



THE FLAME

Newsletter

First United Methodist Church of McMinnville
April 2026

Towards the end of my first college semester, some friends and classmates were finishing their fraternity pledge campaigns. Pledges dreaded this final week before full initiation. Horror stories were quietly told about hazing tactics and, frankly, some dangerous behaviors. One guy's fraternity supposedly made him and the other pledges stay up all week, sleeping as little as humanly possible. Let's just say that student didn't say much in the two English classes we shared during his final week as a pledge. Pledges refer to that period of days as "hell week" for obvious reasons. A pledge's acceptance is earned as a result of hell week; pledges must prove their worthiness.

Contrast notorious "hell weeks" of Greek life to the Christian week now upon us – "Holy Week." Holy Week is the Christian term for the week between Palm Sunday and Easter. Ironically, what became known as Holy Week was deeply imbued in early Greek life, too. However, the sacrifice of Christ reveals acceptance by God's grace. Nothing is earned by us.

Holy week is for Christians or anyone who has been through their own experiences of "hell week." Given the opportunity, perhaps some would trade seven days of hazing in exchange for the prolonged seasons of suffering we undergo. If life has been hard or difficult, let us take solace in the example of Christ.

No one had it tougher than Jesus – with the weight of the world on his shoulders – and we are all better off for it. Isaiah 53:3-5 foretold of the Messiah, "3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." (NIV 11). Somehow, in Jesus' horrific suffering the latter part of that holy week, we understand Jesus as more human than we would have otherwise known. In his suffering, we can better relate to Jesus and how human he truly is. Jesus overcomes hell in his holiness and wants the same for us. If life has been tough, hang in there, and hang onto Jesus.

Church Council & Strategic planning sessions

My latest soapbox has been about knowing our WHY. A staff member asked what the WHY is behind our church council & strategic council sessions are. I appreciate this question which challenges me to practice what I preach. Subject to improvement, here's my first attempt. The WHY behind strategic planning church council sessions is "to discern & pursue a faithful future given FUMC's context, gifts & calling." If you want to join us, our next planning session will be Sunday, April 26, at noon in the fellowship hall. Bring a sack lunch for yourself if preferred.

In Christ, Ryan Heatherly



Ferns in Outreach Building

In Memory of

Our parents

In Honor of

Our children & grandchildren

Given by Robert & Marsha
Newman

In Memory of

Jackie Brewer

Given by Beth Heatherly

In Memory of

Brenda McMillen

Given by David & Julie Holt

In Memory of

Billy & Nancy Stubblefield

Given by Steve & Mary Koelbl

In Honor of

Lorien Sites

&

Hunter MacDonald

Given by Sam & Linda Young



Ferns in Historic Sanctuary

In Memory of

Our parents

James & Jeanne Schmidt

Homer & Doris Rose

Given by Robert & Beverly Schmidt

In Memory of

Kenneth Odineal

Given by Lucinda Smith

In Memory of

Our Parents

Given by Thomas & Peggy Bratcher

THANK YOU NOTES, GOOD NEIGHBOR SCHEDULE, & OTHER DATES

Dear Volunteers at FUMC:

The workday volunteers from your church are greatly appreciated. The lunch and volunteers are a vital part of making a successful building day. We appreciate the devotional, lunch and support. Habitat for Humanity Board Members
Annie Moffitt, Admin Assistant

On behalf of the family of Wanda Bess DePriest Ivins, Jon, Belinda and Alex Ivins and family appreciate the prayers, sweet notes of condolence, and heartfelt messages from the dear church family at McMinnville First UMC. We sincerely appreciate all of you!

In Christ's Peace,

Jon, Belinda, and
Alex Ivins

Good Neighbors Cooks & Driver Schedule

April 2

Cook: Mac

Route 1: Sandlin

Route 2: Sub

Route 3: Sandlin

Route 4: Young

Route 5: Alsbrook

April 16:

Cook: The Brocks


Route 1: Sandlin

Route 2: Sub




Route 3: Miller

Route 4: Spanjer

Route 5: Alsbrook




Every drop counts. Donate blood.



