

THE LINK



FAIRHOPE UMC'S MONTHLY JOURNAL SEPTEMBER 2025

GROW THE PROMISE



TABLE OF CONTENTS:



WELCOME

- A Note from Pastor Michael

pg 3



CONNECT

- A Glimpse Ahead: 2026 in the Life of Our Church
- September at a Glance: Calendar & Weekly Events

pg 4-5

pg 6



DISCIPLESHIP

- Adult Ministries
- Student Ministries
- Children's Ministries
- Caring Ministries
- Worship Ministries
- Missions Ministries
- Recreation Ministries

pg 8-9

pg 10-11

pg 12-13

pg 14-15

pg 16-17

pg 18

pg 19



ADMINISTRATIVE

- Committee Reports
- Budget Report - July

pg 21

pg 22



CELEBRATIONS

- New Faces, New Friends
- Memorials

pg 24

pg 25



GROW THE PROMISE

- The Gifts We Will Nurture
- Building on the Promise
- Narrative Budget
- Commitment Sunday
- Commitment Card

pg 28

pg 29

pg 30

pg 31

pg 32

FROM PASTOR MICHAEL

Grow the Promise: Hope for Every Generation

In the first chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses stands up to remind a new generation of Israelites what God had told them 40 years before:

You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance! (Deut. 1:6-7)

Moses then continues with the story of how the people failed to do so. He reminds them how they gathered intelligence about the land where God had called them. They sent spies who surveyed the land and reported how good the land was, flowing with milk and honey and fit to grow every good thing.

But the people were daunted by the size of the task before them and chose to remain stuck in the wilderness for 40 years. They said,

Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to abandon us.'

Throughout September, we will be worshiping and preaching and living everything that happened next in the book of Deuteronomy. We will learn from the generation that chose to remember *and* chose to advance. This month is also the season for our annual Discipleship Campaign, when we renew our promises to offer each other our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

After more than a year of listening and scoping out the lay of the land, we have an exciting vision for the year ahead of us. We have six priorities for the coming year that all point to the same goal, to nurture and grow "an intergenerational church with a heart for others."

We have big dreams of what that can mean, and the difference we can make. And each of us has a choice when we encounter those big dreams. We can plant seeds in the promised land, or let our hearts melt in fear.

This month's edition of "The Link" is full of promises. As you read through these pages, you will find

- Our ministry calendar for 2026.
- The six priorities adopted by our Board of Stewards for the coming year.
- A narrative budget that shows just what it takes to be a church of prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness.
- Your pledge card for our Commitment Sunday, September 28 (It's on the back cover).

You'll also find reports from every ministry of our church; please take time to read each one. Our staff team has taken extra care to offer more than just news and notes; they've shared scriptural reflections that you can incorporate into your own devotional reading and prayer throughout the month. We are excited to make this kind of spiritual reflection part of our church's dependable rhythm, as we get back to publishing "The Link" every month. That, too, is a promise.

This is a moment of generational transition, as much for us as it was for Israel in Deuteronomy. Our hope for the future grows from the soil of our promises. Let's step forward boldly, joyfully, and prayerfully—trusting that God will grow the promise into something greater than we ever imagined.

2026 in the Life of our Church

In addition to all we do during weekly and monthly, here are some of the special celebrations we are looking forward to in 2026.*

JANUARY

4th: KidsMin Poptarts & Pajamas
7th: Biblical Storytelling with Rita Sweatt
11th: Leader Orientation
11th: Deadline for Scholarships
23rd-25th: Discovery
30th-Feb. 1: Kids' Winter Retreat



FEBRUARY

1st: Guest Preacher: Bishop Jonathan Holston
15th: Jazz Sunday
18th: Ash Wednesday
24th-25th: Wonderfully Made (5th Grade)



MARCH

29th: Palm Sunday
29th: VBS Registration Opens



APRIL

Date Pending: Chancel Choir Spring Concert
1st: Kids' Easter Celebration
2nd: Maundy Thursday
3rd: Good Friday Crosswalk
5th: EASTER!!!
19th: Confirmation
26th: KidsMin Takeover



MAY

3rd: Senior Sunday
13th: Last Wednesday Night Programming
17th: Summer Missions Commissioning
TBD: Costa Rica Mission Trip
26th-Jun. 5 : Journeys of Paul
31st-Jun. 4: Vacation Bible School



JUNE

7th-9th: Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference
22nd-26th: Youth Oakwood Camp



JULY

Date Pending: Regional Mission Trip
6th-10th: Kids' Blue Lake Camp

AUGUST

2nd: Choir Kickoff
9th: Blessing of the Backpacks
9th: Youth Kickoff Party
16th: 3rd Grade Bibles
16th: Sunday School Open House
19th: Youth and Kids Wed. Night Activities Resume
23rd: Mission Celebration

SEPTEMBER

Stephen Ministry Recruitment Begins
9th: Wednesday Night Kickoff
16th: Wednesday Night Adult Studies Resume

OCTOBER

Pending: Charge Conference
28th: Trunk or Treat
25th: Stephen Ministry Recruitment Ends

NOVEMBER

1st: All Saints' Day
11th: Last Wednesday Night Programming
15th: Baby Recognition
18th: Advent Wreath Making
26th: Thanksgiving Day Lunch

DECEMBER

5th: Breakfast at the Manger
6th: Children's Choir Musical
13th: Traditional Lessons & Carols
20th: The Gathering Lessons & Carols
24th: Christmas Eve



All dates are subject to change. be sure to subscribe to our newsletters (and The Link) for the latest info.



