

# The Flame Newsletter

2026 April Issue

## First United Methodist Church

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### From the Pastor's Study...

Normally, for the April edition of *The Flame Newsletter*, I would be writing to you during the closing days of the season of Lent about Holy Week activities and Easter Celebrations...but it's already Eastertide! The weather outside is changing as winter (finally) gives way to the warmth of spring, and at the same time, we as a church community have shifted our focus from Lenten reflection, to joy, excitement, and thanksgiving as we celebrate our Risen Savior and Lord at Easter.

For Christians, Easter is not just one day - it's a season of 50 days derived in its length from the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost (which means fiftieth) in Judaism. The Easter season begins at sunset on the eve of Easter and ends with Pentecost, the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church (see Acts 2). The Easter season (or Eastertide) is more than an extended celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. In the early church, Lent was a season when persons who wished to become Christians were learning how to live the way of Jesus and preparing for baptism on Easter Sunday. Christians have referred to this time of formation as "catechesis" or "echoing the way of Jesus." The original purpose of the Easter season was to continue the formation of new Christians in the faith. Christians have historically referred to this formation process as "mystagogy" or "leading people into the mysteries." (taken in part from [UMC.org](http://UMC.org))

Today, this extended season gives us time to rejoice and experience what we mean when we say Christ is risen and that we, as the church, are the body of the Risen Lord. It's a season for focusing on the core doctrines and mysteries of the faith and for preparing for the ministries the Spirit has empowered us to undertake in Jesus' name.

As we enter April together and continue through the season of Eastertide I want to invite you to find ways to celebrate this season by attending worship with us, participating in at least one missional activity, and carving some space every day to pray and study the scriptures. The "season" of Easter is a time to celebrate Christ's victory, but it is also a time when we can strive to embody him more and more.

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

Lots of hope! -Chris

- join us**
- Fellowship Time**  
Sundays  
10:00AM  
Gathering Area
  - Worship Service**  
Sundays  
10:30AM  
Sanctuary
  - Adult Sunday School**  
Sundays  
9:30AM  
Library
  - Bible Fellowship**  
Sundays  
11:45AM  
Youth Room
  - United Women in Faith**  
3rd Sundays  
11:45AM  
Fellowship Hall
  - United Methodist Men**  
2nd Sundays  
8:30AM  
Fellowship Hall
  - 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



### Senior Fellowship Group

Please join us on Wednesday, April 22nd at 11:30 AM for our next Senior Fellowship lunch at China Wok Buffet in

Athens. This will be our fourth time gathering and we have had a great time!! Bring a friend! If you would like to car pool or need a ride to the restaurant, meet at FUMC upper parking lot at 10:45 AM. Please contact Regina Warfel or Sue Hamilton with any questions.

### Intergenerational Mission Trip Interest Meeting

Rev. Chris Black invites all those who are interested in signing up for or supporting a summer mission experience in July to join

him for a coffee (or tea, soda or even water!) and conversation in our sanctuary at 9 AM on Sunday, April 26th. Our church has a long tradition of being in mission both in Monroe County and outside it! This gathering will be an informal time where you may chat with Chris to learn more about potential plans for a possible mission trip. If you want more information about this conversation feel free to email Chris at [cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org).



### United Women in Faith

On Sunday, April 26th after worship you are invited to our Annual Salad Extravaganza!

This is always a fun event where all proceeds given go to support the UWF scholarship fund, which provides scholarships for high school seniors and camp attendees. As a part of the meal we will be having a silent auction where folks will bid on some "creative" items, services, and fun experiences! If you are interested in providing some art, handy man services, carpentry, baked goods, or a class on how to make a favorite dish then please let Janet Ruppel know. **Please have your donations to FUMC by Sunday, April 19th.**

### Are you interested in joining our Church?

We are a faith community that is incredibly blessed because we have so many active members! However, we are also blessed because we have numerous folks who have been faithful as long-time visitors, and some who have been wonderful short-term guests. If you are someone who is interested in learning more about what it means to join the church as a full member, please feel free to reach out to Rev. Chris Black by email [cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org) or you can call or text him on his cell. We are so blessed to be such a vibrant and multifaceted community of Christian disciples!

