



First Church of Lucedale

A Global Methodist Congregation



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Notes From the Pastor's Desk . . . December, 2024

Join us Sunday, December 1 as we begin the observance of Advent. Advent is from the Latin word "Adventus" and it means "coming" as in the advent of Christ. The season begins four Sundays prior to Christmas Day. This is also the beginning of the Christian liturgical year. We know the Word of God has been made flesh in Jesus. He is the fulfillment of prophetic words spoken by Isaiah, Micah, and others. "Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." "Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." Matthew 1 and Luke 2 record his birth as having taken place according to the prophecies of the Old Testament. When we express the life of someone who has died, we place a dash between the birth and death dates. The dash represents the years of their life. In the Word of God there is no beginning and end date, yet we live in the dash between the date of Jesus' birth and His glorious return. The season of Advent anticipates Jesus' first appearing as the "Word made Flesh" and His return.

We often speak of yearning for Christ to return in order to escape the problems of this world. That is not how people prayed for His first Advent. They yearned for our Lord's appearance to save them from evil, free from oppressors, and extend mercy to His beloved and judgment to those who hated God. But they longed most of all for His presence. Do we long for Jesus' presence in our lives? As He tabernacles within us, the beauty of holiness dominates our lives. We love what God loves and are no longer at war with our Creator. The purest form of joy is simply being in God's presence and being loved as we love Him. The return of Jesus promises this. There will be no more sorrowful tears, no death, and no war. It will be Kingdom living because He is in our midst!

Waiting and Living for the return of Christ,

Brother David

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Children Ministry . . .

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Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts".

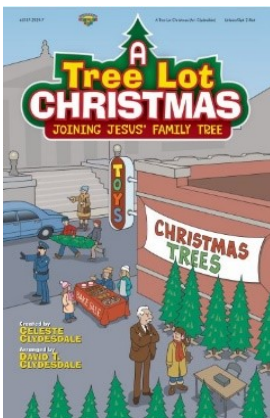
"If God's way of thinking is literally light years ahead of ours, we shouldn't be so surprised when He interrupts our plans with the unexpected".

Unexpected surprises. Have you ever had one of those experiences? An unexpected event which occurred that changed your plans but actually made it better in the end? I had one of those experiences the other day. An unexpected surprise. It made me stop and realize that God was really right there beside me. He gently let me know that he knew where my feet were at that very moment. He also knew my very heart's cry. It was humbling.

I can't imagine what a young girl, barely 15, thought about when her unexpected surprise came to her in the form of an angel's sweet words. Her surprise took her whole world by storm. It changed her life forever. I imagine though, she wouldn't have changed a thing. God called, she answered and everlasting eternity was given to all of us through the gift of her womb and her baby. She could have said no. God could have chosen someone else. Jesus could have decided a different plan was easier but He didn't. Joseph could have walked away. They all followed the Father's plan even when it was unexpected to them. It did not take God by surprise. All the events unfolded just as the Father desired because they were willing to do the unexpected.

In Children's Ministry, we have been talking about the Gift goes on.... the Gift of giving, the gift of the Father's love, the gift of Jesus' sacrifice and the gift of the Spirit's abiding presence. As we wind down 2024, it seems as if the clock goes faster and time runs away. Yet, God has unexpected things for us if we take time to be still and listen. Mary had to listen to hear God speak, she couldn't panic. Joseph had to stay faithful even when he felt like he was facing unfaithfulness, the shepherds had to go off the beaten path, the angels had to leave glory to sing a message of hope, and the Wise men had to believe that this beautiful bright star was actually a sign - months before the Messiah ever came; unexpected surprises that brought the greatest gift ever.

The Father gave His beloved Son, the Son gave us His life and the Holy Spirit and the Spirit gives us abiding life. Who could ever believe a tiny little baby would change the world for all generations to come? Who could know what unexpected surprise God was bringing into the middle of that dark night. God is infinite - we are finite. God is infallible - we are fallible. God knows it all, sees all and hears all. So maybe we should take a breath, halt in the middle of the madness and be pleasantly surprised by God's unexpected ways -- ways that are far higher than our ways and far better in the end. After all who doesn't love a surprise?



- ♦ **JOIN US SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8 FOR THE KIDS' CHRISTMAS PROGRAM - 10:00 A.M.**
- ♦ **Breakfast with Santa - December 7 (tickets still available)**
- ♦ **Kids' Christmas Party - December 11**
- ♦ **Live Nativity - December 13**
- ♦ **Special Visitation - December 18**

Music and Youth Ministries, Announcements . . .

