

PREPARE

4th Sunday of Advent

Changing Lives by Sharing Christ, Making Disciples, Serving and Giving Hope

Sermon Notes: Thursday, December 21 and Sunday, December 24

One of the legends of First United Methodist Church is about a nativity that used to be displayed in the Chestnut Street lobby. With this nativity, baby Jesus could be removed from the manger. And guess what, he was, never to be seen again! No one knows how and why he was removed. I've heard several theories, but none could be proven. The bottom line is Baby Jesus went missing several years ago and no one has seen him since. Matthew, our building supervisor looked for Jesus. The pastors looked. Everyone searched for Jesus, and he could not be found. Many believe that Jesus hid somewhere in this very building. Others think that Jesus may have left the building. This was before my time, and I have no idea. I do know that people still talk about Him and search for Jesus. There are some who continue to be in active pursuit. And I do believe he will show up and he is going to show up unexpectedly and perhaps when we need him the most. Have you seen Jesus?

This week, I encourage you to be on the lookout for Him and you will find him. He will be in the hustle and bustle, the silent nights, the love of others, your church family, worship, and personal devotion. Jesus will be with us because He is always with us. Jesus is "Emmanuel, God with Us."

Advent Blessings, Rev. Sherri

Christmas Eve at First UMC Gadsden

Celebrate the birth of Jesus with friends and family! Make plans now to come to one or more of these worship services on December 24.

10 am, One United Worship Service. This will be a "regular" Sunday morning worship service at a special time, 10 am, as we observe the fourth Sunday of Advent on Christmas Eve morning.

There will be two worship opportunities on Christmas Eve, one at 4:00 pm and one at 6:00 pm. Each of these service will be the Gadsden First UMC Tradition of Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship and will include special music, a message, "Preparing for the Baby" by Rev. Sherri Reynolds, the celebration of Holy Communion, and everyone singing Silent Night as handheld candles are lit. Choose the time that works best for you to come and celebrate Jesus' birth! In addition, at 5:00 pm there will be a Live Nativity on the Corner of 5th and Chestnut presented by First UMC Youth. There will be horse & carriage rides by the animal sanctuary available for \$10 during this time, weather permitting. (see page 3.)

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Worship Opportunities

5:30 pm Thursday Worship

Sunday Mornings:

December 24 & 31 One Service at 10:00 am

*In Person (Sanctuary) and Online

ACOLYTES

December 24 Volunteers

Security for Thursday Worship

December 21 George Fant

December 28 No Service

Tech Team Schedule

December 24

One Service at 10:00 am: Sheila Freeman, Carmen McKiven, Jacob McKiven

December 31

One Service at 10:00 am: Eric Wright, Bill Haller, Brad Barnes

Sunday SCHOOL

Classes for All Ages!

**Children's Sunday School Rooms 108 and 104
Youth Sunday School Room 211**

**New Young Adult Sunday School Room 209
Pathfinder/Seekers Room 208
Living Water Room 116**

(Nursery provided for Children under 3)

*Please note: Sunday school classes will not meet on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24
or on New Year's Eve, Sunday, December 31!*

*Please join us at 10 am in the Sanctuary on these two Sundays
for United Worship Services in the Sanctuary!*

*Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24, United Worship Service at 10 am
New Year's Eve, Sunday, December 31, United Worship Service at 10 am*

Men at the Well Thursday Mornings, 7:00 am

You are invited to join the weekly Bible study with the Men at the Well small group. They are currently meeting at the Choice Restaurant at 7 am. Their current study is the "12 Tribes of Israel".
Contact Todd Rains, Mark Condra, Mark Casey, or any of the Men at the Well for more information.

**Wonderful Wednesday Fellowship
Dinner 5:15 pm**

Will resume on

January 10

\$7 per person

\$3 for 11 and under

Adult Small Groups @ Wonderful Wednesdays

Will resume on Wednesday, January 10.

Wonderful Wednesday @ 6 pm

Rev. Sherri Reynolds Room 208

**Small Group with Harriet Murray
6 pm, Room 110**

Advent and Christmas at Gadsden First UMC - **PREPARE**



**Between the Christmas Eve
Worship Services**
(Approximately
4:30 pm to 6 pm.)

The Live Nativity is
presented by the GFUMC
Youth and there will be live
animals provided by the
animal sanctuary.

Special Activity:
Horse and Carriage rides
down Broad Street will be
available for \$10 per person,
weather permitting.

