



JANUARY 2026 ISSUE 65

MINISTRY MATTERS

The Newsletter of Christ United Methodist Church
Owen Brown Interfaith Center, Columbia, Maryland



GROWING A FUTURE OF LOVE, JUSTICE, AND COMMUNITY

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for you."
— Matthew 17:20

As we look ahead to the next 50 years, we want to ensure an enduring legacy for CUMC. As members of Christ United Methodist Church and this community, we are not just living in the present; we are stewards of a future that we may never fully see, but one that we have the power to shape. That's why CUMC has established an Endowment Fund. The vision was to create a permanent resource where bequests and contributions could be carefully invested, generating income to sustain and expand CUMC's programs, outreach, and ministries for years to come.

At CUMC, we believe that even the smallest acts of faith can lead to extraordinary growth. Just as the mustard seed begins tiny but flourishes into a tree that shelters many, our new Endowment Fund is designed to take modest gifts today and grow them into lasting support for ministry, mission, and outreach for generations to come.



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CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Owen Brown Interfaith Center, 7246 Cradlerock Way, Columbia, MD 21045
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The Reverend Angela Wells (she/her), Pastor





CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ENDOWMENT FUND



What Is an endowment fund?

An endowment fund is a pool of donated money and assets that is invested to generate ongoing income for a nonprofit or institution, while preserving the original principle. It provides long-term financial stability by creating a permanent source of funding.

- An endowment is established with assets and gifts, forming the principle.
- Growth comes from investment income, outright gifts, and legacy gifts entrusted through wills and estates, or life insurance policies.
- Each year, a percentage of the earnings from the fund support outreach and mission, while the principal remains untouched.

Why start an endowment?

An endowment is more than financial planning—it is planting seeds of faith for the future. Annually, as early as 2027, a percentage of the earnings from the fund will support outreach and mission.

- Growth: Small gifts equal big impact over time. Even modest contributions, when invested, can sustain ministry for decades.
- Faith in the unseen future: Giving to the endowment is an act of faith—believing that what we plant today will bless those yet to come.
- Community: Our endowment will provide a lasting foundation for outreach, youth programs, and community care rooted in love and justice.

Benefits for CUMC

- Stability: Creates a permanent financial foundation alongside annual giving.
- Mission Expansion: Supports new outreach initiatives, youth programs, and justice ministries.
- Legacy: Offers members a way to leave a lasting impact, ensuring CUMC continues to flourish long after today.
- Participation Without Pressure: Every seed matters—whether large or small, each gift contributes to the growth of our shared mission.





CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ENDOWMENT FUND



How can our endowment help CUMC grow?

CUMC's Endowment will help us grow and flourish by providing a permanent financial foundation to strengthen ministry, expand mission and outreach, and ensure long-term stability alongside annual giving. It nurtures sustainable resources that meet today's needs while planting seeds of faith and hope for future generations.

What types of mission and outreach we could begin next year?

With the endowment in place, CUMC could begin:

- Expanding youth engagement programs to nurture the next generation of leaders.
- Supporting community justice initiatives that extend care and advocacy beyond our walls.
- Growing local outreach partnerships to serve those in need.
- Strengthening worship and education ministries with sustainable resources.
- Each year, there will be an opportunity to present mission and outreach ideas to be supported by a percentage of earnings from the endowment.

Invitation to Join

In the upcoming months, we invite you to learn ways in which you can plant your own seed of faith into the CUMC Endowment. Together, we can grow love, justice, and community—ensuring that our church remains a place of hope, care, and transformation for years to come.

Did You Know?

- Small gifts grow big over time. Even a \$25 contribution to the endowment, when invested, can multiply into lasting support for ministry.
- Endowments are seeds of faith. Donors may not see the full harvest, but their gifts ensure future generations will thrive.
- Community impact is lasting. Our endowment will provide enduring outreach, youth, and justice programs.
- Every seed matters. Participation is about faith, not size—each gift helps CUMC grow love, justice, and community together.

