

150 YEARS
1875-2025



DECEMBER 2025

What is Advent about?

Advent is a season for anticipating what the world is becoming.

Ryan Dunn

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-advent-about>

It's the most wonderful time of the year, isn't it? A season ripened by anticipation. We're waiting for the big day to come—a day sure to be full of joy, reflection, and peace. Right?

You're likely thinking I'm alluding to Christmas

Day—which, in our United Methodist Tradition, we observe on December 25 (like most other Christian denominations). Culturally that seems to be the big focus this time of year. In the church, our congregations are preparing for their Christmas observances and celebrations. The time leading up to Christmas is known as “Advent.” It might jar some to learn that Advent only kind of partially has anything to do with Christmas.

It is a time of heavy anticipation. It focuses on waiting for a big occurrence. But the anticipated occurrence or

(Continued on page 2)



Merry Christmas

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event is not actually fully realized on Christmas. During Advent we're anticipating the full realization of something that began at the first Christmas (when Jesus Christ was born*) but isn't yet fully realized. Technically, Christmas begins on December 25.* Everything leading up to that date is Advent. And it's important to note that distinction so we can be fully mindful of the hope that faith speaks into our human experience.

**While observing Christmas on December 25 we don't actually claim that Jesus was born on December 25. We don't know the date of Jesus' birth. December 25 has become a culturally useful day for commemorating Jesus' entry into human history.*

What is Advent?

The word "advent" derives from the Latin "adventus," meaning "coming." During its earliest observances, Advent was 40 days of repentance, fasting, and prayer as new believers prepared for their baptisms. Oftentimes, these baptisms took place on the day of Epiphany—which is a day remembering the Magi's visit to baby Jesus; it was a celebration of Jesus' incarnation on Earth.

Later, Christians began tying Advent not just to Christ's incarnation, but to an anticipated second coming of Christ. Advent became a period for renewing the anticipation and longing for Jesus' return.

Today, Advent is a period of preparation for both "advents"—or arrivals—of Jesus. Lester Ruth, a professor at Duke Divinity School and a historian of Christian worship, offered this distinction for Advent: "The simplest way I have to distinguish between Advent and Christmas is that advent uses the word "come" as a longing petition, expressed in anticipation, whereas Christmas is a commemorative reflection on how the Lord has come in Christ's birth and thus the trigger for a new redemptive order has begun."

In our culture, the close ties to Christmas seemingly outweigh the anticipation of another "advent" of Jesus. We conflate the Christmas commemoration and the anticipation of Advent. Ignoring this "second coming" removes some of the urgency of our Christian call to enact God's love and justice on Earth.

What do we mean by "Second Coming"?

Most Christian creeds of faith contain some derivation of the following statement:

"Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead."

In The United Methodist Church, we affirm that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead as prelude to the revealing of the new creation.

So when Christ returns a renewed creation comes, too. This new creation is marked by the unity of Creator and created alluded to in the book of Genesis. In the New Testament, this renewed creation is aligned with freedom from death, sin, and decay. So the renewed creation takes the shape of a world without the bounds of death and liberated from the systems and actions through which humans tear themselves apart from one another and from God.



There's a lot of hope inspired by believing that such a world is possible. Advent is a season for reflecting on and renewing that hope.

What do we do for Advent?

It seems our Advent observances could benefit from a greater emphasis on the advent that is yet to come, and a diminished emphasis on the advent remembered in our Christmas celebrations (there's time for that when Christmas actually arrives). So how can we re-orient ourselves towards longing this Advent?

One of the ways we reflect on Advent in communal worship is by utilizing an Advent wreath—a simple wreath surrounding four exterior candles and one central candle. The four exterior candles represent the hallmarks of a renewed creation: joy, hope, peace and love. The central candle represents the presence of Christ. Each Sunday, one more of the exterior candles is lit. Finally, the Christ candle is lit as a reminder of Christ's ongoing presence. We, of course, can bring this practice home, creating our own Advent wreaths and contemplating our own longings for more joy, hope, peace, and love.

We also utilize music for reflection. Many songs communicate our Advent longings. Unfortunately, these songs are overshadowed during this season by songs that are explicitly Christmas-themed. Take a listen to some more Advent-aligned songs, listening for the expectations and longings they communicate. [Check out our Advent playlist](#) (with more input from Dr. Ruth).

Devotionals present weekly or daily opportunities for an explicit focus on a topic. Our friends at [UpperRoom.org](#) offer a [free daily devotional](#) that is Advent-focused during this season. Our friend Shane Claiborne also recommends [CommonPrayer.net](#). [It offers daily prayers](#) speaking into our Advent expectations during this season.

Ryan Dunn is the Minister of Online Engagement, Rethink Church, in Nashville, TN. Ryan is an ordained deacon in The United Methodist Church.

2025 October Budget Summary

The Finance Committee appreciates your contributions and donations. With your support we will be able to continue sharing God's love with those around us.

