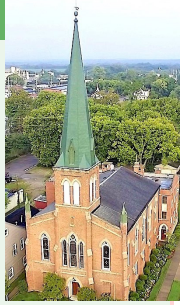




The Steeple Bell— May 2023

Franklin First United Methodist Church

“Under the Green Steeple”



Happy Mother’s Day!

Were you privileged to know your mothers and grandmothers? I was blessed to be raised in a four-generation family. We lived on farms and I grew up knowing that family was important.

The women in my family were not fancy. They were used to wearing their work clothes and providing for the family. In addition to the traditional duties of tilling acreage, we had very large gardens and small livestock animals. Everyone shared in the chores and it was a time of laughter and constant work.

What did you learn from the women who raised you? I learned a hard work ethic, the blessedness of being generous, and pragmatic faith. My people were not Bible thumpers, nor were they perfect; but they modeled Christian care and concern for those around them. I also learned that one did not need to have a big bank account to have a rich life. I’m thankful for the witness of these faithful ladies.

There are some incredible examples of mothers recorded in the Bible, and the story of Naomi and Ruth stand out among them. Ruth was a Moabite woman who accepted the God of the Israelites as her own and the Hebrew people as hers. She was married to Mahlon the son of Naomi, although Ruth’s husband dies early in the account – as does Naomi’s husband Elimelech. Naomi tried to convince her daughter-in-law to return to her own people after this tragedy, but Ruth declared her loyalty to Naomi.

Together, the women returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley season. Ruth and Naomi were desti-

tute, and Ruth went out to the fields to glean. There she met Boaz, a close relative of Elimelech. By Levite law, Boaz was obliged to marry Ruth to provide for her and carry on the family line. Thus, he was a “redeeming kinsman.” It was an ancient form of social security.

Boaz and Ruth married and gave birth to a son. Grandma Naomi named him Obed, and thus the family line continued. It is interesting to note that Obed’s son was named Jesse, who was the father of King David of Israel. A faithful Moabite woman was a great, great, great... grandmother of Jesus. Although we are not privileged to know the little details of their lives, we see the strong legacy they’ve left in the story of faith.

The moms of today are charged with the same duties that generations of moms have fulfilled. They love, teach, correct, share, pray, and work to raise well-balanced kids. Parenthood is challenging. But motherhood is the best job you’ll ever love.

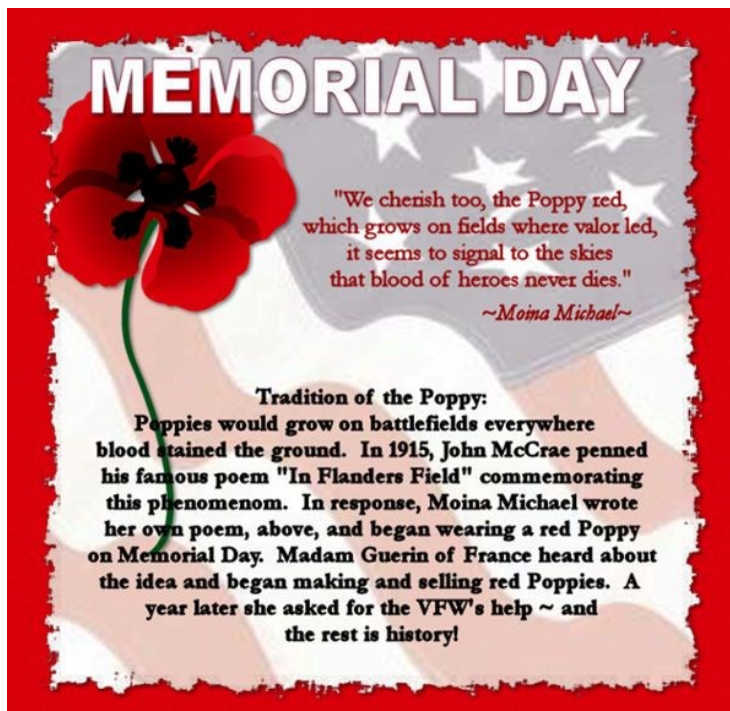
Pastor Laura



Memorial Day Remembrance

Memorial Day started as a remembrance of soldiers who died in the Civil War (1861-1865), but eventually became a time to honor those who died serving the United States in any war. Did you know that 620,000 Americans died in the Civil War? Compare that to the 644,000 who have died in all other U.S. wars combined. Staggering, isn't it?

We wear red poppies to remember the fallen. May God hasten the day when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4



Snack Packs

Our school year is coming to a close, and with it our snack pack program. We are finishing the year by providing 190 snack packs weekly to Anthony Wayne Elementary. This ministry has grown significantly and we will need God's provision to continue to have the food items necessary to fulfill this important service to students who face food scarcity on the weekends when school lunches are not available.

