



The 2024 Highlighter

Welcome to the Potomac Highlands District fifth edition of The Highlighter.

There are myriads of ministries undertaken by the churches in the Potomac Highlands District, *so many*, it is not possible to enumerate them all. Each Parish was asked to highlight 3 ministries they believe are unique or outstanding.

Please take time to peruse the exciting work highlighted on these pages. Who knows, you or your church may decide to participate in some of these ministries or you may decide to initiate similar ones!

Celebrate God's work in the Potomac Highlands District

Brought to you by:

The Potomac Highlands District Lead Team.

Of Special Note This Year 

Rev. Cheryl George, of the Main Street UMC in Petersburg, has created a library of music videos (MP4 format) consisting of hymns from the United Methodist Hymnal. These can be used for singing by churches that find themselves without a pianist on Sundays. Rev. George is excited to share these with any church who might find them useful!

You can contact Rev. Cheryl George at (304) 851-7672 or at pastorcheryl@mail.com

East Preston Cooperative Parish

Albright, Aurora, First-Otterbein (Preston), Christ (Rowlesburg), Trinity (Terra Alta), Wesley (Kingwood)

Love Project

What started at First UMC (Terra Alta) as a simple call to meet the needs of struggling working families continues to shine going into its fourth year. The church gathered names of families in need from the local school. Donations are collected by the church establishing a schedule for donating specific foods. For example, one week they may collect peanut butter and jelly, the next, canned fruits/vegetables, etc. This stocks the church pantry with non-perishables that can later be distributed as needed. The church received a grant that enables them to add meat to their monthly boxes.

The 8-week cycle recently ended with the gifting of approximately 20 Easter dinners including a ham and all the trimmings. Turkey dinners are given at Thanksgiving. They also incorporated a coat drive to include warmth with their food boxes. Christmas boxes were embellished with the addition of hot chocolate and cookies. Individuals are asked to pick up their boxes at the church unless other arrangements are made.

In addition to families struggling to meet their needs, recipients include those that may be experiencing homelessness or battling addiction. The relationships that are built go beyond the church walls and food boxes. Individuals are asked what they may like to see in their boxes; this provides additional, personalized blessings. This ministry is not intended to grow, it is intended to meet the needs of those identified, and to provide them with the support needed to move forward in life without struggling to eat. Once they are self-sufficient, new families are identified and blessed by the Love Project!

For additional information, contact Stevie Bayles at (304) 559-2673 or at haybales386@gmail.com or contact Donna Lohr at (304) 698-5343 or at donna.longshot@yahoo.com

Bible Club: "Let Me Tell You About My JESUS!"

When Chelsie Harsh was called to start a Bible Club at her local school, she resisted, but as we know, God always wins! Chelsie humbly notes that this was not her doing, it was a "God Thing!" Chelsie first started a Bible Club while teaching at South Preston. When she changed jobs and landed at East Preston, she started a Bible Club there. Local churches were eager to donate snacks and drinks for the students that willingly stay after school to participate. They follow the "Superbook" curriculum (<https://superbookacademy.com>). The students love the cartoon characters that bring Bible stories to life. Songs of worship are also incorporated. They had 90+ students enrolled, with 55-60 attending regularly. Transportation is not an issue for parents; the students are able to catch the late bus.

When her son started school in Aurora, her call expanded. Through God's blessings, someone stepped up to continue the East Preston Club, so Chelsie now leads a new Bible Club in Aurora with volunteer helpers. About 50 students stay on Friday evenings to learn about God. Community churches again stepped in to provide snacks and drinks. Students have added a new component to the sessions: they share God Sightings. One of their favorite songs of worship is "Let Me Tell You About My Jesus!". They will soon be receiving t-shirts printed with this song title, all thanks to the generous donations of the community. If the blessings continue, they will also receive their own Bibles.

As the news spreads, there is the possibility of other school sites offering this opportunity to their students.

