



- STAYING CONNECTED -

United Methodist Church
Marion, Virginia

March 2026

Sunday Mornings at First UMC

- 9:15 am Join us for coffee & doughnuts
- 9:45 am **Sunday WORSHIP**
- 11:00 am First Kids Sunday School
- 11:00 am First Youth Sunday School
- 11:00 am Seekers Sunday School
- 11:00 am The Discovery Group

WEEKLY

Tuesday

- 7:15 am First Youth Breakfast Club
returning March 10

Wednesday

- 8:30 am Prayer Breakfast @ Pioneer Rest.
- 3:00 pm First Kids After School Fun
- 6:00 pm The Table *returning March 18*
- 5:45 pm W³ - First Youth
- 6:00 pm First Handbells
- 7:00 pm First Choir

Thursday

- 11:30 am Food & Fellowship
 - 3-5 Seekers
 - 3-12 Faith Circle
 - 3-19 Royal Oak Presbyterian
 - 3-26 Marion Baptist
- 7:00 pm Praise Band

March Ministry Events & Activities

- Board of Trustees Meeting
Monday, March 2 at 5:00pm
- First Monday Prayer
March 2 at 10:00am & 7:00pm
- Red Cross Blood Drive
Friday, March 13 at 1:00pm
- District Cookbook Submissions Deadline
Sunday, March 15
- Food Pantry pack day
Wed, March 18 at 10:00am
- Finance Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 19 at 6:30pm
- Administrative Board Meeting
Sun, March 22 at 6:00pm
- Food Pantry Distribution
Tues, March 24 at 1:00pm
- Palm Sunday - March 29
Worship at 9:45am
(no Sunday School)
Fellowship Potluck at 11:15am

United Women of Faith

- Sarah Circle - Tues, March 3 at 7:00pm
- Faith Circle - Wed, March 4 at 10:00 am
- Deborah Circle - Thurs, March 5 at 7:00pm
- Grace Circle - Tues, March 10 at 5:00pm

Rise Up: Creating Space for God to Move

Our first *Rise Up* worship night exceeded every expectation.

From the very first song, there was a tangible sense of God's presence in the room — a holy stillness, a deep engagement, and a shared hunger for more of Him. What unfolded was not just a service, but a sacred space for worship, prayer, and encounter. Many left encouraged, renewed, and deeply moved.

One attendee shared:

"The Rise Up service was so incredibly moving and powerful. It touched my heart, and I cannot wait for the next one. When I asked Weston if he enjoyed it he said 'absolutely!'"

— Amy Spiker

Another reflected:

"I was raised on praise and worship music all the way back to the 90s when it was DC Talk and Third Day. It has always been the music that makes me feel the most up close and personal with God. I was so happy to have the opportunity to attend the Rise Up worship service. It was so beautiful and I cannot think of a better way to get centered and ready for the upcoming week than to spend it in worship and praise.

Getting to share it with Sophia, and watching her sing along, made it even more special. We are excited for the next one!"

— Stephanie Counts

These words capture exactly what Rise Up is about: **creating intentional space for worship and prayer, where people of all ages can encounter God, respond to His presence, and simply dwell with Him.**

We are excited to continue this journey with our next Rise Up worship night on **Saturday, April 12**. Coming right on the heels of Easter, this gathering will lean into themes of **resurrection, intimacy, and God's living presence among us**. Rather than rushing through a program, our goal is to slow down, linger, and make room for God to work — through worship, scripture, prayer, and moments of quiet reflection.

Rise Up is designed to be more than an event. It's becoming a rhythm in the life of our church — a quarterly space where we step away from distractions, lift our eyes, and seek God together.

Whether you joined us for the first one or are considering coming for the first time, we invite you to be part of what God is doing. Come expecting. Come hungry. Come ready to encounter the living God.

Holy Week 2026

Palm Sunday March 29

- 9:45am Worship
- 11:15am Church Family Potluck

Good Friday April 3

Come between 12:00-2:00pm
self guided reflection on the death of Jesus

Maundy Thursday April 2

- 6:00pm Communion & Worship

Easter Sunday April 5

- 9:15am Worship
- 11:15am Easter Egg Hunt



Claiming What Matters This Lent

Pastor James

When many of us think about Lent, we think about giving something up. We give up sweets, social media, or a daily habit as a way to focus more intentionally on God and to remember the sacrifice of God in offering Jesus for our sins.

