



THE MESSENGER



DULUTH FIRST UMC'S NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2025



Join Us for "Burgers & Bingo" Special Wednesday Night Dinner Event on August 6th

All are invited to join us on Wednesday, August 6th, for a special back-to-school "Burgers & Bingo" Wednesday Night Dinner event from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in Hinton Hall, located on the 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. **The menu includes hamburgers, French fries, cole slaw, baked beans, and dessert. For the kids – the same.** Bingo will begin at 5:45 p.m. and will be played during the dinner time with prizes for our winners!

The prices for Wednesday Night Dinners are: \$10.00 for adults (including seniors and from 11 years up); \$7.00 for children 10 years and younger; \$30.00 for family meals (nuclear family members only – husband, wife, their children under 18 years); \$7.00 for salad bar only, which includes the salad bar, a choice of baked potato or sweet potato, dessert and a drink. Credit/debit card payments, as well as cash and checks, are accepted.

Wednesday Night Activities Resume on August 13th!

Make plans to join us on Wednesday, August 13th, as the following Wednesday night activities resume their weekly gatherings at Duluth First United Methodist Church:

- **Wednesday Night Dinners:** 5 to 6:30 p.m. in Hinton Hall, 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **Book Bunch for kids (ages 3 – 4):** 6:15 to 6:30 p.m. in the Louise McDaniel Memorial Library, 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **DuluthKids (ages Kindergarten through 5th grade):** 5:45 to 7 p.m. in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall;
- **Youth Bible Study (grades 6 – 12):** 6 to 7 p.m., room F149, 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **Parent Connection Group:** 6 to 7 p.m., room F145, 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **Happy Sacks:** 6 to 6:30 p.m., room F152, 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **Yarn Art Ministry:** 6 to 7 p.m., room F205, 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- **Handbell Ensemble rehearsals:** 6 to 7 p.m., in the Sanctuary;
- **"The History and Archaeology of the Bible" Class for Adults:** 6 to 7:30 p.m. in room F151, 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.
- **Chancel Choir rehearsals:** 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Don Lee Music Suite.

Additional information about these activities can be found inside this edition of *The Messenger* newsletter.

INSIDE THE MESSENGER

News & Announcements.....1-14 Prayer Requests.....14 Finances.....14 Attendance.....14

Duluth First United Methodist Church

3208 Duluth Highway 120

Duluth, GA 30096

Phone: 770-476-3776

website: www.duluthumc.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DuluthFirstUMC

Instagram: www.instagram.com/duluthfirstumc

Sunday Mornings

8:30 a.m. — Traditional Worship service

11:00 a.m. — Contemporary Worship service

11:00 a.m. — Traditional Worship service

All services can be viewed online at www.duluthumc.org
or on the Duluth First UMC Worship channel on YouTube –
search for Duluth First UMC Worship.



Owen & Abby Houck
2305 Woodiron Dr.
Duluth, GA 30097

Promotion Sunday Celebration:

August 3rd

The new school year is beginning soon, and we are excited to celebrate **Promotion Sunday** on August 3rd! Children and youth are invited to the celebration on August 3rd, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall. Children and youth will be together playing games, having a snack, enjoying fellowship with one another, and they will receive a goodie bag. We can't wait to see everyone there!

**PROMOTION
SUNDAY**

Blessing of the Backpacks: All Worship

Services on Sunday, August 3rd

We invite our children and youth to bring their backpacks to church on Sunday, August 3rd, for **Blessing of the Backpacks** in all three worship services (8:30 a.m. Traditional Service, 11 a.m. Contemporary Service, and 11 a.m. Traditional Service). Bring your school backpacks with you, as we will have a moment set aside during the worship services to pray for our children, youth, teachers, school administrators, and other school employees for the new school year.



Sunday School for Children and Youth

On Sunday, August 10th, children and youth will report to their new Sunday School classes. Kindergarten through 5th grade kids will meet in their new classrooms in the C and D wing hallways of the Kids Village:

- Three & Four year old (as of September 1st): **Childcare Corner**;
- Kindergarten through 2nd grade: room C120;
- 3rd through 5th grade: room D126.



6th through 12th grade youth will meet in room F149 on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

Sunday School for both children and youth is from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. If you would like to be a Children's (Kindergarten through 5th grade) Sunday

school teacher, please contact Leslie Yokeley, Director of Children's Ministries, by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138. If you would like to be a Youth (6th through 12th grades) Sunday school teacher, please contact Rev. Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministries, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 119.

Duluth First UMC's Childcare Corner

Childcare Corner (formerly known as the Nursery) is a place where kids love to hang out and play with toys, make new friends, create crafts and have stories read to them. On Sunday mornings during the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. worship services, children from birth to pre-K (4 years old) are invited to stay at **Childcare Corner** while their parents attend either the Traditional or Contemporary Worship services.

During the 9:30 a.m. Sunday School hour, the children are taught a Bible lesson, do a craft and have a snack as well, as good old fashion playtime. When the weather is good, we even will have some outside time. When there are other events going on around the church, such as Bible studies, choir rehearsals, etc., **Childcare Corner** is available for children as old as 5th grade. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Wettlaufer, Childcare Director, by e-mail at lwettlaufer@duluthumc.org.



DuluthKids Begins on August 13th **with Big and Exciting Changes**

DuluthKids is a fun opportunity on Wednesday nights for kids, ages Kindergarten through 5th grade, to gather together for fellowship, music, Bible study and missions. Programming is age-appropriate with curriculum designed for the kids. **DuluthKids** will meet on Wednesday evenings, beginning August 13th. Fellowship time for everyone (K-5th) will begin at 5:45 and we will meet in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall.



The new **Children's Chime Choir**, for ages 3rd through 5th grades, is an exciting way to learn music and provide music at worship. This group will learn to play the tone chimes, which are similar to handbells. **Children's Chime Choir** meets from 6 to 6:30 p.m. during **DuluthKids** time.

The **Children's Bell Choir**, for ages Kindergarten through 2nd grade, is a place where children will learn the fundamentals of music in a fun group environment! The **Children's Bell Choir** meets from 6 to 6:30 p.m. during **DuluthKids** time.

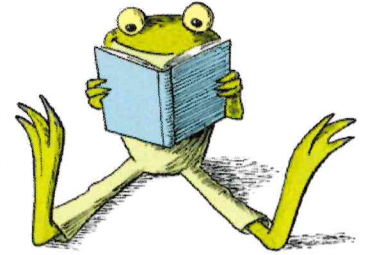
All of the children (ages Kindergarten through 5th grade) will come back together from 6:30 to 7 p.m. for a time of Bible study and missions.

If you have any questions or would like to be involved in this ministry for children, please contact Leslie Yokeley, Director of Children's Ministries, by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138, or Verena Anders, Minister of Music & Worship Arts, at vanders@duluthumc.org, or 770-476-3776, ext. 116.



Book Bunch Story Time Resumes **on Wednesday, August 13th**

Book Bunch, a story time for kids ages three and four-years old, will meet on Wednesday evenings from 6:15 to 6:30 p.m., beginning on August 13th, in the Louise McDaniel Memorial Library, located on the 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. Kids will hear a story being read from a guest reader and they will have an opportunity to check out a book from the library.



