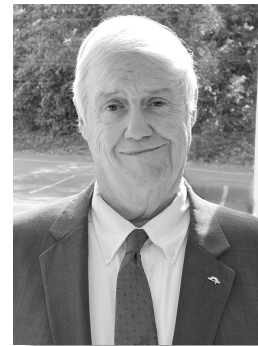


Letter from our Pastor

Holidays and retirement ...



Hello and happy holidays! I am looking at the calendar as I write this and trying to grasp the fact that it is November already! This year seems to have flown by. Psychologists say that time actually does seem to move faster for us as we age. By the time you read this I will actually be 74. Sometimes I wonder how that happened. Do you ever wonder how you got to be your age? It seems that I have gotten older while I was not looking. Is that how it happens? One day you finish your formal education, get married, start a life-time job, probably have children, they “grow up” and then you are old enough to retire. Time does indeed fly. Maybe I – we – were too busy to notice that time passed so quickly.

I think that possibly time seems to move slowly for younger persons because they are in the anticipation stage of life. It seems to them that the 12 years of elementary, middle and high school years last at least 100 years. I remember when the years between 14 and 16 lasted an eternity. The four years of college seemed to stretch out in front of me like an endless road. I would never reach my final destination. While we are busy with our lives it is easy to be eager for the next “thing” ahead. Eventually that next stage comes and we then rush on to our next anticipated destination. It is too easy for us to be so busy living that we forget to live in the moment. I believe that the moment we live in – the NOW – is at least as important as the goal we are reaching for.

Those of us who have reached the age of retirement sometimes find the fact that we have few goals in front of us to evoke a feeling of strangeness. A psychologist once told me that statistically nearly 50% of individuals who reach retirement undergo at least a mild depression. Frankly, I thought that he was wrong. I was told when I retired from teaching high school that I might find being retired a disappointment. My reply to that statement was that I had found work often disappointing and I could deal with disappointment. I haven’t found retirement to be disappointing, it is just “different.” However, the “different” is not depressing.

Of course, please bear in mind that I still haven’t been able to retire, at least not in the conventional sense. I do find life interesting and I am enjoying my time with Monticello First UMC. Being appointed to a United Methodist Church again was not anywhere on my “bucket list” of things I planned to do before I died. Whatever my plans were for the days of not being pastor have not come to fruition. Actually, I did not have any big plans. I do find fulfillment of my purpose in serving as your minister.

However, the Bible tells us that our plans may not be God’s plan. “There are many plans in a man’s heart, nevertheless – the Lord’s counsel – that will stand.” (Proverbs 19:21 NKJV) Happiness, contentment, joy and peace are found in following the Lord’s counsel. God has plans for all of us, regardless of our age. In this holiday season may we seek the Lord’s purpose for our life and be willing to follow where ever He leads.

I know that some of you are too young to have reached all of their life’s goals. However, we need to be aware that God does have a plan and use for each of us. We are only here in this world for a little while, however long we live is but a flicker of light compared to eternity. As we prepare for Thanksgiving may we reflect and see the blessings that God has given us. God’s gifts always exceed our expectations. As we prepare for Advent and Christmas may we remember to focus on the gift of Jesus Christ. He was, and is and will forever be the greatest reason to celebrate that we will ever have.

Grace and Peace, Ben

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for UPCOMING EVENTS on:

- **November 12, 5:30 PM** – *Charge Conference* hosted by Monticello First United Methodist Church. We will be joined by the other United Methodist churches in Butts and Jasper Counties. There will be a covered dish dinner before the meeting. The business session will begin (hopefully) around 6:15 PM.
- **November 19** – our *Thanksgiving dinner* follows morning worship. A special time for us to gather together as a church family and celebrate the blessings we have received from the Lord! **The Leadership Council** will meet briefly following the dinner in the Fellowship Hall.
- **December 24** – *Christmas Eve* falls on a Sunday this year. In previous years if Christmas Eve occurred on a Sunday, it is customary to have no morning worship service. We will gather in the afternoon for worship at 4:00 PM for the candlelight service.



Traditional Worship in person every Sunday

or join us on Facebook live at 11:00 AM!

