

THE LINK

FAIRHOPE UMC'S MONTHLY JOURNAL



DECEMBER 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS:



WELCOME

- A Note from Pastor Michael

pg 3



CONNECT

- December & January At A Glance

pg 4



DISCIPLESHIP

- Adult Ministries
- Children's Ministries
- Caring Ministries
- Student Ministries
- Worship Ministries
- Missions Ministries
- Recreation Ministries

pg 7

pg 8-9

pg 10-11

pg 12

pg 13

pg 14-15

pg 16



ADMINISTRATIVE

- Committee Reports
- Budget Report - October

pg 18

pg 19



CELEBRATIONS

- New Faces, New Friends
- Memorials

pg 23

pg 23

FROM PASTOR MICHAEL

Holding Christmas Together

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” – Colossians 1:17

More than any other season, Advent fills my heart with so many things that I wonder it does not bust right out of my chest. I’m filled with memories of Christmases past; I’m filled with hope and excitement for the coming New Year. I love the crowds of the Fairhope Tree lighting and Christmas parties, but I also long for silent nights, for a moment where everything feels calm and bright. Maybe you sometimes feel the strain of trying to “hold Christmas together.” We work hard to keep traditions alive, manage gatherings, navigate griefs, and search for joy. But the miracle of the Christmas has never been about how we learned to hold everything in place. Instead, this is the season to discover how God holds us together, even when we cannot.

This Advent, we’ll begin a new sermon series titled “Holding Christmas Together,” an invitation to rediscover the mystery at the heart of our faith. Scripture often uses the word *mystery* to describe truths that cannot be solved, deduced, or proven—realities we only know because God has revealed them. Whenever we take communion, we announce the mystery of faith. “Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.” No detective work can uncover this. No scientific formula can explain it. We can only receive it as gift.

There is another mystery at the heart of Christmas: the mystery of the Incarnation. In the birth of Jesus Christ, God became fully human while remaining fully divine. How does that work? We will never figure it out. But we can celebrate it, and we can trust that because “The Word became flesh and moved into our neighborhood” (John 1:14), that God is holding together all the things that we cannot.

The worship historian Lester Ruth says you can always tell a Methodist hymn because it will include a mystery, something we cannot explain but can only celebrate. Charles Wesley, one of the great poets of the Christian tradition, loved paradox—those surprising pairings of truth that sit side by side, refusing to be squeezed into tidy explanations. While some theologies describe God in superlative terms (bigger, better, stronger), Wesley was captivated by God’s beautiful contradictions:

- God's kingdom is already and not yet here.
- God is exalted in glory yet revealed most clearly in humility.
- Christ is entirely everywhere.

These paradoxes don’t cancel each other out; instead, they reveal the kind of God who can hold all things together. These paradoxes give us hope that God will meet us in the places where our own lives feel torn or unresolved. The Gospel meets us there, not with easy answers but with a Savior who binds together the frayed edges of our lives.

Even when we cannot hold everything together, Christ does. And in the mystery of Christmas—already come, not yet complete—we find strength, wonder, and hope.

--

And as we prepare for this season, I want to offer a special thank you to the members of our worship design team and altar guild, who put such thought and creativity into our worship throughout the year. Pam Vincent, Katie Robertson, Tom Hood, Jamie Waldhour, Jeff White, Shea White and Pastor Kristen pour their hearts into every aspect of our worship together. How they make it all happen is a mystery to me; I’ll never figure it out, but I celebrate them always!

Michael

COMING SOON...

Weekly

Sundays

8:30am Traditional Worship
9:45am Sunday School
11am Traditional Worship
11am The Gathering Worship

Mondays

9:15am Walk & Talk with Jesus
10am Knit or Crochet
3pm Grief Support Group
5pm UPWARD BBall Practice

Tuesdays

9:30am Twelve Disciples Study
5pm UPWARD BBall Practice
6pm Experiencing God
6pm Handbell Choir

Wednesdays

9am TJ's Food Ministry
1:30pm Dr. Ann's Bible Study
4:15pm Lighthouse Kids' Choir
5pm Wednesday Night Supper
6pm PIER Kids & SWIFT
6pm Salt Students
6pm Adult Choir
6pm Deep Dive Drop-In Study

