

THE MESSENGER
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
601 NORTH PINK STREET
CHERRYVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 28021
Phone (704) 435-6732 Fax (704) 435-4468
firstmethodistcherryville.com

NOVEMBER 26, 2025

Vol. XXXVI No. 12

Rev. Zack Christy
Pastor

Teresa Gardo
Administrative Assistant

Bess Thornburg
Director of Christian Education

Nancy Catena
Organist

Linda Barger
Chancel Choir Director

Andrew Harmon
Handbell Director

Cam Alfaro
Audio Visual Tech.

Trinity Smith
FUMC Weekday Preschool Dir.

December Reflection

Brothers and Sisters,

I can vividly remember being a child in elementary school, and watching the clock as it seemed to stand still waiting for Christmas break to officially begin. If I pause long enough, I can still hear my Nike's squeaking on the linoleum of Mrs. Duncan's classroom, as it felt like Christmas would never come. Flash forward to today and I am trying to figure out how to make time stand still so I can get everything I need done. As I write this the Monday before Thanksgiving, I am somewhat concerned that I should have started planning for this season back in July.

In the midst of the craziness and business of this Christmas season, we here in Church strive to point to something much more important than the commercialization that has taken over this season. As we prepare to enter this holy season of Advent, I invite you to pause, breathe, and receive once again the deep gift this season offers. Advent is far more than the countdown to Christmas it is a sacred time of waiting watching and preparing our hearts for the transforming presence of Christ.

Advent teaches us the spiritual practice of waiting. Scripture is filled with God's people waiting, Israel waiting for deliverance, the prophets waiting for God's justice, Mary waiting for her child. These stories remind us that waiting is not wasted time, but a place where faith is shaped. In our own lives of faith we too wait, for healing, for guidance, for renewed strength. Advent assures us that God meets us in these waiting places is already at work in ways we cannot yet see.

The candles of Advent help guide our journey. The first candle symbolizes hope, and it reminds us that even the faintest light can push back the darkness, and there is no darkness so strong that it can overpower the light. Our hope is not wishful thinking, or in our own powers or devices. Our hope is firmly rooted in God. As Paul reminds us in Romans 5, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

The second candle that we light represents peace. This is not the fragile peace the world offers, that never actually represents peace. The peace of God is not passive; it is not the absence of conflict, but rather the presence of God in the midst of it. When Christ enters the world, he does not eliminate the turmoils surrounding him, rather he embodies peace so fully that even storms must bow before his word.

The third is the candle of joy. It is a different color, pink, symbolizing a shift in tone. In the mist of waiting and longing, joy bursts forth as a reminder that God's work is already unfolding. Joy is not the same

as happiness, happiness is fleeting, dependent on circumstances, while joy is anchored in the presence of God. Advent joy reminds us that God delights in surprising us.

The fourth candle, centers us on the very heartbeat of the gospel, love. Advent love is not sentimental; it is incarnational. It is God taking on flesh, entering our world not from a distance but from within. Love that saves, love that heals; love that does not give up, love that is always looking for that one lost sheep. In Jesus Christ we see the fullness of God's love revealed; a love that comes close, that stoops down, that welcomes, that forgives, that transforms.

Theologically Advent grounds us in the story of salvation. We remember Christ's first coming to Bethlehem, we rejoice in His presence with us now, and look forward with hope to his coming again. Advent teaches us to live faithfully between promise and fulfillment. It forms us as disciples, helps us to slow down, practice prayer, and open our lives to Christ's renewing work. For us as First UMC Cherryville, Advent is an opportunity to refocus our hearts. It calls us to worship with intention, to strengthen our life together and to renew our commitment to mission and service. This season also invites us to generosity, compassion, and gratitude, reminding us that Christ is born not only in Bethlehem but also in every act of love shared in his name.

