



St. Joe UMC

Spring 2024 Newsletter

From Pastor Glenn...

Rev. Glenn Knepp – Lead Pastor

Pastor Ashley Moreland

Rev. Chris Dourson

Rev. Dr. Ron VerLee – Pastor of Visitation

Administration

Erica Gray: Office Administrator
Ginny Stine: Financial Administrator
Barry Davis: Facilities Manager

For Families

Teah Aldred-Ash: Director
Holly Glentzer: Faith In Motion

St. Joe @ Y

Ashley Moreland:
Campus Pastor
Austin Lambert:
SJ@Y Worship Lead

The Canvas

Chris Dourson:
Associate Pastor
Chelsea Dourson:
Canvas Worship Lead

The Classic

Beth Wind:
Director of Choirs
Dr. Jonathan Young:
Accompanist

Caring Ministries

Laura Deckard: Coordinator



Spring was always a big time of year when I was growing up on the farm. Millions of seeds would be spread across thousands of acres. I would watch and often ride along as seeds were planted in the ground. There was a mystery and miracle to the watching, and then the waiting, for the moment that corn plants would break through the soil, reaching to the sky, just as the lilacs bloomed. How does that happen? I know there is a scientific process, but it's a wonder.

The same kind of wonder stirs within me as I observe St. Joe UMC and St. Joe @ Y in this season. This is not a season of harvest, we are a long way from enjoying the benefits of fidelity to our vision and values. Yet, I am in wonder as the shoots of God's presence and leading emerge in our midst. How does that happen?

I have seen God at work in conversations about the renovation of the St. Joe UMC building. Faithful people are engaged in conversations about what can be done to update, repair, and improve guest experiences.

I have seen God at work in conversations about partnerships at Praise Park that will cause more people to enjoy that space and come into our proximity for the gospel.

I have seen God at work in meetings as God's people wrestle with how to meet the needs of a GROWING church financially. We are blessed. The financial standing continues to improve (**first quarter giving up by 24% from last year!!!**), but ministry needs are now growing too.

I have seen God at work in the Next Steps class in which 12-15 people are taking the journey towards baptism and/or membership from all services at both campuses.

I have seen God at work in conversations about staffing new ministries such as the Keystone Ministry (see more about that ministry within this newsletter) and a Praise Park Chaplain, all benefiting from our ministry context @ Jackson Lehman Y (Learn more from Pastor Ashley's article on the next page about that).

I have seen God at work in the fearless hearts of God's people for our siblings who are in Haiti and who need escape to this country and our city. We are just getting started on that journey, but God is at work in a mighty way. I hope you'll pray about how you can tend those shoots of mercy!

The seeds have been planted and God is causing a great many things more than I can count to grow. It's all a mystery and a miracle and a sign of resurrection.

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Keystone: Seniors For The Fort

MISSION (What are we doing?)

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

VISION PROPER (Where is God taking us?)

We are called to be For The Fort.

VISION FOCUS (Who will we focus on?)

St Joe @ the Y, The Canvas, For Families, Keystones

VALUES (Why are we doing it?)

Because we want to be:

Faithfully seeking with one another the call of Jesus Christ (through his teaching in scripture),

Fearlessly responding to the Holy Spirit with costly love in real relationships, and

Fruitfully leading neighbors to the transforming grace of God in Christ.

STRATEGY (How are we doing it?)

We will faithfully worship, engage with others during services, and pray with our church. We will fearlessly give of our financial blessings to support the mission of the church and serve within my gifts for the sake of our church and community. We will allow God to bear fruit by learning and sharing our faith story.



The Keystones continue to be fruitful with a ministry that offers the chance to participate in the hospitality of the church and to connect the church to the community. We continue with our ongoing activities of women's bible studies, indoor daily church walks, visit with shut-ins and weekly community pickleball events. In May, we will continue the Family Legacy class (pictured above), host an open men's breakfast, and travel to the Civic Center to see the Jersey Boys. We will also start a monthly Game Day on May 15th. In August, we will celebrate our 1-year anniversary, reinstate our outdoor walks in September and look forward to genealogy classes in October. In between, we are considering some educational classes on various topics.