Coming up soon

Weekly

Sundays

- 8:30am Traditional Worship
- 9:45am Sunday School
- 11am Traditional Worship
- 11am The Gathering Worship

Mondays

- 9:15am Walk & Talk with Jesus
- 10am Knit or Crochet
- 3pm Grief Support Group

Tuesdays

- 9:30am Twelve Disciples Study
- 6pm Experiencing God
- 6pm Handbell Choir

Wednesdays

- 9am TJ's Food Ministry
- 10am Intercessory Prayer Life
- 1:30pm Dr. Ann's Bible Study
- 4:15pm Lighthouse Kids' Choir
- 5pm Wednesday Night Supper
- 6pm PIER Kids & SWIFT
- 6pm Salt Students
- 6pm Adult Choir
- 6pm Bible Studies (starting 9/10)
 - Deep Dive Drop-In Study
 - Companions in Christ

THURSDAYS

- 9am TJ's Food Ministry

FRIDAYS

- 9:30am Reservation Nursery
- 11am - 1:00pm Community Cafe

September

SEPT 1

LABOR DAY! Office & CLC Closed

SEPT 4

7:30am Stephen Ministry Breakfast

SEPT 7

- 8am -1:00pm Blood Drive
- 8:30am Traditional Worship
- 9:45am Sunday School
- 11am Traditional Worship
- 11am The Gathering Worship

SEPT 8

- 9:30am MOMCO
- 9:30am Sanctuary Cleanup
- 11:30am Cancer Care Angel Luncheon
- 3pm Grief Support Group
- 6:30pm SOS (Survivors of Suicide)

SEPT 9

- 6:45am Youth Breakfast Club
- 12:30pm Tough Dogs Cancer Support
- 1:30pm Chemo Care Bag Assembly
- 6:00pm Finance Committee

SEPT 10

- 1:30pm Short Term Bible Study
- 4:30pm Coastal CC Meal

SEPT 14

9:45am Coffee With The Pastors

SEPT 15

- 11am Prayer Meeting
- 6:00pm Stephen Ministry

SEPT 16

- 9:30am Caregiver's Support Group
- 6pm Anchored in Hope

SEPT 17

- 6:30am fm3 Men's Breakfast
- 1:30pm Short Term Bible Study

SEPT 22

6:30pm SOS (Survivors of Suicide)

SEPT 23

6:00pm Trustees Committee

SEPT 28

COMMITMENT SUNDAY!!!

- 8:30am Traditional Worship
- 9:30am Fellowship Brunch
- 11:00am The Gathering Worship
- 11:00am Traditional Worship



Looking Ahead

OCT 10

9:45am Coffee With The Pastors

OCT 14

10:00am New study begins "Epic of Eden: Ruth"

6:00pm Charge Conference

OCT 19

6:00pm Music and Prayer Service with AUC

OCT 20

10-11:30am Fall Birthday Celebration

Upward Basketball Practices Begin

OCT 21

Anchored In Hope

OCT 26

Costa Rica Info Meeting

Journeys of Paul Info Meeting

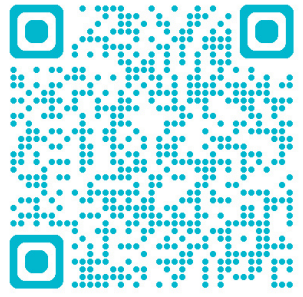
OCT 28

SPR Committee

OCT 29

Trunk or Treat

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR LOCATIONS, DETAILS, and SIGNUPS





DISCIPLESHIP

ADULT MINISTRIES

Dr. Kristen Curtis Wright, Associate Pastor

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 261

✉ kristen.wright@fairhopeumc.org

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith...and overflowing with thankfulness. – Colossians 2:6–7

These words from Paul remind us that faith is not a one-time decision but an ongoing journey. Just as a tree grows stronger as its roots go deeper, we, too, are called to sink our roots into Christ. When we do, we find stability in seasons of change, nourishment in times of need, and the strength to keep growing. Paul also reminds us that a life rooted in Christ will naturally overflow with gratitude. Thankfulness isn't something we manufacture. It bubbles up when we see God's Spirit at work around us.

This fall, as we begin new studies, launch new classes, and step into new forms of support, I see so many signs of us being rooted and built up together. And for that, my heart truly overflows with gratitude.

This month, I want to celebrate three exciting things happening in the life of our church:

1. SEVEN FALL STUDIES LAUNCHING

This fall, we will be offering *seven different studies*, and already dozens of people have signed up! These groups provide space to learn, to ask questions, and to grow in faith together. It's inspiring to see such energy and hunger for God's Word in our community.

2. NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

I am thrilled that there will be a new Sunday morning opportunity beginning September 7. *The Village* is a class designed for couples raising young children (ages 0–5), this discussion-based class will offer a Biblical perspective on the joys and challenges of everyday life. Through honest conversation, shared experience, and spiritual support, participants will find encouragement and practical guidance for nurturing faith at home.

3. NEW SUPPORT GROUP: ANCHORED IN HOPE

Last but certainly not least, Elizabeth Macklem and I will be launching *Anchored in Hope: Infertility & Loss Support Group* on September 16. The journey to parenthood is not always easy, and experiences of infertility, miscarriage, or pregnancy loss can bring profound—often unseen—grief. This group is designed as a safe place for women walking this difficult road to share friendship, encouragement, and resources together. This once a month support group is for women walking through infertility or pregnancy loss. I am so grateful to Elizabeth and her willingness to co-lead this group!

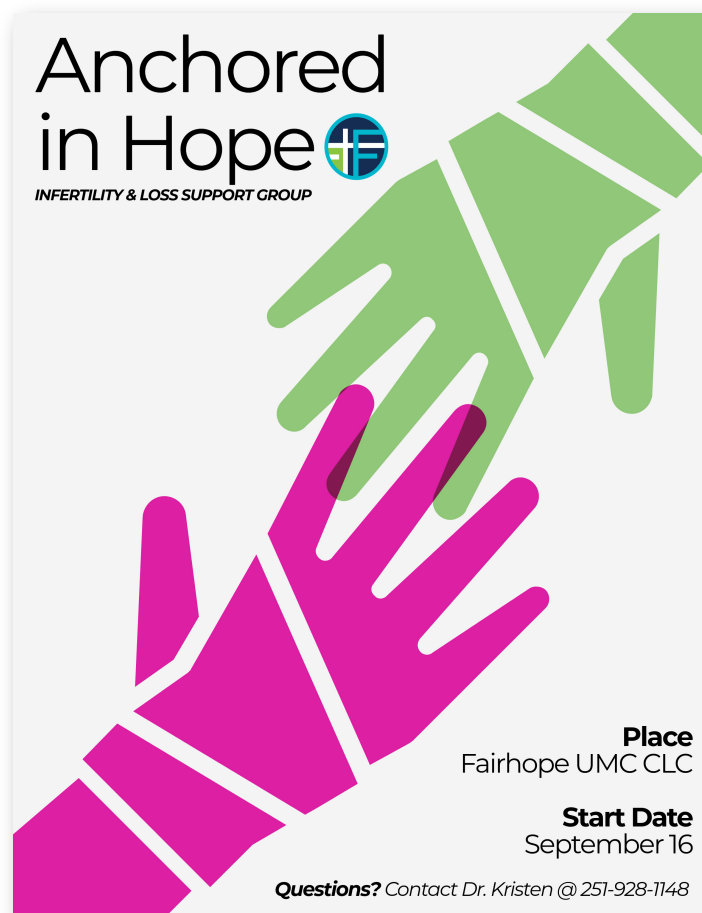
I'm beyond grateful for the way God is leading us into new seasons of growth and care. Thank you for being a church that invests in one another and believes in the transforming power of community.

