



THE CROWN NEWS

Vol. 49 No. 12



"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...'"
- Luke 1:46-47

Pastor's Corner

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Let's Be Friends



At our Annual Meeting on November 16, the congregation made a bold statement of faith, a commitment to believe in new birth. At a time when it might have been easy to give in to discouragement, we chose instead to breathe new life into our community. We affirmed our vision of inclusivity by becoming an officially designated **Open & Affirming congregation**, and we embraced the next steps of our "Where Welcome Grows" sanctuary renovation project.

God's choice to come into the world as a child born to an unwed teenager reminds us that hope often begins in unexpected places. Joseph, too, chose love and life by walking beside Mary on a path that transformed them both. From a humble birth among animals to a journey into Egypt, Jesus entered our world to show us what God's love looks like, bringing hope, peace, joy, and love into times that felt dark and desperate.

Whatever you may be facing in your own life, we invite you to find some solace with us this season. Each Sunday of Advent, we will celebrate a new step on our journey toward the holiest of nights. For our younger friends who need a more active worship experience, our Children's Christmas Service on December 6 is short, engaging, and even features a special guest. For those who carry heavy hearts, our online Carols of Comfort & Hope on December 15 offers a gentle space to rest. If Christmas Eve is a busy day for you, our 3 PM Communion service provides a contemporary, early option. And for those who long for a traditional celebration with organ music, our 7 PM Christmas Eve service will feel just right.

Wherever and however you choose to experience Christ's birth this year, may you be gentle with yourself. Make space to hear God's words of comfort, hope, and inspiration this Christmas season.

In hope, peace, joy, and love,

Pastor Kathryn Kuhu

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

1

DEC

Screening of *Remember This*

📍 Congregation Shaarai Shomayim

Free screening of the true story of a man who told of humanity's crimes.

