
 Epworth United Methodist Church  
 680 8th Avenue SW  
 Valley City, ND 58072  
 www.epworthvalleycity.com

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# Epworth Events

*Living, Sharing, and Growing in God's Love*

December 2023



680 8th Ave. SW  
 Valley City, ND 58072  
 Ph. 701-845-0340  
 Fax: 701-845-0347  
 www.epworthvalleycity.com

Duane Coates  
 Pastor  
 pastor@epworthvalleycity.com  
 Office: 701-845-0340  
 Home: 701-845-0156  
 Cell: 605-695-5561

Cassidy Fraedrich  
 Office Administrator  
 Newsletter Editor  
 office@epworthvalleycity.com  
 Office: 701-845-0340

Hayley Winkler  
 Director of Christian Education  
 christianed@epworthvalleycity.com  
 Office: 701-845-0340  
 Cell: 701-840-7073

Paul & Brenda Lint  
 Directors of Youth Ministries  
 youth@epworthvalleycity.com  
 Office: 701-845-0340  
 Cell: 701-880-8388

VirLyn Hoff  
 Congregational Care Coordinator  
 virlynhoff@yahoo.com  
 Office: 701-845-0340  
 Cell: 701-840-9285

What a wonderful beauty it is when a baby is born in the family this time of year. Advent is a time in which we await the arrival of a baby who changes our lives. I had yet another opportunity to experience that joy on the afternoon of Nov. 17 when Harper Ruth Fuhrer was born in Mitchell, SD to my oldest niece Kathryn, age 25, and her husband, Tanner. Harper joins a family that already includes her brother, Finnegan Thomas, who turned 2 on Nov. 1.

Kathryn is a good mother, and it is fun to see her grow into that role. This birth of the fourth generation of girls in my family reminds me of Kathryn's birth itself, which happened about a month after I moved from here in 1998. That is literally almost half a lifetime ago, but it doesn't seem that long ago that Kathryn was a baby girl herself.

Babies are full of wonder, potential, and beauty. But for a long while they are totally dependent on other people, so they can't help but be loved. They will eventually and progressively become more independent, but just by loving them, we give them advantages. So, we get to teach Harper what it means to be loved because at the second and subsequent transitions to more independence, she will use the lessons learned from the previous transitions. Yet, even when she becomes "independent," she won't be truly on her own. (I hope.) She will still need a soft word, appropriate touch, a secure sense of belonging for her to be all God made her to be. Right now, Harper needs people to love her, and we already do. But before long, she will need someone she can love back. For her to thrive, she will need to care for others.

Jesus said in Mark 10:15, "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." That means we need to be needy for us to understand God's love. That means we probably need to be loved in order for us to truly understand what it means to love another. So, the love we receive helps us then to love others.

Since God created us to love and to be loved, God says we are all worthy of love, care, and devotion.

How does one love a God who comes as a baby? I don't hesitate to think that was probably running through the mind of the teenaged Virgin Mary when God's messenger approached her and asked her to carry and birth the incarnation of God. That communicates divine confidence in youth. That communicates that God just placed the love and care of a child in the hands of one who was a child herself not too long ago. That indicates that just as God needs us to love and trust God, the divine already loves and trusts us.

May you have a holy Advent season of loving God and being loved in return,

Pastor Duane Coates

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED  
 DATED MATERIAL  
 PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY



Join Us!  
 Christmas Eve  
 Candlelight Service  
 Sunday, Dec. 24  
 5:00 p.m.  
 Epworth UMC



