

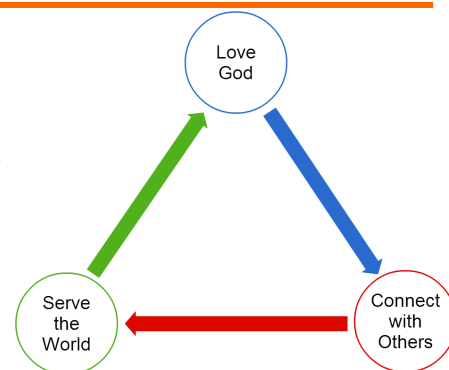
THE MESSENGER

December 2020

Cherry Valley United Methodist Church

Rev. Mark Harkness, Pastor
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Our Mission: *Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by loving God, connecting with others, and serving the world.*

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of

the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Titus 2:11-14 (NRSV)

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As I sat pondering what to write this month, I kept getting drawn to Isaiah 9:2-7, one of the Scripture readings for Christmas Eve, along with the passage above.

Isaiah 9:2 says:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

You may think that I was drawn to the “light,” but the darkness in that passage spoke loudest. Something about the darkness of winter sucks energy from my soul – even as I yearn for winter hikes, downhill skiing, and even a snowball fight when the opportunity arises. Ironically, the days have been getting shorter since June, and they’ll start getting longer on December 21. When February finally arrives and the winter darkness has finally worn me out, there will be one hour and seventeen seconds more daylight than on December 1. Still too dark.

In the midst of the bleak midwinter, that frosty wind makes moan, and earth stands hard as iron, and water like a stone, there comes song of hope reminding me that heaven cannot hold our God, nor even earth sustain, as he comes to reign. Even then, thronged by angels, Mary’s bliss, our Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ, keeps the yearning hope going. Surrounded by darkness, what can I give him, except for my heart.

For many among us, this will be a lonely Christmas, as we limit our visits from house to house and celebration to celebration. For many among us, the year has been too lonely for too long. This year, rather than gathering for our annual “Thanksmas” (Sat. after Thanksgiving) event, my extended family will have done so virtually, with no chance for hugs or even just the comfort of sitting next to one another. I admit that those gatherings wear on me some years. There’s only so much family one can stand. This year is different. I miss it already.

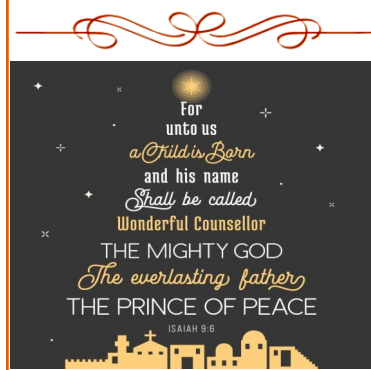
I depend on Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany to get me through the dark, bleak winter. However, after Thanksgiving weekend, I don’t see other family: they live far away, and I work holidays. The expectation of Christmas, the advent candles, the songs, the joyful anticipation of children during the children’s message – these are where that great light shines and sustains a burdened hope.



(Continued on page 2)

In this issue

Prayer Requests	Page 2
Thank You	Page 2
Upcoming Sermons	Page 3
Home Communion.....	Page 3
Pastor's Schedule.....	Page 3
Music Notes.....	Page 3
Spiritual Insights	Page 3
Birthday/Anniversary	Page 4
Tracing Sign In.....	Page 4
In Person Visits	Page 5
You Tube Streaming	Page 5
Tracing Sign in.....	Page 5
Church Conference	Page 5
Rock River Blood Ctr ...	Page 5
Gamblers Anonymous ...	Page 5
Messenger Procedure....	Page 5
Food Pantry	Page 5
Bishops Appeal.....	Page 5
Midwest Mission.....	Page 6
Boy Scout Troop 181	Page 6
Calendar.....	Page 7



Even as winter is only beginning, I hear George Harrison's voice singing, "It's been a long cold lonely winter... it feels like years since (the sun's) been here," words my little darlings that FOLLOW the pronouncement, "Here come the sun. It's alright."

Ironically, this year above others we may actually appreciate the expectancy of advent, not merely as a remembrance of what happened in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, but in hopeful anticipation of what we can expect next year after vaccines have been approved and distributed and normalcy begins to resume, even as I wish it would arr. The past informs that hope, the light that shined so brightly upon that manger long ago, still sparkles from the heavens calling us to look through the darkness.