If you would like to be a volunteer **Book Bunch** reader, please contact Leslie Yokeley, Director of Children's Ministries, by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138.

Register Now for the Christian Beginnings **2025-2026 School Year**

Register now for **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten's** 2025-2026 school year. Offered Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., during the school year for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years, **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten** provides a loving Christian atmosphere for the growth and nurture of each child. They will have fun and make friends while attending our accredited, award-winning school.

Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten has won the "Best of Gwinnett" award for 2023, 2022, 2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, as well as the "Gwinnett Daily Post Reader's Choice" award in 2019.

If you would like additional information regarding **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten**, or you would like to set up a tour, please contact Pat Szathmary by e-mail at pszathmary@duluthumc.org or call 770-497-1743.

Christian Beginnings
Preschool & Kindergarten



where smiles happen!

Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten Wish List

Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten, our church's preschool and Kindergarten program, is starting their new school year on Tuesday, September 2nd. The teachers and staff have been working hard to prepare for the new school year and they are very excited to welcome the kids to the school.

Christian Beginnings uses a lot of supplies throughout the year and we would love your help by donating supplies. If you are interested in donating the following items, please check out our Amazon wish list by scanning the QR code located below.

Thank you for supporting our preschool and Kindergarten! If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Yokeley by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138.



*Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten's
Amazon "Wish List"*

Substitute Teachers Needed for Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten

The upcoming 2025-2026 school year for **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten** will begin on September 2nd. Substitute teachers are needed, and if you love spending time with children from 6 weeks old through Kindergarten, we have a spot for you.

Being a substitute teacher for **Christian Beginnings Preschool & Kindergarten** is a paid position. If you would like to be on our substitute list, please contact Pat Szathmary by e-mail at pszathmary@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 131, for questions or more information.



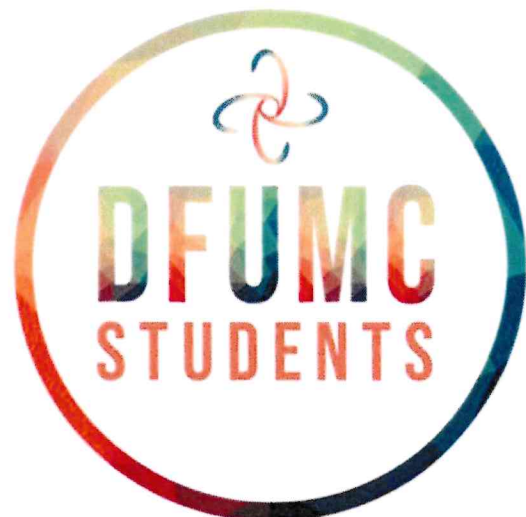
Youth Ministry Sunday Night Gatherings

Students in the 6th through 12th grades are invited to join us on Sunday nights for **Sunday Night Gatherings** from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank"), located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. **Sunday Night Gatherings** include great dinners, fun games, amazing worship, inspirational and relevant messages and life-changing small groups.

Our schedule for the month of August is:

- **Sunday, August 3rd:** Promotion Sunday at Andretti Indoor Karting & Games in Buford (2925 Buford Dr Suite 300, Buford, from 4:30 p.m. (departure time from church) to 7:30 p.m. (pick up time at church)). See additional information on the next page;
- **Sunday, August 10th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank");
- **Sunday, August 17th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank");
- **Sunday, August 24th:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank");
- **Sunday, August 31st:** Sunday Night Gathering at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank").

Please visit the **Youth Ministry's** website at <https://dfumcstudents.org> for more information. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministries, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org.

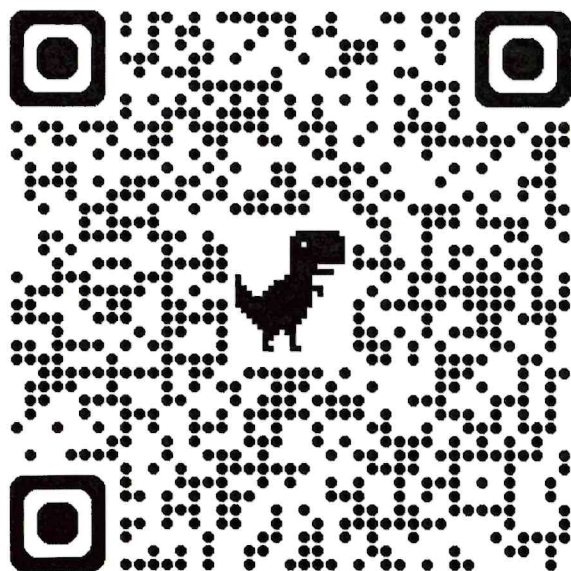




Youth Ministry Promotion Sunday Fun at Andretti Indoor Karting & Games: August 3rd

We are excited to celebrate Promotion Sunday on August 3rd! As we welcome our rising 6th graders to our **Youth Ministry** and kick off the new school year together, we will have a fun night of fellowship at Andretti Indoor Karting & Games in Buford (2925 Buford Dr., Suite 300, Buford) on Sunday, August 3rd, from 4:30 p.m. (departure time from church) to 7:30 p.m. (pick up time at church). The cost is \$25 per person. Please sign up by going to the following link - <https://forms.gle/svUtCQzuJfwBQzu56>, or by scanning the QR code located below. **The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, July 30th.**

We will meet and depart from the church at 4:30 p.m., and the pick-up time from the church will be at 7:30 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministries, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org. We look forward to a great time of fun and fellowship!



*Youth Ministry Promotion Sunday Fun
Sign-Up QR Code*

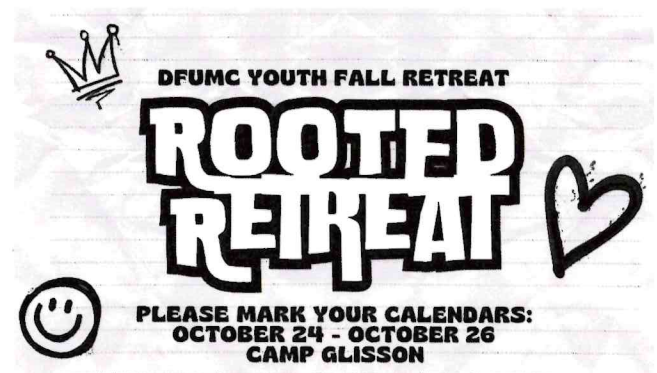
Youth Ministry Weekly Gatherings

• **Sunday School:** We have a year-round Sunday School for students in the 6th through 12th grades on Sunday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in room F149, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

• **Sunday Night Gathering:** Students in the 6th through 12th grades are invited to join us for **Sunday Night Gathering** from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Youth Center ("The Fish Tank"), located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. **Sunday Night Gathering** includes great dinner, fun games, amazing worship, inspirational and relevant messages, and life-changing small groups.

• **Wednesday Night Bible Study:** We invite students in 6th through 12th grades to join us for a Wednesday night Bible Study during the school year as we dive into the Word of God and grow together as a community! Bible Study is held from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in room F149, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

For additional information or questions, please contact Rev. Min Lee, Director of Youth Ministries, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org.



