

First United Methodist Church
Cherryville, North Carolina

THE MESSENGER
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Vol. XXXVII No. 2

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February Reflection

***1 John 3:11 "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning,
that we should love one another."***

Brothers and sisters,

These past couple of weeks have been anything but ordinary. Between an ice storm and snow enough to cover your boots, we have seen the full range of winter weather here in beautiful Cherryville, North Carolina. I can't tell you just how *off* my weeks have felt without being able to gather with one another for worship. Yet, even in the midst challenging weather conditions, we have still been able to worship with one another, we have still been able to get together, we have still been able to live our faith. As we set our sights towards a new month, I can't approach February and not think about that pesky four-letter word...LOVE.

We live in a culture that talks endlessly about love. We sing about it, stream movies about it, and market everything from coffee to cars with it. Love is celebrated as a feeling that sweeps us off our feet, a spark that ignites when the conditions are just right. It is often portrayed as effortless, self-fulfilling, and deeply personal—something we "fall into" and, just as easily, fall out of. And yet, many of us quietly sense that something is missing in these cultural stories of love. If love is only a feeling, what happens when the feeling fades? If love exists primarily to make us happy, what do we do when loving someone costs us something?

Scripture offers us a richer, deeper, and more demanding vision of love—one that does not begin with emotion, but with God. The Bible uses many words for love, but the one that rises to the surface again and again in the New Testament is *agapē*: a self-giving, steadfast love that seeks the good of the other, no matter the cost. This is the love that God shows to Israel again and again, even when the covenant is broken. This is the love we see embodied in Jesus Christ, who does not simply *feel* compassion for the world, but gives himself fully for it. "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Notice that God's love is not a response to our worthiness, our attractiveness, or our good behavior. It is an act of grace. God loves because God *is* love.

This stands in sharp contrast to many cultural ideas of love. Our culture often treats love as a transaction: I will love you as long as you meet my needs, affirm my identity, or make my life easier. When love is framed this way, relationships become fragile, and people become disposable. Scriptural love, however, is covenantal rather than contractual. It is rooted in promise, not performance. This is why Paul can write that love is patient and kind, that it "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures

all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). This is not sentimental language. It is honest language about love that shows up when it would be easier to walk away.

John Wesley understood this well. For Wesley, love was not merely a belief we affirm but a holiness we live. He spoke of “holiness of heart and life,” insisting that God’s love transforms not only our inner attitudes but our outward actions. To love God fully, Wesley taught, is inseparable from loving our neighbor. There is no private Christianity, and there is no disembodied love.

This matters deeply for the life of the church. The church is not meant to mirror the culture’s understanding of love, but to witness to God’s. Jesus tells his disciples, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Notice that he does not say we will be known by our opinions, our arguments, or even our good intentions—but by our love. What does this kind of love look like in practice?

It looks like patience in a world that values speed.

It looks like forgiveness in a culture quick to cancel.

It looks like commitment when leaving would be easier.

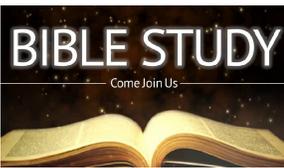
It looks like making room at the table for those who feel unseen or unwelcome.

This love is not passive or permissive. Scriptural love tells the truth, seeks justice, and calls people toward wholeness. But it always does so with humility and grace. Love, as Scripture presents it, is strong enough to hold both truth and mercy together. As a congregation, we are invited to examine not only how we talk about love, but how we practice it. Do our relationships reflect God’s patient, self-giving love? Do our disagreements remain rooted in mutual respect? Do our ministries embody Christ’s concern for the least, the lost, and the lonely?

None of us loves perfectly. That is why we return again and again to the source of love itself. We love, as 1 John reminds us, “because he first loved us.” God’s love is not something we manufacture; it is something we receive—and then pass on. My prayer for us is that, in a loud world full of competing definitions of love, we would be shaped most deeply by the love we encounter in Jesus Christ. A love that does not fade with feeling. A love that does not depend on convenience. A love that is strong enough to change us—and through us, to bless the world God so dearly loves.

Grace and peace,

Zack Christy



BIBLE STUDY with Pastor Zack will continue on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the June Medlin Classroom.



A new Bible Study will be meeting every other Thursday at the home of Phyllis Thornburg at 10:00 a.m. **Our next meeting will be on Thursday, February 12.** We hope that you will be able to join us for this study.



