

The Flame Newsletter

September 2026
Issue



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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lumcm.com



Sundays **United Methodist Men**

*2nd Sundays

8:30 AM

Fellowship Hall

Adult Bible Study

9:30 AM

Library

Fellowship Time

10:00 AM

Gathering Area

Worship Service

10:30 AM

Sanctuary

Bible Fellowship

11:45 AM

Youth Room

United Women in Faith

*3rd Sundays

11:45 AM

Fellowship Hall

Joyful Ringers

*2nd & 4th Sundays

2:00 PM

Classroom #1

Wednesday Nights

Choir Rehearsal

6:00 PM

Sanctuary

United Methodist Youth

6:00 PM

Youth Room

Pastor's Bible Study

7:00 PM

Classroom #5

From the Pastor's Study... "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you, a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' -Matthew 25: 37-39

Every other month (or so) I try to read at least one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) as a devotional practice. In July and August, I made my way through the gospel of Matthew, which is one of my favorite books in the Bible. As I am writing this for you all, I have come back once again to Jesus' powerful vision from Matthew 25: 31-46 affectionately known as the "Parable of the Sheep and the Goats." ***(Feel free to look the passage up as you read this.)***

This deeply apocalyptic vision depicts the judgment of all the nations based on how they have responded to the proclamation of (and about) Jesus. It is evident in the text that the favored at the end of all things will be those who sought to care for, welcome, visit and provide for those who are hungry, thirsty, without clothing, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner. This text reminds us of a powerful truth about Christ, that just as you did it to "one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Our founders, the Wesley brothers, understood this deeply. "The earliest Methodists, including John and Charles Wesley, encouraged one another in the Christian faith. William Morgan, a friend of the Wesley's, began to visit prisoners as a part of his regular spiritual discipline. He soon invited the group to join him in visiting Castle prison in Oxford. John and Charles were so moved by this initial experience; they committed to visiting the prison weekly. The Wesley's continued to visit prisoners regularly throughout their ministries, which encompassed most of the United Kingdom and even stretched to the United States. John would later describe visiting prisoners as a work of mercy alongside visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and assisting strangers. According to John, works of mercy, with works of piety, such as prayer, fasting, and reading the Scriptures, are Means of Grace. These spiritual disciplines provide a means for God's grace to pervade the lives of Christians as they participate in the Holy Spirit's renewing work." {From the Wesley Study Bible}

How could you be a light for someone who may be forgotten, lonely, outcast or oppressed? Maybe you aren't called to visit the prisons as the Wesley's were, but who around you may be imprisoned in a different way? Could you be a comfort to someone today by listening to them, encouraging them, or even praying with/for them? Could you provide some basic necessities for someone in need and at the same time give them the gift of God's love too? I want to invite you to be personally creative during the month of September with how you serve those around you whom Christ called members of his own family. ***-Chris***

Our Stewardship Report

as of the printing of the newsletter on 9/8/26

August Total Giving:

\$19,067.44

August Budget:

\$28,615.00

Year-to-Date giving:

\$196,716.36

Year-to-Date budget:

\$200,305.00

Total Annual budget:

\$297,596.00

Because of your generosity we were able to...

- ♦ Offer First Steps as a disciple ministry to our children.
- ♦ Host a weekly Community Café dinner for anyone who needs a meal on Tuesday nights.
- ♦ Support the United Women in Faith's partnership with Nurture the Next via a diaper drive.
- ♦ Have our church open for worship each Sunday morning.
- ♦ Host a family night supper in our Fellowship Hall.
- ♦ Welcome a new staff person in Children and Family Ministries.

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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 a part of God's work here at FUMC.



## Our New Sign is coming...

Thank you to everyone who donated to the "Sign of Faith" project!! The tear down and install will be done throughout September and should be completed in early October. We are excited to see how we can reach our community and invite them to join in all our events and worship services.

# We Support our Church by...

## Our Presence:

In church average attendance for August-103

Worshipping together and celebrating God through music and scripture.

Guiding new Acolytes on how to light the candles for worship services.

## Our Gifts:

Keeping the church organized and ready for events and services.