THURSDAYS

9am TJ's Food Ministry
5pm UPWARD BBall Practice

FRIDAYS

9:30am Reservation Nursery
11am - 1pm Community Cafe

December

DEC 1

6pm Stephen Ministry

DEC 2

9:30am Caregiver's Support Group

DEC 6

8:30am Breakfast at the Manger

DEC 7

11am Children's Choir Musical
5pm Board of Stewards

DEC 8

9:30am MOMCO
6:30pm Survivors of Suicide

DEC 9

12:30pm Tough Dogs Support
1:30pm Chemo Care Bag

DEC 10

5pm Cookie Swap & Supper

DEC 14

8:30am & 11am Choir Christmas Cantata (S)
9:45am Coffee with the Pastors

DEC 16

9:30am Caregiver's Support Group
6pm Anchored in Hope

DEC 17

6:30am fm3 Men's Breakfast

DEC 21

11am A Gathering Christmas

DEC 22

6:30pm Survivors of Suicide

DEC 24

3pm Christmas Eve Service (S)
3:30pm Christmas Eve Service (TG)
5pm Christmas Eve Service (S)
5:30pm Christmas Eve Service (TG)

DEC 25 & 26

Church Office & CLC Closed

DEC 28

8:30 & 11am Worship Services (S)

Looking Ahead

JAN 1-2

Church Office & CLC Closed

JAN 4

KidsMin Poptarts & Pajamas

JAN 5

6pm Stephen Ministry

JAN 6

9:30am Caregiver's Support Group

JAN 7

5:45pm Biblical Storytelling:
Rita Sweatt

JAN 11

Deadline for College Scholarships
9:45am Coffee with the Pastors
2pm District Conference

JAN 12

9:30am MOMCO
6:30pm Survivors of Suicide

JAN 13

12:30pm Tough Dogs Support
1:30pm Chemo Care Bag

JAN 14

Wednesday Night Suppers Resume

JAN 15

6pm Visitor & New Member Dinner

JAN 18

9am Serve Day @ Rotary Youth
4:30pm 39th Annual Baldwin County
MLK Clergy & Spouses Dinner

JAN 20

9:30am Caregiver's Support Group
6pm Anchored in Hope

JAN 23-25

Discovery Weekend

JAN 26

6:30pm Survivors of Suicide

JAN 27

12:30pm Tough Dogs Support

JAN 30-Feb 1

Kids' Winter Retreat @ Blue Lake

S= Sanctuary
TG= The Gathering

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
LOCATIONS, DETAILS,
AND SIGNUPS



Celebrate

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

@ Fairhope UMC



NOV
30

First Sunday in Advent

Traditional Worship | 8:30am & 11am | Sanctuary
The Gathering Worship | 11am | CLC

DEC
06

Breakfast at the Manger

Pancake Breakfast, Pictures w/ Santa & MORE | 8:30am | CLC

DEC
07

Second Sunday in Advent

Traditional Worship | 8:30am & 11am | Sanctuary
Children's Choir Christmas Musical @ The Gathering | 11am | CLC

DEC
14

Third Sunday in Advent

Choir Christmas Cantata | 8:30am & 11am | Sanctuary
Coffee with the Pastors | 9:45am | Parlor
The Gathering Worship | 11am | CLC

DEC
21

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Traditional Worship | 8:30am & 11am | Sanctuary
A Gathering Christmas | 11am | CLC

DEC
24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Traditional | 3:00pm & 5:00pm | Sanctuary
The Gathering | 3:30pm & 5:30pm | CLC
Nursery available at all services.

DEC
28

Christmas Sunday

Traditional Worship | 8:30am & 11am | Sanctuary
The Gathering Service will not meet. No SS or Children's Church.



DISCIPLESHIP

ADULT MINISTRIES

Dr. Kristen Curtis Wright, Associate Pastor

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 261

✉ kristen.wright@fairhopeumc.org

"...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

These words from Jesus, echoing the Shema in Deuteronomy, remind us that loving God involves the whole of who we are. It is not a partial commitment. It is a way of life that draws in our emotions, our spirituality, our actions, and perhaps most surprisingly, our minds.

It is such an interesting and beautiful idea that we are called to love God with our minds. We use our minds every day to make decisions, solve problems, plan our schedules, and navigate the many responsibilities that fill our weeks. Jesus's command reminds us that those same minds are also places where love for God can grow. When we open Scripture, when we sit in a classroom or around a table, when a new idea challenges us or stretches us, we are practicing a real and essential form of devotion.

And in a world that often pits faith against thinking, Jesus brings them together. He invites us to bring our questions, our curiosity, and even our doubts into our relationship with him. Our minds were never meant to sit on the sidelines of faith. Loving God includes learning, wrestling, and wondering.

This fall, our adult discipleship ministries have lived this out so well. Dozens of people chose to invest their time and energy in a study or Sunday school class. You showed up ready to think deeply, to ask honest questions, and to pray with and for one another. What a gift to see our church family embody a whole-life love for God—heart, soul, mind, and strength.

If you were not plugged into a study, Sunday school class, or small group this fall, be on the lookout for opportunities coming in early 2026. And if you have ideas or interests you'd like to see offered, I would love to hear them.

