



# MESSENGER

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF TITUSVILLE  
206 S. HOPKINS AVE, TITUSVILLE, FL 32796

MAY 2023

## Biblical mothers: Not a job for the faint of heart

By the Rev. Joan LaBarr \*

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/biblical-mothers-not-a-job-for-the-faint-of-heart>

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson declared May 8, 1914, the second Sunday in May, as a special day to honor the nation's mothers, especially those who had lost their sons to war.

Anna Marie Jarvis and fellow members of the Methodist Episcopal Church led the charge to make Mother's Day an official observance. When Andrew's Methodist Church of Grafton, W.Va., held the state's first official Mother's Day on May 10, 1908, Jarvis marked the victory by bringing in 500 carnations, honoring her late mother, who had been a leader in the initial efforts to mark the occasion.

Though gift- and card-buying and secular activities abound, the church still plays a prominent role in Mother's Day. Different, often regional, traditions are deep-rooted, and woe to the pastor who decides to ignore those most special to his or her flock.

This raises some thorny questions about how to keep the focus on worshipping God, while celebrating and honoring the gifts of mothers.



*Biblical figures Ruth and mother-in-law Naomi are depicted as strong, caring women by painter Sandy Freckleton Gagon.*

The answer seems obvious: Just turn to the Bible. We hardly have to turn a page before encountering Eve, the mother of all, in the second chapter of Genesis.

When we do meet Eve, who doesn't get a name until near the end of her story, we are introduced to a jarring reality: There are scant tender moments or lovingly sentimental words. For the most part, biblical mothers face daunting hardships, and many were smart, savvy, and occasionally, ruthless. The majority of accounts in

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# HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



(Continued from page 1)

the Hebrew Scriptures involve the relationship of mothers and sons and questions of power and dynasty. With the exception of Mary, mother of Jesus, the Christian texts offer few developed stories involving motherhood.

The following vignettes of biblical mothers, both named and unnamed, give us pause to reflect.

**Eve**

She enters in Genesis 2:18-22, the result of God's search for an *ezer keneghdo* ("helper") for his creation, Adam.

Careful reading points to a search for compatibility and mutuality. It is after the divine surgery in which God creates woman from Adam's side that the creatures are differentiated sexually and gender-specific names "woman" and "man" bestowed. Only after God issues the penalties for the rupture of relationships that resulted from the first (and continuing) human sin of trying to be like God, does Adam give his partner the name Eve, meaning "living." The woman's penalties, which

included increased pain in childbirth and to live under the rule of her husband, reflect life as the ancient Israelites knew it.

In the next scene, God expels Adam and Eve from Eden. One verse later she conceives and gives birth to Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of the Lord." Abel comes along in the next verse, and eight verses later, we come to the first murder, as Cain kills his brother in a fit of jealousy. God banishes Cain, who goes to the land of Nod, takes a wife, produces progeny and launches civilization. The text is silent on from whence the wife came. The last we hear of Eve, she has borne another son named Seth. Genesis 5:4 says that Adam then had more sons and daughters, but there is no mention of their mother.

**Sarah and Hagar**

As the first wife of Abraham, Sarah (meaning "princess") is the matriarch of the Hebrew people. She is a major player in Genesis 11-25. The story begins when Terah,

(Continued on page 3)

# May Birthdays

- |                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>1 Henry Jenkins</b>   | <b>16 Hal Row</b>           |
| <b>4 Carol Stephens</b>  | <b>21 Carolyn Winn</b>      |
| <b>4 Roanne Damoff</b>   | <b>23 Tom Hammond</b>       |
| <b>4 Wayne Lennard</b>   | <b>24 Marion Brady</b>      |
| <b>7 Jackie Smith</b>    | <b>28 Cathy Spencer</b>     |
| <b>7 Liam Bolton</b>     | <b>29 Grace Haile</b>       |
| <b>10 Diane Brown</b>    | <b>29 Richard Llewellyn</b> |
| <b>10 Tom Trovillion</b> | <b>31 Joe Kendall</b>       |
| <b>16 Arthur Faull</b>   |                             |



# May Anniversaries

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>14 Bill &amp; Kitty Baldwin</b> | <b>20 Richard &amp; Florence Llewellyn</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|

## 2023 March Budget Summary

The Finance Committee appreciates your contributions and donations. With your support we will be able to continue sharing God's love with those around us.

