



Doubling Down to Serve Those Experiencing Homelessness

Members of the FirstNac family have partnered with Godtel to help feed our community's homeless population for decades. The church's support of the ministry dates back to when the shelter was located just a couple of blocks from the church in the heart of downtown Nacogdoches.

After the ministry moved into their new location on Douglass Road, the church family continued to support and bolster the vital work being done to serve those who find themselves without shelter or food. In the past two years, however, the First Nac family has stepped into a larger roll and has become a leading partner in the Godtel efforts.

What began as a handful of FirstNac church members gathering monthly to cook and serve an evening meal to Godtel residents, steadily grew. It pretty quickly reached a point where it was clear that the church had the manpower to double up on the number of meals served and a second date was added to the calendar.

Today, the meal preparation and the serving of the meals has become an amazingly efficient process. The result is hot meals carefully prepared and served in a loving and sharing way that the residents respond well to and the development of relationships that could happen in no other way.

“I love what we do here in the name of Christ.”

-Steve Kahn

Church member Steve Kahn, who joined the FirstNac Godtel team about a year ago, summed up well how many of the team members feel. “It is such a pleasure to come together and work alongside others from our church to serve our neighbors. I value the relationships I have made and I love what we do here in the name of Christ.”

In January, the Godtel teams met in the FirstNac conference room to plan meals for the next six months. The teams pulled from their past experiences and from the compliments of the Godtel residents to schedule meals for the first half of the year. The group pored over

dozens of meal options and quickly laid out the six months of menus. Each person took on responsibilities for purchasing ingredients and supplies, preparing entrees and side dishes or forming serving teams.

As the year unfolds, these plans will become meals and the FirstNac family will once again provide a vital service and a heart full of love to those who need it most. It's one more step forward in building a vibrant, Christ-centered community where ALL are becoming deeply committed Christians. Are you interested in helping serve? Contact Cindy Hancock cindy@hancockadvertising.com



What's Going On In February ?

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Worship 8:45 & 11:05 am
Sunday School, 10 am
Quarterly Blood Drive, FLC, 8:30 - 1 pm
ICAN Sunday
The Grove Youth Group 5 - 6:30 pm

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Service Opportunity

*Heart-to-Heart Chorus Practice, Choir Rm, 9 am
Perform @ 10:30 am The Arbor*

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Service Opportunity

Feed the Preschool Teachers Lunch, 11:30 am

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Parlor, 10:30 am

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Worship 8:45 & 11:05 am
Sunday School, 10 am
The Grove Youth Group 5 - 6:30 pm

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Primetimers. Parlor, 9 am - Noon

Service Opportunity

*GODEL, 1902 Douglass Rd, 5 - 6 pm,
prepare & serve dinner*

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Service Opportunity

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Service Opportunity

*Sew Blessed, Parlor, 10:30 am
UWF Circle VI Meeting, Noon - 1 pm*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Worship, 8:45 & 11:05 am
Sunday School, 10 am
The Grove Youth Group 5 - 6:30 pm

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED PRESENTENT'S DAY

Heart-to-Heart Chorus Practice, Choir Rm, 9 am
Perform @ 10:30 am, Stallings Court
Board of Stewards Meeting, Parlor, 6 pm

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Service Opportunity

*Mobile Food Pantry, west parking lots, packing items starts at
2:30 pm and food distribution starts at 4 pm*

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Ash Wednesday Service, Chapel, 12:10 pm
Ash Wednesday Service, Sanctuary, 6 pm
Service Opportunity

GODEL, 1902 Douglass Rd, 5 - 6 pm, prepare & serve dinner

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Parlor, 10:30 am

FEBRUARY 20 - 22

Connect Retreat, Huntsville, Texas, Grades 6-12

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Worship, 8:45 & 11:05 am
Sunday School, 10 am

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Service Opportunity

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Service Opportunity

Sew Blessed, Parlor, 10:30 am

A FirstNac Highlight



I'm Don Clark and I was born and raised in Angleton, Texas.

After high school and a few years of college, I spent two years in the Army, stationed in Germany. I later moved to Nacogdoches, graduated from SEA, and met a wonderful woman named Pat. We were married in 1976 and are celebrating our 50th anniversary this year. We have three daughters and two granddaughters. I'm a retired IT professional, and I enjoy playing guitar and singing. I'm a lifelong Methodist and stay very

involved in our church. I believe church is about much more than Sunday mornings—it's about staying connected to each other wherever life takes us, whether that's at home, in the hospital, or in a nursing or rehab facility.

Congregational Care & Loving Outreach

Along with others in our church, I regularly visit members who can't attend in person.

