METHODIST MITNESS





Dear Friends.

Advent has a way of sneaking up on us. One minute it's pumpkins and leftover turkey, and the next minute the lights are out of the attic, the playlists have turned to carols, and we're trying to remember where we stored the

Nativity set last year. In the middle of all that, the church quietly reminds us: this season is about Christ.

Caryll Houselander once wrote,

"Advent is the season of the secret, the secret of the growth of Christ, of Divine Love growing in silence."

I love that. Advent is the "season of the secret" — Christ growing in our midst, often unnoticed, beneath all the noise and busyness of December. Our traditions, at their best, are like little parables that help that secret come to light.

This year in worship, our series "Traditions: Practices That Point Us to Christ" will focus on four beloved customs: St. Nicholas, the Christmas tree, stockings, and Nativity crèches. Each of these is more than decoration or nostalgia; each one points us back to Jesus. My hope is that this Advent, we won't just rush past these traditions, but let them preach to us.

When you see St. Nicholas, remember the generosity of Christ. When you plug in the tree, offer a simple prayer: "Jesus, Light of the world, shine in us."

When you hang the stockings, give thanks for God's surprising grace.

When you pass the crèche, pause for a moment and say, "Thank you, Lord, for coming so near."

If we let him, Christ will use even the simplest customs to awaken our hearts, deepen our hope, and make room in us for his coming. That is what Advent is all about: Christ growing in us and among us, quietly, faithfully, until the light of Christmas dawns.

I am grateful to share these traditions with you, and even more grateful for the One they point to. Come, let's walk through this holy season together and rediscover its "secret" — Jesus Christ, Divine Love in our midst.

Practice Ressurection,

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Lentz Senior Pastor

PASTORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS SEASON OF GIVING: Finish the Year Strong

This is a season of giving. As Advent leads us toward Christmas, we're grateful for all that God has done through First Church this year—through worship, mission, care, and discipleship. Thank you for your generosity that makes this ministry possible.

As we approach year-end, we want to share honestly that we are currently behind on our giving for the year. December is always an important month for our ministry budget, and this year we especially need a strong finish so that we can fully fund our commitments and step with confidence into the opportunities God is opening before us in 2026.

Would you prayerfully consider:

- Catching up on your 2025 Estimate of Giving
- Making an extra year-end gift to strengthen our ministry
- Exploring a gift from appreciated assets, such as stock

With markets at or near all-time highs, some people find that giving appreciated stock or other investments directly to the church is a tax-wise way to be generous. (Gifts of stock can, in many cases, avoid capital gains tax and may provide a charitable deduction—please consult your financial or tax advisor.) First Church is able to receive these types of gifts; contact our Finance Office for simple instructions.

All gifts postmarked or given online (<u>fumcpensacola.com/give</u>) by December 31 will count toward your 2025 giving. Thank you for helping us finish the year strong. Your generosity is a blessing—and God is using it to change lives.

Continued on next page...

PASTORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUED

HERITAGE SUNDAY

Sunday, December 7 | All Morning

Join us as we recognize our newest fifty-year members during all of our worship services. We will also be celebrating the 204th anniversary of FUMC Pensacola! Make sure you stop by and check out our newest exhibits in the Consulate and the hallway connecting the Great Hall and the Activities Center.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Monday, December 8 | 6:00 - 7:00pm | Wesley Abbey

This Church Council meeting is to approve the 2026 financial budget and discuss any new business. We will also recognize the Class of 2025 Church Council members for their service over the past three years.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The Church Office is closed December 24 - 26 & January 1.

MCA is closed December 24 - 26, & 31 and January 1 - 2.

COMBINED SERVICES

Sunday, December 28 | 11:00am | Main Sanctuary
We will have ONE combined service at 11:00am in the Main Sanctuary.

Sunday, January 4 | 8:30 & 11:00am | Main Sanctuary We will have two services at 8:30 and 11:00am in the Main Sanctuary. Please note that our ICON service will combine at 11:00am in the Main Sanctuary.

