



NEWS AT
first
Monthly
Newsletter
of
First United
Methodist
Church
June 2026



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Note from our Lead Pastors

Summer Has Arrived!

As we move into the summer months, we are excited to share our new Summer Worship Schedule. May 31, 2026, through August 9, 2026, we will gather on Sundays at:

- 9:30 a.m. – Sunday School for Adults, Youth, and Children
- 10:30 a.m. – Combined Worship Service in the Sanctuary

This schedule adjustment provides an opportunity for our congregation to embrace a different seasonal rhythm together. Summer naturally brings travel, family gatherings, camps, vacations, and changing routines. Rather than competing against those realities, we want to lean into a season that encourages worship, connection, renewal, and simplicity. A combined worship service allows us to gather as one church family each week. It creates space for unity, shared experiences, and the strengthening of our congregational life during a season when attendance patterns naturally fluctuate.

This summer schedule reflects a long-standing tradition in many churches, including First UMC, where the season invites a slightly more relaxed pace and atmosphere. Just as many people exchange formal attire for more casual summer apparel, the church also embraces a rhythm that is simpler and more flexible during these months. In addition, it allows our dedicated volunteers and ministry leaders to experience a healthier balance of rest and renewal while continuing to offer meaningful worship and discipleship opportunities.

Most importantly, we trust that God continues to meet us in every season, in both the bustling moments of life and in the slower pace of summer. We look forward to worshipping together in this unified manner and embracing God's invitations to renewal, connection, and spiritual growth.

In addition, don't forget that this month includes significant events in the life of our church. We invite you to hold each of these in your prayers as we Love God and Love People through these missions and ministry events.

- Mid-Hi Mission Trip to St. Simon's Island, GA (June 4-7)
- Camp Sunshine (June 15-19)
- Western NC Annual Conference, Lake Junaluska (June 17-21)
- Music and Worship Arts Week (June 23-27)

John Wesley reminded the Methodists of his day, "Best of all, God is with us!"

Happy Summer!

Justin & Melissa



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Rev. Melissa Lowe
Lead Pastor of Connection, Mission and Outreach
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Greetings from New Executive Assistant Chris Mull

Hello, First UMC! I am excited to join the staff, serving alongside the members of this lovely church. I rather “fell into” church work as an Administrative Assistant over 20 years ago, and after a short break working in the ministry of retail, I am delighted that God once more tapped my shoulder, calling me back to the UMC. My previous experience in the church allowed me so many opportunities for personal growth as I became absorbed in the life and study of those places. I look forward to whatever God puts before me now, as I assist Co-Lead Pastors Melissa and Justin Lowe, knowing that my journey continues here.



Summer Worship at First UMC

A graphic for the Summer Worship Schedule. The background is a warm, horizontal gradient of orange and yellow, resembling a sunset. In the top left corner, a dark orange box contains the text "MAY 31 - AUGUST 9" in white. In the center, a large, dark blue, scalloped-edged shape contains the word "SUMMER" in large, bold, light green letters. Below it, a teal horizontal bar contains the word "SCHEDULE" in white. Underneath that, the text "— REST & RENEWAL —" is written in white. In the bottom right corner, a dark orange box contains the text "Sunday School - 9:30 AM" and "Combined Worship - 10:30 AM" in white.

MAY 31 - AUGUST 9

SUMMER

SCHEDULE

— REST & RENEWAL —

Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Combined Worship - 10:30 AM

Worship Arts Ministry

We express sincere gratitude to everyone who helped make our Pentecost Sunday service such a meaningful and Spirit-filled occasion.

Along with our family from Epworth UMC, we were blessed by the tremendous musical gifts shared by jazz vocalist Diana Tuffin and the Matt Kendrick Trio. Their uplifting music brought great joy to our worship experience. Through their artistry and heartfelt expression, they helped us celebrate the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in a memorable and inspiring way. Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit moves through many voices, traditions, and expressions of worship, and we were blessed to experience that truth so vividly during our service together.

As we reflected on the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, we were reminded once again of the beauty of unity and togetherness within the body of Christ. Pentecost is a powerful witness to God's ability to bring people together across backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. When the church gathers in worship with one heart and one purpose, we see the living manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work among us. Our congregation demonstrated that spirit beautifully on Pentecost Sunday.

Thank you for your continued support of our worship ministries and for the many ways you contribute to the life of our church. It is a privilege to worship alongside a congregation that values faith, fellowship, and the transforming power of God's presence.

