

The Church Tower
First United Methodist Church
February 2024



*Strengthening and sharing our Christian
faith through fellowship and service.*



Notes from the Pastor

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God:


Grant us the desire to do only what pleases you, and the strength to do only what you command. Cleanse our souls, enlighten our minds, and inflame our hearts with your Holy Spirit, that we may follow in the footsteps of your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

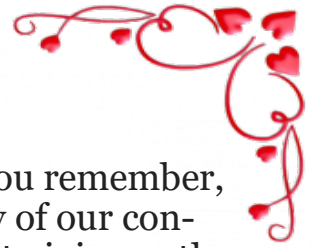
~ St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

I was recently asked why we pray for the renewal of Christ's Church every time we worship. The short answer – because as followers of Christ we want the Church to be what Jesus wants it to be, not a Church in our own image, but in His.

With God's help we will discern the path of Jesus, with God's help we will follow in the ways God directs, and with God's help the Church will be renewed, reshaped, and re-created in the image of Jesus and His love. We pray to understand God's will.

Times have changed - I know you've noticed. One of the questions most often on my heart is: *how do I / we follow Jesus in a time when most people don't think God and Church are relevant?*





Our church is in the process of learning just this! As you remember, our church-wide survey results found that the majority of our congregation is willing to faithfully change and/or willing to join another congregation for the sake of Christ's mission to make disciples. What these changes will be has not yet been determined, but 2024 is off to a great start – both our January leadership team meeting and our recent family meeting went very well! You will find the minutes from both meetings below. If you have questions, or suggestions about our future, please share them with me or church council.

Every Blessing!

Lizbeth

Psalm 46

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,
³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*



Family Meeting

Jan 20, 2024



- Meeting opened at 10:03 AM with prayer.
- Reviewed the statements of how we will treat each other while in discussion.
- Reminded everyone that our survey results showed a majority of respondents said they are willing to make changes for our church's viability.
- Reminded everyone that making disciples of Jesus is our ultimate goal.
- Today's goal: everyone to provide at least one idea on how we as a church can make a positive change that will revitalize our congregation.

These ideas are not in the order presented. Similar ideas have been combined.

- **Ideas that are more conceptual rather than specific**
 - Determine who realistically might join our church and consider what they might be looking for in a church. Then, design programs to meet that need. Options include:
 - Families with kids. But is church "just one more thing" on their already over-tasked weekend schedule?
 - Older adults who might live alone or are empty-nesters.
 - We have a huge, aging facility. Does our continued financial investment in upkeep make sense or should we consider a change (in facility)?
 - Need to focus on solving the financial problem first, rather than the "people" problem.
 - Can't ignore the people / outreach goals but if we don't solve our financial problems, in a few short years we won't be here to solve our "people" problem.
 - We need more social interaction within our own congregation; many groups don't connect with others and the sense of church family is not as strong as it could be.
 - We need more social interaction with local groups outside of our church.
 - They may belong to a church that is facing similar challenges.
 - Realize that many local vendors are praying for our church. Don't be afraid to mingle with them and talk about what our church has to offer.
 - We must realize that all ideas will require a coordinator and most likely other assistance.
- **Ideas that are specific and will probably have little or no financial cost.**
 - Diversify our music.
 - Include more from the Faith We Sing hymnal.
 - Include music that is livelier and more upbeat.
 - Don't ignore the traditional hymns that we already know.
 - Add more recently produced Christian music.



