



# First News First

*Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors*

*From the Pastor's Desk....*

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The Saturday after Thanksgiving we have a tradition at our house of staying in pjs to clean and decorate the house for Christmas. December as a pastor, and with a child, is often a whirlwind of extra events and obligations at church and school. So before chaos begins I always make sure decorations are up, lights outside hung, and firm Christmas wish lists are created (shopping comes later...).

Each year we put up our Nativity Scene, unpacking carefully the wisemen, shepherds, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Some years the wise men are in the scene, other years they are hidden around the house to be found, knowing it took a few years for the wise men to meet baby Jesus as they weren't part of that first Christmas night.

As I unpack them, I am reminded that like me, Mary and Joseph were real people, living real lives, struggling with real challenges and yet each open to being used by God this story of Jesus that we have retold and celebrated for over 2000 years. The birth of their child impacted lives far beyond his parents. What about Elizabeth and Zechariah that were in their inner circle, what were they thinking? How did the shepherds and magi encounter the Christ child? And Herod, oh what was he thinking? Or the Innkeeper, was there regret for not offering a room for the birth of our Savior?

This Advent we will explore some of the Unlikely Characters of Advent as we see how their lives, and ours, are interwoven with God's purpose and plan. We will sing favorite hymns of the season each Sunday in Advent. The Dec 29th worship service will be a service of song, scripture and letters to God.

We also have lots of special Advent events happening as well. See the sidebar for the list of dates and times. More details can be found deeper in the newsletter, in the bulletin, on our website or on the Church Center app.

I truly pray this is an Advent you will draw closer to Christ and be moved closer to Christ as we celebrate his birth together.

Pastor Mira



# Advent and Beyond...



## Mark your calendars!

- **Dec 7 9am-11am Jingle Jam**  
A morning for families with activities, crafts and learning about Jesus' birth today
- **Dec 8, 7pm - Holiday Harmony Concert**  
Celebrate the season with the fourth concert in the 2024 Concert Series with Christmas selections! Featuring First UMC music and worship ensembles, come enjoy a collection of group numbers, solos, duets, readings, lessons and carols, including beautiful and moving selections from traditional classics to modern renditions. Concert will be held in the sanctuary; light refreshments available afterwards.
- **Dec 14 9am-11am Cookie Walk**  
Join us at this fundraiser for Youth Mission Trip while packing up favorite cookies to share this season.
- **Dec 15, 4pm - Service of Remembrance and Hope**  
This worship service offers a reflective Advent worship for those struggling with loss of loved ones, relationships, jobs, etc. to encounter Christ's light in the darkness. Service will be held in the sanctuary, in-person only.
- **Dec 22, 4pm - Christmas Caroling**  
Come out and enjoy our long Christmas tradition and spread cheer, as we sing carols! Combining with the Rejoicers from our Rejoicing Spirits services, we'll meet in the Main Lobby to sing together around the Christmas tree. If your family or small group is interested in Christmas Caroling door-to-door afterwards to some of our members at home, we will have suggested lists of caroling routes and music sheets available at the gathering.

## Christmas Eve Worship

**5pm Family Service** for all ages to sing favorite hymns and retell the message of Christmas.

**10 pm Traditional Candlelight Service** weaves together scriptures and hymns celebrating the birth of Jesus bringing light into the world.



## Looking Ahead

Beginning Jan 5th we celebrate Epiphany learning about Star Words and looking at scripture from Matthew 2:1-12. We will also share in Communion together as we begin the new year.

Jan 12 – Feb 2 Words of Life: Proverbs

As we begin the new year, many of us make goals to "read more of the Bible." In these 31 days joins us to learn from short pieces of wisdom literature and read 1 chapter each day. Proverbs is filled with instructions on family relationships, practical advice, and understanding that respecting the Lord is the start to all wisdom. Discover words of life to guide you into 2025. Daily reading guide will be shared online and in worship starting Jan 5th.



