

ONE  
*Night,* ONE  
*Star,*  
ONE  
*Child*



FIRST UMC  PORTSMOUTH  
DECEMBER BEACON  
2025



## **FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR BOB...**

Earlier in the week I read Bishop Bickerton's message to the Annual Conference, and it made me stop in my tracks when I pondered the first paragraph of his message.

On **November 24, 2025** the Bishop wrote:

*It seems that Halloween has overtaken Thanksgiving as the prelude of Christmas. In October, Halloween decorations appear with flair and creativity. Once the day passes, however, the transformation to Christmas decorations is all but instantaneous! It's not just a house or two, either. Stores stock the shelves with Christmas gifts. Christmas music fills the air. Christmas inflatables appear in front yards. What happened to Thanksgiving!? What IS everyone thinking?*

There is so much truth to his statement. We do move from Halloween to Christmas and Thanksgiving is left in the rear-view mirror. If we truly want to be prepared for the Advent and Christmas seasons...we need to pause and be thankful. Kevin Fickenscher, in his message last week, asked what are you grateful for? What are you thankful for? Here is how I would answer. I am grateful and thankful for each of you. I am grateful and thankful for my family and friends. I am grateful and thankful for the generosity of our church. I am grateful that many have taken a step up in their giving because they wanted to experience that generous life and show their Commitment to Christ. There are Financial Commitments still coming in so there is not a final number at this time but let me give you some highlights:

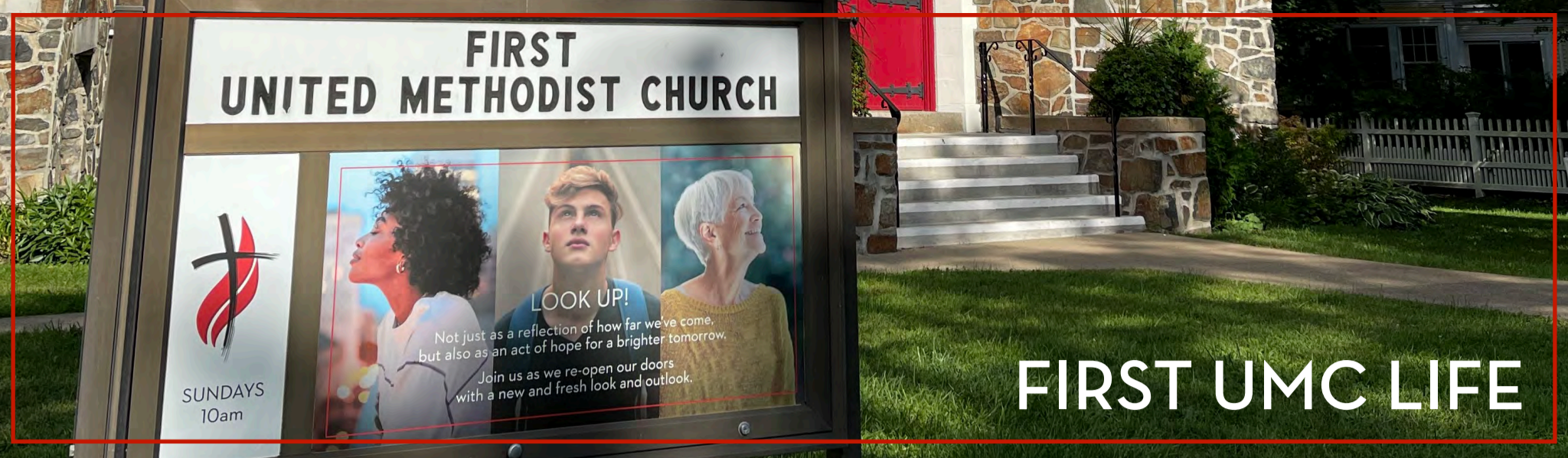
- 2 New Pledges compared to last year.
- Of those that pledged last year...15 people or families took a step up in their giving.
- Of those that pledged last year...4 have not yet submitted a commitment card.
- Of those that pledged last year...1 decreased and 1 remained the same as last year.

