

FROM ALL OF US AT
FIRST METHODIST MONROE

MERRY
CHRISTMAS
& A HAPPY NEW YEAR



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

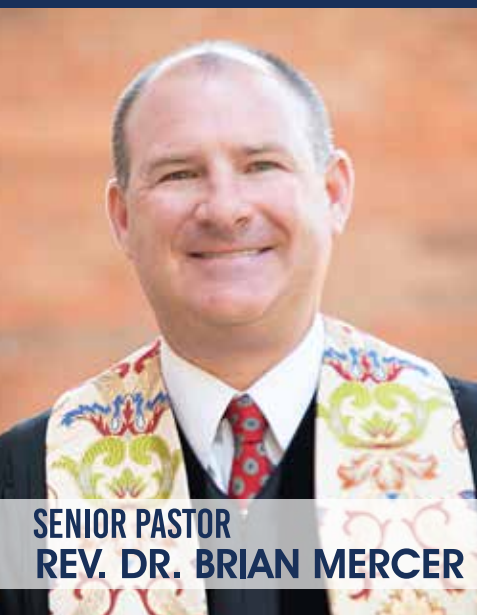
Join us as we celebrate the JOY of Christmas Eve with
five beautiful worship opportunities!

4PM WORSHIP ON THE BAYOU & CONTEMPORARY FELLOWSHIP HALL

6PM TRADITIONAL SANCTUARY & **FOUNDRY CAMPUS**
143 CHURCH ST.
STERLINGTON, LA 71280

11PM TRADITIONAL SANCTUARY

NURSERY AVAILABLE FOR
6 WEEKS - 4 YEARS OLD ★
AT 4PM & 6PM SERVICES



**SENIOR PASTOR
REV. DR. BRIAN MERCER**

**PastorBrian@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM**



We are humbled and excited to announce that Foundry Methodist Church is now officially a campus of First Methodist Monroe! Following an overwhelming "yes" vote, we are launching this new adventure together—one we believe God has designed to accomplish His vision for reaching this region for Christ. Worship at Foundry is every Sunday at 9:00 AM at 143 Church Street, Sterlington.

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

Advent slows us down so joy can find us. In the midst of preparations and busyness, this season invites us to wait with hope and remember that true joy is God's gift to us in Jesus. This December, we'll focus on the powerful words of John 1 and let them shape how we receive and share Christmas joy.

Word, Light, and Joy

John tells us the eternal Word became flesh and moved into our world. Christmas joy begins with this truth: God is not distant. Jesus — the Word and Light — reveals who God is and brings a steady, enduring joy that shines in every darkness.

Joy in the Ordinary

The incarnation shows us that God meets us in everyday life. The manger holds both simplicity and splendor, reminding us that our celebrations can be humble, generous, and full of wonder.

Joy in Hard Places

For many, this season holds both joy and sorrow. John assures us that the light still shines. Christmas joy doesn't ignore pain — it brings God's presence into it. We embody this joy by showing up for one another with compassion and care.

Joy That Reaches Out

Because the Word became flesh, we are called to carry that presence into our neighborhoods. Hospitality, generosity, and service become expressions of the good news we've received.

Practices for the Season

- Set aside a quiet hour each week to read John 1.
- Light a candle and pray for our church and community.
- Serve, give, or welcome someone who may be alone.
- Join us for worship each Sunday in December and at any of our 5 Christmas Eve services.

A Final Word

Christmas joy isn't something we create — it's the gift of God entering our world and our lives. May the Word made flesh dwell among us richly this season, shaping us into people whose joy reflects Christ's light.

Experiencing the Joy of Christmas with you,

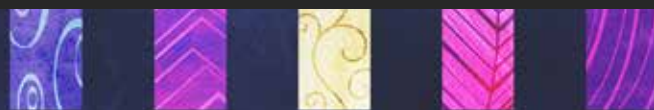
Pastor Brian Mercer

ADVENT SERMON SERIES



What Everyone Needs
THIS CHRISTMAS

HOPE LOVE JOY PEACE JESUS





EXECUTIVE PASTOR
REV. JOHN O'LEARY

John@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM



MINISTER OF MUSIC
KEM ALEXANDER

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JOY

As the Christmas season approaches, hearts around the world begin to fill with anticipation and joy. For Christians, this time of year is not just about festive decorations, gift-giving, or holiday feasts; it is a profound celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. In a world that often feels chaotic and uncertain, it is essential to remember that the joy of the Lord can—and should—lead our way during this special season.

