Walking with Jesus in September

As we move into September, our gospel readings from Luke invite us into a journey of what it really means to follow Jesus. These aren't light, easy stories. They stretch us. They ask hard questions about our loyalties, our money, and the way we treat our neighbors. But woven through them all is good news: God's love will not let us go, and when we learn to walk in Jesus' way, we find freedom, joy, and life.

This month we hear four powerful passages: counting the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25–33), God's joy over the lost (Luke 15:1–10), faithful stewardship (Luke 16:1–13), and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Each one challenges us, but together they give us a fuller picture of what it looks like to live as disciples today.

September 7

Luke tells us "large crowds were traveling with Jesus." People were curious, excited, maybe even swept up in the moment. But Jesus doesn't sugarcoat what discipleship means. He says unless we "hate" father, mother, spouse, children, siblings, and even our own life, we cannot be his disciples.

That word "hate" jars us, but in Scripture it means to "love less" or to put in second place. Jesus isn't asking us to despise our families. He is asking us to be honest: following him has to come first. He compares it to a builder who counts the cost before starting a project or a king who weighs the odds before going into battle.

This isn't about making us feel guilty or unworthy. It's about freeing us from illusions. Only Christ can be our first love. When he is, everything else—including our family relationships—finds its right place. Loving him first helps us love others better.

September 14

The next week we shift from challenge to celebration. The Pharisees and scribes grumble that Jesus is welcoming sinners and eating with them. In response, he tells two parables we know well—the lost sheep and the lost coin.

Both stories are about God's relentless love. A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that wandered off. A woman turns her whole house upside down to find one coin. When the lost is found, there's rejoicing, even a party. Jesus says, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

That's the heart of God: no one is forgotten, no one is beyond God's reach. If last week reminded us that discipleship asks for loyalty, this week reminds us of God's unwavering loyalty to us. Even when we wander, God searches until we are found.

And as the church, we're invited to share in that joy. We aren't called to guard what we already have but to join in God's mission of seeking, welcoming, and celebrating when someone takes even one small step toward home.

September 21

The third Sunday in September brings one of Jesus' strangest parables—the dishonest manager. A manager about to be fired reduces people's debts so they'll help him later. Oddly, the master praises his shrewdness.

Jesus isn't telling us to be dishonest. He's telling us to be wise and urgent about what really matters. If worldly people know how to prepare for tomorrow, shouldn't we, as children of God, be even more intentional in preparing for eternity?

And then Jesus gets right to the point: "You cannot serve God and wealth." Money is never neutral, it tugs at our hearts. The real question is not whether we'll use money, but whom we will serve.

This passage challenges us to take a hard look at how we use what we've been given. Do our choices reflect God's generosity? Do they bless others? Stewardship is more than budgets and bills—it's about living every day with the awareness that all we have belongs to God.

September 28

September closes with one of Jesus' most striking parables, the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man dines in luxury every day while Lazarus, covered in sores, lies at his gate longing for crumbs. After they both die, their situations reverse. Lazarus is carried to Abraham's side, and the rich man suffers in torment.

The rich man isn't condemned for being rich. He's condemned because he never saw Lazarus as his neighbor. His sin wasn't cruelty but neglect. Even in the afterlife, he still treats Lazarus like a servant.

Continued on reverse

The Copperhill Courier

First United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 538
Copperhill, TN 37317

September 2025

Address changes requested

September 28, 11 a.m.

Bring your favorite dish and join us for a potluck lunch following our worship service.

From the Pastor's Desk, continued

Jesus reminds us that God's Word has already made it clear: love your neighbor, care for the poor, seek justice, show mercy. We don't need a messenger from the dead to tell us what to do—we need the courage to see the people at our own gates.

This parable is a mirror held up to us. Who is at our gate? Who are we overlooking? True discipleship means opening our eyes, opening our hands, and loving with Christ's compassion.

Bringing It Together
These four Sundays fit together like pieces of a puzzle. First, Jesus asks us to count the cost. Then he reminds us that God will never stop searching for us. He challenges us to handle money faithfully, and finally, he opens our eyes to see and love our neighbors.

Following Jesus is not always easy, but it is always worth it. These passages don't come to beat us down; they come to set us free. Free from misplaced loyalties. Free from fear of being lost. Free from the grip of money. Free from blindness to our neighbors.

As we move through September, may we walk this journey together counting the cost, rejoicing in God's seeking love, practicing faithful stewardship, and seeing the people God places in our path. And may we discover, again and again, that the One who calls us is also the One who carries us with grace.

Pastor Buddy

Weekly Events

Sunday School: Sundays at 10 a.m.
Son Seekers meet in the Parlor

Choir Practice: Sundays at 10 a.m.

Worship: Sundays at 11 a.m.

Life Group Meeting: Sundays at 6 p.m.
This is an exploration of the early Methodist class meetings. All are invited.

