



The Messenger

First United Methodist Church, Quitman, Texas

December 2023
& January 2024

“Come expectantly seeking Jesus. Follow Him boldly. Go witness intentionally.”



GOOD NEWS FROM THE ATTIC

In his Autobiography of Prayer, Albert Day tells the story of a young boy whose pride and anger were so great, he came to such a point of protest and rebellion that he no longer wanted to be a part of his family. Partly to accommodate the child, partly to buy some peace, and mostly to teach him a lesson, the child was “banished to the attic at bedtime.” Continues Day:

It was drastic treatment [to be sure], but it was realistic. He had read himself out of the family; so he had to realize what being out of the family meant. The attic roof would protect him against the weather; the attic floor would give him a place to sleep. But the attic was not home; it was an ironic fulfillment of his wish to be outside home.

But that night the father in his comfortable bed could not sleep for thinking about the boy, alone in the bleak darkness. So he left his bed, and taking his blanket, entered the attic, and spent the night and the succeeding nights of the exile beside his boy, sharing the punishment.

Day draws his own conclusions for the benefit of his immediate discussion — that is, about the redemptive potential of our struggles. (Redeeming the pain of the boy’s exile, for example, were the lessons that law/justice and love/mercy are essentials of a healthy home.)

For my own part, I find the story a powerful analogy of the Gospel we now celebrate at Advent and Christmas:

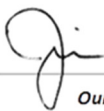
- that, no matter how many years we’ve been walking with the Lord, we are not fully home nor will we ever be fully home in this world – suspended, as we are, somewhere between earth and Heaven. (There’s a focus of Advent.)
- that God so loved the world — even you and me, even in our foolish rebellion — that he chose (and chooses) to descend into our dark exile and make His bed with us. (And, there, dear Friends, is a crucial focus of Christmas!)

Twixt and tween
Fall and Spring—
Earth and Heaven,
We are not alone!
He is “Emmanuel”—
“God with us!”

To be sure, suffering abides still —
even for Him, who must make his bed in straw
in a chilly stable and a stinkin’ stall.
(And, lest we forget:
there’s a cross beyond the creche!)

But, for those who sense His presence near —
who feel and perceive another mate in the cell:
for these, the banishment becomes redemptive,
its pain entirely bearable.

Our exile is effectively over.



With You, in the Observances and Celebrations of these Holy Days.

*Our greatest challenge [and joy]
is not adding more years to our lives
but adding more life to our years!*



Bob Asmussen	Stella Lundy
Elaine Asmussen	Carolyn Manning
Bill Bennett	Diane Moseley
Mickey Barnett	Sandy Narkiewicz
Bert Bair	Jack and Pat Neel
Darlene Blair	Marilyn Odom
Betty Bozeman	Bobby Phipps
Ann Crawford	Mary Phipps
Lynda Gibson	Steve Rhodes
Bruce Grider	Gary Simpkins
Mike Kostial	Brian White
Pat Kostial	Mary & Ron Wimp

***Mark Your Calendars**

Sunday

8:30 a.m. Worship Sanctuary
 9:30 a.m. Sunday School
 11:00 a.m. Worship Sanctuary

Monday

9:00 a.m. Line Dancing
 5:15 p.m. Bell Rehearsal
 5:30-7:00 pm Girl Scouts, JOY Hall

Wednesday

5:00 pm Youth Meal & Bible Study
 6:00 pm Adult Bible Study
 7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday

9:00 am Line Dancing

Church Family:

We thank everyone for the support we were and still are given as we deal with the grief over the loss of our son David. We appreciate very much the prayers, visits, cards, calls and meals. Our church family is special to us and we appreciate very much the love and concern that has been shown our family.

*God bless you,
 Arnold and Saundra Mott and Family*

Financial Update (As of 11/29/23)

(YTD) Giving: \$330,960
 YTD) Expenses: \$390,767
 (YTD) Loss: \$ 59,807
 (YTD) Budgeted Expenses: \$439,686



