



*"I am the vine, you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;  
for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5*

**baldwin first**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

god bless  
**AMERICA**  
Newsletter • July 2026



### **As I see it.....**

We live in a world that often values grand achievements. We can easily overlook the simple ways we encounter Jesus each day, yet the Gospels show that Christ often revealed Himself in ordinary moments through conversations, acts of kindness, and humble service. In Matthew 10:40–42, Jesus taught that whatever we do for others, we do for Him. A kind word, a helping hand, or a listening ear may seem small, but these acts reflect His love and allow His presence to touch others through us.

Receiving Jesus also happens through simple daily practices. Welcoming guests to our home or to our church, a few moments of prayer, reading Scripture, expressing gratitude, or showing patience in difficult situations can draw us closer to Him. Though unnoticed by many, these small acts strengthen our faith and deepen our relationship with God.

Jesus Himself valued the seemingly insignificant. He welcomed children, comforted the hurting, and reached out to those whom others ignored. His example reminds us that true greatness is found in humble service.

When we choose to love, forgive, encourage, and serve, we open our hearts to Christ's presence. The Christian life is not only about extraordinary moments but also about faithfulness in everyday actions. In these small acts, we receive Jesus and share His love with the world.

As believers, we are invited to welcome Jesus not only in worship services and special occasions but also in the ordinary rhythms of life. Every act of love, every gesture of mercy, and every choice to reflect His character becomes an opportunity to receive Him anew in our lives. My challenge to you is:

- Do you welcome Jesus?
- Do you welcome God's people?
- Do you look for small ways to serve?

Have a happy 4th of July and a blessed summer!

Pastor Ezekiel



# Blessing of the Animals

All creatures, great and small, enjoyed an outdoor service and a blessing for pets on Sunday, June 14. Sullivan Square provided a beautiful setting to worship and give thanks and blessings for our pets.

Photo Credits: Donna Curran



LOVE.SERVE.DISCIPLE.

Since 1855, the mission of Baldwin First UMC is to love and serve God and our neighbors as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## ALL ARE WELCOME

Believing that all persons are created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ, the people of Baldwin First United Methodist Church understand that our neighbors include persons of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation and identity, economic or marital status, and physical and mental condition, and are welcome to participate in the life of our congregation.

## CONTACT US

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**Church Office**  
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**Office Hours**  
Tuesday - Thursday  
10 am - 2 pm

**Website**  
[baldwinfirst.org](http://baldwinfirst.org)

**Social Media**  
[@baldwinfirstumc](https://www.instagram.com/baldwinfirstumc)



## Cookout & Pool Party



All are welcome to dive in for the BFUMC Cookout and Pool Party on August 2!

The evening will begin with a cookout at the pool shelter followed by the pool party from 7-9 p.m.

Please remember to invite family and friends to this event!

## Lawn Mowers Needed!

In order to keep the church lawn maintained, mowers are needed! The church has a push mower in the shed that can be used.

A signup form is also in the narthex. Big thanks to those who have volunteered!



## Kenya Mission Trip

Pastor Ezekiel will be leaving on August 17 for his mission trip in Kenya. Through generous donations, Ezekiel will provide water purification kits for people in the village and to purchase uniforms for the Umoja Children's Home.

The Umoja Children's Home is established as a safe and loving place for orphaned or vulnerable children in Bomet County, Kenya. The home supports children in many ways, from giving them an education, healthcare, and emotional support to finding fun activities and social development so they can become their best selves. Their amazing team makes sure every child feels special and cared for.

Your prayers and financial support and prayers are appreciated!



## Sundaes on Sunday

Some days you should eat dessert first. Plan to do that on August 9<sup>th</sup> when we serve up ice cream sundaes and fellowship following service.

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

|                                                |          |
|------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Worship                                        | 9:30 am  |
| Sunday School                                  | 10:45 am |
| BLAST JH/HS Group                              |          |
| (BLAST does not meet during the summer months) |          |
| Adult Bible Studies                            | 10:45 am |
| Young Adult Bible Study                        | 10:45 am |

Childcare service for Pre-K and under is available in the lower level across from Fellowship Hall.

Children's bags can be borrowed during service. They may be found in the narthex.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July 12 - 14

Vacation Bible School  
Sunday: 3:00-5:30 p.m.  
Monday: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Tuesday: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

### July 16 & August 20

UWF Summer Book Study  
6:30 p.m.

