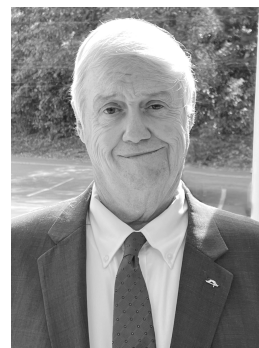


# Letter from our Pastor

Reflections on 2023,  
Looking forward to 2024 ...



2024 is here! The holiday season is over. I hope that each of you had a joyful and blessed Christmas. May God Bless and keep you in this new year! I hope that you have new memories to add to your collection of memories of Christmases past. May the peace, joy, love and hope of Christmas abide with you in the coming days. Our lives will be blessed if we seek to keep the love that God has shown us in our hearts. I believe that the world would be a much more beautiful place if we would only love every day with the spirit of Christ. As we go together into the future days may we love as we have been loved.

2023 was a good year for Monticello First United Methodist Church. We were able to meet together every Sunday for worship. Monticello 1st UMC was able to host our First Responder's Sunday and our annual Fall Tailgate service. We were able to hold several luncheon meetings together after church. Our Holy Week Services and Easter Sunrise service were joyous and well attended. The United Methodist Men held two of their annual Chicken-Q's and were successful in raising funds to continue their ministry to the community. The United Women in Faith were very active and were a vital part of the life and ministry of the church. The Joy group continues to bless the life of our church. The Scouts were active and have been a blessing to our community and to the church. Krista Steele achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and presented a very nice work table to be used to help prepare for our cooking endeavors. The choir still meets to practice and adds a very necessary element to our worship. Our Christmas Eve candlelight service was very well attended. These things were among our accomplishments in 2023. If I have inadvertently overlooked someone or some accomplishment, please forgive me.

The controversy over disaffiliation was the most difficult thing we struggled with this year. That Monticello First UMC experienced controversy over this issue was not surprising to me. The entire United Methodist Church was in a chaotic turmoil during the season of disaffiliation. May God help us!

I regret that some of our membership have chosen to leave our church over these issues. I love all of them and miss them. I do want us – as individuals – and as a church to put this whole issue of disaffiliation behind us. We have talked, met and voted on the issue. I know that there are those who are still dissatisfied with the outcome of that vote. I knew that no matter what the result of a vote by the Leadership Council was that some would be displeased. I do not believe that even if the council had asked the District Superintendent to call a special charge conference that the outcome would have been different. There was not, and is not, a two-thirds majority who would have voted to disaffiliate. So where does that leave us and what are we to do?

I believe that the best thing that we can do as a church is to drop this issue. Let the decision which has been taken to remain in the United Methodist Church be our decision. Nothing has changed in your own well-loved Monticello First UMC. We are still God's people. Love God and each other and all will be well. We are entering a new year. Let us worship God, love Jesus and love each other. I look forward to 2024 with you.

*Grace and Peace, Ben*

## ———— Year End **Contribution Statements** from Sam Kelly ————

*2023 Contribution Statements will be available for pickup beginning Jan 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
on the table in the hallway behind the sanctuary.*

*The ones that haven't been picked up by Jan 21<sup>st</sup> will be mailed out. If your address has changed, please email us!*

# A LOOK BACK AT A FEW 2023 EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH



**FIRST RESPONDERS SUNDAY...was a success** with over 108 attending the service and luncheon! Pastor Ben gave the sermon, and the fellowship hall was full afterward for the luncheon. A memorable day. Kudos to our first responders!



**UWF** visited Nona Wilson for a June luncheon



**Annual Tailgate Service...Go Canes! Go Cougars!**



**DANIEL JEFFRIES** (left) played organ and grand piano on Father's Day while **Joneen** (right) enjoyed some well-deserved time off.



Thanks to our **Leadership Council**, Monticello First UMC has a new oven (*installed*), warming oven and two serving tables in the Fellowship Hall.



**UMM SPRING & FALL CHICKEN-Q's a success!**



**ML&J Christmas Angels 2023**  
Our Church sponsored eight children this year. Thanks to all who gave these children a blessed Christmas!



**SANCTUARY ROSES** on Father's Day (left) and Christmas (right) In loving memory of Yearwood & Brittain family members.





# *Traditional Worship in person every Sunday or join us on Facebook online at*

<https://www.facebook.com/MonticelloFirstUMC/videos>

*Sunday School 9:45 AM* in Fellowship Hall. *Free Coffee!*

## NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS

- The **United Methodist Men's Breakfast Meeting** will be Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.
- The **United Women in Faith's Meeting** is the first Tuesday each month at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. A community of women experiencing supportive fellowship.
- The **Red Cross Blood Drive** is Wednesday, January 10 from 1:00 - 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Register online at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and use code: jasper.
- The **Joy Club Meeting** is the third Thursday each month at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.
- **Leadership Council Meetings** are held the second Sunday each month and all members are welcome. The next meetings will be announced via emails and Sunday bulletins.
- **UPPER ROOMS** for January & February are here! Pickup at the office, Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 11:00 to 3:00 pm. Please call the office and leave a message if you need assistance.
- Every fourth Thursday is **Mobile Day at the Jasper County Community Food Bank**, open to all our friends and neighbors in Jasper County. Hours are 9:30 am to 1:00 pm. If interested in volunteering, come to the Foodbank by 8:30 am any Thursday, 2171 Post Rd. Extra pallets of food were disbursed for Christmas, donated by the Middle Georgia Food Bank.



*For corrections, additions, deletions to the Birthdays, Anniversary & email lists, please leave a message at the church office, 706-468-6118.*

Office hours are Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

### ***January Birthdays:***

- 5. Jessica Kelly
- 10. Louise Kelly
- 26. Larry Smith
- 29. Don Kelly

### ***February Birthdays:***

- 28. Matti Smith
- 27. Gena Smith

### ***Happy Anniversary:***

- 23. Tom & Julie Tucker

### ***—IN MEMORIAM—***

***for beloved family, friends and members who passed in 2023***

*(as reported to the North Georgia Conference):*

*Willard Lawrence*

*Linton Jordan*

*Jane Cullum Foster*

*Mabel McMichael Bennett*

*(former choir member)*