

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

I would like to thank the children for a wonderful Christmas program. Thank you to Jessica and the people who helped her in making this a special event in our church. A thank you to Tammy and the committee that put together the meal and getting people from the congregation together to take a trip to Mapleton to see the city of Bethlehem. I applaud the wonderful show of fellowship.

The Holidays are over, the presents have been opened. The candy and cookies as well as the meals with family and friends have been eaten. Wasn't it great to see and spend time with everyone. Our minds are saying to us, that it is now time to relax.

Did we have a CHRIST-MAS celebration? Or we're so caught up in the holiday festivities that we forgot why we have this holiday? We are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Did we say a family prayer thanking God for his son before we ate our meal? Jesus is the reason for the season!

With Christmas over, people have been thinking of the New Year, what will this year bring us? Maybe our thoughts turned to New Year Resolutions Did you know that 80% of them are abandoned by mid-February. An author suggests a better idea might be to reject resolutions entirely. They had an "idea that we have to fix ourselves before our lives can get better." We should see the new year as an opportunity to do less, to finally "start saying no" to some of the "oversized and ongoing commitment that take our time and energy without giving us much in return." This world is constantly full of pressure to do and be more, it can be easy to miss the radically different rhythm of life Jesus invited His disciples into – one of abiding in Him. In John 15, Jesus described Himself as "the true vine" and his disciple's as "the branches." Vine branches don't grow through working harder but through the nourishment received from the vine of Jesus. So, too, the growth we long for can only be experienced when we let go of self-reliance in exchange for resting in and finding nourishment in Christ, for "apart from Him you can do nothing." Through Jesus, we have hope for a life of less anxiety. Less striving and more resting in God's love and letting it flow to those around us.

This season is about love, the love we share with our family and friends. The love we share with others that we don't even know. Thank you to all who got presents for those on the tree and gave food to help the families in our community. The love that Jesus Christ shares with us every hour of the day. So, sit back, put your feet up, and relax and know that our Father in heaven loves you more than we can every imagine. So, is there anything that God might be leading you to say "no" to this year?

Prayer: Gracious God and loving Father, please help me surrender my self-reliance to rest in your loving arms.

God's Blessings to All,

Pastor Kirk Manchester

Stewardship

As we approach the new year, we want to express gratitude to our members who have supported our various pleas for donations. Our most recent success story was the wonderful response for Christmas gifts for needy children that piled high under the tree in the Narthex. We surely put some joy in Christmas for those children! We understand that plea came at a time personal budgets are trying to meet your own family needs. **Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!**

We move on to the needs for 2026. We will soon see the proposed budget for our church's operation and be asked to approve that budget. As we suspected the amount grew once again. Please be as generous with your support as you can. Always remember that stewardship includes gifts of time, talent, and money. Sometimes gifts of time and talent make bigger impact than actual cash. All gifts are appreciated.

**Is your child or grandchild missing a jacket?
These have been at the church for a while. If
they belong to you, please pick up or contact
the office.**

**The leopard jacket is Arizona size XS and the
white jacket is Wonder Nation size 3T**



**All Christmas decorations and
the Avenue of Trees will be taken
down following the worship ser-
vice on Sunday, January 4th.
Many hands make for light work.**



HYMNS ON THE CHIMES

**January 1st at 9:15 AM "Auld Lang
Syne"** From the UCC Church

**January 7th at 10:15 AM. "What A Friend We Have in
Jesus"** in memory of Margaretha Carstensen from the
UCC Church

January 7th at 6:15 PM "Here I Am, Lord" in memory of
Don & Jo Meyer's Anniversary from the family.

January 9th at 6:00 PM "God Will Take Care of You" in
memory of Rhonda Nemitz from Barry Nemitz and fami-
lies.

January 21st at 7:00 PM "Just a Closer Walk with Thee"
in memory of Ray & Esther Henningsen from David &
Cathy Henningsen and family

January 26th at 1:00 PM "Nearer My God to Thee" in
memory of Leonard & Edna Kastner from the Kastner
family

January 28th at 10:15 AM "Old Rugged Cross" in
memory of Johann Carstensen

January BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Austin McMinemee
- 3 Gary Peters
- 4 Patti Miller
- 5 Christine Adkins
- 5 Sheila Ferry
- 6 Ashley Potts
- 10 Renae Rusch
- 10 Glenn Barker
- 12 Taylor Neubauer
- 16 Susan Boland
- 17 Josie Krohnke
- 18 Evelyn Grau
- 20 Jett Paulsen
- 22 Clinton Kragel
- 22 April Stender
- 29 Lois Jacobs
- 30 Amber Grau
- 30 James Streck
- 31 Larry Wiebers

Congratulations to Brinkley (Thies) Beeck on her graduation from the University of South Alabama. Brinkley graduated December 12th with a Nurse Practitioner degree in Mental Health.

