

THE CORNERSTONE



A Letter From The Pastor

Covenant: Living Together as the Body of Christ

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:23-25

What does it mean to live in covenant with one another?

At first glance, the word covenant may sound like a church word we use from time to time without giving much thought to its meaning. But covenant is much more than a church term. It is a biblical concept that sits at the very heart of our relationship with God and with one another. Throughout Scripture, the word covenant or some form of the word appears around 300 times. It is found most often in the Old Testament, while much of its New Testament usage, particularly in Hebrews, points us toward the fulfillment of God's covenant promises through Jesus Christ.

A covenant is a solemn and binding promise that establishes a relationship and calls those within it to faithfulness, responsibility, and mutual accountability. Unlike a contract, which is often based on an exchange of obligations—"I will do this if you do that"—a covenant is fundamentally about relationship. It says, "We belong to one another, and because we belong to one another, we commit ourselves to live faithfully together."

Throughout the Old Testament, we see God establishing covenant relationships with His people. In Genesis 9, God makes a covenant with Noah, promising never again to destroy the earth with a flood, giving the rainbow as a sign of His promise. In Genesis 12, God establishes His covenant with Abraham, promising descendants, land, and ultimately that through Abraham's family all nations would be blessed. In Exodus 19, God establishes His covenant with Israel through Moses, giving them His law and calling them to live as His holy people. In 2 Samuel 7, God makes a covenant with David, promising that his royal line would endure. Then, we hear the promise of a New Covenant. Jeremiah speaks of a day when God will establish a new covenant with His people, one in which God's law will be written on their hearts. Christians understand this promise to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

One of the things that stands out in all these covenants is this: God initiates the covenant. God demonstrates His faithfulness. And even when His people fail, God remains faithful to His promises. That is important for us to remember because we sometimes think of covenant simply as a list of things we are expected to do. But biblical covenant is first about relationship. God has called us into relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ, and because we belong to Him, we are also called to live differently with one another.

As Global Methodists, we are reclaiming this understanding of covenant and recognizing its importance in the life of the church. The 2024 Book of Doctrine and Discipline speaks directly about this. Paragraph 403 says, "We believe that God has called us to live together in a faithful covenant that expresses our commitments both to God and to each other."

We are not simply a collection of individuals who happen to worship in the same building. We are the body of Christ. We belong to one another. We carry one another's burdens, celebrate one another's joys, encourage one another in faith, and hold one another accountable when we wander from the way of Christ.

Paragraph 420 of the 2024 Book of Doctrine and Discipline describes growth in faithful discipleship by saying that a member is "bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members." This is what covenant looks like in the life of the church.

With this in mind, we are taking a new approach in the life of our church of how we share and do life together. Throughout our spaces you will find posted and hear shared what we are calling a Covenant of Conduct. This covenant is not simply a list of rules designed to tell our young people what they cannot do. Rather, it is a way of saying together, "This is who we are, and this is how we promise to treat one another because we belong to Christ."

Here at First Methodist, we are seeking to create places where every child and young person is safe, valued, respected, encouraged, and able to grow in their relationship with Jesus. We covenant as leaders, parents, children, and youth to take responsibility for the way our words and actions affect others. We covenant to hold one another accountable—not as a means of punishment, but as an expression of love and our shared commitment to follow Jesus. All this is part of our baptismal covenant we make with God and one another.

See More on page 9



A Letter From The Youth Pastor

By Joel Wise

Happy fall!

We are back in the saddle, as it were, and we are having a blast! We began our fall semester with a new youth night format. With the growth of our youth group, we have created a new schedule as well as splitting into two separate small groups for the lesson. See the new schedule on our website at fmcnc.org/youth.

This past month, we learned about Kairos moments where Christ meets us and calls us to a new way of life. Pastor Matt taught our high schoolers, and pastor Joel taught the middle schoolers. The rising sixth graders were able to paint their bricks on the youth wall, and some of the youth touched up the bricks that they had previously painted.

This month, the youth will be going camping at Raven Rock State Park on September 18-19. Register your teen at fmcnc.org.