One way that we find that light is to remember where we've seen it before and where it has shined in our lives. As the church – as those who gather to worship together – that light twinkles in the cracking voice of the lady in the pew in front of us, the distracted shuffling of the boy in the pew across the aisle, or the silent prayer of the widower just a cushion away.

With the advent of the internet and unlimited calling plans, one of the Christmas traditions that has faded is sending Christmas cards: I mean cards that include a short personal note, whether the card itself is preprinted or contains a Christmas update.

This year, I invite you to send out four more cards than usual. (Even if you don't send out any, that's only four cards.) Send them to those who normally sit to the left and right and front and back of you in church. Maybe even send one to someone who used to sit by you in church years ago. Include a short handwritten note. It doesn't have to be long, just a sentence or a phrase of well-wishes or a reminder of what you miss about them.

Not only will you spread a little sustaining Son shine, you might even find some yourself with the hopeful anticipation of seeing the Son in all his glory, having given him your heart through your care and received his

If you need an address, our church directory is on-line in the "members" area of our church website. If you need help finding one, let Nancy or me know.

Remember those people who walked in darkness came to see a great light, and those who lived in darkness had light shine upon them.

Let us rejoice in the light of our Savior's birth and the promise of his return. Zealous for doing good in the name of he who has purified us.

Your brother in Christ,



Rev. Mark Harkness



Members & Friends

- Sandra Baxter
- Violet Collier
- Joe Hunt
- Lela Lameyer
- Lyons Meyers
- Marlene Meyers
- Jim & Barb Whitlock

Military Personnel

- Gage Christensen
- Sean Conderman
- Tamara Duke
- Dan Harter
- Mark Kincaide

Mission

- Pastor Kim & the Next Generation Ministry

Those Who Mourn



PRAYER REQUESTS: If you have prayer concerns that you wish to express, please fill out a prayer request card located in the Prayer Chapel and on the small table in the sanctuary. Please indicate how you would like your request shared via the check boxes at the bottom of the card and then place the concerns in the prayer request box in the chapel or fold and put into the offering plate. Your request will be given to the pastor or forwarded to the Prayer Chain. You may also email your prayer requests to the secretary who will pass it on the Prayer Chain.

Thank You



Thank you to all who donated Christmas stockings for the Rock House Kids! We reached our goal of 200 stockings and they will be delivered to Rock House in early December. Thank you to the Methodist Women for championing this cause and thanks to Donna Layng for heading up the project.

Thank you for all who donated gifts for the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Ministry. We had 22 boxes that was delivered to the drop off center. Thank you to Terri Burritt for being the project coordinator for this year.





Thank you to Cindy Kerr, Juanita Barnes, Barb Clucus, Deb Seno, and Mike Seno who decorated the church for the Advent and Christmas season on Sunday, November 22. The church

looks beautiful!

Thank you to the Health Team who insured that the church was safe for in-person worship. We will put them back into service again soon when we can once again have worship in person at the church.



"In the Bleak Midwinter" by Christina G. Rossetti, The United Methodist Hymnal #221. George Harrison, Here Comes the Sun (London: Apple Records, 1969)

Upcoming Sermons

Below is a schedule of the sermons and scripture readings that Pastor Mark will be presenting. To prepare yourself, please read the scriptures beforehand. Printed copies of Pastor Mark's sermons are available on the church website (cherryvalleyumc.com). Click the worship tab.

