



## Centenary United Methodist Church

PO Box 111

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# The Circuit Rider

DECEMBER 2023



## Centenary United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Vaughn W. Thurston-Cox, Pastor



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Facebook.com/5H20centenaryumc



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CUMC Facebook news

**Our Vision:** To be the Breath of God in Community

**Our Values:** Loving God, Serving Others, Welcoming All

# Circuit Rider



## *The Pastor's Pen*

Rev. Dr. Vaughn Thurston-Cox

It's Monday. I've only just arrived back after a week away with my family, and my schedule already has me rushing to five meetings in four days: two here at Centenary, one for the community, and two for our annual conference. Next week will improve a bit, but just a few weeks from Christmas, things only move faster with extra events and planning for Christmas Eve. Even while the earth covers itself in snow for a winter rest, we rush even more to complete our work, to serve our community, and to spend time with the people who matter most. And

none of these are bad things. They are good. I enjoy all of these. I have to wonder, though, if what often underlies the frenzied activity isn't so healthy, a spirit of scarcity that overhangs our lives. A fear that tomorrow may not come for us.

As a result, we become so busy assembling the tree, wrapping it in lights, and dressing it in decorations, we never pause to bask in its twinkle or joy in its playful light. We become slaves to the tyranny of the immediate, and so miss the reason for this season. We live intentionally, but the intentions leave us no space to tend the inner life, leaving more and more people taking one drug to keep themselves awake during the day and another to help them fall to sleep at night.

This season of Christmas I invite you to be intentional with your time in ways that tend your inner life. An Advent devotional. Sunday morning worship. Slow reading through the infancy narratives found in Matthew or Luke. Set aside time in your calendar for the things that feed your soul by placing them on your



Centenary Quintet (from left) John Faas, Al Erickson, Steve Russell, Ken Konyha, and Keith Danielson

## The Pastor's Pen continued from page 2

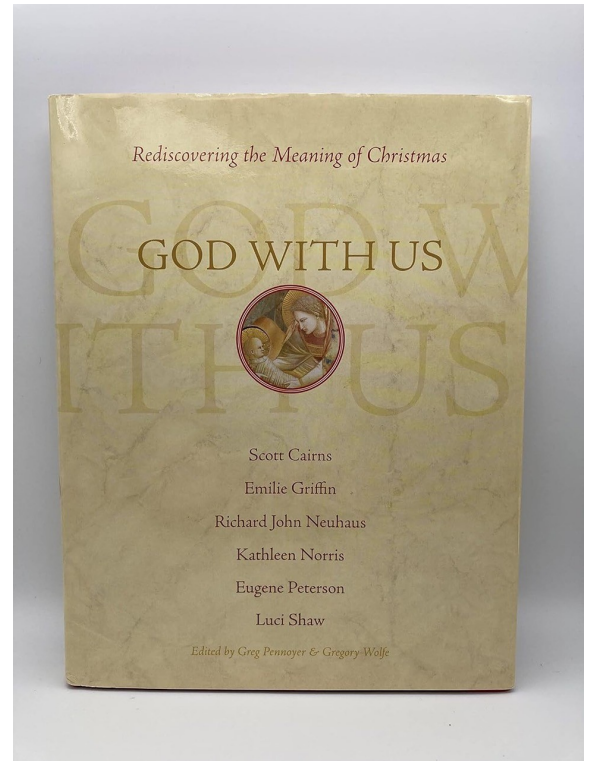
calendar. Let the Advent season do its work and draw you to encounter the God who becomes one of us in Bethlehem's cave.

For those wanting to go deeper and may enjoy the visual arts, I suggest *God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas*, which you can find on Amazon. The hardcover print editions include beautiful pieces of art throughout.

I look forward to celebrating this Advent-Christmas season with you!

Be the Breath,

**Pastor Vaughn**



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## Volunteer to Set Up Communion

Looking for a new opportunity to serve the church by giving a small amount of time and talent? In 2024, the Worship Team will be posting a sign up sheet for preparing communion elements. The task involves cutting bread into cubes, pouring juice into communion ware, placing on the altar and cleanup after the service. There are written instructions available. Generally, communion is served on the first Sunday of each month. Please consider serving. Look for the [SignUp Genius dates](#) starting January!



