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THE FLAME

The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange

from your senior minister...

THE KEY TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR

I wish each of you a Happy New Year! That sentiment is an often-heard, post-Christmas statement of encouragement and well-wishing. Certainly, everyone desires a happy new year ... but how does a person actually experience one? What is the key to having 2022 be a happy one for you?

THE HAPPINESS CONFUSION

Many equate happiness with money and materialism. To them, happiness is a million dollars. Others equate happiness with good physical health. To them, happiness is an in-shape body hitting on all eight cylinders. Still others equate happiness with personal achievement. To them, happiness is a big promotion, or graduation, or a milestone achievement.

Years ago, I read a true story about tennis star Boris Becker. He was the youngest man to ever win Wimbledon, achieving victory in 1985 at the tender age of seventeen. In the late 1980s, Becker was on the mountaintop of fame, fortune, and personal achievement. Yet, he was so unhappy and on the brink of suicide. Becker was quoted as saying, "I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed. It's the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy. I had no inner peace. I was a puppet on a string."

Isn't that amazing? Becker had all the things the world says will make for happiness, yet he was incredibly unhappy. Could it be that true happiness is not found in health, wealth, and achievement?

TRUE HAPPINESS

The Bible makes it clear that true happiness comes when you and I are right with God. When we are yielded to Christ and His will, then we can experience true happiness – inner peace and unspeakable joy. Are you right with God today? Are your sins confessed to Him?

Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer, and philosopher astutely said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made through Jesus."

Let me encourage you to take sober inventory of your life today. Are you trying to fill the inner vacuum of health, wealth, achievement, or the like? Those things will never make you truly happy; they will never satisfy the deep longing of your soul. The only One who can do that is Jesus.

Start your year off right by bowing your knees and your life before the Lord Jesus. Give Him first place in everything – for that is the key to true happiness.

FAITH HABITS, NOT RESOLUTIONS

Before you make resolutions for the new year – before you start a reading plan, or choose a diet, or buy a journal, or step on a treadmill – find the **why** that is worth changing for. Our resolutions often wilt because we did not have a **why** big enough to weather the inevitable temptations, distractions, and setback.

What will your **why** be for the year to come? For me, I want my life to prove worthy of my calling from God. Not my calling to ministry, but my calling to God – the calling every genuine Christian shares. The **why** from Thessalonians 1:11, "**To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power.**"

What evidence do we see in our lives that we have been called by God? What might someone else see in us this year that would suggest something supernatural has happened? What habits might hint that we have been claimed by heaven?

Pastor Ben and I are launching a new sermon series on January 9 entitled, "**Walking in the Ways of God.**" Over the next five weeks, we will celebrate and expound upon what John Wesley identified as the "**Means of Grace**": the Biblical acts and practices by which we receive God's grace and become empowered to walk in His ways. What better way to begin 2022 than by learning the faith habits that help us grow to become more like Jesus? That is how we can live a life that really matters in the year ahead.

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

John +
Dr. John Beyers

We're Better Together!

YOUTH MINISTRY

Will Locke, Youth Minister | will@lagrangefumc.org

Happy New Year from Student Ministry! We are so thankful for the ways God moved in and through Student Ministry in 2021. We cannot wait to see how God guides us in 2022!

Student-Parent Lunch (January 9)

A new year means a new semester and another Student & Parent Lunch! Our Student & Parent Lunch is on Sunday, January 9 immediately following the 11:00 am. Traditional Service. It will be held in Epworth Dining Room. This is a great time to reconnect after the holidays for a meal together, learn about upcoming retreats in the spring, and ask the Student Ministry Team any questions you have about all things Student Ministry.

TGIW: Youth

Wednesday Night Youth starts back for the Spring Semester on Wednesday, January 12. We have enjoyed the pause to celebrate the holidays with loved ones and are itching to get back into this weekly rhythm with students. In January, Youth is focusing on Jesus in the Old Testament. Homework & Hangout is back each Wednesday starting at 4:00 pm with dinner in Wesley Hall provided by Mr. Rick at 5:00 pm and worship in the Youth Worship Room at 6:00 pm.