Endowment Fund

Through the St Joe UMC Endowment, ministry can be funded for decades and decades to come. A dedicated team led by John Painter has thoroughly reworked and successfully found approval from the church for an update of the charter. The team has also updated investments and will continue to do so to fund future ministry. Most of the time people contribute to the endowment through planned giving in the form of wills, bequests, life insurance payouts, etc at the time of death. Pray about and think about if your estate planning should continue the life of ministry and generosity you have practiced with St. Joe UMC.

Faith In Motion Dance Studio



This spring, Faith in Motion will celebrate our 12th anniversary! It is crazy to think we have been dancing for 12 years! As I reflect on all these years, I am reminded of several fond memories, learning experiences, and spiritual journeys. We have reached SO many kids! Not only have we taught these kids about dance, but we have been able to teach these kids about Jesus. One of the most amazing parts of this ministry is watching dancers grow up and begin their walks with Christ. I love when dancers begin to make connections between our devotional lessons and their own lives. Watching the dancers grow in their faith is like watching a flower open its petals and bloom! It is no wonder we have seen such faithfulness in our dancers; so many of our dancers (and instructors) have been with us since the beginning. We are so incredibly blessed with families who have demonstrated this faithfulness to their dancers.

During this session specifically, I am seeing so many dancers taking risks in their dancing and during our devotional lessons. These dancers are willing to try new skills and steps. They are volunteering to read the devotional lessons aloud to their peers. They are willing to share their previous knowledge of the bible verses presented or experiences that connect to the lessons we read at the end of each class. These dancers are truly fearless. In their fearlessness, these dancers continue to amaze me by inviting their friends to sign up for classes and/or come watch performances. They are becoming true, mature disciples of Christ who are continuing the cycle; they are being fruitful in helping spread the Word and inviting others into our program. While we are celebrating 12 years of ministry, I cannot wait to see where the years to come take us!

From Pastor Ashley...



I didn't grow up like Pastor Glenn watching the millions of seeds get planted every year. While there is the wonder and mystery about planting, I do know it's not a mystery if you plant tulips, you'll get tulips. You plant tomatoes, you'll get tomatoes. If only life and ministry were like that. You plant a ministry, a program, an outreach and you get exactly what you expect. In the past few months, St. Joe @ Y has planted a couple different ministries, programs, outreaches, and events. We started the "Centering Practice" in February. Around the same time, we relaunched "Faith and Fitness". During Lent we provided ashes during Ash Wednesday, hosted the Maundy Thursday service, and had hundreds of children come experience the joy of Bunny Bounce (see Teah's article on the next page). Austin and the worship team have been leading us in monthly prayer gatherings in the conference room. Not to mention you served all the Y staff a bountiful harvest of meals and wrote 200 thank you notes to them! AND we added one more chaplain to continue to provide a ministry of presence at the Prayer Table. (Which, did you know that St. Joe and St. Joe @ Y have a ministry of presence in various forms for 1/3 of the time that the Jackson R Lehman YMCA is open? WOW!)

These are all the things that you can see that St. Joe @ Y has planted. What you don't see is that St. Joe and St. Joe @ Y have planted the seeds in the form of 2 different grant opportunities. The first is centered around the Keystone Ministry, which would enable Keystone to have a dedicated staff member to help carry out that ministry at both campuses. The second is having a Praise Park Chaplain who would be a welcoming presence when families show up for leagues but also offer a way to interactively engage with learning nonviolence practices. Both of those deepen our partnership with the Y by collaborating on programs and events with the Active Older Adults (the Y's equivalent to Keystone) and sports leagues. We expected the Y branch and association leadership to be supportive of these efforts (I mean we ARE better together), and why aren't we surprised that they are supportive? Because of all of the other things that we've planted that I listed earlier. What we didn't expect was just how overwhelmingly supportive they would be. You continue to demonstrate the church is committed to doing whatever it takes to be faithful to both the Gospel and living it out in the context of the Y. And that's paving the way for the future God has in store, not just through these new grant opportunities but for what other ways God leads.

