



January 2025

Cedar Park First United Methodist Church

Connections

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



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith Advent Project

The gift bags assembled by UWF were delivered to Yesterday's Gone residents and Head Start teachers. Each bag included \$50 in gift cards, handmade items from Jane, and donations of Dove products provided by Sue.



Marta, Director of Head Start, was given the prayer shawl our yarn artists made and prayed over. She cried when she read the note. She says the shawl will be especially comforting as the program is facing a year of uncertainty with potential federal budget cuts and

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: presents of the Cedar Park First Methodist Church. My staff is very

happy and grateful. Thank you so much for all the hard work. Happy Holidays to all of you, and God bless you!"

Janet, the volunteer coordinator at Yesterday's Gone, said they have doubled the number of residents since our church began supporting them in June. Several organizations in addition to ours have provided Christmas gifts for the

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CEDAR PARK FIRST UMC LEADERSHIP 2025

Bold names indicate persons in new roles.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Sue Chesnut (Chair/Lay Leader)
Jodi Blount (At-large member)
Bob Bowker (At-large member)
Karen Bowker (SPR Chair)
Peter Castles (Pastor)
Jane Hilton (Financial Secretary)
Richard Inzunza (Finance Chair)
Ron King (Financial Secretary)
Brad Lienhart (Trustees Chair)
Anita Martin (Council Secretary)
Suzette Thorpe Johnson (Pastor)

STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS

Sue Chesnut (Lay Leader)
Brenda Higgins – 2025
Jennifer Ruffcorn – 2025
David Gibbs – 2026
Nell Pennington – 2026
Karen Bowker – 2027 (Chair)
Nancy Holmes – 2027

FINANCE

Richard Inzunza (Chair)
Karen Bowker (SPR Chair)
Sue Chesnut (Council Chair)
Todd Greer
Jane Hilton (Financial Secretary)
Ron King (Financial Secretary)
Brad Lienhart (Trustees Chair)
Don Stratmann

TRUSTEES

Brad Lienhart (Chair) – 2025
Paul Gay – 2025
Jorge Soto – 2025
Ginger Goodin – 2026
Dan McNichol – 2026
Helen Trahan – 2026
Marvin Borja – 2027
Anita Stratmann – 2027
Clunie Van Rensburg – 2027

LAY MEMBERS OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE/

DISTRICT BOARD

OF MISSIONS

Sue Chesnut
M Johnson
Meg McClintock
Karen Packard

MEMORIALS

Clara Crank
Sue Sidney
Vickie Thompson

NOMINATIONS

Peter Castles (Pastor, Chair)
Sue Chesnut (Lay Leader)
Neil Howard – 2025
Nancy Holmes – 2026
Steve Howard – 2027

ENDOWMENT

Peter Castles (Pastor)
Sue Chesnut (Council Chair)
Richard Inzunza (Finance Chair)
Brad Lienhart (Trustees Chair)
Don Steussy – 2026
Dean Fezell – 2027

PUMPKIN PATCH TEAM

Helen Trahan (Chair)
Jessyka Gay
Jane Howard
Neil Howard
Steve Howard

VBS TEAM

Jessyka Gay
GiGi Heermans
Brenda Higgins
Nancy Holmes
Debra Longoria
Jennifer Ruffcorn
Carolyn Smith
Amanda Theriot

LAN ADMINISTRATOR

Neil Howard

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Anita Martin

HILL COUNTRY COMMUNITY

MINISTRIES DELEGATE

Bob Bowker

CPFUMC REPRESENTATIVES

ON A CHILD'S HAVEN BOARD

Peter Castles
Brenda Higgins
Karen Packard



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

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 Mesh WiFi 7 Network Installed

Background

Over the last 10 years we have done our best to equip church ministries to keep up with ever-advancing WiFi technology and improving Internet access speeds. Our efforts to date have created a WiFi 6 router/access point network capable of covering both church buildings and their nearby exteriors with a useable WiFi signal. This is built upon our traditional hard-wired local area network (LAN) which links our 14 computers and 3 printers. We now have a total of 38 hard-wired and 28 wireless devices permanently connected to the CPFUMC LAN.

During a recent Trustees meeting back in October, we discussed incremental improvements to our current router/access point LAN. During this discussion, Paul Gay, one of the trustees, suggested that we consider a “mesh” network model instead of our router/access point model. The new mesh network technology is specifically designed to cover large homes and businesses with a uniform WiFi signal by using a central router and multiple interconnected satellites to eliminate “dead spots” and spread the WiFi signal around in a well-managed way. Following discussions with Netgear technical support, we also found out that the mesh technology would work even better with our existing hard-wired LAN to manage the connections among the mesh router and its satellites. The mesh network model seemed like a great idea, so we went with it!

Equipment Selection

Equipment selection was primarily based on cost and brand. We wanted to stick with Netgear since they are a US-Based company with excellent customer support and documentation. We have used Netgear routers and switches in the past with good success. The specific model we chose, the Netgear Orbi 770 Series Tri-Band WiFi 7 Mesh system, was one step below their top-of-the-line 970 model at a 60% reduced initial cost (since we also took advantage of the Black Friday sales).



Installation

Installation of the Orbi mesh system involved deciding where the router and satellites would be placed and then preparing those locations to receive the devices. In our case, we chose to mount the router high up on a wall in the church office. This location required through-wall wiring to get to incoming Internet access through our Spectrum gateway device located in the MMB utility/storage room on the other side of the wall.



