



- STAYING CONNECTED -

United Methodist Church
Marion, Virginia

December 2025



Experience the Wonder of His Coming!

"For unto us a child is born" - Isaiah 9:6

Sunday, December 16, 11:00am

Potluck to follow in Fellowship Hall



This Advent, First United Methodist Church invites you to a special celebration of Christ's birth: God With Us: A Christmas Cantata. Join our Choir as they bring the Christmas story to life through music, narration, and scripture, guiding us from the hope of the prophets to the joy of the Savior's birth.

The service weaves together intimate moments of reflection — including "Away in a Manger" and "A Christmas Prayer" - with triumphant expressions of praise in "Alleluia", "Christ Has Come". Piano and flute provide the foundation, with additional instruments enriching key moments, while narration and scripture help us enter into the wonder and meaning of Christ's arrival.

The cantata concludes with a special Advent moment: the lighting of the third candle, the candle of Joy, followed immediately by the congregation joining the choir in singing "Joy to the World". This joyful finale invites all to celebrate the hope, praise, and gratitude that come from knowing Emmanuel — God with us.

Following the service, all are welcome to stay for a holiday potluck meal, sharing fellowship and the joy of Christmas together. Bring your family, invite friends, and come experience the wonder of God with us.

Allen Johnsey - Music Director

FIRST YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROJECT

This Christmas Season, we invite your family to join us in spreading love, joy, and hope through our annual participation in the Santa's Elves program. Together, we will sponsor 10 children and 20 teenagers from families in need, right here in Marion, ensuring that each child experiences the warmth and wonder of the season. Your involvement will not only bless these children with thoughtful gifts but also remind their families that they are seen, valued, and cared for by their community.

Through financial support, you're doing more than giving presents, - you're providing encouragement and stability during a time when many families face extra challenges. Parents are deeply moved to know that their children are remembered, and the gifts often spark meaningful family moments that strengthen bonds and restore hope. Your generosity becomes a message of God's love in action, bringing light into homes that might otherwise feel dark this time of year.

This program also transforms the lives of the First Youth volunteers who will be shopping for each child. As they thoughtfully select gifts, they learn empathy, responsibility, and the joy of giving. The experience helps them connect their faith with tangible service, showing them how small acts of kindness can have a lasting impact.

Give online at marionfumc.org, be sure to choose Youth Christmas Project or by check, note on memo line.

JINGLE & MINGLE

Do you enjoy spending time with community members? Is wrapping presents your thing? Or are you just interested in sipping something warm while listening to Christmas music?

You are welcome to our Jingle & Mingle events. Share time with local families and support them as they wrap presents purchased as part of our Youth Christmas Project.

Thursday, December 4 at 1:00pm - Fellowship Hall
Thursday, December 18 at 4:00pm - Fellowship Hall

Please let us know which time you'll be joining us. Contact Jen at Jen@marionfumc.org or call the church office.

First Kids Christmas Caroling

Wednesday, December 3 After *First Kids After School Fun* we will eat together at *The Table* in the Fellowship Hall and then we will travel around Marion Christmas Caroling.





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

A weekly experience that.... connects your faith to your future. Each week builds spiritual depth, meaningful relationships, and practical skills that help you live a holistic life.

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.

WALK - Wesleyan Room
Dec - Int. Cooking
Shared by Jane Conner

WORD - Parlor
Lies, busted! In lies busted, we will explore common belief systems that are contrary to the truth of God's word that many of us still actually believe deep down. And how we can get free from those lies with God's truth!

First Youth Breakfast Club

Thursdays, @ 7:15am at McDonalds in Marion
First UMC bus will take you to MSHS & MMS.



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

St. Benedict 480-547 Born in Nursia, Italy and was sent to Rome for his education. He was unhappy with how ungodly people were. He left home as a young man to pursue a life fully dedicated to God. Even as a youth, his example of prayer, study, and community living became the foundation of monasteries across Europe - centers of learning, service and faith during the middle Ages. He started monasteries that have shaped Christian spirituality for over 1,500 years.

A common quote attributed to St. Benedict is....

"Ora et labora" Pray and work.

This simple phrase summarizes the entire Rule of St Benedict and the balanced life he taught.

