



NEWS AT

first

**Monthly
Newsletter
of
First United
Methodist
Church**

JULY 2025






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Note from our Co-Senior Pastors

Happy Summer First UMC!

Summer Reads

Happy July! We hope your summer has been filled with moments of rest, connection, and joy. Whether you've been traveling, enjoying time at home, or just trying to stay cool, we want to invite you to make space this month for something refreshing for your soul: God's Word. John Wesley would describe himself as *homo unius libri*, "a man of one book." He was referencing that while he read broadly, one book is what shaped his life – The Bible.

This summer, we're diving into a sermon series called "Summer Reads: The Book of James." James is short—just five chapters—but it's packed with practical wisdom, powerful encouragement, and bold challenges for how we live our faith each day. It's the kind of book that doesn't just ask, "What do you believe?"—it asks, "How are you living what you believe?"

James reminds us that faith is not just something we think about—it's something we live out. Whether it's controlling our words, caring for those in need, or seeking wisdom in difficult times, James meets us where we are and points us toward the kind of life that reflects the love and grace of Jesus.

This month, we want to encourage you to do two things:

1. Read James with us—not just on Sunday, but throughout the week. Take a few verses each day and ask, "How can I live this out today?" This might be the Holy Spirit's agenda for you for the day!
2. Invite someone to worship—whether they're new to faith, returning after a long time, or just curious. James is a great book for people who want to see what a real, active faith looks like.

Our prayer is that this series will be more than just a summer routine—it will be a summer of renewal. Let's lean into God's Word together and allow it to shape our hearts, our homes, and our habits.

Don't forget that in July, our summer worship begins with Modern Worship at 9:00 am in the Theatre, 10 am Sunday School, and 11 am Traditional Worship.

We're so grateful to be on this journey with you. Let's keep growing, serving, and shining together.

With joy, peace, and hope,

Justin and Melissa



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Justin & Melissa

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“Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you’d have preferred to talk.” (Mark Twain) “By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.” (Confucious)

This Month, we have two bittersweet celebrations – one for Susan Lisle on July 20th and one for Timothy Scruggs on July 27th. I began with the quotes above because the wisdom and experience I have gained while working closely with both Susan and Timothy has been beyond value. There have been many moments over this last year when I have had the opportunity to just sit quietly and soak in the extraordinary talent of these two amazing people. First UMC, I know you know, how blessed we have been. Please help me to celebrate them at the receptions being held in the Gathering Space from 9:30-10:30 on the 20th and 27th. Christmas in July kicks off as well on Sunday, July 6th when will begin asking for the congregation to think about Advent Devotionals. The Chancel Choir is excited to be singing Christmas music, as well as an American Tune! Don’t forget that we have changed our summer worship times to 9am Modern and 11am Traditional.

God be with you ‘till we meet again,
Jill



Celebrate Susan Lisle and Timothy Scruggs on July 20th and July 27th.



Children's Ministry



Margaret Petrey Smith
Director of Children's Ministries
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RETREAT

for rising 6th graders

Tuesday, July 22
8:30am - 6pm

Common Ground
FUMC Stanley



Summer Sunday School Leaders

9:45-10:55am

Two adults needed each
Sunday

fumcgastonia.org
> SIGN UP

Lots happening in Children's Ministries in July! Please email Margaret.Smith@fumcgastonia.org and let me know how you can help with VBC or Sunday School! You can sign up for the Retreat, VBC, and as a Sunday School leader on our website under SIGN UP or scan the QR codes for quick access. Yay, God!

July 27-30 5:30-8pm

JUST
like
Me

digging in & growing deep

Vacation Bible Camp

Yay, God!



Preschool



Rebecca Denton
Director of Preschool
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Preschool Summer Camps Are Underway! The week of June 16–20, our preschool was filled with excitement and imagination as we hosted the first of two summer camps. The theme for this week was Disney and Superheroes, and the children had a blast dressing up as their favorite characters, participating in themed crafts, games, story time, and exploring what it means to be brave, kind, and helpful—just like their favorite heroes! Each day featured special activities such as superhero obstacle courses, Disney sing-alongs, and creative art projects that brought the stories to life. It was a joyful week of laughter, learning, and fun! We are already looking forward to our second camp, which will take place in July. The upcoming theme is Science and Water Works- a hands-on exploration of science experiments, water play, and discovery-based learning. It's sure to be an exciting and educational experience for all our campers!

Youth Ministry



Hollie Luther
Director of Youth Ministries
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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!

NOW FORMING
CONFIRMATION
CLASS
 of 2026

Is your youth ready to learn more about Methodism, the vows of membership, and grow in faith with others? Confirmation class is open to any youth who has finished the 5th grade, and is ready to consider membership vows into the United Methodist Church.

