

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Each year we remember that Advent is a season of anticipation. We anticipate the coming celebration of Christ's birth, and we anticipate Christ's return—the time when God will restore all things through God's own loving presence. In Christmas, we remember that God chooses to be with us, and that God's presence truly changes lives.

We get to join God in changing lives each year through our Christmas Offering, a gift to which we contribute, beyond our regular giving for the year. This year, our offering will go toward two efforts—one local, and the other global.

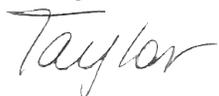
First, we will contribute locally toward the work of Austin Region Justice for Our Neighbors (ARJFON), a hospitality ministry of the United Methodist Church that welcomes immigrants by providing free or low-cost, expert immigration legal services to low-income immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We recently learned of ARJFON's need for additional funds to hire expert witnesses to testify in cases of asylum seekers. These expert witnesses make a tangible difference: last year, every case that included an expert witness ended favorably for the client. In cases without an expert witness, they only won one case out of three. Our help can literally change someone's life by directly helping their legal case.

Second, we will devote a portion of our Christmas offering to support our apportionments, the gift we make to support the wider ministry of the United Methodist Church. We make this gift with the belief that it is more important than ever to support the good that is possible through our worldwide connection. Our apportionments fund ministry for the whole denomination, across the world. For example, the General Board of Church and Society provides a witness as the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Through our ministry in that space, staff members organize and advocate for policies that align with the United Methodist Social Principles. They organize and host coalitions that have developed policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act; they advocate directly with legislators to prevent war and to provide affordable health care for all Americans. Right now, they are educating and advocating on our behalf for holistic immigration reform that addresses the root causes of the immigration crisis. This is only one example of the many ways our apportionments reach around the world to make a difference.

Our mission is both global and local; God works through individual churches and entire denominations; God's love transforms individual lives and complex systems. I pray that you will join me in this effort of joining God's transformation this Christmas.

You can make your gift anytime between now and the end of the year by returning the enclosed envelope to the church office, marking your gift "Christmas Offering" and dropping it in the offering plate, or going online at fumcaustin.org/christmasoffering.

With great love,



Pastor Taylor



We all know the main characters—Jesus, Mary, Joseph, a donkey—but what about the lesser-known characters of the Christmas story? You know, the ones standing outside the stable—who are they and how does their journey of waiting, struggling, and proclaiming speak to us as we, too, await the birth of hope in a dark time? Join us in worship this Advent as we sidle up with the supporting cast and watch what God is about to do.

December 9

Zechariah



December 16

The Angels



December 23

The Innkeeper

Guest Preacher:

Reverend John McMullen



December 24

The Shepherds



December 30

Simeon



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Noon Worship Service 12:00 p.m.

EDU Murchison Chapel

For those who are ready to celebrate the birth of Christ early in the day, this traditional service features carols, scripture reading, and Holy Communion. This service is for those who do not want to drive at night and for those whose plans make it impossible to participate in our later services.



Family Worship Service 4:00 p.m.

Sanctuary

Experience the traditions of Christmas carols, the Nativity story, Holy Communion, and a candlelit Silent Night in this 45-minute worship service designed especially for families with young children. Toward the end of the service, children are invited to enjoy a special treat in Wesley Hall while parents experience time for quiet reflection in the Sanctuary. *Childcare provided.*



Candlelight Worship Services 6:00, 8:00, and 11:00 p.m.

Sanctuary

These traditional services feature carols, choral offerings, scripture, Holy Communion, and candle lighting to celebrate Christ's birth. *Childcare provided at the 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. services only.*

"FEED MY PEOPLE" CHRISTMAS EVE BREAKFAST

DECEMBER 9 AND 16, SUNDAYS

Sock Collection



We are collecting new, white, adult-sized tube socks to give to our homeless neighbors at our annual Christmas Eve Breakfast.

As you are out and about shopping, consider picking up a bag or two of socks. You may place donations in the collection bins located in the foyers of the Murchison

Chapel, Sanctuary, and Family Life Center on December 2, 9, and 16. You may also bring your donations to the church office Monday-Wednesday from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. or Thursday from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

DECEMBER 16 AND 23, SUNDAYS

Cookie Collection



Cookie bakers are needed to provide guests at the Christmas Eve Breakfast with a treat. Our goal is 300 zipped bags with six cookies each!

Make your chocolate chip cookies (NO NUTS) and package six per bag in zipped plastic baggies. We will take a dozen or six dozen! Happy baking!

Bring cookies to the church on Sundays, December 16 and 23. For more information, contact Pastor Cathy Stone at cathy@fumcaustin.org or 512-478-5684 (ext. 215).

DECEMBER 24, MONDAY

"Feed My People" Christmas Eve Breakfast

6:30 a.m. FLC Great Hall

Breakfast will be held from 6:30-8:30 a.m. Our guests enjoy coffee and Christmas music beginning at 6:30 a.m., breakfast will be served at 7:00 a.m. Many in our congregation have made this volunteer opportunity a significant part of their Christmas season. Spaces fill fast, so sign up now at fumcaustin.org/christmasevebreakfast.

"Feed My People" Christmas Eve Service

8:00 a.m. FLC Garrison Chapel

All are welcome to gather for an early morning Christmas Eve Service immediately following the Breakfast. This casual service is a great way to celebrate Christ's birth through hymns, a short message with conversation, and Holy Communion.