

What's It All About?



I've had a lot of questions regarding the process I've recently been through with the Board of Ordained Ministry. I thought I would take the opportunity to explain what has happened and the implications for me.

I am a Licensed Local Pastor (LLP). This means that I do not have a Master of Divinity degree. Instead, I completed the United Methodist requirement of Course of Study through a United Methodist Seminary. All my Course of Study work was completed at the West Virginia Extension School of the Methodist Theological School of Ohio. This process began in 2006 and was completed in 2013.

As a LLP, I am not ordained. I am granted, through my license, the authority to serve in the church(es) and community that I have been appointed to. For Local Pastors, an appointment is not guaranteed. This means that if the Bishop needed to put an ordained elder in a church there is a possibility that a local pastor could lose their appointment. Another restriction is that I can only perform the sacraments and perform weddings in the context of my appointment. I could not marry who were not a part of our congregation at a venue location.

The requirements to become an associate member of an annual conference is that a local pastor will have completed the Course of Study, reached the age of 40 (I'm long past that ☺), and served a cumulative total of 4 years of full-time service. Sixty credits of undergraduate work are also required. I had been considering for the last 6 or so years moving towards associate membership. I did not have the required credits for that process. From January 2022 through May of 2023, I completed the classes I needed to reach the minimum number of credits.

Once these requirements are met a local pastor applies to become an associate member and must be endorsed by the District Committee on Ministry (DCOM), have a Site Visit conducted by representatives of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and write responses to the theological questions found in the Book of Discipline. A sermon, original Bible study, and worship bulletin are submitted along with the answers to the questions and reviewed by 5 different teams on the Board of Ordained Ministry. Then each of these teams interviews each candidate using the set of questions assigned to them to review. Then the full board comes together to discuss each candidate's written work and individual interviews. At that point, the full board votes on whether or not to affirm that person's call to associate membership.

As many of you already know, I was affirmed by the Board of Ordained Ministry. At the clergy session during Annual Conference in June, there will be one final vote by the entire group of clergy present. Then late that day during a special service led by Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, I will be officially received as an Associate Member of the WPAUMC. From that point on, I will have guaranteed appointment just as an elder does. I will also be able to retain my clergy credentials in retirement which would not happen if I retired as a Local Pastor. I also will no longer need to go before the DCOM on a yearly basis to be recertified and continued as a local pastor.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for all your encouragement and support during the last 2 plus years as I have worked towards this goal. Throughout this process, God has opened doors for me and made a way for this to come to pass.

I'm so thankful that we are on this journey together as sisters and brothers in Christ in service to the Kingdom. May we continue to grow in our love for Christ and all of God's children.

With much love and appreciation,

Pastor Sara

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSVUE)



No flowers available for April & May

Bulletins Available

April
7 & 28

**Bulletins available as of March 25, 2024*



From the Ministry Assistant

Dr. Saundra McKee, CLM

Casual Church at Leechburg 1st UMC

Everyone is invited to Casual Church at the First United Methodist Church in Leechburg. Casual is an opportunity for people of all ages to gather informally in our fellowship hall for Christian music and singing, tasty food, short devotions, and a prayer. There's no charge or need to make a reservation. You don't need to dress up or bring a thing. We'll begin at 6:00 p.m. The program lasts around an hour. For more info call or text Sandy McKee at 724-525-2586. Our schedule is:

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 – The Moran Family Singers – Pizza and dessert

Wednesday, May 22, 2024 – Bruce Shaffer – Hoagies and dessert

Wednesday, June 26, 2024 – Patty and Hope Albert – Wraps and dessert

Wednesday, July 24, 2024 – Entertainment TBA - Hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, dessert

We look forward to seeing you there!!!

COMMUNITY P.A.T.H.

PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO HUNGER

How Can You Help A Child In Need?

Donate Money – Make checks to *Leechburg Food Bank*. Please note on check "Community P.A.T.H." Mail donations to: Leechburg Food Bank Treasurer, PO Box 127, Leechburg, PA 15656.

Sponsor a Child – If you'd like to sponsor a child, send a note with your check to above address. Please include name(s) & address(es) of the sponsor(s).

Each child's P.A.T.H. bag costs \$3/week. Each child gets 1 bag/week, 50 weeks/year. Cost is \$150/year, about \$12/month.