Wouldn't it be nice if First Methodist led with an attitude of joy and grace? That throughout this month leading up to our Savior's birthday, we would set a culture of joy!

Joy was a common prayer in many of the letters to the church. Paul prays for the Church to "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" He goes on to say, "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." (Philippians 4:4-5)

The joy of the Lord empowers us to serve others during this season. Christmas is an excellent opportunity to reach out to those in need—whether through volunteering, donating to charities, or simply offering a listening ear to someone who may be struggling. When we serve others, we reflect the heart of Christ and spread His joy. As we give of ourselves, we often find that our own hearts are filled with joy in return. In this season of Christmas, let us commit to allowing the joy of the Lord to lead our way. Let it guide our interactions, influence our decisions, and shape our attitudes. As we light our Christmas trees and sing carols, let us also light the way for others by sharing the love and joy of Christ.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT ALL SERVICES AT MAIN CAMPUS

Christmas for the Children is a benefit for needy children in our area. Many children will not have anything to open on Christmas morning without our help. On December 8, we have an opportunity to bring gifts for children ages 0 to 17 years old. During the service, there will be a moment when we can bring the gifts to the altar and place them there to be blessed. Special music will be played during this time, and our J-Force kids will also offer special music. This is a very special day in the life of our church.

Gifts can include toys, clothes, bicycles—you name it. If the item is electronic, please include batteries or a power supply. **Please do not wrap the gifts!** If you find yourself at one of the services without a gift, no worries—there will be a basket available to accept cash or checks (checks made payable to the Salvation Army). These gifts will be distributed by our dear friends at the Salvation Army here in Monroe. You may bring as many gifts as you would like. Some have brought one per family member in the past, but bring as many as you can. Just imagine the joy these children will experience on Christmas morning.

This all started when Mary Linda and I were foster parents years ago. It was very difficult to see the hardships faced by the parents of these children. Our hearts broke when we heard their stories. One moment that particularly struck us was when a parent had only one gift for their child because they could afford nothing else—and that gift came from the Salvation Army. God stirred my heart that day, and Christmas for the Children was born.

We at First Methodist Monroe are a generous people, and I know you will give from your heart. God will take our offerings, and through our efforts and the help of the Salvation Army, the joy of Christmas will be felt in the hearts of many children and their families this Christmas!

50+ ADULTS



50+ ADULT MINISTRIES
NANNETTE FLOWERS

NFlowers@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

JOYFUL GIVING WITH MEANINGFUL BENEFITS

If you are age 70½ or older, own an IRA, and don't need your required minimum distribution (RMD) for living expenses, a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) can provide tax savings—even if you don't itemize. You can make a QCD directly from your IRA to First Methodist Church and pay no federal income tax on the distribution, up to the annual aggregate limit (\$108,000 in 2025). In addition, the QCD counts toward your RMD if one is due.

“JOURNEY OF JOY” TO THE DALLAS ARBORETUM



Join us **Thursday & Friday, Dec. 11 & 12**, on an overnight journey to Dallas, where we'll experience the transformation of the Dallas Arboretum into a festive wonderland—blending cherished traditions with new delights. We'll stroll through the dazzling 12 Days of Christmas gazebos, shop in the European-inspired Christmas Village, and admire the elegant Merry Monochromatic décor inside the historic DeGolyer House. New for 2025 is their Night Glow, powered by AURORA—an after-dark experience that illuminates the gardens with radiant, artist-curated light installa-

tions that blend botanical beauty with luminous creativity for a truly unforgettable holiday adventure.

We'll also visit the beautifully remodeled Museum of Biblical Art, which features eleven galleries and the Via Dolorosa Sculpture Garden. Seating is limited and available on a first-payment basis. RSVP to me with a \$150 check made out to FMM, which includes transportation, admissions, breakfast, and a hotel room (double occupancy). Please include the name of your roommate in the memo line.

50+ Adult Happenings at the church

“BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS” FOR GRANDPARENTS & THEIR GRANDCHILDREN will be held on **Monday, Dec. 22nd, at 1 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall. We will make a craft, play games, and enjoy birthday cake! Help bring joy to a needy mom by bringing a wrapped baby gift (urgent needs include size 4, 5, or 6 diapers; winter clothes for boys and girls, newborn–24 months; baby shampoo; diaper rash cream; and baby wipes) to be presented to Life Choices' Baby Closet. Please RSVP to me by Sunday, Dec. 14th.

