



New Nativity Is A-W-E-S-O-M-E



The Hanging of The Greens work crew truly enjoyed the sneak peek of the custom-made Nativity on November 25. The detail of each character is phenomenal. It was created by Zachariah's Brothers in Israel. The Nativity is on a rolling cart so it can be transported to and from the Traditional and the Fellowship worship services.



Family Date Night Is FUN, FUN, FUN

Family Date Night, Nov. 9 proved to be a time full of laughter and joy for parent and kids as they each painted a turkey.





Todd Salzwedel
Senior Pastor

As a child, I can recall counting down the days to the Thanksgiving break, because that meant I could begin the important countdown to what really mattered: Christmas!

Today, as I watch my own children and the kids around the church, it's fun to reminisce about the excitement and wonder just around

the corner. I must admit, as I've gotten older, I continue to count down the days to certain events, but probably not with the same eagerness or boundless hope I did when I was younger.

I sometimes wonder if it was like that for the Jewish faithful two thousand years ago as a newly married couple prepared for the birth of their child. I wonder if the Jewish people had long ago abandoned the sense of unlimited hope and promise to become more pragmatic...much like our own transition from childhood to adulthood. I wonder how much a difference that made when the public proclamations about this child about to be born would be made in few decades. And I wonder today if we are able to reclaim the limitless possibility a Messiah heralds in our lives.

I may wonder about such things at times, but what I do know is that we have a whole lot of things planned for the **Advent** season and beyond! Inside the Cultivator this month, you'll read about **Family Advent Nights, Advent services, a Children's Program** being presented at both services on Sunday, December 23, and the **Christmas Eve** services. You will see that the children and youth have a variety of activities centered around learning and celebrating the birth of Jesus. We are counting down, we are preparing, and I pray we have the eagerness of a child about what this birth means in our lives.

One of the things we have done is unveil the **new church nativity** scene during the **Hanging of the Greens** on November 25. It arrived at the church a few months ago, and was kept under lock and key since we unpacked it! The set was hand carved from olive wood in Bethlehem by the Zachariah's Brothers, local artists in Bethlehem. For the Christians in and around Bethlehem, this becomes one of the main sources of income for a people with very few economical options. Where we will enjoy a beautiful arrangement reminding us of the hope

this young child brings for tomorrow, the artists in that area truly understand the hope of today by creating such beautiful pieces.

Advent is a unique time for every one of us depending on our place and circumstance in life. For many, it is a time of great joy, while for others, it is a vivid reminder of loss and pain. Sometimes, Christmas is the culmination of another year, but for others, it is yet another beginning. I think I fall in the latter category. I am always full of anticipation at what God might do in the coming year in my life, my family, and our church. At the same time, I want to give thanks for all God has already done!

In fact, one of the reasons we give gifts to one another is it is a way in which we demonstrate our thanks for God's faithfulness in our lives. We want to show how grateful we are for those that have meant so much to us. As we exchange tokens of love and care with one another, I want to encourage you to remember the church in your gifts. We

are known as an extremely generous church in the conference for our faithfulness to God's mission in the world and our community. And as our church has grown this past year in membership, attendance, professions of faith and baptisms, we have also grown in the financial obligations we encounter. We know that the cost of living has continued to increase which means the needs in our community are continuing to go up.

One of the fiduciary responsibilities that we, as a church do, is tithe 8% of the amount of money we receive for our operating budget to the work of the conference and ministry abroad for the United Methodist Church. We are known for consistently paying our shared ministries, and we generally rely in some part on the end of year giving being more substantial than normal. *That has been our historical tradition, and I trust that will be the case again this year. I challenge us to do something a little different as we head into the future...but I'll save that for early in the New Year!*

For today, let us remember the wonder and excitement this time of year brought to us as children. May we give thanks for all that God has done, be grateful for our families and church, and know that we serve a God that fulfills the promises he makes to His people...time after time...year after year! And may this Advent again fill us with the hope, joy, peace and faith that only a young child from Bethlehem can bring! -- Pastor Todd

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Family Ministry Director Caleb Eckel wants the congregation to know the fabulous students active in Echo Student Ministry. This month's student is **Bella Gregston**.

