



EUFAULA FIRST UMC
BELONG • BELIEVE • BECOME

*The MISSION of the United Methodist Church is to:
“Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”*



January 23rd EFUMC E-Newsletter

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PASTOR'S PEN



Dear Friends,

As I participate this week with over 50 clergy leaders from across the nation regarding clergy health and wellbeing, I appreciate our OKUMC Conference initiative to build “Healthy Clergy leading Healthy Churches.”

Rev. Dr. Kelly Brooks shared an interesting insight into The Art of Balance ...

“... in today’s fast-paced world, it’s easy to blur the line between functioning and performing – and I have often fallen into the whole of functioning while convincing myself I was performing. While these concepts are often used interchangeably, understanding their distinction can make a profound difference in how we approach our personal and professional lives – Otherwise known as The Art of Balance.

“Functioning is the baseline of existence. It’s about doing what is necessary to get through the day. When we’re functioning, we’re meeting the bare minimum requirements of life. We’re attending meetings, responding to emails, and fulfilling basic responsibilities. Functioning keeps the engine running but often lacks intention, creativity, and a sense of purpose.

Signs you’re functioning:

- You’re checking tasks off a list but feeling emotionally or mentally drained.
- There’s a focus on avoiding mistakes rather than achieving excellence.
- Life feels like a series of obligations rather than opportunities.

Functioning often occurs during periods of stress or burnout. It’s a mode we slip into when resources—whether time, energy, or emotional capacity—are stretched thin. While functioning is necessary at times, staying in this mode for too long can lead to stagnation.

“Performing, on the other hand, is about bringing intention, skill, and excellence to what we do. When we’re performing, we’re not just surviving—we’re thriving. Performing involves a sense of engagement and purpose. It’s about showing up fully, using our talents, and striving for our best.

Signs you’re performing:

- You approach tasks with creativity and enthusiasm.
- There’s a focus on growth and learning rather than just completion.

- You feel fulfilled and energized by your efforts.

Performing requires us to be present and invested. It often involves stepping out of our comfort zone and taking risks. Unlike functioning, performing is inherently sustainable because it's rooted in passion and intentionality.

"It's important to note that functioning isn't inherently negative. In fact, it's a necessary part of life. We can't always perform at our peak, and there are times when functioning is all we can manage—and that's okay.

"The key is to recognize when you're stuck in functioning mode and intentionally shift toward performing when the opportunity arises. This might involve:

- **Reflection:** Taking time to assess your current state. Are you operating out of obligation or inspiration?
- **Rest:** Performance requires energy. Prioritize rest and self-care to recharge your creative and emotional reserves.
- **Goal Setting:** Set clear and meaningful goals that align with your values and passions.
- **Support:** Surround yourself with people who encourage and inspire you to perform at your best.

"The journey from functioning to performing is not about perfection - it's about progress. Both modes have their place, but living a fulfilled life often requires us to aim beyond just getting by. By cultivating awareness and intentionality, we can move from surviving to thriving, bringing our best selves to the world."

You don't have to be working in a professional field to appreciate the contrast between functioning and performance. As a person of faith we desire to be intentional in our service and growth in the body of Christ.

I pray your journey is bringing forth balance and the best God had to offer through you to the world "intentionally" for the sake of Jesus Christ.

May God bless us to be a blessing to the world!

Grace and Peace, Pastor Michelle

Pastor Michelle is learning a lot at the clergy conference this week!



Church Calendar

If you have anything to add to the calendar, please contact London Peterson.

January 25 – Community Meal (11:30am)

January 26 - Coffee (Fellowship Hall 9:30am) /

Sunday School (10am) /

Sunday Worship (11am) /

Finance Meeting (12pm) /

Youth Group (4pm)

January 29 – Choir (6:30pm)

February 2 – Coffee (Fellowship Hall 9:30am) /

Sunday School (10am) /

Sunday Worship (11am) /

Church Leadership Retreat (1pm-5pm) /

Youth Group (4pm)

February 3 – Statistical reports due

February 9 – Coffee (Fellowship Hall 9:30am) /

Sunday School (10am) /

Sunday Worship (11am) /

Administrative Council Meeting (1pm) /

Youth Group (4pm)

February 16 – District Leadership Training (2pm-5pm)

