



THE WITNESS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1610 PRINCE ST., CONWAY, ARKANSAS, 72034

Blessing of the Animals Set Oct. 2

Our annual Blessing of the Animals will be held from 3 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 2, in the parking lot at Conway First United Methodist Church, weather permitting.

Activities will begin with a short worship service led by our Children's Choirs. The service will include reciting the Blessing of St. Francis of Assisi, known as the Patron Saint of Animals.

In addition to options for pets and families to park and walk up for a blessing, we will also have a drive-through, in-vehicle option for pets with "social anxiety." Pets must be leashed or crated.

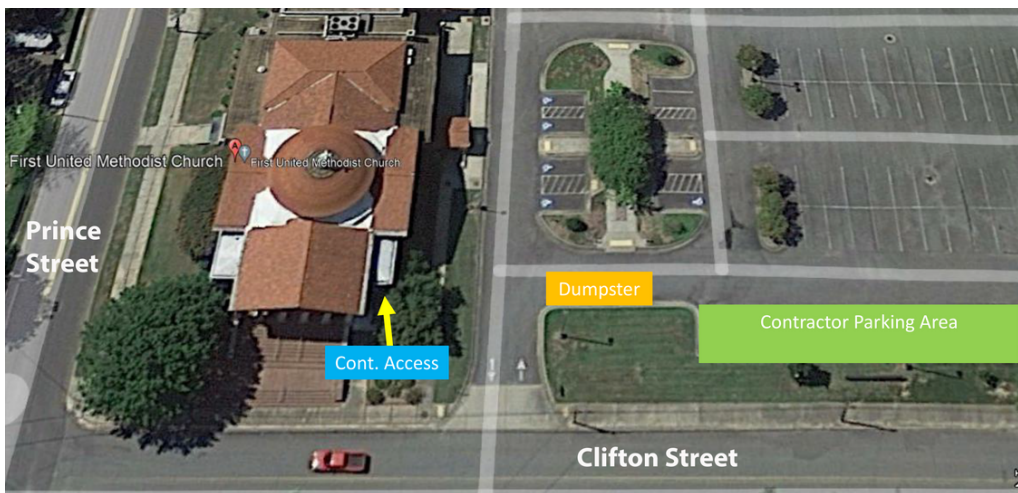
Pets will be blessed as a special creation of God. Even if you don't have a pet, you are welcome to attend and enjoy. If your pet can't make it to the blessing, you are invited to bring a photo of him or her to be blessed. Children are also invited to bring their favorite stuffed animal for a blessing.

The event is free and open to the public, so please invite your friends, family and neighbors!

Questions? Contact Linda Ball at lball@conwayfumc.org.



A Construction Note from the Trustees



Remodeling and renovation work in the Children's and MidYouth Ministry areas in the basement of the Sanctuary building began Monday, Sept. 19.

Although we don't have an exact date of completion, we are hoping the project will take no more than two months. You will notice in the map above that a dumpster will be in the parking lot close to Clifton Street, and contractors will be parking in that same general area.

Items from the basement have been/will continue to be removed, and some items are being stored in other areas throughout the campus.

If you would like to contact the Trustees with a "thumbs up" about the state of the church campus or if you see issues that need attention, please email fixit@conwayfumc.org. The chairman of the Trustees is Emily Walter and Pastor Dede is the staff representative.

The Priesthood of All Believers

Serving God and Each Other through Sacred Music

By Jason Saugey:

On Sunday, Aug. 21, 2022, the Bishop of Mainz, Germany, Peter Kohlgraf, made this statement at the dedication of the new organ in the cathedral regarding the importance of sacred music:

"Describing the Magnitude and Beauty of God and simultaneously describing God's Magnitude and Essence of Mystery is the preaching-duty of music in the Church, not only in the Liturgy."

Have you ever thought of music as an office of preaching in the Church? The congregational hymns we sing, the responses, introits, and anthems of the choir as sermons? As teaching moments? As ways to encounter Sacred Mystery? And have you ever considered the persons who study and prepare this musical sacrifice as priests or ministers?