- Open our facility (free or rent) to outside groups (vetted by the Trustees.)
 - Boy / Girl Scouts
 - After-school programs
 - Small local groups, i.e., painters, crafters.
- Make a personal connection with our community.
 - Participate in non-church community events, and let people know who you are and that you are from our church.
 - Invite one or two people to a Sunday service.
 - Learn who has moved into our area and invite them to church.
 - Create a family / volunteer experience that provides something for people to take back with them to their community.
 - Increase attendance at funerals held in our church facility to show support for the families.
 - Contact local universities and ask if they have music groups who would like to perform in our church building, or if appropriate – at a service.
- Build a mutual relationship with other local UMC churches.
 - Ask another church to join us one Sunday, and we join them on another Sunday.
 - Inquire at UMC in Yorktown, Nancy Yarborough's church (Christ UMC).
 - One church may eventually decide it would be beneficial to formally join the other church (merge.)
 - *Editor's note: this would involve much discussion at the District and Conference level.*
- Hold more combined church services / events with the other Hilton churches.
 - Lenton services, Thanksgiving service, sunrise services, One City Marathon service, etc.
- Increase congregational involvement on Sunday by having activities right after church, such as putting kits together, making sandwiches, soup, etc.
- **Ideas that are specific and may have a financial cost.**
 - Create another service in addition to our regular traditional service.
 - Day and time other than Sunday morning
 - Contemporary in nature
 - Use PowerPoint and projection (screens) instead of bulletins.
 - Shorter in duration, i.e. 30 minutes
 - In conjunction with an informal fellowship, i.e. pot luck meal
 - Create a Spanish language service.
 - Be willing to learn a little Spanish yourself.
 - Advertise what we offer (and our upcoming events).
 - Develop a robust children's & youth program so that parents see we have something to offer them if they come.
 - Simplify the nursery sound system so that anyone can make it work.

Family Meeting Notes Continued...

- Host community events
 - Guest speakers
 - Increase racial diversity – Hispanic, African-American, etc.
 - Local civic leaders, i.e. mayor
 - Genealogy classes
 - Dance classes
 - Health and Fitness classes
 - Parents Night Out on New Year's Eve
 - Crafting sessions
- Other business
 - Virginia Annual Conference has asked if we could provide our facility for childcare during the June Annual Conference.
 - The Conference provides everything; we just provide the space.
 - General opinion was very favorable.
 - Discussed the issue of finding the Preschool door unlocked one morning this past week.
 - General reminder to always check any door you leave to ensure it is closed and locked.
 - Doug Foltz will be contacting Coffee (locksmith) to see about changing the type of lock at the Preschool door.
- Meeting ended at 11:05 AM



**First United Methodist Church Newport News
Church Leadership Meeting
January 15, 2024**



Members Present: Elizabeth Lutz, Pastor , Doug Lutz, Jerry Dodson, Martha Dodson, David Dellinger, Ken Coleman, Lisa Coleman, Jane Waters, James Michener, Teresa Michener, Jane Preston, Dianne Howard , Dianne Harwood, Phil Rehrig, Lori Nosil , and Cathy Nicholson.

Meeting began with Elizabeth presiding and leading a prayer at promptly 7:00PM.

Discussion followed to form rules of conduct for the meetings and developing a prayer for the group and the congregation to pray daily. We have possibly 3 years of finances to continue our present ways of life in our current church. As a group, this committee will discuss options for how to move forward in the next three years. Paragraph 213 in the Discipline will be deciphered, possibly changing our current situation while we have some say before the district will inform us.

Elizabeth announced her retirement in June 2025 with the hopes that a new Minister will lead us forward.

Discussion followed with ideas how to appeal to the community to serve it better, as well as issues facing young families that do not attend church.

Guidelines for the meetings:

Be Kind, respect others' opinions, don't make it personal, express your opinion, be honest, be open minded, Be Christian like, don't expect to get your way, Don't give up on your ideas, ask questions, and encourage different ideas.

Continued...

Suggestions for a daily prayer for discernment and direction for our church and the group included: Serenity prayer and another prayer presented. Each person was asked to compose a possible prayer and present at the family meeting on Saturday February 20th. We need action to follow from our prayers (to move our feet).

Discussion followed of our community Demographics: the consensus : people are too busy with other activities, do not consider church necessary, sports activities consume free time.

Discussed virtual Facebook on- line church and how parishioners/ viewers can contribute with online banking. We would need to look in to enabling online banking deposits to our present finance system.

Next planned meeting: February 12th at 7:00PM
Meeting Closed with prayer at 8:15PM.

