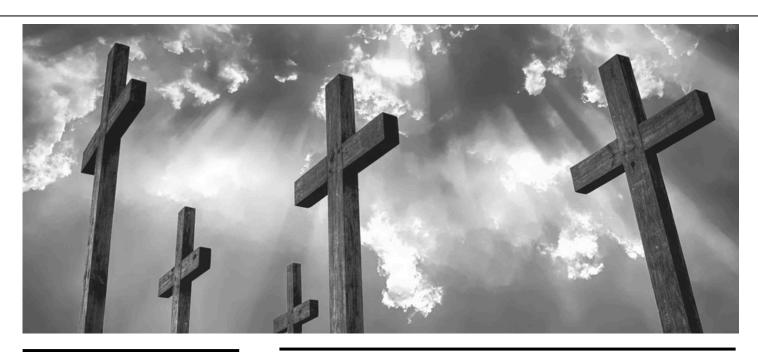
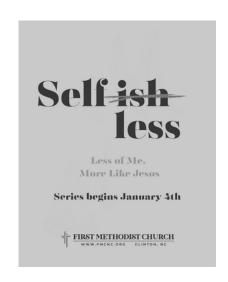
The Cornerstone



Sermon Series:



January 4th: Wesley Covenant Service - Holy Communion Scripture: Philippians 3:7-14 Sermon Title: Selfless Surrender

January 11th: Baptism of the Lord (Baptism Remembrance).
Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17
Sermon Title: Selfless Identity

January 18th:

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 Sermon Title: Selfless Obedience

January 25th:

Scripture: Romans 12:9-18 Sermon Title: Selfless Community

With Rev. Matt Seals

A Letter From The Pastor

By Matt Seals

What is your focus for 2026? You know, at the end of the year, we shift our thinking to all the things that we have done and all the things that we might have left undone. We think back on the wonderful memories and things we did really well, and we reflect on the learning moments from the things we did not do well. Then, we look to the new year and how we might do things differently. We set goals, we set our eyes on accomplishing certain tasks by certain times or improving ourselves, our family, our lives in different areas. We have intentions, but it doesn't take long before the goals are distant memories, the habits of the previous year make their way into the new year, and well, we say to ourselves, I guess I will try again next year. What if we took a different approach for 2026? What if we started with God and worked our way from there? This month, we are going to focus on what it looks like to live a selfless life, which is different than the ways of the world.

This January, we will focus on what it looks like to live a selfless life-a life shaped not by the ways of the world, but by the call of Christ. We begin the year with surrender, laying aside our own agendas and choosing to place Christ first. From there, we are reminded of our identity-named, claimed, and loved by God as His own. As we grow in that identity, we are called into obedience, faithfulness choosing even when it is difficult. Finally, we are invited to live this selfless together, becoming community marked by humility, generosity, and love for one another. As we begin this new year, I invite you to join us in seeking Christ first and allowing Him to shape who we are and how we live as His church.

In Christ,

pastor@fmcnc.org

A Letter From The Youth Pastor

By Joel Wise

And just like that, it's 2026! December was a restful time. The youth had the Progressive Christmas dinner December 14 and had a blast sharing the celebration of the over food season and desserts. The annual gingerbread competition was a success! Teams attempted to create a picture perfect house while having to hurdle over the challenges of having a team member who could only work with one hand and another team member who could not speak. They had a blast! January brings new fun for our group. We will be going on a winter retreat to Blowing Rock, NC through Club Ministries on January 23. There will be worship and skiing. The following week, on January 28, the youth will be hosting a chili cook off at the church to help fund a new sound system for fellowship hall. Please come and support them if you are able. If you think your chili is worthy of competing, by all means enter it into contest. How to enter is listed the flyer within newsletter or you can email **Pastor** Joel, youth@fmcnc.org to enter.



"I look forward to the year we will have together and am excited for where God will use all of us in this coming season."