A special word of gratitude to those who led our fall studies: Wanda Winfree and Martha Barricklow, Tony Caminiti, Emily Garner and Michelle Graham, Dr. Ann Pearson, and Rev. Michael Precht. Your leadership and care made this season possible.

Grace and peace,

Kristen



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Jenna Hood, Director of Children's Ministries

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 227

✉ jenna.hood@fairhopeumc.org

Faith at the Kitchen Table (Advent Edition)

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." - Deuteronomy 6:6-7

"Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." - Luke 2:19

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." - Psalm 34:8

Advent arrives not only in candlelight and carols, but in the ordinary places where we live-especially the kitchen table. God chose a home, a family, and a feed trough to cradle the Savior. That means the sacred doesn't wait for sanctuaries and stained glass; it sits down with us among cereal bowls, lunchboxes, and evening dishes.

Deuteronomy 6 pictures faith woven into daily rhythms: **when you sit at home, when you walk, when you lie down, when you get up**. Luke tells us Mary **treasured and pondered** the story of Jesus. Those two verbs, talk and ponder, describe Advent discipleship at the table: simple words spoken, quiet wonders held.

This month, let your table become a small Bethlehem-an ordinary place where Christ is welcomed. Try one or two gentle practices:

- **One-Line Advent:** Light a candle (any candle will do) before dinner and say, **"Jesus, You are our light."** Then ask, "Where did you notice God's kindness today?" Keep it brief; keep it joyful.
- **Nativity Near the Napkins:** Place a small nativity on the table. Let kids move the figures as you retell the story in your own words. Wonder together: *How did the shepherds feel? What did Mary hold in her heart?*
- **Gratitude & Giving:** Keep a mug of slips and pens. Each night name one gift received and one gift to give (a prayer, a chore, an encouragement). Drop them in as an offering of thanks.

For leaders, parents, grandparents, and friends, remember **kids learn the gospel in small, repeated moments**. They borrow our words, imitate our tone, and feel our reverence for God. When we laugh together, pray a sentence prayer, or forgive quickly at the table, we are telling the truth about Jesus: He is near, gentle, and good.

Success this season isn't a perfect plan but a **patient presence**. If dinner is noisy, God isn't worried; He was born into a barn, after all. If schedules get messy, whisper this grace: *"We start again, because Jesus came for us."* Advent is the story of a God who comes close-close enough to hear our table talk and bless it.

Prayer:

Emmanuel, draw near to our homes. Make our tables places of light, laughter, and holy conversation. Teach us to treasure and to talk, to notice Your presence in simple meals and simple prayers. Let every child, and every adult, taste and see that You are good. Amen.

Mark Your Calendars

Pier Kids Christmas PJ Party

Wednesday, December 3rd | 6:00-7:30pm | Wesley Hall

K4-4th Graders are invited to join us for our annual PJ Party movie night to kick-off the holiday season.

SWIFT Angel Tree Shopping & Christmas Dinner

Wednesday, December 3rd | 6-8pm | Fairhope Walmart & El Mexicano

5th & 6th graders, join us for our December service project – Angel Tree shopping. Meet at Fairhope Walmart. Bring \$10 for dinner at El Mex afterwards. Chaperones needed. Monetary donations appreciated.

Breakfast at the Manger

Saturday, December 6 | 8:30-10:30 AM | Fellowship Hall

\$5 per person | \$25 max per family

Kick off the season with a cozy family pancake breakfast! Enjoy pictures with Santa, cookie decorating, games, and more festive fun for all ages. Proceeds support our Men's Ministry and Children's Ministry—thank you for blessing our church family! Want to make the morning extra special? Volunteer! We need greeters, griddle-flippers, craft helpers, and clean-up heroes. (Teens welcome to serve, too!) Bring the kids, invite a neighbor, and come hungry—let's celebrate Jesus' birth with syrup, smiles, and community. See you at the manger! Contact jenna.hood@fairhopeumc.org for more details or to volunteer.

Elementary Winter Retreat

3rd-6th Grades | Jan. 30 – Feb 1st | Blue Lake Camp

Cost: \$125/camper (by Dec 10th) | \$140/camper (after Dec 10th) | \$60 transportation fee

Deadline for Financial Assistance – December 10th

Registration closes Jan 5th.

Created by God: Wonderfully Made Body Education Workshop

5th-6th Graders | Feb 22, 28-29

Find out all details at www.fairhopeumc.org/createdbygod

Scenes from the SWIFT Friendsgiving...

Thank you so much to Jane & Don Dolan for hosting us!



