

CHURCH CURRENTS

FEBRUARY 2026

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MORE LIGHT
PRESBYTERIANS

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

210 SOUTH WAYNE STREET

MILLEDGEVILLE, GA 31061





First Presbyterian Church

Issue No. 354 February 2026

Pastor:
Rev. Mari Turner

Coord. of Children &
Youth Ministries:
Vacant

Admin. Asst.:
Jessica McQuain

Director of Music:
Dr. Jennifer Flory

Organist:
Kate Phillips

Child Care Providers:
Volunteers

February often feels like a bridge between seasons. As we navigate these mid-winter weeks, we find ourselves standing at a significant spiritual crossroads: we are preparing to enter the reflective forty days of Lent even as we celebrate the sweeping, 200-year legacy of our church.

On February 18th, we will observe Ash Wednesday. This ancient rite marks the beginning of our journey into the "wilderness" with Jesus. Traditionally, we think of Lent as a time of "giving something up," but I invite you to think of it as a season of *taking something up*: a renewed attention to our core identity in Christ. In the desert, Jesus was tempted by the very things our culture still prizes today—power, prestige, and immediate gratification. Lent offers us the space to recalibrate our hearts, reminding us that we are not defined by our productivity or worldly success, but by whose we are.

This year, our Lenten journey is uniquely framed by our Bicentennial celebration. To look back over two centuries of ministry in Milledgeville is to see a long, winding path of faithfulness. As we celebrate this milestone, we aren't just looking at old records; we are honoring the Spirit that has sustained this community through 200 years of change. Our Bicentennial is not a finish line; it is a foundation.

This makes our Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 15th, particularly vital. As we gather for lunch in the Fellowship Hall immediately following worship, we will do more than discuss the business of the church. We will engage in the holy work of discernment. How does a 200-year-old congregation remain a "new creation" in Christ? Where is the Spirit leading our mission as we step into our third century?

In the pastoral letter I sent out last week (available here <https://bit.ly/PastoralLetter1-27>), I challenged us to consider how we respond to the world's hurts not just with words, but with "prayer in action." As we enter this season of Lent, I am asking you to put feet to your intercessions. Prayer is the fuel, but action is the vehicle. Whether that means showing up for a neighbor in crisis, advocating for those the world ignores, or committing to a new path of service within our city, let our Lenten discipline be one that leaves a tangible mark of God's love on Milledgeville.

I hope you will join me throughout this month—whether for a quiet conversation during "Mugs with Mari" on Wednesday mornings, in the solemnity of our Ash Wednesday service, or at the table for our congregational lunch or Wednesday evening potluck & Bible study. The way ahead is long, but it is well-travelled by the saints who came before us and illuminated by the grace of the One who walks beside us.

Grace and Peace,
Mari





BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



The following contains excerpts from an article titled Answering the Call written by Jane Self that appeared in the May 31, 1997 Macon Telegraph:

Praise, worship, and fellowship are important to the people at First Presbyterian Church, but that's not all there is to this congregation of less than 400. First Presbyterian is a church committed to social justice and reaching out to the community—to religion beyond the walls of the church. It's a church dedicated to following Biblical mandates to love and serve your neighbors and to lend a helping hand wherever and whenever possible. It's a church not afraid to take unpopular stands for what it thinks is right and not afraid to reach across cultural, racial and economic barriers.

Sometimes, the church's efforts create a lot of controversy such as when it unsuccessfully supported a bond issue last year to improve existing public schools and build new ones. The administrative body of the church visited the schools to see first hand what the needs were before they decided to take a stand. But raising taxes was not a well-received concept. Church members said their church also has been criticized for, among other things, allowing minority members in the congregation, making its building available to African-American churches and establishing a supportive relationship with a small AME church in Sparta.

But the church has received accolades, too, on a national level. At the annual Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly in Syracuse, NY in June, First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville will be rewarded for its efforts and commitments. It will receive the annual Elinor Curry Award for Outreach and Social Justice.....According to the press release from Presbyterian School of Christian Education, the selection committee was "especially impressed with the courage that First often demonstrates in speaking out for justice."

Some of the ministries the church is being acknowledged for include: the monthly meal on family lunch program for inmates' families who visit the area's prisons; the support of a prison library; support of the food pantry at the Department of Family and Children's Services; ministries for the mentally ill; a blanket program for the homeless; initiation of the city's recycling program; a college course program for older adults; disaster relief efforts; an annual Holocaust Remembrance service and inclusive language in its worship services.