Save the Date! Youth Fall Retreat is October 24th - 26th

The **Youth Ministry** is excited to be participating in the **Rooted Retreat** (North Georgia UMC Conference Retreat) hosted by Glisson Camp and Retreat Center for our Youth Fall Retreat! **Please mark your calendars for Friday, October 24th, through Sunday, October 26th.** There will be powerful worship experiences, dedicated youth group time, fun activities, and food and lodging at Glisson Camp and Retreat Center. Additional information and registration for the retreat will be available soon.

Join Us for Wednesday Night Dinners **in Hinton Hall**

August 6th - "Burgers & Bingo Night"

Hamburgers, French fries, baked beans,
cole slaw, and dessert.
For the kids – the same.

August 13th

Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans,
fried okra, biscuits, and dessert.
For the kids – the same.

August 20th - Taco Night

Tacos with choice of chicken or beef, flour tortillas,
choice of refried or black beans, yellow rice, lettuce,
tomato, cheese, salsa, sour cream and guacamole,
and dessert.
For the kids – the same.

August 27th

Baked ham, macaroni and cheese, green beans,
turnip greens, corn muffins, and dessert.
For the kids – hot dogs and French fries.

**Dinners are served from 5 to 6:30 p.m.,
with to-go boxes available from 6 to 6:30 p.m.**

Dinner is served in the Hinton Hall of the
Sheldon Family Life Center. Enjoy fellowship
around the table with family and friends.

The Dinner Belles and Beaus prepare excellent
meals at very reasonable prices.

The prices for Wednesday Night Dinners are:

- \$10.00 for adults (including seniors
and from 11 years up);
- \$7.00 for children 10 years and younger;
 - \$30.00 for family meals
(nuclear family members only –
husband, wife, their children under 18 years);
- \$7.00 for salad bar only, which includes
the salad bar, a choice of baked potato or
sweet potato, dessert and a drink.

You can pay using a credit/debit card!

**NOTE: Menus are subject to change.
For the week's menu please visit the**

wednesday night
DINNER



Welcome Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles

Duluth First United Methodist Church warmly
welcomes Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles to our church
staff as an Associate Pastor. She is an ordained Elder
in the United Methodist Church and has served
churches in the Louisiana
Annual Conference
and the North Georgia
Annual Conference.
She is passionate about
ministry with families
with young children and
youth, missions, full
inclusion of all people in
the Church, conservation
efforts, especially around
endangered and at-risk
animals, and sustainability and creation care at home
and in the local church.



AnnaKate has a BA in Literature and Religion from
Converse College, a Master of Divinity from Candler
School of Theology, a Certificate for Theology in
Ministry from Cambridge University, and a Doctor of
Ministry from Candler School of Theology.

AnnaKate is married to Brian Trepanier who works as
an Assistant District Attorney. They have a 3-year old
son, Cooper, and a 1-year old daughter, Tilly. AnnaKate
enjoys spending time with her family and volunteering
at Zoo Atlanta.

AnnaKate's work with us will be at $\frac{3}{4}$ time (30 hours a
week). You can contact AnnaKate by e-mail at arawles@duluthumc.org,
or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128.

Wednesday Night Dinner Teams

Are Looking for Volunteers

The **Wednesday Night Dinner** teams are looking for
volunteers - our **Dinner Belles and Beaus** - to help.
No special experience or
skill is necessary – just
a willingness to serve,
make some new friends,
and have fun! **Each team
volunteers only once a
month and on the night
that you volunteer you
get a free meal!** We hope
you will consider joining
us for some good food
and good fellowship.



If you are interested or would like more information,
please contact Marilyn Scheiwe, Event Coordinator, by
e-mail at mscheiwe@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-
3776, ext. 111. We hope you will consider volunteering.

Duluth First UMC's 2025 Vacation Bible School "True North: Trusting Jesus in a Wild World" Was a Lot of Fun and a Great Success!

We had a great time this summer with our "True North: Trusting Jesus in a Wild World" Vacation Bible School! We collected \$440 for **Wellroot Family Services** and 423 lbs of food for the **Hands of Christ Duluth Co-Op**. We are so grateful to have such a generous congregation in their giving of time and donations. We made crafts, sang songs, prayed, did a drama class, danced and learned about how we can always trust Jesus with our hearts. Our rising 5th and 6th graders played bingo with residents at **The Parc** in Duluth, delivered items to the **Hands of Christ Duluth Co-Op**, did a car wash for staff members, and had a special tour of downtown Duluth with Mayor Greg Whitlock.





MISSIONS

“Where are you serving?”

Family Promise of Gwinnett’s

Annual “Night Without a Bed” Fundraiser

It’s time for **Family Promise of Gwinnett’s** annual **“Night Without a Bed”** Fundraiser. Over the last four years you have helped raise over \$49,000 to help **Family Promise of Gwinnett** in their mission to end family homelessness in Gwinnett County. Once again, Rev. David Burchett will be participating in this fundraiser during the month of August. David will kick-off the month by sleeping on the church’s playground on Friday night, August 1st.

NIGHT WITHOUT A BED



If you would like to stop by the playground Friday evening or Saturday morning to “heckle” David and donate to **Family Promise**, you are invited to do so. If you would like to spend the night on the playground with David, you are invited to do so for a donation of \$100.

You can donate by scanning the QR code located below, as well as on the **Missions Ministry** bulletin boards, and in **The Sunday Supplement** weekly newsletters. You can also leave a check in the offering plate made to **Duluth First UMC** with **Family Promise** in the memo line. Please contact Rev. David Burchett by e-mail at dburchett@duluthumc.org for more information.



“Night Without a Bed” Donation QR Code

Wednesday Night Food Drives

Resume on August 6th

The **Wednesday Night Food Drive** at Duluth First UMC for the **Hands of Christ Duluth Co-op** is our weekly mission project, combined with the many Wednesday evening activities offered at the church.

Items needed during the month of August are:

- August 6th: Canned peas;
- August 13th: Boxes of spaghetti or pasta;
- August 20th: Canned fruit;
- August 27th: Cans of vegetables (mixed, carrots, etc.

Join us for a delicious dinner and fellowship in Hinton Hall, pick up a to-go dinner for your family, join us for any of our Wednesday evening activities, and drop off food items to help other families in need. We thank you for your support!

Rainbow Village in Need of

Back-to-School Item Donations

It’s back to school time again, which means **Rainbow Village**, a local Missions ministry supported by Duluth First UMC, will be needing several items for their residents and their children. The focus of **Rainbow Village** lies in the journey that their residents are taking. The paths that lead to experiencing homelessness vary greatly, but the commonality is that residents arrive in survival mode.

Residents of **Rainbow Village** have a safe housing community where dignity, self-respect, and hope are restored. They strive not to work for their families, but rather with their families and to truly listen to their personalized needs, and guide them to wholeness.

Check the **Missions Ministry** bulletin boards (1st and 2nd floors of the Sheldon Family Life Center, and the hallway between the Atrium and the Veterans Memorial Gathering Room) for information on how to donate items from **Rainbow Village’s** Amazon wish list.