The most important thing is simply showing up and being a friend. I usually pray with them, remind them they're still an important part of our church family, and spend time listening to their stories and sharing what's happening at church. These visits help keep the strong connections United Methodists are known for, and let people know they're remembered, cared for, and prayed for. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve in this way and help others stay connected.

Would you like to help?

Reach out to Claudia Whitley

claudiawhitley@sbcglobal.net

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

Mark 6 and Luke 10 tell the story of when Jesus sent his closest followers into towns to heal the sick, cast out demons, and share the good news of God's grace. He told them not to take any extra clothing or food or money, but to rely on the hospitality of the people in those towns. The disciples and other close followers of Jesus must have felt unprepared and vulnerable as they started out on that journey. But they also must have felt free from the burden of carrying lots of stuff. When I pack for a trip, I try to think through what I will need, and then pack more than I need in case something comes up I hadn't planned for. That means that I always seem to be carrying some

clothing or equipment I'm not going to need, and carrying all of that stuff gets in the way. Jesus told his disciples that their needs would be met as they went, and not to burden their trip with over planning.

When we feel God's call to make a difference, we may feel unprepared. But as God provided for Jesus' friends in their mission, God provides for us in the work God calls us to. God opens doors and equips us as we go. When God calls us, God equips us and enables us.

FirstNac is a wonderful, loving church. We work together, each of us giving as we have been blessed. God prepares us to share the good news together and be an example of the community we find in the Holy Spirit. We live out that ministry by joining our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. I'm excited to see how God is opening doors and equipping us for our ministry ahead!

Pastor Marlin

My First | A Real Awakening

I transferred to First United Methodist Church Nacogdoches from Conroe FUMC 15 years ago. What I loved about the church was how welcoming and joyful the Round Table Sunday School Class was towards me, a newcomer. What surprised me about the church was the lack of outreach to the community. One of the most unforgettable sermons I ever heard was by Jeff McDonald, preaching on The Life Saving Station, the story of a church formed to save shipwrecked people, that over time kept deemphasizing saving people and became a self-serving club. This clarified my desire to be part of a church with a committed voluntary outreach to our community. After several years of challenges, crises and changes in leadership, a real awakening occurred. Through committed lay leaders, volunteers and volunteerism have created an ownership of multiple ministries serving multiple needs in our community. Through the strong, well-developed efforts of First Forward, First United Methodist Church has taken a leap forward toward being the true disciples of the Christ we so want to show the world. Thank you to the laity and the leadership who have helped move FirstNac Forward!

- Kent Ferguson

Proud Member of FirstNac



Giving to Our Unknown Neighbors

By Terri Thompson

There is always a need for blood donations in our community. Every donation only has a shelf-life of 42 days. Maybe you know someone who has received a transfusion or maybe you have received a donation. I know I wouldn't be here if someone I didn't know had not donated. I received four units while in surgery to remove cancer from my body. A few days later my hemoglobins were still low and I needed another transfusion. Today I have been cancer free for seven years! I am now able to give back. I hate needles. Every once in a while, I will jump so bad they have to start over, but I know I am helping someone else in need.



Please, if you are able, sign up, to donate the first Sunday of February, May, August and/or November. The next blood drive will be on February 1 in the FLC from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. If it is more convenient you can also go to the Blood Center on University Drive during those months to donate also. Please use code 7247 for FirstNac UMC.

“So continue encouraging each other and building each other up, just like you are doing already.” 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

Eligibility & Recovery:

- **Who Can Donate:** Healthy adults, typically 16+ (with consent if younger), weighing at least 110 lbs.
- **Body's Replenishment:** Plasma is replaced in 24 hours; red blood cells take about 5 weeks.
- **Donation Frequency:** You can donate whole blood every 56 days (8 weeks).

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.



February Focus: Sharing

Sharing our faith with others can take on many forms. It can include sharing our love and our time with a member of the church family who is homebound or in assisted living, as the Loving Outreach group does on a regular schedule.

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.

A Partnership 10 Years in the Making

“Connecting the needs from the community with God’s people so those needs can be met.”

First United Methodist Church and Love In the Name Of Christ have partnered to serve our community for decades. That relationship has flourished in recent years as members of the FirstNac family have helped staff the community shower and laundry facilities that serve those in the Nacogdoches community who need them. Members of the church regularly help get the monthly LoveINC newsletter out and serve in numerous ways including intake, home visits and the day to day operations for the organization.

