

The Vine

“I am the vine, you are the branches...” John 15:5

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Dear Family in Faith,

As we begin a new church year, it is only natural to look back over the past year and forward to what lies ahead. In looking back, I am thankful for the prayers, presence and generous contributions of time, talent and treasure which have brought us through a difficult 2011 to this Advent season. We have been blessed this year with new members and new ministries which add to the mix of diverse gifts and ministries that make up our family of faith here at Bellaire United Methodist Church (BUMC).

From the human point of view, the journey through Advent to Christmas is the story of people—Mary and Joseph—and how they altered their lives for Jesus to enter in. Both were enlightened by God. Mary's response was “I am the handmaid of the LORD, let it be done to me according to His Word.” Joseph responded by taking Mary as his wife. Life did not progress as they had originally envisioned, but they changed to accommodate Jesus in their lives.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture where we tend to repeat things over and over again. This can smother Christian life. Although there are Christians who are convinced of their faith in Jesus, there are also those individuals and groups for whom faith is more culturally conditioned rather than a lived experience of God. Religious customs are commendable, but not when they lead religion to become merely a convention. The Word of God has been rendered too cheap and we have become so accustomed to hearing it that the voice of God is only one among many others.

There are those who close an eye to the present, preferring to dwell nostalgically upon the past. In many cases, we are still speaking yesterday's language and using methods of the past, in spite of the fact that we are aware of the great risk we are taking by doing so, because that language and those methods are no longer comprehended in today's culture. This is to the

detriment of the message of the Gospel! Therefore, unless we are vigilant, as a Church we too run the risk of running dry, our liturgy becomes performance and the Church is rendered no more than a historical museum.

In Advent, this time of preparation for celebration of Christmas, it is also a time that invites us to be born and give birth anew. When Jesus became man “the people that walked in the darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone” (Isaiah 9:1). For this reason, we wish for the coming Christmas to serve as a powerful experience of this “light.”

In today's world, we need to feel duty bound to reiterate to our Church, particularly to the “leaders,” the urgency that “what is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). It is the opportune time to question whether certain teachings, attitudes, projects and religious customs are actually the fruit of the Spirit who works in the Church, or rather fruits which are borne out of our own personal initiatives.

The same Spirit which came upon Mary of Nazareth and by whose power she bore a child in her womb—“the

Continued...

WORSHIP AT BELLAIRE UMC

for December 11, 2011

3rd Sunday of Advent

Rev. Jim Flagg will preach “The Journey with Elizabeth” using Luke 1:26–38 (NRSV) as the scripture reading.

Sunday Morning Schedule

9:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship (Sanctuary)

10:05 a.m. Sunday School

11:11 a.m. Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

11:11 a.m. International Worship (Chapel)

Wednesday Communion Worship

12:15 p.m. & 6:15 p.m. Informal Worship w/ Communion
(with a sack lunch or light dinner)

BELLAIRE  *United Methodist Church*

Connecting People

4417 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire, TX 77401 713-666-2167 www.bellaireumc.org

We Pray For Those...

Hospitalized

Hugh W - Clarewood ECC
Ann W - Methodist Med. Ctr.

In Need

Anonymous, Emma, Luke and all
others listed at bellaireumcprayer.org

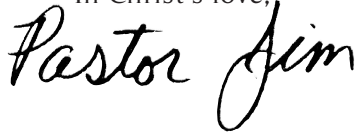
Grieving

The family of Joyce Andrews who
passed away in New Braunfels on
November 18. Services will be in
San Antonio. Details TBA.
The family of Bill Foster. Graveside
services were December 1.
The family of Sarah Locklin.
Services are 12/8 at 10:00 a.m.

Word became flesh and dwelt among us”—the same Spirit of God, who, if we open our hearts to Him, will instill in our hearts the Word of God that serves as a map by which to chart our life journey. As St. Paul writes, “for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). But, to receive God’s Word in our heart and claim it as our own, we need to be open to the Spirit of Truth. This is why we require “to be renewed with the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Join with me in intentional prayer for a renewing of the Spirit’s power at BUMC. Let the season of Advent prepare your heart and soul for receiving God’s precious gift.

In Christ’s love,



Coffee and Breakfast Bar Lovers Unite!

“I loooove me some coffee, and orange juice and friendship at the Breakfast Bar at church on Sunday mornings.” If you can answer “yes,” you have been enjoying the goodies and coffee available at the Breakfast Bar and would like to help keep it up and running, say yes to volunteering to help. We will soon be asking for people to set up, watch over and clean up the bar. Don’t be scared! We are preparing a Breakfast Bar book (with pictures!) that will have all the information you need to make it happen. So think about it now, so you’ll be ready to say yes. Questions? Email them to food@bellaireumc.org or call Robbie Roach at 713-668-0911.

