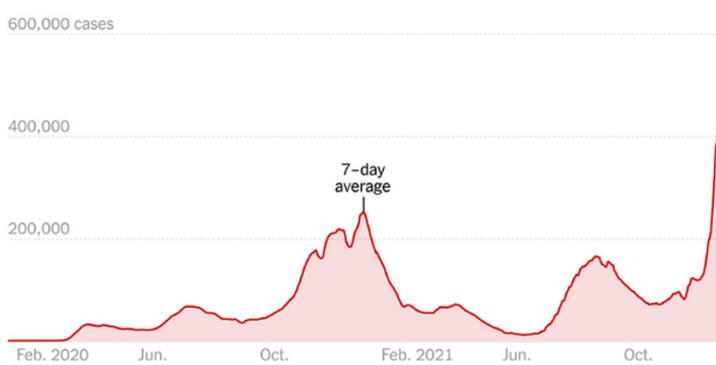




Important Omicron Variant Information

Omicron continues to be a fast-spreading COVID variant. (See the graph of U.S. cases below.) We are increasingly reliant on at-home rapid antigen tests to tell us whether we have COVID or not. The news about the tests' effectiveness is both good and bad.



- The good news: Rapid antigen tests can definitely detect Omicron.
- The bad news: Research shows that rapid tests may be less sensitive to Omicron than to other variants. That means the tests may yield false negatives, especially in the early days of infection.

The rapid tests are less sensitive with Omicron because 1) lower levels of Omicron can infect someone; 2) this variant has a shorter incubation period, meaning someone can receive a negative rapid test result and become infectious hours later; and 3) some scientists think throat swabs work better than a nasal swab for early detection of COVID.

So, you have a better chance of an accurate result from a rapid test if you do the following: 1) wait a day or two after symptoms develop to test since a negative rapid-test result in the early days of infection may be unreliable; 2) protect others during this waiting period if you have symptoms; 3) if your test is negative, take a second test a day or two later; 4) regardless of your test results, if you are coughing, sneezing, and have a fever, stay away from others; and 5) remember that false positives are rare. If you have a positive rapid test, you almost definitely have COVID.

Thursday Live on Facebook Each Week

Rev. Steven Martin and Rev. Mark Flynn host an hour-long Facebook Live event each Thursday beginning at 11 am.

2022 Budget In The Making

Our Church Council will finalize our 2022 general budget soon. They wait to take this important step until the most up-to-date information is available, including the total amount given to fund our congregation's ministries in the previous year. In 2021, our congregation received \$1,498,682 in revenue. The following chart illustrates our financial trends.

Year	Approved budget	Actual revenue	Actual expenses	Surplus(Deficit)
2017	1,548,113	1,504,543	1,521,058	(16,515)
2018	1,534,240	1,420,718	1,481,546	(60,828)
2019	1,491,136	1,482,807	1,482,807	0
2020	1,450,980	1,534,201	1,396,742	137,459
2021	1,422,200	1,498,682	1,417,572	81,110

These numbers offer insight into some trends, such as our decreasing budget. In 2017, aware that many of our strongest-giving members were also our oldest members, the Finance Committee and Church Council set a goal of decreasing the budget by 2% each year until income and expenses were in alignment. As shown above, we have reduced the budget by approximately 9%, or \$126,000, since 2017.

With this history in mind, the Finance Committee proposes that the Church Council set our 2022 general budget at \$1,413,234, which represents a .6% reduction from the 2021 budget.

Children's Ministry News

Children and Family Ministries Director Shelby Fowler recently attended a Children's Pastor Conference where she received valuable information on how to better this ministry. She looks forward to implementing this knowledge during our weekend services. FirstKids has a steady number of children joining us each week in our nursery and Sunday School. In order to continue to make our ministry the best and safest place for our students, we need volunteers. We are in need of teachers for our Pre-K lessons as well as our K-6th grade classes. If you feel led to help in this ministry, email Shelby Fowler.

Children and Family Ministry Mask Update

Masks will be required by all staff, volunteers and children during all children's activities and programs. This will include all Sunday morning activities, nursery, Children's Choir, and camps. If you have any questions, please email Shelby Fowler at sfowler@fumcor.org.

New Members

Kathy & Jim Boullie (Sun 1/16)

Baptism

Aviana "Avi" Sky Dawn (Sun 1/16)

Our Gifts

Weekly 12/27/2021 — 1/2/2022:

\$38,331.55

Weekly 1/3/2022 — 1/9/2022:

\$17,087.85

Weekly 1/10/2022 — 1/16/2022:

\$38,390.71

2022 YTD offering:

\$72,952

2021 YTD offering:

\$91,389

Monthly Mission Special offering:

\$490.00

Worship for January 23

Third Sunday After Epiphany

Sermon: Communion Doesn't Mean What We Think It Does
Scripture: Exodus 2:1-13

8:45 & 11:00 am Traditional Services

11:00 am Contemporary Service

Preaching: Mark Flynn, Lead Pastor



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Pastors

Mark Flynn, lead

Jenny Caughman, spiritual care

Seth O'Kegley-Gibson, worship

Contact Information

865.483.4357 www.fumcor.org

Pastor on call: 865.272.9862

Grief Support Group

Losing someone we love is never easy—and the pandemic has not made it easier. Because we recognize the value of both learning about the grief experience and meeting with others who are also grieving, FUMC will be offering a Grief Support Group starting in February. The group will be led by retired counselor Steve Herbes and will meet virtually on Mondays from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. for 8 weeks, beginning February 21. The group provides an opportunity to understand the grief experience and a safe, supportive community in which to express and explore grief. It is open to those who lost their loved one in the last year, or perhaps earlier. There is no cost for participation, but pre-registration is requested. For more information or to register, contact the church office or Rev. Jenny Caughman.

Website Registration Difficulties?

Everything on our website is open to browse without creating an account. For privacy and security, an account is required to participate in online courses, such as Mark and Seth's class, "Why We Worship As We Do." Bots are continuously creating fake accounts on our site. The best way to prevent them from gaining access and causing trouble is through a double-opt-in system.

To create an account on our website, please visit <https://fumcor.org/register/> and complete the form. Be sure to check your spam folder if you do not immediately receive the email needed to complete your registration. If you have trouble, please contact Steve at communications@fumcor.org. Once you have created your account, you have access all the protected features on our website.

Inclement Weather Policy Reminder

Winter weather has finally made its debut, and we have noticed some confusion regarding our church closure policy. The church office, Keystone, and First Steps all take their cue from Oak Ridge Schools. When Oak Ridge Schools are closed, begin late, or leave early due to snow or extreme weather, the same will apply to the offices and programs of the church.

Sunday services will always be held. A few of our worship leaders can walk to church if necessary. However, please do not travel in snow and/or ice if you have any concerns. Your remaining safe is the most important thing.