## Adult Discipleship

Whether you are just beginning to explore faith, growing as a disciple, or becoming a fully devoted follower, there is always something new to learn on our journey with Jesus. First Church is here to help by providing a variety of offerings for your next faithful step:

- **Advent Study** - Join us this Advent as we explore the Characters in the Christmas Story. The Advent sermon series will dig into four characters, but there are more lives to look at that surround the birth of Jesus. The Characters of Christmas by Daniel Darling introduces us to “the unlikely people caught up in the story of Jesus.” Books are available in the main lobby until supplies last (Cost: \$8.00). Read on your own or grab some friends and spend time wrapped up in the story of Jesus this Advent season.
  - Opportunities to study together:
    - Sunday Morning, 9:45-10:45, beginning December 1st
      - Growing in Christ Sunday school, room B006
      - Faith in Everyday Life Sunday school, room 105
      - Wednesday Morning, 9:30-10:30, December 4, 11, 18 - Hardwood Cafe (round tables under the Balcony), led by Lisa Aronson
- **Daily Bible Reading Plan** - God speaks to us through His Word, and our daily Bible reading plan is customized to go along with our weekly sermons! You can find the plan that pairs with the sermon series on our church website, [fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com).
- **Wednesday Men’s Group – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 8:00 p.m.**

This group enjoys great fellowship while focusing on discussion-based Bible studies. Contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if interested in more information. \*They will not be meeting the 4th Wednesday of December.
- **Deborah Circle - January 14, 2025, at 7:00 pm, room 105.**

This monthly women’s circle comes together to share in a time of devotion and to work together on a service project. January’s devotion will look at the Biblical character Lydia. Service projects have included collections for a Thanksgiving Food Basket, an Easter Basket, and support for Isaiah 61 meals. If you are thinking of joining a women’s circle, come join us! Most members are 50 or older but young at heart. Any questions text/call Sandy Walton [717-433-3687](tel:717-433-3687).
- **Wonderful Wednesday – Spring session – Save the date!**

Wonderful Wednesday expanded will return for another 5-week session this Spring. Mark your calendars to join us for this all-age learning experience. Optional family-style dinner from 5:30-6:00 with study groups to follow from 6:00-7:00. Spring session will be March 12-April 9th, 2025. More information regarding the studies will be available on church center in February.
- **Book Conversation** – In a follow-up to the church’s same-gender conversations, there will be two suggested books to read and a book group hosted by Pastor Mira on Sunday evenings from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
  - **Book 1** – Torn (revised edition) by Justin Lee – February 2nd - March 2nd (with an adjusted early time on February 9th in light of the Super Bowl).
  - **Book 2** – Washed and Waiting by Wesley Hill – March 23 - April 6th.

## Adult Sunday School – Groups meet Sundays, 9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

- **Faith in Everyday Life, Room 105**

A group for adults of all ages focused on fellowship and friendship/mutual support in and outside the classroom. This group will be doing the “Characters of Christmas” Advent Study beginning December 1st. If interested, contact Jenell Paris at [jparis@messiah.edu](mailto:jparis@messiah.edu).

- **Growing in Christ, B006**

A welcoming group that enjoys digging deeper into the Scriptures, to seek the knowledge and wisdom to apply Scriptural truths in our everyday lives. The class generally consists of prayer, a video, and a group discussion. Drop in for a single class, or a specific study, or stay as long as you like! If interested, contact Marjorie Snyder at [57masnyder@gmail.com](mailto:57masnyder@gmail.com).

- December Study – The “Characters of Christmas” Advent Study.
- January Study – Patience (part of the Fruit of the Spirit study) by Dr. Calvin Miller. John Bowen will lead this 6-week study centers on relatable stories of personal situations paired with scripture from throughout the Bible.

- **Christian Fellowship, Room B003**

A friendly, caring group, eager to apply God’s Word to life’s challenges. Currently studying a video series on N.T. Wright’s book *Simply Christian; Why Christianity Makes Sense*. Wright was asked to write a modern version of C.S. Lewis’s book *Mere Christianity* and *Simply Christian* makes modern references to questions such as, why do we expect justice, why do we crave spirituality, why are we attracted to beauty, why are relationships often so painful, and how will the world be made right. If interested, contact Wayde Leister at [waydeleister@outlook.com](mailto:waydeleister@outlook.com).