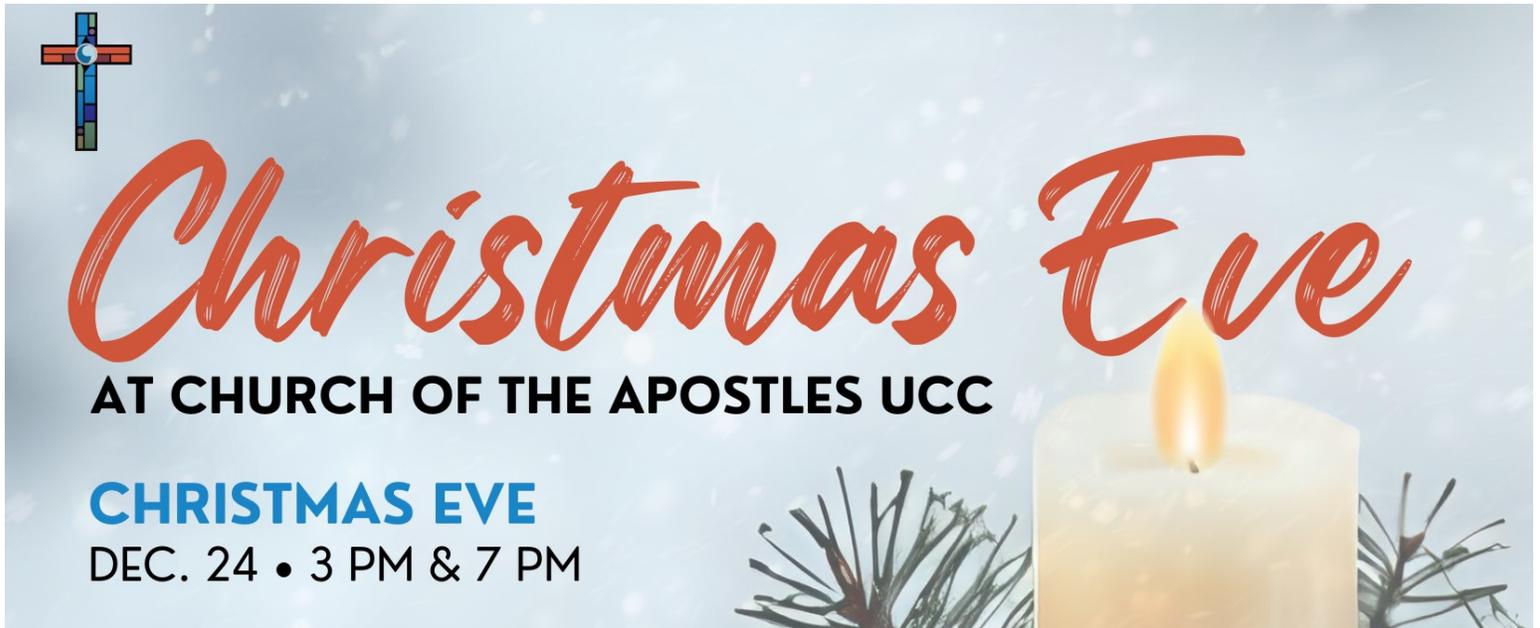
13

DEC

ACS Breakfast with Santa & Bazaar

📍 Fellowship Hall from 9 AM - 1 PM

Buffet style pancake breakfast, photos with Santa, crafts and bazaar vendors.



BOARD NEWS

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, we are reminded once again of the profound truth at the heart of the Christmas story...God is with us-in every heart, and every corner of creation. The light that entered the world in Bethlehem still shines among us today, calling us to embody love, peace, and hope in all that we do.

This season we give thanks for Church of the Apostles' steadfast mission-to be an inclusive refuge, where all are welcomed and cherished as God's beloved; to live out compassionate justice, and stand with the marginalized while speaking truth in love and to practice environmental advocacy, caring for creation as a sacred trust.

May this Christmas renew our spirits, deepen our compassion, and strengthen our resolve to live as bearers of Christ's light. Let us continue to walk together in faith, hope, and love while working to create a world that more fully reflects God's peace and justice.

Blessings in this joyous season and always,

Lou Gaudio (Board Member)

JOIN OUR BOOK CLUB!

Book Club meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 2 PM in the Narthex, and we'd love for you to join us! Whether you've read the book or not, you're welcome to come for engaging discussions and fellowship.



For questions, contact Clara Kosmela at (717) 569-9960. Happy reading!

★ December 9th, 2025: Let Us March by Shara Moon

★ January 13th, 2026: The Hello Girls by Eliz Cobbs

★ February 10th, 2026: Autism Out Loud by Swenson, Carriello, & Wood.

Children's Christmas Service

Happy Birthday Jesus Celebration

You're invited to join us on Saturday, December 6th, at 10 AM for our annual Children's Christmas Service, themed "Happy Birthday Jesus." We'll kick off the morning with fun activities and a short, family-friendly service. Afterwards, enjoy **games, crafts, cookies, hot cocoa, and a special visit from Santa!** We encourage you to register in advance so we can have plenty of supplies for everyone. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate the true reason for the season together.



Give Back While You Shop

Earn 5% For COA with Market Basket Grocery Cards

Get ready for the holidays and support Church of the Apostles at the same time! Through our Market Basket program, the church earns **5% back on every grocery gift card** purchased. We'll have cards available to Stauffer's, Giant, and Weis in **\$50 increments** on the first and second Sundays in December, perfect for holiday baking, family meals, or gifts. For questions, contact Karen Culp.

Inclusivity During the Holiday Season

December's Inclusive Church Focus

The holiday season can be a time of joy, but it can also bring unique challenges for many in our community. This month, our Inclusive Church Team is highlighting ways we can offer compassion, understanding, and support to those who may be experiencing **grief, financial strain, loneliness, or other hardships**. We're also lifting the ministries at Church of the Apostles, such as our Holiday Gifting Ministry for Martin Elementary students, our Preschool's food and toy collections, our Compassion Team, and our *Carols of Comfort & Hope* service that brings light to those who need it most. To learn more, explore the Q&A cards in the Narthex or visit apostlesucc.org/inclusive-refuge.

Cookies, Cocoa & Volunteer Cheer Holiday Drop-In

Volunteers, we want to celebrate YOU!

Whether you helped at an event, serve on Sundays, or lead one of our teams or on the board, you make a huge difference at Church of the Apostles. Join our staff in the church office on **Monday, December 8th, from 11 AM - 1 PM** for fresh cookies, hot cocoa, and holiday cheer. Come for a few minutes or stay as long as you'd like; we'd simply love the chance to thank you in person and spend a little time together this holiday season. Thank you for all you do to support the mission and ministry of COA. We truly couldn't do it without you.

