

THE MESSENGER NEWSLETTER

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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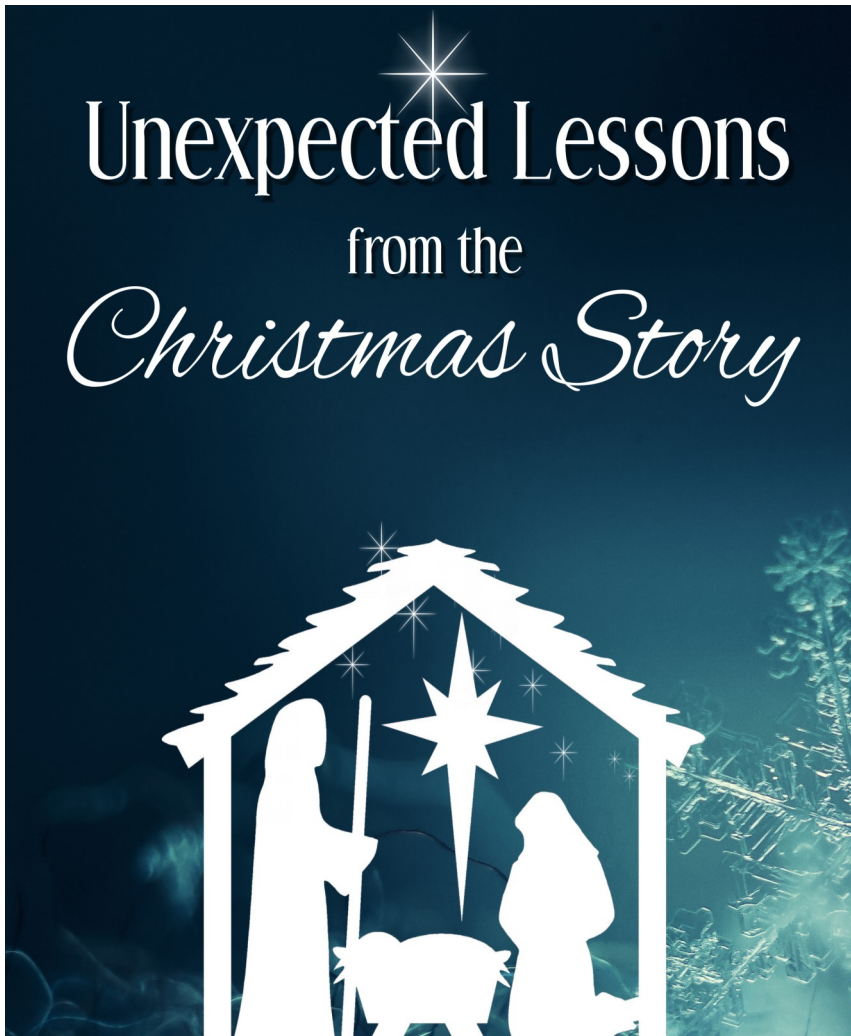
“Our mission is to love, proclaim, know and serve the Risen Christ.”

Volume 20, Issue 11

DECEMBER EDITION

November 20, 2019

The Season of Advent





Our Worship Services

9:00 am Sunday School
10:15 am Worship Service

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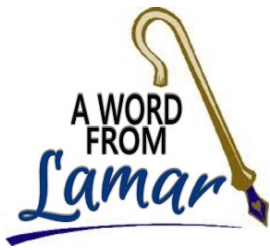


BECAUSE NOT EVERYONE HAS A HAPPY HOLIDAY

For those who experience loss, grief, and/or feel disconnected
as it seems everyone else isn't this time of year.

This service is a time to find hope, comfort, and healing
for any and all seeking the same.





Dear Friends:

There's enough in this month's newsletter about what all is going on in the life of our congregation that I am not going to spend this column laying out for you a motivational exercise designed to

guilt you into shoving so much more into your life over and above what we deal with regularly that you spend more time being busy with the accouterment of the holiday and as a result miss the true joy and journey of the Advent season and arrive at a point where on the evening of December 25 you are glad Christmas is over (forgetting that Christmas doesn't START until December 25.) Read the newsletter. Pay attention to the various activities and services going on in the life of our congregation during this month, and prayerfully consider participating in them so that you are prepared for the joy of Christmas. I have not the slightest doubt that God is going to do some truly joyful things during December that will go beyond what we might expect, simply because that is the kind of God we serve.

