



SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOL. 58 | NO. 9

# THE FLAME

The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange

## Find your true 'home' in a Soul Connection small group

Contemporary author Melissa McClone wrote, "Life takes you to unexpected places. Love brings you home."

Has there been anything we could say that could better describe our experience of the last two years? Who could have expected the things we've seen? The things we've been through? The storms we've weathered? The places we have found ourselves? I certainly didn't see them coming. However, even in the midst of the uncertainties of life, love continues to bring us home.

As we enter a new school year and new season, I would like for you to consider **Soul Connections** as a way to connect with others, grow in the love of Christ, and find a spiritual home through small group discipleship.

True "home" is to be found where our hearts connect with God and others, and I think a Soul Connection group is the perfect place to find a home to weather the unexpected places life will take you.

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 about eight to 12 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" 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.

If your soul, like mine, yearns for deeper connections with God and others, please fill out the **interest form on page 3** of this issue, or visit [lagrangefumc.org/soul-connections](http://lagrangefumc.org/soul-connections) to fill out an electronic form and to learn more.

When you fill out the form, you can choose group preferences most convenient for you, or signify a specific group you would most like to join. As we form the groups, we will do our very best to honor your preferences. **Registration runs through Sunday, September 19**. Hard copies of interest forms can be found in this edition of The Flame, in the Church Office, or at the Soul Connections table set up in the Narthex before and after worship each week. They can be dropped off or mailed to the church. Following the registration period, a minister or Soul Connections host will contact you about your group.

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



### SOUL CONNECTION SMALL-GROUP HOSTS

**Denise and Mike Wilson**  
Mondays, 6:00 pm | Couples

**Elissa and Collin Lamoree**  
Mondays, 6:30 pm | College-Age

**Elaine McCook**  
Tuesdays, 10:30 am | Older Adults

**Christina and John Morgan Jackson**  
Tuesdays, 7:00 pm | Young Adults

**Sammi and Ben Wills**  
Wednesdays, 5:45 pm | Parents

**Joyce Sato and Rhonda Mitchell**  
Wednesdays, 5:45 pm | Women

**Murray Schine, Debra Jackson,  
and Linda Frano** | Thursdays  
1:00 pm | Online Intergenerational

**Jennifer Emery**  
Thursdays, 6:00 pm | Intergenerational



**THANK GOD IT'S WEDNESDAY!**

## 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 Tuesday before each meal by signing up at [lagrangefumc.org](http://lagrangefumc.org) or calling the Church Office. (We encourage you to pay in advance. You also can pay by cash, check, or 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

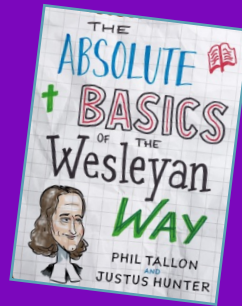
**4:00 - 5:00** Youth Hangout & Homework: supervised time in the Welcome Center/Coffee Bar, youth game room, and other youth rooms

**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



## HANDBELLS

5:30 pm  
Handbell Room

## CHANCEL CHOIR

6:30 pm  
Choral Suite

*The TGIWednesday schedule is subject to change due to COVID-related concerns/protocols.*

## HOSPITALITY TEAM

**Rick Free**, Director of Food Services and Hospitality, is looking for volunteers so he can form a core group of individuals to contact to serve meals and help with clean-up on Wednesday evenings, at TLC, and at other ministries and special events. To find out more, contact Rick at [rick@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:rick@lagrangefumc.org).

## PRAYER TEAM

Would you like to join the Prayer Team? This ministry meets at 9:30 am each Thursday in the Epworth Dining Room. For information, contact **Pastor Ben** at [ben@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:ben@lagrangefumc.org).

## PRAYER WORKSHOP

Why bother to pray? Do my prayers really make any difference? If you've ever pondered those questions, you may be interested in attending a Prayer Workshop led by **Rev. Leah Cunningham** on Saturday, September 18, from 9:00 to 12:30 pm at First Methodist. Rev. Cunningham, director of the North Georgia Conference PrayerForce, travels the Conference sharing her passion for prayer. She brings to our churches an excitement about prayer that focuses on the personal prayer life of each individual, as well as the collective power of prayer as a mission of the church.

