

THE FLAME



August 28, 2023

It's time to talk about Stewardship...It is that time of year for our fall stewardship campaign with a focus on gathering information from each of you to help us formulate a budget for 2024. That is the responsible way of mapping a strategy for the best use of resources in our mission to make a lasting change in our community and world through the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. But let us not forget that stewardship is much more than pledging to make sacrifices of our finances, time, talents, and presence for the continuation and progression of our faith movement. There are more than just good reasons for our giving, there are theological (God reasons) for our giving.

The theological concept of stewardship should underpin almost everything we talk about — yes, our finances, but also our time, our impact on the natural world, and the ways our church buildings and land are used. Our natural tendency is to be like the seagulls in *Finding Nemo*, chirping “Mine, mine, mine,” at everything around us. Or we proudly declare that all that we have is because we “earned” it, that our success is “self-made,” neglecting the roles that community, privilege, grace, and sheer luck often play in our lives.

The truth is that our lives are an undeserved gift from God. Everything we have and everything we are is because of the grace of God. In return, God asks us to be good stewards, to use our resources rightly and for God’s Kingdom. This includes supporting the church with our resources, which is emblematic of our relationship with our broader community and our world.

Jesus Christ came to this world for the good of the world, not his own. We have been given the spirit of Christ so that we as members of the body of Christ may continue the mission of being Christ in the world. So, over the next three weeks, as we explore reasons for stewardship, let's also dream about ways we can be better stewards in this world. What do you dream that we accomplish in 2024? What God-sized dreams can make us a relevant and renewed beacon of hope in Ponca City, Oklahoma? Think about it; pray about it; and show up to be part of it! Blessings, Pastor Leon



HUGH thank you to Lynn Hopkins for keeping our bushes trimmed and neat. Instead of drinking coffee on his patio this beautiful Monday morning, he came to the church and gave the bushes a trim. Our church would not be the same without our volunteer base, we appreciate Lynn and all of them who make our building and grounds well-manicured.

New Beginnings would like to invite you to their new book study for Sunday School class beginning September 10 at 9 a.m. on the balcony level above the Welcome Center. *Saving God from Religion: A Minister's Search for Faith in a Skeptical World* by Robin Meyers -- For more information about the book and/or author, read here: <https://www.abebooks.com/9781984822512/Saving-God-Religion-Ministers-Search-1984822519/plp>

Where has the summer gone? It's that time of year when we will start our Wednesday Night Live programs back up, beginning September 6. The format used last year was well received, so we'll just carry on.

We have a vast array of topics to be addressed this next year from health, religion, Medicare, the power of a teacher, and "you could change the world". Our singing will consist of new praise songs as well as traditional.



To kick off our program this year will be is Derrek Balease from the Oklahoma Methodist Conference, and his program is "Who was Suzanna Wesley". The meal with be Danny's chopped beef sandwiches.

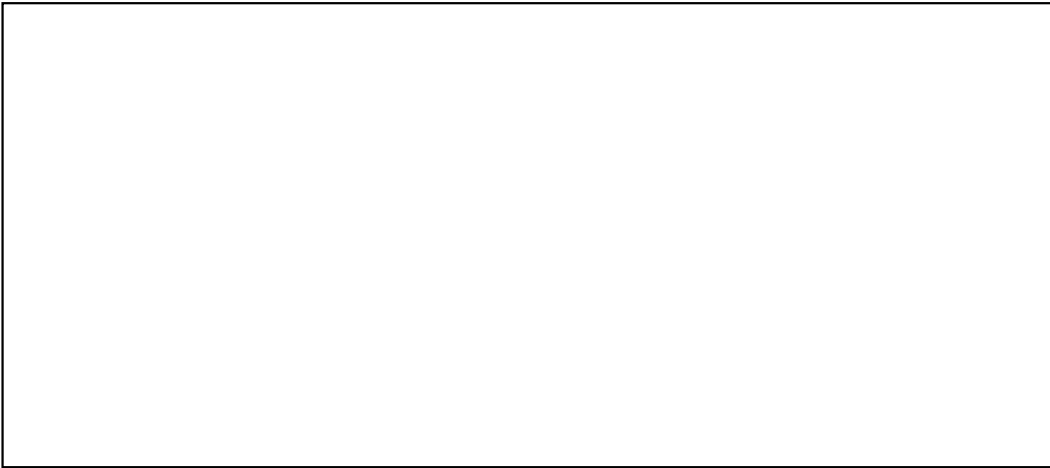
Each week we will let you know what subject, video, or guest speaker we will be having. For those new to WNL, we meet in the fellowship hall where we enjoy a meal beginning at 5:30, followed by singing and then the program, wrapping up by 7:00. We are going to have so much fun and fellowship! Hope to see you there!



