

# Faith Leads

We are pleased to present FUMCAH's inaugural edition of *Faith Leads*. In this quarterly newsletter, we will get a balcony view of our church's ministry and life together. We will look back to celebrate our accomplishments and acknowledge missteps. We will share trends we notice and insights we glean. As a church, we often communicate in short announcements and sound bites, pulling your attention from one event to another. In *Faith Leads*, we seek out the whole picture of the church's ministry, so that we might discern together where our faith is leading us.

This edition of *Faith Leads* looks at the bold steps we have taken during the standstill of the pandemic. You will meet Ben Hallett, our new Director of Children and Youth Ministries, and Sarah Ridyard, our new Preschool Director. Lynn Mikels will share new initiatives we have begun in hands-on mission opportunities. Christopher Rice will introduce you to our digital ministries team and let you in on how we are improving our streamed worship services.

Enjoy this edition of *Faith Leads* and tell us where faith is leading you!

[www.fumcah.com](http://www.fumcah.com)

As we moved towards a hybrid worship and community, the FUMCAH website has become an important point of contact between the church, the congregation, and the community. Here are a few pages to check out:

[fumcah.com/events](http://fumcah.com/events) provides a listing of upcoming events you can participate in.

[fumcah.com/worship](http://fumcah.com/worship) contains the most recent online service, Order of Worship, and check-in page.

[fumcah.com/getinvolved](http://fumcah.com/getinvolved) is a place to sign up to volunteer, learn about Discovery Circles, and more.

[fumcah.com/happenings](http://fumcah.com/happenings) is our community blog, with photos, videos, and descriptions of what we've been up to.

[fumcah.com/enews](http://fumcah.com/enews) is where you can find our weekly e-news.

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FUMCAH's Quarterly Newsletter  
March 2022

### Lent 2022 - Filled to the Brim

God's grace overflows, fills us up, and spills over. Our Lenten theme is *Filled to the Brim*, and invites us to a full life, to live authentically, counter scarcity, and pour out grace wherever it is needed. Often, Lent is a season of giving up and letting go, a season of deprivation, piety, and confession. But the traditional scripture texts for Lent are full of stories of God's abundant love: a prodigal son welcomed home, a barren fig tree nurtured and care for with hope, precious perfume lavishly shared. These texts are brimming with the good news of God's love.

Lent is the season in the Christian year when we prepare for the world-changing events of Jesus' death on Good Friday and Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday. Traditionally, it was the season when new converts to Christianity would prepare for baptism, when they would leave behind old lives and embrace a new life in Christ. We will do the same, trusting that when we live trusting love's promise, we will live fully and faithfully.

Peace,  
*Melissa Earley (she, her, hers)*  
Lead Pastor, First UMC of Arlington Heights

### FUMCAH's Newest Staff Members

#### Ben Hallett | Director of Children and Youth Ministries

Ben grew up in central Indiana on a spot of land surrounded by corn fields, a creek, the woods, and a pond. His childhood home has had a profound influence on his identity and values: a love for God's creation, a habit of wandering in contemplation, and an appetite for adventure and discovery.

Since moving to Libertyville, IL in 2011, Ben's adventures have been about the building of a rooted life. In what can only be described as the gracious activity of God, Ben has been blessed to get married, start a family, and cultivate the humble beginnings of a mini-farm/homestead dream. His household includes Ben, Jacqueline, their two daughters, his father-in law, Wendell the dog, Leo the cat, fifteen chickens, and a garden that seems to need more care than the rest of them.

Ben considers himself a "jack-of-all-trades" type. Loving sports, shows, reading, board games, diverse food culture, music, poetry, art, birding, bicycling, camping, hiking, canoeing, etc... basically, he loves to learn how to love new things though passionate (and nerdy) people.

Ben has a deep commitment to the local church and a strong vision for the beautiful community it can be, and how it can empower people to live as agents of God's abundant life and love in a hurting world. And he's excited to meet you!