ADVENT · AT FIRST CHURCH ·

The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word adventus meaning coming or visit, begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year for Christians.

During Advent, we prepare for, and anticipate, the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for, and need of, forgiveness, salvation, and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward, anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

The Christmas season begins at sundown on December 24 (Christmas Eve) and lasts until Epiphany of the Lord (January 6). This period is popularly referred to as the twelve days of Christmas.

MID-WEEK FELLOWSHIP DINNER

Wednesdays, December 3 & 10 | 5:00 – 5:45pm The Wright Place

Join us in Advent for dinner and fellowship with your church family. The cost is \$10 for adults (10 and older) and \$4 for children with a \$27 family max.

Please note no dinner on December 17, 24 and 31.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT: AN INVITATION TO ADVENT

Wednesday, December 3 | 6:00 - 7:00pm Wesley Abbey & Lawn

All children, youth, and adults are invited to join us for this interactive service of story and song, that begins in darkness and ends in light, to celebrate the beginning of the Advent Season. As the service concludes will we journey outside to experience the illumination of the FUMC Campus for our Festival of Light Show and enjoy hot chocolate and warm cider.

PIZZA DINNER & CAROLING

Wednesday, December 10 | 5:00 - 6:00pm (Dinner)

5:30 - 6:00pm (Caroling at Wesley Haven)

6:00 - 7:00pm (Caroling on the Buses)

All ages are welcome to join us for a special night of Christmas Caroling! After Pizza, Salad, and Dessert we will head over to Wesley Haven for 30 minutes to carol, then, at 6:00pm we will load up on the church buses to share the hope, love, joy, and peace of the Advent Season.

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

Wednesday, December 17 | 6:00pm | Wesley Abbey

Christmas can be a painful time for some, especially for those who are grieving or in despair, so each year around the longest night, we hold a service of healing prayers, scripture, and music that acknowledges God's presence for those who mourn or struggle. All are welcome. This service is offered in partnership with Center for Sacred Space.

Concert Series information is on page 6...



SUNDAY ADVENT SERIES

TRADITIONS: PRACTICES THAT POINT US TO CHRIST

November 30 - December 21

8:30 & 11:00am in the Main Sanctuary & ICON at 11:00am

We love the traditions that help us get ready for Christmas; the lights, the tree, the carols, the Nativity. But these practices are more than holiday customs. In Advent, they point us toward something deeper: the coming of Christ. Advent is a season of preparation — a time to awaken our hearts, to wait with hope, and to make room for the child who changes everything. Each week in this series, Traditions: Practices That Point Us to Christ, we'll explore a beloved Christmas tradition alongside Scripture, discovering how it prepares us not just for December 25, but for the living presence of Jesus in our lives. Come join us as we rediscover the meaning behind the practices we cherish, and let them guide us into the wonder of Christ's birth.

Each week, we'll explore one cherished Christmas tradition:

November 30: St. Nicholas December 7: Christmas Tree December 14: Stockings December 21: Nativity Scene











SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 | 9:30 - 10:45AM | ACTIVITIES CENTER

Join us for a morning with Santa as we focus on the season of giving. We will prepare bags of non perishable items for the Weekend Feeding Kid's Program food drive, make gifts for the homebound, eat a delicious breakfast, and have an opportunity to take pictures with the big guy himself!

Please note that this day is the last day to turn in items for all our giving opportunities (Food Drive, Shoe Drive, Angel Tree, & Be A Santa To A Senior).

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PENSACOLA

WHITE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Presented by the FUMC Children & Youth Choirs

Start the season with some festive Christmas music presented by our Children and Youth Choirs. A special offering will be collected to benefit Embrace Florida Kids. Afterwards, everyone is invited to join us for pizza and cookies in The Wright Place. Nursery provided.



SUN, DEC 14 | 6:00PM **ACTIVITIES CENTER**



This folksy concert features music that tells the true tall tale of the coming of Christ - from the story of Passover in the Old Testament to the birth of Jesus. Includes acoustic and electric instruments, organ, piano, and percussion. The Consulate Cafe will be open before the concert with warm drinks.



