



SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL WISDOM WINTER TERM

DECEMBER: Christmas Traditions in Different Faith Communities

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Tatiana Androsov *Christmas in the Ukrainian Orthodox Tradition*

Tatiana Androsov's father was Ukrainian. He met her mother in a refugee camp in Germany right after World War II. Tatiana was born ten days after her parents crossed over into Belgium seeking gainful employment. Some years afterward, her father disappeared, supposedly spirited away by Soviets because of his Ukrainian activism. Eventually, with the help of a Methodist minister, Tatiana, her mother and stepfather were able to emigrate to the United States. As an adult, she worked for the United Nations in several African and Asian countries. She is still a representative to what is known as the Civil Society Unit of the UN's Department of Global Communications. Here in Dallas, Ms. Androsov served for 8 years as President of the Thanks-Giving Foundation.



8

Julie and Mark Atkinson *Christmas in the Mormon Tradition*

Julie and Mark Atkinson are currently Service Mission Leaders for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As such, they oversee the work of young service missionaries from 86 congregations in northeast Texas, parts of western Louisiana and southern Oklahoma. Julie recently served as president of The Relief Society (the LSD Women's Organization) in the Allen, Fairview, Princeton, and Farmersville areas, while Mark served as bishop of a congregation in Allen. Growing up, Julie in Kansas and Mark in Hawaii, both worked in missions for their faith. Happily married for 33 years, they are the parents of five children, and the grandparents of two fun boys.



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C. David Grant *A History of the Celebration of Christmas*

C. David Grant is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Texas Christian University, having retired after 41 years on the faculty. He taught courses in Christian theology, philosophy of religion, religion and science, and introduction to the Bible. Dr. Grant's research interests focus on contemporary theology and the way that Christian thinking can take seriously our contemporary historical, scientific, and cultural understandings of ourselves, our world, and God. Dr. Grant grew up in this church, and then served at one time as UPUMC's Youth Minister.



JANUARY: Dallas History Month

Join us in the New Year to learn about the early history of the city, including Old City Park, the Zoo, Downtown, Oak Cliff, and other areas of interest where big D got its start.

FEBRUARY: Community Service Organizations

We will host speakers from various service organizations who will enlighten us about their purpose and activities: Larry James, CEO Emeritus of City Square; a Masonic Lodge: the Boy Scouts: and the Assistance League of Dallas.

Maryam Mathis, Editor | Jennifer Stinchcomb, Layout & Printing | contact Maryam at 214-437-6311 or mmathis@upumc.org

FIND US ONLINE: To view detailed information about our Senior Life Ministry, please visit our website at www.upumc.org/seniors

UPUMC

SENIORS SENIOR *Spotlight*

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SINCE YOU ASKED...

I write this on Saturday, November 5, 2022. By the time you open your Spotlight, a little normalcy may have returned to daily life in America. At long last, the midterm elections will be over. You aren't hesitating to turn on the television. The infernal text messages have stopped. At least I hope so, since replying "STOP" seems futile. All the finger pointing, name calling, pundits' speculations and the overall vitriol in the air will have eased. For sure, the bombardment of commercial breaks won't be so exhausting. I, for one, look forward to a steady stream of pitches endorsing the virtues of shampoo, pet products, and car insurance. This world can be wearisome!

My late father-in-law was an annoyingly practical and pragmatic man. His observations on people and life were consistently (and irritatingly) right on the nose. A life-long Methodist, he insisted that there were many practical reasons to engage in church life. Theology, dogma, and doctrine aside, going to church and associating with church people was just a downright good life. His favorite example regarded children raised in the church. He insisted that church-raised kids had a jump on life. They were more comfortable talking to adults. They had better role models than most other children. They had a stronger sense of accountability. Admit it or not, he may have been right. We raised our youngsters in church. They turned out okay.

Lately, I've been appreciating another advantage to church life. Let's call it "refuge." When all the worldly noise gets a bit heavy, there's a little spot in Dallas, on the corner of Caruth and Preston, where I know I can get away. The priorities are different there. Word and service language far outweighs politics and agendas. The older I get, the more I appreciate the sanctuary of church. I don't mean the building. I mean the community that gathers on that corner. I thank you all for this gift. It will be high on my gratitude list this Thanksgiving Day.

On the subject of thanksgiving, this is the last issue of the Spotlight for 2022. I would be remiss if I let the opportunity go by to thank all of those who give their time and energy to the senior ministries here at UPUMC. Volunteerism is what keeps this machine running. I particularly want to express my gratitude to Pam Brier, MaryJo McCurley, Dede Casad, Maryam Mathis, and Janet Hodge for all of their efforts toward making the School of Essential Wisdom such a successful and vital ministry. Their dedication knows no bounds. If you see them in the hallways or the parking lot, be sure to let them know how much they are appreciated.

Until next time, Blessings,

Mark Parker

Mark Parker serves UPUMC as an Usher for Sunday Worship, a member of the Merry Misfits, and as Chancellor of the UP Academy. He and his wife, Ann, are members of the New Life Sunday School class.

A FOND FAREWELL and a PARTING GIFT



We all knew that one day we would have to say goodbye to Rev. Victoria Robb Powers. And now, whether we are ready or whether we are not, the time has come. Victoria will, before the year ends, take on the awesome responsibility of pastoring a church of her own. She will be Senior Pastor at Royal Lane Baptist Church, less than 10 minutes away, just 3.5 miles north on Hillcrest.

