

First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors



From the Pastor's Desk.....

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In worship on January 5th, we started the year picking Star Words. This has been a tradition growing in practice in the Protestant Church of getting a word throughout the year to focus on, seeing where and how God might use it and us throughout the year. I started this practice in 2021 after learning about it from a friend. As the calendar turns I always take time to reflect on last year's word (mine was "family") and where and how that wove throughout my year. Then as I pick the new word (this year is "speaks"), I post it somewhere that almost daily pulls me into reflection around the word.

Reflecting on 2024, I feel that 2025 for our church is a time to recenter and refocus ourselves. It will be a time to consider our roots of faith and how those roots are the foundation for ministry and mission going forward.

Starting Feb 9th we will begin a new series called "Roots." We will look backward at the deep roots of the Methodist movement. We will be reminded how our Methodist traditions are evidence of God's Spirit moving through our history and see where that same Spirit is moving and breathing life into us today.

We will explore Baptism and how that incorporates us into God's family and empowers us for a lifelong process of discipleship in the community. We will explore Grace, God's gift freely given to all people because we are saved; and how grace sparked the Methodist movement. We will explore Personal and Social Holiness, hallmarks of Wesleyan theology and how we are to be connected to the church and world. We will end the series exploring Communion as a means of grace and the holy mystery where Christ is present and makes an invitation to everyone.

As we hear about these roots, I hope individually and as a church we also start to think about what being United Methodist, and specifically First Church, means for how we live and do mission and ministry in our local community. Just like a great tree, may our roots of the past provide a wonderful foundation that continues to support our growth and flourishing of branches and leaves and ministries for generations to come.

On the journey together,

Pastor Mira



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:

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

- **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.

February Study – Patience (part of the Fruit of the Spirit study) by Dr. Calvin Miller. John Bowen will continue to 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. This class will participate in Pastor Mira's Living Wisely with Proverbs study. If interested, contact Wayde Leister at 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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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 1 st . If interested, contact Jenell Paris at jparis@messiah.edu

Living Wisely with Proverbs - Sundays January 26 - February 16; 9:45-10:45 am

Pastor Mira digs into groupings of Proverbs that didnt make the sermon series. Topics include making choices, wealth & poverty, procrastination, and giving. Bring your Bible to join one week or all four. Location: B003

Daily Bible Reading Plan - God speaks to us through His Word

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.

Wednesday Men's Group – 2 nd and 4 th 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.

From the library

Usually in January I talk about “new” new year, new books, new authors, but since the January newsletter was combined with the December one, I didn't get to do that for January. But I refuse to give up on an idea that I have used for 26 years. That seems like a ridiculous statement when talking about new, but I am still going with new as the theme for this newsletter.

A new author to our library is Tessa Afshar and *The Queen's Cook* is the first in her Queen Esther's Court series. Mary Helm brought this book to my attention, and she promptly read it. Often times when I am telling you about new books they haven't even arrived, and I review them based on their online description and reviews. So it is my pleasure to tell you what one of our library volunteers has to say about this book.

Mary says, “The synopsis on the back of the book really doesn't do it justice. Each chapter is preceded with a piece of scripture which adds to the story. The author writes in Esther's voice now and then, but also tells the story of Roxannah and Adin (not historical or biblical figures) from thirty-three years earlier during the time of King Xerxes. There are many biblical figures mentioned like Ruth and Naomi as well as historical figures. You also see the court protocol, as well as what it must have been like to work in the kitchen for a Queen. We learn about Esther and the risk she took to save her people. The author explains Esther's reasoning for various actions in the final chapter. Roxannah's growing relationship with God and with Adin, the royal physician, is so interesting that you won't be able to put this book down for very long. An added bonus is that the final chapter mentions that this is one of three books this author will write about Esther and her court to show it from different vantage points. The series is called Queen Esther's Court. There is even an excerpt for book #2. So, we have more to look forward to on this subject! YAY!”

