

First United Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

Pearisburg, Virginia 24134 [921-1021]

February 2022

Dr. Brian Burch, Pastor

What is your goal?

As your pastor, I am currently operating with two primary goals. The first is to keep the church alive. With the understandable radical decrease in attendance due to COVID in over 80% of the churches in the United States are struggling. My other goal is to continue to fulfill the great commission by making disciples for Christ. Yes, I admit one goal is far more in line with the commands of Christ than the other. With the 2021 year-end reports in, let us see how we have done in the last twelve months.

Staff: Despite the worries that kept me lying in bed awake at night, all staff remained fully employed here through COVID. Due to the Lord's blessings, we were able to provide a Cost-of-living bonus in the fall of 2021. We were also able to fully fund a 6th-8th grade youth director position for a year.

Sunday School: At the end of 2020, we basically had one Sunday school meeting by Zoom, two meeting by telephone conversations, and another getting lessons by a weekly video. We now have three classes that all meet in person; and Zoom is still an option for one class. Our children are still getting weekly video lessons. No, we are not back to where we were before COVID, but we are showing improvement.

Children & Youth Ministry: Take TWO and Youth shut down completely due to COVID. Take TWO is back to meeting twice a month and is showing some signs of growth. The VBS program in the summer of 2021 was the largest church gathering we had since the beginning of COVID. Our youth is in better shape than in my 10 years as your pastor. Renee Williams and Grace Trent are invested into the program and both the 9-12th graders, and the 6-8th graders are meeting weekly.

Financially we ended the year paying all bills in full and set aside funds in savings.

In terms of missions, over 50 volunteers helped build the 512 Food Pantry and took part in the Giles County mission trip to Alaska. Oh, and yes, we gave \$37,625 away to missions and ministries.

Membership: 2020 we took in 2 new members, 2021 was a blessing in that 6 new members became a part of our church family. This includes 3 baptisms.

Attendance: In person worship 2020: 53 with a joyful jump to 61 in 2021. Online decreased from 230 to 91. Part of that decrease is due to a stricter method of counting that was used.

Since before our congregation started in 1810 Methodist leaders have gathered every year and began their time singing the following words:

And are we yet alive,
And see each other's face?
Glory and praise to Jesus give
For His redeeming grace."

Pearisburg First UM Church is still alive and are starting to see the rebirth of our faith community. Thank you to those who keep dreaming bigger than your pastor and know that and the gates of Hades will not overcome God's church.

22+ in 2 Resurrections in 22

Not two weekends, but two locations. With all the complications of COVID, our youth split into two groups this year. Half went to Pigeon Forge and stayed in a large cabin in the woods except for their adventures at LeConte Center to take part in the live sessions. The other half stayed in Pearisburg and watched the sessions live streamed. Between sessions on Saturday, the Pearisburg group took part in a full afternoon of activities in the church. Youth taking part; Olivia Ferguson, Lauren Ferguson, Lily Seeberger, Heidi Claytor, Wyatt Havens, Maddie Havens, Santana Vaught, Aiden Clark, Ally Whittaker, Tayler Duncan, Rachel Hicks, Madelyn Parks, Malon Oaks, Caiden Wehunt, & Lexi Jones. Adults participating: Renee Williams, Suzanne Whittaker, DeAnne Burch, Brian Burch, Grace Trent, Tracy Ferguson, Troy Ferguson, Shannon Ferguson, Dorcas Parks, Ann Parks, and Bryan Stafford. Yes, a total group of 25 going. Our group in Pigeon Forge is worked with the ConneXion Youth Group from Rich Creek, Hale's Chapel, and Kathleen Memorial UM Churches.

Pastor on Vacation

Yes, DeAnne & Brian are heading to Germany to see their son and his wife for the first time in 2 ½ years. This is your chance as a church to decide if you will pull together and do great things for Christ or not. During this time if you need pastoral care, please contact Rev. Doug Armstrong in Narrows (540-922-9442). Wat Hopkins our church council chair and Amy Westmoreland, our lay leader will be available if you need them. Pastor Brian should have access to email during most of the journey at briancburch@gmail.com. Years ago, Pastor Brian was out two Sundays due to a broken ankle. During that time attendance went up, offering went up and two persons asked to join the church. Can't wait to see what the Lord does here between now and February 15.

