

December 2018
Faith UCC
970 N. Loop 337
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter
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Rev. Ray Bizer, Pastor Emeritus
Pastoral Assistant, Janet Sherman L.M.

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When I was younger the Christmas season didn't begin until after Thanksgiving. Now days it is out with the Halloween candy and in with the Christmas trees! Stores of course love to push back the starting date of the Christmas season earlier and earlier in hopes of selling us more stuff. Black Friday and Cyber Monday hype really pours gasoline on the Christmas fire.



As Christians we have our own version of building the hype until it culminates on Christmas Day. We do it of course not to sell things but to take time to explore and celebrate the real "reason for the season", Emmanuel, God with us. The season of Advent begins on December 2nd this year. Each Sunday we light a new candle in the Advent wreath: Hope, Peace, Joy and finally Love. These are the anchors of the true Spirit of Christmas.

The word "advent" comes from the Latin word "Adventus" which is a translation of the Greek word "parousia". Parousia is commonly used to refer to the "Second Coming of Christ. Since the time of Bernard of Clairvaux, in the 12th century, Christians of thought of the coming of Christ in three ways: 1. the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago; 2. the birth of Christ in our hearts here and now; and finally, the coming of Christ in glory at the end of time. The four weeks of Advent provides a time to explore and celebrate all three of these with hope, faith, joy and love.

I spent a December in Wales in 2001 on a mini-sabbatical. While there I attended an Advent Christingle worship service on the Sunday before Christmas. This Advent tradition began in the Moravian Church but soon spread to other denominations. In the service each child receives an orange representing the world with a candle stuck in the top of it representing Christ as the light of the world. A red ribbon is wrapped around the candle or orange representing the blood of Christ shed for the world. Four tooth picks with nuts, raisins, fruit or sweets on them are stuck into the orange to represent God's bounty and goodness in providing the fruits of the earth. Often this song is sung,

***Morning Star, O cheering sight!
Ere thou cam'st how dark earth's night!
Jesus mine,
In me shine;
Fill my heart with light divine.***

Grace & Peace, Pastor Scott

Advent Devotionals Available on Literature Table

As a Christmas gift to the congregation I purchased 20 Advent Devotionals from the UCC Still Speaking Writer's Group. They are on the literature table on a first come first serve basis! The theme for this year's devotional is "Come, Lord Jesus" In the introduction Kenneth L. Samuel writes, ..

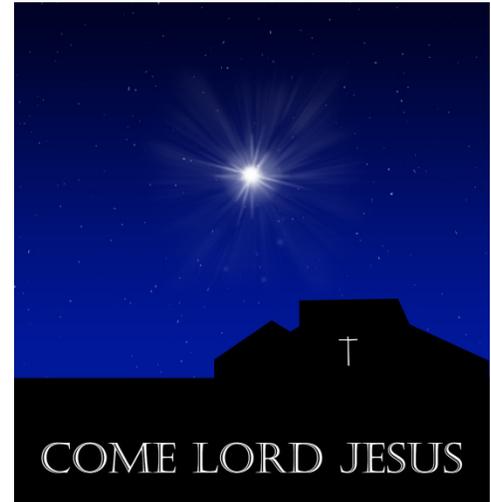
The coming of Jesus' Lordship is not an inviting concept for many people. It portends the exclusion and condemnation of non-Christians for some people. And for some others, the coming of Jesus' Lordship brings to mind a rigid state of theocracy in which diversity is forbidden.

But the biblical context from which we lift the phrase 'Come Lord Jesus' is not really what many people imagine. That context - Revelation 22 - speaks of a pristine river of life that emanates from one Source and flows through the central street of a city that is illuminated. That river nourishes the roots of a tree that gives life - not to a select few, but to people from every nation and culture.

The only thing that might exclude anyone from this city is a refusal to recognize the oneness of humanity. Because every person, from every nation, must eat the leaves from the same tree of life, that's nurtured by the same river of life, that emanates from the one Source of life. In this city, there is no life that is severed from community.

'Come, Lord Jesus' is nothing short of a plea for the renewal of humanity. It is the corrective to a society ravaged by gun violence and mass shootings And it's an indictment of those who elevate the relative distinctions of nation and tribe to the status of ultimate allegiance.

If you can imagine yourself in a better human community, we invite you to join us this Advent season, as we explore the possibilities and the promises of 'Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus.'"



December Birthdays!