Grace and peace,
Kristen

NEW IN ADULT MINISTRIES!



SCAN THE
QR CODE TO
REGISTER!



STUDENT MINISTRIES

Miles Barnhardt, *Director of Student Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 243

✉ students@fairhopeumc.org

Southern hospitality is more than polite manners—it's about inviting others into our lives. At its heart is a simple phrase: *"I'm here for you."*

We often say this when someone is hurting or in need, but what do we really mean? Revelation 3:20 reminds us that Jesus also calls us to be present for Him: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock."*

Usually, we think of this verse as letting Jesus into our hearts. But sometimes His knock is not just an invitation to welcome Him in—it's a call for us to step out. Hospitality isn't only being *here* when others come to us; it's also being willing to go *there*—to the uncomfortable places, to people we don't yet know, to serve where God sends us.

This summer, our Students lived this out—serving in Green Mountain, North Carolina, and Montgomery, Alabama. I am deeply grateful for the adults who not only supported our Youth but also went and served alongside them: Bunky Bishop, Jim Ellis, Kathy Ellis, Kristin Capstraw, Troy Capstraw, Rachael Waldhour, Cairo Plauche, Mary Thomas Butler, and Nellie Meyers. They embodied what it means to answer when God knocks.

We're already back in the swing of things on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, and I'm excited about an upcoming addition to our weekly schedule: Breakfast Club.

Breakfast Club will begin September 9, and continue every Tuesday throughout the school year. We'll meet at a local restaurant to fellowship, share a meal and hear a student-led devotion each week. It's my goal to find ways to give our students opportunities to lead in different ways and I'm excited to see what God places on their hearts on Tuesday mornings.



SALT students

Sun	9:45-10:45 AM	Sunday School Youth Area
Tues	6:45-7:35 AM	Breakfast Club Restaurant TBA
Wed	6:00 - 7:45 PM	Wednesday Night Yout Youth Area
4th Sun	6:00-8:00 PM	4 th Sunday Night! TBA

9/3- Wednesday Night Youth
 9/10- Wednesday Night Youth
 9/17- Wednesday Night Youth
 9/24- Wednesday Night Youth
 9/28- 4th Sunday Night
 10/1- Wednesday Night Youth
 10/8- Wednesday Night Youth
 10/15- Wednesday Night Youth
 10/22- Wednesday Night Youth
 10/26- 4th Sunday Night
 10/29- Trunk or Treat
 11/5- Wednesday Night Youth
 11/12- Wednesday Night Youth
 11/19- Wednesday Night Youth
 12/3- Angel Tree Shopping
 12/10- Youth Christmas Party



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Jenna Hood, *Director of Children's Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 227

✉ jenna.hood@fairhopeumc.org

PLAY IS DISCIPLESHIP

"The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there." (Zechariah 8:5, NIV)

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me...'" (Mark 10:14, NIV)

"There is a time to laugh..." (Ecclesiastes 3:4, NIV)

In many churches, play gets treated like the paper plate under the feast: useful, disposable, not the point. However, Scripture paints a different picture. Zechariah's vision of a restored community of Jerusalem includes children at play in the streets; joy is not extra. It's evidence that God's peace is taking root. When Jesus welcomes children in the book of Mark, He doesn't rush them into adult modes; He dignifies their presence and pace. Lastly, Ecclesiastes reminds us that laughter has a rightful time in the rhythm of a faithful life.

Here's the children's ministry reality: play is not filler between "real" discipleship moments. Play is the lab where discipleship is practiced. Developmentally, kids learn by doing, imitating, negotiating, and narrating. In play they rehearse the very skills the Spirit grows into fruit: patience when it's not their turn, kindness in shared materials, self-control when a game doesn't go their way, gentleness toward a frustrated peer (Galatians 5:22-23). Play turns beliefs into behaviors, and behaviors that when repeated with care turn into habits of the heart.

So, let's treat the gym, the carpet square, and the Lego bin as formation spaces. Use these spaces to "coach the virtue" in real time:

- "I noticed you waited: that's patience."
- "You helped her rebuild: that's kindness."
- "We lost, but we can try again: that's perseverance (James 1:2-4)."

Take advantage of playful moments and point them towards Jesus: cooperative games (we win together), open-ended art (God's image makes us creative), dramatic play corners retelling the day's story (we enter Scripture, not just hear it). Even clean-up can be framed as service: "We return the room better than we found it because we love our neighbor who comes next."

Many churches unintentionally communicate that "real church" happens only when kids are silent and seated. But if we never disciple children as children, we risk teaching them that belonging depends on acting like miniature adults. Instead, let our spaces declare: "Your curiosity, energy, and laughter fit in God's family."

Prayer: Jesus, You welcomed children and blessed their ordinary. Teach us to see play as holy ground. Give us eyes to notice fruit growing in small moments, and help us to design moments where joy, wonder, and Your Word weave together. Make our homes and our church places where kids learn Your love in the language they speak best: play. Amen.

