

FIRST CHURCH

FOCUS

2021



INSIDE:

A Letter from the Senior Pastor
Mission Statement
2021 Budget Summary
Lay Leadership on Committees
Confirmation Update
Children's Ministry Update
Ignite Middle School Ministry Update
Youth Ministry Update
Mission & Outreach Update
Music Ministry Update
Agape Fellowship Update

FIRST 
CHURCH
United Methodist

"I PROMISE THAT I WILL BRING YOU UP OUT OF THE AFFLICTION OF EGYPT..."

EXODUS 3:17

Dear First Church family,

I am excited to be able to bring you this year's edition of the First Church Focus. The Focus is our Church's annual report, which we began two years ago. It is meant to provide our church members with vital information in an easy-to-use format. The Focus includes everything from budget statistics to committee membership to summaries of our ministry areas. It is also "forward looking," in the sense that the staff members who write articles for it are casting a vision for where they hope their ministry areas will be moving in the coming year.

Each year we have chosen a theme verse for the First Church Focus that coincides with our first major sermon series of the year. For 2021, that series is entitled, "Out of Egypt," and the theme verse is: "I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt..." (Exodus 3:17). While that may seem a little different given our themes for the past couple of years, I think it is very appropriate for where we are in our world right now. We continue to labor under a global pandemic that has claimed over 380,000 lives in the United States as of this writing. We are also a nation divided politically and socially, and we have seen violence and unrest from coast-to-coast over the past seven months. Yet our God is a God who hears the cries of His people. He promises never to forsake us or desert us. His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, seeks out lost sheep and brings them back into the sheepfold. We can be confident that God is going to bring us through the challenges and trials we face in the present!

I am so proud of the dedication and faithfulness that our entire congregation has shown over the past year. I think back to the Care Buddy Ministry, where church members volunteered to reach out to the elderly and shut-in in our congregation in the opening weeks of the pandemic to make sure that they were okay and cared for. I think about the fact that we kept ministries like Children's World, Daily Bread, The Bread of Life, and His Helping Hands going throughout last year so that people in our community would be served. I think about the more than \$15,000 we raised for our sister churches in Cuba and Peru so that the pastors of those churches could put food on the table and continue serving their flocks. I think about the way that we dedicated ourselves to developing health & safety protocols so that we could continue to worship in person—even as we devised creative new ways to reach out using technology so that people who couldn't come to church could still be included in worship and other ministries. I think about the way that we have expanded our family ministry staff so that the children and youth of our church can be better ministered to. I think about our new Men's Ministry, which was started during some of the most difficult weeks of 2020 and yet has already borne fruit in significant ways. With all that we accomplished over the past year, how can we not be hopeful for the year ahead? Our God is so good.

I hope you will use the First Church Focus report as a helpful resource throughout 2021. Please be sure to refer to it often, and share it with others who might like to see it as well. May God bless you and your family!

Yours in Christ



Rev. Andrew C. Thompson
Senior Pastor

OUR MISSION



**Connecting
people to God
and one another
by gathering
in worship,
growing in
discipleship to
Jesus Christ, and
going into the
world in mission.**



2021 BUDGET SUMMARY



Ministry & Missions	\$256,553
Salaries & Benefits	\$1,304,155
Administration	\$328,150
Maintenance	\$73,000
Apportionments	\$116,764
	<hr/>
	\$2,078,622





COMMITTEES

CHURCH COUNCIL

2021

Pete Franks
Kathy McFetridge, Vice Chair
Pat Marcy
Steffi Teo

2022

Monty Henderson, Lay Leader
Sue Richardson
Melanie Raymond
Herb Crum

2023

Charlotte Steele
Michael Gibbs
Bill Mathews, Chair
Dena Duckworth
EXOFFICIO:
Theresa Moore, Chair of Trustees
Bill Welsh, Chair of Finance
Rich Morris, Chair Pastor/Parish Relations
Youth Representative
Paula Irwin, UMW Representative
PASTORS:
Rev. Andrew Thompson
Rev. Jen Ryerson
Rev. Rob Williams

