



THE MESSENGER



DULUTH FIRST UMC'S NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

Celebrating Easter at Duluth First UMC: March 31st

7:00 a.m. Sunrise Service with Communion

Join us Easter morning at 7:00 a.m. in front of the main entrance to the Sanctuary for an Easter Sunrise Service with Communion. This service will include singing, prayers, devotion, and Holy Communion. The 7:00 a.m. Sunrise service will be live-streamed on the **Duluth First UMC Worship** channel on **YouTube**.

PLEASE NOTE: We will not be holding our 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship service on Easter morning. Please make plans to join us at the 7:00 Sunrise Service or at either of the 11:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship or Traditional Worship services.

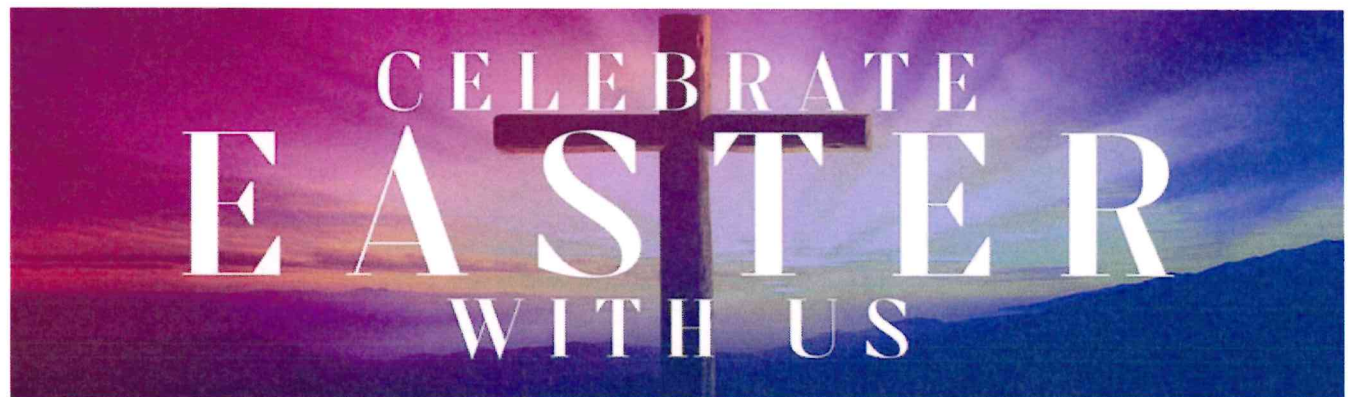
11:00 Contemporary Worship Service

The worship band, technical team, prayer team and pastor will be energized and ready to join with you in the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The 11:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship service in Hinton Hall, located in the Sheldon Family Life Center, will be live-streamed on the **Duluth First UMC Contemporary Worship** page on **Facebook**.

11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service

At the Traditional Worship service in the Sanctuary, the music will be as glorious as the day deserves with the choir lifting praises to God, ending with our annual Easter acclamation, Handel's *Hallelujah*! The 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship service will be live-streamed on the **Duluth First UMC Worship** channel on **YouTube**.

PLEASE NOTE: Childcare, for ages newborn through 5 years of age, will be available for the 11:00 a.m. worship services, and during the 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Sunday School hour.



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Duluth First United Methodist Church

3208 Duluth Highway 120,
Duluth, GA 30096
Phone: 770-476-3776
website: www.duluthumc.org

Sunday Mornings

8:30 a.m.—Traditional Worship service

11:00 a.m.—Contemporary Worship service

11:00 a.m.—Traditional Worship service

All services can be viewed online at www.duluthumc.org
or on the Duluth First UMC Worship channel on YouTube –
search for Duluth First UMC Worship.

Daylight Saving Time

Begins on Sunday, March 10th

Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 10th. Don't forget to set your clocks one hour ahead before going to bed on Saturday, March 9th. This is also an excellent time to replace the batteries in your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.



Observing Holy Week

Holy Week is the last week of Lent, the week of Christian observances leading to Easter Sunday. It begins with Palm Sunday and progresses through Holy or Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. From the waving of palm branches while shouting "Hosanna!" to the confusion of one ritual and creation of another, to the sham trial and gathering of the mob shouting "Crucify Him!" to the slow painful journey to the cross ending with a triumphant shout and darkening skies, **Holy Week** captures the most important week in the history of the faith.

We remember as we worship the One who gave His life for us. **Holy Week**, observed in many Christian churches as a time to commemorate and enact the suffering (Passion) and death of Jesus through various observances and services of worship, culminates with the Easter Sunday celebrations.

Source: UMC Communications



Early Christian Meal: March 27th

Join us on Wednesday, March 27th, at 5:30 p.m. in Hinton Hall, for a special Holy Week event – the **Early Christian Meal**. The evening will feature a delicious meal, and will include congregational singing, anthems sung by our Chamber Chorale, and portrayals of Biblical characters close to Jesus.

Reservations are required! The deadline to make reservations is Sunday, March 17th. The cost is \$12 for adults, \$7 for children, 12 and under. The menu - soup, Chicken Piccata, rice, mixed veggies, rolls, and dessert - is the same for adults and children, and will be served family-style at the tables.

Childcare is available for children younger than Kindergarten. In your reservation, please indicate how many of your children will require childcare. To make a reservation or for any questions, please contact David Daniel, Minister of Music & Worship Arts, by e-mail at ddaniel@duluthumc.org.



Tenebrae Service for Good Friday:

March 29th

The service of Tenebrae, or "shadows," grew out of a combination night prayer and early morning prayer, with an additional focus on the commemoration of the passion. The latter was usually read by several deacons and later, in the middle Ages, was read by monastic choirs. The most significant feature of this service is the gradual extinguishing of the lights and candles in the room and on the altar. The bare altar table and the unvested furnishings emphasize the starkness of the events recalled. The candles represent the apostles and all followers of Christ, and the larger candle represents Christ.