# Month of December 2023 at a Glance

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>3</div> 9:15am - Small Group Study 9:30am - Education Team, 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time 7pm - Christmas by	<div>4</div> 10am - Senior Stretch @	<div>5</div> 11am - Garden Club Cups of Cheer @ Fellowship Hall 9am - Community Dinner 10:30am - Prog Coord'n 1pm - PSC Board @ Wesley 2pm - Meditation Group @ 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley 7pm - Share & Prayer @	<div>6</div> 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Bell Choir @ Music	<div>7</div> 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10am - Service Club @	<div>1</div> 10am - Prayers Squares @	<div>2</div>
<div>10</div> 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	<div>11</div> 10am - Senior Stretch @ 10:30am - Finance & Op's 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	<div>12</div> 9am - Chamber BAH planning 9am - Community Dinner 10:30am - Worship Team @ 6:30pm - Euchre @ Wesley 6:30pm - Pentwater Lake	<div>13</div> 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner 6:30pm - Property	<div>14</div> 9am - Centenary, SPRC @ 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @ 7pm - Jr. Women's Club @	<div>15</div> 10am - Prayers Squares @	<div>16</div>
<div>17</div> 9:15am - Small Group Study 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time 4pm - Caroling on the Green	<div>18</div> 9am - Cargiver's Support 10am - Senior Stretch @	<div>19</div> 9am - Community Dinner 2pm - Meditation Group @ 6pm - Church Council @ 6pm - Council Zoom Link @ 6pm - West Michigan SAIL @ 6:30pm - euchre @	<div>20</div> 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner	<div>21</div> 9am - Frozen Meals 10am - Senior Stretch @	<div>22</div>	<div>23</div>
<div>24</div> 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	<div>25</div> Circuit Rider Articles Due 10am - Senior Stretch @	<div>26</div> 9am - Community Dinner 6:30pm - euchre @ Wesley	<div>27</div> 9am - Community Dinner 5pm - Community Dinner	<div>28</div> Red Cross Blood Drive @ 9am - Frozen Meals	<div>29</div>	<div>30</div>
<div>31</div> 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Fellowship Time	For the most up to date schedule and details, go to <a href="https://pentwaterumc.org/calendar">pentwaterumc.org/calendar</a>					



## Without Friends We Become Ghosts

Jesus gave us some stern warnings about gaining the world at the cost of losing our souls. What does it mean to lose our soul, what does it feel like, and what can we do about it?

First, what is the soul? In the Bible “soul” is used as a synonym for our life as a whole, (Genesis 2:7). The human soul is the container for us as persons. It contains our body, our personality, our attitudes towards the things we acquire, our decisions,

thoughts and moods. What we are generally aware of is our conscious human soul that is the interface between the infinity of everything in the world outside of us (called “otherness”) and the infinity of the world within, of which we are often barely conscious or completely unaware. Interestingly, there is something about our human soul that requires the observance and validation of another person. We are not able to become a fully functioning healthy human soul all by ourselves. This is seen especially in babies that do not develop well when they are deprived of human eye and physical contact. Studies have been done where babies are deprived of interactive eye contact and instead are met with emotionless stares from their mothers. The infants almost immediately are distressed and begin to cry. It's like at the beginning of life our soul is not well differentiated from our care givers. As we mature we can progressively disconnect and become more and more independent but we still need others to see us for what we really are, the personal eye contact helps.

But, what happens when we detach too much from others, that is to be without friends, and attach more to things or projects? This is the essence of losing our soul that Jesus refers to, the switch from people to things. When we choose to live without friends we begin bit by bit to exist as a ghost until in the end we are alone. We observe the lives of others but become unable to interact with them like the stereotypical haunting of the departed portrayed in movies, they can see the living but are denied the ability to relate personally. As a ghost we lose our identity as healthy humans and develop a kind of soul sickness. The perpetrators of mass shootings often have the back story of being shunned and isolated people who are bullied, not validated and therefore exist on the fringes of civil society. The ensuing hopeless despair opens the door for terrible actions without any fear of consequences since other people seem to barely exist.

What can we do to avoid becoming a ghost? This can be much more difficult for the introverts among us but the extroverts among us can help: we can make the deliberate effort to be a friend.



Thanksgiving with friends, from left, Ronda Hamelen Jenkins, Madeline Hamelen, Norm & Sandy Lyons, Elaine Curtis. The group called Gloria Egermaier and she was thrilled to talk with all her friends.

Here are a few ways:

Choose to tell parts of our story to safe people, and, we can learn to listen well to them tell their story and be a safe and nonjudgmental listener. Offer to pray for others when they mention the parts of their lives where they are suffering or lonely. This isn't like an offer to be someone's therapist but is more of a simple invitation to God to be a part of our human drama. I can imagine that God delights in the offer of including him in our lives. I'll bet he responds to our simple prayers far beyond what we might expect.

