



Dear Church Family,

Show of hands- who is ready for a new, fresh year? I have great news! As Christians, our New Year begins with Advent- right now!! The church calendar flips to “next year” as we enter the Christmas season. I love that: how in our faith life, the year starts when God sends us his son, Jesus.



Jesus' coming begins not just this New Year, but every single year that has come before. His birth is our starting point, our fresh start. Jesus, who came into this messy human fray. Jesus, who lived as one of us. Jesus, who knows what it means to suffer.

It's been a hard year. And we're all longing for the promised land. As we wait, as we hope, fix your eyes on our Savior, whose coming signals the start of a new year, whose birth promises that sin and darkness don't get the last say. Not this year, not ever.

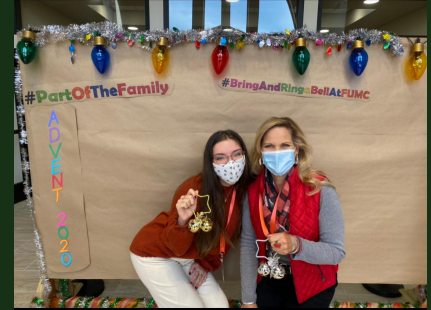
Here are some ways light has shined in the darkness in the past week, all through God's people at FUMC:

- We are getting ready for our last food distribution of the year through the Manna Food Pantry. We've packed up food for 180 families. We'll distribute it Monday, December 21 at 4pm. If you can help, please reach out to Susan Hellums, shellums@mcfirst.com
- Amazing, outstanding news... we received news that we'd been awarded another grant from TMF. This will allow us to continue our *expanded*

feeding ministry into 2021. We have been praying and working and applying for assistance so this is a huge answer to our prayers. Now, we have funds for the next 4-5 months of feeding! There was quite a celebration when we learned of this gift!

- Did you know that \$24 will provide food for a hungry family in our community for 6 months?!? Each month, it costs about \$4 to give a family that lives right here in Hidalgo County 4 bags of non-perishable food. That's something FUMC has done through our normal giving for decades now. With the pandemic, those in need of help have more than tripled. So much that our regular budget can't support all the extra need. We have found grant support that gets us most of the way. Could you help us cross the finish line? I cannot think of a better use of \$24 than providing 6 months of food and the peace of mind that comes with it. If you are looking for a Christmas present with deep meaning, consider a donation of \$24 to the food pantry. You'll be sponsoring a family's food for the first 6 months of next year. Pastor Jon and I and the staff are all going to be doing this. It's a lean year, so all I ask is that donations be *over and above* what you'd normally give. And remember- your *regular giving* makes this program and all our other ministry possible. In this pandemic, we are just reaching even further to help even more people.
- Our Children's Choir blessed us with music this Sunday. The digital children's choir performed Go Tell It On the Mountain. If you missed this song, you can see it here: <https://youtu.be/wutVp8k3ztc> Because choir practice was online, we had kids from all over the *world* participating: Austin, Dallas, even Japan. COVID has helped us imagine ministry in entirely new ways and some of those are very inspiring!
- Christmas Share Update: Thank you church family for all of your generous support and donating over over 100 gifts for teens that are in need. This Friday night, during Christmas Share 2020, there will be over 25 of our youth that are willing to wrap these gifts and pray over them too.
- It was such fun seeing everyone in their Christmas finery! Here are some pictures of the festivities. *If you'd like to take a Christmas Picture, we'll have an outdoor tree, lights, and manager where you can safely take photos on Christmas Eve (Dec 24) and Eve Eve (Dec 23).*





- This Sunday, Dec 20 is a very special lessons and carols service with special music and congregation carol singing (at the end of worship). The children's handbell choir will deliver their *first ever* bell performance!
- Christmas Movies on the lawn will be in the evening in the evening from 6-8pm on Sunday, Dec 20. Bring chairs, wear your masks, and enjoy movies on "the big screen."



- We celebrated Lee Ann's 20th Anniversary with FUMC. What a blessing she has been and continues to be to the children of FUMC, the Day School and our larger community. We love you, Lee Ann. You can see the video we made for her here: <https://youtu.be/AxKJzrWMayU>



- We will have three Christmas Eve services this year.
 - **Wednesday, Dec 23 at 7pm. Family-friendly Christmas Eve service.** We'll be outdoors and will use our new inflatable movie screen.
 - This one, being outdoors, won't have the limit on attendance that we'll have to maintain on our other two.
 - If you are flexible, please join us on the 23rd. It's the same message and amazing music from Sydney Ramon, Evie Pro Martinez, & Stephen Dillon and enchanting special music.
 - We'll have glow-sticks and sing *Silent Night* under the South Texas stars. Bring your own seating and wear your masks!
 - We will broadcast this on Facebook live.
 - We will give each family or individual a very special interactive devotional for New Year's Eve and Day.
 - **Thursday, Dec 24, Christmas Eve services at 5pm and 7pm.**
 - The services are identical: both traditional Christmas Eve services.
 - We'll sing carols, light candles and celebrate the coming of our Savior.
 - These will have a limit on attendance that we have on Sundays. With overflow, we can accommodate about 150 at each.
 - We will livestream both on YouTube.
 - We will give each family or individual and person a very special interactive devotional for New Year's Eve and Day.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES



Family Christmas Eve Eve Worship

Wednesday, December 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

Outside on the Church Lawn ~ Bring a chair or blanket

Christmas Eve Worship

Thursday, December 24th at 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

In the Sanctuary ~ Candles & Carols

- Sunday, December 27 - 10am. We will have ONE combined worship service at 10am.
- For those worshipping online, we'd love to give you a take-home interactive New Year's Eve/Day devotional. They will be available on Sunday, December 27, before the worship services, from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. (drive through the front gazebo and one will be handed out to you).
- If you can let us know which service you plan to attend, it would help us plan. This is such an unprecedented year that all the information you give us can help us know if we need to add a 4th service or if we have provided sufficient space.

Merry Christmas, church family. It's a gift to get to be #partofthefamily with you.

Pastor Laura

Let's stay connected church family | [FUMCmcallen.com](https://www.FUMCmcallen.com)

