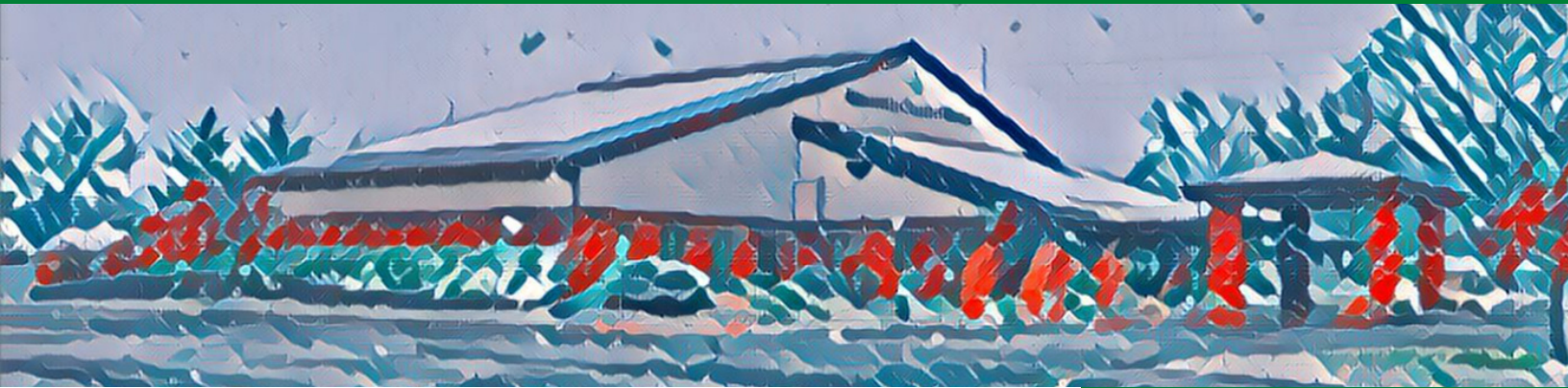


# THE MIDWEEK



## WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY 9:30 AM

Jessica Hall will be preaching this Sunday, sharing Elizabeth & Zacheriah's (in)fertility journey with a sermon titled "Fertile Silence." You may wish to read their story again found in Luke 1: 5-13, 14-25, 57-79. Together with Advent hope, let's wait and watch for the Holy Spirit to transform us in our seasons of silence.



## After Worship

### Adult CE

**Journey Groups:**  
**Group A (20's-30's)**  
Conference Room

**Group B (40's-50's)**  
Room 4

**Group C (60's and above)**  
Room 4

### Children & Youth CE

Pre-K-K Grade

2nd-4th Grade

5th-8th Grade

High School

The service will be live streamed on YouTube at this [link](#).

The bulletins get posted under the Worship tab of our [website](#).



**Mennonite  
Church  
of Normal**

A congregation of  
Mennonite Church USA

# The Longest Night Service



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**Tomorrow, December 21 at 5:00 pm at Wesley United Methodist Church**

If you are looking for a Longest Night Service this year, everyone is invited to Wesley United Methodist Church on December 21 at 5:00 pm for their Longest Night Service. Learn more [here](#).



## Christmas Eve

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**THIS Sunday, December 24th**

MCN will have both a standard worship service at 9:30 am and a Christmas Eve service at 6:30 pm on December 24, 2023. The Christmas Eve service will feature lessons & carols, special music, a meditation by Pastor Kevin, and candlelight.

## Donate to the Mitten Tree



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**Last Sunday you can donate!** The Community Life Commission along with the Fellowship Committee are asking for donation of children's mittens and adult gloves (size med and large). These mittens and gloves will be given to Home Sweet Home Mission for distribution to those in need. Please help to assist in keeping our community warm this winter. You may place your donation on the tree inside the church atrium. We will deliver the mittens and gloves during the week between Christmas and New Years. Any questions contact Deb Stenger or MaryAnn Watkins co-chairs. Thank you!

