

THE MESSENGER
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
601 NORTH PINK STREET
CHERRYVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 28021
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JANUARY 7, 2026

Vol. XXXVII No. 1

Rev. Zack Christy
Pastor

Teresa Gardo
Administrative Assistant

Bess Thornburg
Director of Christian Education

Nancy Catena
Organist

Cam Alfaro
Audio Visual Tech.

Trinity Smith
FUMC Weekday Preschool Dir.

January Reflection

Jeremiah 29:11 "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future filled with hope."

Brothers and sisters,

Grace and peace to you in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ. As we stand at the precipice of a new year, I want to take a moment to you as pastor, fellow disciple, and grateful companion on this journey of faith that we all share. It is one of the greatest gifts of my life to serve with you and it is a privilege to call First United Methodist Church Cherryville, my congregation and my home.

I know I am more than just a little bit biased, but I hope you know when I say First UMC is special, I am not just blowing smoke. Long before sanctuaries were large or complex, faith was nurtured in close-knit communities where people knew one another by name, shared one another's burdens, and trusted God through seasons of abundance and scarcity alike. That legacy lives on here. You are a part of a long, faithful witness, one that reminds the wider church that the gospel does not depend on size, wealth, or recognition, but on love, faithfulness, and obedience.

As we look toward this new year, I am mindful that we do so in a world that feels uncertain and weary. We see new wars beginning, old wars continuing to rage, we are reminded that one in three children in Cherryville does not know where their next meal is coming from, many of our elderly are forced monthly to choose between getting the medication that they need and eating. There is a lot of uncertainty in our world, and the church is not immune, many churches have been told to brace for decline, to lower their expectations, and to simply try and survive. Yet the Christian story has never been about mere survival, and our story is one of resurrection. Our hope does not come from cultural trends or strategic plans alone; it comes from the promise that God is doing a new thing, even when it is not yet fully visible.

This is why it is important that as we move through 2026 as a congregation, we are going to be participating in what is called *visioning*. Visioning is not about chasing the newest idea or becoming something that we are not. Christian visioning is about listening. Listening for where the Spirit is already at work among us and discerning how God is calling us to participate more fully in His work. Visioning invites us to look honestly at who we are, to give thanks for the gifts God has entrusted to us, and to imagine how those gifts might be offered for the sake of our neighbors and future generations.

Hope is at the heart of the vision. Christian hope is not denial of difficulty. It does not ignore the challenges that we face: aging buildings, limited resources, shifting demographics, or the exhaustion many

feel after years of change. Instead hope insists that none of these realities have the final word. Hope anchors us in the conviction that God's grace is sufficient and that faithfulness offered day by day is never wasted.

I told you on the first Sunday of 2026 that this year is not going to be just another year for us. This year we are going to boldly step into the future that God is calling us to. **In order for us as a congregation to do this, I want to challenge all of us to become more active in our faith and in our participation here at First UMC Cherryville.**

We are going to be taking a journey with one another, not a single one of us knows what the destination looks like yet, but I do know with all of us working together we will get there. In the month of January each Sunday we will have a question and prayers for you to ponder during the week. It is very important that you respond to these questions. They are going to help shape and form our 2026. Each Sunday you will be invited to bring your responses to worship with you to place them in a box and the more responses we get the better our vision can take shape.

For vision calls us to notice what God has already planted among us. We know growth doesn't happen overnight. Seeds are sown quietly; roots grow deep before anything appears above the soil. In the same way much of what God is doing here may not be flashy or easily measured, but it is real. Acts of kindness, steady prayer, shared meals, and faithful presence all have lives in ways we may never see.

Looking ahead part of our calling will be to nurture those seeds intentionally. That may mean trying new ways of reaching out while honoring the traditions that ground us. It may mean letting go of some things that no longer serve our mission so that we can make room for what God is bringing next. It will certainly mean continuing to listen to Scripture, to the Spirit, and to one another with humility and trust.

In the United Methodist Church, we often speak about making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Here in Cherryville, we know that transformation often happens up close and personal. It happens in hospital visits and front porch conversations, in shared grief and shared laughter, in showing up again and again for the life of the community. Never underestimate the power of a church that loves deeply and lives its faith authentically.

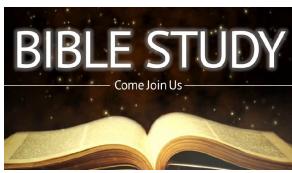
As we move toward this new year, I hope we will be a congregation that is not afraid to ask bold, faithful questions. What would it look like for our church to be known not just for what we do, but for how we love? Where is God inviting us to take leaps of faith? How might we create space for new voices and new leadership while honoring the wisdom of those who have carried this church for so long?