For additional information, contact Chelsie Harsh at (301) 501-7120 or at chelsiefultz@yahoo.com

Sharing Grief and Rebuilding Lives

Grief is something we will all experience in our lives; how we process that grief makes a difference in how we move forward. A father and daughter who completed the Grief Share program together knew it was something they wanted to offer through the church. Wesley UMC, Kingwood, has offered various classes to anyone in need of support while dealing with the loss of loved ones. It is a thirteen-week class that meets once a week. This ministry includes many components: teaching, sharing, mutual support, and home assignments. Individuals are offered coping strategies to deal with daily struggles and are guided through the process of rebuilding a new life while accepting their loss. Grief is not the same for everyone: it can be felt immediately, delayed, or can reappear at various points in time for no apparent reason.

They recently offered a Surviving the Holidays event. This session specifically addressed the struggle of facing holidays without loved ones. Individuals can locate current classes at the website: <https://www.griefshare.org>. Wesley also posts offerings on their church's Facebook page and by word of mouth. Their sessions fill quickly, emphasizing the importance of this ministry.

For additional information, contact Rev. Jonathan Nettles at (304) 517-8160 or at nettlesjk@gmail.com

Gateway Cooperative Parish

Bruceton Mills Circuit, Friendsville, Northeastern Garrett, Sugar Valley

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Sugar Valley UMC began their prayer shawl ministry in early 2018. Approximately 7-11 women from the church along with women from the local community meet weekly to work on the shawls. They also fellowship and pray together. Since the ministry began, 117 shawls have been created and distributed. The shawls are prayed over before disbursement. This ministry came full circle when the member who was instrumental in creating this ministry just received a shawl, as she recently had surgery. The women learn of a need through a multitude of ways, such as someone is added to the prayer request list or the knitters themselves or their relatives learn of someone in need. The shawls are also created for people having special birthdays or similar types of celebrations.

For additional information, contact Tamara Wilson at (304) 282-3405 or at tamaratw@gmail.com

Ukrainian Refugee Family

Pisgah UMC is sponsoring a Ukrainian refugee family.

This ministry began when it was featured in the Mon Valley District Newsletter. Pastor Serena Robinson served in the Ukraine for 9-years and has remained in contact with her Ukrainian church. Thanks to her, 50 families have been placed in the U.S. through UNITED FOR UKRAINE, a program created by the U.S. government. Pisgah UMC voted unanimously to sponsor a family of three members.

The church video-chatted with the family before they arrived in America on September 30, 2023. The paperwork was extensive and the family is fully vetted with background checks and were given green cards. Pisgah UMC found them a place to live in Bruceton Mills through a member who had a small home to offer. The members helped them adapt to our culture, taught them English, helped them find employment and assisted them in applying to Social Services for Medicare and SNAP. West Virginia Works provided a small income. The Elks Club provided cash, household good and toys for the family. The family worships every Sunday with the church.

Other Ukrainians in the Morgantown area have established friendships and another couple is coming into Mon Valley soon. The cost to sponsor the family was \$5000.00 but the return in generosity from the local community has been extraordinary. People hear about it in passing and want to become involved.

For additional information, contact Rev. Lynda Masters at (304) 435-1895 or at lyndamastersr24@gmail.com

Nothing Attracts Kids Like a Campfire

For the 2nd year, the Mt. Zion UMC held a campfire before the community youth returned to school last fall. Timing at the end of the summer ensured more children and youth were able to attend. All invited were asked to bring a chair or a blanket to sit around the fire. Twelve children ages 4-11 years attended and several youth ages 12-16 assisted as volunteers for the planned activities. Fifteen to twenty adults attended.

Mt. Zion held the campfire at the church pavilion where a small fire pit was built. Activities included two crafts, two Bible stories, dinner, lighting of the campfire, and devouring ice cream sundaes. And, what campfire would be complete without roasting marshmallows for s'mores? Gathering around the campfire, they sang camp songs and children's church songs.

The advertising for the campfire was placed on Mt. Zion's Facebook page and Amy Rowe's personal Facebook page. Emmanuel UMC, the sister church to Mt. Zion, was invited. Connections are being made. Two new families attended the campfire and both indicated they would like to start coming to church on a regular basis.

