

The Flame Newsletter

2026 February Issue

From the Pastor's Study...

February is upon us! This means that we are about to enter a unique time in the life of the church. On the evening of February 18th we will have a special evening worship service to recognize Ash Wednesday. This is traditionally a day set apart in the church year for penitence, spiritual reflection, and for new beginnings in the faith. Ash Wednesday also kicks off a 40-day season of the church that is called Lent. For some Christian traditions, this season has been used for new converts in the faith to prepare for their baptism (on Easter) and full membership in their local church. Most Christians who observe Lent use it as a time to work toward turning away from things that distract us from God and build spiritual practices and habits that can sustain us through the coming year. At its heart, Lent is a time for evangelism and for true conversion—a time for growing through repentance, fellowship, prayer, fasting, and being signs of God's kingdom in this world.

As your Pastor I want to invite you to give yourself the gift of having a Lenten journey of your own in 2026. Traditionally it is popular to give something up during this season, like chocolate or junk food...But what I want to invite you to do is set aside some time to reflect on a few things that you could give up so that you could have a deeper relationship with God. This might mean giving up daily social media to read scripture or to pray, or it could mean carving time away from work to serve someone else, or to spend more intentional time with family. In Sunday worship throughout the season of Lent we will be highlighting different ways that you can deepen your relationship with God through personal devotion.

This focus on our devotional life will be coupled with some deep engagement with scripture both in worship, at our Wednesday Pastor's Bible Studies, or in one of our other small groups.

However you decide to participate in Lent, I hope you will do so with intention and care this year. The deep joy and hope that we all wish to experience at Easter as we celebrate Christ's resurrection begins right now. As we enter this new season I hope that we can continue to grow together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Throughout this month and all of Lent I invite you to keep these verses from Lamentations before you: *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him' The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him."*

I pray that these words of scripture may guide us as we enter Lent, and eventually look toward Holy Week and Easter. Lots of Hope!

~Chris

Rev. Chris Black

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Sue Hamilton
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 **CONTACT US**

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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

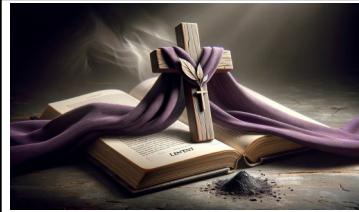
Wednesday Nights

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



Lent Begins this Month...but what is it really?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the Saturday before Easter Sunday).

Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word *lencten*, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

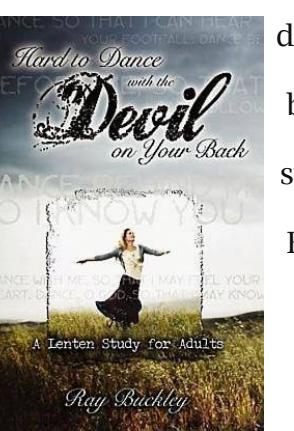
Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on their relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending themselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of themselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." This is why you will see the designation "Sunday in Lent" rather than "Sunday of Lent" in the naming of these Sundays. On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection. (This content comes from UMC.org)

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 beginning on Sunday, February 22nd after church. We share lunch. Please let Marlee Tierce know if you wish to join or need a book.



Are you interested in teaching a new adult class?

Throughout each season of 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 in February for Lent. Reba Dopkins & Regina Warfel have been great leaders for our Adult Sunday School class that meets every Sunday at 9:30 AM. 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.



Ash Wednesday Worship & Family Night Supper on February 18th



Ash Wednesday is a unique day in the church year where we gather to mark the beginning of the 40 day season of Lent. Our worship together will be a time to put aside past sins and failures through repentance, and to kick off a period of time to foster new beginnings in our relationship with Jesus Christ. In worship will focus on the dual themes of sin and death in the light of God's redeeming love in Christ.

While the use of ashes as a sign of mortality and penance may be new to some, it has a significant history in both Jewish and Christian worship. The imposition of ashes can be a powerful way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation. We hope you will join us for a special service of worship on Wednesday evening February 18th at 7:00 PM in our sanctuary.

Before the service, at 6:00 PM, plan to join us in the Fellowship Hall for a light soup and bread supper. Bread will be provided, so please plan on bringing along your favorite soup, salads, or desserts to share with the congregation. This will also be the supper for the youth and Ignite groups. Please mark your calendars to join us!

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First Steps Coordinator
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Senior Fellowship Event

We had our first Senior Fellowship on January 28th and it was well attended. We played bingo, won prizes and ate a delicious lunch. This will be a monthly event occurring on the fourth Wednesday. We would love to have you join us at Pizzeria Venti for our next fellowship on February 25th at 11:30 AM. Please contact Sue Hamilton or Regina Warfel with any questions.



We have a New Nursery Worker!

Our own Mary Gahan (Humphries) has joined us as a new staff person in our nursery. She and her husband Corey (along with their two children, Bear & Lily) officially joined our church in November 2025, but they have been with us for many months prior to joining. Mary comes to us with lots of practical experience with young children. She also has lots of enthusiasm around our children's ministry and has the desire to see these ministries grow. I know that many of you have met Mary and her family already, but please feel free to welcome her this month as our new staff person.

continue to host a weekly home style Bible study class on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM in our Fellowship Hall. Even if you haven't attended yet you are welcome to drop in anytime! Between January and May, Pastor Chris will offer an in-depth exploration of the gospel of Matthew and will utilize images and stories from his trip to Israel to illuminate the scripture in new ways. It doesn't matter if you're new to the Christian faith or have studied the Bible for years, you are welcome to attend. If you have any questions about the class please email Pastor Chris at cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org.