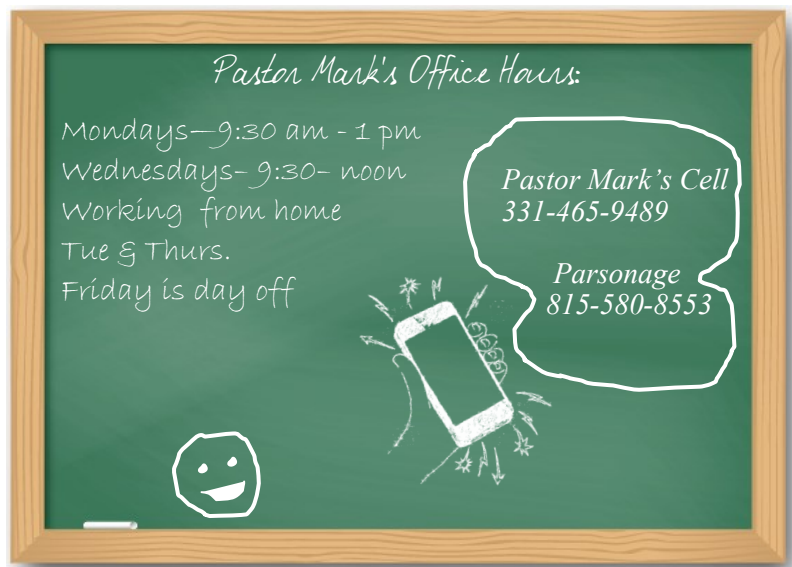
December 6..... 2nd Sunday of Advent
 Call to Worship..... Psalm 85
 Scripture Lesson Isaiah 40:1-11
 Gospel..... Mark 1:1-8
 Message "Where the Wild Things Are"
Series: Where We Belong: Part 2
Rev. Danice Loveridge, Deacon

December 13..... 3rd Sunday of Advent
 Call to Worship..... Psalm 126
 Scripture Lesson Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 Gospel..... John 1:6-8, 19-23
 Message "Homecoming"
Series: Where We Belong: Part 3

December 20..... 4th Sunday of Advent
 Call to Worship..... Luke 1:46b-55
 Scripture Lesson 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 Gospel..... Luke 1:26-38
 Message "Pitching the Tent"
Series: Where We Belong: Part 4

December 24..... Christmas Eve
 Call to Worship..... Psalm 96
 Scripture Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14
 Gospel..... Luke 2:1-20
 Message "Home in the Word"
Series: Where We Belong: Part 5

December 27..... First Sunday After Christmas Day
 Call to Worship..... Psalm 148
 Scripture Lesson Isaiah 61:10-62:3
 Gospel..... Luke 2:22-40
 Message "Reign It In"
Series: Where We Belong: Part 6



(Continued from previous column)

Regarding the sacrament of Holy Communion, St. Paul asks, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Cor. 10:16-17)

Not only do we meet Christ in the elements we partake during Holy Communion, but we **share** them with one another. Holy Communion is a unified thanksgiving (Eucharist) at the Lord's table. Although we engage Christ personally, we do not do so privately. Furthermore, the words of institution spoken by the celebrant (pastor) on behalf of the church are not an incantation but a communal prayer.

To remove the communal nature of the sacrament or to reduce the blessing into a magical incantation for private worship is heretical. Therefore, your pastor will not engage in the practice of asking persons to hold whatever bread or drink they want near a computer screen or television in the false expectation that anything other than private devotion is taking place.

By asking those who would like to partake of Communion with the congregation to join the virtual gathering for the consecration of communion elements, we will pray **together** around communion elements which we will **share**. Even though our distribution of elements will take longer than in in-person worship in that you may drive to the church to pick them up instead of merely walking to the altar, or have them delivered to your home instead of having them taken to your pew, we will be doing the same actions. By holding on to those elements until the entire congregation (virtual and in-person) is gathered on December 6, we will act in **common union** to experience Christ's holy presence.

If you have any questions, please call Pastor Mark for an explanation.



Communion For Those Worshiping at Home

Have you been worshipping with us at home via YouTube or ZOOM, and missed participating in Holy Communion?

Now you, too, can join the in-person congregation in the celebration of the sacrament.

Those wishing to receive Communion are invited to attend a special virtual communion service at 11:45 a.m. on Sunday, November 29. The service will include a brief Scripture reading, reflection, prayer and the consecration of Communion elements. We will then arrange times for persons to obtain the communion elements prior to **Sunday, December 6** so that they will be on-hand ready to partake simultaneously with the in-person congregation. Times and days for pick-up/delivery will be announced later.

A theological explanation follows:

Continued in next column

Love Notes from the Organ Bench

Preparing Advent & Christmas music for you, I have read over and OVER about:

- prophesied *REJOICING*
- *much anticipated PEACE*
- preparation for the *coming of Jesus*

There is SO much excitement and promise in the music and scripture of Advent and Christmas! My family and I have been blessed as the recent strain we've been under has been replaced by joy and peace.

As you hear music during your Christmas preparations, feel free to jot me a quick note when a carol stands out or as you find a past photo of the Choir. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for giving me the privilege of bringing the special music and carols to you. I hope they will bring you blessings of peace, joy, and comfort to your weary soul!