You are encouraged to continue your support over the summer, as we will resume this outreach again next fall. Thank you to those who pack the snack packs every week and thank you to those who have provided funding and/or food items this school year.



Anthony Wayne Staff Appreciation

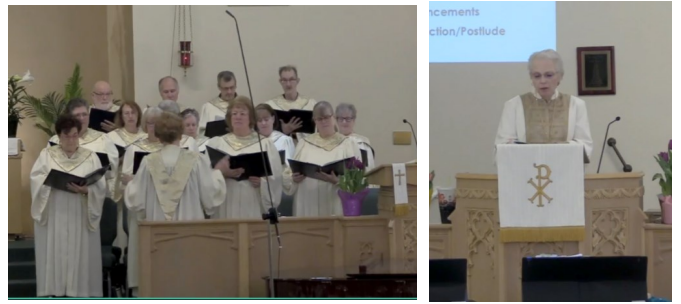
May is Teacher Appreciation Month. We would like to express our thanks to teachers and staff with homemade quick-bread the 3rd week of May. We are in need of 40 loaves of quick bread (9x4 or 8x4). If you can help bake sign up here <https://franklinfirstumc.breezechms.com/form/713c62>

Or reach out to Linda Smith, Karen Anderson, or the office. The bread is needed at the office by Tuesday, May 16th.



A Glorious Easter

Franklin First's Easter celebration is always resplendent with music, flowers, and a message of hope. Thanks to all who gave of their time and talents to make Easter worship special. Thanks again to Jeff Sams who lent his Thespian talents to our Lenten/Easter trial dialogues, as well as Kaylee Womack, Mishelle Dicken, and Brian Graves.



"Twists & Turns" Vacation Bible School

Psalm 25:4 "Make your plans known to me Lord, teach me your paths."

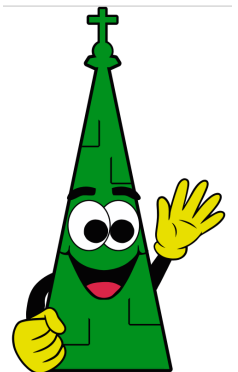
Mark your calendars for **July 18-20** for a fun VBS experience! Kids through 6th grade (a preschool class will be held for Franklin First kids only) will have a blast at the "Twists and Turns" games-themed program. Celebrating games of all kinds, kids will learn that Jesus guides them through all the twists and turns of life. They'll find that even when they mess up, it's never "game over." Classes will run from 6:00 – 8:00 each evening. Please let Director Chris Womack know if you will be able to help with VBS. The first

planning VBS meeting for is on **Thursday, May 11th at 6:30 pm** — all are invited to attend!

Children's Ministry

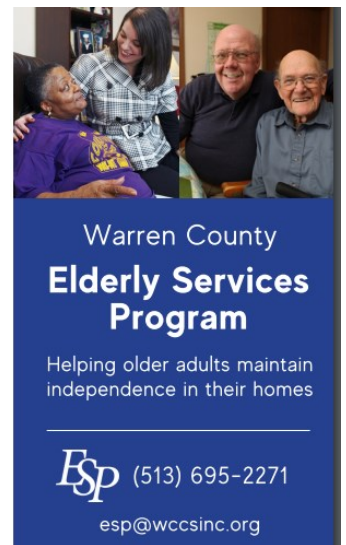
Our Children's Church will take a break over the summer months as families travel and engage in other activities. Our last class for the spring will be on May 14. We will resume Children's Church on August 13.

Nursery will continue throughout the summer, and we appreciate those who are willing to take a turn in caring for our kids. Please sign up on the electronic schedule that Theresa sends out or contact the office if you would like to sign up.



Services for Independent Living for 60 years & Older

The Elderly Services Program (ESP) helps older adults remain safe and independent in their own homes. It provides in-home care for eligible older adults who might otherwise be forced to leave their homes and enter a nursing facility. ESP expands care that may already be provided by family and friends. Eligibility for each service is determined by a care manager during a home visit. Services are available to Warren County residents age 60 and older who need help with certain activities of daily living (personal care, housekeeping, cooking, transportation, etc.). Eligibility for each service is determined by an ESP care manager during a home visit. There is no income qualification for this program. However, depending on your income, you may be required to help pay for the cost of your care through a co-payment.



- ◆ **Day Services:** Structured programs provide a secure, stimulating environment and respite for caregivers. Transportation may be available.
- ◆ **Care Management:** A professional care manager coordinates your services and monitors your care.
- ◆ **Consumer-directed Care:** Allows you to hire a friend or family member (other than a spouse) to provide home care services.
- ◆ **Electronic Monitoring System:** 24-hour, in-home monitoring systems that provide safety and/or medication alerts.
- ◆ **Environmental Services:** Pest control, major housecleaning and waste removal.
- ◆ **Home Care Assistance:** A trained aide helps with housekeeping, personal care and other daily activities, and provides respite for the primary caregiver.
- ◆ **Home Modifications and Repairs:** Minor repairs and safety upgrades such as ramps, grab bars and dead-bolt locks.
- ◆ **Independent Living Assistance:** Help with benefit applications and organizing personal and household records.
- ◆ **Meals and Nutritional Counseling:** Home delivered meals and help understanding your special dietary needs.
- ◆ **Medical Equipment:** Health- or safety-related equipment such as a bath bench, cane, walker or other equipment not covered by insurance.
- ◆ **Medical Transportation:** To routine medical appointments within Warren County and bordering counties. older adults who might otherwise be forced to leave their homes and enter a nursing facility. ESP expands care that may already be provided by family and friends.

