

FOREST FIRE

The Monthly Newsletter of Forest Heights United Methodist Church
863 West Forest Ave., Jackson, TN 38301

December 2024

A Word from Pastor Drew

Thoughts on Receiving a Gift

Luke 2:1-20

“Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.”

You know who said that? John Wesley said that. Having himself held out against grace for a number of years, (even as he was preaching its merits to others), he knew whereof he spoke.

We like to think that we are the ones in control ... that we are not dependent on anyone, even God. And so ... into all of this, we Christians introduce a story. It is a simple story about a God who wanted to do something for us.... Something so strange and so outside the scope of ordinary imagination.... Something so beyond what we could conceivably do for ourselves.... That God resorted to angels, pregnant teenagers, and stars in the sky to get it done.

And whatever you think about the details of the story, remember that their purpose is to show us that Christmas is not something we can do for ourselves, but something that God does for us. The details of Luke’s timeless story strike the mind as “extraordinary,” precisely so that we will not view what they represent as “ordinary.” “For unto us a son is given.” All we can do at Bethlehem is receive him.

We need the nativity stories. We need their quietness ... their passivity. Because we need to allow the God of these stories to give us an unexpected gift. Somewhere, somehow, somebody has to train us to be receivers. We don’t know how to receive gifts very well. We see most gifts as having not only bows, but strings attached. Every gift comes with a claim. And we’re not ready to be claimed.

Well friends, I’ve got to tell you. God’s goal (in giving you his gift) is to claim you....to lure you into a relationship....to draw you closer....to suck you in....to cut through your defenses with something that will be incredibly hard to resist. This gift, this divine gift, comes as a baby. That’s right, a baby. Love is a baby, Who, in his infancy, in his helplessness, will ask more of us than he will bring to us. All babies do, at first. Because, in the short run, we will have to take care of him....he, who in the eternal scheme of things, was born to take care of us.

- Drew

Friendship

Hello, FHUMC



Even though I am no stranger to most of you, there may be some tidbits that you may not know!

I was born to Mary June Wells and J.M. “Buddy” Holley on December 10, 1947 in Kansas City, MO. They named me Joyce “Elaine” Holley after my Aunt Betty Elaine Brewer, Drew’s Mom. I have one sister, Daryl Jeanne Holley Byford, who was also named after our Aunt Patricia Jeanne Simmons. I have one niece and one nephew, 5 great nieces, and a wonderful brother-in-law. I have been married twice. No children were born to either marriage, due to one or both of us trying to complete our educations.

I attended the public schools in Jackson, graduating from Jackson High School in 1965. I then attended Union University. I was the 1st female member of the U.U. Stage Band, and we were the 1st official orchestra for the Miss Tennessee Pageant. As a result of my 1st marriage (he wanted to get a Master’s Degree), I transferred to Tennessee Technological University, and received a B.S. in Music Education from there in 1970. I later earned an M.S. in Music Education from Delta State University. I taught music on various levels for 35 years, in 4 southern states, coming back full circle to Jackson, teaching band & elementary music for the JMCSS. I retired in 2008, and miraculously that same year, a “part-time” job became available at Forest Heights. I have been at Forest Heights for 16 years and have witnessed many changes.

My spiritual growth since I’ve been at Forest Heights has been phenomenal. Currently, I feel the spirit moving through our church constantly, as many activities are being initiated and “re-booted” by the PEOPLE! It is a wonderful thing to witness. My own faith journey has expanded so much since I’ve been here, not only through the music ministry, but also through our empathetic and thought-provoking pastors.

I would be remiss if I did not mention one person – Sue Wyatt. She was the 1st person I met other than the pastor, and from Day One, she became my mentor and dear friend. She taught me to be aware of God through ordinary events, not to think of them as just coincidences.

I will end with some miscellaneous items. I am left-handed. However, I knit and play guitar right-handed. I love animals. My favorites are dogs and turtles. I’ve had dogs my whole life. I currently have 2 senior rescue fur babies – Tessa (blind, liver disease) and Mimi (deaf).

