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# Pastor's Ponderings!

May is such an exciting month. Please see information about all that is going on in this newsletter. Worship will involve Communion Sunday (5th), Mother's Day/ Ascension Sunday (12th), Pentecost Sunday/Confirmation Sunday(19th), and Memorial Day (26th) weekend! Please plan on wearing your red on Pentecost Sunday, and your red, white and blue for Memorial Day weekend. The Mom's will be honored and receive a special gift from our children on Mother's Day. Our District Superintendent is planning on being with us for Confirmation Day also. I can't wait for y'all to meet Rev. Francey Hooten.

Of course, some of the other big things going on - the garage sale for the children and youth on May 4th, the adult Bible Study is starting again May 1st, Circles on a Mission Day (May 18th), the end of the year school celebration for kids and parents on the 22nd, and the 300-mile journey Bicycle ride the week of the 26th! So, please don't say there is nothing to do! And if you want to help with any of those things, PLEASE come and help. We need your service and generosity in mission to help with any or all of it!

This church is so exciting and does such great ministry. You are truly "Central to DeRidder, and Centered in Christ," as our mission statement states.

God bless you and your ministry.

See you Sunday! Laraine

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Follow our livestream on Facebook at First United Methodist Church - DeRidder, or on YouTube at DeridderFUMC In case you missed the email I sent out in April, I am beginning a new Bible Study starting May 1st at 11:00 am and 6:15 pm. The cost of the book is \$20. As always, I am very excited about this Bible Study! The book is *Facing Your Giants* by Max Lucado. You may already be familiar with his writing. He has a very unique way of writing that is easy to relate to for almost everyone. I have read his books for years. This Bible Study is based on David's (King David) life from the time he faced Goliath. Just like David, we all have giants that we face in our lives, and this Bible Study teaches us, among other things, how to see God in the midst of the giant events in our lives. Some of the topics include, "failures you can't forget, habits you can't break, people you can't please, bills you can't pay, and a future you can't face." There is something for everyone. The chapters are short, powerful, and involve great Scripture reading. I will give you questions to think about each week as you read this book. We will then come together to discuss the Scriptures and the book. We will meet upstairs in the Upper Room at 11 am or 6:15 pm. When Confirmation ends later in May, we will move the 6:15 time to 6 pm. Hope to see you there!

All are invited to join us for "The Journey", a week-long, 300-mile biycle ride that is sponsored by United Women in Faith. This is the 6th year our church has had the privilege to ride and raise funds for the various missions we support.

Because of possible inclement weather, we have learned to be flexible with daily routes. Each day begins early in the morning at a designated location, and at least one support vehicle accompanies the group of riders at all times.

This bicycle ride has become a catalyst for creating wonderful friendships and boosting self confidence through physical challenge, and we hope to see you there! To register, go to our website at fumcderidder.org.

## **Confirmation Sunday!**

We are so excited to be having a Confirmation Class this year after the delays of Covid and hurricanes and more! These young men have been working hard and learning a lot since February. I am so very proud of them! Please join us on Pentecost Sunday, May 19th, for this special time in the growth of their faith as they become full members of the church. What better day to do this then on the day the Holy Spirit came and the new Church was born! Our District Superintendent, Rev Francey Hooten, will be joining us for this day. Following church, we will have a short reception to congratulate these young men. If the weather is good, we will have it on the front porch of the Sanctuary. If not, we will move the Fellowship Hall. What a blessed day this will be!

Women's Prayer Breakfast Thursday, May 2nd 8:30 AM Conference Room

## New Bible Study to Begin

## **The Journey**

### A Letter from Bishop Williamson - Louisiana United Methodist Conference

In the bustling flow of life, moments of reflection can often slip by unnoticed. But what if you could anchor your day with a moment of prayer, a minute of communion with United Methodists all across Louisiana? In 2024, this is our calling. Bishop Delores J. Williamston is asking all United Methodists in Louisiana to collectively pause in prayer each day at 4:24. It's a simple act, yet she hopes it can emphasize the power and importance of prayer in personal and communal life. Bishop Williamston's vision is to encourage individuals to pause and offer prayers for matters of global significance or even personal concern, all of it designed to foster a habit of reflection and spiritual connection. Together, in prayer, we will move forward with HoPE to build, connect and equip disciples of Jesus Christ.

To help in our journey, Bishop Williamston has put together a comprehensive reading list - a list of books she hopes will help foster our prayer lives. "These books not only enhance our understanding of prayer but they also speak directly to the marks of what it means to be a Wesleyan Methodist," said Bishop Williamston. "My hope and prayer is that these books can inspire and deepen your prayer life."

#### What Will You Pray 4 in 24?

**Pray for Peace:** Encompass in your heart your loved ones, your mentors, your community, and leaders across the earth. Envision them leading with wisdom, compassion, and courage.

Pray for Every Place You Hold Dear: Whether it's the streets of your hometown or a faraway land, pray for harmony, for justice, and for bridges of understanding.