Take TWO

The focus for this semester is Bible Jobs. Jeremiah and the potter, Zacchaeus the tax collector, Joshua the soldier, David the musician, Andrew the fisherman as well as a special Ash Wednesday lesson. Any interested sixth or seventh graders can join us in March for confirmation. Choir will be back as well!



**One day VBS is set for
Friday, June 10, 2022.**

Worship Plans

January 30: Paul Bowman is coming back. Paul is the director of the Holston Foundation. His job is simple, help people invest money in ministry and pass out checks. Yes, the last time he came was to drop off a \$2,000 check when we were building the playground. You can ask Nancy Haynie how much he helped with the Young at Heart program through the years. Our congregation has over \$60,000 invested with him including our Alec & Love Witten Youth Fund. \$1,000 from that fund is being send this month to Asbury Seminary to help Suzanne Whittaker with her seminary education.

February 6: Our youth are asking the church to come together for a combined worship service at 11 a.m. this Sunday. They are planning on sharing what they learned from Resurrection and that includes a few videos that Bryan Stafford recorded during the Resurrection event at Pearisburg.

February 13: Let’s hear from Nick Clark, Kathy Mitchem, and Todd Morrison about how the Lord has used them and their dreams for the future. All three of these have expressed their faith in multiple ways and you can be blessed by them.

February 20: “Beating Death” is Pastor Brian’s sermon this Sunday. The Egyptians from the Pharoah’s to the commoners had this vision that the more they put in their casket the better life after death would be. The plan makes for great tours, and tomb raiders; but makes not guarantees on your life after death. Let’s listen to God’s true plan; not those leaders who wanted to be treated like gods.

February 27: “Selling Water” does not sound like a great way to get rich. Yet, if you are in the desert, you can make a fortune. That is the story of the magical community of Petra. All the fancy rock work made famous by Indiana Jones brings in the tourists. But the city was built around collecting and selling water. What is our foundation? Join Pastor Brian for worship this Sunday.

Worship Attendance

Date	11 am	9 am	Online
12/26/2021	56	7	85
01/02/2022	45	6	39
01/09/2022	32	15	100
01/16/2022	-	6	116 (snow)

Are you Frustrated?

Let us begin with a common statement: we all wish COVID had never come. In terms of positive outcomes for our church, we now have a ministry to our shut-ins that allows them to be a part of our worship each week. On the January 16 snow Sunday when 6 persons came to our live worship service, we had an additional 104 watch us online between YouTube and Facebook by that Thursday. On the negative side, our in-person attendance is depressing. The anger we express at each other is higher than it has been in the last 15 years. The book of Psalms is a delight in that we get strong statements that life is not fair; and then a constant return to the declaration we will trust God and praise the Lord. So, let us model our faith after the scriptures. Let us express our frustration, and then praise the Lord and wait for God to act again.

Read Together Schedule
February 2022

- 1 Tuesday: Joshua 21-24
- 2 Wednesday: Psalms 12-14
- 3 Thursday: Job 9-10
- 4 Friday: Isaiah 23-28
- 5 Saturday: Romans 9-10
- 6 Sunday: Matthew 14-16
- 7 Monday: Genesis 20-23
- 8 Tuesday: Judges 1-6
- 9 Wednesday: Psalms 15-17
- 10 Thursday: Job 11-12
- 11 Friday: Isaiah 29-33
- 12 Saturday: Romans 11-12
- 13 Sunday: Matthew 17-19
- 14 Monday: Genesis 24-27
- 15 Tuesday: Judges 7-11
- 16 Wednesday: Psalms 18-20
- 17 Thursday: Job 13-14
- 18 Friday: Isaiah 34-39
- 19 Saturday: Romans 13-14
- 20 Sunday: Matthew 20-22
- 21 Monday: Genesis 28-31
- 22 Tuesday: Judges 12-16
- 23 Wednesday: Psalms 21-23
- 24 Thursday: Job 15-16
- 25 Friday: Isaiah 40-44
- 26 Saturday: Romans 15-16
- 27 Sunday: Matthew 23-25
- 28 Monday: Genesis 32-35

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 37
Pearisburg, VA
24134

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