

Middlesettlements United Methodist Church

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December Newsletter 2024



Written with love by the Middlesettlements UMC family, the 2024 Advent devotional booklet is available in print and on our website! You will find members of the congregation reflecting on the meaning of various scriptures and sharing their experiences, insights, and testimonies – as well as ways you can celebrate God and his work this season. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.” Titus 2:11-14

The Church has its own calendar—its own way of organizing time around the stories of scripture. There are holy days (holi-days) and seasons, times of remembering and celebrating, days of feasting or fasting and repenting. Each of those days and seasons helps us tell the story of God, helping us love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. These days and seasons of remembering God’s story are called the Liturgical Year and it begins every year with the season of Advent. The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival”—and the season of Advent is a time of looking forward to the advent of Jesus. Advent invites us to remember how Jesus has come to us before—how as a baby “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”—and how Jesus will someday come again in glory.

While commemorating a season that celebrates God-with-us, we also remember that God is with us even now. Jesus has dwelt among us and the Spirit currently dwells in us, joining us to the Father and to one another. But even this presence is a foreshadowing, a taste, of what is to come. We await “the blessed hope” and “manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

While we wait and hope, there is much to be done. We are to live in a certain way: the way of the people of God. We live in gratefulness, remembering our salvation as a gift from God. We remember that Christ has made us his own and that we are to live like him. It can sound a little boring at first, especially during the holiday-frenzy of December. But these are ways of life that not only help us be free, but also offer us hope, peace, joy, and love.

A few organizational notes about MUMC’s 2024 Advent Devotional that you might find helpful as you begin:

- Daily entries have two parts: “daily prayer” and “devotion”. Take time to read these each day, if possible, at around the same time. If you don’t already have a daily Quiet Time, this can give you the “kick-start” you need to make it a regular practice. If finding time for prayer is hard, or feels boring, set a timer for 10-15 minutes each day. No matter what, you’re done when the timer goes off and while it’s going, nothing else gets to intrude.
- Each daily devotion features scripture, reflections from the people of God, and a prayer. I love reading these every year as I edit – there is so much wisdom, humor, and honesty in these reflections! **Sunday** daily devotions focus on the scripture passage that will be used in Sunday Worship! These devotions give you space to hear and respond to the reading for each day, as well as to write down anything you’ve learned.
- Each “daily prayer” has space for adoration, confession & pardon, thanksgiving, supplication, and reflection. If you’re new to these, a few notes:
 - **Adoration:** *This one will probably be the hardest at first, cause you’ll be tempted to make it “thanksgiving” – but it’s not! This is pure praise. What can you praise God for? What about Him is revealed to you as worthy of your praise that day? If you’re looking for examples, the Psalms and many hymns or praise songs offer praise that goes beyond gratitude for His gifts. Here are some praises I’ve given in the past (these are ...simple, but struck me as pretty awesome of God too): “You are Creator of leaves & trees & changing colors”, “you designed the color red and cinnamon and clove”, “you worked to include tastebuds in my body”, “you made families and placed them together to live in love”, “you imagined fire and made it real”, “you are head of the church and all things are under you”, “you set things in order, with specific natures and rules and purpose”, and “you are good and your purposes are always good”.*

- **Confession & Pardon:** You've probably confessed your sin before, but here it is: a daily confession of sin. This month, you might realize you're confessing the same sin each day...or that you rarely acknowledge you've done wrong! But important to each daily confession is the acceptance of God's forgiveness – as God's people, repentance is followed by mercy. It might seem silly to follow the daily instructions of setting aside a (timed) minute to breathe God's mercy in and out, but it's a beautiful, life-changing practice. Try it!
- **Thanksgiving:** Daily thanksgivings are so, so good and so, so important. This month, try to find new, specific things to be thankful for – not the same three every day. I'm tempted to often just say "family, job, home", but when I push myself, I've been so much more grateful because while these three are AMAZING, I am surrounded by things to be grateful for. Here's some of the thanksgivings I've given in the past month: a lunch date with my husband, my children singing in church, the earrings I was gifted that brought joy to my heart, the feel of my heated blanket, my kids' friends' moms who have become my friends, the way the color pink looks so good with the color red these days, the taste of horseradish potato chips, the ability to go to Mariah Carey's Christmas concert with Mom & Kate, the book Atomic Habits, and how cute my kids look in reindeer pajamas.
- **Intercession:** This is the space to pray for your requests and for others! Every week we send out prayer requests – take time to pray for the people in our church and community, as well as for yourself and your family.
- **Reflection:** In your "daily devotion", you've read the word of God and read/heard a reflection on it. Take time to respond!
- Every Thursday has a "throwback" entry. Enjoy reading the wisdom of some of the MUMC Saints who have now joined the Church Triumphant.
- Woven throughout are ways for you to observe the season at home. This may be new to you—but surrounding your home, ways, and even meals with discipleship can only be a good thing!

