

BEHOLD! SMYRNA

January 2026



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Dear Smyrna Folks

'I like to listen to podcasts on my drive down Hwy 213 from Oregon City toward Smyrna. Sometimes my favorite podcasts will offer a re-broadcast, a show they've played before that still seems appropriate. I'm always surprised when I listen to one to discover new things I haven't heard before.

So consider this letter to you a rebroadcast of my Behold note to you last year at this time. Do you remember it? Besides the dates (which I've changed) what new things do you notice?

As we step into 2026, the future may seem uncertain or unsettled. Many members of our community have **told me that you're looking for ways to ground in faith, hope, and purpose. One beautiful practice that has** gained traction in recent years is the use of "Star Words." Inspired by Epiphany traditions and the journey of the Magi, Star Words were first introduced by Pastor Cat.

On January 4, we will be invited to select star words to serve as a reminder of God's presence and guidance in our lives. **Unlike New Year's resolutions, Star Words aren't about striving to be better versions of ourselves but about opening our hearts to God's wisdom in a deeper way. They encourage us to approach** the year with curiosity, anticipation, and openness. Star Words offer a unique opportunity to center our faith in a year of uncertainty or change. They remind us that God's light is always shining, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

Each word invites us to explore how it connects with our personal lives, our communities, and the broader world around us. Throughout the year, these words can serve as a touchstone for reflection and growth, and our star words this year will come with a reflection guide that we can carry with us into the Lenten season. Hopefully, these words challenge us to consider how we can embody the essence of that word in our daily actions, relationships, and gifts of service.

If you can't be in worship on January 4, but would like a Star Word, please let me know and I will make sure you get one. May your word be a guiding light on your journey, a source of inspiration, and a reminder that God's star still shines brightly in our lives.

Blessings,
Pastor Jennifer

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Young Adult Fellowship

Meaning Makers Officially Launched!

The Meaning Makers are a group of young adults (17ish to 22ish) that meet every first and third Friday evening to share a meal, explore questions of faith and, well, meaning, and create something together.

If you have a young adult in your life who you think might be interested in the Meaning Makers, please feel free to connect them with Pastor Jennifer — or just show up!

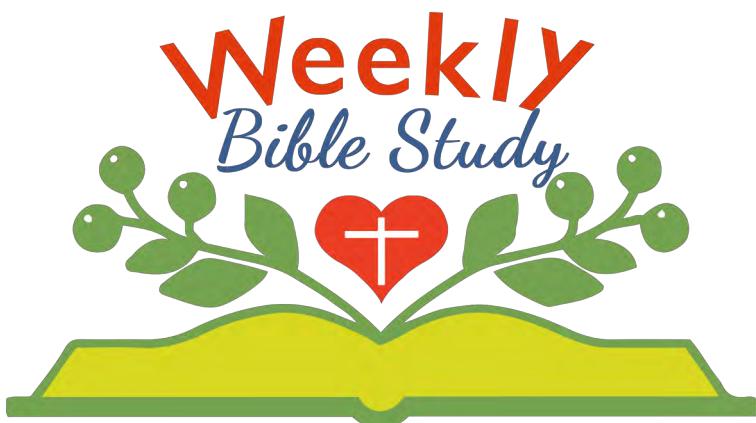


December Creations —

After inspiring us with a display of her handcrafted dolls, Karyl Carlson provided clay, tools, and guidance for making our own art.