**THANK YOU...THANK YOU...THANK YOU**

I am grateful for each of you and your Commitment to God and your church. We need to pause to be thankful for what we have and for what will be coming soon. What is coming soon is the best gift anyone could have given to each of us. God sent his one and only Son to the world. In John 3:16 **"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** May you be grateful and thankful that you have a Heavenly Father and His one and only Son, Jesus Christ that loves you so much for who you are. I know I love you the same.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday of Advent which begins on Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, as our theme for this Advent Season is **One Night...One Star...One Child.** Come, Let Us Adore Him.

See You In Church, Pastor Bob



## WORSHIP, FUN, AND FAITH IN ACTION AT FIRST UMC

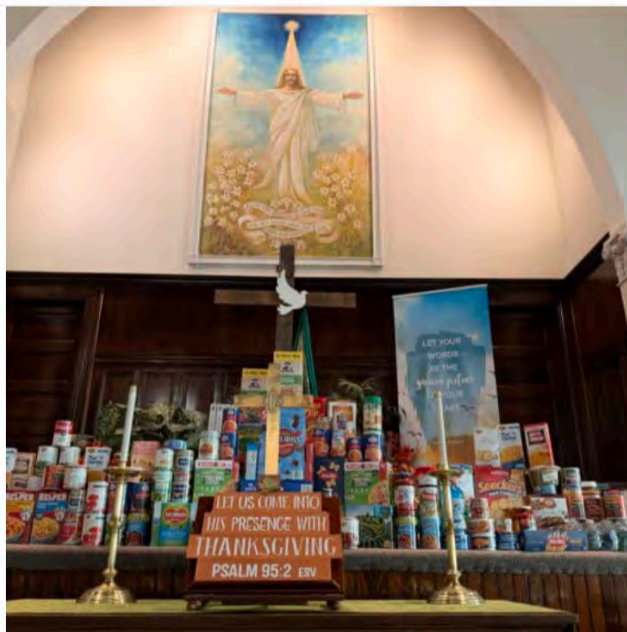
Our Church website [fumcportsmouth.com](https://fumcportsmouth.com) is a great place to remind ourselves of the amazing work we are doing supporting each other, our community in making a difference by sharing our faith in God. Check out the photo galleries here - <https://fumcportsmouth.com/photo-galleries/>



### WHAT THANKS SHOULD WE OFFER

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



### GIVING AND SERVING

NOVEMBER 16, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



### COME AND WORSHIP

NOVEMBER 9, 2025

[VIEW PHOTOS »](#)



### ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 2, 2025



### THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD



### DON'T STOP PRAYING

OCTOBER 19, 2025



## **LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:**

It is truly remarkable how reading God's word draws people closer to Him as He speaks through the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit reaches out to connect with us even before we fully receive the Spirit in our hearts. Through the conviction of Scripture, we will often discover a need we may not have previously recognized, drawing us closer to God. Enjoy getting closer to Him!

### **Sunday, December 7**

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

### **Sunday, December 21**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

### **Sunday, December 28**

First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalms 148

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

### **Sunday, December 14**

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalms 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46-55

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

### **Wednesday, December 24**

Nativity of the Lord / Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14 [15-20] Thursday,



## **THANKSGIVING MOUNTAIN OF GRATITUDE**

Thank you all for your support in building the "Mountain of Gratitude"...your generosity help 43 families celebrate Thanksgiving through our partnership with the Salvation Army. You made a difference!



## **PIE ANGEL UPDATE**

We are grateful for the PIE ANGELS who lovingly made all the pies that found their way to Thanksgiving tables throughout the Seacoast...there were 110+ pies made!

Thank you to everyone who once again ordered their favorite pies through First UMC...we hope you enjoyed them!



## ***KIDS FIRST***

We continue our tradition of helping kids in the community that without us wouldn't experience the joy of Christmas.

The Christmas tree in the Narthex is dedicated to this outreach. Please take as many ornaments as you want and return the "unwrapped" gifts with ornament tags by 12/14.

If you would like to help wrap the gifts we will be doing that on 12/20 from 10am to 1pm...no experience required!

Thanks for making a difference!



## FIRST UMC FINANCE FLASH UPDATE

Hello Church Family,

December is upon us, and with it comes a season filled with gratitude, anticipation, and a little extra coffee. As we move through Advent, I'm reminded daily of how much we have to be thankful for as a church family. Our Giving Tree is once again beautifully decorated with the Christmas wishes of New Hampshire children. Thank you to Sue Sarosiek for helping bring this ministry to life. And for her bravery in wrangling tags, tape, and faux tree branches.

