



December 6, 2024

The Weekender

A Christmas Quest

Rev. Kaylen Short, Senior Minister

Throughout Advent and Christmas, we all have little things that make the season feel special. Maybe for you it's that it just doesn't feel like Christmas is approaching until you've put that special ornament on the tree. Maybe you don't feel in the holiday spirit until after you've heard your favorite Christmas tune. For me, I can't truly embrace Christmas until I have a vanilla Little Debbie Christmas Tree Cake.



One year while a student at Candler School of Theology, one of my best friends and I went far too far into Advent without tasting that delectable ultra-processed treat. Upon realizing it, we drove to the nearest grocery store to find a box (or more likely 10 boxes because we were in our early 20s and could eat such things without a thought). Sadly, they were all sold out. Fortunately, there was another grocery store a very short drive away, so we went there instead. They too were sold out of the vanilla ones (they had the chocolate ones, but they are simply nowhere near the same). Thus, began "The Great Christmas Tree Cake Quest."

If I remember correctly, we went to something like 8 different stores before we finally found the long-yearned-for confectionary treat. We went to at least one of each major store you can probably think of including Kroger, Publix, Target, and Walmart. We drove miles, wasted hours, and listened to countless plays of "All I Want For Christmas is You" blaring down store aisles. Finally, we found them, and those Christmas Tree Cakes have never tasted so sweet.

Truthfully, a lot of ingredients coalesced to make that evening a memory I now cherish. First, we were both looking for any excuse to take a break from final papers and studying for final exams. Second, neither of us was feeling particularly festive before that point and needed an excuse to just embrace the holidays. Third, both my friend and I enjoy a challenge and simply wouldn't be denied. Eventually it wasn't even about the cakes anymore. It was about friendship, laughter, and the gift of time spent together. Every year, when I eat my first vanilla Christmas Tree Cake of the season, I fondly remember that night.

This season we are in is often about those little things. Much as we try to make it about big grand gestures, it consistently seems to be the little things that we cherish years later. Therefore, I hope throughout this season you'll be attentive to the little things. I hope you'll waste time with those you love for no reason other than merely being together. I hope you'll seek out those things that make this season feel special, and share them with others. And of course, I hope you will go and eat one of those Christmas Tree Cakes for me. Just don't buy too many boxes or I will have to restart my quest.



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 8, 2024

8:45 AM (Chapel) 11:00 AM (Sanctuary & Online)

[Online link active at 11 AM and after](#)

Malachi 3:1-4; Matthew 1:18-24

"Inside the Manger: Joseph" Rev. Kaylen Short



Season of the Nativity continues into January

What is God up to here? You're invited to explore that question as we journey through the Season of the Nativity together. You can get a printed packet with an Intentional Daily Journal, schedule of events, and family activity. You can share in conversations on Facebook as we wait and seek Divine Presence each day.

[Get the full Season of the Nativity Schedule here.](#)

SPECIAL EVENTS AND SERVICES

NATIVITIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD | DECEMBER 5-7

Come see 650+ nativities on display in the Sanctuary that uniquely express joy of The Christ from around the world. December 5-6, Noon - 7 PM; December 7, 10 AM - 3 PM

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT & BONFIRE | DECEMBER 11 | 6 PM

Join our children to tell the story. Just show up in the Fellowship Hall! Costume and script provided. Gather in The Field after for s'mores and carols around a bonfire.

CHRISTMAS AT MESSY CHURCH | DECEMBER 14 | 11 AM TO 1 PM

This all-ages community church includes games, crafts, music and a meal with lots of Christmas fun!

FAYETTEVILLE FIRST PRESCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM | DECEMBER 12 | 5 PM

You're invited to enjoy the Christmas program presented by our young learners in the Sanctuary.

LESSONS & CAROLS | DECEMBER 15 | 8:45 & 11 AM

Worship on the Third Sunday of Advent through music and Word.

CHURCHWIDE CHRISTMAS CAROLING | DECEMBER 18 | 5 PM

Gather in the Fellowship Hall for dinner and then go out together to spread good tidings. This is a church-wide, all ages caroling event.

CHRISTMAS ON THE SQUARE CONCERT | DECEMBER 22 | 7 PM

Experience Christmas with the Bach Magnificat and other seasonal favorites provided by The Chancel Choir and orchestra. Free. First-come seating in the FFUMC Sanctuary with overflow in Fellowship Hall.

CHRISTMAS EVE | DECEMBER 24 | 4 PM, 6 PM, 11 PM

Celebrate the Christ Child with traditional Candlelight Service and Communion. Services at 4 & 6 PM in the Sanctuary and at 11 PM in the Chapel.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS | DECEMBER 29 | 8:45 AM & 11 AM

We gather for worship and praise.

