



NEXT STEPS

Where is God calling you to take your next step?

SUNDAY, MAY 17 10:10AM
IN THE PARLOR

Finding your place in a church community isn't always easy—but you don't have to do it alone. If you're ready to explore what it means to get connected at First Methodist Monroe, we'd love to have you join us.

Next Steps is a relaxed, welcoming opportunity to meet our pastors and staff, connect with others, and learn more about what it means to call First Methodist Monroe home.

Our hope for you!

FAITH: Grow in your relationship with God in meaningful, practical ways as you take your next steps on your spiritual journey.

FELLOWSHIP: Form genuine connections with others who are also seeking community and a place to belong.

FOUNDATION: Discover who we are as a church, where we're headed, and how your unique gifts and God-given calling can make a lasting difference in the lives of others.

Please contact Emily at 318-537-0906 with any questions. We would love to save you a seat!



Scan me!

**SCAN THE
QR CODE TO
CHECK OUT
MORE WAYS
TO GROW
& SERVE
WITH US!**

SENIOR PASTOR



**REV. DR.
BRIAN MERCER**

**PastorBrian@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM**

WITH LOVE IN CHRIST,
Pastor Brian

First Methodist family,

As we step into the bright, blooming days of May, I find myself returning again to the words Jesus offered from a boat on the Sea of Galilee—stories about seeds, soil, growth, and the quiet, steady work of God beneath the surface of our lives. Matthew 13 is a great companion as it speaks with a clarity that feels tailor-made for this moment in our church's life.

Over the past several months, we have walked together through the wilderness of Lent, stood in the shadow and glory of Holy Week, and celebrated the dawn of resurrection. In each newsletter, we have reflected on how God forms us—through wilderness, through waiting, through walking with the risen Christ in the garden. Now, in this season after Easter, the Spirit invites us to consider what comes next: growth.

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

Jesus' parable of the sower reminds us that God is always scattering seeds of grace—generously, abundantly, even recklessly. Some fall on rocky ground, some among thorns, some on the path. But some fall on good soil, and when they do, they produce a harvest beyond imagination.

What strikes me is this:

The seed never chooses the soil. The soil becomes ready to receive the seed.

So often we imagine that spiritual growth requires a different season, a different circumstance, a different place. "If only life were calmer... if only I had more time... if only things were different..." But Jesus teaches us that God can bring forth fruit right where we are—in the soil of our actual lives, not the lives we wish we had.

To "bloom where you are planted" is not a call to settle. It is a call to trust.

Trust that God is already at work in the ground beneath your feet.

Trust that the Spirit can soften what has grown hard, clear what has become tangled, and nourish what has grown weary.

Trust that the seed of the Kingdom is already within you, waiting for the right conditions to burst into life.

This is the work of discipleship: tending the soil of our hearts so that God's Word may take root and flourish.

A CHURCH THAT GROWS TOGETHER

As we celebrate our bicentennial year, we are not simply remembering our past—we are cultivating our future. Month by month, we are honoring the eras and ministries that shaped us, even as we ask how God is planting us for the next 200 years of faithful witness.

Our mission—**Becoming People of Christ**—is itself a seed.

And every act of worship, every Bible study, every prayer, every meal shared, every child taught, every neighbor served... these are the ways we water the ground God has given us.

May this be a season where each of us leans into the place God has planted us—our families, our workplaces, our friendships, our ministries—and asks, "Lord, what would You grow here?"

WALK THE LAND OF THE BIBLE WITH ME — MAY 2027

As we reflect on Jesus' parables of soil and seed, I want to extend a personal invitation to join me next year as we walk the very ground where these stories were first spoken.

In May 2027, I will be leading a guided Holy Land pilgrimage, and I would love for you to be part of this life-shaping journey. We will stand on the Mount of Beatitudes, sail the Sea of Galilee, walk the streets of Jerusalem, pray in Gethsemane, and celebrate the empty tomb together.

All details and registration can be found here:

<https://www.eo.travelwithus.com/tours/hl27050327153353#eotours>

If the parables of Jesus have stirred something in you this year, imagine hearing them again while standing in the places where they were first spoken. It is an experience that deepens faith in ways words cannot fully capture.

MAY GOD CULTIVATE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL IN YOU

Church family, I am grateful for the soil God has given us here at First Methodist Monroe, I see signs of new growth everywhere—new faces, new ministries, new energy, new hope. And I believe God is preparing an abundant harvest.

May this month be a reminder that you are planted on purpose.

And may the God who tends the fields of creation tend the garden of your heart with grace, patience, and joy.