Prayer Breakfast

Prayer Breakfast returns after Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend on Tuesday, January 18 at 505 Eats from 7:15-7:45 am. This is an energizing time of fellowship as we have delicious food, catch up and have a brief devotion before school. If your student wants to come and you are not sure you can get all your kids to school on time, we can help! We can give your student a ride to school from Prayer Breakfast, all you have to do is drop them off. We are extremely grateful to Joyce Sato and the staff at 505 Eats for graciously hosting our Prayer Breakfasts this school year!

Confirmation Retreat (March 4-6)

The first retreat Student Ministry is going on this spring is the Confirmation Retreat at Camp Glisson in Dahlonega, Georgia. This retreat is March 4-6, 2022 (Friday-Sunday) and only open to students in the current Confirmation Class. During this retreat, confirmands will learn about the United Methodist connectional system and

explore further the membership vows they will say on Confirmation Sunday. Registration for the Confirmation Retreat is from Sunday, January 9 until Sunday, February 6. The cost is \$200 per confirmand and can be paid by signing your confirmand up on Realm. Also, Student Ministry needs a current Medical Release Form and the Confirmation Permission & Covenant Form on file for your student to attend. These forms can be found on the Realm Registration Event. If you have any questions about the Confirmation Retreat, please reach out to Will Locke (will@lagrangefumc.org) before registration closes.

Spiritual Life Retreat (March 11-13)

Student Ministry is going to be back at Camp Glisson the following weekend for Spiritual Life Retreat (SLR) March 11-13, 2022. SLR is one of Student Ministry's most beloved trips every year. During this weekend at Camp Glisson, students are immersed in God's creation and God's Word through corporate worship, small group time, outdoor activities and more. One exciting aspect of the SLR experience returns in 2022: family-style meals! We are so pumped SLR is gradually returning to some treasured traditions. Registration for SLR is from Sunday, January 9 until Sunday, February 6 and open to all 6th-12th grade students. The cost is \$200 per student and can be paid by signing your student up via Realm. Also, Student Ministry needs a current Medical Release Form and the SLR Permission & Covenant Form on file for your student to attend. We would love to have your student join us for this impactful weekend of worship, fellowship and resting in God's presence.

Vision 2022

Our Vision for Student Ministry in 2022 can be summed up in one word: ownership. We envision students taking ownership of Student Ministry by leading in our various programs. We envision students taking ownership of their faith by living out their faith as they serve others in the community. We envision rising 6th graders taking ownership in Student Ministry by articulating a sense of belonging. We envision parents taking ownership of their student's discipleship. We envision the whole church taking ownership of Student Ministry by partnering to provide robust discipleship in Sunday School. We are expectant for the Lord to bring about this vision in His timing.

YOUTH FUN IN DECEMBER!

MERRY CHRISTMAS



Making
Gingerbread
Houses



Martha &
Tom Pirkle,
Youth
Leaders



Ugly
Sweater
Party



Blessings in
a Bookbag
Pack: 156
bags!





THANK GOD IT'S WEDNESDAY!

**DINNER 5:00-6:00 PM
IN WESLEY HALL**

Adults: \$6

**Children/Youth: \$3
(under 2 FREE)**

College Students: FREE

JANUARY 12

Poppyseed Chicken, Rice, Vegetable, Salad, & Dessert

JANUARY 19

Beef Chili, White Chicken Chili, Baked Potato, Slaw & Dessert

JANUARY 26

Pork Loin, Hashbrown Casserole, Vegetable, Salad, & Dessert

CHILDREN - 5:30-7:00 pm

CHILDREN'S BUILDING

(Check in at Broad Street entrance)

Children (K-5th grade) will eat dinner together and then enjoy games, praise and worship, and small-group time. This winter we are learning about the Lord's Prayer!

YOUTH 4:00-7:00 pm

4:00-5:00

Hangout & Homework

5:00-6:00

Dinner in Wesley Hall

6:00-7:00

Youth Worship
Second Floor, Youth Rooms

COLLEGE 5:00-6:00 pm

You're invited to come eat ... for free!

ADULTS - 5:45-6:45 pm

JANUARY 12

Interactive Discussion with Susan Marshall on severe depression & suicide
St. Andrew's Chapel

JANUARY 19

Pastor Ben hosts seminar on "Glorifying God through Social Media"
Wesley Hall

JANUARY 26

Rev. Dane Wagner and Hannaniah Pinto preview upcoming travel opportunity to Israel
Epworth Dining Room

A nursery is provided from 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

Welcome, Sara Grace!

Director of Member Engagement



Sara Grace Todd will be joining our team on January 18 as our Director of Member Engagement.

