



Cedar Park First United Methodist Church

# Connections

*A Spiritual Oasis Committed to Christ,  
to Peace, and to Service*



## **A Conversation with Martha Orr and Michael Wilson:**

Q: When was your first day at CPFUMC and what do you remember about it?

A: Easter Sunday, about 15 years ago. I was so impressed that the pastor, a woman, took the time on a very busy Sunday to talk with me.

Q: Tell us about what drew you to CPFUMC.

A: The church seemed like a family place to me and I wanted a small church.

Q: In what city did you grow up? Where do you live now?

A: I was an Army brat and grew up all over, including four years in Germany. Michael Wilson and I live in Cedar Park. Michael grew up in and around Colorado and also spent time in Germany.

Q: What church did you come to CPFUMC from?

A: Lord of Life Lutheran Church. I was baptized in a Methodist church founded in part by my great-grandfather in Savannah, Georgia. I was also confirmed in an Episcopal church in New York.

Q: Tell us about your family.

A: Michael and I have been married just two years. He was my high school sweetheart in Germany in 1959. His wife and my husband died, and Mike came to Texas to find

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# A Child's Haven Happenings



Even though November was a short month for us, it was full of learning, sharing, and being thankful. The fruit of the spirit was faithfulness, and the verse of the month was "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..." Proverbs 3:5. This month was all about the color brown, and activities with triangles.

We celebrated our thanksgiving Potluck lunch on Thursday, November 21st. This is one of our favorite events, as it brings families together to share a meal and count our many blessings. Special THANKS to all the church members who came and helped set up chairs and tables, serve food, and clean up after the event. We really could not do this without you!



As we counted our blessings, we also came together to help other families in need through our Thanksgiving food drive. We were able to donate 104 pounds of food to the Hill Country Community Ministries Pantry. We were off for break November 25-28, and will be back December 2nd to get ready for all the fun going on in December.

## Coming up in December

- Coffee, Community, and Prayer: Wednesday, December 4th
- Brown Santa Gift Drive: December 2-16th
- Santa Shop for Mom and Pop: December 9-10th
- Sounds of Christmas Presentation: Wednesday, December 18th

Yaheli Benitez, Director  
A Child's Haven Preschool  
<https://childshaven.net/>





**BE LIGHT YOUTH bring  
SANTA and JOY  
to local Nursing Homes**

BE LIGHT YOUTH are once again wrapping up small gifts, dressing up in our sparkliest of sparkly Christmas cheer and headed to bring smiles of joy to our local nursing homes.

We bring our RED WAGON full of gifts and visit every resident in their rooms. We share laughter and happiness as they share their stories and feel remembered during the holiday season.

For every \$5 donated to BE LIGHT YOUTH England trip, we will deliver a gift – a pretty mug, a homemade craft, a necklace or lotion etc. Last year, they were delighted to have us bring bright shining LIGHTs to their homes.

**Please put donation in the collection basket with the memo Joy/England on the check or envelop.**

Thank you for bringing light and love into the hearts of our eldest and dearest brother and sisters in Christ.

# POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS

***Join in honoring our loved ones with poinsettias  
decorating the church or to take home for your  
enjoyment or as a gift.***

Once again, the BE LIGHT YOUTH are partnering with Down Home Ranch to create a festive season. Down Home Ranch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, as well as a working farm and ranch for people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. They are located in Elgin, Texas on 410 beautiful acres about 45 minutes east of Austin.

The lovely red poinsettias are grown in their very own greenhouses, nurtured and cared for by residents, staff, and volunteers. They are guaranteed to have three full velvety blooms (many have up to five!) healthily growing upwards from their 6 ½ inch pot. Typically, DHR poinsettias stand between 12"-18" tall by the time they leave our greenhouses.

**Place your order for the number of plants you want - \$20 each.** Excellent Christmas, birthday or thank you gifts for anyone on your list. *Half the funds will go to the church and half to the England trip.*

**NUMBER OF POINSETTIAS ORDERED: (please attach payment)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In Honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In Memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE circle one choice:**

Pick up **OR** decorate the church **OR**

deliver to nursing home residents. **DEADLINE: Dec 15th**





Unplug from the busyness of life and gather with friends old and new at the 2025 Youth MidWinter Retreat this January. Find space away from your phone to reset, relax, and connect with God and each other through worship. Youth and adult volunteers from across central Texas will spend Friday night through Sunday morning enjoying the beautiful Texas Hill Country at Highland Lakes Camp in Spicewood as we gather for an awesome weekend full of worship, fellowship, and fun.