For additional information, contact Amy Rowe at (240) 727-6402 or at amy74rowe@gmail.com

Hampshire Cooperative Parish

Augusta, Bethel-Hill, Cacapon, Capon Bridge, Ebenezer-Springfield, First (Romney), Hampshire, Mt. Olive

Make NEW Friends

The Bethel-Hill Charge and Capon Bridge Charge came together on the fifth Sunday to have a hymn sing at North River Mills UMC. They encouraged people to bring their instrument(s) and play along. The service lasted an hour. People called out the hymns they wanted to sing and the service ended with "Amazing Grace." Afterward, there was a fellowship meal provided by North River Mills.

In the future, the home church will provide the meals or they may choose to do a cover dish dinner. The offering collected was split between the two charges.

The Hampshire Charge hosts a 5th Sunday Charge Rally, where all three churches in the Charge unite for worship and share a meal afterwards.

For additional information for the Hymn Sing contact Terry Bailes at (304) 496-7349 or at bailsteve@yahoo.com

For additional information about the Charge Rally contact Rev. Tim Ours at (304) 257-8281 or at rioours1975@gmail.com

We are Old and it is Cold!

The North River Mills church hosts "Christmas in the Wildwood", an indoor version of Christmas caroling on the third Sunday of Advent. Participants sing in a warm church instead of going out in the cold. Everyone from far and wide is invited to come and sing their favorite Christmas hymns. There is an hour of singing followed by the sharing of refreshments.

For additional information contact Terry Bailes at (304) 496-7349 or at bailsteve@yahoo.com

Sponsor a Student at Living Hope High School

Ebenezer UMC sponsored a student from Living Hope High School. He just graduated from High School in January 2024. He will be going to college. The church is considering the possibility of helping another student.

For additional information, contact Diana Temple at (304) 822-6098 or at TRB275@hotmail.com

What is Living Hope High School?

The late Marilyn Uhl was sitting at her kitchen table in Riverton working on lesson plans when she heard the voice of God. She heard three things: "They went to bed hungry", "I will provide", and "Go". With those words, she sold everything she had and moved to Kenya to create Living Hope High School.

The school serves children whose parents cannot afford to send them to the "Public High School" because in Kenya, High Schools have costs associated with attending. Because the need is great, children must pass entry exams before being accepted. The school runs completely on donations and sponsorships. *Currently there are 46 students who need to be sponsored for the 2024 year* and new students are added each year. The cost of sponsorship is \$110 per month or you can make a lump sum payment of \$1320 per year. You or your church can choose a student to sponsor by contacting Sandy Binotto, the US Coordinator. Sponsorships and donations for special projects (there are *always* special projects that need funding), may be made by sending checks to:

Riverton United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 23
Riverton, WV 26814

All donations are tax deductible and are used for the school. They are completely a volunteer organization. There are no overhead costs associated with giving. Riverton UMC makes money transfers to the school each month. Individual sponsors will receive a statement of giving from Riverton UMC each year.

For additional information, contact Sandy Binotto at vashe4jc@hotmail.com

Hardy Cooperative Parish

Baker, Duffey Memorial-Bass, Mathias, Open Door Ministries, Wardensville

Help Light our Christmas Tree

Each December, The Wardensville UMC United Women in Faith host an outside Christmas Tree. People in the church and community are invited to donate a Christmas light in honor or in memory of a relative, friend, or pet. The cost is \$5.00 per light. A bulletin with the list of dedications is given out and featured on the church's Facebook page.

The "Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony" is usually held on the first Sunday night in December. There is a guest musician, everyone sings Christmas carols, the list of dedications are read, and the church lights the tree. After the lighting, everyone is invited to the Fellowship Hall for refreshments. It is an excellent event for our whole community. Donations benefit the United Women in Faith and the missions they support; last year, \$2000 was donated.

Would you like to try it, too? All you need is a telescoping flagpole, quick links, 500 outdoor lights, wire anchors, a timer, and someone who's willing to organize the activity!

For additional information, contact Margaret Orndorff at (304) 874-3806.

Need Diapers?

The Oak Grove UMC offers a children's diaper/wipes giveaway on the 2nd Sunday of each month. Families register online through the church's Facebook page by completing a Google form. Once completed, these forms are automatically sent back to the church and the forms will dump the information into a spreadsheet they can use for checking names. The diapers are picked up at the church. The church averages about 60 families registering, although many times only about 50 pick up their diapers. If people come that aren't registered, and if the church has extra diapers, they will distribute them on a first come first served basis.