CARING MINISTRIES

Dr. Ann Pearson, Director of Caring Ministries

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 230

✉ ann.pearson@fairhopeumc.org

An Evening with Rita Sweatt: A Monologue & Conversation on Ruth Wednesday, Jan 7 | 5:45pm | Fellowship Hall

You're invited to step back in time with Rita Sweatt as she brings the story of Ruth to life in a dramatic monologue. Drawn from Ruth 1-4, this timeless story follows a young woman through love, loss, infertility, and leaving everything familiar behind. In a new land, Ruth chooses faith, hard work, and loyalty—trusting the God of Israel as her own. Through her journey, we see God's faithfulness and His beautiful plan for her life... and for ours today.



Come join us as we hear Ruth's story and allow God to give us hope for ours.

Cancer Care Angels Shining the Light

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." - James 1:17

In 2006 several women in the Fairhope community were being treated for different types of cancer. The ladies approached Dr. Ann Pearson with their idea of starting a cancer support group, and with her assistance, the Tough Dogs Cancer Support Group opened to the community. The group offers support, knowledge, and prayers. Every second and fourth Tuesday, the meetings are open to cancer patients and their caregivers. Over the past 19 years, the ministry has expanded to preparing comfort bags for patients receiving chemotherapy, providing gas cards for patients needing assistance, and children being treated in Mobile for cancer or sickle cell anemia.

Most recently, Mary Hodgkins was inspired to create a ministry that would provide financial assistance to those battling both cancer and financial difficulties. Hence, the birth of "Cancer Care Angels". The financial assistance grant includes expenses not covered by health insurance, such as pharmacy bills, cosmetic devices, nutritional supplements, co-pays, gas cards for travel to treatment, etc.

A team of five, Patti Hanafourde, Mary Hodgkins, Nancy LeBlanc, Mary Kathryn Metzger, Bud Walden under the direction of Dr. Ann Pearson, developed an application process for prospective recipients from the following local cancer centers: **Southern Cancer Center, Mitchell Cancer Institute, Infirmary Cancer Care in Fairhope, and USA Health Children's and Women's.**

The application process for recipients is thorough and requires documentation of a diagnosis and treatment program as well as the need for financial assistance, yet it is designed not to be overwhelming to the patient. The cancer center representatives work with the applicant in preparing the application.

Our goal in the infancy of this program is to provide a minimum of **\$500** to one cancer patient in each facility twice a year. Prayerfully, we anticipate increasing the amount as more funds become available. Two applications were received in October, and the team was able to grant **\$1,000** to the applicants. The next deadline for applications is April 15, and we anticipate many more applicants at that time. The burden of cancer treatments on someone already financially strapped can be overwhelming and has the effect of having to make the choice of continuing treatment or supporting a family.

CARING OUTREACH



102

VOLUNTEERS
SERVED IN OUR
GIFT BAG
DELIVERY
TO 699 HOMES.



SUCCESSFUL TURKEY GIVEAWAY!

TJ'S FOOD MINISTRY GAVE AWAY

500

TURKEYS TO THE COMMUNITY
ON VETERAN'S DAY.



TJ'S FOOD MINISTRY
CONTINUES TO SERVE
WEEKLY AT AUC. APPROXIMATELY

154

FAMILIES ARE SERVED
EACH THURSDAY.



THANK YOU!



Thank you Fairhope
UMC Preschool
for collecting food
for the Lord's Pantry
in November!

Thank you Church
family for your
support of SNAP
donations.



IN HOME COMMUNION

If anyone would like to receive communion
at home during Advent, please call the
church office. Someone would be happy to
serve you and your family and/or caregivers.

WEEKLY SUPPORT GROUPS:

CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

1st & 3rd Tuesday, 9:30am, Library

SEEKING PEACE GRIEF GROUP

Every Monday, 3:00pm, B114

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE (SOS)

2nd & 4th Monday, 6:30pm, B114

TOUGH DOGS CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

2nd & 4th Tuesday, 12:30pm, Library

CHEMO CARE BAG ASSEMBLY

2nd Tuesday, 1:30pm, Wesley Hall

ANCHORED IN HOPE:

INFERTILITY & LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Tuesday, 6:00pm, Parlor

STUDENT MINISTRIES

Miles Barnhardt, Director of Student Ministries

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 243

✉ students@fairhopeumc.org

WEEKLY

ACTIVITIES
SUNDAY
9:45am-10:45am | Sunday School
TUESDAY
6:45am-7:35am | Breakfast Club
WEDNESDAY
6:00pm-7:45pm | WN Youth
4TH SUNDAY
6:00pm-8:00pm | 4th Sunday Night

DISCOVERY WEEKEND

You might have heard about what Discovery Weekend is, but there's an even more important question to ask: Why does it matter? Why gather teenagers from all different walks of life onto our campus to worship together, sleep at the church, play games, meet in small groups, and miss out on a little sleep for two nights?

