



**Dover First UMC's Weekly Newsletter**  
**December 19, 2025**

**Let's Worship Together**

Sundays at 10:20 a.m.  
in the Sanctuary

**Recharge Service**

**Live Contemporary Music**  
Last Sunday of the Month  
Fellowship Hall at 6 p.m.

**Nursery Care**

Sunday mornings  
for children 1 to 3  
in rooms 1 and 3

**Preschool**

Sunday mornings  
for children 4 to 6

**Children's Ministry**

Kidz Min Church  
during Sunday Worship

**Youth Ministry**

Youth Group for grades  
middle and high school  
Sundays at 6 p.m.

**Our Website**

Visit **doverfirst.org**  
for online services,  
special studies,  
announcements,  
opportunities to serve,  
and the church calendar



Our annual Christmas Card Exchange Boxes  
are setup in the lobby and ready for sharing  
greetings with members of our church family.

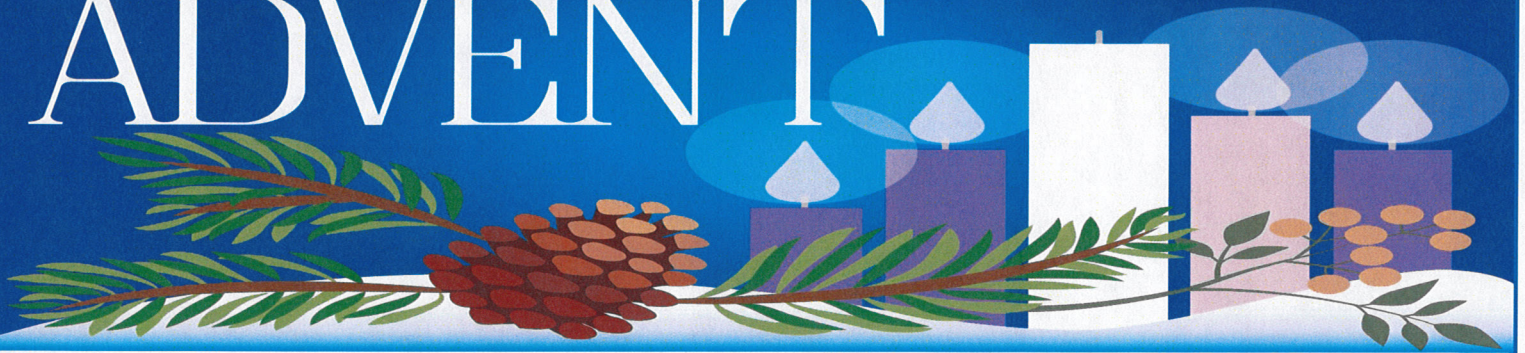
Simply place your cards or notes under  
the correct letter of the alphabetical tabs  
and file by the recipient's last name.

Please do not leave cards to be mailed and be sure  
to check the boxes each week for your greetings.

**Special thanks to Nedra Trautman for sharing  
this fun and convenient annual tradition.**



# *Fourth Sunday* OF ADVENT



**"For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed,  
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,  
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,  
says the Lord, who has compassion on you."- Isaiah 54:10**

**What is your picture of love? Perhaps you think of a person giving up title, fame or fortune to marry someone? Or perhaps a parent sacrificing themselves for a child? Or maybe a person adopting a child in need? There are two images that Isaiah uses to describe God's love that I find striking. One is of a woman who has no family finding love (Is. 54:1-10) and the other is that of a devoted mother (Is. 49:15-16). Both of these images capture care, concern, and protection that are the hallmarks of God's love. Notice how these pictures correspond to our stereotypical pictures of love. The prophet is telling us, no matter what illustration you use to think of love between people God loves you more. The prophet tells us that God loves even if parents abandon, God loves even when we are alone and despondent. God takes us in when we are rejected and lost and provides and cares for us.**

