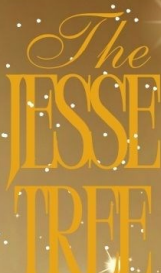




4TH SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



REV. SHERRI  
REYNOLDS



THE RETURN FROM EXILE  
EZRA 1:1-4

Changing Lives by Sharing Christ, Making Disciples, Serving People, and Giving Hope

### Sermon Notes: Thursday, Dec 18 and Sunday, Dec 21

The countdown to Christmas often invites us to consider some of the most unlikely of characters. Ezra 1:1-4 begins the story of the return of the exiles of Judah, and it starts with the unlikely King Cyrus of Persia. Cyrus' heart was stirred by God to allow the exiles to return home and rebuild the temple. Cyrus was not Jewish and likely did not have a relationship with God (Yahweh), but he was still part of the unfolding which would allow the return of the Jews and would be part of the events leading to Jesus' birth. Cyrus reminds us that we often find God's activity in the least likely of places.

As we quickly approach Christmas, pause and stop to notice God's work among us. Look for divine moments and miracles, which shout to the presence of God. Particularly focus on how these moments may come in the most unlikely places, people, and ways. In our seeking, we may find that *God with Us/Emmanuel* in the most unexpected.

Waiting for Christmas,  
Rev. Sherri

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### Worship Opportunities

**Thursday: Worship, 5:30 pm**

**Sunday Morning: Celebration\* - 9 am Chapel Traditions\* - 11 am Sanctuary**

\*In-Person and Livestream or On Demand

[www.fumcgadsden.org/media](http://www.fumcgadsden.org/media)

### Security for Thursday Worship

December 18: Bob Oltman December 25: No Service

### ACOLYTES

December 21: Volunteer

December 28: Luke Barnes and Brooks Bone

### Tech Team Schedule

**December 21**

**Celebration:** Mark Condra, Sheila Freeman, Rob Reynolds

**Traditions:** Mark Condra, Sheila Freeman

**December 28**

**One Service at 10:00 am:** Mark Condra, Bill Haller, Sheila Freeman



**Wednesday, December 24**

**Candlelight Worship**

**4 pm & 6 pm**

**Live Nativity**

**5 pm**

**Presented by FUMC Gadsden  
Student Ministries**

*The Live Nativity is given in memory of their mothers,  
Dora C. Payne & Mary Joyce Edwards,  
by Lucy and Chip Edwards.*

## Bible Studies & Small Groups for Adults

*There are Jesse Tree Devotion Books available for the Advent season. We hope you will join us on a journey through Advent using this devotion. You can read the devotion book or follow the Jesse Tree Devotions by email. Need to subscribe to the daily devotional or church news? Send your email to [fumc@fumcgadsden.org](mailto:fumc@fumcgadsden.org) and request to be added.*

### *What is a Jesse Tree?*

*A Jesse Tree is a symbolic representation of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, named after Jesse, the father of King David. It is used during the Advent season to illustrate the people, prophecies, and leading up to the birth of Jesus. Each day of Advent, a Bible story about someone from Jesus's family tree is read, and an ornament symbolizing that story is hung on the tree, linking the Old Testament to the coming of Christ.*

**Wonderful Wednesday Small Groups will resume on Wednesday, January 7.**

Join Rev. Sherri for a Bible Study based on **The Chosen (Season 3)** starting January 7. Each week will focus on a different episode with a Bible Study of the scripture behind the scenes and each week will stand alone, so you can plug in as your schedule permits. Classes will be at 11am and 6pm in Room 208. (Skipping February 18 for Ash Wednesday and April 1 for Spring Break/Holy Week). The classes will end at the church picnic in May.

## Wonderful Wednesday Dinner will resume on January 7.

**\$7 Per Person, \$3 age 11 & Under**

**Please text 256.490.5018 to make or change a reservation.**

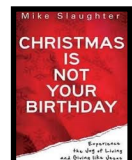
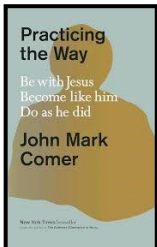
## Sunday School: New Advent Series

### Transitions 10 am, Room 209

Advent Study: Christmas is Not Your Birthday by Mike Slaughter

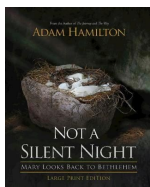
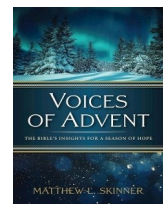
**A new adventure begins January 11th in Room 209! You are invited!**

Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer—The disciples spent 3 years being apprentices to Jesus. They watched His every move and hung on every word. They were with Him 24/7. As a result, they, over time, became more and more like Him and began to do many of the things He did. With the Spirit's help, with John Mark Comer as our guide, and with each other as encouragers, we too can learn to walk in Jesus' steps.



