



THE WITNESS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1610 PRINCE ST., CONWAY, ARKANSAS, 72034

A Christmas Worth Believing

From Rev. Nathan Kilbourne:

I walked into a large chain store a couple weeks ago and it was already decorated for Christmas. There were trees out for sale, signs inviting me to find the “perfect” gift for my loved ones, and the smells of cinnamon and spice filled the holiday section. I could imagine that as soon as the Halloween decor and products had been removed, the transition to “prep” for Christmas commenced. In fact, as I write this article in a coffee shop before a meeting with the Bishop, there’s a Christmas Tree and stockings hung already!

None of this is new to us. After all, we are used to the retail market guiding us to anticipate what should be our next financial priority. But, as I walked



through the store, my heart just sunk. What I saw felt hollow and empty, filled with promises that last as long as the decor is up and the presents wrapped. But soon, promises and hope will fade when we move to the next season. The presents that were to be transformative

to us - to make us happy, more efficient, more likable, more beautiful (you name the promise) simply don’t last.

Now, I’ve been accused sometimes by my family as being a bit of a grinch around Christmas because stuff like this drives me. But I’ve wondered for the past number of years, “Is this all Christmas is? Is Christmas just about gifts and indulgence? Is it a season to feel warm and cozy and then fade? I want a Christmas worth believing.”

Even in our practice of Advent and Christmas in the church, it often feels like nostalgia rules the roost. We see sweet, baby Jesus in the manger and fail to see the transformation the advent of

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Poinsettia Fund to Benefit Hope Village

During Advent 2025, our annual poinsettia fund collection will be dedicated to helping Conway FUMC complete a project we committed to a few years ago — sponsoring a house as part of the Hope Village project at the City of Hope.

This house will offer an opportunity for an individual or family to move from homelessness to a more sustainable life. We’d love to finish raising those funds so the house can be completed!

Currently, the Hope Village project has three completed homes, said Alicia Gough, a member of Conway FUMC and chairwoman of the Hope Village steering committee.

“All 10 have been framed and are awaiting completion. We are currently working on an additional one to be completed by the end of the year,” Alicia said.

To donate to the poinsettia fund, visit our website at

www.conwayfumc.org/give

or scan the QR code.

Please enter the names of those to be honored or memorialized in the “note” section. You may also bring a check to the church and fill out a printed form.



When FUMC donated back in 2021 and 2022 to complete one home, the decision was made to proceed with having all 10 of the homes framed. “The remaining funds have been used to complete the electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and insulation work at the FUMC house. The sheet rock, cabinetry, lighting fixtures, and appliances are yet to be completed to have the home considered complete. We would then need to

furnish it with beds, living room furniture, and other kitchen items.”

The goal of City of Hope Outreach in building Hope Village is to tackle the homelessness problem in a unique way. “They will offer social workers, nutrition, and educational opportunities for both adults and children. Thanks to generous donations and support of local businesses, churches, and banks, CoHo is building opportunities for a hand up.”

“The Hope Village model provides individuals or families with the opportunity to reside in the Village for 2 to 2.5 years, allowing them to establish a good credit score, rental history, and utility history.

“Our model offers individuals who want to create a better life for themselves and their families the opportunity to do so.”

Journey Through Advent

November 30, 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Join us in the Great Hall for hands-on activities to help your family get ready for Advent!

We're collecting lip balm and hand lotion for our homebound friends.



Volunteers are needed for Journey Through Advent. To sign up, scan the QR code. For more information, contact Catherine Gatlin at cgatlin@conwayfumc.org.

SCAN
ME



Lessons and Carols Service Set Dec. 14

Since 1918, when the service of Christmas Lessons and Carols was first devised at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, communities of faith worldwide have maintained the tradition of gathering each year both at King's and at their local parish churches to hear the news of God's saving work in Word and song. This practice at Christmas had become so popular through the years, that a set of appointed lessons and prayers was made available specifically for use in the Advent season also, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, making ready his path to enter the world as one of us.

