

AUGUST 2026

FUMC Courier

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

610 BONUS AVE

BELVIDERE, IL

61008



Belvidere First

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

LOVIN' JESUS  LOVIN' YOU

August Newsletter

Can you believe summer is already moving toward its final chapter? Looking back, we see a summer filled with God's presence, joyful moments, and many opportunities to grow together.

Summer is always a busy time in many different ways. We make time for family gatherings, find moments to rest and recharge, and continue serving through the ministries God has entrusted to us. Through all these different rhythms of life, God has been faithfully present and at work among us.

We are grateful for the many ways we have grown together this summer – from the ASP Mission Trip, where we shared Christ's love through service, to Vacation Bible School, where children explored who God is, and Camp Rock Forward, where we shared God's love through hospitality, care, and meaningful relationships.

This summer, we have also been reflecting together on the Kingdom of God and how God is inviting us to participate in God's work around us. We are reminded that God's kingdom is not only something we hope for in the future – it is something we experience and help make visible through our lives today. Every act of love, every moment of service, and every gathering of God's people is a way we bear witness to God's kingdom among us.

And just when we thought summer was slowing down... there are still a couple more highlights ahead: the Boone County Fair! Beginning August 11, many from our church family will serve our community through this special opportunity to share God's love beyond our church walls.

Then, on August 23, we will celebrate Rally Sunday as we begin another season of ministry together. Bible studies, ministries, and opportunities to grow in faith will continue as we seek and live out God's kingdom in our daily lives.

Summer may be coming to an end, but God's work among us continues. What a joy it is to be part of a church that keeps serving, growing, and sharing Christ's love.

See you at Church,

Pastor Jay

Check out these books from our church library in August!

For Kids: Heaven by Nicholas Allen

For Women: A Woman's Walk with God by Elizebeth
George

For Men: Wild at Heart by John Eldridge



Last dates for the IDA Library
Book Mobile are:
August 10 & 24
Located in the church parking
lot from 10-11:30am



Grief Share Meetings
will begin
Thursday, August 27th
6pm
in the Adult Classroom.
For more information,
contact the church office.



Our prayer team is always
ready to pray for you, or
someone you know. If you
have a prayer request, please
contact Karen Frazer @ 815-985-
7970, or contact the Church office
at 815-544-3479.



Active Military

**Do you have a family member
serving in the military?**

Please contact Ruth Bower, and let us
know so we can be encouraging and
praying for them. Here is what we need:

- Name of active family member and their
Relationship to you
- Branch of military
- Location serving
- Address to send correspondence

Hospitality Team

Galatians 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Would you like to meet and greet visitors to our church? Then our Hospitality Team may be the place for you. Contact the church office at 815-544-3479 for more information, if you feel God nudging you towards this team.



Reflections from a UMC Conference Newbie

I'm sharing my thoughts on the annual meeting of the Northern Illinois Conference of the UMC which I attended with my fellow lay representative Curt Newport as well as Pastors Jim, Jay, and Pam. Unlike my fellow attendees, the meeting was a new experience for me, where over 700 clergy and lay representatives gathered to discuss the business of our churches. Alternately a worship event, pep rally, boardroom report, legislative debate, and communing of the body of Christ, it was at times fascinating, frustrating, and encouraging.

I'll begin with the verses around which the events were structured: Romans 5:3-5. "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

In turbulent times, we all look for hope but this passage suggests that it is the turbulent times that teach us hope. This makes the hope we have meaningful because it is based not on an ill-considered optimism but on a relationship with God. This was important to remember as I learned more about the struggles in the conference. We have churches that are being closed, churches with desperately low attendance, and campgrounds that are losing money in the service of God.

But as I heard about these difficulties, I found myself with people that love God and are willing to make sacrifices to serve Him. I do acknowledge most of these people were adults and older adults at that. (At the meeting, I learned that United Methodists have a distinctive way of classifying members as adults and older adults. And still, most people in the second classification were hesitant to identify themselves as elder. I understand that as I am less than a year away from qualifying as a so-called older adult.)