Thank You For the Desserts!

The Foster Kids DEVoured all the delicious desserts you provided!! Thanks so much to everyone for the wonderful pies, cakes and cookies! You provided more than 30 different desserts! The Thanksgiving Lunch was a huge success and the college kids and caseworkers enjoyed it immensely. They filled out cards showing what they were thankful for. Please stop by the Connection Center to see the display board featuring their comments. This was a project of Bellaire UMC’s Community Service Group. We’re

always looking for new members! We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month in Room 123 to plan our projects. In December (December 21 at 5:00 p.m.), we’re stuffing 24 Christmas Stockings for the 24 kids who live in the Chimney Rock CPS Shelter. For more information, please call Barbara Nowotny 713-666-5088 or email fosterkids@bellaireumc.org.

“Adopt” a Foster Child Gift Program

Close your eyes for a moment (but wait until you’ve finished this paragraph) and try to remember the look on your children’s faces as they opened their favorite gifts that you picked out. Now, try to imagine if your kids didn’t get a gift, because they had no Mom or Dad or even a relative to purchase something for them.

We want to remedy that this year for at least some of the children in the foster care system in Houston. We have the names and wish lists of 80 Foster children who are living in foster homes or CPS Shelters. They’ve each written down three presents they’d love to get for Christmas.

If you’d like to sponsor one of these kids, just stop by our table near the Parlor. Simply decide on the child you’d like to sponsor, write your name down on the board next to his or her name, then go shopping! Return the gifts anytime through Tuesday, December 13.

Don’t want to shop? No problem! Just put a donation in our collection jar and we’ll be happy to do the shopping for you! This project is sponsored by the Community Service Group. For more information, contact Barbara Nowotny at fosterkids@bellaireumc.org.

Christmas Double Feature

Watching Christmas movies with the family is a time honored tradition to help prepare our hearts for this great season. Come join us for a Christmas Double Feature in the Fellowship Hall on December 10 from 5–7:00 p.m. We will be serving hot dogs, turkey dogs, chips, popcorn, hot chocolate and apple cider as we watch “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” (the animated version) and “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” Bring your blankets, family and friends and be prepared to have a great time. This event is open to **everyone**, AND IS FREE. If you’d like more information, please contact bhinshaw@bellaireumc.org.

Advent Series

Join us for Rev. Flagg's Advent series based on the book The Journey, by Rev. Adam Hamilton. Each week, we will explore a different portion of the journey toward's Christ's birth at Christmas. This study will take place during Sunday School at its new time of 10:05 a.m. and will meet in the Family Life Center.

Family Sing-a-Long

Everyone is invited to join the fun and lift your voices in song. On December 11, at 5:30 p.m., we will share dinner in the Fellowship Hall and sing some of our favorite Christmas songs. Different music groups in the church will be presenting some special music interspersed throughout the evening, but mostly, this is a chance to sit back, relax, enjoy the food and sing through our favorite songs of the season.

Simbang Gabi is Coming Soon

Simbang Gabi, literally translated "Evening Mass," is a Filipino tradition that normally takes place between December 16 and 24th. During the years of Spanish colonization, the friars and priests wanted to reach the masses that worked in the rice fields and the sugar and coconut plantations. Therefore, they created an evening mass that would last several days in order to tell the story of Christ during the christmas season. The Filipinos in our International Service have continued with this tradition. And every year, they host Simbang Gabi in their homes. The celebration has been shortened to three days, December 21, 22 and 23. However, the excitement, food, fun and the worship experience has not been lessened. If you would like to participate in this year's Simbang Gabi come by the Chapel and pick up a flier for more details.

Bellaire United Methodist Seniors

REPORT ON SANTA'S WONDERLAND TRIP— Twenty-seven seniors gathered for the trip to see Santa's Wonderland on Wednesday, November 30. The food at Mallet Bros. BBQ was very good and many talked about their pecan cobbler! The lights were spectacular—over 2 million now and other new features have been added since last year. They are open through the week after Christmas. It's a trip for everyone!

NO TRIP IN DECEMBER— Enjoy your Christmas holidays with your friends and families.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR— Wednesday, January 25 is the next trip on the county bus. We are working out details now. It WILL be an indoor venue just in case the weather is wintery.