Bella Gregston is a Junior at Permian High School.

Involvement at PHS: Varsity Choir, JV Soccer Player

Favorite Animal: white Bengal tiger

Future plans: Crime scene investigator or game warden

Involvement at 1st-UMC: Attended youth group for 6 years, Confirmation Class of 2014, volunteered for VBS for 2 years, has attended 4 church camps and a mission to Port Aransas. Bella has also served as a greeter, served communion, and is part of the youth worship team.



Bella pictured working at the Gulf Coast Humane Society in Corpus Christi, during the 2018 Mission Trip.

2018 Mission Trip to Port Aransas, Bella said "After going to Port Aransas, I have a new outlook on life. I no longer take life for granted anymore and I realize how blessed I am."

Favorite youth group moment, "I really like when we are singing worship at ECHO youth and the instrumentals stops so we just sing a capella. It gives me goosebumps to feel the Holy Spirit moving in me."

How is God working in your life?

"God is giving me people that I need in my life, life's been really tough. God is giving me the support system I need right now to help me through my hard times."

NEW YEARS LOCK-IN

FOUR YOUTH GROUPS WILL CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR

WHERE: ST LUKE'S UMC MIDLAND

WHEN: DEC 31- JAN 1

Youth from 1st-UMC-Odessa and Asbury-UMC are joining 1st-UMC-Midland and St. Luke's to ring in the New Year.

D6 Sunday School Studies for DECEMBER 2018

ELEMENTARY THROUGH ADULT – Wisdom From Proverbs

This study highlights the major theme of the book of Proverbs and demonstrates how ancient counsel is relevant today. Students develop skills in living by adopting the principles of problems in their daily lives.

	Dec. 2	Dec. 9	Dec. 16	Dec. 23	Dec. 30
D6	The Source of Wisdom	The Need for Wisdom	Wisdom in Righteous Living	Wise Men Seek Him	Wisdom in Daily Living
2GEN CURRICULUM	Proverbs 1:1-33	Proverbs 8:5; 12:15; 29:16; 3:21-23	Proverbs 23:24-25; 19:1; 29:23; 5:1-8	Matthew 1:18-2:12	Proverbs 10:4-5; 21-23; 23:4-5; 14:29

PRESCHOOL – CHRISTMAS

This unit helps students examine the truth that *Jesus is God's son*. He came to earth as a baby just like the prophets said He would. Students will explore the biblical account of Jesus' birth and be challenged to respond with worship and praise for this amazing gift to the world.

GLORIA: Music For The Advent Season And For The Soul

The traditional service, **Sunday, December 16**, will feature the 1st-UMC choir, soloists, piano, and organ in *Gloria* by composer Mark Hayes. *Gloria* is a celebration of the "splendor" of Jesus Christ with lyrics in Latin and English. The first movement is the familiar "Gloria in Excelsis Deo", glory to God in the highest. Jesus is portrayed as the true King, the only begotten Son, and the Lamb of God in the second movement. The third movement celebrates His holiness, "Thou Alone art the Lord!"

This is a beautiful cantata celebrating the birth of Jesus, the only begotten Son! — *David Corman, Director of Traditional Music*

***Gloria* by Mark Hayes, composer**

I love writing music that is dramatic, music that grabs you and takes your breath away, that keeps you on the edge of your seat, music that you experience deep in your soul. The Scripture upon which the first movement of the Gloria is based tells a story that is both dramatic and profoundly life changing. The announcement of Jesus' birth by an entire heaven filled with angels to surprised shepherds is the ultimate dramatic act. From the opening measures of my Gloria, it is my desire to capture that excitement and hint at the glory of that celestial experience. My hope is that you will experience the essence of the Divine through the beauty of this music and that as you hear the serenity of the final Amen, your soul will know it has been touched deeply by something grander than you could have ever imagined.

