



STEEPLE BELL

MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

LOVE IS MORE BUOYANT THAN FEAR



This Mother's Day, as we celebrate the handmade cards and the macaroni art traditions, it's worth looking back at one of the most harrowing—and hopeful—stories of motherhood ever recorded: the story of Jochebed, the mother of Moses. Her story isn't just an ancient Sunday School lesson; it is a masterclass in the radical courage that defines motherhood in every generation.

Jochebed lived in a time of institutionalized cruelty, where her child's very existence was deemed illegal by the state. While it would have been easy to succumb to despair, she chose a different path. She hid her son for three months, fueled by a deep-seated conviction that his life was worth the risk.

In 2026, the "Pharaohs" may look different, but the pressure on mothers remains immense. Whether it's shielding children from the toxic corners of the internet, navigating a complex educational landscape, or fighting for a child's mental health, the modern mother still operates on that same primal instinct: the audacity to protect what is precious.

Perhaps the most striking part of Jochebed's story isn't just how she held on, but how she eventually let go. When she could no longer hide Moses, she didn't leave him to fate; she built an ark. She used her resources, her wit, and her hands to create a vessel that would keep him afloat in a river designed to swallow him.

"When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch." (Exodus 2:3)

There is a profound parallel here for today's parents. We spend years "daubing the ark"—teaching values, building resilience, and providing a foundation of love. Eventually, every mother faces her own "Nile" moment: the day she must push that basket into the current and trust that the preparation was enough.

Jochebed's courage didn't just save a baby; it changed the course of history. Because she refused to let fear dictate her child's future, a liberator was born.

To the mothers reading this: Your daily acts of bravery—the difficult "absolutely not," the quiet prayers, the advocacy for your child's needs, and the strength it takes to let them grow—are your own version of that papyrus basket. This Mother's Day, we honor your courage. Like Jochebed, you are building arks in a shifting world, trusting that love is more buoyant than fear.

Happy Mother's Day to the architects of a hope-filled future.

Pastor Laura

BUCKETS FULL OF BLESSINGS

Congregation, you are amazing! Our children learned about mission work by collecting noisy bucket change throughout Lent to benefit the work of Heifer International. The total was \$1,570.04.

Our children chose to allocate the funds as follows:...

One Pig	\$120.00
One Sheep	\$120.00
One Goat	\$120.00
One Water Buffalo	\$250.00
Send a girl to school	\$275.00
Clean water x 2	\$600.00
Garden seeds	\$ 60.00
Flock of chicks	\$ 20.00
	\$1,565.00

LOVE IN EVERY NOTE: GOD'S LOVE, MOTHER'S LOVE



May 10, plan on joining us for worship for a meaningful service honoring the special women in our lives. Our service will be a remembrance of the contribution of women, and we will also be presenting the “Woman of the Year” award.

Combined with our celebration of Mother’s Day, we will also enjoy Music Sunday. Franklin First’s musical groups have been working diligently to prepare a message in song for this yearly tribute to the power of music for our souls. Each group will be participating, and it will be an uplifting experience. Invite friends and family to this special worship service.

REACHING FOR THE STARS: EXPLORING GOD'S LOVE AT VBS

We have exciting news! Kaylee Glossip is going to be heading up this summer’s Vacation Bible School using a three-day format. The program will run Wednesday July 29 through Friday the 31st from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. To celebrate the Artemis II Moon Mission, she has chosen a “Galaxy” curriculum.

Save the date and watch for more information. Let Kaylee know how you can help. We love volunteers.



SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST

A huge thank you to Jeff Sams for sharing his talents as he and Pastor Laura shared the Lenten two-person dialogues on the Seven Last Words of Christ. This series was meant to provide us with a consideration of Jesus’ mindset while on the cross, deepening our understanding of the events of Jesus’ passion. Thank you to Chris Womack Lorton and Brian Graves for their participation as well. If you missed some of these installments, they can still be viewed on Facebook.