Ms. Afshar has not let us know when her next book in the series will be out, but we have *The Peasant King*, also an historical Biblical fiction for you to read while you are waiting.

Although Colleen Coble is not a new author in our library, her subject of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in her new murder mystery *I Think I Was Murdered* is a new theme that has yet to be explored in our library. Main character, Katrina Berg, is a grieving widow who uses an ultra-sophisticated chat box to talk to her dead husband. Katrina is a rising star in the new chatbot world, but when her husband is killed in a fiery car crash, her whole world tumbles. Her CEO is indicted, and the Feds take over her company and lock her out of her office. Not knowing how to face these overwhelming circumstances, she turns to the chatbot for comfort. But when the chatbot says the phrase, “I think I was murdered” Katrina is more distraught. She flees to her hometown and enlists a long-time friend to try and figure out what is going on. Oh yes, now someone is trying to murder her, too. This is a fast-paced book that I think will keep you wondering what could be next.

If neither of these books is right for you, stop in the library and let our volunteer help you find just the right book for you. And don't forget our puzzle exchange—great for these winter days.

See you in the library,

Pam, Mary, Annette, Marge, Debra, & Donna



COME VISIT THE
CHURCH LIBRARY

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 later in February.



Life and Ministry of John Wesley - February 23, 9:45-10:45 in the Guyer Classroom.

Join Al Robinson as he shares knowledge and pictures about the life and ministry of John Wesley gleaned from a recent overseas trip to England.

Praying Follower



Joy in the Morning - A small group invitation

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](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com.



Greeting Cards to Share!

Looking for a birthday card or wanting to send 'get well' wishes to a friend? Stop by the 'Card Ministry' display in the lobby outside the multipurpose room and help yourself to a card! Save yourself a stamp and drop a note/card in your church friend's mailbox! If you'd like a bigger supply of cards or suggestions of who may appreciate receiving a card, please contact Janice Bowen wecare@fumchurch.com or [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611), ext. 112.

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 you are able to get to church, but you are missing your friends who are 'stuck at home.' Either way, Janice would love to hear from you! [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com.

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: July 20, 27 - August 3, 10, 17, - October 12, 26 - November 9

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

Passionate Worshipper



Rejoicing Spirits | Feb 23, 4 p.m.

First Church invites everyone to attend this inclusive praise and 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.

Dedicated Missionary

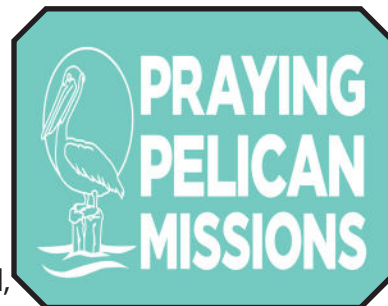


Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child | Feb. 12, 3pm

Regional Area Coordinator, Laura Bucknam will share about her trip to Kenya with Operation Christmas Child through pictures, videos, and stories. Learn how lives were changed because of a simple shoebox. Event will start at 3pm and is located at Enola Emmanuel UMC 22 Salt Road, Enola PA. Please RSVP by Wednesday, Feb 12th to email Shoebboxeumc@gmail.com or text at [717-364-2536](tel:717-364-2536).

Summer Youth* Mission Trip

Youth and adults interested in participating in a summer mission trip to assist in the North Carolina hurricane disaster relief can find more information on Church Center. An informational meeting is scheduled for February 9th from 9:45-10:45 in the youth lounge (If you attend a Sunday school class and cannot attend, please reach out to Lisa for more information) We are partnering with Praying Pelican Missions from June 28th to July 4th. We will be serving in Western North Carolina. *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.



Greeters and Ushers

As the new year begins, I am asking you to consider being a greeter and/or usher. The job is an easy one that only requires you to come in about 30 minutes before service and have a friendly smile. The more people I have signed up, the less each one has to work, usually only 1 or maybe 2 Sundays a month. If you are interested, please reach out to Judi Buddenbaum, either on Sunday morning or by email ljbuddenbaum@verizon.net or by text [717-805-2296](tel:717-805-2296). Thank you!

