



**A NOTE FROM PASTOR LAUREN** The beginning of a New Year is an opportunity to imagine what is on the horizon - what God is making new here and now, and how we are being called to participate?

It's also an opportunity to reflect on what will never change: God's love for us, God's abundant grace, and God's call to love our neighbor as ourselves. Those truths have rooted a community of faith here in this place for 180 years.

Our church was organized at the end of 1844, with a group of faithful Scottish Presbyterians and a local minister. I've always found it curious that they organized in the dead of winter. Perhaps they needed something hopeful to warm their souls as snow piled up, making chores and living difficult.

In January of 1845, they celebrated their First Communion, which is the final act that officially organizes a newly chartered church.

As we mark a new year as individuals and as a church, we reflect with gratitude on the permanence of these old brick walls. We know that buildings are not actually permanent, and neither are churches, for that matter. But *the Church of Jesus Christ is permanent*, and as long as we continue to seek the will of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is no reason to wonder how many more New Years Willow Creek will celebrate. The faithful have gathered in this place and broken bread together - at the Communion table and at tables of celebration and fellowship as well as tables where the mourning are gathered - for generations now. May we continue to do so. With gratitude, we chalk these lovely sanctuary doors and prepare for another year of welcoming friends and strangers who will become friends.

In the bleak midwinter 180 years ago, warmed by the love of God and the fellowship of friends and family, and the Holy Spirit and perhaps some other spirits - they were Scottish, after all - a group of faithful Presbyterians planted roots so that this community would be a place where the cold might always find warmth. We honor their legacy and our shared faith by persisting in the mission of loving God and neighbor here and now. We greet another New Year with consideration for our past and resolve for our future.

**CHALKING OF THE DOORS** You are invited to take chalk home with you and join the ancient practice of chalking your doors for the New Year with CMB + 2025. The letters CMB stand for the names of the magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar) or the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem benedicat* (Christ bless this house). Here is a blessing as you chalk your doors:

*God of doors and homes, bless this home this year and every year. Bless all who come and go through this door, both those who live here and those who visit. May all who enter through this door come in peace and bring joy. May all who come to this door find welcome and love. May the love and joy in this home overflow and spread into the community and the world. And may Jesus Christ watch over us all. Amen.*

**Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>** plan to stay after worship to help **undecorate the church** and enjoy our **annual chili cook-off!** All are welcome to bring a chili to share or just help with undecorating & enjoy what others bring.

**WHAT A WONDERFUL YEAR IT WAS!** A small look back on what a great year WCPC had!



**CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL** All Preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> graders are welcome to join us after the Children's Moment on Sundays around 10:30am. We will meet **January 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>**. See Rebekah, Karli, Shannon or Riley if you have any questions.

**YOUTH** Youth dates for January and the rest of the Winter and Spring will be sent out soon!

**POINSETTIA** Flowers not picked up prior to **Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025** will be delivered by the Deacons to those in need of extra cheer.

**LIVING WITH GRIEF GROUP** Join us on **Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 1pm** for our **Living with Grief Group**. No matter how long you've been grieving, or who or what you carry grief for, you are welcome. We will meet on **Second Wednesdays at 1pm**. All are welcome - please consider inviting those who are grieving who are not yet connected to our church.

**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL** is making plans for the new year. See Pastor Lauren, Pastor Tanya or April if you have any ideas!

**SESSION SUMMARY** The Session traditionally does not meet for business in December, so there is no report this month.

- A motion was made and seconded to receive the Pastor's Compensation Package including a 3% increase. The motion passed.

**WCPC OPERATING STATISTICS** Stay tuned for November statistics!

**A NOTE FROM LIZ O'LEARY** Hello folks. I hope you had a blessed Christmas. I wish to thank all of the musicians who helped make our Willow Creek Christmas so joyous. The lineup for January is below. Thanks & stay warm!      🎵 Liz

- **January 5<sup>th</sup>**: Bill & Joyce Zartman
- **January 12<sup>th</sup>**: Elizabeth O'Leary, Contralto
- **January 19<sup>th</sup>**: Tom Andrew, Keyboard
- **January 26<sup>th</sup>**: Renee O'Dell, Soprano

