

SENTINEL

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Horizons

SING A NEW SONG!

The music, Scriptures, sights and sounds of the Advent season tune our hearts to a new song of God's loving presence and intention for our lives and for our world. God is sending out angels, Mark's Gospel reminds us, singing a new story.

Here at First UMC, from the Christmas Concert to the lighting of the candles in the Advent wreath, to opportunities for outreach and Mission through Alternative Christmas and Angel Tree, and opportunities for fellowship at the Advent Brunch and UWF Christmas Boutique, we'll hear the ancient/new melodies stirring in our hearts and lifting our spirits to the broad reach of heaven's skies. The angels are there, singing, singing a new song of comfort and joy.

Christmas in the Holy Land will be subdued this year at the request of church leaders throughout the region. In what they have called "this season filled with sadness and pain," they call us, with them, to focus on the spiritual meaning of Christmas, praying for "the relief of the victims of this war and for those in dire need."

The skies were dark on that first Christmas so long ago, yet still the angels sang. How we need again now to hear their new song, the song of God's dream for our weary world and for each and every one of us.



"For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world send back the song which not the angels sing." (*"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"* United Methodist Hymnal #218)

As we lift our prayers for a world made new, let us join the heavenly chorus in God's eternally new song!

Rev. Patricia Farris
Senior Minister

CHRISTMAS 2023

Sunday, December 24:

- **Christmas Eve Service of Lessons & Carols, 10 a.m.** In-Person and Online Worship

The annual worship service of music and word.

- **Christmas Eve Family Service, 4 p.m.** In-Person and Online Worship
Family Friendly! Celebrate with Christmas carols, re-telling the Christmas story, and rejoicing together.

- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7 p.m.** In-Person and Online Worship
Special choir music and candlelight





Worship in the Sanctuary

We worship on Sundays at 10 a.m. in-person in the Sanctuary each week. Masks are optional, but always acceptable and welcome. Everyone is strongly encouraged to get your vaccinations and booster shots. If you feel ill, please choose to worship from home online. Let us know if you need assistance in joining online.

Thanks to **Ben Ing** for baking the Communion bread for December. **Berneice Southcott** prepares the Communion elements before worship, with the help of Congregation Care Associate **Anne Premer**. **Mary Crawford** and **Rose Kujawa** help take care of the elements after worship. Thank you all for your service!



Worship Online

We offer several options for participating in online worship. **You may join in the service Livestream in real time or later at your convenience on these platforms:**

Sundays 10 a.m. Worship Online LIVESTREAM on:

- **Website:** During 10 a.m. service: www.santamonicaumc.org/livestream On Sunday after worship: www.santamonicaumc.org/sunday-service-archive
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/santamonicaumc/live
- **YouTube Channel:** search [@SantaMonicaUMC](#)
- **The First UMC App:** (download from the App Store, search *FirstUMC_SM*)

December Ongoing Ministries

- **Men's Bible Study** Tuesdays, 7 a.m. via Zoom
- **Open Space Young Adults** Dec 6, 7 p.m.
- **Listening Hearts Women's Group** Dec 6, Coffee and Connect: 10 a.m. Literati Cafe (12081 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90025) Dec 13, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom
- **Prayer Quilt Ministry** Third Saturday of the month: *No meeting in December*
- **The Chancel Choir** Rehearsals on Thursdays 7:40 p.m. in the Choir Room
- **Nursery Care** Sundays: 9:30 - 11 a.m. Room 204
- **Blood Pressure Screenings** Sunday Dec 10, after worship in the Alcove
- **Sunday School for Kids** Sundays, 10 a.m. in Room 206, for ages 2 and up. *No Sunday School on Dec 24 or Dec 31*
- **UMYF Youth Group** December meetings: Dec 3 & 10

For more information on all of these programs, go to www.santamonicaumc.org/small-groups



Children's Ministry

In November we celebrated Thanksgiving. Jamie and I are grateful for each of you, for all the wonderful church and preschool families who make up our community, and for our Sunday School teachers and Youth Counselors who give so freely of their time and care to nurture our young people. - **Tricia Guerrero**

Crowded With Gratitude

Lord God, our hearts are crowded with gratitude as we celebrate the feast of Thanksgiving. We have come to this our feasting table with great joy and eagerness, for we are truly grateful to you, our God, for all that we have been given. We pause now and, in silent prayer, do thank you for the great generosity of Your gifts.



