

YOU'RE INVITED!



**BACK TO
SCHOOL**

**BACK TO
CHURCH**



**BLESSING OF BACKPACKS • KEYCHAINS
LORD'S PRAYER BOOKS • SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE**



**14th
AUGUST**

BACKPACK SUNDAY
Paragould First United Methodist
Church

**WORSHIP
8, 9, 11AM**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL 10AM
PROMOTION SUNDAY**



More Info:



870.239.8541



fumcparagould.org



Dear First United Methodist Church,

WELCOME BACK! After a busy summer, I am looking forward to having everyone in worship together again on Sunday, August 14! Our annual **Backpack Sunday** will include celebrating our return to school and academic-year church activities. Also, on that Sunday, children will move into their new Sunday School class (if applicable) - known as **Promotion Sunday**.

Students of all ages are encouraged to join us, including bringing their backpacks, for a prayer of blessing in preparation for the school year. Students will receive a keychain for the backpacks as a sign of the church's support. We encourage all education-related faculty and staff to be present so that they too might be recognized, and share in prayer for the coming academic year.

During this back-to-school season, FUMC will share in its annual **School Supply Drive** in support of both Paragould & Greene County Tech School Districts. We strongly encourage you to purchase some of the following items and bring them to church through Sunday, August 28. This is an important ministry of support for our local schools and students in need. Financial donations are also welcomed.

Hand Sanitizer | Facial Tissues | Pocket Folders | Wet Wipes | Black, Blue, Red Pens | Backpacks | Washable Markers | Highlighters | Glue Sticks | Rulers | Spiral Notebooks | Loose Leaf Paper | Crayons | Dry Erase Markers | Blunt Scissors | Cap Erasers | Q/G Ziplock Bags | 3 Ring Binders | Composition Journals | Pencils | Bottles of Glue

On August 14 we will begin a new **Sermon Series** titled "**The Most Important Prayer**"- including a gift! That Sunday we will provide every household a book (or two) to accompany the sermon series on the Lord's Prayer. There is no Biblical text or element of worship more central to the Christian tradition than the Lord's Prayer. The words of the prayer are well known, but the depths of spiritual insight can always be explored further. That is our goal in this series with the help of two books. We will give every child a copy of *The Most Important Prayer of All* written by Rev. Adam Hamilton with the help of his granddaughter Stella. This is a wonderful children's book that teaches young children the Lord's Prayer. My hope is that each household will make use of this book for that purpose. For teens and adults, we are sharing a copy of *May It Be So* by Justin McRoberts & Scott Erickson. This is an unconventional devotional book which includes creative essays and intriguing art. I am particularly fond of Scott's illustrations and have had a chance to work with him on previous projects. I am so happy to introduce you all to his work. I chose this book because it is so different from typical devotionals. When studying something we know well, like the Lord's Prayer, it helps to have a fresh perspective.

We'll see everyone in church on Sunday, August 14 as we (1) Pray for Backpacks, Students and Teachers; (2) Promote Children and Youth into new Sunday School Classes; and (3) begin The Most Important Prayer sermon series with gift devotional books for everyone! It'll be a great Sunday! As we get "Back to School" let's get "Back to Church"! Let us worship and grow together!

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Dane

YOUNG AT HEART



AUGUST

8/8 Movies in the movie room at 1pm
8/17 Partovi's & ASU Museum
8/22 Game Night in the Welcome Center at 5:30pm

AUGUST 7, 4-7PM

remember your baptism

An event for youth at Crowley's Ridge State Park

YOUTH
80'S WORSHIP GLOW PARTY
AUGUST 14 AT 5PM

PARAGOULD FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The most important PRAYER

SERMON SERIES
AUG 14 - SEPT 18

FREE BOOKS!
CHILDRENS-FAMILY BOOK
TEEN-ADULT DEVOTIONAL

THE MOST IMPORTANT PRAYER OF ALL
STELLA LEARNS THE LORD'S PRAYER
Written by Adam Hamilton
Illustrated by Kristine and James Hamilton

MAY IT BE SO
Forty Days with the Lord's Prayer
JUSTIN MCROBERTS & SCOTT ERICKSON



Pencils, crayons, and gluesticks! Oh my! It's August, so it's back to school time! For some, it may be a little sad to end the lazy days of summer and get back into a routine. For others, it's exciting new possibilities, fresh clean pages of notebook paper, and reuniting with friends. As a teacher, August is the beginning of my year, not January. I always think in terms of the "new year" being when school starts. In terms of our Children's Ministry, it's not any different. August is the beginning of all of the fun activities surrounding our children at FUMC until we rest next summer. It takes a village to make it all happen. If you would like to be in on the fun, let me know!

