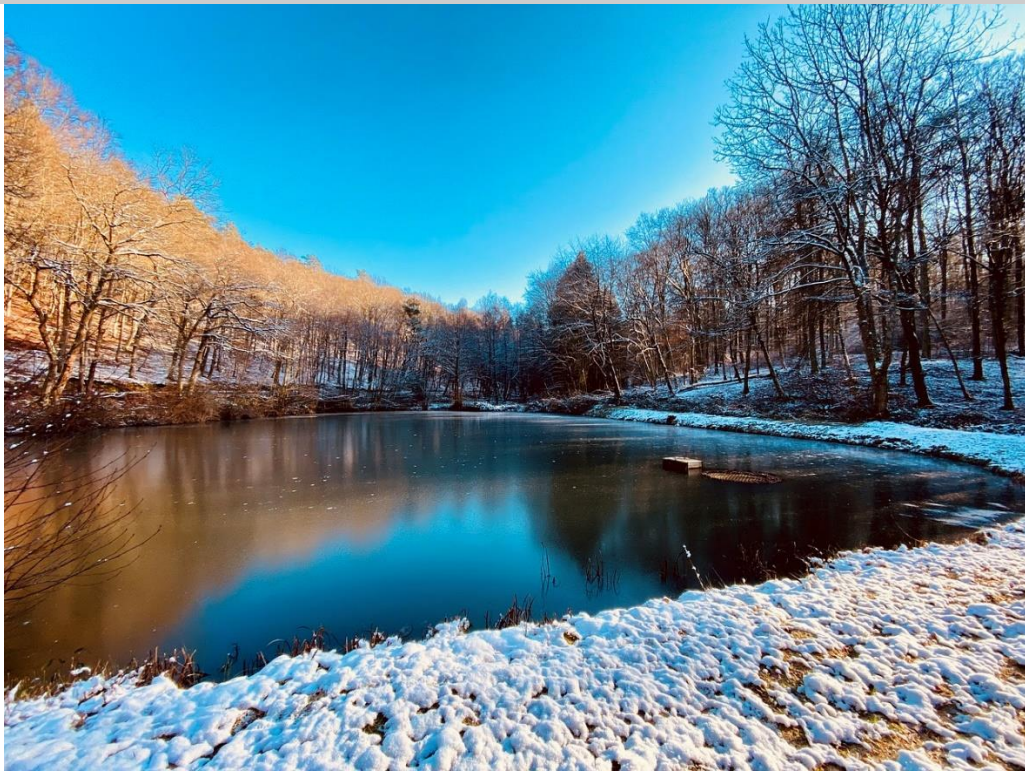


**Central United  
Methodist Church  
January 12, 2025**



Lectionary readings for the First Sunday  
after the Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord  
January 12, 2025

[Isaiah 43:1-7](#), [Psalm 29](#), [Acts 8:14-17](#), [Luke 3:15-17, 21-22](#)

“Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find, knock, and the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7

From the earliest days of Sunday School, I was encouraged to memorize scripture. After all, none of the original texts of the Holy Bible exist. That means our ancestors’ keen memories, thankfully, kept the Bible stories alive.

Yet, I do not make a big fuss about memorizing scripture passages. I read from it every day. And as I do, I enjoy the words, phrases, and ideas surprising me. Challenging me. Upsetting me. I appreciate it when the text leads me to a new understanding. In avoiding memorizing scripture, perhaps, I hope to keep it liberated from my own limitations, my own smallness of imagination.

Truly, holy scriptures can be used for good and abused for evil. In our tradition, groups of Methodists used the Bible to both condemn and condone slavery, child labor, women’s suffrage, civil rights, and war. History teaches us that if a person searches the Bible for verses to defend their position, they will find them.

The Best-Selling book by Rachel Held Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, includes her wisdom:

“This is why there are times when the most instructive question to bring to the text is not, “What does it say?”, but “What am I looking for?” I suspect Jesus knew this when he said, “Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find, knock, and the door will be opened.”

If you want to do violence in this world, you will find the weapons. If you want to heal, you will always find the balm.”

Reading scripture makes a difference in our lives. It brings about both comfort and prophetic transformation. With your awareness of all the goings-on around us and of the heartscape of your inner life, the Bible is a living Word. It meets your honesty with depth and guides you in truth.

May you find the power to heal, make peace, and love each time you encounter the sacred, liberation-filled texts of our tradition.

Keep asking, seeking, and knocking,

**Pastor Biel**

**"We choose what matches our desires. - Nakedpastor"**





## Pastoral Letter Addressing the Plight of Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees in the US Epiphany 2025

Jesus said, “When you welcome the stranger, you welcome me....” Matthew 25:35

At no time has the church in the US had a greater opportunity to welcome Jesus among us as he journeys with migrants, immigrants, and refugees than today. We your bishops are clear that the situation these beloved of God face as the Trump Administration comes to power threatens their humanity, livelihood, and basic human rights.