We also thank one another for gifts – especially for the gifts of love and affection that we have freely shared.

We are thankful for all who are present at this our feast as well as for all those who have labored in love in order to bring this dinner to our table.

May You, our God, bless this Thanksgiving feast and all of us who shall share it in your holy name.

Edward Hays, Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook for Worship in the Home

Listening Hearts Women's Group with Tricia Guerrero

Listening Hearts is a group for women of all ages, grounded in the practices of sacred listening, prayer and reflection. We gather both in person and online. We meet for coffee and community at Literati Cafe on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month at 10 a.m. We also gather on Zoom for meditation and prayer, a topic for discussion, and sharing with one another on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome to join! Contact Tricia Guerrero to learn more: t.guerrero@santamonicaumc.org

December Meetings: December 6, 10 a.m. at Literati Cafe
December 13, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Open Space Young Adults

A place of community for "youngish" adults (loosely in your 20's, 30's... even 40's!). We seek to journey alongside one another in spiritual discovery, growth, and belonging. We gather twice a month for conversations and connection.

December meeting: December 6, 7 p.m. off-site

Youth Ministry

Youth Group meets weekly, and is open to all 6th - 12th graders in the community. They gather on Sunday evenings in the Youth Lounge for dinner, games and a program or topic for discussion and reflection.

December meetings: December 3, 5:30 p.m. Pizza and Ice Skating
December 10: Christmas Party, 6 p.m. in the Fireside Room

December at a Glance

Fri Dec 1	Walk the Labyrinth/Chapel Open for Prayers
Sat Dec 2	Christmas Concert Rehearsal
Sun Dec 3	First Sunday of Advent / Holy Communion Christmas Concert in the Sanctuary Youth Group Ice Skating
Sun Dec 3, 10 & 17	Angel Tree Project
Sat Dec 9	Spirit Sisters Luncheon
Sun Dec 10	Second Sunday of Advent/Moments for Mission with Alternative Christmas Blood Pressure Screenings
Sun Dec 10 & 17	United Women in Faith: Peanut Brittle Sales and Christmas Boutique
Sun Dec 10 & 17	Alternative Christmas
Wed Dec 13	December Mid-Week Recital Online
Fri Dec 15	Preschool Christmas Concert
Sun Dec 17	Third Sunday of Advent / Baptism Advent Brunch
Sun Dec 24	Christmas Eve Service of Lessons & Carols, 10 a.m. Christmas Eve Family Service, 4 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7 p.m.
Mon Dec 25	Christmas Day
Sun Dec 31	Covenant Renewal Worship Service/New Year's Eve

Walk the Labyrinth & Chapel Open for Prayers

The Labyrinth is open every first Friday of the month from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., in Simkins Hall. If you've never walked the Labyrinth before, there are printed instructions to help with your walking meditation. For those unable to walk, we have finger labyrinths. A finger labyrinth is similar to a full sized labyrinth you would walk except it is on a much smaller and more portable scale. The First UMC Chapel will also be open for prayers that day from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.



Friday, December 1, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. in Simkins Hall and the Chapel

First UMC Christmas Concert

The First UMC Music Department is pleased to announce the Christmas Concert will be back this year in the Sanctuary! Featuring **Haydn: Te Deum; Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on Christmas Carols; and the ever popular Carols, Etc.** Chancel Choir with guest singers, orchestra & Mark Twain Alumni Ringers. *No admission charges - freewill offering will be taken. Reception in Simkins Hall to follow performance.*

Sunday, December 3, 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary

* For those who can't attend Sunday night, you may observe the Concert rehearsal Saturday morning (December 2) at 9 a.m. at no charge. Carols and readings rehearsal begins at 11 a.m. *Out of courtesy to the musicians please no cell phones; families with babies/ small children may listen from the Narthex.*



Angel Tree Project

Angel Tree is back and is again being chaired by church member, Chris Ruud. This church/community project fills 26 laundry baskets with new household items to provide the families of Family Place/Upward Bound House with new things for Christmas. Celebrating her 20th year coordinating this fundraiser, Chris is excited that her table will be in the Alcove after worship until December 17. If you worship online, or can't make it to church, please call or email Chris (310-393-3255, chr10is@yahoo.com) and she will tell you what is needed. The wrapped gifts can be dropped off on Sundays, or at the church office Tuesday- Friday.

