

The Messenger



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First United Methodist Church

Worship Schedule

Please remember that we will have only one service at 11:00 a.m. on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Due to the Holidays . . .

- ▶ The church office will be closed during the week after Christmas. We will re-open on Monday, January 2nd.
- ▶ We will not publish a newsletter next week, so birthdays and volunteer schedules which would be published that week are included in this newsletter.
- ▶ In order for offerings to be counted for 2011, they must be received in the office or post-marked by December 31st. You may place offerings in the offering plate, mail them, or drop them through the mail slot to the right of the office door.

Christmas Eve Service

Please join us on Christmas Eve at 5:00 p.m. for a Candlelight Communion worship service which will include children's participation in the telling of the Christmas story.



Your church staff wishes you all the joy and peace of Christmas!

<i>Robbins Sims</i>	<i>Ann Mitchell</i>	<i>Ella McCray</i>
<i>Janet Wooten</i>	<i>Wanda Styles</i>	<i>Carolyn Phillips</i>
<i>Pam Hunter</i>	<i>Chuck Walker</i>	<i>Cathy Senn</i>
<i>Ashley Washington</i>	<i>Thelma Dennard</i>	<i>Shelley Clark</i>
<i>Billy Wilbourne</i>	<i>Margarita Garza</i>	<i>Ashley Register</i>

December 25 Volunteers

▶ Acolytes

Shelby Tyler

▶ Children's Church

Dee Miller

▶ Ushers

Ben Tye, Joel Smith Jr.,
Tom Chesnutt, Robert Bennett,
Charlie Schaeffer, Jim Martin,
Denise Corcoran

▶ Lay Readers

11:00 – Aubrey Baugh

January 1 Volunteers

▶ Acolytes

Hayden, Hunter & Beth Anne Baugh

▶ Children's Church

Caty Richardson

▶ Ushers

Toby Anderson, Billy Houston,
John Gray, Logan Mitchell,
Dan McKenzie, Jay Jaxon,
David Jones

▶ Lay Readers

11:00 – Toni Houston

Calendar of Events

▶ Sunday, December 25

Worship 11:00

▶ Tuesday, December 27

Mother's Morning Out 8:30

▶ Wednesday, December 28

No activities

▶ Thursday, December 29

Mother's Morning Out 8:30

▶ Sunday, January 1

Worship 11:00

A Look at Last Sunday

December 18

Sunday School 144

11:00 Worship 255

Total Worship 255

Offering received \$7,041

YTD received \$418,258

Youth News



Hi everyone,

I am sure that all of you are enjoying your break from school!

I wish all of you and your families a very Merry Christmas!

Ashley

White Christmas Offering

We are continuing to collect our annual White Christmas Offering for the United Methodist Children's Home. To date, we have received \$3,298. Gifts given through White Christmas offerings enable the Children's Home to minister to children in need year after year. Please make your check to FUMC and note "White Christmas" on the memo line. Your offerings will be combined and sent to the Children's Home.

Chocolate Is Here!

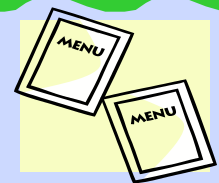
In addition to coffee and hot chocolate, you may now purchase chocolate bars from the UMCOR



Coffee Project booth in the fellowship hall. Simply take your desired purchase and place your payment in the collection envelope on the table. Thanks for helping with this worthwhile project!

Flower Calendar

If you would like to place flowers in the sanctuary during the coming year, please sign the flower calendar in the fellowship hall. The next available dates are March 18th & 25th.



Recharge Menu

December 28

No meal tonight



From the Pastor . . .

In his introduction to the first Disciple Bible Study class, the late Albert Outler pointed to a "primal narrative" that runs through the whole of scripture. He described it as the God's "rule of grace," which opposes humanity's obsession with "the power syndrome." According to Dr. Outler, the Bible always presents an alternative reading of events. It is an open invitation to recognize and enter upon God's will for the world.

For us Christians, the Christmas story contains the heart of sacred truth. To the extent that they actually participate in truth of Christmas, the celebrations of this season grow out of its story. When approached with a spirit of reverential love, Christmas liturgies, cards, gifts, lights, music, and fellowship manifest God's rule of grace. They bear a winsome witness to peace, which is the waiting partner of Divine grace. They beckon us to seek the Lord whose coming inaugurates a kingdom that will have no end.

