

May 2025

Bedford First United Methodist Church  
Grace United Methodist Church  
Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church



# Lawrence County UMC News

## Spring!

Spring is in the air! (Or at least it is this week!) For the period of time between Easter Sunday and Pentecost (which is on June 8 this year), the UMC Discipleship Ministries folks have my attention directed to gardening, specifically building a terrarium. I have never created one before, so this is a new skill to learn. The good news is that I will be building four of them (one for each church and one for the online messages) so maybe one of them will survive. The other piece of good news is that I have able helpers at Wesley Chapel and Grace to fill in when I can't be there, so those two terrariums have a better chance of surviving. We'll see.

I will be taking a Sunday off in May to travel to Evansville to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of two very dear friends. This is the couple I mentioned in a sermon earlier this year; the one where the panicked and nervous groom had to ask the minister to "run that by me again" before repeating his vows. It has been great fun to watch their love grow over the years and I can't wait to celebrate their milestone anniversary with them.

Our Bible study on the book of Daniel is progressing nicely. The group is using the book *Daniel: A Twelve Week Study* by Todd Wilson to facilitate discussion. I have two extra copies of the book if anyone is interested in them. No charge, no obligation. It's just kind of sad to see them sitting in my office.

Finally, I want to say thank you to everyone for the honor and privilege of serving as your pastor. Some of you are sharing thoughts and experiences with me that confirm God's work in this community. And I am so very proud of your insights and accomplishments. Keep up the good work!

Love you all. Please let me know how I can pray for you.

Pastor Judi

### Inside this issue

Next Generation.....	2
Open House .....	2
Confirmation.....	3
Baptisms .....	3
Soul Food.....	3
Strategic Planning .....	3
Financial Report .....	3
Brain Games.....	4
Pitch-In Dinner.....	4
Birthdays.....	4
Calendar.....	4

## Next Generation

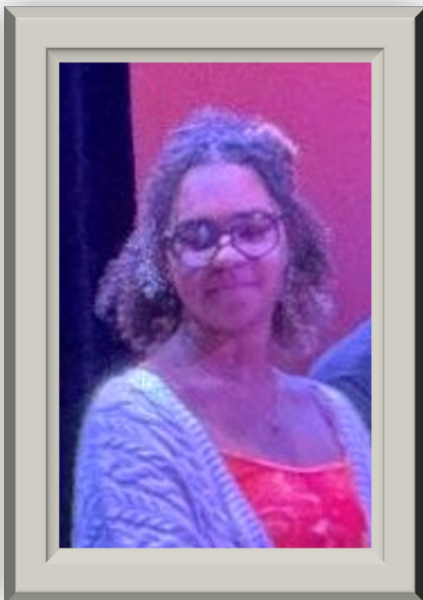


The Next Generation is focusing on the Next, Next Generation! Initiated by Madison Thompson, the group plans and delivers Sunday School lessons for the children in the Nursery. The group is also responsible for providing a short devotional every second Sunday of the month.

Congratulations to Kayeh Kwakye, Madison Thompson and Richard Bell for being recognized at the Lion's Youth Appreciation Program on April 14th. Madison was unable to attend the program but here is a picture of the other two. This recognition makes all three eligible for selection to receive the "Lion Bill Morris Scholarship."

Also, Congratulations to Kayeh Kwakye for her recent induction into the Bedford North Lawrence National Honor Society.

~Pastor Judi



## Graduation Open House!

An open house to celebrate Katarina Kwakye's high school graduation will be held on Saturday, May 31 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall at the Bedford FUMC. Please stop in and help Kat celebrate this milestone!



## Confirmation

Richard Bell will be confirmed on Sunday, May 25 during the regular worship service at Bedford FUMC. Please join us for this special event.

## Baptisms

On Palm Sunday, four members of the Kopp family (Tabatha, Deklin, Daxin and Duttin) were baptized during our worship service.



## Soul Food

Soul Food will meet at 10:30 on Wednesday, May 7. We will discuss *The Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivey. Sherry Hardesty will be leading the discussion. Newcomers are welcome. We will go to lunch following the meeting.

~Linda Schoonmaker



## Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee developed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the results are included at the end of this newsletter.

## Financial Report

Our deficit for the first three months of 2025:

January	\$6,000
February	\$4,000
March	<u>\$4,100</u>
TOTAL	\$14,100



~Jerry Jackson, treasurer

## Brain Games



Brain Games are May 12 and 13 starting at 6:00 PM at the Stone Gate Arts and Education Center. This is a Trivial Pursuit-type fundraiser for the Lawrence County Museum. Five people are needed to compose a team of Mighty Methodists, sponsored by Judge Nikirk. If interested, see Pastor Judi ASAP.

## Pitch-In Dinner

There will be a pitch-in dinner at Grace UMC on May 9 at 6:00 PM. If attending, please bring a dessert or side-dish. The dinner will be in the Fellowship Hall.



