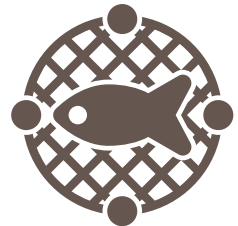


THE FISHNET

ZACHARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024 | NO.1



What does it mean to be connected? At the heart of who we are as United Methodist Christians lies our connection with God and with one another. Wesley fostered this connection through rigorous and oftentimes regimented worship, small group ministries, and outreach. Throughout our history we have proclaimed our connectionalism as the best of who we are as United Methodists. However, I think we have lost the true grace and blessing of our connection. Divisiveness within the denomination, competition between clergy, regional differences, and too many other 'worldly issues' have driven us apart.

I think it's time for us to reclaim the best of who we are.

Throughout this next year, I hope you'll pay attention to all the ways our church is striving to reclaim our connection with other Christians in our local community and with other local United Methodist Churches.

Psalm 133 proclaims, *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."*

As we kick off a new year in January, we'll focus on these connections both within and outside the Church with a sermon series discovering what it means to be a United Methodist Christian.

I look forward to the journey. Won't you join me?

Rev. Austin

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STUDENT MINISTRY

Hello, Zachary United Methodist Church! First, I would love to thank you all for the warm welcome extended as I transitioned to this wonderful church. Since I am new to the position and to the area, I thought you all may like to know a bit about me. I grew up as a preacher's kid in the Presbyterian Church (USA) tradition and moved around a bit growing up depending on where my father was accepting callings. Though most of these years were spent in Texas, I did spend the majority of my teenage years in Moss Bluff, Louisiana where our school mascot was also the Broncos. I felt my call to ministry while in undergrad at Texas State University and began volunteering in every college and youth ministry that I had time for. After undergrad, I served at a church in Bryan/College Station, Texas for a year before accepting another position in Houston. A year into that position, I began the hybrid MDiv program at Duke Divinity School where I am set to graduate with my MDiv and certificates in Christian Education, Latinx Studies, Faith-based Organizing, Advocacy, and Social Transformation, and Theology, Medicine, and Culture.

Ministries all over are experiencing some decline and, having had conversations with over a hundred churches along with dialogue between my Christian Education professor, Dr. Fred Edie, and classmates who also serve in youth ministry, we are all too aware that our youth ministries have also taken a hit. After taking a season of rest where I only focused on my studies the past semester while also interviewing for different student ministry positions, every place I interviewed wanted to get their youth groups back to how they were 2-10 years ago. The past always seems like some magical place, and I find myself also fondly reminiscing on my youth group days. The good news is that there are beautiful days ahead if we move with the Spirit. Youth ministry today will look a bit different than it was before. I can't say I have all the answers, but I'm excited to begin finding ways that we as a community can reach the students in Zachary. **(Continued on pg. 5)**





CONFIRMATION AT ZUMC

**Six Sundays Beginning February 11th | 6-8pm | Blackwater United Methodist Church
Confirmation Service - Easter Sunday During Both Services**

In the United Methodist Church, we believe in the power of infant baptism wherein the parents acknowledge the grace of God already present in the life of the child and makes
vows

with the church to begin a discipleship journey with that child. Confirmation offers a later opportunity for the child, now a teenager and able to speak for themselves and make
spiritual

decisions of their own, to confirm the vows their parents made through a service of confirmation and reaffirmation. Confirmation as a discipleship journey gives these teenagers an intentional space to discern the call and responsibility of being a disciple of Christ in a community of peers, mentors, and church leaders, and it is therefore open to all youth, regardless of if they have been baptized or not.

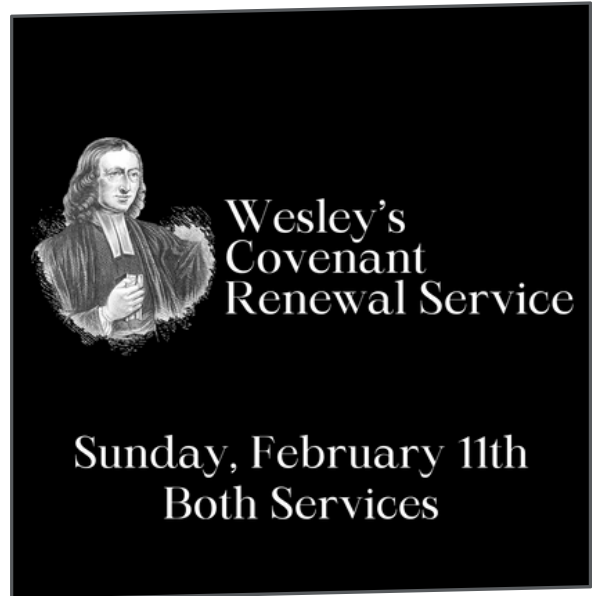
This year at Zachary United Methodist Church, our Confirmation journey will be a partnership with other local United Methodist Churches, including Blackwater, Denham Springs FUMC, and Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church. We will meet each week from 4-6pm at Blackwater UMC in Central. The sessions will be led by the pastors of the partnership churches. This journey will begin on Sunday, February 11th and run for six Sundays, ending on March 17th. Students participating will then be confirmed during morning worship on Easter Sunday (March 31st).

