



NEWS AT *first*

Monthly
Newsletter
of
First United
Methodist
Church

SEPTEMBER 2025



Table of Contents

3	Note from our Co-Senior Pastors
4	Worship Ministry
5	Children's Ministry
6	Preschool Ministry
7	Youth Ministry
8	Adult Discipleship Ministry
13	SPRC Update
14	Community Health Ministry
15	Financial Report
16	Hands and Feet Ministry
18	Life at First UMC
19	Joys/Sympathies
20	Take Note

Note from our Co-Senior Pastors

Fresh Faith at First UMC Gastonia

Hello friends,

What a wonderful season we are stepping into together! As the days begin to cool and routines settle back in, we are excited to lean into a season of **Fresh Faith** here at First UMC Gastonia. This fall, we're turning our hearts toward two simple but powerful practices: digging into God's Word and living out the gift of welcome and hospitality.

Each week in worship, we'll explore how Scripture shapes our daily lives and how a warm, Christlike welcome can open doors for others to experience God's love. Whether it's greeting a newcomer, sharing a meal, or simply making room in your heart for someone who needs encouragement, these practices are ways we grow together as a church family.

September also holds some truly special moments:

- **Saturday, September 6 at 10 am – HOPE Fest 2025** kicks off in our West Parking Lot. At this event, many different churches, government agencies, non-profits, and business come together for our community to dispense HOPE. It is an honor to be the host site yet again.
- **Sunday, September 21 at 11 am** – We'll commission our **Confirmands, their mentors, and teachers**, blessing them as they take these important steps in their faith journey.
- **Sunday, September 28 at all services** – We'll celebrate our children by presenting **Third Grade Bibles**, placing God's Word in their hands and praying it will guide their hearts for years to come.

We hope you'll make plans to be part of these meaningful gatherings as we *Love God, Love People, are For our Community, and For the World*. They're reminders that faith grows best when it's shared—through learning, through welcome, and through the simple gift of being present with one another.

This fall, why not invite a friend or neighbor to join you? A kind invitation might be the very thing that helps someone else discover the joy of Christ's welcome.

With joy and anticipation,
Pastors Justin and Melissa

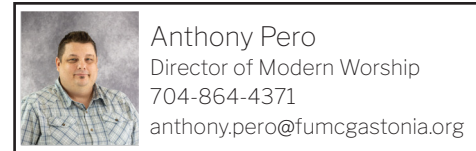
Justin & Melissa



Rev. Justin Lowe
Co-Senior Pastor
704-864-4371
justin.lowe@fumcgastonia.org



Rev. Melissa Lowe
Co-Senior Pastor
704-864-4371
melissa.lowe@fumcgastonia.org



“How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place, O Lord of Hosts!”

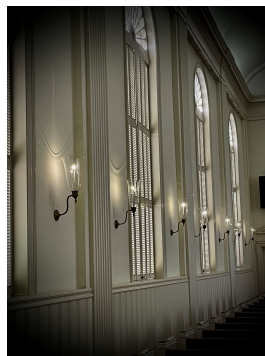
Many of you may have noticed the beautiful candle wall sconces located in both the main Sanctuary and Chapel. I’ve been researching the history of our beloved church, spending several hours pouring over the *Shiloh and Beyond, A History of the First United Methodist from 1870-1970*. Vintage church architecture is a passionate hobby of mine. If walls could talk, oh the life they have witnessed, and in this case, oh the magnificent moments of worship they have witnessed. It was my hope that I could glean just a little information about these wall sconces, which I did not find. However, I did have the opportunity to read about the carvings of the shields of the twelve apostles on the reredos in the Chancel above the altar!

I digress...in the first photo below, you will see a close-up of the original candle inserts that were installed in the Sanctuary sometime during the 1950’s. After extensive searching to find replacement parts for these, the Trustees knew that someone would have to come up with a way to refurbish them completely. The original lights were not the typical socket, screw in light bulb that we are familiar with. They were one full piece with a tiny candle bulb that was a part of the whole cylinder.

