

FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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DECEMBER 2022

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MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

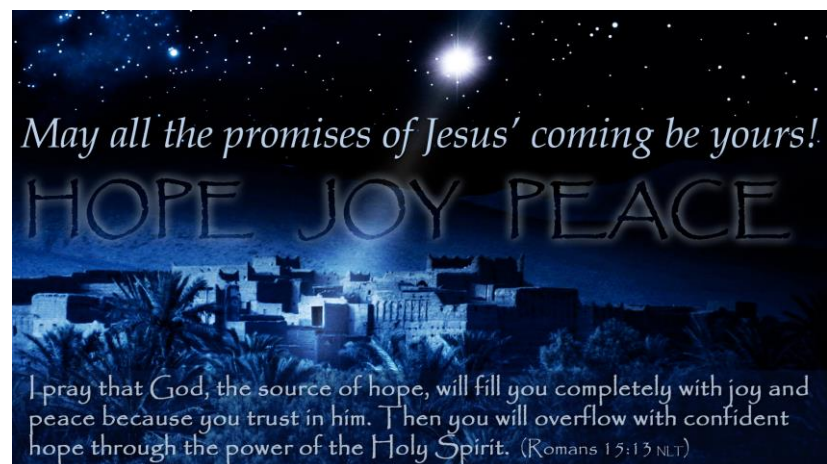
Dearest Faith,

I hope all of you are having a wonderful Advent season! On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, a bunch of us gathered in the warmth of the sanctuary to decorate for Advent and Christmas. It was such a joyful time of hanging ornaments and arranging the nativity scene and sharing coffee and doughnuts. Most of all, it was a joyful time of being together.

That Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, I shared these thoughts: *I love that God has brought us together to live into this Advent season together. It can be a time when we are reminded of the darkness around us, but it is also a time when we draw near to each other to share warmth with each other, to hold each other up, and to remind each other that God is drawing near, here and now. Christmas will come. Christ, the light of the world enters into the world, into all of our places of darkness to light the way.*

The light of Christ is constantly breaking through, and I think there is an invitation or a reminder during the Advent season to look for that light. Maybe it's in the smile of a friend, or the presence of a loved one. Maybe it's in a joyful memory, or in a moment of hopeful anticipation. My prayer for each of us during this Advent season is that we may constantly look for the light of Christ and discover that light constantly breaking through.

Grace and peace,
Jed



“Christmas Countdown”

Apparently, people love Christmas so much they start putting up Christmas lights and huge inflatables in their yards right after Halloween. I couldn't wait either, so I drug out some of our collectables in early November.

As I carefully placed a recently gifted beautiful nativity set on the sideboard in the dining room, I thought of the song – “Come Just as You Are”. I thought about Mary and Joseph. They must have been exhausted from their trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This trip could have taken anywhere from four to seven days. They were out in the elements the entire time. Their provisions may have been minimal, and you know she must have been very uncomfortable walking and riding a donkey so close to her delivery date. After all this, they arrived at their destination and there was no room for them at the inn. Being forced to retire to the stable, they were probably greeted by a chorus of dirty, smelly livestock. I'm guessing this is not what Mary had in mind for the birth of the child who would save his people. And then the group of low life shepherds showed up. You know that group of social outcasts. A lower class of individuals representing the poor and humble. Now you see where I'm going with this? God does the extraordinary with the ordinary!

And today we are invited to “Come just as you are, hear the spirit call, come just as you are, come and see, Christ the King, come and live forever more.” And as we come to him just as we are, may Christ come to you this Christmas with the gift of love, the blessing of hope, and the promise of peace. Susan



RICK'S REFRAIN

This is a busy time in our church. We've decorated with trees, lights, garlands, Chrismon ornaments and other bright adornings. We want our surroundings to remind us of the light and love sent to us long ago in the form of a baby. That baby grew to be the one who carried our sins to the cross in the cruelest of deaths so that we may live. How wondrous the thought!

It seems that each year, commercialization of Christmas begins earlier and will soon precede Independence Day on July 4. Strains of Christmas music can be heard in most stores if the din of shoppers doesn't drown it out. Much of the music is good; some not-so-good. But it is all part of the plan to entice us to stay a little longer and spend more. But as we hear these songs, let's remember not only his birth, but His life and His sacrifice for us all.

