



AUGUST 2021 | VOL. 58 | NO. 8

# THE FLAME

The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange

## Join us on for prayer, blessings, and a celebration at BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUNDAY!

Please join us for worship on **August 15**, when we will celebrate Back-To-School Sunday! During the service, we will recognize and pray for our students, teachers, and school staff as they start the new academic year. We also are inviting students to bring their backpacks so we may bless the bags that carry the resources necessary for their learning.

If you know of a student, educator, or other school staff member who may be interested in joining us, be sure to extend an invitation. We'd love for the community to join us!

After the service, we'll all head outside to enjoy Kona Ice, a photo booth, and an inflatable bounce house. In addition, we'll have a dunking booth to help raise money for our School Ministries program, which includes **School Shepherds** as well as our **Blessings in a Book Bag** and **Teacher Encourager** programs at Ethel Kight Elementary. (School Ministries also will be our August Mission of the Month.)

For \$5 you'll get three chances to dunk some of our beloved ministers (and other brave souls) who've stepped up to raise money for the cause (including Dr. John)!

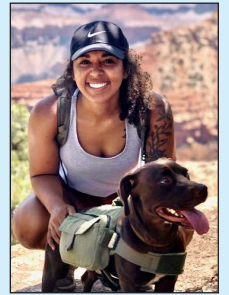


We'll also host a 10:00 am brunch in Wesley Hall for the teachers in our Ethel Kight Encourager program. Started last year, the ministry pairs an individual church member with a teacher to provide prayer, encouraging emails and notes, small gifts, and treats during the year to let them know we embrace their call to educating and caring for our community's children.

Forty-three teachers would like an encourager this year, and so far we've paired 29 with an encourager. Will you be one of the 14 encouragers still needed? Contact **Peggy Feather** at [peggyfeather@gmail.com](mailto:peggyfeather@gmail.com) if you'd like to be a part.

## GERICK TO LEAD MODERN WORSHIP

Believing that God is calling LaGrange First to create a worship service that is rooted in tradition, planted in the present, and that will bear fruit for the future, the Staff Parish



Relations Committee is pleased to announce the hiring of **Mary Elizabeth Gerick** as our Minister of Modern Worship.

Mary Elizabeth and her best friend, **Daisy** (pictured above), will be moving to LaGrange from Kennesaw, where she has been pursuing a degree in Public Relations from Kennesaw State University. With more than two years of experience in organizing and leading modern worship services at Hillside United Methodist Church, Mary Elizabeth brings a genuine and abiding faith in Jesus Christ, a relational disposition and people-focused outlook, and exceptional musical talent.

Mary Elizabeth and Daisy love to explore new outdoor destinations. Be sure to introduce yourself when you see them walking The Thread or frequenting our local coffee houses!

Beginning on August 9, Mary Elizabeth will be working with the church team to build and plan a modern worship service that will provide another on-ramp into the life of our congregation. The service will launch later this fall.

## HOMECOMING AUGUST 29, 2021 Sunday

MESSAGE BY THE  
**Rev. Dr. Stuart Gulley**

FOLLOWED BY  
**Lunch in Wesley Hall**

*Please bring a side dish or dessert. The church will provide the meat!*

# TGIWednesday!

Are you ready to return to the familiar rhythms of mid-week food and fellowship with your church family? We thought so! Mark your calendars for **August 25\***, when FUMC will resume Wednesday evening hot meals in Wesley Hall followed by Bible study, small groups, and Christ-centered fellowship for all ages.

Actually, **return** and **resume** aren't strong enough verbs to describe the new beginning of the Wednesday evening experience in the life of our church. We have a newly refurbished building, new creative Bible study and small groups, and a promise from Rick Free that he'll prepare plenty of our favorite comfort foods this fall. We have a new Minister of Modern Worship, Mary Elizabeth Gerick, whose love for the Lord is palpable. And if that's not enough, there's more.

There's something else intangible at work here. In your life, do you ever just feel like you could have a "do-over"? The pandemic has kept us from worshipping together as we would have liked, but as it's been said, with a crisis comes an opportunity.

