

The Lamplighter

February 2024 • Volume XVII • Issue II

“This Is Love...”

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” I John 4:10 NIV

As you read this article, Valentine’s Day is just around the corner. The other day, I did some research on this holiday and came across some interesting tidbits of information. Did you know:

- Nearly 250 million roses are grown just for Valentine’s Day each year
- People spent \$26 billion on Valentine’s Day in the United States in 2023 (this comes to an approximate \$193 per person average)
- Over \$5 billion was spent on jewelry and \$4.4 billion on an evening out for a couple
- Americans send 145 million Valentine’s Day cards each year.

Business and economic impacts aside, it seems as if many people understand the importance of showing signs of love and appreciation with those who mean something to them. Finding some way to show or say “thank you” and/or “I love you” to the people that mean something to us is an extremely important practice in which we should engage. Doing so puts us into a mindset of generosity instead of a mindset of scarcity; it puts us into an attitude of gratitude, rather than the mindset of entitlement. When we are grateful for the kindness and care shown to us, it enables us to encounter life, with all its strange turns and setbacks with a spirit of hope.

This has certainly been my own experience as of late. I have been reminded once more that things like calls, visits, cards and texts can be more precious than gold, especially when one is struggling on a “down” day. I have learned that meals and little treats can taste finer than anything on the menu at a multi Michelin star restaurant. I have learned that vows made before God are not just so many pretty words: they are binding---that there actually can be those who stand with us “...for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health...” I have been reminded once more of the importance of saying “thank you” and “I love you”...and often. Life is too short for us to neglect this practice.

Of course, we are able to be grateful toward and thankful for one another; we are able to know love from and for one another because first of all, we have been loved by One who loves us to the uttermost: **Jesus Christ our Lord**. The words of our text remind us that the first and most important sign of love was not a heart shaped Whitman’s Sampler, nor a Hallmark Card, nor a rosebud vase, but of all things...**a cross**. Love is seen in the fact that while we were yet sinners, while we were a long way away from God, He loved us enough to come to us as one of us, to live among us and teach us of the ways of God and He was willing to give His life on a cross, that we might be forgiven our sins and find our way home to God once more. I don’t know about you, but that expression of love causes me to immediately say, “**Thank you, Lord. I love you.**” Because of Jesus’ freeing, forgiving, loving act of grace, we can give of ourselves to others---and we can express our love and gratitude to those who mean so much to us.

I am not sure that I will be able to get to the Hallmark store to get my cards together for this Valentine’s Day (**I hope you get your shopping done in plenty of time**). That being said, it is not going to stop me from expressing my love and gratitude to those who mean so much to me...especially my Lord. See you in church soon!

P.S. To my First Church Family---Thank you and I love you!

Ken



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Cook Team and Youth Group Parents for Matthew 25 Meal on January 13, 2024 (See article top of p. 9)

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From Your Associate Pastor of Missional Discipleship

Jesus teaches us, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" John 15:13. Love is such an easy word to say, and yet so hard to do. And oh, how often do we miss the fact that it's a verb, meaning an **action word**. Ultimately love is expressed not through declarations of affection but by the service we render to the one we profess to love. Jesus makes a stronger point in teaching that the greater the profession of love, so also is the act of sacrifice in that service. The supreme act of love being to lay one's life down completely for another.

When asked what the greatest commandments were, Jesus responded with two: One, to love God with the whole of your heart, mind, and strength. The second being like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. The choice to sacrifice is perhaps one of the hardest things to learn to do willingly as human beings. We are not naturally prone to sacrifice. That's why love is hard, and why it's an action that takes practice throughout our lives. Our culture tries to disguise love in wrappings that try to make service easier, diluting the word down to sentimental rituals we fulfil on Valentine's Day. However, love's greatest displays are done with heavy lifting. It requires us to "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things" according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:7.

I can't help but to receive inspiration through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, when it comes to the action of love. Jesus obviously had in his mind his own life being laid down, when giving this teaching to his disciples. And upon the cross he beautifully demonstrated the greatest display of love the world had ever seen.