Rather, I want to spend this column addressing two contentious issues about which a new pastor is usually asked during their first Advent season with a congregation. These two issues, I believe, are ones that we can so often allow to hijack us and our celebration of the season because we can be so easily manipulated.

The first of these is kind of sweet, even though it is usually handled in a very aggressive way, and that is, "Preacher, I know you stand with me in getting angry that people are encouraged to say, 'Happy Holidays,' rather than, 'Merry Christmas.'" Depending on who brings this up to me, and how they address it, I will choose a way to say that I have no problem with it at all, because it is kind of amusing given that the word, 'holiday,' is actually a contraction of 'Holy Day.' It's amusing because wishing people a happy holy day is one of the most Christian things we can do, for, in fact, we should be wishing each other Happy Holy Days because

during December we are celebrating the holy days of Advent. In a culturally diverse society, wishing someone a Happy Holy Day is also an act of respect and hospitality, for we Christians are not the only ones celebrating holy days during this time of year. Besides, do we really believe that God is calling us to get our dander up because of this matter? Does getting angry about the idea of some people and organizations shifting to Happy Holidays really bring glory to God or advance the cause of spreading the Good News of Jesus to a world that so desperately needs to awaken to the grace He offered on Calvary?

A response to the 'Happy Holidays' issue actually leads to the second thing I offer for your consideration: "Preacher, I'm not going to let ANYONE take the Christ out of Christmas." A sibling to this is, "Keep Christ in Christmas." I don't know exactly how to say this in a couched, diplomatic way, so let me just make the observation that a strong argument can be made that if someone can take Christ out of your Christmas the question must be begged whether or not Christ was really ever in your Christmas. We all know the truth - Christ is present even when there are no words. Just as an example, when we use language that insinuates that someone does or does not have Christmas based on whether or not they have any gifts under the tree that we have, knowingly or unknowingly, taken Christ out of our Christmas.

Tell ya what - as part of our focus on discipleship for the next year of our shared life together, let's take a break from the trivial and non-helpful 'culture wars' that pop up every year around 'Happy Holidays' and 'Keep Christ in Christmas' and instead focus on bringing Christmas INTO the lives of those we love, those in our church, community, and world by living the life of a disciple - one who loves God with all they have and their neighbor as themselves.

Grace and Peace,
Lamar



Thanksgiving Holiday

Church office will close on Wednesday, November 27,
12 Noon through Friday, November 29.

We will reopen Monday, December 2 at 8:30 am.

Christmas and New Year Holidays

Church office will be closed Tuesday, December 24 through
Wednesday, January 1. We will reopen Thursday, January 2 at
8:30 am. Telephone messages and mail will be checked daily.



Hope That Surrounds Christmas

The other night, talking with my youngest daughter, I realized that there are so many different events and characters that surround the Christmas season. This makes it difficult for children to know what is most important.

The presents under the tree, the food being prepared, the family gathering throughout the day, are all things that help the season be filled with joy. These times are precious! Memories are made and love is shared with those that mean

the most in our lives. I am just as guilty as anyone else about letting the excitement that leads up to that magical day overshadow the birth of Jesus.

This year, Pastor Lamar has entitled our Advent Worship series “Thrill of Hope.” This speaks to me in so many ways. I have challenged myself and I challenge you to try and implement this word HOPE into all things Christmas. Let your children know that the reason we enter this amazing season of joy is because God gave us the gift of HOPE in the form of a tiny baby named Jesus. HOPE for the world. HOPE for each and every one of us in our everyday life!

Grace & Blessings,
Ellen

Get information for FUMCWM Children's Ministry right on your phone—not on handouts.

Pick a way to receive messages for FUMCWM Children's Ministry:

A If you have a smartphone, get push notifications.

On your iPhone or Android phone, open your web browser and go to the following link:

rmd.at/fumcwmc

Follow the instructions to sign up for Remind. You'll be prompted to download the mobile app.

