

The FIRST LOOK

NEWSLETTER

First United Methodist Church

December 2016 Edition



A Word from the Senior Pastor

Dr. Jerome Brimmage

What is the Christmas Spirit for you? What tradition, song, or experience helps you to feel like Christmas is in the air? For some, it is the Christmas Carols, or watching *It's a Wonderful Life*, or Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight Worship. Christmas spirit to me is when people begin to share their stories of generosity, both shared and received. It is in this time of year that we become open to a spirit of giving sacrificially to be a blessing to others. When a small child enthusiastically runs up to me at An Evening in Old Bethlehem to say she has seen the baby – then joyously tells me, “FOLLOW THE STAR and you will see Jesus too.” ... this is the Christmas Spirit to me.

When someone begins to tell me of their family collecting change in a Christmas Blessing Jar, then there is a heartwarming story of how the jar was a blessing to an unsuspecting person ... this is the Christmas Spirit to me.

When the church gathers for Christmas Eve worship; we sing, pray, and hear the story of Jesus' birth and have a Christmas Eve offering that goes to support our Local Education Mission rather than support of church utilities, buildings or operations ... this is the Christmas Spirit to me.

God's ultimate generosity.....
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16 (NIV)

THIS is the Christmas Spirit to me. May God Bless you and yours this Christmas.

Pastor Jerome

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WORSHIP ARTS PRESENTS

IMMANUEL

GOD WITH US

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016

Immanuel - God With Us! Choir Cantata | Sunday, December 18

Our Christmas Cantata this year is titled “Immanuel.” It is going to be a worship service of joy and anticipation as we listen to the scriptures from Isaiah, Micah, Luke and Matthew. We return our hearts and minds to Bethlehem and experience the loving kindness of our God in a form of a baby lying in a manger. In our worship, we will also sing hymns, carols, and anthems that will draw our hearts to the message of Christmas. A message filled with hope and joy, and a message reminding us that God has come to dwell among us. The Chancel Choir will sing anthems and carols, handbells will ring out songs for the season, and steel drums will also play. The congregation will also sing Christmas hymns.

Join us for this wonderful celebration on Sunday, December 18 at the Traditional Service at 8:40am.



Blue Christmas | Sunday, December 18 at 6 PM

First United Methodist Church and Pastor Laura Campbell invite every person who has experienced something ranging from very difficult to terrible this year to come together for a quiet, peaceful time of worship at our Blue Christmas Service. Meet in Henderson Chapel at 6 PM on Sunday, December 18, for a reminder that God is with us during the desert of Christmas merriment. We will sing a hymn or two, pray for one another, break bread and share the cup of

Christ's pain/struggle/death, and hear Pastor Laura give a word of encouragement in this casual service of honesty and hope for the holiday season.

An Evening in Old Bethlehem

Bethlehem is the gift that keeps on giving. For 31 years I have worked as a weaver in Old Bethlehem, two nights a week. ...That is a total of 62 times! I have worked with many dear friends in this congregation over the years, and they have played a huge supporting role. This year was special in that I was able to share that experience with a former student of mine, Tina Webber, who attends Abundant Life United Methodist Church.

Working in Bethlehem has always been a blessing to me. We have shown the blind what the craft of weaving is like. Last year a grown man cried as he watched us weaving because we reminded him of his mother in Mexico. Every year I work at Bethlehem I encounter wonders. It might be cold or rainy outside, but what happens inside the city warms your heart. I have two short blessings I would like to share with you that occurred this year. I talk to the children while I am preparing the weaving loom with additional yarn. A young teenage girl who was waiting her turn to try the craft began a conversation with me. When I asked her if she had any friends with her, she said some of her classmates were behind her. Staying in character, I asked her, "Do you mean you go to school?"

When she replied yes, I informed her that I had never gotten to attend school because I was a girl. Alas, my future was then set to work in the city as a weaver most of my life because I had developed no other skills. The teenager became excited when she discovered girls could not attend school in Bethlehem, and turning to her friends she eagerly shared with her friends, "Did you hear that? Girls can't go to school in Bethlehem. I wish I was living then." That was the wrong thing to tell an educator of 45 years. Thinking quickly, I used that as a teaching moment. I told her the value of getting all the education she could possibly receive. I relayed the story of a boy in the village who attended the synagogue and later then became a rabbi. Her face suddenly got even more excited when I told her that. She then enthusiastically asked, "You mean they taught him how to be a rapper?" I said, "Well, not exactly, but he did go on to proclaim the good news."