Many thanks to all who contributed, edited, produced, and distributed! As always, I'm grateful for this devotion that encourages me in my personal prayer time, challenges me in my discipleship journey, and binds me together with my church family. May this Advent & Christmas be a blessing to you, teaching you to follow and desire Jesus in every corner of your life and home.

God bless you! Pastor Magan

Faithfulness

"I will support the church with my presence, prayers, gifts, and service!" (Membership vow)

October	S.S.	Worship	Offering
6	52	72	\$6,084
13	59	87	\$5,381
20	61	102	\$2,509
27	64	99	\$2,269
November	S.S.	Worship	Offering
3	76	125	\$12,751
10	62	125	\$6,162
17	68	120	\$1,514
24	72	127	\$1,077
Morning View Sunday Evening Worship Attendance			
10/6	22	11/3	18
10/13	15	11/10	15
10/20	No service	11/17	18
10/27	16	11/24	15
Budget amount needed for 2024: \$229,883			
Budget amount received in 2024: \$222,654			
Louisville Christian Assistance Center: \$525			
Costa Rica Mission 2025: \$250			
Maintenance: \$235			
Evangelism/shoebox /backpack/food for school: \$100			
Memorial: \$100; Pastor's Salary; \$100; Children: \$380			
Parking Lot; \$250; Youth Trip: \$100			
Designated: \$3,660			
"Remember the Church in your will."			

Children's Christmas Play, Sunday Morning 12/15

As part of our December 15th morning worship service, our children's choir will sing and tell the good news of Jesus through a short Christmas play.

Lessons & Carols Service, Sunday Morning 12/22

On Sunday, December 22nd, we will read and sing the Christmas story, from prophecy to fulfillment, through a series of scripture lessons, carols, and anthems.

Adult Wednesday Night Study (off for Christmas Break on 12/18, 12/25, and 1/1)

After dinner (5:30 pm) and before choir (6:30 pm), all adults are invited to the Fellowship Hall as we continue to study the bible together! Every Wednesday night features a short video, group discussion, and homemade desserts :)

Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Services 12/24

Please join us on Tuesday evening, December 24th to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ! Services begin at 5 and 10 p.m.



Birthdays in December

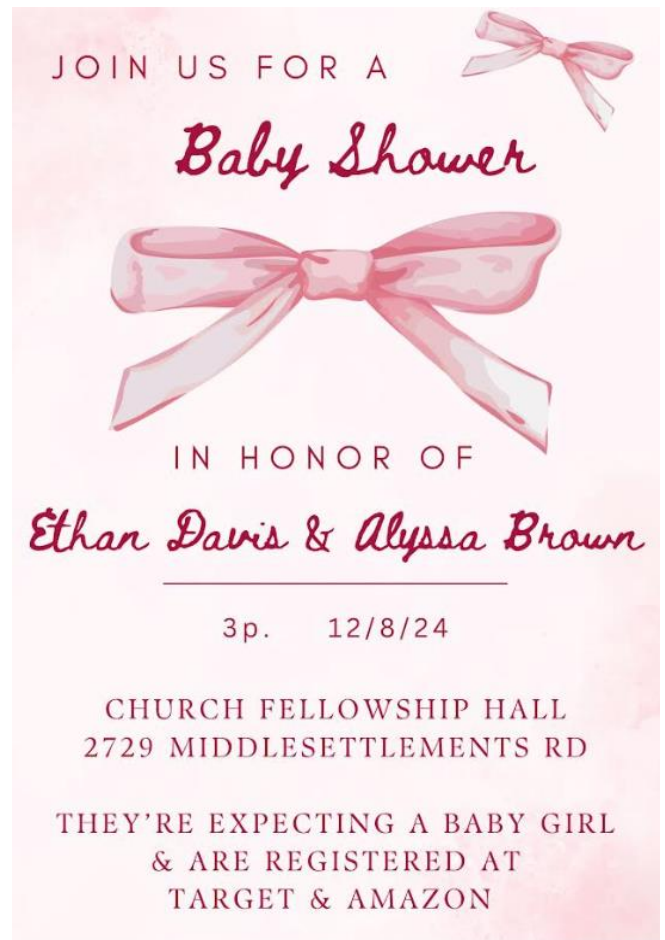
- December 1—Harold Brown
- December 2—Joel Puckett
- December 4—Melinda Andes
- December 6—Lucille Tallent
- December 7—Todd Moore
- December 8—Rhiannon Mills
- December 10—Gage Teffeteller
- December 11—Justin Marcus, Mary Justice, Joe Smith
- December 12—Linda Hearon, Donna Hammontree
- December 15—Leighanne Sisk
- December 17—Julia Keylon
- December 20—Jenna Rogers
- December 23—Lee Dirmeyer
- December 25—Richard Davis
- December 27—Melissa Duckett
- December 29—Norman Goodson
- December 30—Amy Bloomer, Ann Connatser
- December 31—Brenda Clemens, Lori Wilkerson
- January 1—Janice Goodson
- January 3—Howie Ammons
- January 5—Jeff Bolton, Amy Long
- January 6—Poppy Keylon