12-1	Cody Allen	12-2	Mike Ziegler
12-11	Devyn Perry-Clark	12-13	J.D. Foster
12-15	Mikki Ward	12-22	Janet Sherman
12-23	Richard Leber	12-24	Ainsley Nipper
12-25	Bob Manning		

If your birthday is not on here let Pastor Scott know so we can get it in next year



Salvation Army Bell Ringing 12/9

Faith UCC will be ringing bells for the local Salvation Army outside of J.C. Penny's on Sunday afternoon, December 9th from 1-7 p.m. We are looking for people to fill one hour shifts. A signup sheet will be placed on the kiosk in the narthex. Money raised stays locally to support the work that Salvation Army does in this community to help the poor.

Pastor Scott on Vacation November 26 - December 6th

I will be in Florida November 26 through November December 6th. If there are any pastoral emergencies please contact Pastor Janet Sherman. On Sunday, December 2nd Rev. Jeremy Albers, Slumber Falls Camp Director, will lead the worship service.



Hanging of the Greens Service December 2

. We will set up the Christmas tree and other decorations on Sunday, November 25th after the worship service is over to prepare for the Hanging of the Greens and Advent. Advent begins on Sunday, December 2nd with the Hanging of the Greens service. Rev. Jeremy Albers will lead the service. Hanging of the Greens explores the meaning behind Christmas traditions.

Christmas Bunco-- Dec 14th

Please join us for Christmas Bunco on Friday, December 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the church! Bunco is a fun and exciting game and no experience is needed! Ham and turkey will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert. Each player should also bring an unwrapped ornament and \$5. Please sign up in the narthex. For more information contact Dan or Vicky Geisler at 817-925-3222 or geislerv@sbcglobal.net.



Also, please let us know on the sign-up sheet if you would like childcare provided at the church.

Children's Christmas Program Sunday, December 16th

It's that time of year again! Time to join the children in celebrating the birth of Christ! Our Youth have been working hard to bring to life the story of the birth of our Lord. Please join the youth on December 16th as they take us on a journey to Bethlehem and the manger through song, scripture, and readings.

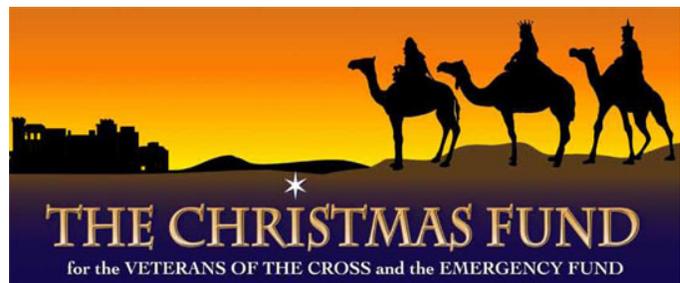


Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 5:30 p.m.

Join us for a traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion service on Christmas Eve at 5:30 p.m.

2018 Christmas Fund Offering

For over a century, the Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, the United Church of Christ members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.



In 2017 UCC congregations and members generously contributed \$1.5 million dollars to the Christmas Fund. This enabled the UC Board for Ministerial assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Board, to provide, on behalf of the whole church, supplementation of small pensions, retiree health premium supplementation, emergency grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals in need.

The theme of this year's offering is "The Light Is Surely Coming." Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. Recipients of your gifts are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years. And now in their time of need, you can be the church to them. Contribution envelopes are in the pews. On behalf of the hundreds of clergy, lay employees, and their families whose lives were touched by your support of the Christmas Fund offering, we offer our sincere thanks for your generosity!

This is our pain
 Because some went -
 We could remain.
 They bore the fearful risk.
 That risk fulfilled -
 Bodies, minds, and spirits broken and defiled
 And others - killed.
 And others - lost.
 In action wholly lost.
 Others returned un-whole -
 With trust....
 Or restful nights ...
 Or links to fellow man
 Left back on foreign shores.
 And then, returned to home to find these shores
 More foreign still.
 Forever foreign, by this breach of faith.
 Truths - "lost in action" - never here regained.
 (when Johnny comes marching home again - hurrah, hurrah)
 This is our brokenness -our loss - our foreign shore
 (we'll give him a happy welcome then - hurrah, hurrah)
 For did we heal their memories?
 Or bathe their mental wounds?
 Or dry their spirit's tears?
 ... with words of thanks?
 ... with crowded streets?
 ... with "Welcome home, well done"?
 (and the boys will whistle,"
 and the girls will shout,
 the Ladies, Aid will all turn out.
 and we'll all feel glad when
 Johnny comes marching HOME)
 Ah ... God forgive us.
 We did not.
 This is our pain,
 This is our shame,
 That we did dub their efforts false.
 Invalidated loss,
 and salted doubt, regret
 into their wounds.
 Renamed - what in all previous days -
 was hailed as "sacrifice"
 ... with wordless names.
 This is our pain
 That no sure solace came
 From those of us who did remain.
 And this my fear
 (pray be it false)
 That what we all have lost,
 we never can regain.