Signed,

Cathy Nicholson, Recording secretary for the Council



First Church's Homebound Members



Joanne Bates
5 Pin Oak Road
Newport News, VA 23601

Mary Lou Carter
4 Susannah Drive
Apt. 203
Durham, NC 27705

Evelyn Creasy
107 James River Drive
Newport News, VA 23601

Anna Gibson
14301 Brandermill Woods Trail
Apt. A-307
Midlothian, VA 23112

Richard & Mallory Joyce
1103 Sam Lions Trail
Martinsville, VA 24112

Phyllis Kirts
440 McLaws Circle, Rm 131
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Edith Layman
Edgewood Park at Newtown
5501 Discover Park Blvd
Apt. 1215
Williamsburg, VA 23185

John & Peggy Pierce
23 White Oak Drive
Newport News, VA 23601

Lynda Rainey
The Devonshire
2220 Executive Drive
Apt. 169
Hampton, VA 23666

Agnes Rodgers
22 Milford Road
Newport News, VA 23601

Norman Shields
113 Battle Road, Apt. 105
Yorktown, VA 23692

Sally Walker
1327 William Styron Square South
Newport News, VA 23606

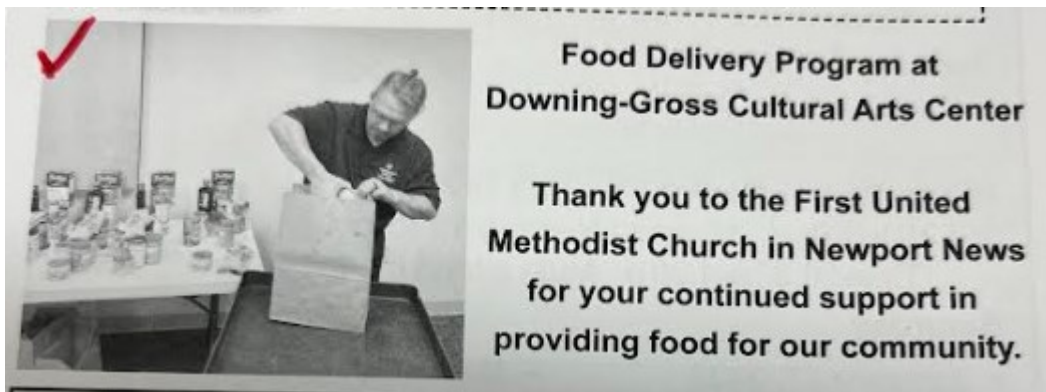
Billie Way
Golden Living
Bayside of Poquoson
1 Vantage Drive
Poquoson, VA 23662

Missions

Each February, First Church shows our support for several agencies in our community. Again this year, we will be recognizing the staffs at The Newport/Huntington and Palmer Elementary. We are asking the church members to bring packaged small items i.e. nabs, chips, cookies, candy, etc. for the fire department and police departments that we also recognize. For questions call the Dodson's. **Items are due by February 11. A tub will be in the Narthex marked with Fire and Police.**



First United Methodist Church makes 30 bagged lunches for the Newport News Parks and Rec program monthly and was thanked for their support in the Active Lifestyles Jan-April 2024 edition for Newport News Parks and Recreation program. You are making a difference!





February Birthdays

2/01 Mary Barker

2/21 John Talbert

2/07 Mike Webster

2/21 Bud Vincent

2/08 Susan Foltz

2/24 Cindy Marsteller

2/10 Kathy Hubbard

2/27 Polly Clodfelter

2/10 Lindsey Cook

2/28 Charlotte James

2/18 David Howard



2/19 David & Linda Dellinger

2/26 Gene & Brenda Garriss



Gifts to the FUMC Foundation given to the Glory of God by:

Martha & Jerry Dodson in honor of Cindy & Jim Bush

Lisa & Ken Coleman, Jr.

Bill Jones in memory of Bette Jones

Sally Walker in memory of Bob Walker

Jean Filetti

Linda & David Dellinger

Jonathan Smith in honor of the United Methodist Men

Mahla Swinford

Miriam Sandstrom

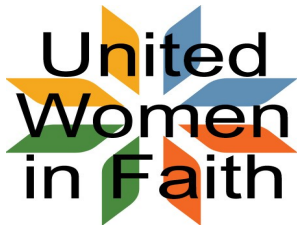
Mallory & Richard Joyce

Betty & Glenn Miller in honor of Martha & Jerry Dodson

Florence Kingston

Thank you for all the generous gifts to the Capital Fund and Friends Campaign. Your love and support means so much to others.





UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH REPORT - FEBRUARY, 2024

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Galatians 6:9

The activities of the United Women of Faith are beginning 2024 with a bang! We have a group that knits, crochets, and weaves scarves, shawls, and hats for those in need. These items can be given to anyone you chose, whether it be for someone who has lost a loved one, someone who is sick, for someone who just some help to keep warm. Recently we delivered 31 hats and scarves and 4 shawls. If you would like to be a part of this outreach, you are more than welcome to join us. We will meet January 26, at 1:00, in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome even if you don't know how to crochet, knit, or weave - we will be happy to teach you!

The United Methodist Day at the General Assembly in Richmond is scheduled for Thursday, February 1. If you are interested in attending, you may register at: <https://vaumc.org/umday/>. This is a time to have your voice heard.

CIRCLE YOUR CALENDAR! Breakfast will be served on Tuesday, February 20, at 10:30 in the fellowship Hall. After a delicious meal, you will hear about what is going on at The Wesley Center. Join us for fun, fellowship, and food!

We would love for you to join one of our circles. We meet during the day as well as one that accommodates those who work. If you are interested, please call Jeanette Leslie, 757-753-5039.


"I put this year into your hands, O God. Only you know what lies ahead - the challenges, the joys and sorrows. I give you the 'blank page' of this year of my life." Amen

*Jeanette Leslie
Leadership Team Member*



February 2024

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Preschool Closed—February 16—20 for Winter Break Office Closed—Monday, February 19 for President’s Day Ash Wednesday—February 14 Lent Begins				1	2	3
4 Sun. School 9 am Worship 10 am Choir 11 am Handbell 11:45 am	5 Bible Study— 10:30 am Staff Mtg—11 am	6	7 UWIF Board Mtg—1 pm Bible Study— 6 pm	8 Chapel—10am	9	10 Tidewater Paint- ers—9am Choir Practice— 12 pm
11 Sun. School 9 am Worship 10 am Choir 11 am Handbell 11:45 am	12 Bible Study 10:30 am Church Leader- ship Mtg—7 pm	13 Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner 5 pm	❤️14✝️ Chapel—10am Ash Wed. Service—7 pm	15 Soup Kitchen— 7:30 am	16	17 Men's Breakfast 8 am
18 Sun. School 9 am Worship 10 am Choir 11 am Handbell 11:45 am	19 President’s Day Bible Study— 10:30 am	20 UWIF General Mtg—10:30 am	21 Chapel—10am Bible Study— 6 pm	22 Social Hall being used by Healthy Families— 11:30-4pm	23 Knit one/ Pray Too— 1 pm	24
25 Sun. School 9 am Worship 10 am Choir 11 am Handbell 11:45 am	26 Bible Study— 10:30 am Book Club— 7 pm	27	28 Chapel—10am Bible Study— 6 pm	29		



Shrove Tuesday / Pancake Tuesday

Tuesday, February 13

5 pm

Pancake Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday observed in many Christian countries through participating in confession and absolution, the ritual burning of the previous year's Holy Week palms, finalizing one's Lenten sacrifice, as well as eating pancakes and other sweets. **Join us for a Pancake Dinner here at the church on Tuesday, February 13 at 5pm.**



Ash Wednesday
— Lent Begins

Ash Wednesday Service

February 14

7 pm



First United Methodist Church

Worship with our Family on Sunday mornings!

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Church Staff

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Lutz, ***Pastor***

Kim Webster, ***Pre-School Director***

Kevin Wilson, ***Business Administrator***

John T. Allsbrook, ***Director of Music Ministries***

Vanessa Sargent, ***Administrative Assistant***

Rick Clifton, ***Custodian***



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Pastor Elizabeth: pastor@firstumcnewportnews.com

Pastor's phone: Mobile: (757) 335-2649 Home (757) 595-5630

Church Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:30 am—2:30 pm