Relationship Builder



Men's Breakfast – February 1 and March 1, 7:30 a.m. Brothers Restaurant

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 (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 – February 22 and March 22, 7:30 a.m. Down To Earth Café

Start your morning with a warm cup of coffee and great company. 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 if you have an interest in helping support this expression of hospitality.



One80 Ministries Spaghetti Dinner

Join us for the 4th annual spaghetti dinner and basket raffle on Saturday March 15th 4pm
At Grantham Church located on 421 Grantham Rd, Mechanicsburg. There is always room at the table!
Reach out to One80 Ministries at [717-620-1143](tel:717-620-1143) with any questions.

Womens Faith Paint Night | Feb. 21, 630-830p.m.

Join us for a fun and faith-filled evening, as we learn to paint a beautiful piece of art based on scripture. Step by step instructions provided by 'Bring Your Own Apron,' a local mother and daughter team that offers art classes. Every skill level is welcome. We will meet in our Fellowship Hall at 6:30 for snacks and painting. Wear something suitable for painting. The fee is just \$20 and includes all materials, instructions and snacks. Thanks to United Women in Faith for underwriting this event.

You may sign up on Church Center here: <https://fumchurch.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2687265> or contact Lori Hoffnagle at L_hoffnagle@yahoo.com to register or contact the church office at [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611).

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](tel:717-766-4611), ext. 112 or 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 or [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112) with questions.



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](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com.

Generous Giver



Financial Report

2024 End of Year:

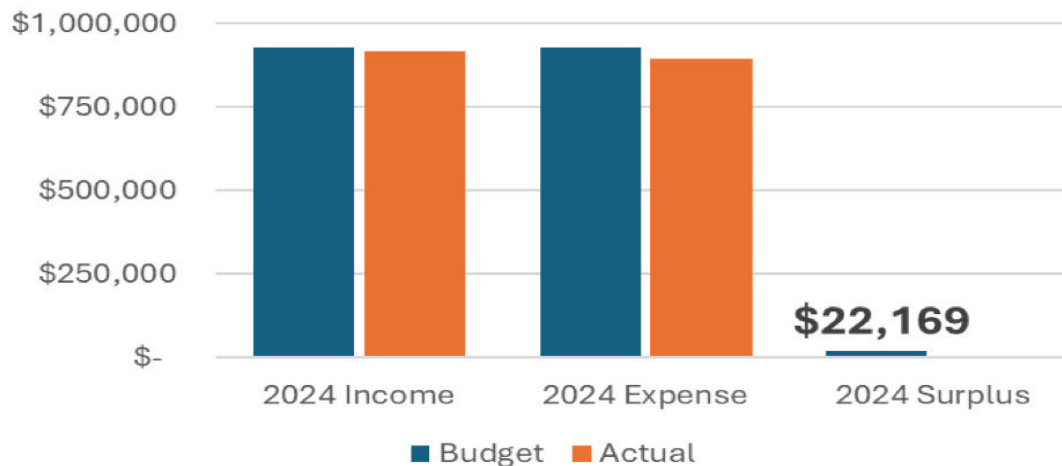
First Church ended 2024 in a strong financial position, with income exceeding our budget by 4%. First Church's General Fund is supported almost entirely through local giving/tithing—Thank You to all of our congregation who are truly Generous Givers. Though some expenses were above budget like utilities, overall expenses were lower than anticipated. Better-than-expected income plus lower-than-budgeted expenses left the Finance Committee with a surplus of \$22,169, which the Finance Committee will review how best to deploy at our next meeting in January.

At the end of 2024 our Parsonage loan has \$40,636.99 outstanding, while the Bell Tower loan has \$41,772.83 in principal remaining.