December 2023

8:30 a.m.
 John and Sally Seekins

11:00 a.m.
 Stephen Fulce
 Teresa Fulce
 Peyton Kruckner
 Carol Denson

January 2024

8:30 a.m.
 John and Sally Seekins

11:00 a.m.
 Brad Floyd
 Brady Floyd
 Pam and Randy Henington

Communion Rail Offering

Dec. 2023
 Methodist Children's Home

Jan. 2024
 Crafty Christians

Communion Preparation

Dec. 2023
 John and Sally Seekins

Jan. 2024
 Keith and Joann Zimmerman

DECEMBER

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

12/01 Parker Simpkins	12/15 Kevan Burroughs	01/07 Carley Goodson	01/19 Anna Stone
12/03 Beverly Sawyer	12/16 Jan Lumley	01/08 Keaton Cameron	01/19 Bryan Swenson
12/06 David Dobbs	12/16 Vanessa Simpkins	01/08 Venita Holbrook	01/22 Patricia Kostial
12/10 JaNan Straznicky	12/18 Jentri Jackson	01/09 Sue Bonnette	01/26 Bert Blair
12/13 Mikayla Hubbard	12/21 Shelby Tackett	01/09 Sarah Medlin	01/27 Sherri Young
12/13 Gary Thurman	12/22 Charles Sawyer	01/09 Beth Moore	01/28 Betty Dalhoff
12/14 Heather Marcee	12/25 Stephen Fulce	01/10 Bill McPherson	01/28 Sue Edwards
12/14 Brenley Diane von Reyn	12/31 Allie Gail Medlin	01/10 Ron Wimp	01/30 Jim Gould
		01/12 Sandra Grider	01/31 James Goodson
		01/12 Marilyn Robinson	

FUMC Quitman again proudly served as the Wood County collection site for Operation Christmas Child during National Collection Week November 13-20, 2023. Headed by Gloria Jeane Rosewall and Marti Busbee, a volunteer team that included both church members and members of our community greeted both church groups and individual donors, collecting shoe boxes destined to bring great joy to children along with the Gospel of our Lord.



The OCC team would like to thank our youth for packing 79 boxes at their packing party and all our members who took the time to lovingly pack each box for its journey to bless a child in need.

We are very proud to report that FUMCQ received 1522 boxes which were sent to the regional collection center on Monday, November 20th. Although our count is slightly less than 2022 (1568), the new online "build a box" option is allowing individuals to create a box online and as such would not be included in the collection count at this time. Although we won't know number of online boxes connected with our postal code for some time, so we are very enthused by the generosity of our community for contributing to such a worthy cause.

Many thanks and joyous blessings to all!
Gloria Jeane and Marti

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



BELLS ARE RINGING!!!

We are entering into Advent and anticipating the coming of Christmas. What a glorious time in the life of the church. To help bring in the Christmas spirit, the Joy Ringers will be playing on Sunday, December 10. We hope you will be able to attend one of the services as we praise the Lord in ringing!

On another note, this will be my last time to direct the choir. Over the last 23 years it has been my privilege to start and direct this choir for 13 of the 23 years. I thank this church for allowing me to be a part of the music ministry.

Thank you!!

Becky Bradfield



Cheryl and Charlie Baker

Advent, 2023 Encourages “Coming Home...”

“Come Home for the Holidays [i.e., “Holy Days”]” is the theme for this year’s Advent and Christmas observances at Quitman’s First United Methodist congregations—emphasizing Advent’s reminder of our constant need to “come home” to God as well as our call to be a place of warm homecoming for all of God’s children!

We’re not used to singing “Softly and Tenderly” or reading the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” during Advent but these are the very themes which Pastor Reiter is discerning in those lectionary readings prescribed for Advent this year. (In fact, he recommends a slow and repetitive reading of that parable [found in Luke 15:11-32] throughout the coming season.)



First Sunday of Advent, Dec 3

Inauguration of our Advent “Come Home...” series and a focus on the Biblical truth that we are not fully home in this world (and we never will be!)

Scripture

Psalm 80

“Prodigal” Connections

(Luke 15:11-32)

Amidst bankruptcy and famine, the Prodigal becomes homesick.

Second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 10

Continuation of our Advent series, with a focus on the Biblical promise that God does have a “home” for us!

Psalm 85

“Coming to himself,” the Prodigal knows there is a place for him back with his father.

Third Sunday of Advent, Dec. 17

Continuation of our Advent series, with a focus on how—even now, even while we are yet far off—we can celebrate homecoming!

Psalm 126

While he was still a long way off, the father runs and welcomes the wayward son—ever before he’s fully home!

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 24

Continuation of our Advent series, with a focus on the “amazing grace” that will surround and fill our homecoming!

Luke 1:46-55

Grace abounds! Beyond being welcomed home, there’s a party and full restoration!

A theme running through quite a few of the more popular songs of the coming season is that of our longing to be home: “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” “There’s No Place Like Home for the Holidays,” “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,”... Could it be that this yearning is actually seated in something deeper—something eternal within us?

From the outset, then (before the seasonal “crunch” is on), let us...

- make our Advent pilgrimage — our “coming home for the holidays” (that is, our “Holy Days”) — a priority
- pray for opportunity embedded in seasonal activities to help others (all around us!) to find and experience their “home” in Christ.