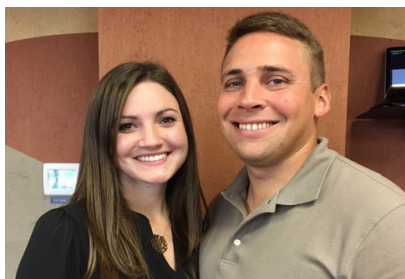
Another blessing occurred when a young girl of about 4 or 5 came to my booth and said she had seen the baby not far from my shop. When I asked her what baby, she told me it was God's son. She said the baby was a boy and was named "Jee Sus." I inquired, "How I could find the baby in the crowd?" Excitedly, she said, "Just follow the star. An angel will help you." I then pointed out our Pastor Jerome in the tent city. I told her that he had come a long way just to find a miracle baby. He didn't know where to look for the baby because the baby wasn't in the inn. Would she please go show him the way? Suddenly, weaving wasn't her priority any more. She hurriedly grabbed her mom's hand, and said, "Come on." Off she went on her mission to tell Pastor Jerome where to find the baby. In just a few minutes, she had turned into one of God's ambassadors as she hurried over to spread the news. That is what Old Bethlehem is all about.

Mark 16:15 New Living Translation - "And then he told them, 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.'"

That is what Old Bethlehem does for our community and a charge for each of us to share in our own way. -Ellen Miller



We Welcome New Members



Rebecca and Joshua McMahon
Joined Dec. 4, 2016



Lisa Gill
Joined Dec. 4, 2016

*We have lift off....
Our new website
is now LIVE!*



New Website Launched

Our new Lufkin First website has been launched! Please take a moment and visit www.lufkinfirst.com to take a look at our beautiful new site!

Commitment Sunday Update

Through end of business, December 6, we have received 207 cards and have \$1,199,450.60 pledged. If you have not turned in your pledge card yet, it's not too late! Visit LufkinFirst.com to fill out a form.

End of Year Financial Gifts

All financial gifts to be posted to your 2016 giving record must be received in the church office by Friday, December 23. Mailed checks must be postmarked on or before December 31. Thank you for your support of the ministry and mission of First United Methodist Church.

Welcome Pastor Laura Campbell



Pastor Laura Campbell pictured with Marty Harris

On Sunday, December 4, we welcomed our new Associate Pastor, Laura Campbell. Pastor Laura joins us from Clear Lake United Methodist Church in Houston. She is very excited to be here in Lufkin and for the exciting opportunities that lay ahead for her here at First United Methodist Church. If you have not had the opportunity to introduce yourself to her, please look for her on Sundays and say hello.

Annual Thanksgiving Meal



Our annual Thanksgiving meal this year was such a blessing to all those who helped and those we served. We delivered almost 500 meals Thanksgiving morning. At 12:30 PM, we had a total of 42 people who joined us for lunch. Many volunteers prepared, served, and delivered meals. I am so thankful for the enthusiasm of all the volunteers who made this annual meal a blessing to many homes. A special thanks to Rodney Thompson and Tony Dale who helped take the lead this year. They worked tirelessly to make sure that everything ran smoothly. This is truly our church families' effort to touch the people

in our community. It is truly an expression of love and gratitude to a God who loves us unconditionally. In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, John Wesley writes, *"Thanksgiving is inseparable from true prayer; it is almost essentially connected with it."* Giving thanks by giving to others is as essential to our spiritual growth as prayer. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this year's meal a great success. *"You are my God and I will praise you; you are my God and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."* Psalm 118:28-29 - Dr. Ernest Boamah

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LOVING GOD. LOVING NEIGHBOR

CHRISTMAS 2016

RECLAIM
BREATH OF HEAVEN

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

3 PM - TRADITIONAL SERVICE | HENDERSON CHAPEL
5 PM - FAMILY FRIENDLY INTERACTIVE SERVICE | YOUTH & WORSHIP CENTER
5:30 PM - COME AND GO COMMUNION | HENDERSON CHAPEL
7 PM - TRADITIONAL SERVICE | SANCTUARY
11 PM - TRADITIONAL SERVICE | HENDERSON CHAPEL

*TRADITIONAL SERVICES WILL HAVE COMMUNION AND CANDLELIGHT

Christmas Eve Services | Saturday, December 24 at 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, and 11:00 PM

Join us for one of our four Christmas Eve services. We will hold three traditional services with candlelight and communion, a family friendly interactive service, and we will also have come and go communion at 5:30 PM in Henderson Chapel.

Christmas Day Service | Sunday, December 25 at 10 AM

Join us on Christmas morning! We will have one service at 10 AM in the Youth and Worship Building. Children, come in your pajamas and don't forget to bring a toy you received from Santa as Pastor Jerome will do a blessing of the toys!

