

FROM THE PASTOR

The Spirit at Work

My Journey to Azle

by Ray Gilman, M.Div.

Senior Pastor, First Methodist Church

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well" (Psalm 139:14, NRSV).

Many people prefer to determine their own path in life. I felt that way myself when I was younger. I consider myself a self-made man. It makes me laugh now to remember. Looking back, I was rarely in charge of anything. Chaos was more likely the rule of the day.

In 2008, I joined in on a teaching mission to Uganda. I thought I knew what to expect. We were there to help others walk with Christ. Little did I know the mission had a purpose for me. Suffice it to say, the LORD claimed me in Africa. I was "ordained" in the jungle in a particular corn stalk and mud-walled "church" where a "fire" swept over me.

My life changed, and I eventually became a UMC Pastor in 2012. I walked away from an advertising career into the unknown. I surrendered to the LORD's call to go wherever Christ commanded. For 11 years I diligently served in the Upper New York conference of the UMC around Western and Central New York. The experience was far more "institutional" than I expected. Sadly, office politics often clouded any vision of God. I frequently prayed for a great movement of the Holy Spirit to turn our hearts to him. "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly, come now!"

In January of 2023, I took a solitary mission trip to Havana, Cuba, to assist a spirit-filled church. It was a blessing to step away from "busyness" and encounter the LORD directly. I was inspired to "let go of life" even more. I came back to the U.S. ready to cast everything to the wind and scared my wife and family. My life was changing again.

After much prayer and reflection, conversation and tears, my wife and I

decided to sell all that we had and follow God's lead. I was unanimously selected as the preferred candidate by the Staff Parish Council to be the Senior Pastor of First Methodist Church of Azle. So, here we are in Texas. God had his way with all of us it seems.

Now begins the work of formation. As a new congregation in the Global Methodist Church, we are blessed to share our faith and use our spiritual gifts within the community. The Holy Spirit has brought us all together. We strive to grow into a harmonious community. A place where people can see glimpses of the Kingdom of God. A place where we can live out an open expression of a "lived theology" in which values, beliefs, and practices are held in common. A place where every member is encouraged to share creatively and be part of the church's work and communal life. I look forward to bearing witness to the Spirit at work right here in Azle, Texas.

May you also know blessings this year. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



The Reverend Raymond C. Gilman

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS





ATTENTION MEN!!

Save the Date:

April 20-21

Men's Retreat

**Lake Bridgeport
Conference Center**



Chair Exercise

Monday

Thursday

11:00am



Chair YOGA

Tuesday

11:00am



Recurring Weekly Schedule

Sundays

8:15am - noon - Nursery (ages infant to 4 years)

8:30am - Eclectic Worship Service (Sanctuary)

9:45am - Sunday School for ALL ages:

Children (Cornerstone); Youth (Youth Room)

Adventurers (Room 111); Breakfast Club (FLC)

Renegades (Room 110); Upper Room (Room 113)

10:45am - Modern Worship (HUB)

5:30pm - 7:30pm - Youth (HUB/Youth Room)

Mondays

11:00am - Chairercise (FLC)

Tuesdays

7:30am - Men's Breakfast & Bible Study (FLC)

9:30am - Pastor's Bible Study (Room 113)

11:00am - Chair Yoga (FLC)

2:30pm - Grief Group w/ Janet Hargrove (Parlor)

Wednesdays

5:30pm - Wednesday Night Dinner (HUB)

6:15pm - Children & Youth Activities (meet in HUB)

6:15pm - Handbell Rehearsal (Music Suite)

6:20pm - MomStrong (Room 110)

6:30pm - Pastor's Bible Study (FLC)

7:00pm - Vocal Rehearsal (Music Suite)

7:30pm - Childcare begins for Cantata rehearsal (HUB)

7:45pm - Cantata Rehearsal (Music Suite)

Thursdays

9:30am - Women's Bible Study (Room 113)

11:00am - Chairercise (FLC)

6:00pm - Thursday PM Ladies' Bible Study (Room 113)