CLERGY CORNER

Rev. Angela



Epiphany Sunday

On January 4th we'll celebrate Epiphany Sunday, the traditional day in which we remember the Magi who visited the Christ child offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. What you may or may not know is that January 4th starts the season of Epiphany in the church year, a season that lasts until Lent begins this year Feb 18th.

The way we use the word epiphany in everyday conversation tends to mean a "lightbulb moment" or an "aha moment." A moment of perhaps sudden realization of some truth. That's what the liturgical season is referring to as well. During the season of epiphany we shed light on who this babe born in a manger grows to be—we realize that God is indeed with us in Jesus the Christ.

But realization only happens when we take the time to pay attention. Pay attention to the ways God is at work in our lives through scripture, prayer, relationships, worship, nature, etc. As we begin a new year, can you recommit to paying attention? Paying attention to God, to truth, to justice, to one another? Paying attention can be a spiritual practice, one that is particularly apt for the season of Epiphany.

And as you pay attention, what epiphany or revelation might this season bring you? I'd love to hear about it!





WORSHIP

January 4th: Epiphany Sunday

The latecomers to the nativity scene, the Magi, have arrived! Let's see what their story has to say to us in our lives today. As in past years, you'll have an opportunity to choose a Star Word for the year—a word that you might pray and meditate on to see how God might speak to you through that intentional practice.

January 11th: The Mustard Seed

We'll celebrate the official launch of Christ UMC's Endowment Fund exploring the parable of the mustard seed—how small gifts can bear large fruit. We'll also celebrate baptisms on this Baptism of Our Lord Sunday and receive a new member in this celebratory service!

January 18th: Children's Sabbath

The kids are in charge for this animated service themed around the Fruit of the Spirit! Our preschool, elementary, and middle school kids will lead us in worship, demonstrating the many gifts God has given them. The kids will even have a small gift for you as you depart to remind you of our scripture verse for the day!

January 25th: A Light Shines in the Darkness

We'll read a familiar passage from Isaiah about the light shining in the darkness, but wait... does the darkness have to be a bad thing? We'll break open the light-dark binary that has been problematic in Christian history and explore God's holy darkness through an excellent children's book for all ages and a short reflection.

February: Looking ahead to Black History Month

During Black History Month we'll explore a worship series on African-American Spirituals. Each week we'll pair a scripture reading with a Spiritual and we'll put them in conversation with one another. And of course we'll sing the Spiritual too!



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

- Prayers for **Rev. Douglas Fox** as he copes with many medical issues.
- **Catherine Messenger** and her family continue to need our care and prayers.
- **Sofi Flanagan-Wells** continues to struggle with mental health concerns and she and her family need our prayers.
- **Darwin Perry** is struggling with the serious complications from Parkinson's disease. He and Sue need our support.



The CUMC Members and Friends Photo Directory is available on the CUMC Website under [Archives Documents](#).



Happy Birthday!
Mary Jo Messenger

Attiya Daniels

BJ James

Samuel Swirdovich

Miamor Flanagan-Wells

Nicholas Fitzgerald

Natalie Swirdovich

Lisa Lindberg

Brenna Lindberg

Paul Klink

Daniel Mello

Katie Weston

Sara Swanson

CUMC CARES

Missions and Community Ministries Matter

Second Sunday Stock-up on January 11, 2026

Remember that commercial that designated Wednesday as “spaghetti day?” Well, every day can be “spaghetti day!” And what better way to warm the heart on a cold winter night than a delicious bowl of pasta covered with an aromatic sauce that is easy to prepare, easy to store, and is a stress-free meal?

Who knew that there are so many kinds of pasta: spaghetti, linguini, angel hair, tubes, penne, rigatoni, macaroni, farfalle, bowtie, fusilli, lasagna, and tortellini offered by many pasta brands such as Barilla, Ronzoni, Prince, Mueller’s, Buitoni, Chef Boyardee, Rao’s and more!

