

JAN./FEB. 2024

The Flame



A Word from Our Pastor

Greetings Paragould First United Methodist Church!

Those peas and greens have not paid off like I had hoped! 2024 is off to a strange start. In my extended family we experienced some challenging health diagnoses. Our household joined many in battling the stomach bug! The snow disrupted plans and expectations. On a much more serious note, our church has faced unexpected losses and funerals. The new year did not start like I expected or hoped. Perhaps we can soon re-settle into life-giving patterns.

As I reflect on this new year I am reminded of the oft-quoted verses from Romans 12, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer...Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another." I give thanks for the church and specifically this church and the ways in which it cares for its members. As pastor, I so often get to witness your willingness to "weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice." This is the great gift of the church. Here we find a constant community of care, support, and companionship. We need these gifts in the new year, middle of the year, end of year, and all the time.

At our Leadership Orientation meeting (Jan. 7) we shared reflections on the year past and hope for the year to come. 2023 was a wonderful year including: Quality Youth and Children's Ministries, including Sunday School, small groups, Connect Wednesday, Ozark Mission Project, VBS, Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas celebrations, Backpack Sunday, Trunk-or-Treat, ARUMC Retreats, Ready Set READ!, etc.; special events like "Bach Mobile" concert, "Jubilation Jazz" concert, Women's Ministries such as Galentines Social & Tea Party, Men's Breakfast, etc.; "Permissive Use Agreement" with the Greene County Historical Society at 320. W. Main; as part of the 2022 Next 100 Years debt reduction campaign we completed the office suite renovation on budget and on time; FUMC's growth in worship attendance and participation.

This January we are sharing in our 2024 Stewardship Series and Study based on the Adam Hamilton book *Enough: Discovering Joy through Simplicity & Generosity*. February 4 will be Commitment Sunday. As part of our series, we celebrated the work of the Witt House Food Pantry in 2023! (more information on page 5) As part of our stewardship series and other yearly communications, I have shared many financial notes. I refer you to those other letters or inserts for a detailed update on capital matters!



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We are giving thanks for the wonderful turnout and support of our "Let's Taco 'Bout Marriage" couples night (Jan. 21)! Pastor Greg Schick (St. James UMC Little Rock) gave a wonderful talk on marriage including the importance of teamwork, communication, and forgiveness. In his closing point, he compared our marriages to our sanctuaries or worship centers. Especially in a sanctuary as old ours there are many imperfections. Scratches on pews or the communion rail. Communion stains in the carpet. Water damage and ongoing repairs. But the imperfections make the space no less holy or beautiful. And so it is with our marriages. They contain all our imperfections but also make space for holiness, grace, and growth. This powerful metaphor will stick with me for some time. Thanks again to everyone who came. I think that "format" of an adult-themed discipleship and fellowship opportunity is something that can be repeated and further developed! Stay tuned!

Other upcoming ministry and fellowship opportunities include the return of Connect Wednesday (Jan. 31); Galentine's Women Social (Feb. 10); Youth Tailgate Party (Feb. 10); Soup-er Bowl Fundraiser (Feb. 11); and Youth at Veritas (Feb. 23-25). We will welcome guests from the United Methodist Committee on Relief on Sunday, March 10. And it will not be long before Holy Week and Easter, including Palm Sunday (Mar 24), Maundy Thursday Noon & 6pm (Mar 28), Good Friday Noon & 6pm (Mar 29), Children's Egg Hunt (Mar 30), and Easter Sunday on March 31! More details throughout this newsletter.

As this season of Epiphany winds down, we will soon turn our attention to Lent. Ash Wednesday services are February 14 at Noon and 6pm in the FUMC Sanctuary. I look forward to seeing you then as we share in this season of reflection and repentance. Lent may seem somber, but I find it to be enriching and honest. We admit our frailty, search our hearts, and long for God's healing and wholeness. We know the great joy of Easter is awaiting us, but it is good to spend time focusing on the cursed cross and the Christ who died there. In considering Jesus' death, we see the great value God places on our souls. And we realize again how foolishly we have wasted our time and energy in silly sins and lack of discipline. Oh, that our lives might reflect the goodness of our Lord.

