

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Holiday special services

Saturday, December 11

4:00 PM in WGCC
Sanctuary and on
Facebook – Jazz
Christmas service of
lessons and carols
featuring Two Times
True

Christmas Eve

Services at WGCC –
December 24 (5:30
PM and 11:00 PM
with special music at
10:30 p.m)

Sunday, December 26

Quiet Christmas
Worship Service
10:30 AM at WGCC.
No Sunday School
classes.

At our Special Congregational Meeting on November 7, members of WGCC voted in overwhelming (98%) support of becoming an Open and Affirming Congregation.

See details on Page 3 of how the Board will begin the process of helping guide the congregation in implementing our Open and Affirming welcoming statement:

*Webster Groves Christian Church
proclaims that we are
an Open and Affirming congregation.*

*Beyond celebrating the diversity of God's
creation, we affirm that everyone is a child of
God, worthy of love and grace, regardless of
race, ethnicity, national origin, creed, class,
age, gender, marital status, family
configuration, physical or mental ability,
sexual orientation, gender identity,
or gender expression.*

*All who seek to follow Jesus are invited to
join in our common life and mission through
participation and leadership in this
congregation, and by fully sharing in the
worship, rites, and sacraments of this church.*

Books, music, and basketball: Get to know the Gibbons family

You may think that the Gibbons family have been members for a long time. We have seen them around on Sunday mornings and they have been a big part of our service projects and other activities for many years, but Jesse and Molly made it official on November 7th. Riley had joined by baptism on May 24, 2017.

The Gibbons family came to us from Cleveland where they grew up in the United Methodist Church. Jesse's mother is a semi-retired UMC minister there. Jesse and Molly were childhood sweethearts. They came to St. Louis in 2011 for Jesse's new job. They moved into the Parkway School District. Riley and Athena DeKinder were in kindergarten together and have been friends ever since. The parents got to know each other through Girl Scouts. The DeKinders invited them to our Church and the rest "is history."

Jesse is an anesthesiologist assistant. He worked nine years at St. Louis University but for the last year has worked at Christian Northeast Hospital. Molly is a youth advisory worker for the County Courts as a social worker. She works with youth ages 12 to 18. Somehow she finds time to have another job on the side with a marketing company. Riley is a freshman at Parkway North High School.

When I asked Jesse what they were interested in, the answer was sports and music. Jesse loves his basketball. He plays two times a week with



Jesse & Molly Gibbons joined on November 7, 2021

Riley Gibbons joined by baptism May 24, 2017

friends at different churches in the area. He also helps coach the basketball team that Riley was on when she was in middle school. Riley is playing freshman basketball and JV softball at school. Molly loves to dance and sing. Molly has graced us with her singing voice during some of our special music programs in the past. Riley is writing poetry and songs. She has won a contest with her poetry that was read in church a while back. She is taking piano lessons from Lisa Cripe, and we have heard her play in church also. Riley also plays the guitar and cello - quite a talent!

As a family, they love to vacation in Ohio to visit family, but also go to the FAMOUS Cedar Point amusement park. They love to rent a pontoon boat and be on the water. They love eating out: favorites are Mexican and Indian. Go to movies, play video games and maybe read a good book! Molly is part of a book club, so they do relax some.

Even though the Gibbons have been a part of our community family for many years, let them know how glad we are they chose us!

Sally Smith



Board member Keiler Swartz thanks members after the Nov. 7 vote.

The road ahead for an open and affirming congregation

On November 7, 98 percent of our voting members approved a motion in support of our Open and Affirming commitment and welcoming statement. Since then, here are the next steps WGCC has taken in fulfilling that commitment.

On November 14, 2021, 12 members of Webster Groves Christian Church met to discuss next steps for implementing and celebrating our Open and Affirming status. The group formed a subcommittee for signage, logo, and marketing imagery. The committee will also explore websites, lists, organizations, and ministry partners with whom to share, celebrate, and continue to learn. Once we have heard back from the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance, we will submit an article for the MidAmerica Region newsletter. WGCC name tags and directories will be revised to include people's preferred pronouns. Welcoming documents and statements at worship and other gatherings will include: "Welcome to Webster Groves Christian Church, an Open and Affirming congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." A subcommittee was formed to plan and schedule educational opportunities to help the congregation and community continue to learn about issues important to the LGBTQIA+ community and to our ongoing life together as an Open and Affirming congregation.

On November 21, 2021, the Webster Groves Christian Church Board met, and received a report from the November 14 meeting (at which many Board members were present). The Board acknowledged, approved, and encouraged the work of the committee. The Board voted unanimously to provide an initial financial gift of \$1,000 to Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance, to add the Alliance to WGGC's Givelify online giving options, to hold a special offering benefitting the Alliance each year on the Sunday nearest the anniversary of the congregation's vote to become Open and Affirming, and to encourage the congregation to pray regularly for the work of the Alliance.

