Advent at First Church

The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning “coming” or “visit,” begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. This year, Advent begins Sunday, December 3, and we will welcome it with our annual Christmas Cantata at the 11 a.m. service. That morning, Minister of Music, Joshua Elder will be leading our Chancel choir, organ and a chamber orchestra in the Vivaldi classic “Gloria.” This beautiful worship service is not to be missed. The following Sunday, December 10, our youth choirs will be highlighted in both services with our annual Taste of Christmas festivities being held that same morning at 10 a.m. We’ll round the corner to Christmas Eve with our annual Christmas concert on Sunday, December 17 at 3 p.m. This festive concert features all aspects of our music program, from our kids’ choirs to our Chancel Choir, the Rejoicing Handbells and everything in between. Each performance is free and open to all, so it is a perfect time to invite a friend to First Church.

We’ll begin Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24 with a morning service featuring carol singing galore at 10 a.m., which will serve as our warm-up for the four evening services featured on page three of this newsletter. Our evening services kick off at 5 p.m. with our Family Service and will end with a bang (or a saxophone) with our inaugural Candle Light Jazz Communion Service at 11 p.m. Advent is always a special time at First Church and this year will give us all so much to look forward to from beginning to end!
Dear Friends,

I trust this will find you well and overflowing with not only leftovers but gratitude as well. The month of November has given us many times to reflect on our countless blessings and to experience new ones as well.

One of the new blessings for First Church, at least new within the last six years, was a meaningful Ecumenical Thanksgiving Prayer service. Five local congregations: Crossroads United Methodist Church, Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Orangewood Presbyterian, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, and First Church joined together for a wonderful service at St. Thomas church. Joshua Elder, our Music Minister, directed a combined choir. Pastor Kimberly Scott and I participated by leading readings. It was a spiritual feast for many who attended.

Another place of thanksgiving was the pledge campaign, which is running slightly ahead of last year. This is good news, both from a planning point of view and as an indication of a growing awareness of the spiritual benefits of being generous. The ministry of the church in God’s kingdom is financed by our gifts. Thank you!

We began the month with All Saints’ Sunday. In the past 12 months, 17 of our members have died, and of course, many others who were relatives of our members. On All Saints’ Sunday we had an opportune moment to reflect on the contributions all these people have provided for us and our congregation.

If you like pancakes, you had a good chance to indulge your appetite when our Junior Youth took over the Applebee’s just south of us on Camelback for a “Flapjack Fund Raiser.” Pastor Scott, her counselors, and most of the youth participated in this enjoyable event. The food was good, but the service was better. Thank you to all the helpers.

The Saturday after Thanksgiving saw a good number of our congregation take to the trails at North Mountain Park. It was a good way to burn off a few extra calories, but moreover, a great way to meet some others from the church. Be on the lookout for details of the next hike, which will come after Christmas.

Wishing You a Happy Thanksgiving,
Mike Pearson
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Advent Elves Needed!

Advent is a wonderful time at First Church. Wonderful and busy. We are always in need of eager volunteers to help in many different roles during the holiday season. Currently we are in need of people to help with our Taste of Christmas Event, the Birthday Party for Jesus, and Advent Decoration Tear-down. Since we are not above bribery, there will be doughnuts during the tear-down, and helping with Advent can count towards community service for our youth! If you are interested in helping, contact Stephanie Wallace at 602.263.5013, or stephanie@firstchurch.church.

Taste of Christmas, Sunday, December 10

Our Annual Taste of Christmas event will be held on Sunday, December 10, at 10 a.m. in Asbury Hall. Taste of Christmas is always wonderful opportunity to squeeze in some fun and fellowship during the busy holiday season. It’s one of the few opportunities that members who attend the 9 a.m. service get to rub elbows with the members who attend at 11 a.m. We’ll have an additional reason to celebrate as the Children’s choirs will be singing during both services that Sunday! We’re also adding a twist to this year’s event, as we are asking folks to donate two dozen of their very favorite holiday treats for us to serve. If you are interested in volunteering to donate goodies, or to help with the event that morning, contact Stephanie Wallace at 602.263.5013, or stephanie@firstchurch.church. Please plan on stopping in, having a bite and spending some time with your First Church friends.

Welcoming the Stranger. It’s What We Do

Please consider ushering or greeting on Christmas Eve. We anticipate crowds on December 24 so we anxiously await your name appearing on the sign-up sheets found in the Narthex. These services require more volunteers than usual. Both ushers and greeters will need to arrive 30 minutes prior to the service of your choice. The perk is parking should be available. Remember, ushers will work with others who are experienced….you will not be working alone.

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve

Family Service, 5 P.M.

