



# Life @1st Church

905 Glendale Avenue, South Charleston, WV 25303

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January 2021

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Memorial Gifts	2
Peace, Love & Books	2
Church Directory	3
Heart + Hand Bell Ringers	3
UMW Year In Review	4
January Prayer	5
UMM Year In Review	6-7
Community Garden	7
Graceful Generosity	8-9
January Celebrations	10

## Happy New Year!

Greetings First United Methodist family, my prayer and desire for the local body for the year 2021 is that God would bless you with *joy, strength, hope and excitement* to face another year.

As we say goodbye to 2020, we realize the losses we have grieved and the victories we have won. We have opened our eyes to the reality of the world's needs and pandemic; we joyfully acknowledge the absolutes of God's divine plan. In all the world's confusion, we have never lost faith, shrunk back, or remained stagnant. Throughout the year we have persevered with all diligence and steadfastness. You are God's children, a holy priesthood and warriors standing on the front lines of spiritual battles.

We never give up hope. We remain faithful because we trust in an everlasting God who is sovereign in all His ways. As we look towards the future, our hope is to unite the body of Christ regardless of denominations in Christ Jesus, to co-labor with all churches for the sake of the gospel and be willing to serve our community to the best of our ability.

Some of the ways we will achieve this is through Heart + Hand. We are working through our local school system providing for the needs of children and families, pastoral counseling, and whatever other means the community deems necessary.

I also met with our City Manager and Mayor and have communicated our desire to serve the community in whatever basic needs come up such as: Crisis situations, special events, spiritual guidance, assisting the elderly and whatever needs the city deems necessary. We will be involved in all opportunities as they become available in the South Charleston area.

I am geared up and ready to make 2021 the launch of a very busy year for First United Methodist Church. I will need all of your help so please be praying about your role in the 2021 year as we serve Christ together.

Again, I want to thank you for your grace and mercy in giving me the privilege and honor to serve as your pastor at First United Methodist Church.

Our journey continues,

Pastor Paul



## Memorial Gifts

**Frances Neff Memorial Fund:**  
Anonymous Gift

**Vicie Knowlton Memorial Fund:**  
George Russell

**First United Methodist** wishes to thank all who have honored our loved ones with a donation to our church Memorial Fund.

Memorial gifts are often given at the time of a person's death instead of flowers. It is a way to say that the person was important and will be missed. But memorial gifts do not always have to come at a person's death. Some people also like to make memorial gifts on the anniversary of someone's death or at other times in remembrance of someone close.

Some gifts can be given to honor someone who is still alive. It is a celebration of one's life at an anniversary, birthday, or just to say thanks.

Donations can be mailed to the church advising if the donation is in memory of a deceased person or in honor of someone.



United  
Methodist  
Women  
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

## Peace, Love and Books January 2021

From Andris Salter  
Operations Officer  
United Methodist Women

The Reading Program has always included books showcasing diverse characters and provoking critical thinking about many issues, including race and racism. We hope you'll read at least one of these books that center stories around Black experience and elevate our understanding of how to be anti-racist.

I am so pleased you will be participating in this program which, for the first time, will span two years instead of one. The purpose of the Reading Program is to better understand and participate in God's mission today, to increase sensitivity to all human beings, to explore contemporary issues, and to enhance and act on self-knowledge. Even when we're apart, we're together—and still working to deepen our understanding of the intersections of race, class, sex, religion and gender through books and discussion.

Find a list of books on the 2021 Reading Program at <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/readingprogram>



A new membership directory is planned for late January or early February. The directory will include names, addresses, home and/or cell phone numbers and email addresses.

In order to ensure an up-to-date directory, you need to notify the church office by Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup> of any changes to your address, phone numbers and emails. If you have a change and the church is not notified, current information will be listed (which may be old).

### THANKS TO THOSE WHO RANG BELLS FOR HEART + HAND 2020

A great big thank you “the Miracle of First Church” volunteer Bell Ringers. First Church Volunteers, Sue Hawkinberry, Joyce French, Paul & Kathy Helmick, George Russell, Dave Biondi, Paula Lepp, Bill & Linda Nehr, Danny & Jeanne Murphy, Reagan McLeary, Sharen Sumpter Deitz and youth, Sara Hampton, Emma Crouch, Ella Hamilton and Brock Massey.

Bell Ringers on Wednesday, December 2 collected \$352.20, on Friday, December 11, they collected \$458.82 and the youth rang bells on Thursday, December 10, and collected \$103.13. **Our volunteers received donations totaling \$914.15.**

Thank you to everyone who participated in this worthwhile ministry for Heart + Hand Outreach Ministries.