Confirmation is open to students in the 6th-12th grades.

To sign your child up for Confirmation, please visit: **www.zacharyumc.org/confirmation**

“May the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born through water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.”

UPCOMING EVENTS



STUDENT MINISTRY (CONTINUED)

We are in literally in a unique setup where we share property with the school. Our youth want to be reached and are longing for a community that will accept them as their unique selves. In a world where everything is expected of our youth, especially when it comes to schoolwork and extracurricular activities, we are in a position to give the youth of our community a break from that and a space to feel love and support. Matthew 11: 20-30 has Jesus telling us “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” What if we, through the Holy Spirit, can help our youth find this rest and light burden that is offered through Jesus? In a world where high schoolers have to be a part of every club, organization, sport, and whatever else looks good on a college application, we can be a special part of their spiritual journey that provides a time and space that centers their mind around God. While the ultimate goal is to get students and their families plugged into the ministry of ZUMC as a whole, I am looking forward to being a part of each student that walks through our building’s lives. I hope that we are able to provide a space in which students who come in a few times a year for fun activities are able to see God working through ZUMC just as much as those who become actively involved each week.



“Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity. Stay at your post reading Scripture, giving counsel, teaching. And that special gift of ministry you were given when the leaders of the church laid hands on you and prayed—keep that dusted off and in use.”

1 Timothy 4:11-14 (MSG)

ADVENT RECAP

We hope and pray you enjoyed the Advent Season at ZUMC as much as we did! Thank you to everyone who helped make Advent the best one yet - from beignets at the Christmas Parade to the beautiful decorations to the very special worship services throughout the season, we were all blessed by the preparation and anticipation of the birth of Jesus the Christ, our Emmanuel.

Angel Tree Gifts Purchased - 115
Community Helpers Sponsored Kids - 20

FINANCE REPORT

Thanks to your generosity throughout 2023, we are happy to announce that we ended the year fulfilling many of our financial goals of 2023:

- a balanced budget
- fully funded emergency fund
- funding for Youth and Children's Ministries

A complete financial report will be made after the year-end audit and reconciliation process. Look for that report in next month's edition of the Fishnet.



SIGN UP FOR HAPPENING

February 16th-18th - Wesley Center (Woodworth, LA)



The Louisiana United Methodist Happening is a three-day weekend spiritual retreat led by teenagers for teenagers. Happening is hosted annually at the Wesley Center and is open to all 9th – 12th grade youth in Louisiana and adults involved in Youth Ministry. The Happening Experience is a powerful instrument of renewal in the church, concentrating closely on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Happening gives those who attend the desire to understand and serve the church. It also provides an opportunity for one to explore their own spirituality and share in fellowship with one another in small groups, often forming relationships that last a lifetime. Register by calling the Church Office.

Rev. Austin will be one of the Spiritual Directors for this upcoming Happening!

The cost for the weekend is \$135.00, which includes the \$25.00 registration fee. The cost covers two nights of lodging at the beautiful Wesley Retreat Center, all large group and small group sessions, as well as five delicious meals prepared by the Wesley Center kitchen staff.

UPCOMING SERMON SERIES



LENTEN SERIES: “THE POWER OF SACRIFICE”



Lent has become a vain ritual where Christians give up small, often insignificant vices as they prepare themselves to contemplate the passion and resurrection of Christ. But what if Lent was meant to be much more radical and transformative than that? The fundamental call of Jesus to all who follow him is to sacrifice themselves and their lives for the good of their friends, neighbors, and even enemies. However, this call is far more easily preached than practiced. In this Lenten series, we will examine tangible ways that Jesus demonstrated sacrificial living in his day and age, and the powerful, world-shaking ramifications that his sacrificial life had on his society in his day, while posturing ourselves to imitate Jesus in our day.

EASTER SERIES: “LIVING IN A POST RESURRECTION WORLD”

One of the central messages of the Christian faith that is most often overlooked is that Christ is present in and through all things, which means that everything is sacred and every moment is holy. From Easter to Pentecost, we will explore the good news that Christ is risen - not just physically from the grave some two thousand years ago but in every aspect of our lives and world - and how to live in awe of the mundane moments of ordinary lives. This series begins with focusing on the resurrection of Jesus, a single person, and leads us to Pentecost, where we understand the way in which the entire faith community and indeed the world is resurrected in the Spirit of Christ.

Screamin' OWL



Salsa & Jelly

SALSA AND JELLY IS BACK!

What began as an experiment in the early 2000's has now turned into a statewide obsession over salsa and jelly. Screamin' Owl salsa is created, cooked and canned by the staff and volunteers of the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home.

We have several of their varieties in stock and for sale at ZUMC.

All proceeds will benefit Student Ministries.

Pick up a jar or two today in the Lobby of the Sanctuary, during the Pathway Service in the Fellowship Hall, or in the Church Office.

Salsa - \$8/jar

Jelly & Pepper Jelly - \$9/jar

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