

NEWS AT

first

**Monthly
Newsletter
of
First United
Methodist
Church**

April 2026

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Note from our Lead Pastors

Celebration of Resurrection Sunday and What's Ahead

Holy Week invites us to slow down and step into the heart of our faith. From the joy of Palm Sunday to the table of Holy Thursday and the solemn reflection of Good Friday, we walk with Jesus through love, sacrifice, and grace.

And then comes Easter—the good news that changes everything. The tomb is empty. Hope is alive. In a world that often feels uncertain, the resurrection reminds us that God is still bringing life out of death and light into our darkness.

We encourage you to join us not just for Easter, but throughout Holy Week. Walking the whole journey helps us more fully experience the power and promise of resurrection. And consider inviting someone to come with you—this season is a meaningful opportunity to share hope.

Remember, we worship at 6:30 a.m. for Sunrise in the Memory Garden, 9 a.m. in the Theatre for Modern Easter Worship, 9:45 a.m. Brunch in the FLC, 10:15 a.m. for Butterfly Release on the FLC Patio, and 11 a.m. for Traditional Easter Worship with full sanctuary restoration.

As the season warms and the stir to be outside increases, we will lean into a new sermon series centered on the Psalms of Ascent. Life's spiritual journey is like a long hike—sometimes joyful and invigorating, sometimes challenging and steep. The Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120–134) are a rich mix of songs sung as pilgrims climbed toward Jerusalem, full of hope, faith, lament, and celebration. Just like a trail mix combines different flavors and textures to sustain a hiker, these psalms offer a blend of spiritual nourishment for our own ascents of life. Join us as we explore this trail mix of faith.

We look forward to worshipping with you in this sacred season and in the journey ahead.

Justin & Melissa



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Preschool



This past month has been filled with joyful learning and celebration in our Preschool Ministry. We began by celebrating Dr. Seuss and Read Across America Week, focusing on the letter “D.” Many of our wonderful parents graciously volunteered their time to visit the classrooms and read some of their children’s favorite books. The students had a blast dressing as their favorite storybook characters, wearing crazy socks for Fox in Socks, and sporting their favorite colors to celebrate Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

As the month continued, we moved on to the letter “S” while celebrating St. Patrick’s Day and learning about the lucky shamrock. Our mischievous leprechaun once again managed to escape all the clever traps set by the children, but not before leaving behind a trail of green and gold that filled our classrooms and hallways with laughter and excitement. With the arrival of warmer weather, we were grateful to return to outdoor play as we began learning about spring.

One of the most memorable experiences for our preschoolers was observing caterpillars transform into butterflies. Each day brought new excitement as the children witnessed the beauty of God’s creation in action. Our preschoolers also had a joyful time celebrating Easter. Each class enjoyed a fun-filled Easter egg hunt, and one of the highlights of the season was releasing the butterflies the children had watched grow and change. This special moment served as a beautiful reminder of new life and transformation. Many parents joined us on the FLC patio as we shared the Easter story and celebrated with the butterfly release. It was a meaningful time together as we reflected on the incredible gift of Christ’s death and resurrection.

We are truly grateful for our preschool families and the opportunity to share the true meaning of Easter with their children. We are also pleased to share that registration for the upcoming school year and summer sessions has been completed for our current students and their siblings. We will now begin opening any remaining spaces to families on our waitlist. If you or someone you know may be interested in joining our preschool family, please contact the preschool office for more information.

- Rebecca



Children's Ministry



Margaret Petrey Smith
Director of Children's Ministries
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During this Holy season of Lent, our children have learned about so many wonderful and powerful moments of Jesus' ministries, from His time of temptation in the wilderness, to the Canaanite woman, to His answering tricky questions: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." We have waved the palm branches, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He, who comes in the name of the Lord!" And now Easter is here! We look forward to celebrating with you all! Please continue to check each week's Thursday e-blast for detailed info about all things KidMin, as well as your texts from the church. If you are not receiving either, please let me know. Happy Easter! Yay, God!

- Margaret

**EASTER MORNING
BUTTERFLY RELEASE!**



**Sunday, April 5
10:15 AM
FLC Patio**

*Bring your
butterflies from home!*



Save the Date!



For 4th & 5th grades

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 - 5:30-7:30pm

Youth Ministry



First UMC Scholarship

The FUMC scholarship is available to all 2026 high school graduates of FUMC seeking higher education. To apply, connect with Hollie. Applications are due by April 24.



