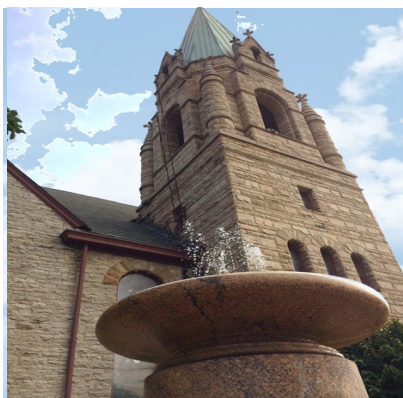




The Ambassador

September 2026

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*"For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
Psalm 139:13-14*

Dear Friends,

As you may know, my family and I have been on a roller coaster since returning home from our vacation in July. While we were on vacation my husband developed a pressure sore. It got really bad, really quick, resulting in a six-day hospital stay and an unplanned surgery. Since he has been home, we have learned new skills in wound care as well as developing new routines as we make this six-month healing pilgrimage.

We have had moments of frustration to be sure, but we have also had time to marvel at how the human body is both frail and resilient, how we can be both weak and strong, and how in the words of one of our guest preachers in August, we can be both helpless and powerful. The words of Psalm 139 have come to my mind and filled my heart repeatedly: we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Thanks be to God!

Life is messy. We are full of contradictions. And God is there for all of it.

We begin a new worship series in September called Messy – God's love for imperfect people (see page 2 for more info). When I planned this series, I did not realize I would be living it so fully, but there you have it. Growing up can be messy, too, and full of contradictions. We begin a new confirmation class this fall and our young people could use your support (see page 5 for more info). We also have messiness with the joy of choir season returning (see page 4), mixed in with the sadness of Pastor Daniel's time with us coming to an end (see pages 3 and 5).

Staff

Senior Pastor Kim Armentrout
Assoc. Pastor Daniel Cardenas
Worship Mary Ellen Clinard
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Worship With Us

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

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The other night my husband remarked about how there are miracles right before our very eyes and we just don't recognize them as miracles. It was less than one hundred years ago, in the 1940s that antibiotics began to be used for fighting infections, before then people with spinal cord injuries just didn't live. They would die within weeks of their injury. The fact that my husband is expected to heal from this is a miracle

You are a miracle, too. If you feel frail, resilient, weak, strong, helpless, powerful, or a combination of any or all of these – you are a miracle. Fearfully and wonderfully made by a God who loves you. And God is not alone – your church family and I love you too!

Blessings,
Pastor Kim
<><

MESSY

Worship Series for September & October 2026

I love planning. I love lists. I write most of my sermons on graph paper and I take all my notes on graph paper. When I finish a notebook, I will flip through it, write the main highlights on the cover, date the cover, number it, and sit it on my shelf. I like to organize and be organized.

But the spiritual life is not one of organization. As much as I want to experience a nice, steady, straight line of ascension from left to right, this is not the way discipleship works. Ugh. There are zigs and zags, ups and downs, scribbles and doodles, stops and starts. It is messy.

And God embraces us in the mess. This sermon series will directly contradict the belief:

I must be perfect to be loveable and loved.

We will explore the love of God for imperfect people throughout this series. We will see multiple messes that people have made and we will look and notice that the grace of God is at work – right there amid brokenness.



<u>Date</u>	<u>Sermon</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Preacher</u>
9.13.2026	What a Mess	Luke 22:54-62	Pastor Kim
9.20.2026	Messy Faith	John 21:1-19	Pastor Kim
9.27.2026	Mess Resisters	Mark 10:46-52	Pastor Kim

A Note from Rev. Daniel Cardenas, Associate Pastor

Jesus, our Savior.
Matthew 16: 22-33

A few weeks ago, I preached about the episode in which Jesus walks on water, reaches out to Peter and saves him from drowning, and finally calms the storm.

As I prepared that sermon, I could not help but see myself in that boat—or, even worse, slowly sinking into the depths of the sea just as Peter did.