For decades, a broken immigration system in the U.S. has kept migrants, immigrants and refugees in this country living in the shadows of society in a state of perpetual fear. They have come to the U.S. under forced circumstances fleeing extreme poverty, hunger, political and religious persecution, war, cartel and gang violence, and the severe impact of climate change. Some are actively recruited by large U.S. companies who need their labor. Yet migrants, immigrants and refugees help to sustain the U.S. economy, serve our families caring for our children and our elderly, cleaning our homes, landscaping our properties, building our roads and the houses we live in, and cultivating and picking the crops that feed our families. They are our neighbors, our friends, and members and pastors of our churches.

Deplorably, racist, xenophobic, nationalistic, and anti-migrant hate speech has become standard rhetoric for many US politicians, including President-elect Donald Trump. He has stated that under his administration he will order the mass deportation of the 11 million undocumented migrants who live and work in the U.S. He has threatened to use military and law enforcement at all levels for this mass deportation. If allowed, this mass deportation of migrants will cause further racial profiling, the separation of families, the undermining of communities and congregations, the weakening of the economy of this country and its democratic systems of law and justice. President-elect Trump has also threatened to end birth-right citizenship, dismantle Refugee resettlement in this country and further strip away the possibility of the U.S. welcoming Asylum Seekers onto this land.

We are living in a dark time that more than ever calls us to be the light of Christ, people of faith who take our baptismal vow to “resist evil in all its forms,” with utmost seriousness.

As United Methodists we have firmly declared through our Social Principles that we are called to actively welcome the migrant, immigrant, and refugee among us.

- Affirming the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants and refugees.
- Recognizing that displaced people are particularly vulnerable as their in-between status often provides them with few protections and benefits, leaving them open to exploitation, violence and abuse.
- Urging one another to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into our congregations, providing concrete support, to them including help with navigating

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110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 301  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-547-6270

[click here](#) to read more.

## Bible Study



Join us for Bible Study from **9 am to 9:45 am** - Sunday morning via Zoom.

If you would like to be on the Zoom list for the Bible Study Class, please email the church office by clicking on this link:

[centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org).com

## Worship Service

Join us this **Sunday**, in the Sanctuary for our in-person service. We celebrate the **Lord's communion every Sunday and we invite all to partake regardless of membership.**

The Worship service will also be available on **Zoom at 10:30 am.**

## Donate



We appreciate all the financial support that has been received to support the church and missions. You can now give your financial support to Central in many ways.

**CASH and CHECKS**– Cash and check donations can be placed in the offering box at our church services. Checks can be mailed to the church.



**VENMO** – Using the VENMO app, pay by credit card. Enter Central Church's Venmo email: [centralchurchgiving@gmail.com](mailto:centralchurchgiving@gmail.com).

**ONE TIME DONATIONS OR SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK TRANSFER USING THESE OPTIONS:**

**ONLINE GIVING** – go to <https://onrealm.org/skokiecentralumc/give/now> ;

or use the QR Code.

**TEXT TO GIVE** – Using our secure online giving platform, TEXT to 73256 and send the message GIVECHURCH. A response will appear with a link to our online giving web page.

### Altar Flowers



**Sunday, January 12, 2025**

The altar flowers are given by Ellen Nero in honor of Nathan's birthday.

### Fellowship

Please join us for fellowship this Sunday provided by Ellen Nero and Jennifer Gonzales.

The following allergies and dietary restrictions within our congregation are known of **corn, dairy, gluten, meat and onions**.

## Looking Ahead

### **Readers, Flowers and Fellowship Oh My!**

**We are always looking for Volunteers. Please sign up, TODAY!**

**Sunday, January 12, 2025**

Reader: Jaime Arvizu

Flowers: Ellen Nero

Host Fellowship: Ellen Nero and Jennifer Gonzales

**Sunday, January 19, 2025**

Reader: Nick Werth

Flowers: **Volunteer needed**

Host Fellowship: **Volunteer needed**

**Sunday, January 26, 2025**

Reader: Pam Castenda

Flowers: Remy Yabes

Host Fellowship: **Volunteer needed**



**LAKE NORTH  
LEADERSHIP  
TRAINING 2025**

**February 1** 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
**Trinity UMC in Mount Prospect**  
605 W Golf Rd  
**Cost \$ 15 each**

**Classes:** Pick 2 Classes (All classes are offered in both sessions)

- **Net Zero for Your Green Ministry**  
- Richard Alton and the Net Zero Committee
- **Church Marketing and Worship Storytelling**  
- Rev. Scott Himel
- **Collaborative Models for Creative & Connectional Ministry** - Northside Co-op pastors
- **Pensions, Benefits, and Health Insurance**  
- Rev. Cheryl Weaver
- **Conflict Resolution and Team Dynamics (SPRC Encouraged)** - Rev. Hope Chernich
- **Caring for Our Neighbor in Uncertain Times**
- **Discipleship for New Leaders (Trustee and Finance Focus)** - Lake North Building and Location Team

**Registration:** [umcnic.org/calendar/lake-north-leadership-training-2025](http://umcnic.org/calendar/lake-north-leadership-training-2025)

**Questions?** Contact Pastor Jieun 'Mori' Siegel  
[pastormorio@gmail.com](mailto:pastormorio@gmail.com)



[Click Here](#) to register.



