As we stood on the threshold of a New Year, I shared with you “Seven ‘Up’s” that would make good resolutions for 2018. I’ve seen several versions of this list through the years. The following is the one that I am using for my own growth this year, and I invite you to join me.

Wake Up! Decide to have a good day. “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalms 118:24)

Dress Up! The best way to dress up is to put on a smile. A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks. “…the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (I Samuel 16:7)

Shut Up! Watch your tongue. Decide not to gossip. Say nice things and learn to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, so we are meant to do twice as much listening as talking. “Those who guard their lips guard their soul.” (Proverbs 13:3)

Stand Up! Take a stand for what you believe. Stand for something or you will fall for anything. “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all….,” (Galatians 6:9-10)

Look Up! – Open your eyes to the Lord. “I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

Reach Up! Connect with a higher power through prayer. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lift Up! Be available to help those in need by serving, supporting, and sharing. “Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

I pray that you will be blessed with peace, hope, joy, and love throughout the coming year, and that you will be resolved to growing deeper in your discipleship with each passing day.

~David Fleming
New Study Opportunity - Living Fully, Dying Well

Our Tuesday Bible Study will resume next month with a special offering of “Living Fully, Dying Well.”

Our best decisions about life’s most important events are seldom made in a time of crisis. Living Fully, Dying Well is a small group experience designed to assist us in making careful, wise and prayerful preparation for meeting life’s most important moments. Using materials developed by the late Bishop Ruben Job (including video segments that many of you will remember from our “Face-to-Face Encounter” last July) Pastor David will facilitate this video-based study that will help participants think about living in the second half of life...and beyond. You are invited to join us for these weekly sessions:

- February 6 – Living Fully
- February 13 – A Theology of Aging
- February 20 – Our Culture’s View of Aging
- February 27 – Finding Purpose and Meaning in Life
- March 6 – Getting It All Together: Making Decisions
- March 13 – Dying Well
- March 20 – What Happens When We Die?
- March 27 – How Then Shall We Live?

To register for this event, please call the church office at 501-623-5626. Copies of the participants guide to this study are available in the church office at a cost of $7.50.

Celebrate Our Endowment Fund and Our Partnership with the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

On Sunday, February 18 we will be joined in worship and fellowship by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. Janet Kernodle Marshall, Vice President of Development, and Clarence E. Trice, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, will be with us in worship at 10:45 to bring greetings from the Foundation and to share a few highlights of the mission and ministry it has accomplished in the past year.

At noon, you are invited to join us for a luncheon during which the staff will talk more specifically about the Grand Avenue UMC Permanent Endowment Fund, how it has developed since it was established in 2003, and ways that you can benefit its work through direct gifts, bequests, and estate planning. Your contributions – large or small – can have a lasting impact forever.

Our Grand Avenue UMC Permanent Endowment Fund is a great opportunity to provide for the church today while expanding the possibilities for tomorrow. Our endowment is a permanent charitable fund that is invested with the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas to produce annual income. You might think of it as a savings account where we only spend the interest or earnings; the principal or original gift amount is never spent. Therefore, the endowment provides a dependable, steady stream of financial support to strengthen and expand local church ministries.

Discerning the Voice of God: How to Recognize When God Speaks

Everyone is invited to join us for this new seven-week study by Priscilla Shirer. The class begins on Thursday, February 22 at 9:30 a.m. and will end on April 5. We plan to meet in the Striver’s Sunday School classroom. If you are interested, contact Lee Calloway at lcallo6@gmail.com or (501) 282-4010. Please let her know soon so that she can order books in plenty of time for the first session.
Join Us on a Journey of Self-Discovery and Service

God’s plan for the church calls for each member of the Body of Christ to play a vital role. Sometimes we think that serving God is an obligation, a duty, and that it isn’t meant to be enjoyable. The truth is, though, that God wants us to find joy and fulfillment when we serve. That happens when we serve in a role that matches who God created us to be.

