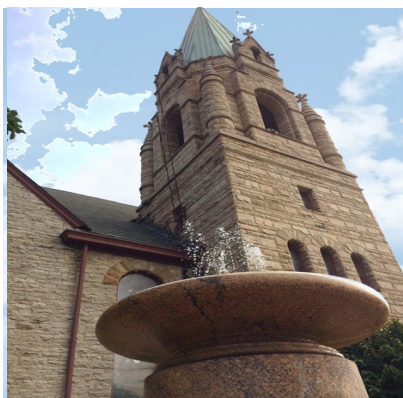




The Ambassador

May 2026

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*"If it were not so, would I have told you that
I go to prepare a place for you?
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come again and will take you to myself,
so that where I am, there you may be also."
- Jesus
John 14:2-3*

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you, but I find it hard to say goodbye. My sister-in-law was visiting from Chicago the last weekend of April. She had her car packed and was planning to head home after worship. We had such a good time with her that we didn't want to say goodbye. We kept talking about future trips and when we would see each other again. And right as she put her hand on the office door to leave, I blurted out, "Do you want to see our church's Edie Harper print?" Of course she did! So, we went in to see the artwork and then started the goodbye process all over again. I think by the time she left, we must have said 'Goodbye' and 'I love you' about half a dozen times. Goodbyes are hard!

In the Gospel of John, Jesus and the disciples struggle with saying goodbye to each other, too. Jesus offers assurances and the disciples stumble over questions regarding logistics. It takes three whole chapters of John's gospel for the goodbye to happen! Scholars call this Jesus' Farewell Discourse and it can be found beginning in John 14:1 through John 16:33. Like most goodbyes, it does not follow a linear train of thought but it does weave a beautiful tapestry where Jesus assures the disciples they are not alone, he encourages them to abide in his love, he reminds them that they are chosen, and offers them the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, we know these words to not be promises Jesus offers only to the disciples but promises God offers to the faithful throughout time. Amid transitions, changes, and goodbyes, may we find assurance, encouragement, and hope in these beloved words. We are not alone as we seek to be faithful in this challenging world.

Staff

Senior Pastor Kim Armentrout
Assoc. Pastor Daniel Cardenas
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Building Supt. Greg Cooper
Office Mgr. Pam Fugett
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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

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May we find strength in each other, in God's word, and in the abiding presence of God.

Peace,
Pastor Kim
<><

Resurrected

Our Easter 2026 Worship Series continues in May

The season of Easter, lasting 50 days, is an invitation for us to celebrate and experience the new life that God offers. Just as in our part of the world, the earth comes alive in spring, we are encouraged to allow God's resurrection work to unfold in and through us. Inspired by a prayer entitled, "A Liturgy for the Ritual of Morning Coffee" in Every Moment Holy, Volume 1, this worship series will continue to guide us in experiencing Easter and resurrection not just as a day, but as a season of new life. We are resurrected!



<u>Date</u>	<u>Sermon Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
5.3.2026	Resurrected Faith	John 14:1-14
5.10.2026	Resurrected Love	John 14:15-21
5.17.2026	Aware and Awake	John 14:25-27

Out of Town

Pastor Kim will be out of the office beginning May 20th through May 29th. She will be in Boonville, Missouri with her aunt as her aunt recovers from knee surgery. If you need pastoral care while she is away, please contact Pastor Daniel. Our District Superintendent, Rev. Suzanne Allen will be preaching for us while Pastor Kim is away.



Worship on the Go

The first week of Easter, a few of us went to take our celebration of Easter on the road. We visited folks from our church who could not be with us in Easter worship like they wanted to. We shared the Easter story, sang hymns, prayed, and celebrated resurrection together. We take worship-on-the-go a few times a year. If you would like us to visit you, give the church office a call and we will put you on the visit list!

New Worship Series this Summer!

On Sunday, May 31st we begin a new worship series that will focus on the parables of Jesus. The series, entitled Summer Reading, will explore these short stories Jesus tells to teach us about so many aspects of faithfulness: what the kingdom of God is like, how to love our neighbors, the depths of God's love, and so much more. Be on the lookout: more information will be coming soon about this series!

A Note from Rev. Daniel Cardenas, Associate Pastor

While I was preparing my sermon for Sunday, April 26, God was comforting my soul by reminding me that He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus did not use this image randomly; Instead, He chose it with purpose to show His people and His disciples that they were not alone, and that if they allowed themselves to be guided and cared for by Him, they would have life—and life in abundance. However, during my preparation, one question kept coming to my mind: what makes Jesus the Good Shepherd? In other words, what makes Him different from the rest? Because at the time Jesus spoke these words, there were already many shepherds and leaders guiding the people. Still, their way of leading was very different from what Jesus was doing during those three years of ministry. So, what makes Jesus different? From what I have studied in Scripture, Jesus is the Good Shepherd—different from all others—because:

1. He is close.

John 10:3 tells us that the sheep hear His voice, and He calls them by name. This shows a deep, personal, and close relationship between the Shepherd and His sheep. While many leaders stayed distant or were insensitive, Jesus did the opposite. He came close to the marginalized, walked with the outcasts, and spoke with those who had no access to religious spaces. Christ did not watch life from a distance; He entered into it and walked side by side with people.