"Where are you serving?"

Happy Sacks:

Helping Children in Our Community

A growing number of school children in our community rely on free and reduced priced meals at school for their main daily meals. However, there may not be enough food to go around over the weekend. The goal of the **Happy Sacks** mission outreach program is to provide healthy snacks for school children over the weekend. We pack approximately **150 Happy Sacks each week**, which are then delivered to the schools on Friday, and given out by the school counselors to the appropriate children.

For the 2024-25 school year, we packed and delivered **4,943 Happy Sacks**. Since the program began in the Fall of 2012, we have delivered **40,044 Happy Sacks** to children in our community. The need continues to grow as does the cost of filling the bags. The **Happy Sacks** program is not a part of the church's regular budget, so we depend on your donations.

As we get ready to begin our 14th year of the **Happy Sacks** program, please consider picking up a few extra items the next time you're at the store or making a financial donation to support the **Happy Sacks** ministry. For more information, please visit the **MISSIONS** page under the **MINISTRIES** tab on the church's website - **duluthumc.org**. Thank you for your continued support of this mission!



Backpacks for Buffalo

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's **"Backpacks for Buffalo"** school supply drive, benefiting children who attend the Summer Reading Camp at the Seneca Street United Methodist Church in Buffalo, NY. On Saturday, July 12th, all ages came together to fill some of the backpacks with school supplies. Others in the church took the remaining empty backpacks and filled them with school supplies on their own.

The church shipped 100 backpacks to Buffalo on Thursday, July 24th, scheduled for delivery on Tuesday, July 29th, to coincide with the Reading Camp. Thank you to everyone for your support of this very essential ministry.





Join Women Studying Together for Book of Ephesians Study on Thursday Mornings

You are invited to join *Women Studying Together*, the Thursday morning women's Bible study group, as they study the New Testament Book of Ephesians. This six-week study will continue through August 28th.

The author of Ephesians makes some rather wordy theological statements while also referring to Jesus as Lord over 20 times. How did understanding that Jesus is Lord affect the Ephesians or us? What behaviors are encouraged/discouraged? Don't be overwhelmed with the writing style. We need both an understanding of what we believe and how we are to live it. This book has much to teach us about the church and the unity of the body. Even in the midst of this 'mystery', we are reminded that grace and faith are expressed in acts of love. After that, there is nothing left to do but praise God!

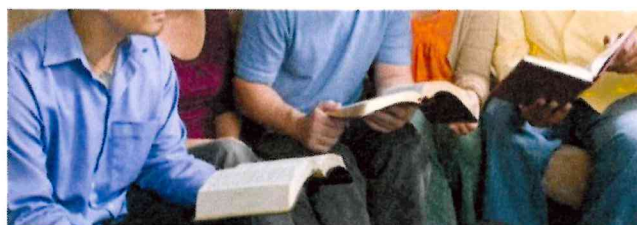
There is no book to buy, just bring your Bible and join us. We meet on Thursday mornings from 10:00 to 11:30 am in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center, and discussion is led by Jenny Masterson. As we study, we ask questions, search for answers, share our stories, laugh and pray together. Sometimes, we even sing! We welcome all women.

If you would like more information, please contact Jenny Masterson by e-mail at jennybobm@comcast.net or call her at 678-591-0800.

Men Studying Together Thursday Morning Bible Study

The *Men Studying Together* group meets for Bible/book studies on Thursday mornings from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in room F206, located on the 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. This study is led by Rev. Terry Tippens. The group is currently studying the Gospel of Matthew.

All are welcome to join us, any time, and every class time will allow for individual input and group discussion. Please contact Tracy Brinker by e-mail at tbrinker@duluthumc.org or at 770-476-3776 for more information.

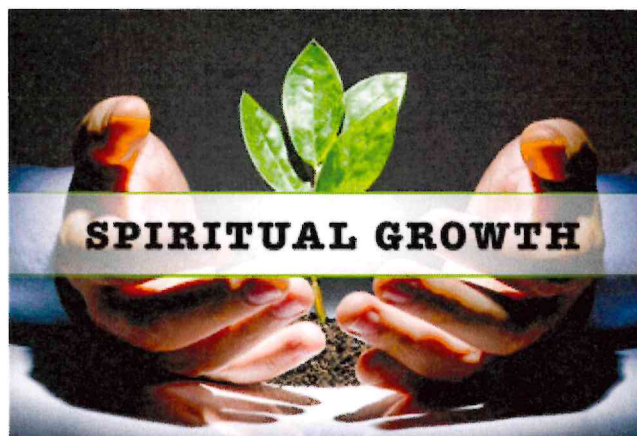


Simply Something: A New Weekly Discussion Opportunity of all Things Theological, Biblical, Social, Methodist, or About Life in Today's World.

Have you ever had a topic that you simply wanted to talk about with others at church but there doesn't seem to be a class or group to focus on that one thing? Then *Simply Something* is just the place to be. Join Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles and Rev. Dr. C. Kay Fuino on Tuesday mornings from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center, for *Simply Something*, a weekly discussion place to bring up all things theological, biblical, social, Methodist, or simply on your mind about life in today's world.

Each week at *Simply Something* will begin with prayer and a short devotion, followed by discussion about a variety of topics chosen by the group. We will begin on Tuesday, August 12th, looking at our own church and all that is offered for learning, mission, and volunteering to grow God's kingdom around us. Join us with your list of topics to plan for our future time together. Bring your coffee, tea or water, and your open mind to learn from each other.

Childcare in *Childcare Corner* will be available. For more information, please contact Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles, Associate Pastor, by e-mail at arawles@duluthumc.org or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128.



Book Club to Discuss “The Alice Network” by Kate Quinn: Monday, August 11th

The Book Club invites you to read **The Alice Network** by Kate Quinn, and then to join them on Monday, August 11th, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center for a discussion of the book. Amy Burk will lead the discussion.

In **The Alice Network**, an enthralling novel from New York Times bestselling author Kate Quinn, two women—a female spy recruited to the real-life Alice Network in France during World War I and an unconventional American socialite searching for her cousin in 1947—are brought together in a mesmerizing story of courage and redemption.

“Both funny and heartbreaking, this epic journey of two courageous women is an unforgettable tale of little-known wartime glory and sacrifice. Quinn knocks it out of the park with this spectacular book!”—Stephanie Dray, New York Times bestselling author of **America’s First Daughter**.

Please contact Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles by e-mail at arawles@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 128, if you have any questions.

Visit Our Church Library

Stop by and check out all of the new titles in The Louise McDaniel Memorial Church Library for late Summer and early Fall reading:

- **All My Knotted Up Life: A Memoir** by Beth Moore (Nonfiction: Winner of the 2024 ECPA Book of the Year New York Times, Publishers Weekly, & Wall Street Journal bestseller);
- **Moses: In the Footsteps of a Reluctant Prophet** by Adam Hamilton (Nonfiction: Adam Hamilton is Senior Pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, one of the fastest growing, most highly visible churches in the country and has authored many books published by Abingdon Press.);
- **Theo of Golden** by Allen Levi (Fiction: Allen Levi is a Georgia author from Columbus, GA and UGA alumnus who self-published his first novel, **Theo of Golden**, and is working on the sequel, **Ellen of Golden**.)

