



The FirstNac Family Opens Arms and Homes to Strawbridge UMC Youth

Emily Bankston's family has been part of FirstNac UMC for as long as she can remember. She said, 'It was great to come home and join my childhood church in being the hands and feet of Christ!!' This spring, Emily brought 5th & 6th graders from Kingwood's Strawbridge United Methodist Church to participate in a Mission Trip to Nacogdoches. During their stay on our campus, they had the opportunity to participate with FirstNac members, serving with LOVE INC, the produce food distribution at the church and The Village Nac. Their activities included: bagging clothes, participating in a food distribution to members of the Nacogdoches community, building a new garden and working with an awesome group of knitters. The



preteens were asked, "To be love and light to all they served this week.' Emily, who is the coordinator from Strawbridge said, "They did an outstanding job! I'm extremely proud of these kids.' Kathy Cochran of Sew Blessed commented, 'They were a great bunch of kids and it was fun teaching them how to knit.' The hats that were knitted will be donated to a cancer patient, people at GODTEL or a newborn baby at a Nacogdoches hospital. Some of the other activities included adding three rows to the garden at The Village Nac and finishing up a painting project at LOVE INC. The SUMC youth were grateful to ALL these organizations for the opportunity to serve and to the FirstNac UMC family for providing a place to stay and have meals, for opening their homes for showers and snacks and for their wonderful hospitality and example of service to the community.



OUR PURPOSE

To Build a Vibrant, Christ-Centered Community Where ALL are Becoming Deeply Committed Christians

What's Going On In May?

SUNDAY, MAY 3

Worship 8:45 & 11:05 am

Sunday School, 10 am

Service Opportunities

ICAN Sunday

Quarterly Blood Drive, FLC, 8:30 am – 1 pm

Chancel Choir Practice, Choir Rm. 12:05 – 1:05

Stone Fort Choral Spring Concert, Sanctuary, 3:30 pm

Confirmation Class, Youth Lounge, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

The Grove Youth Group, Youth Lounge, 5 – 6:30 pm

MONDAY, MAY 4

Service Opportunity

Heart-to-Heart Chorus Practice, Choir Rm, 9 am

Perform at Meadowview @ 10:00 am

TUESDAY, MAY 5

Service Opportunity

Feed the Preschool Teachers Lunch, 11:30 am

THURSDAY, MAY 7

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Scout Hut, 10:30 am

MAY 7-9

SFA Graduations

SUNDAY, MAY 10 – MOTHER'S DAY

ONE SERVICE

Worship 11:05 am – Confirmation Sunday and Reception

Sunday School, 10 am

Chancel Choir Practice, Choir Rm. 12:05 – 1:05

The Grove Youth Group, Youth Lounge, 5 – 6:30 pm

MONDAY, MAY 11

Primetimers. Parlor, 9 am - Noon

Service Opportunity

GODTEL 1902 Douglass Rd, 5 – 6 pm, prepare & serve dinner

TUESDAY, MAY 12

Service Opportunity

HOPE Evening Food Distribution, 2100 E Main St., 5 – 7 pm

THURSDAY, MAY 14

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Scout Hut, 10:30 am

Circle VI Meeting, Noon – 1 pm

SATURDAY, MAY 16

Texas Annual Conference meeting, FLC

SUNDAY, MAY 17

Worship, 8:45 & 11:05 am

Sunday School, 10 am

Chancel Choir Practice, Choir Rm. 12:05 – 1:05

The Grove Youth Group, Youth Lounge, 5 – 6:30 pm

MONDAY, MAY 18

Heart-to-Heart Chorus Practice, Choir Rm, 9 am

Perform at Pinecrest Retirement in Lufkin @ 10:30 am

Board of Stewards Meeting, Parlor, 6 pm

TUESDAY, MAY 19

Service Opportunity

Produce Distribution, west parking lots, packing items starts at

2:00 pm and food distribution starts at 3:30 pm

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

Service Opportunity

GODTEL, 1902 Douglass Rd, 5 – 6 pm, prepare & serve dinner

THURSDAY, MAY 21

LAST DAY OF NAC ISD

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Scout Hut, 10:30 am

SUNDAY, MAY 24

Worship, 8:45 & 11:05 am

Sunday School, 10 am

Chancel Choir Practice, Choir Rm. 12:05 – 1:05

No Youth Group

MAY 24 – 27

Texas Annual Conference, Houston, Texas

MONDAY, MAY 25 – MEMORIAL DAY

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

TUESDAY, MAY 26

Pastor Melissa Garza, Ordination,

FUMC Houston Downtown Sanctuary, 7 pm

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

First Forward Meeting, Parlor, Noon

Service Opportunity

Love INC, 917 Ruby Street, 9:30 am - Newsletter Folding

THURSDAY, MAY 28

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Scout Hut, 10:30 am

SUNDAY, MAY 31

Worship, 8:45 & 11:05 am

Sunday School, 10 am

The Grove Youth Group, Youth Lounge, 5 – 6:30 pm

A FirstNac Highlight



Hi church! I'm Rob McDermid and I'm excited to step into a new role as board chair for FUMC this year. For those who I haven't had the chance to get to know yet, here is a little bit about me and my family to help you get to know us.

