



First Family News

SEPTEMBER 2025

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Dear Beloved Congregation,

Today, as I am writing this, I am full of gratitude and joy because it was a year ago, this morning, that my grandson, Jack Jack was born! This little one has given his family a year of beauty, love, and hope in what, for the world has been a year of chaos. In days when I haven't felt well physically, when unexplained fatigue has fallen upon me, a facetime with Jack made everything better, even if the fatigue did not go away.

There have been facetimes with Jack for so many other reasons—just because it was Tuesday, when he learned to crawl, to make animal noises with me, to see the “puppy” aka Arlo, to show him something I discovered on a walk, to read to him, often just to sing to him and sometimes just to gaze on him as he sleeps.

I have watched him grow, develop a personality, embrace curiosity, discover his hands, his knees, his voice. I have watched his parents embrace this little guy with so much love and opportunity. They have made the normal sacrifices that new parents make, but they are already making unusual sacrifices that are thought through because of Jack, such as going back to “dumb” flip phones with no internet service because they don't want Jack seeing them on their phones constantly.

Today, on his first birthday, he is at the beach—Kitty Hawk, NC. What a great place to celebrate this little guy, with new things to experience, making memories with his parents that they will tell him about as part of the stories of Jack. Already today, I have facetimed with him on Granny Smith's (John's mother and grandmother are there too!) phone. He loves playing in the sand and watching the lifeguard drive up and down the beach on a 4-wheeler. He is not quite sure about the water and the waves yet, but he will get there, I am sure. It is a marvelous day to celebrate that all important first birthday, with sand and sun and water and love!

I must admit that as much as I am grateful for this little guy, as much as he has brought joy into our lives, as much as I love being with him, he has also awakened in me again the same thing that Ethan (my oldest) awakened in me when he was about the same age. At the beginning of Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, I was pregnant with Ethan. If you remember, this was the first time that a war or conflict could unfold before our eyes in almost real time and like so many others, the first few days I was glued to news reports, and my heart was in a state of constant prayer. I wasn't certain exactly how to pray. I was numb and silent, but my heart was praying.

After about a day, something emerged in me. I began to think about women in Iraq or in Kuwait that were also pregnant with their first children and along with praying for those in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

danger and for solutions and peace, for soldiers and anyone in harm's way, my heart cried out for these mothers, carrying their first children, like me.

I was safe. They were not. I had waited a long time for this child. Perhaps they had been waiting a long time too. I was craving peanut butter sandwiches. Did they even have the luxury for craving? Did they have shelter, food, hope? For the rest of my pregnancy I prayed for the woman who was expecting her first child. When Ethan was born on June 20th of that year, I prayed for whatever child had been born that same day. And all through that first year I prayed for the unnamed mother and child who live life so differently than Ethan and myself. I still pray for that mother and the now 34-year-old child. I hope they are safe. I hope they are fed and housed. I hope that there is love that sustains them.

On this day, Jack's first birthday, I find that the same kind of prayer has again awakened in me. Lately I have been praying for a Gazan child that was born the same day as Jack. I pray for the children all over the world that were born on that day, especially those born in uncertainty and in places where food and hope are scarce. There are so many of those places throughout the world, even in our own country. I pray for their mothers, who are living day to day in despair and wondering if their children will live to see their own children. No matter what the history and politics of the area that surrounds them, these mothers and children are innocent and are caught up in something beyond their control.

And that breaks my heart. The hunger and illness break my heart.

The uncertainty of the future for any of these children, no matter where in the world they are breaks my heart.

All children deserve to thrive.

And each day I ask for ways that I can pray deeper and act more lovingly, so that somehow, whatever small thing I can do can help. Somehow, there are always opportunities to do something to reflect the Light of the world, the Prince of Peace, the one that fed the 5000 and welcomed children to come to him.

Yesterday, I was led to respond to a woman on the social media site, "Threads," who had lost contact with her mother in Gaza. The last she had heard from her there were tanks coming at her and she was fleeing for her life. She was only asking for people to pray, but there were so many mean and nasty comments. She didn't need those comments. I felt led to leave her words of encouragement. This is what I wrote:

"I pray for Gaza

For peace and justice

For food and hope

For safety and strength

For the children and for all

For those trying to help

For family members in other places that are worried

I have to say that almost immediately she responded to me with a thanks and the message that the words helped, which is what I was hoping for. But as the day went on, I kept getting notifications on how many people had seen my response—nearly 2000. And nearly 150 people

responded in some way. And yes, there were two comments that were negative or aimed at being hurtful, so I deleted the comments. She didn't need any more negativity. Sometimes I feel helpless because I can't fix the problems that I carry in my heart. Some of the problems are small, but many of them are on the scale of starving children. I do what I can and I encourage you to do the same. Support food pantries, meals for those who are hungry, ways that people can feel safe and secure. And never, ever underestimate what prayer can do. It may not fix the problem right away, but I can guarantee that continual prayer can lead us to acts of love that we would not have thought of before.

