

ECCLESIA

December 2020



FIRST
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH
SALISBURY, NC
EST. 1783

IN THIS ISSUE



On the cover: Lobby Chrismon Tree

The tree in the Carter Lobby is covered in intricate, handmade Chrismons. The ornaments that hang on the lobby tree are dedicated in honor or in memory of a loved one! "Chrismons, meaning "Christ monograms," traditionally are white and gold designs made from Christian symbols that signify Christ. Often displayed on an evergreen tree during the Christmas season, symbols such as stars, crosses, fish, crowns, and the alpha and omega remind us of Christ's identity, his story, and of the holy Trinity." *From UMC.org

Page 5: Advent Studies

There are several ways for you to connect and grow through study this Advent season! Join an online study hosted on Zoom, or follow along with scripture readings and devotions in the Advent Devotional Guide. Most of the devotions were written by FUMC church members. This intergenerational guide was written by people of all ages.

Page 8: The Story

Coming in 2021 - The Story! This church-wide focus will tie together a scripture reading plan, thematic sermons, and more. We will be exploring God's story Genesis to Revelation. If you're interested in purchasing a new Bible, or downloading an app to use as a resource in 2021, page 8 offers some suggestions!

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Reverend Doctor Mark Conforti, *Senior Pastor*
The Reverend Stacey Lundy, *Associate Pastor*
Mrs. Becca Blackmon, *Business Administrator*
Mr. Mike Fansler, *Building Superintendent*
Ms. Jen Fogt, *Director of Youth Ministry*
Mr. Joshua Starnes, *Director of Music Ministry & Organist*
Mrs. Bailee Weisensel, *Director of Children's Ministry*

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Pastoral Counseling, Sanctuary Counseling Group
Mrs. Donna Fredrick,
Lead Teacher of After-School Child Care Program
Mrs. Kelly Austin,
Director of Preschool
Ms. Beth Yelvington,
Lead Teacher of Summer Day Camp
Mrs. Courtney Bost
Lead Teacher/Director of Child Development Center

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www.fumcsalisbury.org | 704.636.3121 | 217 South Church Street
Facebook: First United Methodist Church Salisbury
Instagram: fumcsalisbury



JOIN US ON THE CHURCH LAWN FOR

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT

THE PAPER BAG PAGEANT 3:00PM

WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION 4:30 & 7:00PM

Register online

Wear a face mask and bring your chair

More service times will be added if registration exceeds 50 per service

REMARKS

The season of Advent is coming right on time, and we need it now more than ever!

Remembering. Longing. Believing in God's promises. These are just some of the Advent season's theological themes every year. It strikes me, however, that they are timely for Advent in 2020. The undeniable challenges of these recent months have brought us to this pivotal moment. Will we dive headlong into December with a self-indulgence outmatched only by our neglect of suffering people? Or will we stay in step with God's calling?

REMEMBERING Most years, we need to guard against the pitfall of nostalgia, because the emotions woven into our memories cause us to remember falsely. This year, however, it seems that nostalgia can serve us well. Why? It has to do with the past eight months shaking loose so much of what is normal. Some of us can't remember two months ago, or even last week. Can you remember what life was like, say, in July? Oddly enough, perhaps not. But I'm sure you can remember a special Christmas from your childhood, or a Christmas memory involving your child or grandchildren. We string together these memories with a heart full of gratitude. God has a way of helping us remember; we can ask God to help us remember well, so that, as we count our blessings, we appreciate God's faithfulness.

LONGING Being human means having desire. Desire is not necessarily bad. Along the way in life, however, we discover our sinful desires for the wrong things. Ancient Israel longed for God's justice to intercede on their behalf and make things right. This had a political and economic dimension, along with a religious reality. During Advent, we celebrate how the incarnation of Jesus Christ satisfies that deep longing, along with the world's unspoken appetite for healing and wholeness. In today's context, the pandemic leaves us longing for God to make things right again. In a different way, we long for healing and wholeness. We long to hug our family, to move freely around town, and certainly to gather for worship!

BELIEVING IN GOD'S PROMISES During December, we typically try to have our fruitcake and eat it too, meaning we want the festive secular holiday along with the Christian message. This always challenges us to watch out for false idols from the marketplace. In 2020, we are needing to watch even more carefully for false idols through the news and social media. We worship God, not Caesar, and the biblical story of Jesus' birth names this. We believe in God's promises, not Caesar's deception.