Our experience in the past has taught us that most people would rather serve in a ministry than sit through a committee meeting. This year Grand Avenue UMC is offering ways to help people name and claim their spiritual gifts and put them to use for ministry within the church and mission to the world around us. The first opportunity is a journey of self-discovery and service.

In “Serving from the Heart,” Ellen Clements will lead us on a 7-week journey of self-discovery as we learn more about how the Body of Christ is intended to function, and what that means to each of us individually. It will help us in assessing our spiritual gifts, talents and abilities, resources, individual style, dreams and experiences...all adding up to an enhanced capacity to serve God and our neighbor.

We will meet on Sunday afternoons from 4:00-5:30 beginning February 4. The weekly itinerary for our journey is as follows:

- February 4 – Introduction and Biblical Foundation
- February 11 – Spiritual Gifts Defined
- February 18 – Talents and Resources
- February 25 – Individuality
- March 4 – Dreams
- March 11 – Experiences
- March 18 – Putting It All Together

To learn more about this exciting opportunity or to register, call the church office at 501-623-5626 or Ellen Clements at 501-617-0983. Participant guides are available in the church office at a cost of $14. (A limited number of guides are also available free through our church library.)

Aqua Vitae Emmaus Fellowship at Smokin’ in Style

On Tuesday, January 9, our Aqua Vitae Emmaus group will meet at Smokin’ in Style in the party room at 6:00 p.m. for a “Dutch Treat” meal. There will be no program - just great food and great fellowship. Mark your calendar and join us for our first event of the new year.

In other Aqua Vitae news, our executive committee is meeting on Tuesday, January 30 to plan activities and events for the coming year. Our group’s meeting dates and times will be announced soon.

Year End Statements

Thank you for your generosity throughout 2017. You helped us meet all of our mission and ministry needs and undertake several special projects. Year-end statements will be mailed once our books have been closed and audited. If you need a record of giving before then, please call Karen in the church office at 501-623-5626.
January 14 is “Human Relations Day”

In the 1700s, John and Charles Wesley visited prisoners at Oxford Castle in England, sharing food, medicine and Holy Communion. Those early Methodists began a rich tradition that continues today.

Turn on the news or drive around the outskirts of your town and you will find what Jesus called “the least of these.” Those living in the margins of society, struggling to survive. People like:

- An immigrant teenager in Texas’ poorest county, being recruited by a local gang
- A father struggling for sobriety in Little Rock, Arkansas
- An Oklahoma woman recently released from incarceration looking for work

Over and over Jesus served people like this, embracing them. And that’s what we want to model as the people of The United Methodist Church. To continue the ministry of Jesus we established Human Relations Day as a Special Sunday that calls all of our churches to participate in helping all God’s children to realize their potential.

Will you continue to support Human Relations Day? Will you continue nurturing at-risk youth, strengthening communities’ self-improvement efforts and advocating for the oppressed?

Rev. I Maliik Safir, whose church works with those gripped by addiction in Little Rock, sums up the work of Human Relations Day by recalling Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan: “to meet the poor, the disadvantaged and the underserved at the places where others have robbed them and help them to recover from the wounds of social inequality.”

Your gifts to Human Relations Day provide avenues to restored relationships through ministries like Youth Offender Rehabilitation, Community Developers self-improvement programs and United Methodist Voluntary Services community advocacy programs. It’s time to think and support justice, to become radical in changing lives and changing the world. To learn more, follow links on our Facebook page.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the extravagant generosity you showed to our staff, to my family, and to me this Christmas season. The gracious gift that you shared with each of us has truly been a blessing, and we thank you.

Karla, Andrew, and I are eagerly looking forward to Andrew’s graduation from Hendrix this May. As we make plans for a trip to celebrate the occasion, your gift will help us in our preparations. Thank you!

David Fleming
Outreach is collecting spaghetti and sauce during the month of January.