YOUTH

PRIMARY FAITH FORMATION (AGES 3 - 3RD GRADE)

December Schedule

Our Primary Faith Formation class will gather each Sunday in December to explore the Advent and Christmas story together. This class meets in **Room 304** right after **Children's Time** and is open to **all children**, including first-time guests. We'd love to have you join us! Here's what we'll be learning this month:

- **Dec 7:** We Can Listen to God
- **Dec 14:** Mary Shares Her Joy
- **Dec 21:** We Can Celebrate Jesus' Birth
- **Dec 28:** We Can Honor Jesus

We hope you'll join us as we journey through this special season together!



ROOTED IN FAITH (4TH - 8TH GRADE)

November Kitchen Takeover!

Our ROOTED youth (Grades 4+) have been learning how to turn to God in prayer during tough times. To bring this lesson to life, they made soft pretzels during our Nov. 23 Kitchen Takeover, inspired by the tradition that medieval monks created pretzels in the 600s, shaping them like crossed arms to remind us to pray.



Soft Pretzels (makes 32)

2 c. warm water • 2 envelopes yeast • ½ c. sugar • 2 t. salt • ¼ c. softened butter • 1 egg • 6½–7½ c. flour • 1 egg yolk • 2 T. water • Coarse salt

Mix water + yeast. Add sugar, salt, butter, egg, and 3 c. flour. Add more flour to make stiff dough. Cover and refrigerate 2–24 hrs. Divide dough in half, cut each half into 16 pieces. Roll each into a 20" rope; shape into pretzels. Place on greased sheets. Mix egg yolk + 2 T. water; brush on pretzels. Sprinkle salt. Rise 25 min. Bake at 400°F for 15 min; cool on racks.

YOUTH GROUP (4TH - 12TH GRADE)

Christmas Party Fun!

Join us **Dec. 7th** from **6-8 PM** in **Room 306** for cookies, games, and a Christmas movie! Bring a friend (or two!), some baked cookies to decorate, and a new unwrapped toy for our Preschools Toys for Tots drive.

No meeting on Dec. 21. We'll resume our regular first-and-third Sunday schedule on **Jan. 4, 2026!**



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS! APOSTLES COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL UPDATES



November was filled with gratitude, friendship, and giving! Our preschoolers reflected on their blessings and shared the spirit of thankfulness through special classroom and school-wide activities. Our annual Friendship Feast was a highlight of the month! Students joined together for a school-wide prayer, shared friendship trail mix, and had fun dancing the Turkey Pokey.

In the spirit of giving, families donated food for the Hempfield Community food bank, Cozy Coats for Kids collection and toys for the Toys for Tots program. This project helped our preschoolers learn about kindness and helping others in need.

December will be filled with joy as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus! Children will enjoy festive stories, songs, and crafts while rehearsing for our annual **Christmas Show: Joy to the World!** In addition to our fun classroom activities, our Parent Council will be hosting the Annual Christmas Shopping Room where our preschoolers will secretly shop for special gifts for their family members. COA members are invited to attend the preschool shows on Wednesday, December 17 through Friday, December 19 at 10:30AM!

From all of us at Apostles Community Preschool, Merry Christmas!

Maggie Biggs
Preschool Director
mbiggs.acp@gmail.com



@Apostles_Community_Preschool



OUTREACH

INCLUSIVE GIVING THIS DECEMBER

This holiday season invites us to share love, generosity, and care and COA is embracing that spirit with several meaningful opportunities. Our **Holiday Gifting Ministry** is already underway, and we are thrilled to report that all 40 tags have been claimed! All wrapped gifts are due back in the Large Caring Cart on Sunday, December 14th, so they can be delivered on time to bless the children of Martin Elementary School.

OUR IMPACT

\$5,000

FoodHub Lancaster

Donations as of Publishing

In addition to gift giving, our December special giving focuses on **Bethany Children's Home in Womelsdorf**, a UCC ministry that provides safety, healing, and hope to children and youth who have faced trauma, neglect, or abuse. By directing our support to Bethany, we can offer meaningful care to the more than 300 young people they serve each year as they work toward trust, recovery, and renewed stability. Supporting Bethany aligns beautifully with this month's Inclusive Church theme: **including those who may be facing a challenging season**. By giving generously, we extend Christ's compassion to children who may not experience the holidays the same way we do.