Scan the QR code to access the form to sign your youth up for the 2025-2026 Confirmation Class

Youth Ministry

MISSION
MONDAY



Let's join together to help in our church and local community.
 July 14 and August 4 12-5:30
 Youth @ First



YOUTH DAY AT
EMERALD POINTE
WATER PARK

Enjoy a Day at Wet & Wild Emerald Pointe Water Park with your friends!
 Tickets are \$35
 July 11, 2025

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!



CHRISTMAS IN JULY PARTY



JULY 6 IN THE GREENE HOUSE
 6-8PM

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

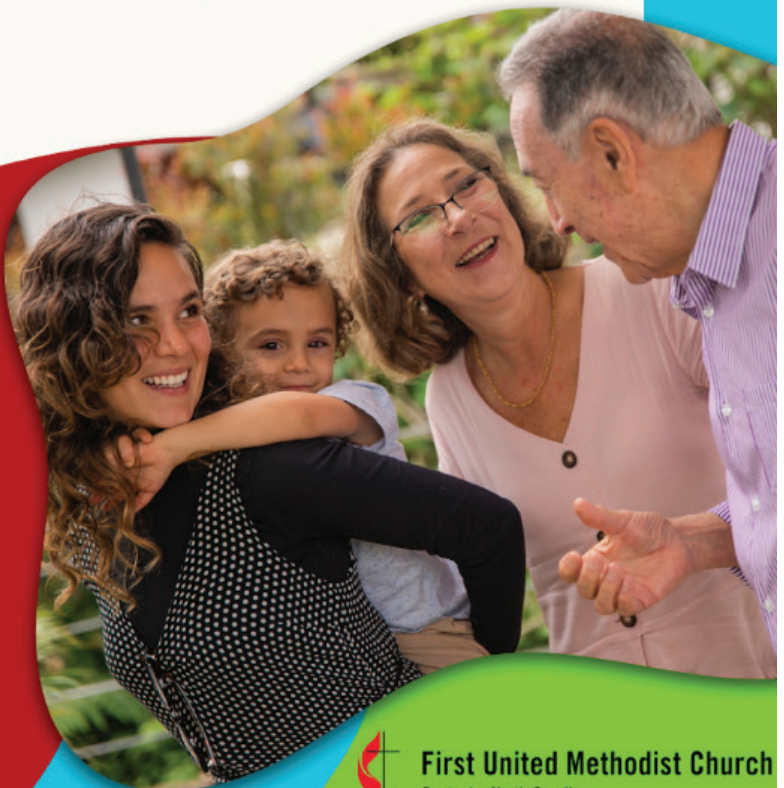
Adults- Puzzles, Dominos, Mahjong

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

Adult Discipleship Ministry



Becky Greene
Director of Spiritual Formation
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Savoring Summer

One of my favorite pastimes is sitting in my camp chair outside in the sunshine, reading a good book. It is good for my mental and spiritual health to “Be Still”. I just finished reading *It Goes So Fast*. by NPR’s Mary Louise Kelly. By the way, Lisa and Andy Jurs will be teaching a class on Wednesday nights and referencing this book as they help parents shift gears. Parenting is hard no matter what stage you are in! The young years with diapers, feedings, to the teenage years that take us for a wild ride to adult children who need us but in a different way. This book reminds us there are no do-overs. And I am currently reading *The Longing: Embracing the Deepest Truth of Who You Are* by Joey O’Connor which offers the refreshing good news that you are a chosen, loved and accepted child of God. And concurrently, I am reading University of South Carolina Women’s Basketball Coach Dawn Staley’s recently released memoir, *Uncommon Favor*. On Father’s Day, as I was reading from her book and I was reminded of my parents. Dawn said, “my mother taught me everything that ended up mattering in the long run of my life”. Same rings true with my parents. Now we have more information at our fingertips, more available resources and technology but the things that matter most come from our most trusted advisors. My parents believed in doing things the right way, treating people with respect, and loving God and serving others. My daddy was generous, and my mother cared about everybody. Kindness was essential to their character. I am grateful for my moment in the sun to remind me to “Be Still” Savor the Sunshine and give thanks for my parent’s example.

- Becky



First United Methodist Church

Women's Retreat

with Rev Palmer Cantler

September 12-14, 2025

Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center

Lake Junaluska, NC

Rev. Cantler is a United Methodist Church clergywoman, most recently serving as the Associate Pastor at Church Street UMC in Knoxville, TN. Currently, she is a stay-at-home mom for her daughter, Harper, and a consultant. Her consulting brand, Echoes: Create + Cultivate, works with churches and faith-based non-profits to help their missions and ministries echo throughout their community. She and her husband, Brent, are foodies who enjoy traveling any chance they can get.

"In praying and looking forward to our time together this fall, my hope is that God will continue to remind us of the ways we are created to be masterpieces reflecting God's grace. Each piece of the various mosaics of our stories matter to our Creator and come together to echo Christ's love to those around us. I look forward to worshipping and sharing with you this fall!"