My prayer is that we will face the future with courage rooted in trust. We do not need to have everything figured out to take the next faithful step. God has never asked God's people for certainty only for faithfulness. When we walk together, guided by prayer and grounded in love, we can have full confidence that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead us.

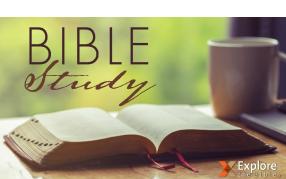
Most importantly though, thank you for your commitment to this church and to one another. Thank you for the countless ways you serve, often quietly and without recognition. Thank you for being the body of Christ in this place. I know that God has good work ahead for us, not because we are perfect, but because we are willing. Praise be to God!

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.



On Thursday, January 15, at 10:00 a.m. a new Bible Study will be meeting every other week at the home of Phyllis Thornburg. At our first meeting we will discuss the topics we wish to delve into. We hope that you will be able to join us for this study.



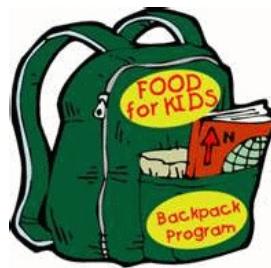
"GREETING CARD OUTREACH"

Sunday, January 11

We will have cards available for signing on Sunday, Jan. 11 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, January 11, 2026.



Beginning on Sunday, Jan. 18, at 9:00 a.m. we will offer coffee and doughnuts before Sunday School for a time of gathering.



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

We served 10 families at Thanksgiving, and 9 families at Christmas. On a weekly basis, we send home food to 9 families with a total of 25 children receiving food.

We received an email from the guidance counselor at Beam Intermediate, and he said "Let the church know that they may not always hear it publicly, but there are many families that have expressed how much this means to the ones who receive it. I hear it often when counseling with them."

The donations are much appreciated and much needed. I am so thankful that our church continues to serve this ministry. We have a dedicated group of packers each week. We wish to thank Susan Fraley, Jenny Emerson, Rhonda Ballard and Tim Pruitt for stepping up year after year to make sure that these kids have food every weekend.

Jan. 4	canned peaches
Jan. 11	canned beef stew
Jan. 18	Chicken Helper
Jan. 25	Spam

Thank you,
The Backpack Ministry Committee

Breakfast

On **Saturday, January 31**, 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.



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 [link below](#) Acolyte/Crucifer schedule for the month of **JANUARY 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

Jan. 4 Riley Shuford
Jan. 11 Lydia Bradley
Jan. 18 Allie Anthony
Jan. 25 Hunter Brafford

CRUCIFER

Mikki Jane Emerson
Sophia Williams
Ava Thornburg
Caroline Carswell

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



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.



JANUARY 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 **January**. 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.

Jan. 4	Jenny Emerson
Jan. 11	Kaci Beck
Jan. 18	Crystal Christy
Jan. 25	Julie Dellinger

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, January 27th. 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!!!!

Romans 12 SS Class News

The Romans 12 SS was formed in 2019. This class is made up of young adults and Parents of young children who aspire to live like Paul instructed in Romans Ch 12. They are the new generation of our church and they are laying the Christian foundation for their families. Sometimes we have Moms, sometimes Dads, sometimes couples...and many times babies in our class on Sundays.

This class was busy in 2025.

- We designated the remaining funds from our first fundraiser to the baby nursery for a little "face lift."
- These funds were originally used to replace the flooring in the Childrens Sunday school rooms.
- The class designed and sold FUMC T-shirts this year and all proceeds went to the playground fund.
- This group provided Christmas gifts for 2 boys with intellectual disabilities through "Operation Santa Claus" sponsored by the Arc of Gaston County.
- We also provided gift cards for gas and extra expenses to 2 young families associated with Cherryville Elementary who are currently battling cancer.
- During the holidays, we loaded up the church bus with our families and went caroling to several church families. The joy of Christmas was seen in the children's faces for sure!! They loved it.

Our church is growing with young couples and young families and the Romans 12 SS class would love to have you visit us any Sunday. As we enter into 2026, come visit the Romans 12 class. Come early or come late... we do not care ... Just come. You will be blessed when you come and blessed when you leave.

Our "Souper Bowl" Soup lunch will be Super Bowl Sunday, February 8, 2026. Always a fun lunch event, so mark your calendar. Details will follow soon.

Happy New Year!
Romans 12 SS Class



Prayer Breakfast

Prayer Breakfast meets every Thursday morning before school at 7 am. We will start meeting again after the holidays on **January 8th**. 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 will be there to provide a ride to school for anyone who needs it.