Income

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Total Income: | \$37,348 |
| Change in Payables: | <u>\$4,041</u> |
| Total Income: | \$41,389 |

Expenses

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Church Programs: | \$1,184 |
| Finance: | \$425 |
| Church Administration: | \$1,460 |
| Facility Maintenance: | \$9,457 |
| Personnel: | \$22,495 |
| Conference Apportionments: | <u>\$3,256</u> |
| Total Expenses: | \$38,277 |

Income Over Expenses: \$3,112

The budget for 2025 is **\$500,000** which, divided evenly, makes each month's goal \$41,667 rather than being weighted differently throughout the year.

Thank you for your loving generosity in keeping this church operating! Only with the generosity of our congregation have we been able to weather the storms of the past and even the storms that will inevitably come.

December Birthdays

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 5 Gay Hammond | 13 Amie Kendrick |
| 7 Hudson Haile | 15 Pascale Daniel |
| 10 Beth Wise | 22 Carl Breznik |

December Anniversaries

| |
|-------------------------|
| 2 Dennis & Sherry Gant |
| 27 Joe & Gloria Kendall |
| 30 Don & Pam Smith |



A Different Gospel: How Christian Nationalism Distorts the Way of Jesus

October 10, 2025

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/a-different-gospel-how-christian-nationalism-distorts-the-way-of-jesus>

"I'm shocked at how quickly you're abandoning the God who by the grace of Christ called you. You are turning to a different kind of gospel that isn't gospel at all!"

– Galatians 1:6–7

Paul's warning to the Galatians could just as easily be written to the American church today. In our time, a different gospel has captured the imagination of millions, a gospel not of grace, but of grievance; not of love, but of power. It calls itself Christian, but it bears little resemblance to Christ. It is the gospel of Christian nationalism.

What Is Christian Nationalism?

Christian nationalism is not simply loving your country or praying for its leaders. It is an ideology, a racialized, political theology, that fuses allegiance to Jesus with allegiance to the nation. It mythologizes America's founding as a divine act, portrays its history through a whitewashed lens of moral exceptionalism, and declares the United States to be God's chosen nation.

This is why faithfully diagnosing the prominent distortions of the Christian faith is an urgent task. Sociologists Samuel L. Perry, Ryon J. Cobb, Andrew L. Whitehead, and Joshua B. Grubbs define Christian nationalism as: "an ideology that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American civic life" ("Divided by Faith (in Christian America): Christian Nationalism, Race, and Divergent Perceptions of Racial Injustice," *Social Forces*, 101(2), 2022).

They explain that, in practice, this ideology mythologizes and sacralizes America's past, casting it as founded on Judeo-Christian principles, uniquely blessed by God, and morally superior, while encoding religious language with racial content. In effect, words like "nation," "heritage," "values," and "culture" become racially coded, signaling whiteness and "native-born" identity as the markers of who counts as a "true American." Using a six-item scale, they measure support for ideas like declaring the U.S. a Christian nation, advocating "Christian values" through government, promoting prayer and religious symbols in public schools, and seeing America's success as part of God's plan.

The data is sobering. Those who strongly affirm these beliefs, especially among white respondents, are far more likely to minimize racial injustice, oppose immigration, support authoritarian leadership, and justify

political violence in the name of preserving a "Christian America."

In other words, Christian nationalism replaces the gospel of Jesus Christ with a civil religion of dominance. It trades the cross for the flag.

A Racialized Ideology

Christian nationalism, according to this study, is not just about fusing faith and patriotism; it is a racially coded ideology. It sacralizes a mythic Christian-America past, encodes whiteness into "true" citizenship, and functions as an epistemology of ignorance that allows white Americans to deny racism while claiming victimhood.

Christian nationalism did not arise in a vacuum. It is deeply entangled with the myth of white supremacy that has haunted American history from the beginning. Born out of the transatlantic slave trade, the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples, and centuries of segregation and exclusion, this ideology has long baptized national power in religious language.

Its theology sanctifies inequality. Its rituals center whiteness. Its prophets preach nostalgia for a past that never truly existed, when "America was great" for some, but hell for others.

This is why it is not enough to say, "You can love God and love your country." Of course you can. But Christian nationalism is not patriotism. It is a counterfeit faith that confuses devotion to God with devotion to empire. It demands loyalty to a flag rather than to the crucified Christ.

A Different Gospel

Paul confronted the "other gospel" of his day, those who sought to add law and ethnicity to grace. His warning echoes across the centuries.

Christian nationalism claims that faith in Jesus is incomplete unless it also serves the interests of a particular culture, race, or political movement. It exchanges humility for triumphalism, compassion for control, and neighbor-love for tribal loyalty.

This ideology has become one of the greatest obstacles to evangelism in our generation. Many people, especially young adults, aren't rejecting Jesus. They're rejecting the distorted version of Christianity they've seen weaponized in public life. On the other hand, it seems a growing number of young people are fueling a kind of nationalistic revival, wrapped in a Jesus bumper sticker.

When faith is used to exclude, intimidate, or dominate, it ceases to be good news.

