

DECEMBER 2022

Newsletter



Spirit of Grace Lutheran-Methodist Church invites you to join us for

Advent Midweek Gathering

Meal - Discussion - Worship

Schedule

5:00pm

Setup & Gathering

5:15pm

Soup Supper Served

5:30pm

Scripture Discussion

6:15pm

Evening Worship

On Wednesday evenings in Advent, come and gather at Spirit of Grace for a simple soup supper and discussion on the Psalms and prayer using the themes of Advent, followed by an evening prayer worship service.

Dates

November 30th

December 7th

December 14th

December 21st



1140 Tucker Rd. Hood River, OR
Learn more at hoodriverchurch.com



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Pastor's Letter

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

I can hardly believe December is already here, as we find ourselves in the midst of Advent once more. In this season of waiting, as we eagerly anticipate the arrival of Christ born among us, it is also a season of reflection – a time to reflect on all we have endured and accomplished in the last year, as we make plans for the coming future.:

2022 was an exciting and formative time for us here at Spirit of Grace, as we began to dream together about what our ministry will look like moving forward. We explored creative worship practices during Holy Week when we gathered in the sanctuary for a Maundy Thursday Dinner Church service. We honored our relationship to creation and our commitment to climate justice through the Season of Creation, listening to the voices of Creation and filling our Burning Bush with prayers. We formed Ministry Teams to work collaboratively on planning and implementing the ministries and projects of the congregation. We welcomed new opportunities for education with our Fall Book Study groups, as well as our monthly Living [in the] Word bible studies. We began the journey towards becoming an official Welcoming Congregation through the RIC/RMN organizations of our denominations. And, perhaps most importantly, we gathered together in August to engage in the sacred practice of group discernment as we brainstormed how to articulate the mission, vision, and values of this congregation to our surrounding community. In all of these ways, and in all of the love, relationship, and community found through the small, ordinary moments together, we have seen that the Spirit of God is alive and at work among us, leading us into the future God has in store for us!

Unfortunately, 2022 has also been a year filled with challenges and struggles - not only for us, but for churches and faith communities all over the state and country. Our annual giving has declined, and if giving trends for this year continue, **we will finish out 2022 with a budget deficit of about \$9,000**. Additionally, when the Finance Committee met to plan the budget for next year, we agreed to take a realistic approach in estimating our 2023 income. If our current giving trends continue through next year, this will leave us **short of covering our annual expenses in 2023 by \$16,225**. The Finance Committee has cut costs wherever possible, but as of right now we will be presenting an unbalanced budget to the Board of Directors for approval this December.

Pastor's Letter

As disappointing as this is to hear, we do have many things working in our favor: we own our building and parsonage outright, meaning we don't have a mortgage hanging over our heads to worry about. We also have money in savings that can cover the budget deficit for this year and next year as well. However, relying on savings is not a sustainable solution. If our giving does not increase significantly next year, we will need to consider some creative options for how to increase our income or drastically reduce our spending, which could look like a change in our staffing model and pastoral coverage. I say this not to worry or alarm anyone, but in order to be fully transparent with you all about the reality of our financial situation, and prepare you for the possibility of difficult decisions in the near future.

Though I know most of us are feeling the effects of rising costs and inflation, and are struggling with tight finances for our own families and personal budgets, **I am asking you to prayerfully consider if you are able to increase your giving to Spirit of Grace.** Perhaps you could make a special donation this December to help us reduce the budget deficit, or you could make a plan to increase your regular giving for 2023, even if only by a small amount. Any amount of financial assistance you could offer to our congregation would be enormously appreciated.

This isn't the first time we've experienced financial difficulties, and I'm sure it won't be the last. **I wholeheartedly believe in the mission and ministry of Spirit of Grace, and I believe that God has called us to be agents of change and bearers of the Good News in this time and this place.** I am still joyously anticipating the arrival of the Christ child this Christmas and the start of the new year, with all of the opportunities for learning, growth, and ministry it will bring – and I hope you are as well.

In Peace,
Pastor Miranda BG





Spirit of Grace

LUTHERAN-METHODIST CHURCH

Invites you to join us in
celebration this
Christmas Season!

