

 **MUNSEY**

DECEMBER 2025

MESSENGER

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



**Welcome back to Munsey, John & Judith Anderson!
Read their story about coming home on page 6.**

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR CHRIS



Are you ready for Advent? Advent is a season of preparation where the church not only prepares to commemorate and celebrate the birth of Christ and what that means for the world, but it also anticipates the promised Second Coming of Christ.

My first memories of Advent date back to my childhood when families in my home church would begin worship by lighting the Advent wreath. Week by week, a new candle would be lit, until the four candles representing the four weeks of Advent were kindled. On Christmas Eve, the pastor would light the middle candle, the "Christ Candle." As a child, I remember thinking, "Finally!" You see, I always considered Advent as some sort of "countdown" to Christmas. I used to think that the more candles lit, the closer to opening presents on Christmas!



As I've grown older, I've realized that Advent is not so much a countdown as it is a "count up." When we countdown to something, we often miss the value in waiting or longing. To use the example of one commentator on how he views his exercise routine: "When I count up, I am motivating myself on how much I've achieved; when I'm counting down, I'm motivating myself on when the suffering will end."

Advent is a season of hopeful waiting and anticipation. We should not rush to get through the season. Instead, we should all find some time to appreciate what Advent means for the church and for our souls. By "counting up," we are preparing our hearts to look back and look forward all at the same time. As we prepare our hearts together, I hope and pray you and your family have a wonderful Advent and Christmas! -Pastor Chris



GIFT OF LAST SUPPER DEPICTION MADE IN HONOR OF MUNSEY PASTORS AND STAFF

An anonymous gift was recently made "honoring the Munsey pastors and staff for their work acknowledging the reality that we are God's children." The gift is a framed print entitled *Their Own* by Hyatt Moore. The painting depicts The Last Supper with Twelve Tribes and was featured on our 11:00am Sanctuary bulletin on World Communion Sunday. The picture can be viewed on the wall outside the Senior Pastor and Executive Director of Programs and Ministries offices near the Connection Point. The question posed on the painting is: "What language would He use to speak to each of these?"

ADVENT IN FOUR WORDS: HOPE. PEACE. JOY. AND LOVE

Our church-wide Advent theme for this year is *Advent in Four Words: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*, based on a new book written by four United Methodist bishops, two of whom are especially known and loved at Munsey: Kenneth L. Carder and Debra Wallace-Padgett. Our hope is that classes and small groups will consider journeying through the book together, and it provides daily devotionals for individuals to use as well.

Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett will be joining us on **Sunday, December 7**, to share during our Sunday School time at 10:00am in the Christian Life Center Gym. She will then preach at 11:00, and we'll combine our 11:00 services in the Sanctuary, where we'll look forward to having our children's choirs, Praise Team, Chancel Choir, and handbells lead our music. Our 9:00 services in the Sanctuary and Melting Pot will be on their regular schedule. We're so grateful to have our bishop join us in the midst of Advent!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT PROGRAMS

We have age-level programs for children and youth and adult studies from 6:00-7:00pm each Wednesday through December 10! 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 have these studies available for adults, and information on children and youth can be found in our Family Ministries Newsletter:

- Pastor's Bible Study led by Rev. Chris Brown: a discussion-based study of the lectionary text for the following Sunday (Christian Life Center Meeting Room); *a daytime option is available at 1:00pm in the Conference Room for those who prefer not to drive after dark.*
- 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)

LADIES' LUNCH

All ladies are welcome to join us on **Monday, December 15, 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.

CARING FOR OUR CONGREGATION

We are always willing and grateful to reach out in care to our congregation members. If you or one of your Munsey friends is in the hospital, having surgery, dealing with illness, or could use extra care, please let our Parish Nurse, Emily Ham, know by contacting her at (parishnurse@munsey.org or 423-282-8970). Thanks for helping us stay informed to care for each other!

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 **December 8 at 2:30pm** in the Parlor. For more information, please contact Emily Ham at parishnurse@munsey.org.

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).

WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP

Our Women's Study Group meets on Monday mornings from 9:30-11:00am in the Gathering Place through December 15. All women are welcome, and please let Amanda Onks (amanda@munsey.org) know if you have questions or would like to join us.

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

We have a wonderful Christmas tradition, where we take an offering to benefit a ministry outside the walls of our church. This year's offering will help support the ETSU Wesley Foundation. We're grateful to share in ministry with them as they increase connection, community, and commitment in the lives of young people on ETSU's campus. You can use a special Christmas Eve offering envelope, write a check and put "Christmas Eve offering" in the memo line, or give online at www.munsey.org/give. Thank you for your generosity!