April Birthdays

Jean Camp	4/14
Linda Taylor	4/16
Cheryl Gidos	4/17
Kristy Helsel	4/19
M.J. Cline	4/21
Lynn Sibley	4/30

May Birthdays

Deb Loftus	5/2
Sean Wrona	5/8
Phyllis Lamison	5/18
Paul Wrona	5/20
Isabella Lloyd	5/29
Lori Klingensmith	5/31

April Anniversaries

Brian & Kristy Helsel	4/11
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If you would like to tell us when your birthday or anniversary is please let us know and we will put you in a future newsletter!!

Our Finances:

As we have in the past, we will continue to provide the most recent Treasurer's Report to keep you updated on church finances. If at any time you have a question relating to church funds, revenue, expenditures or designated giving, please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of the Finance Committee. Following is the report for the period ending February 29, 2024:

Beginning Balance	\$24,614.52
Deposits	\$13,800.40
Expenditures	-\$13,939.90
Balance	\$24,475.02
Designated Funds	-\$17,173.00
Working Balance	\$ 7,302.02

In January deposits totaled \$11,855.39 and expenditures totaled \$13,045.72, a deficit of \$1,190.33. As can be seen above, February expenditures exceeded deposits by \$139.50. Fortunately we came into 2024 with a positive working balance that allowed for covering the shortfalls. This is where our giving to the General Fund to maintain a positive working balance is so important. Thank you for your continued contributions to this fund.

Designated Funds:

You have probably noticed the total of "designated funds" shown above has been increasing recently. This is due to your generous donations to one or more specific mission or ministry supported by our church. We adhere to a strict policy of tracking and directing any and all donations "designated" for a specific fund or cause to that identified cause or fund. This includes donations to the various WPA Conference missions as well as more local missions and ministries. We categorize these funds into two groups: LFUMC designated programs/missions and obligations, which include, Outreach, Nurture, Witness, Casual Church, Campership, Choir, Bereavement and Connectional Apportionment. The second includes designated donations that are held for a time and then forwarded or "passed through" to an organization or person for a specific cause. These currently include the local Food Bank, Scholarship and Endowment Funds, Rise Against Hunger and Red Bird Mission Trip. You will notice the total designated funds increase as contributions are received and decrease as funds are disbursed. Just know that as you see the total decrease, those funds went to the mission, ministry or cause just as you directed or "designated".

Connectional Apportionment:

Our 2024 goal is as you know \$20,608.00. To meet this goal requires a monthly payment of \$1,717.33. We were able to meet this payment amount in January and February, actually exceeding the required payments by \$5.34, and submitted \$3,440.00. This leaves a balance of \$17,168.00 to be paid over the remaining ten months of 2024. With our continued giving, our faith and prayers we will meet this goal.

E-Giving:

We want to remind you that we offer electronic giving as an option for those times you cannot attend services in person. Giving electronically can be done anytime from anywhere by visiting our website LFUMC.org or (LFUMC251@comcast.net) and clicking on the Donation button. Credit and Debit cards and ACH payments are accepted. Visit our website and take a look when you have a chance.

Thank you very much for your support of the ministries and missions of our church. Your giving allows the work for God's Kingdom to continue in many ways.

Blessings,
Don Sheaffer
Stewardship & Finance

OUTREACH

Articles submitted by Lori Klingensmith, Chairperson

Feeding Our Neighbors

We will be packing bags on Sunday, April 7th after the luncheon. Sandwich delivery will be on April 9th. In May, there will be an Outreach Meeting on Monday, May 13th at 10 a.m. Before the meeting at 9:30 am, we will be packing lunch bags. If you are interested in helping, just show up, we would be happy to have you!

Mission Outreach

There will be no Outreach Meeting in April. The next Outreach Meeting is on Monday, May 13th at 10 a.m. Crockpot ministry has restarted in March.

Choir practice on Mondays at 6:45 p.m.
April 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29
May 6, 13, and 20



Caring Crockpot Ministry

April 10, 17 & 24 from 2:45 PM-4:30 PM

May 1, 8, & 15 from 2:45 PM-4:30 PM

If you are interested in helping, please contact Lori.



**Become
Part of
Our
Church
Family**

New Member Class

If you, or anyone you know, are interested in joining the church please contact Pastor Sara or the church office.

Thank you!



