

From the Hill

Fort Hill United Methodist Church
106 Oakridge Blvd.
Lynchburg, VA 24502
Phone (434) 847-1251
Corner of Memorial and Oakridge Blvd.
Website: www.forthillumc.com

Volume 61, No.12 **December, 2026**

"Share the Warmth: Coffee, Cocoa, Cookies, Candy Canes and Carols"

Saturday, December 12
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.



Join us as we spread God's love and holiday joy with our neighbors. We will serve complimentary hot beverages to passersby in front of the church. Our Celebration Ringers and Brass Ensemble will share Christmas music periodically throughout the time period. This is an opportunity to share a smile and a simple holiday welcome with others. Join us!

Christmas Cantata To Be Presented

On Sunday, December 20, during the 10:30 a.m. morning worship service, our Sanctuary Choir will present *Peace Has Come: A Musical for Christmas* by Dennis & Nan Allen. Following worship, the J.O.Y. team will sponsor a Christmas Potluck for the congregation and our guests. Fried chicken, tossed salad and beverages will be provided. You are invited to bring a vegetable, fruit, bread or dessert to share.

This is a great Sunday to invite friends to join us for worship, followed by wonderful food and fellowship!

"Repeat the Sounding Joy" Service

December 27

Join us on the 1st Sunday after Christmas as we rejoice together that Christ, our Savior is born! The service will include Scripture readings, stories and singing some of our favorite carols.



"Supper with Santa" Family Christmas Event

Sunday, December 13, 4-6 p.m. I
in the church Fellowship Hall.

All ages are invited to join us for a pancake supper, pictures with Santa, crafts, cookie decorating, Christmas story time and holiday fun! Please reserve through the church office (434-847-1251; secretary@forthillumc.com; or online at forthillumc.com) no later than noon on Wednesday, December 9. The event is free, but donations are welcome. A sign-up sheet has been placed in the Narthex if you are able to help supply some food items that are needed. Plan to come and invite someone to come with you! Please contact Mindy Zelaya with questions. Sponsored by the Children, Youth and Family Ministries Team

Longest Night/"Blue Christmas" Service to be Held

A Gathering of Hope and Light
Monday, December 21, 6:30 p.m.



During the busyness and noise of the holiday season, many people experience a disconnect with "seasonal merriment" because of losses (both past and present), grief, illness, loneliness or changing personal and family circumstances that make it more difficult to celebrate the season. Join us for a sacred time of quiet meditation, prayer, Scripture reading and remembrance. Those experiencing grief are invited to bring a photo or a special remembrance of a loved one to place on the memory table. All are welcome.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service,

Thursday, December 24 5 p.m.

Join us on the holiest night of the year for our traditional Christmas Eve service featuring Scripture readings, beloved carols, candlelight and holy communion. All are welcome.

The Advent Virus: An Anonymous Email



Several years ago, at the beginning of Advent, I received one of those "chain emails" instructing me to read it and then sent it on to as many others as I could. While I usually delete most of these without reading them, this one captured my attention. I offer it here as a reminder to all of us that while we are in the midst of the "holiday mayhem" that Christmas often brings, let's make an effort, by God's grace, to share gifts that cannot be bought or sold. As Christ's disciples, we have a wonderful opportunity this time of year to share God's love with others in unexpected and "contagious" ways. Let's hope and pray that we all catch "the Advent virus."

WARNING!!! WARNING!!!

Be on the alert this season for symptoms of inner Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to this virus, and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has, until now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict and discord in the world. Some signs and symptoms of

THE ADVENT VIRUS:
*A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than in fear based on past experiences.
*An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment
*A loss of interest in judging other people
*A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others
*A loss of interest in conflict
*A loss of the ability to worry (this is a very serious symptom!)
*Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation
*Contented feelings of connectedness with God, others and nature
*Frequent attacks of smiling
*An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen
*An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others,
as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.
Please send this warning out to all your friends. This virus can, and has, affected many systems.
Some systems have been completely cleaned out because of it!

-Many Blessings, Pastor Nancy

December Communion Offering Designated for Society of St. Andrew

For the month of December, our communion offering will be divided between the Society of St. Andrew and our own Local Relief Fund.



The Society of St. Andrew is based in Big Island and brings people together to harvest and share healthy food, reduce food waste, and build caring communities by offering nourishment to hungry neighbors. Did you know that more than 40 million Americans sometimes go hungry, including women, children, the unemployed, the working poor, seniors, and those who are homeless? One in eight Americans experience food insecurity every year, including one in six children. Food insecure people either do not have enough to eat or they do not know where their next meal will come from. SOSA works tirelessly to help alleviate these problems. Your gift on Communion Sunday will help.