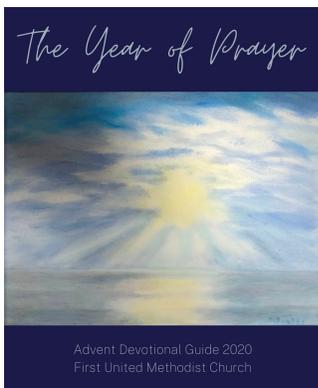
Take a closer look in this edition of the ECCLESIA to know more about how you can be nurtured in your Christian discipleship during Advent and Christmas. Let's purposefully take this time to grow deeper in our faith commitments.

May God bless you and keep you!

Pastor Mark



ADVENT STUDIES



Advent Devotional Guides

Look for your copy of FUMC's Advent Devotional Guide "The Year of Prayer" in your mailbox! Each day of Advent (from November 29 to Christmas Eve) has a scripture reading and a reflection for that day. Beautiful artwork by some of our talented church members also fills the pages. If you would like an extra copy of the devotional book, you can pick one up at the church. You can also find a digital copy on the church website.

Faith in Christmas Movies

Join Pastor Mark Conforti for these fun and faith-filled conversations about some of our favorite Christmas movies. We will discuss how the movie characters & themes help us understand the Christian faith better. Each session will be on Zoom (find the link on the church website & emails)



Thursday, Dec. 3
7:00 pm
"It's a Wonderful Life"



Thursday, Dec. 10
7:00 pm
"White Christmas"



Thursday, Dec. 17
7:00 pm
"Home Alone"



Wednesday, Dec. 23
7:00 pm
"Elf"

4-WEEK ZOOM ADVENT STUDY

Peace,
Justice, Joy,
& Salvation

STUDY ON ISAIAH

Mondays at 7 | 11/30-12/21
REGISTER fumcsalisbury.org

CHRISTMAS LOVE OFFERING



An Invitation from SPRC

During this season of giving, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee would like to ask for your participation in providing a Love Offering to be shared with our staff. If you wish to participate, you may do so by making your check payable to FUMC and note Staff Christmas Love Offering in the memo line or church envelope. If you wish to give a gift, please do so by Sunday, December 13.



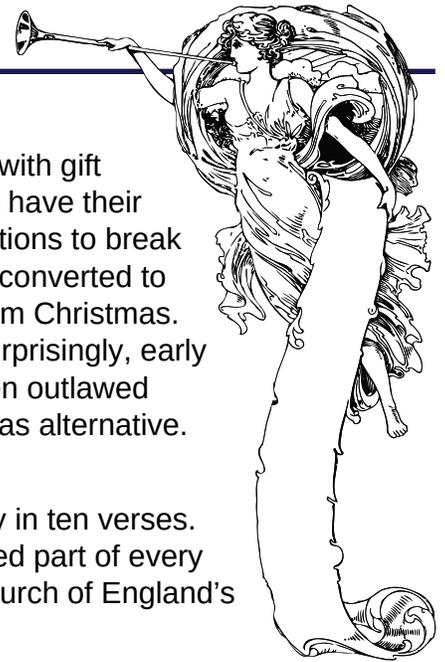
2021 CHURCH CALENDAR MEETING

Have you often said “Wow, I did not know that was happening at the church”? Or if your group uses the church once or for the entire year, we are going to do something about this! Especially with the changes that have taken place because of COVID. On Thursday, January 7, all church staff, committee chairs, and ministry team leaders will get together to develop a 2020 church calendar! The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate communications, scheduling needs, and resources for the entire 2021 year.

We will meet **Thursday January 7 at 6:00pm on Zoom**. Please come with any dates and activities you would like to add to the calendar. We will take time to pray and cast a vision for the year ahead.



CHURCH HISTORY



"Looking back, moving forward"

We easily forget that Christians have not always celebrated Christ's birth with gift giving, crowded church services, and family feasts. Many of our traditions have their roots in pre-Christian Europe. Heathen countries held mid-winter celebrations to break the dull drudgery of cold weather and long nights. When these countries converted to Christianity, they continued their traditional folk festivals and renamed them Christmas. These celebrations often included excessive alcohol consumption. Not surprisingly, early Protestants shunned rowdy Christmas parties. Colonial New England even outlawed Christmas work holidays. Puritans celebrated Thanksgiving as a Christmas alternative. That began to change with the Methodist revival.

In 1739 Charles Wesley felt moved to compose a hymn for Christmas day in ten verses. It celebrated the anniversary of his own conversion and became a favored part of every Christmas service. It is the only Charles Wesley hymn included in the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*.

The original opening line began, "Hark how all the welkin rings!" In the 18th Century "welkin" referred to the sky or heaven. Thankfully, another early associate of the Wesleys, George Whitfield, changed the line in his 1753 *Collection of hymns* to "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Another change came in 1760 when Martin Madan in his *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* repeated the opening line as a refrain.