### Pathfinders/Seekers 10 am, Room 208

Voices of Advent – The Bible's Insights for a Season of Hope  
by Matthew L. Skinner



Living Waters 10 am, Room 116

Not a Silent Night Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem – by Adam Hamilton

## “Men at the Well” Thursday Mornings, 7:00 am

You are invited to join the weekly Bible study with the “Men at the Well” at the 278 Restaurant.

**Contact Todd Rains, Mark Condra, Mark Casey, or any of the Men at the Well for more information.**



## ELC NEWS

Thank you to all our families and friends that attended the annual Christmas program. What a fun joyous time! The ELC is now on Christmas Break and will return to normal hours on Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>.

Helene Haller



## Youth

Sunday School  
10 am, Room 211

## Wonderful Wednesday

Youth Group, 6:00 pm  
Will resume on Jan 7.

Live Nativity, December 24,  
5:00 pm

*"Let's Build a Solid  
Foundation!"*

Matthew 7:24

**Wonderful Wednesday Dinner: will resume on January 7**

**\$7 per person \$3 Age 11 & Under**

*Please text 256.490.5018 to make or change a reservation.*

# Children's Ministry

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
ACOLYTES**

ALL ACOLYTES ARE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH  
SERVICES TO LIGHT THE CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLES.

4:00 & 6:00

**GFUMC CHILDREN'S  
December Unit**

**Wednesday's  
JOY STORY at 6:00**

**WEEK 1** Jesus is the Savior  
GOD PROMISED.

**WEEK 2** GOD SENT JESUS AT THE  
Perfect Time.

**WEEK 3** JESUS BRINGS  
Joy to the World.

**WEEK 4** JESUS IS GOD'S  
Greatest Gift.

**WEEK 5** Everyone is  
Invited TO WORSHIP JESUS.

**"My soul glorifies the Lord and my  
spirit rejoices in God my Savior."**  
LUKE 1:46-47 (NIV)

## Wonderful Wednesday

Small Groups and Activities  
@ 6 pm

Fellowship Dinner, 5:15 pm  
Will resume on January 7.

## Sunday Mornings

Children's Church  
during worship, 9 am & 11 am  
Sunday school @ 10 am

Need more info?  
Katharine@fumcgadsden.org  
Mrs. Katharine Barnes  
Children's Director



## December Mission Focus



The Angel Tree

***You provided gifts for 38 children this Christmas. Thank you for your generous gifts this Christmas season!***

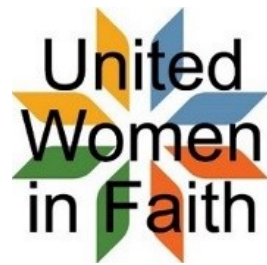
***The Mission Team***

### United Women in Faith

**December 14th, & 21st, 3rd & 4th**

**Sundays in Advent**

Shop at the UWF Christmas Boutique in Chestnut Street Lobby, between the worship services.



***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!***



**Christmas Boutique:**  
**Don't miss out ! The Christmas Boutique is open Dec 14th and Dec 21st. Something for Everyone on your list or spoil yourself ! Goodies; quick fix dips, soups cookie mix. Perhaps you would like tea, jams or Suzi's chutney? There is also jewelry, stocking stuffers, and so much more. There is a beautiful hand**

**carved cane that is being auctioned and the bids close at 12 on this Sunday ! Don't miss it !**

### GFUMC



*"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35*

### Ladle of Love

Fridays, 11:00am-12:00pm,  
at the Portico entrance.

***Volunteers are needed to serve on Ladle of Love Teams. Contact the church office for more information on how you can serve.***

**Clothes Closet Workdays**  
are Tuesdays before open days from 9:00-11:00 am.

**Open to Public**

**1st & 3rd Wednesdays**

**January open dates are 1/7 and 1/21**

**9:00 am to 11:00 am**

**516 Broad Street Gadsden**  
Find out more about mission and service opportunities @ [www.fumcgadsden.org/serve](http://www.fumcgadsden.org/serve)  
Phone: 256-543-8200

**Email:**

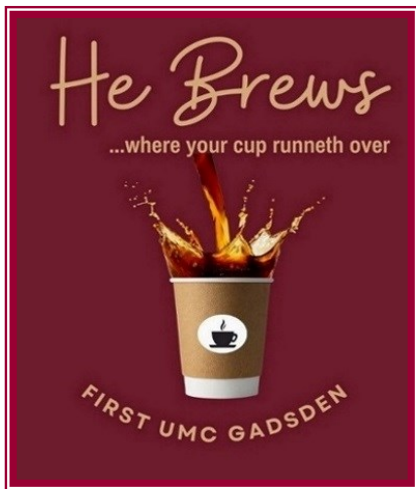
**[fumc@fumcgadsden.org](mailto:fumc@fumcgadsden.org)**

### Ladle of Love Clothes Closet

**November**

**LOL 502**  
**Clothes Closet 378**

**Thanks to our Volunteers!**



Follow us on  
Facebook and Instagram.



