

THE FLAME



The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange



FROM YOUR SENIOR MINISTER

"Is your life focused on thick or thin places?"

Have you noticed that the news seems to focus on **"thick places"**—those places where our world is farthest from God? For some strange reason, we gravitate to the stories of murder, corruption, abuse, crime, and war. We often live in **"thick places"** where fears and assumptions make us deaf to God's voice breaking through the heavens. **But God gives us moments when He comes near, moments when we sense the fragrance of His presence, and we hear the whisper of His voice.**

Celtic Christianity has a term to refer to those moments when the separation between this world and heaven becomes so minimal that we sense the presence of God. They call these moments **"thin places."** They are the places where love and compassion reign. Where forgiveness overcomes resentment. Where selfishness is swallowed up in sacrifice. Where prejudice surrenders to acceptance. Where the violent flame is quenched, and people live in peace. They are the times when our soul is overwhelmed with awe, and we worship God.

For some of us, **"heaven meets earth"** in nature – on the oceans or in the mountains. For others, "heaven meets the earth" through music, relationships, worship and spiritual disciplines, art, and life moments. Any of these spaces can create the conditions for those **"thin places"** or epiphanies, which allow us to be touched and transformed in profound ways by God.

On my second visit to the Holy Land, I experienced my **"thin place."** It was in the intimate setting of the **Gabbatha**, deep beneath the Convent of the Sisters of Zion in Old Town Jerusalem. When the convent was being constructed in the 1860s, archaeologists unearthed a stretch of stone pavement that many believe is the location of the **"Judgement Seat"** where Pontius Pilate tried and condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion and where the Roman guards cast lots for His garments. See John 19:13.

At one end of the pavement is a mosaic of the Lord Jesus carrying His cross along those very stones. In that quiet place, deep beneath the bustling city of Jerusalem, I was so moved that I wanted to fall on my knees in His presence. It was truly my **"thin place"** where I felt that heaven and earth met – touching me in a way that transformed my witness in the world.

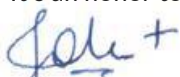
When Jesus came, the reign of God broke through upon the Earth so that we were able to see, in a brilliant flash, what God's Kingdom really looks like. Wherever Jesus went, He created a thin place. This is why Jesus said, "the Kingdom of God is at hand."

When He sent his followers out, Jesus taught them to live and speak in such a way that people would know that they had come into a **"thin place."** "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, **'The kingdom of God has come near to you'**" (Luke 10:8).

As followers of Jesus, our task is to help create the **"thin places."** We do so by living in such a way that the reign of God rules in our hearts, controlling our speech, our actions, and our decisions. We are to create **"thin places"** wherever we work or study, among our co-workers, fellow students, family, friends, and even our enemies.

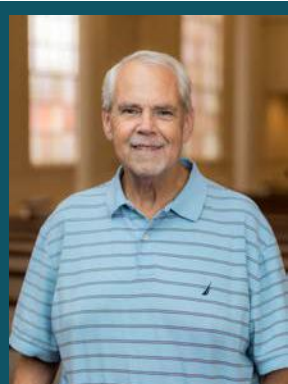
May you seize the opportunity this Easter to seek out those **"thin places"** where God's light and voice breaks into the unexpected and ordinary dimensions of your being. May we embark on this holy journey with open hearts and minds. **Truly, "We're Better Together!"**

Remember how much I love you ...
It's an honor to be your Senior Minister!


Dr. John Beyers
Senior Minister

**Easter
2023**

Staff Transitions



Rick Free

Spring is a time for renewed hopes and new beginnings, and our church will be experiencing change as well.

Rick Free, Director of Food Services & Hospitality, has been the person who has fed our bodies and souls and helped the most vulnerable of our guests for more than 21 years. Rick began as our Director of Operations in 2001 and moved to his current position in 2011 upon the retirement of the late Beth Godwin. Rick is retiring, effective May 11. I admire Rick's gracious hospitality extended to all and his compassion and patience for those who are especially dealing with life's greatest challenges. I am delighted that he and Jane will enjoy retirement together and am thankful that they will remain faithful, active members of our church.



Andy Rainey

Andy Rainey moved into the Director of Operations position upon Rick's transition to food services in 2011. With his extensive business experience, Andy was soon promoted to **Executive Minister** and has led our staff team under the direction of three Senior Ministers. All of us rely upon Andy's steady leadership. He is on campus countless hours during the week, often working all seven days. I am so grateful for his dedication. Andy has resigned his position, effective April 15, so he may have the time to decide what is next for him in this stage of his life. He and his family will also remain faithful, dedicated members of LaGrange First Methodist, and I am delighted that one of things he said he is most looking forward to is returning to his Epiphany Sunday School Class.

