

# First Family News

## DECEMBER 2025/JANUARY 2026

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Dear Beloved Congregation and Friends,

This year, as I approach Advent, I do so with the knowledge that likely, this will be my last Advent as a full-time clergy. Throughout this fall, that knowledge has become increasingly real as I have reflected on what the coming months mean for my life and for my ministry. I may retire at the end of June, but I am certain that God has more in store for me.

So, I have pondered what I wanted to say this last Advent in fulltime ministry. I have always loved Advent. I love the songs of Advent—those songs that are relatively unfamiliar because we only sing them during Advent. They are hymns that we must get through in order to sing all of our Christmas hymn favorites near Christmas. So faithfully, every year, we sing:

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*  
*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*  
*Lift Up Ye Heads*  
*People, Look East*  
*Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*

These are the hymns of Advent that we won't hear playing as we shop or have coffee at our favorite coffee shop. These are the hymns that won't be played at all the parties and gatherings that we will attend. And yet, these hymns are important for preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of the Christ child.

Earlier in the fall as I begin thinking and planning for Advent, I remembered an Advent study that I led one year called *Mary Had a Baby*. It was a four-week study that explored the theology and meaning behind four African American Spirituals. I looked to see if the book was still in print and found it on a used book site. I ordered it. And the more I have read it, the more I have felt led to preach a sermon series based on these four spirituals. The melodies are powerful. The words are powerful. The scriptures interwoven in the spirituals enhance the power and faith expressed in these songs and in this chaotic world we find ourselves these days, I believe they speak to all of us.

The Spirituals that I will use in the four Sundays of Advent are these:

*Mary Had a Baby, Yes Lord*  
*Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow*  
*Children, Go Where I Send Thee*  
*Go Tell It on the Mountain*

If you are not familiar with these spirituals, take the opportunity to look them up on YouTube and listen to them. Use a spiritual each day of each week to help you ponder this season and pray. And we just might learn some new expressions of the longing of our hearts this Advent Season.

Peace,

*Pastor Alicia*



## CHRISTMAS FOOD BOXES



Again this year we are providing Christmas food for 20 families. This year has been difficult for many of our community families, especially with the rise in food costs. We have all experienced that. Through the generosity of this congregation, we will be able to provide everything that we have for the past several years and a little something extra.

Shopping for the Christmas Baskets will be on Tuesday, December 16. We will need helping organizing and packing the boxes on Wednesday, December 17. We will meet that Wednesday morning at 10:00 to pack the boxes. We can use lots of help for this. Distribution for the Christmas boxes will be on Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. We are inviting all of our families for a simple gathering of coffee and cookies at 10:00 on that day, and we will need help to offer hospitality to our families and help them to get their boxes out to their cars. **So please mark your calendars for these days and come share the joy of Christmas and the gift of Christ's love.**

## NEW YEARS BEFORE NEW YEARS

This year we are trying something new! On Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup> we will gather at the church for at 3:00 pm for a potluck and games to celebrate the New Year. Some of my fondest memories of celebrating New Year's Eve was when my family lived in Eden, NC, and on New Year's Eve the congregation was invited to someone's home, shared a potluck and played Rook. The food was simple. It was whatever anyone had left-over from Christmas. And the laughter was contagious!

So plan on joining us at the church for a potluck and games as we celebrate New Years before New Years!

## LOGAN MEMORIAL

### ANNUAL ADVENT SING

Logan Memorial UMC will host the annual Advent Sing at Logan on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm. This will be an evening of music from several groups in our community and is a time of celebration for the coming of the Christ Child in our midst. Parking is available in unnumbered spaces at the News and Sentinel lot across the street and at the Community Bank parking lot. Everyone is invited!



United  
Women  
in Faith

Teresa Racer of Momma T and the Warriors will be the guest speaker for our meeting on Wednesday, December 10 at 2:00 pm in the parlor. All women are welcome to join us to hear her story and help sup-

port her ministry of feeding people in Parkersburg. When asked about any special needs, she responded, "bags of candy" to be used as stocking stuffers. We look forward to seeing you there!



## **CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

**NO ADDRESS IS NEEDED.** There is a basket to put them in near the elevator. Cards are to be brought to the church by December 7. The absolute deadline is noon on December 10th. They will be on the first pew on December 14, sorted and ready for people to deliver.

Betsy Albright & Gary Dunn  
Dina Andrews  
Thelma Badger  
Mike & Bev Brannock  
Lee Carrico  
Anne Case  
Charlie & Marilyn Casto  
Gary & Jan Davis

Virginia Edwards  
Mark Gaston  
Sharon Hennen  
Gary & Arlene Parsons  
Carol Power  
Margaret Stemple  
David Taliaferro  
Eleanor Westfall

### **FOR OUR CURRENT MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

#### **CHRISTMAS CARD EXCHANGE**

ADDRESS YOUR CARDS WITH JUST THE PERSON'S/FAMILY'S NAME AND SAVE YOURSELF THE POSTAGE. (THIS IS FOR CURRENT MEMBERS ONLY. PLEASE REFER TO THE REVISED LIST THAT WAS EMAILED TO YOU RECENTLY.) IF YOU NEED A COPY OF THIS LIST, LET CINDY KNOW. A BASKET HAS BEEN PLACED NEAR THE ELEVATOR TO PUT YOUR CARDS IN. PLEASE BRING THEM ON DECEMBER 14TH. THEY WILL BE DISTRIBUTED ON THE 21st AT THE CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON.

