

AUGUST 2026

The Messenger

“DO GOOD,
DO NO HARM, &
STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD”



Grace Was Never Meant to Keep Us Small

There are moments when I find myself watching people in our church family and quietly thanking God for the courage I see in ordinary lives. I watch someone walk into worship carrying a grief no one else can see. I see a family choosing forgiveness instead of bitterness.

I hear laughter in the hallways from children who remind us that hope always has a future. I watch volunteers serve meals, visit hospitals, pray with neighbors, teach our children, sing with joy, and quietly love people who may never know their names. It reminds me of something important.

Grace is never just God's way of making us feel better. Grace is God's way of making us new. The beautiful thing about God's grace is that it always moves toward us before we ever think to move toward God. It meets us in our ordinary Tuesdays, our unanswered prayers, our doubts, our celebrations, and our disappointments. It finds us exactly where we are—but it loves us far too much to leave us there. Sometimes we imagine grace as a gentle hand on our shoulder saying, “It's okay.” And it is that. But it is also a loving hand reaching toward us saying, “Come with me. There is more.” More joy than fear would have chosen. More hope than disappointment could imagine. More purpose than comfort could ever provide.

As your pastor, one of my greatest privileges is walking beside you through the real moments of life. Sitting in hospital rooms. Celebrating baptisms and weddings. Standing together at gravesides. Laughing over shared meals. Praying in moments when words seem too small. Those moments remind me that faith isn't something we simply believe. It's something we live together. Thank you for allowing my family and me to share this journey with you. You have welcomed us, encouraged us, prayed for us, and loved us well. Every week I become more convinced that God is doing something beautiful among us—not because we have everything figured out, but because we continue to trust the One who does.

As we step into another month together, my prayer is simple: that each of us would become a little more available to God's grace. That we would notice it in unexpected places. Receive it with grateful hearts. Share it generously with others. And discover that the life God imagines for us is always richer, deeper, and more beautiful than the one we would have settled for on our own. The Apostle Paul wrote, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:10). May that be our prayer as well.

Rev. Kennon

Rev Kennon Pickett



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Vivian Martin
Custodian

Sunday Services

8:30 Grace Life
11:00 Traditional

Church Office

(318) 443-5696
Mon-Thur 9:00-3:00
Friday- 9:00-12:00

Youth and Children Programming



August brings new beginnings as our children and youth kick off a new school year. Reflecting back on this summer, it's been a whirlwind of Vacation Bible School dancing, Grill and Chill splashing, movie watching, and youth fellowshiping!

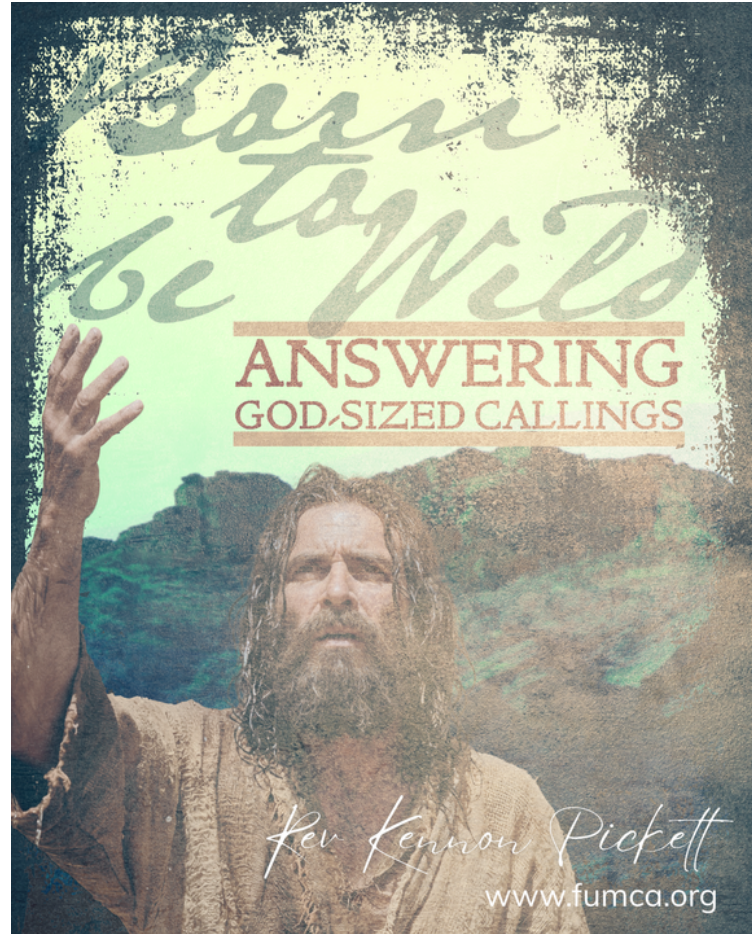
Shifting seasons bring acute change in the lives of our children and youth, change which we can feel compassion for and patience as we help them grow. Calling by the Holy Spirit looks different across the lifespan, and our children and youth embody their calling in unique and unexpected ways. As our younger children enter a new school year, I see them answer God's call in the ways they learn with wonder, share with openness, and love and welcome new and old friends alike.

