



# THE OLIVE BRANCH

## JANUARY 2026

# OLIVE BRANCH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(Disciples of Christ)

**Richard D. Cline, minister**  
**Sara C. Scungio, administrative assistant**  
**757-566-8077 (Church Office)**

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**Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

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### CHRISTMAS MOMENTS

Advent and Christmas at Olive Branch are over, but certain moments remain fixed in my memory. They might not be the defining moments of 2025, but they certainly added to the texture of a wonderful time in the life of our congregation. In no particular order or ranking, here are some of the moments that stood out for me.

- *Rome wasn't built in a day, but Bethlehem was built in a week.* This year's set for the live nativity was the best yet. All the work that was done, from building the stable to lighting, was excellent. The star shined brightly every night, inviting the community to join in our live performance.

- *A donkey speaks.* For the first time, our donkey decided to speak during the live nativity. His braying was impressive and brought all that we were doing to a halt.

- *Jesus is in the drawer.* One of our elders said this during our Advent studies, and it instantly became the title of my Christmas Eve Homily. My challenge: take Jesus out of the drawer and into our lives.

- *Food, food, and more food.* Thanks to an early December snow, activities that are normally spread over four weeks were compressed into two. From a beautiful Christmas gala to the DWM Christmas Dinner to Wednesday Family Night meals to Sunday School Christmas party, there was food and plenty of it!

- *One of the best ever Cantatas.* Our choir's Christmas Cantata this year was one of their best. The

music was beautiful; the church was packed. We have the best choir and music director and music accompanist – period.

- *Christmas Eve.* The Christmas Eve service was very special, as I was gifted to hear "O Holy Night" sung perfectly, and had the privilege of serving communion personally to our congregation.

- *A Christmas Love Gift.* The generosity of this congregation was on full display as love gifts were given to all the staff. Thank you one and all!

These moments and so many more fill my memory of this year's Advent and Christmas services. Undergirding them all is the love that defines Olive Branch, a love that enables us to say with joy, "This is my church family".

Thank you, Church, for all the ways you have blessed me this past year.

Blessings,  
~Pastor Richard

### MEETINGS & BUILDING USE

T.O.P.S.: Tuesdays; 9:30AM; Taylor Hall

Seekers Prayer Group: Tuesdays; 11:30 AM  
Adult SS Room

Our Day Out: 2nd Wednesdays; 10AM-2PM;  
Branch Hall

Comfort Ministry: 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturdays; 10 AM  
Sandy's Restaurant

Girl Scouts Troop 1385 Meetings:  
Alternate Wednesdays until June 3, 2026

6:30-8:00 PM; Adult Sunday School Room

OBCC Men's Meeting: 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays; 9 AM; Branch Hall with breakfast

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday DWM Circle of Grace: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays; 11:30AM; Taylor Hall

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday Lunch Bunch: 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays; 11 AM; Sandy's Restaurant



18 Charles & Naomia Barker



- 06 Kayla Walker
- 08 Phyllis Gardner
- 08 Rudy Ruskey
- 09 Sheila White
- 11 Harold Barker
- 11 Katy Henderson
- 14 Colleen Wright
- 15 Erich Hodson
- 17 Shirley Harrison
- 18 Amy Gilliam
- 19 Jimmie, Jr. (JC) Biggs
- 23 Bob Herndon
- 30 Linda Hutton
- 31 Dennis Cotner
- 31 Skip Jensen



**SERVICES & HOURS**

Sunday Services:

8:30 AM Branch Hall                      11:00 AM Sanctuary

Sunday School:

NFH Sunday School following the 8:30 service

Andy's Sunday School at 9:30

Nursery:

Open on Sundays: 8:15AM-12:15PM

Office Hours:

Mon-Fri 8:30AM-1:30PM



**PRAYER LIST**

**Church Family:** Pat Allred, Michael Ayers, Jeanne Bell, Betty Boley & Family, Nancy Griffith, Irma Gustafson, Norm Hall, Petra Hall, Keeta Hodson, Jim & Anne Holland, Linda Hutton, Cheryl Johnson, Dallas & Joann Mitchell, Barbara Nicholson, Carolyn Rodenberg, Jim Romesburg, Fred Rothermel, Chuck Rupe, Cecelia Ruskey, Bob Sharp, Mike Smith, Ellen Waite, Brenda White, Ronald White

