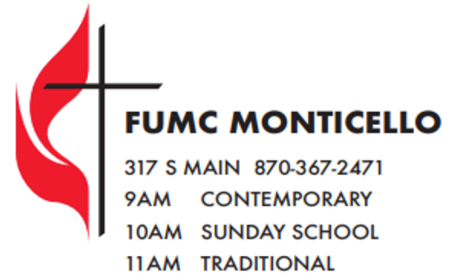


Reflections

August 2026



Dear Church Family,

August has a way of reminding us that every season brings new beginnings. As summer gradually gives way to a new school year, many of our families are preparing for fresh routines, new teachers, new classrooms, and new opportunities. Whether you are a student, parent, grandparent, educator, or simply someone who enjoys cheering on the next generation, this is a wonderful time to pray for those beginning another school year.

Scripture reminds us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart...and God will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Those words offer encouragement not only for students but for all of us. Every new season invites us to place our confidence in God's guidance rather than our own understanding. My prayer is that every child, teenager, teacher, administrator, and school employee in our community experiences God's wisdom, protection, and peace throughout the year.

As a church, we have the privilege of surrounding our schools with prayer and supporting families as they navigate busy schedules. A kind word, a listening ear, or a simple act of encouragement can become a powerful witness to Christ's love.

This month also marks a personal milestone as I celebrate my 55th birthday. Birthdays naturally invite reflection, and I find myself deeply grateful for God's faithfulness through every chapter of life and ministry. I am especially thankful for the blessing of serving this congregation. Your prayers, encouragement, and partnership in ministry have made these years rich with purpose and joy.

While another birthday is a reminder that time moves quickly, it is also a reminder that God continues to call us forward. There is still important work to do, people to love, lives to touch, and good news to share. I am excited about what God has in store for our church in the months ahead.

As August unfolds, I encourage each of us to embrace this new season with renewed faith, hopeful hearts, and a willingness to follow wherever Christ leads. May God strengthen our families, bless our students and educators, and continue shaping our church into a community where all people encounter the grace and love of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your pastor. It is a privilege I never take for granted.

Grace and peace,

Bro. Bryan

FUMY returned home from an AMAZING mission trip to Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota with Next Step Ministries just in time to celebrate our country's 250th Independence Day on July 4th! The mission trip changed our hearts & our lives. We experienced a lot and cannot wait to share more about our trip in the coming months! ***HUGE Thank You to Steven Harvey, Valerie Harvey & Andi Wagner for sharing chaperone responsibilities with me on the trip.*** In addition to our mission trip, we also returned to Lakeside UMC in Pine Bluff to read with some kids attending "Project Transformation." For fun, we had a couple of game nights & a swim party plus we played golf at Top Golf and we went bowling! Zoey Hunter & I had the opportunity to attend Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry's annual event "Assembly" at Hendrix College. I was the speaker for the week and was blessed to preach 9 times to 250 youth & adults. Our Zoey is now on the Conference Youth Team, representing our South district and our church AND she is serving as the secretary! We are so proud of her!

On July 31, we held our annual FUMY Planning Retreat and rolled on into August by spending the night in the youth room! During our planning retreat we planned our youth calendar for 2026-27, had some great fellowship, elected our FUMY officers, decided our mission trip destination for 2027 (Kentucky) and our mission projects plus we had another awesome around-the-town scavenger hunt! ***Thank you to Maggie Brown for spending the night with us and Renee' Holland for feeding us a yummy supper! Thank you to Maggie, Andi Wagner & Honey Talley for driving the youth around town.*** And now we look toward August for some last minute summer fun right before school resumes! ***We are so excited to welcome youth that are in the 7th to 12th grade to come & get to know our incredible group.*** We have so much love to share! We have plans to go eat pizza and watch the new *Spider Man* movie plus we plan to pray around town before school begins. We'll be doing some meaningful lessons on what it means to make an impact for Jesus & as always, we'll be having some fun, too! We'll end the month by with our monthly prayer breakfast on August 28.

