

 **MUNSEY**

MARCH 2025

MESSENGER

A monthly publication for family and friends of Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church



Ministry Spotlight

Connie Willeford tells us what
Munsey means to her in our
March Ministry
Spotlight found on page 6.

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR KIP



In November of 1982 the premier of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, died. Then Vice President, George H. W. Bush attended the funeral as a representative of the United States along with many other world leaders and dignitaries. Vice President Bush would later share that he was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow.

She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest!

Let that sink in for just a moment. The Soviet Union had long since declared it had no need of Christianity or religion of any kind, and yet there in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus

might show grace to her husband in death.

Women and men of every age have stood at the foot of the cross and have been grasped by its power and image. What really happened there? Why has the cross become such a dramatic symbol of our faith, hope, love, and forgiveness? One New Testament scholar I read recently intimated that there are many different ways of understanding the meaning of the cross of Christ in the pages of scripture, and each of them speaks to various needs we have depending on what we may be going through at any given time.

The cross is the powerful reminder of God's sacrificial and redemptive love for us. And the cross is the constant signal to us of how God wants us to live and love today...as sacrificial servants. We are not called to be prima donnas... We are called to be disciples and take up the mission of Christ... and to emulate the servant spirit of our Lord.

The month of March focuses our attention on the cross of Christ with Ash Wednesday and the holy season of Lent. Pastor Beth and I will be sharing a special sermon series for Lent entitled "**The Cross that Spoke,**" where we will consider the seven statements that Jesus makes during his crucifixion. Each statement illustrates a different and unique perspective on who Jesus really is.

We will also ponder the various images and motifs for interpreting the cosmic meaning of the death of Christ as we draw closer to the beauty of Eastertide. I look forward to sharing this Lenten season with you!

See you soon!
Pastor Kip

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING DATES

Church Council meetings are open to any Munsey member, and each is at 6:00pm in the Christian Life Center Meeting Room on the following dates this year: **March 27, May 15, July 17, September 18, December 4.** To learn more about our teams and committees, you can find a list of them in the brochure racks and at www.munsey.org.

CAMP BAYS MOUNTAIN

Camp Bays Mountain summer camp registration is open! We hope to have several campers from Munsey attend again this summer and are offering partial scholarships to Munsey children or youth who register for summer camp at Bays Mountain. If you're interested in registering for camp with a Munsey scholarship, please contact Amanda Onks (amanda@munsey.org).

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is a special time in the life of our church, signifying the beginning of Lent. This year, the service will take place on **March 5** at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary with Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes. We hope you'll join us for this meaningful service. We'll also offer ashes in our community again this year, and some of our staff will be set up at a table in Dos Gatos Coffee Bar from 11:00am-2:00pm on Ash Wednesday to offer ashes to any who would like them. We look forward to sharing this season of Lent together.

ASH WEDNESDAY PANCAKE DINNER

Join us for dinner before Ash Wednesday worship on **March 5 at 5:30pm** in the Christian Life Center Gym! The menu includes pancakes (gluten-free upon request) and toppings, sausage, fruit, decaf coffee, milk, orange juice, and water. Please RSVP at www.munsey.org/rsvp, email wexlernj@yahoo.com, or call the church office (ext. 201) by March 2.

WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP

Our Women's Study Group meets on Monday mornings from 9:30-11:00am in the Parlor, and we're studying *None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different from Us (and Why That's a Good Thing)* by Jen Wilkin. We won't meet on March 17 during spring break. All women are welcome, and please let Amanda Onks (amanda@munsey.org) know if you have questions or would like to join us!

WAYNE ANDERSON PRAYER GROUP

The Wayne Anderson Men's Prayer Group meets **Thursday mornings at 6:30am** in the Christian Life Center Meeting Room. We invite all men of all churches to join us for study, prayer, and fellowship. For more information, please email Bill Darden (billdarden7@aol.com).

WEDNESDAY NIGHT PROGRAMS

We have programs for all ages from 6:00-7:15pm each Wednesday! If you would like to bring your dinner with you before programs begin, tables are available around the gym floor from 5:30-6:00pm. We won't have regular programs on March 5 due to Ash Wednesday worship at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary or on March 19 due to spring break. We have these studies for adults each week:

