

AUGUST NEWS



BACK TO SCHOOL Sunday

Join us as we celebrate the
beginning of a new school year!

AUGUST 9

All Worship Services

We will offer a special blessing for teachers and school staff as well as a Blessing of the Backpacks for students of all ages. Bring your backpack as we pray for a year filled with wisdom, growth, and God's guidance.

DON'T FORGET YOUR BACKPACK!

SENIOR PASTOR



REV. DR.
BRIAN MERCER

PastorBrian@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

GROWING ALONGSIDE YOU,
Pastor Brian

READY, START—GROW

August always feels like a threshold month. Summer is still with us, but the rhythms of a new school year, new routines, and new beginnings are already knocking at the door. It's a month of preparation—of getting ready, starting fresh, and growing into what comes next. That is exactly the spirit behind our August theme: **Ready, Start, Grow**. This theme builds on the journey we've shared throughout 2026. We walked through the wilderness of Lent. We stood in the garden of resurrection. We explored what it means to bloom where God has planted us. We spent the summer learning from the Twelve—ordinary people called into extraordinary purpose. And woven through all of this is the joy of our **Bicentennial year**. For 200 years, God has been cultivating faith in this congregation—preparing soil, planting seeds, and growing disciples across generations. As we reflect on the Parable of the Four Soils, we are reminded that our church's story is itself a testimony to God's faithful, patient, and abundant work.

READY—PREPARING THE SOIL OF THE HEART

In Luke 8, Jesus describes four kinds of soil:

- The **path**, where the seed never sinks in.
- The **rocky ground**, where growth begins but cannot endure.
- The **thorny soil**, where good things are choked by competing priorities.
- The **good soil**, where the Word takes root and produces abundant fruit.

Before anything grows, the soil must be ready. August is a month for readiness—examining the condition of our hearts, clearing what has become cluttered, softening what has grown hardened, and making space for God's Word to take root again. Readiness is not about perfection. It is about **openness**. It is the prayer: "Lord, prepare me for what You want to grow in me." As we celebrate 200 years of ministry, we recognize that we stand on soil prepared by those who came before us—pastors, teachers, families, saints whose faithfulness made our present possible. Their readiness becomes our foundation.

START—PLANTING THE SEED AGAIN

Every new season begins with a seed. Jesus tells us that the seed is **the Word of God**—the living, active, transforming message of the Kingdom. And the miracle of the Gospel is that God never stops planting. Even when we feel distracted, discouraged, or distant, God continues to sow truth, hope, and calling into our lives. On our farm near Four Forks, Louisiana planting season was always the most exciting, mostly since it was full of hope—that it would be a 2-bale an acre crop season.

August is a month to start again with hope:

- Start a new habit of prayer.
- Start reading Scripture with fresh eyes.
- Start reconnecting with worship.
- Start serving in a ministry that needs your gifts.
- Start trusting that God is not finished with you.

The seed is ready. The season is beginning. The invitation is open.

GROW — BECOMING WHO GOD IS FORMING US TO BE

Growth is the quiet miracle of discipleship. It doesn't happen all at once. It doesn't happen without intention. And it doesn't happen without God's grace. But when the soil is ready and the seed is planted, growth becomes inevitable. Jesus says that the good soil produces fruit "a hundredfold"—far beyond what anyone could expect. That is the promise of spiritual growth: God can do more in us than we imagine when we allow His Word to take root. As we enter the fall, I believe God is preparing growth in our congregation—new ministries, new families, new opportunities, new depth, new joy. Our bicentennial year has reminded us that we stand on faithful soil. Now we ask God to grow something new from it.

WALK THE SOIL OF THE SCRIPTURES — HOLY LAND TRIP, MAY 2027

As we reflect on the soils Jesus described, I want to remind you of a special opportunity next year. In **May 2027**, I will be leading a guided pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We will stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus taught the parable of the soils. We will walk the paths where the disciples learned to grow in faith. We will experience the land where the Word was first planted.

