

# The Encourager

December 2017

## First United Methodist Church of Seffner

Open Hearts Open Minds Open Doors

Our mission at First Seffner is to GO into  
the world to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

### Potpourri of Happenings

**December 2: Decorating the Church for Advent/Christmas:** Saturday, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

**December 3: Post Office Ministry Sale:** Sunday, 11:30 a.m. In the Fellowship Hall.

**December 3 & 17: Youth Group Meeting:** Sundays, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall & GNR.

**December 5: Legend Dairy 4H Group Meeting:** Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. in the Good News Room.

**December 5, 12, 19 & 26: Country Western Music Group:** 6:30 p.m. Every Tuesday in the Fellowship Hall. December 19 they will meet in the Sanctuary.

**December 6, 13 & 20: Handbell Choir Practice:** Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

**December 6, 13, 20 & 27: Choir Practice:** Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. in the Choir Room.

**December 9: Decorating the Church for Advent/Christmas:** Saturday, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary and Narthex.

**December 10: Youth Group - Walk to Bethlehem:** Sunday, 2:00 p.m. The Youth Group will meet in the Church parking lot to go to lunch and then to Walk to Bethlehem in Brandon.

**December 11: Irene Circle Meeting:** Monday, 6:30 p.m.

**December 12: Trustees Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. in the Good News Room.

**December 16: Decorating the Church for Advent/Christmas:** Saturday. Time to be determined.

**December 24: Christmas Eve Morning Worship:** Sunday, 10:30 a.m. We will observe our regular Sunday worship time.

**December 24: Christmas Eve Evening Service:** Sunday, 6:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Please join us for thirty minutes of special music, with the Candlelight Service beginning at 7:15 p.m.

**December 25 & 26: Merry Christmas:** The Church Office will be closed Monday and Tuesday, December 25th and 26th for the Christmas holiday. We hope you have a happy and blessed Christmas!

**January 1: Happy New Year's:** The Church Office will be closed Monday for the holiday.

Dear Friends in Christ,



I have been sitting here staring at the computer screen for well over an hour and nothing has happened. Christmas music is playing in the background coming from the “Sounds of the Seasons: Holidays” cable channel with the familiar songs doing little more than filling a disturbing and unsettling quiet. There is an obvious and uncomfortable disconnect between my mind, my heart, and ultimately my fingers resting on the keyboard. The task before me is to write a pastor's message for the December “Encourager”.....nothing! Then, I looked at an unopened piece of mail from the Duke Divinity School laying on my desk which simply had the words “Meditations for ADVENT” on the front.

Each year as the Advent/Christmas season approaches I receive this little booklet of meditations from the Divinity School with brief devotionals for each of the Sundays of Advent as well as one for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. They are written by both faculty and students at the Divinity School. I opened this year's booklet, and the first words I focus on is the “Introduction” written by Elaine Heath, Dean of the Divinity School and Professor of Missional and Pastoral Theology. Her words immediately hit home and were exactly what I needed to hear in this moment in time. I call this a “God-thing”....God providing just what we need, when we need it. So, now I write!

She began by saying, “These are perilous times.” She went on to talk about some of the times that we have been living through in these past few months. She spoke of devastating hurricanes that literally flattened entire islands and communities. She spoke of millions of acres burned to ashes as a result of one of the worst wildfire seasons in our history. Spoke of how our nation and the world faces a grave risk of thermonuclear war. Add to all of this there are fresh memories of mass shootings where far too many innocent people were gunned down and either injured or killed and certainly even more lives forever changed. There is certainly no shortage of these “perilous times”. Then....add to all of this the “perilous times” of our own lives like serious health issues, the death of loved ones, the loss of a job or financial resources just not stretching far enough, broken relationships, addiction, depression, anxiety, and so much more. Ms Heath uses the word chaos, and I would add the word darkness!

She writes: “Amidst the fearsome chaos all around us we remember that Advent is the season of longing for the Light. Each day as we journey toward Bethlehem we bring the devastation (and, I would add darkness) with us, wailing the sorrows and needs of the world (again, I would add our world). “How long, O Lord?” we cry. “If only you would tear open the heavens and come down!” (Isaiah 64:1a).

“So it is that we work our way to the Christ Child, the answer to our prayer. He sleeps in a feed trough, surrounded by the sounds and smells of cattle. His mother is too young, too vulnerable, too poor. There are rumblings from the government that new trouble is on its way. The babe will soon be a refugee.

“The Lord *did* tear open the heavens. The Lord *did* come down. Salvation *is* upon us, but not in the way we hoped.