Such a practice can be meaningful, but Lent is not only about what we surrender. It is also about what we claim.

Lent is a season for reclaiming what truly belongs at the center of our lives. Lent offers us a holy invitation to pause, reflect, and intentionally claim again what matters most.

This season, instead of asking only, "What should I give up?" consider also asking, "What do I need to claim?"

We might claim time with God. Setting aside even a few quiet minutes each day for prayer or Scripture can help re-center your heart.

We might claim community. Reaching out, joining a small group, or simply checking on a neighbor reminds us that faith is never meant to be lived alone.

We might claim compassion. Looking for ways to serve, encourage, and care for others allows Christ's love to move through us into the world.

We might claim honesty before God. Lent is a season for bringing our whole selves—our struggles, doubts, hopes, and wounds—into God's presence, trusting in grace.

During Lent we make space so that God can fill us again with mercy, purpose, and love.

Here are some suggestions of meaningful things we can claim during Lent (instead of only giving things up). They will help draw you closer to God. These are simple, doable actions. Start by picking a few... and then maybe a few more... and then maybe a few more. *The important thing is to start.*

- ___ Set aside 10 quiet minutes with God.
- ___ Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly.
- ___ Read a Psalm aloud.
- ___ Sit in silence for 5 minutes.
- ___ Thank God for 5 blessings.
- ___ Take a prayer walk.
- ___ Worship intentionally on Sunday.

- ___ Read a Gospel story.
- ___ Write a favorite verse on a card.
- ___ Reflect on what God is saying to you.
- ___ Read Scripture before checking your phone.
- ___ Memorize a short verse.
- ___ Journal a prayer based on Scripture.
- ___ Share a verse with someone.

- ___ Reach out to someone you've missed.
- ___ Pray for your church.
- ___ Encourage someone with a note.
- ___ Attend a group or study.
- ___ Listen deeply to someone's story.
- ___ Invite someone to coffee.
- ___ Pray for your neighbors by name.
- ___ Perform a hidden act of kindness.
- ___ Give generously to someone in need.
- ___ Volunteer or serve locally.
- ___ Pray for people who are hurting.
- ___ Practice patience with a difficult person.
- ___ Offer forgiveness where needed.
- ___ Speak words of encouragement.

- ___ Turn off distractions for an hour.
- ___ Practice gratitude throughout the day.
- ___ Declutter one small space.
- ___ Eat one meal slowly and prayerfully.
- ___ Rest intentionally.
- ___ Fast from negativity.
- ___ Spend time outdoors with God.

During these 40 days of Lent may we intentionally reclaim the deeper things—faith, hope, love, and a closer walk with Jesus.

May we all have a holy and renewing Lent.

One Day at a Time Resource Box

Our mission: to provide toiletry items for anyone in need. Mount Rogers Community Services provided the distribution box located outside the Chapel doors. It is stocked with bags of donated toiletries for men and women.

How can you be involved? Donations of the following items are needed:

TRAVEL SIZE or small packages

shampoo deodorant razors shaving cream
conditioner lotion soap feminine products

Ashes to Go?

Pastor James was offering ashes and prayer in our community on Ash Wednesday. Several folks stopped by to ask questions, talk, take a breath, pray and start Lent in a tangible way. God meets us where we are.



Jen Feliciano and her daughter, Izzy, left for Indonesia on February 16 and will be there until March 5. They have returned to a place where she and her family served as missionaries for seven years. If you would like a front-row seat to missions it's not too late to sign up and experience how God is moving on the other side of the globe - all from the comfort of your home.

Each day, you'll be welcomed into the culture, stories, and real-life ministries God is using to bring hope. Through daily cultural insights, prayer points, and hands-on opportunities to give, you'll discover how your participation can make a tangible difference.

Here's how you can be part of the impact:

Feed the Flock - College students often travel far from home to study and struggle to afford basic necessities. A \$20 essentials bag can feed and support one student for an entire month.

*Can we support 20 students together?
Group Goal: \$400*

Fund a Future - Help two young women, Arda and Gea, as they pursue higher education and break cycles of poverty.

Goal: \$4,500 to completely fund their 4 yr degrees

Unlock a Smile - Provide a dental hygiene experience for a child from a local orphanage - helping them stay healthy and smiling all year long.