My prayer for you this Advent is simple: that Christ will meet you where you are. If you are weary, may he renew your strength. If you are grieving, may he surround you with comfort. If you are joyful, may he deepen your gratitude. And if you feel distant from God, may this season lead you home. As we light the candles each week, may their glow remind us that Christ, the true Light, has come, is with us now, and will come again in glory. Let us walk through this holy time together with hearts open to wonder, hope, and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace,

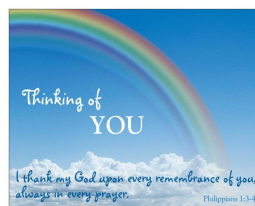
Zack Christy



We will have our annual
Christmas Eve Service
of Lights on
Wednesday, Dec. 24, at
6:00 p.m.



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



"GREETING CARD OUTREACH"

Sunday, December 14

We will have cards available for signing on Sunday, December 14 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, December 14.



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

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.

- Dec. 7 Canned chicken & dumplings
- Dec. 14 Canned beef stew
- Dec. 21 Tomato soup
- Dec. 28 Chicken Noodle soup
- Jan. 4 canned peaches

Thank you,
The Backpack Ministry Committee

Breakfast

On **Saturday, November 29**, 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.**



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.



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 **DECEMBER 2025**. **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. ****

	<u>ACOLYTE</u>	<u>CRUCIFER</u>
Dec. 7	Ella Shuford	Henry Shuford
Dec. 14	Landry Pruitt	Grayce Pruitt
Dec. 21	Zach Harmon	Seth Harmon
Dec. 28	Amber Grace Brittain	Lawson Walls

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



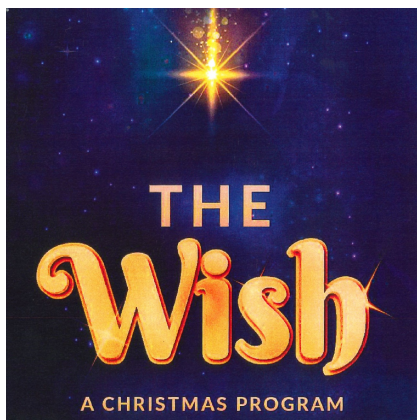
DECEMBER NURSERY WORKERS

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 **December**. 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.

Dec. 7 Emily Winter
Dec. 14 Dawn Whitworth
Dec. 21 Susan Beam
Dec. 28 Maria Pruitt

UMKS CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION ...



Our UMKs will delight the congregation with a presentation of ***“THE WISH”*** on Sunday, Dec. 14th during the 10:30 a.m. worship service. They have a program of Christmas songs and carols to share as a Christmas chorus as well as a somewhat modern journey with the three wisemen.

UMK's



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Our Wednesday night United Methods Kids, better known as UMKs are meeting each Wednesday night. All 3 yr. olds through 5th graders are welcome to join in and be a part of our UMK program. UMKs meet each Wednesday night at 6:00 p.m. Supper is served each night from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. and then we will move into the sanctuary for our singing and assembly time. For the month of December, we are working hard on our Christmas presentation of ***“THE WISH”*** in the Sanctuary. Everyone will be a part of the play and is encouraged to **PLEASE** be at UMKs to practice. We have a lot of work to do!!!! Then on December 17th we will celebrate and have our Christmas party and have our Christmas Eve Bulletin coloring contest and greet a possible visitor from the North Pole!!!! Parents can pick-up your children at 7:30 p.m. at the side entrance.

Dec. 3 “The Wish” play practice

Dec. 10 “The Wish” play practice

Dec. 17 UMK Christmas Party!!!!

Dec. 24 No Meeting Merry Christmas

Dec. 31 No Meeting Happy New Year!!!

We love our Wednesday nights of fun and learning together about God's love! As always leaders, helpers, kitchen volunteers and supper providers are needed. Let Bess know if you are willing to help!

UMK DECEMBER SUPPERS:

Dec. 3 Chicken nuggets, tots and cookies
Kelsi & Zach Price & Amy Shedd

Dec. 10 Soup and Sandwiches and dessert
Chris & Bobbi Ballard

Dec. 17 Pizza, chips, dessert

CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHT!

Dec. 24 NO MEETING MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

Dec. 31 NO MEETING HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!



Prayer Breakfast

Prayer Breakfast meets every Thursday morning before school at 7 a.m. 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 a.m. 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 will be there to provide a ride to school for anyone who needs it.