As I mentioned before, our youth group is growing. We have increased to over 25 teens in youth this year. This is fantastic! However, with that growth comes the need for volunteers to help teach and lead our youth. If God is calling you to serve our youth, either by teaching, being present on youth nights, or feeding our youth, please contact me, Pastor Joel, at youth@fmcnc.org or sign up on our website at fmcnc.org/youth.

Our youth are involved in several extracurricular activities. One way to support them in these activities is by going and seeing them perform either on the sports field or at a band or dance recital. Every other week, we will be highlighting one of these events. Be sure to check the bulletin for this week's game or performance.

Upcoming Dates

Sept. 6 – Operation Christmas Child Collections Begin

Sept. 9 – Wed. Nite Youth Begins

Sept. 13 – Confirmation Course Begins

Sept. 18-19 – Raven Rock Camping Trip

In Christ,
Pastor Joel





A Letter From The Children’s Minister

By Abby Tomell

As we close out August, we are so thankful for all God is doing in and through our church family. This past month brought special moments of fellowship, encouragement, tears, and excitement as we continue to grow together in Christ.

Back-to-School Sunday

Our Back-to-School Sunday was a wonderful success! We were especially blessed by Laura-Blake, who spoke beautifully about how we can share the love of Jesus while we are at school. Her message was a wonderful reminder that our faith shouldn’t stay inside the church walls, but that we have opportunities everywhere to show Christ’s love through our words, actions, and kindness. It was also such a bittersweet moment promoting our new youth members. I truly loved each and every moment with them.

Please continue to pray for all our students, teachers, and school staff as we move through the school year. May God guide, protect, and use each of them to be a light (a highlighter!) in their schools and communities!

Infant Nursery Completion

We are excited to announce that our infant nursery is now complete and ready for use. We look forward to having a welcoming, comfortable place for our littlest church members. It will begin being staffed with volunteers at the beginning of the new year unless otherwise needed. What an amazing blessing it is to have a growing church!

Thank you, Parents!

A special thank you to all the parents who joined us for our recent Parent Meeting. We truly appreciate your time, ideas, questions, and commitment to helping our church create a wonderful environment for children and families.

Looking Ahead ...

WEF resumes September 9th. Please see the schedule for times, volunteer slots, and menu. We can’t wait to see you there!

Mark your calendars for September 11 and join us for a fun-filled Family Movie Night. Grab your dinner, but make sure you save room for fresh-popped popcorn. Bring the family, invite a friend, and

come enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship.

I am so thankful for all God is doing here at First Methodist and I look forward to another great month.

Much Love,

Abby Tomell

Children@fmcnc.org





A Letter From The Musicians

Dear Church Family,

The music ministries are excited to jump into a busy and very musical fall semester. We are gearing up to start back with regular Wednesday evening programming and rehearsals. Here are some upcoming dates to go ahead and put on your calendars:

- The Chancel Choir will resume on **Wednesday, September 2nd** with the annual choir appreciation dinner. Please attend this wonderful event if you are at all interested in singing with us!
- All other ensembles will resume regular rehearsals on **Wednesday, September 9th**.
- The schedule for Wednesday evening rehearsals will be slightly altered from last year.

Activity	Time	Duration
Singing Strings (Dulcimers)	4:00-4:40	40 minutes
K-5 Choir	5:00-5:30	30 minutes
Preschool Choir	5:30-5:45	15 minutes
Bible Study (All Ages)	5:30-6:25	55 minutes
Bells/Winds	5:45-6:25	40 minutes
Dinner	6:25-7:00	30 minutes
Chancel Choir	7:00-8:00	60 minutes

- The Children’s Choirs will sing in worship on **October 4th, November 1st, and December 6th**.
- **9-25-2026:** The FMC Wind Ensemble will possibly play for “Music on Main” (details TBD).
- **10-10-2026:** The FMC Wind Ensemble or the Singing Strings will play at the Sampson County History Museum as part of the Square Fair (details TBD).
- **11-15-2026:** Women’s Sunday with special music.
- **11-22-2026:** Community Thanksgiving Service. This will include combined adult and children’s choirs. More details to come.
- **12-16-2026:** Chancel Choir Christmas party. Rehearsal at 6 and party at 7. Last choir rehearsal of the year and dress rehearsal for the Christmas special. More details TBD.
- **12-20-2026:** Choir Special as part of the 11 o’clock service.