Greensburg District Conference

April 21, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Holiday Park UMC

Worship Leader Schedule for April & May

Date	Name
*April 7, Second Sunday of Easter	Gloria Womer
April 14, Third Sunday of Easter	Jo Ellen Stewart
April 21, Fourth Sunday of Easter	Don Sheaffer
April 28, Fifth Sunday of Easter	Marilyn Oldfield
*May 5, Sixth Sunday of Easter	M.J. Cline
May 12, Seventh Sunday of Easter	Elaine Brenneman
May 19, Pentecost	Gloria Womer
May 26, Trinity Sunday/Peace with Justice	Jo Ellen Stewart

Greeter Schedule for April & May

Date	Names
*April 7, Second Sunday of Easter	Bob & Vange Stewart
April 14, Third Sunday of Easter	Gloria Womer, June Womer
April 21, Fourth Sunday of Easter	Alana Gipson, Dianne LeSueur
April 28, Fifth Sunday of Easter	Sandy Ashbaugh, Cathy Kepple
*May 5, Sixth Sunday of Easter	Becky Blankenship
May 12, Seventh Sunday of Easter	Don & Brentta Sheaffer
May 19, Pentecost	Bob & Vange Stewart
May 26, Trinity Sunday	Gloria Womer, June Womer



April 24, 2024
Polls open from 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.



Packing & Distribution Dates for April

Packing – Tuesday, April 30 – 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Distribution – Wednesday, May 1

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. & 6:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Packing & Distribution Dates for May

Packing – Tuesday, May 21 – 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Distribution – Wednesday, May 22

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. & 6:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Drivers needed, please contact Robin Patton at 412-977-8094.

Witness

To “witness” can be defined as having personal knowledge of something and giving testimony to it. This can be done in several ways which can include, to name a few; Sharing the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ, Sharing our Christian faith with our congregation and the community. Visitation, Public relations, Testimonial witness and Sharing our faith in word and action through daily living.

You may have heard our **Witness Committee** has received a few new members and has reorganized. The team has been meeting monthly and is pursuing several projects. You will be seeing and hearing more about those in the coming weeks but our initial focus has been on our Card Ministry. Many of you have contributed cards of all types, holiday cards, birthday cards, anniversary cards, thank you and thinking of you are among them. We thank you for your help in building a robust card inventory. The cards will be sent to our homebound members and others on special occasions, events or just to let them know we care about them. If at any time you would like to send a card to someone, just look through our inventory, it is available to all members and is currently housed in the fellowship hall.

Most projects planned will of course require funding. We have a few fundraising ideas under consideration for the future and one is currently underway. Deb Loftus has donated several Mary Kay products and made them available to anyone interested. You will see the display in the fellowship hall. A free will offering for any of the products will be appreciated and the proceeds will be put to work in our witnessing efforts.

There is a lot of enthusiasm and excitement in this group for the work we have planned to share our faith and the good news of God’s love for all. If you are interested in joining us or willing to help or have a question, please see either of us or any member of the committee.

Blessings to you,
Deb Loftus & Don Sheaffer
Witness Committee Co-Chairs



Mission Trip Tidbits: March/April

- RedBird Mission in Beverly Kentucky September 8-13th.
 - Check out the link to Redbirdky.org on the church website.
 - Stop and see the informational poster in the vestibule.
- There are 15 people signed up (5 spots remaining)
- Opportunities to support our trip...there are many ways to participate in a Mission Trip other than actually going:
 - Fundraiser Spaghetti Dinner on April 27th 4-6. Tickets available from members of the mission team.
 - Kitchen assist
 - Cash Drop fundraiser: ongoing March-August
 - Envelopes in the back of the church with dollar amounts 1-100 dollars. If you wish to donate to our trip, please take an envelope that matches your financial ability to donate. Fill the envelope and place in the offering plate or mail to the church.
 - Prayer partner with us. We are so appreciative of all the generosity and prayers that have seen us through thus far. If you wish to pray for the group or a specific person in the group, please see the mission board in the back of the sanctuary for a list of the names. Also, we will be asking for increased prayers for our departure and arrival days, and each day during the trip.

Please see Elaine Brenneman or Pastor Sara with questions!

SAVE THE DATES

April

Wednesday, April 6

Thursday, April 18

Sunday, April 21

Friday, April 26-Sunday, April 28

Saturday, April 27

Casual Church at 6:00 p.m.

Blood Drive from 2 – 6:30 p.m.

District Conference Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Lay Leader Classes

Red Bird Mission Calendar Dinner 4-6 pm

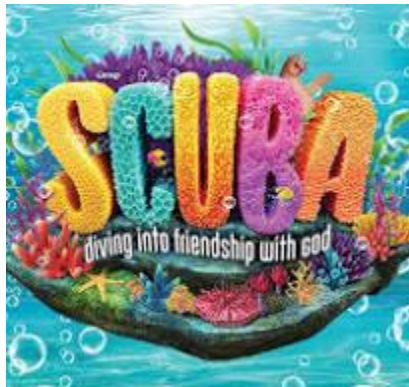
May

Saturday, May 11

Wednesday, May 22

Women's Banquet at 5:00 p.m.

