



Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

THE MESSENGER

FIRST WAUSAU UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Downtown Wausau Wisconsin

From the Pastor

by Pastor Rebecca Voss

Dear First Wausau Family of Faith,

Christmastime is full of wonderful memories, but sometimes it can become depressing when we miss loved ones and see empty seats. Many of us remember when pews were packed, and extra services were added to accommodate the “Christmas” crowds. Will we ever return to those days? Perhaps, but it helps to know some statistics that can lead us to pray with more insight.

In the past 30 years, the number of people in the U.S. who identify as agnostic, atheist, or non-religious grew from 8% to 29%. Christians now make up 63% of the populations (down from 90%), and people of other faiths rose slightly from 5% to 7%. Let's pray for all who claim to be Christians to live as gracious witnesses of God's love, not as judgmental people who drive people away from wanting to know Jesus.

Today, the average senior (or only) pastor is 60 years old, and 36% of church members are 65 and older. Both numbers have been rising a year and percentage each year.² Let's pray for more and younger people to be encouraged to explore a calling to pastoral ministry, and for God to lead the next generation of pastors to reach their peers.

Here is a helpful summary of the different generations that will be mentioned more below. Those born between 1928-45 are often called the “Silent Generation”, and for some ironic reason they are not heard in the statistical research I found. Baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. They're currently between 57-75 years old (71.6 million in the U.S.). Gen X was born between 1965 and 1979/80 and is currently between 41-56 years old (65.2 million people in the U.S.). Gen Y, or Millennials, were born between 1981 and 1994/6. They are currently between 25 and 40 years old (72.1 million in the U.S.)³ Gen Z are those born between the late 1990's and early 2010's. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to move in all generations of people in ways they can each connect to Christ.

In 2000, the average attendance in U.S. churches was 135 people. In 2020, it was 65. In 2023, in-person attendance averaged 60, but another 15 attended online, to add up to 75 in average worship attendance. “Baby Boomers” have had a sharp decrease in attendance since Covid. Before the pandemic in 2020, 31% of the Boomer generation attended church, but by the end of 2022, only 22% were attending. In contrast, the Millennial generation outpaced all the other generations in attendance. Before the pandemic, 26% of white, and 31%

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"From the Pastor" continued from page 2

of non-white millennials attended church. Now, 30% of white and 40% of non-white millennials attend worship.⁴ Let's pray for our church to be truly welcoming to younger and more diverse people.

There are interesting differences in attendance frequency between mainline Protestants (like us), evangelical Protestants, and Catholics. 33% of Mainline Protestants attend weekly, 43% attend less regularly, and 24% attend rarely if ever. Catholics are a bit more faithful in worship, with 39% attending weekly, 40% less regularly, and 20% rarely to never. Evangelical Protestants are the most devoted in attendance, with 58% weekly attendance, 30% monthly-ish, and 12% rarely/never. Interestingly, those who worship weekly are 80% likely to experience spiritual peace and well-being, compared to 52% of those who attend less frequently and 41% of those who attend rarely if ever.⁵ These attendance numbers include both in-person and online. 10% of attenders only attend online, and another 16% attend partially online and partially in person. For black Protestants, those online statistics double.⁶ Let's pray for more people to find weekly worship, whether in person or online, to become a priority in their faith and life.

We light a candle each week of Advent to pray for the hope, love, joy, and peace we expectantly wait for in Christ. May Christ be born in us, so that we and the world may more fully know the hope, love, joy, and peace of God.

Merry Christmas!
Pastor Rebecca

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/how-u-s-religious-composition-has-changed-in-recent-decades/>

² <https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Epic-4-2.pdf>

³ [https://offer.kasasa.com/exchange/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z#:~:text=Gen%20X%3A%20Gen%20X%20was,72.1%20million%20in%20the%20U.S.\)](https://offer.kasasa.com/exchange/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z#:~:text=Gen%20X%3A%20Gen%20X%20was,72.1%20million%20in%20the%20U.S.))