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Mon - Thurs 8:30am - 12:00pm

Fridays - Office Closed for Pastor/Staff Sabbath

Pastor Roy's Office Hours

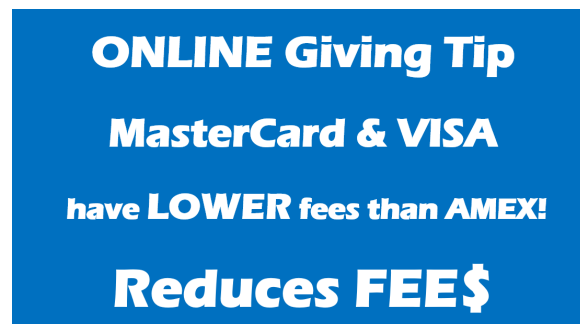
Tues - Thurs 9:30am - 12:30pm or by appointment





Pastor Ray teaches a Bible Study open to all each week. There are two identical sessions to choose from:

- Tuesday mornings 9:30 am – 10:30 am in Room 113
- Wednesday evenings 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm in the FLC



MUSIC AND WORSHIP

ALL ABOARD The Azle FMC Praise Train! We're steamin' and already rolling! We are so grateful for our wonderful worship team and all the hard work and prep that they do for Sunday Morning worship. We are also so thankful for all the NEW volunteers who are giving their talents for Sunday Morning Worship and the Good Friday Cantata rehearsals.

PLEASE JOIN us in song on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm (7:45 pm for Cantata Rehearsal).

In January and February 2024, we experienced the full integration of a Worship Unit from the Body of The Church. The growth in musical excellence ensues from an already talented

group of volunteers. I am ever so grateful to be a part of this journey together!

One of the goals of our integrated worship unit for our service format has been to focus on effective music selections for our Worship in each service.

Music is divinely designed to move and inspire us. There is something awe-inspiring about the formation of beautiful melodies and harmonies in music that is objectively meaningful. When such excellent music [ancient, traditional, and modern] is discovered in our local church, it's fun to share our experiences with each other afterward. We often note our favorite worship moments. We always strive for Musical Excellence, but our primary goal is a music ministry consistent with excellent selection - meaningful. Genuine.

As we seek closeness with our Creator, we explore the selections that mean most to us. I encourage everyone to share their favorite hymns and songs with each other (and me!). This is an important dialogue to share with each other. We might find many commonalities that can be revisited often, so that we may have more meaningful worshipful experiences together!

Please read this passage, **Colossians 3:16–17**. It's not as much a philosophy of music ministry, as it is a basic understanding of the goals of our worship:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

For Further information on rehearsal schedules or other ways to plug in, please feel free to reach out anytime!

Blessings to all,

Grant
gnewman@fmcazle.org



WEDNESDAY EVENING DINNERS

Wednesday evening dinners have been a huge success! Thanks for the continued great attendance! If you haven't had a chance to attend, we hope you can do so this month. A couple of reminders:

- Dinner will be served from 5:30 pm – 6:15 pm, to allow a little more time for those who are working in Fort Worth or beyond to make it.
- A peanut butter and jelly sandwich station will be set up at each dinner.
- There will be two (2) \$125 Amazon gift cards that will be given away on the last Wednesday before summer break. Each Wednesday dinner you attend gives you one entry to put in the bowl for one of the prizes.

Here is the dinner menu for March:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| March 6 | Oven Baked Chicken
Seasoned Green Beans
Tossed Salad
Rolls
Dessert |
| March 13 | Spring Break
No Wednesday Night Dinner |
| March 20 | Beefy Macaroni & Cheese
Casserole
Seasoned Green Beans
Tossed Salad
Rolls
Dessert |
| March 27 | Sandwich Bar
Homemade Tomato Basil Soup
Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup
Dessert |

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversaries listed are taken from the information in Realm. If your information needs to be updated, please contact Pat Noe pnoe@fmcazle.org.

