



We Seek to Better Understand
the Teachings of Jesus—
and Live those Teachings.

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

www.fbfirst.org

P. O. Box 116, Fort Branch, IN 47648

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melissa@fbfirst.org

Blythe Chapel
8141 S. 450 W.
Owensville, IN

Fort Branch First
100 W. Vine St.
Fort Branch, IN

Office Hours

Tuesday - Thursday, 9:00 am–2:00 pm

Closed Monday and Friday

Rev. John Baylor, Jr., Pastor

john@fbfirst.org

Parsonage: (812) 615-0053



Melissa Foster,

Administrative Assistant

melissa@fbfirst.org

Rexanne Robicheaux
Musician @ First & Blythe

Derek Robicheaux
Custodian @ First

Zella Frey
Custodian @ Blythe

WELCOME

Whoever you are,
and wherever you find yourself
on the journey of faith, you are
welcome to this church as you
are to receive the riches of
God's grace...

The Way...

The earliest Christians were called *The People of the Way*.

This weekly publication is provided to show
how our congregations are living *The Way* today.

Third Sunday of Advent December 17, 2023



This is a service designed so you may participate from home, in front of Fort Branch First UMC, at Blythe Chapel UMC, on the streets of Fort Branch or by live streaming wherever you are in the world. We can all gather and pause with our hearts and minds on Jesus for a few moments, regardless of location or denomination of faith. FUMC & Blythe Chapel will start ringing their church bells at 6pm with everyone, everywhere invited to ring their own bell for 2 minutes. We invite other church bells to ring with us...what a glorious sound that will be! Pastor John will read the Christmas Story LIVE from the bell tower steps. A Christmas carol will be sung as we all light a candle. This is to be a community event, so be sure to spread the word and invite your neighbors to step outside for a few minutes.

Christmas Bells: They are rung to announce the arrival of the Christmas season, to proclaim the birth of Christ.

Share
THE
Joy
OF
Christmas

New office hours for 2024
Tuesday & Wednesday
9am ~ 2pm

Church Office will be closed
Dec. 22 through Jan. 1

Our God of hope

Near the end of a long bout with cancer, Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson realized that hope for recovery wasn't credible. The year before he died, he wrote a Christmas message from "the antiseptic wonderland of the holiday hospital ward," asking, "What sustains hope when there is scant reason for it?"

The answer, Gerson said, is found in our "God of hope," who became vulnerable, "cloaked in blood and bone and destined for human suffering." Rather than fulfill our deepest earthly wishes, God offers eternal security: "He promises a transformation of the heart in which we release the burden of our desires, and live in expectation of God's unfolding purposes, until all his mercies stand revealed."

That hope-filled message echoes Gerson's 2012 Christmas column, written in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shooting. "The point of Christmas is not a sentimental optimism about the human condition or even a teaching about the will of God," he wrote. "It is an assertion that God came to our rescue, and holds our hand, and becomes, at the worst moments, our brokenhearted brother. It is preposterous, unless it is true. And then it would be everything."

N V X Z O O N O S A E S P J L Z P V Q X E W E L
O R D N O I T A R B E L E C D H F X P I R K D J
I J E L P R U P U B E B C R A O M X P H L V B V
T E R H G B Z L I Q G C I E J C C B T N E V D A
R H R Y J L F R A E X T O Y S U S U N D A Y J J
A U W X X M T N Y Y H Q J A E F K R W Y P E C F
P D S U F H G J E X O D E R D E Y D A O S R Q K
E Q L P L E H E Y X D X R P W C S T Q U C H N R
R S Y O L O R R C Q F P Y U U O R K S D P I U N
P I U S H N V U H I U H C R U H C D I L P B L G
D K G D Z E F S R U S B T U L T N J K S H O P E
P E O U P T B A I C E K N O I U O F A I T H M D
W G Z J A M A L S M L L Q R B Y V N W S J M B M
O A A X R G S E T K D P J O T R Q Q C A C O C E
H E S B P N N M M Z N Q H E S A A E A E A S R H
Y A F V E K C T A G A R X T K W K T C R D K F E
G K I N X Z D O S U C C R Z Y X Y A S U S E C L
W F D S R E B M E C E D G L T H E N O E I H E H
F U Q H S P S S C A I A W J P P P L F Z M A R T
V C E Z D E U M B I R E G N A M C E H R F A C E
L J F M D N M A M H T H Q X R W M O S O X D R B
R V W E D D S U T N E V D A Q H C A N O Y D W Y
D J E V O L A Y R N A E Q E C Z E X T E J T O P
G G R O E F G N I M O C H W N B O T C E M D M K

| | | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Advent | Adventus | Angels | Behold | Bethlehem | Birth |
| Candles | Celebration | Christmas | Church | Clouds | Coming |
| December | Faith | God | Hope | Jerusalem | Jesus |
| Joseph | Joy | Love | Manger | Mary | Messiah |
| Peace | Pink | Prayer | Preparation | Purple | Rejoice |
| Season | Star | Sunday | | | |