Each child in a family is eligible to receive a "sleeve" of diapers (containing 20-30) and a pack of wipes. The church has been able to partner with the New Vision Depot, as well as other churches in the area to collect diapers. Occasionally the local food bank receives diapers and they will pass them along to the church for distribution. Additional funding, as needed, is supplied by the church's Sunday offerings.

For additional information, contact Bethany Jennings at (304) 703-0737 or at Bethany.sirk@gmail.com

Young Disciples Program at Duffey Memorial

The Duffey Memorial UMC is in its third year of their Young Disciples program. Sixth graders meet for ninety minutes each week on Tuesdays from 6:30-8 pm. The course lasts for 20+ weeks. Books and videos, supplied by the Seedbed curriculum titled *The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith* (<https://my.seedbed.com/product-category/seedbed-kids/>) are supplemented with additional bible study and a variety of other learning experiences involving object lessons, crafts, games, and educational snacks.

Sessions are led by the pastor, with the assistance of another adult and a senior high youth. After completing all the weekly sessions, there is a day-long retreat. They study the questions which are asked of those who wish to be baptized or confirmed. Baptized members are given the opportunity to be confirmed, and those who have not been baptized are invited to receive baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Students who complete the study but do not choose to be baptized or confirmed are recognized in worship along with those who do choose to be baptized or confirmed.

Duffey would love to share their plans with other churches that are interested in their program.

For additional information contact Rev. Mark Flynn at (304) 667-3949 or at revmwflynn@gmail.com

Mineral Cooperative Parish

Burlington, Elk Garden, Forest Glen-St Paul's, Fort Ashby, Grace (Keyser), Keyser-Faith, Rees Chapel-Antioch, Trinity (Keyser), Trinity-Waldon (Piedmont)

Partnering with the Staggers Recovery Home for Women

What started as a regular shopping trip has turned into a heartfelt ministry. Two women ran into their friend who was shopping for necessities for the Staggers Recovery Home for Women. They decided to help. This encounter led to an ongoing collaboration between the Emoryville UMC and the Staggers Home. The thirteen members of the church now donate items ranging from cleaning supplies to personal hygiene supplies.

What is the Staggers Recovery Home? A home, operated by Burlington UM Family Services, for women who are at various stages of recovery. Women work through their hardships and addictions one day at a time. Because they would otherwise be separated from their children, this home offers them an opportunity to reunite with their families. Residents are assisted with school: some need to complete their GEDs, others prep for college classes or vocational training. The ultimate goal is to prepare them to be self-sufficient productive citizens, and to provide for themselves and their families when they leave the facility.

Members of the church try to make a personal visit to the home at least once per year to sit with the residents and listen to their journey. They've taken pizza or enjoyed snacks and cookies made by the residents, while offering a gentle presence of God's love. They share what God can do in their lives, but most important, they listen. It is their hope that this can increase as it is deemed to be safe for the residents and the church members. The Staggers Recovery Home has become an extension to the Emoryville UMC family.

For additional information, contact Deb Pennington at (301) 616-5226 or at dl_penn@frontier.com

Wednesday Children's Youth Fellowship

We are always asking ourselves where youth can be found. Every other Wednesday you can find them at Rees Chapel from 6:00-7:30 pm. It was their hearts' calling to provide the area youth an opportunity to join in fellowship and learn of God's love for each of them. This ministry draws church members as well as youth from the community. Although each Wednesday may look a little different, they gather for an opening, sing songs, pray, and have a Bible lesson. They also get to enjoy a snack and some fun activity in the form of a game or craft.

Attendees are divided into four different age groups to better meet their needs since the children range from preschool to high school. You will usually find 10-15 adults working to make this night a success. They have been averaging 20-25 kids each week. It is their hope to continue offering this opportunity to learn about God and be a part of a loving community.