BLESSED TO SERVE TOGETHER | VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION SUNDAY



VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION SUNDAY

SUNDAY,
MAY 31, 2026

10:45 AM WORSHIP

FRANKLIN FIRSTUMC

Join us for a special worship service as we celebrate and give thanks for the many gifts that make ministry possible at Franklin First. During worship, we will honor our volunteers, partners and reflect on how God calls each of us to serve for the common good.

All are welcome!

Invite friends, family, and anyone who serves—or is curious about serving—to be part of this joyful celebration.

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Think about a time you’ve witnessed a truly effective team event. What made it work? Likely, it was the unique contributions of everyone, their skills and talents blending harmoniously to achieve a common goal. Paul, in this passage, paints a similar picture of the Body of Christ. We are each given specific gifts, not for our own glory, but as the Spirit chooses for the “common good.”

Perhaps you possess the gift of wisdom, offering insightful guidance to those around you. Maybe you are good in the kitchen or making repairs, and love to work behind the scenes. You may be a natural encourager, helping others through rough times. The gifts God gives are as diverse as all of humanity.

It’s easy to look at someone else’s gift and feel inadequate or envious. We might think, “If only I could speak like them,” or “If only I had their talent for [fill in the blank].” But Paul reminds us that all these gifts, in their unique forms, originate from the same Spirit and serve the same Lord. Each gift is valuable, each role essential.

The key lies in recognizing and embracing the gifts we have been given and using them in service. It’s not about wishing for a different gift, but about faithfully stewarding the one entrusted to us. When we operate in our areas of giftedness, empowered by the Spirit, we become vital parts of the Lord’s work in the world. Our individual contributions, when offered in love and unity, create a powerful force for good.

Franklin First is a “modest but mighty” church in the Lord’s service. We partner with one another and those beyond our fellowship to bless others in God’s name. We could not do what we do without the dedicated efforts of each person. Let’s continue to step out in faith, knowing that in doing so, we are fulfilling our purpose and glorifying the One who has gifted us so generously.



EASTER SUNDAY: CELEBRATING RESURRECTION TOGETHER

Easter Sunday at Franklin First was a joyful and meaningful celebration of resurrection, hope, and community. Powerful music filled the sanctuary, and we are especially thankful for our choirs, whose leadership in worship helped proclaim the good news of Christ's victory over death.

The echoes of Lent & Holy Week were still with us, as the final dialogue from The Seven Last Words of Christ gave depth to our celebration—reminding us that Easter joy is born out of Christ's ultimate act of love and trust in God.

Our children added brightness and life to the morning, offering a visible reminder that resurrection hope continues to grow among us. Together—members, friends, and visitors—we shared in worship that reflected the heart of Easter: God's love alive and active in our midst.

We give thanks for all who helped make this holy morning possible and for a community that continues to live into the promise that new life is always unfolding.



FAITH SEEKERS: DIGGING DEEP INTO SCRIPTURE

The Faith Seekers Adult Bible Study group has been exploring the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, sparking deep conversations and meaningful “aha” moments along the way. With more Beatitudes still ahead, the group looks forward to continued growth in understanding Jesus’ teachings.

Next up is a deep dive into the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, and there is great anticipation for the insights this study will bring.

The group welcomes 12–15 participants each week and is led by Mike Smith, who shares that it is a blessing to guide such an insightful and engaged group. All are invited to join the group on Sunday mornings at 9:15 am.

FRANKLIN FIRST UMC RECEIVES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Franklin First United Methodist Church was honored with the Community Partnership Award by the Franklin City Schools Board of Education on April 26. The award celebrates Franklin First's long-standing partnership with Anthony Wayne & Gerke Elementary Schools, especially through the church's Tutoring Ministry and Snack Pack Ministry. Pastor Laura Saunders accepted the award on behalf of all of Franklin First volunteers from Gerke Principal Jim Rhoades, who praised the strength and impact of this collaboration.