“So it is that with Isaiah we lift a prayer of lament and confession. “Forgive us, O Lord, for demanding a violent God who would crush our enemies but show favor to us. Forgive us for the sin of our presumption. May the wisdom of Christ be in us and guide us into a new day. May we bear witness to Christ through our own incarnation of his love, solidarity, and forgiveness. Amen.”

I pray that for each and everyone of us that this year's Advent/Christmas season is one that does not dwell on the chaos of our lives but instead on the Light of Christ in the darkness, Light that is a reminder to us of the real gifts of the season: hope, peace, joy, and love, gifts when embraced in faith will indeed empower us to bear witness to Jesus Christ through living our lives by his example of his love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. This Advent/Christmas, I urge each of us to take a step of faith away from our world of chaos and into a way of life....His way of life....that will change us, and through us, change the world, our world!

I hope this is truly a season blessed in Christ's presence and changed by His love!

Christmas blessings to one and all!

Pastor Terry

PS....I want to share part of a poem/prayer: "An anxious note to baby Jesus" written by Peter Thurston

Dear Lord,

All begun in makeshift circumstances. (Sorry, Lord, we were not better prepared – some things didn't change.)

A sign of things to come, of an uphill struggle to make your voice heard.

Uphill towards Jerusalem.

Uphill to the Mount of Olives.

Uphill to the hill of execution.

Hoping we would follow.

Hoping we would understand you, respond to you, welcome you then, welcome you now.

Lord, were you tired before it even started?

Or was your love your inner energy, the love you received your support,  
the love you gave a light in the darkness, the love you give the strength I need?

Will you help me though Advent, dear Lord, little one?

Give me the grace to greet you without suppressed sighs of weariness.

Give me the generosity to invite you home without thought to the inconvenience.

Give me the will to rise to your demands, to share your love and to receive it.

It's not so much to ask, I know, when you have faced it all – the Advent task, the Christmas hope – two thousand times before.

### **IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS....**

As I look forward to Advent and Christmas I am reminded that I am nearing my two-year anniversary as pastor here at First United Methodist Church of Seffner. It does not seem possible that nearly two years has passed since I first walked through the doors and into the pulpit of this wonderful church who welcomed me with open arms!

It's been quite a journey! Not only have we worked together, done ministry together, prayed together, played together, worshiped together, but we have also walked the walk of faith together through good times and hard times. Through all the times of our life together as the church we have walked with God and He with us and has provided for our needs along the way.

I am so appreciative of ALL your support and prayers as I have gone through some significant health issues this past year! I couldn't have made this journey without your prayers and support and understanding and encouragement....Thank You!

I am also SO appreciative of ALL the Oreos (and other gifts and goodies) along the way. Truth be told, I haven't had to buy many Oreos myself thanks to your generosity and Oreo surprises!

As this second year soon comes to an end and year number three begins January 1<sup>st</sup>, I look forward with hope and anticipation to what God has in store for us as we share ministry together at Seffner First. I'm grateful for our church's faithful staff and team of volunteers and look forward to working together in the new year.

My prayer is that we walk into the future together with faith in our God who has called us to ministry here!

Thanks and blessings, Pastor Terry

## PASTOR TERRY AWAY

Pastor Terry will be away beginning Christmas Day and returning January 10<sup>th</sup>.

Preaching December 31<sup>st</sup> will be Pastor Ed McWilliams.

Preaching January 7<sup>th</sup> will be Pastor Lloyd McClelland (Communion will be celebrated).

For pastor care emergencies please call:

Pastor Brian Brink from December 25<sup>th</sup> thru 27<sup>th</sup> and January 3<sup>rd</sup> thru 9<sup>th</sup> at 813-765-7108.

Pastor Rick Cornwell from December 28<sup>th</sup> thru January 2<sup>nd</sup> at 813-892-3041.

Or call the church office at (813) 689-3513.

## THANK YOU...

To our youth and parents and other adult helpers for the AMAZING Thanksgiving dinner they cooked and served to the WHOLE church on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup>. EVERYTHING was plentiful and delicious!!!

## Handbell Choir Rehearsals



If you have played handbells before or if you are interested in playing please join us at Handbell Choir rehearsals for our Christmas program every Wednesday through December 20<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. We will play at the Christmas program at the December 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday Service and at the December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve Service.

## DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR ADVENT/CHRISTMAS



Once again we will be decorating the sanctuary for the Advent/Christmas season in "stages."

Please join us Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9AM as we begin with the altar and Advent candles.