May we continue to walk together in unity, guided by the Spirit, and strengthened for the work God has called us to do.



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Barry Lyons
Interim Director of Traditional Worship
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Preschool



Rebecca Denton
Director of Preschool
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We have wrapped up another joyful and memorable school year at the preschool! May was filled with meaningful moments and special activities that allowed our students to celebrate all they have learned while enjoying precious time with their teachers and classmates.

One of the highlights of the month was our Preschool Graduation on May 19 in the First UMC Theatre. It was a beautiful celebration honoring the children who will soon begin their kindergarten journey. We are so proud of each of them and grateful for the opportunity to have been part of their early years of learning, growth, and development.

It is truly a blessing and privilege to be entrusted with the care of these children, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to the families who allow us to partner with them during these important early years. As we look ahead to summer, we are excited to welcome many of our students back for Preschool Summer Camp!

Preparations are already underway for two fun-filled weeks. We will be offering one week of camp in June and one week in July, providing children with opportunities for creativity, exploration, friendship, and joyful learning throughout the summer months. Thank you, church family, for your continued support, encouragement, and prayers for our preschool ministry.



Children's Ministry



Margaret Petrey Smith
Director of Children's Ministries
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Thank you for your generosity and support in helping provide bottles of bubbles for our preschool students. What may seem like a small gift created so much joy and excitement for our children, and we are grateful for the many ways our church continually invests in the lives of our youngest members.

As we move through the summer, we are also looking forward to an exciting week of Vacation Bible Camp from August 2 through August 5, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. nightly. I'll be reaching out to you in earnest this month to invite you to volunteer to serve during VBC week. We are eager to welcome children for a fun-filled week of worship, Bible lessons, activities, and fellowship as we continue teaching them the truths of God's Word.

We encourage all parents to help their children remain committed and engaged in reading and studying Bible stories throughout the summer months. Even simple moments spent reading Scripture together can have a lasting impact on a child's spiritual growth. Thank you again for your prayers, encouragement, and faithful support of our Children's Ministry.

Yay, God!

- Margaret

**Kids' Meet-up
Supper & Fun!**

Complimentary event to the
grown-ups' supper at Amberjack's!

**Wednesday, June 10
early evening**

Details coming soon to an
e-blast near you!

**Children's Summer
Sunday School**

Volunteers needed through 9/6,
Labor Day weekend.

Come love on our children!

fumcgastonia.org
> SIGN UP

SAVE THE DATES!

Vacation Bible Camp

**Sunday, August 2 -
Wednesday, August 5
5:30-8pm**

For rising Kindergarten
through 5th grades

Youth Ministry



Hollie Luther
Director of Youth Ministries
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Rec and Connect - Play. Lift. Belong.

Looking for a place to hang out, work out, play basketball, volleyball or pickleball, meet new people and build real community?

Rec & Connect is a space for high school youth and young adults to move, grow, laugh, and connect.

Whether you're coming to shoot hoops, hit the weights or just be with good people, there is a place for you here.

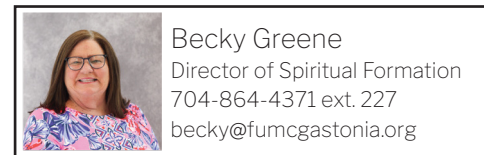
Bring a friend and check it out Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 8 p.m., starting in June.

YOUTH @ FIRST SUMMER EVENTS

- Mid-Hi Service Learning Trip**
June 4-7 @ Epworth By The Sea
- Camp Sunshine**
June 15-19 Volunteer to help!
- Annual Waterpark Trip**
July 22 @ Emerald Pointe
- Sr-Hi Service Learning Trip**
July 26- Aug 1 @ Fort Collins Colorado
- Vacation Bible Camp**
August 2-5 Volunteer to help!

More to come, stay tuned!

Adult Discipleship Ministry



What is something you can do for hours that leaves you energized instead of exhausted? Hang on to it! As a youth, I sang in a countywide chorus. Yes. You heard that right! I do not recall the name of the musical, but the words to one of the songs began “Rushing Winds and Tongues of Flame – That’s How the Holy Spirit Came.” Literally, that is how I remember to this day Pentecost and Acts 2. It also serves as a reminder to me to make daily choices that kindle joy and sets your heart on fire, not those efforts that leave you exhausted As we leave May in the rear view mirror and look through the windshield into June, let’s try to locate the soul of summer. In the middle of our travels, swim teams, camping, grandparenting and caregiving, let’s choose joy, anyway.

