



# The Flame Newsletter

2026 May Issue

## 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)



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

As we enter May, I am reminded of all the transitions that often take place during this month, especially for many of our young people. We will have graduations, and the end of another school year for teachers and administrators. Some of our parents will be making the shift toward summer childcare, and many young people will be starting summer jobs. Also, many will be going on trips to rest or will look to spend time outside with family and friends. May can be a fun time as we shift from the unpredictable weather of spring to the promise of warmer days in the summer.

In the midst of all the good things that often happen with this new month, we have to acknowledge that May 2026 is different from many "Mays" in the past. There are many difficult social, financial, political, and cultural realities happening right now. The news seems to be filled with challenging things, and with reporting about the realities of "higher prices" in just about every avenue of life. *(As I am drafting this article I just saw a news alert that gas prices are rising yet again...)*

Any sustained increases like we are seeing means that the needs in our community will increase and become more complicated. This will also push many of the most vulnerable folks to have to make difficult choices about how to provide for themselves and their families.

So, what can we do as disciples of Jesus Christ during times like these? Well I am reminded of a passage from Matthew 10:

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

In this passage we see Jesus moving intentionally through the world even seemingly with his "head on a swivel" looking out for needs around him and how he can help meet them. He brings hope, healing, and a message of love and encouragement from God. As the needs inevitably increase around us we will need to move throughout our community with increased intention and awareness. I want to invite you to welcome May with all its fun transitions...but I would also invite you to be on the lookout for creative new ways that you can be in outreach/mission in Christ's name.

See you around the Church!-**Chris**

**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  
[eroberts@firstumcmadisonville.org](mailto:eroberts@firstumcmadisonville.org)

**Mary Gahan Humphries**  
Nursery Coordinator  
[maryfgahan@gmail.com](mailto:maryfgahan@gmail.com)



### Altar Flowers

May 3  
Communion

May 10

Given by Kris and Don Browder in memory of Kris' dad, Jerry Hartley

May 17

Open

May 24

Given by Margaret and Chad Chester

May 31

Open

### Coffee Bar



May 3

Janet Tweed

May 10

Brenda Alford

May 17

Tara Stewart

May 24

Glenda Parker

May 31

Peggy Wengert

### An Intergenerational Mission Trip is Coming!

This coming Summer our church is planning on taking a group to be in mission in Bishop, Virginia. A few years ago our youth group took a trip to Bishop, and did many meaningful construction/repair projects for this community and a few of our young adults have asked to return!

All youth, young adults, and even adults are welcome to sign up for this experience.

The dates are: June 25 (Thursday)-July 1st (Wednesday) (There will be plenty of flexibility for working folks to come up for a night or two or just over the weekend.)

This mission trip will be very similar to previous mission trip experiences that we have done. It will be construction oriented, with plenty of time in the elements, and we will be working whole days while we are on site. (Examples: simple carpentry, painting, construction, disaster clean up, rebuilding, etc.) Air mattresses will be required since we will be staying in the fellowship hall/main church building of Alexander Memorial UMC in Bishop.

If you are interested in going on this trip (or learning more about it) then please sign up on the orange sheet in the gathering area and we will get you the information that you will need to attend.

Also, if you are interested in independently supporting this trip with donations, planning, or logistics please let Rev. Chris Black know.

### 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!



Grill in Lenior City. 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.

### FUMC Diaper Drive for Community Baby Shower

The Monroe County Health Council and the Health Department are hosting their second annual Community Wide Baby Shower event on June 27th at Madisonville Intermediate School. (Our church hosted this event last year but they outgrew our facility this year!) Members of the planning team have asked if our church could (once again) take the lead on a diaper drive for those parents who will be present at the event. Next time you are shopping we want to invite you to purchase some extra diapers (Newborn/Size1) and drop them off in Mission Alley. This will be a great way for our church to show the love of God to some new young families!



