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Hello church family and friends near and far!

So there I was, hanging around with family at my brother's house on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. It's the first time we've all been together since my Dad's funeral around Thanksgiving last year. It was very good, and such a welcome return to what once was normal.

My brother is a very handy, crafty guy and a couple of years ago he built a pond with a big rock waterfall in his backyard. It's perfect for their three kids and their friends to splash around in. So while we adults were sitting around talking in the shade, that's what the kids were doing. The sound and the joy of it was so, so nice. And it occurs to me, in all our talk about and practice of the Christian life, there is not near enough about play.

Play is a spiritual practice, my friends.

John Wesley, the accidental founder of this thing we call United Methodism, was apparently something of an old grump. In his "Rules for Preachers", he counsels that a Christian should always be serious. "Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talk," he writes. Deeply faithful, committed to God and his calling, an incredible organizer and bold preacher, I think Wesley misses the boat a bit here. Playing, laughing, singing, walking, gardening, creating for its own sake...these are essential elements to a healthy life, and a joyful, hopeful spirit. Most of us don't do anywhere near enough of it.

According to an article at US Preventive Medicine, adults on average laugh 17 times a day compared to a child's 300! And yet, "studies from around the world have shown that an atmosphere of humor results in better patient care, less anesthesia time, less operating time, and shorter hospital stays." Laughter (and the playfulness that inspires it) reduces anxiety, improves your immune system, and even strengthens internal organs. And it doesn't have to be outright, uproarious laughter; any time spent doing something that makes you smile, for no practical purpose at all, improves mental, physical, and spiritual health.

There is an article at the end of this newsletter about a really inspiring ministry that started at First UMC in Montgomery, Alabama doing respite ministry for folks caring for people in memory care. The accompanying photo shows a bunch of folks in chairs and wheelchairs whacking balloons over a volleyball net with foam pool noodles, every one with wide, playful smiles on their faces. I'm thinking of many years directing and participating in VBS and youth camps, and how many of the best moments – the ones that created lasting bonds, happy memories, and a sense of belovedness that opened hearts to more serious Christian learning – involved playfulness and utter silliness.

We are called to pray, worship, study, and serve in order to grow as disciples. Friends, we need to play, too. Do something that makes you smile, every day, for that reason alone. Do it by yourself, or with friends. Do it as a way of loving yourself as God loves you. And don't you feel one second of guilt about it! Let yourself smile, laugh even, and know that God is laughing with you.

*Joyful, joyful we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love; hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away; giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!*

*Pastor Dawn*

# Worship Any and Everywhere!

## DAVID: Shepherd, Warrior, Poet, King



This Sunday we continue our study about David, the greatest king in Israel and – despite his flaws – a “man after God’s own heart.” The youngest son of an ordinary family of the tribe of Benjamin, last week we talked about how God directed Samuel to anoint David king. We’re told in 1 Samuel 16 that David’s heart was changed in that moment, and that God was with him from that point forward. But it would be a long time before he would actually take the throne as king. First, he would enter the service of King Saul as a court musician and his personal armor-bearer...all while going back and forth from the king’s court to his home in Bethlehem where he continued to care for the family’s flock of sheep. In this Sunday’s reading, David is still young, barely more than a boy, and he volunteers to meet Goliath on the field of battle.

It was so good to be in worship together last week, celebrating our freedom as Americans and our freedom in Christ! I pray that your week is good, whatever “good” looks like for you. Maybe it means quiet and peaceful, maybe it means busy and productive, maybe it means time laughing and enjoying the company of friends or family. Whatever it means for you, and even if this week is a struggle, I pray that God is powerfully present in it, and that you come to worship this week both thankful and yearning for time in worship with our Lord Jesus.

# News and Fun Stuff



## Vacation Bible School Coming Soon!

Let’s teach our kids about God, through Vacation Bible School! This year’s VBS them is “Discovery on Adventure Island”, and it’s all about receiving and BEING the Light of the World with Jesus Christ. Our time together will be filled with Bible stories, games, art and science projects, and more. **The dates are July 30-31, from 9am til noon each day.** Thank you to those who have agreed to be leaders and helpers, and thank you in advance to those we will call and invite to help! ☺ Stay tuned for sign ups in your email and in worship. Join us!

## Monday Bible Study Group on Summer Hiatus

Our Monday Bible study is officially on a summer break. We look forward to gathering back together in the fall for a new study: “Women of the Bible Speak,” by Shannon Bream.

## July Birthdays!

Mike Berney, 7/1  
♥Debi Kissick, 7/1  
Jim Wieboldt, 7/1  
Dustin Stritenberger, 7/2  
Hayden Brown, 7/5  
Barbara Evans, 7/8  
Jackie Warburton, 7/8  
♥Darline Hughes, 7/9  
Grant Mills, 7/9  
Shirley McDonald, 7/12  
Ariel Endacott, 7/13  
Faye Tewell, 7/13  
Darrell Dugan, 7/16  
Aaron Fraker, 7/16  
Dan Wolf, 7/16  
♥Kathy Albiston, 7/20  
Jaime Lawrence, 7/23  
Jerry Noonkester, 7/23  
Laura Ivey, 7/24  
♥Bill Hughes, 7/27  
Wilma Miers, 7/31

♥*We celebrate the lives and hold in prayer the families of these beloved friends who are celebrating in heaven with our Lord Jesus.*

## Men's Breakfast on Hiatus for the Month of July

See you bright and early for breakfast, prayer, and fellowship in August!