We cannot thank all of you enough for the many ways that each of you supports our youth! Please continue praying for our youth. They are truly being the hands & feet of Jesus. May the Lord bless you & keep you....***always!***

Christ above all, *Lori*



Reminders:

- July 31-August 1:** FUMY Planning Retreat @ FUMC, 5 pm-9 am
- August 5:** FUMY out to eat & to see new *Spider Man* movie
- August 10:** FUMY to pray around town, plus eat supper & have fun
- August 12 & 19:** FUMY Mid-Week resumes, 5-7 pm
- August 15:** Mission Work: Help move UAM students into dorms, 8 am-noon
- August 16:** FUMY Sunday night schedule resumes with Small Groups, Supper & Fun, 5-7 pm
- August 26:** FUMC "Wednesday Night Kick Off" fun & supper (FLC), 5-7 pm
- August 28:** FUMY Prayer Breakfast @ 7 am (FH)



Article for the FUMC Monticello monthly newsletter:

FIRST STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING RETREAT

As part of the effort to continue the work of planning for the future growth of the Monticello First United Methodist Church, approximately thirty-two dedicated church members, along with Rev. Bryan Diffey, met Friday, July 24, from 2:00 until 7:00 p.m. at Tommy Maxwell's camp. This site provided us a quiet place to begin work on the work of our church.

The session began with Bro. Bryan setting the tone for the meeting by sharing a message, offering communion and leading us in prayer.. Bro. Diffey shared the following verse and prayer:

"The Lord of hosts has sworn: As I have designed, so shall it be; and as I have planned, so shall it come to pass." Isaiah 14:24

Prayer:

"Lord God,

We desire to know Your preferred future for Monticello First United Methodist Church. We lift up our church and ask that you make us instruments of Your design. Break through our human limitations.

Show us Your way."

Amen

Belinda Carpenter led the group in reviewing input from the previous church-wide meeting and the surveys from all church members. Groups previewed the information and determined those areas that might be easy to address right now. Each group listed tasks that could be a "quick fix" and how they might be easily addressed.

Following this, the groups then moved on to address the largest areas of concerns in our church as identified by the church membership. Those areas are Children/Youth, College-Age/Young Adults, Middle-Aged/Seniors, and Technology/Re-Branding. In small groups, task forces were created to begin the work of looking at each of these areas and how to address them in our church. Each group created a list of church members to contact to work in one of these areas, with an invitation to any person in our church to join a group of interest.

The group enjoyed a meal together then came back together to determine next steps. We also discussed how best to share with the whole congregation and the need for additional times to come together as we explore plans and solutions for each area. As a group, it was agreed that we need to hear from our congregation. Persons are strongly encouraged to join one of these groups.

It was recognized that this will be a big undertaking and will be ongoing for 3-5 years. In the interim these "task forces" will be making regular reports to the Executive Committee, our pastor, and to fellow church members to keep us on track and to hold each of us accountable for implementing plans.

If you have questions, suggestions, concerns or if you want to take part working with one of these groups, please call or task the following Task Force leaders.

Children/Youth — Renee Holland 870-550-1281

College/Young Adult Ministry — Jill Brown 870-723-4195

Maggie Brown 870-723-4105

Middle-Age/Senior Adults — Anthony Brown 870-329-7342

Technology/Re-Branding — Amanda Harrod-Gilbert 870-723-4145

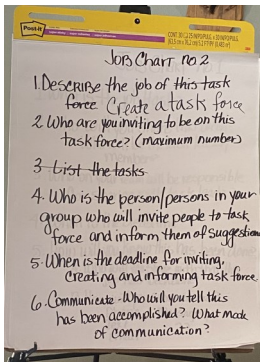
FIRST STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING RETREAT CONTINUED

This was the first planning meeting—the first of several other meetings will be held as we wish to provide everyone an opportunity to attend and to be involved in the work of our church. We ask that our congregation be in prayer as we all strive to share the message of Jesus Christ.

A very special “thank you” to the following:

- ♦ Thank you to Bro. Bryan for his leadership and support!
- ♦ Thank you to Belinda Carpenter for leading the work today!
- ♦ A huge thank you to each church member who took the time to come together to work and plan for the future of the Monticello First United Methodist Church!
- ♦ Thank you to Tommy Maxwell for opening his camp to this team!
- ♦ Thank you to Susan Sharp Smith for arranging, picking up and setting up the wonderful meal that was enjoyed by all!
- ♦ Thank you to Dalene Stephenson for the delicious homemade ice cream!

We invite and encourage each member of our congregation to consider joining one of the four teams to work toward the future of the Monticello United Methodist Church. Your ideas and leadership are needed!





FUMC Children's Ministries

As we look forward to a new school year, we are excited for all that God has in store for our students, teachers, school staff, and families.

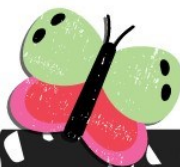
Let us keep them in our prayers, asking God to bless them with wisdom, protection, strength, and a successful year ahead!