Tom & Joni Bettis	3/03 (35 years)
Max & LeRae Burton	3/04 (41 years)
Jeff & Lisa Mahlmann	3/08 (38 years)
John & Dianne Rhoads	3/10 (57 years)
Larry & Esther Brown	3/11 (36 years)
Meg & Scott Arnold	3/21 (15 years)
Gary & Luanna Fisher	3/27 (51 years)

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

If you know of someone not listed, please send an email to pnoe@fmcazle.org.

Bill Propp 1, Margaret Maggard 2, B.J. Collins 5, Mandy Robinson 10, Pam Meyer 10, Stacy Boenisch 16, Jack Stevens 17, Tamara Piland 19, Emily Terrett 19, Bert Olsen 20, Derrell Helm 26, Sally McMinn 26, Jennifer Naylor 29, John Potts 31, Judy Burton 31, Wendi Noe 31

ONLINE Giving Tip

E-Checks
(online BANK ACCOUNT transactions)
Have the LOWEST fees...

Reduces FEE\$

SENIOR ACTIVE CHRISTIANS

The February meeting was a great success, and everyone enjoyed the day! We toured the SeaQuest Aquarium at Ridgmar Mall. Many people think it's just a big aquarium but it's more. There are other exotic animals at the exhibit, and it was fun to see animals not of Texas origin and some not even from the U.S. Not only did we get to feed large fish, nurse sharks, Koi, and prairie dogs, but you can touch a starfish and stingrays. But be careful there; they will get you wet!



March 2024 MESSENGER

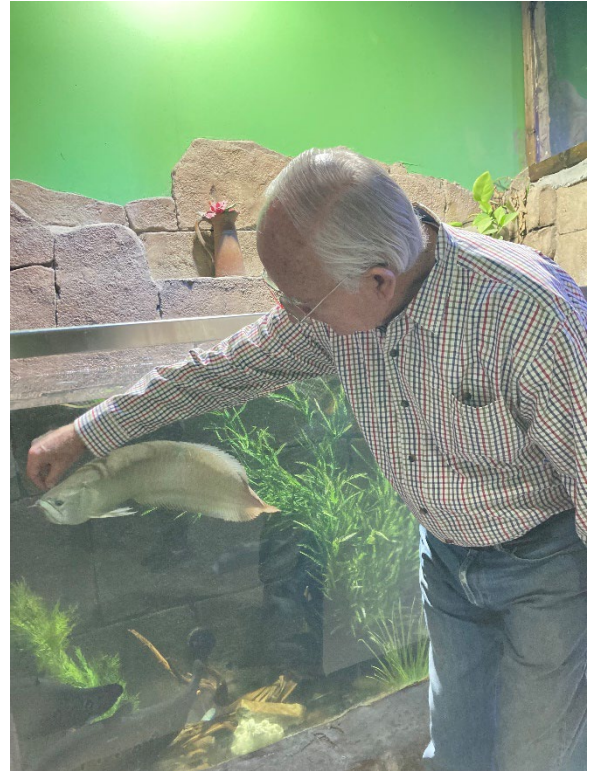


The March meeting is going to be even better! Do you know what a Pink-spotted Cattleheart is? How about a Small Postman or Glass Wing? Tiger Longwings? Blue Morpho? Give up? These are the butterflies we will be seeing, among others, on March 13. We are touring the butterfly exhibit at the Botanic Gardens. We will be walking among live, active butterflies!

Once again, Pat will be ordering online tickets ahead of our trip and driving the van for us (personally, I think she just likes to come on adventures with us). Tickets are \$12 for ages 50-64 and \$10 for 65+. Please pay Pat by the 11th so that she can order the tickets ahead of the actual trip. You can buy tickets at the conservatory, but they will cost a little more. And you can drive yourself there if you prefer and meet us there, or you can ride in the van. We will again meet at the church and leave at 10:30 am. Please let Sallie or DeAnne know if you plan to come along so we have a good accounting of who to expect to be coming along with us.

After the visit, we will head to Spring Creek BBQ in Lake Worth for lunch before returning to the church. When we lunch together, we always have great fellowship and many laughs. So please do plan to join us! We'd love to have you with us!