This year the service will be held on Good Friday, March 29th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. It is a wonderful service to bring a neighbor or a friend. There will be childcare available for children newborn through 5 years of age. The service will be live-streamed on the **Duluth First UMC Worship** channel on **YouTube**.





"Let's Head 'Em Off at the Pass"

That's a familiar phrase for those of us who like old Western movies. The good guys hop on their trusty steeds and ride off to intercept the bad guys before they can get to town and cause a ruckus. In today's parlance, the good guys are being proactive. They recognize that a potential problem might be on its way, and they want to do something about it before it really becomes an issue.

Our church works the same way. The church staff, the **Finance Committee**, and the **Stewardship Committee** all watch over the money that the church brings in and keeps an eye on how much the church spends, too. We try to be proactive whenever possible and identify potential problems before they become an issue and 'head them off at the pass.'

That said, last year in 2023, as a congregation, our giving to the church was down by 4%. That means the church took in less revenue than we were expecting. The result was an overall financial loss for the year of about (\$142,000).

Obviously, we don't want to see that happen again in 2024. So, to avoid another loss year, we want to be proactive now and head off any potential problems at the pass before they get here. **To that end, we're asking everyone to increase their giving plans for 2024 by 10%.** Whether you completed a pledge card or not, we would like to see everyone help out by giving just a little bit more. For example, if you give \$100 per week, start giving \$110 per week. A 10% increase isn't much and, if everyone in the church does it, then we won't have to worry about the prospect of potential cuts to programs, ministries, and staff in the future.

It's always a good idea to be proactive instead of reactive. Being proactive with your health by getting an annual physical always pays benefits. Being proactive with your house and car by making sure they are serviced and in good repair helps them last a long time. Being proactive with your faith by attending church services, studying the scriptures, and loving God and your neighbor will help your spirit stay nice and strong.

(Continued in the next column.)

"Let's Head 'Em Off at the Pass"

(Continued from the previous column.)

Our church has been a good steward of the provisions and blessings that God has given us. Financially, we are pretty healthy and that has allowed us to weather that loss for 2023 without too much pain. That good financial health also allows us to have ministries and programs that play a huge role in our community and that impact a lot of people. Nobody wants to get to the point where cuts have to be made, so let's do everything we can as a congregation to 'head that off at the pass' and make sure it doesn't happen.

The **Finance Committee** and the **Stewardship Committee** believe that our church is very capable of giving sufficiently to fund our budget, but it takes everyone in the church to do so. Please consider helping if you can.

In His Service,

Don Greene,

Chair of the Finance Committee

Bryan Johnson,

Chair of the Stewardship Committee

Talking Points Regarding the Church's Budget for 2024

1. **The church's budget is about \$1.8 million dollars per year.**
 - That covers all programs, ministries, staff, utilities, etc., to keep this church going.
2. **Staff does an excellent job of controlling expenses.**
 - They are very aware of how much money is available to spend, and they are good stewards of that money.
3. **Giving from tithes and offerings went down in 2023 by about 4%.**
 - That means we got less revenue than we were expecting.
 - That led to an overall loss for the year to the tune of about \$142,000.
4. **Our church is pretty healthy when it comes to our finances.**
 - In fact, we are healthier now than we were 10 years ago.
 - We are healthier than many other churches out there.
 - Because of that financial health, we can weather that \$142,000 loss from 2023, but we don't want to see that happen again in 2024.

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Talking Points Regarding the

Church's Budget for 2024

(Continued from the previous page.)

5. **So, to avoid another big loss year, and to avoid getting to the point where we have to make some cuts to programming, ministries, and staff, we want to be proactive.**
- We want to head off any potential problems at the pass before they get here.
 - We are asking everyone to increase their giving by 10%.
 - Whether you completed a pledge card or not, we would like to see everyone increase their giving plans by 10%.
 - So, if you give \$100 per week, please start giving \$110 per week.
 - 10% is a suggestion, not a limit. If you can give more, please do.
 - We would like to see everyone do that sooner rather than later.
 - We don't want to get to the point where cuts become necessary, so we need to be proactive now.
 - A 10% increase isn't much, and if everyone in the church does it, then we won't have to worry about the prospect of potential cuts in the future.
6. **The Finance Committee and Stewardship Committee members believe that our church is very capable of giving sufficiently to our budget.**
- But it takes everyone in the church to do so.
 - Our church does so much good. And **YOU** make it possible through your giving.
 - Everyone needs to step up if they can.

In His Service,
Don Greene,
Chair of the Finance Committee
Bryan Johnson,
Chair of the Stewardship Committee



So What Is Lent?

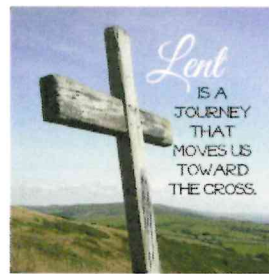
At Jesus' baptism the sky split open, the Spirit of God, which looked like a dove, descended and landed on Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, My Beloved, with whom I am pleased." Afterward, as told in Matthew 4:1-11, the Spirit sent Jesus into the wilderness, where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. During his time there he was tempted by Satan and found clarity and strength to resist temptation. Afterward, he was ready to begin his ministry.

(Speculation)

Maybe Jesus needed some time with God to sort through the major changes happening in his life. Maybe he needed to get away from family, friends and the familiar routine in order to see God (and himself) more clearly. Perhaps he wanted some intentional time with God as he searched for direction and answers. Like Jesus, we may need to take some serious time to pray and listen for God.

Why "do" Lent? How do I start?