**Warren County Community
Blood Drive**

First United Methodist Church - Outreach Building
200 West Main Street - McMinnville, TN 37110

Tuesday April 28, 2026 12:30 – 5:30 PM

\$15  All donors will receive \$15 eGift Card to merchant of choice!!
To schedule an appointment log onto [redcrossblood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter sponsor code: Warren019 or scan QR Code above call 1 800 RED CROSS

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2757 | [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) | Download the Blood Donor App

save the date



**Women's Retreat
Gather & Grow**

May 1-3, 2026

55 Hege Ave.
Beersheba Springs, TN
37305



Hi friends! Registration is open for the Women's Retreat May 1-3, 2026! YAY! We are so excited to host you again for this wonderful retreat. Our retreat leaders are Rebecca Gwynn-Dixon from Lebanon and Lee and Megan Alexander from Murfreesboro. Our theme of Gather & Grow should be one that we won't want to miss. When we gather together and show up for our faith and each other, God blesses us in so many ways. Join us and help us spread the word!

https://www.cognitoforms.com/BeershebaSpringsAssembly1/_2026BeershebaAssemblyWomensRetreat

Grace and Peace to you,

Allyson

Allyson Ashmore
Retreat Director
Beersheba Springs Assembly

YOUTH MINISTRY - BRUCE WATSON

Dear Church Family,

Wow! Time is flying. With the passing of so many on our Church Family it's nice to have some good news to share with you. And good news I bring you.

Our excursion to the Creation Museum and The Ark Encounter is in the books! The Lord smiled on us and gave us safe passage and a good communal spirit throughout. We left on Sunday afternoon, March 15th, and made the 5 hour drive to our hotel in Florence, Kentucky in 4 different vehicles. The hotel was nice and centrally located for our planned itinerary. Those of us traveling in the church van ate a Cincinnati tradition, Skyline Chili after the journey while some stayed at the hotel and enjoyed the pool.

On Monday morning we proceeded by caravan to the Creation Museum, about 20 minutes west of our location in Florence. You may remember the weather that day as we had snow and a cold blowing wind as did you here at home. The Creation Museum was truly enjoyed by our young people. There were more activities than we able to do in a single day and a very full day it was.

That evening we went to Dairy Queen, mainly because we had 5 birthdays to celebrate and ice cream is a favorite of several of our birthday boys. Byron Keyes turned 11 on the 12th, Benjamin Spanjer turned 15 on the 13th, Thomas Spanjer turned 12 on the 19th, and Triston Lumons and Wes Newman turned 24 and 45, respectively, on the 23rd. It was a fun and fitting end to our first full day complete with swimming in the saltwater pool when we got back to the hotel.

On Tuesday morning, the 17th we checked out of the hotel by 8:45 and were on our way to the Ark which was a half an hour drive back down I-75 toward home. It was bitterly cold and windy in Northern Kentucky that morning, but it didn't stop us! The Ark was a wonderful experience and enjoyed by all. It is a very thoughtful and inspirational place for anyone who gives the Word of God significance in their lives. Again, there is more to do than can be done in a single day, but the trip was everything I had hoped it would be and I hope we will see seeds it planted come to fruition in the lives of those who went.

I'm very pleased to share with you all of those who are currently attending Confirmation Class went on the trip. Speaking of which, this coming Sunday is our final gathering for this class. The event will be a campfire at the home of the Heatherlys where S'more will be the main thing on the agenda besides reflecting back over the things we've shared and learned during this special time. Please be in prayer for our young people as some of them will be making important decisions regarding their spiritual lives. Then, on Easter Sunday we will have a special recognition of all those who have attended these classes and their mentors, members of our church family who have supported our children, will all be recognized. This will be during the first service. All the church family is invited to take part.

These are the highlights, but know, there is so much more going on, especially in the spiritual realm in the lives of our young people as well as the life our church.

Thank you for your continuing support and prayers. God bless you all and please... watch this space!

Peace and Love in Him,
Bruce

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR - JULIE HOLT

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Happy April! Boy am I glad to see the spring season arrive and the time springing forward is always a plus. Lets just say my mood highly depends on the sun. I am always reminded of how precious God's creation is when spring time rolls around. The grass is so green and lush, the flowers are perking up and blooming, the sky just looks clearer than it does in the winter. It gives me a sense of hope, hope that things are getting brighter.