Then....Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9AM we will add the trees and door wreaths.

Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> wall wreaths will be added (watch for time) as well as the Nativity.

Orange juice and bagels will be provided each time we meet!

NOTE: Our poinsettias will be added by a team of "elves" the weekend of December 16<sup>th</sup>.



## Christmas Poinsettias



Poinsettias

December 3<sup>rd</sup> will be the last Sunday to fill out your bulletin insert to order your Christmas poinsettias. Thank you to everyone who purchased beautiful poinsettias to adorn our sanctuary during this holy season, given in memory or honor of loved ones and friends. This year's plants will be in place for worship Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, and Christmas Eve, both services. (NOTE: If need to take your plant(s) after church Christmas Eve morning, please feel free to do so.)

## Post Office Goodies Are Back!

**Sunday - December 3rd**



Post Office goodies are back! New merchandise from housewares, jewelry, makeup, electronics, books, etc. Come see what treasures you can find. The sale will be held in the Fellowship Hall December 3rd following the Worship Service.

## New Church Picture Directory - 2nd Date

Church Photo  
Directory



The 2nd and last date for pictures for our new Church Picture Directory will be on **Tuesday, January 16th**, appointment times from 1:00 - 7:40 p.m. Please mark your calendar so your picture will be included and we will hopefully have 100% participation....our directory will not be complete without you. Please see Dot Blaney in the Narthex after the church service **starting December 10th** to sign up for your appointment. Pictures ordered on this date will still be available for Christmas. Every person who participates by getting their picture taken will receive a free Directory and a free 8x10 picture. Lifetouch has a special offer that will give back 5% of photography and frame sales to our church.

## Picture Appointment Hostesses Needed

We need Picture Appointment Hostess volunteers to sign people in as they arrive for their Directory picture appointments at our 2nd photography date on Tuesday, January 16th, for shifts between 1:00 and 7:40 p.m. Please see Luran Breeden if you would like to help.



## Memory Tree....

Back in the Narthex, Sunday December 10th. You are invited to write the name of loved ones and friends who have passed through death to eternal life on provided ornaments and hang on our Memory Tree for all to see and pray for.

## Guardian Ad Litem Gift Tree



The Guardian ad Litem gift tree for children in foster care is in the Narthex. If you would like to help make Christmas brighter for one of these children, please take an angel card from the tree. If the angel tags for our kids are all taken, anyone who wishes may bring a gift for another child in foster care. All gifts may be placed under the tree on Sunday mornings in a gift bag, or given to Dot or Ken Conklin, by Sunday, December 10th, or please call the Conklins' at 689-9266 to arrange for your gift to be picked up. Thank you for caring for our kids!

## Florida United Methodists Children's Home



We will be collecting items for the children at the Florida UM Children's Home for Christmas through December 10th. Please place your donations in the box in the Narthex. Please see Nancy Facenda for questions.



### Christmas Gift Ideas:

Jewelry	Make-up	Games	Boxer Shorts
Toys	Socks	Pajamas	Twin Size Sheets
Twin Size Bed Comforters			

Stocking with small items: Lip balm, Sunblock, Deodorant, Hair Brushes, Combs, Shampoo & Conditioner, Mousse, Gel, Non-Aerosol Spray, Bath Soap, Moisturizers & Lotions, Toothbrushes & Fluoride Toothpaste, Disposable Razors

### **Walk to Bethlehem Sunday, December 10th**

December 10th the Youth Group will be meeting in the parking lot at 2:00 p.m. to go to Walk to Bethlehem in Brandon. We will be going to lunch before this event. If you would like to come with us please see Jerrie McClamma or Daniel and Dawn Allen for more details.

### **Colson School Ministry**

We will be collecting gently used yard sale type items for the Colson Positive Behavior Support Holiday Store through Sunday, December 17th. The children at Colson Elementary will use tickets they earn for good behavior to buy items at the Store Event on December 21st for Christmas presents for their families. Please drop off the items in the Narthex or see Lauran.

### **CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES**

**Morning Worship - 10:30 AM (Fourth Sunday of Advent)**

**Evening Worship - 6:45 PM**

**DON'T MISS IT...WE'RE EXPECTING A SPECIAL VISITOR!!!**

Special music begins at 6:45 PM

Candlelight Service begins at 7:15 PM

**Merry  
Christmas**



Invite a friend and join us as we gather at the church for this holiest of nights and celebrate anew the gift of God's greatest gift....Jesus Christ! LET'S FILL THE PEWS!