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The Sociological Reality

The language of Christian nationalism is measurable, not imaginary. Scholars across disciplines, sociology, political science, and religious studies, have studied it using rigorous empirical methods. Data from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and Pew Research Center show that Christian nationalism is a real and growing movement, especially among white conservative Protestants.

These studies reveal clear patterns:

- † Racial resentment: Christian nationalist adherents are significantly more likely to deny systemic racism and oppose multicultural education.
- † Gender hierarchy: They strongly affirm patriarchal family structures and oppose women's equality in leadership.
- † Authoritarianism: They express greater support for political violence, censorship, and a "strongman" leader willing to break democratic norms to protect their values.

To call attention to this isn't "partisan." It's prophetic. Social science gives us data. Scripture gives us discernment. Together, they help us tell the truth.

The Theological Crisis

Christian nationalism commits a theological heresy by confusing the kingdom of God with the kingdoms of this world. Jesus refused the devil's offer of worldly power in exchange for worship. Yet many today are eager to make that same bargain.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." His mission was not to seize political control but to transform human hearts through love, mercy, and justice. The earliest Christians lived as a creative minority, serving the poor, welcoming the immigrant, and bearing witness

to a kingdom without borders.

Christian nationalism reverses all of that. It turns mission into conquest, discipleship into indoctrination, and the Great Commission into a political campaign. It is, as Paul would say, "no gospel at all."

A Pastoral and Missional Response

Our task as followers of Jesus is not merely to condemn Christian nationalism but to offer a more beautiful gospel in its place. That means embodying a faith that is incarnational rather than ideological, a faith that shows up in love, not in slogans.

Through movements like Fresh Expressions, I've seen the Spirit at work in coffee shops, tattoo parlors, dog parks, recovery circles, and housing programs. In these everyday places, people are encountering a Jesus who is not American, not partisan, but profoundly human and divine, who transcends every tribe and tongue.

Christian nationalism may shout from the halls of power, but the real gospel still whispers in neighborhoods and dinner tables where people choose relationship over rhetoric.

Conclusion: Trading Performance for Presence

To challenge Christian nationalism, we must loosen our grip on control, our obsession with winning, with being right, with protecting "our" way of life. We must trade performance for presence.

We have to care. We have to love. We have to learn in real time, even when it's messy. And above all, we have to trust that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is alive in others too, calling us beyond fear and into communion.

The call of the church in this generation is not to "make America Christian again," but to "embody the compassion of Jesus again" through humility, justice, and love. Anything less is a different gospel.



The Table Crisis: How Every Church Can Respond to Hunger in Our Time

By Michael Beck

November 11, 2025

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/the-table-crisis-how-every-church-can-respond-to-hunger-in-our-time>

“Little children beg for food, but nobody gives them anything.” – Lamentations 4:4 FBV

The line of cars stretches around the block. It’s another Wednesday morning at our drive-through food distribution. As I move from window to window, checking in, offering a smile, and a listening ear where I can, a young woman rolls her window down just enough to speak. A toddler sits in the back seat, a laptop bag in the passenger seat.

“I never thought I would find myself here,” she says quietly.

She started her career in tech after earning a bachelor’s degree in computer science. It was a remote position with good pay and full benefits, until the layoffs hit earlier this year. Now she’s a single mom, waiting for groceries, hoping her next SNAP deposit isn’t delayed again by the government shutdown. My heart aches for her and for the little one who smiles between bites on a toy in the back seat.

For a moment, the hum of idling engines becomes the sound of a nation’s unraveling. The gap between the middle class and the food line has never felt so thin.

A Holy Drive-Thru and the Church that Eats Together

Every Wednesday morning, the parking lot at St. Mark’s UMC comes alive. Volunteers line up boxes of fresh produce, canned goods, milk, and meat. Cars begin forming a line an hour before distribution starts. Some drivers are regulars who greet us by name. Others are first-timers, embarrassed, nervous, avoiding eye contact. Off to the side, a prayer station stands ready. We pray with those who ask, reminding each one they are not alone, that God sees them, and that this church loves them.

Later that night, we host a Wednesday evening Dinner Church called Family Table. There, the same food we give away becomes the food we share. People who came through the line that morning, along with folks stepping out of the 5:30 AA meeting or showing up early for the 8:00 NA group, come inside the community center and sit down at tables. Volunteers, neighbors, and friends from the street eat together. God sightings are shared; prayers are spoken, and communion happens in the most literal sense.

After dinner, we gather for Community Bible Study, where people who have never cracked open a Bible sit beside lifelong church members, exploring scripture together.

And on Tuesday nights at Compassion UMC, it happens all over again—friends experiencing homelessness, recovering addicts, seniors on fixed incomes, and single moms gathered around steaming pots and full plates, sharing their lives and their faith. The air smells like the banquet hall in the kingdom of God.

What began as a simple commitment to provide food has evolved into a network of tables, a ministry of presence, dignity, and belonging. And I often think: this is exactly how the first Christians did it.

The First Church Crisis: A Matter of the Table

The first crisis in the early church wasn’t about doctrine or leadership; it was about food. In Acts 6:1–6, Hellenistic widows were reportedly being overlooked in the “daily distribution.” The apostles realized that if some were excluded from the table, the gospel itself was in jeopardy. They appointed seven Spirit-filled leaders to ensure everyone, especially the most vulnerable, had enough to eat.