Grace & Peace,
Rev. Dane Womack
Senior Pastor of Paragould FUMC



Soup-er Bowl Sunday Participation Information--your playbook!

1. You can participate individually, or as a Sunday School class, group, or family. Just participate by making a crock pot full of soup on Feb. 11.
2. Next, gather your players, pay your admission (donations of money and/or canned food for the Witt House), and come eat!
3. Finally, bring extra cash and canned goods. Use them to tip the best soup and help us select the winner. The Soup-er Bowl champion will be the Witt House and their clients. We will announce an MFP (Most Favored/Flavored Player(s)) based on the tips.
4. If you have more spirit, consider bringing it up a notch and design a table decor theme to set your soup apart from the competition.
5. Want to be noticed as a rookie? Just show up and carry your two cups of soup around to sample...OR...be that experienced veteran and seasoned player and bring a 6-or 12-position muffin tin. This is the perfect size to carry several soup samples at once.
6. Sign up by calling the church office (870-239-8541), adding your name to the list in the Welcome Center, or by contacting Tracy Finch (870-215-1461). If you are providing soup you need to sign up in advance; we need to know how many soup stations to set up and ensure we provide enough electrical plugs and soup cups. This event will be in the gym on Sunday, February 11. Come and eat anytime from 11am-1pm.



The youth have decided to do something different this year. Instead of having a Super Bowl party and watching the game, they will meet the night before and eat tailgate food, play games, and watch a football movie in the gym. We will get the blow up big screen out for the movie. The fun starts at 5:30pm. Everyone is invited to join in, so please invite your friends for this special event!

Hello FUMC Friends!

I hope everyone is having a great start to 2024! Just a few updates about the children's department. We have some wonderful volunteers that lead our children in Sunday School and Connect Wednesdays. If your children have yet to participate in these activities, please bring them! We have a great time and they learn so much! If you have questions and are curious about what it's all about, I would be happy to answer them for you.

I know schedules get busy, but come when you can. We love seeing your children, whether it's on Sundays, Wednesdays, or both! Encourage them to bring a friend! The more the merrier!

Blessings!

Mrs. Angela Newby, Director of Children's Ministries

Thank you to these wonderful ladies that are making disciples of Jesus Christ!

Sunday School Teachers:

Jill Womack: Three Year Olds

Shani Barnhill: Pre-K-Kindergarten

Susie Cook: First and Second Grades

Hayley Richardson: Third and Fourth Grades

Kersten Herget: Fifth and Sixth Grades



Greetings FUMC Friends-

As we are closing out January, I am hopeful that the new year is off to a good start for you. As I know it has been a challenging start for some in our church family and community, I continue to pray for peace and comfort for you and your family.

With the beginning of a new year comes a lot of planning to fill our days with meaningful fellowship, spreading God's love, and serving others. We will be back in full swing with Connect Wednesday and youth events starting back up soon. As we return to regular programming for the spring semester, there are several opportunities for youth to attend, including weekend trips and connect Wednesday activities. The youth will be taking our annual trip to Veritas in February. The youth and I are looking forward to this year's event in Fort Smith as it is being held in a new location. I know the days are busy with all types of activities; youth are always welcome to join in on an activity when available. Any parent or youth that would like an updated youth calendar of events, please let me know and I will get a copy to you. I am looking forward to getting back into our spring activities at Paragould FUMC and hope you can join me, as well. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Mary Hickox

FUMC Director of Youth

VERITAS

Veritas is the largest event of the ACCYM (Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries) of the year. It is hosted at the Ft. Smith Convention Center in Ft. Smith, AR. The event concentrates on offering an incredible worship experience with nationally renowned speakers, bands, and specialized artists. Between worship sessions, Veritas provides various opportunities to connect in community with others through a Ministry Mart, which is full of ministry opportunities for all, and Saturday options. Youth can participate in Saturday options, such as mission opportunities, a prayer room, learning workshops, and other activities with your local church group. In addition, visiting vendors are offered after the lunch break. Devotionals are also provided to each church to be discussed each night after the last activity ends as a way to reflect on the day's experiences together.

