



Faith Is Not a Spectator Sport

Melissa Earley, Lead Pastor

Have you noticed that people on TV don't watch TV? I have. As someone who goes through seasons of watching more television than is good for me, I've noticed that the characters on the shows I watch are busy doing things. They are solving crime, committing murder, falling in love, searching for treasure, baking cakes, saving family fortunes, losing family fortunes, creating false identities, and training dogs.

When Jesus called his disciples, he did not call them to "come and believe" or "come and watch," but to "come and follow me." And for a time, they learned from him. They listened to his parables, they watched him perform miracles, they heard him argue with religious leaders. But eventually, way earlier than seems advisable, he sent them out to do. He sent them out in pairs to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits. Faith is not a spectator sport.

When asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus said, "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you will love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12:29b-31). This was also his answer about how to gain eternal life. When asked how to know who our neighbors are, Jesus responded with a parable about a stranger who helps someone who has been beaten up and left on the side of a road. Being a neighbor is offering aid. He was also answering the question that went unasked, "what is love."

Love is not conjuring up a warm cuddly feeling. In the final reckoning, according to Jesus, we won't be asked how we felt about our neighbors, but what we did for them.

"Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me."

Then those who are righteous will reply to him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?"

Then the king will reply to them, "I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me." (Matthew 25:34-40).

And if you keep reading, you'll see that those who didn't visit the sick, or give food to the hungry, or give drink to the thirsty, are sent away to eternal punishment. Faith is not a spectator sport.

Not even in worship. Worship is not the whole of a life of faith, but it is a critical part of it. In worship, we practice paying attention to God, listening to the scripture, the music, the sermon, the silence; listening for what God might be saying to us today. And through the hymns we sing, the prayers we pray, the attention we give we praise God, we thank God, and we invite God into our lives. Corporate worship plants us in a community that promises, with every baptism, to "proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ," and to be a "community of love and forgiveness where all might grow in their trust in God and be found faithful in their service to others."

Faith is not a spectator sport, and it is not a solitary one. Our individual relationship with God matters, but we do not follow Jesus alone. Jesus did not call his disciples to independent study, but to join a motley crew of followers in a life of messy, but profound, faithfulness.

RefugeeOne Update

Lynn Mikels, Pastor of Discipleship

A lot can happen in two months' time. The refugee family that FUMCAH co-sponsors, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has moved into their Evanston apartment, experienced public transportation, started school (four of the seven children), started English lessons on Zoom (the mom), applied for social security cards and completed needed forms, are learning about Chicagoland and navigating life here (thanks to mentors and friends from FUMCAH and RefugeeOne), met neighbors from the DRC who helped them find a Congolese church, and so much more.

In addition to "work," there has been time for fun. Thom Frerk, part of our Refugee Assistance and Friendship Team (RAFT), helped the family create beautiful and colorful art! (see photo on opposite page)

A paragraph or two cannot adequately describe what the family is encountering. Not only has working with mentors and tutors been life changing for Nasu Marie and her family, but it has also been an unforgettable experience for the mentors as well. Here's what a couple of them shared:

"The most amazing thing about my refugee family experience so far is the depth of love witnessed and shared. I love them already as we try to just be present in their lives as needed. They express such a

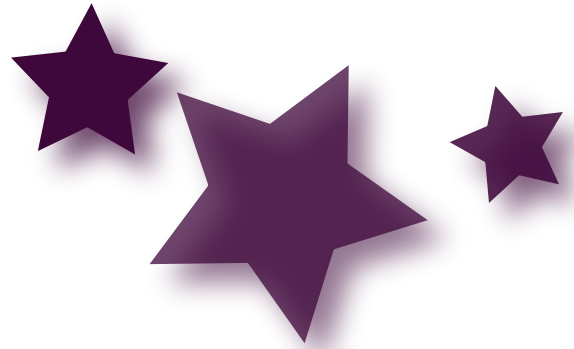
loving welcome for us every visit. They also love each other so very well! On one of our very first visits, the teenagers were trying out writing simple English sentence. I expected some requests or questions. Instead, one of the first was: "I love my family." A beautiful witness!" (Mary Kay Baldino)

"The experience has brought me tremendous joy. Each member of the family is vibrant, warm, and loving. I have generally played with the children while the other mentors work out issues with the mom. The children are wonderful! So enthusiastic, kind, and alive. The children have been taught to treat each other well, and they really seem to get along. The experience has shown me how faith can sustain people - Nasu Marie and her family, in this case - under even the most arduous of life journeys." (Chris Mier)

This has been mutual ministry at its best - people meeting one another right where they are and sharing their gifts, knowledge, and faith.