Snowy Nights & Christmas Lights

Community Christmas Concert & Carol Sing Along

The Pensacola Bay Concert Band (PBCB), a 110-piece community concert band, will perform a FREE Christmas Concert and carol sing-along as a thank you to our church for the temporary use of our facilities for practice space. Please bring non-perishable food items for Manna Food Pantry.





SANCTUARY CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT with Orchestra

This is a traditional evening of classical Christmas favorites presented by the First United Methodist Church Sanctuary Choir under the direction of Rick and Heidi Branch. A full professional orchestra will accompany the choir. A reception will follow the concert in The Wright Place.

JOURNEY TO THE MANGER Epiphany Concert

Join us for a very special last concert of the season, "Journey to the Manger", featuring local musicians from area churches. A love offering will be taken for the FUMC Music Ministry.



Christmas

AT FIRST CHURCH

5 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

4:00, 5:00, 6:00, 8:00, & 11:00pm



Candlelight & Communion Service 4:00 & 6:00pm | Main Sanctuary A service of candlelight, Christmas carols, children's sermon, and communion. *Childcare provided*.



An ICON Christmas
5:00pm | Wesley Abbey
An intimate, family-friendly, candlelight, and communion service. Includes a dynamic reading of the Christmas Story and music from the ICON Praise Band. Childcare provided.



Choir, Candlelight, & Communion Service 8:00 & 11:00pm | Main Sanctuary A traditional service of candlelight, Christmas carols, communion, and special choral music.



WHAT'S HAPPENING at

FIRST CHURCH for

FIRST KIDS

First Kids is our children's ministry at First Church. All children 3 years old (as of Sept. 1, 2024) through the 5th grade are invited to be a part of this ministry. We have a great time connecting with each other while singing, playing, learning about God, and learning about ourselves.

Lisa Bond

Director of Children's Ministry LBond@fumcpensacola.com

CELEBRATE SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

Sun, Dec 14, 21 | 9:45 - 10:45am Education Building, 2nd floor
Each week (Presschool - 5th Grade) will celebrate the weekly theme: Traditions with St. Nicholaus, Christmas Tree, Stockings, and Nativity with crafts/activities and hear the story of Christs birth through story.

PARENTS SHOPPING DAY & WRAPPING PARTY

Sat, Dec 6 | 9:30 - 1:00pm Activities Center | \$25/child Register HERE by December 3 Parents can shop, infants -5th graders can have fun with us, while youth raise money for choir tour. What's not to love? Shop, then come back and wrap gifts or drop them off for youth to wrap. Registration is required with a suggested donation (\$25 per child). Lunch included.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA & GIVING WORKSHOP

Sunday, December 7 | 9:30 - 10:45am | Activities Center
Join us for Clause with a Cause - morning with Santa as we focus on the season of giving. We will collect and prepare bags of non perishable items for the Weekend Feeding

Kid's Program food drive, make gifts for the homebound, eat a delicious breakfast, and have an opportunity to take pictures with the big guy himself!

MOMS COFFEE BREAK

Friday, December 5 | 3:30 - 5:00pm Starbucks 501 E Gregory St Drop off yours kids at church and come join us for some kid-free mom time. RSVP to Lisa (850-549-8967) for childcare.

KID CONNECT/CHILDREN'S CHOIR PARTY

Wednesday, December 10 3:00 - 5:15pm Come celebrate the end of the semester with us! Drop off in the Wesley Abbey Belmont St entrance. Pick up in the gym.

DECEMBER COMMUNITY DAY & DOWNTOWN PARADE

Saturday, December 13 3:00 - 5:00pm

We will be opening our doors in the Consulate to families who will be enjoying the down parade. We will have free hot chocolate, live music and other activities

BABY RECOGNITION

Sunday, December 21 | 11:00am Main Sanctuary

Please join us as we welcome the newest members born into our church family in 2025 and celebrate them as a child of God. A reception for families and friends will be held at 10:15am in the the Hospitality Room (Lower Sanctuary). Please contact Lisa Bond if you would like your child recognized if you have not been contacted.