Are you searching for something more? Tired of running in circles, but not really living life with direction, purpose or passion? It's pretty easy to get caught up in the drama of classes, relationships, family, and work. Our lives are filled with distractions that take us away from living a life with Christ. We try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, meaningless chatter, stimulants, alcohol, too many activities or other irrelevant stuff. We run away from life and from God.



Lent is a great time to "repent" — to return to God and refocus our lives to be more in line with Jesus. It's a 40-day trial run in changing your lifestyle and letting God change your heart. You might try one of these practices for Lent:

FASTING: Some people have been known to go without food for days. But that's not the only way to fast. You can fast by cutting out some of the things in your life that distract you from God. Some Christians use the whole 40 days to fast from candy, TV, soft drinks, cigarettes or meat as a way to purify their bodies and lives. You might skip one meal a day and use that time to pray instead. Or you can give up some activity like worry or reality TV to spend time outside enjoying God's creation. What do you need to let go of or "fast" from in order to focus on God? What clutters your calendar and life? How can you simplify your life in terms of what you eat, wear or do? Learn more about or design a fast.

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So What Is Lent?

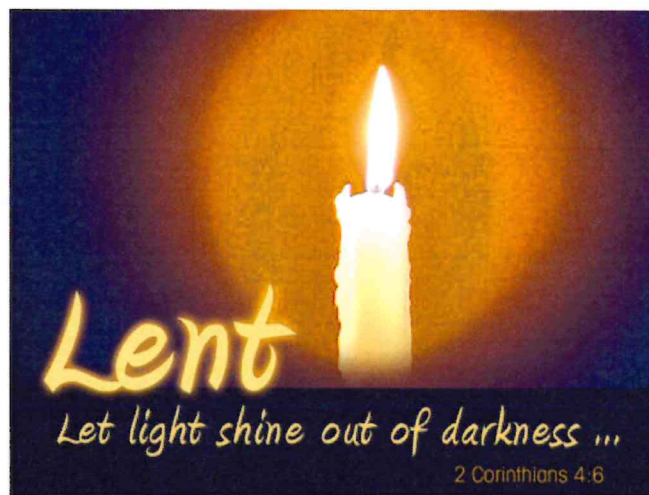
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SERVICE: Some Christians take something on for Christ. You can collect food for the needy, volunteer once a week to tutor children, or work for reform and justice in your community. You can commit to help a different stranger, coworker or friend everyday of Lent. Serving others is one way we serve God.

PRAYER: Christians also use Lent as a time of intentional prayer. You can pray while you walk, create music or art as a prayer to God, or savor a time of quiet listening. All can be ways of becoming more in tune with God.

Christians from many different traditions celebrate Lent. How will you use the time to grow closer to God?

Source: UMC Communications



Installation of the Butterflies:

Saturday, March 30th

All are welcome to help install the butterflies on the church's front lawn on Saturday, March 30th, at 4:00 p.m. We will gather in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall. With a crew of 8-10 people, it will take approximately 45 minutes. This year marks the 5th anniversary of celebrating Easter with the butterflies!



Top Ten Things You Can Try for the Season of Lent

10. Try an electronic fast. Give up TV, Facebook, texting, tweeting, e-mail and all things electronic for one day every week. (Or every day of Lent!) Use the time to read and pray. Learn about fasting.

9. Start a prayer rhythm. Each day pray for another person.

8. Go deeper. Take part in a Bible study, a book study, or take an online course as a part of your Lenten discipline.

7. Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it (maybe even yourself). Study a book on forgiveness, such as Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey.

6. Give up soft drinks, fast food, tea or coffee. Give the money you save to help folks in a different part of the world who are in crisis.

5. Create a daily quiet time. Spend 10 minutes a day in silence and prayer. Read a daily devotional for the season of Lent. See how it can help you add spiritual practice to your daily life beyond Lent.

4. Cultivate a life of gratitude. Write someone a thank-you letter each week, and be aware of how many people have helped you along the way. Learn more about the spiritual practice of gratitude.

3. Visit Sight Psalms (www.upperroom.org/sight_psalms) and spend time in visual meditation and prayer.

2. Volunteer one hour or more each week with a local food pantry, a local shelter, tutoring program, nursing home or prison ministry.

1. Pray for others you see as you drive to and from work, as you walk to and from classes, or as you run errands and go about your daily business.

Source: UMC Communications



Join Us for Wednesday Night Dinners in Hinton Hall

March 6th

Pulled pork on a bun, cole slaw, corn pudding,
Brunswick stew, and dessert.
For the kids – hot dogs and French fries.

March 13th

Fried catfish, au gratin potatoes, fried okra,
collard greens, hushpuppies, and dessert.
For the kids – fish sticks and chips.

March 20th

Pot roast, oven roasted potatoes, green beans,
squash casserole, and dessert.
For the kids – hamburgers and French fries.

**Dinners are served from 5 to 6:30 p.m.,
with to-go boxes available from 6 to 6:30 p.m.**

Dinner is served in the Hinton Hall of the
Sheldon Family Life Center. Enjoy fellowship
around the table with family and friends.

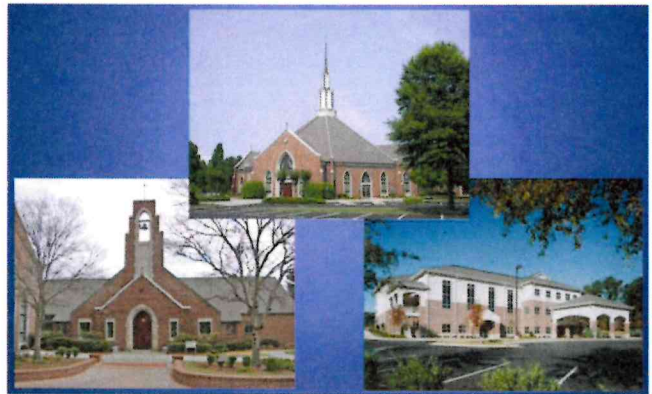
The Dinner Belles and Beaus prepare excellent
meals at very reasonable prices.

