

THE MESSENGER



AN ADVENT WORD FROM PASTOR GINA

‘For (God) has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow.” Hebrews 13:5 & 8

The Season of Advent gives the church the opportunity to begin again. Once more, the full story of God’s grace is awaiting our discovery. Once more, we get to listen and respond in faithfulness to the God who comes to us so humbly, intimately, and personally in the birth of Jesus. As Christians, it is our joy and privilege to receive the gracious gifts of God’s presence in Christ. Our task and hope are to prepare for His coming so we will not miss life’s greatest gift.

Sometimes, the hype and clichés of the season distract us. The clever marketing efforts succeed in making us desire tangible things we can hold in our hands and savor as gifts. However, marketing hype and catchy clichés cannot answer the deep questions of the heart, explain the mystery of God’s presence, or help us comprehend the meaning of our existence. Yet, all these life-giving gifts are promised to us in the Advent Season.

Yes, it is true that God’s astounding and radical intervention in our human history cannot be contained in the tame and timid displays of Christmas lights, catchy slogans, or the exchange of gifts. Advent confronts us once again with God’s unparalleled effort to communicate that all humankind is embraced and held close by a God of love. Jesus Christ has come, is present with us, and will come again in final victory when all darkness, pain, and evil will be no more.

This Advent, let us prepare our hearts and lives for a Life-Giving Christmas, as we journey together receiving anew the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Find us at [FCMoorestown.com](https://www.FCMoorestown.com)



1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LIFE-GIVING HOPE...NEXT YEAR, THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT!

December 1, 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. services

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LIFE-GIVING PEACE...STRENGTH TO HOLD ON!

December 8, 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. services

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LIFE-GIVING JOY...TO GET ME THROUGH THE TOUGH DAYS!

December 15, 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. services

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LIFE-GIVING LOVE...THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS CANTATA

December 22, 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. services

Readings and liturgy will focus upon the love and hope of our faith through the proclaimed Word, carols, praise songs, and anthems of the season.



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES: THE GREATEST GIFT

Tuesday, December 24

Contemporary Christmas Eve Service: 4:00 p.m.

This fun, energetic, and interactive service is for all ages as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child in festive and innovative ways. Shuffling in your seat is actively encouraged through the music of the FMC Worship Praise Team! Children and adults are to be seen and heard as we continue our lively tradition of singing "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

Traditional Christmas Eve Service: 7:00 p.m.

The FMC Worship Choir & Bells will once again add their stylish nuances to this sacred evening of praise to our Newborn King, bringing joy and excitement as we celebrate this Holy Night. We will share the joy of Christmas that is revealed by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords—Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world!

1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMASTIDE: GIFTS...THAT KEEP ON GIVING!

December 29, 10:00 a.m. Combined Service and Carol Sing

ADVENT WREATH MAKING FAMILY NIGHT & COVERED DISH DINNER

Sunday, December 1 | 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

On this first Sunday of Advent, all are welcome to bring a dish to share and create an Advent Wreath for their home! This family-friendly event will be a time of joy and celebration of the holiday season that has just begun.

We will gather for a covered dish supper at 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please bring a dish large enough for your family and some extra to share. We ask that you bring your own dishes, utensils, and napkins. Drinks will be provided.

Advent wreath making will follow the dinner. You may order a new wreath kit for \$15 by contacting Donna Banes at music@fmcmoorestown.com. Gloves and pruning shears are also helpful to have on hand—and bring greens and holly if you can. If you saved your advent wreath base from last year, please bring it with you. After we add the finishing touches to each wreath, we'll dim the lights and light the first candle. We will conclude the evening with a brief service and singing a few carols.



PIZZA WITH SANTA!

Friday, December 6, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

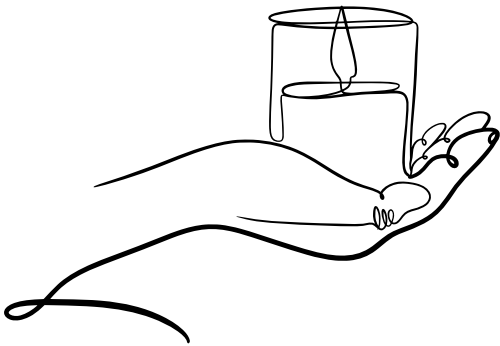
Celebrate the holiday season with a fun, festive, and free event filled with pizza, crafts, and photo ops with Saint Nick for kids of all ages!



HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

Sunday, December 15, 3:00 p.m.

This service offers a time of prayer, naming, and remembering departed loved ones during the holiday season. We invite you to bring a candle to light but will provide tea lights for anyone who needs one. This sacred service will be held in the Chapel; all are welcome. Nursery care provided.



CAROL SING & GINGERBREAD HOUSE BUILD

Sunday, December 22, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

We'll joyfully gather to sing holiday carols at this festive intergenerational event. Families can create their own gingerbread houses, and awards will be given in different categories. Light refreshments will be enjoyed by all. A donation basket will be available to help offset costs. We ask gingerbread contest participants to register at church@fmcmoorestown.com, so we can order needed supplies.



WINTER PREACHING SERIES | *ON PURPOSE*

Have you ever asked this question: Why am I here? Trying to discover the purpose of our lives can lead to a lot of questions: Who am I? Do I have a “calling”? What am I supposed to do with my life? What does purposeful living look like? Often, the world is all too ready to give us answers to these questions – promising that finding the perfect job or achieving the next milestone will make us happy. But in this series, we will embrace these questions as an invitation to discover what it is that God wants to do with the story of our lives right now.



Sunday Services at 9:00 & 11:00 a.m., unless noted otherwise.

January 5: *Starting a New Year*

A Covenant of Purpose to start our lives anew for Christ!

January 12: *Why Am I Here?*

Asking this question opens us up to God’s purpose for our lives.

January 19: *What Is a Purpose?*

We have a lot of misconceptions about what purpose is; let’s explore how God has uniquely created us to be, and how our own gifts can serve others in any given moment.

January 26: *Missions Sunday Event*

(10:00 a.m. Combined Service)

On Purpose for the Neighborhood! Discover the ways we serve all. A church luncheon follows.

February 2: *Who Am I?*

We may feel like our highs and lows define us, but first and foremost, we are defined by God’s love for us. All experiences—good, bad, and in-between—shape our purpose.

February 9: *Purpose Is Present*

To discover our purpose, we must not only focus on the future but also pay attention to the present. What do we have to offer right now, and who needs it?

February 16: *Purposeful Leadership as the Church*

Join our guest preacher, District Superintendent Ronell Howard as she shares a Spirit-filled message as we impact the world for Christ.

February 23: *No Time is Wasted*

When we don’t have the answer to where we are going, we often feel like we are wandering and “wasting time.” But with God, no time is wasted. In our wandering, God offers us an opportunity to explore new possibilities through acts of creativity, wonder, and play.

March 2: *Will Purpose Make Me Happy?*

In a world that prioritizes “happiness,” God calls us into a more expansive vision of faith and flourishing.

ORDER YOUR CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS!

Celebrate the beauty of the season by ordering one or more of these festive plants to decorate our sanctuary. Plants can be taken home after the 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service. The poinsettias are \$10 each, and there are two ways to order them:

1. Fill out the order form (see the last page of The Messenger)
2. Order and pay online at fmcmoorestown.com/poinsettias

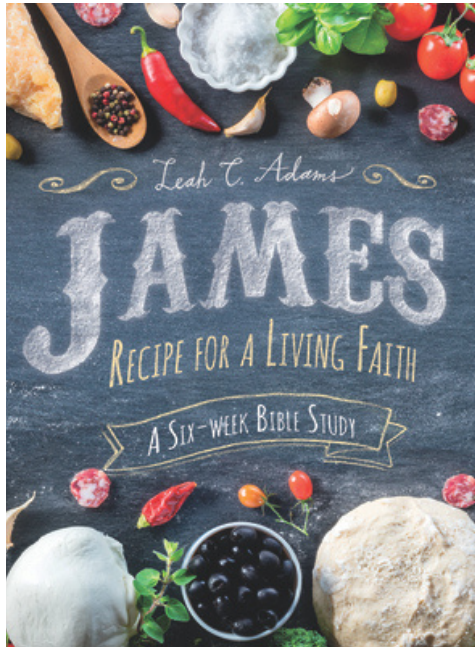
ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BY NOVEMBER 24.