The Christmas Choir made a splendid offering of worshipful gifts last Sunday. The melodies and lyrics of the anthems moved us to a place of holy awareness. We beheld the mystery and beauty of Christ's coming. The voices of instruments and choir evoked the very word of God. The deep stream of the primal narrative swept us up and carried us along!

Our upcoming Christmas Eve service will be a highlight of this holy season. Song and light will accompany the sacrament of bread and cup. The center of the service will be hearing Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 2:1-12 read aloud. This year children will lead us in a dramatic visualization of the characters and events of the Christmas story in response to its being read. This living tableau will be neither picture perfect nor clumsily cute. Instead, it will call us be present with Christ in a childlike state of openness and wonder. The children who participate will connect with Christmas story on the very night when the church tells and hears it with great expectancy. They will experience the memorable joy of being evangelists to an overflow crowd. Hopefully, the story will become their story for the rest of their lives. Then, weather permitting, we will follow the children's lead and move out to the corner of South Eufaula and East Barbour, light our candles, and raise our voices as a witness to all who pass our way.

Grace and peace,

Robbins

Prayer List

▶ New concerns:

Hannah Berndt
*John Jenkins
Matt Brunson
*Vivian Hatfield
*Fred Cherry
*Reba Beall
Zelia Baugh
*Paul Matherne
*Ken Knight
Jeanette Orr

▶ Continue to pray for:

David Robinson
*Charles Irvin
*Doug Purcell
Joanna, Annie & Luke Jardina
Benjamin Pomeroy
Judy Marshall
Kathy Armstrong
*Jeff Richards
*Joe Whaley
*Taylor Washington
Richard Hattaway
Jan Elrod
Stewart Baker
Jeff & Michelle VanSon
Betsy Vincent
*Keleigh Gary
*Brian Devlin-Meagher
Sue Salter
*Mel Stephenson
Mary Lindsey Hannahan
*Richard Boyette
Police & Firefighters

▶ Deployed overseas:

*Rex Howard

▶ Prayer list guidelines:

Our prayer list is updated weekly. If you would like to place someone's name on the list, please ask that person's permission before calling the office. Names remain for 4 weeks unless requested to remain. * denotes church members.

Merry Christmas!

Birthdays

Friday, December 23

- ▶ Dent Richards, Jr.

Saturday, December 24

- ▶ Jack Anderson
Sky Morris

Sunday, December 25

- ▶ Joseph Ritter

Monday, December 26

- ▶ Robert Conniff

Tuesday, December 27

- ▶ Beth Kasper
Marcus Bickley

Wednesday, December 28

- ▶ Shelby Cole

Thursday, December 29

- ▶ Pierce Smith
Averi O'Brien

Friday, December 30

- ▶ Kaye Cutchen
John Adams Gray

Saturday, December 31

- ▶ Toni Houston

Monday, January 2

- ▶ Kim Zellner Granberry

Tuesday, January 3

- ▶ Craig Harris

Wednesday, January 4

- ▶ Betty Searcy

Thursday, January 5

- ▶ Jenny Abbott

Merry Christmas!



*"For
unto us
a child
is born..!"*



"Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus..."

I'm sure that many of you know the real story of Santa Claus but just in case, I thought I might remind you here.

Nicholas was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At that time, the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents raised him to be a devout Christian but died while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell all you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man.

Under the Roman Emperor, Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. He was released after Constantine became emperor. He died on December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his Cathedral Church. Since then, he was canonized and December 6 is his feast day.

Many legends surround Nicholas. One such legend tells of a poor man with three daughters who could not afford a dowry so that the girls could be married. In that day, without a dowry, the girls would be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of this and threw bags of gold through the window of the home. Some of the gold somehow fell into stockings which were drying by the fire. This is the inspiration of our Christmas stockings.

We do know that Nicholas was very kind to and protected children. He is now the patron saint of children. The translation of St. Nicholas in Holland was Sinterklass. We can easily see where our name, Santa Claus originated.

So, "yes Virginia, there 'was' a Santa Claus." May that spirit bless our hearts this Christmas. And may we be inspired to always love all of God's children.

Merry Christmas!

Billy and Cathie and all the Wilbournes