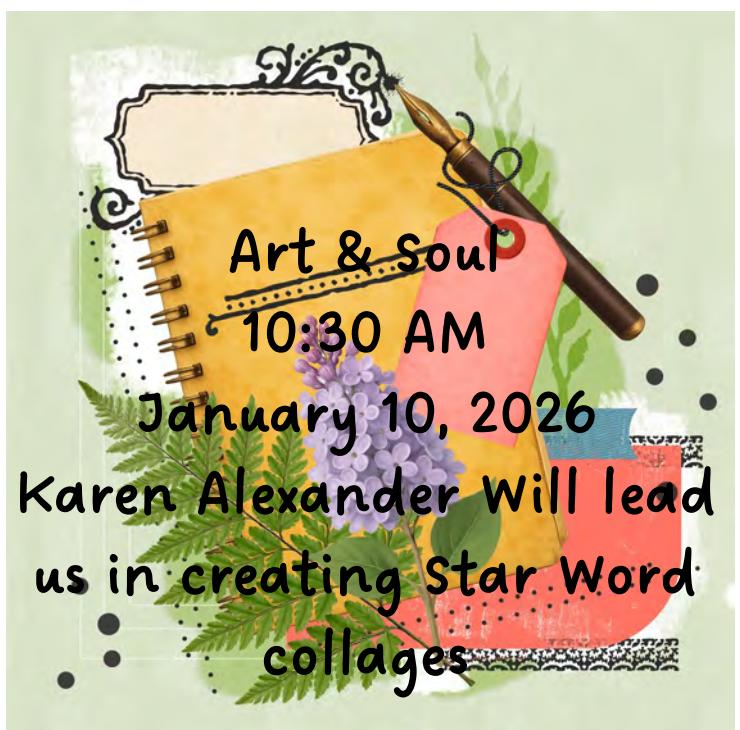
Gentle Yoga

Every Wednesday at 12:30, drop in to our gentle yoga group for a relaxing 45 minutes of stretching and strengthening. People with no experience in yoga, or lots of experience are all welcome. We practice in chairs, and you do not need to be able to get up and down from the ground, bring any props or mats, or wear special clothes. This class is free of a charge — a gift from Pastor Jennifer in gratitude for your support during her strenuous yoga teacher training in 2025.



Bible Study every Wednesday at 2 pm

Learning, conversation, community, prayer and helping shape the sermon for the coming week are all part of weekly Bible study. You can always join by zoom, if you'd rather not come in person. See you there!



Library Bookshelf

Check out these recent additions to Smyrna's Library...

- ⇒ Human Kind: Changing the World One Small Act At A Time by Brad Aronson. "This book is an uplifting reminder of what really matters and of how easily you can change a life—including your own."
- ⇒ Moment by Moment: the Art and Practice of Mindfulness by Jerry Braza. "Provides simple exercises for developing greater awareness and emotional involvement in our daily lives."
- ⇒ The Spirited Walker: Fitness Walking for Clarity, Balance, and Spiritual Connection by Carolyn Scott Kortge. "The author offers a wealth of easy-to-do breathing exercises, visualizations and active affirmations that transform fitness walking into a meditative practice."
- ⇒ Whispers from the Wild: Stories from a Wildlife Center by Jacqueline A. Carl. True stories from the American Wildlife Foundation, a place where "harsh realities are healed by the magic of ordinary people."

Did you know this about our Susan Connick?

My husband Al and I were visiting his family in Coos Bay, and went to an exhibit of carousel animals that was being displayed at the museum there. The animals were amazing (kenmeanscarousel) and there was a flyer there about learning to carve.

The claim was, "I can teach anyone to carve."

We had a chance to meet Ken Means (the carver/artist) and he was very dear, and said again that he could teach anyone to carve. We left to go to the deli for lunch, and Ken was there again, also dining, and we felt really good about the interrelationship.

I had been concerned that my husband had no other hobbies than golf for when he retired, so I signed him up for the class, offered by the week or for all three weeks in the summer. I went with him and was helping him carve when Ken came up behind me and said, "No one audits my class." So I stepped into something that turned out to be very fun, challenging and captivating. Our first project was the rocking horse which Al and I carved together and I painted, and then my second project was the baby giraffe.