WINTER BIBLE STUDY

James: Recipe for a Living Faith by Leah Adams

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Rich Hendrickson



After spending eight weeks grappling with how Jesus is indeed our best and only guarantor of entering into God's sabbath in the Letter to the Hebrews, Pastor Rich is ready to help us forge forward with a study focused on the Letter of James. We will discover how we can keep our eyes on Jesus as we run the race set before us with enduring faith.

This six-week study gives us insight into the wisdom and instruction for Christian living. Together, we will consider topics essential to a dynamic and powerful life of faith: faith and works, staying faithful under persecution, patience, the importance of taming the tongue, and the power of prayer.

The study guide is *James: Recipe for a Living Faith* by Leah Adams (\$14 to \$17). If you would like to be part of the group order, please contact Elite Law (elitewlaw@gmail.com) before December 15. Register online at www.fmcmoorestown.com/jamesbiblestudy or in person after Christmas.

Mondays at 7:00 p.m. | Zoom sessions

- January 20, 27
- February 3, 10, 17, 24

Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. | In-person sessions

Heritage Room

- January 22, 29
- February 5, 12, 19, 26

PLANNED GIVING WORKSHOP

Thursday, November 14

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Triangle Room

This gathering is geared toward individuals and couples looking for ways to plan ahead and support the ministries of FMC during your lifetime and beyond. Your legacy will build ministry opportunities now and long into the future for Christ! Certified Financial Planners from GNJ will lead the event. Coffee, tea, pastries, and bagels will be offered. RSVP to the office at church@fmcmoorestown.com. For more information, reach out to Rich Hendrickson, Generosity Team Leader at richhendrickson58@gmail.com.

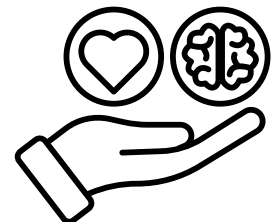
HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

Hold the date! FMC's 3rd Annual Health & Wellness Fair will be Saturday, February 1, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. While we wait, let's do our R.E.P.S.! It's Relational, it's Emotional, it's Physical and it's Spiritual. As we learned from Rev. Richard Hendrickson at last year's fair: "Attention to these four areas leads to wellness and balance in one's life." More information about topics and speakers will be shared soon.

To watch last year's plenary by Rich, click on the link below or type into your browser:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWpKQsvellg>

[Link: [First Methodist Church Health and Wellness Fair January 27, 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWpKQsvellg)]



YOUTH UPDATE

Jeremiah Appleton, jeremiah@fmcmoorestown.com

December Activities

The Advent season is busy but joyful at FMC, and that includes the Youth Group! Youth and their families are encouraged to participate in our wreath-making and carol-singing events and volunteer at the Pizza & Santa event on Friday, December 6. The 2024 Youth Group Christmas Party will be held on Sunday, December 15, in the basement youth space and, as always, will involve some of our craziest games along with our gift exchange.



January 24-26: Mid-Winter Advance (MWA)

Always popular with our Youth Group, Mid-Winter Advance (MWA) is a weekend retreat at Refreshing Mountain in Stevens, Pennsylvania. Leaving Friday evening and returning Sunday afternoon, our youth will be treated to inspiring worship and impactful messages as they join over 200 students from New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. Periods of downtime allow for volleyball and basketball tournaments, ziplining and a ropes course, visiting a reptile house, and time for fellowship. The

2025 theme is "Closer," based on the scripture from Isaiah 43:2. Cost will be \$125/attendee.

Appalachia Service Project (ASP) 2025

Appalachia Service Project is a mission organization serving areas in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky to provide home repair ministry for families who desperately need that love and support. In August 2024, FMC sent a mission team of 25 youth and adults to Jonesville, Virginia, where we worked on three homes, repairing collapsing floors, building ramps, and replacing drywall. Our homeowners and volunteers were impacted in very powerful ways, so much so that we are ready to plan next summer's trip with ASP! The dates will be August 3-10, 2025, and we will have our first information meeting in January. Please reach out to Jeremiah to learn more or officially register for the trip.