This is an opportunity for grades 7-12. February 23-25. The cost is \$100; scholarships are available. See Mary or Denise for more information. You can register on the church center app. All adults that attend must be safe gatherings certified.



CONNECT WEDNESDAY RETURNS!

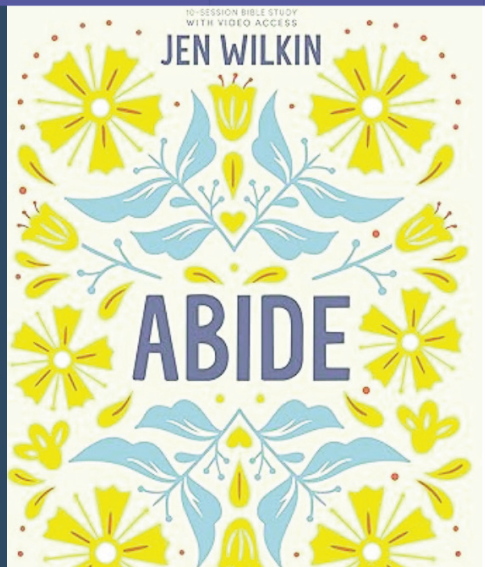
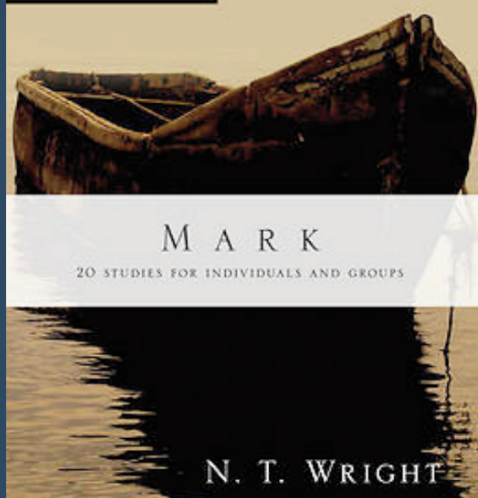
CONNECT WEDNESDAY SPRING '24 | Jan. 31 - April 24

4:00 PM	Pastor's Adult Study: Gospel of Mark	Community Room
5:45-8:00 PM	Nursery Available (birth - 3)	Nursery
5:00 PM	Dinner	Fellowship Hall / Gym
6:00 PM	Children's Activities (PreK-6th)	Children's Area
	Youth (7th-12th) Small Group	Youth Room
	Pastor's Adult Study: Gospel of Mark	Community Room
7:10 PM	Choir	Sanctuary
	Women's Study: ABIDE: Study of 1, 2, 3 John by Jenn Wilkin	Youth Room
7:30 PM	Praise Band Practice	Worship Center

NOTE: Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday services Noon & 6pm. Dinner 5pm.

NOTE: March 20: Spring Break. No meal or activities.

FOR EVERYONE
BIBLE STUDY GUIDES



Young at Heart Upcoming Events

- February 12 at 1pm * Movie Club in the 3rd floor movie room
- February 26 at 5:30 pm * Game Night in the welcome center
- February 29 at noon * Potluck Luncheon in the gym
- March 11 at 1pm * Movie Club in the 3rd floor movie room
- March 25 at 5:30 pm * Game Night in the welcome center
- March 28 at noon * Potluck Luncheon in the gym

Movies are free; all other activities are dutch treat.

Programming will start back on January 31 and will end on April 24. On February 14 we will have Ash Wednesday services in lieu of our regular Connect Wednesday programming; we will still serve the meal starting at 5pm. We will have no activities on March 20 due to Spring Break.

The pastors will lead a study on Wednesdays at 4pm & 6pm (the same study offered at two different times) in the community room. This will be a study on the book of Mark by N.T. Wright. Everyone is welcome to join this study.

A women's study will start at 7:10 and will be held in the youth room on the second floor. All are welcome! This will be a 10-session study on the books of 1, 2, and 3 John.

Children and youth have activities from 6-7pm. Children (Pre-K-6th grade) will rotate among games, art, storytime and music. Youth (7-12th grade) will meet for devotions and games in the youth room on the second floor.