2. He guides with authority and gentleness.

Jesus is not only close; He also leads with wisdom and purpose. He knows what His sheep need and guides them with loving care. His authority is not harsh or controlling, but restoring. He does not place burdens to control people, but leads them into life. No matter how lost we are, Christ is not only near—He also leads us with faithfulness.

3. He gives abundant life.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd because His work is not about taking advantage, but about restoring. While some leaders oppressed the people and placed heavy burdens on them, Jesus offers rest, care, and provision. He leads His sheep to green pastures and still waters. His purpose is not to exhaust His sheep, but to give them full, abundant, and true life. This truth is not only a theological reflection, but also a daily invitation. We live in a world where many voices try to guide us—some promise security, others power, and others instant satisfaction. But not all of these voices care for the soul.

So today we are called to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd and trust His guidance. This means learning to pause in the middle of the noise, to discern which voice we are following, and to intentionally return to Christ when we feel lost or weary. And if today you feel distant, confused, or overwhelmed, remember this: The Good Shepherd not only sees you, but He calls you by name. He has not lost interest in you, nor has He stepped away from your story. His invitation is still open: come to Him and find rest, direction, and life in abundance.

Con Cariño.
Pastor Daniel Cardenas =)

Mother's Day is Sunday May 10

We will celebrate all the women in our congregation by providing carnations to each woman attending our worship service that Sunday. So many women in our congregation have touched our lives, whether they are our mothers or not; thru a homemade meal, a listening ear, a hug, a kind word, and so many other acts of "motherliness" throughout the year. We appreciate and love all of you!



Pentecost is Sunday May 24

We wear red on Pentecost Sunday to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire above the heads of the disciples. This is the beginning of the ministry of the disciples. Wear something red to celebrate the birthday of the Church!

Celebrating Pastor Daniel

In the four years that Pastor Daniel has been with us, he has done so much! In addition to doubling the size of his family, Pastor Daniel has received his Master's of Divinity from United Theological Seminary. He has completed local pastor's school and has received his Local Pastor's License. And he has passed his interviews to be a provisional elder in the West Ohio Conference. In the fall we are going to be celebrating Pastor Daniel's ministry and accomplishments but you do not have to wait until then. You are welcome to attend Pastor Daniel's graduation from United Theological Seminary. It will be this month, on Saturday, May 16th at 10:00 a.m. at Christian Life Center in Dayton. If you would like more information, please contact the church office.



In addition to the graduation ceremony, Pastor Daniel will be commissioned at the West Ohio Conference Celebration of Ministry on Friday, May 29th at 7:00 p.m. at Capital University in Bexley, OH. All are welcome to attend the Celebration of Ministry worship service. More information about the fall celebration will be coming soon.

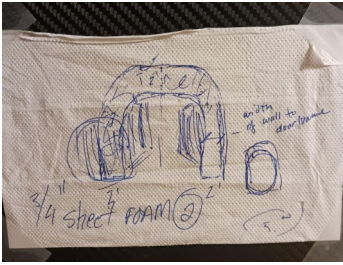
Storytelling Workshop Update

We had a wonderful time with Janet Steele who is from the Network of Biblical Storytellers. She came and shared with us some techniques on how to move scripture from the page into our minds and hearts. Her workshop is on the church's website as well as the documents she shared. She also shared scripts for the gospel lessons each Sunday during our summer worship series on the parables of Jesus. Pastor Kim's hope is to have all the parables this summer be told rather than read in worship. If you are interested in being a storyteller this summer, please call the church office and let us know. There are still a half dozen Sundays that need to be covered.

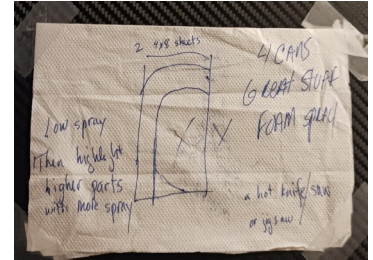
Janet is returning to us on Sunday, May 17th at 2:00 p.m. to check in and see how we are doing in learning stories and to answer any questions we may have.

A great big thank you to everyone who came to the workshop and to Janet and her leadership.

What do Southwest Airlines, Pixar Movies, Shark Week and FUMC's Easter Tomb have in common?



They all started with a great idea and a napkin sketch!