Celebrating Advent

The season of **Advent**, which comes from the Latin word "adventus" meaning "arrival" or "visit," begins four Sundays (December 3-6) before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. **Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year for Christians.**

Although we are accustomed to celebrating Christmas on a single day, in both Church tradition and on the Church calendar, the **Christmas season lasts sundown on December 24 (Christmas Eve) through the Epiphany of the Lord (January 6), sometimes popularly referred to as the twelve days of Christmas."**

The **Advent wreath**, four candles in a wreath of evergreen, is shaped in a perfect circle to symbolize the eternity of God. In worship services, we light three purple candles, one rose or pink, to represent the four virtues of Christ: hope, love, peace, and faith. The larger white candle in the middle represents Christ.

For each Sunday of Advent, we focus on one of the four virtues Jesus brings us: Hope, Joy and Peace. The white, center candle, the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve. The purple candles are lit on Christmas Day to remind Christians that Jesus is the light of the world. The order and the wording vary among churches, but the wreath continually reminds us of whom we are called to be as followers of Jesus. — *United Methodist Church, www.umc.org*

The
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of
Advent



2018

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Is He Worthy? Our Advent Sermon Series

1st Sunday of Advent **December 2** *Promises, Promises*

Throughout Scripture, the promise of God to redeem His people is evident

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:3-6

Sometimes, we can think of the birth of Jesus as a reactive response to the state of humanity. In reality though, it is evident that God recognized from the beginning our need for a Savior. We'll look at some of the prophecies that point to the enduring plan of God for our redemption.

2nd Sunday of Advent **December 9**

Coming Soon...the Messiah!

John the Baptist heralds the coming of the Messiah to purify, judge, and redeem a fallen humanity

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4

Have you ever wished and prepared for something to happen only to be so preoccupied with other things that you missed the event altogether? It appears that for many, the vision of what God would do in the future was lost on people who became so focused on the things around them, they failed to pay attention to the work God was doing among them.

3rd Sunday of Advent **December 16**

Putting Action to Words

Jesus demonstrates what it means to fulfill the law and to love humanity at the same time he is the fulfillment of God's grace

Scripture: Luke 3:7-14

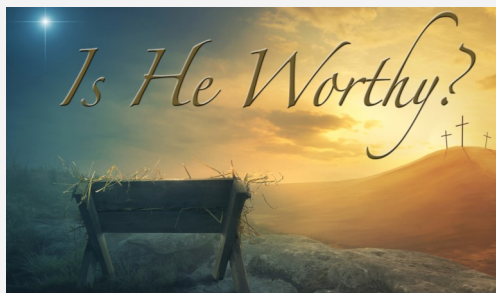
The Advent of Jesus gives us insight to the mission of God through His son.

Salvation, justice, and redemption are all themes we witness in statements pertaining to Jesus coming. What then does that mean for us? How do we live into the hope the Christ child brings?

4th Sunday of Advent **December 23 9:00 and 11:00**

Traditional Christmas Pageant by Our Youth and Children

Be awed by the creation of a live Nativity as the sanctuary is filled with shepherds and their sheep; Wise Men and their camels, donkeys and an ox. Angels will perform a sacred dance to celebrate Mary and Joseph and their baby Jesus.





The Spice of Life group last met on Thursday, November 15th. Russell Kimble, and Debra & Steve Meador prepared a fantastic, home-made Thanksgiving feast. We were served roasted turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, sweet potato casserole, home-made rolls, and cranberry salad. For desert, we had sugar-free pumpkin spice cake, pumpkin pie, and coconut cream pie! Wow, what a wonderful menu that was so delicious! Thank you all so very much. We are so very blessed!!!

Marsha Melton provided the door prizes this month. Thank you, Marsha, for all the love and work that you do to make our Spice of Life meeting so beautiful and inviting.

The program was given by Marsha Melton. Marsha



Dick Sivalls is pictured with Jody

spoke about the recent Holy Land Pilgrimage that several of us from our church took under Pastor Todd guidance and excellent planning. Peggy and I were fortunate to be able to go on that trip, and I can truly say for the both of us it was a "Trip of a Lifetime." We will never forget it. Thanks for sharing your memories Marsha!

