



# NEWS AT

# *first*

Monthly  
Newsletter  
of  
First United  
Methodist  
Church



# AUGUST 2025



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# Note from our Co-Senior Pastors

## Fresh Faith This Fall

As summer begins to wind down and we turn the page toward a new school season, we find ourselves filled with gratitude for the ways God has moved in our church family this year—and full of anticipation for what's ahead. Fall at First UMC is always a time of renewed energy and fresh beginnings, and this year is no exception.

Beginning **Sunday, August 10**, we return to our **Fall Sunday Morning Schedule**:

- **8:45 AM Modern Worship in the *Theatre***
- **9:00 AM Relaxed Traditional Worship in the *Sanctuary***
- **10:00 AM Sunday School for all ages**
- **11:00 AM Traditional Worship in the *Sanctuary***

I hope you'll make plans now to be part of this rhythm of worship and discipleship. Whether you've been here for decades or you're just finding your place, Sunday mornings are a time to connect, grow, and center ourselves in God's grace together.

We'll also be launching a **new sermon series** titled **Fresh Faith: Why It's Needed and How It's Lived**. In this series, we'll explore how faith can be renewed in our everyday lives through **prayer, rest, study, and service**. Each week will offer practical guidance and spiritual encouragement as we seek to live with a faith that is vibrant, grounded, and fresh for this new season.

Don't forget that Wednesday Evening Fellowship returns on Wednesday, August 20. We invite you to join us with expectation, and to lean into what God might be ready to do in you and through you. Let's step into this new season together with Fresh Faith.

With expectant hope!

Justin and Melissa

*Justin & Melissa*

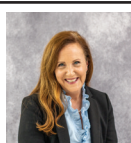


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# Worship Arts Ministry



Jill Willis  
Director of Traditional Worship  
704-864-4371  
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Anthony Pero  
Director of Modern Worship  
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August...

Hello dear Friends! We had some wonderful celebrations for Susan Lisle and Timothy Scruggs in July and I am grateful to you all for how beautifully you have loved them! As we turn the page into a new month we look forward to the start up of our WEF activities and the return of our music ensembles! Please take a moment to sign your children up by using the QR code below! Children's Ensembles begin on August 20th, and Youth Ensembles begin September 7th. I am looking forward to making beautiful, worshipful music with everyone!

-Jill

## Worship Arts Ministry

Group / Leader	Description	Time & Location	Start Date
Morning Bells Jill	Ring for 9:00 worship All are invited	As Needed Room 113 or Sanctuary	August 10th
Youth Handbells Jill	6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades. Music reading ability and/or experience in bells is helpful	4:30 – 5:15 Sundays Room 113	September 7
First Brass Jill	All ages, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year +, youth and adults	3:45 – 4:30 Sundays Room 112	September 7
Youth Choir Jill	6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grades	5:15 – 6:00 Sundays Room 112	September 7
Chancel Handbells Jill	Adults & Youth (10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades)	6:30 – 7:30 Wednesdays Room 113	August 6
Chancel Choir Jill	Adults & Youth (10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades/experience helpful)	7:30 – 9:00 Wednesdays Room 112	August 6
Asbury Ringers Jill, Charlene & Robin	Intermediate handbells 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> year ringers (have already been in Ready Ringers)	4:30 – 5:00 Wednesdays Room 113	August 20
Music Makers Lisa & Julie	3 – 4 year olds- Kindergarten	5:15 – 5:45 Wednesdays Room 114 – Jill's Office	August 20
Wesley Choir Charlene & Susan Stacey	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> grades	5:00 – 5:45 Wednesdays Room 119	August 20
Asbury Choir Jill & Katie	3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grades	5:00 – 5:45 Wednesdays Room 112	August 20





# Preschool



Preschool Science & Water Works Summer Camp: A Splashing Success! From July 14–18, our Preschool Science and Water Works Summer Camp offered a refreshing and exciting week for our little learners. The children enjoyed a mix of hands-on science experiments, creative water-themed crafts, and joyful water play—all designed to keep them active, curious, and cool during the summer heat. From splashing in kiddie pools to exploring the wonders of water through fun-filled games and activities, each day was packed with laughter, learning, and plenty of memorable moments. It was truly a joy to help create such a meaningful and playful experience for our preschoolers. Our dedicated preschool teachers will return in mid-August to prepare for another amazing school year. We look forward to welcoming students and families back at Parent/Student Orientation on August 28!

