



PALM LEAF

Palm UMC **December 2023** **First Word**

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PASTOR'S PONDERINGS—GOD COMES TO US

I love the story of Incarnation. Many of the world's religions have a lot in common in their teachings about seeking true justice and caring for the poor and seeking transformation of our hearts in a spiritual pilgrimage. There is a lot we can learn from followers of other religions and much we can work together doing, knowing that God calls us to act in faith and make a difference in this world.

But the Christian story of the Divine becoming Human just wins in my heart every time. As the angel Gabriel put it to Mary, "[Y]ou will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:31-32)

Our human existence and our human story is precious to the Creator of the Universe. Our pains and troubles, our joys and worries, what confounds and comforts us, how we grow and heal, is all intimately known to the Most High God, through the life of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate this month.

It is good to remember that God was not born into a pristine palace or to a highly born and pampered family, but in particular circumstances that included forced migration and sharing space with livestock, and being born to a poor woman without many choices. The story of Jesus' birth reminds us that we don't need to clean up our act or get wealthy or respectable before receiving Jesus. We don't need to do anything to deserve God coming into our lives. God just does it. And does it out of love for us.

The complicated messy story of our humanity is a focus of the Advent series that we have begun, based on the devotional by Joanna Harader, *Expecting Emmanuel*. We started with the story of Tamar and will continue with other women listed in Jesus' family tree in Matthew 1. None of these stories is easy or ties up neatly with a bow. But they are stories that show us how God acts despite human sin. They are stories that remind us that the "royal lineage" of famed King David included women who acted faithfully in some desperate circumstances. That royal lineage includes foreigners, which foreshadows Jesus' interacting with other ethnic groups besides his own, freely inviting them to join his movement and even highlighting how they act in ways faithful to God. The stories we will go through, including also Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba in many cases reveal how shame and blame others put on them do not belong to them, which also foreshadows how Jesus will take the shame of the cross and use it to reveal God's true judgment. These lessons grow out of the beauty of incarnation- that God loved us so completely as to enter life as one of us so we could be certain that God loves every bit of us, and loves us enough to want to show us how we can change and become more holy.

My prayer for us this season is that we might remember again that there is no part of our lives that God does not want to enter. No dark sin we need to hide or past we need to pretend away. No shame put on us or discrimination that God doesn't want to flip upside down. The Most High was born into this world of sin and brokenness, to reveal the depth of God's holy love for each and every little bit of humanity. Wishing all of you a Blessed Advent and when the time comes, Merry Christmas!

--Pastor Michelle

Pastor Michelle Magee

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JOYS AND CONCERNS AMONG PALM CHURCH FAMILY

Please continue to pray for cancer warriors Rosa Elias (friend of Lisa Delgado), Linda Gourley (friend of Mary Esmay), Jim Bulls, Isaac (Robert's co-worker), Alicia (Brent Sadahiro's friend), Liz's cousin Grace Arifuku, Jon Clifton, Jennifer (Clifton) Washington, Chase Glosier, and Tammy Campbell.

Please keep Kathy Lamb, Phyllis Martzen, George Martzen, Carol Rossi-Christianson, Jamie Campbell, Rosalinda Vasquez and her family, Don and Ruth Fujinaga, Winnie and Cherry Cadiente; Wayne Morimoto (Liz's cousin); Brenda Godinez, Marcia Williams, Miyeko Cabello, Dianne Young and her sisters Denise and Connie, Terry McKittrick, Joe and Ruby Takeda, Melissa and Okalani Rodriguez, Sandy Hansen, Lupe Gonzales; firefighters; health care workers; teachers, refugees, Ukraine, Haiti, Morocco, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Israel and Gaza, our country, and Open Gate Ministries in your prayers.

Sincere sympathy is extended to family and friends of Bob Kishi, who passed away on Thursday, October 26, 2023, in Fresno.

Average Sunday Worship attendance for November 2023 was 34 !!

Messy Church attendance on October 21 was 52 !! Praise God !!

PALM CHURCH NEWS BITS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2023

ALL PALM CHURCH SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES ARE LIVE-STREAMED VIA FACEBOOK; WORSHIP BEGINS AT 10:45 am. REEDLEY FUMC SUNDAY WORSHIP BEGINS AT 9:00 am EXCEPT WHEN COMBINED, AND IS BROADCAST VIA YOUTUBE LATER.

<https://www.facebook.com/PalmUMCDinuba/videos/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@reedleyfirstumc4393/videos>

As we worship in-person, masks and social distancing will be encouraged out of consideration for the safety of all. Facebook Livestream will be available; see Page Four. Following indoor, in-person services, Coffee Hour refreshments will be served in the Social Hall. (Church location—438 West Tulare Street; corner Tulare & "P" Streets, Dinuba)

Grace Groups meet on Thursday 3:30 PM every other week via ZOOM, young adults on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 5:00 PM, and Spanish Grace Group on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 5:30 PM via conference call; in-person Grace Group meets every other Wednesday, 10:00 AM, at 780 Harvard in Dinuba. OT Bible Study convenes on Wednesdays at 11:00 via conference call. Ad Council will meet Thursday, January 18, at 5:00 PM on ZOOM.