*****PLEASE NOTE WE WILL NOT MEET DECEMBER 25TH OR JANUARY 1ST DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS.**



Our UMYF YOUTH group is sponsoring an angel tree. Many of you have already seen it and taken an angel from the tree. Thanks so much for taking an angel and buying a gift for a needy child in our community. The Angel tree is on the back table in the narthex and holds angels for children of all ages. Each angel has a sticker on the back describing the needed gift or toy as well as the size and age of the child. There is also an application #/number on the sticker. This helps to identify the gift with the child. Please attach your angel to a boxed, but unwrapped gift, and place it under the tree when you bring it in. **THANKS FOR HELPING A CHILD AND OUR YOUTH WITH THIS MISSION POSSIBLE PROJECT!!**

THE GIFTS ARE DUE BY DECEMBER 12TH!!!!



UMYF CHRISTMAS AND DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY!!

We have several things in store for our group this holiday season:

Our Angel Tree is up and decorated and ready for our members to choose an angel and fulfill a child's Christmas wish. Our UMYF is sponsoring the Angel Tree and we will be collecting the angel gifts for needy children in our area until December 12th.

On Monday December 8th we will be leaving from the church at 4:00 p.m. to go to the Operation Christmas Child Operations center in Charlotte to help sort and pack Samaritans Purse shoe boxes. We should be home around 10:30 P.M. You may need money for a quick supper or snacks.

December 14th will be our Christmas Party and Christmas shopping spree. We will meet that evening at 5:00 p.m. we will meet at the church to go to Walmart and finish our shopping for our Christmas family. We will eat at the Subway in Walmart and come back to the church with our gifts to pack them up and label them and then play "DIRTY SANTA."

***EVERYONE IS ASKED TO BRING A "GENDER NEUTRAL" GIFT OF AT LEAST \$15.00, BUT NOT OVER \$20.00, FOR A SECRET SANTA GIFT EXCHANGE.

NO UMYF ON DECEMBER 21ST, DECEMBER 28TH OR JANUARY 4TH.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL !!!
AND HAPPY NEW**





KINGDOM KIDS KORNER

We have had so much happen this past month, Our Trunk-or-treat turned out so truly amazing. The First United Methodist Church was the hit of the town. We haven't had such a turn out with participation of trunks and children in many years. The rain didn't spoil a thing! I'm so grateful to all who made this happen. November has been such a busy month. We had Teddy Bear portraits to take photos. We celebrated Veterans Day by wearing red, white and blue and drawing soldiers and American Flags. Our classes have begun to practice for our Christmas program which will be on December 18". We have been learning about Moses with Pastor Zack in Chapel. The children have been learning about Pilgrims and Indians, fruits and veggies! The four year old class has been learning a thanksgiving prayer to say for their family. We look forward to our upcoming Thanksgiving break with our families. December will be a very busy month, learning about the birth of Jesus!

Thank you all for all you do for our preschool. We are so blessed.

Mrs. Trinity Smith



YOU ARE INVITED TO A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS event right here at our church Sanctuary on Friday evening December 12th at 7 p.m. Parker Webb and Guilford will present: *"O come ye"*.

As many of you know Parker is the son of Rick and Phyllis Webb and the grandson of the late Wonnies and Margaret Sue Webb. We have been inspired and entertained by the Webb family for years and we look forward to a night of inspiration and music to set off our Christmas Season. Please make plans now to attend. The cost is a love offering made during the performance. This is a must see for your Holiday to be complete!

STEWARDSHIP REPORT: NOV. 23, 2025

Received to Date \$296,338.92
Needs to Date \$394,547.14

OTHER FUNDS RECEIVED YTD:

Church Building Renovations \$9,630.00
Endowment Fund \$1,755.00
Backpack Ministry \$1,470.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund \$2,842.93
Playground Fund \$26,234.99
Youth Missions \$900.00

DECEMBER USHERS:

Gary Freeman, Danny Webb, Reid Huss,
Guy Eaker, Vee Thornburg



Stewardship update: Our 2026 pledge campaign is underway and a special thank you to everyone who has turned in their pledge card.

