

# Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave  
United Methodist Churches

December 2019

## A Tale of Two Holidays

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

I was in a popular store that will remain nameless in October and I noticed they had a blow-up Santa right next to the blow-up spider. The two seemed so conflicted side-by-side. It was like seeing a harpist at a heavy metal concert.

**It doesn't seem right to display** both holidays next to each other. One celebrates Jesus coming the other death, one celebrates light the other darkness, one celebrates giving for the sake of giving, the other a request for candy under threat of prank -- it is trick-or-treat after all.

Though mildly annoying there was something worse, it was out of order. The church historically celebrated Hollows Eve, modern-day Halloween, as a preparation for All Saints Day. This is the day we remember those who have come before us who lived out their faith and provided for us a blueprint of faithfulness, integrity, and resilience.

**I don't think most people today** celebrate Halloween in order to more fully and authentically experience All Saints Day. This is **one reason why I don't like** Halloween because without All Saints Day it is incomplete. Giving out treats and is well and good, but **as a celebration I'm not a fan.**

Christmas is the unparalleled birth of Christ. We celebrate

Christmas at the end of the year to end on a high point and drive home the divine sacrifice given on our behalf, the vulnerability of the babe invisibly clothed in heavenly garb. The richest being in heaven becoming poor to share his riches with us. A divine, vicarious substitute for our sin came to earth.

Now this is a holiday I can get behind. I love the singing, the food, the parties, candles, the gift giving, the gifts getting, the smiles, eggnog, Christmas Eve service, bathrobe nativity plays, I love it all!

### ***A Stock-Full December***

We, therefore, shower you with a full calendar this month. We start the month with *The Service of Remembrance* on Sunday, December 1, 2:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary of Porterville First UMC. We design this service to help those who have experienced loss to better navigate the holidays. In our grief, we can come

together and process those emotions together. We sing of hope; we remember and share symbols of hope and the promise of resurrection. Jesus is not only the reason for life, the celebration of his birth, but the substance of our hope. Our grief is not hopeless grief, but a grief that is part of the unseen winter growth underground.

On Tuesday, December 10, we invite the leadership of both churches to gather in the Fireside room of Grand Ave at 6:00 p.m. We will share a meal, sing songs, and share the company of those who give their time, prayers, and resources to support our churches. The church will supply the main dish. Please bring your favorite side or dessert.

On Sunday, December 15, the children of First UMC will present **their Christmas program "Baas Christmas."** They continue to dedicate time, effort, and youthful energy to share their gifts with us and we are grateful!

Beginning Monday, December 16, 9:00 a.m. *Mega Sports Camp Christmas Vacation* VBS will start with an athletic

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### ***Events for First and Grand Churches***

**Dec. 1 • Service of Remembrance • 2:00 p.m. • FUMC**

**Dec. 10 • Leadership Christmas Gathering • 6:00 p.m. • GAUMC**

**Dec. 16-18 • Mega Sports Camp VBS • 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. • GAUMC**

**Dec. 24 • Christmas Eve Service • 6:00 p.m. • FUMC**

# Youth Ministry

The month of December is upon us and we have some awesome events planned for our youth, children and community. On Monday, December 16, we will begin our winter Vacation Bible School. The theme this year is, **"Mega Sports Camp."** We will be playing multiple types of sport related games all while learning about the perfect love of Jesus. If your child likes sports, games, singing, fun, and snacks, this is the event for them. It will be a great time and we invite your child to join us for the fun. Registration for, **"Mega Sports Camp," is now open.** Please call the church office and we will get your child signed up. If you are interested in volunteering for this event, please speak to me and I will help you find out how you can bless the children in our community.

One of the most anticipated events of the year is our youth Christmas party. I have awesome memories of our past Christmas parties and I know this year's party is going to be amazing as well. On Friday, December 20, the youth group will gather in the Fireside room at 5:30 p.m., for a night of food, fun, games, and the **celebration of our savior's birth.** We will be having a gift exchange at the end of the party, which is always **the youth's favorite part.** Each student is encouraged to bring an inexpensive gift for the exchange. A gift is not required to attend. If anyone is interested in helping provide dessert for our youth Christmas party, please speak to me. Your donations are always delicious and appreciated.