Emery Capstraw, a junior, shares why Discovery is meaningful to her:

"Discovery Weekend means so much not only to me but to my family. This weekend offers so many leadership opportunities while also creating a space to share God with amazing middle schoolers."

As a student, Discovery shaped my faith journey, and as a leader it made me realize that teaching people about God is what I want to do with my life. Getting to share my testimony with the students last Discovery truly changed my life. Discovery changed my life, and it will definitely change yours!"

When we give our students opportunities to lead, we invite them into a deeper experience of faith, community, and purpose.

God shows up in powerful, unexpected ways. That's why we gather. That's why we serve. That's why Discovery matters!

-Miles



WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Tom Hood, Director of Worship & Music Ministries

☎ 251-928-1148, ext. 228

✉ tom.hood@fairhopeumc.org

The Soundtrack of Christmas

Every year around this time, the world gets a new soundtrack. You hear it in the grocery store aisles, in the car on the way to work, and drifting from speakers while you wait in line for coffee. It's everywhere—sometimes to the point that we hardly notice it anymore. But when you stop and really listen, there's something remarkable about the way the music of Christmas works on us. Even in a season that can feel busy or stressful, a familiar carol has this gentle way of grounding us, reminding us of a story we know by heart but still need to hear again: God came close. God stepped into our world. God arrived among us in the most unexpected way.

In worship, these songs do even more. They shape our hearts. They draw us into the mystery of the Incarnation before we've even opened a Bible or lit a candle. Think about "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"—that longing built into every note. Or the quiet humility of "Silent Night," where the whole sanctuary seems to breathe in unison. Or "Joy to the World," which reminds us that Christmas isn't just nostalgia; it's an announcement. When we sing these songs together, we aren't just revisiting memories. We're participating in a story that keeps unfolding. The music helps us step into hope, peace, joy, and love—sometimes even when we don't feel those things on our own.

What's beautiful is that the soundtrack doesn't stay in the sanctuary. It follows us home and hums its way into our days. Sometimes it surfaces at just the right moment—a lyric that pops into your head when you least expect it, nudging you toward gratitude or reminding you of God's nearness. And maybe that's the real gift of this season's music: it keeps preaching to us long after the service ends. It invites us to notice the melody of God's presence woven into the ordinary moments—wrapping gifts, driving through traffic, sitting quietly at the end of a long day.

So this Christmas, don't rush past the songs you've heard a thousand times. Let them slow you down. Let them speak to you. Let them draw you back to the heart of why we celebrate at all. The soundtrack of Christmas isn't just background noise—it's an invitation to worship, to remember, and to rejoice that Christ is still singing hope into our world.

Blessings,

Tom Hood



**DEC
07**
**Children's Choir
Christmas Performance**
11am, The Gathering

**DEC
14**
Choir Christmas Cantata
8:30am & 11am, Sanctuary

**DEC
21**
A Gathering Christmas
11am, The Gathering

MISSIONS MINISTRIES

Jennifer Myrick, *Director of Missions Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148

✉ missions@fairhopeumc.org

December People

December is one of my favorite times of the year. It's a very busy season for everyone, and if you're like me, some days you don't if you're coming or going. But I sort of thrive in the chaos.

December is also a very busy time in the life of the church. All our ministry areas are hard at work with Christmas musicals, events, parties, etc. Many of these things we see and experience first hand, while other activities require work behind the scenes. This is especially true regarding outreach, and there are many needs and opportunities to serve. This is a wonderful thing! People come out of the shadows to be apart of something bigger than themselves. Churches and individuals are always willing to provide a little extra time or resources during the Christmas season. I have often referred to these churches or individuals as "December People". Please don't hear me wrong, that is not to be taken as a negative. It is a beautiful thing to witness churches and others doing for so many during the month of December.

Serving in the area of missions for many years now, I have come to realize that Fairhope United Methodist Church is not a "December" church, but a church that meets the needs of others year round. Needs of the community come to us in various ways throughout the year. This church family rises to the occasion each and every time, and for that I am so grateful. We are not only "December People", but we are also "January-November People". We have elves who don't take a break on December 25th, but continue to help meet the next need. Sometimes we see these elves working to serve or deliver food on Fridays at Community Cafe' or serving on mission trips to Costa Rica. But many times, we never see the elves who are delivering washing machines or beds to those in other parts of the county. Or those who take an extra moment to teach one of our homeless friends how to use the dishwasher or helping to pay a power bill or rent. Or the elves that bake desserts each week for Community Cafe' or give generously to a particular need. Or elves who secretly arrange flowers for our Thanksgiving meal. Elves who also sleep overnight in the church for Family Promise or provide dance lessons for children in Foster Care. The list goes on and on.