The most controversial editing of Charles Wesley's hymn arose with the *1935 Methodist Hymnal*. It had to do with the line "Late in time behold him come, offspring of a Virgin's Womb." Linguistic scholars questioned the use of the word virgin to translate the Hebrew text. They changed the line to "Long desired, behold him come, finding here his humble home." The *1966 Methodist Hymnal* restored the original Charles Wesley line but changed "a virgin" to "the virgin." Our current hymnal restores the original "the virgin," and changed the line "as man with men to dwell" to the gender inclusive "pleased with us in flesh to dwell."

Every great hymn needs great music and this hymn is no exception. When first included in 1786 Methodist hymnals, the suggested music was "Salisbury Tune." It is now known as "Easter Hymn" and is used for "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." The current tune for Charles Wesley's Christmas hymn is taken from Felix Mendelssohn's 1840 cantata *Festgesang* composed for male chorus to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Johannes Gutenberg's invention of moveable type printing.

As we gather this holiday season to decorate trees, exchange gifts, light candles, and sing carols, let us remember the reason for the season. Charles Wesley wrote this hymn with his own renewed spiritual experience still fresh in his mind. Conversion was not far from his thoughts when he composed the concluding line,

*Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.*

May this Christmas truly be a time when the Prince of Peace raises us from the earth and give us second birth.

Fred Jordan, Church Historian

COMING IN 2021... THE STORY

THE STORY

- Daily Bible readings
- Discussion groups
- Video lessons
- Weekly thematic sermons

All tying together so that the story of our lives faithfully reflects The Story of God.

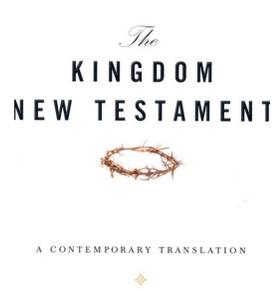
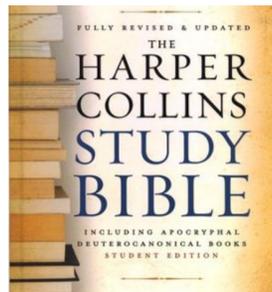
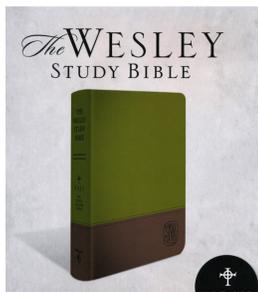


NEW BIBLE SUGGESTIONS

As we approach The Story anew in 2021, perhaps now is the time to invest in a new or additional Bible.

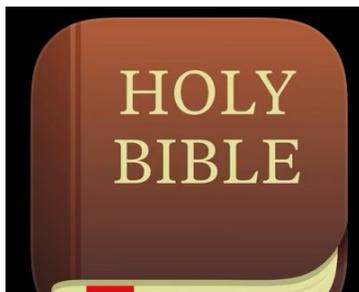
Study Bible: Study Bibles add additional footnotes and resources to help explain verses or meanings of words. Most are available in hardcover or paperback/leather-type cover. Try The Wesley Study Bible or The Harper Collins Study Bible, both available in New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

A Fresh Take: If you already own a study Bible, or find reading Scripture devotionally difficult, a Bible with modern language may be a great way for you to increase your time reading scripture or provide fresh insight. The Message and The Kingdom New Testament are a couple of good options.



Apps and Online Resources:

- The Bible App by Youversion is free!
- The Bible Audio App offers several audio translations,
- The Bible Gateway App offers many translations as well. Their website allows you to look at versions in parallel.



WORSHIP & WONDER

Reflections on the Meaning of Worship from Joshua Starnes, Part 2 of 3

Using our spiritual gifts is a way that we are able to faithfully serve God and offer our bodies as living sacrifices in spiritual worship to Him. There are many different gifts and some people may possess more than one spiritual gift at any given time. We should also take notice that any particular gift may only be entrusted to us for a season. Therefore, we must be good stewards and rightly use and exercise our gifts and talents as God intends – for His glory and the sake of Christ’s kingdom. I remember one of my seminary professors repeatedly telling us, “God does not call the equipped – He equips those whom He calls!” That is not an invitation to false humility, but instead a reminder that all spiritual gifts are endowed to Christian believers by the Holy Spirit and their sole purpose is to edify (build up) Christ’s body, the Church!