For additional information, contact Deb Amtower at (304) 813-6406 or at amtowers@frontier.com

Help for the Homeless

In Oct 2022, Cheri Gannon (not associated with the UMC) acted on God's call and established a feeding ministry for the homeless and hungry people in Keyser, called "His Table", in conjunction with the Mineral County Coalition for the Homeless. The Janes UMC allows "His Table" to use their Community Center to pack non-perishable lunches filled with items such as tuna fish, crackers, protein bars, water and Gatorade in the summers. They also offer bags of cat and dog food. Food may be picked up at the door of the Center between 11-12:30 on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Volunteers also take meals to a box at Brooks Park and a footlocker behind Best Price Market in McCoolle. In the winter they filled the locker with coats, hats, gloves, etc, and last winter, distributed more than 80 blankets.

They function through the kindness of donations of money and food from the community with occasional help from Walmart and Martin's. *They could use **your help in whatever way you feel called.*** For monetary donations, you can go to The First United Bank in Keyser and just ask them to put the money in the "His Table" Account. Their non-profit's motto is: Simply God's people loving God's people.

For additional information contact Cheri Gannon at (304) 813-0224 or at cagannon04@yahoo.com

Mountain Cooperative Parish

Mountaintop Ministries, Riverton, South Fork

Sunday School – with a Twist!

Who says Sunday School must be on Sunday mornings or even held at the church? The Southfork Charge has their Adult Sunday School at 3 pm on Sunday afternoons via a phone conference call (internet is not readily available to all in this location). The Pastor leads the group, using the United Methodist Adult Bible Study Series, issued quarterly (available online through Cokesbury.com or Christianbook.com). There are 5 regulars, including one person who joins from Newport News, Va, as well as a few guests from time to time. Everyone reads the Scripture for the week so the time on the call can be spent learning and discussing.

For additional information, contact Rev. Judy Vetter at (304) 703-0591 or at pjrvetter@gmail.com

After School KIDZ program

In June of each year, Main Street UM in Franklin, with the help of people from the Mt. Zion and Walnut Street churches (in the Mountaintop Ministries Charge) hosts Vacation Bible School for around 115 children. Since some of those children don't set foot inside a church door or hear the word of God in a positive way until the next summer's Vacation Bible School, the churches decided they needed another way to reach the community's children and youth.

The After School KIDZ program started in mid-October 2023, with the help of a grant from the United Methodist Foundation. Each week on Thursdays, approximately 25 children come to the Main Street UMC after school. Most ride the bus; some travel from as far away as Brandywine, 20 minutes away. There are many activities: play time, learning about Jesus, singing, making crafts, sharing joys and concerns the children have, learning how to pray, executing STEM projects, and enjoying puppet skits, videos, and plays. At Christmas, the focus was learning about Advent and the birth of Jesus. Early in 2024, in partnership with Eastern Community Action, a cooking class was held for the kids and the local community bank taught a class about money and banking. During the Lenten season, the focus was on the events leading up to Easter before the program ends for the year in April.

This program gives the Main Street Church the opportunity to reach children while their hearts are open to the gospel. It provides a loving, safe, Christian atmosphere where the children's spiritual, physical and social needs can be met.

For additional information, contact Barb Hamilton at (304) 668-3300 or at kimblefh@shentel.net

Christmas "Prayer" Tree

For the past three years and starting as an idea from the online group, Faithfully Following Ministries (<https://faithfullyfollowingministries.org>), a Community Christmas Prayer Tree resides in the Riverton Pavilion, thanks to the efforts of the Riverton UMC. Around Dec. 1, a Christmas Tree is erected at the pavilion with timed lights that automatically pop on at dusk. A large banner hangs at the Pavilion announcing its presence. A tool box sits close to the tree which contains preprinted prayer tags (available to download for free from the website), pens and plastic bags. People complete their prayer request, put it in a bag that is supplied with a twist tie, and hang it on the tree.

A local newspaper ad helps spread the word, aided by announcements in the Charge's Churches and word of mouth. The entire community (and beyond) is invited to hang their prayer requests on the tree's branches at any time. There are picnic tables for people to sit where they can pray and reflect as well as enjoy a complimentary candy cane. People who can't get to the pavilion are encouraged to email their prayer requests to "Christmasprayertree@yahoo.com" and a church member will add them to the tree. At least one church member prays for all the requests on the tree, daily.