- **Faithful Families, Room B005**

An active group of parents with young adult children who study Scripture, encourage one another and celebrate life together in and out of the classroom. If interested, contact Bob and Tracy Wertz at [wertzfive@gmail.com](mailto:wertzfive@gmail.com).

- **Helping Hands, Room B004**

A group of active seniors who focus on encouraging instructions for faithful living, and who enjoy fellowship activities together outside of class. Lessons follow the Adult Bible Study series. If interested, contact Bob Wertz, Sr. at [robert\\_wertz@plantsitelogistics.com](mailto:robert_wertz@plantsitelogistics.com).

- **Guyer Class, Room 123**

This class, comprised of a wonderful group of seniors who are young at heart, is taught by a variety of church leaders. Lessons follow the Adult Bible Study series which includes daily devotions. If interested, contact Steve and Deb Noss at [sdppp@msn.com](mailto:sdppp@msn.com).

## Jingle Jam | Dec.7, 9-11 a.m.

Looking for something exciting for the entire family to do this Christmas? Don’t miss JINGLE JAM! Join us for an unforgettable Christmas Experience complete with fun, games, and music! Invite your friends, family, and neighbors for a morning to get you in the Christmas spirit and learn about the true meaning of Christmas. This is an event for kids and families to participate all together, this is not a drop-off event. Register you and your family on Church Center or through [fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com). If you have any questions, please email Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry at [kidscount@fumchurch.com](mailto:kidscount@fumchurch.com).



## Growing Together

This is an intergenerational Sunday school class that meets the third Sunday of the month from 9:45-10:45 in the youth lounge (basement level of the church). All ages are welcome to come participate in a devotion and a hands on activity. If you have any questions, reach out to Katie Knorr at [kidscount@fumchurch.com](mailto:kidscount@fumchurch.com) or Lisa Aronson at [uthrock@fumchurch.com](mailto:uthrock@fumchurch.com).

## Service of Remembrance and Hope | Sunday, Dec.15, 4 p.m.

If you are feeling the weight of grief this holiday season and missing your loved ones, please join us for a time of worship and reflection at our Service of Remembrance and Hope in the sanctuary. (The service will also be recorded and available afterward for viewing from home?) Contact Janice Bowen for more information [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com).

## From the Library

I am pretty sure I say this all the time, but I can't believe Christmas is less than a month away as I write this article. Of course, if you have been in any major stores, you would have thought Christmas had moved to October or at least November. Working in the library always makes me think in the "two week ahead" mentality due to stamping due dates on books. But at least today it is not 80 degrees, I am wearing a sweater, and I am listening to Christmas music. So far, I am not panicking over all the tasks required (mostly by me) for the holidays. So, let's talk about one of my most favorite topics: books. As always, I have some great holiday reads.

*A Lancaster Amish Christmas* is a collection of four short novellas that feature Christmas and romance. Written by some of the library's favorite authors, I don't think this will disappoint you. The readers on Amazon gave the book a five-star review and mentioned how engaging each story was. And if that is not enough to entice you into reading this book, I will mention that 4 short stories are easier to fit into a busy schedule than a full length novel. Set in Lancaster, you may identify with some of the settings. Grab some hot chocolate and get ready to have your spirit lifted by this holiday read.

Every year the library purchases Melody Carlson's holiday book and this year is no exception. At only 176 pages, *The Christmas Tree Farm* is another great book for the season. Main character Madison McDowell returns from teaching overseas for several years thinking she will take her place on her family's Christmas tree farm in Oregon. Little does she know in her absence her sister has neglected the property, and recent wildfires have added to the problem. In fact, her sister is planning to sell the farm. If all that is not enough, her neighbor plans to turn his property into a noisy dirt bike track. But Madison will not let the farm go without a fight, and she starts working toward her dream of having a Christmas tree farm as her life's work. Did I mention her neighbor is a former flame and now a widower? Really, I don't think I need to say more.

