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Concert showcases Christian diversity

Christmas is One Language event scheduled for Dec. 7

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Whether you say Jesus or Yeshua, God or Dios, all followers of Christianity agree on one event — the celebration of the Savior's birth is one of the most special times of the year.

For the 18th year, Gainesville First United Methodist Church and the Gainesville Multicultural Committee is teaming up with various local musicians, dancers and performers to celebrate the holiday in "Christmas is One Language," a popular yearly performance focused on celebrating diversity in religion and the community.

"It's really a great way to showcase a lot of the diverse talent in this community," said John LaForge, director of worship arts at the church. "This year's concert is going to be fantastic."

Some groups set to perform include a Mariachi band, the Gainesville High School marching band, the Lanier Chamber Singers, GFUMC's handbell choir and the Lupita Sosa Dance Company.

"All of these different groups that perform are coming from different denominations, different segments of the Christian faith and different backgrounds to celebrate Christmas together," LaForge said. "I think it's very important, because we don't spend enough time really celebrating our faith in different ways."

The Lupita Sosa Dance Company, an "audience favorite" according to LaForge, has performed for many years. This year, the company will perform dances from several different states in Mexico, as opposed to sticking to a uniform dance style.

"What's cool is every state in Mexico has different customs," said Lupita Sosa-Smith, owner and director of the dance company. "Some are very colorful; some are really (indigenous)."

The Mexican states included in this year's dance are Veracruz, Chiapas, Norteno and Jalisco. A dance in the style of the Aztecs, one of the native peoples of Mexico, also will be performed. Dancers will wear costumes inspired by the different states as well.

Dances will be performed to the song "Mexicano," which was recorded by Luis Cobos and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sosa-Smith's dancer troupe, which celebrated its 21st anniversary this year, put a lot of work into the multifaceted performance, but she's very pleased with the results.

"It took a lot of practice. Last night, we were practicing, practicing. It's a lot of steps," Sosa-Smith said. "I think it looks pretty good,"

The "Christmas is One Language" performance will be followed by a reception the organizers have previously called "A Taste of the World," as several local businesses donate food inspired by different countries and customs.

Diversity is the ultimate goal of the event. Whether it's diversity of denomination, origin or musical style, all come together for the singular purpose of celebrating Christ's birth.

"It's good to see how other people and other, whether you call it a denomination or background, how they celebrate Christmas, and what is unique about the way that they do that," LaForge said.

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The Latter-Day Saints Choir sings "Some Children See Him" at the annual Christmas is One Language concert at Gainesville First United Methodist Church last year. The concert is scheduled for 7 p.m. Sunday at the church at 2780 Thompson Bridge Road in Gainesville.

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Lupita Sosa-Smith of the Mexican Folkloric Ballet participates in the Magic Mexican Posada during the annual Christmas is One Language concert at First United Methodist Church. The "posada," which means a place to spend night, is a Mexican re-enactment of Mary and Joseph looking for lodging on their way to Bethlehem.

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Young Bae of the Atlanta Korea Chamber Choir sings a traditional Korean song during the concert.

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