None of this could have happened without the generous support of so many people from FUMCAH and from friends in the community. We raised money for rent support, furnished an apartment, and have a supportive mentoring/tutoring group. If you would like to be part of our RAFT in the future, please contact Wendy Dunnington or Pastor Lynn.





Blessing Backpacks

Ben Hallet, Director of Children and Youth Ministries

Back in January, a young girl in our church named Avery was inspired by a story in a magazine, and she became enamored with the idea of creating a project to collect items of need for families who were under-resourced. She talked with her mom, and they put together an April toy and supply drive for the seven children of the refugee family our church recently sponsored in partnership with RefugeeOne. Over four weeks, the generosity of our kids and their families was on display as they filled up bins with school and art supplies, toys, and body/haircare products to welcome this family into their new home. When Avery came to church to help divvy up and package the items, her face lit up at the collection! She was very proud of everyone's kindness and feels encouraged about the welcome this family will feel as a result. Thanks to everyone who donated! This is the church at its best!

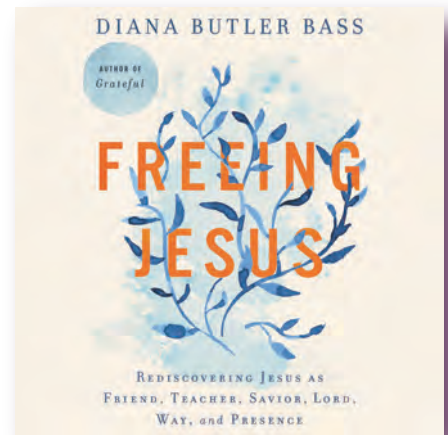
“Hi, I’m Avery, and I’m six years old. I got an idea from a magazine that made me want to help kids who didn’t have much. I talked with my mom, and we realized we might be able to help a refugee family. I wanted to do this project because I know lots of people are less fortunate than us. I am glad that I could do this project because I know they will receive nice gifts.”

Rediscover Jesus: A Sermon Series and Discovery Circle (Small Group) Opportunities

Melissa Earley, Lead Pastor

“Who do you say that I am?” is one of the key questions that Jesus asked his disciples and asks us as those who follow him today. It can seem like this question has a right answer, and so we root around in our memories for what the creeds say or what we learned in Sunday school. We evaluate our answers as “orthodox” or “heretical” based on what would make some other person happy. However, “Who do you say that I am?” is not a test we pass or fail, but an opportunity to put words to how we experience Jesus.

Starting June 19, for six weeks, we will spend time with different experiences of Jesus in order to help us connect more deeply with him. The jumping off point for this series is *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence* by Diana Butler Bass. In this spiritual memoir, Bass rediscovers a Jesus who is more than creeds can contain and will never fit in a “one-size-fits-all” box. If you are looking to deepen your relationship with Jesus or would like new words to describe your understanding of him, this sermon series is for you.



We will also have book discussions on *Freeing Jesus*. On Thursday, July 21, at 6:30pm, at a restaurant TBA, Pastor Melissa will lead a discussion of the whole book in one sitting. Please sign up at fumcah.com/getinvolved to get an email about which restaurant. Pastor Lynn will also lead a discussion of the book chapter by chapter. Watch the e-news for details at fumcah.com/e-news.

Additionally, Pastor Melissa will lead a five-week class called “Discovering Your Spiritual Autobiography.” We will use the Jesuit practice of examen and freewriting from prompts to reflect on various stages of our lives to discover who Jesus was for us. Understanding our relationship with Jesus from our past may help us delve more deeply into our relationship with Jesus now. This class starts on Tuesday, June 28 at 7:00 pm and continues for five weeks, through July 26. To get the Zoom link, sign up at fumcah.com/getinvolved.