November Financials



Income:

Weekly Envelopes	\$6784.00
Loose Offering	\$296.50
Seasonal Offering	\$2.00
Misc. Offering	\$0.00
Misc. Income	\$91.35
Chicken Dinner Income/ Donations	\$0.00
Interest Income- General Fund	\$9.19
Investment Income	\$2167.67
Total Income:	\$9350.71

Expenses:

Travel & meetings	\$0.00
Insurance & Taxes	\$383.91
Janitor Supplies	\$30.80
Misc. Expenses	\$2888.39
Music	\$939.00
Office Expense	\$1222.63
Pastor Expense	\$5753.91
Payroll Expenses	\$0.00
Repairs and Maintenance	\$92377.04
Supplies	\$165.00
Support Staff Salaries	\$4189.00
Utilities	\$-114.02
Total Expense:	\$107,835.66
Net Ordinary Income:	- \$98,484.95

January Greeters:

January 4: Wayne & Ina Mae Bliesmann
January 11: Neil & Kim Kragel
January 18: Jim & Jolene Whiteing
January 25: Ken & Connie Boger

January Acolytes:

January 4: Huntur Johannsen
& Jett Paulsen
January 11: Ryder Luth & Sophia Luth
January 18: Averi Valentine
& June Jurgensen
January 25: Jayton Bral & Journey Bral

**Annual meeting is
Sunday, January 25th
following the worship
service**

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

**Please contact the office if you
would like an absentee ballot.
Absentee ballots must be returned
to the office no later than Friday,
January 23rd in order to be
counted for the Annual Meeting.**

Numbers for the Books

Date:	Attendance:	Contribution:
November 2	49	\$549.25
November 9	42	\$230.00
November 16	46	\$5354.75
November 23	72	\$801.50
November 30	church	cancelled
Total:	209	\$6935.50
Average:	52	\$1733.88

2025 Avenue of Trees Champions



**The Neubauer Family
(Tammy, Shelby, Lacey, Royce,
Elliot, & Amelia)**

Council Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2025

Call to Order: Council Vice-President, John Dorfler opened the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Council members in attendance were Josie Krohnke, Roberta Jepsen, Leisha Kragel and Seth Neubauer. Kirk Manchester and Tammy Neubauer were also present. John Bahnsen, Jill Sedore and John Fineran were absent.

Opening Prayer: Kirk opened the meeting with a prayer.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2025 text meeting and the October 15, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded. Motion carried.

Approval of Financial Report: A motion was made to approve the financial report. It was seconded. Motion carried.

Bills to be paid: A motion was made to pay the November bills. It was seconded. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

CE: They are working on the Christmas program but no report was given with Jill's absence.

CSFD: Leisha has been in contact with Gaylen Bahnsen to better understand the investments for CSF.

CSFI: No meeting.

Property: Parking lot project is complete. There are some repairs needed at the parsonage including fixing a closet door and the range hood isn't working. Parking lot snow removal will be done by Jepsen's again and Dalton Miller will handle the sidewalks.

Outreach: The newly formed Outreach Committee met. They are working on the December 7 Santa Day preparations and will be sponsoring a soup supper in Fellowship Hall prior to the Walk through Bethlehem event in Mapleton on December 17. Everyone is invited to attend both events. Outreach will also

adopt 6 children from the Christmas Crusade and ask the congregation to help buy gifts for the children. Outreach will buy gifts for those things not supplied by individuals.

Stewardship: No report

Endowment: No report.

Pastor's Report: Council reviewed the report submitted, listing visiting elderly, giving communion and attending meetings. He will meet with the CCMA committee soon about completing his lay leader training. He also listed he is looking at advent and lent material as well as working on his annual meeting report.