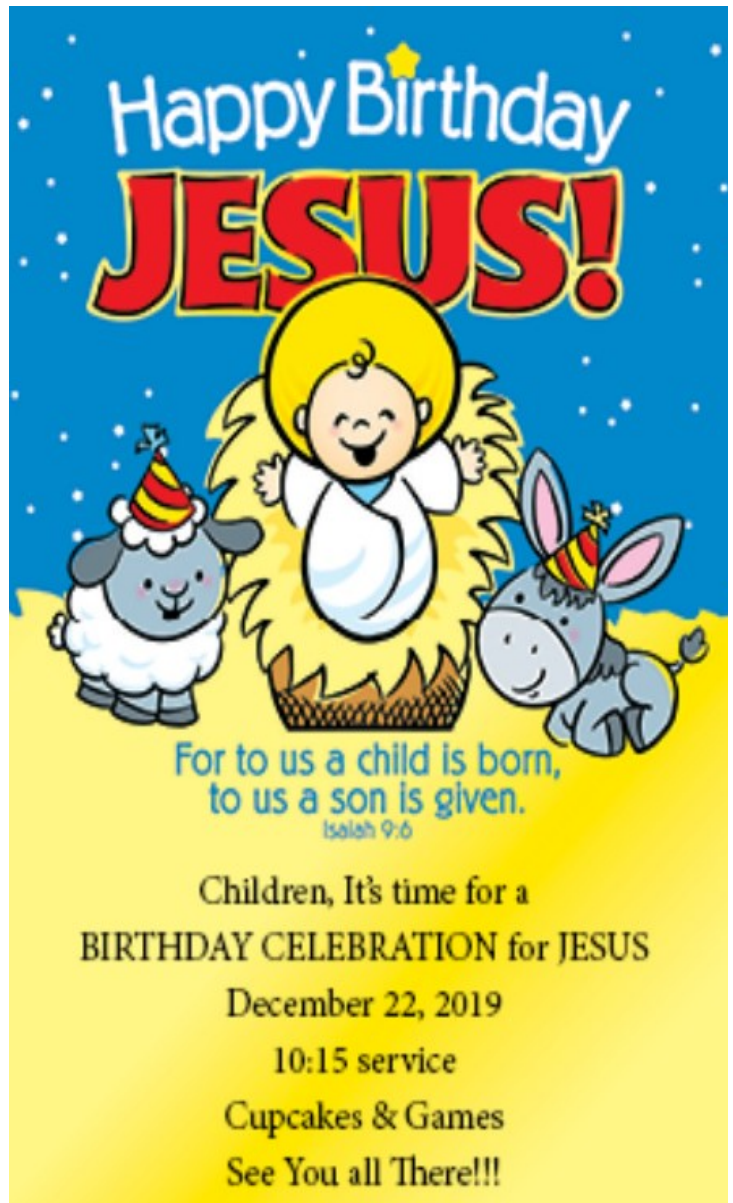
B If you don't have a smartphone, get text notifications.

Text the message @fumcwmc to the number 81010.

If you're having trouble with 81010, try texting @fumcwmc to (469) 208-6825.

* Standard text message rates apply.

Don't have a mobile phone? Go to rmd.at/fumcwmc on a desktop computer to sign up for email notifications.



SAVE THE DATE—DECEMBER 7, 2019 @ 3:30

ENCHANTED Christmas

**The Annual Greater Ouachita
Kiwanis Christmas Parade**

**In need of lots of candy for children to throw during the parade!
Please drop off in front office.**

Schedule of the days events:

- 10:00: Youth final decoration party of float**
- 11:30: Advent Service rehearsal for children & youth**
- 12:30: Lunch provided for children & youth**
- 1:30: Get dressed for parade**
- 2:00: Leave to meet float in line-up (details later)**
- 2:30: Youth & Children in Line-Up**
- 3:30: Parade begins**



Share the joy of the season by providing a gift from a child from the Angel Tree. The children are from the Center for Children & Families Annual Christmas project and are being served through their CASA program. We have 50 angels to sponsor this Christmas season.

Our giving is a symbol of hope for these families. Choose your “angel” from the tree and return your gifts no later than Sunday, December 1.



It's almost time to sit around the table with family, slice the turkey, pass the dressing, and enjoy a nice slice of cobbler or pie. This is the season to embrace family and remember what we are grateful for. Our youth have been learning, during the month of November, what it looks like practically to love your neighbor as yourself. We have been focusing primarily on what it looks like to love those closest to us, our family and friends. Sometimes family and friends can be the hardest to love, but God calls and equips us to love them with lots of mercy and grace. It has been such a blessing to see our youth begin to understand how they can go through their day focused on different ways to actively love their family and friends.

It won't be long and we will be entering the Christmas season where we can focus on the wonderful story of a baby boy sent to rescue the world, Jesus! This is always such a special season, not just because of the Christmas trees, lights, treats, and presents, but because it gives us a time to reflect on the wonderful plan of God to redeem us. My prayer over the next month is that our students and their families are able to slow down and experience the love of God through this season.