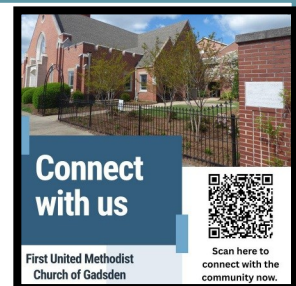
**HeBrews Coffee Café 10 am, Chestnut Street Foyer**  
**We Can't Wait to See You There!**



You are invited to connect with the GFUMC Family in a new and exciting way. Connect through the church app today by scanning the QR code above. You will now be able to find groups and connect with Teams, Leadership Groups, Sunday school classes, UWF Circles and more within the App.

**Follow these steps to connect:**

- Scan the QR Code and Click the link.
- "Join" by creating your profile with a password in the app (use "continue with email").
- Discover your connections to the GFUMC church community, a smaller community (like UWF, choir, or Children's Ministry, etc.) or a small group (like a Sunday school class or small group) or a church leadership team. There are so many ways to connect!
- Request to join or accept an invitation to join.
- You are now ready to send and receive notifications, messages, notices, reminders, prayer requests, and more within your GFUMC connections.



## Greeters & Ushers for Worship

**Sunday, December 21**

**Celebration: Steve & Sherri Watson**

**Traditions: Leslie & Phillip Johnson, Lori Varner, Gail McNair, Grover Kitchens**

**Sunday, December 28**

**One Service: Vickie Handy and Helene Haller**



*If you would like to serve as an Greeter/Usher, please contact Susan Swann in the church office, email: [susan@fumcgadsden.org](mailto:susan@fumcgadsden.org) or phone: 256.543.8200.*

## “Building Upon a Solid Foundation,” our 2026 Generosity Emphasis



This has been a great celebration of generosity with estimate of giving cards being turned in and wonderful church-wide brunch. Thanks to all who made this special emphasis a success.

***As of December 70 estimate of giving cards have been returned with a commitment of \$480,328.00.***

There was also a great commitment to continue to support First United Methodist Church of Gadsden with prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

If you have not had an opportunity to turn in your estimate of giving card you may do so by placing your card in the offering plate, returning it to the church office, mailing it to the church office, or completing an online card (via the church app or website). The finance department will continue to receive those until the end of the year. Remember that your estimate of giving is held confidentially in the church finance office and is not legally binding. This is a commitment between God and you and helps the church plan for the coming year's budget. You should have received your *2025 Impact Report* in the mail. If not, please contact the church office. Hold on to this report and remember the impact that your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness have on the church, Gadsden, and beyond. We are making a difference by changing lives in the name of Christ!

Building a Firm Foundation,

Rev. Sherri Reynolds

**First UMC Gadsden**  
**is a registered charity and can receive**  
**donations through Venmo:**

**@FirstUMCGadsden**

(Please search in Venmo under charities  
or follow the link in the QR Code.)



**venmo**

Download our Church App  
Search First UMC-Gadsden  
In the App Store for Android or iPhone.



### Generosity: Ways to Give

In-person, at the offering time during worship.

Online: [www.fumcgadsden.org/give](http://www.fumcgadsden.org/give)

Text to Give: 256-344-8464

Venmo **@FirstUMCGadsden**

Mail your tithe or gift: 115 S. 5th Street, Gadsden, AL 35901



### Secure Online Giving



Scan the QR Code or  
Text to Give: 256-344-8464  
First United Methodist Church of Gadsden



## 2025 Advent & Christmas @ First UMC Gadsden

Thursday, December 18 5:30 pm - Thursday Worship Service

Sunday, December 21 - 4th Sunday of Advent

9:00 am - Celebration Worship

10:00 am - Sunday School; HeBrews, Chestnut Foyer

11:00 am - Traditions Worship



Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve, Church Office Closed

4:00 pm - Candlelight Worship

5:00 pm - Live Nativity

6:00 pm - Candlelight Worship



Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day

Church Office closed; No Thursday Worship

Friday, December 26 Church Office closed; No Ladle of Love



Sunday, December 28 1st Sunday of Christmas

10:00 am - One United Church Service

No Sunday School

Wednesday, December 31 New Year's Eve - Church Office closed at Noon

Thursday, January 1 New Year's Day - Church Office closed; No Thursday Worship

Friday, January 2 Church Office closed

### Year-End Giving Reminder

The church office will be open until 12:00 noon on December 31st for anyone wishing to submit tithes or gifts to be credited for 2025. Contributions may also be made through online giving or sent by U.S. Mail and must be postmarked by December 31st to receive credit for 2025.