Having communion prepared and ready for Communion Sunday.

Building gorgeous shelves for Mission Alley.

## Altar Flowers

September 6

Communion Sunday

September 13

Open

September 20

Mark and Debbe Higgins in honor of their 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary

September 27

Ed and Janet Ruppel in honor of Nathan's birthday



## Coffee Bar

September 6

Glenda Parker

September 13

Janet Tweed

September 20

Janet Tweed

September 27

Open



## Our Prayers...

- Quinn Strickland and family
- Gary Hamilton and family
- Gini Tallent and family
- Venable family
- Carolyn Peters and family
- Rich Bouchard and family (Browder)
- Barbara Penland and family
- Tara Stewart and family
- Cardarella family
- Rustie Stukey and Jim & Bob Richardson (Dopkins)
- Kay Ashley (Barger)
- Slouka family
- Taylor family and Kevin's sister Brenda Leslie
- Jill Reeves and family
- Brenda (Kathy Isbill's sister)
- Kayana Jones (Gary's sister) and Patty's mother
- Connie Caroine and Ken Hibbert
- Conley family
- Kat Ahart and Barbara Baiz
- Maiuri family
- Houvenagle family
- Tate, Merritt Sherrer, and family
- Kendall Wimmer and family
- Mike and Sandy O'Neill & family
- Nelson and Stratton family
- Mary Kefauver and family
- Unspoken Prayers

# Our United Methodist Youth



On Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> our youth group did a Bible verse scavenger hunt. The youth had to read several verses and find the key item from the verse in our church. Here are a couple of pics of them getting started. We would love you to join us and see these amazing kids and all that they do. We meet every Wednesday night at 6:00PM for dinner, lessons and fellowship.

## Exciting New Addition to Mission Alley!

At the end of August our own Chad Chester delivered two custom made wooden shelves that will go in Mission Alley as a permanent addition. The two that have been delivered this week are the first of six that he is planning to make for the church. They are absolutely beautiful and I hope that you all will find ways to thank Chad and this wonderful handmade gift to the church. One unique personal touch to these new shelves is that the darker wooden inlay crosses are made from walnut that came from the Chester Family Farm from many years ago.



## UWF September Mission

Fresh Start is a local nonprofit that provides housing, food and other essentials to people who are without housing or who are struggling, even though they go to work every day. They have requested meal starters to help them cook daily meals at their shelter, such as Hamburger Helper and Macaroni & cheese. They also need shampoo and shower wash for their women's shelter. Fresh Start is always in need of cash donations to help them pay the monthly mortgage and utility bills on their shelter property.

## TWU Dental Clinic

The Dental Clinic will be held at FUMC on September 16<sup>th</sup> from 10AM-2PM. Dental cleanings will be provided free by *appointment only*. Tennessee Wesleyan (TWU) Dental Hygiene program and their mobile clinic will provide services under the direction of Dr. Randa Colbert and local dentists led by Dr. James Dash, DDS. Participants will receive free dental cleaning and exams.

## District Day with the Bishop

**On Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>,** Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett will be with us in the Smoky Mountain District. She will spend the afternoon visiting some ministry sites and hosting leadership meetings with a few clergy groups. Then in the evening she will host a conversation with both the Laity and Clergy laity at Seymour UMC from 6-8 PM. All are welcome to join in this discussion.

## *A Word from Abby Blair*

In a study involving 650 churches, 99% of pastors ranked parents and families as the number-one influence in a child's spiritual formation and development. And I suspect none of you are surprised by that. We instinctively recognize—and Scripture repeatedly affirms—that parents and families have a profound and lasting impact on a child's spiritual life (Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 1:8-9).

However, what did shock—and honestly disturb—me from this same research is the disconnect between belief and practice. Although churches overwhelmingly agree that families are critical to a child's spiritual development, most churches fail to invest in, equip, or practically support parents in discipling their children at home. According to the study, only about one in five churches provide meaningful training, resources, or guidance to help parents lead their children spiritually. And this is exactly why our church must respond differently.