A Hell By Any Other Name

A Veterans Day Poem by Donna Foster Myer

I spent part of one year working with stress management training with a group of Vietnam veterans. Both my husband and I had been in college during the Vietnam conflict (police action? war?). While we had friends from home who were drafted -- and knew a few who chose to enlist (a very few) --

-- most of the people we knew were on student deferments, being in the sciences and in graduate school. We were insulated and isolated from the realities of this war. But I had been raised in a family where the Second World War was very personally experienced and discussed. I had an idea of how these men and women had been treated by their country.

When during the project, we both attended a banquet, we were the only people there who had not had to pay in some very real way the price that the Vietnam war had exacted on this country. We were both very uncomfortable - feeling like we were there illicitly and might be found out and asked to leave.

This poem came out of the months of work with this group and especially out of the feelings at the dinner, contrasted against the history of previous wars my family had made so real for me.

Heart of Texas Association News

Our **Heart of Texas Committee on Ministry** does careful and essential work for our Association, as do the Committees on Ministry (some also called Church and Ministry Committees as ours was in the past) across the United Church of Christ. This committee is charged with the oversight of UCC ministers as well as working with Members in Discernment (preparing for ordained ministry), licensing ministers, and being supportive when needed. This committee meets five times per year, currently at St. Peter's Church of Coupland.

As our chair of the recent past, John Gage, moves to Massachusetts, the Committee has **elected Anne Wehrly as the new chair**. Anne brings a wealth of wisdom and previous experience as the chair. Cindy Miller is the registrar, an important part of the Committee's work as we keep substantial files -- recordkeeping is crucial to our work. We have just appointed Tom VandeStadt, pastor of Congregational Church of Austin, to fill John Gage's place on the Committee with a vote of approval from the Association officers. A vote of the whole Association will be taken at our Spring Meeting to approve Tom (or another candidate if needed) to continue on the Committee. Other current members include Jewell Ellis-Eyler, Dave Phillips, Michelle Dupy, Jess Wade, Cecile Adam, and Darrin Holub.



At our last Committee on Ministry meeting, we approved Nicole Crean and Eric Dehmer to be candidates for licensed ministry and Arlene Turner to be a Member in Discernment. Nicole is a member of Open Cathedral in Leander and is close to finishing the online Certificate in Ministry program at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She has been a hospice nurse for many years and is very active in the work of Open Cathedral. Eric Dehmer has been called to be the pastor of Friedens Church of Washington. He has served for several years as a Local Pastor in the United Methodist Church as pastor of the Richards circuit in Grimes County, commuting from his home in Chapell Hill, and serves as a spiritual director in the local Emmaus Walk community. Eric has completed a number of classes for local church pastors through Perkins Divinity School (associated with SMU). Arlene Turner has a Master of Divinity from Perkins, was in the United Methodist ordination process for a period of time, and served churches in the Corsicana area and in Mart. She is now a member of United Christian in Austin. All of these people have stories of lifelong calls to ministry. It is inspiring to hear them, and we welcome them on their path of discernment and ministry in the Heart of Texas Association. I hope many of you will be able to meet them.

Finally, St. John's UCC in Burton is saying goodbye to Risa Garza as their Associate Minister, at the end of November. Risa, a licensed minister and Member in Discernment, has taken a full time job at Blinn College in Bryan. She is a student in the primarily online Master of Divinity program at Lexington Theological Seminary. We join with St. John's in our love and support of Risa as she enters a new period in her journey in ministry.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Family Promise Hosting: what we need to know Meeting for Volunteers, Sunday, 12/2 , following church

It is time for our congregation to host Family Promise guests at Slumber Falls, beginning on Dec. 16. We do need persons to help with setting up, providing breakfast or lunch items, and to stay overnight at the Bizer Retreat Center! If you have never had the opportunity to volunteer for this essential ministry, we welcome and encourage your participation.