The prices for Wednesday Night Dinners are:

- \$8.00 for adults;
- \$7.00 for seniors;
- \$5.00 for children under 11 years of age;
- \$23.00 for family meals
(immediate family members only);
- \$5.00 for salad bar only, which includes
the salad bar, a choice of baked potato or
sweet potato, dessert, and a drink.

You can pay using a credit/debit card!

**NOTE: Menus are subject to change.
For the week's menu please visit the
church's website at duluthumc.org.**



Information Station -

The Place to Learn About Our Church:

Sundays, March 3rd through 17th

Information Station is a three-week course especially
for new members and those interested in becoming
members of Duluth First United Methodist Church. We
will meet at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays March 3rd, 10th, and
17th in the Conference Room, located on the 3rd floor of
the Sheldon Family Life Center.

Sunday, March 3rd

- Tour the 3rd floor of the Sheldon Family Life
Center and learn about the administrative work
of our church.
- Learn information about The United Methodist
Church.

Sunday, March 10th

- Hear about the history of Duluth First UMC.
- Learn about the opportunities for participation
and service in our church.

Sunday, March 17th

- We will tour the church campus.
- We will have time for a question and
answer session.

Please make plans to join us! Please contact Rev. Beth
Brown Shugart by e-mail at bshugart@duluthumc.org
to RSVP or for additional information.



Order Your Easter Lilies:

March 6th - 24th

The **Worship Committee** invites you to remember or honor a loved one with a lily on Easter. The lilies will be used to adorn the Sanctuary and Hinton Hall on Easter Sunday, March 31st. **The cost per plant is \$20.** You may pick up your lily/lilies following the Easter morning service you attend. Printed copies of the Easter Lily Remembrance/Honor listings will be available at the Contemporary Worship and Traditional Worship services on Easter morning.

All proceeds go to **Seeds of Hope**, whose funds are used to help meet the needs of God's people living in Duluth and Suwanee--often strangers, widows, orphans, homeless, those who are lost, and those who are without hope--who come to Duluth First United Methodist Church seeking assistance.

You can place your order for lilies online with a credit/debit card payment beginning Wednesday, March 6th. To order online please go to the church's website - **duluthumc.org** - and click on the **Easter Lilies** slide on the homepage **beginning on March 6th.**

If you wish to pay by check or cash, order forms will be available beginning March 6th:

- At the Welcome/Information Centers;
- Online at the church's website - **www.duluthumc.org** - click on the **Easter Lilies** slide on the homepage.

Order forms will be available in the Sunday Orders of Worship for all services on March 10th, 17th, and 24th.

Please place your form/forms, along with a check made payable to **Duluth First United Methodist Church** and marked **Easter Lilies** in the memo section, in the Church Staff Drop Box located in the Atrium, or send it to Duluth First United Methodist Church, Attn. Ken Willi, 3208 Duluth Hwy. 120, Duluth, GA 30096. **NOTE: All orders must be received by Sunday, March 24th, at 5:00 p.m.**



Kids' Easter Egg Hunt: March 31st

The **Children's Ministry** of Duluth First UMC is hosting a **Kids' Easter Egg Hunt** on Easter Sunday, March 31st. Please meet at 9:30 a.m. in room D126. Refreshments will be provided for the parents in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall while their children are hunting Easter eggs. **Please bring your own Easter basket.** This event is for children ages Pre-K (4 years) through the 5th grade, with childcare for younger children available in the nursery.

Easter morning worship services will be a 7:00 a.m. Sunrise Service and 11:00 a.m. Traditional and Contemporary Worship services. For more information about the **Kids' Easter Egg Hunt**, please contact Leslie Yokeley, Director of Children's Ministries, by e-mail at **lyokeley@duluthumc.org**, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138. **We "hop" to see you there!**



Donations Needed for Easter Egg Hunt

The **Children's Ministry** needs donations of candy and empty plastic eggs for our **Kids' Easter Egg Hunt** on March 31st! You may drop off your donations on the stage in the Dorothy Rainey Fellowship Hall and outside of Leslie Yokeley's office (room F143) on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. The **Children's Ministry Team** would appreciate your donations **by Wednesday, March 20th**, so we can get the eggs stuffed and ready to go for our **Kids' Easter Egg Hunt** on Easter morning!

If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Yokeley by e-mail at **lyokeley@duluthumc.org**. Thank you for your support!



Christian Beginnings and Children's Ministry:

Life is sweet at Christian Beginnings and our students are having the best time making friends, learning new things and growing with God!



Christian Beginnings

Preschool and Kindergarten



Where Smiles Happen



Christian Beginnings

Preschool and Kindergarten



Where Smiles Happen



Christian Beginnings and Children's Ministry:

Life is sweet at Christian Beginnings and our students are having the best time making friends, learning new things and growing with God!

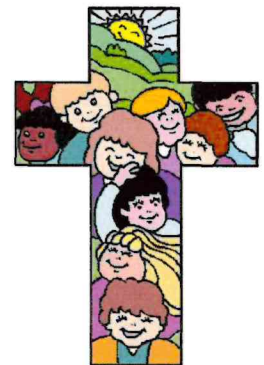
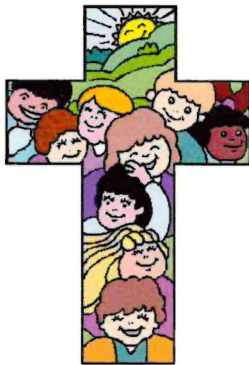


Christian Beginnings

Preschool and Kindergarten



Where Smiles Happen



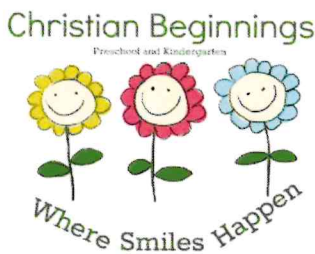
Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten Wins “Best of Gwinnett” Award for 2023

Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten is excited to announce that they won the “Best of Gwinnett” award for 2023! Christian Beginnings also won the “Best of Gwinnett” award in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. They also won the “Gwinnett Daily Post Reader’s Choice” award in 2019. Congratulations to our church’s award-winning preschool and kindergarten program!