And what would pasta be without a tasty sauce? Some brands are Rao’s, Ragu, Bertolli, Trader Joe’s, Prego, and many more!

Pasta is a popular item at food banks because it is shelf-stable, lightweight, is a great source of carbs, can be used with other pantry items like sauce, tuna and more. The Food Bank could use LOTSA PASTA and sauce this second Sunday, January 11 and it is grateful for your contributions!

If you have any questions, please contact Lillian Lehnert.

CUMC in the Community Showing Up, Serving, and Shining Bright



Our December 6th “Hanging with Santa” was a huge success. While getting an exact count was difficult, this writer thinks we had 50 kids plus adults. Many expressed interest in attending the “Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant” on December 24th. One thing I know for certain; a splendid time was had by all!

Kevin Swanson

A collage of hands holding various books, including Bibles, against a blue sky background.

LEARNING FOR ALL

Education Matters

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday School for preschoolers thru HS age:
Each class has 2-3 adults and leaves for class approximately 15 minutes into our regular worship service and returns near the end of our worship time. In addition to their Biblical story and discussion, the younger children usually do a craft activity.

SOMETHING NEW FOR THE NEW YEAR

NEW STUDY SERIES: EXPLORING COMMUNITY

Time: Sunday afternoons 1:30 to 3:00 beginning January 11

Place: The Messengers' 7661 Sweet Hours Way, Columbia 21046

Join us for a six-session journey into the meaning and power of Community. Together we'll explore what brings people closer, what holds us together, and how we can help build the kind of beloved community God intends for us.

Our conversations will draw on ideas from Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Beloved Community, the Hidden Brain podcast episode "Relationships 2.0," the documentary "Join or Die," and James Rouse's dream for Columbia, Maryland. The sessions will include short readings, videos, and plenty of time for open, thoughtful discussion. We'll also practice good listening, deepen our understanding of one another, and consider how Christian community can thrive in today's world.

All are welcome—whether you're new to church life, a long-time member, or simply curious about what community can mean at its best.

Please speak to Mary Jo or Scrib to sign up!



FELLOWSHIP

Matters

FIRST FRIDAY

FIRST FRIDAY....Still in season!

Inclement weather forced the cancellation of the December First Friday; however, hostess Lillian Lehnert has maintained ALL of her Christmas trees and many decorations for us to enjoy Friday Jan. 2 at 6:30pm. So hoping the weather cooperates for you to bring a potluck dish and wrap up your holiday season with the first First Friday of the new year! Please contact Lillian by Dec. 30 if you plan to attend... those reservations sure helped in the last minute Dec. cancellation!



CARING, CONNECTING, COMMUNITY ARE ALL PART OF LUNCH BUNCH!

Start the new year by connecting with the women of CUMC at LUNCH BUNCH on **Thurs. Jan. 8** at the home of Karen Ohrich. New ideas, plans and revamping of this 15+ year CUMC activity are under way and we need YOUR input! Please let Karen know if you will attend by Jan. 5 and plan your potluck dish to share.



FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE



JUSTICE FOR ALL

Matters

A Story of Freedom, Memory, and Repair

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, formerly enslaved people were promised “40 acres and a mule” as a first step toward rebuilding lives that had been stolen from them. In reality, very few of those promises were ever fulfilled. True reparations for freed slaves were rare, and the injustices of slavery were largely left unaddressed. One powerful reminder of both the long delay of justice and the persistence of hope is Juneteenth—the day in June 1865 when enslaved people in Texas finally learned of their freedom, more than two years after emancipation had been declared. For many Americans, Juneteenth was never taught in school and remained largely unknown until very recently. It became a national holiday only in 2021.

