

# THE CHURCH BELL



FEBRUARY  
2024

WITH MY WHOLE HEART I SEEK YOU;  
DO NOT LET ME STRAY  
FROM YOUR COMMANDMENTS.

**PSALM 119:10**



Nearly three hundred years ago, in 1729, John and Charles Wesley started a new student organization on the Oxford University campus called the Holy Club. Years later, biographer Abram Lipsky wrote that the purpose of this club was “making religion the great business of their lives.”

Lipsky continues:

*Besides performing their college work with a regularity offensive to the majority of the Oxford scholars, the members of the club attended all the church rites and services, read the Bible assiduously, prayed in private, visited prisoners, the sick and the poor and fasted every Wednesday and Friday.*

*It was a skeptical age and religion generally was at a low ebb. The group became known as Methodists, Bible-bigots, Bible-moths, the Godly Club and the Holy Club. The jeers of the university community were rather welcome than otherwise to the Oxford Methodists, who longed to suffer like true Christians.*

That’s our heritage! We’re called Methodists in 2024 because college students teased our predecessors three hundred years ago for being so disciplined in their ways of following Jesus!

As we begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, which is on February 14th this year, we are invited to embrace new disciplines—perhaps by giving up something for Lent or by taking on a new holy habit during the season.

I invite you to put the Method back into Methodist this season of Lent by embracing not only our heritage, but also our holy habits. Perhaps you feel called to embrace one of those disciplines of the very first people called Methodists by attending *all* church services during the weeks between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, by reading the Bible *assiduously*, by praying, by caring for people, or by taking on a weekly fast.

Maybe our habits *form* our identity. Maybe our habits *express* our identity by allowing us to put our priorities into action. Regardless, it’s undeniable that there is a close connection between who we are and what we do.

Lent is a perfect season for disciples of Jesus to become more disciplined. It’s a time for people who are striving to live holy lives to become more methodical about our habits. It’s a time to put the method into Methodist.

## Leadership Launch 2024

On Monday, January 29th, over 45 of our congregation's elected leaders and committee members gathered in Wesley Hall for a 2024 Leadership Launch. This was an evening of celebrating victories in the year past and anticipating opportunities in the year to come.



We remembered together our mission, methods, and leadership structures, gave thanks for our leaders' faithfulness, and prayed over and consecrated our efforts in 2024. Please lift up our leaders and ministries in your prayers regularly that we might discern God's will and direction as we strive to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

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## Dedicated to growing disciples

Beginning this year, our church will have three ministry groups dedicated to growing our disciple-making ministries. Just as our four administrative committees help the church council to carry out its temporal and organizational responsibilities, these three new ministry areas of **nurture, outreach, and witness** will enable the council to fulfill its responsibilities for ministry and programs.

These new ministry groups will help to connect and equip our congregation for the mission of disciple making, create new opportunities for our people to serve in the community and world around us, and reach new people by allowing us to tell the story of Jesus Christ and of 1st United Methodist Church.

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## 1st UMC Book Club reads for 2024

Are you looking for a good book to read, or better yet, sharing what you've read with others? The 1st UMC Book Club members recently selected the books for the year and they hope you'll want to join them in reading the books and having conversations about them afterward.

The February book is *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver. Discussion is on February 19th. *The Happiest Man on Earth* by Eddie Jaku is the next book with discussion on March 18th.

The Book Club meets on the 3rd Monday of each month from 10:00 am until 11:00 am (currently in Room 254). More information and the full book list are available at: [1stchurch.org/book-club](http://1stchurch.org/book-club).

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## Going BIG for New Voices

The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church has embraced a New Voices campaign for its 2024 conference mission offering. This campaign's goal is to raise \$1.5 million for twelve conference ministries that equip young leaders and enable them to find and lift their voices in leadership. If the campaign meets the goal, each ministry will receive about \$125,000 to benefit its efforts to raise up new voices.



For the campaign to reach its goal, each conference congregation would only have to raise about \$13 per member. Our congregation designated its annual Christmas offering to this campaign, hoping to raise \$26,000. We celebrate that we slightly exceeded that goal by giving \$26,500! In fact, when our Holston Conference news publication, *The Call* recently published a story about Advent/Christmas offerings to the New Voices campaign, our congregation had raised the highest dollar amount, nearly doubling the second highest.