Al had promised these two animals to his grandchildren and given them a date we'd deliver them (horrors!) so I



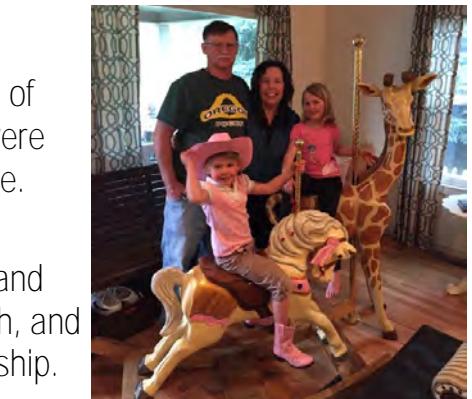
had to hustle to get the giraffe carved and painted. It was taller than I am so I had to stand on a step stool to carve and paint the little horns and top of the head. The third animal for me is a smaller-than-carousel rabbit that I've cut in half so when completed the one rabbit will be jumping over the other rabbit on the wall. Still largish (3 ft long but less cumbersome and space consuming than the huge carousel size

In 2019 I fell and broke my left hand and sprained my right hand which made me step back from carving. I am ready to jump in again, though, and am wrestling workshop space away from my husband. It takes about 1400 hours to carve and paint a carousel animal, and there aren't many wood carvers that do carousel anymore since plastics and 3-D printing. It was and is a surprising talent that I never knew I had.

LONELY? Medical issues? Need Help?

Please visit the Smyrna Resource page.

On Smyrna's website, www.smyrna-ucc.org, just click the Resource tab



RESOURCE Page

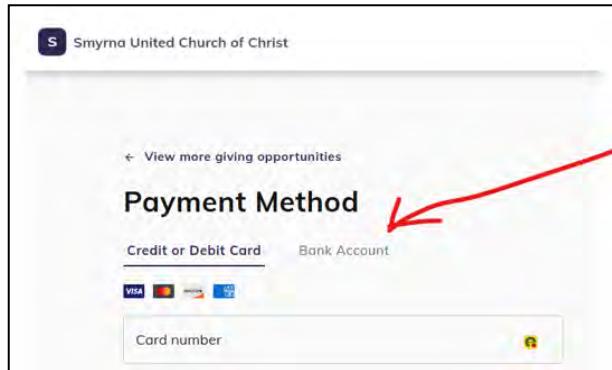
**A Helpful page for people in
our community.**

(Click here.)

Upgrades to Digital Giving at Smyrna

Smyrna started using a credit card processing system around 2011 from a company called Vanco Payments. Over time, Vanco interfaces were enhanced to allow us to create a donation page on **Smyrna's website**. There is a small cost (around 3%) to using credit/debit card payments. Last month, Vanco enhanced this giving portal so that **we can make donations using our bank's savings/checking account**. This feature is called ACH (Automatic Clearing House). A big plus is no cost to Smyrna nor the donor.

To see how this works, go to Smyrna's donation page. <https://secure.myvanco.com/YHXK/home> After you have specified a fund and an amount, **proceed to payments**. There is a "tab" that switches you from *Credit or Debit Card* to *Bank Account (ACH)*. You will need to enter your bank's routing number and your saving/checking account number. Here are some screenshots from Smyrna's donations/payment methods. If you have any questions, please let us know.



Smyrna United Church of Christ

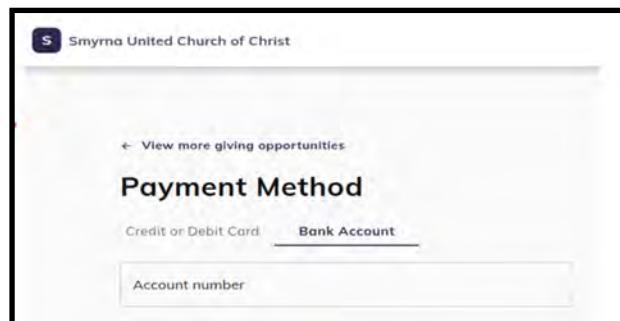
← View more giving opportunities

Payment Method (arrow pointing to this tab)

