



The Messenger

First United Methodist Church, Alexandria
Experiencing Life Together

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February 9, 2012

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IMPORTANT DATES:

Bible Explorers

5 p.m.
Sunday, February 12

Children's Mardi Gras Parade

10:45 a.m.
Saturday, February 18

SPRC Meeting

5:30 p.m.
Monday, February 20

Finance Committee Meeting

6 p.m.
Tuesday, February 21

Spirit Sunday

5 p.m.
Sunday, February 26

Church Council

6:30 p.m.
Monday, February 27

LENT IS ALMOST HERE!

It seems kind of hard to believe but Lent is almost here again. This year, Lent starts on February 22 with Ash Wednesday. The reason that the date for the beginning of Lent changes each year has to do with the fact that the date for Easter is set by the lunar calendar. The cycle of the moon determines the date for Easter and therefore the date for the beginning of Lent.

Lent is an important time of the Christian year. It is a time to get ready for the celebration of Easter. It is also a time when some folks adopt the spiritual discipline of giving something up for the season. Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, has become a day to party due to the fasting which begins on Ash Wednesday. It always amused me how such a holy season began with such unholy behavior as the Epiphany Season came to an end.

Instead of giving something up during Lent, I would suggest that taking something up might be a better practice. Here are some suggestions for things to take up during Lent.

Bible study. When was the last time you read through the Bible? Get a modern version or even an audio version and read/listen to the entire Bible during Lent.

Exercise. Walking is the ideal exercise. It requires no special equipment and can be done anywhere. Combined with an audio version of the Bible you can do something good for your mind, body and soul!

Prayer. Regular and habitual conversations with God (which is what prayer actually is) are important. Again—any time or anyplace can work for prayer. I pray when I walk

the dog. Begin with thanks to God. Next tell God what you need to talk about. Finally thank God for the answers to your prayers. I also end by praying the Lord's Prayer.

Attend. Sunday school and worship attendance are both important in a growing life of faith. In addition to our usual worship times are special worship opportunities during Lent. Increase your involvement over the 40 days of Lent and I would wager that you will continue after Easter.

Give. United Methodists pledge to give their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness when joining a local church.

Volunteer. If you don't want to volunteer at the church there are always lots of non-profit agencies in our community which could use the gifts you could bring to them. Give of your talent.

Lent is such a special and holy time of the year. I hope you enjoy a holy Lenten season this year. Let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

Peace!
Barry

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Wednesday, February 22

5:30 p.m.

Sanctuary

TAKE STOCK IN OUR YOUTH!

The youth group will begin their annual stock sales on Monday, March 5. Each year, church members are asked to purchase "stock" for the youth mission trip. This year, youth will travel to Tennessee in July to participate in a TEAMeffort mission trip.

The youth need to raise \$8,000 - \$10,000 for this trips. Stock sales are typically the largest fundraiser for youth activities. Last year, about \$6,000 in stock were sold, and we need your support to help us reach

our goal this year!

Members of our youth group will call church members between 4 - 7 p.m. during the weeks of March 5 - 8 and March 12 - 15. Each share of stock is \$25.

The youth will host a Stockholder's Banquet on September 9 for anyone who purchases stock. This is a chance for the group to say thank you to all of our supporters, share a meal, slide show and testimonies about the mission trip.

MISSION TRIP

The youth mission trip is July 8 - 14 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. As a part of TEAMeffort, youth from around the country will work in mission teams in the Smokey Mountains to help local residents with home repair projects.



CONFIRMATION IS AROUND THE CORNER

Confirmation will begin on Sunday, March 4 and run for nine weeks. Anyone who is at least 12 years old or in the sixth grade is encouraged to participate. The confirmation class will meet on Sundays from 5 - 7 p.m. in the sixth grade room. Please contact Jaime Gentry if you have a child who is interested.

Confirmation Day with the Bishop is March 10, 2012 at the Wesley Center in Woodworth. The theme is *Standing Right With God*. Confirmands can participate in a fun-filled day of exploring how being a members of the United Methodist Church helps us focus on the highest goal and what standing right with God is all about. The program begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. The cost is \$25 per person which covers lunch, a t-shirt and program costs. The registration deadline is March 5. Please contact Jaime Gentry for additional details.

