



# The Weekender

February 20, 2026

“The Sky is an Amazing Thing”  
Written by Austin Baur and Caroline Creel

It was early in the morning on Saturday, January 31. Our phones' weather apps were reading 9 degrees Fahrenheit as we boarded Atlanta's only flight that day to the small Central American country of El Salvador. The boarding ramp to the plane was frigid. We could see our breaths as we waited in the corridor amongst a crowd of Spanish-speakers who, we can only assume, were excited to return home to warmer weather.

Three hours later we landed at San Salvador International Airport and stepped off the plane to a gentle breeze and welcome 75-degrees. The stark difference in the weather between where we now stood and just about a thousand miles north was only a precursor to the differences in daily life we would encounter over the coming week.

We met outside the airport with a local missionary, Brian Dubberly, and together set off on the Iglesia Metodista bus on our way to the small town of Ahuachapán. The bus driver skillfully navigated us through the hectic traffic of San Salvador, the bustling capital city of this country some of us had never been to, while others were overjoyed to return.

Our group consisted of newcomers and veterans across four North Georgia Conference United Methodist churches: Fayetteville First, Inman, Cornerstone, and Sunny Side. The four-hour bus ride to Ahuachapán afforded us the opportunity to get to know one another as we anticipated the busy week ahead.

Ahuachapán is a beautiful town. As we arrived at the mission house that evening, we could hear singing and music radiating through the night, like joy in the wind. The sunrises over the volcanoes surrounding the town were breathtaking and always punctuated by the comedically cliché morning cry of roosters. Salespeople would take to the morning streets on bicycles, selling fresh bread each morning. Looking out over our small neighborhood, many homes shared walls and makeshift roofs. There was a sense of togetherness not so easily felt in our American neighborhoods, where a wall of trees or bushes separates our acre-plot from our neighbor's.

Life in Ahuachapán is difficult by our standards. Potable drinking water is not very accessible. Draining runoff floods every street. Most buildings lack air conditioning, and the homes are all surrounded in razor wire and broken glass for security. Brian explained to us that the average salary in El Salvador is around \$12/day. But gasoline is still \$3.50/gallon, and a sandwich at a fast-food joint still costs about \$8. And yet spirits were high. It was truly a privilege to be able to work alongside the skilled people who call Ahuachapán home.

Our week in Ahuachapán consisted of aiding a local construction team with a new building for the local high school, working with a local church to host child-care activities through vacation bible school at Iglesia Metodista La Providencia, and distributing food to families in rural communities that needed aid. Everywhere we went, we found beautiful people who welcomed us with a smile, accepted the aid we came to offer, and turned the gesture around in amazing displays of humility and hospitality.

This was a meaningful opportunity to serve alongside the local community in Ahuachapán and learn from their culture, resilience, and faith traditions. Rather than approaching the experience as “helping from the outside”, we focused on partnership—supporting locally led efforts, listening well, and honoring the knowledge and leadership already present in the community. We believe humility, respect, and cultural sensitivity foster mutual growth and create lasting impact.

At the end of each day of work, we would gather at the mission house for a period of personal reflection. Serving in a cross-cultural setting often challenged our assumptions and broadened our perspectives. Reflecting on these experiences together fostered a deeper sense of empathy, global awareness, and a stronger commitment to ongoing service, both abroad and in our own community.

On Sunday, we were blessed with the opportunity to attend worship at Iglesia Metodista El Shaddai. Its Pastor, an amazing woman named Evelyn, preached from the Beatitudes, in which Jesus systematically teaches that participation in God's Kingdom precedes wealth, power, status, or achievement. In English, we translate Jesus' description of God's blessing for his people as, "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." But in Spanish, this phrase is more literally rendered as "because they belong to the Kingdom of the Sky". As servants on an international mission, we can be quick to believe we are there to help others find a sense of belonging that we already possess. But the words of Jesus suggest all of us already belong to him. We are merely here to serve humbly and enjoy true relationships with others who already belong to the Kingdom of the Sky.