Anniversaries in December

- December 18—Tim & LuJean Buckner
- December 18—Dale & Ellen Jenkins
- December 19—Larry & Jan Kerr
- December 21—Joel & Kathy Puckett
- December 24—Kip & Valerie England
- January 1—Gary & Diane Kuhlman



The Women's Circle will meet for their Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 10, at 6:30 p.m. at Kathy Puckett's home. It will be a potluck, so bring your favorites. Dora will have our devotion. As always, everyone is invited. If you have a question about our mission emphasis, please see Joyce.



Blessing our Front Doors 1/5

On January 5th, MUMC will be celebrating Epiphany, the holiday that celebrates the Wise Men finally making it to Jesus. The way to end Epiphany is to “chalk the doors” of your home and church by writing the initials of the 3 Wise Men above the main door, together with the year and a cross: “20 K + M + B 25” (Scripture doesn’t have the names for the Wise Men, but tradition holds that the names are Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar). The crosses stand for Christ, and the letters have a double meaning: in addition to the Wise Men’s names, they’re also an abbreviation of an ancient blessing that means “May Christ bless this house.”

This year, we will “chalk” our church doors after the 1/5/25 service, so make sure to bring your coats!

Soup Supper & Undecorate the Church 1/8

While Pastor Magan leaves her Christmas decorations up until...a couple of weeks before Easter, we put them up much sooner at the church! We need all hands to help take down Christmas decorations and put everything back in its place. Dinner (soup) is provided!

**MIDDLESETTLEMENTS U.M.C. CHURCH
COUNCIL MINUTES
December 3, 2024**

Attending:

Keith McAmis, Kathy Puckett, Magan Stubblefield, Joyce Overton, Karen Lewis, Dagen Thomas, LeAnne Moore, Sam Love, David Wells, Laura Floyd, Josh Clark, Richard Davis, J.B. O'Connor, John Davis, Harold Brown, Bridget Jenkins, Brenda Crisp, Kate Keylon

Meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Magan.

Minutes from the Nov 6 and Nov 12 meetings were approved. Motion by Karen Lewis. Seconded by Laura Floyd. Motion passed.

Treasurer – David Lewis

--Amount received as of 12/3/2024 = \$226,293
--Amount needed for budget = \$238,896
--Amount short budget = -\$12,603
--We are down \$5,218, which is normal for this time of the year.

Finance Committee – Laura Floyd

--We are doing good for this time of the year.

Pastor's Report – Magan Stubblefield

--Lots of calls and texts and keeping in touch with the D.S. so that we are connected.

Nurture Ministry – Kate Keylon

--We will do planning in January for spring programs.
--We need teachers in the children's department.

Outreach Ministry – Karen Lewis

--We are gathering food for the food baskets we will give the families at Middlesettlements School when we give them the children's gifts.

Worship Ministry – David Wells

--Have received a lot of positive comments about the focus in the sanctuary remaining on worship and not the issues with which we are dealing

Media Ministry – Josh Marler --No report.