## JANUARY CALENDAR

Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup>		Hello 2025! - Church Office Closed
	8a	Men's Coffee at Boone County Family Restaurant
Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup>		<b>No</b> Bell Choir Rehearsal
	11:30a	Ladies Meet & Eat at Sophia's Restaurant
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup>	10a	Worship - Epiphany & Communion
	11a	Fellowship
	11:15a	F/P/E
	11:30a	Diaconate
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Welcome Back Argyle Preschool!</b>
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup>	6:30p	Session
Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup>	8a	Men's Coffee at Boone County Family Restaurant
	1p	Living with Grief Group
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup>	6p	Bell Choir Rehearsal
<b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Change for Change</i>	10a	Worship - Baptism of the Lord
	10:30a	Children's Sunday School
	11a	Chili Cook-off & Undecorate the Church
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup>	6p	Pipe Band & Drumming: Lessons & Rehearsals
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	8a	Men's Coffee at Boone County Family Restaurant
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup>	6p	Bell Rehearsal
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	10a	Worship - Officer Installation
	10:30a	Children's Sunday School
	11a	Fellowship, Officer Training & Luncheon
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Martin Luther King Jr. Day - No Argyle Preschool</b>
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	8a	Buildings & Grounds
	6p	Pipe Band & Drumming: Lessons & Rehearsals, W & M
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	6p	Bell Choir Rehearsal
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>		<b>February Streamer Articles Due!</b> ❤️
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>	10a	Worship
	10:30a	Children's Sunday School
	11a	Fellowship
	11:15a	F/P/E
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup>	6p	Pipe Band & Drumming: Lessons & Rehearsals
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup>	6p	Bell Choir Rehearsal

**ATTENTION STUDENTS \* THE FLORA MCEACHRAN SCHOLARSHIP** To apply, please submit a letter to the Clerk of Session (Rebekah Landi). The letter should include a description of your plans following graduation. You may also wish to include information about yourself including activities, community service, etc. Please mail the letter to the Church Office (Clerk of Session, Willow Creek Presbyterian Church, 7300 Belvidere Road, Caledonia, IL 61011) or email ([reblandi1650@gmail.com](mailto:reblandi1650@gmail.com)). Prior to the Scholarship disbursement, recipients chosen for the scholarship will need to show proof of enrollment in a course of basic study or training beyond high school. Eligibility: any student in or beyond their senior year of high school who has not previously received the scholarship.

**OFFICER ORDINATION, INSTALLATION & TRAINING** On Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, our new Elders and Deacons will be ordained and installed during our regular worship service at 10am. Make plans to join us in worship for this special occasion. Following worship on the 19<sup>th</sup>, all currently serving Elders and Deacons are invited to Officer Training. We will have lunch together and pray and plan for the upcoming year. We will meet from 11:30am until no later than 2pm. If you *cannot* attend, please let Pastor Lauren know ([Lauren@WillowCreekPC.org](mailto:Lauren@WillowCreekPC.org) / 678-203-7549).

## DIANNE'S HYMN OF THE MONTH: "WASH, O GOD, YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS"

#490 in our Glory to God Hymnal

Born in 1947, Ruth C. Duck, composer of this hymn, has been involved in making God's eternal and unchanging world relevant to the modern era. Holding several degrees, all her work has focused on Christian education, liturgy, and worship with an emphasis on the Trinity and Baptism.

While God never changes, human expression of the Divine does. She emphasizes the transformative and nurturing power of God through Baptism, the Bread and Cup, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and of our trust in God's wisdom.

May this New Year help us to see God in new and exciting ways as we commune together on January 5<sup>th</sup>, and as our new officers, called by God, inspire us.

**THANK YOU FOR MAKING A LOCAL FAMILY'S CHRISTMAS MERRY & BRIGHT!** Thank you so very much for making another family's Christmas special again this year. This little brick church is filled with such amazing congregants who have the biggest hearts. Thank you again for giving selfishly and graciously!



**THANK YOU NOTE FROM THE CHURCH STAFF** We are beyond grateful for the kindness and generosity you showed through the Gratitude Bag tradition. Thank you for the kind notes and thoughtful gifts. Thank you for being such a wonderful church. We are grateful to serve God here with you. A huge thank you from Your WCPC Staff: Tom Andrew, Stephanie Konen, Dianne Londo, Elizabeth O'Leary, Emily Monroe, Pastor Tanya Muzzarelli, Pastor Lauren Patrus-Betzel, David Perez-Fernandez, Annie Picken, Shannon Reagan, Diane Van Vleet & Katie Wolf.

### **MINISTERS: ALL MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

For more information about our staff and volunteers, visit our website. **The Church Office is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am - 3pm.** If you'd like to set up a time to visit Pastor Lauren or Pastor Tanya, please reach out to the Church Office.

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