

March 2025

First United Methodist Church of Murphy

P. O. Box 86 (73 Valley River Avenue)

Murphy, NC 28906

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Our **Mission** is to:

Live as a community transformed by God's grace, sent to love and serve like Jesus.

Our **Vision** is to:

Build communities of hope where all people experience belonging and abundant life.



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Dear Murphy First,

Dr. Ellen Davis, of Duke Divinity School, has suggested that the wilderness is the most common setting for Scripture. Think about it: how often are we in the wilderness in the Bible? There is Hagar, cast out from Abram and Sarai's tent. There is Moses, and his experience with God at the burning bush. Then the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. The prophets, like Elijah, are often in the wilderness. The Israelite's experience of exile in Babylon is a particularly excruciating wilderness experience—including being violently conquered, sent to exile, and returning home to a Jerusalem that is in ruin.

Then when we turn to the New Testament, one of our first experiences with Jesus is when the Spirit drives him into the wilderness where he is tempted for 40 days. This is the story we reflect on at the start of Lent every year. Jesus will return to the wilderness several times during his ministry in order to find solitude. Then there are the wilderness experiences of the apostles: Peter, Paul, and Phillip.

I think it IS fair to say the wilderness is the main setting of the Bible. That is even more true when we begin to think about the wilderness experiences of our soul. The wilderness is a place where we are vulnerable and disoriented. The old landmarks that used to guide us are long gone. Hardly anyone ever goes there willingly or on their own volition.

It is a place where the old answers no longer add up, where the well-ordered old world has come undone, and the things that used to make sense no longer do. Have you ever been there? Are you there now?

Wilderness experiences often come during seasons of suffering, loss, life transition, or crisis, including crisis of faith. My guess is most of us have been there, maybe more than once.

We typically think of Lent as a wilderness experience. We draw near to Jesus to apprentice ourselves to him and learn to depend on him. This Lent, our wilderness guides will be the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. They both know more than a thing or two about what it means to survive in the wilderness.

Join us on this journey. Shrove Tuesday is a big party before Lent begins (you can read about that in the newsletter). Then on Ash Wednesday you have 3 opportunities to mark the beginning of the journey: 12pm (Episcopal Church of the Messiah), then after-school (for kids and families, in our Sanctuary) and 6pm in our sanctuary.

If you've not been on the Bible Year journey with us, this is another good time to pick it up. We'll be starting in Isaiah on March 9, the first Sunday of Lent.

During Lent, I also encourage you to participate in the weekly Lenten services on Wednesdays at 12pm at St. William Catholic Church.

On the journey,

Pastor Wil



Don't forget to set your clocks ahead 1 hour before bed on Saturday, March 8th or you'll be late for church!



The Friends of the Harshaw Chapel

It has been a few years in the planning process, but we are getting close to starting the roof replacement on Harshaw Chapel. A shoutout and thanks goes to Tim Nicholson for his continued support and assistance with this project.

Working with a company called Architecture Unlimited (AU) in Matthews NC, AU has taken previous plans for Harshaw Chapel and combined them into one set of workable plans. Those plans have been given to Wolfgang Raffler of W's Allworks who will be our contractor. We have met with Wolfgang a

few times and have worked out details and are close to signing a contract for the work to begin. We have just a couple of questions to get answers to and we will be ready to start. If all goes well, Wolfgang will be ready to start mid to late spring and the project will take six months to complete.



California Fires Offering

On January 7, a wildfire in the Pacific Palisades area near Santa Monica spread uncontrollably, fueled by strong winds. The fire has engulfed many lives, homes, commercial buildings, schools, and churches, leaving devastation in its wake.

Tragically, two United Methodist Churches – Altadena UMC and Community Church of Pacific Palisades – within the Cal-Pac Conference under the leadership of Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank have been destroyed by the fire, and two pastors have lost their homes.