*From Community Life Commission (CLC) and Fellowship Committee*



## Office Closed - No Midweek

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**Closed: December 25 through January 1**

The church office and building will be closed from 12/25 through 1/1. It will re-open on January 2nd. There will be no Midweek on December 27th. Merry Christmas everyone!

*From Lydia Hedberg, Office Administrator*

## Giveaway Event



**Saturday, January 6, 2024**

Wayne and Lois Hochstetler invite you to our home for a giveaway event before our move to Luther Oaks. We would like those who can make use of our items to take them, and remember us! There are a number of household and kitchen items that we will not be taking with us. For a list of some items, click [here](#).

This is not just for people who can use things from our house; it is for anyone who would like to have a Saturday morning outing with friends. Donuts and coffee, hot chocolate and tea will be supplied. This will happen on Saturday, January 6, 2024.

*From Lois and Wayne Hochstetler*



## Midwest Food Bank

**Thursday, January 11 from 6-8pm**

Our next scheduled volunteer night at Midwest Food Bank is January 11 from 6-8pm. **MFB always wants us to sign up early, so if you think you might go, might as well sign up today!** Click [here](#) to sign up.

*From the Outreach Commission*

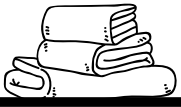
## Camp Friedenswald Retreat



**January 26-28, 2024**

EVERYONE is invited to a weekend of fellowship and fun at camp, January 26-28! Friedenswald is a beautiful retreat with large, comfortable, warm lodges for us to stay in. Whether you're looking for social time or solitude, there's something for everyone! Activities for the weekend can include sledding, tubing, hiking, relaxing, eating, cross country skiing, reading, games, worship, fellowship, and more! For more details (including notes on cost and an important note about meals), and to sign up, please click [here](#). If you have any questions, please contact Shelly and Darvis King.

*Sponsored by the Fellowship Committee*



## Supporting Immigrants in Our Community

If you are looking for additional ways to give this season, here are the two opportunities I mentioned in church.

**Warm Welcoming Closet** - If you would be willing to donate items to District 87's Warm Welcoming Closet, here is the [link](#) to the Amazon wishlist. Families that are recent arrivals to the community often need blankets, sheets, pillows, rollout mattresses and other items. Thank you for considering!

**BN Welcoming** - Through the BN Welcoming fund housed by our church, we are able to help support families or individuals who are unable to get the assistance from other avenues. We have been able to support people with rent, medical bills, utilities, etc. You can designate this fund in your giving, by clicking the link for B-N Welcoming on the website, or using [this link](#).

Thank you for considering giving! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Helen Dick Brandon.

## Cease Fire Now



MCN people were at US Representative Eric Sorensen's office on December 19th to tell him that Mennonites want a cease fire now in Gaza and we don't want the US to give Israel any more weapons of war.

Hundreds of Mennonites visited 40 US and Canadian Representatives' offices on December 19th calling for a cease fire in Gaza.

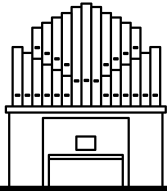
*Thanks, Phil Dick, Chair, Outreach Commission*





The Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team submits Leah Roeschley, Beth Reeser, and Liz Augspurger as candidates to serve on Community Life Commission. We also submit Denise Hedberg as a candidate to serve on Worship Commission. Please send any feedback to Kristen Hartwig **by December 29th**. Thank you!

*From the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team*



## *Dorothy Loepf Retirement*

The following was shared with the congregation on Sunday, December 10, 2023 marking Dorothy Loepf's anticipated retirement the following Sunday, December 17.

"A question. What has been one of the longest running successful ministries in this church? I'm thinking of a ministry that has been in place for over 50 years. This has been a faithful and giving ministry and one that we maybe, at times, have taken for granted.

