



# River Spirit

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD,  
UNITED METHODIST OSWEGO, IL 60543

## “The Good News”

Esther Perel, world renowned psychotherapist, recently said “*Self-esteem is knowing you are flawed but still holding yourself in high regard*”.

Indeed, for people of faith, we know through scripture that in spite of our shortcomings and sin, we are still prized by the Creator of the Universe. We can read in the 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God (or “angels”) and crowned them with glory and honor.”

Psalm 8 may be a good one to write on a post-it note for your bathroom mirror so you can see it regularly. We know that we were created in goodness, have fallen short of God’s will, but then have been made right with God through the forgiving and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

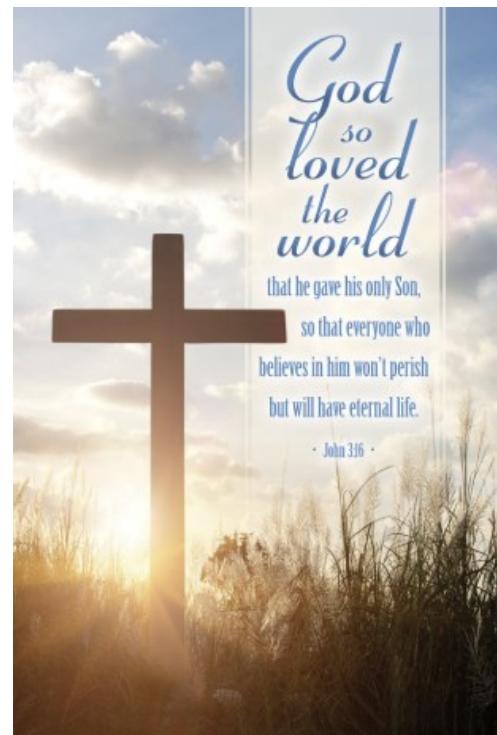
As Esther Perel notes, we are all flawed through our humanness, but at the same time, we can love ourselves at this point in our journey. We can “hold ourselves in high regard” even as we seek to continue mature in our understandings of self and the world around us. After all, scripture also reminds us “For God so loved the world (that includes you!!) that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16)

Only when we are grounded in this proper self-love can we respond to the second part of Jesus’ Great Commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:39)

May one of your New Year’s resolutions be to humbly but confidently “hold yourself in high regard” because you know God loves you, and thus you can love yourself. From that beautiful position, just imagine what God has in store for you in 2026. . .

Happy New Year, my friend

Pastor Steve



[www.goodshepherdoswego.org](http://www.goodshepherdoswego.org)

January 2026

## From The Office:



Please call or email ahead when visiting the office.

[office@goodshepherdoswego.org](mailto: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](mailto:publications@goodshepherdoswego.org) (Submission deadlines are 9am 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](mailto:pastor@goodshepherdoswego.org) See our website for a contact list of all church committee leaders.



As our year comes to a close, we want to thank you all for your continued support and dedication to your church!

Please note that 2025 contributions will be accepted until **Thursday, January 8th**. Important: Please be sure to carefully mark your envelope for the year you are contributing to ensure the contribution is credited on the correct year.

Reminder: 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.

*Also, if you plan to send a backdated contribution via Zeffy after 12/31/25 please email the office so we know which calendar year your contribution is intended for.*

*Thank you!*



If you would like a Contribution Statement emailed, or mailed to you please contact the church office email listed below.

Thank you and wishing you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year!



**PRAYER REQUESTS:** Please contact Pat Rogerson for prayer requests or to be added to the email list to join our prayer warriors at [prayerchaingoodshepherd24@gmail.com](mailto:prayerchaingoodshepherd24@gmail.com)



*Thank you on behalf of the church staff for all of your generous gifts. It was a wonderful surprise and it is such a blessing to be appreciated.*

*We hope you had a very Merry Christmas and enjoy a happy and healthy 2026.*



During the month of December, our Little Shepherds spent time learning about the birth of Jesus and the reason we celebrate Christmas. We had fun putting on a Christmas Program for our families and enjoyed a visit from Santa!

We look forward to spending a couple of weeks at home with our families during Christmas Break. When we come back to school, we will start learning all about various occupations and community helpers.