⁴ <https://www.barna.com/research/church-attendance-2022/>

⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/06/02/online-religious-services-appeal-to-many-americans-but-going-in-person-remains-more-popular/>

Our long time First Wausau member
Bob Wylie celebrated his
100TH BIRTHDAY
on October 18th!



December Birthdays

7 Betsy Duginski	14 Sharon Gisselman	23 Ann Johnson
Lynn Sydow	Stan Schacht	24 Vicki Nowaczyk
9 Yvonne Firary	Lois Susor	28 Dennis Carey
Carrie Hockerman	16 Robert Bauer	29 Anita Gerber
11 Cyrus Adams	18 Dean Marquadt	31 Nancy Bogumill
Arthur Chang	19 Dave Carlson	Sarah Koss
13 Charlie Strong	C. Merrill McMahon	
	Andy White	



- The Volkman family as they grieve Jerry's death on 11/13/23
- The Guth family as they grieve Jon's death on 11/9/23
- The Wenzel family as they grieve Brian's death on 11/4/23
- Andrea Anderson's health
- Merrill McMahan's health

First Wausau



Savvy Seniors

Savvy Seniors will be meeting on Monday, December 4th, at 11:30 at The Palms Restaurant in Schofield. This is a social group open to singles & couples over 55. We would love to have you join us! Any questions, call Vicki Nowaczak at 715-571-3009. Thank you.

FUMC Wired

Website: firstmethodistwausau.org
with links to the weekly sermon
in text and podcast

facebook.com/WausauFUMC
youtube.com/@FirstWausauUMC

WiFi Network: FUMC Guest
password: fumcpublic

Phone: 715.842.2201

A Fond Farewell and Warm Welcome



With much prayerful consideration of our circumstances and an eye toward the future, the Staff Parish Relations Committee has decided to restructure the church's staffing priorities. We will continue to have the same office hours, from 9 am - 1 pm, Monday - Thursday. We are grateful to our secretary, **Joan Stroyny**, who has graciously received calls and visitors and worked hard to keep many parts of the office

running for the past five years. She will be leaving at the end of December. We invite all to come to thank her at a coffee hour held in her honor on Sunday, December 3, after the 10 am service. Joan has genuinely been a blessing!

The SPRC is changing the secretarial role to become more focused on communications, particularly in a digital age. **Georgia Reynolds**, who became our Finance Director in July, will also become our new Communications Director on January 1. She will expand our abilities to organize and communicate effectively and efficiently with everyone in person and online. She will also continue to keep our finances in good order. We are grateful for Georgia, her wide range of skills, and her careful and caring personality!

Andy White is continuing as the Building Engineer but will be dividing his time to be paid about 8 hours/week by our church for his work related to our worship and related times, and the rest of his time focused on the building will be funded by the lease arrangement. Andy will also be training a younger custodian to learn how the building works so he (and we) can entrust the care of the building to someone well-prepared once he is ready to retire.

We all thank **Adele Bluhm** for serving as the interim choir and bell director. The SPRC continues to welcome more candidates to direct the choir and/or handbells. In addition, we are also hiring a Nursery Director to work 9-11 am on Sundays. If you or anyone you know would like to apply, please get in touch with Margaret Anderson, Bonnie Goertz, or Pastor Rebecca.

Please join in celebrating Joan's five years
with us on Sunday, December 3rd!



The coffee hour will be held in her honor
after the 10:00 am service.

*Check out the
Giving Trees
in the parlor
and help
support
local
missions!*



Growing Generous Givers

Did you know that 49% of people between 25-54 years old have not written a single check in the past year? Or that only 45% of people aged 50 and under carry cash? Those Pew Research statistics are signs that we live in a digital economy, and we want to ensure that the next generations have opportunities to worship God through their offerings, even when offering plates are not needed.

Whether you are joining us in person or at a distance, this QR code can be used to give a secure offering. Soon it will also be used to let us know you are worshiping and how to pray for you. Please ask a staff member or an usher if you would like assistance. Thanks!