The PrayerForce does not charge a specific fee for workshops or consulting, but love offerings are accepted to help offset travel and workshop expenses. The workshops are casual, fun and informative. Whether you are an experienced intercessor or new to prayer, you'll be glad you came! If you're interested, please RSVP to **Linda Frano** at [linda.frano@gmail.com](mailto:linda.frano@gmail.com).

## THURSDAY LUNCH CLUB (TLC)

We were anticipating welcoming back our TLC crowd on September 2. However, because of COVID-19, we are **canceled the planned September TLC luncheon** with the hopes of resuming the monthly event in October.

## HANDS IN SERVICE

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.

you are invited...



Please join us for a baby shower honoring

**SAMMI AND BEN WILLS**

as they anticipate the November arrival of their baby boy!



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 • 12:00 PM, WESLEY HALL**

A light lunch will be served.

*Sammi and Ben are registered at Target, Amazon, and Buy, Buy Baby.*

*Hosted by the adult Sunday School classes and United Methodist Women*



For this *child* I have prayed, and the Lord has granted me the desires of my *heart*.

- 1 SAMUEL 1:27

*Are you interested in  
'coming home' to a  
Soul Connections small group?*

Fill out the form to the right and  
return it to the Church Office.  
You also may sign up online at:

**lagrangefumc.org/  
soul-connections**

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Pastor Ben  
Wills at ben@lagrangefumc.org  
or 706.884.4635.

*If you would like to share any further  
information or concerns with us regarding  
Soul Connections, please include on a  
separate sheet of paper along with your form.  
Thank you!*

## CHURCH ON THE HOOCH

*Thank you to our featured speakers who  
helped make the 2021 season of Church  
On The Hooch a success!*

**Rev. Ben Wills**  
**Will Locke**  
**Jim Thornton**  
**Rev. David Adamson**  
**Dr. Colin Dacus**  
**Carol Cain**  
**Rev. Yolanda Jones-Colton**  
**Rev. Carl Von Epps**  
**Jeanne Jones**  
**Dr. John Beyers**  
**Laegan Smith - Music Worship Leader**

## INTEREST FORM

# SOUL CONNECTIONS

We're better together!

NAME

EMAIL

PHONE

*To help us in organizing our small groups, please choose one option  
below and then fill out the corresponding information in that box.*

### ☐ **OPTION 1**

*Please place me in a  
group that best fits my  
preferences and schedules.*

**Check all the days of the  
week you are available to  
participate in a group:**

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday

**Desired makeup of the  
group, if any (check one):**

- ☐ Couples
- ☐ Women
- ☐ Women/Men
- ☐ Intergenerational
- ☐ Young Adults
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ College Age

### ☐ **OPTION 2**

*Please try to place me in the group  
hosted by:*

- ☐ **Denise and Mike Wilson**  
Mondays, 6:00 pm | Couples
- ☐ **Elissa and Collin Lamoree**  
Mondays, 6:30 pm | College-Age
- ☐ **Elaine McCook**  
Tuesdays, 10:30 am | Older Adults
- ☐ **Christina and John Morgan Jackson**  
Tuesdays, 7:00 pm | Young Adults
- ☐ **Sammi and Ben Wills**  
Wednesdays, 5:45 pm | Parents
- ☐ **Joyce Sato and Rhonda Mitchell**  
Wednesdays, 5:45 pm | Women
- ☐ **Murray Schine, Debra Jackson,  
and Linda Frano** | Thursdays  
1:00 pm | Online Intergenerational
- ☐ **Jennifer Emery**  
Thursdays, 6:00 pm | Intergenerational

