

Sharing Advent Love By Continuing A Tradition

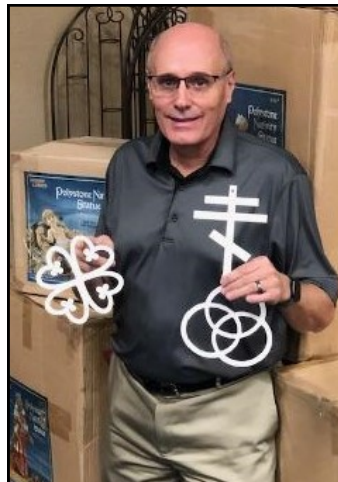
Britani Severance organized Deck The Halls this year to adorn the sanctuary and Fellowship Worship Center for the season of Advent and Christmas. She added white wooden Chrismons to all of the trees to complement the existing gold ornaments. Chrismons are ornaments based on centuries-old symbols of Christianity. Another new look

is using blue candles and banners on the Advent Wreath, instead of purple. Either liturgical color is acceptable in the United Methodist Church to represent the "advent or anticipated coming" of the Christ Child.

Another new adornment is a special nativity provided by Pastor Jay. Here is why it is special.

The nativity in the Fellowship Center was a gift to me, by one of my congregants at First UMC of Belen. For years I personally had one of those hollow plastic nativities that have a Christmas light in each figure so that they light up at night. I put it at the parsonage each year because it was what I could afford, and because I wanted there to be something other than Santa in the neighborhood. We were talking about that nativity and a friend mentioned she thought we needed a nativity for the sanctuary at the church, and I said, "as long as it is not like my plastic Jesus at the house." It worked great at the house because it is weather proof, but not for the sanctuary. Next thing I knew this big, beautiful nativity showed up at the church, courtesy of this friend. I think we used it one year when my appointment changed and the new pastor didn't like the nativity.

It ended back in my friend's possession. She called that I could use it at Paradise Hills, and that she was giving it to me and not the church. I love nativities almost as much as my wife and so I accepted the gift.



Pastor Jay holds new Chrismons as he poses in front of his special nativity which will be in the Fellowship Center for Advent.

I knew that First Church Odessa already had a beautiful olive wood nativity from the Holy Lands and I was in a quandary what to do with the one I have. Then Britani Severance told me about the difficulty of moving pieces from one service in the sanctuary to the service in the Fellowship Center. I thought, why not pass on the love that my friend showed me by sharing my nativity with the church family? So I offered it to Britani since she is heading up the adornment of our church for Advent and Christmas.

I have always thought that it would be a wonderful thing to fill a church with nativities one Advent Season and then offer tours to the community. Maybe next year.

More than anything, I think love grows when we share. That happened when the olive wood nativity was shared with the congregation. It happened when my friend shared with me and now I am sharing with my new church family.

Make sure you take time to go and see both. God is Good.
— Pastor Jay

Welcome New Children's Director, Maisha Morris

Grace to all! My name is Maisha Mercee' Morris. In November, I stepped into the position of Children's Director and Family Ministries Assistant Director.

To share a bit of myself with you, I will start with my first and second love. My first love is Jesus, and my second love is Movement. The two have been a part of me for many years and are truly a gift from our Heavenly Father. Through movement, I have ministered to many people around the world and in this season of my life the Lord has brought me home to Odessa to share Him.

I come from and appreciate the full family I have been blessed with and have learned to accept and



Maisha Morris

embrace every community of which I have been a part. As I step into this newness with FUMC, I look forward to and believe for both community and family.

The desire of my heart and plan is to help this next/now generation access worship as a tool and expression that comes from and is returned to God. I believe leading from this place will make room for the Holy Spirit to move in and through our lives as individuals, families and the collective body of Christ.

May the God who created us and gave us breath continue to purpose our steps as we serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Blessings — Maisha Morris, Children's Director



Rev. Jay Armstrong
Senior Pastor

This year, I have noticed that people started early celebrating Christmas. Two weeks before Advent my son and his wife had already erected a nativity in their yard and put up their Christmas tree. They may be taking that down sooner than they think now that their infant has become more mobile. It was not just Walmart and Hobby

Lobby that made the pivot to Christmas the day after Halloween.

