



Watseka First United Methodist Church

***‘Welcoming Neighbors of All Ages to Experience God,
Share Hope, and Be Changed by Christ’s Love’***

Volume 54 Issue 8

August 1, 2026

Thoughts from Pastor Ashley

From the Pastor: Stay Salty. Shine Brightly.

Over the past several weeks, we have spent time in Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount, where he tells his followers, "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13–16). These simple images have challenged us to consider what it means to live faithfully in our everyday lives.

Jesus doesn't tell us to *become* salt or to *try* to become light. He tells us that, through him, we already are. The question is whether we are living into that identity.

As we've explored these ideas together, we've discovered that **staying salty** begins with what John Wesley called **personal piety**. It is the inward work of God's grace that shapes our hearts through prayer, worship, Scripture, communion, fasting, generosity, and the other practices that keep us rooted in Christ. Salt preserves and flavors. In much the same way, a life grounded in Christ preserves what is good, resists the temptation to drift from God, and reflects the character of Jesus in everyday living.

But Jesus doesn't stop with salt.

He also tells us to **shine brightly**.

Light was never meant to be hidden. It exists to illuminate the darkness, to help others find their way, and to reveal hope. This is where our faith becomes visible.

John Wesley reminded us that there is no holiness but **social holiness**. In other words, our relationship with God is never meant to remain private. God's grace always moves outward into acts of compassion, mercy, justice, generosity, and service.

Over these last few weeks, we've reflected on James' powerful reminder that "faith without works is dead." Genuine faith isn't measured only by what we believe or what we say on Sunday morning. It is seen in how we love our neighbors on Monday afternoon, how we care for those who are struggling, how we welcome the stranger, forgive those who hurt us, stand alongside the lonely, and serve those whom the world often overlooks.

Personal piety and social holiness are not competing priorities—they belong together.

A heart transformed by Christ naturally begins to love as Christ loves. Worship leads to service. Prayer leads to compassion. Bible study leads to obedience. Grace received becomes grace shared.

The world doesn't need Christians who merely attend church. It needs disciples whose lives point others to Jesus through both their words and their actions.

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As we move into the next season together, my prayer is that we will continue to be a people who stay close to Christ and step boldly into the world Christ loves. May our lives be deeply rooted in prayer and joyfully poured out in service. May our faith be both heartfelt and hands-on.

May we continue to **stay salty** by growing in our love for God, and **shine brightly** by making that love visible in the way we care for others.

After all, the brightest witness to Christ is a church whose love can be seen.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Ashley

Food Pantry Update

In June we served 156 families – 340 adults and 110 children. Year to date numbers are 879 families and 2,543 people.

Produce is starting to come in from local gardeners and is much appreciated. We have also started receiving produce from a local store. This gives the clients some fresh foods to choose from.

Special items for the food pantry for the month of August are peanut butter, jelly, and condiments. Our delivery from Eastern Illinois Foodbank in Champaign is Tuesday, August 4, at 8:00am. Our monthly trip to the Midwest Foodbank in Bloomington is on Friday, August 7. The trailer should arrive back at our fellowship hall around 11:30am. All volunteers are welcome!



How Does Your Garden Grow?

The summer garden season is here! The Food Pantry appreciates donations of fresh, homegrown produce to share with our neighbors. If your garden produces more than you need, please share it with the Food Pantry!

Thank you for helping us provide healthy, nutritious meals to our community.



Red Cross Bloodmobile



Thank you to the 24 special people who participated in the Red Cross blood drive and donated blood on July 9th. Six power red donations were given as well as 18 whole blood donations.

Holy Stitchers Update

The Holy Stitchers met on Tuesday, July 22nd. We spent some time in our new sewing and yarn room picking out some yarn for projects and looked at some completed blankets and shawls that were added to our inventory to hand out. We then moved to the parlor and worked on the projects we brought with us and caught up with what everyone had been doing.

Rhonda Leitz has been busy getting material and patterns for those who are cutting the material for one handle bags and sanitary pads to sew. We will be setting some dates for sewing days to sew the one handle bags and sanitary pads to have them ready for Rhonda to deliver to Midwest Distribution Center when she goes.

Jeanne Brown brought back some comfort bears that she sewed and stuffed. They just need to be sewn shut. Rhonda Leitz has taken the bears to Lynn who is a part of our group and joins us on sewing days to finish sewing them shut.

The Holy Stitchers' next meeting will be on Tuesday, August 18, at 7:00pm. We welcome all types of stitchers, and you don't need to be a member of our church to join us.





Next Newsletter Deadline

The next newsletter deadline will be Friday, August 21st. Please have all articles and information for the September newsletter to me in the office by 2:00pm. You can also email information to me at office@watsekaumc.org.

Thank you Notes

Dear Holy Stitchers,

Thank you so much for your generous gift of the devotional book and the quilt! It's very beautiful! Your continuous love and support mean the world to me! I'm so grateful to be a part of this wonderful church family!

Love, Cara



Friends of First United Methodist Church Watseka,

Thank you so much for the reception, goodies, and kind words. Thank you for being an important part of my faith journey. Your prayers and support are much appreciated.