Thanks to Bill Payseur and his mighty band of helpers, Letha Payseur, Marshall Dilling and Robert Dilling, the refurbishment in the Sanctuary is complete. How delightful it is to see these candle wall sconces burning brightly once again! If you will notice in the photos below, the way they create a scallop of light on the wall, and it is so charming.

If you happen to see these amazing servants, Bill, Letha, Marshall and Robert, please thank them for the way they have ministered to our church.

With joy,
Jill



Children's Ministry



Margaret Petrey Smith
Director of Children's Ministries
704-864-4371
margaret.smith@fumcgastonia.org

Greetings, Church Family!

A new year is so exciting! We have so many wonderful plans for faith, fun, and fellowship in Children's Ministries. I encourage everyone reading this to pray about how you can help the children of our church grow in their faith and have meaningful connections. Please reach out if you can volunteer!

Sunday School for the new year has begun! This is a great opportunity for our children to be with their peers, to establish and grow relationships and enjoy time together, all while learning more about being the people God calls us to be. Sunday School is at 10 am, and we gather starting at 9:45 for a snack and fellowship.

Wednesday Evening Fellowship is another meaningful time for our children to be together. We are having FUN at WEF! Free play in the gym is available starting at 5:45 pm (for those who eat super fast). Between 6:30 and 6:45, we transition to the Children's Wing on the 1st Floor for a bible story, devotion, or even more playtime. We'll split into age groups in a few weeks for more focused time together.

F.I.S.H! First in Serving Him, for our 4th and 5th graders, will meet on Sunday, September 28 from 5:45-7:45 pm. Save that date and be on the lookout for plans for October, November, and December!

Bible Sunday is Sunday, September 28. On this day, we'll present Bibles to our Third Graders during each worship service. And our Kindergarteners will receive their bibles during Sunday School. Third Grade Parents, please let me know which service you'll attend. It continues to be a joy and privilege to be in ministry with you!

Yay, God!

- Margaret





This summer, the preschool was filled with joy, laughter and plenty of unforgettable moments during our two week-long summer camps in June and July. From creative crafts to energetic games, our campers made memories that will last all year long! As mid-August arrived, our wonderful preschool teachers returned, pouring their hearts into preparing bright, welcoming classrooms for the new school year. On August 28, we hosted our Student/Parent Orientation, where families met their teachers, connected with classmates, and got a sneak peek at all the exciting learning adventures ahead. Now, we're celebrating the official first day of school! We can't wait to see our classrooms come alive again with the smiles, curiosity and energy of our amazing students. We appreciate your prayers as we begin another wonderful school year!

- Rebecca



Youth Ministry



Hollie Luther
Director of Youth Ministries
704-864-4371
hollie.luther@fumcgastonia.org

Can you volunteer with youth for just one Wednesday Night?



SIGN UP HERE



Use the QR Code to Sign Up or reach out to Hollie at Hollie.luther@fumcgastonia.org

GLOW PARTY NIGHT
Youth @ First

SEPTEMBER 7, 2025 | 5:30-7:30 PM
IN THE GREENE HOUSE



Sunday Evening Meet Ups Start Back September 7 and we will kick it off with a Glow Party! Think music, glow sticks, neon, and black lights!

Can you provide snack supper for just one Sunday Evening Youth Meet Up? Use the QR Code or reach out to Hollie at Hollie.luther@fumcgastonia.org.



YOUTH SUNDAY

5:30-7:30



Sr-Hi Youth
CHICKEN BOG

SUNDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2025
5:30PM

HOSTED BY NATALIE TINDOL AT HER HOME,
TRANSPORTATION WILL BE PROVIDED.

Adult Discipleship Ministry



Becky Greene
Director of Spiritual Formation
704-864-4371 ext. 227
becky@fumcgastonia.org

Find Your People – Find Your Place

Church is more than a Sunday service—it's a family. Small Groups are where you can share life, grow in your faith, and be surrounded by people who pray for you. Whether you're new to First United Methodist Church or have been here for years, there's a group waiting to welcome you. The lyrics to Drew Holcomb's song say "when you find your people, you will find yourself." We certainly believe this to be true in discipleship ministry. I am praying for each person to find a small group where you can be yourself and experience the love of God in Christ Jesus.