For more than 11 years, Franklin First has provided weekend snack pack bags to students—serving an average of 125 students annually and distributing more than 41,000 Snack Packs over the life of the program. The church's 1:1 after-school tutoring ministry, now in its eighth year, has supported more than 60 students, with participants showing strong growth in reading. In addition, Franklin First has donated clothing to students in need and supported school staff with meals and appreciation events. We are deeply grateful for all who serve through these ministries and help extend Christ's love into our community.

ANGEL SHOP SUPPORTS TEENS DURING PROM SEASON

This spring, Franklin First United Methodist Church's Angel Shop served more than 50 local teens, helping them prepare for prom with free, gently used formal wear. Students were able to select dresses, suits, shoes, and accessories in a welcoming setting.

The Angel Shop is made possible through generous donations and the work of volunteers who create a space where each teen is treated with care and respect. The ministry operates at Franklin First UMC and opens seasonally for prom and homecoming on Sundays.

Donations are accepted year-round, helping ensure the Angel Shop can continue to serve students in future seasons. We are thankful to everyone who supports this ministry.



PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE



Want to help our church thrive for generations?

The Permanent Endowment Fund supports long-term ministry by investing your gift so it continues giving year after year.

A "Forever Gift"

- Your principal stays intact.
- The earnings support future ministry.
- Your generosity keeps working long after today.

Why It Matters

- Builds a legacy of faith
- Provides stability in every season
- Blesses future generations of families

Learn More

A one-time gift or estate designation can make a lasting impact.

Contact Pastor Laura Saunders to explore how you can leave a legacy of hope.

MAY CALENDAR

May 3, 2026

9:15 AM Faith Seekers Study Group
10:45 AM Children's Church Worship
10:45 AM Livestream of Worship on Facebook
10:45 AM Worship Service

May 6, 2026

1:30 PM Snack Pack Packing
6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal
7:30 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal

May 7, 2026

4:00 PM Community Dinner (St. Mary's K of C)

May 10, 2026

Music Sunday
Mother's Day
9:15 AM Faith Seekers Study Group
10:45 AM Livestream of Worship on Facebook
10:45 AM Worship Service

May 11, 2026

6:30 PM Women's Circle Meeting (Red Lobster)

May 14, 2026

4:00 PM Community Dinner (St. Mary's K of C)

May 17, 2026

Fellowship Sunday
9:15 AM Faith Seekers Study Group
10:45 AM Children's Church & Nursery for Worship
10:45 AM Livestream of Worship on Facebook
10:45 AM Worship Service
11:45 AM Fellowship

May 20, 2026

1:30 PM Snack Pack Packing
6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal
7:30 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal

May 21, 2026

4:00 PM Community Dinner (St. Mary's K of C)

May 24, 2026

Pentecost
9:15 AM Faith Seekers Study Group
10:45 AM Church & Nursery for Worship
10:45 AM Livestream of Worship on Facebook
10:45 AM Worship Service

May 25, 2026

10:00 AM **Memorial Day**
Jim Mears Memorial Day Parade

May 26, 2026

5:00 PM Community Dinner (Coffee Collab)

May 28, 2026

4:00 PM Community Dinner (St. Mary's K of C)

May 31, 2026

Volunteer Recognition Sunday
Graduation Sunday
9:15 AM Faith Seekers Study Group
10:45 AM Children's Church & Nursery for Worship
10:45 AM Livestream of Worship on Facebook
10:45 AM Worship Service

PENTECOST: HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

On Sunday, May 24, United Methodists celebrate Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the first followers of Jesus. Often called the birthday of the Church, Pentecost marks the moment



when the disciples were empowered to go beyond their fears, speak boldly, and share God's love with the world.

For United Methodists, Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit is still at work today—guiding, equipping, and sending the Church to live out Christ's mission. As we celebrate, we are invited to listen for where the Spirit is stirring among us and to faithfully follow God's call to love our neighbors and serve with hope.

EASY WAY TO SUPPORT FRANKLIN FIRST: CHECK YOUR KROGER RECEIPT!

Did you know your weekly grocery run can support the ministries of Franklin First—at no extra cost to you?

