

Your Invitation Could Change Everything

Easter Sunday, April 5, is nearly here — and with it comes one of the most meaningful things you can do for someone you love: simply ask them to come with you to church.

It might sound small. After all, we have worship, music, and a message prepared. We have signs and social media and everything else. But none of it is as powerful as you.

Research confirms what most of us sense intuitively: the single most effective way people begin attending a church — not advertising, not online search, not even the pastor's invitation — is a personal, face-to-face invitation from someone they already trust. Study after study of United Methodist congregations and other churches finds that the vast majority of new worshippers first walked through the door because a friend, neighbor, or family member asked them to come. Not a mailer. Not a Facebook post.

Someone they knew.

And here is the part that may surprise you: most people who don't currently attend church say they would be open to going if someone they know simply invited them. They are not waiting for us to dazzle them.

They are waiting for you.

Easter creates a unique window. This is one of the highest-attendance Sundays of the year, and the weeks leading up to it are a season of unusual openness. People who might brush off an invitation in July find themselves pausing in the days around



quiet hunger they can't quite name — makes them more willing to say yes.

Think for a moment about the people in your life. A neighbor you've gotten to know. A coworker who's been going through a hard stretch. A cousin you haven't seen in a while. A friend who used to come to church but drifted away. Someone who's never really found a spiritual home. Could any of them use an Easter morning that speaks of hope, of resurrection, of life beginning again?

You don't need a speech. You don't need to have all the answers to their questions. You just need a genuine word: *"I'd love for you to come with me on Easter Sunday."* That's it.

Your quiet, unhurried invitation may matter more than you can imagine. It might be the nudge someone has quietly been waiting for without knowing it.

Easter is April 5. ***Bring somebody with you.***

Who Are You Looking For?



An Invitation to Easter Sunday

On that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. She was weary with grief, her heart broken by loss, her hopes apparently buried along with Jesus. And then, through her tears, she heard a voice ask her two of the most searching questions imaginable: "Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" What a question to carry into a Sunday morning — into any morning, really. Because whether we realize it or not, all of us are looking for something. We are looking for hope that holds when life gets hard. We are looking for love that doesn't abandon us. We are looking for meaning that runs deeper than our accomplishments, our fears, or our failures. Easter is the stunning claim that what — *who* — we are most deeply seeking has already come to find us.

This Easter, we are wrapping up our Lenten series, *Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith*, and the culminating question couldn't be more fitting: *Who are you looking for?* Throughout these weeks of Lent, we have wrestled with questions about justice, new beginnings, thirst, suffering, and hope. We have sat with questions that don't resolve neatly but that have the power to draw us deeper into faith. And now we arrive at Easter — not with all the answers, but with the remarkable story of a risen Christ who calls Mary by name, lifts the veil of grief, and

makes himself known to her in a way she never expected. The resurrection doesn't tie everything up in a tidy bow. It does something better: it assures us that love gets the last word.

That is the good news we want to celebrate together — and we would love for you to be part of it! Join us for **Easter Sunday worship on April 5 at 9:30 am or 11:00 am**. Whether you have been with us every Sunday this Lent or it has been a long while since you walked through our doors, you are warmly welcome. Come as you are, with your questions, your doubts, your grief, and your hope. And bring your family or friends. Like Mary at the empty tomb, you just might encounter something — Someone — you weren't quite expecting.

Easter is for seekers. It always has been. We'll see you there.

Mother's Day Luncheon



The UMW is having a luncheon **Saturday, May 2nd** at 12:00pm and it's open to all females in your family. There will be an assortment of sandwiches, potato salad, Jello salad, mac and cheese, fruit, chips, drinks and dessert. The deadline is April 19th to have your reservation in for your family, so we will know how much to prepare for the luncheon.

We are asking \$5.00 per person to offset some of the cost. You can pay by Cash or Check. Checks need to be made out to UMW. You can give your cash or check to either Arlene Horton at the 9:30 service or Paula Barricklow at the 11:00 service. Please put in the memo on your check how many family members will be attending. Put cash in an envelope with your name and number of family members attending.

Roger's

Ramblings

THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

George Beverly Shea recalls once seeing George Bennard, author of this hymn, many times at Winona Lake Bible Conference in Indiana. "Though a preacher – a good one – he would sometimes sing," wrote Mr. Shea. "His voice was not trained or out of ordinary, but he had great feeling and expression and could really put over any hymn. I remember how moved I was the first time I heard him sing his own 'The Old Rugged Cross' What a distinguished looking man – slight of build, short, with glasses. The most memorable thing about him was his long, white hair."