## **Church Office Closed for Christmas**

The Church Office will be closed Monday and Tuesday, December 25th and 26th for the Christmas holiday. We hope you have a happy and blessed Christmas!

### **POST OFFICE FUND HELPING THE NEEDY DURING THIS SEASON OF LOVE AND GENEROSITY....**

The following agencies that care for the needs of young and old alike not just at Christmas but throughout the year as well. Needs at this time of the year always increase and we are so blessed that we have these funds that have accumulated these past few months to distribute to the following helping agencies:

Toys for Tots  
ECHO of Brandon  
Cookson Hills Christian Home  
Florida United Methodist Children's Home  
Metropolitan Ministries  
Salvation Army - Local  
Shriners Hospitals for Children

Each of these agencies will be given a donation of \$1000 to help meet the needs of the children and adults they serve so that they will hopefully have a brighter Christmas.

We also are giving out random gift cards at Winn Dixie and Walgreens to help people with food at this special time....again....to help folks have a brighter and merrier Christmas!

This is Outreach through First United Methodist Church of Seffner at work...sharing the love and light of Christ at Christmas! Thank you to all of our Post Office Team for their faithfulness each week receiving, opening, and distributing unclaimed packages received through this special PO program. And...thank you to all who give donations for these items.

## **Altar Guild**



Volunteers are needed for Altar Guild for January through December 2018. We usually work in teams of two and it usually takes about an hour each week. This includes dusting Chancel area, replacing offering envelopes and pencils, checking hymnals and Bibles in the racks, changing paraments when needed, water plants, clean water fountains, etc. There is a complete list in the Sacristy. If you can spare an hour a week for this, please contact the Church Office at 813-689-3513 or [deborahgendreau@fumcseffner.org](mailto:deborahgendreau@fumcseffner.org).

## Stewardship Minute

“Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others.” --Augustine

Our Giving for November: \$11,685.00

Our Monthly Need for Ministry: \$13,455.00

## **BUY FROM AMAZON** **AND EARN REBATES FOR OUR CHURCH**

If you purchase anything from Amazon you can now have 1/2 percent of your purchase price rebated to our Church.

Just follow these easy steps:

1. Open Amazon as **Smile.Amazon.com**
2. If you have an account with Amazon go to “my account”.
3. Go to “Settings”
4. Go to “Change your Charity”
5. Type in “First United Methodist Church of Seffner”

Then when you wish to make a purchase from Amazon open in **Smile.Amazon.com**. Everything will be the same. But now you will be earning rebates to our Church. If you have questions see Jim Blaney.

## **New Altar Flower Calendar For 2018**



Please consider providing altar flowers in honor or memory of your friends and loved ones. These flowers not only grace our worship center with their beauty but honor loved ones as the church community gathers for worship each Sunday. The cost is only \$25.00. Please note your payment is for altar flowers. Sign up on the flower calendar on the door outside the sanctuary. We will have the new 2018 flower calendar out soon.



## **MEALS ON WHEELS HELP NEEDED**

Come one, come all! Meals on Wheels is looking for volunteers on Monday mornings, if you can spare an hour or two between 7:00 and 11:00 a.m. to help with the food prep and/or cleanup.

Meals on Wheels is also looking for volunteer drivers and people to ride along with them to deliver the Monday meals from 10:30 to 12:00. Substitute drivers are needed as well. Please call the church office at 689-3513 or see Connie Nelson if you would like to help.

## **34th Annual United Methodist Women's Retreats February 16-18, 2018 and March 8-10, 2018**

Our theme for 2018: "Restored and Free"

The Women's Retreats are designed to provide women a time to intentionally come away from the responsibilities of their home, children, families, and jobs; to set their feet on holy ground; and to meet Jesus Christ face to face. Come and join us at one of our two weekends held annually at the Life Enrichment Center on the shores of beautiful Lake Griffin in Fruitland Park, Florida. Every weekend offers a time for Bible study, enrichment and craft sessions, music, fun, fellowship and food! Spend the weekend in a way that is meaningful to you – bring a friend, bring a group of friends or come and make new friends.

Registration is online only at [www.flumc.org/floridaconferencewomensretreats](http://www.flumc.org/floridaconferencewomensretreats) and will begin Tuesday, November 1, 2017 at 6:00 am. Please contact Lori Buonasera at 352-360-9389 or at [lori@lecretreats.org](mailto:lori@lecretreats.org) for questions.



**PRAYERS**  
*of the*  
**CHURCH**

## Prayer Requests

Remember Our Shut-Ins: Carl Brill, Charlene Cabbage, Frances Jordan.