That’s All Folks

Elaine Jones

FRIENDSHIP from one to another be blessed

Serving Each Other and Our Community

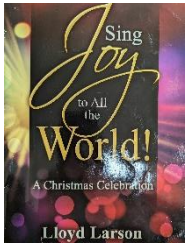
Nurture Area News

A big thank you to Cheryl Thomas for creating the beautiful cornucopia worship visual for our Sanctuary during this Thanksgiving season. Your gift is indeed a blessing to us.



Christmas Cantata

Save the Date



On the afternoon of December 22nd, at 3:00 p.m., our Chancel Choir with orchestral accompaniment will present the cantata, “*Sing Joy to All the World! A Christmas Celebration*” by Lloyd Larson. Our cantata filled with beautiful music and word proclaims the promise for great Joy of the Savior’s birth.

“It is a message filled with the assurance that no matter how difficult the journey may seem; no matter how hopeless the situation may feel; no matter how long and dark the night may be, joy will eventually come. That is the promise of God: *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes with the morning. (Psalm 30:5b)*

Make plans to attend and invite a friend to join you. A reception will follow in our Fellowship Hall hosted by The United Women of Faith.

Advent Studies

This year, we are offering two advent studies.

Option 1 is open to everyone at 10:00 a.m. beginning November 27. This study will be led by Drew and will be using a study entitled Heaven and Earth by Will Willomen.

Option 2 will be a Ladies study to be held in the home of Sue Wyatt on Monday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Sue and Marianne Archer will facilitate this group using the study, The Christmas Letters by Magrey R. DeVega.

Both studies will be for four weeks leading up to Christmas. Please pick up a book (\$12) for the study you will be joining and call the church office to register.

Fa la la la la.....

Join us for our annual Christmas Caroling gathering on Sunday, December 15 at 4:00 p.m. We’ll have a two groups going out to sing to our homebound members and a group staying in the Fellowship Hall to sing favorite Carols and songs of the season. We’ll also enjoy a chili supper when the Carolers return from their visits.

Christmas Eve Service

Join us on December 24 for our Christmas Eve candlelight service. Music, Word, Sermon, and Communion will be shared on this Holy Night. Our service will begin at 4:00 p.m. Come, let us adore Him.

March to the Manger

Our Special Christmas offering will be received on Sunday, December 22, during morning worship. Bring your gift in a white envelope marked March to the Manger. This offering will be designated to aid members of our congregation who may need some support. Our pastor administers this giving.

2024 Financial Giving

All Financial gifts must be received in the church office by December 29 to be recorded as 2024 donations.

Holiday Church office hours:

Office will be closed December 24, 25, 26, and January 1.

Staff Christmas Gift

If you would like to remember our staff during this Christmas season we are taking donations for their gifts through Monday, December 23. If writing a check, make it payable to Forest Heights and designate it for Staff Christmas. If you have questions, contact our Staff Parish Relations chairperson, Paul Finney.

Just a Reminder

Meals from our Freezer Blessings ministry are available to our members. You can pick up a meal for yourself or deliver it to members who may need a meal as they go through a time of recuperation, rehabilitation, or dealing with a tough life experience. Find them in the Freezer Blessings freezer located in the room across from the kitchen. Instructions are on the freezer for your convenience.

The Sojourner Class invites you to join them at 9:30 each Sunday morning for their discussion-based class. Beginning December 1st, we will be using a study entitled, "Following Jesus". Rev. Laura Whitman is the writer of this series and will focus on three topics: Compelled by our Faith, Jesus' Beloved Community, and Partners in Jesus' Mission. Our team of five teachers present well prepared and thought-provoking lessons. We look forward to having you join us. We meet in the Resource Room on the second floor of the main building.

Calendar for Wednesday Bible Study Thru Holiday Season 2-24-2025

Nov 27 – Dec 18 – Advent Study (4 Weeks)

Thursday, Nov 28 – Happy Thanksgiving

Dec 25 – No Bible Study – Merry Christmas!

Jan 1 – No Bible Study – Happy New Year!