The chancel choir meets from 6-7:15pm in the sanctuary in preparation for leading worship in the 11am service each Sunday. If choir members would like to attend a Bible study, they are encouraged to attend a study at another time that does not conflict.

Connect Wednesday dinner happens every Wednesday night (with the exception of March 20 for Spring Break) from 5-6pm in the gym. Cost is \$5 per person, \$3 for children under 8 with a \$15 family maximum. You can sign up online or in the welcome center.

Coming up on the menu:

- January 31: chili, hot dogs, Fritos
- February 7: chicken spaghetti
- February 14: ham & cheese croissants
- February 21: taco soup, Fritos
- February 28: tenderloin, scalloped potatoes
- March 6: potato bar provided by youth

PARAGOULD FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

404 West Main Street, Paragould, AR 72450 | 870.239.8541 | fumcparagould.org

Love God. Serve People. Make a Difference.



WITT HOUSE
food pantry

Partnering with the Northeast Arkansas Food Bank, donors, and many volunteers, the Witt House serves food insecure families and individuals in our community including a unique foodchoice operation. The Witt House mobile distribution team delivers food and builds relationships in areas of need across Paragould. From former FUMC member Cora Witt's kitchen doorway, nutritious foods were shared with families experiencing difficult times. Emmy Witt inherited her mother's love of serving others, inspiring FUMC members to take part in helping their neighbors. The Witt House is named in their memory and honor.

The Witt House has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years. We celebrate this ministry and give thanks God is using our church to serve in this way. At the same time, we lament growing food insecurity in our community.

Additional support is always welcomed including monetary gifts, food donations (especially proteins!), and volunteers!

Witt House Year Over Year Report						
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Households	4,119	3572	2,203	2,105	2591	2513
Individuals	12,011	10,672	7,093	2,879	5,111	4765

From our neighbors & clients:

"The Witt House has been a lifesaver so many times for my family. We would have gone hungry if it wasn't for its services and very friendly volunteers. Thank you so much and God Bless."

"I am ever so thankful for the Witt House and their obedience to God's Word to help those less fortunate. God Bless you all."

"I am so proud of the Witt House. God has blessed me so much. They keep me fed and get me through hard times. God bless everybody for their time and caring. I feel the love of God at the Witt House."

"My family has been blessed by the Witt House. If it wasn't for them I could not make it from month to month."

"I have very limited income after I pay my bills each month. This month I only have five dollars left and a week left in the month. Thanks to the Witt we will have some food."

From FUMC volunteers:

"I would like everyone to understand the rich blessing that the Witt House has been for me. I always get more out of it than I put into it. Always. The number of families we serve since I began over a year ago continues to grow. There is great need in our humble community and I'm very proud to be a member of the beautiful body of Christ called FUMC. Serving Every Tuesday and Friday always renews me."

"I started volunteering at Witt House as a way to get involved in our new church family and give to the community in a meaningful way. Simply being able to share a smile or kind word with others is a blessing to me. It has also given me the opportunity to get to know the amazing team who also serves there. I look forward to my time every week!"

"We are there to help the more unfortunate, but it is so much more. If you think you are having a bad day and feeling sorry for yourself, come volunteer at the Witt House. Your situation is nothing compared to these people in need. They help me more than they could ever imagine. I am blessed, grateful, humbled, and appreciative to be able to help in any way."



Ash Wednesday

We will have our Ash Wednesday services at noon and 6pm in the church sanctuary. These services are identical. This service takes the place of our regular Connect Wednesday programming, however, dinner will still be served that night starting at 5pm.



Holy Week

- Palm Sunday*, March 24.
- Maundy Thursday*, March 28. Services at noon & 6pm in the sanctuary.
- Good Friday*, March 29. Services at noon & 6pm in the sanctuary.
- Holy Saturday*, March 30. Children's Egg Hunt at 9am.
- Easter Sunday*, March 31. Services at 8, 9, & 11am.

