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Love God. Serve People. Make a Difference.

First United Methodist Church

The Flame

AUGUST 2021

A word from our pastor

Rev. Dane Womack



Happy August, Paragould FUMC! Greetings in the name of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ! I write to you after a very exciting few weeks at First United Methodist Church. Summer can sometimes be a downtime in church. Many people are traveling. Giving and attendance can wane. Participation in ministries may be slowed. But that has not been the case this year. I write this month to share with you celebrations, updates, and some questions about our immediate future.

First, we hosted and celebrated

Ready, Set, Read! at FUMC June 28-July 2. You are likely more familiar with RSR than I was. Children from around our community came each day for meals, games, fellowship, and exercises in improving literacy skills. We had wonderful volunteers from FUMC and our community. Please share a word of appreciation and encouragement with Danielle Honeycutt and Angela Newby for their work leading this awesome ministry. The Arkansas Conference has adopted a missional emphasis on children's literacy across the state and our program is a flagship example of such efforts.

Second, we hosted Ozark Mission Project day camp July 5-9. Youth and adult volunteers from FUMC, Cornerstone UMC, and Rector FUMC shared in meals and worship at FUMC in mornings and evenings while their days were spent on job sites in Paragould, Jonesboro, Monette, and Walnut Ridge. We built 4 wheelchair ramps, repaired decks and stairs, and cleaned up multiple yards. It was an inspiring week of hard work and shared ministry. OMP holds a special place in my heart and it was such a joy to share in this ministry at FUMC.

Lastly, we just wrapped up a wonderful week of Vacation Bible School July 12-15. Adventure Island! Seeking God's Light! Andrea Pearson led a small army of adult volunteers who cared for children while sharing in games, crafts, music, meals, and Bible stories. It was a high energy week!

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JOB POSTINGS

2 positions available

*Director of Student Ministries, and
Director of Children's Ministries*

We have two staff openings at FUMC. The first is a full-time position titled Director of Student Ministries with oversight for grades 5th - 12th. The second is a part-time position titled Director of Children's Ministries with responsibilities for ages PreK - 4th grade. A change is grouping 5th-6th graders under the full-time job. This change also makes the children's position more part-time. Expectations for the Children's Director will primarily include Sunday mornings, Wednesday evenings, and special events. We imagine this position could be appealing to someone with another job, perhaps someone already in our congregation. Please be in prayer regarding these positions.

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Our church's children were so happy to be together and sharing this time. We also welcomed many guests and friends. And a number of kids joined us in leading VBS songs at the 9am service on Sunday, July 18.

You will see photos and reflections on each of these ministries in the following pages. Though it was a long three weeks, it was a great inspiration! Sharing in ministries of service, outreach, care, and discipleship are central to our church's call. What a thrill to see Paragould FUMC in action in such fun ways. Our church is alive! Thank you to everyone who supported these ministries. I am already looking forward to next summer, though we might not schedule all three back-to-back-to-back next time!

Our financial reporting has been delayed while Denise was tending to Larry's healthcare in Houston. We are so glad to have the Chipmans back in Paragould and continue to pray for Larry. Both our Finance Committee and Trustees met in July for the first time in a while. Below are a few notes.

First, I invite you to consider a snapshot of our current financial standing including summaries for May, June, and Year-to-date. The short of it is this: we are very pleased with our financial situation and are optimistic about its continued strength. You can see that giving has been strong and is year-to-date ahead of spending. We are keeping up well with both monthly budgetary expenses and our building loan. With respect to our loan, we continue to make monthly interest payments and were able to make a significant payment toward principal this summer that was not due until December. We made this payment now because anytime we can reduce our principal we more quickly reduce our interest and total loan cost. We have also received a number of memorials and designated gifts that are reflected in the YTD Total Received value of \$682,227.

Contribution Summary	MAY		JUNE		YEAR TO DATE	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Operating Budget - YTD					521,190	520,584
Received - General Funds	85,007	70,143	71,521	62,308	421,464	420,118
Distributed - General	58,033	85,897	82,412	79,044	426,427	484,161
Received - Building Funds	13,780	10,897	109,668	17,085	260,763	147,814
Distributed - Building	11,973	-	-	40,000	57,019	80,691
Total Received	98,787	81,040	181,189	79,393	682,227	567,852
Total Distributed	70,006	85,897	82,412	96,129	483,446	445,808

Which leads to an update on our facilities. You may have noticed this summer that crews have begun working on the exterior of our facilities. I'll remind you this is "Phase 1" of three with the intention of waterproofing and repairing water damage to the exterior Sanctuary. (More and different work will be needed to address the water damage inside in the future.) In Phase 1, the brick is being cleaned and water-proof-treated, all windows and fixtures are being caulked, and mortar is being repaired. I invite you to take a look at how much better the Sanctuary already looks! So happy this work has begun and look forward to continuing to repair and care for our worship spaces.