My wish for The First United Methodist Church this Christmas season is this: **that we continue to be a place where hope gathers, grace multiplies, and the love we share becomes louder than anything the world can throw at us.**

We are also thrilled to share that several new members are officially joining the Finance Committee. Please help us welcome Steve Scott, John VanReenan, Dave Richards, Roseanne Groff, and Jane Richards. We are absolutely delighted to have them with us and grateful for their willingness to step into the *thrilling* world of church finance.

Any congregation member curious about how we steward the church's resources is welcome to audit a meeting, either in person or via Zoom. We promise a clear agenda, meaningful work, and a surprising amount of good conversation.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to once again share that in the New Year we will be launching a brand-new fundraiser: our very own FUMC Church Cookbook. This delicious project will be overseen by Penny Sue Orr, who is seeking volunteers to help with collecting recipes, proofreading, organizing content, and preparing both printed and digital editions. If you have a signature dish, or simply enjoy proofreading, please see Penny Sue or Aerial Sillanpaa to get involved.

We will be accepting pre-orders for a printed book, and digital copies will also be available for those who prefer their recipes without gravy splatters.

As we turn our hearts toward a fresh year, here is a Scripture to guide us forward: **"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" - Isaiah 43:19**

Wishing you peace, joy, and plenty of holiday faith to get you through every casserole, pageant, and poinsettia.

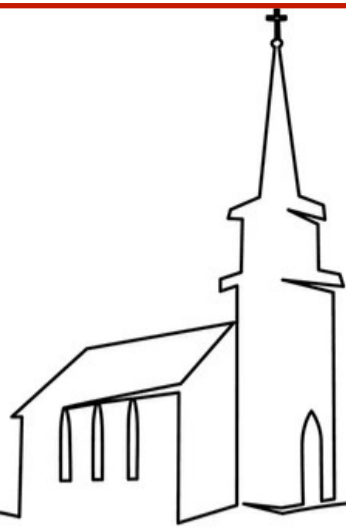
With gratitude,

Aerial Sillanpaa

Chair, Finance Committee

FRIENDLY REMINDER...:

You can use our on-line "giving" tab tool on our website @ [fumcportsmouth.com](http://fumcportsmouth.com)



## **FIRST UMC TRUSTEES UPDATE**

### **STAIR LIFT**

The new chair lift has been installed. We are waiting for the State of New Hampshire to do the final inspection. In the mean time the chairlift will not be available. We have encouraged with the State to expedite the inspection process. A heart felt thank you to all who donated to make this happen, a true testament of our congregations strength.

We sprung a leak! Our thanks to Wayne Rasch for fixing a leak in the roof above the office, Sue the umbrella is no longer needed!

Blessings  
Mike Coffey - Chair





## FIRST UMC WORSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE



Merry Christmas my church family!

Many thoughts have been going around in my head about the upcoming season. Many get wrapped up in shopping, parties, wrapping, decorating our homes and forget the true meaning of the season. Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of our Lord and Savior - the greatest gift of all! There are several ways we can keep the "Reason" at the forefront of the season. Here is something I found on Pinterest (I altered it a little)

#1 Do not buy presents - but BE Present. Not only in church each Advent Sunday but be present everyday in the Spirit of the Lord. Read the Advent 2025 Calendar of Devotion which Pastor Bob has offered to each of us. You can find your copy on the table in the sanctuary.

#2 Do not wrap gifts - but Wrap SOMEONE in a HUG! It's one of the greatest gifts you can give someone and it's FREE!

#3 Do not send gifts - but send PEACE. Be a vessel of spreading the peace and love that was given to us on that morning.

#4 Do not shop for food - but DONATE food. Our local food pantries need donations all year round.

#5 Do not just see the lights that illuminate our homes but BE the Light of Christ!

Please be present for the children's pageant "Joy Story" on 12/21 during the service. They are working hard with the help of Miss Sharon, Miss Stephanie and Mr David. I've had a sneak peek and you will not want to miss it!

As in years past if you have a Christmas card to share with the congregation there will be a place in the narthex for you to pin it up.