Community Meal: Mondays from 4-5:30 p.m.
All are invited. "To Go" only meals available.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays

9 Tim Nicholson
10 Becky Wilson
14 Rene Bidez
16 Juline Mixon
17 Melissa Brock
21 Ramona Cook
24 Kathy Thompson
25 Louise Arp
27 Diane Pellington, Adam Turner
28 Joe Dusombre

Anniversaries

19 Charlie and Evelyn Stemmann 55th

Your birthday or anniversary not listed?

Please contact the church office at 423-496-4931 or firstumc@etcmail.com.

Food and Diaper Drive

Please donate nonperishable food items in the Narthex box - canned meat, tuna, flour, sugar, stove top stuffing mix, peanut butter, jelly, spaghetti sauce, spaghetti, pasta, rice, soup, chili, shelf stable milk, oatmeal, cereal, canned vegetables, mac and cheese. *Thanks to all who contribute—the families are always grateful.*

We are now collecting diapers to benefit a Foster Family with three little ones. Sizes needed are 2, 3, and 4—any brand except Luvs (due to perfume sensitivity). There's a box in the Narthex for donations.

United Women in Faith News

UWF members will be attending a matinee show at the Blue Ridge Community Theater on Sunday, September 14. (No meeting at the church in September.)

On Wednesday, October 1, at 11 a.m. we will have a Potluck Lunch Meeting. A representative from First Fruits will attend to share their ministry with us. We will also finalize plans for UWF Sunday which will be held on October 19. We will have a sign-up sheet for UWF participation in the service: Liturgists, ushers, prayer leaders, etc.

We will not have a meeting in November.

United Women in Faith

September Events

The Church Office will be closed on September 1 in observance of Labor Day.

The Scenic South District Conference will be conducted on Sunday afternoon, Sept. 7 at 3:00 p.m. at Tyner UMC. Rev. Nathan Malone, our District Superintendent and Mission Strategist will offer a message of encouragement and we will share in a remembrance of our baptism. During the Conference session, we will elect District leaders, adopt a budget and elect At-Large Members to the 2026 Holston Annual Conference. This will also give attendees a chance to see where the new District offices are located.

The **Church Council** will meet on Tuesday, September 23, at 4:30 p.m.

Our 136th Annual Homecoming will be celebrated on Sunday, September 28, at 11 a.m.
Bring your favorite dish and join us for a potluck lunch following our worship service.

Upcoming in October

World Communion Sunday will be observed on October 5.

Planning ahead: **Operation Christmas Child** shoeboxes and suggestion lists will be available in the Narthex in October. The back to school/fall sales will offer some bargains that can be included in your box! Filled shoeboxes will be due back on Sunday, Nov. 9. ***You can make a difference in a child's life!***

United Women in Faith Sunday will be held on October 19.

A New Vision for The United Methodist Church

Stepping in faith into a new season of ministry.

A collaborative effort of the Connectional Table and the Council of Bishops, this new vision statement is the result of a multi-year process of discernment to capture these kernels of truth rooted in scripture and lead the United Methodist Church forward into a hope-filled future:

The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, **love boldly**, **serve joyfully**, and **lead courageously** in local communities and worldwide connections.

Love Boldly: We passionately love God and, like Jesus, embrace and include people of every age, nation, race, gender, and walk of life. (Matthew 22:37-39 | John 13:34-35)

Serve Joyfully: With the heart of Christ, we journey alongside the most vulnerable among us, offering care and compassion with joy. (Psalm 100:1 | Nehemiah 8:10 | John 13:14-15 | 1 Peter 4:10)

Lead Courageously: Following Jesus' example, we resist and dismantle all systems of evil, injustice, and oppression, striving for peace, justice, and reconciliation. (Joshua 1:9 | Ephesians 6:10)

Share the ways your local church is living into the Vision by posting on social media and adding **#LoveServeLeadUMC**. Search the hashtag to be inspired by others' stories!

Online Worship Opportunities

You may access Sermon by Phone at 1-423-226-6437 to hear the current service, plus several previous ones. Check out the page titled **Sunday Worship Highlights** on our website, fumc-copperhill.org.

As each becomes available, we'll also post the link on our Facebook page @ **First United Methodist Church-Copperhill.** *Please like and share so others see our posts!*

Video and/or audio of our services will be available online and Sermon by Phone by Monday afternoon.

We Remember Our Promise

To participate in our church's ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness…

	Worship	Sunday School	General Fund
June 29	41	4	$3,868.25
July 6	36	7	$3,353.25
July 13	39	7	$3,115.83
July 20	39	8	$2,083.25
July 27	38	8	$4,518.25
August 3	43	8	$4,476.83
August 10	41	6	$2,795.25
August 17	40	5	$2,293.25
			Total: $26,504.16
Average:	**39**	**7**	**$3,313.02**

Additional giving:

Snack In a Backpack (for summer meals for East Polk students)	$600.00
Operation Round-Up Grant for Snack In a Backpack:	$1,000.00
Missions:	$20.00
Pastor's Benevolence Fund:	$1,362.41
Operation Round-Up Grant for Pastor's Benevolence Fund:	$1,500.00
Community Meal:	$560.00
Scholarship Fund:	$300.00
Holston Home for Children:	$201.00
UMCOR Advance #2050 Flooding in Texas:	$400.00

Did you know you can Donate Online?