I hope you see the connection between the first few paragraphs of this note and the last two paragraphs. Thrilling, inspiring, and vital ministry is happening at FUMC for the sake of children, youth, adults and our community. Just as it should be! And these ministries are made possible because of our shared resources including financial strength and wonderful facilities. The tithes and gifts you offer to FUMC are in direct support of ministry. Our addition and renovated facilities as well as maintenance on our older buildings are for the sake of ministry - so that we might "Love God, Serve People, and Make a Difference." Thank you for your steadfast support including financial gifts, time, and energy.

Lastly, for some concerns. As I write this newsletter in mid-July, local and national news headlines exclaim that Arkansas has become the center of the highest rates of spread of COVID-19. This "delta variant" is causing more cases and greater sickness with those infected. I am so disheartened by this news. On a personal note, this makes me very sad. The months of navigating COVID were difficult and lonely. I was hoping that season was permanently behind us. Yet, here we are again. As of this writing, I am not sure what these new circumstances will mean for our church. Our Trustees will take up the matter and make decisions in support of our church's and our community's safety. This means some of our August plans are currently in jeopardy. Our calendar is disrupted - again. But take heart! We can do this! We will be safe while continuing our ministry as best we can. I have every confidence in our congregation and I encourage you to take care. Pay attention to the recommendations of the CDC, AR Dept of Health, and your local physicians. More updates to come.

It is a joy to serve alongside the people of Paragould First United Methodist Church. We have much to celebrate and look forward to for months and years to come. COVID is a challenge but it is not a determinative factor. Ministry has and will flourish. To God be the glory.

Grace & Peace,
Rev. Dane Womack

MISSION MOMENT—WITT HOUSE

In June, the Witt House served 136 households which numbered 482 individuals including 320 new neighbors. We expect that these numbers will be higher in July. On July 20, we served twenty-three households! We are blessed to have such strong support from our pastors and church members, both financially and in service.

As I mentioned we served twenty-three households and we had a special servant population! Last week, our 5th and 6th graders from VBS visited to learn about the food pantry. This week, many of them returned to act out what they had learned as they volunteered to serve. They were busy from opening to past closing. A big thank you to them!

I think this is much of what we're about - showing our children what serving God is about - caring for our neighbors. Our mission team is busy thinking of ways to do that. Our last project was "popping" in on our friends and neighbors at the mini rise to let them know that Paragould First was thinking of them. Thank you for participating in this.

If any of you have thoughts or suggestions about how we can expand our service to others in our community, please feel free to contact one of our team members.

Mary Justice



Our Witt House Food pantry is open:

Tuesday 4:30-6:00 pm

Friday 9:30-11:00 am



Finance

A Dollar A Week

Year to Date 1,521

2021 Budget

1,250,857

Month of May General Contributions: \$85,007

Month of June General Contributions: \$71,521

Loan Balance: \$3,566,215

Memorials

Gretta Jernigan by Fellowship Class, Jann Willcockson, Matt & Lesley Hobbs, Mike & Mary Harvey, Debbie DaVault, Karen Mosley, Shirley Eliason, Gary & Barbara Roberts, Larry & Denise Chipman

Kay Goodwin by Joe & Jackie Barnett, Donis & Bonnie Hamilton, Mary Ann Allen, Ann Cathey Gregg & family, Beth Pace, Billie & Skip Rutherford, Dr. John & Ann Honeycutt, Goodwin Moore PLLC, Rev. Wayne & Doris Clark, Clifford & Beverly Gordon, Bunny Lee, Sally Martin, Phillip & Paige Wooldridge, Jann Willcockson, Vic & Freddie Nixon, James & Laura Goodwin, Larry & Denise Chipman

Phillip Brasher by Diane Blossom, Mary Ann Allen

Iris Wheelis by Bud & Jeani Wallace, Clifford & Beverly Gordon, Larry & Denise Chipman

Don Fleeman by Melvin & Sandra Wamock

Carl Schexnaydre by Sara Schexnaydre

Dewayne Allen by Kaut & Lynda White

Phil Herget on Father's Day by Nancy Wood

Honorariums

Rev. Dane Womack by Diane Blossom

Rev. Chase Burns by Diane Blossom

SYMPATHIES TO:

Bob Resler on the death of his sister, Judy Hefley

Shelia Ragsdell on the death of her mother-in-law, Dortha Ragsdell

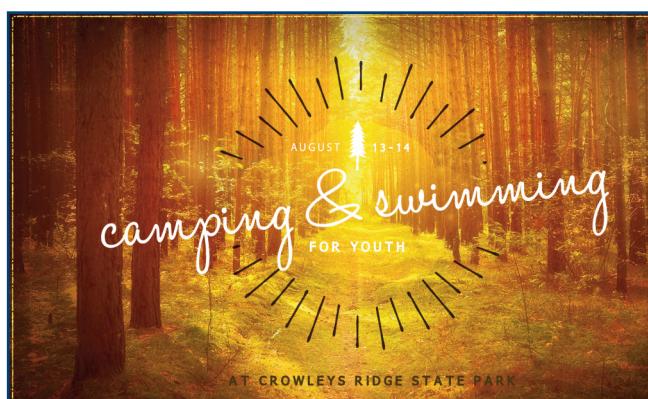
Jocelyn Noel, Matt & Lesley Hobbs and family on the death of mother and grandmother, Gretta Jernigan



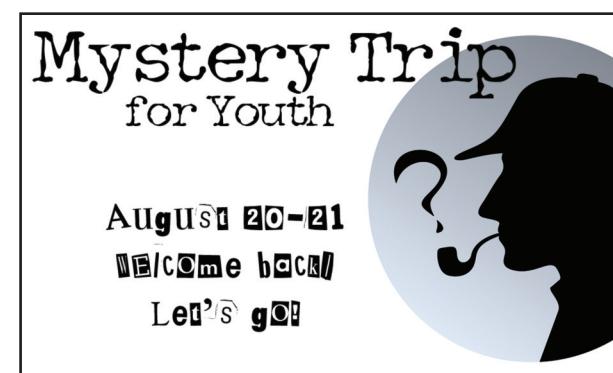
Vacation Bible School—We had a great time on Adventure Island this summer for VBS. Approximately 70 kids and 35 adult and youth volunteers came out each night to search for God's Great Light. We learned about how to shine God's Light of Love, Trust, Faith and Joy through storytelling, crafts, music, games and some great food. Our 5th and 6th grade group did some mission work and got to tour the Witt House one night. They ended their week of fun with a pool party! The children loved to see Beacon the Puffin each night as he helped them understand what they would be learning. We also collected PJ's for the Greene County Foster Parents Association. A big THANK YOU to all of the volunteers and those that prayed for our VBS. It was an awesome week!



Camping and Swimming at Crowley's Ridge—5th and 6th graders are welcome to join us for a time of swimming and camping at Crowley's Ridge State Park! August 13-14. Sign up in the church center app or online at www.fumcparagould.org/register.



Welcome Back/Let's Go!—Our annual mystery trip to initiate our 7th grades in the youth department and to welcome back grades 8-12. There is no cost for this trip. We leave Friday, August 20 and come back Saturday. The location is a secret (but it's awesome!) Sign up in the church app or at www.fumcparagould.org/register.



AUGUST CALENDAR

Sunday, August 1

*8:00 am Early Worship
*9:00 am Contemporary Worship
10:00 am Sunday School
*11:00 am Traditional Worship
4:00 pm Hospitality Committee
5:00 pm Mission Committee
5:00 pm Youth
6:00 pm SPRC

Monday, August 2

3:00 pm Blood Drive

Wednesday, August 4

4:00 pm Playground & Popsicles
*6:00 pm Chancel Choir
*7:30 pm Praise Team
8:00 pm Young Women's College Age Class

Friday, August 6

10:00 am Threads of Faith

Sunday, August 8

*8:00 am Early Worship
*9:00 am Contemporary Worship
10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Traditional Worship
5:00 pm Youth

Monday, August 9

1:00 pm Young at Heart Movie
"Brigadoon"

Tuesday, August 10

1:30 pm Glenna Rose UM (UMW meeting)
6:00 pm Choir Practice

Wednesday, August 11

5:00 pm Churchwide Pool Party
7:30 pm Praise Band Practice

Friday, August 13

10:00 am Threads of Faith
Youth leave for camping trip

Saturday, August 14

Youth return from camping trip

Sunday, August 15

*8:00 am Early Worship Service
*9:00 am Contemporary Service
10:00 am Sunday School
*11:00 am Traditional Worship Service
5:00 pm Youth

Wednesday, August 18

*6:00 pm Chancel Choir
*7:30 pm Praise Team

Friday, August 20

10:00 am Threads of Faith
Youth Welcome Back trip

Saturday, August 21

10:00 am Sarah Yopp Wedding Shower

Sunday, August 22

*8:00 am Early Worship
*9:00 am Contemporary Worship
10:00 am Sunday School
*11:00 am Traditional Worship

Wednesday, August 25

*6:00 pm Chancel Choir
*7:30 pm Praise Team

Friday, August 27

10:00 am Threads of Faith

Sunday, August 29

*8:00 am Early Worship
*9:00 am Contemporary Worship
10:00 am Sunday School
*11:00 am Traditional Worship

*Nursery Provided

A Look Ahead

FALL PROGRAMMING—Be on the lookout for information concerning classes, choirs, and youth!

