



The Flame Newsletter

2026 March Issue

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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From the Pastor's Study...

March has arrived, and as winter reluctantly gives way to spring, we continue our Lenten journey together. As you know, Lent is a unique time in the life of the church, where we set aside 40 days to intentionally deepen our relationship with God. This could occur through adding spiritual practices or even doing acts of mission/service in Christ's name. You could also deepen your relationship with God by "fasting" from things that might get in the way of that connection. This could mean taking a long break from social media in order to pray, or turning off the TV at night to search the scriptures before you sleep. Overall, Lent provides us (as Christ's disciples) with the opportunity to grow in the faith. As I said last month, Lent is a time for evangelism but also true conversion—a time for growing through repentance, fellowship, prayer, fasting, and being signs of God's kingdom in our community and world.

My prayer for you this month is that you will lean into the scheduled moments presented in this newsletter, to be present and engaged in the life of our church. There are opportunities to be in service, but also fellowship, study, and prayer together. Even if you didn't begin a Lenten practice in February, you can still jump in and participate this month. As you consider this, I want to invite you to ask yourselves: "What is one thing that I could give up that distracts me from God, and what is one thing that I could add that draws me closer to God?"

As you consider this, I invite you to join me in keeping these verses of scripture from Hebrews 10:19-25 before you this month: *"Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching."*

I look forward to seeing you around the church this month!

Lots of hope! -Chris



Adult Sunday School

Sundays
9:30AM
Library

Fellowship Time

Sundays
10:00AM

Gathering Area

Worship Service

Sundays
10:30AM
Sanctuary

Bible Fellowship

Sundays
11:45AM
Youth Room

Wednesday Nights

Choir Rehearsal
6:00PM
Sanctuary

United Methodist Youth
6:00PM
Youth Room

Ignite Children's Ministry
6:00PM
Ignite Classrooms

Pastor's Bible Study
7:00PM
Fellowship Hall

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Madisonville First United Methodist Church

200 years of fellowship 1826-2026

Part 1: Foundation story

It is fitting that the foundation story of First Methodist UMC begins on the fiftieth (50th) anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. As the new town of "Tellico" was laid out by Capt. Robert Wear in 1826, Lot #77 was purchased by the trustees of the First Methodist Church upon which a log building soon went up and the Chestua Campground Methodist congregation relocated. Twenty-four year old pastor Creed Fulton purchased an adjacent lot for a parsonage for his new bride Betsey Thompson Wear. 1826 was a busy year, Rev. Fulton founded Bolivar Academy, Monroe County's first school, as town lots quickly sold around the courthouse and the Presbyterians built a brick church and burying ground-Madisonville City Cemetery in 2026. In 1830 "Tellico" changed its name to Madisonville and Creed Fulton relocated to SW Virginia where he founded Emory & Henry College. He would return to Madisonville to found Hiwassee College in 1849 the same year that (23 years later) Bolivar Academy added a Female Institute. Ten years after its founding, Madisonville First Methodist church hosted the 1836 Holston Conference Annual meeting in the "log Church". The 1849 cyclone damaged that structure, and a new, larger frame building went up between Tellico Street and, the newly renamed, "College Street". -Don Browder

Alzheimer's Disease Workshop on March 22nd

On March 22nd directly after worship First United Methodist Church will have the opportunity to host an education and awareness workshop around Dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Lezli Ledesma-Lemer, a research intern at Tennessee Wesleyan University under our own Dr. Tara Stewart will facilitate the short workshop. There will be a pre and post test along with an Alzheimer's 101 workshop presentation. We would like to invite all our community members to participate in this free and informative event.

Are you interested in teaching a new adult class?

Throughout the year we have various class opportunities for learning, fellowship, and growth as disciples of Jesus Christ. Pastor Chris has taught various studies, as well as a weekly Bible study that will continue in the spring. Marlee Tierce has been our Bible Fellowship leader for a couple of years and she has a new study starting for Lent. Reba Dopkins & Regina Warfel have been great Adult Sunday School leaders that meet every Sunday at 9:30am. Some of you may feel led by offering to teach a new adult class/small group here at First UMC! Please reach out to Pastor Chris at cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org.

A new Lenten Sermon Series: "The Vows We Live By"

Throughout Lent Pastor Chris will be offering a sermon series which explores the idea of "stewardship" and its connection to our unique UMC membership vows. Whenever a person becomes a full member of our congregation they make a vow to faithfully participate by their **prayers**, their **presence**, their **gifts**, their **service**, and their **witness**. Pastor Chris' series will explore how to balance all 5 parts of the vows in your own walk and how they can make you a more fruitful disciple of Christ. We hope you will join us for worship throughout March for this insightful series.