For additional information, contact Cindy Wilkins at (304) 567-2047 or at christmasprayertree@yahoo.com

Mountaintop Cooperative Parish

Bloomington, Garrett Highlands, Lakeview, St. Paul's (Oakland), Swanton-Kitzmiller

Meals for the Community

On the last Friday of each month, a dinner is held at Bethel UMC, from 5:00-7:00 pm. The meal is advertised on a local billboard in Oakland, MD and on Bethel Church's Facebook page. This is a community outreach; the doors are open, and all are welcome. Menus vary and are prepared by Bethel church members. The average attendance ranges from 60 upwards to 100.

The Hoyes Church UMC, with the support of the McHenry UMC, hosts a community meal each month. The day for this meal varies from month to month but once scheduled, is advertised. It is generally a spaghetti dinner. Maximum attendance has been near 100. Donations of offerings are determined prior to the event and are tithed back into the community.

For additional information for the Meals at Bethel, contact Mark Rodeheaver at (240) 321-6127 or at meteacher6@yahoo.com

For additional information for the Meals at Hoyes, contact Linda Tichnell at (301) 746-5343 or at hltich0760@gmail.com

Always Wanted to Learn to Play the Guitar?

The Pastor for the Bloomington Charge offers free guitar lessons for members of the church and community. Five people currently participate, ages 12-68. Guitars have been donated for any student who wishes to learn to play. The lessons are held on Thursdays at 6:00 pm and all ages and all skill levels are welcome. Connections and relationships are being built that open the doors for relationships with Christ to be strengthened.

For additional information, contact Rev. Tom Matthews at (304) 703-9194 or at thomasmatthews@frontier.com

Mission 200 Project: "Growing in the Spirit Since 1824"

St. Paul's UMC has begun the celebration of their 200th anniversary. As part of the celebration, and because they are a "mission-oriented family" on a journey of following Jesus in the Wesleyan tradition, they will be collecting items to give to people, programs and organizations in need in their community. They named their celebration the Mission 200 Project: 200 because it is the 200th anniversary and because they are hoping to collect at least 200 items for each charity every month. At the end of each month, they will transport the collection of items to the people, programs and organizations they have chosen.

In January, the church collected winter coats, gloves, hats, mittens, and scarves for children for Share the Warmth, a collaborative effort between Garrett County Lighthouse Inc. and Bethel UMC. Additional Mission Project 200 collections are:

- February - Souper Bowl Sunday: cans or packages of soup.
- March - Children's Books: Infant through teen/young adult options will be provided. (A label will be added: "This book is in honor of the 200th Anniversary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Oakland, Maryland).
- April - Diapers & Wipes.
- May - Senior Citizen Food Bank items
- June - Nursing Home Residents - puzzle books, lotions, socks, etc.
- July - Veterans Collection for Martinsburg VA Medical Center: requested items include stamps, full-size personal care products, phone cards, etc.
- August – Back to School Supplies

For additional information contact Melissa Rank at (301) 387-2630 or at Mrank320@gmail.com

Smoke Hole Cooperative Parish

Bayard-Mt. Storm, Grove Street (Petersburg), Main Street-St. Paul, North Branch, Pendleton-Grant, South Branch

Pretty Dresses

The Main Street UM Women made dresses from new pillowcase for girls in Africa. The ladies from the church used an assembly line method to follow simple patterns, embellishing them with pretty ribbons, buttons, arm holes, elastic and ties on the shoulder. They made 27 pillowcase pretty dresses in 2023. The finished dresses and a contribution for shipping were sent to a local educator who owns a fabric shop and oversees this ministry. The concept for providing the dresses is that the better the appearance of the young girls they serve, the less likely they are to be stolen off the street for human trafficking.

For additional information contact Sharon Prunty at (304) 703-5066

Church Camp is ALWAYS Fun!

