



River Spirit

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
UMC

“The Good News”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

2026 marks the 10th year that I have been honored to serve as your pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd. This also marks the 39th year of my full-time pastoral ministry in churches of our Northern Illinois Conference. I am so blessed to be serving with you at such a healthy and vibrant church. However, I have decided that 2026 is the right time for me to retire.

Following our United Methodist protocol, I made a formal retirement request to our District Superintendent Rev. Wendy Hardin Hermann and to our Bishop Dan Schwerin. Once the Bishop approved my retirement request, Pastor Wendy helped me share the news with our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC). Several days later, SPRC Chair Pat Harmon helped me share the news during worship on Sunday January 25th. Our SPRC will continue to be in conversation with D.S. Wendy Hardin Hermann to share a profile of our church and the qualities needed in the next pastor who will be appointed to serve at Church of the Good Shepherd.

At this time, it is unclear when my last day will be at Good Shepherd. I will retire from pastoral ministry on September 30, 2026, but, due to the complexities of securing the best leadership for my replacement, there is a slight chance that I will have to be an interim pastor elsewhere for a short time before my requested retirement date.

As I have cared for you, I have felt your care for me. It's difficult to leave a place where I feel accepted and loved, but that also points to the character of Good Shepherd, a church who will greet the

new pastor with open arms while continuing to be a welcoming, inclusive, loving family of faith. Eight months is a very long time to say “Goodbye”, but we will be emotionally and organizationally prepared for this pastoral transition. Our wonderful staff and committee leaders will continue the work and ministry of the church, which is part of what makes Good Shepherd such a strong and committed band of disciples of Jesus Christ.

I look forward to further sharing with you as we help each other to nurture and grow this body of Christ known as Church of the Good Shepherd UMC.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Steve



10 Years of Service

From The Office:



Please call or email ahead when visiting the office.

office@goodshepherdoswego.org

Diane and Jessie continue to check voicemail and email regularly.

If you would like to have a zoom meeting with your group and would like us to set it up for you, or need an announcement added to our weekly or monthly news, contact Jessie at

publications@goodshepherdoswego.org (Submission deadlines are 12pm Wednesdays for the weekly publications and the 15th of the month for the River Spirit. If you need additional time, please contact Jessie.



Pastoral Care: For joys, concerns, needs, questions, appointments, or just a chat with the Pastor, call him on his direct church cell phone **630-608-7843** or email him at pastor@goodshepherdoswego.org See our website for a contact list of all church committee leaders.

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Online giving is available for your convenience. Please mail in your giving to P.O. Box 695 5 W. Washington St. Oswego IL 60543 or use our E giving for online giving.

We have now switched all online giving to our Zeffy platform. We are so thankful for everyone switching and reporting the ease of using the new account. Please visit our website to connect, or use the attached QR code shown.



2025 Year End Contribution Statements are now available. If you are currently on our email list please look for your statement there. If you are not currently on our emailing list and would like to be added please contact the office at office@goodshepherdoswego.org



PUBLICATION DEADLINES: Reminder- **River Spirit deadline is the 15th of each month.** If you have an event later in the month that you would like included in the River Spirit– you may contact Jessie by the 15th to save space for your article. publications@goodshepherdoswego.org

The deadline for weekly news is NOON on Wednesdays. Please submit your written announcements to publications@goodshepherdoswego.org

Thank you ~ Jessie



Please contact Pat Rogerson for prayer requests or to be added to the email list to join our prayer warriors at who can be contacted for prayer needs by phone 630-220-1649 or prayerchaingoodshepherd24@gmail.com. Contact Pat also if you would like to be added to the prayer chain.



LENT BIBLE STUDY with Pastor Steve: This year's Adult Lent Study with Pastor Steve will read "The Third Day" by Tom Berlin, who "uses his gift of storytelling and understanding the scriptures to connect the reader to the experiences of several individuals around Jesus in his final days, focusing on new life and redemption rather than loss." We'll look at the experiences of Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas, as well as Paul and the disciples at Emmaus.

We will meet Monday evenings at 7 pm in the Gathering Room for six sessions, from Feb. 23 through March 30 during Holy Week. Please contact the church office if interested (630) 554-3269, or sign up in the Gathering Room. Participants are asked to order their own student books through Cokesbury or Amazon.