Making music in the Church is a vital aspect of what we call the Priesthood of All Believers. We know we are all part of this, because we know that God told Moses on Sinai, who told us, that we, God's people, are also God's priests: "Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19)." This priesthood of all persons is confirmed again and again in the Old and New Testaments by the prophets, historical writers, by

the writers of the epistles, and the evangelists.

Not only is sacred music a preaching office, it is a teaching and worship-leading office. It is a means whereby we enter into Sacred Mystery and most especially a means whereby we all teach each other about God, as Bishop Kohlgraf put it: about God's Magnitude and Beauty.

Remember how Moses, in talking to God both in the burning bush and on Sinai, doubts himself, asking God "What do I say to the people"? We're all so much like Moses! "I can't do that. I can't sing. You don't want to hear me sing! I can't play instruments. What use would I be?"

The good news for Moses and the Israelites was that God knew better, and in God's Wisdom, God told Moses (and us!): "Here's what you say. Tell the Israelites this: I'll give you what you need. I'll equip you for service, for ministry. You are all priests of my Kin-dom." In the Tent of Meeting on Sinai God not only gives the Law, but God also foretells the Gospel with the call to ministry: service not only to God, but service to others, too.

There are many of us who stand on Sinai or at the burning bush, called but hesitant, interested, but reluctant. Be confident that God gives you what

you need: if you love to sing, you will learn to sing even better. If you have convinced yourself you can't sing or play instruments but wish you could, you will learn how.

The Music Ministry of First United Methodist Church welcomes you to participate in its many musical preaching opportunities for all ages. We provide you the notes to sing, and God provides you the words to proclaim. And as an added benefit, in doing so, we enjoy the blessings of Christian fellowship and friendship.

Children, Youth, Adults, Parents, Singles, all you people on the journey: I invite you to become part of the Music Ministry.

To sign up for K-1 Choir, Joyful Sound Choir, Joyful Ringers, Midyouth Choir, Midyouth Ringers, First Service Singers, Chancel Choir, Bells of Grace, and Chancel Ringers, please speak to Jason Saugey, Director of Music or to Linda Ball, Associate Director of Children's Music, or email Jason or Linda (Jason@conwayfumc.org, lball@conwayfumc.org).

If you are called to participate musically in the Contemporary idiom at the 9:05 a.m. service, please contact Stuart Holt, Associate Director of Contemporary Music (sholt@conwayfumc.org) or speak to him following worship on Sunday.

In Honor & In Memory

In memory of Doris Garlington by: Michael & Donna Harris

In memory of Marion Baker by: Rosanne & Bill Johnson, Laurie & Ted Smith

In memory of Sue Hines by: Margaret Taverner, Wayne & Rynnett Clark, Cliff & Maribeth Garrison, Sam & Carole Teague, Laurie & Ted Smith

In memory of Harry Bickerton by: Michael & Donna Harris

In memory of Mattie Sue Epting by: Pam Wren, Larry & Hilda Malpica, Ellis & Kim Arnold, Sam & Carole Teague

In memory of Peggy Crowell by: Skeet & Mary Jane Morse, Pam Wren, Claudia Davis, Cecille Boyd, Terri Boyd Shotts, Linda Tyler, Ellis & Kim Arnold, John & Carla Smith, Cliff & Maribeth Garrison, Sam & Carole Teague, Kathy & Chris

Cooper, Jerry & Cherry White, Dotty Robins Light Sunday School Class, Centennial Bank, Rick Willbanks, Laurie & Ted Smith, Bruce & Barbara Sossamon, Bob & Susan Bell, Rex & Martha Ross

In memory of Buddy Pugh by: Cecille Boyd, Terri Boyd Shotts, Cliff & Maribeth Garrison

