



**First United**  
METHODIST CHURCH

# THE MESSENGER DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 12: 2025

## ✦ When You Enter a New Place, You're Given Two Options

Assimilate

Separate

Whether it's a new school, a new job, a new phase of life, or a new faith community, the world whispers (sometimes shouts): *"Become like us... or pull away from us."*

And if we're honest, sometimes **we** are the ones choosing one of those unhealthy options. The world is monetizing distrust. Disunity is trending. And yes—our church has felt this tension in recent memory.

## ✦ Advent Reminds Us That God Chose a Third Way

In Jesus' birth, God answered the world's demands with a simple, holy **"Neither."**

- Jesus was fully God, yet refused to **assimilate** to the world's definition of power.
- And despite humanity's best efforts, God refused to **separate** Himself from us.
- Instead, **God moved in next door and made His home among us.** 🔥

This is the countercultural heartbeat of Advent.

## ✦ Looking Toward 2026: A New Birth of Unity

As we anticipate the joy of Christ's coming, I'm also anticipating the new birth God is preparing for **our** church.

In 2026, we will join Jesus in rejecting the world's false choices of assimilation or separation. Instead, **our church will embrace unity**—a unity grounded not in sameness, but in grace, friendship, and story.

When the world pressures us toward division through workplaces, community groups, politics and social identities ...**the Spirit empowers us to choose another way.**

A way where friendship crosses lines.

A way where grace builds bridges.

A way where unity becomes our witness. 🧡 ✦

## ✦ Our 2026 Focus: Fostering Friendship

And we'll do it through two powerful initiatives:

### 🧡 1. Serving Side by Side

We join together in our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. When the mission stays central, love holds us together.

## 2. Sharing Our Story

We will tell and hear stories of how the same God is at work in each of us—powerfully, but uniquely.  
Your story encourages mine.

My story strengthens yours.

Together, they reveal how God is drawing us into deeper relationship.

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### ✦ A Personal Invitation

I hope you will join this movement of the Spirit.

Serve with us.

Share with us.


Walk into the future of FUMC *with* us.

I can't wait to see what God does through this church—through you—this coming year.

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### ✦ Celebrate the Season — Experience Advent With Us!

 **Sunday, December 7** – ONE Worship Service at **10 AM** for the Christmas Cantata

 **Advent Classes** – Tuesdays (Dec 2, 9, 16, 23) at **6 PM** in the Fellowship Hall

 **Kids' Advent class at the same time!**

 **Christmas Eve Candlelight Services** – **5 PM & 7 PM** in the Sanctuary

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**Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!**

— Sean



  
**FIRST UMC  
ADVENT STUDY**  
Tuesdays, Dec. 2–23 | 6–7 PM  
503 W Main St.  
**Adult Study:** “Advent” by Dr. Derwin Gray  
**Kids Classes:**  
• Ages 0–5  
• Kindergarten–5th Grade

Join us for a Christmas Cantata ✨



## “This Child Shall Be Our Peace”

A musical reflection on the miracle of Christmas

**December 7 • 10:00 am**



**Combined service  
in the sanctuary**

Potluck to follow in the CLC

**Please invite a friend!**



## **December Community Assistance project**

# **FOOD DRIVE**



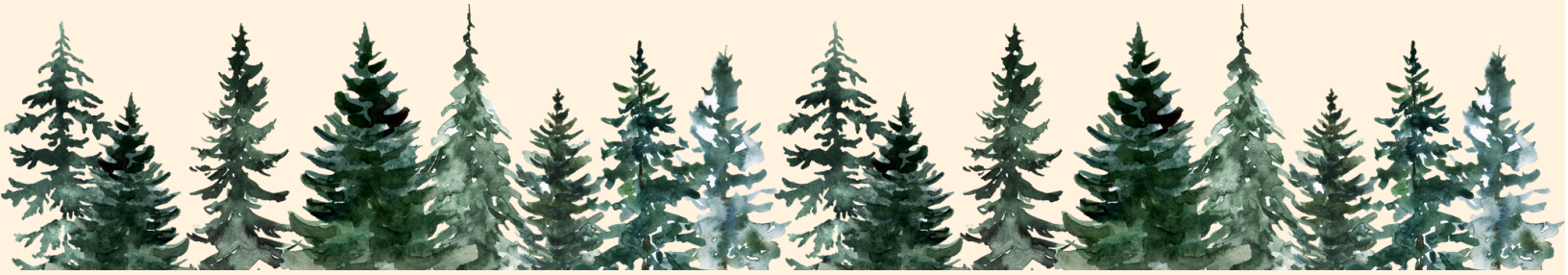
**Non Perishable food collection bins will  
be in the FUMC church lobby**