You can learn more or register here: <https://www.eo.travelwithus.com/tours/hl27050327l53353#eotours>
I would love for you to join me on this journey of faith and discovery.

GROWING ALONGSIDE YOU

As we step into this new season, may we be people who are ready, willing to start, and eager to grow. May God prepare the soil of your heart. May His Word take root in your life. May our Bicentennial year deepen our gratitude for the past and strengthen our hope for the future. And may this fall be a season of abundant, surprising, joyful growth.



**REV. JOHN
O'LEARY**

John@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

READY, SET, GROW

"Here we come, ready or not," said the local school principal. You may be thinking, are we already here again? August is upon us, and if you have school-aged

children, the rhythm of your life is about to change drastically. And that's a good thing.

Each year, the start of school reminds us that we're meant to grow and develop — in our education, our work, and our faith. We know this, but it doesn't take away times we seem to end up on the struggle bus instead of the bus headed to a bright new day. May this new school year be a reminder that yet another season of growth is a new opportunity to learn something new. Spiritually, we're called to grow in our faith, step by step, year in and year out. It's good for us, even if we don't always love the growing pains that come with it.

I'd love for our faith family to see this new school year as a reminder to grow in your faith. It's a little nudge that God wants to develop and shape your life to look more like his (John 3:30). Each year brings maturity, new material to master, and challenges to be faced.

Philippians 1:6 tells us, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." We grow by showing up to worship, spending time in God's Word, talking to the Prince of Peace, and letting each season shape our lives.

In this new season, know this: your church is cheering you on to make the most of every opportunity! We want God to lead and guide your steps as we continue becoming people of Christ.



BACK 2 SCHOOL



FISH FRY!

FOUNDRY CAMPUS
AUGUST 16 AT 4PM

Kick off the new school year with an evening of food, fun, and fellowship! Enjoy a delicious fish fry, cheer on your favorite desserts in our First Annual Bake-Off, and let the kids cool off on the waterslides. Bring your family, invite your friends, and come make great memories as we celebrate together at our Foundry Campus. We hope to see you there!



**REV. DR. CRAIG
FERGUSON**

Craig@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

ASK PASTOR CRAIG!

A place where your real questions meet honest, biblical answers for everyday faith.

Question: Why does God let bad things happen to good people?

I'm not going to pretend I can fully answer this. Nobody can. Anyone who hands you a tidy explanation for suffering hasn't sat with a grieving family long enough. So, let's start honestly: this question isn't a puzzle to solve. It's a wound to sit with. But there are some things worth saying.

First, the phrase "good people" deserves commentary. Scripture is blunt about this. None of us are as good as we think we are (Romans 3:23). That's not meant to minimize anyone's pain. It's meant to clear away a false premise, the idea that suffering is

a scorecard and good behavior should buy us protection. It doesn't work that way, and honestly, we wouldn't want a universe where it did. It wouldn't be good for any of us!

Second, a lot of suffering isn't God doing something to us. It's the result of living in a broken world, one bent by human choices, including our own. God didn't design cancer or car accidents or cruelty. He grieves them. Jesus, standing at Lazarus's tomb, didn't offer a lecture on divine sovereignty. He wept (John 11:35). Whatever else is true, we don't worship a God who's distant from our pain.

Third, and this is the part that takes time to believe: God doesn't waste suffering, even when He doesn't cause it. Joseph told his brothers, who'd sold him into slavery, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good" (Genesis 50:20). That's not a promise that pain will make sense right away. Sometimes it takes years. Sometimes it takes eternity. But it's a promise that God is still working, even in the wreckage. And here's where it lands for me. Christianity doesn't pretend to fully explain suffering, it offers real reasons but never a complete one. What it does offer, beyond explanation, is a God who entered it. The cross means God didn't stay safely outside of human pain. He walked straight into the worst of it. That doesn't answer every "why." But it means you're never suffering alone, and you're never suffering in front of a God who doesn't understand. So if you're in it right now, I won't tell you it makes sense. I'll tell you that you're not abandoned, and that grief and faith can sit in the same room together.