The library is located on the 2nd floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. If the church is open, the library is open. If you have any questions, please contact our amazing library volunteers by e-mail at library@duluthumc.org.

“The History and Archaeology of the Bible” Class for Adults Begins Tuesday, August 12th, and Wednesday August 13th

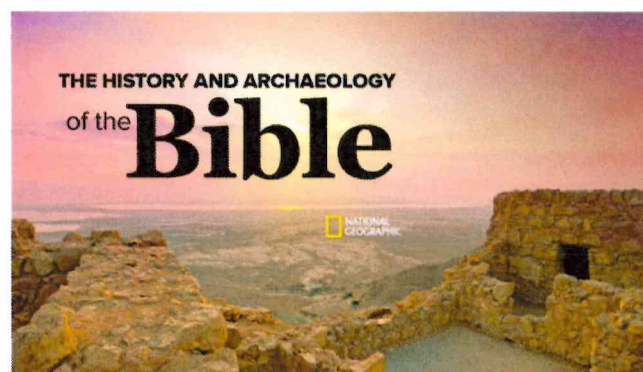
A new class for adults, “**The History and Archaeology of the Bible**,” will be offered beginning Tuesday, August 12th. This class, led by Pete Fleming, will be offered twice each week for 24 weeks:

- 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesdays in room F154, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center;
- 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays in room F151, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center.

Choose the one that best suits your schedule.

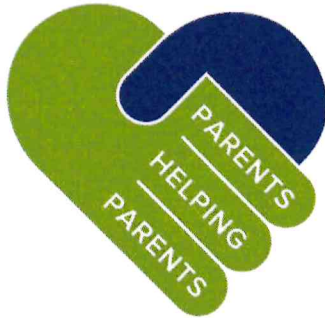
The course will include a video each week produced by National Geographic and featuring lecturer Jean-Pierre Ishbouts, a professor in the Social Sciences PhD program of Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California, and an archaeologist, author, screenwriter, director, and producer of works addressing various historical periods, particularly the time period of Jesus and that of Renaissance and post-Renaissance art. During the course, he will visit many of the places mentioned in the Bible.

Participants will be encouraged, but not required, to purchase the book **Who Wrote the Bible** by Richard Friedman. It can be purchased online at **Thrift Books** for under \$10.00. Pete will present excerpts from this and other books and articles each week. If you are interested in attending this class, please contact Pete by e-mail at lfleming3832@att.net or call 678-575-3761.



Parent Connection Group Resumes Meeting on Wednesday, August 13th

Parent Connection, our small group for parents, will resume its weekly meetings on Wednesday, August 13th, from 6 to 7 p.m. in room F145, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. Everyone is welcome to join us as we share in the joys and struggles of parenting children of all ages. Please contact Rev. David Burchett by e-mail at dburchett@duluthumc.org for more information.



Blood Drive at Duluth First UMC on Wednesday, August 13th

The need for blood doesn't take a summer break! **Every 2 seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.** All blood types are needed now to help save lives. An American Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at Duluth First UMC on Wednesday, August 13th, from 3 to 7 p.m. in the Dorothy L. Rainey Fellowship Hall.

To schedule an appointment:

- Visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter the sponsor code **dufumc**;
- Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767);
- Contact Tracy Brinker by e-mail at tbrinker@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 112.
- Last, but not least, be a "walk-in" on Blood Drive Day.

Donate blood at Duluth First UMC on August 13th and the Red Cross will say **"Thank You"** with a \$15 e-gift card and free A1-C testing. **Don't be afraid to save someone's life!**



GriefShare Support Group Meetings Begin Wednesday, August 27th

GriefShare Support Group, led by the church's **Stephen Ministers**, will walk alongside you through the loss of a loved one. **GriefShare** is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 13-week session, you'll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what's "normal" in grief. Since there are no neat, orderly stages of grief, you'll learn helpful ways of coping with grief, in all its unpredictability—and gain solid support each step of the way.

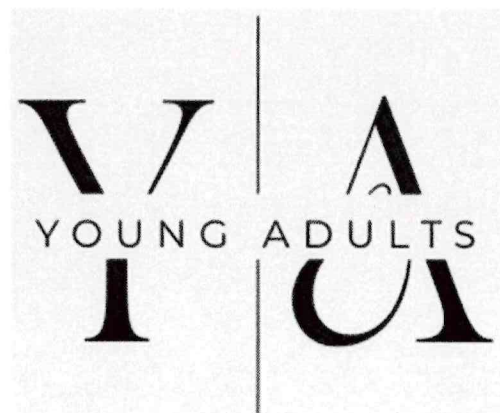


Our next session of **GriefShare Support Group** classes will start on Wednesday, August 27th, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in room F153, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center. Gain access to valuable resources to help you through your grief. **GriefShare** also offers **Bereavement Candlelight Services** the Monday before Thanksgiving, and a **"Surviving the Holidays"** class on Wednesday, November 19th.

For more information, please visit the **GriefShare** website at griefshare.org, or contact Tracy Brinker, Bereavement Coordinator, by e-mail at tbrinker@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776.

Join Our Church's Young Adult Ministry

If you are between 18 and mid 30's, or you know someone who is, the **Young Adult Ministry** needs you. We would love to have you join us for Bible study and fellowship on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in room F147, located on the 1st floor of the Sheldon Family Life Center, and also for our fun, off-campus events. For more information, please contact Rev. David Burchett by e-mail at dburchett@duluthumc.org.



Save the Date!

Block Party on Sunday, September 7th

Mark your calendars now for Sunday afternoon, September 7th, from 5 to 7 p.m. for an awesome block party coming your way. There will be something for everyone - hamburgers, hot dogs, inflatables, a DJ, Toofpick the clown, cotton candy, and a lot of fun and fellowship! What a wonderful opportunity to invite our community to join us in a wonderful afternoon!

Additional information will be made available closer to the date of the event.



BSA Troop 419's 9th Annual

"Cars for Campouts" Classic Car Show,

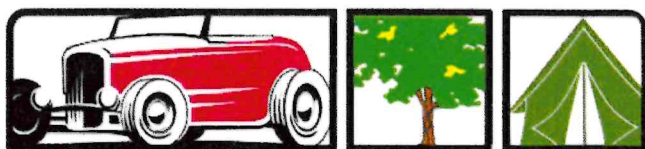
Cruise In, and BBQ: Saturday, October 4th

BSA Troop 419 will hold their 9th Annual "Cars for Campouts" Fundraiser Car Show, Cruise In, and BBQ on Saturday, October 4th, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the church's front parking lot. If you have a special vehicle (all years, makes, models) – muscle cars, classics, resto-mods, exotics, bikes, and one-offs – if it rolls, please bring it and participate.

Preregistration by October 3rd is \$20, and registration on the day of the show is \$25. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/cars4campouts-2025>. Sixty participant-judged awards will be presented. If you just want to see some cool vehicles, feel free to attend as admission for spectators is free.