This miraculous birth was not by happenstance. Jesus came with a purpose. In the first chapter of John (The Message), we find these words beginning in verse 9: “The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life he brings into Light. He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice.” His complete purpose was foretold by the prophets but came into fruition in his later years. John continues in verse 11: “He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he

said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.” In verse 14, we find: “The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

Do we want this baby, the Son of the Living God, this Christmas season in our neighborhood? Are we willing to look beyond the tinsel, the pageantry and the commercial fervor, to see Jesus the child and then the man who made a way for our salvation? The last two lines of “What Child is This?” come to mind: “This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary!”

May this Christmas season be for all of us a time for reflection and joy as we praise God for sending His Son.



BETH'S MISSION MESSAGE

December has so many opportunities to be giving to people that you know and folks you might not know.

Our food theme for HCM are side dishes and desserts to accompany holiday meals. Please bring items such as potato mixes, stuffing mix, mac and cheese, or dessert mixes.

I always try to carry some change for the bell ringers. Greet people with a smile. Let everyone see the love of God shining from your eyes.

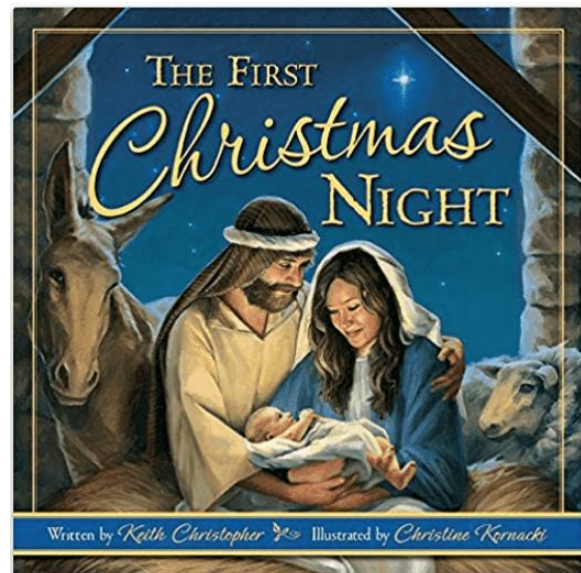
Wishing you a Merry Christmas and every other holiday you might celebrate!

UMCOR helps with natural disasters whenever they strike. Please consider a donation.



SUNDAY SCHOOL AT 10

Smokey has Sunday School lessons for children ages 4 to 12 and Mark has adult lessons each week.





Stewardship News as of November 29, 2022

“I will be loyal to the United Methodist Church and uphold it with my Prayers, my Presence, my Gifts, my Service, and my Witness.”

2022 Budget \$58,453.00

Needed thru 10/23/22 for budget	\$56,114.88
Received to date for budget	\$39,452.00
Behind budget	\$16,662.88
Paid out to date for budget	\$47,084.65

We thank you for your faithfulness!

DECEMBER 2022 DATES TO REMEMBER

**SUNDAY SCHOOL 10 AM
WORSHIP 11 AM**

December 6 - St. Nicholas

Day, feast day (December 6) of St. Nicholas, the 4th-century bishop of Myra. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia and Greece, of a number of cities, and of sailors and children, among many other groups, and was noted for his generosity. Some countries celebrate St. Nicholas Day on December 5. Saint Nicholas Day is celebrated on Tuesday, December 6, 2022.

After the Reformation, St. Nicholas was largely forgotten in Protestant Europe,

although his memory was kept alive in Holland as Sinterklaas. There St. Nicholas is said to arrive on horseback on his feast day, dressed in a bishop's red robe and miter and accompanied by Black Peter, described as a freed slave or a Moor, to help him distribute sweets and presents to good children or lumps of coal, potatoes, or switches to bad ones. The Dutch took the tradition to New Amsterdam (now New York City) in the American colonies, where he was transformed into Santa Claus by the English-speaking majority. His legend of a kindly old man was united with old Nordic folktales of a magician who punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents. The resulting image of Santa Claus in the United States crystallized in the 19th century, and he has ever since remained the patron of the gift-giving festival of Christmas.