- Women's Community Group led by Gwen Sitsch and Amanda Onks: a group of women in various stages of life who are looking deeply into the life of Jesus and encouraging one another to recognize the presence and movement of God in the day-to-dayness of life (Gathering Place)
- Men's Community Group: a group of like-minded Christian men from diverse backgrounds wanting to strengthen their faith through weekly discussions and fellowship (Parlor)
- Join Pastor Beth on Wednesday nights from 6:00-7:15pm in the Christian Life Center Meeting Room, beginning on **March 26**. *Radicle Methodism: Back to our Roots* is a four-part history course to examine the beginnings of Methodism, the people and the movements that crossed oceans and centuries, with a fifth session focused specifically on Munsey's history. Join us to explore the very beginnings of Methodism that, like the radicle - the first part of the seed that sprouts to become the root system and the future plant - were vital to the denomination as we became rooted and grounded.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather, we follow Johnson City Schools' schedule for church programs. If schools dismiss early or close on a weekday, we won't have evening activities at Munsey that day. The church office will be open on weekdays, as staff are able to safely travel to the church. Sunday morning schedules will be adapted and shared via social media and email as needed for weekend snow.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT GROUP

Are you caring for someone with Dementia? If so, we would like to care for you! This group is a wonderful opportunity to hear from others who share the same struggles and have the same questions. Our next meeting is **March 10, at 2:30pm** in the Parlor. For more information, please contact Emily Ham at parishnurse@munsey.org.

LADIES' LUNCH

All ladies are welcome to join us on **Monday, March 10, at 12:00pm** at Ole's Guacamoles, and we look forward to lunch and fellowship together. Please let Amanda Onks know (amanda@munsey.org) if you plan to be there so we can save you a seat.

A LOOK AT YOUR WEEKLY GIFTS AND ATTENDANCE

	2/2/25	2/9/25	2/16/25	2/23/25
Weekly Budget Offering	\$28,376	\$30,160	\$12,414	\$18,520
Weekly Budget Requirement:	\$29,970			
Missions Offering	\$3,270	\$1,768	\$697	\$1,027
Worship Attendance	250	288	248	258

MESSENGER DEADLINE

The deadline for March Messenger submissions is **MARCH 24, 2025**.

MISSIONS UPDATES

FLOOD RECOVERY TASK FORCE UPDATE

At the writing of this message, Munsey is getting ready to host a group of 14 adults who are volunteering through Appalachia Service Project to help rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Helene flooding. This group – coming from Florida and Washington, DC – is the first we are hosting, and there are developing plans to host more this spring and summer. The Task Force thanks the Virgil Anderson Sunday School class for providing a special catered meal and to the many individuals who have donated food and other meals.

The Rebuild Embreeville Team has received around \$300,000 and has added a total of three more houses to their building plans. Four houses are under construction, a fifth is under contract, and the sixth is waiting for the contract to be signed. Great things are happening in our neighboring community thanks to your kindness and generosity. Our 5th Sunday offering on March 30 will go to this effort.

To learn more about progress in our community, please plan to attend the fifth Sunday special Sunday School session where representatives from ASP and other groups involved in the recovery efforts will speak. The session will be held in the Gathering Place on **March 30 at 9:45am**.



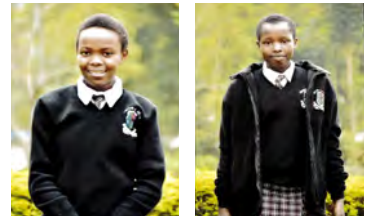
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CZECHIA

The Czech Mission Team is delighted to announce that Katya Bruckernova will be coming to Johnson City for a two-month job-shadowing internship in physical therapy in late July. Katya attended the softball camp that our group helps organize each summer in her hometown, Litoměřice, and has gone on to become one of our coaches now that she has aged out of the camp. Katya is completing a degree in Physical Therapy at the University Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem in Czechia (formerly the Czech Republic). The job-shadowing she will do in Johnson City is part of the required practicum hours for her program. Katya has a black belt in karate and recently came in 5th place for her age group in the Karate World Championships in Japan. She is really looking forward to being here with us for two months. If you would like Katya to speak to your Sunday School class in August or September, or if you have any questions about her time with us,

contact Jason Bemby (jabembry@milligan.edu).

FREEDOM GLOBAL UPDATE

Stellah Kwamboka and Margaret Emelda, two of the Form 4 students that Munsey sponsors with scholarships at Uhuru, graduated with scores high enough on the KCSE exams to qualify for direct entry into a university. These young women have achieved a high school education, a great accomplishment for them. And in the words of Donna Akubariki, sponsorship and prayer partner coordinator at Freedom Global, "Now we send them out into God's hands for further education. Only God knows how these planted seeds will grow and flourish. Mungu Akubariki (God Bless You!)."