Upcoming Dates:

August 9th: Blessing of the Backpacks during both services

August 26th: Back to School Kickoff from 5:00-7:00 pm

September 2nd: Wednesday after-school activities resume



FUMC College Ministry

Our Small Group meets on
Tuesday nights @ 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall
*We invite anyone out of high school to
join our group!*



For more info, contact
Maggie Brown @ 870-723-4051

MISSION Opportunity

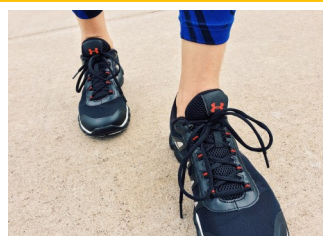


**Help move UAM freshmen
into their dorms**
Saturday, August 15
8 am to Noon

We need LOTS of help!
Free FUMC Volunteer t-shirts for all volunteers!
For more info or to sign up to help, contact
Maggie Brown @ 870-723-4051
or Pastor Lori @ 870-723-4968



Sole Purpose



What many don't realize is that Sole Purpose is a year round mission! Yes, we have a major event each fall when we invite our school children and their families into our church where we serve them. It is a day of rejoicing for them and for us, as well. But, throughout the year, as families need the additional help, all they have to do is call our church and we make sure the children have what they need.

It is also a year round event because of all of the months of planning and implementing. We have church members picking up coats from the schools and washing them in preparation for our fall event. We have members going to Options to pick up books, collecting and sorting them so they are ready to share with these children. Teams order coats and shoes, sometimes making trips to Little Rock and other places to find these items at a price we can afford. In July applications are created, printed and taken to the schools to be shared with parents at the schools' open houses. And so much more—all kinds of activity as we get ready for our day of sharing.

And now is our MAJOR fund-raising time. In an effort to make fund-raising easier on families, the few months before our Sole Purpose event, we have taken a collection during our Communion time. We only have two more collection times before the heavy duty purchasing begins. We try to raise at least \$8,000 each year. This year we have raised approximately \$3,000 to date. The good news is that we still have two more months! So we ask that you prayerfully consider making a donation sometime during the next two months. We are coming up on 10 YEARS of taking care of our children! And we will continue to do this as long as we can.

Thank you for your faithful support!



Scouting.... New Season New Adventures

Scouting across South Arkansas enjoyed an active and successful summer, with youth and volunteers participating in exciting outdoor adventures, leadership development, and program expansion. The season featured three major camping events at Camp De Soto in El Dorado—Cub Scout Day Camp, First Year Camper Weekend, and the Scouts BSA Wild Quest Camp—providing memorable experiences for Scouts of all ages. Two Scouts from the Monticello Troop also traveled to Philmont Scout Ranch in June, where they completed a challenging 90-mile trek through the rugged backcountry of New Mexico alongside fellow Scouts from across South Arkansas. Meanwhile, Monticello's

Scouting leadership has been preparing for new district responsibilities, focusing on rebuilding membership in communities that have lost Cub Scout Packs and Scouts BSA Troops over the past three to eight years while working to restore popular programs at Camp De Soto, including its Range and Target Activities.

Mark your calendars for our Scout Kick-Off on **August 31 from 5:00–7:00 p.m.** in the church fellowship hall as we begin an exciting new school year! this will be for both Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA. We look forward to another year of helping our Scouts build strong character, develop leadership, and learn valuable outdoor skills. We are also looking for Den Leader Assistants to help with special group activities on Monday nights. If you're interested in volunteering, please call or text Renee' at 870-550-1281. In addition, we are working to expand our range and target sports program and will be hosting a Range Safety Officer Training at Camp De Soto on August 29 for anyone interested in earning their NRA certification and assisting with future events at Camp De Soto. If you would like to participate, please contact Jonathan at 870-723-0996.



Weekly Events

Sundays:

9:00 AM In-person & Online Service
11:00 AM In-person & Online Service
10:00 AM Adult, Youth, and Children's
Sunday School
5:30 PM FUMY Bible Study
6:00 PM FUMY Supper
6:30 PM FUMY Small Groups

Tuesdays:

10:00 AM Prayer Team/weekly
12:00 PM Hopeful Hearts — 8/4
1:00 PM Staff Meeting — 8/11
1:30 PM Wilma Hankins-Wesley Room 8/4
6:00 PM Executive Council — 8/11
7:00 PM Bible Study for Young Adults FH

Wednesdays: Weekly

5:30 PM Wed. Kick-off Dinner 8/26
6:30 PM Chancel Choir 8/26
6:30 PM Small Group FLC Foyer/weekly
7:00 PM Praise Band

Thursdays:

11-12 PM Feed Our Neighbors
(Every other Thursday)



Fifth Sunday Meal & Service Schedule

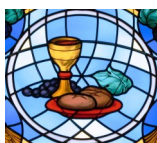
August 30, 2026 — 10 AM Meal; 11 AM Service
November 29, 2026 — 10 AM Meal; 9 AM Service
We need someone to coordinate the November 29 meal. If you are interested, call the church office at 367-2471.