#### Sarah Ridyard | Preschool & We-e Care Director

Sarah Ridyard has been working in the early childhood field since 2009. Before joining the FUMCAH Preschool, she combined her passion for working with children and her love for travel by working abroad in schools located in South Korea, Turkey, China, and Brazil. Sarah is a licensed K-6 educator with an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education. She feels lucky to be part of the FUMCAH community and working with a preschool that promotes child development through inquiry, discovery, and play.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone  
to meet the entire FUMCAH staff:



## A Year of New Beginnings

In the wearying flux of our “comeback year,” one thing has become abundantly clear. New beginnings are messy! What great energy we had to kick off the year! VBS, a packed youth kick-off, multitudinous meetings, bold ideas, shifts in philosophy, you name it! We were in it. And then life (re: COVID, winter, etc.) hits and knocks you around a little, jumbles things up and scatters that energy.

This has been an emotionally challenging year for me. I’ve lamented publicly that I still don’t even know what most of you fully look like. I’ve struggled with the disconnect of serving a community in which my family and I are not living. I’ve felt mired in a spiritual dry spell, finding some, but little, solace in the words of the Psalmist, “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” And yet, just as a seed must be buried and die before it produces new life, I cling to that perennial hope of winter: that spring always comes around. There are good, fresh, and beautiful things, both now and on the horizon.

We’ve re-established a regular rhythm for all our youth (6th-12th grades) to come and do life together. A place to shed all the defense mechanisms that we gather in a world that can be cruel and encourage each other to pick up the cross of Jesus that extends love and blessing to others. This community is growing stronger week by week, and we’ve had fruitful conversations about the Bible, justice, and the big questions of identity and purpose. We’ve also been struggling together to confess the damage being done by colonialism and extractive capitalism while trying to figure out how to hold on to hope in this humanity that God so loves. And yes, it’s been hard and awkward at times, but such is the messiness of new beginnings!

We affirmed our commitment to ASP (Appalachia Service Project) and are excited to explore where and to whom our other mission endeavors will take us in future years. We are in the conception stage of imagining what a new high school music ministry will look like - perhaps a worship band with singers & instrumentalists experiencing that transcendence that can come when we lose ourselves in music made for God’s glory. We are excited to reconnect with the earth - to the clay from which we were formed, finding ways to cultivate abundance from its potential, limit the harm we do, and slowly undo the curse of climate catastrophe - the messiest of new beginnings.

The future is bright because it is God’s. And as people who belong to God, I invite you to open up your imagination with us and be present as we stumble together through this season into God’s promised, abundant reality. For Christ is with us, therefore we have all we need to make it happen.

With you and for you,  
*Ben Hallett (he/him/his)*  
Children & Youth Ministry

## Preschool & We-e Care

Has this cold winter weather got you feeling down? Well, that certainly is not the case for us here at FUMCAH Preschool! We are relishing in the weather the winter months have to offer. Give us snow any day!

Our children have been taking full advantage this winter by going for walks in the cool air and playing in the snow. Not only does snow offer a fantastic invitation for children to put their creativity to good use through imaginative play, but it also provides a perfect medium for us to work on our fine motor skills. And, of course, breathing in that crisp, fresh air does the body and mind some serious good!

The next time you catch yourself wishing that spring would hurry up and get here already, take a step outside, and look at the magic and wonder winter has to offer for all our Preschool and We-e Care children.

*Sarah Ridyard*  
Preschool & We-e-Care Director



now enrolling  
[fumcah.com/preschool](http://fumcah.com/preschool)



## Jesu, Jesu

Jesu, Jesu fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve  
the neighbors we have from you.

Neighbors are rich and poor,  
neighbors are black and white,  
neighbors are near and far away.