FAMILY PROMISE

Munsey continues to support the Family Promise program that helps temporarily homeless families in the greater Johnson City area. **March 10-16** is the first Munsey "host week" of 2025. The staff at Family Promise always appreciates food donations (non-perishable snacks), \$25 or \$50 gift cards for gas or food, and this month donations of crock pots and griddles would be especially appreciated. The Family Promise Thrift Store also accepts donations of clothes, kitchen items, books, and furniture. You can deliver donations directly to Family Promise at 215 W. Watauga Avenue or you can leave them at the Connection Point. If you have any questions, please contact Scott Beck at r30scott@etsu.edu.

SHEPHERD'S BREAKFAST COMPANIONS (Serving Breakfast 7:45am - 9:15am on Saturdays)

March 1: Allie Greer (Seasons Sunday School) & Eliza Smith (Kappa Delta)
March 8: Respite Day Volunteers - ETSU Health, Women's Hiker Group
March 15: ETSU Health Bridge
March 22: East Unaka Christian Church
March 29: ETSU Health Bridge

To serve or learn more about our Saturday morning ministry for our downtown neighbors, contact Anthony Jackson at anthony.jackson@munsey.org or Sharon Pickering (423-491-4616 at sharonpickering520@gmail.com) or go to www.munsey.org/meltingpot to sign up.



To sign up for Open Door worship or Shepherd's Breakfast, go to munsey.org/meltingpot or scan QR code.

NORTH SIDE ELEMENTARY - A GREAT PLACE TO BE

David Warlick once said, "We need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher's hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time, and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world." Recognizing the importance of technology, North Side has made it a priority to provide the equipment necessary to prepare the students for their life experiences.

Matthew Church, the Technology Assistant, is an invaluable part of North Side's staff. He maintains and stores all the equipment and aids students with technology assistance. All of the Pre-K and Kindergarten students work with tablets, and the students from 1st through 5th grade all use Chromebook laptops. Storage cabinets for these devices were on Principal Moore's wish list. Thanks to designated funds and the Open Door Sunday School class, we were able to purchase two mobile cabinets for them. (See photo with Principal Moore, left, and Mr. Church.)



In addition, the Brown Fellowship class provided 160 packs of crackers and 72 bags of Goldfish for the special education class. We also collected 47 boxes of Kleenex and 44 jars of disinfecting wipes to help the classroom teachers through this flu season.

In March, we will be collecting TCAP snacks (crackers and drinks).

Principal Moore constantly mentions how grateful they are for all that Munsey does for the school. He realizes we help make North Side a great place to be! ~Susanna Chinouth

ASP SUMMER MISSION TRIP

We're organizing an intergenerational summer mission trip with Appalachia Service Project and hope you'll join us! We'll spend the week of **June 22-28** serving with Appalachia Service Project, and all students who are 7th grade or older and adults are invited to join us. We're grateful to have such a meaningful relationship with ASP through Munsey and to partner with them throughout the year to make a difference in our community. We've asked to be placed at center in our local region so we can help with much-needed flood recovery.

NEW ADDITION TO MUNSEY CHURCH



For many years, two matching stained glass windows from the former "circular" Munsey Church sanctuary have been in storage in the Archive room. They are the last remaining windows from that historic building that had not been repurposed in our current church building. Recently, a moment of inspiration occurred that presented an opportunity to find a new home for the beautiful stained glass windows and improve an area of the church that needed some help.

The double doors in the hallway just outside the Gathering Place entrance have been in need of repair for some time. They overlooked the newly renovated Columbarium and Memory Garden courtyard area. The location seemed an ideal place to create a unique visual feature that could enhance both the Columbarium area and the inner hallway.

Utilizing a combination of private donations and designated Columbarium account funds, the project was completed with the help of local stained glass expert Bill Donoho from *Artistry in Glass* in Limestone, TN and the elegant installation work of our own "Munsey maintenance expert," Frank Malinovsky.

The new stained glass feature can be viewed from the hallway outside the Gathering Place and from the Columbarium and Memory Garden courtyard between the

Sanctuary entrance alcove and the Education building. Please take the time to discover this beautiful new addition to our Munsey Church building! ~Rick Chinouth, Columbarium Committee Chair

MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT FROM CONNIE WILLEFORD

In 2000, my husband and I retired from the State University of New York at Fredonia and having lived for 25 years with an average of 200-300 feet of snow per year, we headed South and landed in Jonesborough. With the moving van gone, boxes unpacked, we started looking for a church home. Having been a church organist for 45 years, music was an important part of our decision. After visiting several churches, we saw an ad in the local paper for a Christmas Eve service with choir, brass choir, organ and piano plus other special music. We sat shoulder-to-shoulder in a packed sanctuary at Munsey. I could say the rest is history, but Munsey has been a very important part of my life since.

