



The Ambassador

June 2022

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From the Pastor

This was only a few weeks ago. I had lost my voice. Some powerful virus or allergy or sinus infection gave me such a bad cough that I was down to a raspy whisper. Then something akin to pink eye replaced the whites of my eyes with a dark red. I looked and sounded hideous, so I decided not to preach. And yet I had already typed out a sermon. Rather than scramble to find another preacher I thought maybe this time someone could read it, and then I thought about Patty McGraw. I called her and she said yes immediately (what else could she say since I sounded like I was at death's door!) I emailed the completed sermon to her on Saturday afternoon. She was our preacher that following Sunday.

Friends, I know what it's like to have a sermon go over well, and then have people take the time to tell me it was especially meaningful. These are nice moments for people like me. But this sermon may have received more positive attention than any sermon I've ever written. And it hasn't been lost on me that I wasn't the one who actually put it out there into the world. I had to have help from a talented interpreter who faithfully rendered my exact words, but then supplied an additional and essential emotional element with her voice. The result was apparently something far more than what I'd put to paper the day before.

So ... yet another life lesson. They just keep coming, don't they?

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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

In Person & Online
Bible Studies
@ 10 am Wednesdays and
@ 6 pm Thursdays

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Whether we are aware of it or not, most of us grow up desiring individual recognition. We want our unique personal contribution recognized, we want at some point to be singled out. I know I feel this way, and I know many of you do as well – for some I can tell it is the primary driving force in their lives. But in the end I think we all start to get it - that it's not about any one of us. It's about all of us. And for us Christians, it's about how all of are part of God's plan. When one of us falls, another continues the race. This is simply the way life is, and accepting this fact of life requires grace – which is the word we use to describe God's love for us regardless of having done anything in particular to deserve it. I've been preaching grace for forty years now and I'm afraid I'm still not able to let grace really take over, and I will likely never be able to do that. But I'm getting better. The gravitational pull of my ego seems to be growing weaker. The awareness that I am only a small part of something immeasurably larger is growing stronger. I can't say it's always fun – but there is a freedom in this realization that can't be found anywhere else.

My last Sunday as your pastor is June 19th. I've already decided that part of my sermon will be dedicated to recounting the times in my ministry of which I am most proud. It just feels right to get it on record and I'd like my family to hear it. But in doing so I also hope to convey how much this has all been a collaborative effort. So many people! So many Patty McGraws, Donna Lasheys, Jerry Zartmans! The list is long and of course includes you folks. And most important, I will want to lift up the faith that Christ has been present throughout – in ways seen and unseen. This is how we are to see our life together.

I really hope you can be there.

Peace, John Wagner

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31)



Music and Worship Notes *by Mary Ellen Clinard*



As United Methodists, it is part of our church life that eventually Ministers arrive and leave with some regularity over the years. Each minister leaves a part of themselves and their vision of worship with us that reminds us of their ministry amongst us in the years that they served.

There are several “traditions” that we now do within worship that were created by both Rev. Folgoso and Rev. Wagner over the years. I have enjoyed reminiscing about these over the past few weeks and thought I would share a few of them with you:

Henry’s Children’s Moments Opener – In person, he has taught us all how to say “Good Morning” in Spanish as he used this greeting at the beginning of his time with the children each Sunday.

Henry’s COVID Children’s Moments – Full of color, visuals, and lively graphics, we loved watching those creative and well done videos each Sunday, and we learned a lot, too!

The Benediction “God Be With You” (UMH #672)– When looking for a sung benediction, the late Bob Boonstra mentioned to Rev. Wagner a song that was sung as a benediction at his daughter’s church. We gave it a try, and John soon decided the whole song was too long to hold hands with someone you weren’t related to, so we shortened it. The refrain was a later addition to the hymn anyway, so you could say we were just being “historically correct”! We have sung it that way ever since.