Ministry Match: Match your Skills, Interests, and Passions to Ministry at FUMCAH

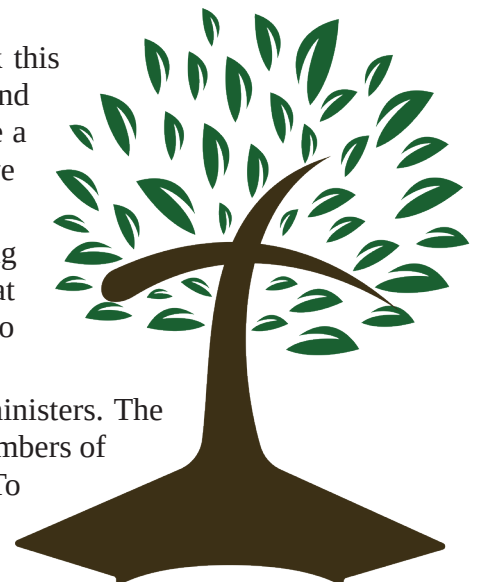
Melissa Earley, Lead Pastor

Like many churches, our church tends to ask the same people to do different things over and over. We end up burning out some people and never using the gifts and skills of others. Most people get more deeply involved in the life of the church because someone asked them to do something or help in some way. It can be hard for those in leadership to know who to ask, so they ask the people they already know or the people they are sure will say yes.

Ministry Match is a custom-made survey that we hope will help us break this destructive habit. This short survey asks questions about skills, interests, and passions, and then gives the taker their top ten potential areas that could be a good fit. Church staff and leaders who are tasked with inviting others to serve will see all the areas that might fit for those who have taken the survey.

No survey can capture all of who a person is. But we hope that those taking this survey might see new areas to serve that they hadn't thought of, and that those doing the asking would be able to think of new people to invite to volunteer.

Ministry is not limited to just one person or one set of gifts. We are all ministers. The apostle Paul emphasized this by talking about members of the church as members of the Body of Christ. Everyone has a part to do and every member matters. To take the survey, go to fumcah.com/ministrymatch. This survey is just the beginning of the conversation about how you might join FUMCAH in loving boldly.





Discover, Imagine, Create, and Explore

Sarah Ridyard, Preschool & We-e Care Director

Success in our ever-changing world is not determined by what we can learn through rote memorization. Specific skills, such as collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication play a huge role in how we can thrive in our current, and future, society. These skills naturally present themselves through play, as children must think on their feet and work together to keep play themes going.



FUMCAH
Preschool &
We-e Care

Here at FUMCAH Preschool, we are also lucky enough to have our DICE class, which further fosters these thinking skills and dispositions. Children in our DICE classes have the opportunity to take on tasks that inspire them to discover, imagine, create, and explore. In these dynamic classes, children have undertaken projects which have given them hands-on experience with investigating, observing, experimenting, cooking, and sewing. But the actual best part is all the joy on our children's faces while they take part in these classes. We are thrilled to be able to offer these experiences to our students!

You can learn more about the Preschool and We-e Care program at fumcah.com/preschool.



United Methodist Women Is Now United Women in Faith

Kathy Pollard, United Women in Faith Unit President

In the 150 years since we began, our organization has had more than 25 names, each reflecting varying states of the church, society, and women's lived experiences. We've been "Ladies," "Woman's," and then "Women's" societies, associations, guilds, and circles.



United
Women
in Faith

Now we are again taking a new name to better reflect how we answer our calling to faith and action today:

United Women in Faith.

"This is an exciting time for our organization!" said Harriett Jane Olson, CEO of United Women in Faith. "Looking back, we see the through lines for our organization - faith in God and commitment to women, children, and youth - and how this has been expressed in different ways at different times, always calling women into action that changed the world. Now we are again opening up new opportunities to continue to make that happen."

Along with the new name, we are rolling out an array of new and innovative programs and opportunities for women's spiritual growth, soul care, leadership development, and service and advocacy. We recommit to inclusivity, action, and impact as women of passion and power, united by God's love in our mission to help women, children, and youth.

Our own United Women in Faith Unit at FUMCAH has been putting love into action in many ways throughout the year. Every season we have an array of activities intent on sharing our faith through gatherings and circle meetings, sponsoring educational programs and book discussions, organizing work days to help members, and holding two fundraisers every year to support our mission giving. We act out our commitment to love in action through giving to programs and organizations that improve the lives of women, children, and youth locally and around the world. We help our own members by providing meals when needed and organizing service days to help with tasks such as yard clean-up.