As a continued tribute to America’s 250th birthday, the FMC music ministries will present “An American Christmas”, a musical celebration featuring selections from Joseph Martin’s Appalachian Winter, special anthems, and traditional American carols.

We are planning to begin rehearsing this program on **September 2nd**. We would love to invite anyone who would like to sing in this program to join us for the first 15 minutes or so of choir rehearsal every Wednesday. We will work on this program during the first part of weekly choir rehearsals so that folks who only want to sing in the program can participate right after WEF dinner. Please consider joining us for this wonderful event. This is open to singers ages 3rd grade and up.

Please continue to hold the music staff, volunteers, and ministries in your prayers as we plan and rehearse for all of these exciting events. A specific prayer request is for more people to join our chancel choir. We would love to have folks join us full-time, just for first Sunday combined worship services, and/or just for the Christmas program. Please contact us if you have any thoughts or questions!

In Christ,
*Cameron & Marquita
Someliana-Lauer*
(910) 548-2719
organist@fmcnc.org



N.O.W. Corner – College Kids

Reach out to our college kids:

Finn Howard – Grandson of Kathleen Gancer
William Peace University
15 E Peace St. Raleigh, NC 27604

Daughtry Jackson – Son of Wellie & Tara
Jackson, UNC Carolina Square Apts.
143 W Franklin St., Apt 413 B, Building C,
Chapel Hill, NC 27516



Birthday Cake Bunch

Janet Carter; Sue Williams; Helen Hobson



W.E.F. Schedule

SEPTEMBER

- 9th – Team Phillip Andrews & Kaleb Sargent
- 16th – Team Mary Nell Darden
- 23rd – Team Sandra Pearson
- 30th – Team Debbie Jones

OCTOBER

- 7th – Team Lesa Moore
- 14th – Team Jan Smith & Kay Raynor
- 21st – Team Bob & Ken
- 28th – Team Mike Rivenbark

NOVEMBER

- 4th – The Methodist Men
- 11th – Team Marilyn St. Pierre
- 18th – Team Luke Martin



Meals on Wheels

Sept. 11: Brenda Nordin
Sept. 25: Steve Williams



Flower Calendar

- 6th – Janet Shoemaker
- 13th – Darrell & Debbie Jones
- 20th – OPEN
- 27th – Mary Nell Darden; Janet Shoemaker

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.



Worship Corner

Altar Guild: Phillip & Elizabeth Andrews
Greeters: Ida Johnson Circle

The Prayer Corner

Intercessory Prayer Group: Mondays at 10:00 am



Happy Birthday!

- 2nd – Hugh Carr
- 2nd – Jim Moore
- 3rd – Christopher Hobbs
- 3rd – Hayes Griffin
- 4th – Daughtry Jackson
- 5th – Tyler Carter
- 6th – Marshall Heath
- 7th – Greylon Barwick
- 7th – Mitch Malpass
- 7th – Wright Waters
- 10th – Jack DuBose
- 10th – Jonathan Taylor
- 12th – Caroline Butler
- 13th – Craig Herring
- 13th – Kelly Best
- 15th – Emily Sumner
- 15th – Gary Wells
- 15th – Ruth Godwin
- 16th – Phillip Andrews
- 17th – Dottie O'Quinn
- 17th – John Sargent
- 18th – Richard Rogers
- 19th – Beverly Tew
- 19th – Debo Bell
- 19th – Susan Heath
- 21st – Abby Tomell
- 24th – Karen Herring
- 26th – Charles Knowles
- 26th – Denise Hendricks
- 26th – Ken Sutton
- 27th – Clark Serafini
- 27th – Kay Ann Evans
- 29th – Steve Miller

