



**First United**  
METHODIST CHURCH

**THE MESSENGER**  
**JANUARY NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 01: 2026

## ★ The Best Is Yet to Come

Bear with me for a moment. Stay until the end. I promise—it's worth it.

I saw a post this week that said: *"I don't really want a new year this time. I'd like a gently used 2007... or maybe a 1996 if it's in good shape."*

I laughed at first because it's clever. Then I paused—because it's painfully relatable.

The story we keep hearing is that every year things get harder, more expensive, more anxious, and more broken. And yet... we just finished celebrating Christmas. We just proclaimed that *"the people walking in darkness have seen a great light."*

**The Light has come.** Darkness is not the final word.

And still—if we're honest—Christians are often the first to point out the darkness, talk about how it's growing, and unintentionally help it feel heavier. Many people outside the church believe we spend more time naming what's wrong with the world than celebrating what Jesus has already made right. ---- But that's not our calling.

We are meant to sound like the angels— **declaring good news of great joy for all people**, with the glory of the Lord shining all around us.

God appointed us as *light bearers*. Too often, though, we sit in the dark complaining about it—too tired, too frustrated, or too afraid to flip the switch.

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## 💡 Hope That Refuses to Quit

Here's the truth: **I believe the best is yet to come.**

And that's saying something—because I'm naturally pessimistic. But Jesus has a way of wearing my pessimism down.

When I look into the empty grave, all that's left is hope. C.S. Lewis once wrote:

*"There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind."*

The Apostle Paul said it this way:

*"To live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

For followers of Jesus, even death leads to light. So what could possibly steal our hope?

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## **Light in the Darkness: Jamaica**

That's why I am **so proud** to be part of this church.

After a catastrophic hurricane, the people of **Jamaica**—particularly our partner community in **Falmouth**—have been walking in darkness (sometimes literally). And instead of just talking about the Light of the World, **we chose to shine it**.

As a way to honor the birth of Jesus, we gave **100% of our Christmas Eve offering** to hurricane relief efforts.

Because of you...

 **Over \$12,000** is going to make a Kingdom impact in Falmouth.

That's a *lot* of light.

That's a *loud* message to people who feel forgotten.

That's a Christmas gift worthy of the newborn King.

**Thank you** for making that possible.

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## **You Can Still Be Part of It**

There's more light to shine:

-  You can still give—online or through the church office—designating your gift to **Jamaica Relief**.
-  Pray for our **Emergency Response Team** traveling January 11–17.
-  Pray for our **Medical Mission Team** traveling February 9–17.
-  There are still a couple of open spots for the February trip—contact the church office if you'd like to join.

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## **Looking Ahead**

What an incredible message to God's people in Jamaica—and to ourselves:

**The best is yet to come.**

Because of Jesus, I'm excited for **2026**.

Excited for *you*.

Excited for *our church*.

As we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—

by **fostering friendships** and **serving side by side**—

I'm grateful we get to walk this road together.

**Happy New Year.**

The best truly is yet to come.

— Sean



# Love in Action: Feeding Our Neighbors

Because of your generosity, **real people in our community were fed, supported, and reminded they are not alone**. This is the kind of Kingdom work that quietly changes lives—and it's happening through you.

Through donations and faithful giving, our church was able to respond in a powerful way to urgent needs across West Plains and beyond.

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## Meeting a Critical Need

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) here in West Plains serves 300–400 households every month**, providing food at no cost to families who need it most.

In December, TEFAP received **less than 50% of the food they needed**. When that gap became clear, our church stepped in.

Because of you, we were able to provide:

-  **436 cans of vegetables**
-  **172 boxes of mac & cheese**
-  **172 cans of meat**
-  **55 bags of rice** (meeting November needs)

Your generosity helped ensure that shelves were stocked and families had meals on their tables during a critical season.