February 23- District Leadership Training (2pm-5pm)

Epiphany Series: “Seeing God Clearly”

January 5th, 2025 – Epiphany Sunday (Communion Sunday)

Liturgical Color: White

Sermon: “SEEING HIS STAR” / Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

January 12th, 2025 – Baptism of the Lord Sunday

Liturgical Color: White

Sermon: “SEEING THE SPIRIT” / Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 19th, 2025 – 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “SEEING HIS FIRST SIGN” / Scripture: John 2:1-11

January 26th, 2025 – 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany

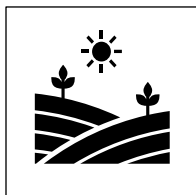
Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “SEEING SCRIPTURE FULFILLED” / Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

February 2nd, 2025 – 4th Sunday after the Epiphany (Communion Sunday)

Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “REFUSING TO SEE” / Scripture: Luke 4:21-30



February 9th, 2025 – 5th Sunday after the Epiphany

Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “SEEING HIS MASTERY” / Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

February 16th, 2025 – 6th Sunday after the Epiphany

Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “KINGDOM REVERSALS” / Scripture: Luke 6:17-26

February 23rd, 2025 – 7th Sunday after the Epiphany

Liturgical Color: Green

Sermon: “THE PLATINUM RULE” / Scripture: Luke 6:27-38

March 2nd, 2025 – TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY (Communion Sunday)

Liturgical Color: White

Sermon: “SEEING GOD’S GLORY” / Scripture: Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

Committee Articles

Administrative Council Updates



Our first meeting of 2025 was yesterday and there are exciting things happening in our church!

Most of us are familiar with the United Methodist Church mission of “making disciples.” Do you know the mission of Eufaula United Methodist Church? Does “**Belonging, Believing, Becoming**” sound familiar? Remembering and exploring our mission was one of our conversations yesterday. As part of the leadership of our church, we

discussed what this mission means and how we, as members of His church, are living out the mission. We will be digging deeper into our mission, creating a covenant as leaders, and setting goals for the year at future meetings.

I’m excited for all God has in store for us, and I hope you’ll join us in fulfilling our mission. That begins with **showing up**. Your presence matters! Corporate worship is an important part of our walk with Jesus, and I hope you’ll make it a priority for yourself and your family. I challenge you to take the next step if you aren’t already serving in some way. I’ve come across this quote several times this week and it resonated with me: “**You’ll never truly feel connected to a church until you begin to serve in it. Attending helps you grow spiritually, but serving allows you to fulfill your God-given purpose.**” There are so many ways to serve, even if you don’t feel you have special talents. From liturgists to kitchen help, to volunteering in our office to a leadership role there are always opportunities for service. Be an encourager, share authentically, practice mutual accountability and transparency, and be open to others – especially those who don’t look like you or whose beliefs don’t align with yours. There is opportunity for great growth within that challenge.

We will be exploring these topics more in the coming months, as well as attending to the “regular” business of the church. We are working diligently to bring policies up-to-date and complete conference tasks and forms.

I’m sure you are aware of the financial struggles many churches have dealt with since the pandemic and even before. Unfortunately, this is particularly true for our church. Our giving has not kept up with rising expenses for several months, and we must find ways to

generate revenue. Please prayerfully consider your own giving. If you can increase what you've typically given, I know the Lord will bless your generosity. I am personally committing to increasing my own giving by 50%.

One of the things I've enjoyed most about attending at Eufaula UMC is how open and accepting the congregation is. In spite of our "mature" membership, we are welcoming and willing to embrace change. I love that about our church! We still have work, but the results will be worth the effort.

In His Great Love,

-Cindy Wilkey, Administrative Council Chair



Greetings From the Trustees

First and foremost, we would like to introduce the committee members: Co-Chairs Margaret Kramer and Gayle Cooke, Secretary Patsy Kirk, and Directors Doug Kuykendall, Gayle Schroyer, Maureen McCracken, Kita Morgan, and Reverend Michelle McCarty.

We have been keeping busy, especially earlier this year when we were getting the parsonage ready for our new pastor's move in. There was a very long list of immediate projects that were completed, and there remains a list of pending projects. There are too many to list here; however, if you are interested in knowing what was done and what still needs done, please feel free to contact us!

