

By invitation only. That sounds pretty exclusive doesn't it? It sends the message that the only way to get in is to know someone on the inside. What if I told you that the Church is a 'By Invitation Only' group? Oh wow, I can hear the emails already being written! Hold on a minute before you hit send and let me explain a bit.

Jesus said, "Come all you who are weary and I will give you rest." That is the invitation we have all received. Y'all come is at the heart of Jesus' message. Come and believe the Gospel. Come and give your life to the work of God. It's the way Jesus worked from the very beginning as he walked along with coast of Galilee and told Peter, Andrew, James and John "Come, follow me and I will make you fishers." And it worked. We are living proof that the invitation Jesus extends to all produces faithful followers.

And the good news is that Jesus allows each of his followers to extend their own invitations. In fact, Jesus' invitation has been entrusted to the people of faith since the day of Pentecost and therefore it is up to us to take up the mantle of invitation. And it works.

Ask Wayne Oates how he and Lisa wound up at First Church. You should find time to ask Kris Hobson how she and David arrived at First Church, too. I could go on, but you get the point. These folks share something in common with many others. They were invited to be a part of the community of First Church. And it worked!

And I'm convinced it is not done working. Studies regularly show that most people (70%+) when asked if they would attend a church if invited by someone they know answer "yes". And here is the deal. There is no better invitation than the one to abundant life that has been entrusted to the people of God.

Who has God put in your path (no accidents remember!) and how might you invite them to church? While most folks are willing to accept an invitation, experience shows us that few of us are asking. Too many reasons for me to list as to why. So let's just leave the past behind and look forward. Will you accept the invitation to be invitational?



Grow

Listening to God's Word

At the beginning of the year Pastor Todd gave all of First Church Downtown a challenge to begin a year of listening. He also invited us into a weekly reading of the Scriptures, where we will read the entire Bible in one year. I wanted to share with you how I have found the two coming together...

Most mornings as I get ready for the day, my son, Will, and I will open our Bible app and instead of "reading" the passages, we listen to them. At first, I felt like I was cheating the process—the fact that I was not opening up my Bible and reading from it meant I wasn't actually doing what I said I would. But, as I got into it, I found I really enjoyed listening (especially with my son) and I found I heard portions of Scripture in a different way than when I read the words. There are still times I open the Bible and follow along, but most mornings, I am getting ready for the day as I listen and I have found this is a wonderful way to begin my day.

I begin with pause—a moment to thank God for the beginning of the day and a moment to focus my attention to listening—and then I hit play and the words begin to pour forth. Will and I have time to talk after we are done, and I am grateful for our engagement in the text together. I have found the stories I have read many times before, I am hearing them differently, because I am not skimming over the words in the text. So, for this year of listening, I am thankful to be listening to the Word of God and listening to what God would want to teach me through it—and even more, how God is teaching Will at the same time and how we enjoy starting our day with each other and God.

Grace for the Journey,

Carol

Grow through Sunday School

If you have been around the Downtown Campus much at all, you have heard we focus on three areas: Worship, Grow, and Serve. We believe it is critical to our faith development to participate in each of these areas. One of the main ways we develop and encourage the Grow aspect is through Sunday School.

Over the last few months we have had 2 new Sunday School classes begin. One is a group facilitated by Nell and Chris Alford, and their class is journeying through different books which help cultivate Spiritual Formation in our lives. They

just finished *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* by John Ortberg and are beginning *24 Hours that Changed the World* by Adam Hamilton. This class meets on the 2nd floor of the Old Parsonage and welcomes anyone looking for a discussion around various books.

The other class which began in January is a Young Professionals group being facilitated by Eric and Jean Ezell. Eric and Jean were blessed by a couple reaching out to them and their contemporaries when they were in Paducah and have felt God calling them to reach out here. This is a great group for people in their 20's and early 30's who are building their careers and lives, but also looking to keep God at the center of their lives. This group meets in the Rokeby Office Building in the Conference Room and would love for others to join them.