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## Extending Care Across Our Community

Your giving didn't stop there. Food donations were also shared with:

- **Salutes Homeless Shelter** – 4 boxes of food
- **Rich in Faith** (serving those experiencing homelessness) – 2 boxes of food and a case of Vienna sausages
- **Samaritan Homeless Shelter** – multiple boxes of food, plus coffee, tea, and sugar
- **School Backpack Program** – 5 boxes of food for children who need meals on weekends and during school breaks

- **1st Baptist Food Bank** – several boxes of food, some used for the Tuesday night Community Dinner
- **West Plains Pregnancy Resource Center** – 2 boxes of baby food for families in need

Each box represents dignity, care, and hope—and each one was made possible through your faithfulness.

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### ❤ Thank You for Being the Church

This is what it looks like to **serve side by side**.

This is how love becomes visible.

This is how discipleship transforms our community.

To everyone who donated, organized, transported, prayed, and supported this work—**thank you**.

You are living out the Gospel in tangible ways, and your generosity is making a lasting difference.

Together, we are showing West Plains what it means to love our neighbors well.

### Heartland Ecumenical Camino

Camino is for Christians who have a servant's heart and want to follow the calling of God to serve in their local church. Camino is designed to encourage participants to return to their home churches and get involved in their churches needs.

Camino is open to men and women 21 years and older. Participants must have a sponsor (someone who has attended a Camino weekend in the past). Here at FUMC we have lots of willing sponsors.

The cost is \$75.00 per person

Men's Weekend – March 12-15

Women's Weekend – March 19-22

Transportation will be provided to the Laclede Baptist Camp near Lebanon, MO.

For more information:

<https://www.heartlandecumenicalcamino.com>

or contact: Bob & Beckie Legler 417-293-7704

Wanda Byrd 417-274-0241



# JANUARY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## 1 Stop Service Day!



Providing Free Services for  
Homeless Families & Individuals

WE ARE COLLECTING:

**HYGIENE KITS NEEDED!**



Toothbrush  
& Toothpaste



Washcloth



Bar of Soap



In a Plastic Bag

### Please Donate Hygiene Kits!

January 29th FUMC is participating in Project Homeless Connect. A service day that served approximately 150 homeless people last year. Families and individuals living in surrounding counties were provided access to free services, including medical, mental health, substance abuse, housing, benefits, eyeglasses, photo identification, food, clothing, haircuts and more. FUMC will provide hygiene kits to those attending this event. Thank you for providing Hygiene kits. Containing a new one of each: toothbrush, small toothpaste, wash cloth, and bar of soap in a small clear plastic baggie by January 25th.

FUMC-WEST PLAINS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS  
ROOM 207

# Daniel and Esther

## Outsiders in a Strange Place



A detailed illustration of two figures from the Bible. On the left, an older man with a white beard and hair, wearing a red robe, looks towards the right. On the right, a young woman with a blue headscarf and a gold necklace, wearing a blue dress, looks directly at the viewer. A lit candle is visible in the background on the right side.

Classes Sundays at 9:45 AM  
Starting January 18, 2026

The FUMC-WP Middle School Sunday School class is excited to start a new series on Daniel and Esther and invites all Middle Schoolers (and parents are welcome also) to join them for their kickoff lesson starting on Sunday, January 18.

## Friendship Circle Child Care and Preschool

Our Child Care children will have these themes for January: New Years, Winter, Polar Animals, Outer Space, and Jungle Animals. We will continue daily lessons in alphabet, color, shapes, and number recognition. The children will be learning bible stories about Jesus' Early Ministry and Jesus' Disciples.

Our Preschool Children will be learning about New Year's, Winter, Bears, and will conclude the month with a Pajama Party.

This month we will begin using our tablets that were provided to us by FUMC UMW. These tablets will help us to better communicate with parents during the school day.



## Children's Ministry

During January, our nursery and preschool children, we will be learning about Young Jesus, Philip, Paul and Silas, and Tabitha and Timothy. Our theme is Book Fair: The Bible teaches me the best things.

Our elementary children will make a "Game Plan: Growing Stronger in Faith Everyday". Our stories will be Jesus at the temple, The Lord's Prayer, The Wise and Foolish Builder, and Jesus Chooses Levi. During our Sunday School, we will be learning about Nicodemus.