The committee, in conjunction with the finance committee, prioritized repairs according to priority and finance availability. The church building has an ongoing chore list. The lists seem endless; however, we are extremely optimistic that with the help of the congregation we can get all unfinished business completed and devise a preventative maintenance schedule.

We would like to take a moment to thank everyone who lent a hand or donated money or materials to complete the work that has been done. Your time and generosity did not go unnoticed or unappreciated!

One of our future plans is to schedule a "Trustee Workday" complete a few of the projects on the church and parsonage to-do list.

We also assisted with the completion of the Charge Conference data. Gayle Cooke negotiated with the insurance carrier that insures both the church and the parsonage. Our premium increased by about \$4000, though we were able to save a bit of money. All churches are experiencing the same financial dilemmas with insurance premiums, and we

are extremely concerned about further rate hikes in the future in light of all the devastation due to damaging weather across the country.

The committee has the responsibility of rewriting the Wedding Policy to comply with the Charge Conference guidelines. If any church member is interested in assisting and developing this policy, we urge you to share your ideas and join the discussion and collaboration to create this document.

The uninvited and unwanted pesky Gofer's that are making tunnels around the church are being treated. Thank you Kelly Jordan, for consulting with Pied Piper and ordering the product that will hopefully rectify the problem.

There are a few outlets in the unused classrooms (west side) which were reported as having no power. Arrangements are being made to have them checked.

Together as a church family we can make all this happen. We wish you all a very Happy, Healthy and Blessed 2025!

–Margaret Kramer & Gayle Cooke, Trustee Co-Chairs

A Few Words from Finance

HAPPY NEW YEAR! The Finance Committee would like to thank everyone for their generosity and commitment to our church in 2024. We had some unexpected expenses on maintenance of the parsonage with some work still to do. We have made every attempt to be vigilant on everyday expenses and to be good stewards of your benevolence. Looking forward to 2025, we are searching for fundraising ideas. We welcome any and all suggestions: perhaps you have heard of successful efforts by other congregations and groups that might work for us. It would be wonderful to combine this with opportunities for outreach to the community as well. For 178 years, this congregation has served the needs of this area and according to Philippians 1:6 “we can be confident that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” The best is yet to come!

-Martha McCracken, Finance Chairperson

SPRC News

SPRC met briefly on Sunday (Jan 5th) to get acquainted with our newest team members and discuss goals for our work in 2025.

We hope to update job descriptions and complete staff evaluations. We are developing a "mentoring" process to support our staff members. And we will be looking for new ways to affirm our amazing volunteers in their service to Christ's body @ EFUMC.

We covet your prayers and support as we fulfill our mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Any ideas you may have to help us build up the body in a Spirit of harmony and unity is encouraged and welcome! We always love to learn new ways that will help us build up the church and strengthen relationships with God and one another, so we would love to hear from you!

May God bless our Team-Work and Efforts! Yours in Christ,

-Linda Johnson, SPRC Chairperson

Fellowship/Nurture Committee Summary

December 21, 2024 our UMC served lunch for 35 volunteers of the God's Helping Hands community food distribution. We served four large crockpots of taco soup, chips, crackers, salad, and peanut butter cookies. A special THANK YOU to those who donated and helped.



We have an ongoing mission of providing sack lunches and food for walk-in people needing food. This food is located in the hall next to the secretary's office. If you wish to donate to this project, we need non-perishable food. For sack lunches we need items individually wrapped and easy to open, such as nutrition bars, cheese crackers, juice boxes, apple sauce, Vienna sausages, single serving meats, and cookies. For family food we need canned meat, soup, instant food, and any easy-to-fix food. Please leave your donations in the kitchen marked for sack lunches.

Our salad lunch on Sunday, January 12 was a success. Please share any ideas you may have to make our Fellowship dinners even more enjoyable. Our next dinner will be on February 9. Please bring one signed Valentine!

Fellowship dinners are ALWAYS ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH. Mark your calendars! Thank you to those who put money in the donation jar; it's used to purchase chicken and needed supplies for the kitchen. Friendship Kitchen recently purchased a new microwave, and we have a new Keurig coffee maker!

My committee thanks you for helping us. We are always looking for new members!

