



Epiphany Sunday Is January 3; Holy Communion To Be Served

This Sunday is Epiphany Sunday when Christians around the world remember the coming of the Magi to visit Jesus, bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The word *epiphany*, comes from the Greek word *epiphania*, which means appearance or manifestation.

The arrival of these visitors was a sign that the incarnation of God in Christ had been made known and was recognized by the heavens to the whole world, so that even Gentile wise men from the East came to pay him homage. This is an observance of great majesty, solemnity and awe.

The three gifts of the magi also have significance--gold symbolizing his kingship; frankincense (incense) symbolizing Jesus' deity or priestly role; and myrrh (an embalming oil) as a symbol of death.

An even more ancient Christian

celebration than Christmas, Epiphany originally focused on the nativity, God's incarnation (God made flesh) in the birth of Jesus Christ, and Christ's baptism.

United Methodists in the United States recognize Epiphany on the Sunday nearest Jan. 6, The sacrament of communion will be celebrated in St. John's UMC worship services on Sunday, January 3.

Youth Gathering Planned on Dec. 31

Student Ministries Director Leslie Albrecht has invited the FLOCK (St. John's youth members) to gather in a socially acceptable, masked way, on New Year's Eve, December 31, from 6-10 p.m. in the Community Life Building.

The traditional overnight lock-in held in past years has been modified this year because of COVID to include a movie, special activities, and perhaps use of the patio area, depending on the weather.

"I've really missed seeing my FLOCK," Leslie said. "This gathering will provide an opportunity to see one another, have fun, and enjoy refreshments but still get home in time to celebrate the arrival of the new year with their families."

In an email to all youth and their parents, Leslie wrote: "If you are feeling sick, have been directly exposed to someone with COVID or have either tested positive, been asked to self isolate, or have recently tested without receiving results, please stay home and we will see you another time."

Please contact Leslie Albrecht at 361-537-7199 to confirm participation.



"Do this
in remembrance
of me."

All are welcomed to participate in Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month. Because of the continuing pandemic, worshippers who want one or more pre-filled cup/wafer packages to use at home during the online service may pick them up on Sunday from 8:45-9:30 am in the front parking lot.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Launching into a God-Promised Future With New Energy

Happy New Year! There has been a lot of talk about 2020 being such a difficult year and that people couldn't wait for 2021 to get here.

It seems that 2021 does carry more promise than we've seen in 2020. There are vaccines on the horizon that should stem the tide of the coronavirus pandemic as we get into the mid and latter half of 2021. I imagine that nearly all of us are tired and weary of isolating ourselves from other people, and not being able to be together in some of the same ways that we are used to. Many of us significantly muted our holiday celebrations this year for those reasons.

As I have followed the news and certain blog sites about the place of the church in all of this and as I've had conversations with pastors and consultants and all kinds of people, sometimes there are threads of fear and gloomy prospects for churches.

I get that, and it is easy to understand why. Most churches have been operating at only a fraction of their capacity for worship and other activities. Finances have been challenging. Churches have had to cancel and curtail what we see as life giving ministries to the world. All of that can be considered gloomy and scary in regards of looking to the future. However...

The God who has called us to be a beacon of wonderful light to a dark world does not possess or encourage a spirit of fear or gloom. I know this from experience in my own life, and in the lives of churches I have been fortunate enough to serve. Even if I didn't know that, God tells us that is the case.

Examples:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." – Isaiah 41:10

"Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid." – John 14:27

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." – 2 Timothy 1:7

There are plenty more where those come from! So, what are we to do?

We could choose to worry and fear, wring our hands, lament the past, and project the worst onto the future. But as people of faith we are called to do some very simple things that include none of that.

I feel like we have a very unique opportunity, perhaps unlike few opportunities in our lifetime. We have some downtime to pray, prepare, and launch our lives and the life of our church into a God-promised future.

The simple things we are called to do are to **love our neighbor as we love ourselves** and to be about assisting God in building God's preferred future for all people by making, baptizing and launching disciples into the world to love others. No one is disqualified.

For us here at St. John's we have a leg up. We've been working on this already. We have four areas of engagement that we have committed to as a result of our work with church growth consultants, The Unstuck Group.