Much of that renewed awareness is due to the tireless work of **Opal Lee**, now known as “The Mother of Juneteenth.” For decades, Ms. Lee walked, marched, and advocated so that this day of Black freedom would be remembered and honored nationwide.

Opal Lee’s life also tells a rare and moving story of repair. In June 1939, when Opal was just 12 years old, her family moved into a new home in Fort Worth, Texas. The very next day, a white mob forced them out, smashing their belongings and burning their home to the ground. The family never returned, and the land passed through several owners over the decades.

Eventually, the property came to belong to **Trinity Habitat for Humanity**—an organization Opal Lee herself had helped to found. Years later, she asked Habitat’s CEO if she could buy back her family’s land at 940 East Annie St., Fort Worth. Instead, Habitat built her a new home and sold her the original family plot to her for just \$10 in 2023.

While such stories are far too rare, Opal Lee’s journey offers a glimpse of what truth, remembrance, and restoration can look like. Her life invites us to reflect on our history, to listen to long-silenced voices, and to consider how faith calls us to pursue justice—not only in words, but in tangible acts of repair.

More information about Opal Lee, her land, and her lifelong activism is available online.

Kevin Swanson



GOING GREEN

Matters

Decluttering? Declutter In a Green Way!

Take **old rags and clothes** unfit for donation over to Cradlerock Elementary. Your used fiber and textiles can go in the bin in the parking lot to the right of the school. Cradlerock Elementary gets paid by the pound for these textiles. You can declutter and help our partner school!

We are collecting **used batteries and small electronics** in the back of the sanctuary. We can return these items to Staples for points, which will lead to discounts for CUMC.

Lastly, we will be accepting **broken/old Christmas lights** on January 18th ONLY. The lights will be taken to MOM's where they will be sent for recycling.

Let's start 2026 off by decluttering responsibly!



*"Clutter is the physical manifestation of unmade decisions,
fueled by procrastination."*





CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Matter

News and Views - Game night. Name of the game? Church vitality

Posted by on Oct 30, 2025

Rev. Matthew Tate, pastor at Hollywood United Methodist Church in southern Maryland, was approached by a child and his dad, who attended the church's weekly youth group, with a problem.

They belonged to a board game group that held weekly meetings to play board games at a local store, but the store was closing. They asked if the church would let them use its space for game night. For Tate, it was a no-brainer to help the group.

"The church building is one of the most underutilized things that a church has to offer, which is just their space," he said. "Many churches have these spaces and they're not using them all the time. In fact, many churches aren't using them near as much as they used to, so it's sitting vacant quite a bit."



A few dozen people each week came to the church, playing a wide variety of games. But the games weren't Monopoly or Yahtzee. Tate said the group would even call the popular game Settlers of Catan a "gateway" game, but even that was "too mainstream for them in a lot of ways."

Tate had remembered a call to action for clergy from the Baltimore-Washington Conference Bishop LaTrelle Easterling: she did not want to go to communities and have the people there be unfamiliar with the Conference's local churches.

The board game group brought together people from different generations for the love of board games. Ages often ranged from early teens to mid-60s, none of whom were members of the congregation. Tate, on many occasions, even joined them.

"There were people concerned that the pastor was going to be there," Tate recalled. "They had not had good experiences with pastors, or just thought that it would be really weird. I was there, not in a collar or anything, and got to know them. It wasn't really like 'You need to go get saved before you can play a game. We just talked.'"



CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Matter

A Lesson in Church Vitality, continued

Church attendance in the United States is on the decline, but research suggests the drop-off has slowed or leveled off altogether. According to a Pew Research Center poll, a little more than six in ten people identify as Christian. Ministry software company Churchtrac finds that, since the turn of the 21st century, weekly church attendance has declined to just 20 percent, down more than 33 percent.

Church vitality could play a role in reversing such trends. While the church is outside of the walls, the physical space churches can provide is still a huge boon for congregations looking to engage with their broader community, Tate explained. By opening up to non-ministry events or groups, if the need ever arises, that familiarity could prove fruitful in the future.