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

NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS • NEWS BRIEFS

- **All Saints Sunday** – during the morning worship we will light candles for those Saints who went home to glory since last All Saints Day to November 5th this year.
- **UWF Luncheon meeting** is first Tuesday each month at 11:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. November 7th speaker is Sam Kelly on “Where the Money Goes.” On December 4th meet to prepare goodie trays for shut-ins and the Retreat.
- **UMM Breakfast meetings** are the first Sunday each month, 8 AM In the Fellowship Hall, upcoming dates are November 5th and December 3rd.
- **Joy Group meetings** – Third Thursday, 11:00 AM, covered dish in the Fellowship Hall. November 16th, bring something for which you are thankful. December 21st Holiday surprise! Everyone welcome.
- **Thanksgiving Covered Dish & Leadership Council** –November 19th luncheon at noon, Council meeting following the covered dish meal in the Fellowship Hall. All members are welcome.
- **Red Cross Blood Drive** – November 19th 2:00 – 7:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Register online at: redcrossblood.org and enter *Jasper* to schedule an appointment.
- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** – 4:00 PM on Sunday, December 24th in the Sanctuary. Kids in PJs OK!
- **Upper Rooms** for November & December are here! Pickup in the hall on the wall behind the Sanctuary. Regular print and large print available. Please call the office 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. To volunteer, come to the Foodbank by 8:30 AM any Thursday, 2171 Post Rd. **HOLIDAY NEEDS LIST** on bulletin boards with donation boxes below.



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

Office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

We want to hear from you!

November Birthdays:

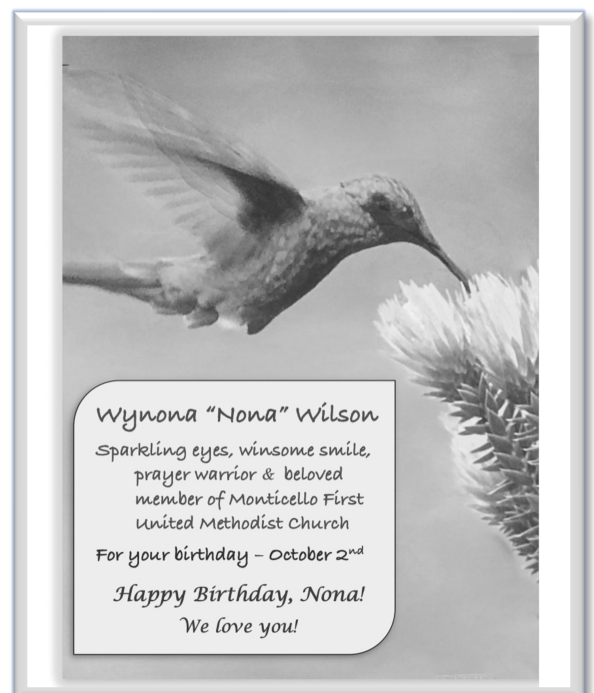
5. Sam Kelly
7. Alexandra Kelly
8. Janet Anderson
11. Gail Parrott
26. Donald Tyler

December Birthdays:

11. Lee Russell

November/December Anniversaries:

- 11/22 Frank & Nancy Pool
- 12/17 Larry & Cindy Smith



UMM FALL CHICKEN-Q *was another success! Thanks to all who participated ... from coleslaw prep to cooking to plating to sales.*



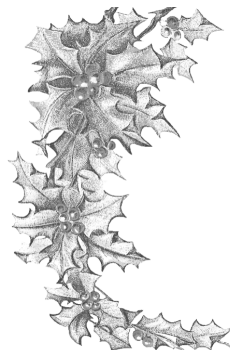
Volunteers of the United Methodist Men serve behind the scenes for their Chicken-Q fundraiser meals twice each year. Proceeds benefit the outreach ministries of the UMM. Meals include half a chicken, slaw, chips and bread. They usually sell out within just a few hours. *Gentlemen, we appreciate you!*

99th COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CANTATA
will be held on December 10th at 4:00 and 7:00 PM at the Baptist Church in Monticello. Amy Scroggs will direct the musical "Peace Has Come."



ML&J Christmas Angels 2023

The List will arrive in November, and we will post Angels on the tree for children who need help with their Christmas (clothes, shoes, and gifts). Gifts to be picked up by parents by Dec. 15th. Our church is so generous providing for their Christmas. We expect 8-10 children again this year.



Christmas Baskets *this year go to the Jasper County Courthouse employees. Jelly Jars are already secured. Please donate small items (such as candies, toiletries, gift cards, post-it notes, snacks, etc.) in the donation boxes behind the Sanctuary doors, Nov. 6 – Dec. 18th. Volunteers to stuff the baskets will be appreciated. Contact Joneen for details.*



Thanks to the hard work of our **Leadership Council**, Monticello First UMC has a new oven (*installed*) and warming oven (*to be installed*), and two serving tables in the Fellowship Hall. They will be put to good use hosting the North Georgia Charge Conference covered dish & business meeting on Nov. 12th, and our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon at noon on Nov. 19th. These are a blessing for the Women in Faith who so faithfully serve (and clean up) the special events and bereavement committee meals for our Church.





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Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Pastor: Rev. Ben Strength

Choirmaster/Accompanist: Joneen Padgett

Financial Secretary: Sam Kelly

Secretary/Office Manager: Gail Cowart

Monticello First UMC • November/December 2023 Newsletter

