



Please join us for worship.
Midway Kids: 10:30
Worship: 10:30

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Calendar

Sundays —

Women's Bible Study 5:00 p.m.
Midway Students 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Mondays — 6:30 p.m.
Boy Scout Troop 68

Last Monday of Month—
Gorgeous Girls Lunch: 11 a.m.

Tuesdays—
Prayer Ministry—1:30 p.m.

Wednesdays —
Midway Hotel Lunch—Noon
Choir Rehearsal — 6:29 p.m.

Thursdays — 9-4:00
Sewcial open sewing
Yoga at 11:00
Men's Bible Study 6:00 p.m.
1st and 3rd—Twice Blessed
Open Noon to 5 p.m.

This Month

Friday, December 6
Christmas Store Setup — 10:00

Saturday, December 7 - 10:00 a.m.
Twice Blessed Christmas Store

Tuesday, December 10 — Noon
Second Tuesday Lunch
Prayer Ministry — 1:30

Thursday, December 12 — Noon
Social Sisters Christmas Lunch

Sunday, December 15 — 6:00 p.m.
Christmas Program

Midway Locust Grove Church



Volume 37
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Locust Leaves

The Gift of Longing

This December, we invite you to journey with us through the season of Advent as we explore the profound truth that our deepest longings are, in fact, God's gifts to us.

Through this four-week series, *The Gift of Longing*, we'll celebrate the arrival of Jesus and discover

how His coming answers the core desires of our hearts.



Beyond
the Pulpit

Pastor
Ben

What is Advent?

Advent, meaning "coming" or "arrival," is a season of anticipation and preparation as we look back to the first coming of Jesus in Bethlehem and forward to His promised return. It's a time to reflect on God's faithfulness, renew our hope in His promises, and prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew. Advent invites us to pause amidst the season's busyness and remember the true meaning of Christmas: the fulfillment of God's plan to redeem and restore His people through Jesus. Here is how the series will breakdown:

Week 1: Hope

Reflecting on our longing for Jesus to come anew into our lives, we'll see how the hope of His presence meets our deepest needs.

Week 2: Joy

Jesus's birth in Bethlehem reminds us of our longing for God to move in our lives and fills us with joy beyond measure.

Week 3: Peace

In Christ, we find the answer to our longing for a Savior who calms our hearts and brings true peace.

Week 4: Love

Looking ahead to Jesus's return, we'll rejoice in His promise to make all things new and experience the fullness of His love.

This Advent season, join us as we marvel at how Jesus fulfills every heart longing with His peace, joy, hope, and love. Together, let's celebrate the beauty of His first coming and the promise of His glorious return. Make plans to worship with us and be intentional about inviting family, friends, and neighbors as we prepare our hearts for the coming King!

Peace,
Ben

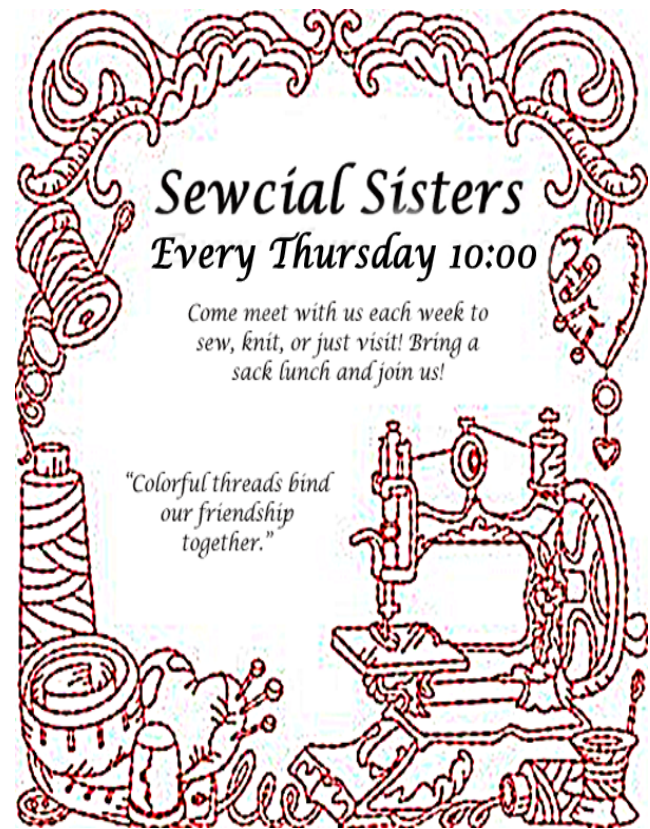
Ministries & Missions

Mission Team joins Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program

The Missions team has recently joined the Angel Tree program, which is a branch of Prison Fellowship.