The other half of the communion offering will go to our own Local Relief Fund. Thank you for caring and sharing!

Ongoing Prayer Concerns

We are now listing our ongoing prayer concerns for those who are in nursing or rehab facilities or recovering at home. Only immediate prayer concerns will be listed in the weekly bulletin. Our current prayer concerns are as follows:

Runk & Pratt (Gristmill)
Sylvia Morgan

Runk & Pratt (Leesville Rd)
Marye Almond

Others who need our prayers:

Joyce Baker	Carolyn Maness
Betty Buford	Jimmy & JoAnn Mays
Liz Coleman	Becky Spangler
Richard Hawkins	Kendra Toney

A Word of Thanks: Thanks so very much to the SPPRC and the congregation for the generous gift that you gave me for Pastor Appreciation Month. Your thoughtful kindness is most appreciated, and am blessed to be your pastor!

-With love and gratitude, Pastor Nancy

Bits and Pieces

United Women in Faith Supporting Henry Fork Service Center

Our UWF circles supported the Henry Fork Service Center in Rocky Mount in 2026 with 40 Birthday Cake Kits for the children. According to the director, the children were so happy to have this surprise for their birthday.



The director tells this endearing story of a new child that came into the program during the summer: She was not aware of the kits, but the ones with siblings, who had received them already, were aware. This little 5-year -old girl was so excited to be able to help make her birthday cake and set up for a small family party, as most of her family lives out-of-state. The parents were very appreciative because they were not planning on doing a cake, since there were only a few people who would be coming, and they didn't want to have the extra expense. After her birthday, she came in talking about making her cake and decorating it. She was so adorable and couldn't wait to tell me all about it. It was the coolest thing for her. She had been able to invite a couple of friends from her PreK class last year, so a "no real party" ended up being a real party for her.

If you would like to participate in this project, please supply any of the following items to be assembled at a later date in 2027. We will need 40 "kits." There will be a container in the Welcome Center for this project. Here is what is needed for each kit:

9x13 disposable cake pan with lofted lid
One box of cake mis (any flavor)
12 oz. can of Sprite
Container of icing (any flavor)
Candles, Balloons, Plates, napkins & forks
Sprinkles
Small toy, such as a Beanie Baby
Whisk (for mixing the cake)

Please Help Share A Smile

Those Hallmark moments are more likely to arrive electronically, than be placed in someone's hand with a smile and perhaps a hug. Our Greeting Card Ministry deals in smiles & hugs, and we need help.

I have really enjoyed working with the cards, calendars, etc., but need help to keep it going. If smiles and hugs are "right up your alley", please see me to volunteer. *-Carolyn Maness*

Field Trip to Bethlehem Village

at Hebron Baptist Church,
66 Tanbark Drive, Afton, VA 22920
Sunday, December 20, 5-8 p.m.

Join us as we take a trip to Bethlehem! Experience the night of Christ's birth through this outdoor Bethlehem Village reenactment. Walk the paths of the Village, visit the shops, interact with the villagers, and celebrate the birth of our Savior. This event is outdoors and admission is free. Vendor items are available for purchase. Please make note of the following:



Parking is free - handicapped spaces available; Overflow parking is in a field adjacent to the church; Wear comfortable and appropriate walking shoes for your safety; Outdoor lighting is dim and appropriate to the atmosphere, so you may want to bring a small flashlight; Paths are graveled and wheelchair accessible; there are small, open campfires in the village; Emergency personnel are on the premises. The Village is approximately one hour from FHUMC. We will meet in our church parking lot at 3:30 p.m. for those wishing to carpool. If you plan to come and can transport others in your vehicle, please let Nancy know via email at ncolemanjohnson@gmail.com. We are arranging transportation for those who prefer not to drive. If you need a ride, please contact the church office by noon on Wednesday, December 16. For additional information, visit: https://sites.google.com/site/bethlehemvillageinafton/home

We're Joining the Parade!

Lynchburg Christmas Parade
Sunday, December 6 @ 4 p.m.



Our Children, Youth and Family Ministries Team has entered a float for the church in this year's Christmas Parade, so come on out to cheer us on! The parade departs from City Stadium, turns right onto Fort Avenue, takes a left onto Wythe Road, continues straight onto Oakley Avenue, turns right onto Memorial Avenue, and ends at E.C. Glass High School. Those walking alongside the float are allowed to distribute candy to the crowd, so we are collecting individually wrapped small hard candy (mints, dum-dums, smartees/sweet tarts, bubble gum, small candy canes; the more inexpensive, large quantity bags; NO CHOCOLATE for the parade!) Please place your donation in the marked bin in the Welcome Center. Thanks for your generosity. Hope to see you there!