In the face of this terrifying disaster, we are reminded of our frailty as human beings and turn to God for help. As the psalmist declares, *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1)*, we pray that God will indeed be the refuge and strength for those who are suffering. With this in mind, we humbly request two things:

- **Please pray** for those who have lost their homes and loved ones, for healing for those who are experiencing fear, anxiety, and emotional wounds, for the affected churches and church members, and for those who have worked hard, including firefighters, law enforcement officers, public servants, and volunteers.
- **We will collect a special offering on March 16** and send it to the Smoky Mountain District to be added to offerings by other church in our District

Additionally, we are selling stainless steel **water bottles** for \$15/bottle. The proceeds from these sales will be added to the special offering. Order yours by contacting the church office.

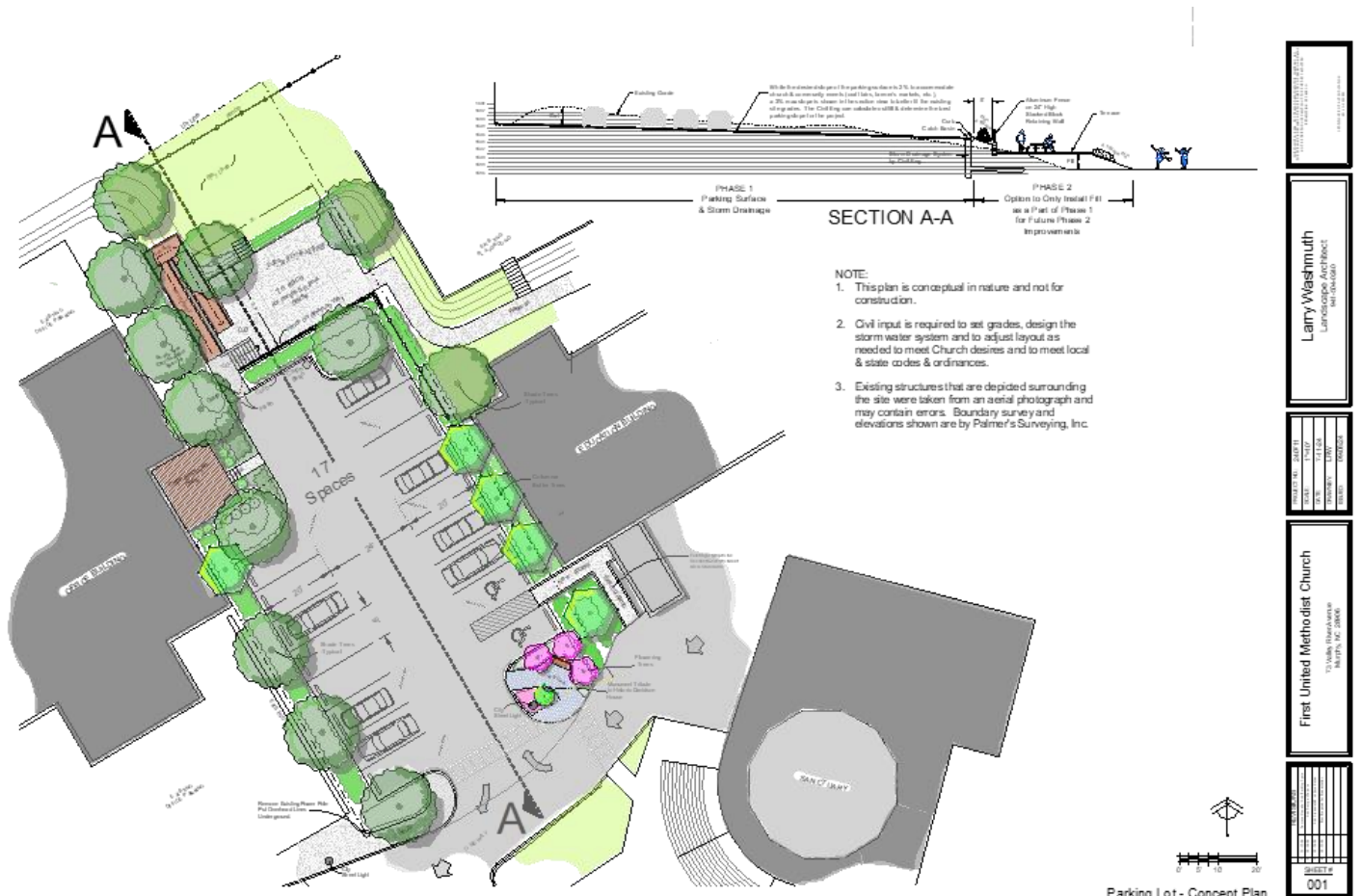


Parking Lot Update

At the January 27 Administrative Council meeting an ad hoc Parking Lot committee was created in order to pursue completing the parking lot construction within the budget of the approved \$120k loan and in accordance with the plan previously approved at Admin. Council and shared with the church. That plan is included below (for full size image reach out to church office). The Ad Hoc committee is Ricky Hill (former Trustee Chair), Vera Confer (Admin Council Chair), and Pastor Wil.

Details not shown in this rendering, but that will be worked out with engineer and contractors are the feasibility of an 18th spot and a new access ramp that is ADA compliant, and ensuring the van accessible spot meets recommended specifications.

We have submitted our loan application to the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina and are waiting to hear back from them.



Parking Lot - Concept Plan



The Children's Ministry Team is looking for volunteers who are willing to help in a variety of spaces. If you are interested in helping out in the Nursery, in Sunday School, or in Worship Readiness, please let Drew Ellis know. We would love to plug you in as part of our children's spiritual guides!

For those in Confirmation, this is the schedule of lessons:

March 2	Connect with Creation/The Call of Robert Sheffey
March 9	Connect with Church/The Calls of Paul and Timothy
March 16	Life in Christ
March 23	Know What You Believe
March 30	Confirmation Retreat



Ladies Lenten Walk, March 6, 2025