Employ table fellowship to open the door to potential friends. The gospels often portray Jesus being in the homes of various people and eating with them. This provided Him the opportunity to enjoy the company of others in a relaxed and intimate setting and opened the door to many personal interactions with Jesus. This metaphor of dining together is used in Revelation 3:20, "I will come in and eat with you," meaning I will have a friend relationship with you. Not everyone you invite for dinner will become a friend but some will. Jesus even encouraged us to invite for dinner those too poor to invite us back.

Besides Centenary's community dinner as an example, why not personally offer your home as a place for good food, safety and friendship in a world where a kind of madness seems to stalk the streets of our strange times? If a personal need comes up why not pray for them? The environment of a home and dinner seemed to be the conditions for Jesus to do his supernatural ministry and he is still about his Father's work as much now as then.

***Roy Martens***

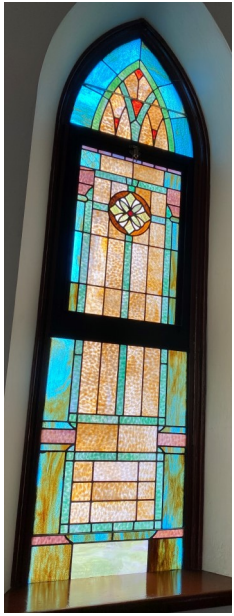
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## Christmas by Candlelight



Join the United Women of Faith  
for an evening of music  
to open the Advent Season.

**7pm, December 3, 2023,  
Centenary UMC Sanctuary  
All are welcome!**



## Quiet Corner - Sharing Our Light Within

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.  
- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.  
- William Shakespeare

Be a kind voice in this broken-hearted world; give grace and be ready to receive it. Listen so well that the person you're with can rest in your attention for a moment. Be a light. Be a light. Be a light.  
- Nana Hoffman

On this day may I be present to the Miracle of being alive. May I reach out to those who are suffering and may I use my voice as a force for good. May I have the courage to do what is right, not what is easy. May I have the strength to shine a light in the darkness. May I not distance myself from myself.  
- Joanne Fink

Let each one be receptive to the Spirit that inspires  
allowing the will to respond with action;  
And may all judgments and denials be released  
that our souls are freed to serve the Light with joy!  
Thus will we recognize oneness with The Divine Spark  
dwelling within our hearts, fanning it to illuminate the way.  
- Nan Merrill from Psalm 144



I can't resist sharing (again) one of my all-time favorite quotes:

"Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the face of men. It is a seed stirring to life IF we do not choke it. Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He is within us all.  
- Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*

*Thoughts and Prayers for a Praying Community - compiled by Sandy Lyon*



# Prayers & Squares

***“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”***

*- 1 Thessalonians 5:18*

***“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”***

*- Isaiah 60:1*

As I am writing this article for the Circuit Rider, I have Covid. Verse 18 in 1 Thessalonians 5 does not say we are to be thankful “for all circumstances” but “in all circumstances”. Submitting to this command as told by Paul to the church of the Thessalonians requires a belief that God is good...no matter what appearances might suggest. I have come to experience that God uses everything for good and I’m getting better at ‘handing the wheel over’. So, here I am...waiting to see what God has in store.

And it’s not about me. Covid seems to be gathering momentum again in the community. Maybe we’re all just supposed to do a reset. Take a pause to reflect on the advent season and the birth of Christ. Not let holiday tasks and gift-buying distract us too much from the simpler meaning of Christmas.

The halls of UMC have been abuzz with activity these days. Community Dinner the night before Thanksgiving was packed! Not to mention preparing for at least 80 take-out orders. Quilt requests have been on the rise as well, giving our little ministry plenty of opportunities to keep the focus on our mission alive.

But, as we enter the month of December, a new and most important energy awaits. As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, we are invited to reinvest in our relationship with Christ in a deeper way. In my mind that also extends to our worldly and personal relationships. Especially now. It occurs to me...maybe this is the gift being offered to me through Covid. An ‘interlude’ that quiets my busy-mind enough to feel and see my relationships in the truth of Christ...not in their ‘flawed’ states.

With that said, may there be many opportunities for everyone to have their own personal interludes with Christ. Enjoy your friends and families this Christmas season. Love your neighbor. Have fun. Be blessed. Pray for our ministry.