As we approach my one year of serving First Methodist (I began in February of 2025), I reflect on my past year, as many do as a traditional celebration on New Years. So negative things many happened this past year including celebrating Years Eve and New Years in the hospital with Enid because of RSV, the death of Jessie's father and my grandmother, and my kidney stone surgery in September. Still, God was faithful and placed us within the most caring community of faith that we have been in. If it had not been for the many loving members of First Methodist, we would not have survived this past year.

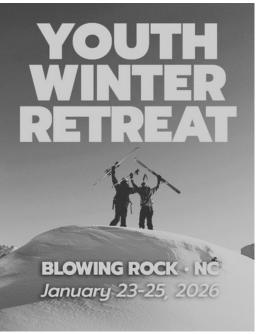
This encourages me as we begin 2026. I look forward to the year we will have together and am excited for where God will use all of us in this coming season. I encourage you to continue in the love and care that you have shown to me and my family and that together we can do the same for the community around us. you bless all, First Methodist family. If you do not know how much of a blessing you are, well now you do.

Much Love,

Associate Pastor youth@fmcnc.org

Youth Events This Month







A Letter From The Children's Minister

By Abby Tomell

As we step into a new year, we are excited for all God has in store for our children. A new year brings new opportunities to grow, serve, and learn together. Our kids did wonderful job in the Christmas play, "The Power of the King." We are so incredibly proud of everyone who participated. Their hard work and joyful truly brought message to Christmas to life we all know I cried! Thank you to everyone who helped bring this vision to life! If you did not get a chance to see it, please check our website for the full video. A fun time was had yet again at the Downtown Clinton Christmas parade.

A big shout out to Mike Rivenbark who once again helped with the trailer and driving. New ideas for next year are already forming!

As we move forward in this New Year, please note that the Children's Ministry new volunteer schedule is now church-wide. Thank you to everyone who is serving and supporting our children - your time and dedication make a lasting impression. We are also excited to announce February 1st will be Children's Sunday. After the kids take over all of Pastor Matt's Sunday duties, we will have a covered dish meal, along with face painting for the kids!

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for **Vacation Bible School June 7-10**. It will have an Irish twist, centered around Psalm 23. We are excited for a week of faith, fun, and lasting memories.

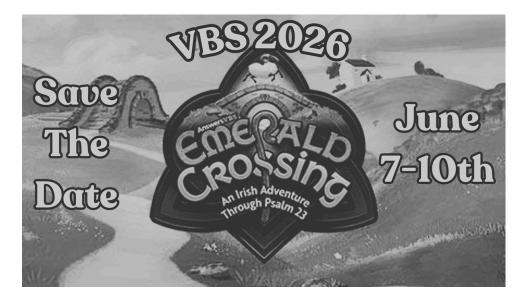
We can't wait to see what God has in store for our kids this year. Thank you for being part of our Children Ministry Family.

Hoby Comell

Happy New Year!

Children@fmcnc.org

Children's Events Coming Soon



A Letter From The Musicians

Dan Holland, Cameron and Marquita Someliana- Lauer

Dear Church Family,

This month we will begin rehearsing for an amazing event that some of us have lovingly dubbed "The Concert Dan." This concert is officially titled "Sing Praise to God", after Mr. Dan's favorite hymn of the same name. This rousing hymn (OGRP No. 5) is among the oldest hymns we sing on a regular basis. The text, originally written in German, dates to the midseventeenth century and was authored by Johann J. Schültz. It was later set to the tune Mit Freuden Zart ("With Great Personal Gladness"), which dates back to a 1566 Moravian hymnal. According to author Kenneth W. Osbeck, "this stately hymn is the product of several significant historical events occurring in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which greatly shaped the course of church history." He goes on to explain that these events included the Protestant Reformation, the Lutheran Pietism movement, and the Thirty Years' War between the Catholic and Protestant churches (Osbeck, Kenneth W., 101 Hymn Stories. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1982).

