

NAME: _____

- ☐ First time guest
- ☐ Returning guest
- ☐ Member
- ☐ Interested in membership or Baptism

New Contact Information:

Phone _____

Email _____

Address _____

Opportunities to serve

Random acts of kindness:


- ☐ Pray for peace in the world.
- ☐ Pray for the people, leadership, and ministry of Two Rivers Church.
- ☐ Donate socks, hats and gloves to Operation Safety Net.

Two Rivers Outreach Ministry opportunities:

- ☐ Donate new or used household items to Operation Safety Net.
- ☐ Donate non-perishable food and hygiene products to our Little Free Pantry.

Worship team opportunities to serve:

- ☐ **Liturgist** – Assist Pastor with readings and communion during worship.
- ☐ **Greeter**– Greet people at the West parking lot.
- ☐ **2nd & 4th Sunday Ushers**—Open the church for Sunday worship and make coffee. Take offerings in bank bag to bank depository. *(Must be a member of the church in good standing for at least 6 months.)*



RECONCILING MINISTRIES NETWORK

Welcome Statement

From the beginning of the Jesus movement, followers of Christ declared that there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, nor is there male and female. We, the people of Two Rivers United Methodist Church join in this movement of the Holy Spirit and declare that we celebrate the diversity of our neighborhood and the world.

We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and affectional orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status, and so much more. We believe that the body of Christ is more vital in its ministry when the whole diversity of the human family may enjoy full participation and leadership in the Church.

We welcome all who have known the pain of exclusion or discrimination in the Church and society, and acknowledge the pain caused by the exclusionary policies of the United Methodist Church. We will continue to work toward a more inclusive Church and invite you to join us in following Jesus Christ on the Way, marked by greater hospitality, kindness, justice, peace, understanding, and mutual respect.

Announcements for December 31, 2023

Swahili Sunday School—10:45 am in the Swahili Class Room
Confirmation Class—10:45 am in the Youth Room on 3rd floor
Adult Sunday School—10:45 am in the Asbury Parlor
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL TODAY DECEMBER 31st

Discipleship Schedule Monday Bible Study meets every Monday in Epworth Hall at noon. Wednesday Prayer & Devotion Time meets on Facebook Live and Zoom at noon every week. Zoom Meeting ID # for Wednesday is 961 006 728. The Zoom meeting can also be joined by phone simply by dial 312-626-6799. Once connected, dial the Meeting ID # 961 006 728, and you will join in the conversation. **No Monday Bible study this week due to the New Year’s holidays.**

Baby Shower for Mary The Confirmation Class would like to cordially invite you to a baby shower for Mary, mother of Jesus, to be held in Epworth Hall **from 10:45 a.m.-12:00 today**. This celebration will feature games, snacks, and opportunities for intergenerational connections. The items donated will be given to Family Resources, which provides care, treatment, and services to women in crisis.

Love Gift Our accompanist, Mary, Ellen Carroll, has resigned effective immediately. We will miss her beautiful piano solos, and her support of our choir and guest soloist. Please keep her in our prayers for healing and health. We will have a card to sign in the west entrance on Sundays December 31 and January 7. Love gifts can be brought to the offering on January 7 or sent to the church office as a farewell gift.

GriefShare A GriefShare support group is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 12-week group, you’ll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what’s “normal” in grief. This group will be led by a combination of laity and clergy. It will meet on Mondays at 4:00 p.m., starting January 8. It is open to all – you do not need to be a member of Two Rivers Church to participate. There is a \$10 registration fee, which helps cover the cost of the GriefShare workbook.

