



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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of Rockmart

November 17, 2020

ADVENT 2020

Greetings Wonderful People of God,

[Advent](#) is the season when we prepare ourselves to receive God's gift of Jesus Christ. It is a time of "getting ready" for the celebration of Jesus's birth. We have a several great opportunities to share with you this Advent. I hope you and your family will take part!

[Churchwide Worship Series & Study](#)

We will kick off the Advent Season on November 29 with a churchwide worship series and study, "*A Different Kind of Christmas*". This theme certainly fits the year we are finishing up, doesn't it? Through it all, I have seen God at work among us in large ways. The Holy Spirit has been stirring in many hearts. God's Spirit has primed us, made us open and ready, so that we can discover and embrace the vision God has for us. I believe God will make many things clear to us as we go through these weeks doing this series and study together.

For the worship series, I suggest that you read, [Christmas Is Not Your Birthday](#) by Mike Slaughter. Slaughter is a gifted pastor who has led his congregation in missional effectiveness beyond imagination. God truly stirred in our hearts during the last study we did by Slaughter. I think [Christmas Is Not Your Birthday](#) will have an even greater impact. This book will also compliment the sermons I preach throughout the season.

Our Churchwide Study, [A Different Kind of Christmas](#), will complement the book and worship series. In fact, Slaughter wrote this study to go along with the book.

I encourage everyone to take part in our worship services each week as they will lead us into our conversations regarding the study. There are special editions for children and youth too: [A Different Kind of Christmas Youth Edition](#) and [A Different Kind of Christmas Children's Study](#).

We will **meet for discussion via Zoom on Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m.** throughout Advent. Hopefully, everyone will have taken part in the worship service by that time. I will preach the same message for in-person and virtual services. Zoom will allow us to gather from our homes and it will allow me the opportunity to show a video that will be helpful to our discussions. Here is an [introductory video](#) that will give you a small taste of what's to come.

Our hope is that all will take part by doing the study with your families and with friends beforehand and as we worship together. This is a great opportunity for parents and children to share faith together. For those of you who remain quarantined, I encourage you to pair with a few folks to do the study through phone calls, Zoom, FaceTime or some other technological means. The Zoom time we have on Sunday evenings will

complement your discussions. It will also give opportunity for you to ask questions and to share insights as God speaks to your heart.

Books and materials can be ordered from the links I provided above. You can also find them online through various retailers including Amazon. There are used copies available as well. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you are unable to get copies and I'll see what I can do to help. We do not want anyone to miss out!

Advent Wreath

Have you ever made an Advent wreath for your home? You can do it! The wreath is a circle that symbolizes God's never-ending love. We place evergreen in the circle to symbolize everlasting life. You can make a wreath using a round Styrofoam base and greenery. Place 3 purple or blue candles in the wreath along with one rose colored candle so that they are equally distributed around the circle. Then place a white candle in the center of the wreath. The purple/blue candles symbolize Hope, Peace and Love. The Rose-colored candle represents Joy. The white candle in the center represents Jesus. If you do not have a Styrofoam base, place your candles in candleholders and arrange them in a circle, with the white candle in the middle. Place greenery around the candles.

We will have a **blessing of the Advent Wreath during the service on November 29. We will light our candles together each Sunday during Advent** in the virtual services. To do this we need your help. **Would you and/or your family like to light the candles for one of our services?** I will provide the scripture and meditation. **Please let me know if you are interested.**

Reverse Advent Calendar

Many people are familiar with traditional Advent calendars and use them at home to guide their devotional time in the days before Christmas. Parents may use interactive Advent calendars with their children, opening a different box or door each day to reveal a tiny present. A Reverse Advent Calendar works the opposite way. Instead of unveiling a new gift each day, the Reverse Advent calendar asks participants to give a different item each day during the season of Advent. **Our Reverse Advent Calendar will be used to help support our partner in ministry, the Helping Hands Food Pantry.** Each day will list one item that is needed. Collect the items throughout the season then bring them as an offering. You can take the items to Helping Hands during their designated hours or you can leave them at the church and we will make sure they are delivered. Hailey will email the Reverse Advent Calendar to you in the near future so be on the lookout. **A special thanks to Barbara Seyler for sharing this idea!**

Blue Christmas/Longest Night Service

Monday, December 21 at 6:00 p.m.

This is a service of hope on the longest night of the year for those who are grieving or struggling during the Christmas season. No doubt we have all experienced much grief this year. Life as we knew it before COVID 19 has ceased. Much is different. Much remains uncertain. Many of our friends and loved ones have died. Many more have been sick. Some have lost their jobs and their sources of income. The nation has been in political unrest. The world is in turmoil. The list can go on as there is no "business as usual" for anyone. Even in a relatively good year, grief or hardship of any kind can be difficult. The struggles often intensify as Christmas approaches. While praying for you all, I sensed this service would be a blessing to you and to our community. I'm working out the detail so hold tight. **More details to come later.**

Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion

Thursday, December 24, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

by reservation

It may be a different kind of Christmas but in the midst of darkness there is a great Light! We will have a special time Christmas Eve to allow you and your family a moment to worship together celebrating our Savior's birth with Holy Communion. **Holy Communion will be in the sanctuary during assigned times so you will need to make a reservation.** Though a reservation time is needed, all are invited. **More details concerning reservations and the service will come soon.**

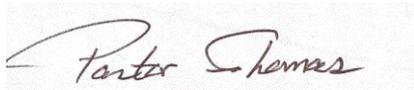
Christmas Eve Mission Offering

This year's Christmas Eve Mission Offering will help support of our Community Meal.

On the last Wednesday of each month, RFUMC serves a hot meal to the hungry in our community. As many of you know, we have had to make some changes in order to serve food safely. We are now partnering with several restaurants in town and we are distributing meals through delivery to our homebound and through curbside pickup. Proving the Community Meal in this way cost us \$6-\$8 per plate. We hope to feed at least 50 people each month. Your generous donation will help us do just that if not more. You may bring your gift as an offering when you come Christmas Eve or you may give any time before. Thank you for your prayerful support!

May the Spirit of God awaken us to the hope, love, joy and peace that God has instore for us as journey through this season together.

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Thomas". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.