



# The Steeple Bell— December 2022

Franklin First United Methodist Church

*"Under the Green Steeple"*



## Gifts of Devotion

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage' ...When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Luke 2

One of my favorite short stories is the 1905 "The Gift of the Magi" written by O. Henry. Do you know it? It tells the tale of a young and poor married couple who wanted to give a meaningful Christmas gift to their beloved spouse. Wife Della has beautiful long hair. Husband Jim wants to buy her some lovely combs to adorn her lush hair. Jim owns a treasured pocket watch but has no chain for it. Della wants to purchase him a watch chain.

Each purchased their chosen gifts, but at great personal sacrifice. Della cut off her hair and sold it to buy the chain for Jim. He sold his watch to obtain the combs for her hair. While their gifts were no longer immediately useful, they represented the depth of their love for one another. The story ends with the narrator comparing these sacrificial gifts of love with those of the Magi in the Bible.

The Magi encountered great personal sacrifice in bringing their gifts to the Christ child. They were not even of the Jewish religion yet had studied the stars watching for the fulfillment of the prophecy of the divine King. They travelled great distances in a caravan to visit the child. The gifts they brought were symbolic of the ministry of the Savior: gold represented the kingship of the Messiah...King of kings and Lord of lords, frankincense was an essence used in worship, and myrrh was an ointment used in burial rites, pre-shadowing his death. The coming of the Magi was prophesied in Isaiah 60:6. Their giving of gifts is the model of our Christmas gift-giving today.

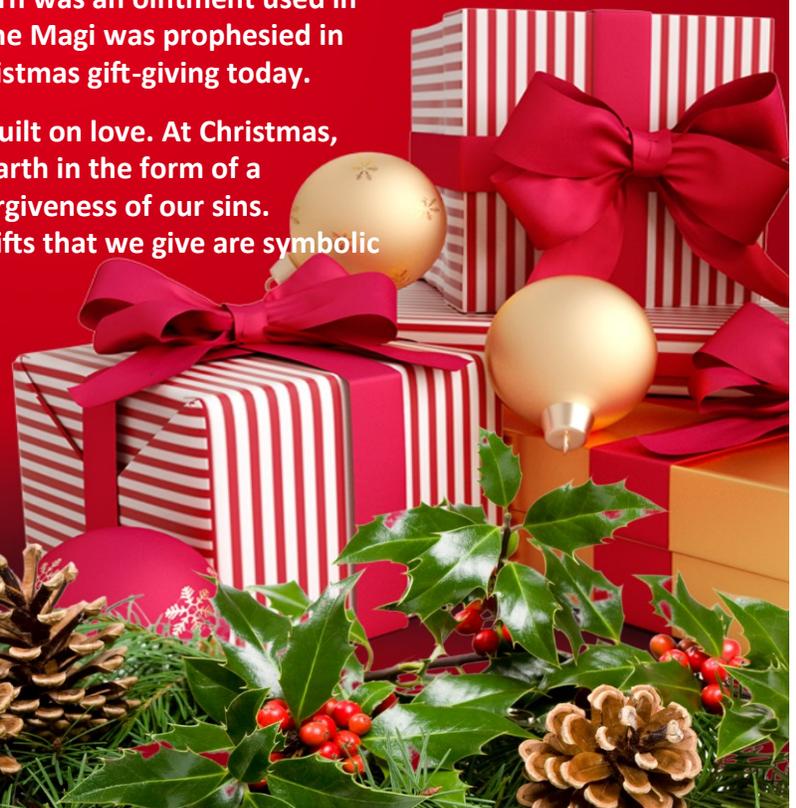
The focus of each of these gifts was on a relationship built on love. At Christmas, we remember God's gift of love as he sent his Son to earth in the form of a vulnerable baby destined to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. There is no greater gift that we will ever receive. The gifts that we give are symbolic of shared relationships as well.

Let's not make gift-giving one more frenzied activity of the holidays this year. It's not about quantity or cost.

It's about meaningful relationships.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Laura



## Your Generosity is a Blessing

The year 2022 is almost ready to draw to a close, and Franklin First has engaged in some amazing ministry this year:



- ◆ More than 3,000 weekend snack packs have been distributed to Anthony Wayne children in need.
- ◆ Our Free Medical Clinic provided care for more than 125 uninsured or underinsured people.
- ◆ The Angel Shop Boutique was blessed with more than 200 formal dress donations and welcomed about 25 young people who chose their special occasion attire free of charge.
- ◆ Our FFUMC kids collected \$145 in the noisy bucket for Heifer Project International to provide animals for needy families around the world.
- ◆ Monthly birthday contributions totaling more than \$300 have been given to the following charities: The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Abilities First, Big Brother/Big Sisters of Cincinnati, and Franklin High School Senior Fees.
- ◆ FFUMC is administrating the Christmas food and gift ministry for approximately 40 families this month. The Gymnastics Training Center of Ohio (GTCO) and the American Legion have donated to this important outreach project.
- ◆ We have made quarterly contributions to the Franklin Community Pantry of paper products, baby items, cleaning supplies, and personal care items.
- ◆ We are hosting and co-sponsoring an average of 200 community meals per month in partnership with Hope and Red Lion United Methodist Churches and St. Mary's Catholic Church.
- ◆ Our music program has inspired us with the Chancel Choir, Women's Ensemble, and the Aspenleiter Bell Choir gracing our worship with their songs.
- ◆ Emphasizing our social media presence and on-line worship has increased the visibility of our church in the greater Franklin area and beyond. As Joe Chamberlain shared with us in November, this has resulted in 91,000 people engaging with us online in the past year.

Your faithful stewardship has enabled this and more. Thank you for your year-end generosity that keeps our ministries vibrant! Pastor Laura

## Good News

### Good News for 2023

We have been notified that we will be receiving the following grants next year. These grant amounts are maximums, as we must submit receipts to receive reimbursement.

- \* An Ohio River Valley District "Community Connection" grant in the amount of \$3,000 to support the work of the Free Medical Clinic as well as provide some of the food expense for the community dinners served twice per week out of Franklin First.
- \* An Ohio River Valley District "Anthony Wayne One-on-One" grant in the amount of \$7,000 to support the Snack Pack program and other Anthony Wayne school initiatives.

Once again we are benefiting from being part of a "connectional church" where apportionment dollars are reallocated to the ministries of those churches who are doing good in the community. One eligibility requirement for these grants is to have paid and continue to pay 100% of our apportionments. Your continued faithful support of the church has resulted in some real financial blessings.

## Christmas Baskets & Gifts

We are once again distributing food baskets and children's gifts for families in need. You are welcome to take part and help with the effort. Please take note of the following dates:



- ◆ Saturday, December 17th, 9 am—Sorting food into boxes
- ◆ Monday, December 19th, 1 pm—6 p m—Distribution of Christmas Baskets

Also, we have a number of children in need of gifts for Christmas. If you are interested in helping purchase a gift for a child, please stop by the office to select a tag or see Tami Chamberlain on Sunday. Gifts are due back to the office by Wednesday, Dec. 14th.

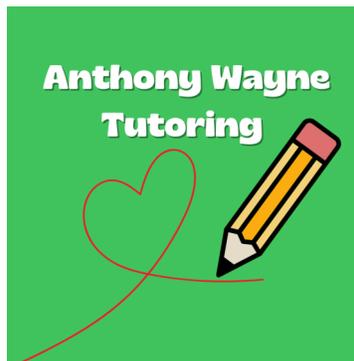
This is a perfect opportunity to help those in need feel God's love through the generosity of others.

## Anthony Wayne Tutoring

Beginning January 12 and lasting through the end of March, we are excited to re-engage in tutoring Anthony Wayne students after a long COVID break. This year, we will be working exclusively with first graders. Tutors need to be available on Thursdays from 3:15 – about 4:30 (or whenever the designated adult picks your child up).

School staff will have the lessons prepared for us. After school ends, the students will spend a short time in the gym with Pastor Laura to run off some steam. They then have a snack and work the rest of the time with their tutor.

Principal Jim Rhoades says that the literacy need for tutoring is significant in this class of first graders, and that tutors can expect to work with their student for two years of tutoring. What a blessing to help a child achieve! The kids love the program and non-participating children often ask us if they can join. Talk to Linda Smith or Karen Anderson with questions and to sign up. We need your help! The number of students we can take will depend on the number of tutors we have.



## Anthony Wayne Holiday Luncheon

On Thursday, December 15 at 10:30, Franklin First will be serving a staff holiday luncheon for Anthony Wayne personnel. We can use help with food, serving, and clean-up. The meal will be served on site at the school. Our educators and support staff work so hard equipping our children. Let's let them know how much we appreciate them. If you can help, talk to Pastor Laura, Linda Smith, or Karen Anderson ASAP.

## Christmas Offering

The Christmas offering will be donated to Warren County Community Services Head Start, Health & Wellness Center. For information about their services and programs, please visit: [https://www.wccsi.org/sitepages/PGM\\_EARLY\\_LEARNING.html](https://www.wccsi.org/sitepages/PGM_EARLY_LEARNING.html)



## Missions Team Update



### Paper Products for The Pantry

The Missions Team is continuing to

collect paper products for The Pantry in November and December. Bring your contributions to the church on Sunday or drop them by the office during the week.