At the same time, there was a notable younger contingent at the meeting, something it seems we need to focus on. The first meeting for the lay representatives featured a panel of these young people. Initially, they were steered towards questions that evoked hope for the future but questions from the crowd steered them to their concerns and how we have to reach young people outside the four walls of the church building. We need to know that many young people think of church folk as overly concerned with things that don't matter to them.

Part of this experience included one of our former youth pastors, Sharon Rice, giving young believers an opportunity to share with the large group: one raised in the church and seemingly destined to be a church leader and another who never felt welcome in church because of who he is until he attended a United Methodist Church.

Yes, we learned churches are being closed but they are also being combined or repurposed for other ministry outreaches. This is a hard swallow but in times of crisis we can still find opportunities. I met a person on a financial committee who said facing our hard realities was essential for us to have a hope for the future.

For the first evening, the large group sat in straight rows in a large hall but, for the next two days, we sat at round tables in that same hall. We were randomly assigned table mates but, even with the random assignment, I was thrilled to see Pastor Pam at my table. Everyone else was new to me, a body of Christ made up of lay and clergy with a mix of races, genders, sexual orientations, and urban/rural backgrounds. The diversity of this small group within the large group worked to remind me of the John Wesley principle that religion is for all people.

Over the three days, the meetings alternated between different points of focus. There were moving worship services (a celebration of ministry, a memorial service, and a retirement service). There were discussions of legislation in small groups and then in the large group. There were committee reports that were more interesting than you might suspect from the description "committee reports."

In terms of legislation, the most contentious proposal was for the temporary closing of Camp Reynoldswood to study how it might again be profitable and not regularly bailed out by the conference. With a proud history of influence on believers who became great leaders, it was hard for many to see what might be the best path forward. But finding a way to reconcile the church conference's past with its current reality is essential.

Along those lines, I came to understand the commitment of the already mentioned "older adults" to be as crucial to church survival as the youth who are our future. And yet, in terms of survival strategies, one of the most important characteristics of a church is its willingness to change. In short, we need to stay the same in the ways God wants us to and change in the ways God wants us to.

The issue dealt with most often mentioned at the conference was immigration which I'll describe colloquially and inadequately as a political hot potato. The task force devoted to dealing with the issue described how they advocated for civil rights, supported those wrongly detained, and worked to make sure that clergy had visitation rights. I'm sure that we have a variety of opinions on this issue in our church but I also know that, politics aside, we gather in church to treat people as human beings all deserving of God's love.

(continued from Terry)

We live in a fast-paced world where the information age of the internet and AI may be changing how we define ourselves but, as a speaker from Garrett Evangelical Seminary said, the church has faced radical challenges before and come out stronger for it. What does this all mean for our church and for the church conference? I'm not entirely sure because as I said, I'm kind of new at this.

But I can say this: As I think back at the group gathered at the small table to which I was assigned, I know we're in this together as a body of Christ. (We had an activity where we said, "If they come for one of us, they come for all of us.") In the future, I hope that we can use the conference meeting to learn from churches recognized with special awards from the conference. There are undeniable struggles in our church and in our church conference. But as suggested by Romans 5:3-5, struggles are the starting point in a process that leads to true hope. And as was suggested by our Bible study leader, sometimes we have to be emptied out so that God can pour all of his love into us.

Annual Conference Report 2026

By Curt Newport, Lay Delegate

United Methodist congregations have a unique relationship with the 51 conferences of the UMC across the United States. The conference provides a pool of pastors that can be appointed and moved between congregations as the needs arise. The conference also administers health insurance and pension programs for pastors and a property/liability insurance pool for its 300 or so local churches.

Belvidere First UMC pays annual apportionments to the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) exceeding \$54,000 per year. Some of this pays for the administrative structure to manage those programs and some of it supports missions, new church plants and philanthropic efforts, both within conference borders and around the world.