Everyone would agree that unreciprocated love is difficult to endure. We need then to consider how we best respond to His love for us. Well, I'm am thankful how God uses servants in His church, who give of themselves selflessly for others. This month we are excited to recognize new leaders who have heard the call to respond to the love of God in their lives by helping serve our church in leadership. I am thankful to each and every person who said, yes, when the call came. Servant leadership in the church is not always for the faint of heart. It requires a calling from God, but along with a calling it requires a spirit that knows what love is. As we recognize those who have been called into leadership for our benefit at First Methodist Church Washington, please join me in considering how we can continue to respond to such displays of love. Not everyone is called into leadership. Not everyone needs to serve on a committee, but all disciples of Christ are still called to love—to love God first and to love their neighbors as themselves. Perhaps February, the month of love, is a good time for us to consider how best we can respond to the Father's great displays of love given to us.

In Christ,
Stephen Bazan

Stephen Bazan

Wednesday Night Supper Menus

- 2/7/24 Baked Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Roasted Broccoli, Bread, and Dessert
- 2/14/24 Homemade Vegetable Soup, Baked Potato Bar, Salad, Bread, and Dessert
- 2/21/24 Chicken Pastry, Cooked Cabbage, Baked Yams, Cornbread, and Dessert
- 2/28/24 Beans 'n' Ham Soup, Mixed Salad, Cornbread, and Dessert

Please sign up each week or call the church office by noon on Monday.

First Methodist Church Meetings & Activities Calendar

February 2024

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THUR | FRI | SAT |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | 1 7:00 AM Men at the Table 6:30 PM BSA Pack 99 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 9:00 AM Blended Worship and Children's Church 10:15 AM Sunday School 11:15 AM Traditional Worship | 5 9:30 AM MW Executive Board Meeting 7:00 PM Troop 99 Meeting | 6 MW Circle Meetings 10:00 AM Staff Meeting | 7 9:30 AM WWBS "When You Pray" Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00 PM Men of Redemption 4:30 PM River City Ringers 5:30 PM Wed. Night Supper 6:15 PM Financial Peace Univ. 6:15 PM "Salt & Light" Bible Study 7:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal | 8 7:00 AM Men at the Table 6:00 PM Staff-Parish Relations Committee 6:30 PM BSA Pack 99 | 9 | 10 11:00 AM Matthew 25 Fellowship Lunch |
| 11 9:00 AM Blended Worship and Children's Church 10:15 AM Sunday School 11:15 AM Traditional Worship Service 6:00 PM MYF | 12 Newsletter Deadline 5:30 PM Missions Committee Meeting 7:00 PM Troop 99 Meeting | 13 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Pack 99 Committee Meeting 7:00 PM Wiccocon Chapter Order of Arrow Meeting | 14 Ash Wednesday Valentine's Day 9:30 AM WWBS "When You Pray" Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00 PM Men of Redemption 4:30 PM River City Ringers 5:30 PM Wed. Night Supper 6:15 PM Financial Peace Univ. 6:15 PM "Salt & Light" Bible Study 6:30 PM Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 PM Children's Ministry Event 7:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal | 15 7:00 AM Men at the Table 6:00 PM Child Care Staff Meeting 6:30 PM BSA Pack 99 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 1st Sunday in Lent 8:00 AM Methodist Men's Breakfast 9:00 AM Blended Worship and Children's Church 10:15 AM Sunday School 11:15 AM Traditional Worship 6:00 PM MYF | 19 President's Day—Preschool Closed for Students and Staff 5:30 PM Child Care Board Meeting 6:30 PM Preschool Board Meeting 7:00 PM Troop 99 Meeting | 20 10:00 AM Staff Meeting | 21 9:30 AM WWBS "When You Pray" Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00 PM Men of Redemption 4:30 PM River City Ringers 5:30 PM Wed. Night Supper 6:15 PM Financial Peace Univ. 6:15 PM "Salt & Light" Bible Study 6:30 PM Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 PM Children's Ministry Event 7:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal | 22 7:00 AM Men at the Table 6:00 PM Yahoos 6:30 PM BSA Pack 99 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 9:00 AM Blended Worship and Children's Church 10:15 AM Sunday School 11:15 AM Traditional Worship | 26 1:00 PM Matthew 25 Board Meeting 6:00 PM Young Life Annual Banquet 7:00 PM Troop 99 Meeting | 27 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 7:00 PM Church Council Meeting 7:00 PM Troop 99 Committee Meeting | 28 9:30 AM WWBS "When You Pray" Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00 PM Men of Redemption 4:30 PM River City Ringers 5:30 PM Wed. Night Supper 6:15 PM Financial Peace Univ. 6:15 PM "Salt & Light" Bible Study 7:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal | 29 7:00 AM Men at the Table 6:30 PM BSA Pack 99 | | |

Join us as we celebrate five years of guiding women and their children out of homelessness.