I'm originally from Toronto, Canada. Early in my career I spent six years at the University of Waterloo working in collegiate and international sport. In 2007 I moved to the United States to attend graduate school and pursue a career in college athletics at The Ohio State University. I moved to Texas in 2009, where I met my now-wife Lawren in Beaumont. In 2011 I accepted a position at SFA, and Nacogdoches has been home ever since.

I'm currently finishing my 15th year at Stephen F. Austin State University, where I serve as the Director of the MBA Program and a Senior Lecturer in Sports Business in the Rusche College of Business.

Lawren and I were married in 2013 in a beautiful beachside ceremony in Mexico. We have two incredible boys, Robert (11) and Reid (7), who were both born here in Nacogdoches and keep our family busy with their activities.

Our family has been part of First United Methodist Church of Nacogdoches since 2014, joining shortly after Robert was born. Both boys were baptized in the church. I currently serve on the FUMC board and have also served multiple terms on the SFA Wesley Foundation Board.

These days most of my free time revolves around whatever my boys are involved in. When I do get a little time to myself, my favorite hobby is reading—something I try to fit in whenever I can.

Find Your Opportunity to Serve

FIRST FAMILY Claudia Whitley, Team Leader

First Family is all about caring for our church family. That includes helping host special events in the lives of our families, special events in our church, caring for each other in any way and providing personal and pastoral care as needed.

FIRST DISCIPLESHIP Jared Barnes, Team Leader

Our team coordinates meaningful learning experiences that help people of all ages grow in their faith and fellowship together. We oversee Sunday school for adults, children, and youth; small groups; and Midweek classes.

FIRST COMMUNICATION Terri Thompson, Team Leader

Communication is a tool that can couple spirituality with business practices to convey God's grace as we continue to turn our beliefs into our behavior.

FIRST COMMUNITY LeAnn Solmonson, Team Leader

First Community is about being the hands and feet of Christ in our community. We focus on serving those experiencing food insecurity, supporting students and teachers in our schools and ministering to those who experience housing instability.

FIRST OPERATIONS Steve Westbrook, Team Leader

One of our key areas in the coming year will be our church building and grounds with a goal of having a facility and surrounding grounds that are well-maintained, meet the needs of the church's ministries and are appealing to members and guests.

THE FIRST EXPERIENCE Lynn Teague, Team Leader

The First Experience teams are all about insuring every person, member and guest find a warm and friendly place to join in meaningful corporate worship.



Message From the Pastor

Our church is very much a relationship-oriented organization. Healthy relationships are key to how we function. When relationships get strained, our church does not do so well. That's why it's so important to pay attention to the traits that build healthy, loving, caring relationships. The Holy Spirit gifts us with those traits. Jesus showed us that mercy, trust, humility, self-control, simplicity and perseverance build community and change lives for the better.

We are in a series of sermons called The Power Of Deeper Living. We are talking about characteristics of our faith that build deeper, stronger relationships. When we practice mercy, trust, humility, self-control, simplicity and perseverance, along with other important traits of our faith, our relationships become more dependable and our anxieties can grow calmer.

At our best, we are people who try to love others as God loves them. As God's love is shared and our practices of faith are lived out, God draws us closer together and builds a community of faith that grows deeper and stronger.

Pastor Marlin

Focus on the First Five

The First Five represent five essential practices that can help us on our journey to become deeply committed Christians. They certainly are not all of the essential practices but they represent keys to our growth and align with the vows we make to the church.



May Focus: Worship

Worship can take on many forms and happen in many places. Traditionally, many think of worship as what occurs inside the church. Few have a more magnificent place to worship on Sunday mornings than in our beautiful sanctuary.

THE FIRST FIVE

WORSHIP: Pray five times a day and worship weekly.

STUDY: Read five verses of the Bible daily and study the Bible in a small group.

SERVE: Practice five acts of intentional kindness a week and serve with others.

GIVE: Extend five acts of generosity toward others each month and give generously to God through the church.

SHARE: Let others know you are a Christian and invite five people to church each year.

When we practice these actions, we are living out our vows to the church and our commitment to Our Purpose.


Quarterly Blood Drive
 for May 2026 donate at
 The Blood Center East Texas and use code 7247.
GIVE BLOOD .ORG
 The Blood Center East Texas, 3520 N. University Dr.

First United Methodist Church
 presents

JUNE 8-11


We need volunteers and bottled water donations for the water cooling station on the front lawn during the Blueberry Festival, Saturday, June 13, 2026
 Contact: Terri Thompson at (936) 554-1721 or terrihompson75965@gmail.com




One Service
May 10 @ 11:05 a.m.

My First | It Just Resonates With Me

Hello, I am Dayna Westbrook, a HAPPILY retired Teacher/Coach of 31 years. I am married to Steve and we have two great sons (Reed and Bryce), two amazing daughter in laws (Annabeth and Ellen) and 3 wonderful grandkids (Slayde, Hayes and Henry).