August was a blast! From kickoffs to Sunday reunions, our hallways buzzed with name tags, friends, and that joyful hum whispering God is at work. We saw engaged kids, first time visitors, and volunteers stepping in with open hearts. Games were played, prayers were whispered, and donut messes became badges of honor. Thank you, families and volunteers! You helped set the table so kids could taste and see the Lord is good. Your presence makes a real difference for families here.

Now we turn the page to September, when our Wednesday night small groups launch on September 3rd. This is where play meets the muscle of discipleship. In small groups, kids get a consistent leader, peers, and a rhythm that helps faith move from head to heart: Scripture as story, prayer as conversation, service as habit, and play as the language that ties it together. We will practice the fruit of the Spirit in real time: waiting our turn, trying again after mistakes, and encouraging one another with grace. We cannot wait to help your child discover who Jesus is and how much He loves them!

Here is how you can help us start strong:

- Prioritize Wednesdays. Consistency builds trust.
- Invite a friend. Every kid deserves a circle.
- Arrive a few minutes early. Hellos matter.
- Ask one wonder question after pickup: Where did you notice God tonight?

August showed us momentum; September will shape the habits that last. We cannot wait to see big smiles and wiggly energy back in our spaces. Let's build a season where joy, belonging, and Jesus are the headline every week!

A huge thank you to our incredible crew of volunteers for giving our Sunday School rooms fresh sparkle! Michelle Graham, Emily Garner, Emily Determann, Stephanie Bills, Pam Vincent, Megan Smith, Robyn Koser, Elizabeth Macklem, Deb Sloane, and Pastor Michael: your time, care, and elbow grease turned busy spaces into warm, welcoming rooms where kids can learn, play, and meet Jesus. Because of you, floors shine, supplies are organized, and our leaders can focus on relationships instead of clutter. You embodied our Safe Sanctuaries promise by creating clean, safe, and ready-for-every-child environments. Parents noticed, kids noticed, and our whole church felt the blessing. Thank you for showing up and tackling the details no one sees but everyone experiences. We are grateful for your servant hearts and joyful teamwork. May God return the strength you poured out and multiply the fruit of every tiny task you completed!



CARING MINISTRIES

Dr. Ann Pearson, *Director of Caring Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148 , ext. 230

✉ ann.pearson@fairhopeumc.org

In 1 Corinthians 16, the Apostle Paul gives us a glimpse into the heart of ministry and the importance of honoring those who serve faithfully. Among those mentioned is Stephanas, one of Paul's first converts in Corinth. Stephanas and his household devoted themselves to the service of the saints, providing encouragement and support to God's people. Their love for Christ and commitment to the Gospel were evident not just in word, but in action.

Paul encourages the Corinthian church to respect and submit to the leadership of such individuals—those who labor with distinction and godly character. In doing so, the church demonstrates appreciation for their efforts and helps to strengthen unity within the body of Christ. Submission to godly leadership is not about hierarchy but about honoring Christ through mutual respect and shared purpose.

In our own congregation, we are blessed to witness this same spirit of servant leadership in Mary Hodgkins. Like the household of Stephanas, Mary has faithfully and quietly served the body of Christ with love, compassion, and unwavering dedication. Since co-founding the Tough Dogs Cancer Support Group in 2006, she has been a tireless advocate and minister to those walking through the valley of cancer.

Under Mary's leadership and vision, the ministry has expanded its reach:

- In 2010, the group began providing chemo care bags to patients at the Mitchell Cancer Institute.
- From 2012 to 2019, additional facilities received support, including Southern Cancer Center in Daphne and Foley, Infirmary Health Cancer Center in Fairhope, and USA Children's and Women's Hospital.
- In 2022, the ministry extended its care to children with sickle cell anemia at USA Children's and Women's Hospital.

Mary has also worked diligently to form partnerships with local businesses, helping to meet ministry needs and even establish a grant program for cancer patients facing financial hardship.

Her work has never been about accolades. Mary lives by the motto of *Loving Boldly and Casting the Light of Jesus into the World*. Her actions speak volumes—testifying to a heart fully surrendered to Christ and to serving His people.

As a church, we are called to recognize and celebrate the lives of those who serve in humility and love. Just as Paul urged the Corinthian believers to honor Stephanas and his household, let us likewise honor Mary Hodgkins and others like her who embody the very heart of servant leadership.

May her example inspire each of us to use our gifts in service to the Kingdom. And may we continually pray that God raises up more believers—more households—committed to the Gospel, devoted to the saints, and radiant with the love of Christ.

Ways to Serve:

- **Life South Blood Drive**

Sunday, September 7, 8:00am-1:00pm. Back Parking Lot of the Church.

- **Walk & Talk with Jesus**

Walk and Talk with Jesus is a prayer time on the CLC track each Monday. We are focusing on praying for students, parents, teachers and administrators. Other times for your praying each day are between 8:00am and 5:00pm Monday-Friday.

- **Knit or Crochet for a Purpose**

This meaningful ministry will resume Monday, September 8th in the church library. Email suzanchristensen@gmail.com

- **TJ's Food Ministry**

Join us Wednesdays & Thursdays, 9-11am, at AUC (8355 Jonesboro Rd, Daphne) to help pack and distribute food with TJ's Food Ministry and the African Universal Church.

Short Term Bible Study: Ruth

September 10 & 17, 1:30pm, Wesley Hall. Contact Dr. Ann Pearson for more information.

In Home Communion

If you or someone you know would like to receive communion, please call the church office. Communion can be brought to you by a lay person after the elements are consecrated by the pastor. Communion is usually served the week after the 1st Sunday of the month at your convenience.

African Universal Choir Prayer & Worship Service

The African Universal Choir will be bringing a Prayer and Worship Service Sunday, October 19 at 6:00pm in the Sanctuary. Our partnership with Pastor Cassandra Boykin and her church has grown over the years. AUC is the church who has provided worship for us on Thanksgiving Day as we celebrated the many blessings in our lives. Come and invite friends, neighbors and families to join in an evening of spiritual renewal.