**Thank you to everyone that has  
helped and donated to this project**



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# *Christmas Eve Worship*



503 W Main St.

5 and 7 PM  
(childcare at both services)

Candlelight  
Service

## *In Loving Memory*

Deana Gleghorn

John & Kim Woodworth  
Charles Tom  
William Pollard  
Jane Kramer

Ted Bunch

Richard & Helen Atkinson  
Barbara Alsup





## Friendship Circle Child Care and Preschool

Our Child Care children will have these themes for December: The Polar Express, Christmas Around the World, Christmas, and New Years. We will continue daily lessons in alphabet, color, shapes, and number recognition. The children will be learning bible stories from Psalms and Ecclesiastes as well as Stories about Job and the Birth of Jesus.

Our Preschool Children will be learning about all things Christmas. All preschool classes will have a Christmas Program on December 18th.

Thank you to the UMW for helping to send Operation Christmas Child boxes around the World. Also a very special Thank You to the UMW for providing us with tablets so we can better serve the families of Friendship Circle.



## Children's Ministry

During December, our nursery and preschool children, we will be learning the story of Jesus' Birth. Our theme is Christmas Shapes: God gave us Jesus.

Our elementary children Celebrate the Good News of Jesus' Birth. During our Sunday School, we will be learning about Christmas Gifts.

As the holidays approach, please remember these special opportunities that are available through our Children's Ministry.

Children's Christmas Nativity Service December 21st at 6pm. Practice began on November 23rd at 6pm and each Sunday evening until the performance. There are several speaking parts for our school age friends and support roles for our preschool friends. Nativity Services are great for sharing the story of Jesus with our community. If you know a child interested in participating, please see Crystal in the office. All children are welcome. It's never too late to join us.

We will need a few adults to assist Crystal with the Nativity play. We need a person to play a few songs, several people to help with managing children during the performance, and several people to serve refreshments at the end of the performance. We will also need donations of homemade decorated cookies and drinks. If you are interested in helping, please let Crystal know.

Children Advent Class will begin Tuesday, December 2nd. Children will take an Advent Adventure to see what it was like to anticipate the arrival of the most important person in the history of the world. We will celebrate Advent through lessons, crafts, and service projects for the homeless and lonely in our community. We will also have a Celebration to express our JOY at Jesus' Coming. If you would like to help with Children Advent classes, please let Crystal know. Contact the church office if you want to sign up for the Advent classes. We will be collecting new adult socks, washcloths, winter hats, bars of soap, toothbrushes, small package of facial tissue, and individual toothpaste for our service project for the homeless. Please bring these items to the church office.



# Christmas NATIVITY

SUNDAY, DEC 21, 6 P.M.

OUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PRESENTS A CHRISTMAS NATIVITY  
SERVICE AT FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.

PRACTICES ON SUNDAY  
NIGHTS IN CLC

6 PM  
START TIME

BEGINNING  
NOV. 23RD

IF YOUR CHILD IS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING PLEASE CONTACT  
CRYSTAL HOUSTON IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.

ALL CHILDREN ARE WELCOME.

ROLES FOR KIDS STARTING AT PRESCHOOL THROUGH 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
CHURCH OFFICE 417-256-6167

## The Prophecy

Day 1: Isaiah 9:2-7  
Day 2: Isaiah 11:1-5  
Day 3: Isaiah 7:10-14  
Day 4: Micah 5:1-5  
Day 5: 2 Samuel 7:12-16

## The Messiah is Born

Day 6: Luke 1:26-33  
Day 7: Luke 1:34-38  
Day 8: Luke 1:46-55  
Day 9: Matthew 1:18-25  
Day 10: Luke 2:1-7  
Day 11: Luke 2:8-12  
Day 12: Luke 2:13-20  
Day 13: Matthew 1:1-17

## The Gift of Salvation

Day 14: Romans 6:20-23  
Day 15: Galatians 4:1-7  
Day 16: 1 Timothy 1:15-17  
Day 17: Titus 3:3-7  
Day 18: Philippians 2:6-8

## The Messiah Will Return

Day 19: John 14:1-6  
Day 20: Daniel 7:13-14  
Day 21: Revelation 1:4-7  
Day 22: Revelation 3:20-22  
Day 23: Revelation 22:12-13  
Day 24: Revelation 22:16-17  
Day 25: Revelation 22:20

# A Season of *Advent* Reading Plan





Greetings Church Family,

The seasons are changing. The shorter daylight and cooler temperatures are on the way. I look forward to this time of year for so many reasons, but paramount is the dramatic event that happened over 2,000 years ago. Who would have thought that the creator of the universe would choose to come into his creation as a peasant child? But that is exactly what Jesus did. As we begin this Advent season let's experience again this amazing, awesome act that God has done for us.