**OPEN: Monday– Friday**  
 6 am-6 pm  
**Saturday**  
 8 am-4 pm



WISHING YOU A  
 Merry  
**CHRISTMAS**





# December 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 9am Christmas Program Practice
3 9am Sunday School 10am Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship 4pm Troubadours Concert @ VCSU	4 Pastor's Day Off	5 9am Ministerial Association 1:30pm Tuesday Bible Study	6 10:30am UWF Brunch 7pm Choir 7pm Youth	7 10am Pastor's Bible Study 7pm Cub Scouts	8	9 9am Christmas Program Practice
10 9am Sunday School 10am Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship 11:45am Staff Appreciation Potluck	11 Pastor's Day Off 7pm Troubadours Concert @ the Courthouse	12 1:30pm Tuesday Bible Study 6:30pm Troubadours Concert @ St Raphael's	13 5:30pm SLT 7pm Choir 7pm Youth	14 10am Pastor's Bible Study 2:30pm Staff Meeting 7pm Cub Scouts	15 Newsletter Articles Due	16
17 9am Sunday School 10am Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship	18 Pastor's Day Off 10am UWF Cookie Tray Assembly	19 1:30pm Tuesday Bible Study	20 7pm Youth	21 10am Pastor's Bible Study 7pm Cub Scouts	22 <b>Office Closed @ Noon</b>	23
24 Christmas Eve 10am Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship 5pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day <b>Office Closed</b>	26	27	28 7pm Cub Scouts	29	30
31 New Years Eve 10am Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship						



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1<sup>st</sup> Matt Thorson
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Don Enger
- 4<sup>th</sup> Annette Nielson
- 5<sup>th</sup> Mike Watterson
- 9<sup>th</sup> Marty Rohrbeck
- 12<sup>th</sup> Paul Owen
- 17<sup>th</sup> Jim Burchill  
Katie Clark  
Katy Van Dyke
- 18<sup>th</sup> Austin Shape  
Michelle Grebel
- 19<sup>th</sup> Todd Burchill  
Kevin Tulp  
Wally Otteson
- 21<sup>st</sup> Meredith Cummings
- 24<sup>th</sup> Carol Peterson
- 28<sup>th</sup> Eden Cuypers  
Ellen Drevecky  
Patricia Triebold
- 29<sup>th</sup> Kyle Vareberg
- 30<sup>th</sup> Abby Rohrbeck
- 31<sup>st</sup> Wayne Winkler  
Celeste Breske



## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 8<sup>th</sup> Kim & Joel Owen
- 14<sup>th</sup> Amy & Carl Martineck
- 15<sup>th</sup> Jennifer & Dan Elston
- 20<sup>th</sup> Liz & Dennis Fick
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Susan & Bruce Larson
- 26<sup>th</sup> Deb & Jim Hegdahl
- 28<sup>th</sup> Avis & Dwayne Richter



Your serving group provides fellowship for Sunday mornings and the comforting presence that all need following a funeral or memorial service. These are important ministries that we provide for one another within the community. It is a way to reach out to those who have not found that gift of the Holy Spirit as being real in their own lives. If the month is not a fit for you, please contact VirLyn Hoff, or leave a note in the office.

The next funeral will be served by the September serving group.

Kitchen Care—Please refer to the poster in the kitchen for care and cleanup after kitchen use.

## Serving Groups

### Serving for December CO-CHAIRS—

- Amy & Jerry Noeske**  
Stephanie & Clark Kruta  
Marian & Lance Drevecky  
Judy Nicholson  
Jackie Owen & Todd  
Katy & Curt Van Dyke  
Ted Wieser

### Serving for January CO-CHAIRS—

- Mary Lee & Steve Nielson**  
Liz & Dennis Fick  
Rose & Brad Knutson  
Scott Miller  
Avis & Duane Richter  
Katie & Derek Woehl

### Epworth's 2023 Leadership Team

#### Class of 2023

- Bonnie Ranum—Staff-Parish  
Jan McCarthy—Trustees  
Derek Woehl—Finance

#### Class of 2024

- Holly Neuberger—Trustees  
Bill Bertram—Staff-Parish  
Phil Mueller—Finance

#### Class of 2025

- Michelle Grebel—Staff-Parish  
Bruce Larson—Trustees  
Katy Van Dyke—Finance  
Pastor Duane Coates  
Bev Enger—Lay Leader  
Anita Tulp—Lay Member to AC  
Mary Lee Nielson—Treasurer  
Recording Secretary—Randi Watterson