When you shop at Kroger, linking your account to our Community Rewards helps fund ministry all year long. It's free, takes just a minute, and if you're already enrolled, no action is needed—this is only for new sign-ups with our new church number.

How to enroll:

- Visit www.kroger.com
- Register or Sign In
- Community
- Community Rewards
- Enroll Now
- Enter RK151



Thank you for supporting Franklin First in this easy and meaningful way!

UNITED METHODISTS PARTNER WITH TINY HOMES FOR HUMANITY | CINCINNATI

The United Methodist Church's Social Principles affirm that every person—regardless of circumstance or social standing—deserves basic human rights, including food, shelter, and the opportunity to obtain safe, affordable housing. Yet the need remains great. In Cincinnati alone, the shortage of affordable housing exceeds 40,000 units, and more than 6,000 of our neighbors in Hamilton County are unhoused.



Tiny Homes for Humanity, founded by President Earl Crossland, member of Hyde Park Community UMC, and Board Chairman/Treasurer Larry Plum, aims to provide housing and a fresh start for

unhoused veterans, individuals, and families. In partnership with Gaines United Methodist Church in Madisonville, they plan to build a Tiny Home Veterans Village with 14 units on 3/4 of an acre behind the church.

“This project is our first tiny home development, but the design goal of this and future communities is to create a neighborhood feel, encourage social interaction, build camaraderie and develop personal responsibility,” Larry Plum shares.

Rev. Paula Stewart of Gaines UMC adds, “We hope that this project becomes the model for tiny home development throughout the city to help curtail the trend of unaffordable housing.”

Tiny Homes for Humanity has received a commitment of a large government grant, conditional upon raising \$760,000 in private funds by June 30. Each tiny home costs \$70,000 to build, with a total project cost of \$2,020,000, including site infrastructure, engineering and other costs. The units feature the comforts of home, including a small front porch, living area, kitchenette, dining area, full bathroom and bedroom area.

Half of the expected donation of \$70,000 has been raised from the GMD for the project. Will you consider being part of making this community a reality? Please send gifts to the district office, 7388 E. Kemper Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45249.

[Click here to read the full story](https://citylifestyle.com/articles/building-community-12) (<https://citylifestyle.com/articles/building-community-12>) recently published in Hyde Park Lifestyle magazine or click on the video above to learn more.

THE PANTRY — HELP PROVIDE INFANT CARE ESSENTIALS

Franklin First is collecting infant care items for The Pantry to support families with young children.

Items Needed: Diapers, wipes, infant bath items, diaper cream, lotion, formula & baby food (unopened), bottles, pacifiers, and other baby essentials.



Please place donations in the collection bins at church. Thank you for helping care for our youngest neighbors!

WELCOME TO THE NEXT GREAT MIAMI RIVER DISTRICT OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR!

The District Office is delighted to announce that Jaime Sparks will join the Great Miami River District staff starting May 4. Jaime is stepping into the role of District Office Administrator as we prepare for Nancy Newton's upcoming retirement at the end of June.



To ensure a smooth handoff, Jaime will work a part-time schedule of 20 hours per week throughout May and June before officially transitioning to full-time service on July 1.

A Heart for Ministry

Many of you may already recognize Jaime from her active service on the District Committee on Ministry. A lifelong United Methodist raised at Jacksonburg UMC in Middletown, Jaime's roots in our faith community run deep.

While her professional background began in Purchasing and Operations Management, she eventually followed a calling toward local church ministry. For over 12 years, she served as the Intentional Faith Development Coordinator at Jacksonburg, where she nurtured spiritual growth through:

- Children's ministries and Vacation Bible School
- Confirmation and mission experiences
- Supporting families and building community relationships

Getting to Know Jaime

Jaime grew up in Trenton, Ohio, and is passionate about helping people of all ages—especially children—understand their place in the life of the Church. She is married to Art, and they are the proud parents of their 15-year-old daughter, Alexis.