Birthdays and Anniversaries

DECEMBER

TJ Lewis ~ 17th
Nancy Jones ~ 20th
Kaia Gerts ~ 23rd

Women's Conference

**WE LOVE
BECAUSE
HE FIRST
LOVED US.**

1 JOHN 4:19

Fort Branch First UMC
100 W Vine ST, Fort Branch, IN 47648

February 24 9am-2pm

Guest Speaker
Jammy Whitehurst

\$25
conference, lunch & t-shirt

RSVP to Kristi Pflug 812/664-1108
by February 17, 2024
Please indicate t-shirt size.

Fort Branch First UMC
P. O. Box 116
Fort Branch, IN 47648

Deliver to:

* -This symbol,
when found in the Order of Service
invites you to stand - if able.

CCLI #2446518
Streaming License # 20701562

THIS WEEK *At Church*

† Indicates location is Blythe Chapel
Ω Indicates location is First UMC

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

This Sunday:

9:00am † Worship

10:30am Ω Worship & Live
streaming worship

3:00pm Ω Private Rental ~
Schleter

Monday: ~ Office Closed ~

6:30pm Ω Bible Study

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday: ~ Office Closed ~

Saturday:

CHRISTMAS
EVE

Next Sunday:

9:00am ~Blythe Chapel

10:30am ~Fort Branch First &
Live streaming

6:00pm ~ Fort Branch First
Bell Ringing & Candle lighting

Complete Schedule @
www.fbfirst.org



Rev. John Baylor, Jr.

PRELUDE

*THE LIGHT OF GOD IS PRESENT WITH US

*HYMN # 218 *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*

*GREETING AND PRAYER

*We offer a cordial greeting to all worshipers who have come to praise the Lord.
Your presence helps lift our spirits, and we welcome you in Christ's name.*

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING ~ JOY

9:00 am ~ Woehler Family

10:30am ~ Rostron Family

Congregation: *We wait as people who experience
hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the
persistent joy that sustains our life as God's people.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Please add your name to the attendance register located in your pew and pass to
the next person until reaches everyone in your row.*

PRAYERS

SHARING OF CONCERNS AND CELEBRATIONS

PRAYER HYMN # 219

What Child Is This

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen.

THE OFFERING:

The Gathering of the Gifts

*Presentation of Gifts with **DOXOLOGY**:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts!
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen.

CHILDRENS MOMENT

MINISTRY OF MUSIC

Derek Robicheaux ~ Joseph's Lullaby

*SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 1:39-56 NLT

MESSAGE *"Third Sunday of Advent: The Gift of Joy"*

*HYMN # 220 *Angels from the Realms of Glory*

*BLESSING Pastor

*THE LIGHT OF GOD LEADS US INTO THE WORLD
Acolytes

*DEPARTING SONG:

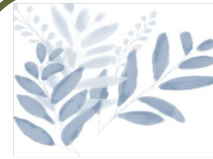
Hymn #219 *What Child Is This*

*This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.*

*PASSING THE PEACE:

Let us greet one another with the peace of God.

POSTLUDE



Friends needing prayers

*Prayer Requests —last names are printed
for individuals requesting prayer for themselves or
with explicitly given permission.*

*Jane Marginet, Richard
Michel, Morgan Whitehead,
Terri Jarboe, Derek Barton,
Jo Eckert, Ruby Wilkerson,
Scotti Pitts,, Gretchen Young,
June Regenhold, Brian Price,
Triston, Tegan, Pastor John,
Thelma & Len Robicheaux,
Wyatt Wagner, TJ Lewis,
Mary & Roy, Roberta &
Duncan, Koda, Brenda &
Robin Hooker, Nathan Hargiss,
Mark Fear. Kim Stratman*



Pastor John & Staff Christmas Gifts

will be presented during
Christmas Eve Worship.