United Women in Faith (UWF) invites you to join us!

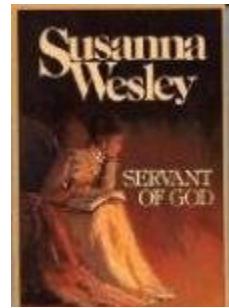
United Women in Faith is very strong and active here at First UMC of Madisonville. As we enter a new year the leadership of our UWF wants to invite all women of the church to be a part of our conversations and our outreach and missions initiatives. We meet on the third Sunday of every month in the fellowship hall, where we share a meal as we work, learn, and strategize together. Our next meeting will be on February 15th and we would love for you to join us.

~UWF



The Susanna Study

The Susanna Study (for widows) is beginning and will be meeting monthly. We will share a pot luck lunch. We will be discussing the book Susanna Wesley: Servant of God. Susanna was the mother of John and Charles Wesley. She had amazing faith. You can read the book along with us or come and join in on the discussion without it. Please let Marlee Tierce know if you are interested in joining this group that will support each other through the study with companionship, laughter, and food at 678-525-0348 or mtierce@aol.com.



Pastor's Weekly Bible Study Continues

Throughout February Rev. Chris Black will host a weekly home style Bible study class on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM in our Fellowship Hall. Even if you haven't attended yet you are welcome to drop in anytime! Between January and May, Pastor Chris will offer an in-depth exploration of the gospel of Matthew and will utilize images and stories from his trip to Israel to illuminate the scripture in new ways. It doesn't matter if you're new to the Christian faith or have studied the Bible for years, you are welcome to attend. If you have any questions about the class please email Pastor Chris at cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org.



SUE'S February NEWS

I hope everyone is ready to get back into our normal routine during the month of February. January weather played havoc with some of our regular activities and services. I don't know about you, but if I am not at Sunday morning worship and at church on Wednesday night for activities, my entire week is off schedule. Hopefully the weather will cooperate this month and we can get back into our rhythm.

I wear several "hats" at our church. Last February I wrote mostly about our music program since I am choir director and work very closely with Pastor Chris to make sure that we have service music that is appropriate for Sunday morning worship and other services throughout the year. This February I am writing about one of the other areas that I am really involved in—congregational care.

Our Church Prayers...

- ◆ Ron Leinart (surgery) and family
- ◆ Strickland family
- ◆ Kathy Hartley and family
- ◆ Ronnie Gay (Veronica Venable's father)
- ◆ Veronica Venable and family
- ◆ Houvenagle family
- ◆ Robert Parker Jr. (Glenda's Son)
- ◆ Evan Kile and family
- ◆ Jim Richardson and John Bolinger (Dopkins)
- ◆ Joshua Stuckey (Huff) and family
- ◆ Tate Sherrer and family
- ◆ Family of David Kefauver
- ◆ Karen McCue and family (Ruppel)
- ◆ Anna Paquette and Rene (Dopkins family)
- ◆ Gary and Sheena (Larson)
- ◆ Robert Mitchell and family
- ◆ Shay Farnsworth (Community Cafe helper)
- ◆ Sellers family
- ◆ Amy Depew Wolz and family
- ◆ Kaleigh Frye and family (Travis Frye's niece)
- ◆ Grady Givens and family
- ◆ Joe Grubb and family
- ◆ Kendall Wimmer (Charlie's brother)
- ◆ Michelle Pope (Barr)
- ◆ Mike and Sandy O'Neill and family
- ◆ Kat Ahart and Barbara Baiz
- ◆ Miranda Larson and family
- ◆ Nelson and Stratton family

I think we are all involved in congregational care and in outreach to our community and beyond. I have really thought about the challenge that Pastor Chris had in his article in the January 2026 newsletter—"caring for one another and our community". What a challenge to every one of us! We already do many things. We take care of each other within the church, and we reach out into our community, but there are so many other things that we can do. We are in the process of putting together a 1st UMC Care Team that will assist in coordinating many of our efforts. Getting our senior fellowship group up and running was one of the things we wanted to see happen in 2026 and we accomplished that today! Several people have wanted us to get a church tee shirt printed, and we are ready to take orders for the shirts. We are proudly going to have our "Caring for Our Church and Our Community" printed on the back of the shirt along with a scripture reference for the challenge. It is a big challenge, and I know that we are up for it because we are already doing it. We know that by working together we can do a lot more!

~Sue

We support our Church by...

Our Gifts:

- ◆ Leading a bible study or small group.
- ◆ Donating Altar Flowers in memory of, in honor of, in celebration of or just because!

Our Presence:

- ◆ January Average Attendance: 116
- ◆ Participating in our new events!

Coffee



February 1
Glenda Parker

February 8
Janet Tweed

February 15
Open

February 22
Open

Flowers

February 1
Communion Sunday

February 8
Open

February 15
Open

February 22
Open

