

FIRST news

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2018 Stewardship Campaign Harvesting God's hope

Hurricanes on the Texas Gulf Coast, in Florida, in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean.

An earthquake in Mexico. Tornadoes in Garland, Rowlett, Canton, Fruitvale and Van Zandt County.

Mass shootings in Las Vegas, Orlando, Charleston, Newtown, Killeen, Blackburg, Aurora, San Bernadino and Columbine.

Senseless violence in Charlottesville, Berkeley, Atlanta, St. Louis and Phoenix.

Not to mention many crises that haven't risen to the top of the evening news. And these are just in the United States!

Dare we add threats from Iran, North Korea, ISIS and elsewhere?

It's enough - more than enough, actually - to make life seem hopeless. Our minds and our hearts grow numb, simply as a coping mechanism to maintain our sanity.

And where is God in all of this misery and despair? Why is God not listening? Why does God not answer our prayers for an end to these calamities?

"We are in serious danger of becoming a hopeless people," says Valarie Englert, Senior Pastor, First United Methodist Church Garland.

"Yet to be hopeless is to be unfaithful. As God's children, saved by his grace, we are called to believe, model and communicate an unshakable faith.

*O Lord, how long shall I cry
for help, and you will not listen?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?*

- Habakkuk 1.2 (NRSV)

"To know and to share that there is hope for the future in the promise of our risen Lord."

In short, we are called to deliver a **Harvest of Hope** ... the theme of our **2018 Stewardship Campaign**

at First United Methodist Garland.

We are called to continue living our Christian faith. To serve our community every day. To **plant, nurture and harvest hope** ... as we have done repeatedly since 1847.

The mission fields and vineyards surrounding our block on Avenue B alone remain large, beckoning us to vigorous work and ever more faithful Christian nurture.

We have a plan - as spelled out in the **2018 Narrative Budget** members will soon receive - to continue this God-given, grace

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Making the season meaningful

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Only 85 days until Christmas!

Only 12 weekends to shop for the people on your gift list!

Advertisers are already pandering to our anxieties. Christmas decorations are on the shelves just across the aisle from the Halloween candy and costumes. Some stores have pop Christmas music playing.

And let's not even talk about the family negotiations that are already underway in many households:

What weekend will we go to mom and dad's or the grandparents?

Do we send our Christmas cards this year or write a Christmas letter?

And on it goes.

The Christmas list season is underway for many of us right now.

I go through some version of this frantic spiral every year – some years are worse than others. But I ran across a tool some time back that offers wonderful counsel and ideas for planning a season that



seems to have been gobbled up in a consumer-driven culture.

That resource is *Unplug the Christmas Machine*, a book and workshop that helps participants drill down to what's really important for a meaningful season.

The premise of the workshop is this: people want a celebration that is rich in meaning. Oftentimes, however, we don't take time to identify exactly *what* makes Christmas meaningful for us. This four-hour workshop encourages us to pinpoint what we really want our celebration to be, and what simple changes we can name to make it happen.

Here at First United Methodist Garland, we'll offer space for this discernment to happen in this interactive, fun workshop on Saturday, October 21, 9:30am-1:00pm.

We'll consider the "Christmas Pledge:"

- Remember those people who need my gifts.
- Express my love in more direct ways than gifts.
- Examine my holiday activities in light of my deepest values.
- Be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends.
- Rededicate myself to spiritual growth.

We'll explore this pledge in four exercises to help us achieve more equilibrium in our Christmas observances.

We'll also enjoy Christmas music, share some seasonal snacks and food, and offer a low-key, no-pressure space to reclaim the God-given gift of Christmas.

I hope to see you there. It will be time well spent!

Peace be with you!

2018 Stewardship: Harvest of Hope

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-filled cycle as the Lord of the Harvest calls us to do.

This plan includes:

- aggressive growth in Discipleship and Spiritual Formation
- increased participation in Music Ministries and Worship
- planting new disciples through Evangelism, Welcoming and Hospitality
- building on our capacity to

share the love of God through Congregational Care

- expansion of Local, Regional and Global Missions through additional disaster relief teams and local school and agency partnerships
- continued, faithful support for the Learning Academy, the First United Methodist Church Foundation, and the Texas Methodist Foundation.

The Harvest of Hope campaign begins **Sunday, October 29.**

It continues with our **All Saints Sunday** remembrance on **November 5.**

And it concludes with **Commitment Sunday** on **November 12**, when we'll join together in the harvest with our personal commitments of prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness.

Your commitments and generosity are key ingredients to achieving our 2018 ministry goals.

Won't you join us?