YOUNG FAMILIES FELLOWSHIP

Sarah Owens, sarahmowens13@gmail.com; 847-254-772

Families with young children (up to high school age) are invited to join us for dinner and fellowship to connect with other families in the church and community while growing in their faith. Dinner is followed by fellowship and adult discussion. Dinner and childcare are provided. We are currently discussing the book, *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*. You do not need to read the book to participate.

Upcoming Fellowship Dates: November 8, December 13

All meetings are from 5:00-7:00 p.m., with dinner and childcare in the Parlor and the discussion sessions in the Heritage Room.

Volunteers Needed!

We are also seeking volunteers to provide a meal for one of the evenings or help with childcare.

Please contact Sarah for more information or to volunteer.

EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE NEWS

Mary Starn, E&SJ Committee Chair, starred5@comcast.net

The busy fall season for our committee included two guest speakers and a prayer vigil for the election. We also helped our congregation learn about the Action Alert emails from our denomination, which encourage people to let their voices be heard on legislative issues of equity and social justice.

On Sunday, November 24 at 10:00 a.m. in the Heritage Room, we welcome Dr. June DePonte Sernak, who will offer a presentation about Native American culture. In December, we will continue to discuss plans for future speakers and seminars. We will highlight Poverty in America Month in January and Black History Month in February. If you have any contacts dealing with these issues, please let us know. We plan to offer a church wide "field trip" in the spring that will broaden our understanding of the issues of equity and social justice.

May your holiday season be attuned to the ways we can express our commitment to the Social Principles of the United Methodists as we become more generous advocates for equity and social justice within our own circle of influence.

"We have been too quiet for too long. There comes a time when you have to say something. You have to make a little noise. You have to move your feet. This is the time."

John Lewis



Your
VOICE
MATTERS



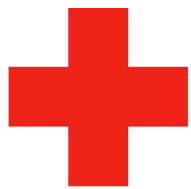
MLK DAY OF SERVICE: BLANKETHON

Monday, January 20, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

Crafts for Good and My Abba's Hands will sponsor a day of making no-sew fleece and machine-sewn flannel blankets for the homeless. Please come and join us; we will show you how! All ages are welcome. Allow 1½-2 hours to complete a blanket.

- **To make a no-sew fleece blanket**, bring a 2-yard piece of 60"-wide fleece, sharp fabric scissors, and a ruler.
- **To make a machine-sewn flannel blanket**, bring 4 yards of 42"-wide flannel, a sewing machine, thread, and scissors.

Contact Cindy Cope (609-790-7456) or Rae Caputo (609-417-4444) for more information.

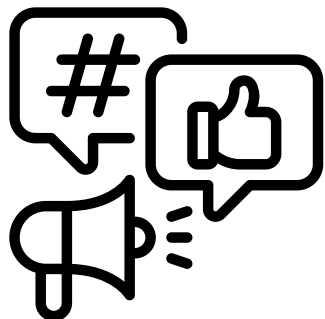


American Red Cross

BLOOD DRIVE *Monday, December 30, Fellowship Hall*

It's the season for giving, so why not add the gift of life to your list this year? Sign up for the Red Cross blood drive! Appointments are available from 2:30 – 6:45 p.m. Did you know that most medications and many health conditions do NOT disqualify you from becoming a blood donor? Learn more about giving blood (including how many donors with types O+, O-, A-, and B- can give a concentrated dose of red cells with a "Power Red" donation) and make your appointment at redcrossblood.org.

Questions? Please contact Jen Dunne at jendunne1@gmail.com. Thank you!



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CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS ORDER FORM

\$10 per plant



DEADLINE FOR ORDERING: SUNDAY, NOV. 24, 2024

Please PRINT clearly:

of Plants: _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name of Donor: _____

Optional: if you would like to order a plant in memory or in honor of a loved one, please indicate it on the provided lines.

In Memory of: _____

☐

In Honor of: _____

☐

To the Glory of God

☐


Online ordering & payment is also available at:
www.fmcmoorestown.com/poinsettias

QUESTIONS? Contact Bev Heusser at jbeusser@comcast.net
Paying by check? Please make checks payable to First Methodist Church and include "Christmas Flowers" in the memo line

Mailing Address:
First Methodist Church, 446 E Camden Ave., Moorestown, NJ 08057