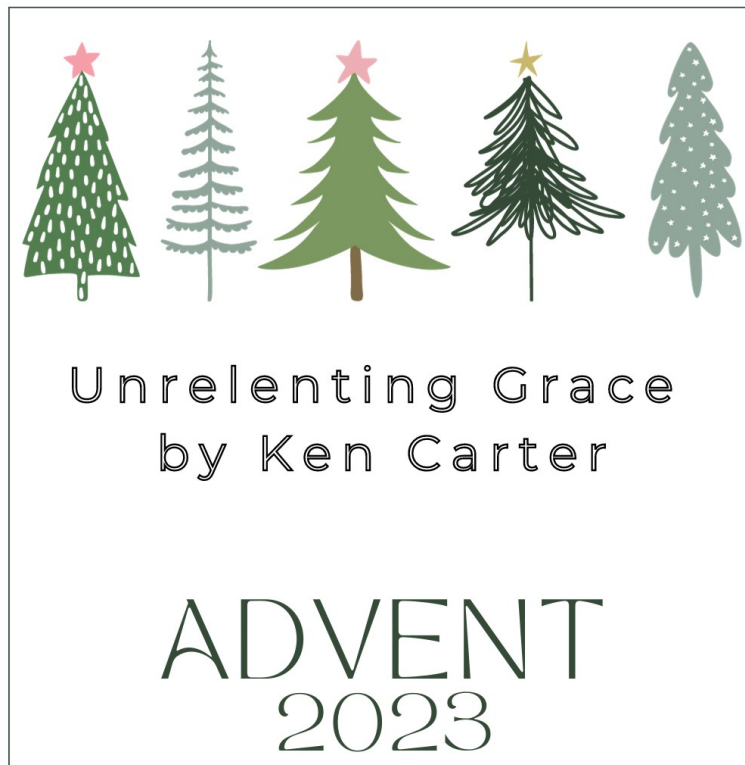
Email: alisondix@umcmv.com

Website: www.umcmv.com

[ONLINE GIVING LINK \(or QR code\)](#)

<https://bit.ly/UMCMVonlinegiving>





Advent 2023 — Share this with a friend!

Advent 2023 — Join us this Advent for Unrelenting Grace!

This holiday season, come join us as we celebrate the great love of God! The same God who came to earth in Jesus offers grace to you for whatever journey you are walking this Christmas. Share the joy of the season with us!

December 3: Modern Worship 8:30, Traditional Worship 11.

Evensong 6:30-7 pm Live holiday music invites us into deep reflection of the meaning of Christmas.

December 10: Modern Worship 8:30, Traditional Worship 11.

Sunday worship will focus on healing for the holidays. If this time of year brings a mix of joy and longing, you are not alone. We will reflect on Mary's journey. Potluck to follow at 12:10.

Sunday School Program— 6:30 PM

December 17: Modern Worship 8:30, Traditional Worship 11.

Sunday worship includes an invitation to wear your favorite, loudest Christmas apparel. Worship will include "Advent Bingo" as part of our celebration.

Evensong 6:30-7 pm Live holiday music invites us into deep reflection of the meaning of Christmas.

December 24: No in person morning worship. Online service only.

Modern Christmas Eve service at 5:30 PM.

Traditional Christmas Eve service at 9 PM.

Both services include communion, candles, and carols. Freewill offering to support the



MAGICAL NIGHT CAROLING

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 30TH
MOUNT VERNON IOWA



Magical Night caroling— be a wandering caroler for the night !

Sign up for Caroling—

<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/30712256098/true#/invitation>

Kim Schwiebert is coordinating, so feel free to contact her as well!

You are Invited! Come enjoy soup, veggies, crackers, shredded cheese, drinks and desserts!

Magical Night Soup Supper

Thursday Nov. 30

5 to 7 PM
Fellowship Hall





United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon
304 First Street SW
Mount Vernon, IA 52314
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon Staff

Senior Pastor	Pastor Vicki Fisher
Praise Team Director-....	Clint Stanerson
Christian Education Director	
& Director of Youth Ministries...	Veronica Fisher
Congregational Care Coordinator	Julie Baty
Office Manager/Newsletter	Alison Dix
Nursery Care.	Melissa Oxley
Director, Adult Handbell Choir . . .	Kristi Keast
Organist	Karen Stoll
Chancel Choir Director	Kit Currie
Choir Accompanist	Denae McGrath
Custodian	Night Shift
Maintenance & Repair Director	Trustees
Wedding Coordinator.....	Barb Shepley
Financial Secretaries	Richard Jacob,
	Tim Legore & Jackie Morrical
Treasurers	Mike Kragenbrink
	Alison Dix

Christmas Eve– Sunday Dec 24

**No in person morning worship on
December 24!**

**Pastor Vicki will record an online
meditation for the morning.**

**Please join us for Christmas Eve
services at 5:30 & 9:00 PM.**

