



FRANKLIN FIRST UMC STEEPLE BELL NEWSLETTER

March 2025

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

I would like to introduce you to Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, the first African American female President of the United Methodist Council of Bishops. She also began serving as the Bishop of the Indiana Conference in September 2024, and prior to that served as Bishop of the East Ohio Conference. She was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan and was raised in Chicago, the daughter of a pastor. She grew up in the UMC and answered a call into ministry at the age of 13. She has served as pastor in several churches in the Northern Illinois Conference, has been a delegate at four General and Jurisdictional Conferences, served as a District Superintendent and been Dean of the Cabinet.



Bishop Malone is married to husband Derrick, and they are the parents of two daughters. She prioritizes family time and emphasizes the importance of finding balance – believing that nurturing her family strengthens her ministry. She enjoys reading, biking, bowling, movies, and traveling. She loves to ride motorcycles and has a motorcycle license.

Bishop Malone shares that her favorite verse in the Bible is Romans 8:28, which states, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Her favorite hymn is “Blessed Assurance.” One of her favorite heroes of the Bible is Esther, for her strength to lead with boldness and courage. Esther advocated justice for her people in a foreign land.

Rev. Malone holds a Master of Divinity from Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, and an Honorary Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary. She is a published author, has taught at the university level, and serves as the President of the General Conference on the Status and Role of Women. She serves on the Board of Trustees of Africa University and recently was honored with the unveiling of the Bishop Tracy S. Malone Hall of Residence for female students at Africa University.

The Bishop states, “I believe all my ministry and leadership experiences in the local church, in the general church and as a DS [and Bishop] have prepared me to lead in critical times like these. We live in a hurting and fractured world, and we are a hurting and fractured church. I desire to offer my leadership, experiences, passion and vision to expand the church’s witness in proclaiming the gospel and bringing hope, healing and justice in the church and in the world.”

Friends, let’s pray for Bishop Malone and other UMC leaders as our church moves forward in the coming decades.
Pastor Laura

Sources: Resource UMC, Council of Bishops, and UM News Source.

Holy Week

You are invited to observe Holy Week beginning April 13 with our Palm Sunday worship service at 10:45. We will be continuing our “Symbols of the Passion” series, looking at the deeper meanings of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the parade of palm branches, and Jesus’ actions in cleansing the Temple.

Maundy Thursday is April 17 and we will be observing Holy Communion. Symbols will include the basin and towel, the Passover meal, and the Garden of Gethsemane.

Good Friday is on April 18, and we will consider the cloak of darkness that covered the earth while Jesus hung on the cross and the curtain in the Temple that was torn in two at his death.

Our Easter worship will feature glorious music and a reflection on the empty tomb. Easter is the high point of the Christian year as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his triumph over death. Invite family and friends for a meaningful Easter observance.



2025 LENTEN SERMON SERIES
MARCH 9 APRIL 18

The Symbols of the PASSION



Palm Sunday Service
April 13th - 10:45 am

Maundy Thursday Service
April 17th - 7 pm

Good Friday Service
April 18th - 7 pm

Easter Sunday
April 20 - 10:45 am

Holy Week Services

2025 LENTEN SERMON SERIES
MARCH 9 APRIL 18



THE CROSS



30 PIECES OF SILVER



THE SANHEDRIN



PILATE'S JUDGMENT SEAT, THE ROMAN WHIP, PURPLE ROBE & CROWN OF THORNS



GOLGOTHA & THE TOMB



THE DONKEY & THE PALM BRANCHES & CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE



BASIN & TOWEL, PASSOVER MEAL, GETHSEMANE



DARKNESS & TEMPLE CURTAIN



THE EMPTY TOMB

Symbols of the Passion

Jeff Sams and Pastor Laura are once again offering a special Lenten series on the symbols of Christ's passion. Each week, we will look at the deeper meanings behind the items mentioned in Jesus' journey to the cross and the tomb. Presented in a two-person dialogue format, we will learn that each detail is included in the story because it represents a particular message about Jesus' sacrifice. The series begins on March 9 and runs through Easter on April 20.

