

# The Messenger

September 2023

**First Methodist Church of Zephyrhills**  
**38635 Fifth Avenue**  
**Zephyrhills, FL 33542**  
**813-782-5645**



August 23, 2023

Dear Members of First United Methodist Church of Zephyrhills,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The United Methodist Church (UMC) has been in debate over human sexuality and obedience to *The Book of Discipline* for several decades. In recent years the conflict reached a point where civil debate was replaced by hostile protests and uncivil dialogue. The denomination is at a place where in order to have peace, we must have a “Paul and Barnabas moment” (Acts 15:36-41), with churches serving the Lord on separate paths for the sake of the mission. Then Methodists on both paths can cease with conflict and dedicate themselves to making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our church’s Administrative Council has been in prayerful discernment for several years about where God is leading our church. After multiple congregational meetings for information, prayer, and discernment, and after surveying our members on the issues at hand, we engaged in legal action with 105 other churches (later 71 other churches) in the spring of 2022 to negotiate a path out of the UMC and into the Global Methodist Church (GMC). This action was in response to the unreasonable cost and measures levied by conference leadership. At the time, this was the most prudent course of action we could take to stay faithful to Methodist theology and tradition since the UMC is clearly going in a different direction.

On April 18, 2023, the judge dismissed the case based on past legal precedents about church and state matters in Florida. Realizing that winning upon appeal was highly unlikely and knowing the deadline for disaffiliation through ¶ 2553 is rapidly approaching (December 31, 2023), our Administrative Council voted on April 26 to withdraw from the lawsuit and to instead disaffiliate from the UMC under ¶ 2553 in *The Book of Discipline*. In addition, the exit fees for our church, which allow us to keep our property and assets, are much smaller than were anticipated at this time last year.

All full members of First United Methodist Church of Zephyrhills are invited to a **Church Conference** vote on whether to reaffiliate from the UMC to the GMC on **Sunday, September 17 at 1:00pm** in our sanctuary. This Church Conference will be led by our district superintendent or a representative from the district office. We will vote to disaffiliate from the UMC or to remain in the UMC. Following that vote, we will take a second vote to reaffiliate with the GMC. To make it easier for members to remain after our worship services for this Church Conference, we are providing lunch in Cooper Hall 12:00-12:45pm (sandwiches, drinks, etc.) thanks to a few generous donors. You are invited to come eat lunch with your church family, then head to the sanctuary’s main doors (on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) to check in for the Church Conference before 1:00pm.

In order for members to prepare for the vote, let us clarify a few items:

**If we vote to disaffiliate from the UMC:**

Our exit fees payable to the Florida Conference will be \$102,768, which will allow us to retain all our assets and property. We also anticipate another \$20,000 of expenses for rebranding and marketing related to our reaffiliation from the UMC to the GMC. The bottom-line projected cost to our church is \$122,768. Our Moving Forward fund, set up last year for this purpose, now has approximately \$23,000.

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Letter, 8/23, Church Members

Our church leaders are trusting that God will provide the path forward financially, with your help. We ask that you prayerfully consider giving to the Moving Forward fund allowing us to exit the UMC without incurring any debt. Please contact church treasurer Peter Jordan, finance chair Julie Cotton, or pastor Steve Ezra to let one of them know how much you are willing to give toward the exit fees.

Whatever is left unfunded after donations and gifts will be paid for by a foundation or credit union loan. Both the Wesleyan Investment Foundation and the Florida United Methodist Foundation are offering competitive terms on loans for exiting churches. As part of the GMC, our annual apportionments will be reduced by approximately 50% compared to the UMC, and our property and liability insurance will see a reduction. Therefore, within five years most of the exit fees would be paid back via cost savings in these two areas.

If we vote to disaffiliate from the UMC, we will immediately seek an additional vote to approve affiliation with the GMC. Our Church would be renamed “First Methodist Church of Zephyrhills” and the UMC logos will be removed from our property and communications over the next few months. Pastor Steve plans to remain as the pastor of our congregation and will transfer his credentials to the GMC. No staffing changes are anticipated.

### **If we vote to NOT disaffiliate from the UMC:**

Our church will agree to prioritize the ongoing mission and ministry of the United Methodist Church as a continuing part of the denomination and will cease conversations about disaffiliation. This will end the matter and the church will submit to the current leadership of the United Methodist Church denominationally and in Florida. Pastor Steve will leave our church, transferring his credentials to the GMC, and the bishop will appoint a new pastor to First United Methodist Church of Zephyrhills.