This family friendly service is geared toward sharing the Christmas story with our children. We will sing our favorite Christmas Hymns, hear the Christmas story and even have a “Birthday Party for Jesus” immediately following the service.

Childcare is available.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service, 7 P.M.

Guaranteed to get you in the spirit! This service is led by our Chancel Choir and our magnificent pipe organ and is filled with traditional Christmas music. Childcare is available.

Candlelight Communion Service, 9 P.M.

A time of quiet celebration, this service focuses on the birth of our Savior, and the ultimate reason for His coming.

Christmas by Candlelight - A Jazz Service featuring Blaise Lantana

11 P.M.

We are excited to share that veteran musician and Valley jazz mainstay, Blaise Lantana, will be bringing her ensemble to First Church to bless us with her beautiful and voice and lead us in a time of singing while we celebrate the Newborn King! Christmas Eve in Phoenix just got a little cooler!
UPCOMING GROUPS AND EVENTS

APS LIGHT PARADE, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

Kick-off your Holiday Season with This Phoenix Tradition!

The 31st Annual APS Electric Light Parade will take place on Saturday, December 2 at 7 p.m. This parade is the perfect way to begin your holiday season, as you enjoy the marching bands, classic cars, and brightly lit floats. The parade route goes down Central Avenue, right past the church! This event is a fundraiser for both our Jr. High and our Girl Scouts, so you can support these wonderful youth programs while enjoying the lights, sights, and sounds of Christmas. Tickets for seats and parking are on sale now! Tickets for seats are $5, and parking costs $7. These tickets will sell out, so buy early to ensure that you get a chance to celebrate the season with a Phoenix tradition!

STARTING WITH THE PROMISE IN GENESIS

S.W.A.G Features a Returning Favorite for December Program

All adults are invited to the Second Wednesday Adult Group on Wednesday, December 13 in Asbury Hall at 11 a.m. Our presenter is the well-known and well-loved docent from the Phoenix Art Museum, Sherry Koopot. She will bring the art slides and story of “There is Something About That Name”. Lunch ($6) will follow her presentation. Please RSVP to the church office by noon on Monday, December 11 at 602.263.5013. Consider inviting your friends to this event. And yes, there will be two swag bags for the drawing!!

FIRST CHURCH MENTORS

First Church Answers the Call

In April of 2017, we had the desire to partner with a school district, as an outreach program. Immediately we spoke with one of our members, Scott Holcomb, who is also a board member for the Madison School District, and he graciously agreed to work with us. Mr. Holcomb introduced us to Kim Gullo, the coordinator of the OASIS Tutoring Program at Madison, an intergenerational literacy program for students in Kindergarten through 4th grade. Mrs. Gullo cooperated fully and worked with First Church to move us forward. All of the fall mentors have completed the OASIS training, and have begun mentoring in the school district. Our spring mentors will begin their work in January of 2018. Presently, we have a total of 19 dedicated mentors! On November 19, at the 9 a.m., and 11 a.m., services, Pastors Mike Pearson and Kimberly Scott gave a special prayer of blessing and thanksgiving for all First Church mentors. We praise and thank God that we are living out our Church’s vision - “Uniting our Lives with God’s Dream for the World”, by becoming involved in the community, to help students succeed!

-Marie Morais Garber, FUMC Mentor Coordinator/Lay Leader
The Eve Circle will be having our annual Christmas potluck on Thursday, December at 6 p.m., in the Centennial room. All women are invited. Please bring a dish to share and a white elephant gift to exchange. Our circle will also collect NEW socks and underwear (adult and youth) and postage stamps for distribution to our mission projects. The Beatitudes Circle will be meeting at 10 a.m. on Thursday, December 14, on the Beatitudes Campus, in the second-floor lounge of the North Plaza Building. They will have a short business meeting, then go to Elaine’s Fine Dining for lunch, which is also on campus.

COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAMS

Fry’s - [www.FrysCommunityRewards.com](http://www.FrysCommunityRewards.com). Connect VIP card to Phoenix First United Methodist Women, use NPO #80160. The UMW receives 4% of total spent using your VIP card. If you don’t have a computer or if you’re having trouble, just call their corporate office at 1.866.243.2333, option #3, give your VIP card #, and our NPO #80160, or Phoenix First UMW, and they will be happy to enroll you. **You don’t have to re-enroll in September if you’re already enrolled in 2017!**

Basha’s - use gift cards to purchase groceries. Purchase your initial gift card from UMW, add money to the gift card at Customer Service or at the checkout BEFORE ringing up groceries. You may use any form of payment. UMW receives 6% when adding to a gift card.

This is a prayer from the Prayer Calendar that UMW uses. "**God of grace, thank you for all the ways you bless us and allow us to be blessings for others.**" This prayer was submitted by Mary B Caruso-Yahne, deaconess, Lazarus Ministries, Kansas City, Missouri.