Each conference holds an Annual Conference event every year (yeah, the language is confusing). Terry Wandtke and I were lay delegates to Annual Conference this year, and I encourage you to read Terry's report as well. My objective here is to share what I consider to be the most relevant information that our church members should be aware of.

Financial overview: Apportionment income from local congregations, the main source of income for the conference, has improved significantly over the past year. 2025 totals and 2026 forecasts are both significantly above budgeted amounts. This has provided some optimism, and the NIC draft budget for 2027 includes total expenses of \$5,647,000, up 10.5% from the 2026 budget.

Legislative documents were brought forth and approved, covering such topics as "creation care" (environmental stewardship), pastor compensation and housing, and disposition of the assets of closed churches. To my surprise, this year's docket was devoid of resolutions apologizing for things other people did 100 years ago, condemning Israel, or declaring that guns are bad.

I was disappointed, but not surprised, by the absence of any attention to the most pressing issue facing both our conference and the larger denomination: The continued decline in church attendance and church membership, closing local churches and ordaining fewer pastors (our conference ordained only one elder this year). The Bishop did mention a couple statistics to bring this home: The majority of our congregations have an average worship attendance of 35 people or less, and 40% of our churches have not celebrated a single baptism in the last three years. These numbers do not inspire hope for long term sustainability. The Bishop mentioned the UMC mission statement: "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." It's apparent that as a conference, we are not making disciples as fast as they are leaving or dying off.

A few churches have actually grown recently and now have more people in worship than pre-COVID numbers, are financially sound and venturing into new initiatives to advance the Kingdom of God. Belvidere First UMC is one of those churches. But just as in previous years, no microphone time was given to the pastors or lay reps of those churches. The NIC has squandered yet another opportunity to show declining congregations what the growing congregations are doing that is making a difference.

Certain causes were mentioned repeatedly during the Annual Conference, including anti-racism, DEI initiatives, inclusiveness for LGBT people and resistance to America's immigration enforcement efforts. I continue to be frustrated that our conference places such heavy emphasis on various social issues while ignoring an existential problem.



United
Women
in Faith

Board Meeting only—August 31st 1pm
Adult Classroom

The next UMM meeting is August 1 (the first
Saturday!) at 8:30 am in Perry Hall.

Come for breakfast, fellowship, and a
review of our plans!



August 11-16

If you volunteered, we will be calling you soon to
remind you of your dates and times.

This is the church's biggest fundraiser and without all
the wonderful volunteers, it wouldn't be possible.

August Greeter Schedule

August 2 Jeanette Gardner
August 9 Sue Holmes
August 16 Max Gardner
August 23 Helen Schuerr
August 30 Wandtke Family

August Ushers

Craig Lawler
Jill Lawler
Jeanette Gardner
Lucy Capitosti



Care Notes

Care Notes are small booklets offering strength, help, and
healing for a variety of topics that impact everyday lives at a

very personal level. They are free to those who are hurting and
in need of them.

Topics range from overcoming everyday anxiety to dealing with depression,
abuse, grief, financial stress, addictions, dementia, and suicide. There are
booklets for children, teens, and adults. Check out the **Care Notes** rack in the
main hall just outside the office.

Debbi Bloomingdale is a Notary. If you need something
notarized, please call the church office. This service is free to
church members and their families.



August Altar

Flowers

August 2 Beth Bruha

*August 9 Rich & Tammie
Bahling*

*August 16 *Open**

August 23 Marilyn Weaver

August 30 Bloomingdale's



Visitation Team

"Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions." 1 John 3:18

Jesus served others in love. As his children, we are called to do likewise. Think of people who need to receive the love and touch of Christ. Allow God to work through you to share his love with those around you, with the homebound, with the grieving and with those who have serious health issues. As followers, do not neglect your call to service.

If you have suggestions on how the Visitation Team may more effectively minister, please notify a team member or contact the church office at (815)544-3479.