August 25 promises to be not just a **return**. It's more like a **recharge**, a **renewal** ... a **reinvigoration**! It's a **reimagining** of what we can be collectively when we use our Wednesday time together to celebrate the shared love for Christ we have in our hearts. This fall is a time we can **rededicate** our lives to Christ and see our Wednesday time together not only as a **recommitment** to Him, but to ourselves, each other, and our church family. We can say **"TGIW ... Thank God It's Wednesday!"**

*ON A RELATED NOTE: Do you find yourself gravitating toward our Food Ministry when you step up to volunteer for your church? Are you looking for a ministry area in which to serve? If so, we have a new opportunity for you: becoming a part of our Hospitality Team! Rick Free, Director of Food Services and Hospitality, is forming a core group of individuals he can contact to help serve meals and help with clean-up on Wednesday evenings, serve and clean up at TLC, and help with other ministries and special events. To find out more, contact Rick at [rick@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:rick@lagrangefumc.org).*

## Find your spiritual home through First Methodist Soul Connection Groups

We all know the saying, "Home is where the heart is." In the context of Christian community, I would take this famous phrase a step further and say that true "home" can only be found where our hearts connect with God and others. Beginning August 29, Homecoming Sunday, you will have the opportunity to find a greater sense of "home" in our congregation by signing up to be a part of a Soul Connection Group at First United Methodist!

These relationship-driven small groups are open to all and will be offered at varying times and days of the week, meeting weekly September 26 through November 7. Consisting of no more than a dozen individuals, each Soul Connection Group allows participants to do life together, further connecting with God and one another in transformational community. Modeled after early Methodist Class Meetings, these revolve around discussion of the scripture passage from the previous week and two primary "check-in"

## TGIWednesday Schedule

*Subject to change due to COVID-related concerns/protocols*

### 5:00 - 6:00 | Dinner

Adults: \$6

Children/Youth: \$3

(2 and under FREE)

College Students: FREE



To give Rick a headcount for planning purposes, please make reservations no later than the day before the meal by signing up here (link is case-sensitive):

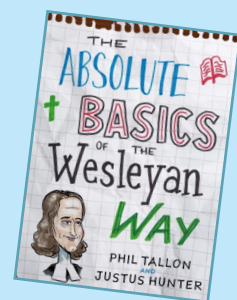
**[bit.ly/fumc\\_TGIWednesday](https://bit.ly/fumc_TGIWednesday)**

We encourage you to use the link/QR code to pay in advance. You also can pay by credit card at the door.

### ADULTS

#### 5:45 - 6:30

Bible Study with Dr. John: 12-week series, *The Absolute Basics of the Wesleyan Way*



#### 5:45 - 7:00

Soul Connection Group for parents of small children (Stay tuned! This group will start later this fall.)

### YOUTH

**4:00 - 5:00** Youth Hangout & Homework: supervised time in the Welcome Center/Coffee Bar, youth game room, and other youth rooms

**5:00 - 6:00** Dinner in Wesley Hall

**6:00 - 7:00** Youth Worship (second floor)

### CHILDREN

**5:30 - 7:00** Dinner, interactive lessons, games and more in the Children's Building

**COLLEGE STUDENTS - Epworth Dining Room**

**HANDBELLS - 5:30, Handbell Room**

**CHANCEL CHOIR - 6:30, Choral Suite**

questions that were employed by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley: 1) "How is it with your soul?" 2) "How did you experience God this week?" Utilizing these two questions, Wesley gave people who had experiences of God in worship, the opportunity to dive deeper into their faith and prioritize their daily walk with Christ within the context of small group discipleship.

As we prepare to begin a new school year and step back into a greater sense of normalcy on the other side of a worldwide pandemic, perhaps your soul, like mine, yearns for deeper connections with God and others? If that's the case, let me invite you to be on the lookout for more information about Soul Connection Groups and registration opportunities. I cannot wait to see the ways that God continues to use this new discipleship opportunity to help us grow in the grace of God together at First United Methodist Church in 2021!

*Ben*

Pastor Ben Wills

## AUGUST MISSION OF THE MONTH

### School Ministries

Throughout August, your donations and volunteering will support all the ways we impact local students, educators, and school staff in our community! Help us make a difference by donating toward "missions" this month or by volunteering to serve with one of our mission areas! You can give online at [bit.ly/fumc\\_giving](http://bit.ly/fumc_giving) or text LGFUMC to 73256 to give using your mobile device; you'll then be able to select "missions." You also can write a check to the church with "missions" in the memo line.

