

ADVENT CALENDAR
Everything happening this month

GIVING SPIRIT
How you can make a difference

GOSPEL

Gazette

DEC 2023

Advent is Everywhere

The messages and meanings of Christmas





Mount Dora
First United Methodist Church

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SERVICE TIMES

Early Traditional 8:00am

Contemporary 9:30am

Late Traditional 11:00am

CONTACT

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URGENT AFTER-HOURS: DIAL 2

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OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Thu 8:30am–3:30pm

Fri–Sun Closed

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As we enter the joyful and sacred season of Christmas,

our hearts are filled with anticipation and wonder. This time of year is not just marked by twinkling lights, festive decorations, and the warmth of loved ones gathering—it is also a season infused with the celestial beauty of angels.

Angels play a significant role in the Christmas story, heralding the miraculous birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Their presence brings a divine touch to the narrative, reminding us of the heavenly realm’s intersection with our earthly lives.

The angelic journey begins with the Annunciation—a moment that changed the course of history. Imagine the awe and reverence felt by Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared, delivering the astounding news that she would conceive and give birth to the Son of God. In this divine encounter, we witness the angels’ role as messengers of hope, heralding the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah.

The night of Christ’s birth was not a silent one; it was filled with the celestial symphony of angels. The shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks, were startled by the glorious sight of a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God. The angels’ proclamation of peace on earth and goodwill to all resonates with timeless significance, reminding us of the profound impact of Christ’s birth on humanity.

Even the Magi, wise men from the East, were guided by a star that could be seen as a heavenly beacon. Some interpretations suggest that this star may have been a

manifestation of angelic guidance, leading them to the newborn King. The angels' influence extends beyond the shepherds and directly contributes to the unfolding of God's divine plan.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us be mindful of the angelic presence that surrounds us. The Christmas story invites us to reflect on the angels' role as messengers, heralds, and guides, encouraging us to embrace the divine message of hope, peace, and goodwill.

In the spirit of the angels of Christmas, let us be messengers of hope in our community. Whether through acts of kindness, words of encouragement, or expressions of love, we have the opportunity to embody the angelic qualities of compassion and joy.

May the angels of Christmas inspire us to share the good news of Christ's birth with those around us. As we gather with family and friends, let our hearts be open to the presence of angels in our midst, guiding us toward a deeper understanding of the true meaning of Christmas.

Wishing you a blessed and angel-filled Christmas season!

Grace and Peace,



David Averill

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2023 ADVENT CALENDAR

Church events happening all month long

1 FRIDAY
6-9PM

Mount Dora Christmas Walk

Enjoy downtown Mount Dora's beautiful Christmas decorations and hear our musicians performing Christmas carols!

2 SATURDAY
10AM

Mount Dora Christmas Parade

Distribute candy cane invitations and decorate the float! Meet in the Grandview parking lot at 9am. Holiday clothes encouraged!

10 SUNDAY
3PM

Go Light Your World

Enjoy a dramatic afternoon concert featuring the drama team, children's choir, handbell choir, Celebration choir, praise team, and pipe organ.

16 SATURDAY
10AM

Remember Our Veterans

Wreaths Across America and our congregation will place wreaths on the graves of 400 veterans in Pine Forest Cemetery.

17 SUNDAY
2-4PM

Parsonage Open House

Pastor David and his family invite the congregation to visit their home and celebrate the holiday.

21 THURSDAY
10AM

Blue Christmas Service

Meet in the sanctuary for this unique worship service designed for those who struggle during the holidays.

24 SUNDAY
5:30PM & 7:30PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

5:30 – Enjoy contemporary music from the praise team, a live nativity scene acted out by the children, Advent candle lighting, and a message from Pastor David.

7:30 – A more traditional service of Lessons and Carols. Includes music from the Celebration Choir and our pipe organ, as well as Advent candle lighting and a message from Pastor David.

DEC 23
Thrift
Shoppe Closed

DEC 25-26 &
DEC 30-JAN 2
Church
Office Closed

DEC 31
One Sunday
Service @ 10am



SAVOR EVERY DAY OF ADVENT WITH OUR 2023 DEVOTIONAL

By Rev. Gary Upleger

*Available in the
Sanctuary and at
mtdorafumc.org/advent23*

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

Sundays

Mary Looks Back at Bethlehem: 9:30am, Carpenter's Class

Bible Explorers: 1 and 2 Corinthians: 9:30am, Chapel

Chronological Study: 9:30am, Sanctuary Hall

Connecting the Sermon to Life: 11am, Fr. Hall

Tuesdays

Exploring Revelation with Rev. Gary Upleger: 7pm, Chapel

Wednesdays

A Wesleyan Way of Christmas: 9:30am, Chapel

The Angels of Christmas: 6:30pm, Chapel

GIVING SPIRIT

SHARE YOUR TIME AND TALENT

Staff Love Offering

DUE DEC 3. Wish church staff (not including the pastor) a very Merry Christmas! Write "Staff Love Offering" on your envelope or select "Staff Love Offering" when giving online.

Order Poinsettias

ENDS DEC 4. Last chance to order a poinsettia to pick up on Christmas Eve. Fill out one of the envelopes at each usher's table and bring it to the church office.

The Difference You Make

Jennifer Gray thanks our congregation for hosting her concert in September. With the funds we donated, she was able to purchase a handicapped-friendly stove and light switches for her home.

We received so many personal hygiene items for the Open Door day shelter in Eustis that we were able to donate five full boxes. The people who visit the shelter for showers, laundry, food, counseling, and computer access were thrilled. (Open Door helps an average of 53 people every day. One success story is a veteran who was homeless.

The staff helped him re-start his veterans benefits, which allowed him to use the back pay for a house down payment. He reunited with his daughters and met his grandchildren for the first time.)



Rotating the Biblical Rite of Anointing with Oil

Previously the Rite of Anointing with Oil has been offered only at 8am worship on Communion Sundays. Starting this month, the rite will instead be rotated between services each Communion Sunday as follows:

- December: 9:30am Service
- January: 11am Service
- February: 8am Service
- And so on.

Those who wish to receive the rite can do so before or after the sacrament. Proceed via the side aisles to the anointing station at center back of the nave. Once you have received the rite, you may return to your seat via the center aisle. If you are not physically able to go to the station, tell a communion server and we will come to you.

If you have any questions, contact Pastor Williamson.



PREPARE FOR THE NEW YEAR

2024 Envelopes

If you need or would like offering envelopes please contact the church office. If you no longer use envelopes and have any left over please feel free to turn them back in.

2024 Flowers

Reserve a date on the new Calendar in the Sanctuary to donate flowers in honor or memory of someone special.

OTHER EVENTS

Lake Cares Mobile Distribution
Fri, Dec 15, 7:30am
at the King Center
(803 Florida Ave)

UWF Meeting
Tue, Dec 19, 1pm,
Friendship Hall

Widowed Support Group
Thu, Dec 21,
9:30am, Chapel.



4 *Simple Ways to Give*

1 Online

Visit mtdorafumc.org/donate to access our quick and easy-to-use giving portal

2 In Person

Drop your envelope in the offering box on Sunday morning or mail your offering to the church office.

3 Vanco Mobile App

Download the Vanco Mobile app on the App Store or Google Play

4 Giving Your Time

Use their gifts and resources toward the glory of God. Contact Janet Westlake to learn how to volunteer with us.