We also have many other wonderful Sunday School classes being offered throughout our church on Sunday mornings. We would love to see every person in our church involved in a Grow Group—whether that be Sunday School or a Small Group that meets at another time. And, if you are thinking you would like to start a class, let me know, I would love to help you get a group started! Growing with you, *Carol*

Confirmation 2018

Our Confirmation classes have begun, and I am extremely excited to be engaging this group each week. This year we have 3 amazing youth who are going through Confirmation: Carson Faulconer, Elizabeth Hunter, and Zach Rothrock. They are learning more about what it means to follow Christ, what it means to be a United Methodist, what it means to grow and serve, and more. Each of our Confirmands has a Friend in Faith who is on this journey with them, and I am very thankful for these adults who have stepped into this role as a mentor and friend.

As we go through our Confirmation journey, would you join me in holding the Confirmands, their families, and their Friends in Faith in prayer? The prayers of the church community are extremely important for our youth, and we thank you for all you do to care for our youth and children.

Serve

Family Serve Event | Ages 5+ welcomed | All Communities

Packing 10,152 meals for Rise Against Hunger

Meals are used to feed the hungry all over the world

March 24, 2018 at First Church Downtown Campus

We need 50+ volunteers for Christ

7:30 AM - 9 AM Setup (4-6 volunteers needed)

9 AM – 11 AM Packing (40-50 volunteers needed)

11 AM -12 PM Cleanup (4-6 volunteers needed)

Signup at <http://events.stophungernow.org/FirstUMC2018>

Can't make but want to help, there is a DONATE BUTTON on the website.

Contact Bryan Mullins at 859.619.7512 or bmullins@creativelexington.com with questions.

Help Serve the Homeless Dinner | Ages 5+ welcomed | All Communities

In conjunction with Chuck Gutenson's Serenity Group Outreach

Every 2nd Saturday of the month

Lighthouse Ministries (Wayne & Marge Smith Dining Hall)

Corner of Spruce St. & Corral St. off of Elm Tree Ln (Downtown)

5:15 PM – 7 PM

Contact Bryan Mullins at 859.619.7512 or bmullins@creativelexington.com with questions.

Altar Flowers – We have plenty of dates available for the purchase of altar flowers for this year. If interested, please contact Mike and Sheila Green at 859-271-4789 (Home), 859-533-5282 (Cell) or greenlex1961@yahoo.com. God bless.

God's Table, our monthly potluck dinner for our friends in the community, will be on March 20, 2018. Please bring a dish and a friend to our Fellowship Hall around 5:30 pm. Plan to stay and help prepare and serve the meal, if you are able. For more information, contact Melinda Kemp, 278-3570 or melindakemp@twc.com.

Room in the Innour 14th Season

Just a few weeks left, as our Room In the Inn season prepares to wind down, at the end of March.

Our sincere thanks to each of you who have 'stepped up' so unselfishly and given an extra effort....that is what has made this year happen! You are our heroes!!

We ask for your continued prayers for the 24 men that we have served throughout the last 5 months, as most of them will return to living 'on the streets' of Downtown Lexington. Many of the men have repeatedly told us that Room In the Inn has impacted them so positively that they have a renewed hope for their future and they know that someone cares. Most importantly, they know that they are loved by God! Thank you, First Church! *Peggy and Hunt Ray*

Room in the Inn is in need of new men's underwear, socks and undershirts. We are also accepting donations of toiletry items including shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and shaving cream. This will be the last call for donations for this year. Many thanks to those who have generously donated. Thanks, *Amy amyrrutenberg@yahoo.com* (858) 389-8284.

The Belle Bennett Circle will meet **Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.** in the Church Parlor, Room 107. Meghan Talley, Program Director at Nathaniel Mission, will present a very interesting overview of the "Vision and Direction for Nathaniel Mission" for the coming year. Please try to attend this very informative program!

The **United Methodist Mountain Mission** truck is scheduled to pick up from the Downtown campus on Monday, March 19. Please leave donations for the mission in the closet of Room 12 (downstairs to the right as you exit the elevator) by March 18.