Our two August events are the end of summer swim party at the Paragould Community Center on August 10 at 6pm and our Backpack/Promotion Sunday on August 14! This will be a special Sunday for our children as they move up to their new Sunday School classes and receive a special blessing for back to school. Please have your children bring their backpacks to church on August 14. If you're in education in ANY form (teacher, paraprofessional, administration, school nurse, bus driver, custodian, etc.), bring your teaching bag, wear your school's shirt/colors, or something else that identifies you as being involved in education. We want to celebrate and bless you, too!

Our Sunday School Teachers this fall are:
 PreK-Kindergarten: Scarlett McMunn and Jessica Brewer
 1st and 2nd Grades: Susie Cook and Kelsey Matheny
 3rd and 4th Grades: Hayley Richardson

In my world, I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year!

Blessings,
 Angela
 Director of Children's Ministries



An invitation to investing!

The two questions most relevant to our younger generations are : "What is the purpose (cause affected)?" and "Where is my place?" We experience life in a number of expressions. As believers in the Gospel, we understand that the Gospel is lived out in our lives through those expressions. As a member or guest of the church, you will find that the church offers a number of worshipful expressions and experiences. The Sunday School experience is designed with a focus on the Bible. Sunday school is a critical component in being active and participating within ones spiritual growth and within the Body of Christ. It is a spiritual investment! For youth, participating in Sunday School Bible Study gives them a basis for critically considering their faith in order to increase depth and their personal participation within the Body of Christ. This is a community in which everyone has a place as we share in understanding and growing in our faith.

Fall Planning! Parents/Guardians/Church Members!!!! We are gearing up for a wonderful fall season! We need all hands on deck. If you would like to know more about being an adult partner in youth ministry, follow the link and complete the short survey!
<https://info8.aidaform.com/adult-partner>



Purpose & Place

Today's emerging adults (aged 18 to 25ish) are a subgroup of the Homeland Generation (which includes people born from 1997-2012). Most of them are digital natives, meaning they grew up with access to digital communications technology. Many of them are studying for degrees, or beginning careers. Some of them are starting families and buying homes. Gen Z holds a communal focus of finding a purpose and a place.

During this season, the busyness of life arises - new responsibilities, future planning, balancing time with loved ones, becoming more independent, and the list goes on. During the chaos of it all, there is still a drive to name one's purpose and place. Core's purpose is to provide a stable faith community here at home. You have a place to connect here. If you are going to school locally, across the state, or beyond. We meet each Sunday at 10 o'clock for Sunday School (come as you are and when you can), we stay connected through instagram (follow us @ firstcore.pfumc), and we gather for social and missional events during the summer and during semester breaks.

Life is exciting, crazy, busy, hard, wonderful, stressful and amazing. We share life and faith in community. Come join us at Core - a place to explore the experience of faith and life.

DELIVER TO WELCOME CENTER BY AUG. 28

PARAGOULD FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

Hand Sanitizer | Facial Tissues | Pocket Folders | Wet Wipes | Black, Blue, Red Pens | Backpacks | Washable Markers | Highlighters | Glue Sticks | Rulers | Spiral Notebooks | Loose Leaf Paper | Crayons | Dry Erase Markers | Blunt Scissors | Cap Erasers | Quart/Gallon Ziplock Bags | 3 Ring Binders | Composition Journals | Pencils | Bottles of Glue



SUPPLIES WILL BE SHARED WITH PARAGOULD & GREENE COUNTY TECH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

MONETARY DONATIONS WELCOMED

Chancel Choir back August 3

Have you ever flirted with the idea of giving the choir a try but thought "I don't want to jump in after they've been working on this material for so long"? NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME. Our choir numbers are reaching a critical low and we need you.

Don't just take my word for it! Here are a few words from one of our dedicated choir members, Bob Reynolds:

"...We cannot do justice to much of the music we would love to do simply because we do not have enough members. If you can sing "Happy Birthday", you can sing in our choir. We are a choir made up of imperfect people who are under the direction of a great leader who helps us "get it right" most of the time, and we would love for ANYONE who has ever thought about joining us to come give us a try. We all help each other, and with Brian's and Bernard's leadership, we can do even greater things, but we need YOU. There are several rather ambitious things that we would love to try, but simply do not have the numbers..."