Ladies, begin your Lenten Journey on Thursday morning, **March 6** at the Riverwalk near the Pool/Wellness Center and ball fields at Konehete Park. We will walk a short distance and have a devotional. This is a reflective and personal time as you journey toward Easter. We'll gather around **9:30** near the Pickle ball courts. In the busyness of our everyday lives, take time to begin your Lenten journey in an intentional walk of reflection. Taking intentional time is an important part in making Lent more meaningful. As this season begins, let us gather to begin our Journey toward Easter. If you have questions or need more information, contact D'Anna Liber at 770-853-6814 or liber765@comcast.net



On Tuesday, February 18th, the Common Ground team sponsored a sing-a-long in our sanctuary that brought almost 70 people together to lift their voices with songs from the civil rights movement.



Children's Ministry Volunteer Opportunities

"Growing up my experience with the church was very positive (not all of my peers got to have this same experience). My love for God and trust in the church was shaped by my experience from those adults who shared their love with me in my small church. I was shaped by the volunteers and nursery workers who shared their love by being present, curious about my life and interests, and unconditionally kind and caring.

As I reflect on my experience, I find myself so very grateful for the staff and volunteers who are shaping my children's love for God and church. You are all pretty great and I can not thank you enough! I hope we remember how showing up for the children and being kind and caring can effect the type of relationship the children and the parents develop with Christ." - Lea Posey

With that said, our rotations as parents and volunteers for trying to be in all the places has been getting more difficult as children's ministries have grown over the last year. Adult classes are growing as well and parents are looking for time to participate in these and to grow in their own faith. So we sure could use some more volunteers to fill in, and we are working on our systems to help plug you in comfortably.

What does it look like?

- You pick your frequency: monthly, quarterly, twice a year, or you could simply be a "Sub" when someone calls out sick at the last minute - this happens!
- You pick your age group: comfortable with all ages - awesome! Scared of babies - that's ok, let's pair you with the bigger kids!
- What do you do? Support your lead teacher or staff member. Share the love of God that fills you up with the children by engaging with them, staying curious about their interests, helping with activities and stories as needed, and being kind and present.