Christmas Eve service will be at 5pm on 12/24.

May each and every one of you enjoy and keep the Light of Christ this Advent season!

HE is the REASON for the Season!

Peace in your Journey

PennySue Orr

Worship Chair



You can learn more about us by using your camera on your phone and this QR code



## CHILDREN'S CHURCH UPDATE

**Look!**  
**I bring good news**  
**to you—wonderful, joyous news**  
**for all people.**  
Luke 2:10



10 Bible Verse Poster—Unit 1  
Sessions 1–4

Celebrate Wonder All Ages • Winter  
15

### **Children's Church:**

The kids have been doing a great job practicing their pageant script during Children's Church sessions throughout November. As we enter the Advent season, we will also meet in the sanctuary directly following Sunday service to practice our staging. These rehearsals will take place on November 30th, December 7th, and December 14th, and each will wrap up before 12pm.

### **Pageant:**

"We are gifts given at Christmas time. We're not just toys. This isn't a toy story. We are an important part of a joy story."

- excerpt from "Joy Story", from Little Christmas Dramas For Today's Kids by Timothy W. Ayers

Join us on Sunday, December 21st for 10am service when the children of First UMC will present their 2025 Christmas Pageant, "Joy Story."

Listen along as Eddie and Maggie's toys meet in the playroom on Christmas Eve to share what Christmas means to them - and to learn a bigger lesson of why we celebrate the season.

The script includes five musical interludes; singing along is strongly encouraged!

We hope to see (and hear) you in the audience!

Stephanie Labadie



## SEACOAST FAMILY PROMISE UPDATE

### **Seacoast Family Promise - Volunteers needed**

As one of the founding churches for Seacoast Family Promise, First UMC has been assisting families experiencing homelessness for 20+ years now. The families used to come to our church to stay, but since COVID hit in 2020, they have been staying at the Joshua House in Greenland. However, the network of churches involved in this ministry still provide dinners for the families every day. First UMC, along with our partner in this work, Temple Israel, are responsible for providing dinner 5 - 6 weeks per year. Below are the remaining dates for 2025 that FUMC is responsible for providing dinner:

December 21, 26, 27 (21<sup>st</sup> is a Sunday - Temple traded days with us so they will provide dinner on Christmas Day.)

Volunteers cook the meal and deliver it to the Joshua House in Greenland ready-to-serve.

Updates to previous articles:

Joshua House - the new addition to the building is complete except for the kitchen stove and we have 4 families currently staying there (13 people). Renovations on the original house are in progress, and we hope to have them completed by the end of the year. I did a tour of the building a month ago and it is really impressive. This program has come a long way since its beginning.

Donations for Joshua House in honor of Pati Frew-Waters - donations so far to honor Pati total \$15,982.50!

This ministry has been an important one for this church since 2003 and I hope people will volunteer so we can continue to be a part of such important outreach. This program changes lives forever. See <https://www.seacoastfamilypromise.org/> for more information.

Jen Berry

[Jen.berry76@gmail.com](mailto:Jen.berry76@gmail.com)

603-801-3886





## END 68 HOURS OF HUNGER UPDATE

### **End 68 Hours Of Hunger - Portsmouth**

End 68 Hours of Hunger - Portsmouth was originally started by this church as our “Backpack Ministry” in 2010. In 2012, when this ministry became so large our congregation could no longer fund it by itself, we joined the End 68 Hours of Hunger organization as the Portsmouth chapter, which created more funding opportunities and brought in additional volunteers from the Portsmouth community. Currently we work with all the Portsmouth schools, the Greenland elementary school and The BIRCHTREE Center in Newington NH, feeding 80+ children.

For the last 15 years, we have been sending bags of food home with Portsmouth school children every Friday during the school year. The bags contain 7 simple meals and snacks they can eat over the weekend, filling the gap of approximately 68 hours between lunch at school on Friday and breakfast at school on Monday morning. We’ve also expanded our outreach in the last couple of school years by sending individual pantry items to some of the Portsmouth schools, allowing children who can’t/won’t carry a bag home to also have access to meal and snack items.