EPIPHANY SUNDAY | JANUARY 5 | 8:45, 11 AM SERVICES; 10 AM BREAKFAST

Celebrate joy as we move into the new year and the season of Epiphany with worship at 8:45 & 11 AM and a church-wide potluck breakfast at 10 AM.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS THAT KEEP GIVING

You may have some people on your Christmas list who have everything they need but who you still want to celebrate with a gift. Here are a few ways you can honor them and help others at the same time! Each gift is described with details on how to order and pay.



Poinsettia orders due Monday, December 16

Your purchase of poinsettias has at least 3 benefits this year:

1. Poinsettias enhance our worship space through the season.
2. You may give plants in memory or honor of family or friends. They'll be listed in the Christmas Eve Order of Worship. Ordered poinsettias are available to take from the sanctuary following the Christmas Eve service.
3. Proceeds from poinsettia orders benefit the FFUMC Flower Ministry. This group makes flower arrangements to encourage others throughout the year. Complete a form available in the narthex on Sunday or anytime in the church office or [place an order with this form and pay online following instructions](#). (Cost: \$15 each) DUE DECEMBER 16.



Holiday Commemorative Brick Project

Place a commemorative brick in the church courtyard this holiday season! You may personalize a brick for yourself or your family, honor a loved one, or make a memoriam. Commemorate a new baby, baptism, graduation, friendship, ministry, church membership, or new home. The cost is \$100 per brick. Each 8"x4" brick can be engraved with three lines of text with up to 15 characters per line. If desired, you may pick up a card in the church office confirming the purchase which you can place in a Christmas card or letter to loved ones. [Simply complete this form and return it with payment by December 31, 2024](#). Copies will be available in the Narthex or church office as well.

Christmas gifts to change lives in El Salvador

There is a Christmas gift that can change a child's life forever. That gift is education. Tuition for a child to attend the Methodist School in El Salvador is just \$40 per month or \$480 per year. Two South West District mission teams are heading to El Salvador February 8-15, 2025, and February 15-22, 2025. The teams comprise 19 individuals from five different churches and are collecting money to help deserving children whose families cannot afford even this small amount. The school offers grades 1-10, the only grades that schools there have. The school helps keep the kids out of gangs, drugs, and the risk of human trafficking. The kids learn the usual subjects that we have here, including music. Their marching band has won national competitions. Many of the students are also learning English, which will open many more opportunities for good jobs. The school offers hope to the community.

[You can make a tax-deductible donation by check or online to Fayetteville First United Methodist Church](#). Write "El Salvador Tuition" on the memo. Your gifts will be hand-delivered to Bishop Juan de Dios Peña in February 2025. Questions? Contact Maggie Clarke.





Nativities from Around the World open still

December 6 from noon to 7 PM; December 7 from 10 AM to 3 PM

During this Advent season, FFUMC will again host a collection of hundreds of unique nativities, curated by Wendy Haymans and her late mother Sharon Bowen as a ministry of focus about the meaning of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. Wendy is the daughter-in-law of our own Gerry and Jim Haymans and is generously making the exhibit available to our community at no charge.

The exhibit remains open to the public Friday, December 6, from noon to 7 PM and Saturday, December 7, from 10 AM – 3 PM. Hosting the exhibit is a lot of fun, and it also is labor-intensive. We could use your help for tear-down on Saturday, December 7 at 3 PM. Just come to the church sanctuary.



Angel Tree gifts due this Sunday

Angel Tree gifts are due this Sunday so they'll be ready for the Bloom holiday party. If you selected an "angel" from the tree and have not yet delivered your gift to the church office, please bring it to the Welcome Center area on Sunday, December 8. Contact Suzie Lusk directly if you have questions.

[You'll need to follow these specific, easy instructions. It's that simple to show some cheer and love to children this Christmas season.](#)



Wednesday Night Supper December 11

This is Christmas Pageant night!

Time: **5 PM** Fellowship Hall

Advantages: **Friendship!** Be with people you really like.

Hassle Free! Enjoy meals from local restaurants.

Affordable! Adults \$10, Children under 13: \$7 (pay at door)

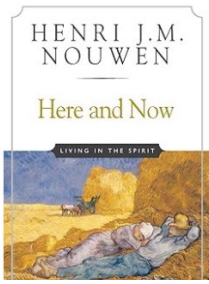
Sign up each week by 4 PM on Mondays. Contact the church office, 770-461-4313, admin@fayettevillefirst.com, or fill out a pew card.

December 11 Menu: Vegetable Beef Soup, Pear Salad, Rolls, Dessert



Sunday Morning Coffee & Conversation

Have you ever had a Sunday where you showed up too late for your Sunday school class? Have you ever arrived extra early for the 11 AM service and you don't know what to do while you wait? Beginning this Sunday, we will offer coffee and conversation in our Fellowship Hall from 9:45-10:45 AM. Each week you can drop in and grab a coffee or something light to eat before you head off to your next thing.