Join us for "Messy Church" monthly inter-active inter-generational creative worship experience on Saturday, December 16, at 3:30 PM. Co-leaders are Dianne Young & Melanie Mizuno.

Liz Sasaki will serve as Worship Leader on December 3 and 17; Cathy Yada will serve on December 10. Philip Martzen will serve on December 24, Christmas Eve combined morning service, at 10:00 AM at Palm Church; Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be combined at Reedley FUMC at 4:30 PM. New Years Eve service, December 31, will be combined at Reedley FUMC at 10:00 AM. Reedley FUMC is located at 1461 East Eleventh Street, corner "E" Street.

"Hanging of the Greens" and pizza will be celebrated following worship on Sunday, December 3. December Tobans—Dianne Young, Stan Davis, Diane Domingo, Rosalinda Vasquez, Ginger Munson, Liz Sasaki, and Melanie Mizuno-- will serve Coffee Hour on December 24 !!

Order more free COVID tests at <https://www.covid.gov/tests>

Check out the Reedley First United Methodist Church "Resurrected Books" used book store, open Thursdays and Saturdays, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM !! Books, magazines, and puzzle donations welcome !! Palm Church will also be collecting winter-wear for the Reedley FUMC Little Free Coat Closet ministry !!

Huge thanks to EVERYONE who helped with or donated to the annual Palm Church Oriental Take-Out Dinner and Boutique on November 11--over \$4000 was grossed !!

WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH PASTOR MICHELLE

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My cell phone continues to be the best way to reach me, and please know that you can call me; I would love to hear from you !! Let me know how I can pray for you and if you would like a visit !! (I will continue to wear a mask indoors for the foreseeable future, and I have received the Covid Vaccine.) Mondays continue to be my day off. Please check out our Website, giving portal, and Facebook page !!

I have received reports of text messages and emails going out in my name asking people to purchase gift cards on my behalf for others. This is a scam. Please know that I would not ask you to do that. We have many official funds to help our neighbors that you can give to; not through gift cards !! Please check the cell number or email of anything suspicious to see if it lines up with my contact information.

--Pastor Michelle



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1— Jackie Muzzy
- 3— Dianne Young
- 4— Jose Erenas, Junior Bulosan
- 10—Taye Abe
- 12—Kristen (Yoshimura) Floresca
- 13—Brent Sadahiro
- 14—Jackie Hernandez
- 17—Katherine Rodriguez
- 19—Pastor Michelle Magee, Lance Fujinaga
- 21—Eduardo Espino
- 27—Michelle Kirkpatrick



Donations of general interest books for the Little Free Library **OR** canned, bagged, or boxed **non-perishable** food items for the Little Free Pantry may be brought to Palm Church any Sunday.

Donations of winter-wear for the Reedley FUMC Little Free Coat Closet Ministry may be brought to either church any Sunday.



P.4.

LISTEN AND VIEW PALM CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICES
AT 10:45 am ON FACEBOOK LIVESTREAM
or you can watch a previously recorded Sunday service.

<https://www.facebook.com/PalmUMCDinuba/videos/>

- If you get the Log-in Window, Click on "Not Now."
▶ When the Live Video appears, click on the red **LIVE** button.

Please leave a Facebook comment or an "Emoji," or a "Like," for attendance purposes
marianclifton@verizon.net 834-5135 THIS IS IMPORTANT !!

GOD AT WORK IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Our church has supplied scholarship funds for books for students at Wilson School for a second school year !! Your generous giving has made it possible; the students, staff and teachers greatly appreciate it. Every grade level has received \$250 for books for students to have, at the teacher's discretion. If you would like to give for the next school year to be able to continue, donations should be designated as Wilson School support. We would love to be able to increase the amount for upper grades as the chapter books are more expensive.

For the last several weeks of last spring, Dianne Young and Pastor Michelle offered extra reading support to selected first graders one hour a week. We hope to continue supporting young readers and would love to have more volunteers join !! Continue to pray for Wilson's staff, students and families! In September Pastor Michelle and Dianne Young delivered two Thank You gift baskets of goodies for the teachers and support staff. We want to bless our neighborhood by partnering with the school. **Palm Church is adopting a Wilson School family with three children, (ages 10, 11, and 13) for Christmas. If you would like to donate a gift for one of the children, please contact Marian for specific needs and sizes.**

2023 PALM CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL**

**Susan Yoshimura---Education Chair, SPRC Chair, Ad Board Chair,
Annual Conference Lay Delegate Alternate

**Jerry Munson---Finance Chair

**Dianne Young---Financial Secretary, Missions co-Chair

**Arthur Anderson---Treasurer

**Marian Clifton---Missions co-Chair, Recording Secretary, Palm Leaf / First Word Editor

**Philip Martzen---Trustees Chair

**Pastor Michelle Magee---Nominations Chair

**Norma Lozano---Worship Chair

Dianne Young---Messy Church co-Leader

Melanie Mizuno---Messy Church co-Leader

Sean Stephens---Webmaster

**"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."
Colossians 3: 23-24, NKJV**

MESSY CHURCH PHOTOS