SUPPORT GROUPS:

CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

1st & 3rd Tuesday, 9:30am, Library

SEEKING PEACE GRIEF GROUP

Every Monday, 3:00pm, B114

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE (SOS)

2nd & 4th Monday, 6:30pm, B114

TOUGH DOGS CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

2nd & 4th Tuesday, 12:30pm, Library

CHEMO CARE BAG ASSEMBLY

2nd Tuesday, 1:30pm, Wesley Hall

ANCHORED IN HOPE: INFERTILITY & LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Tuesday, 6:00pm, Parlor

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Tom Hood, Director of Worship & Music Ministries

☎ 251-928-1148, ext. 228

✉ tom.hood@fairhopeumc.org

THE GIFT OF MUSIC IN MINISTRY

Music has always been a central part of the church's life and witness. From the psalms of David to the hymns of the early Christians, God's people have lifted their voices in song as both prayer and proclamation. Psalm 96 begins with the words, *"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day."* Here we see the dual purpose of music in ministry: to glorify God and to declare His saving work to the world.

When we sing, whether as individuals or as a choir, we join in something greater than ourselves. We connect with the saints of the past and with the church universal today. Music transcends boundaries of language and culture, uniting believers in one common voice of praise. In Ephesians 5:19, Paul exhorts the church to be *"speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."* What a beautiful reminder that music is not merely performance but ministry—an offering of the heart that points others to Christ.

In music ministry, we are called not only to sing well but to serve well. The choir loft is not a stage; it is a place of worship leadership. Every anthem, hymn, and response becomes a prayer offered on behalf of the congregation. When we sing, we help carry the words of Scripture deep into people's hearts, often in ways that spoken words alone cannot accomplish. A melody lingers, a harmony strengthens, and God's truth is planted through song.

This is why music is more than notes and rhythms. It is a vessel for God's Spirit to move among us. The prophet Zephaniah reminds us in 3:17 that God Himself *"will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."* Imagine that—the God who created the heavens sings over us! If the Lord delights in song, then surely we who bear His image are called to delight in it as well. Music ministry is one of the ways we reflect God's own joy back to Him and share it with the world. As we continue to grow as a choir and congregation, may we remember that every note sung and every word spoken in worship carries eternal weight. Let us approach this ministry not with a spirit of performance but with humility and thanksgiving, offering our best as a sacrifice of praise.

It is with this spirit that we look ahead to our upcoming Christmas cantata, ***Born a Savior, Born a King*** by John Purifoy, which we will present on Sunday, December 14. This work beautifully captures the wonder of Christ's birth, blending familiar carols with new music to tell the timeless story of God's love made flesh. Each movement invites us into the manger scene, reminding us that the baby born in Bethlehem is both Savior and King—the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world and the Lord who reigns forever.

This cantata is not simply a musical performance; it is a proclamation of the gospel. Through choral anthems, solos, and narration, the message of hope and salvation is woven together, calling us to marvel again at God's greatest gift. As we prepare, our prayer is that the music will draw listeners closer to Christ, inspiring worship and renewal during this holy season. We invite the congregation, friends, and community to join us on this special evening. The beauty of Christmas music has a way of opening hearts, and our hope is that many will experience the joy, peace, and wonder that come only through Christ, our Savior and King.

None of this would be possible without the faithful dedication of our volunteers. To our choir members: thank you for giving your time, energy, and voices week after week. Your commitment to rehearsal and worship leadership is a gift that blesses our entire church. A special word of gratitude goes to John Richardson and Vicki Wright, our accompanists, whose skill and devotion provide a strong foundation for all we do in music ministry. And behind the scenes, we are deeply thankful for Elizabeth Sandoe, who quietly but faithfully handles the many details of our ministry—from filing and robes to folders and organizing special events. Elizabeth, your steady presence makes such a difference.

Together, you embody the spirit of service that makes music ministry not only possible but fruitful. Thank you for offering your talents and hearts to the Lord and to this congregation. May God bless each of you as we continue to sing, play, and serve in His name.



MISSIONS MINISTRIES

Jennifer Myrick, *Director of Missions Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148

✉ missions@fairhopeumc.org

Matthew 20:28 reads “Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” These words were shared with us over 10 years ago, as our church entered into a partnership with Ransom Ministries. At the time, Ransom Ministries was an organization serving those in need by providing meals through “donation only” cafes in Mobile. The leadership of Ransom, now known as Ransom Solutions, was seeking to open a cafe’ in Baldwin County. Our cafe’ opened in August of 2014 in the CLC, providing meals and community to those in need. At that time, our contribution was to provide a space and volunteers, while Ransom prepared and provided BBQ meals each week.

Three years later, the Ransom team asked if the church would be willing to assume full responsibility of the cafe. This would include preparing the meals and providing the financial support needed to maintain the cafe’. Our team was nervous to absorb the full responsibility of this outreach, however the Lord kept telling us that HE would provide. We knew the needs of our community and that several would go without if we did not answer the call to serve. So after much prayer, we decided to continue the cafe’. We changed the name to Community Cafe’ and continued to build relationships with those in our own backyard... literally!

Friday cafe’ became the hub for those seeking community, as well as our homeless friends in need of a hot shower and a hot meal. During COVID and after Hurricane Sally, we realized the need to offer meals to those in our church family and community who are homebound. Again, our team was nervous to explore this new opportunity of outreach, and yet, the Lord continued to provide. Currently, our Community Cafe’ team prepares and serves around 300 meals every Friday. 170+ of these meals are delivered to our homebound. The remaining meals are served restaurant style in the cafe’ and to those who come to grab a meal to-go.



I am so very grateful for our faithful volunteers who serve each week. We have kitchen volunteers, table servers, those who plate the food, dessert cart volunteers, dish washers, those who come to set up and drivers who deliver. All of this, because of willing hearts who are willing to serve. And the Lord who is faithful and continues to provide, as long as we are faithful to what HE is calling us to do.

We are also excited to announce that the Friday Pickleball Crew will be hosting a Pickleball Tournament on October 24th. The funds raised from this Tournament will benefit the much needed support for Community Cafe’.