As always, *thank you* for your generosity. Because of your gifts, our conference camps, campus ministries, and colleges will have new opportunities to strengthen and equip New Voices.

## Conversation Matters Returns with Depolarization Workshop

Polarization can be driven by how we talk with like-minded people about those on the other side. Too often, we stereotype, dismiss, or ridicule our fellow citizens who support the other political party, its leaders, and its policies. So, how do we move beyond polarization and have meaningful and productive conversations?

On February 24th (from 9:00 to 12:30) members of the Braver Angels organization, including Pat Scruggs and Anna Young, will lead a special workshop to help you become more aware of your “inner polarizer” and how you can disagree with others without contempt and ridicule.



To be a part of this special Conversation Matters event, please visit [1stchurch.org/depolarization](https://1stchurch.org/depolarization) or call the church office at **865-982-1273**. For questions please contact Pat Scruggs at [pscruggs@braverangels.org](mailto:pscruggs@braverangels.org) or Anna Young at [ayoung@braverangels.org](mailto:ayoung@braverangels.org).



The start of the new year for Family Promise of Blount County has been noteworthy for certain! The weekend prior to the official opening of the new First Watch restaurant in Maryville, the public was invited to a “soft opening” where meals were served free of charge. Customers, instead, were asked to give a donation to Family Promise. What a blessing! \$8,000 of donations were collected over that weekend.

Secondly, it was recently announced that Family Promise of Blount County is the recipient of a 2024 grant from the national Family Promise organization. Moreover, the grant was unsolicited, with FPBC being selected because of their “strong leadership in preventing family homelessness.” The \$15,000 grant is contingent upon a \$5,000 community match which has been unofficially secured.

Plans for renovations to the Sycamore Tree space allotted to Family Promise continue to develop. Stay tuned for updates as they become available. It is an exciting time for this ministry, and we hope you will choose to be a part of the volunteer team we will need, once host churches are able to fully participate.

Happy New Year and Blessings to all,  
*Mavis Ziegler and Amy Large*  
Co-Coordinators of Family Promise at 1stUMC



**EVERY WEDNESDAY**

**5:30 Meal**

**6:30 Worship**

**7:40 Share Groups**

**Join us in-person or online!**  
**CRMaryvilleTN.com**

## Pray for our Adopt-a-Grand-Friend program

It's time for those intergenerational pen pals to start their conversations. Then, after a month has passed, the undercover participants of the Adopt-A-Grandfriend will meet at a special "reveal party" after church on March 3rd. Please take time to pray for this special program that it may result in many blessings.

## Helping kids and families understand Lent

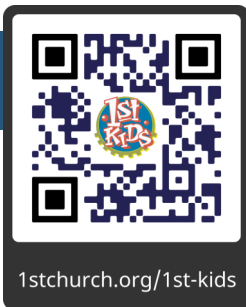
1st Kids has a special Lenten & Easter book for families called "Make Room: A Child's Guide to Lent and Easter," by Laura Alary. Participating families will receive weekly devotionals to go along with the book that were written by Kristi Alton. The goal is to help families understand some of the more abstract aspects of the Lenten Season.

We are asking families to give a \$5 donation for each book. You can sponsor a book for a family by contacting Kristi at [kalton@1stchurch.org](mailto:kalton@1stchurch.org). Books will be available on Ash Wednesday, February 14th.

Check out what's happening with 1st Kids!

**Kristi Alton**

Director of 1st Kids Ministries  
[kalton@1stchurch.org](mailto:kalton@1stchurch.org)  
865-982-1273 ext. 113



[1stchurch.org/1st-kids](http://1stchurch.org/1st-kids)

## NEWS



## Jesus never leaves us

In a well-known story, "Footprints in the Sand," a man who thought Jesus would always be there for him says, "During the most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints [on the beach]. Why did you leave me when I needed you the most?" God's reply: "When you saw only one set of footprints, *it was then that I carried you.*" Jesus **never** leaves us.

During Sunday School in February, children will meet Lazarus and a woman and young girl, *all* healed through Jesus' power. They'll learn about a pool in Bethesda and weather a storm with Jesus' disciples.

