



First United Methodist Church
Downtown Bentonville





First United Methodist Church

201 NW 2nd St
Bentonville, AR 72712
info@fumcbentonville.org

fumcbentonville.org



Dear First United Methodist Church of Downtown Bentonville Family,

If you have been part of a church community for any length of time, you are likely familiar with the annual invitation to make a financial commitment for the coming year. These commitments are essential. They allow us to steward our resources responsibly and to support the full scope of our ministries—from children and youth, to worship, mission, and administration. Each year, we build our budget based on your commitments and a conservative estimate of other funding sources.

While annual budgeting will always be necessary, our church now stands at an important moment in its history. On the far side of the pandemic—a season marked by significant loss—we find ourselves in a time of renewed strength and growth. Since 2022, in-person worship attendance has increased by 30 percent, with online participation up 43 percent. Our financial position is healthy: we are consistently meeting budget expectations, are working to build appropriate operating reserves, and carry no debt.

Because of this stability, now is the time for intentional and visionary planning. Rather than focusing only one year at a time, we are invited to look ahead and anticipate where God may be leading us. We are calling this season an opportunity to 4C (Foresee) the Future, grounding our vision in four commitments that define who we are as a church:

Creation – As people created in the image of God, we are called both to creativity and to care. We will encourage the gifts and creativity of our congregation while deepening our commitment to caring for God’s earth through our Creation Care Team.

Connection – As a connectional church, we know we are not meant to live in isolation. We will continue to strengthen relationships within our congregation and reach out to those experiencing loneliness, ensuring that our neighbors encounter the love and community of God.

Conviction – Our faith shapes how we live. We are committed to being a people who welcome all and who live out our membership vows through prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Contribution – Following Jesus calls us to action. We give of our time, talents, and financial resources so that God’s love can be made visible in this community and beyond.

As you read through this booklet, you will see financial projections based on past budgets and anticipated growth. These include three possible paths: conservative, baseline, and missional. A conservative approach maintains a minimal level of funding and leaves little room for change. A baseline budget aligns with projected growth but limits expansion. A missional budget allows us to reach further into the community and innovate in ways that deepen our impact.

You will have the opportunity to plan your giving over the next four years based on the future you hope to see for this church. The choice is yours—and it matters.

We are grateful for your generosity, your faithfulness, and your willingness to look beyond the present moment with hope. God’s future is assured, and what a gift it is to participate in Christ’s transforming work together.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Dr. Michelle J. Morris, Lead Pastor
Rich Carvell, Finance Chair 2026





"Everything came into being
through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being."

John 1:3



"God saw
everything he had
made..."



"...it was
supremely good."

Genesis 1:31



Creation





Creation

Caring for God's world as an expression of faithful stewardship.



What We've Already Set in Motion

- Launched a Creation Care Team to help our church live out faithful stewardship of God's creation
- Educated our congregation through climate resources, interfaith partnerships, and hands-on learning
- Hosted two Earth Day Fairs that grew from 12 to 25 exhibitors, extending our witness into the community
- Reduced waste on campus by eliminating most single-use plastics and adding a water bottle filling station
- Integrated Creation care into worship, education, and daily discipleship
- Partnered with trustees on an energy audit, native landscaping, and exploration of solar panels
- Created opportunities to encounter God in nature through Faith Walks, speakers, and Forest Therapy

Where We're Headed Next

- Host a third Earth Day Fair in Fall 2026 to deepen community impact
- Launch a congregational composting program
- Continue pursuing long-term sustainability solutions for our campus
- Invite more people into Creation care through shared meals, storytelling, and volunteer leadership
- Further weave Creation care into the life, worship, and witness of our church

Creation as Creativity

In addition to care for the earth, we will also continue to nurture creativity in our church, supporting groups such as Art and Faith, writing original music, preparing studies that reach beyond the walls of this church, seeking innovation in livestreaming, and potentially launching a new Downtown Drama initiative.



Then the Lord God said, "It's not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him."

Genesis 2:18



"This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you."

John 15:12



Connection





Connection

We are a Relational Church

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to love God and love neighbor. But we can't truly love without being in relationship. So over the next four years, we commit to strengthening our relational ministries, whether that is growing and diversifying our small groups or creating intentional places of gathering such as potlucks and coffee hours. We will also create opportunities to grow deeper in our relationship with God through spiritual practices and more in depth Bible studies, including a return of Disciple Bible Study in Fall 2026.

We are an Intergenerational Church

As of 2026, eight living generations —the Greatest Generation, Silents, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, Gen Alpha, and Gen Beta—are part of our shared life together. While we offer age-specific ministries that honor the unique needs and life stages of each generation, we intentionally create shared spaces where generations learn from, celebrate with, and serve alongside one another, such as our Back to School Dance and Intergenerational Talent Show. We understand intergenerational life not as optional programming, but as a theological practice: a living witness to God's ongoing work across generations, where wisdom is passed on, new voices are welcomed, and the faith is continually renewed.