**Friends:** The professional and volunteer women and men who protect and defend us, Our Nation, Nancy Alexander (Josephine Gardner's sister), Kevin Barker (Naomia & Charles Barker's son), Rusty Copeland (Chuck Walker's friend), Jane Crowder (Sharon Herndon's friend), Evala (Norm Hall's daughter), Cody Ferguson (Amy Ferguson's nephew), Clara Grace Goins (Patti Banks' granddaughter), Reilly Ruby Houchens (Connie Cason's great-granddaughter), Jimmy Hunt (Carolyn & Jim Hunt's son), Jim Jegel (Diane Wright Jegel's husband), Steven Laplante (Bob & Carol Sharp's son), David Leatherman (Jim & Anne Holland's grandson), Ben Manning (Cheryl & Gene Johnson's friend), John Morris (Naomia Barker's brother), Douglas Morris (Naomia Barker's brother), Elizabeth Panzer, Lisa Pipkin (Sheila Yeatts' sister), Rose Pitts (friend of David & Carol Pitts), Mike Poland (Andy & Ann Bradshaw's son-in-law), Phil Reynolds (Larry & Louise Smith's son-in-law), Sheila Rinehart, Pam Swift (Susan Kohlman's friend), Gladys Watson (Mel Watson's mother), Jason (Lorraine Beasley's son), Mo (friend of Cheryl & Gene Johnson)



**ELDERS & DEACONS & DEACONESSES**

		THIS MONTH'S DEACONESS
		Naomia Barker
01/04/2026	Missy Harbour Mel Watson	
	Maralyn Carr Ethel King Patti Banks Danny Pitts	
01/11/2026	Bob Herndon Chuck Walker	
	Edie Larkin Jason Teagle Anita Dasher Amy Ferguson	
01/18/2026	Kim Riffle Dianne Mongold	
	Dennis Cotner Jan Smith Danny Kelley Betty Bennink	
01/25/2026	Linda Williams Abby Matschke	
	Mike Hebbard Jody Hebbard John Henderson Jerry Henderson	



## WORSHIP & WONDER SCHEDULE

	<b>Leader:</b>	<b>Greeter:</b>
01/04/2026	Teri Tench	Jeremy Dill
01/11/2026	Ethel King	Danielle Kelley
01/18/2026	Bob Eber	Trina Eber
01/25/2026	Ann Bradshaw	Dennis Cotner



OBCC sends condolences to Susan Kohlman and family on the passing of her sister, Mary Brown. Mary passed away November 4, 2025. A Celebration of Life service was held at OBCC on November 24, 2025.



OBCC sends condolences to Betty Boley and family on the passing of her mother, Harriet Gritzmaker. Harriet passed away on December 28, 2025. A Celebration of Life service was held at OBCC on January 5, 2026.



### HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSING

The office will be closed on January 19 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday.



### OBCC LEADERS FOR 2026

#### ELDERS:

Kim Riffle (HEAD)  
Harold Barker  
Hunter Creech  
Missy Harbour  
Bob Herndon  
Abby Matschke  
Dianne Mongold  
Teri Tench  
Chuck Walker  
Mel Watson  
Linda Williams  
Sheila Yeatts

#### DEACONS:

Ethel King (HEAD)  
Patti Banks  
Patty Barker  
Betty Bennink  
Betty Boley  
Maralyn Carr  
Dennis Cotner  
Anita Dasher  
Jeremy Dill  
Judy Eley

Amy Ferguson  
Linda Garrett  
Steve Garrett  
Jane Hatcher  
Jody Hebbard  
Mike Hebbard  
John Henderson  
Jerry Henderson  
Danny Kelley  
Edie Larkin  
Danny Pitts  
Bill Simpson  
Jan Smith  
Jason Teagle

#### DEACONESSES:

Liz Ripley  
Kaye Watson  
Naomia Barker  
Susan Simpson  
Carol Sharp  
Dennis Cotner



### OUR DAY OUT-2<sup>ND</sup> WEDNESDAYS

Unfortunately, the weather prevented us from having Our Day Out in December, but we will have some Christmas fun in January!

Sharing stories, singing a few songs, eating a delicious lunch, crafting a clever craft, and of course bingo fun and laughter will all ensue January 14th beginning at 10:00AM. Hope to see you all then!

May God be with you and keep you safe always,  
*Marney Brickhouse, Coordinator*



### OLIVE BRANCH CHRISTIAN CHURCH MEMORIAL TRUST FUND REPORT NOVEMBER, 2025

The Olive Branch Memorial Trust Fund, as of September 1, 2025, has a market value of \$82,580.04 in the Christian Church Foundation Joint Investment Trust and \$2813.25 in checking at Chesapeake Bank. The total value as of September 1, 2025 is \$85,393.29.

The investment payout this year will be \$3133.89. The specified purpose of the fund (set up in 1983 by Mrs. Ethelyn McSherry) is to perpetually support the work of Olive Branch Christian Church and support programs which alleviate hunger throughout the world.

