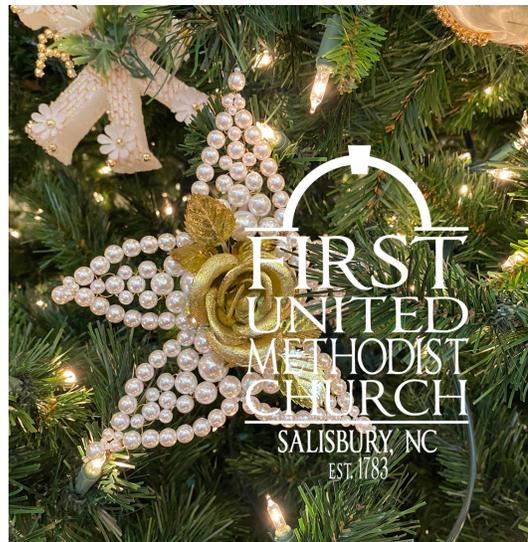


ECCLESIA

January 2021



IN THIS ISSUE



On the cover: Lessons & Carols

FUMC's Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols was transformed into a video service, allowing us to worship from home! Church members of all ages participated in Scripture reading, singing, ringing, and playing. You can re-watch Lessons & Carols and share it with your friends by visiting the church's YouTube channel!

Page 4: The Story Reading Plan

As a new year begins, you are invited to participate in The Story as we read through the Bible together! The 5-day per week reading plan will challenge us to dive deep into the Word in 2021. You can find your January reading plan on page 4.

Page 6: Wesley's Covenant Prayer

Church historian, Fred Jordan, recounts the story of John Wesley holding Methodism's first 'Covenant Renewal Service' in 1755. Wesley's covenantal prayer invites all disciples to re-examine their commitment to God, challenging each of us to take a step nearer to God as we are reminded: *I am no longer my own, but thine...*

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Reverend Doctor Mark Conforti, *Senior Pastor*
The Reverend Stacey Lundy, *Associate Pastor*
Mrs. Becca Blackmon, *Business Administrator*
Mr. Mike Fansler, *Building Superintendent*
Ms. Jen Fogt, *Director of Youth Ministry*
Mr. Joshua Starnes, *Director of Music Ministry & Organist*
Mrs. Bailee Weisensel, *Director of Children's Ministry*

Mark@fumcsalisbury.org
Stacey@fumcsalisbury.org
Becca@fumcsalisbury.org
Mike@fumcsalisbury.org
Jenni@fumcsalisbury.org
Josh@fumcsalisbury.org
Bailee@fumcsalisbury.org

Rev. Garry Cook M.Div. LCSW,
Pastoral Counseling, Sanctuary Counseling Group
Mrs. Donna Fredrick,
Lead Teacher of After-School Child Care Program
Mrs. Kelly Austin,
Director of Preschool
Ms. Beth Yelvington,
Lead Teacher of Summer Day Camp
Mrs. Courtney Bost
Lead Teacher/Director of Child Development Center

Gdcook@triad.rr.com

Afterschool@fumcsalisbury.org

Kellyhaustin@gmail.com

Summercamp@fumcsalisbury.org

CDC@fumcsalisbury.org

www.fumcsalisbury.org | 704.636.3121 | 217 South Church Street
Facebook: First United Methodist Church Salisbury
Instagram: fumcsalisbury

REMARKS

Let's spend the year 2021 dedicated to exploring the depth, breadth, and beauty of the Bible. As I have been wrestling with the challenge of leading our church through the coronavirus pandemic, I keep asking, "What's the best way for our church to live into our mission – 'to make and nurture Christian disciples through the presence and power of God' – right *now*?" How would you respond to this leadership question? By right NOW, I'm especially thinking of the following factors:

- Understandable COVID-19 safety precautions
- Some people need to stay at home, while others are eager to get out
- The pandemic's disorienting impact on our schedules, sensibilities, & connection
- The opportunity to leverage technology in new ways

All the while, I have been sensing a need to get back to basics. This involves remembering who we are as the Church, and focusing on our primary functions. Reading the Bible together, following up on 2020 as "The Year of Prayer," will bring this together for our church. Think with me about First United Methodist Church can be three years from now or ten years from now. Imagine our church growing & thriving in marvelous ways. Imagine our church being an undeniable force for good in downtown Salisbury. Imagine our church bringing healing and hope to hurting people. Imagine our church providing a safe space for children, youth, and families to make spiritual sense of their lives. Imagine our church providing connection & community for a wide array of adults. Imagine our church "spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land," as John Wesley put it.