## CHURCH ON THE HOOCH

A beautiful sun has set on our 2021 season of Church On The Hooch, and we hope you'll be ready with your boats and lawn chairs next year as we plan to continue this unique worship-on-the-water experience! We extend our heartfelt appreciation to church member Mike Wilson, who spearheaded Church On The Hooch in 2012 as an outreach ministry of the Boy Scouts. Through the years, several local churches have been gracious in hosting the services, and this is the sixth year it has been a ministry of First Methodist. Mike remains extremely involved in all aspects of Church On The Hooch. You can see him in the red shirt at the podium in the picture to the right, but the picture in the top left more accurately conveys Mike's involvement, as he is seated behind-the-scenes as the Rev. Carl Von Epps preaches. Mike puts in countless hours of work to make Church On The Hooch a reality for our community, but his passion and efforts are not normally seen by all of us. We are also thankful to Shane Moore for volunteering at every service as our sound technician guru; for Marilyn Huberdeau and Boy Scout Troop 21 for their assistance at each service; our mighty volunteers who set up and took down equipment, usually in sweltering heat; other volunteers who mightily kayaked from boat to boat gathering the offering; and of course, all those who came to worship by boat or by land!





# YOUTH MINISTRY

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

September means a hint of fall will be in the air soon and that Youth Ministry's programming is in full swing!

## Prayer Breakfasts

Prayer Breakfasts return in September, and an exciting change from last year is we'll be at a local restaurant! Our First Prayer Breakfast of the school year will be Tuesday, September 7, from 7:15-7:45 am at 505 Eats. All sixth-12th grade students are invited! We'll have breakfast together and a brief devotion before school. As a way to celebrate our first Prayer Breakfast of the school year, it will be FREE to all students. We will have our next Prayer Breakfast on Tuesday, September 21, from 7:15-7:45 am at 505 Eats. Please note students will need to have transportation to and from 505 Eats for Prayer Breakfasts.

## Wednesday Night Youth

Wednesday Night Youth is back in full swing! We meet starting at 4:00 pm for Homework and Hangout, have dinner in Wesley Hall at 5:00 pm, and gather for worship in the Youth Worship Room at 6:00 pm. We have thoroughly enjoyed Mary Elizabeth Gerick's leading us in worship each week and getting to build deep relationships in small groups! In September, we will wrap up our series on Friends and Family before spending the rest of the month in a series on Sexuality and Dating. (Parents, more information will be sent out soon regarding the sermon series and resources to equip you to talk further with your student about this important topic.)



## Confirmation Class

A new Confirmation class with 10 amazing confirmands begins Sunday, September 12! The Confirmation class members will meet weekly throughout the school year before celebrating the culmination of their journey on Confirmation Sunday (May 1). Over the course of their journey, the confirmands will explore the history of Christianity, foundational Methodist doctrine, and what each confirmand believes. I look forward to beginning this journey with them soon and ask you to join me in praying for our confirmands throughout the year.

## Bed Build for 'Sleep in Heavenly Peace'

The Youth Ministry's Monthly Service Opportunity is the Sleep in Heavenly Peace Bed Build! The event will be on Sunday, September 26, from 2:00-6:00 pm at New Ventures' warehouse (105 Lukken Industrial Drive), and a catered dinner will follow the build. This is an outstanding opportunity to join alongside other members of our church and our sister church, Warren Temple UMC, to meet a vital need in our community.



Our goal this year is to build 15 beds; this means we need 40 volunteers to make this happen. Elissa and I would love to see as many students as possible help with the Bed Build. If you plan to join us, you can scan the QR code above to fill out Sleep in Heavenly Peace's release form in advance. All ages are welcome to participate in the Bed Build; this is a fantastic opportunity for families to serve our community together! (You can find more information about the Bed Build in the Mission of the Month section below.)

It is an honor and joy to partner with this great church to create opportunities for students to grow in their walk with Jesus. May the Lord grant you His perfect peace in the month ahead!

Your Youth Ministry team,  
Elissa Lamoree and Will Locke

## MISSION OF THE MONTH - SEPTEMBER

# SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE BED BUILD

OUR YOUTH MINISTRY'S GOAL IS TO FUND AND BUILD...