Jan 8 – Jan 29 - No Bible Study

Feb 5 – Study of Luke resumes thru Holy Week

United Women of Faith

The United Women of Faith met November 21st, with Janette Chaplin leading the meeting. Marilyn Kemp provided the devotional. It was decided that UWF will not meet in December, but will resume meetings in January.

Outreach Area News

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES: We are preparing for the winter months at **ROOM IN THE INN**. Our next meal will be on Monday, December 10th. Please sign up to provide food items or to serve. We will be using the Mission Center at First UMC to serve the men at Room in the Inn. Forest Heights will also be part of an emergency response team for severe weather. You will receive an e-mail outlining the needs if we have life-threatening cold weather. Thank you for being the hand and feet of Christ.

..... and a teeny tiny need: Last year I noticed the rooms we use for Room in the Inn did not have any Christmas decorations. As you decorate for Christmas, if you have any extra decorations or a tree that you want to donate, please see Beverlyann Jetton.

Reelfoot Toy Store



Five Santas from Forest Heights made an early delivery to Reelfoot Rural Ministries. On November 12th, Bill and Sue Wyatt, Marsha Tate, Woody Williams, Elaine Jones, Bill and Sue Wyatt made the trip to Reelfoot to deliver our Christmas Toy Store contributions. They toured the Christmas Store and were once again amazed by the wonderful work of this ministry. Reelfoot credited Forest Heights with 35 bags of toys.

\$255.00 in monetary contributions from Forest Heights have been sent as well. Make plans to join the Santas next year to see all that God is doing.

Dedication of the Prayer Shawls, Hats, and Prayer Squares

On November 17th our current group of prayer shawls, hats, and prayer squares were dedicated during our Sunday Morning service. 49 hats for cancer patients and 16 prayer shawls were dedicated during the service. This ministry has been continuing at Forest Heights since 2010.



Meet Bishop Graves

There will be a District-wide meeting with our new Bishop, Bishop Graves, at First United Methodist Church here in Jackson on December 4th, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Happy Birthday in December to:

- 9 Jack Finney
- 10 Elaine Jones
- 14 Kathleen Wilson
- 19 Dusty King
- 19 Ida Tumbaga
- 24 Marion Gaffney

December Anniversaries

- 24 Carol & Robert Reeves

Calendar for December 2024

Dec 2	10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hall	Worship Committee
	6:30 p.m. Wyatt's	Women's Advent Bible Study
Dec 4	10:00 a.m. Resource Room	Advent Bible Study
	5:00 – 7:00 p.m. District wide meeting with Bishop Graves at First United Methodist Church, Jackson.	
Dec 5	12:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall	Pre-School Steering Committee
Dec 8	5:00 p.m. Margaret Harrison's	Choir Christmas Party
Dec 9	6:30 p.m. Wyatt's	Women's Advent Bible Study
Dec 10	5:30 p.m. 1 st UMC	Room at the Inn
Dec 11	10:00 a.m. Resource Room	Advent Bible Study
Dec 13	6:00 p.m. Chaplin's	Sojourners SS Christmas Party
Dec 15	4:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall	Christmas Caroling
Dec 16	10:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall	Worship Committee
	6:30 p.m. Wyatt's	Women's Advent Bible Study
Dec 18	10:00 a.m. Resource Room	Advent Bible Study
Dec 22	3:00 p.m. Sanctuary	Christmas Cantata
Dec 24	4:00 p.m. Sanctuary	Christmas Eve Service
Dec 24, 25, 26	Offices Closed – Christmas Holiday	
Dec 30	10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hall	Worship Committee
Jan 1	Office Closed – New Year's Day	

Have you checked our church website lately? Remember you can always find the **Weekly Calendar** and more details about **Upcoming Events** under the **"Events"** tab on fhumc.com.

The Church Council met on Sunday, November 17th, and approved the 2025 budget for Forest Heights. The total projected budget for 2025 is approx. \$230,000.00. Due to inflationary pressures and increased activities in the church this is an increase from the projected budget for 2024. The Council is asking that we each consider a small increase for our giving to Forest Heights in 2025.