# Ministry in Review

## Former member dies in Colorado

Epworth received word in the past month that former member Barb Barrow (*left*) passed away at the age of 96 on Oct. 16, 2023, in Windsor, Colo., at the home of her daughter-in-law Jackie Barrow, widow of Barb's son Bob. Barb and her husband, Robert, moved to Valley City in the early '70s where Robert Barrow was a chief Valley City engineer. Barb was devoted to her church and community, especially the Open Door where she worked for many years even after she officially retired. Barbara moved to Colorado after her son Bob passed away in 2008. There she got to know and enjoy her great-grandsons. A burial of her cremains is planned in Valley City before next summer begins.



### Poinsettias

We love to see Poinsettias decorating the chancel at Epworth. Many of these are given in honor or memory of someone. So, you are invited to bring a Poinsettia to share as part of the sanctuary decorations. Please provide the names to Cassidy in the office by Dec. 17.



### October 28, 2023—November 27, 2023

Daily Expenses	\$29,098.90
Glory of God's House Campaign	\$2,404.00
Building & Maintenance	\$1,113.24
Bridges Backpack Program	\$746.94
Matthew 25	\$424.00
Student Day	\$238.00
Study Books	\$125.00
Memorial	\$120.00
Sunday School	\$100.97
Parking Lot	\$50.00
Upper Room	\$50.00
Tech Booth	\$50.00
Endowment	\$40.00
Choir Music	\$31.50

### Sunday Worship Attendance

Online—8	
November 5—149	Online— 9
November 12—72	Online— 31
November 19—66	
October 22— 85	Online—33
October 29— 83	Online— 26
November 26—N/A	Online— 31

### Sunday School Attendance

October 22— 14	Adults—8
October 29— 10	Adults—10
November 5—15	Adults— 10
November 12—8	Adults— 10
November 19—N/A	Adults— N/A
November 26—14	Adults— 2

### Youth Attendance

October 25— 15	November 1— 16
November 8—17	November 15—17
November 22—N/A	

## Christmas Love Gift and Staff Appreciation Potluck

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable Gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15. Where would Epworth Church be without the caring gifts of our hardworking staff?

Please join the Spiritual Leadership Team by showing your appreciation at a potluck dinner after the children's Christmas program on Sunday, December 10. The staff will all be there so you can meet our new Office Administrator, Cassidy Fraedrich, if you haven't already done so. Plus we would like to recognize all of our staff: Pastor Duane Coates; Virlyn Hoff, (Congregational Care), Lance Drevecky (choir director), Marion Drevecky (pianist), Pastor Paul and Brenda Lint (Youth Directors), Dawn Thomsen (Epworth Holy Grounds Manager), and Hayley Winkler (Christian Education).

We also would like to encourage you to consider a Love Gift for each of our staff members. You can send them directly to each person, bring them to the potluck, or drop off your gifts at the church office. We will make sure they are delivered.

May all the gifts of this wonderful Christmas season be yours! Hope to see everyone at the Staff Appreciation Potluck on Sunday, December 10 right after worship.

—Bev Enger, Chair of Staff/Parish Relations



## Christmas Eve Offering to Feed People

Undesignated offerings received at our Christmas Eve service do not go to current expenses. These offerings are a gift to some other agency or person to accomplish a specific ministry. For instance, in 2022, we raised more than \$3,300 from our three Christmas Eve services and specific gifts. These offerings supported Rydel Samuelson, who was finishing his seminary career. (Rydel is now a licensed local pastor serving the Wagner-Tyndall charge in southcentral South Dakota).

This year, the Servant Leadership Team has decided to split the offering between the Backpack Program and the Barnes County Food Pantry. So, any undesignated gifts given during the Christmas Eve service (at 5 p.m. on Dec. 24 in the Epworth Sanctuary) will be split between these two feeding ministries. Also, as always, we will distribute any gifts given specifically to these causes regardless of when they are given.

