

Pastor's Ponderings!

The Christmas of 2009 was one that is never to forgotten. It was the first Christmas after our mother died. Everyone was coming to my home and church in Olney, TX. Dad came to stay a couple of weeks and was already with me. Everyone else was to come Christmas Eve day in time for the Christmas Eve service. Except...we got up and it was supposed to snow. It was only supposed to be a couple of inches. My gut feeling, the Holy Spirit, urged me to call everyone and to tell them to come now. I called and none of them seemed to think I was too crazy. Everyone made it... eventually. That light snow turned into a full-blown blizzard with ten inches in total falling! It got a little scary for some and very scary for my sister. There were times that she could barely see the car in front of her, but there was nowhere to stop. She and another guy even bumped fenders, but they both moved on and didn't even get out of the car. Literally, hundreds of people were stranded in gas stations and along major roads. Farmers with their tractors came to the rescue. Finally, my sister made it almost at dinner time absolutely exhausted from the stress. We were all safely together and so grateful. Much of the town lost power, but not at my house. Part of the group was supposed to sleep across town, but instead we all bedded down in every room possible with sleeping bags, air mattresses and cots added to the arrangements. Fifteen people and five dogs! And we had the best time ever, even while making a toast to Mom because we were together. We played and played in the snow. A white Christmas like we had never had before. So much laughter and joy as we celebrated being together and the birth of Christ. Mary and Joseph's life together was starting off in ways they could have never imagined. Likely ostracized in their own town because of Mary being pregnant before the wedding. A census being taken, which meant they had to travel with Mary pregnant. And she would even deliver the baby far away from home. There was no room in the inn. A stable is where they had to be. Yet, God provided every step of the way. And the family of God, the shepherds, even came to tell them about the good news from the angels and to celebrate the Savior's birth. They were never alone and it was glorious. God provides. We just have to open our eyes to see, feel, hear and experience the blessings. May you experience the same this Christmas season in you and your family's lives. Blessings! Laraine

First United Methodist Church P.O. Box 965 DeRidder. LA 70634

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Each year FUMC offers a special worship service where we honor and remember those loved ones who are no longer with us. This year the Blue Christmas Service will be held on Sunday, December 17th, at 4:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a picture of each person you would like to remember, and bring a friend. as well!

We have copies of our Advent Devotions available in the Sanctuary and the Church Office for anyone who is interested. Please take one per family, and allow it to fill you with joy and prepare your hearts for the arrival of Jesus this Advent season!

> **Aldersgate Christmas Tree Project** The Aldersgate Sunday School Class is hosting its annual Christmas Tree lights fundraiser. You can purchase a light in honor or in memory of a loved one, and these will remain lit for the entire Christmas season. The deadline to purchase lights is Monday, December 18th. Proceeds for this event go towards the Ehrin Bennett Scholarship fund.



Happy Holidays!

The Office and MCLC

will be closed

December 25-26th,

as well as January 1st

Advent

Bible Study

Wednesdays

11:00 AM and 6:00 PM

The Upper Room

Fellowship Hall Building

Beauregard's Retired Teachers Christmas Luncheon Thursday, December 14th 10 AM - 1 PM **Fellowship Hall**



Miranda Chapman Admin. Assistant / Bookkeeper Office: 337-463-4491 Miranda@fumcderidder.org

Worship with us on Facebook at First United Methodist Church-DeRidder, or on our YouTube page: DeridderFUMC



Blue Christmas

Advent Devotions



Poinsettias

Orders are due by Sunday, December 17th! Posettias will be displayed in the Sanctuary during **Christmas Eve Service.**

Lessons and Carols Thursday, December 7th 6:30 PM in the Sanctuary

Christmas Baskets

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas! First United Methodist Church has a loud and clear voice that we can make a Christian Difference. We supply many families with a generous Christmas Basket of food. The food items are everything from fresh fruit, milk, and peanut butter, to a ham. We also add non-food items like dish detergent and toilet paper. The baskets are a gift from us without any strings attached. It is a HUGE HONOR to make this possible.

You may help with the process of organizing and boxing on Friday, 12/15 in the Conference Room. Come and go as you want between 4 and 6 PM. We will distribute the gifts on Saturday, 12/16 from the Conference Room between 10 and 11 AM. Come show your brotherly love! There is also the need to support this annual ministry



with monetary donations! Please note on your donation that it's for Christmas Baskets. How much is a Christmas Basket? We aren't sure because of inflation, but a good guess would be \$40, plus the availability/cost of a ham.

Shalom, Susan Hill and the Missions Team.



Christmas Day Meal

What fun we had last year on Christmas Day! Several people prepared various outstanding dishes and shared them with all who cam to dine in our Fellowship Hall. We offered the meal to the community, our families, and our congregation. We will do the same this year on Christmas Day. Please help support this wonderful opportunity! If you join us for the meal, you will be mighty glad that you did. If you can't make it, you can still prepare an item and leave it in the kitchen on Sunday, Christmas Eve. Nothing is too small. Nothing is too much! Contact the church office or Susan Hill to find out how you can participate. Merry Christmas!

MINISTRIES

Youth Bazaar Fundraiser

The Youth Bazaar was a big hit this year! Thanks to the generous support and donations of so many folks at our church, we were able to make just over \$1,200 in one day! We even had to open up a second Saturday because we had such good stuff to sell, and that generated even more funds for our Child & Youth Program. Thank you to everyone who supports this ministry at FUMC!