-Rebecca





# Children's Ministry



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

August 10! 10am | CANTEEN

## CHILDREN'S Sunday School KICK OFF and The BACKPACK BLESSING



During Children's time in all services,  
students and teachers are invited to come  
down for a blessing as the school year begins

## Summer Sunday School Leaders

9:45-10:55am

Two adults needed each  
Sunday

[fumcgastonia.org](http://fumcgastonia.org)  
> SIGN UP



What a wonderful and busy summer we are having! Vacation Bible School was absolutely outstanding, thanks to so many from our congregation and community. A special retreat just for our Rising 6th Graders was held at Common Ground in Stanley. And in just a few short weeks, the new school year begins! Please make plan to join us on August 10th as we officially kick off the new Sunday School year as well as August 20th for a new beginning of Wednesday Night Fellowship. What a joy and a privilege it is to be in ministry with you!

Thanks very much,

Margaret

Thank you for making  
Vacation Bible Camp  
such a fun,  
faith-full,  
and flourishing  
experience!



JUST like Me  
digging in & growing deep





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

# Youth Ministry



## DAY AT THE LAKE

### AUGUST 16



Join in on a fun day at the Helms' Lake House!  
 There will be swimming, fishing, boating, food, and fellowship!  
 RSVP Today!



AUGUST '25						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10:00 Sunday School 27	----- Vacation 28	Bible Camp Youth 29	Have Been Asked To Week of Welcome for Rising 6 <sup>th</sup> Graders 30	Volunteer ----- 31	1	2
10:00 Sunday School 3	4	5	Big Game Bash and BBQ 6	7	8	9
10:00 Sunday School Promotion Sunday & Backpack Blessing 10	11	12	GCS First Day of School FDOS Drive thru dinner 13	Gaston Day First Day of School 14	15	Day at the Lake! 16
10:00 Sunday School 17	18	19	WEF Starts Back 20	21	22	23
10:00 Sunday School 24	25	26	WEF 27	28	29	30



# Youth Ministry



## Congratulations

To our new scholarship recipients for the  
2025-2026 school year



REGAN O'NEILL  
UNCW



GREY RADFORD  
GASTON COLLEGE



AIDAN RUDELIC  
NC STATE



# BIG GAME BASH AND BBQ

Wednesday, August 6

5:30pm-7:30pm

BBQ Dinner & Games For All Ages!

Children & Youth- Gym Games, Outside Games, Game Truck, Kona Ice Truck

Adults- Puzzles, Dominos, Mahjong

Bring school supplies to fill the giant backpack and support our partner schools!



Enjoy BBQ, fun, fellowship,  
and big games!

RSVP using the qr code or by  
calling the church office



 First United Methodist Church  
Gastonia, North Carolina

AUGUST 13, 2025

## back to SCHOOL DRIVE THRU

Celebrate the 1<sup>st</sup> day of public school by driving thru FUMC Portico and picking up dinner to-go served by your church staff from 4:30 – 6 pm.  
\$5.00 per box



Scan the QR code  
or call the church  
office at 704-864-  
4371 to reserve  
your meal

# Adult Discipleship Ministry



Becky Greene  
Director of Spiritual Formation  
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becky@fumcgastonia.org

## “I just want to be seen”

As summer draws to a close, and another school year begins, I can’t help but think of the students and teachers who dread going back to campus because they feel invisible.

