



THE FOCUS

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

Growing in Faith

It can be hard to know how to grow closer to God, and the more you know about it, the more confusing it can become. There are many different practices that people have found helpful, from ancient practices like solitude, silence, and fasting, to more recent developments like regularly listening to Christian music and listening to sermons by different preachers. It can be easy for us to find a new piece of advice in growing in our faith almost every day, and figuring out what it actually looks like to put these into practice can be a daunting challenge.

I wonder if maybe the large number of activities that attract our attention as we try to grow spiritually are actually distracting us from being able to grow in our faith at all. A phrase that has been on my mind a lot recently comes from the title of Eugene Peterson's book on spiritual growth, "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction." You see, it can be easy for us to constantly change what we are trying to do in order to grow closer to God. One day we pray, the next we are in silence, the next we are reading our bibles, the next we listen to music, the next we fast, and so on, seemingly without end. We hear a sermon that convicts us in one direction, then read a book that inspires us in another, and then we hear about a ministry that is doing incredible work in yet another direction, and we never stay with one thing for very long. Sometimes we feel like cars constantly turning onto a new street at each intersection; maybe we are getting somewhere, but we aren't getting anywhere quickly.

What is one thing that you can focus on this month as your "long obedience in the same direction"? Maybe you need to keep applying our definition of "missional" from last month: "to be missional is to build relationships that make disciples of Jesus and transform the world." Maybe you need to focus on applying just one thing, whether from a sermon you heard or a study you've done or a book you've read. Whatever it is, make that your sole focus for this month. Maybe other messages will connect with it, but let's all commit to "a long obedience in the same direction" this month.

Pastor Jason Stanley

RALLY DAY

Fall Rally Day will be held September 15, In church Bibles will be presented to Harrison Varner and Ayden Covey, teachers will be recognized, and children and Christian education will be celebrated. Following SS will be a carry-in luncheon featuring Chester's fried chicken. Please plan to be here for this special Sunday.



HIGHLIGHTS of the AUGUST CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING:

1. The parsonage is getting a makeover, new siding and repairs that are needed.
2. The church is having tuck-pointing done to stop the leaks. Also, the bell tower will be re-roofed after the tuck-pointing is done.
3. The organ has been repaired.
4. A solar light has been placed on the flag pole to light it up at night.
5. The Adams St. awning is repaired and up.
6. Shoe Distribution date has been set for October 12th from 9:30-11:30 A.M.
7. Trunk or Treat was discussed and information will come later.

Full report of the July meeting is on the bulletin board in the church office hallway

Church Spending Plan as of 2019

Monthly	July	Year to Date	
Income	\$13,657.10	Income	\$97,474.78
Expense	\$13,501.87	Expense	\$91,783.16



2019 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE DONUTS

September — Koinonia Class
October — J.O.Y.



CHICKEN NOODLE DINNER

OCTOBER 19

4:30 – 7:00 PM

Tickets are: Adults \$9.00

children 5-12 \$5.00, 4 and under free

Dessert by Donation

If you can help in any way, please talk to

Bonnie Lou Gamson.

THANK YOU! I would like to thank my church family for the flowers and Steve and Jane Sharon for bringing them to me along with a visit. Thank you very much! *Jeannette Renbarger*

THANK YOU! Dear FUMC Friends, Every healing thought whether it was in the form of a prayer, get-well card, or an encouraging word has been so appreciated. Thanks to Pastor Jason for his call and Sunday School friends for the flowers. I look forward to walking unassisted in a few weeks. Blessings, Sidenia Stace

OPEN-AIR MARKET

ReNewed Boutique and Thrift is organizing an Open-Air Market for the First Saturday of every month. This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce ourselves to more people in our community and build relationships. We would like to have one booth set up for inviting people to church. At this booth, we will also pass out free water or popcorn. We would also like to have a second booth for selling our noodles. If you would be interested in helping, please let me know.
– Pastor Jason



UMW NOODLES

We have noodles for sale!
Just stop by the church office.
They are \$3.50 a bag.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 Jeanette Renbarger	16 Debbie Ivey
7 Ralph Pack	18 Christine Stanley
11 JoAnn Blood	20 Willard Rust
12 Jeannette Ball	23 Joan Brown
15 Pat Wickham	26 John Wood

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

1	Curtis & Jennifer Swathwood
5	John & Kathy Boxell
25	Jim & Betty Fletcher

UPDATE ON THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

There has not been a lot of news to report about our denomination, The United Methodist Church, since the Special General Conference held in February when the Traditional Plan to maintain the current language in the Book of Discipline about homosexuality was approved. While little has been said in the news, the denomination is still moving forward to our next scheduled General Conference in 2020.

The following is an update written by Rev. Adam Hamilton, and given to me by Kay Dougherty who got it from First Wayne Street UMC. Adam Hamilton is the pastor at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, author of several books and Bible studies, and leading voice in the UMC-Next movement. I have slightly edited this statement to remove some of Rev. Hamilton's personal opinions, but you can find a copy of the original document at the offices. I have marked all of my edits with brackets.

An Update on the Denomination

For those interested in the latest news about the United Methodist Church, I wanted to give you some of the latest information from across the denomination. In the United States, the UMC is divided into 54 regional bodies called annual conferences. Every pastor and a layperson for each pastor gather for three or four days in their annual conference each May or June. The annual conference season is just concluding. Among the things that happened at this year's annual conferences was the election of new delegates to next May's General Conference.

The elections this year were widely seen as a referendum on [the 2019] special General Conference and the policies approved there [opinion deleted]. Delegates [to the February 2019 special conference] were elected in 2016. This year, it is estimated that [around] 73% of the U.S. delegates just elected [for the 2020 General Conference] are persons who oppose the Traditional Plan that was passed [in February]. There were also resolutions passed in more than a dozen annual conferences opposing the plan (including Great Plains).

This is not surprising. [Many] United Methodists in the United States are heavily centrists and the Traditional Plan did not reflect our values regardless of how we interpret scripture related to same sex marriage. It's not that we all agree in our interpretation of scripture, but [many] U.S. United Methodists agree that it's okay to disagree and still remain one church and that there needs to be space for pastors, churches and annual conferences to interpret scripture differently.

It's important to note that, just because 73% of American delegates oppose the Traditional Plan and the current policies of the Discipline does not mean they can overturn the policies approved last year. To do that would require [deleted] some African delegates and others to [change their vote].

[Opinion deleted]



First United Methodist Church
624 S. Adams St.
Marion, IN 46953

September 2019

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

***Making disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the
world.***

THE NEXT FOCUS DEADLINE
September 18, 2019

H O P E

*Discovering it
Living it
Sharing it*

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SERVICE TIMES

MORNING WORSHIP— 9:15 A.M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL— 10:30 A.M.

YOUTH GROUP—6:00 P.M.