**ABSOLUTE DEADLINE TO TURN THEM IN  
IS NOON**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17.**

This is for people who attend church and can pick up their cards here on December 21. Please do not address cards to people who live out of town.



THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON **DEC. 24 and DEC. 25** FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY AND ON **JAN. 1** FOR NEW YEARS DAY AND ON **JAN. 19** FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY.



### **DECEMBER 21**

**Immediately following Worship**

**The meat and drinks will be provided. Come and celebrate the season with your church family and friends!**

**All you have to bring is a covered dish to share.**

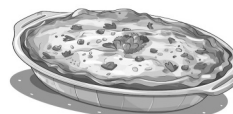
**Salad**



**Vegetable**



**Casserole**



**or Dessert**



**POINSETTIAS** Please put the completed order form in an offering envelope with your check and place it in the offering plate or give to Rebecca or Cindy. Please make checks payable to FIRST UMC with "poinsettias" on the memo line. If you would prefer to make a DONATION to a church fund in honor of or in memory of someone special, please provide the necessary information so that it can also be included in the list of acknowledgements on December 14. All information for this list needs to be in the church office by Wednesday, December 10. **Orders for poinsettias must be received by noon on December 8th to guarantee delivery on time from Bob's Market. MONEY IS DUE WHEN ORDER IS PLACED. They are the same prices as last year!**

Check the size you want: \_\_\_\_\_ 6 1/2"pot-\$5.50 \_\_\_\_\_ 8"pot-\$14 \_\_\_\_\_ 10"pot-\$19

\_\_\_\_\_ Poinsettia in honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Poinsettia in memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation in honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
To \_\_\_\_\_ FUND  
By \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation in memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
To \_\_\_\_\_ FUND  
By \_\_\_\_\_

**PUM needs for December:** boxed meal 'helpers', rice, dry pasta mix packets

**PUM needs for January:** canned meat products, (Spam, tuna, chicken, ham, beef), canned fruit

**Gustke Center needs for December:** tissues

**Gustke Center needs for January:** toothpaste and toothbrushes

**WOMEN'S CARE CENTER current needs:**

boys clothing, size 0-3 months, 3-6 months; baby bath wash; baby wash cloths; newborn diapers baby blankets; size 1 diapers; baby bibs; size 4 diapers; burp cloths

**Parkersburg Urban Ministries**

*urgent need*

*PUM is in need of quart size zip-lock food storage bags.*

### **Weekly Opportunities**

**Sunday:** Sunday School, 9:15 am

Worship, 10:45 am

**Wednesday:** Disciple Study, 7 pm

**Thursday:** Handbell Practice, 6 pm

Choir Practice, 7 pm

**Saturday:** Women's Zoom Meeting, 8 am

### **DECEMBER Birthdays**

4—Barbara Knopp

17—Jonnie Camp

### **JANUARY Birthdays**

1—Karen Whitacre

9—Joanne Greene

20—Larry Clinton

20—Janice Burdette

30—Jim Wojcik



We once again ask that if you wish to furnish **flowers** for the Worship Service on Sunday morning, you either bring them yourself or have them delivered by a florist on Friday morning. **DON'T FORGET TO WRITE YOUR NAME ON THE 2026 CALENDAR** on the wall near the church office. We have a whole year to fill up. Thank you.



**AN ADVENT  
CELEBRATION  
DECEMBER 14 4 pm  
A service of Lessons  
and Carols**

Jimmy, the choir, and some extras always do us proud!  
Come and celebrate the season of the birth of Baby Jesus!



Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Worship

SERVICE  
BEGINS  
AT  
7:30 PM

BRING  
YOUR  
FAMILY

DECEMBER Anniversaries

December 14-James & Joanne Greene  
December 20-Russ & Alice Montgomery  
December 27-Kathryn & Randal Lamm  
December 28-Judy & William Crichton V

JANUARY Anniversaries

January 2 : Jim & Julie Wojcik  
January 30: Mike & Laura DePue

**Gingerbread House  
Contest**



For the last several years we have had a gingerbread house contest. The rules are that the houses need to be made out of gingerbread! They can be as simple or as elaborate as your creativity and time allow. The houses need to be brought to the church for our Christmas dinner on Sunday, Dec. 21<sup>th</sup>. The voting for best house in the following categories will take place at our dinner.  
Category 1: Age 12 and below. Get your grandkids involved, but they need to come to our dinner.  
Category 2: Age 13-25                      Category 3: Over 25

**DECEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS**

**December 7**

Isaiah 11:1-10                      Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (UMH 795)  
Romans 15:4-13                      Matthew 3:1-12

**December 14**

Isaiah 35:1-10                      Luke 1:46b-55 (UMH 199)  
James 5:7-10                      Matthew 11:2-11

**December 21**

Isaiah 7:10-16                      Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (UMH801)  
Romans 1:1-7                      Matthew 1:18-25

**December 28**

Isaiah 52:7-10                      Psalm 98 (UMH 818)  
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)                      John 1:1-14

## BLUE CHRISTMAS

For the last several years, First UMC has observed the longest night of the year with a service on the Winter Solstice, the first day of winter, which of course is the longest night. Just the next day, the days begin to lengthen. This service, which has several names, including Blue Christmas, was originated in the mid 1990s to provide a space for those who are experiencing grief, loss, or sadness during the holiday season.

This year several churches in our area will come together to offer an ecumenical service on Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>. The service will include quiet reflection, music, and readings of scripture and prayer. Pastor Alicia is taking part in this service and is inviting our congregations to come to this service.

The service will be at St. Paul's United Methodist, Saturday Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm.

## PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

If you placed someone on the Prayer List (especially if they have been on here for some time), **please** let Cindy know of their status so we can keep the list current.

### AMERICA

Barrie Daniels  
Carol Power  
Cecil (Dina's brother)  
Charlie & Marilyn Casto  
David Hennen  
David Taliaferro  
Deborah Shaffer  
Dina Andrews

### ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Douglas Mitchell  
First UMC  
Gary Parsons  
Jan Davis  
Jaxson Harvey  
Julie Nutter/family  
Lee Carrico  
Logan Mem. UMC  
Margaret Stemple

### UKRAINE

Marie Butler  
Mark Gaston  
Martha Blackburn Williams  
Mike Brannock  
Nathan Corathers/family  
Scot Harper  
Sharon Hennen  
Tish Oney

## JANUARY LECTIONARY READINGS

### January 4

Jeremiah 31:7-14 Psalm 147:12-20 (UMH 859)  
Ephesians 1:3-14 John 1:(1-9), 10-18

### January 11

Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm 29 (UMH 761)  
Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17

### January 18

Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 40:1-11 (UMH 774)  
1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42

### January 25

Isaiah 9:1-4 Psalm 27:1, 4-9 (UMH 758)  
1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23

## Moravian Love Feast



Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup> will be our Moravian Love Feast. For the past several years we have had a service with Logan Memorial. This year is Logan's turn to host. So, our worship service for Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup> will be at Logan Memorial at 10:00 am. Love Feasts are a time for joy, singing, and of course the special Moravian bread and hot chocolate that we share together. It is a time at the end of the year to give thanks to God and to worship together as sister congregations.

- 5-6 Julia-Ann Square Historic District Tour and Tea
- 7 Logan Memorial UMC **Advent Sing**, @ Logan, 4 pm
- Deadline for bringing homebound Christmas cards

## DECEMBER

- 8 **Deadline for ordering poinsettias (before noon)**
- 9 South HS Madrigal Singers concert in the sanctuary , 10:30 am
- CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING, 4 pm
- 10 United Women in Faith, 2 pm
- 14 **ADVENT CELEBRATION**, 4 pm
- Deadline for bringing Christmas cards for members and friends of FUMC
- 17 Putting together the Christmas food boxes, 10 am
- 18 Distribution of the Christmas food boxes with coffee and cookies, 10 am
- 20 Blue Christmas at St. Paul's UMC, 4 pm
- 21 Christmas Program during Worship, Christmas card distribution at the Christmas Luncheon following Worship, Gingerbread House Contest Judging
- 22 Latrobe St. Mission dinner, 6 pm
- 24 Christmas Eve Service, 7:30 pm
- 24-25 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED-Christmas holiday
- 28 Moravian Love Feast @ Logan Memorial UMC, jointly with First UMC, 10 am
- New Year's before New Year's Celebration, potluck dinner, play games, 3 pm
- 1 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED-New Year's holiday
- 4 Epiphany Sunday
- 11 Baptism of the Lord Sunday
- 14 United Women in Faith, 2 pm, parlor
- 18 Human Relations Day
- 19 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED-MLK, Jr. Day holiday
- 26 Latrobe St. Mission dinner, 6 pm
- 27 CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING, 4 pm
- 31 WV Philharmonic & Ensemble Music Festival for HS kids, here at FUMC

## JANUARY

The Christmas offering will be for Apportionments.

OFFERING ENVELOPE GOES HERE

## FIRST FAMILY NEWS

DECEMBER 2025

JANUARY 2026

First United Methodist Church

1001 Juliana Street

Parkersburg, WV 26101

Walking in a  
Winter Wonderland

### Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Alicia Randolph Rapking

Administrative Asst.: Cindy Lucas

Music 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

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