## Brite Ideas:

- Jesus is near when we are lonely.
- Jesus is near when we are scared.
- Jesus is near when we feel hopeless.
- Jesus is near when we are sad.

## Jesus' miracles

Whether it's a rocket car powered by soda and mints or a tornado in a water bottle, there's so much in our world that can fill us with awe. The world of STEM is full of things that look like little miracles, but they're nothing compared to the miracles God can perform.



During the month of February, participants in Kids Own Worship will take a look at some of the miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry.

These stories found in the Gospels show the power of Jesus, and after hearing them will have you saying Wow! Jesus has the power to heal, to calm our fears, to provide, and to save.



Chris Jacobs - [cjacobs@1stchurch.org](mailto:cjacobs@1stchurch.org)  
[1stchurch.org/students](http://1stchurch.org/students)

## Weekly Youth Opportunities

Wednesdays at 1st

5:00 pm - Deep Space Youth Study, Wesley Hall

6:00 pm - Youth Choirs, Room 249

Sunday Mornings

9:15 am Youth Sunday School, Wesley Hall

Sunday Evenings

6:45 pm - 8:00 pm - Close Encounter  
1st UMC @ Sycamore Tree

The winter weather didn't stop this group on the right from taking in Resurrection 2024 in Pigeon Forge. 45 students (and several adult volunteers) represented the First Future program at this annual event.



## A special faith journey for the Lenten Season.



Lent is a special time in the year of the church. The period of 40 days (not counting Sundays) takes us from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. This year we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples, Peter. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a normal guy trying to figure it out, just like us.

The hymn, "Come Thou Fount" mirrors Peter's life in many ways and so throughout the season, lines from this treasured song will become our themes as we go through Lent, binding our *Wandering Hearts* to God.

This all begins on February 14th, which is Ash Wednesday. We will gather in the Sanctuary at 6:30 pm for worship and the imposition of ashes. (Celebrate Recovery services will still happen downstairs.) The Adult Bible Study and Youth Choirs will not meet that evening, but the 1st Kids Trackers of Truth Study will still meet at its regular time.

### February 18th

*Jesus sought me*

### March 10th

*I'm fixed upon it*

### February 25th

*Rescue me from danger*

### March 17th

*Teach Me*

### March 3rd

*Praise the mount*

### March 24th

*Songs of loudest praise*

### Maundy Thursday

March 28th

7:00 pm Worship in the Sanctuary



### Good Friday

March 29th

7:00 pm Worship - 1st UMC @Sycamore Tree

## Get your digital Devotion Book

Looking for daily reminders and insight regarding the Wandering Heart theme for Lent? If so, there is a digital devotion book available. For access to it, please make sure you are signed up for the "Church Bell & General Communications" email list. We will send out the link to the digital book via email (to people on that list) on February 13th.

To sign up for the emails visit:

[1stchurch.org/communications](http://1stchurch.org/communications)

## Share the Journey

Our look at Peter's faith journey will go well beyond Sunday mornings and the special services throughout the Lenten Season. Whether you follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, you will find special "Wandering Heart" related content. We encourage you to comment, like and SHARE what you see.

**Facebook** - Centering practices for the week along with daily questions about the week's theme and a link to a daily prayer.

**Instagram** - Special visuals and elements helping you learn more about the weekly themes and more.

**Twitter** - A daily prayer following the weekly themes.

**Website** - More information on the weekly themes and links to the social media channels and the daily prayers.

**Podcast** - Our *Grace for All* podcast offers up a Lenten themed devotion for each day. And while these do not necessarily follow the "Wandering Heart" theme, the devotions do serve as a guide to help you along your Lenten faith journey. Find the episodes at [1stchurch.org/podcast](http://1stchurch.org/podcast) or most everywhere you get your podcasts.