Angel Tree: Sundays after worship until December 17 (gifts due)

Spirit Sisters

St. James Spirit Sisters began twenty years ago at the St. James United Methodist Church in Pasadena under the leadership of Rev. Dorothy Bimber Worley who continues to lead the group. We are Christian women from many denominations, including many from First UMC Santa Monica. We meet almost every month. We have an annual Christmas Luncheon, an annual All-Day January Retreat, an April Weekend Retreat, and many monthly Saturday meetings at Pastor Dorothy's home and garden in Santa Monica. We study scripture, pray, reflect, sing together, and get to know Jesus and each other better. We seek out to live out Jesus' Great Commandment to love with every fiber of our being. All are welcome. For more information, please contact Pastor Dorothy (626)826-8301.

Upcoming events:

- **Christmas Luncheon: Saturday, December 9, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.** in the Fireside Room
- **All Day Retreat: Saturday, January 20, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.** in the Fireside Room

Monthly Blood Pressure Screenings

The Health Ministry Council will host the December Blood Pressure screening on **Sunday, December 10, after worship in the Alcove.** Thank you Health Ministry Council for providing free monthly blood pressure screenings. We are grateful for the care you offer to our church and community.



United Women in Faith Peanut Brittle Sales, and Christmas Boutique

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities. Formerly known as United Methodist Women (starting in the 1860's), this group has changed the name to be more inclusive. Our focus is on education and mission, including a priority towards helping women, children and families. All monies raised throughout the year go to local and global missions. Come to the Christmas Boutique and Peanut Brittle Sales to support our missions!



Sundays, December 10 and 17, after worship in the Alcove

Alternative Christmas Fair 2023

Sponsored by the Mission Council, the Alternative Christmas Fair is a way to support mission projects and programs in the community and around the world, by giving a financial gift in the name of a loved one. Each donation (\$5 minimum) comes with a e-card with the gift information. Share the SPIRIT of Christmas! This year we celebrate Alternative Christmas on the website through December. Online: visit the website to make your financial gift. www.santamonicaumc.org/alt-christmas23. Or, stop by the Alternative Christmas tables that will be in the Alcove after worship.

This year's Mission Projects:

The People Concern
The Wesley Foundation
CYFC
Upward Bound House
Vietnam Clinic
Harvest Home
InnerChange
Homeboy Industries (new this year!)



Sundays, December 10 and 17, after worship in the Alcove

Preschool Christmas Concert

The First UMC Preschool is excited to celebrate their annual Preschool Christmas Concert! All are welcome to watch the adorable Preschoolers perform their holiday songs.

Friday, December 15, 10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary



Scenes from last year's Preschool Concert

December Mid-Week Recital

The December Mid-Week Recital features **Cristina Montes Mateo harp**.

In the words of Maestro Zubin Mehta: "... Cristina is one among those very few individuals who have reached the very top of her field." Unanimous 1st Prize winner at the "Torneo Internazionale di Musica" (Rome) and the International Harp Competition "V. Bucchi," Cristina Montes Mateo is recognized as one of the leading harpists of her generation throughout the world. She has also won four more international contests (Paris -Laskine and Sacem-, Madrid and Tokyo), as well as numerous national awards. She usually appears as a soloist with major orchestras like the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Philharmonic Orchestra of Málaga, Francisco de Miranda Orchestra in Venezuela, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of the Theatre für Niedersachsen in Germany, and the Santiago de Chile Orchestra.



