



New Connexions United Methodist Church



March 2026

## Words from the Pastor

*Rev L. Grace Harmon*

Lent is a tricky part of the Christian year to fully express, especially in our modern world of perpetual distraction. Yet it is probably the most important one for us to try to experience as fully as possible. While it often makes us uncomfortable to think about, there is no Easter without Lent. And we can only embrace the miracle of Easter if we are prepared to take the time to grapple with Lenten truths.



The tradition of giving something up for Lent exists so we can practice such a spiritual discipline, contemplate what is really important to us, test our sense of mettle and resolve in some way, and be reminded that our sacrifices are small in the face of so much suffering in the world – not to mention the suffering of Jesus. Unfortunately, as with all repeated and ritualized practices, the true meaning becomes obscured by the habit and repetition.

This Lent, we have erected the ‘Wheel of Wisdom’ at the center of the cross. Each week we are exploring a different way of relating to Wisdom. Each of the little words around the wheel are ‘just’ connecting words: to, with, around, under, through...and yet each one forms a distinct kind of connection. It is very different to go around wisdom than it is to go through wisdom, which is not the same as going to wisdom, and all of those are different than going with wisdom.



Wisdom and our relationship with it are hard to define, and yet essential to a life of faith. The combination of maturity, empathy, hindsight, foresight and insight that I recognize as wisdom can only exist if and when we make peace with the harsh realities in which we live. None of those characteristics are possible if we are still trying to leap from Christmas to Easter without honestly dealing with the frightening power of the story in between. In essence, we will be stuck forever wandering around wisdom, but never really getting to know her.

The world could certainly use more seekers of wisdom right now. Imagine for a moment, what might be different if, rather than seeking victory, domination, validation, or vindication, we were committed to seeking wisdom. This is the power of honest Lenten reflection: it gives us an

opportunity to do some spring cleaning of the soul. In the process, we make space for truly new life instead of moving the clutter of our old lives around and saying we redecorated the house. By the time you read this, Lent will be almost over and Easter will be upon us. In each of our lives and in our lives together, what do we want resurrection to look like? What role do we want wisdom to play in the year ahead? And what old ideas are we willing to give up so that we can make space for Wisdom and the new life she brings?

It seems to me that New Connexions is well on the way to being a place for an often lost and Lenten world to build a new understanding of and relationship with wisdom and then invite others into the resurrection that is only possible when we have gone through the work of Lent.

This Easter season we will be looking at missed opportunities for new life in the biblical stories as well as in our own lives. Having glimpsed resurrection and becoming hungry for it, ideally we will not let ourselves miss any more. Read on to see what opportunities for new life we are already creating together, and how you might join in the resurrection life that is coming to define us here at New Connexions.

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### **Appreciation all Around!!!**

*Jane Ruback, SPRC Chairperson*



March came in like a lion this year. But it did not keep us from trying to share warm thoughts and blessings with our Pastor. The SPRC (Staff/Parish Relations Committee) designated the month of March as one in which we would make special efforts to let her know how much we valued her. We held a celebratory March 1<sup>st</sup> Pastor Grace Appreciation event following that Sunday service. Some of us sent cards or flowers throughout the weeks. Pastor Grace loved it all! And well deserved it was. She has been a source of creativity and positive change throughout all of the years she has served our



congregation. My records show she has been our Pastor since 2018. So much has happened it is difficult to enumerate the events, activities, and the special services we have all enjoyed together.

It is a sad truism that we often fail to fully appreciate the wonderful gifts we have been given. But we are not paving paradise and putting up a parking lot, (forgive me if you are not familiar with Joni Mitchell's lament for unanticipated consequences), but we are going to be face-to-face with an unexpected change. Pastor Grace has been reassigned, and she will be leaving us July 1. This date is the one set by the Conference.



It is a frantic time in the life of many Methodist Churches. Pastors leave, new ones begin in their place. Sounds so simple. So easy. Of course, we all know different. But this is not the time to dwell on the sadness and

lost-at-sea feelings that everyone, church members, pastors and pastor’s families all experience. Time enough for that. And then for new beginnings. New Connexions.