### Personal Hygiene Product Collection for High School

The Franklin Junior and Senior High School is in need of personal hygiene products for their students. Products such as tampons, pads, deodorant, etc. for students not able to afford such products.



### College Student Christmas Gift Bags

We will be preparing Christmas gift bags for college students of the church.

If you would like one prepared for your college student please contact a member of the Missions



## Women's Circle Christmas Gathering—December 12th



Women's Circle will gather at the Bowman home (117 Miami St, Franklin) on Monday, December 12th at 6:30 pm for their Annual Christmas Gathering. If you missed the last meeting, please reach out to the office or Judy to confirm your attendance.

Also, Women's Circle members don't forget to turn in your gifts for a family in need to the office.

## Ushers & Greeters Needed for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Worship

Help us welcome all to Franklin First! We are in need of Greeters and Ushers for our Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Worship services. Spread some Christmas cheer by welcoming guests and regular attenders to Christmas Worship! If you can help, contact the office.

## Franklin First Giving

### Online Giving/We SHARE:

This is a great choice for when you are unable to join us for Worship to continue to support the church. You can either set-up a recurring payment or give each time you visit the site.

Connect by using this link:

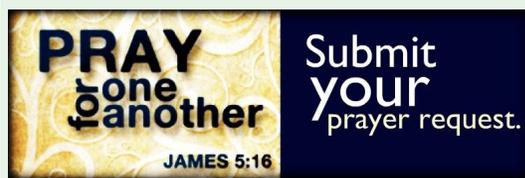
[franklinfirstumc1.weshareonline.org](http://franklinfirstumc1.weshareonline.org)



### Amazon Smile

When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate to Franklin First United Methodist Church. Support us every time you shop. Just follow the prompts from the link below:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/31-0599434>



### Submit a Prayer Request Anytime

Use the link below to submit a Prayer Request anytime. The link will send an email directly

to the Pastor and our prayer warriors will begin the prayers for your request.

[franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/862a54](http://franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/862a54)

## West Ohio Conference Special Session Called



**West Ohio Conference**  
The United Methodist Church

Bishop Gregory Palmer called a Special Session of the West Ohio Conference on Saturday November 19 to deal with church disaffiliations and changes in clergy status. As you likely know, The United Methodist Church has been struggling for multiple decades over differences in theology and LGBTQ participation in the life of the church. In May 2022, the Global Methodist Church launched, a new denomination with conservative theology on these issues. Faithful followers of Christ at all points on the theological continuum are trying to discern their response to these dividing issues.



Currently, our Book of Discipline has very conservative language addressing human sexuality. This language was upheld by vote at the last General Conference. Across the denomination, many Annual Conferences and individual congregations have taken issue with this outcome. As a result, our

current denomination is moving toward a split – but the final decisions about process will not be figured out until the General Conference scheduled for 2024. Leadership in our current denomination has stated that all churches - whether conservative, moderate, or progressive – will have a home in The United Methodist Church. Some of our congregations have chosen to disaffiliate and not wait to see what happens in 2024.

From Bishop Palmer: “No entity of The United Methodist Church, including the West Ohio Conference, is asking any clergy person or congregation to disaffiliate. However, we understand that a few are considering or have decided by their own choice to leave.” There is a discernment process facilitated by each District Superintendent that exiting churches must follow governed by paragraph 2553 in the Book of Discipline.

Because the buildings and assets of each congregation are held in a “Trust Clause” by the local Annual Conference, each church must follow the disaffiliation process. Currently, to exit the denomination with the church’s assets requires a 2/3 majority vote of the membership to disaffiliate, a payment of two years future apportionments commitment as set by the conference, and payment in full of the congregation’s pro-rata share of conference unfunded pension liability for clergy.

On November 19, West Ohio Conference delegates voted to disaffiliate 80 churches at their request, about 8% of the total churches in West Ohio. Across the United States portion of the denomination, 1314 churches have been approved for disaffiliation. The US has approximately 30,000 United Methodist churches total.

Friends,

**Let me share my thoughts. We have people at all ends of the theological continuum at Franklin First. I think it is important that we see what will happen at the 2024 General Conference, and until that time we continue to focus on mission and ministry within our community. We will not all agree on this human sexuality issue, but we can choose to think the best of people as they grapple with the faith issues underlying their understanding of these topics. We can show love and respect in our witness to our community and the world. Please see me if you have questions and/or comments.**

**Let us pray for a Spirit-filled outcome.**

**Pastor Laura**



## Welcome to New Members

On Sunday, November 13th, we were blessed to welcome new members to our congregation.

We received Rhonda Roberson, Gary & Barbara Ogden, & Lori Hemmelgarn as they made their commitment to grow in Christ as members of Franklin First. Please join us in welcoming them!