- Becky



Scan the QR code to listen to "Find Your People" by Drew Holcomb

Friends On The Go

Trip to Belmont Abbey

Our Friends on the Go uncovered a hidden gem in our very own county! We toured Belmont Abbey College with Rev. Tripp Hord and student guides. Did you know that they have an outdoor grotto for meditation, a chapel that is available for personal prayer from 7 am - 11 pm and daily mass at the Basilica at 11 am?



Annual Fall Leaf Trip

Join us for a time of lunch, laughter and listening! We'll leave from the covered driveway to spend the day in the mountains of Linville, NC, at the home of Charlie and Kathy Gray.

Register with Stephanie Sholtzes at stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org.

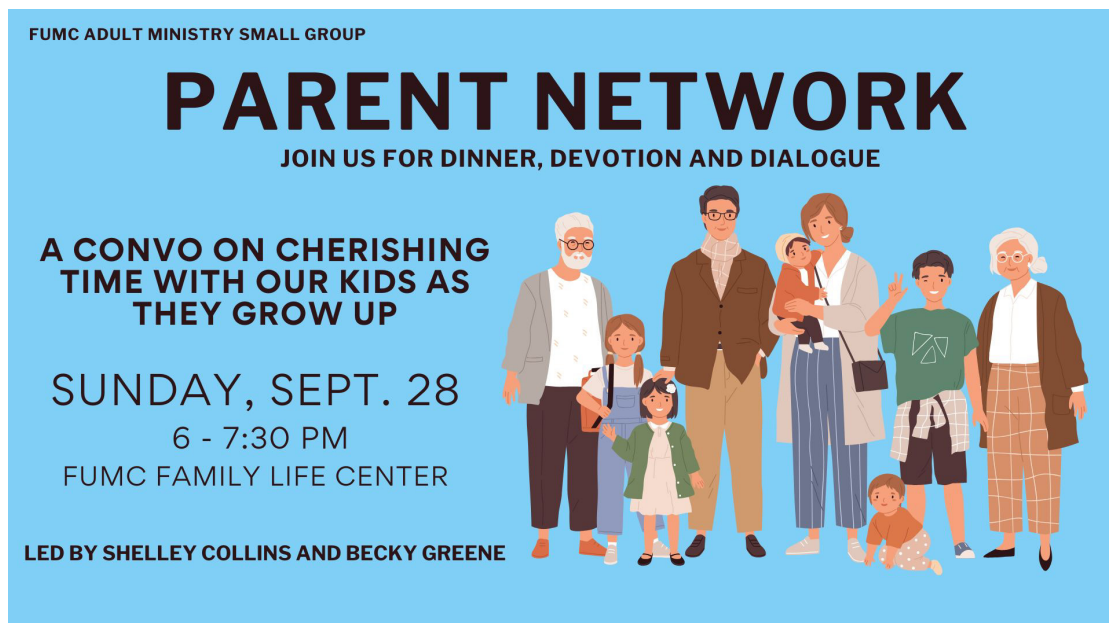


Sunday Adult Small Groups



Spark: Finding Your Next Most Faithful Step

Spark is a five week journey to help you notice your gifts, listen for your calling, and discover how the Holy Spirit is guiding you. **Meetings are held every Sunday at 10 am in Room 303/305.** Together we'll create space to let go, take risks, and step into your next most faithful step.



How do we cherish relationships with our children as they grow and mature? This time of dinner, devotion and dialogue will help answer those questions. Join us on Sunday, September 28 in the Family Life Center from 6-7:30 pm. Shelley Collins and Becky Greene lead our group.

Monday Adult Small Groups

FUMC Adult Ministry

MONDAY BIBLE CLASS with Bill and Nancy Moore

BEGINS SEPT 8 AT 6:30 PM

MEET US AT
COVENANT VILLAGE

1351 Robinwood Rd
Gastonia, NC 28054

For more: 704-864-4371

Bible Class at Covenant Village

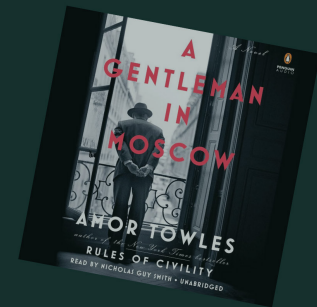
Starting Sept. 8, bring your Bible to Covenant Village and join us each Monday at 6:30 pm for a time of fellowship and study. Bill and Nancy Moore will lead our group.