6 Bart Bertolino  
13 Catie and Abby Scott  
14 Jack Kenworthy  
15 Darryl Ivanson

22 Marilyn Sanders  
23 Phil Scott  
26 Charlie Elkins  
28 Mike Berry

May 5, Strategic Planning Committee at 4:30 PM, BFUMC  
May 6, Hospitality Committee at 9:00 AM, BFUMC  
May 7, Soul Food at 10:30 AM, BFUMC  
May 7, UMW at 1:00 PM at Grace UMC  
May 7, Food Pack from 6:00-8:00 PM, Lawrence Co. 4-H Fairgrounds  
May 9, Pitch-in at 6:00 PM, Grace UMC Fellowship Hall  
May 13, Administrative Council at 6:00 PM, BFUMC  
May 25, Richard Bell's confirmation during worship, BFUMC  
May 31, Kat Kwakye's Graduation Open House from 1:00-4:00 PM, BFUMC  
Every Sunday, Choir Practice at 9:30 AM (ends Mother's Day)  
Last Monday of the month, Euchre at 2:00 PM  
Every Tuesday, Men's Breakfast at Bob Evans at 9:00 AM  
Every Tuesday, Grief Share at 2:00 PM  
Every Tuesday, Bible study at 4:00 PM  
Every Thursday, Fiber Time at 2:00 PM  
Every Saturday, Gideons at 8:00 AM



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*Making disciples  
Jesus Christ for  
the transformation  
of the world.*



## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## SWOT

FINALIZED SWOT 3/31/2025		
LINE	Helpful	Harmful
NUM	Strengths - what we do well	Weaknesses- areas of improvement
1	Beautiful sanctuary, good size class rooms for Sunday School, nice kitchen and fellowship hall.	No Greeters at door to help and welcome people
2	Caring people in congregation.	Limited resources / staffing cut backs
3	Pipe organ and good piano. Have other instruments such as digital drums etc.,	No out reach programs; Lack of hands-on evangelism and mission effectiveness in community.
4	Could open our doors for other groups to use facilities. E.g. Salvation Army Service Core.	Lack of uplifting and modern worship music. Pipe organ is no longer in vogue and doesn't work well with modern praise songs.
5	Prayer Box Ministry - Interdenominational	Choir is very small
6	STO gives funds to various charitable organization	Decreasing membership / attendance
7	Grief Share class (facilitated by Karyn P. -Interdenominational)	No nursery, SS classes for children or adults
8	Good location , especially for intown folks, Historical presence in community - rootedness among congregants	Certain percentage of young adults will not attend church. View religion as outdated and/or judgmental
9	Desire, Willingness to try, Desire among members to keep presence of UMC in Bedford and Lawrence County	Building costs a lot to maintain. Facility needs repairs and has water leaks. Too much of our money goes to maintain an old building.
10	Interdenominational groups in church: Fiber Time, Euchre, Soul Food book club.	Shallow Spirituality - believing without actions. Consumer mentality to worship and religion.
11	Call to discipleship	Size of congregation cannot sustain our expenses
12	Provide Leadership and mentoring programs	Congregation Inward focused vs outward focused on community needs
13	Some members of BFUMC are strong leaders in the community / spheres of influence	Very few younger families with children or teens to entice other families to our congregation.
14	Shared values and cultural similarities among congregants	Cultural similarities of congregation maybe threatening or intimidating to some.
	<b>Opportunities for Growth</b>	<b>Threats to Success</b>
17	Keep UMC alive in Bedford and/or Lawrence County. Merge with Wesley Chapel and Grace UMC but may still have the diminishing congregation	Lack of interest / apathy among congregation, no Sunday school classes for adults or children. Sense of apathy in our own congregation; Discouragement.
18	Build new relationships in community through local mission and evangelism and marketing. WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.	Financial constraints: not enough money coming in to cover expenses. Have to take money from trust fund on a regular basis.
19	Move church to a new location.	Already did that or We use to attitude; not open to doing something different (change)
20	Small community	Work involved; No hands on missions in the community.
21	There are Mission opportunities in Bedford	Small community, less people to draw from.
22	Merge with Wesley Chapel and/or Grace UMC	Anticipatory Fatigue - Get tired just thinking about it. Lack of community presence via hands-on missions in community, no marketing.
23	Music more upbeat and some praise music	Membership continuing to decline thru death or leaving the church.
24	Rent parsonage	As an older congregation it is becoming more difficult to do "hands on" services within the community. Even SS teachers and nursery help would be difficult to recruit.
25	Rent rooms in current church building	Apathy of unbelievers in community *Community indifference - see no value in "Organized Religion"; Lack of interest in church, youth, young adults
26	Sell parsonage and use proceeds to repair major issues in current church building	No youth pastor; Lack of interest in church activities for youth, young adults
27	Become a church for senior population	No Community Newspaper, MUST rely on social media and radio to get information in or out.
28		Congregations in Lawrence Cnty seem to be shrinking or vanishing; people aren't attending another church.
		Will anyone miss us when we're gone?
		No Greeters at door to help and welcome people
	<b>Options to consider</b>	
1	Spend down our money until it is gone and we are forced to leave church and close doors	
2	Donate our money to charities and close doors sooner	
3	Rent space somewhere and let current buildings go back to conference	