Sign up at fumcgastonia.org

\$100 deposit due by July 11

Monday Adult Small Groups



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 July 22nd 4:00 pm
FUMC Room 218

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

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Join us Sunday, July 6 @ 10 am in the FLC for continental breakfast provided by FUMC members – sausage balls, breakfast casseroles, fruit, muffins and coffee. You will hear more about our Advent Sermon Series and Devotional booklet. There will be no children, youth or adult Sunday School classes.



Friends On The Go

Join us on Thursday, August 14th for a tour of the Basilica at Belmont Abby with Rev. Tripp Hord. Tripp attended Belmont Abbey on a tennis scholarship and he and Rebecca were married there. Meet us at FUMC in the Gathering Place at 9:00 am to board the bus. We will eat breakfast, tour, and attend Conventual Mass at 11:00 am. We encourage you to bring school supplies to donate to our partner schools. Locate the giant bookbag to contribute. RSVP Stephanie's email: stephanie.s@fumcgastonia.org or 704-864-4371.

Basilica & Breakfast



Thursday, August 14th

Belmont Abbey

Images from Seagrove Pottery and Popcorn



First UMC Community Health Ministry

Lisa Marisiddaiah (FUMC Faith Community Nurse) participated in & represented the Community Health Ministry at two recent events.



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

April 29th- NC MedAssist Executive Luncheon had more than 800 people in attendance and met a fundraising goal of \$250,000. This equates to more than 1,086 North Carolinas receiving support from NC MedAssist.

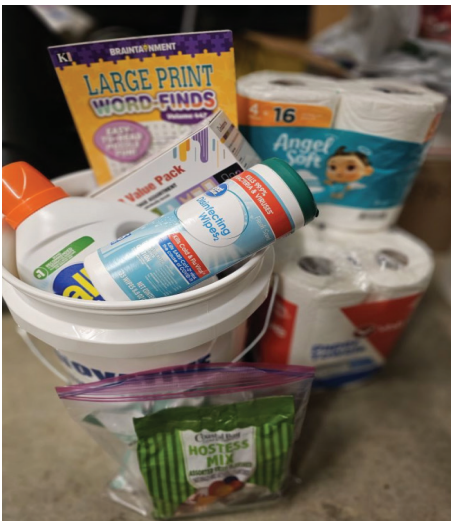
April 26th- PanCAN PurpleStride Charlotte Region- 5K - Group efforts raised 90% of its \$280K goal to put an end to Pancreatic Cancer.




Christmas in July-

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


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!






DONATE BLOOD


Donors Receive



- PLUS -




- PLUS -



ID REQUIRED

Appointments are encouraged, please visit 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.

Operation Fan Heat Relief 2025

Operation Fan Heat Relief

2025 is upon us. Thanks to the donations made by Duke Energy Foundation, Gaston County will have a finite amount of boxed fans to donate to Gaston County residents that meet the below eligibility requirements.



Why is this program

important? As individuals age and develop chronic medical conditions, they are less likely to sense and respond to changes in temperature. They also may be taking medications that can worsen the impact of extreme heat. Operation Fan Heat Relief helps vulnerable adults at risk for heat-related illnesses and stay safe in the summer.

Operation Fan Heat Relief 2025 Eligibility Requirements:

Must be 60 years old or older OR an adult with a disability that worsens with heat.

Must reside in Gaston County

Must have a home situation where a threat to health or well-being exists related to summer heat

Call the department of Social Services Adult & Aging Services at 704-862-7540 to reserve a fan today before they run out.

Upcoming Events

- **July- "Christmas in July"-** Outreach project to local nursing homes/low-income senior apartment complexes (Volunteers needed for event July 18, 1-3pm, email Nurse@Fumcgastonia.org)
- **August 4th 2:00-7:00pm** Blood Drive

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 - 2nd 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.

Financial Report

Year to Date May 2025 Financial Results

Total spending through May 2025 was \$884,824 (\$6,873 less than budget). Total revenue in the same period was \$778,325 (\$29,942 more than budget). Consolidated cash flow was \$106,499 negative (Kitchen/Food Service was \$3,503 positive, Preschool was \$4,996 positive and Church Operations was \$114,998 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

Hands & Feet Missions



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



Joy and Sympathy To:



Sympathy to:

Andy and Kassie Haynes on the death of her father, John William Sapp, who died May 31, 2025.

The family and friends of Steve Skeen, Sr., who died on June 11, 2025.



Joys:

The birth of Kit Caldwell, who was born on May 29, 2025. Parents are Adam and Reid Caldwell. Great-grandparents are Bob and Dana Crunkleton.

The joining of Patrick Peterson on May 15, 2025.

The baptism of Eric Hurd on May 15, 2025.

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 by Friday, August 1st.

CALL FOR
DEVOTIONS

ADVENT
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:	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
June 1	31	33	52	145	102	228
June 8	47	37	64	134	170	221
June 15	41	42	45	151	112	237
June 22	54	48	50	116	159	220
June 29	50	42	48	152	146	250

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

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Email: contact@fumcgastonia.org



First United Methodist
Church of Gastonia, NC



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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