## Birthdays

December 04 Ken Smith  
 December 08 Ken Lang  
 December 10 Peggy Darragh-Jeromos  
 December 11 Mishelle Dicken  
 December 11 Greyson Roberts  
 December 12 Lisa Dillon  
 December 16 Caleb Humphries  
 December 17 Andrew Goodpaster  
 December 20 Judy Bowman  
 December 21 Mike Smith  
 December 23 Joseph Chamberlain  
 December 25 Janet Kirby  
 December 26 Gary Ogden  
 December 26 Amber Ramsey  
 December 27 Gracelyne Lucas  
 December 29 Karen Anderson  
 December 29 Ella Banks  
 December 31 Cody Chilcutt

## Anniversaries

December 16 Caleb & Marisa Humphries  
 December 27 Jan & Julie Abell  
 December 28 Judy & Robert Bowman



## Warren County Food Distribution

### Upcoming Dates:

December 10th, 2022 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM

4203 Pennyroyal Rd  
 Franklin, OH 45005

Pennyroyal Elementary School



Please bring photo ID and a piece of mail.

**Supply is limited**  
**First come, First Served**



Volunteers:  
 Please register at  
<http://warren.sharedharvest.volunteerhub.com/>



## Altar Poinsettias

Help us adorn the Christmas altar and purchase a poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one.

Place your order by **Dec. 5th** using this link: [https://](https://franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/362a616149)

[franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/362a616149](https://franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/362a616149) or call or stop by the office.



## Sunday Worship

If you are interested in helping with Sunday Worship as an usher or greeter, please contact the [office](#).

## Fall Marketplace

Wow! What a success! The Fall Marketplace was amazing! Women's Circle raised a record-breaking \$4,624 for all of the hard work that went into the event. So many people contributed to it's success!! Thank you to everyone who made noodles, helped organize, set-up, donate, and so much more. We are thankful of everyone who participated as well as all the friends who stopped by for lunch or to shop. A great day!!



*Join Us At*  
**FRANKLIN FIRST**

December 4th	Blessing of the Nativities
December 11th	Children's Christmas Program
December 18th	Christmas Music Celebration
December 24th	Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service
December 25th	10:45 am Worship
January 1st	10:45 am Worship

**Faith  
Seekers  
Sundays  
9:30 am**

Join our Faith Seekers group on Sunday mornings. They will be starting Revelations soon.

All are invited!

## Historical Articles to Highlight 225th Anniversary of FUMC during 2023



The Rev. John Kobler (1768-1843) was the first Methodist Episcopal circuit rider to spread the Gospel to those living in the valleys of the Great & Little Miami Rivers of the western Ohio territory during 1798. The Frank-

lin First United Methodist Church (FFUMC) congregation considers its start to have occurred on Monday August 14, 1798 when the missionary Rev. Kobler held the first religious service by an ordained minister in the frontier settlement of Franklin with his preaching to six or eight families in the log cabin of Captain Robert Ross. Hence, 2023 will mark the passage of 225 years of Methodism in our community.

In order to commemorate this milestone for FFUMC, a special series of nine monthly historian articles will commence with the January 2023 issue of The Steeple Bell where each segment will cover 25 years of history and events within the Franklin Methodist community. A celebration of the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FFUMC is being planned for the September 2023 Homecoming service. Congregation members and friends are invited to provide information, memories, or photos related to the history of the Franklin Methodist church for possible inclusion into these historian articles or for the September celebration.

If you wish to explore further what is being compiled on FFUMC history and past ministers and members, there are three highly recommended relatively recent resources to consult:

(1) "Franklin FUMC (1798 – 2013) A Brief History in Celebration of Our 215th Anniversary" compiled and

written by Robert C. Bowman, Jr. (FUMC Franklin OH 2013).

(2) "125-Year-Old Memorial Stained-Glass Windows" compiled and written by Bob Bowman., Tami G. Chamberlain, & Peggy Darragh-Jeromos (FUMC, Franklin OH, 2018).

(3) "Remembrances Under the Rainbow: A Compilation of Historian Articles Published in The Steeple Bell Monthly Newsletter between 2012 - 2020". By Robert C. Bowman, Jr. (FUMC, Franklin OH 2020).

Hardcopies of these documents are available from the FFUMC office while electronic PDF-files can be obtained by sending an email directly to Bob Bowman ([rcbjr1967@gmail.com](mailto:rcbjr1967@gmail.com)).



The first installment will cover the years 1798 to 1823.