The Backpack program currently provides 226 packs of meals each month in the backpacks of children on the last day of school each week. This is to supplement nutrition in homes that may be food-insecure. Some of these homes wouldn't be able to provide adequate nutrition to these students without the backpack meals. When the major benefactor to this program shifted its generosity away from this non-profit, opportunities opened to broaden the donor base for this program.

The Barnes County Food Pantry, a program of the non-profit South Central Adult Services, provides nutritional sustenance and personal items to eligible individuals and families in need. Monetary donations will be used to purchase price-reduced, overstocked items from area grocery food distributors. So, these donations provide the Food Pantry with the flexibility to purchase those needed items in short supply.





## Christian Education, Hayley Winkler, Director

Hello Everyone,

Our Indoor Trick-or-Treat was a huge success again this year! We had 535 people come through our doors for food and trick-or-treating.

We have been getting ready for our Christmas program in Sunday School, so we have been very busy!! Our Christmas Program will be on Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup> during worship service. We will be having our Saturday rehearsals on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and Dec 9<sup>th</sup>. Both days we will be rehearsing from 9am to 10:30am. We will provide a snack half way through our rehearsal for the children. If anyone would like to help out during our rehearsals, we would love to have you! Again if your child will not be here for the Christmas Program please let me know ASAP!

Our Library Sunday School group has finished up their book study and are moving onto their Advent series that Pastor Duane has chosen. Books are available for purchase in the office for this study. The price is \$15. This study will also be done during the Bible study during the week. We have begun our Mitten Tree Ministry already this year! I decided to start earlier than we normally do so we have more time to collect hats, gloves, etc. for students in our community. These items will be donated to all the schools in Valley City including St. Cates, VCPS, as well as both HeadStart programs at the college. We are looking for items for students ages of 0-3 years as well at Preschool thru 6<sup>th</sup> graders. I will be delivering these items before the Christmas break this year at schools, so donations will need to be brought by December 17<sup>th</sup>.

We will not have Sunday School on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. We will resume Sunday School on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

We are now looking towards Summer (crazy I know). Vacation Bible School: We have made the discission that VBS will take place June 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> this year! It will be in the evenings again from 5:30pm (meal) and VBS will begin at 6pm and go to 8pm. We are starting to look for volunteers again this year to help out with VBS this year. The children really enjoyed having youth helping out last year, so I'm sure they'd love to see some of you again this year! We allow children Pre-K thru 6<sup>th</sup> grade to participate in VBS. This years VBS is called Seekers in Sneakers Discover Jesus! This year's VBS we will be learning about different Bible stories throughout the Bible that focus on Jesus and His life lessons He teaches us, from being a learner all the way to Jesus being a teacher. We invite all members of the community to join us for VBS this year and look forward to this exciting event!

Hope everyone has enjoyed our beautiful weather before the cold comes soon!

Blessings,  
Hayley Winkler  
[christianed@epworthvalleycity.com](mailto:christianed@epworthvalleycity.com)

Dates to remember: Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> 9am-10:30am Christmas Program Rehearsal  
Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> 9am-10:30am Christmas Program Rehearsal  
Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Program during Worship  
Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> No Sunday School



## Church Families to Provide Christmas Gifts to Those in Need

While Epworth does not host an angel tree of gifts to buy for children in the Social Services system, there are generous families in the church who could provide gifts to those in need, if requested. Sometimes children fall just outside of eligibility for certain services, but their families are nonetheless so cash strapped that Christmas gifts for them may be limited. As a church, we seek to avoid that, contributing to such programs as Shoebox Christmas. However, if you know of a family in need of Christmas gifts for children, please contact the church office, so we can match generosity to need. Also, if your family would like to be on a list of secret angel families who are willing to supply children's Christmas gifts to under-resourced families, please call Cassidy in the office at 845-0340.