Blessings of Peace... ***Carrie Roberts***





## Share & Prayer

We had our last Share and Prayer for 2023. Thank you all for your interest in a small group like this. The group's purpose is to learn to listen carefully to peoples' life situations or problems and if they request we pray for them, leaving a space for them to give feedback. Then they can report on what they are thinking and feeling at that moment and then pray again along a direction that seems to be where God is working in the situation. At the end there is a short book recommendation (not necessarily a religious book), review and discussion on a topic that relates to Biblical agenda. The meetings were in the church library on Tuesday evenings. If we resume, perhaps in February, we could consider a better time and day, any opinions on this?



For additional information,  
contact Roy Martens 231-742-3799.

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Thanks to friends for your cards and calls as I recover from my procedure. I have been home for a few days and am grateful to be slowly moving into a routine. Thanks again for your kind words and thoughts. Blessings, Don Palmer

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### Come Enjoy the Festive Carols

What: Community Christmas Caroling  
When: December 17, 2023, 4:00 pm  
Where: On the Green

Let's celebrate the Christmas Season as we join together to sing your favorite carols, accompanied by musical instruments. Refreshments provided.

# Christmas Baskets



The holidays are here! There are many needs in and around Pentwater, including many children who can use some extra holiday cheer. There are over 40 local children in need, identified during the Thanksgiving food basket giveaway. Can you help make their Christmas a little cheerier? A list of children's names, including ages and sizes, is available to choose from in the church office. The office is open 9-12 Monday - Thursday. The lists will also be available at church on Sunday Morning, December 3. If you choose a child or two to sponsor, please be sure to put your name and phone number associated with those children on our master list.

For Christmas, the church purchases a ham, organizes food baskets for each family, and asks individuals to sponsor children for gifts. We do welcome donations of canned goods that can be distributed in the boxes. We have 16 families with children that need assistance this holiday season.

Gifts and any canned goods are all due back at the church by December 17. Please wrap all gifts and clearly mark them with the Basket # and the name of the child.

Thank you for your continued generosity! **Beth Russell & John Faas**

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## Community Dinner upcoming menus\*

\*Dishes may change subject to the availability of food.



December 6	Sausage Stuffed Acorn Squash Cornbread Cucumber Dill Salad Mushroom & Wild Rice Soup Delicious Donated Desserts
December 13	Crispy Oven-fried Chicken (Mustard-Herb Panko Crusted) Almond Rice Pilaf Creamy Fruit Salad Broccoli and Cheddar Soup Delicious Donated Desserts
December 20	Ham Scalloped Potatoes St. Martin's Carrots Mixed Fruit with Creamy Dressing Mushroom & Wild Rice Soup Delicious Donated Desserts
December 27	Chicken and Dumplings Buttered Corn Broccoli Raisin Salad Ham and Bean Soup Delicious Donated Desserts



We are now using **SignUpGenius** to sign up and serve in several ways. Please click on the links if you can share your time and talents with us!

[Community Dinner volunteers](#)

[Liturgist](#)

[Children's Time Leader](#)

[Hosting Fellowship Time](#)

[Ushers](#)

[Communion Set Up](#)

You can also sign up using our bulletin board.



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# Thanks for your help with our Church Workday!

We appreciate the help of all of you who worked to clean up our church grounds and get everything prepped for Winter.







Jean Russell  
 Jackie Woodley  
 Evelyn Jacks  
 Don Palmer  
 Winter Vaughn  
 Bill Bluhm  
 Mat Hacker  
 Kaycee Bylsma

### Cancer Treatments

Stan Rokita  
 Jeff Klein  
 Ronda Hamelen Jenkins  
 Cindy Williams  
 Ernie Beauvais  
 Dale Trierweiler  
 Richard Wild

*Names will remain on the list for four weeks and they can be resubmitted.  
 Please submit updates or corrections to the Pastor*



### Birthdays

Jean Nicholson	12/06
Joan Wild	12/09
Mary Kayler	12/10
Marlene Veen	12/22
Diane Larson	12/23
Steve Kruto	12/27
Ronda Hamelen Jenkins	12/30
Bill Gardy Jr	12/31



### Anniversaries

Roy & Robin Martens	12/06
Richard & Karen SaintDenis	12/10
Richard & Joan Wild	12/18

## Help Us Grow: Give Electronically

Electronic gifts are fast and secure, and they reduce administrative costs, allowing more of every dollar to fund the important work we are called to do.

- Give anytime, anywhere to your favorite funds
- Schedule and manage recurring donations
- Make one-time donations to special appeals
- Pay for events, programs and other activities

If you would like to give electronically, visit our website or contact the church office.



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