*Can we support these children together?
Goal: \$25 per child*

TO GIVE - go to marionfumc.org and choose the project you would like to support.

TO REGISTER to receive access to daily updates, prayer guides, and opportunities to be part of God's work in Indonesia. Register at: marionfumc.org

Come along - and let God use YOU to change lives.

Our youth are involved daily with First Youth Director, Jen Feliciano, in the VMT. They are also making real sacrifices to take part and contribute their own money in this mission - and we invite you to join them in that spirit.

Consider how small, intentional choices can lead to big change. Some examples are...

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| Eat at home instead of dining out and donate what you save. | Sell items you no longer need and give the proceeds. | Invite friends to join you and collect funds together. |
|---|--|--|

TO GIVE - go to marionfumc.org and choose the project you would like to support.



- WALK** Life skills
- WORSHIP** Live music & connection
- WORD** Bible truths that stick

A weekly experience that... connects your faith to your future.

**March 4
Virtual Mission Trip
March 11 - First UMC**

Wednesdays beginning at 5:45 pm

Each week builds spiritual depth, meaningful relationships, and practical skills that help you live a holistic life.

5:45 pm WALK - Wesleyan Room
February - Cleaning

With expertise by Busy Izzy's Cleaning Service.

6:15pm WORSHIP - Chapel

We start in the Chapel with Abby Johnsey leading in meaningful worship songs. Together we learn what it means to worship our loving God.

6:30pm WORD - Parlor

Christian Youth Who **THEIR CHANGED WORLD**

Being a follower of Jesus can feel isolating and is challenging. We will be highlighting young historic figures in our Christian faith who acted with courage and stood for Jesus through their lives. Let's get inspired together! Just Jen, First Youth Director

Joan of Arc 1412-1431

Joan was a teenage peasant girl in France who believed God had called her to help lead her country in battle against the English in the 100 year war.

At 17, she inspired the French army to victory and gave them hope. She was later executed at 19, but her faith and courage made her a hero remembered for centuries.

"Be strong and courageous.

It is better to be alone with God.

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love.

In His strength, I will dare and dare and dare until I die.

Joan of Arc

Reflection Questions:

What stands out to you most about Joan's courage as a teenager?

Have you ever felt called to do something big that others might doubt?

Annual Easter Flower Cross

A favorite tradition for many of us is the flowering of the cross during the Holy Week.

Let's make this year's cross come alive. Life from death. Light from darkness.

Please bring flowers from you yard or the florist.

First Monday Prayer: Creating Space to Seek God Together

Beginning in March, we're launching First Monday Prayer, a new monthly rhythm designed to create intentional space for prayer, reflection, and listening for God's voice. First Monday Prayer is a part of a larger prayer effort in our church, building a sort of "intercessory infrastructure."

Each first Monday of the month, we'll gather in the chapel for a guided time of prayer and scripture-centered reflection. This will be a simple, welcoming environment where people of all ages and backgrounds can come just as they are, slow down, and rest in God's presence.

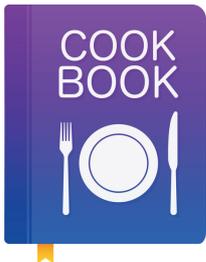
Much like Rise Up, First Monday Prayer is about creating space for God to move — not through performance or pressure, but through stillness, attentiveness, and shared seeking. In a busy world filled with noise and distraction, this time offers a moment to pause, breathe, and realign our hearts with God's purposes.

As we journey through Lent toward Easter, these gatherings will help prepare us for renewal, repentance, hope, and resurrection joy. Through scripture, guided prayer, and moments of quiet reflection, we'll lift up our church, our families, our community, and our leaders, trusting God to shape us and lead us forward.

First Monday Prayer is a part of a growing rhythm in the life of our church — alongside Rise Up, Faith & Life Circles, the work of the Joel Team, and our shared vision where all are loved, purpose is found, and lives are changed. Our prayer is that this time will deepen our hunger for God, strengthen our unity, and root us more firmly in His presence.

If you can't join us in person, please pause wherever you may be and join us in prayer. Prayer prompts will be available online. We invite you to come expecting. Come open. Come ready to listen. Come ready to pray.