"GREETING CARD OUTREACH"
Sunday, February 8
We will have cards available for signing on Sunday, Feb. 8 to send to our church family or members of our church who are sick, or home bound, or who may be struggling. Also, there are many friends in our community who need some love. In an effort to reach out to others, there will be various cards available for you to sign for our shut-ins or members of our church or community on the second Sunday of each month. These cards will be set up on a table in the narthex for you to drop by and sign. The next "Greeting Card Sunday" will be Sunday, February 8, 2026.



Each Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. we offer coffee and doughnuts before Sunday School for a time of gathering.

Breakfast

On **Saturday, February 28**, we will have our Community Breakfast. Serving times will be from 7:30 - 10:00 a.m. Come join us for a time of fellowship and a delicious all you can eat breakfast buffet. Cost will be by donation. Our profits have gone toward assisting our local community by giving to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, to the local "Handy Man's Ministry" for helping with minor repairs to homes, and to our youth for retreats and mission trips. **We hold this event the last Saturday of every month.**

Anyone who would like to volunteer to fill in or help with the breakfast, please contact Bill Moss or the church office.

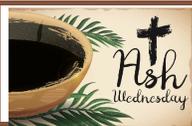


The Backpack Ministry is in need of the items listed below of nonperishable items to put in book bags during the month of February.

Thank you to all who assist with this program. Your generous donations help this mission to be successful and are very much appreciated by those who receive the book bags.

- Feb. 1 Spam
- Feb. 8 Peanut Butter
- Feb. 15 Poptarts
- Feb. 22 Ravioli
- Mar. 1 Canned tuna

Thank you,
The Backpack Ministry Committee



Ash Wednesday Service will be held on February 18, at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary.



CHILDREN'S CHURCH is held during our 10:30 worship service for all children **3yrs thru 3rd grade**. The children will leave from the sanctuary worship service following the children's sermon and go to a classroom on the educational hall for lessons and crafts. Parents can pick-up their children at the end of worship. A packet will be available outside the sanctuary in the Narthex for children 4th-5th graders or older with pencils crayons and coloring pages and Children's Worship bulletin. Again... **volunteers are needed for Children's Church teachers and helpers.** Please let Bess know if you are willing to help with children's church.



The missions and evangelism committees are hosting a blanket drive. The goal is to get blankets that will then be given to the police and firemen as they encounter those who need warmth. When you are out shopping if you see a blanket, please pick it up, as it will help keep someone warm during these cold months. If you have any questions please reach out to Crystal Thornburg and Susan Fraley.



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR ACOLYTES AND CRUCIFERS

Thanks so much for serving your church as Acolyte and Crucifer. You are an important part of our worship service each week. Please see the below Acolyte/Crucifer schedule for the month of **FEBRUARY 2026**. **Acolytes and Crucifers will resume wearing robes.** This has been very well received by both our congregation and the young people. **ALSO PLEASE BE IN THE NARTHEX BY 10:15 a.m. TO GET READY!**

****If you cannot serve on your Sunday, PLEASE contact Bess @ 704-435-6732, cell: 704-836-6803 or 704-435-5185 or switch with one of the other people on the list. ****

ACOLYTE

CRUCIFER

Feb. 1	Hunter Brafford	Mallie Emerson
Feb. 8	Zach Harmon	Seth Harmon
Feb. 15	Emma Pruitt	Grayce Pruitt
Feb. 22	Lawson Walls	Ava Thornburg

*****NOTE TO ACOLYTES***PLEASE WEAR YOUR ROBE WHEN YOU GO BACK TO EXTINGUISH THE CANDLES AT THE END OF THE SERVICE.**



FEBRUARY NURSERY WORKERS

We are proud to offer an infant nursery, provided each Sunday morning, for our sweet babies during the 10:30 worship service. Our nursery is located at the end of the hall and to your right just below the church office. **A BIG THANK YOU** to all who have agreed to help in the Nursery. Below is the Nursery Workers list for **February**. You will receive a reminder card and text on your given Sunday. Please let Bess or Susan Beam know if you cannot be there on your Sunday.

Feb. 1	Renee Allen
Feb. 8	Karen Freeman
Feb. 15	Robin Blackburn
Feb. 22	Dawn Whitworth

fff fit fab fun bunch



The Fit Fab Fun Bunch will break the “winter blues” with a trip to Captain’s Cap in Gastonia on Tuesday, February 10th. This was postponed from our January 27th and February 3rd planned outings. We will have supper together and just enjoy a night out with the group!! Please mark your calendar and plan to join this **FitFabFun** group! We will leave from the church at 4:00 p.m. and return around 7:00 p.m. The cost based on how much you eat!

