



# December 2023



## Beacon...guiding our walk

**Our Mission:** We commit to living out the Truth of the Gospel through Spirit-filled worship and study, faithful fellowship and loving service, and to impact our world as followers of Christ sharing the Gospel.

**Our Vision:** A community of faith connecting and growing in Christ, transforming the world.

*Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness. Come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. —Psalm 100:1-2*

Greetings SUMC Friends and Family,

Advent has arrived. I'm ready. This season SUMC is focusing on Waiting as we prepare for the arrival of our King. Many of us aren't very good at waiting. Have you seen the cartoon entitled "Drive through Christmas?" Underneath the golden arches, there's a big sign: "McChristmas." The caption: "One 'Christmas Joy Combo' — super-sized. Hold the Advent." In the ancient Church, Advent was a time of abstaining from public festivity in order to prepare for the holy day of Christmas. The twelve days of Christmas didn't begin till Christmas Day. As unpopular as it may be, the 12 Days of Christmas still begin on Christmas Day. Waiting is important. It gives us time to not only think about what is to come but to prepare for it. Still, waiting is difficult. One thing I have learned is that God is not in a hurry. In fact, in the waiting, God is at work in our lives forming and shaping us to fulfill His desire for us. Will you trust this is true?

These days preparing for the waiting, I have been thinking about our Music Minister, Megan. God sent Megan at the very time Sebastian needed her. And in these nearly 14 years God has formed and shaped her ministry and the ministry of SUMC. In the waiting for what is next for her and for us at SUMC, I know that Megan has touched me. In the twenty-one months that I have been here, Megan has reinforced no less than three areas of how best to Praise God in the church amidst the waiting:

First, planning ahead...way ahead. Waiting does not mean inaction on our part, waiting means becoming prepared for all that God has for us next. Second, Megan welcomes and actively waits. No matter how good (or not so good) you are in music, you are welcome to give what you've got. She never waits for us to be good enough to sing or play, she takes us as we are, encourages, challenges and lifts us up and in the molding and rehearsing, and she waits patiently as we learn. Finally, for Megan, worship is more than a passion or a duty; worship is a way of life, a heartbeat, a necessity in the work of the church. Worship is waiting on the Lord with the best we have.

This preacher's prayer is always that in the waiting, we would be transformed, changed, by the work of Jesus in this season. Megan has been with SUMC for fourteen Advents. The work that Christ has done in her has changed her, made her more. Moreover, whether here for fourteen years or twenty-one months, the work Christ has done in Megan has changed us. **Thank you Megan for your faithfulness to God and to the ministry of this congregation, you are a blessing.** May you be blessed as you embark on your next chapter of God's call on your life, planning, welcoming and worshipping with joy and with integrity. *We can hardly wait! And for SUMC...you just wait. God has more for us too.*

Megan will be sorely missed.  
With more love than you know...Joy, Joy, Pastor Alexis



*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

For my final Beacon article, I want to leave you with a reprint of one of my favorite hymns. I want you all to know how much you have blessed me on my journey. I feel so fortunate to have made so many wonderful friends that I am now able to call family here at SUMC. Thank you for the opportunity to serve God in Sebastain, to take risks, and to grow together.

Advent is my favorite season. One way to help embrace Advent is to use an Advent hymn as part of your devotional time. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is a very rich text that could be used. This hymn has an interesting history. The text comes from the O Antiphons which originated in the 8th century. An antiphon is a verse, usually from Scripture that is said or sung responsively. One antiphon was sung at Vespers prior to the *Magnificat*, the Song of Mary, each of the seven days leading up to Christmas. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the number of antiphons could be as many as twelve. Composers throughout history have used individual antiphons to create a single piece of music. The seven antiphons in order are; O Wisdom, O Sacred Lord, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O King of all the Nations, and O Emmanuel. Notice that what is the final antiphon is most common to us as the first stanza of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." This order is important because when read from last to first in Latin, the first initial creates the acrostic *ero cras*, which means, "I will be present tomorrow." This reveals the promise of Christmas and the promise that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Each antiphon has scripture that is associated with it (see chart below for scripture references). These passages are related both to Christ's birth as well as the second coming.