One of the most significant results of these events was an increase in personal holiness and dependence upon a sovereign God. This, in turn, led to a wealth of passionate hymnody. Verse one of "Sing Praise to God" declares:

"Sing praise to God who reigns above, The God of all creation, The God of power, the God of love, The God of our salvation. With healing balm my soul is filled And every faithless murmur stilled: To God all praise and glory."

Each subsequent verse also ends with the phrase, "To God all praise and glory." This declaration reminds us that our singing and worship a response to the wondrous power and might of the Lord our God. When we sing praises to Him, we are giving Him praise and glory. Psalm 97:1 and 6 express it this way: "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice... The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory."

Mr. Dan has made tremendous impact on the life, worship, and music of our church and community. forty years, he faithfully helped lead our congregation in giving God praise and glory through music. We hope that you will attend-and/or sing with us in this concert celebrating his forty years of music ministry here at Methodist. Rehearsals will take place in the sanctuary on January 11, February 8, and March 8 at 3:00 p.m.

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like more information.

In Christ,

Marguita Someliana-Lauer

Organist, etc. (910) 548-2719 organist@fmcnc.org





N.O.W. Corner

Meeting January 6th at 6:00 PM



Missions Corner

Meeting January 20th at 6:30 Care Package Collection (See List in Bulletin)



Worship Corner

Altar Guild: Tyler & Hannah Baxter Greeters: Ida Johnson Circle Nursery:

- 4th 11:00 Tiffany Rivenbark
- 11th 9:00 Jenna King
- 18th 9:00 Hannah Baxter
- 25th 9:00 Casey Bartsch



Birthday Cake Bunch

Linda Andrews; Lori Barwick; Ellen Moody. Contact is Christy Boyette 910-990-1001



Flower Calendar

January 4th: Dan & Ruth Holland

January 11th: **OPEN**January 18th: **OPEN**January 25th: **OPEN**

Sanctuary flower arrangements are \$55 for one slot or \$110 for both. Payments are made before your date.

Scan the QR Code to sign up for yours.





Food Pantry Collection
First Baptist Church 900

Rice (1 lb. bag or box)



Meals on Wheels

January 9th: Helen Hobson January 23rd: Sue Williams

The Prayer Corner

Intercessory Prayer Group: Mondays at 10:00 am



Dr. Mac Herring, Ann Herring, Jimmie Hall, Marvin Mitchell, Frances Pearson, Wayne Boyette, Ethan Youngblood, Mary Margaret Hobbs, Homer Morris, Debra Morris, Jane Waters, Pam Griffin, Wayne Tew, Louetta Carr, Pat Warrick, Emery Walker, JoAnn Westbrook, Janet Johnson, Wes Keen, Zachery Johnson, Steve Baker, Mike & Myra Humphrey, Glenn Brewer, Bryson Capps, Ed Owen, Merry Wicke, Greg Moore, Jimmy Smith, Donald & Carolyn Wrench, Wayne Reynolds, Angie Hall, Danny Dyson, Violet White

Those in long-term care:

- Loraine Butler
- Margaret Oates
- Anthony Balkcum
- Pat Green
- Frances Pearson
- Gerry Krivoniak

Those who are homebound:

- Ruth Godwin
- Barbara Carr



Join us January 5th at 7:00 pm **Worship Night with Bishop Jeff Greenway** St. Paul GMC Goldsboro, NC



Happy Birthday!

2nd - Kaitlin Heath

4th - Emily Godwin

4th - Jerry Hobbs

6th - Allison Driver

7th - Wellie Jackson

7th - Hannah Williams

8th - Eric Turlington

9th - Delores Williams

11th - Cameron Sutton

13th - John Cox

13th - Tom Weikert

14th - Meredith Allen

15th - Chris Embler

15th - Elizabeth Rogers

16th - Reed Williams

17th – Houston Crumpler

17th - Judith Griffin

18th – Tommy McLamb

20th - Marilyn St. Pierre

21st - Sam Williams

25th - Robert Malpass

26th - Caitlyn Collins

26th – Ellen Moody

27th - Taylor Stanley

27th - Jane Claire Tew

28th - Bryan Griffin

28th - Patrick O'Quinn

28th - Sandy Weikert

29th - Ross Kimbro

29th - Rex Moody

30th - Dianne Johnson

Your Ministry Team Leaders for 2026

These are the discipline required ministry teams.