PHISHING SCAMS

Occasionally we hear of members receiving texts, emails, or other messages supposedly from Pastor Chris requesting 'urgent' assistance or help with an important task. This may be accompanied by a sad story with an appeal for money in some form – gift cards, money orders, etc. Please do not fall for these traps! These are scams, people only after money and misrepresenting Chris in the process. Chris will **never** email or text you asking for gift cards, money, or any financial transaction. If you receive such a request, do not reply, click any links, or purchase or send gift cards. You may contact Pastor Chris (chris.brown@munsey.org) directly or Ed Temple (edt@munsey.org) if you ever have concerns about whether an email or text is genuine. Thank you for staying alert!

NEW MEMBER INTEREST

We're always glad to include more in our Munsey family! If you're interested in joining our congregation, please let Pastor Chris know (chris.brown@munsey.org). He'll be happy to answer any questions you may have and to help you join Munsey Church.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The church office will be closed for the holidays December 25-January 2. Year-end gifts should be dropped off at the church by December 24 or post-marked by December 31 to be included in this year's giving. You may also give at www.munsey.org/give through December 31. If you would like offering envelopes for 2026, they will be available in the Connection Point for pickup. On Sunday, December 28, we won't have Sunday School and will have one combined service at 11:00am in the Christian Life Center. Open Door worship will meet as usual at 9:00am in the Melting Pot.

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 online as needed for weekend snow.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS - FOOD. FELLOWSHIP. & SONGFEST

Mark your calendar for **Sunday, December 21, at 4:00pm** as we come "Home for the Holidays" and share food, fellowship, and songs together in the Gathering Place! Bring a festive appetizer or dessert to share, along with your friends and family who may be home from out of town and can use a little cheer this holiday season. All ages are welcome, and no vocal skills are required to join the holiday fun!

MISSIONS

REBUILD EMBREEVILLE NEXT PHASE

The Munsey *Rebuild Embreeville Next Phase* committee held a housewarming shower in November for the six families we have been supporting after the devastation of Hurricane Helene in 2024.



Each family was asked to provide a wish list of things that would help them turn their new house into their family home, and with the generosity of Munsey members, their wishes were granted. From bed sheets and bath towels to dishes and vacuum cleaners, these families left the shower with resources to help them move forward in their recovery journey.

Special thanks go to Nora Jane Wexler and the Church Life Team (Carol Cagle, Joanne Gilmer, Liz Hughes, Claudine Hunt, Sara Hayman, Susan Stanley, and Laura Wheeler) for the beautiful decorations and delicious refreshments. We also thank the "shepherds" (Rubye Beck, Carlene Eastridge Christian, Jamie Johnson, Cheryl Maner, Trish Patterson, and Sharon Pickering) who connected with each family to be their resource for questions and other assistance.

Continued prayers are requested for these families: Betty Francis, David Harris and Carolyn Gardner, Rhonda Mango, Megan Milhorn, Amy and Chris Price, Emma Smith, Jamie and

Michelle Smith, and Patsy White.

FAMILY PROMISE

Family Promise of Greater Johnson City assists homeless families in our area. This faith-based organization temporarily houses families in local hotels while assisting parents with job searches, financial education, counseling, and housing applications. In December, the staff of FP would appreciate donations of cleaning supplies, household and kitchen items as well as gas and/or food gift cards for their current unhoused families. Family Promise also has a thrift store at 215 West Walnut and gladly accepts donations Monday through Friday. Have questions? Please contact Scott Beck at 423-557-4370 or r30scott@etsu.edu.

SHEPHERD'S BREAKFAST COMPANIONS

(serving breakfast from 7:45am - 9:15am on Saturdays)

DECEMBER 6	ESTU Health, sign-up slots still available
DECEMBER 13	Ballad, sign-up slots still available
DECEMBER 20	Ballad, sign-up slots still available
DECEMBER 27	Sign-up slots still available

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 scan the QR code or visit www.munsey.org/meltingpot to sign up.



Scan here to sign up for Open Door worship or Shepherd's Breakfast!

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM SPRC

Dear Munsey church family,

This December, we look forward to celebrating the exemplary leadership of Dave Culberson as he steps aside from his role as Interim Missions Director.

Dave has served as chair of our Send Team for quite a number of years now - I think almost 10 years! In that time, he has helped to coordinate or lead countless missions efforts where Munsey has served our local community, our region, and our neighbors around the country and around the world. This has generally been a volunteer role where he has worked alongside a staff Missions Director, most recently John Redmond.