During the Christmas season, I just want to express how grateful I am for this church family and who continue to serve and meet the needs of those in our community year round. Many of you have heard me say that any need that is thrown at FUMC, this church always meets that need and then some! The Lord provides each and every time, and HE is using each of us to be his hands and feet.

Much love,

Jennifer



SAVE THE DATE:

Mark your calendars for January 17 & 18 as we join Trinity Presbyterian and other local churches for a powerful community event to help end hunger! Together, our goal is to pack 50,000 meals—and we can do it with your help.

Each meal costs just 41¢ to prepare, and Fairhope UMC will be partnering with Trinity to share the cost. More details are on the way, but we'd love for you to start praying, planning, and getting excited now! For questions or to get involved, contact Jon Macklem or Jennifer Myrick.

Your Generosity in Action...



350+

WATER BOTTLES
GIVEN DURING OUR
**BACK TO
SCHOOL BASH**



80+

FAMILIES (300+ PEOPLE)
SERVED THROUGH OUR
**FIRST SNAP
DISTRIBUTION.**

8+

APPLIANCES
PURCHASED IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH
NEIGHBORHOOD BRIDGES

**189
HOURS**

OF VOLUNTEERS SPENDING
THE NIGHT IN THE CHURCH FOR
FAMILY PROMISE

**1700LBS
OF VBS**

SUPPLIES, BIBLES, ETC
**TAKEN TO
COSTA RICA
FOR THE MISSION TRIPS**



3750LBS+

OF MEAT PREPARED
ON FRIDAYS
FOR COMMUNITY

CAFE'

350+

CAKES & PIES
HOMEMADE
FOR COMMUNITY CAFE'

**3,000+
MILES**

DRIVEN THIS YEAR
**BY OUR
COMMUNITY CAFE
DRIVERS
DELIVERING MEALS.**

**300+BIBLES
PRESENTED TO
OUR FRIENDS IN COSTA RICA**



3900LBS

APPROXIMATELY
3900LBS OF
FRESH MEATS
WERE PURCHASED
BY FUMC

RECREATION MINISTRIES

Jamie Waldhour, *Director of Recreation Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148, ext. 249

✉ jamie.waldhour@fairhopeumc.org

Christian Life Center Temporary Closure for Improvements

The Christian Life Center will close from **December 22 to January 2** for facility improvements, including flooring upgrades and deep cleaning. This temporary closure will create a safer and more welcoming environment for the new year.

Of course, the CLC will be open for Christmas Eve Services at **3:30pm. and 5:30pm.** Regular operations will resume on **January 5.** Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

Moving with Hope: Staying Active Through the Holidays

The Advent season invites us to slow down, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Yet December also brings full calendars, long to-do lists, and the temptation to let our physical and spiritual rhythms slip. One of the simplest ways to stay grounded during this season is to keep moving.

Movement doesn't have to be complicated. A ten-minute walk, a few gentle stretches, or parking the car a little further away from the store or restaurant can help clear the mind and release stress. Small choices to care for our bodies often open space for prayer, gratitude, and renewed focus—reminding us that hope is something we practice one step at a time.

As we wait for Christ's light to break into the world, consider making movement part of your Advent rhythm. Use a morning walk to reflect on scripture, or invite a friend or loved one to join you for a lap around the neighborhood. However you choose to move, may each step draw you closer to the joy and hope of this holy season

Family Fitness Ideas for Christmas Break

Christmas break provides a wonderful opportunity for families to slow down, enjoy time together, and build healthy habits in simple, fun ways. You don't need special equipment or a gym membership—just a little creativity and a willingness to play.

Try a walking challenge, where each family member aims for a certain number of steps a day. Create a holiday scavenger hunt around the house or neighborhood. Even classic activities like tossing a football, taking a family bike ride, or walking the dog can become memory-makers.

You can also make movement part of your family's devotional time—sharing a verse, praying together, and then taking a short walk afterward.

The goal isn't perfection; it's connection. A few active moments each day can strengthen bodies, lift moods, and help families make the most of this meaningful season.





Breakfast at the Manger & Pancake Breakfast

December 6 | 8:30am-10:30am | Fellowship Hall

\$5 per person | \$25 family max

Kick off the Christmas season with a cozy pancake breakfast! Enjoy photos with Santa, cookie decorating, games, and festive fun for all ages. All proceeds support our Men's and Children's Ministries.