Call (513) 695-2271 for program information and to discuss your individual needs. If ESP is right for you, a care manager will schedule an in-home visit. [Warren Co ESP Brochure \(help4seniors.org\)](http://Warren Co ESP Brochure (help4seniors.org))

Heifer International — Noisy Bucket Success!!

Congregation, you were very generous with your support of our children’s mission work during Lent. Their “noisy bucket” raised \$855 for Heifer International, and combined with last year’s VBS collection of \$145 – our kids had \$1,000 to spend to benefit needy families globally. They made the following choices:



\$275.00	send a girl to school
275.00	send a girl to school
60.00	buy seeds that grow
30.00	honey bees
50.00	share of a heifer
50.00	hope basket
20.00	flock of chicks
120.00	buy a sheep
<u>120.00</u>	buy a pig
\$1,000.00	



Cows were the first animals that Heifer provided to help people in need to become self-sufficient through farming.

May is Foster Care Awareness Month

Did you know that in the United States, more than 700 children are placed in foster care on a daily basis? Currently across the U.S., more than 463,000 kids are in foster care. In Ohio, this amounts to more than 15,000 children. The totals have steadily risen over recent years due to increases in substance abuse.

Foster parents protect children from potential harm and help them learn and use new skills. They help a child to feel good about themselves and build relationships and resilience in youngsters who have often been traumatized. Kids in foster care experience significant losses when they are taken from unsafe homes, as they lose family, friends, schools, and neighborhoods. Foster care can be a stabilizing and positive force in these young lives.

Every child deserves a safe and loving environment in which to grow. God bless and empower those who feel the call to fostering children.

MAY IS
NATIONAL
FOSTER
CARE
MONTH



National Day of Prayer—Thursday, May 4th

The website for National Day of Prayer makes the following observations and suggestions. Let's each of us be part of praying for our country.

"God is sovereign and nothing comes as a surprise to Him. Whether we face fluctuating economics, threats from abroad, unrest at home, or other troubling circumstances, our Heavenly Father is not caught unaware. Through prayer, we are able to tap into His wisdom, strength, protection, and peace. He is the One who gave us this promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14: 'If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.'"

How to pray for America:

Government: federal, state, local: for leaders, as well as judges in our courts, to act with wisdom and integrity.

Military: perseverance to endure hardship, wise leaders who inspire respect from those under their command, protection and support for the families they leave behind.

Media: that decision makers will realize they can make a profit by producing uplifting projects, that Christians in media find favor and be filled with creative ideas to share kingdom messages.

Business: for impartation of ideas and resources to open principled businesses, especially in areas that need economic boost, for Christian workers to display Christ-like humility and service to their co-workers.

Education: for a safe atmosphere conducive to learning, for excellence in educators, for equal opportunities for every student to achieve their full potential.

Church: to find a new zeal and commitment to the mission and purpose of Jesus Christ, for unity with and among churches that reveal God's love to the world, for integrity – that God's people look and act differently from the world.

Family: unity and love in individual families that reach out in hospitality toward others, to establish healthy relationships between family members.



— ★ ★ ★ —
NATIONAL DAY
OF
PRAYER





Wedding congratulations and blessings to Kaylee and Nate Glossip who were married on April 15th.



Women of the Year Nominations

The Women of the Year award is presented to someone who has been an extraordinary worker for her church. Someone who has gone above and beyond to help in anyway possible for the better of the church. Nominations letter should be submitted to the office or to Monica by May 7th.

Women's Circle News

Next Meeting:

Monday, May 8th, 6:30 pm the Warped Wing in Springboro



- ◆ Start decluttering and save the date for the upcoming Garage Sale on August 9-12th during the Franklin community garages.
- ◆ If you ordered a hanging basket, watch for pick up dates and times. We will post pick up times as soon as we have a delivery time.