So, where we had foolishly designated only March as Pastor Appreciation Month, we must now look to April, May and June to make sure we say what needs to be said, do what needs to be done, and “make way for the path of the Lord”. Find those ways to praise, to celebrate, to prepare for a wonderful future, and to stay connected.....connexed? Maybe not. But you get the idea.

Count your blessings every day.

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## The Way We Were

*Anna Louise Bates, Church Historian*



This week I was stunned by a series of photos e-mailed by one of New Connexions UMC’s parishioners, Ann Craig. The images are a clear picture of the New Paltz congregation a decade ago: the smiles, the gestures and the love that so clearly shines through like radiant sunlight.



The first photo features The Rev. Bette Johnson Sohm, our pastor, delivering a benediction following our communion service flanked by Linda Loomis, Margaret Howe and Makayla Bennett. In the second photo, our honored guest, Bishop Thomas Bickerton and Stephanie Parsons stand nearby. The third photo features our beloved music director, Lee Pritchard.



The year was 2016. Each week, we lifted in prayer the War in Iraq and prayed for world peace. We wrote names of victims of gun violence on stones and prayed for an end to such violence. Our “big event” in 2016 was the observation of our 230<sup>th</sup> year. The celebration was commemorated by a series of talks, the Carleton Mabee Lecture Series, and this visit by our Bishop. The first circuit riders, came to New Paltz as part of the East Jersey Circuit in 1786.



So many things have changed in the past decade. The New Paltz church combined with neighboring parishes to form New Connexions UMC. Though some of the faces have changed, and some have passed on, we continue to celebrate our congregational ebbs and flows, and commemorate our history. We still pray for the world each week, and move forward with hopes for a bright future.

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## Connexion to Community

*Jason Rosenberg*

We have been coming Together at the Table, here at New Connexions, for the past few months, hosting community dinners started by the Community Center. It was noted that our kitchen functions like a well-oiled machine, but the engineer behind this marvel, as we all know, is too humble to be mentioned.

We have had a miraculous turn out for these dinners, that have filled our social hall to the point of requiring the participants to rotate through the seating arrangements, despite the social hall being maxed out with tables and chairs. Who could blame the community for clamoring for the best split pea soup, quiche or casserole in town, with both vegan and non-vegan options for all dishes.

If you want to try the next meal our mystery kitchen engineer has in store for the community, come join us on April 15th at 5:30 pm. Get there as early as you can and stay for Wellness Connexions with a performance by West African music group M'Bollo at 7pm and let your body sway to the rhythm.



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## Connexion To History

*Jason Rosenberg*

Poetry as History rises from the ashes of New Connexions' Ash Wednesday service. Poet Laureate Kate Hymes brought together a huge audience, both in person and online, to listen to her historical research on the period of abolition of slavery, from various records, presented as poetry.



She surprised us with the revelation that even after abolition, some of the African American residents of New Paltz had to finish contracts of servitude that lasted another 20 odd years. One mother's baby was taken and sold to the south, because the land owner, who was the father, felt that the child's life was worth more to him as a lump sum with the changing social value of African Americans dawning in that era. She not only told these shocking historic

twists with the backing of records to prove her tales, she spoke from the perspective of the people involved, with emotion and personality that made them palpable.



It was no wonder this was the largest audience drawn by a Wellness Connexions' event yet, though the recent Sound Healing on March 18<sup>th</sup> came in a close second with 40 participants. Let's hope these offerings have raised the bar for participation and there is a similar attendance for the West African band M'Bollo on April 15<sup>th</sup>, with local Senegalese drumming sensation and lyricist Amadou.





# WELLNESS CONNEXIONS

Free events for  
mind, body,  
& spirit, in great  
company

**THIRD  
WEDNESDAYS  
@ 7 P.M.**

**CORNER OF  
GROUÉ & MAIN  
NEW PALTZ**

<b>JAN 21</b>	<b>OFF GRID GAME NIGHT</b>	Unplug. Relax. Make Friends. Cocoa and cookies.
<b>FEB 18</b>	<b>POETRY AS HISTORY W/ KATE HYMES</b>	(Ash Wednesday Service @6.) Tea & sympathy, w/snacks.
<b>MAR 18</b>	<b>SOUND BATH W/ SAMA SHAKTI</b>	Kombucha & Infused waters
<b>APRIL 15</b>	<b>MUSIC OF M'BOLLO</b>	Bissap & West African treats
<b>MAY 20</b>	<b>PAINT &amp; SIP W/ ERIN EDIB</b>	Mocktails & Treats
<b>ALL OTHER WEDNESDAYS</b>	<b>THE GROUÉ</b>	Socially relevant bible study w/o BS or pretense