Scripture says: Psalm 119:9
"How can a young person stay on the path of purity?
By living according to your word."

Reflection Questions:

Why do you think young people can sometimes see God's call more clearly than adults?

How can creating healthy habits (like prayer, study, service) shape your future?

GENEROSITY AT FIRST UMC

General Budget Year-To-Date

Giving Needed Y-T-D as of 11-23-25	\$373,274.00
Giving Received Y-T-D as of 11-23-25	<u>382,877.48</u>
Balance as of 11-23-25	\$ 9,603.48

Year-To-Date Generosity & Expenses

Total received as of 11-23-25	\$382,877.48
Total expenses as of 11-23-25	<u>274,405.61</u>
Balance as of 10123-25	\$ 73,159.19

Preparing our hearts for Christmas

You have read a newsletter article like this before, but please read it again with an open heart and mind as a new season approaches.

As we enter the Advent season, the world around us shifts into high gear—lights go up, calendars fill, and the familiar rush of December comes upon us. The season of Advent invites us to slow down, to breathe deeply, and to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

The word Advent means “arrival” or “coming.” For centuries, the Church has observed these weeks as a time of expectation—looking back to Jesus’ first coming in Bethlehem and looking forward to His promised return...His Second Coming. Advent reminds us that Christmas is not merely a sentimental holiday; it is the story of God stepping into our world to bring hope, peace, joy, and love.

Each Advent candle carries a message we desperately need in our lives today:

Hope In a world that feels uncertain, the promise of Christ anchors us.

Peace Jesus brings peace not just to circumstances, but to our hearts.

Joy True joy is found not in what we receive, but in the Savior who came to be with us.

Love God's love moved Him from heaven to a manger and ultimately to a cross.

As we journey toward Christmas, may we not rush past these messages but take time each week to reflect, pray, and draw near to God. Read and hear the Scriptures with fresh eyes. Pause long enough to hear the still, small voice of the Lord. Advent is not about adding more to your schedule - it's about making room for Christ.

And when Christmas morning arrives, may we celebrate with hearts full of wonder: that God became flesh, that light broke through the darkness, that Emmanuel - God with us - came for each of us.

Blessings to all as we enter a season of hope, peace, joy and love!

Come, let us adore Him, James

First Community Ministries - includes Blessing Bags, Day at a Time Bags and clothing essentials. Next time you are at the church office take a look in our First Community Ministries closet.

It's COLD outside!
★ We have an urgent need for warm clothing for the homeless. ★

for BOTH women & men	socks	t-shirts
gloves	sweat shirts	shoes
hats	hoodies	boots
scarves	jeans	long sleeve shirts
coats		

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

Food & Fellowship needs you in 2026 to provide, prepare & serve the meals weekly on Thursdays.

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

We are planning the 2026 schedule now and our goal is to fill every Thursday.

If you can help in 2026 please call the church office at 276-783-5194 or email at info@marionufmc.org or text at 844-214-4685. Thank you!



Walking this Journey Together

Reflections and Gratitude from Allen Johnsey

As we step into December and the close of another year, I find myself reflecting on the journey we've shared here at First United Methodist Church. It's hard to put into words what serving in this place has meant to me. Every role I've been entrusted with - whether facilitating GriefShare, planning worship, organizing Food & Fellowship, teaching Sunday School, leading our music ministry, or even the "less glamorous" tasks like tending to the fellowship hall floors - has been a privilege I do not take lightly.

Many of you know my story and how I had come to a point in my journey where I was certain ministry was no longer part of my path. When Kandi and I first walked through those red doors, we were lost and uncertain about many things. What we found here was a group of people who loved and accepted us, despite our mistakes and failures. We found grace here. We found Jesus.

As I slowly began to serve again, you all welcomed me with open arms. From beginning to sing in the band, to sharing in Sunday School, to being entrusted with the opportunity to serve full-time on staff, each step has been a gift. There are too many special people God has used along the way for me to name, but know that your names and acts are recorded in heaven.