I would like to Thank everyone who provided cookies, served refreshments, helping to decorate, helping with costumes, and especially all ou

r wonderful parents for bring your children for both our advent class and Children's Nativity Play. The children of FUMC are so grateful for all your help during the month of December.



# CHRISTMAS EVE MIRACLE OFFERING

# \$12,500

For Jamaica hurricane relief



**First United**  
METHODIST CHURCH





# January

## New Beginnings

Day 1 – 2 Corinthians 5:17  
Day 2 – Jeremiah 29:11  
Day 3 – Isaiah 43:18-19  
Day 4 – Ephesians 4:22-24  
Day 5 – Lamentations 3:22-24  
Day 6 – Isaiah 40:31  
Day 7 – 1 Peter 1:3  
Day 8 – Ezekiel 36:26  
Day 9 – Philippians 3:13-14  
Day 10 – Ecclesiastes 3:11  
Day 11 – Matthew 7:7-8  
Day 12 – Acts 3:19-20  
Day 13 – Isaiah 65:17  
Day 14 – Proverbs 3:5-6  
Day 15 – Malachi 4:2  
Day 16 – 2 Chronicles 7:14  
Day 17 – Colossians 3:9-10  
Day 18 – Psalm 73:25-26  
Day 19 – Psalm 23:1-3

Day 20 – Romans 12:2  
Day 21 – Romans 6:3-4  
Day 22 – John 10:10  
Day 23 – Isaiah 41:13  
Day 24 – Philippians 4:6-7  
Day 25 – Proverbs 16:9  
Day 26 – Isaiah 60:1-2  
Day 27 – Psalm 40:1-3  
Day 28 – Galatians 6:14-16  
Day 29 – Psalm 98:1-3  
Day 30 – John 3:16-17  
Day 31 – Revelation 21:4-5





Greetings Church Family,

December was another very busy month here at FUMC as we prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus. During our worship services we experienced dynamic preaching as well as awesome music from our Praise Band and Chancel Choir. Outside of our worship services we held many programs from Advent studies to Friendship Circle Preschool Christmas Programs to a super children's program (that we haven't seen in a few years).

Plans were developed to send a work crew to our friends in Falmouth Jamaica to assist in recovery of the damage caused by Hurricane Melissa, the most powerful hurricane to ever hit Jamaica. That work crew will be going to Jamaica this month. Our generous Christmas eve offering will be used to help purchase items needed for this crew. Next month our church will be sending a Medical Mission team to Falmouth as well. Please keep these two groups in your prayers.

My term on the Church Council has come to an end. Below is a list of Church Council members who will lead the church in 2026. It has been an honor and a blessing to serve your church as we strive to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World". If you feel the nudging of the Holy Spirit to become more active in the ministries of FUMC, please contact Pastor Sean. I know you will be blessed when you do.

The best is yet to come.

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 2025

Shaun Duggins- Church Council Chair 2026

Wanda Byrd – Secretary - UMW Representative

Lay Leader-

Finance Team: Melody Martin, Nick Schultz, Nancy Davudson

Trustees Team: Greg Weeks, Scott Womack, Amanda Rutledge

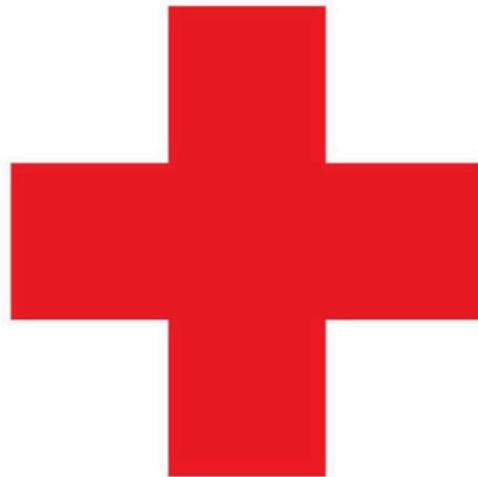
Staff Parrish: John Ackerson, Mallory Snodgras, Carol Powell

Youth Representatives: Drew Bauer, Ella Orr

*Give blood.*

Every 2 seconds someone  
in the U.S. needs blood.