"I look forward to continuing to support the work of the district and partnering with the leaders who faithfully share in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ." — Jaime Sparks

Please join us in offering Jaime a warm "Great Miami River District" welcome as she begins this new chapter of ministry with us!

PRAYER FOR NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER | MAY 7TH

Gracious God, We give thanks for this nation and all who call it home. Grant wisdom to leaders, compassion to servants, and courage to seek justice and peace. Heal what is divided and guide us in love and truth. Amen.



MIRACLE SUNDAY: INVESTING IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH

On Sunday, May 17, United Methodists around the world will celebrate Miracle Sunday, a special offering that supports theological education for church leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.

While many clergy in the United States have access to advanced theological training, far fewer pastors elsewhere in the world do—not because of a lack of calling, but because of limited opportunity. Miracle Sunday helps close this gap by supporting a permanent endowment that will fund 500 scholarships every year, forever.

One such impact is seen in the story of Gabriella, a student from rural Zimbabwe who is now preparing for ministry after facing an uncertain future. Through theological education, leaders like Gabriella are being equipped to serve congregations with deep faith and great need.

Miracle Sunday reminds us that when leaders are formed, congregations grow stronger—and communities are transformed. On May 17, our prayers and generosity connect us to God's work around the world and invest in the future of the church.

SPECIAL DAYS!

BIRTHDAYS

MAY 01	JESSICA LUCAS
MAY 09	PAM TROUT
MAY 11	SUTTON BRANNON
MAY 11	JENNIFER CHILCUTT
MAY 12	HAYDEN CHAMBERLAIN
MAY 12	JILL DRAKE
MAY 13	BELLAMY DILLON
MAY 15	CHARLOTTE SUMMER
MAY 16	HIRAM FULLEN
MAY 17	MARIAH HYNES
MAY 19	NELL DAUGHERTY
MAY 20	ANDY KUNTZMAN
MAY 27	GREG CYPHERS
MAY 27	PAM BISHOP
MAY 29	SERENITY HILL
MAY 31	JOANN ACHTERMANN

ANNIVERSARIES

MAY 10	JASON & AMANDA LEFFEW
MAY 20	KAREN & PAUL ANDERSON
MAY 22	RICK & TAMI CHAMBERLAIN
MAY 22	CAROL & ORVAL SWENEY

WOMEN'S CIRCLE OFF-SITE GATHERING

Monday, May 11 | 6:30 PM
Red Lobster
8200 N Springboro Pike, Miamisburg, OH
Near the Dayton Mall



Join the women of the church for an evening of fellowship, faith, and food! We'll gather off-site at Red Lobster for conversation, connection, and a shared meal. Whether you're a longtime participant or brand new, you're invited.

Questions? Contact the church office or a Women's Circle member.

GIVING MADE SIMPLE: SUPPORTING OUR MINISTRY ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

Life can get busy, but your generosity can stay steady. With Franklin First's updated Online Giving platform, supporting the ministries you care about is easier than ever—anytime, anywhere.



Why Give Online?

- Quick & Convenient: Make one-time or recurring gifts in just seconds—no cash, checks, or Sunday-morning rush needed.
- Consistent Impact: Regular giving helps our ministries plan wisely and serve our community with confidence.
- Safe & Secure: Our trusted system protects your personal information and ensures every transaction is secure.

Your gifts make life-changing ministry possible. Ready to take the next step?

Start today: franklinfirstumc.org/giving-%26-member-resources
Thank you for your faithful generosity and for helping us share the love of Christ in powerful ways!

A CROPPIN' GOOD TIME SAVE THE DATE



Save the Date: The next A Croppin' Good Time will take place September 11–12. More details coming soon!