BE FIT EXERCISE CLASSES meet at **10 a.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays** in the Fellowship Hall. Wear workout clothes, tennis shoes, and bring a water bottle. We will be loading the donated Christmas for the Children toys and games into the Salvation Army truck after class on Monday, Dec. 15th, at 11 a.m., so they can bring great joy on Christmas to families in NELA!

50+ Adult Happenings outside the church

HOLIDAY LUNCH & LEARN is **Wednesday, Dec. 3, at 11:30 a.m.** in the Magnolia Room at the Hotel Monroe, 120 Walnut St., followed by a tour of the historic building. Seating is limited and on a first-payment basis. RSVP to me with a \$30 check payable to FMM.

DISCOVER JOY ON OUR JOURNEY TO NORTHERN ITALY! Join us for a faith-based tour with a one-hotel stay, **September 17–25, 2026**. For more information or to register online, visit: <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1329058>



Helping Others by Praying & Encouraging

The Ministry of H.O.P.E. (Helping Others by Praying and Encouraging) brings great JOY to our shut-ins and hospitalized members through visits, serving communion, delivering holiday gifts, providing transportation, and sending cards! If you would like to be part of this ministry team in 2026, please contact one of these awesome people!

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS & COMMUNITY

Christmas is coming—and with it, that familiar rush of emotion that catches us off guard every year. You know the feeling: when a carol hits just right, when the lights come on at dusk, when you smell pine and cinnamon and something in your chest just... expands. That's not nostalgia. That's not sentimentality. That's your soul remembering what it was made for.

Joy.

Not happiness—that comes and goes with circumstances. Not excitement—that fades when the wrapping paper's in the trash. But joy: that deep, settled certainty that God is good, that He came near, and that everything is going to be okay because of what happened in Bethlehem.

The Christmas story isn't just a beautiful narrative we dust off once a year. It's the ongoing reality that God didn't stay distant. He didn't send instructions from heaven. He put on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. And when we gather to celebrate that miracle—in worship, in community, in those moments when the whole church sings together—we're not manufacturing emotion. We're tapping into something real, something that's been true for two thousand years.

And speaking of gathering—I know you have noticed what God's been doing at First Methodist Monroe! Five worship services now. Attendance growing week after week. A new Foundry campus in Sterlington joining our family. On any given Sunday, hundreds of people are experiencing the same thing: the joy that comes when God's people come together.

That's not an accident. That's what happens when a church becomes what the church is supposed to be—a place where broken people find healing, where lonely people find family, where tired people find rest, and where everyone encounters the God who showed up in person to make it all possible.

This Christmas season, let's not lose sight of what we're celebrating. The lights are beautiful, the music is stirring, and the traditions are meaningful—but underneath it all is this astonishing truth: God came near. He still comes near. And when we gather as His church, we get to experience together the joy that the angels announced to those shepherds: "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."

Come celebrate with us this December. Five services, one message, countless reasons to rejoice. Because the best part of Christmas isn't the decorations or the presents or even the memories—it's the fact that God loved us enough to become one of us. And that, friends, is joy that lasts.

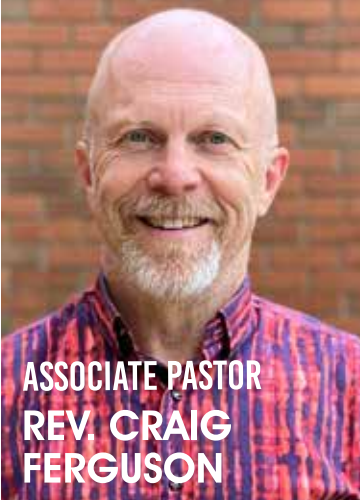
THE BEST GIFT

*Oh come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord,
We'll praise His name forever, Christ the Lord,
We'll give Him all the glory, Christ the Lord,
For He alone is worthy, Christ the Lord.*

This beautiful Christmas hymn has been around for ages, and I love how it truly reflects the heart of the gift of Christmas—to live in wonder and awe of the best gift, our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Each December, the world tugs at me to do all the things we think we must do to get ready for Christmas, but in the end, it only leaves me weary and overwhelmed. The tug of the Holy Spirit draws me near, reminding me to regroup and focus on the truly important things in life—His Word, His promises, His grace, and His love. May the glory of the best gift recapture our hearts so that we slow down and adore Him, day after day.