OPEN DOOR

WOMEN'S SHELTER

**You're invited to our
5th Anniversary.**

11:00 am
Open House
Tours

Thursday, February 15
11:00 am to 1:00 pm
at Open Door Women's Shelter
1240 Cowell Farm Road
Washington, NC 27889

Light Refreshments until
1:00 pm

12:00 pm
Ribbon Cutting
Held by
Washington
Beaufort
Chamber
Of Commerce

Our Church Directory is Online!

To access the online directory, scan the QR code, or go to members.instantChurchDirectory.com and follow the prompts under "First time signing in? Create Login." You will need to use an email address that is listed in our directory to sign up. The Online Church Directory is secure and may only be accessed by Church members who are listed in the directory. Accessing the directory is free of charge - you do not need to input credit card information to log in. If you are asked for credit card information, **do not** provide it and make sure you are at the correct website address. If you have provided your credit card information, contact your bank. You should only need to provide your email address and set up a password.

Once you log into the directory, you will be able to see contact information for the members of our Church. You can also update your family's information, if needed. **Did you miss the directory photos?** You can upload your own photo to the directory! To update your information, click on "Edit My Family" at the top right of the screen. On the edit screen, you can update your family's address, phone numbers, and email addresses. To update contact information for a specific family member, click on the edit button next to their name. To upload a family photo, click on "Choose File" in the photo section and select a file to upload. Once you have made your edits and/or uploaded your photo, click "Submit Edits" at the bottom of the screen to save your changes. **Please take a moment to log into the directory and make sure your information is up-to-date.**

Need help or have questions? Contact Rachel Cessna at pksocket516@hotmail.com. More information about printed copies of the directory will follow soon.

Special thanks to Cherri and Meg Howdy, Erin Franz and Greg Cushing, Judy Peede, and Rachel Cessna for all their work to make the directory possible!



Celebrating the gift of life during the month of February:

- 1st Nic Stembridge
- 3rd Barbara Van Vliet, Katy LaBarbera
- 4th Annabelle Howdy
- 5th Jill Gravely, Linda Howard
- 6th George Isovitsch, Marquis Woolard
- 8th Betsey Lee Hodges
- 9th Chris Stembridge
- 10th Jane Dockins, Nicole Jackson
- 11th Lee Hartsell, Ingrid Hall, Erin Blackmon
- 12th Stephen Bazan
- 14th Will Taylor
- 15th Sara Cutler
- 16th Rebecca Wilkins
- 17th Charlie Alligood, Stephen Tubaugh
- 18th Robbie Edwards
- 20th Shirley Stone
- 21st Brenda Hardy, Moses Moye
- 22nd Tom Atkins
- 25th Bob Douglas, Seth Edwards, Sarabeth Franz
- 26th Linda Moore, Edward Lich, Brad Jackson, Sarah Katherine Oden
- 28th Mickey Cochran, Donna Burrus
- 29th Dal Newbold

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for submissions to the March Lamplighter is February 12, 2024, the **second** Monday of the month.

Family Ministries

"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.'¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1:17-18

When I was little, we spent a lot of time at my grandparents' lake house on Lake Gaston. One of our favorite things to do as soon as we got out of the car was to take off running, around the house, down the hill, and onto the dock. After our initial trip down the hill, it was back inside to change into our swimsuits and back down to the water.

As much as I loved (and still do) the water, the one thing I didn't really enjoy was when I would jump in and it was cold. I am not a person who enjoyed the cold. One time I jumped in, opened my eyes and was shocked that the water was cold and dark and scary. I came up for air sputtering and very upset. Promptly getting out and swearing I wouldn't go back in, I had gone past my comfort zone.

I have since overcome this fear and will swim just about anywhere but was reminded of this fear and thought about the verses above. What if the disciples did as I did and decided to stay in their comfort zone. They never would have come to know Jesus and certainly they wouldn't have had the opportunities to share His love with others.

There are several opportunities for each of us here at FMCW to step out of our comfort zones, out of our boats and take a leap of faith to serve Christ. It may be as simple as seeing an unfamiliar face and walking over to say hello and begin a conversation. It could be signing up to help with children's church - we always need helpers, and it doesn't matter if you're a man, woman, youth or adult we need your help. Our children need your help so they can see others trusting God. Our youth could use other church members stepping into their lives and sharing how God has worked in their lives to help them explore how He can use them. Our shepherding program is a wonderful way to help people feel better connected to our church and share God's love.