## A 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW – THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN OF FIRST CHURCH

Like everyone else, the 2020 COVID pandemic negatively impacted how the United Methodist Women of First Church were able to serve our church and our community. But, with ingenuity and determination, we were able to find ways to meet our goals. During the past three years, we have been able to conduct quarterly mission projects, and with the cooperation and assistance of our generous congregation, 2020 was no exception.

The first quarter was devoted to “Giving 100”. We were able to surpass our goal of 100 hours of community service (169 hours), give \$100 to the Shadow of His Wings Orphanage in Guatemala (nominated by Nancy Wolfe), and have more than 80% of our members pledge for 2020.

The second quarter focused on sharing food from our pantries for donation to Heart + Hand. Several drive-up and drop-off dates were done to facilitate our congregation’s participation and maintain social distancing.

The third quarter project was “climate justice” and recycling as many items as possible that had not been picked up by the SC Recycling Team. Several members donated empty medicine bottles to The Woman’s Club of SC for their recycling program.

August was devoted to buying and stuffing backpacks for kids starting back to school. In conjunction with the DIVAS Sunday School class, 63 backpacks were donated to Heart + Hand for distribution. Members also purchased underwear, socks and personal hygiene items for the Veterans Stand Down held at the Huntington VA.

October became “Soctober” as we collected adult and children’s socks for contribution to Heart + Hand. Thanks to our generous congregation, we were able to take them a huge box full, providing warm socks for those in need.

In December, the Mary Jane VanCamp Circle donated toys to Heart + Hand for distribution and made a gift item to be included in each Christmas basket. They made gift bags for two of our church shut-ins, baked homemade goodies for our church mission team in recognition of their work in keeping us connected via streaming Sunday church services, and Dawn Wells completed her Mission U Challenge by donating \$82.00 to Tyrand Cooperative Ministries.

The Anna King Circle “adopted” a family through Heart + Hand and bought toys, clothes, pajamas, boots and coats for two little boys, plus a stocking for each with candy and little goodies. Gifts were also purchased for the Mom.

UMW donated \$500 for help purchase the hams for the Christmas baskets and \$500 to Heart + Hand to supplement their Toy Fund Drive.

All in all, not a bad record for a difficult year. We thank every member of UMW and every member of the congregation for their generosity.

Happy New Year!  
Jeri Whitten, President

# January Prayer by David Biondi

Almighty and most gracious God, we give you our heartfelt thanks that you loved the world so much that you came to us in the person of your Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. By his birth, you have given us hope for our world and for all of life. And so we pray that, as we embark upon the new year of 2021, you will continue to guide and direct us, abiding with us in all times, places and circumstances.

We give thanks for the roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine and pray that it will be effective in enabling people to be set free from this dreaded disease. Even so, we realize that there are still many dangers associated with covid -- that we are not out of the woods yet when it comes to the pandemic. And so we pray that you will keep us diligent in doing what is necessary so as to avert the spread of the virus.

We pray for all who are sick and infirmed, and especially for those afflicted with covid, that you will touch them with your healing mercies -- and we pray for comfort and solace for those who have lost loved ones in recent days.

We pray for the frontline workers providing treatment for those who are hospitalized -- for the exhausted doctors, nurses, orderlies and the many other hospital workers whom we don't always think about (like the cleaning crews, the laundry and food service personnel, and so on).

We pray for comfort for the lonely, sustenance for the poor and the hungry, deliverance for those who have been evicted from their residences, and a spirit of increased generosity for those who are fortunate enough to have more.

We pray for patience and fortitude for those caring for children who must stay home from school due to safety concerns. We also pray for the children themselves so that they will not fall behind in their learning as a result of the pandemic.

We pray for wisdom and compassion for our leaders as well as for each of us so that, in the days ahead, we will do everything that we can to share your love, goodness, grace, encouragement and support with all whom we encounter.

All these things, O God, we pray in your most holy and blessed name. Amen.

## **Every First Church man is automatically a member of the United Methodist Men**

Every man at First Church is automatically a member of the United Methodist Men, whether active or not. We urge you to become active by supporting an existing activity or helping us create an activity that you are passionate about.

Monthly meetings in Wesley Hall were replaced by meetings via the internet during 2020. Our outreach to the community continued. Here are some highlights:

— In January we invited everyone who has ever been to the Holy Land to come to our meeting and share their experiences.

— On Feb. 9 the UMM presented a commemorative patch to each Scout, Cub and adult leader who attended Scout Sunday. In addition, we continued to sponsor Boy Scout Troop 195 and Cub Scout Troop 195 by paying their annual charter fees.