"Should the day ever come when any of them all of a sudden feels the calling of the Spirit to go to a church, this is a church they are somewhat familiar with. They've been there," Tate said.

In a turn of events, the father who asked if the group could hold Friday night game nights at the church became the youth leader at Hollywood UMC. Yet, the fruit of the relationship kept coming.

Around a dozen attendees have at some point attended a Sunday church service. One regular member of the board game group worked at a local bank, helping to secure a \$500 donation for an upcoming mission trip. And when events like the church pancake breakfast arise, the board game group regularly shows up too.

The decision to host the board gamers even drew praise from those who didn't share Hollywood UMC's theological beliefs. One attendee, unprompted, wrote a review of the church online.

"This church opened its doors to our local board game group when we lost the place at which we normally play," the Game Night participant wrote. "I am not religious, but in my humble opinion, this church exemplifies a spirit of Christian generosity."

Tate hoped that the relationships built over Friday night gameplay, including his favorite, One Word, would lead them to Hollywood UMC if they ever felt a tug to attend church. But it's also about embracing the unknown. Perhaps, the game night will be the extent of some people's interaction with the church.

"I don't know if any of them would say I'm their pastor, but I think that if they were looking for a pastor, it might be whoever is the pastor at Hollywood," Tate said. "If they were looking for a church, Hollywood might be the place that they go."

"You plant these seeds and you don't really know what will happen," he added.



PARTICIPATION MATTERS

January 2026

Date	Events
1/2	First Friday 6:30 p.m. at Lillian Lehnert's RSVP by Dec. 29
1/4	Sunday Service* 10:00 a.m.
1/7	Prayer Meeting* 8:15 p.m.
1/8	Lunch Bunch 12:00 p.m. hosted by Karen Ohlrich RSVP by 1/5
1/8	SPRC* 7:00 p.m.
1/11	Sunday Service* 10:00 a.m. Community Study Group 1:30 p.m. at the Messengers
1/14	Prayer Meeting* 8:15 p.m.
1/15	Ad Board Meeting* 7:00 p.m.
1/18	Sunday Service* 10:00 a.m. Community Study Group 1:30 p.m. at the Messengers
1/21	Prayer Meeting* 8:15 p.m.
1/22	Community Ministry Team* 7:00 p.m.
1/23	Newsletter Deadline
1/25	Sunday Service* 10:00 a.m. Community Study Group 1:30 p.m. at the Messengers

*To join services or meetings connect through Zoom link on the front page of the CUMC Website: cumcobic.org

January 2026

Please find the new updated Worship Volunteer Instructions on the CUMC website at this link:

<https://cumcobic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/volunteer-instructions.pdf>.

	Jan 4	Jan 11	Jan 18	Jan 25	Feb 1
Liturgist	Daniel Klinkenberg	Lillian	YOUTH	Phil	Miamor
Reader	Luke Weston	Rob Rosenberger	YOUTH	Sissy Plank	Cristin Messenger
Acolyte	Miguel Angel	Emily Walker	Miamor	Luke	Daniel
Altar Flowers					
Tech					
Ushers 1	Sissy Plank	Dennis	YOUTH	Lee Klinkenberg	Fred Mueller
Ushers 2	Mike Plank	Warren	Kevin Swanson	Toni Klinkenberg	Becky Nicodemus
Altar Set-up	Klinkenbergs	Ohlrich	Duggan	Messenger	Kelley
Communion & Set-up	Kelley	James	*****	Gomez	Duggan
Counters 1	David Burtnick	Austin	Warren	Greg Swirdovich	Becky Nicodemus
Counters 2	Becky	Natalie	Sissy Plank	Kevin Swanson	David Burtnick
Nursery Volunteer					
Refreshments	Eduardo	Swirdovich	Klinkenberg	Delvin Daniels	Kelley
Sunday School Assist MS	Kevin	Karen	Lisa	Dea	Kevin
Sunday School Assist ELEM	Don James	Don James	Don James	Don James	Don James