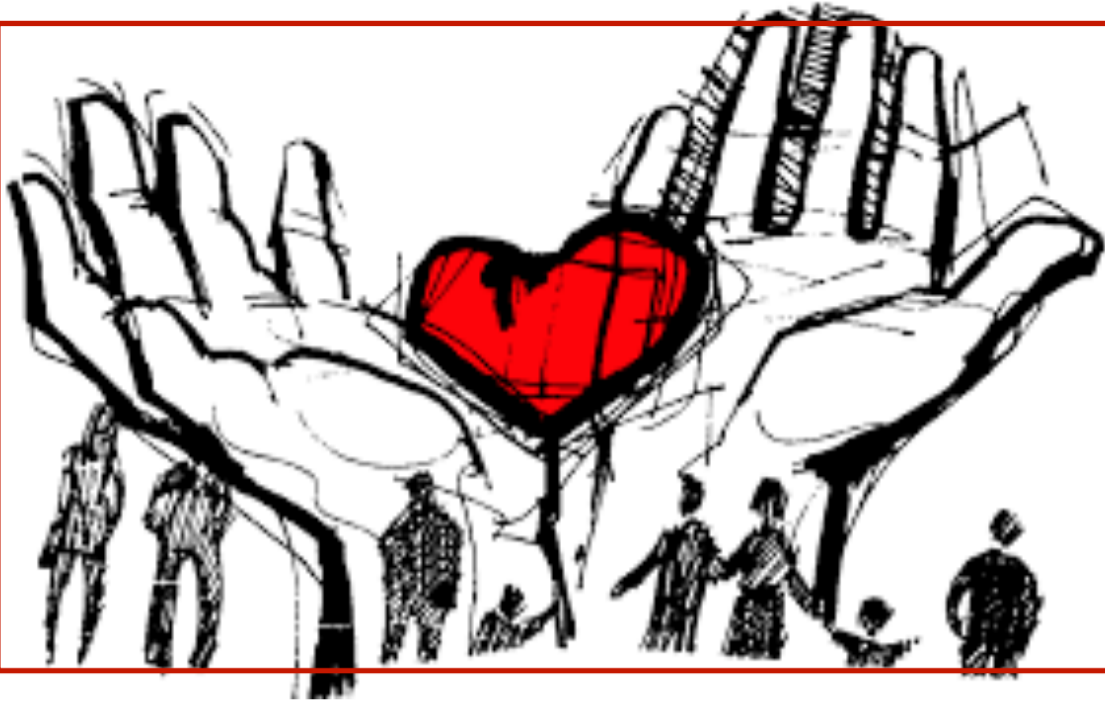
Sadly, the need is just as great today as it was when we started, so we need to continue this important work in our community. End 68 Hours of Hunger - Portsmouth is lucky enough to be one of the charities benefiting from Spinning Generosity - an annual week-long indoor cycling charity event sponsored by LizFit here in Portsmouth that raises money and awareness for 7 local charities in 7 days. Last year, over \$222,000 was raised for the 7 charities! This fundraiser is our biggest one of the year, usually raising thousands of dollars to help buy food to feed the children.

There are 3 ways you can help - ride in the spin class (Dec 11, 6 pm at LizFit), join the team as a fundraiser without riding, or with an individual donation. Any size donation is truly helpful and appreciated! Please visit [SpinningGenerosity.com](http://SpinningGenerosity.com) for details and to sign-up or donate. If you’d rather donate via check, please make the check out to End 68 Hours of Hunger with the memo “Spinning Generosity” and either leave in the church office or mail to:

End 68 Hours of Hunger - Portsmouth  
c/o Jennifer Berry  
13 Sunset Drive  
Rochester, NH 03867

All donations must be received by Dec 13.





# CHURCH FAMILY

## **CARING FOR EACH OTHER**

At our core, we are a FAMILY. We recognize that some members may not be able to attend church regularly or participate in activities at First UMC. They are always in our thoughts, and prayers, cards, calls, or visits are always appreciated.

We  
Are  
Family

Jenya Westbrook  
20 Islington Street #402  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Priscilla Wilson  
361 Sagamore Road  
Rye, NH 03870

Barbara Glidden  
188 Jones Ave #101  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Cynthia Drake  
5 Huntervale Avenue  
Rye, NH 03870

You can learn more about us by using your camera on your phone and this QR code





**NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE  
POWER OF A SINGLE PRAYER!**

***THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!***

Through prayer, we can connect with God, seek His guidance, and intercede on behalf of others.