Here and Now: Living in the Spirit study continues

Are you longing for ways to experience life to its fullest? Right here, right now? Join the Book Club Class for a walk through *Here and Now*, one of Henri Nouwen's much loved books exploring encountering Spirit in our everyday lives. Get the book from your favorite bookseller and come to Room C-260 on Sundays at 9:45 AM. Questions? Contact Margaret Whitaker.



December List: Pantry needs from Fayette Samaritans

Donations are one way to help those in our community with food insecurity and other needs. Food and clothing donations may be placed in the hallway cart near the gym or dropped by the church office. Volunteers are also needed in the food pantry, clothes closet, receptionist area, and as interviewers with a 3 hour commitment each week.

Most Needed List: *Canned Corn, Canned Mixed Vegetables, Canned Green Beans, Pasta Sauce, Dry Spaghetti, Jiffy Mix, Pancake Mix, Jelly, Coffee, Hot Chocolate Mix, Feminine Products (Pads)*

SAGE Trip is December 19

Take a SAGE trip to Chick-Fil-A headquarters on Thursday, **December 19**. We will gather at the church office at 8:30 AM and depart at 8:45 AM; Backstage Tour (which includes the Test Kitchen) will be from 9:30 – 11 AM. We will stop for lunch at a Chick-Fil-A on the way home. Tickets are \$11 and transportation cost is \$2. Contact the church office to reserve your place. For more information, see [Rev. Charles Robinson](#).



UWF Christmas Banquet

Please join United Women in Faith at our Christmas Banquet in the Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, December 10, at 6 PM. We will enjoy a catered dinner of pork chops, mashed potatoes, broccoli casserole and dessert, followed by the musical talents of our very own Nick Bowden and friends!

Cost: \$10 payable on December 10. **Make your reservations by Friday, December 6, through your circle chair or contact Susan Burch.** Please indicate number of children for nursery.

**UWF Banquet
December 10**

We'll be accepting hat and glove donations to support Bloom's foster children at the banquet for both boys and girls from sizes infant to age 18.

Christmas Caroling is Wednesday, December 18

It's time to spread Christmas cheer for all to hear with carols! You're invited to enjoy supper at 5 PM in the Fellowship Hall for regular Wednesday Night Dinner; then we'll load vehicles and start caroling at 5:30 PM. We hope to have three groups this year, so we'd love to know who might be coming in advance. [Just let us know here.](#)





Tell the story! Christmas Pageant Comes December 11

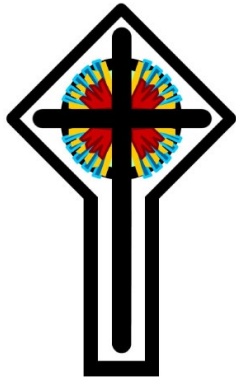
We act out the story of Christmas with our children each year. Just show up for the annual Christmas Pageant. We'll have costumes and a script. No rehearsal needed. After Wednesday night dinner on December 11, we'll get the play together and begin at 6 PM. Following the pageant, gather in The Field for s'mores and carols around a bonfire. Questions? Contact Rev. Drew West.



Messy Church on December 14 - and on parade!

We're getting ready for our next Messy Church, December 14, from 11 AM-1 PM. Sign up here to be part of the volunteer team.

After, Messy Church will be in the Fayetteville Miracle on Main Street Christmas Parade sporting a dinosaur theme! The parade stages at Fayette County High School at 2:30 PM. Meet the FFUMC team there to participate. The parade starts at 3 PM. Questions? Contact Rev. Allyson Lawrence or Chase Leonard.



December 2, 2024 Financials

Operating Budget 2024

Year-to-Date Receipts	\$1,050,170.21
Year-to-Date Expenses	\$1,073,397.60
Difference	- \$23,227.39

Benevolence

Benevolence funds received this week \$1,369

160 Families Assisted Year-To-Date: Total distributed \$39,755.61

You can continue your financial support in many ways:

Online giving: [Click here.](#)

Mail check to church or place it in the drop box at the church office.

Use electronic funds transfer with your bank.

Regular Church Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed 12-1 p.m. lunch)

Closed Fridays

AA Meetings: Sundays 3 PM; Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays 7 PM; Thursdays 7:30 AM

NA Meetings: Thursdays 7 PM

inspired ...

Nativities celebrate the Christ child

The inspiring display in our sanctuary of more than 650 nativities celebrates love ... from the individual expression of each artist ... from the collection curated by Wendy Haymans and her late mother, Sharon Bowen ... from the many volunteers donating supplies and hours to set up and greet ... from all the visitors who tour the display to glimpse the impact of the nativity around the world.

Open Friday noon to 7 PM and Saturday 10 AM to 3 PM



The display fills the sanctuary.

Top right: Jim Haymans, Ashley Haymans and Wendy Haymans