For more information, and to view past recitals, visit the website:

www.santamonicaumc.org/mid-week-recital-series

How to watch the Livestream:

- Facebook: [@santamonicaumc](https://www.facebook.com/santamonicaumc)
- YouTube Channel: search [@SantaMonicaUMC](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSantaMonicaUMC)
- Website: www.santamonicaumc.org/livestream
- The First UMC App: (To download, go to the App Store, search FirstUMC_SM) *You may view past recitals on these channels as well.*

Wednesday, December 13, 12:10 p.m. online

Poinsettia Dedications

Beautiful **poinsettias** will grace our sanctuary for the December 24, 10 a.m. Christmas Eve service of Lessons & Carols; the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve Family service, and the 7 p.m. Candlelight Service. Order at the Sunday Welcome Table or in the church office. Each plant is \$15, and **may be picked up after 7 p.m. Christmas Eve service**. Deadline to order is **Friday, December 15**.



Advent Brunch

Save the date for the Advent Brunch following worship on Sunday, December 17, hosted by Fellowship and Events. Activities will include seasonal crafts, caroling, and a special visit from Santa. Let's celebrate the season together! We also take time to highlight the Missions featured in the Alternative Christmas Fair and the UWF Christmas Boutique, happening in the Alcove. *A light brunch will be served.*



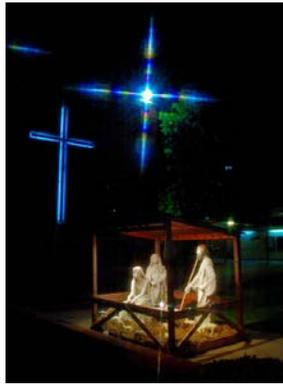
Sunday, December 17, after worship in Simkins Hall

First UMC Creche

We invite you to our courtyard to view our Nativity scene, or creche, with the Holy Family—Joseph and Mary, and the animals that shared their shelter and warmth. We celebrate God's love that comes to be with us, bringing peace, hope and joy for all. The display will be on view beginning December 2.



The creche during the day



Our favorite First UMC Creche photo, courtesy of Allan Walker

Advent Devotional 2023

The 2023 Advent Devotional booklet will be available in print and online on the first Sunday of Advent, December 3. The devotional is written by First UMC congregants and provides a wonderful opportunity to share Advent with family and friends. This year's theme is "Sing A New Song!" We're excited to once again offer Audio Devotion files for the last week of Advent. Sign up now to receive the daily email devotionals: www.santamonicaumc.org/advent. The printed booklet will be available at the church office and at the Sunday Welcome Table.



A Journey Through the Psalms by Howard Wollitz

For me and the participants in Rev. Larry Young's Zoom presentations on portions of the Bible using materials from the Yale School of Divinity, I want to provide our thanks and gratitude for his tremendous efforts. The latest was a six-week course on the Psalms.

Others courses have been on The Old Testament Through Jewish Eyes, The Miracles, and The Book of Matthew. Each week is a one-hour Zoom meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. with a repeat session on Thursdays at 2 p.m. The sessions begin with a 15-minute video presentation by professors from Yale followed by discussion from Larry and participation with all. A six- or seven-page lesson is included each week as a study guide.

Each of the sessions has been a literal eye-opener about facts, stories, lessons, and meanings from the Bible that one never suspected were there. Every subject has been great, but I believe the course and insights about the Psalms in the just-completed course has been the best. Of course, like everyone, I knew about the 23rd Psalm, having memorized it in Vacation Bible School during my family's summer visits to the relatives in Minneapolis. "The Lord is my Shepherd . . ." etc., but there is so much more in the Psalms!

They fall into seven groups: Psalms of Complaint, Hymns, Royal Psalms, Wisdom Psalms, Psalms and the Human Condition, The Character of God, and Psalms of Poetry. Interestingly, the Psalms are recognized

2023 Pledge Contributions Due

The end of the year is coming. Many will be out of town in the last days of the year. You may always contact Christina Eddy (c.eddy@santamonicaumc.org) to arrange your giving at this busy time of year. Our church office is closed December 25 - January 2, but special arrangements can be made.

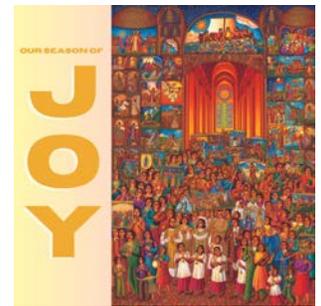
- Give at one of these remaining worship services Dec 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.
- Mail your check postmarked by 12/31/2023. • Contribute online at www.santamonicaumc.org/give. • Use your bank's bill pay system.
- If giving stock or funds managed by a broker, ask for a transfer to be completed by 12/31/2023. • Bring your gift to the church office.
- Lastly, if you are paying in January for the 2023 year, be sure to date your check 2024 and mark your check "prior year fulfillment."
- Giving statements will be prepared and mailed out Tuesday, January 9, 2024.