2026-2027 enrollment opens for church members on January 11th. Enrollment for all others opens on January 17th. Don't miss out on reserving your child's spot for next year!

Blessings,  
Amanda Sidhu



Can you help us help others in need? Food items and small personal items are in great need for our pantry. Please consider donating the following items:

- Can goods – fruits, vegetables, soup, meats
- Instant food pouches – rice, pasta, potatoes
- Cereal and Oatmeal cups – single serve
- Misc pantry supplies – peanut butter, jelly, small mayo, mustard, spices
- Any other items YOU can contribute will also be appreciated!

The Sunday School students put on a wonderful Christmas program between services.





## United Women in Faith

UWFaith thanks everyone for their support of local families in need. Your willingness to buy gifts through the Share Your Blessings and Angel Tree programs are wonderful examples of your love, generosity, and faith. May your hearts be warmed by the thought of those families having a much happier Christmas because of you.

We also thank you for all the help and support with our Chili Supper. This annual fundraiser helps us donate to many mission organizations local and abroad.

We enjoyed a great holiday sing along at our Unit meeting on Dec. 11 performed by the Senior Singers. Some of our great choir members are part of the Senior Singers group. We hope many more of you will join us next year. Consider adding: "Join the United Women in Faith" as one of your New Year's Resolutions. There are 4 Circles/Groups that meet on a monthly basis and we have 5 larger Unit meetings a year. May the New Year bring you much cheer!



**FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH:** Please join us between services on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> for our Fellowship brunch. 9:15-11am. Join us for an Oatmeal Bar, Assorted Bagels with Cream Cheese, Bacon Wrapped Sausages, a Hot Chocolate bar, and more!

\*\*Mark your calendars for the return of our potluck BIRTHDAY Supper celebrating all the birthdays of the year! Saturday night, January 24th. Watch for a sign up sheet in the Gathering Room. \*\*



We will once again be participating in the 7th annual Oswego Downtown Chocolate Walk on Saturday, February 7th from 10am-2pm.

We welcomed the Oswego Chamber of Commerce for the December networking coffee. We had a full house and everyone loved the treats and comfortable Gathering Room!





- 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](mailto: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](mailto:office@goodshepherdoswego.org) with any questions.



**MEN'S LUNCH:** The United Methodist Men will be having their monthly Men's Luncheon at Maciano's Pizza & Pastaria, 272 E.Veterans Pkwy, Yorkville on Wednesday, January 21st at noon. Please join us for fellowship and a fine meal.



Many thanks to Jonathan Tatar, Sue Gilla, and One A 'Chord Choir for all their hard work bringing us the beautiful and meaningful Christmas Cantata: *Born a Savior, Born a King*



The book club selection for this month is the true story of a Christmas miracle, *The 13th Gift* by Joanne Smith. We will meet on Tuesday, January 13 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.

# MISSIONS MOMENT

**"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."**

Sara Poniatowski continues to coordinate Good Shepherd's mission with Hesed House. Her expertise and efforts are greatly appreciated. Missions served dinner to approximately 25 guests at the Hesed House Family Shelter on Monday, December 15. Guests enjoyed baked pasta, garden salad with fixins, garlic breadsticks, dessert, and lemonade. This dinner was generously provided by Craig and Melody Watson, Roland and Lucy Saka, Tom and Cheryl Todd, Pat Rogerson, and Steve and Sara Poniatowski. Thanks for preparing a wonderful meal! Thank you also to Melody and Craig Watson, Roland and Lucy Saka, Sharon Freudenrich, Aidan Poniatowski, and Sara Poniatowski for serving the meal.



We continue to be immensely thankful for the Good Shepherd congregation. Your generosity makes this mission possible, and it is making a real difference in our community.

Please be on the lookout for details about our first meal service of 2026.

Happy New Year!