Have a question you'd like your pastors to address? Email it to Craig@firstmethodistmonroe.com





READY, SET, GROW AT ADULT VBS!



What's all the BUZZ? Registration is open to church members and adults from throughout Northeast Louisiana for the BEEattitudes study with Rev. Dr. Brian Mercer and Rev. John O'Leary on **August 24-26 from 10:30AM-1PM**, with a Meet and Greet from 10AM-10:30AM. We'll have a sweet time taking a deep dive into the Beatitudes and Jesus' teachings on living a blessed life through humility, mercy, peacemaking, and faithfulness. You'll also have an opportunity to sing your favorite hymns, support a mission project, and enjoy a delicious catered lunch. Pick up a registration form at the church office or scan the QR code to register online by August 17.

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18*

50+ Adult Happenings at the church

BE FIT exercise class meets every Monday and Wednesday at 10am in the Fellowship Hall. Come grow with us in strength and stamina! Wear comfortable clothes and bring a water bottle to stay hydrated!

BRIDGE is Wednesday, August 12, from 1-4pm in the Aldersgate classroom. If you play contract bridge and are interested in participating as a substitute, please contact me.

50+ Adult Happenings outside the church

SENIOR ADULT BINGO: Council on Aging (Monroe) Fri., July 31 at 10:30AM &/or West Ouachita Senior Center (West Monroe) Friday, Aug. 7 at 10AM. Join us for fun and fellowship as we invite others to GROW along side us by attending worship services, Wednesday Night suppers, Bible study groups, Support Groups, Adult Vacation Bible School, and 50+ Adult Ministries! Wear a First Methodist Monroe shirt and a smile on your face!

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S – Ready, Set and Grow in your knowledge and support of those experiencing dementia! Save the date: Nov. 7 at ULM

"MAJESTIC CITIES OF CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE," a small exploration group tour, is June 5-18, 2027. For more information, visit <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1369681>



BLUEBERRY PICKING



AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR



NANNETTE
FLOWERS

NFlowers@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

GRIEF SHARE

Grieving the loss of a loved one can be one of life's most challenging experiences. GriefShare is a support group designed to help those who are navigating this difficult journey. Through guided sessions and videotapes, participants will find understanding, healing and a sense of community. A fall group will begin in September and is open to church members and those in the community of all ages who have experienced a loss.

BEGINS IN
SEPTEMBER

HOSPITALITY



EMILY MARTIN

Emily@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

**SHOW
HOSPITALITY
TO ONE
ANOTHER
WITHOUT
GRUMBLING**

1 PETER 4:9

**YOUNG ADULTS &
YOUNG FAMILIES**



NATHAN MCCLAIN

Nathan@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

CALLED TO WELCOME

As August arrives, many of us are settling back into the routines of school, work, and the busyness that comes with a new season. Our calendars may be filling up, but God's call to hospitality remains the same.

Biblical hospitality is more than opening our homes- it's opening our hearts. It isn't about having a perfect home or preparing an elaborate meal (I have to remind myself of this often).

A simple invitation to coffee, inviting a new family over for dinner, checking in on a friend or reaching out to someone who may be feeling alone can make a lasting impact.

As this new season begins, let's consider these questions:

Who can I welcome into my life this season?

Who might need encouragement, friendship or a reminder that they are loved?

How can I intentionally show the love of Christ, even in the midst of a busy schedule?

Lord, thank you for welcoming us into your family through Christ. Help us to slow down long enough to notice people and share the love of Christ. May our homes, our church and our hearts be places where others experience Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOU TO TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP?



NEXT STEPS

SEPT. 20

10:10AM IN THE PARLOR

We invite you to attend Next Steps on September 20 at 10:10AM in the Parlor (down the main hall). Whether you're new to our church, new to your faith, or ready to grow deeper in your walk with Christ, this class is for you. You'll learn about our church's mission, beliefs, and ways to get connected through serving, small groups and other ministries. Our goal is to help you grow in your relationship with God and, no matter where you are in your spiritual journey, we believe God has a purpose for your life. We are blessed to walk alongside you as you take next steps in your faith. Contact Emily at 318-537-0906 with any questions.