The tune for "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" was originally thought to have been copied from a French Missal by John Mason Neale, a well-known hymn translator of the nineteenth century. Another theory about the tune suggested that Thomas Helmore had written the tune and presented it as being a French chant. However, in the 1960's the original chant was found in the Paris National Library. The tune originally had no association to Advent but was instead used as a funeral litany for saints. Carlton Young writes, "Perhaps it is a measure of Helmore's genius that he detected in this melody an appropriate Advent sound as well, one which conveys an unmistakable sense of solemn expectancy, not only for the Nativity of Christ, but also for his Second Coming as judge and as savior." The change of the music in the refrain highlights that the refrain is not part of the original text but added later. I invite you to use this hymn as part of your devotion the week before Christmas to help prepare your heart to receive anew the birth of the Christ Child.

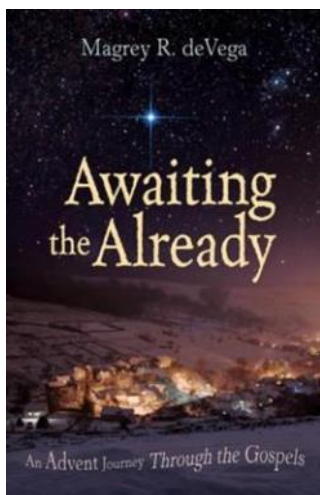
Antiphon	Old Testament	Gospel	New Testament
O Wisdom	Isaiah 11:2-3 Proverbs 8:1-36		
O Sacred Lord	Exodus 19-20 Isaiah 63:11-14		
O Root of Jesse	Isaiah 11:1,10		Romans 15:12
O Key of David		Matthew 16:19	Revelation 3:7-13
O Dayspring	Isaiah 9:1-7, 60:18-20	Luke 1:78-9	
O King of all the Nations	Isaiah 2:1-4 Daniel 7:13-14		Ephesians 2:11-22
O Emmanuel	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23	



## **SUNDAY MORNING, 8:45 AM – Prior to 10:00 AM Worship**

***God Abides*** – Winter Adult Bible Studies, by Dr. Rita B. Hayes Facilitator, Ben Ashton – Large Classroom  
This study helps us grow our faith and transform our lives.

## **TUESDAYS IN DECEMBER, 10:00 am – JOIN ONE OR ALL CLASSES**



Each Gospel, in its own way, leads us on the Advent journey of preparation for Christ's coming. *Awaiting the Already*, originally released in 2015, takes a tour through the four Gospel narratives that announce Christ's birth or make way for his ministry. Readers will discover what parts of the Christmas story come from which Gospel, recognizing an invitation from each Gospel writer to prepare for a fresh experience of Christ in the past and the future.

This five-session study includes four sessions for each week of Advent and one for Christmas. Each chapter provides questions for reflection or discussion, a brief prayer, and a focus for the upcoming week.

Magrey R. deVega is the Senior Pastor at Hyde Park United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida. He is the author of ten books. He has contributed to numerous preaching publications and has been the featured speaker at conferences throughout the country. He is a graduate of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, and Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida.

## **DECEMBER - 10:00 am SUNDAY WORSHIP AND MUSICAL EVENTS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS**

### **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 3 (Holy Communion)**

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 11:1-9; Mark 13:24-31

SERMON: ***Why Wait?***

### **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 10**

Megan's Gratitude and Farewell Event (following worship)

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 30:15-16, 18-26; James 5:7-9