American Red Cross



**Blood Drive**  
**First United Methodist Church**

Fellowship Hall  
503 West Main Street  
West Plains, MO 65775

**Tuesday, January 27, 2026**  
**11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

# *United Methodist Women*



This month Mary Beth Davis  
will be teaching us how to  
do chair yoga. We hope to  
see you there!

**Tuesday January 13, 2026**  
**9:00a.m. Fellowship Hall**

**Everyone is welcome!**

## FUMC West Plains High School Youth Ministry

High School Youth Ministry meets on Sunday nights from 5:30-7:30PM. Each night includes supper, games and a lesson. We thank those who have been gracious enough to serve a meal for our Youth group! We could use volunteers willing to provide a meal for the upcoming months. Attendance has been great because youth are inviting friends, creating disciples and helping spread God's word through their testimonies.

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

December was highlighted by our Christmas party! Thanks to our parents for tacos, desserts and drinks! Our games were amazing, thanks to Kim/Drew Bauer for their hard work and all of those that provided prizes! This was also a Christmas pajama theme with a gift exchange.



**Special thanks to our core group of adult volunteers that make this ministry possible!**

**Joy Ross, Joanna Patillo, Bryan Moore and Ellen Bivens have been a **HUGE** blessing!**

Special Upcoming Events:

January 1st-3rd – PASSION 2026 Conference in Arlington, Texas

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

# Gifts & Numbers

December 7<sup>th</sup>

Attendance: 237

Gifts: \$8,190.82

December 21<sup>st</sup>

Attendance: 172

Gifts: \$21,068.03

December 14<sup>th</sup>

Attendance: 163

Gifts: \$21,943.00

December 24<sup>th</sup>

Attendance: 325

Gifts: \$ 12,500.00

for Jamaica Reconstruction

December 28<sup>th</sup>

Attendance: 123

Gifts: \$ 19,422.00

\*\*Currently we need \$8,689.00 per week to meet our 2026 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

January 1<sup>st</sup>

New Years Day - Building Closed

January 6<sup>th</sup>

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

January 12<sup>th</sup>

Church Council Meeting - Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm

January 13<sup>th</sup>

UMW - Fellowship Hall, 9am

January 19<sup>th</sup>

Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Building Closed

January 20<sup>th</sup>

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

January 27<sup>th</sup>

Blood Drive - Fellowship Hall, 11-3

# In Our Thoughts & Prayers



January 9, 2026

## PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ◆ Alicia Goodfellow - health
- ◆ Brittany Watson - health
- ◆ Jessica Pospifio - family/friends
- ◆ Billy Wade - health
- ◆ Bruce Owens - health
- ◆ Deborah Whittington - health
- ◆ Jim Peterson - health
- ◆ Joy Melton - health
- ◆ Amy Smith - health issues
- ◆ Lee Ann Warren
- ◆ Desirea Baker - health
- ◆ Shirley Hinkle's daughter & brother

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

Faye Denton will have neck surgery on January 20th. Prayers for a successful surgery and a quick recovery. 4197 State Rt. 14, WP

Braelyn Boucher and her family are moving to Indiana.. Prayers for them as they make this big move.

Barry Fielder's aunt, Veda May and her adult children are all going through health struggles and could use extra prayers.

McKamie Langston (Janice Bowden's son) is severely ill with gastrointestinal issues. Prayers for healing. McKamie- 1402 Chateau Dr., WP

Scott Womacks father Jerry Womack passed away December 16th. Continued prayers for the family. Scott - 7480 St Rt 17, 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

Bud & Marie Nale 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

## 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
- Gary Foster - Leukemia

## NURSING HOMES & ASSITIVE 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

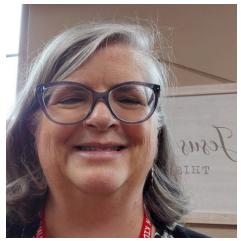
# STAFF & LEADERS



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- **Administrative Council Chair**  
Shaun Duggins
- **Columbarium Committee**  
Janice Bowden
- **Librarian**  
Donna Cook
- **Methodist Women**  
Wanda Byrd
- **Treasurer**  
Amy Murphy

## Contact Information

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