



# The Flame Newsletter

2026 January Issue

## From the Pastor's Study...

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." -**Galatians 6:2**

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." -**John 13: 34-35**

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." -**Matthew 25:40**

Happy New Year!

We welcome a new year in ministry on the heels of a beautiful Advent season. It was such a joy to celebrate my fifth Advent/Christmas season as your pastor. Throughout November and December I did something I do every year. I prayed and reflected about how our church community should enter into the new year. 2026 is full of promise for us, and we are in such a wonderful place as a church community. As I contemplated how we should be postured as we move into 2026 the phrase that kept coming to mind was, "**caring for one another and our community.**"

One of the best ways to do this is to get involved in some capacity here at the church with one of our helping ministries. This could mean volunteering with our community cafe ministry, sending cards to folks, making calls to check on people, getting involved with United Women in Faith/United Methodist Men, supporting our blessing box ministry, or helping with a mission project in 2026. Jesus' ministry always emphasized reaching out and helping the vulnerable and caring for those around you. Our founder John Wesley encouraged his Methodist Christians to strive to do works of mercy like visiting prisons, caring for the sick, providing food/drink/shelter for those who need it, advocating for the vulnerable, and building bridges of understanding.

In this edition of the newsletter there are some ways listed that you can get involved in acts of care both within and beyond our church community. Please be on the lookout in the coming months for new ways that you can go about serving others this year. My hope and prayer for you this month is that you will take advantage of at least one new way to care for others and that you will be on the lookout for other ways in the coming months as we continue together in ministry in 2026.

It is a privilege to continue to serve as your Pastor in this new year, and I look forward to seeing you around the church or in worship.

Lots of Hope! ~**Chris**

**Rev. Chris Black**

*Pastor*

cblack@firstumcmadisonville.org

**Sue Hamilton**

*Director of Congregational Care & Choir Ministries*

sue@firstumcmadisonville.org



**Nikki Rutzen**

*Executive Assistant*  
nikki@firstumcmadisonville.org

**Erin Strickland**

*First Steps Coordinator*  
eroberts@firstumcmadisonville.org

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**Church:** 143 College Street S

**Mail:** PO Box 157

Madisonville, TN 37354

423-442-2471

[www.1umcm.com](http://www.1umcm.com)

**JOIN US**

### 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

## Church Leadership for 2026

### Church Council Board Members:

Chair: Peter Alliman

Charge Conference Secretary: Phyllis Harrell

Finance Committee Chairperson: Jeff McMillan

Lay Leader: Lee Anne Strickland

Lay Member to Annual Conference: Lindsay Liszeski

Lay Member to Annual Conference Alt.: Sue Hamilton

Nominations/Leadership Dev. Com.: Rev. Chris Black

Staff Parish Relations Committee: Don Browder

Treasurer: Regina Warfel

Trustees Chair: To Be Decided in the January meeting.

(*Jerry Barr was the Chairperson in 2024/2025.*)

United Methodist Men's Chair: Duane Dopkins

United Methodist Women's Chair: Jill Alliman

### Staff Parish Relations Committee:

Chairperson: Don Browder

Lay Leader: Lee Anne Strickland

Greyson Strickland

Mali Hubert

Steve Cornett

Dora Nelson

Ben Barger

Kim Townsend

Lindsay Liszeski (Lay Member to AC)