Our Ministry of Time, Talent and Treasure

Sunday Worship

	for 11/27	for 12/4
8:15 a.m. Contemporary Worship	125	110
10:55 a.m. Traditional Worship	115	124
11:00 a.m. International Worship	96	60
Nursery	2	6

Total Worship Attendance 338 300

Guests worshipping with us	47	30
Received into Membership 2011	35	35

Sunday School

Children (Nursery - 5th Grade)	62	56
Youth (6th - 12th grades)	21	25
Adults	144	175
Total	227	256

Weekly Funds Update

2011 Budget	\$1,258,855.00
Weekly Budget Needs	\$24,208.00
Amount Received Sunday, Dec. 4	\$21,053.54

Pledges and Other Gifts	
Received through 49 Sundays	\$1,063,756.94
Expenditures through 49 Sundays	\$1,050,689.71

Designated Account Balance as of Dec. 5 \$310,186.15

Pledge Update: \$479,970
in 85 pledges

For your convenience, monthly pledge payments may be made through ACH Pre-Authorized Debit. The Electronic Funds Transfer form is now available at www.bellaireumc.org/forms. To sign up or receive more information, contact Elizabeth Lloyd at 713-666-2167.

Church Office Hours

Monday - Thursday	8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Friday	8:30 a.m. - Noon

Church Building Hours

Sunday	7 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Monday - Friday	7:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Saturday	9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Contact Information

Bellaire UMC Church Office	713-666-2167
School for Little Children	713-666-1111
Church Fax:	713-663-6397
BUMC Information Email	info@bellaireumc.org
Emergency Pastor on-call	713-666-2167 x142

Sunday School News

DISCOVERY—(136/137)—Thanks to everyone who helped prepare the youth breakfast and the 44 gift boxes for the Seafarer’s Center at the Port of Houston as well as the student snack packages for finals. Next Sunday (December 11), we will meet back in our room to continue our Advent study.

GIBSON—(125/126)—We are still missing Bette D. and Betty Z., but welcomed back Nita D. after several weeks absence. Keep Mary Hope P. in your prayers as well as Claire and Hugh W. He is presently in Clarewood’s ECC unit. Dick W.’s daughter Joyce W. visited our class and played the piano for us. We enjoyed a time of singing our favorite hymns and carols. Sally W. began our new quarterly study with the call of Abram (Gen. 12). Once again, God used an unlikely man to preserve His broken world and eventually continue His relationship with humankind. God’s plan continues next Sunday as Sally tells us what we can know for certain about His love, promises and judgment (Gen. 15). Join us for the third Sunday of Advent.

GOOD NEWS—(235/236)—To all of our hot chocolate makers, shepherds, bread and cookie bakers, carolers and carpenters—thanks for helping to make Holiday in the Park and Bethlehem Village a great success this past weekend. What a blessing to be able to share the Good News! Join us again this Sunday as we continue along “The Journey” and learn more about Elizabeth (10:05 a.m. in the FLC). Remember the Lloyd’s Open House on Friday night!

HERITAGE—(Parlor)—Happy Birthday to Sondra, Amelia and Barbara! In our prayers are the Fosters, Linda and LeRoy, Wanza, Vera and Jim. Thanks to Sandra, Tom, Patsy and Martha for our Lessons and Carols Christmas Gathering.

NEW HORIZONS—(220)—We continue to enjoy Pastor Flagg’s Advent series, “The Journey,” running through December 25. Hope all of you will join us.

Church Staff

Dr. Janice Riggle Huie.....Bishop
Rev. Lawrence Young.....District Superintendent
Members of BUMC.....Ministers
Rev. Jim Flagg.....Senior Pastor
Rev. Tori Butler.....Associate Pastor
Virilene Martin.....Interim Music Director
Ben Hinshaw.....Christian Education Coordinator
Carolyn Reed.....Director of Youth
Elenor Coursey.....Organist
Rhonda Sampiere.....Director of Weekday Ministries
Alice Clark.....Assoc. Director of Weekday Ministries
Elizabeth Lloyd.....Business Manager
Michael Ervin.....Communications Coordinator
Michael Hutchinson.....Administrative Assistant
Debbie Baker.....Power Camp Director
Denise Johnson.....Nursery Coordinator
Whitney Joseph.....Building Staff Coordinator
Rosana Cruz.....Building Staff
Jose Pacheco.....Building Staff
Jose Pascual.....Building Staff

Upcoming Issues/Due Dates

December 14/December 7

Vine articles are due by 5 p.m. one week before the Vine’s publication date and should answer the questions **who, what, when, where** and **how/why** in the body. Full submission guidelines may be found at www.bellaireumc.org/vine.



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