Sara Grace is a graduate of Auburn University, earning a degree in Communications. Following an internship with Sweetland Amphitheatre, Sara Grace joined

the team at the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce. She has served as Communications Manager since 2019.

Sara Grace has visited our church several times and brings a strong faith, abundant energy, exceptional organizational skills, and a great affinity for people to our team. She may be reached (1/18/22) at saragrace@lagrangefumc.org.

DON'T ASK FOR HELP!

Congregational Care of LaGrange First Methodist is offering two important programs; both are open to our members, friends, and the general public.

SUICIDE & DEPRESSION DISCUSSION

Nearly 1 in 5 adults in the US experiences some form of mental illness. Join noted therapist, Susan Marshall, LPC, for an interactive discussion on depression and suicide in St. Andrew's Chapel on Wednesday, January 12 at 5:45 pm. Susan is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Georgia and a National Certified Counselor.

GRIEF SHARE GROUP

After the funeral when the cards and flowers have stopped coming, most people around you return to their normal lives. But your grief continues and you feel alone. If this sounds like you, you consider GriefShare. GriefShare is 13-week program with special weekly meetings designed to help you rebuild your life after losing a loved one.

A GriefShare informational meeting, led by Bonnie Norrick, will be held January 23, 2022, in the Epworth Dining room after the 11:00 am service. A light lunch will be served. Weekly meetings will begin February 2, 2022, 3:30-5:00 pm in the Genesis classroom. For more information, please contact Bonnie Norrick (bonnies1955@gmail.com).



Welcome New Members!

THE LACEY FAMILY

Jessica, Quest, & Matt

We're Better Together!

Night of Lights

More than 1200 persons participated in our Night of Lights & Living Nativity. The event gave families the opportunity to enjoy an evening together. A togetherness that costs nothing but offers so much: a chance to spend time together, see our beautiful community, and reflect upon the true source of our joy and hope, Jesus!



Special thanks to the volunteers that made the event possible: Patsy Hale, Steve Cole, Wayne Godwin, Jessica Emery, Marty Hale, Bobby Cammon, Richard Ennis, Zachary Taylor, Ibby Robertson, Towns Weldon, Tom Pirkle, Hank Dobbins, Short Brown, Jack Brown, Donna Ennis, Gail Dacus, Ila Kornek, Mollie Roberts, Peggy Feather, Marcy Draper, Martha Pirkle, Debra Jackson, Jennifer Emery, Mary Ann Keck, Mary Ellen Taylor, Jane Free, Dorothy Cammon, Jim Hardy, Murray Schine, and Glenn Quiggle. And kudos to event organizer, Jeanne Jones, and the church staff that supported her.

Save the Date!
December 11, 2022



MISSION OF THE MONTH

LaGrange Personal Aid

BENEVOLENCE
Fund

Our Missions Committee is joining other local churches in partnership with LaGrange Personal Aid (LPA) to expand our church's ability to help those in need. For the month of January, all funds collected for "Missions" will be given to the LPA Benevolence Fund.

LaGrange Personal Aid is a non-profit organization established to provide temporary assistance to residents of West Georgia during times of distress, illness, or disability. Assistance is provided at the time of need, in whatever form is suitable to the client's situation. Our church's partnership with LPA allows our congregation to better help those with needs that extend beyond our on-campus food and prescription medication missions, while also allowing further coordination with other community partners. LPA has an advanced screening process that verifies needs, avoids creating systems of dependency, and truly helps without hurting!

This partnership, begun in the late Fall of 2021, has already made an impact in the community, helping those who otherwise would not be able to get by without the generosity and gifts of our congregation! Some examples of real life situations touched by this benevolence fund include:

- A middle-aged man who had to be out of work for three weeks due to illness with COVID received help with his utility bill;
- A woman who was unable to work due to ongoing treatment for a brain tumor received rental assistance;
- An elderly gentleman, who was behind on his propane bill and was worried his heat was going to get shut off, received assistance;
- A young man who had leg surgery and was unable to walk, forcing him to be out of work, received rental assistance.

Your gift makes a real difference in the lives of real people who live within the shadow of our steeple. Thank you in advance for allowing Christ's love to be made real for others through your gifts this month!