Have a soul-filled summer.

Rebecca Greene
Director of Spiritual Formation

Summer Sunday School Schedule

As we enter our summer worship rhythm, some of our Sunday school classes will break for rest and renewal, while others continue to gather. Rest assured, there will always be a class for you to attend! Connect with Becky Greene if you have additional questions. Classes will begin each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

June Classes:

Crosstalk - Room 301

Joy - Room 315

Faith Matters - Room 316

Tuesday Adult Small Groups



Our next Gather session will be on June 9 at 6:30 p.m. at Terra Mia in McAdenville.



Join us for our next meeting on June 23 at 4 p.m. in Room 218.

Women's Retreat 2026

What does it mean to truly walk as a daughter of God?

Join the women of First UMC for a meaningful weekend of encouragement, connection, worship, reflection, and renewal at beautiful Lake Junaluska as we gather for our 2026 Women's Retreat: Walk Worthy.

Inspired by Romans 10:15 – "How beautiful are the feet of those who follow the Lord" – this retreat will focus on how our everyday lives reflect our identity as children of God.

We are thrilled to have Rev. Lauren Vanacore as our guest retreat leader. Lauren was Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia. She was also the Engagement Officer for the Gaston Community Foundation, and she is transitioning to a new position at Covenant Village as their Director of Resident Well-being. Lauren and her husband, Jeff, have two sons, Will and James.

Throughout the weekend, Lauren will help us explore themes of faith, purpose, character, and calling through worship, discussion, creative activities, fellowship, and quiet moments of reflection in the beauty of the mountains. We look forward to Lauren sharing her spiritual insights as she leads us on our faith journey as we Walk Worthy.

Whether you are longing for spiritual renewal, deeper friendships, or simply a weekend away to breathe and reconnect with God, this retreat is designed for women of all ages and stages of life.

More details and registration information will be coming soon – but for now, mark your calendars and begin making plans to join us for this special weekend together.



"You are His...now walk like it."

First UMC Women's Retreat

September 18-20
Lake Junaluska Conference Center
With guest speaker Rev. Lauren Vanacore

Nonrefundable \$100 deposit and registration due July 10
Balance due August 7

For more information and to register, click QR code



Wednesday Evening Summer Fellowship

Join us over the summer for food, faith-based discussion and fellowship! There will also be complimentary events for youth and children during these gatherings.



Table Trivia - June 10

It's an evening of Bible trivia and fellowship! Join us at AmberJack Seafood and Steaks at 5:30 p.m., 4253 S. New Hope Road.

To register, call 704-864-4371, email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org, or scan the QR code.

Register by June 8.



Summer Sizzle - July 15

Hot meal and hot topics led by Pastors Justin and Melissa. Meet us at Jackson's Cafeteria at 5:30 p.m., 1453 E Franklin Blvd.

To register, call 704-864-4371, scan the QR code, or email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org.

Register by July 8.



Blessing Box - August 12

Pick up a boxed meal for your family and receive a blessing! Beginning at 5:30 p.m., you can grab your meal near the FUMC portico.

To register, call 704-864-4371, scan the QR code, or email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org.

Register by August 8.



First UMC Community Health Ministry



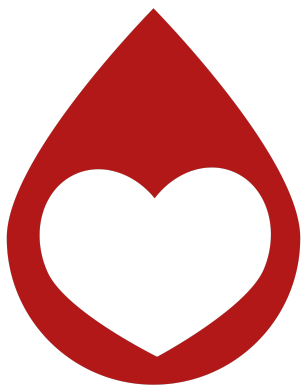
Honoring National Cancer Survivor Day

On June 7, First UMC will acknowledge, honor, and celebrate cancer survivors in our church family and community. A special display will be available in the gathering space. The community health ministry would like to offer a gift of inspiration to FUMC members currently undergoing cancer treatment. If you or someone you know would like to receive a gift, please reach out to Lisa Marisiddaiah at nurse@fumcgastonia.org.



Men's Health Event

Join us on June 24 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the First UMC FLC and patio for this men's health event. Learn about physical health, nutrition and exercise, plus financial and mental health. To sign up, scan the QR code or call 704-864-4371.