God is constantly providing opportunities for us to step out in faith, out of our comfort zones, and take the opportunity to share His love with others. And not only does He keep providing opportunities to step out, but He will give us little nudges to take that step of faith and see where He will lead us. If you need some ideas, please come see me, you never know where God will take you, but we are promised that He is always with us! "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." Isaiah 43:2a

Blessings,

Sarah Beth

Director of Family Ministries
252-946-3311 Ext. 204

Child Care

FMCW Child Care began a new Bible Curriculum in January called Wonder Ink. We are on a three-year journey to grow together in four focused ways:

God Knows Me (Psalm 139)

Jesus Loves Me (John 13)

The Holy Spirit Leads Me (Romans 8)

I Am a Child of God (1 Peter 2)

Each month we will have a new theme and in January it was The Heart of Jesus and Matthew 5 and 6. Parents can interact with their kids at home through a link with a weekly newsletter and videos, so we are all partnering together. In February, our theme is What Did He Say?

As always, we thank you for the many ways you impact this ministry and ask that you pray with us for every area of touching the lives of our Child Care children with the love of Jesus.

Diane Van Staalduinen

Child Care Director
Director's Cell: 252-947-2836

Matthew 25

Many thanks to Sarah Beth Wood and the Youth Group and their leaders and parents, Rachel Cessna, PJ and Chris Stenbridge, Catherine and Elanor Davis, Buffy and Catherine Liche, Sullivan Howdy, Madison, Cate and Caroline Swanner for providing and serving 66 meals to our guests. What a blessing to see the Youth involved with such efficiency and bright smiles. Twenty-six meals were delivered by Diana Tew, Gale Champion, Renee Douglas, Barbara Smith, Missy Deaner, and Jane Weaver to our homebound church members. This is such a wonderful addition to our program and those that deliver come away with smiles and great memories.

Matthew 25 doesn't provide just a nice meal; there are other things happening such as: an inspirational message by Paige Davis; music by William Faust; information by David Sullivan, new manager of Zion Shelter; policy advocate from Raleigh, Rebecca Ceresa providing information about the new Medicaid program and answering questions; Will Jefferson assisting guests at the prayer table; and hats, gloves, socks, and school and hygiene supplies were being distributed to the guests by Susan Zachary and Kay and Bob Smithwick.

On hand were our students from BCCC that helped to serve: Debia, Yetzibe, Evelyn, Brisey and Hazy. Other team members assisting were Janice O'Kane, Kim Copeland, Beth Litchfield in her chicken hat, Pam Deese, Katherine Taylor, Sally and Reid Brodie and Lorre Bowen.

The tables were decorated by Sally Brodie with a creative arrangement of holly, greenery, and winter branches in a bed of snow.

It was a wonderful way to begin 2024.

Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Jane Weaver

(See picture on back cover)

AGAPE VALENTINE PROJECT

Agape Circle members want to send your Valentines. This is our annual money-making project for missions. Thank you for letting us send your love to others.

We will address and mail for **\$2 each**. Many ways to get us your list:
 *Fill out pink sheets and place list with check (Agape Circle) or cash in offering plate.
 *Leave list and money in the church office
 * Mail addresses and check to:
 Paula Willey
 508 Northwood Road
 Washington, NC 27889
 *Email address list to:
 pwilley76@yahoo.com
 and mail check to Paula Willey

Any questions? Call 947-0334

Deadline for getting your list to us is **Tuesday, February 6.**

Thank you again for your support!
With love and blessings to all,

The Agape Circle

Methodist Women Circle News

Monday, February 5, 2023
MW Executive Board Meeting
9:30 AM, Asbury Conference Room

Tuesday, February 6, 2023

Circle Meetings:

Agape Circle

9:00 AM, Fellowship Hall—Backpack Pals
and Child Care Snacks
7:00 PM, Parlor—Meeting

Circle of Joy

1:00 PM, Asbury Conference Room

Circle of Kind Blessings

12:00 PM, Wesley Hall

Circle of Mary and Martha

9:00 AM, Fellowship Hall—Backpack Pals
10:00 AM, Asbury Conference Room—Meeting

SONshine Circle

Next Meeting in March

METHODIST WOMEN MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Calling all women of the church:

Methodist Women Circles are open to all women in our church. We would love for you to join us. We reach out to local and worldwide missions. Circles meet on the first Tuesday of each month (except June, July, and August). We have a fellowship dinner with all the circles in May and December.