We have teams of people who have committed to four specific areas:

1. Improving the Sunday Experience with a mind toward reaching new families.

2. Building a Family Ministry for all ages by increasing the quality and quantity of our student and children's programs and adding to our existing small group ministries

3. Improving our overall internal and external communication strategy with an active communication team.

4. And streamlining our leadership teams in order to become more nimble to change, requiring fewer meeting to make decisions and releasing valuable disciples from meetings to serve in areas that actually can foster growth in our fellowship and in our outreach to the community.

If you have ever said something to yourself or someone else like, "If we don't do (fill in the blank), we are not fulfilling our mission," then we need you to help us move from talking about those things, to serving in one of these areas and helping prioritize the order of those activities.

The idea is that we get these four areas working well and then prioritize additional things. And the fact is we are not a large enough organization that most of us can sit on the sidelines and watch. We need you!

For my part, during January, I will host a series of meetings, both Zoom and in-person, to present to all of you the details of a simplified leadership structure that reduces the number of people required to serve in an administrative committee capacity. I wrote about this in the November Steeplenotes. (See additional information on the next page.)

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Launching

(Continued from Page 2)

Our goal is to craft this structure to specifically address our unique circumstances and to adopt it in March.

I am hopeful that every single person who calls St. John's United Methodist Church home will commit to attending one of four sessions to learn about this, ask questions, and offer suggestions (Sessions are tentatively scheduled for January 8, 13, 18 and 30).

Adopting this policy will require a vote of the entire membership of the church in March.

When leadership moves to the simplified, accountable leadership structure, the church begins to intentionally align all its resources to the congregation's mission and unique vision. Those resources include such things as time, energy, people, facility, budget, and calendar.

This change will allow more lay people to devote time to doing hands-on ministry, rather than committing to simply serving on administration committees.

The structure could reduce the number of planned administrative meetings from 40 meetings per year to 12 meetings per year. It's a more fluid structure for decision making and empowers people to do the work Christ calls us to do. The meetings will be regularly scheduled, and will be open to the congregation, except when personnel discussions are addressed.

The post-COVID pandemic world at St. John's will and should look quite different. My hope is that we will launch out of this fallow season into a season charged with new energy and commitment to our neighbors and fertile ground for our future ministry.

Peace,
Pastor Wade



So what keeps YOU up at night?

New teaching series begins January 3!

Sure, sometimes it's the flu or a barking dog or crying baby. But we're not just talking about loss of sleep, we're talking about loss of peace. We want to figure out how to deal with our nocturnal nagging. And the worry that stays with us all day.

What difference does faith make?

What do I tell myself when I start freaking out about my kids? My health?

My finances? The past? The future?

How do I get more of God's peace and presence?

Share what keeps YOU up at night by emailing Pastor Wade @ wade.sjmethodist@gmail.com.

Join us in this NEW teaching series beginning Sunday, January 3, 2021, as we explore how God can help us overcome our sleepless, restless nights (and other moments!).

Sessions Planned for Congregation Regarding Simplified Leadership Structure

Pastor Wade Lindstrom will schedule several Simplified Board Structure information sessions during the month of January. Times and venues (whether in-person or on Zoom) have yet to be determined. Please look for information in the church's Constant Contact email message sent weekly.

These will be open meetings for church members to learn more about the new proposed leadership structure and to ask questions.



Karen Felts bags food for clients



Willard Haskell greets Food Pantry clients

Food Pantry Looks Ahead To Serving Our Community

Thank you so much for the support and generosity you have given your St. John's Food Pantry this year. It has been quite a journey for us all this past year, and we look ahead to a new and better 2021. It was a difficult decision to close the Food Pantry back in April, but we have been back open and serving our clients since October.

All of our clients are so appreciative that we are helping and supporting them not only this year, but in the past. Over the many years this pantry has been reaching out to the community, we have been the hands and feet of Christ in this manner. This means YOU have been the hands and feet of Christ!

Most of you know that we are a partner with the Coastal Bend Food Bank which enables us to keep our shelves stocked. We are able to purchase, at a discounted rate, canned fruit, canned meat, jars of peanut butter and jelly, and various non-perishables like rice, macaroni, and cereal. However, we sometimes run low or the Food Bank is out of certain items.

Here are a few items we could really use this month:

- 1 or 2 pound bags of pinto beans
- 12 or 16 ounce jars of peanut butter
- Canned pasta (like ravioli, Spaghetti'os, etc.)
- Canned soup
- Boxed mac 'n cheese

St. John's UMC Prayer List



Please pray for those who are on the Prayer List. After 30 days, names on the prayer list will be removed. Please submit another prayer card or call the church office at 991-4342 if you would like to add someone or return someone to the prayer list. [Emergency messages to Pastor Wade---960-4021]

Grieving: Family of Margaret Earle (mother of Leslie Albrecht); Family of Mike Glover (brother of Debi Francis and Pam and Brenda Glover).