I now have the benefit of being in ministry with teens and adults. And guess what? There are a lot of similarities. Many adults are apprehensive to begin a new day because they too feel out of sight.

Recently, I watched “On the Road” with Steve Hartman. I encourage you to do the same but in case you are still on summer break, I will share a bit of the story.

In Waunakee, WI, an 18-year-old was a loner. Some of her classmates knew her in elementary school, but they had not spoken in years. Something happened along the way, but no one could really say why.

This longing for connection is not uncommon for most of us, but it’s the courage this 18-year-old embraced that made a difference. Instead of playing the blame game, she literally designed a mechanism to reconnect.

Every day after school she painted a portrait of each senior classmate. She put in 600 hours of work to create 44 paintings to present as graduation gifts. Imagine the reaction of her classmates to these masterpieces. God designed each of us special.

We think the church should look different and it should! But we are a community comprised of human beings so it’s not always that simple.

Just this week, I saw people struggling “just to be seen” with their grief, doubt, fear, celebration and worth. Lord, help us take responsibility and pay more attention to others and try to see the face of God in each person we encounter. Amen.

Becky Greene,  
Director of Spiritual Formation

Scan for Facebook video:



## Tuesday Adult Small Groups

### DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

*This group will provide support and practical tips for caregivers dealing with loved ones with cognitive issues.*

Tuesday August 26th 4:00 pm  
FUMC Room 218

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





# 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

### Parenting Series:

Facing the Unexpected Curveballs of Life with Your Child

Dr. Leigh Smith, Lesley Ford Cogburn

Aug. 20, 27, Sept. 3

Third Floor Conference Room – Gathering Space

Embracing the Gift of Your Child

Meredith Dangle

Sept. 10

Third Floor Conference Room – Gathering Space

Facing the Unexpected Curveballs of Life with Your Child

Sept. 17, 24

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 if you need to pause from the wilderness of everyday life and pause, press re-set and pray.

Led by: Becky Greene

## Sabbath

WEDNESDAYS

6:30 PM

PARLOR

### 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.

Led by: Clara Harris

## Mid Week

6:30 pm  
Chapel

Bible Study

### Mid Week Bible Study

Join us for prayers and “biblical stories that we live.”

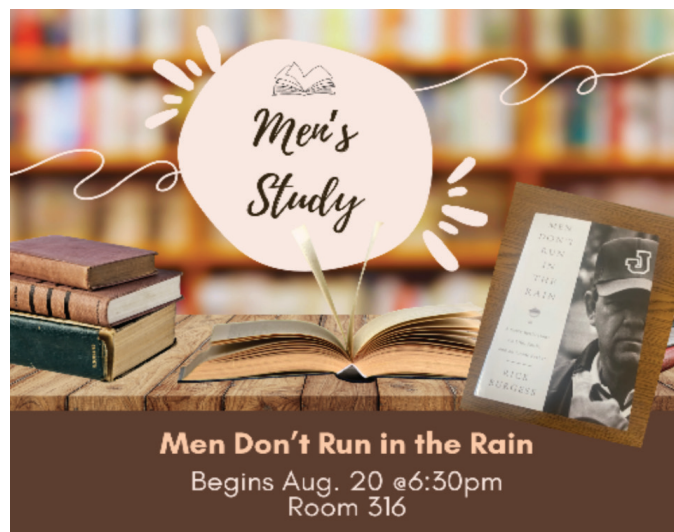
Led by: Rev. Dr. Greg Gordon

## Wednesday Adult Small Groups

### Men's Study Group

Men Don't Run in the Rain – a son's reflection on life, faith, and an Iconic Father by Rick Burgess  
Few things shape a life more profoundly than the lessons of a father. Join this inter-generational discussion on being the best role model you can be at home, church and community.