SERMON: ***Wait a Minute***

### **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 17**

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke 3:3-6

SERMON: ***Expect To Wait***

4:00 PM - ***The Songs of the Season*** Christmas Concert

### **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 24 – Christmas Eve Morning**

***Our Choir Cantata***

### **CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT AND HOLY COMMUNION – 7:00 pm**

SCRIPTURE: Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

SERMON: ***Worth the Wait***

### **FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 31 – Megan's Last Sunday**

***A Service of Lessons and Carols***



## NEW THRIFT SHOP HOURS

**Thrift Store Hours Monday - Thursday- Friday - Saturday**

**Boutique in the Bay Hours Thursday - Friday - Saturday**

10 am to 2 pm

***Stay tuned for upcoming sales!***

*Carol Decker & Teddy Hulse,*

*Thrift Shop Coordinators*

*Ginger Horner, Thrift Shop Scheduler*



IT IS THAT TIME OF THE YEAR "MAGIC IN THE AIR AND LOVE EVERYWHERE"  
SO ENJOY EVERY MOMENT -- MAKE IT LAST ALL YEAR!!

Our annual fundraiser- "TIS THE SEASON BAKERY AND CRAFT EXTRAVAGANZA  
is Saturday December 9th time 9 AM to 3 PM

Our "SWEET SHOP" is filled with the most DELECTABLE homemade bakery items.

We have a lunch counter serving homemade chicken salad sandwiches--- egg salad sandwiches  
and hot dogs. All are available for sitting around a table and enjoying. Drinks - hot and cold.

Bakery items are in lovely packaging and can be easily frozen for Christmas Dinner.

If you are a baker and would like to bake some goodies that would be wonderful. (bring to fellowship  
hall on Friday December 8th) Otherwise PLEASE COME EAT AND SHOP WITH US.

We have over eight ARTISANS that will be selling their crafts and works of art Great place to shop  
for Christmas.

There is a SPECIAL ARTISAN--THE HOOKERS AND STRIPPERS RUG GROUP they will be giving  
demonstrations on the art of RUG HOOKING. TRULY AMAZING -They made the piece hanging in  
the fellowship hall. They have also donated items for our silent auction. Lots of AWESOME ITEMS  
on Silent Auction table (again great Christmas gifts)

By shopping with us, you will be supporting HIBISCUS CHILDREN'S CENTER- (40 YOUTH at  
present) we provide SOCKS WHICH ARE ALWAYS NEEDED, washcloths, etc. and gift cards. And  
this year we have 2 families we are adopting for Christmas. One family has an 8 year old girl. The  
other family has 3 teenagers (2 girls and one boy)

We appreciate all you support and LOVE. MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL and TO ALL  
A PEACEFUL and A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

MARY'S CIRCLE LADIES



### It's time to grow again.

As we continue to grow in Spiritual Maturity and Leadership here at Sebastian, your Administrative Board is calling us to focus on prayer in two areas of ministry listed in our Mission Statement. The call is to intentionally pray to expand and enhance these areas over the next 18 months: **Spirit-Filled Study** and **Faithful Fellowship**. Please let Teddy Hulse, Admin. Chairperson, or Pastor Alexis know if you are sensing a call to work in or lead one of these areas (we are grateful for those who teach and those who provide for Fellowship Café and Potluck, already). If you would like to serve in any of these areas, please call the church office and we will connect you with those chairpersons.

### Spirit-Filled Study (Discipleship)

**Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.** (Matthew 28:19-20)

Spirit-Filled Study is Discipleship...becoming more spiritually mature. Every person who has a relationship within the body of Christ has the opportunity to be a growing disciple of Jesus Christ. From a biblical scholar to the uninformed searcher, we are all somewhere on the journey of faith whose destination is eternity. This journey doesn't just happen; it takes a level of intentionality, organization, and commitment. This ongoing process enables people to grow in forgiving and serving others, in living a God-honoring lifestyle, in walking with God through difficult times, in having Godly balance in their lives. Spirit-Filled Study includes Small or Covenant Groups; Bible Studies; off or on campus seminars; Lay Servant classes; District trainings and more; Church-wide planning, goal setting, Sunday School.