When this happens, we will look back on 2021 and say:

"During the chaos of the coronavirus pandemic, we opened our Bibles together. And as we made our way out, by God's grace, it was the story – the biblical story about God – that deeply impacted who we are today!"

Quite frankly, sisters and brothers, what else could do the job? Are you ready to get started? Use the reading plan on page 4 in this edition of the ECCLESIA for your January Bible reading. Also, look ahead for three online resources: 1) discussion groups on Zoom and 2) weekly videos from me and Pastor Stacey Lundy, and 3) instructional videos about the Bible. We will also have monthly in-person sessions. Let's start the year 2021 together! It's time to start The Story, for the Spirit of God to move through the Scriptures and breathe into us new life.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mark





JANUARY

Each month, we will publish the reading plan in the Ecclesia, on our website, and on Facebook. The reading plan is 5 days to help you adapt the plan to your schedule. If you miss a day/week/reading, do not feel guilt. God's grace is new every morning! New as well is your opportunity to rejoin The Story. Sunday worship will correspond to readings in the week to come.

Week of January 3-9

1	GENESIS 1-2 LUKE 1-2 PSALM 104	GENESIS 3-5 LUKE 3-4	GENESIS 6-8 LUKE 5-6	GENESIS 9-11 PSALM 24 LUKE 7	GENESIS 12-14 LUKE 8 PSALM 108
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Week of January 10-16

2	GENESIS 15 LUKE 9 PSALM 146	GENESIS 16 LUKE 10-12	GENESIS 17-18 LUKE 13 PSALM 9	GENESIS 19-21 LUKE 14	GENESIS 30 LUKE 15
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Week of January 17-23

3	GENESIS 24 LUKE 16 PSALM 11	GENESIS 25-26 LUKE 17-18	GENESIS 27-28 LUKE 19 PSALM 4	PSALM 127 GENESIS 29 LUKE 20	GENESIS 12-14 LUKE 21 PSALM 108
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Week of January 24-30

4	GENESIS 31-32 LUKE 22 PSALM 11	LUKE 23 GENESIS 33-34	GENESIS 35-36 PSALM 34 LUKE 24	GENESIS 37-38 DANIEL 1-2	GENESIS 39-41 DANIEL 3-4
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Week of January 31-February 6

5	GENESIS 42-44 DANIEL 5 PSALM 59	GENESIS 45-47 DANIEL 6-7	GENESIS 48-50 DANIEL 8-9	PSALM 129 EXODUS 1-2 DANIEL 10	EXODUS 3-5 DANIEL 11
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DON'T FORGET! You can download a free app to your smartphone or device called 'Bible' by YouVersion- you can read or LISTEN to scripture from anywhere!

2021 CHURCH CALENDAR MEETING

Have you often said “Wow, I did not know that was happening at the church”? Or if your group uses the church once or for the entire year, we are going to do something about this! Especially with the changes that have taken place because of COVID. On Thursday, January 7, all church staff, committee chairs, and ministry team leaders will get together to develop a 2020 church calendar! The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate communications, scheduling needs, and resources for the entire 2021 year.



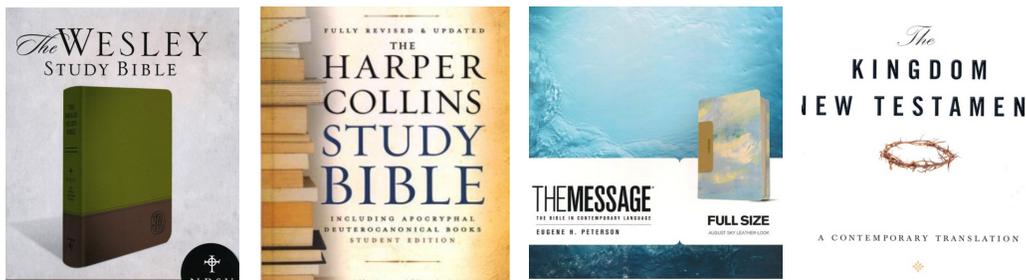
We will meet **Thursday January 7 at 6:00pm on Zoom.** Please come with any dates and activities you would like to add to the calendar. We will take time to pray and cast a vision for the year ahead.