"...WHEN THEY SAW
THE **STAR**,
THEY WERE FILLED
WITH **JOY**..."
MATTHEW 2:10

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

Donate to The Christmas Fund

Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their families in need.

Donate Online Here!

We are also uplifting the wider church through the **UCC Christmas Fund**, a long-standing denominational offering that provides essential support for retired clergy, lay employees, and their families. This fund helps cover medical expenses, health insurance, emergency needs, and other financial burdens for those living on small pensions after a lifetime of service. Every gift, no matter the size, makes a meaningful difference. Your generosity spreads joy and expresses heartfelt gratitude to those who devoted their lives to God's work.

Together, these December giving opportunities allow us to shine Christ's light into our community and beyond, supporting vulnerable youth, blessing families through our Gifting Ministry, and caring for those who cared for congregations like ours. You can contribute to any of these efforts through **Vanco, Realm, or your special offering envelopes**. Thank you for making a difference this Christmas season.



A MUSICAL NOTE

With Music Director, Lars Potteiger

Christmas is a season of joy filled with traditions that bring cheer to the holiday. Some of these customs are so old we can forget where they came from. One of my favorite Christmas pastimes is caroling. But where did this practice begin?

The roots of caroling reach back to a time before Christmas was Christmas. Ancient Europeans sang songs to chase away the dark during winter festivals, often celebrating the turning of the seasons. In the Middle Ages, clergy adopted this idea of festive winter songs and wove it into celebrations of the Nativity. These early carols were musical, but they also functioned like brief dramatic scenes, helping people remember the Christmas story in a world without printed programs.

A few centuries later, wandering musicians traveled from house to house singing on feast days. As Christmas grew into a major cultural holiday, their songs gradually shifted toward the season. Sometimes towns hired these singers; other times they sang in hopes of a warm drink.

Our modern concept of Christmas caroling took shape in the Victorian era of the 1800s. Caroling books appeared, old melodies were revived, and many of the songs we know today became part of the familiar Christmas repertoire.

May your Christmas season be filled with peace, joy, and wonder!

Peace and Blessings,

Lars

Church of the Apostles UCC

Christmas Hymn Sing

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 | 3 PM IN THE SANCTUARY

HONOR & REMEMBER LOVED ONES THIS CHRISTMAS

Church of the Apostles will once again be adorned with beautiful poinsettias for the 2025 Advent and Christmas season, bringing warmth and joy to our worship spaces.



You are invited to sponsor poinsettias **in honor or in memory of loved ones**. Your gift helps fill our sanctuary and narthex with the vibrant colors of Christmas and meaningful remembrance.

Please return the poinsettia memorial form and your contribution to the church office **by December 15, 2025**. A memorial insert will be included in all Christmas Eve service bulletins, listing donors and those being honored or remembered.

You may take a poinsettia home following the Christmas Eve services:

- After the 3 PM service (from the Narthex)
- After the 7 PM service (from the Sanctuary or Narthex)
- Or anytime during the following week

Thank you for helping create a beautiful and meaningful Christmas celebration for our church family.

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

Presented by _____

In memory of: In honor of: (Please circle one)

Please mail or drop-off this order form to the church office by December 15th

BUILDING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN 2026

As we conclude another year of faithful service, it is exciting to look ahead to 2026 and the impactful projects our congregation will be embracing. These initiatives are not just about buildings and gardens; they are about **deepening our welcome, nurturing God's creation, providing spaces for connection and growth.**

