

Central United Methodist Church Epiphany Sunday January 4, 2026



Lectionary readings for Epiphany Sunday
January 4, 2026
Jeremiah 31:7-14 Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14 John 1:1-18

Beloveds,
Merry 9th Day of Christmas! I hope you still take time to ponder the mystery of Christmas each day.

We are blessed to have Antoinette Senjanovich, LCSW, preaching and leading in worship with me on Sunday. Ms. Senjanovich is a first-year student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. She is a clinical therapist, social worker, and candidate for ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church.

In preparation for Sunday, she and I discussed our Wesleyan heritage: our music and traditions. She selected meaningful hymns for this time of year. Part of her message reminds us of the Methodist New Year's tradition of observing a Watch Night. Historically, it is a time for renewing our baptismal vows and covenant to God.

You may recall that John Wesley's ministry to the poor was considered scandalous by the 18th century religious elites. The word "Methodist" was an insult that this new group of social and spiritual activists embraced. Wesley was, himself, both horrified and in awe of God's summons to serve coal miners, dock workers and the imprisoned; people excluded from the decorum and order of church life.

In 2025, the United Methodist Church released this new motto to guide our work: **"Love boldly. Serve Joyfully. Lead Courageously."**

A passionate love of God, neighbors and self enables us to resist evil and oppression. As we see God's image in all people, we are less likely to objectify others. With God's bold love, we can overcome the evil in our own hearts and stand up as we reclaim our Wesleyan roots.

Serving joyfully, we walk with our Methodist ancestors, past and present. We have a long and storied history of siding with the vulnerable. With God's help, we can be more Christ-like in our compassion. We can overcome the evil in the world.

The landscape of church life continues to shift and change. Leading courageously means that we will be reliable, persistent and seek to unite as we move the church into deeper discipleship and spiritual growth. Our forerunners in the faith turned the church upside-down. They took risks that threatened their reputation and safety. For inviting women to speak, visiting prisoners, singing hymns in public and

denouncing slavery at a time when the Atlantic slave trade was at its peak, early Methodists, like John's brother, Charles, were assaulted and arrested.

By God's grace, United Methodists today are empowered to lead the church outside its own comfort zone, to be relevant, and to make prophetic calls for justice and mercy. We resolve to continue to offend people by our proclamation of the God who loves the poor, the queer, the undocumented and the unhoused. We resolve to cling to the love of Jesus amidst bitterness and hate and the chaos they bring in 2026.

Let a spiritual fire blaze in our Church, Lord, so that we are not domesticated, "a dead sect having the form of religion without the power."

Happy New Year!

Pastor Biel

Worship Service

Join us on **Sunday, January 4, 2026** - Epiphany Sunday - in the Sanctuary for our in-person service. We celebrate the **Lord's communion every Sunday and we invite all to take part regardless of membership.**

The Worship service will also be available on **Zoom at 10:30 am**. Click on the link below and request access the Zoom link.

centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Bible Study



Join us for Bible Study from **9 am to 9:45 am** - Sunday morning via Zoom.

If you would like to be on the Zoom list for the Bible Study Class, please email the church office:

centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org.com



New Tax Deduction 2026



Beginning in 2026, taxpayers who take the standard deduction can also deduct up to \$1,000 (\$2,000 for married couples) for cash and check gifts made directly to qualified charities like Skokie Central Church.

What this means: If a person doesn't itemize deductions (and most of us don't), this gives you a new way to reduce your tax bill while supporting causes and charities you care about. It also means you can increase your support because it will cost you less at tax time!

[click here](#) to learn more.

Donate



We appreciate all the financial support that has been received to support the church and missions. You can now give your financial support to Central in many ways.

CASH and CHECKS— Cash and check donations can be placed in the offering box at our church services. Checks can be mailed to the church.

VENMO – Using the VENMO app, pay by credit card. Enter Central Church's Venmo email: centralchurchgiving@gmail.com.

ONE TIME DONATIONS OR SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK TRANSFER USING THESE OPTIONS:

ONLINE GIVING – go to <https://onrealm.org/skokiecentralumc/give/now> ; or use the QR Code.

TEXT TO GIVE – Using our secure online giving platform, TEXT to 73256 and send the message GIVECHURCH. A response will appear with a link to our online giving web page.

Altar Flowers



The altar flowers this week are in celebration of the New Year.

Fellowship



Join us after the church service for Epiphany Sunday Potluck Fellowship. Please bring your favorite dishes to share.

The following allergies and dietary restrictions within our congregation are known of: **corn, dairy, gluten, meat and onions.**

Missions

Dear Church Family,

The various Mission and Outreach activities of this church - Central United Methodist Church has been outstanding in 2025! Congratulations to YOU! Congratulations to US! We fed our neighbors, our members, our Niles Township community and showed hospitality. We have created Winter Warmth Packages for the community and donated money where there were grocery and basic needs.

The Mission Committee has been creative in helping others in kind and dignified ways - for instance, the "Winter Warmth Package". The Central Crafters created and designed about 30 flannel scarves, knitted various hats, baby bibs and wash cloths. Our church completed these packages by purchasing mittens, gloves and socks. Some packages were for infants, babies, toddlers and everyone else. Thank you dear family. The Mission Committee and this whole church continues to support the Mini Food Pantry. Kudos to all!!! Weekly, the Mini Food Pantry Storage Closet receives bags of groceries.