- The United Methodist Hymnal, #432



Our Missions Committee and the FUMCAH family are living the words of this hymn. The pictures from the airport in Kabul last year were heartbreaking. The images, coupled with the words of fear and despair we heard from those attempting to leave Afghanistan, were reminders of the worldwide plight of refugees. Worldwide, thousands of children spend their formative years in a refugee camp. Our Missions Committee responded by forming RAFT, the Refugee Assistance and Friendship Team. This small group decided to co-sponsor a refugee family with RefugeeOne, and officially announced the project in early December.

As we explored the theme of "finding home" during Advent, the RAFTers actively raised money for rent support, gathered furnishings for an apartment, and sought mentors to work with the family - so that a family, our "neighbors from far away," could be warmly welcomed to their new home. That first team of Wendy Dunnington, Greg and Dale Ford, Jean Wood, and Lou Walton has since expanded to include many more persons from the church and community. In less than two months, our initial fund-raising goal was met, furniture and household goods have been gathered, and our mentor team is anxious to meet the family.

It was only last fall that the small team from the Missions Committee began actively exploring what would be involved in co-sponsoring a refugee family and so much has been accomplished. The spirit of generosity and hospitality is alive and well at FUMCAH. I wonder where God might be leading us next as we seek to love boldly.

*Lynn Mikels (she, her, hers)  
Pastor of Discipleship*

### Office Hours

Beginning March 1, the church office will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am-4:00pm or by appointment. Sunday morning office hours will continue unchanged, 9:00am-11:00am. Please call the office at 847-255-5112 for further information.

### Church Apportionments

At \$79,116 per year, over 9% of our budget goes to our apportionments. To see what our apportionments support, please visit [link.fumcah.com/apportionment](https://link.fumcah.com/apportionment). Contact Melinda Kirby at [m.kirby@fumcah.com](mailto:m.kirby@fumcah.com) with any questions.

## Incremental | Monumental

As we continue to worship through the changes and challenges that the pandemic has brought, I would like to highlight the work that the Worship Tech Team has helped us accomplish. When we first came back to in-person Sunday services in June of 2021, we jumped on Zoom as a church. This was done with donated phones throughout the Sanctuary acting as cameras. Many thanks to Jim Petrusek, Terri Passolt, Jim and Susan Abdnor, and Lauren Johnson for the phones. Christina Rice continued her role as Media Assistant, bringing an astounding attention to detail and care for the final look and sound of the services. The two of us controlled the Zoom meeting, streamed the meeting to YouTube, mixed the sound, projected the slides, and controlled the lighting. What a joy to be together in real-time, instead of pre-recording and editing every word and every frame! One thing we learned quickly was that we needed to make the service more accessible, more consistent, and more authentic for the congregants at home as well as in the Sanctuary.

When the Rob Roy Parsonage was sold, funds were designated for improving online and hybrid worship, and we were able to invest in a set of Mevo cameras and an iPad to control them. This advancement coincided with the official formation of the Worship Tech Team, as Sam Williams volunteered to help with running the increasingly complex technology needs of a Sunday service. The team has expanded to include Lauren Johnson, Matthew Jones, Shane Sutton, and Julianne Conlee with additional support from Chad Sutton, Mike Schellinger, and Ben Hallett. Incremental changes lead to monumental improvements: a typical service currently consists of two iPads, three cameras, twenty microphones, two independent audio mixes (in-room and online), and over sixty projected slides. We stream directly to YouTube and embed the video on the FUMCAH website.

YouTube was chosen as our host due to it being a video-focused platform that is easily accessible on computers, tablets, smartphones, and



smart TVs. Not everyone at home has the same access to modern devices or the technical skills to see and hear the services clearly. Lauren Johnson thinks that something we do well is "making sure everyone, including those at home, can see and hear the service," and Matthew Jones says, "I think we have a strong online presence that really reaches out to new people." Reaching and supporting everyone where they are is one of our primary goals. If you would like to join the Worship Tech Team or you would like help with receiving the services at home, please reach out to [media@fumcah.com](mailto:media@fumcah.com). We are happy to help!

*Christopher Rice (he/they)  
Director of Communications and Media*