We will certainly celebrate these gentlemen's dedicated service in the days ahead. I hope you will take a moment to express your appreciation to them.

Happy Birthday, Eddie!

Eddie Giddens, Custodian, recently celebrated a milestone birthday. Our ministers and staff surprised Eddie with a breakfast (his favorite meal!) birthday celebration. Eddie has been part of the LaGrange First Methodist family for 22 years and is beloved by all. Happy Birthday, Eddie!





Leah Chapman serves as our Youth Minister. She leads efforts to educate our 6th-12th graders about Christianity and encourages them to worship, do volunteer work, and get involved in community outreach. Leah is also a writer, speaker, and founder of Apologetics Simplified. She is passionate about fostering discipleship and evangelism through apologetics and biblical theology. Learn more fun facts about her!

TEAM TALK: LEAH CHAPMAN

A Series of Rapid-Fire Questions with LaGrange First Methodist Staff Members

Where is your hometown?

Lawrenceville, Georgia

Tell us about your family?

I'm married to Phill. We have a one-year-old daughter and two dachshunds.

Are you outdoorsy?

Depends. How easily can I get back to A/C?!

Early bird or night owl?

Neither? I like sleeping.

Favorite genre of music?

Indie Folk

Where did you go to college?

LaGrange College. Go Panthers!

First job?

Server at BBQ Restaurant

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

Astronaut

If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?

The ability to instantly be anywhere in the world! I love to travel.

Hard shell or soft shell tacos?

Both!

When eating a brownie, do you prefer an edge piece or center piece?

Edge piece

Where do you really want to go on a vacation?

England

Where are you the most relaxed?

Sitting on my back porch drinking coffee

Solve the great toilet paper debate: over or under?

OVER IS THE ONLY RIGHT ANSWER

Go to scripture passage?

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

-1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Upcoming Youth Events

CAREER NIGHT

April 12 | 5:45-7:30 PM
Youth Worship Room
for 9th-12th graders

Explore different occupations and learn how to be a Christian in college and in the workforce.

The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange

MAY 21, 2023

Mark your Calendars

SENIOR SUNDAY

We are so proud of you!

The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange



Bishop Robin Dease

“Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have” 1 Samuel 25:6. Following the example of St. Paul and Barnabas as they welcomed believers to the newly-birthing church, local clergy, including Rev. Marlon Burns (far left), Dr. John, and Pastors Liz welcomed our new **Bishop Robin Dease** (far right) to the Southwest District at a luncheon held in the Epworth Dining Room.

April TLC



The music provided by representatives of the **Warren Temple United Methodist Church Choir** stirred our souls at our **April Thursday Lunch Club (TLC)**. Thanks to beautiful Easter-inspired decorations provided by the ladies of Ruth Circle, all attendees had “spring fever!” As always, the delicious meal filled our bodies and fellowship with friends warmed our hearts. We look forward to our next gathering on May 4!



In Memoriam

GWEN LOVELESS
January 23, 2023

FRED BODINE
February 21, 2023

EUGENIA "T" FAGAN
February 24, 2023

SUSAN CARMICAL
March 2, 2023

CLIFF RAINEY
March 7, 2023

JAY FAGER
March 26, 2023

ORIEN HALL
April 5, 2023



Our children are studying the parables of the Bible on Wednesday evenings. Recently, they learned what it means to be a good shepherd from Cheryl and Raymond Smith of Hunt Road Katahdin Sheep Farm. Three sheep joined the Hunts, including a sweet little lamb that was born that very morning! It was a great way to illustrate Jesus' Parable of the Lost Sheep. Jesus tells the story of the shepherd who leaves 99 of his flock to search high and low for the one that is lost. This reminds us that the Kingdom of God is accessible to all, even those who are sinners who have strayed from God's path.

Mrs. Jeanne Jones, Children's Minister, and her team of volunteers organized another search for boys and girls—an Easter Egg Hunt at Southbend Park! The raindrops stopped and the sun appeared just before hundreds of children fanned out to find the prize eggs. Thanks to all who donated 5000+pieces of candy! #BetterTogether





Church Council Chairperson Nancy Stevens

MOVING FORWARD IN

faith
PROVERBS 16:3

“...my friends, I ask you to place your absolute truth in God to show us our way forward.”