CHRISTMAS EVE

Two Services...

5:00 Children’s Service
(featuring a birthday cake for Jesus)

7:00 Traditional Candlelight & Communion

The best gift we could give this year is a commitment to constantly pray for our kids in the next coming year.



I turned forty years old. And I'll have two teenagers living in my house next month, as our daughter turns thirteen. Yikes! So, I'm raising teenagers hoping I didn't mess up with the first one and seeking to point them intentionally, engagingly, and prayerfully to Jesus and to God's Word.

As a follower of Jesus Christ and a parent or grandparent, you already know that you must pray for your teenage child or grandchild. But perhaps you are like me and you struggle with how exactly to pray . . . and for what, specifically, you should pray. I want to share

seven specific prayers that I'm learning how to pray for my own teenagers, and I'd like to encourage you to pray for yours. Even if you don't have children or grandchildren, would you consider adopting one of our children/youths and praying for them in the next coming year.

1. Pray for a miracle (2 Corinthians 5:17).

For any sinner, dead in his/her sins (Eph. 2:1–3), to hear the gospel, repent of sins, and believe in Jesus Christ with saving faith is a miracle! It is God, by the power of the Spirit, making a dead heart come alive in faith toward Christ. That's why Paul doesn't say that if anyone is in Christ he/she is "improved," "better," or "happier"; he says he/she is a "new creation"! That's what we're asking God to do for our teens. We certainly are called to speak God's word to them, point them to Jesus, bring them (drag them?!) to church, but only the Holy Spirit can make their hearts come alive in repentance and faith toward Jesus. And that's the miraculous saving work of God; it's regeneration.

2. Pray for gospel friendships (1 Samuel 18:1).

Quickly on the heels of my prayers for God's miraculous, regenerative, saving work in the hearts of my kids comes my prayer for friends who will walk alongside them—not only in companionship but in mutual encouragement in Christ. I'm praying for friends who will chase after God and encourage each other, "Come on! Let's follow Jesus together!" I think of John 1:45–46 when, in response to Nathanael's question about Jesus, Philip simply invites his friend: "Come and see." Let's pray, Lord, bring friends into our teens' lives who will invite them: "Let's go worship and serve Jesus together. Come and see."

3. Pray for a growing appetite for God's Word (1 Peter 2:2–3).

I've often explained to teenagers that personal Bible reading is a bit like learning to love coffee. Coffee is an "acquired taste." That taste may actually make some addicted, just word to the wise. As we encourage our teens to dig into the Bible on their own, pray that their appetite for God's Word would steadily grow. Ask God to develop their spiritual "taste buds" so that they begin to enjoy reading the Bible . . . and crave it in the morning more than you crave coffee. Pray for love for God's Word to grow in them.

4. Pray for a faith that moves from head to heart (Psalm 42:1).

We've taught our teens about the things of God—and hopefully that teaching has been reinforced by other pastors, youth leaders, and godly men and women in the church. Pray, then, that God would stir their affections for God as they grow in their knowledge of Him through His Word. Ask God to send his Spirit to help them "pant" for God as the psalmist imagines the wild "deer" panting for water on a hot day. Pray that our teens would grow to say of Jesus: "I believe in Him . . . and I love Him." This, too, is a work of God's Spirit; let's ask God to do this work in our teens' hearts.

Cont. page 6

5. Pray for influential voices in between your age and theirs (Titus 2:1–6).

Parents, we need other voices speaking into our teens’ lives and reinforcing the truths that they hear from us . . . but don’t always really hear. What a blessing. What a joy to know that my teen will hear God’s truth from me, as well as from other adults . . . who may or may not be cooler than mom and dad (at least from my teen’s perspective).

6. Pray for a growing love for the church (Ephesians 2:19–22).

I can still remember the smell of the musty old hymnals in the pew of the church where I grew up. I remember the little blue prayer cards that we’d doodle on during a long sermon. I remember the awkward conversations, some people I thought were strange, and some older saints who seemed a bit annoyed by my energy or attitude. But I also remember growing to feel in my heart about the church: “This is my home. This is my family. These are the people of God.” It didn’t hit me all at once, but I loved the church. I knew that to be a follower of Jesus Christ meant deep and meaningful engagement with brothers and sisters in Christ—and that meant placing the local church at the center of my life. Let us pray that our teens grow to love the church and model that love to them in our attitudes, words, and commitments to our church.