Any one 60 and older is invited to be a part of this energetic bunch of Senior adults. Remember, today is the oldest you’ve ever been and the youngest you’ll ever be again! So, Enjoy yourself today!!!!



The Pastor Parish Relations Committee is seeking applicants to fill the position of Director of Music Ministries. Primary responsibilities include directing the Sanctuary Choir for Sunday worship:

- Prepare and conduct weekly choir rehearsals
- Work with the Director of Christian Education for Children and Youth to develop and lead music ministry opportunities for K-12 students.
- Recruit, welcome, and train new musicians

Interested applicants may contact Palmer Huffstetler at palhuf@gmail.com or the church office.

Romans 12 SS Class News



"5th ANNUAL SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY" FEBRUARY 8TH

The Roman's 12 Sunday School class will be hosting a "Souper Bowl Sunday" lunch following our worship service at 11:30 am in the fellowship hall. The cost is donation only. There will be a variety of delicious soups and desserts for all to enjoy. All proceeds will again be used for service in church and community needs. Plan now to enjoy a hearty bowl of soup prior to the Super Bowl LX event on Super Sunday, February 8th.

RSVP ON THE SIGN-UP SHEET ON THE TABLE IN THE NARTHEX OR IN THE HALLWAY.



Prayer Breakfast

Prayer Breakfast meets every Thursday morning before school at 7:00 am. Start your day off with a time of fellowship and prayer together with other students, parents, grandparents and friends of all ages. Our prayer breakfast is such a blessing to all who attend. It's a great start to our school day, work day or anyday! We are meeting at Homefolks Café at 7:00 am on Thursday mornings to feed our tummies, our souls and our hearts with friendships, devotions and prayer time before school. Everyone of all ages and all denominations are invited to join the prayer breakfast group! Our church van or Miss Bess will be there to provide a ride to school for anyone who needs it.



Hello my UMY Friends...
U.M.Y.F. (United Methodist Youth Fellowship) meets on Sunday nights at 6:00 pm until 7:30 pm down stairs. We will resume our meetings on February 15th. I have really missed some of you lately but I hope you enjoyed your days in the snow and "Superbowl" with friends. Our group is for all 6th thru 12th graders. We have been planning for our winter/spring activities. We gather in fellowship each week and of course play games, have our snack suppers, devotions and make plans for the year. You are welcome to invite a friend to join our group.

Our lessons and devotions for the next several weeks will be based on Kyle Idleman's **"NOT A FAN"**. We will look closely at Jesus's invitation to follow Him. Not just as an interested "fan" or enthusiastic admirer but a completely committed follower of Christ. We will work with DVD stories and examples and daily scriptures.

We had a wonderful uplifting trip to **The Edge Conference at Ridgecrest**. Our group experienced dancing, singing, and praising God with 500+ other youth groups from all over the southeast. There was laughter with the ventriloquist and our own Hunter Brafford made it to the stage for our entertainment. We gained knowledge of the scriptures and good worship times together as well as plug-in time and leadership training for the adults. **MANY THANKS** to Andrew Harmon and Matt Brafford for coming along on the trip with us!!!



We are also planning our Winter Snow Tubing trip on February 16th at Jonas Ridge Snow Tubing Park. The cost is \$45.00 person. We will leave from the church at 10:30 am and return around 5:00 p.m. permission slips will be sent out via mail. You can invite friends to go with us. Please let Bess know if you plan to go.

We will be again be working on filling the food box and doing toiletries and participating in the blanket drive and a Lock-In possibly in March. Also, we are working on some new fund raisers in the future. We need your help to plan and your in-put for our activities!



UMK's

Our Wednesday night UMK's are going strong for the winter 2026 session. We are meeting in the fellowship hall each Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm for our supper/game time, and at 6:30 move in to sanctuary for object lessons, skits, singing and offering. Then from 7:00 to 7:25 we will have bible study and lesson time down stairs. Then back up to the sanctuary for vespers and closing prayers. All 3-year-olds thru 5th graders are invited to come and join in the fun with our United Methodist Kids from 6:00 – 7:30pm. For the winter months we will enter at the side door near the kitchen and leave from there also. Our lessons will be based on the stories and scripture behind our Christmas presentation "The Wish".