Anyone wishing to
participate should mail
their contribution either
to the church office or

Don Steinmetz
253 E 750 S
Fort Branch,
47648.

You may also give them
to Don in person or place
in the offering plate by

December 17th.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹ A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town ⁴⁰ where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁴² Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. ⁴³ Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? ⁴⁴ When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

⁴⁴⁶ Mary responded,

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵² He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵ For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.



RESPONSE: The Word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Listening Guide
“The Gift of Joy”
December 17, 2023

Scripture: Luke 1:39-56

What brings joy at Christmas?

_____ (vs. 39-45)

_____ with God (vs. 46-48)

God’s _____ (vs. 49-53)

The _____ (vs. 54-56)

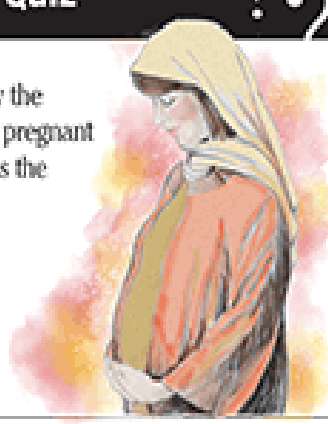
Personal Application: What is the root of your joy at Christmas? Do the above things that brought Mary joy bring you joy at Christmas also?



?? ? Bible Quiz ? ?

Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

A. Aaron
B. Zechariah
C. Joseph
D. Simeon



Answer: B (See Luke 1:57-66)

Poinsettia Dedications

In Memory of Jon Teel

~ Todd & Sonya Teel and family

In Memory of Mary Godley

~ The Todd & Sonya Teel and family

*In Memory of Ralph, Butch, Terry Davis, Kolin Clutter,
Joann Fitch, Charles Boss, Kay Meyers, Jean Dawson*

~ John & Bev Boss

In Honor of Our Family & Friends

~ Bruce & Sherry Holder

In Memory of Our Grandparents,

Dr. & Mrs. Leroy Holder and Carl Kriete

~ Grant, Kelsey & Blake Holder

In Memory of Fred Fuhs & Grandparents

~ Wayne Anderson & David & Sarah Fuhs Family

In Memory of Linda Anderson & Grandparents

~ Wayne Anderson & David & Sarah Fuhs Family

In Memory of Russell Butts, Keagan Butts & Dane Barnett

~ Carolyn Butts

In Memory of Bill & Martha Jane Russler

~ Mike & Sydney Russler

In Memory of Our Siblings

~ Phil & Marla Scott

In Honor of Ennes & Ruby Woolston and

Hubert & Dorothy Frey

~ Bill & Zella Frey

Christmas Flower Dedications

In Memory of Tom R. Lewis
~His Family

In Memory of Elizabeth Shanks
~ Tom Lewis Family

In Memory of Marvin & Dorothy Steinmetz
~ The Steinmetz Family

In Memory of Allen & Margie Cornelison
~ The Steinmetz Family

In Memory of Cameron Foster
~ Kelly & Melissa, Brandon, Lauren, Owen, Caleb & Chase