[newconnexionsumc.org](http://newconnexionsumc.org)

**AN INCLUSIVE HOME IN THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY**



# WELLNESS CONNEXIONS

PRESENTS

## M'BOLLO

MUSIC OF SENEGAL



"M'Bollo means gathering people together in Senegal's national language, Wolof.

The music is written and arranged by singer Amadou Diallo. Amadou brings the ancient rhythms of Africa to the present tense with the use of western instruments such as electric guitar, standup bass, mandolin, and banjo. This upbeat, positive music is **super fun to dance to.**

Amadou Diallo lives in Rosendale, NY and has performed with numerous groups including: Fakoly Dance and Drum, Forest Sacre, The Saruba Group, Vanaver Caravan, Foliba, Nego Gato, and John Specker in the group Shout Loula "

Wednesday  
April 15, 2026

5:30 Together @ the Table  
Free Community Dinner  
7:00 Music

An inclusive home  
in the heart of our community

1 Grove Street  
New Paltz NY

## HEARTS

Rev Eileen Daunt



A dementia support program offering:  
HOPE - ENCOURAGEMENT  
ACTIVITIES - RESPITE  
TRUST - SUPPORT

Winter has been a joy this year, once we safely arrived at our HEARTS gathering. Our weekly participation is up from a year ago, thanks to those who helped spread the word about HEARTS' great joys to all who benefit from the ministry.

Our friends, both volunteers and participants, have been engaged and joyful as each week they experience a routine format with new movements, activities, and games. Always the same but different.



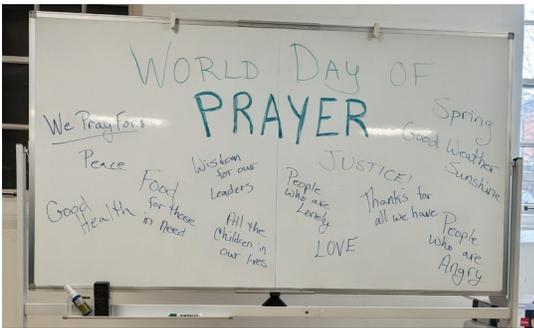
We joined in the Olympics this year, making the colorful Olympic circles into a banner. We used hula hoops in creative ways for movement and games.

Winter was brutal this year, reminding us all of winters past with all those snowfalls and ice to boot. Inside, we made sugar cube igloos and mini-marshmallow snowmen.

We even shot snowballs (ping pong balls) into large buckets (pots), making cognitive exercises fun for all. We must not forget the ice hockey played with pool noodles and balloons as pucks.



We explored some Black History within our local area and beyond, acknowledging the rich history and contributions made by so many.



The World Day of Prayer was experienced by testing out various ways to connect with the Holy. By the end of our day, we had made beautiful prayer candles to use at home.

We are all looking forward to Spring's arrival and all that it will bring.

HEARTS is helping to educate our communities about dementia. Rev. Eileen will be leading two six-week classes with the Community Training "Getting to Know Dementia". They will be held in Gardiner and New Paltz at the Libraries; Tuesday evenings 7-8:30 pm in Gardiner, April 21 till May 30, and Wednesday daytime 1-2:30 pm in New Paltz, April 30 till June 3. Register on the respective library's website calendar for all details and to enroll.



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## Trustees News

*Brenda Beane*

The Trustees have been very busy! Here is a brief re-cap based on information provided in the Trustees Report to Admin Council on 3/19/2026.