More Bits and Pieces

Christmas Decorations Needed!:

Do you have artificial Christmas trees, Christmas lights, artificial greenery or other decorations that you no longer need? Our CYFM Team (Children/Youth Fellowship Ministry) would love to have them! We are collecting artificial trees of all sizes (pre-lit or unlit), Christmas lights and other decorations to help us decorate the Fellowship Hall for Supper with Santa. If you have items to donate, please leave them at your earliest convenience in the Fellowship Hall near the piano in back. We can also make arrangements to pick up your items if you need assistance, so please call the church office to l (434-847-1251 or secretary@forthillumc.com) OR Mindy Zelaya (434-426-8909 or mindy7426@yahoo.com) to let us know you need help with pick-up. Please bring your items no later than Sunday, December 6. Thanks so much for your help!

A Word From Amos . . .

Hello everyone! This is Amos, your little church mouse, reporting in again.

So many plans are being made for Christmas at Fort Hill this year! You can read about all the activities in this newsletter. I'm particularly interested in the "Supper with Santa" event. I love it when folks are in the kitchen cooking and a morsel of food might drop on the floor, not to mention the delicious aromas that are in the air.



The Sanctuary Choir has been working hard on the cantata for December 20. I hope you will make plans to come and hear them and experience one of the highlights of the Advent season at Fort Hill. I just know you will enjoy the music and the warmth of this congregation. I just love being among you on Sundays!

I want to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas. I hope you will get to spend time with your families - just like I plan to do. I have learned in my years hanging around Fort Hill, that families play a very important part in our lives. And Fort Hill families seem to know that, because they care for, and show love for, each other. But the best part of all is that we are all part of God's family. Enjoy your holidays, and I will report in again in January! *-Amos*

About the Acolyte Ministry

The Worship Team would like to create an acolyte schedule for weekly worship. The acolyte has the important and symbolic task of bringing in the light and presence of Christ into the worship service. When worship concludes, the acolyte leads the worshippers out into the world as we follow Christ, our light, and share God's love and light with the world. Ann *Vincent is serving as our Acolyte Coordinator.* Any children, youth and adults who are willing to serve as an acolyte may contact Ann at (434) 851-3737. Thank you for considering this important ministry.



"Holiday Helpers" U.M.Y.F. Fundraiser



Need help with your holiday preparations? Cleaning? Baking? Decorating? Lifting/ Moving Boxes? Leaf Raking/Light Yard Work? Miscellaneous household jobs? Our UMYF Youth ages (13 and up) are ready to be your personal elves! If you would like to "hire" a youth to assist with a job, please call the church office (434-847-1251) or use the forms available in the Narthex to request a time for your holiday helpers to assist you. Once you make your request, you will be contacted to set up a time. Your per hour donation for the help will be designated for UMYF Ministry Projects. Please make your check payable to Fort Hill UMC with "UMFY" in the memo. Thanks for considering this opportunity to support our Youth!

Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries

Our church continues to seek a dynamic, innovative, self-starting disciple of Jesus Christ to serve as our church's part-time Director of Children's, Youth and Family Ministries (CYFM). The Director will give hands-on leadership for the church's overall ministry with Children and Youth, ages birth to 18, and their families, to include Christian Education/discipleship, fellowship, mission programming, and community outreach. We invite the congregation to share this information with potential candidates. The full job description and application instructions are available on our church's website at www.forthillumc.com.

Advent Devotional Book Available

The Society of St. Andrew has published a devotional book for Advent, and copies are available in the Narthex if you would like one. Any donation to help offset the cost of printing the book, will be appreciated by the Society.





12/1 Easton Beuerle
12/4 Tommy Green
12/4 Matt Connelly
12/5 Nancy VanZant
12/5 Jean Fielding
12/5 Dwayne Grant
12/6 Paul Cox
12/7 Earl Wootton
12/9 Richard Kiger
12/9 Conner Kendrick
12/11 Clay Bourguignon
12/11 Carly Bosiger
12/13 Lynn Cash
12/16 Barbara Mayne
12/20 Peggy Vannaman
12/20 Robin Wrabley
12/21 Rhett Kiger
12/21 Cheryl Manning
12/22 Leigh Wrabley
12/22 Charlie Toddammon
12/23 Wiley Green
12/23 Wesley Duncan
12/25 Cody Elliott
12/26 Cheryl Napier
12/27 Melissa Sutor
12/28 Barbara Creasy
12/28 Jackie Marks
12/28 Brantley Seale
12/30 Betty Martin
12/30 Sonny Minnick
12/30 David Denny
12/30 Macy Hamilton
12/30 Kathryn Alvis
12/31 Liz Coleman

If your birthday or anniversary is not listed, it may be because we do not have the date in our data base. Please call the church office at 847-1251 with your information.