Blessings, Jeanne

August Birthdays

8-3	John Onnen	8-16	Jim Knecht
8-4	Nancy McKenna	8-18	Charlee Davenport
8-5	Kathy Cain	8-23	Lesa Corzine
8-6	John Cook	8-24	Martha Howe
8-9	DeDe Yenerich	8-30	Timothy Dorsey
8-10	Lori Yelenick		Deb Longest
8-12	Ashley Clifton	8-31	Elden Del Rosso
8-13	Nancy Davenport		
8-14	Tanner Davenport		
	Hannah Marchan		



Super Senior Birthdays

Martha Howe
206 Wilson Drive
Watseka, IL 60970

August 24

August Anniversaries

8-3-1974	Sandra & Lynn Overacker
8-8-1981	Velanne & Craig Gocken
8-13-1967	Diann & Chuck Peabody
8-18-1957	Mary Jane & A. J. Day
8-19-1972	DeDe & Paul Yenerich



United Women in Faith

The United Women in Faith group will meet on Thursday, September 3 at 1:30 pm in the church fellowship hall. The program “Caregiving” will be presented by John Franklin, Iroquois Memorial Hospice chaplain. This program is available for anyone.



United
Women
in Faith

The term “caregiver” refers to anyone who provides assistance to someone else who needs it. A caregiver can be an older adult taking care of their spouse, children or grandchildren taking care of parents or grandparents, neighbors or friends taking care of people in their neighborhood, anyone caring for someone else. A 2025 study from AARP reports that one in every four adults is a caregiver. Caregivers are increasingly diverse across race, income, and generation.

The Fall District meeting of United Women in Faith will be held at the Catlin United Methodist Church on Saturday, September 19. The program will be about Living Alternatives, a faith-based organization committed to honoring God by providing care, compassionate support, and honest information to those facing pregnancy decisions in Illinois and Indiana. Registration is requested by September 5. Our Watseka UWF unit will pay the \$18 registration fee. If interested in attending, please contact Diann Peabody.

RUMMAGE SALE SET FOR SEPTEMBER 25-26

The fall Rummage Sale will be on Friday and Saturday, September 25 and 26. **Rummage may be brought to the church after Friday, September 4.**

August Radio Broadcast Support

August 2:	Lynn & Sandy Overacker in honor of their 52 nd wedding anniversary
August 9:	Julia Carey in honor of her son, Robert Carey’s birthday
August 16:	Paul & DeDe Yenerich I celebration of their 54 th wedding anniversary
August 23:	Carol Drew in celebration of her youngest daughter’s birthday
August 30:	Doug & Tammie Warner

Greeters & Ushers for August

August 2:	Jim Ward, Pam & Mick Thurston
August 9:	Carol Christy, Carol Bull
August 16:	Martha Howe, Dorothy Koonce
August 23:	Paul, Lesa, & Catlin Corzine
August 30:	Tim & Joyce Dorsey

August Liturgist: Carol Drew

WFUMC General Fund Report: June 2026 General Fund Income & Expense Summary

	June	Y-T-D
Income	\$20,253.69.	\$87,610.86
Expenses	-\$20,093.10.	-\$96,465.50

These figures do not include \$6,148.72 due for
2026 Y-T-D conference apportionments.

Thank you for your monetary support which allows us to share Jesus' story and love, fulfilling the mission and vision of our church.

August 2026 Church Calendar

*Calendar is subject to change.

Sunday, August 2	10:30am- Sunday Worship Service
Tuesday, August 4	8:00am- Food Pantry Delivery 9:00am- Food Pantry Board Meeting 11:00am- Staff Meeting
Wednesday, August 5	11:30am- Prayer Group
Friday, August 7	11:30am- Food Pantry Delivery
Sunday, August 9	10:30am- Sunday Worship Service
Tuesday, August 11	11:00am- Staff Meeting
Wednesday, August 12	11:30am- Prayer Group
Sunday, August 16	10:30am- Sunday Worship Service
Monday, August 17	6:00pm- AD Council Meeting
Tuesday, August 18	11:00am- Staff Meeting 7:00pm- Holy Stitchers Meeting
Wednesday, August 19	11:30am- Prayer Group
Thursday, August 20	2:00pm- Newsletter Deadline
Sunday, August 23	10:30am- Sunday Worship Service
Tuesday, August 25	11:00am- Staff Meeting
Wednesday, August 26	11:30am- Prayer Group
Sunday, August 30	9:30am- Sunday Worship Service here with Cissna Park UMC 10:30am- Packing Meal Kits for Midwest Mission 12:00pm- Potluck Lunch with Cissna Park UMC



In Every Season, Turn to God
 Are you enjoying a happy time? *Praise God.*
 Is life becoming difficult? *Seek God.*
 Are you experiencing a quiet moment? *Worship God.*
 Are you suffering great pain? *Trust God.*
 Are you unsure what to do? *Ask God.*
 Are you overwhelmed with joy? *Thank God.*

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firstumcwatseka@gmail.com

Rev. Ashley Clifton Email: ashleyncifton@gmail.com

7:00 p.m. Radio Broadcast on WIBK, 96.9FM and www.wibkradio.com

Online Giving at <https://bit.ly/2SlvyCr>



First United
Methodist Church



First UMC Watseka

Our Mission: Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
**Our Vision: To welcome neighbors of all ages to experience God, share hope,
and be changed by Christ's love.**

Celebrating Pastor Ashley Clifton & Pastor Jeanne Brown