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/member-resources-%26-giving>



FRANKLIN FIRST SUMMER LINE UP

The summer months can get very busy, so please use this opportunity to mark these special dates on your calendar:

- MAY 14 MOTHER'S DAY WORSHIP CELEBRATION
- MAY 16 ANTHONY WAYNE STAFF APPRECIATION BREAD BAKING DEADLINE
FINAL WEEK FOR SNACK PACKS
- MAY 21 MUSIC SUNDAY
DEEP DIVE DISCIPLESHIP CLASS; 5:00 PM
- MAY 27 FRANKLIN'S FARMER MARKET STARTS WEEKLY ON SATURDAY MORNINGS
- MAY 29 MEMORIAL DAY PARADE AT 10:00 AM
- JUNE 4 GRADUATION SUNDAY
DEEP DIVE DISCIPLESHIP CLASS; 5:00 PM
- JUNE 11 FINAL DEEP DIVE DISCIPLESHIP CLASS; 5:00 PM
- JUNE 18 FATHER'S DAY WORSHIP CELEBRATION
- JULY 4 INDEPENDENCE DAY
"WETTEST PARADE IN OHIO"; 10:00 AM
- JULY 16 WORSHIP IN THE PARK
FRANKLIN COMMUNITY PARK, LARGE SHELTER
- JULY 18-20 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL, 6:00 - 8:00 PM
- JULY 23 VBS PROGRAM IN WORSHIP
- AUGUST 1 NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
5:30 - 8:30 PM
- AUGUST 6 BACKPACK SUNDAY
- AUGUST 9-12 WOMEN'S CIRCLE
RUMMAGE SALE

Summer Sermon Series:

- June**
"Ready, Set, Go!"
- July**
"Dinner with Jesus"
- August**
"Meltdown"

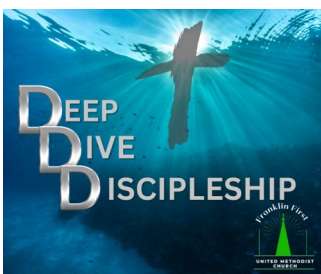


Permanent Endowment Fund

The Permanent Endowment Fund was established to provide a long-term source of income for Franklin First church. The intent is for the funds to be held in perpetuity, where only the income from the funds can be used. By giving to this fund through your will and estate planning, you can establish funding for future generations. This means that your grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren of the community will witness the love of God through the ministry of Franklin First. Contact Pastor Laura or Ken Smith for more information.

[Correct Address?]

Please be sure the office has the correct cell phone number, home phone number, address, etc. for your family.



Deep Dive Discipleship

Pastor Laura's Deep Dive Discipleship class continues to meet. We have a total of 24 people enrolled in the class. It's not too late to join in future classes. Just let Pastor Laura know you plan to attend.

- May 21** Having a servant's heart
- June 4** Deep discipleship insights
- June 11** What does hospitality look like in the Body of Christ?

Trustee Team Update

The first quarter of 2023 has been full of issues. Starting with the high winds in January, the parsonage had roof damage. A claim was filed with the insurance company who agreed to cover the damage. I'm happy to say, the roof was completed on April, 18, although we are still filing for payment for a few things not covered in the original claim.

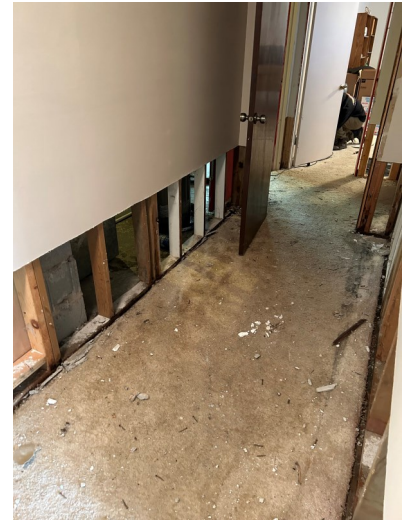
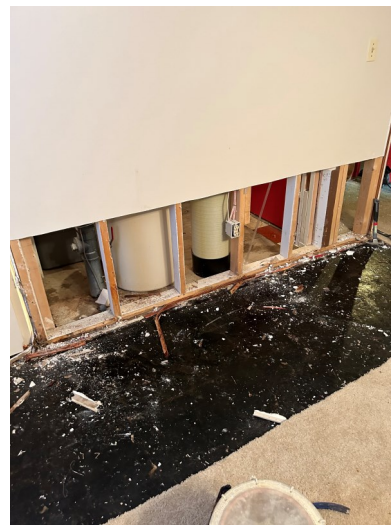
At the end of March, in another high wind event, one of the storm windows blew off the building.

Fortunately, no one was around when that occurred. Another claim was filed, and we are in the process of locating a company that will manufacture and install a custom window. The company that did the original windows is no longer in business.

Finally, the Monday before Easter, the

parsonage had a sewer back up. A plumber was located to open the drain, and the entire affected area was mitigated in three days. Yet a third claim was filed with insurance, a field adjuster has been out to survey the damage. We should be hearing soon, what the insurance will cover.