In memory of Otto Warren Teague by: Marsha & Harold Rogers

In memory of Sue Jones by: Claudia Davis, Rex & Martha Ross

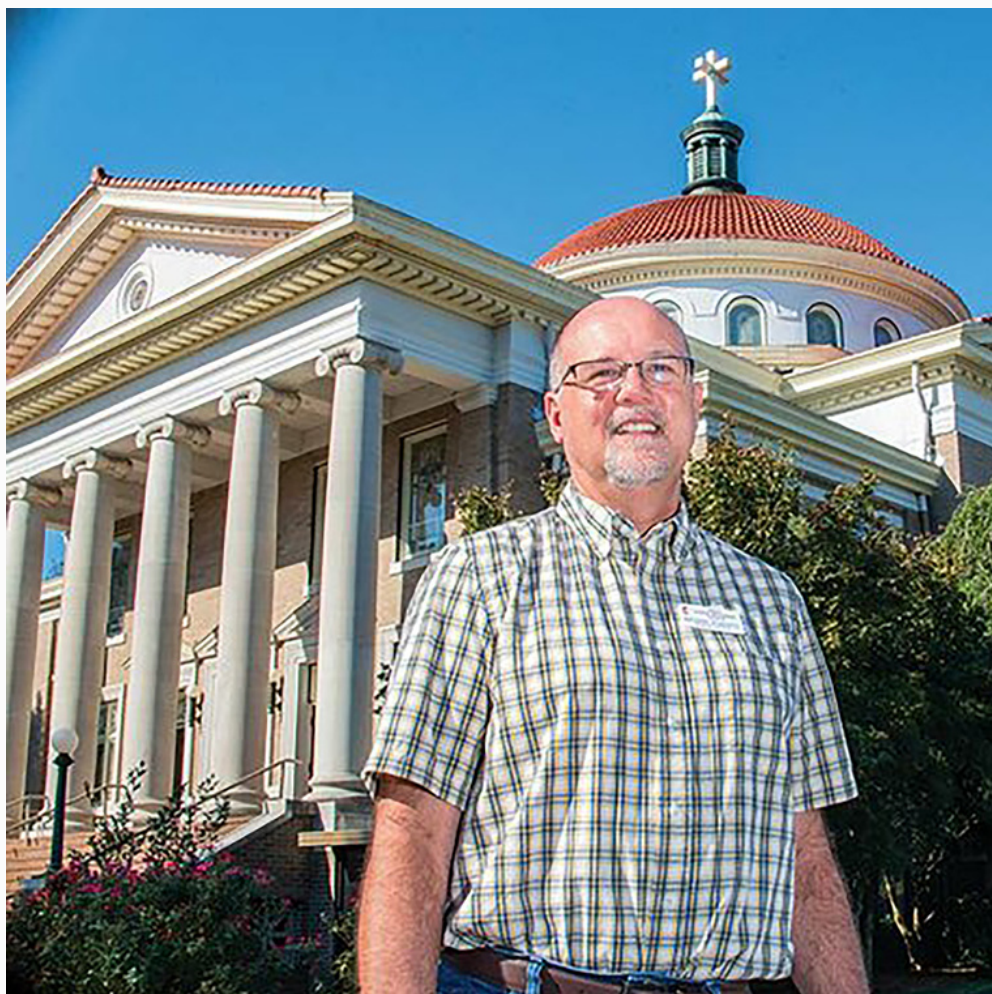
In honor of Zack & Gracie Bloodworth by: Jeanne Hanson

In honor of Kish Jones by: Charles Pittman



THE WITNESS

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, CONWAY, ARKANSAS



A Tribute to Pastor Michael



A tenure of 10 years as senior pastor of a United Methodist Church is definitely on the long side of the norm. At Conway First United Methodist Church, Rev. Dr. Michael Roberts has definitely gone beyond the norm — both in years of service at the church and in his depth of ministry.

In August, Bishop Gary Mueller announced that Dr. Roberts had been appointed to be the Director of the Arkansas Conference ReStart Initiative, effective October 1.