Grand Avenue Administrative Council 2018

Chair: Carol Scrivner
Senior Pastor: David Fleming
(also Nominations Chairperson)
Lay Leader/Lay Member: Jonnie Nix
Alternate Lay Member: Linda Stanley
(also Communications Coordinator)
UMM President: Joe Peters
UMW President: Carol Dickinson
Secretary: Regina Butt

Members at Large
Class of 2018: Terry McLarty, Ray Owen
Class of 2019: Joleen Braswell, Robin Oliver
Class of 2020: Martha Dale Cooley, Jeanne Dean
Evangelism Chair: Mary Tom Taylor
Worship Coordinator: Martha Dale Cooley
Missions Chair: Shari Coston
Children & Youth Chair: Karla Hefty
Family Ministries Chair: Patti Keahey
Congregational Care Chair: Linda Lewallen
Staff Parish Relations Chair: Bob Clements
Trustees Chair: TBA by Trustees
Finance Chair: Pegi McNeely
Endowment Chair: Dickey Cooley

Commission on a Way Forward Town Hall Meetings

You are personally invited to participate in the Commission on a Way Forward Town Hall meetings. These meetings will be strategically facilitated to allow participants to provide feedback and ask questions about the preliminary models the Commission on a Way Forward proposed.

The Commission on a Way Forward Town Hall meetings have a threefold purpose:

- Provide attendees with an overview of the history, process, three preliminary models, and next steps of The Way Forward.
- Facilitate discussion among attendees about strengths, weaknesses, and questions regarding the three preliminary models.
- Gather feedback to share with The Commission on a Way Forward.

Your participation and input will be extremely beneficial, so you are invited to attend any of the scheduled gatherings. The Bishop will be hosting three meetings at FUMC North Little Rock, FUMC Jonesboro, and Central UMC Fayetteville. District Superintendents will host the remaining eight meetings. It is important to note that all the meetings will be the same, so please RSVP for the one that is most convenient for you to attend.

Regional Meetings will be facilitated by Bishop Gary Mueller:

Sat, Jan 13, 10:00 am - FUMC North Little Rock
Sat, Jan 13, 2:00 pm - FUMC North Little Rock
Sun, Jan 14, 2:30 pm - FUMC Jonesboro
Sat, Jan 20, 10:00 am - Central UMC Fayetteville

The Southwest District Meeting will be facilitated by Rev. Rodney Steele, DS
Sun, Jan 21, 2:30 pm - Southwest, Arkadelphia
FUMC
Bring joy into the House of the Lord
Advent & Christmas at Grand Avenue

2018

Advent & Christmas at Grand Avenue
We’re Here to Serve You
Senior Pastor - Rev. David M. Fleming
Chancel Choir Director - Kathie White
Ukulele Band Director - Peggy Phillips
Church Secretary - Karen Copelin

Phone: (501) 623-5626
Fax: (501) 623-3526
E-mail: grand.avenue@sbcglobal.net
www.gaumch.org

“Blessing Box” Extends Our Mission to Those Who are Hungry

If you’ve entered Grand Avenue UMC from the parking lot recently, you’ve probably noticed one of our newest missions focused on feeding the hungry. Andy and Lee Calloway have partnered with our Missions Committee and Board of Trustees to place a “Blessing Box” on the sidewalk outside the church office. The theology behind their mission is quite simple. As a sign in the window indicates, passersby are invited to “Take what you need; give what you can...and above all, be blessed.”

We already provide boxes of groceries for individuals and families who qualify through the Department of Human Services. We also offer “hungry packs” with a small can of fruit, some crackers, a source of protein, and a bottle of water both in our office and at United Methodist Outreach. The blessing box is intended for those who may not qualify through DHS but need more than a “hungry pack.” Since it is kept outside, it is always available, even when the church and thrift store are not open. Moreover, people are able to take what they need (or leave a blessing for someone else) anonymously.

A consecration of the blessing box and prayer for all who use it will be offered as part of our worship on Sunday, January 14. If you would like to contribute non-perishable food items, simply place them on an empty shelf in the box.