

# SUMMER VIBES

CREATING LIFE WHERE WE LEAST EXPECT IT

## Catching the Summer Spirit

As we settle into the heart of summer, I've found myself paying attention to the rhythms of our life together as a church. I wanted to share a few observations—just musing aloud about what I'm seeing among us.

Several weeks ago, your pastors, staff, and church leaders began asking a simple question: *How can we celebrate our life of faith during a season when people's routines naturally change?* School is out. Families travel. Weekends fill up. Summer has its own pace.

We also know that these seasonal patterns exist within a much larger cultural reality. Across the country, churches continue to experience declining participation. Recent Barna research notes that the percentage of Americans who identify as practicing Christians has fallen from 46% to 24% over the last 25 years, and the perceived importance of faith has declined significantly as well.

None of that is news to us. Every summer, attendance shifts, and over the years First Church has responded in different ways.

This year, though, we wanted to try something different.

Instead of approaching summer with a mindset of scarcity, we wanted to lean into abundance. Rather than simply "getting through" the season, we wondered what it might look like to embrace it with joy, creativity, and hope.

That's how **Summer Vibes** was born.



With the help of our communications partners—and a whole lot of brainstorming—we landed on a theme that was colorful, playful, welcoming, and flexible enough to keep evolving all summer long.

I have to admit, I never imagined just how enthusiastically you would embrace it.

Whether it's the colorful sunglasses, the groan-worthy dad jokes, the music, the laughter, or the simple willingness to try something new together, I've sensed an energy every single week that is both infectious and deeply heartwarming.



Even more encouraging, I'm seeing people discover new ways to share their gifts. When people are invited to participate, they find purpose. When they offer their gifts, relationships grow. New friendships are forming. People are connecting across generations and worship preferences. There is a beautiful sense that we're creating something together.

I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who has contributed to this summer's energy. Our worship team continues to dream up fresh ideas and invite new voices and talents into worship, and there is still plenty to look forward to before summer comes to a close.



As I watch all of this unfold, I can't help but think about Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit has always been about creating life where we least expect it, drawing people together, awakening gifts, building community, and reminding us that God's future is always larger than our fears.

I believe that same Spirit is moving among us today.

I can feel it. Can you?

**Rev. Duane Carlisle (he/him)**

# Celebrating Ronda Kroeschen on Her Retirement from First Church

This summer we celebrate someone who has quietly shaped the life of this church for years. Ever since I walked in the doors of First United Methodist Church six years ago, I instinctively knew that Ronda Kroeschen was the beating heart of this place. I also figured out pretty quickly who was really the boss around here (Ronda!), and because I was wise enough to recognize that from the start, we got along just fine—in fact, better than fine. Ronda has been a patient listener, a wise counselor, a co-conspirator, and one of the very best workplace friends anyone could hope for. Her imagination shines through everything she does. Her love language is generosity (and crocheting!), and I never knew what creative surprise might appear on my office door or in a little gift bag.



There really isn't anything Ronda can't figure out how to do. But more than anything else, she loves the people of this church. She pays attention to your lives and has helped make sure I do too. Her quiet, behind-the-scenes ministry of care has touched countless people in ways most of us will never fully know. I will miss seeing my friend every day, but I am so happy that retirement will give her more time for camping with Gene, trying new crochet patterns, dreaming up new crafts, and spending time with her family. And somehow, I have a feeling I'll still run into Ronda around the church from time to time—with another clever creation in hand—because all that love still has to go somewhere.

## Rev. Duane Carlisle (he/him)



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## Messages To Ronda | From Our First Church Family

Ronda has been not only amazing as a knowledgeable and highly skilled administrator, but her humor has been such a part of church life that it's hard to imagine the office without her! I'm excited for her to take all that spunk and have many more adventures! - **Talitha Huber**

Ronda is a "can do everything" (and does!) kind of person. An excellent multi-tasker who you seldom need ask her to do something because she's already done it - **Larry Huggins**

Ronda, you will truly be missed! Thank you for always having patience with me as I bugged you with countless questions and requests for Freedom School. Thanks for all of the sweet, creative gifts and trinkets, they brightened my day. I'll miss your sense of humor and sarcasm so much, it helped to calm me down and take a moment to laugh. I wish you all the best with your next adventure! Enjoy retirement, you deserve it! - **Breanya Hogue**

If you have a question about the church, chances are Ronda knows the answer. Thank you for always putting up with Freedom School and for patiently helping us, even when we are constantly coming to you with more questions and requests. You have a special way of making people feel seen and appreciated, often through small gifts that bring a smile to someone's day (I know because I am clearly your favorite person in the world! ) I am truly grateful for everything you have given and wish you a retirement filled with happiness and relaxation! -**Sara Luo**

Ronda has a way of making humor and laughter a part of everything she does. She is a loyal friend and before you know it she's crocheted you a grand piano and made her way into your heart. The office won't be the same without her. - **Charis Vander Plaats**