NEW BIBLE SUGGESTIONS

As we approach The Story anew in 2021, perhaps now is the time to invest in a new or additional Bible.

Study Bible: Study Bibles add additional footnotes and resources to help explain verses or meanings of words. Most are available in hardcover or paperback/leather-type cover. Try The Wesley Study Bible or The Harper Collins Study Bible, both available in New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

A Fresh Take: If you already own a study Bible, or find reading Scripture devotionally difficult, a Bible with modern language may be a great way for you to increase your time reading scripture or provide fresh insight. The Message and The Kingdom New Testament are a couple of good options.



Apps and Online Resources:

- The Bible App by Youversion is free!
- The Bible Audio App offers several audio translations,
- The Bible Gateway App offers many translations as well. Their website allows you to look at versions in parallel.



CHURCH HISTORY

"Looking back, moving forward"

The New Year begins at an odd time. January still clings to the cold dark days of winter, and spring's promise of new life lies months in the future. The normal cycle of work and school is only half complete. However, just as each day begins at midnight, so does January's darkness launch a New Year.

John Wesley, Methodism's founding father, saw January as the ideal time for personal reflection and spiritual renewal. Like many other eighteenth century evangelists, he preached a gospel of conversion. He also believed that individual conversions need constant rebirth like our New Year's resolutions. Our covenant with God needs regular rejuvenation.

Methodists believe salvation involves more than a one-time emotional commitment. It demands more than one tearful trip to the altar and the reciting of the sinner's prayer, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner." We believe an initial response to God's grace is important, but real salvation involves a life-long spiritual pilgrimage called sanctification. Christian converts need to deepen their faith by regularly and methodically resubmitting their life to God. It is a journey toward holiness and perfection.

On Monday, August 11, 1755, Wesley's Journal records Methodism's first Covenant Renewal Service. Drawing from both Puritan and Presbyterian resources, this service became one of the most distinctive contributions of Methodism to Christian liturgy. By 1769 the Covenant Service had moved to New Year's Day or alternatively to the first Sunday of the New Year. It was always preceded by a day of fasting and prayer.

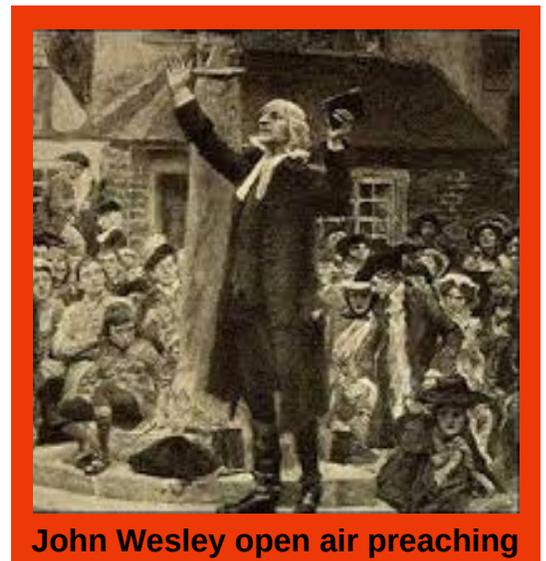
The Covenant Service became and remains a major worship event in the British Methodist Church. That is not equally true in America. Wesley did not include it in his 1784 edition of *The Sunday Service of the Methodists; With Other Occasional Services* which he prepared for use in the newly formed American Methodist Episcopal Church. That meant the Covenant Service remained largely unknown in the New World. The current United Methodist Book of Worship contains a Covenant Service, but it is seldom used.

Through the years, the readings and prayers of the Covenant Service have been updated. The intent and thrust of the service, however, remains unaltered. The modern liturgy still offers believers an opportunity to renew the covenant they made with their Creator at their baptism.

This January we cannot hold in-person worship services due to public health restrictions. However, there is no better way to begin each year and each day than by praying John Wesley's covenant prayer. It is how we Methodists move from the darkness of sin and burden of guilt into the light of God's life transforming love.

*I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.*

Fred Jordan, Church Historian



John Wesley open air preaching

WORSHIP & WONDER

Living Sacrifices of Praise: Spiritual Gifts and Lives of Worship (Part 3 of 3)

We've all probably heard that "a team is only as good as its weakest member." So too it is with the Church. Continuing with his analogy of the Church as a body (cf. I Cor. 12.12), the Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of every church member and body part. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body suffers and becomes less effective. We shouldn't look down on those whose gifts seem unimportant, nor should we be jealous and envy those who seem to have more "impressive" spiritual gifts. Instead, we should use the gifts that God has given us and entrusted to our care, and encourage others to use their gifts. If we don't, the whole Body will suffer and become less effective. God never calls us to be featured – only to be faithful! And thanks be to God, whose strength is perfected in our every weakness!



