



THE WITNESS

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

Origin of Altar Arts in the Church

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a two-part series about the history of Altar Arts and what it means to us in today's church. The second part will be published in the June Witness magazine.)

By Shannon deKunffy

Altars are always there in our worship space. There's usually a cross or candle, flowers and fabric. They seem to magically appear each week. But have you ever given much thought to our altars? Why do we have them? Who sets them? Why do they look the way they do? Where do the elements come from? Come along with us to learn all about it!

The early roots of the word "altar" can be found in Latin (altarium/altus meaning high, adolere meaning to ritually burn or sacrifice), Greek (thusiasterion meaning a place of sacrifice), and Hebrew (misbeah meaning to slaughter).

Altars originated wherever spaces were regarded as holy or inhabited by spirits or gods. These locations included trees, rocks, springs, mountaintops, caves, and shores. Worshipers prayed for intervention and, in exchange, would leave gifts for these entities: bits of food or cloth, coins or carvings. These places were used to commemorate rites of passage, hold offerings to ancestors, and create a focal point for prayer. Sometimes they were used for sacrifices. Altars have been used by every religion - ancient Greeks and Romans had them everywhere: in homes and entryways, gardens and markets, public buildings and temples. Altars were used as a representation of a divine presence, but they weren't defined by the objects left on them. The intention behind the placement and use of the altar is what gave it holiness. In that sense, any special place where people encounter God or a divine presence becomes an altar, whether it's an ornate piece of furniture, a stone table, or a pile of rocks.

Altars are used all over the world today. They are most commonly found in worship spaces, but people also have personal altars in homes, memorial altars for the dead, garden altars, altars to give thanks, and more. Have you ever seen a space in a Chinese restaurant adorned in red, with figurines or candles and fresh produce set by it? That's an altar, too!



Altar decorations can change from season to season in the life of the church. These photos show examples of altars from Advent (top) and Easter (bottom) in the Good News Celebration Service.

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Rev. Dede Roberts Retirement

It's happening – Pastor Dede Roberts is retiring.

On June 11, Rev. Dede will be preaching her final sermon here at Conway First UMC. As many may know, Rev. Dede is retiring after many years of faithful ministry. To honor her service in the Annual Conference as well as here at Conway First, we will be throwing a Retirement Party for her to celebrate her ministry.



Dede has been faithfully serving the United Methodist Church since 1986 – that's over 37 years of bringing God's word to the people of Arkansas! Her first appointment was to South Bend UMC as an associate pastor in June of 1986. Since then, Dede's ministry spread with 13 other appointments across the state where she served as an Associate Pastor, a Senior Pastor, a District Superintendent, a Lead Equipper at the Center for Vitality, and as the Conference Clergy Recruitment Coordinator.

Dede has actually been appointed to Conway FUMC twice. She was first appointed to Conway FUMC in June of 2005 as an Associate Pastor – a position which she held for

five years. Then, most recently, God called her back to Conway FUMC in July of 2021 as an Executive Pastor.

We have truly been blessed by her ministry, leadership and friendship. Dede has a wonderful gift of love and humility and her leadership and ministry have reached many people over the years.

As we get ready to help her celebrate this new milestone in her life, we'd like to do some special things for her. First, we are collecting Congratulations/Thank You Cards that will be given to Dede at her party on 06/11/2023. We'd love to flood her with tons of these cards that she can read and reflect on after her retirement. We will have a basket at the retirement celebration to collect these well wishes.

Additionally, if you'd like to make a monetary gift in Dede's honor, she has asked that those donations be made to the Mid Youth Director's Position. One of the traditions for retiring pastors at Conway FUMC is to give a gift in their honor in lieu of a personal gift. Dede has asked that her retirement gift be a gift to fund the Mid Youth Minister's position.

Finally, please mark your calendars for Sunday, June 11, and make plans to join us in the Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour to shower Dede with our love and well wishes.

ALTARS from Page 1

Altar Arts – Early Christianity

We've learned how altars came to be – but what place did they have in early Christianity?

Early Christians didn't really use altars as we know them. Wooden communion tables would hold the sacred elements, sometimes with a cross or candles alongside. These tables came to be regarded as altars for a time. Hebrews 13:10 may be the earliest reference to these distinctive Christian Eucharist altars. Gradually, though, altars were set apart on their own as a sanctuary or holy place. They were treated with reverence, and regarded as so holy that nothing but sacred elements were allowed to be placed on them. Sometimes altars were enshrined under a canopy that rested on four columns, known as a ciborium. Silk curtains were hung from the canopy and drawn around the altar to conceal it during the consecration of elements. Others were concealed by a screen called an iconostasis that is still used by Catholic and Orthodox churches today. Concealing the altar was thought to emphasize its mystery and sacredness. Communion tables came to be regarded on their own merit and purpose, apart from altars.

