



THE CHURCH BELL



DECEMBER

2023

The weekend after Thanksgiving was a nostalgic time in our house as we shared the annual ritual of removing Christmas decorations from their storage bins, remembering their stories, and placing them on display for this season. We said things like, “You made that in preschool,” or “You used to love to play with that,” or “That was my grandmother’s.” The photos, the handwriting, and the wear and tear reminded us of Christmases past.

I believe holidays—with their traditions, rituals, and heirlooms—have a distinct way of causing us to look back. We grieve our loved ones who are no longer with us, and we crave the smells and tastes of previous generations’ recipes. We miss the days when children were younger. We feel keenly the bittersweetness of changing family dynamics and holiday habits across the years. Without even trying, we may convince ourselves that things were somehow more joyful, more peaceful, simpler, or even *better* in the past.

In this way, we’re not dissimilar from Jesus’ contemporaries. I imagine they did a lot of looking back, too. They probably yearned for the good old days of independence before Pompey the Great and his Roman troops conquered Israel in 63 BC. Beyond that, they likely looked back with nostalgia nearly a millennium to the reign of King David, their last great king.

But God was looking forward. Notice the future tense as Gabriel speaks to Mary in Luke 1:31-32: “And now, you *will* conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you *will* name him Jesus. He *will* be great, and *will* be called the Son of the Most High.”

Similarly, in Matthew 1:21-23, an angel speaks to Joseph in future tense: “She *will* bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he *will* save his people from their sins.”

Just as God prepared his parents for Jesus’ arrival into the world, God’s voice beckons us forward to Jesus’ ultimate return in Revelation 21:3-5:

“He *will* dwell with them; they *will* be his peoples, and God himself *will* be with them; he *will* wipe every tear from their eyes. Death *will* be no more; mourning and crying and pain *will* be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

We are always grateful for our heritage, for God’s faithfulness, and for the joys and blessings of the past, but from the beginning, God has asked us to look forward to, in, and through Jesus Christ. I hope you look forward to Christmas this year by looking forward.



Highlighting “New Voices” with the 2024 Christmas Offering

Each year, the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church asks all its congregations to cooperate for a missions offering, usually totaling tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars. This year’s goal is to raise \$1.5 million to benefit ministries here in the Holston Conference that raise up new voices in ministry and leadership.



Proceeds of this campaign will benefit our five conference camping ministries: Camp Wesley Woods, Camp Lookout, Camp Bays Mountain, Camp Dickenson, and Camp in the Community; our five college and university Wesley Foundations at Radford University, East Tennessee State University, the University of Tennessee Knoxville, the University of Virginia at Wise, and the University of Tennessee Chattanooga; and our two conference universities, Tennessee Wesleyan University and Emory & Henry College. A successful campaign will yield \$125,000 for each of these twelve ministries shaping young minds and hearts.

And a successful campaign is within reach! If each congregation in the Holston Conference contributed only \$13 per member, we would surpass the campaign goal of \$1.5 million. To raise the next generations’ young leaders, 1st Church will designate this year’s Christmas offering to the New Voices campaign.

Who knows? A few years from now, the Christmas Eve worship services at 1st Church might be led by pastors and lay leaders who grew closer to Christ or even experienced their calls to ministry at our Holston Conference camps, campus ministries, or colleges! Will you please give this year to ensure that they do? As always, thank you for your generosity.

You can give to the Christmas Offering by:

- giving during the evening presentation of the Chancel Choir Cantata on December 10th,
- giving during any of the Christmas Eve afternoon and evening worship services,
- marking your check “Christmas Offering 2023,”
- or giving online at 1stchurch.org/giving.

Staff changes and updates

Rev. Matt Hall’s appointment

In consultation and cooperation with our Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Bishop and Cabinet of the Holston Conference discontinued Rev. Matt Hall’s appointment as an associate pastor of First United Methodist Church in mid-November.

