

I occasionally get asked “how many attend the Downtown campus?” While that sounds like an easy question to answer, it is not. My normal answer is that it depends on the week. Any given Sunday we see between 40 and 55 percent of what I call the Downtown cloud. The Downtown cloud is anyone who, if you stopped them in the grocery store and asked where they go to church, would say Downtown. If you are reading this, you are probably part of the Downtown cloud. And my best guess is that there are over 600 of us who fit that category.

The new attendance pattern which most, if not all, churches face has significant implications:

1. Finding ways to keep us connected is a top priority. Blog, email, Facebook and other “on-demand” mediums are vital. For instance, the move to live-streaming the services has been an effective way to help.
2. Discipleship must take on a 7-day a week rhythm instead of only Sunday morning. I’m not talking about adding more days of programming but more avenues for content to be accessed. Expect to see more video and on-line content available as we move forward.
3. Announcements on Sunday mornings are not a good way of getting the word out. Anything that we want everyone to hear needs to be in the

monthly newsletter or weekly email newsletter. Communication on other topics is better delivered more personally and to the particular audience. This means we need to plan ahead and to focus our messaging in order for it to be effective.

4. Facility usage must be flexible. Each week can bring wide swings in attendance in worship and Sunday school. For instance, one week a Sunday school class may have 2 people and the next 10. That presents obvious challenges for volunteer staffing as well as deciding which space in the building works best. We have plenty of small group spaces, what we need is additional large group gathering spaces that are more accessible to the main floor.

I’ll leave things right here for now. Just wanted to give you some insight on what keeps me up at night! I believe that the churches who embrace the new normal(s) in attendance patterns will move resources into increasingly more effective disciple-making pathways. If you look back at the history of the New Testament church, this is not surprising. Every so often there have been major changes that have demanded the church to adapt its ministry. The key is to adapt the way we do things and not the what or why. We exist by the power of the Holy Spirit to make disciples of Jesus Christ.



Grow

Start Here

Last month you received a *Start Here* book in your mail. Right from the beginning, Todd invited you to come be a part of a Grow Group. We, the pastors and staff of Downtown, believe it is important for every one of us to be a part of a group of people who have the opportunity to know us, challenge us, pray with us, and walk through life with us...Many of us have friends and family who fill this role in our lives, but we also believe it is incredibly important to have a group like this through your faith community.

Let me encourage you to find a place this fall to grow—Sunday School or a Wednesday Night Study or one of the other ones offered throughout the week. Our faith is deepened in these classes and our fellowship strengthens our relationship with God and others. If you would like help in deciding what class to check out, please let Todd or Carol know. We will gladly help you find a place that is good fit for you. See the exterior note for details on dates and times. *Carol*

Downtown Family Ministries

I do want to extend a huge thank you, again, for everyone who had a hand in making VBS happen and to our leaders who build relationships with our children and youth every week. You are the hands and feet of Christ. It is a blessing to work alongside you in discipling the kids and students who walk through our doors. *Cameron*

Downtown Family Camp

Sometimes when it comes to our family, we can feel like we are each headed in different directions and we never have time for one another. In the busyness of work, school, extracurriculars, devices and screens, our feeling of being disconnected with one another can become a real concern for parents and guardians. Before we know it,

we are disjointed and out of rhythm as a family. How can we get that rhythm back? How can we make space and time to develop a spiritual rhythm for our family? A rhythm that connects each of us and helps to grow our relationship with God as a family. Family Camp is a great way for you to hit the pause button and reset your family rhythm. While there you will get to experience all that Aldersgate Camp has to offer as well as take time to reconnect as a family. Family Camp is September 27-29. For more details and to register visit tinyurl.com/downtownfamilycamp.

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

The Prayer Action Team has put together a six-week series on prayer: "Lord, Teach Us to Pray." The disciples made this request of Jesus, who Himself modeled a life of prayer before this group He had chosen to change the world with His message. It is a request that any of us can make today, knowing that our learning and growing in prayer delights the heart of the Master. Oswald Chambers, much beloved devotional writer, has said, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer *is* the greater work." It doesn't matter how long one has been a Christian, there is still more to learn about prayer.

We will richly be blessed by the leaders who will be sharing what the Lord has laid on their hearts for these sessions. Leaders will be retired Bishop Al Gwinn, Rev. Jessica LaGrone, Rev. David Thomas, and Rev. Kris Key. We asked the leaders to pray about what God would have them share, and we are looking forward to hearing them as we all grow together in the grace and discipline of prayer.

The series will begin on September 4 and continue for 6 weeks. Sign up on the sheet at the Welcome Table in the Gathering Hall, and begin now asking the Lord what He wants to teach you about prayer!

Serve

Backpack Program: School is open and our Backpack basket is in place near the Welcome Center. Thank you for helping provide: Microwaveable pasta meals, individual cereals, peanut butter (small jars or Jif-to-Go), cheese or peanut butter crackers, fruit cups, cereal bars and shelf-stable pudding. We will serve 50 elementary and 25 middle school students. Thank you for your generosity! Contact Cindy Dominick, cdominick@twc.com, 859-536-9722 or Lisa Oates, lisa.m.oates@gmail.com, 859-321-9280) with questions or for more information.

Altar Flowers – We have filled all dates for 2019. We are ready to take reservations for 2020. If interested in purchasing altar flowers for 2020, please contact Mike and Sheila Green at 859-271-4789 (Home), 859-533-5282 (Cell) or greenlex1961@yahoo.com. God bless and thanks to all that support this ministry.

