

## SMALL GROUPS

**NEW Advent Study Began Sun, Dec 2nd: "Waiting in Joyful Hope"**

Hosted by Sunday Morning Small Group  
When: 9:30 am  
Where: Adult Classroom

**Adult Small Group Study: "The Epic of Eden"**

Hosted by: The Late Sunday Morning Small Group  
When: Sundays at 10:45 am  
Where: Adult Classroom  
Leader: Gary Potter

**NEW Study: Faithful: Christmas through the Eyes of Joseph**

- ◆ Tuesday @ 10:00 AM at Dianne Ho-Gland's home in Texas City, began Tues., Nov. 27
- ◆ Wednesday @ 7:00 PM in the Adult Classroom began Wed., Nov. 28

**NEW Advent Study Starts Thurs, Dec 6th: "Waiting in Joyful Hope"**

When: Wednesdays at 11:00 am  
Where: Adult Classroom  
Leader: Rev. Cindy Riddick



Looking for a great Christmas gift? Give the gift of yummy Timeless Recipes!!!

Books are \$10.00 and we will have a table set up Sunday morning... come by and get one for you and a friend!!!

## Stewardship Report

**2018 Tithe & Offerings**  
(funds we have collected compared to what was budgeted)

YTD Income Received as of Nov 30th \$397,573.55

YTD Projected Income as of Nov 30th \$393,298.58

YTD Income difference as of Nov 30th \$4,274.97

Come Celebrate the Season...You're Invited!!!

**Christmas Cantata.**  
Sunday, December 23RD  
**ONE SERVICE ONLY**  
AT 10:30 AM (Nursery available)  
Featuring The St. John's Traditional Music Ministry  
Presenting  
*Lead Me Back to Bethlehem*  
Followed by a Potluck Lunch  
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

The nursery will be open but there will be no Children's Sunday School. The Cantata will be followed by a Potluck Lunch 11:30 am – 12:30 pm. Everyone please bring a dish according to the letter in your last name:  
A-H Last Names - Meat Dish  
I-Q Last Names - Salad or Dessert  
R-Z Last Names - Vegetable side dish or Dessert.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES**  
5:00 pm – Family Friendly Service  
With Communion & Candlelight  
7:00 pm Late service  
With Communion & Candlelight  
Nursery available for both services



### Year End Tax Deductible Contributions

Thank you all for your generosity through out this year. To help make sure you get credit for your gifting this year all donations must be in by December 31 to receive tax credit for 2018. If you wish you can mail your donation to the Church Office. Please note that the office will be closed December 24th-31st. However, as long as your contribution is mailed and postmarked by the 31st, you will receive credit for 2018. You may also place your year end donations in the offering plate on Sunday mornings.

# The Monitor

December 2018



**ST. JOHN'S**  
A United Methodist Congregation

## A Word From Our Pastor

It's the season of Christmas, or in the church, it is what we refer to the season of Advent. Advent is the four weeks leading up to Christmas Day. It is a season of anticipation and waiting for God to do something surprising, like send a baby to grow up to be the world's savior. It should be a season of contemplation of the great things God has done and a wondering about the awesome things that God will do. It should be a season of peaceful introspection, but instead it becomes a season of a chaotic searching for delight. What I mean by this, is that we don't take the opportunity to be still during this season. There is the hustle and bustle of shopping for some of us in search of the perfect gift that shows our thoughtfulness and expresses our love to the receiver. But then there are the sights and sounds of Christmas that fill up our senses and still leave us wanting more. The lights, rich foods, Christmas songs, decorations, and smells of Christmas that point to the season, but are they really pointing to the reason? Or has this season become something else for us?

Everything we do this season should be a statement of our faith in Jesus Christ, and expression of our belief in a loving generous God, or an outward sign of the Holy Spirit at work in us. When we put up lights on our house or see the lights in our neighborhoods and around town, it should be a reminder that Christ is the light of the world that shines out overcoming the darkness. When we put up our Christmas tree and other evergreens, especially the wreath on our door, remember that it is a statement of the goodness of God giving eternal life to all those that believe. When we eat the delicious food at parties remember to be grateful for God's abundant love that is lavished upon us every day. And when we give and receive gifts, may those gifts be a sign of God's greatest gift. That awesome gift of love and life that came to the world in a cold dark stable so long ago. The gift of God's self. This is the true expression of all that should be done during this time of year. So, if you aren't getting that message, then try something different. Seek out the giver of love, life and light this year with true intention. And don't get caught up with anything that may steal the show away from the baby in the manger!