Led by: Gordon Haygood and others in class



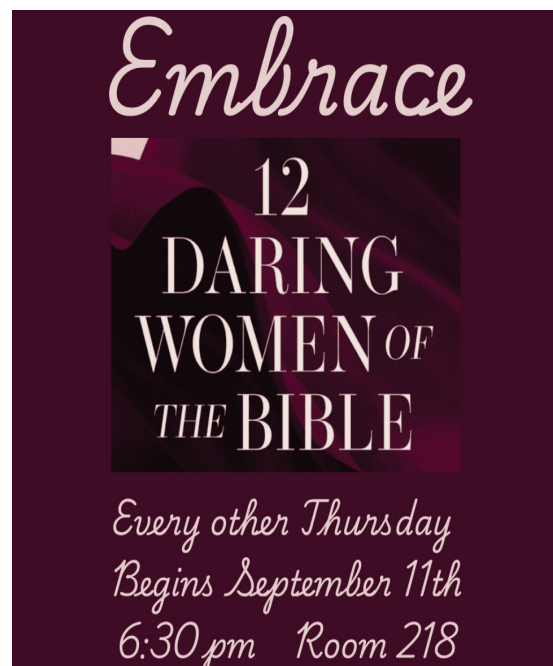
## Thursday Adult Small Groups

### Embrace

#### Find Contentment in All Circumstances

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. Some of today's best-loved Christian authors and speakers look at the spiritual lessons learned from twelve daring women in the Bible and what they mean for you today.

Led by: Class



### WOW Nothing to Prove

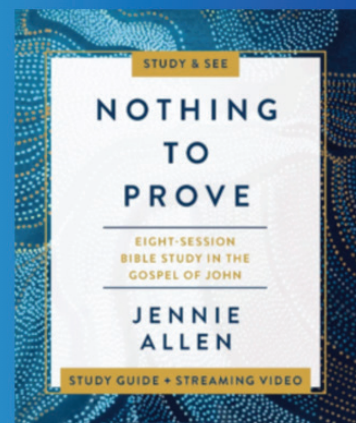
Fall study for WOW ( Women Of the Word) group on zoom led by Marti Sell "Nothing to Prove" by Jennie Allen an 8 week study of the Gospel of John. Tired of striving? Join us as we walk together through key passages in the Gospel of John encouraging us with the good news that we dont have to prove anything because Jesus has proven everything! ALL are welcome!

Leader: Marti Sell

### Thursday Online Small Group

Sept 11- Oct 30

**WOW**  
**Thursdays**  
**@ 9:30 am**  
**ZOOM**



Zoom Leader: Marti Sell



## Basilica & Breakfast



Thursday, August 14th

Belmont Abbey



United  
Women  
in Faith

## Lunch Fundraiser August 17

Join us for a lunch Fundraiser following the 11:00 service.  
All profits go to local missions.

Adult Plate- \$12 | Child Plate- \$6

Purchase on website or on campus on Sunday mornings.



Using your phone's camera, scan the qr  
code to access the form to purchase your  
plates.

## Joy Sunday School

Images from Breakfast at  
Bojangles during the summer  
months!



# First UMC Community Health Ministry



**Lisa Marisiddaiah**

First UMC Community  
Health Ministry  
nurse@fumcgastonia.org

## CHRISTMAS IN JULY EVENTS



Christmas in July-  
The Community Health Ministry sponsored an outreach project to benefit the Seniors who live at Glenwood Gardens apartment complex and Juniper Gardens nursing home in Gastonia. Practical and essential items were collected through donations, community partnerships and few purchases.



# DONATE BLOOD

Donors Receive



- PLUS -



- PLUS -



ID REQUIRED



Appointments are encouraged, please visit  
[oneblood.org/donate-now](http://oneblood.org/donate-now) and use sponsor  
code 44185



**First United Methodist Church**  
**Monday, August 4**  
**2:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

All donors will receive\*:

- **\$20 eGift Card**
- **Top Handle Drinkware**
- **Wellness Checkup**


including blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count, and cholesterol screening.