-Kate Kuykendall, Nurture Committee Chair

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Mark 10:45 ESV

www.KrystalRSimpson.com

Opportunities to Engage & Serve

As 2025 begins, are you looking for fresh ways to serve and engage in the life of our church? This new beginning is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on how we can grow in our faith by actively contributing to the life of our congregation. Serving and getting involved not only strengthens our community but also allows us to live out the love and teachings of Christ in practical ways. By participating in church activities, we help create a welcoming, supportive environment where all can experience God's presence and grace. Engaging in service also deepens our connection to one another, fosters spiritual growth, and allows us to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. Let's embrace this new year as a chance to serve with purpose and passion, trusting that God will use our efforts to further His Kingdom. Want ideas of how you can serve or get on board? Contact our church office or Pastor Michelle!



Don't miss Sunday Morning Fellowship and Coffee at 9:30am every week!

Youth Group & Sunday School

Our Youth Group meets each Sunday afternoon at 4:00pm. 10 different girls have attended. Our usual group is 4 girls! We learn a new Bible verse each week, write words of affirmation in our books, eat snacks and play games! Some of us even had a special trip to the Muskogee Little Theater to see "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" on a recent Saturday. Always a lot of fun with this group. All youth of any age are invited to join us. You never know what we might have planned!

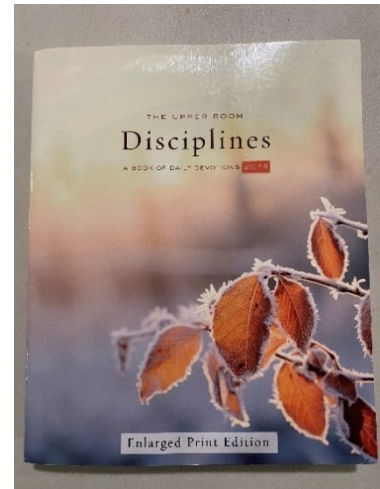
The Children's Sunday School class welcomes new members. Elementary age students are invited to join us for Bible stories, songs, crafts, games and fun! We meet in the classroom closest to the kitchen each Sunday morning at 10:00.

-Robyn Burris, Youth Director



Discovery Sunday School

Come join us in the Discovery Sunday School classroom for adult Bible study using the Upper Rooms' "Disciplines" curriculum, which is focused on disciplined daily devotional readings and reflections on the Scriptures. It also follows the church liturgical calendar and spiritual practices. The class is led by Pastor Michelle and meets at 10am!



Wesley Class

The Wesley Adult Sunday School Class is located in the Wesley room on the West side of our building. Our lesson books are a quarterly series; the winter theme this year is "following Jesus." Each week a scripture is part of the lesson, and the teaching is followed by discussion. Come join us at 10am on Sundays!

-Dorothy Merrick, Wesley Class Leader

Wednesday Evening Choir Practice

Psalm 81:1-2 states, "Sing aloud unto God our strength: Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob." Singing in the choir is a wonderful way to serve God and our church congregation! Choir practice is every Wednesday at 6:30pm, and you are invited!



United Women in Faith

Our Eufaula unit of United Women in Faith will start the new year with our monthly meeting on Thursday, Jan. 16 (due to inclement weather). This is not a lunch meeting, so we will

gather in the Fellowship Hall at 1:00. The Pledge to Mission Service will be presented by Robyn Burris. At this time each can make their own pledge to UWF missions for the coming year. Pledge donations can be given at this meeting or at any time during the year. Our unit pledges \$800 to the District UWF (which then goes to Conference and beyond) each year.

All women from our church and the community are invited to join us! United Women in Faith is for all!!

-Robyn Burris, UWF President



Starting a Men's Group at Eufaula FUMC

Dear Church Family,

The First United Methodist Church has always been a place where we can grow together in faith and fellowship. As we look to deepen our connections within the church, I feel called to explore the idea of forming a Men's Group right here in our congregation.

The purpose of this group would be to create a space where men of all ages can come together to share, learn, and grow in Christ. Through Bible studies, discussions, and community outreach, we can support one another in our journeys as fathers, sons, brothers, and friends. Together, we can tackle important topics such as faith in the workplace, family dynamics, mental health, and living with integrity as disciples of Christ.

This group would not only strengthen our bonds with one another but also empower us to serve our church and community more effectively. Imagine the impact we could have by coming together regularly for encouragement, accountability, and prayer.