Save the date for Holy Week Services and Events in March & April.

- ◆ **Sunday, March 29th:** Palm Sunday Worship at 10:30am in the Sanctuary.
- ◆ **Wednesday, April 1st:** Pastor's Bible Study at 7:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.
- ◆ **Thursday, April 2nd:** 7:00pm in the Sanctuary we will have an informal *Maundy Thursday Communion Service with foot & hand washing.*
- ◆ **Friday, April 3rd:** *Good Friday Way of the Cross Prayer Walk* with Pastor Chris at 11:00am. We will meet & depart from the Sanctuary.
- ◆ **Saturday, April 4th:** Community-Wide Easter Egg Hunt at 11:00am at Houston Park in Downtown Madisonville.
- ◆ **Sunday, April 5th:**
 - ⇒ *Easter Sunday Worship Sunrise Service* at 7:00am at the home of Donnie and Kris Browder Address: 645 West Crestview Drive, Madisonville
 - ⇒ *Fellowship time* begins at 10:00am in the Gathering Area
 - ⇒ *Easter Worship Service* at 10:30am in our Sanctuary. *(Don't forget to bring flowers!)*

IGNITE for Children in Grades K-5

We are excited that our IGNITE program for K-5th grade continues to meet each Wednesday evening at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall for dinner. Following dinner, the IGNITE activities are in the room across the hall from Pastor Chris' office and in the Library. This children's ministry includes music, Bible stories, games and more. If you are interested in volunteering to help with food, teaching, crafts or other activities with our kids contact Carol or Jennifer McKenzie.

Volunteer Spotlight

For many, many years our own Lois Green has been a fixture in our church community both in the choir, but also in many quiet and essential ways that are behind the scenes. Many of you may not know but Lois helps to organize and recruit all our ushers each for Sunday worship experience. She also helps to coordinate keeping our decorations stored and updated for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, etc. Lastly, she organizes the group of volunteers that helps to set up and take down communion each month. In her spare time Lois finds time to be a weekly volunteer at the Good Shepherd center, and helps to keep our blessing box equipped with essential items. We are so thankful for Lois! I hope you will find some time this month to thank Lois for all that she does and all that she does to help our church and its worship ministries.



THANK YOU, Lois!

Construction Update

You may notice some new construction beginning to happen in our lower parking lot in the month of March. The Trustees committee (in consultation with our finance committee) is moving forward with a project to expand our lower parking lot and clean up the area. This will mean that the house that sits next to the lower lot of our property will be removed and the area graveled for overflow parking. The house has been vacant for several months, and has been deemed unsalvageable based on its current condition. The funds for this project were taken out of our building maintenance investment account with the Holston Foundation and not out of our General Fund. There will be a church-wide discussion in 2026 about how best to permanently utilize this property in the future.

Stewardship Report

as of the printing of the newsletter 2/26/26

February Total Giving: \$17,819.58
 February Budget: \$22,892.00
 Year-to-date: \$41,835.74
 Year-to-date budget: \$51,507.00
 Total Budget: \$297,596.00

Because of your generosity we were able to:

1. Serve and feed folks both within and outside our church community.
2. Teach both our children and youth about Christ at 15 points in February.
3. Worship together and share in fellowship with one another.

Thank you for your faithful generosity. Your gifts are more than numbers on a report—they are acts of worship that make ministry possible in our church and community. Because of you, lives are being touched, needs are being met, and the Gospel continues to be shared. We are deeply grateful for your stewardship and for being part of God's work here at First UMC of Madisonville.

Altar Flowers

March 1
Communion
March 8
Open
March 15
From Bruce and Diane Christopher in honor of their first anniversary
March 22
Open
March 29
Margaret & Chad Chester donated the Palms

Coffee Bar

March 1
Janet Tweed
March 8
Open
March 15
Bruce and Diane Christopher
March 22
Open
March 29
Peggy Wengert



Our Church Prayers...