UMK Lesson Schedule for February: finish up "MORE THAN A WISH"

"THE PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS"

Feb. 11 Wish Upon a Star
Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1-12

UMK LESSONS FOR FEBRUARY



PSALM 67

Feb. 18 "God's Grace" / Ash Wednesday
Psalm 67:1

Feb. 25 "God's Salvation" Psalm 67:2

UMK Supper Schedule for February

- Feb. 11 TBA
Tom and Madison Dellinger
- Feb. 18 Subs, chips and brownies
Phyllis and Chesley Thornburg
- Feb. 25 Pizza, chips, oranges and cookies
J.L Beam Men's SS class

****NOTE: UMK SUPPER MENU IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE...If anyone would like to volunteer to prepare and serve UMK Suppers please let Bess know! Thanks to all those who have so willingly served and provided supper during the year!!**



After many hours of planning and years of fund raising, we have completed our playground upgrades. The total cost for the upgrades was:

- \$70,394.22 - cost for upgrades
- \$61,362.22 - received from donations
- \$9,032.00** - still needed to fund project.

The UMK's, Youth, Preschool and scouts are enjoying the improvements that are already in place. Please remember this fund when making memorials or special gifts to the church.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT: FEB. 1, 2026

Received to Date..... \$22,683.25
Needs to date..... \$44,104.10

OTHER FUNDS RECEIVED YTD:

- Church Building Renovations..... \$740.00
- Endowment Fund \$50.00
- Backpack Ministry \$210.00
- Pastor's Discretionary Fund \$130.00
- Playground Fund..... \$340.00
- Youth Missions..... \$40.00

February Birthdays

- 1 Sam Smith
- 2 Amber Grace Brittain
- 2 Hayden Rupard
- 5 Jedidiah Sneed
- 5 Jennifer Wilent
- 5 Paige Yount
- 6 Martha Allen
- 6 Freida Clawson
- 6 Kathy Panton
- 6 James Putnam
- 7 Jacob Ross
- 11 Dennis Bradley
- 11 Hunter Brafford
- 12 Johnny Brown
- 13 Melanie Ross
- 14 Maria Pruitt
- 14 Bobby Putnam
- 14 Justin Winter
- 16 Will Elmore
- 18 Cindy Dellinger Swisher
- 20 Kay Bumgarner
- 20 Terry Moss
- 21 Aiden Sneed
- 22 Lauren Carnes
- 22 Martha Cornwell
- 22 Bennetta Dellinger Dunning
- 22 Rita McGinnis
- 23 Chad Thornburg
- 24 Shaina Anderson
- 24 Aidan Harmon
- 24 Haley Wilent
- 26 T. L. Saine
- 27 MeKenzie Drum
- 27 Morgan Morrow
- 27 Katie Walls
- 28 Kathy Craft
- 28 Zack Fraley
- 29 Hudson Beam
- 29 David Smith

If your birthday is in February and not listed, please contact the church office.



FEBRUARY HOMEBOUND MEMBER TO SEND A CARD

Mr. Jim Tate
110 Olde Coach Lane
Crouse, NC 28033

Tuesday, February 3

6:00pm - Evangelism/Missions Committee meeting

Wednesday, February 4

6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, February 5

7:00am - Prayer Breakfast at Homefolk's Café

7:00pm - Preschool BOD meeting

Sunday, February 8

"GREETING CARD OUTREACH"

9:00am - Coffee & Doughnuts - time of gathering

9:30am - Sunday School

10:30am - Worship

11:30am - Souper Bowl luncheon

Tuesday, February 10

4:00pm - FFF Bunch to Captains Cap

Wednesday, February 11

6:00pm - UMK's

6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, February 12

7:00am - Prayer Breakfast at Homefolk's Café

10:00am - Bible Study at the home of Phyllis Thornburg

Sunday, February 15

9:00am - Coffee & Doughnuts - time of gathering

9:30am - Sunday School

10:30am - Worship

6:00pm - Youth

Monday, February 16

10:30am - Youth Snowtubing at Jonas Ridge

Wednesday, February 18

6:00pm - UMK's

6:30pm - Ash Wednesday Service

Thursday, February 19

7:00am - Prayer Breakfast at Homefolk's Café

Sunday, February 22

9:00am - Coffee & Doughnuts - time of gathering

9:30am - Sunday School

10:30am - Worship

6:00pm - Youth

Wednesday, February 25

6:00pm - UMK's

6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, February 26

7:00am - Prayer Breakfast at Homefolk's Café

10:00am - Bible Study at the home of Phyllis Thornburg

Saturday, February 28

7:30am-10:00am - Community wide breakfast buffet