New Year's Day Service | Sunday, January 1 at 10 AM

Start the new year with your church family! We will have one service at 10 AM in the Sanctuary. Check with your Sunday School teacher to see if you are meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coffee with the Pastors | Sunday, Dec. 11

Have questions about the Christian faith? The United Methodist Church? Or how to connect with our church family? We would love to meet with you and answer questions over a cup of coffee. Join Pastor Jerome and Pastor Laura on Sunday, December 11 at 9:50 AM in Hebrew's Cafe.

Primetimers Christmas Luncheon | Monday, Dec. 12

The Primetimers will celebrate the season with a Christmas Luncheon on Monday, Dec. 12 at noon in the Youth and Worship Building. If you would like to join the festivities, please RSVP to Carolee Brink.

Church Council Meeting | Tuesday, Dec. 13

Our next Church Council Meeting will be Tuesday, December 13 at 5:30 PM in Henderson Chapel. Come and hear about the ministry of the church and enjoy being part of an evening of worship with communion.

Christmas Jar Blessing | Sunday, Dec. 18

Pastor Jerome will offer up blessings for Christmas Jars on Sunday, Dec. 18 during both services. Stickers for your jars are available in both Welcome Centers. Please bring your jars to be blessed for those who are to receive them.

Poinsettias

Poinsettias that were purchased will start adorning the Sanctuary and Youth & Worship Building on Sunday, Dec. 18 and will be on display through Christmas Eve. If you would like to take your poinsettia home, you may start taking them from the worship spaces after the Christmas Eve services. The church offices will be closed the week of Dec. 26-30 and you will not be able to retrieve them after the Christmas Day service.

Church Offices Closed | Dec. 26-30

The church offices will be closed from Monday, Dec. 26 through Friday, Dec. 30. Offices will reopen on Monday, Jan. 2.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



— LOVING GOD, LOVING NEIGHBOR —

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Upcoming Events

Dec. 9 - Craft Night - CLC

Dec. 14 - Panther Pride Christmas
Spectacular

STORM Weekend | January 13-15

STORM weekend is an opportunity for our students to take pause in the middle of their busy schedules and dive into study, service, and fun! Students will be divided into grade and gender specific homes for the weekend, and each home will also host a small group leader. STORM is a great way for our students to engage in our faith community here at First United Methodist Church and to serve in different places all around the city of Lufkin. Cost is \$70 for early registration (Nov. 30 - Dec. 14). Late registration is \$80 (Dec. 15 - Jan. 2). Financial assistance is available. Visit www.lufkinfirst.com to register. We are looking for a few people to serve as prayer partners for our students over STORM weekend. If you would like more information or to volunteer, please contact Lisa Gill at lgill@lufkinfirst.com.

Mid-Winter 2017 iGnite | February 24-26

All students 7th-12th grade are invited to join us for a weekend of worship, discussion, games, and lots of outdoor fun! This awesome conference-wide event will be hosted at Forest Glen in Huntsville, a Christian camp located in the middle of the Sam Houston Forest. Cost is \$130. Financial assistance is available. For questions about the retreat, or if you need help with the cost, please contact Lisa Gill at lgill@lufkinfirst.com.

Youth Wednesday Nights will resume January 11.

Youth Sunday Night Bible Studies will resume January 22.

Children's Advent Schedule

Drop and Shop Kid's Night Out | Friday, Dec. 9 from 6-10 PM

Leave your children with us and shop 'til you drop! Get your Christmas shopping finished while we have some Christmas craziness! RSVP online at lufkinfirst.com to reserve your spot. \$10/child or \$25/ family.

Children's Advent Worship Service | Sunday, Dec. 11 at 11 AM

Join us for a special Children's Worship Service during the Contemporary service at 11 AM in the Youth & Worship Building.

Supper with Santa | Sunday, Dec. 11 from 5-7 PM

Inviting all families who love cookies, Santa and fun! Join us in the CLC/Fellowship Hall for some Christmas crafts, pizza, pictures with Santa, and an opportunity to help a child in need. Bring a toy (still in the package) to be donated to "Toys for Tots". Santa will help us bless others by delivering our toys to children who need some extra love!

Interactive Family Christmas Eve Service | Sunday, Dec. 24 at 5 PM

All families with children ages 0+ are invited to celebrate the story of Advent in the Youth & Worship Building for an interactive, wild and crazy, no "shushing" allowed service! We will have hands on activities, an impromptu telling of the birth of Jesus, costumes, and so much fun! Following this service, we will enjoy cookies and hot cocoa in Hebrews Café! We hope to see you there!