*(One of a regular series of reports on the people and events associated with the history and ministry of the Franklin First United Method Church. Robert Bowman, Historian)*



## 2022 in Review

During November, we focused on stewardship for 2023 and celebrated the ministries of Franklin First during 2022. We gave to God our time, talents, resources, and service and have much to be thankful. Take a look at Franklin First's Year in Review.



### EDUCATION/ DISCIPLESHIP

*"Therefore, go and make disciples..."*

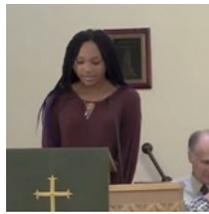
Matthew 28:19

Education ministries provide learning opportunities that foster growth and spiritual development that enrich our relationship with God and the world around us. We offer learning opportunities for children on Sunday mornings. After the Children's Message during the service, children have the opportunity to go to Praise Town on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for Children's Church with our mascot Frankie!



This summer we offered a "Food Truck Party" for Vacation Bible School for the children. Nursery is also provided during the morning worship service.

The fourth graders were presented bibles during worship service this year. In October we had Children's Sabbath where our youth and children helped to lead the morning worship service.



Our Adult Sunday School class meets each Sunday morning at 9:30 in the Dining Room. A new member class is being offered in November for those who are interested joining in our community of faith. Pastor Laura is offering a Bible study on "What Happens When We Die." Next year she will be doing a class entitled "Deep Dive Discipleship".



Our pastor and leaders of our church participate in learning/educational opportunities throughout the year through webinars, seminars and the West Ohio Annual Conference workshops to advance and deepen the scope of our ministry.

The church works to create a welcoming and inviting place for all. Our church provides meeting space for

Narcotics Anonymous. This group provides support and education for individuals going through personal and family health issues. We provide meeting space for 4-H groups. 4-H is a great organization that teaches life skills to young children. The church is also used for tutoring service with the Adult New Readers program. The Franklin Chamber of Commerce has also held several workshops at the church this past year.



### MISSIONS

*"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have..."*

Hebrews 13:16

Our outreach programs provide the compassion and ministry of our congregation to those in need. The congregation provides for others in many ways including support of Franklin Area Food Pantry (serving Carlisle, Franklin and Springboro) collecting items quarterly throughout the year. We have collected cleaning supplies, paper products, baby items, and food. Our church coordinates the Christmas/Toy Food Baskets with help from the Franklin City Schools, Franklin City and several different churches in the area.

We provide snack packs for over 170 students at Anthony Wayne Elementary School each week for children to have a healthy snack over the weekend. This program is supported through a grant from the conference and from donations from the congregation. The tutoring program will start back up in 2023 at Anthony Wayne Elementary. We donate school supplies to the schools as well as personal hygiene products for girls at the high school. The church also gave Teacher Appreciation gifts to Franklin City Elementary School teachers.



The Free Medical Clinic is on Tuesday evenings. We have volunteers from our church as well as friends

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from the community volunteering each week. Pastor Laura offers prayers to those in need. The clinic is also supported through a grant from the conference. The church continues to be a resource for providing dinners to the community with partnerships with Hope United Methodist, Red Lion United Methodist and St. Mary's Catholic.

We give a \$15 donation in honor of congregation members' birthdays. Individuals can decide to give to any of the following organizations by returning their postcard: UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), Abilities First, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, School lunch fees for Franklin High School Seniors. This has been a well received mission project.

We started a new mission project this year, the Angel Shop. We accepted donations of new or gently used and clean homecoming and prom dresses and men's attire. The shop received over 200 dresses in addition to shoes, purses and accessories. We had several young ladies from Franklin, Carlisle, Springboro and Dayton receive dresses as well as a young man!



The children collect a "Noisy Bucket" and monies are donated to Heifer International which allows families to receive livestock and seeds to help them with their nutritional needs. We continue to provide monetary support at various times through the year to UMCOR for various projects here in the United States and abroad during natural disasters. We support our Connectional Ministry through our apportionments to the West Ohio Conference and the Ohio River Valley District.

## PASTORAL CARE/ FELLOWSHIP

*"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"*

1 Peter 4:10

Births, dedications, baptisms, weddings, illnesses, family conflicts, personal struggles and funerals are times when we, the church, respond to people's needs. It is also during these times that our pastor provides coun-

seling and guidance. Pastor Laura along with other members of our congregation visit our shut-ins in their home. Our Care Team sends cards to the congregation to celebrate milestones and in time of grief and illness.

Pastor Laura visits those who are hospitalized and provides care and prayer to give comfort. The church provides a place to gather, and a dinner is coordinated by our Women's Circle for a family after the loss of a loved one following a funeral. Each fall we remember those we have lost through the year with the lighting of a candle, ringing of a bell and a slide show during All Saints Sunday. Those with prayer concerns can contact the office to be put on the prayer chain.