7. Pray for courage to live for Christ in a pagan culture (Romans 12:1–2).

It takes courage to follow Jesus Christ today, especially for teenagers. Bombarded by images and cultural messages on social media, pressured toward “tolerance” and even celebration of sinful behaviors on all sides, and immersed in a society that is more post-Christian with each passing day. Our young people will need courage to stand for Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Pray that God would transform their hearts and minds to love and treasure Christ above all else so that they will have the strength not to conform to the pattern of this world.

So, parents and church, let us pray.

Joseph



If you wish to order a Poinsettia in Memory of or in Honor of a loved one, please pick up an order form at Sunday services and place in the

collection box or call the church office at 903-763-4127 to place your order.

The Poinsettias will be displayed in the sanctuary and can be picked up after the Christmas Eve service.

The Poinsettias order form is due by Tuesday, December 17 and the cost is \$10.00.

Quitman Christmas Sharing is preparing for the holidays! Each year, we ask you to give towards helping make Christmas a special one for the unfortunate in the Quitman area,



Your gifts and gifts from individuals have made this possible year after year. Donations may be made to:

Quitman Christmas Sharing
P. O. Box 1116
Quitman, TX 75783

Or use the QR Code above.

May you be blessed as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Welcoming our New Pastor:

It seems fitting in some respects that our preparing for the coming and arrival of a new pastor coincides with our observances of Advent (and the ways it calls us to prepare for the deeper and fuller coming of the God into our lives). To be sure, Thomas Harper is no Jesus. Still, both comings can and do demand some preparations on everybody's part.

While I will leave final words of "thanks" and "farewell" for later, this seems the proper time and place for me to air a few "rules" for welcoming your new pastor and his family —rules or pointers which have had meaning for me through the years.

- Let your new pastors set their own pace. Don't expect them to be at dozens of places and events in the first few days and weeks and months on the job.
- Along these same lines, avoid making comparisons between the new pastors and former pastors. Never say, "Rev. So and So never did it that way"
- Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. Come to church with a receptive heart and an open mind.
- Be aware of rules of pastoral etiquette. Be careful about inviting former pastors to return to conduct funerals or weddings—apart from the knowledge/permission of the pastor-in-charge.
- Offer to help your pastor settle in, but allow them to decide what it is they need.
- Be patient with the amount of time it takes to learn new names... be open to wearing name tags to help your new pastor (and visitors!).
- While we all like to maximize our time, don't use Sunday mornings as a time to hold deep discussions with your pastor... There are just too many other things going on! If you have given the pastor important information on a Sunday morning, call the office on Monday morning to make sure the information registered—something especially useful in early days when names and faces can float around.
- If a pastoral visit [in the home] is important to you, invite the pastor over! (Don't sit there wondering why he hasn't come to see you yet!)
- When your pastor takes a vacation [or a day off], don't say, 'Gone again?'... Insist that your pastor actually take time off and, if someone complains, be among those who show support.
- Please don't think of your pastor as an employee. Yes, this is complicated. The church does pay the pastor. However, she/he is also called by the Church to provide leadership. As hard as clergy try, they can not be available for every need. Nor should they... We are the church together! Some aspects of ministry are your responsibility!
- Pray for your pastor and his family.
- "Treat your pastor as you wish to be treated. If you have something unpleasant to say, do it privately and in a loving spirit."
- Be kind and forgiving... Pastors will make mistakes... Pastors will not always say what you want them to say or be what you want them to be.

With You, for a Good Good-bye... and Warm Welcome, I am...



*Our greatest challenge [and joy]
is not adding more years to our lives
but adding more life to our years!*



“Be the church we are called to be!”

First United Methodist Church
406 E. Lane Street
903.763.4127
Sanctuary Worship 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sanctuary Worship 11:00 a.m.
YouTube Delayed Recording 6:00 p.m.
fumquitman.org

HAVE YOU MOVED, CHANGED YOUR PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL?
If so, please contact the church office.

Help Us Reduce the MESSENGER Cost!
If you are receiving this newsletter by mail and you have access to the web, please consider switching to the on-line version of the MESSENGER. It will reduce printing and postage costs and get it to you several days sooner, and in color! Call 903-763-4127 to opt in.

DONATIONS MADE EASY
Want to simplify your giving of tithes, memorials, and other offerings? Then consider using the “Make a Donation” link on the Church’s secure web-site, fumquitman.org. or simply focus on the QR Code on the right.
PayPal is very safe and reliable and will allow you to Add Special Instructions that specify how your offering is to be applied. It will also provide you with an emailed receipt for your bookkeeping and tax records.
The Quitman First United Methodist Church is a 501(c)3 non-profit religious organization. Your donations are tax deductible, and all are sincerely appreciated.



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“Transforming God’s Children Into Disciples”