Pastor Kim has had the idea of bringing in the Easter flowers for quite some time, so finally this year we decided to do it. Her idea was to create the unpredictable feeling of that first Easter—not being sure what to expect or know what was happening. I hope at least some of you were surprised when you entered the sanctuary and found no flowers in the Chancel area! The Design Team, and ultimately the volunteers who were at rehearsal the day before, were so excited to hold this secret and watch reactions that Sunday morning.



This could not have been created without the professional experience and expertise of Charley Shafor, Managing Artistic Director of the Middletown Lyric Theatre. Charley has set design experience in New York, Delaware, Iowa, and locally for many years. He was happy to help and came in with a plan and materials. Our Worship Design Committee met in the Fellowship Hall on several occasions to construct and paint



the arch and the stone. Edwin Toy, also of MLT, installed the newly created arch and stone and secured it in a way not to damage the walls or wood.

Thank you to everyone who had a part in making Easter worship special. And if you would like to join the worship team, please call the church office and let us know. There's a space just for you!





Finance Committee

The chairman of the Finance Committee is John Hoffman. There are 12 other members of the committee. Each member's term is three years and with a rotating schedule, the makeup of the committee changes every year. This committee is charged with managing the finances for the church. Simply put, they monitor our income and expenses each month. Of

course, there is nothing simple about it! They make sure that we are aware of the need and help to design our Stewardship campaign. They make sure that the checkbook balances and that the bills are paid in a timely manner. With over 100 potential sources of income and almost that amount of potential expenses, this is not a simple task. The committee works closely with the Treasurer and Financial Secretary so as to have a clear and accurate financial picture.

Celebrating Baptisms

On Easter Sunday, April 5, we were honored to participate in the baptisms of Sophia and Sidney Wallace. They are the daughters of Jason & Amanda Wallace and the granddaughters of Luanne Fugate. Sophia is in the 8th grade and Sidney is in the 6th grade at Preble Shawnee Middle School.



West Ohio Annual Conference

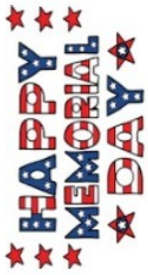


This year the conference will be held May 28-30 on the campus of Capital University in Bexley Ohio. Laity and clergy come together to celebrate the work that has been, the work that is being done, and help fashion the work of the future. This body elects representative to the Jurisdictional and General Conferences of the United Methodist Church. It also votes on legislation that affect just the West Ohio Conference as well as legislation that comes from General Conference that affects ALL United Methodist Churches. All clergy are considered part of the body. Each church, in the conference, elects lay representatives based on each church's membership. In an effort to balance the number of lay representatives against the number of clergy, each district within the conference also has lay delegates that represent the district instead of an individual church. Our district, Great Miami River, is always looking for members of our faith community to be "delegates at large". If you'd like to learn more about being a delegate at large or a lay delegate from our church, please call the church office and we can help you.

Pastor Kim and Pastor Daniel will be attending as clergy from First UMC. Mark Frazer and Pam Fugett will be attending as lay delegates. Mark is FUMC's lay delegate and Pam is a district delegate at large.

May 2026

Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	4 8:00 Breakfast Club	5 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Congr. Care 2:00 Pantry	6 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	7	1 Noon First Friday Concert	2
10 Mother's Day 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	11 8:00 Breakfast Club	12 10:00 Staff Mtg 1:00 SPRC 2:00 Pantry	13 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	14	15	16 10:00 Pastor Daniel's Graduation from UTS
17 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 2:00 Storytelling Workshop pt. 2	18 8:00 Breakfast Club	19 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:00 Council Mtg	20 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	21	22 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	23
24 PENTECOST 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship RED is the color of the day	25 8:00 Breakfast Club	26 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 6:30 Trustees	27 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	28 West Ohio	29 Annual 7:00 Pastor Daniel's Commissioning service	30 Conference
31 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship					Dates to remember in June: 5 First Friday 7 Communion 21 Father's Day Early June birthday: 1 Erin Edgen	

John Regensburg 01
 Becky Rogers 04
 Shirley Fields 06
 Judy Thorn 07
 Susan Beagle 17
 Tom Piper 19
 Brenda Byrd
 Jim Gayhart
 Mary Nichol 20
 Vickie Frazer 22
 Pam Fugett 23
 Tammy White 26
 Marian McGuire 29
 Tucker Smarzinski 30

Happy Birthday!



2026 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

**May 1, 2026
Raison d'Etre**

Singing together for over 30 yrs., the close harmonies of the Swing Era, the Old West, and more come together in an eclectic mix that's sure to please every listener.

**First UMC - Middletown
@ noon**

Free Admission

***Date change due to Good Friday**

first
church
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a united methodist community
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Middletown, OH 45044