### July 20

Leadership Team Meeting  
7:00 p.m.

### August 2

Cookout & Pool Party!  
6-7 p.m. - Cookout Pool Shelter  
7 - 9 p.m. - Pool Party

### August 9

Sundaes on Sunday  
After Service

# Children's Ministry News

## Vacation Bible School

It's almost time for VBS! It's not too late to register or volunteer to help!

### When:

Sunday, July 12, 3:00-5:30

Monday, July 13 6:00-8:00

Tuesday, July 14, 6:00-8:00



Here is the link to sign your kid(s) up! Kids in Preschool through 5th grade are welcome (entering 5th grade). If you have an older child that would like to sign up to be a "Helper," you can let me know what area they would like to help in. Helper choices for older kids and teens are: Games, Crafts/Science, helping walk a group of students from station to station (with an adult), Music helper.

We also need adult help in the following areas: Outdoor Games, Walkers (walking groups from station to station), and Science. Please see the signup form in the narthex.

Registration Link: <https://shorturl.at/gcd7w>

Even if your child can only make it for 1-2 days, we'd love to have them! Let me know if you have any questions!

-Jill Dodge, [JillMDodge@gmail.com](mailto:JillMDodge@gmail.com)

## Spread the Word!

Baldwin First is seeking two child care workers for the nursery. These are paid positions.

Applicants should be 16 years or older and able to work Sundays from 9:15 - 11:15 .m.

Interested applicants may send a resume to the church office.

A poster for Baldwin First UMC seeking child care workers. It features a blue header with 'WE'RE HIRING! CHILD CARE WORKERS' in yellow and white text. Below is 'BALDWIN FIRST UMC' in yellow. The text 'Seeking two loving, responsible people for our nursery!' is followed by three yellow boxes: 'Must be 16 or older', 'Sunday's 9:15 - 11:15 a.m', and '\$25 per hour (\$50)'. A blue box says 'FOR INFORMATION:' with contact info: '+785-594-6612', 'office@baldwinfirst.org', and '704 Eighth Street Baldwin City, KS'. There are images of children and a church logo.

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Jill Dodge, Marcia O'Neil,  
Amy Berg, Cynthia Perez  
Barbara Pressgrove, Nursery  
Angela Murry, BLAST Leader

## TECHNOLOGY TEAM

Dr. Frank Perez, Mixer/Editor  
Ryan Berg, Worship Technology

## WORSHIP TEAM

Pam Sharp  
Cynthia Perez  
Donna Curran  
Kathleen Thomas

## Marve' Ralston Retires

by David Burke, [GP Connect](#), June 24, 2026



In her final weeks on the job, Marve' Ralston has been packing up the Southeast Kansas District office, located in a Baldwin City storefront, for its move to Chanute.

With the move at the end of the month comes her retirement as administrative assistant, a role she has held since 2004 -- the longest of any current conference employee.

"She's detail-oriented, kind and caring. One of the best listeners ever," said Micki McCorkle, who is stepping down from the cabinet to become senior pastor at Wichita Calvary UMC. "She really helps people work on finding what they need and giving people what they want. She has lots and lots of patience."

"I never thought of this as just a career or job, but it has been my ministry," said Ralston, who was born in Lafayette, Ind., and raised in St. George, Kansas, where her father was a professor of agricultural engineering at Kansas State University. Ralston has worked for five district superintendents.

"No day has ever been the same. No year has been the same because there's new software, something changes. It makes the job challenging and piques my curiosity to learn some new skillset," she said. "It's never been boring."

Her offices have varied, including the basement of Baldwin City First, her home in Baldwin and the current downtown storefront, where she has been for two years.

Through Rev. David Watson's encouragement, she became a Certified Lay Minister. "I get to meet a lot of the people that I talk to and never would have met," she said. Although she is taking a few months off this year, last year she preached at more than 20 churches. She will return to her home church, Baldwin City First UMC, to preach in September.

Her retirement comes during a bittersweet chapter of her life, following the loss of Lonnie, her husband of 45 years, who died suddenly in August.

Ralston's retirement plans include a visit to "our place," Atlantic Beach along the Outer Banks of North Carolina, with her three adult children and six grandchildren, ages 1 to 23.