This was the first formation of a leadership structure, and it wasn’t to form a hierarchy or clergy caste system, but to build infrastructure around the emerging mission as they followed the Spirit.

From the beginning, the followers of Jesus understood that discipleship was not merely about believing the right things; it was about embodying love in daily practice. They broke bread in homes, turning meals into means of grace. The table wasn’t a metaphor. It was the center of their mission.

A Modern Table Crisis

Today, we face our own Acts 6 moment. As SNAP benefits are reduced and grocery costs rise, food insecurity is spreading like a shadow across the nation.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, roughly 13.5% of American households, about 18 million families, or 47 million people, experienced food insecurity in 2023, including nearly 6.5 million households with children.² That means one in eight families struggled at some point to put food on the table. While complete 2024–2025 data are still being compiled, most analysts expect those numbers to rise sharply due to inflation, reduced SNAP benefits, and the ongoing government shutdown, pushing millions more Americans to rely on food banks, churches, and community networks for their daily bread.

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BREVARD CHORALE PRESENTS

Comfort and Joy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT 7 P.M.

First United Methodist Church

206 S. Hopkins Ave. Titusville, FL 32796

Free Admission, Donations Accepted.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 7:30 P.M.

EFSC Cocoa Campus, Bldg. 4, Simpkins Fine Arts Center

\$10 for adults/seniors \$5 for students with ID.

Tickets also available at the door. Cash and card accepted.

To purchase tickets, go to efsc.booktix.com.



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But hunger doesn't strike evenly. It follows the fault lines of class and race. Working-class families, single mothers, and people of color experience hunger at twice the rate of white households. The [U.S. Census Bureau](#) reports that Black and Latino families are more than twice as likely to struggle with consistent access to food.

Sociologically, this reveals how food insecurity mirrors our wider system of inequality. Structural violence, a term coined by Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, describes the quiet, normalized harm embedded in social systems that limit access to life's necessities. This is not about individual failure but collective design: zoning laws that isolate the poor, grocery chains that abandon certain neighborhoods, wages that lag behind rent.

Food insecurity is not only an economic crisis, but also a moral and spiritual one. It exposes the fractures in our social body, where some feast in grand ballrooms while others go hungry.

Incarnational Sociology: From Hull House to the Church Basement

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull House in Chicago practiced what we I call incarnational sociology. Rather than studying poverty from a distance, they moved in...sharing life, meals, and struggles with their immigrant neighbors. Addams believed that knowledge detached from the lives it describes is morally incomplete. Truth must be tested in experience, refined in community, and measured by its capacity to heal.

Addams was influenced equally by both the social gospel movement and the American pragmatism of philosophers like John Dewey, a tradition that rejects the false choice between rigid certainty and anything-goes relativism. For Dewey, truth was not something handed down from on high but something human beings make together through shared inquiry, tested in lived experience, and revised through dialogue. Democracy, for both Dewey and Addams, was not just a system of government but a way of life: people learning together how to live well with their differences.

Hull House embodied that vision. Addams's "sympathetic observation" blended intellectual analysis with moral presence. She insisted that real understanding requires proximity, sharing daily life with the people one studies or serves. She brought neighbors with her when she spoke publicly, ensuring their voices checked her generalizations. Her research always aimed toward relief and reform, from child labor laws to sanitation policy. In her hands, sociology became not a detached science but a social ethic, a discipline of presence that turned knowledge into neighborliness.

"Incarnational Sociology," like incarnational

theology, insists that truth must take flesh. It must be discovered in proximity, enacted in compassion, and tested in the consequences it produces for vulnerable neighbors.

The early church in Acts 6 practiced the same thing before there was a word for it. They didn't theorize about justice from afar, they organized the daily distribution of food. They shared life with widows and laborers, turning the fellowship hall of the first century into a living laboratory of grace.

Our church basements, dinner churches, and food pantries can become the Hull Houses of our time, where faith and inquiry meet in compassionate proximity, and where the gospel takes on flesh again through the simple, radical act of eating together.

The Table as Theological Protest

In the Roman Empire, bread was a tool of domination. The state fed people to keep them loyal. The church fed people to make them free. The daily distribution in Acts 6 was a theological protest, a declaration that God's economy runs on grace, not greed.

Our world still needs that protest. As safety nets shrink and inequities deepen, the Spirit is calling us back to the table—not just to hand out food, but to share meals, build relationships, and practice communion as community transformation.

If the government shutdown drags on, the situation will likely worsen before it improves. The USDA's contingency funds are limited, meaning monthly SNAP allotments could shrink even further in December and beyond. Some households may see delayed or interrupted payments, widening the hunger gap across already-struggling communities. States will be forced to scramble, diverting emergency funds, leaning on food banks, and mobilizing nonprofits to fill the breach. But those stopgaps cannot sustain the millions of families living one grocery trip away from crisis.