The Trustees will distribute \$3100.00 as follows:  
Olive Branch Christian Church \$1500.00  
The recommendation for OBCC: Starting a fund for the new floor in Branch Hall

Salvation Army	\$300.00
St. Olaf Food Pantry	\$700.00
St. Andrews Society	\$300.00
Meals on Wheels	\$300.00

Respectfully submitted,  
 Kay Ainsworth, Trustee  
 Lorraine Beasley, Trustee

While I've always known how wonderful this church is, when I was on the receiving end of your love and care, it overwhelmed me with how fortunate I am to belong to this church and have you as my church family. I am so proud of being a part of Olive Branch and I know I am truly blessed.  
 Thank you again.

~Susan Kohlman



**SPECIAL THANKS**

A special thank you to all who helped with the Live Nativity and setting up the manger! Special thanks go to: Steve White, Dennis Dasher, Charles Barker, Pastor Richard Cline, Donald White, Hunter Creech, Keyclub Starmer, Jonny Starmer, Jim Hunt, and Jeremy Dill.  
 Thank you to all that helped out!

A special thank you also to the congregation for participating and supporting the 2025 Live Nativity! You are a wonderful group of people who don't know the word *can't*, so we did. Thank you!



**DIRECTORY UPDATE**

The OBCC Directory is still online! You can access your account at [members.instantchurchdirectory.com](https://members.instantchurchdirectory.com).

We will be supplying hard copies of the 2026 OBCC Directory beginning in mid-February. The hard copies will be available at the office. If you are unable to stop by the office and would like a hard copy mailed to you, please contact the office and Sara will be happy to send you a copy. If you have any updates to add to the directory, please send them to Sara by Monday morning, February 9.

We are still looking for pictures for our online directory. If you would like to have your picture taken, Sara will be happy to take your picture in the office and upload it to the directory for you. Alternatively, you can bring in a picture or request to use the picture from the old pictorial directory. If you have any questions regarding how to access your account or add a picture, please contact the office and Sara will be happy to help. Thank you!



**SPECIAL THANKS**

Dear Church Family,  
 Thank you for being there for me and my family when I had the unexpected loss of my sister, Mary. When I was feeling heavy with grief, you stepped in with so much love, support, and acts of kindness.



**CEMETERY CLEAN UP**

The semi-annual clean-up will occur between February 1 & 10, 2026. If you would like to save anything, please remove it before then. Non-perishable items left in place will be moved near the shed area next to the parking lot. Thanks for helping the committee to keep our cemetery one of the most beautiful in the county.

~Cemetery Committee



**DWM CIRCLE OF GRACE**

Lots going on in December, but we were able to enjoy our Thursday Circle of Grace lunch and our special Woman of the Bible presentation.

As usual, lunch was delicious with very clever ladies fixing beautiful salads and a sweet or two.

Louise used her poetic talents to introduce Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary's life had many challenges, but her faith and love of the Lord helped her meet each one. Louise has that same kind of faith and love and her presentation touched all our hearts.

Please join us when you have a chance as Circle of Grace introduces more wonderful and inspiring women of the Bible.



**SPECIAL THANKS FROM STAFF**

Thank you so very much for all your cards, delicious goodies, generous gifts, and support throughout this Christmas season! Your thoughtfulness and generosity are so greatly appreciated, and your love and kindness are inspiring. I thank each and every one of you for sharing the joy and light of Christ with me as you do with all you meet. Many blessings to you throughout this new year and Epiphany season!

~Sara Scungio

Ann and I have been overwhelmed by the cards, gifts, treats, and special presents we have received this Christmas from our church family! And then to receive the love gift last Sunday! I know any words we could write or say would fail to capture our deep thanks for

all this church means to us – so all I can say is “Thank You!” Thank you for the privilege of serving as your pastor!

~Ann and Pastor Richard



### CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL MUNGELI NEWS

Greetings to you! The School of Nursing for our General Nurse-Midwife—GNM—degree program celebrated “freshers day” on November 25 for the new batch of GNM 1st year students (2025 to 2028). The superintendent of the School, Sipora Raj, writes, “20 students have joined this year. We had prayer followed by a cultural programme and dinner”.