The Service of Joy



Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

In the final part of this section, Paul continues to enforce this unity and synergy dynamic. We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who mourn. Too often though, we are jealous or cynical of those who rejoice and apathetic toward those who mourn. Although, I'm sure the events of this year have given us all opportunity to pause and ponder, and maybe even take a slice of humble pie too. Jesus told His disciples that all people would know they were His disciples by their love for one another (John 13.35). Believers are in this world collectively – not only here at FUMC, or in our state, time zone, or country – but all throughout the world! There is no such thing as "private or individualistic Christianity." Our faith is meant to be lived and exercised (perhaps, that's why they're called "spiritual disciplines?") in communion with God and one another. We shouldn't stop with only enjoying our own relationship with God, but we need to be involved in community with the lives of other believers and building relationships and making disciples. This is pure and undefiled religion: to care for orphans and widows. Of course this has a literal approach, but our lives of worship extend far beyond that. Paul makes it abundantly clear that no one is superior to another, just as no spiritual gift is superior or inferior to another. Jesus Christ and His Cross are the great equalizing factor. (When I was growing up, I was conscious to address my parents as "brother" and "sister" instead of "mother" and "father" at church. This was to emphasize the reality that we are all one in Christ Jesus, collectively siblings and children of God.) So, brothers and sisters, I leave you with these final thoughts: each of our spiritual gifts are not for our own self-advancement, but for building up the body of Christ (His Church) and glorifying God. We have to help equip the saints of all ages and maturity levels, teaching others and emulating right worship and discipleship, for what we do today bears eternal consequences! All those whose faith is in Christ will one day be surrounding the throne of God and proclaiming the majesty and worth of Him who sits upon the throne. This is our ultimate Calling for what we will do for all of Eternity – so we best start practicing now! *Soli Deo Gloria* ("Glory to God Alone!")

Grace + Peace,
Josh Starnes, Director of Music & Organist

CHRISTMAS FUN FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

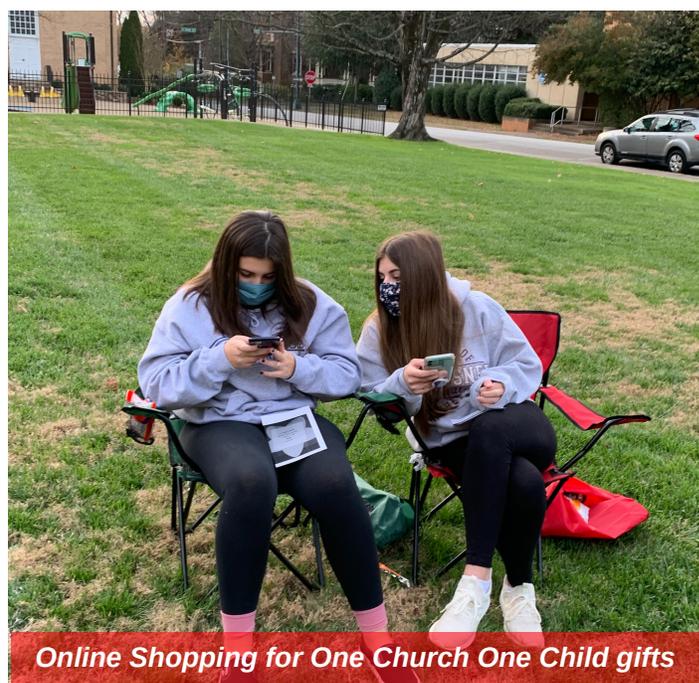
The Advent spirit was still alive and well this year!

From bags filled with Advent activities and treats, to the Children's Service of Joy, Lessons & Carols, and outdoor Christmas parties for Club 45 and Youth - the season was shared by many of our Kids First in Christ children and Salisbury Youth.

Wednesdays and Saturday were filled with Children's Choir rehearsals outside and recording for services. All the children did a wonderful job leading during these worship services! The Youth Band was able to creatively practice and record a song for Lessons & Carols, and our acolytes did a wonderful job lighting the way in worship! Several children and youth also contributed their reflections to the church's Advent Devotional Guide, and youth helped (online) shop for gifts given through Rowan One Church One Child.