Right now, we have 2 nursery workers each week - one for the 0-2 yr old room, and one for the 3-5 yr old room. Each of them needs a "helper" during Sunday school and church. As a helper, your responsibility is to simply be there to support the staff member and help play with and supervise the children.

We also have an elementary age class where our children have started Godly Play as their Sunday school curriculum in the hour before worship, and we offer a Worship Readiness Class during worship. Each of these times have volunteers who take the lead already, but we could use more volunteers as our support helpers.

Why do we need so many helpers? We follow Safe Sanctuary practices to protect our children, our staff and volunteers. This means that whenever we are working with children and youth, we have 3 adults present in each space. We offer multiple opportunities to receive our Safe Sanctuary training for all volunteers working with children so you can better understand the importance and learn our guidelines.

Here's why a few of our current volunteers choose to serve with the children:

"Spending time in the nursery with the youngest members of our church is my pleasure. I believe I have no greater calling than to share the love of God with children, and being able to be with them is an amazing gift." - Esther Manchester

"Volunteering in the nursery is a great way to bridge the gap between the children and the adults. It is important for them to feel comfortable with us as well as the parents being comfortable leaving their children in our care." - Terri Stroup

Thank you! Please reach out to Drew Ellis, our Family Ministries Director, for any questions or to sign up to help. I hope you'll join us in shaping the young disciples of our church family.

- Lea Posey



Bible in a Year Readings for March

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
02/23 Proverbs 19 - 20	02/24 Proverbs 21 - 22	02/25 Proverbs 23	02/26 Proverbs 24	02/27 Proverbs 25 - 26	02/28 Proverbs 27 - 29	03/01 Proverbs 30
03/02 Proverbs 31	03/03 Ecclesiastes 1 - 2	03/04 Ecclesiastes 3 - 5	03/05 Ecclesiastes 6 - 8	03/06 Ecclesiastes 9 - 12	03/07 Song of Solomon 1 - 4	03/08 Song of Solomon 5 - 8
03/09 Isaiah 1 - 4	03/10 Isaiah 5 - 7	03/11 Isaiah 8 - 11	03/12 Isaiah 12 - 16	03/13 Isaiah 17 - 23	03/14 Isaiah 24 - 27	03/15 Isaiah 28 - 31
03/16 Isaiah 32 - 35	03/17 Isaiah 36 - 39	03/18 Isaiah 40 - 44	03/19 Isaiah 45 - 48	03/20 Isaiah 49 - 52:12	03/21 Isaiah 52:13 - 55	03/22 Isaiah 56 - 59
03/23 Isaiah 60 - 66	03/24 Jeremiah 1 - 4	03/25 Jeremiah 5 - 8:17	03/26 Jeremiah 8:18 - 12	03/27 Jeremiah 13 - 16	03/28 Jeremiah 17 - 20	03/29 Jeremiah 21 - 24
03/30 Jeremiah 25 - 29	03/31 Jeremiah 30 - 33	04/01 Jeremiah 34 - 38	04/02 Jeremiah 39 - 45	04/03 Jeremiah 46 - 49	04/04 Jeremiah 50 - 52	04/05 Lamentations 1 - 2



All are invited for a fun pre-Lent event!

Come celebrate Shrove Tuesday (also known as Pancake Day or Mardi Gras) with us! No matter what you call it, the point is to have a giant party before the season of fasting begins!

Please bring a covered dish or something tasty for our potluck dinner. We will have themed crafts, food, fun, and games!

If you have a stroller or wagon, we will have materials for you to decorate them for a chance to be part of our Krewe of Kids Parade.

WILLING HANDS – COME JOIN US FOR SOME FUN!



United
Women
in Faith

Know that all women in our church family and also the community are invited to these meetings. Feel free to contact any member of our United Women in Faith group or call Karen Watson (828-361-9520) or Nancy Jo Willis (850-428-3636) with questions, comments, ideas, etc.