Credit or Debit Card Bank Account

Visa   

Card number 



Smyrna United Church of Christ

← View more giving opportunities

Payment Method

Credit or Debit Card Bank Account

Account number



Annual Reports due date is January 5!
Reports will be checked off as they come in. See list below

These reports will be needed:

- Pastor's Report**
- Moderator's Report**
- Trustees**
- Finance and Personnel**
- Pastoral Relations Committee**
- Board of Christian Education/Christian Nurture**
- Scholarship Report**
- Diaconate Report**
- Board of Mission and Outreach**
- Library Committee**
- Technology Committee**
- Women's Fellowship Report**
- Fund-raising dates for 2025**
- Health Committee**
- Building Use**
- Memorial Committee**
- Clerk's Report**
- Grounds Committee**
- Earth Care Committee**
- Cemetery Report**
- Camp Adams**
- Heartline**
- Treasurer Report — separate from annual**
- Coffee Hour Volunteers — please sign up**
- Flower Volunteers — please sign up**

**No matter who you are,
or where you are on life's
journey, we welcome
you.**



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all



I Thessalonians 1:2, NIV

- Paul and Mary Ashton
- Barack Holt and Family
- Anne Stronko and Roger Marin
- The Crispin Family
- Murlene Liechty
- John Farrell (Janet Bess' brother)
- Christine Albright
- Winter Pebley
- Jeannie Rogers' brothers, Steven and John

If you know anyone who should be on the prayer list in the Behold, please let Jeannie or Elaine know. If they would enjoy receiving cards notify someone in the Diaconate.

Mission Statement

Smyrna United Church of Christ is striving to be:

- ♦ A place of peace, where we offer to all an extravagant welcome wherever you are in your life journey regardless of your ethnicity, marital status, religion, gender, race, age, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation, and where we teach the stories of God's love and call on our lives.
- ♦ A spiritual haven, where we accept and care for all people and God's creation in an outreach of grace.
- ♦ A lighthouse of God's compassion, where worship, teaching, learning and spiritual growth take place in community, powered by thought and action.
- ♦ A Christian people, working for God's realm in ecumenical harmony with other people of faith and conviction.

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	28	29	30	31	1	2
			7pm - NYE Party at Smyrna		6:30pm - Meaning Makers	3
CH: Joel & Elaine SS: Play Day 10:30am - Sun. School 10:30am - Worship	BD: Don B BD: Tavi R 10am - Office hours 11am - Office meeting - Jen 7pm - Diaconate @ zoom 7pm - AA/AO Meeting	10am - Office hours 11am - Office meeting - Jen 7pm - Diaconate @ zoom	12:30pm - Gentle Yoga 2pm - Bible Study @ https:	BD: Christine F W.F. Luncheon 10am - Office hours 12pm - W. F. Luncheon		BD: Liz C 10:30am - Art and Soul @
Ch: Christian Education 10:30am - Sun. School 10:30am - Worship	BD: Morgan R 7pm - AA/AO Meeting	BD: Ryan Y 10am - Office hours 11am - Office meeting - Jen	12:30pm - Gentle Yoga 2pm - Bible Study @ https:	BD: Nicholas S 10am - Office hours 12pm - Memory Cafe 7pm - Church Council Meeting	BD: Julie S 6:30pm - Meaning Makers	17
10:30am - Sun. School 10:30am - Worship	BD: Anne B 7pm - AA/AO Meeting	10am - Office hours 11am - Office meeting - Jen	12:30pm - Gentle Yoga 2pm - Bible Study @ https:	BD: Carl S BD: Diane P BD: Hope I 10am - Office hours 12pm - W. F. Lucheon		23
Annual meeting and potluck CH: Diaconate Team A 10:30am - Sun. School 10:30am - Worship	7pm - AA/AO Meeting	10am - Office hours 11am - Office meeting - Jen	12:30pm - Gentle Yoga 2pm - Bible Study @ https:	10am - Office hours		BD: Nickson I 31