Trustees	SPRC	Finance	Nominations	
2026 Denise Hendricks Steve Cox Dennis Carter 2027 Billy Sutton Vanna Johnson Chris Driver Phillip Andrews 2028	2026 CharlesAnna Williams Nick Serafini Bob Carr 2027 Luke Martin Sarah Lane Mary Nell Darden 2028	2026 Jonathan Williams Tom Weikert Jerry Hobbs 2027 Craig Mann Janet Mitchell Elizabeth Andrews 2028 Margaret	2026 Mandy DuBose Karen Sutton Wendy Carr 2027 Lynn Owen Venetia Mann Helen Hobson 2028 Sue Williams	
Wayne Andrews Lisa Turlington Curtis Barwick	Robert Turlington Patrick O'Quinn Wayne Moore	Turlington Tyler Baxter Debbie Jones	Steve Williams Brittany Serafini	

Missions	Stewardship	Worship	N.O.W.	
2026 Kay Raynor 2027	2026 Jane Herring Rachel Grantham Jessica Martin	2026 Debbie Jones Hannah Baxter Selma Turlington	2026 Heather Turlington Brittany Serafini Janet Carter	
Dempsey Craig Sarah Swartz 2028	<u>2027</u> Elizabeth Rogers	<u>2027</u> Becky Jackson	<u>2027</u> Brenda Nordin	
Kathleen Gancer Michael Dale Williams	Sarah Hesketh 2028 Susan Sautter	Jane Spell Robert Turlington 2028	Karen Wrench Jane Claire Tew Emily Pope	

nch Tew 2028 Ricky Kaleel Jan Smith Jeff Swartz Don Wrench **Christy Boyette** Helen Kaleel Reid Butler Melissa Perry Reece O'Quinn Kathleen Gancer Allison Driver Sarah Hesketh **Administrative Board**

Youth Ministry

Reid Butler Jenna St. Pierre King Jonathan Lane

Children's **Ministry**

Sarah Stone Tiffany Rivenbark Karen Wrench Holly McMillen Kaleb Sargent

Recording Secretary: Venetia Mann Lay Leader: Rex Moody Finance Chair: Anthony Steed Treasurer: Lori Barwick

Administrative Board: Marilyn St. Pierre

SPRC Chair: Bob Carr

Methodist Men President: Don Wrench

NOW Team: Jeff Swartz

Stewardship Team: Rachel Grantham

Mission Team: Dempsey Craig & Kay Raynor Trustee Chair: TBA (Elected in January)

Lay Delegates to Annual Conference: Helen Kaleel, Kay Raynor

Methodist Women President: Kay Raynor

Parsonage: Wendy Carr Worship: Hannah Baxter

Backyard Buddies: Ellen Moody

Your 2026 Church Budget Narrative

Grace and peace to each of you. From the Finance Team, we are pleased to present our 2026 Operational Budget for First Methodist Church of Clinton, NC. Our budget is divided into three categories: Section 200 - Church Salaries, 200.1- Church Programs, Section 300 Church Operations. Through this narrative, I hope you will gain insight onto some of the different components of this budget. First, know that this budget was not simply thrown together. Each ministry team leader and staff member provefully considered what was not simply thrown together. Each ministry team leader and staff member prayerfully considered what they sensed God was calling them to do in the upcoming year and then what they felt they would need to carry out that vision. Second, Finance has done an excellent job of taking into consideration our giving history and pledge campaign results in preparing this budget. This budget is also a leap of faith budget. I invite everyone to prayerfully consider this budget and its approval. As we heard during our stewardship campaign, I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together. I love Jesus, I love this church, I love you, and I am excited to join in prayer with you over what we believe God is calling us to for 2026. With that, I invite you to also consider how we, as a community, might sense God calling each of us to take the same leap of faith in supporting the ministries of this church through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Section 200- Church Salaries

