



THE WITNESS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1610 PRINCE ST., CONWAY, ARKANSAS, 72034

It's Time to Burn the Mortgage!

From Rev. Nathan Kilbourne,
Senior Pastor:

"Burn, baby Burn!"

As many of you are aware, we will gather on Sunday, Sept. 28, following the 11 a.m. worship service to burn the mortgage!

We will first gather in the Great Hall for lunch, which will be provided by Mike's Place as a free gift! The one thing we will be providing are desserts – you can find more information here on how to sign up to bring desserts. We will also need some help in the kitchen, as well as setting up to transition the Great Hall from worship to a space ready for lunch.

Following the meal, we will have a brief ceremony with distinguished guests, including our District Superintendent, Rev. Natasha J. Murray. Former senior pastors,



Rev. Phil Hathcock, Rev. Dr. Michael Roberts, and Rev. Dede Roberts, will also be here to help us celebrate.

After the ceremony, we will make our way onto the parking lot to burn the note and celebrate!

It will be an exciting day to celebrate getting this "monkey" off our back so that we can unleash our potential. In talking with members of the congregation, it was mentioned

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Blessing of the Animals Set Oct. 5

All creatures great and small will be among those attending the Blessing of the Animals at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 5, at Conway First United Methodist Church.

Each year on or around the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, which is Oct. 4, the church invites all in the community and their pets to stop by the parking lot for a blessing.

Hosted by the Children's Music Ministry, the free event normally includes a hymn accompanied by members of the Joyful Ringers children's chime choir and the unison recitation of the Prayer of St. Francis.

Then the fun begins, as pets of all kinds and their human family members take time to be blessed, visit with one another and receive a little snack for a treat later in the day.

Four blessing stations will be available, including a drive-through option for those pets with social anxiety. Even if you don't have a pet to be blessed, children are invited to bring their favorite stuffed animal for a blessing, and families may bring photos of their pets who might not be able to handle the excitement of the day in person or have passed away during the past year.

Among those scheduled to be on the "blessing crew" are the church's pastors, staff members and retired clergy. In the past, the event has been attended by dogs, cats, gerbils, guinea pigs, snakes, bearded dragons, turtles and a variety of stuffed animals too numerous to name.

For church member Donna Stephens, the annual blessing event is the perfect way to include her pets – some of whom are foster fails – into her church life.

See **BLESSING** on Page 2



George (left) and Buffy (right) accompanied Donna to the Blessing of the Animals in 2024.



Pastor Nathan and Finance Chairman Todd Abel announce that our building debt has been paid.

MORTGAGE from Page 1

that this will be the first time in many years the church will be debt free. Obviously, we have been paying off the construction of the Trinity Building for 19 years; however, the church had rolled other debts into that debt at the time.

All to say, after many years, we are going to be debt free! This will be a huge relief to the congregation and allow money dedicated to this loan to be potentially used for other areas of ministry. At a time when the ministry of the church is so desperately needed, we will be poised to do wonderful acts in the name of Christ for the world.

LOOKING AHEAD

Don't forget: the Unleashing Our Potential Campaign continues into Phase 2, as we seek to raise funds to take care of deferred maintenance on our buildings, such as sound systems, internet infrastructure and water damage repairs.

Unleashing Our Potential Campaign Timeline

September 2024 – Unleashing Our Potential capital campaign launched, with a goal of \$1.15 million to pay off debt, repair facilities and build our endowment

Oct. 23, 2024 – A time of prayer was held for the campaign.

Nov. 3, 2024 – Pastor Nathan announced that the campaign had received pledges of \$2.7 million. Payments on the principal begin.

Aug. 17, 2025 – Pastor Nathan and Finance Chairman Todd Abel announced that our building debt has been paid.

Mortgage Burning Potluck Helpers Needed

Help us celebrate the retiring of the debt! Many hands make light work, so we hope you'll sign up to bring a dessert or to be a helper on Sunday, Sept. 28.



BLESSING from Page 1

"I grew up with pets, mostly dogs, and have always loved every one. Through young adulthood, apartments, jobs, etc., I wasn't in a position to have my own until 2005," she said. "Every dog and cat since then has been a member of the family. I've been involved with local animal rescues since 2012, and most of our dogs were foster fails. I always say they find us when they're supposed to."

Donna says the first blessing service she attended was in 2013, "and it was the sweetest thing I'd ever seen. I always tear up when my babies are blessed. I know God sent these creatures to me, and I love that affirmation through this service. I will never miss it."