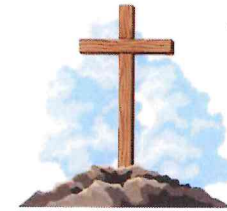
George Bennard was born in Youngstown, Ohio, shortly after the end of the Civil War. His father, a coal miner, moved the family to Iowa, and there George came to Christ through the ministry of the Salvation Army. He felt impressed to train for the ministry, but plans were disrupted when his father's death left him responsible for his mother and sisters. He was sixteen years old. Instead of theological school, he worked by day and devoted his spare time to books.

Eventually George's obligations lessened, and he was able to move to Chicago, marry, and begin ministry with the Salvation Army. Later he was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church and became a traveling evangelist.

On one occasion, after a difficult season of ministry, George realized he needed to better understand the power of the Cross of Christ. He later said, "I read and studied and

prayed . . . The Christ of the cross became more than a symbol . . . It was like seeing John 3:16, leave the printed page, take form, act out the meaning of redemption. While watching this scene with my mind's eye, the theme of the song came to me."

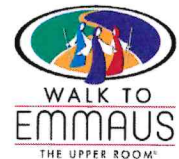
It took several months for the words to formulate in his mind. As he preached through the Midwest, George would carry the words with him, working on them, polishing them, and sometimes singing them in his meetings. It always struck a chord with his audiences.



At last, his hymn finished, George went to the home of his friends, Rev. and Mrs. L.O. Boswick, and sang it for them. After the last note, he looked at them and asked, "Will it do?"

The Boswicks were so moved that they helped pay the fees to have it printed and it soon began appearing in hymnbooks across America.

Monroe UMC to Host Women's Emmaus



Monroe UMC will welcome the Women's Walk to Emmaus in April. Set up starts on Wednesday, April 15th. Participants arrive April 16th and depart Sunday, April 19th. They will be using the entire building. Please be considerate and limit your visits to the church during those days to the office only.

The 9:30 service will meet in the Sanctuary on Sunday, April 19th, as Emmaus will use Atchley Hall.

Please pray for the team and participants at Emmaus, that God might touch their hearts and lives and sustain them in faith.

Parsonage Improvement Fund

Dear Church Family,

In Psalm 127:1, we are reminded that “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” Our parsonage is more than just a building; it is a vital resource for our ministry and a place of rest and hospitality for our pastor’s family.



To ensure this home remains a safe and welcoming space, we are officially establishing the **Parsonage Improvement Fund**. This designated “rainy day” account will allow us to address both the immediate repairs and long-term—such as roofing, HVAC, and other expenditures without straining our general budget. It is anticipated to be a long-term fund that needs annual contributions.

Caring for our parsonage reflects our congregation’s love and a witness to our community. We invite you to prayerfully consider a one-time gift or a recurring contribution to help us reach our goal of \$9,000. Simply write Parsonage Improvement on the **For** line of an envelope or check.

The current budget is set for \$1,800 and as we have learned, for a house of this size and age, we should be budgeting \$9,000 each year, 5 times as much. That adjustment will be made in the 2027 budget.

Thank you for your incredible past support of our church’s needs. We look forward to your continued partnership and generosity as we work together to maintain the parsonage.

A Sunday Filled with Your Favorite Music!



Get ready for a truly special Sunday at Monroe United Methodist Church on **April 12, 2026** — a morning dedicated entirely to the music *you* love most!

Our congregation has spoken, and we listened! Members submitted their all-time favorite songs, and on April 12 we are bringing those choices to life in two unique and joyful worship experiences.

9:30 AM — Praise Celebration: Led by our energetic Praise Team, this service will feature the contemporary worship songs *you* voted as your favorites. Come ready to sing, celebrate, and lift your voice in the modern sounds of praise that move your spirit!

11:00 AM — Song Sunday: Joined by the beautiful voices of our Chancel Choir, this service will take us back to the beloved hymns that have shaped our faith and filled our hearts for generations. From the first note to the last, it will feel like coming home.

Whether you enjoy contemporary worship, love the great hymns of the faith, or both — April 12 has something just for you. And the best part? **You picked the songs!**

We warmly invite everyone to join us — and please, bring a friend! If you know someone who loves great music, this is the perfect Sunday to bring them through our doors. No experience required — just a love of music and a willing heart.

Come and make a joyful noise with us on April 12. We can't wait to worship together!