ABIDE, THEN GROW

When most people hear the phrase "spiritual growth," they picture effort — read more, pray harder, try to measure up. It's an easy slide from there into a consumeristic faith,

one measured by our preferences and our performance: which church, which style, which label fits best. The whole thing quietly becomes about us. But growth was never meant to come from striving. It comes from staying connected to Christ, trusting that as we abide, growth follows naturally.

Jesus put it plainly: "Abide in me, and I in you... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Picture a branch grafted onto a vine — the fruit was never the branch's own doing; it's simply the overflow of staying attached. That's the shape of the Christian life. By grace, through faith, you have already been saved — that's not the finish line, it's the starting line. From there, God's will is Christ-likeness: not intellectual agreement with a set of beliefs, but a heartfelt love that reshapes how we live, as we're invited into the relationship the Father, Son, and Spirit already share.

That invitation changes the question we ask ourselves day to day. Instead of "am I doing enough," abiding asks "am I staying close?" — near through His Word, near in prayer, near His people — trusting that closeness, not effort, is what produces real fruit.

That's what ties this month's theme together for me. Peter tells us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) — not by straining to earn more of him, but by staying near the very things that anchor his grace and his truth in us. Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). So here's the question worth sitting with this month: how many of us are missing God's promised abundant life because we are accidentally making it about us?



**EMERY
JOHNSON**

Emery@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

**KINGDOM
KIDS**



**JACKIE
KITCHINGHAM**

Jackie@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

RISE YOUTH MINISTRY (6TH -12TH GRADE)

welcome

TO OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY! EMERY!

PUN FACTS ABOUT EMERY!

- From Monroe, LA
- Graduated from Ouachita Parish High School & LA Tech with a degree in Architecture
- Favorite Candy: Junior mints & Reese's
- Loves being outdoors
- Favorite Verse: James 1:2-4

Whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

RISE YOUTH FALL SCHEDULE

Parent Meeting
AUG. 2 | NOON

Sunday Small Groups
Begin AUG. 16 | 5PM-7PM

Rise Wednesdays
Begin AUG. 19 | 5PM - 7PM

***CAN'T WAIT TO SEE
WHAT GOD HAS IN STORE!***

KINGDOM KIDS MINISTRY (K-5TH GRADE)

WOW! I simply cannot find the words to adequately describe VBS. The Snowball Mountain Challenge was packed full of fun, laughter and so much love. The support leading up to it, during it and afterwards, is unmatched. Ann and I may have planned it, but you executed the plan flawlessly. Many times, I've said (and will continue to say) it takes everyone to pull off an event this grand. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for all you did to make VBS an amazing week of loving on over 300 kids. Sharing the love of Jesus with so many kiddos is the best way to wrap up July, fill your heart in ways you never expected and lead us into a new school year.

Each summer, I take some time to pray over the upcoming year and plans that will be made. Through the planning process, I settled on the following goals:

1. Continue to work closely with families to nurture the spiritual growth of all our children in Kingdom Kids.
2. Create a pathway of learning for our infants - 4 years old.
3. Implement a new curriculum that is deep in scripture, engaging and age appropriate.
4. Improve Wednesday night activities by having adequate help and working towards the appropriate balance of studies and fun.

God has big plans for our children's ministry. I'm honored to play a part in helping His plans for our ministry come to life. Join me in praying for what's to come and for the hearts of our kiddos.