In Christ, Nola



Spiritual Insights

Jim Whitlock

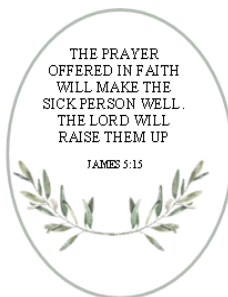
I have decided to begin my letter to you this month with a personal testimony. A few years ago, our church had many joys and concerns expressed and shared within the services. Testimonies were a part of our worship when the Holy Spirit could be felt moving among us.

I want to share my testimony about Barbara and that the Holy Spirit is still among us. Barbara had been getting worse. She was so weak she couldn't stand up or take any steps. Her memory was worsening each day. I started praying that God would give her strength in her body, to regain her ability to walk, and that her mind would become clear.

One night, after about 3 months of daily prays in the morning and at night, I received a message in my sleep. A loud voice called out to me and said, "God has heard your prayers and there will be joy in the morning." I tried to awake, but I could not.

I got up the next morning about an hour before Barb to unlock the door, shut off the alarm, and make my coffee. I heard footsteps and suddenly Barb was walking down the hall into the living room, and declared with a smile, "Good morning, honey!" Barb was talkative and clear, using sentences, discussing the day, and remembering what happened in the past. Then I remembered the voice in my sleep that said, "There will be joy in the morning". "PRAISE GOD! PRAISE GOD!" is all I could say that morning.

God doesn't always answer prayer right away. He is awaiting our consistent faith in who He is. If He doesn't answer right away, keep on praying. There is power in prayer. Power to save us from sin. Power to heal. Power to give sight to the blind. Power to receive freedom from vices. Power to love.



Birthdays & Anniversaries



23 Lynn Brown
26 Ann Harned
29 Nola Carnine



December Birthdays

6 Delilah Herold
10 Carolyn Kloss
14 Bill Harned
Craig Wilt
17 Lela Lameyer
19 Karen Harter
20 Veronica Layng
22 Lynn Brown

December Anniversaries

63 Lyons & Marlene Meyers
29 Ryan & Jamie Spears



Christmas Eve Worship

Watch your email, the church Facebook page, and the web site for updates. With the current Covid-19 restrictions, we may have to revise the plans for worship.

7:00 pm & 11:00 pm

As in past years, two Christmas Eve worship services are scheduled.

In order to maintain a safe worship environment during the current pandemic, this year, we will require persons to register beforehand.

Each worship service will be limited to 25 persons for the in-person congregation.

Only church members/regular attendees and their households will be able to register prior to December 20. If less than (or about) 25 persons total have registered prior to December 22, only the 7:00 pm service will be held. In any case, only the 7:00 pm service will be livestreamed for those who will participate from home.

To Register for Christmas Eve worship, [sign-up here](#), or by going to the church website: www.cherryvalleyumc.com.



In-Person Visits

At the direction of the Bishop, Pastor Mark has been unable to make in-person visits with members of the congregation since the COVID restrictions began.

Upon obtaining further information and approval by the Bishop, Pastor will resume some in person visits. However, due to restrictions at congregate living facilities, it's likely that he will be unable to visit nursing home/assisted living residents for some time.

You are always in our prayers.



You Tube Live Streaming



Since we have returned to phase 3 of the Covid-19 mitigations, we have suspended in-person worship for at least 4 weeks, which began on November 22. We are still worshipping via Zoom and You Tube live streaming service. Information for how to join in the worship is on the Cherry Valley United Methodist church web site at cherryvalleyumc.com

Tracing Sign In

All persons entering the church during the week must wear a mask and sign in on the tracing sheet provided on the table in the gathering room.

Please follow this procedure if you come to the church for any reason. Please continue to use social distancing and face masks along with good hygiene habits to keep yourself safe.

All these precautions helps everyone.



The date for the Church Conference is Saturday, December 5 via Zoom Conferencing. The SPRC will meet at 9:15 a.m. and the conference will begin at 10:00 a.m.

Rock River Valley Blood Center



Since we are unable to hold our usual December blood drive at the church, please consider other locations for donating blood. The Center is in dire need of donations, especially this year. Visit the website (rrvbc.org) to see locations near Cherry Valley. There is a listing on the bulletin board in the atrium of the church as well.