We do all of this while having fun and getting to know one another. Our photos from the past year are a sampling of the activities we have shared. Working together for a common good is a wonderful way to make lifelong friends. Please reach out to us if you are interested in learning more about United Women in Faith.





Murals by the Masses

Thom Frerk, Artist-in-Residence

Creating murals is one of the many activities Art Ministry does to beautify the church and people's lives. The large-scale works allow many people to contribute, and we have had dozens and dozens of artists participate. We have had people as young as three and as old as ninety-three!

Our recent *Mother's Day* mural featured hands from the bell choir and JAM (Jesus Arts Music) kids. The *Daffodil* mural, which took over two years to complete due to the COVID-19 pandemic, started with all sorts of participants following service on several Sundays in Fellowship Hall. This process has been repeated many times for our other murals, including *Starry Night* and the *Butterfly and Flower* mural done in collaboration with choir members in the Music Room.

Easter Morning, painted in the southwest style, represents the sun rising over Christ's mountain tomb.



Some murals are more like installation art. This includes the recent *Giant Spring Flowers*. The first step was picturing Jesus, where again old to young shared their vision of how Jesus might be seen or shown through the ages. The *Earth Day Paper Quilt* mural, carefully pieced together by the Art Ministry team, consisted of ninety-one pieces sent in by church members when we were all stuck at home during the pandemic last year.



To see more of the murals and installations created by members of the church, guided by members of Art Ministry, please visit fumcah.com/art.

Hope to see you with brush in hand for our next mural and, as always, all are invited to join the Art Ministry team.





Music Ministries

Jeannie Workman,
Director of Music Ministries

After a few years of singing together through cameras and microphones, being together on Sunday mornings is a wonderful gift. The Chancel Choir will continue to sing throughout the summer. We will have a hymn sing on July 3, singing some



of FUMCAH's favorite hymns outdoors in the gardens. In August, we'll be singing some famous pop songs from different decades. The choir will sing one each Sunday, and there will also be featured soloists. The congregation might also be asked to participate, so warm up those vocal cords on the way to church!

If you like to sing, this would be an ideal time for you to try singing with the choir. There is no weeknight commitment; we rehearse on Sundays right after the worship service. Being a part of the choir is really fun and fulfilling in a creative way. Working together to realize music is a uniquely human experience.

Please visit fumcah.com/music to see and hear some songs and pieces from both our recent in-person services and our virtual services. Be sure to check out the Chancel Choir's wonderful Easter cantata, "Crown Him with Alleluias," the Family of God Handbell Choir's "I Wonder as I Wander," and the Children's Choirs' presentation of "It's Okay to Be Different" for Mother's Day.



Staff Transitions

Melissa Earley, Lead Pastor

We say goodbye to two staff members this quarter. Sam Coker has been the student pastor since September 2021, and his last Sunday was May 15, 2022. Joyce Hawley has been on staff, with various job titles, since March 8, 2010, and her last day will be June 30, 2022.

Sam Coker completed his last year of field education at FUMCAH while in the last year of his Master of Divinity at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. He came to FUMCAH to learn how a vibrant suburban church does ministry. To learn about the administrative side of the church from two strong committees, Sam attended Trustee and Finance meetings. He also preached regularly, planned the Maundy Thursday service, did pastoral visitation, led an introduction to the Bible class, and began a fellowship with young adults.

In addition to his “official” duties, Sam joined the Chancel Choir. “I’ve been surprised by the ways I’ve come to be part of the life of this church, especially in my participation in the Chancel Choir. Returning to group singing was not something I expected to do during my tenure here, but I’m so grateful I did. It’s been such a joyous experience to sing again in a choral setting.”

Though he finished his Master of Divinity this May, he will stay at Garrett-Evangelical for one more year to complete a Master of Theological Studies. He hopes to take a chaplaincy position at the Presbyterian Home in Evanston so that he can continue developing his preaching and pastoral skills. We hope to see Sam

again, as a guest preacher or in other capacities. “This congregation has given me a wonderful home to grow into my vocation, and I am so grateful for the time I’ve spent and the people I’ve met here. Thank you so much for having me!”