We've included information below on our three main School Ministries. To volunteer, please reach out to the ministry leaders listed below or by filling out our volunteer opportunities form by clicking the "Make an Impact" box on our homepage at [LaGrangeFUMC.org](http://LaGrangeFUMC.org).

#### BLESSINGS IN A BOOK BAG

Contact: **Elissa Lamoree** at [elissa@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:elissa@lagrangefumc.org)  
Led by our Youth Ministry, Blessings in a Book Bag served 35 students a week in 2020-21 at Ethel Kight Elementary School by providing food for two breakfasts, two lunches, and two snacks over the weekend. Through your generosity and our church's youth, we provided 3,500 meals to food-insecure students who might go hungry otherwise. As we begin another year of this vital mission, we need to restock the food and drink items we pack in each Blessings bag. A \$5 donation ensures a student has the sustenance needed during the weekends.

#### SCHOOL SHEPHERDS

Contact: **Barbara Ward** at [bwward@hotmail.com](mailto:bwward@hotmail.com)  
School Shepherds coordinate with school counselors in Troup County to assist vulnerable students by anonymously providing clothing, school supplies, and other resources as needed. Your donations prepare us to respond to the immediate needs of students. You also may donate kids' clothes and shoes, men's pants and shoes (especially size 11 shoes) to the Jabaley Clothing Center to support the School Shepherds' ability to respond to these clothing needs.

#### ETHEL KIGHT TEACHER ENCOURAGERS

Contact: **Peggy Feather** at [peggyfeather@gmail.com](mailto:peggyfeather@gmail.com)  
Last year we began our New Teacher Encouragers Program with Ethel Kight Elementary! The Encouragers program pairs teachers with an individual partner from First Methodist who encourages the teacher throughout the year with prayer, notes, small gifts, and supportive emails. Last year we had 40 teachers partnered with encouragers! In addition, our Encouragers treated the entire Ethel Kight staff last year to a back-to-school brunch, fall goodie bags, Christmas dessert buffet, and an end-of-year ice cream sundae bar! We really believe that education is ministry and want to support our local educators! Donations to the Encouragers program support all the teachers and staff at Ethel Kight by providing the funds needed for special events throughout the school year.

*Showing God's Love through ...*

## MEALS ON WHEELS

We are so grateful to everyone who donated to **Meals on Wheels**, our July Mission of the Month. Our goal was \$2,000, but our church family went above and beyond; thanks to you, we raised **\$2,925** for this vital ministry!

Since 2014, your faithful stewardship has allowed our church's Meals on Wheels program to deliver over 40,000 meals to community members unable to cook for themselves. An equally vital component to this ministry is the willingness for so many of you to volunteer your time and energy to preparing, driving, and delivering meals. We thank God for each and every one of you!

#### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

*Love personified ...*

### Dorothy Cammon

"My association with FUMC's Meals on Wheels program started in 2010 as a substitute driver for **Oleeta Aspinwall** and **Betty Ragan**. I eventually assumed their route permanently for another two years before taking Cecelia Goode's place as director in 2014.



"I never had the opportunity to do volunteer work during my 35-year teaching career, so after retirement, I was looking for my niche. I served on the boards of several local non-profits, but it wasn't until I volunteered for Meals on Wheels that I found my true passion. Working with **Rick Free** and the dedicated Meals on Wheels kitchen prep team and drivers has been a real blessing in my life. Rick is the driving force behind this program, and the volunteers are the ones who make it all happen. Meals on Wheels is truly a team effort, with every job as important as the next; I'm just the paper-pusher and numbers girl.

"During these past many months of a global pandemic, I can boast that we never once missed a Monday delivery, and the same can be said for our Soup Kitchen. It took many adjustments on everyone's part, but we made it happen! While the rest of the church was closed, Rick and the Meals on Wheels and Soup Kitchen teams were faithful and determined to see that people were fed.