Dorothy Loepf began playing organ for this church body in 1970. She has shared richly of her music talents in regular Sunday morning services, choir accompanying, weddings, special services, funerals, and in so many other ways. Dorothy, your crafting of music has been such an inspiration. As a songleader standing at the front of the church, it has always been a great joy to see the faces of all of you when Dorothy plays an amazing accompaniment. You open up the sound of the organ and use some full-throated pedal stops that are just breathtaking. You are probably one of the most humble people I know. You serve this congregation in ways that allow us to transcend the day-to-day and soar to the heavens. Yet you don't think it's all that much.

Dorothy, you and I have walked a musical road together here for over 40 years. It has been a genuine delight. And I thank you for trying all kinds of things that I asked of you with grace and daring. Your promoting and honoring of the music gifts of all our children has been inspiring. And today, I thank you for entrusting me to share with the congregation that Sunday, December 17, will be your last Sunday playing during morning worship. Dorothy is retiring.

And now all of us will learn to live with this news – with celebration for you and with sadness for our congregational life together. You have richly blessed us freely and willingly for a long time, and we are so very grateful for you and your ministry. Thank you, Dorothy."

Plans are underway for a celebration for Dorothy in the coming months.

*Shared by Cindy Ropp*



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**Congratulations and Celebration time!** We met our Spring goal! We are approaching the second payment for college students attending Mennonite Schools. Our current balance is \$30,500 and we will be paying out approx. \$25,000 by the end of December for the next semester starting in January 2024. Let's continue to support this program with end-of-the-year giving. Donations can be placed in the offering plate (memo line: SMAP) or online [here](#). Please reach out to Darvis King with any questions. Thank you for your continued support and pledges for this program!

*From Darvis King*

*"The entire educational experience at Bluffton College, among teachers and friends, helped me to develop a philosophy of life based upon the biblical teachings of Christ. The concepts of peace, justice, reconciliation, and love for one's fellow beings came from these experiences. There I also learned of God's power in the scientific world which helped me as a physician." -Dr. John Stuzman*

Our very own, John, sums it up perfectly. This is the value of a Mennonite/Anabaptist liberal arts education. My four years at Bluffton University were foundational to my profession, faith, and relationships. SMAP was created so students in our congregation could access continued learning through an Anabaptist lens. Please consider giving back or giving forward to SMAP to keep this opportunity possible.

*From Leah Roeschley*

## Sharing Our Gifts Photos

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Thank you all for sharing wonderful photos of you sharing your gifts! Find a link to the slide show that played before and after the Sunday worship service last Sunday [here](#).

*Shared by the Spiritual Gifts  
Discernment Team*



## Missing Steamer

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MCN's new handheld steamer (used for decorations) has gone missing. Please contact the church office at [church@normalmennonite.org](mailto:church@normalmennonite.org) or 309-452-6622 if you have any information about.

*From the church office*

## Hosting in Homes Information

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We are inviting interested individuals in the Congregation to be a part of Hosting in Homes. You may remember that Hosting in Homes was initiated during the summer months by CLC as a way of working toward one of our Congregational Goals for 2023. The process includes a host from the Congregation extending an invitation to the Congregation inviting a specified number of people to gather in fellowship for a meal or other activity in the home of the host. For those who are interested in hosting in your home in December, contact Lydia Hedberg Office Administrator with your invitation, including the date and time that you have selected for hosting for the holidays in the month of December. Your invitation can then be included in Midweek with a link for use in signing up by persons interested in coming to your home. If you have questions, please contact Deb Stenger or Mary Ann Watkins.

*From Community Life Commission (CLC) and Fellowship Committee*

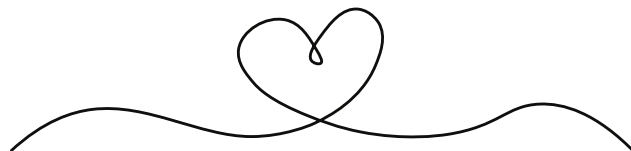


## Did You Know?

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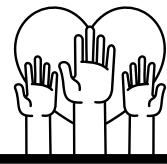
As of the publishing of this Midweek, there are only 4 days until our Christmas Eve service at 6:30 pm on December 24, 2023.

