

MESSAGE FROM LAY LEADER

“The Nativity Puzzle”

About fifteen years ago, someone gave me a hand-made, 5x5 wooden, five-piece nativity puzzle. For years I displayed it in our home to enjoy during the Christmas holiday. Always sad when it came time to take down the Christmas decorations, I decided to leave this particular item out year-round.

Now it is displayed in the windowsill at our kitchen sink. People say that the kitchen is the heart of the home, so I decided, what better place for the heart of Christmas to be. It is a visual reminder for me each day, the importance of the Christ Child in our lives.

**I hope this Advent and Christmas will bring you much joy and peace and the heart of Christmas will remain in the forefront of your life in 2024.
Christmas Blessings,**

Susan



LAUREN'S INSPIRATIONS

Hello!!! My name is Lauren Harris, and I am so thankful to have been given the opportunity to make music and worship with Faith UMC! I believe that God gives each of us gifts to help us worship him and glorify his name, and I feel honored to be able to spread my love of Crist with others through music and song!

In 2nd Kings, Chapter 3, Verses 4-15, Elisha said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you. But now bring me a musician.” Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. Three kings came to the prophet Elisa asking for God’s help and guidance. Elisha had no respect for the kings of Israel or Edom, but because of the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Juda, he agreed to seek God for their needs.

When Elisha sought God for a prophetic work to speak to the three kings he said, now bring me a musician. When Elisha wanted to become more sensitive to the leading and speaking of the Holy Spirit, he asked for the service of a musician. As a musician myself, I know and understand how music can be used to “speak” more than words ever could!

We don’t know the musician’s name, but when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha and he prophesied, bringing a promise of deliverance to the three kings. As the musician played the instrument, he probably never thought that God would use the notes and melody to bring positive victory/ending, but the musician did what he could do, and God used it and in at least a small way it helped to change history.

We are made in God’s image, so we have a natural attraction to music. We can help to honor and worship God by listening to God-honoring music and by worshiping Him in song. When we worship together and give our gifts to God, we can praise his name and our music and song to glorify him!





BETH'S MISSION MESSAGE

As we prepare for Advent and celebrate the greatest of gifts, let us remember those less fortunate. During Advent we will be collecting funds to provide meals for the Bethel House community.

Whether you can give just a little or make a more substantial gift be assured it will be a blessing to someone.

Also, if you can, support the bell ringers outside the stores or donate to any of your favorite charities, God will bless you for your compassion and generosity.

Have a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.



Stewardship News as of
November 27, 2023

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

2023 Budget \$50,519.00	
Needed to date for budget	\$48,498.24
Received to date for budget	\$36,301.00
Behind Budget	\$12,197.34
Paid out to date for budget	\$36,972.01

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS!

DECEMBER 2023 DATES TO REMEMBER

**SUNDAY SCHOOL 10 AM
WORSHIP 11 AM**

DECEMBER 3-24 ADVENT means "arrival" and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person.

During the darkest days of winter, Christians prepare for one of their religion's most important holidays during the season of Advent. Lasting roughly four weeks, it's a season of candlelight, reflection, and expectation—a chance to get ready for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Christians traditionally pray, sing, and light an additional candle on each Advent Sunday until all the candles are lit on the fourth Sunday. A fifth, white candle known as the Christ candle sometimes sits unlit in the center of the wreath; it is only lit on Christmas Eve.



The Four Sundays and Themes of Advent

- First candle / Sunday: HOPE (The Prophecy Candle)
- Second candle / Sunday: PEACE (The Bethlehem Candle)
- Third candle / Sunday: JOY (The Shepherd's Candle)
- Fourth candle / Sunday: LOVE (The Angel's Candle)

**DECEMBER 24 FAITH CHRISTMAS EVE
WORSHIP AT 11:00 AM**

The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the "Shepherd's Candle," and is pink because rose is a liturgical color for joy.

On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Savior. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

In some homes and parishes, people will also light a fifth candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent the birth of Jesus; this candle, when added to the Advent wreath, is typically white and larger than the other candles and is placed in the center of the wreath.

The wreath is meant to remind us of both the immortality of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life to us through Christ.

DECEMBER 16-24 LAS POSADAS (Spanish: "The Inns") religious festival celebrated in Mexico and some parts of the United States between December 16 and 24. Las Posadas commemorates the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a safe refuge where Mary could give birth to the baby Jesus. When they were unable to find lodging in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary were forced to seek shelter in a stable, where the Christ Child was born.

DECEMBER 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE

marks the culmination of the Advent period before Christmas that starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Eve. Many churches mark the end of Advent with midnight church services. During modern times, it is popularly celebrated on the night before Christmas Day.

The tradition of celebrating Christmas Eve derives partly from Christian liturgy starting at sunset, which is inherited from Jewish tradition and based on the Book of Genesis's Story of Creation, saying the first day starts in the evening and ends in the morning. It is also believed that Jesus, or Jesus of Nazareth, was born at midnight in the region of Palestine.

Christmas Eve marks the end of the Advent season, the period of preparation for Christmas. It was on this night that the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks outside Bethlehem saw the bright star in the sky that signaled the birth of Jesus Christ. This is why many churches have services beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. From the 12th to the 15th century, due to the Holy Inquisition, Christian traditions were made mandatory. During the 16th century, the church was influenced by the Winter Solstice celebrations and began Christmas preparations the night prior.

In many parts of Europe, people believe that at midnight on Christmas Eve, animals briefly possess the power of speech. It might have been the traditional association of the ox and the donkey in the Nativity scene that gave rise to such superstitions, but the concept of talking animals is probably pagan in origin. A closely related belief, widespread in England and Europe, is that cattle rise in their stalls at midnight on Christmas Eve or kneel to worship the Christ child.

Celebrating Christmas as a holiday became popular in the 19th century. Christmas Eve remains an important part of Christian culture and signifies the birth of Jesus. It has become even more popular within the last century thanks to a beloved icon: Santa Claus. The idea of the jolly man in red gave rise to more traditions such as hanging stockings and leaving out cookies, milk, and sometimes carrots for his reindeer.

Apart from Santa Claus and Christianity, Christmas Eve took on another significance, it also became a day made for spending time with family and loved ones over dinner, decorating, gift wrapping, and Christmas-themed movies. The holiday unites families and friends, allowing them to get together and enjoy special and traditional activities.

DECEMBER 25 - CHRISTMAS DAY is an annual sacred Christian holiday that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, the spiritual leader and founder of Christianity.



[St. Francis Is Credited With Creating the First Nativity Scene in 1223](#)

Around this season, it is common to see a display of the Nativity scene: a small manger with the baby Jesus and his family, shepherds, the three wise men believed to have visited Jesus after his birth and several barnyard animals.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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



