

Leaving the wilderness?

In Joshua 1 we read:

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them (vs. 1-6).

Think of it: wondering around the wilderness for 40 years! The children of Israel faced danger on every side. There were enemies, animals, lack of water, death, disobedience and the constant complaining? Sounds a little like the wilderness of Covid (but may it not be a 40 year struggle!) The good news is that the people, maybe best called survivors, finally, walked out of the wilderness and began to receive the inheritance that God had promised Moses. Glory, hallelujah!

It feels like we are beginning to walk out of the wilderness at First Church. It has been a difficult, challenging time the last 3 years, for all of us, for a variety of reasons, many associated with the pandemic. The church has had to adapt to what some are calling a "new normal." This new normal may include less numbers physically present for worship, but it contains a large number of people present online. And this new normal is expressing itself with much stronger outreach ministry as well as our new youth group program. I am excited by these emphases. We are doing what God has called us to do – to reach out in His wonderful name!



I love this picture of Clark Evans and Imre Barsy. I took it during our Christmas Shoppe which was run by our youth minister Natasha Evans and our Encounter Youth Group. You will recognize the Star Wars light sabers. Below the table are Star Wars models of the Millennium Falcon and a Jedi X-wing fighter -terms

familiar to all Star Wars fans! Seeing the joy on two grown-up kids in the picture reminds me how many of the shoppers felt as they browsed and purchased (for minimum cost) presents for their loved ones (each family received one free toy).

Dear church family, we are making a great impact on our town, our county and our world! Through 1,500 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, through about 270 bags of food distributed to school children in need throughout Randolph, through over 100 meals made each Monday, Tuesday and Thursday for Lunch with Neighbors, through support of Tyrand Ministries, through the gift givers in conjunction with our Angel Tree, through the collection of clothing for those without adequate clothing, through our We Care program, through the Communion Fund, through our Adult Sunday School, through our Wednesday morning bible study, through Pioneer and Pioneer Teens, through children's church, through Men and Women's ministries and through Scouting, and through other groups and individuals, we are sharing God's blessings! I am so proud of you, Church! Keep up the great work!

As we enter a new year (hard to believe, isn't it?), may God provide you with fulfilling tasks, a heart of faithfulness, a peace that passes understanding, a compassion that humbly serves the least, the last and the lost, and all the strength you need for the service He grants! God bless you, each and every one!

Pastor Brian



Children and Youth Ministry

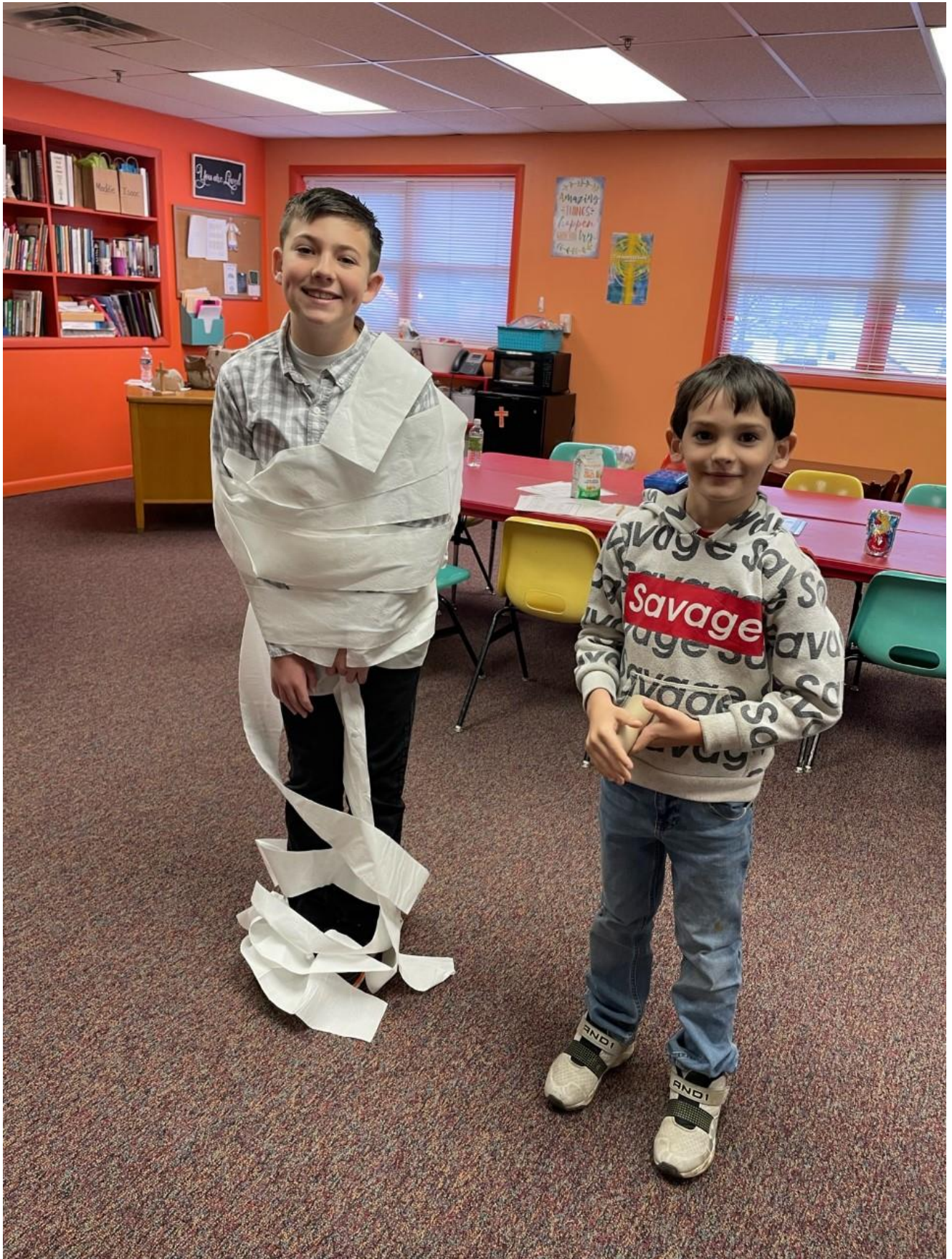
Hello from the Children and Teen Departments. December proved to be a very busy month! Our teens hosted a Toy Shop and were blessed with multitudes of donations. Therefore, several community members were able to shop for their families. Each family was given a toy of their choice for free, and then any toys they wanted after that, were purchased with a donation of their choice. Shoppers seemed overjoyed with the blessing of this ministry. Each was invited to attend our services and events in the future.