"I know it'll be cathartic and bring some closure," she said.

In celebration of her time, you are invited to participate in a card shower to share your words of appreciation and recognition of a job well done. Cards may be sent to: P.O. Box 327, Baldwin City, KS 66006-0327.

## Leadership Team

Jeanne Stanley, Chair  
Ryan Berg  
Susan Butell  
Mike Curran  
Christi Darnell  
Martha Harris  
Marcial O'Neil  
Frank Perez  
Glen Sharp  
Katherine Cook, Secretary  
Coleen Burgess, Finances

## CONTACT US

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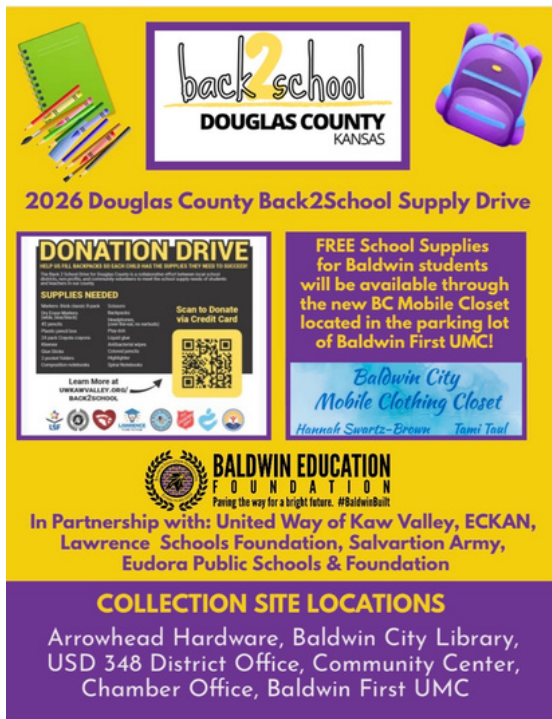


# Back to School Drive

The Lawrence Schools Foundation, in partnership with United Way of Kaw Valley (UWKV), ECKAN, Eudora Public Schools & Foundation, Baldwin City Public Schools & Education Foundation and the Salvation Army, invites your participation in the 2026 Douglas County Back2School Supply Drive. This collaboration gathers and organizes resources to help low-income students obtain required supplies for the 2026-27 school year. With your help, we aim to provide Douglas County children with the necessary tools so that they may succeed on the first day of school and beyond.

In previous years, our annual effort has produced backpacks filled with school supplies for approximately 1,800 students. This year's goal is to provide a complete supply kit for every Douglas County youth in need, as well as access to teachers for their classroom closets to replace and refresh throughout the year.

BEF is participating again this year with this county-wide effort for school supply donations. BFUMC will host a collection bin this year in addition to the other locations around town!