February 24<sup>th</sup> was not a good day. The Trustees were called because there was no heat in the Social Hall... and this was a time that the heat was not only being used to warm people but to also keep the pipes from freezing from all the super cold temps. The plumbers were called and a circulator was replaced. All good! Not so fast... It was discovered that all three of the downstairs toilets were backed up. The plumbers were called again. The sewer line needed to be snaked out. Roots were discovered 48 feet into the line. If this wasn't enough... the sump pump overheated and set off the fire alarm... Pastor Grace woke up to fire engines at the church. There was smoke only, no fire! However, the three smoke alarms closest to the sump pump were not operational. SafeCo was called to fix these and they will be replacing 10 more alarms throughout the building. This fire call prompted a visit from the Fire Inspector who came up with a long to-do list with items to be addressed.

Other work being done by the Trustees:

- Getting updated quotes for the parsonage and shed roofs
- Approving a quote from Tri-Pan to blacktop the parsonage driveway
- Working on getting air conditioning in the sanctuary... The New Paltz Village didn't approve the original plan so a re-design is being done
- Deciding on property and liability insurance for the Modena property
- Working on getting new appraisals for the Modena property more aligned with the property's value and getting quotes from contractors for the repairs that need to be done to the property

The Spring work day is Sat April 18<sup>th</sup>.

A big thank you to all the Trustees for all that they do and especially for handling emergencies at a moment's notice!  
**Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!**

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## Still keeping Ukraine in our prayers

If you would like to add a financial donation to your prayers, see [GIVE - New Paltz United Methodist Church \(newpaltzumc.org\)](https://www.newpaltzumc.org) for "Give to Ukraine".



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## Kenya Wesley Mission School - A Ministry Partner of New Connexions

Ann Craig



New Connexions UMC first met Rev. Kennedy Mwita in 2019. At that time, he was a District Superintendent in East Africa. He was a graduate of Africa University (a UMC University) with degrees in theology and agriculture. Rev. Ken (as he is affectionately called) first learned about discrimination when his sister was shunned for having HIV/AIDS. Rev. Ken and his congregation did their homework and decided not to discriminate against

LGBT people. By a unanimous vote, they became the first Reconciling Congregation in Africa. Soon, Rev. Ken was serving on the RMN national board and the UMC General Board of Discipleship.



His congregation met in a typical mud brick building with a metal roof. They also had a clinic building which lacked electricity, clean water, or a full-time nurse. New Connexions walked with the congregation and made gifts to help expand the water service for the clinic. When the clinic, parsonage, and church building needed electricity, New Connexions gave a gift to cover one building. When the electric company arrived, on their own they decided to install electricity for the whole village. Locals now call their power “Methodist Electricity!”



Before the clinic grew or the electricity arrived, the community suffered a devastating flood. Ann Craig and Karen Seyfert in New Paltz organized a birthday fundraiser on Facebook. Although we fell short of our goal, we raised enough funds to pay a seed company from Nairobi to come to the church. Fifty families showed up and formed a co-op. They followed the guidance of the seed company. It was so profitable, they were able to pay for their own two-story church building.



The clinic still needed help. In 2023, Rev. Ken visited Texas after a Discipleship board meeting to see where Marisa and Ann were now living. In true United Methodist fashion, he itinerated again. A small congregation in Seguin welcomed him. They knew what it was to be rejected. They had been told to leave the building when the big church voted to break away from the UMC. They also learned about welcome as they were invited to meet regularly in the fellowship hall of La Trinidad UMC

which opened its doors to the “Stay UMC” contingent. For once it was a largely Hispanic congregation welcoming a largely Anglo congregation. Good change!

When one member of this stalwart UMC remnant heard the needs of the clinic, she gave \$6000 to pay for one year of salary for a nurse. She gave it in honor of her mother who had been a nurse all her adult life.

- Because of that one nurse, the clinic then qualified for reimbursement from the government health system.
- Because the clinic was now certified, the ministry was able to apply for and receive funding from the Board of Global Ministries for a full hospital with 50 beds!
- Because there was a church building and an empty clinic building, they could house a school.
- In November 2024, a group met by zoom to ask, “Can we raise \$20,000 in one month to launch Wesley Mission School?” YES! In January 2025, more than 100 students began.



Rev. Ken itinerated again in 2025. Dozens of people and congregations welcomed him and gave generously. From New York to Ohio, Michigan to Texas, and finally North Carolina, the pictures of kids getting uniforms, desks, breakfast and lunch inspired all of us.