Tuesday Adult Small Groups

FUMC ADULT MINISTRY BOOK STUDY

A GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW

EVERY TUESDAY
FROM OCT. 7 - NOV. 11 AT 10 AM
ROOM 218



LED BY SHARON ECCLES

FOR MORE INFO: 704-864-4371

A Gentleman in Moscow

Join us for month-long book study of *A Gentleman in Moscow*. We'll meet each Tuesday from October 7 – November 11 at 10 am in Room 218. Sharon Eccles will lead our group.

DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Providing support and practical tips for caregivers dealing with loved ones with cognitive issues.

Next Meeting
Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2025
4 pm
FUMC Room 218

Check out the link below:
<https://teepasnow.com/>

Dementia Caregiver Support Group

Our Dementia Caregiver Support Group will meet on Tuesday, September 23 @ 4 pm in Room 218. Join us every fourth Tuesday and be encouraged as we provide tips for caregivers.

Wednesday Adult Small Groups

Facing the Unexpected Curveballs of Life with Your Child

Come join a supportive group to talk about the challenges and gifts of the unexpected parenting journey.



Wednesday evenings – Beginning August 20th
First United Methodist Church
6:30–7:30

Embracing the Gift of Your Child

Professional Therapist and member of University UMC Chapel Hill Meredith Dangle will be with us on **Wednesday, September 10 @ 6:30 pm** in the Greene House. Meredith will address how to reframe your family's new normal when dealing with the challenges of children and youth. How do we bring these emotions to God instead of trying to control the world around them?

Facing the Unexpected Curveballs of Life with Your Child

September 17 & 24 @ 6:30 pm

With Hannah & Cody Coleman

Third Floor Conference Room - Gathering Space

Prayer Pause



Wednesdays
6:30 pm Room 312

Prayer Pause

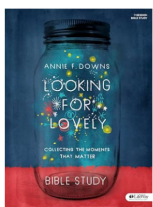
A group of women who are faithful followers of Jesus' example in Luke 5:16: "He frequently withdrew to pray." Join us **each Wednesday in room 312 at 6:30 pm** if you need to pause from the wilderness of everyday life and pause, press reset and pray.

Led by: Becky Greene

Sabbath

Discipleship is about being transformed into the likeness of Jesus. This group of women provides a holy connection to life, Jesus and one another. Join us every week at 6:30 in the church parlor.

Led by: Clara Harris



The Sabbath Women's Bible Study group is beginning a new season—and a new book—and we would love for you to join us. Whether you've been part of Sabbath in the past or this would be your first time, you are warmly welcomed into this circle of women who gather for spiritual reflection, honest conversation, and meaningful connection.

On August 20th, we'll begin the study of *Looking for Lovely: Collecting the Moments that Matter* by Annie F. Downs. Annie invites us to notice the beauty God plants in our lives—even in seasons of waiting, hardship, and change. Through her stories, humor, and faith, we'll explore how to find hope in the midst of real life and collect the moments that truly matter.

Details:

📖 *Looking for Lovely* by Annie F. Downs

👤 Led by Clara Harris

🕒 Beginning August 20th, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. in the church parlor

💰 The books are \$15 each

Mid Week Bible Study

Join Us for prayers and
"Biblical stories that we live"