Jennifer McKenzie

### The Board of Trustees:

Janet Tweed

Rick Rapking

Jill Alliman

Jerry Barr

Ray Nelson

Glenda Parker

Regina Warfel

Chuck Isbill

Chal Thompson

meet our  
leadership team

### Nominations and Leadership Development Committee:

Chairperson: Rev. Chris Black

Lay Leader: Lee Anne Strickland

Patty Jones

John Sherrer

Peggy Wenghert

Lindsay Liszeski

Veronica Veneble

Marlee Tierce

Kathleen Cornett

Bruce Christopher

Diane Christopher

### Finance Committee Members:

Chairperson: Jeff McMillan

Pastor: Rev. Chris Black

Lay Member to Annual Conference: Lindsay Liszeski

Church Council Chair: Peter Alliman

SPRC Chair: Don Browder

Trustee Representative: Jerry Barr

Lay Leader: Lee Anne Strickland

Financial Secretary: Reba Dopkins

Treasurer: Regina Warfel

### We have a New Nursery Worker!

Our own Mary Humphries will be joining us as a new staff person in our nursery beginning in the month of January. She and her husband Corey (with their two children) officially joined our church in November but they have been with us for many months. Mary comes to us with lots of practical experience with young children. She also already has plenty 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, but please feel free to welcome her this month as our new staff person.

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

Our group of United Methodist Women also known as 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 come be a part of their conversations and missions initiatives. This group meets on the third Sunday of every month in the fellowship hall, where they share a meal as they work, learn, and strategize together. Their next meeting will be on January 18th and they would love for you to join them in 2026!

### Presbyterian and FUMC Choir Concert

On Sunday afternoon January 11th at 3 PM our chancel choir and Madisonville Presbyterian Church's choir will present the cantata *A Child is Born...All Is Well* in our sanctuary. An offering for the Community Café will be taken, and we are encouraging folks to bring items for the blessing boxes located at both churches. We hope you will come and bring your friends.



### Mark your calendars for breakfast for dinner!

On Wednesday, January 21st at 6 PM we will be having our monthly family night supper in the fellowship hall, and we want to invite you to bring your favorite breakfast dish! This could be biscuits with gravy, fruit salad, bacon, egg & sausage casserole, etc. Pastor Chris will be making pancakes to share. This dinner should be a wonderful time to be together during one of the coldest months of the year.



Join us for a new January series by Rev. Chris Black called: **"The Way of Wisdom"**

Life doesn't always come with easy answers—but Scripture offers wisdom for living faithfully. **The Way of Wisdom** is a five-week sermon series exploring the Bible's wisdom literature and what it means for everyday life. We will journey into Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, the Psalms, and even the gospels themselves as they speak honestly about suffering, meaning, daily choices, and prayer. These ancient voices help us name life as it really is—complex, fragile, and full of hope.

Each week, we will also discover how Jesus gathers this wisdom into his own life and teachings. We hope you will join us as we strive to discover a wiser way of following Christ in every season of life.

**January 11th—Job:** Wisdom When Life Falls Apart

**January 18th—Ecclesiastes:** Wisdom in a Fleeting World

**January 25th—Proverbs:** Wisdom for Everyday Living

**February 1st—Psalms:** Wisdom That Prays

**February 8th—Jesus:** Wisdom in Flesh and Blood



**Resurrection is this Month!**

**January 23rd-25th, 2026**  
**LeConte Center, Pigeon Forge, TN**

Resurrection is an awesome annual event of worship and spiritual growth for youth and youth mentors. Each year thousands of youth and volunteers come together in Pigeon Forge, TN, to celebrate the God of The Resurrection. Through inspirational words and music led by nationally-known speakers and musicians, young people encounter Christ in new and deeper ways. Resurrection is hosted by the youth ministry of the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church. Most of the youth and adults who attend Resurrection come from the geographical areas of the Holston Conference which includes northeast Georgia, eastern Tennessee, and southwestern Virginia. For many, Resurrection is an opportunity for conversion, decision, and revival. For others, it becomes a moment of realization that their faith needs to grow deeper and more serious. Let us be in prayer for each of our youth who will be on this formative retreat. For more information, contact **Vanessa Barr** at [vbruemmer@gmail.com](mailto:vbruemmer@gmail.com).

**Into the Bible with Rev. Chris Black starts January 7th at 7:00 PM**

Have you ever been intimidated by the Bible? Or felt that you didn't know where to start with reading or studying scripture? Have you ever wanted to go deeper and to learn more?