Inge Davis: Healing prayers for health issues.

Allen Duncan: Continued healing prayers for our custodian, for health issues. Prayers for finding a new second job.

Eric & Connie Nelson: Continued healing prayers for Britney Edmondson for radiation and chemo to help heal her from cancer that is spreading into her bones. Healing prayers for cousin, Tom Hodge, from lymphoma.

Jim & Dot Blaney: Healing prayers for niece, Dagmar Blaney, for health issues. Prayers for John Kolibab, brother-in-law, for a cure from liver and pancreas cancer.

Susan White: Continued prayers for relief from pain and that procedures work so surgery isn't necessary.

Les & Elaine Hanna: Healing prayers for Les in the hospital with heart issues. Continued healing prayers for Elaine for pain from Shingles.



## Monday Morning Prayer Group

Our Monday morning Prayer Group meets every Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Good News Room. Join us as we pray for church members, family, friends, anyone who is in need of prayer. Everyone is welcome.

# DECEMBER 2017

<b>Weekly Events:</b>	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Small Groups	Morning (FH)
Monday Meals on Wheels	7:30 p.m.
Boy Scouts	7:00 p.m.
Tuesday Cub Scouts	

## SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

<b>3</b> 1st Sunday of Advent 9:30 a Sunday School Class 10:30 a Worship 11:30 a Post Office Min. Sale 3p Youth Group Meeting	<b>4</b> 10 a Prayer Group 5:45 p TOPS Club Meeting 6:30 p Aerobics	<b>5</b> 6:30 p Country Western Music 7 p Legend Dairy 4H Meeting	<b>6</b> 6 p Handbell Choir Practice 7 p Choir Practice	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 9 a Decorate the Church
<b>10</b> 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:30 a Sunday School Class 10:30 a Worship 2p Youth Group Lunch & Walk to Bethlehem	<b>11</b> 10 a Prayer Group 5:45 p TOPS Club Meeting 6:30 p Aerobics 6:30 p Irene Circle Meeting	<b>12</b> 6:30 p Country Western Music 7 p Trustees Meeting	<b>13</b> 6 p Handbell Choir Practice 7 p Choir Practice	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Decorate the Church - Time TBD
<b>17</b> 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:30 a Sunday School Classes 10:30 a Worship 3 p Youth Group Meeting	<b>18</b> 10 a Prayer Group 5:45 p TOPS Club Meeting	<b>19</b> 7 a-7 p Special House District 58 General Election 6:30 p Country Western Music	<b>20</b> 6 p Handbell Choir Practice 7 p Choir Practice	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 4th Sunday of Advent 9:30 a Sunday School Classes 10:30 a Christmas Eve Morning Worship 6:45 p Christmas Eve Evening Worship	<b>25</b>  Office Closed	<b>26</b> 6:30 p Country Western Music Office Closed	<b>27</b> 7 p Choir Practice	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> 9:30 a Sunday School Class 10:30 a Worship New Year's Eve	<b>Pastor Terry Will Be Away December 25 - January 9</b>					

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Time sensitive material—Please deliver promptly.

Email: staff@funmcseffner.org

Fax: 813-654-4460

Phone: 813-689-3513

Seffner, Florida 33583

PO Box 607

1310 South Kingsway Rd.

First United Methodist Church of Seffner

The Encourager  
December 2017

Please let the office know if your special date is not listed!!



Anniversaries

December 1	Mike & Carolann Mullins
December 6	Paul & Sue Palmer
December 21	Eric & Connie Nelson

January 5	Wally & Theresa Sparks
January 19	Robert & Marty Davis



Birthday's

December 3	Ann Kubiet	December 19	Richard Scionti, Jr.
December 4	Karen Sloan	December 20	Nancy Gonzalez
December 5	Dan Rogers	December 22	Patty Barker
December 9	Michael Whitney	December 24	Jim Blaney
December 11	Mike Mullins	December 25	Timothy White
December 12	Carol Sanelli	December 28	Paul Palmer
December 12	Maureen Harter	December 30	Lynne Whitney
December 14	Britton White	December 31	Daniel Allen
December 19	Carolann Mullins		

January 1	Peggy Moore	January 17	Dee Scionti
January 4	Pat Eastham	January 19	Gladys Ray
January 5	Edna Barker	January 25	Daniel Williams
January 9	Madison Heffner	January 25	Ruth Heffner
January 11	Cheri Champion	January 26	Meagan Heffner
January 15	Dot Blaney	January 27	Pam Hoyos
January 15	Jenna Brink	January 30	Sue Bunch