

December 2023 / January 2024



Malesus United Methodist Church

The Beacon

Merry Christmas
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

"For all those dwelling in such darkness, there is incredibly good news. Light broke through upon them..." When Jesus came into the world, Jesus dispelled the darkness! (Matthew 4:16)

We just celebrated Thanksgiving! I confess I ate too much... Ready or not, we are moving swiftly into Christmas and the New Year. I love Christmas time. Many great memories!

I also love it because when Christ came incarnate, light broke through the darkness. This is the reason and inspiration of our joy as we get ready to celebrate Christmas and the New Year.

As people of faith, we rejoice in the light and hope that Christmas brings. The light of Christ truly does shine in a world full of darkness. It penetrates the hardest hearts one person at a time, one soul at a time in a world that so desperately needs it.

We do celebrate the birth of Christ because no matter what may be happening in the world, we are reminded that God has come and has intervened in history. The hand of God continues at work to complete the work that Christ came to do.

As we start to prepare for Christmas and the New Year, in whatever special way you do, and we reflect on what God did for all humankind, there is hope in this world. No matter how mixed-up and messed-up things may sometimes seem to be. Jesus' birth shines a light into the darkness!

We are living representatives of the greatest Christmas gift ever given. I hope that you will plan to join us during the Advent Season, and as we kick off the New Year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Pastor Don

FINANCE REPORT

Financial Report year-to-date, as of October 31, 2023.

Pledged giving is at 98% of the budgeted amount year-to-date.

Unpledged giving is approximately 89% of the budgeted amount year-to-date.

Total income is at 96% of the budgeted amount year-to-date.

Total expenses are at 96% of budgeted amount year-to-date.

October Income: \$18,979.70

October Expenses: \$14,470.02

Funds needed to date: \$165,900.00

Funds received to date: \$159,837.57



Our Weekly Stewardship

November 5, 2023

Attendance

Sunday School	31
Worship	70
Offering	\$7,509.00

November 12, 2023

Attendance

Sunday School	39
Worship	71
Offering	\$2037.00

November 19, 2023

Attendance

Sunday School	37
Worship	72
Offering	\$4,405.00

November 26, 2023

Attendance

Sunday School	40
Worship	62
Offering	\$1,205.00

Please note that the offering numbers above are a total of pledged giving, unpledged giving, and loose plate giving. They do not include designated gifts.



Communion Rail Offering

Communion Rail Offerings

Jan:	Southside Assistance	\$204
Feb:	Souper Bowl Sunday	\$287+
	97 cans of soup	
March:	UMCOR Turkey Relief	\$621
April:	Bemis "Room in the Inn"	\$363
May:	VBS	\$178
June:	Project Peanut Butter	\$228
July:	Reelfoot School Supplies	\$676
Aug:	College Care Packages	\$385
Sept:	Maui Disaster Relief	\$1,596
Oct:	Hurricane Idalia Relief	\$757
Nov:	Reelfoot Toys	\$1,035
Dec:	The Care Center	



When you need ...
FAITH

Joshua 24:15
Romans 10:8-13



Breath Prayer
In you, Lord, I put my





Did you know that the **Calendar** function on our website at www.malesusumc.org contains all the meetings, deadlines, and other events that are appropriate for inclusion on the church calendar?

For example, suppose a question came up concerning the start time for our Christmas Eve worship service. A quick reference to the Calendar on our website would show you that the service will start at 5:30 PM and is expected to last about an hour.

The Digital Communications & Technology Team has been working steadily on this website for Malesus UMC for nearly two years now. One of the many Team requirements is for our website to become the primary tool for our church family members to increase their communications with the church and for our church family members to become even more knowledgeable of what Malesus UMC brings to each of us.

The Team welcomes suggestions for our mission to provide relevant and up to date information to our church family, our community, and the world.

For example, we are also working to put the Agendas and Minutes of all meetings (except for the SPRC) on our website.

Making our faith come alive through the Internet!

“It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air.” — W.T. Ellis

The Tennessee River District (that includes us) of the Tennessee – Western Conference of the United Methodist Church is considering a project - perhaps during the Spring of 2024 - to assist New Hope United Methodist Church to convert an adjoining garage into a badly-needed fellowship hall.

