

Ecclesia

DECEMBER 2023



In This Issue...



THE HIGHLIGHTS

On the Covers

Front: Scouts whitewater rafting

Back: Youth playing 'flamingo hockey'

Page 4

Advent 2023 - a calendar of events and how you can get involved!

Page 16

Pastor Mark & Jen recently attended a building dedication at Rowan Helping Ministries. This new space opens up exciting new opportunities for ministry

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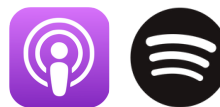
Website

www.fumcsalisbury.org



YouTube Channel

FUMC Salisbury



Sermon Podcast
Salisbury Sermons



Facebook
@fumcsalisbury
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@fumcsalisbury



704.636.3121 | 217 South Church Street Salisbury, NC 28144

Re:Marks

Many years ago, a wooden Nativity scene was constructed on the front lawn of a community church. The pastor, Rev. Matthews, looked out his parsonage window, grateful for those kind church members reconstructing the scene once again.

The air was especially cold that early December day, the wind and snow swirling all around. School let out, and the children made their way down the sidewalk, like they always did. This time, however, they were all captivated by what was being built in the church's lawn. Rev. Matthews couldn't help but notice the children lingering for several moments. One by one, a child would peel away and continue walking down the snowy sidewalk, leaving just one girl standing alone.

This young girl was around age 6. She stood at the Nativity scene get its finishing touches, including the arrangement of the plastic light-up statues. The wind caused the little girl's coat to fly open; she seemed completely unaware of the weather. Her attention was focused on who was arriving... First, the barnyard animals. Then the shepherds, and the magi. Eventually, Mary and Joseph with an empty feeding trough. One of the church members placed some fresh hay in there. And then gently lay the last one, the focus of the entire Nativity scene.

What Rev. Matthews saw next mesmerized him. The young girl grew excited! She quickly took off her blue woolen head scarf. The wind almost caused the scarf to fly out of her hands, but she held on tightly, enough to wrap her scarf around the little statue of Baby Jesus. She then patted the baby, kissed Him on the cheek, and then set off skipping down the snowy sidewalk.

Rev. Matthews recalled, "As I watched, I realized that Christmas had come once again."

If you're like me, then you're ready for Christmas to come again.

We're ready for the heart-warming moments of kindness. Bring on the inspiring scenes of compassion. And not the fluff, the empty ornaments pretending to be Christmas. For children, waiting for Christmas is hard. For adults, recognizing Christmas may be even harder.

Christina Rossetti's poem, "Love Came Down at Christmas," has become a cherished Christmas Carol.

*Love came down at Christmas; Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas; Star and Angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead; Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus; But wherewith for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token; Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men; Love for plea and gift and sign.*

Long ago, Love came down once and for all. This Advent season, we are given the chance again to anticipate the Nativity. When Love appears, don't miss it!

Mark Conforti

Pastor Mark





bless the **Advent We Actually Have**

*"It is the beautiful task of
Advent to awaken in all of us
memories of goodness and thus
open the doors to hope."
- Pope Benedict XVI*

Fellowship Events in Advent

Wednesday, December 06
**Potluck/Covered Dish Meal with
Caroling & Decorating**
Fellowship Hall, 6:00pm

Friday, December 08
Cocoa & Carols with Downtown Churches
Bell Tower Green, 5:00pm

Sunday, December 17
Youth & Kids Connection Christmas Parties
Fellowship Hall, 5:00pm

Opportunities to Celebrate & Give

Saturday, December 16
Camp Discovery Christmas
Fellowship Hall, 4:00pm
Volunteers needed to shop for gifts

Celebrating Support of
Rowan One Church One Child
*Gifts have been purchased for children in
our community in Foster Care*

Seasonal Worship Services

Sunday, December 03, 10 & 17
Advent I, II, & III
8:30am & 11:00am

Sunday, December 24
Advent IV
8:30am & 11:00am
*Children's Paper Bag Pageant
during 11:00 service*

Sunday, December 24
Christmas Eve
7:00pm & 11:00pm

Sunday, December 31
Covenant Renewal
8:30 & 11:00



bless the
**Advent We
Actually Have**

Advent Playlist
Listen on



Spiritual Growth Beyond Worship

Wednesdays Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13, 20
Advent Bible Study
Crossover Hall Classroom, 10:30am

Sundays Dec. 03, 10, 17 & 24
Parallel Advent Class - Children & Parents
Upstairs in Education Building, 10:00am

Wednesday December 13
Advent Prayer Stations
Fisher St. Lobby & Sanctuary, 6:00pm



Visit fumcsalisbury.com/advent
for more Advent details



Decorating for Advent



Thank you to Laura Koontz, Jamie Webb, and everyone who came out to help decorate the church for Advent & Christmas this year! It was wonderful to have many of our children and youth decorate the lobby, and some of our college students were instrumental in putting up the Sanctuary trees while they were home for Thanksgiving!