It is this order of Advent Lessons and Carols which we offer each year at First United Methodist Church, Conway. This year, we invite you to attend our Advent Lessons and Carols titled "O Day of Peace," on Dec. 14, the third Sunday of Advent, at 11 a.m. in the church Sanctuary.

This special service of singing, prayers, and lessons from Holy Scripture takes the place of the regularly scheduled 11 a.m. worship service. If you would like an opportunity to attend the service of Advent III, you may do so at either 8:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary or at 9:05 a.m. in the Good News Celebration service in the Great Hall.

In addition to beloved carols and hymns of the season, there will be choral and instrumental works by Daniel Kantor, Thomas Forster, Kerenesa Briggs, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Sir Charles Parry, Igor Stravinsky, John Stainer, Jantz Black, and Denis Bédard. Musicians include the Chancel Ringers handbell choir, the treble choristers of the Aldersgate Choir, the Chancel Choir of First United Methodist Church, Andrew Irvin, violin, and Betty Cohen and Jason Saugey, organists.

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the Christ Child already makes among the people to whom he has come. As I read the stories of the anticipation of the arrival of Jesus and his birth, it was life altering. The Good News of the Gospel was already altering the status quo, overturning the powers and principalities, lifting up the lowly, and drawing people out of the humdrum of the ordinary and into the holy. Even in the baby Jesus, the world is being transformed. The coming of the Christ child and his birth is already accomplishing the good news of God's redeeming love in the world. This is a Christmas worth believing.

As we look toward Advent and Christmas this year, I want to invite you into a Christmas worth believing. This year, our worship series will be centered around this idea. In our sermons, we hope to strip away the nostalgia of the texts and hear afresh how the coming of Jesus already alters the world and our lives. So join us on Nov. 30 as we kick off the season of Advent with our new series, "A Christmas Worth Believing."

Longest Night Service Set Dec. 21

In this Advent season, while many celebrate joyfully, others find this time to be heavy with grief, loss, or loneliness. As we approach the longest night of the year, we invite you to a service of quiet reflection, comfort, and hope as we remember that in Jesus, God came close to us—even in our darkest moments.

Join us at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21, in the Chapel as we remember we are not alone and find peace in the presence of Christ among us.

Linktree*



Check out our Link Tree list of sign up forms and volunteer opportunities by scanning the QR Code, or visit the Resources section on our church website.

Christmas Coffeehouse

Nov. 16,
2025





Christmas Eve

First United Methodist Church * 1610 Prince St. * Conway, AR. * conwayfumc.org

11 a.m., Sanctuary
3 p.m., Great Hall
5 p.m., Great Hall
7 p.m., Sanctuary

Carols, Candles & Communion



CHRISTMAS

Worship at
10 a.m. Dec. 25,
in the Sanctuary

Bring the
whole
family!

Let's Talk About It FAMILY DYNAMICS During the Holidays

Please join the Church & Society committee of Conway First United Methodist Church for our Fifth Sunday Presentation on November 30th at 10AM in the Great Hall.

We'll have a panel of professionals speaking about how to approach difficult topics with family members and protect your mental health during the holidays.

Follow the QR code below to submit any specific questions or topics you would like our pros to address.



November 30th, 10am
Great Hall



Submit Questions here.



In Honor & Memory

In memory of Gene Wilbourn by: Beth Ruple, Charles Nabholz, Carey &

Andria Smith, David & Pebble Sutherland, Nancy Graddy, Lyn Curtis

In memory of Dr. Tom Higgs by: David & Pebble Sutherland, Martha Bumpers, Carol & Richard Clark

In memory of Ruby Anderson by: Carol & Richard Clark

In memory of Inez Cumble by: Pattie & Keith Duncan

In memory of Allan Bruner by: Jeremy Bruner

In memory of Joy Lynn Williams by: David Meriwether, Gene Bethards, Linda Tyler, Larry & Peggy Sparks, Diane & Fletcher Lord, Beverly Villines, Deborah Bass, Clay & Dana Reeves, Mary Mobley, Pamela Osment, Nancy & Cloud Keyes, Kathy Farris, Rick Willbanks, Harold & Mary Henderson