MENTORS NEEDED

Mentors are an important part of Confirmation. Mentors are adult members of the church whom the confirmands trust and with whom they can share their faith. Each confirmand has a mentor to be a "friend in faith" during the confirmation journey. Mentors are also a wonderful way to connect each youth with an adult to foster long-term relationships between generations in the church. If you would like to be a mentor during confirmation this year, please contact Jaime Gentry.

CHILDREN'S MARDI GRAS PARADE

The children's ministries will have a float in the Alexandria Children's Mardi Gras parade on Saturday, February 18 at 10:45 a.m. Children enjoy riding the float each year for the parade.

Children need to be five years of age to ride the float. Sign up online to ride the float or to walk beside it by visiting www.fumca.org. Space is limited, so be sure to sign up today!

The Children's Council will decorate the float on Friday, February 17 at 10 a.m. Please contact Jaime Gentry to help.

SAVE THE DATES!

As you begin making plans for the next few months, please keep these important dates in mind.

Buddy Camp Registration Begins
March 1, 2012

Easter Family Day
April 1, 2012

**Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival
Art Run Fundraiser**
April 14, 2012

Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival
April 20 - 29, 2012

Louisiana Skeeter Run
April 21, 2012

Confirmation Sunday
April 29, 2012

Senior Sunday
May 6, 2012

Vacation Bible School
June 25 - 29, 2012

Buddy Camp
June 4 - 8, 2012
July 30 - August 3, 2012

Youth Mission Trip
July 8 - 14, 2012

THANK YOU FROM THE STAFF AT FUMC

First United Methodist Church is fortunate to have dedicated volunteers to help with a wide variety of activities and tasks and the staff would like to take an opportunity thank all of our volunteers. Please join us for a volunteer appreciation lunch in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, February 12 after the worship services. Lunch will be provided—just kick back and relax this Sunday afternoon!

VOLUNTEER *Appreciation* LUNCH



Sunday, February 12
12 noon
Fellowship Hall

EASTER FAMILY DAY ON APRIL 1

Mark your calendar for Easter Family Day on April 1 after the 11 a.m. worship service! Families in our Weekday Children's Ministries also join in the fun for this afternoon. It's a great opportunity for EVERYONE to enjoy a potluck lunch, Easter egg hunts, bingo, inflatable jumpers, the Easter Bunny and games for all ages.

The church will provide the meat for the potluck lunch; please bring additional foods based on the first letter of your last name:

A — F Desserts

G — L Salads

M — Z Casseroles/Side Dishes

Easter Family Day gets bigger each year. Please bring plastic eggs and individually wrapped candy to the collection bin outside the church office. Approximately 3,000 eggs are needed for the Easter egg hunts!

Please make plans to join the fun and fellowship this year on April 1!

ART RUN ON APRIL 14



The Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival is hosting *Art Run*, a 5K Run/Walk fundraiser on April 14, 2012 for the annual Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival. Registration is \$25 and available online at www.fumca.org/artsfestival. Register today for a fun event to support the Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival!

CONFERENCE BOARD OF LAITY RETREAT

The Louisiana Conference Board of Laity is sponsoring a laity retreat at the Wesley Center in Woodworth from March 16 - 17. *Claiming Our Call as Laity* is an experience led by Bishop William Hutchinson and The Rev. Dr. Gil Rendle and is open to all Louisiana laity.

Rendle is a leading voice in calling the church to rethink our mission for this current age. His insight will challenge assumptions and offer pathways into spiritual transformation and leadership. Registration is \$35 and open until March 14. Please call The Conference Center at 449-4500 to register for this exciting weekend.

CHURCH FAMILY JOYS



Sören Doniphan Risén, son of Sarah and Jonas Risén, was baptized on December 25, 2011.



Mason Donald Stead and Grant Stephen Stead, sons of Catherine and Mark Stead, were baptized on January 29, 2012.



Emma June Clerc, daughter of Laura and Brian Clerc, was baptized on January 29, 2012.

Congratulations to Anna Connel Brooks and Oliver Santschi on the birth of their daughter, Addison Elise Brooks, born January 25, 2012. Michael and Sandra Harris



Kearney and Nelwyn R. Harris are the proud grandparents and great-grandmother.

We're on the Web!
www.fumca.org

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WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

January 29, 2012	226
February 5, 2012	218

SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

January 29, 2012	97
February 5, 2012	122