Church Council plays key role in missions, ministries

Mary Baughman
Chair, Church Council
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In September, First United Methodist Church Garland adopted a new Mission Statement:

***Cultivating Christian Community:
Loving God, Living Faith,
Serving People, Inspiring Hope***

This required a favorable vote by the Church Council.

What else requires review or action by the Church Council? And really, what is the Church Council?

These are reasonable questions asked after the new mission statement was shared with the congregation last month.

The Church Council is comprised of congregation and staff, who meet once a quarter to ensure effective use of church resources and successful implementation of First United Methodist Garland's missions and ministries.

The role of the Church Council is defined in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

The First United Methodist Garland Church Council includes a chairperson, secretary and chairpersons (or their appointed representatives) from the standing committees and missions of the church.

In addition, up to 10 'at large' members are elected - each for a three-year term - to represent the congregation at the annual Charge Conference.

Key church staff members, including pastors, music, mission and youth directors, also attend Church Council meetings.

(A complete membership list is available from the church office.)

In our neighborhood

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If you are a fan of **Sesame Street**, you probably know the song, **"People in Your Neighborhood."** You can probably sing the chorus:

Oh, who are the people in your neighborhood? In your neighborhood? In your neighborhood? Say, who are the people in your neighborhood? The people that you meet each day

If [Freeman Elementary School](#) is our neighbor, do we know who they are?

This year 331 children are enrolled at Freeman. Most qualify for free lunch. Many come from Spanish-speaking homes. And because many of them are from low-income families, Freeman qualifies for federal financial assistance under Title I.

With a staff of only 45, Freeman also needs many volunteers - as Pat Hall and I discovered back in 2015.

We immediately agreed to provide a luncheon for Teacher Appreciation Week. But like many impromptu decisions, we didn't foresee where that one would lead.

Not knowing how we would be received, we made a big sign that said "From your friends at First United Methodist Church!" But we are familiar faces now.

Even if you don't see yourself as a volunteer, you have probably already helped. Every call has been abundantly answered.

We have helped with school uniforms, school supplies, backpacks and binders. A special response with meals during Thanksgiving and Spring breaks has assured 40 kids something to eat for breakfast and lunch when school is not in session.

Activities supported by church members range from tutoring to throwing colored chalk during the Spring Fun Run.

Freeman Elementary volunteer needs

After-School Tutors
'Room Moms'
Trunk-or-Treat Hosts

To volunteer:

1) Have drivers license or government-issued photo ID scanned at Freeman office

2) Fill out GISD volunteer application online at garlandisd.net/content/volunteer-application-process

3) Sign up at bit.ly/freeman-volunteers

Teachers may know us for our food, but kids know us for our Trunk-or-Treat candy. The most famous of us is Dave Barton, who appears in a tux to serve candy from a silver tray. Amy Steininger has given out toothbrushes, which are a surprising favorite.

Recently several of us helped with T-shirt sales at a before-school porch party, and we sold more T-shirts than ever before.

Last December, while we were taking pictures of the children with Santa Claus, one first grade class wrote letters to Santa. As Santa took a break, we glanced at one of the letters, which said:

*"Dear Santa,
All I want for Christmas is food."*

This was a previously unidentified family in crisis because of a job loss. The need is real. Our neighbors need help.

Jesus was asked by an expert in the law, "Who is my neighbor?" What followed came to be known as The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

As Jesus finished the parable, he turned the question back on the expert, who answered, "The one who showed him mercy."

And Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

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Church Council plays key role

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Each Church Council meeting discusses ministry topics brought forward by the staff or standing committees for input, information or approval.

In addition to the new Mission Statement, 2017 Church Council topics have included:

- status and growth plans for the Learning Academy
- the church budget (approved in February, reviewed at each meeting)
- Trustees plans for 2017
- changes needed (and implemented) for early Sunday worship service
- opportunities to expand church role in The Reindeer Project, as we also continue “Night in Bethlehem”
- emerging need for intergenerational discussion group to supplement classes available during Sunday School hour
- our role in leading changes the church has seen or will face
- ideas to expand welcome program for new members
- evolving roles and responsibilities of church staff

Church Council meetings are well-attended, lively and focused on key topics relevant to the future of First United Methodist Garland.

If you are interested in serving on the Church Council or other church committees, please make your areas of interest known to the 2018 Nominations Committee by contacting Senior Pastor Valarie Englert or Caroline Noll, Pastor for Children and Families.

The next Church Council meeting will be held as part of the annual Charge Conference on Sunday, October 29, 6:00pm at New World Church United Methodist Church Garland.