Robert Seay/The Macon Telegraph

Members of the First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville's 'Wednesday Night Group' share stories with the Rev. Bill Morgan, left.

The award included a plaque and a \$1000 stipend....which the church would like to use to further the work for which the church received the award

(From left: Bill Morgan, Corley Ward, Janie Ward, Gloria Burns, Donna Matta, Mary Barbara Tate, Kaye McChesney, Sam McChesney, Donna Gautier, Joel Burns, Rosemary Begemann, Jane Rose, Fred Heal, and Lydia Sales.)



CONGREGATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Save the Date: Congregational Meeting & Lunch

Sunday, February 15 | Following Worship

Join us for a vital time of fellowship and discernment as we celebrate our Bicentennial year! Immediately following our 11:00 AM worship service, the Care and Fellowship Committee will host a **congregational lunch**, with our meeting to follow shortly after.

The Session has called this meeting to tend to several important pieces of our life together, including:

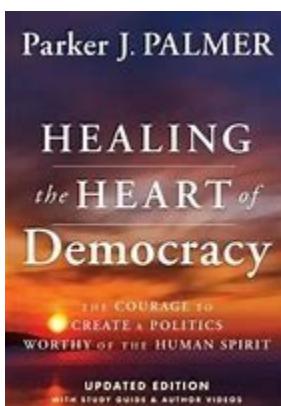
- **The Election of Corporation Officers**
- **The Election of the 2026 Nominating Committee**
- **Approval of the new By-Laws** (including our new Mission Statement) *A copy of the By-Laws can be found at <https://bit.ly/FPCBy-Laws>*
- **Presentation of the 2026 Budget and 2025 Annual Report**



Through a generous gift, the church has new dishes to begin our year of celebration....

Your participation is crucial as we look back on 200 years of ministry and move forward into our future. We look forward to breaking bread and seeking God's vision together!

First Presbyterian Book Club



The First Presbyterian Book Club will meet on Thursday, February 12th, at 2:00 pm in the church parlor. The book that we will be discussing is *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* by Parker J. Palmer.

Palmer writes about what we can do to restore civil discourse, reach for understanding across lines of differences, focus on our shared values and hold elected officials accountable. He explores ways that we can reweave the communal fabric in which democracy depends in everyday settings, including five "habits of the heart" we can cultivate as we work to fulfill America's promise of human equality. This book awakens the human instinct to seek the common good and gives us tools to pursue it.

The book selection for March is *The Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* by Erik Larsen. The time is 1933, the place Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany.

As evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, Dodd telegraphs his concerns to an indifferent State Department back home. Suffused with the tense atmosphere of the period, the book lends a stunning eyewitness perspective on events as they unfold in real time. This readable work speaks volumes about why the world did not recognize the threat posed by Hitler until Berlin and Europe were awash in blood and terror.

We have selected two very interesting and very different books to read and discuss. Please join us for our usual stimulating discussion.

~Millie Murphy

The church
has left
the building.

The church
has left
the building.



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MISSION AND MINISTRY

The Milly Free Fridge continues to help those families and individuals who experience food insecurity in our community.

Make plans to join us Sunday, February 22 to help feed our neighbors by making sandwiches for the Milly Free Fridge .

Please bring any of the following: Sliced bread, lunch meat, jelly, fresh fruit, prepackaged snacks, bottled drinks. We will provide condiments and labeling materials, and additional space for sandwich makers.

Samaritan Ministry

We helped five families this month through Samaritan Ministry. Clothing donations are now being accepted; clothing bins are located in the Fellowship classroom at the end of the hall. Please contact Pat Henry or Bill Werts if you are interested in supporting this ministry. Thank you for your continued help.

The next disbursement of funds will be on Tuesday, February 17 at 9:00 AM.



FPC FOOD PANTRY

Tuesday's 9:30am—10:30am!!



Food Pantry had a couple of 'slack" days when people probably thought we would not be open due to weather conditions, but we still served 44 households, including 6 new ones, in January.

Several of you, and our "community angel", donated quantities of food which helped conserve our budget, and some also designated budget funds. We and our needy neighbors are so very thankful!