This program allows for children of incarcerated parents to receive a gift from their parent at Christmas.

We currently have 3 children to provide gifts for, with the ability to take up to 20 children. If you are interested in helping with this mission, please ask Jessie Kempf for more details & how to help.



Sewcial Sisters are having a shared Christmas lunch and gift exchange on December 12th.

We will drop off finished quilts for Colony Pointe Memory Care before Christmas. We are starting a new project for teens graduating out of the Foster Care Program. More info to come.

We are open to any and all creative friends on Thursdays from 10:00 on.

Join the
**Midway Locust Grove
CHURCH CHOIR**

Where
**Church
Sanctuary**

All
WELCOME TO JOIN
All that's needed is
enthusiasm,
commitment, and the
LOVE to sing.

When
**2024-25 Kickoff
Wednesday,
9/4/24
6:29 p.m.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Glenna or Jim Johnson or
ANY choir member!

*The Will of God
never takes you
where the Grace of God
will not protect you.*

Happy Birthday

December 2024

If someone's name does not appear here and they do have a birthday this month, please let us know by email and we will update our records.

1 Connie Wieberg	10 Tim Praiswater	15 Betty Fuemmeler	31 Jordyn Moore
2 Evan Hughes	11 Jennifer Butzlaff	16 Michele H. H. Prado	12 Glenna Johnson
3 Steve Green	11 Dale Graff	17 Susie Henneke	18 Gyla Elmore
6 Bob Grant	11 Lyndi Fuemmeler Rees	17 Cooper Martin	21 Janie Butler
8 Billy Cook	12 Leslie Utterback	20 Laura Cunningham	24 Michelle O'Neal
9 Gale Bensussen	13 Leslie Brown	21 Andrew Gessling	27 Alyson Price
9 Mariea Caruthers	14 Denise Lasley	26 Julie Roberts	
10 Marsha Coleman			

Please join us for the 42nd Annual All-Church

christmas program

Welcome
to our
WORLD

Sunday, December 15, 2024
6:00 p.m. MLGC Sanctuary
Annual Christmas Program featuring music by
MW Sprouts, MW Kids, MW Jazz Combo, & MW Chancel Choir
Desserts to follow plus a visit by Santal



Getting to know you

With the recent and continuing growth of our congregation, it seemed a good idea to revive a feature from earlier years of Locust Leaves. We will feature someone in each month's issue, alternating new and longtime members. Thanks to LeeAnn Martin for coordinating the series.

Sheldon and Janet Toepke

When Sheldon and Janet retired in 2003, they had already determined where they would spend their retirement years. Over a period of 11 years, their three children had attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, which had the qualities they sought for their retirement, a college town with good medical services. Remembering their early life experiences they purchased a farm northwest of Columbia in 1998.

Sheldon was raised as a Lutheran, Janet grew up as a Baptist. They raised their family in the Lutheran Church, where they were active with the youth groups. As they settled into their retirement farm they needed to find a church nearby so they didn't have to drive into town as their vision became less dependable. After visiting several rural churches in the area, they settled in at Locust Grove, and formally became members on December 11, 2022.

Sheldon was an engineering manager for McDonnell-Douglas/Boeing in St. Louis. He worked on projects from fighter planes, Blue Angels and Thunderbirds, to Skylab, to the deaths of astronauts on Apollo. He also worked on flammability of fluids used. After retiring, he served on many boards and committees for University of Missouri Extension.

Janet was a stay-at-home Mom. While their three children were in school, she ran their church's child care program, which grew to more than 100 children. She chaired a Project Graduation program during their children's high school



years. Later she did some substitute teaching, including calculus which she had never studied.

In the middle of Sheldon's engineering career the couple spent 10 years farming in Illinois with his parents. The acreage was small so they raised 1,000 pigs a year, wanting their kids to grow up with farm experience.