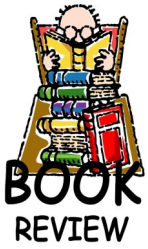
December Wedding Anniversaries

12/1 Rico & Mindy Zelaya 16 years
12/7 Bubba & Carol Humphries 30 years
12/21 Greg & Octavia Starbuck 30 years
12/28 Earl & Mary Wootton 24 years



From Our Librarian . . . .

Faith is the Answer, But What are the Questions? James W. Moore – Dimensions for Living, 2007



In today's world, we are challenged by situations and questions that often perplex us. Life still brings hard, personal, and theological questions. How does faith help us when problems arise? What is faith? Faith can mean different things depending on the context. Faith for most of us is trust and belief in God and spiritual truths. For others, it is confidence, trust, or belief in someone or something, often without complete proof. So, where is **your** faith? Whom do you trust for help when confronted with problems or illness, loss, or hardship? We know that faith is the foundation, but life still brings hard, personal, and even theological questions. These are not just abstract doubts – doubts are the moments when trust meets reality.

In his book, Moore's point is that faith is not a one-time decision but an ongoing dialogue with God, the world, and ourselves. If faith is the answer, the questions are real-life conversations, struggles, and searches that keep the faith alive and relevant. They are the places where trust meets truth, and where the believer's walk with God is shaped by both belief and experience. He presents fifteen everyday questions and offers answers based on a personal relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Bible Study and Small Group News

Tuesdays @ 2 Bible Study will not meet on December 22, 29 or January 5. Meetings will resume on Tuesday, January 12.

Java & Jesus will meet on Thursday, December 10, 9:00 a.m. at Panera on Old Forest Road.

Books & Breakfast will meet on Thursday, December 19, 9:00 a.m. at IHOP on Fort Ave. Our December book is an Advent devotional-style book entitled *Silence and Other Surprising Invitations of Advent* by Enuma Okara (Upper Room Books, ISBN 978-0-8358-1112-5). We will resume our regular 4th Thursday meetings on January 28 (same time and place). Our January book is *The Happiest Man on Earth: The Beautiful Life of an Auschwitz Survivor* by Eddie Jaku (Harper Books, ISBN 978-0-06-309769-8) in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. All are welcome to get a copy of the book and join us.

We extend our sympathy to the family of June Plunkett who died on November 3; and to the family of S. David Thomas, Jr., who died on November 4.



Committee Chairs/Team Leaders: Your faithful leadership is most appreciated! Please help us keep our church calendar coordinated by calling Jeanette in the church office **before** scheduling your meetings to avoid conflicts. Thanks for your help!

December 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
In-Person Worship Each Sunday @ 10:30 a.m. Java Stop 8:45 a.m. - 10:15a.m. Sunday School 9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Staffed Nursery Available		1 2:00 Bible Study	2 4:15 King's Kids 5:30 Martha Circle 7:00 Celebration Ringers	3 6:45 Sanctuary Choir	4	5
6 **Holy Communion** 4:00 Christmas Parade	7	8 2:00 Bible Study	9 4:15 King's Kids 7:00 Celebration Ringers	10 9:00 Java & Jesus 6:45 Sanctuary Choir	11	12 **11:-00 - 1:00 Share the Warmth Event**
13 4:00 Supper w/ Santa 4:00 SS Christmas dinner	14	15 2:00 Bible Study	16 4:15 King's Kids 7:00 Celebration Ringers	17 9:00 Books & Breakfast 6:45 Sanctuary Choir	18	19
20 **10:30 Christmas Cantata** **11:45 Christmas lunch**	21 **6:30 Longest Night/Blue Christmas Service**	22 2:00 Bible Study	23	24 5:00 Christmas Eve Service **Church Office closed**	25 **Merry Christmas!**	26
27	28	29	30	31 **12:00 Deadline for last 2026 contribution**		

Miscellaneous

THE BOX SCORE

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" Psalm 122:1

Average worship attendance in 2025 - 104
Average worship attendance as of November 22, 2026 - 98
NOTE: This attendance is for in-person & online worship beginning January 1, 2026

"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse . . . And put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Malachi 3:10

BRIEF OPERATING FUND REPORT
Your first line of giving — mission and ministry!
Budget for 2026 as approved by the Church Council is: $404,827

We need an average of $7,785.14 per week to meet this budget.