Since July 2012, Pastor Michael has been the spiritual head of this congregation, leading us not only in worship but also in mission, ministry and education. Michael says his initial focus for Conway FUMC was on worship and Bible study, with work on new ministries mixed in. During his tenure, he worked to develop our MidYouth ministry, create new classes for all ages,

oversee building renovations and a capital campaign, and helping to design the new Love Grows Here vision.

“From 2012 to 2019, we experienced growth every year in worship attendance and ministry participation,” he said.

This vision and its outcomes were all on track for great things when the pandemic hit in 2020. Using the word “pivot” became our byword — and Pastor Michael led the charge in determining how to do ministry in a different way. This included developing multiple online and hybrid opportunities.

“Today, as we come out of this challenging time, we are seeing renewed excitement for worshipping together and meeting together with many new people

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PASTOR MICHAEL from Page 3

who found us online and want to be in a congregation where love truly does grow here,” he says. Half jokingly, he added, “I would have never imagined that I could tell people to not come to church for over a year and we would come through that so well.”

For the past 10 years, Pastor Michael has not pastored alone. In fact, he has had some heavy-hitting associate pastors who did great things here and continue to do so in a variety of posts throughout Arkansas.

Rev. Lynn Kilbourne was already in place at Conway First United Methodist Church when Pastor Michael came on board. She served as an associate from July 2011 through June 2016. “One of the things I most enjoyed about working with Pastor Michael was the time we spent in conversation planning our sermons,” she says. “We would spend time thinking of illustrations, ways to connect the scripture to the lives of the folks in the congregation, and how we could make a sermon actually mean something to the hearers. I miss those conversations!”

One example of this brought a national issue right here to the doors of Conway FUMC. “I remember when the Supreme Court made significant decisions by a five-to-four vote. Pastor Michael and I



wondered how we would address these subjects in our preaching. I'll never forget how he pointed out to me that Conway FUMC is a 'five to four' congregation; on any given issue, the congregation is likely split somewhere around five to four. Instead of that being a negative, Pastor Michael led the congregation to see that as a strength and challenged us all to find our unity in something deeper - the call to love as Christ loves us.”

Rev. Lauren DeLano came on board, fresh out of Boston University School of Theology, in July 2016. She served until June 2020, when she was named senior pastor of Vilonia United Methodist Church. Her time as an associate with Pastor Michael seemed to be more like a team effort, with some humor mixed in. In fact, many times you could hear Michael say, “Yes, Lauren, you're right,” only with Lauren to respond, “I know!”

Lauren says she particularly remembers the love she felt in her time at Conway FUMC. “When I found out I was being appointed to Conway First straight out of seminary, I cried tears of joy. In those moments, I was so excited to be somewhere familiar, a town I'd gone to college in, and to have some familiar faces in the congregation.

See **PASTOR MICHAEL** on Page 5





PASTOR MICHAEL *from Page 4*

"I was also excited to work with Michael from our first phone call as we talked about how we might work together at Conway. From the very beginning of my time at Conway First, Michael was a mentor to me, but shortly into our time together we also became teammates. He didn't just see me as a young pastor straight out of seminary who had a few things to learn, he respected my perspective, my input, and my gifts for ministry. I will always be grateful to have spent my first four years in full-time ministry at Conway First working alongside Michael."

Rev. Michelle Moore came to Conway FUMC from a Conference position, right after the start of the pandemic. With her came the knowledge this congregation needed to launch those online and hybrid opportunities. And as quickly as she came in, she was out of here after serving just less than one full year, heading to northwest Arkansas to pastor her own church.

"The ministry partnership I had the privilege of experiencing with Michael will undoubtedly be the most memorable I will ever have. At least I hope that is the case! We got the unique experience of navigating an entire year of pandemic together, when all the rules for how things were 'supposed' to work went right out the window! As a result, we got to go on some amazing adventures together," Michelle said.