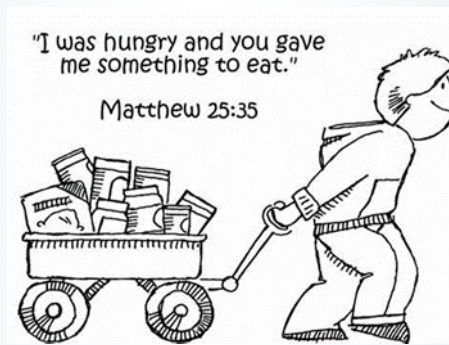
In an economically challenged area not too far from the Lakeshore Camp & Retreat Center, New Hope UMC is small and this project is well beyond their capabilities. But it is desperately needed for this small church to flourish rather than die.

While the Tennessee River District will fund the material cost of this worthwhile project, at least some of the 80 churches in our District will need to provide all the volunteer labor.

Our church family members can help. The project doesn't need the technical know-how but badly needs man-hours, probably on two consecutive weekends. Both male and female help is needed as there is a need for people for both construction and ancillary work.

Lakeshore has tentatively agreed to house the volunteers on their campus for Saturday nights.

As we move into the holidays, each of us needs to prayerfully consider how we can individually and as a group make a small but significant difference.



Manna Boxes and Manna Bags

The Missions Team and the Good News Sunday School class are pleased to announce that all the Manna Bags in the narthex have been replaced with new unexpired products.

A Manna Bag holds a bottle of water, two protein sources, a fruit snack, a package of cookies, and a prayer square provided by the Missions Team.

A Manna Box contains 3 Manna Bags and each Box is designed for each family to take one and put it in their car in an easily accessible place. Then, when you are out and about, and you see a homeless person or someone in need of a meal, please stop long enough to give them a Manna Bag as a gift from Malesus UMC.

During the winter, extra precautions may be needed to keep the water bottles from freezing.

Manna Boxes and replacement Manna Bags will always be in the narthex to refill your Manna Box for future gifts. The Manna Boxes and Manna Bags are free to you but, of course, donations from the church family are always thankfully and prayerfully accepted. Manna Bags are always given without charge to recipients of these gifts.

Together, we can make a small but real and meaningful difference in someone's life.



Mission News – December 2023

We all have a mission- to reach out and be the hands and feet of God's love---and in 2023 your Missions committee thanks you for doing just that: in many ways, our congregation has reached out and touched many in our community. The special communion rail offerings this year have added up to \$6,919. THANKS to all!

Communion Rail Offering: The Communion Rail Offering for **December** will be designated for the Jackson Care Center, then in **January** we will have a communion rail offering for the "Feed the Starving Children" packing event which will take place in Jackson on March 19-22, 2024.

FIGHTING HUNGER: – **Right here** on the local scene....Our **Blessings Box** has been filled by many, and is emptied by those in our community who are hungry. A big thanks to all of you for leading the way. When you go shopping, put a little extra in your basket, and find out how you can bless someone in need. **"Bring what you can, take what you need, but above all, be blessed"**

TOYS FOR REELFOOT – Our collection for Reelfoot Toys this year has totaled \$1,035. Thanks to all who reached out to help these parents and their children.

Live Nativity: Our Live Nativity will be taking place Dec.9-10, and we want to thank all those who helped out in advance. It's our way of reminding our neighbors of the "Reason for the Season".

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024: The Feb. communion rail offering will once again be designated for RIFA—bring a can (or cans) wrapped with a dollar (or dollars). Bring it on Communion Sunday, or on "Souper" Bowl Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024.

As we continue to reach out to our community, keep your eyes and ears open. If you see a need, share it with one of your fellow church members--- we can take care of each other!!



A very, very special thank you to each of you for your part in making our Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners a special time. We could not have done both without each of

you - from the setting up to the cleaning up afterwards.. The fellowship, entertainment and food were all great. Thanks to Don for arranging for Bill Kelly and Kevin Wheatley for inviting the group from Huntingdon.

And just a reminder - If you use tablecloths from the Fellowship Hall, please launder these and return them to the closet. If kitchen items are used, please return them as soon as possible so they are there for the next use.