Date	Liturgist	Ushers	Greeters
12/31		Kevin & Brianna Pollock	Larry Dalton/
01/07		Cand Canik & Dave Dehnel	Larry Dalton/

Network: Two Rivers Sanctuary
Password: TwoRivers2013
www.TwoRiversUMC.org



Donation QR Code



December 31, 2023

Sunday of Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-15 (CEB)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

*You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,
because from you will come one who governs,
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.” When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him.” Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: *I have called my son out of Egypt.*

GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE

PRELUDE "March of the Kings"

GREETING

*HYMN "There's a Song in the Air" vs. 1, 2, 4 #249 UMH

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION Beth Merrill Neel

All: God of stars and angels, God of sheep and lambs, God of abundance and grace. You know us well, better than we know ourselves. You hear us cry "Gloria!" and "Praise!" And you watch us tear things apart with our words and deeds. You hear us say "Thy will be done" and "Use me, O God" And you watch us do nothing in response to cries for help. You know us, and you love us, and you forgive. Hear us now say, "Help us to change; turn us around, Make us more loving and courageous and hopeful." This we pray in Jesus' name.

Pause for silent confession

One: Hear the good news, God's forgiveness and grace is offered before we even ask for it. The God who knows us well forgives us fully.

All: We are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PASSING THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S GATHERING "Love Came down at Christmas" vs. 1 #242 UMH

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

PRAYER HYMN "Love Came down at Christmas" vs. 2 #242 UMH

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: Holy God, grant us an epiphany.

All: Burst furth through the clouds of doubt and confusion.

One: Enlighten our path, guide our direction.

All: And reveal to us new ways of loving you, loving each other, and growing in faith.

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 2:1-15

SERMON "Embrace" Rev. Robb McCoy

RESPONDING TO THE GOOD NEWS

RESPONSE HYMN "Good Christian Friends Rejoice" #224 UHM

Mark Swessinger & Tamara Baugh

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

MISSION MOMENT Family Resources Nicole Cisne Durbin

PRAYER FOR THE OFFERING

One: Gracious God, Herod pursued Jesus and commanded the death of the innocent children to protect his grip on privilege and power. May we loosen our grip on the illusions that provide us security.

All: Empower us through the radical act of generosity to claim your Kingdom of abundance and peace and let go of Herod's kingdom of fear and violence. Like the Wise Ones so long ago, may the gifts we bring to Christ be used to bring healing.

One: May we be healed through generosity, and may the world be healed through our generosity.

All: In faith we pray, Amen.

*HYMN "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" #229 UMH

(All are invited to place your offering and the detached part of the bulletin in the offering container at the front of the sanctuary as we sing)

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH Nathan Nettleton

We believe in God, the creator and giver of life, who brought all creation to birth, who mothers and fathers us, protecting, nurturing, and cherishing each of us.

We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby, embodying both love and the need for love, and calling us to rest in God as a trusting child rests in their mother.

We believe in the Holy Spirit who is breathed into us at our birth, always drawing us on to be born again, encouraging, comforting, sustaining, and nourishing our growth and inspiring our living.

We believe in the reconciliation of the world to God through Christ. Hunted at birth and humiliated at death, Christ entered our darkness so that we may enter his glorious light and share in his resurrection.

And we believe that each new child is a glimpse of the face of God, a sign of the life to come, and a call to live in peace and celebrate living together. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth. Amen.

*DOXOLOGY #94

*BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

* You are invited to stand as you are able.
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Beth Merrill Neal's prayer is from holdfastowhatisgood.com.
Nathan Nettleron's affirmation is from Laughingbird.net



December 31, 2023
Sunday of Epiphany

PRAYER MINISTRY

YOUR NAME: _____

Who would you like to see this prayer? _____

- ☐ **Pastor Only.** Only the pastor will see this prayer. He will most likely see it and be in prayer for it on Monday morning.
- ☐ **Prayer Chain.** These prayers will be sent to those who have signed up for prayer chain email. They will also be prayed for by first name only during our Wednesday online prayer service.

Please be in prayer for: _____

Please pray for this:

- ☐ For this week only.
- ☐ Until _____
- ☐ This is an ongoing need.

I am interested in being a part of the Prayer Chain:

- ☐ Email: _____