For young children, God's call is love: love others, yes, but also be loved by the Heavenly Father. For our youth who walk in faith, the call is similar yet ripening: as they grow into their own, God calls them to remember the grace of God. This grace, after all, has been with them all along, and grace will continue surrounding them as they grow, learn, experience, and live in the life by which God has blessed them.

I look forward to witnessing where God leads our young believers this year!

Peace,
Carly Bratcher
Program Director

Upcoming Sermon Series



God doesn't call us to tame faith or comfortable religion. God calls us wild—to break barriers, defy fear, and live beyond limits. From Peter stepping onto stormy seas, Noah building a massive ark in the desert, to Moses facing a burning bush and an impossible mission, God's people have always been called to wild, impossible faith.

In this series, we will journey through bold Biblical moments that reveal how ordinary people answered God's epic summons. We'll confront fear, step into impossible missions, and ignite a wildfire faith that breaks walls and changes history.

This is a call to live born to be wild—to trust God wildly, act courageously, and embrace a vision bigger than ourselves.

CLAIM YOUR
MEMBER
PROFILE
ON OUR NEW
WEBSITE.
step by step

1 GO TO OUR
WEBSITE
www.fumca.org

2 CLICK
"MEMBERS"
from the
menu across
the top.

3 SIGN IN
Use your phone
number to
start the
process.
Follow instructions
from there.

Music Ministry

I've shared with all of you before that the first time I heard God call me to ministry, I was singing "Here I am, Lord" in Children's choir. It was not exactly the lightning-bolt moment it sounds like. The second line of the hymn is the question "Is it I, Lord?" and THAT was the great question of my life in music ministry for decades. Me? Are You sure?

The truth is, you don't have to go into a career in ministry to hear and obey the call of God. Any of us can get distracted from all He is doing. We have a church where lives are transformed and expressions of creativity and worship surround us, and we can get distracted. There are many assuring verses in Isaiah 43, but I think my favorite line is verse 19. Isaiah 43:19 says, "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?"

He is doing big, new things in our church and congregation right now, and we get a front row seat. He is doing new things even when we can't perceive any of them, and that should fill us with joy! I want my eyes to be opened to His business, not just my "being busy at the church". I want my ears to be opened to what He is saying about us, and Isaiah 43 gives us a good idea of His tone. It turns out, friends, He will call you and I...forever! My prayer is that we prepare ourselves with confidence to still be amazed; that our ears, eyes, and minds stay open, and that the fruits of this season multiply in ways we can and cannot even perceive.

Elizabeth Nix

Director of Worship and Music Ministries



Pre-school

The ability to make a unique, imaginative connection is called an idea. Ms. L. Mathilde Bradford, a member of First United Methodist Church of Alexandria, had an idea. She wanted to use her social work skills to help license childcare centers all over the state of Louisiana.

Ms. Bradford's idea became a vision for the preschool here at 2727 Jackson Street. And with the help of the rest of the congregation, Ms. Bradford saw her vision become reality. Over 55 years later, First United Methodist Preschool stands as one of the longest running preschools and childcare centers in the state of Louisiana. One of the last people to interview Ms. Bradford, Mr. Bill Sumrall, reminds us that her story is remarkable and her unique idea for childcare made her a pioneer in the field of early childhood educational centers. But that story began with a vision and a passion for improving the welfare of children.

