

Letter from our Pastor

Reflections on 2024,
Looking forward to 2025 ...



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! The pastor and staff of Monticello First United Methodist Church hope that all of your families had a joy filled holiday season. May the light, joy, love and peace of the Savior fill your hearts and homes! And may the God who has brought us through 2024, and all the other years, be with you and yours in 2025.

What do you remember most when you reflect back on the past year? I choose to remember the good: the blessings, the joys, the people and events that wrought positive feelings and changes in my heart and mind. A saying that I find helpful is, "The days are long, but the years are short." I strive to let go of the dark parts of the past and to only recall the good. This is a difficult thing to accomplish, but I find that a serious effort to let go of the dark, hurtful things that occurred in the past is a very positive choice. I forgive others and let go of the past because I want to be forgiven. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others."

We have experienced a number of good things at Monticello FUMC this year, things that are worthy of remembrance. We have one new official member, Ms. Karen Null. We are grateful that she has joined our church. We have several regular visitors that attend morning worship almost every Sunday. They are not yet official members, but they have become part of our church family. I believe that if we are faithful to the Lord and continue to trust and rely on Him, that things will continue to improve.

We have baptized children this year! Sam and Jessica Kelly's twin grandchildren were baptized on September 22nd, 2024. It was with joy that we baptized Elizabeth Lydia and Willie Wade Kennedy III, in the presence of their parents, grandparents and families. During our Christmas Eve service, we baptized Matt & Kaitlyn Kelly's children, Grant and Emma-Claire. I believe that their confessions of faith and baptism on Christmas Eve made our service especially memorable. Their faith and desire to be followers of Jesus is a special Christmas gift to the Lord, and to the Church.

We have begun a Youth program! We have had 2 after morning worship Youth activities. Joneen created an art contest one Sunday after church. On the first Sunday in Advent the youth decorated the Church for Christmas! They did a very good job and had fun! Matt Kelly and "helpers" took the church youth to a live Christmas nativity on the bus one weekend night! We are still working on future events.

Our regular annual events were held and were successful. First Responders Sunday went well and was well attended. It is good that we can express our gratitude to those who are willing to help those in our community in their hour of need as they are dealing with some of life's unexpected difficulties. Dr. Alton Standifer, was the guest speaker for our August Fall Tailgate service. Dr. Standifer did an outstanding job and the event was well attended. These two special events are a ministry to the community and help us show our appreciation for those who make Monticello such a wonderful place to live.

I am running out of room to write. However, I must not forget to mention that Troop 331, Troop 331G, cub pack 331, and the 331 Venture Crew are still alive and thriving. Our support of Scouting is a real ministry to this community. I also wish to express my gratitude to those Scout Leaders who so freely give of their time to make these scout groups possible.

Grace and Peace, Ben

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

*2024 Contribution Statements will be available for pickup beginning Jan 5th, 2025
on the table in the hallway behind the sanctuary.*

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

A LOOK BACK AT A FEW 2024 HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT...

(left) was well attended by over 70 people. Matt & Kaitlyn Kelly's youngest children were baptized, Grant and Emma-Claire (right). A blessed time at our Church!



UWF prepared & delivered "Goodie Trays" for The Retreat and shut-ins in December.



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



SCOUTS SUNDAY (left) color guard. Kaylee Slocumb completed Eagle Scout and presented a flag pole, flag and lights to the Church.



TWIN BABIES BAPTIZED

(above) in September as proud grandparents Sam and Jessica Kelly look on. The children of Alexandra Kelly and Willis Kennedy, Jr were joined by family for this blessed event.



OUR YOUTH (above) participated in an Art "Paint the Vase" contest hosted by Joneen. Above were the winners and the participants. The Youth also decorated our Church for Christmas! The Pastor provided pizza and fun was had by all.



UMM SPRING & FALL CHICKEN-Q's successfully raised funds for hurricane victims and the Scouts!



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** is January 12 at 8:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. The February meeting is the usual first Sunday, February 2nd.
- The **United Women in Faith's Meeting** the first Monday in January is cancelled; next meeting at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall on Feb 3rd. All welcome.
- The **Red Cross Blood Drive** is Wednesday, January 8 from 1:00 - 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Register online at www.redcrossblood.org and use code: jasper.
- The **Food, Fun & Fellowship** meets the third Wednesday each month at 11:30 am at Charlotte's.
- **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 (subject to change).*
- **UPPER ROOMS** for January & February are here! Pickup at the office, Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays (hours below). 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. New building is being planned!



OFFICE HOURS are Monday, Tuesday 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, and Friday noon to 3:00 pm.

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

January Birthdays:

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

Happy February Anniversary:

- 23. Tom & Julie Tucker



NORTHERN LIGHTS (above) made a rare appearance in our Southern skies in October. Such a blessing to see shining over our Church!