

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First United Methodist Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Making Disciples in Three Centuries

December 21, 2025
8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

"The Angel Visiting Joseph in a Dream"
Georges du Mesnil (1593-1652)

The season of Advent is a time of waiting for the promises of God. In today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph is visited in the night with the strange message of Jesus's coming birth.

GATHERING

CHIMES *Worship begins at the Opening Voluntary. At the sound of the chimes, we invite you into a period of quiet reflection preparing for today's service.*

OPENING VOLUNTARY "Fantasia on 'Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus'"

Setting by Carol Lynn Mizell

GREETING

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Today, we come face to face with the scandal of Advent: Mary, the unmarried mother; God Incarnate growing in Mary's womb as a vulnerable baby; Joseph contemplating leaving Mary because of her pregnancy; God's love at work in ways that society and propriety could not understand; God calling Mary and Joseph to faithfulness despite the fear of disgrace.

With Mary and Joseph, we choose to wait, watch, and listen for the way of Love instead of responding in fear to the world's judgment.

We light this candle of love as a sign of our faithfulness as we seek, find, and follow Emmanuel, God with us.

The fourth candle of the Advent Wreath is lit.

† HYMN 224 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM (11:00 a.m.)

Amelia True, child of Samuel and True Webb

Pastor to congregation:

Do you, as Christ's body, the church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?
We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include this family, now before you, in your care?

With God's help we will proclaim the Good News and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround this family with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE *All sing:*

**Amelia True, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you too.
We this day do all agree, a child of God you'll always be.
Amelia True, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you too.**

OUR SHARED LIFE

The flowers are given to the glory of God and in memory of Bill Mitchell on his 80th birthday, by Bess Mitchell.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Children are invited to come forward during the singing of the last verse for the children's sermon.

† HYMN 219 "What Child Is This"

CHILDREN'S SERMON

† PASSING OF THE PEACE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

An offering is collected to support the work of First United Methodist Church sharing God's love with the world. Please take a moment and record your attendance on a card located in the blue folders in the pews. Place the card in the offering plate when passed to you. Make a secure gift by scanning the QR Code or visit fumcbr.org/give to give online.



OFFERTORY "A Christmas Carillon"

Setting by Margaret Tucker

† DOXOLOGY

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

† PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son.

Speak to us by your Word in these Advent days, and walk with us until the day of your coming. Amen.

† GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON “Born of the Virgin Mary”

Reverend Whitton

SENDING FORTH

† HYMN 238 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

† BENEDICTION

CLOSING VOLUNTARY “People, Look East!”

Setting by Kristina Langlois

MINISTRY OF WORSHIP

Acolyte	Ian Venuto (8:30 a.m.); Liam Snyder (11:00 a.m.)
Advent Wreath	Richard and Carol Brown (8:30 a.m.); Drew and Denise Sellers (11:00 a.m.)
Children’s Sermon	Joy Irwin
Lay Reader	Mike Steinkamp (8:30 a.m.); Dr. Chelsey Geeting (11:00 a.m.)
Liturgist	Patty Hewitt, <i>Executive Director of Adult Education, Hospitality, and Care</i>
Musicians	The Woodland Ringers Holden Miller, <i>Associate Director of Music and Organist</i> Lamar Drummonds, <i>Director of Music and Worship</i>
Preaching	Reverend Brady Whitton, <i>Senior Pastor</i>
Soundboard	Tim McKey (8:30 a.m.); Rebecca Mitchell (11:00 a.m.)

New to First United Methodist Church? Here’s Where to Begin!

Café 930 - Enjoy fellowship and a cup of hot coffee or tea from 8:00-11:00 a.m. (Ory Parish Hall) every Sunday morning. An assortment of teas, flavored syrups, and sweeteners are available. All are welcome.

If you are new to First United Methodist and are ready to learn more or have questions, we invite you to join us for our monthly **Newcomer Coffee**. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and meet others. This event takes place on the first Sunday of each month from 9:45–10:45 a.m. in Ory Parish Hall. Registration is helpful (scan the QR code) but not required. For more information, contact Shan Schatzle, *Coordinator*, at shan@firstmethodist.org.



Families with Children – Children are always welcome in worship! Childcare is available during all services for children ages 6 weeks through Kindergarten. FUMC also offers Sunday morning groups for children and youth from 9:45–10:45 a.m. To find a group, visit the check-in table located across from the welcome desk in the Conference Center lobby.

Believe & Belong – Are you discerning becoming a member of FUMC or ready to join? Attend the next Believe & Belong on Sunday, January 25 from 9:45–10:45 a.m. in the Conference Center. Childcare and Children's Sunday School are available during this hour. Register by scanning the QR code. Questions? Email Pattye Hewitt, *Executive Director of Adult Education, Hospitality, and Care*, at phewitt@firstmethodist.org.



Events, Missions, and Learning

Our Ministries Require Your Support: Your contributions help underwrite the important ministries of FUMC. Recurring gifts provide stability for our church, helping us know how much income to expect and to manage cash flow throughout the year. To establish a recurring gift via ACH bank draft, contact Destiny Muse, *Contributions Coordinator*, at dmuse@firstmethodist.org, or at 225-383-2777, extension 218. For instructions on setting up an online recurring gift, visit <http://www.fumcbr.org/give>.

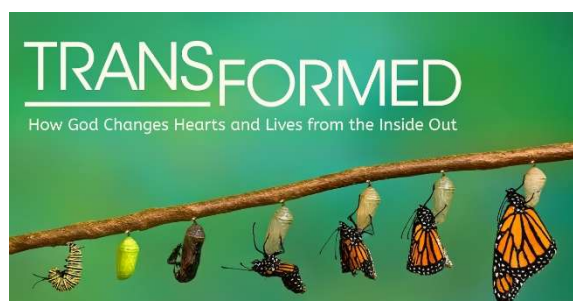
The Longest Night Service – today at 7:00 p.m. At this service we honor the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, and offer healing, hope, and encouragement. This contemplative, candlelit service speaks particularly to persons who have had a difficult year and to all of us who have unspoken concerns and needs.

Unable to join us in person for Christmas Eve worship? Online Worship Kits have everything you need to celebrate from home. Kits are available throughout the week and on Sundays at the America Street Welcome Desk and in Ory Parish Hall. Request one to be mailed to you by contacting Pattye Hewitt at phewitt@firstmethodist.org.

As Christmas and the New Year draw near, **many people make end-of-the-year gifts** to their favorite charities. We want to make you aware of some giving options that could benefit you and ask you to remember First United Methodist Church of Baton Rouge in your giving.

- Donate Stock
- Pre-pay 2026 charitable gifts before December 31, 2025
- Contribute your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) using Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD).

You can mail a check to the church, place your gift in the offering plate, or give online at fumcbr.org/give. For more information about giving to First United Methodist Church, contact Wanda Allphin at wallphin@firstmethodist.org.



2026 Sermon Series (January 11-February 18)

Many of us feel the pull to grow, to change, to become better versions of ourselves. For others, the voice is louder: something has to change — now. But how does deep, lasting transformation actually happen? Where does it come from? This series outlines the biblical, and time-tested path by which God shapes human hearts and lives -- healing us, and making us new.