It seems that people are looking for something to bring a bit of cheer into their lives. It has been a rough year with the economy, Covid-19, and a nasty

political season. However, we need to be careful. In our Scriptures Jesus talks about whitewashed tombs. Graves that have been given a good paint job, but that changed nothing inside the grave. There is still death.

The real joy in this season is not found in the colorful lights, though I enjoy them. The real joy of this season is not found in bright red bow, and strings of pearls wrapped around a tree. The real joy of this season is not found inside the packages, though I don't mind getting a few of those packages. It is found in the truth that in Jesus Christ God is with us. That is the enduring gift that will be there long after the light strands wear out, the gifts fall apart the day after the warranty expires, and the bright red bows have faded. *Merry Christmas, Pastor Jay*

2021 LAY LEADERSHIP

Chair: Brett Emerson

Lay Leader Nancy Sims

Leaders: Susie Schnaubert, Ann Moore, Mike Forrest, Leldon Hensley, Tammy Hawkins, Julie Brown, Celeste Dale, Bynum Vincent

BUILDING TRUSTEES

2021

Brad Watts
Danny Pool
Gary Sims

2022

Colby Brazil
Dick Sivalls
Britani Severance

2023

Jeremiah Vanley
Clifton Garza

STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

2021

Terri Woodward
Jo Forrest
William Nall

2022

Cindy Fowler, Chair
Shay Vanley
Cherie Hensley

2023

Mary Blain
Jim Brown
Anne Shugart

FINANCE COMMITTEE

2021

Judy Hayes
Gary Moore
Clyde Shugart

2022

Becky Guerrero
Craig Van Amburgh
Glenda Adams

2023

Josh Stumpner, Chair
Paul Lucas
John Mark Weaver

NOMINATION & LAY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

2021

Sara Dyrstad
Luke Williams (youth)
Danny Schnaubert
Tricia Elrod

2022

Dan Brazelton
Tamara Stumpner

2023

Nancy Sims
Connie Grewell

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DELEGATES for 2020

Jody Wallin Connie Grewell Joni Vincent

A Word from our Congregation Care Pastor

Greetings Church Family,

As I am writing this article I realize that Christmas will be here before we know it!

This year, many of us had to face different types of issues, and all of us have suffered from the effects of the Covid-19 virus. At FUMC, we have had to re-think everything we do as a church. These changes have often seemed a hindrance and have not always been what we have wanted to do. We love our hugs, high-fives, handshakes and just being close to each other!

What I can honestly say is, "things are certainly not what they used to be!" At times like these, we must turn to God, ask Him for His help and direction, and repeat the words that Jesus himself said when he was facing Calvary. We can say, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; never-the-less not My will, but Yours, be done."

In my 71 years, this has been the most tumultuous year I have experienced. However, I have grown spiritually. I have read the Bible and a number of books that have enlightened me. I have grown in my own trust of God, and I have witnessed a few miracles happen. Glory to God!

Wherever you are in your journey, I encourage you to put your faith and trust in Jesus. Remember the many promises that we read in the Bible. A few that come to my mind are, 1 Cor. 2:9, "No eye has seen,

no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him."

And, John 14:1-3, Jesus tells us, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also." To be with Jesus where-ever He is... that's a beautiful description of Heaven!

By putting our faith and trust in God, we will make it through these tough times and come out the other side stronger and better than we were before. God is good. He will not forsake us in our time of trouble. He will make the paths that are before us straight. Take good cheer, remember the words that the Angel of the Lord spoke to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" Luke 2:10-11 NLT.

Blessings, and may the peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with you and yours, always.

Jody Wallin, Congregational Care Pastor



Save These 2021 Dates

DAVE RAMSEY'S
FINANCIAL Peace
UNIVERSITY

Monday, January 18, 2021 Mary Blain will lead this 9-week **on-line** study by David Ramsey.

"Tell your money where to go instead of wondering where it went!"

Join **virtual Financial Peace University class** and learn to make a budget you'll actually stick to.

Visit fpu.com/1128562 to sign up for my class and start your 14-day free trial of Financial Peace!