Register Now for the Christian Beginnings 2024-2025 School Year

Register now for **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten’s** 2024-2025 school year. **Christian Beginnings**, offered Monday through Friday during the school year from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years, provides a loving Christian atmosphere for the growth and nurture of each child. They will have fun and make friends while attending our accredited, award winning school.



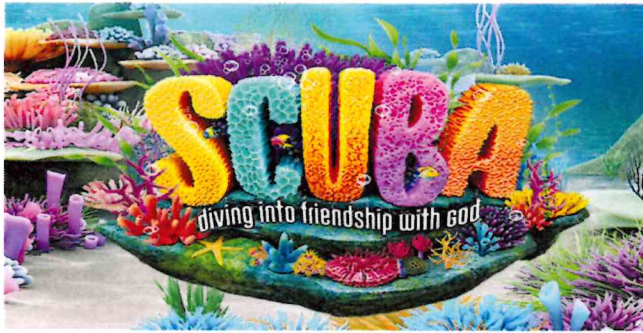
If you would like more information regarding **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten**, or you would like to set up a tour, please contact Pat Szathmary by e-mail at pszathmary@duluthumc.org or call 770-497-1743.

Find the Little Jesus Figurines Around Our Church

As we go through the season of Lent at Duluth First United Methodist Church, you may notice some little Jesus figurines (with purple, blue, green, and yellow sashes) tucked away in places around the church. Our hope is that you will keep one for yourself as a reminder of Jesus always being with you, and use them as ways to invite friends, neighbors and colleagues to church.

If you find any more than one, we ask that you would re-hide them for others to find. We hope you’ll join us in having some fun with this as we share the love of Jesus with others. Please take a picture of where you display your Jesus figurine, or someplace you have taken it with you, and e-mail it to Ken Willi at kwilli@duluthumc.org. Please make sure to put **Little Jesus Figurine** in the subject line of your e-mail. The week before Easter we will post the pictures on the church’s Facebook and Instagram social media pages.





Save the Dates for Vacation Bible School

2024: June 24th - 28th

Save the dates for our 2024 Vacation Bible School - "Scuba: Diving into Friendship with God!" Vacation Bible School will be held June 24th through the 28th.

If you enjoy decorating, are creative, and have a love for the ocean, we are looking for volunteers to help with decorating the church for our week of Vacation Bible School. Please contact Leslie Yokeley by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org for additional information.



Youth Group Sunday Night Gatherings

Students in the 6th through 12th grades are invited to join us on Sunday nights for **Sunday Night Gatherings** from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank"), located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. **Sunday Night Gatherings** include great dinners, fun games, amazing worship, inspirational and relevant messages and life-changing small groups.

Our schedule for the month of March is:

- **Sunday, March 3rd:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank")
- **Sunday, March 10th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank")
- **Sunday, March 17th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank")
- **Sunday, March 24th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank")
- **Sunday, March 31st:** Sunday Night Gathering is canceled due to the Easter holiday.

Please visit the **Youth Ministry's** website at <https://dfumcstudents.org> for more information.

Youth Summer Mission Trip:

June 5th - 9th

Please mark your calendars! The **Youth Ministry** is very excited to be returning to **The Gainesville Aid Project** for our summer mission trip from Wednesday, June 5th, through Sunday, June 9th. This is a mission opportunity where students and adult leaders will be in service for those in need of home repairs, wheelchair ramps, lawncare help, etc. There will also be group activities, games, and worship.

Additional information and registration will be available soon. If you have any questions, please contact Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministry, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org.

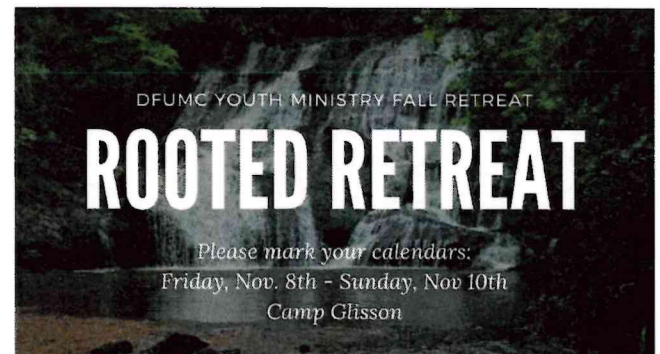


Youth Fall Retreat:

November 8th - 10th

Please save the dates for our **Youth Ministry's** annual **Rooted Fall Retreat** (the North Georgia UMC Conference Retreat) hosted by Camp Glisson! The retreat dates are from Friday, November 8th, through Sunday, November, 10th. The weekend will be filled with powerful worship experiences, dedicated youth group time, fun activities, food, and lodging at Camp Glisson!

Additional information and registration will be available soon. If you have any questions, please contact Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministry, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org.



Coming Together to Support the Murphy-Harpst Children's Center

On Saturday, February 10th, twenty-eight women and men participated in a learn-give-create event about the **Murphy-Harpst Children's Center**. An agency of the United Methodist Church, **Murphy-Harpst** is an independent not-for-profit organization committed to meeting the needs of abused and neglected young people through residential treatment, placements in specialized foster care, and community programs that serve at-risk youth and their families.