As many of you know, this November my family and I will be returning to Mexico. Ever since we made that decision, we have found ourselves surrounded by the strong winds and high waves of uncertainty, doubt, and exhaustion. Little by little, our home has been emptied as everything has been packed into boxes. Some things have been donated, while others have been sold, and all of this has brought a certain sadness.

As we pack, it is impossible not to remember everything we have experienced and gone through during these years here in the United States. So many memories, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, and experiences.

On top of all of this, we also feel the sadness of leaving behind the ministries we have been part of. Without a doubt, we will miss all the love that First UMC has shown us. We will miss the Hispanic ministry, Corazones Ardientes. And it is painful to say goodbye to Pleasant Ridge UMC.

Taken together, all of this feels like a storm that forces us to row with all our strength. At times, it feels as though it will never end. Yet, as I went back to my sermon notes and reviewed what I was going to preach that week, God began to bring the calm described in the Gospels. I could feel Him holding our hands and bringing us back to the surface once again. By His grace, strength, and presence, God was carrying us toward a safe and peaceful harbor.

Even when the storms of life are harsh and relentless, we must never doubt the real presence of Christ in our lives. Sometimes it may seem as though the waters are flooding our boats, but even then, the Lord is there, ready to reach out His hand and never let us go until He brings us to a place of safety.

Thank You, Lord. Truly, You are our Savior!

Amen.

Con Cariño.
Pastor Daniel Cardenas =)

If you looked up the word “choir” in a thesaurus you would find alternative words such as “ensemble”, “vocalists”, and “carolers”. Actually there aren’t all that many synonyms for the word “choir” to be found. That’s unfortunate, because I think that if church choir members would be allowed to add to that list, the words “team players”, “support group”, and “family”, would show up frequently. In addition, most of us know that the emotional, mental, and physical benefits of singing together in a group is widely documented and as a choir, we have experienced those benefits personally. After choir practice you just FEEL better, you’ve taken in larger amounts of oxygen, you’ve used parts of your brain that stimulates cognitive memory, reasoning, and emotion. The endorphins are buzzing!



On Sunday morning in the choir loft, your choir may appear to be calm and collected, but unless you've witnessed the craziness that went on 30 minutes before the service in rehearsal, you can't fully appreciate what you hear! After we have adapted, re-arranged, and rehearsed, we always pray that God will use our music to touch the heart and soul of our congregation so that the message will be heard and it will be used to help our congregation grow closer to God. Then we give it to God, head down the steps and enter the sanctuary. More than once we have been surprised that an anthem that was flawed and unsteady in rehearsal becomes strong and meaningful in worship. And to me, that moment is sacred—we have personally experienced God moving through our music in spite of our human weakness.

If you would like to experience being closer to God through music, **we start our “Fall Choir Season” with a potluck on Wednesday, Sept. 2nd at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall.** Guests and potential members don’t need to bring anything except themselves. There will be food, games, and singing. Try us out for a month or so to see if it's something you might like to experience! No musical background necessary, we will teach you! Choir rehearsals are on Wednesdays at either 3pm or 7pm in the Choir Room. Let me know if you are thinking about it—I would love to answer any questions you may have!

Mary Ellen Clinard

WORSHIP COMMITTEE



This committee is team of individuals. Some of them help to design the sanctuary and create visual and take-home worship materials that reflect and enhance each worship series throughout the year. Some of them “tidy up” the sanctuary during the week and after any mid-week events to ensure that there are adequate hymnals, offering envelopes, pencils, etc. for Sunday worship. Some arrange special flowers at Easter & Christmas. This team of 8 individuals is led by Mary Ellen Clinard and

works behind the scenes to enhance our worship experience.

CONFIRMATION

This fall we will be starting a confirmation class – and confirmation is an all-church event. We are in need of people to provide snacks, chaperone classes and events, co-teach with Pastor Kim, and help with at least one overnight. And of course – we need your prayers for our young people, that this be a time of spiritual formation and growth for them as they prepare to confirm their baptismal vows for themselves.



If you would like to live out YOUR baptismal vows by “surrounding these young people with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others” please call the church office and let us know! Thank you!