"Our clients rely on us not only for warm, healthy foods but also for friendship and care. For some of them, their driver(s) may be the only human contact they have in a day. Drivers look out for their needs and have occasionally reported unhealthy/unsafe conditions, and as warranted, I have reached out to the Department of Family and Children Services and the LaGrange Police Department.

"FUMC has provided floor fans to clients who have no means of cooling their homes during our hot and humid summers, and we have partnered with Success by Six, a local organization whose goal is to provide books to preschool age children, to deliver books to the children and grandchildren of our clients."

## Hands In Service

A MISSION OF SERVICE TO THOSE IN NEED



When you have a small task or job that requires attention and you're unable to do it yourself, we're here to help! Don't hesitate to ask. We all need a helping hand from time to time, and it's completely confidential. Just call or text Tina at 706.756.5399.

*We're Better Together!*



# YOUTH MINISTRY

Will Locke, Youth Minister | [will@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:will@lagrangefumc.org)

Happy August, everyone! It feels to us like summer just started yesterday and now we're gearing up for the start of a new school year.

First Methodist will celebrate the start of a new school year on Sunday, August 15, with Back-to-School Sunday! We will have a blessing of the bookbags during the service followed by free Kona Ice and a dunk tank after church. The dunk tank will feature some of your favorite First Methodist ministers and support our August Mission of the Month: our School Ministries (Blessings in a Bookbag, Teacher Encouragers, and School Shepherds). You and your student do not want to miss this fun Sunday when First Methodist will celebrate the start of a new school year!

Wednesday Night Youth is BACK on Wednesday, August 18, from 5:00-7:00 pm! We'll have pizza and fellowship from 5:00 to 6:00, and we'll then gather in the Youth Worship Room for large group worship before breaking out into our small groups. On Wednesday nights this school year, the Youth Ministry is focusing on understanding who we are. The year-long focus begins with a three-week series on friends and family. The Youth Ministry will have five small groups this year led by outstanding partners who care deeply about helping students grow in their faith: Middle School Girls (led by **Elissa Lamoree**), Middle School Guys (led by **Collin**

**Lamoree**), Underclassmen High School Girls (led by **Lauren Hill**), Upperclassmen High School Girls (led by **Laura Jennings**), and High School Guys (led by **Will Locke**). We are so excited to be in-person to start out the school year and resume some of our normal Wednesday rhythms!

Our annual Fall Cookout is on Sunday, August 22, at 5:00 pm at the Highland Park Pavilion. We will eat together, play some yard games, and have a time for your student to get to know their small group leader. This is a great opportunity to reconnect with each other after a summer of traveling and get back into the school year rhythm. Be sure to mark August 22 on your calendars!

We are excited and expectant about what God has in store for the Youth Ministry as we head into the 2021-2022 School Year!

If you or your student would like to receive our Youth Ministry weekly emails and special events updates, please email us at [fumcyouthlagrange@gmail.com](mailto:fumcyouthlagrange@gmail.com). We would love to make sure you are plugged in and aware of all the fantastic things happening in the life of our Youth Ministry.

May the peace of Christ and the joy of the Lord dwell in you richly.

Your Youth Ministry team,  
Elissa Lamoree and Will Locke

## ESTES TRANSITIONS FROM VOLUNTEER TO CHURCH STAFF

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee has unanimously invited **Page Estes** to become our Director of Development and Stewardship. For the past 16 months, Page has served as an unpaid volunteer. She transitions to the staff team on August 1.



A native Kentuckian, Estes received her bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky (UK), Master's from the UK Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, and is a Doctoral Candidate at Auburn University. She began her career in institutional advancement for UK and West Georgia Technical College in LaGrange. In 1999, Page launched a 10-year trek through senior housing, followed by serving more than a decade as President & CEO of the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce. In 2019, she began consulting with nonprofit organizations in the areas of fundraising, strategic planning, marketing, and organizational development.

A long-time member of LaGrange First and most recently serving as Chair of the Finance Committee, Page resides in LaGrange with two canine companions, Harry and Lilly.