Food and beverages will be available. Enjoy great food, hot dogs, BBQ (available on-site or for take home) snacks and beverages.

If you have any questions, please send an e-mail to carshow@bsatrop419.org, or call Mike Ringham at 770-815-4206. All proceeds from the event help make BSA Troop 419's program one of the best in the council, and with your support, will continue to do so.



CARS FOR CAMPOUTS

Crafts, Pieces of Art, and Baked Goods

Needed for "Bundle Up for Buffalo"

Annual Fundraiser: November 15th & 16th

Crafters, potters, artists, and bakers of all kinds – your talents will be needed in November! It may seem a long time from now, but it really isn't and it is not too soon to be thinking about our annual missions fundraiser, **Bundle Up for Buffalo**, on Saturday, November 15th, and Sunday, November 16th. All proceeds from the **Bundle Up for Buffalo** fundraiser help our sister church, Seneca Street United Methodist Church in Buffalo, NY, keep the heat on their facility during the winter months which fall from October 2025 through April 2026. This helps provide a safe, warm, after-school location for neighborhood children to go to.

You have been so faithful in prayer for this "pocket of poverty" in the North for many years. Please consider what you can make, and something that others would enjoy purchasing. Thank you for your support.

The North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church's 2025 Annual Conference Report

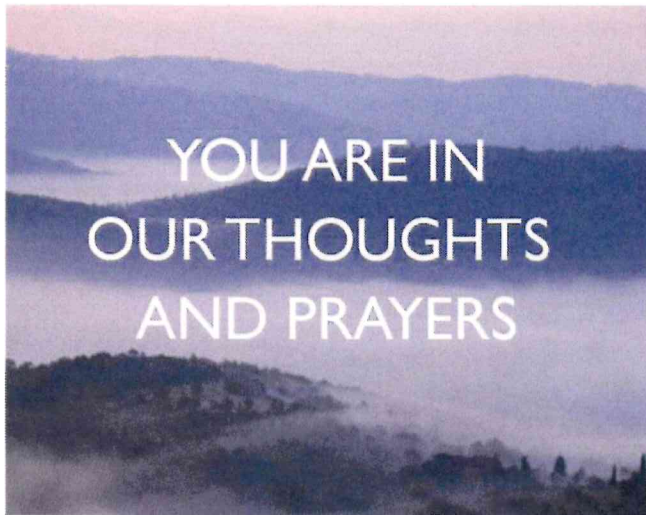
Our Lay Delegates from Duluth First United Methodist Church have submitted their report from the 2025 North Georgia United Methodist Church Annual Conference, held June 12th - 14th in Athens. The report includes information from various forums, business meetings, and services. Meeting with the theme **"Come Follow Me,"** the conference focused on listening to God's call on our lives, celebrating our United Methodist colleges Wesley Foundations and Wesley Fellowships, and giving thanks for 100 years of camp ministry at Glisson Camp and Retreat Center! A copy of the 2025 Annual Conference Report is included with this edition of **The Messenger** monthly newsletter.

Stephen Ministry:

Help — Hope — Healing

Stephen Ministers are here for you when life gets difficult. For more information or to request the support and care of a **Stephen Minister**, please contact Rev. Dr. C. Kay Fuino by e-mail at ckfuino@duluthumc.org or call Stephen Leader Ann Fleming at 678-644-9108.





Prayer Concerns

- Reed Balkcom • Teresa Bell
- Doris Brackett • Sara Brewer
- Don Greene • Erica Hall
- Shamain Hallett • Linton Jones
- Emily Anne Klayman • Luke Livingston
- Shirley Grace Madajewski • Dottie Moor
- Joy Parsons • Mike Ramstead
- Henry Roerig • Jeff Schulz
- Mary Jo Southerland • Pat Szathmary
- Ann Tiberghien • Easton Wall
- The family of Lee Bailey in his death.
- Dave Brinker & family in the death of his mother.
 - Donald Greenwood & family in the death of his mother, Jane Greenwood.
- Cheryl Jackson & family in the death of her mother.
 - Dottie Moor & family in the death of her niece.
 - Missy Tippens & family in the death of her mother, Cellia Conley.
- The family of Wayne Webb in his death.

Deadline for the September 2025

Edition of "The Messenger" Newsletter

The article deadline for the September 2025 edition of *The Messenger* newsletter is Thursday, August 21st, at 9 a.m.

To keep up-to-date with all of the happenings at Duluth First UMC, please visit the church's website at duluthumc.org and/or pick up a copy of our weekly newsletter, *The Sunday Supplement*, available on Sunday mornings at all of our worship services.



General Church Fund

Received on July 6 th	\$27,220.41
Received on July 13 th	\$32,370.55
Received on July 20 th	\$29,833.57

Year-to-Date, 2025

Received as of July 20 th	\$830,329.74
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"Crossing the Finish Line"

Capital Campaign: Year-to-Date, 2025

Received as of July 20 th	\$191,947.75
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Worship Attendance

(includes in-person attendance and online views)

July 6 th	558
July 13 th	544
July 20 th	587



Music & Worship Arts Ministry Opportunities **at Duluth First United Methodist Church**

Chancel Choir, the primary worship ensemble for traditional worship, is open to anyone high school age and older who feel called to serve through music. No audition is required. Rehearsals are Wednesdays, 7 to 8:30 p.m., August through May, in the Don Lee Music Suite. Childcare in **Childcare Corner** is provided. Please contact Verena Lucía Anders, Minister of Music & Worship Arts, by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org for more information.

The **Praise Team** is the primary worship ensemble for the Contemporary Worship service. New members are ALWAYS welcome! Rehearsals are Sunday mornings from 8:45 to 9:30 a.m., and from 10:30 to 10:45 a.m. For more information, please contact Rev. Min Lee, Contemporary Worship Music Director, by e-mail at mlee@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 119. Childcare in **Childcare Corner** is available.

Chamber Chorale is a smaller ensemble of singers dedicated to bringing quality, sacred choral literature to our church community. This ensemble often sings more challenging and a cappella repertoire. Rehearsals are Mondays, 7 to 8:30 p.m., August through May, in the Don Lee Music Suite. Please contact Verena Lucía Anders by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org for more information.

Treble Ensemble and Tenor-Bass Ensemble meet in rotation on Wednesdays, 8:30 to 9 p.m. August through May. We have a great time singing a wide variety of music and sing for worship several times during the year. Childcare in **Childcare Corner** is available. Please contact Verena Lucía Anders by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org for more information.

DuluthKids is an exciting Wednesday night opportunity for kids where we will gather together for fellowship, Bible study, mission opportunities, games and music! Programming is age-appropriate with curriculum designed for kids ages Kindergarten through 5th grade.

The new **Children's Chime Choir**, 3rd through 5th grades, is an exciting way to learn music and provide music at worship. This group will learn to play the tone chimes, which are similar to handbells. The **Children's Chime Choir** meets from 6 to 6:30 p.m. during **DuluthKids** time.

The **Children's Bell Choir**, for ages Kindergarten through 2nd grade, is a place where children will learn the fundamentals of music in a fun group environment! The **Children's Bell Choir** meets from 6 to 6:30 p.m. during **DuluthKids** time.