Peace,

Pastor Alicia



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 4 PM @ FORT BOREMAN PARK
IN THE UNDERWOOD SHELTER

BRING A COVERED DISH TO SHARE.

MEAT, DRINKS AND TABLE SERVICE WILL BE FURNISHED.

BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN.

WE WILL HAVE A CORNHOLE CONTEST WITH PRIZES!

Get you a partner and sign up for the competition. (Cindy is taking names.)

CHANGES TO THE FIRST UMC CHURCH DIRECTORY (MEMBERS & FRIENDS)

A current list of First UMC Members and Friends will be emailed to the congregation in the near future. If you need a hard copy, call Cindy in the office.

Weekly Opportunities

Sunday: Sunday School, 9:15 am

Worship, 10:45 am

Thursday: Handbell Choir Practice, 6 pm

Sanctuary Choir Practice, 7 pm

Saturday: Women's Zoom Meeting, 8 am

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 1



2025 APPORTIONMENT PAYMENTS

as of July 31, 2025

From church budget: \$5,970.63

From contributions: 5,800.00

From Antero Resources: 4,150.51

TOTAL \$15,921.14

Monthly payment: \$4,376.50

Total due through 7-31-25 **\$30,635.50**

**SEPTEMBER
LECTIONARY READINGS**

September 7

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18 (UMH 854)

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

September 14

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

Psalms 14 (UMH 746)

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

September 21

Jeremiah 8:18—9:1

Psalms 79:1-9 or Psalm 4 (UMH 741)

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

September 28

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

Psalms 91:1-6, 14-16 (UMH 810)

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

CALLING ALL WOMEN

The **United Women in Faith** will resume monthly meetings Wednesday, September 10 at 2pm in the church parlor. This group is the same as the former United Methodist Women and all women of any age are invited to participate. Church membership is not required.

Our mission is to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

Our emphasis is to become aware of the needs of women and children especially within our church, community, and globally. Our monthly meetings highlight the spiritual and physical efforts of our greater church as well as agencies that work to address needs.

It is a great way to join in the fellowship with other women. This is a great time to invite a friend from within the church or someone who would enjoy the fellowship and learning.

September's program will be on "What Is Faithfulness to You?" presented by Deborah Shaffer, unit president.

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

The generosity of our congregation never ceases to amaze me. One of the ministries of the church is one that is somewhat hidden from view. This ministry is offering emergency help with utilities, rent, and sometimes car repairs. It is funded by generous individual donors and is administered by the pastor. So far in 2025, we have helped 26 families in the following ways:

Parkersburg Utility Board—7 families for a total of \$490.20

Hope Gas-2 families for a total of \$175.00

Mon Power—13 families for a total of \$928.66

Rent assistance—3 families for a total of \$1,245

Car repair—1 family for a total of \$100

The total of emergency assistance that we have been able to provide, so far in 2025 is
\$2,938.86

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!



*A fallen leaf is nothing more than a
summer's wave goodbye.*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



- 1 Labor Day holiday, church office closed
 - 7 Communion Sunday
 - 10 United Women in Faith, parlor, 2 pm
 - 12 Young at Heart Committee Meeting, parlor, 1:30 pm
 - 14 CHURCH PICNIC, Fort Boreman Park, 4 pm
 - 17 Beginning of Disciple Bible Study, 6 pm *
 - 22 Latrobe St. Mission Dinner, prep in the kitchen, 2:30 pm; serve dinner at the Mission, 6 pm
 - 23 CHURCH COUCIL MEETING, Assembly Room, 4 pm
- *lasts 24 weeks

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

2-Rev. Dr. Don & Jacqueline Underwood
27-Dr. Bob & Melissa Herceg
28-Rev. Dr. Damon & Judy Rhodes
28-Eric & Anne Casto Poole
30-Larry & Charlotte Clinton

September Birthdays

4-Sheila Wiseman
7-Rocky Wiseman
7-Jan Davis
10-Mike DePue
19-Ty Ellenwood
23-Eric Poole

HOMEBOUND BIRTHDAYS

Thelma Badger Sept. 4
1225 Juliana Street
Parkersburg WV 26101

Charlie Casto Sept. 11
One Wyngate Drive
Parkersburg WV 26105



PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

AMERICA

Bertha Stone family
Carol Power
Charlie & Marilyn Casto
CPS Staff
David Hennen
David Taliaferro
Douglas Mitchell
Ervaleen Shaffer