If we believe parents, guardians, and grandparents are the primary spiritual leaders in a child's life, then the church must become the strongest encourager, equipper, and prayer partner those families have. We want to be a church that comes alongside parents and grandparents—not occasionally, not accidentally, but intentionally and consistently.

What we do here at church each week matters deeply, but it matters most when it is reinforced, repeated, and remembered at home. A Sunday lesson can become a Monday conversation. A Wednesday night craft can become a Thursday reminder of God's goodness. A simple Biblical truth can become a seed that grows because it is watered in the living room, the car seat, the backyard, and the bedtime routine. And here is the good news: discipling our children does not have to be complicated. God has already given us a beautiful picture of what everyday discipleship looks like in Deuteronomy chapter 6:

*"5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be in your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates"* (ESV).

Since becoming a mom myself, I believe that verse seven of this passage has become my favorite in Scripture because it provides such a simple, freeing, and beautiful framework for home discipleship.

Basically? Talk about God all day long.

Are you already thinking of all the moments you *do not* do this? All the missed opportunities? Me, too. But this is not meant to intimidate you. God is not asking you to add something heavy to your already full life—He is simply inviting you to bring Him into the life you already have.

Talk about God when you are buckling car seats and driving home.

Talk about God when you are stirring dinner.

Talk about God when you are cleaning up messes.

Talk about God when you are walking to the mailbox.

Talk about God when you are tucking little ones into bed.

Discipleship is not an event. It is the steady, faithful weaving of God's truth into the ordinary moments of your family's day.

And as a church, we commit to walk with you in that high calling—practically, prayerfully, and persistently. We will equip you with tools, encourage you with Scripture, support you with community, and celebrate every small step of faith your children take.

For now, just keep talking about Him all day, every day. Let His name be the most familiar sound in your home. Let His goodness be the story your children grow up hearing. And as you do, trust that God is shaping your children's hearts in ways you cannot always see. He never fails to honor the faithful seeds you plant.

Grateful to be serving alongside you,

~Abby

*Coordinator of Children and Family Ministries*

## Articles from our congregation members

### Madisonville First Methodist UMC Church 200 years of fellowship 1826-2026 Part 7

August 6, 1945, the "Atomic Age" began, right here in East Tennessee. With the end of WWII rationing on food and gas the American love affair with the automobile resumed and with that, the paving of College Street and other roads in and around Madisonville. Downtown expansion saw First Methodist grow too. The Education Building was added in 1956 reflecting the "Baby Boom" and subsequent congregation growth. A new brick basement extension was added; the building was dedicated by Bishop Kerr in 1964. The ten-million-member Methodist Church and the 750,000-member Evangelical United Brethren, similar in doctrine and practice for 200 years, "united" in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church (UMC). Six pastors served in the 1950s, and Reverends Goodman, Eastridge and Phillips guided the church in the 1960s. The 1970s were peak years for Sunday School attendance under long serving pastors Eugene H. Lovell and Charles Burnette. In November 1975, a recent Tennessee Wesleyan graduate appeared in the church bulletin for the first time as Choir Director. In 2026, Sue Hamilton celebrates fifty-one years leading First UMC Madisonville's congregation in "making a joyful noise unto the Lord".

### A letter from Kris Hartley Browder

I've been asked to share a few thoughts about our family's financial commitment to our church and specifically our tithing practices. My husband and I are regular tithers to the church. As many do, our tithe is treated within our personal budget as a line item, just like the mortgage payment and utility bills. Auto pay is turned on, and our monthly tithe sent in without further thought. It comes ahead of our discretionary spending. In this way, we show the same commitment to keeping the lights on in our church home as we do in our private home. We understand that keeping our church family operational comes at sizable cost; we're happy to share in fulfillment of those costs of operation.

Now, is our monthly tithe a strict 10% of gross income? It isn't. Is it a strict 10% of net income? It is not. I will say my mother was so keen on the strict 10% rule that even in the days after her recent death I submitted her 10% tithe to this church on her behalf, knowing her scolding finger would be wagging from heaven above were I not to do so. Clearly, others hold the 10% rule firmer within their hearts than I do.