"May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion." Thomas Jefferson

The Visitation Team: Linda Clair, Joanie Eastland, Karen McClenthen, Mary Lou Poulter, Rene Worden, Pastor Jay and Janet Wheeler



Ministry by, with and for women, supporting spiritual growth individually and in community, encouraging and recognizing the unique needs that come with life stages.

Adapted from www.resourceumc.org/en/topics/womens-ministry

Join us on Saturday August 8th at 10:00am. We will be talking about spirituality. Hope to see you there, we'll save you a seat.

Please call any of the ministry team with questions, (Karen Frazer, Pam Rossmiller, Carla Walter, Linda Lennon or Cindy Poulter). We'll save you a seat.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Attention everyone from 16 (with parental consent form) to 99+

Save 3 lives and get a free snack!

Rock River Valley Blood Center Mobile Truck
is coming to our church parking lot
Thursday September 3, 2026

Time: 10am-2pm

Sign-ups will be available soon!



A HUGE THANK YOU GOES OUT
TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED SERVE OUR COMMUNITY DURING
THE NI MOBILE FOOD TRUCK
ON WEDNESDAY JULY 22ND!

Without your continued support
some of those we serve
would go hungry.

Borrowed from a friend's Facebook page...



Always pray to have
eyes that see the
best in people,
a heart that forgives
the worst,
a mind that forgets the bad,
and a soul that never
loses faith in God.

Money Matters ~Becky Newport

1. It's all about Jesus

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'" John 14:6-11

It's all about Jesus. *Jesus is our life.* Money is not.

In his book *The Treasure Principle*, author Randy Alcorn writes, "The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it's all about God, not about us. It's saying I'm not the point, He is the point...God's money has a higher purpose than my affluence".

- Giving reminds us it's all about God and His will
- Giving acts like an antidote to materialism
- Giving reminds us who we worship

~From 20 Effective, Encouraging Tithe & Offering Messages

2026 Financial Information				
	June	Year-to-Date		
Income	30,299.27	207,002.13	Annual Apportionment	54,140.50
Expenses	36,999.29	252,355.80	Apportionment paid to date	20,640.21
Net Income (Loss)	(6,700.02)	(45,353.67)		

The mission field is calling!

Once again, adults from First Church will be heading to the mission field to help relief efforts in storm-devastated communities throughout the Midwest. From October 4-9 we'll most likely be heading back to Greenfield, IA where we've been rebuilding from one of the most powerful tornadoes ever witnessed. By now we're familiar in the community with churches in town, the Foundation that coordinates the work, the lumberyard and our neighbors. We have the rare opportunity to return to homes we've labored on and greet the families we've served. We've reached out to areas impacted by storms this year to see if there are more urgent needs closer to home.

For more information about cost, transportation, lodgings or to sign up, contact Pastor Jim or Debbi Bloomingdale in the church office.



FREE COMMUNITY DINNER

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5TH - 430 TO 6PM IN PERRY HALL

* Join us - and invite your friends, neighbors and others!

* This month we are serving up **Italian Beef Sandwiches!**



* Then stay after the meal for a group **Hymn Sing in the library** at 6!

Come sing along to your favorites!