By January 2026, 150 children arrived. They now have latrines, new classrooms, computers, and recreation equipment. State education officials decided to meet at the school as they assessed all the schools in the region. Schools that didn’t meet the basic requirements of qualified teachers and hygiene were closed immediately. Wesley Mission School not only passed, it was lifted up as a model.

The school is funded through the middle of the school year (January to January), and we will urge congregations to put the Wesley Mission School into their budgets and to give generously. This is the only school when gender-different children will not be ostracized. This is the only school where openly LGBT teachers are treated as equal to other teachers. All teachers have background checks and follow safer school guidelines.



Eventually, they plan to have a self-supporting residential program that will attract students from all over Kenya as well as Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and more. The English-based program in Kenyan schools is a real magnet. And, with the high scores of this program, the word is getting out. Until then, United Methodists in the USA will be a primary source of support. Kenyan families give as they are able, but the total program and its growth will only become self-supporting with continued growth through giving over the next four or five years.

But please note, a series of relatively small gifts and fundraising efforts created an avalanche of good ministry. From inclusion, to electricity, to a farmers' co-op, to a new church, to a well, to a clinic, to a hospital, to a school, God has been at work. And New Connexions United Methodist church has made a huge difference.

Many gifts, one Spirit, one Lord known in many ways. In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise!

Check out their website for more information about the Wesley Mission School in Moheto, Kenya... [Wesley Mission School website](#)

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## Financial News

*Margaret Howe*

I know I am the last to submit – I wanted to wait until after the finance report was given at Admin Council! I love this Newsletter! And I know finances need to be part of it – so that folks can be aware of the various financial situations! Money is always a concern unless you have won the lottery and even then I am sure there are issues of how best to invest and use the winnings. We at New Connexions who have to account for the money do worry and struggle and are also very good stewards of that which we receive.



Near the end of the first quarter it has been a bit more difficult because we are dealing with the Modena campus which has not yet sold and has many layers of issues related to that selling. There is insurance costing more than we anticipated for an empty campus; there is the condition of the buildings; there are the frozen pipes in the parsonage as a result of the very cold winter. New Connexion Trustees, Pastor Grace, the lawyers and the realtor are in constant communications to better proceed with the sale of this campus as quickly as possible. However, during this process there is money required which in some places was not included in our budget for Modena expenses. We will come through this!

The Finance Committee is keeping a close watch on the budget and cash flow. Your continued financial commitment is essential in keeping the finances of New Connexions fluid.

The finances of a Methodist church are critical – however the ministries and mission, if they are in full operation, are the foundation and money becomes the necessary second. In the Methodist denomination, we are not subsidized by the greater church – we develop our own financial budget and work to maintain it. And, as Methodists we make a membership vow to serve our congregations through our prayers, presence, service, gifts and witness. I think we sometimes get so busy we forget these important vows/commitments we made – we need to acknowledge what and how we fulfill these – we do many automatically – let’s do them all as a matter of recognizing what it means to be a United Methodist. I think we will be surprised that we are committed.

Our new ministries are continuing with great success. Wellness Connexions in its new format – every third Wednesday at 7pm preceded by a supper called Together at the Table – in February and March saw two very different and exciting events – make sure you come in April. As we saw The Grove has found its being and now meets every week. They are such a creative group that some of the ideas for new ministries or changes in current ministries are emerging from The Grove. There is no limit to what we can do!

Food Ministries continue to function at a high level. We have Food Supplement to ABCD Center and Senior Citizens and what is wonderful about this program is that the ABCD Center help make the logistics happen – it is certainly a collaborative effort with the receivers of the food so appreciative. Fresh Food Give-A-Way each 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday provides fresh food to families and students. The source of this food is so wide – grocery stores, local farmers and growers – often home made soups. And during this very cold winter and some very snowy 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays we found alternative ways to give this food to those who needed it. These ministries reinforce our place in the community.

We are in need of additional resources to support the budget. We do not do the big extensive financial stewardship campaign – perhaps we should. We do hope that those of you who have made commitments will continue with them and just maybe increase a bit. And those who have not made a formal commitment, please give as you can.

