

2022

# DECEMBER

## NEWSLETTER

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**cross  
tracks**  
CHURCH

 A United Methodist Community

### SERMON SERIES

#### *A Promise...as Promised...is Promising Advent Series*

- |        |                                    |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| Nov 27 | A Promise for Hope                 |
| Dec 4  | Love Promises More                 |
| Dec 11 | Joy in the Promise                 |
| Dec 18 | Peace-giving Promises              |
| Dec 25 | Promise Realized and Still to Come |



#### *New Year's Day*

- |       |               |
|-------|---------------|
| Jan 1 | Guest Speaker |
|-------|---------------|

#### *Jesus: More*

- |        |                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Jan 8  | Jesus: more than we're ready for |
| Jan 15 | Jesus: more than we expect       |
| Jan 22 | Jesus: more perfect journey      |
| Jan 29 | Jesus: more simple, but not easy |
| Feb 5  | Jesus: more expectations         |
| Feb 12 | Jesus: more pushing              |



### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Juli McBrayer  
Sandra Wentworth

## A NOTE FROM PASTOR MICHELE

### TRADITIONS: NEW/OLD, INTENTIONAL/INHERITED

#### *Romans 12:2*

*Do not be shaped by this world; instead be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.*

These scriptures are some of my favorite for guiding the way I choose what will happen in my life.

As we wrap up Thanksgiving, embrace the Christmas season, and move towards New Year's Eve, I can't help but think about traditions that have been established in my life. Some are decades old, some began formation this year, some were intentionally set, others just seemed to develop, and still others were inherited from generations long ago.

One of my favorite traditions that just sort of developed was running in a Thanksgiving morning in full costumes. We weren't able to participate this year, but will pick it back up next year with just a slight modification in location. I also love my family's Advent tradition with the wreath and readings - especially on Christmas morning with Breakfast Casserole before opening stockings.

With our move to Texas Thanksgivings, we are being

#### *Psalm 16:8*

*I praise the Lord because he advises me. Even at night, I feel his leading. I keep the Lord before me always. Because he is close to me, I will not be hurt.*

#### *Joshua 22:5*

*But be careful to obey the teachings and laws Moses, the Lord's servant, gave you: to love the Lord your God and obey his commands, to continue to follow him and serve him the very best you can.*

deliberate about what traditions we want to form. This started me thinking about what other traditions I might want to start and why.

Traditions are wonderful because they remind us of where we come from, who we want to be, and what is important to us. Over the past few years, I've noticed a new tradition for some that includes being more mindful and intentional about moving into the new year.

Several of my friends adopt a word for the new year. The ponder their word for weeks leading up to January 1st. This word isn't a traditional New Year's Resolution in the sense that we're trying to improve a specific piece of our lives, but a concept that will guide life and growth for the coming year.

It's "being changed from within" (Romans 12:2) so that our lives follow a new path. I want to adopt a word for 2023, but I want to make sure that it's something that "keeps the Lord before me always"

(Psalm 16:8) and reminds me to "obey God's commands, to continue to follow Jesus, and serve God the very best I can" (Joshua 22:5). May our year be filled with intentionally living in connection to God.

Looking forward to 2023,

*Pastor Michele*

# REVERSE ADVENT FAQS

## What is an Advent calendar?

Advent is the period where we prepare for Jesus' birth. It begins four Sundays before Christmas. An Advent calendar has something for you to do or think about, a verse to memorize, a small gift, or a piece of candy for each day of the Advent season.

## What is a Reverse Advent Calendar?

In a reverse Advent calendar, instead of receiving a gift each day, you gather a gift each day of Advent to be donated to those in need. When Advent is over, you have collected 24 gifts. The gifts are usually donated to a food bank, a shelter, or some other organization supporting the needy. This year, gifts from Cross Tracks will be donated to Operation Liberty Hill.

## When/where do I deliver my Reverse Advent Gifts?

You can drop off all the gifts you've collected at the church between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, and we will deliver them to Operation Liberty Hill in early January.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR						
27 <b>BOX CEREAL</b>	28 <b>PEANUT BUTTER</b>	29 <b>STUFFING MIX</b>	30 <b>BOXED POTATOES</b>	1 <b>MAC &amp; CHEESE</b>	2 <b>CANNED FRUIT</b>	3 <b>CANNED TOMATOES</b>
4 <b>DESSERT MIX</b>	5 <b>CANNED SWEET POTATOES</b>	6 <b>CRANBERRY SAUCE</b>	7 <b>CANNED BEANS</b>	8 <b>BOX CRACKERS</b>	9 <b>PACKAGED RICE &amp; PASTA</b>	10 <b>PACKAGED OATMEAL</b>
11 <b>SPAGHETTI SAUCE</b>	12 <b>SOUP</b>	13 <b>TOOTHBRUSH &amp; TOOTHPASTE</b>	14 <b>FRUIT SPREAD OR JAM</b>	15 <b>SHAMPOO/CONDITIONER</b>	16 <b>BATH SOAP</b>	17 <b>DISH &amp; LAUNDRY SOAP</b>
18 <b>COFFEE &amp; TEA</b>	19 <b>FLOUR &amp; SUGAR (5 LB)</b>	20 <b>CANNED MEAT</b>	21 <b>TOILET PAPER</b>	22 <b>CANNED VEGGIES</b>	23 <b>SHELF STABLE MILK</b>	24 <b>JUICE</b>
25 	<b>BENEFITING OPERATION LIBERTY HILL</b> Donate these items each day of advent for a twist on the classic advent calendar, in the true spirit of Christmas!					1