Also, please remember that all private events that use the Fellowship Hall are responsible for bringing their own supplies. No church supplies are to

Prophecies Fulfilled

Peter Stoner, a professor who wrote *Science Speaks*, asked students to help him determine the probability of one person fulfilling just eight of the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. The result? By a conservative estimate, that number was 10 to the 17th power.

To put that in perspective, if you placed that many silver dollars across the entire state of Texas, they'd be 2 feet deep. "Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state," Stoner wrote. "Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would've had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man."

The professor concluded: "Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact, proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world."



Dear Malesus,

Thank you so much for thinking of me during my first semester in college. I really appreciate all of the goodies!

I hope you all are doing well!

With love,
Miriam Wheatley



Dear Friends of Ministry,

Thank you so much for your donation to *Birth Choice*; I assure you that it will be put to good use! May the Lord richly bless you for your kindness to His unborn children and their young mothers.

Thank you so much for your beautiful labor of love!

Serving Christ for Life
Christine Veteto, Clinic Director

Thank you to everyone who took the time to make the beautiful scarves and also for the warm gloves. They are so greatly needed and appreciated.

Much love from
The Ladies from the Care Center
Heather Alyssa Emma Lisa Amber Carlee Melissa Ashley

Hunger is still causing nearly half of all worldwide deaths in children under 5 years old. An estimated 6,200 children die each day from causes related to malnutrition. Heartbreaking!

Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) believes hope starts with food. As a Christian nonprofit, FMSC is dedicated to seeing every child made whole in body and spirit. FMSC works with food distribution partners to distribute simple but nutritious meals worldwide. Learn more at www.fmsc.org.



FMSC meals are developed by food science and nutrition professionals to reduce problems with malnutrition. The process is straightforward. Donations given by people just like us fund the meal ingredients. The January Communion Rail Offering will go toward this effort. Volunteers hand-pack the meals. These meals are then donated to FMSC food partners around the world, where kids are fed and lives are saved!

During March 19 – 24, 2024 the Jackson Christian School will host a **Mobile Pack Event** where volunteers hope to pack 380,000 meals. Wow! The Missions Team will be working hard for us to be a part of this effort. Details to follow within the next few weeks for us to help **Make A Difference**,

"He **upholds** the cause of the oppressed and **gives food** to the hungry." Psalm 146:7(NIV)

Trustees report for December 2023 newsletter

- 1. Parsonage storm damage—March/April**
All repairs complete (new roof installed, new HVAC unit, other repairs)
Costs of repairs \$31,451.67/Insurance payment \$38,170.39
- 2. Sanctuary roofing—July/August**
Bid \$22,600 for labor and materials/Saved \$1,200 in sales tax
Total cost of Sanctuary roofing \$21,399
- 3. Parsonage upgrades**
Replace carpet/pad in four bedrooms \$3,390.83
Painting \$875, Replace light fixtures
- 4. AED**
AED unit received and installed in FH lobby
AED cost \$500, AED training session completed
- 6. Minor plumbing/HVAC**
Office hot water heater replaced, new FH toilet
HVAC repairs and improvements ongoing
- 7. Sanctuary Sound Room**
Video and Sound equipment upgrades approved
Total cost \$7,300 (Christmas offering designated for this)
Hopefully complete by end of December
- 8. Planned for 2024...All parking areas and driveways**
Fill pavement cracks, sealer, and re-striping (\$12,000 +/-)



The Friendship Circle is making plans for 2024. They meet at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall on the 4th Tuesday, each month. If you'd like to become a part of this hard-working group of ladies then just talk with Sandra Atherton.

A Year that Whispers Jesus

For author Nancy Tichy, a small holiday gift once sparked big-picture thoughts about Christian living. One December she received a kitchen towel with the message "I want a Christmas that whispers JESUS." That prompted thoughts of what it's like to have an entire year that whispers Jesus.

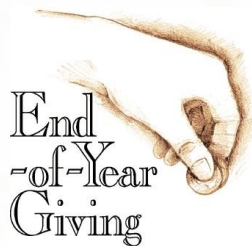
For starters, that involves daily quiet time, devotion and prayer. "Sometimes I wake with the thought of a person on my mind," writes Tichy. "I'm quiet with this impression, interceding for the family member or friend until it has lifted. Could this be a whisper from our Savior?"