REV. JOHN O'LEARY

John@FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

*"No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
Luke 9:62 (NIV)*

There is a quiet temptation that often whispers to a follower of Jesus to encourage us to stop, turn around, and long for what was left behind. It whispers that the old life was easier, that new challenges may be too hard, and that maybe the past was as good as it gets. Do you ever wonder if you took a wrong turn somewhere in the past and now the future does not seem very bright? Christians are not meant or designed to look back. The calling for a follower of Christ is to keep the eternal perspective in mind. To keep the main thing the main thing, yet our mind wonders.

God is calling each one of us to bloom where we are planted. The circumstances of life may have you in an unexpected season, yet there is comfort in the words of Philippians 1:6 that says, "I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

Our calling is not to passive acceptance or merely a nice sentiment that God uses every circumstance to grow us. Our faith is built on the solid foundation that each of us has a great responsibility to grip the plow with both hands, trust that God is faithful, and complete the work He has for us.

What is that work God has for you? First and foremost, it is to look to God who has rescued you from the dominion of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). The second reminder about the work God has for us is finding places in your life where you sense God's goodness and pleasure in what you are doing. He has called each of us to use the gifts he has given us to spread the light of his presence and purpose.

The plow is a demanding instrument. It requires our full attention, a steady grip, and our eyes set firmly on the horizon ahead. You cannot cut a straight furrow while looking over your shoulder. The calling for us to bloom where we find ourselves is a calling to make daily decisions to commit, surrender, and pursue the promises of God found in the pages of scripture. Where are you using the plow God has given you to build his kingdom in and through your life? The Christian who blooms where they are planted has made a quiet, daily decision: "This is where I am. This is where God has placed me. I will pour my life out here."



Worship ON THE BAYOU

SUNDAYS AT 7AM | APRIL - OCTOBER



HOSPITALITY



EMILY MARTIN

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BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's grace in its various forms" 1 Peter 4:11

Do you ever wonder what you bring to the table? Or question what your gifts and talents really are? You're not alone. Scripture reminds us that each of us has been given unique gifts by God—meant to serve others and bring Him glory.

What comes naturally to you? Maybe you're quick to step in and help at an event, enjoy teaching or guiding others, or feel drawn to encourage someone with a thoughtful note. Some gifts are visible, while others work quietly behind the scenes—but every one of them matters. Together, they form the body of Christ, each playing an essential role.

Peter reminds us that our gifts aren't meant to be kept to ourselves. We are called to use them to serve others, and in doing so, we reflect God's grace and bring encouragement, joy, and support to those around us.

This month, would you join me and take time to pray and reflect on these questions:

- What gifts has God uniquely given me?
- Am I using my abilities to serve others, or only myself?
- Where might I be called to step in more intentionally?
- What is one small step I can take this week to serve someone?



**NANNETTE
FLOWERS**

**NFlowers@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM**



**ADULT VACATION
BIBLE SCHOOL**

**THE
Bee
ATTITUDES**

**WITH PASTOR BRIAN
& PASTOR JOHN**

**SAVE THE DATE
AUGUST 24-26
10:30AM-1PM**

Sing favorite hymns, support a mission project, enjoy a delicious lunch, and fellowship with others!

L.Y.F.T. MINISTRY (LIVING YOUR FAITH TRANSPORTING)

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards... 1 Peter 4:10

We are seeking 3-5 couples and 4-6 individuals, ages 25-75, to serve on our Hospitality Team by helping transport and ride with residents of The Gardens of Somerset to and from church on Sunday mornings for Sunday School and worship. No CDL is required, and training will be provided. This ministry opportunity requires only a one Sunday per quarter commitment and is a wonderful way to share Christ's love through service and fellowship. If you are interested in being part of this ministry, please see me or Pastor Brian.

50+ Adult Happenings at the church

BE FIT kicks off the month with a "May the 4th BE FIT with You" exercise class! Join us each Monday and/or Wednesday at 10am in the Fellowship Hall for an out of this world workout!

BRIDGE is Wednesday, May 13, from 1-4pm in Room 16. If you play contract bridge and are interested in participating as a substitute, please contact me.

TECH CLASS is Wednesday, May 27, 1-2:30pm to assist users in feeling more confident and comfortable with technology. Bring your phone, laptop or tablet and passwords. Class is limited to 15 people so RSVP to nflowers@firstmethodistmonroe.com to reserve your seat!

50+ Adult Happenings outside the church

LUNCH AND LEARN is a "Bouquet of Tables" Ladies' Luncheon on Saturday, May 9th, 11am - 2pm, at Tower Place, 1500 N. 19th, with Cheri Dupree, founder of Abiding in the Vine Ministries, as the keynote speaker. Please scan the QR code on the church office bulletin board flyer to register as seating is limited.