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2021

Brad Baldwin
Joe Herriman
Don Rutledge

2022

Theresa Moore, Chair
Don Gibson
Margaret Barber

2023

Ian Felix
Lee-Ellen Kees
Betsy Phillips
EXOFFICIO:
Lay Leader
STAFF REP:
Rev. Andrew Thompson

FINANCE COMMITTEE

2021

Kellie Knight
Stephen Whatley
Bill Welsh, Chair

2022

Dorothy Hanby
Jeff Williams
Susan White
2023
Drew Frits
Sandy Poore
Jim Lollis
EXOFFICIO:
Chair of Board of Trustees
Lay Leader
Chair of Church Council
STAFF REPS:
Rev. Andrew Thompson
Summer Boyd

NOMINATIONS

LAY LEADERSHIP

2021

Biddy Williamson
Evelyn Shaw
George Charles

2022

Jan Struebing
Janet Huntsman
Dennis Martin

2023

Niki Lunsford
Vivian Sturdivant
David Carnes
EXOFFICIO:
Lay Leader
STAFF REP:
Rev. Andrew Thompson, Chair

PASTOR/PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

2021

Steve Smith
Terry Quast
Martha Ellen Myers

2022

Carol Altom
Chris Dodson
Chris Weiser

2023

Niki Mann
Gerald Barrett
Rich Morris, Chair
EXOFFICIO:
Lay Leader
STAFF REPS:
Rev. Andrew Thompson



CHILDCARE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2021

Laurie Gibbs
Nancy Bostian

2022

Julie Wagner
JoAnne Herriman

2023

Christine Williams, Chair
Sandy Nickerson
STAFF REP:
Summer Boyd

RETIREE COUNCIL

Janet Huntsman
Don Rutledge, Chair
Arlis Williamson
Biddy Williamson
Bob Reynolds
Barb Reynolds
Jan Struebing
Don Struebing
Russ Rhodes
Betty Rhodes
Carl Campbell
Molly Campbell
Betsy Penix
STAFF REP:
Rev. Jen Ryerson

BREAD OF LIFE ADVISORY BOARD

2021

Jackie Guist
Bob Chambers
Ralph Jensen, Chair

2022

Paula Jackson
Patricia Vanderbush
Pat Marcy

2023

Kellye Smith
Susie Mitchell
Janet Huntsman
STAFF REP:
Joshua Bland

CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE STEERING COMMITTEE

Craig Lile
Stacy Waller Lile
Renee Morris
Rich Morris
Jessica Ritchie
Ryan Ritchie
Neal McAlister
Kelly McAlister
STAFF REP:
Joshua Bland

FUMC FOUNDATION BOARD

2020

Paul Lawrence, Chair
Karen Thompson

2021

Larry Wright
Debby Weiser
David Van Bebber

2022

Susan White
Larry Wilkins

2023

Jeff Williams
Cyndy Spencer
EX-OFFICIO:
Rev. Andrew Thompson
FOUNDATION STAFF:
Mary McKinney, Director



CONFIRMATION UPDATE

Rev. Jen Ryerson

God is ready to lead our youth into a new day in 2021, and this is very exciting to me. We have the 2019/2020 Confirmation class that has been waiting to be delivered from the “way station” they were put in when the pandemic hit. They are now ready to renew their commitment to the Confirmation journey. In this coming year, these confirmands will be brought up out of this place of waiting and delivered “into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” They will be confirmed!



I grew up in the United Methodist Church and have fond memories of my tween years, even though they weren't called that then: the years from 4-6th grade. Whoa, now I had to read aloud, from the Bible, in front of others!



Then 7th grade hit, and suddenly I was hearing words like “Confirmation.” What exactly was it? What did it mean? Did I get to go somewhere? Was it “fun”?

I didn't know a lot about Confirmation when I entered the class. I remember the room. I remember my mentor. I remember and still have the cross necklace I received on Confirmation Sunday. Sadly, I do not remember much of what we talked about or learned about the Holy Spirit. I remember it feeling somewhat dull and confusing.

I want our youth to have an experience that they will be inspired by and remember as being a season of transformation. Confirmation is more than a destination, more than a class. It is an integral part of one's journey of faith and an important time in the life of the church. It is the time when you take ownership of your faith and decide if you are ready to make a public declaration and commitment to love God, follow Christ, participate in the life of the church, and join in God's missional work in the world.