## Epworth Holy Grounds Wins People's Choice Awards

Epworth Holy Grounds has won three people's choice awards from the Valley City Times-Record. The awards were best drive-through, best coffee/latte, and best Frappuccino. The awards were based on votes received during August and September for nominees brought to the newspaper's attention throughout the year. Congratulations to Epworth Holy Grounds. Through them, we are building relationships one cup at a time.



## Christmas Eve Services Announced

Epworth will host one Candlelight Christmas Eve service on Sunday, Dec. 24 at 5 p.m. Pastor Duane is looking for people who would be willing to read certain sections of Scripture for that service, offer special music, usher, and/or greet. Please see Pastor Duane if you are interested. All are welcome to this service. So, please bring your family, neighbors, and friends.





**Council of Bishops Comments on Gaza War**

From time to time, the United Methodist Council of Bishops issues statements to the church about issues both in the church and in our worldwide society. This is part of how the Council seeks to influence and lead the church. At their last meeting, the Council issued the following statement on the Gaza War. While the Council does not speak for the church itself, this is an historic reflection of the sentiments of the majority of the elected leaders of our denomination. So, I thought it was important to share it with you. – Pastor Duane Coates

*Christ's true disciples must work for peace: build it and not just keep it; live it and not just aspire for it. If Christ is our peace, then peace must be imperative. (Resolution 6129: The United Methodist Church and Peace)*

The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops, along with millions of people across the globe, are weeping and praying for the people of the Holy Land. We decry the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and the continuing loss of life of Israelis and Palestinians including thousands of children.

We cannot remain silent while a preventable humanitarian crisis in Gaza unfolds with no safe haven for the citizens in Gaza or the volunteers and agencies seeking to prevent starvation and to treat the wounded.

We value all life. We encourage every effort toward a peaceful solution. We call for the release of hostages and for the killing to stop. We also call for the immediate allowance of unrestricted humanitarian assistance. As Bishops of the Church, we denounce acts of and the proliferation of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and hate crimes that may begin with words and often turn to violence directed toward persons whose race, ethnicity or religion is disparaged.

We cannot stand by as though God is not weeping when the innocent, including children, are dying. We cannot abandon the way of Peace.

May we find ways to listen to the stories of those most directly impacted by this centuries-old conflict. We commit to join all people in creating life-giving ways to journey toward peace with justice for all.

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church Meeting at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina Friday, November 10, 2023



**Dakotas Conference Creates Christmas Worship**

Bishop Lanette Plambeck and the Dakotas Conference Cabinet will again present the gift of worship during the Christmas season with the video production: "A Very Dakotas Christmas 2023." Epworth will engage this service during our regular worship time Sunday, Dec. 31 at 10:30 a.m.

The service will celebrate the birth of the Christ-child with clergy, families, and scenes from United Methodists across the Dakotas Conference. Our own Pastor Duane Coates was asked to participate in reading Scripture for the service.

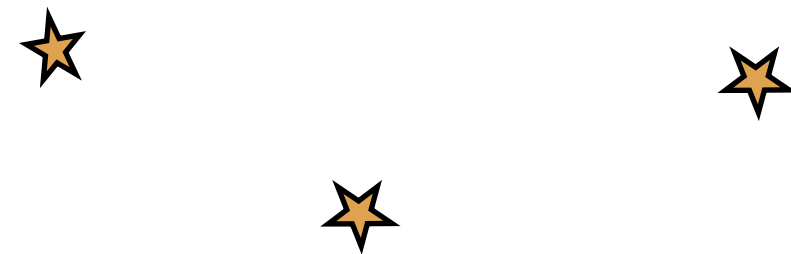


The youth are prepping for the great Holiday Bake-off—Epworth style. After a month of exploring our thanks, we change our focus to the Christmas story while making some seasonal treats. Each Wednesday in December will find the youth creating some tasty masterpieces.