The family consists of three children, Joseph a retired Major from the U.S. Army, Nicholas, a veterinarian, and Faye, a physical therapist in sports medicine. There are eight grandchildren, Shea, McKensie, Kelsey, Nathan, Katie, Zach, Grant, and Tyler. Of these, three are in college and two in high school. There is one great-grandson, Adrian.

A farm must have pets; this one has one dog, Libby (short for Liberty), and eight outside cats.

The Toepkes were married on August 31, 1968. One of their favorite memories is their 50th wedding anniversary, which they celebrated with a vow renewal service.

Nearly 100 people attended from all stages of their married life. Guests came from Texas, Illinois, Florida, and Minnesota. Among the guests were couples who were in the youth groups Sheldon and Janet worked with in their early church. Those couples are now grandparents too. Janet's comment on the event, "It was a huge blessing to have them with us on that special occasion."

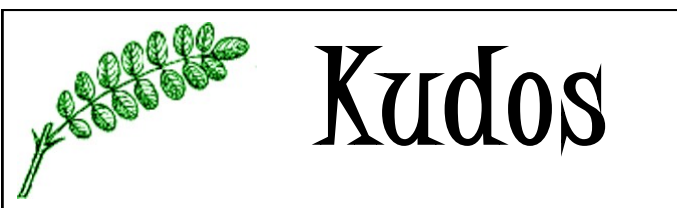
Editor's note: If we ever expand Locust Leaves to a 36-page paper, we'll try to tell you the rest of the story of Sheldon and Janet Toepke.



From time to time worship is enhanced with special music beyond the choir's regular offerings. On November 17, choir member Steve Lightner joined his grand-



daughter Kayli Lightner for a duet of "Only Hope," the Psalms reminder that God is the only trustworthy source of help and hope.



**Know something nice
about someone?
Let us know about it
for KUDOS.**

Clete and Kathy Koehler have yet another proud moment with a grandchild. Chael is a junior at Lexington High School, and is the MSHSAA Class 2 State Cross Country Champion! This is a triple for Chael, having won 1st in District, 1st in Conference, and now 1st in State.

He ran at Gans Creek November 9, finishing the 5000m race with a time of 16:31. In spite of the rain and a slippery muddy track, it was a great day for Lexington. The runners all persevered, and came out on



top! Addison Smith, a sophomore at LHS, placed 1st in the girls race, and the Lexington Minutewomen XC team placed 1st at State! A police escort met the happy bus load of team members on the ride into town!

Chael is the son of Katie & Michael Lichte.

Chael got talked into running in Middle School because his friends were running. He found out that the camaraderie, coaches, and XC family soon made up his mind to be a runner! Although Chael, unlike his sister, Ellie, admits to "not liking to run!"

The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toils, and mocks our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray."

Samuel Chadwick

Rain adds Divine Touch to Midway Prayer Walk *By Jessica Kempf*



The first annual Midway Prayer Walk was held on a rainy Saturday morning, November 9. The weather didn't stop over 50 people from walking a 5K to pray over our community, country, schools, families, & give praise.

The volunteers organized a coffee and hot cocoa station for warm up, and several walkers purchased t-shirts and hoodies which supported our non-profit Midway on a Mission. During the walk, each walker received a bookmark with prayers written by our prayer team for each half mile.

At the halfway point, we set up the cross at the Midway Heights Baptist Church. Each walker was invited to write prayers on different color ribbons and tie them to the cross. A special thanks to the



volunteers at Midway Baptist for providing restrooms and waters at the turn!

The event ended back at Midway Elementary where we sang three hymns as a group through the halls of the

school. It was a powerful, serene, and beautiful morning of prayer for our community. We look forward to hosting it again next year. Special thanks to our prayer walk committee for helping to organize this memorable event: Leslie Brown, Lauren Mendez, Lynda Baumgartner, Sherri Perry, Stacy Lee, Lori Stoll, and Margaret Preus.





Jessica leads the group filling the school's hallways with hymns to conclude the day's activity.

Midway citizens and church members who shared the day say farewell with hopes of meeting again for next year's Prayer Walk.

Editor's note: Kathy Hughes has offered her regular column space to members of the Rez Trip to offer their thoughts on the trip.

The church mission trip to Pine Ridge Oglala Lakota Reservation in September was full of interesting events. Some of the details were learning experiences. Many were variances of life as we know it in Midway. However, when going on a mission trip you are taking a step into discomfort.