Scripture provides exhaustive lists of spiritual gifts (cf. Romans 12, Ephesians 4, I Peter 4). We seek to help each other use our gifts and talents most effectively. We shouldn’t hoard our gifts, but instead offer them freely with open hands that we might be able to both give and receive. Remember what happened in Jesus’ parable of the talents as recorded in Matthew 25 and Luke 19? “If you don’t use it, you lose it!”

All Saints Day November 1



In his letter to the believers in ancient Corinth, the Apostle Paul devoted an entire chapter of the epistle to the matter of spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 12) because instead of building up and unifying the church, the issue of spiritual gifts was splitting and dividing it. Spiritual gifts had become symbols of power, sparking rivalries because some thought they were more “spiritual” than others because of their gifts. This of course is a terrible misuse of those gifts, as their sole purpose is always to help the Church function more effectively and in unity.

Paul continues by comparing the body of Christ to a human body (v. 12). Each part has a specific function that is essential to the body as a whole. The parts are different and varied for a purpose, and in their differences they must work and coordinate together. We all must be careful that we are neither too proud of our abilities, nor thinking that we have nothing to offer to the body of believers. Instead of comparing ourselves to one another, we should capitalize and combine our different gifts collectively, to further spread the Good News of salvation and fulfill the Great Commission.

WORSHIP & WONDER CONTINUED

The Church, just like our own congregational family, is comprised of many different types of believers from a variety of backgrounds, and each one possesses different gifts and abilities. It is easy for these differences to divide us, as it did in Corinth. But despite our differences, all believers have one thing in common: our faith in Christ. On this essential truth, the Church finds unity. All believers are baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body of believers: the Church. We don't lose our individual identities – the Cross is the great equalizer: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3.28). Perhaps following a tumultuous year and election cycle, we could also include: "there is neither rich nor poor, Republican nor Democrat, infirmed nor healthy; for we ALL are ONE in Christ Jesus!" The Holy Spirit indwells, that is takes up residence, within every Christian believer and he/she is adopted into God's family and reborn. When Paul writes, "we were all made to drink of one Spirit," he is affirming that it is the same Holy Spirit that completely fills our innermost beings. As members of God's family, we may have different interests and gifts, but we are united in one common goal." Thanks be to God!

Soli Deo Gloria ("Glory to God Alone"),
Josh

*If you're interested in participating in the worship and music ministry, please email josh@fumcsalisbury.org for more information on opportunities for getting plugged-in!



Outdoor Vespers November 15

CHRISTMAS FUN FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Club 45 & Youth Christmas Party

DECEMBER 13, 2020
4PM - 5:30PM

Join us for the premiere of the Service of Joy,
Hot Chocolate, Games and Fun!

Bring a chair and mask!



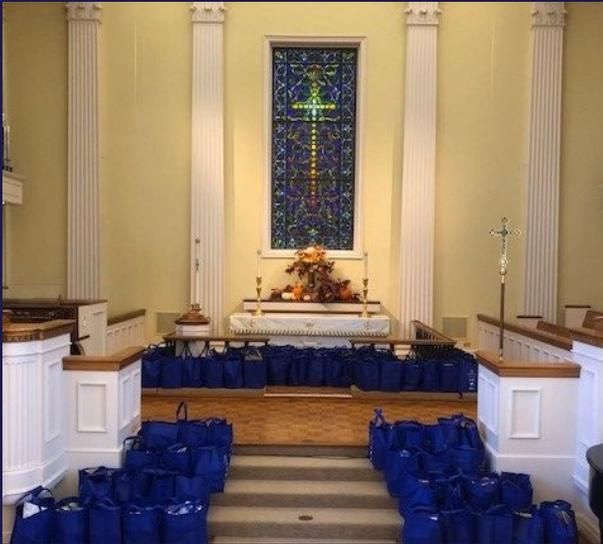
SAVE THE DATE:

CHRISTMAS FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

December 1 • 6:30pm
December 22 • 4:00pm

MEET AT TINSELTOWN
Bring \$5 (cash) for the movie, and money for snacks!

THE HARVEST PROCESSION



We collected 136 bags, and donated 2,006 pounds of food for our neighbors this year!

AFTER-SCHOOL CHILD CARE

Merry Christmas from students and staff in the After-School Child Care Program! We will be sharing Christmas books, sending cards to Veterans, doing crafts, making ornaments and more. We will have a small gift exchange, decorate our tree and talk about the true meaning of Christmas.

We wish everyone a safe holiday season!

"He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under the tree."

**MERRY &
BRIGHT**

ORDERING POINSETTIAS

Return Orders by December 6

If you wish to place a poinsettia at the altar for Christmas in memory or honor of a loved one, the order deadline is December 6. There are order forms in the Narthex and the Carter Lobby, as well as on the back of the Ecclesia. The cost for each red poinsettia is \$10. Please turn your form into the church office.



