



NEWS AT

first

**Monthly
Newsletter
of
First United
Methodist
Church**

May 2026





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Note from our Lead Pastors

A Season of “Yes”: Confirmation and the Fire of Pentecost

We are grateful to share that we have been reappointed by the Bishop and Cabinet to serve alongside you at First UMC for another year. It is truly a joy to continue in ministry together, and we are thrilled to keep calling First our home. Thank you for the ways you love, support, and partner with us in the work God is doing in and through this church.

The month of May is one of those holy, joy-filled seasons in the life of the Church where we are reminded that God is always on the move calling, forming, and sending people into a life of faith.

This month, we have the deep privilege of celebrating Confirmation Sunday on May 3 at 11 a.m., when 14 of our young people will stand before God and the congregation to say a powerful and personal yes to Jesus Christ, and yes to the Church.

In the United Methodist tradition, confirmation is not simply a class or a milestone, it is a sacred moment of claiming the faith for oneself. It is also a reminder to all of us, inviting us to reflect on our own “yesses” — the ways we continue to trust Christ, participate in the life of the Church, and live out our faith in the world. When these 14 confirmands stand before us, they are not just marking a personal milestone; they are strengthening the whole Body of Christ. Their courage, curiosity, and commitment breathe new life into our shared witness.

Later this month, we will gather again for another powerful moment in the life of the Church: Pentecost. This year, we are especially excited to celebrate Pentecost through a joint worship service with our friends at Epworth UMC, culminating in a vibrant Jazz Pentecost service on May 24. Be sure to wear red on Pentecost as we remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church, and the moment when God’s people were empowered to carry the good news into the world.

As part of this celebration, we will welcome Gospel Recording Artist Diana Tuffin, whose gifts will help lead us in a dynamic and Spirit-filled time of worship. It will be a Sunday marked by joy, unity, and the movement of the Holy Spirit among us. We encourage you to make plans to attend and to invite someone to come with you.

As we move through May, may we be people who continue to say yes to God’s call, yes to the work of the Spirit, and yes to the life we share together as the Church.

Grace + Peace,

Justin & Melissa



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Worship Arts Ministry

On May 24 at 11 a.m., our congregation will join with Epworth United Methodist Church for a special gathering, as we celebrate Pentecost with a vibrant and distinctive jazz-styled service.

This special combined service will feature acclaimed vocalist Diana Tuffin alongside the Matt Kendrick Trio, bringing a dynamic blend of musical excellence and spiritual reflection. Diana is widely recognized as one of the premier jazz vocalists in the Southeast, having performed with some of the finest musicians in the genre.

Her artistry has been shaped in part by her coaching with renowned pianist and educator Norman Simmons, whose distinguished students also included jazz legends Betty Carter and Sarah Vaughan.

Joining her is bassist Matt Kendrick, an accomplished performer who has appeared with an impressive array of jazz greats, including the Marian McPartland Trio, Ernie Watts, Gene Bertoncini, Archie Shepp, and Jake Byard.

In addition to his performance career, Kendrick is a two-time recipient of the North Carolina Jazz Composers Fellowship, reflecting his significant contributions to the art form. The service will feature beloved hymns and familiar songs re-imagined with rich jazz accompaniment, offering a fresh and inspiring worship experience. As we celebrate the spirit of Pentecost, you are invited to wear red and join us for a morning filled with joy, energy, and meaningful music.



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Preschool



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We began this month by celebrating the joy of Jesus' resurrection and the new life it brings. Our Fours class enjoyed a wonderful field trip to the Rotary Community Garden, graciously hosted by First UMC's own Lynn Anderson. This meaningful, hands-on experience beautifully extended their learning about God's creation and the world around them.

As Mother's Day approaches, our classrooms are filled with excitement. Little hands are hard at work creating thoughtful, handmade gifts to honor the special mothers and caregivers in their lives. Through these acts of love, our children are learning that kindness, gratitude, and service are ways we reflect God's love to others. We look forward to these sweet creations bringing joy and blessing to our families.

We are also looking ahead to important upcoming events. Our Fours Graduation will be held on May 19, followed by our last day of school on Wednesday, May 20. As we move into summer, we are excited to offer two week-long summer camps, scheduled for June 22–26 and July 20–24. We look forward to continued learning, fun, and fellowship in the months ahead.



Children's Ministry



Margaret Petrey Smith
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Church Family,

As we gear up for the summer months, I am grateful and so proud of the many ways this church shows up for each other and our community. Our work of bringing children closer to God continues. I heard a speaker recently – more about that next month – who offered some profound words, something like this: Your kids are not going to remember every Bible verse; they're not going to remember every faith lesson; but they will remember how you made them feel loved, secure, and special — how you showed up.

I invite you to think about how you can simply show up to best serve the children of this church and community! You don't have to be a professional teacher, All-Star coach, or a multiple-degreed theologian. Could you show up and love?

Yay, God!

Margaret

**Wear Red for
Pentecost Sunday,
May 24th!**

**Fun and meaningful
moments for
Sunday School &
the Children's Message**

Hope to see you!