### **Who can vote on September 17?**

Only those who are active and official members of the church may vote. *The Book of Discipline* does not allow affiliate members to vote. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact the church office to confirm your status. Voting must be done in person on that day; there will be no early, remote, or proxy voting.

You can observe the Church Conference if you are not a member, but we request you sit in the balcony.

### **Where can I gather more information?**

[www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-should-united-methodist-congregations-know-about-disaffiliation](http://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-should-united-methodist-congregations-know-about-disaffiliation)

[www.flumc.org/the-continuing-united-methodist-church](http://www.flumc.org/the-continuing-united-methodist-church)

[www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org)

<https://goodnewsmag.org/methodisms-great-divides-video-series/>

[www.peopleneedjesus.net](http://www.peopleneedjesus.net)

[www.juicyecumenism.com](http://www.juicyecumenism.com)

Please be in prayer for Methodists and Methodist churches everywhere. This is a significant decision for our church family; it's not an easy decision but it is necessary. If you need help or have additional questions, we will assist you any way that we can.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,

Virginia Gray, Administrative Council Chair

Bonnie Hazelett, Lay Leader

Rev. Dr. Steve Ezra, Senior Pastor





**Young at Heart!**  
**Seniors' Luncheon**  
**Thursday, September 21th, 11:30a.m.-1:00p.m.**  
**in Cooper Hall**

**Admission: Bring your favorite covered dish**  
**Guest speaker: Johanna Theel**

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## **Tops**

### **(Take Off Pounds Sensibly)**

**New schedule began Thursday, August 3rd.**  
**Now at a new time, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**  
**TOPS will meet in the Crusader's room.**  
**Please enter through the 6th avenue door,**  
**located close to the northeast corner of Cooper Hall.**

**Want to know more?**  
**Click on the link below to visit the TOPS website.**

**<https://www.tops.org/tops/TOPS/FindAMeeting.aspx>**



## Mission of the Month September

Our mission focus for September will be Agape Flights based out of Venice FL. Agape Flights delivers mail and supplies that are vital to sustain missionary families and their missions to Haiti, Bahamas, Dominican Republic and Cuba as regulations allow.

More than 20 million people live in the areas regularly reached by Agape Flights. In 2022 they served 300 mission partners with 63 flights and 100 tons of cargo, mail and emergency supplies. They have been serving the Caribbean for 42 years.

Agape Flights' mission statement is "we listen, we respond, we deliver." Their vision is "a world where mission partners never lack resources to share the unconditional love of Christ." Their purpose statement is "2 Corinthians 9:12 - For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God."

Agape Flights ministries share the love of Christ through agriculture, athletics, clean water, community resources, education, evangelism, discipleship, home & church construction, medical & dental care, micro-enterprise opportunities, orphan care, vocational training, as well as expediting disaster/emergency relief and humanitarian aid.

Please remember to designate your donations to Agape Flights.  
Thank you for your support to this vital mission.





## Children's Church 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. services!

During our 9:30 a.m. contemporary worship services each Sunday, children age 6 through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be dismissed to Children's Church approximately midway through the worship service. There will be someone in the front right corner of the sanctuary to take the children to our newly renovated Church's Church room, across from our Nursery (through Cooper Hall).

Parents can pick them up after the worship service. Children - infant through 5-years-old will continue to be welcomed into our Nursery during the entire hour of worship. Questions? Wanna help with children's ministries? Contact our Interim Director of Children's Ministries Karen Ezra at [childrensdir@fumczhills.org](mailto:childrensdir@fumczhills.org).

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### Calling All Youth and Children Actors!

We are looking for youth and children who would be excited to take part in a small play to be performed at both services on December 10<sup>th</sup>. There are speaking and non-speaking parts. Of course, there will be Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, and many other roles to fill!

Come and join in this seasonal fun!

Please email Karen Ezra at [childrensdir@fumczhills.org](mailto:childrensdir@fumczhills.org) for more information.