Advent and Christmas: **PREPARE**

Sunday, Dec. 24, 10 AM, One Worship Service

Sunday, Dec. 24, 4 PM, Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Sunday, Dec. 24, 5 PM, Live Nativity, Corner of Chestnut and 5th Street

Sunday, Dec. 24, 6 PM, Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Sunday, Dec. 31, 10 AM, One Worship Service



Thursday Worship

Nov 30, 5:30 PM
"Celebration of the Chrismons"

Dec 7, 5:30 PM
"Preparing for a Perfect Christmas"

Dec 14, 5:30 PM
Meet in the Chapel, Room 118, this week.
"Preparing with Joy"

Dec 21, 5:30 PM
"Preparing for the Unexpected"

Dec 28, No Thursday Worship

Celebration

Nov 26, 9 AM
"Preparing for Holy Seasons"

Dec 3, 9 AM
First Sunday of Advent
"Hanging of the Green"

Dec 10, 9 AM
Second Sunday of Advent
"Preparing for a Perfect Christmas"

Dec 17, 9 AM
Christmas Unplugged, Chapel
"Preparing with Joy"

Dec 24, 10 AM One Worship Service
"Preparing for the Unexpected"

Dec 31, 10 AM One Worship Service
"Preparing for a New Year"

Traditions

Nov 26 "Preparing for Holy Seasons"

Dec 3, 11 AM
First Sunday of Advent
"Celebration of the Chrismons"

Dec 10, 11 AM
Second Sunday of Advent
"Preparing for a Perfect Christmas"

Dec 17, 11 AM
Third Sunday of Advent
Christmas Music
Chancel Choir With Orchestra

Dec 24, 10 AM One Worship Service
"Preparing for the Unexpected"

Dec 31, 10 AM One Worship Service
"Preparing for a New Year"

ELC News

Our 3K and 4K students gave a great performance for the Judicial Staff at their Christmas party on Monday, December 11th at the Judicial Building. The ELC will be closed for Christmas Break Friday, December 8th through Tuesday, January 2nd. Regular hours will resume Wednesday, January 3rd.

—Helene Haller



Youth Ministry News



The Youth will participate in the live nativity on Christmas Eve at 5 pm.

Youth Counselor
Carmen McKiven

Wonderful Wednesday Fellowship Dinner
Will resume on January 10

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Children's Ministry

GFUMC CHILDREN'S CALENDAR

JANUARY 2023

Children's Church, Sunday's 9:00 & 11:00

Wonderful Wednesdays @6:00

MEASURE UP: JESUS' EARLY LIFE

January 10: God guides us to safety

January 17: Love God with our actions

January 24: We can follow Jesus

January 31: We are ready at the right time

January 24 🤡

National Belly Laugh Day

Bring a joke this Wednesday!

www.fumcgadsden.org/children

CHRISTMAS EVE ACOLYTES

ALL ACOLYTES ARE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH
SERVICES TO LIGHT THE CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLES.

4:00 & 6:00

JOIN US FOR A

Pancakes & pajamas

ONE UNITED SERVICE, 10:00AM
CHILDREN'S CHURCH
DECEMBER 31

December Missions

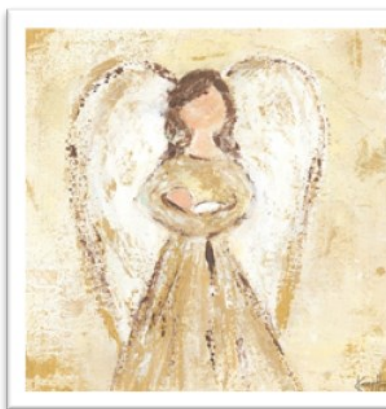
Be the
light

Each year during the Christmas season, we are reminded there is no greater joy for us than giving to others. For decades, the White Christmas Offering has enabled Methodists to share their blessings with those whose circumstances in life just haven't been fair. These children and young adults certainly didn't sign up to be in the situation they're in, and with your support, they have the hope of a much brighter tomorrow. If you would like to give a donation to the White Christmas Offering, you may make your check marked "White Christmas", payable to GFUMC and a record of your giving will be here at the church. One hundred percent of your gift will be sent to Embrace Alabama Kids, which was formerly known as the United Methodist Children's Home.

The Angel Tree

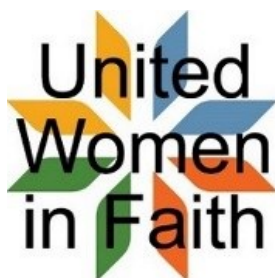
The Angel Tree is located in the Sanctuary.

