

All prayer requests are welcome. Please write them in the book on the desk in the narthex.

MEMBERS: Please sign the pew pad and pass it down the pew and then back to the start. The last person should put the sheet in the offering plate. All e-mail addresses will be protected in blind copy so no one else sees your e-mail address. If you are receiving regular e-mails from Church, it is not necessary to write it in again.

VISITORS: Please fill out a yellow card found in the pew and place it in the offering place.

North Star District Prayer List for this week includes:
McGregor—Diane Brennan



FIRST MILE MISSION

First Mile Mission Giving begins in all UM Churches with Apportionments: 'A Portion Meant' for mission. Grace's 1st Mile Mission Giving Goal is \$21,600 or \$123.00 each member based on A membership of 176. Generous givers are already **Paving The way** to meeting that goal, with \$4,506.74 given to date.

PRAYER FOCUS

Remember those who enter this holiday season with a loved one absent: through death of a loved one, deployment of a loved one overseas, or any of the many reasons that separate us from the important people in our lives.

Dear Lord, let peace abound in each of us gathered here. Prevent us from resisting the benefits of your grace. You alone can provide our greatest needs. Help us have quiet and joyful spirits as we worship you, our loving Creator.

WORSHIP LEADERS

Ministers: All the People
Organist: Sharon Fangsrud
Readers: Listed

Pastor: Roger Grafenstein
Choir Director: Tyle Eliason
Ushers: Bill Krogen

but to gently be held by us. Celtic tradition speaks of thin places where it seems especially likely to feel the presence of God. May our Christmas preparations birth *thin places* where we remember the baby Jesus and await Christ's second coming. Welcome to a journey through the symbols of Christmas.

HYMN: #217 (Blue Hymnal) "Away in a Manger" -

Children 1st verse, Congregation: verses 2 and 3

THE ADVENT COLORS:

Julie Possehl

Today is the first day of the church calendar's New Year. The year begins with waiting, an expectancy of help yet to arrive on this journey through life. **Purple** found favor as the Advent color. Purple was viewed as the color of a heavenly king and broken king. Recently however, some churches have reclaimed another ancient color of advent—**blue**. Blue is the color of royalty, too. It also hints at somberness and whispers of *the blues*. It reminds us of the sky before nightfall and the Genesis image of the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters about to do a new thing. Plus, blue points toward baptism. Whether a Church uses purple or blue the point is that Advent is NOT Lent. Following Christ is more than suffering. Life with Jesus is joy, growth, peace and new birth.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 2:1-5 (CEB)

Angie Ybarra

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 3:4-14 (CEB)

Jean Mann

THE CHRISTMAS WREATH:

Todd Grow

Made of that which is ever-green the wreath forms a circle: without beginning or end; it's a symbol of eternal life. It's an invitation to enter into the circle of God's love; Wreaths with red holly and red ribbons have their own history. Tradition indicates holly was used to fashion Jesus' crown of thorns. Red Holly berries and ribbons bespeak Christ's blood. Each doorway with a prickly wreath this season reminds us Jesus was willing to undergo great pain to open the door to a new way of life.

SILENT AND SPOKEN PRAYER :**Doyme Grow**

There is no way of knowing the prayers of Mary and Joseph when they found the inn was full and they settled in the stable for the night. Lonely, labor pains, far away from home, somehow their prayers became angels singing and shepherds joining Mary and Joseph. Their prayers became a beacon of light that guided wise, generous visitors to provide for the family. Journeying with Jesus is believing in prayer's power.

SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS, AND PRAYERS : **Pastor Roger**

(Please wait for the microphone and speak clearly, keeping it about an inch or two from your mouth.)

THE LORDS PRAYER: #895 (Blue Hymnal)*HYMN: - # 249 (Blue Hymnal) "There's a Song in the Air"****LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: — John 1:5-9****Del Larson**

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light. The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world

GATHERING AT CHRIST'S TABLE:**INVITATION TO COMMUNION:**

Many of the symbols of Christians include the color red. It is no accident. It's the color of sacrifice—Jesus blood spilled for all. All are welcome at Jesus' table—all who want to give their best to God and neighbor.

CHOIR ANTHEM: "Christmas Communion Song" - Susan Naylor Calloway**REMEMBRANCE AND BLESSING THE BREAD AND CUP:****RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP:**

Please come forward to the rail or to the servers to the right or left. If you have an **OFFERING** please place it in one of the plates in the front pews. As you receive the bread and cup a common response is "Amen" or "Thanks be to God".

THE POINSETTIA:**Bonnie Christopherson**

An American in Mexico admired a beautiful plant that bloomed red each Christmas. In 1828 he brought the plant and its tradition back to the U.S. The Poinsettia was a visual sermon. "On the night of Jesus' birth the Star of Bethlehem was so bright that it illumined the earth. The earth received the light, reflected the light and was changed by the light. On the night of Jesus' birth a star-shaped flower was born—with white petals and golden-star centers. It became known as the Flower of the Holy Night, a sign of the 'stars shouting forth the glory of God,'" Its whiteness was like starlight and the purity of baby Jesus. Its redness was the memory of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Its green was the promise of new life. As the star heralded Jesus' birth, each poinsettia still preaches the story of salvation —Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

(Poinsettia carriers—Sunday School Children)

THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS:**Esther Vollbrecht**

There is power in music as we journey through Advent toward Christmas. Somehow the carols of the season sing our souls home. "Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head. The stars in the sky look down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay." Christmas music calls us home to our roots: home to the story of the homeless one who became our shelter, home to the fact we enter this world by the grace of God and completely dependent upon the kindness of others. Let the melodies of Christmas call our spirits home into God's care this year.

***Hymn:—#240 (Blue Hymnal) "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"**

***BENEDICTION:** The Lord bless all your preparations for the coming of Jesus. May God's peace, grace, forgiveness and love find a cradle in your hearts. **Amen**

POSTLUDE:

We greet one and all in the name of Jesus Christ. On this first Sunday of Advent, may we all prepare spiritually for Christ's birth. The light shines in the darkness!