Rev. Dr. Greg Gordon

6:30 pm

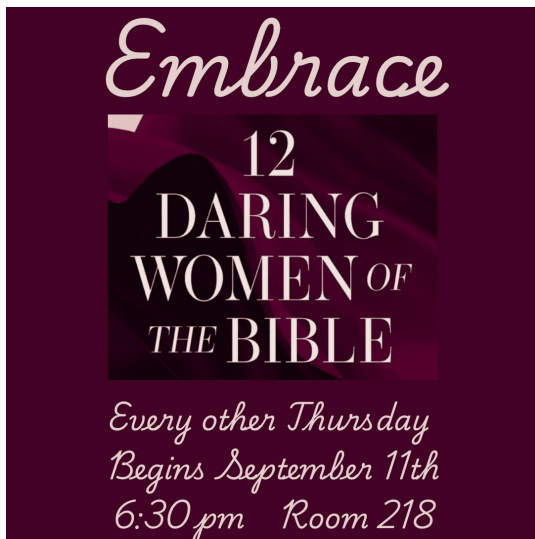
FUMC Chapel



Men Don't Run in the Rain

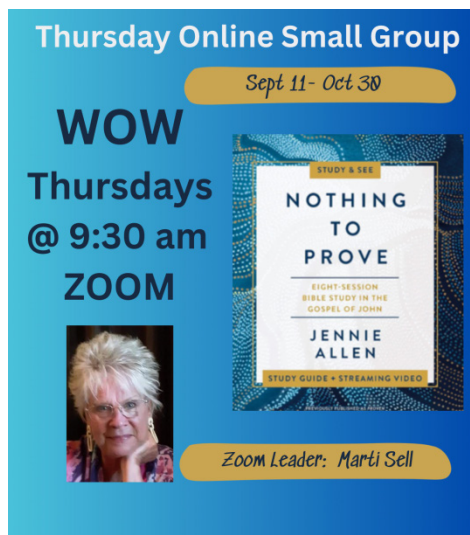
Begins Aug. 20 @ 6:30pm
Room 316

Thursday Adult Small Groups



Embrace - 12 Daring Women of the Bible

This Bible study helps you learn to live through life's failures and successes, draw near to God in a world of trials, find contentment in all circumstances, and much more. Meet us each Thursday, starting September 11.



WOW - Nothing to Prove

This fall study for Women of the Word on Zoom features an 8-week exploration through the Gospel of John with the book *Nothing to Prove*. Join us each Thursday starting Sept. 11 as we walk through key passages and receive the good news that Jesus has proven everything! ALL are welcome! To sign up, email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org.

Led by: Marti Sell



Theology on Tap

Theology on Tap takes a unique look at the Word. Starting on Sept. 11, bring your Bible and join us each Thursday for a time of fellowship and engaging Biblical conversation.

Led by: Patrick McConnell

SPRC Update

Dear First UMC Church Family,

In April, when we announced that Pastors Justin and Melissa would be returning, we shared “It will look a little different but stay tuned!” We are excited to now share the details of changes the SPRC has made with you, ones that we believe honor the gifts God has given to both Pastors Justin and Melissa.

Pastor Melissa will now serve as our Lead Pastor of Connection, Mission, and Outreach. In her role, we have agreed that she will take primary responsibility for designing and implementing different ways of establishing and sustaining connections within the First UMC family, including creating a New Member Journey process, driving the membership audit and updating our Shelby software, and serving as a “connector” across ministries and guiding First UMC members and attendees toward opportunities for mission, growth, and outreach. She will oversee and strengthen systems to sustain the vision for missional engagement in our community and the world. Pastor Melissa will be the primary pastor providing support to our Evangelism, Mission, and Outreach committee and the new Hospitality committee in 2026.

Pastor Justin will now serve as our Lead Pastor of Worship, Care, and Administration. In his role, we have agreed that he will provide pastoral leadership related to all worship services, serve as primary preaching pastor, and oversee the systems of our care and nurture ministries in partnership with other staff. In the area of Administration, Pastor Justin will be the primary pastor providing support to our administrative committees.

Pastors Justin, Melissa, and Precious will continue to provide pastoral care, leadership, and support as a team. Together, they will lead in prayer and worship, offer care through hospital and home visits, and respond to other congregational needs. They will continue to serve in various leadership roles during our worship services, helping guide and enrich our time together.

We are grateful for our Director of Children’s Ministries, Margaret Smith. Beginning September 1, 2025, we are thrilled that Margaret will be expanding her leadership in her current role from a part-time to full-time staff member. This will provide the capacity for our children’s ministry to grow and continue to remain a vital part of the discipleship journey offered here at First UMC.

In the coming weeks, we will release additional videos with more detailed information about these changes. We encourage you to watch them as they become available. As always, we are grateful for your prayers, support, and partnership in ministry.