Church History

This month's article might be titled "A Tale of Two Christmases." One is secular and the other sacred. Their calendars overlap, but they have major differences.

Our secular Christmas has deep roots that go all the way back to pagan Rome. The start of the slow lengthening of daylight hours brought on weeks of late December parties and festivities. European cultures also enjoyed a mid-winter celebration of strong drink, rich food, and leisure living.

Today's secular Christmas celebration usually begins the day after Thanksgiving. Commonly known as Black Friday, merchants launch their busiest commercial season. During the remainder of November and most of December, we sing about snow predictions, an enchanted red-nosed reindeer, and a desire to spend nostalgic time with family and friends. It is the season of jolly little elves piloting flying sleighs, decorated evergreen trees, and hanging mistletoe. Delicious food, wrapped packages, and greeting cards are shared by both saints and sinners.

Alongside this secular season is a very different Christmas tradition. The church calls it Advent from the Latin word "adventus" meaning "coming" or "arrival." In ancient Greece, it announced the coming of the emperor. In Christian tradition, it became a time to prepare spiritually for the coming of the Christ child.

The Advent season runs for four weeks including four Sundays prior to December 25th. Depending on the fluctuating calendar, it can begin in late November or early December. Each Sunday has a distinctive emphasis. The first Sunday celebrates Christ's second coming. The next two Sundays focus on John the Baptist. The events immediately preceding the birth of Jesus occupy the fourth Sunday.

Often an Advent wreath marks each Sunday. It is an evergreen wreath with four purple candles plus a central white Christ candle added on Christmas Day. Evergreen represents eternal life. Each candle traces the gradual approach of Christ's light to the world. In some churches, the candles represent hope, peace, joy, and love. The third Sunday "Joy candle" is frequently pink.

Churches may provide devotional aids for private use during Advent. Some churches recommend fasting. The emphasis is not on the birth of Jesus. That comes later. The focus of Advent is on preparation to receive the coming Savior.

December 25th and the twelve days afterward celebrate Christmas. Congregations sing familiar carols and tell the nativity story. This season ends with Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th, when we celebrate the arrival of the Wise Men.

Singing carols after Christmas Day often feels odd to people accustomed to ending the secular celebration on December 26th. That is when many people take down the decorations, exchange unwanted gifts, and take advantage of store-wide sales. And yet, it is only after four weeks of Advent preparation that we can finally sing "come and worship, Worship Christ the Newborn King." Our church will mark this religious celebration with a Sunday school hour of carol singing on December 31st. If you want to put Christ back into your Christmas, the last days of December is a good time to do that.

Fred Jordan, *Church Historian*



YOU ARE INVITED TO



COCOA & CAROLS

DECEMBER

FRIDAY

8

5:00pm

Bell Tower Green Park

Join us for this free event for all ages, as we sing & celebrate the coming of Christmas! Sponsored by the churches of Downtown Salisbury

HOT COCOA
PROVIDED BY:



Christmas

POINSETTIA ORDERS

\$20 PER PLANT

DUE MONDAY,
DECEMBER 11
BY 3:00 PM



Annual
CHRISTMAS

STAFF LOVE OFFERING

Contributions will be accepted until
Monday, December 11th.

Around the Table

one goal: nurturing people in body & spirit
one time: all meals are at 6:00pm



Community Meals

connect with the
community

Fellowship Meals

foster fellowship among
church members

Covered Dish Meals

participate in feeding
people in body & spirit

on hiatus 'til spring

Fellowship Meal
(Dec. break for holidays)
Next: January 17

Covered Dish Meal
December 6
Next: January 3

DECEMBER



CHRISTMAS POTLUCK

Wednesday, December 06

at 6:00 pm

in the Fellowship Hall

Bring a side dish

(starch, salad, or dessert) to share!



**CHRISTMAS CAROLS &
DECORATING THE
FELLOWSHIP HALL TREE
DECEMBER 6 DURING
CHRISTMAS POTLUCK!**



From the Staff-Parish Relations Committee

A special thank you ...

2023 has been an especially challenging year for our church staff and congregation – financially, attendance, and many losses in our church family. And with each day, our small staff continues to be there to meet our needs. So much happens beyond Sunday mornings and I wanted to say a special thanks to Mark, Jen, Josh, Becca, Mike, Bailee, and Aaron for all their hard work and dedication.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee committed this year to provide individual liaisons to each staff member, to listen and assist where we could. We also reached out to volunteers that provided additional support to our staff for projects and other needs. I personally want to say thank you to those volunteers and to each SPRC member for being there for the staff.

