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# The Methodist Messenger

First United Methodist Church  
Edinburg, Texas

## January 2023



“But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”  
[Matthew 4:4](#)

The end of 2022 and all of 2023 has been a profoundly transformative time for me. I’m different. I’ve become intimately aware of the mortality of those I love, as well as my own. I’ve learned the difference between holding on to “things” versus holding on to that which lives in the eternal. I’ve had to let people love and care for me on their terms, not my own. I’ve had to learn that sometimes I can’t just “lean” on others, I have to let them carry me. Frankly, I had to do more than learn these lessons, I had to live them. That changed me.

And...helped remind me who I am, who I want to be, who I am called to be.

As a pastor, part of who I am called to be is a prophetic voice – a truth-telling voice that encourages people to turn to the Lord. Some people describe it as speaking truth to power, but I like to think of it as speaking power from truth. We, believers and disciples, (and yes, there is difference) are empowered by God’s Holy Spirit to be bearers of love, hope, healing, grace... all the good that God wants to offer the world.

To do that, to be the love of God to the people God loves (everyone), we have to know God, to know the story of God and God’s people. We have to know Jesus and stories of Jesus’ life on earth and Jesus’ promises of the life to come. We have to know the Holy Spirit and recognize the work of the Holy Spirit so we can do our part in it. And like the lessons of this last year, we have to do more than know or learn these stories, we have to live them.

Within the waning Christian culture, people have forgotten the stories of God, the words of scripture. We stopped telling them because we stopped reading them, learning them, and living them. Being a “good” person has replaced being a “God-loving” person. Instead of pursuing a holy life, we satisfy ourselves with being moral, ethical, and/or “law-abiding.”

I see this as a result of surviving on “bread alone” instead of feasting on “the very word of God” as we are admonished in Matthew 4:4. We’ve come to believe if we pray, its enough, or maybe coming to church a couple times each month is enough, or maybe being in small group is enough. The problem with all of that is the idea that we only want “enough” of God. Enough to believe we’re “good people.” Enough to feel good about ourselves and our priorities. Enough to justify our politics and personal beliefs.

It’s like filling up on chips and salsa then finding no room for the meal that actually nourishes you and keeps you healthy. We aren’t taking care of spiritual hunger in a way that properly nourishes us, so we see the spiritual life of our culture, our country, becoming sick. Maybe, we are becoming spiritually sick, if not sick, at the very least chronically fatigued. No energy, no power in our discipleship or in our relationship with God.

In 2024, my first prayer for us is for a spiritual hunger that drives us to the Table. I pray that EFUMC will respond to the invitation to immerse themselves in scripture this year. That more and more people in our congregation would join our group that prays daily for the church/community. I pray that every single attendee, congregant, and member would be moved to regular, consistent, faithful, giving of resources to the church as an act of worship. I pray that we do more than learn the stories of God, we would live them. I pray that as we are transformed by God’s word and our faithful discipleship, others would be blessed and choose to follow Jesus too.

Here's to new beginnings.

Blessed New Year,  
Pastor Michelle



### January Dates To Put In Your Calendar

- January 3rd: Bible Study/Conversation from Bible Recap reading challenge starts. Wednesday evenings at 6pm at the parsonage
- January 7th: Holy Communion Worship
- January 12th: Pastor’s Open House at the Parsonage starting at 4pm
- January 15th: Office closed MLK Day



## What's up with the HUB?

Start off the new year right with fresh farm veggies every Saturday 10 am - 12 pm! This month's free workshop topic is Essential Equipment for Small Farmers and will be held Saturday Jan. 13 also 10 am - 12 pm. We'll start the workshop off with a show and tell of hand tools, so feel free to bring your favorite tool from home to share. You can reach Stephanie with any questions at [stephanie.kasper01@utrgv.edu](mailto:stephanie.kasper01@utrgv.edu).

Thanks,  
Stephanie

## Prayers and Blankets and Groceries

Our December food pantry distribution was a blessing to 100+ families thanks to your giving. We blessed our community with blankets, children's books, Christmas treats, basic groceries and lots of smiling faces wishing them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

As the new year of 2024 approaches, we will be organizing to bring food and blessings to our neighbors on the third Saturday of each month. If you know someone who is in need, please share that information with them.

Please pray for our success and pick up an extra can of vegetables or a bag of pinto beans when you are purchasing your groceries.

Every donation counts and helps with our food pantry.

Thank you for being a blessing.



## UM Campus Ministry at UTRGV

Campus Ministry is an important ministry for EFUMC to participate and support. We have a long history and connection to UMCM. Just last week, students from Campus Ministry helped build/install a ramp at the home of one of our congregation members. In the next 18 months, Campus Ministry is working to become a self-funded ministry. Due to current financial circumstances, financial support from our conference/district will no longer be available. The UMCM board spent the summer working a strategic plan and will be looking for support from both local churches and larger institutions. There are many ways we, as individuals and the church, can help in the immediate. Ways you can support UMCM in the Spring Semester:

- Meals will be needed for Thursday night bible study in the Spring.
- People willing to fill the beverage fridge (individual serving size bottles/cans of soft drinks, chocolate milk, juices etc.)
- Individual snacks (granola bars, chips, cookies, cheese sticks, cups of yogurt)
- Non-perishable items for their food pantry
- People willing to help fill the freezer with snacks/meals (pizzas, hot pockets, uncrustables, lasagnas, etc.)

If you are willing to help by providing food or if you might be interested in volunteering at the ministry building, please contact Todd Jones (Campus Pastor) at [toddmcjones@gmail.com](mailto:toddmcjones@gmail.com)  
(Monetary donations are also welcomed J)

## The Return of the Pastor's Open House at the Parsonage!!!!

If all goes to plan, I will be hosting a "Open House" on Wednesday, January 3rd at 4pm. The remodeled parsonage is beautiful. I'm excited to share how God has redeemed a tragedy and brought beauty, literally, from ashes. Looking forward to sharing this time with you.



## 2024 – 2026 EFUMC Admin Board

Please welcome our incoming Administrative Board/Leadership Council~

- Board Chair – Tina Gall
- SPRC – Rebecca Morrison  
– Shelia Pruitt Orr
- Finance – Gerry Rodriguez  
– Bruce Bush  
– Maryann Denner
- Trustees – Ken Flannagan  
– Craig Bovee
- Lay Leaders – Chris Rierson  
– Dora Pagel
- Delegate to AC – Judy McClelland
- Alternate – Tina Gall
- District Delegates to AC – Marty Engelbrecht  
– Gary Henrichson
- Treasurer – Dana Villarreal



## EFUMC – Let's Read The Bible Together in 2024

Each new year during my appointment at EFUMC, we have pressed into practices to intentionally deepen our discipleship. As I have prayed, asking the Lord what he desires for EFUMC this year, I feel like the God is asking us to feast on God's Word. The scriptures give us life. They do more than teach us, they feed us spiritually. Reading and wrestling the holy texts will strengthen our discipleship. When we become more and more involved with the scripture, our relationship with God becomes more intimate. The bible is more than "a" story, it's "our" story. It's important for us to know our story in order to help lead our future.

Starting January 1, 2024, I will begin a reading program to complete the bible in a year. I'm inviting and challenging all of you to do this with me. Our midweek bible studies this year will be digging deeper into whatever text we're on at the time. We'll be using "The Bible Recap: A One-Year Guide to Reading and Understanding the Entire Bible." I would also recommend the companion book with daily questions. This reading study takes us through the bible chronologically, beginning to end, oldest story to newest. You can order the book(s) through Amazon.com.