Encounter has continued to be a success with an average of 11 kids per week. These teens are creative, funny and enthusiastic! I can't say enough about this ministry and all those involved. I would encourage anyone who has a teen in their family, or in their circle of friends, to invite them to be a part of Encounter.

Teen and kids alike were invited to join us for Christmas Crafts and Cookies. We allowed our creativity to shine as we enjoyed fellowship, a good meal, decorating cookies and making Christmas crafts. It was a joy to see our kids and teens together.

As the new year arrives, I look forward to all God has in store for the teens and children of FUMC. I feel his presence moving and steering us in growth and relationship with Him. If you would like to be a part of any of these ministries, we can find a job that's right for you. Please just reach out to me.

Blessing and a Happy New Year,
Natasha Evans
Youth Minister

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Operation Christmas Child had a great year with 1,500 children in need being served with gift filled shoeboxes from our church!

Special thanks to all who participated in any way to make this happen.

We look forward to working with our church family again as we have started preparing for 2023.

More information will be available soon for this year-round project.

Many thanks!
Bob Cowgill
FUMC OCC Leader



No Pioneer Teen in January since the meeting falls on a No School Day. With only meeting once a month, we will meet the first Monday in February on February 6th at 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm.

2023 January Newsletter

Music Ministries



***“See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way
and to bring you to the place I have prepared.”
Exodus 23:20 (NIV)***

It's a new year! I should be taking a big, long breath after such a busy December month. But all I can think about is catching up on all the work I put off during the holidays. I feel like I am behind before the New Year even starts.

But then God put this scripture before me reminding me that He goes before me and walks beside me along the way, and He does indeed send angels to us on our behalf. One such angel in my life is a dear friend who is one of God's biggest prayer warriors. She was my mother's best friend and when my mother passed at the age of 45, she took over praying for me as my mother had done.

She shared with me recently that her prayer for me and for Brian was for God's **Grace** and **Favor** to be upon our lives and our ministry together. Ever since that revelation, I began seeking a deeper understanding of His Grace and Favor. But what I discovered was the evidence of it throughout that busy and very unpredictable December month. Even in my moments of stress, as I took a step back and drew upon this new knowledge, I could feel God at work giving me His assurance. He reminded me of these important words, “Trust me! I have everything under control.”

The beauty of this revelation caused me to see Christmas and the New Year in a different perspective – through the eyes of God's **Grace** and **Favor**. This is my wish for you in the New Year and beyond.

Susan

The evidence of God's *Grace* and *Favor* was undeniable
in our Music Ministries throughout December.

Our Cantata, "Glory in the Highest (A New Hallelujah)" was a beautiful display of God's handiwork through the 72 adults and children who came together to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth. We had 5 different churches participate: Smith Chapel UMC, Stealey UMC, Duff Street UMC, St. Brendan's Catholic Church and our very own Elkins First UMC.

We were able to reach two communities through our performances on December 10th at Duff Street UMC and December 11th at Elkins First UMC. In this time where change abounds, we found "A New Hallelujah"!!













On December 14th, our Music Ministry groups went to “Mountain Memories” to lead a Christmas Sing-along. It was so good to see the residents join us in singing all those familiar Christmas songs.