Since 2013, Donna has normally brought two dogs and maybe a cat to each blessing, and then she will bless all the others "in absentia" after they get home. "Over the years, they've all come in person at least once, and that would include 10 dogs and two or three cats," she said.

An added benefit of the event for Donna's dogs is a little bit of socialization. "Remember, I have to keep mine away from everyone else! There must be something about me that attracts the misfits," she laughs. "But they always enjoy a car ride and the treats, and even if they're not really integrating with other dogs, they're caught up in the excitement of the barking and singing and oohing and aahing."



Rusty and Lily were blessed in 2019.



One Service Sunday

Thank you to all who helped pack 1,250 UMCOR Hygiene Kits on One Service Sunday!
Interested in helping us get them to Sager Brown to be distributed across the country? Contact Pastor Miranda!



College Ministry Updates



Students at The Wesley volunteered with the Conway FUMC Food Pantry on Thursday, Sept. 11.





WE NEED YOU!

Due to recent changes in Instagram requirements, we must have more followers before we can resume live streaming our Wesley Worship on Wednesday nights!

Live Streaming is a great way to reach students (and others) who occasionally don't have time to make it to service!

Please consider following us on Instagram at [thewesley_at_conway](https://www.instagram.com/thewesley_at_conway) so we can resume streaming our worship!



Members of the group also recently made birthday kits for our Food Pantry patrons (photo above, right). The kits are given to families with children who would like to celebrate with a cake -- all the supplies needed for baking are included, along with a Birthday sign.

TUESDAY

Bible Study

6:00 pm-dinner
7:00 pm- study

Wesley House
(1903 College)

WEDNESDAY

Wesley Worship (College-led)

7:30 pm

FUMC Conway
(1610 Prince Street)

THURSDAY

Bible Study

7:00 pm

Wesley House
(1903 College)

Wesley Weekly Events

Feeding Ministries Update



Scenes from a Recent Indoor Distribution Food Pantry!



Food Pantry Team Expanding!

Through the Hendrix work study program, we are excited to welcome Alex McCastlain-Kehrli to the Food Pantry team this school year! Alex will be with us on Thursdays and will be helping with some of the behind-the-scenes reporting and logistics that keep the pantry running smoothly. This partnership is free for us and will be a blessing to our ministry.

Book Study: The Painful Truth About Hunger in America

October 13, 20, & 27 at noon via Zoom

Join 200,000 More Reasons for this three-week study, reimagining hunger in our communities and exploring new ways to take action. Thanks to the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, the first 25 participants will receive a free copy of the book. Contact Pastor Miranda for a Zoom link to the study.

Who did we serve? August 2025

CHURCH & SOCIETY
The United Methodist Church
Living FAITH Seeking JUSTICE Pursuing PEACE

Households:
179

Amazing Grace
Meals:
199

Pounds of
Food:
7,850

Did you know?
213,540 households in AR
face food insecurity

Needed:
Deodorant

Thanks, Wesley at Conway,
for the birthday kits! Each kit includes
a cake mix, candles, and a birthday sign.

A neighbor this week was grateful for the
opportunity to have a birthday cake and brought back
the Birthday sign so the next person could have one to use.

Volunteers Needed:
2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 2pm; 1st & 3rd Thursdays 1:30- 3:00pm

FOOD PANTRY

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONWAY, AR

Want More Information? Email: FoodPantry@ConwayFUMC.org



"There is a place for you!" Sign up on the
Link Tree to serve in our pantry.



Heart and Home Ministry



Thank you to Martha Bumpers for delivering our Heart and Home Ministry bags for September, and to Pat Crowder for choosing the items and putting the bags together. If you would like to help the Congregational Care group plan, prepare and deliver bags every other month to some of our older church members, please contact Pastor Miranda at the church. This is a perfect ministry opportunity for anyone who enjoys visiting!

More Members Sought for GNC Praise Band

The Good News Celebration Praise Band members would love you to join our ministry in leading music on Sundays at the 9:05 a.m. worship service in the Great Hall!

New band members — vocalists and instrumentalists alike — are always invited. Those interested should be proficient on their instruments, and be able to learn new songs from chord charts and/or recordings. You will not need to play or sing every week.

The band would love more members who specialize in drums, guitars, keyboards, and more traditional stringed, brass and woodwind instruments.