I was just looking over the 10-day weather forecast. I don't know why I do that, it's never accurate that far in advance. One thing is both accurate and hopeful, though - the days are getting longer. It's just a few minutes each day, barely noticeable, but those minutes add up, and 10 days from now, we will have almost 20 more minutes of sunlight in the day!

The laws of nature are tangible reminders of how God's kingdom plays out in our lives. Sometimes, when our souls feel dark, we are watching for a "big bang" while we fail to notice God is sending us increments of light. Increments that add up.

We may tend to feel restless to do some big thing for God's kingdom, or to experience God's presence in a way that blows us away. Often, God is inviting us to obedience and experience through "small knowings," or incremental changes in our lives.

One small gift I've been able to experience these last few months has been going with a few members of my Sunday School class (The "Real Good" class) and the Coffee Break class to host an event for the Pecan Grove apartment community. Nothing huge, just one little party one Sunday a month where we laugh, snack, read, and craft together with the kids. As we spend intentional quality time with these neighbors, God is inviting us to something deeper, and I am eager to see what's in store for us. If you're interested in joining us at Pecan Grove on the last Sunday of each month, let me know. We'd love to have you!

How about you? How is God's light showing up for you in a small way this season? How is God inviting you to do something small for your soul? Your family, community, or church? I pray that we may have our hearts and minds open for the small, great things God is offering us today.

Pastor Sarah

A NOTE FROM Pastor Sarah



Women's Ministry

You are invited to a
Galentine's Brunch
and
Book Exchange

Saturday, February 10
10:00 am - 11:30 am
FUMC gymnasium

*Bring one new or like-new book that you would love to share with one of our attendees!
Any topic or genre of your choosing.*

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

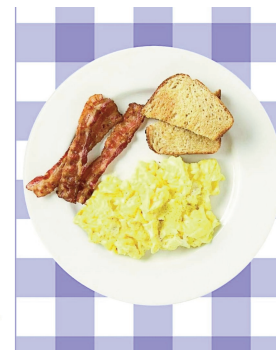
register online or in the Welcome Center

Our women's ministry is preparing for the second annual Galentine's brunch on Saturday, February 10 at 10 am in the gym. Brunch will be provided, as well as "table topics" and other activities to help us get to know one another better. Bring a new or gently used book you'd like to share for a "book swap". This will be a fun and meaningful time to celebrate the importance of friendships - both new and old! You can register on the church center app. It is not necessary to register but it does help us to plan. See you there!

Men's Ministry

METHODIST
MEN'S BREAKFAST
2024 | 1ST & 3RD THURSDAYS
NEXT:
FEBRUARY 1, 15
MARCH 7

6AM @ IRONHORSE BBQ
ALL ARE WELCOME
FELLOWSHIP & DEVO

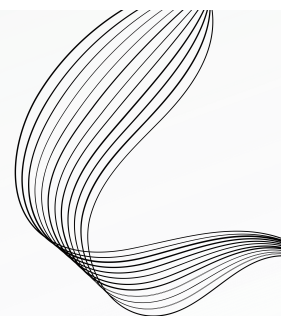


Paragould First United
Methodist Church

Take Note

MARCH 10
UMCOR SUNDAY

 **Global Ministries**
The United Methodist Church



Let's Taco 'Bout Marriage

Our first marriage event was a success! We are thankful to Pastor Greg Schick (St. James UMC Little Rock) who gave a wonderful talk on marriage, as well as the many couples who joined us to strengthen their marriages and enjoy a night out.

The children enjoyed eating pizza and watching "The Little Rascals" in the movie room during the event.

We are hopeful to have more similar events in the future.