And now I am getting to my favorite, *Christmas in the Crosshairs* by Lynette Eason, Kate Angelo, and Kelly Underwood. This book contains three novellas, also designed for the holidays. Yes, it is hard to think of murder and mayhem in a Christmas setting unless you watch Die Hard every year as part of your Christmas traditions. But the authors have added some romantic suspense to each story and maybe even some happy endings to keep them from getting too heavy. This book is an add-on to The Elite Guardian Collection and each story features the main characters from each of the three books. Though you don't need to read the earlier books to enjoy this one, the other books provide background for each story. We have them in our library ready for you to check out.

But if none of these books is for you, stop in and let our volunteers find just the right book for you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from our volunteers.

Marge, Deb, Susan, Mary, Annette, Pam, and Donna



COME VISIT THE  
CHURCH LIBRARY



**Share Your Joys and Prayer Concerns**

We want to pray with and for you! You can share your prayer requests on Sunday mornings during worship by filling out a green prayer card (located in the pews and at the prayer station under the balcony) and placing it in the offering basket or Janice Bowen's mailbox. You can also share your prayer requests and subscribe to our weekly prayer letter by contacting Janice directly ([wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611, ext. 112).

**Altar Flowers**

We still have Sundays available in 2025 for dedicating altar flowers for worship if you would like to honor a special occasion in your family or remember loved ones by donating beautiful flowers! Dates available include:

- January 12, 19, 26
- February 2
- April 13, 20
- May 4
- June 1, 15
- July 20, 27
- August 10, 17,
- October 5, 12, 26
- November 2
- December 14

(Altar flowers cost \$50 and a mache basket is \$35) Please contact Linda Weldon to confirm a date and submit payment: [Lindaweldon@hotmail.com](mailto:Lindaweldon@hotmail.com) or 717-519-9615.

**Women's Retreat, January 24 to 26, 2025**

Our 2025 women's retreat, "Enter His Gates," will be held at Rhodes Grove Retreat Center 7693 Browns Mill Road, Chambersburg. Lisa Aronson and Deb Noss will take us on a journey exploring the City Gates. Using Nehemiah and Ezra as narratives to ground us in scripture: the intention and importance of their rebuilding projects and the necessity of building not just the walls, but the gates. As we build our lives, do we give attention to the need for these gates? Join us for a weekend filled with fellowship, fun, food and faith! Program starts on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday before noon. Hotel-like accommodations and 4 meals are included. Again this year, a One-Day option is available (lunch and dinner included)! You can find the registration form at the entrances to the sanctuary, on the Church Center App, at the Display Window near the church library or send an email to Patti Herring at [familyzeke@verizon.net](mailto:familyzeke@verizon.net). All women are welcome!





2025 Women's Retreat  
January 24 to 26, 2025

Rhodes Grove Retreat Center, 7693 Browns Mill Road, Chambersburg  
Join us for a weekend filled with fellowship, fun, food and faith! Program starts on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday before noon.

Hotel-like accommodations and 4 meals included.

**One Day Saturday Option Available!**

Registration also available on the Church Center App

.....  
Please return registration with payment (payable to FUMC)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Medications: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies or Diet Restrictions \_\_\_\_\_

Send payment to Patti Herring, 613 Lavina Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 **OR** via the Church Center Registration (link is available on the app). You may also place payment and registration in the Scrip Box (located near the couches).

Early Bird Registration due by **12/31/2024 is \$170**. After that date, fee will be \$175. **All registrations due by 1/10/2025**. Financial assistance available upon request, contact Patti Herring.