FIRST STUDENTS

First Students is our youth ministry at First Church for students in the 6th-12th grades. We have many combined activities and occasionally separate into midhigh and senior-high activities.

Rev. Heather Nysewander
Director of Student Ministries
HNvsewander@fumcpensacola.com

DECEMBER CURRICULUM BY WEEK

December 7: Advent Week 2 Tradition: Christmas Tree "The Holy Forester" (Matthew 3:1-12)

December 14: Advent Week 3
Tradition: Stockings
"Waiting" (Matthew 11:2-11)
December 21: Advent Week 4
Tradition: Nativity Scene
"The Holy Child" (Matthew 1:18-25)

December 28: "Our Help Has Come" (Hebrews 2:10-18)

COOKIE DECORATING & FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Wednesday, December 3 6:00 - 7:00pm

All youth in grades 6–12 are invited to bring sugar cookies to decorate. Finished cookies will be shared among participants and delivered to local nursing homes to share the Advent spirit. After decorating, we'll gather outside to view the illumination of the FUMC Campus for the Festival of Light Show and enjoy hot chocolate and warm cider together.

Continued on next page...

FIRST STUDENTS CONT.

SKY ZONE END-OF-SEMESTER CELEBRATION

Saturday, December 6 3:15pm - 7:00pm Register HERE

Join us on Saturday, December 6 at Sky Zone to celebrate the final two weeks before Christmas break! We will meet at the church at 3:15pm and will leave to head that way at 3:25pm. The cost of the ticket is \$40. We will head to the Cordova Mall Foodcourt after our time at Sky Zone and youth are encouraged to bring about \$15 or more for a meal. We will return to the church at 7:00pm for pick up, however, you are also welcome to pick up your youth from the mall. If youth are driving separately to meet us at Sky Zone, they must be at Sky Zone by 3:40pm. Friends are also welcome and encouraged to come!

CAROLING

Wednesday, December 10

All are invited to take part in caroling with our church around the community! See page 3 for more information.

MID-HIGH LOCK-IN

Friday, Dec. 12 - Saturday, Dec. 13 5:30pm - 9:00am Youth Ministries Building Register HERE

Grades 6 - 8 are welcome to sign up for a lock-in! The evening (and probably into the early morning hours) will include dinner, games, snacks, and a movie. We will also have time for a white elephant gift exchange. Youth are to bring something wrapped that they did not spend money on! Youth are encouraged to wear their best Christmas jammies, bring supplies for blanket forts, and any snack foods they may want for the evening. Feel free to

invite a friend! A packing list will be sent out to those who register.

SENIOR HIGH PROGRESSIVE DINNER

Saturday, December 13 4:00pm to 9:00pm

Register Here Please register so that each home knows how much food to prepare!

Our high school-aged youth (grades 9-12) will travel from house to house this evening, partaking in appetizers (home 1), dinner (home 2), and dessert (home 3), along with a white elephant gift exchange at our final home. Youth are to bring something wrapped that they did not spend money on! Everyone is encouraged to wear an ugly Christmas sweater or something festive for the evening! For youth families interested in hosting, please reach out to Rev. Heather Nysewander at hnysewander@fumcpensacola.com.

FIFTY FORWARD

50 Forward is First Church's ministry for adults over the age of 50 (but all ages are welcome to participate). It provides opportunities for adults to be in community with one another and share in the gifts and graces of the more experienced members in our congregation.

Jennifer Piver

Director of 50 Forward Ministries JPiver@FUMCPensacola.com

SILVER & GOLD - CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Thursday, December 4 | 11:00am - 1:00pm | The Wright Place | \$10 Register HERE

Join us for a fun filled afternoon of fellowship with friends. It will include a delicious lunch provided by Ruth's Kitchen, along with a festive Christmas music performance by Rick Branch and company, as well as Christmas games and trivia. Each guest will receive a Christmas gift . RSVP ASAP. Doors open at 10:30am.