St. Johns UMC camp, Camp Pinnacle, is a faith-based experience for children and young people usually scheduled in June. The camp is held from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon near Wardensville, WV. Counselors, instructors, cooks, and leaders are from St. Johns as well as from the other four churches in the Pendleton-Grant Charge, and are mainly made of up of parents, grandparents, and other church members. Besides providing Christian instruction and learning, campers have an opportunity to swim in the pool, make crafts, attend campfires in the evening, sing Christian songs, and participate in skits. Campers spend two nights in cabins at the camp. The camp uses a bible school curriculum. There is no cost and except for the year of COVID, the camp has been held at various locations for 30 years. The Pendleton-Grant charge has been able to offer this event free to campers through the generosity of volunteers, donations, and fundraising activities.

For additional information contact Barbara Halterman at (304) 257-2319 or at bhalterman@frontiernet.net

Red's Blanket and Sock Drive

Homelessness is a major problem in this country. Jesus ministered and showed his compassion for those in need. The South Branch Charge supported a Mt. Hebron parishioner's grandson, Quincy Redmon, and his ministry entitled, Red's Blanket and Sock Drive.

Quincy Redmon, a dedicated Christian and former Miami Dolphin pro football player who, himself, was at one time homeless, started collecting blankets and socks five years ago. He distributes them personally to the homeless at a tent city in downtown Washington DC. Now he collects so many more items, it requires a U-Haul truck to transport it all!

The South Branch Charge collected and bought many items they considered vital to the homeless including gloves, thermal blankets, head coverings, socks, scarves, towels, snacks, and personal hygiene items. Church members helped gather, pack, and transport these items to Quincy. They also made a sizable donation. The South Branch Charge is extending the grace of God beyond their community!

For additional information contact Quincy Redman at (304) 671-9790 or at quincyredmon@gmail.com

Tucker Cooperative Parish

Blackwater Charge, First (Parsons), Leadmine, St John's (Parsons), St Paul's/Iron's Chapel

St. Paul's EXPLODES with Toys at Christmas

What started over 7 years ago with gifts to 50 children exploded in 2023, putting smiles on the faces of over 320 children at Christmas. That's not all. Leftover toys are delivered to the pregnancy center, local schools and the Maryland Coalition for Families which helps people in recovery.

This ministry takes a Village and they have formed one. Soliciting donations of lightly used toys begins around the first of November as does identifying people in need. Ads are placed in the newspaper and on Facebook. Parents are asked questions to help match the child with the perfect gift. Countless hours are spent by volunteers ensuring the toys work, besides cleaning and organizing the toys. This past year, Dominion Power helped sanitize toys, fill orders, and donated \$1,000. Kingsford Charcoal provided cleaning supplies.

For additional information, contact Marie Barr at (304) 621-5133 (cell) or vv4barrs@yahoo.com

Our House Youth Center is Rebranding and Expanding!

Officially opening its doors in 2017, The "Our House Youth Center" in Parsons, first rebranded as "Our House The Second Floor", relocated this last year to the 2nd floor of the First UMC In Parsons. The Second Floor is a year-round free program on Saturdays from 1-3 pm, providing a safe space for Middle and High School students to congregate and have fun.

Volunteers prepare a hot meal. Afterwards, the teens take advantage of the game room: immersing themselves in ping pong, air hockey, foosball, board games or video games, and crafts. Occasionally a movie will be scheduled. There are themed parties in the fall and at Christmas. Christian and other reading materials are available for perusing.

The Christian volunteers, from a wide variety of backgrounds in the community, are carefully screened, background checked and interviewed. To provide a warm, welcoming environment for teens from all walks of life and spiritual (and non-spiritual) backgrounds, the need to model Christian behaviors without judgment is critical.

Building relationships allows the volunteers to get to know the teens and help with their needs. Need community service hours? Volunteers will identify local projects to fill the bill. Food insecurities or clothing needs? Volunteers are able to connect the teens and their families with the Hinkle House Food Pantry, also run by First UMC.

The Second Floor is funded by donations from numerous churches in the area as well as donations from individuals and businesses in the community. This year, they plan to start a spiritually based youth group that would meet prior to lunch, removing the stigma of those who only want to attend after lunch. They would love to open some evenings but need additional volunteers. *Feeling the call? Reach out to HELP!* Check out their Facebook page called "Our House Ministries" at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064445539148>.