For more information, contact circle leaders below:

Paula Willey (Agape Circle)—946-9591

Kay Buckman (Circle of Kind Blessings)—946-9591

Shirley Stone (Circle of Mary and Martha)—481-2420

Tish Moore (Circle of Joy)—945-0526

Sarah Katherine Oden (SONshine Circle)—945-1289

Preschool

We were excited to return to school after the Christmas holiday, and the children were glad to see their friends once more. They were full of stories from Christmas, and it is always fun to hear all that they did over the holiday. January was filled with winter activities and stories of Jesus growing, maturing, and beginning His ministry with His disciples. The Pre-K and Three's class have enjoyed their visits to Brown Library that will continue once a month until the end of the year. Mr. Terry does a wonderful job reading and keeping the children entertained during our time there.

This month is sure to be busy as we will have all our Valentine parties, discuss Dental Health month, and learn that no one loves us as much as Jesus. The Pre-K class will take a trip over to the post office to mail some Valentines. We are looking forward to all the fun the children and teachers will have.

The following are some ways that our church congregation can come alongside the preschool to support and lift up our ministry:

1. Registration is continuing for our program for next year and is now open to the public. Children must be one by August 31 through four years old to participate. Registration forms can be found online at <https://fmcwashington.com/preschool-registration/>. You may also contact Amanda Bazan at 252-532-7604 or email fmcwpreschool@gmail.com if you have any questions concerning the program. Please help get the word out!!
2. Continue to pray for our program, its staff, and students. We specifically ask for prayers of continued good health throughout the program so that we can effectively bring God's Word to His little children. We also ask for prayers of God's provision as we look ahead to the upcoming school year. We trust God to bring those who need this program most, to us, in His time.
3. If you feel led to give to the preschool financially, we are still in need of scholarship money for the upcoming school year. Scholarships are only possible through the generous donations of church organizations or individuals. We appreciate your consideration of this possibility.

Amanda Bazan

Preschool Director
Cell: 252-532-7604
fmcwpreschool@gmail.com

Youth News

The New Year has started, and the youth have kicked it off well. In Sunday School, we started a new series titled Your New Playlist - where we are exploring how to better call on God and the Bible to help our minds focus on Him instead of what the world calls us to think about. One of the main verses we looked at is Psalm 49:19 - "When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer." We are also exploring some new ideas on other areas where the youth can be in service here at the church, to our church members and in our community.

Speaking of service, the youth and some faithful parents and volunteers served about 70 people at our Matthew 25 meal on Saturday, January 13. We had a wonderful meal of fried chicken, green beans, potato salad and rolls, everyone who came had a joyful time sharing in good food and conversations.

On Sunday, January 21, we resumed Sunday night MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) or Youth Group. We had a fun night of games with a devotion about why having a church family is important. We hope that this will restart our Youth Group time again, encouraging all Youth to come and bring a friend. Please keep watching as there are some big changes coming for our Youth Ministries.

If anyone would like to donate their time to help with our youth in any way or share a financial gift to help provide dinner to the youth on Sunday evenings, please contact Sarah Beth.

Blessings,

Sarah Beth Wood

Children's Ministry

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and even when He is old He will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) This verse keeps coming to mind as I think about all that our Children's Ministry is doing and preparing to do. What an honor it is to serve the children of this church and continue to grow them in their walk with the Lord. While I agree that this attitude first and foremost begins at home, I know from experience that it takes a village. My oldest child, Isaac, recently expressed to me his excitement in going to church. When he woke up on Sunday, he said, "YES! It's church day!!! True, as a ministry family, a lot of times it feels like we live at church, but his excitement is genuine. It does not come from spending another 3 hours with his parents constantly reminding him to be good, to sit up, to act respectful (he gets enough of that at home, and trust me, it isn't always pretty). His excitement stems from the people here who invest time in teaching him about our Lord and Savior. It's from knowing that he is going to see friends who are like-minded. It is from hearing the same values from others that are also talked about at home. What a great comfort as a parent to know that your children are loved and valued by their church family.

Currently, our Children's Ministry needs YOU! There are several ways in which you can serve our children this year. Please prayerfully consider giving your time and talents to the future of the church, the nation, and the world.

3rd-5th grade Sunday School teachers needed! We really want to make this class successful for our older children. They are wanting and needing more in depth discussion of God's word. This is crucial in their development as disciples. Please reach out to me if you feel led to this position. We hope to get enough teachers so that we can work on a 3-month rotation. (That means we need at least 4 teachers to step up to cover a year's worth of curriculum.)