#### Order Poinsettias for Advent and Christmas Worship Services

Cost: \$25 each \_\_\_\_\_ of Poinsettias \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Paid

Select Date: \_\_\_\_\_ December 24

*(Poinsettias will be placed in both Services)*

Select One: \_\_\_\_\_ in Honor of \_\_\_\_\_ in memory of

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Given by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

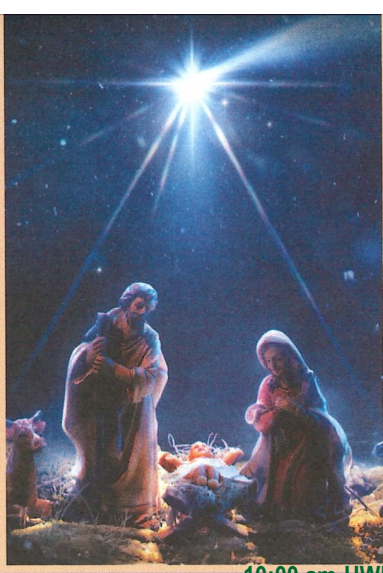
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# THE Christmas star STILL SHINES BRIGHT...

WHEN THEY SAW THE STAR, THEY REJOICED. MATTHEW 2:10



## First UMC Gadsden Dec 21-Dec 27, 2025

### Dec 21, Sunday

4th Sunday of Advent

9:00 am-Celebration, Sanctuary

10:00 am-UWF Christmas Boutique, Chestnut Foyer

10:00 am-HeBrews Coffee; Sunday School

11:00 am-Traditions, Sanctuary

### Dec 22, Monday

ELC closed

9:00 am-10:00 am-Exercise Group, Gym

2:00 pm-4:00 pm-Pickle Ball, Gym

### Dec 23, Tuesday

ELC Closed

### Dec 24, Wednesday

Office and Church Closed

4:00 pm-Candlelight Service, Sanctuary

5:00 pm-Live Nativity, corner of 5th & Chestnut Street

6:00 pm-Candlelight Service, Sanctuary

### Dec 25 Thursday

Office and Church Closed

No Thursday Worship

### Dec 26, Friday

Office and Church Closed

No Ladle of Love

The "White Christmas Offering" is received each year in United Methodist Churches (UMC) for Embrace Alabama Kids (formerly the UMC Children's Home) to provide care, homes, and hope for vulnerable children and families. Please mark your gift "White Christmas". More information is available at the entrances to the Sanctuary.

*In Memory for her Life  
Lynn Hawkins King  
December 13, 2025*



### Honorariums & Memorials

#### Ladle of Love Fund

In memory of Jane Herb, given by Butch Herb.

*The flower on the altar is placed  
in honor of the birth of*



*Sloane Grace Cassity  
December 11, 2025*

*Proud Parents: Susan & Jared Cassity  
Proud Grandparents: George & Jane Fant*

### Immediate Prayer Concerns

Jay & Taylor Dial & newborn infant James  
Maitland Adams Family of Lynn Hawkins King  
Andrew Swann (grandson of Danny Swann)

### Continued Prayer Concerns

Jackie Herlong Julia Lopez Dawn Rains Phillip Johnson  
Amy Epperson (Gene & Danna Dean's daughter)

### Birthdays

**Dec 21** Mikeal Martin, Matt Ross,  
Davis Varner, Dylan Guthery

**Dec 22** Julia Lopez, Jane Gargus,  
Caroline Long

**Dec 23** Russell Hopper

**Dec 24** Claire Wigley, Dr. Ross Isbell,  
Mary Ragan Whisenant

**Dec 25** Karen Harmon, Larry Hughes,  
Dawn Rains

**Dec 26** Kaity Dorsett, Lori Sokol,  
Victoria Mills, Morris Gladden

**Dec 27** Jon Hand, Belinda Tackaberry,  
Justin Gilbert

### Attendance Week of Dec 14 2025

In Person Total *331	On Line Total 742
Worship Total 1073	Thursday Worship *16
Celebration *44	Traditions *174/417
Bible Study Groups *22	Children Sun/Wed *34
Middle & Senior Hi Wed/Sun *16	UWF *25
Nursery Wed/Sun *10	
Children's Christmas Program *97/325	

### Year 2025 Week of Dec 14, 2025

General Offering Budget	\$ 12,400.00
General Offering Received	\$ 7,380.17
YTD Gen. Offering Budget	\$620,000.00
YTD Gen. Offering Rec'd	\$658,100.00

### Please excuse our progress!



Improvements  
are being made  
by the City of  
Gadsden to 6th  
St including

sidewalks and the entrance/exit for  
our parking area near the portico/  
greenspace. The use of the exit on  
6th St will be closed for  
approximately one week. Please  
remember, for those needing  
assistance, entrances at the ramp  
on Chestnut or the Courtyard doors  
are available.