On Wednesday, March 19th, the Greeting Card Ministry will gather at **10:15 am** to make more lovely cards for our church family and friends. At **11am** we will meet for our regular monthly meeting, which will be very short so that most of our time can be spent enjoying our **WHITE ELEPHANT SALE**. You don't have to be a member of Willing Hands to join us for some fun! Anyone who is interested is invited to join us. This is how we raise funds to prepare our annual Easter baskets (for shut-ins, etc.).

You can call it a White Elephant Sale or an All Purpose Sale or a "Junk and Treasures" sale. Each participant will bring a gift (can be new, gently used, no longer wanted, something funky, something beautiful, useful, helpful, etc.). We bid on things we like, spend a little money for a great cause, and laugh a lot!

Remember: All ladies of the church are invited to attend any of our meetings or other events. Please consider joining us!



FINANCE UPDATE

On behalf of the Finance Committee, THANK YOU to everyone who returned an Estimate of Giving card! We're so grateful for the 51 cards we've had returned. That's a big help for us as we plan for ministry in the year ahead. If you haven't yet returned your EoG card, you still can, and we'd be grateful if you would.

We've stretched ourselves in the last few years and our budget has grown to reflect the growing ministries of our church. Our collective giving is a significant way we come together to support the ministries of our congregation. It takes all of us to be FUMC.

As we strive to be faithful stewards of your gifts to the church, we think it is important to let you know that we are behind where we need to be in our monthly offerings received compared to our expenses. The ministries of our church are based on needing \$35,000 each month. In January, we received \$23,519. We always strive to be wise in our spending, and will be looking for even more ways to save money.

We understand everyone is in different positions, and economic uncertainty doesn't make things easier. Which means we're all the more grateful for your generosity that makes ministry happen. Transparency is important to us, which is why detailed financial reports are always available upon request from the office. The attached chart of year-to-year comparisons gives a general sense of our overall picture.

YEAR END	GENERAL OPERATING REVENUE	TOTAL SPENT	YEAR END OPERATING FUND BALANCE*
2021	\$355,440	\$331,139	\$169,056
2022	\$316,816	\$356,655	\$142,760
2023	\$308,275	\$340,987	\$94,499
2024	\$329,636	\$408,395	\$51,365

*basically our regular checking account

FUNDRAISER

Preschool Depot Dance

Join us for a fun afternoon supporting
the Preschool Scholarship Fund



FUMC CHILDREN'S CENTER
MONTESSORI BASED PRESCHOOL

Sunday March 23rd 12-2pm

L&N Depot, Downtown Murphy

LUNCH, DANCING, AND LIVE MUSIC!

ticket information coming soon



Mission Team News

The work of the Mission Team continues in many ways. Donations of \$1000 are made yearly to REACH, the Ministerial Association, the Sharing Center, Hulbert-Johnson House, the Senior Center, and Hinton Center.

The ZOE group has graduated! The Mission Team is exploring the possibility of sponsoring a new group. Each group spends three years in the program. For anyone interested in more information about Zoe, please contact a member of the Mission Team.

Soul Table continues to serve our neighbors and provide good food, fellowship and a warm place to gather. Please join us to eat and meet our beautiful community.

The annual Service Sunday will be after Easter. The Mission Team will plan and announce the event. Some other churches from the community will join us in projects to help our town.

Did you know that over 50% of the population of our area is considered “elderly”? The Mission Team is looking for ways in which to support our citizens who fall into this demographic. In addition to Soul Table, the team is adding support for the Senior Center through activities designed to engage those who visit the center. Some activities will include art, music therapy, crochet, and greeting card design! If you have a skill or talent and would like to offer a class at the Senior Center, please contact Diane Barfield.



“Please Bring Me Some Friends On March 9th.”

This will be our first UWFaith – Willing Hands Teddy Bear Sunday and we are asking folks to get a new plush, soft, fuzzy Teddy Bear or some other sweet stuffed animal. We will place them all around the church on the 9th and ask Pastor Wil to bless them. They will then be given to the Sheriff’s Dept, Social Services, etc. to be given to children in need. Thanks!