# CHURCH NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## The FROG Class Short Story

In November of 2012, Jim Smith "Smitty" told our church he was moving back to Mexia, Texas. He had lost his wife (Carol) months earlier and wanted to "get closer to his relatives". At that time, about 6 of us members were meeting in the "Fortress" (before it was the parsonage). The Fortress was also the Youth Center.

That same month, Pastor Hilburn came to me and said, "You need to keep this class going". To myself, I said "Duh!" I had never led a Sunday School Class. I reluctantly agreed. For 2 years the Holy Spirit helped us plod along. During this time, the new Worship Center was being completed and we searched for and decided on a class name F.R.O.G. Class (Fully Relying on God). We were!

The class started growing and the Holy Spirit led us to Christian authors like Hamilton, Lucado, Nouwen, Levine and others. Our highest attendance was 23; imagine that! Our average attendance has been around 10. About 4 years ago, Tom and Ella Williams decided to remain in Texas. Tom has become our Co-Teacher. We are grateful to have him.

What a blessing the FROG Class is to Cross Tracks! All told, in over 10 years we have probably studied 40 plus Christian books. We do indeed have HIGH, WIDE AND DEEP CHRIST-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS GATHERED AROUND CHRIST'S FEET. COME SEE US SOMETIME! CHRIST IS WAITING FOR YOU!

-Gary Bible and Tom Williams, Class Leaders



## An Invitation to Participate in the Cross Wall

The Cross Tracks cross wall is intended to represent each family in our church. Families contribute crosses which express themselves in a personal way. The wall is currently being rebuilt following the painting of the worship area. I invite you to take a little time to observe the individual crosses, and enjoy the diversity!

If you would like your family included and have not already brought in a cross, you may do so. Drop it in the box on the entry table, or bring it to the office, and it will be displayed proudly.

### Upcoming Office Closures

December 23 and 26 - Christmas holiday

January 2 - New Year holiday

January 16 - MLK Day



### Angel Tree Project



The Cross Tracks Church Angel Tree project was a great success. Because of your generosity, 34 children will have gifts to open on Christmas morning! Imagine the love, hope, and joy their entire families will experience by virtue of your gifts. Thank you all for your kindness.

### Rekeying of the Church Campus

The Trustees are preparing to re-key the Cross Tracks Church campus sometime in the next 4-6 weeks (schedule pending).

Why you ask? Over the years, keys have been handed out without any log of who had one. Additionally, people with keys were able to duplicate them. So as of now, we have no idea who has keys. We have had at least one significant unplanned access to the Worship Center since I've been here.

We have implemented a new lock on the front door of the Worship Center that allows access to be granted to anyone with a smart phone. If you need access to the building, contact the church office so Donna Huff can get you setup.

If you have questions, please let me know.

Jim Turner

Trustees Chair Pro-Tem



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Teresa - ChristianEducation.CTC@gmail.com

## Advent Sunday School Series

are a great way for us to spiritually prepare for Christmas. Sunday School for all ages is at 9 AM. Check out these amazing opportunities!

### CHILDREN'S CLASSES - GATHER IN THE CHAPEL

*And a little child will lead them.*

Week 1: And a little child will lead them-Isaiah 11:6-9

Week 2: Elizabeth and Zechariah-Luke 1:5-25, 57-63

Week 3: Mary and Joseph-Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24

Week 4: Birth/Shepherds-Luke 2:1-20

Week 5: The Wise Men-Matthew 2:1-12

4 YEAR OLD TO 1ST GRADE TO THE EDUCATION BUILDING  
2ND TO 5TH GRADE TO CLASSROOM 21

### YOUTH CLASS - CLASSROOM 22

This Christmas series help students learn how Jesus was more than just a baby. He is The Marvelous Light! The series teaches students how Jesus came as a light to the world and how he calls us to shine our lights!

Week 1: Simeon saw the Light-Luke 2:21-33

Week 2: The Magi followed the Light-Matthew 2:1-12

Week 3: Jesus is the Light of the World-John 8:12

Week 4: Let Your Light Shine-Matthew 5:14-16 & James 2:14-18

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

## F.R.O.G. CLASS – CLASSROOM 23

For centuries, Christians have turned to the story and message of John the Baptist in the weeks leading up to Christmas. In *Prepare the Way for the Lord: Advent and the Message of John the Baptist*, best-selling author and pastor Adam Hamilton explores the Advent themes of John's life and ministry, and how John calls all followers of Jesus to prepare our hearts for his coming.