Near the end of our time in Ahuachapán, we met outside under the stars to play a game of soccer—fútbol—with members of the local community. Children, teenagers, mothers, fathers, workers, pastors, and our small group all took to the pitch. Together, we experienced an authenticity that seldom shows itself in daily life. The joy, laughter, smiles, and community shared by everyone there profoundly demonstrated that the Kingdom of the Sky truly transcends all languages and cultural barriers.

The sky is an amazing thing.

It surrounds us completely. We breathe its oxygen. We marvel at its beauty. It gives us light in the day and the night. We can run from it, but we can't escape it. We can hide from it, but it's always there. It's in Atlanta, it's in Ahuachapán.

We all belong to it.

Praise be to God.

(Also, for the record, during the fútbol games Kaylen scored two goals and Austin scored zero.

Kaylen will not let this be forgotten. We encourage everyone to congratulate Kaylen on his athletic achievements as you leave church on Sunday.)



## 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

**FEBRUARY 22, 2026**

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

Online link active at 11 AM and after

*Matthew 4: 1-11*

*" Four "P"s "*

Rev. Kaylen Short

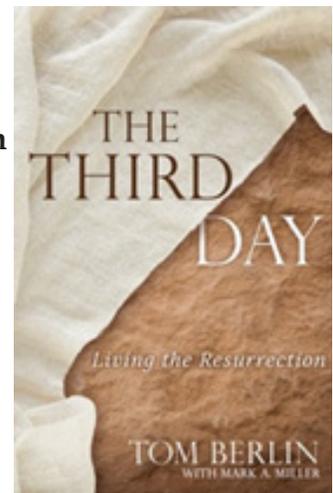
## CURRENT NEWS

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Lenten Lunches During the season of Lent, the United Women in Faith will host Lenten Lunches from 12:00-1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Each week, a different speaker will share a chapter from the Lenten book study *The Third Day* by Tom Berlin.

Lunches in the following weeks will take place on Thursdays. Cost: \$5 per lunch

- **February 26 - Hosts: United Methodist Men | Speaker: Rev. Charles Robinson**
- March 5 - Hosts: Marie Lamb Circle | Speaker: Florence Prine
- March 12 - Hosts: Ethel Taylor Circle | Speaker: Danny Beck
- March 19 - Hosts: Friendship Circle | Speaker: Dave Lee
- March 26 - Hosts: Mary Martha Hope Circle | Speaker: Barb Combs
- April 2 - Hosts: To Be Announced | Speaker: Nick Bowden



Questions about the Lenten Lunches, please contact Faye Livingston at 770-401-9761 or fayecl@mindspring.



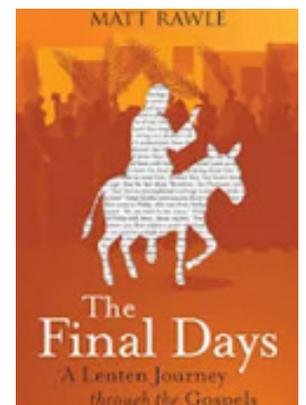
### **GriefShare Begins February 23**

GriefShare will begin on Monday, February 23, from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM in Room B350. This caring and supportive group offers help and encouragement for those grieving the loss of a loved one. If you would like to register or have questions, please contact Carol or Bill Webb at 404-234-1056.

### **Lenten Bible Study: The Final Days**

Join us beginning Tuesday, February 24, - March 31, at 3:00 PM in Room C240.

We will be studying *The Final Days: A Lenten Journey Through the Gospel* by Matt Rawle, walking together through Scripture as we reflect on Christ's final days. Please bring your own book and Bible. The study will be led by Florence Prine. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Florence.