Another special thank you goes to all those who lead and teach in our FUMC Childcare Programs (Preschool, Child Development Center, and After School). We appreciate your hard work and dedication to the children in our community.

As we leave 2023 behind us and “Gather Together” in 2024, please take a few minutes to show your appreciation and encouragement to all these staff members who make a difference at FUMC.

Blessings,
Deneen Jones, SPRC Chair



Children's Ministry Update

Starting in January, our children's ministry will be led by a team of church members, not a paid Director of Children's Ministry on the church's staff. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee made this decision, which came with much prayer and conversation over the course of many months. Yes, church finances drove the decision, which was a difficult one, because we all deeply appreciate Bailee Weisensel. We highly value all of Bailee's contributions, and we thank God for her. Thankfully, Bailee and her family very much still want to be part of First United Methodist Church. They're not going anywhere, and we don't want them to leave!

Children's ministry is not fading away. In fact, we need to ramp up our offerings for children, and you are needed to make that happen. You can join the fun, because our church is committed to our children – to love them and to teach them the Christian faith. You could lead the Children's Moment during worship, teach Sunday School, help plan special events like Vacation Bible School, the Easter Egg Hunt, or the Fall Festival.

Together we are the church! We have a responsibility to these kids. We claim it at their baptism. In the new year, we have a fresh opportunity. You are needed. Let's make it happen!



HARVEST

procession

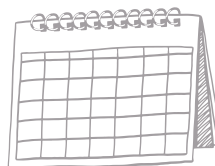
2200 pounds of food was collected, sorted, and delivered to Rowan Helping Ministries' Food Pantry. Thank you for making it possible to support our neighbors in need this holiday season!



Youth Ministry

Salisbury Youth
6-12 GRADE MINISTRY

Newsletter



YOUTH GROUP CALENDAR

2023-2024

REINDEER GAMES



YOUTH GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY
DECEMBER 17, 5:00-7:00PM

DECEMBER

3 - YOUTH GROUP

10 - YOUTH GROUP

17 - XMAS PARTY

24 - no youth group
(Christmas Eve)

31 - no youth group
(New Year's Eve)

JANUARY

7 - YOUTH GROUP

14 - no youth group
(MLK wknd)

22 - YOUTH GROUP

26-28 - WINTER
RETREAT



We're excited to be part of bringing a Confirmation retreat experience to Mount Shepherd! Our retreat planned with Milford Hills has now grown into a Western North Carolina Conference event!!



Confirmation

Confirmation Classes
will be hosted at
Milford Hills
in December and
FUMC in January.

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

January 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Youth & Children's Thanksgiving Potluck



Children & Youth families enjoyed a Thanksgiving potluck dinner after helping to sort food donated for the Harvest Procession!



Children's Advent Sunday School

Children are enjoying learning about the season of Advent, and making advent wreaths while their parents are next door. Pastor Mark & Bailee are teaching this parallel parent/child Advent class through all four Sundays of Advent!



Children's Ministry



BRING JOY TO OUR 2023 CAMP DISCOVERY CAMPERS THROUGH GIFT GIVING

This year we will be collecting gifts for our Camp Discovery campers and their families! Contact Bailee for details about gifts we still need to collect!



CAMP DISCOVERY JUNE 9-14, 2024

We're thrilled to be making plans for another exciting week of Camp this summer at Mount Shepherd! Mark your calendars - Camp Discovery requires many volunteers to make it all happen!

Childcare Programs

Preschool

Preschoolers, and preschool teachers, love the Christmas season! We enjoy singing Christmas songs and working on some of our cutest crafts we do all year! We make special gifts and have wonderful class parties!

We help spread Christmas cheer as we donate our “Penny Harvest” to the Salisbury Post’s Christmas Happiness Fund. This is meaningful tradition, as we talk about how thankful we are for all that we have, and how we can help others.

Please remember to link your Harris Teeter VIC card to FUMC Preschool. (Even if you have linked in the past it needs to be re-linked every year.) Our code is 6268 and is listed as “First Methodist Preschool, Salisbury”. Simply give the cashier our code or go online to www.harristeeter.com, click the “Community” tab, enter your information and click “Submit Information “. Harris Teeter allows you to link several schools to your VIC card. When shopping please remember that only Harris Teeter products count towards their Together in Education program donation percentage.