More recently, members of FirstNac have taken on key roles in LoveINC’s annual fundraiser, Chairished Blessings. This event not only provides essential funding for LoveINC’s work but helps raise awareness for the group’s mission. Like many nonprofits that FirstNac helps support, an annual “fund raiser” is vital, not just for financial support but to highlight the heart of the work that is done by the organization and the services that are available to the community.

The LoveINC mission is to “help the church help people by connecting the needs from the community with God’s people so those needs can be met.” Understanding that mission helps people understand why so much of the work at LoveINC centers around repurposing. Thus the event’s name, Chairished Blessings.

In the weeks leading up to the event, volunteers work hard to prepare donated items, often repurposing them into something new and beautiful. These creations are displayed for raffles and as items for sale. Members of FirstNac invite church members of the church family or Sunday School classes to bake casseroles, desserts or assemble gift baskets with some of the most creative and unique baskets imaginable.

Traditionally, more than 700 people attend the Chairished Blessings event, making it one of the largest such gatherings in the area. In 2025, the event netted more than \$85,000 to support the LoveINC work in our community. This year’s gathering is February 6 at the Nacogdoches County Civic Center. The FirstNac family will be more than well represented.



FirstNac & the Jacks

Much More Than a Game

When SFA Basketball Coach Brad Underwood and his family became a part of the FirstNac family in 2013, he introduced an idea to the church that he brought with him from a previous coaching assignment. The idea was to match the young, college student-athletes who made up his mens basketball team with families in the church. The purpose was to provide some stability and a sense of family to young men a long way from home.

To say the program took off is a bit of an understatement. Dubbed Adopt-A-Jack, the FirstNac family embraced the concept in a big way. Players were assigned to teams of church members who volunteered to “adopt” players and give them a home away from home. What happened next was unexpected, particularly by the adopters. Relationships were formed, Christian witnesses were shared and bonds grew.

It all kicked off with a church-wide luncheon to introduce players to “parents” and quickly turned into regular meals hosted at FirstNac homes, snack bags that greeted the players as they boarded buses and well-wishes by text as the team travelled.

Over the years, lasting relationships have developed between the FirstNac adopters and the young men who have come into their lives. Through coaching changes, player graduations and the ups and downs of a basketball

season, one constant has been the “adoption” program started a dozen years ago. Over that time, adopters have become close to their adoptees in a way that far outlasts the players’ time here in Nacogdoches and at SFA, with many attending weddings, graduations, family funerals or celebrating the birth of a child.

In November, the FirstNac family launched a new year of Adopt-A-Jack, with the full support and respect of new SFA Head Coach Matt Brauer. It’s an opportunity for the church family to have a profound impact on young men who are trying to find their way in life as adults. To get an idea of how the players respond to family away from home, you need only watch what happens after any home game after the school song is sung. One at a time, the players look to the northwest corner of the stands to find their “families” and make their way to outreached arms for a good hug.

The FirstNac School Partnership team of First Forward is charged with organizing the Adopt-A-Jack program. It is an opportunity for the church family to reach out to the student population a few blocks to the north of our church campus. If you have an interest in serving the SFA community through the Adopt-A-Jack program or Wesley or in any other way, contact

Le’Ann Solmonson lsolmonson@gmail.com



*2025-26
Adopt-A-Jack
Participants*

Update From the Board of Stewards

The Board of Stewards gathered in the Parlor at 6:00 pm on Monday, January 19 for the regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The group was called to order at 6 pm by Chair Chris Hancock. Members welcomed Pastor Marlin Fenn, who opened the meeting with prayer and then heard a devotional from board member Garry Solmonson. After hearing a ministry report from Pastor Melissa and a report from the chair and the senior pastor, members heard a request from the Staff/Parrish Relations Committee to set salary parameters to be used in the recruiting process for a youth director and a director of children's ministries. With the decision, at the encouragement of the District Superintendent, to move FirstNac to a single-pastor church effective at the end of June, the board agreed to place a ceiling on the combined salaries for the two new director positions. That ceiling will

be equal to the combined salaries of the two associate pastor positions that will be ending in June. The board also heard a financial report that included the news that the church rallied at the end of 2025 to close the gap in our operating budget to almost zero. Members also heard a report that the replacement and installation of both heating units that serve the sanctuary is pending and should be accomplished soon. After hearing a report on audio/visual needs in the choir loft and approving the use of the scout hut by the Sew Blessed team, the group adjourned just before 7 pm. The Board of Stewards meets monthly on the third Monday at 6 pm in the Parlor. All are welcome to attend.

If you have a question or matter for the Board of Stewards, please contact:

Chris Hancock, Board Chair
936.554.0029
chris@hancockadvertising.com

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