Blessings of Christ,
Andy Jurs, SPRC Chairperson 2025

First UMC Community Health Ministry

Blessings,

September is World Alzheimer's Month...a time to focus awareness and education on Alzheimer's Disease. World Alzheimer's Day, which takes place every **Sept. 21**, is a global effort to raise awareness and challenge the stigma around Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. Please consider wearing PURPLE on this day, and look for a display table in Gunter Hall with educational materials. If you need help navigating care for yourself or a loved one with Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease, contact Lisa Marisiddaiah, RN at Nurse@fumcgastonia.org.



Lisa Marisiddaiah
First UMC Community
Health Ministry
nurse@fumcgastonia.org



—WORLD—
ALZHEIMER'S MONTH
—SEPTEMBER—

Do you know how to knit or crochet? Are you looking for something to do to pass the time? How about making a "Twiddle Muff" for someone with Alzheimer's/Dementia? I have FREE kits with everything you will need. People with dementia often have restless hands, and a "twiddle muff" provides warmth, as well as a wonderful source of visual, tactile and sensory stimulation which can be very calming to these individuals. You can make one for someone you know, or you can return it to me and I will get it to someone with Alzheimer's/Dementia.



Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based, early-intervention course. It is a skills-based training that teaches participants to identify, understand and respond to mental health and substance use challenges. This free training will be held at First UMC on **Friday, Nov. 7** from 6-9 pm and **Saturday, Nov. 8**, from 9 am-noon. Both sessions are required. Please register with Lisa Marisiddaiah or Hollie Luther. For more, send email to Nurse@fumcgastonia.org.

The Walk To End Alzheimer's October 11

This event is being held to raise awareness & funds to end Alzheimer's.

Please consider joining the GSM Team lead by FUMC church members, Steven & Janet Long

https://act.alz.org/site/TR?fr_id=18742&pg=team&team_id=958419

Registration at 9 am

Opening Ceremony and Walk at 10 am

Location:

Rotary Centennial Pavilion

107 N. South Street

Gastonia, NC 28052



First UMC is hosting flu clinics this fall.

Join us on October 9 and November 6 from 4:30-6:30 pm.

To register or receive more information, including which shots are offered as well as pricing/medicare information, email nurse@fumcgastonia.org.



Financial Report

Year to Date Financial Results

Total spending through July 2025 was \$1,219,010 (\$41,689 less than budget). Total revenue in the same period was \$1,090,495 (\$24,390 more than budget). Consolidated cash flow was \$128,515.00 negative (Kitchen/Food Service was \$1,582 positive, Preschool was \$2,532 negative, and Church Operations was \$127,565 negative). If you desire additional information please do not hesitate to contact the Church Business Office.

Your continued support of our local fellowship is deeply appreciated. First UMC is actively carrying out our ministries and missions throughout the year. Please make every effort to make your donations as early as possible during the year. Thank you for being a valued member of First UMC!

Your Finance Committee



Turning Pages, Changing Lives

If you have just one hour a week to spare, you can help change a life by supporting individuals on their journey to becoming confident readers.

1. Volunteer to Assist Adult Learners

The Gaston Literacy Council is in need of volunteers to work with adults who are seeking to improve their reading skills. Volunteers are asked to give just one hour per week—a small gift of time that can make a tremendous difference in someone's life.