## No Adult Sunday School on July 4, but Going Strong All Summer

We are finishing up our study of the parables, and will start a new study on women in the Bible in mid-August. We meet after worship in the Wolf Center dining room. Join us!

## Mark Your Calendars! Church in the Park on August 29!

Join us for worship and a breakfast pot luck in Oats Park on Sunday, August 29 at 9:00am. Praise God, and bless the neighborhood with music, prayer, and scripture all at the same time. It's a ways off, but be sure to remember sunscreen, water, and a fold up chair. Let us know if you need a chair, and we will bring some from church. 😊

## Back-to-Church Ice Cream Social on Sunday, September 12!

Check out and join new classes and all kinds of groups, and celebrate being a family of faith. With ice cream and lotsa delicious toppings! We'll have healthy stuff too. Probably. Another thing to put on your calendar!

## Church Council Meeting THIS SUNDAY July 11 After Worship

Join us for all kinds of updates, and to share in the planning of our ministries! All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

## UMC AROUND THE WORLD

### Finding Unexpected Joy in Memory Care From an article at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org) by Crystal Caviness

Retired and looking for a way to serve, United Methodist John Bell wasn't sure he had what it takes to volunteer at his church's program for people living with memory loss. "I didn't know if I would be saddened by what I saw," the former educator recalls about the First United Methodist Church at Montgomery, Alabama, ministry. He signed up anyway, even though he left the first day unconvinced that Respite Ministry was the right fit for him. "But by the second time," Bell shares, "it became apparent that where you think there would be a great deal of sadness, there was joy, a great deal of joy."

Bell is one of dozens of volunteers at the core of Respite Ministry's success, a care program that started at FUMC and is being replicated throughout the United States at United Methodist churches, as well as within other faith communities. One of the reasons for the success, leaders believe, is the love that radiates throughout the program.

### The Second Commandment

Loving his neighbor is exactly how Larry Carter views his time at the program. "Love your God with all of your heart, but love your neighbor like yourself," says Carter, a regular Respite Ministry volunteer who spent 41 years

**“The King will  
reply, ‘Truly I tell  
you, whatever  
you did for one  
of the least of  
these brothers  
and sisters of  
mine, you did  
for me.’**

*Matthew 25:40*



**Balloon volleyball at  
FUMC Alabama's  
Respite Ministry**

in the Air Force before retiring. When he and his wife, a nurse, joined FUMC, Johnston quickly approached them to ask Carter's wife to volunteer. Bobbie Carter started volunteering seven years ago; Carter started six.

"I'm not seeing any boundaries on how you love your neighbor," Carter says, adding that being a part of Respite Ministry has made his life richer. "I can see the Lord at work in so many different ways," Carter declares. "Every volunteer there is a testimony to the Second Commandment. The experience is made it richer and more alive being around people that have that spirit."

"There is no certainty in knowing the participant understands or doesn't understand," Carter points out. "You never know what you're dealing with and pretty soon it doesn't matter because you just show love regardless. And that seems to work in all cases."

"If it's a job, it wouldn't be a fun job. But if it's a calling, then it's pure love. There's a difference there," says Carter.

### **Finding her community**

Priscilla Tubbs had no idea that taking her husband who was living with memory loss to a respite care program would lead her to her own faith community.

When Tubbs' husband, Allen, was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, his doctor suggested the former biologist and college educator get involved with pastimes to keep his brain active. Soon after, her husband began attending Respite Ministry. "It was the best thing that ever happened to him," Tubbs says. Allen Tubbs received a second diagnosis of frontal temporal dementia, which accelerated his memory loss. This past winter, Tubbs moved her husband to fulltime care.

"I had an empty feeling," Tubbs says of those first days. "I knew that I needed to do something, so I asked if I could volunteer (at Respite Ministry). She switched from caregiver who dropped off her husband at Respite Ministry for more than three years to one of the people staying and spending time with the participants once a week. "It has filled my heart in a way that you can't imagine," Tubbs says of her new role.

Two months ago, Tubbs made her relationship with FUMC official when she became a member. "I didn't go to church because of Respite," Tubbs clarifies. "I already belonged to Respite. I joined the church because I love the way this little respite group grew out of it. It is good. It has certainly brought me closer to the faith that I really wanted."

### **Friend serving friend**

Respite Ministry began in 2012 when FUMC's pastor at the time, the Rev. Dr. Lawson Bryan, recruited Daphne Johnston, a member at FUMC, to start the community outreach program. In the past 10 years, FUMC's program has inspired 18 similar respite ministries throughout the United States. At FUMC alone, 14 volunteers and two participants in 2012 have multiplied to 120 volunteers who serve 20 participants daily four times a week. Johnston, who serves as Respite Ministry's executive director, has written a guidebook for other churches to duplicate Respite Ministry, a much-needed offering in our church, Johnston believes.

***Are you inspired to be a part of a ministry like this one? Pray about it, and let Pastor Dawn know!***