**We all long for a love that is guaranteed to outlast creation and God provides that. I think the difficulty is that sometimes this can be hard to accept because it is impossible to picture. We cannot fathom such unconditional love, and I think because of this fact we often fail to meditate on this reality. We do not take the time to consider that God is consistently longing to love us and love us to a greater degree than any other person. But that is part of what we are called to do over the Christmas season. We are meant to take time focused on the beautiful decorations and allow them to draw our minds toward God's unfailing and unending love. This year as Christmas approaches take time to sit and reflect on God's love for you and how you can more richly encounter that love every day.**





# **Celebrating Our Savior's Birth**

## **Dover First United Methodist Church**

### **Church Family Christmas Breakfast**

Sunday, December 21st at 9 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

### **Blue Christmas Service of Remembrance and Hope**

Tuesday, December 23rd at 6 p.m. in the Church Lounge

### **Christmas Eve**

Special Music Begins at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service with Candlelight at 7 p.m.

### **Recharge Contemporary Worship Service**

Christmas Music on Thursday, December 28th at 7 p.m.





# Welcome to Worship

## Fourth Sunday in Advent

### December 21, 2025

## Welcome and Announcements

Prelude                      “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”  
arr. Edward Broughton

## Lighting the Advent Wreath

Rev. Doug George and granddaughters:  
Katelynn, Melody and Amelia George

\*Hymn #196              Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Scripture                  Isaiah 7:10–16

Hymn #237              Sing We Now of Christmas

All children who would like to go to Kidz Min in the Education Zone are asked to meet at the back of the sanctuary during the hymn.

## Prayer

\*Hymn #236              While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

Scripture                  Matthew 1:18–25



Choir Anthem "When Will He Come?"  
Words and Music by  
Nancy Price and Don Besig

\*Offering Introduction/Doxology/Prayer/Lord's Prayer

Message Love Chooses Faithfulness Over Fear  
Pastor Wesley George

\*Hymn #220 Angels from the Realms of Glory

\*Benediction

\*Postlude "Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding"  
arr. Robert J. Powell

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### Thank You Note

Thank you to Sara Marlatt  
for organizing the church  
family Christmas breakfast.

Thanks also to everyone  
sharing their time to help.



## *Love Chooses Faithfulness Over Fear*

### **Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

### **Questions**

1. Would marrying Mary have impacted Joseph's reputation, if so, how?
2. Why does Joseph give so much importance to his dream?
3. How is Matthew using the quote from Isaiah that "his name shall be Emmanuel" if Jesus was not called Emmanuel?

### **Background**

Related Scriptures: Isaiah 7:14; 1 John 4:18

Giving something or someone a name is a way of taking on authority, so Joseph naming Jesus is a public sign that he is taking Jesus as his son. The angel providing the name to Joseph is a direct way of incorporating Joseph into this mission. By naming Jesus and formally adopting him Joseph provides Jesus with a claim to Joseph's heritage including his status as a descendant of David.

Matthew's emphasis in quoting Isaiah 7:14 is not on the circumstances of Jesus' birth but on his title and role "Emmanuel"—God with us. The point of the quotation is to focus on who Jesus is. The title Emmanuel is meant to take the reader's mind back to the moment God saved Israel from the Assyrian Empire and to understand that God is again saving people but this time from a more dangerous enemy.

**John Chrysostom:** Why then do they not call him Emmanuel instead of Jesus Christ? Because the text says not "you shall call" but "his name shall be called." This means that the multitude and the outcome of the events themselves will cause him to be called Emmanuel. For here he puts the event as a name. This is customary in Scripture, to substitute names for the actual events. Therefore to say "they shall call him 'Emmanuel' " means nothing else than that they shall see God among us. Admittedly God has always been among us, but never before so openly<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1–13*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 18–19.