Our congregation is grateful for Matt and for his unique contributions to our mission and ministry. We particularly commend and appreciate his leadership of our Celebrate Recovery ministry, through which he has blessed many lives and consistently encouraged our congregation to seek out the least, the last, and the lost.

With gratitude to God for the five years of ministry we have shared, we will continue to embrace Matt in our love, appreciation, and prayers through all the days and years to come. Send your expressions

of love and encouragement to him at: 1305 Grant Street, Alcoa, TN 37701.

Our commitment to the mission and ministry of Celebrate Recovery will not waver in Rev. Hall’s absence. Our senior pastor, Jonathan Jonas, is cooperating with the lay leaders of Celebrate Recovery over the coming weeks to discern the ministry’s next best steps forward and needs for staff leadership.

Search continues for Organist

In our last edition of *The Church Bell* we announced the retirement of our church organist, Dwain Pesterfield. He’ll be stepping down at the end of the year after almost 47 years of playing the organ at 1st Church. We are currently searching for an organist and will keep you updated on the search. Early next year we plan on celebrating Dwain (along with Terry Wilson and Susan Daves) during a special reception.

An Unlikely Advent & Christmas



Christmas is a time filled with tradition and stories including the unlikely birth of a child in a town called Bethlehem. As we deal with the rush to decorate, shop and make it to special holiday events, let us all remember how God fulfilled a promise more than 2000 years ago.

Throughout the month of December in the days leading up to Christmas Day, 1st UMC reaches out to connect with you in hopes of finding you peace, hope, love and joy in the seasons of Advent & Christmas. Please take time to check out all that's happening and be sure to invite friends, co-workers and family to share in this most wonderful time of the year.



1stchurch.org/Christmas

Sunday, December 3rd
8:15 am
Morning Glory Chorus Cantata:
Light of the World

5:00 pm
1st Kids Christmas Celebration

Wednesday, December 3rd
6:30 pm
The Word Players present:
West of Bethlehem

Sunday, December 10th
10:30 am & 7:00 pm
Chancel Choir & Orchestra
Cantata:
Hope, Peace, Joy & Love

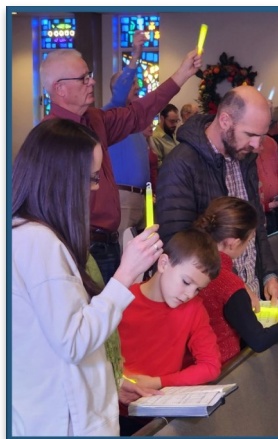
Sunday, December 17th
10:30 am
Contemporary Worship
Christmas Special

3:30 pm
Songs of the Season
Christmas Music Recital
With Shelley Maddox &
Dr. Jennifer Anderson

Wednesday, December 20th
6:30 pm
Blue Christmas
Worship Service

This year the 4th Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve (December 24th). We invite you to join us for morning worship service at 10:30 am in the Sanctuary. *There will only be one morning service.* Children & Youth Sunday School will not meet and nursery service will not be provided.

Later in the day we hope you will return to participate in one of our Candlelight Christmas Eve services.



The first **Christmas Eve service of December 24th happens in the afternoon at 4:00 pm** in the Sanctuary. This is a time when kids (and many adults) are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Christmas Day. For several years, we've given children and families a special way to celebrate the wonders of Christmas Eve. Through unique storytelling, music and interactive elements, this early afternoon service is designed for children of all ages. It's a great way to hear the **GOOD NEWS** and **REJOICE** that Christ is born.



Out of the darkness, Jesus brings light into the world. As we come together on the evening of **December 24th at 7:00 & 10:00 pm**, we hear the **GOOD NEWS** of Christ's birth amidst a backdrop of special music, Holy Communion and the lighting of candles.

The Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship service is one of the most beautiful and meaningful services of the year.

The worship focus for December is "An Unlikely Advent" which brings you a special look at characters in the Christmas story you may not know much about.