# Heritage Tractor Food Drive

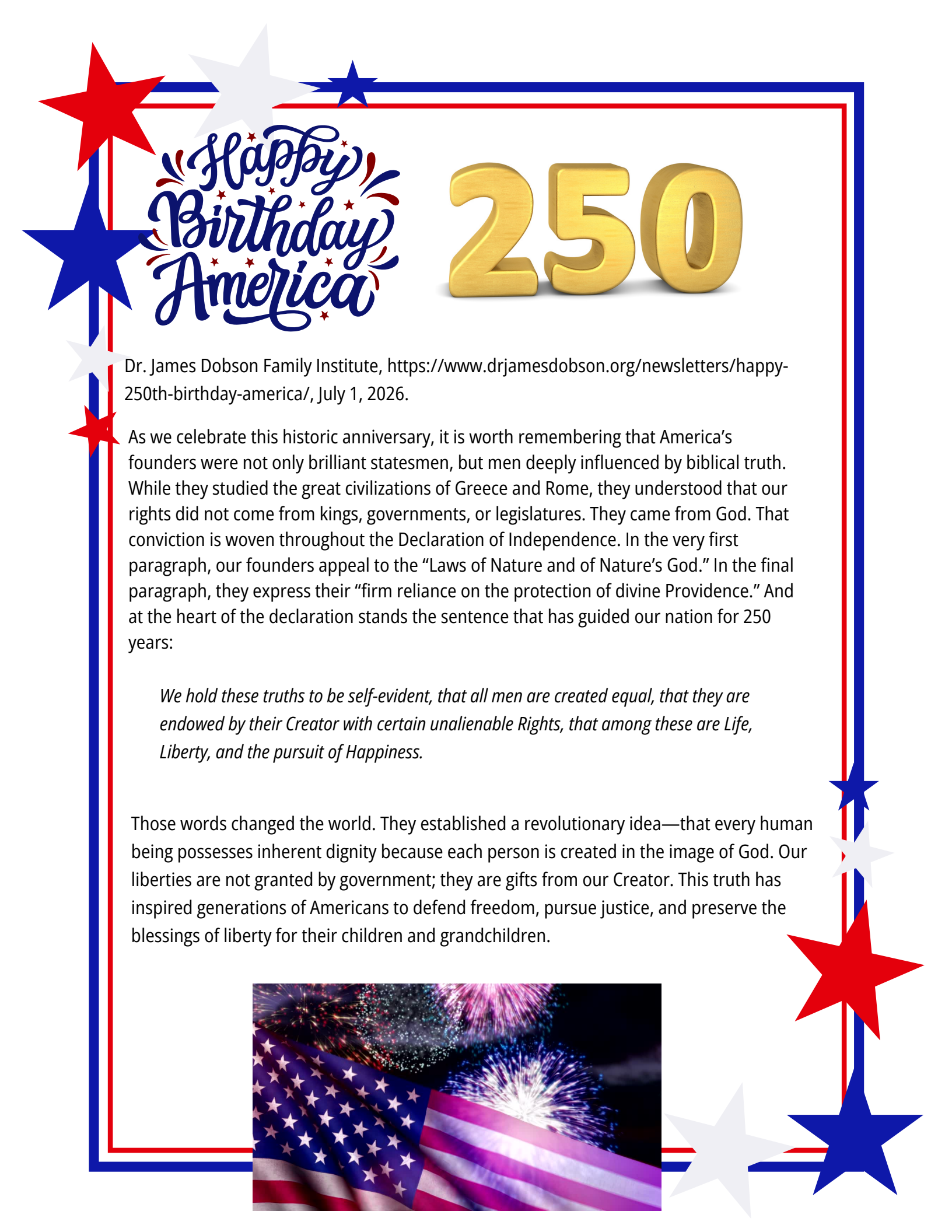
The Community Food Pantry was the recipient of the Heritage Tractor food drive held in June. 150 mostly kid friendly foods were delivered. Items needed for kids especially in the summer months are: granola bars, pop tarts, graham crackers, fruit and applesauce cups, spaghetti, meatballs, and ravioli with poptop lids.

## MISSIONS TEAM

- Susan Butell
- Nancy Arnold
- Marilee Beins
- John Beins
- Coleen Burgess
- Kelley Bethell-Smith
- Martha Harris
- Robin Schrack
- Corey Schrack

## FELLOWSHIP / HOSPITALITY

- Linda Ballinger
- Trish Batchelder, Co-Chair
- Coleen Burgess
- Randi Canterbury
- Samantha Cheek
- Sheryl Cleverley
- Katherine Cook, Co-Chair
- Christi Darnell
- Jill Dodge
- Jennifer Fulton
- Lori George
- Carolyn Groves
- Kay Kuhlmann
- Peggy McMillon
- Marcia O'Neil
- Jeanne Stanley
- Kathleen Thomas
- Janet Venable
- Tara Welch, Co-Chair
- Letha Williamson



# Happy Birthday America

# 250

Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, <https://www.drjamesdobson.org/newsletters/happy-250th-birthday-america/>, July 1, 2026.

As we celebrate this historic anniversary, it is worth remembering that America's founders were not only brilliant statesmen, but men deeply influenced by biblical truth. While they studied the great civilizations of Greece and Rome, they understood that our rights did not come from kings, governments, or legislatures. They came from God. That conviction is woven throughout the Declaration of Independence. In the very first paragraph, our founders appeal to the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." In the final paragraph, they express their "firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence." And at the heart of the declaration stands the sentence that has guided our nation for 250 years:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*

Those words changed the world. They established a revolutionary idea—that every human being possesses inherent dignity because each person is created in the image of God. Our liberties are not granted by government; they are gifts from our Creator. This truth has inspired generations of Americans to defend freedom, pursue justice, and preserve the blessings of liberty for their children and grandchildren.