In Exodus 27, God gave detailed instructions as to the appearance of the altar in the courtyard of the tabernacle. Square in shape, measuring 3 cubits high, 5 cubits wide, and 5 cubits long. (Cubits are an ancient measurement of roughly 18 inches.) It was to have four horn-like projections, one at each corner, for holding large sacrifices and for protecting the altar. The horns and the altar should be of

one piece, overlaid with bronze, and attended by bronze utensils. Poles of acacia wood, covered in bronze, would be used to carry it. Impressive!

The presence of altars in churches didn't cancel their existence in other places, however. Altars represent any occasion and/or place where one has a personal encounter with God. In fact, they appear throughout the Bible. According to Pastor Jack Hayford (A Time of Altars), some of them are:

A place of encounter – The Lord met Jacob in a crisis and the next day he built an altar in that place. Genesis 28

A place of forgiveness – The brazen altar of the tabernacle sacrifice was offered as an advance testimony that there would be a once-for-all sacrifice in God's Son.

A place of worship – The most common altar built by people to acknowledge their praise to God was the altar of incense, the holy place where priests would offer worship to the Lord on behalf of the people and themselves.

A place of covenant – An altar was built where the covenant was made between the Lord and Abraham, and the land was sealed as a timeless promise to Abraham and his offspring. Genesis 15

A place of intercession – The prophet Joel called for intercession by leaders on behalf of the people and their devastated economy.

But what do altars mean to us now? We'll look into that next month!

For more information about Conway FUMC's Altar Arts, contact Jill Hankins at jhankins@conwayfumc.org for Sanctuary Altar arts, or Shannon deKunffy at sdekunffy@yahoo.com for Altar Arts in the Good News Celebration.

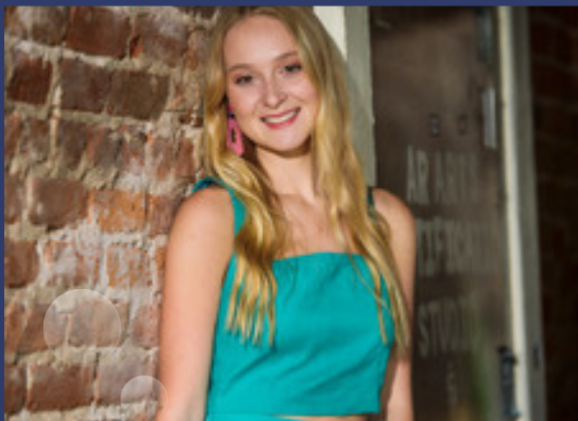
SENIORS



My favorite memory is going to the travelers game and the van rides to and from. - Maggie Lyon



My favorite memory is trying to make Pastor Lauren laugh while she's at the pulpit. - Victoria Walter



Favorite Quote:

**"May the Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace." - Elizabeth Gordon**



My favorite memory is the Agape feast that we do in the youth group. I love that we are able to welcome the incoming eighth-grade students and share a meal with them and get to know them. I have to admit my first agape meal I was terrified to meet new people who were older than me, but it quickly turned into something I love. I think it is the best way to welcome the new people as everyone is invited to the meal and everyone sits at one table. It is the table that I have many friends at and a tradition I hope continues for a long time. - Sarah Mulhearn

2023

SENIORS



Veritas has always been a place I have loved getting to go to. Throughout the time I've gotten to go to Veritas, I've built a deeper connection with God and a better understanding of my faith.
- Bryna Mathis



Favorite memory is me and Hayden getting yelled at for buying souvenir socks in Chicago - Hayes Johnson



Fovorite memory is going to Reconnect and getting to spend time with C1 Youth - John Phillips



My favorite memory is Church Easter egg hunts at Laurel Park in elementary school. - Hugh Hill

2023

SENIORS



2023



UCA Wesley Students Participate in Local Mission

By Amy Shores,
Director, UCA Wesley Foundation

Our FUMC Conway Wesley Foundation participated in a local mission trip May 15 through 20.