We are a Connectional Church

Connectionalism is the theological and organizational principle that the church does its work together rather than independently, believing that God's mission is best fulfilled through shared discernment, mutual responsibility, and collective action. Theologically, connectionalism reflects the belief that the church is the Body of Christ, where no part exists only for itself, and faith is lived out in relationship, not isolation. In practice, within the United Methodist Church, this means we practice shared mission, shared leadership, shared governance, and shared resources across the denomination.



Jesus said,
"Neither do I
condemn
you. Go, and
from now on,
don't sin
anymore."

John 8:11



Conviction



The woman
said to the
snake, "We
may eat the
fruit of the
garden's trees
but not the
fruit of the
tree in the
middle of the
garden."

Genesis 3:2-3



Conviction

The Promises That Shape Our Lives

In the United Methodist Church, baptism and membership are rooted in deep conviction—public promises about how we choose to live as followers of Jesus Christ. When we are baptized or become members, we promise to:

- Resist evil, injustice, and oppression in all their forms.
 - Confess Jesus Christ as Savior, trust fully in his grace, and follow him.
 - Serve the church through prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.
 - Support the mission of the church, locally and globally, as disciples.
 - Grow in faith and holiness, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our lives.
- These vows reflect our conviction that faith is lived, commitments matter, and discipleship is a lifelong journey—one we walk together.



A Church Who Welcomes

FUMC Bentonville welcomes all. Because we believe the Communion Table is God's table, we invite everyone into our church family. We welcome and celebrate every race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical and mental ability, national origin, economic station, and political ideology. We come together in action and outreach, aspiring to follow Jesus' example of radical hospitality, love, and grace as a transformative movement in our community.

4C a Big Future!

We have a big opportunity before us that can help ensure the future of our church and respond in powerful and meaningful ways to needs in our community as we consider what to do with the land to the west of our church and our parking lot. There are any number of problems we could address and possibilities we could turn into realities. Please commit to being part of the conversations about what we might do with the land. We can live out our convictions of following Christ, loving our neighbors, and truly allowing the reign of God to be experienced in the here and now for some of the most vulnerable among us as we seek to be good caretakers of the land and resources God entrusts us with.





"All the families
of the earth will
be blessed
because of you."

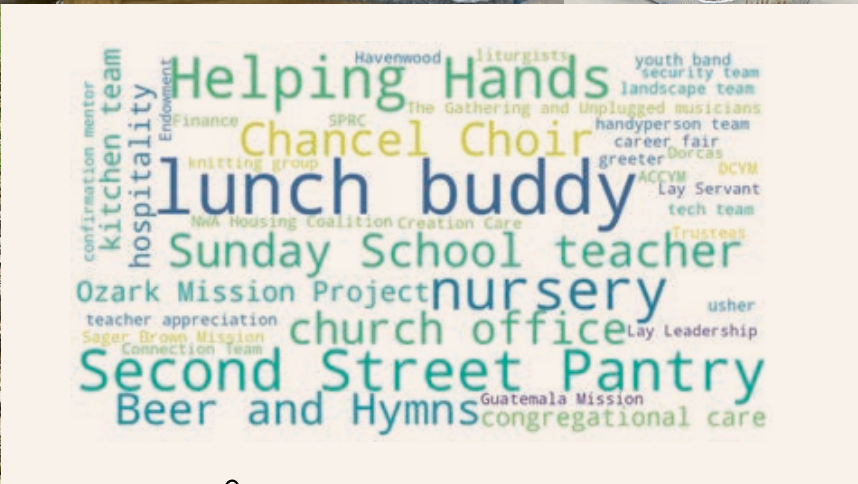
Genesis 12:3



Contribution

Jesus said to him,
"Take care of my
sheep."

John 21:16



Thank You

for all the ways you contribute
to our church and our world
community!

Get in touch at
info@fumcbentonville.org
to learn more.



Check out our
Volunteer Wish List



Request a 4 Questions
Conversation



Four Year Operating Budget Projections

Fiscal Year	Conservative (~4%)	Baseline (~6%)	Missional (~8%)
FY2026-27	\$1,345,112	\$1,384,193	\$1,450,573
FY2027-28	\$1,398,917	\$1,460,323	\$1,566,619
FY2028-29	\$1,454,874	\$1,540,640	\$1,691,949
FY2029-30	\$1,513,069	\$1,625,380	\$1,827,305

Now that you have seen some of who we are and who we are working to be as we **4C the Future** here at FUMC Bentonville, it is time to think about how we make this happen financially. We analyzed the budgets and attendance reports of the last three years, added in projected growth for Benton County, and came up with the above four year projections of what our budgets could be. We invite you to consider what kind of commitment you want to make over the next four years. To guide your decision, here is an explanation of the three categories:

- **Conservative** - Holds us at our current programs, staffing and services at the most conservative estimates of growth. If we exceed projected growth, our budget will not keep up with our needs. May also be a challenge if attendance is ahead of giving commitments. Basically a check-to-check budget.
- **Baseline** - Keeps up with growth and allows us to respond to needs by building a safety net that allows us to handle attendance growth while giving growth catches up (giving growth is typically 2-3 years behind attendance growth). Also allows for small improvements in programs and facilities along the way.
- **Missional** - Grows our ministries within the church and in our community, allowing us to innovate and dream ahead of the curve. Allows the possibility of meeting our Beyond Us 2030 Goal of 25% of the budget allotted to Mission and Outreach without detriment to church services and programming.