If you are interested in being a part of this new initiative or have ideas about what a Men's Group could look like, please reach out to me, Michael Taylor, at Michael.roni@yahoo.com. I would love to hear your thoughts and work together to make this vision a reality.

Let's walk this journey of faith side by side, growing stronger as men of God and making a difference in His name.

Blessings, Michael

Revitalizing Our Online Presence: A Call to Action

Dear Church Family,

In today's digital age, a strong online presence is more important than ever for any community—and that includes our church. Our website, <https://eufaulafumc.org>, has not been updated in a while and it is time to make this a resource for sharing information about our church, its ministries, and upcoming events. Let's breathe new life into this vital tool!

A revitalized website would help us:

- Share Information Easily: With an updated platform, we can ensure that details about our worship services, events, and ministries are always accurate and accessible.
- Grow Our Membership: A welcoming and user-friendly website can serve as a digital front door, inviting newcomers to learn more about our church and join our community.
- Expand Our Outreach: By enhancing our online presence, we can share the love of Christ and the mission of our church with more people than ever before.

If it is feasible to revamp our existing website, we will do so. However, if that proves too challenging, we're prepared to create a brand-new site to serve as the foundation for our digital outreach.

This effort is not just about technology; it's about ministry. Our goal is to create a vibrant, accessible, and engaging platform that reflects who we are as a church and supports our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I am looking forward to ensuring that our website is a beacon of hope and a resource for all who seek to know Christ and connect with our church family.

In Christ, Ronda Taylor

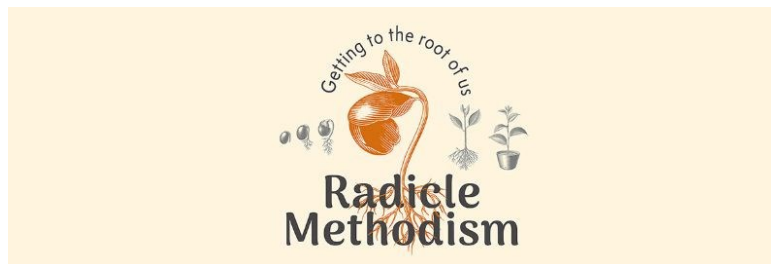


Educational Opportunities



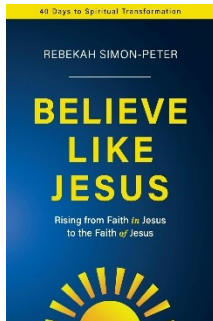
As of April 1, 2022, the Oklahoma United Methodist Conference ministries have transitioned to using Ministry Safe background checks. This improved platform allows for online training and comprehensive background checks. The program offers 5 levels of checks, of which the conference **requires a minimum of a Level 3**. All ministry volunteers will need a level 3 background check with 3 references: 1 pastor/clergy and 2 personal.

If you are working with youth in the local church (teaching, transporting, or volunteering with children at any level), MinistrySafe requires background checks every two years, and some insurance companies require annual background checks and online training. Please remember, the Conference requires a minimum of 2 adults when working with youth and children. Please contact our church office to renew your background check.



We're thrilled to announce that *Radicale Methodism 2025* starts Jan. 15! This is your opportunity to explore United Methodist roots, grow in your faith, and connect with others on this transformative journey. You can begin online now (contact London for the link), or join in our hybrid class at EFUMC beginning Jan. 26 (contact Pastor Michelle).

District and Conference Training opportunities (February 16 & 23, location *tbd*)



Special Lenten Study — “Believe Like Jesus” (starts in Lent, March 5th, watch for more details coming soon)

Just for Fun!

Here we cover the shenanigans and activities our church has recently participated in, projects we are working on, and other fun miscellaneous write-ups from our church members!

Congrats on 60 years of wedded bliss to our church members Doug & Kate Kuykendall!



Potluck Casserole

4 chicken breasts

1 can cream of chicken soup

1 can evaporated milk

1 can cream of mushroom soup

1 can sliced carrots, drained

1 can peas, drained

1 large bag stuffing mix

Boil chicken and cut into chunks; combine with both cans of soup, milk, carrots, and peas. Place in a large casserole dish. Prepare stuffing following package directions and spread over mixture in the casserole dish. Cook at 400 degrees for 45 minutes until bubbly. Enjoy!