Hello my UMYF Friends.... **U.M.Y.F.** (United Methodist Youth Fellowship) meets on Sunday nights at 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. down stairs. We will resume our meetings on January 11th. I have really missed some of you lately. 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 few weeks will be **continuing our AM I Happy series! Joy in following JESUS.**

We are looking forward to our exciting and uplifting trip to **The Edge Conference at Ridgecrest!** **The Edge begins January 17th – January 19th.** (See more information below.)

Plans are being made to attend "Winter Jam" in Charlotte on Jan 25th. Leaving at 3 pm and returning home by 9 pm. We are also planning our Winter Snow Tubing trip in February 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!



**UMYF THE
EDGE**

WEEKEND RETREAT!!

Hi everyone, we have a new "VAN ADVENTURE" coming up! As we have been talking about and planning, our UMYF weekend getaway to **THE EDGE CONFERENCE/RETREAT** at Ridgecrest N.C. is Martin Luther King weekend. We are planning to leave Saturday, January 17th at 2:00 p.m. and return Monday, January 19th around 2:00 ish. You will need money to eat on for Monday lunch. All other meals are provided at the conference. Our lodging will be paid for with our money raised with our coffee bar fund raisers and donations from the community breakfast donations and church member donations. Your cost is **only \$75.00** per person to attend plus spending money for the coffee bar, and hoodies or books or any other personal things you may wish to purchase. We will spend Saturday and Sunday nights at the Ridgecrest Conference Center where we will be doing group building activities (meaning we all will have to take care of each other!), worship celebrations, late night bible sessions, concerts and Christian entertainment. **Your \$75.00 is due now. Please bring it to UMYF by January 11th.**

You will need to bring: your Bible, your sleeping bag or blanket, pillow, (linens are provided), personal toiletries, snacks, comfortable shoes to walk in and be outside in, preferably something warm and of course a change of clothes. You will need a jacket or hoodie just in case. Remember, it gets cold up there! We have limited space in the van so pack light! Limit 1 bag person!!! (NO NEED TO BRING THE KITCHEN SINK!!) GIRLS!!

***** You must have your permission slip to go with us*****

Please let Bess know ASAP if you are still planning to go! Call with any questions!

cell: 704-836-6803 I'm Looking forward to another adventure and fun in the SON!!!

With Peace, Bess

Our current guest / rooming list for Edge/Ridgecrest is:
Adults: Bess, Chrystal and Andrew Harmon, Matt Brafford

Boys: Zach, Seth, Hunter, and William

Girls: Amber Grace, Caidance, Mallie, Laney, Lydia, Laney, Grayce, & Lauren

Let me know ASAP if there are any changes.



UMK's

Our Wednesday night UMK's will begin again for the winter 2026 session beginning January 7th. We will meet in the fellowship hall each Wednesday evening at 6:00 p.m. 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 out Christmas presentation "The Wish".

UMK Lesson Schedule for January: "MORE THAN A WISH"

"THE PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS"

Jan. 7 A Long Time Coming
Genesis 22: 17-18, Luke 1:26-38

Jan. 14 Dreams Come True
Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-25

Jan. 21 Something More
Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2: 1-20

Jan. 28 Wish Upon a Star
Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1-12

UMK Supper Schedule for January:

Jan. 7 Subs, chips, cookies
F.U.M.C., Debbie Gantt, Juanita Gunnell,
Phyllis Thornburg, Cindy Holland

Jan. 14 McChicken nuggets, fries, bananas, ice
cream cups
Roman's 12 Sunday School Class

Jan. 21 Pancake Breakfast for supper, brownies
Etheleen Dover Class

Jan. 28 Chicken Nuggets, Tater Tots, and Little
Debbies
June Medlin Class



KINGDOM KIDS KORNER

WOW! We are done with 2025! I feel as if it has gone too fast.

Our children have been working so hard for the Christmas program. The program was December 18th at 6:30. This is the first year since 2012 that we have done this play; "A Special Place for Santa." Our three-year-old class participated with the four-year-old class this year.

We called the Cherryville Area Ministries and asked where they still had a need. They said they needed children's toys. Our families and some of our church members rallied together and collected an entire trunk filled to the brim for local families in our community. I am beyond grateful for the outpouring of (GOD'S WORK) through them. So many children felt special, loved and not left out because of our amazing Kingdom Kids family. This is truly an amazing experience for all our students to learn what it means to give!

We were out of school for the holiday season starting on December 20th and returning on January 6th. We are so excited to start a brand new year full of wonderful experiences. Please pray for our New Year to be amazing!