And also remember that Christ came in a place of poverty. In a place and time when there was no room for him. In a world that would not want him and despise him to the point of gruesome crucifixion. It is a time to remember those that find themselves in a place of poverty. In a place and time when they may feel like there is no room for them. And remember those that the world has hated and despised. It is a time for all of us to remember who we represent. It isn't the lights, the songs, the greenery, or the food that points to the true meaning of Christmas. It is the people of God that point the way to Christ. It is you and me who become the outward signs of God's inward grace. So, rise like the star of Bethlehem and shine out God's amazing love this Advent and watch God do amazing surprising things!

Grace and Peace,

*Stephanie Hughes*

Rev. Stephanie Hughes



8200 25TH AVENUE N.  
TEXAS CITY, TX 77591  
409-655-5348

Sunday Worship Services

9:30 am—Contemporary

11:00 am—Traditional

Checkout the calendar at  
[www.stjohnsumctc.org](http://www.stjohnsumctc.org)  
Inviting People to  
Experience Amazing Love!

Find us on Facebook @  
[stjohnsumctexascty](https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsumctexascty)





## ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

### A Place to Grow—Advent Studies have begun!



The season of Advent began on Sunday, December 2. To help us focus on this season of anticipation of Jesus' coming, we encourage you to pick up an Advent devotional book and join an Advent bible study. It's a great opportunity to try out a bible study for the first time AND spend some time preparing your heart and mind for the coming of Jesus. All of the studies are meeting in the adult classroom except the study at Dianne's home.

#### Advent Devotional: Waiting in Joyful Hope

Sundays at 9:30 AM

Tuesdays at 7:00 PM

Wednesdays at 9:30 AM

Thursdays at 11:00 AM

#### Faithful: Christmas through the Eyes of Joseph

Tuesdays at 10 AM at Dianne Ho-Gland's home

Wednesdays at 7:00 PM

### A Place to Serve—United Faith Alliance



St. John's partners with United Faith Alliance to serve people in need in our local community. United Faith Alliance needs a crew of 3-4 people to unload the food truck and stock shelves on Friday mornings at 9:30 AM. UFA's greatest need is for the second Friday when they have a staff meeting. Let's put together a crew or two to help out on Friday mornings. Contact me if you can serve. There are so many more ways to grow and serve at St. John's. Check out the website, the rest of this newsletter, the back of the worship bulletin, or give me a call. We'll chat about what might be a good fit for you.

Grace and peace,  
Rev. Cindy Riddick

## MISSION/OUTREACH



### WE WANT YOUR COATS!!!

Please bring clean, gently worn or new coats and place them in the collection box set up just outside the church office. Coats will be given away to TCISD High school kids that are in need of a coat. **We will collect them through Sunday, December 23rd.**

### ELMCROFT/HOMEBOUND CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

Edna Day & Jessica Dean will be taking our Mother's Day Out kids and anyone who wants to help over to Elmcroft Assisted living on Monday, December 17th to carol and minister to the residents and we are also making gift bags to hand out. Please see the list below for ways you can help.

There is a collection bin located just outside the church office.

#### **WE NEED SMALL SIZE ITEMS FOR CHRISTMAS GIFT BAGS (65):**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Warm socks for men and women  | 5. Colorful bandanas                      |
| 2. Games (Crosswords, playing cards, dominos, are helpful for exercising their mind) | 6. Toiletries (toothpaste, tooth brushes) |
| 3. Writing tablets-small or small journals or small note pads                        |   |

**ITEMS ARE NEEDED BY NO LATER THAN THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13TH.**

### THE BLANKET PROJECT AND MEXICO MISSION TRIP

I am so very excited to report that for the "Blanket Project" we have collected 128 blankets!!! If you are interested in coming on the trip to Mexico, there is still time to sign up, all you need is a valid passport and a willing heart. The Mexico trip dates are Dec 27th-Jan 3rd, the cost of the trip is \$250.00. Youth age 14th and up & adults are encouraged to come on this trip.