I prayerfully look forward to your presence on August 3rd! Come and have dinner with us at 5pm, followed by rehearsal at 6pm. We will then resume regular weekly rehearsals at 6pm every Wednesday night in the sanctuary. We will sing again in the loft on August 14.

Yours in Christ and in song,
Brian Pearson
Director of Music Ministries



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Our Sunday School classes happen each Sunday at 10am. Everyone is welcome to join any class.

Homemakers

Contact: Mary Justice

Location: Chapel

Literature: Adult Bible Studies

Coffee Break

Contact: Jason Weatherford

Location: Gathering Room (off of kitchen)

Literature: Various studies

Pairs & Spares

Contact: Everett Rogers

Location: First floor education wing

Literature: Adult Bible Studies

Transitions

Contact: Andrea Pearson

Location: Fleming Worship Center

Literature: Various Studies

Wesley

Contact: Robin Patten

Location: Community Room

Literature: Various Studies

Fellowship

Contact: Nancy Cupp, Sheila Ragsdale

Location: First floor education wing

Literature: Adult Bible Studies

Sisters in Spirit

Contact: Janice Wilcox

Location: First floor education wing

Literature: Adult Bible Studies

Why should you be in Sunday School and why is it important?

First, Sunday school is important because of its basic purpose - Christian education. In Sunday school persons of all ages learn about God, the Bible and God's will for each person's life. The Bible is the Christian's "handbook for life." Within its pages we learn about what's right and what's wrong. We see examples of people who followed God and those who rejected His leading. And, we learn about Jesus Christ, His teaching, and the Way of Salvation that is available through Him.

Second, Sunday school is important because of how people are taught. Sermons are important, but they are one-size-fits-all sermons with little opportunity for discussion or questions. But, in Sunday school, you can ask questions, discuss, and share personal insights and experiences as you really dig into the Scriptures.

Third, Sunday school is important because it is age specific. Preschoolers don't have the same understanding of sin, grace and many other Christian concepts as adults. And, the problems and concerns that junior high students face are much different from those of senior citizens. That's why, in Sunday school, we divide students according to their age, interest and education so that they can get the maximum benefits from each lesson.

Fourth, Sunday school is important because of the fellowship that it promotes. We all need friends. We all need Christian friends, persons that we can share with, confide in, laugh with and be accountable to. And, Sunday school is one of the best places to see such Christian relationships develop.

And, fifth, Sunday school is important because of the opportunities for service that it promotes.

Why is Sunday school important? Because the Bible and the central character of the Book - Jesus Christ - are important! If you believe that Jesus Christ is important, shouldn't you have the desire to learn more about Him by reading the Bible and then coming together with other Christians to really dig into God's word in Sunday school?

—Taken from "In Defense of Sunday School for Kids-and Adults" article by Rodney L. Pry in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

FALL CALENDAR

Highlights

- Aug 19-21 Youth Back-to-School Trip to Memphis
- Aug. 28, 3pm, Sun. - Safety & Security Training - Worship Center
- Sept. 7 - Nov. 16 Connect Wednesday
- Sept. 16 & 17 FUMC volunteer at Get Downtown Festival
- Sept. 18, Sun. - Youth Cookout & Color War Connexional Event
- Sept. 30, Fri. - Oct 2, Sun. - Youth Retreat @ Mt. Eagle
- Oct. 1-31 ARUMC Ingathering
- Oct. 16 - Laity Appreciation Sunday
- Oct. 16, Sun. - 5pm Church Council Meeting
- Oct. 23, Sun. - Youth Pumpkin Hollow Connexional Event
- Oct. 30, Sun. - Trunk-or-Treat
- Nov. 1, Tue. - 5th & 6th Graders "Turkey Tuesday" Volunteer at Witt House
- Nov. 6 - All Saints Sunday
- Nov. 8, Tue. - 7th-9th Graders "Turkey Tuesday" Volunteer at Witt House
- Nov. 15th, Tue. - 10th-12th Graders "Turkey Tuesday" Volunteer at Witt House
- Nov. 17, Thur. - N.E. Districtwide Charge Conference (6:30pm via Zoom)
- Nov. 19, Sat. - Called Session ARUMC Annual Conference, St. James UMC (10am-4pm)
- Nov. 21, Mon. - Called Session ARUMC Annual Conference (6-8pm via Zoom)
- Nov. 20, Sun. - Youth Hanging of Greens Service Sanctuary
- Nov. 27 - First Sunday of Advent / College Student Sunday
- Dec. 4, Sun. - Children's Christmas Program
- Dec. 11, Sun. - Youth Christmas Progressive Dinner
- Dec. 18, Sun. - Choral Christmas Concert
- Dec. 24, Sat. - Christmas Eve Services - Noon, 5pm, 7pm, 11pm
- Dec. 25, Sunday - Christmas Day - 10am One Service in the Sanctuary



Dear FUMC,

As we prepare for the school year and return to a more normal household & church schedule, I want to share with you some reflections on our congregation as I see it from the "pastor's desk."