For additional information, contact: Liz Lancaster at (304) 642-4188 or at ourhouseyouthministries@gmail.com

Blackwater Ministerial Association Food Pantry

Did you know there is an active Food Pantry at the "other end" of Tucker County?

The (ecumenical) Blackwater Ministerial Association Food Pantry supports food distribution to over 100 local families. Senators Manchin and Moore-Capito have recently secured funds to build a permanent structure to house the pantry. Volunteers from many churches in the area and as well as members of the community run the pantry. Each of the three churches in the Blackwater Charge (Thomas, Davis, and Buena Chapel) either collect food or make periodic donations through earmarked collections or a donation from their general fund.

Every Christmas, volunteers fill and deliver over 110 Christmas boxes with canned food, fresh vegetables, fruit, and ham. A very dedicated member of the Davis church individually wraps each box with love (and Christmas wrapping paper!).

For additional information, after July 2024 contact Rev. Caitlin Ware at (984) 327-1520 or at caitlinware@gmail.com or contact Rev. Ruth Bullwinkle (St. John's Lutheran Church) at (304) 704-3150 or at ruthbullwinkle@gmail.com

West Preston Cooperative Parish

Birds Creek-Chestnut Ridge, Masontown-Bethlehem, Reedsville, Sturgis-Mt. Zion, South Preston, Tunnelton

Parent's Night Out

For over a year, on the first Friday of each month from 6:00 to 8:30 pm, the Reedsville UMC organizes Parent's Night Out. It's a safe place where parents or grandparents can drop off their children and enjoy a night to themselves. The purpose of this event is community outreach, fostering relationships, and sharing the message of Christ with children pre-K through high school.

The church typically rents out the Craig Civic Center in Kingwood, which has a large auditorium that can be split in the middle to accommodate roller-skating on one side and basketball on the other. If the Civic Center is otherwise occupied, they rent the local bowling alley. Members of the congregation prepare and serve the dinner for the 80-90 participants. There are craft activities available for the younger children and a short message is provided for all.

Most of the chaperones are members of Reedsville UMC; they are aided by the pastor and his wife from Wesley UMC in Kingwood. One month, the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts of Troop 1066 took over the entire evening's festivities, providing their own activities and teaching opportunities; it was a great success.

The cost is free to the participants. The church funds the rentals and food with help from donations from the community. Wesley UMC supplies drinks and helps with the food. The local schools allow the church to send information about the activity home to the families, plus the church posts it on their Facebook page.

The members of Reedsville UMC offer love, kindness, and prayers to the children, making it a warm and welcoming environment. One child remarked, "Parents night out is the only time we pray."

For additional information contact Ron Wojcicki at (304) 906-5976 or at rwojcicki316@gmail.com or contact Kathy Doyle at (304) 288-1321 or at doylewv@aol.com

Quilt Ministry

Hazel Freeman, a lady in the Rowlesburg community, makes quilts for the quilt ministry programs of many churches in the area. When the quilts are finished for the Green Valley UMC, a member collects the quilts and brings them to the church. The quilts are prayed over during the Sunday morning service. Church members identify people who might be comforted by the gift: those who are sick, in the hospital, have experienced grief, or have some other difficulty they are facing. The quilts are then delivered to the thankful recipients.

For additional information, contact Shirley Travis at (304) 454-9320

Community Luncheon

For nearly 10 years, on the first Saturday of each month, the Reedsville UMC is exhausted from cooking! On the preceding Friday night, members gather to prepare a meal that is served for lunch on Saturday. A sign-up sheet with the food required for the next week's meal is passed around the congregation in church. Donations are received from church members and the church covers any deficits. The food is free, but some recipients offer donations. The church makes apple butter in October and at Thanksgiving, they include a small jar in the meal. Meditations are often added in the "take-out" meals.

The Church's mission is to provide food to those in need in Preston County. On average each month, the church serves about 120 meals, 65 of which are delivered to shut-ins unable to attend the luncheon. Many folks eagerly look forward to getting their delicious home-cooked meal!

For additional information, contact Becky Radabaugh at (304) 276-1363 or at rwr6574@frontier.com or contact Linda Brown at (304) 594-8823 or at flhairlinda@yahoo.com