Blood Drive

First UMC will be hosting a blood drive on August 3 from 2 to 7 p.m. For more details, including how you can donate, contact Lisa Marisiddaiah at nurse@fumcgastonia.org.



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

Additional Announcements

Community Closet

The First UMC Community Closet is open once a month in conjunction with the dates of the UMM Hot Dog Lunches in order to help many of the same community friends. No donations are needed at this time.



Upcoming dates through the end of the year:

June 5 - July 3 - August 7 - September 4
October 2 - November 6 - December 4

Volunteers can sign up by scanning the QR code. If you have any questions, please contact Theresa McIntosh at lvtennis1964@yahoo.com or 704-718-4339.



Juneteenth

The Juneteenth holiday is an important reminder of freedom, justice, and the dignity of every person created in the image of God. Observed each year on June 19, the holiday commemorates the day in 1865 when enslaved African Americans in Texas finally learned they were free. First UMC offices will be closed on Juneteenth, allowing us as a church to celebrate God's gift of liberty and respond to Micah 6:8, which calls us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. For more information, contact Pastor Melissa at melissa.lowe@fumcgastonia.org.



Explore First UMC: Take the Next Step

Are you curious about First United Methodist Church? Join us on June 14 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 218 to learn more. Pastors Justin and Melissa will explain the mission and ministries of the church. Attendees will be invited to fill out a form indicating if they want to join the church. This class is open to guests as well as longtime members ready to engage at a deeper level.

On June 28, we'll celebrate new church members during our 10:30 a.m. combined worship service. For more information, contact Pastor Melissa at melissa.lowe@fumcgastonia.org.





Camp Sunshine Volunteers Needed

Camp Sunshine is looking for volunteers for summer camp, held this year from June 15 to June 19. The first two days of camp will be hosted by First UMC, and the final three days will be held at Crowder Springs Camp. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Kelley Haygood at kelley.haygood@gmail.com.

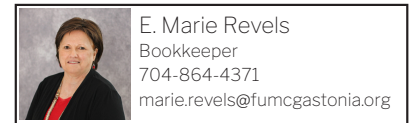


Hairspray: The Musical

Friends on the Go is headed to see Hairspray! On Sunday, July 19, join FOTG at Matthews Playhouse. The performance begins at 2 p.m. The bus will leave from First UMC immediately after our 10:30 a.m. combined service. Tickets are \$27. Make your payment by June 19. To register, call 704-864-4371, email stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org, or scan the QR code.



Financial Report



April 2026 Financial Update

Through April 2026, the church continued to benefit from strong giving and prudent expense management.

For the first four months of 2026, combining church operations, kitchen, and preschool:

- Total income equaled \$653,016 (\$21,919 above budget).
- Total expenses were \$674,658 (\$84,331 under budget).
- This results in a year-to-date total loss of approximately \$21,642, which is \$106,250 better than budgeted. We budgeted for a loss in the first few months of the year, and this is expected at this point. We are in a strong financial position overall.

Your gifts directly support the ministries of First United Methodist Church and positively impact lives every single day! Thank you!

Your Finance Committee

Joy & Sympathy:

Joy to:

Melissa and Jonathan Paysour, on the birth of their son,
Liam Paysour, on May 2, 2026.

The marriage of Alison Pohlman and Ronald Long on May 16, 2026.

The Cogburn family, upon the baptism of Immanuel Cogburn and the reception
of Lesley Cogburn as associate member on May 17, 2026.

Phillip and Holly Haygood Kreisher, upon the birth of their daughter,
Jane Crisler, on May 19, 2026.

Sympathy to:

Nancy Pridnia and family upon the death of her stepfather,
Arthur Richard "Dick" Mercure, on April 20, 2026.

David Martin and family upon the death of his mother,
Margie Cosey Martin, on April 27, 2026.

The family and friends of Richard Abernethy,
who died on May 5, 2026.

Jenae Blumer and family, upon the death of her father,
Don Hanson, on May 23, 2026.

Connect With Us



Learn more
about First UMC

Scan QR Code

Submit Prayer
Requests

Praise
Reports

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
Apr 26	56	60	47	125	96	228
May 3	39	43	37	180	126	256
May 10	25	25	46	156	156	227
May 17	55	57	30	186	157	271

May 24 - 11 AM Combined Worship
In-person: 179 | Online: 206

*May 31 attendance numbers will
be shared in July newsletter

**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...

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First United Methodist
Church of Gastonia, NC



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