

With charge conference scheduled Sunday, November 2, this space seems appropriate to duplicate the highlights of my pastor's report submitted along with our charge conference form. That entire report was 4 pages, but is slightly redacted below to retain the most relevant items for The Flame.

Pastor's Report - Charge Conference 2025

By Ryan Heatherly

In the Church

I extend deep gratitude to our laypeople & staff members who enable me to serve our church and community....

- Two of our most remarkable missional successes in the past year were 2 fundraisers for individuals in the homeless community. A yard sale and a car wash raised over \$15,000 to benefit the personal development goals of homeless or struggling neighbors.
- Two others and I co-lead confirmation class on Sunday nights.
- I facilitate Wandering Guys (merged with remaining Happy Campers) Sunday School discussion weekly
- I meet virtually each month with our District Superintendent & peer clergy
- Given our context, homeless and benevolent ministries, I imagine some of my pastoral duties in this appointment resemble those of a social worker.

Counseling:

- In the past year, I have led two couples through premarital counseling, totaling approximately 20 hours total and given spiritual counseling to several individuals and officiated one wedding.
- I am currently leading a couple through a faith based personal finance course

Beyond the church:

- Teach Transformation Project weekly at Warren County Jail (This is a faith based curriculum addressing addictive patterns, conflict resolution, anger management, & other life skills).
- In October 2025, I began serving as a life coach to a male participant in Transformation Project. This involves a brief daily phone call with the participant to encourage accountability.
- Regular participation in Warren County Ministerial Association (monthly breakfast at Medley's, help with concessions for movies on the downtown lawn, attend joint worship services, & preached at 1 joint worship service)
- Joined HART (Homeless Advocacy of Rural Tennessee), Upper Cumberland's continuum of care, & attend their meetings every other month
- Became secretary of new local non-profit M.A.T.C.H. (McMinnville Action to Create Housing), whose mission is to match homeless neighbors with wrap-around supportive services
- Coached youth boys' basketball (December – March)
- Growing participation with Warren County Drug Coalition
- Bowled in community bowling league with church members (August – May)
- Regular blood donor (reached 3 gallons donated w/ American Red Cross - 2025)
- Attended New Room Conference in September 2025

Books read since last Charge Conference held in 2024: *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt, *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality & the 12 Steps* by Richard Rohr, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer, *When Helping Hurts* by Stephen Corbett, Brian Fikkert, *Letter to the American Church* by Eric Metaxas & 2 additional books on relationships and Christian living.

Personal & Spiritual Development

- I continue meeting regularly with 2 colleagues as part of a **discipleship band**. We meet virtually most Mondays to share our lives and encourage one other.
- I meet almost weekly with men for breakfast to discuss upcoming scripture as part of a Bible study group.
- During the spring, I met with a few local colleagues about 4 times as part of a peer group referred to as **L3** (loving, learning & leading). Signs suggest we may meet less regularly going forward.
- For my **personal devotional** life, my wife and I continue sharing Jonathan Cahn's *The Book of Mysteries*. I appreciate its accessibility and simultaneous depth, especially as it relates to ancient Hebrew culture.
- Our family enjoyed vacationing this summer in Michigan, splitting our days between loving family and friends.

2025-2026 goals

- 1) Co-lead & complete a confirmation class for youth by May 2026. This goal is underway.
- 2) Research, announce & plan Wesley Heritage Tour or other spiritual travel for 2026 or 2027
- 3) Work more closely w/ Centertown & Clark UMCs for improved missional alignment
- 4) Begin a job or volunteer program for willing participants within the homeless/underserved community by 12/2026
- 5) Secure housing placements for 2 families or individuals through MATCH (note "Beyond the Church" section above)
- 6) Reevaluate & adjust benevolence procedures with office staff & *When Helping Hurts* study participants

SWOT Analysis

The below SWOT analysis reflects my perceptions of McMinnville First's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:

Strengths:

- Our people
- Community focused
- Community reputation (by some)
- Community connections – Adult Ed, HOME partnership, Empower Upper Cumberland, Girl Scouts, Good Neighbors meal delivery
- Sense of community, friendly to newcomers
- Debt free
- Growing discipleship among individuals
- Versatility & size of property
- Gribble endowment Fund (for WC churches & higher ed.)
- Improving diversity across socioeconomic categories

Weaknesses:

- Community perception (by some - \$)
- UMC perception in Warren County/ Upper Cumberland
- Church's Identity confusion/ lingering effects of General Conference departures
- History of short-term pastoral appointments
- Imbalance of children & youth : adult ratio
- Aging, expensive buildings (\$40,000 annual utility budget)
- Too reliant on few donors
- Declining worship offerings
- Inexperience of ministry teams

Opportunities:

- Emerging signs of spiritual awakening among Gen Z
- Newcomers to Warren Co.
- Strategic partnerships
- Warren County Ministerial Association relationship development - youth & children ministries
- Improved training of ministry teams
- Missions engagement better aligned with church mission
- Adult Ed, Empower Upper Cumberland, host football team, Girl Scouts
- Repurpose desirable spaces for ministry
- Nontraditional revenue streams – parking, party rentals, etc.
- Cultivating giving across socioeconomic spectrum
- Renewed interest in Holy Spirit
- Cold shelter & training
- SNAP recipients now required to volunteer regularly
- Closer work w/ Centertown & Clark UMCs

Threats:

- Aging members & passing of financial supporters
- Long term finances
- Resistance towards institutions
- Disruption of traditional family units
- Recent declining influence of American/ Protestant church
- Denominational resistance & division
- Welfare funding cuts

Pastor's Report for Charge Conference respectfully submitted,
Ryan Heatherly

(Pastor's updates continue below)

Planned absence this month: Our family will be away Sunday, November 16, for a family wedding out of state. As such, I want to affirm our schedule substitute preacher for worship. He is known well by many of you. Matt Campbell will lead our continuing journey through Luke. Matt has earned the privilege of bringing the Word of God to you, as he has attended three training sessions of lay servant ministry over the past couple of years. Lay servant classes are designed to prepare and train leaders in the local church, and present an appropriate path towards occasional or regular preaching in the United Methodist Church. Let me say attendance sometimes dips when the preacher is away (I really don't know why that is), but I am counting on our attendance to INCREASE, not decrease November 16. Your presence will serve as a show of support and commitment to Matt and your local church. Thank you in advance for supporting Matt Campbell in the pulpit November 16!

Christmas Wreaths Could Make a Great Gift for Someone on Your List! Please note the fundraiser in this newsletter for Christmas wreaths sold in support of MATCH. They are \$35 each and orders must be received by November 21. Local drop-off will occur at the outreach building indoors or in the parking lot December 1 or 2. Watch upcoming bulletins for confirmation. MATCH aims to secure housing solutions for homeless persons in McMinnville, a necessary step towards wholeness of life. You can find our more information about MATCH at <https://mcminnvilleactiontocreatehousing.org/>

Advent Readers Needed: Advent begins November 30. If your family—or you and a few friends—would like to take part in leading an Advent reading and candle lighting this year, let me hear from you. Each week, our readers share a brief, provided reading and light the candle(s) on the Advent wreath as we prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. It's a meaningful way to participate in worship and in the spirit of Advent. Readers can be responsible for 8:00 or 10:30 worship on November 30, December 7, 14, 21, or Christmas Eve at 8:00 PM.

Feast or Fast?

November 27 is Thanksgiving Day. Many will stuff their mouths with food that day. Some will not, due to untold circumstances. As of the time of this writing, so many are worried about food with potential suspension of their SNAP (food stamp) benefits. A continued government shutdown also means more demand placed upon food banks. Hopefully, everyone can experience one meal this month like a *feast*, but are we willing to consider a *FAST*? For John Wesley, fasting was a means of grace – a discipline by which a person encountered God.

Given the plight of many across our state and country, I ask you to consider fasting once this month, or even once per week. When I fast, I usually fast after my evening meal until the next day's evening meal, hydrating with water. This was John Wesley's pattern, too. If you haven't ever fasted, consider it. You might pray each time your stomach growls or reflect on those who go longer than a day between meals. Don't fast in order to boast (Jesus warned against that). Rather, practice fasting as a spiritual discipline conducive to gratitude and reflection. You might even donate the cost savings normally spent on food to a local food bank now experiencing greater demand.

Newcomer's Gathering in January

Attending a new church can be intimidating, but connecting can be even more difficult. We can help with that! If you have begun attending or joined First UMC by membership in the past three years, consider attending a newcomers' gathering designed especially for you. Our agenda should include faith, food, fun, and fellowship. The gathering will be hosted by another church family, so reservations will be necessary due to space limitations. The gathering will include an evening meal, tentatively on a weeknight in January 2026. Notify me or office personnel if you're interested, and we will share specifics as those become available.

In Christ,
Ryan Heatherly



Support MATCH

McMinnville Action To Create Housing



Participant QR Code



Or Purchase Wreaths
\$35 each

Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the web-link that appears to open the launch guide.

Watch introductory video then follow the steps to download the MoneyDolly app and join the campaign.

Help sell award-winning 24" Hand-Made Fraser Fir Wreaths. Shipped directly from North Carolina to McMinnville.



**Join the Fundraiser
Scan the QR Code**



Group Campaign Page



Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the web-link that appears to access the group campaign page.

McMinnville Action To Create Housing (MATCH) is a newly formed interfaith non-profit affordable was established to create housing that matches our homeless neighbors with a permanent home which includes wrap-around services and support. Pastor Ryan is serving as MATCH secretary. You are invited to support a holiday fundraiser. Help sell award-winning 24" Hand-made Fraser Fir Wreaths. Shipped directly from North Carolina to McMinnville. Wreaths are \$35.

Purchase an award-winning 24" Hand-Made Fraser Fir Wreath. Shipped directly from North Carolina to McMinnville.