Bible Study
January
2021

Finding God Faithful by Kelly Minter

Eight Week study, trace the path of Joseph's life in the Book of Genesis to observe how God's sovereignty reigns, even in our darkest moments. Learn to recognize when God is working during periods of waiting, trust God's plan when life doesn't make sense, and rest in the sufficiency of His presence in every circumstance. His provision is enough, His presence is constant, and His purpose is unstoppable. **Begins January 11, 2021**

...who Empowers us to make a difference

Refurbishing The Steeple Begins

At long last, the repair to the steeple has begun. Crews from Austin Scaffolding are pictured installing the 110' high scaffolding which will allow workers to access the steeple. It was damaged in the infamous hail storm of June 2017 which caused intensive damage throughout Odessa. Building Trustee Chas Weatherby has been committed to our steeple project all this time. He says, "The Building Trustees were very diligent about finding a roofer that had experience roofing steeples...and located Joe Salinas with Nixon Roofing from Fredericksburg, TX. Once the roofer was retained, it was decided the existing copper would be replaced with stainless steel shingles. The stainless steel shingles are made by Erno Ovari with Fine Metal Roof Tech, Salt Lake City, Utah. Joe Salinas placed us on his booked calendar, and the material was ordered. All of this took time.



Hello, Church!
The work crew from Austin Scaffolding waves for this Cultivator photo.

Once COVID restrictions hit, the roofing material was delayed, and was finally received in early November." The bid was \$250,650.00. The church anticipates a total insurance payment of

\$229,000. The remaining \$20,000 will come from the Building Trustee budget. That budget is funded by an annual allocation of our church's Foundation Fund.

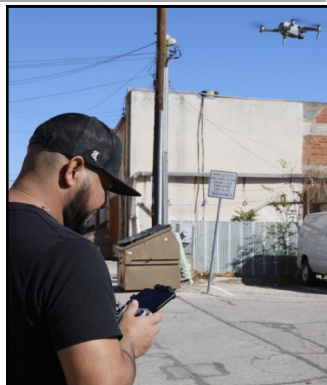
Chas says the project is expected to take about three months to complete. The exact date of the addition of

the steeple is unknown, other than "it must have been constructed after the devastating sanctuary fire in 1965." Building Trustee Gabe Grewell recalls climbing into the tower when he was a youth, so you do the math on that.

Refurbishing the steeple adds to the continuous story of our 130-year old church. It also enhances the endeavors of the City of Odessa to revitalize the downtown area. To mark the progress of the workers, a professional videographer has volunteered to use his drone to create a timely video to be shown on Sundays and then be posted to the church's Facebook. Iovany Galindo is opening a studio—Rec House Media-- near the church. He understands the difficulty of using a still camera to take a meaningful photo of such a tall project and offered the use of his drone to get a "bird's eye view" of the steeple.

Pastor Jay says "this project is symbolic of our re-birth and how FUMC will shine after Covid"

When the steeple is sheathed in the new steel shingles, it will provide another bright spot to reflect God's love to all of Odessa. — Betsy Triplett-Hurt



Iovany Galindo programs his drone to circle the steeple to create a weekly video of the progress. He owns Rec House Media, which is near the church.

EMMANUEL

God Is With Us

1st Sunday in Advent November 29
Watch

Mark 13: 24-37

2nd Sunday in Advent December 6
Prepare

Mark 1: 1-8

3rd Sunday in Advent December 13
Obey

Matthew 1: 18-23

Special music by Sanctuary Choir

4th Sunday in Advent December 20
Move

Luke 1:45-56

Liturgical dance by Maisha Morris and youth
along with songs by our children

Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Worship Services **Emmanuel**

2:00 p.m. Traditional worship service — Sanctuary

4:00 p.m. Contemporary worship service — Fellowship Hall

6:00 p.m. Traditional worship service — Sanctuary

To ensure safe social distancing at each service,
please call church office, 432-337-1527 to reserve your place