2025 Budget:

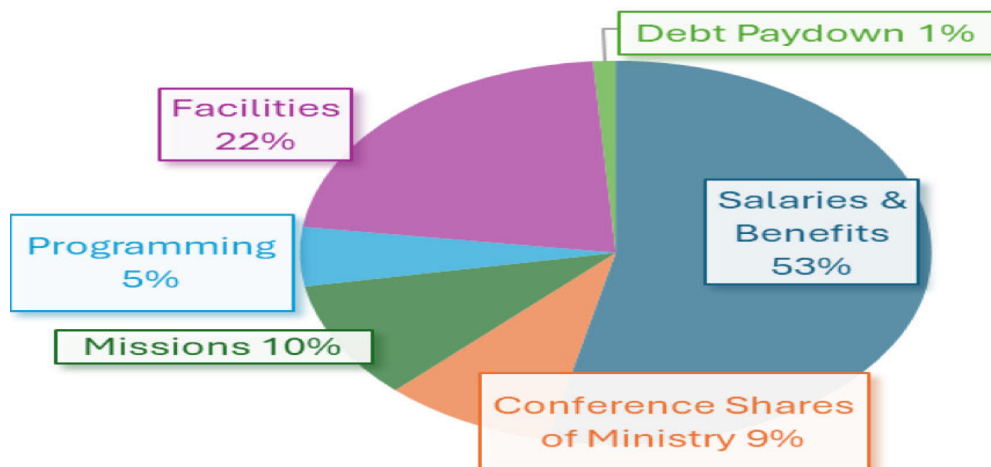
Income: As noted, 99% of First Church's General Fund income comes from local giving/tithing. We use the results of the pledge cards, historical giving, and project changes in giving due to families changing churches to conservatively budget 2025 income. Thank you to everyone who completed a pledge to First Church in 2025, of any amount, it greatly helps in planning and budgeting. For 2025, based on estimate of giving cards received we anticipate a 6% reduction in income, or \$869,000.

FUMC 2024 General Fund Budget vs. Actual



Expenses: Kudos to the Committees and staff who thoughtfully prepared and refined expense estimates for 2025 during the past few months. Their work resulted in lower expenses to match lower income estimates, while still remaining committed to the mission of First Church, as well as commitments to our people, our facilities, our neighbors, and our United Methodist community.

Where Each Dollar of Your Offering Goes in 2025...



Thank you to the volunteers, committee members, and staff members who provided input and guidance to the budget process. Thank you also to the dedicated volunteers who work throughout the year to tally and record weekly giving, pay the bills, and reconcile our accounts. Again thank you to our congregation of Generous Givers who give time, talent, gifts, and prayers in support of First Church.

Complete 2025 budget information is available at the church office. If you have any questions please email Brian Sanker, Finance Committee chair, at sankerb@gmail.com.

Christian Fellowship Sunday School Class Peanut Butter Egg Fundraiser

Orders are being taken for peanut butter eggs. The cost is \$10.00 for a bag of 6 eggs. Order your eggs by calling Sandy Walton at 717-433-368 or by emailing swalton54@comcast.com. If interested in helping make the eggs, please also reach out to Sandy Walton. All are welcome! Eggs will be ready for pick up in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, March 29, 12:00 - 2:00 pm, and on Sunday, March 30, after 8:30 worship service and Sunday school. Please place your orders by Tuesday, March 25. Thank you in advance for your support.

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 December were \$24.20 and January totaled \$8.96. Thank you for your donations!

Ringling in the News!

Ringling in the News – January 2025

Whew! We made it through the Holidays! It was so nice to see some of you at one or more of our Holiday Concerts! Besides our wonderful Holiday Harmony Concert here at church featuring many of First Church's musicians, the Handbells also played at the River of God Church in Enola, at the Silver Spring Township's Winterfest Celebration, and at the Camp Hill Fredericksen Library. It was a busy month! Now we look forward to 2025, playing at church once a month, participating in the Susquehanna Valley Bell Festival at St. Joe's, and Ringling in our annual Concert here at church this Spring. As many of you know we are also looking forward to the summer of 2026, when we plan to attend our 5th International Handbell Symposium – this time in Scotland! As we prepare to start our fundraising in earnest, we already thank a couple generous folks from church for their donations!