God's Table is our meal for anyone who is hungry on the third Tuesday of the month. Volunteers are needed to serve dinner and help clean up – commitment time is 2 hours. Contact Melinda Kemp, melindakemp@twc.com or 859-333-8095. **God's Table will be on Tuesday, September 17.** Plan on bringing food by 5:30 PM; we open the doors at 6:00.

The **Belle Bennett Circle** meets Wednesday, September 11 at 10:00 AM Downtown in the Ladies Parlor. Peggy Ray will bring an update on our Room In The Inn Mission needs and prayer requests.

Can You Help? School is back in session and **we are seeking tutors for the Woodhill Tutoring program.** This program provides one-on-one tutoring for students from Breckinridge Elementary who need special help with homework as well as lots of encouragement and affirmation. The volunteer will serve one day a week on either Monday or Wednesday from 2:45 PM to 4:30 PM.

This tutoring program is a little different from most others because the tutor works with the same child each week. This gives the tutor not just the opportunity to see progress but to also form a caring relationship with that child.

As Christians we know that God's grace flows in and through us, so as we equip these children for success in school, we more importantly can love them with the love of Christ. If you feel drawn to this kind of ministry, please call or email Kathie Beach, kathrynbeach99@gmail.com or (859) 230-7332 or 299-4227.

High Street Neighborhood Center is turning 50, and we are invited to help celebrate those years of learning, service, and partnership on **September 8** at 3:00 PM in the Calvary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall. RSVP by August 31 to Whitney Schlansky, director, at 233-1654.

Rise Against Hunger

Words cannot begin to express the heartfelt thanks to all who participated in Rise Against Hunger on Sunday, August 11th. Once all was set up and tummies were full after an incredible meal, the work went smoothly and quickly. It is awe-inspiring at how efficiently everyone worked to pack over 10,000 meals in such a short amount of time! The smiles, the fellowship, the joy each exuded while willingly taking part of your day to serve those all over the world is an example of Christ's love that will not soon be forgotten.

Children from 4 years of age to youth to adults to seniors were all able to come together and work for a common purpose—helping to provide meals to those in need. Thanks, also, to the many who made monetary donations to help cover the cost of the meals that were packed—it would not have been possible without your generosity.

If you weren't able to join the event this year, be on the look-out next year—it's an event not to be missed!

Church Family

We are happy to celebrate 2 recent arrivals: Livy Ruth Helsby, born on July 12, is the daughter of Hannah and Mike and joins big brother, Michael Foster, and big sister, Abbey. Proud grandparents are Martina and Foster Ockerman, Jr. and great grandparents are Joyce and Foster Ockerman; Avery Lee Mathis, born on August 5, is the daughter of Jimmy and Sara and joins big brother Oliver. Proud grandparents are Al and Judy Mathis.

Our sympathy is extended to the families of these members who passed away recently: Phyllis Williams (July 3), Lucy Massie (August 11), Johnny Massie (August 13), Agnes Cooper (August 17), and Joyce Hayes (August 26).

Membership Sunday – September 29: Are you interested in becoming a member of the Downtown Community of First Church? If so, please let Carol know (carol@1stumc.org or 859-233-0545), and she will set up a time for her or Todd to meet with you. There is more information on what it means to be a member on our website at downtown.1stumc.org/join. We look forward to talking with you and welcoming you as a member!

Ways to Stay in Touch

Not in town or able to come to service? You can worship with us on Sundays at **11:00 AM** by **livestream** at <https://vimeo.com/1stumc> or on Facebook at First United Methodist Church Downtown Campus. The Vimeo link is an easy way to find past services. Find our **sermon podcast** at <http://downtown.1stumc.org/podcast/>.

Thoughts from Todd: Find Todd's blog at <https://jtoddnelson.com>. To subscribe and get the posts delivered by email, click "Follow" on the bottom right of the blog's page.

Weekly email: Each week, usually on Friday mornings, we send an email that highlights happenings Downtown. If you would like to be included on this list, please email info@1stumc.org and let us know.

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

Ryan Barr
Office Manager
ryan@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 246

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

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

David Cooper
Organist
davidcoopertls@yahoo.com

Debbi French
Director, KDO
debbi@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 233

Jennifer Gibson
Business Administrator
jennifer@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 223

Cassidy Hasty
Family Ministries Lead
cassidyh@1stumc.org
233-0545

Kris Hobson
Administrative Assist.
kris@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 226

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

Mike Powers
Congregational Care Pastor
mike@1stumc.org
233-0545

Barry Prince
Assistant to Sr. Pastor
barry@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 237

Brock Terry
Director, Music Ministry
brock@1stumc.org
233-0545 x 240

Church office
M-Th, 8:30-4:30
info@1stumc.org
233-0545



First United Methodist Church

September 2019

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

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September 4: Wednesday Night Dinners and Programs begin – dinner at 5:30 PM and programs at 6:00. Our *Start Here* guide contains the details on these groups.

- *Surprised by Hope* by N.T. Wright
- *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*
- Walking Group
- Crafty Hands and Hearts
- Finishing Well
- Disciple 1 Bible Study
- Financial Peace University
- Handbell Choir
- Chancel Choir (meets at 7:00 PM)

Sunday, September 8: Adult Sunday School Open House, 9:50 AM

Have we mentioned that Sunday School is a great way to connect to a group? Visit classes to find the Sunday morning spot that is best for you.

- BLT
- FISH
- Mixed Media
- Trailblazers
- Spiritual Growth Class
- Contemporary IssuesForum
- Foundations
- Young Professionals
- Journey
- YAC (Young Adults and College)