The longer benefits are reduced, the greater the ripple effects: increased strain on food pantries, rising malnutrition among children and elders, and growing pressure on congregations to meet needs once covered by public programs. When the government eventually reopens, partial retroactive payments may arrive, but trust in the safety net will have eroded even more deeply. This moment will almost certainly ignite renewed political debate over SNAP's structure, work requirements, and funding, but in the meantime, the church will again find itself on the front lines of compassion. As the state falters, the body of Christ must rise to fill the gap, rediscovering what it means to be the community that quite literally feeds the world.

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Note from Florace "Gay" Hensley

To the members who signed birthday cards for me. The cards were beautiful. Thank you so much!

Love in Christ,

Gay

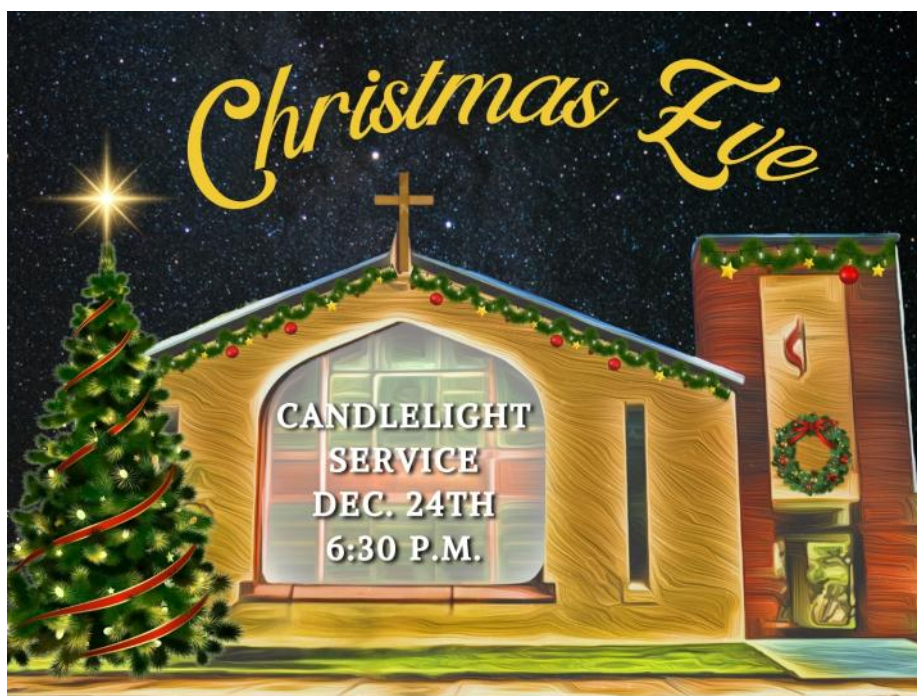
A Thanksgiving Prayer

Dear God above, look down with love
on this Thanksgiving Day
and give us peace throughout the world,
in Your dear name we pray.

Grant to everyone on Earth
a special gift from You
to cheer the heart, relieve the pain
and kindle freedom's golden flame.
Bring the whole world nearer, God,
to Your beloved heart,
and help the people all to see
the beauty You impart.

Let one and all assembled here
gain new hope and calm their fear
and look to Your abiding love for comfort to sustain
while working together hand in hand,
help us create a better plan
for peace on Earth and human worth,
and at the closing of this day
as we all go our separate way
we thank You for the right pray
and for this Thanksgiving Day.
Amen.

Florace Gay Hensley
—The International Library of Poetry





CHILI COOKOFF

Register on Sunday Morning
or on our website!

DECEMBER 3RD, 2025
5:30PM

206 S Hopkins Ave, Titusville FL
www.fumctitusville.com

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A Call to the Church

In the days ahead, it won't be the churches with fog machines, light shows, and buildings dedicated solely to concert-style worship that thrive. It will be the churches that feed the hungry, shelter the unhoused, and open their doors when the night grows cold.

It will be congregations that practice incarnational sociology, learning, eating, and organizing with their neighbors rather than for them. The same Spirit who resolved the crisis in Acts 6 is stirring again, calling us to organize, distribute, and dine together.

This is our moment to show the world what the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Jesus really looks like.

Embodied Communion: Fresh Expressions and the Table as Ecology

The principles of incarnational mission come to life most powerfully not in policy statements, but around tables. The Fresh Expressions movement and the network of dinner churches it has spawned offer a simple pathway for ordinary congregations that long to reclaim sacred property as common ground and sacred meals as common good. Across Florida and beyond, meal-based Fresh Expressions are transforming fellowship halls, parking lots, and public parks into places of belonging and renewal. Each shared meal collapses the distance between housed and unhoused, rich and poor, church and unchurched, forming what Wesley might call a "means of grace" that is social, not only spiritual.

These communities practice environmental justice on a human scale. They repurpose kitchens and sanctuaries once dormant during the week into ecosystems of care, spaces where food waste

is reduced, loneliness is healed, and local partnerships form to meet real needs. Around these tables, hospitality becomes ecological: nourishment replaces scarcity, and communion becomes creation care.