Christmas Eve Worship

A CANDLELIT SERVICE OF
LESSONS AND CAROLS

7:00 PM

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

Christmas Day Worship

A MORNING PRAYER SERVICE

10:00 AM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

1140 TUCKER ROAD

HOOD RIVER, OR

WWW.HOODRIVERCHURCH.COM

Annual Meeting

Save the Date - January 15th

Mark your calendars and plan to join us at Spirit of Grace on Sunday, January 15th for worship, followed by our Annual Congregational Meeting. This meeting is our annual opportunity to come together as a congregation to hear reports from our various committees and ministries, vote on important business of the church, elect new members of the Leadership Team, and look forward to the coming year with joy and anticipation.

This congregational meeting will also be particularly important, as we will be voting on our newly articulated Mission & Vision Statements, as well as our list of Core Values that have emerged as a result of our conversations in August! Pastor Miranda worked collaboratively with the board this fall to draft statements that captured the energy, excitement, and dreams of these conversations. Once approved, these statements and values will be posted in our church building and on our website, and will be used by members of the Leadership Team and Ministry Teams to guide decision making moving forward. Below, you will find the final version of these guiding statements, which we will vote on to formally approve at the January 15th meeting:

Mission Statement

To be a vital, forward-thinking congregation that lives into God's call to love the world by embodying service, change, and mutual-relationships with one another and our community.

Vision Statement

To be agents of change, called to serve as God's Living Bridge, connecting community with God's grace so that all may know God's unending mercy, abundant love, and radical welcome to all people, just as they are.

Values

1. Abundant Love & Radical Welcome
2. Honoring Tradition & Embracing Change
3. Repentance & Reconciliation
4. Community & Relationship
5. Listening & Learning
6. Stewardship & Service
7. Living Word & Holy Sacrament
8. Simultaneously Saint & Sinner

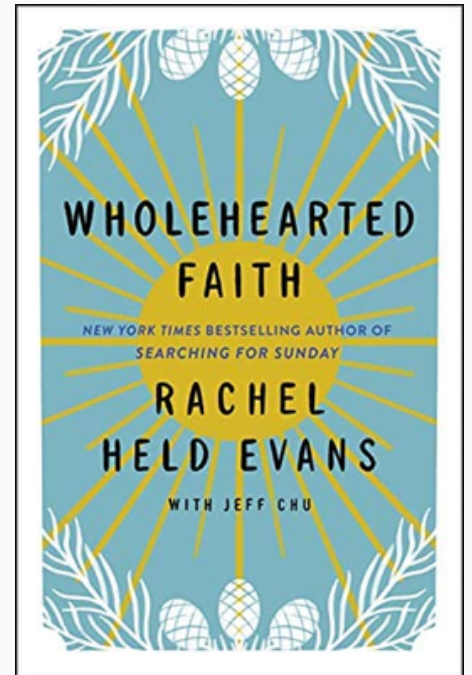
Lifelong Learning

Book Study Groups - Winter/Spring Session

-Sundays at 8:30am or Thursdays at 6:30pm-

Thank you to everyone who signed up to dive into The Wild Land Within together this fall in our Book Study Groups! It was a joy to hear all of the rich, thoughtful discussion and questions that emerged from this text.

In January we will prepare to start our Winter/Spring Session book: Wholehearted Faith by Rachel Held Evans & Jeff Chu. We will read this book in two parts, beginning the week of January 15th, pausing during Lent, and resuming in April to conclude in early June. Sign-up [via this Google Form](#) or on the sign-up sheet at the church building.



Wholehearted Faith by Rachel Held Evans & Jeff Chu

Rachel Held Evans is widely recognized for her theologically astute, profoundly honest, and beautifully personal books, which have guided, instructed, edified, and shaped Christians as they seek to live out a just and loving faith.

At the time of her tragic death in 2019, Rachel was working on a new book about wholeheartedness. With the help of her close friend and author Jeff Chu, that work-in-progress has been woven together with some of her other unpublished writings into a rich collection of essays that ask candid questions about the stories we've been told--and the stories we tell--about our faith, our selves, and our world.