RECREATION MINISTRIES

Jamie Waldhour, *Director of Recreation Ministries*

☎ 251-928-1148, ext. 249

✉ jamie.waldhour@fairhopeumc.org

THE THEOLOGY OF RECREATION

Recreation is a spiritual practice, not a worldly distraction. The very word re-creation implies being renewed and refreshed by a temporary break from labor. In these times of rest and enjoyment, we find space to appreciate God's gift of creation and experience the fullness of life that Christ promised. This rejuvenation restores our body, mind, and soul, preparing us to return to our work and ministry with renewed strength and a grateful heart. As the apostle Paul wrote, "bodily training is of some value, but godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8, NRSVUE).

THANK YOU!!

You might have noticed the new molding on the sink cabinets in the CLC Main Restrooms. Many thanks to Reed Givens for replacing the old molding with a new look!

SHOOT FOR THE STARS—UPWARD BASKETBALL REGISTRATION IS ON!

Join us at Fairhope UMC Upward, where kiddos aged 4 to 9 can dribble their way to fun and faith! We offer a slam-dunk environment where everyone feels welcome, learns the game, and discovers the gigantic love God has for them.

Don't miss out—register today!



The poster is divided into two main sections. The top half features two side-by-side images of young girls in green basketball jerseys (number 12 and 35) holding a basketball. The background is red with yellow text and graphics. The bottom half is a solid blue section with white and yellow text. It includes a QR code, a registration fee of \$95, and details about practices and games. The text 'PLAY WITH PURPOSE' is prominently displayed in a yellow banner.

UPWARD SPORTS BASKETBALL LEAGUE 2025-26
FAIRHOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SIGN UP NOW!
4-9 YRS. BOYS & GIRLS

PLAY WITH PURPOSE
GET IN THE GAME!

REGISTRATION FEE: \$95
Includes: Jersey +

Practices: Beginning October 20
Games: Beginning December 1
Season Ends: January 26
All practices and games will be held at the Fairhope UMC Christian Life Center Gym
Register at:
<https://registration.upward.org/UPW88982>
or scan the QR code.

Scan me

☎ 251-928-1148, ext. 249
✉ jamie.waldhour@fairhopeumc.org



ADMINISTRATIVE

COMMITTEE UPDATES

TRUSTEES

Jennifer Jones, Chair

During the month of August, you would have noticed some scaffolding around the Education Building and Sanctuary. Crews replaced the joint sealants around the windows and then applied a water repellent to the brick to help prevent moisture from getting inside. The current scope includes only the walls that were showing moisture damage, but additional walls, including the bell tower, will need to be repaired and sealed as the budget allows. Additionally, the Trustees have been assessing the current and future maintenance needs of our facilities, with particular attention to the age and lifespan of the Education Building roofs and the CLC HVAC units. This will inform our conversations as we prepare our 2026 budget as well as more long-range budget planning.

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS (SPR)

Noah Funderburg, Chair

The SPRC successfully held retirement receptions for retired Pastoral Assistant Julia Gavin and Associate Pastor Laura Parker. The Committee facilitated the welcoming of new Associate Pastor Dr. Kristen Curtis Wright, including her welcoming reception. The Committee also reviewed staff evaluations with the pastors.

FINANCE

Allen Mitchell, Chair

We are on track to match both our budgeted income and budgeted expenses for the year. The church appreciates the continued generosity of its members in providing for meaningful ministry to the community.

The church remains in good standing financially. As of the end of June, we have our 90-day expense reserves and an additional \$130k in undesignated reserves. We will soon be making plans for our Discipleship Campaign. Based on the campaign results, we will propose a budget that funds our 2026 operating expenses, as well as the short-term goals to be adopted by the Board of Stewards.

We are anticipating additional funds from the IRS for the Employee Retention Credits (ERC) for which the church made application several years ago. We have received the funds for one calendar quarter but still have several quarters outstanding.

The Finance Committee has completed its initial review of the financial Policies and Procedures. We will review the draft at our September meeting and finalize the document shortly.

BUDGET REPORT | JULY

3:23 PM
08/20/25
Accrual Basis

Fairhope United Methodist Church
FUMC Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual
January through July 2025