We offer fellowship time after church one Sunday each month and we celebrated Homecoming Sunday in September with a dinner after the worship service.

Our Women's Circle group meets monthly at church and organizes several events throughout the year. The annual Easter Egg Hunt was held in the church due to weather conditions this year. The group sold chocolate and peanut butter fudge this year to raise funds. This fall they were very busy making homemade noodles as they were able to hold their annual Fall Marketplace (formerly known as the Fall Bazaar)! They served lunch with homemade chicken-n-noodles, bean soup, sloppy joes, salads and pies. Several vendors were also on hand as well as baked goods for sale and of course homemade noodles were sold. The group also adopts a family each year at Christmas.



We participated in several community events: 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade (Wettest Parade in the Country), National Night Out – where we raffled off two back packs with school supplies, and Trunk or Treat downtown Franklin.

We enjoy getting together and building relationships and friendships. We stay connected through weekly announcements, our monthly newsletter the Steeple Bell, and through increased use of social media such as our Facebook page "Franklin First United Methodist Church." You can also stay connected through our website at franklinfirstumc.org.



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## WORSHIP

*“Remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy”*

**Exodus 20:8**



Our congregation meets each Sunday morning at 10:40 a.m. to praise God in every life

through scriptures, prayers, the message, song, and giving. We begin the service with personal prayers and concerns and at 10:45 we begin live streaming the service on our Facebook page. We offer Children’s Church following the Children’s Mes-

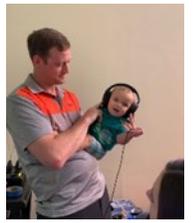


sage each week. As disciples of Christ, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper through communion on the first Sunday of each month. The Lord’s Supper is open to everyone who chooses to participate.



During the year we celebrate special days including Ash Wednesday, Holy Week (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday), Easter, All Saints Day, World Communion Sunday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve. This fall we had a blessing of the backpacks for children and educators returning to school and we honored our grandparents on Grandparents’ Day with an ice-cream social and cook-out. This summer we enjoyed another outside service at

Crain’s Run Park in Miamisburg, followed by a cook-out.



There are many opportunities to participate in our service by being a greeter, usher, worship leader and being a part of the media team (live streaming service). You can join our chancel choir, music ensembles, bell choir, and playing an instrument. Services are further enhanced by the use of bulletins, hymnals, banners, flowers, candles, paraments and communion elements. We also offer a nursery during worship. Children are welcomed in the service and the sanctuary/church is handicapped accessible through the elevator.

Our music program partners with Otterbein Lebanon UMC choir throughout the year on many different occasions with Monica Rhude serving as our Music Director at Franklin First and Otterbein Home.



**Welcome to Rylee Ann**  
Born November 8, 2022 at 8:02am weighing 7lb7oz. Congratulations to parents Caleb & Marisa Humphries, sister Bella, grandparent, Amber Ramsey, and great-grandparents Laura & Lee Saunders.



**Give Franklin First a Review!**  
Take a moment to tell others what you like about Franklin First. Use the link below to give us a review on Google. The more positive reviews and interaction, the better placement we receive when individuals search for a church in Franklin.  
<https://q.page/r/CebjXokui9PHEB0/review>

We know the stories in the Bible, attend Advent and Christmas Eve worship each year, listen to tons of Christmas carols, and have seen just about every Christmas movie and special. We United Methodists know a lot about Christmas, but like most things there is always more to learn. Here are a few lesser-known tidbits.



### JOHN WESLEY NEVER PUBLISHED A CHRISTMAS SERMON

If you search for Christmas sermons by John Wesley, you won't find any. He never published one.

One reason may be that when the Puritans rose to power in mid-1600s England, Christmas fell out of favor. Authorities passed laws attempting to prohibit the celebration of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, some towns even sent criers to call out, "No Christmas! No Christmas!"

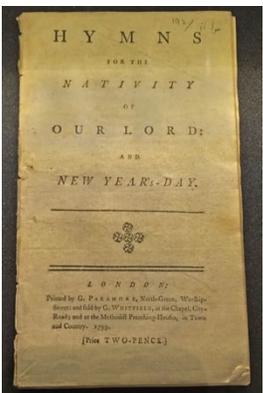
It wasn't until the mid-1800s, that Christmas had a resurgence in England. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were of German background, and popularized the Christmas tree tradition in England. The popularity of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* published in 1843 may also account for the holiday's resurgence.

John Wesley's Methodist movement began in England during those 200 years of Christmas suppression. As a result, there is no evidence they celebrated Christmas other than with a special worship service.