## TLC Thursday Lunch Club

SEPTEMBER 2 • 12:00 PM • WESLEY HALL

When First Methodist's Thursday Lunch Club guests gathered in March 2020 to enjoy hearing **Bill Lepp**, a featured performer at the Azalea Storytelling Festival, we all had no inkling it would be 18 months before our beloved TLC monthly luncheon would return! We finally have a firm date for our first TLC luncheon in over a year (though it is subject to change due to COVID-related concerns/protocols). Mark your calendars for **Thursday, September 2**, at noon in Wesley Hall! Be sure to make a reservation by signing up online at [bit.ly/thursdaylunchclub](https://bit.ly/thursdaylunchclub), emailing us at [churchoffice@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:churchoffice@lagrangefumc.org), or calling us at 706.884.4635 by noon on Tuesday, August 31.



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Jeanne Jones, Children's Minister | [jeanne@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:jeanne@lagrangefumc.org)

## Back-to-School Sunday

Don't miss our Back-to-School Bash on Sunday, August 15! Kids, wear clothes that you can jump and tumble in so you can play in the inflatable bounce house that will be on campus that day. Be sure to check out the front page of this issue for more details. It's going to be a great day, and we want you there!

## Wednesday Night Kids is back on August 18!

Join us on Wednesday, August 18, from 5:30 - 7:00 pm as we kick off a new year of Wednesday Night Kids! Wear a bathing suit and be sure to bring a towel and shoes that can get wet. We are going to have a water extravaganza—water balloons, water games, and a giant slip-n-slide! We'll serve dinner and then finish the evening with popsicles and ice cream. Parents, drop your children off at the Broad Street door to the Children's Building at 5:30 pm. Pickup is at 7:00 pm at the same location.

Then join us every Wednesday night from 5:30 - 7:00 pm as we dig into understanding the Fruit of the Spirit. Each week through interactive lessons, fellowship time, games, and more, we will talk about how the qualities of Jesus are produced in us through the Holy Spirit. Those qualities of Jesus that we call Fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Children will be served dinner each week during our time together.

## Fourth/Fifth-Grade Students

In July we loaded up the bus and had a great time at Water Wiz! We are looking forward to our next event on August 20: a pool party at Ms. Jeanne's house, including a cookout with hamburgers and hotdogs! Meet at the Broad Street entrance to the children's building at 4:30 pm. The bus will return to the church at 7:30 pm. Be sure to RSVP to [elissa@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:elissa@lagrangefumc.org).

## Sunday School

We will begin a new series called Epic Teachings of the Bible on August 8. We will explore the enduring lessons of the Old and New Testaments, including the Sermon on the Mount, The Lord's Prayer, The Fruit of the Spirit, God's Commandments, and much more. If you'd like more details, we'd love to email you the full scope and sequence of the lessons.

## Kids' Church

Kids' Church is a time for children to participate in age-appropriate meaningful worship designed just for them. Our Bible lesson each week will be the same as the lesson taught in Sunday School, reinforcing the important stories in the Bible. This year our fourth- and fifth-grade students will not only be participating in Kids' Church but also leading our younger students. Join us on the second, third, and fourth Sundays of every month. The first Sunday of each month is Communion and family worship.

# SUMMER DAY CAMP 2021

We'll wrap up 10 great weeks of Summer Day Camp on August 6. We are grateful for all the ways our church family has stepped up to welcome so many families from our community and provide a place for their children to grow in their faith, build relationships, and learn during the summer months! Thank you to the church members who spent time with our children as they shared their creativity and talents, including **Jennifer Emery, Steve Cole, Beth McClanahan, Rick Free, and Mary Ann Keck**. In addition, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the college students who served as counselors for Summer Day Camp 2021. We're spotlighting them here so you can see the bright faces who cared for our children this summer. Please give them a hearty thank-you if you see them before they head to college in a few weeks!



### WILL ALLRED

Mississippi State University  
Biomedical Engineering  
Favorite part of camp: "Playing four-square with the kids."



### ASHLEY DANIEL

University of North Georgia  
Business Marketing  
Favorite part of camp: "Water day!"



### JAMIE LIVINGSTON

University of West Georgia  
Psychology (to become a child life specialist)  
Favorite part of camp: "I love getting to know the kids. It's definitely been a growing experience."



### LIZ RAINEY

Georgia College & State University  
Education  
Favorite part of camp: "Seeing the kindness of the campers when they gave their own lunches to someone with food insecurity."