Pray for Leaders of the Church: Pray for your pastor, your lay leader, your district superintendents, members of the Louisiana Conference cabinet, Bishop Delores J. Williamston and leaders all across the jurisdiction and the connection. Pray for the United Methodist Church: Pray for unity, and the fulfillment of its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Pray for Your Own Path: Seek grace in living out the simple edicts — Do no harm, Do good, and Stay in Love with God. Bishop Delores J. Williamston

Recommended books to read: Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living By Ruben Job; A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants By Ruben Job, Methodist Book of Daily Praver By Matt Miofsky



## held at the Wesley Education Center. The target age group of participation is Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grades; however, we will be needing many youths (6<sup>th</sup> grade and up) to assist with the events. Proposed sports are soccer, volleyball, cheerleading, and basketball. We are open to other sports as well. We need adult volunteers that will take the lead on each of the sports activities as well as refreshment preparation, registration staff, on site nurse and many more. Please consider giving your time to this adventure. To volunteer, please reach out to Cathy at (337) 396-9610.



## Methodist Children's Learning Center



## **Music Ministry Notes**

As you read the newsletter today, I hope the extended Easter season has been full of blessings and good health. I am excited about what is going on in the music ministry as Kelley Allen and Cameron Craig are back singing with the choir. It is a blessing to us all to be able to sing with a full sound again. Thank you to my fellow hand bell ensemble ringers for their performance on Easter Sunday. It was very moving, and thank you for putting up with me while I rang with you. Our hearts are heavy, however, as we have to say goodbye to our dear friend, Joe Ann Lillie. Joe Ann was a dedicated member of our choir for many years until she was unable to walk up the steps into the altar area every Sunday. She was a special person in my life. Joe Ann would invite me to go eat lunch, or dinner, with her and Roger, and she would never let me pay for it. We had many meaningful conversations in her living room about living a Christian life. I know she was content with whatever God's plan was for her and lived life to the fullest. Please, continue to pray for Roger during this time of transition.

John Schwarze, Director of Music Ministries

Nursey and Preschool care is available on Sunday mornings during Sunday School and Worship. Children aged from 6 months up to Kindergarten are eligible for this service. Parents can drop off their cherubs as early as 8:45 AM for Sunday School, and 9:30 for Worship. Please spread the word. If you have any guestions, please contact me at 337-396-9610 or email cathy@fumcderidder.org.



April showers bring May flowers (We hope for flowers!) Our children have been busy working on their graduation program! Can you believe May is almost here? We are so excited to share that our Graduation will be May 21st at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary. Our Pre-K 4 students are so excited to share what they have learned this year. In April we learned about baby animals, turtles, tadpoles, and frogs. MCLC is growing, and YOU can be a partner in that growth. We are looking for "Partners of MCLC" (Similar to Partners in Education).

The Partners in Education Program is designed to connect businesses and individuals with MCLC to help improve education by providing support for the well-being of our children and their families, for the general health of our community, and for the educational contribution to a vibrant economy. Any business, organization, or community individual can serve as a Partner in Education. MCLC has served families in this community for so many years, and the legacy continues with the next generation.

If you desire to make a difference and have the time and/or resources to invest in the lives of our students, please don't hesitate to inquire about becoming a Partner. Contact me or the Center if you would like to help.

Liz Maricle, MCLC Director



## New Bible Study: Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado

Begins May 1st at 11 AM and 6:15 PM Upper Room Classroom in Fellowship Hall Building





## May Norship Assistants

### Sunday, May 5th

Greeters - Betty & Scotty Nease Readers - Van Allen & Mary Alice Wisdom 1st Sunday Communion Servers (During Service) -Grant & Catherine Beal, Cameron Craig

### Sunday, May 12th - Mother's Day

Greeters - Jimmy Hicks & The Oldaker Family Readers - Gayle Bailey & Barbara Haynes After-Service Communion Server -Hunter Oldaker

#### Sunday, May 19th - Confirmation Sunday

Greeters - Confirmands Readers - Confirmands After-Service Communion Server -Tim Kindler

#### Sunday, May 26th

Greeters - Ted & Becky Hammerschmidt Readers - Raymond & Tammi Henderson After-Service Communion Server -David Hardesty

## From the Heart by Mary Allen

Grief is hard. A big hole is left in our hearts. My Church family has surrounded several sweet friends in the past few weeks through hospice and their final battles with illness. But then — they are free! Free of pain and fatigue. Free in their new home to praise our amazing God ...... for all eternity!

We as family and friends, though, are thrust into a world that is suddenly without them. It's hard. It's painful. As I watched the tears and sadness, as well as heard favorite stories filled with laughter as we celebrated their lives, I vividly remember God's answer when I called out to Him in desperation. About a year after my husband died, I was still expecting to see him walk in from work every day. I would also wake up and immediately have a blinding split second where I had to realize—for the 354th morning—he's not here. I called out to my loving God, *"How do I do this?? Does it get easier?"* He showed me His answer: John 16:22 *"So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you* again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

I stand on His Promise. I will remember and celebrate all the minutes with my husband and with my friends. Those times with them make up much of the happiness in my life. Which of those moments would I give up so that grief hurts less? None! Not one!! I thank my Father in Heaven for telling us in Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Lean on God. He's the answer.

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