Here is one way you can support the budget and clean out your closets. There is still the St Pauly’s Clothes Bin at the Modena campus. They take clothes and bedding and pillows and stuffed animals, etc. It clearly states on the bin. So as you clean your closets and need to get rid of things – take them to the St Pauly’s bin. We could get \$400 to \$500 per month and you would have reduced your closet bulge.

Now, from the Trustees you know there has been activity around sump pump issues and smoke detectors, clogged and leaky toilets – all being taken care of by the Trustees with the money committed to them from the Operating Budget - \$1250 per quarter. Perhaps you might wish to give an extra gift to the Operating Budget to cover this budget line.

Now there is another exciting activity taking place at the church – we have signed a contract to have air conditioning put in the sanctuary – Do you realize what this means? Do you know how many years we have cried for air conditioning? There are so many things we could do with a sanctuary that does not get so hot we cannot use the space – I am dreaming of a summer music

series whatever that might look like. The cost of this is \$50,000. I am suggesting we start a campaign to raise that \$50,000 from the church and community -who is with me – who might like to assist with this. If we raise \$50,000, the Trustees can use what they have allocated for air conditioning for something else. Watch for the information – or make a donation now to the church or online – put “Air Conditioning” in the memo space.

I am again repeating – and this time it is a test – no one responded form the January Newsletter.

If you know your John Wesley history – you know that May 24, 1738, known as Aldersgate Day – at a prayer meeting on that day – Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed” – he experienced an assurance of God’s love and went on to share that love with all. Want some Methodist history and read more about John Wesley, I suggest *John Wesley Holiness of Heart and Life* by Charles Yrogoyen, Jr. Why do I share this – because much has happened to us at New Connexions – and although my heart still gets financially heavy – I do feel a warm spirit of growth and renewal – not to the past – rather to the now and future – we have much work to do to embrace our sustainability as a church, a parish, a district and a conference – we have opportunities - let’s grab hold – and with enthusiasm move forward with these ministries and missions ..... doing good, doing no harm and staying in love with God.

The test is did you read the book and/or do you want to read the book and do a one or two night book study to see what made John Wesley tick and help us be 21st century Wesley people?

The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table of the United Methodist Church recently unveiled a new vision statement – “*love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously*”. I look forward to the growth and love and sharing and fellowship and discipleship that can emerge from our new *connexion*. Let’s continue to show signs for the future - Forward we move on the corner of Main and Grove, out and about wherever we are called.

May it be so!!!!

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Catskill Hudson District Conference**

**Sat, April 11**  
**9:30am-12pm**

Hosted by **Asbury UMC**  
5830 State Route 81  
Greenville, NY 12083

**Hope with Joy**

**DS Karen Monk**

**Register Now!**  
<https://ny-reg.brtapp.com/CHDC2026>

Thanks for your timely pre-registration!  
It is a kindness to our host & helps us prepare to welcome you!

**Uplifting Worship • Inspiring Speakers • Joyful Fellowship**

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## Let's Celebrate



### Happy Birthday!

March 1	Herb Witz
March 2	Kim Haughton
March 2	Margaret Howe
March 6	Art Mellor
March 8	Katelyn Welch
March 12	Eileen Daunt
March 12	Matthew Schifani
March 13	Tiresias Lundin
March 15	Brenda Beane
March 15	Karen Seyfert
March 17	Patricia Buchanan
March 22	Christine Ransom
March 27	Sam Reiss
March 28	Landen Sanchez

### Happy Birthday!

April 6	Susan McNaughton
April 7	Lee Pritchard
April 7	Ryan Wager
April 15	Jacqueline Vedder
April 23	Kim Rosenmeier
April 27	John Carraturo
April 27	Gene Regan
April 30	Alec Rappleyea
May 5	Angie Morhous
May 6	Anthony Buchanan
May 7	Joe Watson
May 10	Frazier TownsendPitt
May 11	Lyla Laffin
May 12	Matte and Lia Evers
May 14	Charlie Evers
May 15	Jarrett Scott
May 23	Linda Mellor
May 29	Nani Bautochka

### Happy Anniversary

March 29	Kate Hymes and Bill Flanagan
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We welcome your feedback. Email the church at [newconnexionsumc@gmail.com](mailto:newconnexionsumc@gmail.com). It will be forwarded to Brenda Beane and Jacqui Vedder as current newsletter editors.