We have received 23 cards totaling \$83,400.00. The finance committee invites all church members to turn in a pledge card. You may bring it by the church office or you may place it in the offering plate on Sunday morning.

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IN HONOR

We gratefully acknowledge gifts presented to the church in honor of:

BRUCE BARRETT

Terry & Dawn Moss

TERESA HOPPER

Danny & Teci Webb

FRED RUDDER

Danny & Teci Webb

DANNY WEBB

Terry & Dawn Moss

✠ ✠

PRAYER LIST (Members)

Linda Alexander, Kent Ballard, Michael Beam, Steve Bowen, Dennis Bradley, Matt Brafford, Mac & Jewel Brawley, Mike Burgess, Deanna Daggerhart, Brent Gardo, Ruth Gaston, Reid Huss, Dick Ledford, Archie Mitchell, Samantha Moss, Dave Owens, Rev. Harry Queen, Amanda Sorenson, Vernon & Betty Smith, Todd Sorenson, Jim Tate, Ron Walls, Wayne & Belinda Watts, and all our homebound and nursing home members.

PRAYER LIST (Family & Friends)

Jerry “Buck” Carpenter, Mary Crocker, Danny Eaker, Becky Estes, Steve Kale, Susan Moss, Jennifer Pruitt, Rick Webb, Matt Williams, Greg Yount, Frank Zayas and our loved ones in the military.

LOVED ONES IN THE MILITARY:

#Ethan Beck, Edward Blackburn, Caleb Dickerson,

*Hunter Haire, *Jessica Lovell, Paxton York.

Church Member, *Deployed



After many hours of planning and years of fund raising, we have almost completed our playground upgrades. Our Playground Selection Committee along with the Trustees originally anticipated the cost of the upgrades to be around \$80,000.00. After the work began, these 2 committees saved the church almost \$10,000 by doing some of the manual labor themselves and we are so thankful for this savings. The total cost for the upgrades is anticipated to be

\$70,394.22 - cost for upgrades

\$60.042.23 - received from donations

\$10,351.99 - 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.

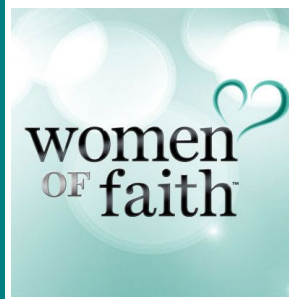
Our Advent Special Event was held last Sunday, November 23. It was a huge success and our church looks beautiful and now the Season of Advent begins.

A special Thank you goes out to so many people. Thank you to the Special Events committee for their tireless efforts to plan and carry out the special events for our church family during 2025. A Special thank you to Bobbi and Chris Ballard for preparing the Soups for this event. Thank you to Subway (@ Walmart Cherryville) for going above and beyond to provide us w/ fresh and delicious Subs. Not only did they provide us with a very fair price, they even threw in a tray of cookies, all our condiments, and packaged the order. Thank you to those church members who just “showed up” to provide dessert, and who jumped in today to assist where needed. Thank you to the members of our Youth family for assisting w/ carrying soups / plates for anyone who needed assistance. They assisted with clean up and even helped carry out trash! Thank you to Dr Claudia Harrelson who provided an inspiring story time about the meaning of Chrismons... with our “little ones”. Thank you to each of the ladies (and gentlemen) who “led” the efforts to decorate. Most of all Thank you to “YOU” our Church family. You showed up and You showed out today! It has been MANY years since we had a traditional “Hanging of the Greens”... and so 2025 “Advent Hanging of the Greens” will be the first of many to come!

Personally, I could feel the presence of the Lord when looking at every face, seeing every smile, hearing every laugh, and watching every step you took to serve the Lord today through your efforts. “Thank you” to our church family seems inadequate. BUT it is all I have.

Thank you and May God Bless each of you this Christmas Season, and May you feel joy when you look around our church this season knowing it was done by family for family.