Old Business:

Farm Leases: Ullrich lease has been signed. It was noted the trees were not removed from the property prior to signing the lease, as written in their prior and current lease. Hargen's 3 year lease has been prepared but will not be presented to be signed until soil maps have been turned in and the small trees growing are removed as the lease states.

By-Laws: Both by-law changes presented to the congregation on November 2 passed.

Chicken Dinner Re-cap: The dinner cleared a profit of \$3,479.61. There was discussion about the size of the chicken being very small this year. Council thought perhaps there should be an investigation into other food options that Staley's has available for next year, with the research being done now. Nobody was put in charge of this at this time.

New Business:

Christmas Eve Service plans: The service will be at 6 p.m. Kirk has asked some individuals about providing special music, but has no definite answers.

CE Budget: Jessica presented the CE budget. It was moved and seconded to approve \$20,000 to come from the JAC account for the next year's expenses. Jessica and Tammy will work together to move funds to their account when necessary.

(Council Minutes continued)

Christmas sacks: Leisha will contact Fareway and order the supplies to make 80 bags to be handed out following the Christmas Program on Dec. 14. Sacking will be done by council at 9:15 on Dec. 14.

Arrangements for supply pastor in Kirk's absence: It was requested that Kirk have arrangements made prior to taking vacation and then notify the staff and council of his replacement. He stated the council President is aware of his replacement arrangements.

Lenten Services: A meal will be served at 6 pm with a service at 6:45 on Wednesdays during lent. A signup sheet will be made to sign up to serve.

Claussen CD: The CD comes due November 25. Council instructed Tammy to handle renewing the CD.

2026 Budget: The 2026 budget will be prepared prior to the next council meeting. Tammy will work with Roberta who will represent council and Sandy Lacey as she has worked on the budget the past several years.

The next meeting will be December 17, 2025 at 7:30, following the Walk through Bethlehem event.

With no further discussion, a motion was made to adjourn and was seconded. The Lord's Prayer was recited and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Neubauer

Financial and Council Secretary

Thank you to the Outreach Committee for serving a meal prior to the "Walk Through Bethlehem" event in Mapleton at the Fatih Bible Church. Members of all ages enjoyed this wonderful event.



STEWARDSHIP JANUARY 2025

A new year is rolling in and with it a new fiscal year for the church. Council has voted on a projected budget and will present it to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting. As you probably know, a budget is an educated guess on what it will take for general operations in the next year. Of course, as usual, we have no idea of what our income will actually be as your giving is an unknown to the council but again an educated guess! That giving is supplemented with the dividend income from the Carstensen Brothers stock holdings and miscellaneous income such as the Poinsettia Fund, fund raising projects like chicken dinner and Lenten meals. The operating costs have gone up, the dividends have steadily grown, and now it is your turn to help balance the budget.

As you plan your family budget – formally or informally – please be generous in your gifts to the church. Some have more available than others. Give as you are able. No one knows what individuals give, it is between you and God. And no one should judge how much you give.

Again, I want to remind you that our church is so fortunate to have the farm account for mission gifts and major repairs, the investment account to balance budget and source for our parking lot improvement, The John Wulf money for local mission gifts, and generous givers. Most other churches are constantly fund raising to pay for the electricity and salaries! We are able to share multiple larger gifts for various worthy projects and missions.



Christian Education

I pray that you had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends! We had a fantastic month with the Sunday School and Confirmation kids. We spent the entire month in multiple ways reviewing the true meaning of Christmas. We were blessed with healthy children and decent weather for our Christmas program. The children did an amazing job with the program. I am very proud of them all and their individual talents! Thank you to the kids, parents, and all those helping in the background. Without all of your extra efforts, our Church would not be able to have this in-depth of a program. I truly appreciate it. The children had a blast finalizing their ornaments and building their Gingerbread "Mangers" while watching the movie "Star" on the final day of Sunday School. I think they ate more than they built. Thank you to those that donated supplies!

For those wanting to catch up on our Light Lounge material through Revive School, the website is reviveschool.org It is easy to set up a free account. We will be on lesson #27, which is the first lesson in the book of Exodus. I have learned a lot and encourage you to listen in. We will kickoff Light Lounge and Sunday School on January 11th at 9:00AM with donuts and breakfast pizza. The Youth fellowship Lock In happening the night before, so pajamas are encouraged for all ages on Sunday morning!