### United Women in Faith Children's Food Project

The mission project for the United Women in Faith for May is to support children in our community who are experiencing food insecurity this summer. When children have summer breaks, they miss out on breakfast and lunches provided at school. We want to help provide food this summer by partnering with the Good Shepherd Center and Coordinated School Health to support their summer children's food programs. With our financial donations, they will purchase food from the Second Harvest Food Bank to distribute to children in need.

Monroe County experiences a Child Food Insecurity Rate of 19.6%, which means that the total number of Food Insecure Children in the county is approximately 1,940. If you'd like to help support this local mission project, please give donations to Tara Stewart, Regina Warfel, or Jill Alliman in May.



### Our Church has stepped up in Missions!

This year the Smoky Mountain Hands On Mission Project goal for our church was 100 health kits and as of 5/5 our community has collected **120 kits!**

As a church body we have responded in an incredible way to support the Holston Conference's ongoing mission to both Liberia and Zimbabwe. This mission is part of a broader Holston Conference effort to annually provide Health, Education, and Food resources to the people of Liberia and Zimbabwe. Let us celebrate together how we have been inspired to provide in such an abundant and beautiful way!

### Senior Fellowship Group

Please join us on Wednesday, May 27th at 11:30 AM for our next Senior Fellowship lunch at Casa Fiesta Mexican

## Volunteer Spotlight



For the last several years our own Don Browder has acted as our resident church historian and archivist. He has graciously volunteered to take on several projects including organizing 1000s of bulletins/newsletters from our church's past. He has also arranged/cataloged many church "artifacts" and has worked very hard to plot out our church's history. Don is also a faithful choir member, and has served on the SPRC committee as chairperson for the last two years. Outside the church, Don has spearheaded efforts to upgrade the city of Madisonville Cemetery and to catalog and renew lost burials of our ancestors. This is in addition to his work in the community with the Monroe County Archives, the Hiwassee College Collections, Madisonville Presbyterian Church, and the Greenback Historical Society. I hope you will find time to express your thanks to Donnie for all his hard work as archivist/historian for our church.

### Why I Give To The Church

I'm in my third year as church treasurer. Boy, have I learned a lot since taking this position. I always took for granite that the church ran itself and paid the bills. My eyes have been opened to how much it takes to keep lights on, heating and air, alarms and sprinklers along with all our wonderful missions. We do have wonderful missions, outreach and children's programs. Have you tried to feed a bunch of energetic, hungry kids and teens? I love helping Janet Tweed fix food on Wednesday night for our Ignite and youth. I not only enjoy the time with Janet fixing the food, but I really get excited to interact with our youth in the church. You never know what gems I may glean when I talk with them. Although I don't go on mission trips, I'm always ready to help provide things they may need. I've gotten to know some of our youth who help in the sound booth with Steve Tweed and me. Carter Kennedy, Briley Williford, Zander Liszeski and Tate Sherer are knowledgeable on how to run things in the sound booth, helping with the services and sharing online. These are all things that our church provides to enhance the worship service and to bring to those who can't attend. Behind the scenes, Sue Hamilton works hard to purchase our special music for cantatas and the music our choir sings on Sundays. Lois Green keeps on our communion supplies. Did you see the nice mulch that was recently put down? Our mowing team worked hard on this. Jeff McMillan trims our shrubs. This creates a good curb appeal and may entice others to come worship with us. Trustees have worked hard to upgrade all our lights to be more efficient, our new mission alley and the welcome mural in the coffee bar area. These are just a few of the reasons why I give to my church. I'm very proud to be a member here. Thank you Laurie McNeece for inviting me to come here to church and reinforcing where God wants me to be.

*Regina Warfel*

### Stewardship Report

*as of the printing of the newsletter 5/6/26*

**April Total Giving:** \$19,876.00

**April Budget:** \$22,892.00

**Year-to-date giving:** \$97,400.91

**Year-to-date budget:** \$97,291.00

**Total Annual budget:** \$297,596.00

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

- We were able to collect 120 health kits for the Smoky Mountain District that will benefit Liberia! This is a record for our congregation!
- We were able to help meet several emergency needs for the most vulnerable. Including helping someone to begin the process of finding housing.
- We were able to host an average of 12-14 children in our children's church 1st Steps ministry.
- We were able to host a variety of Holy Week worship and fellowship activities including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and our Annual Easter Egg Hunt!