Merry Christmas!
Crystal Thornburg
and the 2025 Special Events Committee



The Women of Faith will have a covered dish dinner here at the church on **Monday, December 1, at 6:00 p.m.** If you have taken an angel tree tag, please bring your gift to this dinner. We will also have some Christmas fun and games at this dinner. All ladies of the church are invited to join us for this time of fellowship and fun.



DON'T FORGET JESUS

Christmas poem on remembering Jesus through the busyness of Christmas

Don't Forget Jesus
Christmas is a special time
To reflect on Jesus Christ,
The wonder of His lowly birth
Brings meaning to our lives
There really is no other reason,
We celebrate this day,
The birth of God's precious son
And the life, He willingly gave
But so much seems to distract us
In the busyness of our lives,
We lose our focus in all the happenings,
Not knowing, we leave out Christ
We lose sight of the true meaning
As we endlessly rush about,
Trying to find that perfect gift,
Seems to crowd our Saviour out
We need to stop and reflect awhile,
Remembering our precious Lord,
His birth, His life and sacrifice
And all that He stands for
For though the world may celebrate,
It seems, though, for other reasons,
Let's keep in mind that Jesus Christ
Is the true meaning of the season.

© By M.S.Lowndes

December Birthdays

1	Tommy Allen
2	Kacee Buff
3	Lakynn Hayes
3	Zaylee Morris
5	Steve Beam
5	Robert Smith
6	Reid Huss
6	Riley Shuford
9	Karley Powell
10	Fin Beam
10	Violet Wallace
11	Pierston Elliott
11	Tracy Lyles
11	Mary Beth Wyatt Wilkinson
12	John Warlick
15	Stacey Bradley
15	Jennifer Mauney Cushman
15	Quita Moss
17	Gary Freeman
18	Dean Starling
19	Kelly Brown
19	Bryan Flynn
20	Carolyn Abernathy
20	Scott Aldridge
21	Palmer Huffstetler
23	Angela Jones
24	Rob Elmore
25	Harold Mauney, Jr.
26	Sara Baity
26	Chad Bingham
26	Dwight Stroupe
27	Sophie Williams
28	Jimmy McGinnis
29	Emily Whitworth Parris
30	Carroll Sneed
30	Kyle Wilent
31	Angie Anthony



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



**DECEMBER HOMEBOUND
MEMBER TO SEND A CARD**

Mr. Archie Mitchell
TerraBella Assisted Living
1550 Charles Rd., Apt. C-8
Shelby, NC 28150

Sunday, November 30

9:30am - Sunday School
10:30am - Worship
4:00pm - Cantata rehearsal
6:00pm - Youth

Monday, December 1

6:00pm - Women of Faith covered dish dinner
in Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, December 3

6:00pm - UMK's
6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, December 4

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

Sunday, December 7

9:30am - Sunday School
10:30am - Worship
2:30pm - Carolina Care devotions
4:00pm - Cantata rehearsal
6:00pm - Youth

Monday, December 8

4:00pm - Youth to OCC Distribution Center

Wednesday, December 10

6:00pm - UMK's
6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, December 11

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

Friday, December 12

7:00pm - Parker Webb & Guilford Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 14

"GREETING CARD OUTREACH"

9:30am - Sunday School
10:30am - Worship
2:30pm - Carolina Care devotions
4:00pm - Cantata rehearsal
5:00pm - Youth Christmas Party & Shopping

Wednesday, December 17

6:00pm - UMK's Christmas Party
6:30pm - Bible Study

Thursday, December 18

7:00am - Prayer Breakfast at Homefolk's Café
7:00pm - Preschool Christmas Program

Sunday, December 21

9:30am - Sunday School
10:30am - Worship
2:30pm - Carolina Care devotions

Wednesday, December 24

6:00pm - Christmas Eve Service

Church office closed

Thursday, December 25

Merry Christmas

Church office closed

Friday, December 26

Church office closed

Saturday, December 27

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

Sunday, December 28

9:30am - Sunday School
10:30am - Worship
2:30pm - Carolina Care devotions



FROM THE CHURCH STAFF: We would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you a most blessed Christmas and the happiest of New Year's.