Scan the QR Code Above

**BUY
NOW**

Rehearsals for the Community Chorus Christmas Concert began on Tuesday, Oct 28 at 7:00pm. If anyone who would like to join us to sing is welcomed. Rehearsals will be every Tuesday at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. The concert will be on Tuesday, December 16th at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary.



Sunday, November 2 @ 12:00pm - Charge Conference in Historic Sanctuary
Monday, November 10 @ 10:00am - Prayer Shawl meeting
Tuesday, November 11 @ 10:00am - staff meeting
Thursday, November 13 @ 10:00am - Shepherding Team Meeting
Tuesday, November 18 @ 9:30am - UMW meeting
Sunday, November 23 @ 4:00pm - SPPRC meeting (Tentative)
Monday, November 24 @ 10:00am - decorate the Historic Building and Outreach Building for Advent

Weekly time of prayer every Monday beginning at noon in the Historic Chapel

Thank You for helping fund our FUEL Feeding Program

Many local students depend on this food sent home each Friday as part as their weekend diet. Your support ensures this vital program continues.

During the month of October we have received gifts of \$5,488 for our FUEL program. Thank you to everyone for your generous giving! We now have a balance of \$7,300 in the FUEL fund, and this should be enough to fund the program through 2026!

We typically spend \$4,500-\$6,000 annually on FUEL bags to supply Bobby Ray Elementary and Warren County Middle School for the school year. Year to date expenses total \$3,500. Prior to our October appeal, the balance in the FUEL account was approximately \$1,850, which already included the pancake breakfast proceeds of \$2,300 from July 4th.

OBSERVATION OF ALL SAINTS

All Saints' Day



This year, on November 2, we will pause to remember the life of your loved ones and friends during our 8:00am and 10:30am worship services. Our services will include calling the names of our dearly departed, ringing a bell, and the sharing of The Lord's Supper that points to our greater joy in that day when all God's children will be reunited. We are inviting you to be a part of this meaningful and memorable service.

*Barbara Gillespie
Charlie Campbell
Charlotte Boyd
Phyllis Taylor (Phyl)
Sara Jean Thaxton
Roger Cope
Sherry Lee Luman
Cecilia Murphy
Robert Pliha
Daphne Lee
Phillip Mason
David Waninger
Roger Franklin*

November Birthdays & Anniversaries

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Susan Maxwell Thomas & McKenzie Miller	3	4 Lily Jo Harvey Arick Murphy	5 Linda Newby	6 Nora Harvey Jon Ivins	7 Mary D. Koelbl Sandra Lee Carter Smith	8 Jlm Glenn Mary Wanamaker
9	10	11	12 Lynn Tede	13	14	15 Steve Tepley Garen Smith
16 Dot Briggs	17 Tom Thaxton	18 Michael & Cindy Ratz	19	20 Gene Maxwell	21 Ann Layne Sam Harvey	22
23	24	25 Larry Shelton	26	27 M'Liss Miller Jonathan Spanjer	28 Mary Greer Matthew Hicks	29
30	31					





Mike and Cindy Ratz joined the church on July 13th in the 10:30am worship



Thank you so much for y beautiful prayer shawl. Its on my bed and makes me feel wrapped in love and warmth. I think of all of you every time I see it and all the love and prayers that were poured into it.
Thank you so very much!.

In Christian love,
Shari Newby

Dear Ladies of the Prayer Shawl Ministry,
My daughter, Susan S. Davis, and I were so thrilled to receive the two lovingly handmade gifts of prayer shawls. They are so beautiful and will be treasured always. God has blessed you with a wonderful talent and us with Christian friends to help us at this very difficult time in our lives. We especially shall feel the warmth of your love as we go through the cold winter months ahead. Thanking you for thinking of us and for your coveted prayers.

Love always,
Ann Schultz and Susan S. Davis

Good Neighbors Schedule

Nov 6

Cooks: Mary
Route 1: Sandlin
Route 2: Hinds
Route 3: Sandlin
Route 4: Spanjer
Route 5: Prater

Nov 20

Cooks: Dennis
Route 1: Sandlin
Route 2: Dennis
Route 3: Hall
Route 4: Dodson
Route 5: Alsbrook

To the Shepherding Team

Words often fall short when it comes to expressing the gratitude felt in moments of deep loss. I want to extend my heart felt thanks for the thoughtful gifts you have given me during this difficult time - the "Journeying Through Grief" book series and the beautiful hand knitted white shawl.

The books arrived jus when comfort and understanding was most needed. Each page has helped guide my heart through the complexities of sorrow, encouraging reflection, and offering hope. Your choice to share these resources speaks volumes about your care and your commitment to waling alongside those who mourn.

The shawl, with its soft warmth and craftsmanship, feels like a tangible embrace - a symbol of community, love, and healing power of gentle hands. I am reminded of the kindness and prayers given into every stitch. Your generosity and thoughtfulness are truly appreciated.

Linda Wilson