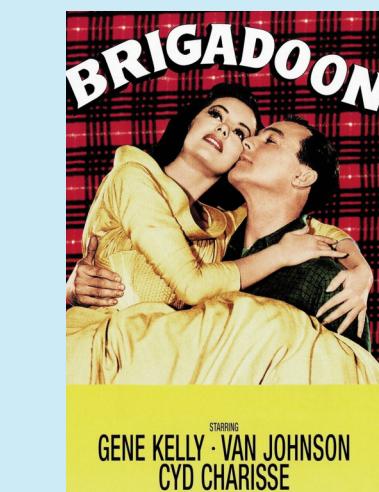
YOUNG AT HEART—Game nights are returning! Join us on Monday, September 20 at 5:30 pm in the Welcome Center for a time of games and fun!

YOUNG AT HEART

Upcoming Activities

Movie Club

Monday, August 9
1:00 pm 3rd floor movie room
Movie: "Brigadoon"
Popcorn and candy provided
(bring your own drink)



NOTE OF THANKS:

Mike and I want to thank everyone for the calls, prayers, food, texts and cards for me during my illness. Everything was greatly appreciated. We love the people of First Church. They are so kind.

God Bless, Betty & Mike Rutherford

We cannot express our gratitude for all the prayers during our stay in Houston for Larry's treatment. God knows our love for this church and congregation. You are our family! Thanks also to everyone who stepped up to help out during my absence in the office. Special thanks to Dane, Chase, Karoline, and Greg Graham.

Blessings, Larry & Denise Chipman

Ready, Set, READ!

By Caleb Hennington, Digital Content Creator at the Center for Communication

One of the best environments for the development of strong literacy skills for kids usually happens at school, but when class ends for the year and children go home for the summer, those reading skills tend to fall off and can sometimes stop developing altogether.

For nearly a decade, FUMC has aimed to break that summer reading slump with its Ready, Set, Read summer program, a weeklong event that encourages kids in the area to continue reading and learning during the summer months.

"Ready, Set, Read came out of a Wednesday night Bible study in which Angela (Newby) and I were both participating," said Danielle Honeycutt, one of the program coordinators for Ready, Set, Read. "The study was over the book, 'Outlive Your Life' by Max Lucado. During the discussion, Angela and I started talking about the low literacy rate of our students and we wondered how we could break the cycle."

The idea that spawned from that meeting was Ready, Set, Read. Newby, who is also a program coordinator for the event, and Honeycutt said the mission of the event is getting kids to read during the summer, with the hope of avoiding the regression that happens when they're out of school for several months.

Some of this year's guest readers included Paragould School District and Greene County Tech School District principals and superintendents; Paragould police officers, firefighters, and paramedics; and representatives from the Paragould Chamber of Commerce, Junior Auxiliary, and Nunn Construction. Paragould Mayor Josh Agee also participated in a video where he read the "Book With No Pictures" to his two young daughters.

Honeycutt and Newby said they hope that kids who participate in Ready, Set, Read leave the event with a love of learning and reading.

"We sent them home with brand new books to start their own libraries at home. We want them to read while they aren't at school and we want their siblings to read also. If we can get books into the hands of children and teach them about Jesus and serving and loving our neighbors, we have done our jobs," Newby said.

"We are looking forward to expanding our efforts in not only fighting childhood hunger, focusing on literacy, and promoting healthy, stable families as a means of hope and assistance for families to move out of poverty; we are looking forward to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, through loving God, serving others, and making a difference," Chase Burns, associate pastor, said.



Ozark Mission Project

Youth serving in Paragould and beyond

OMP is an organization that has been sending church youth groups to campsites and churches around Arkansas since 1986, where they, in turn, engage in the surrounding communities by serving individuals and families, our neighbors. OMP completes beautification and accessibility projects such as wheelchair ramps, painting, minor construction repair and yard work while forging relationships with our neighbors and each other. In July, a team made up of youth and adults from Paragould FUMC, Cornerstone UMC, and Rector FUMC served several projects in the Paragould and surrounding area.

From one of the campers: Seeing the joy and appreciation on my neighbors face after my family group and I had finished the project has to be one of the most rewarding things I have ever experienced. It makes the work not even feel like work. It makes the days in the crazy hot Arkansas heat so worth it. It makes you forget all about those moments of anxiety when don't know if your project is gonna be finished on time or if it is being done correctly. I will forever be thankful for opportunity Ozark Mission Project has given me to grow my faith, make lifetime friends and memories, and learn how to build a wheelchair ramp!

—Ragan Wheelis



Bishop Gary E. Mueller
District Superintendent John Fleming
Pastors Dane Womack
(william.womack@arumc.org, Chase Burns
(chase.burns@arumc.org)
Music Director Brian Pearson
(eaglebandguy2@gmail.com)
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Custodian: Greig Lynn

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