One satellite would be mounted high up on the wall in the MMB large classroom at the end of the hallway near an existing hard-wired LAN jack and power outlet. This location would provide good coverage for the back rooms in the MMB.

The second satellite would be placed on the right-hand speaker stand in the Sanctuary, exactly where a previous Sanctuary WiFi access point had been placed.

Pre-installation tasks involved purchasing and installing an 8-port switch and two wall mount brackets designed for the Orbi 770 mesh satellites. Also, we cut a 3" hole in the wall between the MMB utility room and the church office to accommodate wiring from our Spectrum Internet gateway and back to the newly-installed switch which helped connect to the rest of our hard-wired LAN.

Final installation was simply screwing the Orbi mesh router onto its wall clamp previously mounted in the church office and connecting the wires during the setup process.



Final Setup and Configuration

The final setup operation made use of a convenient Netgear "Orbi app" to reboot our gateway, connect wires and achieve Internet access. After a few tries and getting the wires connected correctly, the Orbi main router was set up. Once the main router was set up, we simply plugged in the two satellites and the Orbi system set up the two satellites automatically. Nice!

Main router configuration was necessary once the router was set up in order to name the WiFi network to "CPFUMC" and assign certain reserved IP addresses and recognizable names to all the 50+ detected devices. Configuration allowed the computers to easily print to the printers, the computers to "see" each other and the WiFi devices to connect to the new CPFUMC WiFi 7 network.



UWF continued from p. 1



families. They continue to have needs, and she encourages us to offer support through their [Amazon wish list](#). She texted this note: "Thank you again for your kindness. Merry Christmas!"

We have a generous congregation, and talented crafters and yarn artists who have brightened the holidays for these women and their families. Thank you all!

Peace,
Ginger

CPFUMC Now Using Rechargeable Batteries

We have been using rechargeable AA batteries in the sound booth for wireless microphones and remotes since late 2023. Based on the success of this experiment, during 2024 we expanded rechargeable battery use to all devices in the Sanctuary Building including wireless mic transmitters, remotes, computer keyboards and computer mice.

Following Trustees approval in October 2024, in 2025 we are expanding the use of AA **and** AAA rechargeable batteries to all devices in both the Sanctuary building and the Multi-Ministries Building (MMB). A recent “battery inventory” of both buildings shows that we are currently using **80** AA and **44** AAA batteries in both buildings. AA and AAA batteries are used in wireless mic transmitters, remotes, wireless computer keyboards, wireless computer mice, telephone handsets and wall clocks. By replacing single-use batteries with rechargeable batteries, we can reduce battery waste and overall battery cost.

Rechargeable AA batteries cost \$4 each. Rechargeable AAA batteries cost \$3 each. So, they are about 5 times more expensive than a regular single-use battery. However, rechargeable batteries can be recharged up to 500 times. Once a rechargeable battery has been recharged 5 times, it has paid for itself.

We have chosen to use *Panasonic eneloop pro* nickel-metal hydride (Ni-MH) rechargeable batteries. The AAA batteries have a capacity of 950 mAh. The AA rechargeable batteries capacity is 2600 mAh. These batteries are black and the AA batteries have a label saying **“DO NOT DISCARD.”** **The distinctive color and label will hopefully remind people not to discard these rechargeable batteries, but put them on the charger so they can be brought back to a full charge. Otherwise, you are throwing away a \$3 or \$4 battery!**



Recharging

These batteries are recharged when low using a Panasonic BQ-CC65 battery charger which has capacity for up to 4 batteries of either size, or a mix of AA and AAA battery sizes. We have two of these chargers: one in the sound booth and one in the church office. This charger can recharge four AA batteries in about 5 hours and four AAA batteries in about 4 hours. The battery charger can also recondition dormant rechargeable batteries to refresh their life.



Storage

We are keeping rechargeable batteries in plastic containers labelled “Rechargeable Batteries” to distinguish them from single-use batteries. The batteries and their plastic containers are located in two places:

1. In the sound booth in the center file drawer labelled “BATTERIES.” Duh.
2. In the church office credenza in the left-most drawer.



As you need to replace a single-use AA or AAA battery in the church, please use the rechargeable batteries we now have on hand.

If you need to replace a rechargeable battery, **please do not throw away the black rechargeable battery**, but grab a spare rechargeable battery and put the spent rechargeable battery on a charger. In 4-5 hours, it will be back to a full charge and ready to use again!





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.

Join us on Feb 1 at 9:30

Church Contacts

Find us online at 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

peter@cpfumc.org

Assoc. Pastor/Youth Dir. Suzette Thorpe Johnson

suzette@cpfumc.org

Trustees Board Chair Brad Lienhart

lienhartb@yahoo.com

Music Director/Pianist Jodi Blount

jodi_blount@hotmail.com

Newsletter Editor Jill Lundstrom

lund121@me.com

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

Church Finance Report

November was a challenging month for the Church financially. Pumpkin Patch expenses were paid in November, and as we explained last month Pumpkin Patch income had been recorded in previous months. In addition, contribution income was about \$5,000 less than we need each month. The combination of Pumpkin Patch expenses and income below expectations resulted in a significant deficit for the month. We now have a deficit for the year through November of a little over \$9,000. December is often a better month for giving so hopefully we can reduce the deficit some in December. The Church continues to have adequate reserves to meet our financial obligations.

Financial status through November 30, 2024

Total Income:	\$ 267,772.92
Total expenses:	\$ 276,817.71
Net Income/deficit:	\$ (9,044.79)

CPFUMC Calendar January 2025

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

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