Confirmation is also a time for our congregation to celebrate our young people's commitment to “live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ” and renew our commitment to do the same.

As we move forward, Pastor Andrew and I intend for Confirmation to be fun, interactive, with a time of sharing, and a time of reflection, to see what God can do, is doing, and will continue to do throughout the discipleship journey of our youth!





CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Amanda Worthy

The mission of Spark Kids is to connect our children to God and one another by gathering together, growing together, and going together. The past year challenged us in how we accomplish our mission, but it sparked new ideas in how to stay connected when it felt like we were exiled away from one another.

Just as the Israelites escaping Egypt and traveling in the wilderness needed God's creativity, we have needed it in Spark Kids

as well. From finding a new way to teach our Sunday school lessons online, to thinking outside the box for virtual VBS, to meeting face to face during Porch Picnics, to sharing new at-home discipleship activities, like the Advent-in-a-Box kits, God came and delivered us by showing us how to adapt, how to use the creativity He gives us and how to overcome the obstacles in our way, in order to stay connected.

As we begin 2021, I am excited to see the ways God will deliver Spark Kids in this new year and help us find new, creative, and safe ways to gather together, grow together, and go out into mission together. As we reopen our Spark Sunday school program this January, we will once again be able to gather together. Our dedicated volunteers are returning to the classrooms to help teach our children about God's good and perfect grace and the gift of his Son, Jesus. As the Spark Children's minister, I am amazed and inspired by the creativity of our volunteers. Each week, they take the material provided and add their own personal touch and story to it, in order to help our children grow by seeing Jesus in their own world, not just as a person in a Bible story.

Spark Kids in 2021 may look and feel different, but our mission is still the same. Children will meet together again in grade-level classes with their peers and, hopefully, grow closer to one another and to God. We will continue to provide fun and engaging lessons and life applications through our Sunday morning programming and special events like VBS. Our children and their families will continue to be invited to join us in serving our community through new and safe mission opportunities. However, as we move back into the classroom, we cannot forget about our families who have not returned to in-person meetings yet. Spark Kids will continue to do our best to connect with our families and children virtually and through at-home discipleship resources such as our Bible Story Boxes.

I am excited to see the work God will accomplish in 2021 through Spark Kids. In Exodus 3:8, God promises to deliver his people to the "land of milk and honey." I put my hope for Spark Kids and the place we land after this "exile" in the hands of a God who wants the very best for his children, a God of deliverance, grace, and love.



MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mary Anne Kull



"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:12). This is the guiding scripture for our new Ignite Ministry for 5th and 6th grade students at First Church. This is such an appropriate scripture for this age student, because while young, 5th and 6th graders are able to think critically about the Bible and participate in deeper discussions

about who God is and what His Word teaches us. These students also are able to shock us all with their insight and desire to come up with solutions to big problems in the world. The purpose of this ministry is to meet the spiritual, social, and developmental needs specific to 5th and 6th graders.

As we kick off 2021, Ignite will resume Sunday morning Sunday School. During this time, students will dive deep into God's Word and build relationships in small groups. We believe that through gathering together to study in community, God will revive our hearts from all this past year has brought. Starting in late January, our Ignite First Sunday evening programming will commence. Students will gather together for a meal, followed by a music lesson led by Rev. Danny Reding. What a wonderful opportunity for students to learn new music skills and worship the Lord with their gifts through song and handbells! Our hope is that through the year, these students will be able to perform during church and special services.

This spring we will offer the "Created by God" class for 5th-7th graders (for those who may have missed the opportunity last year). This program teaches our students a healthy biblical perspective on human sexuality, values, and relationships. Vacation Bible School Daycamp will take place this June. Get ready for some fun! Each day students will get to travel off campus for a fun activity. We will also have a daily devotion alongside the VBS program. We can't wait for Daycamp 2021 for our students to make new friends, build relationships, grow in faith, and give back to others in our mission focus.

2020 brought challenges that none of us expected. Just as those who have come before us have been brought out of hard times, I believe that 2021 is the year we will understand how God comes to deliver us and be able to experience the goodness of our true and faithful God. Our hope and prayer for all students is that they grow so strong in their faith in Jesus Christ that they, "show themselves an example of those who believe."