In this sense, meal-based Fresh Expressions are more than outreach strategies...they are a sacramental ecology for our age of fragmentation. They model a post-rapture Christianity that stays, eats, and rebuilds. When congregations open their tables, they embody the redemptive pattern of Christ, who did not flee the world but entered into it and fed it with his own flesh. In the act of breaking bread, the church learns again that salvation is not escape from the earth, but its restoration.

How Your Church Can Respond

- † Start small, start local. Host a community meal once a week and invite everyone, no strings attached.
- † Partner with food ministries in your area, bringing spiritual and relational depth to existing efforts.
- † Listen first. Ask neighbors what they need most and co-design solutions rather than imposing them.
- † Partner with your regional food bank or Feeding America affiliate. Becoming an approved agency gives churches access to bulk food, often including fresh produce and dairy, at little or no cost, along with training on safe storage and equitable distribution.
- † Share the table. Eat with, not for. Relationship is the first ingredient of justice. Giving people food is great. Eating together at tables is better.
- † Teach theology at the table. Every loaf broken is a sermon. Every shared meal is a sacrament. No need to "preach," just point to the presence already there.

What is the history of Advent?

September 17, 2020

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-history-of-advent-for-united-methodists>

Advent was developed as a season of the church year in the late fourth century. It was widely practiced across Christian churches worldwide by the sixth century.

The church developed **Advent** to provide an additional season of fasting and an alternative time for the final preparation of candidates for baptism. The normal three-year preparation period included a final forty days of intense preparation during Lent. Baptism would follow at Easter.

A second season of baptismal preparation was more needful after the Roman Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire in 380. At that time, approximately 15% of the Empire was Christian. After 380, the vast majority of citizens sought to become Christian. A single season could not accommodate all of those preparing for baptism.

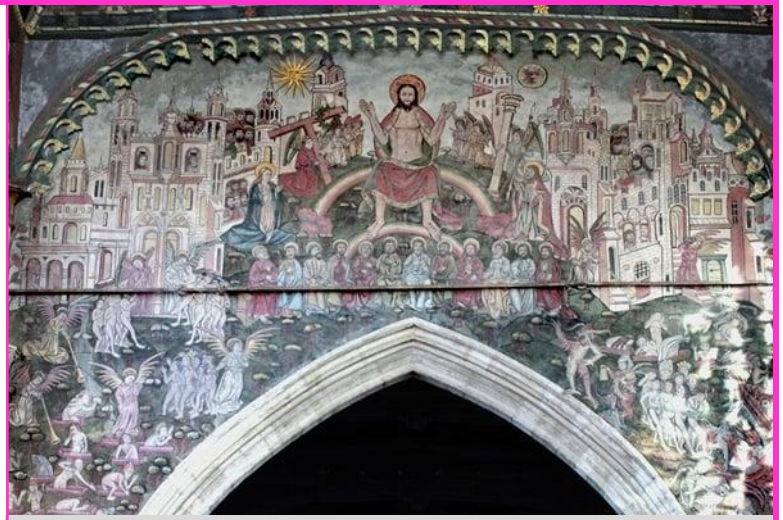
Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” The focus of Advent is on Christian life now in light of the culmination of all things at Christ’s second coming. By focusing on last things, baptismal candidates were reminded of the need for Christ to come again to make all things new as they prepared to begin their new lives in Christ.

Baptism would typically occur at **Epiphany**, the end of the Christmas Season when Christians remember the coming of the Magi and celebrate the baptism of Jesus. This is why many older baptismal fonts include depictions of the Magi bringing gifts.

Similar to Lent, Advent developed as a penitential season of varying lengths. By the eighth century, Advent was generally observed for six weeks in the East (as it is to this day) and seven in the West. By the 12th century, it became shortened in the West to four weeks.

Advent was part of the practice of the Church of England when John Wesley was a priest. When he revised the liturgical calendar for use by American Methodists in 1784, he kept Advent and its four Sundays. So, Advent was part of Methodist ritual from the beginning.

However, the 1792 General Conference dramatically simplified the ritual, removing nearly all of the church calendar and the associated readings for each Sunday. As a result, Advent became a “lost practice” among most American Methodists for well over a century. While a few hymns related to Advent were retained, it wasn’t until 1965 that specific ritual resources for Advent were included in The Book of Worship of The Methodist Church.



A medieval painting of the "Doom" or Last Judgment in St. Thomas Church, Salisbury, England. Photo by Nessino, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

By the time Advent was restored to Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren practice in the mid-20th century, there were other significant developments in the cultural practices of Christmas that impacted Advent in our congregations. The Christmas season as a cultural practice was no longer the 12 days beginning with Christmas Eve. Instead, it had become the nearly 30 days from American Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve. This meant that even though the 1965 Book of Worship included readings and prayers focused on the second coming of Christ, many congregations expected Advent to conform to the cultural Christmas focus on the birth of Jesus.