At the finance meeting on April 12, it was agreed to move forward on a quote to fix the roof leak above the altar. That work should start in approximately a month. Submitted by: Mike Runyan



Submit a Prayer Request Anytime

Use the link below to submit a Prayer Request anytime. The link will send an email directly to the Pastor and our prayer warriors will begin the prayers for your request.

franklin-firstumc.breezechms.com/form/862a54



Annual Conference

The 54th session of the West Ohio Annual Conference will be held in person June 1 – 3 at the **Dayton Convention Center**. Our theme is *Committed, Connected, Community* based on the scripture from Hebrews 10:23-25.



Missions Team Collections

Next Missions Meeting: Tuesday, May 23rd, 6:30 pm

Baby Care Products for The Pantry

The Missions Team is collecting personal care products such as toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc for The Pantry during the months of January, February, & March. Bring your contributions to the church on Sunday or drop them by the office during the week.



Personal Hygiene Product Collection for High School

The Franklin Junior and Senior High School is in need of personal hygiene products for their students. Products such as tampons, pads, deodorant, etc. for students not able to afford such products.

May Calendar of Events

Missions Team begins to collect baby care items

Teacher Appreciation Month

- 3 Snack Pack Packing; 1:30 pm
- 3 Communication Team; 2:15 pm
- 6 Franklin City Schools Prom
- 8 Women's Circle Meeting, 6:30 pm, Warped Wing
- 10 Snack Pack Packing; 1:30 pm
- 12-13 Flower Sale Distribution
- 14 Mother's Day
- 15 Church Council Meeting, 6:30 pm
- 17 Final Snack Pack Packing; 1:30 pm
- 21 Ascension Sunday & Music Sunday
- 21 Deep Dive Discipleship: Having A Servant's Heart
- 21 Missions Meeting, 6:30 pm
- 28 Pentecost
- 29 Memorial Day/Franklin Memorial Day Parade

Birthdays

May 01	Jessica Lucas
May 09	Pam Trout
May 11	Sutton Brannon
May 11	Jennifer Chilcutt
May 12	Hayden Chamberlain
May 13	Bellamy Dillon
May 15	Charlotte Summer
May 16	Hiram Fullen
May 17	Mariah Hynes
May 18	Nell Daugherty
May 20	Andy Kuntzman
May 27	Pam Bishop
May 27	Greg Cyphers
May 31	JoAnn Achtermann

Anniversaries

May 20	Karen & Paul Anderson
May 22	Rick & Tami Chamberlain
May 22	Carol & Orval Sweney

225th Anniversary of Methodism in Franklin – Part 5 (1898-1923)

As the fifth article in this series that commemorates the 225th anniversary of forming the congregation that became the Franklin First United Methodist Church (FFUMC), the period from 1898 through 1923 will be briefly described. Our congregation dates our founding on Monday August 14, 1798 when the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) missionary Rev. John Kobler (1768-1843) held the first religious service in the frontier hamlet of Franklin. For more than 50 years, irregular services were held by Methodist “circuit-rider” preachers. A full time minister was assigned to Franklin in 1853 and the current church building was constructed in 1860 and remains our Sanctuary until the present time.

The Franklin ME congregation actively continued into the 20th century in their updated building with the new stained glass windows and pipe organ installed during the early 1890s. In 1902 women took their place in the Official Board for the first time when Mrs. Anna Anderson and Mrs. Adah Thirkield joined.

This was also the era of large revival religious meetings and local Methodists joined with other Franklin churches in 1904 for united revival services, conducted by the Evangelist P. M. Fitzgerald of Texas. The current Franklin Pastor Creighton Wones (1856-1907) noted that “The services continued for about three weeks, and resulted in great good to all the churches engaged in the work. Twenty-six united with our church on probation.” In another series of revival services began in January 3, 1906 under the direction of Miss Josephine Nichols. These continued for three weeks with “most blessed results – fully 100 persons were either converted, reclaimed, or especially helped.”

Following the general Methodist practice at that time, pastors were usually appointed to a given church for just one or two years of service before moving. The first minister to spend over five years as the Franklin Methodist pastor was Rev. Creighton Wones who started in 1902 until he died suddenly on April 8th, 1907 at the age of forty-nine. From a copy of his memorial booklet retained in the FUMC archives, brief biography is given with these words of remembrance: “For the past five years he has been a Pastor among us, during that time he gained the love and respect of everyone in Franklin”.

Rev. Wones is interred in the Franklin Woodhill cemetery with his wife Bertha and one son Stanley. The only former minister’s name on our Church’s memorial stain glass windows is Rev. Wones. See if you can locate it the next time you are in church.



Fig.1. Rev. Creighton Wones photograph circa 1907 from his Memorial Service Program.