Additional donations our folks have enjoyed include the numerous beautiful 2026 calendars you shared, along with a few other "freebies" charitable organizations sent you, like pens, notepaper and greeting cards. One of our talented crocheters turned out over a dozen colorful neck scarves, which have been very popular the past 2 weeks - a very timely offering!

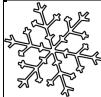
Do continue to keep this vital ministry in your prayers, your budgets, and on your shopping lists (make generous use of BOGO offers).

Thank you for all you share.
~Donna

Food Pantry staples list:

Canned soups; canned pasta; canned ham; tuna; salmon; and chicken; boxed mac & cheese; grits; oatmeal; and/or cereal; peanut butter & jelly; canned fruit and vegetables



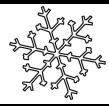
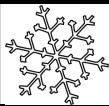


FEBRUARY



1 9:30 Sunday School 10:15 Children's School 11:00 Worship Service—Food Pantry Offering 12:30 PFLAG Luncheon (Upstairs)	2 7:00 Oconee Recovery Commission 	3 9:30-10:30 Food Pantry 12:00 Kiwanis 7:30 NA 
8 9:30 Sunday School 10:15 Children's School 11:00 Worship Service 5:00 PW Bible Study	9 7:00 Oconee Recovery Commission 	10 9:30-10:30 Food Pantry 11:00 PW Bible Study 12:00 Kiwanis 6:30 Session Meeting 7:30 NA 
15 9:30 Sunday School 10:15 Children's School 11:00 Worship Service 12:00 Congregational Meeting/Lunch	16 7:00 Oconee Recovery Commission 	17 9:00 Samaritan Ministry 9:30-10:30 Food Pantry 12:00 Kiwanis 7:30 NA 
22 9:30 Sunday School 10:15 Children's School 11:00 Worship Service 12:00 Milly Sandwich Squad	23 7:00 Oconee Recovery Commission 	24 9:30-10:30 Food Pantry 12:00 Kiwanis 7:30 NA 

2026



4 6:30 Wednesday Potluck and Study 	5 7:30 NA 	6	7 7:30 NA
11 10:00 Have a Mug with Mari 6:30 Wednesday Potluck and Study 	12 2:00 FPC Book Club 6:30 PFLAG (Youth Room) 7:30 NA 	13	14 7:30 NA
18 10:00 Have a Mug with Mari 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service	19 7:30 NA 	20	21 7:30 NA
25 10:00 Have a Mug with Mari 6:30 Wednesday Potluck and Study 	26 7:30 NA 	27	28 4:00 Kiwanis Board Meeting 7:30 NA

Operations: The church office is open Mon - Thurs. 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Please call the office for an appointment (478) 443-5203



YOUTH MINISTRY



Youth Ministry in February: Faith, Fun, and Flaps

February is shaping up to be a busy month for our youth as we balance high-energy fun with intentional service and preparation for the Lenten season.

Please note that our meetings take place immediately after worship and conclude at 1:30 PM.

- February 1: Church Photo Scavenger Hunt** – We'll be exploring every nook and cranny of our church building for a fast-paced hunt. This is a great way for our group to see our sacred space through a new lens.
- February 8: Early Shrove Tuesday & Lenten Learning** – The youth will enjoy a pancake "breakfast" together as an early Shrove Tuesday celebration. While we eat, we'll spend time learning about the significance of Ash Wednesday and what it means to observe a holy Lent.
- February 15: No Youth Meeting** – We encourage all our youth and their families to attend the **Congregational Meeting** following worship. This is a vital moment in our life together as a church family.
- February 22: Service & Story** – We'll be rolling up our sleeves to make sandwiches for the **Milly Free Fridge**, providing immediate support to our neighbors in Milledgeville. Afterward, we'll dive into "Modern Parables," reimagining Jesus' timeless stories in a 2026 context.



One of the most impactful ways to support our youth is through the gift of a meal. Sitting down to eat together at the start of our meetings is where the best conversations happen—it's where the "churchy" walls come down and real life is shared.

We are looking for volunteers to provide lunch for our Sunday meetings (for approximately nine students and two chaperones). Whether you enjoy cooking a favorite family recipe or prefer picking up a few pizzas, your contribution makes a world of difference. **If you're willing to feed our crew, please sign up for a date here: <https://bit.ly/FeedYouth>.**

Thank you for your continued prayers and support as we walk alongside our students!

TREASURER'S CORNER

We started off the year with two good Sundays but then the weather played havoc. Our online contributions have not been enough to make up for the in person giving we usually expect. Please try to give a little extra next time to replace the income we lost.