2. Become a Reading Soul Mate

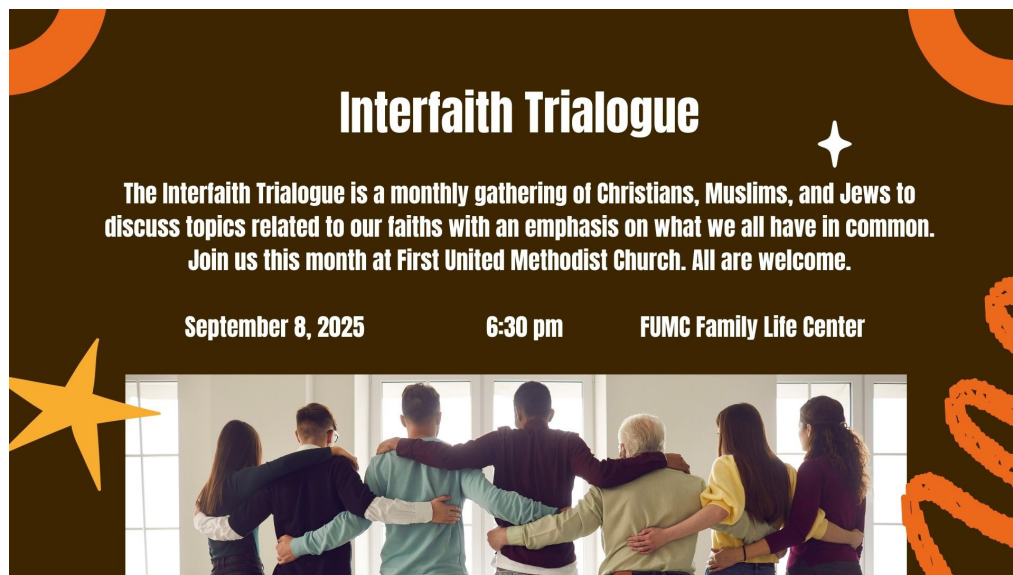
The Reading Soul Mates (RSM) program is a preventative initiative that pairs volunteers with second grade students who need extra support with literacy. Volunteers are paired with one or two children who will be their "reading buddy" for the entirety of the school year, and requires only 30 to 60 minutes of your time each week. Volunteers will need to complete a single training session (1.5-2 hours) and the program will begin late September or October and finish in April. If you are interested, please reach out to Merry Deely m.deely@gastonliteracy.org or visit <https://gastonliteracy.org/>.



We are pleased to announce that sign-up slots for Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Gaston have been filled except for December 3 and April 1 dates. Please prayerfully consider signing up. For more details, contact Lezlie Hill at lezliehill@gmail.com.



Life at First UMC



Joy and Sympathy:

Joy to:

Larry and Diane Brannock on the birth of their great-granddaughter, Blakely Ann Brannock, who was born on July 24, 2025.

Joyce Lowery on the birth of her great-grandson, Turner Grant Ross, who was born on July 7, 2025.

Graham and Nadia Hunter on the birth of their son, Wesley Michael Hunter, who was born on August 13, 2025.

Sympathy to:

Reba Jacobs on the death of her son, Anthony Christian Stewart, who died on August 1, 2025.

Mark Farmer on the death of his mother, Kay Ramsey Farmer, who died on August 3, 2025.

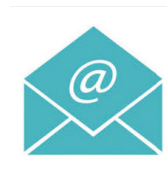
Cathy Walters on the death of her mother, Alice Lewis, who died on August 6, 2025.



Minister on Call Schedule

*To reach a Pastor on nights or weekends, please call the church office **704-864-4371** it will direct you to the ext. 247 and you will be forwarded to the minister on call.*

To get a weekly e-blast or a monthly newsletter in your inbox, email ***stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org***



**JOIN OUR
EMAIL LIST!**

Take Note

Sunday Morning Views & Attendance

Date:	8:45 AM In-Person	8:45 AM Online	9:00 AM In-Person	11:00 AM In Person	11:00 AM Online	In Person Totals
Aug. 3	57	N/A	57	137	172	194
Aug. 10	56	49	64	140	270	260
Aug. 17	50	29	69	144	207	263
Aug. 24	42	40	65	146	164	253

**For any additions to the newsletter, please submit submissions by
the 15th of the month at**

fumcgastonia.org/resources/communications-promotions-request

Connect with us...

Website: www.fumcgastonia.org

Phone: 704.864.4371

Email: contact@fumcgastonia.org



First United Methodist
Church of Gastonia, NC



FUMCGastonia



Sign up to receive
Newsletters online



First United Methodist Church
PO Box 218
Gastonia, NC 28053

Published Monthly at
190 East Franklin Blvd.
Gastonia, NC
(USPS 198-720)

Periodicals postage paid at Gastonia,
NC.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to: News At First
First United Methodist Church
PO Box 218
Gastonia, NC 28053