### CHARLES WESLEY WROTE A POPULAR CHRISTMAS SONG

John Wesley never published a Christmas sermon, but his hymn-writing brother Charles wrote songs for the season from the very beginning. The first Methodist hymnbook, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), includes Charles' "Hymn

for Christmas-Day." The song begins, "Hark how all the welkin rings, 'Glory to the King of kings.'" Another Methodist preacher would change the opening line to words we know much better, "Hark! the Herald Angel



### Sings."

In a later publication, *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*, Wesley published 18 more hymns for the season. We still sing one of the songs in that collection, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus." The words in our United Methodist Hymnal today are almost exactly as Charles wrote them in 1745.

One wonders if Charles was the bigger fan of Christmas because his birthday is exactly a week before, December 18, 1707.

### NATIVITIES ARE FILLED WITH SYMBOLISM

What our nativities lack in historical accuracy is often due to the inclusion of powerful symbolism. For example, the baby Jesus figurine sometimes has outstretched arms, despite the angels' words to the shepherds that they would find him "swaddled and lying in a manger." The open arms are a sign of welcome, an invitation to receive the salvation we know in Christ. Other elements like animals, trees, and wells also have symbolic significance. Read "Nativity scenes: More than meets the eye" to learn more about your nativity set.



Many United Methodists also participate in Las Posadas, a symbolic representation of the Nativity journey from the tradition of Latin American Christians. Each of the nine nights before Christmas, "commemorating the nine months Mary carried the infant Jesus in her womb and emphasizing his coming again," explains The United Methodist Book of Worship, the people travel together to a home where a host family is prepared for a celebration. When the procession arrives, they knock on the door and follow a liturgy that uses Scripture to remind everyone of the one who offered Mary and Joseph a place to stay the night Jesus was born, and our need to welcome Jesus into our lives. After the liturgy there is a piñata and food.

### JOSEPH AND MARY'S JOURNEY

It may surprise even those who have been Christians for years, to learn how little we know about the man who raised Jesus. Joseph is only



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mentioned in 16 verses in the Bible and none of his words are recorded. The Bible tells us only two things definitively. His dad's name was Jacob, and he worked as a craftsman, probably a woodworker.

[Everything else we know about Joseph](#), we infer from how he responds to the news that an angel visited Mary, his betrothed, and told her she will give birth to Jesus. This could not have been easy news to hear, but even in this moment, Joseph acts nobly and faithfully. He does all he can to protect his new family and follow God wherever he leads.

One of the roads Joseph and Mary are called to travel is one from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. The approximate 100-mile journey on foot, with possible help from a donkey, took an estimated nine or ten days. In a [Get Your Spirit in Shape podcast episode](#), the Rev. Adam Hamilton shares the response he received from a mom who was 9 months pregnant, "There's no way Joseph was getting me on a donkey, if that was me."

### RED KETTLES HAVE UNITED METHODIST LINKS

When Christmas shopping, many encounter the [red kettles and ringing bells of The Salvation Army](#). Not all will know that the Salvation Army has Methodist roots.



William Booth, a Methodist minister, started The Salvation Army in London in 1865. His passion for reaching the poor, homeless, and hungry with the gospel of Jesus Christ led him to open a mission to meet people's physical needs. That mission continues to grow today.

Goodwill Industries is a similar organization with United Methodist ties. Methodist minister the Rev. Edgar J. Helms founded the organization in Boston in 1902. He hired and trained people in need of a job, to repair and resell donations he collected.

\*[Joe Iovino](#) works for UMC.org at [United Methodist Communications](#). Contact him by [email](#).

Adapted from: <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/five-things-you-may-not-know-about-christmas>

## Blessing for the Christmas Tree



In the United States, there seems to be a sharp division between secular Christmas traditions (the tree, the stockings, Santa) and Christian traditions (the manger scene, attending church, singing Christmas carols). As the tree is the focal point in many homes during Christmas, blessing the tree and setting up a manger scene under the tree (as opposed to gifts) can highlight the Christian significance of the day, something culture has lost sight of.

### Designed for All Ages

#### How To

Before the tree is decorated, gather everyone together and read the following blessing:

*God who created the birds in the air, the fish in the sea, the stars in the sky, and the trees in the ground, bless this tree as we decorate it and make it joyful symbol in our home.*

*May its branches remind us of the shade and shelter you provide for us and for many creatures.*

*May its trunk remind us of your strength.*

*May its lights bring us peace.*

*May we remember your gift to us this season, the gift of the baby Jesus.*

*Amen.*

#### Variations

- Print the blessing on an ornament and say it as the ornament is hung on the tree.
- Write a new blessing each year and collect them from year to year.
- Cut down your own tree and say this blessing before the tree is cut down and brought home.
- ◆ As always, adapt the language of the blessing to the age of your children or your own traditions and culture.

