**Program Description:**

The Respite Ministry was started under the Committee of Health and Welfare at First United Methodist Church in the spring of 2012. The church saw a need in the River Region for a program that would not only serve people who suffer from any form of dementia, but also their family and caregivers. There are roughly over 7,000 people diagnosed with dementia each year in the city of Montgomery. Until the development of this program, there was no program to serve the mental, physical and spiritual needs of both a caregiver and participant. By offering music, art, children interaction, pet therapy, dance therapy, yoga and games of love and laughter, this ministry hopes to be the spark to bring the whole region together in support of the entire memory loss community. Our program is open to any one suffering from Parkinson’s, Lewy Bodie’s Disease, Alzheimer’s, vascular dementia and even memory loss due to depression or older age.

The Respite Ministry was developed to provide a place of community for those living memory loss. Often times, when diagnosed, families become embarrassed and overwhelmed at the thought of going out in public. All of the Respite volunteers have been dementia trained and know how to provide the upmost care so that we may still help in making new memories and maintain memory wellness.

When diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, people often think a happy purposeful life cannot continue for their loved one; hope feels lost. Dr. John Zeisel, noted author of a non- pharmacological book, *I’m Still Here*, shows that people living with Alzheimer’s and other dementias are highly creative and emotionally intelligent. They can still live a joyful, purposeful life. Respite offers our friends a place where they can still participate in service projects and give of themselves to the community. Through creative engagement and new relationships, Respite can help maintain independence and improve quality of life. This approach helps family members stay in their home longer.