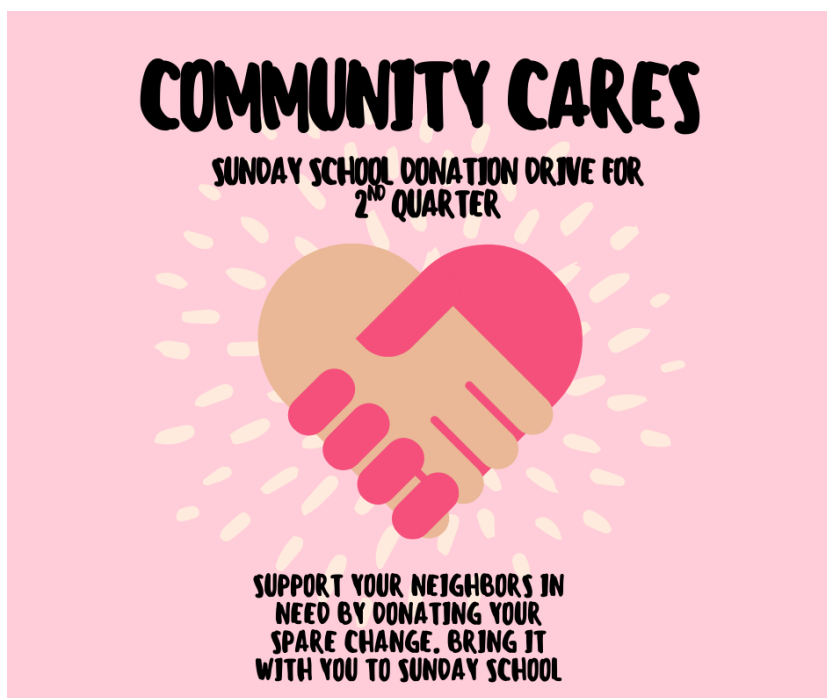
On Wed. Feb. 18th at 7 pm, we will observe our traditional Ash Wednesday service with our brothers and sisters at Trinity United Methodist Church in Yorkville:

2505 Boomer Lane, Yorkville

Pastor Tedd Steele and Pastor Steve will lead us in an evening of scripture, music, and word as we begin the Lenten season with the imposition of ashes. Come join us!



Join us in raising funds for Community Cares, a 501C3 that raises money to benefit area families. You may see them passing out health and personal needs supplies at the satellite food pantry here in Oswego, or assisting with school supplies every year. They are also a major resource when tragedy happens in our community helping families who need assistance. Thank you for your support!





United
Women
in Faith

The UWF had a Unit meeting on Dec. 11th. The local group, Senior Singers, presented a holiday concert that was enjoyed by 25 members and guests.

Pastor Steve installed the officers for the ensuing year at the 8:30 service on Jan. 18.

Kay Bonebrake decided to step down from the presidency. Shar Momich will act as pro tem with Janet McCarty. Our next Unit meeting will be in March.

OFFICERS FOR 2026

President -

Vice President - Sharlene Momich

Secretary - Judy Johnsen

Treasurer - Barb Wood

Nominations Chair - Barb Schilling

Program Resource - Janet McCarty

Spiritual Growth & Prayer Chain - Pat Rogerson

Membership Nurture and Outreach - Phyllis Wagner

Social Action - Gail Ford

Wedding Coordinator - Sharlene Momich

Funeral Coordinators - Pat Rogerson and Amy Nicholson

Kitchen Coordinator - Pam Dodson

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharlene Momich

UWF Secretary



The book club selection for this month is *The Thursday Murder Club* by Osman. We will meet on Tuesday, February 10 at 1:00 p.m. at Nancy Patush's home. All readers are welcome to join. If you need a ride, please contact the church office and we can arrange one.

New members are always welcome!



- Grab a cup of coffee and join the Good Shepherd UMM online on ZOOM on Friday's at 7 am starting Friday, January 9th. If you desire to meet in person, contact Craig Mc Gregor at 630-346-2239 or email him at craigscottmcgregor@gmail.com. He will set up an internet connection in the church Gathering Room.

Join us to find out what is happening at the local, district, and the conference level and be spiritually inspired.

- We are always looking for people interested in the UMM stocking of the Kendall Co. Food Pantry on Wednesday evenings at 5:00pm.

Please contact the church office at 630-554-3269 or office@goodshepherdoswego.org with any questions.



MEN'S LUNCH: The United Methodist Men will be having their monthly Men's Luncheon at Spartan House, 1032 Prairie St., Aurora on Wednesday, February 18th at noon. Please join us for fellowship and a fine meal.



Join our team! You are invited to join us to help build and celebrate our fellowship here at Church of the Good Shepherd! From our monthly brunches and special events like advent boxes, to outreach events like the Downtown Oswego Chocolate Walk, we need you. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Crystal Robinson or the office.