**What:** Youth MidWinter Retreat

**When:** Friday, January 17 (7 pm) – January 19 (10:15 am)

**Where:** Highland Lakes Camp (5902 Pace Bend Rd N, Spicewood, TX 78669)

**Cost:** \$175/person

**Deadline:** December 20

[Adult registration](#)

[Youth registration](#)

**Please note: You MUST complete a separate Highland Lakes Camp Release Form linked on the last page of each registration.**

Questions? Feel free to reach out to Ryan Jenson: [ryan@oakhillumc.org](mailto:ryan@oakhillumc.org)

**Notes:**

- As we seek to draw closer to God and one another, **youth are not permitted to bring their phones to MidWinter this year.** Should an emergency arise, youth at camp can contact their families and be contacted by their families through their individual youth directors.
- A limited number of partial scholarships are available as needed. Please request a scholarship form through your youth director.
- All adults attending MidWinter must be Safe Gatherings certified.
- Adult to youth ratio requirement by church is 1:8 with a minimum of 2 adults per church group.

## CPFUMC Technology Upgrades for 2025

Following an early October 2024 meeting with the Trustees, several technology improvements around the church have been approved for 2025. These improvements are all funded by the off-budget Technology Fund established for this purpose. No 2025 operating budget impact is expected.

### Rechargeable Batteries

Since January 2024 we have already been using rechargeable AA batteries in the Sound Booth for wireless microphones, AV remotes, computer keyboards and mice. In mid-year we expanded use of rechargeable batteries to the entire Sanctuary building, included telephones. Since our experience has been good, over the next year we plan to add rechargeable AAA batteries and cover the Multi-Ministries Building (MMB) as well. We also plan to add a battery charger in the MMB to complement the charger already in the Sound booth. This will decrease operating costs and reduce battery waste. These batteries are rechargeable up to 500 times. They will pay for themselves after about 5 recharges.



Rechargeable batteries initial cost is \$3 to \$4.60 each, depending on size, so from now on if you find a church AA or AAA battery that has run out of juice, **DO NOT DISCARD it, RECHARGE it.**

### Wi-Fi 7 Mesh System Conversion

We have had hard-wired and Wi-Fi Internet access available in both church buildings since mid-2014. Over the years we have upgraded and expanded our original hard wiring and Wi-Fi system to Wi-Fi 5 and now Wi-Fi 6 using a single main router and three other routers configured as wireless access points. This past summer we added an outside Wi-Fi access point that serves the pumpkin patch, our entire backyard and even parts of our Memorial Outdoor Sanctuary.

Our plan for 2025 is to convert our church Wi-Fi system to a Wi-Fi 7 mesh system. The advantage of the mesh system (suggested by Trustee Paul Gay) is that our Wi-Fi network will have one name and will seamlessly hand off access as you take your portable Wi-Fi devices



to different locations within and between both church buildings. The external access point will remain separate.

When we get this Wi-Fi mesh system installed, we will have a main router and three satellite mesh devices using our existing hard-wired LAN to connect them together. We will have two satellites in the Sanctuary building with the main router and a single satellite in the MMB.



These new mesh Wi-Fi 7 devices can handle up to 100 simultaneous, separate Wi-Fi connections with the latest Wi-Fi security, faster speeds and a single Wi-Fi network name. Our Spectrum Business Internet service currently provides hard-wired and Wi-Fi speeds in excess of 400-450 MBps.

The rechargeable battery upgrade should cost about \$300 and the mesh Wi-Fi 7 upgrade should cost about \$1400 or less, both charged to the Technology Fund.



United  
Women  
in Faith

### United Women in Faith Advent Project

We have two wonderful programs we are supporting that are consistent with our mission to be in loving outreach to women, children and youth:

- [Head Start](#) is the federally funded free daycare program for ages birth through five for families meeting the federal low-income guidelines. We are supporting the program in Leander, which covers Cedar Park, Leander and Liberty Hill. It currently serves 66 children with 100+ on the waiting list. UWF previously supported teen moms through Acts of Love, which has been folded into Head Start.
- [Yesterday's Gone](#) is the transitional housing and support program for women in our area who have suffered trauma or abuse.

**We are providing gift cards for families in these programs this year.** If you would like to donate, you can make a monetary donation in the offering basket labeled “UWF Christmas Mission” or place gift cards of \$10, \$15, or \$20 from HEB, Walmart or Target in the UWF jar in the Narthex. We will be collecting donations and gift cards through December 8<sup>th</sup>.

### UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Mission: We seek to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

Vision: We are a powerful, fearless force driven by God’s love and united in sisterhood. With a focus on women, children and youth, we act for justice and transform communities.

### Church Contacts

Find us online at [cpfumc.org](http://cpfumc.org)  
or call the church Tues-Thurs between 9 and 2 at (512) 335-9540  
Want to contact a Church Leader or submit something for a future  
Newsletter?

Pastor Peter Castles

Assoc. Pastor/Youth Dir. Suzette Thorpe Johnson

Trustees Board Chair Brad Lienhart

Music Director/Pianist Jodi Blount

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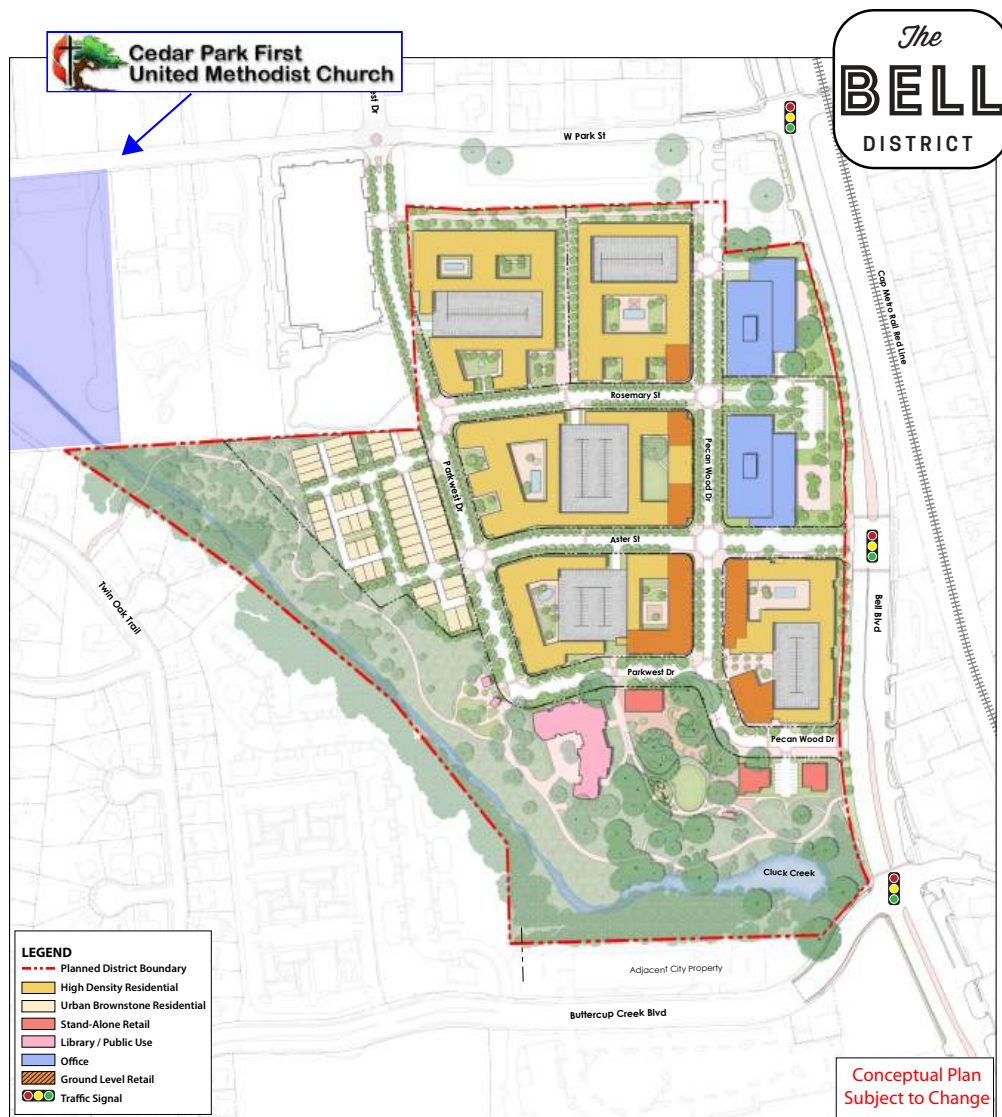
Be sure to put “Newsletter” in the subject for Connections submissions!