Unified: Save the Date

Join us on Saturday, April 25 at Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, N.C., from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for Unified, a day of fun, fellowship, and collaboration. Youth from ages 12 to 18 will connect with other Methodist youth and grow in their leadership skills. Unified is organized by youth from CCYM, Harambee, and Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Scan the QR code to sign up.



Celebrating Graduates

On May 17, we'll celebrate all our graduates. Scan the QR code and share your achievements with us!



Sr-Hi Trip to Fort Collins

This July, a group of our Sr-Hi Youth will travel to Fort Collins, Colo., for a service learning trip. We'll learn how housing insecurity and homelessness affect real people and we'll dive into service activities and conversations that unpack the bigger picture of how housing affordability, systemic injustice and community care are all connected. Please consider sponsoring a portion of our trip. Reach out to Hollie for more information.

Adult Discipleship Ministry



Becky Greene
Director of Spiritual Formation
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A friend gifted me a book by Maya Shankar entitled *The Other Side of Change* with a subtitle, “Who We Become When Life Makes Other Plans.” Often, we consider those interruptions to be adversity and certainly we experience life in those terms... death, divorce, job loss, economic hardship, prison...you fill in your own blank. And God does work through adversity.

But I also want us to consider how God works in prosperity—particularly how life will look differently for you today because of the resurrection. It is of little benefit to celebrate Jesus and then push Him back in the tomb. Transformation does not stop with Lent; it must continue in the version of yourself today.

The resurrection means death, sin and fear did not win, but hope springs eternal. Even when life brings challenges, we remember that God is always creating new life. And because Christ is risen, we must rise and carry hope into hospital rooms, into difficult conversations, into our church and our homes. Fear no longer controls us but God’s love permeates our being. We do not live or serve timidly, but boldly. Others should encounter in us that same grace, comfort and dignity offered through Christ.

Easter reminds us God is not finished with the world - and He's not finished with us. Easter is not only a day on the calendar but a way of living. So, if Christ is risen, what will change about the way I live tomorrow?

Rebecca Greene,
Director of Spiritual Formation

Daughters of the King - First UMC Women's Gathering - April 15

You are invited to a gathering for women of all ages as we come together as Daughters of the King. Rooted in Colossians 3:12, we will reflect on what it means to live as God's beloved children—clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. As daughters of the King, we are called to carry His light into the world. Come as you are and be reminded of who you are.

Motivational speaker **Molly Grantham** will be our guest with catering by **Dahlia Grove**, a nonprofit that supports women survivors of trafficking and abuse. Please scan the QR code or call 704-864-4371 to sign up by April 10.

JOIN US!

FIRST UMC WOMEN'S GATHERING



FREE EVENT
SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER
OR CALL 704-864-4371



WED, APR 15
5:30-7:30 P.M.
GATHERING SPACE

SPECIAL GUEST
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER MOLLY GRANTHAM

COLOSSIANS 3:12
CHOSEN BY THE KING. CLOTHED IN COMPASSION.
190 E FRANKLIN BLVD - GASTONIA, NC 28052

Upcoming Men's Events

*Tentative

CAPTAIN'S CHOICE
GOLF TOURNAMENT
MAY 29-30



MOUNTAIN AIRE GOLF COURSE
WEST JEFFERSON, NC

SAVE THE DATE

MEN'S
HEALTH
EVENT

JUNE 4 | 6 PM
FIRST UMC FLC



MEAL AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Event hosted by Bill Gray at
Seven Devils, N.C.
mountain home

Tuesday Adult Small Groups



Gather

Gather is a call to women living in Charlotte, Mount Holly, Belmont and Gastonia to the table for food, fellowship and faith-based discussion. Our next session will be on April 15, as we join the women of First UMC for the Daughters of the King gathering.



Dementia Caregiver Support Group

The dementia caregiver support group provides practical tips for caregivers dealing with loved ones with cognitive issues. Join us for our next meeting on April 28 at 4 p.m. in Room 218.

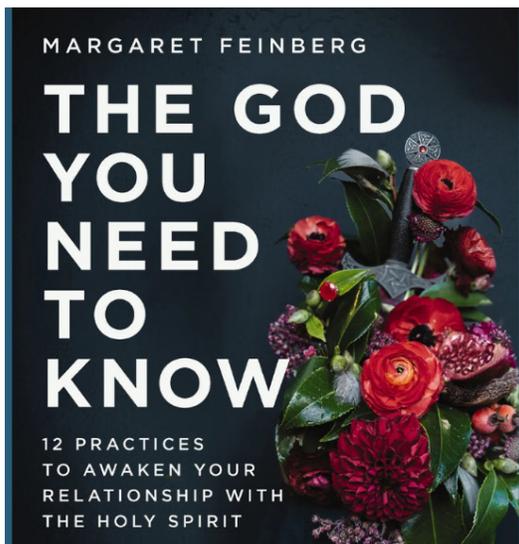
Wednesday Adult Small Groups



Another Great Season of WEF

Thank you for a great season of fellowship, food and faithful discipleship! Stay tuned for Summer opportunities and Fall kickoff.