### Name Tags are available in the Gathering Area

We have brand new name tags available for you to wear while you are with us on Sunday mornings. Putting on a name tag is a friendly and welcoming act that allows folks to know who you are to become more familiar with you. If you cannot find your name on the blue board in the gathering area then please share that with an usher.



### Easter Cantata Worship

On Sunday, April 19th our Chancel Choir will present Russell Mauldin's cantata "The Day He Wore My Crown" during our morning Worship service. The choir has been working on the music for several weeks. This is a beautiful Easter cantata. Please join us!

### Pastor's Weekly Bible Study Continues

Throughout April Rev. Chris Black will continue to host a weekly home style Bible study class at 7:00 PM in our community room downstairs. (Across from the 1st Steps Room.) 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/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 upcoming class please email Pastor Chris at [cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org).

### Calling all new members and friends to our Church!

If you are newer to our church community, have been attending worship in the last several months, or recently joined as full members in the last couple of years...you are invited to a very special lunch at **noon on May 3rd in the Fellowship Hall**. Some of our Care Team members are creating an opportunity to join in fellowship together, to break bread, and to learn more about our church. If you are interested in joining us for this meal please RSVP with Marlee Tierce at [mtierce@aol.com](mailto:mtierce@aol.com) or Nikki in the office. For those of you who have joined our church since 2024, look for an invitation to this fun event in the mail. We look forward to being in fellowship together!



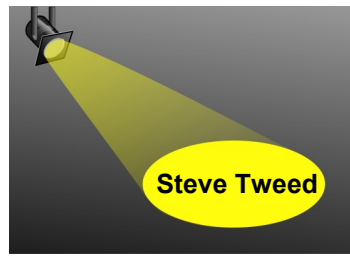
**Rev. Chris Black**  
 Pastor  
[cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org)

**Sue Hamilton**  
 Director of Congregational Care  
 & Choir Ministries  
[sue@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:sue@firstumcmadisonville.org)

**Nikki Rutzen**  
 Executive Assistant  
[nikki@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:nikki@firstumcmadisonville.org)  
**Erin Strickland**  
 First Steps Coordinator  
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**Mary Gahan Humphries**  
 Nursery Coordinator  
[maryfgahan@gmail.com](mailto:maryfgahan@gmail.com)

## Volunteer Spotlight

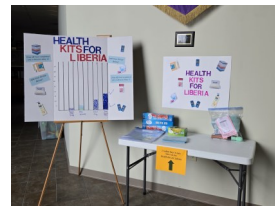


For many years Steve Tweed has been a faithful volunteer leader in our congregation in the areas of technology and production. Each week Steve manages our sound booth and systems, our video production/streaming, our lighting, and our slideshows. During worship he and his team of volunteers are "Mission Control" for those of us who are guiding worship.

Steve's tireless devotion to our church allows all of us to worship effortlessly and without distractions. His work has also allowed those outside our walls to experience worship via live stream. In addition to Steve's role in the sound booth, he has also served on many committees of the church including SPRC, and is a well respected teacher. I hope all of you will take some time this month to thank Steve for all his hard work to help make worship a wonderful experience for all of us.

### Hand's On Mission for the Smoky Mountain District

For decades now, The Holston Conference has made a significant impact on children in both Liberia and Zimbabwe through the Hands-on-Mission kits. Thanks to the generosity of Holston churches, millions of dollars' worth of school supplies, food buckets, and health kits have continued to flow to our mission partners in Liberia and Zimbabwe, serving as vital lifelines of support. In 2026 the Smoky Mountain District will be collecting Health Kits to further this effort. Please feel free to take an instruction sheet (located in the gathering area) home and purchase a health kit or two. You can bring your completed kits to Mission Alley until the first week of May.



