



# - STAYING CONNECTED -

United Methodist Church  
Marion, Virginia

January 2026

## First Kids Christmas Caroling

Ending 2025 on a sweet note!



## New Year, Same Faithful God

When the calendar turns to a new year, it always cues for me a sense of possibility. Calendars are blank, routines reset, and I feel, as many of you do, a mix of hope about what lies ahead.

As followers of Jesus, we do not step into a new year alone - or unanchored. We begin this year with the assurance that God is already there. The One who carried us through last year - through joys and challenges, celebrations and disappointments - walks with us into this one as well.

Following Jesus is not about perfect resolutions, but it's about daily faithfulness: choosing prayer over panic, generosity over fear, service over comfort, and hope over despair. A new year gives us space to ask honest questions: How is God calling me to grow? Where can I serve? Who needs the love of Christ through me?

As a church family, a new year is a time to renew the commitment we share together. The reality is this - the world continues to hunger for meaning, grace, and truth. God has placed us here - not by accident - but with purpose. When we worship together, serve together, give together, and pray together, we bear witness to the living hope found in Jesus Christ.

This year, this New Year, together, let us set forward with trust---trusting that God calls, equips, and uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

May this be a year marked not by fear of the future, but by confidence in Christ. Not by weariness, but by renewal. And not by hesitation, but by faithful steps of obedience.

For us as a church family, the path ahead may be unknown, but the One who leads us is sure.

Let us follow Jesus - together - into all that God has prepared.

Peace - Pastor James



**Begins on Tuesday, February 3  
with two opportunities to attend  
at 10am and 5:30pm**

GriefShare is a vital part of how our church walks with people through loss. For the past couple of years, this ministry has continued because staff stepped in temporarily when our longtime facilitator retired.

This upcoming session will be the **final GriefShare cycle unless new lay facilitators emerge**. GriefShare is designed to be a congregation-led ministry, and this cycle will intentionally serve as both care for those grieving **and discernment for those who may be called to help lead it in the future**.

If you have a heart for walking alongside others in grief, please speak with Allen.





## ***What if you could change lives across the world.... without ever packing a suitcase?***

If your heart is drawn to missions but your schedule or season of life makes travel difficult, this is your invitation. Join Jen Feliciano on a **Virtual Mission Trip to Indonesia** from February 17–March 5 and experience how God is moving on the other side of the globe - all from the comfort of your home.

During this time, Jen will actually be traveling to Indonesia, returning to a place where she and her family served for seven years. You'll be getting a front-row seat to real people, real ministries, and real needs - shared directly from the ground by someone who knows and loves this community deeply.

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. Together, we'll invest in children at a local orphanage and support college students who are living far from home as they pursue education and a better future.

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



**Arda**  
is beginning  
her studies  
in Public  
Administration

#### ***Fund a Future***

Help two young women pursue higher education and break cycles of poverty.

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

#### ***Gea***

is in her 2nd year of a Bachelor's degree in Accounting.



#### ***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*



#### ***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*

***Our youth are making real sacrifices to take part 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.

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

**[marionfumc.org](http://marionfumc.org)**

**OR** register on the Virtual Mission Trip registration sheets outside the sanctuary and in the Welcome Center.

***You don't have to go far to go deep.***

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



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

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

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

**January - Job Readiness**

Shared by.... **YOU!**

Would **YOU** be willing to share your experience?

**W<sup>3</sup>** is an opportunity for **YOU** to share your life experiences with the next generation. Sign up today to mentor young people with practical life skills.

**Servants needed in:**

**January** - topic: Job Readiness

**March** - topic: First Aid & Health Care

**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

January 7 - February 11 Study: Spiritual Goals

## FIRST YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROJECT

This year, 13 youth and 4 adults shopped for 30 children and youth ages 4-15. Together, we made three shopping trips to Walmart, placed a Nike order, and wrapped things up with a final Amazon "shebang." Our youth were intentional and prayerful, focusing on blessing each child with thoughtful, meaningful gifts. We prayed before shopping and trusted God to guide our resources - and He did.

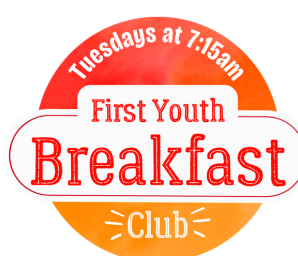
During Jingle & Mingle, five families gathered to wrap gifts, share stories, and enjoy time together. It was a joyful evening of connection, laughter, and learning more about the children we were serving. Several families shared how meaningful it was to experience church community through this project.

Every life we touch through programs like this - serving with the hands of Jesus - is precious, and we are grateful to be part of the work God is doing through our church.

Jen Feliciano - First Youth Director

**THANK YOU!**

to everyone who prayed for and gave their financial support to this project.



First Youth Breakfast Club is moving from Thursday to....

**TUESDAY**

Beginning Tuesday, January 6 at 7:15am at the Marion McDonalds. See you there! First UMC bus will take you to MSHS & MMS.