RETREAT

for rising 6th graders

Thursday, May 28
8:30am - 6pm

Check e-blast & texts for
more details and sign up link

FISH
First In Serving Him

For 4th & 5th grades

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6 - 4:30-6pm

Serving supper
at the Boys &
Girls Club

Sign up or tap **HERE**



Confirmation Sunday

Our 2026 Confirmands have spent the last nine months learning about Methodism, and they are ready to publicly confess faith in Christ and commit to the life and mission of the church. Join us on May 3 during the 11 a.m. service, as we celebrate this major step in the lives of our youth.



Youth & Graduate Sunday

Join us on May 17 during our 8:45 a.m. and 11 a.m. services for Youth & Graduate Sunday. We'll recognize their hard work, faith, and the milestones they have reached, while offering prayers for their promising futures. Come worship with us, as we celebrate what God has done and look with hope toward what lies ahead.



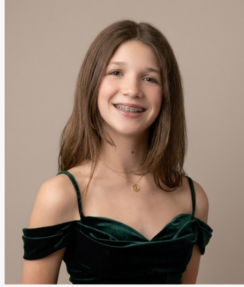
Sunday Sundaes

Celebrate the summer with ice cream sundaes! Join us on May 17 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Greene House for fellowship and a delicious treat!

Congratulations



Ansley Renee Austell



Emerson Parker Austell



Grant Thomas Austell



John Henry Braxton



Catherine Czerr



Harper Claire Henry



Hayes William Hovis

25-26 Confirmands!



Kennedy Arabella Miller



Caroline Grace Porter



Rae Elizabeth Richards



Christopher Luke Smith



Macon Christina Tippett



Jane Elizabeth Willis



Charlotte Witten

Adult Discipleship Ministry



Becky Greene
Director of Spiritual Formation
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On Wednesday, April 15, the women of this church and community gathered together here at First UMC as Daughters of the King. It was a truly special evening filled with flowers, photos, fellowship, food, and—most importantly—faith.

From the moment we walked in, we were welcomed in such a meaningful and thoughtful way. We were greeted royally and given scepters that held our order of events, setting the tone for a night that reminded us of our identity and worth as daughters of the King.

We had the opportunity to select fresh flowers from a beautiful flower bar, which were later arranged into stunning bouquets for us to take home. There were spaces to take photos with friends, time to connect and mingle, and a chance to meet our guest speaker before the evening began. It was one of those rare moments where everything felt both joyful and intentional.

We then made our way to the dining room where we were served delicious boxed meals provided by Dahlia Grove—a nonprofit justice enterprise that empowers and employs women who are survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. It was such a powerful reminder that even in something as simple as a meal, we can support and uplift others. After Becky Greene led us in prayer, we shared that meal together and prepared our hearts for the message to come.

We were then introduced to our guest speaker, Molly Grantham—a four-time Emmy Award-winning journalist, author, and founder of a nonprofit pediatric network. But more than her accomplishments, what stood out most was her authenticity and the way she connected with all of us in the room.

Her message centered around one powerful idea: to bet on ourselves. She shared several truths that really stuck with me. She reminded us that a messy ending doesn't ruin the journey that got us there. That we don't make ourselves look better by making others look bad. And that instead of constantly looking in the rearview mirror, we should focus on what's ahead—on the windshield—where God is leading us next.

One of the most relatable takeaways was what she called the “loose t-shirt theory”—to wear the opinions of others like a loose t-shirt, something that doesn't cling too tightly or define us. And she encouraged us to walk through doors when they open, even if we don't feel completely ready, trusting that we can build the plane as we fly it.

The evening ended with a touching tribute to Yvonne Goforth for her many years of faithful service to the children of our church, which was a beautiful way to honor a life poured out in love and dedication.

It was truly an evening of women empowering women. We left feeling renewed, refreshed, and inspired—not just to grow in our own faith, but to go out and serve others with confidence and purpose.

And I also want to add a special note about the scepters we received at the beginning of the evening. They weren't just part of the program—they've already found a second life at my house as “magic wands.” My kids have been using them in play, and it made me smile realizing that all the thought, creativity, and hard work that went into making them did not go to waste. They're still bringing joy beyond that night in ways I'm sure were never even planned.

Thank you so much to everyone who worked so hard behind the scenes to make this incredible night possible. It made a lasting impact on all of us who were there.

- Erin Bean

Upcoming Events

Friends on the Go

Join Friends on the Go for our next outing to First United Methodist Church's Dahlia Grove Community Cafe in Belmont on Thursday, May 14 at 11:30 a.m. You can meet us there or ride the church bus, which will leave from the FUMC Gastonia parking lot promptly at 11 a.m. The cost of your meal is a donation to Dahlia Grove Community Organization, which provides jobs to survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and addiction. Please register with Stephanie at 704-864-4371 or stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org, so that Dahlia Grove will be able to plan food accordingly.



Men's Base Camp - May 29 & 30

"Fellowship, Fairway, and Faith"

Join us for relaxing fellowship at Bill Gray's mountain home at Seven Devils on Friday night. The following day, take part in the Captain's Choice Golf Tournament at Mountain Aire Golf Club in West Jefferson, N.C.