In memory of Ellen Sikes Johnson by: Clint Johnson

In memory of Richard & Barbara Collins by: Clint Johnson

In memory of Doug Poindexter by: Larry & Hilda Malpica, Rick & Becky Rasnick, Rick Willbanks

In memory of Bud & Sue Hines by: Libba Tierney

In memory of JoNell Plafcan by: Becky Hammett

In honor of Kish Jones by: Charles Pittman

Care Giver Ministry Update

Monthly caregiver support continues during the holidays and into the new year through the "Caring Connections" social respite program for caregivers.

The "Caregiver Connect" coffee and conversation in the church library invites community and encourages attendees to prioritize self-care while loved ones participate in dementia-related activities in Fellowship Hall.

The "Caring Connections" program meets monthly on the third Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Quarterly 30-minute informational caregiver programs begin on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 10 a.m.

To support this growing ministry, donate to FUMC with the memo line "Caring Connections." The ministry thanks FUMC volunteers who assist 4 to 8 loved ones monthly. Training is provided for these friend assistants by program director Leigh Walls, who identifies the only prerequisite skill: caring. Co-chair is Barbara Satterfield.

At a recent gathering, "Caring Connections" clients helped to decorate gift bags for our shut-in church members and friends.



Thank you to Pat Crowder for helping to organize the creation of the gift bags for November, along with the distribution.



C1Youth Update for November

So far we've raised

\$31,366



We have also had
another **\$31000**
pledged for the year.

**C1Youth Impact
Fund Update**



Several members of our C1MidYouth participated in Brag on Jesus in October. This is an opportunity for our MidYouth to learn about who Jesus is, how to build your relationship with Jesus and how to share your story. For more information about C1MidYouth, which is for students in grades 5-7, please contact Christy Lemmer at clemmer@conwayfumc.org.

UCA Wesley for Fall & Winter

ADVENT SERVICE



**7:30 PM ; WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 3
TRINITY CHAPEL**

LAST WESLEY WORSHIP OF THE YEAR

**ALL AGES ARE WELCOME
TO JOIN US!**

NOVEMBER 2025

Finals Care Packages

FUMC Conway would like to show support to our college students (near and far) who will be taking finals before we know it!

*** Use this QR Code to submit your
student's mailing info!
Deadline to submit is November 30 .**



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Witness Magazine Wins Second Place

The Witness magazine, First United Methodist Church's monthly publication, recently earned second place for print publications in the newspaper and magazine category at the United Methodist Association of Communicators annual meeting in Kansas City.

The other winners in the category were the staff of The Northern Illinois Conference Reporter, third place; and the staff of the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate, first place.

The Witness issues entered were from September, October and November 2023. Issues could be entered if they were published between July 1, 2023, and Aug. 1, 2025. The categories in the contest, judged by communications professionals across the country, included print, video, digital, internet, writing and photography.

Witness editor Colleen Holt said the vitality of the church family — both inside and outside of the church walls — is a main factor in achieving the second-place win. The issues entered featured articles and photos detailing the church's contributions to the City of Hope Outreach program; Advent activities; Blessing of the Animals; grief support efforts; celebrating Methodism; a huge food pantry donation from the community; and One Service Sunday.

The Witness magazine is sent through postal mail and by email once a month. It is designed to go more in depth with stories of the church than what is normally offered in the weekly email blast and in other print publications such as the worship bulletin and the Toilet Paper.

According to the website, "The United Methodist Association of Communicators is a professional association geared to support the work of every United Methodist communicator serving the Church throughout the connection through resources, engagement, continuing education, sharing of ideas, networking, spiritual support, and more. We believe that effective communication is essential to the mission of the church."