END OF YEAR GIVING

End of Year Gifts to the Church

If you would like to make a year-end gift to the church, it must be post marked no later than December 31. Becca Blackmon will be in the office on December 30 and 31. Contact her at becca@fumcsalisbury.org or 704-636-3121, ext. 102 with any questions. Thank you!



Making the Most of your IRA Required Minimum Distribution

As the year-end approaches, people 70 ½ and older are required to take a minimum distribution from their IRA, or be faced with a hefty tax penalty. If you must take a required minimum distribution but don't need the funds and don't want to pay income taxes on it, please consider gifting it to the Church as part of your annual support.

To qualify for the tax credit, you must have your retirement plan administrator direct the distribution DIRECTLY to First United Methodist Church of Salisbury; it cannot pass through your hands or it will trigger an income taxable event for you.

If you have questions on how to execute this gift transaction, please contact Susan Cothorn at the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina at (888) 450-1956 ext. 1507 or email her at scothorn@umfwncc.org and she will be happy to help you through the process.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

1 Harold Buchanan
Doug Miller

2 Josie Goodnight
Maggie Goodnight
Harrison Banish

3 Will Bivens
Libby Hollowell
Diana Storey

4 Sarah Baker
Isabella Banish
Austin Hedrick

5 Lewis Austin
Steve Etters
Angie Fansler
Max Foote

6 Steven Anderson

7 Phil Cooley
Julia Howard
Bud Mickle

8 Jean Allen
Gina Strandlien

9 Meg Bivens
Carole Schall

10 Carolyn Gresham
James Howe

11 George Hines
Craig Johnson
Jenna Robinson

12 Eddie Nicholson, Jr.

13

14 Chris Sherrill

15 Larry Crowell
Jay Hughes

16 Bret Busby
Bob Roakes

17

18 Regan Roakes

19 Henry Austin
Beverly Hartsell
Faye Hollar

20 Samantha Hensley
Michael Rimmer
Davis West

21 Delaney Fisher

22

23 Anna Maphis

24

25

26 Brianna Brinkley
Al Carter

27 Hannah Baker
Nelson Robertson

28 Phillip Floyd
Ethan Mastro

29 Judy Beymer
Charles Smith
Joseph Steinman
Peggy Yarbrough

30

31 Kathryn Baker
Wes Fazia
Patrick Howard
Celeste Ward



FUMC FAMILY AND EXTENDED FAMILY TRANSITIONS

In Remembrance

Please keep these families in your prayers,

TERRY LEE MCCALL

Sister of Tonda Coutu

February 4, 1948 - October 30, 2020

ROGER LEE LEONARD

Brother in Law of Ron Gobble

May 14, 1956 - November 1, 2020

MICHAEL CORNELIUS GERALD

Husband of Monnie Williams Gerald

March 6, 1949 - November 19, 2020

GERTRUDE JANZEN

Mother of Laurie Zerger

January 6, 1930 - November 20, 2020

JUANITA LEFTWICH DANIEL

Mother of Tish Hatley

December 18, 1921 - November 21, 2020

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1

THANK YOU NOTES TO THE CHURCH

Dear Church Members,

Our family wants to thank you for all of the love and support you have provided for us during the time of our son and brother's passing and the time ever since.

Buxton will always be greatly missed, but we are so thankful for his deep, deep faith. We know for a fact that he is in Heaven and that we will see him again one day. We deeply appreciate your prayers for our family. Prayers sustain us. This time has been the darkest and hardest time of all of our lives. Thank you to Mark, to those who helped with communion, sound and video and to the Ladies of FUMC who provided beautiful flowers and exceptional food for the reception after the service.



Our children have all grown up at Salisbury FUMC. It is our church home and we are thankful for you all. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. May God bless and keep each of you. You are all mighty special to us.

Philippians 1:3 "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"

In Christ's love,
Joe, Susan, Hurst, Susan Barker and Hill Fowler

DIRECTORY UPDATES

Please note the following changes in your directory:

Sandra & Jerry Simmons

300 North Fulton St.

Salisbury, NC 28144

(336)436-4736

Jsimmons6@triad.rr.com

ECCLESIA

NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Cost of Red Poinsettias - \$10.00

Deadline - December 6th

(Please turn form into the church office.)

_____ Amount Paid _____ Total No. Ordered

____ No. In Memory of _____

____ No. In Honor of _____

Given by _____

*You may pick up your poinsettias on Sunday, December 27th
Thank you!*

Please print clearly.