



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Pastor's Ponderings!

I am so proud of this congregation! You are so busy being Disciples of Christ and growing in your faith! You fed so many families with food baskets for Christmas. We had a nice gathering for a meal on Christmas Day. There were multiple services related to Advent and Christmas with Lessons and Carols, Blue Christmas, and a Christmas Eve service. Bible Studies were held, Advent workshop for families, Breakfast with Santa, and more! You gave with your time, your talents, your gifts, your service, and your witness. As always, this church finished strong—so strong, in fact, that contributions were able to cover all ministry costs for 2023. By the end of January, you will receive an annual report for 2023. This report is filled with testimonials, graphs, and stories. We also have a report available for 2024 as we look to this year's goals. If you didn't receive either of these reports and you would like one, please come by the office to pick one up or we can mail you one.

January was busy with missions with a great group going to Dulac to work on people's homes as they recover from Hurricane Ida. We all know what that is like! As I write this, we leave on Wednesday. All of the children's ministries are active after the Christmas break and are learning more about their faith. They are loving the many ways they are involved in ministry in this church also! They could use more help if you have a couple of Wednesdays to help each month!

Easter comes early this year and so does Lent. Sunday, February 11th at 10 a.m. is our "Mardi Gras" service with Beauregard's Courtesy providing our faith music. We will be in the Fellowship Hall and have a great time celebrating the Transfiguration of Jesus and his passionate and transforming love for us. Shrove Tuesday will bring a Pancake Supper in the tradition of getting rid of the leaven (the yeast) before Lent begins. This tradition dates back to the Israelites leaving in a hurry as they escaped slavery and the Pharaoh of Egypt. The dinner will provide funds for our children to go to summer camp. Of course, there will also be a Lent Bible Study. See the information about these events in other articles in the newsletter.

Miranda Chapman,

Admin / Bookkeeper

Laura Schultz,

Administrative Assistant

Phone: 337-463-4491 Email: Office@fumcderidder.org

Follow our livestream on Facebook

at First United Methodist Church -

DeRidder, or on YouTube at

DeridderFUMC

Come and join us. All are welcome! - Laraine

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PO Box 965

DeRidder, LA 70634

Physical Address:

406 W. Shirley Street

DeRidder, LA 70634

Ash Wednesday – Yes, It's Also Valentine's Day! You will have two different opportunities to celebrate Ash Wednesday. There will be a shortened service at 7 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone will have time to get to work or have coffee with your friends.

In the evening, we will remain in the Fellowship Hall immediately following dinner for the 6 p.m. service. This service will be a little longer than the morning service with more music.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Christian season called Lent. Lent originated in the 4th century, and was initially a time of preparation for those being baptized at Easter. Since baptism is an act of introduction into a community of faith, the entire community was called to this "time of preparation." Additionally, those people who had been removed from the fellowship of the church were also called to a time of self-examination, prayer, fasting, and introspection before their re-introduction to the church.

The ashes symbolize our humility before God and our recognition that we are mortal. It is a time when we reflect on what we need to change in our lives in order to live responsibly and lovingly as a member of the created world" (umc.org/Rethink Church).

Come and join us for one or both services on Valentine's, and discover the deepest love of all from God!



Pick up a Lent Devotional Sunday, February 11th, in the Sanctuary or in the church office. All families are welcome to take a copy to share.



Ash Wednesday & Lent

Lent Bible Study

Come and join us for the Lent Bible Study on Wednesday nights. If you'd like, let's eat and Fellowship with dinner beforehand. Serving starts as early as 5 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Don't forget we have an elevator if you don't want to use the stairs! We will be studying the book Remembrance: God's Covenants and the Cross by Rev. Susan Robb of Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas. "God's covenants throughout the Old Testament show the character of God's promises to the people of Israel. In this book, Susan Robb leads readers through the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, followed by the new covenant established on Maundy Thursday. The Lenten story culminates with an examination of the cross as another of God's promises for a new world!

The cost of the book is \$15. As always, you will have the choice of attending the 11:15 a.m. class or the 6 p.m. class in the Upper Room of the Fellowship Hall. We will begin on Wednesday, February 21st. Our last Wednesday will be during Holy Week (we will meet a little earlier that week so we can go to the luncheon). Come and join us for a great

discussion and study! Please order your book now through the office or put your check in the offering plate with Bible Study in the memo.

Dear Friends.

My heart is overflowing with gratitude because of the loving kindness that has been shown me since I recently announced my retirement. It has been an honor to serve as your pianist for the last 26 years, and I will always cherish the opportunities this position has afforded me.

The reception in my honor was a lovely tribute because of all those who planned it and prepared and provided the delicious refreshments and decorations. I sincerely appreciate the attendance of my church family and my children and grandchildren.

The comments made by Laraine, Mary, John, James, *Jo, and others were very heartwarming. The lovely* engraved plague, which I placed on my piano, will always hold a special place in my heart, and the gift card to Tony's will help continue my retirement celebration!

Even though I will no longer be sitting at the piano every Sunday, I look forward to seeing you all on Sunday mornings and continuing to work with you on other church projects.

Blessings to You All!

DiAnne



Methodist Children's Learning Center

December and January have been great months at MCLC. Our children have enjoyed the holidays as we celebrated the birth of Jesus. Our favorite verse from December was Luke 2:11, "Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." January came very quickly, and we started the new year with a door contest for each class. Our theme was Winter Wonderland. Teachers and children helped decorate the doors with art work and their own special touches to make each door beautiful. We will continue to have a theme for the next few months. MCLC continues to grow as we are adding a class downstairs to our center.



CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Do you want to work with our children and youth? We need you! You must have this training. If it is your first time, you will need to take the morning session.



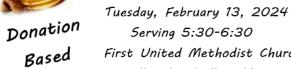
Wednesday February 7, 2024

Safe Sanctuaries Training 9:00 - 11:00am in the Upper Room

Risk Reduction Training 1:00 - 2:00pm in the Upper Room 6:00 - 7:00pm in the Conference Room

To register, or for any questions, please call or text Cathy at (337) 396-9610; or email at cathy@FUMCDeRidder.org





Serving 5:30-6:30 First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall Building

All donations will help send kids to Summer Camp at the Uskichitto Retreat Center in LeBlanc.

Volunteers Needed for the event For more information on the Pancake Dinner call (337) 463-4463 or text (337) 396-9610

FUMC DeRidder Homeschool Fellowship Semi-Structured Fellowship Time for all Homeschooled Children from K- 12th grades

> 1st & 3rd Thursday Monthly 9:00am-1:00pm Wesley Education Center 701 North Texas Avenue





For more

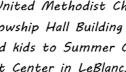


We have a FUN time at Children's Choir. Come see what all the joy is about. Wednesday evenings 4:45 - 5:15 in the choir room.

Come join us!!



Music Ministry Notes





There are several issues that need to be addressed within the music ministry at our church. We need a volunteer for our Praise Ensemble (string bass) and singers for our Chancel Choir. Of course, the pianist position is still open. The Hand Bell Ensemble and Children's Choir always need new members. Bottom line, we need you. I'd like to thank Roger Sterling for many years of dedicated service in the choir. Moving forward, Roger has chosen to step down and focus primarily on his duties with the carillon and Sunday School. We will greatly miss him and his wealth of musical knowledge. I call him a music encyclopedia. Several times, I have given the choir music, and Roger could tell me when the last time the choir sang it was and the circumstances surrounding its performance. Make sure you let Roger know how much you appreciate his work.

John Schwarze, Director of Music Ministries

New Volunteers For Technical Team Are Welcome!

Join us on Sunday mornings to see how FUMC's worship services are made possible! Call 337-463-4491 for information on how to get involved.



Beauregard's Courtesy Performing on Sunday, February 11th at 10 AM

Where: Fellowship Hall during Sunday Service Contact the Church Office at 337-463-4491 for more information about this annual performance!

Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of Margaret Palma From John Marcello

In Memory of Gene Holloway From Scotty & Betty Nease

In Memory of Margie Labby From Joyce Lewis

In Memory of Charles Penney From Joyce Lewis

> In Honor of Mary Bell From Joyce Lewis

Pew Bibles

Pew Bibles are available for \$10 and can be dedicated in honor or in memory of a loved one. Please contact the Church Office at 337-463-4491 for more information.



Honduras Mission Trip

When: February 24th - March 2nd Where: Potrerillos, Honduras What: Mission work through dental, construction, children's ministry, Bible stories, and more! Contact Dean Sawyer

337-274-9238

Circles on a Mission 2024 Registration is Open!

Visit our website <u>fumcderidder.org</u> to sign up for this year's bicycle ride, which will be on Saturday, May 18th. There will be several options for



participation, including the 8-mile, 23-mile, and 50-mile race option, as well as a 1-mile guided walk. This event is sponsored by FUMC's Missions Team, and funds go to the Methodist Children's Home in Sulphur, LA. **All are welcome to join!**



The Journey Bicycle Event May 22nd - May 25th, 2024

The United Women in Faith will begin their bicycle event "The Journey" on Wednesday, May 22nd (the last day of school), with a family bike ride. The 300-mile bicycle ride will start on that Saturday, May 25th.



February Worship Assistants

Sunday, February 4th

Greeters - Jimmy Hicks Readers - John Marcello & Betty Nease 1st Sunday Communion Servers (During Service) -Mary Wisdom, Susan Hill, and Jo Blankenship

Sunday, February 11th

Greeters - Scotty & Betty Nease Readers - Hunter Oldaker & Garrett Oldacker After-Service Communion Server -David Hardesty

Sunday, February 18th

Greeters - Becky & Ted Hammerschmidt Readers - Gayle Bailey & David Hardesty After-Service Communion Server -Tim Kindler

Sunday, February 25th

Greeters - The Tepley Family Readers - Tammi & Raymond Henderson After-Service Communion Server -Tim Kindler



From the Heart by Mary Allen

The year of 2023 is behind us. It was a gift. I spent it with my children and grandchildren. Their lives were fast-paced, filled with work, school, homework, church, baseball, softball, and basketball. There were stolen moments when they fished in the pond, raced on their bikes, cared for puppies and kittens, or caught tadpoles and geckos.

Sprinkled throughout, we slowed down time a bit. We sat around the table, art pencils and paints in hand creating pictures for someone's January birthday. In spring, I was given a comfortable chair from which I could judge a competition of high-in-the-air trampoline tricks. The winner and everyone else—got ice cream served to them. In summer, Pete the Horse would often join us. Once, my grandson climbed onto his sun-warmed back and almost snoozed as he grazed on the lawn's grass. In the fall, there were trips to my college-aged granddaughters. With pride, I saw a confident, beautiful young lady where once a child stood. We caught up on exciting changes, and I could still feel her hug on the way home.

Yes, the year of 2023 is behind us. Before us lies a new gift—the year of 2024. With thanks, I give this new year to God, trusting His plan for all that lies ahead, for He is mighty to be trusted!

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my God; in Him I will trust." -Psalm 91:2

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