Don't miss out! Visit our website for more information about Lent and Easter activities, service times, and other events: www.franklinfirstumc.org.

Let's walk this sacred path together
and deepen our understanding
of the Passion of Christ.

District Confirmation Gathering



Franklin First has been chosen to host the Great Miami River District's gathering of Confirmation classes and their adult leaders and mentors. On April 6 from 3:00 – 5:30, groups from area churches will join together to work on a mission project, art-

work, worship, a lesson on the church as a connectional system, communion, a meal, and a time with West Ohio Conference leaders and our District Superintendent Suzanne Allen.

Franklin First will be preparing a simple meal of macaroni and cheese, chicken fingers, salad, desserts and drinks. If you would be willing to help, please contact Pastor Laura.

Confirmation Sunday



Four of our youth have been meeting once per month throughout the school year preparing for their Confirmation during worship on April 27. This will be a special service that will celebrate each of these girls' personal profession of faith. As

members of Christ's Church, we take vows to support one another in maturing in our faith. Let's all make this a Sunday to remember! We will likely have special guests, so be prepared to welcome them in Franklin First style.

Save the Dates

MAY 11	SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY WORSHIP SERVICE. INVITE THOSE SPECIAL LADIES!
MAY 18	MUSIC SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE
JUNE 1	GRADUATION SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE
JUNE 8	PENTECOST – A CELEBRATION OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH
JUNE 15	FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATION. INVITE YOUR FAVORITE GUYS.

Ash Wednesday

March 5 is the start of Lent, and at 6:30 we will offer a short service of repentance and imposition of ashes. Choir Rehearsal will begin at 7:00.

Ash Wednesday IMPOSITION OF ASHES



"From dust you came and from dust you will return"

**March 5, 2025
6:30 PM**



Scouting Ministries

Were you a Boy or Girl Scout? How many people do you know who were? Adult volunteers who give of their time are working to give our kids solid footing to face their adult years.

On Sunday, March 9 during worship, we will be honoring our Scouts. They will help lead us during the service and we will have an opportunity to congratulate them on their accomplishments. We will also be recognizing the adults among us who give leadership to the many programs that benefit our young people. Invite a scout you know to come and be applauded.

Snack Pack Volunteers

It has been a real blessing to include Franklin High School National Honor Society volunteers for our February packing sessions. Our usual packing crew was smaller because of some winter vacation absences, and these students stepped up to fill the vacancies. Thank you!!!



Noisy Bucket Rings Again

Help our children during the season of Lent collect donations for Heifer International, an organization which provides animals to needy families to offer a hand up to impoverished communities. During Advent 2024, the kids collected \$839.09. Can we hit or exceed that goal once again? Save your change.



Croppin' Good Time

Franklin First's Women's Circle is once again hosting a Friday evening and Saturday cropping event. They welcome registered guests and provide brunch and a baked potato bar for Saturday dinner. The weekend is always a hit with our guests.



Birthday

March 02	Aubree Kelly
March 03	Ryan Hynes
March 04	Elliott Duff
March 06	Mike Runyan
March 07	Rick Chamberlain
March 11	Daran Bishop
March 12	Carol Hatfield
March 14	Don Chamberlain
March 14	John Lass
March 14	Barbara Ogdin
March 14	Pastor Laura Saunders
March 15	Rick Marksberry
March 15	Gib Woody
March 22	Oakland Roberts
March 26	Rachel Chamberlain
March 27	Noah Hinds
March 27	Easton Hinds
March 27	LeeAnn Lee
March 30	Carol Runyan
March 31	Kay Marksberry

Anniversary

March 09 Peggy Darragh-Jeromos &
Joe Jeromos

Ohio Great Miami River District & West Ohio Conference E-News

The Ohio Great Miami River District has a weekly publication called News and Notes. To subscribe, sign up at: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/zxhn199?source_id

The West Ohio Conference NewsNet newsletter is published twice a month and delivered to your email. Mission Mosaic is a conference quarterly publication highlighting conference mission activities. Subscribe to email newsletters at: <https://www.westohioumc.org/news>

Leave a Lasting Legacy

Want to make a lasting impact on our church community? By contributing to our Permanent Endowment Fund, you can ensure that your generosity continues to bless future generations. Your gift will be invested wisely to support our mission and offer hope to those in need. Join us in this meaningful endeavor and create a lasting legacy. Contact Pastor Laura if you want to learn more.