Christmas Cookie Swap & Supper

Join us for a festive Cookie Swap on **Wednesday, December 10** during Wednesday Night Supper! Bring 2 dozen homemade or store bought cookies/treats on disposable trays and you'll go home with 2 dozen assorted cookies beautifully boxed and ready to gift or enjoy! **Scan the QR Code to RSVP!**

Come share something sweet, enjoy fellowship, and leave with treats to brighten someone's Christmas! **Questions:** katie.robertson@fairhopeumc.org





ADMINISTRATIVE

COMMITTEE REPORTS

TRUSTEES

Submitted by Jennifer Jones

"THANK YOU!" from Pastor Barry and the congregation of Fairhope Church of God in Christ. Our response: "It's what neighbors do!" The Fairhope Church of God in Christ has been meeting for prayer and worship in Wesley Hall since September while they make plans for replacing their church building which developed unsafe structural issues. Leaning on one another during tough times is one of the many blessings we have as members of the family of God. Well done, church!

At our November meeting, the Trustees evaluated a proposal from a local waterproofing company to repair and seal the masonry of the bell tower as well as additional walls on the Sanctuary building and Education Building. Additionally, the proposal includes re-caulking around windows and at joints. The trustees have a prioritized list of the walls most in need of repair and will endeavor to include as many of those walls in the scope as funds will allow.

In 2026, we will review our policies guiding the use of our facilities by outside groups. One of the hallmarks of our church is that we open our doors to the community, and we want to continue to do so in a way that is safe and sustainable.

FINANCE

Submitted by Allen Mitchell

Our financial position is good as of the end of October. Our income is a little ahead of last year, and we are on track to finish the year with a slight surplus. Although we are meeting our annual operating expenses, we are behind on scheduled maintenance of our buildings.

We are at the end of the expected life of several of our air conditioning units, and we have additional expected roof and flooring expenses. The Board of Stewards approved our recommendation to conduct a capital campaign in the Spring to pay off our existing mortgage. The payments that we have making on the mortgage will then be able to cover the ongoing repairs and replacements.

Our current Stewardship Campaign is going well. We are in line with the pledged amount for last year. We do, however, need to increase our budgeted expenses for 2026, so we are hoping for an increase in giving. If you have not submitted your 2026 pledge, please do so as soon as possible so that we can finalize our plans for next year.

The additional detailed reporting is now in place. One of those reports enables the Finance Committee to better track the funds that flow outside the budget, primarily designated giving. Another new report is the Comparative Balance Sheet. This report lets us compare the current month and year-to-date with the same period last year. This report does away with seasonality and lets us know how we are doing vs last year.

We are still anticipating additional funds from the IRS for the Employee Retention Credits (ERC) for which the church made application several years ago. We have received the funds for one calendar quarter but still have several quarters outstanding

The Finance Committee wants to again thank the members for their faithful giving.

