

The Church Bell

REACH - CONNECT - EQUIP - SEND

JUNE
2026



GRATITUDE IN GOODBYE

REV. JONATHAN JONAS



"I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" - *Philippians 1:3-6*.

This greeting from the apostle Paul to the church in Phillippi has been on my mind often over the past few weeks. As I prepare to move to another pastoral appointment, my primary feeling about and toward the beloved people of First United Methodist Church is gratitude. I am so thankful for you, and I am so grateful for the privilege of leading this congregation.

Thank you for accepting me in the most awkward pastoral transition any of us have ever experienced. When the pandemic prevented many of the rhythms and rituals that would have allowed us to get to know each other, you were patient, graceful, and hospitable. I felt loved and encouraged from the outset, and I am grateful for that.

Thank you for allowing me to lead through the most divisive season any of us have ever experienced within the denomination. In a large congregation with a correspondingly large variety of perspectives and convictions, differences are inevitable. You articulated those differences graciously and respectfully, and even more importantly, you chose to dwell on the things that unite us, the greatest of which is love. We experienced painful loss, but we also experienced net gain because you chose to dwell on love. Thank you.

Thank you for daring to say yes. We have dreamed together, and we have embraced creative, entrepreneurial ministry opportunities together. You have made dreams reality through your generosity of resources, time, and spirit. You have said yes to the Sycamore Tree campus, to DayBreak dementia respite, to Rise & Shine for Maryville Junior High School, and to so many other opportunities. I am grateful for your affirmative spirit.

Thank you for your generosity of encouragement. Over the past six years among you, I have made mistakes, I have fumbled, I have stumbled, I have been wrong, and sometimes, I have been stubborn. You have consistently offered patience and encouragement, gifts I've received as expressions of love. I will always be grateful, and I will always love you all.

Paul continues that greeting in *Philippians 1:9-11*, "And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God." Amen. May you always be blessed to be a blessing.



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.
Email is: info@1stchurch.org

Getting together to say "Thank You"

When worship services are over on June 14th, you are invited to have some ice cream up in Wesley Hall. Yes, dessert will come first on this day, but it's all in the spirit of thanking Rev. Jonathan Jonas for his six years of leading ministry here at 1st UMC-Maryville.

Pastor Jonathan has a "sweet" new appointment at Church Street United Methodist Church in Knoxville that starts in July. In an effort to make the transition go smoothly, Jonathan's last time leading worship here will be on June 14th.

Jonathan started here at 1st Church during the COVID-19 period and never got the normal "welcome." A couple of weeks ago, the staff got together at Top Golf in Knoxville to make sure he knows how much his time here has meant to everyone.

Workers at Top Golf even brought out a tray of donut holes with the words "Congrats" and "2 Corinthians 5:17" written out in icing. May Jonathan's road ahead remain empowered by God.



Strength for the Journey by Kathryn King

Did you know that the Holston Conference has been ministering to adults with AIDS and HIV since 1997? *Strength for the Journey* is a ministry that provides a safe, caring, and healing community through an annual week-long retreat and year-round connection. The 2026 retreat invited participants to explore the theme "In the Wilderness" - a journey through the unknown, the mysterious, and the transformative, discovering how community gives us courage and faith in uncertain times.

I say that I married into *Strength for the Journey*, since my husband, Rev. Don Jones, had been involved in the ministry since before we met. This year was my third as a volunteer, and I also serve on the conference committee for the ministry. Words may be inadequate to explain *Strength for the Journey*, but I'm going to try.



While singing during our last evening worship on Thursday night, I started looking around the room. Everyone in the room was praising God enthusiastically, and I certainly felt the presence of the Lord that evening. Seeing these campers who have experienced some of the worst life has to offer join in corporate worship, well, I believe that's what heaven looks like.

I am thankful that the Holston Conference supports this wonderful ministry, and I'm forever grateful to have experienced a little bit of heaven on earth.

Confirmation & Baptism

The faith journey has many chapters. Of those, baptism and confirmation are some of the most important. On Pentecost Sunday, May 24th, 1st UMC welcomed five young people into the church family. Ruth Ann Slack was confirmed, while Maggie Harris, Mercy Rose Everhart and Emerson Rose were presented for both baptism and confirmation.



That afternoon, Elizabeth Jordan (Confirmation Class of 2025) was baptized in the Little River at Camp Wesley Woods.



Congratulations to each one of these young people in taking big steps in their faith journeys. Please continue to pray for each of them and remember your vows to help nurture each other in the Christian faith and life.

Are you ready to be a digital disciple?