If you have any questions or would like to be involved in this ministry for children, please contact Verena Lucía Anders by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org, or Leslie Yokeley, Director of Children's Ministries, by e-mail at lyokeley@duluthumc.org, or call 770-476-3776, ext. 138.

Genesis Youth Choir rehearsals are Sundays at 4:30 p.m. in the Don Lee Music Suite. The **Genesis Youth Choir** is open to students in 6th through 12th grades. No audition is needed and no experience is necessary - all are welcome! Please contact Verena Lucía Anders by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org for more information.

The **Hand Bell Ensemble** is open anyone high school age and older as spaces are available. Prior ringing experience is not necessary, but helpful. Rehearsals are Wednesdays from 6 to 7 p.m., August-May, in the Sanctuary. Please contact our new Director of the Hand Bell Choir, Johnathan Ancell, by e-mail at jancell@duluthumc.org.

Volunteers Needed: Camera and Streaming Operators Needed for All Worship Services

Did you know that through live streaming our three worship services that we reach approximately 200+ members and visitors each week? And those are just view numbers on YouTube and Facebook that don't take into account how many people are watching together on the same device.

Our streaming ministry is a vital connection and extension of our on-campus worship. We need more volunteers at all three worship services to help keep this ministry going. If you have experience with camera or streaming operation, or are willing to learn how – both are EASY! Please contact either Johnathan Ancell, Director of Worship Technology, by e-mail at jancell@duluthumc.org, or Verena Lucía Anders, Minister of Music & Worship Arts, by e-mail at vanders@duluthumc.org.

REPORT ON ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

The 2025 North Georgia Annual Conference met June 12-14 at The Classic Center in Athens, Georgia, with Bishop Robin Dease presiding. Approximately 1,800 United Methodists gathered for the session under the theme "Come, Follow Me" based on Matthew 4:19-20.

Together we worshiped, shared meals, deliberated, sang, and prayed. We adopted a budget, celebrated retirements, remembered the saints who have gone before us, and commissioned and ordained clergy. We heard from college and university presidents and received the Annual Conference special offering celebrating 100 years of camp ministry at Glisson!

Highlights: Among the highlights and actions of the session, we:

- Received the first full One Georgia Task Force Report and offered a blessing to the committee to continue the study of potential unification (visit www.georgiaumc.org regularly for updates and information.)
- Were blessed by the leadership and participation of 70 voting youth delegates.
- Adopted a 2026 budget of \$10,493,931. (A 5% reduction from 2025.)
- Celebrated that last year, North Georgia Conference churches paid 92.8% of apportionments—the highest collection rate in recent years.
- Adopted two resolutions, the "Joint Resolution on Immigration" and the "Resolution on Full Inclusion and Justice for People with Disabilities." The final text of the resolutions will be posted at www.ngumc.org/ac2025.
- Made a change to our Standing Rules to add an LGBTQ Advocacy Representative to the Conference Connectional Ministries board.
- Celebrated the 5th anniversary of the Barnes Evaluation and Administration Team. Since its inception, BEAT has awarded more than \$5 million toward innovative missions and ministry in our Conference. In 2024, the spending policy allowed \$1,527,474 to be awarded, which funded 32 BEAT grants. Learn more at www.ngumc.org/beatdashboard.
- Approved a motion from the floor to establish a task force to study and report back on clergy salary inequities.
- Adopted the conference nominations report. The 24-page document includes more than 750 names. These volunteers now make up our 2025-2026 Conference boards, committees, and commissions.
- Voted on four proposed constitutional amendments.
- Heard from our United Methodist college and university presidents from across Georgia.
- Were led in daily devotions by leaders from our campus ministries.
- Celebrated 100 years of Glisson Camp and Retreat Ministry.

Worship: The 2025 North Georgia Annual Conference was anchored by four powerful worship services that reflected the heart and mission of The United Methodist Church.

Opening Worship

Bishop Robin Dease preached on Psalm 78:1-4, reflecting on the importance of passing faith to the next generation. She reminded us that our Christian identity is communal, not individualistic, and that the world is watching how we live out our call. God calls us to be humble shepherds and faithful sojourners.

The United Methodist Church is a place of welcome, justice, and action—where lay and clergy alike are transformed and empowered to lead, said Bishop Dease. In other words, "The United Methodist Church is the place to be!"

Service of Licensing, Commissioning, and Ordination : Thursday evening the North Georgia Annual Conference licensed 7 new local pastors, commissioned 5 provisional members, ordained 1 full connection deacon, ordained 6 full connection elders, and recognized a transfer of orders from deacon to elder. And the extraordinary Clark Atlanta University Philharmonic Society brought the annual conference to our feet. Each ordinand was given a handmade stole crafted by North Georgia United Methodists as a symbol of our connection.

Rev. Dr. Jimmy Asbell Jr, pastor of Vineville UMC in the South Georgia Annual Conference, preached on I Corinthians 13:1-13, "And the Greatest of These is Love." With warm humor and deep truths, he spoke directly to the ordinands, provisional members, and licensees.

He shared about what he calls a "ministerial trust fund," where relationships are built on deposits of presence, care, and follow-through — visiting the sick, remembering milestones, sending that text. "Churches will start you with a credit," he said, "but what happens after that is up to you." That trust, he emphasized, is only as powerful as the love that fuels it.

Service of Remembrance: At our Memorial Service, the Annual Conference remembered the saints of the church who have gone before us. Preacher for the service, Rev. Greg Porterfield of Wesley UMC in Evans, offered a moving reflection on the perishable and the imperishable, and the hope and promise of resurrection.

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 15:50-54, he reflected that death is a universal human experience, "no one is exempt." He reminded the gathered body that funerals—far from merely rituals of grief—are sacramental spaces where love, faith, and memory bind us to one another and to God. Rev. Porterfield closed with the affirmation that we will share God's name until all our names are called in heaven.

Rev. Dr. Alice Rogers, director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, and Kim Powell, Conference lay leader, called the names of the clergy, clergy spouses, and laity remembered this year.

Retirement: Those ministers who are retiring were recognized. Our own Rev. Beth Shugart was among them.

Closing Service of Word & Table: The 159th session of the North Georgia Annual Conference closed with worship and Holy Communion. Glisson Camp and Retreat Center staff and alumni led our worship music, singing camp songs and hymns. Russell Davis, director of our North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries, was the preacher.

In his sermon, he reflected on Holocaust rescuers who courageously acted to save others. It was hard to find any connection among these heroes. They spanned ages, genders, races, faith groups, and more. But a post-World War II researcher did find a common thread—compassion.

When people act from empathy and servant-hearted love, they aren't just following Christ, but embodying the character of Christ. Our work as the church isn't only to teach about following Jesus, but to equip one another with the character of Jesus. "It has to be built into everything that we do," he said. "Especially in our ministry with children and youth."

After the sermon, each District Superintendent read the names of the clergy in their district receiving a new appointment, and each district lay leader offered a prayer. In closing, Bishop Dease officially fixed the July 1, 2025, appointments. The service concluded with a blessing sung every week of camp at Glisson for more than 50 years, "My Friend."