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### Youth Ministry

**Every Sunday!**

**Come grow in Faith and Friendship and Fun!**

**4:00 to 5:30 p.m.**

**in Cooper Hall.**

**(Grade 6 thru 12)**

**Join us!**

MEMBERS FOR 2023 CHARGE CONFERENCE REMOVAL

The following are members who we had sent mail to, but the mail has been returned and we have been unable to locate a current address for them and the phones have apparently been disconnected. If they had an email address, an email has been sent requesting contact information and we have not received a reply.

These individuals were listed in our Charge Conference report for 2022 for removal from our membership rolls, unless contact can be made prior to our 2023 Charge Conference. If you have information about these members, please contact the Membership Committee (Bobbie Crosby or Judy Sibley) or the Church Office with a current phone number or accurate address. If they have passed away, we need an obituary or comparable piece of information, including the date of their death.

Charlotte (Sue) Austin	Megan Baisden	Sara Bowden
Kevin Hall	DeAnna LaHaye	Norah Modzvimbo
Sam Modzvimbo	Roger Morel	Martha Peavey
Jessica Peavey	Ralph Salley	Ginger Schaeffer
Nancy Souder	Scott Spurling	Hailey Taylor
Emmett White	Joyce White	Opal Wirth
Robert Wirth		

MEMBERS FOR 2024 CHARGE CONFERENCE REMOVAL

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Edna Brock	Ernst Brock	David Carlson
Shirley Carlson	Bethany Dykema	Alene Mattison
Marcus Price	Chris Shaver	





## **Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting**

**Are you having trouble staying away from a drink?**

**Join us on Fridays at 4:00 p.m.**

**In the Crusader's Room**

**Park on 6th Avenue**

**Between 10th & 11th Avenue**

**The only requirement for membership is  
A desire to stop drinking.**



## **Attention Winter Visitors**

If you are a winter visitor of our church and receive mail from us, we would appreciate your calling the church office (813) 782-5645 and letting us know when you return north for the summer and give us your summer mailing address as well as your expected date of return.

This is an attempt to keep you up-to-date as to things happening here, as well as to cut down on the amount of mail being returned.

Thank you,  
Membership Committee





## Church Conference to Vote on Reaffiliation September 17 at 1:00pm

All full members of First United Methodist Church of Zephyrhills are invited to a Church Conference on **Sunday, September 17 at 1:00pm** in our sanctuary to vote on whether to reaffiliate from the United Methodist Church to the Global Methodist Church.

This Church Conference will be led by our district superintendent or a representative from our conference or district. We will first vote on disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church. If the disaffiliation vote passes by 2/3 of all present and voting members, we will then vote on affiliating with the Global Methodist Church, which will require a simple majority vote (over 1/2 of all present and voting members). **Please bring a photo ID to confirm your membership.**

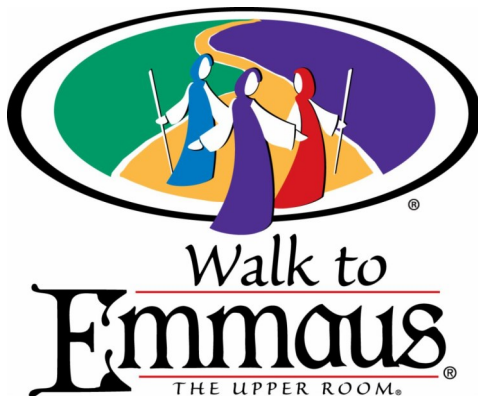
To make it easier for members to remain after our worship services for this Church Conference, we are providing lunch in Cooper Hall 12:00-12:45pm (sandwiches, drinks, etc.) thanks to a few generous donors. You are invited to eat lunch with your church family and then head to the sanctuary's main doors (on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) to check in for the Church Conference before 1:00pm.



## Church Campus and Facilities Maintenance Request Process

If you are participating in a ministry event or activity on campus and notice a campus or facilities problem that needs addressed, please let your ministry leader know. If it's not an emergency, the ministry leader will fill out a Work Order form (available [online](#) or in the church office) so the problem can be addressed. If it's an emergency problem (water leak, etc.) and it happens during regular church office hours of Mondays through Thursdays 9:00am – 2:00pm, the ministry leader will let the office staff know as soon as possible so they can address it. If the emergency problem happens outside of regular church office hours, all ministry leaders have a telephone number so they can reach the on-call Trustee to handle the emergency.

We appreciate your assistance in helping us stay on top of campus and facilities maintenance!