DONATIONS FOR STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Each year at this time, the congregation of First United Methodist Church expresses appreciation to the pastoral, administrative and program staff in this church by making a Christmas gift donation.

There are several ways to contribute:

- Put a check in the red gift box in the hospitality area of the Sanctuary building.
 - Mail your donation to the church at 1610 Prince St., Conway, AR 72034.
 - Donate online by scanning the QR code to the right.
- Note the gift in the space below the Special Giving area.



The gift for the staff will be collected through Sunday, Dec. 21. All donations will be used for staff gifts. Please join us in recognizing the hard work and dedication of the great staff at Conway FUMC.



Compassion Bags for our homeless neighbors are now ready for you to pick up and distribute. The bags include items such as travel-sized toiletries and bottled water. The bags are in the shelves that can be found in the hospitality areas of both buildings. Thank you to the members of the Koinonia Sunday School class for packing the bags!

Food Pantry Donation Lists

Are you wondering what you can donate? Help us keep the pantry stocked!

Standard Non-Perishable Box Includes:

- Peanut Butter
- Jelly
- Spaghetti Sauce
- 3 Canned Veggies
- 1 Can Fruit
- 2 Cans Soup
- 1 Ramen
- 1 Corn bread Mix
- 1 box Mac and Cheese
- 1 bag rice
- 1 bag dried beans
- 1 pack spaghetti
- 1 box of Saltines
- 4 Oatmeal Packets

Standard Perishable Supplements (Provided by Community Partners):

- Fresh Vegetable
- Fresh Fruit
- Frozen Meat
- Bread
- Dessert

Often Requested (non-SNAP eligible):

- Deodorant
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Dish Soap
- Laundry Detergent
- Tampons/Pads
- Diapers

Thanksgiving Special (Nov. 20th)

- Box of Stuffing
- Cranberry Sauce
- Cream of Mushroom Soup

Christmas Holiday Bag (Dec 18th):

- Frozen Ham
- Eggs
- Canned Green Beans (Family Sized)
- Canned Yams (Family Sized)
- Canned Cranberry Sauce
- Box of Stuffing Mix
- Box of Instant Mashed Potatoes (Family Sized)
- Brown Gravy Packet (no glass)
- Cake Mix & Icing
- Apple Sauce/Can of Sprite for cake

Happy Extra Items:

- Deer Meat
- Warm Beverages: Cider, Tea, Hot Chocolate, Coffee
- Wrapping Paper
- Toys
- Books
- Puzzles/Games
- Cake Mix
- Cereal
- Granola Bars
- Seasonings
- Wipes
- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Winter Hats/ Gloves
- Ziplock Bags/Food Containers
- Foil
- Hairbrush/Comb
- Laundry Detergent

Group Assembly:

- Cookie Jar Mix
- Soup Jar Mix
- Birthday Kits
- Compassion Bags
- Meal Bags



Sign up on the Link Tree to serve in our food pantry.

There is a Place for You!



Operation Facelift: Conway FUMC Library

The Conway FUMC library received a well-deserved facelift recently, growing from a repository of books to be checked out to a space in which those visiting the church can relax to read, work on a puzzle, enjoy a small group gathering, or just find a quiet place to rest.

Our church librarian, Sandra Humphreys, and her husband, Oliver, have worked tirelessly for the past several months to rearrange shelves, discard books that are no longer needed, and create charming and educational displays in the glass window of the library.

The facelift has included relocating a large conference table to the pastor's office area; adding a smaller, more usable table for small groups, such as the knitting group (pictured); and putting in a few club chairs for extra seating. Along the south wall of the library you can find a collection of children's

books, and under the display window there are several puzzles that are available for times of fun.

"I haven't been by the library a single time since putting the chairs in that there hasn't been someone sitting in there. One of the high school kids said, 'Man! This is awesome. We need more chairs!' Maybe we will eventually get two more," said Sandra.