The event was hosted by Duluth First United Methodist Church in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall. Guest speaker Gary McDonald (see picture above), Stewardship and Advancement Manager of the **Murphy-Harpst Children's Center**, gave a very informative talk about the history of **Murphy-Harpst**, as well as what is currently happening there, followed by a question and answer time.

The group then set about creating 60 valentines for the residents at **Murphy-Harpst**. The **United Women of Faith** would like to thank the congregation for their generous donations of art supplies. Gary McDonald took a van packed with art supplies back to **Murphy-Harpst** with him. For additional information about the **Murphy-Harpst Children's Center**, please visit their website at <https://murphyharpst.org>.



Happy Sacks: Helping Children in Our Community

A growing number of school children in our community rely on free and reduced priced meals at school for their main daily meals. However, there may not be enough food to go around over the weekend. The goal of the **Happy Sacks** mission outreach program is to provide healthy snacks for school children over the weekend. **We pack approximately 150 Happy Sacks each week**, which are then delivered to the schools on Friday, and given out by the school counselors to the appropriate children.

The need continues to grow as does the cost of filling the bags. The **Happy Sacks** program is not a part of the church's regular budget, so we depend on your donations. Please consider picking up a few extra items listed below the next time you are at the grocery store, or make a financial donation to support the **Happy Sacks** ministry.

You can help us fill these **Happy Sacks** by contributing the following items:

- Cheese or peanut butter crackers
- 100% fruit juice boxes (not Capri Sun)
- Non-perishable milk boxes (white milk only)
- Fruit cups
- Applesauce cups
- Dried fruit (individual servings)
- Fruit-filled breakfast bars (Nutri-grain brand)
- Granola bars (Nature Valley Honey & Oat)
- Goldfish, Cheez-its, Combos, pretzels (individual serving bags)
- Fruit roll-ups

PLEASE, NO CHOCOLATE INGREDIENTS, and all items should be name brands and within expiration dates. **Happy Sacks** collection bins can be found in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall and by the rear portico doors of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

If you would like more information, or would like to volunteer by helping pack or delivering sacks, please contact Debbie Johnson by e-mail at dljohnson8957@gmail.com.



Wednesday Night Food Drives

The **Wednesday Night Food Drive** at Duluth First UMC for the **Hands of Christ Duluth Co-Op** is our weekly mission project, combined with the many Wednesday evening activities offered at the church.

Each week we will ask for the donation of one critically needed item. **Upcoming dates and needed items are:**

- **March 6th:** cereal;
- **March 13th:** tuna;
- **March 20th:** peanut butter and jelly;
- **March 27th:** canned fruit.

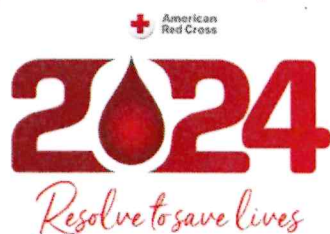
Join us for a delicious dinner and fellowship in Hinton Hall, pick up a to-go dinner for your family, join us for any of our Wednesday evening activities, and drop off food items to help other families in need. We thank you for your support!



Blood Drive: April 17th

People live when people give, so show your love by donating blood on Wednesday, April 17th, in memory or in honor of a loved one. An American Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at Duluth First UMC from 3 to 7 p.m. in the Dorthy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall. **Please consider donating blood as the Red Cross is experiencing the worst blood shortage in over a decade.** To schedule an appointment:

- Visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter the sponsor code **dufumc**;
- Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767);
- Contact Tracy Brinker by e-mail at tbrinker@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 112.
- Last, but not least, be a "walk-in" on Blood Drive Day.



Volunteers Are Needed

During the Month of March at the Hands of Christ Duluth Co-Op

Volunteers are needed at the **Hands of Christ Duluth Co-Op** during the month of March, which is Duluth First UMC's volunteer month at the **Co-Op**. You can volunteer on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to noon, noon to 2:00 p.m., or all day. You can also volunteer any other time of the year.

To schedule a date and time to serve, please contact Ramona Ricks by e-mail at ramonaricks@att.net.

"Simply Psalms" Classes

Join us for **Simply Psalms**, a Bible study of the Book of Psalms, led by Rev. Dr. C. Kay Fuino and Rev. Beth Brown Shugart. Each week we will study one Psalm during the one-hour class. The same class will be offered twice a week:

- Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

Upcoming **Simply Psalms** classes and Psalms are:

- March 5th and 6th: Psalm 29;
- March 12th and 13th: Psalm 30;
- March 19th and 20th: Psalm 31.

For additional information, please contact Rev. Beth Brown Shugart by e-mail at bshugart@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128.

Learning More in 2024

About The United Methodist Church

The motto of **The United Methodist Church** is **Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Doors**. The word **open** describes the state of our hearts, minds, and doors.



Sometimes we put it this way, "Our hearts, our minds, and our doors are always open." It is a symbol of welcome. It also means that we are supposed to accept people as they are. It is not our job to judge the person; it is our responsibility to love and help this person in their relationship with God.

If you would like to know more, please visit **The United Methodist Church's** website at www.umc.org.