As we approach the end of the year I want to take a moment to slow down and share my gratitude

to our amazing church family. Thank you all for continuing to allow me to be the youth pastor of Grand Avenue. Your support and encouragement continues to provide motivation and hope in my heart as I strive to share Jesus with the youth in our church and community. Throughout the years I have had the honor of spending time with your children and sharing the love of Jesus with them. Thank you for trusting me with this huge responsibility. Your children have been and continue to be blessings in my life. Thank you all for the amazing support that you give to our youth as well. Your generous donations and support provided an avenue for our youth to attend camp and other events which has impacted their faith in beautiful ways. Thank you to Mike Wait and Robin Galloway who stepped up and helped me teach the *Teach One to Lead One* programs. Your love of Christ is evident in how you treat our students. Thank you to all the awesome volunteers who provide dinner to my youth group members on Monday nights. The kids are so grateful to show up and have a hot meal. Last but not least, thank you Pastor Tom. Your guidance and support over the years have been blessings on this faith journey we are traveling. I have grown so much over the years with your help. Thank you for making time to go to Vine Street School with me. Your love for our students is inspiring and encourages me to continue sharing the love of Jesus with struggling youth in our community.

Merry Christmas to you and yours!

God is Love, Ryan Ridenour



## **"Mega Sports Camp"**

VBS - December 16-18

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Grand Ave Campus

We invite all seasoned people to share their talent and experience with the children coming to VBS at Grand Ave December 16-18. Our hope is to fill the halls and rooms of our church with young people to hear the Good News of the Gospel that Jesus is our Rescuer. There is no charge to attend VBS. Kids, ages 5-12, will come ready for sports, singing, learning, praying, running, jumping, finding their God groove! Pray for the kids who will attend and who you will invite.

## Contact

Ryan Ridenour  
at the Grand Ave  
church office for  
registration  
information  
784-3791.

# Joy...Past, Present and Future

By Judy Lowery

*"You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." Acts 2:28 NIV*

One source of joy in my life among many others has been in raising orchids and watching them bloom. I have only owned a few, and just common ones, but there is always great excitement when something else besides roots begins growing from the base of an orchid.

**"Look, there's a spike on this one," I'll tell Al, holding it up for him to see. Since orchids don't bloom very often, maybe only once or twice a year, it's always a big event in our household.**

In the past, the finicky plants would only last a few months before turning yellow, withering up and dying. On three or four trips to the coast, Al and I visited a nursery that specialized in orchids. Each time we brought one home, **knowing that it probably wouldn't make it.** And we were right!

Maybe it was the hot climate of the central valley of California or over-watering. Whatever the **reason, I just couldn't seem to keep them alive and finally gave up trying.** But then I met a neighbor who raised orchids as a hobby, dozens of them and of many different varieties.

Our Springfield neighbor, Darlene, was suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) at that time. She needed help caring for her plants. When we met and her need became known, I volunteered to help, warning her about my black orchid thumb. She laughed and told me that there were definite things to do and things not to do and that she would show me whenever I came over to her house.

Darlene was a good teacher, explaining what to use for potting the orchids, when to water and where to place them so that they would get enough sun, but not be burned by the powerful rays. It **wasn't until later though that I tried raising them on my own...in our laundry room!**

**Besides the do's and don'ts of orchid care,** we also talked a great deal about spiritual matters. She was greatly concerned about her future, especially as her body became increasingly unable to function as it should. One day I asked her if she would like to have the pastor of our church come for a visit.

**"I'd like that very much,"** she immediately responded. After **hearing about Darlene's situation,** he agreed and I offered to go along with him. We three sat in a circle, with Darlene in her wheelchair, listening to her questions, talking and listening some more. She was eager to make things right with God, surrendering her life to Jesus that afternoon.

It was amazing seeing her face shine with joy and hope, the anxious expression replaced by one of peace. I was overjoyed as well, knowing that Jesus would be with her, helping her face the future. Al and I continued to visit Darlene, caring for the plants, bringing communion to her on Sundays, reading the Bible to her and praying with and for her.

After she passed away, **I couldn't see an orchid** without thinking of her. I was hesitant to try raising them in Michigan, thinking that it would be too cold—completely the opposite from a tropical climate.

However, Al surprised me with two purple and white Phalaenopsis or **"moth" orchids shortly after moving** into our house. And then, friends who were moving gave us another Phalaenopsis, just as Al and I had bequeathed all of our plants to friends and family before our move from California.

Three orchids, oh my! They were placed near a window in the kitchen with a purple grow light for rainy or foggy days. The orchids must have liked the humidity in that environment, because just a few weeks ago I noticed spikes beginning to develop on two of them.