A portion of the funding for the updates came through memorials designated directly to the library by the family of Shirley Alger, mother of Kathleen Caruthers and Colleen Holt, grandmother of Allyson Caruthers, and mother-in-law of Stuart Holt. If you would like to donate to the library fund, visit the website at www.conwayfumc.org/give and note "library fund" in the special fund line, or you may bring a check to Laura Bounds in the church office.

Advent Devotionals with Bishop Merrill in December

This Advent season, you are invited to begin your mornings in prayer, reflection, and community. Join the staff of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church on Zoom on Dec. 4, 11, and 18 at 8:30 a.m. for a time of devotion and shared prayer as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

These brief gatherings are designed to fit before your

regular workday — a simple, sacred pause to center your spirit and connect with others across the Conference.

Week 1 & 2: Led by Bishop Laura Merrill — reflections on hope and peace. Week 3: hosted by Conference Staff of Arkansas and Oklahoma — reflections on joy and love.

You will join the Zoom offerings at this link: www.okumc.org/bishopmerrilladvent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1610 PRINCE ST.
CONWAY, ARKANSAS 72034
501-329-3801

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Financial Update for Year End 2025

*From Todd Abel,
Chair of the Finance Committee:*

We have had much positive financial news to share this year. We've paid off our debt. Our capital campaign continues to do well. You can see our parking lot being repaired as part of phase 2. We've raised significant funds for the C1Youth impact fund to support our youth.

Yet in all of these wonderful accomplishments, our operational budget remains the core of our financial ministry. It is funded through offerings and your regular gifts. It is how we pay our regular bills like lights, heat and air, and insurance; how we fund program ministries like children, music, midyouth; and how we pay salaries and benefits for the gifted people who lead those ministries. I can say, our staff are good stewards of the gifts you give. It creates the space for ministries such as our food pantry, the Early Childhood Center, and support for our many community partners.

As of the end of October, our giving lags \$68,000 behind operating expenses. What does this mean? It means we've

continued to do ministry, to pay bills, to serve the community, and eat into our reserves. Despite some unanticipated expenses, our spending is on track with what we projected for the year. \$68,000 is about 6 percent of our budget. So if our givers were able to increase their donation by 5 to 10 percent, we would eliminate the deficit. So, if you give \$2,000 annually, an extra \$100 to \$200 would make a difference. I would ask that, as we come to the end of the year that if you are behind in your normal giving, try to catch up if possible. If you haven't given before to the offering, I'd encourage you to consider what you can give.

I know that discussing money can be uncomfortable. It's a goal and responsibility of the finance committee to maintain transparency regarding our financial position and how the church is stewarding your gifts. So, we are thankful for the many ways this congregation is supporting ministry and ask that you prayerfully consider how you might be able to help provide the financial support we need to continue to be a vibrant congregation and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

First United Methodist Church Staff Directory

Senior Pastor -- Nathan Kilbourne
Associate Pastor -- Miranda Hornsby
Director, Children's Ministries -- Catherine Gatlin
Director, Youth Ministries -- Zach Schrick
Director, MidYouth Ministries -- Christy Lemmer
Campus Dir., Wesley Foundation -- Amy Shores
Dir., Music/Worship Ministries -- Jason Saugey
Assoc. Dir., Music (Praise Band) -- Stuart Holt

Assoc. Dir., Music (Children) -- Linda Ball
Nursery Coordinator -- Cara Rucker
Bookkeeper -- Libby Conder
Supervisor, Hospitality Ministries -- Ed Spears
Custodian -- Tim Tarpley
Financial Assistant -- Laura Bounds
Communications Assistant -- Colleen Holt

SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES:
8:30 & 11 A.M. -- SANCTUARY
9:05 A.M. -- GREAT HALL
LIVE-STREAMING AT 9:05 & 11 A.M.:
WWW.CONWAYFUMC.ORG
FACEBOOK.COM/CONWAYFIRSTUMC
OR YOUTUBE: @CONWAYFUMC