Thank you for making a difference in countless lives in our community and in the world.

Stewardship Continues

The 2024 Annual Giving Stewardship Campaign invites us each and all to prayerfully consider our financial pledge to support the mission and ministries of First UMC. To fill out a pledge card online visit

www.santamonicaumc.org/stewardship or fill out a pledge card available in the church pews and drop off in the offering plate.



to be entirely the words of humans about God, not the word of God through humans. As a result, there is a lot of complaining and a lot of frustration that the good people, like the writers, are not rewarded while the evil doers seem to live abundantly and without retribution. Often, the writers ask God to impose justice on the evil, and justice means vengeance. I did not know any of this was in the Psalms. One of the Yale professors characterized life in ancient Israel as "nasty, brutish, and short," so no wonder there is so much complaining in the Psalms. But there are optimistic Psalms as well, so there is a balance. There are extremes, too, with the 23rd Psalm perhaps at one end of the spectrum and Psalm 137 at the other (if you dare to read it!)

It is obvious that Larry puts in a lot of time and effort to build on and enhance our experience around Yale's materials and videos. Our sincerest gratitude to him. If Larry does more of these programs, I'll be there on Wednesday evenings, and I would encourage all members of the congregation to join in.



A screenshot of one of the Zoom classes led by Rev. Larry. (Not all participants pictured.)



Rev. Keri Olsen Paget Staffing Announcement

As was announced at our recent Church Charge Conference, we are pleased to share the news that the **Rev. Keri Olsen Paget**, our Deacon Associate, will be joining our staff in January in a part-time role in the area of Spiritual Formation and assisting worship leadership two Sundays per month. We look forward to the unfolding of this new ministry in the life of First UMC. Feel free to share with her your ideas for Spiritual Formation when you see her and Ellie on Sundays!

Congratulations!

First UMC Member **Chris Reagh** graduated from Cerritos College in August 2023, with two degrees. She received an Associate in Arts Degree in Retail Management, and an Associate in Arts Degree in Business Administration.

Deaths

We extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of these departed loved ones:

- First UMC member **Paul Eugene Ballmer** died October 21. A memorial service will be held Saturday, January 13, at 1 p.m. in the Chapel.
- Long-time former First UMC member **Ken Baird** died November 11. A memorial service will be held Friday, January 19, at 1 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Living with Grief at the Holidays

Although the holiday season can often bring much joy, for those of us who have lost a loved one, this time of year may make us feel our loss even more deeply. To respond to this need, the St. Monica Bereavement Ministry is hosting four workshops (*both in-person and Zoom options*) to provide guidance, support, and practical ideas for navigating through the holidays while we are living with grief. Everyone is welcome and all the workshops will have identical content. **Meeting Tuesdays: December 5 & 12.** More info and register: www.stmonica.net/ministries/pastoral-carebereavement



The Preschool celebrated Thanksgiving with all of the classes eating a Thanksgiving feast!

Congregation Care Corner

If you have any questions or need pastoral care, you may always call the Pastoral Care line (310-393-8258 and enter extension 1), which is available for people to leave a message requesting care. If you have questions, need assistance, or would like to volunteer to help with our homebound folks, please contact Congregation Care Associate: **Anne Premer**: a.premer@santamonicaumc.org. Or, call (310)393-8258 ext. 103. Visit the website for **Community Care** - a list of local resources including info for senior assistance, Medicare, American Red Cross, bereavement resources, and more! www.santamonicaumc.org/care

Time for Medicare Open Enrollment

Final call for open enrollment for Medicare 2024, closing **December 7**. If you're 65 or older, this is when you can start thinking about signing up for Medicare or reevaluate your coverage and make changes if necessary. To help with that decision making, the WISE and Healthy Aging is offering FREE Medicare counseling. You can reach them at (310)394-9871 to make an appointment. Also, AARP offers following link that will walk you through the process: www.aarp.org/health/medicare-insurance/enrollment-guide