When John received the call to serve in Willow, AK, two people really stepped up: Anthony Jackson stepped in to lead our Melting Pot efforts, and Dave Culberson extended his Send Team role to serve as staff Interim Missions Director. His goal was to ensure that the missions of Munsey UMC continued without interruption and that we could extend them where possible.

SPRC has honestly been daunted at the scope of trying to “replace” Dave with a permanent hire. He has been everywhere and done everything. In early 2025, Dave worked with Staff-Parish and Nominations committees to help split the scope of this work up into more manageable pieces, both in staff and volunteer capacities. Anthony’s role is now permanent as our Director of Local Missions, where he continues to do truly excellent work. Sharon Pickering is set to take over coordinating the Send Team in 2026. Rev. Chris Brown will lead our international missions efforts, especially via the Holston Conference. Finally, Dave will take a step back, but continue to lead our regional efforts with Bishop, VA and Helene recovery. He will do this as a volunteer, and SPRC will sunset the Interim Missions Director staff position.

I know you will join me in thanking Dave for his key leadership. Munsey leaned so heavily on him in transition. He carried so much with a constant smile. His example of leadership and service is one we can all do our best to emulate. Mark your calendars for a **December 14** reception in the Gathering Place after church where we can all shake his hand and thank him!
Sincerely, James D. Culp, Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair



NORTH SIDE PARTNERSHIP DECEMBER 2025

In December, we're asking for new toys or games (ages Pre-K through 5th grade) for North Side students. Place these in the green bins around the corner from the Connection Point.



MUNSEY SPOTLIGHT - JOHN AND JUDITH ANDERSON

Walk with Judith and me to the Munsey parking lot. Five years ago, we stood there with tears in our eyes as we waved goodbye to our Munsey family.

YES, WE LEFT MUNSEY. WHOA, BIG MISTAKE, BUT WHAT DO WE DO?

First, we recall what the Bible says in Proverbs 28:13, "A person who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if that person confesses and forsakes those mistakes, another chance is given."

We are now happily back at Munsey. The many things we missed motivated us to return. This includes the family spirit of Munsey. There is always someone available to lend a helping hand. The Music program at Munsey features professional-level talent. Listening to the Word expressed in meaningful sermons by our pastors.

WE ARE BACK AND THRILLED TO BE BACK. ~ John and Judith Anderson

A NEW MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY!

There are currently many families in our church who are caring for a loved one in the home. Sometimes this is a short-term issue after surgery, or a long-term issue with dementia. These families need support and help. Would you be willing to sit with someone at their home while their caregiver runs to the grocery store or another errand? You do not need any medical training and will not be asked to do anything other than visit and be present. This would be an opportunity where you could volunteer as much or as little as your schedule allowed. If you think you might be willing to help, please reach out to Emily Ham, RN Parishnurse@munsey.org.

FESTIVE CHRISTMAS SWEATER DAY

December 14 is Festive Christmas Sweater Day, an annual tradition at Munsey! Don your best Christmas wear to celebrate the season at church that morning, and we would love for you to take a picture and share it with us or tag Munsey Church on social media.



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



JINGLE JAM: THE ULTIMATE FAMILY CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE!

It's time to mark your calendar for a new holiday tradition! Forget everything you thought you knew about Christmas pageants and prepare for *Jingle Jam*, the most exciting and interactive way to celebrate the season.

We've wrapped up the Christmas story in a high-energy package of side-splitting comedy, festive music, hilarious games, and fun audience participation. It's an unforgettable event designed for all families—from our church and the wider community—offering a joyful way for everyone, from the youngest child to the oldest adult, to connect with the true spirit of Christmas. Make a brand-new, unforgettable holiday memory with us!

SO JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, AT 5:30PM IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CENTER GYM!

Invite your friends, family, and neighbors! The fun doesn't stop after the main event; stick around for our Christmas after-party, complete with even more games, crafts, cookies & cocoa, and photo opportunities worthy of your family Christmas card! We can't wait to celebrate with you!

YOUTH MINISTRIES - Mindy Moore, Director of Youth Ministries (mindy.moore@munsey.org)



YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Our Youth Fellowship is on **December 14**. We will meet on the youth floor after the 11:00am services to have Barberitos for lunch, decorate cookies, and have a white elephant gift exchange. Please bring a wrapped gift. **The gift should be no more than \$25. If your youth would like to come, please let Mindy Moore (mindy.moore@munsey.org) know by December 10.** Friends are always welcome!