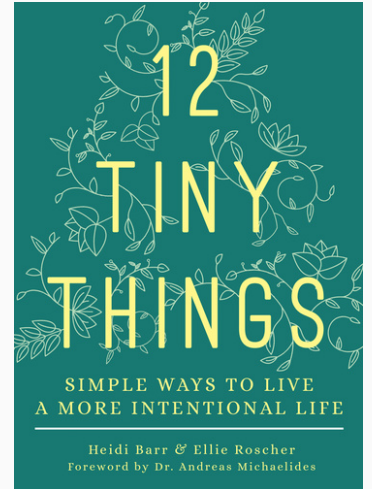
This book is for the doubter and the dreamer, the seeker and the sojourner, those who long for a sense of spiritual wholeness as well as those who have been hurt by the Church but can't seem to let go of the story of Jesus. Through theological reflection and personal recollection, Rachel wrestles with God's grace and love, looks unsparingly at what the Church is and does, and explores universal human questions about becoming and belonging. An unforgettable, moving, and intimate book.

Lifelong Learning

Women's Spirituality Group 2023

First Saturday of the Month

Our Women's Spirituality Group, which meets on the first Saturday of each month, will be starting a new book together in 2023! This group of women gather together each month to hold space for one another, engage in fellowship, and participate in discussion based around a central text. In 2023, that text will be *12 Tiny Things* by Heidi Barr and Ellie Roscher. If you are interested in getting involved with this group in the coming year, please email Carol Kyger at cckyger@gmail.com.



In a culture that says bigger is better, it is subversive work to take tiny, lasting steps toward learning and growth.

In 12 Tiny Things Ellie Roscher and Heidi Barr journey with us through twelve essential areas of life: space, work, spirituality, food, style, nature, communication, home, sensuality, creativity, learning, and community. In each of these areas, we are invited to take one tiny action that is sure to open up growth and renewal.

12 Tiny Things guides us in curating a spiritual practice that promotes a more reflective, rooted, and intentional life. Regardless of how the ground feels underneath your feet, trust that there are roots there to tend. By trying on one tiny thing at a time, you can slowly, deliberately, and playfully remember who you are. You can nourish that being with tenderness. Together, we will reach and grow toward the sun.

Living [in the] Word *Third Sunday of the Month*



On the third Sunday each month, Pastor Miranda leads a Bible Study after worship, during which we dig into a scripture text from the lectionary in the last month that we didn't have time to address during worship. This is a chance to engage with scripture as the Living Word of God. We ask questions of the text that help us better understand the history and context of the story, as well as consider how the text has changed over time and what meaning it has in our lives today.

On **Sunday, December 18th**, join us as we delve into the story of **John the Baptist**, the prophet sent to prepare the way for Christ, as told in the Gospel according to Matthew.

Church Updates

FISH Distribution Dates

Our next opportunity to volunteer with FISH distribution will be on **December 19th, 21st, and 23rd!** This will be a much needed time to provide support to our community members in the holiday season. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Bette Lou (abyenne@gorge.net) to sign up for a day to serve.



A Note from the Welcoming Team

For those of you that don't know me, in addition to being Pastor Miranda's mom, I also have a son that is queer and two cousins that are gay. The LGBTQIA community has been a part of my life for a long time. I have been an active member in two churches that went through the process of becoming an RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Church. I feel passionately about the need to be welcoming in all aspects of my life. I have been the Chief Executive of three different chambers of commerce in the past ten years. Each time it has been my goal to make certain that everyone feels the ability to be a part of the organization - for everyone to feel welcome and heard. I guess you could say this is a part of me at my core. So serving on the Welcoming Team was a natural fit for me. Thank you for having me!

As a Team we have been learning and discerning for several months now. It is now time to hear from each of you. **Over the next several months, each of you in the congregation will hear from a member of our team.**

We will be asking for 30-40 minutes for a one-on-one conversation. This is meant to be a dedicated time to get to know each other a little better. We might discuss what initially brought you to Spirit of Grace, we might discuss what you think about our congregation becoming an officially welcoming church. We will listen to whatever you have to say! Please know none of us has all of the answers, but we are willing to listen and bring your questions, joys, and concerns back to the group. This is a journey and we are all in this together! Thanks for being willing to help us! We will be talking with you soon!