*Monroe United Methodist Church Sunday,
April 12, 2026 | 9:30 AM & 11:00 AM*

MUMC Children & Youth Ministry



Xtreme Kids Sunday School is for kindergarten and up every Sunday at 9:15. Dismissal is at the end of the first service

(usually between 10:30 and 10:45). Let your kids have fun while learning about Jesus! Invite friends too! Engaging activities will help your child grow socially and spiritually.

Nursery: for newborns to 4 years old. Sundays during the 9:30 and 11:00 services.



The Amanda Outreach / Slinky Tutoring Center

Tutoring is on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the school year between 4:20 and 5:30.

Amanda Elementary children and parents appreciate your Christian love and academic encouragement.

LINK Adult Readers

As a tutor for an adult reader, you determine the schedule and meeting place (church or library).

Contact Gina for more details (gmatcraft@gmail.com/937-514-3793).



Through prayer, scripture, and service, 5th–12th graders **ENCOUNTER** the Journey that Jesus set before them.

**We meet every Wednesday
between 6:00 & 7:30PM.
Bring a friend!**

- 1st week: Bible Study at church
- 2nd week: Mount Pleasant
- 3rd week: Bible Study at church
- 4th week: Bulls Run Arboretum – meet at church during the winter
- 5th week: Game night at church



Adventure Awaits – Church Summer @ Camp Wesley

West Ohio Summer Camps are set at the renovated and reopened Camp Wesley near Bellefontaine. Camp gives an experience where faith feels real in the sanctuary of nature. Friendships are forged through laughter and trust. Outdoor adventures include swimming, archery, hiking, and camp games in a Christ-centered and inclusive community that welcomes everyone with open arms.

Three full-week camps are available June 7-12, June 14-19, and June 21-26 at a cost of \$550. Two short-week camps are offered June 28-July 1 and July 5-8 for \$375. Youth ages 7 to 17 are welcome; discounts are available for siblings.

Visit WesleyCampandRetreatCenter.org to register online. If you know a child or youth who would like to attend but can't afford it, please talk to Pastor Jeff or Gina Craft.

Everyone is invited to visit the renovated Camp Wesley at Open House events on Saturday, May 2, 9 am-12 noon and Sunday, May 3 2-5 pm. Camp Wesley is located at 576 Township Road 37E, Bellefontaine, Ohio.

FEARLESS: Overcoming Fear with Faith

A New Sermon Series Beginning April 19

Do you remember when you were fearless? When you splashed through mud puddles, raced your bike down hills, and climbed trees without a second thought? Somewhere along the way, growing up brought a world full of worries — economic uncertainty, political strife, illness, and those deeper fears that keep us up at night.



But what if we didn't have to live this way?

Over 100 times, Scripture invites us: "Do not be afraid." Its pages offer clues for how we can live without worry or fear.

This spring, Monroe UMC invites you to join us for *Fearless: Overcoming Fear with Faith* — a five-week series beginning April 19. Drawing on the wisdom of Scripture and the words of Jesus, we'll name the fears that most shape our lives and discover what faith has to say about each one. We'll explore fear of the unknown, fear of those who are different from us, the anxiety and self-doubt that haunt daily life, and even the fear of death itself — in the light of resurrection hope.

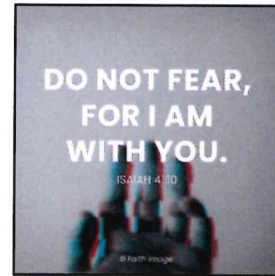
On Mother's Day, May 10, we'll gather around one of Scripture's most powerful promises: *"Perfect love casts out fear"* (1 John 4:18). Invite your Mom, mother figures, daughters, sisters, and other women in your life and family to join you.

You don't have to live driven by fear. Join us beginning April 19 — and bring someone who needs to hear it.

Series Sundays: April 19, April 26, May 3, May 10 (*Mother's Day*), May 17

Post-Easter Small Group Bible Study "What Are You Afraid Of?"

Most of us don't talk about our fears very much. We mention them in passing — "I've just been so anxious lately" — and then move on. This spring, Monroe UMC is making space for a different kind of conversation.



Beginning **Thursday, April 16, at 1:15 p.m.** in the church library, we launch *Fearless: Overcoming Fear with Faith* — a four-week small group Bible study that takes fear seriously and then takes faith even more seriously. Each Thursday we'll name a specific fear that shapes human life and discover together what God has to say about it.

"Over 100 times, Scripture says 'do not be afraid.' It isn't a command to pretend everything is fine. It's a promise — that the God who is with us is greater than whatever frightens us."

You don't need to have it together to join us. No theology degree, no Bible background, no right answers required. Just come. What small groups offer most is a room full of real people, willing to be honest about their lives — learning together, building friendships, and reminding each other that none of us has to carry fear alone.