Our 2024-2025 preschool registration begins on January 22nd for preschool and church families, and opens to the public on the 29th. Please help spread the word about our program! If anyone is interested in learning more about FUMC Preschool, or would like to come for a tour, they are welcome to call Kelly Austin 336-722-9260.



Volunteering at Rowan Helping Ministries



Left: Members of the Music Ministry recently served meals at Rowan Helping Ministries



Right: Members of FUMC and First Baptist came together to pack food when the food pantry put out a call for extra help through the Faith Relations Committee before Thanksgiving

Scouting at FUMC: Troop & Pack 442

This Fall the Troop and Pack were very busy. The Cubs participated in Family Fun Fest at Camp Barnhardt, camping, trick or treating, hay rides, BB gun shooting and eating a ton of great food. The Scouts traveled to the western Nantahala National Forest to raft on the Nantahala River, hike into the big trees of Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and hike to the Maple Overlook to see it all.



Rowan Helping Ministries Building Dedication

Exciting changes are taking place at Rowan Helping Ministries!

In October, the non-profit organization unveiled 12 new transitional housing apartments and new program space built to help more homeless citizens return to stable, permanent homes and self-sufficiency. These new facilities are located behind the agency's original building, The Ralph W. Ketner Crisis Assistance Center on North Long Street, and across from the Salisbury Train Station.



The new transitional apartments, called Eagle's Nest III, bring the agency's total number of transitional units to 22. Nine of the new units are reserved for Veterans served through a partnership between Rowan Helping Ministries and the Salisbury Veterans Administration Medical Center. Transitional housing bridges the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, providing case management and supportive services temporarily until the client can become self-sustaining.

The new apartment units are connected to a historic building donated to Rowan Helping Ministries and now renovated to provide space for client case management and specialized mental health services. Housing guests or other clients experiencing a mental health crisis will benefit from the on-site "Living Room" environment which provides a comfortable, calm place where the client and a peer support specialist can de-escalate the crisis, keep the client in stable housing, and avoid hospitalization, when appropriate.

The remainder of the historic building will become the new location of Rowan Helping Ministries' Administrative Offices, including those for the Executive Director, the Controller, the Community Relations staff, and the Support Services staff. Those offices are expected to be moved to the new location by the end of the year.

Moving the Administrative Offices out of The Ketner Center will allow the building to be dedicated to providing program services and to serving more shelter and housing guests, program clients, and citizens who need medical and mental health services. Rowan Helping Ministries partners with Cabarrus-Rowan Community Health Centers (CRCHC) to provide those services on site two days a week. This renovation will help to expand service hours and assist more clients.



Serving Meals in Jeannie's Kitchen

December: Adam & Eve/Seekers Class

Dinner, December 14 & Breakfast, December 15

No group is currently signed up for January's meals.

Interested in your group serving a meal? Contact Taffy Jordan!

Food Packing

Fourth Wednesdays, during the school year

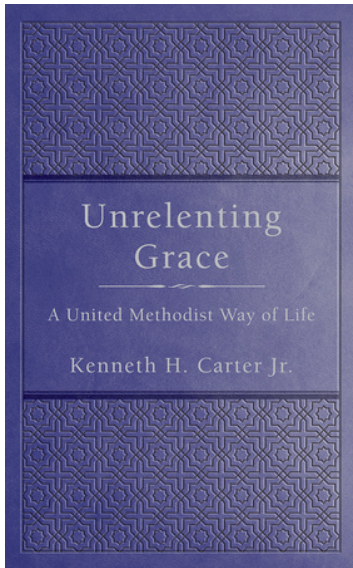
Next Packing Party:

December 27, 2:00-3:00pm

(if needed over the holidays)

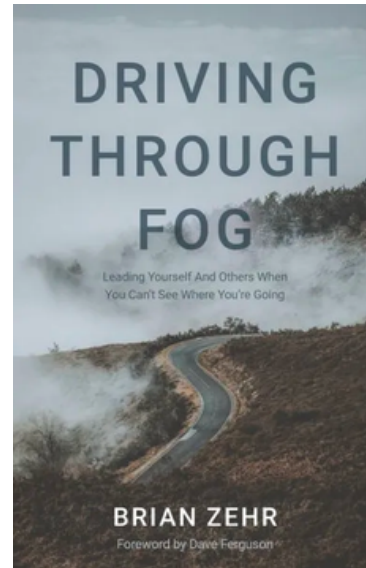
Interested in coming to a packing party? Contact Jen Fogt!

New Year Sermon Series



Coming in January - we'll be taking a break from preaching on passages from the Lectionary and instead spend four weeks drawing from Scripture passages around the theme of grace. Bishop Carter recently published *Unrelenting Grace: A United Methodist Way of Life*. We will use the wisdom from this book as a jumping off point for our sermon series.