Updated COVID-19 Protocols

We encourage each of you to consult with your trusted physician to determine what COVID-19 protocols are best for your overall health. Our individual actions certainly impact our community of faith. If you have 1) not received the COVID-19 booster, or 2) received the second dose of Pfizer/Moderna more than six months ago, or 3) received the first doses of the J&J vaccine more than two months ago, or 4) are unvaccinated, or 5) you are immunocompromised, we respectfully request that you follow the CDC's recommendation to wear a mask while inside our church buildings. Masks are available at each entry.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Jeanne Jones, Children's Minister | jeanne@lagrangefumc.org

What is happening in Children's Ministry?

Are we active and busy? YES! Do we have children coming each week? YES, a lot of children!

What is the most important thing to know about the Children's Ministry at LaGrange First Methodist?

We desire to equip parents and lead children into a lifelong relationship with their Lord and Savior—the God that created us and the Spirit that dwells within us. That is the cornerstone of our program!

Do you know the Lord's Prayer?

The month, our children will begin a ten-week study on Wednesday nights of *The Lord's Prayer*. You may be wondering why we are spending so many weeks on something that we all know. At some point, we all learn *The Lord's Prayer*, and most of us say it without giving much thought to what we are actually saying. We want to equip children with Biblical truths and knowledge that will last a lifetime. We will examine *The Lord's Prayer* in detail, allowing children to understand beyond rote memorization. It is our hope that when the children at LaGrange First Methodist say *The Lord's Prayer* ten years from now, with each word they will remember all that is within this powerful prayer.

Starting with the first words, "Our Father," a translation of the word "abba." Jesus is calling us into an intimate relationship. At a time when some religious leaders believed you should not even say God's name, Jesus uses the word "abba." In our contemporary language, it would be like saying "Dad" or "Daddy." Jesus inviting us into a relationship with the Most High God, Creative of the universe as His children.

And that's just the first few words! Have you looked at why Jesus said, "give us this day our daily bread"? Why daily bread? To what bread is He referring? What does hallowed mean? What scripture backs up and explains all of these words? All of these questions will be answered, and children will hear the scripture that supports each word spoken in this prayer. When children recite *The Lord's Prayer*, they will understand the power and love held within these simple sentences.

What do children experience on Sunday mornings?

Sunday mornings at LaGrange First Methodist are jam packed with faith and relationship-building activities, along with praise and worship. No matter what time you arrive at LaGrange First Methodist, children may proceed directly to the Vernon Street entrance of the Children's Building to check-in. Families and children are enjoying a full three hours to connect with each other and build a lifelong faith.

During the month of January, our focus will be on understanding the *Ten Commandments* and how they apply to our daily lives. For children in our nursery, we have a brief story and interactive or lesson about Jesus and how much He loves us. Along with the lesson, your child is being actively prayed for by name throughout the week by our prayer team.



Children's Ministry CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS





TWEENS (FOURTH- & FIFTH-GRADERS)

Ice Skating at Sweetland (January 14)

Tweens are invited to join us for Ice Skating at Sweetland on Friday, January 14. We will meet at the church at 5pm, grab dinner at YourPie, then go to Sweetland for skating! We will return to the church at 8:00 pm.

The cost of this outing is \$20. RSVP to Elissa Lamoree (elissa@lagrangefumc.org)!



Leadership Retreat (March 18-20)

We still have a few spots left for our Tweens Retreat (March 18-20). Our 4th and 5th graders will attend a leadership retreat at Indian Springs State Park. The entire cost of the trip is \$125 which covers meals, activities, t-shirt, and more! If your Tween would like to join, let us know soon, so we can reserve their spot! Email Jeanne Jones (jeanne@lagrangefumc.org) or Elissa Lamoree (elissa@lagrangefumc.org) to RSVP or for more information.

THE FLAME

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Staff Servants

Dr. John Beyers	Senior Minister
James Camp	Pianist
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
Elissa Lamoree	Assistant Family Minister
Will Locke	Youth Minister
Maxine Ogletree	Nursery Worker
Don Papenbrock	Organist
Dr. Richard Prior	Interim Minister of Music
Andy Rainey	Executive Minister
Sara Grace Todd	Director of Membership Engagement
The Rev. Ben Wills	Senior Associate Minister

Our Church Office is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday. We have a secure mail slot to the right of the Trinity Street door entrance. You also may drop off correspondence in our locked mailbox under the portico on Vernon Street outside the Children's Building.

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