Keep the following in your thoughts and prayers:

Ukraine and its people; John McCarley; Danny Lawrence; Dell Douglass; Maria Mcleod; Christian Sawyer; Banks Anderson; Mike Woods; Diane Barfield; Helen Martin; Karen Smith; Bud Penland; Student at MHS; Mary Ledford; Jordan Gregory and Family. UAFS Team; Paula Esposito; Debbie Cocalis; Pati and Erica Sims; Tony Teston; Sheila Snow; Daphne Blount; Justin & Meredith Hensley and Family; Bob Barker; Margaret Freel; Churks Garland; Caroline & Conner Bellwally; Students and Faculty from Tri County Early College .



Prayer Team: prayfumc@gmail.com.

In an effort to have room for all prayer requests we will rotate off the names every 3 weeks unless indicated, either by a notation on the blue prayer request card or by calling the church office.

828-837-2718 or email: admin@murphyfirstumc.org

Prayer Requests can be submitted on our Facebook page, YouTube live stream or by calling

Contacts

Pastor Wil Posey

pastor@murphyfirstumc.org

Drew Ellis—Director of Family Ministries

families@murphyfirstumc.org

Suzanne West—Director of Music

music@murphyfirstumc.org

Maggie Corrigan—Admin Asst

admin@murphyfirstumc.org

Jack Frahmann—Treasurer

treasurer@murphyfirstumc.org

Bridget Esterhuizen—Preschool Director

preschool@murphyfirstumc.org



Adult Sunday School meets at 10am in Fellowship Hall led by Wally Avett.

The Bible Year Classes meet at 10am in the Education Building and above the sanctuary.

The Nursery (Room 202) is available for children aged 0 yrs to Kindergarten from 9:45am-Noon.

Children's Sunday School meets in the Education Building at 10am.

Worship Readiness (Room 304) for children aged Kindergarten through 4th grade meets during worship following the Pastor's children's moment.

Children are welcome in worship and will then be released after Children's Time to return to their nursery or Children's Church. Older children (3rd grade+) should remain with their parents in worship.

march birthdays

03/01—Courtney Sumpter

03/02—Laura Smith; Jessica Stiles

03/04—Scott Freel

03/05—Totsie Gentile

03/06—Pastor Wil

03/08—Noland smith

03/09—Tony Teston

03/13—Chris Kelley

03/17—Joyner Edwards; Dalton Mallonee

03/18—Tori Hughes

03/19—Jakob Edwards

03/20—Rob Robertson

03/23—Bill Gill

03/24—Emma Stroup

03/25—Anne Hymen

03/26—Vera Confer

03/28—Ryan Kephart

03/31—Asia Mendoza; Ethan Palmer;
Charlene Smith

**Trustee on Call for March:
Ursula Lasky (732-684-9012)**

march anniversaries

03/20—Ron & Alice Lewis

03/25—Paige & Eric Brinke

03/30—Cobby & Diane Barfield

CREATION CARE TEAM

A Creation Care meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20th at 1:15pm following Soul Table. We will discuss a 2025 schedule of events. Please contact Sarah-June Ely-McCollum at 828-361-1330 with any questions.




The Wesley Foundation Ministry and the Wesley Band led us in worship on February 16th. What a blessing to be joined by these young people professing their faith!



The **Brasstown Five** joined us in worship on February 23rd and graced us with their music!