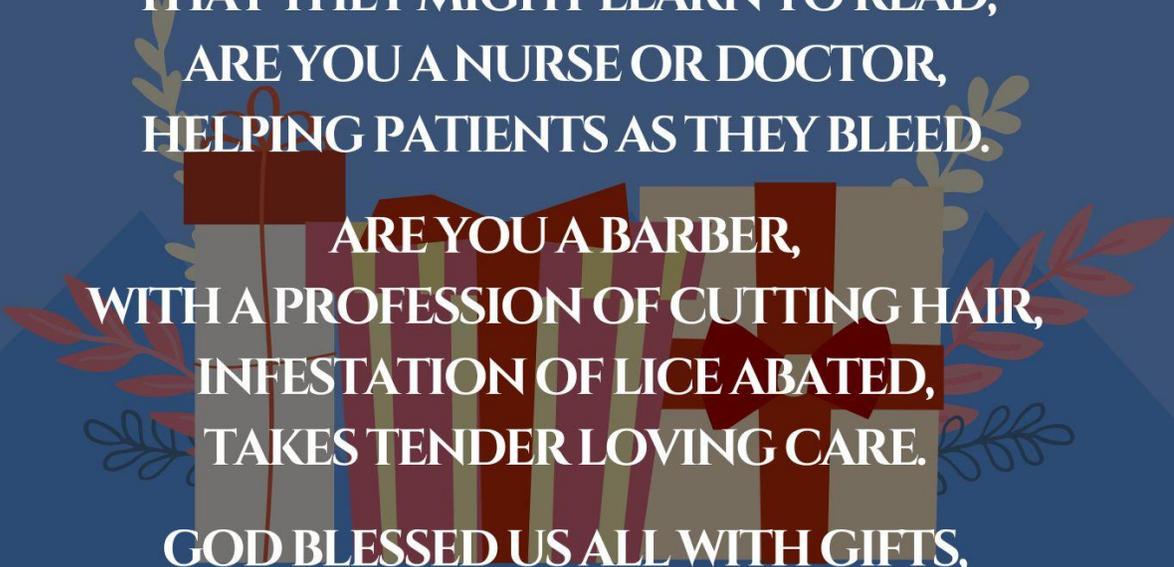
~Landa Simmons



JESUS BIDS US GO,  
INTO THE MISSION FIELD,  
MANY PLOTS ARE EMPTY,  
WAITING TO BE FILLED.

WILL YOU BE THE ONE,  
A HUNGRY SOUL TO FEED,  
OR WILL YOU FILL THE CUPBOARD,  
OF IMPOVERISHED NEED.

PERHAPS YOU COULD TEACH CHILDREN,  
THAT THEY MIGHT LEARN TO READ,  
ARE YOU A NURSE OR DOCTOR,  
HELPING PATIENTS AS THEY BLEED.



ARE YOU A BARBER,  
WITH A PROFESSION OF CUTTING HAIR,  
INFESTATION OF LICE ABATED,  
TAKES TENDER LOVING CARE.

GOD BLESSED US ALL WITH GIFTS,  
AS JESUS KNEW QUITE WELL,  
THAT IS WHY HE BIDS US GO,  
JOINED BY THE SPIRIT WE PREVAIL.

GOD BECAME MANIFEST,  
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST THE MAN,  
WE NOW REVEAL OUR RISEN LORD,  
WHEN IN HIS NAME WE LEND A HAND.

*~Louise Gatling Smith*



**WE USHER OUT THE OLD,  
WELCOME IN THE NEW,  
WHEN JESUS CAME TO SAVE,  
THAT'S WHAT HE DID FOR YOU.**

**AS A NEW YEAR APPROACHES,  
YOU HAVE A BRAND NEW START,  
GET ON YOUR KNEES, CONFESS YOUR SINS,  
INVITE JESUS INTO YOUR HEART.**



**THE OLD SLATE WILL BE WIPED CLEAN,  
QUICKLY FILLED WITH THE NEW,  
THE OLD HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN,  
AS GOD'S FORGIVENESS WILL DO.**

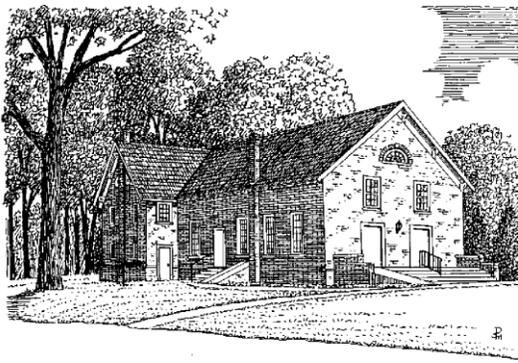


**YOU CAN CELEBRATE IN STYLE,  
YOU'RE REFRESHED FROM HEAD TO TOE,  
WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOU,  
YOU'LL HAVE A NEW-FOUND GLOW.**

**INSTEAD OF BELLS AND WHISTLES,  
A TRUMPET CALL WILL SOUND,  
YOU HAVE BEEN EXALTED,  
SOON YOU'LL BE HEAVEN BOUND.**



*~Louise Gatling Smith*



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## The Olive Branch

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newsletter? Address changed?  
Please contact the church office.*