## Trustees Report December

First and foremost please send in your Stewardship Pledge Cards for 2025. That helps us so much when we are planning our budget for 2025. And don't forget our costs are going up 7% so please factor that into your pledge. Like I said the Church is a little business and it has an A+ rating on physical property and finances--I just want to keep it that way. God bless!

This year we were reminded we own 6.3 acres of PRIME property near the new downtown of Cedar Park. That brings challenges and opportunities.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN  
BELL BOULEVARD  
DRAFT: May 15, 2024

First, we have lots of beautiful trees that have not been given much care over the last 10 years, so we must have a tree budget of \$5,000 a year if we can find a way to fit in. One way to help is to give a little extra to our NEW TREE AND GROUNDS FUND--we have already received donation of \$1,500. You can just add it to your Sunday donation but be sure to mark what portion of your check you want to go to T&G FUND. If we could each give \$250 a year that would cover the work

we need to do on our beautiful trees and landscape--and our new MEMORIAL WALKWAY TO THE LIBRARY. We truly have a prize piece of property right in the center of Cedar Park and right next door to the new BELL DISTRICT and new Library. As the Bell District develops over the next ten years, it will have a mix of retail, restaurants, and residential development anchored by the new library, public gathering space, an arts collective, and the adjacent parkland along Cluck Creek.

So on the OPPORTUNITY SIDE, our 6.3 acres connects corner to corner at Cluck Creek with the new Library walkway--as the crow flies we are only 6 blocks away. I want to see us connected to the Library through our woods via a MEMORIAL ZEN WALKWAY and at some point with a labyrinth and a gazebo in our back 3.0 acres and connected to the Library walkway. This is a pretty big project but it is my top priority for 2025. It will take some effort (maybe a couple Church day projects and perhaps something the Youth can help with) and some money (which will come from the T&G FUND) but by the Fall of 2025 I want to be able to park at the Church and take a nice stroll through our property to the Library. The city has gone to great effort to preserve trees around the Library and it is basically sitting on its own park of 13 acres. My goal is to connect CPFUMC and the NEW Cedar Park Library and the Bell District through the woods--kinda like Goldie Locks and the Red Robbin.

Ginger, Neil (our chief photographer), Bruce Bunn (our Forest Ranger guide) and I took a very interesting tour of our 3 acre back woods on November 25. Our goal is to do two things (and Bruce has already done a lot of chopping and marking). 1) Create a walkway access through our woods or down the pipeline easement to connect the Church to the new Cedar Park library concrete walkway. This will allow us to walk from the Church to the library through the woods, it is about 6 blocks. 2) Create a loop walkway through the woods "for our members" that would start at the back of the Memorial sanctuary, to the left of the cross, go through the woods and come back up on the right side of the cross--I refer to this as our Memorial Zen Walkway. At some point the Memorial Zen Walkway would include a labyrinth and benches to rest and meditate. All this is a priority for 2025, and yes there is a lot of work to be done and some money will be required. Donations of time and money are welcome. The monetary donations can go to our NEW Trees and Grounds Fund--just be sure to mark your donations to that Fund. Have a look at the cleared area around the Memorial sanctuary cross, thanks to Bruce and Barbara's personal donation. Our Memorial sanctuary is a beautiful piece of our property and a great connection to our Memorial Garden--come and enjoy it.

Brad Lienhart

Chair of Trustees and the Endowment Committee.

### Church Finance Report

The Church had a positive month financially in October mainly due to income from our Pumpkin Patch. Donations were below where we need them to be and expenses were close to our budgeted estimates. We did have the bulk of our Pumpkin Patch income in October. However, our Pumpkin Patch expenses will not show on our statements until November. As a result we had net income \$4,925.61 for the month. However, we would have had a small deficit if Pumpkin Patch expenses had been recorded in October. Nevertheless, we are now showing positive net income for the year through October. The Church continues to have adequate reserves to meet our financial obligations.

#### Financial status through October 31, 2024

Total Income:	\$ 248,767.12
Total expenses:	<u>\$ 245,458.97</u>
Net Income/deficit:	\$ 3,308.15

**MEMBERS** continued from p. 1

me! We married twice – once in Florida so that his family could be present, and then again here in Cedar Park so that my family could be with us. I have one son and two grandsons, all of whom live in Austin – which accounts for how I came to move from New York to Cedar Park. Mike has two sons, one daughter, and one grandson in Florida.



Q: Do you have any pets?

A: We have three fur babies, two border collies (Tan and Boots) and a dachshund/chihuahua mix (Liesl). How much do we love them? Well, we traveled back and forth to Florida by car several times with them.