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
23 10am Sunday School Classes 10:55am Worship 11:15am Children's Church (K-2nd) 12pm Confirmation Class 4pm AA Dinner Mtg	24 8:30am Preschool 12pm Justice Team 12:30pm Chair Exercises	25 5pm VRR <i>Deadline for Newsletter Input</i>	26 8:30am Preschool 10am Worship Mtg 12:30pm Chair Exercises 1:30pm Bible Year Study 3:15pm Children's Choirs 4:30pm Wesley Ringers 5:30pm Choir	27 9:30am Mom's Morning 5:30pm Finance Committee 5:45pm Common Ground	28 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	01 9:30am Al Anon
02 10am Sunday School 10:55am Worship 12pm Confirmation Class 3pm Women's Spiritual Formation	03 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	04 SHROVE TUESDAY 5pm Pancake PotLuck Supper 5pm VRR	05 ASH WEDNESDAY 8:30am Preschool 10m Worship Mtg 12pm Ash Wed. @ Messiah 12:30pm Chair Exercises 1:30pm Bible Year Study 3:15pm Families & Children Ash Wed Service 5pm Choir 6pm Ash Wed. Service	06 9:30am Mom's Morning 9:30am Ladies' Lenten Walk 11:30am Soul Table	07 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	08 9:30am Al Anon 
09 10am Sunday School 10:55am Worship 11:15am Children's Church 12pm Confirmation Class	10 8:30am Preschool 12pm Justice Team 12:30pm Chair Exercises	11 5pm VRR 5:30pm Trustees	12 8:30am Preschool 10am Worship Mtg 12:30pm Chair Exercises 1:30pm Bible Year Study 3:15pm Children's Choirs 4:30pm Wesley Ringers 5:30pm Choir	13 9:30am Mom's Morning	14 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	15 9:30am Al Anon
16 10am Sunday School 10:55am Worship 11:15am Children's Church 12pm Confirmation Class 12pm Potluck Lunch	17 8:30am Preschool 11am Mission Team 12:30pm Chair Exercises 5:30pm Admin Council	18 5pm VRR	19 8:30am Preschool 10am Worship Mtg 10:15am Card Ministry 11am Willing Hands 12:30pm Chair Exercises 1:30pm Bible Year Study 3:15pm Children's Choirs 4:30pm Wesley Ringers 5:30pm Choir	20 9:30am Mom's Morning 11:30am-Soul Table 1:15pm Creation Care Team Mtg	21 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	22 9:30am Al Anon
23 10am Sunday School 10:55am Worship 11:15am Children's Church 12pm Preschool Fund-raiser 12pm Confirmation Class	24 8:30am Preschool 12pm Justice Team 12:30pm Chair Exercises 5pm SPPRC	25 5pm VRR <i>Deadline for Newsletter Input</i>	26 8:30am Preschool 10am Worship Mtg 12:30pm Chair Exercises 1:30pm Bible Year Study 3:15pm Children's Choirs 4:30pm Wesley Ringers 5:30pm Choir	27 9:30am Mom's Morning 5:30pm Finance Committee	28 8:30am Preschool 12:30pm Chair Exercises	29 9:30am Al Anon
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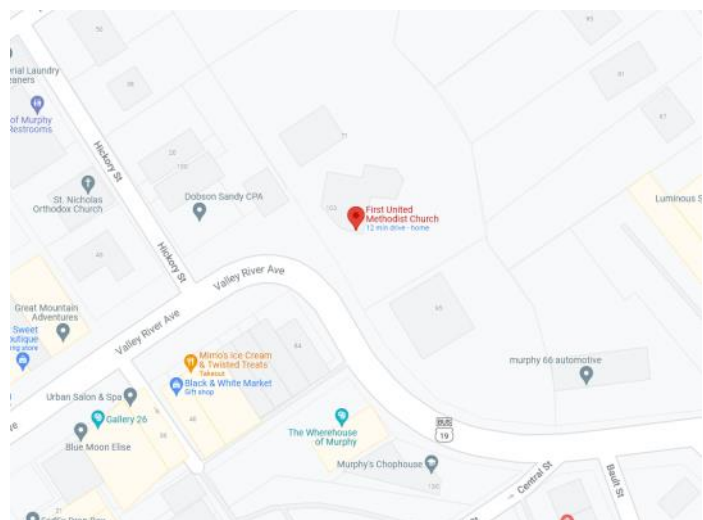
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OFFICE HOURS:

The church office is open Mondays thru Thursdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

If you wish to speak with a member of our church staff, please call the church office at 828-837-2718 and leave a message, or call the desired individual on their cell phone.

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