— On Feb. 21 the men sponsored the Pancake Shrove Community Dinner.

— On March 4 the men sponsored and organized a “Mac & Cheese Challenge” for the W.O.W. (Way Out Wednesday) kids.

— On May 8 the UMM sponsored a picnic for the South Charleston Public Works Department. Hot dogs, hamburgers, baked beans and potato salad were enjoyed by approximately 100 employees.

— The UMM began meeting online, via Zoom, in June. On June 27 Pastor Paul and the UMM distributed 11 free meals to our King Street neighbors and 54 meals to the residents of the YWCA Sojourner’s Shelter for Homeless Women & Families in Charleston’s East End.

— On July 11 the UMM assisted with the furniture ministry organized by First Presbyterian Church and Heart+Hand.

— In July we made a donation to a local veterans group.

— On August 10 we contributed \$250 to Heart+Hand for the United Methodist Women’s backpack project.

— On Sept. 11, Sept. 14 and Sept. 15, First Church men and others from across the Midland South District, along with Rebuilding Together, gathered in Buffalo, W.Va., to construct a ramp that improves access to the Buffalo United Methodist Church’s food pantry.

— On Sept. 12 several First Church men attended the West Virginia UMM's Annual Gathering via Zoom. First Church and First Church Administrative Assistant Linda Nehr were awarded Certificates of Appreciation for their support throughout the year. Also, First Church was one of four churches to receive the 2020 Palmer Award, an honor bestowed on the church or churches with the most Annual Gathering attendees. During the gathering, George Hohmann was re-elected president and Ed Altizer was re-elected secretary of the state men.

— On Sept. 14 First Church and the UMM presented a letter of appreciation and a book with 365 devotions titled “Strength for Service” to representatives of South Charleston’s first responders. The letters and books were distributed to all 93 of the city’s police officers and firefighters, the city’s humane officer, Mayor Frank Mullens and City Manager Rick Atkinson.

**Continued on page 7**

## UMM Continued from page 6

—The First Church men kicked off the establishment of a partnership with Montrose Elementary School by providing a pizza lunch to the school’s faculty and staff on Oct. 15.

—Also during October, Men’s President Mike Warwick contacted the folks who are organizing a women’s shelter at the former Rock Lake Pool property. The men have offered to assist with the project.

—In November, following up on the men’s partnership with Montrose Elementary School, the men provided clothing for a student who was in need because of a house fire.

—In December, the men traditionally provide two cans of fruit for each of the 60 Heart+Hand Christmas food baskets. Because of the increased need in 2020, the men provided 120 cans of soup in addition to the fruit.

Also in December, officers were re-elected: Mike Warwick, president; George Hohmann, vice president; Jerry Gieseke, treasurer; and Ed Altizer, secretary.

If you would like to attend the men’s Jan. 2 meeting via zoom, e-mail Hohmann at [g.hohmann48@gmail.com](mailto:g.hohmann48@gmail.com) or call him at 304 419-1916.

To support the men’s ministries, send your check, made out to First UMC South Charleston, to: 905 Glendale Ave., South Charleston, WV 25303. Write “men’s ministries” on the memo line.

### FUMC 2021 Church Directory

The Church Office is in the process of preparing a new church directory to be mailed in January. Please make Linda aware of any changes to your address, home phone, cell phone or e-mail address so we may publish a correct directory.

### Gardeners urged to sign up for plots, plan to attend organizing meeting

Gardeners are urged to sign up for plots for the 2021 growing season and mark their calendars to attend a Community Garden organizing meeting via Zoom on Sunday, Feb. 21, at 12:30 p.m.

To sign up for a plot and to receive an invitation to the Zoom meeting, e-mail George Hohmann at [g.hohmann48@gmail.com](mailto:g.hohmann48@gmail.com) or call him at 304 419-1916.

### Prayer Request Guidelines

New guidelines for prayer requests: Any prayer requests that are to be mentioned during the upcoming online Sunday service must be sent to [1stumcsc@gmail.com](mailto:1stumcsc@gmail.com) by Wednesday evening. Prayer requests made after Wednesday will be read the following week. Additional prayer requests can be sent to [1stumcsc@gmail.com](mailto:1stumcsc@gmail.com) at any time. Also, all prayer requests will be read for two weeks unless we are notified otherwise.

# Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

## Where is Your Heart?

Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21). Your treasure is the thing that is most important to you. Maybe it's your job, investments, a new house, or a new car, your spouse or children. Regardless of your particular passion, your treasure is what you think about, what you go after, what you want to attain. It's where your heart is.