\_\_\_ Full weekend early bird payment enclosed \$170

\_\_\_ Full weekend payment enclosed (if paying after 12/31) \$175

\_\_\_ One Day (Saturday) payment enclosed \$50

Is this your first retreat? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Any special concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions**, contact Patti Herring at familyzeke@verizon.net or 717-713-0617



**Rejoicing Spirits | Sunday, Dec. 22, 4 p.m.**

First Church invites everyone to attend this “shush-free” worship experience that celebrates all expressions of worship and individuals of all abilities. This monthly service includes music, scripture, prayer and a brief message, along with refreshments and fellowship afterward. This month we join in the church’s annual Christmas Caroling event.

**Christmas Caroling 2024 | Sunday, Dec. 22, 4 pm**

Caroling means “to sing in a joyful manner!” Join us to enjoy the Christmas tradition of Carol Singing and spreading cheer together as we sing around our Christmas Tree in the Main Lobby. Cocoa and cookie fellowship will follow immediately afterwards! Interested in more Christmas Caroling? If your family or small group is interested in Christmas Caroling ‘door to door’ to some of our members at home, we will have suggested lists of caroling routes and music sheets available at the Christmas Caroling gathering on December 22nd! For additional information, please contact Janice Bowen at [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com).



**Interested in more Christmas Caroling?**

If your family or small group is interested in Christmas Caroling ‘door to door’ to some of our members at home, we will have suggested lists of caroling routes and music sheets available at the Christmas Caroling gathering on December 22nd! For additional information, please contact Janice Bowen at [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com).



**FIRST CHURCH PRAISE RINGERS | MAY 5, 7 P.M**



**BRANDON RHODY  
JULY 21, 3 P.M.**



**SARAH PUGH  
OCT. 13, 3 P.M.**



**FIRST UMC MECHANICSBURG'S  
2024 FREE  
CONCERT  
SERIES**



**HOLIDAY HARMONY | DEC. 8, 7 P.M.**



## *Dedicated Missionary*



### **Soupy Saturday**

If you enjoy cooking, we invite you to the church kitchen to cook-up some delicious soup and muffins to share with a friend, neighbor, or church member at home! Stay tuned for a date sometime this winter! Questions? Contact Janice Bowen at [WeCare@fumchurch.com](mailto:WeCare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611 x112.

### **Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry | Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m.**

First Church is pleased to support Isaiah 61 Ministries, a local organization that serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County. They provide a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and Life groups. Specifically, First Church members help serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. To find out how to get involved, contact Tiffany Holland at [tholland1967@gmail.com](mailto:tholland1967@gmail.com).



### **Operation Christmas Child**

Thank you for making Operation Christmas Child a huge success! This year we collected 208 boxes (including the virtual boxes filled online). Continue to pray for the journey these boxes will take and the children who will receive them.

### **Summer Youth\* Mission Trip**

Youth and adults interested in participating in a summer mission trip to assist in the North Carolina hurricane disaster relief should contact Lisa Aronson to learn more. Tentative trip plans are to partner with Praying Pelican Missions from June 28 to July 4. \*Our youth summer trips over the past years have continued to be more intergenerational, so we would like to extend the opportunity to other adults in our congregation wishing to participate in a mission trip. Because of youth presence on the trip, all adults must have up-to-date safe sanctuary clearances. Priority will be given to students.

## *Relationship Builder*



### **Hospitality Tip**

Why is hospitality important during the Christmas season? Church hospitality reflects the spirit of giving ~ Christmas is a time to share love and generosity. Church hospitality reaches new people ~ this festive season can be a great opportunity to attract new visitors to the church. Church hospitality builds community ~ it fosters a sense of belonging and connection among church members by creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. We have the opportunity to invite guests and other church members to many events happening right here in our church during this special season .... Jingle Jam on December 7, Holiday Harmony Concert on December 8, Cookie Walk on December 14, Service of Remembrance and Hope on December 15, Christmas caroling on December 22, Christmas Eve services on December 24. We are called to demonstrate Christian love and hospitality always ~ but what better time to do that than during a season when people may be particularly open to connection!



