

The first two months of 2019 will be some of the most important months of our 225+ year history. How's that for an opening attention-grabbing line? And while not wanting to over-state things, I believe that I am not.

February will bring United Methodists from around the world to St. Louis for a General Conference meeting to determine the future of our denomination. What we will be voting on are two issues: 1) definition of marriage, and 2) qualifications for clergy ordination. To prepare, I am calling on us a community to do three things:

- 1) **Pray.** Join me in praying and fasting on Fridays for our denomination and the decisions facing us.
- 2) **Get informed.** There will be multiple chances for you to attend an informational meeting. You'll find them listed below. If those times and days don't work for you, my door is always open. You may also want to check out <http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session> to do some pre-reading.
- 3) **Stick to the facts.** We may be drawn to speculate about what will happen and what that will mean. I'm asking for us to stick with the facts before us and not jump to conclusions or make decisions until things are fully known.

I am convinced that the next few months offer the potential for us to grow in our faith and strengthen our community at First Church in particular and the United Methodist Church as a whole. Will you join me in committing to doing our part to do just that?



Informational Meetings

Some know a great deal about the General Conference meeting in February and others haven't heard much about this before now. We believe that we can best prepare our congregation for what lies ahead by beginning with our Sunday School classes.

Below is a list of the Sunday School classes Todd and Carol will be visiting and when they will be there. If you are not a part of a Sunday School class, please know you are invited to any one of these classes to hear this presentation.

- January 6 – Meet in Fellowship Hall
Young Professionals, Foundations, Mixed Media
- January 13 – Meet in Room 111
Contemporary Issues
- January 20 – Meet in Room 1 (BLT Classroom)
BLT and FISH
- January 27 – Meet in West Chapel
Trailblazers
- February 3 – Meet in the Parlor
Forum and Spiritual Growth

Grow

Learn more about your place in God's plan: Todd and Susan Nelson will lead a 10-week group on calling and spiritual formation. We'll have lots of discussion, read *The Call* by Os Guinness and *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster, and do several other outside assignments. **This group is the first part of our 2-year Discipleship Intensive.** If, after these 10 weeks, you choose to continue, you'll learn about the Biblical narrative, Christian theology, and ministry in the Methodist tradition. Discipleship Intensive requires high commitment: a 2-hour meeting and 4-6 hours of reading and preparation each week. Those who have completed DI say you can't do it without that time commitment. They also say it was worth it for them. Please

contact Todd, todd@1stumc.org, if you are interested or have questions. **Introductory meeting on January 13 at 6:00 PM in Todd's office.**

Wednesday Evenings Begin January 16

As you begin to prepare for 2019, we hope you'll consider coming Downtown on Wednesday evenings for a meal, fellowship, study, and/or music! We will be kicking off our Wednesday Nights on January 16, and they will go through the end of February. Some studies may be a bit shorter and some a bit longer, but the meals will be offered through February 27. There is more information below on the Financial Literacy group; be on the lookout for more information about others soon! Questions, please contact Carol Cooper (carol@1stumc.org or 859-233-0545).

Groups you can be a part of:

5:30 PM: Wednesday Night Dinner

6:15 PM:

- *Handbell Choir*
- *The Good & Beautiful Life* Study with Keith and Carol Cooper (Room 123)
- *Holy Spirit* Study with John Stumbo (Room 111)
- *Financial Literacy* hosted by the Endowment Foundation – West Chapel (see details below)
- *Holy Conversations: How to talk about the tough stuff in life* with Todd Nelson
- Crafty Hands and Hearts – Parlor
- *Walking Group* – Meet in the Gathering Hall

7:00 PM: *Chancel Choir*

Financial Literacy

Do you have parents who will be retiring and will potentially need some type of care as they grow older?
Have you given any thought to preparation for your retirement and the potential need for assistance in later years of retirement?

The Endowment Board of Stewards is sponsoring an **aging/retirement financial planning class** as part of First Church's regular Wednesday Night program, starting Wednesday, January 16, and continuing through February 6. The sessions will be led by D. Scott Neal, Principal of D. Scott Neal, Incorporated, a Lexington-based fee-only financial planning company. The focus of these sessions will be to share knowledge about several topics that all, or most of us, will deal with at some time in our life:

- Where will my loved one live as they grow into elderhood?
- Who will coordinate my loved one's healthcare?
- How will my loved one pay for care?
- What will be my loved one's legacy?