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time? Or what takes up a lot of your time?

A: I love to read. I'm thrilled with the new library! Mike is a scientist/inventor and spends most of his time working on a new type of aircraft engine that he hopes to patent and take to market soon.

Q: Do you have a particular hobby? Is there one you want to learn?

A: For over 40 years I did my family genealogy, but I'm calling that finished now. Mike's hobby is his work!

Q: What's your favorite restaurant or favorite meal?

A: My son's cooking!

Q: Where is your favorite vacation locale?

A: I have been to Ireland three times and wish I could go again. I have multiple health issues so vacations now are staycations!

Q: I'd rather do anything besides

A: Go to the dentist!

Q: Tell us something we might not know about you!

A: I'm a Registered Nurse and worked for 30 years in New York, first as a specialist in the care of patients with kidney disease and later as Executive Director of the New York State Nurses Association. I'm thrilled to have Michael in my life and we both love CPFUMC. A spirit of love lives strong in this church.

# CPFUMC Calendar December 2024

Click [here](#) to go to the most up to date online calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>8:30am - In-Person 9:45am - SS in-person &amp; 10:45am - In-Person 10:45am - Livestream 12pm - Youth</p>	<p>2</p> <p>4:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Centering</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:30am - Morning Prayer 10am - Bible Study 10am - HCCM 11am - Prayer Shawl 7:30pm - AA Men's Group</p>	<p>4</p> <p>8:30am - Red Shirts 5:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Big Book Study</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10am - Sanctuary Prep 4:30pm - Stephanie Piano</p>	<p>6</p> <p>8:45am - Men's Coffee 7:30pm - AA Group @</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9am - Memorial Service</p>
<p>8</p> <p>8:30am - In-Person 9:45am - SS in-person &amp; 10:45am - In-Person 10:45am - Livestream 12pm - Youth</p>	<p>9</p> <p>4:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Centering</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9:30am - Morning Prayer 10am - Bible Study 10am - HCCM 7:30pm - AA Men's Group</p>	<p>11</p> <p>8:30am - Red Shirts @ 5:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Big Book Study</p>	<p>12</p> <p>10am - Sanctuary Prep 4:30pm - Stephanie Piano</p>	<p>13</p> <p>8:45am - Men's Coffee 7:30pm - AA Group @</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Peter Castles Birthday 9am - PEO Meeting @</p>
<p>15</p> <p>8:30am - In-Person 9:45am - SS in-person &amp; 10:45am - In-Person 10:45am - Livestream 12pm - Youth 3pm - Piano Recital -</p>	<p>16</p> <p>4:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Centering</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9:30am - Morning Prayer 10am - Bible Study 10am - HCCM 5:30pm - Prayer Shawl 7:30pm - AA Men's Group</p>	<p>18</p> <p>8:30am - Red Shirts @ 9am - ACH Christmas 10:30am - Mbrshp, Care 5:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Big Book Study</p>	<p>19</p> <p>10am - Sanctuary Prep 4:30pm - Stephanie Piano</p>	<p>20</p> <p>8:45am - Men's Coffee 7:30pm - AA Group @</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p>8:30am - In-Person 9:45am - SS in-person &amp; 10:45am - In-Person 10:45am - Livestream 12pm - Youth</p>	<p>23</p> <p>4:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Centering</p>	<p>24</p> <p>9:30am - Morning Prayer 10am - Bible Study 10am - HCCM 7:30pm - AA Men's Group</p>	<p>25</p> <p>7:30pm - Big Book Study</p>	<p>26</p> <p>10am - Sanctuary Prep 4:30pm - Stephanie Piano</p>	<p>27</p> <p>NEWSLETTER Input Due 8:45am - Men's Coffee 7:30pm - AA Group @</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p>8:30am - In-Person 9:45am - SS in-person &amp; 10:45am - In-Person 10:45am - Livestream 12pm - Youth</p>	<p>30</p> <p>4:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Centering</p>	<p>31</p> <p>9:30am - Morning Prayer 10am - Bible Study 10am - HCCM 7:30pm - AA Men's Group</p>	<p>1</p> <p>8:30am - Red Shirts 5:30pm - Stephanie Piano 7:30pm - Big Book Study</p>	<p>2</p> <p>10am - Sanctuary Prep 4:30pm - Stephanie Piano</p>	<p>3</p> <p>8:45am - Men's Coffee 7:30pm - AA Group @</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9am - Memorial Service</p>