**We are also collecting new men's work gloves/ small hand tools/ kitchen towels and kitchen utensils to take to Mexico. These items will be handed out as Christmas gifts. We will be collecting these items until Sun, Dec 23rd.** Please contact me at 409-655-5348 or via email at IClark@stjohnsumctc.org for additional information.

Fresh Fire!!!

Ingrid Clark, Director of Missions & Administration

## CHILDREN'S & YOUTH



Boy, has this fall been life changing for me. My friend Brittany and I are almost twins. Have you ever met that person that you can just connect with? She and I always joke that when we were in the hospital nursery after we were born, we looked over at the other cribs and said "I need to get me one of those" talking about the other babies. I'm not sure who loves babies more, me or Brittany but I know we love them a lot. She has three babies and now I'm proud to say I have Ollie. Oliver is such a blessing. After many, many years of stress, heart ache and straight up fear, he is here. Pretty much everyone who came to visit or loved on Ollie told him "You have been wanted for so long," "your mommy has talked about wanting you for so long," "I can't believe the wait is over, that you are here". Mike and I tell each other that almost daily "I can't believe he is finally here." It's funny because when I was pregnant, I had a hard time allowing myself to be excited or plan on Ollie's arrival. Even after I felt him kicking, I still wouldn't get my hopes up. One day, on my way home from work Francesca Battistelli's The Breakup Song came on the radio and it was exactly the words I needed to hear. She sang "Sick and tired of being sick and tired, Had as much of you as I can take, I'm so done, so over being afraid." This song became my anthem. I sang it at the top of my lungs in my car with tears streaming down my face. I must have looked crazy to those around me. I was tired of living in fear, I was tired of thinking the worst of every situation. This song saved me! God has a funny way of putting things in our lives. Lately we have had some trouble getting Ollie to sleep. He screams and fights us but guess how he goes to sleep for me....Francesca's song. I play this song 20 times a day to get him to sleep! It's my constant reminder that I am not fearful, I have given all of that over to the Lord! As we get crazy busy and ready for Christmas, my wish for you is that whatever is bothering you, give it to the Lord. Whether its fear like me or sadness or hatred or anger or whatever it is, I pray that it is lifted from you. That you will be free in Christ. The feeling is amazing once you decide to give it to God. I know this personally!

Jessica Dean



The youth began celebrating Christmas very early this year. We had our Foundry Youth Christmas Party December 2nd. We did a photo scavenger hunt and grab bag gift exchange. Everyone had a blast and lasting memories were made. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be part of the lives of these kids and also very grateful for the wonderful people who volunteer with the youth. We had a great night but the fun is not over yet. The youth will be celebrating Christmas with youth from all over our district December 14 -15 at Holiday Hoopla. This is an overnight district wide event full of a variety of fun activities. We will also be looking at the Christmas Story in Sunday School this month. The youth will finish the year off by serving in church service December 30th. If you are in grades 6-12 join us for Foundry Youth on Sunday nights in the Foundry from 4pm-6pm. For more information please contact me at mdiazdeleon@stjohnsumctc.org.

Peace and Blessings,  
Mae Diaz de Leon  
Youth Director

### STAFF LOVE OFFERING

As we move into our busy Christmas holiday season we would like to take a moment to recognize and thank our staff. They have been very busy working hard as it has been an exciting year for St. John's. Our staff has shown their love and support to our church by their dedication and outstanding performance during the year. As an expression of our appreciation we would like to take up a special offering for our staff. The St. John's SPR Committee requests your participation in a love offering for our church staff members. You may put your offering in the offering plate on Sunday, mail it or drop it by the church office and please mark it "Staff Love Offering." **Offerings will be accepted until Sunday, December 16th.** Also, please take the time to send a thank you note or card to our staff for all they do during the year for our St. John's Family.

Thank You,  
Richard Bostelmann, SPRC Chair