While growing up in Tyler, I never had a consistent church home and would occasionally attend church with my friends and their families. I didn't realize what I was missing out on during some difficult times in my Jr. High and HS years. After moving to Nacogdoches (SFA), graduating college, getting married and starting a family we felt the need to find a church home. Our boys were 5 and 4 years old when we joined FUMC-Nac in 2000. Winston Goens was the pastor at that time and he baptized me on September, 3rd, 2000 when I was 31 years old.

We have felt welcomed and at home at FUMC-Nac since Day 1! We have seen many changes during our time here but it still feels like home. I love the Praise worship service at 8:45!!! The music just resonates with me possibly because of not being brought up in the church and more familiar with this music than the Traditional service music. I enjoy seeing the familiar faces at the early service and the casual attire. I just feel after the early service things are going to be ok. I feel lighter and more at ease. I have REALLY enjoyed all the opportunities available by way of First-Nac to give back to the community and to one another and see each other places other than just during church.

- Dayna Westbrook



The Power of Prayer

There is banner in the Narthex that has gently flowing strips of cloth in a rainbow of colors and ribbons tied to it. The colorful ribbons were tied on by youth at the recent youth leadership retreat, Connect, in Huntsville. Pastor Melissa brought this fascinating piece of work back to FirstNac UMC so we can add our sorrows, peace and joy. Members of our congregation have added white ribbons over the past several weeks. Each of us is invited to pray over a ribbon and add it to the banner, thus binding our prayers together in strength.

FirstNac UMC member Emily Taravella was touched by the banner and the idea of it. "Pastor Melissa made this beautiful prayer banner, and we are invited to pray over a ribbon and to tie it on with the many others. I tied on a ribbon for my mom, a ribbon for my dad, and a ribbon for my mother-in-law navigating fresh grief. To anyone going through hell this season of Lent, may God be with you, and may you never walk alone."



A Look Back at Easter

Maundy Thursday service at FirstNac is a very meaningful experience for me. It is a time of remembering the last hours of the life of Jesus. As I participate in Holy Communion and receive the bread and wine, I remember the sacrifice he made on the cross. I also remember that this is the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples before he was arrested and crucified. The most moving event of the evening for me comes when the Altar Guild strips the altar of all signs of Christ. The Bible is the first symbol to be carried down the aisle and removed from the sanctuary.



MAUNDY THURSDAY Service



First United Methodist Church, Nacogdoches



As each symbol is removed and taken out, I think about what was happening to Jesus. He knew he was going to die, he was betrayed by Judas, arrested and removed from his disciples, humiliated, flogged, judged, convicted by his own people and crucified for my sins and the sins of all the world. As the candles on the altar are extinguished, the light of Christ is gone. The altar area is draped in black and the sanctuary is dark. As we exit from the building in silence and see the cross outside the church draped in black, I feel the enormity of Christ's sacrifice. Thank you God for your grace, mercy and everlasting love.

- Mary Nelle Brunson

Update From the Board of Stewards

The FUMC Nacogdoches Board met on the evening of April 20th in the parlor to support the church's mission: "To build a vibrant, Christ-centered community where ALL are becoming deeply committed Christians." In addition to board members, five church members also attended the meeting.

Following the call to order and approval of the previous meeting's minutes, the new board members introduced themselves. The board then heard ministry reports from Pastor Melissa, who shared updates about the work being done by members of the Youth Group as well as recent volunteer efforts by the confirmation class at Village Nac. Pastor Marlin also shared a brief pastoral report. During the Financial Report, Carolyn Bowyer spent time walking new board members through the reports before the board approved the church's financial statements. In the First Forward Report, Terri Thompson shared that more than 400 families are currently being fed through the food distribution program.

In the S/PR Report, Charmayne Dickhaut provided an update on two current staff searches for Children's and Youth Directors. A candidate for Children's Director had been on-site the previous weekend, and a Youth Director candidate would be visiting the following weekend. The board also voted to approve allowing the TAC to electronically file Articles of Incorporation for the church. Trustee Sam Smith shared several updates regarding recent work being done inside the church and on the property. Discussion took place about repairs to furniture in the youth lounge, and one church group offered to replace the draperies in the parlor. Sam also discussed repair needs for the two parsonages, and the board voted to approve completing those repairs. The board selected Becky and Sam Smith as lay delegates for Texas Annual Conference. Finally, the board approved the purchase of a new laptop computer for the church financial secretary.

As a reminder, all church members are welcome to attend the monthly board meetings to hear about the work being done on behalf of the church. The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 18th at 6:00 pm in the Parlor.

You are receiving this edition of the FirstNac News, a requested printed newsletter to help us communicate better as a church. If you prefer to receive an electronic version only, please let the church office know and we will remove you from the mailing list.

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The FirstNac News is published monthly by the Communications Team of First Forward.



Need to talk to a pastor?

When there is a hospitalization, a death in the family or any other time you may need urgent pastoral care, we encourage you to use these numbers.

Monday - Thursday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm: 936.564.8308

Evenings and Weekends: 936.564.8308