**January 23-25 - Pigeon Forge**

Annual weekend retreat filled with worship and spiritual growth for youth and youth mentors.

\$100 payment is due.

Please see Jen or call/text her at 585-200-0380.



**Christian Youth Who CHANGED THEIR 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

**Lady Jane Grey 1537-1554**

Lady Jane Grey became queen of England at just 16 years old. Though her reign lasted only 9 days, she boldly stood for her Protestant faith. Sadly she was executed at 17. Her courage inspired generations to stand firm in their beliefs.

She famously stated:

"Deny the world,  
defy the devil,  
despise the flesh,  
and delight yourself only in the Lord"

Scripture says: Revelation 2:10

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."

*Reflection Questions:*

Would you be willing to stand for your faith even if it cost you everything?

What "small" ways can we show courage for Christ today?



First Kids  
after school

**fun!**

kids, grades K-5, 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 the 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



## Sign up for Upward BASKETBALL & CHEER

Online sign-up ends  
Sunday, January 11.

sign-up online at: [marionfumc.org](http://marionfumc.org)

OR

Sign-up | Monday | January 12  
5:00 - 6:00pm at First Fellowship Hall

Please pray for this sports ministry, for the children, parents, coaches, and all who serve. This is a vital ministry for First UMC.

Volunteers are needed too! Sign-up online, at the link above, to help coach, assist coaches, help at practices and on game days, etc. Contact Ginger Moore at 276-780-9701



*Servant: a person who performs duties for others. A devoted and helpful follower or supporter. "a tireless servant of God".*

### WEEKLY

#### Church Office

Answer phones and office door, help staff where needed.

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

Contact: Teri McCall  
276-783-5194 or  
[teri@marionfumc.org](mailto:teri@marionfumc.org)

#### W<sup>3</sup>First Youth

Share your life experiences and mentor our youth with practical life skills.

January: Wednesdays  
5:45 - 6:15pm

Topic: Job Readiness  
March: Wednesdays  
5:45 - 6:15pm

Topic: First Aid & Health Care

Contact: Jen Feliciano  
585-200-0380 or  
[jen@marionfumc.org](mailto:jen@marionfumc.org)

#### Upward BB & Cheer practices & games

Assist with set up & tear down, help coaches where needed and other stuff at weekly practices and games.

mid Jan-Mar, days TBA.

Contact: Ginger Moore  
276-780-9701 or  
[ginger@marionfumc.org](mailto:ginger@marionfumc.org)

#### The Table 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](mailto:jen@marionfumc.org)

### MONTHLY

#### Food & Fellowship Meal

Provide, prepare & serve meal Thursday, Jan 29 by 11:30am.

Contact: Allen Johnsey  
276-783-5194 or  
[allen@marionfumc.org](mailto:allen@marionfumc.org)

#### Church Office

Help fold, label and stamp monthly newsletters.

The last week of each month.

Contact: Teri McCall  
276-783-5194 or [teri@marionfumc.org](mailto:teri@marionfumc.org)



The Joel Team has been assembled and will be meeting soon!

More details will be coming soon.

### GENEROSITY AT FIRST UMC - 2025 YEAR END

#### 2025 Year End Generosity & Expenses

Total received as of 12-31-25	\$ 447,093.78
Total expenses as of 12-31-25	<u>360,473.96</u>
Balance as of 12-31-25	\$ 86,565.82

#### 2025 General Budget

Total received as of 12-31-25	\$ 412,984.00
Balance as of 12-31-25	<u>447,093.78</u>
Balance as of 12-31-25	\$ 34,109.78



# 2026 Officers & Leaders

## ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

Administrative Board Chair.....	Denton Staley
Lay Leader.....	"Big 5"
Lay Member to Annual Conference.....	Allen Johnsey
Secretary.....	
Treasurer.....	Joyce Cullop
Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair.....	Beth Gates
Board of Trustees Chair.....	Jerry Breen
Finance Committee Chair.....	Ernie Catron
Staff Connection .....	James Bennington
Staff Connection .....	Allen Johnsey
Committees that relate to Admin. Board:	
Pre-School Board Chair.....	Kim Austin/Patty Warren

## ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Board of Trustees	Chairperson: elected by body Staff Connection: Allen Johnsey
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2026	2027	2028
John Saunders	Jerry Breen	Benjamin Conner
Tracy Sledd	Ernie Catron	Sam Musick
	Jan Ladewski	Danny Counts

Finance Committee	Chairperson: Ernie Catron Staff Connection: Susan Hansel
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2026	2027	2028
Sue Hunt	Terry Jennings	John Saunders
Sharon Brown	Brian Walker	Stephanie Counts

Members by virtue of office: Treasurer, Lay Leader, Pastor, Trustees Chair, SPR Chair