<https://onrealm.org/FirstUnitedMeth91919/-/form/give/now>



**New!!
Give On
Line!**

An account is not required but if creating one, please sign up using the email you provided in the church directory.

December Mission Offering

This month's offering will be for the **Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**. This mission serves the residents of the reservation and deepens the relationship with the native community there. The donations will provide supplies for the early childhood programs and clothing for the children. In addition to financial donations, there is a gift box in the parlor for new infant & toddler hats and mittens. Thank you for your generosity.

Remember that the Mission Offering must be clearly marked. Either write a note on your check or use the brown envelopes in the back of the pew. Just loose change in the offering plate will not go to the monthly offering.

2023 Charge Conference

These faithful members came to vote at our annual Church Conference, which included a unanimous vote by ballot to lease our building to the Community Foundation for \$1/year for the next century. The CF will become the Agent of the whole property (including the building with 50,000 sq. ft.), the congregation will be owner-occupants of about a 1/3 of the space, we will share 1/3 of the space, and the other 1/3 will be used by a wonderful community organization to be formally announced soon! This church truly has Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors!



Pointsettias Donation Form

Pointsettias

We will be using poinsettias to decorate our Sanctuary for Christmas. If you would like to donate toward one or more flowers, the cost is \$12 (small) & \$25 (large) per plant – but any amount is welcome.



Please fill out the form below and, drop it in the offering plate, mail it, or bring it to the Church Office, along with your check. We will need to have your orders no later than December 10th. On December 17th we will list the names of those remembered or honored in our worship bulletin.

Please print

Name: _____

Phone: _____

In Memory / In Honor of (*circle one*) _____

Total Donation: \$ _____

Make checks payable to *First United Methodist Church*
Memo line: *Poinsettias*

UWF Cookie Order Form



2023 United Women in Faith
Holiday Cookie Order Form
UWF is having a pre-order cookie sale!!!

Cookies will be pre-ordered and packed ready for you to pick up. Orders are due by Monday, December 11.

They may be picked up Friday December 15, 3:30-5:30 p.m. (B.K. Smith Room)

-or-

Sunday December 17, following the 10:00 service.

Here is your chance to order an assortment of holiday cookies and support UWF missions.

Submit order to Barbara Ritchie, 1-715-205-4622 -or- 16 Fulton St, #413, Wausau 54403- or – barbjack57@msn.com

Orders due by December 11, pick up at B.K. Smith room Dec. 15, 3:30-5:30 p.m. -or- Dec 17, following the 10:00 service.

Make checks payable to UMW. Do **NOT** combine Poinsettia check with cookie order.

Contact Information:

Your Name: _____

Preferred phone: _____

Email: _____

Home Address: _____

Your Order: _____ pound(s) @ \$10.00 per pound \$ _____

Nut free? (Please circle) Yes No





United
Women
in Faith

UWF/UMW Fall News

The women of the United Methodist Church-Wausau have had a very busy November. It started the first weekend of the month with the women providing sweet potato casseroles as part of a special early Thanksgiving dinner enjoyed by many newcomers to the Wausau area from other countries. The food theme for the month continued into our church's annual charge conference, where the UWF provided a chili supper prior to the conference (and after the Packer game!) that was enjoyed by many of the people who attended. A donation was asked for, and the money collected will be applied to the missions work that our unit is involved in. Special thanks go out to the kitchen dish crew, who stepped up to help get things cleaned up in a very timely fashion—thank you!

With December now upon us, the food theme will continue as the women prepare for our church's annual Cookie Sale. Once again, the cookies will be sold pre-packaged, available for pick up at church on December 15 or December 17. Order forms are available in the Messenger and at church, due back by December 11. There were also a number of holiday items left from the fall Rummage Sale, so a table will be set up during the holiday season with many festive things for sale. Please stop by and take a look!