What can you do to support us? Go out to eat! Yep, that's what we said! We hope to have restaurant choices for you every 4-6 weeks where all you have to do is show the restaurant that you're there to support us, and we will get a percentage of your bill. Our first date will be January 28th, at Isaac's in the Rossmoyne Center. Then on February 18th we are going back to the Mechanicsburg Hosses. Longhorn Steakhouse will be next. Look for certificates to take with you, sent either electronically or on paper at church. Happy eating and thank you!

And then, of course, we want to remind you of our February Pie Sale. The date is February 15th. We will be making apple or cherry pies - crumb or double crust tops. Look for order sheets now - with a bell choir member, in Sunday School Classes, or at the desks as you leave the sanctuary. Thank you!

First Church Mission Moments...

Our missions team is a group of dedicated individuals involved in helping our congregation focus on caring for God's people. Together, we spent some time collecting information from all of our mission-oriented groups to learn more about what we did in 2024. We filled 1,516 volunteer roles last year. That included missions in our church, such as VBS, serving funeral meals, and programs like Rejoicing Spirits. We served our church members through missions like our knitting and quilting groups, home communion team, and flower delivery. We also partnered with local organizations to serve our community - groups like Backyard missions, Mission Central, camping ministry, youth missions, gleaning for 180 ministries, and Isaiah 61. And that's just the tip of the iceberg - our church members serve God's people in so many ways! Through all those opportunities, First Church members volunteered over 11,000 hours.

Not only are we generous in terms of our volunteer service, we are also generous givers. We donated nearly \$140,000 to in-house missions, local missions, and missionaries. God calls us to be cheerful and obedient givers. Thank you, First Church, for giving your time and your money in 2024. If you'd like to find a way to get involved, check out our mission table each month or contact Krissy Marshall at kjmarsh1126@gmail.com. We look forward to continuing to serve with you in 2025!

Church Staff

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director@littlefriendspreschool.org

Timeless Connections:

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717-319-7318
pvogl@timelessconnections.org

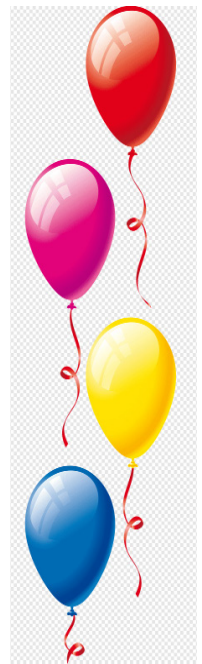
Cookie Walk - Thank you to all those who helped make the annual Cookie Walk a great success! Not only did we meet many new faces waiting in line for cookies, but we also were able to raise helpful funds for students participating in the summer mission trips.

New Hope Ministries - We want to thank you for your previous donations. At this time, New Hope Ministries cannot accept egg cartons. However, your donations of food items are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued support!



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

Joanna Ciampa.....February 6	Gwen Harkins.....March 3
Janie Stover.....February 6	Pat Gavlick.....March 9
Leon Bricker.....February 9	Ben Miller.....March 12
Joyce Parfet.....February 12	Larry Hall.....March 13
Dottie Zimmerman..February 26	Sara Meck.....March 15
Gerry Aumiller.....February 27	Marge Robinson.....March 15
Ralph Haines.....February 28	Gail Siemons.....March 15
	Bob Wertz, Sr.....March 17
	Lorraine Stroock.....March 18
	Evelyn Fennell.....March 25
	Mabel Stroock.....March 28
	Robert Erikson.....March 29
	Buddy Miller.....March 29
	Dave Scholl.....March 31



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



Mr. & Mrs. Larry Hall married 64 years on February 4, 1961.

Mr. & Mrs. Denny Kauffman married 65 years on February 14, 1960.

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Betz married 51 years on February 16, 1974.

Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Cook married 51 years on February 19, 1974.

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

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