### Income

Total Income: \$35,036

### Expenses

Church Programs: \$322

Finance: \$333

Church Administration: \$1,766

Facility Maintenance: \$8,179

Personnel: \$31,061

Conference Apportionments: \$4,192

*Total Expenses: \$45,853*

**Income Under Expenses: \$10,817**

The budget for 2023 is **\$489,821** which, divided evenly, makes each month's goal \$40,818 rather than being weighted differently throughout the year. Although we have begun trying to cut expenses where we reasonably can, we are still feeling the financial pinch. If you are able to still contribute during these lean times, please help us to maintain our regular operating costs as you find you are able. Only with the generosity of our congregation have we been able to weather the storms of the past and even the current storm we are in.

Thank you for your loving generosity in keeping this church operating!

*(Continued from page 2)*

his son Abram, grandson Lot, and daughter-in-law Sarai, set off on a journey that is to take them to the land of Canaan, but they get sidetracked and end up in Haran.

It will be Abram and Sarai who eventually go to Canaan, launch a new nation, and get their new names. The big problem, which will occur again and again in this family's history, is that Sarah is barren. She has already taken matters into her own hands by giving her slave girl, Hagar the Egyptian, to her husband to produce children for her. Tensions escalate as soon as Hagar is pregnant. She tries to flee, but an angel sends her back with the reassurance that she will be the mother of multitudes through her son, who will be called Ishmael.

The Lord comes through on his promise, and Sarah and Abraham have a son, Isaac, in their old age. There is still tension in the household, and after Sarah sees Isaac and Ishmael playing, she makes a startling demand: "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac."

Abraham reluctantly agrees after God urges him to comply with Sarah's demand. One of the few tender mother-child scenes comes as Hagar and Ishmael wander about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. They run out of water, and she sits down and weeps away from her son

because she cannot endure seeing the death of her child. God hears and sends an angel with water and reassurances that Ishmael, too, will become a great nation. So, the mother and son settle into wilderness life, where he becomes an expert with the bow.

We hear no more of Sarah until her obituary in Genesis 23:1, when she dies in Canaan, and Abraham buys land for her burial from the Hittites, the cave of Machpelah, famous burial site of the ancestors.

### **Rebecca (Rebekah)**

In Genesis 24, a very old Abraham sends a trusted servant back to his homeland to find a suitable wife for Isaac. The servant bears extravagant gifts for the bride to be and her family.

When he and his 10-camel retinue arrive in the city of Nahor, they come to a well. The servant prays for success, that God will show *hesed*, steadfast love, to his master.

Before the servant finishes his prayer, Rebecca appears and generously waters the camels. The beautiful young virgin turns out to be Abraham's niece. The servant gives Rebecca gold rings and bracelets and goes to meet the family, including her brother, Laban, who helps unload the camels and becomes the family spokesperson

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# Why Ascension Day matters to United Methodists

A UMC.org Feature by Joe Iovino\*

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/why-ascension-day-matters-to-united-methodists>

For many, Ascension Day will go relatively unnoticed. Forty days after Easter is just another Thursday with many of us in our ordinary weekday routines. The event it celebrates, however, is an important episode in the life of Jesus that the church has regarded highly through the years.

Luke tells the story of Jesus' ascension both at the end of his gospel (Luke 24:50-53) and the beginning of his writing about the early church (Acts 1:9-11).

Our creeds affirm the Ascension as a central doctrine of the Christian faith. The [Apostles' Creed](#) reads, "he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." The [Nicene Creed](#) similarly states, "he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father."

Centuries later, our United Methodist forebear, [John Wesley](#), emphasized the day by including it as one of three non-Sunday holy day observances included in his [Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America](#)—a forerunner of our [Book of Worship](#). The other two are Good Friday and Christmas.

Wesley also retained language about the Ascension as part of the [Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church](#), which he edited from the Church of England. Echoing the creeds, [Article III](#) states, "he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day."

[Charles Wesley](#), John's brother and hymn writer of the early Methodist movement, published a pamphlet of seven [Hymns for Ascension Day](#) in 1746 and several more hymns on the Ascension that appear in other volumes of his work.

Today, many United Methodist congregations recognize Jesus' ascension during regular worship services on Ascension Sunday, the Sunday immediately following Ascension Day.

## "Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise"

Interestingly, we have no sermons on Ascension Day from John Wesley, and his [Explanatory Notes on the New Testament](#) offer no commentary on the account of the Ascension in Acts and little on the verses in Luke. Most of what we know about the Wesleys' teaching on the Ascension comes from Charles's hymns.

Our [United Methodist Hymnal](#) contains a Charles Wesley hymn titled "[Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise](#)" (312). The lyrics for this hymn, an adaptation of Charles's "Hymn for Ascension-Day" published in [Hymns and Sacred Poems](#) (1739), offer insight into the importance of this day.