Ronda has been behind the scenes of so much of what makes our church run smoothly. Her dedication, willingness to help wherever needed, and commitment to ministries like LUM Jubilee Christmas have made a lasting impact on our congregation and community. It has been a joy to get to know her over the years, and I am deeply grateful for all she has done. - **Anna Clark**

Ronda is a treasure! Her knowledge of church operations and administrative processes keep FUMC and all of its ministries running smoothly. She has shown me grace, empathy, and compassion, along with a side eye from time. - **Jorge Perez de Jesus**

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I have never known First Church without Ronda. I appreciate the humor, care, creativity, and a thousand miles of yarn she brought to our work and will miss her signature flare in our communications. - **Pastor Kory Pritchett**

Ronda is the kindest person I've ever known. Her kindness is real, not just words, but kind, quiet acts of support and affection for friends and strangers. - **Ann Caddy**

Ronda has been the mainstay of our church office administration for many years. In particular, she has always been willing to provide assistance when it was needed for the church Foundation activities. In addition to her "official" duties, Ronda was simply a good friend for many people in church. Her participating with church members in Hands at Work meant a lot to so many. When you came into the church office, you knew you would be greeted by a smiling face and a willingness to help. - **Carl Griffin**

Thank you, Ronda, for your years of dedication and service to First Church. Congratulations on your retirement. Although we will miss you, we know you will always be a part of the First Church family!

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## Welcoming Mindy Kuney to the First Church Team

We are excited to welcome Mindy Kuney as our new Director of Administration and Missional Services at First Church, beginning this month!

In her role, Mindy will oversee the administrative operations of First Church, support staff and ministry teams, and help advance our mission of serving the congregation and community.

Mindy Kuney is a lifelong resident of Tippecanoe County, Indiana. She has been married for 21 years and is the proud mother of a son serving in the United States Army.

Mindy is dedicated to her family, faith, and community and enjoys supporting others through both her personal and professional life. She brings a compassionate, detail-oriented approach and is committed to supporting church operations with integrity and care.

Join us in giving Mindy a warm First Church welcome!



### Summer Vibes Worship

This summer, join us each Sunday at 11:00 AM for **Summer Vibes!** Come as you are and experience meaningful worship, inspiring music, and a message of hope as we gather together in faith and community. Everyone is welcome.

### Solar Panels Proposed for First Church

First Church is considering a proposal to install solar panels on the education building. Posters explaining the project have been placed in the Narthex.

Benefits of solar panels are economic and environmental.

- After a 30 percent investment tax credit, the cost to FUMC would be \$162,624.
- In 11.8 years, the church would recoup the initial investment.
- In 20 years, the net cash gain would be \$176,713.
- The projected annual bill, post-solar, would be \$18,807, compared to \$29,509 now.
- The lifespan on the panels is expected to be 30-plus years.



The Governance Board has requested that the Foundation provide the funds for the project, and the savings be budgeted for programs. The Foundation Board has not yet voted on the request.

Stay tuned for further updates.

# The First Church Community Garden

Over the past few months, the First Church Community Garden space has transformed from preparation work into a flourishing area filled with raised beds, fresh soil, and growing plants.

The first stage of the project focused on preparing the garden beds and surrounding space for planting. First Church landscaper, Greg, worked with Talitha and Pastor Duane Carlisle organize the layout and begin building the foundation for the garden. The Young Lover's Nature Club helped paint the garden beds and prepare for the plants.

In the latest update, the garden is continuing to thrive as plants mature and volunteers maintain the space. The progress over just a few short weeks reflects the commitment that has gone into creating a garden that can serve and connect the community.

Thank you to Talitha, Greg, The Young Nature Lovers Club, and all of the volunteers who have contributed their time, energy, and effort to make the First Church community garden a reality. We look forward to continuing to watch it grow throughout the season.



Each Other 

## Help Us Prepare for Lafayette Pride OUTfest!

First Church will once again be part of Lafayette Pride OUTfest on Saturday, August 15, and we need your help!

We're forming a planning and volunteer team to help create a welcoming, joyful, and visible presence for our church at this important community event.

Would you be willing to join us? Whether you have lots of time or just a little, we'd love to have you on the team.

To learn more or get involved, please contact Pastor Duane or Pastor Kory.

## Welcoming Statement

We, the people of First United Methodist Church West Lafayette, welcome everyone, through all life's stages, with arms that are open, respectful, and loving. And by everyone, we mean regardless of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, race, ability, bank balance, or background. As a Reconciling Congregation, we welcome you into our church family, for it is by joining hands that we support one another and share our faith journey together. Whoever you are, and wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.



## Mission, Vision & Core Values

**MISSION:** To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**VISION:**

1. Adopt & Embrace the Families of the Klondike School District in partnership with Klondike Elementary School & Teachers
2. Embrace the Purdue Community in partnership with Wesley Foundation;
3. Ensure our First United Methodist Church Community is connected & growing in their walk with Christ.

**CORE VALUES:** We are a loving & joyful church committed to celebrating God's love in all that we do. Welcome, Acceptance, & Support; Christ-centered Worship; Spiritual Growth Towards Discipleship; Active Christian Service.