Witnessing to others is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. Without it, the faith might just simply fade away. In an age where the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence often define how we communicate with each other, it becomes even more important to understand discipleship and how to cultivate it.



The Witness Committee looks at ways to enhance opportunities for the church to tell its story and inspire others to be part of the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. One idea put forward is to create a team of "Digital Disciples." The tasks are simple, and could be something you are already doing. Together we can help make the online experience more welcoming and provide new opportunities for you to share the love of Christ in a digital world.

Here are a few ways you can serve as a "digital disciple":

- greeting online visitors and providing supportive messages provided by the communications director during the livestream of worship services,
- liking and sharing church content publicly on social media,
- and supporting initiatives from the 1st UMC Communications ministry.

The Witness Team will provide training, support, and appreciation for each person who wants to serve in this important role. Please consider helping so that 1st UMC may be more effectively engaged and supportive of members and visitors on our online platforms.

If interested, please contact Clayton Hensley at communications@1stchurch.org.

Loving Boldly Together

The United Methodist Connection brings people together in many ways and one of those is Annual Conference. From May 31st through June 3rd, the pastors of 1st UMC along with several representatives of the church and the district will be in Lake Junaluska, NC for this event.

In 2026, the theme is "Loving Boldly Together." This builds on the previous year's theme of "Together in New Beginnings" while aligning with the new vision statement of the United Methodist Church which calls us to "love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously so that all may experience God's love and justice."

One highlight of this year's Annual Conference will be the ordination ceremony where 1st UMC's Greta Smith will be ordained as will incoming Associate Pastor, Teanna Black.

Please be in prayer for everyone attending.

BBQ & Bluegrass

Each summer, near the July 4th holiday, we offer up an opportunity to enjoy great food and music. The church provides the BBQ and beverages, you just need to bring a side dish and/or dessert to share.

In 2026 we welcome back, Gary "Biscuit" Davis on Banjo, Jimbo Whaley on guitar, David Slack on bass and Abbey Tungett playing fiddle and providing vocals.

Sign up by June 29th!



A flyer for the BBQ & Bluegrass event. It features a red background with a blue and white banner that says "BBQ & BLUEGRASS July 5th @ 5:00 PM". There are images of food (burgers, fries, and a bowl of soup) and musical instruments (guitar, banjo, and fiddle). A QR code is in the bottom left, and a photo of people playing music is in the bottom right. The website 1stchurch.org/BBQ is at the bottom.

Go.Do. with a twist

Looking for a fun and meaningful way to keep your child engaged this summer? Then sign them up for Summer Service & Surprises. This Tuesday morning program helps them serve others, connect with their community and after they Go.Do. they get a surprise by exploring new activities. Each session of Summer & Surprises happens from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

(Kids will ride the bus to deliver meals in the morning, followed by lunch and activities back at church.)



2026 Meeting Dates:

Tuesday, June 2
Tuesday, June 9
Tuesday, June 23
Tuesday, July 7
Tuesday, July 14
Tuesday, July 21

SIGN UP AT:

[1STCHURCH.ORG/SUMMER-SERVICE](https://1stchurch.org/summer-service)



A summer of service and fun

As this newsletter comes together, a group of students are busy working on some landscaping projects over at the 1st UMC @ Sycamore Tree property. The work is part of the DayBreak ministry's efforts to improve outdoor spaces for its programs.

Over the next couple of months, youth will have other opportunities for service and to go on fun outings like a movie night, hiking & tubing, a baseball game and a trip to Dollywood. Check out the website, 1stchurch.org/students for a full schedule of events.

And while there won't be Wednesday evening youth gatherings, Sundays will still have opportunities for fun and faith. Sunday School happens at 9:20 each week and there are Summer Life Groups on Sunday evenings from 5:30 to 7:00 pm.



Brayden York
1st Student Ministries
byork@1stchurch.org



News



FOR MORE
INFORMATION
ABOUT
1ST KIDS

Contact the 1st Kids Director
Kristi Alton

•••••

✉ kalton@1stchurch.org

☎ 865-982-1273 ext. 712





Imagine what it would be like to live in a car, a tent or on the couch or floor of someone else's home. This can be an unhealthy situation for families and can keep them from

establishing a life in their own place. Families end up in this dire situation for a variety of reasons, and YOU can step in to help.

Since Family Promise of Blount County was established in 2008, the people of 1st UMC have been part of the life changing work of the organization. Volunteers have stepped up to help in a variety of ways and there is still work to do, work that even people with already busy schedules can do.

You can help make a family's life better by stepping up to serve. Please mark your calendar for upcoming host weeks and consider giving your time to help people in a BIG way.