By 1992, United Methodist liturgy and an expanded selection of Advent-specific hymns all helped United Methodists understand and reclaim the original focus of Advent on the second coming of Christ. And **Come to the Waters**, the primary United Methodist resource for preparing candidates for baptism, includes guidance for using Advent as a season for final preparation for baptism.

United Methodists now have many rich resources to help us observe the fullness of what our Christian ancestors created the Advent season to do. We can help others prepare for baptism as we contemplate together the destiny of the universe when Christ comes in glory and then, during the Christmas Season, celebrate the gift of new birth and all that continues to unfold as we remember the birth of God with us.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.



CONFIRMATION

Beginning January 11th, students in grades 6–9 will have the opportunity to take part in the Confirmation process during the Sunday School hour.

Over the course of three months, students will:

- Explore the United Methodist faith
- Learn about life in a faith community
- Study core Christian beliefs and theology
- Reflect on God's calling in their lives

At the conclusion of the program, students will have the opportunity to affirm their faith and join First United Methodist Church as active members.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

CONTACT LAUREN GOOD FOR MORE INFORMATION

What do the candles in our Advent wreath mean?

December 12, 2019

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-do-the-candles-in-our-advent-wreath-mean>

The Advent wreath began as a German and Scandinavian home devotional practice used to mark the four weeks of Advent. Families would light a candle for each past week and the current week at their dinner or evening time of prayer. The configuration of candles, whether in a line or a circle, did not matter. Neither did the color of the candles (all colors are used in homes in Europe). What mattered was the marking of time and the increase of light each week in the face of increasing darkness as the winter solstice approached.

As Advent wreaths began to be used by congregations on Sundays in some places in Europe and America beginning in the late 19th century, several adaptations were made to make them work better in public worship spaces. Candles needed to be larger and more uniform than the "daily candles" handmade or purchased for home use. They also needed to be more uniform in color to fit with other décor in the sanctuary. That is why candles used in the Advent wreath are usually purple or blue, to coordinate with color of the paraments used during this season.

This shift in context from home to public use also made it important in the eyes of some for the candles to be given a meaning more than simply marking time and increasing light. This led to special ceremonies being developed for lighting these special candles each week.

As this practice began to catch on by the mid-twentieth century, several church supply

houses who sold Advent wreaths and candles for public worship also developed resources, banners, and bulletin covers assigning a theme to each week, and thus each candle, based on scriptures from the one-year lectionaries used at that time. Those themes were Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace, in that order.



Advent

Today, almost no one uses those one-year lectionaries, so those themes may not always fit the scriptures we hear in worship. The one exception is the Third Sunday of Advent, where the current lectionaries have continued to support the centuries old observance of "Gaudete" or "Joy Sunday." That is why church supply houses often offer rose or pink colored candles for the wreath for use on this day.

So how may we talk about the meaning of the Advent wreath today?

We can reclaim the original home use of marking time with the hope of increasing light as we await the return of Christ, that day when "The city no longer has need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it, because the glory of God illumines it, and its lamp is the lamb."

And we can develop meanings or themes for each week based on the focus of the scriptures themselves. After all, the candles and the wreath are an accessory, not an end in themselves. Their meaningfulness comes from how we use them to point toward Christ, the world's true light, who was, and is, and is to come.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

LET'S GO AGAIN!

**We will reopen our
medical debt
campaign from**

Oct. 1st—Dec. 31st



**Current Medical Debt in Brevard:
Over \$45 Million**

Nancy Burgess is once again coordinating with [UndueMedicalDebt.org](https://www.unduemedicaldebt.org) to organize a campaign to help local residents pay off their medical debt. When we did the first campaign at the beginning of this year, your contributions helped pay off **over \$2 MILLION** worth of medical debt. According to Undue Medical Debt, there is currently **over \$45 MILLION owed in Brevard County, Florida alone!** As daunting as that number may seem, when good people come together, great things can be accomplished...and the possibility of success is magnified beyond numbers when we join together with Christ in our hearts.

This is how it works:

- † **We start a campaign**
We coordinate with [UndueMedicalDebt.org](https://www.unduemedicaldebt.org) to create and promote a campaign that collects donations.
- † **You make a donation**
Undue Medical Debt uses data analytics to pinpoint the debt of those most in need: households that earn less than 4x the federal poverty level (varies by state, family size) or whose debts are 5% or more of annual income.
- † **Undue buys medical debt at a steep discount**
Undue Medical Debt buys debt in bundles, millions of dollars at a time at a fraction of the original cost. This means your donation relieves about 100x its value in medical debt.
- † **Together we wipe out medical debt**
People across the country receive letters that their debt has been erased. They have no tax consequences or penalties to consider. Just like that, they're free of medical debt.

First United Methodist Church in Titusville Florida is determined to eliminate MORE medical debt in Brevard county in 2025.

Our hope for this short campaign is to extend our love of God to our neighbors in need. This campaign runs October 1st thru December 31st, 2025. We would love to join with other churches around Brevard County to increase our impact in.

Please visit <https://www.fumctitusville.com/undue-medical-debt.html> for more information including a secure link to donate!

Thank you for contributing as we help address the #1 cause of bankruptcy in the United States, medical debt.