Veterans Home Supplies Needed

The Catalyst Sunday School group is collecting donations on behalf of the VFW, as well as the Southwestern Louisiana Veterans Home in Jennings, LA. Items Needed; Men's Bodywash Men's Body Spray and Spray Deodorant Men's Warm-Up Pants and Sets (Large and Up) Slippers with Backs Diabetic Socks Women's Body Spray

Little Debbie Cakes

Tootsie Pop Suckers



The Lego Club has officially broken ground on its new Capital Campaign construction project! How many bricks do you think it will take to transform our 1965 Sanctuary into a table-top model? Stay tuned for updates on this ongoing project.

Nursery Workers Needed!

If you or someone you know wants to make a difference at FUMC by teaching and loving on our children on Sundays and Wednesdays, contact Cathy at 337-396-9610.



Methodist Children's Learning Center



During Community Helpers Week, we had the pleasure of welcoming Julia Willis with the Louisiana State Troopers, Dr. Erin Bardin of Bardin Dermatology, and Dr. Catherine Beal of Paws and Claws. They shared their love for the jobs that they do in our community, and even read books to our children.

Lessons and Carols

Our annual Lessons and Carols service will be held on Thursday evening at 6:30 PM on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day. Thanksgiving will have passed by the time you read this. Nevertheless, I want you all to know I am so thankful for this fine congregation and the opportunity to lead you in worship. I'm so thankful to God for giving me the talent and desire for music performance. I'm thankful for each student I teach and the opportunity to help instill a love for music in their hearts. I am thankful for all those who serve in the music ministry, and I hope and pray that our choir will grow back to its pre-COVID form. It will happen if you, the reader, would join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. If you don't want to join us, you can hope and pray along with me.

> John Schwarze, Director of Music schwarze@fumcderidder.org



The children have worked very hard on their Christmas music and will sing on Sunday, December 10. After that date we will not have choir practice until Wednesday, January 3.

First United Methodist Church of DeRidder is looking for a pianist to play on Sunday mornings. Please call 337-463-4491 for more information!







December Norship Assistants

Sunday, December 3rd

Greeters - Grant & Catherine Beal Readers - Gayle Bailey & Lexi Detty 1st Sunday Communion Servers (During Service) -Gayle & Kenneth Bailey

Sunday, December 10th

Greeters - Raymond & Frances Cole Readers - Van Allen & Charlotte McGee After-Service Communion Server -Miranda Chapman

Sunday, December 17th

Greeters - Becky Hammerschmidt & Linda Jones Readers - Betty Nease & Mary Launey After-Service Communion Server -David Hardesty

Sunday, December 24th

Greeters - The Tepley Family Readers - Tim Kindler & John Schwarze After-Service Communion Server -Erin Tepley

Sunday, December 31st

Greeters - Raymond & Tammi Henderson Readers - Cathy Scott & David Hardesty After-Service Communion Server -Susan Hill

Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of Curtis Meadows Scotty & Betty Nease

In Memory of Eleanor Marcello Joyce Lewis Rosemary Cady Circle

In Memory of Marty Smith Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bennett Dianne Penney Joyce Lewis

In Memory of Anna Wiggins Dianne Penney Joyce Lewis

In Memory of Jo Calhoun Dianne Penney

In Memory of Jerry Lewis Dianne Penney Joyce Lewis

In Memory of Carla Smith Dianne Penney Joyce Lewis

In Memory of Billy Penney Dianne Penney

In Memory of Jimmy Galloway John Marcello

In Honor of Wilfred Luttrell Leah Cooper

In Honor of John Schwarze Leah Cooper

In Honor of James Bailey Leah Cooper In Honor of Ron Yule

Leah Cooper

Pew Bibles are available for \$10 and can be dedicated in honor or in memory of a loved one.



['] Honduras Mission Trip & Meal Fundraiser

Share the love of Christ through service to the people of Potrerillos, Honduras. Join this team from February 24th to March 2nd, 2024, and assist with children's ministry, dental, construction

projects, Bible stories, and more! Contact Dean Sawyer at 337-274-9238.

ATTENTION: You are invited to join in on Sunday, January 21st, 2024, for a meal / fundraiser for the Honduras 2024 Mission. Chef Ben Herrera of 121 Artisan Bistro in Lake Charles will provide a fine dining experience for \$150/ plate. Proceeds will go to dental, as well as VBS materials, eye glasses, and a construction project.

Blue Cupboard Project



Please consider donating: new or gently-used clothing items, school supplies, nonperishable food items, snacks that can be given discreetly, and hygiene items. To donate please drop off items in the Fellowship Hall building or in the church office.

From the Heart by Mary Allen



One year, not many days after Christmas, my newborn daughter was placed in my arms. Impatient to get here, she arrived so curious she could hardly concentrate on crying. Those big blue eyes had to see everything, turning her face every direction to drink in this new place. Then she heard her

daddy's voice and turned her whole body towards him. From that instant on, he and she had a bond not many have known. What a joy she has been, making us laugh everyday by her unique view of life. Watching her live like a little "Ted, Jr.", competitive, smart, a heart as big as Texas, always for the underdog and giving selflessly 98% of the time. The other 2% was used to pull her sister's hair, steal her crayons, and read her diary; we called her "Bossy Mossy" during the times she was overcome with the need to DIRECT everyone's lives....lol. She loves life, still, with her amazing family of four. She is my sweet, determined, giving, entertaining, Jesus-loving daughter. God answered our decade of prayer for children. What a blessing! I love my daughters more with every passing year.

> "Give thanks to the Lord because he is good. God's faithful love lasts forever!"

> > **PSALM 136:1**

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