- **Joining the Keystone Conference:** Beginning January 1, 2026, our congregation officially joins the newly formed Keystone Conference (merging the four former Pennsylvania conferences). We look forward to being guided by the Rev. Dr. Carrie Call (Transitional Executive) and supported by the Rev. Kevin J. McLemore (Transitional Conference Associate, Lancaster Association).
- **Rader Park:** Our Board is focusing on utilizing Rader Park for new outdoor ministries in 2026. If you have a passion for an outdoor project, please contact a Board member!
- **Retreat Center Transformation:** We are excited to announce plans to transform the Youth Center into a Retreat Center by early 2026. This will be a welcoming, peaceful space dedicated to reflection, deeper connection, and enjoying the tranquility of Rader Park.
- **Where Welcome Grows Campaign:** As we continue moving forward with our Sanctuary renovation project, we invite your ongoing financial support. We are also exploring ways to make our space more welcoming and accessible for everyone, including installing automatic door openers. With additional gifts, we will be able to make even more improvements that help our church live more fully into our vision of hospitality and inclusion.
- **Caring for Creation:** Our Environmental Team is actively nurturing God's creation by developing a native plant garden for pollinators and looking into ways to reduce mowing.
- **Fostering Connection & Care:** Our Compassion Team is dedicated to ensuring no one feels alone and every story and voice is heard and seen. They are starting a new spiritual support group as they continue to explore and find the best ways to support our community.
- **Inclusive Church:** With the congregation's recent approval for our Inclusive Church Covenant and official recognition as an Open & Affirming congregation by the UCC, our Inclusive Church Team is feeling renewed energy and purpose. They will continue to help us grow in our understanding of what it means to be truly inclusive, welcoming and honoring people from every walk of life. This includes guiding us in how to share different perspectives with grace, respect, and care for one another.
- **Mocktails & Meaning:** We will continue to host these evenings which are dedicated to exploring social issues and important community topics in a relaxed, engaging environment. We encourage your continued participation as we learn and grow together!

These projects require your passion and participation to succeed. How can you help in 2026? Share the inclusive welcome of our church with friends and neighbors, step up to volunteer at events or on one of our teams, empower youth by helping them learn and lead, and treat one another with respect as we build our future together!

Let's build our Beloved Community together!

December Birthdays

- 12.1 ~ Sloane Rhoads
- 12.2 ~ Janie Cardellino
- 12.5 ~ Alexander Carr
- 12.6 ~ Conner Braun
- 12.7 ~ Andrew Laymon
- 12.9 ~ Stella Newport
- 12.10 ~ Emma Carr
- 12.13 ~ Beverly Hoffman
- 12.13 ~ Linda Schock
- 12.16 ~ Louise Zabel
- 12.16 ~ Liviah Bracken
- 12.16 ~ Carol Emig
- 12.17 ~ Hunter Laymon
- 12.18 ~ Mary Crozier*
- 12.18 ~ Jim Wherley
- 12.19 ~ Kirsten Kepple
- 12.19 ~ Stephanie Rampaul
- 12.21 ~ Cathy Kenlin
- 12.21 ~ Holly Kleimo
- 12.21 ~ Donna Maxwell
- 12.21 ~ Marie Wenner*
- 12.23 ~ Laurey Williams
- 12.24 ~ Rich Braine
- 12.26 ~ Molly Walters
- 12.27 ~ Erin Rohrbaugh
- 12.27 ~ Pat Cover*
- 12.27 ~ Ed Fuller
- 12.28 ~ Don Hess
- 12.31 ~ Kelly Zipko

*90+ Birthday's

December Anniversary's

- 12.16 ~ Kelley & Steve Brown
- 12.23 ~ Peter & Mischelle VanBuskirk
- 12.31 ~ Rev. Kathryn & David Kuhn

*50+ Anniversary

WORSHIP FLOWER SPONSORSHIP

Enhance our worship with the beauty of flowers by sponsoring them in honor or memory of a loved one.

To sponsor, email office@apostlesucc.org or complete a form in the Church office. The suggested donation is \$60, but any amount is appreciated.



SPONSOR THROUGH VANCO

Contributions can be made via check, cash, **Vanco**, or **Realm**.

Big News! Vincent Edmond, a member of the COA refugee family from Tanzania, has been voted to the **Lancaster-Lebanon League Section 1 First Team All-Stars** for soccer at McCaskey High School! He's one of only two McCaskey players to earn this honor. We are so proud of him!



	October 2025	October 2024
YTD Revenue	\$313,348.34	\$316,943.69
YTD Investment Transfers	\$221,043.90	\$166,940.00
YTD Operating Expenses	\$539, 239.57	\$585, 117.63
Net YTD Operating Income	-\$4,847.33	-\$101,233.94

LOOKING BACK WITH GRATITUDE, MOVING FORWARD WITH PURPOSE

By Johanna Baker, Board President

I first became a member of Church of the Apostles when I was confirmed here many years ago. From that moment forward, this congregation has been a place of faith, hope, and belonging in my life. Some of my earliest memories are of singing in the choir and being part of the music ministry, experiences that shaped my faith long before my confirmation. Today, as I serve in my second year as Board President, I am especially grateful for the opportunity to reflect on where we have been and where God is leading us.