**"Look, honey," I excitedly called to Al, "the orchids are going to bloom!"**

While I am waiting with anticipation for the flowering of the orchids, I am also filled with joy as I wait in anticipation of celebrating **Jesus' "birthday," a little over a month away... Jesus, who offers new life and the hope of being with Him in heaven forever to all those who put their trust in Him.**

No matter what else is going on **in our lives, may we rejoice in God's gift of Jesus to all people during this holiday season and all year long.**

For more information, please visit [www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com](http://www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com)



A Beautiful Orchid



# December 2019 Prayer Calendar

Sunday, December 1 - Pray as we begin Advent. Pray today as we light the candle of Hope. May we reflect on that virtue as we prepare for the **coming of Christ "The Light of the World"**. Pray for **"The Service of Remembrance"** for those who have lost loved ones at 2:00 p.m. today at First UMC.

Monday, December 2 - Please pray for the youth of our community and church who attend the Youth Group this evening at 6:30 pm.

Tuesday, December 3 - Praise God today and thank him for all our blessings! Amen.

Wednesday, December 4 - Pray that we can take some time today and read Revelations 21:23: *"The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."*

Thursday, December 5 - Pray for the **Children's Church teachers who will** plan lessons and activities for the kids.

Friday, December 6 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, December 7 - Pray for the Sack Lunch at 9:45 a.m. Pray for the preparers and the receivers of the meal. Pray also for the Clothes Closet at First UMC from 1-2:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 8 - Pray for **Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Group and Worship Services**. Pray today as we light the candle of **"Love"**. Reflect on God's unending love for us.

Monday, December 9 - Pray that God will be with us as we go through **this week**. Pray we can feel God's presence.

Tuesday, December 10 - Pray for the GAUMC Finance Committee meeting tonight at 6:00 p.m. Pray as they make important decisions. Pray also for the leadership Christmas party at 6:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room.

Wednesday, December 11 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Sunday Worship Services.

Thursday, December 12 - Pray for **the Women's Bible Study at GAUMC** at 5: p.m.

Friday, December 13 - Pray for the students and teachers of our churches as they begin their Winter Break.

Saturday, December 14 - Pray for Ryan Ridenour as he plans lessons and activities for the youth.

Sunday, December 15 - Pray for our Worship Services today. Pray as we **light the candle for "Joy"** today. Luke 1:14 *"He will be a joy and a delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth."*

Monday, December 16 - Pray for the Mega Sports Camp Vacation Bible School at Grand Ave. Campus. It will take place from December 16 to 19. Pray for kids and pray for the ones volunteering their time.

Tuesday, December 17 - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle as they meet today at 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 18 - Pray for First United Methodist Church as they prepare for Sunday Worship Service.

Thursday, December 19 - Pray for the GAUMC Trustees who will meet this evening at 6pm.

Friday, December 20 - Pray for the **Praise Team and FUMC's choir as** they prepare for Sunday and Christmas Eve Services.

Saturday, December 21 - Pray for **the Greeter's and their warm** welcome to all at Worship Services tomorrow.

Sunday, December 22 - Pray for the Sunday Worship Services today. Pray **as we light the candle of "Peace"**.

Luke 1:78-79 says *"because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

Monday, December 23 - Pray for those in our churches who are ill or going through rehabilitation. Pray for strength and healing.



Tuesday, December 24 - Pray for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 6:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church. Luke 2:14 *"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men,"*

Wednesday, December 25 - Pray on this Christmas Day for thanks for the greatest gift of all Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Thursday, December 26 - Pray for Francie who shares the Prayer Requests via email.

Friday, December 27 - Pray that the ones who are traveling at this time will be safe.

Saturday, December 28 - Pray for all the homeless in our community. Pray they may find shelter and a meal to eat.

Sunday, December 29 - Pray for **Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Group and Worship Services**.

Monday, December 30 - Pray that we know God is with us as we experience many different situations.

Tuesday, December 31 - Pray for the last day of 2019. May 2020 be filled with faith, love and growth to our churches in this new year.

# Announcements

## ***Service of Remembrance • December 1***

The *Service of Remembrance* is for those who have lost loved ones. We invite you to come and remember those we have lost and look forward to the future. This service is Sunday, December 1 at 2:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary at First Methodist.

## ***Sack Lunch***

Share the Gospel with us by sharing food with the hungry. We meet at 9:45 a.m. at Grand Ave on Saturday, December 7, then serve at 11:30 a.m. at Porterville Coordinating Council on Date and Plano. You will give and receive a blessing!

## ***Clothes for the Needy***

The First Methodist Clothing Closet is open on the first Saturday of every month. We are open December 7 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. for those in our community in need. Greeters and volunteers are welcome to help distribute and engage visitors.