The T-shirts sold by the youth have arrived. If you did not pre-order, you can still pick up a shirt. Youth will be available after worship services as supplies last.

There will not be youth group on December 27. We will have youth group after the new year on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The youth had a fun time at DakYouth. A big thank you to Matt Nielson and Dawn Thomsen who chaperoned, drove, and took in the event with the youth. There were 14 members of the Epworth community that attended with 3 on the CCYM leadership team. We continue to gather together with UMC Youth to celebrate our connectional ministries.



**Wednesdays  
@ 7pm  
  
No Meeting  
12/27**



# United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith – VirLyn Hoff, Unit President

**Gifts.** Christmas is coming! God’s Gift of Jesus the Christ. To us!

We celebrate. Women’s program is Wed. Dec. 6 for 10:30 a.m. Brunch. Hosted by Darlene Mueller. Program by Michelle Grebel. Bring a bell.

Donations to the Mitten, Hat, Glove collection.

Monday, Dec. 18—prepare cookie trays for visitation. Bring treats Sunday, Dec. 17 or by ten on Monday morning. Help deliver and give a visit. Both men and women invited.

Balloons and visits to Care Center – date to be decided. The gift of being remembered by church family. If you will help with this ministry, contact me.

**Gifts.** What gift did young Mary have that she was chosen to birth 7-8 pounds of The Divine? Shivering in a barn? With the lowing of animals?

Mary listened to God’s call. God continues to call. Do you hear the call to deliver God’s love?

**Gifts** of United Women in Faith  
Finances. Service. Witness. Leadership. Education. Hope. Love in Action!

*“There are different kinds of gifts. But they are given to believers by the same Spirit. That is for the good of all.”  
(1 Corinthians 12: 4 & 7)*



## Christmas Trays

Christmas Trays will be prepared Monday, December 18th, 10:00 am at the church. All are invited to donate.

Suggested items include: Christmas cookies, treats, microwave popcorn, sweet breads, crackers & cheese, fruit, and hot cocoa mix. Items may be dropped off at the church Sunday, Dec. 17th--Monday morning, Dec. 18th.

Both men and women are invited to help with delivery and visits.

## Updating contact information for remote members

In trying to update and improve the accuracy of our membership roster, we have discovered there are scores of members for whom the church has little or no contact information. Some of these are the young adult (and even middle-aged) children living apart from their Valley City-area parents, who are active members. So, if you have children who were confirmed here before growing up and moving away without transferring their membership to another church, please check with the office to see if we have up-to-date information on those members. All members are important, and we want to stay in touch with them all.

## Congregational Care

While there is no church family supper for the winter months, there will be a **staff appreciation potluck Sunday, Dec 10 after the children’s Christmas program.**

All are invited to these times of food and fellowship. Please join us.

VirLyn Hoff,  
Congregational Care



**The Church Office** Will Be Closed:

- Church Offices will close at noon on Fri., Dec. 22
- Church Offices will be closed on Mon., Dec. 25 for Christmas.
- Church Offices will be closed on Mon., Jan. 1 for New Year’s Day

## Address Change?

If your address has changed, please notify the church office @ 845-0340 or e-mail: [office@epworthvalleycity.com](mailto:office@epworthvalleycity.com)

Please help us keep our postage costs down by notifying the church of your address change.



- In Memory of **Alan Storkson**  
—Jan & George McCarthy, Building Fund
- In Memory of **Barb Barrow**  
—VirLyn & Gordon Hoff, Endowment
- In Memory of **Becky Lutz**  
—VirLyn & Gordon Hoff, Endowment
- Perry Roorda, Memorial
- Tom Vagle, Memorial
- Katy & Curtis VanDyke, Endowment
- Bev & Don Enger, Memorial
- Connie Wright, Memorial

\*Memorial gifts given to “Memorials” are undesignated funds that are used to purchase physical items used in worship, in the sanctuary, or in the church building at the discretion of our Servant Leadership Team.

Memorial gifts can be given at any time and either designated or undesignated.