



First United
METHODIST CHURCH

HAPPY
Thanksgiving

THE MESSENGER
NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11: 2025

“The GPS Is Set”

I can hardly make it anywhere without my GPS.

I’m part of that last generation who remembers printing off directions from **MapQuest** before a family road trip. Now, all I have to do is type it into my phone—and like magic, it pops up on the car screen.

My wife, Brittany, teases me about it all the time. She says I can barely find my way out of a parking lot. (She’s not wrong.) Even though I’m learning my way around **West Plains**, I still rely on those directions to keep me from getting lost.

Without them, I wander.

Wandering Without Direction

In Scripture, we see that same kind of wandering.

- The **Israelites** spent 40 years in the wilderness, aimless until God gave them a path forward.
- God’s people were stuck in exile in Egypt for 400 years—until He led them home.

Like them, when we don’t have direction, we drift.

So we ask:

What is our purpose?

How do we live it out?

How do we know when we’re on the right path—or when we’ve missed it?

Finding Our Purpose

The good news is that God doesn’t leave His people without direction.

Jesus gave us a clear mission:

“Go into all the world and make disciples...”

Or in the words of our United Methodist mission statement:

“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

That’s our GPS.

That’s the direction that keeps us moving with purpose.

Setting the Course for 2026

Since I arrived this summer, our **church leadership** has been praying, planning, and discerning how *our church* is uniquely called to live out that mission.

As we look toward 2026, **First UMC will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by:**

Fostering Friendship through

 **Sharing Our Story**

 **Serving Side by Side**

These three initiatives will shape *everything*—
from our worship themes and fellowship gatherings
to our mission work, budget planning, and leadership priorities.

And the best part?

Every one of us will be on the same discipleship journey—together.

One Church, One Mission

As a church that values **unity**, this focus gives us a shared direction and shared language.

Because no matter:

- Who we are,
- Where we come from, or
- How we think—

Our only way forward is together.

This approach will help us live out the Gospel as *powerful witnesses* in a world that desperately needs hope, friendship, and faith.

The Road Ahead

I hope you'll be part of this movement with us.

You'll hear more soon about how to join in—but if you're ready to start now, I'd love to talk with you.

This vision won't happen through individuals working separately.

It will happen through **teams of gifted, passionate disciples** working side by side to move our church in God's direction.

The GPS Is Set

The **Kingdom needs navigators**.

Will you be one—so that together, our church might accomplish its mission and transform the world?

— **Pastor Sean**

Advent Class 2025

We are thrilled to invite you to an Advent Study at First UMC this Advent season. We are offering three classes to include people of all ages on Tuesdays December 2, 9, 16 and 23 from 6-7 PM at the church campus (503 W Main St).

1. Adult Study

Join us for a bible-based video and discussion study "Advent" by Dr. Derwin Gray, led by Pastor Sean. This study requires no book purchase nor any reading in advance. Come as you are! Here is a taste of the class from Dr. Derwin:

"Who exactly is Jesus? What kind of God would come to earth as a human? As Christmas approaches, the season of Advent offers us a chance to reflect on our savior, his purpose, and the surprising ways he invited people near to him. Join pastor Derwin Gray in this Advent study as he unveils King Jesus - the God-man who defied expectations, the king of all creation who humbled himself to serve and die, the friend to sinners who wants to lift us up.

2. Kids Classes

We will have two kids' classes: one for ages 0-5 and one for ages K-5th grade. Our kids will have hands-on learning activities that teach them about the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love. They will not only learn together, but serve others as well, led by our Kids' Ministry Director: Crystal Houston and other kids ministry leaders.



Adult Study: "Advent" by Dr. Derwin Gray
Kids Classes:

- Ages 0-5
- Kindergarten-5th Grade





Living in Thankfulness

- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- ☐ Psalm 100:4
- ☐ Colossians 3:15
- ☐ Philippians 4:6-7
- ☐ Psalm 118:24
- ☐ Ephesians 5:20
- ☐ Colossians 4:2
- ☐ Psalm 136:1
- ☐ Hebrews 12:28
- ☐ James 1:17
- ☐ 1 Chronicles 16:34
- ☐ Psalm 95:1-2
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 9:11
- ☐ Psalm 9:1
- ☐ Isaiah 12:4-5
- ☐ 1 Timothy 4:4-5
- ☐ Luke 17:15-16
- ☐ Philippians 1:3-4
- ☐ Psalm 30:11-12
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 4:15
- ☐ 1 Chronicles 29:13
- ☐ Psalm 92:1-2
- ☐ 1 Peter 1:6-7
- ☐ Psalm 107:8-9
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 15:57
- ☐ Psalm 103:1-2
- ☐ Romans 1:21
- ☐ Colossians 2:6-7
- ☐ Psalm 145:1-2
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 2:14
- ☐ Psalm 28:7