Becoming your Director of Ministries, taking on Music Ministry and Facilities, and earning certification as your Lay Minister have been honors I do not deserve, and of which I often feel unworthy. Beyond our local church, serving on District and Conference Committees has given me the privilege of representing First, learning from our broader United Methodist connection, and seeing how God is at work across our larger community of faith. These experiences have not only deepened my understanding of ministry, but also reminded me how the lessons, relationships, and joys from First ripple outward—how the faith and care we share here touch lives far beyond our walls.

Serving here is deeply personal. This community has welcomed me, challenged me, and encouraged me in ways I never anticipated. I've celebrated milestones with you, walked through seasons of grief with you, and shared in the quiet, behind-the-scenes work that often goes unseen but is essential to the life of the church. I've realized that it's in those ordinary, sometimes messy moments that God's extraordinary presence shines the brightest. Those moments remind me why we do what we do—not for recognition, but because God is at work among us, and we get to be a part of it.

As we enter the season of Advent—a time of hope, anticipation, and reflection—I want to express my sincere gratitude. Thank you for allowing me to serve, to learn, and to grow alongside you. Thank you for your trust, your laughter, your patience, and your friendship. Being part of this church family isn't just a role; it's a gift, and I am humbled to walk this journey with all of you.

May this season of joy and hope fill your hearts and homes, and may we continue to serve, celebrate, and discover together in the years ahead.

With gratitude and joy, Allen

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 the First Kids volunteers are excited to welcome the kids to After School Fun. Each Wednesday 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



First Kids are growing in faith as they learn what it means to be true disciples of Jesus! Each week, they explore how to follow Him through love, kindness, and service to others. From Bible lessons to hands-on

activities, our kids are discovering that being a disciple means putting faith into action every day.

In November, our children learned to take discipleship a step further by participating in Project Christmas Child.

What a great way to serve others! These children brought in items to help with Project Christmas Child!

They will also be able to track where the boxes go so they can pray for the children that receive the boxes from First Kids!!!

*With joy and excitement,
Ms. Ginger*



Wednesdays at First UMC - The Table Meal

You are invited to enjoy the meal on Wednesdays.

Please be sure to register and pay \$5 per family online at: marionufmc.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.

Merry Christmas

Teri & Susan



From the staff
at First UMC

Jen & Ginger





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	3:00 pm	Recovery Group - 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	W3- First Youth
	6:00 pm	First Handbells
	7:00 pm	First Choir
THUR	7:15 am	First Youth Breakfast Club @ McDonalds
	11:30 am	Food & Fellowship - Fellowship Hall
	6:00 pm	Praise Band

UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

Sarah Circle - 1st Tuesday monthly - homes
Tuesday, December 2 at 7:00pm

Faith Circle - 1st Wednesday Monthly - parlor
Wednesday, December 3 at 10:00am

Deborah Circle - 1st Thursday monthly - parlor
Thursday, December 4 at 6:00pm

Grace Circle - 2nd Tuesday monthly - parlor
Tuesday, December 9 at 6:30pm

Food Pantry
we are collecting
Instant Oatmeal - 10 packet boxes



PLANNING AHEAD

Board of Trustees
Monday, December 1 at 5:30pm

First Kids Christmas Caroling

Wednesday, December 3 - eat at The Table
then we will go Christmas Caroling.

Back On My Feet Team Meeting
Thursday, December 4 at 10:00am

Jingle & Mingle

Thursday, December 4 at 1:00pm

First Youth Christmas Project Shopping

Friday, December 5 at 3:30pm

Food Pantry Packing Day

Wednesday, December 10 at 10:00am at our
storage building on Gill Street. Next to the E&H
University School of Health Sciences.

First Youth Christmas Project Shopping

Saturday, December 13 at 10:00am

GOD WITH US

Christmas Cantata - Potluck to follow
Sunday, December 14 at 11:00am

Food Pantry Distribution Day

Tuesday, December 16 at 1:00 - 4:00pm
in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers please arrive
at 12:45pm.

Finance Committee Meeting
Tuesday, December 16 at 5:30pm

Jingle & Mingle

Thursday, December 18 at 4:00pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Wednesday, December 24 at 6:00pm

Christmas Day

Church Offices Closed
Thursday, December 25

New Years Day

- Church Offices Closed
Thursday, January 1, 2026