Thursday Adult Small Groups



The God You Need to Know

Women of the Word (WOW) continue their study on the Holy Spirit with Margaret Feinberg's book *The God You Need to Know*.

Sessions will be held on Zoom each Thursday morning at 9:30 a.m., through April 9. If you'd like to be a part, please connect with Marti Sell at martisell01@gmail.com.



Theology on Tap

Theology on Tap returns on April 16 at 6:30 p.m. at Keepsake Brewery (211 Columbia St). Join us for a time of faith-based fellowship and theological discussion.



Embrace: Women's Study

Embrace women's study group has concluded our study and will meet for lunch on April 23 at Garden Cafe in York, S.C. at 11:45 a.m.

First UMC Community Health Ministry



Darkness to Light

Join us on April 20 from 12:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. in the First UMC Fellowship Hall for an important training. Darkness to Light, *Stewards of Children*, is a free 2.5-hour, evidence-informed training that teaches adults how to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. Lunch will be provided for those who RSVP by April 15. To register, scan the QR code.



Advanced Care Planning Clinic & Dinner

Join us on Tuesday, April 28 at 6 p.m. in the FLC for this clinic. We'll answer your questions about Health Care Power of Attorney (HCPOA) and Living Will decisions. Official forms will be available during the class. A light dinner will be provided. Michelle Petty, Notary Director of Community Engagement at Carolina Caring, will be presenting. A follow-up meeting will be offered, if needed. RSVP required by April 27, 2026. To register, call 704-864-4371 or email nurse@fumcgastonia.org.

OTC Medicine Giveaway

First UMC will be hosting an over-the-counter medicine giveaway on May 8 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Take home free over-the-counter medicine, including allergy, cough and cold, pain relief, vitamins, children's medicine, and more. You can pre-order online and schedule a pickup time by scanning the QR code. FUMC members unable to attend can pre-order online and arrange for medicine to be picked up and brought to the church. If you are homebound and need medicine to be delivered, email Lisa and delivery arrangements will be made. Registrations begin on April 8. If you'd like to volunteer, visit medassist.org/volunteer. Children 12 and older can volunteer with parental supervision.



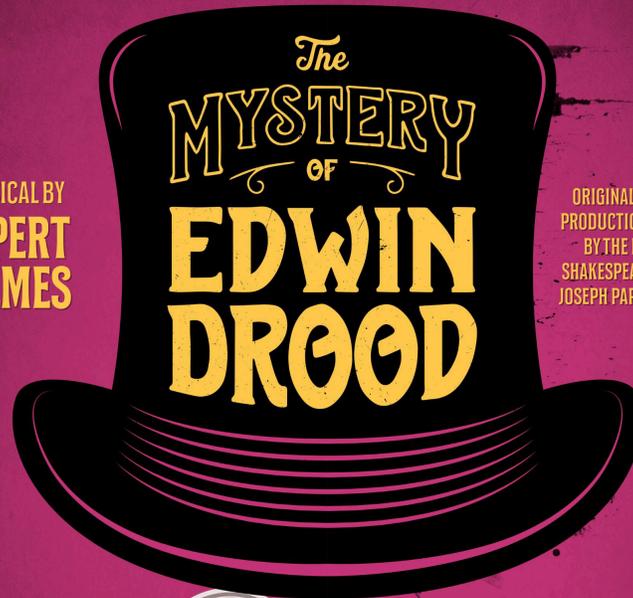
Lisa Marisiddaiah
First UMC Community
Health Ministry
nurse@fumcgastonia.org

Drama Ministry

FUMC
theatre

PRESENTS

A MUSICAL BY
**RUPERT
HOLMES**



ORIGINAL BROADWAY
PRODUCTION PRODUCED
BY THE NEW YORK
SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL,
JOSEPH PAPP, PRODUCER



Directed by
Jeff Manus
Music directed
by **Susan Lisle**

Performances:
April 17 & 18 at 7:30
April 24 & 25 at 7:30
April 19 & 26 at 2:30

162 East Main, Gastonia, NC 28052
Reservations at fumcgastonia.org/theatre

Presented by arrangement with Tams-Witmark, A Concord Theatricals Company (www.tamswitmark.com)

Admission is free. Donations are accepted

Other Events



Bishop's Climate Summit

Bishop Ken Carter and the Conference Creation Care Ministry Team invite you to a special gathering on April 18 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Maple Springs UMC in Winston-Salem, NC.