The Mission Committee is thankful for all the monetary gifts to support these three main projects. Through everyone's generosity with dollars or prayers, we were able to support each project in a significant way. This year our church collected enough to donate \$900.00 to the Niles Township Food Pantry. This is the largest gift we have given to

date. Other funds went to our Mini Food Pantry and Central's Families. We are very proud to be able to help our church families, our neighbors and our community. We are doing the work of Jesus in our little Kin-dom.

To regularly finance MISSIONS, click on our website address:

<https://www.skokiecentralumc.org/general-6>

This link takes you to the DONATE page of Central's website. Just answer about seven questions and you have made your financial commitment to Missions. Done!

The Mission Committee Members thank you!

We are: Doris Bloom, Jo Faber, Mar Haidari, Linda Hovland, Barb Smith, Kathy Tiffin, Mary Wadleigh, Mae Williams - and YOU!

Looking Ahead

Readers, Flowers & Fellowship, Oh My!
We are always looking for Volunteers.
Please sign up, TODAY!

January 4

Reader: Mary Wadleigh

Flowers: In celebration of Epiphany

Fellowship: Epiphany - Pot Luck

January 11

Reader: Ed Gut

Flowers: Mae Williams, in loving memory of her daughter, Dawn.

Fellowship: Alpha & Tina

January 18

Reader: Pam Castaneda

Flowers: Pam Castaneda, in loving memory of her husband, Raul.

Fellowship:

January 25

Reader: Remy Yabes

Flowers: Remy Yabes

Fellowship: Pot - Luck / Remy Yabes

Morning Tai-Chi Class



Weekly on Tuesday Log Cabin- 9 AM

Interested in learning Tai-Chi? Join our free class in the **Log Cabin, Tuesday mornings, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.** Classes are taught by certified instructors, Jas and Jo Faber. This slow, meditative exercise is designed to improve energy, relaxation, balance and overall health.

If you're interested, please email the church office at:

centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Central Caring Crafters



3rd Thursday of the month Next meeting is Jan 15

10 AM Ed Bldg. Room 7

The prayer shawl group is back as **Central Caring Crafters!** If you crochet, quilt, sew and have a heart for other crafts, gather with us to work, to learn how, or just come for the fellowship! Bring a bag lunch and stay for lunch and a treat. We hope to see you there!

If you're interested, please email the church office at: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Tuesday Morning Meditation



**Weekly on Tuesday
Log Cabin or Online
10:30 AM CDT**

Join us as we gather to practice Lectio Divina on the weekly lectionary readings.

Lectio Divina is a contemplative practice with its Christian roots in the Benedictine tradition. It combines slow,

conscious reading of a biblical or sacred text with contemplation and silent prayer. It is meant to promote communication with God and a deeper knowledge of Christ, in our lives today.

During Lectio Divina we put aside thoughts of studying the text. This is not the time to consider the historical or theological meanings of what we are reading. We read with a willingness to enter into text in a felt sense. The purpose of this practice is to hear, in silence, the word of God, in this moment. What, through this reading, is God saying to me right now? What do I hear that helps me know what it means to walk the Christ path today?

Lectio Divina has traditionally been a communal practice; that is, one shared when in a group but it can be done when alone.

If you're interested, please email the church office
at: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Mini Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who brings food for our Mini Food Pantry. The Pantry needs filling every day. Please bring something on Sunday - even a couple of cans would be gratefully accepted.

Please do not bring any containers - empty jars, etc.

Below is a list of suggested items - because the Mini Food Pantry is outside, it's important to only contribute non-perishable items, such as:

- **Canned goods** with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled water




Thank you for your support in helping others less fortunate.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Yoga

**MORE INFO
& REGISTER**



YOGA SAMPLER WITH VICTORIA BIEL
FRIDAYS 5:30–7 P.M.
FULL SESSIONS: \$125/\$156
DROP-INS: \$28/\$35

SESSION I:	SESSION II:
1/9: VINYASA	2/20: IYENGAR
1/16: YIN	2/27: VINYASA
1/23: HATHA	3/6: KUNDALINI
1/30: SOUND	3/13: RESTORATIVE
2/6: EFT/SOMATIC	3/20: LAUGHTER




**RESTORATIVE YOGA
WITH VICTORIA BIEL**
THURSDAYS 5:30–7 P.M.
1/8–2/26: \$200/\$250
3/5–4/30: \$200/\$250
DROP-INS: \$26/\$33





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Resources for Grief and Loss



Grieving loss consciously is at the center of the spiritual path. It is soul work — healthy, cleansing, and intelligent. The process allows us to metabolize the pain of loss and continue living. It lets us open to love.

By honoring what has passed away, we are free to embrace the life that is here.

Yet grief is so deeply painful, so hard to endure.

A question I am often asked is: How do I find refuge in the midst? What can help me move through the pain of separation?

to learn more [click here](#).

Prayer of the Week

God's light is present in this world.
Present in the Christ child, born to lead us out of darkness.
Present in the star, in all that guides us to love.
God's light is in the world, and the darkness did not overcome it.
God's grace is in the world, and our missteps will not overcome it.
We are loved; we are forgiven. Alleluia!
Amen.

Central United Methodist Church

Rev. Timothy Biel Jr., Pastor

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