Many other daily occurrences are "worthy of [Jesus'] whispered response of love," Tichy points out. That's true whether we're distracted by tasks and troubling thoughts or buoyed by encounters with contentment and joy. "For me," she writes, "whispering is part of intimacy, and that is what I want to make a hallmark of the coming year. I want closeness with our Savior that enables me to hear from him, even when he whispers."



Blessing Box

Please remember our Blessing Box . It empties almost as quickly as we fill it up. Any and all help is much appreciated.



All giving for the 2023 year **MUST** be in by Sunday, December 31st.

Please remember the office craziness with the January/February bookkeeping and please keep



Office News



In the introduction to his book *For All God's Worth*, theologian N.T. Wright says, "Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of

sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. The light shines in the darkness, says St. John, and the darkness has not overcome it."

For that reason, Wright explains, Christmas isn't a dream or a momentary escape but reality. And the same is true for Christianity. "Either Jesus is the Lord of the world and all reality makes sense in his life, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world," he adds. "There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies."

Advent Meanings

During Advent, which begins this year on December 3, many churches and families use wreaths to symbolize watchfulness and increasing joy as Christmas approaches. Colors for the candles vary, with some traditions using blue (for hope or creation) and others preferring purple (for royalty, humility or penitence).

The four candles that each represent a week in Advent also signify hope, peace, joy and love. (The third candle is often pink.) In the center is the white Christ candle, representing Jesus as the light of the world. That candle is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The round, green Advent wreath has special meaning of its own. It symbolizes eternal life and the unending love of God, who sent his only Son to earth to die in our place.

"Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending." —Carl Bard

Dec. 2nd Christmas Dinner 6:00 pm

Reservations **MUST** be in by Nov. 22nd. Any that come in after this date will be put on a waiting list should there be a cancellation.

Tickets are as follows: Adults (13+) \$10, Children (6-12) \$5, and children 5 and under eat for free.



Dec. 9th & 10th Live Nativity 6:00 pm

We are still short a few shepherds and wise men. If you can help us out with this gift to our community, please call Martha Morris.

December 17th Cantata 9:00 am

December 24th Christmas Eve Service 5:30 pm

This year's Christmas Eve Candelight Service will be held here at Malesus UMC and will begin at 5:30 pm.



Christian Symbol

ROSE — This flower, often shown as stylized artwork, is a symbol for Advent, the promise of the Messiah and Jesus' nativity. A white rose represents the Virgin Mary, and a red rose stands for martyrs. A wreath of roses symbolizes heavenly joy.



2023 Christmas Poinsettias of Remembrance



Given in Memory Of:

Elmer & Phyllis Carver, Charles Wathen, Jr, & Jaye Carver
Charles Marchant, Grady & Beatrice Reach, & Clayton & Viola Marchant
Sam Watlington
Mary Watlington
Mack Watlington
Golden Watlington
Gerald McGuire
Brandy Branch
Buddy Branch
James D. Riley
Ray C. Young
Our "Mimi" – Nina Young

Nina Young
Don Pickens
Charles & Gladys Spain
Jane Helen Roe
Dale Childress
Ann Weaver
Mr. & Mrs. Leo Atherton
Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Eliff
Billy Joe & Susan Watson
Carl & Jessie Ward
Cloys & Lois Matheney
Cecilia Scott
Larry Green
Kenneth & Mary Watlington
Wanda & Thomas Lovelace
Sue & Shelby Hutcherson
Joe & Martha Wheatley
Ruble & Elizabeth Azbill
Idelle & Leon Moyer
Bill Morehead
Glenn Elliott
Willie & Margie Ferrell

Given in Honor Of:

Wesson & Vivian Clifton
Cathy Riley
My Children
My Grandchildren
Mike Atherton & Family
Jennifer Reynolds & Family
Katie Green & Jerry Holt
Alexander Green & Family
Bonnie Tubbs
Randall & Tanya Green
Loret Evans
Kevin & Susan Wheatley

Given By:

Don & Connie Carver
Don & Connie Carver
Steve & Jane Watlington
Steve & Jane Watlington
Steve & Jane Watlington
Steve & Jane Watlington
Jennifer McGuire
Nell Branch
Nell Branch
Rusty & Peggy Riley and Family
Rusty & Peggy Riley and Family
Matthew Riley Family &
Megan Riley Williams Family
Peggy & Rusty Riley
Sandra Pickens
Sid & Doris Spain
David & Karen Roe
David & Karen Roe
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Bill & Lois Ward
Bill & Lois Ward
Bill & Lois Ward
Dot Green
Judy & Jerry Barker
Richard & Janice Hutcherson
Richard & Janice Hutcherson
Bill & Brenda Wheatley
Bill & Brenda Wheatley
Georgia Morehead
Georgia Morehead
Steve & Debbie Ferrell
Steve & Debbie Ferrell

Given By:

Jennifer McGuire
Rusty & Peggy Riley and Family
Sandra Pickens
Sandra Pickens
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Joe & Sandra Atherton
Randall & Tanya Green
Randall & Tanya Green
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Friends

Celebrate the Light

Bursting through December nights that could be long and cold, our Christmas lights bring warmth and joy with colors soft or bold.

Cascading from the rooftops, and from trees both small and tall, the lights cry out, "We have good news! We want to shout to all.

"You've seen the darkness earth can hold, the sorrow, war and fear; but God has sent his Son for all, to show his Love is here.

"The darkness can't put out God's Light. Christ's with us day by day, illuminating paths so we can follow in his way."

Light homes and streets and candles. Make your world shine clear and bright. God's love surrounds and blesses us.

A Season of Relationship

For his Christmas album *Milk & Cookies*, worship leader David Crowder wanted to focus on the relationship aspect of the holidays and the mixed emotions involved. Deaths of loved ones, absence from home or having "no home to get back to," he says, can wrap sadness into what's supposed to be a joyful season.

Yet pain and separation perfectly mirror the meaning of Christmas, according to Crowder. "It's about the created being at a distance from their Maker and ... God making a way back into communion with [them]." He adds, "I feel like most of the stuff that we experience around the season points to what is the miraculous — that there was the best gift ever given, and it was to make a way back into relationship with our Creator."

"Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward." — Princess Diana



One Hooky Day a Year

On a random Saturday, I threw the to-do list out the window, packed up the kids and headed to the mountains. Because Saturdays are usually for catching up on chores, my sons were surprised by their new, care-free mom. We played, laughed and explored — all with no agenda. I introduced them to the concept of a hooky day.

As a child, my parents allowed me one of those per year. It wasn't a sick day but a day off, just because. I could take it any time (but not to avoid a test), and I didn't need to plan ahead. It was okay to wake up one morning and play hooky.

Proverbs 17:22 (NKJV) wisely states, "A merry heart does good, like medicine." What will you do with an impromptu day off? Will you set your own pace walking through a park? Maybe stop at a restaurant you've wanted to try? Whether a fun day off includes spending time alone or with a friend, make the most of it as a God-given gift.

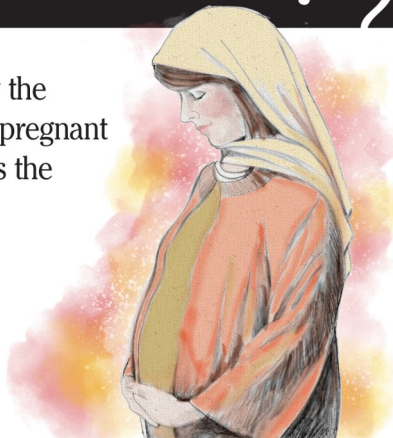
—Janna Firestone



Bible Quiz

Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon




Answer: B (See Luke 1:5, 39-41.)

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 A Stephen Ministry Congregation

 A Safe Sanctuaries Congregation



QR Code
for
Online
Giving

Our mission is to share the Gospel of Jesus
Christ by making disciples through our
service to our church, community , & world.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



Two Ships



The year like a ship in the distance
comes over life's mystical sea.
We know not what change of existence
'tis bringing to you or to me.
But we wave out the ship that is leaving
and we welcome the ship coming in,
although it be loaded with grieving,
with trouble, or losses, or sin. ...

The new ship comes nearer and nearer,
we know not what freight she may hold.
Hope stands at the helm there to steer her;
our hearts are courageous and bold.
Sail in with new joys and new sorrows.
Sail in with new banners unfurled.
Sail in with unwritten tomorrows.
Sail in with new tasks for the world.

—from "New Year," Ella Wheeler Wilcox