### Altar Flowers

April 5  
Communion

April 12

Given by Frances and Larry Sellers in celebration of their 42nd Anniversary

April 19

Given by Pat Rapping in memory of Letha Rapping and her love of birds & flowers

April 26

Open

### Coffee Bar

April 5

Janet Ruppel

April 12

Janet Ruppel

April 19

Janet Tweed

April 26

Kris Browder



### Stewardship Report

as of the printing of the newsletter 4/8/26

**March Total Giving:** \$35,689.171

**March Budget:** \$28,615.00

**Year-to-date:** \$77,524.91

**Year-to-date budget:** \$74,399.00

**Total Budget:** \$297,596.00

#### Because of your generosity we were able to:

- ◆ We were able to open our doors for worship, Bible study, and fellowship for all ages.
- ◆ We were open for pastoral care and counseling for several members.
- ◆ We were able to feed many folks via the Community Cafe Ministry in March.
- ◆ We were able to help someone who is newly homeless receive essential items, resources, shelter, and a pathway forward.
- ◆ We were able to keep our blessing box fully stocked everyday.

*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.*

### Our Church Prayers...



- ◆ Chad Chester and family
- ◆ Melaine Bass and family (Tallent)
- ◆ Maiuri family
- ◆ Brenda Leslie and family (Taylor)
- ◆ Linda Giles (Penland)
- ◆ Family of Joe Grubb
- ◆ Frank McKenzie and family
- ◆ Bonnie Jean Brown
- ◆ Ken Hibbert and family (Wes's brother)
- ◆ Kathy Hartley and family
- ◆ Ronnie Gay and family
- ◆ Houvenagle family
- ◆ Evan Kile and family
- ◆ Joshua Stuckey and family
- ◆ Tate Sherrer and family
- ◆ Mary Kefauver and family
- ◆ 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 APRIL NEWS

Wow! April already! March went by in a blur. And where did the first week of April go? The days leading up to Easter and Easter Sunday were wonderful. Several people wore their new church tee shirts as we interacted with people in the community. We had a big crowd for the Maundy Thursday service and another large crowd for our Good Friday Way of the Cross Walk through downtown Madisonville. The Saturday community Easter Egg Hunt was a huge success with lots and lots of children in attendance and lots of eggs and candy for the hunt. I want to thank everyone who helped in putting together these special events together.

I am looking at our April calendar of services and events. I am so excited about all the services and events that we will take place. It is so exciting to see new folks almost every Sunday. Lots of things are going on every Wednesday night. Small groups are meeting throughout the week.

We are alive!

See you Sunday if not before.

~Sue



## Madisonville First United Methodist Church 200 years of fellowship 1826-2026

### Part 2: Growth and conflict

Hosting the 1836 Holston Conference Annual meeting was a high point of the antebellum (pre-Civil War) period for 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist of Madisonville. Circuit riders and camp meetings gave way to large frame buildings as old town Madisonville grew to a population of four hundred souls. The large frame 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist church built in 1850, following the destructive cyclone of June 1849, faced Tellico Street (no photo has been found). The Presbyterian and Baptist denominations also built large frame structures on the spot where they can be found in 2026. The buildings reflect the prosperity that gave rise to middle class Victorian values and changing attitudes among all denominations toward the Cherokee and African Americans.

The year 1844 saw the Methodism, Presbyterian and Baptist churches torn asunder by the moral and economic issue of the day, slavery. Our congregation joined the Methodist Episcopal Church South and was closely connected to Brunner Chapel on the recently founded (1849) Hiwassee College campus. Unusual for its time or any era, Hiwassee was founded to offer higher education to all those in this Appalachian region whether they could afford tuition or not. Attracting students from all over East Tennessee and the Upper South, Hiwassee's reputation grew as did its enrollment to over 200 students in 1860.

By 1861, as the storm clouds of war gathered, Monroe County was evenly split. Debates and discussions gave way to shouting and political division between supporters of the Union (usually farmers, country folks, and workers) and secessionists, typically wealthy merchants and townspeople. Two statewide votes, no to secession in Monroe County in February 1861 and another in June of 1861 which led Tennessee out of the Union. This division would truly become a civil war among families and congregations in these parts over the next four years.

### Our Presence:

- ◆ March Worship Average: 110
- ◆ Praising Jesus in Worship together.
- ◆ Celebrating Holy Week as a Church community.

### Our Gifts:

- ◆ Giving your time to the many events at FUMC!
- ◆ Donating to the requests we have for our various on-going missions.