### Faithful Fellowship (Hospitality and Outreach)

**But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)**

Jesus, gladly welcomed children, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, and all sorts of sinners into His fellowship. As followers of Jesus, we are able to offer Faithful Fellowship by our desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are among us and those who are strangers, so that they find a spiritual home with us and the blessing of relationship with and through Jesus Christ. This is Koinonia, real love for and desire to share with others. Faithful Fellowship includes Fellowship Café, Potluck Suppers, and other ways of connecting with each other and the community, the Nurture Team and the New Membership Classes, Trunk or Treat, Spring event.





## CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Life Care, December 14, 10am

Pelican Gardens,

December 16, 10:45am

Certus, December 21, 10:10am

See Megan or Kathi White if you are interested. Meet at church at the time listed above.



## POT LUCK WILL START AGAIN IN JANUARY



**NEXT STEWARDSHIP MEETING, WEDNESDAY, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

### HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED:


**Time/Talent**: Pick up our ministry descriptions on the table in the Sanctuary or in the office. Join in on one or two of the 20 ministry opportunities at SUMC. There is a place for you.

**Treasures**: It's **NEVER** too late to turn in your Commitment Card. Let's give together to reach our others in the name of Jesus.

*Stir the goodness of God by contributing your time, talent, treasures to God's ministry at Sebastian...*  
***Growing in Generosity. Rooted in Faith***



# December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 10:00 am— 2 :00 pm Thrift Shop	2 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop
3 8:45 am Adult Bible Study (LCR) 10:00 am Worship 11:15 am Fellowship Café Birthday (FH) 1:00 pm Brass (S) 2:00 pm Tree Decorating	4 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop 12:00 pm SPRC Meeting (parsonage)	5 10:00 am Pastor's Bible Study (LCR) 12pm UMM Woody's	6 3:00 pm— Joyful Ringers (S) 7:00pm— Handbells (S)	7 10:00 am— 2:00pm Thrift Shop 1:30 pm Worship Meeting (CO) 7:00pm Adult Choir (S)	8 10:00 am—2:00 pm Thrift Shop	9 9:00 am—3 pm Tis The Season 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop
10 8:45 am Adult Bible Study (LCR) 10:00am Worship 11:15am Farewell Celebration (FH) 1:00pm Brass	11 10 :00am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop	12 10:00am Pastor's Bible Study (LCR) 12pm UMM Pelican Diner	13 3:00pm— Joyful Ringers (S) 7:00 pm— Handbells (S)	14 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop 7:00 pm Adult Choir (S)	15 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop	16 10:00 am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop
17 8:45 am Adult Bible Study (LCR) 10:00am Worship 11:15am Fellowship Café (FH) 4 pm Songs of the Season	18 10:00am— 2:00 pm Thrift Shop 6:00 pm Admin Meeting	19 10:00am Pastor's Bible Study (LCR) 12pm UMM Riverwalk	20 3:00pm— Joyful Ringers (S) 7:00pm— Handbells (S)	21 Thrift Shop Closed 7:00pm Adult Choir (S)	22 Thrift Shop Closed	23 Thrift Shop Closed
24 8:45 am Adult Bible Study (LCR) 10:00 am Cantata 11:15am Fellowship Café (FH) 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Merry Christmas 	26 Office Closed	27	28 Thrift Shop Closed	29 Thrift Shop Closed	30 Thrift Shop Closed
31 8:45 am Adult Bible Study (LCR) 10:00 Lessons & Carols 11:15am Fellowship Café					S-Sanctuary, FH-Fellowship Hall, YR-Youth Room (north side of education wing), SG-Small Group Room (south side of education wing), CO-Church Office, LCR-Large Classroom (north side of education wing)	



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## Happy Birthday

Patricia Rogers	December 16
George Schulze	December 17
Eugene Nunez	December 27
Robert Kier	December 28

*Missing your birthday or anniversary?  
Call the Church Office to help us update your records!*