**Celebrate Recovery**

*In memory of:* Pat Blankenship  
*Given by:* Gordo & Rhonda Watson  
 John Thierbach Gordo & Rhonda Watson

**Christmas Offering/New Voices**

*In honor of:* 1st UMC Staff  
*Given by:* Doug & Emily Smith  
*In memory of:* Wally Roberts  
*Given by:* Al & Jackie North

**Family Promise**

*In honor of:* Liz Gaskin  
*Given by:* Trendsetters Sunday School  
*In memory of:* Lila Eby  
*Given by:* Brad & Patsy Lunde  
 Lila Eby Don & Ann McElhaney  
 Barbara Maztek Don & Ann McElhaney  
 Lila Eby Mr. & Mrs. Eric Spalding  
 Jack Delaney Trendsetters Sunday School  
 Lila Eby Jim & Susie Curtiss

**Memorial Fund**

*In memory of:* Wally Roberts  
*Given by:* Brad & Patsy Lunde  
 Betty Bell Bob & Charlotte Hood  
 Lee North Kittrell, Katrina, Billy & Family  
 Lee North John & Carolyn East  
 Lee North Lolly Miller  
 Lee North Elliott Davis, LLC  
 Wally Roberts Charlie & Barbara Barton  
 Lee North Shannon Wical  
 Wally Roberts Jim & Susie Curtiss  
 Bill Wells Jim & Susie Curtiss  
 Lee North Scott & Connie Bullock

**Music Ministry**

*In memory of:* Wally Roberts  
*Given by:* Friends  
 Kyle Wilson Robert & Katie Lawson

**Organ Fund**

*In honor of:* Dwain Pesterfield  
*Given by:* Karl & Sherry Miller

**Welcome Table**

*In honor of:* Amelia Geis Scott  
*Given by:* Phyllis Bostick  
 Wally Roberts Mary Helen Peery  
 Lila Eby Mike & Ibbey Davis  
 Barbara Maztek Mike & Ibbey Davis  
 Wally Roberts Mike & Ibbey Davis  
 Lila Eby Jim & Jaylene Myers  
 Lila Eby Rocky & Julie Rochelle  
 Wally Roberts Rocky & Julie Rochelle  
 Doris Bailey Rocky & Julie Rochelle  
 Vickie Flynn Rocky & Julie Rochelle  
 Barbara Maztek Rocky & Julie Rochelle



**Bill Wells**

*Joined First Church:*  
 October 23, 2016

*Entered the Church Triumphant:*  
 January 3, 2024

**Pat Blankenship**

*Joined First Church:*  
 August 25, 2002

*Entered the Church Triumphant:*  
 January 4, 2024

**Christian sympathy extended to:**

Robin North in the death of her husband, Lee on December 28th.

Linda Wells in the death of her husband, Bill on January 3rd.

The family of Pat Blankenship who died on January 4th.

Susan Colclough in the death of her brother Len Mink on November 28th.

Barry & Lynn Mathis in the death of their niece, Michela Mathis.

Edward Waters in the death of his sister, Dorlis Mae Waters on January 6th.

**Staff Contacts** 

You can find staff and ministry contacts under the "Reach" tab on the church website:  
[1stchurch.org](http://1stchurch.org)

The church phone number is 865-982-1273

**Maryville First United Methodist Church**  
804 Montvale Station Road  
Maryville, Tennessee 37803  
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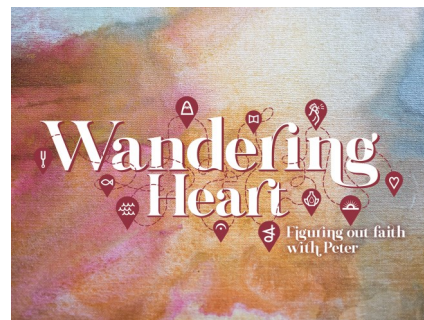
*When in Our Music,  
God is Glorified*  
A special worship celebration

Music has played an integral role in worship here at 1st UMC since its founding more than 150 years ago. On Sunday, February 11th we will celebrate the ways we worship God through music.

During this time together adults, youth, and children, will raise their voice in praise for God. You will also hear from brass musicians and handbell choirs.

This special service happens in conjunction with a reception to honor the service of Terry Wilson, Susan Daves, and Dwain Pesterfield, whose combined years working at 1st Church totals more than 100. The reception will follow the service in Wesley Hall (upper level) at 11:45 am.

The Lenten Season begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th. Check out more about the journey we'll be taking together on page 6 or visit [1stchurch.org/Lent](https://1stchurch.org/Lent).



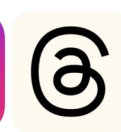
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