**ALWAYS**

**PRAY**

AND

*never give up.*

LUKE 18:1

***WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER:***

***Tim & PennySue Orr, The Linchey Family, June McClaren, Liz and Margaret, Chris Duval, Kim, Brian, Megan, & Joseph, and Mark G., all those who find the holiday season challenging and lonely.***

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Get a card in the mail or send a quick text or instant messenger to wish these church family members a Happy Birthday or Happy Anniversary and a day filled with love, laughter and lots of cake!

# DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Al Cansdale
- 4 Jaime Berry
- 10 Shirley Russ
- 13 Evelyn New
- 17 Lilly Sillanpaa
- 23 Priscilla Wilson
- 24 Aerial Sillanpaa
- 25 Kimberly Philbrick
- 27 Priscilla Paisley
- 30 Donald Twombly



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

**12/14 - Kid's First gifts need to be at church unwrapped with ornament tag**

**12/20 - Kid's First gift wrapping from 10am - 1pm**

**12/21 - Children's Christmas Pageant**

**12/21, 26, & 27 - Seacoast Family Promise dinners**



December 2025

# FIRST UMC WORSHIP SCHEDULE

NOTE - If you are unable to meet the proposed schedule please let the office know immediately and we will reschedule.

DATE	LITURGIST	ACOLYTES	9:55 BELL RINGERS	GREETERS & USHERS	FACEBOOK LIVE	WORSHIP TECH	SOUND TECH	SUNDAY SCHOOL	COFFEE HOUR
12/7/25	R. Buswell	Norah	Rosie & Will	T. Thompson D. Thompson	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	J. Berry H. Groff	S. Labadie
12/14/25	D. Pierce	Maria	Liam	R. Groff H. Groff	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	D. Richards S. Labadie	C. VanReenen PS Orr
12/21/25	A. Langs	Georgia	Lilly	K. Langs S. Langs	S. Richards	S. Scott	S. Sarosiek	S. Stewart M. Lindgren	Y. Griffin S. Olbricht
12/24/25	S. Stewart	Dominic	Daphne & Jack	M. Giandomenico M. Stebbins	S. Richards	S. Scott	D. Richards	---	---
12/28/25	S. Beckert	Rosie & Will	Liam	M. Verrill D. Astbury	S Richards	S. Scott	B. Labadie	J. VanReenen C. VanReenen	J. Berry M. Lindgren



First UMC is a Reconciling Congregation dedicated to worshiping, learning, and serving with ALL people embracing Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance.

We celebrate our diversity and invite ALL persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.

# WHY BE DIGITAL DISCIPLES?

- Builds relationships and reaches new visitors
- Spreads the message of God's love
- Shares our Church's message
- Builds community and connections
- Grows our church physically and spiritually
- Facilitates prayer and support
- Recruits volunteers and collaborations

YOU CAN HELP BY: SHARING - VISITING - INVITING - PROMOTING - LIKING OUR POSTS AND WEBSITE

## LET'S BE FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK!

Facebook is a fantastic way to stay updated on events, prayers, daily inspiration, and to connect with Church family and friends. We appreciate it when you "like" our posts, but we absolutely LOVE it when you share them too!



The image shows a Facebook profile page for 'Fumcportsmouthnh Church'. At the top is a navigation bar with icons for home, search, video, marketplace, groups, and a profile icon with a '20+' notification badge. The main cover photo shows a church building with a sign that reads 'UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FIRST METHODIST CHURCH'. The sign features a graphic with three people and the text: 'LOOK UP! Not just as a reflection of how far we've come, but also as an act of hope for a brighter tomorrow. Join us as we re-open our doors with a new and fresh look and outlook.' The foreground is filled with pumpkins. A button labeled 'Edit cover photo' is in the bottom right of the cover image. Below the cover photo is the profile picture, which is a circular image of a stained glass window. The name 'Fumcportsmouthnh Church' is displayed in large black text, followed by '331 friends'. Below the name is a row of small circular profile pictures of other users. At the bottom right, there are three buttons: '+ Add to story', 'Edit profile', and a dropdown arrow.

ONE

*Night*

ONE

*Star*

ONE

*Child*