*Thank you to all who have shopped
and donated for our Angel Tree!
All our Angel gifts have been
delivered to the Salvation Army to be
given to boys and girls for Christmas!
Your generosity has given JOY this
Christmas!
Thank you. —Mission Team*

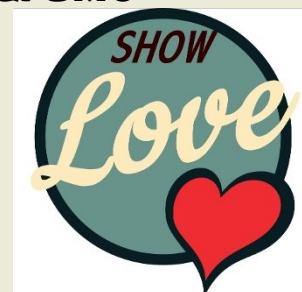


United Women in Faith

**Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year!**



GFUMC



*"By this all will know that you are
my disciples, if you have love for
one another." John 13:35*

Ladle of Love

Fridays, 11:00am-12:00pm,
at the Portico entrance.

***Donations may be made
to the Ladle of Love Fund
in honor or in memory of
a loved one.***

**Clothes Closet Workdays
are Tuesdays before open
days from 9:00-11:00 am.**

Open to Public

1st & 3rd Wednesdays

December open dates are

12/6 and 12/20

9:00 am to 11:00 am

516 Broad Street Gadsden

**Find out more about mission
and service opportunities @**

www.fumcgadsden.org/serve

Phone: 256-543-8200

Email:

fumc@fumcgadsden.org

#gfumcreconnect2023

Clients Served

October 2023

Ladle of Love 377

Clothes Closet 247

November 2023

Ladle of Love 294

Clothes Closet 248

**Thanks to our
Volunteers!**

"I'm about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 42:19

I wanted to follow up on Generosity: New Beginnings. In this emphasis you were invited to consider how God is calling you to a new beginning and how you are committing to a new beginning. Through the spiritual disciplines of prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness God transforms us and makes us new. God may have called you to a new prayer emphasis, or a renewed commitment to worship. The Lord might have invited you to tithe or a new avenue of service. God could have nudged you to invite someone to church or share your faith in another way. I am so excited about all the ways First United Methodist has stepped up and responded. Many of you have answered the call to follow God into a new discipline in the coming year. This new commitment includes an increased commitment to giving, with a greater amount pledged for 2024 and being just three commitments shy of surpassing last year's number of pledges.

If you have not made a commitment to your new beginning and completed your estimate of giving card, I encourage you to do so. Your card may be turned into the church office, in the offering plate, or electronically on the church website/app. If you have lost your card, blank estimates of giving cards are available at the information table in the Chestnut Street lobby. Your commitment is not a binding contract but helps the leadership plan for 2024 and to be good stewards of resources. The information is kept confidential by the financial secretary. In addition to the logistical aspect of stewardship, this year's card includes a space for you to indicate and commit to how God might be calling you to step up in 2024. If you are planning on carrying your 2023 commitment to the coming year, please let our financial secretary, Sheila Witherspoon, know even if the amount remains the same. All of this allows you to be a part of new beginnings which are happening here.

I am so excited about the year ahead. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I can feel that God is doing a new thing at First United Methodist Church, and I am blessed to be on this journey with you!

In Christ,

Rev. Shu Reynolds

**Sixty-three (63)
"New Beginnings
Estimate of Giving" Cards
have been returned
as of 12.20.23
Thank You!**



See Page 7 for information on End of Year Giving to First UMC Gadsden.

Generosity: Ways to Give

In-person, at the offering time during worship.

www.fumcgadsden.org/give

Text to Give: 256-344-8464

Mail your tithe or gift: 115 S. 5th Street ,
Gadsden, AL 35901



Secure Online Giving



Scan the QR Code or
Text to Give: 256-344-8464
First United Methodist Church of Gadsden

Guidelines for End of Year Contributions:

In order for contributions to be posted to your 2023 giving record, they must meet one of these requirements:

1. The gift is received & posted to your account before December 31st.
2. The contribution is put into the offering plate or delivered to the office on or before December 29th.
3. The envelope in which the gift is mailed is postmarked on or before December 31st.
4. An online E-Giving transaction is dated on or before December 31st. (Find link at fumcgadsden.org/giving)
5. Gifts of stock should be transferred before the market closes on December 29th. Please inform the financial office at the church about a stock transfer.

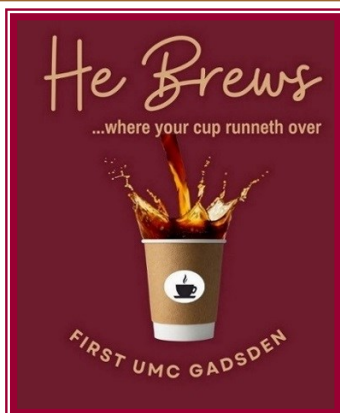
If you have questions or need more information, please contact Sheila Witherspoon or Pam Deru in the church office at giving@fumcgadsden.org or 256-543-8200, no later than December 29th. **(Church office closes at 4:00 pm, Friday December 29th)**

DOES AN IRA ROLLOVER MAKES SENSE THIS YEAR?