				TOTAL		
	Jul 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget	Jan - Jul 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget
Income						
04000 Pledge Contributions	125,519.60	102,240.00	23,279.60	851,820.90	769,640.00	82,180.90
04001 Non Pledge Contributions	55,919.93	56,525.00	-605.07	350,099.23	420,493.00	-70,393.77
04002 Cash Contributions	2,057.67	2,160.00	-102.33	17,061.02	16,260.00	801.02
04003 Adult Sunday School	31.00	108.00	-77.00	660.00	815.00	-155.00
04004 Fees	730.00	662.00	68.00	8,090.00	4,927.00	3,163.00
04005 Other Income	0.00	0.00	0.00	56,019.40	33,500.00	22,519.40
04006 Interest Income	3,903.57	2,500.00	1,403.57	25,122.14	17,500.00	7,622.14
Total Income	<u>188,161.77</u>	<u>164,195.00</u>	<u>23,966.77</u>	<u>1,308,872.69</u>	<u>1,263,135.00</u>	<u>45,737.69</u>
Gross Profit	188,161.77	164,195.00	23,966.77	1,308,872.69	1,263,135.00	45,737.69
Expense						
10000 Worship	974.60	715.00	259.60	6,453.33	6,355.00	98.33
10100 Music	2,010.25	800.00	1,210.25	8,796.95	10,465.00	-1,668.05
10200 Evangelism/Navigator	105.02	0.00	105.02	638.36	500.00	138.36
10300 Adult Spiritual Growth	1,177.28	1,222.00	-44.72	5,694.64	6,861.00	-1,166.36
10400 Church Family Ministry	0.00	261.00	-261.00	2,164.81	3,561.00	-1,396.19
10500 Children's Ministry	664.03	5,810.00	-5,145.97	25,920.42	23,335.00	2,585.42
10600 Youth Ministry	21,916.64	8,884.00	13,032.64	55,149.90	41,339.00	13,810.90
10700 Caring Ministry	2,625.00	375.00	2,250.00	2,625.00	2,625.00	0.00
10800 Communications	926.93	1,370.00	-443.07	8,514.08	7,524.00	990.08
10900 Missions	9,471.17	4,321.00	5,150.17	74,074.93	38,635.00	35,439.93
11000 Nursery	0.00	130.00	-130.00	578.90	930.00	-351.10
11100 Recreation Ministry	496.64	1,315.00	-818.36	5,517.95	5,710.00	-192.05
11200 Gathering	505.00	480.00	25.00	4,857.59	3,510.00	1,347.59
11400 Stewardship Campaign	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
11500 Hospitality	0.00	200.00	-200.00	0.00	1,400.00	-1,400.00
11700 Discretionary Fund	-714.92	500.00	-1,214.92	1,986.30	1,200.00	786.30
11800 Wednesday Night Supper	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,818.28	3,250.00	568.28
20000 Trustees	11,236.98	15,588.00	-4,351.02	99,837.89	114,605.00	-14,767.11
20100 Utilities	8,900.03	8,730.00	170.03	56,474.01	48,090.00	8,384.01
20200 Office Expense	6,144.44	4,376.00	1,768.44	27,943.59	29,736.00	-1,792.41
20300 Kitchen Supplies	826.78	1,275.00	-448.22	7,264.07	8,925.00	-1,660.93
20400 Custodial Supplies	2,161.49	1,250.00	911.49	8,608.53	9,000.00	-391.47
20500 Financial Audit	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	-12,000.00
30000 SPR (Salary/Contract)	98,212.68	102,711.00	-4,498.32	673,390.02	718,958.00	-45,567.98
40000 Conference Apportionments	11,670.90	11,670.90	0.00	81,696.30	81,696.30	0.00
40100 District Apportionments	1,808.80	1,808.80	0.00	12,661.60	12,661.60	0.00
50000 Mortgage Interest	2,327.51	2,300.00	27.51	17,296.77	16,100.00	1,196.77
60000 Mortgage Principle	16,442.27	16,470.00	-27.73	114,091.69	115,290.00	-1,198.31
Total Expense	<u>199,889.52</u>	<u>192,562.70</u>	<u>7,326.82</u>	<u>1,306,055.91</u>	<u>1,324,261.90</u>	<u>-18,205.99</u>
Net Income	<u>-11,727.75</u>	<u>-28,367.70</u>	<u>16,639.95</u>	<u>2,816.78</u>	<u>-61,126.90</u>	<u>63,943.68</u>



CELEBRATIONS

NEW FACES, NEW FRIENDS...



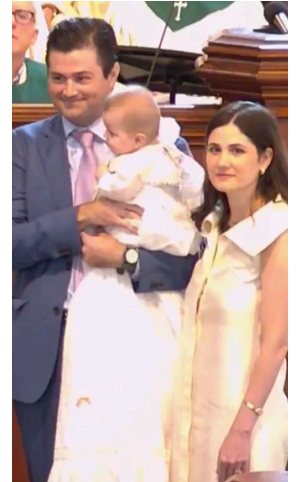
Linda Richardson
Joined May 18



Jessica & Michael Jackson
Joined May 25
Christopher Michael Jackson
Baptized May 25



Sidney Carol & Miles Barnhardt
Joined May 25



Lee Davidson Marbury
Pittman, V
Baptized June 22



Lee Pearson
Joined June 22



The Steele Family:
Laura, Caleb, Hannah, Andrew & Mary
Joined July 13



Susan & Steve Pugh
Joined July 27



Azelie Frances O'Neil
Baptized July 27



The Ratliff Family:
Lane, Jake & Sims
Joined August 3



Cameron Collene Sirmon
Baptized August 3

MEMORIALS

We are deeply grateful for the memorial gifts given in remembrance of loved ones. Your generosity not only blesses the church but also creates a lasting legacy of faith and love.

In memory of Gail Golson Phillips:

April Sherling, *Caring Ministries*
Jackie Golson, *Caring Ministries*
Liz Braswell, *Caring Ministries*
Kate & Joe Lavelle, *Caring Ministries*
Gaynell Dumas, *Caring Ministries*
Susan & Barker Stein, *Caring Ministries*
Sandy & Steve Houston, *Caring Ministries*
Jack P. Golson, *Caring Ministries*

In memory of Elaine & Larry Culver:

Mary Beth & Robert Gibson, *Gibson Memorial Scholarship Fund*

In memory of Debbie Dilbeck:

David Dilbeck, *Tough Dogs Cancer Support Group*

In memory of Patsy Fulgham:

Glenda & Leland Driver, *Caring Ministries*



Curious about church membership? Join us for *Coffee with the Pastors* on Sunday, September 14 at 9:45 AM in the Christian Life Center Parlor! Meet our pastors, learn more about becoming a member, and enjoy a warm cup of coffee. Look for the signs on Sunday morning to find your way!

CHURCH SANCTUARY CLEAN-UP



volunteers needed!

SEPTEMBER
8
9:30AM

For more info, contact
katie.robertson@fairhopeumc.org

Join the “Pew Crew” for a special morning of service, fellowship, and care for our sacred space!

This is a wonderful opportunity not only to lend a helping hand but also to enjoy time with others as we care for the church we love. All ages are welcome, and no special skills are needed –just a willing spirit!

Honor a loved one with beauty that blesses! There are still Sundays left in 2025 to place flowers in the sanctuary in memory or honor of someone special. Reserve your date today!





ALTAR
FLOWERS
NEEDED!






GROW THE PROMISE

THE GIFTS WE WILL NURTURE

*For a year, we have listened and prayed and sought God's call for this season in our congregation. We want to GROW by identifying the **Gifts** that God has already given us, and then removing the **Roadblocks** that hinder those gifts, seizing the **Opportunities** presented by those gifts, and sharing those gifts through acts of **Witness**.*

In every conversation and deliberation, two themes have been repeated most passionately and consistently. These two gifts have defined Fairhope UMC for a long time; these gifts are the seeds from which our calling grows.

We exist for others, and we are an intergenerational church.

Promises are the soil of hope, and so we make these promises for 2026, so that our gifts may GROW.