*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...

- ◆ Family of Kathy Hartley
- ◆ Jill (Peters) Reeves and family
- ◆ Brenda (Kathy Isbill's sister)
- ◆ Family of Bill Higgins
- ◆ Kayana Jones (Gary Jones' sister)
- ◆ Connie Caroine (Sandy Hibbert's sister)
- ◆ Conley family
- ◆ Kat Ahart and Barbara Baiz
- ◆ Chad Chester and family
- ◆ Maiuri family
- ◆ Linda Giles (Penland)
- ◆ Bonnie Jean Brown
- ◆ Kathy Hartley and family
- ◆ Ronnie Gay and family (Venable)
- ◆ Houvenagle family
- ◆ Joshua Stuckey and family (Huff)
- ◆ 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 MAY NEWS

I can't believe that it is May!! This school year and the first 4 months of 2026 have flown by. I am looking at our May church calendar that is packed with exciting services and events. Two things make me think of the beginning of summer. The first thing is that our IGNITE activities will end on the 13th and will start back in August when the kids get back in school. We have had a great IGNITE program this school year and we want to thank all those who have been involved in leadership roles and other responsibilities. The second thing is that we will have our annual Wednesday night family cookout on May 20th at 6:00 PM. Chris and company will grill hot dogs and burgers, and we ask that you all bring the sides and desserts for the meal. We will eat in the fellowship hall. This is always a fun event for the entire church! Start thinking about what you want to fix for the meal and plan to attend.

I am already beginning to think about our 2026 choir Christmas cantata! I am already receiving samples from choral distributors, and I'll be ordering music soon. We would love to have you join the choir. We meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 PM in the sanctuary. Let me know if you have any questions.

Our goal is to keep all of you informed about all the happenings at First UMC Madisonville. Read your newsletter and watch for emails from the church. We send out prayer concerns on Monday, a blast on Thursday and I send out my email on Friday. If you are not getting emails or want to be added to our email lists, please let the office know. We want to keep you informed!

*~Sue*

## Madisonville First United Methodist Church 200 years of fellowship 1826-2026 Part 3: A House Divided, the Civil War and its aftermath

A rush of volunteerism in the early summer of 1861 led Monroe County Sheriff John Vaughn to raise Tennessee's first Confederate regiment who saw action in Virginia, in July 1861 at the battle of 1st Bull Run. Hundreds of other Monroe County young men travelled north to Kentucky to join Union forces. By late 1863, that early enthusiasm was gone. Madisonville was in chaos as armies marched between Knoxville and Chattanooga, and "Bushwackers", deserters and lawless outcasts preyed on the women, children and old men who were left to guard the few provisions and resources the soldiers of both sides didn't take.

At Hiwassee College, a lone brick building was left standing; the frame structures were all disassembled by Union General Sherman to build a pontoon bridge across the Little "T" River at Morganton. In December 1863, First Methodist Church on College Street, like the courthouse, suffered fire damage by occupying Federal troops. Was this rough treatment due to harboring a pro-secessionist Athens newspaper editor or the result of an accidental burning by freezing soldiers? The Presbyterian church was not damaged, some say it was the Masonic handshake passed between the Minister and Union General Jefferson C. Davis that spared that church building and the town of Madisonville. For the next decade, the First Methodist congregation shared the Presbyterian church house until funds for a new structure could be raised. The two congregations share that spirit of cooperation to this day whether it is singing the Christmas Cantata together or hosting the Community Café on Tuesday nights.

### Our Presence:

- ◆ April Worship Average: 122
- ◆ Praising Jesus in Worship together.
- ◆ Being part of one of FUMC's many missions.

### Our Gifts:

- ◆ Working together to keep the Church building in order to lead our mission.
- ◆ Celebrating new members to our church family and making them feel welcome!