Key Reports

What a Welcome: The host district welcomed the North Georgia Conference back to Athens with fanfare. Co-District Lay Leader Tom Jackson, the voice of the UGA Redcoat Marching Band, kept us glued to our seats to hear from University of Georgia President Jere Morehead, Superintendent Beth Sanders, and led the conference in a cheer! (That spells fun!)

One Georgia Task Force Report: The One Georgia Task Force presented a thorough report, following months of prayerful conversation and collaboration, on the potential for unification of the North and South Georgia Annual Conferences. The members of the annual conference affirmed the continued exploration of a possible unification in the future. Stay connected to the work of the task force and more than 20 working groups by visiting the information site www.georgiaumc.org.

Address of the Conference Lay Leader: In her address to the annual conference, Conference Lay Leader Kim Powell celebrated the faithful, passionate witness of laity across North Georgia and emphasized the urgency of using our time well to do all the good we can. Kim expressed gratitude for the hospitality and encouragement she received in her first year, highlighted collaborative efforts with the South Georgia Conference including Lent and Advent devotionals, and lifted up church lay leaders who embody Christ's love. With deep joy and hope, she called the Conference to keep seizing opportunities to make disciples of Jesus Christ, bound together in peace and love as one body.

Thriving Leadership Initiative:: A transformative new opportunity is on the horizon for Georgia United Methodists ready to reimagine what vibrant, thriving ministry can look like. The Thriving Leadership Initiative is launching with a mission to develop and deploy effective United Methodist lay and clergy leaders who can strengthen ministry in existing settings or be deployed to launch new, healthy, and self-sustainable ministries across Georgia. Learn more at www.ngumc.org/thriving.

UMC General Board of Higher Education and Ministry: Meg Lassiat, Executive Director of Ministry, for the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shared how GBHEM and UMC Global Ministries are partnering to align leadership, mission, and education in response to the global needs of the UMC. She highlighted GBHEM's focus on developing transformational leaders through equitable clergy education and supporting students through scholarships and initiatives like the Black College Fund.

Disaster Response: Local churches were invited to get involved in disaster response ministry through ERT training, assembling UMCOR kits, volunteering, and mission trips to Augusta, where more than 80 recovery sites have already been identified. As the North Georgia Conference continues long-term recovery work from Hurricane Helene, Rev. Scott Parrish reminded us that "we are UMCOR," He shared with us that no community in Georgia is beyond the reach of disaster.

Glisson Camp & Retreat Center: The whole annual conference is joining in the celebration of Glisson's 100th Anniversary. For a century, Camp Glisson has been a place of Faith Forming Fun. Conference clergy can tell you where they were in Glisson's chapel when they heard their call to ministry. Campers learn that worship has no walls, and that we can hear God speak anywhere, if we'll slow down enough to listen.

Church Closures: In a solemn moment, the annual conference approved the closure of 16 churches. Rev. Dr. Rodrigo Cruz, assistant to the bishop, offered a prayer for the clergy and laity that have served faithfully through the years at these churches. "God, we come to you in prayer, with heavy hearts. But we also stand before you, acknowledging that you are in the resurrection business. Your gospel continues to work in and through us," he said.

A member of one of the closing churches spoke from the floor, sharing that resurrection is already happening, as some of these closures are the result of mergers that have brought new life, energy, and excitement to congregations.

Awards & Recognitions: A number of individuals and congregations were honored and recognized by the annual conference. These include:

Denman Evangelism Awards:

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award went to:

- Denman Award for Clergy: Jamey Prickett, pastor of Gainesville First UMC
- Denman Award for Laity: Neil Duggan, member of Tucker First UMC
- Denman Award for Youth: Julia Allen, member of Community First UMC in Carrollton

One Matters Awards: The Discipleship Ministries One Matters Award goes to a congregation that has demonstrated significant revitalization in discipleship, marked by an increase in professions of faith and baptisms from zero to at least one in the previous years. This year, Discipleship Ministries agreed to name five One Matters recipients in North Georgia:

- Griffin Chapel UMC, Rev. John Woods
- Atlanta Bethany UMC, Rev. Harold Yen-Pyo Hong
- Walker UMC, Rev. David Collins
- Bethlehem UMC Atlanta, Rev. Michael Dean Myers
- Faith UMC Griffin, Rev. Al Danso

Francis Asbury Award: Named for early American Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury, who called for the establishment of a school in the vicinity of every church, the award recognizes United Methodist individuals who have made a significant contribution to supporting, strengthening, and promoting United Methodist ministries in higher education.

This year's Francis Asbury Award for North Georgia goes to Rev. Sam Hopson, director of the Georgia Tech Wesley Foundation.

Faith Connection Federal Credit Union Scholarship Award

Presented by Keith Pritchard, President/CEO, and Jonathan Curtis, Executive VP, the North Georgia United Methodist recipient of this year's Credit Union Scholarship Award is Shemaiah Perry, a student at Brandeis University.

Marian Wilder Award: The Marian Wilder Award, presented by Aldersgate Homes/Collinswood, is a new recognition highlighting congregations with exceptional outreach to those with developmental disabilities. Three churches received the award:

- Athens First UMC
- Dunwoody UMC
- North Decatur UMC

Areas of Focus: Churches of Excellence Awards: Awards were given to churches excelling in the areas of focus of our Annual Conference. Recipients were:

Scriptural Literacy and Imagination

- Ben Hill United Methodist Church
- Chamblee First United Methodist Church

Health and Wellbeing Award of Excellence

- Ben Hill United Methodist Church
- New Hope United Methodist Church in Gainesville
- Mount Carmel United Methodist Church in Norcross

Community Engagement Award of Excellence

- Ben Hill United Methodist Church
- Birmingham United Methodist Church
- Clayton First United Methodist Church
- Cornerstone United Methodist Church
- East Cobb United Methodist Church
- Northside United Methodist Church
- Tucker First United Methodist Church

New Faith Opportunities and Communities Award of Excellence

- Ben Hill United Methodist Church
- Trinity United Methodist In Cartersville

Special Recognition: The Annual Conference recognized journalist Shelia Poole for decades of service covering faith, non-profits, and The United Methodist Church for the Atlanta-Journal Constitution. Shelia has attended General Conferences, Annual Conferences, worship services, town halls, and gatherings, telling the story of the church through the top news outlet in our state.

Annual Conference Special Offering

As we departed Annual Conference, \$25,193 had been given to our Special Offering for Glisson Camp & Retreat Center. Additionally, we received an offering for the Ministerial Education Fund of the North Georgia Conference. Donations totaled \$4,679.53.

Statistics

At the close of 2024, in the North Georgia Conference

- Churches: 416
- Membership stands at: 204,415 (down from 211,504 in 2023)
- Average Attendance at all weekly worship services: 39,430 (down from 40,288)
- Average Attendance of persons who worship online: 47,088 (up from 40,874)
- Professions of Faith: 982 (up from 907 in 2023)

The next session of the North Georgia Annual Conference will be June 18-20, 2026, at The Classic Center in Athens, Georgia.

Prepared by Sybil Davidson, Director of Communications, NGUMC