Charles begins acknowledging the Ascension as both the ending of Jesus's physical presence on Earth and his return to his rightful place in heaven.

*Hail the day that sees him rise,  
Ravish'd from our wishful eyes;  
Christ awhile to mortals giv'n,  
Re-ascends his native heav'n!*

Our [United Methodist worship resources](#) explain, "The language of Ascension is, primarily, language of enthronement. It is Jesus ascending to his full authority."

John Wesley included Ascension Day in the Sunday Service, because it "marked not just something about Jesus or the church, but about the scope of salvation for the whole universe," the worship resources continue. Jesus "ascended to heaven to assume the fullness of his reign."

In verse 2, Charles Wesley expands on the theme of enthronement.

*There the pompous triumph waits,  
"Lift your heads, eternal gates,  
Wide unfold the radiant scene,  
Take the King of Glory in!"*

As we sing these lyrics, we worship Jesus who "sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." We acknowledge Jesus in his role as Lord over all the earth.

As Jesus ascends to his throne, however, he does not abandon us. Verse 3 of "Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise," which is adapted from verse 4 of Wesley's original text, reminds us that Jesus is not leaving us alone. Wesley writes,

*(Continued on page 10)*

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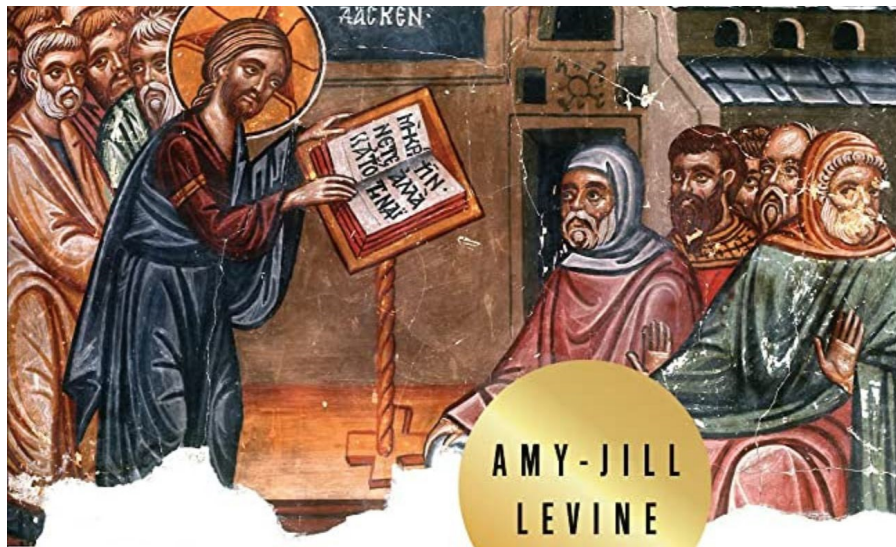
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*(Continued from page 3)*

in the marriage negotiations. He and his father, Bethuel, agree to the proposal. The servant wants to leave the next day, but Rebecca's mother pleads to let her stay 10 more days. Rebecca says she is ready to go and departs the next day with her maids.

Rebecca also has trouble conceiving. Isaac prays for his wife, and their wishes are granted. The pregnancy turns out to be difficult as her twins struggle within her. The Lord tells her that she is carrying two nations in her womb, two peoples destined to be divided, and that the younger would serve the elder. The first son is named Esau, because he was red and hairy. The second is named Jacob (he who supplants) because he is born holding on to his brother's heel.

As the story unfolds, Jacob is quite a schemer. First, he dupes his brother into selling his birthright for a bowl of stew. Then, when Isaac is old and blind, Rebecca and Jacob create a plot to trick Isaac into thinking Jacob is Esau in order to steal the father's blessing. Esau makes plans to kill Jacob as soon as their father is dead, but Rebecca finds out and sends Jacob back home to live with Uncle Laban, who is his equal as a schemer and conniver, and the family saga goes on to the next generation. We learn that Rebecca and Jacob are buried in the cave of Machpelah in Genesis 49:31.

### **Mary (mother of Jesus)**

The name Mary is derived from Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, who is called a prophet in Exodus 15:20 and plays a significant role during Israel's wilderness wanderings. She is one of six New Testament women who share a popular name in first century Judaism. The likely oldest reference to Mary comes in Mark 6:3, with a parallel in Matthew 13:55, when hometown folk in Nazareth take issue with Jesus' teaching: "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

Matthew names Mary four more times, once in Jesus' genealogy and three times in the birth accounts. Here, she is a passive character, important because of her place in God's plan. To make his point, Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us." An angel appears to Joseph in dreams, giving instructions protecting mother and child, first from rejection by Joseph, then from destruction by Herod.