Balloons on Ascension Sunday – Rev. Wagner enjoys preaching with the Lectionary and Ascension Sunday is a special day in the church year when we celebrate Jesus’ returning to heaven after he appears to his disciples after the resurrection (Acts 1:1-11). On this Sunday, white helium balloons are passed out by the children and on Rev. Wagner’s cue, are released during the service and we watch them rise to the ceiling, symbolic of Jesus’ rise to heaven...

Scripture Readers – Rev. Wagner created a regular rotation of scripture readers in order to offer our congregation another way to participate in worship.

There are many more, of course, that could be mentioned, ways both of these ministers put their “stamp” on the lives and the history of FUMC. I hope that this sparks a memory or two of your own as we celebrate the new appointment of Henry to a new church and we prepare to wish Rev. Wagner the very best years in his retirement going forward in the future. We will miss them both!

A Note from our Associate Pastor

In these days of live streaming worship, we can watch all kinds of church services, both big and small. We might prefer the big churches with their prodigious technology. They can make it look very professional. Their worship teams look like famous rock bands, and their pastors look like Hollywood movie stars. We are amazed by the sight of their congregations. When we see this, we could think that they are very successful ministries. Then when we look at ours, it may seem like we are decreasing, and maybe, this could be discouraging to us.

However, the Bible teaches us something different. It says to us that numbers are not as important as proclaiming the gospel with all our heart.

When Jesus was among us many people followed him. We are told in John 6:2 that "*a great crowd of people followed him.*" According to Matthew and Mark there may have been as many as four or five thousand people (*Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 8:1-13*). But even when there was a big crowd Jesus was never too impressed because he knew their real intentions. He knew they were mostly looking for miracles and food (*John 6.26*), and not so much interested in him or his message. Jesus judged the crowd more by its heart than by its size. He never wanted to be simply popular or simply have a big ministry with many people. In the end he decided to train just twelve guys and prepare them to spread the Gospel after his resurrection. Jesus taught them how to believe, how to love, how to pray, and basically what ministry is all about, namely service, humility, and love, not numbers so much. Large numbers are good, but they aren't the center of the ministry.

So let's take away our eyes from the numbers every so often, and let's look upon the service and love for our neighbors as he taught us. Let's not get too discouraged if you see your church attendance in decline. Maybe it is time for God to work in our hearts. Maybe it's time to take a deep breath and just keep walking in the path of obedience.

After we die, I don't expect Jesus to say something like, "*Good job, the benches in your church were crowded, you did a great work there, you amaze me.*" Instead I hope and pray he will say this: "*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*"

Work spreading the gospel of love and hope, but don't do it to simply increase the numbers. Do it for the glory of God and the sake of the Gospel. Then Christ himself will bring growth to the church.

Daniel Cardenas

"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons."

Mark 13:13-15

Rev. Armentrout

The next senior pastor of our church is Rev. Kimberly “Kim” Armentrout. She was born in Dayton and grew up in Englewood. She attended the University of Evansville and then attended United Theological Seminary in Dayton where she earned her Master of Divinity degree. She has been an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church for 22 years and has served as pastor in Wilmington, Huber Heights and Englewood, Ohio. She has been at her last church, Englewood United Methodist Church for the past 13 years.

Among Rev. Armentrout's accomplishments has been starting a new and innovative United Methodist congregation that was co-sponsored by a local YMCA and dedicated to both spiritual and physical vitality. Also, for many years, Rev. Armentrout has been entrusted by her ministerial colleagues with one of the most difficult of tasks, namely, serving on the committee that responds when there has been clergy misconduct. Rev. Armentrout's greatest joy is her family. Her husband Darryl is also a United Methodist minister, serves as the director of chaplain services at Dayton Children's Hospital, and is an elected city commissioner in Dayton. They have a daughter, Maya, who will be starting her first year as a student at Stivers School for the Arts in Dayton, majoring in piano performance. As a family Kim, Darryl and Maya love spending time together playing games, enjoying Star Wars, and taking family adventures. Kim also enjoys reading and visiting our National Parks.