## *Love Chooses Faithfulness Over Fear*

### **Reflection**

I find it interesting that Matthew's description of Joseph is as "a righteous man" specifically in his plan to divorce Mary. His righteousness is directly connected to his decision to divorce her. The desire to not publicly expose her (though at some point she would be publicly exposed) was not the reason he is righteous. Matthew calls Joseph righteous because he has decided to divorce Mary. Joseph understands his Bible (Deuteronomy 22:22-29) and is doing his best to maintain purity according to its words. So does this mean that Joseph abandons his righteousness to listen to the angel and take Mary as his wife? While I think that in some quarters it might be trendy to say yes, this is not the case. And others might try to distinguish between "the old Law and the new Gospel". But that is not really what Matthew is concerned with either. Rather, Matthew brings up Joseph's righteousness to demonstrate how his commitment to being righteous allows him to follow God in difficult circumstances. Joseph's commitment is not simply to the Law for the Law's sake; it is to promote a healthy society that honors God. This desire leads him to follow the Law because it generally promotes such a society. It is when the angel provides Joseph with more information that Joseph understands the original intent of the procedures for divorce do not apply to his situation.

What I find special about the angel's message to Joseph is that he is able to get Joseph to truly see Mary and her situation. This speaks to Joseph's character, he is not trying to get back at Mary; by publicly exposing her, he simply wants righteousness to thrive in the world around him. Joseph could easily have given in to his hurt and the feeling of betrayal that would accompany the news of Mary's situation. Instead, he allowed his character to shine when he decided he was not going to expose Mary to public shame. This alone is far better than what many want, so many people want vengeance, they want to see the person who wronged them suffer. But Joseph wanted righteousness, he wanted to be treated well and so treated others well. Then the angel came to him and asked him to go the extra mile, to see Mary's situation and ask how he could elevate her. The angel is asking Joseph to overcome his fear of what his community might say about him and stay faithful to his character.

Now obviously, Matthew has included this story to help us understand the kind of man Joseph was and to give us insight into the home Jesus was adopted into. But this should not stop us from looking at Joseph as someone to emulate and to look at how his example can be translated into our world. At the most basic level we need to consider Joseph's commitment to righteousness. We can commit to the idea that we will pursue God in all things and seek to live out righteousness in the world. This commitment is that we will always look to do things according to how God would in the world. This is the basic commitment of loving God. Where righteousness and legalism diverge is that legalism is concerned with actions and repeating the same actions in every circumstance. Righteousness listens to how one's actions impact another person and adapts. Joseph wanted to act rightly, his initial thought was probably that he had been betrayed and so not wanting to cause harm but wanting to do right, he committed to a less public divorce. However, he was challenged with the idea that he could be even more loving toward one who needed love. When we are committed to righteousness and we see how we can love and help individuals we will adapt our behavior to be as loving as possible. This means listening to what others need and providing that even if it means life gets more difficult for us. Righteousness leads us away from fear and into the difficult life of faithfulness. Faithfulness to our beliefs, to others, and to God. This is what Joseph demonstrated, he was faithful to God and that faithfulness led him to consider Mary in her difficult time and adjust his behavior toward her. May we each learn to emulate this kind of righteousness this Christmas.



# This Week at Dover First UMC



## Sunday

9 a.m. Church Family  
Breakfast  
Fellowship Hall

10:20 a.m. Worship Service

## Next Sunday

10:20 a.m. Worship Service

**7 p.m. Christmas  
Recharge Service**

Music By:  
**Steve Dulaney**  
Fellowship Hall

## Monday

7 p.m. Leadership  
Board Meets

## Tuesday

6 p.m. Blue Christmas  
Fellowship Hall

7 p.m. WMM Church  
Spanish-Speaking

7 p.m. Boy Scouts  
Scout Room

## Christmas Eve

**6:30 p.m. Music Begins**

**7 p.m. Candlelight  
Service**

## Christmas Day

7 p.m. WMM Church  
Spanish-Speaking

## Friday

Offices Closed  
Staff Holiday

## Saturday

No Events



**Our Church Offices Will Be Closed  
Christmas Day thru New Year's Day  
for Staff Holiday Time**