Nominations & Leadership Development Committee	Chairperson: James Bennington Staff Connection: Allen Johnsey
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2026	2027	2028
Linda Crowder	Jackie Wilson	Amy Spiker
Joyce Collins	Linda Catron	Zach Counts
D.B. Waddle	Shirley Lockhart	Patty Hayes

Members by virtue of office: Lay Leader, Conf Delegate

Permanent Endowment Committee	Chairperson: Julie Walker Staff Connection: James Bennington
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2026	2027	2028
Teresa Bystrek	Steve Strickland	Luke Spiker
Mike Albano	Julie Walker	Marvin Craig
	Danny Counts	Kay Wood
	Tom Graham	

Staff-Parish Relations Committee	Chairperson: Beth Gates Staff connection: James Bennington
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2026	2027	2028
Kim Williams	El Saunders	Beth Gates
Betty Hash	Kim Barton	Jonathan Catron
Valerie Armbrister	Noel Collins	Joyce Cullop

Members by virtue of office: Lay Leader

Pastor.....	James Bennington
Certified Lay Minister.....	Allen Johnsey
First Kids.....	Ginger Moore
First Youth.....	Jen Feliciano
First Music.....	Allen Johnsey
Food Pantry Directors.....	Ernie Catron Tommy Cullop
Joy Group.....	Helen Burkett
Grief Share.....	Allen Johnsey
Lay Visitation.....	Allen Johnsey
Audio/Visual.....	Media Team
Altar Guild.....	Anna Moore, Shirley Lockhart
Evangelism.....	the whole congregation



Day at a Time Bags  
clothing essentials  
Food Pantry  
Blessing Bags  
Food & Fellowship  
Community Assistance

## Food & Fellowship needs you!

To provide, prepare & serve the meal on Thursday, January 29, at 11:30am.

Food & Fellowship happens because this congregation, community groups and families prepare and serve meals every Thursday.

If you can help in 2026 please call the church office at 276-783-5194 or email at [info@marionfumc.org](mailto:info@marionfumc.org) or text at 844-214-4685. Thank you!

It's COLD outside!

★ We have an urgent need for warm clothing for the homeless. ★

for BOTH women & men but mainly men.

<b>gloves</b>	<b>socks</b>	<b>long sleeve shirts</b>
<b>hats</b>	<b>sweat shirts</b>	<b>t-shirts</b>
<b>scarves</b>	<b>hoodies</b>	<b>shoes</b>
<b>coats</b>	<b>jeans</b>	<b>boots</b>

Please leave your items on the bench outside the church office. Thank you!

## FUMC D Pantry

As we look back at 2025, Tommy and I are humbled by the congregation's generosity and the involvement of our local Walmart, Food Lion, and Ingles stores.

Even though Ingles and Food Lion are not our official pickup partners, Ingles has provided us with empty milk boxes for distribution packing and has shared donated canned goods during their December food drive. Food Lion has assisted us with bulk food orders that have saved us the expense and time of having to go to the Feeding SWVA Warehouse in Abingdon. With our official pickup partner, Walmart, the local store has provided us with 10,652 lbs. of fresh produce, 2,414 lbs. of bakery items, 1,044 lbs. of assorted dry goods items, and numerous random items such as clothing and candy.

With the purchase of food and donated items, we have been able to provide 1,526 boxes that have served 3,593 individuals during 2025. Many thanks for your continued support of FUMC Food Pantry!

Co-Directors: Tommy Cullop & Ernie Catron

FUMC D Pantry

we are collecting  
**Instant Oatmeal -  
10 packet boxes**





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

## 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

- TUES** 7:15 am First Youth Breakfast Club  
@ McDonalds  
Feb 27, March 3 & 10 @ First UMC  
Fellowship Hall
- WED** 8:30 am Prayer Breakfast at Downtown Pioneer  
3:30 pm After School Fun  
5:15 pm The Table  
5:45 pm W<sup>3</sup> - First Youth  
6:00 pm First Handbells - begins January 28  
7:00 pm First Choir
- THUR** 11:30 am Food & Fellowship - Fellowship Hall  
6:00 pm Praise Band

## UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

- Sarah Circle - 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday monthly - homes  
Tuesday, January 6 at 7:00pm
- Grace Circle - 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday monthly - parlor  
Tuesday, January 13 at 6:30pm

## PLANNING AHEAD

### **Pantry Packing Day**

We will not have Packing Day this month due to unused boxes from prior months.

### **Pantry Distribution Day**

Tuesday, January 27 at 1:00 - 4:00pm  
in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers please arrive at 12:45pm.



### **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](http://marionfumc.org/thetablemeal)  
or please place your \$5 per family in a pew envelope and place it in the offering plate on Sundays. **PLEASE** be sure to include your name, AND how many people will be eating with you.

### Church Office Update



Our Administrative Assistant, Teri McCall, is switching from full-time to part-time beginning January 2026.

### Church office hours are now:

Mon - Wed	Thursday	Friday
8:30am - 4:00pm	8:30am - 1:00pm	Closed