LUNCH AND LISTEN "Brown Bag Concert" is Wednesday, May 27, at noon at the gazebo behind the West Monroe Farmer's Market, 1800 N 7th Street, with Alice Prophit performing. Bring a brown bag lunch or treat yourself to a \$6 box lunch with tea on site from Newk's Eatery.

HOLLAND AND BELGIUM SPRINGTIME RIVER CRUISE, April 20-28, 2027, highlighting the tulips of Keukenhof Gardens, the Kinderdijk's 18th century windmills, and visits to Amsterdam, Arnhem, Bruges, and Middelburg, is on a brand-new river boat! Deadline is May 15 to guarantee price and cabin. For more information or to register online, visit: <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1329277>



SLIDE PRESENTATION FOR "MAJESTIC CITIES OF CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE,"

a small exploration group tour, is Tuesday, May 12th at 5:30pm. Join us June 5-18, 2027, to discover a land where history and fairy-tale charm blend seamlessly across Central and Eastern Europe. From Prague's storybook streets to Vienna's elegant coffee houses, Budapest's vibrant culture, and Kraków's timeless Old Town, each city invites you to slow down and truly connect. Travel like a local by train, hear powerful stories from a Berliner who lived through the fall of the Berlin Wall, and choose your own path in Budapest—whether reflecting at the House of Terror Museum or relaxing in its famous thermal baths. Walk through history in Kraków and experience a moving visit to Auschwitz, where the past is never forgotten. This is a journey where culture, beauty, and history come vividly to life! For more information, visit

<https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1369681>

YOUNG ADULTS &
YOUNG FAMILIES



NATHAN MCCLAIN
Nathan@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD PICTURE, PONDER, PRAY

When most people hear the word "meditation," their minds drift to images of crossed legs, closed eyes, and an empty mantra — an emptying of the mind until nothing remains. But biblical meditation is almost the opposite. Scripture never asks us to empty our minds; it calls us to fill them with the Word of God until it reshapes how we think, feel, and live. The Hebrew word for meditate in Psalm 1 is *hagah* — a word that can mean to mutter, to murmur, even to growl. It is the same word used for a lion crouching over its prey. Biblical meditation isn't about quieting your mind into silence; it is about slowly chewing on Scripture until it nourishes your soul.

Joshua 1:8 puts it plainly: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it." Meditation isn't a mystical experience reserved for spiritual giants — it is the ordinary, daily way God transforms our minds into His. The psalmist describes the person who delights in this as "a tree planted by streams of water" (Psalm 1:3) — deeply rooted, quietly fruitful, steady in every season. That is the promise of a life shaped by Scripture.

A simple way to begin comes from the Navigators, and it is just three words: Picture. Ponder. Pray. Start by picturing — read the verse slowly and let your imagination engage it. Who is speaking? What does the scene look, sound, or feel like? What is God revealing about Himself? Then ponder — turn the verse over in your mind. Ask what it means, why it matters, and how it intersects your life today. Memorize it if you can, so you can return to it while driving, walking, or lying awake at night. Finally, pray — respond to what you've seen. Thank God, confess, ask, surrender. Let Scripture become the very words you lift back to Him.

You don't need an hour, a seminary degree, or a perfect routine — just a verse, a few quiet minutes, and a heart willing to linger. Plant the Word deep, and trust the Spirit to bring the growth.



LINDA CRAWFORD
LindaC@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

firstmethodist monroe AFTER SCHOOL CARE

We are excited to expand our program to now include **PreK4-6th grade & offer pickup from Sallie Humble & Lexington!**

**REGISTER EARLY FOR
A CHANCE TO WIN!**

Everyone who registers by June 1 will be entered to win an Amazon Fire Tablet!



**REGISTER
BY JUNE 1!**

(Completed registration form & \$100 registration fee are required)



SCAN QR CODE
TO REGISTER

FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM/AFTERSCHOOL



RISE YOUTH MINISTRY (6TH -12TH GRADE)

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers..." 1 Timothy 4:12

Support the future of our church by investing in our youth through our annual Stock Sale Fund-raiser. Contributions from the Stock Sale will help provide scholarships for summer camp tuition and support upcoming mission trips, giving our students opportunities to grow in faith, serve others, and deepen their walk with Christ. Thank you for helping encourage and equip the next generation of leaders in our church!

MACKENZIE MILLER
 Mackenzie@FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

ONE WAY CAMP!
JUNE 8-12
 COMPLETED GRADES 6TH & 7TH
JUNE 15-19
 COMPLETED GRADES 8TH-12TH

To register call Ceta Canyon 806-488-2268

STOCK SALE

INVEST IN OUR YOUTH!