If you haven't come to Spice of Life in a while (or maybe ever), we hope you will come join us next month. You will enjoy the food and fellowship, and you will be glad you came. We always meet on the third Thursday of each month from 11:30 – 1:00 in the Fellowship Building's dining room. *Blessings to you all, Jody Wallin, Congregational Care Pastor*



YUMMY UMW, once again, helped stock pantries of goodies for Thanksgiving with their annual **bake sale**, November 18. Funds from the sale go to help others in our community and beyond.



Outreach Pastor, Colin Proft conveys appreciation to our custodial staff for their faithful dedication to the upkeep of our wonderful facilities. Irma Aguirre, Mary Rodriguez and Teresa Macias were each presented with a Thanksgiving feast with all of the trimmings.



United
Methodist
Women
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

**United Methodist Women's
Christmas Luncheon
December 13
11:30
Fellowship Dining Hall**



Troop 91 Shows Off New Facility aka former Food Pantry



It is hard to miss the inspiring artwork in the windows at 412 N Lee. What was once the Food Pantry has been converted into a large area for meetings, project workspace and storage. All of the work has been done by the Scouts and Scout Leaders. On Sunday, November 11, the Scouts opened the doors to church members to "come and see." Photos show the outside view of the windows and the bright but filtered light in the inside. Anne Acreman is pictured buying that great Troop 91 popcorn from a scout. Pastor Todd Salzwedel and Ken Anderson line up with Scouts and Scout Leaders Emily Bates, Jeff Bates. The group is standing in front of the plaques listing the three Eagle Scouts from Troop 91. There are currently eight Scouts set to achieve that lofty goal within the year. While much work has been done, much work to upgrade the facility remains. Donations are always appreciated.

**POINSETTIA
ORDERS**



Please help make our Sanctuary merry & bright and support our student ministry by buying poinsettias. The cost is \$20 each. Deadline to order is Dec 23

**ALL CHURCH
POTLUCK
BRUNCH**

December 23
at 10 am
Fellowship Center

Bring your favorite dish!

SAVE THE DATE



January 26, 2019



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Odessa TX 79761

Bring A Friend This Sunday

8:00 AM	Adult Bible Class
9:00 AM	Traditional Worship —Sanctuary
10:00 AM	Sunday School, all ages
10:16 AM	The Bridge Worship, —3901 E. Yukon
11:00 AM	Fellowship Worship —Fellowship Center

First United Methodist Church, Odessa, Texas, founded in 1890, is a community of Christians who have pledged to support this church with their presence, their service, their gifts and their prayers. We dedicate ourselves to spreading God's Word throughout our community and to providing meaningful worship experiences, fellowship, and opportunities to fulfill the teachings of Jesus Christ through a variety of ministries. As United Methodists, "our doors, our hearts and our minds are open to all those who seek God's Grace."

The *CULTIVATOR* is a monthly publication whose exclusive purpose is to help FUMC-Odessa accomplish its Mission by communicating and "cultivating the presence of Christ in the lives of this congregation."

First United Methodist Church-Odessa Mission Statement

*We exist for **LIFE**...*

*To **L**ove others, **I**nvite them to join us as we **F**ollow
Christ, who **E**mpowers us to make a difference.*



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Thursday, Dec. 13

6:30 p.m. in the
Sanctuary.

This special worship
service is a time to
acknowledge to

*ourselves and others that at
Christmas time there is sadness, sorrow,
pain and grief in our lives that needs to
be honored.*

*The candles of this candle light service
serve as petitions to God for loved ones
who are not with us this holiday season.*

Christmas Eve Worship Services

4:00 pm

Fellowship Worship Service with
contemporary music
in Fellowship Center

6:00 pm

Traditional Worship Service with
the Sanctuary Choir
in the sanctuary.

Christmas Eve giving will be shared with
missionaries supported by 1st-UMC:
Holly Stallcup & Now She Rises (formerly
Mended Women)
Arthur Raj in India
Brandon Hembree family in China