Recovering at Home: Tom Niskala, Roseann Zammiello, Cathi Garza

Our Church
 Coronavirus Victims
 and Families
 President Trump
 President-Elect Joe
 Biden
 US Military
 World Leadership
 All School Teachers
 All Parents and
 students
 Children's Learning
 Center
 CC Metro Ministries
 The Wenholz House
 Katherine Anderson
 Bruce Armstrong
 Adela Balderas
 Phillip Balderas
 Cassie Barber

Robin Blue
 Melissa Brownlee
 Tyler Brownlee
 Evalynn Bunk
 Jeff Caravantes
 Marcia Caravantes
 Tammy Cardwell
 (Kerrville--
 granddaughter of
 Suzy Shepard)
 Margo Chapman
 Margo C.
 Josh W. Cox
 Dana D'Amore
 Mike Dailey
 Jan Decovic
 Judy Forbes
 Robert Garza
 Glover and Francis
 Families
 Joe H.

Fay Haggerty
 Kathryn Heslep
 JoAnn Holland
 Elle Silvas Holloway
 Hopkins Family
 Deborah Jacobs
 Jinnette Family
 Elene Johnson
 Hydie Johnson
 Jack Johnson
 Stacia Johnston
 Phyllis Jones
 Ann Jordan
 Margaret K.
 Mimi Keen
 Charlotte Kunc
 Tommy Lewis
 Mathews Family
 Jeanne Mayes
 Tom Moore

Lee Narvarro
 Judi Oestreich
 Todd Olson
 David Olson
 Roma Onwiler
 Chris Oxley
 Mike P.
 Dolores Pace
 Jack Pace
 Roger Pigott
 Jenna Purdy
 Dottie Ramella
 Amy Ramsdell
 Sue Rees
 Mary Lee Ress
 Rilla Roots
 Kelly R.
 Kelly S.
 Fay Sassman
 Ivan Shaver

Lyneve Shaver
 Suzy Shepard
 Susan Skidmore
 Teresa Smith
 Cindy Straub
 Richard & Angela
 Strong
 Terrie & Marie
 Charles Teas
 Earlene Thorne
 Sara Tucker
 Dorothy Tullos
 Family of Jamie Ward
 Kimbo Ward
 Davris White
 Betty Wilson
 Beverly Wilson
 Doug & Sharon
 Winnek
 Mary Lee Woodson

Celebrating Advent and Christmas Eve

All four Sundays in Advent (Nov. 29-Dec. 20) were observed in the Community Life Building (CLB), as well as Christmas Eve services in both the CLB and the Sanctuary. In-person attendance at the 10 a.m. Sunday morning services since October has averaged about 50, while attendance on Christmas Eve was about 65 in each of the two services. Special thanks to both worship teams for their help in decorating both worship spaces.



(Above: Pastor Wade leads Christmas Eve worship in the Sanctuary, the first time back in this space since last March; Amanda and Harley Mathews and Tonya and Mariah Delk participate in the Advent Wreath liturgy and candlelighting; organist Marcia Caravantes plays Christmas hymns; Madeleine Bryce and Dorothy Pallotti share their beautiful music; in the CLB; worshippers hold lit candles as service ends.



A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Gracious Father,

Thank you for your great love and blessing over our lives. Thank you that your favor has no end, but it lasts for our entire lifetime. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting that you are intimately acquainted with all of our ways, that you know what concerns us, and you cover us as with a shield. We ask that we would walk in your blessing and goodness today...that your face would shine on us...that you would open the right doors for our lives and for our loved ones...that you would close the wrong doors and protect us from those we need to walk away from.

Establish the work of our hands and bring to fulfillment all that you have given us to do in these days. We pray that you would make our way purposeful and our footsteps firm out of your goodness and love. Give us a heart of wisdom to hear your voice, and make us strong by your huge favor and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Children at Bokenkamp Enjoy Decorating Cookies

By Rick Darst

It has been a unique year for my family, my church family, and Bokenkamp Children's Center. A month ago, we had no idea how to continue St. John's annual gift giving to children and teens residing at Bokenkamp. This pandemic eliminated our normal year for aligning children with presents.