These adventures included "such holy moments as standing outside live-streaming and presiding over memorials, and such wild adventures as hauling camera equipment up trails on Petit Jean Mountain. Still, it will be the quieter times, sitting together in the sanctuary and reflecting on what our baptisms and our ordinations mean in such seasons, or the hilarious times of laughing over video bloopers, that I will hold closest in my heart. I am grateful for Michael's warm and open heart for people and our Methodist Church

and so thankful to have had him to walk through that wild and wooly season alongside."

While we hate to see him go, Michael has a big job ahead of him, stepping into a newly created cabinet position to provide spiritual care, support, worship opportunities, and the development of next steps for persons who will remain United Methodists from congregations involved in the disaffiliation process.

As for the Conway First congregation, Pastor Michael is known as a people person. "I've always known that what Michael really and truly cares about is PEOPLE," said congregant Wayne Gregory, who has served on many committees with Michael. "Even though he is forced to deal with denominational issues, church finances, non-working air conditioning, leaky roofs, Covid closures, and a hundred other things that try to get between him and other people, he always comes back to caring about people. And this includes people who may be on the other side of some of those issues."

In making the appointment announcement, Bishop Gary Mueller said: "I am delighted that Dr. Roberts has agreed to serve as the first Director of the Arkansas ReStart Initiative. Michael is passionate about the future of the church. He brings in-depth knowledge and experience after his years with Connected in Christ and service as Senior Pastor at Conway First United Methodist Church. He is a perfect match for this position at this time. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Michael, thankful for his willingness to serve, and excited about the work he will do in a position that."

In the meantime, we are happy to have Rev. Dede Roberts serving as interim Senior Pastor. FUMC will continue to be the church home for the Roberts family in the immediate future, the family said.



Reception Set Oct. 2 for Pastor Michael

After 10 years of ministry as our senior pastor, Michael Roberts will be moving to a new appointment. There will be a reception for him on Sunday, Oct. 2, at 10 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Doughnuts, coffee and juice, will be served, and the congregation is invited to write cards of appreciation and thanksgiving. Blank cards will be available for you to use or you can bring your own. We will accept donations in Michael's honor for finishing out the basement renovations.



1610 Investment Plan: Invest in Our C1Youth

We are asking that you consider investing in our C1Youth ministry by investing \$16.10 per month for one year beginning Oct. 15, for a total of \$193.20. We will use all the investments to send each youth to three conference events – Refuge, Veritas, and Assembly – our own spring retreat ReConnect, and one summer mission trip for FREE!!

We are praying we reach the 250 investments that it will take to accomplish that goal this year. Last year the 1610 investment plan sent 29 youth and adults to Junior High Refuge, 46 youth and adults to Veritas, 55 youth and adults to ReConnect, 53 youth and adults on mission trips, and 35 youth and adults to Assembly.

The 1610 Investment Plan continues to be a success. Not only have stories been created from the trips that have had their costs covered by the investments made, but we have 11 youth in discernment of their calling into ministry – both lay and ordained – and what that looks like for each of them. Each and every youth in discernment has expressed that these trips were instrumental in their decisions to seek

out their calling. It's not just an investment in the youth ministry, it's an investment in the stories created in youth ministry by creating space for God to do what God does.

More specifics about the program:

- This investment is for 8th - 12th graders only
- This is a commitment ABOVE AND BEYOND the pledges made to stewardship and Blessings to Blessings.
- The entire investment is tax deductible.
- We can easily add to an existing automatic draft if it's set up through the church already or set up a new draft.
- If you have been investing by direct draft over this last year then you are all set, unless you would like to make any changes.
- You can make monthly payments or pay in one lump sum by check. The cost is \$193.20 for one, \$386.40 for two, or \$579.60 for three. You can write a check to Conway FUMC and attach it to the investment form or write in the memo line "1610 plan" and place it in the offering plate.

Lay Ministries Begin Nov. 27 in Sanctuary Worship

On the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 27, we will welcome several Lay Ministries back to their regular weekly functions at the 8:30 and 11 a.m. worship services. Below is a listing of our various ministry offerings and how to connect. Please contact the coordinator/chair of the ministries in which you would like to become a part! If you have general questions about serving as a Lay Minister, please reach out by email to Jason Saugey, Director of Worship Ministries, Jason@conwayfumc.org.