*From the Administration Commission*





# Those Serving This Week



## December 24th

**South Greeters:** Barry & Marge Weaver

**West Greeter:** Pam Hodel

**Welcome Table:** Mary Dyck

**Ushers:** Larry & Louise Reeser

**Offering Counter:** Kristen Satchwell

**Worship Planner & Leader:** Joe Culpepper

**Sharing Prayer Leader:** Ron Ropp

**Children's Story:** Darrel Miller

**Scripture Reader:** Marriane Israel

**Technology:** Caleb Augspurger

**Song Leader:** Barry Weaver

**Accompaniment, Prelude, & Postlude:** Elsa Raab

**Infant Nursery – during worship:** Open for parents

**Infant Nursery – during CE:** Nancy Fisher

**Preschool Nursery:** Spring Neely

## December 31st

**South Greeters:** Rick & Connie Satchwell

**West Greeter:** Judy Hershberger

**Welcome Table:** Bernice Valverde

**Ushers:** Steve & Deb Stenger

**Offering Counter:** Lotus Hershberger

**Worship Planner & Leader:** Steve Benner

**Sharing Prayer Leader:** Lauren Satchwell

**Children's Story:** Janet Wilson

**Scripture Reader:** Marge Weaver

**Technology:** Adam Augspurger & Rick Harnish

**Song Leader:** Barry Weaver

**Accompaniment, Prelude, & Postlude:** Elsa Raab

**Infant Nursery – during worship:** Open for parents

**Infant Nursery – during CE:** David Harnish

**Preschool Nursery:**



# *This Week at MCN*



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A BRIEF LOOK AT THE CHURCH CALENDAR:

**Wednesday, December 20**

**9:30am** Wednesday Morning Book Group

**Thursday, December 21**

**7:00am** Next Man Bible Study

**9:00am** Brave and Beloved: Women's Bible Study

**Sunday, December 24**

**6:30pm** Christmas Eve Service

**Monday, December 25 through Monday, January 1**

**All Day** Office Closed

*Birthdays & Anniversaries*

CELEBRATING LIFE'S MOMENTS AT MCN

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## *Prayer Requests and Announcements*

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Sharing of Joys and Concerns have returned to open mic sharing during the services. Please send Lauren Satchwell your announcements so that these can be shared by the worship leader during the Community Life portion of the service. When sharing, it's helpful if your requests are succinct. This is true whether in person or livestreaming on YouTube.

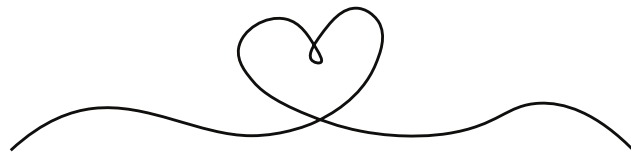


## Sharing of Joys and Concerns



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MCN IS ASKED TO BE IN CONTINUED PRAYER FOR FOR THE TOP ADMINISTRATORS AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM CARLE BROMENN MEDICAL CENTER—OUR PARTNER IN HEALING FOR 2023



*MC USA statement calls for ceasefire*



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Mennonite Church USA has published a statement calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas War. **Read the statement [here](#).**

Join Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. in signing this petition calling for a [#CeasefireNow](#): Open Call for an Immediate Ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Israel to Prevent a Humanitarian Catastrophe and Further Loss of Innocent Lives. **Sign [here](#).**



## Mennonite Action

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**Mennonite Action is bringing Mennonites across the world together to call for an end to violence in Gaza.**

There are a number of ways you can take action (in order from least to highest commitment):