Fortunately, the idea for decorating Christmas cookies arose and was complimented with great ideas on how to decorate with items to colorfully adorn the cookies. We believe the Bokenkamp children again felt love from a nearby church filled with loving souls.

We thank the anonymous donor who mailed in a donation for the Bokenkamp cookies. Many donated to the cause. Nancy Busby gave 2 dozen cookies which brought the total to 26 dozen while Jean Shivers, Cindy Hopkins, and Elaine Harpine contributed funds to buy the rest from HEB. Several of our congregation (Carolyn Pence, Mable Phippen, and Tammy Longino among others) donated specific items like icing, frosting and various sprinkles and other cookie toppings, plus paper goods and plastic ware. We deeply thank Ms. Claudia Robledo at Bokenkamp Children's Center for giving permission to make these gifts possible. She let us a few feet inside the front door and yes, we all wore masks. It has been a unique year!



Above: Rick Darst and his son Nathan take inventory and display the items on their kitchen table.. Bokenkamp Director Claudia Robledo poses with the items that were delivered by the Darst family on December 23.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Lina Crumpler, Chris Staiger
- 2 Jake Patton
- 6 Johnny T. Davis
- 8 Harold Onwiler, Joyce Zimmerman
- 9 Sarah Carter, John Edwards
- 10 John Thurston
- 11 Alexis Nisbet
- 12 Kara Hahn, Patrick Taber
- 14 Brenda Glover, Austin Luker, Glenda Sanders
- 15 Kyla Beard, Robin Blue, Madison Phillips, Daniel Lindstrom
- 17 Eric Schwartz
- 22 Pam Glover, Ashley Steehler
- 27 Esmeralda Juarez
- 28 Bruce Francis, Mable Pippin, William Straub
- 29 Judith Edwards
- 30 David Shaffer
- 31 Elene Johnson

NOTE: If your name was omitted on the birthday list, or if you see other errors, please call Cathy McRorey at the church, 991-4342.

Thank You for Your Stewardship Pledges and Your Miracle Christmas Offerings

Dear Church Members:

Your generous response to the 2021 Stewardship campaign shows that 45 estimate of giving cards have been returned to date, reflecting a total of \$195,118. Church office staff report that cards continue to be received and tallied. The Finance Committee will be working on the 2021 church budget in the coming weeks.

If you have not returned your pledge, please continue praying about how you can support St. John's through weekly, monthly, or annual giving. God bless you for your continued stewardship.

This year's Christmas Miracle offering was designated to apportionments from St. John's to support Methodist ministries beyond the local church. Please respond to the special offering request by Friday, January 8, if possible. If questions, please call Pastor Wade.

Thy Kingdom Come's New Schedule

By Harley Mathews, Pastoral Intern

If 2020 was a year of perseverance, then 2021 is a year of pursuing. Pursuing a heart that loves God, hands that move with compassion, feet that walk in the ways of justice, and minds that meditate on Christ's unending love and grace.

Last month we got together and did some of the prep-work for that. We swept, mopped, changed light bulbs, detached unworking machines, and prayed over the space.

We integrated a permanent "prayer wall" that is chalkboard painted where we can create a space of permanence in our prayers. We removed things from the stage that haven't been used in years, and detail cleaned the hallway and bathrooms. We also reached out and had a new logo created for promotion and to be used at venues as well.

Why? As we learned at Advent, because company is coming. Jesus is coming, neighbors are coming, friends and people who are unsure are coming in 2021.

We made a commitment to seek out those who have felt abandoned by the church, or have had poor experiences with religion, as well as whole families of folks that grew up in the previously highly popular Christian hardcore movement from 2000 to 2010s. We are all adults now, with families, and those large crowds have them also. We have a place for them.

As St. John's as a family looks toward 2021, know that the Fellowship Hall will be utilized in various ways to serve the community. Know that we are praying and leaning into the mission of making disciples as we all belong, believe, and become who we truly are. It will stretch us, it will bless us, it may hurt a little, but with grace in our hearts, it is a worthy effort.

What will TKC look like? That is the joy of this article! We will have four points of contact every month.

Week 1 every month will be two songs recorded with a short devotional created for easily consumable content.

Week 2 will be our live service, with full music, a larger contextual sermon, communion, and fellowship.

Week 3 is our "circle pit" small group, which will fluctuate between online and in person as Covid-19 allows.

Week 4 will be creative ways to engage in physical outreach.