What Could We Do with a Missional Budget? Here are some ideas from your Lay Leadership:

- Start a children/youth choir
- Improve online audio/video
- Ensure enough transportation availability to attend concerts and activities, especially for those with limited access
- Expand worship offerings
- Hire a volunteer or new-member coordinator
- Support layperson volunteers within the worship/building team
- Create a dedicated child space
- Provide space for coffee hour, meetings, and gatherings
- Ensure care and safety for all staff
- Provide services for families with children who have special needs
- Better utilize youth groups
- Increase engagement across age groups
- Engage the Hispanic congregation more in worship planning
- Grow support for area organizations such as Havenwood

So now it is your turn to dream and decide how you can support this church and its ministries. We know some of you are on a fixed budget and that will of course shape how you give. But some of you are experiencing your own financial growth as this area and this church are too. We wanted to give you a four year vision so that you can start thinking beyond this moment to all the possibilities before you. A simple way to think about it is that for every \$100 that you give, Conservative grows your giving by \$4, Baseline by \$6, and Missional by \$8. Use that as your guide as you plan out the next 4 years of committing to the work and the people of FUMC Bentonville!



In 2026/2027, I/we want to 4C the Future at FUMC by giving _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Contact me about: ☐ Automatic Withdrawal ☐ Leaving Funds to the church



In 2027/2028, I/we want to 4C the Future at FUMC by giving _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Contact me about: ☐ Automatic Withdrawal ☐ Leaving Funds to the church



In 2028/2029, I/we want to 4C the Future at FUMC by giving _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Contact me about: ☐ Automatic Withdrawal ☐ Leaving Funds to the church



In 2029/2030, I/we want to 4C the Future at FUMC by giving _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

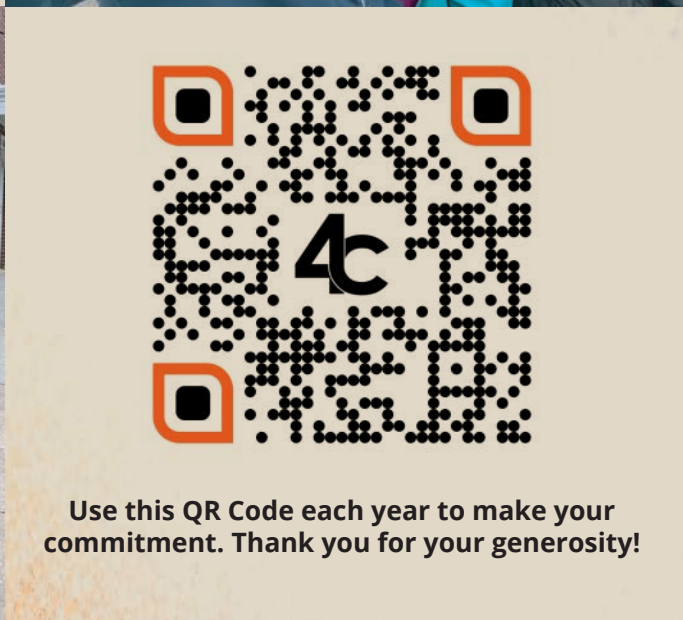
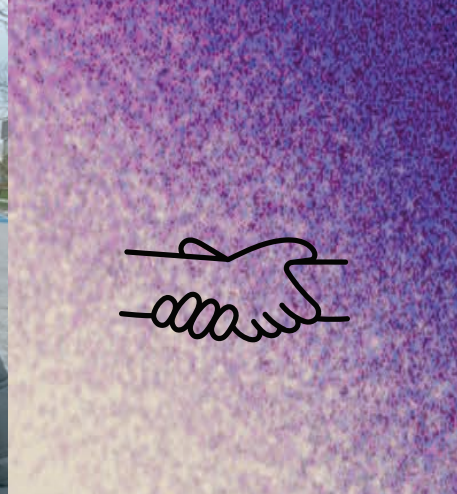
Contact me about: ☐ Automatic Withdrawal ☐ Leaving Funds to the church



Each year, either cut out your commitment for the applicable year and bring or mail it to First United Methodist Church of Bentonville, c/o Church Accountant, 201 NW 2nd St, Bentonville, AR 72712, or pledge online using the QR code on the back cover.



Let's dream big together.



Use this QR Code each year to make your commitment. Thank you for your generosity!