ROADBLOCKS

As a church for others, we are eager to minister beyond our walls, but we also acknowledge that the size and sprawl of our campus can be a barrier to welcome others. **In 2026, we will install new wayfinding signs throughout our campus and commission a new master plan to ensure our campus has visible, accessible, and inviting entrances for all ministries.**

Sometimes, our strengths work against each other; one of our biggest strengths becomes a roadblock to our other biggest strength. The biggest roadblock to having truly intergenerational discipleship is that one generation is almost continually needed to serve another. So, in 2026 we will explore reorganizing our children's Sunday school experience so that we can offer a spiritually rich environment without depending solely on the parents to volunteer during the Sunday School hour. **We want every parent in this church to have the opportunity to be a full participant in an adult Sunday school.**

OPPORTUNITIES

Our dual identity as a church where every generation can serve others gives us opportunity to grow our hospitality while simultaneously strengthening the bonds between us. In 2026, **Project Zechariah will unite our oldest, youngest, newest, and most-tenured members in teams that serve together twice a year.** Our Zechariah teams will ensure that every new member in our church immediately has a place where they belong, and it will also quadruple the number of volunteers dedicated to hospitality on Sunday mornings.

One of the most audacious ways we serve our neighbors is simply by making the CLC available to every generation in our community. In 2026, our remaining debt on the CLC will be less than a million dollars. **We will retire that debt with a capital campaign** that will free up more than \$200,000 a year that we can reinvest in mission and ministry.

WITNESS

Throughout our history, we have been most united across the generations when we served something bigger than ourselves. For 2026, our Nominations committee will name our first Committee on Church and Society, with a special focus on housing in Baldwin County. This team will visit ministries throughout our region to learn how other churches are alleviating homelessness in their communities. In September 2026, **this team will provide a plan for our church to lead the way in ministry to the homeless in Baldwin County.** The committee will provide our children, youth, and Sunday school ministries with ways to make a difference through regular service projects and fundraisers. This vision will require more than a single year, but we will see it through.

As a church for others, we also commit ourselves to building the church universal. We are eager to build new partnerships with our neighboring congregations. Because we want a true partnership in which we listen as much as we lead, we cannot yet promise what we will accomplish together with the churches of Fairhope. As we look for these partners in 2026, **we commit to pray for a different local church, by name, in our worship every month.**

HERE ARE SOME MORE THINGS WE'LL DO...

- Provide coffee and hospitality each week in the library and Gathering Grounds
- Relaunch our website. The front page will have a laser focus on helping visitors understand (a) where to start on their first visit, and (b) how to begin with their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. The calendar will be a simple, reliable, and, instantly updated source for all featured events and sign-ups.
- Set up KidsMin check-in stations at both worship spaces so that Children's Church is more accessible and hospitable to newcomers.
- Launch a new youth choir.
- Offer a free monthly dinner to any students at Coastal Community College.
- Publish (in print and social media) monthly, subject-specific devotionals from our pastors, children, youth, missions, caring, small group, and administrative leadership.
- Re-establish the ministry committees associated with all our program ministries (Adult Discipleship, Caring, Children, Family Life, Missions, Youth, and Worship). Some of thee are already meeting, while others will need to be re-constituted and scheduled for bimonthly meetings.



NARRATIVE BUDGET

If we took every staff hour, every utility expense, and every paper expense and asked “how does this accomplish our mission” - here’s how our typical spending would breakdown:

4.7% of Facility Costs 9% of Personnel Costs

Caring for sick, new or absent members, bereavement care
Stephen Ministry, and support groups.



PRAYERS
\$134,531



WORSHIP
\$219,970

3% of Facility Hours 13% of Staff Hours

Sunday mornings and special services, choir and band rehearsal,
worship team planning, sermon and testimony preparation, music
licensing, equipment, instruments and maintenance, bulletins.

3% of Facility Hours 20% of Staff Hours

Teaching, training, and resources and meeting times for
Sunday Schools, study groups, and other fellowships.



ADULT
GROUPS
\$319,936



YOUTH &
CHILDREN
\$412,862

8.8% of Facility Hours 20% Staff Hours

Wednesday Night Youth, Swift, and Pier Kids. Discovery,
VBS and retreats, Children’s Church, Children’s Choir,
curriculum, supplies, nursery staff and coordination.

2.5% of Facility Hours 8% of Staff Hours

Accounting, giving reports, committee meetings
for oversight and accountability.



GIFTS
\$122,102



SERVICE
\$119,973

3% of Facility Hours 8% of Staff Hours

Volunteer scheduling, training, and recruitment.

75% of Facility hours 22% of Staff Hours

Family Promise, Mission Trips, Community Cafe, laundry
facilities, recreation, community outreach events; support of
denominational ministries locally and globally, facility use by
outside groups, Shepherd’s Place and preschool.



WITNESS
\$974,084

GROW THE PROMISE



Commitment Sunday

SEPTEMBER 28

8:30am - 11:00am Traditional Worship

9:45am Fellowship Brunch (CLC)

11:00am The Gathering

Join us in 2026 as we “Grow the Promise” by joyfully pledging our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness on Commitment Sunday!



Use this QR Code if you prefer to complete this pledge online, or visit fairhopeumc.org



COMMITMENT CARD

With this pledge, I/we make the following commitments to Fairhope UMC for 2026:

Name(s)

Address

Email(s)

GIFTS

In 2026, I/We Commit To Give

\$_____ per () week () month () other_____

If two people are making commitments below, initial the boxes to identify who is making each commitment.

PRAYERS

Please add me to the Five-Day Devotion mailing list.

I will send a card to each church or pastor we pray for in 2026.

PRESENCE

I am a member of a small group/supper club/etc.

I would like help finding a small group, etc.

I will teach or serve behind the scenes in Children's Sunday School 4x a year.

SERVICE

I am currently serving my fellow church members by_____.

I am looking for a place to serve, please contact me.

I'll be a test pilot by serving on a Zechariah Team for one Sunday in Lent.

WITNESS

Please pray for_____. I am praying they will know and love Jesus.

I already serve beyond our walls by_____.

I'd like to learn about, pray for, or lead the way in homelessness ministry for Baldwin County.