We joined the church in April 2001 and became members of the Philosophers Class. I was accompanist for a junior choir, and I volunteered in the church office among other church activities. Then Mike became very sick, and we had to put things on hold. He died in 2011, and we had a beautiful Celebration of Life service in the Christian Life Center with the Praise Band. Not long after he died, a dear friend of mine, Betty Miller, took me by the ear (literally) and said "You are going with me to the Solon Gentry class." I eventually became one of the rotating teachers in that class until it disbanded. After much thought and prayer and with God's guidance and suggestion from Trish Patterson, I became a member of the Virgil Anderson Class where I have been truly blessed. When I was in the hospital and rehab and at home with health care, I have received cards every week, food and lunch with stay-and-eat-with-me visits. Truly blessed.

Because of lots off health issues, I have once again had to put most of my activities on hold. I was working in the Connection Point, was an usher in the 8:45 service, and a loyal participant in Pastor Kip's Symposiums. Now I watch on Thursday morning. Not the same. I can truly say: Munsey is my church home, my anchor, and my avenue to friends and fellowship. Thank you, God! Thank you, Munsey! And thank you, Munsey friends! Truly Blessed!!!

WELCOME TO MINDY MOORE

Our Staff-Parish Relations Committee is pleased to have Mindy Moore join our Munsey Staff in February as Interim Youth Coordinator. As our Youth Ministry search team seeks to find the right candidate for our permanent Director of Youth Ministries, Mindy will help coordinate the ongoing activities and programs for our 7th-12th graders, along with HWY 56. Mindy is a familiar face and member of our congregation. She and her husband, Jeff, and daughter, Hannah, have been actively part of our Munsey family for a while now. If you do not already know her, please introduce yourself and welcome her to our staff! Here's a note from Mindy to our congregation:

I'm Mindy Moore, and I have been attending Munsey since October of 2023 when my family and I moved to Johnson City from Lewisburg, PA. By trade I am hairdresser, but in real life I am a stay at home mom. My husband, Jeffrey, is a Chaplain for the Federal Prisons and in the Navy Reserves. Our daughter, Hannah, is 10 and loves to play tennis. In 2018, I started a cooperative multi-church youth group in Lewisburg called United Youth Group. I brought together four churches, two Methodist, a Baptist and a Lutheran church. It was one of the most rewarding things I have done. I ran United Youth Group until we moved here in 2023. We are excited to say that Johnson City is our forever home.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES - Charity Damrau, Director of Children's Ministries (charity.damrau@munsey.org)



So how did you end up in Children's Ministry? I've heard that question so many times during my almost 20 years as a Kids' Director. After all, ministry was not the path I chose in college; it was not even encouraged for many young women graduating high school in the 90's. Instead I opted for engineering. (You know, a much more female-friendly profession – haha.) But I had volunteered in church nursery since middle school and continued up until I had my own kids, and when a part-time position opened up at a nearby church, I applied without realizing where God was steering my path.

Children's ministry as a career came with a steep learning curve. After all, I was raised under two unfortunate schools of thought within the church. First, that most children's services within the church are simply babysitting so that the adults can worship. And second, that if parents would only bring their children to church, that they had done all they needed to do to ensure their child would grow into an adult who loved Jesus and stayed faithful to the church.

We've seen the results of this mistaken messaging. Over two-thirds of children raised in the church abandon it as adults. Knowing the statistics (I'm an engineer. I love statistics.), I have poured my time and energy into discovering what anchors kids to church and to Jesus. The data is pretty convicting: the majority of adults who follow Jesus first learned to love Him as children, usually before the age of 12. And how are they "trained up in the way they should go?" The two most important influences in a child's spiritual life are his family and his church.

That is why I truly feel that children's and youth ministry are the most important ministries within the church. Childhood is such a short and precious window of time. It is an honor to be able partner with your family each week so that what we do at church aligns with your teaching at home. I am so excited to work with you as you raise your children to love God and love others!
~Charity

WANT TO HELP WITH EASTER HAPPENINGS? WE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO SERVE

- **Candy Donations!** Donations of nut-free, individually wrapped candy and small treats for egg stuffing may be left at the Connection Point at any time.
- **Egg Stuffing Party!** We plan to serve over 300 kids in our community at our Munsey Community Egg Hunt, and that means thousands of eggs need to be stuffed! Please bring a large bag (or two!) of nut-free, individually wrapped candy to the CLC Gym on **Sunday, April 6, at 2:00pm**. We will provide lots of plastic eggs for you and your friends and family to stuff and pack for the big day. And...
- **Egg Hunt Set-Up and/or Clean-Up!** Help us serve our community kids by showing up on **April 12** at Founders Park early to set up or staying after the event to clean up. Please let Charity know that you are interested by emailing (charity.damrau@munsey.org). High schoolers and college students needing community service hours are encouraged to join us for credit.