STAFF

Pastor	Rebecca Voss	rebecca@firstmethodistwausau.org
Finance Director	Georgia Reynolds	georgia@firstmethodistwausau.org
Secretary	Joan Stroyny	joan@firstmethodistwausau.org
Director of Discipleship	Julie Miehe	julie@firstmethodistwausau.org
Building Engineer	Andy White	

903 Third Street, Wausau, WI 54403
Office Hours: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday-Thursday
(715) 842-2201
www.firstmethodistwausau.org

New!!
Give On
Line!



An account is not required but if creating one, please sign up using the email you provided in the church directory.

SECURE ONLINE GIVING LINK: <https://onrealm.org/FirstUnitedMeth91919/-/form/give/now>

DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 8:00am Worship, Chapel 9:00am Sunday School/FOCUS Group 10:00am Worship, Sanctuary 11:00am Coffee Hour	27	28 10:00am Hanging of the Greens 1:00pm Prayer Shawl Group, Parlor 5:30pm Trustees, B.K. Smith	29 5:45pm Handbell Rehearsal 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary	30 8:00am AA, Room 101 7:00pm Boy Scouts, Choir Room	1 Office Closed	2
3 8:00am Worship, Chapel with Holy Communion 9:00am Sunday School/FOCUS Group 10:00am Worship, Sanctuary with Holy Communion 11:00am Coffee Hour	4 11:30am Savvy Seniors, The Palms, Schofield	5	6 5:45pm Handbell Rehearsal 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary	7 8:00am AA, Room 101 1:00pm Worship Design, Parlor 7:00pm Boy Scouts, Choir Room	8 Office Closed	9
10 8:00am Worship, Chapel 9:00am Sunday School/FOCUS Group 10:00am Worship, Sanctuary 11:00am Coffee Hour Presentation-The Hagar House 12:00pm Jon Guth, Visitation, Noon-2pm, Funeral at 2pm	11	12 1:00pm –3:00pm Personal Needs Closet/Claire's Critter Closet	13 5:45pm Handbell Rehearsal 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary	14 8:00am AA, Room 101 7:00pm Boy Scouts, Choir Room	15 Office Closed	16 9:00am –12:00pm Lessons & Carols Rehearsal
17 9:00am Sunday School/FOCUS Group 10:00am Lessons & Carols, Sanctuary 11:00am Coffee Hour	18	19 6:00pm Finance Committee, BK Smith Room	20 1:00pm United Women in Faith Meeting, Parlor	21 8:00am AA, Room 101 7:00pm Boy Scouts, Choir Room	22 Office Closed	23 NO Personal Needs/Claire's Critter Closed
24 Christmas Eve Day 10:00am Combined Worship Service, Sanctuary 4:00pm Christmas Eve Service, Sanctuary 8:00pm Christmas Eve Service, Sanctuary	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26	27	28 8:00am AA, Room 101	29 Office Closed	30
31 New Year's Eve Day 10:00am Combined Worship Service, Sanctuary	1 New Year's Day Office Closed	2	3	4 8:00am AA, Room 101 1:00pm Worship Design, Parlor 7:00pm Boy Scouts, Choir Room	5 Office Closed	6

THE MESSENGER

First United Methodist Church of Wausau
903 Third Street
Wausau, WI 54403

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Our Mission:

*Living as a community where God is forming
deeply committed followers of Christ.*



DECEMBER WORSHIP

Sunday Worship Times: 8:00 am Chapel 10:00 am Sanctuary

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

Our Shocking Hope

Psalm 80:1-7, Isaiah 64:1-9, Mark 13:24-37

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

Our Just Peace

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, Isaiah 64:1-9, Mark 13:24-37

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

(no 8:00 am service)

Lessons and Carols Service

Our Fierce Joy

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

(Christmas Eve)

Our Wondrous Light

Psalm 89:1-4, 24-27, Isaiah 2:1-14, 15-20

10 am, 4 pm, and 8 pm Christmas Eve Services

(no 8 am or 2 pm services)



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

(no 8:00 am service)

Watchnight

Psalm 148, Isaiah 61:10-62.3, Luke 2:22-40