Remember that your support of the general fund, the Samaritan's Ministry and the Food Pantry is the only way these ministries are possible. All of our work follows the example of Jesus.

*Joel D. Burns
Treasurer*

OPERATING BUDGET	November	December	2025 YTD
Contributions	\$27,926	\$62,897	\$263,774
Other Income	\$3,713	\$688	\$11,286
Total Operating Income	\$31,369	\$63,587	\$275,060
Total Operating Expenses	\$14,546	\$15,858	\$230,034
Net Operating	\$16,468	\$47,728	\$45,026
DESIGNATED FUNDS			
Contributions	\$4,708	\$127,336	\$170,744
Expenses	\$3,670	\$18,860	\$30,530
Net Designated	\$1,038	\$108,476	\$140,214



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

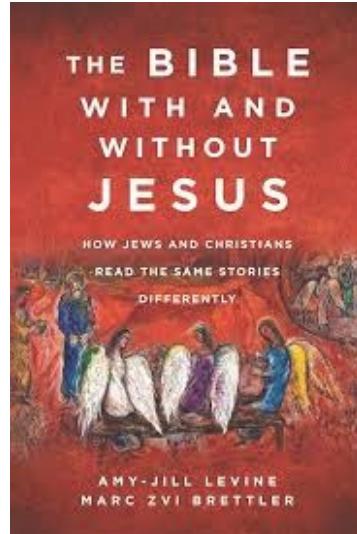


The Bible Sunday School class continues its study of The Bible With and Without Jesus by Amy Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler. We have finished the discussion of the "Suffering Servant" from Isaiah and are now studying Jonah. This meticulously researched book helps us understand the Jewish perspective on many of the best known stories in the holy scriptures.

Our class is meeting in person (in the Betty Newton Campbell church parlor) every Sunday at 9:45 AM unless bad weather forces us to use ZOOM alone.

I hope a number of you will join us. If you wish to join by ZOOM, call me at (478) 414-6516 and I will forward the link.

~Joel D. Burns



d365

d365 is a daily devotion written for youth and adults. The devotion follows a five-step format – **Pause, Listen, Think, Pray, Go.** The **Pause** step remains the same all week and is designed as a centering tool as you begin the devotion.

The **Listen** step is the scripture passage for the day, using the

Common English Bible translation.

The **Think** step is the devotional thought by the week's writer.

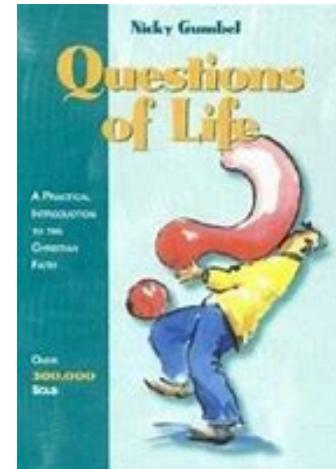
The **Pray** step is the start of a prayer that you can expand into your own conversation with God.

The **Go** step is a call to action – launching you from this moment toward acting on what you have heard.

As you read the thoughts of the writers, think about your own response to the scripture for the day. Let the writer's words serve as background for your own conversation with God.

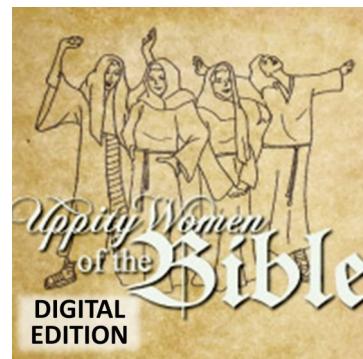
FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL

We are studying *Questions of Life: A Practical Guide to the Christian Faith* by Nicky Gumbel. This group meets in person **every Sunday morning at 9:45**. We would love to have you join us.
~Bill Werts



WEDNESDAY NIGHT STUDY

The Wednesday night group meets in person for a great pot luck supper and lively discussion every week. We are beginning *Uppity Women of the Bible* by Hebrew Bible professor Dr. Lisa Wolfe. This video series takes a fresh look at the books of Ruth, The Song of Songs, Esther and Judith. With humor and fresh insights the professor makes the study a joy.



The pot luck begins at 6:30 P.M.

If you do not wish to participate in the pot luck, the discussions begin about 7:00 P.M. Please join us!