## ***Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal***

Christmas Eve Choir rehearsals are Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Contact Christine Klippenstein for more information. All are welcome to join the choir for Christmas Eve.

## ***Sermon Video***

Watch a video of the sermon during the week or share a link with a friend. **Pastor Tom's sermons are posted** on [www.grandavenue.org/sermon-video](http://www.grandavenue.org/sermon-video) each week.

## ***Next Newsletter Deadline***

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at [judy.bur87@gmail.com](mailto:judy.bur87@gmail.com). The deadline for the January 2020 Messenger is December 18. Thank you.

*Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free.  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.*

*Charles Wesley*

## **A Tale of Two Holidays**

*Continued from page 1*

emphasis training and people to run the race of faith and score the goal for the kingdom of God. We invite you to help with this outreach. The camp runs from December 16 to Wednesday, December 18. If you can help for even part of this experience, we invite you to receive more than you give by serving our young people.

Then on Tuesday, December 24, 6:00 p.m. Grand Ave and Porterville First will gather at First UMC for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Please bring your friends, family, neighbors, relatives, distant cousins, colleagues, and anyone else who needs to hear **the good news of Jesus' birth.**

I went back to the store and saw only the blowup Santa left. And that is as it should be. Christmas stands alone because Jesus stands alone. He is the one true God, the only King, the victorious and famous one, born to set his people free! *O, come let us adore him!*

## ***Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Tuesday, December 24 • 6:00 p.m.***

### ***At First Methodist Church***

We will have one Christmas Eve Service at First Methodist Church this year for Porterville Methodist congregations. Make plans to join us for an inspirational service celebrating the birth of Jesus. Invite family and friends to join you.



## Grand Ave Methodist Weekly Schedule

### Sundays

8:30 a.m. Sunday School • Fireside Room  
9:30 a.m. Worship Service • Sanctuary  
5:00 p.m. Youth Bible Study

### Mondays

5:30 p.m. Youth Group

### Thursdays

10:00 a.m. Prayer Group  
5:00 p.m. **Women's Bible Study**  
(2nd & 4th Thursdays)

## Grand Ave Methodist Calendar

### Sunday, December 1

2:00 p.m. *Service of Remembrance* at FUMC

### Tuesday, December 10

5:30 p.m. Grand Ave Finance Meeting  
6:00 p.m. Leadership Christmas Party

### Wednesday, December 11

9:00 a.m. Formation Planning Team

### Monday, December 16 to Wednesday, December 18

9:00 a.m. Mega Sports Camp VBS

### Tuesday, December 17

11:00 a.m. Linda Circle

### Tuesday, December 24

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service at FUMC

## First Methodist Weekly Schedule

### Sundays

9:30 a.m. Bible Study  
11:00 a.m. **Children's Sunday School**  
11:00 a.m. Worship Service

### Tuesdays

10:00 a.m. Morning Watch Prayer Group

### Wednesdays

6:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal  
7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal  
7:30 p.m. Bible Study

## First Methodist Calendar

### Sunday, December 1

2:00 p.m. *Service of Remembrance* at FUMC

### Saturday, December 7

1:00 p.m. Clothing Closet

### Tuesday, December 10

6:00 p.m. Leadership Christmas Party at GAUMC

### Wednesday, December 11

9:00 a.m. Formation Planning Team at GAUMC

### Sunday, December 15

11:00 a.m. **Children's Christmas Program**

### Tuesday, December 24

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service at FUMC

## Happy Birthday!

Jan Geiling • December 4  
Amanda Ridenour • December 5  
Fernando Gutierrez December 10  
Elizabeth Gill • December 15  
Miriam Wilcox • December 25  
John White • December 31



### Grand Ave Staff

**Senior Pastor** • Rev. Tom Buratovich  
**Director of Youth Ministries** • Ryan Ridenour  
**Worship Administrator** • Judy Buratovich  
**Treasurer** • Rodel Lipumano  
**Custodian** • The Congregation

### First Staff

**Senior Pastor** • Rev. Tom Buratovich  
**Counseling Center Director** • Joy Semple  
**Administrative Assistant** • Melissa Sutherland  
**Music Coordinator** • Christine Klippenstein  
**Organist** • Donita Roulsten  
**Custodian** • Melody Burkhart

### Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday– Thursday  
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-3791

Fax: 559-784-3798

info@grandavenue.org

www.grandavenue.org

Grand Ave United Methodist Church  
776 W. Grand Ave.  
Porterville, CA 93257

### First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday– Thursday  
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-4232

pvfumc@ocsnet.net

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