For the 2026 year, our total budget for church salaries is \$363,166.00. We are fortunate to have a great team of staff here at First Methodist Church. The increases in this line reflect the continued support of this staff through salary increases. With those increases comes an increase in what we pay to Social Security. With an upcoming Charge Conference, the Administrative Board must approve pastoral compensation of appointed pastors. In your packet for approval will be the documents as they will appear in the charge conference packet to approve the appointed pastor's salary for the year 2026.

Section 200.1 Church Programs

Our church programming section for 2026 is \$45,140.00. Within this section, you will find our budget monies for youth ministry, children's ministry, VBS, Music, Missions, and SALT. A new line item this year is the Lay Member to the Annual Conference. With two appointed pastors, we can send two lay delegates to the annual conference. For 2025, the cost was just under \$1500. Considering the rising costs of hotels and food, \$2000 should cover those expenses.

Section 300- Church Operations

Our church operations section for this year totals \$126,531.00, which is a key section of our budget. This section covers office supplies, utilities, and kitchen items, as well as cleaning products. One decrease you will see is postage. Thanks to those who indicated they were open to receiving the newsletter by email, we no longer need to mail out 150 newsletters. Our postage expenses have dropped significantly. Our insurance premiums increased this year, but our prayer is that by February, when the renewal comes, we will see a decrease in that number.

Connectional Funding

Connectional Funding refers to the monies we send to the general church and the annual conference. This amount is determined by the amount of money we receive through tithes and offerings that go to support the mission and ministries of this church. We don't know what this number will be until after the last Sunday of the year, so our budget estimate is based on this uncertainty. Based on our current giving, our connectional funding will be at least \$21,000.

The total budget for First Methodist Church for 2026 is \$555,837.00. We had pledged for 2026, \$460,766.00.

Along with this budget are also some capital projects that the Trustees have considered for 2026.

1.Compressor for the Sanctuary units: \$11,000.00

Our sanctuary during the summer has been operating on a single AC unit. The unit that is currently out needs a compressor replaced. The hope is that this will get us up and running and take some stress off the one unit we currently have.

2. Parsonage Master Bath/Laundry Room Reno: \$40,000

Our family is blessed with a wonderful house that we get to make a home. The church has done a great job of maintaining this house and ensuring that everything is up to date and functioning correctly. As with anything, over time, some repairs and maintenance needs come up. The floors in the bathroom are slick, and if you hit them right, you go ice sketing across the room. Given the age of the bound and the and if you hit them right, you go ice skating across the room. Given the age of the house and the restrooms, Trustees believe that when we remove the floor, we might uncover more than just a slick surface. This amount will enable trustees to redesign the space, making it more functional, and update some fixtures, as well as address necessary repairs.

3. Security Camera System: \$11,500
We all agree that the world we live in is not the world we grew up in. Security and safety are at the forefront of everyone's mind. SPRC requested that Trustees assess our camera system and add cameras to necessary where children are represent, for the protection of those who God has entrusted to care for us, as well as for our volunteers. The trustees received a quote to replace three cameras that are currently not functioning to the standard they should be. The quote also includes an additional 16 cameras to cover areas where we currently do not have coverage, as well as to enhance the visibility in some rooms that we already have cameras in but cannot see well due to the camera's location or the room's size. This quote also includes an updated doorbell system for the main door of the church.

I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together. Together, with God's help we will see the kingdom of God continue to advance in Clinton thanks to your generoisity and our ministry teams good stewardship of the funds which God has entrusted to us. A line by line budget will be emailed and printed out in the coming weeks. To God be the glory!