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**Thank You, Thank You, THANK YOU!!!**

The First Church Library Committee would like to thank members of the church, family, and friends for their help, support and determination in making the “Final” Book and Bake Sale a great success. As most of you know, it takes a monumental commitment from many people throughout the year to make this sale happen. Each week, Library Committee members would come in to sort and store books that were donated that week. The result of their effort allows funding for various church and community activities. The Committee especially wants to thank the group that came in at 7 a.m. on the Thursday prior to the actual sale to move the donated books from the storage areas and arrange them on the tables. We also want to give a “SPECIAL THANKS” to Gail Reiley and Elizabeth Vick for their organization, decorations and contagious smiles for the Bake Sale. These ladies gave us their “special” touch. We also want to acknowledge the bakers for sharing their favorite family treats and those that purchased and enjoyed those goodies. Together we have all made a difference.
Each month, United Methodist Women collect basic items for families in need. It’s called “Just One.” If each of us would bring just one item, think how much that would be! This month they are collecting **lotion and chapstick**. Items may be dropped off at the UMW table on the patio or in the front office each Sunday morning.
Help Us Pick the Next WorKship Projects!

Is there a local non-profit agency or project that you enjoy working with? Would you like to see First Church lend them a helping hand? This year’s WorKship is scheduled for Sunday, March 11, 2018. WorKship is the one special Sunday where we focus on worship through service. We are looking for opportunities to expand our WorKship to reach further into the Phoenix community. Who or where would you like to see us serve? If you have a project in mind, contact Pastor Kimberly at kimberly@firstchurch.church.

Catching Up... how is the Family from Eritrea?

In January 2016, some dedicated members of our church assisted a refugee family from Eritrea including a mother and her four children. Trhas, Kamiliya, Milkias, Kebron and Kanari Yaine were met by some of those volunteers at the airport and taken to their fully furnished apartment. They had lived in a refugee camp in Ethiopia for six years before coming to the United States. Our volunteers kept in very close contact with the family for over a year and a half. The older two children were involved with our youth groups, and even participated in the mission trips. Now, the mother reports all is well. The family attends the Maranatha Ethiopian and Eritrean Church (part of the United Methodist System.) Trhas still has her night job cleaning, as well as doing hair braids for her neighbors. All of the children are attending school.

FOUNDATION CORNER

Required Minimum Distributions – Without the Tax

If you have a tax-deferred retirement savings account, you must withdraw a minimum amount (Required Minimum Distribution) each year once you reach age 70 ½. Affected accounts include traditional IRAs and qualified retirement accounts with a former employer. Distributions from an account funded entirely with deductible contributions are fully taxable as ordinary income. However, you may be able to have your RMD paid directly to a qualified charity, up to $100,000 annually, to satisfy your distribution requirement and not pay income taxes on that amount. Consider having that RMD paid directly to First Church for your pledge or for a special gift to the Church or its Foundation. Special rules apply to your first RMD, to retirement accounts funded with both deductible and nondeductible contributions, to inherited IRAs, and to other situations. In addition, if you don’t distribute enough to satisfy the full RMD, there may be a penalty equal to 50% of the shortfall. Consult your tax adviser and the holder of your account.
Don’t Forget to Order Your
CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Help proclaim the coming of Christ through the beauty of poinsettias in the chancel of the sanctuary. The cost is $15 each and the deadline for placing orders is **Sunday, December 17**. Return the order form below to the church office, or place it in the offering plate on Sunday with your check. Please leave poinsettias in place until the conclusion of your Christmas Eve worship service.

Please order _______ poinsettia(s)
Given by ______________________________
Phone ______________________________
In memory or honor (circle one) of ______________________________
Amount enclosed/attached $_________
_(donation of $15 per flower please)_
I will take my plant home _______
Please give plant to homebound member _______

GOOD NEWS
AT FIRST CHURCH
First United Methodist Church
5510 North Central Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85012

SUNDAY SERVICES
9 a.m. contemporary worship
10 a.m. classes for all ages
11 a.m. classic worship

church office: 602.263.5013
weekday school: 602.230.0646
web: firstchurch.church
email: Info@firstchurch.church
facebook.com/firstumcphoenix
facebook.com/weekdayschool
#FirstChurchPhoenix
Twitter: @FirstUMCPhoenix
Instagram: FirstChurch.Church
Livestream: Livestream.com/firstchurch

STAFF TELEPHONE EXTENSIONS
Mike Pearson 1102
Stephanie Wallace 1100
Jen Heffington 1101
Russ Morrow 1106
Robin Spencer 1107
Kimberly Scott 1108
Joshua Elder 1115