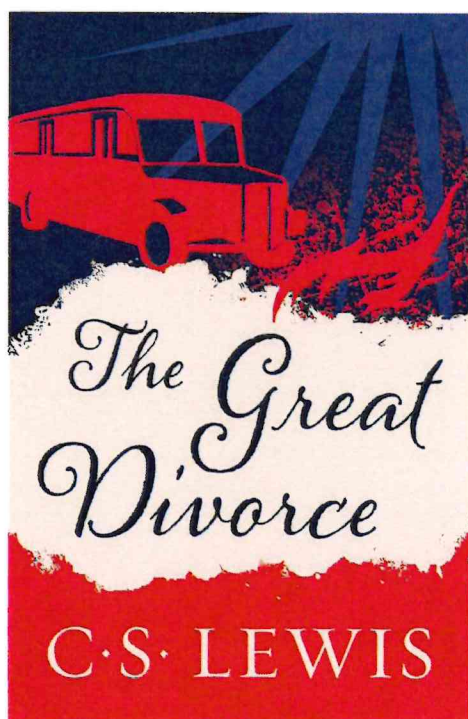
**“Sisters By Grace” Women’s Bible Study
to Begin Study of C. S. Lewis’ “The Great
Divorce” on Tuesday, March 19th**

The **Sisters By Grace** women's Bible study group will begin an 8-week study of **The Great Divorce** by C. S. Lewis on Tuesday, March 19th, at 7 p.m. at Lois Young's home. This Biblically-based study offers flexible class nights for your personal schedule: Tuesdays or Thursdays.

The Great Divorce, a thought-provoking allegorical tale by C.S. Lewis, published in 1945, is based on a theological dream vision of his in which he reflects on the Christian conceptions of heaven, hell, and the choices we make in life. Through a fictional journey, the book delves into the nature of good and evil, the consequences of our actions, and the possibility of redemption.

The use of the term “divorce” in the title refers to the separation of heaven and hell, rather than a marital divorce. The main conflict surrounds the surrender of all earthly burdens to be in God’s presence. Some characters choose to remain in the shadows of grey town, clinging to their earthly pain rather than surrendering to God’s eternal love and brightness.

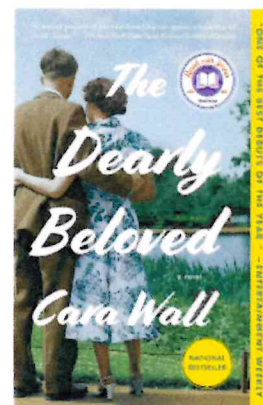
The Great Divorce challenges everyone to question their beliefs and consider the consequences of their choices. If you would like to participate with this study, please contact Lois Young at sisterbygrace@att.net. **The deadline to register is Monday, March 4th.** For questions about **Sisters By Grace**, this study, or about the class schedule, please direct your questions to Lois.



Book Club to Discuss

The Dearly Beloved by Cara Wall:
March 4th

Rev. Beth Brown Shugart invites you to join **The Dearly Beloved** by Cara Wall and then read her on Monday, March 4th, for a discussion of the book. In her debut novel, author Cara Wall follows four characters over approximately a decade, granting them equal voice as they attend college, get married, find their callings, and weather tragedies. The resulting book is wise, nuanced, restrained, and — perhaps most radically — kind. Wall's approach is quiet and intellectual, yet of an overwhelming grace.



We will meet on Monday, March 4th, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center to discuss the book. Please contact Beth by e-mail at bshugart@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128, if you have any questions.

Morning Fellowship for Adults:
March 12th

Morning Fellowship is for the adults of our congregation who have many gifts and talents to offer to the church and the surrounding community. Active and encouraged to participate in all aspects of the various ministries of the church, they are a vital part of the ministry of the church and are truly an asset to the surrounding community.

Morning Fellowship meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. **Join us on March 12th as our guest speaker will be Richard Rawls, Professor of History at Georgia Gwinnett College.** For more information, please contact Rev. Beth Brown Shugart by e-mail at bshugart@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128.



**A Notice Regarding the Rear Entrance
Doors to the Sheldon Family Life Center
on Fridays**

The rear entrance doors to the Sheldon Family Life Center will be locked on Fridays due to safety precautions. Please use either set of main entrance/ Atrium doors if you need access to the Sheldon Family Life Center on Fridays. Thank you.



**Bring Flowers for Easter Morning:
March 31st**

The Worship Committee invites you to bring fresh flowers from your home to adorn the resurrection crosses that will be located outside of the Sanctuary and inside Hinton Hall on Easter morning, March 31st.



**Yarn Arts Ministry
Adds Second Weekly Workshop**

The Yarn Arts Ministry is happy to announce that we have added an additional crocheting/knitting time to our weekly schedule. We will now be meeting every Monday morning at 11:00 a.m. in room F154, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Center. This is in addition to our Wednesday night meetings at 6:00 p.m. in room F204, located on the 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center, following Wednesday night dinners.

If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Beth Shugart by e-mail at bshugart@duluthmc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128.

**Operation: Taste of Home
“Cookies for Soldiers” Collection Drive**

You are invited to participate in the 2024 Operation: Taste of Home, the Hugs for Soldiers Ministry’s 21st annual “Gift of Caring: Cookies for Soldiers” Collection Drive. Girl Scout cookies, a great symbol of America, continue to be one of the most requested items by our soldiers. The Hugs for Soldiers Ministry is collecting donations of Girl Scout Cookies for our military men and women. Show your support for our soldiers and your local Girl Scouts by purchasing an extra box or two of cookies.



This is a wonderful community service project for our Girl Scouts, along with their families, friends, and neighbors, to support our soldiers. Deployed soldiers are in stressful situations, but when they receive a box of cookies from home, it sends a message to the troops that America is thinking of them and their safe return.

You may drop off your cookies in the collection box located inside the back entrance to the Sheldon Family Life Center. Cookies can be donated through the end of April. You can also attach a personal message to your donated boxes - 2” x 4” mailing labels work best.

Thank you for helping us put a smile on a service member’s face! If you have any questions, please contact Angie Doerlich by e-mail at hugsforsoldiers@gmail.com.





