

Dear Beloved Church Family,

December 3, 2024

I greet you with warmth and gratitude for the community we have built together through faith, love, and service to one another and to our Lord over the last 7 ½ years. As we approach the year end, I want to take a moment to reflect on the year and the importance of giving.

Highlights of the Year - We have had so many joyful and important moments together in 2024.

Our community outreach is strong. The Food Panty provided meals for hundreds of area families on a weekly basis with special meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We hosted an Unhoused Speaker Series connecting churches on the issue of homelessness, we partnered with the Homeless Youth Initiative, and we have distributed many Blessing Bags throughout our community. Magnolia Ministries continued to take Christ beyond our walls to those living in residential facilities.

We've turned our hearts toward our young people by adding a unique 11am Sunday service led by those under 25 years old. In the first six weeks of worship, we've had ten baptisms of teens and children! In addition, a team of four adults is building relationships with youth mid-week and Julie Holland is new on staff creating phenomenal K-5th grade ministry on Sunday mornings. I encourage you to continue making space for our young people in all aspects of church life, handing them the keys of leadership as they grow into those roles.

In worship, we celebrated 100 years in our sanctuary and gathered with hundreds in our community with Easter at the Festus Performing Arts Center. In our service themes we have connected with the goodness of God, shared our prayers with ribbons and post-it notes, gone for the gold with sacrifice, training, and commitment, and we ditched our assumptions about who is our neighbor. Most importantly we proclaimed that hate divides, but love unites. Now for Advent we focus on "The Purpose of Christmas."

Our building has hosted organizations doing good in our community including NA, AA, and Alateen, Spotlight Theatre, educational groups PEO and DKG, Life through Love Ministries, Jefferson County Square Dancers, the American Red Cross, The Optimist Club, Giving Something Back to the Community and more. Through these organizations our community impact has been exponential.

This year we have mourned, laughed, and eaten together. Notably, our Church Council served faithfully handling the difficulties of General Conference by both affirming the inclusive nature of grace at First UMC and emphasizing our unity in Christ amidst differing views.

What a blessing you all are to me and to each other. Thank you!

The Heart of Giving

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded of the power and blessing that come with giving. In Hebrews 13:16, we are encouraged: "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to

God.” Giving is not just an obligation; it is a joyful expression of gratitude and worship of God. When we contribute to the work of the church—whether through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, or witness—we are participating in God's mission on earth. Thank you for the part you have played in that giving this year.

The generosity of our church family helps sustain and expand the ministries that impact lives and draw others to Christ. Your gifts make possible everything from providing food for the hungry to supporting our programs, maintaining the church building, and spreading the gospel in our community and beyond. Each contribution, no matter the size, is a vital part of God's kingdom work.

Making the Most of End-of-Year Gifts

As the year draws to a close, many of us are reflecting on our finances and planning for the upcoming year. If you are considering making an end-of-year donation, I want to highlight a valuable option available to many of you—gifting from your retirement accounts, such as an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) or 401(k). For those aged 70½ or older, the IRS allows individuals to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA to a qualified charity, such as our church, without paying income taxes on the withdrawal. This can be a great way to avoid taxable income, maximize your giving, and support the church’s mission.

How to Donate

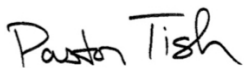
To make a charitable gift from your retirement account, simply contact your account administrator and instruct them to make a direct transfer to the church. Our Finance Team is happy to provide any information needed to assist with this process. If you prefer, you can also make a standard donation through our Tithe.ly app or check or cash. Your bank could mail your monthly tithe check through their bill pay service.

A Final Word

As we close out the year, I encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can contribute to the life of our church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness to God’s work in the world. Your generosity reflects the heart of our faith, and together, we can continue to share the love of Christ with the world.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to our shared mission. May God bless you richly in the coming year and may God’s grace lead us all to greater generosity, compassion, and faithfulness.

First United,



Rev. Dr. Tish Green



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TLDR? Thanks for giving. God’s been making a difference in people’s lives with your prayers, presence gifts, service and witness. You are invited to make a special gift to our church for Christmas. Thank you and Merry Christmas! www.FestusUMC.org