In September 1910, the Franklin congregation celebrated the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Church completely rebuilt in 1860. That year the Franklin Chronicle paper published an article written by Mrs. Adah Trimbull Thirkield (1855-1930) from her notes used during these services. Mrs. Thirkield summarized the history of the Franklin congregation from the first sermon given by the circuit rider John Kobler through the building of the three Methodist churches in Franklin, formation of the Sunday School and prayer classes, and naming some of the itinerant and assigned ministers. She wrote: “J. W. Thomas named as one of the trustees was the architect and builder. She said he was an honest builder and no poor material ever went into his work. And this building which still stands fifty years as his monument”. She also memorialized her father-in-law Eden B. Thirkield (1828-

(One of a regular series of reports on the people and events associated with the history and ministry of the Franklin First United Method Church. Robert Bowman, Historian)

1905). "I see him there in that corner. I hear his voice singing the dear old hymns he loved so well. I see him the room below in the prayer service; I hear him as he tells of his Heavenly Father's goodness and love. I see him the Sunday School where for more than a quarter of a century he stood before our children telling the 'old, old story of Jesus and His love'."



Fig. 2. Mrs. Adah T. Thirkield photo circa 1874.

In March 1913, a series of storms caused one of the greatest natural disasters in U.S. history including flooding along the Great Miami River. Over 360 people died in the Miami Valley alone and 8 perished in Franklin. While the west and south sides of Franklin were flooded, the downtown region that included the Methodist church and parsonage was spared. The floodwater rose to within a few feet of the parsonage located on the southeast corner of

Third and Front (now River) streets. Our church served as a temporary haven of shelter and food for those displaced by this devastating 1913 flood of the Great Miami River.



Fig. 3. This photo may have been taken from the upper story of the M.E. parsonage at corner of 3rd and Front streets. It looks across the flooded river at houses on Oxford Road in the Mackinaw District.

In 1918 the parsonage was wired for electricity, and a partition was cut joining the Sunday school room with the Primary. On some Sundays during the cold winter of 1917-1918 the Presbyterian Sunday School met in the Methodist rooms because of the fuel shortage during World War I.

Starting in circa 1920, women of the Franklin congregation gathered Wednesday mornings to spend the day making quilts that would continue for about 50 years. The group, known as the "Quilters", started to raise money for the church, Sunday school, and parsonage while providing a highly valued social outlet. This group provided many benefits to the church from the gifts they donated from the proceeds of their craftwork.

Rev. Wilbur P. Thirkield (1854-1936) had entered the Methodist ministry. He was the president of Howard University in Washington D. C from 1906 to 1912 when he was appointed a M.E. Bishop in 1912 until his retirement.

Mrs. Anna Stahl (1868-1947) was the church organist starting sometime after 1907 until at least the late 1930s. Her husband, Dr. Silas S. Stahl (1869-1942) was in the choir and local physician. Musician, teacher, composer, and publisher Harry C. Eldridge (1873-1946) became the choir director circa 1915 and would remain so for around 20 years.

POLL ABOUT JESUS RAISES QUESTIONS

Some questions for United Methodists:

- Do you think Christians are hypocritical and judgmental, or more generous and loving?
- Are you comfortable talking about Jesus with friends?
- Can you have a productive relationship with Jesus if you decide to make it a private matter?
- What were the most important activities of Jesus?
- Do you have any doubt that Jesus was a real, historical person?

A poll released by the Ipsos polling company, commissioned by the Episcopal Church, has some interesting results to these questions and many others.

"I think what (the poll) demonstrates is that we have not done a sufficient job of teaching people who Jesus is and why he's important," said the Rev. David F. Watson, professor of New Testament and academic dean at United Theological Seminary. "I think the absence of catechesis in a lot of the mainline traditions has now come back to haunt us."

The poll, released earlier this year, was conducted of a nationally representative sample of 3,119 Americans ages 18 and older, with a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. The findings regarding the questions above are:

- 26% of everyone polled said Christians are hypocritical and judgmental, 23% think they are self-righteous and 13% said they were arrogant. On the plus side, 47% said Christians were giving and 44% said they were loving.
- 67% of mainline Protestants feel comfortable talking about Jesus with friends, with 23% uncomfortable.
- 48% of mainline Protestants consider their relationship with Jesus "private," while 8% said it was "public" and 9% said they "have no relationship with Jesus."
- The most important thing Jesus did, according to mainline Protestants, was forgiving sins (35%), followed by teaching (26%), saving souls (14%), don't know (9%), advocating for the poor (6%), healing (4%), seeking justice (4%) and other (3%).
- 88% of mainline Protestants believe Jesus was a real person in history, leaving 10% who said they didn't know and 2% who answered "no."

In addition to Watson, United Methodist News sought insight from Althea Spencer Miller, assistant professor of New Testament at Drew University, and two United Methodist pastors, the Rev. Stephanie Dodge, pastor of Glendale United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Rev. Jeff Ridenour, pastor of La Rue, Mount Victory and Ridgeway United Methodist churches in Ohio.

Miller said the term "Christian" has become so indistinct that many who answered the poll's questions were likely

responding with a narrow perception of the full spectrum of Christianity.

"Complexity is our life, not singularity and simplicity," Miller said. "'(Christian' is) just such a flat term now, that is used to represent and misrepresent such a gloriously diverse group of people."