Another one of God's Angels was busy at work on the grounds this beautiful Monday morning. Instead of getting his deer stand ready, he took time to weed-eat the playground for our Angel Academy Children and all the visitors we have that utilize our playground. It looks much nicer to have all the grass out of the fence line and off the edging. A **BIG** thank you to Barry for taking his time to keep our yard looking neater! We appreciate his service.

Wayne Moore is hosting a table at the annual Living Hope banquet on Thursday, September 28, 2023. You will be blessed to attend as the guest speaker is David Bereit, Founder of 40 Days for Life. The event will be in the Renfro Center at NOC in Tonkawa. The evening is free to you but donations are appreciated. There will be a choice of a regular entree or a vegetarian option. Let Wayne know which you prefer.

Please respond by Wednesday, September 6th to Wayne at imbobalso@aol.com with the names of those coming as the caterer requires a three-week notice. Should you be unable to attend, Living Hope (425 Fairview Ave. Suite 3, Ponca City, OK 74601) would appreciate a generous donation to continue serving families in north central Oklahoma.



You can always access our online calendar with correct dates and times at fumcpc.org under the heading of calendar.



On October 21st, we will celebrate our birthday as the oldest church in Ponca City. Games, food, music and pioneer Methodist impersonators will provide a fun afternoon of fellowship for our members and community.

For the anniversary Sunday on October 22nd, past ministers, music directors, children's & youth ministers have been invited to provide the church service. Put it on your calendar! This is a weekend you won't want to miss - More details to follow!

Are you one of the 60 people who have turned in your information sheets for our in-house church directory? We want to include you!!! The information sheets are on the tables in the Welcome Center before and after church or in the church office with Mary if you stop in during the week. If you would like to have one sent to you via email, please request one from BusMgr@fumcpc.org and Sheila will email you the form. Please help us get the needed information.

Stitches Through Time is seeking volunteers as well as quilts to help with the Quilt Show. If you are able to help with this event or need additional information, please contact Mary Lou. This is one of the occasions helping us celebrate our 130th birthday!



The Bible Study led by Betsy Carter will begin September 28 in the Fellowship Hall. **The Names of God** will be a six-week Bible study, Melissa Spoelstra leads women on an exploration of the many names of our triune God.

This study will be in the Fellowship Hall and will begin September 28 and run through October. Sign up sheets are in the Welcome Center office if you want to purchase a book. They will be \$15. For more information, contact Betsy Carter.

After school JAM (Jesus and Me) will be starting the first Wednesday in September. If you would like to have a child picked up from school, please let the church office know at least 24 hours in advance. September 6 will be here before you know it and we want to make sure we have a comprehensive list of children we need to pick up so we can share God's love. We encourage families to stay for Wednesday Night Live after JAM.



TONIGHT! August 28, 5:15 p.m. Finance Meeting
TONIGHT! August 28, 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting
Sunday, September 3, Communion and Caring Fund Sunday
September 6, Wednesday Night Live begins
September 7, United Women in Faith, 600 p.m. meeting
September 28, 10 a.m. Women's Bible Study in Fellowship Hall
Thursday, October 26 Lunch and Learn with Alan Herndon, Director of Gift Planning, Oklahoma Methodist Foundation

Think about the part you want to play in *First United Methodist Church's* future. Naming *FUMC* as a beneficiary in your estate plan to create an endowment can assure your continued participation in the life and mission of *First United* far into the future.

If you receive this email, and would prefer to be taken of the weekly communication, please reply to the email with your request and we will honor it. If you have a church friend who would like to receive the weekly communication, please have them email info@fumcpc.org and we will gladly put them on the list!

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Music Director

Marta Sullivan

Organist

Debra Rue