### SAM ROBERTS

LaGrange College  
Digital Media and Film  
Favorite part of camp: "I really likes playing four-square with all the kids and drawing for them in the mornings."



### ANNA SHANK

Augusta University  
Early Childhood Education  
"I'll miss each of the children and the small lessons each has given me."



### MARY FRANCES SMITH

University of Mississippi  
Visual and Photojournalism  
Favorite part of camp: "When the children come in and hug us and say, 'I missed you.'"



### KIT TURES

Agnes Scott College  
Computer Science  
Favorite part of camp: "My favorite part of camp is the energy and creativity of the kids."

# THE FLAME

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**The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange**

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The Flame

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Dr. John Beyers	ext. 205	Senior Minister
Jeradean Collins		Nursery Worker
Page Estes	ext. 207	Director of Development/Stewardship
Rick Free	ext. 210	Director of Food Services/Hospitality
Mary Elizabeth Gerick		Minister of Modern Worship
Eddie Giddens		Custodian
Scott Hill	ext. 213	Facilities Maintenance Coordinator
Jeanne Jones	ext. 209	Children's Minister
Darian Krimm	ext. 202	Minister of Music
Elissa Lamoree		Assistant Family Minister
Will Locke	ext. 215	Youth Minister
Maxine Ogletree		Nursery Worker
Don Papenbrock		Organist
Andy Rainey	ext. 201	Executive Minister
Natalie Shelton	ext. 203	Director of Communications
The Rev. Ben Wills	ext. 206	Senior Associate Minister

*Our Church Office is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm Monday to Friday.*

*We have a secure mail slot to the right of the Trinity Street office-door*

*entrance. You also may drop off correspondence in our locked black*

*mailbox under the portico on Vernon Street outside the Children's Building.*

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## Memorial Gifts

### Loretta Beall

Carolyn Alise  
Catherine Carmical  
Tanya & Michael Stevens  
Sharon & Alan Jones  
United Methodist Women  
Elizabeth Circle of UMW  
Carlene & Dusty Mills  
Laura Shedd  
Isabel & Donald Stephens  
Jane Stephens  
Enid Tate  
Jane Willey  
Marty & Ken Young  
Lea & J. M. Rawlinson

### Mary Watkins

(mother of Mary Ellen Taylor)  
Virginia Robertson

### Joe Colley

Heather & Sam Graham  
Peggy Lukken  
Nancy Cammon Peterson

### Frank McCook

Cheryl Weldon

### Fred Jones

Judy Baldwin

### Janet Wyche

Bernard Bledsoe  
Ruth & Bo Davis  
Laura & Blair Harlin  
Betty McManaway  
John McManaway IV  
Enid Tate  
Susan & Charles Wyche  
Norma & Larry Williamson  
Elsie & Tommy Harris  
Nancy Cammon Peterson  
Judy Baldwin  
Charles Smith  
Edward Smith  
Wesley Smith  
Cheryl Weldon



IN MEMORIAM

**Loretta  
Beall**

July 18, 2021

*"Grab a drink. Fuel your faith.  
Be a light. Buy our T-shirt."*

That's the premise behind **BEACON OF HOPE**, a new form of faith community that's been brewing at Beacon Brewing Co. in LaGrange! Actually, we're embellishing a bit. That last part about buying a T-shirt isn't part of Beacon of Hope's premise; we were just trying to get your attention.



This new ministry drew together 25 to 35 people (mostly those in their 20s and 30s) once a month from February to June, providing a chance for meaningful fellowship, authentic discussions of faith, and monthly hands-on-service opportunities. After taking a July vacation, it will resume on **Thursday, August 19**, from 6:00 to 7:30 pm and continue to meet the third Thursday of each month through November.

Your buying a BEACON OF HOPE T-shirt will help us to be a light and serve those in need in our community! For every T-shirt purchased (cost is \$25), \$10 will go directly toward helping us serve and support community partners to make a difference right here in LaGrange. Plus, who doesn't love a good lookin' pocket T?

TO BUY A SHIRT, VISIT:

**[bit.ly/beacon\\_shirt](https://bit.ly/beacon_shirt)**