After church on Sunday, Dec. 2nd, for a few minutes, we will review with all the volunteers some guideline reminders to be sure we are all on the same page. We will discuss program expectations and opportunities, answering any questions you may have about how to help. We will meet in the sanctuary around the newly decorated Christmas tree. If you do not receive the sign up website on your email, please give your information to Michelle or Karen.



Christian Education

Thank you to all our children and our volunteer teachers for a great fall semester of church school. It takes a lot of people working together to make Sunday School happen each week!

Our fall teachers:

Karen Dietz	Kim Beauchamp
Tim & Jenn Marlow	Jan Ziegler
Michelle & Nicolle Perry-Clark	Elly & Jacob Beauchamp
Jim & Chrissy Gossett	Julie Allison
Kathy Leber	Joe Ward
Carol & Eddie Sisco-Martinez – youth group	

We look forward to sharing our Christmas program with you on Sunday, December 16th during the worship service. Parents, please stay tuned for rehearsal dates and times!

Kim Beauchamp will once again be organizing this special time for our youth and she would love additional support! If you are interested in assisting with the Christmas program in any capacity, please let Kim, Jennifer, or Karen know. Thanks so much!

After the Christmas break, church school will resume on January 13th. We are already in need of teachers. Please consider including Sunday School teacher as part of your New Year's commitment to Faith UCC! We would love to have you and welcome new teachers!

With gratitude,

Jennifer & Karen

December Worship Assistant List

12/2 Liturgist: Kathy Leber Acolyte & Council Rep: Carol Sisco-Martinez
Greeter: Richard Leber Hospitality: Tex Pantermuehl Communion: Sheila Angerer
Church School: (no classes) Nursery: TBA AV: Cassidy Martinez
Ushers: Carol Sisco-Martinez; Richard & Kathy Leber; Mike Ziegler

12/9 Liturgist: Curt Leonhardt Acolyte: Jason Chapel Council Rep: Jason Chapel
Greeter: Nicolle Clark Hospitality: Mary Jean Owen Nursery: TBA
Church School: Jan Ziegler & Kathy Leber AV: Quinn Perry
Ushers: Jason Chapel; Jim Gossett; Will Gossett; Curt Leonhardt

12/16 Liturgist: Ralph Ludwig Acolyte: Kyle Kramm Council Rep: Kyle Kramm
Greeter: Karen Kramm Hospitality: Jan Ziegler Church School: **Christmas Program**
Nursery: TBA Ushers: Kyle Kramm; David Bizer; Mike Ziegler; Karen Kramm

12/23 Liturgist: Youth Acolyte: Youth Council Rep: Valerie Oates Greeter: Youth
Hospitality: Nicolle Clark Nursery: TBA AV: Youth Ushers: Youth

12/24 Liturgist: Julia Allison Acolyte: Dan Geisler Council Rep: Dan Geisler
Greeter: Joe Ward AV: Mikki Ward Nursery: TBA
Ushers: Dan Geisler; Eddie Martinez; Quinn Perry; Joe Ward

12/30 Liturgist: Nicolle Clark Acolyte & Council Rep: Kim Beauchamp Nursery: TBA
Greeter: Michelle Perry Hospitality: Chrissy Gossett Church School: (no classes)
Ushers: Kim Beauchamp; Nicolle Clark; Jim Gossett; Will Gossett AV: Jakob Beauchamp

2019 January 6 Liturgist: Karen Dietz Acolyte & Council Rep: Carol Sisco-Martinez
Greeter: Robynne Martinez Communion: Kathy Leber Hospitality: Mikki Ward
Nursery: TBA Church School: (no classes) AV: Joe Ward
Ushers: Carol Sisco-Martinez; Frank & Karen Dietz; Mikki Ward

If you cannot serve on the date(s) shown, please try to find a sub. If that is not possible, please leave a message at the church (830-625-6761) as soon as possible. If you would like to be added or removed from all or part of the Worship Assistant List, please contact the church office.

SOS Foodbank Fund raisers

Soup & Bread Dinner at Krause's (148 S. Castell Ave.)
Wednesday, December 5th, 6:00-9:00 p.m. \$10/per person

Enjoy a soup line service of vegetarian vegetable soup and house-made bread.

All proceeds benefit the New Braunfels S.O.S. Food Bank.



9th Annual Holiday Detour of Homes - Celebrating Soulful Spaces
Wednesday, December 5 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Benefitting S.O.S. Food Bank & New Braunfels Humane Society
Purchase tickets at Max's Haus or Johnson's Furniture for \$15
Afterparty at Krause's Café with special guests The Pine Coats
For more information visit <http://www.thedetourofhomes.com>