**First Monday Prayer — Beginning Monday,
March 2 at 10am & 7pm**



Recipes & Photos needed for a District Cookbook

Our DS, Rev Jane Taylor and Sharon Hughes are working together with the Clinch Mountain and New River Districts to create a cookbook featuring treasured recipes and photos.

Of particular interest are recipes that evoke the warmth of special gatherings or represent significant Appalachian traditions. AND we are invited to submit photographs of our favorite churches, capturing their essence and the role they play in our lives. These images will not only enhance the visual appeal of the cookbook but will also evoke the shared faith and fellowship that unite us as Virginia communities.

All proceeds from the sales of the cookbooks will go to support local missions in our two districts. By sharing your recipes and

photographs, you'll be contributing to a cause that resonates with the values of compassion and service that are at the heart of our Appalachian traditions.

Let's work together to make this cookbook a wonderful reflection of our community's spirit, love, and generosity.

Please email your submissions to info@mariofumc.org OR bring them to the church office. Deadline to submit recipes and photos: Sunday March 15

First Kids

grades K - 5

Ginger Moore - First Kids Director
ginger@marionufmc.org

First Kids after school fun!

Wednesdays at 3:30pm

Ms Ginger and volunteers are excited to welcome the kids to After School Fun. Kids are invited to come to First UMC to have a lot of fun learning about Jesus, playing games, watching videos, playing outside and so much more. Snacks are provided. **Parent Pick-Up at 5:15pm at church office doors**

Parents: please send a note to your student's teacher giving permission for your student to ride one of these buses.

Oak Point Elem - First UMC bus
Marion Elem - school bus #241B

Upward BASKETBALL & CHEER

Let's Show Up AND Support Our Kids!

Our Upward Basketball and Cheer season has tipped off, and we are excited to see how God will work through this important ministry! Upward is more than just a game—it is our church's sports ministry, designed to share Christ's love while building confidence, character, and community in our children.

Game Days: Sundays

Game Times: 1:30 & 2:30pm

Location: Oak Point Elementary School

One of the simplest and most meaningful ways to support this ministry is to **show up, sit in the stands, cheer loudly AND take time to get to know the families and children involved.**

Your presence speaks volumes. It tells our kids and their families that they are seen, valued, and supported.

Let's rally together, fill the stands with encouragement, and be the hands and feet of Jesus through Upward Basketball and Cheer this season. We can't wait to see you there!

From Programs to Movement: An Open Door for God's Work

When I was hired four years ago, my title was intentionally changed from Program Director to Director of Ministries. That shift wasn't about semantics — it reflected a deeper vision for how ministry would take shape at First United Methodist Church.

From the beginning, our heart has been to move from programs to rhythms, and from maintenance to culture.

Programs help organize what we do.

Rhythms shape how we live.

Maintenance preserves what is.

Culture forms who we become.

That vision continues to guide the way we approach ministry in this season.

Now, as our pastor and the newly forming Joel Team begin a season of prayerful listening and discernment for the future of our church, we sense God inviting us even more deeply into this way of being — not simply doing church, but becoming the Church.

As Director of Ministries, my role is to help connect vision with action — to come alongside individuals and ministry teams, encourage new ideas, support existing ministries, and help create space where God's calling can take root and grow.

That's where the **Open Door Policy** comes in.

If God is stirring something in you — a ministry idea, a burden, a passion, or even a holy question — my door is open. Whether your idea is fully formed or just beginning to take shape, it matters.

Some of the most meaningful ministries begin when someone simply says, "I think God might be inviting us into something."

This Open Door isn't about adding more activity. It's about discerning God's direction together — listening for the Spirit, aligning hearts and gifts, and stepping forward in faith.

We believe God is cultivating hunger for deeper worship, stronger prayer, authentic community, and meaningful discipleship. And we believe the Spirit is already planting seeds of what comes next, often in the hearts of people sitting right among us.

So if you feel a nudge...
If you carry a dream...
If you see a need...
If you wonder "what if..."
Let's talk.

My door is open.
Your calling matters.
And together, we will discern what God is doing among us.

Grace and peace, Allen

Faith & Life Circles: Following Jesus in Everyday Life

One of the dreams I've carried since coming on staff has been to see discipleship move beyond the walls of the church and deeper into everyday life, where everyone in our church is connected to a smaller group of believers. While worship, prayer, and study gatherings remain vital, most of our real life — and real faith — happens around kitchen tables, in living rooms, at ball fields, coffee shops, and front porches.