06/07/26

2ND SUN AFTER PENT

Here 808

Online 1510

TV Area Wide

WE GAVE

\$64,076

06/14/26

3RD SUN AFTER PENT

Here 890

Online 1602

TV Area Wide

WE GAVE

\$31,550

06/21/26

4TH SUN AFTER PENT

Here 764

Online 1721

TV Area Wide

WE GAVE

\$16,786

06/28/26

5TH SUN AFTER PENT

Here 792

Online 1840

TV Area Wide

WE GAVE

\$68,192

ONLINE GIVING

\$77,105

TEXT **"GIVE"** TO

318.217.8383

FOUNDRY

WE GAVE

\$1,400

WE GAVE

\$858

WE GAVE

\$1,743

WE GAVE

\$486

ONLINE GIVING

\$5192

At First Methodist Monroe we celebrate the opportunity to give back a portion of what God gives us. As a result, giving provides important resources needed to execute our ministry plans to see Monroe change one life at a time. **"You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." 2 Corinthians 9:7**

MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

In memory of Kathy Daughdrill
given by First Methodist
Women

In memory of Sue Laborde
given by First Methodist
Women

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Larry & Francis
Winter

In memory of Ted Holmes
given by Anne Yount

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Carlos Somoza

In memory of Ted Holmes
given by Louise Gilley

In memory of Mary Virginia
Troy Coker given by Graham,
Bordelon, Golson & Gilbert,
Inc.

In memory of John
Hendrickson given by
Bonita Dyess

In memory of Bill Kelly given
by Ken & Bonita Dyess

In memory of Rose Reppond
given by Ken & Bonita Dyess

In memory of Marty Somoza
given by Ken & Bonita Dyess

In memory of Kathy Daughdrill
given by Ken & Bonita Dyess

In memory of Mary Jo
Wimberly Newell given by
Ken & Bonita Dyess

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Nancy Meinel

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Aldersgate Class

In memory of Mary Virginia
Coker given by Cindy & David
Coffey

In memory of Mary Alice
Husted given by Kay Lynn
Tettleton

In memory of Mary Alice
Husted given by Kay
Warziniack

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Connie Waites

In memory of Mary Coker
given by Anne & John Yount

In memory of Ted Holmes
given by David & Becky Stith

In memory of Tammy Brown
given by Nancy Meinel

In memory of Carl Wayne
Dear given by Doris Kemp

In memory of Mary Rabb
given by Joe & Linda Walker

In memory of Mary Rabb
given by David & Debbie
McLemore

In memory of Mary Rabb
given by Nancy Meinel

In memory of Mary Rabb
given by John & Mary Jane
Bentley

In memory of Mary Rabb
given by Kay Lynn Tettleton

**CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A
MEMORIAL OR HONORARIUM
318-325-7335**

AUGUST 2026

firstmethodist
m o n r o e
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Non-Profit Org.
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Peregrine

- 2 RISE PARENT MEETING
- 3 ADMIN BOARD 5:30PM
- 7 50+ ADULT BINGO AT WOSC
10AM
- 9 BACK TO SCHOOL SUNDAY
- 12 50+ ADULT BRIDGE 1PM
- 16 BACK TO SCHOOL FISH FRY
@FOUNDRY
- 24-25 ADULT VBS 10:30AM

50+ ADULT BE FIT AT 10AM
MON., AUG 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
WED., AUG. 5, 12, 19, 26

MEN'S BIBLE STUDIES 10AM
TUES., AUG 4, 11, 28, 25



wednesday NIGHT *LIFE GROUPS* KICK-OFF SEPTEMBER 9

SOMETHING NEW IS STARTING ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

We are the word we're building around at FMM this year. Not me. Not you. We. We want you in a Life Group this year. **Life Groups, you say? What does that mean?**

Good question. Starting this fall, Wednesday nights are shifting away from a lecture-style format, where you mostly sit and listen, toward something built for real relationship. A Life Group is a small circle of people, maybe eight or ten-ish, who gather to dig into Scripture together, ask honest questions, and actually do life with one another. No lectures. No sitting in rows. Just people around a table, a Bible open, and enough trust in the room to say what's really going on. We were never meant to walk through faith alone, and Life Groups are where that stops being a nice idea and starts being real. It's one thing to sit in a service and nod along. It's another to sit across from people who know your name, ask how you're really doing, and actually wait for the answer. That's what we're inviting you into. Join us for our Life Groups kick-off on **Wednesday, September 9. Dinner at 5 pm, groups start at 6 pm.** Come hungry. Come curious. Come be part of the we.