Enjoying Advent In A Bag Activities



Online Shopping for One Church One Child gifts

CUB PACK AND SCOUT TROOP 442

It has been a difficult couple of months trying to meet, camp and participate as a group because of Covid-19 but we've managed to continue our program despite all the restrictions. We have cleaned the many islands and remote campsites on Falls Reservoir for the US Forest Service. Both the Troop and Cubs visited the National Historic Cemetery here in Salisbury to take in the rich history of the area. Scouts have hiked locally. Both the Cubs and Scouts have continued meeting either under the portico or online via Zoom.

Both of our programs would like to thank the generous support of our Church members as we struggled to make our dues payment without being able to utilize any fundraisers during this tough time.



AFTER-SCHOOL CHILD CARE

Happy New Year from all of us at After-School Child Care! We are enjoying the holiday season and have been busy! We sent cards to Veterans and bookmarks to shut-ins, made Christmas crafts, enjoyed a party, read fun Christmas books and talked about the real meaning of Christmas.

Our year is going well and we look forward to continuing to learn, play and grow together in 2021!

"May you shine the light of Christ in the new year!"



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

1 Robert Anderson, III
Thomas Paffrath
Andy Storey

2 Bailee Weisensel

3

4 Chad Cross
Beth Yelvington

5 Ellis Hartsell
Jenny Nussman

6 Britni Branson
Maude Lee DeGrotte
Spencer Storey

7

8 Lainey Cook
Andrew Goodwin
Caroline Johnson

9

10 Shirley Disseler
Wendy Douglas

11 Hazel Kirk
Alisha Mastro
Lois Poteat

12 Christie Chea
Skye Mowery
Nancy Sherriff
Jean West

13 Kim Grenoble
Rikki Spencer
Katelyn Storey Lee

14 Joel Goodwin, II
Scott Johnson

15

16 Coleman Bready
Evan Koontz
Suzanna Maxwell

17

18 Betsy Crowell
Jim Molitor

19 Susan Linn
Dan Sullivan

20 Norman Clark, Jr.
Eli Robinson

21 Olive Robinson

22 Kathi Allen

23

24 Jim Martin

25 Tim Bivens
Rhoda Calloway

26 Fred Bachl
Cress Goodnight
Gracie Lineberry
Sara Jean Maness
Joshua Starnes

27 Roland Fowler
Wesley Ludwig

28 Wayne Cline

29 Corey Basinger

30 Jeff Insley
Mike Jordan
Susan Maxwell
Teague Rowland

31 Bruton Allen
Mike Fansler



FUMC FAMILY AND EXTENDED FAMILY TRANSITIONS

In Remembrance

Please keep these families in your prayers,

RONNIE THOMAS CLEMENT

Husband of Joy Clement

BETTY DAN NICHOLAS SPENCER

RUBY MATTHEWS

Mother of Jeff Matthews

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1

March 22, 1944 - December 9, 2020

January 28, 1936 - December 13, 2020

August 8, 1929 - December 15, 2020

In Celebration

We rejoice with these families celebrating new beginnings

EMERSON BELLE PAUL

Daughter of Alexandria & William Paul

Born August 12, 2020

Baptized December 22, 2020

THANK YOU NOTES TO THE CHURCH

To Our Wonderful Congregation,

We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous gifts to us this Christmas season! Your kindness knows no bounds and we hope you know how much each of you means to us! We are truly blessed to be "The Staff of FUMC"! We want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and many blessings in the coming year!!



Mark, Stacey, Josh, Jen, Bailee, Mike, Christine & Becca

DIRECTORY UPDATES

Please note the following changes in your directory:

Tonda & Danny Coutu

Tonda's cell phone - (704) 433-8620

Danny's cell phone - (704) 431-8620

SERVING AT ROWAN HELPING MINISTRIES

Delivering food from the Harvest Procession



Serve a Meal at Rowan Helping Ministries

Did you know that throughout 2020 our church has continued to send volunteers to Rowan Helping Ministries to provide meals for the guests in the shelter?

in 2021 We are committed to providing an evening meal the second Thursday of each month. We are also responsible for the breakfast on the morning after we serve the evening meal.

Taffy Jordan is the mission committee's liaison with Rowan Helping Ministries and will be happy to answer any questions if you would like to volunteer! Call Taffy at (704)633-4514.

ECCLESIA

NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