Fearless meets **Thursdays, April 16 through May 7, 1:15–2:30 p.m., in the church library.** All are welcome.

We hope to see you April 16. Bring a friend. There is room at the table. *Contact the church office for more information.*

A Pastoral Letter – Part 2

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ at
Monroe UMC,



Grace to you and peace from Christ, who calls us to be his hands and heart in the world.

In my last letter, I shared a story that challenged us. (That message was sent via email.) Today, I want to share one that celebrates you.

A few months ago, someone found us the way many people do these days — searching online, hoping to find a place to belong. They took a chance and walked through our doors. And what they found was exactly what a church should be.

They were welcomed warmly before worship, embraced during it, and sent off with genuine friendliness afterward. That alone might have been enough to bring them back. But when they returned and stayed for our Potluck Dinner, something even better happened. People noticed them. People invited them to sit down. They shared a meal, shared conversation, and something that can only be described as the beginning of real Christian fellowship.

That newcomer has kept coming back. They are getting involved. They are becoming one of us.

This is Monroe UMC at its best — and I want you to know how proud I am of each of you.

I also want to offer a heartfelt word of gratitude to our greeters, ushers, and hospitality volunteers. Your ministry may feel routine to you but make no mistake — what you do every single week is sacred work. You are often the first face someone sees when they are nervous, searching, and wondering if they are truly welcome. The smile you offer, the hand you extend, the genuine "so glad you're here" — these are not trivial things. They can change the entire trajectory of someone's life.

Scripture calls us to "*welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God*" (Romans 15:7). That is exactly what you did for this newcomer — you reflected Christ's own welcome, and a searching soul found a home because of it.

So, let's keep going. Let's keep noticing the person who looks a little uncertain. Let's keep pulling out the chair, scooting over to make room, and saying "please, sit with us." The warmth that brought one searching soul home a few months ago is the same warmth that will welcome the next one — and the one after that.

You are doing the work of the kingdom. And it is beautiful.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jeff





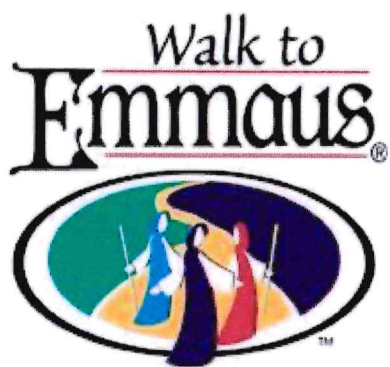
April Birthdays

18 – Marian Dillon
20 – Mike Grooms
21 – Roger Miller
22 – Jessica Finley
23 – Jan Bresnahan
24 – Carol Follmer
27 – Larry Stoner
30 – Ellen Osterman

April Anniversaries

4 – Mike & Rhonda Finley
6 – Jack & Sharon Collier (**64 years**)
Howard & Sue Wilson (**64 years**)
24 – Glen & Jane Majors (**73 years**)
28 – Larry & JoAn Webb (**64 years**)
29 – Dan & Jennifer Moak










May Newsletter
Deadline
Wednesday, April 22nd



Women's Emmaus Walk
April 15th – April 19th



Sunday, April 5th

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29		30 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	31 10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	1 11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	2 7:00pm Worship Service/AH 	3 7:00pm Worship Service/Sanctuary 	4
5	 Holy Communion	6 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	7 10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	8 11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	9 1:15pm -2:30pm Seeking Small Group/Library	10 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	11 8:00am -4:00pm Kairos Team Meeting/AH
12		13 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	14 10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	15 	16 10:00am UMWV Going to LaComedia 	17 	18 
19		20 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	21 10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 1:00pm Finance Committee/AH	22  11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	23 	24 	25 
26		27 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	28 10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	29 11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Narthex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	30 6:30pm -8:30pm Emmaus Gathering/AH	1 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	2 12:00pm Mother's Luncheon 

MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
206 East Avenue, PO Box 310
Monroe, OH 45050

REQUESTED RETURN SERVICE

Mission Statement:

*Shining the light on the hill by connecting with Jesus Christ,
connecting with each other and connecting with the world.*



MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Monroe UMC Staff

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Andy Garitson, Contemporary Worship Director: andy.garitson@gmail.com

Larry Daniel, Choir Director

Melanie Flower, Organist

Linda Larkin, Nursery Attendant

Arlene Horton, Treasurer

Jerry & Anne Lapham,

Financial Sec'y

MINISTERS: CONGREGATION

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 9:00AM-4:30PM



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