LUNCH OUT - THE PENSACOLA YACHT CLUB

Thursday, December 11 | 11:30am \$25

Register HERE by December 7 Join us for a special Christmas lunch outing with friends. We will gather at the beautiful Pensacola Yacht Club for a delicious buffet lunch. Please bring \$25/ person for lunch, cash or check made out to FUMC Pensacola. Doors open at 11:00am.

FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE WRIGHT - CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Friday, December 19 | 6:00pm - 8:00pm | The Wright Place | \$15

Register HERE by December 14

Join us for a fun filled evening of fellowship with friends. It will include a delicious dinner provided by Ruth's Kitchen, along with a Bluegrass music performance by The String Farm Band, including Bluegrass Christmas music. Doors open at 5:30pm.

COFFEE WITH FRIENDS

Tuesdays | 9:30 - 10:30am Church Library

We have a small, friendly group that meets each week for coffee and fellowship in the Church Library. We have no agenda other than to get out of the house and enjoy time with friends... new and old. Anyone is invited to join us. Coffee and pastries are provided.

GRAND MONDAY NIGHTS

Mondays | 7:00 - 8:00pm Grand Monday Nights is a free weekly

webinar to help you grow as a Christian grandparent. In these webinars, you'll get practical ideas and information on grandparenting, learn how to nurture your grandchildren's faith and overcome obstacles, and find encouragement. This is a ministry provided by the Legacy Coalition. Register at legacycoalition. com/grand-monday-nights.

Continued on next page...

FIFTY FORWARD CONT.

QIGONG/TAI CHI WITH JEAN PARKER

Wednesdays & Fridays | \$5 per class 9:45 - 10:45am | Franklin Building QIGONG, the "meditative martial art", has its roots in Chinese Medicine, and is a close cousin to the better-known tai chi. The slow, graceful motions are simple and repetitive, making the practice of qigong accessible to just about anyone. Some benefits include: increased energy, better balance, improved muscle strength, reduced joint pain, lowered inflammation, decreased stress, anxiety and depression, improved overall well-being and more. Join us and bring a friend! Dress comfortably. You can sit for class, or hold on to the back of a chair. Even lie down. For more information contact Jean (jeanp347@gmail.com).

MISSIONS

Mission and Outreach is at the heart of who we are at First Church. By supporting various missions and ministries, we strive to serve our community in love, sharing with them the message of Christ through example.

Lisa Bond

Missions Coordinator LBond@fumcpensacola.com

WEEKEND FEEDING KIDS: FOOD DRIVE

To make our food drive a success, we need the following items donated by December 7.

- Cans of Soup
- Boxes of Mac n Cheese
- Cans of Ravioli

SERVING THE HUNGRY: SHOE DRIVE

Our Serving the Hungry Ministry provides hot meals twice a week to community members experiencing food insecurity. We also offer clothing and toiletries to help meet essential needs. As the winter months approach, we are collecting new or gently used men's shoes (sizes 6-12) — no sandals, please — to help keep our friends warm and comfortable. Please bring your donations to the GIVING CENTER in the Activities Center by Sunday, December 7.

ANGEL TREE & BE A SANTA TO A SENIOR

Thanks to our generous congregation, all the Angels and Seniors have been claimed this season. Please remember to bring in your items UNWRAPPED by December 7.

SERVING THE HUNGRY - WINTER CLOTHING NEEDED

Serving the Hungry is in need of winter necessities such as men's long sleeve shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets and blankets. No ladies items are needed at this time.

RESPITE

Kirstin Norris

Respite Director

KNorris@FUMCPensacola.com

RESPITE ADVENT SERVICE

Wednesday, December 3 | 12:00 - 12:30pm | Wesley Abbey

Join us for a special Respite worship service to mark the beginning of Advent. This community service will be a time of peace, hope and great expectation as we prepare to open our hearts to the light of Christ coming into the world. Our Respite worship services are open to the community and are designed to accommodate those who cannot attend a typical worship service. Through inclusive practices and a judgement free atmosphere, we seek to put into action our commitment to truly be a place for all. Come and worship with us as we celebrate the season.