In each of the Gospels, the story of Jesus is intertwined with that of his cousin John, the one whom the prophets foretold would come to "prepare the way of the Lord." When we hear the message of John the Baptist, it makes us and our world ready to receive Christ.



Week 1: A People Prepared for the Lord

Week 2: God Is Gracious

Week 3: The Fruit of Repentance

Week 4: Witnesses Testifying to the Light

## L.I.F.E. CLASS – CLASSROOM 24

In Isaiah 9:6, a divine utterance is given to us using four royal titles-- Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Names for the Messiah ponders each title and how the people understood it then, how Jesus did or did not fulfill the title, and how Christians interpret Jesus as representative of that title.

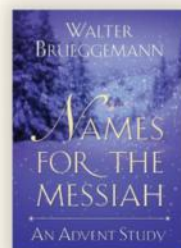
Christians have claimed from the beginning that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. In this study, best-selling author Walter Brueggemann tackles the questions: "What were these expectations?" and "Did Jesus fulfill them?"

Week 1: Wonderful Counselor

Week 2: Mighty God

Week 3: Everlasting Father

Week 4: Prince of Peace



# CHRISTMAS CANTATA



The Worship Center was alive with the sounds of celebration on Sunday evening, December 11. The festivities began at 5:30 p.m. with food, fellowship and fun, as everyone gathered for a potluck dinner. Children young and old were delighted to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus.

At 7 p.m., the Cross Tracks Community Choir took the stage for a musical celebration of the season. The congregation was treated to a dynamic presentation of "One Small Child," a Christmas cantata for every choir. This year's choir included some very talented community members, in addition to our church members. Featured soloists were Leah Piccolo, Taylor Lott, Ocean Garcia and Kaylyn Funk. The cantata was narrated by Kathy Major, accompanied by Rick Huff and under the direction of Margaret Wofford. Congratulations to all on a fantastic presentation!

Immediately following the cantata, everyone enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate, as we moved outside for the lighting of the Christmas tree and caroling.





# EVENTS ON CAMPUS

## Chocolate Workshop Hosted by Outreach Committee

On November 10, the Outreach Committee hosted a chocolate workshop here at Cross Tracks. The instructor, Ms. Melanie Boudar, is an awarding winning chocolate maker and chocolatier. The nearly 20 people in attendance encompassed people from our congregation and people from the community.

They learned the chocolate process from the cacao tree to the final product, how to read and understand the labels and ingredients on packaged chocolate, and how to make good choices when purchasing chocolate. They will never again see chocolate in the same way. Many thanks to Maureen Stroup for all her hard work.



## 5th Sunday Potlucks Are Back!

On October 30th we celebrated 5th Sunday with our first potluck in a LONG time. We had a fantastic turnout and enjoyed some great food and fellowship. The next 5th Sunday potluck is in January. We hope you'll join us!



## Fun fact: Chrismons are Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them.

During the Children's Sermon on December 11, Pastor Michele taught the children what Chrismons are. They discussed the meaning of a few of them, and made some intuitive guesses for some others. Immediately afterward, all children were invited to decorate Chrismons in the back of the worship area. Later during the service, the children presented their creations and decorated the stage edge with them.



## Cross Tracks Christmas Card Exchange

Want to send Christmas cards to your friends in the congregation but don't want to spend all that money on postage? Just drop your cards in the box which includes the last name of the recipient.

Don't forget to look in the box for cards which may be left for you. You may be surprised!

The Christmas Card boxes can be found in the lobby.

## RECURRING EVENTS

Cub Scouts

Boy Scouts

Hwa Sun Martial Arts



# APPRECIATION

Our troop is so blessed by all of you! Thank you for your generosity & helping to grow our scouts! The Edwards family

Thank you! - Arush

Thank you! - Mrs. Hew

Thank you! Steven Hale

Thank you! KEVIN

Thank you! - Louisa

Thank you for the use of the Myrtle House for our troop meetings. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Selvia J. Ford

VERY MUCH



**Operation Liberty Hill**  
caring for our community

Thanks you!!!!

Cross Tracks Church, Thank you so much for your continued support of O.L.H. Our client numbers have been on the increase and food costs are rising making it difficult to meet the needs our community. You are definitely a blessing.

Susan

In honor of Pat Robinson

IN OUR TIME OF LOSS YOU HAVE GIVEN US  
*peace and healing*  
THROUGH YOUR COMFORTING WORDS  
— — —  
WE ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL

CAROL McLENDON AND TERRI ANDERSON JUST WANT TO THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE FLOWERS! APPRECIATE SO MUCH FOR BEING SUCH A HAPPY PART OF OUR MOMS LIFE! FAITHFUL IN THIS TIME OF NEED. MUCH LOVE! APPRECIATION,  
Carol; Terri

**THANK YOU TO THE TRUSTEES!  
WE APPRECIATE YOUR VISION, DEDICATION, HARD WORK, AND ENTHUSIASM. ALL THE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE WORSHIP CENTER AND CHURCH CAMPUS LOOK AMAZING!**