
SALEM SPIRIT

The Newsletter of Salem United Methodist Church

Highlights of the North Carolina Annual Conference 2026

The 2026 NC Annual Conference was held at the Greenville Convention Center on June 18-20, 2026. It was a time of celebration, and congregational delegates from SUMC included Edie Snider, Lay Delegate; Scott Cole, Lay Leader; and Sarah Smith, Lay Member.

This year the conference centered around one unifying statement: "The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections."

Annual Conference brought clergy, lay delegates, and lay people together in a unified body, as we explored ways to communicate better as we become stronger disciples for Jesus.

Delegates from SUMC attended two Learning Lab sessions on Wednesday before the conference started on Thursday. The workshops attended were "Healthy Congregations: Looking Beyond the Numbers to Better Understand Church Health" and "Engaging and Welcoming New People: Why Are People Not Coming or Staying at Our Church?"

Attendees learned the importance of many features of a church, such as the church website, physical organization of church parking lots, building layout, etc., that together reach out and invite people to join in fellowship and ministry with us.

At the conference delegates were encouraged not to focus on our past, but rather what God has given us for the future of our church. With all of this in mind, we encourage Salem to be a church that is "loving, serving, and connecting to God and our community."

We are excited about our future here at Salem and what God is doing in our midst.

Pastor's Corner

By the Reverend Jim McConnell

In the last newsletter I expressed my hope that 2026 would be a year of vision and growth for Salem United Methodist Church. The first step toward this growth is taking time to discern where God is calling us to invest our time, talents and resources so that we might begin seeing more fruitful ministry. To this end we have held two open visioning sessions for church members, and we've learned some important things.

In terms of our community and its needs, we've learned that demographically, most of the new houses in our neighborhood are more likely to have retirees and "empty nesters" than families with young children. We've learned that people in our community are interested in a church that offers them an opportunity to get involved and serve. We've learned that we need to invite with intention, greeting people outside the church, and following through on hospitality inside the church. We need more opportunities for fellowship and better signage to help create an inviting environment that meets the needs of people we hope will become a part of this church.

But no matter what gets people to walk through the door, the thing that makes them want to come back is the people. Our visioning has reminded us that we all have a role to play in the church as the body of Christ. Perhaps that means serving on a committee or helping with events. Maybe you have musical gifts to share or bring skills we haven't even thought about yet. We need greeters, and ushers, and people to run tech on Sunday mornings. We need trustees and finance committee members. We need people serving on staff parish and people showing up to help with community events. I could go on, but I think you get the point. The biggest lesson we've learned in this visioning process is that we need you!

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find information about many of the committees and mission teams of the church. I hope that as you read about these different groups you will also be in prayer about where you might be called to serve. If you're just showing up on Sunday morning, you're missing out on some wonderful opportunities to grow as a disciple. If this is you, I want to personally encourage you to jump in somewhere and find your calling so that you might experience the joy in walking more fully in the footsteps of Jesus.

Fellowship and Faith Opportunities

Bingo and Popcorn Social

Sat., Sept. 12 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

If you have any prizes that you would like to donate, that would be great! Come & join in on the fun and excitement. A good time will be had by all.

Blessing of the Animals

Sun., Oct. 4, 2026 at 3:00 PM

Mark your calendar and plan to bring your pet. Prayers and Squares will be making scarves and bow ties to be given to the cats and dogs that attend.



News from your Salem UMC Church Choir

By Pam Greeson

I'd like to thank our dedicated choir members for their faithful weekly service. Their talent and time given to rehearsals enrich every Sunday morning service.

The choir is getting ready to start rehearsals for the Christmas program this year and rehearsals will take place in the sanctuary. During preparation for the Christmas program, we will practice every Sunday, October through December. It's a lot of new musical arrangements and we want to raise a joyful noise to the Lord!