One of the first things we noticed after unpacking the vehicles was the sign posted on every paper towel dispenser: PLEASE TAKE ONLY ONE. THATS ENOUGH! We tried to comply.

Our sleeping rooms were in a building separate from the main building. Which also had bunk beds. Each room had 4 bunk beds. Only one outlet. I had taken a power strip. All four women had several electronics that needed recharging. A fan in the window was on all night for cooling. It was turned off during the day and the window closed to keep the cool in. It was 90 degrees most days.

Every morning coffee was ready at 7 am. Just in time for those of us who greeted the rising sun at 6:30. Ask us about that experience!

The fellowship building, named Shelam was set up for efficiency. Metal picnic tables were for sitting while listening to talks or entertainment by Lakota. Try sitting on them for an hour or two! We talked about sending cushions for future groups.

Our first tour was to the Sanctuary. Another long bus ride. We saw miles of bad lands. Raw, eroded buttes and pinnacles. Beautiful but the history is unpleasant at best. Once we reached the sanctuary we were instructed to be silent. Don't take anything or leave anything. Sit with distance between each other. Meditate. When I found a place to sit down I looked down and found a pile of broken turquoise glass. I took a picture to bring back. Lots of souls and mystery in this rugged spot.

Daily we listened to Wisdom of the Elders. Philosophy and teachings of the native People.

ON THE REZ

*With Mariea
Caruthers*

A quote from Rachel Naomi included this: We are either fixing or helping which can be draining. Or we Serve, which is renewing.

All participants were assigned to a crew of four. Eight crew teams names were posted. Each day two crews worked together. That changed daily. Every crew had a turn in the dining room/kitchen, setting up or cleaning after the meal. Simple tasks like putting food on the shelf or washing dishes.

These crews also went out on the reservation to build ramps, bunk beds, sand and paint beds and water plants in the garden. On our first assignment I helped build a ramp. As we were finishing two young kids brought their trucks out and started playing on it. A clean safe place. The bathroom for us was at least a 20 minute drive to a place with public restrooms. During lunch time.

The shop was down the drive from the bunkhouse. Sawing. Power drills. Sanding. Painting. All happened here. Interesting conversations and friendships formed.

The Garden was about 45 minutes away. A good place to visit. The restrooms were inside a building with AC. We lingered here!

Transportation to worksites was usually on a school bus or van. A water cooler to fill our water bottles and a cooler held lunch. Deli meat, cheese, bread, cut up apples or oranges and carrots. Only ONE each. Rationed closely. Same every lunch.

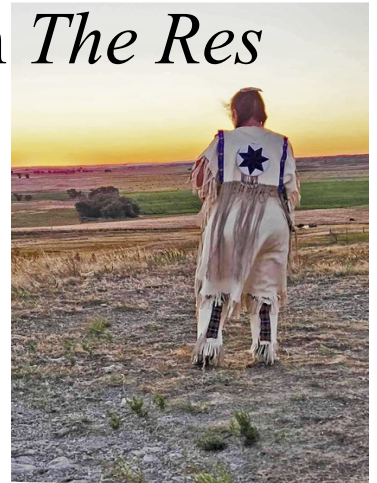
After five days of cereal or PBJ for breakfast and soup for dinner we were looking forward to the trip home. Almost in unison we all voted for STEAK as our first meal off the Rez!!! Elk. Bison. Beef. Fried potatoes. Then a stop at the Pie and Purple Ice Cream Shop. What's next? We mentioned fudge. But didn't find any.

As Kathy Hughes wrote in the October newsletter, the trip our family of volunteers took was a life changing mission trip. Truly Family. We are all related. I invite you to join our family next year to see and work at Pine Ridge Reservation.

Second Tuesday Lunch reports on *The Res*



The members of the mission trip to Pine Ridge Reservation took the speaker's platform at the November Tuesday Lunch to present their views on the mission. See Page 8 for one of those views. The lunch itself took on a new look to celebrate an early Thanksgiving. At left, Dale Graff and Jerry Wirth carve the turkey served in place of the traditional fried chicken.



Following the traditional carry-in buffet dinner, each member of the trip spoke of their recollections of their role in this important annual Locust Grove mission.



Members of this year's mission to the Reservation, left to right, were Belinda Thompson,

Jana Wirth, Keith Andersen, Jerry Wirth, Mariea Caruthers, and Kathy Hughes.