1st UMC host weeks

July 6th to 10th
September 14th -18th
November 2nd - 6th

Shifts for each of the evenings will be 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm or overnight from 8:00 pm to a time the next morning of one's choosing. Anyone who has not completed the 1 hour 15-minute training session after 2024 is required to do so if interacting with the guests.

Visit 1stchurch.org/family-promise to contact Mavis Ziegler, 1st UMC's Family Promise Coordinator.



DayBreak Happenings

May has been a busy and wonderful month! Most importantly, we have new families joining us and several more visiting to explore joining.



We also had a visit with the STAR mini horses. It was a fun event! For music, we had a visit from the Friendship Choir, and we regularly have visits from Bill Robinson to play his violin for us.

A group of teachers from Montvale Elementary School came one day to volunteer and help us. A week later a group of students from Montgomery Ridge Intermediate School joined us for a SERVE day organized by the United Way. Our very own youth group spent a day working on our landscaping, and

Dylan is working on an Eagle Scout project to build one of our raised planters for our programming.

Memory Garden Gathering

We would love to see you June 6th as we celebrate all the mission work 1st Church is doing on the 1st UMC @ Sycamore Tree campus, especially the improvements outside the building and the growth of DayBreak programming over the last six months.

Join us for a special gathering at 10:00 am. There will be live music provided by some of our favorite local musicians, Vienna Coffee and pastries for sale and a dedication of the Memory Garden at 10:30 am. Bring a chair and enjoy your morning with us!

Grants support an expanding mission

The DayBreak Ministry wouldn't be possible without support from people like you, giving their time and money to help the program expand. In addition to individual support, DayBreak has also benefitted from a \$50,000 grant from the Trinity Health Foundation of East Tennessee.

More recently, DayBreak received a \$2,000 grant from the Akima Club of Knoxville. We value their support and the money will go toward finishing work on the outdoor space.

The Holston Foundation provided DayBreak with an \$8,000 grant. The organization has been a strong supporter of the ministry. With this assistance, DayBreak continues to grow helping even more families in the community.

1st Kids Ministries

In honor of:
 Kristi Alton
 Terry & Brooke Wilson

Given by:
 Diane Lawhern
 Tom & Nancy Martin

Building Fund

In memory of:
 Sandy Ross

Given by:
 Herb Dixon

Celebrate Recovery

In memory of:
 Naomi Cunningham

Given by:
 Steve & Martha Shields

Memorial Fund

In memory of:
 Marge Clemmer
 Don Hensley

Given by:
 Steve & Martha Shields
 Steve & Martha Shields

Welcome Table

In honor of:
 Jill Rollins

Given by:
 Linda Lamb

Christian sympathy extended to:

Al North in the death of his brother Gary.
 Jackie Sprigg in the death of her sister.



Emerson Rose



Brandon & Jennifer
 Everhart



Mercy Rose
 Everhart



Ruth Ann Slack



Maggie Harris



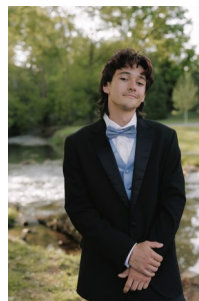
Allie Simpson

Maryville High School
 She will be attending
 Furman University on
 academic, music and
 science scholarships.
 She is planning to major
 in Chemistry.



Oliver Nocton

Maryville Christian School
 He plans on studying
 Chemistry at UTK on the
 pre-med track to go into
 anesthesiology.



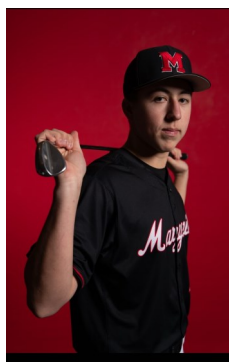
Jeremiah Lee Jordan

Maryville High School
 He will be working at
 Camp Wesley Woods
 this summer.



Viola Modi

The Kings Academy
 She will be attending
 Belmont University in
 the Fall.



Britton Woods Johnson

Maryville High School
 He plans on attending
 Montreat College on a
 Golf Scholarship,
 majoring in Biology



Other high school graduates:

- Anderson Abbott
- Conner Crim
- Addison Giffin
- Savannah Dawson
- Jonathan Henneke
- Ada Monroe
- Hannah Schrock
- Nash Stinnett
- Allie Watson

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When it comes to making disciples of Jesus Christ we are all called to love, to serve and to lead. However, this calling doesn't simply come through the words, but by the way each is described.

From now through June 28th, you are invited to learn how you can live out this vision for discipleship as you heed the call to **LOVE BOLDLY**, **SERVE JOYFULLY** and **LEAD COURAGEOUSLY** !



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1stchurch.org