If you love to sing in the shower or hum along with hymns, consider sharing your voice with the choir. No prior audition is needed – just a willing heart and a joyful spirit. All ages are welcome! **Come experience the deep fellowship and joy of leading our congregation in worship!**

Fellowship and Faith Opportunities, cont.

Get Involved with a Committee

Below you will find a list of the committees busy behind the scenes at Salem UMC. These committees keep the church running beautifully, efficiently and seamlessly. Committee members are volunteers who devote much talent and time to accomplish this goal. If you are interested in joining a committee, please contact Pastor Jim.

Church Council – Responsible for planning and implementing administrative processes in the church. This group plans, implements, and annually evaluates the mission and ministry of the church.

Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee – Responsible for maintaining healthy relationships between clergy, staff and the congregation.

Finance Committee – Responsible for budgeting, giving, and stewardship within the church.

Trustees – Christian stewards of the property God has entrusted to the congregation; physical property as well as monetary gifts to maintain the property.

Nominations Committee – Responsible for recognizing the gifts/strengths of congregants and working to use those gifts/strengths as the body of the church.

Hospitality/Kitchen Committee – Responsible for hosting events of the congregation. Assists with needs of special group activities involving kitchen area.

Nurture Committee – Coordinates, plans, and carries out activities for the congregation to support member care including children, worship, and educational experiences.

Fellowship and Faith Opportunities, cont.

United Women in Faith

Salem Women in Faith met on Aug. 2 to begin getting ready for Fall and the holiday season. Everyone was thanked for their help with the yard sale; a total of \$2724.50 was raised for missions and several future mission projects were discussed.

In July the women prepared a meal for the residents at Community Crossroads, the Greenville Homeless Shelter. Approximately 90 meals were served.

Of course it's "Back to School" time. Women in Faith served a staff breakfast at GR Whitfield for approximately 75 staff members in August. School supplies donated by our church family to those in need at GR Whitfield were delivered at this time.

Yes, we have been busy and plan to be even busier in the months ahead. Good News! "Holiday Helpers" is planning to return on a smaller scale. The proceeds will be used to support mission projects of Women in Faith during 2027. More about this and how you can help will be shared in the days ahead.

Next meeting of Women in Faith will be October 4th right after church service. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us, as we will be planning for "Holiday Helpers" and the holiday season.

Have something to share?

If you have an idea, story, or photo for the newsletter, please share it with Joyce Owens or Emily McConnell.

Join Us on Sunday Mornings!

Sunday school begins at 9:15 a.m. The morning worship service begins at 10:30. We would love to see you there!

Health Highlights



Be Still and Know that I am God – Psalm 46:10

By Susan Gibson

While we know that exercise is very important to our health– stillness is also important. Stress is a well-documented risk factor for numerous health issues, such as immune suppression, cardiovascular strain, GI disorders and increased cortisol levels. Increased cortisol levels may trigger cravings for high carbohydrate foods and cause the body to store calories as deep belly fat. These issues invite chronic illness!

Psalm 46:10 reminds us to let go! Stop worrying! Know and accept who God is and allow this to quiet your heart. Very simply– stop fighting situations, let go of your control and surrender your worries to God. That sounds pretty simple, right? Of course it is not easy! Human nature does not usually bring about this approach to the difficulties of life.

What we know about stillness is that it increases your mental clarity (clear thinking). Pausing to breathe deeply lowers your heart rate and blood pressure, while increasing serotonin (a natural hormone that our body produces) which improves our mood. Stillness also soothes your nervous system, lowers stress hormones like cortisol and calms our overactive brain.

So how in the world do we “be still”? Here are some simple ideas:

- Begin your day with a few minutes of praise and prayer. Sing your favorite song.
- Count your blessings – of which we all have many.
- Meditate on a passage of scripture. Allow it to sink in and become present in your thoughts.
- Recite a simple prayer of stillness. Ask God to help you find stillness.
- Start small. Be intentional about your decision to slow your thoughts.
- Box breathing– Breath in for four seconds, hold the breath for four seconds, then exhale for four seconds. Repeat this several times.