-Dena Sponsler



**We are working on revitalizing our Facebook page! You can find and follow us at
<https://www.facebook.com/eufaula.methodist>**



Friendship Kitchen News



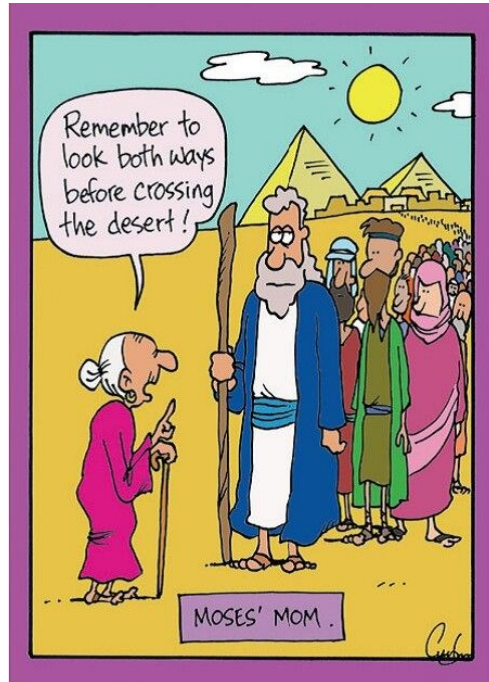
For those of you who don't know about Friendship Kitchen here is a little history. After EFUMC members Kathleen and David Shannon encountered a young couple walking from Eufaula to McAlester on a Saturday to get a free meal, they realized that Eufaula had no programs available to feed the hungry physically and spiritually. They brought their idea back to Pastor Brannon and the

congregation and in June of 2013 Friendship Kitchen was born. All the local churches were invited to participate. Initially 7 churches rotated and served a meal, offered friendship and spiritual guidance to anyone walking through the doors, no questions asked, no qualifications required. After several years Friendship Kitchen became a partner with the Food Bank of Easter Oklahoma, with the help of God's Helping Hands Mission. Twelve years later we still average serving about 50 to 60 patrons per week. Serving Churches have come and gone along the journey. Currently EFUMC spearheads the program and I am currently the 4th Program Director. Community Culture Church, Wayland Baptist Church, Eufaula VFW Post, and Beta Iota ESA Service Organization volunteer to prepare and serve a meal when it's their turn. Meals are served every Saturday from 11:30 to 1:00. The program is sustained by donations only. The program does get some food supplies from the food bank when available. If it were not for the loyal volunteers, Dorothy Merrick, Georgia Nichols, Carolyn Reed, Kate and Doug Kirkendall, and Robyn and Randy Burris, the EFUMC could not continue this Blessed Outreach. These dedicated people volunteer their cooking skills, time, prayer, spiritual support with kind servant's hearts and have been doing so since 2013. You are encouraged and welcome to join our team when you are able. If you would like to support our Mission financially that would be appreciated as well. If you have any questions about Friendship Kitchen and how you might get involved, please feel free to call upon me. This Mission will not only be a blessing to those we serve but to you as well.

We are happy to announce that there are 2 new churches that will be volunteering to cook and serve on a quarterly schedule, Lake Eufaula Christian Church and the Church of Latter Day Saints. We are pleased and grateful for the additional support and assistance. The Mission continues to provide a hot meal along with spiritual fellowship!

-Margaret Kramer, Friendship Kitchen Director

Is there a funny spiritual/church-related joke or cartoon that makes you laugh out loud? Let us know so we can include it in our e-newsletter!



Church family, we want your photos for the new church directory! Please send them to churchmethodist@sbcglobal.net. Or let us know and we can take your photo at church on Sunday. Thank you!

Church members toured the Christmas lights at Rahma College (Tulsa) and Honor Height (Muskogee). Let us know if you have an idea for another church field trip!



Prayer List

Please keep the people listed below in your prayers this week. If you have someone you would like to add to our prayer list, please contact Robyn Burris or the church office.

Nancy Welch

Grayson Gay

Shella Bowlin

Bob Sunday

Maurice Arnold

Dave Conatser

Myrna Kiester

Hershal & Janis Rinker

Gayle Cooke

Marcy Aquino

Duane and Debra Baker

Hal Kirkpatrick

Joe January