After over twelve years on staff at FUMCAH, Joyce Hawley will retire on June 30, 2022. In retirement, she looks forward to spending more time with the people she loves. She will be able to visit her children and grandchildren, who live in California, Missouri, and Kansas. She will also see more of her good friends who are local. A few household projects await her, like sorting through photos and other projects she set aside in the past and now has the time to do. Though she looks forward to doing some volunteer work eventually, she welcomes the time to be unscheduled and getting adjusted to not working.

Joyce has seen her share of changes over the years. Changes in technology, clergy, and the building have all occurred during her tenure, as well as changes in her responsibilities.

When asked about the highlights of working for FUMCAH, Joyce says without having to think about it, “The amazing people I work with – my second family! I will truly miss working with them. And the congregation - the people are wonderful in this congregation.”

People who work closely with Joyce describe her as someone who is genuine, caring, and kind. She is well organized, anticipates needs, and attends to every detail. Joyce treats her work not as a list of tasks to get through, but as a ministry and a way to love others.



Communications Corner

Christopher Rice, Director of Communications and Media

The FUMCAH website continues to be the hub of the church. Whether you want to learn more about our monthly missions (fumcah.com/missions), join a Discovery Circle (small groups), volunteer, or donate (fumcah.com/getinvolved), or see all of our upcoming events (fumcah.com/events), the website is the place to do it.

Happenings (fumcah.com/happenings) is our community blog, with photos, videos, and descriptions of what we've been up to. Some recent highlights include the Children's Choirs' Mother's Day Musical, the newest Confirmands, and the graduates honored on Baccalaureate Sunday.

Besides having the current online service, fumcah.com/worship contains a playlist of all our online services. Would you like to revisit a memorable sermon by Pastor Melissa? Maybe a Time for Children with Ben really resonated with your kids, and you'd like them to see it again? Did Jeannie and the choirs make a Sunday special for you? You can watch services back through March of 2020.

You can sign up for our weekly e-news from the footer of every page and see the last ten mailings at fumcah.com/e-news. You can also sign up to receive bereavement notices and special mailings.

As our world transitions away from paper, electronic contact options have become more important to everyone. Faith Leads is also available on the website at fumcah.com/faithleads. If you would like to receive an electronic copy only, please visit link.fumcah.com/opt-out. It reduces our environmental impact by using less paper, ink, and fuel for delivery vehicles, while also reducing our cost to produce the newsletter.

Financial Update

Kevin Conlee and Jonathan Nii, Chairs, Generosity and Finance

As chairs of the Generosity Committee and the Finance Committee, open communication and transparency about our church's financial position is important to us.

Our budget this year included a planned deficit of \$54,000. We came to this difficult decision after careful consideration of various factors, including rising utility and staff costs, along with a decrease in income from space usage. The most significant factor is our decision over the last two years to invest in staff to address critical needs in our youth programs, online worship, and communications.

As we near the mid-point of the year, we are more concerned about our financial position. Giving is lower than expected and costs are higher. As of our May Finance Committee meeting, our current forecast is a \$15,000 deficit at the end of 2022 after using the \$74,000 that remains in our PPP. If nothing changes in income or spending, we face a shortfall of \$87,000 in 2023.

The Finance Committee and other church leaders are investigating multiple ways to both increase income and decrease spending. Please pray for our church leaders as we make difficult decisions. Please remember that money is not the measure of our ministry, but it is a necessary tool. We know that it will take all of us, working together, to address the budget growing pains we are experiencing. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact one of us.

We have every expectation that our church will continue to be a vital congregation that loves boldly.

About Us

FUMCAH shares God's bold love by welcoming everyone and working for the well-being of the most vulnerable. We believe that God is working for a world where everyone is valued and where the earth is cared for. Participating in God's bold love is central to everything FUMCAH does.

In 2009 FUMCAH adopted the following statement: "We celebrate humanity's diversity of age, racial and ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, special needs, socio-economic conditions, and family status. Created in the image of God, all persons are worthy of God's love and grace and welcomed into full participation in the life of our congregation."



Faith Leads

FUMCAH's Quarterly Newsletter
Issue #2 - Summer 2022

Would you like to receive *Faith Leads* electronically? Scan this QR code:



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