Help Us Support "The Pantry"

This quarter, the Missions Team is focusing on a vital need at "The Pantry": personal care items. These essentials—shampoo, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, and more—are often in short supply but are crucial for those The Pantry serves.

Why Your Donation Matters:

Your contributions of personal care items will significantly impact lives by complementing the food items already offered by The Pantry.

Drop off your donations at Franklin First UMC:

Every little bit counts! Thank you for your support.



March 2025 at Franklin First

Week of March 2nd

2-Mar	Angel Shop Open for Prom Season	12:30 pm- 2pm
5-Mar	Snack Pack Packing	1:30 PM
5-Mar	Ash Wednesday Service	6:30 PM
5-Mar	Lent Begins	
5-Mar	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 pm
7-Mar	Croppin' Good Time	6 pm - 11 pm
8-Mar	Croppin' Good Time	9 am - 8 pm

Week of March 9th

9-Mar	Scout Sunday/Daylight Savings Time Begins	
9-Mar	Faith Seekers Group	9:15 AM
9-Mar	Noisy Bucket Campaign Begins	
9-Mar	Angel Shop Open for Prom Season	12:30 pm- 2pm
9-Mar	Lenten Bible Study	5:30 PM
10-Mar	Women's Circle Meeting	6:30 PM
11-Mar	Missions Team Meeting	6:30 PM
12-Mar	Finance Committee	2:30 PM
12-Mar	Snack Pack Packing	3:00 PM
12-Mar	Choir Rehearsal	6:30 PM
12-Mar	Bells Rehearsal	7:30 PM

Week of March 16th

16-Mar	Faith Seekers Group	9:15 AM
16-Mar	Children's Choir	During Worship
16-Mar	Angel Shop Open for Prom Season	12:30 pm- 2pm
16-Mar	Confirmation Class	After Worship
16-Mar	Lenten Bible Study	5:30 PM
17-Mar	Church Council Meeting	6:30 PM
19-Mar	Snack Pack Packing; 1:30 pm	1:30 PM
19-Mar	Choir Rehearsal	6:30 PM
19-Mar	Bells Rehearsal	7:30 PM

Week of March 23rd

23-Mar	Faith Seekers Group	9:15 AM
23-Mar	Angel Shop Open for Prom Season	12:30 pm- 2pm
23-Mar	Lenten Bible Study	5:30 PM
26-Mar	Snack Pack Packing	1:30 PM
26-Mar	Choir Rehearsal	6:30 PM
26-Mar	Bells Rehearsal	7:30 PM

Week of March 30th

30-Mar	UMCOR SUNDAY	
30-Mar	Faith Seekers Group	9:15 AM
30-Mar	Angel Shop Open for Prom Season	12:30 pm- 2pm
30-Mar	Lenten Bible Study	5:30 PM
31-Mar	Franklin City Schools Spring Break Starts	

Give Franklin First a Review!

Take a moment to tell others what you like about Franklin First. Use the link below to give us a review on Google. The more positive reviews and interaction, the better placement we receive when individuals search for a church in Franklin.

[Click Here to leave a review!](#)



Kroger Community Rewards

Have you checked the bottom of your Kroger's Receipt? If it does not list our church as your designated Community Rewards Beneficiary, follow the instructions on the back and get signed up now! Please note our new church number! You do not need to change your current account; this is for new sign-ups.

Go to: www.krogers.com

New account users:

go to "Register"

Create Account

Or Sign-in

Go to: Community – Community Rewards

Click: Enroll now

Church #: RK151

The Important Practice of Decentering Yourself

by: Joseph Yoo

Pastor and author Francis Chan told a story about a parishioner who came up to him after worship and said, “I didn’t like today’s worship that much.”