Preaching Schedule for August

Aug. 2, 2026 Scripture: Psalm 72 Rev. Bryan Diffie
Aug. 9, 2026 Scripture: Psalm 25:1-10 Rev. Bryan Diffie
Aug. 16, 2026 Scripture: Psalm 100 Rev. Bryan Diffie
Aug. 23, 2026 Scripture: Psalm 42 Rev. Bryan Diffie
Aug. 30, 2026 Scripture: Psalm 46 Rev. Bryan Diffie

July Giving General Fund

July 5, 2026 — \$10,961
July 12, 2026 — \$6,322
July 19, 2026 — \$14,631
July 26, 2026 — \$9,914
Weekly Amount Needed to Make Budget — \$11,592
YTD Budget Giving \$343,756
YTD Budget deficit \$15,596



Communion in August will be on August 2 during the 9 AM and 11 AM service.



Hopeful Hearts will meet on August 4 @ noon in the Family Life Center.

July Attendance

July 5, 2026: 9 AM — 53; 11 AM — 42
July 12, 2026: 9 AM — 69; 11 AM — 39
July 19, 2026: 9 AM — 62 ; 11 AM — 51
July 26, 2026 9 AM — 85; 11 AM — 55



MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

FEED OUR NEIGHBORS

Join us on Thursdays to put together meals for local families in need.

BRENDA WRIGHT PHONE 501/812-2812

HOPEFUL HEARTS

Widows/Widowers come together each month for a meal and fellowship provided by volunteers.

LOUISA SMITH PHONE 870-723-3560

FEED THE KIDS

FUMC supports this non-profit organization by helping prepare food bags for local children. The bags are sent home with students at their schools.

RENEE HOLLAND PHONE 870-550-1281

SOLE PURPOSE

Provides shoes, socks, coats, Bibles, books, and hygiene kits for local children in the community.

BELINDA CARPENTER PHONE 870-723-3980

UAM WESLEY FOUNDATION

Meals are provided for students at the Wesley Foundation Ministry on the UAM campus.

DALENE STEPHENSON PHONE 870-723-0650

SENIOR CARE

Volunteers assist seniors with transportation to doctors and other appointments and provide social outings for those who are able.

SUSAN MUSICK PHONE 318/447-9309

WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES

After school activities for children | Youth activities

Free meal for everyone | Birthday celebrations | Small groups

OFFICE PHONE 870-367-2472

CHILDREN'S LIBRARIES IN THE COMMUNITY

Children's books are placed in local public locations as reading corners for children.

KATHY TUMLISON PHONE 870-723-4054

BEREAVEMENT TEAM

Volunteers provide a meal for the family after the funeral of a loved one.

SANDY FUNDERBURG PHONE 870-723-1915

MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES

Choir | Handbells | Praise Band | Children's Choir

KATHY LYON PHONE 870-308-1518

feed your soul

317 S MAIN ST, MONTICELLO, AR 71655 | PHONE 870/367-2471 fumcmonticello.org

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOTES

Class of 2026

Michael Blazier, SPPRC/Leader
John Kidwell, Trustees
Valerie Harvey, Treasurer
Bryan Diffie, Senior Pastor
Lori Fallon, Associate Pastor

Class of 2027

Belinda Carpenter, SPPRC
Loyd Oxner, Trustees
Audrea Stephens, Finance

Class of 2028

Anthony Brown, SPPRC
Jaime Hunter, Trustees
Amanda Gilbert, Finance

Meeting was brought to order at 6:02 P.M. by Michael Blazier. Rev. Lori Fallon opened the meeting with prayer.

Motion: to accept the June meeting minutes as presented by Audrea Stephens seconded by Belinda Carpenter. All in favor. None opposed.