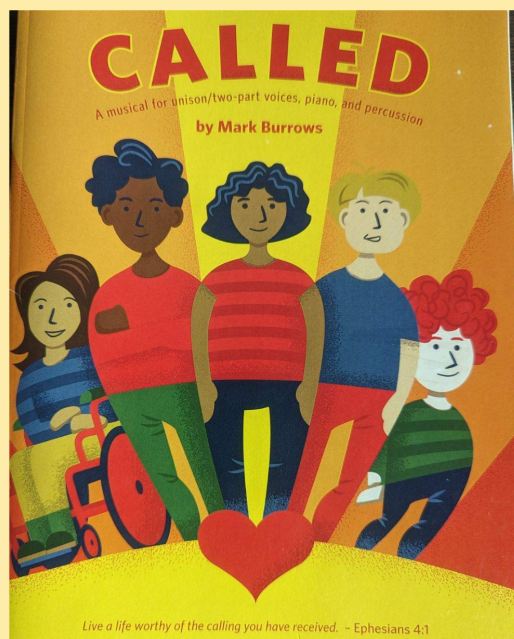
We were originally scheduled to do mission work in Tulsa, Okla., at this time, but once the tornadoes hit Central Arkansas in March, we decided that there was plenty of work to do at home! We worked mostly in North Little Rock, in the Indian Hills neighborhood, directly behind FUMC in North Little Rock. While some of the homes we helped in were still uninhabitable, we met nearby neighbors and were able to hear their stories. We also greatly benefited from a cool place to eat lunch as NLR FUMC opened their doors to us.

Bailey Faulkner of Ozark Mission Project also gave us a tour of the destruction of her parents' home, and we were able to help clean up and move some furniture for them. We partnered with the Arkansas Food Bank to help with Veteran Food Distribution one day, where we met an Arkansas UMC Clergy mom, as well as saw evidence of the 200K Reasons and the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas as we packed food boxes. The students really enjoyed working alongside the veterans and hearing their stories. To wrap up the week, we partnered with Wesley UMC in Conway to help with some landscaping that they needed done. While the rain eventually caught us, there was no thunder or lightning, so we were able to keep working and enjoy the cooling off that was provided!

While we did plenty of work, we also took time to fellowship with game nights, an evening at Larry's Pizza, a night out at Dave and Buster's, and a screening in the movie room in the basement at Conway FUMC. We ate our meals, showered, and slept at the church each evening, as well. The trip was a great reminder of the United Methodist connection, of the need that is all around us, and of why the Wesley Foundation/FUMC Conway partnership is so beneficial!



Children's Summer Musical!



'Called'

Monday, June 12, through Thursday, June 15
8 a.m. to noon each day

Performance at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 15, in the Sanctuary

ALL kids going into grade 3 and up are welcome

Registration deadline is June 1.

COME ONE, COME ALL!

WOW CAMP 2023

Save the date for **THE GREATEST SHOW**

Mark your calendars and join us!

Fun for all ages!

JULY
10-12
2023

First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, Arkansas 72034

MON - WED
**9 AM-
NOON**

MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION TO COME!



2023 FUMC and Faulkner County Library Lunch Program

Last summer, FUMC partnered with the Faulkner County Library to combat hunger in our community. With the support of this congregation, individuals, local businesses, and grant funding, we served 3,300 lunches to area families. We are ready to do this again in 2023, but we will need your help!

VOLUNTEER: There are a number of ways to volunteer (pack lunches, deliver lunches, and/or assist at the library during the lunch and programming). Sign-up to volunteer here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c054facaf29a31-summer1#/>

DONATE: Donations can be sent to the church ("Summer Lunches" in the memo of your check). You can also give online, please choose "Special Giving" and type "Summer Lunch Ministry" in the notes

<https://www.shelbygiving.com/app/giving/lovegrowshere>

Questions can be directed to Kisha Bumpers (kbumpers@conwayfumc.org) or Mission Committee Co-Chairs, Tricia Burris (tburris@conwaycorp.net) and Lori Mulhearn (lmulhearn@conwaycorp.net).

FUMC & FCL

SUMMER LUNCH MINISTRY

FUMC is teaming up with the Faulkner County Library to serve 3000 lunches to our neighbors June-August. Find out how you can help...

DONATE

Select "Special Giving" & type "Summer Lunch Ministry" in the notes.

VOLUNTEER

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In Honor & In Memory

In memory of Joel Lane by: Rick & Becky Rasnick, Martha Bumpers

In memory of Bill & Gene Jacob by: Martha Bumpers

In memory of Ronnie Duke, Jr. by: Michael & Donna Harris

In memory of Aaron Purtee by: Jeff & Norma Kelley

In memory of Judy Wheeler by: Jeff & Norma Kelley

In memory of Greg Wren by: Tommy Hollowell

In memory of Dr. Steve McElmurry by: Larry & Sarah Morse

In memory of Ben Bakker by: Elisabeth Bakker

In honor of Colleen Holt by: Bill & Cecilia Patterson

In honor of FUMC Food Pantry Workers by: Men's Prayer Breakfast Group

In honor of Kish Jones by: Charles Pittman

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 on
Facebook and
YouTube

First United Methodist Church Staff Directory

Senior Pastor -- Nathan Kilbourne
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
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

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