Alicia Bermes
Welcoming Team Coordinator
aliciabermes7@gmail.com

Finances

Qualified Charitable Donations

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a wonderful way to support the ministries of Spirit of Grace and receive key tax benefits. Recent changes in the law have raised to 72 the age at which you are required to withdraw a certain amount of money from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) each year. This is your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). These distributions are taxed as they are withdrawn. **A QCD allows taxpayers age 70 1/2 or older to donate to charities directly from their IRA, which allows them to avoid income tax on this money while supporting our ministries.** Because these distributions aren't added to your income, you may qualify for lower Medicare premiums and Social Security tax rates. They do count towards your Required Minimum Distribution if you are 72 or older.



Duckwall Endowment and Johnson Scholarship Report

In October Shelley Oates met with Brandon Buell, our investment advisor, for an annual review of the endowment and scholarship funds. Both accounts are down from last year which is a reflection of the overall decline in the stock market. Covid and worldwide inflation have depressed the stock market overall. We are advised and our intention is to maintain our positions in order to fully participate in recovery when the market turns up again. Our investments are well diversified and remain invested in solid stocks and A level bonds. We maintain approximately 35% bonds and 65% stocks.

The John Duckwall Endowment is currently at \$104,470 and available income for distribution is expected to be two to three thousand dollars. Although earnings are less than in previous years, we will provide social justice gifts to one or more worthy causes next spring. As in the past, we will be guided by Mr. Duckwall's instructions and initial list of appropriate recipients to further the cause of social justice in our community and or in the world. It is a privilege to be able to continue to support worthwhile programs through Mr Duckwall's generous bequest.

This year endowment gifts were directed to aid in Ukraine through both the ELCA and UMC relief funds. A project to provide micro loans for women in Africa was supported through ELCA. Local projects through GEM, Gorge Ecumenical Ministries were also supported.

The Irv Johnson Scholarship fund is presently valued at \$6,880. We are required to not let the fund drop below \$5,000. Distributions are not limited to earnings, but growth in the fund as well. Thus far, we have been able to provide some assistance to our graduating members. Original scholarships were for \$500. This past year \$800 scholarships were presented to Amy Fowler and Miyuki Gerald. If there are any potential student candidates graduating in 2023, please notify Pastor Miranda or Shelley Oates.

Community Support

FISH Food Bank 24 Days of Giving

Each day, add an item to the box. Deliver to FISH by December 23rd

Dec 1: Cereal
Dec 2: Peanut Butter
Dec 3: Stuffing Mix
Dec 4: Mc & Cheese
Dec 5: Canned Fruit
Dec 6: Canned Vegetable
Dec 7: Tuna
Dec 9: Apple Sauce
Dec 10: Brown Rice
Dec 11: Cranberry Sauce
Dec 12: Oatmeal



Dec 13: Pasta
Dec 14: Spaghetti Sauce
Dec 15: Chicken Noodle Soup
Dec 16: Tomato Soup
Dec 17: Jalapenos Canned
Dec 18: Mole or El Pato Sauce
Dec 19: Lard
Dec 20: Jelly
Dec 21: Coffee/Tea
Dec 22: Toothpaste & Brush
Dec 23: Soap/Shampoo

Hood River Warming Shelter Needs

With the snow and winter weather moving in, we need to keep those without stable housing and shelter at the forefront of our minds. Consider supporting our local warming shelter by donating these much needed items:



Warm blankets

Sleeping bags

Warm, waterproof gloves (Men's L and XL used the most)

Long underwear

Snow/waterproof pants

Boxes of Individually packaged breakfast, granola bars and chocolate bars

Hand-warmer packets (charcoal-activated)

Individual Kleenex packets

Toothbrushes/Toothpaste

Cup of Noodle Soup



If you have or can purchase any of these items, you are encouraged to bring them with you to worship (or drop them off while the church is open during the week) to leave underneath the tree. We will take care of getting those donations to the warming shelter each week.