I also believe our monthly tithe check is only a portion of the commitment my husband and I make to our church family. We believe in gifts. My husband can sing, and so he participates in the choir. I can cook, and so I participate in the community kitchen. My husband can organize things, and so he serves on committees. I have specific gifts related to land and property and so have helped the church when those things require special problem-solving. When specific line-item financial requests are made, Don and I will regularly step up for added giving. And my purse is regularly emptied into the plate when offerings occur on Sundays. As 2nd Corinthians 9:7 says: *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* Between the set monthly check and the regular commitment of gifts, Don and I try to live by God's commandment to give cheerfully, and to the best of our abilities.

I believe God has set us here to be fruitful for each other. To love one another. And to love one another is to mercifully share in the cares of others and to do what you can to lift their burden. To the least of us we should be given the greatest gifts, in my way of thinking. Wouldn't the world be the best expression of God's love if everyone did everything in their power, using more or less than 10% of their stores, but doing everything they can, to shoulder the burdens of others? This is the way Don and I treat the gifts that we give to the church. In hope they help lift the burdens of others. Could we do more? Yes. Will it ever be enough? No. But to each of us comes the mandate to do what we cheerfully can. To do what we each have decided in our hearts that we can do. It may be time for me to reconsider what my heart believes I can do more of.

## *What's happening around FUMC?*



### **Senior Fellowship Lunch**

Join us Wednesday, September 23rd at Gondolier in Athens at 11:30AM. If you would like to carpool, meet in the FUMC upper parking lot by 10:30AM. See Regina Warfel with any questions.

### **Pastor's Bible Study-Mostly Methodical**

Rev. Chris Black will once again host a home style Bible Study beginning on **Wednesday, September 2nd at 7:00PM in classroom #5** which is a downstairs classroom across from the Community Room. This new class called "*Mostly Methodical*" will take a fun and inviting look at what it means to be Methodist today. We will rely heavily on scripture but will also delve into the history, theology, and experience of what it means to be a Methodist. If you have questions about the upcoming class, please email Pastor Chris at [cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org).

### **Acolyte Training**

Any adult, second grader and above please join us for Acolyte training on September 13th at 9:15AM in the Sanctuary. Contact Carolynn Greenwood at 423-253-5264 with any questions.

### **New Sermon Series continuing through September called the *Way of Love***

This month, we will journey through the First Letter of John in a four-week sermon series exploring what it means to live as Wesleyan followers of Jesus. Drawing on themes that were central to our United Methodist founder John Wesley's preaching, we will consider grace, holiness, Christian love, and the transforming power of God's presence in our lives. Together, we will discover that faith is more than what we believe it is a life of love that changes us and sends us into the world. We hope you will join us each Sunday in September as we seek to walk in the light, grow in holiness, and experience the perfect love of God.

### **Sue's September News**

September! We are in the home stretch for 2026. This has been a wonderful year so far at First United Methodist Church Madisonville and we still have four months to go. Today, as we were preparing the September newsletter, two things jumped out at me. We have two open Sundays for someone to provide goodies for the Sunday morning coffee bar and one open Sunday for Altar flowers. Flowers on the altar always catch my eye as I walk into the sanctuary. They just brighten up the room. I think they are a very important part of our worship area. Many people place flowers in memory or in honor of someone special or special milestone events. If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, please contact Kim Townson at (423) 836-5385. If you get on the schedule far enough ahead of time, we can let the congregation know who you are honoring or remembering when we do the newsletters and bulletins. Lots of folks put flowers on the altar just because they love flowers! Please sign up for the coffee bar on the sheet provided there. Sunday mornings between 10:00 and 10:30 have become an especially important part of our Sunday morning worship experience. More and more folks are arriving early for worship and visiting with others. You can grab your nametag, get a cup of coffee/juice, and enjoy coffee bar goodies. Right now, we have two open Sundays in September for coffee bar hosts. Janet Tweed always has drinks and paper goods in stock. The goodies do not have to be fancy. Two or three people might want to team up to take a Sunday. There is a sign-up sheet at the coffee bar and Janet will be happy to answer any questions. See you Sunday if not before. Come a little early and enjoy some fellowship time!

~Sue