BUDGET REPORT | OCTOBER

Fairhope United Methodist Church

FUMC Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual

January through October 2025

	Oct 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget	Jan - Oct 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget
Income						
04000 Pledge Contributions	97,652.00	106,500.00	-8,848.00	1,153,164.50	1,073,520.00	79,644.50
04001 Non Pledge Contributions	34,013.65	58,485.00	-24,471.35	468,088.02	588,761.00	-120,672.98
04002 Cash Contributions	1,424.21	2,250.00	-825.79	23,601.24	22,680.00	921.24
04003 Adult Sunday School	107.00	113.00	-6.00	1,180.00	1,137.00	43.00
04004 Fees	950.00	685.00	265.00	16,370.00	6,897.00	9,473.00
04005 Other Income	0.00	0.00	0.00	56,019.40	33,500.00	22,519.40
04006 Interest Income	2,554.26	2,500.00	54.26	34,014.94	25,000.00	9,014.94
Total Income	136,701.12	170,533.00	-33,831.88	1,752,438.10	1,751,495.00	943.10
Gross Profit	136,701.12	170,533.00	-33,831.88	1,752,438.10	1,751,495.00	943.10
Expense						
10000 Worship	798.13	785.00	13.13	10,857.32	9,290.00	1,567.32
10100 Music	498.92	1,440.00	-941.08	11,156.17	14,725.00	-3,568.83
10200 Evangelism/Navigator	0.00	100.00	-100.00	638.36	700.00	-61.64
10300 Adult Spiritual Growth	1,006.19	1,330.00	-323.81	8,322.85	9,493.00	-1,170.15
10400 Church Family Ministry	202.14	2,000.00	-1,797.86	5,002.48	8,687.00	-3,684.52
10500 Children's Ministry	802.82	1,210.00	-407.18	29,404.02	26,145.00	3,259.02
10600 Youth Ministry	1,659.01	730.00	929.01	60,939.15	59,747.00	1,192.15
10700 Caring Ministry	0.00	375.00	-375.00	3,375.00	3,750.00	-375.00
10800 Communications	999.45	1,109.00	-109.55	11,467.58	10,651.00	816.58
10900 Missions	-5,128.42	4,550.00	-9,678.42	74,736.89	65,956.00	8,780.89
11000 Nursery	42.38	50.00	-7.62	883.90	1,250.00	-366.10
11100 Recreation Ministry	378.78	1,240.00	-861.22	7,305.68	8,705.00	-1,399.32
11200 Gathering	475.00	510.00	-35.00	6,476.89	5,010.00	1,466.89
11400 Stewardship Campaign	0.00	1,150.00	-1,150.00	3,620.40	4,200.00	-579.60
11500 Hospitality	0.00	100.00	-100.00	114.43	1,800.00	-1,685.57
11700 Discretionary Fund	0.00	500.00	-500.00	4,121.16	2,200.00	1,921.16
11800 Wednesday Night Supper	2,839.28	625.00	2,214.28	10,236.22	4,500.00	5,736.22
20000 Trustees	11,465.91	19,788.00	-8,322.09	209,135.66	190,554.00	18,581.66
20100 Utilities	7,963.16	10,030.00	-2,066.84	82,165.14	78,870.00	3,295.14
20200 Office Expense	280.82	3,725.00	-3,444.18	40,987.55	42,581.00	-1,593.45
20300 Kitchen Supplies	1,367.58	1,275.00	92.58	12,939.07	12,750.00	189.07
20400 Custodial Supplies	1,992.86	1,250.00	742.86	12,464.08	12,800.00	-335.92
20500 Financial Audit	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	-12,000.00
30000 SPR (Salary/Contract)	92,623.60	102,252.00	-9,628.40	951,666.97	1,026,179.00	-74,512.03
40000 Conference Apportionments	11,670.90	11,670.90	0.00	116,709.00	116,709.00	0.00
40100 District Apportionments	1,808.80	1,808.80	0.00	18,088.00	18,088.00	0.00
50000 Mortgage Interest	2,210.96	2,300.00	-89.04	24,194.92	23,000.00	1,194.92
60000 Mortgage Principle	16,558.82	16,470.00	88.82	163,502.88	164,700.00	-1,197.12
Total Expense	152,517.09	188,373.70	-35,856.61	1,880,511.77	1,935,040.00	-54,528.23
Net Income	-15,815.97	-17,840.70	2,024.73	-128,073.67	-183,545.00	55,471.33



Choir Christmas Cantata: Born A Savior, Born a King December 14 | 8:30am & 11am, Sanctuary

Join us as the Fairhope UMC Chancel Choir presents our annual Christmas Cantata—a joyful retelling of Christ's birth through beautiful music and inspiring narration. Come experience the wonder of worship through song as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.



A Gathering Christmas December 21 | 11 am, CLC

Join us for a special Gathering Christmas Worship as we celebrate the birth of Christ through powerful music, heartfelt prayer, and a message of hope. Come as you are and experience the wonder of Christmas in community, light, and love.



CELEBRATIONS

NEW FACES, NEW FRIENDS...

We're thrilled to welcome the newest members of our Fairhope UMC family! Every new face is a reminder of God's grace and the joy of growing together in community. We can't wait to walk alongside them in worship, service, and fellowship.

Join us in celebrating and praying for these wonderful new members—may their journey here be marked by love, purpose, and deep joy!



The Case Family

Collins, Lauren, Lillie, Mae & CB
Joined on November 9, 2025



The Bearden Family

Patrick, Kelly, Peyton & Palmer
Joined on November 16, 2025

MEMORIALS

We are deeply grateful for the gifts given in memory of loved ones. Your generosity blesses our church family and helps build a lasting legacy of faith and love.

Bob Gibson (Robert & Mary Gibson Memorial Scholarship Fund)

by Nancy & Mike May

by Francis M. James

by Hazel & JD Odom

Niki Kelley (Caring Ministries)

by Jo Ann Riggs

Elsie Butgereit (Roy & Elsie Butgereit Missions Scholarship Fund)

by Karen Haywood

by Rhonda & Robert DeHaven

Laurel Holland

by Susan & Barker Stein (Caring Ministries)

Becky Stack (Caring Ministries)

by Jan & Glen Pringle

Rose Keel (Caring Ministries)

by Jan & Glen Pringle

Christmas Eve



FAIRHOPE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
3:00PM & 5:00PM | SANCTUARY
CONTEMPORARY CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
3:30PM & 5:30PM | CLC



Merry Christmas
from the Fairhope UMC Staff

Holiday Closings:

Church Office | December 24-26, Jan 1-2

CLC | December 24 - Jan 2



155 S SECTION | 251-928-1148 | FAIRHOPEUMC.ORG

We **EXIST** to **LOVE BOLDLY**, casting the **LIGHT** of **JESUS** into the world.