Mary is the central character in Luke's birth account. She is the primary one through whom God works, and the Divine plan to establish God's Kingdom on earth is risk-filled. The angel Gabriel explains it all. Mary may be young and innocent, but she knows where babies come from. "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" she asks. He points to her cousin, Elizabeth, once thought barren and now six months pregnant,

and gives his reassuring promise, "For nothing will be impossible with God." Mary consents, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." In so doing, she becomes the model of faith and discipleship.

Mary will continue to be part of the story, which will have increasingly painful moments. At 12 Jesus will challenge her as she scolds him for staying behind in the temple while the family searched for three days." He later rebuffs the efforts of his mother and brothers to see him as he preaches to the crowds in Galilee, redefining kinship: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Luke does not specifically place Mary at the crucifixion, but he notes that Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had followed him, stood at a distance and watched. In Luke's second volume, The Acts of the Apostles, Mary and Jesus' brothers are among the disciples devoting themselves to prayer between Jesus' ascension and the Pentecost event.

The Gospel of John does not have a birth story, but though unnamed, the mother of Jesus is a commanding presence. She first appears near the start of Jesus' ministry at the Wedding at Cana of Galilee. Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman," as she presents the plight of the wedding hosts who have run out of wine. This becomes the occasion for Jesus' first sign, or miraculous act, in the Gospel. He tells her puzzlingly that his time has not yet come. When Jesus' time does come, he will use the same title when he gives his mother over to the care of the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross.

Though tradition has linked Mary with the mysterious woman of Revelation 12, the connection is unlikely. The image of the woman, clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet, wearing a crown of twelve stars, in birth pangs, as the great red dragon threatens to devour the child as it is born appears to be a symbol, first for Israel, then for the church. The child is snatched away by God and the woman flees to the wilderness, a place of refuge, where she will be protected. The church under persecution is reassured of God's protection, and in the final message of Revelation, of final victory.

### **Ruth**

We circle back to the Hebrew texts to close with the Bible's only extended story of mother-daughter love, and like so many Bible stories, there is an unexpected twist: Ruth is not a daughter, but a daughter-in-law.

Ruth is also the second of five women noted in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus all are Gentiles or have some kind of irregular situation in their pasts. The story of Ruth begins in the village of Bethlehem during the time of the Judges. A family of four father, mother and two sons flees to the neighboring country of



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Moab because of a famine. The husband dies and the two sons marry Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After about 10 years, both sons die, too, leaving the woman, Naomi, whose name means "sweetness, bereft."

Naomi hears that the famine in Bethlehem is over and decides to go home. She tries to send both young women back to their mother's house. She blesses and kisses her daughters-in-law and everyone weeps. First, both insist on going back with Naomi. She firmly commands them to stay, that all is bitter; the hand of the Lord has turned against her. She can offer them no hope for a future.

Orpah obeys and turns back. Ruth makes her famous declaration of loyalty, so often misused in weddings. "Where you go, I will go, where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God," is a young woman's pledge to a mother-in-law who could offer her nothing in return.

As the story unfolds, Ruth is a model of faithfulness and God's self-giving love. The women arrive in Bethlehem, just in time for the barley harvest. Ruth asks permission to glean in the fields, a form of charity guaranteed the poor by Israelite law. The ensuing tale is one of the best loved in the Bible. The field just happens to belong to Boaz, one of Naomi's relatives on her husband's side of the family. Boaz notices the industrious young woman and makes sure she is cared for during the barley and wheat harvests.

Naomi is not above a little scheming herself and coaches

Ruth to approach Boaz on the threshing floor at night. The Hebrew has some interesting double entendres here, and no one can say exactly what happens. Come morning Boaz sends Ruth back to Naomi with six measures of barley.

All good stories have tension, and Ruth is no exception. Boaz knows he is second in line as the next-of-kin to redeem the property of his dead kinsman, including Ruth. The first in line is ready to claim the property, but when he learns that she is part of the package, declines. The way is cleared for Boaz and Ruth to marry.

The name of the Lord is not invoked often in this story, but it is in Ruth 4:13, which notes the Lord made her conceive. The baby is a boy, Obed. The women of the neighborhood celebrate and bless the Lord who has remembered Naomi: "He shall be a restorer to you in your old age; for the daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has born him."