As of 47 weeks, our weekly receipts have averaged $7,251.50
Thank you for your support of the mission

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Phone: 434-847-1251

Times of Worship
9:15 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Staffed nursery provided from 10:15 a.m..- 11.45 a.m.

Rev. Nancy C. Johnson
ncolemanjohnson@gmail.com

Diego A. Divila, Director of Music
diego@forthillumc.com

Jeanette J. Seale, Administrative Assistant
secretary@forthillumc.com

Rev. Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent
Phone: 434-832-0401

The Rev. Sue Haupert-Johnson, Bishop, Richmond, VA
Phone: 1-800-768-6040

"Fort Hill United Methodist Church seeks to nurture God's people so they can CONNECT, GROW and SERVE."
-Fort Hill UMC Vision Statement

FHUMC United Methodist Youth Fellowship (UMYF) News

The Youth invite the congregation to join us for a Fort Hill Community Tree Lighting on Sunday, November 29, 4:00 p.m. in front of the church. S'mores & hot cocoa will be served prior to the lighting of the tree. Help us start a new tradition on the 1st Sunday of Advent for our church and communion. All are welcome.

Schedule for December:

***Sunday, December 6:** Lynchburg City Christmas Parade!

***Sunday, December 13:** Assist with the Supper with Santa Event

***Sunday, December 20:** Church-wide Field Trip to Bethlehem Village in Afton.

***Youth and Children's Sunday School:** Please note that the Children's and Youth Sunday School classes will not meet on Sunday, December 27, January 3 or January 10 for Christmas and New Year's break. Both classes will resume on Sunday, January 17 (9:15 a.m.-10:00 a.m.)

***King's Kids on Wednesdays** (K through age 12) will not meet on the Wednesdays of December 23, 30 or January 6. Meetings will resume on Wednesday, January 13.

***UMYF (ages 13 and up)** will not meet on the Sundays of December 27, January 3, January 10. We will resume meetings on Sunday, January 17.

Stewardship Commitment Sunday Held

Sunday, November 22 was Stewardship Commitment Sunday, the culmination of this year's emphasis: Extravagant Generosity: The Heart of Giving. The congregation had opportunity to return our Faith Promise Cards for 2027 through the offering on Commitment Sunday. If you need to return your card, you may return it or mail it to the church using the envelope included in the packet. Extra Stewardship Packets are available in the Narthex and in the church office. Please return your card by December 15, 2026. Thanks to everyone for prayerfully considering the giving of our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness in 2027 as we trust God in all things. Thanks to everyone for prayerfully considering the giving of our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness in 2027 as we trust God in all things.

Don't Forget to . . . . .



order your Christmas poinsettia in honor or remembrance of a loved one. Orders will be received through December 6. The cost is $20 per plant and will be placed on the altar for the December 20 worship service. You may also give a gift to our Capital Improvement Fund in honor or memory of a loved one as an alternative. Use an order form found in the Narthex or Oxford Hall OR call the church office to place your order.

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Address Service Requested

Phone: 434-847-1251

www.forthillumc.com

Rev. Nancy C. Johnson
Pastor
ncolemanjohnson@gmail.com

Diego A. Divila
Director of Music

Worship Times:
9:15 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Service in the Sanctuary
& online via YouTube

Next newsletter deadline is December 15. Please submit SHORT articles by this date. Thank you!

Special Christmas Offering to be Received

Each year, the church receives a special Thanksgiving and Christmas offering, which, in years past, has been used to help in any area where there is a shortfall of cash flow.



This year, the Finance Committee has decided that this special offering should be given to the Salvation Army to help with the many requests for assistance that they receive during the holidays.

The Finance Committee hopes you will want to participate in helping our community in this way. As always, your gifts are very much appreciated!



2027 Giving Envelopes Available
Starting December 20

Your box of offering envelopes for 2027 will be available in the Welcome Center, beginning Sunday, December 20. Please be sure to pick up your box, saving the church the cost of mailing them to you (appx. $6.50 per box).

If you have not been receiving envelopes and would like to be included in 2027, please notify the church office no later than December 15.

Note: Please do not use your 2027 envelopes until January 1 *as you most likely will have a new envelope number.*