Note from Pat: DeAnne is right; I DO love coming along on the adventure! And I think YOU will also.





Please join us!!
Sallie Hamilton
DeAnne Williams

YOUTH

Letter to the Church from the NOW Youth,

We are continuing in our journey of learning just what in the world is the Bible. We have covered the first 5 books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). We learned these books are The Laws. We looked at each book and spent some time learning what the major topic of each book was. We then moved into The Books of Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs). We learned in these books about life and morals. We now have moved on to the last set of books in the Old Testament. We are looking at The Books of Prophecy. So far, we have learned there are 17 books. We started with the 5 major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel). We will continue next into the Minor Prophets and work our way into the New Testament.

Wednesday night we finished our last topic of listening to God's word in a song called Confidence by SANCTUS REAL. We have started into our new topic of discussion. We are learning about the book of James. We will be in the book of James for the next 5 weeks. We have all admitted in the group that we are firm believers in Jesus and His teachings. There is no better book than James to call us out and see if we mean what we say. With the



book of James being a real “in your face” book we will see if we can walk the walk to back up the talk.

Upcoming news. We have some plans in the works, but nothing is set in stone yet. We recently had a Youth Council meeting. We haven't had a meeting in some time, and it was met with great discussion. We put some ideas out for discussion, and we are going to pray on those topics. We hope that in the next meeting, we will have some dates to put out there for activities, games, and events.

Have a blessed day FMC!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

January Income	\$51,152
January Budget	\$56,403
2024 Budget	\$676,830

ONLINE Giving Tip

Give to **MULTIPLE FUNDS**
in **ONE** transaction
with **drop-down box!**

Reduces FEE\$

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD RETREAT

Fourteen members of the Administrative Board and Staff met for a Saturday retreat at 10 am on February 24, 2024, at the lovely One Azle facility on Commerce Street. The first two hours were filled with a time of Sharing, Listening, Meditating, Reflecting, and Rest. Pastor Ray introduced us to *Lectio Divina*, which is a traditional way to read and reflect upon the scriptures. We read passages from Psalm 139 and John 15. It was a special time together.

After a delightful lunch from Simply Southern Catering (highly recommended!), we launched

into the business of the afternoon. Pastor Ray gave us a presentation on Visioning and Missional Alignment. As he told us, “We are going to crack a lot of eggs today, but we are not making any omelets!” It was familiar material to those with a business background, but very helpful from a church perspective. We are aiming for Missional Alignment where everyone and everything are moving together. To achieve this, we as a congregation will be identifying our 3-5 key values. We will identify our Mission, give it a Context, and then apply our Mission and Context to our Church Vision. Unlike our Mission Statement, a church vision is not static but changes over time through a continual discernment process.

After a period in which we identify our church vision, the next part of the process will be developing S.M.A.R.T. goals as a congregation, in our ministries, and as individuals. S.M.A.R.T. goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. There will be a 4-D process for doing so in which we Discover, Dream, Design, and then Do in a circular fashion.

After a time of teaching, we had “state of the church” briefings from six areas: Building/Trustees (Kent Meyerhoeffer), Welcome/Hospitality (Pastor Ray), Committee Organization (Brett Laaser), Music/Worship (Grant Newman & Pastor Ray), Youth/Mission (Kim Cox & Pastor Ray), and Children/Education (Marsha Ingle). We finished up right on time at 3 pm, refreshed and renewed with a vision for the next steps as we fully embrace our new path as a church within the Global Methodist Church.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation classes are underway with 22 confirmands under the tutelage of Pastor Ray. They are studying The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith as well as A Catechism of Christian Faith and Doctrine for the Global Methodist Church. The class meets on Sunday afternoons from 4:00-5:30 pm. Confirmation Sunday will be on Sunday, May 19 which is also Pentecost Sunday. Please be in prayer



for these young people as they learn and grow in their faith.

Please see Deanna Keen for more information on this opportunity!