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

First UMC
Gary Parsons
Jan Davis
Law Enforcement
Lee Carrico
Logan Mem. UMC
Margaret Stemple
North Star Advocacy Ctr. Staff

UKRAINE

Marie Butler
Mike Brannock
Nathan Corathers/family
Pekka Siltanen
Scot Harper
Sharon Hennen
Terrell
Tish Oney

Texas and WV Flood Victims

*request received on our voicemail

SOME IMPORTANT DATES for upcoming fall activities and ministries

September—Season of Creation

September 4—Bishop Day in the District, Mt. Pleasant UMC, registration required, 5 pm

September 14—Church Picnic, Fort Boreman Park, 4 pm

September 17—Beginning of Disciple Bible Study, 6 pm

September 22—Dinner at Latrobe St. Mission

October 5—World Communion Sunday & Blessing of the Animals, our parking lot, 3 pm

October 12—First Presbyterian has invited First and Logan Memorial to participate in Trunk or Treat in their parking lot. More details and information will be forthcoming.

October 26—Beginning of our annual Stewardship Campaign

October 27—Dinner at Latrobe St. Mission

November 1—All Saints' Sunday, remembering those among our church family that have inherited eternal life in this past year

November 10—PPRC with District Superintendent, 6 pm
Charge Conference 7 pm

November 16—Stewardship Sunday

November 20—Young at Heart Event, 11 am

November 24—Dinner at Latrobe St. Mission

December dates to note will be in the October newsletter.

Our special Thanksgiving Offering will go toward funding our annual Christmas Boxes. We will be filling boxes for 20 families this year. More details will be in the October newsletter.

Our special Christmas Offering will go toward our apportionments. More details in the October newsletter.



WE WELCOME
YOU!

SEPTEMBER 22

*I love autumn, the one
season of the year that God
seemed to have put there
just for the beauty of it.*

PUM needs for September: canned tomatoes; tomato sauce; white sugar; corn bread or biscuit mix

Gustke Center needs for September:
bleach



HOW COULD WE
FORGET?

THE DAY THE USA CHANGED FOREVER

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001



BERTHA STACY STONE

Bertie went to her Heavenly home on August 23 while at her earthly home. She was 90. Many people loved her, and she will be missed. We offer our sincere condolences to Dawn and Jimmy and the rest of the family. Please keep them in your prayers.



LIGHTHOUSE DESIGNATION

The Church Council and Church Trustees met with Rev Amy Shanholtzer, District Superintendent, and Ken Willard, Conference Staff for Congregational Vitality, after church on Sunday, August 24. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss our progress on the steps toward becoming a designated Lighthouse Congregation. This designation recognizes churches that have taken specific steps to show 'radical hospitality' to welcome and encourage visitors, spiritual seekers, and others to our church and congregation. An audit of our physical church had previously been conducted by our Trustees and had also been submitted to the Conference. Following a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall, Mr. Willard reviewed with us the information we had submitted, made additional recommendations, and then declared our congregation and church leadership had successfully concluded the steps necessary to become a Lighthouse Congregation. And then he told us we would be receiving a \$5,000 grant to continue additional plans to show radical hospitality to all who enter our doors! We were relieved and thrilled that our work over the past year had been recognized.

First Church is the FIRST church to receive this recognition in the Little Kanawha District!!

Our work on the designation is over, but the real work has just begun. Church Council met Tuesday, August 26 and all in attendance could sense the excitement as several new ideas for outreach and invitations were discussed. There will be many opportunities for everyone to become involved in both large and small ways. I can't wait to tell you more in the near future.

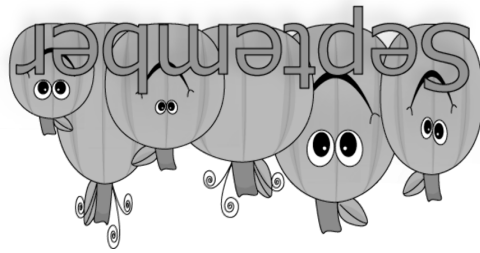


*In His Service,
Deborah Shaffer, Lay Minister*

FIRST FAMILY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2025

First United Methodist Church
1001 Juliana Street
Parkersburg, WV 26101



Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Alicia Randolph Rapking

Administrative Asst.: Cindy Lucas

Music Director & Choir Director: Jimmy Sundquist

Financial Secretary: Rebecca Crooks

Organist/Pianist/Handbell Director: Jimmy Sundquist

Custodian: Rob Bauer

Volunteer: Deborah Shaffer, Certified Lay Minister

Office Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tues. thru Thurs.

Friday 9 a.m. to noon

Phone: 304-428-0111

Contact Information

Administrative Asst.:

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Financial Secretary:

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Pastor Alicia:

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