Fact: Only 3% of those who are eligible actually donate blood.

Please consider donating blood on August 4th. One pint of blood can potentially save up to 3 lives!! A single unit of blood can be separated into red blood cells, plasma and platelets, each of which can be transfused to different patients with different needs!



# Upcoming Events



- August 4<sup>th</sup> - 2:00-7:00pm  
Blood Drive
- Mental Health First Aid Class
- Flu Clinics
- Alzheimer Walk

# READY, SET, GROW

A COMMUNITY BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT

## GET READY FOR BACK TO SCHOOL WITH US!



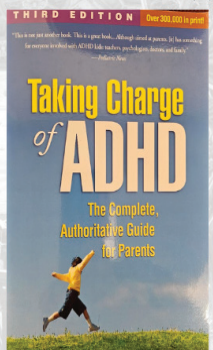
Saturday, August 2, 2025  
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM  
Eastridge Mall - 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor



The Gaston County Early Literacy Collaborative is a collective of organizations serving families in Gaston County. Our vision is that children enter Gaston County Schools ready to learn and thrive.

# Free Books

Contact [Nurse@fumcgastonia.org](mailto:Nurse@fumcgastonia.org) to claim a copy



# WALKING GROUP

7 am Mondays



Would you like to join other church members for some exercise & fellowship?

Contact Jim Ware to get on text list

**NC MedAssist communicated a need for sunscreen, dry shampoo, aloe and lotions... these items were collected and sent to those in the NC Mountains who are still recovering from Hurricane Helene.**



  
*Thank You*  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT

# Financial Report

## Year to Date June 2025 Financial Results

Total spending through June 2025 was \$1,059,616 (\$12,815 less than budget). Total revenue in the same period was \$ \$925,487 (\$10,473 less than budget). Consolidated cash flow was \$134,129 negative (Kitchen/Food Service was \$2,391 positive, Preschool was \$1,134 positive and Church Operations was \$137,654 negative.) If you desire additional information please do not hesitate to contact the Church Business Office.

Your continued support of our Church is deeply appreciated. As we all know, FUMC Gastonia 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

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## CELEBRATING A LONG-AGO BIRTH IN A RIGHT-NOW WORLD

As part of FUMC's Christmas In July, we are calling for Advent devotions early this year. The theme for the 2025 Advent Devotion is Celebrating a Long-Ago Birth in a Right Now World. We are looking for devotions that remind us, as we make our holiday plans, of the plans God has for us. In the hustle and bustle of the season, we want to hear your words about the peace and calm that God can provide even in the most harried or heart-wrenching moments. As gift lists are prepared, we are asking you to reflect on the gifts that God has given us. Please share the gift of your encouragement with your church family this year.

Devotions should start with a Scripture passage (chosen by you), then your personal story about or interpretation of this year's theme. Please write a brief prayer to close your devotion.

Devotions should be about a page long, typically 200-250 words. How your devotion connects to the theme is entirely up to you. You might reflect on the scripture passage you chose, or you might recall a personal story and then choose a Scripture passage to introduce it. Your prayer could connect them with the theme and also be an opportunity to pray for our church family. Consider writing a devotion together with a friend or family member. We have had some fine devotions over the years that came from couples, from close friends, and from parents and children. Please help us by sharing this call for devotions with others.

Devotions should be pasted into the body of an email and sent to [wittensn@gmail.com](mailto:wittensn@gmail.com) by Friday, August 1st.

CALL FOR  
  
DEVOTIONS

ADVENT  
2025







## 2025 Laity Service AWARD

### OUTSTANDING LAY PERSON OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS TIME!

We encourage you to consider those persons who have demonstrated a commitment through service over many years to the church and our community, as well as those who have made specific achievements for the betterment of the church over the last year.