- Nancy Stevens

AN UPDATE FROM OUR CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

I would like to provide an update on the issue of our affiliation with the United Methodist Church. On **March 30**, a lawsuit was filed by **186 churches**, including LaGrange First Methodist, seeking to **restore the provisions outlined in *The Book of Discipline*** that would allow our congregation to determine the future of our church through a church-wide vote.

Please be reminded of the steps that we have taken to date:

December 2022

On December 13, our Church Council voted to request a Church Conference to be called by our District Superintendent, The Rev. Susan Landry, to determine if we remain under the umbrella of the United Methodist

Church or choose to affiliate with a different Methodist denomination. The Council believes that this issue is of such importance that every church member's voice should be heard through a formal vote. A written request was forwarded to Rev. Landry.

On December 28, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson and her Cabinet announced via email a “pause” on all disaffiliations in the North Georgia Conference until the UMC General Conference meets in May 2024. This blockage prevents our church from potentially exercising the provisions of Paragraph 2553 of *The Book of Discipline* which allows churches to disaffiliate and retain their church property if the process is completed and ratified by the Annual Conference prior to December 31,

2023, which is five months before the UMC General Conference session.

January 2023

On January 8, 2023, The Rev. Dr. Robin Dease was installed as the new Bishop of the North Georgia Conference. Dr. John Jackson, Co-Lay Leader, and I sent a letter to Bishop Dease on January 10 to welcome her to the Conference and to request a meeting to discuss her position and paths forward for our church. On January 30, I received an email from our District Superintendent that the Bishop would not discuss the affiliation issue with local churches.

I convened meetings with our Executive Leadership Committee to review options and a path forward.

This Committee is comprised of Church Council Chairperson (Nancy Stevens), Board of Trustees Chairperson (Lea Rawlinson), Finance Chairperson (Rhonda Mitchell), Staff-Parish Relations Chairperson (Jan Mallory), Lay Leaders (John Jackson and Martha Pirkle), Lay Member of Annual Conference (Jennifer Emery), Memorial Foundation President (Esther Rainey), and Vision 2028 Chairperson (Libba Bowling).

February 2023

On February 9, John Jackson presented a recommendation on behalf of the Committee for the Church Council to authorize our Board of Trustees to join other North Georgia Conference United Methodist churches in retaining the counsel of the National Center of Life and Liberty (NCLL). This nonprofit legal firm will seek to restore our rights to exercise the provisions outlined in *The Book of Discipline*. The recommendation was approved by a vote of 15 in favor and 1 opposed.

Our church joined NCLL and signed a retainer agreement with the firm. All costs associated with our representation (not to exceed \$3500) have been covered through private donations; no church budget funds are being used.

March 2023

Throughout the months of February and March, Attorney David Gibbs of NCLL participated in discussions with Harold Buckley, Chancellor of the North Georgia Conference. A formal settlement agreement was sent to the Conference for their consideration. Our preference has always been to settle this matter amicably. However, time is of the essence since the provisions of Paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline expire at the end of this year, and the Conference continues to delay responding to the requests of our legal counsel. Therefore, we joined 185 churches, including 22 of the largest 100 churches in the Conference, in filing the lawsuit on March 30. The lawsuit requests that the pause be lifted so churches may proceed with congregational votes on the issue of our affiliation.

This Easter

As resurrection people, we see the great meaning of Easter. This is no casual celebration, for we know that it came at great cost. When we experience the events of Holy Week, we see the agony and the suffering, the anguish of the garden of Gethsemane, the torture and pain Jesus endured, and His awful death on the cross of Calvary. Understanding the darkness Jesus faced makes the light of this Easter triumph even more glorious. The atrocity of the cruel cross is overcome by the victory of the empty tomb. And for you and me, it is what gives greater depth and meaning to our celebration as a follower of Christ.

So, my friends, I ask you to place your absolute truth in God to show us our way forward. Each Sunday when we gather for worship, we commemorate Christ being raised from the dead. Because the victory of Jesus over the grave has such great implications for the living of our faith, we can truly proclaim in the words of a great hymn, "Every day to us is Easter with its resurrection song!"

May we remain in prayer for one another, for our ministers and staff, and for our mission to Make and Grow Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World!



Dear Friends,

We have a unique opportunity to reimagine how we educate our children—all of those within our congregation and those who reside within the shadows of our great steeple. We would like to bring together those who have a special interest in Christian education for infants to pre-school for an initial discussion about the possibilities.

Wednesday, April 12

5:15 pm

Epworth Dining Room

If you are interested, please email giving@lagrangefumc.org or call the Church Office.