Miller said many don't think of people like her when they think of mainline Christians.

"Because I'm Black," she said. "I am an immigrant. I am gay. And I'm a seminary professor. ... I am resistant when I have to answer as if I belong to a homogenous group, when I actually don't."

Dodge said the doubts about the historical Jesus didn't surprise her.

"I think that doubt is a part of faith," she said. "I would actually argue healthy churches can allow people who are doubting or not believing to be a part of their community and have that support whether or not they believe the exact same thing."

The hesitancy to speak to friends about Jesus among mainline Protestants was not a surprise to Ridenour. Many people were brought up not to discuss politics, religion or sex in polite society, he observed.

"I think there's also the fear that, 'I don't know enough to talk to somebody,' or that 'They may ask me something I don't have an answer to,'" he said. "I think there's just a hesitancy to talk with even our friends about things that might divide us."

Miller, who said she doesn't "want to pronounce judgment on someone who thinks they need to be private about their Jesus," thinks that avoiding discussion about faith eventually leads to too narrow a conception of it.

"While it might be helpful for a while, after a time, it becomes the least helpful way of finding yourself in the varied world that God created," Miller said. "Jesus invites us to explore contacts with other people who don't think like ourselves. It's just fundamental."

The concept of a solely "private" relationship with Jesus struck Watson as a non-starter.

"Christ didn't just call a bunch of individuals and say, 'Have a personal relationship with me in your heart,'" Watson said. "He called together a community, and we call that community the church. To be a Christian properly is to participate in the life of the church."

The trend away from community may partially be the result of changes in the church in the 1950s, Ridenour said.



(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

"We had a lot more accountability prior to World War II, but I think when the church really grew in the 1950s, more and more of the classical lay leadership tasks were being assigned to paid staff."

America's ethos of the rugged individual also contradicts the concept of a community where people are accountable and supportive of one another, Watson said.

"I think we live according to a myth that we can ... do things on our own," he said. "I don't think that anybody accomplishes anything of value without the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit. We need one another, and we also need God to provide us direction and to provide us the gifts we need to carry out what is truly good in the world."

The results showing a notable percentage of people believe Christians are judgmental, hypocritical, self-righteous and arrogant alarmed Ridenour.

"We could say, 'Well hypocritical — you know that the church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.' But what's happening in these other folks that they're seeing that?"

Seeking justice and forgiveness of sins are interrelated, said Dodge and Watson.

"I think it's hard to seek justice without also asking for forgiveness for the ways that we have explicitly or implicitly perpetuated injustice in the world," Dodge said. "However, there is a great disconnect if we think we can ask for forgiveness and then turn around and ignore the great needs in our world."

Ridenour said that "you can't have personal holiness without social holiness, and you can't have social holiness without personal holiness."

"When we look at the life of Jesus, to separate out the social justice aspect, it takes away from the whole of the message," he said. "We can't be making disciples without transforming the world."

Although mainline Protestant denominations have been declining in membership for years, the response should not be to lower standards of beliefs or conduct, Watson said.

"I think that the church of the future is going to have to be a much more high-demand church than we've seen in years," he said. "For a long time, we had the tailwinds of cultural Christianity going behind us, and those are gone now."

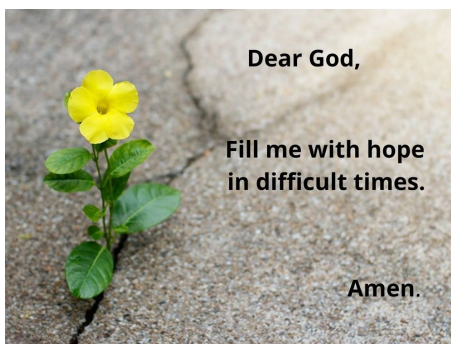
While many view Christianity from "a neutral or negative perspective, that doesn't mean they look at Jesus in that way," he said.

"Now that these cultural tailwinds are not going behind us anymore, we're going to have to get more serious about articulating the significance of our message and demonstrating the distinctiveness of our way of life.

"Otherwise, why would anyone come to church?"

Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Adapted from: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/poll-about-jesus-raises-questions>



Get Them Talking: Be Encouraged

Scripture

"In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world." [John 16:33](#), *Common English Bible*

Reflection

Sometimes it is fun to be scared. We might choose to watch a scary movie or go on an amusement park ride that frightens us. It's fun because even when we're the most scared, we know we are actually safe.

As Jesus anticipates his death, resurrection, and ascension, he prepares the disciples for life when he is no longer physically present with them (see [John 14-16](#)). In our verse for today, Jesus tells the disciples that sometimes life will be scary, but we can endure those times because we know Jesus is in charge. It's okay to feel afraid, sad or angry, but we can make it through difficult times in life because we know that Jesus is always with us.