Mrs. Trinity Smith

STEWARDSHIP REPORT: DEC. 31, 2025

Received to Date \$398,701.24
Budgeted Expenses to date \$392,673.83

OTHER FUNDS RECEIVED YTD:

Church Building Renovations	\$10,990.00
Endowment Fund	\$1,755.00
Backpack Ministry	\$1,715.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$3,222.93
Playground Fund	\$27,215.00
Youth Missions	\$1,454.00



We gratefully acknowledge gifts presented to the church in loving memory of:

DAVID CARLYLE BEAM

Jerry Thornburg (Backpack Ministry)

DARRELL BOWMAN

Debbie Gant (Backpack Ministry)

LISA DOVER

T. L. & Miney Saine

PAT EAKER

Guy Eaker

SANDY EDWARDS

Johnny, Kelly & Nick Brown (Backpack Ministry)

JANICE HOWELL

Johnny, Kelly & Nick Brown

JACK D. JENKINS

Gail & Jeff Jenkins, Chelsi & Rob Thomas

ROSE BEAM KING

Johnny, Kelly & Nick Brown

GAIL KISER

Nancy Catena

CD & FANNIE BELLE LEDFORD

Chad, Crystal & Leslie Thornburg

HAROLD & MARGARET LONG

Barry & Wanda Dellinger

KEN MAYHEW

Darlene Mayhew

GINGER PARKER

Ronnie & Jill Puett

REV. HARRY QUEEN

Nancy Catena
Jerry Thornburg (Backpack Ministry)

CINDY SELF

Johnny, Kelly & Nick Brown
Debbie Gant (Playground Fund)

MARTHA STROUP

Johnny, Kelly & Nick Brown (Backpack Ministry)

LARRY & SABRA THORNBURG

Chad, Crystal & Leslie Thornburg

LINDA WHITWORTH

Brent & Kathy Burleson

THELDA HAMM WOOD

Ben & Robin Blackburn (Playground Fund)



PRAYER LIST (Members)

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

PRAYER LIST (Family & Friends)

Mary Crocker, Danny Eaker, Becky Estes, A. J. Henley, Scott Jenkins, Steve Kale, 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



Dear Church Family:
Thank you so much for all of the cards, phone calls and visits. I am so blessed to have such a caring church family.

Mary Etta Stephenson

IN HONOR

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

LINDA BARGER

Danny & Teci Webb

DAVID, KELLY & GWEN BASS

Amy & Ben Davis

JUSTIN BEAM

Darlene Mayhew

STEVE & SUSAN BEAM

Terry & Dawn Moss

SANDRA CARPENTER

Leslie Thornburg

PASTOR ZACK CHRISTY

Chad, Crystal & Leslie Thornburg

Doug & Dawn Whitworth

BILLY & BARBARA CREWS

Leslie Thornburg

MCCAULEY DELLINGER

Ronnie & Jill Puett (Playground Fund)

BRIAN & JENNY EMERSON

Terry & Dawn Moss

REID & DORIS HUSS

Ben & Robin Blackburn (Playground Fund)

KEITH & KATHY KISER

Leslie Thornburg

JUNE MEDLIN CLASS CAROLERS

Bill Sneed

SYLVIA NORTON

Leslie Thornburg

MRS. JANE ROBINSON

Amy & Ben Davis

ROMANS 12 CLASS CAROLERS

Bill Sneed

BILL SNEED

Shirley Smith

DR. JOSH YELVERTON

Darlene Mayhew

FRANK & TEDDI ZAYAS

Amy & Ben Davis



After many hours of planning and years of fund raising, we have 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

\$61,022.22 - received from donations

\$9,372.00 - 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.

January Birthdays

3 Jax Carpenter
4 Haley Alexander
4 Pat Yount
5 Anna Burleson Anthony
5 Bess Thornburg
6 Jalie Creech
6 Steven Spangler
7 Kristen Husen
8 Shafer Rupard
8 Clay Thornburg
11 Cam Alfaro
11 Jack Bingham
12 Robin Norwood
13 Ilene Dellinger
14 Tad Huffstetler
14 Sandra Tate
16 Bob Elmore
17 Bill Sneed
17 Melanie Thornburg
22 Lindsey Cartee Hetrick
22 Frankie Dellinger
23 Annie Norwood Downer
23 Gunnar Shedd
23 Vivian Wallace
24 Roy Pursley
25 Eric King
25 Margaret Starling
26 Charlie Smith
27 Tabor Elmore
28 Julie Wallace
29 Megan Emerson
29 David Huss
30 Blaze Dedmon
30 Barbara Lamanna
31 Cameryn Bell
31 Michael Catena
31 Ed Pierce



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