December is upon us and we have a calendar filled with music, worship, and fellowship! On December 1, we will have our annual "**Hanging of the Greens**" in the A.M. service. December 8 will be our Children's Christmas musical, "**The Christmas Tree Lot**" and on December 15 the Adult Choir will present "**Christmas...A Savior Is Born!**" May God be glorified as we celebrate the birth of our dear Savior again this year.

It is with a bit of a heavy heart that I tell you that I will be retiring as Music Director at the end of December. I cannot express how much I have enjoyed serving our Lord and our church in this position, nor thank you all enough for your kindness, love, prayers and encouragement over the past 10 years. It has been such a blessing in my life and I have loved every minute of it. I look forward to being a part of the choir under the leadership of Charles Bufkin, and to being able to sit on that second row on the left with my hubby during the services.

I wish each and every one a very blessed and joyful Christmas season! Let us not forget that **JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!**
Love you all,

Annie Hillman, Youth Leader
601-508-9988
youth@firstchurchoflucedale.com

November was an amazing time for our Youth as they got together in fellowship with Friendsgiving at the beginning of the month. It was so nice to see all of them eat and be merry. The parents got a nice treat with paintings of what the Youth were thankful for and I got to see their wonderful creativity.

In the next month, the Youth will participate in various Christmas programs and parties that we will have for them at the church. There will be a Christmas Party on December 11 for them that will have food, presents and lots of fun.

I hope everyone has had a wonderful November and will have an amazing December.

Happy Holidays to everyone.

-Annie Hillman



Our Wednesday night Ladies Bible study groups are hosting a **Ladies' Christmas Get-together** with an **Ornament Exchange** on **Wednesday, December 11th at 5:30 PM in the Stinson House.**

Ladies, bring a finger food, an ornament, and join us for a time of food, fun, and fellowship.

--Terri Nyman

December Kids/Youth Wednesday Snack Supper:

- 4: David and Amanda Newton
- 11: Children and Youth Christmas Parties
- 18: Jason and Kelli Ardoin
- 27: Christmas Break

Thank you for serving!!!

We would like to announce Mr. Charles L. Bufkin Jr. "Charlie" as the new Minister of Music/Youth Director beginning in January of 2025. Annie Hillman will continue working with the youth as an Assistant Youth Director.

Mr. Bufkin lives in Lucedale with his wife, Leslie Dungan Bufkin from Lucedale. He has two sons Hunter 29 and Alex 26. He is from Vicksburg. He was saved at 10 years old at Shiloh Baptist Church in Port Gibson, MS and surrendered to the ministry at age 17. He was licensed by Grace Baptist Church in Vicksburg, MS in 1980. He was ordained by Flora Baptist Church in Flora, MS in 1985. He has been working in some capacity in churches all his life. Church Ministry of Music is where his focus and training has been, but also has experience as a Youth Minister. We look forward to having him join our church family. Please make his family welcome!"

--Tanya Beech, SPRC Chair

The South MS Cross of Christ Foundation will meet Tuesday, December 3, here at First Church of Lucedale at 6:00 PM in the Chapel. All are welcome to attend.
--Lee Hedegaard



Memorials, Missions, Announcements . . .

In Loving Memory, gifts have been given. . .

In Memory of Camryn Hobby

a gift has been given to First Church of Lucedale by Jim and Carol Glawson

In Memory of Joey Rogers, Jimmy Redd

a gift has been given to First Church of Lucedale by Jessie and Brenda Underwood

MISSIONS
across the street & around the world

FOOD
pantry

Tuesdays
9 - 11AM

As we look ahead to the holiday season and reflect on our blessings of the year, we are most grateful for you. We've all felt the pinch of high prices — but because you care, those in need that are hit hardest have found relief and nourishment through our Food Pantry. Data shows that one in six people in our area face hunger, including one in four children.

Not only do you support the weekly needs of our pantry, you supported the distribution of over 250 Thanksgiving Bags which included a Turkey Breast.

The Food Pantry Team is deeply grateful for your commitment of support. Your efforts serve as a beacon of hope to those in our community. Thank you for allowing Christ to use you to show His love through this ministry.

--DeWanda Platt

Thank you so much to all those who volunteered during National Collection Week. We collected a total of



2,438 shoeboxes from George and Greene counties. Also, we have a big praise! Beth exceeded her goal of 600 and collected 680 for our church! These shoeboxes present an

opportunity for children in foreign countries to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you again for sharing the love of Jesus! --Kim Dees

Please consider sharing Christmas joy with one of our Angels this year. The Angel Tree is located across from the Church Office. ***After making your selection, be sure to sign the list located next to the tree - very important!!! Bring gifts to Room #103 located across from the Nursery by **Sunday, December 15**. Each gift will need to be wrapped, tagged with name of the Angel, and placed in designated boxes.