## United Women in Faith



United  
Women  
in Faith

**Spiritual Growth Retreat  
Our Sacred Breath  
By Catherine Inserra  
Saturday, March 22, 2025**

United Women in Faith  
Northern Illinois Conference Spiritual Growth Retreat  
First United Methodist Church in Park Ridge



Featuring: Martha Lundgren

Time: 9 AM to 3 PM; doors open at 8:15 am

Theme: Our Sacred Breath

Featuring: Deaconess, Martha Lundgren,  
member at Renewed Hope UMC Chicago

The cost per person is \$25 all-inclusive.

Refreshments and lunch will be included. Plan to carpool. Inviting other young adult women and friends for this meaningful and timely experience during Lent is wonderful.

Martha Lundgren is a United Methodist deaconess who responded to a call to provide faithful care to dying persons. She is a spiritual care volunteer at Aperion Wesley Place and Chicago Methodist Senior Services Hartwell Place where she leads weekly prayer services for residents with dementia and practices the ministry of presence. She also volunteers with the Modern Widows Club, a women's health organization serving widows seeking to understand their experience and focus on growth. Martha is pictured here with the plaque at Wesley Place that honors Isabelle Reeve, first licensed deaconess and trained by Lucy Rider Meyer.

## Central Caring Crafters



**Thursday, January 16, 2025**

**10 AM Ed Bldg. Room 7**

The prayer shawl group is back as **Central Caring Crafters!** We are exploring the scope of our group to include quilting, sewing and other crafts that you have a heart for. Bring a bag lunch and stay for lunch together or just come to gather for exchange of patterns and ideas. We hope to see you there!

If you're interested, please email the church office

at: [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

## Tai-Chi Classes



**Weekly on Tuesday**

**Log Cabin- 9 AM**

Interested in learning Tai-Chi? Join our free class in the **Log Cabin, Tuesday mornings, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.** Classes are taught by certified instructors, Jas and Jo Faber. This slow, meditative exercise is designed to improve energy, relaxation, balance and overall health.

If you are interested, please email the church office at:

[centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

## Tuesday Morning Meditation



**Weekly on Tuesday**

**Log Cabin & Online**

**10:30 AM**

Join us as we gather to practice Lectio divina on the weekly lectionary readings.

**Lectio divina** is a contemplative practice with its Christian roots in the Benedictine tradition. It combines slow, conscious reading of a biblical or sacred text with contemplation and silent prayer. It is meant to promote communication with God and a deeper knowledge of Christ, in our lives today.

During Lectio Divina we put aside thoughts of studying the text. This is not the time to consider the historical or theological meanings of what we are reading. We read with a willingness to enter into text in a felt sense. The purpose of this practice is to hear, in silence, the word of God, in this moment. What, through this reading, is God saying to me right now? What do I hear that helps me know what it means to walk the Christ path today?

Lectio Divina has traditionally been a communal practice; that is, one shared when in a group but it can be done when alone.

## Mini Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who brings food for our Mini Food Pantry. The Pantry needs filling every day. Please bring something on Sunday - even a couple of cans would be gratefully accepted.

Please do not bring any containers - empty jars, etc.

Below is a list of suggested items - because the Mini Food Pantry is outside, it is important to only contribute non-perishable items, such as:

- [Canned goods](#) with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled water

Thank you for your support in helping others less fortunate.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)



## Center for Action and Contemplation



**Discover contemplative wisdom and practices that are easy to understand and apply to your everyday life.**

Contemplation is the practice of being fully present—in heart, mind, and body—to what is in a way that deepens awareness, encourages oneness, and strengthens compassion. A committed daily contemplative practice does not have to be long or complex—it simply needs to allow deep listening to open your heart to love.

Discover ways to embody a contemplative life with this collection of practices that help us align actions and values, re-engage with our True Self, and show up in service to the world.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

## Spiritual Gifts



Every child of God is filled with [the power of the Holy Spirit](#), specially gifted to play a unique and valued role in the body of Christ.

No one is without a gift or purpose.

Spiritual gifts are not our talents or skills. They are the grace of God at work within us, empowering us to match our deep passions with the world's deep need. The gifts are given to individuals, but they are given to build and strengthen community and to meet the needs of those around us.

Begin the journey. Discover your gifts. Talk about your gifts with others. Strive together to understand your gifts and how you can use



them to serve God, neighbor, and world. You have been gifted. You have been given a purpose.

[Click here](#) to take Spiritual Gift Assessment.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

## Prayer of the Week

### ***We Are One with You***

O God, we are one with you. You have made us one with you.

You have taught us that if we are open to one another, you dwell in us.

Help us to preserve this openness and to fight for it with all our hearts. Help us to realize that there can be no understanding where there is mutual rejection.

O God, in accepting one another wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept you, and we thank you, and we adore you, and we love you with our whole being, because our being is your being, our spirit is rooted in your spirit. Fill us then with love and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, united in this one spirit which makes you present in the world, and which makes you witness to the ultimate reality that is love. Love has overcome. Love is victorious.

**- Thomas Merton**

### [Central United Methodist Church](#)

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