MESSY CHURCH UPDATE

Last month the church newsletter announced that we would be starting a new ministry called Messy Church, an inter-generational ministry that provides a place for people to be welcomed in God's grace and invited to grow in God's love. After prayer, discernment, and some further training, the team has decided to delay the start of Messy Church until the winter.

Please continue to keep the team, the ministry, and the people we hope to reach in your prayers. More information about Messy Church will be coming forward in the months ahead.

PASTOR DANIEL IS RETURNING TO MEXICO

Sunday, October 11, 2026 will be Pastor Daniel and his family's last Sunday with FUMC. He will be preaching that Sunday and the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is planning to celebrate by having a traditional American cookout following the worship service. SPRC will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, buns, drinks and dessert. We are asking the congregation to bring side dishes of their choice.

We are asking the congregation to participate in a love offering that will assist Pastor Daniel's return to Mexico. He has obtained financial assistance from the West Ohio Conference and the Great Miami River District. In order for Pastor Daniel to make payment for the necessary expenses, we are asking that your love gift be made to the church office by September 15.

Please mark your calendars and plan to be in worship on October 11 and join us as we celebrate Pastor Daniel's ministry with us. If you have any questions, please talk with a member of SPRC. (Barb Balsmeyer, Melanie Alderton, Marilyn Clark, Sue Faulkner, Lynda Goecke, Sally Jo Inwood, Ken Krummrich, Rick Lyke, J.C. Shew, Mike Snyder)

Great Miami River District Annual Celebration

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2026

9:30 am - Noon

First UMC Middletown

120 S. Broad St.

Middletown, OH 45044

Guest Speaker: Rev. Kim Armentrout

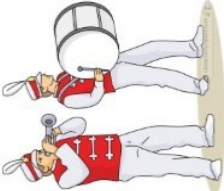
No cost/No registration

Join us for our Annual Celebration, a time for fellowship, business, and inspiring moments.

We will be presenting the 2027 budget for approval and electing our 2027 District Team.

All are welcome - you do not need to be a member of United Women in Faith, just a supporter. Come and see what we do and be inspired by our speaker!

September 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 6 COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	 7 8:00 Breakfast Club	1 10 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	2 6:00 Hispanic Study 6:00 Choir Potluck 7:00 Choir Rhrl	3 9:30 Worship Committee	4 10:00 UWFaith Board 12:00 First Friday Concert	5 John Regensburg's Memorial Service 12:30 Visitation 1:30 Service
6 COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	7 8:00 Breakfast Club	8 10 Staff Mtg 1:00 SFR 2:00 Pantry	9 NO Hispanic Study NO Choir	10 2:00 Elizabeth Cir: @ Mt. Pleasant	11 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans	12 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans
13 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 12:00 Messy Church Team	14 8:00 Breakfast Club	15 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:00 Council Mtg	16 6:00 Hispanic Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	17 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	18 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	19 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE
20 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	21 8:00 Breakfast Club	22 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 6:30 Trustees	23 NO Hispanic Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	24 GMR UWFaith Annual Celebration 9:30—Noon	25 GMR UWFaith Annual Celebration 9:30—Noon	26 GMR UWFaith Annual Celebration 9:30—Noon
27 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	28 8:00 Breakfast Club	29 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	30 6:00 Hispanic Study 3:00 & 7:00 Choir	Oct. Reminders: 2 First Friday Concert 11 Pastor Daniel's celebration Early Oct. Birthdays: Virginia Jenkins 4th Bob Rogers 4th Jen Tucker 4th		

Birthdays

Destiny Back 04
 Larkin Ward 04
 Barb Wright 04
 Silas Chapman 05
 Anahi Hernandez 07
 Sandy Shifflet 07
 Marti Kreps 10
 Gary Rutledge 10
 Cooper Smarzynski 10
 Daniel Cardenas 11
 Reece Edgren 11
 Brent Alexander 15
 John Hoffman 17
 Juanita Harsh 24
 Melanie Alderton 26
 Jim White 26
 Barb Hoffman 28
 Gloria Garrett 29

Happy Birthdays!



2026 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

September 4, 2026

Dean Simms and Rich Begel

Louis Armstrong Tribute Artists

First UMC - Middletown

@ noon

Free Admission