The cost for green fee and golf cart is \$85.

Please register by May 3, 2026. You can sign up for the overnight or make it a day trip. Breakfast will be provided as well as any other meals.

To register, call the church at 704-864-4371 or email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org.

For additional questions, call Bill Gray at 704-905-0591.



To the participants and producers of the Daughters of the King gathering...



THANK YOU!

Tuesday Adult Small Groups



DEMENTIA CAREGIVER
SUPPORT GROUP

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 May 26 at 4 p.m. in Room 218.




G A T H E R

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 May 12 at 6:30 p.m. at One19 North Main in Mount Holly.

Thursday Adult Small Groups



FUMC MEN'S SMALL GROUP

Theology on Tap

Theology on Tap

Theology on Tap returns on May 21 at 6:30 p.m. at Keepsake Brewery (211 Columbia St). Join us for a time of faith-based fellowship and theological discussion.

First UMC Community Health Ministry



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. If you'd like to volunteer, visit medassist.org/volunteer. Children 12 and older can volunteer with parental supervision.



Honoring National Cancer Survivor Day

On June 7, First UMC will acknowledge, honor, and celebrate cancer survivors in our church family and community. A special display will be available in the gathering space. The community health ministry would like to offer a gift of inspiration to FUMC members currently undergoing cancer treatment. If you or someone you know would like to receive a gift, please reach out to Lisa Marisiddiah at nurse@fumcgastonia.org.

Men's Health Event

Join us on June 24 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the First UMC FLC and patio for this men's health event. Learn about physical health, nutrition and exercise, plus financial and mental health. To sign up, scan the QR code or call 704-864-4371.



Additional Announcements



Proctors Needed at York Chester Middle

York Chester Middle School has requested testing proctors again this year. The End-of-Grade dates for testing are May 7, 12, and 14. Volunteers are needed from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information, please contact Ann Miller at 704-691-4439 or awm777881@gmail.com.



Camp Sunshine Volunteers Needed

Camp Sunshine is looking for volunteers for summer camp, held this year from June 15-19. The first two days of camp will be hosted by First UMC, and the final three days will be held at Crowder Springs Camp. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Kelley Haygood at kelley.haygood@gmail.com.



Community Closet

The First UMC Community Closet had its official open date last month. The closet will be open once a month in conjunction with the dates of the UMM Hot Dog Lunches in order to help many of the same community friends.

No donations are needed at this time.

Upcoming dates through the end of the year:

May 1 - June 5 - July 3 - August 7 - September 4
October 2 - November 6 - December 4

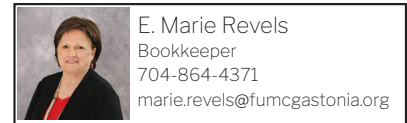
Volunteers can sign up by scanning the QR code.

If you have any questions, please contact Theresa McIntosh at lvtennis1964@yahoo.com or (704) 718-4339.





Financial Report



March 2026 Financial Update First Quarter 2026

Through the end of March and the first quarter of 2026, the church showed strong giving and continued savings in several cost centers and areas of ministry. We continue to closely monitor both revenue and expenses, and benchmark them against our monthly and year-to-date budgets and year-over-year comparisons.

For the first three months of 2026, combining church operations, kitchen, and preschool:

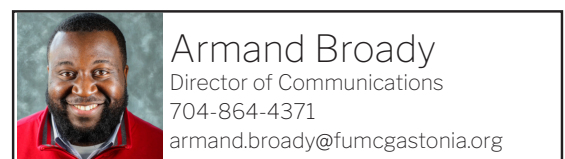
- Total income: \$472,398 (\$14,258 above budget)
- Total expenses: \$516,114 (\$64,481 below budget)
- This results in a year-to-date total loss of approximately \$43,716, which is \$78,739 better than budgeted.

The mission and ministries of First United Methodist Church are supported by your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Thank you!

Your Finance Committee

Communications

As we continue to strengthen communication across First UMC, we encourage every member to take an active role in staying informed. Important updates, event details, and ministry opportunities are shared each week through our established channels—email, website, social media, and Sunday bulletins. Rather than waiting for information to find you, make it a regular practice to check these resources so you don't miss what's happening in the life of the church. Clear communication is a shared responsibility, and your engagement helps ensure you remain connected to the ministries and moments that matter most.



Joy & Sympathy:

Joy to:

Liz and Mike Vicario on the birth of their son, Dante Christopher, who was born on March 26, 2026.

Jackie Clevenger and Mike Reese, who were married on April 1, 2026.

Sympathy to:

Kathie Whitesides and family, upon the death of Dr. Steven Wesley "Wes" Anthony, Jr. on April 2, 2026.

Katie Porter and family, upon the death of her father, Dr. David Albert Cook, on April 26, 2026.



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 29	25	82	50	234	181	309
Apr 12	35	94	60	113	119	214
Apr 19	45	83	45	128	137	218

*Resurrection Sunday - April 5			In-person	Online	
	6:30 AM	31	N/A		In-person total:
	9 AM	59	85		484
	11 AM	394	305		

*April 26 attendance numbers will be shared in June 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...

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