Rev. Armentrout's first Sunday is June 26. We hope to see you there.

First UMC Staff Parish Relations Committee, John Hoffman, Chair



SPECIAL MUSIC, SPECIAL GUESTS

On Pentecost Sunday, June 5th, we will share our worship with the Youth Choir from Bartlett United Methodist Church, from Bartlett, TN near Memphis. This Youth Choir ministry has toured annually for more than 20 years and after a two year Covid hiatus, we are excited to have them with us. They will be singing both by themselves and also with our Temple Choir during the service that Sunday. Don't miss this great opportunity to share worship with our larger United Methodist Church family and let's give them a warm FUMC welcome!

PSSST—IT'S NOT A SECRET!

Rev. John Wagner's retiring and his last Sunday, with us, will be June 19. There will be a luncheon reception that day, following our morning worship service. Main/Entrée dishes will be provided but we are asking the congregation for salads, sides, and desserts to round out the meal. So, get out your favorite carry-in recipes and share them with us that Sunday. Please keep in mind that we will be having guests from outside of our congregation (spoiler: Rev. Wagner hasn't always been "ours"!) when planning portions. In an effort to have a balance of items, we have divided up the categories by the first letter of your last name.

A-K - Side dishes

L-S - Salads

T-Z - Desserts

Thank you, in advance, for your help in making this a great celebration for a great life of ministry.

GREEN THUMB?

No? How about a brown thumb but like for the landscaping to look nice? Have we got an opportunity for you! Barb Balsmeyer and Brenda Byrd work diligently to make the landscaping around the church look great. They could use some help. If you'd like to volunteer to help, talk with Barb Balsmeyer or call the church office at 513-423-4629.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

First United Methodist Church parishioners, the members of the United Methodist Women want to take this opportunity to THANK YOU for all your participation in our "Mother's Day Pie" sale. This was very successful. Not only did you buy pies but several donations were made. Also the UMW would like to "Shout Out" to all the volunteers who helped get the pies organized and ready for distribution. Without your support we would not make our goal of raising the funds necessary for funding the in house and local missions of the UMW. Thank you again for your participation.

June 2022

June Birthdays

- 6 Carolyn Callis
- 7 Julie Urso
- 8 Larry Fillnow
- 10 Joni Turner
- 19 Leah Hogg
- 24 Ron Davis
- Anne Sander
- 25 Sharon Piper
- 26 Dede Day
- 27 Norm Harsh
- Judy Spaulding
- Jackson Vance
- 29 Tom Hazelbaker
- 30 Susan Duff

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Dates to Remember in July: July 1—First Friday Concert July 4—Independence Day/Office Closed		1 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	2 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	3 12:00 First Friday Concert WOC Annual Conference	4 WOC Annual Conference
	5 COMMUNION/ PENTECOST SUN- DAY 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Bartlett UMC Choir	6 8:30 Breakfast Club 2:00 Pantry	7 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	8 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	9 10:00 Investment Comm 6:00 Sonshine Bible	10 17 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE
12 PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	13 8:30 Breakfast Club 2:00 Pantry	14 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	15 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	16 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	17 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	18 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans Rodriguez Wedding
19 FATHERS DAY 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship NO Jr. Church Rev. Wagner's Last Sunday/Retirement	20 8:30 Breakfast Club 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:30 Council Mtg	21 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	22 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	23 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study	24 25	25
26 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship NO Jr. Church Rev. Armentrout's First Sunday	27 8:30 Breakfast Club 2:00 Pantry 6:30 Trustees Mtg	28 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	29 10:00 Son Reflec- tors Bible Study 3 & 7:00 Choir	30 6:00 Sonshine Bible Study		



2022 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

**Bringing timeless music to a new generation as only "The Brothers"
can do. A concert that is always high energy and expertly crafted.**

Friday, June 3

@ Noon

First UMC - Middletown

Free Admission

masks encouraged, not required

first church
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a united methodist community
120 South Broad Street
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