YOUTH MINISTRY

Riley Harris & Elizabeth Fink



The Youth Ministry at First Church is designed and purposed to bring our students into a relationship with Jesus Christ and to build a foundation on that relationship that will carry them through their school years and beyond. The youth ministry has gone through some unexpected trials and transitions this past year, but we believe that God is delivering us from a wilderness period and bringing us into a year of renewal. One way we have seen this already is with the blessing of having hired a dedicated Junior High Youth Minister, Elizabeth Fink, and a dedicated Senior High Youth Minister and Director of Student Ministries, Riley Harris. This expansion of our staff will enable us to reach more students and give our students the individual and intentional support they need. This development has also created a lot of excitement amongst staff, students, and their families!

As we enter into this new year we pray that the presence of God will continue to feel near and certain in First Youth as we resume our youth programming. On Sunday evenings

beginning in January our Junior and Senior High students will have an opportunity to gather together for a meal, games, and a worship service led by our incredible worship team. This gathering, called Crossroads, is an amazing opportunity for everyone to not only grow closer together as peers, but also in their own individual faith as we are able to dive deep into topics that are relevant to our youth today. We also look forward to starting a Confirmation "Reboot" on Sunday nights for our students who were not able to be confirmed last spring due to complications related to covid.

During the week you will find our Sr. High students meeting throughout the community in Small Groups. These groups are led by a spiritually gifted group of volunteers that have the unique ability to discuss and navigate intentional topics that meet our students where they are. We are excited for the future of our Small Groups and what they will continue to provide in the spiritual maturation of our students as well as the development of a strong sense of Godly community.

This past summer we were blessed to still be able to safely host a LMP "One Day" event. This day included completing service projects in our community and ending with an evening worship service. In looking ahead to this summer we are excited to be in the preparation process for Local Mission Project 2021. We cannot wait to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this very special event as we bring our students together with churches from around the state to carry out a needed mission in our local community. Our theme for this year will be "Set Free" taken from John 8:32.

We are praying and hoping for great things in 2021! We cannot do what we do for our students without the help and support of the whole congregation, to which we are eternally grateful. May all that we do be glorifying to God.



MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Joshua Bland

Our community is hurting. As we move out of a very difficult 2020, this may seem like an understatement. Nevertheless, we can rejoice that we serve a God who has come to deliver and who is still in the process of making all things new! Hear that, brothers and sisters: he is making all things new!

In the midst of the pandemic that swept across the world, we saw some changes to our missions. For two months, His Helping Hands closed their doors; when they reopened, they began working under an appointment model that allows only one person in at a time to shop for their family. Daily Bread switched to a drive through and, for several months, offered not just one but two meals a week. Bread of Life switched to a drive through until the beginning of November, when they opened their doors to our neighbors using a reduced occupancy model. All of our missions were impacted: Christopher's House, Scholastic Mission, Local Mission Project, and our international missions with our sister churches in Cuba and Peru. Even our special mission events, such as Badges & BBQ and the Alternative Christmas Market, were put on hold.



Praise God, that is not the end of this story. Even with the changes and transitions that our missions have been

through, God is moving and we are seeing lives transformed! Our church family gave tremendously in support of our brothers and sisters overseas. Our missions teams went above and beyond to creatively love our neighbors, working to protect them and protect one another even as we continued to share resources and the hope of the Gospel. When not as many people were able to come to Bread of Life to receive food, they established new partnerships to send food out into our community. When not as many could come in at His Helping Hands, the ministry team there began putting clothes out on the sidewalk for anyone to come by and get what they needed. We saw the birth of a new Community Christmas Shoppe, joining together the ministries of His Helping Hands, Scholastic Mission, and First Moms to serve over 240 families (over 1,550 people) in our community.



Moving into 2021, we are thrilled to continue this story! We will continue to envision, create, and adapt within our mission field to better love and serve our neighbors. We will continue to watch over one another in love as we equip, encourage, and empower one another to share the hope of Christ as we share our time, our gifts, and our resources. We will keep engaging our neighbors: yes, welcoming them into our missions and into our church, but also by going out to where their hurt is. Our Lord Jesus entered into the brokenness of human community and experience, and we will follow Him to those places because He has come to seek and to save the lost. He has come to deliver!