These photos from the trip by Mariea Caruthers are discussed in her On the Rez article on Page 8. Thanks to Kathy Hughes for turning over her regular column space to those who want to share their impressions of the trip.



The Kitchen Cabinet

Remembering
Mary Kaye's
Food Ministry

HOLIDAY BLESSINGS FROM MY FAMILY TO YOURS...

This cake is great for breakfast with a hot cup of coffee. Serve warm. The spices will fill your kitchen with the smells of Christmas. Enjoy, **Hope Burkart**

Southern Sweet Apple Cake

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cup **self-rising flour**
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 Granny Smith apple (peeled and diced)
- 1 tsp vanilla

2 cups chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Beat sugar and eggs, add oil, flour and cinnamon. Beat until well combined. Fold in diced apples and pecans. Pour into greased 9x13 pan. Bake 30-35 minutes. Serve warm.

God Bless Your Christmas

*God bless your Christmas wherever you are and
keep your courage bright;*

*For the spirit of man is the candle of God, and
it burns on the darkest night.*

*God bless your Christmas wherever you are and
keep you strong in faith*

*For the Spirit of God is the refuse of man
and the light in his dwelling place.*



GORGEOUS GIRLS

Join us for lunch!

**Our next meeting
will be
February 24, 2025.
See note below.**

**Email Kathy Koehler
if interested;
kkoehler1976@gmail.com**

**Because of the holiday season
and the possibility of bad
weather, the Gorgeous Girls will
not meet in December and January.
Have a wonderful holiday
season, stay well, we will meet in
February 2025.**

**Join us for
Second Tuesday Lunch
December 10
at 12:00 noon in the
Fellowship Hall.
Bring a dish
and a friend.**



Calling All Elves!

Your services are needed Friday and Saturday, December 6th & 7th, for our 4th Annual Christmas Store!

Looking at our sign-up sheet, we are in special need of help for the actual day of the event on Saturday. If you've never been a part of this mission, we think you will find it to be a true blessing for your holiday season.

And those items you've been saving may be delivered any time the week of our event (12/2-12/6).

Hope to see you there!

Jill and Glenna

ps – Dress Festively





MIDWAY LOCUST GROVE CHURCH

2600 N. Locust Grove Church Road
Columbia, MO 65202

Pastor: Rev. Ben Lee
Administrative Assistant: Catherine Shanahan
Church phone: 573-445-4667
Pastor's cell phone: 478-447-4438
Email: mwlocustgrove@gmail.com
Email: blee.mwlocustgrove@gmail.com
Facebook: [@mwlocustgrove](https://www.facebook.com/mwlocustgrove)
YouTube: [mwlocustgrove](https://www.youtube.com/mwlocustgrove)
Instagram: [@mwlocustgrove](https://www.instagram.com/mwlocustgrove)

Our Mission:
We exist to
gather in grace,
grow in Christ,
and go share the Gospel.

Locust Leaves Editor: Gene Baumann
Rocheport@aol.com 573-445-1998

The Back Row By Gene Baumann

In anticipation of our first Midway Prayer Walk the morning of November 9, and remembering that we were in a season of praying for rain, I found myself hoping the rain would hold off at least until the afternoon.

I suspected the event would be canceled as I watched the rainy-day forecast on my cell phone. The dictionary defines "rainy day" as "a period of want or need," as in "saving for a rainy day."

As I looked out my front door when I got up that morning, I saw a wet sidewalk and thought the Prayer Walk would have to wait; but I felt I should go to the school to be sure.

To my pleasant surprise, folks were gathering and plans were con-

Find the hidden Bible  ***in this issue.***

Visit our Web Site: www.mwlocustgrove.com

Volume 37 Issue 12 December 2024

**If we had a
Message Board...**

**Tuesday Lunch will be
at noon on December 10
in our Fellowship Hall.**

tinuing to walk the walk. While a light rain fell, the walkers made the five-mile trek through Trails West and Rolling Wood subdivisions to the midway Baptist Church, making several prayer stops along the way and attaching prayer ribbons to our portable cross when they arrived at the church. .

It was a divinely inspired decision to do the walk. If we pray *for* rain, surely we should be willing to walk *in* the rain.

See Page 2 for organizer Jessica Kempf's report on the walk.