- Sign a petition with hundreds of other US Mennonites calling on our federal representatives to support a permanent ceasefire. [Click here for the petition.](#)
- Join the Slack Channel where folks can meet each other and keep up to date for the most recent movement/plans from Menno Action. [Click here to join the Slack channel.](#)
- Each Tuesday and Thursday Menno Action is hosting [Action Hours](#) for us to gather with other Mennos as we call our elected officials.
- There is a network of location-based Mennonite-specific actions being organized for Tuesday, December 19th across the country and Canada. More info will be public soon but the most up to date details are on the "dayofaction" slack Channel. [Click here to join the Slack channel](#) and they can connect you to your specific regional action.
- On January 16th, hundreds of Mennonites will gather in Washington DC to peacefully demonstrate for a permanent ceasefire. Together, we will show our political leaders, our fellow community members, and our Palestinian, Jewish, Arab and Muslim loved ones that there are Christians and Mennonites who stand with them in their call for peace and a ceasefire now. We will bring this petition with us, to demonstrate that thousands of Mennonites from across the United States stand together for a permanent ceasefire and an end to occupation. As soon as details are worked out, they'll be posted on [MennoAction's website.](#)

## *A Shoot from the Stump: The Good News of Christmas*

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"When we read Matthew's account of the Nativity, we realize not everyone experienced Jesus' coming as good news. For King Herod, who held political power, the birth of a new king was not good news, it was a threat."

Read more from Sherah-Leigh Gerber's article titled "A Shoot from the Stump: The Good News of Christmas" shared by Mennonite Women USA [here.](#)



## A Wedding Blessed

A church near Buenos Aires, Argentina, in early October became what is likely the first Mennonite congregation in that country to bless a same-sex wedding. Jorgelina Ganim and Romina Ocanto, members of Comunidad Anabautista Menonita de Olavarría, were married Oct. 6 in the church building the congregation shares with a Lutheran congregation. Pastor Pedro Cazola said the congregation grew to embrace diversity and inclusion as it became aware of the struggles of excluded minorities. "Today we work in many neighborhoods of the city, accompanying women who suffer gender violence and people living on the streets and facing various addictions," he said. Local media reported on the wedding because it was the city's first same-sex ceremony. Cazola could not say for certain whether the ceremony was a first for all Mennonites across Argentina, but it is the first such union among a cluster of progressive Anabaptist congregations around Buenos Aires. Comunidad Anabautista Menonita is independent after previously being part of Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Argentina, a conference that counted about 2,345 members in 79 congregations in 2020. The congregation joined IEMA in 2001 but was disaffiliated, along with other Mennonite congregations, by IEMA leaders four years ago for taking progressive positions. "We have formed a space of fraternal support and solidarity among six Mennonite churches," Cazola said. "We plan to strengthen the group and move forward in that direction." **Read Tim Huber's article for the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**

## The Friedensword



Connect with what's been happening at Camp Friedenswald through the latest issue of their bi-annual newsletter. **Click [here](#) to read it.** In this issue you'll find: a reflection from Jenna Liechty Martin, executive director, seven different ways that we have worked at tending the peaceful woods this year, a reflection on the ways camp helps to sustain faith, written by Lydia Nolt, and more!

## Safe Church

Safe Church, Mennonite Church USA's newly formed abuse prevention ministry, now has a webpage available on the MC USA website. The webpage offers resources, including the updated Circle of Grace curriculum, to help faith communities keep children, youth and vulnerable adults safe from all abuse. **Read more [here](#) or view the webpage [here](#).**

# Spiritually and emotionally bankrupt

## END GUN VIOLENCE

Learn. Pray. Join

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Read a **blog post** by **Cyneatha Millsaps**, executive director of **Mennonite Women USA** and the executive director of **Goshen College Center for Community Engagement in Goshen, Indiana**, titled **“Spiritually and emotionally bankrupt”** [here](#). In the post, Millsaps reflects on how gun violence has effected the country, her community and her own family. Her blog post is part of Mennonite Church USA’s [Learn, Pray, Join: End Gun Violence](#) initiative.