Oh come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord. Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas!

If you feel God nudging you to take a next step—whether through serving or deepening your walk of faith—Emily is here to help. Contact her at 318-537-0906 to learn more.



ASSOCIATE PASTOR
REV. CRAIG
FERGUSON

Craig@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

WED
NIGHT

WILL RETURN
JANUARY 7

Join us for
BIBLE 101

Learn how to
read & study
your bible!

HOSPITALITY



DIRECTOR OF HOSPITALITY
EMILY MARTIN

Emily@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM



**INTERIM YOUTH PASTOR
MACKENZIE
MILLER**

RISE YOUTH MINISTRY (6TH -12TH GRADE)

This December, as we move into the most joyful time of the year and reflect on all that has happened before stepping into 2026, my mind is drawn to a verse from the book of Philippians that Rise Youth has been studying on Wednesday nights.

Philippians 4:4 says, *"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!"*

This group of students has brought such joy to the church, the community, and to me personally as they have shown up time and time again—yearning to learn about God, serving those around them, and overflowing with energy and joy. Each of these students carries a joy that shines brightly within the Kingdom of God.

After our Stock Sale Evening, where we thanked those who donated to help us attend summer camp, I hope our guests left filled with joy, knowing that our Rise Youth students are showing up and showing out!

Rise Youth wishes you a joyous Christmas season and a happy New Year!

SAVE THE DATE: CONFIRMATION PARENT MEETING

Sunday, January 11, 2026 | 10:10-10:50AM

All parents of 6th graders are invited to a Confirmation information meeting. Mark your calendars and plan to join us as we prepare for this important season in your student's faith journey.



**CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES
JACKIE KITCHINGHAM**

KINGDOM KIDS MINISTRY (K-5TH GRADE)

The hustle and bustle is here! You may be like me and have lists upon lists of all the things to get done, bought, and prepared—or you may be more of a Type B person who lives knowing it will all get done and be fine one way or another. If you want to know a fun fact about me, I often wonder what it would be like to live as a Type B person. There are times when the lists feel overwhelming and daunting, and there are times when they help keep everything on track.

When I think about the true meaning of Christmas, no list matters. On Christmas Eve, when my extended family is gathered together, the lists don't matter. When we wake up on Christmas Day filled with excitement and so much to celebrate, the lists don't matter. What matters on Christmas is the JOY that fills our hearts because of what happened on that special day so many years ago.

Let's take time this Christmas season to focus on the JOY of Jesus instead of the temporary happiness and merriment of a holiday. Focus on Luke 2:10, which says, "Do not be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." I pray you will join me in focusing on the JOY that Jesus brings to us!

KINGDOM KIDS CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14
5PM | FELLOWSHIP HALL
ALL WELCOME!

Jackie@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

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YOU'RE INVITED TO
FOUNDRY
9AM SUNDAY
MORNING
WORSHIP

143 CHURCH ST.
STERLINGTON, LA 71280

We would love for you to visit our new campus and join us for worship Sunday mornings. Come see what's happening at Foundry!



GUATEMALA
MISSION TRIP



JUNE 2-9, 2026

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DECEMBER 2025

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3 50+ ADULT LUNCH & LEARN
11:30AM

JAMBALAYA & JINGLES
SUPPER 5PM
JINGLES 6PM

10 50+ ADULT BRIDGE 1PM

14 CHRISTMAS FOR THE
CHILDREN - ALL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS
PROGRAM 5PM

22 GRANDPARENT/
GRANDCHILDREN
"BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS"
1PM

24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
CONTEMPORARY 4PM,
BAYOU 4PM
TRADITIONAL 6PM, & 11PM
FOUNDRY 6PM

25-26 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

50+ ADULT BE FIT AT 10AM
MON., DEC. 1, 8, 15
WED., DEC. 3, 10, 17

J-FORCE - 3:15-5:15pm
WEDS., DEC. 3, 10,

MEN'S & WOMEN'S
BIBLE STUDIES 10AM
TUES., DEC. 2, 9, 16, 30

MOM'S IN PRAYER AT 5PM
SUN., DEC. 7, 14, 21, 28



Bring your favorite Christmas treat to the church to be labeled, Dec. 22-24, and after the Christmas Eve service pick up a treat and deliver it to the location on the label. Treats are for those working throughout Christmas Eve to thank them for their service.