Reminder, our youth will be having our annual Christmas Party and caroling on December 15 at the church from 5-8 pm. We will meet at the church, eat, celebrate, and then take the church van to go caroling. As always, this is a goofy Christmas sweater party. Dress up in a fun outfit or Christmas sweater and come have fun with us. Also, our last youth meeting of the year will be December 18. We will reconvene our youth meetings on January 5.

Trae



I'm not sure if you have picked up on this yet, but I LOVE CHRISTMAS! I love lights and decorations and traditions and Christmas movies (though I rarely sit still long enough to watch a movie) and shopping for gifts and THE MUSIC!!! I listen to

Christmas music for at least two months because it makes my heart SO FULL. As much as I love the silly and the crazy, Christmas for me is a holy time. There is something about Christmas - about God sending a *baby* to redeem us that my soul latches onto and doesn't ever want to let go. That love is so pure, so radical, SO BIG that my heart could just burst from my chest. Christmas music helps me express this in worship. Buddy the Elf says it best: the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear! I hope you're ready for a month full of people spreading the hope and love that Christmas gives us through some amazing music. We can't wait to worship with you all month long.

PARENTS OF CHILDREN: We will have an extra rehearsal on Sunday, December 1 for our children's Christmas program from 3:30-5:00. If at all possible, PLEASE send your kiddos. We'll be sending home CDs before then for the kids to practice. Feel free to drive yourself crazy letting them practice their songs. :)



WOULD YOU LIKE TO
HELP DECORATE THE
CHURCH FOR ADVENT?

COME OUT
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30
AT 8:30 AM

MEN AND WOMEN,
YOUNG AND
YOUNG AT HEART!

45TH
ANNUAL

Louisiana
ASHRAM

FEBRUARY 7 - 8, 2020

[Facebook.com/LouisianaAshram](https://www.facebook.com/LouisianaAshram)



Evangelist
REV. AARON BROWN
ST. PAUL'S UMC OF JOPLIN



Bible Teacher
REV. JASON RAMSEY
THE PENTECOSTALS OF THE TWIN CITIES

HOSTED BY: FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | 1411 GLENWOOD DR. WEST MONROE, LA 71291

Year-End Giving

Giving is our joyous response to what God has done, what God is doing, and what God calls us to do. It is one of the ways we live out our membership vows to faithfully participate in the church's ministry through our "prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness."

**All contributions should be received
in the office or postmarked by
Tuesday, December 31 to be
credited for 2019.**

**Support our ministries while
shopping with Amazon!**

[SMILE.AMAZON.COM/CH/72-0513737](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/72-0513737)

amazonsmile

By using AmazonSmile, a percentage of your eligible Amazon transactions will be sent to FUMC - WM.



You know if you haven't already you will soon be starting your holiday shopping, and chances are good you will be spending some time at Amazon. If you start your Amazon journey by or using the link shown therein, a percentage of your eligible Amazon purchases will be donated to the ministries of our congregation.



- 1 Steve Blake
- 3 Heather Parker
Casey Stutson
- 6 Melissa Shepard
- 8 Jean Lee
Jenny Jones
- 9 John Wiggins
Gina Allen
Lindsay Reynolds
Lily Wallace
Brenda Moffett
Tommy Jones
- 12 Frances Allen
Linda Booker
- 13 Mary Beth Johnson
- 14 Maxine Klick
Brandi Thomisee
- 17 Margaret McKee
Elah Flores
- 18 Erin Oliver
- 20 Brexli Bryant
- 23 Peggy Hammond
- 24 Earleen Thompson
- 27 Nell Spurlock
Linda Gasaway
Michael Booker
- 28 Richard Ballard
- 30 Debbie Russell

If your birthday is not listed, we do apologize. Please contact the church office to make sure we have accurate information.



- 1 Bobbie Cook
- 2 Keith Moncrief
- 3 Jack Joiner
- 4 Janiece Obed
Jennye White
- 5 Danny Allen
Linda Titus
Jamie Lofton
- 9 Amy Curits
Brooke Bedoit
- 10 John Obed
Matt Lee
Adele Groan
Sophie Ann Bourgeois
- 11 John Tom Murray
- 12 Samuel Blake
- 14 Gail Palmieri
Jason Thomisee
- 15 Pat Twilbeck
Carolyn Cook
- 16 Sydney Curtis
- 18 David Dalfiume
- 20 Geri Mueller
- 21 Teresa Gadberry
Kristen Hill
- 22 Cyndi Tatum
- 28 Don Hammett
- 30 Linda Jans
Dave Jeffords
Tyler Putnam
- 31 Marcia Donald
Rowan Gilbert