MIDDLE SCHOOL PICK-UP

Middle School Pick-Up for 6th-8th graders is on **Wednesday, December 3**. We are excited to share that 1st UMC will be joining us for Middle School Pick-Up. **A red van from 1st UMC will be picking up University School students.** Pastor Gary Ihfe from 1st UMC will be driving the van. We'll also pick up from Liberty Bell and Indian Trail Middle Schools. **If your youth needs to be picked up from University School please email penleye@etsu.edu, saying that your student will be picked up by Pastor Gary Ihfe from 1st UMC on Wednesday, December 3.** We will be going ice skating at the Bristol Motor Speedway Ice Rink. **Youth will need money for the snack stop and \$5 for ice skating. Please let Mindy Moore (mindy.moore@munsey.org) know by December 1** if your youth plans to join in on the fun. Friends are always welcome!

For more information about our Children's and Youth Ministries, please see our Family Ministries Newsletter at www.munsey.org.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS:

It is time to begin thinking about the application process for Munsey scholarships. This year things will be similar to last year, including being able to upload your transcript. The application is on the website at www.munsey.org/youth, and it will be submitted online. You can also use the QR code to fill out the form.

Please read the first page of the application to make sure you understand the purpose, what the scholarships are based on, and that you qualify. Remember that you must be a Munsey member to apply. The deadline for online submission of your application is **January 31, 2026**. If you have any questions, please contact me at jimgayleth@gmail.com.

Gayle Hughes
Scholarship Committee Chair



PLANNED GIVING

Persuading by pen is something we all know;
First, pick a subject, then scribble the prose;
Thus, did candidates campaign with verve;
Certain they were of most every word.
Titles were won till a challenger chose.

Poetry, for it's said this better stirs the heart;
Leave bland words for after, chatter for the part;
Of governing and laws,
Debate and pregnant pause,
Only gained after charming through art.

This lesson learned and now applied,
To other fields, this we must try.
Supplication by verse,
To matters numbing and terse.
None moreso than endowments on high.

Of Munsey I speak, beloved to us all.
This subject for me will always stand tall.
But how to sway.
The congregants to obey.
Scripture that steers us to install?

*In our wills or donor parchments our church to receive.
Largesse from our bounty, I'm speaking of these.
Specific bequests, life insurance, and land.
Charitable remainder trusts, others to command.
Our faith, our all, just to please.*

*Our God Almighty from whom all blessings flow.
Servants we are, toiling here below.
Is it even possible to outgive
The One for whom we live?
To ask, is to answer, this we know.*

*But mine are mere words, arranged in humble verse.
Others could exceed, or surely do no worse.
Outclassed I am by Advent and the season.
I fear I've failed to give you a reason.
To honor His name and holy birth.*

*Stories are judged best that finish strong.
Mine is no different, so for this I long.
Not for fame or fortune do I write.
Even your praise I do not invite.
Simply this: pray, prove me wrong.*

John Taylor, Chair of Planned Giving (Endowment)

POINSETTIA ORDERS

Poinsettia Order Form

Remember your loved ones by dedicating a poinsettia for the Sanctuary & Journey worship spaces.
Poinsettias are **\$11**. You may place this form & money in the offering plate or you may bring it by the church office.
Orders & money are due by **10:00am, Tuesday, December 9.**

Your Name: _____ Number of poinsettias: _____

Please circle whether each poinsettia is in *memory* or *honor* of your loved one.

In *memory* or *honor* of _____

In *memory* or *honor* of _____

In *memory* or *honor* of _____

In *memory* or *honor* of _____

In *memory* or *honor* of _____



Christmas Eve at Munsey

All services include candlelight and optional communion.

12:00pm in the Melting Pot

Open Door Worship will include a meal, & all are encouraged to stay & fellowship.

3:00pm in the Gathering Place

Casual & relaxed, Fireside Worship works well for families with young children.

5:00pm in the Sanctuary*

Family Worship includes a nativity drama with children.

10:30pm in the Sanctuary

Our Chancel Choir leads in Festival Worship.