Prayer & Reflection

Weekly Reflections



November 27th – Isaiah 2:4

What could our communities look like if the energy allotted to violence was instead put towards working together to create abundant life for all? What changes can we make in our own lives to adopt this kind of attitude?

December 4th – Matthew 3:3

This Advent season, what are you doing to prepare the way for the coming Christ? What does it feel like for you to make these kinds of preparations?

December 11th – Luke 46:52-53

In Mary's Magnificat, she prophesied the world Jesus will lead us towards by speaking of the great things God has done. What stories of God give you hope for the future?

December 18th – Matthew 18:23

"and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us,'" How do you experience the presence of God through Jesus Christ in your everyday life?

December 25th – John 1:14

Always remember that when God came to dwell among us, God chose to enter into our world in the most vulnerable way: born as a child, to parents in a land that was not their own. Hold this in your heart today as we celebrate the gift of Emmanuel - God with us!

January 1st – Galatians 4:4-5

Through Christ's birth, we too have been adopted as children and heirs of God! How do you understand your identity as not only a child of God, but an heir of the Divine?



If you have prayer requests that you would like to be lifted up by our prayer chain and in Sunday morning worship, please email Carol Kyger (cckkyger@gmail.com), who will pass your request along to our prayer chain.

If you are interested in being a part of our prayer chain that receives prayer request emails as they come in, please email Carol Kyger to be added to that list.

If you have a prayer request that you would like to be kept **confidential**, please email Pastor Miranda. These prayer needs will not be shared publicly unless expressly mentioned.

Church Calendar



December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 9am Women's Spirituality Group
4 Communion 10am Worship First Sunday Fellowship	5 10am Women's Coffee Hour	6 10am Men's Coffee Hour	7 9am Quilting 10am Prayer Team Meeting 5pm Advent Midweek Gathering	8	9	10
11 10am Worship	12 10am Women's Coffee Hour	13 10am Men's Coffee Hour	14 5pm Advent Midweek Gathering	15	16	17
18 Communion 10am Worship 11:15 am Living Word 2pm Welcoming Team Meeting	19 10am Women's Coffee Hour FISH	20 10am Men's Coffee Hour	21 9am Quilting FISH 5pm Advent Midweek Gathering	22	23 FISH	24 7pm Lessons & Carols
25 Christmas Day 10am Worship	26 10am Women's Coffee Hour	27 10am Men's Coffee Hour 2pm Women's Bible Study	28	29	30	31



Important Upcoming Dates



December 26 - 31: Church Office Closed
 January 8 - 12: Pastor Miranda on Vacation
 January 15th: Annual Congregational Meeting

Contact & Connect

Sunday Worship

10:00 am

In-Person & Online

hoodriverchurch.com

Church Office Hours

9am - 1pm

Monday - Thursday

Staff

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com

Available during office hours or by appointment

Linda Boris, Pastoral Assistant

Available Tuesdays, 10am - 1pm



1140 Tucker Road
Hood River, OR 97031

541-386-3993

office@hoodriverchurch.com

Leadership Team Members

Board of Directors

Meets every other month

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

Tom Hart, Treasurer (*end of term, 2024*)

Sharon Poynter, Secretary (*end of term, 2024*)

Shelley Oates, Chair (*end of term, 2023*)

Gordon Leigh (*end of term, 2023*)

Michelle Sibley (*end of term, 2022*)

Cindy Murahashi (*end of term, 2022*)

Finance Committee

Meets quarterly

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

Debby Chenoweth (*end of term, 2022*)

Dottie Gilbertson (*end of term, 2022*)

Tom Hart, Treasurer (*Treasurer & Payroll*)

Jennifer Fowler (*Financial Secretary*)

Staff Parish Relations Committee

Meets quarterly

Sharon Pantley (*end of term, 2024*)

Pat Moore (*end of term, 2024*)

Jill McBee, Chair (*end of term, 2022*)

Ty Sibley (*end of term, 2022*)

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Inspiration



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to Support
Our Ministry.



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+ Learn More
on Our Website