I thank you for your steadfastness and support over these last three years. Because UMC pastoral appointments go from July to June, this month feels more like the start of the year than January. Rev. Chase and I have just completed three years with FUMC Paragould and are now joyfully beginning our fourth.

It has been well-documented why our time together has been different. I have very little memory of FUMC pre-pandemic. This sometimes makes it difficult for me to understand our congregation. How have we changed? What's next? What's missing? These are questions many churches and institutions are asking. I ponder them daily. Below are a few thoughts.

Let's look at attendance numbers. In 2019 our in-person attendance averaged 350 per Sunday. Online participation was mostly an afterthought back then. Below is our attendance data for 2022 to this point:

IN-PERSON				ONLINE		GRAND TOTAL
8am	9am	11am	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLDS PER WEEK	2.5 per HOUSEHOLD	
23	150	83	256	55	140	396

We worship about 256 folks in-person per week right now. Current in-person attendance is 73% of pre-pandemic attendance. The professionals who study this sort of thing including our own Conference leaders tell us this is above average. FUMC Paragould has performed well relative to other churches of similar size in return to in-person worship.

During the pandemic we got more serious about online worship. We have worked to improve the experience in many ways. We believe we average about 55 households online per week, most of whom are FUMC members who are diligent in their worship and prefer to do so online. We do not count folks who worship on delay, via television, or on radio broadcasts.

I hope FUMC members would try and be at worship in-person whenever possible. If you are in good health and able to do so, come to church! We want to see you in-person! We want to greet you and share together in a way we simply cannot online. At the same time, I understand the necessity of online or television worship. We have very faithful members who cannot be present for reasons beyond their control who tune in every week. They tell me and I understand how much worshiping from home means to them. Thank God we have that option.

How has in-person participation changed? My sense is not so much that less people come to church, but that people come to church less. Folks who once worshiped 3 to 4 Sundays per month now attend once or twice. National data indicates the average American church goer now attends 26 times per year. We most experience this change in consistency in smaller settings. One week a Sunday School class will have 12-15 and the next week it will have 3-4. We may have 25 for youth at a special event, then only 5 the next week. Some adult Sunday School classes are not meeting at all. We have challenges in the 11am service, including in the choir.

Our culture has changed a great deal these last few years. Between two election cycles and the challenges of C19, our communities are not as close. This is true across the nation, in large & small towns, churches, civic organizations, and so on. People again travel for recreation. Many folks are now able to work remotely. More denominational upheaval puts stress on our system. Admittedly, things were more simple in 2017, 18, 19...

I hear from our church members, "We don't feel as close as we used to." I'm sure that is true. We've been through a lot. Things have changed. Youth have graduated and moved to college. Entire families have moved to new communities. In church this is a self-perpetuating challenge. We feel less connected so we come less often. Which leads to feeling less connected. Which leads to coming less often. And so on. There is no church where this is not true.

As we begin a new school year together, I want to offer you a spiritual challenge to grow in your consistency in sharing in ministry at FUMC. There is no guilt or shame! We've been through a lot and we all process at our own pace. But I want to see you more often! There is no reason we should not average 30 (8am), 200 (9am), and 100 (11am) in-person worshipers each week. We have 1000 members. 330 in attendance per Sunday should not be a challenge. Let's begin to grow in that direction. Let's expect to see each other most Sundays. Let us recommit to our Sunday School classes. Let us bring our children and youth to church regularly. Children/youth only participate in church as often as their parents/guardians. I want you to join me in dreaming again about being a growing church. When was the last time you invited someone to join you at church?

I feel a tension in pastoral leadership when it comes to communicating the Gospel. First and foremost, the Grace of God in Jesus Christ is free to anyone. You do nothing to earn God's Love. It's all forgiveness and goodness and care on God's behalf for your good. Come as you are! At the same time, we commit ourselves to Jesus through tangible action. Christ calls his followers to "deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The United Methodist membership vows include supporting your church through "presence, prayers, gifts, service, and witness." I pray this August marks a return to a deeper level of consistency and commitment for FUMC. We have a wonderful church. We need to be together in worship, in small groups, in youth and children's ministries. I look forward to seeing you!