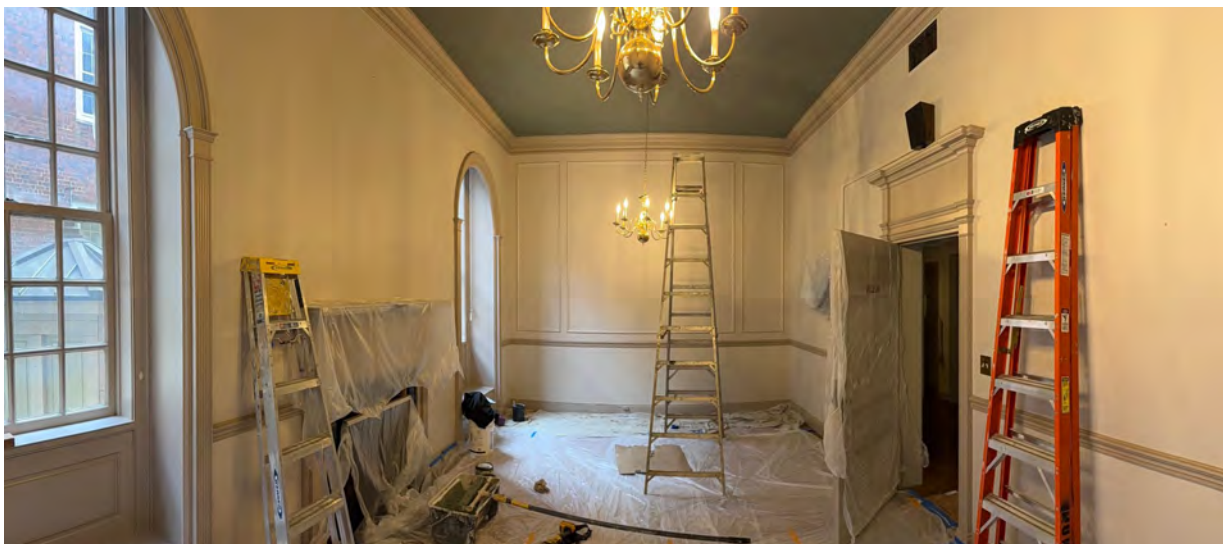
*Childcare is provided at 5:00pm for children 3 & under. Children are welcome in all services.

EMBREEVILLE SHOWER PHOTOS



PARLOR REFRESH

There is lots of work going on at Munsey so please pardon our dust as the Parlor is being refreshed. We're so grateful for the generosity of a donor to make this renovation possible, and we look forward to sharing the new look with our congregation!



CHURCH DECORATING



MUNSEY SPARK



1. "Shearing" shaving cream sheep in preschool Spark.
2. Creating "Super Kids" hero masks in preschool Spark.
3. Making caramel apples as a fall treat on a Wednesday night.
4. Practicing to lead worship on Wednesday night.
5. Learning about Jonah in Sunday morning Spark.
6. Ready to lead worship on Sunday morning.
7. A "Super Kid" learning how God helps us to be brave in preschool Spark.
8. Making caramel apples as a fall treat on a Wednesday night.

A LOOK AT YOUR WEEKLY GIFTS AND ATTENDANCE

	11/3/25	11/9/25	11/16/25	11/23/25
Weekly Budget Offering	\$39,895	\$34,105	\$33,513	\$40,940
Weekly Budget Requirement:				\$30,577
Missions Offering	\$2,229	\$3,599	\$400	\$3,962
Worship Attendance	334	359	326	316

MESSENGER DEADLINE: The deadline for January Messenger submissions is **December 17, 2025.**

WORSHIP AT MUNSEY– DECEMBER SERMON SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 7 (Peace) 9:00am Sanctuary Matthew 3:1-12 Rev. Beth Sullivan preaching 11:00am combined worship in the Sanctuary Luke 1:26-38 Bishop Debra Wallace- Padgett preaching 9:00am Open Door Anthony Jackson preaching	DECEMBER 14 (Joy) 9:00am Sanctuary Matthew 11:2-11 Rev. Chris Brown preaching 11:00am Sanctuary Lessons and Carols Service 11:00am Journey Matthew 11:2-11 Rev. Chris Brown preaching 9:00am Open Door Anthony Jackson preaching	DECEMBER 21 (Love) 9:00am Sanctuary Matthew 1:18-25 Rev. Chris Brown preaching 11:00am Sanctuary Matthew 1:18-25 Rev. Chris Brown preaching 11:00am Journey Matthew 1:18-25 Rev. Beth Sullivan preaching 9:00am Open Door Anthony Jackson preaching	DECEMBER 24 12:00pm Melting Pot Open Door worship & meal 3:00pm Gathering Place Rev. Beth Sullivan preaching 5:00pm Sanctuary Rev. Chris Brown preaching 10:30pm Sanctuary Rev. Chris Brown preaching	DECEMBER 28 11:00am combined worship in the Journey Isaiah 63:7-9 Rev. Beth Sullivan preaching 9:00am Open Door Anthony Jackson preaching *No 9:00am Sanctuary worship or Sunday School; communion will be offered at 11:00 combined worship
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WORSHIP SERVICES AT MUNSEY

- 9:00am Worship in the Sanctuary features communion served weekly.
- 11:00am Worship in the Sanctuary features traditional music with the Chancel Choir.
- 11:00am Journey Worship in the Christian Life Center Gym features contemporary music with the Praise Band.
- 9:00am Open Door Worship in the Melting Pot 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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Parish Nurse: parishnurse@munsey.org