Casual Church at 6:00 p.m.



June 17 - 21

Vacation Bible School from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

More information to follow!

?? ? Bible Quiz ? ?

We know the name of only one of the two disciples to whom the risen Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus. Who was he?

A. John
B. Paul of Tarsus
C. Joseph of Arimathea
D. Cleopas

Answer: D (See Luke 24:18.)

Nurture Committee News

Thank You!!

Souper Bowl Sunday – The committee would like to thank everyone for the food donations and monetary contributions for this event on Sunday, February 11th. A nice supply of groceries and \$94.00 in cash was collected for the local food bank. Thank you to all who contributed.

Another BIG Thank You to everyone who made and donated cookies and those who helped set up and serve refreshments after the Black Light Puppet Show on Saturday, March 2nd. The show was great and very well attended AND we had more than enough cookies! The help of everyone was very much appreciated.

So far this year!

In early February the committee put together and mailed three “Thinking of You” boxes to college students and a service member. Each box contained a few snacks, note pads, pens and other goodies. They were sent to Anna Cibik, Joseph Miller (Chris & Kay VanDervort’s grandson) and Olivia Blankenship (Becky Blankenship’s granddaughter).

In conjunction with the Outreach and Witness Committees, Nurture has begun sending Birthday and Anniversary cards to church members on their special days. A get-well card when needed will likely be in the mix too. So we do not miss anyone please be sure we have your special days on file. You can check with Pam in the office or a member of the committee.

Upcoming!!

We will be holding a soup and sandwich fundraiser immediately after worship service on Sunday, April 7th. This will be takeout only with a variety of soups and sandwiches available for a free will offering. Be sure to stop in the fellowship hall before heading home and take lunch with you.

Plans are being finalized for a **Women’s Banquet** to be held on Saturday, May 11th at 5:00 p.m. Work on the menu is underway and more details will follow but mark your calendar, we would love to see you there.

Other events are in the planning stage and we’ll let you know about those as the schedule is set. If you would like to join the Nurture Team or help in any way, please contact me or a member of the committee.

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” John 13:34

Brentta Sheaffer

Special Missionary Speakers

Sunday, April 21, 2024

We will welcome Jean Claude Masuka Maleka and Francine Ilunga Mpanga Mufak to share their experience as endorsed United Methodist Missionaries serving in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Jean Claude is married to Francine and they have two children, Berthe Mafefe Maleka, born in 2001, and Ephraim Masuka Maleka, born in 2004.

Jean Claude assigned to evangelism and church planting in Côte D'Ivoire. He is based in Abidjan. Francine is the coordinator for Young Girls Ministry in the Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference in West Africa.



During our worship service, this missionary couple will testify to their call and share their experiences. Following the worship service, we will have a simple lunch of pizza and salad and a time of conversation to learn more.

A sign up sheet has been placed in the vestibule. Please let us know if you are planning on attending the lunch so that we can order enough pizza and salad fixings.



Did you know that donated blood is a precious and renewable resource that dedicated donors like you can give regularly to help save patients' lives? Help Vitalant celebrate Earth Day by donating blood April 1-20, 2024, and you'll be entered for a chance to win one of 20 \$400 gift cards through Vitalant's Donor Rewards program. * Donors who are randomly selected as winners must first have an account and be opted into the Donor Rewards program to receive points to redeem for the gift card.
Details at vitalant.org/earthdaygiveaway | Schedule at vitalant.org

First United Methodist Church Leechburg Blood Drive

Thursday, April 18
2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Fellowship Hall
251 Main Street
Leechburg, PA 15656

To schedule an appointment to donate:

- Go to vitalant.org and search with Account Code **UG0110175** or by zip code.
- Call 1-877-25VITA.
- Or scan code for a list of all available times



APPOINTMENTS RECOMMENDED



CASUAL CHURCH

First United Methodist Church

251 Main Street, Leechburg



FREE & OPEN TO EVERYONE

Come as you are!

Christian Music, Light Meal,

Short Devotions, & Prayer



Wednesdays @ 6 P.M.

April 3rd

June 26th

May 22nd

July 24th



First United Methodist Church

251 Main Street

Leechburg, Pennsylvania 15656-1394



The Stepping Stone

“Growing, Loving & Serving in Christ’s Name.”

April/May 2024

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Prepared especially for...

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #58
Vandergrift, PA



April/May 2024

Livestreaming on YouTube

CCLI #1601529 - Streaming Plus License
#21214474