### Messy Church - Musical Messy

Join us for Messy Church on Saturday, February 28, for a special Musical Messy experience! This interactive, family-friendly evening will include music, creativity, fun activities, and fellowship as we explore faith together in a relaxed and joyful setting. All ages are welcome – come ready to sing, create, and have fun!

Titus II Luncheon – March 3 Titus II will meet at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, February 3, in the Fellowship Hall. 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 February 24.



### March 7th - Local Retreat at the Calvin Center

Cost is \$25 per attendee

(a discount code is available for families who may need assistance)

Register -> <https://onrealm.org/FFUMC/PublicRegistrations>

[Event?linkString=NDcyMGVhNGYtNGMwNi00MTZkLWE5Y2QtYjNjODAxNmNhMThj](https://onrealm.org/FFUMC/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=NDcyMGVhNGYtNGMwNi00MTZkLWE5Y2QtYjNjODAxNmNhMThj)

I want to thank everyone who has sent me cards, notes, flowers, visits, and phone calls. I have been recuperating at home this month and trying to get somewhat back to normal after breaking my left femur. I hope i will be back at church soon and I love each and every one of you.

Thank you for your kindness.

Love, Suzie Lusk



I appreciate the kindness of the FFUMC Shawl Ministry. What a beautiful afghan blanket. Great colors too. Thanks so much! What a wonderful ministry.

Randy Potter



## Save the Date: Great Day of Service April 18

Get ready for another Great Day of Service, a work time set aside for us to go be the hands and feet of Christ in our community.

What to do right now? SAVE THE DATE!

Registration will open soon!

**Great Day of Service coming April 18.**

## BenevoLENT

To fulfill the sacrificial spirit of the Lenten season, think no further than our own church and community. The Fayetteville First UMC Benevolence Program is one of the few sources of financial help for Fayette County people struggling to pay bills.



There are many such families and individuals around us. The economic troubles we hear about in the news – layoffs, reduced work hours, rising rents, and skyrocketing utility bills – are very real to several of our neighbors.

Following the recent cold weather, requests have surged for help to avoid disconnection of gas or electric service. As a result, our Benevolence Fund balance has dipped to an uncomfortable level.

So please think BenevoLENT as a fitting way to sacrifice some of our discretionary resources, in order for our neighbors to have necessities.

The Benevolence Team



*You're Invited: VBS 2026 Kick Off Party!*

*Join us for our VBS Kick Off Party on Sunday, March 15th, at 12 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Enjoy food, fellowship, and prayer as we prepare for this year's Vacation Bible School. Whether you are a returning volunteer, a parent, or new to FFUMC VBS, we invite you to be part of the excitement!*

- *Theme: Snowball Mountain Challenge*
- *Theme Verse: Philippians 4:13 – "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

## Wednesday Night Supper February 25

Let's eat together!

Time: 5 PM Fellowship Hall

**Advantages: Friendship!** Be with people you really like.

**Hassle Free!** Enjoy meals from local restaurants.

**Affordable!** Adults \$10, Children under 13: \$7 (pay at door)



Sign up each week by 4 PM on Mondays by contacting the church office at 770-461-4313, admin@fayettevillefirst.com, or fill out a pew card.

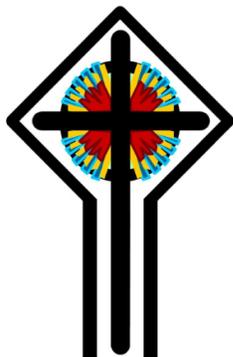
**February 25:** Picadilly - Chuckwagon Stew, Salad, Rolls & Dessert!



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

- Bedroom dresser
- Sofa
- Living room chair
- Stove

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



## February 18, 2026 Financials

Operating Budget 2026

Annual Operating Budget Receipts	\$222,486.38
Annual Operating Budget Expenses	\$172,026.73
Difference	\$50,459.65

Benevolence

Benevolence funds received this week: \$1,184.00

26 Families Assisted Year-To-Date: Total distributed \$6,653.42

**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

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