



Yucca Breeze

December 2024

THE UNITED CHURCHES OF HOT SPRINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Pastor's Pulpit:



In the cold and dreary month of December, we once again remember that long ago our Eternal God broke into our finite world. Light overcame darkness! Jesus was born in Bethlehem. A Savior was presented. A Sovereign was sent. A Son was given. O the wonder that so many things happen at the most unexpected times.

Think about your own conversion. When did you receive Heaven's greatest gift? And it was indeed a gift! For some of us, it was in childhood. For lots of us, it was at a special service, such as Christmas Eve or Easter. And there are those of us who came to know God's reality through receiving Christ during a particularly dark and dreary time in our lives. During the Christmas season, I take time to truly ponder what a great gift I have been given. I hope you will do so as well!

I am always amazed that it was God Himself who personally gave this gift to me. I didn't earn it. I didn't buy it. I didn't deserve it then and I still don't. Isn't that what real gifts are? A way of one person telling another that they are special, that they mean something to us and they are indeed cherished. Mostly they are loved by us ... and with no ulterior motives. That is worth pondering, especially in December as the weather does get cold and dreary. Love is the gift that keeps on giving.

Speaking of such ... one of the big fads today is the gift that keeps on coming. It's a subscription service where virtually any item can come to a designated individual not just once at Christmas, but each and every month of the following year. You can literally have monthly gifts of: beauty and makeup; fashion for women and men; kids' favorites; meal kits; pet essentials; wine deliveries; fun activities for kids; fresh food sends; and Book of the Month Club ... to name just a few!! It is a unique way of stretching the Christmas spirit to last all year round!



Have you ever wanted to perhaps give a different kind of gift, not to a friend, or sibling or parent ... but to God? I was thinking about this and thought, what if we could just concentrate on one area or deed throughout the months of 2025 and actually give them back to God. Let's just use the first letters of the months to see what we could do with this in our quest to give God gifts that keep on coming.

January: **J**ob.

Here's the idea, I'm going to work as good, as faithful, as deliberate in all areas of my work; and in such a way that people will take note and maybe even ask me, why the difference? And Lord if you'll give me the courage, I'll share with them my love for You. And maybe even start to develop relationships that will eventually allow me to share Your great gospel message! Lord, I give you my entire **J**ob in January.

February: **F**eet.

Here, I will not get out of bed in the morning, without glancing down at my feet and inviting You to direct my path throughout the day! Lead me to the person I need to talk to, the circumstance I need to be in, and the situation where I may be most needed. Use my feet Lord for Your glory! Lord, I give You both my **F**eet in February.

March: **M**otivations.

Motivations are tricky. I want all my motivations to be truly reflective of Your mercy and grace. I know I can't be proactive in this, but I can be reactive as I just ask You to remind me of the "whys" that I am doing such and such or acting so and so. Lord, keep my motives pure! I will give them to You. I pray that You will help me and remind me concerning them. Lord, I give You each of my **M**otivations in March.

April: **A**ttendance.

Here the idea is twofold. On the one hand, to not be attending events or places that are borderline for me because of the temptations I may face there or the appearances that others might draw from me being there. Then on the other hand, what should I be attending? A new Bible study ... a new group meeting ... a new volunteer position? Lord, you're in charge of where I go this month! I give you my **A**ttendance in April.

May: **M**ercy.

This is a hard one. Lord who is it that needs to experience what only You can provide through my words or actions. Help me to be ever-sensitive in my conversations and situations to hear the silent cry for Your mercy from the person I may be speaking to. I can't read people's minds or look into people's hearts, but You can. Just use my ears to truly listen and my tongue to truly share words and actions that speak of Your incredible mercy! Lord, all my **M**ercy I give You in May.

June: Joy.

This one is just between the Lord and me ... or better yet the Lord and you. This month I (we) choose to lift up a daily expression of joy and praise. Sometime during each day, I will come before You in joy and with joy, not just for all that You have done for and in me, but just for You being You. The wonder of Your presence. The greatness of Your love. O Lord, help me to do this three times each day that it will remind me that praising You is just as important as taking in each meal. Lord, I give You my **J**oy in June.

July: Jewels.

Here the idea is to take stock and remember all the little things in my life that are good. All the jewels that I keep wrapped up safely stored away and don't usually share out of sounding too braggadocious or prideful. Things I can do well. Things that I have excelled in. Things, that I know You have, over time, given and equipped me with. But I want You to receive all the glory this month. Lead me ... guide me. Help me to make proper use of my secret jewels so that people will be more amazed with You than impressed by me. Lord, I give you all my **J**ewels in July!