Scan this QR code to link directly to the church's web-site to donate. You can also donate securely online on the church webpage: fumc-copperhill.org.

Our Vanco giving page can also be accessed at: https://secure.myvanco.com/YJXP/home

Members in Service to FUMC

Ushers: Elaine Morgan, Ron Singleton

Audio Visual Technicians: Marti Lane, Randy Loudermilk, Ann Rymer, Jeff Walker

First United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 538 • 146 Scenic Drive
Copperhill, TN 37317

Email: firstumc@etcmail.com
Visit us on the web at www.fumc-copperhill.org
Like us on Facebook:
First United Methodist Church-Copperhill
Office Hours: 9 a. m.—3 p. m. Monday, Thursday & Friday

Church Office: 423-496-4931
Parsonage: 423-761-6999
Pastor's Cell: 423-429-3820

Sermon by phone: 423-226-6437

Gilbert "Buddy" Butler, Pastor
Bethany Allison, Choir Director
Matt Scoggins, Accompanist
Heidi Rule, Secretary
Christine Dowlin, Custodian

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In Loving Memory…

Janice Gertrude Burger
September 27, 1933 — August 5, 2025

Carolyn Mae Smith
February 10, 1948—August 9, 2025

In Memory / In Honor Giving

General Fund in memory of: Janice Burger
By: Cathryn McCarter, Donna Ratzlaff, Brett and Lonney McDonald, David and Joy Turner, Rev. Larry Russell, Marti Lane, Jeff and Jennifer Walker, Flora Grindstaff, Elaine Morgan, Leland and Ann Rymer, Rene and Teresa Bidez

Pastor's Benevolence Fund in memory of: Janice Burger
By: Barb Bender

Community Meal Fund in memory of: Janice Burger
By: Garry and Linda Day, Rosie and family

General Fund in memory of: Carolyn Smith
By: Cathryn McCarter, Brett and Lonney McDonald, David and Joy Turner, Flora Grindstaff, Elaine Morgan, Leland and Ann Rymer

Scholarship Fund in memory of: Carolyn Smith
By: Garry and Linda Day

Community Meal Fund in memory of: Carolyn Smith
By: Rosie and family

Pastor's Benevolence Fund in memory of: Carolyn Smith
By: Barb Bender

Our Prayer Concerns

Our Congregation: *The family of Carolyn Smith, *the family of Janice Burger, Kathy and Jerry Panchyshyn, Donna Ratzlaff, Barry Abbott, Sheppie Dunn, Ann Record, Barb Bender, Maria Ruark, Bill and Glenda Simonds, Stephanie Silvani, Sally Patterson, Mary Mills, Ariana Morris, Lily Loudermilk, Elaine Crowe, Lisa Loudermilk, Ron and Shirley Singleton, Ron (having new therapy) and Neila Pace, Juline and Denny Mixon, Elaine Minor

Homebound/Assisted Living: Louise Arp, ^Cathy Turner (Pruitt Health), ^Jennifer Clamon (Sonshine Manor), ^T.J. Thompson (Pruitt Health), ^Barbara Collins, Margaret Self, Don Loudermilk

Others in our prayers: *Lori Hancock, broken wrist (Joe Dusombre's daughter), *Emma Anderson (friend of Bethany Allison *Doug Hudson (brother of Linda Haney), *Jim (cousin of Ron Wray), *Emily Ginn (mother of Dylan Scoggins), Madeline (daughter of Jennifer), *M/M Lloyd Mays) *Pamela Gamble, *Bonnie (friend of Carolyn Smith), *Joetta Farnan (daughter of Cathryn McCarter), *Rodney Patterson (cancer), *flood victims in Texas, *Gail Scheren (friend of Flora), Larry Collis, Jeremy Collis (friend of Lisa Loudermilk), Sue Talley (sister of Marti Lane), Monica Errington, David Gibson, Kelly Pace, car accident (d-i-l of Ron and Neila) Norma Bean, Cathy Cox-Brakefield (cousin of Joy Turner), ^Sue Beaver, Simon Grant (on organ transplant list) Paul Carter, Jean Miller, cancer (cousin of Kathy Panchyshyn), Madison Satterfield (auto accident), Richard (brother of Ann Rymer), Carol Green, Lena Talley, Polly Perkins, Mary Jane, Margaret Fleming, broken rib (Dura's sister), Chad (brother of April Butler), Hope Loudermilk, Ryan Panchyshyn, Annette Loudermilk (aunt of Randy), Micheline Bennett, Phil Young, pancreatic cancer (grandson of Ann Record), Dennis Wray (chemo), Garry Cheyne, Ava Smith, plane crash victims, Jodi and John (daughter and son-in-law of Barb Bender), Jerry Williams (Shirley's husband), Mackenzie Ray, Ed and Jerrie Sue Massengale, Hannah Geren, victims of natural disasters, first responders, armed forces members, world leaders

**new to concerns*
+Hospital or Rehab ^Assisted Living/Nursing Home ~ Hospice
Please contact the church office to add someone to our Prayer Concerns list.