Here in the children's department, we have been doing a Lenten study self-titled "Walking With Jesus". So far, we have learned about prevenient grace, repentance, temptation, sanctifying grace, prayer, social holiness, Holy communion and open table. By the time you read this we will have learned about resurrection hope. That's what Easter does, it reminds us there is true HOPE in Jesus! We call ourselves "Easter People" because we live on THIS SIDE of the resurrection. We are a HOPE-FILLED people, young and old. I just love this time of year. I will be challenging our kids to find ways to keep that Easter hope alive all year long, not just this time of year. How about you, the church? How do you keep hope alive beyond Easter?

On Saturday April 4th at 2pm we will be having an Easter egg hunt at church for all ages, that includes you teenagers! The teenagers will have to work a little harder for their prizes but it will be fun nonetheless! We will also have an egg dying station and crafts station as well. If the weather is bad we will move it inside. Thank you to everyone who has sent in eggs and candy. We couldn't have this much fun without you.

With much Christian love,
Julie Holt
Childrens Director of Ministry



We will be taking coke tabs back to Ronald McDonald house in December. We had a great turn out for it last year but we want to shoot for a bigger amount this year. We thought a little friendly competition would be fun so we will be awarding a \$50 gift card to the person who brings in the most coke tabs toward the end of November. You collect them and keep them at home then we will have a weigh-in day that will determine the winner. We look forward to seeing how many coke tabs y'all can bring in.

Julie Holt, Missions Team

Note: We are having a Missions Team meeting on Sunday, April 12 at 11:30am to plan a date for the yard sale.



April

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Dwight Burch Jim Pierce	2 Good Neighbors	3 Michael Spanjer	4 Thomas Miller
5 EASTER Belinda Ivins	6	7 Peggy Bratcher	8	9 Shepherding Team @ 10:00	10	11 Hilrie Brown Lee Davis
12 Missions Team Meeting @ 11:30am	13 Nan Lane Prayer Shawl @ 10:00am	14 Staff Meeting @ 10:00	15	16 Good Neighbors	17 FUMC Basketball @ 8:00pm at Bobby Ray	18
19 Julie Holt preaching Native American Ministries Sunday	20	21 UMW Meeting @ 9:30	22 Pat Gaither	23 Debbie Dunham	24	25 Cowan & Olver Wedding Day
26 Church Council Strategic Planning Session @ 12:00	27	28 Red Cross Blood Drive @ 12:30	29	30	May 1 Eulalia Jones Celebration of Life @ 1:00pm	





March 15, 2026
Welcome new member, Dewayne Fox.



Thanks to everyone who volunteered
March 14 to work on the Habitat House.

S'MORE FUN AT THE HEATHERLYS

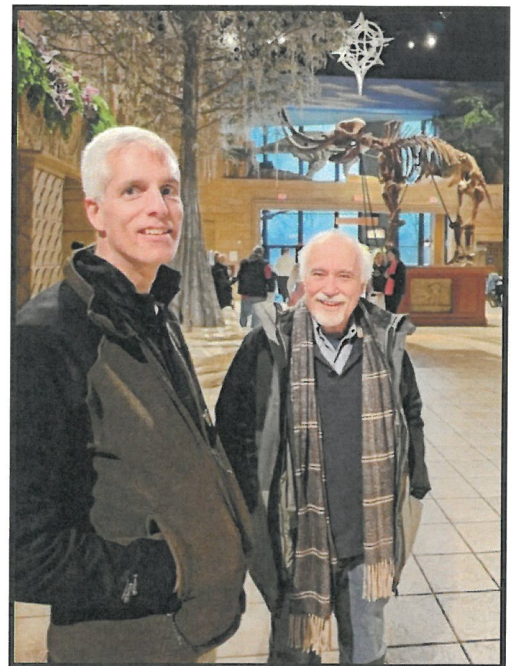
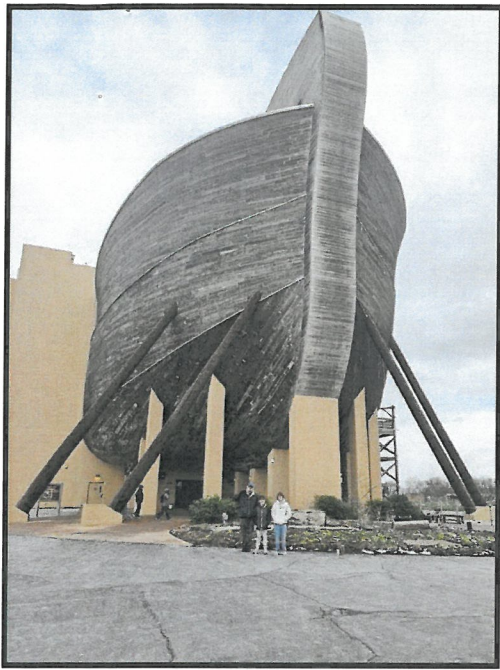