**15 x \$350 = \$5,250**  
**BUNK BEDS      EACH\*      TOTAL NEEDED**

*\*Cost for materials to build one bunk bed (includes all linens)*

Led by our Youth Ministry, our church will participate with Warren Temple UMC in a Bed Build for "Sleep in Heavenly Peace." You can help our youth meet their goal by donating funds and by volunteering at the Bed Build on:

**Sunday, September 26, 2:00 to 6:00 pm**  
**New Ventures' Warehouse, 105 Lukken Industrial Drive**

*A light dinner will be provided to volunteers.*

Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a national volunteer organization with a LaGrange chapter that builds, assembles, and delivers top-notch bunk beds to children and families in need.

Please give to support the local children served by this wonderful ministry. You'll also be supporting students in our youth group as they show the love of God through building beds!

You can help our youth meet their goal by writing a check to the church with "Missions" in the memo line and mailing it to the church at 401 Broad Street, LaGrange, GA 30240.

You also can text LGFUMC to 73256 to give using your mobile device, or give online at [lagrangefumc.org](http://lagrangefumc.org). When prompted, please select "Missions."

Unless otherwise directed, all gifts to the Missions account through the end of September will be directed to Sleep In Heavenly Peace's Bed Build until our goal is met.

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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

## Wednesday Night Kids is back!

August 18 was our fun, very wet welcome-back celebration. Students enjoyed getting soaked on the Slip 'N Slide®, tossing water balloons at each other, and celebrating being back together again. We feasted on pizza and ice-cream sundaes.

This quarter we are studying the Fruit of the Spirit. When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and grow these attributes in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. With those qualities we are better, stronger, and more equipped to handle whatever life brings and to show God's love to everyone.

All children in kindergarten-fifth grades are welcome to join us each week from 5:30-7:00 pm. Children participate in dinner together, games, activities, praise and worship, and small-group time. We meet in the Children's Building; check in at the Broad Street entrance.

## Children's Sunday School

Each week from 10:00-10:45 am, children gather in Room 107 of the Children's Building to discover more about the God who created them and how much they are loved. During Sunday School, students explore scripture and learn how it applies to their lives now. Students learn through interactive activities that change each week. Have you ever made a fruit salad during Sunday School, eaten M&M's® as part of your lesson, or acted like a donkey and had someone ride on your back in class? Our learning is interactive and fun, and we'd love for your children to join us!

## Community Fall Festival - October 24

Our traditional big event will be held from 4:00 to 6:00 pm! Set this date aside and invite your friends and neighbors.



## Kids' Church

The epic adventure that we start each week in Sunday School will continue in Kids' Church with corporate worship—kids' style! Prayer, praise and worship, a scripture lesson, and more are included each week. We get loud, and we love Jesus! Kids' Church is offered each Sunday during the 11:00 am worship hour with the exception of the first Sunday of the month—Communion Sunday—when we invite families to experience worship together.

## Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Events

Our August event took us to Mrs. Jeanne's house for a pool party and cookout! We had so much fun spending time together and celebrating the start of our new school year.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19, our Camp Glisson retreat for September is cancelled. Instead, join us for a "Staytreat"; we are staying here, but it will be a treat! Our tweens will meet at the church on Friday, September 17, at 4:30 pm. We will walk to Your Pie, eat dinner, have gelato, and then return to the church for a game night! Bring \$10 to cover the cost of food. RSVP to Elissa Lamoree at [elissa@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:elissa@lagrangefumc.org) by Wednesday, September 15.

We are looking for tween leaders to help run Kids' Church every week. We need help with leading songs, running out audio and visual, and more! If this is something your child would be interested in, please email Elissa at [elissa@lagrangefumc.org](mailto:elissa@lagrangefumc.org).

## Stephen Ministers

If you happen to see one of these friendly faces at church, be sure to give them a "thank-you," air hug, or elbow bump! These five are LaGrange First Methodist's Stephen Ministers. We consider them to be our behind-the-scenes, quiet heroes, for they have gone through extensive training to be a lay caregiver so they can provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

Hank Dobbins coordinates the program and puts in countless hours and care to provide this ministry in our community. He currently is leading an intensive training program for five additional church members who will join our present team as Stephen Ministers in a few months.