YOUTH MINISTRIES - Mindy Moore, Interim Youth Coordinator (mindy.moore@munsey.org)



YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Our March Youth Fellowship is on **March 9** from 5:00-6:30pm and all 7th-12th graders are welcome! We'll be having a movie night on the Youth Floor. Please let Mindy Moore (mindy.moore@munsey.org) know by March 6 if your youth plans to attend.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PICK-UP

Middle School Pick-Up for 7th & 8th graders is on Wednesday, **March 26**. We'll pick up from Liberty Bell and Indian Trail, stop Wendy's for a snack and head to Willow Springs. Please let Mindy Moore (mindy.moore@munsey.org) know by March 19th if you plan to join in in the fun.

CONFIRMATION PARENT AND STUDENT LUNCH

Confirmation Lunch is **March 30** from 12:00-1:30pm in the Gathering Place. Please let Mindy Moore (mindy.moore@munsey.org) know by March 24 how many in your family will attend.

For more information about our Children and Youth Ministries, please see our Family Ministries Newsletter.

JOB POSTING

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

We are seeking a full-time Director of Youth Ministries to serve in ministry to students in grades 7-12, also assisting with grades 5-6, alongside the Director of Children's Ministries. More information is available at www.munsey.org/employment.

WINTER SYMPOSIUM

The final session for the Winter Symposium was postponed due to inclement weather and other mitigating circumstances. The Cross and the Crescent has been rescheduled for **Wednesday, March 12, at 6:00pm** in the Christian Life Center Gym.

FIFTH SUNDAY OFFERING

At Munsey, months with a fifth Sunday have historically been opportunities for special giving, over and above pledged offerings. The **March 30** Fifth Sunday Offering will go toward support for flood victims in the local Embreeville community. All loose cash will be part of this offering, as well as any checks or giving designated as "Fifth Sunday Offering."

NEW MINISTRY STARTING!

Have you ever had someone bring a meal to you during a stressful or difficult time? If so, you know how helpful that is! Munsey is starting a frozen meal ministry, and we need some help. Are you able to make an easy casserole recipe at home and bring it to the church at your convenience? If so, we will have a couple of recipes to choose from, most of which can be easily doubled so you can make dinner for yourself while helping someone else in need. Please let Emily Ham know if you would be willing to help at: Emily Ham at parishnurse@munsey.org.

KIDMIN FAMILY VALENTINE'S



WORSHIP AT MUNSEY- MARCH SERMON SCHEDULE

On Wednesday, March 5, Rev Dr. Kip Laxson will preach our Ash Wednesday service, "Father Forgive," at 6:30pm.

MARCH 2
"Where do we go from here"

11:00am Sanctuary
Rev. Dr. Kip Laxson
preaching

11:00am Journey
Rev. Beth Sullivan
preaching

9:00am Open Door
Anthony Jackson
preaching

MARCH 9
"In Paradise"

11:00am Sanctuary
Rev. Dr. Kip Laxson
preaching

11:00am Journey
Rev. Beth Sullivan
preaching

9:00am Open Door
Pastor Tom Campbell
preaching

MARCH 16
"Here is Your Mother"

11:00am Sanctuary
Rev. Dr. Kip Laxson
preaching

11:00am Journey
Rev. Beth Sullivan
preaching

9:00am Open Door
Anthony Jackson
preaching

MARCH 23
"Why"

11:00am Sanctuary
Rev. Dr. Kip Laxson
preaching

11:00am Journey
Rev. Beth Sullivan
preaching

9:00am Open Door
Anthony Jackson
preaching

MARCH 30
"I Am Thirsty"

11:00am Sanctuary
Rev. Dr. Kip Laxson
preaching

11:00am Journey
Rev. Beth Sullivan
preaching

9:00am Open Door
Anthony Jackson
preaching

WORSHIP SERVICES AT MUNSEY

- ♦ The 11:00am Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary features traditional music with the Chancel Choir.
- ♦ The 11:00am Journey Worship in the Christian Life Center Gym features contemporary music with the Praise Band.
- ♦ The 9:00am Open Door Worship is held in the Melting Pot and is our most informal service. Coffee and pastries will be available from 8:30-9:00am.

Holy Communion is traditionally offered the first Sunday of the month in all worship services.

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Web: www.munsey.org | Email: info@munsey.org | Phone: 423-461-8070
Parish Nurse: parishnurse@munsey.org