



The Weekender

January 23, 2026

An Inside Look at Confirmation at FFUMC

By Rev. Drew D. West

“So God created humans in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”
Genesis 1:27, NRSVUE

A high school teacher recently posed a deceptively simple question to her students: Are human beings basically good or basically bad? To her surprise, most of the class landed firmly on the pessimistic side. Humanity, they said, is inherently bad.

This question sits at the heart of our confirmation conversations with middle school students because it is one of the most basic—and most urgent—questions the biblical writers are wrestling with. Who are we, really? And to what extent can we be made new by God’s love and grace?

It’s easy to see why so many people assume the worst about humanity. Turn on the news or scroll the headlines, and you’re met with violence, exploitation, cruelty, and environmental devastation. The evidence of human brokenness is everywhere. But scripture refuses to let us settle for a simple answer. Faithfulness in a despairing world means telling the fuller truth: we are neither purely good nor irredeemably bad.

The Bible begins not with condemnation, but with blessing. Humanity is created in the image of God and declared good.

Sin enters the story in Genesis 3, not as proof that humanity is worthless, but as a description of our brokenness. As our confirmation curriculum puts it: “Sin is our brokenness, our separation from God, our fractured world, and our need of healing.” In the sermon New Birth, John Wesley suggests that sin strikes at the moral center of our lives. When that center is distorted, life becomes disordered. Apart from grace, the damage is deep and far-reaching.

So how can we be healed?

The Christian story answers with grace—grace that forgives and grace that transforms. Justification is God’s decisive act of forgiveness through Christ, offered freely and received in faith. In a moment, we are assured that God wins, not sin. But there’s more. By grace, we are not just saved from sin; we are saved for something new. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live as beacons of new creation in a world longing for redemption.

Humanity is not bad—we are made in God’s image and treasured beyond measure. But because of sin, we fall into patterns that wound our neighbors, our world, and our own lives. Grace meets us there, not to abandon us as sinners, but to heal, restore, and send us into the world as bearers of God’s renewing love.



3RD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 25, 2026

8:45 AM 11:00 AM (Sanctuary & Online)

Online link active at 11 AM and after

Psalm 27: 4-9 Matthew 4: 12-23

"Follow The Leader"

Rev. Kaylen Short

CURRENT NEWS



SOUPER BOWL V

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**FAYETTEVILLE FIRST
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SOUPER BOWL V Is Underway! ☺☺

Get those cans of soup ready! Souper Bowl V kicked off January 11, and we are collecting soup to help provide healthy meals for those in need. Please donate any variety of 16.3–18.8 oz ready-to-eat soup (not condensed).

We have four teams this year, led by team captains Kaylen Short, Drew West, Charles Robinson, and Nick Bowden. Our goal is to collect 2,600 cans this year and surpass 10,000 total cans donated since the start of FFUMC's Souper Bowl!

Be sure to tune in this Sunday as we announce our division champions—and find out which minister will win the playoff!

Messy Church – January 31 | 11:00 a.m.

Join us for Messy Church on Saturday, January 31 at 11:00 a.m. for a Ren Faire

Mess full of fun, creativity, and hands-on faith for all ages!

We're excited to welcome special music guests Barehead Bards, bringing lively, Renaissance-inspired sounds to our celebration.

Come ready for a joyful, interactive morning of music, activities, and fellowship—costumes welcome!



Titus II Luncheon – February 3



Titus II will meet at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, February 3, in the Fellowship Hall.

Our Valentine's program will feature singer Penny Miller.

Lunch: \$8 per person (meal provided by a local restaurant)

Please reserve your meal with the church office or with Martha Turner by noon on January 26.

Our first December Blood Drive on 12/28 was a success! You may not realize that over 60% of the donations received are from FFUMC members. We had 30 signups and we collected 31 usable units! What a precious gift we are able to give to those who need blood -- especially this time of year.

Thanks to those who were able to give!

FFUMC Blood Drive Team



Our Summer Lunch family is in need of the following items:

- Microwave
- Refrigerator
- Stove

If you are able to donate or help in any way, please contact Cindy Hall at harvecin@charter.net.