This month your Church Council began developing our budget for 2026. The past couple years have been a time of lean budgets in the face of rising costs. This year's budget is heavily focused on our ministerial emphasis points. You should have received a letter from Pastor Sean last month outlining our ministries of 2026. If you have not received your letter, please contact the church office for a copy. Along with Pastor Sean's letter was a pledge card for you to prayerfully consider what you can give back to God to support the ministries of your church. Please return this card to the church by December 15.

As I mentioned last month, Friendship Circle Preschool and Day Care are the largest ministries of our church, and that ministry was reviewed by a consultant last month. The consultant was complementary of our staff and facilities, and has offered some suggestions to improve this excellent ministry. Crystal Houston has already implemented some of those recommendations, and you will see more changes over the next year. An immediate change you will notice is a rebranding of the name to simply "Friendship Circle Preschool". This more accurately reflects the educational programs Crystal has implemented for all ages.

As always, your Church Council meetings are open to all who are interested. If you have an item you would like the Council to discuss, please notify the church office at least one week before our meeting. If you would like to attend a meeting, please join us on the second Monday of each month in the Fellowship Hall at 5:30 pm. We remain a church family whose desire is to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World". See you in church.

Blessings, Bob Legler – Church Council Chair

Wanda Byrd – Secretary - UMW Representative

Lay Leader-

Finance Team: Melody Martin, Nick Schultz

Trustees Team: Greg Weeks, Scott Womack, Amanda Rutledge

Staff Parrish: Shaun Duggins (Vice Chair), John Ackerson, Mallory Snodgras, Carol Powell

Youth Representatives: Drew Bauer, Ella Orr



# THANK YOU!



Thanks to your generous response to the Bakeless Bake Sale this year, UMW raised over \$6000.00 to be used in ministries within our church and the local community. We are touching the lives of many women, youth and children in our area.

## *United Methodist Women*



This month we will be making lunch to deliver to Samaritan Outreach. Please join us in this community outreach project!



**Tuesday December 9, 2025  
9:00a.m. Fellowship Hall**

## Everyone is welcome!

## FUMC West Plains High School Youth Ministry

High School Youth Ministry meets on Sunday nights from 5:30-7:30. Each night includes supper, games and a lesson. We thank those who have been gracious enough to serve a meal for our Youth group! This allows volunteers to interact with our amazing Youth group! Attendance is increasing because youth are inviting friends, creating disciples and helping spread God's word through their testimonies.

**LOVE Boldly, SERVE Joyfully and LEAD Courageously!**

We have had a great month, highlighted by our "Friendsgiving" night where we had a full meal and great fellowship. Each Youth read a scripture verse about being thankful. Special thanks to Jerris Armstrong, Wanda Byrd and parents!



Several Youth and church volunteers assisted the local food commodity with serving over 500 Thanksgiving meals to our community on November 25th! Volunteered but not pictured (Ellen Bivens, IC Bivens, Jacob Ackerson and Evan Ackerson)



### Special Upcoming Events:

December 7th – Youth Christmas Party

January 1-3 – PASSION Conference in Texas

**Special thanks to Joy Ross, Joanna Patillo, Bryan Moore and Ellen Bivens for supporting this Youth Ministry!**

**God Bless,  
John Ackerson - "Interim" Youth Director**



# Gifts & Numbers

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Attendance: 160**

**Gifts: \$2,599.83**

**November 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Attendance: 141**

**Gifts: \$3,840.76**

**November 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Attendance: 148**

**Gifts: \$5,249.00**

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Attendance: 145**

**Gifts: \$5,185.88**

**November 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Attendance: 147**

**Gifts: \$26,074.35**

**\*\*Currently we need \$8,308.00 per week to meet our 2025 budget\*\***

## Important dates for your calendar

### Every Sunday:

8:30am Contemporary Service  
Christian Life Center

9:45 am Sunday School

11:00am Traditional Service  
Sanctuary - 2nd floor

5:30-7:30pm Youth Group  
Christian Life Center

### Every Wednesday:

5:30-6:30pm God's Crew

6-7pm Handbell Practice

7-8pm Choir Practice

### Every Monday:

6:30 am Men's Group - Fellowship Hall  
2nd Monday of the month, will meet at  
Ozark Cafe for breakfast