Prayer Requests

The First UMC Prayer Group is a network of persons who provide regular, dependable, and confidential prayer support. The prayer group communicates regularly via email. You may send a prayer request to the church at any time, and our Prayer Group will be notified of your request. Go to: www.santamonicaumc.org/prayer-requests

Request a Prayer Quilt

Led by **Sue Payne and Maile Marquand**, the Prayer Quilt Ministry offers Prayer Quilts to those in need. To request a quilt:

1. Talk to the intended recipient. Ask if the person is willing to be prayed for and to receive a quilt. Ask what specific prayers are wished for. There is no charge for the quilt – it is a gift of love.
2. Contact Maile Marquand and Sue Payne at: prayerquilts@santamonicaumc.org. (*Prayer quilts may only be requested and sponsored by members of the First UMC congregation.*)
3. Select the quilt if some are already made, or suggest colors if one is to be selected for you. Once the quilt selection has been made, First UMC will display the quilt in the Friday Community Email, and also during Sunday 10 a.m. worship, where you may tie a prayer knot during in-person worship, or view the quilt on the Livestream.

Prayer Quilt Ministry will not meet in December. The next meeting date is Saturday, January 20.

Contact info@santamonicaumc.org if you would like to volunteer.

Prayer Quilt Ministry on the website (includes the 20th Anniversary Celebration video):

www.santamonicaumc.org/prayerquiltministry

Flowers: To order flowers to remember or honor a loved one for Sunday Worship service, go to: www.santamonicaumc.org/flower-fund.
Open dates: All Sundays in December





Community Photos



Church Charge Conference with our new West District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Siosaia Tu'itahi



Martha Ross accepted an award in behalf of First UMC for the top fundraising team for the Westside Food Bank Hunger Walk, raising over six thousand dollars!



The Youth Group extend a big THANK YOU to all who purchased goodies and donated at the Sweets for a Cause fundraiser during Charge Conference. We are excited to announce that the event raised \$500 towards Meals on Wheels West!



On Saturday, November 18, Women of Action members Carmen Herrera, Anne Premer, Janet Searfoss and Martha Ross, made and wrapped 240 sandwiches at The People Concern in Santa Monica. The sandwiches are given out daily to the homeless community. Thanks to the Women of Action!



An Open Space lunch gathering



Kids Night Out was once again a fun-filled night for the kids!



PRESCHOOL CORNER CELEBRATING 75 YEARS!



The Preschool Fall Festival



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
OF SANTA MONICA

1008 Eleventh St.

Santa Monica, CA 90403

email: info@santamonicaumc.org

310.393.8258

www.santamonicaumc.org

  @santamonicaumc



FIRST UMC OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., and by appointment

Pastoral care by appointment only: 310-393-8258, enter ext. 1

Stay Connected

To join in fellowship and ministry online, here's how to connect:

First UMC website: www.santamonicaumc.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/santamonicaumc

Instagram: @santamonicaumc

YouTube: @SantaMonicaUMC

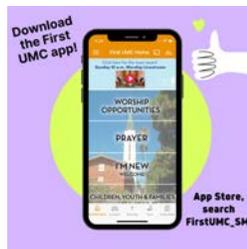
The First UMC App:

First UMC offers a free app - download it and give it a try!

Download the app, go to the App Store, search FirstUMC_SM

- Sign up to receive **PUSH NOTIFICATIONS** (texts sent to you directly) for Sunday morning service and special events!

How to sign up: In the app, slide screen to the right for Settings, click Settings/Notifications/click General to turn on.



2024

Looking forward to January

- Sun Jan 7 Epiphany Sunday/Holy Communion/Baptismal Renewal
- Sun Jan 14 Moments for Mission with UMCOR
- Sun Jan 21 Bill Buxton will be speaking after worship on "Finding Purpose and Identity in God through Times of Physical and Cognitive Illness and Challenges."
- Sat Jan 27 United Women in Faith Game Day
- Sun Jan 28 Youth Sunday and Girl Scouts cookies sales
...and more in January!