If we don't have these questions about our own elders, then our children probably have these questions about us.

These sessions will be for sharing knowledge to those who may want/need it, and it is not to be a solicitation for business. Please plan to come and join us!

As a Certified Financial Planner and CPA, Scott has advised clients as they navigate the tricky territory of caregiving and end-of-life planning for the past 33 years. He holds an MBA with emphasis in accounting; having also earned a Master of Divinity degree with emphasis in pastoral care, he is uniquely qualified to guide clients with foresight and compassion. With factual research and real-life experience, Scott Neal will share insight and valuable information in four weekly presentations focused on housing, managing health care, financing elderhood, and leaving a legacy.



Three Sundays and then some

Youth Sunday, Children's Sunday, and Christmas Pageant—three Sundays in which we manage the chaos, but also three Sundays out of the year when we are led in worship by our children and youth at Downtown. On these Sundays children and youth have a prominent place in our congregation. Those Sundays are special. And yet it's not only on those three Sundays but on many Sundays throughout the year you might see youth or children leading the liturgy, giving the children's moment message, helping with sound or video, and ushering during our services. It is significant that we intentionally set aside dates and times for them to lead. In doing so we communicate to our children and youth that they are welcome, they belong, and they are loved. But it's just as significant, and even more so, that they are simply and organically part of the community and leadership of the church. Thank you for being a church that welcomes teenagers and children in so many meaningful ways and finds places for them to lead and be a part of what we are doing at First Church Downtown. *Cameron*

Serve

Room in the Inn is accepting donations of thermal shirts and pants, new men's underwear and undershirts in sizes large and extra-large, socks, gloves, hats and used men's coats. We are also in need of toiletry supplies including deodorant, razors, shaving cream, toothbrushes and toothpaste and shampoo. Please contact Amy Rutenberg with any questions at (859)333-4260 or amyrrutenberg@yahoo.com.

Backpack Program: In January, we suggest donations of individual-sized cereals. The collection basket is in the Gathering Hall near the Welcome Center. Contact Cindy Dominick, cdominick@twc.com or Lisa Oates, lisa.m.oates@gmail.com for more info. Thank you for caring for these students!

Altar Flowers – We are taking reservations for altar flowers for 2019. We have February 3rd available as well as many other dates. If interested in purchasing flowers or in volunteering with us, please contact Mike and Sheila Green at 859-271-4789 (Home), 859-533-5282 (Cell) or greenlex1961@yahoo.com. God bless.

Our next God's Table meal will be on Tuesday, January 15, 2018. Please bring a dish and a friend to our Fellowship Hall around 5:30 pm. This monthly meal is open to anyone who is hungry. Plan to stay and help prepare and serve the meal, if you are able. For more information, contact Melinda Kemp, 859-333-8095 or melindakemp@twc.com.

The Belle Bennett Circle will meet on Wednesday January 9, at 10 o'clock in the morning in the church Parlor. Our program will be presented by Lori Casey, Lori is a pastor and grief counselor. We will also have our annual "Thinking of You Card Shower". We would be happy to have you join us. For information or if you need a ride, call Joyce McKinney at 224-4609.

FUMC Leadership Day, Saturday, January 12, 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM: All those serving on church-wide teams or community lead teams are invited to our annual Leadership Day. This will be a day of getting to know one another, orientation to our teams, and preparation for 2019. Nursery will be available – please let us know names and ages of children to expect by contacting info@1stumc.org.

Church Family

We celebrate the baptisms of Brooks and Walker Jacobson, sons of Brendan and Chelsea, on December 2, 2018.

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January 2019

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January Calendar Highlights

- 6: Kid's Choirs rehearsals (Sundays, 9:35 AM) and Sunday Nights @ DSM (6:00 PM) resume
- 12: FUMC Leadership Day, 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM, West Chapel
- 13: Introductory Meeting, Discipleship Intensive, 6:00 pm, Todd's office
- 16: Wednesday Night Dinner (5:30 pm) and Programs (6:15) begin
- 18: DSM to Winter Blitz