BELONG BELIEVE BECOME

SECOND SUNDAYS 7PM

**THY Kingdom
COME** 

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

TKCMINISTRIES

After looking at a series of options, we have chosen to walk through the Gospel of Mark together. Each of the 3 first weeks will center on a chapter in Mark until we finish it out strong.

I look forward to updating you with great news of how TKC is blessing our community. Mother Teresa said "we cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." While TKC is small, we are sure of our great love for each of you and a searching world.

Please reach out to me if you have questions, comments, or want to help in any way. My email is harley.sjmethodist@gmail.com and you can reach me at the church most weekdays from 1-5 pm.

Grace and Peace, Harley



Harley Mathews

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Because of technical problems experienced by the SN editor, digital photos furnished by the *Thy Kingdom Come* worship team showing "getting ready for company" activities mentioned in Harley's story could not be used in this issue. Please visit the TKC FACEBOOK page to view the photos posted there.

CHURCH CHATTER

Guidelines in Using Fellowship Hall...

Just a reminder to all who might schedule a meeting or activity in Fellowship Hall:

Our Children's Learning Center (CLC) uses the Fellowship Hall weekdays from 9 am-10:45 am and from 2:50 p.m.-4:45 p.m. for indoor play when it's too hot, too cold, or too rainy for the children to play outside. Our daycare teachers can't supervise pre-schoolers AND put away furniture at the same time.

If you use Fellowship Hall, please make sure that your group puts away everything before you leave. This includes ladders, trash, tables, and chairs.

Thanks for everybody agreeing to work together to keep our kiddos safe!

Reminder

ONLINE WORSHIP CONTINUES!

Join fellow worshippers on Sunday mornings at 10:50 a.m. for the 11 a.m. online worship service. Great sermon, beautiful music, and video clips. Tune in at 10:50 a.m. to enjoy online chat with fellow church members and friends near and far:

<https://sjmethodist.online.church/>
or
<https://www.facebook.com/SJUMC>

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Financial gifts given in memory, in celebration of, or in honor of family members, friends, and ministries are placed in St. John's UMC Memorial Fund. Current funds include Building, Choir, Youth, Scholarship, Worship, Care/Concern/Bereavement, Food Pantry, and Undesignated for general church needs. Your gift, in any amount, is sincerely appreciated.

In loving memory of Margaret Earle, mother of Leslie Albrecht and grandmother of Melanie and Natalie, undesignated gifts from Sam and Sue Windsor, Barb Benton, and Chris Garcia.

Also in loving memory of Margaret Earle, a gift to Youth Ministry from Dr. Gaylord and Sue Hoyt; a gift to the General Fund from Mary Jane Fox; and a gift to the Food Pantry from Dr. Charles and Glenda Sanders.

In loving memory of Jo Anne Wilshusen, an undesignated gift from Patricia Boyd.

St. John's United Methodist Church

5300 S. Alameda, Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Rev. Wade Lindstrom, Senior Pastor

(wade.sjmethodist@gmail.com; 361-960-4021)

Leslie Albrecht, Director of Student Ministries

Barbara Benton, Bookkeeper

Kim Bryce, Traditional Music Director

Marcia Caravantes, Organist

Brian Claunch, Sunday/Weekend Custodian

Adela Garcia, Children's Learning Center Director

Harley Mathews, Pastoral Intern/*Thy Kingdom Come (TKC)*

Adam Mathews, Worship and Online Technician/TKC

Cathy McRorey, Administrative Assistant

Hanna Patton-Elliott, Children's Director

Sharon Staiger, Nursery Director

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

Location: 5300 S. Alameda, Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Church Telephone: 361-991-4342

Church FAX: 361-991-1840

E-mail Address: st.johnsumccc@gmail.com

Website: www.sjmethodist.com

OFFICE HOURS: (until further notice) Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; Thursday, 9 a.m.-noon; closed Friday.

FOOD PANTRY: Open on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m.-noon.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER: Open 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Call Director Adela Garcia at 991-4780 if questions.

WORSHIP SERVICES: In-person worship at 10 a.m. Sunday in the Community Life Building and 11 a.m. online.

INFORMATION ABOUT STEEPLE NOTES

Steeple Notes, a monthly publication of St. John's United Methodist Church, is emailed to members and guests as a PDF document and is published on the church website. Printed copies are also available at the church. Deadline for the February 2021 issue is Friday, January 29, 2021.

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