That's the heart behind Faith & Life Circles.

A Faith & Life Circle is simply a small group of people who already share life together and choose to be more intentional about following Jesus in those relationships. These circles meet at a time and place that works for them — often just once a month — to share life, pray together, reflect on Scripture, and encourage one another in faith.

Rather than asking people to add yet another church activity to their already full schedules, Faith & Life Circles invite us to recognize that God is already at work in our existing relationships and to lean into that work with greater purpose and intention.

Right now, we're in the pilot phase, with a few groups beginning to meet and explore what Faith & Life Circles can look like in real life. We're taking this slow, listening carefully, learning together, and allowing space for God to shape this ministry organically. We're prayerfully, trusting that faithful roots will lead to lasting fruit.

If you're interested in learning more, exploring a Circle, or even gathering a few people you already do life with, I'd love to talk with you. Because discipleship doesn't just happen at church — it happens in life. And that's exactly where Jesus meets us.

Come curious. Come open. Come ready to grow.
Allen Johnsey

Easter Egg Hunt Easter Sunday, April 5 immediately following the worship service!

Bring your basket and get ready for a fun and meaningful adventure. As children hunt for eggs, they'll also discover treasures that help them learn about the resurrection of Jesus and the hope we celebrate on this joyful day.

It's a wonderful way for families to continue the celebration together!

Easter Candy Donations needed!

We can't have an Easter Egg Hunt without Easter Candy. Please bring your Easter Candy donations to the church and leave them in the baskets at the sanctuary doors and at the church office. Thank you!



First United Methodist Church
115 S Church St.
Marion, VA 24354



spring *forward*

Sunday March 8

Servants Wanted *Updated Regularly*

RED CROSS & FIRST UMC LIASON

Be in the Fellowship Hall on Red Cross Blood Drive days and stay with the Red Cross team. You will be the contact person for First UMC during the blood drive.

Fridays: 3 to 4 times a year 12-6pm
Next Blood Drive: Friday, March 13, 2026
Contact: Teri McCall 276-783-5194 or teri@marionfumc.org

Mentor: A community supper mentorship program. Teach your cooking and kitchen skills to community members wanting to improve their lives. Share the love and kindness of Jesus.

Wednesdays, 3-7pm Contact: Jen Feliciano 585-200-0380 or jen@marionfumc.org

First Youth Mentor - share your experiences and mentor our youth with practical life skills.
March: Wednesdays 5:45 - 6:15pm
Topic: First Aid & Health Care. Contact: Jen Feliciano 585-200-0380 or jen@marionfumc.org

Church Office - answer phones & office door, help staff where needed.

Weekly - Thursday. 9:30am - 1:00pm

Church Office - help fold, label and stamp monthly newsletters. **Monthly** - end of month

Contact: Teri McCall 276-783-5194 or teri@marionfumc.org

GriefShare facilitators: Organize, lead, advertise, and more. Training & mentoring will be available. For more info contact Allen Johnsey at 276-783-5194 or allen@marionfumc.org

FUMC D Pantry Update

After several weather delays and also having leftover boxes from prior distribution days, we are finally back to a normal schedule for March. Our normal Food Pantry Pack Day will be on Wednesday, March 18 at 10:00am at the Food Pantry Building located on Gill St near the E&H College of Health Sciences and then our normal Food Pantry Distribution Day will be on Tuesday, March 24, from 1:00-4:00pm at First UMC.

During the month of March, we will continue to collect 16 ounce jars of peanut butter. Thank you so much for your generous support of this ministry.

Tommy Cullop & Ernie Catron - Co Directors



Wednesdays at First UMC Meal is served at 5:15pm

You are invited to enjoy a weekly meal at The Table. Please be sure to register and pay \$5 per family online at: marionfumc.org/thetablemeal

or please place your \$5 per family in a pew envelope and place it in the offering plate on Sundays.

The Table has been frozen by the winter freeze! We will return March 18.

GENEROSITY AT FIRST UMC - 2026

Total received as of 2-22-26	\$ 45,980.14
Total expenses as of 2-22-26	<u>57,639.89</u>
Balance as of 2-22-26	\$ 11,659.75