Beginning on Wednesday, January 7th at 7:00PM Rev. Chris Black is beginning a new Pastor's Bible Study Class that will help you approach the Bible with confidence. This class will meet in the fellowship hall and will be a homestyle Bible

Study for all ages! Pastor Chris will offer an in-depth exploration of the gospel of Matthew, and then he will move into other areas of the scriptures. In the midst of our study the group will discuss some fundamental ways to engage with the Bible, so that you may apply it to your life today. 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).

**New Weekly Prayer Ministry**

Beginning in December, Rev. Chris Black began sharing a community-wide email message called *"Weekly Prayers of the First UMC Family."* You should see this message in your inboxes on Mondays, and our hope is that this will act as a prayer for your week. Pastor Chris will write most of the prayers but will also invite members of the church to write as well. We will include the Lord's Prayer along with a list of requests that the congregation can pray over throughout the week. Please make sure you are subscribed to our Constant Contact emails to receive these and other messages.



**New Senior Fellowship Event at FUMC**

On Wednesday January 28th we are going to have a fun kickoff Senior Event in our fellowship hall. We will gather beginning at 11 AM for a time of fun and games and socializing and have a pizza and salad lunch at 12PM. We are asking everyone to contribute \$5 for lunch and to bring your favorite card games, board games, etc. We want to take some time to begin planning for future senior events. There will be a signup sheet at the coffee bar or you can call the office at 423 442-2471 to sign up so we will know how much food to prepare. For more details talk with **Sue or Regina Warfel**.

**SUE'S January NEWS**

Wasn't December 2025 an exciting month at First UMC Madisonville?! I can't believe that it was my 51st Christmas season here at First UMC Madisonville. We had a beautifully decorated church. We had a special service Deck the Halls and Taste the Season on November 30<sup>th</sup> to start our Advent season. Our choir performed the Christmas cantata on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Marlee Tierce led an Advent study group and Chris had a Wednesday night Bible study. We had an adult Sunday School class. We had Breakfast with Santa for our children and opened the big event up to all children in the community. We had wonderful sermons. We had a wonderful Christmas family night supper on the night that we did our annual children's/youth Christmas program. We had a beautiful Christmas Eve service with many church and community people (almost 180) in attendance. Our United Methodist Women in Faith provided Christmas gifts for several children and had a wonderful Christmas luncheon at Kahiti. We built a ramp for the Leinert family. Community Café' provided hot meals for the community. I am sure there are things that I have not put in this paragraph. December 2025 was a wonderful and special month at First UMC Madisonville.

January is always a time of new beginnings, and January 2026 is no exception. The 2026 calendar is wide open for exciting things that we want to do and plan to do at First UMC Madisonville. We already have many things penciled in. We have 2 adult study classes that will begin in January. Our choir continues to grow as does our United Methodist Men and Women in Faith groups. The choir will begin to work on the Easter cantata soon. We have our First Steps program for our children on Sunday mornings and a wonderful nursery for our littles. Our Ignite program for our children takes place on Wednesday evenings. Our youth group is preparing for Resurrection 2026. We are laying the groundwork to have regular activities for our senior group. We have opportunities for all ages to get involved! The year 2026 is going to be another very exciting time for our church and we hope everyone feels this excitement. Continue to look at your emails, our website, newsletters and bulletins for what will be happening. **WE ARE ALIVE!**

*~Sue*

**We support our Church by...**

**Our Gifts:**

- ◆ Making the Advent season beautiful by decorating the church.
- ◆ Giving your time to the Coffee Bar on Sundays serving our congregation and guests.

**Our Presence:**

- ◆ December Average Attendance: 109
- ◆ Christmas Eve Attendance: 179

**Coffee**

**January 4**  
Glenda Parker

**January 11**  
Open

**January 18**  
Open

**January 25**  
Kris Browder

**Flowers**

**January 4**  
Communion Sunday

**January 11**  
Open

**January 18**  
Open

**January 25**  
Open