In Christ,

Rev. Matt Seals

Dear Church Family,

On December 15, 2025, the Administrative Board approved a motion to bring before the congregation a vote on whether we should pursue the property next door, known as the Bell Property. That motion passed by a vote of 13–3.

In order to help our congregation make the most informed and prayerful decision possible, we will offer two question-and-answer sessions:

Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, January 11, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.

During these sessions, Trustee Chair Phillip Andrews will share a presentation explaining how this opportunity came about and will respond to questions raised by the Administrative Board and others.

The Bell Property is located directly next to our current parking lot and consists of two parcels of land. One parcel is 0.47 acres, and the second is 0.14 acres. We currently lease the smaller parcel for bus parking at a cost of \$100.00 per year.

At a date to be determined in the coming weeks, we will hold a Church Conference, during which every professing member of First Methodist Church will have the opportunity to vote yes or no on whether to spend \$30,000 to enter into a three-year option with the current owners of the property. This option would give us time to prayerfully explore and discern the best plan for our church and the future needs of First Methodist.

First Methodist Church has a long history of faithfully responding to the needs of all generations. Once again, we are asking you to help us seek God's wisdom as we consider this important decision. Our focus for 2026 is "I am the church; you are the church; we are the church together," and we invite you to be part of this discernment as we seek ways to best serve the Lord and all of God's children in our community.

Please prayerfully consider the future of our church, plan to attend one of the information sessions, and be present for the upcoming Church Conference. Above all, pray without ceasing for God's guidance as we seek to make disciples here in Clinton, North Carolina.

Grace and peace,

First Methodist Church Leadership



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
			1 Нарру	2	3	
			New Year			
5		7		9	10	
10:00 Intercessory Prayer 10:30 Methodist Women's Meeting 7:00 Worship with Bishop Jeff Greenway St. Paul, Goldsboro	6:00 N.O.W Meeting	4:45 K- 5 th Choir 5:30 3 & 4 yr Choir & Bible Study 6:30 WEF Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir	Meeting			
10:00 Intercessory Prayer	9:00 Chat with M@ 7:00 Trustees Meeting 7:00 Night to	4:45 K- 5 th Choir 5:30 3 & 4 yr Choir & Bible Study 6:30 WEF Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir		16	17 3:00 - 4:00 Methodist Men Boston Butt Pick-Up	
		Training/ Virtual	Victoria Out of Office			
19	20	21	22	23	24	
9:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Dress Shopping Day	9:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 Missions Meeting 6:30 Eleanor Powell Meeting	4:00 Dulcimers 4:45 K- 5 th Choir 5:30 3 & 4 yr Choir & Bible Study 6:30 WEF Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir	6:30 Skill Creation Worship Night		1:00 - 3:00 Building In Use (Wedding Shower)	
OFFICE CLOSED				Youth Ski Trip		
26	27	28	29	30	31	
10:00 Intercessory Prayer	9:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 SPRC Meeting	4:45 K- 5 th Choir 5:30 3 & 4 yr Choir & Bible Study 6:30 WEF Dinner				
	19 9:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Dress Shopping Day OFFICE CLOSED 10:00 Intercessory Prayer 11:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Worship Team Meeting 7:00 Team Meeting 7:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Dress 19 0FFICE CLOSED	5 10:00 Intercessory Prayer 10:30 Methodist Women's Meeting 7:00 Worship with Bishop Jeff Greenway St. Paul, Goldsboro 12 10:00 Intercessory Prayer 11:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Worship Team Meeting 7:00 Worship Team Meeting 19 9:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Training 10:00 Night to Shine Dress Shopping Day 19 9:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 Missions Meeting 7:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 Missions Meeting 6:30 Eleanor Powell Meeting 7:00 Intercessory 9:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 Missions Meeting 6:30 Eleanor Powell Meeting	Solution Solution	1	1	

Notes:

01/04 Sign Up for Chili Cook Off Begins

01/25 Sunday School Class Begins Profoundly Christian, Distinctly Methodist