--Kelli Ardoin (601-770-1898) / Linda Roberts (601-551-1887)

Thanks for serving in December:

Communion Servers:

Derrick & Karen Scott, Jessica Welford

Advent Readers:

1: Danny Moore

8: Children

15: Jack & Judy Vosburg

22: Billy & Elaine Rogers

Scripture Readers:

1: Brother David

8: Children Christmas Program

15: Adult Choir Cantata

22: Terri Nyman

29: Chrissy Jordan

Ushers: Frankie & Kelly Massey and Robert & Cathy Hudson

Money Counters:

Kathy Hudson, Kelly Massey

Doorstep Ministry:

Mitch and Sara Howell

8:30 AM Chapel Fellowship:

1: Jeff Howell: Adult Class

8: Annie Hillman: Youth

15: Andy Brantley: Contemporary

22: **Christmas Sunday**

29: **New Year's Sunday**

Kids/Youth Wednesday Snack Supper:

4: David and Amanda Newton

11: Annie and Chrissy/Christmas Parties

18: Jason and Kelli Ardoin

27: Christmas Break

"We would like to show our thanks to **Donna Bragg** for her many years of dedication to the church and to serving our congregation by holding the position of Minister of Music. On **Sunday, December 15, 2024**, immediately following the Cantata, we will have a lunch in the Fellowship Hall (CLC) so the congregation can fellowship while sharing our thanks to Donna. A basket will also be at the serving counter for those who would like to leave her a personal thank you. If you would be interested in bringing something for the lunch, please contact Pastor Chrissy. We look forward to seeing you there.

--Tanya Beech, SPRC Chair



2024

Schedule: (Nursery provided) . . .

8:30 AM Chapel Fellowship
9:00 AM Sunday School
10:00 AM Worship Service

No Children's Church in December
5:00 PM Adult Choir Practice

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 First Sunday of Advent 	2 12 Noon WSCS Luncheon/Meeting, Chapel 5 PM <i>Weight Watchers Meeting, Chapel</i> 6:30 - 8:30 PM <i>Gideons, Stinson House</i>	3 6 PM <i>So. MS Cross of Christ Meeting, Chapel</i> No Men's Bible Study	4 4:30 PM <i>Youth Bible Quiz</i> 5 PM Kids Christmas Practice 5:30 Kids /Youth <i>Snack Supper, CLC Bible Quiz & Kids</i> 6 PM <i>Small Groups Bible Study for All Ages</i>	5 6:30 AM Praise & Prayer, Chapel 7 PM <i>9th MS Cavalry Meeting, Stinson House</i>	6	7 8 AM - 10 AM Breakfast with Santa, CLC <i>Ultreya: Keeping Christ in Christmas Diamondhead Methodist Church</i> 6 PM Lucedale Christmas Parade
8 Second Sunday of Advent Children's Christmas Program 	9 5 PM <i>Weight Watchers Meeting, Chapel</i> 5:30 PM Trustees Meeting 5:30 PM Live Nativity Rehearsal	10 9 AM - 11 AM <i>Food Pantry</i> 5:30 - 6:30 PM <i>Scouts, Upstairs</i> 6 PM Men's Bible Study, Chapel	11 4:30 PM <i>Youth Bible Quiz</i> 5:30 PM Kids / Youth Christmas Party 5:30 Ladies' Christmas, Stinson House 6 PM <i>Small Groups Bible Study</i>	12 6:30 AM Praise & Prayer, Chapel	13 6 - 8 PM Live Nativity	14 Ring the Salvation Army Bell!
15 Third Sunday of Advent 	16 5 PM <i>Weight Watchers Meeting, Chapel</i> 6 PM <i>Boy Scouts Christmas Party, CLC</i>	17 9 AM - 11 AM <i>Food Pantry</i> 5:30 - 6:30 PM <i>Scouts, Upstairs</i> 6 PM Men's Bible Study, Chapel	18 12 Noon Staff Party 4:30 PM <i>Youth Bible Quiz</i> 5 PM Kids Christmas Practice 5:30 Kids /Youth <i>Snack Supper, CLC Bible Quiz & Kids</i> 6 PM <i>Small Groups Bible Study</i>	19 6:30 AM Praise & Prayer, Chapel	20 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM <i>Co-Alice Sturgis/ Children's Christmas</i> 6 PM <i>District Pastors' Christmas Party, Chapel/CLC</i>	21
22 Fourth Sunday of Advent No Regular Scheduled Sunday School Classes	23 Church Office Closed until January 6	24 Christmas Eve No Food Pantry 5 PM Christmas Eve Service	25 Merry Christmas	26 6:30 AM Praise & Prayer, Chapel	27	28
29  First Sunday After Christmas Day No Regular Scheduled Sunday School Classes	30	31 New Year's Eve 9 AM - 11 AM <i>Food Pantry</i>				