I work with many people who have supported Ms. Bradford's vision and this church's largest outreach, our preschool, which provides early education, offers a haven for working parents, and introduces Christian values to young families. If you purchased something when we were fundraising; if you donated to our foundation; if you helped fix a broken piece of equipment; if you sat and watched a child's performance in a program; and if you volunteered your time and talent to help this school's mission, then please know that the First United Methodist Preschool is grateful and thanks you from the bottom of its collective heart.

But what prompted that strong inner urge, or calling, to help our church family care for and help educate children? You made a connection between what you knew could be and what was. Like Louise Bradford, Reverend Kennon also has a vision, and it includes this school. Join me and Rev. Kennon in working to maintain the community and service that our church is known for—what is your vision? Our school wants to know!

Catherine Lytle

Pre-School Director



L. Matilde Bradford

Art Ministry

I have always been drawn to "call" stories in the Bible: Mary, a virgin girl called to bear the son of God; Joseph, Mary's betrothed called to a supporting role in her story; Moses, called through the burning bush to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt; Esther, called to become queen of a foreign land "...for such a time as this" to deliver her people; the boy Samuel, called to be God's messenger; Paul, Jeremiah, Jonah: I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

And I grew up with the distinct impression that I was called. I just had to figure out my calling. The myriad of call stories tells me that there are many ways to be called and many callings. I always knew I was called to be a mother and even today after all of my five sons are grown and my oldest granddaughter is going off to college, I am sure this was my first and highest calling.

I was called to a supporting role as a preacher's wife to my first husband, Doug. At times that felt like being the mother of the room, "wear beige and smile." Every time we moved, I looked for a way to serve in this new church. What was needed that I could possibly do? In the smaller churches I was often asked, you do play the piano, don't you? Alas, I could not help there, even though the last preacher's wife played beautifully. I taught Sunday School and Bible School; I taught a calligraphy class to raise money for the youth trip; became a summer children and youth director; directed Christmas pageants and Easter plays; and served as part-time church secretary to do the bulletin and newsletter. They paid me probably what I was worth on this one, not much, but it was enough for a babysitter and many other things.

After Doug's sudden death at age 42, in the midst of extreme grief, I was dropped into discernment mode again. What is my place in the church now?

What am I called to do? In my utter surprise, and through much help from many people, I discerned a call to preach. Five years after my husband's death, I entered seminary, and after graduation three years later I was appointed to my first church. I pastored in Hammond, Tallulah, Shreveport, Haughton, Opelousas, and Alexandria.

When I retired six years ago, I began to discern, what does the Lord want me to do now in retirement? What am I called to do? You know the answer this time: Artist-in-Residence and Pastor-in-Residence right here at First UMC, Alexandria — art and prayer. I feel like I have finally lived into my calling. It was a winding path to get here, but I wouldn't trade a minute of it. To God be the glory! He has led me and been so very patient with me at every turn. Seems like that is he of the Fruits of the Spirit, patience, right?

So what are you called to do or be? How could you be more faithful right where you are? What are your gifts and graces for ministry? What are the needs around you that you can do something about? All are called. ALL are called. Read Romans 12 to get started on discerning a call. Or look up any of the call stories in the Bible to be inspired. Also, remember aren't meant to discern a call on our own. Listen to God and talk it over with other Christians, and especially one of your pastors. We love these conversations!

Rev. Jean Sanders

Art Pastor & Artist-in-Residence

"Callings" from the month of August from your Artist-in-Residence:

- Sunday, August 9, at 12:00pm in the 50/50 Room, Pop-Up Art Party, lunch and collage
- Saturday, August 15 at 10:00am, Urban Sketching at FUMC, Fellowship Hall
- Every Tuesday: Centering Prayer at 9:30am & Art Class at 10:30am

Weekly Events

Monday

10:30am Staff Meeting
in Transitions Room

Tuesday

9:30am Centering Prayer
in Crowell Chapel
10:30am Art Class
in Art Studio
3pm Farmers Market
across the street

Wednesday

The Gathering
will resume in September.

Thursday

5:30pm Pickleball
in Johnson Center

Friday

1pm Mahjong
in 50/50 room

Monthly Events

Grill & Chill: Aug. 4 • Johnson Center Pool

5th Sunday: Aug. 30 | 10am blended worship

Potluck Lunch to follow.