August: Awareness.

Here the idea is to spend the entire month sharpening my mind to be more aware of and sensitive to Your presence, Your direction, my relationship with You, Your goodness, and so on. I want to be super aware of being super aware of You! Show me Yourself so that I can give You the gift of my love and wonder and appreciation! Lord, I give You all my **A**wareness in August.

September: Secrets.

This is the one that I know You want, but to be quite frank, I don't want to give. I promise to bring before You each and every one of my secrets: secret sins, secret desires, secret thoughts, secret actions. All the things that I have fooled myself into believing that You don't know about. I know this is more for me than for You. But I want to get honest with You and especially ... start getting honest with myself. Lord, I reluctantly give you my **S**ecrets in September.

October: Obligations.

How am I doing is the question here. Am I keeping my obligation to spend time daily with You, reading Your Word, communing, and conversing with You? How is my church attendance? How is my giving and tithing? How is my witnessing and how is my willingness to stay both motivated and obedient? How am I doing in being Your child before others? Lord, I know that I have issues keeping all my obligations. But this month I desire to keep them all. Lord, I give You my **O**bligations in October.

November: Niceties.

This has to do with all of the niceties others have passed on to me throughout the years. People who have helped me. People who have taught me. People that have been so very supportive. People I should have taken the time to truly thank for who they were or what they did. Lord, remind me of past deeds and folks. Help me to share with them sincere and oft times overdue expressions of gratitude. In doing this I want them to be drawn to Your faithfulness to me and realize that You have been so faithful to them. This is one of those gifts that I hope will take on a life of its own as others share their memories and niceties with folks they know. Lord, I give You all of my **N**iceties in November.

December: Delinquencies.

Here is the time to clean up this past year. Lord help me with my delinquent duty to ask for forgiveness, to reconnect with an out-of-sort sibling, to search out an old marginalized friend. To simply operate in the true meaning of Christmas and to be big enough to put away my pride, to hush my haughtiness, and to finally get my spiritual delinquencies brought up to date. Lord, help me just to truly be the light and salt You want me to be, and the example that You can use to draw as many people as possible to Yourself. Lord, I give You each and every one of my **D**elinquencies this December.



So, there you have it. Twelve gifts that we can give to God, not just at Christmas ... but throughout the year. The gift that keeps on giving. May this season be filled with His presence, and more, your awareness of the true wonder of just who He is.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor David



*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him?
Give Him my heart.
(Christina Rossetti)*

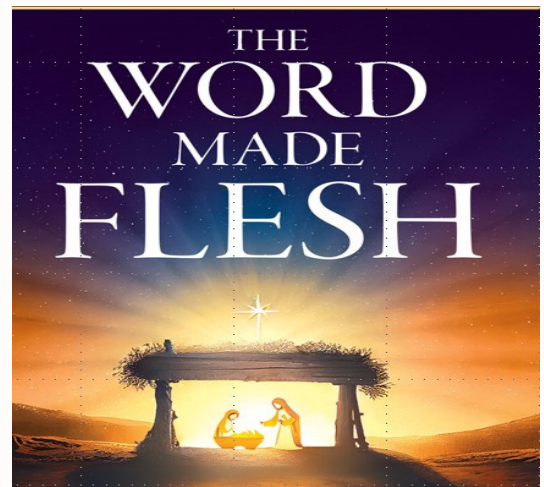
*Merry Christmas to our church Family,
With our Love and God's Blessings,
Pastor David & Bernice*

**Special Advent Services
Wednesday Evenings
6:45—7:30 pm
In the Church Sanctuary
At The United Churches**

The Word Made Flesh

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14



Wednesday, December 4th

Week 1: Salt of the Earth [Matthew 5:13]

In this service, we remember that Jesus calls us to flavor the earth and to savor the good things that come from Him through His birth.

Wednesday, December 11th

Week 2: Rock of Ages [Isaiah 51:1]

In this service, we give thanks that Jesus is our rock, a solid foundation on which to build a life of joy.

Wednesday, December 18th

Week 3: Light of the World [John 8:12]

In this service, we rejoice that Jesus brightens our lives through His birth, dispelling the darkness of sin to bring forgiveness to light.



Christmas Season at the United Churches

Sunday, December 15th

10:00 am in the Church Sanctuary

a Christmas Cantata

"Light and Life"

A Chronological Retelling of the Christmas Story

With Strong Biblical References.