His response? “Well, it’s a good thing we weren’t worshipping you today.”

Is this funny? Yes. Was his response appropriate? That depends on who you ask, but for me... also “yes.” And I think there is truth in his response.

Too many times, we make worship about us — what we like; what we prefer; what we want. And then we complain when it’s not what we prefer.

And as a church, we perpetuate the consumption of church. We sometimes cater to the complaints. We offer things that we think people would like in hopes that they will not only stick around, but keep coming back for more. And when we don’t check our mission, we end up becoming a preference-driven church rather than a purpose-driven church. We end up working on making sure people like our church and the things that we are doing rather than focusing on our call to love our neighbor (and our community).

What does worship accomplish?

For me, worship is, essentially, putting God back into the center of the universe and re-prioritizing my life so that God is first. Which is, admittedly, something that my life needs on a regular basis since I like to be in control. I like things to happen according to my plan; my timeline; my will. If I go unchecked, I start behaving like I’m the center of the universe; that I am in charge; that I am god — like the world will fall apart without me.

But worship breaks that line of thinking--that self-centering route of life. Worship reminds me that God is



God and I am not.

While there may be tension in acknowledging that God is in charge — there’s also tremendous freedom in that. In the big scheme of things, I am nothing but a speck of dust. The world existed long before me and the world will exist long after me. This re-centering that worship provides reminds me of who I am and whose I am.

How that re-centering is done, implemented or practiced, *that* can be preference-based. But does it matter *how* we worship as long as *God* is being worshipped? As long as we de-center ourselves from our universe?

I’d argue that worship doesn’t necessarily (always) have to take place within a church building. I’m often reminded how small I am and how great God is on walks with my family. I often feel a bigger presence that surrounds me when I’m skateboarding through the neighborhood. I’m reminded that I am not the Creator when I’m confronted with the majestic sunset that lights up the Texas skies.

Eucharist

Different churches call the holy meal by various names: Eucharist, Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion. While there are other names, these three are most commonly used in United Methodist Churches. Each name has its roots in the New Testament witness and the life of the early church. Some denominations describe this holy meal as a sacrament, while others call it an ordinance. As United Methodists, we understand Holy Communion to be a sacrament. Holy Communion (and baptism as well) is a means by which God encounters us, works in us, and sustains us in mercy and love

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The crazy thing is, we *can* (and often do) encounter God outside of the church building. The church does not (and never can) monopolize God's presence.

Is it all about God and me?

However, I don't believe worship is a solitary practice. Going the route of *just* God and myself will lead to an incomplete faith journey. Because, as I mentioned above, it's never about me. Secondly, it's not *just* about me and God.

It's always about God, you, *and* me.

How I love my neighbor directly relates to how I love God. And vice versa. So it is imperative that we engage in communal, corporate worship with *others*. When we gather together, it always reminds us that we (*all*) belong in the kin-dom of God. You are my kin. I am yours. We are bound by God's love for us and for love of one another.

Sure, we may wildly differ when it comes to our opinions; our world view; our ideology; our theology; how one should "do" church... whatever. But we are united by the love and grace of God that permeates our gathering.

We are *here*. Together. In God's name. And we celebrate that.

And we participate in rituals like the Eucharist to continuously and deeply reminded of the love God has for us and the call to love one another.

An Evangelical colleague once asked me how come we never have altar calls like he does in his church on a regular basis. I simply responded with, "Of course we have one. Every Sunday." Our "altar call" is the invitation to the Eucharist.

Week in and week out, I invite people to forward to Christ's table and to receive the holy sacrament of communion to be reminded — to *remember* — that we are *here*; that God is *here*; that all are welcomed; that all are celebrated; that all are loved. As Pope Francis once said, "Communion is not the grand prize for the perfect person, but for the hungry one. We're all hungry."

And as we celebrate the Eucharist together, we recognize that hunger in all of us; that everyone has a place at Christ's table because *we're all hungry*.

Gathering in God's name in worship and receiving communion always de-centers me and brings God back into the center of my life, where God rightfully belongs. I am reminded of the love God has for me and the invitation to embody that love to my neighbor.