The Board also approved the following amendment to the WGCC Personnel Policy:

Webster Groves Christian Church is committed to treating all staff fairly without discriminating on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity and marital status, encouraging all to apply for employment, evaluating applicants and staff equally, and providing equal compensation and benefits for equal job descriptions.

Mark your advent calendars for Project NOW

In the spirit of giving during the Christmas season, this unique Advent calendar is an opportunity to share with others. Each day put the designated food item into a large box or bag. At the end of the Advent season please leave the gift of food items at the church for Project NOW. All the items on the list are foods that we use each month for the NOW families.

Project NOW is a nutrition on weekends program affiliated with Webster Groves Christian Church. NOW provides a bag of food to 16 families every weekend. Questions? Email Julie DeKinder at dekinderj@umsl.edu

December 1- box of macaroni and cheese

December 2- canned Chicken

December 3- box of granola bars

December 4- box of fruit snacks

December 5- box of cereal

December 6- package of fruit cups

December 7- box of Nutri-Grain bars (or similar breakfast bars)

December 8- canned tuna

December 9- microwave popcorn

December 10- applesauce (plastic jar or individual containers)

December 11- pretzels

December 12- canned pizza sauce

December 13- canned refried beans

December 14- box of ritz type crackers

December 15- goldfish crackers (or similar snack cracker)

December 16- oatmeal

December 17- package of pasta noodles

December 18- canned spaghetti sauce

December 19- canned chicken noodle soup

December 20- canned tomato soup

December 21- animal crackers

December 22- pudding cups

December 23- individual raisin packages

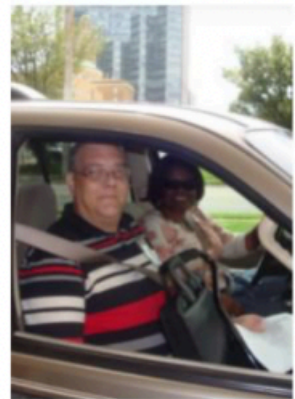
December 24- canned ravioli pasta (or similar canned pasta)

Make New Friends Hear Great Stories Drive for the Shepherd's Center

The Shepherd Center's free transportation service provides older adults in need with access to medical care. As more and more older adults in our communities receive vaccines, our requests for rides are increasing. We do not want to have to turn anyone away.

Please consider joining our volunteer transportation team. It's easy!

- Complete an application, online background check and attend one orientation meeting (in-person or via Zoom)
- Once approved, sign-up for rides using our online *RideScheduler* system (or via telephone if preferred)
- Minimum of two rides per month
- Call 314-395-0988 or email: kzelle@shepherdscenter-wk.org to get started.



Prayers, reflection and service from Disciples Women through the holiday

The December Disciples Women General Meeting was scheduled for 1 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 2. There will still be no food. Hopefully, that will change soon as we continue to battle COVID.

The Lydia Group will give the Devotional. There will be a simple Christmas Program and a short business meeting. Service Projects will be discussed, Care and Concerns will also be on the agenda.

The groups will meet as follows on Dec. 9:

11 a.m.: Lydia Group at Charlotte Pullen's Home.

1 p.m. Martha Group in Fellowship Hall at the church.

6 p.m.: Tabitha Group at Daun Hashbarger's home.

Though the groups will meet all winter on the second Thursday, the next General Meeting will be in March.

In November, the Lydia group meet with Barb Merrell sharing a special prayer which her late husband, Rev. Dr. James Merrell, gave at the U.S. Senate on October 15, 2009. She also provided a handout of essays about song and the meaning people find in special songs. Charlotte Pullen provided the Bible Study about Mary Magdalene, from the DW Women's Study. She also had a wonderful picture book of all the many ways that Mary Magdalene has been set forth in art. They shared a time of thanksgiving/blessing. Four people attended.

The Martha Group met on Veteran's Day and had Max Ott sharing some stories of his military service. Vicki Ott shared the Devotional and Study from the DW Women's Study. Six people attended. Tabitha Group met at church with nine attending.

Sally Smith delivered the food from the church food bank to MBCC for the Martha Group in November. Thank you Sally for your dedication to the many efforts at MBCC!

From Pat Roseman and Janie Joplin, Service Team, they report: In November our DW membership responded abundantly for MBCC men and women. MBCC sends their THANKS!

Janie and Pat thank all of our Disciple Women for being so flexible in accepting the change to our December service. As we work together with Julie DeKinder, NOW Coordinator, providing for the Shoebox Gifts, we were able to offer Christmas surprises and joy to the NOW children we serve throughout the year. Julie is more than happy to do the shopping for us that our donations make possible and we also thank her. In January our service looks to our own service at WGCC with donations to the Neighbor Fund aiding our own congregation as well as those who come to our door for assistance. May joy fill your home as you celebrate the joy your giving brings to those in need.