YOU ARE INVITED TO BRUNCH!

February 8th, 9:15-11am in Fellowship Hall.

We will be celebrating Super Bowl Sunday with a "Souper" Sunday Brunch featuring a variety of delicious soups, bread and fruit! We hope everyone can join us for a "Pregame" meal to warm your tummies before you head home to watch the big game! Everyone is invited to wear their favorite sports gear or colors to support their favorite team...whether they're playing in the Super Bowl or not! It'll be a super time!

A free will offering will be taken.



Youth Group Newsletter: Winter 2026

January updates and upcoming events

January 2026 Youth Group Update: A Winter Wonderland of Activities!

Hello everyone!

We've had an incredible start to 2026, packed with exciting events, meaningful studies, and opportunities to serve. Here's a recap of what we've been up to and what's coming soon!

Winter Events Recap: Fun in the Frost!

January was filled with memorable moments! Here's a quick look back:

- **Christmas Party:** A festive celebration with games, music, and delicious treats.
- **Ornament Decorating:** Creative crafting session where everyone designed unique ornaments.
- **Gingerbread House Challenge:** A sweet competition filled with architectural masterpieces (and a few sugary collapses!).
- **Feed My Starving Children Volunteering:** We packed meals with purpose, making a difference in the lives of children around the world.
- **Cooking Classes & Youth Cooking Club:** Budding chefs honed their skills and created culinary delights.
- **Hike at Saw Wee Kee Park:** Embracing nature and enjoying the beautiful winter scenery. We're planning more nature outings, so stay tuned!

Upcoming Events: Get Ready for More Fun!

Mark your calendars for these upcoming adventures:

- **Family Fun Bowling Outing at Pinz in Oswego:** Join us for a strike-ing good time with family and friends! Details to follow.
- **Indoor Climbing Trip at ABC Climbing Academy in Naperville:** Reach new heights with us on this exciting climbing adventure. Get ready to challenge yourself!

Sunday School & Wednesday Bible Study: Diving Deeper

We're currently studying **1st and 2nd Samuel**, focusing on a character study of **Saul and David**. Our discussions have been inspired by the 'David' movie, bringing new perspectives to these classic stories. Don't forget to check out the weekly updated resources and slides to enhance your learning!

Youth Group Meeting Times: Connect and Grow

Join us **Sundays and Wednesdays** for our youth group gatherings!

Sundays 11:30 am-1pm are family-friendly events where everyone is welcome.

Our Wednesday 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm Bible Study sessions are designed for both teen and young adult youth as well as parents, creating a space for shared learning and growth.

Service Project Proposal: Making a Difference

We're proposing a service project to fundraise for a **Water Bottle Refill Station Upgrade**. Our goal is to **reduce plastic waste and improve energy efficiency**. The estimated cost is **\$800-\$1,200**. Stay tuned for fundraising opportunities and let's work together to make our community more sustainable!

Looking Ahead to Summer: Vacation Bible School!

Get ready for **Vacation Bible School (VBS) from June 14-18!** This year's theme is **Emerald Crossing**, and our youth will be leading ceremonies. It's going to be an unforgettable week of fun, faith, and friendship!

Stay Connected!

Thank you for being a part of our amazing youth group! Stay connected with us for more updates, photos, and exciting news. We can't wait to see what the rest of 2026 has in store!



“The purpose of our Missions Team is, first and foremost, to serve others. We intend to fulfill our mission by connecting our congregation to the many ways the Church of the Good Shepherd can, and already is, serving others at the local, national, and global levels.”

HESED HOUSE Plan ahead for the upcoming opportunities to be part of our mission at Hesed House. Good Shepherd is scheduled to provide dinner and volunteers at Hesed House Family Center on the following dates: Monday, March 2, Friday, April 24 and Thursday,

May 14. Look at your calendars, with the variety of dates, you may be able to help provide food or serve. Sara Poniatowski continues to organize this mission. Look for information in future River Spirit articles as well as the weekly emails from church.

MISSION TEAM We will be meeting via Zoom in February to discuss and plan our year of missions.



Our Little Shepherds would like to thank all of you for your support at our Portillo's fundraiser. We raised \$138!!

During the month of January, we hosted our Second Annual Drive-In Movie! We loved seeing all the boxes re-designed into a variety of vehicles. We had sports cars, cars with headlights, even a Mac Truck! We watched to movie Luca and munched on popcorn and fruit snacks.

This month we will be taking a field trip to the Oswego Police Station. We are very excited to get a behind-the-scenes look at what police officers do.