- Rev. Dane

WITT HOUSE

How are things at the Witt House? Busy! As of this day, July 20, we have served 229 households, which accounts for 674 neighbors. This month we have added 72 new households or 206 more individuals.

We are so thankful to our VBS kids and their generous gifts of canned food.

At the closing of each pantry day, we're finding our shelves close to bare. And, of course, our monthly bills are growing- as are anyone's who goes to the grocery store. As I am writing this summary, I'm thinking of how gloomy it sounds. But it is also joyful - joyful because of our many volunteers, because of the generosity of our congregation, and joyful because of the privilege of Loving God, Serving people, and Making a difference. Together we can do this.

Next time you are at the store, please consider picking up a can or two for the Witt House.

—Mary Justice

The Witt House can always use peanut butter and pinto beans. There are receptacles in the Narthex and Welcome Center for donations that are given directly to this food pantry. The demand for food increases every month and the costs associated are also rising. Please consider gifts of food and money to cover the great need we currently have.



Above: food contributed by the kids at VBS that was donated to the Witt House

WELCOME BACK

Connect Wednesday Returns

September 7-November 16

5:00 pm Dinner is Served

6:00 pm Adult Study group, Youth Group,
5th and 6th Group, Children's Groups, Choir Practice

7:30 pm Praise Band Practice

Nurse available

Love God. Serve People. Make a Difference.

Finance

2022 Budget

\$1,269,130

July 2022

General Contributions: \$60,581

Building/100 Year Contributions: \$26,227

A Dollar A Week

\$4,277 to date

Memorials

In Memory of:

Danny Thomas by Janice Wilcox, Farrah Wilcox, Robin Patten, Larry & Denise Chipman, George & Susie Cook

Leon Giguere by Janice Wilcox, Kay & Herb Bland, Larry & Denise Chipman, Bob Branch

Carolyn Haynes by Kay & Herb Bland, Bob Branch

Joan Ratton by Robin Patten, John Wyatt, Kay & Herb Bland, Larry & Denise Chipman, Donna & Charles

Brazil, Bob Branch, Ed & Carol Clary, Gerald & Janet

Butler, Carolyn Samuel, Debbie DeVault, Dane & Jill Womack, Rosemary Fortner, Janice Wilcox, John & Ann Honeycutt, Shelia Ragsdell, Joe & Noreen

Williams, Beth Deweese, Bob & Carolyne Childress,

Phillip & Paige Wooldridge, Betty Fletcher, George &

Susie Cook, Jason Tritch, Lane, Courtney, Connor, Cohen,

& Cross McMurry

Jim Keith by Bill & Diane Brewer, Michael Roleson, Kay & Herb Bland, Melvin & Sandra Wamock, Bob &

Carolyne Childress, Bill & Pat Phillips, Fred & Judy

Workman, Mary Ann Allen, Donna & David Jones, John

Jacob & Carrie Cook, Joe & Noreen Williams, Mike &

Mary Harvey, Jimmy C. Dodd, Jr., Dr. Lawrence D.

Dodd, Bonnie & Donis Hamilton, Phillip & Paige

Wooldridge, Betty Fletcher, Gary & Beverly Biggs,

George & Susie Cook, Sherland & Barbara Hamilton

Donna Vaughn by PHS Class of 1968

Terry Waits by John Wyatt, George & Susie Cook

Dick Pace by John Wyatt, Janice Wilcox, Gary & Beverly

Biggs

Jack Blackshear by Phillip & Paige Wooldridge

Jasper Poindexter by Mary Ann Stallcup

Bob Peel by George & Susie Cook

Fred Swindle by Charles & Jan Long

In honor of:

Bob Branch by Jeff & Theresa Branch

• **BACK TO SCHOOL**
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SUNDAY AUGUST 14th

10am SUNDAY SCHOOL | **BLESSING OF BACKPACKS**
8, 9, 11am WORSHIP | **SUNDAY SCHOOL PROMOTION**

giveaway
 LORD'S PRAYER
 STUDY BOOK
 FOR EVERYONE

First United Methodist Church
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 72450

info@fumcparagould.org **870.239.8541**

Office Hours: 8:30-4:30 Monday-Thursday
 8:30-noon Friday



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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