Family Ministry Continues To Provide Excellent Activities For Our Kids

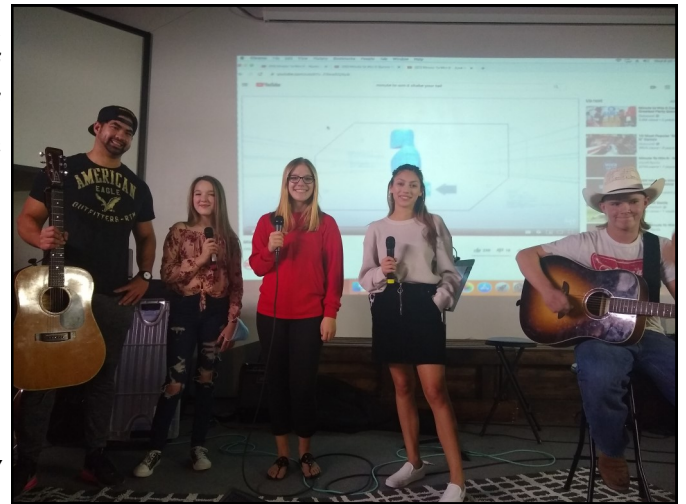


Children's Director Maisha greets Tiffany Wood as she logs in her children for Sunday School. During Sunday School, the children are having a great time learning our new children's curriculum "Celebrate Wonder." The kids also each get their own activity books with crafts and fun activities that go along with their Bible lesson. Pictured are a few of the kids dancing and singing to the opening theme song!



The youth band is back together! Four members of the youth, along with myself (Caleb) lead praise music these past several weeks!

A big thank you to Grace Corman, Kallan Grewell and Kyla Chastain for using their voices to lead us in worship. Also a big thank you to Samuel Simmons for playing the guitar. It's been great to have a band to play and sing along with while we lead the youth group in worship!!!— *Caleb Eckel, Youth Ministry*



The youth had a fun Halloween party on Oct 31st at Highland UMC. A big thank you to the Highland UMC volunteers for providing snacks, drinks and a nacho bar!

Several of the youth dressed up for the costume party! Our runner ups were dressed up as a Pharaoh and another as a cheerleader. Our costume winner was Kiki dressed up in her Taekwondo Gi. The youth had a pumpkin carving contest and gave candy to trick or treaters! Congrats to our winners Raechelle, Baleigh, Ricardo and Xylina for the winning Jack O Lantern contest!

Overall it was a great time where we could get together with Asbury UMC, Mackey Chapel and Highland UMC.

Tradition Of Foster Angels Is Not Stopped By Pandemic



On November 15, Intrepid Foster Angel organizer Janice Wilson confers with Ann Moore, Anne Shugart, and Jo Forrest as they select children to help this year. According to Associate Pastor Karin Carlson, "We are intentional in supporting our local Child Protective Services (CPS). As of November 1, there are 286 children in the foster care system in Ector County." Twenty children will receive toys and clothes from members of our congregation.

**POINSETTIA
ORDERS**



Support the Student Ministry and help make our worship services merry and bright.
\$20 each
 Deadline to order is
 December 20

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Thursday, December 17

6:30 p.m. 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.



**Church Offices
will be closed on
November 25, 26, 27**



**Church Offices closed
December 24-25 & 31
and January 1**

**Children's Center closed
December 23—25 and January 1**



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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 Love others, Invite them to join us as we Follow Christ,
who Empowers us to make a difference.*



Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Worship Services **December 24**

Emmanuel — God Is With Us

2:00 p.m. Traditional worship service — Sanctuary

4:00 p.m. Contemporary worship service — Fellowship Hall

6:00 p.m. Traditional worship service — Sanctuary

Please contact the Church Office 432.337.1527 to reserve a seat in a service

Christmas Eve Special Offering

This has been a rough year for our church and the United Methodist Church. Since July we have not been paying our Shared Ministry askings.

Shared Ministries help to support the work of the United Methodist Church at the District, Conference, Jurisdictional, and Worldwide level. Those askings represent salaries in our conference and beyond. They help to support the mission of the church in some of the poorest and war ravaged places in the world.

When we get beyond this Covid-19 pandemic the world will still need the church. I believe they will need the United Methodist Church.

I am asking that our special offering on Christmas Eve be used to pay our Shared Ministry obligations. If more than enough is given then it will be used to continue to support the ministry of First United Methodist Church of Odessa in our community. Your brother in Christ, Pastor Jay