WOMEN'S HAND QUILTING

We have continued to provide baby quilts to JPS here in Azle. It is an honor to provide this service through the church, and we want to allow others to also make these quilts. To do that, we will be meeting at the church on the third Wednesday of each month from 10 am to 2 pm (feel free to bring a sack lunch with you). We have supplies to make a quilt, and lots of space but sewers will need to bring their own sewing machine. If you are not a sewer but would like to help, we could use people to press the material and blocks as the quilts are made, or just come for the fellowship. If you have cotton material or thread to donate, bring that as well.

First Meeting: Wednesday, March 20
Please join us!

AGAPE FUND

The church continues to help members of the community who come to us with various needs such as rent, utilities, food (through local fast food gift cards), and gasoline. We have several volunteers who help in the church office and help determine how we can best assist these individuals and families. We also take the opportunity to pray with those we help and invite them to church services and activities.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Spring is upon us – and it's time to garden! The Community Garden serves the church and the community by providing garden plots for local community members to grow their food as well as other plots that provide fresh produce for the Community Care Center.

- Plots are available for \$15 each.
- Coordinator needed! The Schluters have very capably coordinated the garden activities for the last year, but they need to step back due to career obligations.

CHILDREN'S BAKE SALE

Almost \$3500 was raised to benefit the Children's Ministry and its many upcoming activities! Thank you so much to all of those who made sweet and/or savory items, bought sweet and/or savory items, and simply made donations. You are appreciated!

Save the Date!

*2024 FMC Azle
Women's Retreat
March 22 – 23, 2024*



Fri., March 22 7-9pm

*Jenny Marshall,
speaker*



Sat., March 23

10am – 2pm

*Mary Hollingsworth,
our 2023 Magnolia
Speaker returns!*

*Come join us for fellowship,
lots of music,
a mission project,
a catered lunch and more!*



March 2024 Events Activities

Day	Date	Time	Event
Sat.	2-Mar	8:00am	Upward Games- Final Week (<i>HUB/FLC</i>)
Sun.	3-Mar	12:00pm	Children's Council (<i>FLC</i>)
		4:00pm	Confirmation (<i>111</i>)
Wed.	6-Mar	4:00pm	Prayer Shawl Ministry (<i>Parlor</i>)
Sun.	10-Mar	10:45am	Connecting Ministries Council (<i>113</i>)
		4:00pm	Confirmation (<i>111</i>)
Mon.	11-Mar	7:00pm	Open Gym (<i>HUB</i>)
Wed.	13-Mar	10:30am	SAC Outing to Butterflies @ FW Botanic Gardens
		4:00pm	Adult Small Group Council (<i>113</i>)
Sun.	17-Mar	3:00pm	Monthly Worship @ Legacy Oaks
		4:00pm	Confirmation (<i>111</i>)
		4:00pm	Youth Council (<i>113</i>)
Mon.	18-Mar	6:30pm	Council for SPR (<i>113 - closed meeting</i>)
Tues.	19-Mar	6:30pm	Council for Finance (<i>113</i>)
		6:30pm	Serving Ministries Council (<i>110</i>)
Wed.	20-Mar	10:00am	Women's Hand Quilting (<i>FLC</i>)
Thurs	21-Mar	6:30pm	Council for Music & Worship (<i>113</i>)
Fri.	22-Mar	7:00pm	Women's Retreat
Sat.	23-Mar	10:00am	
Sun.	24-Mar		Palm Sunday
		9:45am	Children's Experience
		4:00pm	NO Confirmation
Mon.	25-Mar	7:00pm	Open Gym (<i>HUB</i>)
Tues.	26-Mar	6:30pm	Administrative Board (<i>back of Sanctuary</i>)
Wed.	27-Mar	6:15pm	Children's Easter Sand Experience (<i>by playground</i>)
Thurs	28-Mar	6:30pm	Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
Fri.	29-Mar	6:30pm	Easter Cantata (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
Sun.	31-Mar	8:30am	Easter Eclectic Service (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
		9:45am	Sunday School
		10:45am	Easter Contemporary Service (<i>HUB</i>)
		4:00pm	NO Confirmation