Prayer List:

Audrey Vaughn, Marti Knobloch, Dottie Funk, Amanda Underwood, Lynn McLamb, Jack Musick, Larry Waters, Jerry & Mary Margaret Hobbs, Jane Spell, Doris Gore, Neal Hardison, Joey Lowder, Dr. Mac Herring, Jimmie Hall, Marvin Mitchell, Homer Morris, Debra Morris, Wayne Tew, Pat Warrick, JoAnn Westbrook, Janet Johnson, Zachery Johnson, Steve Baker, Mike & Myra Humphrey, Glenn Brewer, Bryson Capps, Ed Owen, Greg Moore, Jimmy Smith, Wayne Reynolds, Angie Hall, Violet White

Those who are homebound:

Ruth Godwin

Those who are in long-term care:

Loraine Butler, Anthony Balkcum, Pat Green, Frances Pearson, Polly Coffey, Helen Griffin, Louetta Carr

Missionary:

Forrest & Laura Strickland



Children’s Volunteers

Nursery:

- 6th – Selma Turlington (11:00)
- 13th – Jan Smith (9:00)
- 20th – Brittany Serafini (9:00)
- 27th – Karen Wrench (9:00)

Happy Anniversary!

- 11th – Curtis & Lori Barwick
- 12th – Jeff & Sarah Swartz
- 21st – Darrell & Debbie Jones
- 30th – Marshall & Susan Heath



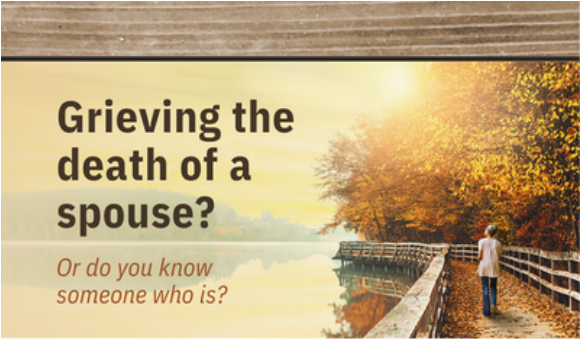
2026

September

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 9:00 Chat with M@	2 7:00 Methodist Women Choir Kickoff Dinner	3	4	5
					M A T T	O U T
6 9:30 Fellowship 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service	7 BYB & Office Closed <i>let's</i> CELEBRATE <i>our</i> HARD WORK +	8 9:00 Chat with M@ 6:30 SPRC Meeting	9 4:00 Singing Strings 5:00 K-5 Choir 5:30 Bible Study for All Ages 5:30 Preschool Choir 5:45 Bells/Winds 6:30 Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir	10	11 12:00 Communion Service @ Graves 6:00 Family Movie Night Meals on Wheels	12
13 Matt Preaching Rockingham 9:00 Son-Up Service 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 3:00 Griefshare: Loss of a Spouse 4:00 Confirmation 5:00 Youth	14 M@ Out of Office – Cabinet Meeting 10:30 MW Executive Board 5:00 Newsletter Due 7:00 NomCom	15 9:00 Chat with M@ 4:30 Griefshare	16 4:00 Singing Strings 5:00 K-5 Choir 5:30 Bible Study for All Ages 5:30 Preschool Choir 5:45 Bells/Winds 6:30 Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir	17 9:30–10 Birthday Cakes 	18	19 9:00 Methodist Men's Work Day
					5:30 Youth – Raven Rock Camping Trip	
20 8:00 MM Breakfast 9:00 Son-Up Service 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 3:00 CPR Training/AED Training 4:00 Confirmation 5:00 Youth	21 10:00 Intercessory Prayer 11:00 Ida Johnson Circle Methodist Men Meeting Happy Birthday Abby!	22 9:00 Chat with M@ 4:30 Griefshare 6:30 Eleanor Powell Circle	23 4:00 Singing Strings 5:00 K-5 Choir 5:30 Bible Study for All Ages 5:30 Preschool Choir 5:45 Bells/Winds 6:30 Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir	24 6:30 Skill Creations	25 6:00 Wind Ensemble Plays Music on Main Meals on Wheels	26
27 9:00 Son- Up Service 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 4:00 Confirmation 5:00 Youth	28 10:00 Intercessory Prayer	29 9:00 Chat with M@ 4:30 Griefshare	30 4:00 Singing Strings 5:00 K-5 Choir 5:30 Bible Study for All Ages 5:30 Preschool Choir 5:45 Bells/Winds 6:30 Dinner 7:00 Chancel Choir			