Friendship Circle Child Care and Preschool

Our Child Care children will have these themes for November: Friends, Nutrition, Community Helpers, and Thanksgiving. We will continue daily lessons in alphabet, color, shapes, and number recognition. The children will be learning bible stories about Daniel, Esther, and Jonah. We will learn the importance of Thankfulness.

Our Preschool Children will be learning about Pilgrims, Native Americans, and Thanksgiving. They will be collecting items for Operation Christmas Child. If you would like to donate items for Operation Christmas Child, please drop off items in the church office. The Preschool will also enjoy a Thanksgiving Feast together with their parents.

Children's Ministry

During November, our nursery and preschool children, we will be learning stories of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Daniel, and Elisha. Our theme is Going on a Picnic: I can thank God for Everything.

Our elementary children will learn the Bedrock: Building Confidence in God Block by Block. Our stories will teach us about Elijah, Jonah, Daniel, and Esther. During our Sunday School, we will be learning about Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Our Fall Festival on Sunday, October 26th was a great success. 103 families enjoyed a time of family fun and fellowship. Thank you to everyone who brought candy, gave monetary donations, decorated, worked booths, and supported this outreach event.

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 will begin 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.

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. You can register for Children Advent Classes on the church website. 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.

-Crystal



Now through December

Benefitting:

- Samaritan Outreach (twice daily meals open to public)
- First Baptist Food Pantry
- Multiple other organizations

Where to Donate Food:

- **Rescue Church**
Sun 9:30a-10:30a, Wed 6p-8p
- **Embellish Salon & Style**
Mon-Fri 8:30a-4p
- **Finish Line Screen Printing**
Mon-Thurs 9a-5p
- **First United Methodist Church**
Mon-Thurs 8:30a-5:30p, Sun 8a-12p

Community FOOD DRIVE

More Info:



tinyurl.com/yvnj4zza

Want to make a monetary donation directly to an organization? This and lots more up-to-date information found here

If you are in need:

- Visit Samaritan Outreach for meals daily at 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Visit the First Baptist Church Food Pantry (Mon & Wed 9-11:15 a.m.)

November Community Assistance project FOOD DRIVE



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



Greetings Church Family,

Friendship Circle Ministries has been a Major ministry of our church for over 50 years. This ministry began as a preschool for 3 and 4 year olds but over the years, our program expanded to serve families in need of daily childcare. Currently up to 54 children are enrolled in these programs.

Many families have had two generations attended Friendship Circle Preschool, where they have learned to love Jesus, and have continued to grow in their faith and have become committed followers of Jesus to become strong leaders in their faith, to the extent of considering ordained ministry.

In past years this ministry has been able to maintain itself through the tuition paid by the families whose children have attended Friendship Circle. Over the past few years, funding of Friendship Circle ministries has become more difficult. Several years ago, the public schools began offering free preschool for four-year-old children. While this has been a tremendous benefit for children in our community, it has made a significant impact on the 4-year-old Friendship Circle enrolment. State and Federal grants are available to help private childcare facilities, however since we are a United Methodist Church we are not eligible for those grants.

Funding Friendship Ministries will become more of a challenge in 2026 when minimum wage increases to \$15.00/ hour. While all of our staff are worth much more than this, the increased cost of staffing will add strain to our existing budget. In an effort to explore our options for maintaining the outstanding Friendship Circle ministries, Pastor Sean has reached out to the Conference office to request a consultant for review of our program. This consultant visited our church in October, and we are anticipating a report of her findings & recommendations in the next couple weeks. Please keep this situation in prayer as we move forward with this disciple making program.

Mark your calendars to attend the annual Charge Conference on November 9 at 3:00 p.m in Fellowship Hall (please note the change in location). The Charge Conference is the annual business meeting for the local churches. Come and join us as our District Superintendent, Jon Thompson, will moderate this time together.

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.

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



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 4TH GRADE
CHURCH OFFICE 417-256-6167

United Methodist Women

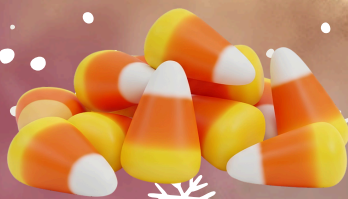
UMW.....you don't want to miss it!