As Christian stewards, God wants us to treasure him and hold our time, talents, and treasure with open hands. If you are unwilling to part with earthly goods your treasure isn't God. When God is your treasure, he will receive from you a generous amount of all that you possess.

## Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify the parable in which birds have a part?

If you said the Parable of the Sower, you were right. In the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:5-15), Jesus describes four different conditions of the soil, which represent conditions of the heart.

*"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up"* (Verse 5).

The birds represent Satan who comes and takes away the Word from our hearts. Continuing the parable, Jesus said,



*Some [seed] fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown"* (Verses 6-8).

Two other types of hardened hearts are represented in this parable. There is the shallow heart that doesn't allow God's Word to take root and the other heart that is choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. However, there is also good soil which represents a good heart, which hears the Word, retains it, remains faithful, and bears fruit.

## Jesus Accepts and Perfects Our Gifts

As sinful people, we are incapable of giving God what he deserves from us. However, we can be confident that our gifts are acceptable to God through Jesus. To illustrate this point, there is a story about a wood-carver who early in his life was a renowned carver. He passed on his craft to his son. Later in his life, the old man's eyes began to dim, and his hands began to tremble. He could no longer carve the perfect figures of his youth. He would mar the figure, and imperfections blighted his work. His fading eyes could no longer see the flaws.



*Continued on page 9*



Continued from page 8

During the night, as the father was sleeping, the son would sneak down and correct his father's flaws in the newly carved wood. When the figures passed through the hands of the son, they were made perfect again.

In the same way, we may bring our imperfect gifts with the confidence that, as they pass through the hands of Jesus, they will all be placed before the Father in absolute perfection.

### Developing an Unselfish Character

Scripture says, *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world"* (Romans 12:2). The pattern of this world is to acquire and to hold on to material acquisitions. Romans 12:2 continues, *"but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* This transformation is brought about in you, the believer, through your relationship with the Holy Spirit, who, through Word and Sacrament, renews your mind so that, instead of following the pattern of the world, you seek to follow your Savior. Like Jesus who emptied himself of equality with God (Phil. 2:6), let us empty ourselves of the desire to acquire and hoard. This way of life leads only to misery, not self fulfillment. Like Jesus, let us give freely, even sacrificially.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 exhorts, *"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*

Life that is truly life belongs to those who are unselfish givers. Giving is an indicator of your unselfishness and an outward litmus test of the inner condition of your heart.

The astonishing thing is that, in God's economy, the more you give, the more you have left to give. Because God replenishes you, your giving can be a daily and a lifetime activity. *"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God"* (2 Corinthians 9:11).

A little girl exclaimed, "Poor Jesus!" when her mother told her that she had to give only one dime of her ten-dime allowance. May you acquire the same unselfish attitude as the little girl when you come to the Lord with your offering.



## Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!

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### Kroger Rewards

If you have a customer account with Kroger, have you named First Church to receive your "Community Rewards" points? After you sign in to your account, you can go to "My Account" then to "community rewards" and see if you are signed up and who gets your rewards. The church is organization JK383-First UMC of South Charleston, WV. If you have previously signed up, please check to make sure it is still current. They contribute 5 cents of every dollar you spend with them. That can be a big help for our church!

# January Celebrations

## Birthdays

03 Dawn Wells	21 Alex Russell
06 Doris Smith, Reagan McLeary	22 Danny Murphy
07 David Biondi, Hunter Withrow	23 Bob Judge
09 Carolyn Smith	25 Carrie Hamilton
11 Bennie Warden	26 Lorrie Mottesheard
12 Art Altman, Debra Wilson	28 Hazel Childress, Rose Christian
13 Robert Matheny	30 Mary Kirkhart

Do you have an event you want to advertise on our church website, [southcharlestonfirstumc.org](http://southcharlestonfirstumc.org)? Send your information and a picture, drawing, cartoon, etc. to Barbara Brown at [cbpnuts@aol.com](mailto:cbpnuts@aol.com). We can post information on the Home page and Event page. Just let us know what you would like to highlight and we will make it happen.

## Church Website: [southcharlestonfirstumc.org](http://southcharlestonfirstumc.org)

Did you miss an online service? Want to see the service again or share with family and friends? Visit: <https://www.youtube.com> and enter FUMC South Charleston into the search bar to locate the recorded sermons. We have over 22 recorded sermons to view.

Know someone who would like to follow our service, but doesn't have Facebook or internet service? Try our Sermon by phone option. Sermons are uploaded and available all week at anytime. **Call 1-304-223-3080** to hear our latest sermon.

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