Sometimes in life and ministry, you plant one thing and God shows up with something else. We planted some of those above ministries and programs and we didn't get the attendance we had hoped for. We planted some seeds as grant applications and we don't know how God will show up there yet. But what did we get? The knowledge that we have a faithful and fearless group of people at St. Joe and St. Joe @ Y who will show up and be the light and love of Christ to our community...and I wonder at how I am so blessed to be a part of it.

For Families: Children



WOW!! Did you see it? Did you experience it? Bunny Bounce 2024 was amazing!! Thank you to everyone who volunteered, helped prepare crafts and treat bags and helped Pastor Ashley and I keep our sanity! We saw an amazing 300 children plus parents, grandparents and aunts and uncles! So many church families came out to enjoy the 4,000 bouncy balls dropped from the track, photos with the Easter Bunny, Bible Story stations, crafts, face painting and a bounce house! Lots of the youth from our church volunteered to paint faces, drop bouncy balls, apply tattoos, and be great smiling faces for all of the families to see! On a personal note this was the first year that I have been able to move around the event, taking pictures, checking on volunteers and wearing a smile from ear to ear the whole time! THANK YOU EVERYONE!!



For Families: Youth

Let me tell you about this group of amazing middle and high schoolers! I am so blessed to get to spend Sunday morning and evenings with them, Wednesdays at Level Up and special events. In February we went to Michindoh for our annual Elevate Retreat where we learned about how TEAMWORK involves Grace, Empathy and Love. This group of super sporty teens played volleyball, basketball, dodgeball, archery tag and 9-Square late into the evenings. Hopefully they all came home tired, happy, and with great memories! I have been so impressed at the kindness and willingness of our youth group to help out at Bunny Bounce, in Sunday School and with many other church events. This group has a big heart and they are showing it to our church and Fort Wayne community through their willingness to assist with things like coffee cleanup, event preparations and volunteering in the Preschool Sunday School. If your child K-12 is interested in Church Camp please reach out to me ASAP at taldredash@stjoemin.com for info and scholarship needs. Don't forget to join us for the Pancake Breakfast Camp Fundraiser on April 28th from 8a-1p at St. Joe UMC.



The Canvas: Contemporary Worship at 9a



Every canvas has a purpose. It's a place of expression and experimentation. It's a place to think about the influences that shape us. It's a place to interpret meaning and in a Christian sense, God's presence. In September of last year we began a new experiment to see what Pastor Chris Dourson and our Worship Leader Chelsea Dourson could help us discover if we started anew and afresh on the Canvas God has given. One of the most intriguing discoveries has been how beautifully secular songs can be blended into worship. Why would we do that? Because we are coming to understand just how much those songs have shaped the pallet with which we paint. God has used the music of Elvis Presley, Taylor Swift, Paul Simon and so many more to speak into our life. Chelsea has been doing an awesome job exploring this dynamic musically. Maybe it's time you found the courage to share your faith story with a friend, then invite them to join you as we worship with The Canvas at 9a!

United Women In Faith



Calling all treasure hunters with hearts of gold! Join us Thursday 4/25 from 5-8p, Friday 4/26 from 9a-4p and Saturday 4/27 from 9a-1p for the annual rummage sale. Clothes, accessories, household items, books, toys, and much more - you name it, we've got it! Plus, every purchase you make goes towards supporting missional efforts in Fort Wayne and beyond. Come shop with a purpose!

We also welcome back Glory Doty on May 4th from 9:30a-11:30a at our brunch! Sign up at the Mission Center!