BUSINESS CORNER

Financial Information - November 2025

Year-to-Date	Actual	Budget
Revenue	\$ 112,317.75	\$ 96,798.17
Expenses	\$ 105,114.10	\$ 114,704.77
Surplus or (Deficit)	\$ 7,203.65	\$ (17,906.61)
Surplus or (Deficit) Per Week	\$ 138.53	\$ (344.36)

Ad Board Minutes: December 18, 2025

Council of Ministries Minutes: November 12, 2025

"Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

HEADS UP!

Early in the new year the Communications Team will be updating the CUMC Directory so you will have a current resource for contacting church friends. Please watch for announcements regarding how you can make changes and additions for the 2026 Directory.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Thanks to all who participated in pledging for the '26 Stewardship Campaign! And special thanks to "Olaf," "Olene," Cristin Messenger and Becky Nicodemus who served on the '26 Stewardship Campaign. The CUMC budget for 2026 is \$130,694. And that will be supported by 33 new pledges totaling \$97,082. If you did not have the opportunity to pledge for 2026, contact Financial Secretary Fred Mueller who will welcome your participation. And if you still have '25 commitments that are outstanding, they are needed and will be more than welcomed by Fred!

Community Ministries Service Project

Come out on Sunday January 18th from 6-8:30 to the Horowitz Center Smith Theater (10901 Patuxent Parkway) to have an evening of celebration of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. The evening will start with a program about the legacy of MLK and then there will be service projects to participate in. You can see the flyer on the side counter for more information or contact Katie Weston.

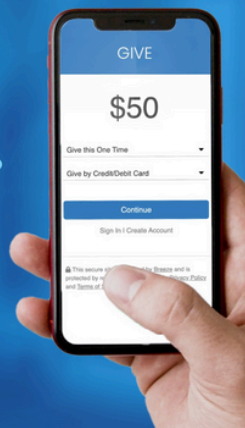


Thank you to the contributors for the Memorial Plaque name plate order for Joanne Piersall: Deadra Atkins, Ching-Ju Cheng, Sara Cochran, Lillian Lehnert, Mary Jo Messenger, Judy Pittman, Jeanette Rosenberger, Natalie Swirdovich, Trudi Wynne.

**GIVE.
ANYWHERE.
FROM ANY
DEVICE.**



cumcobic.org



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Christ United Methodist Church
Love. Justice. Community.

Black Lives Matter





CALENDAR

Click on the calendar to go to the interactive calendar on the website.

< > Jan 2026 ▾							📅	🗓️
SUN 28	MON 29	TUE 30	WED 31	THU Jan 1	FRI 2	SAT 3		
• 10am W			New Year • 8:15pm	New Year	• 6:30pm			
4 • 10am W	5	6	7 • 8:15pm	8 • 12pm Lu • 7pm Sta	9	10		
11 Second S 2 more	12	13	14 • 7pm Co • 8:15pm	15 • 7pm Ad	16	17		
18 • 10am W • 1:30pm	19 Martin Lu	20	21 • 8:15pm	22	23	24		
25 • 10am W • 1:30pm	26 • 6:30pm	27	28 • 8:15pm	29	30	31		
Christ United Methodist Church, Columbia, MD GMT-05							+	

At Christ United Methodist Church, all are invited to experience God's love, build beloved community, and pursue justice for absolutely everyone. We welcome, celebrate, and affirm the sacred worth of people of every race, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, nationality, physical and mental ability, level of education, family structure, and every economic, immigration, marital, and social status. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed; as such, we have committed to being an Anti-Racist church. At CUMC, believers, seekers, and doubters join together to grow in our love for one another, creation, and the Divine through worship, small groups, advocacy work, and mutual support as we strive to be the church God calls us to be!



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