Enrollment for 2026-2027 is now open! Registration is on our website at www.goodshepherdoswego.org and paper copies are also available.

Blessings,
Amanda Sidhu





Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist
5 W. Washington Street/PO Box 695 Oswego, IL 60543
www.goodshepherdoswego.org
(630) 554-3269
office@goodshepherdoswego.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

January, 2026

Here's the Church financial results for 2025. After some ups and downs early in the year, General Fund contributions showed modest month to month improvement through November bringing us close to prior year levels. December was a great month, allowing us to finish the year with total general fund contributions about 2.5% higher than 2024. Thanks to all for their generous contributions and outstanding support of the Church!

Our normal operating and administrative costs (excluding insurance prepayment impact), payroll expenses, and apportionment were, in total, about 8.3% higher than 2024 levels. We had increases in many different operating expenses, most significantly utilities, along with the approved staff payroll increases. Staff members continued to adjust work schedules and responsibilities to accommodate changes in worship schedule requirements, building use, and other revised work requirements. The trustees and other church committees continued their exceptional dedication to controlling their expense obligations. The results of their efforts were outstanding! We are fortunate to have so many great, dedicated people associated with our Church! By the end of August, we had used up the excess funds carried over from 2024 to stay current with our obligations. With contributions continuing to improve slightly from September through November, and the strong contributions received in December, we concluded the year with all expenses, including conference apportionment, paid in full. We also had excess general fund contributions of about \$29,000. Finance voted to provide \$500 to the Handbell Choir dedicated account, \$2,000 to major maintenance for known outstanding bills, and 10% of the balance to our Mission Team for them to redistribute to worthy missions of their choice. The remaining excess will roll back into the Church's dedicated general funds to cover bills in the New Year.

What can we expect in 2026? Our 2026 budget forecasts increased total expenses due to pay increases being provided to staff, along with continued increases in some specific operating and administrative areas. Our anticipation is that income from contributions will be sufficient to offset these increased expenses. The response to November's annual request to provide 2026 "Estimates of Giving" has been great, showing estimated contributions about 10% higher than the estimates received last year. Having these estimates provides significant help in our ability to responsibly manage church finances. If you have not yet provided one, it can still be done by contacting the church office. We continue to see more people in church! Sundays are busy with two Sunday morning services, Sunday School, gathering room and Fellowship Hall hospitality, and regular youth group activities after the second service. Online worship is still available along with many other church programs. This provides many ways to become more personally involved with the Church. The contributions that you make on a regular basis in person, through the mail, by using Zeffy e-giving, or using other methods, are needed and very much appreciated! Please prayerfully consider continuing, or even increasing them as personal finances allow. With everyone's help, your Church will continue to stay up to date with all its expenses, have funds available to make improvements, continue to retain our valuable staff, and continue to bring the Lord's message to everyone.

Yours in Service to the Lord,

Ed Bradley, Finance Committee Chairman

February Birthdays

2/2	Dawn Friel
2/2	Nancy Mallec
2/3	Judy Eggenberger
2/4	Melody Watson
2/5	Stella Lamb
2/7	Sarah Leffel
2/8	Pamela Rhoads
2/13	Nancy Dobbin Lawrentz
2/13	Oliver Green
2/13	Alyssa Marple
2/14	Jamisyn Leffel
2/15	Tom Todd
2/19	Jacob Rodriguez
2/19	Cora Seabold
2/20	Bob LeClercq
2/21	Danielle Zapfel
2/25	Jesse Perez
2/26	Shelley Doolittle
2/27	John Lundy



www.goodshepherdoswego.org

The Church of the Good Shepherd



**United Methodist
5 W. Washington St.
PO Box 695
Oswego, IL 60543**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Pastor: Pastor Steve Good

pastor@goodshepherdoswego.org

Youth Director: Rachel Conover: jessicarc31@gmail.com

**Executive Assistants: Diane Baum and
Jessie Livingston**

Church Office Hours: Tues-Fri by appointment

**Newsletter Editor:
publications@goodshepherdoswego.org**

Office Email: office@goodshepherdoswego.org

**Little Shepherd Preschool:
little shepherdps@sbcglobal.net**

Director – Amanda Sidhu Teacher: Jessica Exline

Teachers Aides: Vincenza Ferguson & Tracy Johnson

Choir Director: Jonathan Tatar

Custodian: Bonnie Kennedy

Organist & HandBell Choir Director: Cheryl Todd

Pianist: Sue Gilla

Reborn Praise Band: Jon Conover, Band Leader