On December 15th, our Music Ministry groups went to “ERCC” to lead the residents there in a Christmas Candlelight Service which was led by the “Heart of Worship” Praise Band. Songs were shared, testimonies were shared, and the true meaning of Christmas was felt by all.





LUNCH WITH NEIGHBORS

Our church along with Elkins Family Worship Center, Davis Memorial Presbyterian, and First Baptist have donated 238 coats so far. Keep them coming along with boots, gloves, and winter socks!

Excluding the 164 meals served at our Thanksgiving meal, our neighbors have been served an average of 97 meals a day, (292 meals a week), since November 1. Since December 1, our average has jumped up to 101 meals.

Great fellowship was enjoyed at the monthly brunch on December 18. 127 meals were savored. The January brunch is tentatively scheduled for January 15. Confirmation and details will be announced after the holidays.

Looking back on 2022, we are so happy and proud of our congregation and the Christian community for living the Golden Rule through the "Neighbors" ministry. God's hand is touching many.

Thanks to each, and every one of you!

**Greg and Diana Johnson
Mission Team Co-Directors**

United Women in Faith

The December 14 meeting of the United Women in Faith was a Christmas covered dish luncheon.

The drawing for the quilt was held on December 11 after the Christmas Cantata and the winner was Paula Doerr.

Thank you notes were received from the families of Frankie Menendez, Mary Margaret Miller, and Jo Conway.

The UWF discussed purchasing a new Christmas tree for the sanctuary and having a plaque made for the quilt room door in memory of Jo Conway.

Items were collected for the Christmas Baby Basket to be assembled and delivered to Davis Medical Center before Christmas.

Natasha Evans, Youth Minister, thanked everyone for donating cookies for the children to decorate.

The new slate of officers for 2023 are President: Catherine Poe, Vice President: Jerri Snyder, Secretary: Kathy Hitchcock, Treasurer: Karen Wilmoth.

***Reminder: All women of the church are invited to join the UWF on the second Wednesday of the month at 11:30 am in the Family Life Center.**



**United
Women
in Faith**

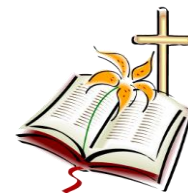
JANUARY BIRTHDAYS							
2	Pat LaFayette	14	Cindy Stemple	21	Bryan Corder	30	Molly Quint
2	Greg Coberly	14	Terry Mallow	21	Elizabeth Antolini	31	Linda Wyatt
2	Ashley Boley	15	Don McCaskie	21	Becky McDowell		
3	Gale Poe	15	Charles Conaway II	22	Connor Montgomery		
4	Don Judy	15	Deena Fox	23	Holly Conrad		
5	Denise Wallace	15	Allison Jack	25	Evette LaFayette		
5	Toby Myers	16	Doreen Hall	25	Ryan Jones		
6	Mary Smith	16	Barb Hanna	25	Sarah Lipscomb		
6	Scott Collett	16	Mary Rowan	26	Dave Hanna		
6	Joel Casto	16	Marty Martin Jr.	26	Sharon HInchman		
7	Debbie Welshonce	17	Vicki Fisher	26	Jeanne Hughes		
7	Shelley Hyre	17	Brian Shields	26	Curtis Conrad		
9	Greg Perkins	17	Chris Shields	28	Carolyn Channell		
9	Angela Nelan	17	Thea Kerns	28	David McDowell		
9	Michaela Mace	18	Beverly Skinner	28	Terra Oldham		
10	Allen Conrad	18	Matthew Downs	28	Alexander White		
11	Marylou Raikes	18	Leah Armstrong	28	Madalyn Hickman		
11	Linda Robey	19	Barbara Carroll	29	Tommie Bodkins		
11	Sarah Ware	19	Dave Simmons	29	Liam Benevides		
12	Loyal Canfield	19	Megan Higgins	29	Lacey Wood		
12	Amie Wamsley	19	Jeff Menendez	30	Garry Shiflett		
13	Sue Lewis	20	Billy McCauley	30	T.L. Jack II		

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES	
15	Ken & Jamie McBride

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

to the families of

Russ Collett's and Kathy Howser's upon the death of their mothers.



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The Circuit Rider
January 2023

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Monday-Thursday 8:30 AM – 3 PM / PH: 304-636-0660

Pastor: Brian Seders (304-636-0406 Home)
blseders@gmail.com, twitter: @SedersBrian

Assoc. Pastor: Trudy Carowick

Office Manager/Treasurer: Rhonda Elmer
rhonda@fumcelkinswv.com

Council On Ministries Director: Greg Johnson

Youth Minister: Natasha Evans

Financial Secretary: Julie Civiello

Music Director: Susan Seders

Pianist/Handbell/Choir Director: Susan Seders

Pastor Emeritus: Basil Hensley

Custodian: Donna Abbott

Nursery Supervisor: Tammy Casto

Staff Liaison: Lynn Ritter