VBS- YES IT'S COMING! Our theme this year is "The Great Jungle Journey," and we need all kinds of talent to help with this event. I am looking for Team Leaders, Teachers, Prayer Warriors, and Decorators just to name a few. Trust me, all talents can be utilized, so please ask me how you can help! Our Jungle Journey dates are June 17-20 from 9 a.m.-12 a.m.

Children's Church - Please continue to sign up to help with this amazing time. This takes up only 20 minutes of your day, but is packed with Biblical truth for the children.

Wednesday Night Programming - You DO NOT have to be a parent to serve on these nights. Are you good at coordinating games? Come be a game leader. Do you have a talent for music? Come and sing. Do you love crafts? Come lead a craft with the children. Any other special talents you want to share? Let's talk and make it happen!

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." You have an opportunity to grow our youngest disciples to be followers of the Truth. Will you answer the call? Contact Information: Amanda Bazan, cmc@fmcwashington.com, 252-532-7604

Calendar of Events:

February 14: Deliver Valentines to Shut-Ins

Amanda Bazan

Children's Ministry Coordinator

Cell: 252-532-7604

Email: cmc@fmcwashington.com

HARDCOPY DIRECTORY

The FMCW Online Directory can be made available in a hardcopy booklet. The price will be \$8-\$10 depending on the number of copies ordered. Please sign up at the Wesley Hall Welcome Center or outside the Sanctuary if you will purchase the Directory booklet.

Missions

Missions Review for 2023

The Missions Committee began the year by planning mission events that lasted the entire year to help support the mission efforts of First Methodist Church Washington. In doing so, the Missions Committee followed our Mission statement of: "To connect the congregation to opportunities, to be the hands and feet of Jesus locally and the broader community." With the Lord's help, we made efforts to involve the entire congregation to meet our goals for 2023. This was accomplished by prayer, informing, encouraging and by providing opportunities for members and non-members to be involved.

The year was very rewarding and God was good in providing the needed funds to support His missions. In January we challenged the congregation to a Lenten goal of \$5000.00 to help support local missions. Praise the Lord, our church family met that goal. We currently support 16 missions throughout our community and were able to increase our quarterly donations to the eight missions which we support through our Missions Budget. Some of the other projects the church supported were: Back Packs Pals, Safe Harbor help line through United Way, Eagles Wings, John Cotton Tayloe School, Open Door Community Center, Matthew 25, Purpose of God Annex, Ruth's House, Salvation Army, Sheltering Homeless, Zion Shelter, Rise Against Hunger, Angels Wings, Kiwanis Special Youth Fund for Christmas, Saturday Night Jamboree, House of Hope and the Shoe Box Ministry.

Some of the events in 2023 were:

Lenten Offering

Yard Sale - May 2023

Rise to Hunger - May 2023

T - Shirt Fundraiser - Summer and Fall 2023

Fall Fling - November 2023

Shoebox - Missions agreed to support with providing to pay the \$10.00 shipping fee for all boxes sent. - December 2023

Kiwanis Special Youth Fund for Christmas - December 2023

John Cotton Tayloe School Student Christmas Bags - December 2023

Salvation Army Christmas Tree - December 2023

Some of the events planned for 2024:

House of Hope - Is a ministry in Bolivia that provides a haven to serve those who have been trafficked. The house is presently full and House of Hope needs more funds to provide housing for those who are waiting on accommodations. FMCW has approved a dinner on April 5, 2024, in Wesley Hall to help with this endeavor. Harvest Church will help support this event.

Mission Committee will present House of Hope for 2024 Lenten Offering.

Yard Sale dates are April 21 to April 27, 2024.

We are so excited to let you know that God has provided a storage unit that we will be able to use for this sale. Please contact Ron Branch if you have LARGE ITEMS that you would like to donate but need to be stored until the sale. 828-719-8803

Respectfully submitted by the Missions Committee:

George Isovitsch, Bonnie Isovitsch, Ron Branch, Deb Branch, Pastor Stephen, Larry Lang, Shirley Stone, Jane Dockins, Paul Dockins and Darwin Woolard.

WEDDING DIRECTORS NEEDED!

Women of all ages are needed to direct weddings in our church. If you are interested in directing weddings or helping with weddings as an assistant director, please contact **Kaye Buckman at 252-946-9591** or **Shirley Stone at 252-481-2420**. This is a great opportunity to serve your church and be edified in so doing.

We are planning a training session that will take place on March 10, at 2:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary. Please call Kaye or Shirley to sign up.