Sincerely,

**Joyce Morgan-Young
Nancy Stevens**



He is Risen!

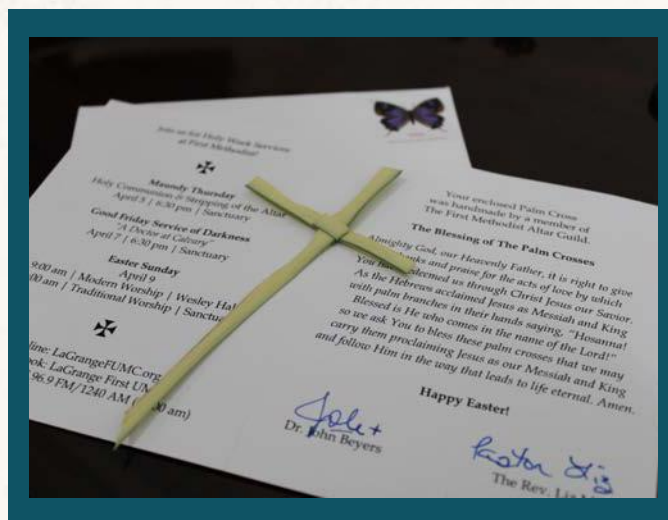


Alleluia!



Hallelujah!





On the first Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. People gathered, laid down palm branches and cloaks throughout Jesus' procession and shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Our Altar Guild handmade almost 1,000 palm crosses this year as a reminder of how much Christ loves you!



In Memoriam

John & Sarah Soltis
by Paul & Karen (Soltis) Tobben

Jennifer Soltis Trizzino
by Paul & Karen (Soltis) Tobben

David Soltis
by Paul & Karen (Soltis) Tobben

John Alise
by His Family

Janet Franklin
by Chuck Franklin

Rick Franklin
by Chuck Franklin

John Robertson
by Virginia Eidson Robertson

Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Eidson
by Virginia Eidson Robertson

Walt Lukken
by Peggy Lukken

Jeff & Cole Hagood
by Peggy Lukken

Jim Wiles
by Peggy, Corey, Ford, Karla, Falcon
& Truth

Donnie Hayes
by Freddie & Gene Hayes

Rev. Sidney J. Tate
by Enid Tate & Family

Alex & Frances Scarborough
by Kay Scarborough

Bill Johnson, Jr.
by Jane, Patrick & David

George Deane Allen
by Anne Allen

Jake Behr
by Dean Chewing Behr; Reisha,
Jeffrey & Richard and Their Families

My Parents, Bill & Ruth Guthrie
by Pat Gilbert

My Beloved Orren Gilbert
by Pat Gilbert

Gene Davis
by Sylvia Davis

Edd, Nona & Eddie Cooper
by Sheryl Cooper

Lydia Helms
by Suzie & Mark Highland

John & Suzanne Schuessler
by Suzie & Mark Highland

Our Parents, Mr. & Mrs. L. T. Hite,
Jr. and Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Mines
by Betty & Joey Mines

Quillian Baldwin
by Judy, Trey, Lei & Wade

Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Mallory, Sr.
by Paul & Jan Mallory

Mr. Richard "Rick" Mallory, Jr.
by Paul & Jan Mallory

Mr. & Mrs. Larry M. Davis
by Paul & Jan Mallory

Mr. & Mrs. C. F. Youmans
by Brenda & Zack Webb

Mr. & Mrs. Roy T. Webb
by Brenda & Zack Webb

Sybil Rayburn
by Ike Rayburn

Frank McCook
by Elaine McCook

Mr. & Mrs. Walter R. Smith &
by Allen & Marilyn Smith

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Osborne
by Allen & Marilyn Smith

The Members of The 1st Platoon A
Troop 11th ACR Who Did Not Come
Home
by Allen Smith

Beth Godwin
by Seekers Class

Janet Wyche
by Seekers Class

Paige Schine
by Patsy & Norman Wynne

Mr. & Mrs. John A. Jones
by Sharon & Alan Jones

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Enright
by Sharon & Alan Jones