Franklin First United Methodist Church

2026 Lay Leadership Ministry

Church Council

Church Council Chair	Karen Anderson
Church Council Secretary	Cheryl Cyphers
Lay Leader	Cindy Kuntzman
Lay Member of Annual Conference	Tami Chamberlain
Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Financial Secretary	Theresa Fultz
Membership Secretary	Cheryl Cyphers
Church Historian	Robert Bowman
Pastor	Laura Saunders

Ministry Team Representatives

Staff-Parish	Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Finance & Endowment	Paul Anderson
Trustee Co-Chairs	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Worship	Monica Rhude
Technology	Joe Chamberlain
Committee on Lay Leadership	Laura Saunders
Christian Education Co-Chairs	Mike Smith, Kaylee Glossip
Missions & Outreach Co-Chairs	Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Hospitality & Events	Carol Runyan
Care Team	Lee Saunders
Welcoming Ministry	Dorothy Rayburg
Women's Circle	Monica Rhude
Member at Large	Amanda Leffew

Staff-Parish Relations Committee

Chair: Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
 Lay Leader: Cindy Kuntzman
 Terms expiring 2026
 Sue Fullen, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos, Pam Trout
 Terms expiring 2027
 Sally Fitzgerald, Cindy Kuntzman
 Terms expiring 2028
 LeeAnn Lee, Cheryl Cyphers, Joe Chamberlain

Trustees

Co-Chairs: Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
 Terms expiring 2026:
 Joe Chamberlain, Chris Womack Lorton
 Terms expiring 2027
 Jim Martin, Trisha Dicken, Jan Abell
 Terms expiring 2028
 Mike Runyan, Brian Graves, Jason Leffew

Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations)

Chair: Pastor Laura Saunders
 Lay Leader: Cindy Kuntzman
 Terms expiring 2026:
 Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson
 Terms expiring 2027:
 Barb Ogden, Charlotte Summer, Brian Graves
 Terms expiring 2028:
 Peggy Darragh-Jeromos, Pam Bishop, Kathy Martin

Finance Committee (By virtue of office.)

Chair: Paul Anderson
 Treasurer: Tami Chamberlain
 Financial Secretary: Theresa Fultz
 Church Council Chair: Karen Anderson
 Trustees Co-Chairs: (one vote) Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
 Staff Parish Chair: Peggy Darragh – Jeromos
 Lay Leader: Cindy Kuntzman
 Lay Member of Annual Conference: Tami Chamberlain
 Pastor: (non-voting member) Laura Saunder

Permanent Endowment Fund Committee

Chair of Finance Committee Paul Anderson (Chair)
 Church Treasurer Tami Chamberlain
 Chair of Board of Trustees Jim Martin
 Chair of Church Council Karen Anderson
 Lay Leader Cindy Kuntzman
 Member at Large (Term: 2025-2026) Jerry Truesdell
 Member at Large (Term: 2026-2027)
 Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
 Pastor (non-voting member) Laura Saunders

Worship Ministry Team

Chair: Monica Rhude
 Choir Director: Monica Rhude
 Bell Choir Director: Tami Chamberlain
 Altar Design: Pam Bishop, Shari Tutt, Carol Runyan
 Technology: Joe Chamberlain
 Lay Leader: Cindy Kuntzman
 Pastor: Laura Saunders

Mission & Outreach Team

Co-Chairs: Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
 Madelyn Lang, Karen Anderson, Tami Chamberlain,
 Sally Fitzgerald, Cindy Kuntzman

Technology Team

Chair: Joe Chamberlain
 Joe Chamberlain, Trisha Dicken, Andy Kuntzman, Tami Chamberlain, Rick Chamberlain, LeeAnn Lee

Christian Education Team

Co-Chairs: Adult: Mike Smith/Children's: Kaylee Glossip
 Jan Truesdell, Rachel Chamberlain, Madelyn Lang, Carol Runyan, Mike Smith, Kaylee Glossip

Care Team

Chair: Lee Saunders
 Lee Saunders, Dorothy Rayburg,
 Jan Truesdell, Judy Deskins



FRANKLIN FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Pastor Laura Saunders

Sunday Worship Service
10:45 am
Livestreaming on Facebook

Faith Seekers Bible Study
Sundays, 9:15 am

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 10 Music Sunday
Mother's Day

May 24 Pentecost

May 31 Volunteer Recognition Sunday
Graduation Sunday

June 21 Father's Day



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