Like you, I know that Victoria is a confirmed Baptist, and that she was always going to return to her spiritual home. I also know that she has spent the last several years ministering to Methodist congregations. And she seems so comfortable with us Wesleyans, preaching with white hot conviction to us, proclaiming the truths she sees in the Gospels in words we not only understand but thrill to hear. So I wondered: "What Methodist tradition will she take with her--something that has become part of her by now? What has she experienced at HPUMC and UPUMC that she **knows** has been grafted onto her own tree of life?" I asked her that question one morning before the cold snap as we sat outside a coffee shop near the church.

Victoria didn't even have to think about the answer. She immediately began telling the story of the Cox Chapel service at HPUMC, which she presided over every Sunday morning. At that service, every week, she would lead the congregants in the Service of Word and Table and the Great Thanksgiving, then break the bread and serve those who knelt before her in a posture of vulnerability and need. Those prayers and that table became essential to her. They shaped her understanding of **sacrament**, and put the Eucharist at the center of worship. Now, Victoria says, she cannot imagine communion without the words of the Great Thanksgiving.

I have not even heard many Catholics (who believe in transubstantiation) speak with such conviction about the Eucharist. So I came away almost awestruck at Victoria's answer. And is this answer not a fine gift that she leaves us: this insight, this essential connection with our most holy sacrament, the one we Methodists celebrate at our completely open table?

- Maryam Mathis

Recital
November 13

LOVE
L'Amore, Liebe

Soprano
Tiffany Silva



On Sunday, November 13 in our sanctuary, Tiffany Roberts Silva performed a selection of 'heavenly' choral pieces from the Romantic Period. Jimmy Emery, Director of Music Ministry at Lovers Lane UMC and friend of many years, accompanied her on the piano. Tiffany began planning this recital about a year ago to celebrate her "30 years in the Classical Singing Business and 22 years as the 1st Soprano Section Leader at UPUMC."

In the first half of her recital, Tiffany sang love songs in Italian and German by composers Tosti, Puccini, and Strauss. After intermission, she stunned the audience with her performance of Julietta's aria from Vincenzo Bellini's opera, *The Capulets and The Montagues*. With neither music stand nor props, Tiffany proved her dramatic talent as she played the emotional scene, expressing her desire for Romeo to come to her, and fearing that he would not come. Tears flowed from her eyes when she sang "Where are you, Romeo? In what lands do you wander?...The sky weeps with the passion of my waiting..." Many an audience member was moved to tears as well.

The second half of the recital featured sacred music by Fauré ("Pie Jesu" from his *Requiem*), Verdi ("La Vergine deli angeli" from the opera *La forza del destino*), Bach ("Ave Maria" arranged by Gounod), and Paolo Tosti ("Ridonami la calma").

After a standing ovation and an encore, the Silvas invited everyone to a reception in the church's gathering area. The crowd included family, mentors, former and current choir members, even several guests invited by church members. While enjoying the food and drink, many of the guests lingered to renew old acquaintances and share fellowship. Everyone left feeling exhilarated, touched by the music, and grateful for the wonderful blessing Tiffany Silva is to our church.



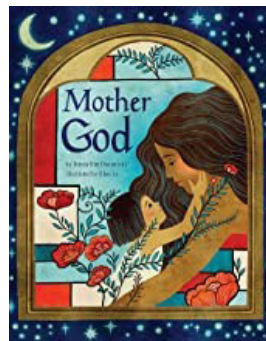
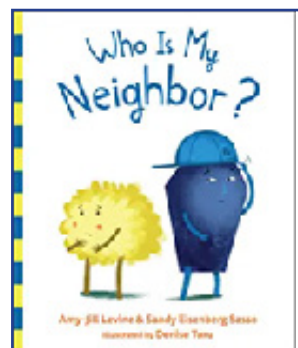
Tiffany, husband David, with daughters Mila and Zoë, pose together after the recital.

The next to last question I asked Victoria was:

What kids' books do you recommend for Christmas?



ANSWERS:



And the LAST ?

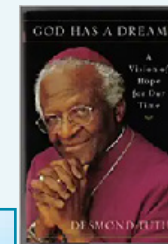
When is YOUR BOOK coming out?



ANSWER: AUG. 15, 2023

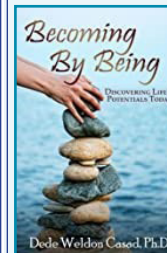
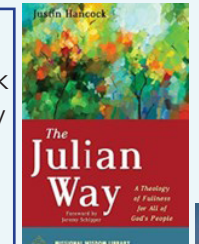
BUT it should be available for PRE-ORDER very soon (within days) !!

New Recommendations from Our Fiske-Miles Librarians



Greatly admired by Pastor Joe, Bishop Desmond Tutu has authored *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*. It is a testimony filled with love and hope, a spiritual message for us all.

With a focus on Christian Community, Justin Hancock explores disability theology in *The Julian Way: A Theology of Fullness for All of God's People*.



Our own prolific author, Dede Casad, has written *Becoming by Being: Discovering Life's Potentials Today*. The gift of her message encourages us to learn by doing and to become by being.

Another prolific writer, Fr. Richard Rohr, shares his Christ-centered wisdom in *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*.