By Lloyd Larson

With special music presentations

**Followed by an all-church
breakfast casserole brunch**

in the Fellowship Hall



Tuesday, December 24th

6:00 pm in the Church Sanctuary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

**You are invited to join us as we celebrate the birth
of our King of Kings!**



Bearly Used Boutique

The Bearly Used Boutique is in need of a Team Leader for 2025. This popular mission of The United Churches serves the individuals and families of our area with need for clothing. The Team Leader coordinates the volunteer work schedule for Thursday nights during the Spaghetti Supper (the Boutique is also open once a month during the summer). The Team Leader also coordinates the intake of donated clothing. If you are interested in this timely mission, please contact Sally Hageman(605) 745-3802 for more information.

NEW MARY MARTHA BIBLE STUDY on the Old Testament Book of Amos Thursday Mornings / 10:00 am In the Fireside Room Fellowship and Bible Study

**Verse by verse study on the prophet Amos by Dr. Chuck Missler,
internationally known author and Bible expositor.**

*"I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant them on their land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land that I have given them,"
says the LORD your God. " Amos 9:14-15*



The United Churches Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes 2024

341 Boxes Filled / 4 Online = 345 Shoeboxes!!



**Congregation Praying Over
Shoeboxes**

*May God bless those who gave ...
... and may God bless those who will receive.*

DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH

THE UNITED CHURCHES

BASIC NEEDS BOUTIQUE



Our Basic Needs Boutique provides much needed items for people who find themselves a little short of money at the end of the month. We help them stretch their budget by providing the following:

**Bar Soap
Shampoo & Conditioner
Toothpaste & Toothbrushes
Deodorant
Disposable Razors
Feminine Hygiene Products**

**Bladder Incontinence Products
Toilet Paper
Paper Towels
Laundry Soap
Dish Soap
Cleaning Supplies**

There is a donation bin labeled "Basic Needs Boutique" (located as you enter the Bethany Room) where you may drop off your donations anytime you are in church.

Our "Loose Change" offering for December will be gathered on Sunday, December 8th and will go toward this mission. There is also a line on our giving envelopes designated for missions. If using an giving envelope, please write BNB on that line.



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

13 Jerry & Jeanne Wyatt
28 Wayne & Sally Hageman



4 Adam Swift	18 Michael Buchholz
8 Gordon Brooks	20 Mark Posthumus
10 Nancy Cuckler	22 Stefanie Nelson
13 Pat Collogan	24 Don De Vries
15 John Johnson	26 Claude Bent
16 Lynn Buccholz	29 Claude Smith
17 Jean Meadows	29 Maris Smith

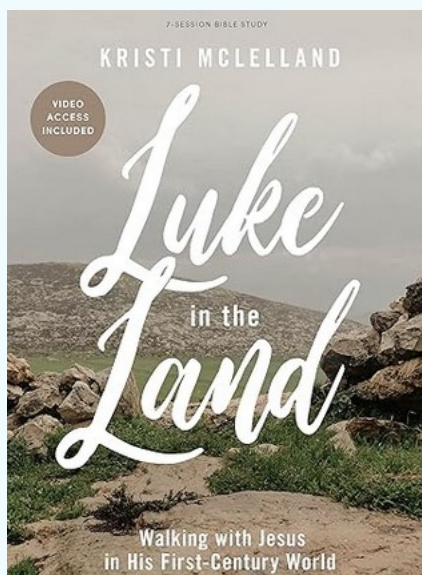
*If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office:
by email: uc@gwtc.net or call 745-5640.*

ATTENTION CRAFTERS!!!!!!

If you have a unique craft that you would like share ... we are looking for projects to share with our kids. Please contact Cal Larive at: 605-891-3144 for more information.

ANNUAL REPORTS!!!! Annual Reports are due in the Church Office no later than January 2, 2025. You may drop off your report in the church office or email it to: uc@gwtc.net. Submitting reports in a timely manner facilitates the preparation of the documents that are distributed for our **Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for Sunday, January 26th**, following the Worship Service. Thank you!

NEW MONDAY WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY BEGINS JANUARY 6 / 9:00 AM IN THE FIRESIDE ROOM



In our Bibles, we have four Gospels describing Jesus's time on earth: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The land of Israel--the place Jesus walked and taught during His earthly ministry--is often referred to as the "fifth Gospel."

Follow Kristi McLelland through Israel as we study snapshots from the Gospel of Luke to see where the stories of the Bible took place. Over 7 sessions, challenge the way you read the accounts of Jesus through teaching videos that take you to locations in Israel like Bethlehem, the Sea of Galilee, Gethsemane, Jerusalem, and the road to Emmaus. Along the way, you'll see how Jesus, the Messiah, brought His kingdom to earth for everybody.