**Widows/Widowers Fellowship | Tuesday, Dec. 10, 11:30 a.m.**

The widows/widowers fellowship will dine at Brothers restaurant on Tuesday December 10th at 11:30am. If you plan on attending please call Bonnie Guyer at (717-766-0145) Transportation will be provided upon request.

**Pickleball in the Gym | Tuesdays 5-7 p.m.**

Join us in the church gym every Tuesday evening for the joy of Pickleball! No experience is necessary; we would love to teach you to play! Paddles/balls are available to borrow. Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com)) with questions or to be added to the Pickleball email list for updates and alerts.

**FUMC Volleyball | Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

If you enjoy volleyball, please join us any Wednesday evening in the church gym! Contact Janice Bowen ([wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611 x112) with questions.

**Lighthouse | Begins Jan. 27, 2025**

Patti Vogl and Janice Bowen will co-facilitate a 6-week supportive grief group this winter at FUMC for anyone experiencing grief and loss. The group will meet Mondays, 1:30-2:30 pm from January 27th – March 3rd. Contact Janice at [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611 or Patti at [pvogl@timelessconnections.org](mailto:pvogl@timelessconnections.org) or 717-319-7318 to register or receive additional information.

**Christmas Card Greetings!**

We encourage you to reach out to one another this holiday season by sending Christmas card greetings! Please help yourself to a supply of Christmas cards found at the card display across in the main lobby. Save stamps and deliver your cards using the church mailboxes. If you'd like to send cards to some of our members at home, a suggested list is also available at the Christmas card display.

**Visiting with Friends!**

If you miss seeing your friends at church due to issues such as aging or driving limitations, Janice Bowen would like to hear from you! Janice is interested in taking people with her for visits so that friends can remain connected by visiting in-person with one another! Whether you find yourself 'stuck at home,' no longer able to get out to church or unable to get to church, but are missing your friends who are 'stuck at home. Either way, please contact Janice to visit with friends! 717-766-4611 x112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com).

**Joy in the Morning | Monday, Dec. 16, 1 p.m.**

If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this small group. We meet monthly on Monday afternoons at Bethany Village's West Apartments Commons Room. Janice Bowen facilitates, drawing upon readings and devotionals.. For more info.,information, contact Janice (717-766-4611 x112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com))

**Men's Breakfast | December 7th and January 4th, 7:30 a.m.**

An open invitation is extended to all men who want to gather for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month at Brothers Restaurant (Brothers Restaurant is located at 705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg, 17055). Please contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if you are interested in attending.

**Women's Morning Meet-Up | December 21st and January 11th, 7:30 a.m.**

Start your morning with a warm cup of coffee and great company at Down To Earth Cafe. Order food or a drink, or just grab a seat and connect with other women of faith, share stories, and find support in a welcoming atmosphere. Down to Earth Café is located at 100 Legacy Park Dr. Suite 108, Mechanicsburg, 17055.

## Coffee Ministry

Coffee is available before Sunday school (9:45) and the 11:00 Gathering Service. Coffee is located in the main lobby (near the mailboxes) and we hope you find it a welcoming addition to Sunday mornings. Contact Lisa Aronson at [uthrock@fumchurch](mailto:uthrock@fumchurch) if you have an interest in helping support this expression of hospitality.

*Generous Giver*



## FINANCIAL REPORT

Through October 31, 2024

83 % of year

General Fund

2024 budget \$ 925,398

Expected income-YTD      \$ 768,080 (83% of budget)

Actual income -YTD      \$ 762,811 (82% of budget)

Actual expenses-YTD      \$ 738,116 (80% of budget)

Income for the four Sundays of October totaled \$80,914, which is roughly 10,000 better than an average month and includes some one-time gifts. Income lags slightly where we expect to be at this point in the year. As we approach the holidays we believe income will continue as anticipated. We thank all individuals and families for living out being generous givers to First Church in ways both through gifts and service. Thank you also to our staff and volunteers for their stewardship of these gifts. Expenses for the month were \$66,955, keeping First Church under budget. Year-to-date (YTD) expenses are less than expected by about \$30,000, with a surplus of \$24,700. Utilities is one area that remain above the budgeted range. The church debt for the parsonage is \$40,637 and our bell tower loan was lowered to \$43,709.