Administrative Council, Part 2:

Helping You to Know More

Last month you learned some basic information about our **Administrative Council** and the duties of the "At-Large delegates. As a reminder, the **Administrative Council** includes the leaders or chairs of program committees such as Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Missions Ministry, Ministry of Care, Worship Committee, United Women in Faith, and other areas for nurture, and outreach. It also includes the chairs of Finance, Staff-Parish Relations, Trustees, Lay Representative and Lay delegates to Annual Conference.

The **Staff Parish Relations (SPR) Committee** is made up of a Chairperson, Debbie Patterson, and other members who work with the Senior Pastor on matters relating to the personnel issues of the church. They meet on a regular basis to address any staffing matters. They work with the District Superintendent on annual evaluations for the appointed clergy and whenever there are changes in appointments to make known the needs of the congregation. This committee is responsible for setting the salary levels for the church staff, including clergy and submitting that budget item to the Finance Committee. Current members of Staff-Parish Relations, in addition to Debbie Patterson, include Susan Baker, Jackie Reeves, Debbie Johnson, Allen Servedio, Sara Burns, Cindy Bennett, Marc Downey, Herb Ricks, Terrie Adkins as Lay Delegate to North Georgia Annual Conference, Clara Truesdell as Lay Leader, and Rev. Terry Tippens, Senior Pastor.

Our **Lay Delegates** attend the Annual Conference of the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church in June in Athens to represent the laity of the church on issues of the conference. They vote on legislation that impacts our conference and the annual budget of the conference. They also serve on committees in the local church and occasionally on conference or district committees. We have an equal number of laity and appointed clergy. Our church has four Lay Delegates to Annual Conference: Jim and Terry Adkins, Sherry Ferguson, and Elizabeth Marcus. Additionally, Pete Fleming serves as a District Delegate to Annual Conference.

As you see these church members please let them know how much you appreciate the work they do to help our church in so many important areas.

Blessings and joy,
Rev. Dr. C. Kay Fuino, Associate Pastor

Giving to the Church **and Best Practices for Giving**

We are thankful for your gifts to the church and we welcome them in many ways. Below are some of the ways you can give:

Preferred (safe):

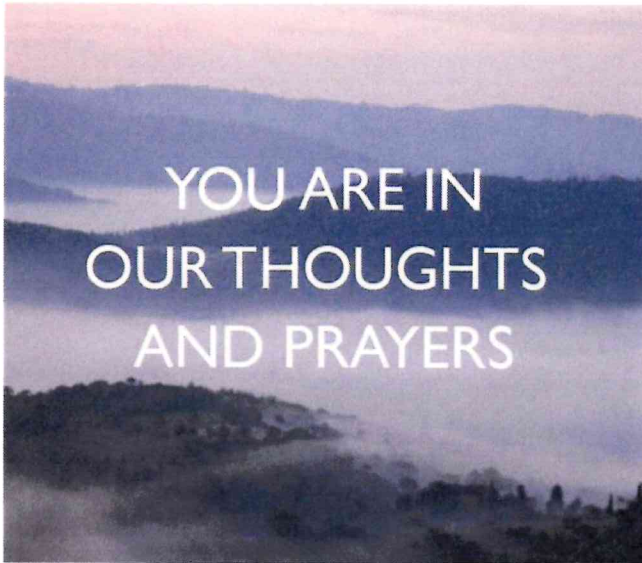
- **Recurring online gift.** Click on **ONLINE GIVING** on the church's website - **duluthmc.org** - and follow the prompts to set up recurring giving. This allows you to give automatically a specific amount at whatever interval you choose - once a week, once a month, once a year, whatever works best for you. If you are growing one step each year toward the tithe (10%), as many of us are, all you have to do is change the amount once each year to reflect that growth, and it's done!
- **Giving online, whether in-person or remote.** Click on the QR code printed in the order of worship if worshipping in-person, or click the link on the screen if you are worshipping online.
- **Through the church website anytime:** **duluthmc.org**, go to the **ONLINE GIVING** page (bank account or credit card).
- **Check in-person.**
- **Cash in-person.**

Not preferred (less safe):

- Check or cash sent through the mail.
- Using the bill pay service through your bank (this ends up being a paper check that is sent through the mail).

While the church welcomes any gift, we have found the most safe and efficient ways to give are in-person or online through the church website and we recommend recurring giving. **We would recommend NOT sending gifts through the mail at this time as we have had a few issues receiving gifts through the mail.** Additionally, if you are using your bank's bill pay service to send your gifts, they are likely sending your gift by check through the mail.





- Joyce Boothe • Jann Brown • Lorraine Day
- Ann Fleming • Lawrence Gibbs • Marion Harley
- Dick Hartlett • Bryan Johnson • Robin Loose
- Jean Lowry • Judy Lutz • Dottie Moor
- Don Page • Ellouise Pennington • Jan Smid
- Karen Smith • Mazie Stone • Clara Wade

- Peace for those in war-torn countries.
- Lori Allen & family in the death of her aunt.
- Allena, Rachel and Christina Denny & family in the death of their uncle.
- Bobbie Heard & family in the death of her sister, Gail Taylor.
- Teresa & Candye Spry & family in the death of their mother, Jean Spry.
- Gail Waigand & family in the death of her brother-in-law.
- The family of Rayann Walker in her death.

Deadline for the April 2024

Edition of "The Messenger" Newsletter

The article deadline for the April 2024 edition of *The Messenger* is Thursday, March 21st, at 9 a.m.



General Church Fund

Received on February 4 th	\$46,324.75
Received on February 11 th	\$32,359.69
Received on February 18 th	\$28,868.47

Year-to-Date, 2024

Received as of February 18 th	\$194,751.69
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"Crossing the Finish Line"

Capital Campaign: Year-to-Date, 2024

Received as of February 18 th	\$94,762.70
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Worship Attendance

(includes in-person attendance and online views)

February 4 th	548
February 11 th	622
February 18 th	838