

# Notes From Cheryl

## PASTOR'S NARRATIVE REPORT CHARGE CONFERENCE 2025

### *Blessings Table*

Our location across the highway from East Texas A&M University and a low-cost motel next door makes our neighborhood a perfect opportunity to feed hungry people. We stock a table with portable convenience food and water, and we have a faithful following of people who utilize this resource. We keep prepared canned meals (ravioli, soup, etc.) with pop tops, plus protein snack bars and other items as available. We have two volunteers who shop for the Table weekly and an additional four to six who put out new stock each day. Several members have helped individuals with special needs, such as a new wheelchair, food for cats and dogs, camping gear, and so on. Some of the clients have come into the worship service to express their thanks. This is a great way for us to build relationships.

### *Commerce Homeless Task Force*

This year we are working with city leaders, other churches and campus ministries to offer a Warm Center during adverse winter weather. We have joined with Greenville's Homeless Task Force to transport people by bus to Greenville to take advantage of weekly Street Showers offered there through Wesley UMC and a nondenominational church.

### *Serve Team*

Our Serve Team organizes the volunteers for the Blessings Table and collects money during worship designated as "Drop A Dollar" funds for local, denominational, and global ministries such as Commerce ISD, UMCOR, Angel Tree Prison Ministry, Wesley Campus Ministry at East Texas A&M. Serve Team and Prayer Shawl puts on a Merry Market and/or Fall Festival each year to raise money for missions, involving the entire church.

### *Finances*

Member giving is falling every year and 2025 is no exception. We have approximately the same number of people being moved to the "Inactive" list as we do members who have not given anything this year to the church.

This fact has presented the opportunity to make Little Ark Nursery & Preschool a major income stream for the church. This year Little Ark has paid approximately \$33,500 in reimbursements for building usage and \$20,000 in shared tuition. Our Little Ark ministry team, formed last year, consists of mostly church members, whereas before the "board"

(a misnomer) for Little Ark had only one or two church members. We no longer consider our ministry team a “board” because Little Ark is not its own entity – it is an integral part of First United Methodist Church Commerce and will remain so.

Some families from Little Ark participate in worship and other activities of the church. We realize that many parents currently do not attend church on Sundays or consider themselves “members” of church. However, our mission is to build relationships with these families. As pastor, I meet with the older preschool/preK students and the Toddler 2s regularly for faith formation, Bible stories, songs, and prayer. These sessions are the highlight of my week and give me sermon fodder quite often.

### *University Ministry*

We work with Wesley Campus Ministry to invite and welcome college students into our church, as well as supporting their ministry. We have five or six students who sing with the church choir as section leaders. Most of them take part in other church activities as well. We are planning a Christmas music worship event which will utilize university students and youth as readers, actors, and singers, and we will get the word out to invite students to attend as a “front porch” activity.

### *Reconciling Ministries*

We are inviting and welcoming all people to worship and fellowship with us. We began with a Friendsgiving Potluck after worship in November last year and will continue this year. The Friendship Class recently had a study on Homosexuality in the Bible and we will have a “Deep Dive” Pastor’s Bible Study on the same subject this fall.

### *Youth Ministry*

We have youth who especially love Bridgeport Camp and concentrate most of their fundraising efforts on getting there each summer!

We will also host a team from U.M. Army this June which will provide opportunities for more youth and families to experience God’s love in action. The youth sometimes lead in worship, serve communion, and participate in local civic events such as parades, Bois d’Arc Bash, and church activities such as Trunk or Treat and Merry Market.

### *Bible Study & Small Groups*

The Friendship Sunday School class is a long-time active group in the church. We offer seasonal Bible studies as well. The men’s group meets weekly for breakfast, and a women’s group meets in the afternoon every other week.

Prayer Shawl is a group that meets monthly to create handmade gifts for sick, hospitalized, and grieving people. They stay in touch with elderly and disabled persons to keep them connected to the church.