SESSION NEWS



Highlights from the February Session Meetings:

- ♦ Received two new members, Gini Wilkerson and Brett Turner.
- ♦ Approved spending \$24,900 for roofing repairs to address water intrusion issues.
- ♦ Approved cost-of-living increase for the organist and choir director in the 2026 budget.
- ♦ Approved the 2026 budget, which will be presented to the congregation on Feb. 15.
- ♦ Approved the contract with Heritage Tax and Accounting services.
- ♦ Agreed to sponsor a Fraud Awareness Program (with the Civic Women's Club and Baldwin Sheriff Department) for church members.
- ♦ Approved a revised mission statement.
- ♦ Elected John Bradley, Frida Ituka, and Becky Humphrey as commissioners to the Feb. 28th Northeast Georgia Presbytery meeting at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Athens.

~ Respectfully submitted, Susan McGill, Clerk



COMMITTEE REPORTS



The Care & Fellowship Team

- The Care and Fellowship Team assisted with the kick-off celebration for our 200th Anniversary on January 4th. Brunch was available between Sunday School and church. Approximately fifty people enjoyed fellowship and piano selections by Kathy Carroll. Brunch was provided by Melba Burrell, Ruby Werts, Pat Henry, Millie Murphy, Carrie Cook and Becky Humphrey with the assistance of Margaret Ivester, Sherry Henry, and Emily Bradley.
- Collaborating with the Worship Committee, two homebound\assisted living members were visited and received Communion on Sunday afternoon, January 4.
- The Team met on January 11th, though the team has been communicating through group text since October. The responsibilities of the committee were reviewed and sub-committees were formed.
 - » Connections with members will be made by Millie Murphy sending cards and by Harry Beck continuing to make calls.
 - » Melba Burrell and Sherry Henry volunteered to oversee the kitchen and keep supplies stocked.
 - » Pastor Mari Turner and Becky Humphrey will coordinate contact with our members who are home-bound, in assisted living or in nursing homes and in collaboration with the Worship Committee will provide Communion. The team agreed that COMMUNICATION is the key to responding to congregational care needs..... milledgevillepcusa@gmail.com.
- The prayer list has been updated. Pastor Mari has created prayer cards to help keep the list current. These cards are available from the greeters or in the pew pockets.
- The Fellowship Team is busy planning lunch for the Congregational\Corporation Meeting on February 15th. The menu is ham, potato salad, green beans, deviled eggs.... plus rolls and dessert. Did your interest peak at ham or potato salad? If you signed up to bring food on the Time & Talents Survey, you will be getting a call. Please plan to participate in this important part of church life and to enjoy the fellowship – Sunday, February 15th, following worship.
- A special event is in the works for March – A Fraud Awareness Program. This program is provided by the Civic Woman's Club of Milledgeville in partnership with the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office. Listen out for date and time!

Liturgist Schedule

Feb 1 & 8: Donna Gautier

Feb 15 & 22: Jan Hoffman

Greeters:

Feb 1: Susan McGill & Bill Werts
Feb 8: John and Emily Bradley
Feb 15: Pat and Sherry Henry
Feb 22 Nancy Miller & Millie Murphy

Nursery Volunteer Schedule

February 1 ~ Gloria Burns/Sherry Henry
February 8 ~ Nancy Miller/Joel Burns
February 15 ~ Anne Smart/Margaret Ivester
January 25 ~ Laurie Peebles/Susan McGill



ODDS AND ENDS



Journeying Together: A Season of Lent

The season of Lent begins on February 18th—a forty-day journey (excluding Sundays) that invites us into a time of intentional reflection and spiritual renewal as we prepare our hearts for the miracle of Easter.

While Lent is often associated with the tradition of "giving something up," it is perhaps more helpfully viewed as a season for **taking something on**. It is an opportunity to clear space for new growth by adopting spiritual disciplines that draw us closer to God and to one another. Whether it is committing to a daily practice of prayer, engaging in consistent acts of service, or making time for deep scriptural study, these forty days offer us a rhythmic way to dwell more fully in God's presence.

Ash Wednesday Service

We begin this journey together on **Wednesday, February 18th, at 7:00 PM** with our Ash Wednesday service. This is a powerful time of worship where we receive the imposition of ashes—a tangible reminder of our mortality and our total dependence on God's grace. It is a somber yet hopeful start to the season, grounding us in the truth that we belong to God.