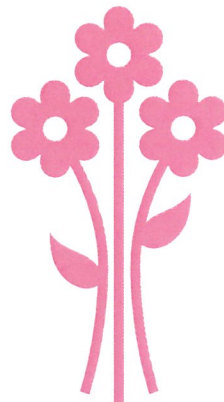
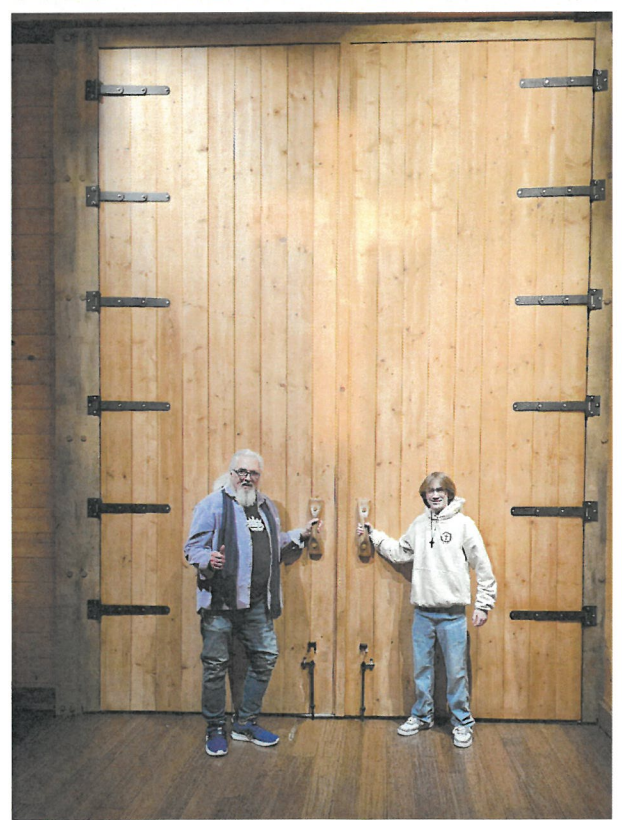
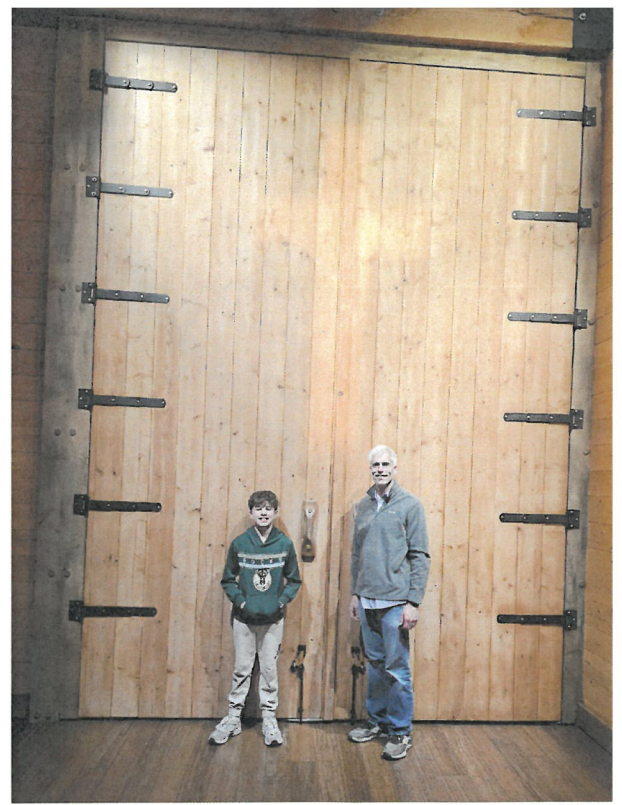
Build Day 2026



Ark Encounter & Creation Museum Trip
March 15-17, 2026









A stop at Dairy Queen to celebrate some of the travelers birthdays. Benjamin & Thomas Spanjer, Byron Keyes, Triston Luman, and Wes Newman all had March birthdays.