There is a plaque on the second-floor hallway, where you pick up your Upper Room copies, with the recipients since 2001. Look for it and consider your fellow members who work diligently and with grace to enrich FUMC Gastonia. We are occasionally asked who has received Lay Person Awards, so the list is below. As I scan this, I can think of so many individuals and couples who should be recognized, and I bet you can, too. You can make that happen!

Year	Name
2001	Dan Moser, Sr.
2002	Keith Smith
2003	Connie Austin
2004	Olivia Davidson
2005	Betty Fowler
2006	Glenn Rowland
2007	Peggy and Jack Clevenger
2008	Bill and Phyllis Kaser
2009	Mid Dover
2010	Myra Jenkins
2011	Juta Carpenter
2012	John and Yvonne Goforth
2013	James and Jane Smith
2014	Tommy and Martha Frederick
2015	Bob Lowder
2016	Jim and Lyn Anderson
2017	Susanne Albright Whitesides
2018	David Poston
2019	Kenneth Wilson
2020	Donald Turner
2021	Tim Patti
2022	Peggy Dameron
2023	Carol Elliott
2024	Pat Quinn



Nomination forms are available online, at the sanctuary and theater entry doors, the lobby of FUMC Gastonia, and the Family Life Center. The Lay Person of the Year Nomination Form is on our website at <https://fumcgastonia.org/sign-up/laity-service-award-nomination>. Please pray about this and submit your nominations. The completed forms go to Emma Taylor at the receptionist's desk or by email to [emma.taylor@fumcgastonia.org](mailto:emma.taylor@fumcgastonia.org). The deadline is September 21, and the award will be presented at the 11:00 a.m. service on Laity Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

We look forward to hearing from you. THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU WHO MAKES FUMC GASTONIA SO SPECIAL.

*Lyn Anderson, Beth and Davis Patton*

# Hands & Feet Missions



Rev. Melissa Lowe  
Co-Senior Pastor  
704-864-4371  
[melissa.lowe@fumcgastonia.org](mailto:melissa.lowe@fumcgastonia.org)



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF GREATER GASTON

FUMC Gastonia provides supper the first Wednesday of every month (Sept.-May) for approximately 140 kids. Drop off/Serve from 4:30-5:00. Provide utensils, plates, napkins, drinks, dessert.

**Dates:**

**Sept 3, Oct 1, Nov 5, Dec 3,  
Jan 7, Feb 4, March 4, April 1**

**Please prayerfully consider signing up for this opportunity either individually or with your small groups or Sunday School classes. Contact Lezlie Hill at 704-813-7550 or [lezliehill@gmail.com](mailto:lezliehill@gmail.com).**



# Sympathy To:

Mike Griffith on the death of his mother, Sandra Griffith,  
who died on June 23, 2025.

The family and friends of Clyde Jones, who recently  
passed away in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The family and friends of Dr. Bobbie Haynes Rowland,  
who died on July 12, 2025.

The family and friends of Michael Stephen Bookout,  
who died on July 12, 2025.

Royce and May Robinson on the death of their  
daughter, Kelly Robinson Stanley,  
who died on July 21, 2025.

Fielding Yelverton on the death of her step-father,  
Kenneth Edwin Mayhew, who died on July 21, 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](mailto:stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org)**



**JOIN OUR  
EMAIL LIST!**

Date:	9:00 AM Online	9:00 AM In-Person	11:00 AM In Person	11:00 AM Online	In Person Totals
July 6	58	66	151	165	214
July 13	47	43	159	179	202
July 20	31	50	216	147	266
July 27	48	46	175	200	221

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

***[fumcgastonia.org/resources/communications-promotions-request](http://fumcgastonia.org/resources/communications-promotions-request)***

*Connect with us...*

Website: [www.fumcgastonia.org](http://www.fumcgastonia.org)

Phone: 704.864.4371

Email: [contact@fumcgastonia.org](mailto:contact@fumcgastonia.org)



First United Methodist  
Church of Gastonia, NC



FUMCGastonia



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