- ◆ Family of Joe Grubb
- ◆ Frank McKenzie and family
- ◆ Glenda Parker and her mission project in Africa
- ◆ Bonnie Jean Brown
- ◆ Ken Hibbert and family (Wes's brother)
- ◆ Kathy Hartley and family
- ◆ Ron Leinart and family
- ◆ Ronnie Gay and family
- ◆ Houvenagle family
- ◆ Evan Kile and family
- ◆ Joshua Stuckey and family
- ◆ Jim Richardson, David Richardson and John Bolinger (Dopkins)
- ◆ Tate Sherrer and family
- ◆ Kefauver family
- ◆ Karen McCue and family
- ◆ Anna Paquette and Rene
- ◆ Robert Mitchell and family
- ◆ Shay Farnsworth
- ◆ Amy Depew Wolz and family
- ◆ Kendall Wimmer (Charlie's brother)
- ◆ Mike and Sandy O'Neill and family
- ◆ Miranda Larson and family
- ◆ Nelson and Stratton family
- ◆ Unspoken Prayers

SUE'S March NEWS

MARCH! Can you believe it? February's weather was crazy. We had cold or hot and not a lot in between. Hopefully March will bring us an early spring. We have lots of things coming up over the next few weeks and we want nice weather!

We have many small groups that will meet in March. Some meet on a weekly basis and some meet monthly. Check the church calendar for meeting times and dates. Find a group that interests you and join that group. There is something for everyone.

Several of us are members of the Madisonville Kiwanis Club. We will have our annual Chili Supper/Chili Cookoff in our fellowship hall on Thursday March 19th from 4:30pm-6:30pm. We would love for you to join us for a fun evening. The Kiwanis Club funds many projects for youth and adult activities in Monroe County and really appreciates the church letting our club use our fellowship hall for this event.

A big event that is on the horizon is our annual community Easter Egg Hunt that will be coming up on April 4th at 11am. We have already reserved Houston Park and Volunteer Federal's Weiner Wagon for that morning. We have LOTS of children who participate, and it takes the effort of our entire church to have a successful event (which we always do)! Our United Methodist Men always man the Weiner Wagon and provide hot dogs. Our United Women in Faith provide cookies. Our youth and other volunteers stuff the eggs. The entire congregation provides candy for the eggs. Beginning on Sunday March 8th we will have a collection tote in the gathering area for plastic eggs and candy. Please make sure that your candy donations are individually wrapped and small enough to fit into a plastic egg. This is a really big event that gives us a chance to show the love of God to many children in the community. Hopefully we will have our new tee shirts by that time. It is going to take us the month of March to get ready! ~Sue

Are you newer to our church?

We want to extend a special welcome to those of you who may be new to our church. It is so exciting to see so many new faces in our pews and online over the last couple of months. We want to celebrate you, and also provide you with a few resources about our great church.

Our office hours during the week are from 8:30am-2:30pm Monday-Thursday. (*Drop by anytime we are open!*)

Check our Website at: firstumcmadisonville.com or 1Umcm.com There you will find links to our YouTube page, our weekly events, and more about our outreach as a church.

To learn more about church activities, programming, and our mission please feel free to get subscribed to our constant contact email messages. We send a variety of updates each week to keep everyone connected. Also, feel free to explore around our gathering area just outside the sanctuary. There are snacks and coffee available and you can pick up a copy of our monthly newsletter, brochures about our beliefs, and a welcome bag.

If you would like to sit down with Rev. Chris Black at the office or over coffee, then please feel free to call the church office, email, or even ask Chris for his Cell #. (*Most people in the church have his # to text/call and you should too!*)

We hope you feel at home here at 1st UMC and that you join us as we seek to grow in holiness but inwardly and outwardly as followers of Christ.

Our Presence:

- ◆ February Worship Average: 103
- ◆ Praising God in Worship every week.

Lenten Bible Study

Hard to Dance with the Devil on Your Back by Ray Buckley

In every culture and time, persons of faith, of all ages, have summoned trials and tribulations to find the endurance and strength to "dance". They have danced with the weight of the world upon their shoulders, sustained by God and others dancing near them. This study looks at the struggle in the lives of believers, while helping us to enter the continually crumbling world surrounding Jesus and the disciples in the days preceding Easter. The Bible Fellowship invites you to join their Lenten study that meets after Worship. We share lunch. Please let Marlee Tierce know if you wish to join or need a book.

Senior Fellowship Group



Thank you to everyone who met up at Pizzeria Venti on February 25th. Our next event meet up will be on March 25th at 11:30am at Peach Street Grill in Tellico Plains. Please join us!! Contact Regina Warfel or Sue Hamilton with any questions.

We support FUMC by...

Our Gifts:

- ◆ Giving our time to the many events at FUMC!
- ◆ Assisting in the preparation of the Community Café dinners.