What do snowflakes, candy corn, bakeless bake sales,
money to spend, new brunch recipes, thank banks and
pledge cards have to do with church ladies? Join us on

Tuesday, November 11, at 9:00 in the Fellowship Hall
to find out!! We hope to see you then.

Tuesday November 11, 2025

9:00a.m. Fellowship Hall



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! We are almost finished with our lesson series from Ecclesiastes! Attendance is increasing because youth are inviting friends, creating disciples and helping spread God's word through their testimonies. Special thanks to Madi Moore for decorating our Youth room with our mission:

LOVE Boldly, SERVE Joyfully and LEAD Courageously!

We have had a great month, highlighted by our annual pumpkin carving competition. This was easily the best year with plenty of creativity! Our team of judges awarded prizes of gifts cards or candy. These pumpkins will also be posted on social media. Youth also participated in the Fall Festival on October 26th.



Special Upcoming Events:

November 12th – FCA Youth Worship Event with Dodgeball Competition

November 23rd – Friendsgiving Youth Night

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

October 5th

Attendance: 161

Gifts: \$9,384.68

October 19th

Attendance: 163

Gifts: \$3,076.76



October 12th

Attendance: 142

Gifts: \$8,151.21

October 26th

Attendance: 160

Gifts: \$ 2,599.83

****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

November 2nd

Daylight Savings Time ends

November 4th

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

November 9th

Charge Conference - Fellowship Hall, 3pm

November 10th

Church Council Meeting - Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm

November 11th

Veterans Day

UMW - Fellowship Hall, 9:00am

November 15th

Work day to sort donated food - Fellowship Hall, 9:30

November 18th

In Stitches - Parlor, 10am

November 25th

Blood Drive - Fellowship Hall, 11-3

November 26th, 27th & 28th

Thanksgiving Holiday - Church office will be closed

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Practices every Wednesday
from 7-8PM
Sanctuary

CANTATA SERVICE
12/07/25 ● 10:00am
Sanctuary



DONATING BLOOD IS AS EASY AS PIE



American
Red Cross

Blood Drive **First United Methodist Church**

Fellowship Hall
503 West Main Street
West Plains, MO 65775

Tuesday, November 25, 2025
11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

November 9, 2025

PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ◆ Our Country
- ◆ Recent hurricane victims
- ◆ Bruce Owens - health
- ◆ Paula Gamblain - grief
Pam, Dan & Rita
- ◆ Becca Barnes - health
- ◆ Deborah Whittington -
health
- ◆ Jim Peterson - health
- ◆ Joy Melton - health
- ◆ Brittany Watson - health
- ◆ Amy Smith - health issues
- ◆ Mya McClung- unspoken
- ◆ Arielle - unspoken
- ◆ Braelyn - unspoken
- ◆ Billy Wade - health
- ◆ Lee Ann Warren
- ◆ Desirea Baker- health
- ◆ Shirley Hinkle's daughter &
brother
- ◆ Billy

Marie Nale fell at home and broke her hip. She is currently at West Vue, Room 221 for rehab. Bud & Marie Nale: 1619 Evergreen, WP

Janice Johnson recently had knee replacement surgery. She is home recovering. 4153 Co Rd 4220, WP

Charlene Case has some minor injuries as a result of a recent fall. 1925 Bluebird Way, WP

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

Ted Bunch has continuing health issues as well as the cancer and could use some extra prayer. Ted & Barbara Bunch: 4616 Marianna 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
- Ralph Mattison - cancer (friend of Gary & Marybeth Davis)
- Veda May - breast cancer (Barry Fielder's aunt)
- Steve Tumer
- Trina Johnson

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

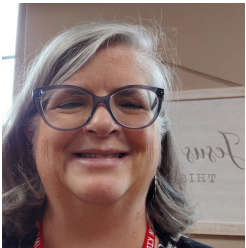
STAFF & LEADERS



Sean McIntyre
Lead Pastor
sean@fumcwestplains.com



Falana Boze
Office Manager
falana@fumcwestplains.com



Crystal Houston
Director of Friendship
Circle Ministries / Children's
Ministries
crystal@fumcwestplains.com

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- **Administrative Council Chair**
Bob Legler
 - **Columbarium Committee**
Janice Bowden

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

Contact Information

417-256-6167 www.fumcwestplains.com
503 West Main • West Plains, Mo 65775