Health Ministry

On Palm Sunday, March 25th, the Health Ministry team and Wheeler Pharmacy will offer "Brown Bag Sunday with a Pharmacist." This is a private, 30-minute, discussion with a Pharmacist reviewing your current medications. **Reservations are required.** The event will begin at 9am and conclude at 1pm. Two Pharmacists will be present for this event. Reservations will be accepted from March 4th through March 16th and are limited to 16 participants. Sign up at the Welcome table in the Gathering Place. Contact Carla Kimmons: *cmcard@hotmail.com* or (859) 684-0969 for more information.

Have you had an answer to prayer?

It's been said that God always answers prayer. Sometimes the answer is "yes;" sometimes the answer is "no;" sometimes the answer is "wait."

Hearing stories of answered prayer is an inspiration and helps us all grow spiritually. The Prayer Action Team would like to prepare a booklet of testimonies to answered prayer, as a way for us at First Church to share our stories with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do you have a story of answered prayer? Perhaps God said "yes" and it changed your life. Perhaps God said "no" and it wasn't until much later that you realized His answer truly was best for your life. Perhaps He said "wait" and you are learning and growing in Him as a result.

Please share your story. Contact the office for the submission form today!

Think about it:

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" - Corrie ten Boom

"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." - Martin Luther

Church Family

Our sympathy is extended to: the family and friends of Frances Cole, who passed away on February 7, and to Martha Duff and the other family and friends of Muriel S. (Vae) Duff who passed away on February 13, 2018.

Kids Day Out Preschool

Our Kids Day Out Preschool has openings. If you are looking for a Christian-based curriculum preschool, we would love to have your kids join us. Children ages 1-4 are welcome. The Preschool is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30-3:30 PM and the cost is \$250/month. If you are interested or know someone who is, contact Debbi French (*debbi@1stumc.org*).

From the Prayer Action team: On Monday, March 5 at 7:30 PM, the Cinemark theatres at Fayette Mall will show *Tortured for Christ*, the story of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, founder of Voice of the Martyrs, who served 14 years in a Communist prison. Tickets must be purchased before March 5 at www.onbuzz.com/new-releases/tortured-for-christ.

Lenten Study Guide: a reminder that you can access the Lenten study guide that Todd and Carol have put together at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I3Bs1Rtq8GDeBDjpySsiYEJUHKYPmLjkY2xOFF0s5YA/edit?usp=sharing>.



March 2018

We are a church that makes disciples - across the street and around the world.



First United Methodist Church
200 West High Street
Lexington, KY 40507

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Permit No. 5

Todd Nelson
Sr./Downtown Pastor
todd@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 224

Carol Cooper
Assistant Campus Pastor
carol@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 227

Cameron Bibb
Family Pastor
cameron@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 229

Brock Terry
Minister of Music
brock@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 240

Chad Foster
Executive Pastor
chad@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 225

Alexis Scott
Treasurer
alexis@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 223

Beckie Sigmon
Financial Secretary
beckie@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 223

Barry Prince
Communications/Assist
barry@1stumc.org
233-0545 x227

Daphne Maurer
Administrative Assist
daphne@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 246

Cassidy Baas
Downtown Fellow
cassidy@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 246

Debbi French
Director, Kid's Day Out
debbi@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 233

Dr. David Cooper
Organist
davidcoopertls@yahoo.com

Church office
233-0545
info@1stumc.org

The deadline for the April newsletter is March 20. Please send submissions to info@1stumc.org. Thank you!

This Sunday, March 4, 4:00 PM

We are excited to welcome the Lexington Singers as they present Home is Where the Heart Is. This program will also feature the Lexington Singers Children's Choir and will consist of sacred songs and spirituals. You will want to be here!

Again this year, they are partnering with us to **collect food donations** for our Backpack Food program, which provides weekend nutrition to 60 students each week. Suggested donations include: Fruit/vegetable cups, individual pasta meals (no dry mac and cheese), cereal cups, granola bars and sandwich crackers. Invite some friends (!) and come enjoy as the Singers share their talents!