Book Discussion



Pastor Mark will be hosting book discussions in the new year for Brian Zehr's book *Driving Through Fog*. Look for more details on when & where these discussions will take place soon.

Coming Soon

Church Office Closed December 25-26, January 1

Becca will be in the office December 28 & 29 to receive end of year gifts from anyone wanting to drop off a check before the end of the calendar year.

Scout Sunday February 4

Scout Troop & Cub Pack 442 will be collecting canned goods as part of the nationwide "Scouting for Food" campaign that weekend!

Confirmation Camp February 23 - 25

Our confirmation class will join with other Methodist youth in the process of Confirmation on a retreat at the end of February. We're excited to be part of planning & hosting this retreat at Mount Shepherd Retreat Center.

Do you have an article for the *Ecclesia*?

Send them to Jenni@fumcsalisbury.org with "(Month to be printed) *Ecclesia*" in the subject line.

Articles should be submitted by the first Friday of the month prior to when you would like it printed.

Access the Church Calendar Any Time

Access the church calendar any time! Just go to fumcsalisbury.org and look under the "Connect" tab. There you can also find a digital version of the *Ecclesia*.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

1 Doug Miller

2 Harrison Banish

3 Libby Hollowell
Will Bivens

4 Isabella Banish
Austin Hedrick

5 Angie Fansler
William Austin
Max Foote

6 Steven Anderson

7 Bud Mickle
Julia Howard
Phil Cooley

8

9 Meg Bivens
Joe Hall
Carole Schall

10 Lincoln Howe
Carolyn Gresham

11 Jenna Robinson
Craig Johnson

12 Eddie Nicholson

13

14 Chris Sherrill

15 Jay Hughes

16 Bob Roakes
Bret Busby

17

18 Regan Roakes
Mason Lentz

19 Faye Hollar
Henry Austin

20 Davis West
Samantha Hensley
Michael Rimmer

21 Delaney Fisher

22

23 Anna Maphis

24

25

26 Al Carter
Brianna Brinkley

27 Nelson Robertson

28 Phillip Floyd

29 Joe Steinman
Judy Beymer

30

31 Wes Fazia
Patrick Howard



Office Relocation

You may have noticed some moving boxes in the church recently! Church Staff offices have been relocated to make room in the upstairs office suite for a prospective business or non-profit agency to use the space as part of a Shared Use Agreement. This is a continuation of the sustainability work that was begun at the end of 2022. Most of the new offices are now downstairs sharing space with the music ministry!



New Office Spaces

Senior Pastor (Mark) - men's vesting room
 Business Administrator (Becca) - women's vesting room
 Music Director (Josh) - choir rehearsal space
 A/V Production Director (Aaron) - recording studio
 Youth Director (Jen) - education building room C209

CHURCH OFFICE OPEN HOUSE!

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

10:00AM - NOON

**YOU'RE INVITED TO SEE THE NEW
ARRANGEMENT OF SPACE!**

We have also created a shared work space in the column room, and the work room will be in the room previously used for storage space in the music suite. The choir and handbells ensembles will still use the same space to rehearse, and the music library will stay as it is.

Thank You!

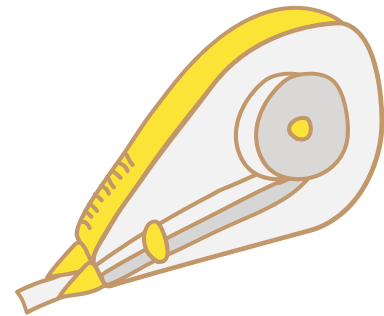
Pastor Conforti and Congregation,
 Thank you so much for the wonderful and heartfelt funeral service and reception you provided for my sister Sarah Chandler. All of you were so helpful and loving. Sarah loved First United Methodist and all of it's staff and members.

Words cannot express how much your kindness and love meant to Sarah and our family.

In His Love,
 Jerry Chandler

Thank you

Corrections Corner



The last Ecclesia newsletter incorrectly noted Susan Linn's birthday being in November. Her correct birthday is January 19. We look forward to wishing her a happy birthday in a few weeks!

Directory Updates



Access the online directory anytime by going to fumcsalisbury.ctrn.co, following the link on our website (under 'Connect'), or downloading the Online Member Directory app on your smartphone or tablet. Enter the access code **fumcsalisbury** and your unique username and password.

You can update your information at any time, if you would like assistance in updating your information please contact the church office.

ECCLESIA

NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



*making and nurturing
Christian disciples
through the presence
and power of God*



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