Taken from: <https://buildfaith.org/a-christmas-tree-blessing/>

# Franklin First United Methodist Church

## 2023 Lay Leadership Ministry

*Making disciples... Building Christian community... Transforming lives!*



### Church Council:

Church Council Chair	Mike Smith
Church Council Secretary	Amber Ramsey
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference	Charlotte Summer
Lay Member of Annual Conference Alternate	Kim Chewning
Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Membership Secretary	Lee Ann Lee
Communications Coordinators	Carol & Mike Runyan
Church Historian	Robert Bowman
Pastor	Laura Saunders

### Ministry Team Representatives:

Staff-Parish	Julie Abell
Finance	Paul Anderson
Endowment	Ken Smith
Trustee Chairs	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Worship	Monica Rhude
Technology	Joe Chamberlain
Committee on Lay Leadership	Laura Saunders
Christian Education	Charlotte Summer, Chris Womack
Missions & Outreach	Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Care Team	Lee Saunders
Hospitality & Events	
Welcoming Ministry	Dorothy Rayburg
Scouting Coordinator	
Member At Large	Amber Ramsey

### Staff-Parish Relations Committee: Chair: Julie Abell

(Lay Leader: Mike Smith)

Terms expiring 2023:	Julie Abell, Judy Parker, Sue Fullen
Terms expiring 2024:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson, Patti Noland
Terms expiring 2025:	Cheryl Cyphers, Mishelle Dicken

### Trustees: Tri-Chairs: John Lass, Jim Martin, Mike Runyan

Terms expiring 2023:	Joe Chamberlain, Brian Graves
Terms expiring 2024:	Jan Abell, Jim Martin, Trisha Dicken
Terms expiring 2025:	Cody Chilcutt, Mike Runyan, Connie Bolinger

### Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations):

**Chair: Pastor Laura Saunders**

**Mike Smith, Lay Leader**

Terms expiring 2023:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson
Terms expiring 2024:	Ken Smith, Shirley Berold
Terms expiring 2025:	Kathy Martin, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos

### Finance Committee: (By virtue of office.)

Chair	Paul Anderson
Treasurer:	Tami Chamberlain
Financial Secretary:	Julie Abell
Church Council Chair:	Mike Smith
Trustees Tri-Chairs:	John Lass, Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Staff Parish Chair:	Julie Abell
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference:	Charlotte Summer
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

### Permanent Endowment Fund Committee

Chair of Finance Committee	Paul Anderson
Church Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Chair of Board of Trustees	Jim Martin
Chair of Church Council	Mike Smith
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Member at Large (Term: 2022 only)	Monica Rhude
Member at Large (Term: 2022-2023)	<b>Ken Smith, Chair</b>
Pastor (non-voting member)	Laura Saunders

### Worship Ministry Team: Chair: Monica Rhude

Choir Director:	Monica Rhude
Bell Choir Director:	Tami Chamberlain
Altar Design:	Kay Marksberry, Pam Bishop, Shari Tutt
Technology:	Joe Chamberlain
Usher Organizer:	Judy Parker
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

### Mission & Outreach Team:

**Co-Chairs: Linda Smith, Karen Anderson**

Lisa Dillon, Madelyn Lang, Tracy Easter, Ken Smith, Karen Anderson, Tami Chamberlain, Marna Rogers, Judy Parker, Sally Fitzgerald, Amber Ramsey

### Technology Team: Chair: Joe Chamberlain

Joe Chamberlain, Trisha Dicken, Andy Kuntzman, Tami Chamberlain, LeeAnn Lee, Paul Anderson

### Christian Education Team:

**Co-Chairs: Charlotte Summer, Chris Womack**

Jan Truesdell, Rachel Chamberlain, Madelyn Lang, Carol Runyan, Chris Womack, Charlotte Summer

### Care Team: Chair: Lee Saunders

Lee Saunders (phone contact); Charlotte Summer, Dorothy Rayburg, Jan Truesdell, Judy Bowman (visitation team)

## Upcoming Events

Franklin First United Methodist Church

Pastor  
Laura Saunders



### **Sunday Worship Service**

10:45 am

Livestreaming on Facebook

### **Faith Seekers Bible Study**

Sundays, 9:30 am

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>December 4th</b>  | <b>Blessing of the Nativities</b>                |
| <b>December 11th</b> | <b>Children's Christmas Program</b>              |
| <b>December 18th</b> | <b>Christmas Music Celebration</b>               |
| <b>December 24th</b> | <b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service</b> |
| <b>December 25th</b> | <b>10:45 am Worship</b>                          |
| <b>2023</b>          |  |
| <b>January 1st</b>   | <b>10:45 am Worship</b>                          |

Franklin First United Methodist Church

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