Get them talking

- Do you like scary things? When is it fun to be frightened? When is it not fun?
- What are some difficult things in your life right now?
- How does knowing that Jesus is in charge—that he has "conquered the world"—fill you with hope?
- How can your family support one another as you endure challenges?

Prayer

Dear God, fill me with hope in difficult times. Amen.

Activity

Enjoy some appropriately scary entertainment together. Make sure each member of the family knows they will be safe in the end.



Get Them Talking: Discussion starters for families

Each month, we provide a scripture, reflection, prayer, activity and some starter questions to help families initiate conversations about faith issues. For more on the series visit: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/get-them-talking-discussion-starters-for-families>

Franklin First United Methodist Church

2023 Lay Leadership Ministry

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



Church Council:

Church Council Chair	Mike Smith
Church Council Secretary	Amber Ramsey
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference	Charlotte Summer
Lay Member of Annual Conference Alternate	Kim Chewning
Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Membership Secretary	Lee Ann Lee
Communications Coordinators	Carol & Mike Runyan
Church Historian	Robert Bowman
Pastor	Laura Saunders

Ministry Team Representatives:

Staff-Parish	Julie Abell
Finance	Paul Anderson
Endowment	Ken Smith
Trustee Chairs	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Worship	Monica Rhude
Technology	Joe Chamberlain
Committee on Lay Leadership	Laura Saunders
Christian Education	Charlotte Summer, Chris Womack
Missions & Outreach	Linda Smith, Karen Anderson
Care Team	Lee Saunders
Hospitality & Events	
Welcoming Ministry	Dorothy Rayburg
Scouting Coordinator	
Member At Large	Amber Ramsey

Staff-Parish Relations Committee: Chair: Julie Abell

(Lay Leader: Mike Smith)

Terms expiring 2023:	Julie Abell, Judy Parker, Sue Fullen
Terms expiring 2024:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson, Patti Noland
Terms expiring 2025:	Cheryl Cyphers, Mishelle Dicken

Trustees: Co-Chairs: Jim Martin, Mike Runyan

Terms expiring 2023:	Joe Chamberlain, Brian Graves
Terms expiring 2024:	Jan Abell, Jim Martin, Trisha Dicken
Terms expiring 2025:	Cody Chilcutt, Mike Runyan, Connie Bolinger

Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations):

Chair: Pastor Laura Saunders

Mike Smith, Lay Leader

Terms expiring 2023:	Sally Fitzgerald, Karen Anderson
Terms expiring 2024:	Ken Smith, Shirley Berold
Terms expiring 2025:	Kathy Martin, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos

Finance Committee: (By virtue of office.)

Chair	Paul Anderson
Treasurer:	Tami Chamberlain
Financial Secretary:	Julie Abell
Church Council Chair:	Mike Smith
Trustees Co-Chairs:	Jim Martin, Mike Runyan
Staff Parish Chair:	Julie Abell
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Lay Member of Annual Conference:	Charlotte Summer
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Permanent Endowment Fund Committee

Chair of Finance Committee	Paul Anderson
Church Treasurer	Tami Chamberlain
Chair of Board of Trustees	Jim Martin
Chair of Church Council	Mike Smith
Lay Leader	Mike Smith
Member at Large (Term: 2022 only)	Monica Rhude
Member at Large (Term: 2022-2023)	Ken Smith, Chair
Pastor (non-voting member)	Laura Saunders

Worship Ministry Team: Chair: Monica Rhude

Choir Director:	Monica Rhude
Bell Choir Director:	Tami Chamberlain
Altar Design:	Kay Marksberry, Pam Bishop, Shari Tutt
Technology:	Joe Chamberlain
Usher Organizer:	Judy Parker
Lay Leader:	Mike Smith
Pastor:	Laura Saunders

Mission & Outreach Team:

Co-Chairs: Linda Smith, Karen Anderson

Lisa Dillon, Madelyn Lang, Tracy Easter, Ken Smith, Karen Anderson, Tami Chamberlain, Marna Rogers, Judy Parker, Sally Fitzgerald, Amber Ramsey

Technology Team: Chair: Joe Chamberlain

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

Christian Education Team:

Co-Chairs: Charlotte Summer, Chris Womack

Jan Truesdell, Rachel Chamberlain, Madelyn Lang, Carol Runyan, Chris Womack, Charlotte Summer

Care Team: Chair: Lee Saunders

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

Communication Team: Mike & Carol Runyan, Linda & Mike Smith, Pastor Laura Saunders, Theresa Fultz

Upcoming Events

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

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| May 14 | Mother's Day |
| May 21 | Music Sunday |
| May 27 | Franklin Farmers Market Starts |
| June 4 | Graduation Sunday |
| June 18 | Father's Day |
| July 4 | Franklin's Wettest Parade in Ohio |
| July 16 | Worship in the Park |
| July 18-20 | Vacation Bible School |

STEEPLE BELL NEWSLETTER

Franklin First United Methodist Church

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