*The Poinsettias in our sanctuary were lovingly donated by:*



Ed & Carol Bradley: In Honor of Our Family

Alexander Butkus & Family: In Memory of Ellen Butkus

The Butkus & Johnson Families: In Memory of Dick & Charlene Young

Carol Dodd: In Memory of Lynn Bastian, My Niece

Robert & Pamela Dodson, Sr: In Memory of Clifford & Edith Dodson and  
Ferne Esping and Stanley Esping

Debbie Klonowski: In Memory of Our Parents (Everett & Dodie Blake, Al Klonowski)

Janet McCarty: In Honor of My Grandsons, Chris & Matthew Prosser

Pk & Mary McDonald: In Memory of Edith & Philip McDonald, and Vivien & Jack Olson

Nancy & Dave Patush: In Celebration of Christmas

Mark & Deanna Steinke: In Memory of Carol & Lois Steinke, and Oliver & Brona Pierce

Artie & Allison Taylor: In Memory of Dina-Jo Taylor

Randy & Barb Wood: In Honor of Our Parents

## January Birthdays

1/2	Pam Dodson
1/2	Castigan Saka
1/4	Jody Haltenhof
1/6	Dolly Maly
1/10	Diana Bonhert
1/10	Christina Roberts
1/10	Shirley Was
1/12	Steve Klonowski
1/14	Nancy Miller
1/17	Dave Ralston
1/18	Melissa Butkus
1/21	Alison Cartwright
1/21	Samantha Cartwright
1/21	Rachel Farrow
1/23	Mary Lee Snyder
1/25	Kathy Craig
1/26	Elaine Green
1/27	Mark Gilloffo
1/28	Phil Hartness
1/28	Jonathan Tatar
1/29	Todd Bell
1/29	Mark Craig



## *Daily Herald*

# Nativity sets displayed from around globe

OSWEGO, Ill. — Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist in suburban Chicago hosted its 21st annual exhibit of Nativity sets from around the world on Dec. 5. The display and a United Women in Faith chili and pie supper are a highlight of Oswego's annual Christmas walk.



A Filipino nativity set of narra wood, the country's national tree, is among 60 sets displayed on Dec. 5 at Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist of Oswego. Congregant Janet McCarty of Oswego purchased the set while serving as a Methodist missionary to the Philippines. *Courtesy of Al Benson*

## Oswego church hosts display of 60 nativity scenes from around the world



A miniature nativity set loaned by Judy Hafenrichter of Oswego is among 60 sets on display Dec. 5 at Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist of Oswego. *Courtesy of Al Benson*

Featured was a Filipino set of narra wood, the Philippines' national tree.

Good Shepherd congregant Janet McCarty of Oswego purchased the set while serving as a Methodist missionary to the country.

The display and a chili and pie supper held by Good Shepherd United Women in Faith highlighted Oswego's annual Christmas Walk in the downtown area. The free event included a tree lighting performance, Santa's reindeer, live ice sculpting, an emergency vehicle light parade and other holiday activities.

Bob "Santa" Dodson Jr. of Oswego adjusts lighting on one of 60 nativity sets displayed Dec. 5 at Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist of Oswego. The church's United Women in Faith's 21st annual display and chili and pie supper are a highlight Oswego's annual Christmas Walk. *Courtesy of Al Benson*

**The Church of the Good Shepherd**



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

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**Everyone is Welcome!**

- Wheelchair Accessible building
- 8:30AM traditional and 10:00 AM contemporary services.
- Weddings dates available for our beautiful 1890's sanctuary and downstairs reception area. 630-554-3269.
- We practice open Communion, we honor the Evangelical tradition of using grape juice and bread and gluten-free
- Space available for weddings, parties, events and meetings. Alcohol not permitted.

**Pastor: Pastor Steve Good**

[pastor@goodshepherdoswego.org](mailto:pastor@goodshepherdoswego.org)

**Youth Director: Rachel Conover: [jessicarc31@gmail.com](mailto:jessicarc31@gmail.com)**

**Executive Assistants: Diane Baum and Jessie Livingston**  
**Church Office Hours: Tues, Thurs, Fri. 10-3 or by appointment**

**Newsletter Editor: [publications@goodshepherdoswego.org](mailto:publications@goodshepherdoswego.org)**

**Office Email: [office@goodshepherdoswego.org](mailto:office@goodshepherdoswego.org)**

**Little Shepherd Preschool: [littleshepherdps@sbcglobal.net](mailto:littleshepherdps@sbcglobal.net)**

**Director & Teacher – 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**