Celebrating Christmas with 1st Kids

Parents probably don't need to be reminded how anxious kids can be for the arrival of Christmas. This is a time to celebrate and help children understand the true meaning of the season. Celebrations happen throughout the month of December. We hope you and your children will be a part of the fun and the "waiting."



Music, crafts, food & more on December 3rd

Come and BE the church on the first Sunday of December as we come together at 5:00 pm in the Sanctuary for the 1st Kids Christmas Celebration. The fun begins with a special time of music led by the children focused on God and God's gift of Jesus on Christmas.

After the music, our time together moves downstairs to Asbury Hall (gym, lower level). Come enjoy the 12 crafting stations, food and time together. You do not need to sign up for this event.

Christmas Eve Worship especially for Children & Families
Sunday, December 24th at 4:00 pm in the Sanctuary
(Check page 4 and 1stchurch.org/Christmas for more details)

Nursery care will not be provided on December 24th and there will not be 1st Kids Sunday School or Kids Own Worship on that Sunday. KOW will not meet on Sunday, December 31st either.



- December 10th 6:00 - 7:00 pm:** Caroling to shut-ins
- 7:00 - 8:00 pm:** Tacky Christmas Party
- December 14th 6:00 - 7:00 pm:** Operation Gift Away

Registration for Resurrection 2024 ends at midnight Dec. 15th
Mandatory Resurrection '24 Parents' Meeting, Jan. 14th at 11:00 am



STUDENT MINISTRY VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

Close Encounter | Sundays | 6:30pm - 8:00pm

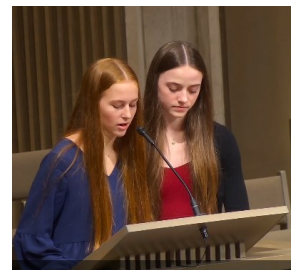
Beginning on **January 7, 2024**, we will be moving Close Encounter to 1st UMC at Sycamore Tree. This will give us more room to host the 40+ student community. Students enjoy eating dinner, playing wild games, hearing about God, and discussing the message in small groups. Please read below to see if you could be a good fit as a volunteer at Close Encounter.

- Set up & clean up
- Sermon slideshow operator
- 2 Middle School Boys Small Group Leaders
- Dinner Coordinator
- Dinner sponsors



Resurrection 2024 | January 19th - 21st | Pigeon Forge, TN

- 10 Adult chaperones to supervise 1 room of 4 students throughout the weekend and also accompany them for the Saturday afternoon activity of their choice.
- A Sunday School class to sponsor the Friday boxed dinner before departure to the event. (Final headcount TBA)





EVERY WEDNESDAY

5:30 Meal

6:30 Worship

7:40 Share Groups

Join us in-person or online!



CRMaryvilleTN.com

**December 6th
6:30 pm**



On this night, the Word Players return to CR to present "West of Bethlehem." This one-act play is a reminder of the beauty, majesty and perfection of the story God gave us for this time of year. It's a story where God's majestic birth announcement comes to whom the world would call "the lowest of the low."

**December 20th
6:30 pm**



Are you struggling with loss this holiday season and wondering how others can have so much joy? You aren't alone. Feeling "blue" is normal.

As we move from long dark nights toward the light we invite you to call out to God for help as we work to heal and find joy in the season.

Warming Shelter



Our congregation is part of a community coalition of churches and compassionate neighbors who provide a warming shelter in downtown Maryville when temperatures dip below 25°. First Baptist Church graciously opens its facility, and other partners, including our congregation, provide food and volunteer help. Our church is on standby for Sunday evenings, and we usually receive the call for help forty-eight hours in advance, based on the weekend forecast.

There are a few ways that our congregation can serve. We can provide heat-and-serve supper or breakfast foods. We can serve as evening volunteers, who arrive at First Baptist at 5:30 PM to heat and serve food, have fellowship with our guests, and clean up after the meal. The evening volunteer shift ends at 9:00 PM, when the overnight shift begins. Overnight volunteers sleep at the shelter and help with breakfast serving the next morning.