For more information about the Praise Band, please contact Stuart Holt at sholt@conwayfumc.org.

Trunk or Treat & Costume Fun

BOO-TIFUL NIGHT

STARTS
AT 4PM

26
OCT

Candy, Fun
Games & More
Conway FUMC
1610 Prince St



Digging Deeper

THIRD GRADE BIBLE
CELEBRATION & EXPLORATION

Calling all
3rd Graders!

Join Us: Sunday, October 12th
to receive your Bible in any of our 3
worship services



Register Here!

Also, celebrate with your parents or
favorite adults at our brunch & learn
10:00 am in the basement Courtyard

Linktree*

Check out our Link Tree list of sign up forms and volunteer opportunities by scanning the QR Code, or visit the Resources section on our church website.



Family Outdoor Day

Saturday, October 11

10:30am - 4:00pm

Mount Eagle Retreat Center

935 Beal Road, Clinton, AR

Bring your hiking sticks from VBC (or one of your own) and join us for a fun fall day of outdoor activities - all are invited!

11:15-12:30 - lunch

12:45 - guided hike with devotional

Other activities will be available for you to explore - disc golf, fishing, other hiking trails, and an outdoor chapel! Come for all or part of the day.

Scan below to sign up!



In Honor & Memory

In honor of Mary Kay

Dunaway by: United Women of Faith

In honor of Diane Newton by:

United Women of Faith

In honor of Kish Jones by:

Charles Pittman

In honor of Shirley Taber by:

Carol Schedler

In honor of Sharon Reynolds

by: Pat & Beverly Bowles

In memory Allan Bruner by:

Jeremy Bruner

In memory of Dee Daugherty

Hoge by: David & Jackie

Daugherty

In memory of Marette Stiritz

by: Steve & Betty Cohen

In memory of Shay Raycher

by: Nancy Williams

In memory of Mrs. Glenda

McKay by: Sarah Wilf

In memory of Ellen Rose

Williams by: Bill & Cecilia Patterson



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith Fall Unit Meeting

**3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 19,
Fellowship Hall**

Everyone is invited to attend a presentation of "Updates on Arkansas Education and Legal Issues." A UWFaith Business meeting will follow the presentation. All women are welcome to stay to learn more about our organization.

Are you a man interested in Prison Ministry? Christ calls us to visit the prisoner and to care for those imprisoned. In response to this call, we are looking at forming a prison ministry team. If interested, please contact Carol Means at bcmeans@aol.com or by phone at 903-733-4505.

Prison Ministry



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The Witness is published monthly by
First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince St., Conway, AR 72034.
Periodicals postage paid at Conway, AR

POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to "The Witness,"
c/o Colleen Holt, editor;
First United Methodist Church,
1610 Prince St., Conway, AR 72034



Welcome – To Sylvia McDaniel, who joined this community of faith on Sunday, Sept. 14. Sylvia is already finding her place to serve in the church, being a member of the choir.



Calling All Artists!

Do you have an artistic talent, such as pottery, knitting, woodworking, painting? We would love to feature some of this art in the window of the church library. The display will be changed out regularly so everyone can participate. If you have something you would like to share, please contact Sandra Humphreys at sph46@conwaycorp.net or Colleen Holt at the church at cholt@conwayfumc.org.

First United Methodist Church Staff Directory

Senior Pastor -- Nathan Kilbourne
Associate Pastor -- Miranda Hornsby
Director, Children's Ministries -- Catherine Gatlin
Director, Youth Ministries -- Zach Schrick
Director, MidYouth Ministries -- Christy Lemmer
Campus Dir., Wesley Foundation -- Amy Shores
Dir., Music/Worship Ministries -- Jason Saugey
Assoc. Dir., Music (Praise Band) -- Stuart Holt

Assoc. Dir., Music (Children) -- Linda Ball
Nursery Coordinator -- Cara Rucker
Bookkeeper -- Libby Conder
Supervisor, Hospitality Ministries -- Ed Spears
Custodian -- Tim Tarpley
Financial Assistant -- Laura Bounds
Communications Assistant -- Colleen Holt

SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES:
8:30 & 11 A.M. – SANCTUARY
9:05 A.M. – GREAT HALL
LIVE-STREAMING AT 9:05 & 11 A.M.:
WWW.CONWAYFUMC.ORG
FACEBOOK.COM/CONWAYFIRSTUMC
OR YOUTUBE: @CONWAYFUMC