Gamblers Anonymous

The Gamblers Anonymous group that meets at the church on Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. have suspended meetings until further notice. Please make a note of the changes and watch for updates when they become available.

Rock River Valley Food Pantry



Feeding Rockford One Meal At A Time

Thank you for your continued support of the Rock River Valley Food Pantry. The pantry currently serves approximately 6,800 clients per month. You can help by bringing your non-perishable foods and placing them in the basket located in the foyer of the church.

CURRENT NEEDS LIST

Canned Fruit	Applesauce	100% Juice
Canned Vegetables	Pasta and Rice	Cereal
Peanut Butter	Tuna	Soup

PEANUT BUTTER ENDOWMENT

The Rock River Food Pantry also has a Peanut Butter Endowment program in which charitable contributions of property, assets or funds are placed. Endowments are created for non-profit organizations in support of a specific goal. The Peanut Butter Endowment was created to purchase food to distribute to our clients. Join in this valuable cause by making a one-time or recurring donation. You may go to the web site at <http://www.rrvp.org/peanut-butter-endowment/> and view the brochure outlining the program and you can donate on line.

New Procedure for *The Messenger*

We are implementing a new procedure for the delivery of *The Messenger*. The post office informed us that due to the low volume of mailings that we were sending, we would no longer qualify for the bulk mail rate.

To save money, we decided that we would send the newsletter via email to those for whom we had email addresses. For those that we know have no access to the internet or who have no email address, we will continue to send paper copies via the postal service.

If you want a paper copy of *The Messenger*, we will have copies available for pick up in the atrium at your convenience. We hope that this system will be acceptable to all. It will definitely be a cost savings for the church.

Bishop's Appeal Update

Rev. Young Seon (Christina Kim) is happy to report that Stage 1 is 85 percent complete on the Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania. Work on Stage 2, which includes building the dorms, is 40 percent complete. This week crews are continuing to finish the work on Stage 1. Also, roofing work for dorms in Stage 2 is getting started. "God has been awesome," said Rev. Kim. "By God's grace, we made 40 sets of student tables and chairs and are continuing to make furniture."

How to Give:

Donations may be made through the AC Registration link or Text "Give" to (844) 563-0429.

Checks may be mailed to:

Northern Illinois Conference

PO Box 5646

Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646

Put "Bishop's Appeal" in the memo line.

For more info, visit umcnic.org/bishopsappeal.

Midwest Mission Update

Posted: November 23 2020 at 01:25 PM

Author: Larry Dunlap-Berg, Mission Challenge Coordinator

The Northern Illinois Conference Board of Global Ministries congratulates the [Midwest Mission Distribution Center](#) on its 20th Anniversary celebration and thanks them for their invitation to celebrate its 20 years of ministry by sharing financial donations and in-kind supplies like those we usually bring during our Annual Conference Fill the Truck Drive.

In partnership with MMDC, the Northern Illinois Conference will reach many people around the world and around the corner with our prayers, a message of hope, laundry detergent, dish soap, household cleaners, toothpaste and other items to help them through a disaster or humanitarian crisis.

In 2019 due to the tremendous generosity of our churches in the NIC, we graduated from a trailer to a real truck that was completely packed with a new record of more than 50,000 items or 5,271 pounds!

In response to this year's pandemic, economic downturn, virtual annual conference and other challenges, MMDC helped us adopt a new 2020 vision and adapt to our changing circumstances by sending a fleet of trailers to more than a dozen collection sites in churches across the conference. Because of this year's numerous challenges, we anticipated a significant drop-off in items collected.



A volunteer at Grace UMC in Naperville smiles over the many items dropped off at the church for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

However, we are excited to announce that this year NIC churches donated an amazing 5,020 pounds of items and nearly \$1,000 for this year's Mission Challenge! We came within 250 pounds of last year's record-breaking collection amounts.

Two drivers, Ramon Ortiz, Operations Assistant at MMDC and Ray Trent from New Lenox UMC drove 686 miles over 13 hours picking up our donations!

We thank MMDC, the churches that served as collection sites, the volunteers who staffed those sites and everyone who contributed to the 2020 Mission Challenge. Through your participation, you have helped all of us look higher, see a vision of God that is greater than our current circumstances and be encouraged in our journeys to spiritual maturity.