Old Business:

- No update on the police report against Freedom Accessibility. John Kidwell will follow up with the police department.
- Ken Hunter is not interested in purchasing the van. Lynne Russell will speak with Steven Harvey to see if he is still interested in taking off decals and seeing if he can find A/C problem.
- Lynne Russell will let carpet people know that with the A/C problems, we have to push the carpet for the future.
- The roof repairs are completed.
- A/C on the third floor has been replaced, and the nursery A/C fan has been replaced also.
- Ken Hunter will be asked if he can look at ceiling leaks in the Family Life Center.
- Anthony Brown will speak to both services regarding the Strategic Planning Meeting on July 24, 2026. Who will prepare the meal and what is the menu?

New Business:

- Discussion about a Social Fund to help members of Monticello First United Methodist in the future for unexpected legal fees. This proposal came about after Francisco Martinez was detained by ICE and has legal retainer fees to be paid before attorney will take on his case. Individuals in our church donated money to pay these retainer fees.
- Further discussion: John Wesley was an advocate for justice. How can the church help such individuals and be good stewards of resources the church has? This fund would not be for criminal arrests. One idea is to set up a committee to look at individual situations. There would need to be donations to a non-budget account.

Motion: Move to set up a social-justice committee for the purpose of reviewing and distributing funds on a case-by-case basis for any immigration needs that may arise.

*Motion was not voted on during the July council meeting. It will be taken up in the August council meeting.

- We need to purchase t-shirts for church volunteers. One shirt for all missions/volunteers. Ask Liz Burnett if she can design a simple design with volunteer on the back in large letters and a logo representing the church e.g. cross and flame and name of church.
- At the last Strategic Planning Meeting there was discussion of purchasing charging cords for students at UAM. Discussion took place about different items, but after the meeting two college students were asked if these cords would be helpful to students, and both agreed that they would.
- Tentative move-in day for UAM students is August 15 and 16, 2026.
- On August 13, 2026, UAM Weevil Welcome will use the FLC as an alternative in inclement weather.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOTES CONT.

SPRC:

- Michelle Oler was hired on a 30-day trial period as the new custodian with a beginning hourly pay of \$14.00 per hour. Her first day was July 15, 2026.

Trustee Report:

- Loyd Oxner spoke to Carlos Lawn Care about grounds and being paid directly.

Motion: to pay Carlos Lawn Care directly and to discontinue paying Jose Escamilla beginning in July 2026. Carols Lawn Care will submit an invoice monthly. All in favor. None opposed.

Finance Report:

- Lynne Russell presented the Financial Reports and Audrea Stephens presented the Special Accounts.

***Motion:** to approve the June financial report made by Loyd Oxner and seconded by Belinda Carpenter. All in favor. None opposed.

Senior Pastor Report: None

Associate Pastor Report:

- Sixteen of our First United Methodist Youth traveled to South Dakota for the 2026 Mission trip. They worked on the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation. Both buses were used with no problems.
- Today our youth went to Pine Bluff to read to children through Project Transformation. After reading, the youth went to Little Rock for an afternoon of fun.
- Six of our youth went to Camp Tanako this summer. Our goal for next summer is to take a church bus full of kids.
- July 21-24, 2026, I will be the speaker for a Conference Event Assembly held at Hendrix College.
- The planning retreat for youth will be July 31 through August 1, 2026, at church.
- We are planning a night out and offer babysitting for our young adults. The date will be announced.

Closing Prayer by Lynne Russell

Motion: to adjourn meeting at 7:10 PM made by Audrea Stephens and seconded by Belinda Carpenter. All in favor. None opposed.

Next regular meeting August 11, 2026, at 6:00 PM.





August 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Communion 9a & 11a Sole Purpose Donation Fundraiser	3	4 Prayer Team 10a Hopeful Hearts Noon Wilma Hankins 1:30p Young Adults 7p	5 FUMY 6p Small Group 6:30p Praise Band 7p	6 Feed Our Neighbors 11a	7	8 EHC Workday
9	10 Drew Central Schools start back FUMY 5p	11 Prayer Team 10a Staff Meeting 1p Executive Council 6p Young Adults 7p	12 Monticello Schools start Small Group 6:30p Praise Band 7p	13	14	15
16 FUMY 5:30p	17 Scouts Meeting 5p Task Force Meeting 6p	18 Special Election 7a Prayer Team 10a Young Adults 7p	19 UAM First Day Classes Small Group 6:30p Praise Band 7p	20 Feed Our Neighbors 11a	21	22
23 FUMY 5:30p	24	25 Prayer Team 10a Young Adults 7p	26 Kick Off Dinner 5:30p Back to School Activities Chancel Choir 6:30p Small Group 6:30p Praise Band 7p	27	28 FUMY Prayer Breakfast 7a	29
30 Fifth Sunday Potluck 10a FUMY 5:30p	31 					