Joseph Yoo is a West Coaster at heart contently living in Houston, Texas with his wife and son. He serves at Mosaic Church in Houston. Find more of his writing at josephyoo.com.

Taken from: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-important-practice-of-decentering-yourself>



Franklin First Online Giving

Online giving is a great choice for when you are unable to join us for Worship to continue to support the church. You can either set-up a recurring payment or give each time you visit the site.

Connect by using this link:

<https://franklinfirstumc.org/giving-%26-member-resources>

Franklin First United Methodist Church

2025 Lay Leadership Ministry

Making disciples... Building Christian community... Transforming lives!



Church Council:

Church Council Chair	Mike Smith
Church Council Secretary	
Lay Leader	Connie Bolinger
Lay Member of Annual Conference	Tami Chamberlain
Lay Member of Annual Conference Alternate	Kim Chewning
Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Membership Secretary	Cheryl Cyphers
Financial Secretary	Theresa Fultz
Church Historian	Robert Bowman
Pastor	Laura Saunders

Ministry Team Representatives:

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

Staff-Parish Relations Committee:

Chair: Peggy Darragh-Jeromos	Lay Leader: Connie Bolinger
Terms expiring 2025	Cheryl Cyphers, Mishelle Dicken
Terms expiring 2026	Sue Fullen, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos, Pam Trout
Terms expiring 2027:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson, Cindy Kuntzman

Trustees: Co-Chairs: Jim Martin, Mike Runyan

Terms expiring 2025:	Cody Chilcutt, Mike Runyan, Connie Bolinger
Terms expiring 2026:	Gary Ogden, Joe Chamberlain, Joe Wright
Terms expiring 2027:	Jan Abell, Jim Martin, Trisha Dicken

Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations):

Chair: Pastor Laura Saunders	Lay Leader: Connie Bolinger
Terms expiring 2025:	Kathy Martin, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Terms expiring 2026:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson
Terms expiring 2027:	Barb Ogden, Charlotte Summer, Brian Graves

Finance Committee: (By virtue of office.)

Chair	Paul Anderson
Treasurer:	Tami Chamberlain
Financial Secretary:	Theresa Fultz
Church Council Chair:	Mike Smith
Trustees Co-Chairs:	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Staff Parish Chair:	Peggy Darragh-Jeromos
Lay Leader:	Connie Bolinger
Lay Member of Annual Conference:	Tami Chamberlain
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Permanent Endowment Fund Committee

Chair of Finance Committee	Paul Anderson
Church Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Chair of Board of Trustees	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Chair of Church Council	Mike Smith
Lay Leader	Connie Bolinger
Member at Large (Term: 2024-25)	Ken Smith
Member at Large (Term: 2025-26)	Jerry Truesdell
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:	Connie Bolinger
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Mission & Outreach Team:

Co-Chairs: Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Madelyn Lang, Karen Anderson, Tami Chamberlain, Marna Rogers, Sally Fitzgerald,

Technology Team: Chair: Joe Chamberlain

Joe Chamberlain, Trisha Dicken, Andy Kuntzman, Tami Chamberlain, LeeAnn Lee, Paul Anderson, Rick Chamberlain

Christian Education Team:

Co-Chairs: Mike Smith (Adult) Rhonda Roberson (Children)
Jan Truesdell, Rachel Chamberlain, Madelyn Lang, Carol Runyan, Mike Smith, Rhonda Roberson

Care Team: Chair: Lee Saunders

Lee Saunders (phone contact); Charlotte Summer, Dorothy Rayburg, Jan Truesdell, Judy Deskins (visitation team)

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

MARCH 5	ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE, 6:30 PM
	LENT BEGINS
MARCH 7 & 8	A CROPPIN' GOOD TIME
MARCH 9	SCOUT SUNDAY
APRIL 13	PALM SUNDAY, 10:45 AM
APRIL 17	MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE, 7 PM
APRIL 18	GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE, 7 PM
APRIL 20	EASTER SUNDAY, 10:45 AM

Franklin First United Methodist Church

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