Thank you all for participating in Consecration Sunday a few weeks ago and for your commitments to the supporting the mission of First Church in 2025. Our Finance Committee uses the information you provide for anticipated giving to develop a 2025 budget, along with input from other committees and church staff. Our budget provides a sensible roadmap for the daily operation of our church as well as the missions we support locally and globally that help us serve our neighbor and share God's love.

## Change for Water

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet, according to the United Nations, over 2 billion people lack access to clean, readily available drinking water. Help us to support well-digging efforts in Africa by dropping your loose change (or even paper bills) into the blue Change for Water bucket located in the lobby in front of the multipurpose room. Donations from November totaled **\$202.09. THANK YOU FRIENDS!!!!**

## Bottle Cap Collection Ended!

Thank you for your support in collecting Bottle Caps. We are no longer in need of this collection and will be removing the collection space for this item. If you are still interested in collecting hard plastic bottle caps, the Rosemary House collects and recycles through Terracycle on behalf of the Penn-Cumberland Garden Club.

## Cookie Walk

Fill your Christmas table with a yummy selection of Christmas cookies. The youth will be having their annual cookie walk on December 14th in the Multi-Purpose Room (Gym) from 9:00-11:00 (or until cookies run out). Purchase and fill a provided box with cookies, and don't be late – the cookies go fast! All proceeds benefit summer youth mission trips.



## Calling All Cookie Bakers!



It's time for the annual Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser, the Cookie Walk! This year we will be having our annual cookie walk on Dec 14th. This event has become popular in part because of wonderful bakers like you! Try out a new recipe or stick to grandma's secret recipe. Anything will do! To have a great enough quantity of cookies, we ask bakers to provide 4-5 batches (8-10 dozen) per style of homemade cookie. Fill out the form below (and place it at the display in the main lobby) or sign up on Church Center. Don't forget, cookies freeze well so you can even start baking today. What a great way to get ahead of the Christmas rush. Please help us continue this tradition and raise money for the youth mission trip. Any questions please email Lynn Rapp at [minion.youth17@gmail.com](mailto:minion.youth17@gmail.com). (Cookies need to be at the church no later than 7:00 A.M. on December 14th. They can be placed in the church kitchen before the walk labeled as "COOKIE WALK".) (If baking 4-5 batches is too much, please still reach out – we would love to have what you can make).



Please select 2 types of cookies. We will contact you with the type we need most.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cookie type 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Cookie type 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to make both types? Yes / No

# First Church Mission Moments...

## Reverse Advent Calendar Returns!

As we approach this season of Advent, many of us look forward to opening an Advent Calendar to discover a special treat or prize to enhance our holiday season. Once again this year, we are turning things around, instead of getting a special treat, you give to others! We are collecting food items for the Little Free Pantry located on our property. The pantry provides a 'no barrier access point to food' to those in our community. The Reverse Advent Calendar lists simple items for you to collect and bring back to stock our pantry. Feel free to pick up the list and a bag for your collected items at the Missions Table located in the Main Entrance hallway. Collect the items and return to the area under the balcony in the sanctuary any time during the month of December. Thanks again for your support of the Little Free Pantry and for helping us celebrate this wonderful season of giving! Questions, contact Lori Hoffnagle or Sandy Walton.



## ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX AND  
HELP SUPPORT THE LITTLE FREE PANTRY  
THIS CHRISTMAS.

NO GLASS OR PERISHABLE ITEMS PLEASE

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 1 - box of cereal (small) | <input type="checkbox"/> December 14 - packaged pasta         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 2 - peanut butter         | <input type="checkbox"/> December 15 - peanut butter crackers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 3 - canned fruit          | <input type="checkbox"/> December 16 - jelly/jam              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 4 - cup of noodles        | <input type="checkbox"/> December 17 - coffee/tea             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 5 - canned beans          | <input type="checkbox"/> December 18 - macaroni & cheese      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 6 - canned chicken        | <input type="checkbox"/> December 19 - canned tomatoes        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 7 - packaged oatmeal      | <input type="checkbox"/> December 20 - canned vegetable       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 8 - crackers              | <input type="checkbox"/> December 21 - canned soup            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 9 - canned corn/peas      | <input type="checkbox"/> December 22 - granola bar            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 10 - packaged tuna        | <input type="checkbox"/> December 23 - apple sauce            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 11 - spaghetti sauce      | <input type="checkbox"/> December 24 - pudding cups           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 12 - packaged snacks      | <input type="checkbox"/> December 25- your choice!            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 13 - packaged rice        |   |

Thanks for helping to provide for the Little Free Pantry! Fill your bag with items each day in December.  
When finished, return your filled bag to the display in the back of the green chair section of the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church.



# Daily Bible Readings December 2024

Sunday, Dec. 1	Worship
Monday, Dec. 2	Luke 1:12-17
Tuesday, Dec. 3	Luke 1:67-79
Wednesday, Dec. 4	Luke 1:26-38
Thursday, Dec. 5	Matthew 2:3-8, 13-18
Friday, Dec. 6	Genesis 3:14-15
Saturday, Dec. 7	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, Dec. 8	Worship
Monday, Dec. 9	Psalms 2:1-6
Tuesday, Dec. 10	Matthew 2:1-2
Wednesday, Dec. 11	Matthew 2:9-12
Thursday, Dec. 12	Numbers 24:16-17
Friday, Dec. 13	Luke 2:8-12
Saturday, Dec. 14	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, Dec. 15	Worship
Monday, Dec. 16	Genesis 48:15
Tuesday, Dec. 17	John 10:11-18
Wednesday, Dec. 18	Matthew 2:5-6
Thursday, Dec. 19	Luke 2:1-8
Friday, Dec. 20	Luke 1:46-55
Saturday, Dec. 21	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, Dec. 22	Worship
Monday, Dec. 23	John 1:1-18
Tuesday, Dec. 24	Worship
Wednesday, Dec. 25	Psalms 8
Thursday, Dec. 26	Luke 2:25-32
Friday, Dec. 27	Jeremiah 23:5
Saturday, Dec. 28	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, Dec. 29	Worship
Monday, Dec. 30	Luke 2:23-38
Tuesday, Dec. 31	Matthew 1:18-25

## Church Staff

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Marilyn Seig would like to extend a **HUGE THANK YOU** to all those who so generously donated to the change for water penny bucket this month. Thanks to your giving hearts we set a record for most money collected in one month! Thank you again and keep dropping that change in the bucket!!

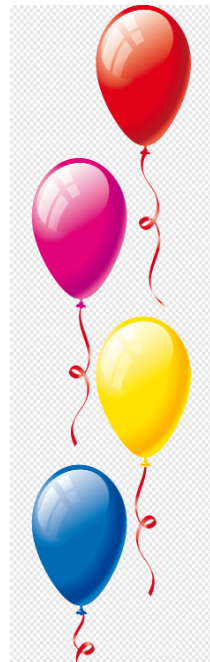


# Happy Birthday

Help us celebrate special birthdays for our church members turning 80 or older!



Joyce Woods.....December 1	Pat Hutter.....January 3
Don Mowrey.....December 8	Ray Powers.....January 7
Dolores Shell.....December 13	MaryAnn Swartley....January 11
Darlis Aumiller.....December 21	Judy Wertz.....January 12
Joan Mains.....December 23	Leroy Weaver.....January 15
Sandy Coover.....December 28	Vicki Coover..... January 19
	Don Coldren.....January 27
	Ed Johnson.....January 27
	Darrell Sill.....January 28



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

♥ Mr. and Mrs. Roy Miller married 57 years December 9, 1967.



**FIRST NEWS FIRST**  
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the February 2025 issue is **Jan. 15**. Early submissions always appreciated!