The family scene ends tenderly with Naomi holding the baby in her bosom as his nurse. The action shifts to the concluding genealogy: Obed as the father of Jesse, the father of David, and the beginning of a royal family, a kingdom, and a place in the ancestry of Jesus.

*\*Joan LaBarr is a retired elder and former director of communication for the North Texas Annual (regional) Conference.*

*News media contact: Tim Tanton, (615) 742-5470 or [newsdesk@umcom.org](mailto:newsdesk@umcom.org).*

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HOSTED BY  
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
LET MOMMY HAVE A MINUTE

**WHEN**  
EVERY 3RD  
WEDNESDAY  
6:00-7:00PM

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First United Methodist  
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ages 4 and up.

(Continued from page 4)

*Him tho' highest heaven receives,  
Still he loves the earth he leaves;  
Tho' returning to his throne,  
Still he calls mankind his own.*

Jesus' connection to Earth and humanity remains. He is not absent, but continues to love and claim us.

The hymn concludes in The United Methodist Hymnal (Wesley wrote 10 verses) with a description of Jesus's humanity being received into the realm of God. Jesus ascends to his rightful throne bearing the scars of the crucifixion.

*See! He lifts his hands above!  
See! He shews the prints of love!  
Hark! His gracious lips bestow  
Blessings on his church below!*

The Ascension affirms that we as the church are also accepted into heaven with Jesus (see [Ephesians 2:6](#)).

### **An important celebration**

While much of the world may see Ascension Day as just another Thursday, United Methodists can celebrate. With John and Charles Wesley, we remember that Jesus ascended to heaven where he took his rightful throne as Lord of the whole earth. Though he is not bodily present, he continues to love us, and longs to receive us into the presence of God to dwell with him throughout eternity.

\*[Joe Iovino](#) works for [UMC.org](#) at [United Methodist Communications](#). Contact him by [email](#).

[This article](#) was first published on May 22, 2017.

Students  
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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# MAY 2023

## First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 9:30am Kids' Playtime	<b>2</b> 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:30pm Soliloquy 7:30pm Broadstreet	<b>3</b> 9:00am Patchwork Friends 3:30pm Joyful Noise Rehearsal 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal 6:30pm CrossPointe Rehearsal	<b>4</b> 10:00am Ladies Day Out 10:30am PEO Meeting	<b>5</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>6</b> 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>7</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	<b>8</b> 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study	<b>9</b> 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:30pm Soliloquy 7:30pm Broadstreet	<b>10</b> 3:30pm Joyful Noise Rehearsal 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal 6:30pm CrossPointe Rehearsal	<b>11</b> 10:30am Retired Teachers 6:00pm Spaghetti Fundraiser	<b>12</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>13</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>14 Mother's Day</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:30pm Soliloquy 7:30pm Broadstreet	<b>17</b> 3:30pm Joyful Noise Rehearsal 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal 6:00pm Family Yoga	<b>18 Ascension Day</b> 11:30am Ladies Day Out 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg 	<b>19</b> 10:00am VPK Graduation 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>20</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>21</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 2:00pm Lion, Witch, & Wardrobe Auditions	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:00pm Lion, Witch, & Wardrobe Auditions 6:30pm Soliloquy 7:30pm Broadstreet	<b>24</b> 10:00am UWF Meeting 3:30pm Joyful Noise Rehearsal 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco Rehearsal	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry 7:00pm Eirinn Abú Concert	<b>27</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>28 Pentecost</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 	<b>29 Memorial Day</b> — Office Closed — 	<b>30</b> 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:30pm Soliloquy 7:30pm Broadstreet	<b>31</b> 3:30pm Joyful Noise 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm Vivos Voco 6:30pm CrossPointe Rehearsal			

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## FUMC Staff

Reception Desk	Ext 201
Rev. Wayne Cook - Pastor	Ext 202
Mario Davis - Administrative Assistant	Ext 203
Glenda Waring - Membership Secretary	Ext. 204
Leah Patterson - Finance Secretary	Ext. 204
Lauren Good - Family Ministries	Ext. 205
Tom Mosier - Facilities Manager	Ext. 206
Leah Patterson - Custodian	Ext. 206
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J.D. Daniel - Organist	
Steve Rossi - Sound Tech	
Josh Huss - Lights and Visuals	

### **First United Methodist Church**

206 S. Hopkins Ave  
Titusville, FL 32796

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.

Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday  
Closed from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Phone: (321) 269-7631

Fax: (321) 269-8359

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