Did you know that you can reduce your taxes by making a gift from your IRA to your church? An IRA rollover is a simple and easy way for you to use your IRA to help Gadsden First United Methodist Church fulfill its mission.

By transferring some of your IRA required distribution to the church, you may be able to lower your taxable income and capital gains taxes this year. Check with your advisor to see how an IRA rollover gift could impact your taxes while helping the ministries and missions of the church.

Inviting Ministries



On Sunday morning, Dec. 24 and 31, coffee will be available prior to the worship service at 10 am.

**Please join us for HeBrews Coffee Café
between the regular Sunday morning worship services, from
10 am to 11 am.**

We can't wait to see you there!!!

MARIAN FORD



Marian grew up in Tennessee, then attended Stephens College, an all-girls school in Missouri. She received a B.A. from Vanderbilt University, then a Masters in Education from the University of Alabama. Marian taught in the Special Education Department of Etowah County for 34 years. With a love for athletics, she played sorority Women's Basketball for Vanderbilt University, then was an avid Tennis player for most of her adult life. She joined various tennis teams in Birmingham to broaden her chances to play in challenging tennis tournaments. Now her interests include playing Mexican Train Dominoes and Mahjong. Marian has three sons: David, who manages a Farmers Home Furniture store in

Anniston; Doug, who is a pharmaceutical representative; and George, an economist working for a company based in Washington, D.C.

Do You Know?

**A weekly interview column
by Anna Mullin & Inviting
Ministries to help our
church family get to know
one another. Anna may be
calling you soon, so we can
get to know you too!**



Calendar for Dec 24-30, 2023

Dec 24 Sunday

One Service at 10:00 am, Sanctuary

No Sunday School

4:00 pm, Candlelight Service & Communion

5:00 pm Live Nativity, outside 5th & Chestnut

6:00 pm, Candlelight Service & Communion

Dec 25 Monday

ELC closed, will re-open Jan 3, 2024

Office Closed for Holiday

Dec 26 Tuesday

Office Closed for Holiday

Dec 27 Wednesday

No Wednesday Morning Bible Study

No Wednesday night meal

No Children or Youth activities or Small Groups

No Choir practice

Dec 28 Thursday

No Thursday Worship

Dec 29 Friday

Office Closed for Holiday

No Ladle of Love

*The flowers today are in honor of
Laura Condra in celebration of her
birthday on Wednesday, December 20,
given by her children, grandchildren,
and great-grandchildren.*

Honorariums & Memorials

General Budget Fund

In memory of Anne Weston Morris, given by Mr. & Mrs. Dick McCoy.

In memory of George Varner, given by Mr. & Mrs. Dick McCoy.

In memory of Janette Willingham, given by Mr. & Mrs. Dick McCoy.

In memory of George Varner, given by Kim & Cynthia Whitt.

In memory of Jeff Blackwood, given by Keith & Harriet Murray.

In memory of My Dad, "Love & Miss you", given by Carmen McKiven.

In memory of George Varner, given by Susan Whitt.

In memory of George Varner, given by Paige Whitt.

Immediate Prayer Concerns

Janie Gray

Regina Holloway



Continued Prayer Concerns

Lisa Dobbins Asher Mae Collins Rodney Thompson

Juanita Hammons Bessie Crow Nancy Smith

Birthdays

Dec 24 Claire Wigley, Dr. Ross Isbell,
Mary Ragan Whisenant

Dec 25 Larry Hughes, Dawn Rains

Dec 26 Kaity Dorsett, Lori Sokol,
Victoria Mills, Morris Gladden

Dec 27 Jon Hand, Justin Gilbert,
Belinda Tackaberry

Dec 28 Will Edwards, Franklin Leach

Dec 30 Sheila Freeman

*Please update your family's record in
the church office to include all dates of
birth. Thank you! —Susan*

Week of December 17, 2023

In Person Total *189 Worship Total 460

Online 271 Thursday Worship *7

Traditions Service *151/271

Celebration Service *31

Sunday School-Adult *28 Children *5

Sunday School-Youth *2 Nursery *1

Bible Study Groups *23 Children *40

Youth *9 UWF *17 *in person

General Offering Budget \$12,777.00

General Offering Received \$17,844.91

YTD General Offering Budget \$651,627.00

YTD General Offering Rec'd \$611,687.00

Online Giving

Venmo: @FirstUMCGadsden



venmo

Text to Give: 256.344.8464
(through GFUMC's eGiving platform)