## Creating a Playground for All

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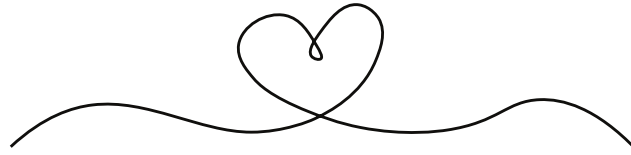
*Below is an excerpt from an article by Beverly Miller published by the Anabaptist Disabilities Network titled “Creating a Playground for All: Plains Mennonite Church Builds a Playground with Children with Autism in Mind.”*

It all started when some families at Plains Mennonite Church (Lansdale, PA) had children who received autism spectrum diagnoses. They reached out to the pastors for support. The pastors saw the need for an autism support group and invited other parents and caregivers from the local community. Catherine Schadler Heller, M.Ed., shared her knowledge and expertise around topics chosen by the group. That was helpful, but the pastors soon realized that the greatest resource for parents was meeting with other parents to talk and share ideas. The congregation became more aware of appropriate language, individual behaviors, and the need for acceptance of persons with disabilities. Local professionals provided insight to the congregation during the adult Sunday school hour on autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory differences, and other disabilities. As a congregation, "we realized that we could do more within our building, park, and property to include those who had been unintentionally placed on the margins," said Heather Gingrich, current facilitator of the Autism Support group. The inclusive playground allows children of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to come and play on equipment, encouraging fun and entertainment for all. Gingrich adds, "We look forward to welcoming our neighbors and community!" **Read the full article by Beverly Miller published by the Anabaptist Disabilities Network** [here](#).





Join Mennonite Church USA's Nancy Kauffmann, Michael Danner and Glen Guyton for a webinar on Monday, Jan. 22 at 7 p.m. EST/4 p.m. PST, in which they will discuss the vision and direction of the new Safe Church ministry, share resources for congregations and conferences, and answer questions about the future vision for Safe Church advocacy in our denomination. **Register for the webinar [here](#). Learn more about Safe Church [here](#).**



## Staff Contact and Building Open Hours

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|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <u>Building Open:</u>    | <b>Standard Hours:</b><br>Monday, Wednesday-Friday 9AM-11AM<br>and Monday-Friday 1:30PM-3PM.  |
| <u>Lydia Hedberg:</u>    | Office Administrator; <a href="mailto:church@normalmennonite.org">church@normalmennonite.org</a> ; 309-452-6622   |
| <u>Rita Munkakusi:</u>   | Custodian   |
| <u>Kevin Chupp:</u>      | Pastor for Outreach Commission, Worship Commission, Congregational Care Committee, and the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team; <a href="mailto:kevin@normalmennonite.org">kevin@normalmennonite.org</a> |
| <u>Lynette Miller:</u>   | Pastor for Discipling and Community Life Commissions; <a href="mailto:lynette.miller.k@gmail.com">lynette.miller.k@gmail.com</a>  |
| <u>Ron Ropp:</u>         | Pastor for Pastoral Care  |
| <u>Lauren Satchwell:</u> | Pastor for Vision Team & Administration Commissions   |

## Items for the Midweek



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Please send items to be included in the Midweek to the [Church Office](#) no later than **8am on Wednesday**. Thank you!

## Commissions and Teams Contact List

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# *Our Members in Care Facilities*

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PLEASE REMEMBER THESE MEMBERS IN YOUR PRAYERS.  
SEND A CARD IF THE SPIRIT LEADS YOU!

## *Item Check-Out Request Form*

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[Google Form Version](#) & [Printable PDF Version](#)

## *Work Order & Purchase Request Forms*

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[Work Order](#) & [Purchase Request](#)

## *Commission Meeting Minutes*

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Click [this link](#) to be taken to a Google Drive folder which contains meeting minutes from each commission.

## *Structure Documents*

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Updated structure documents, including ministry descriptions, vision statement with commission assignments for the goals, structure changes, and a list of individuals called to serve in the new structure, are available at this [link](#). Please click [here](#) for past meeting and other recordings.