Jane Martin

Gift cards for the Adopt-a-Family tree

As was the case last year, the Adopt-a-Family Tree is all gift cards. We were given a very short period of time to buy the gift cards, so I will buy them with the Church credit card. We are asking for you to send money to the Church to cover the cost of the cards.

We are adopting two families. Family One consists of four adults, three of whom are disabled. Family Two consists of six people: a grandmother, a mother and four female children, ages 1, twins age 3 and a 5 year old.

We will be giving each family food gift cards from Aldi's : Family One \$100. Family Two \$140.

We will also be giving gift cards to each person. The cards are for \$75 each. I will buy cards from Wal-Mart for Family One and from Target for Family Two.

The grand total is \$990. To contribute to this project, please send checks to the Church. Write on the memo line "Adopt-a-Family Xmas". Send in the money anytime during December.

Sally Smith

Sunday morning worship services will continue to be live-streamed on Facebook every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome - please invite your family and friends to tune in!

**The link to the page is:
<https://www.facebook.com/WGCCDisciples/>**

Do Your Holiday Shopping right here at WGCC

This Saturday, December 4!

The Annual [Art4Epilepsy.org](https://www.art4epilepsy.org) Holiday Boutique Sale

Open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Art Gallery and Chapel

Come shop a variety of products produced by artists and craftspeople. There will be fine art prints, calendars, original art, jewelry, pottery, fabric items, homemade soaps and of course the “cookie lady” who makes delicious cookies that each look like a piece of art. Something for all. 20% of all proceeds go to benefit [Art4Epilepsy.org](https://www.art4epilepsy.org).

If you purchased items from the online [Art4Epilepsy.org](https://www.art4epilepsy.org) boutique this is the time and place to pick them up.

Masks will be required for all vendors and shoppers. Shop local artists and help support [Art4Epilepsy.org](https://www.art4epilepsy.org).

Right: Holiday cookies by Heidi Ramspott



Dec. 8 deadline for ordering Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to order poinsettias this year in honor or memory of a loved one, please call Steve at the church office (314-961-3232), or email him at admin@wgcc.org

When you call or email, please let Steve know whom the plant is in memory/honor of. They can be taken home following the Quiet Christmas service on December 26.

The deadline for ordering is Monday, December 8.

Poinsettias are \$10 each, and a portion of each purchase will go toward supporting the Shepherd's Center of Webster-Kirkwood.

Recent prayer concerns for WGCC and MBCC

For Max Ott's cousin's family. His cousin passed away after falling from a ladder.

For Max Ott's grandson, who is healing from a concussion

For Susan Moore's family in Chicago

For James Burney, who is having surgery on Wednesday

For Eric Piening, following an appendectomy

For Laura Stuetzer's friend and brother-in-law, dealing with medical issues

For Laura Stuetzer's friend, Carm Mattera, suffering from bilateral kidney failure and ovarian cancer

For Laura Steutzer

For Kay Love's friend, Britney

For Deb Werner's niece-in-law, battling

triple negative breast cancer

For Lisa Rothe

Barb Merrell asks prayers for Jim Mowrey, suffering from dementia

For Rhonda Allridge and family

For MBCC's Pastoral Search Committee, as they seek a new leader for their congregation

For Pauline (Smith) England, who is suffering from advanced heart disease, and is living with her daughter in Springfield, MO

For Devoree Crist's sister, Rosemary.

For Shirley Arther

For Eva Moutrie

For Gregg Eiler's sister-in-law, as she battles breast cancer.

For Jane Yount

Prayers for DeVere and Bev Shoop

For all teachers, students, and school personnel, as the school year progresses

For Barb Farmer and her family

For Tom Reece, who is facing a severe kidney, liver, and heart failure. He has been given 6-12 months to live.

For Kenneth Tate

For Mildred Baker

For Bill and Arlene Sullivan

Analyn Howells is asking prayers for her twin sister, Evalyn Morrison, and her battle with cancer. She is dealing with side effects due to treatment

For Carole Hughes' friend, Melody, who was diagnosed with cancer, and just finished chemotherapy

For Bob Rose's friend, John, battling prostate cancer

An additional way to help families in need

In addition to our help through the Adopt-A-Family program, Breona Hawkins wants to pass along an additional giving opportunity for four families from Barack Obama School, where she used to work.

WGCC members and friends who would like to participate in providing Christmas gifts for these families can either contact Pastor Jeff for more information, or make a financial contribution to WGCC labelled "Obama School Christmas gifts." Thanks to everyone for your compassion and generosity!

WEBSTER GROVES CHRISTIAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission: Following Jesus' teaching and sacrificially serving the people who are the most marginalized.

Webster Groves Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

A Global Mission Congregation
1320 West Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis MO 63122



The SEGA connection newsletter is available at <http://www.mid-america-disciples.org/>

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