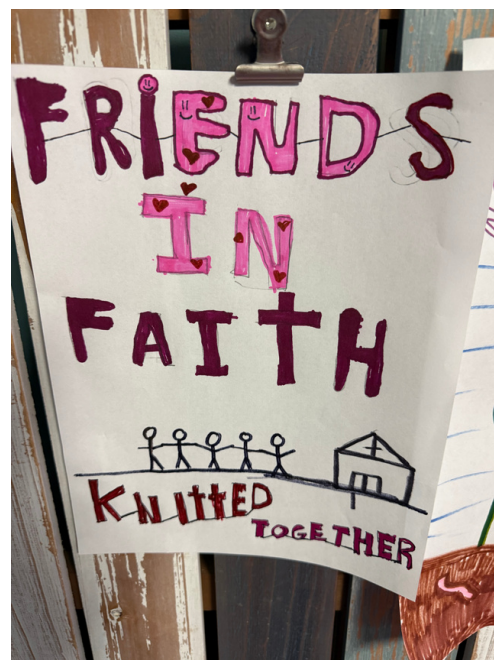
Remember that in quietness and confidence we find our strength.

Sunday School News

Introducing “Friends in Faith: Knitted Together”

Friends in Faith (FIF) is a newly created group of youth, grades 6 and up, who meet on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:15 am (during Adult Sunday School time slot) at the end of the hall behind the sanctuary in the last room on the right.

The major purpose of this group is to provide lots of activities to learn about our place in God’s Kingdom and keep FIF connected in fun, creative “Jesus Serving Ways.”



For example:

- These youth volunteer regularly at “Share the Bounty” Food Pantry operated by our church and serving over 150 families in our community twice a month.
- They participate in Sunday Worship in sanctuary by reading scripture, ringing tone chimes, singing special music and more.

In class, FIF explore scripture and Biblical knowledge/application through:

- Hands on Thematic Activities Units that may occur inside or outside the classroom. Activities designed for the interest level and attention level of this age group, including lots of “hands on” activities.
- Emphasis on everyday application in their own lives of Biblical truths learned and discussed.
- Learning how to “Love and Follow Jesus in today’s world” should never be boring!

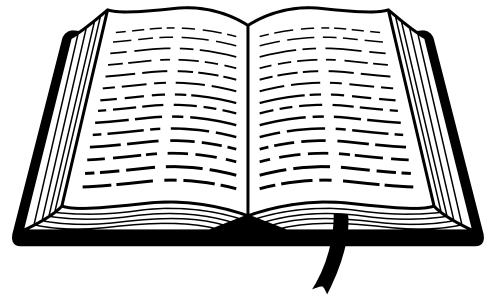
We welcome ALL youth (middle grades and high school). Give us a try!

Sarah Smith and Edie Snider—Co-Teachers

Sunday School News, cont.

Middle Ground Sunday School

By Scott Cole



The Middle Ground Sunday School class was born five years ago, but its genesis goes back a few years earlier. I noticed that we had programs and Sunday School classes for our young children and teenagers. We also had programs and two Sunday School classes for the seniors of Salem. However, there were no programs or Sunday School classes for "younger adults." Several times before I had advocated for this as well as trying to organize a social group for people in the church who were "out of school" but weren't "quite yet a senior.

So, five years ago the opportunity arose where the need for another adult class presented itself. I went on to organize the class. We started with just four other people, outside of Tammy and myself. Over the next few years, our class grew as high as fourteen. We chose to do interactive Bible Studies in our group. Some cover a single book of the Bible, such as Esther, Daniel, or Ephesians. Some cover topics like marriage, dealing with crisis, or confronting our fears.

As the makeup of our church has changed, so has the makeup of our class. Congregants of Salem UMC of all ages have been welcomed into our class and been a part of it. We continue to have a lot of fun learning about each other and learning about God's word.