With the usual forty-eight hours' notice based on the forecast, we are generally able to send a congregational email to ask for help that particular weekend. To learn more about how you can be involved, please email one of our pastors at jjonas@1stchurch.org or sslack@1stchurch.org.

Thank you for helping to care for our most vulnerable neighbors in Jesus' name!



If you have not yet turned in your pledge card for the 2024 Stewardship campaign, please do so by the end of December. You can put it in the offering plate, mail it to the church or pledge online at 1stchurch.org/generosity2024.

Memorials & Honorariums

Children's Memorial Fund

<i>In memory of:</i> Vickie Flynn	<i>Given by:</i> Trendsetters Sunday School
--------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------

1st Kids Ministries

<i>In memory of:</i> R.T. Ousley	<i>Given by:</i> The Ousley Family
-------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Youth Memorial Fund

<i>In honor of:</i> Mike Flynn	<i>Given by:</i> Trendsetters Sunday School
-----------------------------------	------------------------------------------------

Memorial Fund

In honor of baptism: *Given by:*
Alessondra Lawhern June & Doug Jones

<i>In memory of:</i> Vickie Flynn Vickie Flynn Ben Young	<i>Given by:</i> Randy & Laney Lambert Charlie & Barbara Barton Don & Corkey Cochran
-------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Music Memorial and Ministry

<i>In memory of:</i> Kathleen Stewart Kathleen Stewart Kenny Hodson Kathleen Stewart Kenny Hodson	<i>Given by:</i> Doug & Emily Smith Dwight & Jan Wade Jill Rollins Ann Tugwell Betsy Halliday
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Welcome Table

<i>In memory of:</i> Missy Adams Ed Green	<i>Given by:</i> Phil & Amy Large Don & Corkey Cochran
-------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------



Elizabeth (Betty) Bell

Joined First Church: March 6, 1988
Entered the Church Triumphant: November 24, 2023

Lila Eby

Joined First Church: September 25, 1977
Entered the Church Triumphant: November 25, 2023

Christian sympathy extended to:

Pat Raines and her children Todd, Drew & Beth in the death of Pat's sister/their aunt, Mona Leake on November 9th.

Joey & Greta Smith, Ellie and Ryan in the death of Joey's father on November 16th.

The family of Betty Bell who died on November 24th.

Bob Eby and his family in the death of his wife, Lila, on November 25th.

Staff Contacts



You can find staff and ministry contacts under the "Reach" tab on the church website:
1stchurch.org
The church phone number is 865-982-1273



1st UMC @ Sycamore Tree

October 29th was a big day in the ministry of 1st UMC as dozens of people turned out for the reaffirmation service at the Sycamore Tree campus. Resident Holston Conference Bishop, Debra Wallace-Padgett gave the crowd gathered a message about "Hope."

Family Promise of Blount County now operates out of the lower level of the facility and work continues on converting parts of the upper level for use in its emergency shelter program.

In January, parts of the First Future program will move to 1st UMC @ Sycamore Tree (see page 5 for details).

Maryville First United Methodist Church
804 Montvale Station Road
Maryville, Tennessee 37803
Phone: 865-982-1273
Change Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG

US POSTAGE
PAID
MARYVILLE TN
PERMIT NO. 113

**New season of
Advent Devotionals
premieres on
December 3rd!**



**Listen at:
1stchurch.org/podcast or
wherever you get your
podcasts.**

Earlier this year, we launched the first “season” of our daily podcast, *Grace for All*. Starting December 3rd, this series of online devotions returns with a focus on the season of Advent. Throughout the month you can expect to hear devotions written by the people of 1st United Methodist Church.

Jim Stovall and Greta Smith continue to lead this digital ministry and hope you will consider adding your “voice” to this new ministry. You can do this by writing a devotional and/or recording one. Just go to 1stchurch.org/podcast and click on the button “I want to help with the podcast.” Jim and Greta will be happy to hear from you.



1STCHURCH.ORG

804 Montvale Station Road
Maryville, TN 37803
865-982-1273