Trustees – Sam Love

--Contacted neighbor Hanson about tree removal and property line deed clarification in area of intended South Blount Utility water line. Katie Hill is helping.

--All lights owned by Fort Loudon are changed to LED. We will be taking down a pole we don't need.

--We are adding lights at the FOD.

--Contacted John Hill, Jr. to repair the wall affected by the water leak in the downstairs office. Repairs are complete.

--We will service the FOD mowing equipment in the next 4-6 weeks.

SPR – LeAnne Moore --No report.

New Business

--Continuation of discussion on what steps forward we make now that we know the vote of the congregation is 90% disagree with the changes made to the UMC Book of Discipline.
--Designated funds can be done. The committee set up to research this will be meeting to clarify some things about designated giving that will be shared with the congregation. It will be put in the bulletin how designated giving should be done. Current idea is to use the offering boxes for designated giving and use the offering plates for undesignated giving (which the UMC General Conference will get 10%).

--David Wells: We should meet with other churches that are in the same position as we are to see what things they are pursuing.

--David Wells recommended we pursue with Conference Trustees to see if they are interested in transferring or some other form of giving our property to us. There is some precedent in other states that it has been done since the Judicial Council. Some other churches in Holston are pursuing this action. David made a motion that we investigate acquiring our property from the local Holston Conference Trustees and begin steps by letter of inquiry to Conference Trustees. Joyce Overton seconded. Motion carried. The committee formed to work on this motion are David Wells, Katie Hill, and Sam Love.

--Karen Lewis made a motion to update the website to say that we affirm the creeds, traditional Wesleyan theology, and the authority of scripture. Laura Floyd seconded the motion. Motion carried.

--David Wells made a motion to communicate to the congregation that we want to explore changing the name of the church to remove UMC and want the congregation's input. We will take the steps to start this process. Joyce Overton seconded. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, January 7, 7:00 pm, Blanche SS classroom

Submitted by Kathy Puckett

Middlesettlements United Methodist Church
2729 Middlesettlements Rd.
Maryville, TN 37801
Return Address requested



Melinda Andes, Organist
Robby Clemens IV, Associate Worship Ministry
Coordinator
Rev. Susan Groseclose, UMC Deacon
Kate Keylon, Student Ministry Coordinator
Joyce Overton, Secretary
Rev. Magan Stubblefield, Pastor
David Wells, Worship Ministry Coordinator

Costa Rica Mission Trip: Samaritan Hands is organizing a mission trip to Costa Rica around March 8-15, 2025 (Spring Break). Please pray about this opportunity. Karen Lewis will be the contact person from our church. If you are considering going, go ahead and get your passport ASAP. The trip will be a mix of different opportunities to serve. The trip normally costs around \$1600 per person. If you have questions or want to know more, contact Karen at 865.705.5775. If you want to sign up, please let Karen know by Dec. 31.



Shoebox Ministry: Thank you to everyone who was involved with the shoebox ministry this year. This was our ninth year, and we filled 24 boxes. We feel this is a great mission outreach and hope we will be able to add to our number each year. Thanks again.

Middlesettlements Memorial Fund



Write on your check to whom the memorials are for. Then, put them in the mailbox for Memorials outside the Church office, put them in the offering plate, or mail them to the Church.

Upcoming Events

December 8, 3:00 p.m. Baby Shower in honor of Ethan Davis and Alyssa Brown
December 8, Youth Progressive Dinner
December 10, UMW Christmas Party (home of Kathy Puckett)
December 11, Last Fall/Winter Wednesday Night
December 15, Kids Christmas Play during morning worship
December 18, Delivery of baked goods and jams to sick and shut-ins
December 24, 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service
December 24, 10:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service
January 7, 7:00 p.m. Church Council (Blanche Class)
January 8, 5:30 p.m. Soup Supper & Undecorate the Church

Evangelism Team Update

I have all the students covered with shoppers. Thank you! Remember, the gifts are due on Dec. 8. I also need nonperishable food to make a food box for each family. Please place donated items in the storage room off the fellowship hall on or before Dec. 4. Suggestions: mac and cheese, instant potatoes, canned ham, canned beans, noodles, pasta sauce, canned veggies or fruit, and peanut butter.

We want to bless our shut ins again this Christmas with homemade breads, muffins, and jams. If you would like to help by making bread or would like to help in delivering these gifts on December 18, please see Margie or Dora.