Those receiving care may be struggling with grief, a divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or some other crisis. A Stephen Minister usually provides care to one person at a time, meeting with that person once a week for about an hour. All inquiries and discussions are strictly confidential.

For information, contact  
**Hank** at [hankdobbins@gmail.com](mailto:hankdobbins@gmail.com)  
or 706.518.8773.



Hank Dobbins



Linda Frano



Bonnie Norrick



Tom Pirkle



Cheryl Weldon

## BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUNDAY

We had a wonderful time at Back-To-School Sunday on August 15! During worship, we prayed for our children and educators and had a blessing of our children's backpacks. Afterwards, we headed outside to enjoy Kona Ice, a dunking booth, and bounce house.



Our Family Ministries team also held a brunch before worship for those involved in our Teacher Encouragers program. Started last year, the program pairs an Ethel Kight Elementary teacher with an individual church member, who supports the teacher throughout the school year with notes, emails, small gifts, and prayer.



For our August Mission of the Month, we asked for contributions to our three main School Ministries: Blessings In A Book Bag, School Shepherds, and Teacher Encouragers. And wow ... your generosity was overwhelming! Together, we raised \$2,435. Thank you so much. We're also thankful to our Family Ministries crew (and to Peggy Feather, our Teacher Encouragers coordinator) for organizing such a meaningful day for our church family.



# THE FLAME

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**The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange**

401 Broad Street | LaGrange, Georgia 30240

706.884.4635 | churchoffice@lagrangefumc.org | LaGrangeFUMC.org

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The Flame

401 Broad Street

LaGrange, Georgia 30240

Dr. John Beyers	Senior 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
Darian Krimm	Minister of Music
Elissa Lamoree	Assistant Family Minister
Will Locke	Youth Minister
Maxine Ogletree	Nursery Worker
Don Papenbrock	Organist
Andy Rainey	Executive Minister
Natalie Shelton	Director of Communications
The Rev. Ben Wills	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

### Janet Wyche

Trish Smith  
The Dasher Family

### Joe Colley

Ann & John Stewart

### Mary Watkins

(mother of Mary  
Ellen Taylor)  
Trish Smith

### Fred Jones

Martha Stanley

### Frank McCook

Bettie & Ed Biggs  
Trish Smith

### Lonnie Ritchie

Judy Baldwin  
Martha Stanley

### Loretta Beall

Kathleen & Stuart Gulley  
Pat Gilbert  
Carol Winkle-Baldwin  
Cheri & James Hawkins  
Marilyn & Allen Smith  
Ellen Traylor  
& Jimmy Ferrell  
Shirra & Hoyt Rogers  
Ginger Booton  
& Celia Johnson  
Anne Allen  
Laura & Blair Harlin  
Peggy Lukken  
Judy Baldwin  
Freddie & Gene Hayes

Sue Duttera  
Sally & Ray Holmes  
Cecelia Goode  
Judy Glass  
Patti & Larry Lybrand  
Ann & Perry Wilder  
Lauranne Buchanan  
Mary Ann Keck &  
Susan Braik Taunton  
Trish Smith  
Gail Howard Gibson  
Nita & Jerry Overall  
Tee Borders  
Sandra Wilcox  
Sarah Beall  
Virginia Robertson



IN MEMORIAM

**Beth Godwin**

August 21, 2021

It was such a joy recently to join parents **Abbey and Jeremy Dockins** and big brother, **Hudson**, as they celebrated a perfect expression of God's amazing grace—the baptism of their daughter and sister, **Elizabeth Sutton Dockins!**



In August we also welcomed the newest official members of LaGrange First Methodist: **Elissa and Collin Lamoree!** Elissa has worked in our Children's Ministry for several years now and most recently transitioned to a new role in our church as our Assistant Family Minister. Like his wife, Collin has quickly become a presence in our church as well; he just began leading a small group in our Youth Ministry! We couldn't be happier that they have chosen to be a part of the First Methodist family.

