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**The Methodist Messenger**

First United Methodist Church  
Edinburg, Texas

**January 2023**



“I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you to myself.”  
**Jeremiah 31:3**

“Ah February... the month unhappily single people dread. I start to get itchy in January when the red hearts and all things Valentines hit the stores. Love songs, glorious heart-break songs, etc. Love is everywhere. But it’s not. The love the world needs to see, touch, find... is something so much deeper and powerful and permanent than romance.

I’m struck by the words from Jeremiah from God. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That “everlasting” word intrigues me. It comforts me. It disconcerts me. Everlasting. God has loved me (you – us) from before time began and will continue to love us through all eternity. Everlasting. A love that transcends time, conquers sin and death, brings forth resurrection, and births new life. Everlasting. A love that survives my apathy, endures my infidelity, overcomes my inconstancy, and pursues me in my wandering.

Everlasting. A love that is patient, kind, forgiving, forbearing, generous, faithful, and constant. A love that never gives up, never loses hope, and never forgets. Sometimes I struggle to experience those aspects of love from God. I impose human, infinitely flawed, qualities and feelings on the God who loves with infinite and divine grace. If we’re honest, we struggle to love others like God loves us. Everlasting. Unconditional. I forget sometimes that “unconditional” is not permission to do whatever without consequence. It just means that among the consequences of my actions, losing God’s love will never be one of them. Everlasting.

Last Sunday (January 21st), we talked about the Hebrew word “ezer.” This word means so much more than “helper.” It is how God describes God’s relationship to us in scripture. God is our “ezer” – helper, savior, warrior, advocate, strength, defender, and so much more. We were created to be “ezers” for one another. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is created and called to be the “ezer” for the world, it’s communities. I think it would be impossible to desire to be all those things: helper, savior, warrior, advocate, strength, and defender, for people we weren’t actively choosing to love. It would be impossible to desire to be that for people without the God who loves us with an Everlasting love.

Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine’s Day this year. We’ll have different times for people to come receive ashes during the day and a service at 5:30pm. Perhaps it is a beautiful reclaiming of “love” for the day. There is no greater proclamation of love than the gift of Jesus and the sacrifice of Jesus. So, maybe this year, instead of expressing our love with hearts, candy, dinners, or flowers, we’ll find ways that demonstrate the Everlasting love of God for the people in our lives? Perhaps we’ll find ways to be an “ezer” to those who do not feel or believed they are loved- whether by God or people. Maybe we’ll want more for ourselves than those things illustrated by Hallmark, and instead value the Everlasting love and demonstrations from the “ezers” in our lives and respond it in kind.

With Everlasting Love,  
Pastor Michelle



**February Dates To Put In Your Calendar**

- Feb. 4 – Communion Sunday
- Feb. 13 – Pancake Supper
- Feb. 14 – Ash Wednesday
- Feb. 25 – Church Potluck after Worship



## FAT TUESDAY

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, is Fat Tuesday and we are having a Pancake Supper. Proceeds will go to the Shoe Bank. I'm looking for men who like to cook pancakes, bacon, and sausage, and have fun doing it. Please contact Jackie Billings at 956 279 7904. Everyone mark your calendars. You can come and enjoy the fellowship while you eat or you can take it to go.

Tickets will be available soon.

## Food Pantry

Prayers are my focus for this month.

Our In His Hands Food Pantry is submitting a grant for funding to the Texas Methodist Foundation. Please keep this grant funding in your prayers as food prices rise and the line of people ..beginning in our parking lot grows longer.

The grant was completed by a team including Pastor Michelle Vernone, Jennifer Samaniego and Gina Houts Childress. I want to thank them for their time and their gifts of communication.

As we reach a time of change in our food pantry, I want all to know how dear this endeavor has been for me and all those who volunteer every month to pray, purchase, deliver, sort and distribute to those we are blessing. Because there is a need, the food pantry will continue to grow stronger and all of us are challenged to continue to do what we can to make it a success to bless our community.

We are truly blessed to be a blessing



## Shoe Bank

This School year of 2023-2024 is half over. We are planning to give the school district another donation in February. We were recently honored to be the guests at the Edinburg Rotary Club. They gave \$2,500 to our "In His Steps" Shoe Bank. I was able to give them a short history of the Shoe Bank and how we work to get 100 percent of all gifts to the children in the Edinburg school district who need them. Then, Judy McClelland was able to tell them about the need for food and how we can help the community with our Food Pantry. While we were telling them of needs in our community we also did a little advertising for our "Hub of Prosperity" farm.



Blessings, Jackie Billings

## What's up with the HUB?

The Hub veggies came through the freezing weather better than expected and our market continues every Saturday 10 am - 12 pm along Mon Mack Road! This month's free workshop topic is Urban Livestock including quail, chickens, and goats and will be held Saturday Feb. 10, also 10 am - 12 pm.

You can reach Stephanie with any questions at [stephanie.kasper01@utrgv.edu](mailto:stephanie.kasper01@utrgv.edu).

## Sunday School News

The Spirit Sunday School class will begin a new study on January 28. We will be studying Adam Hamilton's book about Christianity and World Religions. We meet at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Please join.

## Thank You Pack 500!!

Cub Scout Pack 500 spent the afternoon of January 14th up at the church picking up trash and cleaning up the property as an act of service. We are so grateful to Pack 500 for all the ways they bless our congregation and serve our community.



## Mark your calendar! Save the date!

Come celebrate Pastor Michelle's birthday with us on February 25th following worship. Of course, there will be cake and ice cream ... it is a party after all. We ask that you bring a covered dish to share. Sign-up sheets will be available on Sunday mornings.

And what would a birthday party be without gifts??? Pastor Michelle is compiling a wish list of items she still needs for the parsonage and for her personal use. More information will be forthcoming in the weekly announcements.

For more information contact Barbara Engelbrecht (901) 289-9040.



## Ash Wednesday and Lent

Ash Wednesday is February 14th. There will be come and go imposition of ashes 7:30 am – 8:30 and 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm in the Sunday School room. There will be service for imposition at 5:30pm. Our Lenten study and sermon series will be drawn from Meeting Jesus At The Table: A Lenten Study by Campbell and Fohr.