Reprinted from UMCNIC.org

Boy Scout Troop 181



On the first Tuesday of November (election day), the scouts conducted Troop/Patrol elections. They elected a new SPL (Senior Patrol Leader), who appointed his ASPL (Assistant...). Then, each patrol elected their own Patrol Leader, who appointed his assistant. For these positions, a scout must write a Letter of Intent (how he wants to improve his Troop/patrol). He must read his

Letter to the whole troop, and may not add to his campaign (this prompts him to Be Prepared by thinking ahead of time and being complete). Finally, the ASPL reviews the letters, and makes appointments to other troop positions (Historian, Quartermaster, Textmaster, etc.). All that was done via Zoom.

The second meeting was hosted on Zoom again. We did a Pet Show. Each scout, and several adults got to display their pets. They brought them to camera when it was their turn (the dogs, cats, etc. were better behaved that way). Each person told us a little bit about their pet. A few shared their screens and showed us pictures of a former pet.



The 3rd meeting of the month was an Information Night, coupled with a Court of Honor. That was also performed on Zoom. Scouts were recognized for their rank and merit badge accomplishments over the past few months. We saw some nice smiles as their names were called. Further, different attendees with responsibilities got to inform every one of their cause, including operating details of the Christmas Tree Lot. There were 44 people attending this zoom meeting.



The final meeting of the month will be at the Christmas Tree Lot. Please consider buying a field grown tree for Christmas this year. Troop 181 will be selling trees at the

corner of Harrison Ave. & Perryville Road, now until they are gone.

All of the meetings in December will be conducted at the Tree Lot. The scouts will do maintenance of the trees and fixtures and play some spread-out games. There is enough room for scouts to run, have fun, and keep a safe distances from others.

We encourage boys 11-17 to visit our Troop meetings, and bring their parents. We have stories to tell you! At this time, any visits need to be coordinated with Sandy at 779-771-3567, or the Scoutmaster.

Visit our website at <http://www.bsatroop181.org>. You may call Terry Nichols, Scoutmaster, 815/540-5900 with all your Boy Scouting questions. Additionally, Scouts BSA has a girl troop of 6th graders, and more, that meets on Mondays at the church. Contact: Sandy Schwartz, Scoutmaster at 779-771-3567 for more information.





December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6:30 pm Boy Scout Troop 181 Christmas Tree Lot	2 9:00 am Bible Study 6:30 pm Trustee Meeting via Zoom	3 6:00 pm Cub Scout Pack #429	4	5 9:00 am GA
6 10:00 am Worship <i>ReTurn Procedures in Effect</i>	7 6:00 pm-8:00pm Scouts BSA	8 6:30 pm Boy Scout Troop 181 Christmas Tree Lot	9 9:00 am Bible Study	10 6:00 pm Cub Scout Pack #429	11	12 9:00 am GA
13 10:00 am Worship <i>ReTurn Procedures in Effect</i>	14 6:00 pm-8:00pm Scouts BSA	15 6:30 pm Boy Scout Troop 181 Christmas Tree Lot <i>Messenger items due today</i>	16 9:00 am Bible Study	17 6:00 pm Cub Scout Pack #429	18	19 9:00 am GA
20 10:00 am Worship <i>ReTurn Procedures in Effect</i>	21 6:00 pm-8:00pm Scouts BSA	22 6:30 pm Boy Scout Troop 181 Christmas Tree Lot	23 9:00 am Bible Study	24 7 pm & 11 pm Christmas Eve Worship (Tenative) 	25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	26 9:00 am GA
27 10:00 am Worship <i>ReTurn Procedures in Effect</i>	28 6:00 pm-8:00pm Scouts BSA	29 6:30 pm Boy Scout Troop 181 Zoom	30 9:00 am Bible Study	31 6:00 pm Cub Scout Pack #429		

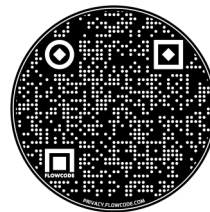
Messenger items are due to the secretary on the 15th of each month.



Christmas Blessings



Cherry Valley United Methodist Church
112 South Cherry Street, P.O. Box 235
Cherry Valley, Illinois 61016



Let us
WORSHIP
Together

Sunday @ 10:00 am—Worship via
Zoom

Live You Tube streaming @
Cherry Valley United
Methodist Church

Pastor: Mark Harkness
Secretary: Nancy Laurent

Church Office Hours
Tuesday – Friday 9:00 am – 1:00 pm