Thank you!

Dear Shawl Ministry,

Thank you so much for the beautiful blanket for Baby Robert! He is gaining weight everyday. He came home weighting under 5 lbs and now is 8 1/2 lbs. God is Good! Thank you for your prayers.

Blessings, Cheryl Lee



Save the Date!

Sage is going to Moreland to visit the Lewis Grizzard Museum on Tuesday, February 10.

More details will be shared soon!

Wednesday Night Supper — January 28

Time: 5:00 PM | Location: Fellowship Hall

Cost: Adults \$10 | Children under 13 \$7 (pay at the door)

Menu: Picadilly - Fried Chicken, potato casserole, mixed roasted vegetables, Rolls & Dessert

Sign up by 4:00 PM Monday via the church office (770-461-4313), admin@fayettevillefirst.com, or a pew card.



Upcoming February Events

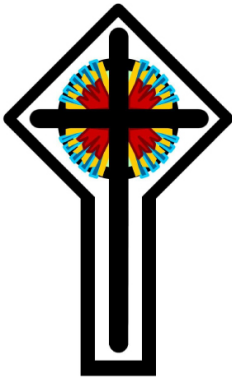
Titus II Luncheon – February 3

Sage Trip to Lewis Grizzard Museum (Moreland) – February 10

Lenten Lunch – February 18

Ash Wednesday Service – February 18 at 6:00 PM

Messy Church – February 28



January 20, 2026 Financials

Operating Budget 2026

Annual Operating Budget Receipts	\$88,619.64
Annual Operating Budget Expenses	\$57,068.48
Difference	\$31,699.16

Benevolence

Benevolence funds received this week: \$1,130.00

4 Families Assisted Year-To-Date: Total distributed \$788.

You can continue your financial support in many ways:

[Online giving: Click here.](#)

Mail check to church or place it in the drop box at the church office.

Use electronic funds transfer with your bank.

Regular Church Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday 9 AM to 4 PM (closed 12-1 PM lunch)

Closed Fridays

AA Meetings: Sundays 3 PM; Mondays, Wednesdays,
Fridays, Saturdays 7 PM; Thursdays 7:30 AM

NA Meetings: Thursdays 7:30 PM

In the Event of Inclement Weather

Rev. Kaylen Short

I know that this is usually the spot in the Weekender where you find an Inspired section. This weekend, though, the weather feels like the hotter topic. Or maybe the colder one. I wanted to take a moment to explain how decisions like this are made and how we would communicate any future weather-related closures.

As I write this, I honestly have no idea what the weather will do. Some of you may be reading this from home, snowed in, or you might be reading it warm in your pew in the sanctuary. Yes, I know some of you will say your pew in the sanctuary is never warm :-). The point is either outcome feels equally possible. Either way, I wanted to offer some clarity about how these decisions are made now and in the future.

If we receive snow or ice over the weekend, I will reach out to our staff along with some of our nominated and elected lay leaders. I will ask for their input on whether we should remain open or close for Sunday activities. When possible, I will also check in with fellow clergy in the area to see what they are planning. While I do make the final decision, it is always done after listening carefully to others. If we ever choose to cancel, we will notify our entire email list and post updates on our social media. We also ask that you help spread the word by calling or texting friends.

I also want to be clear that these decisions are generally made on an all-or-nothing basis. I know it has become more common for churches to livestream services when the weather is bad instead of gathering in person. My own philosophy is this. If it is not safe enough to welcome the congregation, then it is not safe to ask our staff, choir, AV team, and volunteers to come in just to livestream. On the other hand, if it is safe enough for them to do that work, then it is safe enough for the congregation to decide for themselves whether to attend.

Even if there is only light snow and we remain open for worship, I encourage you to use your best judgment. You know the route from your home to the church, and you know your own comfort level with driving and walking in poor conditions. If you are unsure, please err on the side of caution.

That said, I never take cancelling worship lightly. If it is safe, we will be open and ready to welcome you.