Emmaus Gathering  
September 9th  
St. John UMC  
1800 Cypress Blvd.  
Winter Haven, FL 33884  
Contact Rich Vogel for more information

## Wednesday Night Refuel is back!



**September 6th through November 8th  
10 weeks of family, faith and fellowship!**

**Classes begin at 6:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.**

**Dinner is served at 5:45 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**

**Meals are \$10 for family or**

**\$5 for individual**

**Come grow with us!**

## Truthseekers'

The Truthseekers' Sunday School class is starting a new 5 week study called **Pray Yet: A Study of Habakkuk** by Mark Scott. Habakkuk's job was to prepare God's people for Babylonian captivity. Mark Scott explains how we can maintain faith in God when the world seems to be falling apart. The key to this faith for the people entering captivity is the same for us today: to PRAY YET.

We will begin this new study on Sunday September 10th. We meet in the Truthseekers' room located in Cooper Hall from 10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. All are welcome to join us!  
Bobbie Crosby

**John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**

## Newsletter September 2023 - Project Others

Project Others is looking forward to a busy Fall in preparation for Distribution Day the first week of December. We extend the opportunity to our congregation to help collect items for our homemade Christmas stocking project and the assemblage of health kits for the homeless.

### Health Kit items include:

1 Hand Towel  
1 Washcloth  
Travel size: soap, shampoo & conditioner  
1 medium comb  
Toothpaste  
1 new, packaged toothbrush  
Disposable razor

### Stocking Stuffer Examples:

Small toys  
Small reading books (Bible stories)  
Thin coloring books (Biblical ones are great)  
Small boxes crayons (16 or 24 count)  
Jump Ropes  
Small rubber balls  
Action figures  
Cars & Trucks  
Small stuffed animals  
Small Dolls

**REMEMBER ALL ITEMS NEED TO FIT IN A 5" WIDE STOCKING!**

There will be a box in Cooper Hall during the months of October & November for your donations.

Donations may be left on Fridays between 8 & 11 am in Cooper Hall or at the church office (Mon–Thurs 9-2).

All donations will be a blessing to those receiving.

Thanks to all of you for helping!

The Project Others Team

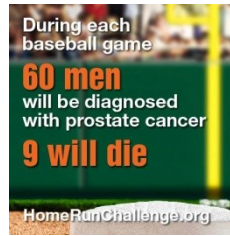




## PARISH NURSE MINISTRY TEAM/SEPTEMBER 2023

**Get Vaccinated for Covid and Flu!**

Check the Bulletin Board in Cooper Hall for Health Info and Tips



## SEPTEMBER IS PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

### **Prostate Cancer Fact Sheet**

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men in the U.S. In fact, one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime will die from the disease each year.

### **About half of all men have PIN by the age of 50**

Nearly all forms of prostate cancer start in the cells of the prostate gland and are known as adenocarcinoma. Physicians believe that prostate cancer begins with small changes in the size and shape of the prostate gland cells, a change known as prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia (PIN).

While the exact cause of prostate cancer is unknown, certain **risk factors** have been identified that may increase the chance of developing the disease:

**Age:** Age is the strongest predictor for developing prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is primarily found in men over age 55, and the average age of diagnosis is 70.3

**Race and ethnicity:** African-American men are disproportionately affected by prostate cancer, with an incidence rate more than **60 percent higher** than white males.

**Genetics:** Having a father or brother with prostate cancer **more than doubles** a man's risk of developing the disease.

**Weight:** Men with a body mass index higher than 32.5 have about a one-third greater risk

### **Symptoms and Detection**

There are generally no **signs or symptoms** for early-stage prostate cancer, and some symptoms can be easily mistaken for those of other disorders.

**Common symptoms** of prostate cancer may include pelvic pain, frequent or painful urination, blood in the urine, painful ejaculation, weight loss, lack of appetite, and bone pain

Medical experts who encourage **regular screening** recommend that all men who have a life expectancy of at least 10 years should be offered the PSA test and DRE annually **beginning at age 50.**

They also recommend offering screening tests earlier to African-American men, and men who have a father or brother with prostate cancer.

If your PSA test or DRE suggests a problem, your doctor most likely will refer you to a urologist. Additional testing is necessary to determine if the problem is cancer or something else.