WEDNESDAY DINNERS

It's good to gather around the table with each other. It's a form of communion. The table is a place where strangers can become friends and friends can become family. So join us on Wednesdays this month for these delicious meals. Cost: Adults - \$10, Children (2-9 years old) - \$4, Max Family Cost - \$27

DECEMBER 3

Chicken Spaghetti, Garlic Bread, Caesar Salad, and Dessert

DECEMBER 10

Pizza, Salad, and Dessert

DECEMBER 17, 24, & 31

No Dinner

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

NIGHT TO SHINE 2026

FUMC is hosting Night to Shine Saturday, February 7, 2026. Volunteers are needed. Night to Shine is an unforgettable prom night experience organized by the Tim Tebow Foundation. It's a night centered on sharing love with people ages 14 and older with special needs. Volunteers are needed to serve as a guest's buddy, members of the red carpet paparazzi, hype crew to keep the enthusiasm up on the dance floor and to serve food, there is something for everyone. To volunteer at Night to Shine, please register and complete our form for a background check. Click HERE to sign up to volunteer. If you have any questions, email PensacolaNTSVolunteer@gmail.com. Visit FUMCPensacola. comNightToShine for more informa-



IN-PERSON & ONLINE

8:30 & 11:00am in the Main Sanctuary & ICON AT 11:00am in Wesley Abbey



FIRST CHURCH ♥ CARES

Congregational Care Ministry of FUMC Pensacola

If you would like to add an announcement or purchase flowers please contact: Ginger Raines at <u>GRaines@FUMCPensacola.com</u>

LOVE & REMEMBRANCE Members who have died

We offer our christian love and sympathy to: The family of Elizabeth Mayhugh. Libby died on November 12, 2025.

Loved ones who have died

We offer our christian love and sympathy to:
Mike Smith, Steve Smith, and Cheryl Hinnen on the death of their mother and grandmother, Pat Smith.
Scott Mitchell and Ashton, Lauren, Hudson, Wilmer, and Marian Mitchell on the death of their father and grandfather, Wilmer Mitchell.
Denise Russell on the death of her father, George Russell.

BAPTISMS

James Sawyer Snyder, son of Mat & Skylar Snyder, was baptized on Sunday, November 23, 2025.

CELEBRATIONS

Avery Kaye Virgilio, born on November 18, 2025, to Joseph and Valerie Virgilio. Proud grandparents are Kaye and Scott Westmark.

William Ethan Manor, born on November 20, 2025 to Jennifer and Geoffrey Manor.

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

You may place flowers in the Sanctuary in honor, celebration or memory of someone. The arrangements are \$65.00 each.

November 16: Given in celebration of Warren Williams' 30th birthday on November 19th, given by Shirley and Dick Knight.

November 23: Given **in loving memory of Tom and Libby Mayhugh**, who for many years provided altar flowers for our church, given by the FUMC Flower Ministry.

THE LIVING TRUST NOVEMBER 1 - 30, 2025

The Living Trust is a special fund set up to receive gifts for memorials that you may wish to give in memory of or in honor of an individual. This is given to meet extra needs of the church above those of the annual budget. If you would like to give towards The Living Trust, contact the finance department (accounting@FUMCPensacola.com).

IN MEMORY

Ryan Hunter TrailFor the Weekend Feeding Kids Program
By Kay Richie

Marion Hawks

By The Bonding with the Bible Sunday School Class

By The Open Minds/Open Hearts Sunday School Class

By Janis and Larry Davison

By Janice Anderson

By Ruth Sneed

Oran Baughn

By The Wallaces: Jack, Jean, Carolyn and Daniel

Tom Helms

By Ruth Sneed By Shirley Knight

Libby Mayhugh

By Ruth Sneed

IN HONOR

Eretha Dillard's BirthdayBy The Olliffs and Vickerys



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

6 E. Wright St. • Pensacola, FL 32501 • 850.432.1434 • <u>fumcpensacola.com</u> For pastoral emergencies, contact the Church Office or Ginger Raines at 850.259.3177