MUSIC MINISTRY

Rev. Danny Reding

When spoken words fail us, we sing! There is music in just about every celebration. Whether it's a birthday party or the 4th of July, someone will be singing and often it is many voices singing together. Music also gives voice to our sorrow and grief. Who has not been moved by strains of "Amazing Grace" in times of sorrowful reflection?

Our church will focus this year on the theme of God's deliverance and our music in worship will often give us just the right words to hear and sing. Our expressions will continue a long tradition of celebrating God's deliverance through song. Psalm 32:7 says, "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." In an even earlier time, Miriam, the sister of Moses, led the people in celebration and thanksgiving for God's deliverance from Pharaoh's army. Deborah, the judge, sang these words, "Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I will sing to the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song." Then there were the songs of Zechariah about the birth of his son, John the Baptist and Mary about the birth of Jesus. Who can forget those magnificent words, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior."

The early church kept singing God's praises and we have fragments of some of their songs preserved in the New Testament. Songs such as Philippians 2 that ends with soaring words of ecstatic joy, "So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Paul even taught the church to include music as part of their spiritual training as he said they should "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).



We, in the Methodist church, have the unparalleled musical riches from Charles and John Wesley. There is no Christian denomination or group whose worship has not been enriched by their contribution to Christian hymnody.

This tradition endures at First Church. Our musicians will continue to find ways to lead us in worship during a time that is unlike any we have experienced before. We applaud the members of our First Praise and Cornerstone Bands along with the Chancel Choir and even an appearance by the Celebration Ringers for their faithfulness 2020, a time when many people thought the music would have to stop.

2021 will be another year of challenges and opportunities. With God's help, we intend to meet them all and continue offering music in our services that honors God and gives us the language to worship him. We envision a music ministry that fully embraces all the gifts that God has given to the members of our church, young and old, traditional and contemporary, classical and even an occasional hootenanny!

So, as we look forward to worship in 2021 we invite you to enter into worship with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. No one can sing your song for you and our worship is always stronger when every voice is heard.

Along with Michael Cooper, Patrick Hall, and Ernest Whitmore, it is a joy to serve God with you in worship.

AGAPE FELLOWSHIP

Rev. Rob Williams



We understand that the whole world is held under bondage by sin and the One who has come to deliver and to take that bondage away is Jesus Himself. He sustains us no matter what trials we face and leads us into His victory. We in turn take this freedom from slavery and share God's life of promise in our homes and workplaces.

Agape Campus is grateful to be part of the community of First Church's mission here in Springdale. We are becoming faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and are excited at the promises of God for 2021. The Covid Pandemic has been a trial for us as it has been for all, but we know that this too shall pass and brighter days are ahead for our fellowship.

This year to accommodate social distancing safety precautions, we have done a little rearranging. Sunday Morning Worship remains at 10am in-person and streaming live on Facebook.

Adult discipleship is on Wednesdays at 6:00pm. Our small groups have had setbacks during Covid but we intend to have every person in a Grow group during this year as we become able to meet again safely. The importance of the body of Christ coming together and reading the Bible and advocating for one another is integral to the Great Commission. The gifts of the Spirit and the 5-fold ministry of the church requires that each person is in ministry and is a vital part of God's plan.

Agape Youth has moved to Friday nights and our youth minister, Regina Capps, and her team will continue to put our amazing outdoor pavilion and fire pit to use for great youth nights.

One ministry that has literally flourished during Covid is the Agape Farm and Market. For over 5 years, this community garden has extended Agape's outreach. An incredible group of volunteers from both campuses has actively utilized the Agape property spring through fall for the Garden and Saturday Market. Youth help run the Saturday markets, both selling and giving produce away. Proceeds from the Market help fund our children's and youth programs, sending our community youth to camp and investing in their growth. As we walk these paths we have never travelled before into the year 2021, we can all begin to see with new eyes that we are, even now, in a land that is good and broad, flowing with milk and honey.





First United Methodist Church
206 W. Johnson Ave.
Springdale, AR 72764
479-751-4610
FirstChurchSpringdale.org