Notes:

- 9/1: Receipts & Coordinating forms Due to Office
- 9/14: October Newsletters Due to Office
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-
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Grieving the death of a spouse?

Or do you know someone who is?

Your life has changed forever. The daily emotions and challenges can seem too hard to bear.

Find help at a Loss of a Spouse seminar.

LOSS OF A SPOUSE

September 13, 2026 3:00 PM

Call today for more information
910-592-2035
Sponsored by First Methodist Church
Sign up at:
www.fmcnc.org/griefshare

GRIEF SHARE

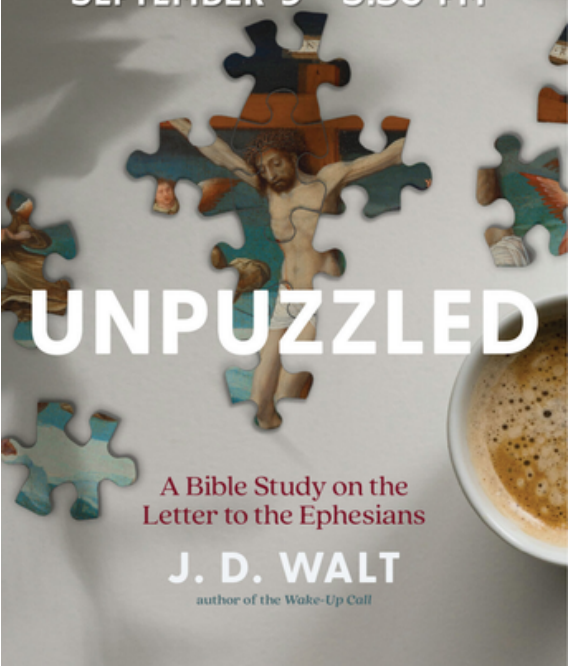
Grief Share®

Grief never ends... Grieving is all-encompassing. The loss could be a spouse, child, family member, friend, pet, and even divorce. Recovery from grief is overwhelming and can be lonely. First Methodist Church would like to help you with your loss by providing "Grief Share" support. This support series will help and give encouragement from a loss. The Grief Share Support group will begin September 16th. If you or someone you know would like to attend, please notify the church office.

Begins September 15th
Meets every Tuesday
4:30-6:30 pm
\$15.00 for entire course (scholarships available)
910-592-2035
info@fmcnc.org

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

WAKE-UP CALL
BIBLE STUDY BEGINS
SEPTEMBER 9th 5:30 PM



UNPUZZLED

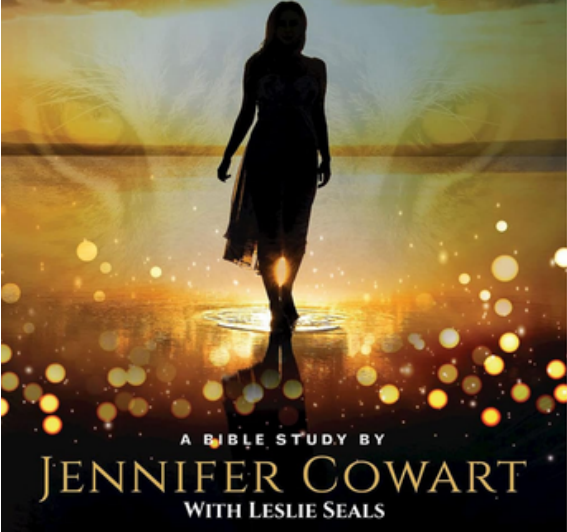
A Bible Study on the Letter to the Ephesians