December 16 - Posadas Navidenas

This is a primarily Hispanic Christian holiday that commends Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus.





December 25 – Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed primarily on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world. A feast central to the Christian liturgical year, it is preceded by the season of Advent or the Nativity Fast and initiates the season of Christmastide, which historically in the West lasts twelve days and culminates on Twelfth Night. Christmas Day is a public holiday in many countries, is celebrated religiously by a majority of Christians, as well as culturally by many non-Christians and forms an integral part of the holiday season organized around it.

The traditional Christmas narrative recounted in the New Testament, known as the Nativity of Jesus, says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in accordance with messianic prophecies. When Joseph and Mary arrived in the city, the inn had no room and so they were offered a stable where the Christ Child was soon born, with angels proclaiming this news to shepherds who then spread the word.

There are different hypotheses regarding the date of Jesus' birth and in the early fourth century, the church fixed the date as December 25. This corresponds to the traditional date of the winter solstice on the Roman calendar. It is exactly nine months after Annunciation on March 25, also the date of the spring equinox. Most Christians celebrate on December 25 in the Gregorian calendar, which has been adopted almost universally in the civil calendars used in

countries throughout the world. However, part of the Eastern Christian Churches celebrate Christmas on December 25 of the older Julian calendar, which currently corresponds to January 7 in the Gregorian calendar. For Christians, believing that God came into the world in the form of man to atone for the sins of humanity, rather than knowing Jesus' exact birth date, is considered to be the primary purpose in celebrating Christmas.

The celebratory customs associated in various countries with Christmas have a mix of pre-Christian, Christian, and secular themes and origins. Popular modern customs of the holiday include gift giving; completing an Advent calendar or Advent wreath; Christmas music and caroling; viewing a Nativity play; an exchange of Christmas cards; church services; a special meal; and the display of various Christmas decorations, including Christmas trees, Christmas lights, nativity scenes, garlands, wreaths, mistletoe, and holly. In addition, several closely related and often interchangeable figures, known as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, and Christkind, are associated with bringing gifts to children during the Christmas season and have their own body of traditions and lore. Because gift-giving and many other aspects of the Christmas festival involve heightened economic activity, the holiday has become a significant event and a key sales period for retailers and businesses. Over the past few centuries, Christmas has had a steadily growing economic effect in many regions of the world.

December 28 – Holy Innocents Day also known as the Feast of the Holy Innocents (and referred to as Childermas), the day refers to King Herod's order found in Matthew's account of the king's reaction to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. This day is observed in the Western churches on December 28th and, Saints of God, by the Church.

December 31 – Watch Night

Watch Night, also called Freedom's Eve, Christian religious service held on Eve and associated, in many African American churches, with a celebration and remembrance of the Emancipation Proclamation (enacted January 1, 1863), which freed slaves in the states during the American Civil War. Many mainline Protestant churches in the United States sponsor a Watch Night service on New Year's Eve.

The tradition of Watch Night may be traced to the early 18th century in Moravian churches, when churchgoers began marking the occasion with a vigil to or night vigil reflect upon the year past and to contemplate the one to come. John Wesley adopted the practice for his Methodist followers, who held similar vigils monthly with the full moon. It was given new significance among African Americans on December 31, 1862, when, according to tradition, slaves in the Confederate states gathered in churches and private homes on the night before U.S. Pres. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was expected to go into effect, pending his signing of the document. The soon-to-be-free slaves stayed awake all night and watched the night turn into a new dawn while waiting for news that the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued, thus making all the slaves legally free.

Church services on Watch Night generally begin sometime between 7:00 and 10:00 PM and end at midnight. The services tend to be attended by family groups. Many attendees go on to New Year's Eve parties afterward.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

5- Trudy Blaine
6 - Hayden Setser
9 - Doyce Rogers
12 - Kari Setser
17 - David McKay
17 - Scotty Setser
19 - Teresa Tate



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

20 - Kenny & Debbie Mull
30 - Doug & Terri Rogers



Getting Faith ready for Christmas





