

The Rabbi's Gift

Once a great order, a decaying monastery had only five monks left. The order was dying. In the surrounding deep woods, there was a little hut that a Rabbi from a nearby town used from time to time. The monks always knew the Rabbi was home when they saw the smoke from his fire rise above the treetops. As the Abbot agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to him to ask the Rabbi if he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The Rabbi welcomed the Abbot at his hut. When the Abbot explained the reason for his visit, the Rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the Abbot and the Rabbi sat together discussing the Bible and their faiths.

The time came when the Abbot had to leave. "It has been a wonderful visit," said the Abbot, "but I have failed in my purpose. Is there nothing you can tell me to help save my dying order?" "The only thing I can tell you," said the Rabbi, "is that the Messiah is among you."

When the Abbot returned to the monastery, his fellow monks gathered around him and asked, "What did the Rabbi say?" "He couldn't help," the Abbot answered. "The only thing he did say, as I was leaving was that the Messiah is among us. Though I do not know what these words mean."

In the months that followed, the monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the Rabbi's words: The Messiah is among us? Could he possibly have meant that the Messiah is one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one of us is the Messiah? Do you suppose he meant the Abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even so, Elred is virtually always right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. Of course the Rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah?

As they contemplated in this manner, the monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah and in turn, each monk began to treat himself with extraordinary respect.

It so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the beautiful forest and monastery. Without even being conscious of it, visitors began to sense a powerful spiritual aura. They were sensing the extraordinary respect that now filled the monastery. Hardly knowing why, people began to come to the monastery frequently to picnic, to play, and to pray. They began to bring their friends, and their friends brought their friends. Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the older monks. After a while, one asked if he could join them. Then, another and another asked if they too could join the abbot and older monks. Within a few years, the monastery once again became a thriving order, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.

January 2026 Newsletter



Bishop Dan Schwerin encouraged us to consider how 2026 could be a year of *Practicing Hope*. I share this story that we read at the first session of "listening circle" in the Academy for Spiritual Formation. May it inspire our hearts to be open and see the holiness in each other.

January 4
Epiphany Sunday
Communion Sunday
"Fear Doesn't Stop Us"
Speaker,
Robin Deak

January 11
Baptism of the Lord Sunday
"Power of Presence"

January 18
Human Relations Sunday
"Ordinary Time"
Lay Speaker,
Alexis Alm

January 25
"Carrying the Light"

*** Pizza & Game fellowship**
following the worship



January Birthdays

Jennifer Pang 1/10
Matt Thomas 1/14
Amy Doyle 1/27

January Anniversaries

Ken & Katy
Spooner 1/11
Doug & Peggy
Literski 1/19
Thomas & Toby
Sroga 1/20
Brighten & Elantine
Sunderraj 1/24

If you are celebrating your birthday and/or anniversary this month, but do not see your name, please call the office and let us know.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS

Contact each group leader or call/email the church office to join the conversation. Check the weekly e-news or your leader's email for their in-person and zoom meetings.

Spirituality Group, Wednesdays at 9 a.m.

Linda Mullen mullen520@comcast.net

Women's Bible Study, Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Lisa Greenwood lisajoegreenwood@yahoo.com
Amy Doyle amybryandoyle@aim.com

Men's Group, Saturdays at 7:30 a.m.

Bryan Doyle amybryandoyle@aim.com

Praying Stitches Ministry * Monday, Jan 12 * 1 p.m.

Praying Stitches invites all who know how to or are willing to learn to sew, knit or crochet! Can't make a daytime meeting? You can still participate! Sew a pillow case (we have an easy pattern). Knit or crochet a 12x12 square (or several) and one of our ladies will put them together making lovely prayer shawls. For more details, see Cheryl Fournier. Our next meeting is at church on Monday, Jan 12.

An Afternoon of Pizza & Games * Sunday, Jan 25

Join us for an fun afternoon of board games and pizza following service. You bring the games and we will provide the pizza.

Sunday School Class * 10:15 a.m.

We are now offering in person Sunday School for children. After Children's Time during worship, the children will be dismissed to the Sunday School room. If you have any questions or would like to teach the class, please contact Mindy Zeppo at mamcall27@yahoo.com.

Youth Group will resume on Sunday, Jan 11 * 4 p.m.

We invite all the youth to come meet your friends and have an evening of fun.

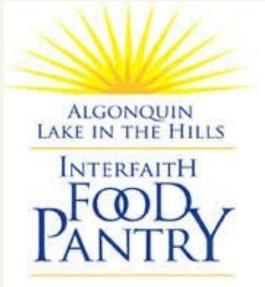
**A HUGE Thank You to our congregation! We donated dinners for 41 families and gave 24 gifts to 8 people in our community. Grafton Food Pantry organized this event so we know the items were sent to needy families in our area. Any questions, ask Michele Linner.



Duane
Graf's
Going
Home
Service

Happy New Year!

January Collection



You can drop off gently used clothes & shoes in the bin.

 **Reach Everyone**
with Acts of kindness & build Communities of Hope

Christ United Methodist Church

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Rev. Mi-Sook Yoo, Pastor
Nisha Waters,
Administrative Assistant

LET US GIVE

2025 missions report by Michele Linner

FOOD PANTRIES:

Algonquin/LITH Food Pantry food donated 350 lbs. \$650 total food value
Total cash given \$325
Crystal Lake Food Pantry food donated 300 lbs. \$525 total food value
Total cash given \$325
Grafton Food Pantry (approx.) food donated 200 lbs. (estimated) \$350 food value Total cash given \$ 325 *Food was not weighed.
Veteran's Path to Hope 100 lbs. \$180 total food value - Total cash given \$250
Toilet Paper Collection 72 lbs - value of \$130
Mini Food Pantry - did not collect this year

Total donations and food worth = approx. \$3000

FUND-RAISERS: All proceeds went to Mission Fund

Clothing Bin - all year \$700
Bake Sale – February \$384
Auction for a Cause – April \$1200
Culver's Fund raiser – September \$1300
Craft Sale – October \$500
Pie Sale – November \$300
Cookie Sale – December \$550
Total money from fund-raisers - \$4900
Giving Tree and Holiday Meals – December 41 x \$35 = \$1635 for dinners plus \$500 for gift (\$ and gifts went to Grafton Township)
Total money for Families in Need (in December) - \$2135

OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES:

Collection for NIConference "Fill the Truck" event (April-May) estimated value \$800
Backpack/school supplies – estimated value \$700
Total approx. \$1500 in goods donated

OTHER CUMC ACTIVITES MISSION SUPPORTS:

FMSC (Feed my starving children) 2-3 dates per year
Midwest Mission trip (help with cost and collect items needed) Did not go in 2025
Kids Around the World (food packing event)

In addition to the above, \$7, 500 will be distributed to various charities and funds for 2025. Mission is also pledging to cover the cost of anyone going on the Midwest Missions Trip in 2026. ***Estimate - over \$14,500 in donations (money and goods) given to charities in 2025.**

Thank you for being a partner of Christ's ministry through your generous gifts!



You can now make all your donations online. Simply visit our website and click the "Online Giving" box on themain page or scan the QR Code on the top. You can also mail the donation to church, use EFT (Electronic Fund Transfer) or QCD (Qualified Charitable Distribution). For any assistance, contact Joe Greenwood, Financial Secretary at josephgreenwood@yahoo.com or 847-458-4698.