J. D. WALT
author of the Wake-Up Call

FIERCE

Women of the Bible Who Changed the World

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY
BEGINS SEPT 9TH 5:30 PM



A BIBLE STUDY BY
JENNIFER COWART
WITH LESLIE SEALS

OPERATION Christmas CHILD

SEPTEMBER ITEMS

SEPT. 6-13 TOOTHBRUSH WASHCLOTH COMB AND BRUSH	SEPT. 13-20 NAIL CLIPPER AND FILE WATER BOTTLE FLASHLIGHT
SEPT. 20-27 PENCILS/PENS SHARPENER ERASERS CRAYONS	SEPT. 27-OCT. 4 COLORED PENCILS MARKERS COLORING/NOTEBOOKS DRAWSTRING BAG

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
208 SAMPSON STREET • CLINTON, NC

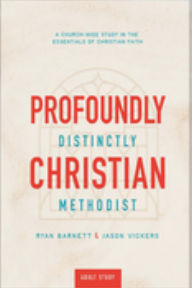
SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

Beginning Sept. 20th
10:10 - 10:45 am
10 Weeks

Only 8 seats will be available.
Sign-Up in the office before all seats are filled!

Sign up at fmcnc.org/adults

Taught by Pastor Matt



S.A.L.T.

Seasoned adults living triumphantly

2026 - 2027 EVENTS





AUGUST 29TH
Mike's Farm
DINNER & MAGIC SHOW





SEPTEMBER • DATE TBA
Farmers Market Lunch
Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral Tour
Howling Cow Ice Cream







OCTOBER 15-16
The Great Gatsby
CHARLOTTE TRIP





NOVEMBER • DATE TBA
Rudy Theatre
CHRISTMAS SHOW
SELMA, NC







DECEMBER • DATE TBA
Snyder Memorial
SINGING CHRISTMAS TREE



JANUARY 24TH • 5:30 PM
Dinner & Show
AT FIRST METHODIST
DETAILS TBA



FEBRUARY
DATE TBA
Bethel Church
VALENTINE
STEAK DINNER &
ENTERTAINMENT
LA GRANGE, NC



MARCH
DATE TBA
Sweet Tea
Shakespeare
PLAY IN
FAYETTEVILLE



APRIL
DATE & DETAILS TBA
Sight & Sound
Theatre Trip
LANCASTER, PA



MAY
DATE TBA
Sampson County
History Museum
& LUNCH



This is a covenant that is for all of us.

As Wesleyan Christians, we have long understood the Christian life through the practices of doing no harm, doing good, and attending upon the ordinances of God. These are not merely individual practices. They shape how we live together as the people of God.

We covenant together to do no harm by the way we speak, act, disagree, and treat one another.

We covenant together to do good by serving, encouraging, welcoming, forgiving, protecting, and caring for one another.

And we covenant together to attend upon the ordinances of God by worshiping, praying, studying Scripture, receiving the sacraments, and continually growing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is the kind of community in Jesus Christ we want to be. And so, we covenant together to Grow Disciples, Care for People, and Send the Church. We do this because God has first entered into covenant with us through Jesus Christ. His faithfulness becomes the foundation for our faithfulness. I invite all of us to think more deeply about what it means to live in covenant community. This is not simply something we ask of our young people. It is something we model for them. Our children and youth are watching how we speak to one another. They are watching how we handle disagreement. They are watching whether we forgive, whether we serve, whether we show up for one another, and whether our lives reflect the Jesus we proclaim.

May we be a church that not only teaches covenant but lives covenant. May we be a people who shoulder one another's burdens, share one another's risks, celebrate one another's joys, and continually point one another toward Jesus. God has made a covenant with us. In response to His faithfulness, may we faithfully covenant with one another to do no harm, to do good, and to grow together as the people of God.

In Christ,
Rev. Matt Seals
pastor@fmcnc.org