There have also been times we've met socially. From going out to dinner to enjoying a game night or Eagles vs Commanders games, we try to enjoy each other's company. We are a close-knit group and welcome anyone who hasn't found a Sunday School class or just want to try something different for a week to join us.

Middle Ground Sunday School meets in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

Committee News

Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of all church properties. For our church these include: the Sanctuary, Education building, Fellowship Hall, church office, the Hut, and the Parsonage.

Other responsibilities are contracts for cleaning, landscaping, pest control, and HVAC as well as insurance coverage for all properties.

Recent projects the Trustees have taken care of are restoration/repair of the stained-glass windows, repair of the roof at the Parsonage, AC repair in the Sanctuary, removal and cleanup of the Paramore building, and church workdays, just to name a few.

The Trustees are also responsible for evaluating the building use needs and making plans for supporting the needs of ministries of Salem United Methodist Church.

In other words, they are responsible for everything from changing out light bulbs to building buildings!!

The Trustees meet on the second Thursday of each month. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Trustees.



Contact Us

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Church Office

(252) 752-1273

Cheryl Wells, Secretary

secretary.salemumc@gmail.com

Church Website

salemmethodist.org

News from Around the Church

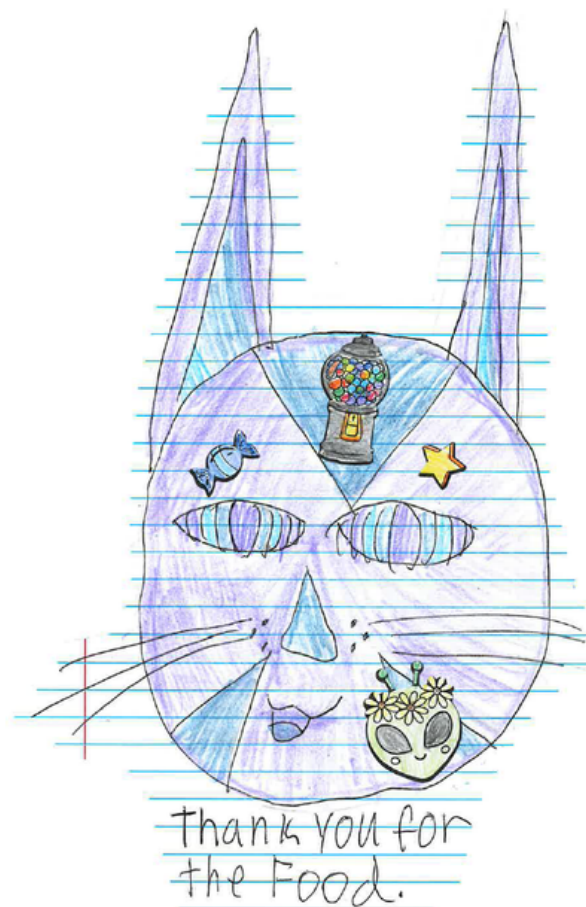
Is volunteering worth it?

This drawing was made by a little girl and given to Caty McConnell while Caty spoke with the girl as her family came through our Food Pantry on August 1.

We shared it with the 24 volunteers helping us that day and "It made our day!"

Sometimes, when you wonder if anything you are doing makes a difference, someone lets you know it makes a difference for them.

Thanks to all of you for what you do to keep our food pantry going.



Sign Up for One Call Now

Would you like to be on the phone call list for information about events, programs, and weather related updates about our church? If so please contact the church office at (252) 752-1273 and ask to be added to our One Call Now phone system. To opt-in to receive these updates via text message, text the word ALERT to 22300.

You can also sign up through the church office to receive emails from the church including future editions of *The Salem Spirit*!

We invite you to take advantage of one (or all) of these methods to get connected to all of the great things happening here at Salem UMC.