In Memory of Larry Nurrenbern & Phil Minton
~ Jeff & Laura Nurrenbern

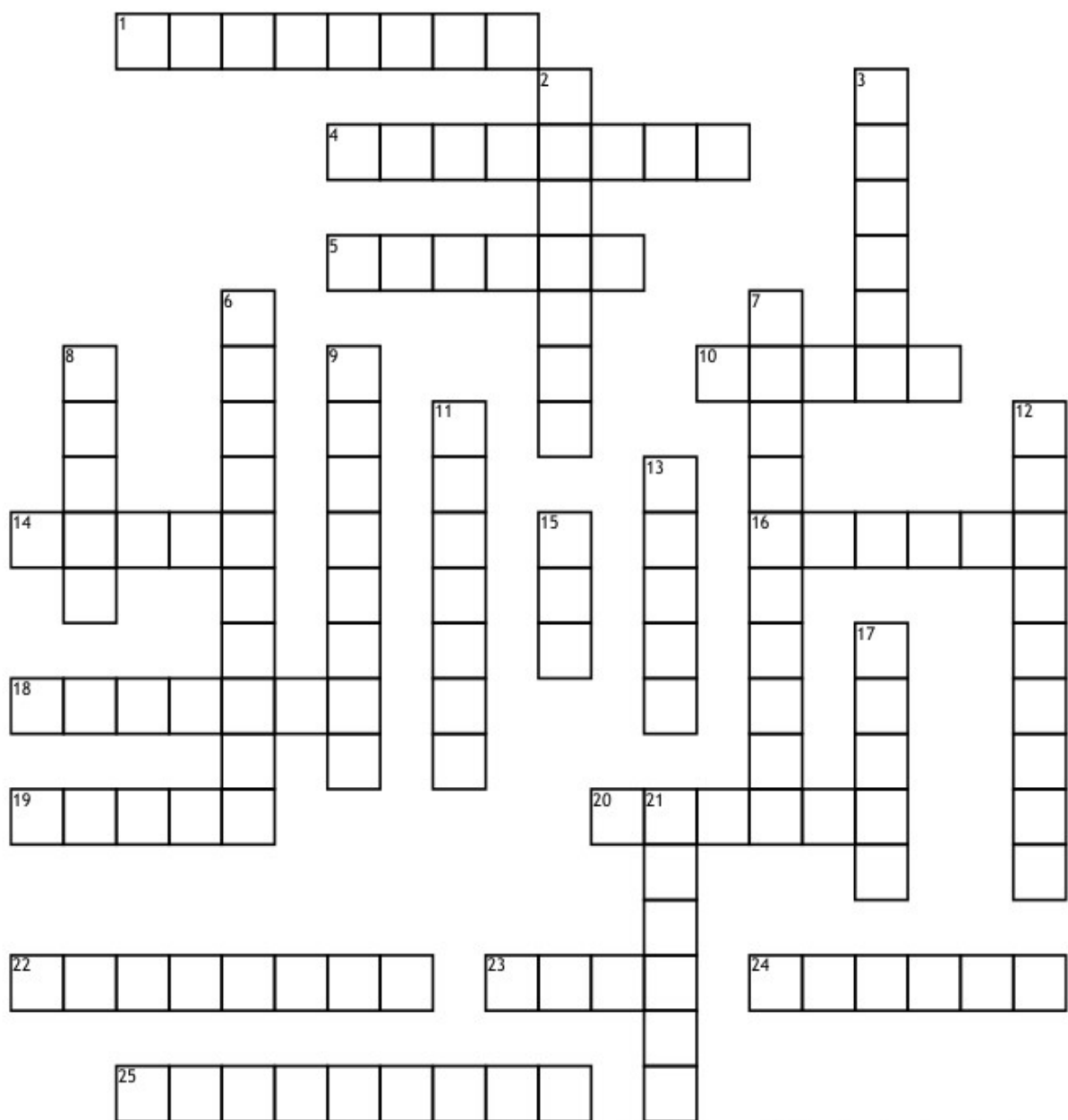
In Memory of Our Loved Ones Who've Passed On
~ Bruce & Marilee Rostron

In Memory of Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Buck
~ Paul & Jeanie Cardinal

In Memory of Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Cardinal
~ Paul & Jeanie Cardinal

The Birth of Our Savior (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20)

Answer key posted on hallway bulletin board.



Across

1. The angel speaks, I proclaim to you

4. Joseph takes a pregnant Mary from _____ to Bethlehem for the census.

5. Who was Mary betrothed (engaged) to?

10. The ____ of the Lord shone around the workers in the field and they were filled with fear (awe of God)

14. Joseph is told he will have a son and he is to give him a name that in Greek is

16. The shepherds go in haste to Bethlehem to see the new born ____

18. To spare her shame, Joseph decided to do what in quiet?

19. Jesus is the ____ of the world!

20. Mary gave birth, wrapped her baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in an animal feeding trough, known as a

22. Ceasar ____ wanted the world to be enrolled (censused) to collect taxes from everyone.

23. Joseph did as the Lord asked and he took Mary as his ____ into his home

24. Even though Mary is with child, she remains a ____.

25. An angel appears to ____ watching their flocks.

Down

2. Isaiah was an Old Testament ____ who told of a savior that would be born of a virgin.

3. A ____ has been born!

6. Mary was made pregnant through the power of the ____

7. The shepherds return home, ____ God

8. Joseph receives a message in a dream from what?

9. This is the Hebrew name of the Greek name Jesus and it means ("God is with us" what a perfect name!)

11. A multitude of angels sing, Glory to God in the

12. What town was Jesus born in?

13. Joseph is the descendant of what great Israelite King? Son of ?

15. The news of the angel will bring great ____

17. Mary reflected on these things in her ____

21. The Season that prepares our hearts for Jesus