Financial Report

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

General Contributions:

December: \$127,953

Year End: \$906,970

Building/100 Year Contributions:

December: \$228,419

Year End: \$564,224

A Dollar A Week total: \$8,092 total 2023

Building Loan Principal Balance: \$2,779,836

In Memory of:

Joy Faith Smith by Kay & Herb Bland, Denise & Larry Chipman, David & Shirley Wilson, Linda Futrell, Mike & Tracy Finch, John & Carrie Cook, Vance & Nancy Cupp, Charles & Donna Brazil, Chester & Nancy Key, Everett & Sandy Rogers, Eric & Elizabeth Newberry, Chancel Choir, Bruce & Sara Dickey, George & Susie Cook

Jim Thompson by Gene & Jill Weeks, Denise & Larry Chipman, Carla & Bob Reich, Bob Branch, George & Susie Cook

John Allen, Jr. by Denise & Larry Chipman, Gene & Jill Weeks, Kay & Herb Bland, Linda Futrell, Mike & Tracy Finch, John & Carrie Cook, Robin Patten, Charles & Donna Brazil, George & Susie Cook

Barry Morrow by Kay & Herb Bland, Larry & Denise Chipman, Bob Branch, Martha Morgan, Robin Patten, Shelia Ragsdell, Sally Martin, Vance & Nancy Cupp, George & Susie Cook

Betty Shrake by Robin Patten, Bob Branch

Charles Smith by Bob Branch

Clifford Gordon by David & Donna Jones, Bob Branch, Charlie & Crete Rhodes, David & Beverly Crawford, Robin Patten, Diane Blossom, Martha & Russell McCain, John & Carrie Cook, Mike & Tracy Finch, Charles & Donna Brazil, Phillip & Paige Wooldridge, Everett & Sandy Rogers, Virginia Odom-Boyd, John Eden, Colonel & Debbie Henson, Chester & Nancy Key, Larry & Denise Chipman, Pairs & Spares Class, Sally Martin, Joe & Jackie Barnett, Janice Wilcox, Carolyn Samuel, Debbie DaVault, Davey Joe & Rena Jackson, Martha Chiles, Jim Weidman, George & Susie Cook

Danny Futrell by David & Donna Jones, Nan Dickey, Mike & Nancy Bruce, Nancy McCulley, Hamilton & Kate Bitely, Shane & Liz May, Mike & Marsha Gibson, George & Susie Cook

Betty Lyerly by Nan Dickey

Vera Mitchell by Nan Dickey

Mary Morgan by Nan Dickey

Holly Swihart by Mike & Nancy Bruce, Kay & Herb Bland

Steve Adams by Mike & Nancy Bruce, Shane & Liz May

Roy McSpadden by Mike & Nancy Bruce

Theda Newberry by Mike & Nancy Bruce, Mary Ann & Laura Stickler, Shane & Liz May

Kenny Cline by Mike & Nancy Bruce, Shane & Liz May

Roy Green by Mike & Nancy Bruce

Kenny & Lynn Cline by Jeffrey & Jennifer Wood, Kelsey, Kasey, Maddie & Clancey

Lisa Jarman by Shane & Liz May

Scarlett Jarman by Shane & Liz May

Wilma Wheelis by Shane & Liz May

Mary Ann Stallcup by Shane & Liz May

April Biggs by Shane & Liz May

Jaunice Coburn by Nan Dickey

In Honor of:

Bill Phillips on his 89th Birthday by Bill Fisher

Jeff & Kerry Combs by Robin Patten

Bernard Raley by Martha Jean Swindle, Mike & Nancy Bruce

Karoline Risker by Mike & Nancy Bruce

The Womack Family by Scott & Jennifer Faldon

LOVE GOD. SERVE PEOPLE. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Church Office

8:30AM-4:30PM MON-THURS
8:30AM-NOON FRIDAY

*Witt House
Food Pantry*

4:30PM-6PM TUESDAY
9:30AM-11:00AM FRIDAY



Bishop Laura Merrill
District Superintendent Zach Roberts
Pastors Dane Womack (william.womack@arumc.org),
Sarah Ellzey (sarah.ellzey@arumc.org)
Music Director Brian Pearson
(brian.pearson@fumcparagould.org)
Director of Youth Ministries
Mary Hickox (mary.hickox@fumcparagould.org)
Director of Children's Ministries
Angela Newby
(angela.newby@fumcparagould.org)
Dir. of Media/Communications Karoline Risker
(karoline.risker@fumcparagould.org)
Organist Bernard Raley
Church Administrator Denise Chipman
(denise.chipman@fumcparagould.org)
Custodian: Mike Rutherford

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FOR MORE INFORMATION



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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