[info@pcf.org](mailto:info@pcf.org) <http://homerunchallenge.org/> <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostatecancer/>

*"If we ask anything according to God's will, He hears us and answers," 1 John 5:14,15*

Through Christ, Druann Briggs RN Parish Nurse Ministry Coordinator 813-420-7919

# Pray for our Military



## Proudly Serving Our Country

**Budurka, Michael**, Staff SGT, US Army, Hawaii, grandson of Bob and Barb Stankiewicz

**Clark, Matthew**, 1ST LT. Army, Ft. Drum, N.Y., Grandson of Jack & Louise Smith

**Daniels, Clay**, Major, US Army, Ft. Bragg, Grandson of Ed Fisher

**Hill, Nathaniel**, Colorado National Guard, Son of David Hill

**Hunter Hollaway**, Army National Guard, Great Nephew of Lori Hollaway

**Hurley, Luka**, MSGT., Grandson of Gordon & Norma Hurley (Omaha, NE)

**Jared Monteiro**, U.S. Coast Guard, Grandson of Debbie Huffert

**Lenz, Alexander**, MM3, Navy, Norfolk, Va., Grandson of Richard & Linda Bice

**Mueller, Hannah**, US Army, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Daughter of Lorraine & Tom Mueller

**Noel, Tim**, MSSGT., Air National Guard, Japan, Son-in-Law of Ann Crawford

**Parks, Andrew**, Senior Airman, US Air Force, Tucson, AZ, grandson of Bob and Barb Stankiewicz

**Shoup, Justin**, Deployed

**Tindall, Tyler**, US Army Specialist, Texas, Grandson of Ed Fisher

**Wagner, Jeff**, CAPT., USAF, Colorado, Nephew of Elton & Pat Wagner

**White, Darrel**, 1<sup>ST</sup> SGT. Army, Texas, Nephew of Gerald & Virginia Swank

**Williams, Andrew**, Lt. COL. USAF, grandson of Bob & Barbara Williams

ALF AND LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES (FUMC MEMBERS)

AMERICAN HOUSE 38130 Pretty Pond Rd., Zephyrhills, FL 33540

Neal Slingerland Apt. 207  
Ruth Palmer Apt. 334  
Lyden & Sue Green Apt. 333

EDWINOLA 14235 Edwinola Way, Dade City, FL 33523

Peggy Fetch  
Beulah Zeller

HEARTLAND 38220 Henry St., Zephyrhills, FL 33542

Ginger Shaeffer Room 313B

ROSECASTLE OF ZEPHYRHILLS, 37411 Eiland Blvd., Zephyrhills, FL 33542

Roberta Hubbart

WESTBROOK MANOR 6701 DAIRY Rd., Zephyrhills, FL 33542

Barbara McCarthy Room A20

ADVENT HEALTH CARE CENTER NORTH 7350 Dairy Rd., Zephyrhills, FL 33542

Shirley Force

ADVENT HEALTH CARE SOUTH 38250 A Avenue, Zephyrhills, FL 33542

Viva Rich Room 3B

POND'S EDGE ALF 7952 Pond's Edge Ln., Zephyrhills, FL 33540

Lou Mathews Room 3





## BIRTHDAYS

1- Russell McGinnis  
2- Stan Roseman  
2- Nancy Swartz  
3- Pam Rios  
3- Joey Theel  
4- Amanda Wregg  
5- Paul Bathrick  
5- Arlene Mahlke  
5- Ty Morrell  
6- Mary Winemiller  
7- Linda Engel  
8- Margo Herring  
9- Yolande Green  
9- Patricia Weeden  
10- Roberta Hubbart  
11- Roz Hill  
11- Joanne Martin  
11- Joan Wansor  
11- Joyce White

12- Kimberly Perez  
13- Shirley Griffin  
13- Curtis Hambrick  
13- Craig Miller  
15- Rita Wencel  
16- Josh Smith  
17- Elizabeth Ahrend  
18- Druann Briggs  
18- Roy Galarneau  
18- David Moore  
19- Yondale LaBarre  
21- Sally Koiso  
22- Emily Morris  
23- Fran Ritzheimer  
24- Robin DeVlieg  
24- Daniel Pride  
26- Nancy Laviano  
28- David Cox  
29- Sara Bowden

## ANNIVERSARIES



10- John & Sandra Newman  
10- Floyd & Marian Otto  
23- Richard & Barbara Gottschalk  
24- George & Cathy Gano  
30- Zachary & Devyn Sheffich