The Bishop's Climate Summit will include worship, conversation, learning, lament, and shared hope. Workshops will offer practical ideas and ministry tools that churches of all sizes can implement in their communities. Ongoing resources and support will be available from the WNCC Creation Care Ministry Team to help congregations take next steps throughout 2026 and beyond. To learn more and to register, visit

<https://www.wnccumc.org/bishopsclimatesummit>.

If you are interested in exploring Creation Care opportunities at FUMC Gastonia, please contact Pastor Melissa.



Pizza with the Pastors

Back by popular demand, it's an ask the pastors anything evening! Bring your hard questions for our pastors on Sunday, April 19 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Greene House.



Financial Report



February 2026 Financial Update

Steady Momentum Through the First Two Months

Through the end of February, the church is trending in a positive direction. Strong giving, responsible ministry leadership, and careful expense management are helping us stay well ahead of budget expectations. While challenges remain, the progress made so far provides encouragement as we continue supporting the mission and ministries of First United Methodist Church in 2026.

When combining church operations, kitchen, and preschool:

- Total income: \$313,755 (\$23,630 above budget).
- Total expenses: \$354,412 (\$33,647 below budget).
- This results in a year-to-date total loss of approximately \$40,657, which is over \$57,000 better than budgeted.

The first quarter of the year is always challenging, but we expect it, plan for it, and are doing better than we anticipated. Our overall financial position is strong!

— Your Finance Committee

Communications

Stay Connected: Don't Miss What Matters

One of the simplest ways to stay connected to everything happening in the life of our church is by reading our weekly e-blast.

These messages, sent directly to your inbox each Thursday evening, are more than announcements—they're an important tool to help you stay informed, encouraged, and engaged.

We know inboxes can get full, but we encourage you to take a few moments each week to read through our e-blast. If you're not currently receiving our emails or need to update your information, please let us know—we'd be glad to help.

Worship with us on YouTube

Nothing takes the place of gathering in-person. Warm hugs, gracious smiles, and kind words from fellow believers remind us of God's goodness and His unfailing love. However, some of us are not able to join in-person, making the online experience an absolute necessity. Over the last few months, we've been working to improve that experience.

We encourage you to join us on YouTube at youtube.com/@fumcgastonia.

You can also share the link with family and friends as a simple way to invite others to experience what God is doing at First UMC.



Joy & Sympathy:

Joy to:

McKenzie and Wesley Wheeler upon the birth of Maxwell Charlton on March 7, 2026.

Sympathy to:

John and Robin Boyce, upon the death of John's father, Roosevelt Williams, Sr., on February 16, 2026.

Armand Broady and family, upon the death of his uncle, James Townsend, on February 17, 2026.

Barry Lyons and family, upon the death of his father, Barry Lyons, on February 26, 2026.



Holy Week at First
THU APR 2 - SUN APR 5

Holy Thursday Services <i>5 & 7 PM - Theatre</i>
Good Friday Service <i>7 PM - Sanctuary</i>
Easter Sunday Services <i>Sunrise Service - 6:30 AM</i> <i>Modern - 9 AM / Traditional - 11 AM</i>

The poster features a wooden cross against a dramatic sky with orange and blue clouds. The text is centered and includes the church name, dates, and a table of service times and locations.



**EASTER
Brunch**

SUNDAY, APRIL 5
9:45 AM
FAMILY LIFE CENTER

The poster shows a pink semi-circular graphic overlaid on a background of tulips, Easter eggs, and bread. The text is white and pink, providing details for the Easter Brunch event.

Take Note

Sunday Morning Views & Attendance

Date:	8:45 AM In-Person	8:45 AM Online	9:00 AM In-Person	11:00 AM In Person	11:00 AM Online	In Person Totals
Mar 1	43	56	54	116	228	213
Mar 8	37	87	50	158	127	245
Mar 15	42	51	45	136	126	274
Mar 22	27	34	49	132	142	208

*March 29 attendance numbers will be shared in May newsletter

For any additions to the newsletter, please submit submissions by the 15th of the month at

fumcgastonia.org/resources/communications-promotions-request

Connect with us...

Website: www.fumcgastonia.org

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Email: contact@fumcgastonia.org



First United Methodist Church of Gastonia, NC



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