My presidency began during a time of transition. Together, through prayerful discernment, we embraced a new vision and mission, shaped by the hearts of our people and inspired by the Holy Spirit. While we honor the faith and labor of those who came before us, we also know that our story is still being written. The mission entrusted to us continues to grow, calling us to meet the needs of this moment in history with courage, creativity, and faith.

At the heart of this mission is a commitment to radical welcome. We are a church where all people, of every race, gender, ability, and orientation, are invited to know the unshakable truth that they are loved by God exactly as they are. This is more than an aspiration. It is our very identity as the body of Christ in this time and place.

At our January board retreat, we named three areas of focus to guide our ministry in the coming years: **Rader Park, Growing Young, and Inclusive Spaces**. Thanks to a new governance structure, every board meeting now provides space for visioning, allowing us to dream boldly about how these priorities might come to life.

- * **Rader Park** is one of Lancaster County's best-kept treasures, a place where God's presence can be experienced in every breeze, in every birdsong, and in the quiet of open space. We are exploring ways to share this gift more fully with the wider community, from long-term projects like installing accessible playground equipment to community events such as concerts and festivals.
- * **Growing Young** reflects our deep commitment to the generations to come. Children and families are the heartbeat of the future church. Our vision is to create spaces where young families feel at home, through programs that offer support, refreshed areas designed with their needs in mind, and meaningful opportunities to weave faith into everyday life. In this vision, strollers are welcome, questions are encouraged, and laughter echoes through the halls.
- * **Inclusive Spaces** remain central to our calling. Following Christ's example, we continue to feed the hungry, support our neighbors, and speak out for justice. Again and again, we are reminded that the church is not only a building but the living witness of all who offer their hands and hearts in love.

As we mark fifty years of ministry together, we do so with profound gratitude for God's faithfulness. We celebrate the countless ways this congregation has embodied love, grace, and service in the past. Yet even more, we celebrate with hope and anticipation for what is still to come. The light of Church of the Apostles continues to shine brightly, and with God's help, it will shine for generations yet to be born.

Here's to the next fifty years, rooted in love, open to all, and guided always by the Spirit.

STAFF

Senior Pastor

Rev. Kathryn Kuhn

Church Administrator

Melissa Kosman

Communications Coordinator

Paityn Nissly

Music Director

Lars Potteiger

Adult Choir Director

Nathan Sheffer

Children's Choir Director

Elizabeth Stoltzfus

Technology Specialist

Jaben Jury

Property Manager

Eric MacLaren

Sexton 2

Tasha MacLaren

To contact our staff directly visit apostlesucc.org/staff

Share Your Story

Be Featured in the next Crown Newsletter!

We want to hear from you! Share how you're living out our Vision & Mission, making an impact in our community, or contributing to our ministries. To submit your story, email the Communications Coordinator, Paityn Nissly, at office@apostlesucc.org by the 15th of the month for consideration in the next issue. Space is limited, but we'll do our best to feature as many articles as possible.



Prayer Requests

Let us Pray with You!

We are honored to pray for you through life's ups and downs. You can share your prayer requests on your connection card during Sunday services or email them to office@apostlesucc.org. Please let us know if your request can be shared or should remain private for our prayer chain. Together, we lift our hearts in prayer to support and encourage one another.

Supporting Our Community

Ways the Compassion Team is Here for You!

Our Compassion Team is dedicated to providing support, understanding, and care to everyone in our community, no matter where you are in your walk of life. We offer several confidential resources designed to help nurture your mental and spiritual well-being.

- **Confidential Listening Sessions** - Set up a private time of listening, understanding, and compassion with one of our trained Compassion Team members.
- **The Compassion Corner** - A collection of materials focused on mental health, grief, and other challenging life topics located in Rm 107.
- **Monthly Spiritual Support Group** - Launching in January, this gathering will provide a space for shared encouragement and community.

**WORSHIP WITH US EVERY SUNDAY AT 10 AM
IN-PERSON OR ONLINE**