It's Who You Know

by Nora Drown
November 21, 2025

Back in late October, I volunteered to help outreach to the community looking for support for the United North Brevard Food Pantry. One of the places I wanted to ask to do a food drive were those beautiful condos at Harbor Point.

I was in the office at the church when I mentioned my intention to go to Harbor Point. Our very own Tom Mosier told me he knew who I needed to talk to. He said, "Dennis Newell is the president of the HOA and a member of our church." Everything fell into place after that.

Food collection boxes were dropped off at Harbor Point on Thursday. Then, on Sunday afternoon, I got a call letting me know that the boxes were overflowing and asking me to come by on Monday to pick up all the food!

Thank you Marcia and Dennis Newell! Harbor Point has stepped up to support our community in ways bigger than I could have imagined! Marcia and Dennis were the right people to know and the helpers to make everything happen at Harbor Point. I could not have done this without you!

When you know the right people, everything falls into place easily.



DECEMBER 2025

First United Methodist Church





| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|
|  | 1 7:00pm Broadstreet Rehearsal | 2 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal | 3 9:30am Patchwork Friends 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm We Gather— Chili Cook-Off 5:30pm Mom's couponing 7:00pm Brevard Chorale Concert | 4 10:00am Ladies Day Out 6:00pm PEO Meeting | 5 11:00am Food Pantry | 6 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 11:00am Moonlight Quilters |
| 7 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship | 8 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal | 9 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry | 10 9:30am Kids' Playtime 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal 6:30pm CrossPointe Rehearsal | 11 | 12 11:00am Food Pantry | 13 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 9:00am Christmas Store 6:00pm Titusville Parade |
| 14 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:00am Coffee Fellowship | 15 7:00pm Broadstreet Rehearsal | 16 11:00am Food Pantry 5:00pm Solos Meeting | 17 10:00am ADK Meeting 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal 6:30pm CrossPointe Rehearsal | 18 12:00pm Ladies Day Out 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg. 5:00pm Conn. Kids Xmas Concert | 19 11:00am Food Pantry | 20 8:00am Comm. Breakfast |
| 21 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship | 22 7:00pm Broadstreet Rehearsal | 23 11:00am Food Pantry | 24 Christmas Eve 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 6:30pm Xmas Eve Service | 25 Christmas Day —OFFICE CLOSED—  | 26 —OFFICE CLOSED— 11:00am Food Pantry | 27 8:00am Comm. Breakfast |
| 28 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship | 29 —OFFICE CLOSED— 7:00pm Broadstreet Rehearsal | 30 —OFFICE CLOSED— 11:00am Food Pantry | 31 New Year's Eve —OFFICE CLOSED—   | | | |

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FUMC Staff

| | |
|--|----------|
| Reception Desk | Ext 201 |
| Rev. Wayne Cook - Pastor | Ext 202 |
| Mario Davis - Administrative Assistant | Ext 203 |
| Glenda Waring - Membership Secretary | Ext. 204 |
| Leah Patterson - Finance Secretary | Ext. 204 |
| Lauren Good - Family Ministries | Ext. 205 |
| Tom Mosier - Facilities Manager | Ext. 206 |
| Leah Patterson - Custodian | Ext. 206 |
| J.D. Daniel - Organist | |
| Steve Rossi - Sound Tech | |
| Josh Henn - Lights and Visuals | |

1st UMC Ministries

OUTREACH

| | |
|--|--|
| Bags of Grace | Patchwork Friends <i>(Quilting group providing quilts to the community)</i> |
| Christmas Store | |
| Community Breakfast | School Outreach <i>(Apollo Elem., Madison MS, Andrew Jackson MS, Astronaut HS, & Titusville HS)</i> |
| Community Garden | |
| Cuba Missions <i>(Santa Cruz Methodist Church in Holguin, Cuba)</i> | Stop Gap Community Dinners |
| Food Pantry | Shoe Ministry |
| Good Shepherd <i>(Funds to help the community with bills & other needs)</i> | Undue Medical Debt |

MUSIC MINISTRIES

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Church Choir | Holiday Cantatas |
| Evensong Services | Special Concerts |
| Handbell Choirs | Specialty Ensembles |

FAMILY MINISTRIES

| | |
|--|---|
| 1st Wednesday Dinners | Theater Programs <i>(Children & Adult)</i> |
| Children's Ministry | Vacation Bible School |
| Street Festivals | Youth—Longest Day of Your Life |
| Open Play <i>(1st Monday, safe playtime for parents & kids)</i> | Youth Ministry |
| Rock the Universe | Bus Ministry |
| Summer Youth Camp | |

NURTURE MINISTRIES

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| United Women of Faith | Solos |
| Bible Studies | |

First United Methodist Church

206 S. Hopkins Ave
Titusville, FL 32796

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.

Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday
Closed from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Phone: (321) 269-7631

Fax: (321) 269-8359

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Website: www.fumctitusville.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/682694095204027

Instagram Handle: [@UnitedChurch321](https://www.instagram.com/UnitedChurch321)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChscOcLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q>