ONE YEAR BIBLE ONLINE.COM

August

	Old Testament	New Testament	Psalms	Proverbs
☐ 01	2 Chronicles 30:1-31:21	Romans 15:1-22	Psalms 25:1-15	Proverbs 20:13-15
☐ 02	2 Chronicles 32:1-33:13	Romans 15:23-16:9	Psalms 25:16-22	Proverbs 20:16-18
☐ 03	2 Chronicles 33:14-34:33	Romans 16:10-27	Psalms 26:1-12	Proverbs 20:19
☐ 04	2 Chronicles 35:1-36:23	1 Corinthians 1:1-17	Psalms 27:1-6	Proverbs 20:20-21
☐ 05	Ezra 1:1-2:70	1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5	Psalms 27:7-14	Proverbs 20:22-23
☐ 06	Ezra 3:1-4:23	1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4	Psalms 28:1-9	Proverbs 20:24-25
☐ 07	Ezra 4:24-6:22	1 Corinthians 3:5-23	Psalms 29:1-11	Proverbs 20:26-27
☐ 08	Ezra 7:1-8:20	1 Corinthians 4:1-21	Psalms 30:1-12	Proverbs 20:28-30
☐ 09	Ezra 8:21-9:15	1 Corinthians 5:1-13	Psalms 31:1-8	Proverbs 21:1-2
☐ 10	Ezra 10:1-44	1 Corinthians 6:1-20	Psalms 31:9-18	Proverbs 21:3
☐ 11	Nehemiah 1:1-3:14	1 Corinthians 7:1-24	Psalms 31:19-24	Proverbs 21:4
☐ 12	Nehemiah 3:15-5:13	1 Corinthians 7:25-40	Psalms 32:1-11	Proverbs 21:5-7
☐ 13	Nehemiah 5:14-7:73	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Psalms 33:1-11	Proverbs 21:8-10
☐ 14	Nehemiah 7:73-9:21	1 Corinthians 9:1-18	Psalms 33:12-22	Proverbs 21:11-12
☐ 15	Nehemiah 9:22-10:39	1 Corinthians 9:19-10:13	Psalms 34:1-10	Proverbs 21:13
☐ 16	Nehemiah 11:1-12:26	1 Corinthians 10:14-33	Psalms 34:11-22	Proverbs 21:14-16
☐ 17	Nehemiah 12:27-13:31	1 Corinthians 11:1-16	Psalms 35:1-16	Proverbs 21:17-18
☐ 18	Esther 1:1-3:15	1 Corinthians 11:17-34	Psalms 35:17-28	Proverbs 21:19-20
☐ 19	Esther 4:1-7:10	1 Corinthians 12:1-26	Psalms 36:1-12	Proverbs 21:21-22
☐ 20	Esther 8:1-10:3	1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13	Psalms 37:1-11	Proverbs 21:23-24
☐ 21	Job 1:1-3:26	1 Corinthians 14:1-17	Psalms 37:12-29	Proverbs 21:25-26
☐ 22	Job 4:1-7:21	1 Corinthians 14:18-40	Psalms 37:30-40	Proverbs 21:27
☐ 23	Job 8:1-11:20	1 Corinthians 15:1-28	Psalms 38:1-22	Proverbs 21:28-29
☐ 24	Job 12:1-15:35	1 Corinthians 15:29-58	Psalms 39:1-13	Proverbs 21:30-31
☐ 25	Job 16:1-19:29	1 Corinthians 16:1-24	Psalms 40:1-10	Proverbs 22:1
☐ 26	Job 20:1-22:30	2 Corinthians 1:1-11	Psalms 40:11-17	Proverbs 22:2-4
☐ 27	Job 23:1-27:23	2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11	Psalms 41:1-13	Proverbs 22:5-6
☐ 28	Job 28:1-30:31	2 Corinthians 2:12-17	Psalms 42:1-11	Proverbs 22:7
☐ 29	Job 31:1-33:33	2 Corinthians 3:1-18	Psalms 43:1-5	Proverbs 22:8-9
☐ 30	Job 34:1-36:33	2 Corinthians 4:1-12	Psalms 44:1-8	Proverbs 22:10-12
☐ 31	Job 37:1-39:30	2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10	Psalms 44:9-26	Proverbs 22:13

<http://www.oneyearbibleonline.com>

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August 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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First United Methodist Church
610 Bonus Ave
Belvidere, IL 61008
Pastor Jim Bell
Associate Pastor Jay Shin

Phone: 815-544-3479

E-mail: officeadmin@fumcbelvidere.com

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 9-3

Friday 9-12

After hour emergencies--847-764-6563

Worship 9:00 AM

Sunday School 10:15 Sept--May



Find us on the web [@fumcbelvidere.org](http://fumcbelvidere.org)



**Scan the QR code with
your phone, or Ipad
to go directly to our
website.**



**If you would like us to
to pray for you, email the
church or scan the QR
code below.**