LECTORS

Lay lectors read passages from Holy Scripture at worship services. To sign up as a lector at the 8:30 a.m. service, please contact Beverly Bowles, bowles72bev@gmail.com. To sign up as an 11 a.m. lector, please contact Sarah Frost, frost55@conwaycorp.net.

LAY COMMUNION MINISTERS

Lay Communion Ministers assist with the administration of Holy Communion during worship. To serve at 8:30 a.m., please contact Beverly Bowles, bowles72bev@gmail.com. To be a Communion Minister at 11 a.m., please contact Todd Johnson, toddj@cbmrep.com.

ACOLYTES

The College of Acolytes consists chiefly of persons

from grade 3 to grade 12. Acolytes serve at the altar during worship services. They are, in a general sense, the stewards of the Holy Board during worship, in charge of lighting and extinguishing candles, holding the book for the reading of the sermon Scripture, and overseeing the reception of the collection plates following the offertory (11 a.m. worship only). Acolytes assist clergy during the Communion Liturgy when needed, and they assist Lay Communion Ministers with the administration of Holy Communion. The Acolyte Master is Peggy Weatherly. To sign up to become an acolyte, contact Jason Saugey, Jason@conwayfumc.org.

11 A.M. USHERS

Ushers are usually the first men, women, and/or youth the parishioners meet when they come to church for worship services. Before the service, ushers distribute bulletins and see to the needs of congregants as they arrive. During the service, ushers are charged with the duty of passing the collection plates through the congregation for the offering. To join the regular roster of ushers at the 11 a.m. worship service, please contact Ritchie Howell, ritchiehowell70@gmail.com, or by phone: (501) 327-0326 or (501) 339-8585 (cell).

Summer Adventure Camp Coordinator Sought

The Summer Adventure Camp program at First United Methodist Church is seeking a Program Coordinator. This is a full-time summer position, with some preparation work to be completed during the school year. This position will begin in January of 2023. This is a supervisory position to all Summer Adventure Camp teachers and program specialists.

Qualifications are a high school diploma, plus state-required director training (can be obtained after hire), degree in a related field preferred.

For more information and a detailed job description, please contact Catherine Gatlin at cgatlin@conwayfumc.org. Applications are due by November 15, 2022.

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Sarah Ross, Pastoral Intern, to Preach on Oct. 9



Sarah Ross, who is our Pastoral Intern, will preach in all three worship services on Sunday, Oct. 9.

Sarah is a Sophomore at Hendrix College, double majoring in Religious Studies and Psychology. She is originally from Bryan, Texas, and her home church is A&M United Methodist Church. She is involved in the UCA Wesley and is part of the United Methodist Student Association at Hendrix College.

Her plans after college are to go to seminary to become a United Methodist Elder.

Sunday Worship

In-person:

8:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary
9:05 a.m. in the Great Hall
11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

9:05 and 11 a.m.
services are
livestreamed.

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First United Methodist Church Staff Directory

Senior Pastor — Michael Roberts
Executive Pastor — Dede Roberts
Dir., Music/Worship Ministries — Jason Saugey
Co-Dir., Children's Ministries — Catherine Gatlin
Co-Dir., Children's Ministries -- Jules Koen
Director, Lay Ministries — Kisha Bumpers
Director, Youth Ministries — Zach Schrick
Director, MidYouth Ministries — Sandra King
Campus Dir., Wesley Foundation -- Amy Shores

Assoc. Dir., Music (Praise Band) -- Stuart Holt
Assoc. Dir., Music (Children) — Linda Ball
Church Administrator — Jill Hankins
Business Assistant — Todd Burris
Supervisor, Hospitality Ministries — Ed Spears
Financial Assistant — Laura Bounds
Communications Assistant — Colleen Holt
Kitchen Coordinator — Kathleen Caruthers

Contact staff by email at:
first initial of first name plus
last name
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Example: [mroberts@
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