Cliff Cammon
by Bobby & Dorothy Cammon;
Margaret, Tim, Caroline & Ben
Sanders

Hildred Cammon
by Bobby & Dorothy Cammon;
Margaret, Tim, Caroline & Ben
Sanders

Eleanor D. Johnson, Sr.
by Charles B. Johnson

Clark "Big Daddy" Johnson
by His Family

Robert & Louise Strickland
by Lynda & Rob Petry

Ann & Bill Petry
by Lynda & Rob Petry

Martha Mills
by Lynda & Rob Petry

Steve Petry
by Lynda & Rob Petry

W. B. "Bill" Houze
by The Weldon Family

Dick Willey
by Jane Willey

Mr. & Mrs. R. C. Willey, Sr.
by Jane Willey

Mr. & Mrs. H.C. Hartzell
by Jane Willey

Murray Drinkard
by Phil & Gayle Oliver

Other & Marlene Oliver
by Phil & Gayle Oliver

Luther Carter
by Wanda Carter

Mike Dobbs
by Ellen Dobbs

Lewis Goode, Jr.
by Cecelia Goode

Fellow Law Enforcement Officers &
First Responders Killed in the Line
of Duty
by Norman Wynne

In Honor

**Our Children: Pierson & Craig
LeFebvre and Paul & Summer Mallory**
by Paul & Jan Mallory

**Our Grandchildren: Childs, Jonah
& Olivia**
by Paul & Jan Mallory

Lola, Lyons, Jackson & Max
by Molly & Bobby Carmichael

Greg McClanahan
by Maranatha Sunday School Class

Mary Ellen Taylor
by Maranatha Sunday School Class

Ken & Marty Young
by Bryna Bobick

Abigail Ennis
by Donna & Richard Ennis

Emma deCelle
by Donna & Richard Ennis

Church Staff & Volunteers
by Jan & Brian Lockerbie

John & Cindy Jackson
by Libba Trawick

James Jackson & Family
by Libba Trawick

John Morgan Jackson & Family
by Libba Trawick

Our Ministers & Church Staff
by Elaine McCook

My Soul Connection Group
by Elaine McCook

Belle Story
by Gayle & Phil Oliver

Dedicated FUMC Staff
by Pat Gilbert

**Debra Jackson's Soul Connection
Zoomies**
by Jan & Brian Lockerbie

**Maranatha Teachers, Volunteers &
Prayer Warriors**
by Jan & Brian Lockerbie

Chase, Sara & Winnie Parmer
by Bernice Strickland

Beth Parmer
by Bernice Strickland

Keith & Ellen Parmer
by Bernice Strickland

Elizabeth & Matthew Hayes
by Mark & Suzie Highland

**Michael, Audrey, John & Charlotte
Hayes**
by Mark & Suzie Hayes

Janice & Dick Ingram
by Anne Allen

**Church Leaders in Word, Music &
Administration**
by Jan & Brian Lockerbie

**Children & Youth Leaders and
Volunteers**
by Jan & Brian Lockerbie

The blooms of an Easter lily are often referred to as “white-robed apostles of hope,” and they symbolize the purity of Christ. The shape represents a trumpet sounding the message that Jesus has risen! The nature in which lilies grow is symbolic of the resurrection as well. From bulbs that grow underground for three years or longer, beautiful flowers emerge. This process is reminiscent of Jesus’s brutal death and holy resurrection.

We appreciate your generosity in adorning our campus with these beautiful representations of rebirth and hope! More than 160 lilies were placed throughout our campus on Easter Sunday!



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401 Broad Street
LaGrange, Georgia 30240

Staff Servants

The Rev. Dr. John Beyers	Senior Minister
James Camp	Pianist
Leah Chapman	Youth Minister
Jeradean Collins	Nursery Worker
Page Estes	Director of Development & Stewardship
Rick Free	Director of Food Services & Hospitality
Mary Elizabeth Gerick	Minister of Modern Worship
Eddie Giddens	Custodian
Scott Hill	Facilities Maintenance Coordinator
Jeanne Jones	Children's Minister
The Rev. Liz Millar	Senior Associate Minister
Maxine Ogletree	Nursery Worker
Don Papenbrock	Principal Organist & Pianist
Dr. Richard Prior	Minister of Music
Andy Rainey	Executive Minister
Sara Grace Todd	Director of Member Engagement
The Rev. Dr. Dane Wagner	Minister-in-Residence

Our Church Office is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Thursday and 8:30 am to 12:00 pm on Friday. After hours, you may drop off correspondence in the secure mail slot to the right of the Trinity Street door or the locked mailbox under the portico outside the Vernon Street entrance to the Children's Building.

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BOY SCOUT SUNDAY BBQ
Boy Scout Troop 21
will have lunch ready for you
after church on April 16!
2 BBQ sandwiches, chips & brownie

\$10

Pre-Sale tickets available:
marilynhuberdeau@yahoo.com

APRIL 16, 2023
11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
VERNON ST. LOT



Did you know that LaGrange First Methodist has sponsored Troop 21 since 1927?