JACKIE KITCHINGHAM
 Jackie@FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

KINGDOM KIDS MINISTRY (K-5TH GRADE)



"Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise" is a familiar refrain and one I sing repeatedly. It reminds me of God's grace that he so freely gives to each of us.

As I think of the verses of this hymn, I think about the beautiful creation God laid out for us to enjoy. The campgrounds at Camp Caney come to mind. What a peaceful place just west of home where you can get away from the things of this world! In June, I will take kids to Camp Caney for summer camp. The grounds won't be very quiet, but the noise will be from kids that were brave enough to leave home, go to an unfamiliar place and see what God has for them. It's a place that has changed since my time as a camper in the 80s but a place where God is still moving in mighty ways.

If you have a child entering 2nd-4th grade next school year, mark your calendar for June 26-28. For those of you with kids entering 4th-6th grade, mark your calendar for June 15-19. I'd love to talk to you about sending your child to Camp Caney this summer.



Pre-Camp
JUNE 26-28 Grades 2-4
Elementary
JUNE 15-19 Grades 4-6





TONDA BUTLER
TondaB@
FIRSTMETHODISTMONROE.COM

CHILDCARE Center

Our Childcare Center is currently seeking caring and dependable individuals to join our team. We are hiring an **Afternoon Supervisor** to work Monday-Friday from 2:00 PM-6:00 PM. Responsibilities include supervising children during afternoon activities, supporting staff, maintaining a safe and nurturing environment, interacting positively with children and families, and ensuring daily routines and center policies are followed. Experience working with children is preferred.

We are also hiring **Summer Camp Workers** for our childcare program running June 1-July 31, serving children ages 4-10 years old. Hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM. Applicants must be 18 years or older and should be loving, patient, dependable, energetic, and willing to attend field trips.

If you are interested in either position or would like more information, please call (318) 325-7426 or go to firstmethodistmonroe.com and send us your resume!

FIRST METHODIST MONROE
CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP





Worship doesn't begin when the service starts, it begins when we intentionally turn our hearts toward God.

REPORTING OUR FAITHFULNESS **ONLINE GIVING \$72,124**

03/01/26 2ND SUN IN LENT Here 790 Online 1273 TV Area Wide WE GAVE \$46,784	03/08/26 3RD SUN IN LENT Here 732 Online 1119 TV Area Wide WE GAVE \$22,741	03/15/26 4TH SUN IN LENT Here 884 Online 1188 TV Area Wide WE GAVE \$30,098	03/22/26 5TH SUN IN LENT Here 712 Online 1500 TV Area Wide WE GAVE \$43,576	03/29/26 PALM SUNDAY Here 865 Online 1022 TV Area Wide WE GAVE \$17,329
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MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

In honor of James William Malone given by Nancy Meinel

In memory of John D. Ellett given by The Clara & Aylmer Montgomery Family - Vada & Eugene, Olive & Steve, Mary Laurens & Kent, Elizabeth & Al

In memory of Kathy Daughdrill given by Louise Gilley

In memory of Sue Laborde given by Louise Gilley

In memory of Kathy Daughdrill given by Gaynell Ainsworth

In honor of Hunt Neely given by Mr. & Mrs. Will Myers

In honor of Denise Hardy given by Mr. & Mrs. Will Myers

In honor of Pastor Brian Mercer given by Mr. & Mrs. Will Myers

In honor of Hunt Neely given by Peggy Anderson

In memory of Sue Laborde given by Maurine Pyburn

In memory of Kathy Daughdrill given by Maurine Pyburn

In memory of Marty Somoza given by Mary Coker

In memory of Marty Somoza given by Martha Bratton

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

MAY 2026

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- 3 YOUTH SUNDAY
- 9 50+ LUNCH & LEARN 11AM
- 10 MOTHER'S DAY
- 12 SLIDE PRESENTATION FOR MAJESTIC CITIES OF CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE 5:30PM
- 13 50+ ADULT BRIDGE 1PM
- 17 NEXT STEPS CLASS 10AM
POKENO AT FOUNDRY 5PM
- 19 FMW CIRCLE 2 11:30AM
- 25 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY
- 27 50+ LUNCH & LISTEN NOON
50+ ADULT TECH CLASS 1PM

50+ ADULT BE FIT AT 10AM
MON., MAY 4, 11, 18
WED., MAY 6, 13, 20, 27

MEN'S & WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDIES 10AM
TUES., MAY 5, 12, 19, 26

VBS 2026
JULY 13-17

SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE

FIND YOUR STRENGTH IN GOD

SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

For kids entering PreK 4 - 5th grade

Cokesbury

SMC