Walking Together: 2026 Lenten Devotional

To help guide your personal reflection and spiritual practice throughout these forty days, our church has curated a special Lenten Devotional. We invite you to use this resource daily for scripture readings, prayers, and reflections designed to help you nourish your faith during this season.

You can access and download the digital devotional at: <https://bit.ly/2026LentenDevotional>

May this Lent be a season of transformation for you and for our entire congregation as we explore new ways to follow the path of Christ. Let us walk into the wilderness together, knowing that we do not walk alone.

Welcome to the Team, Jessica McQuain!

We are thrilled to announce that **Jessica McQuain** has joined our staff as our new Administrative Assistant. Jessica brings a wealth of skill and a welcoming spirit to our front office, and we are so grateful to have her on board as we continue our ministry together. Jessica lives with her wife and pets in Milledgeville. She's a double Bobcat with a BA and MA from Georgia College. Jessica is currently completing an MLIS in libraries and archives online at the University of Alabama. Her first visit to FPC was for the Juneteenth sermon by Joan Browning and she looks forward to getting to know more of the congregation in this special bicentennial year.

When you stop by the church office, please take a moment to introduce yourself and give her a warm welcome!

With Gratitude for Our Interim Team

As we welcome Jessica, we also want to extend our deepest thanks to **John Bradley, Susan McGill, and Becky Humphrey**.

Over the last couple of months, this dedicated trio stepped in to ensure our office operations continued smoothly. They handled everything from bulletins to phone calls to financial tasks with grace, patience, and a deep love for this congregation. We are incredibly fortunate to have members who are so willing to offer their time and talents during seasons of transition.

Please join us in thanking John, Susan, and Becky for their faithful service!

Prayer

CONDOLENCES

BJ Jones and family on the sudden passing of Greg Jones

Brett Turner and family on the passing of Brett's aunt Judy Turner

CHURCH FAMILY:

Harry Beck, ongoing health concerns

Nan Carpenter, ongoing health concerns

Louise Sallstrom, ongoing health concerns

Military Service

Will Deason

Rebecca Elangwe

(Both are

Reservists)

EXTENDED FAMILY:

Darryl Allen, Andrew Allen's father, ongoing health concerns

Nannette Green Allen, childhood friend of Margaret Ivester with serious health issues

Kandace Allen Bivins, friend of Margaret Ivester, heart attack

Don Goggans, Elaine Goggans' son, stage four cancer

Elizabeth Knobel, Carolyn Morgan's daughter, ongoing health concerns

Charles Morgan, Jennifer Flory's father, ongoing health concerns

Joanne Murphy, Kathy Carroll's mother, ongoing health issues—at Carlyle House in Macon

John J. Murphy, Kathy Carroll's father, recovering from kidney operation

Chris Pearson, Sunda Coleman's son, recovering at home; dialysis

Renee Pearson, Sunda Coleman's daughter-in-law, diagnosed with congestive heart failure, at home

Bob Smart, Anne Smart's husband, ankylosing spondylitis

Randy Stewart, Haywood Edwards' son-in-law, ongoing health concerns

Ike Thomas, ongoing cancer treatments

Dudley Weathers, Anne Weathers' husband, at home in hospice care

Wayne Woodward, Ruby Werts' brother, diagnosed with Parkinson's



IN ASSISTED LIVING

Nan Carpenter, PO Box 527, Jefferson, GA 30549

Jude Hirsch, Fellowship Home at Meriwether, 10 Meriwether Place

Laura King, The Cottages of Milledgeville, 1010 Fernwood Drive

Maryanne Morris, Fellowship Home at Meriwether, 10 Meriwether Place

Runette Pounds, Fellowship Home at Meriwether, 10 Meriwether Place

Louise Sallstrom, The Cottages of Milledgeville, 1010 Fernwood Drive

Suzy Smith, The Oaks Peake, 400 Foster Rd., A2, Macon, GA 31210

Anniversaries

February 8 ~ Jack & Deanna Bivins

February 17 ~ Robby & Julie Deason



Birthdays

February 1 ~ Jane Lane

February 2 ~ John Lamsma

February 12 ~ Louise Sallstrom

February 15 ~ Megan Gillis

February 19 ~ Sunda Coleman

February 21 ~ Olympia Applebury

February 22 ~ Nan Carpenter

February 27 ~ Lee Gillis