### December 2<sup>nd</sup>

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

### December 2<sup>nd</sup>

Advent Class begins - Fellowship Hall, 6pm

### December 7<sup>th</sup>

Christmas Cantata - Sanctuary, 10am  
potluck to follow in CLC

### December 9<sup>th</sup>

UMW - Fellowship Hall, 9am

### December 16<sup>th</sup>

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

### December 18<sup>th</sup>

Friendship Circle Preschool Christmas Program -  
Sanctuary, 5:30 & 7:00pm

### December 24<sup>th</sup>

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service -  
Sanctuary, 5:00 & 7:00pm

### December 24, 25 & 26<sup>th</sup>

Church Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

# In Our Thoughts & Prayers



December 7, 2025

## PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ♦ Our Country
- ♦ Billy Wade - health
- ♦ Hazel - safe return
- ♦ Bruce Owens - health
- ♦ Paula Gamblain - grief
- ♦ Deborah Whittington - health
- ♦ Jim Peterson - health
- ♦ Joy Melton - health
- ♦ Amy Smith - health issues
- ♦ Mya McClung - unspoken
- ♦ Arielle - unspoken
- ♦ Braelyn - unspoken
- ♦ Lee Ann Warren
- ♦ Desirea Baker - health
- ♦ Shirley Hinkle's daughter & brother
- ♦ Billy

During this season of the year, please remember all of those who have lost loved ones or other losses.

Please pray for a 5th grade girl in Wanda Byrd's granddaughters class named Milajni, pronounced Mallani. She had brain tumor surgery last year and it's back. She will have surgery the week of Thanksgiving and may not get to come back to school this year.

Jan Dold is currently admitted to OZH for cardiac issues. She is also waiting on results from other test she had done. Please keep her in your prayers. 1956 Bluebird Way, WP

Diana Groe - please remember her as she is having pulmonary issues. 1913 Meadowbrook Dr., WP

Tim and Tracy Waggoner of Waggoner Floral are both going through some health issues. Prayers for both of them. 606 W. 1st Street, WP

Marie Nale is back home after falling and breaking her hip. Bud & Marie continue to have ongoing medical issues: 1619 Evergreen, WP

Alice Reagle and her daughter Kelly Ford could use some extra prayers. Alice is experiencing many health challenges and Kelly is doing her best to help her mom through this time. 2005 Lynn Dr., WP

Faye Denton continues to suffer with neck and back pain, prayers for relief. 4197 State Rt. 14, WP

## Home

Matt & Regina Janocko: P.O. Box 385, WP

Daryl Leonard-2325 St. Rt. 14, WP

Bud & Marie Nale: 1619 Evergreen, WP

Charles & Carole Cooper: 2694 S. St. Rt. 17, Mt. View, MO 65548

## CANCER

- Kinsey Mincey
- Mike
- Ivan Kochubey - lymphoma
- Sheri Hedrick - cervical cancer
- Veda May - breast cancer (Barry Fielder's aunt)
- Steve Turner
- Trina Johnson

## NURSING HOMES & ASSISTIVE LIVING

Larry Pope-Rm 7B, NHC

Barbara Gingles-Whispering Pines, 2313 Bradford Circle

Joanne Lowe-Sleepy Oak Place, 2313 Bradford Circle

Nean Dorris-Whispering Pines: 2313 Bradford Circle,

Helen Birdsong: 213 Davis Dr., Apt. 403

Connie Long: 408A, Brookhaven

Billy Wade - Room 15, Cedar Hurst

Dee McCormack - Room 503, Pleasant Valley

## Nursing Home/Assisted Living Addresses

West Vue-210 Davis Dr.

Pleasant Valley Manor: 213 Davis Dr.

Brookhaven: 1410 Kentucky Ave.

Greenhouses: 2313 Bradford Circle (Oak, Pine Place, Dogwood Cedarhurst-1521 US Hwy 63



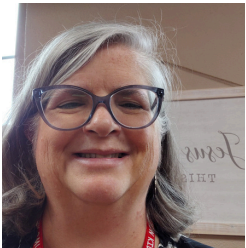
# STAFF & LEADERS



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Bob Legler
  - **Columbarium Committee**  
Janice Bowden

- **Librarian**  
Donna Cook
- **Methodist Women**  
Wanda Byrd
- **Treasurer**  
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