



Pastor Tammy’s Ponderings



ISSUE 53

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Fresh Starts—Live Healthy and Be Well!

“See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.”
—Isaiah 43:19
There are times in life when God invites us to begin again. A fresh start does not always mean that everything around us immediately changes. Sometimes a fresh start begins when God renews our minds and teaches us to respond to life in a new way. In Isaiah 43:19, God declares, “See, I am doing a new thing!” Even in wilderness seasons, God is making a way. Even in dry and difficult places, God is able to provide refreshing streams. Our responsibility is to trust Him, follow His direction, and become willing participants in the new work He desires to accomplish within us. As we embrace the theme “**Fresh Starts—Live Healthy and Be Well,**” let us remember that true wellness involves more than physical health. Living well includes our spiritual, emotional, mental, and relational well-being. God desires that we live lives filled with purpose, peace, meaningful relationships, and faithful service. I believe that there are three important practices that can help us experience a fresh start and live more abundantly.

1. Pray Without Ceasing

The foundation of a healthy and spiritually fulfilling life is prayer. First Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to “pray without ceasing.” This does not mean that we must remain on our knees every moment of the day. It means that we should live in continual communion with God. Prayer should not be our last resort when everything else has failed. Prayer should be our first response. We should pray when we awaken, as we make decisions, while we work, when we are worried, and before we rest at night. Through prayer, we receive direction, comfort, strength, correction, and peace. Prayer keeps us connected to the One who knows what we need before we ask. When we pray consistently, we become more sensitive to God’s voice and more aware of the new things He is doing in our lives.

2. Find or Redefine Your Purpose

A fresh start may require us to examine our purpose. We must ask ourselves: “What is God calling me to do in this season of my life?” Our purpose may develop and change as we grow older, gain wisdom, experience transitions, or enter new seasons. A person’s purpose is not limited by age, employment status, physical ability, or past mistakes. As long as God gives us life, there is still meaningful work for us to do. Your purpose may be found in encouraging others, teaching children, caring for family members, mentoring young people, supporting a ministry, praying for your church, sharing your testimony, or using your gifts to meet a need. Do not allow yesterday’s disappointments to convince you that your life no longer has meaning. God can use everything you have experienced—your victories, struggles, lessons, and even your failures—to prepare you for what comes next.

3. Stay Connected to Others

God did not create us to live isolated lives. Healthy living requires healthy relationships. We need people who will encourage our faith, speak truth in love, pray with us, and remind us of God’s promises. We should intentionally connect with friends who have positive and holy outlooks—people who inspire us to grow rather than encourage us to remain bitter, fearful, or discouraged. We must also remain connected through service. Performing acts of service in the church and community allows us to move beyond ourselves and become a blessing to others. We can visit someone who is lonely, volunteer in a ministry, assist a neighbor, support a community program, feed someone who is hungry, or simply offer a listening ear. Service strengthens our sense of purpose and reminds us that we are part of something greater than ourselves. Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly. Abundant life does not mean a life without challenges. It means a life filled with the presence, purpose, peace, and power of God. Psalm 103:5 tells us that God “satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Living well is God’s desire for us. He wants to renew our strength, restore our hope, and refresh our spirits. Let us receive the fresh start God is offering. Let us pray without ceasing, rediscover our purpose, remain connected to faithful people, and serve others with love. God is doing a new thing. May we have the faith to perceive it, the courage to embrace it, and the commitment to walk boldly into the abundant life Christ has prepared for us.

Rev. Tamara Ingram, Senior Pastor

PASTOR TOREY UNPLUGGED



FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF MY LIFE

August has a rhythm all its own. Backpacks come out of closets. School supply lists get checked twice. Dorm rooms get packed into cars. Whether your student is heading into kindergarten or a college classroom for the first time, this season carries a mix of excitement and nerves for them, and often for you, too.

I still remember my own first day of college like it was yesterday, even though it's hard to believe it's almost been ten years since I graduated. I was carrying 21 credit hours that semester, fueled by nothing but excitement and the conviction that I was about to conquer the world. In my very first honors class, I made a decision that ended up shaping the next four years of my life: I introduced myself. Not just to the students around me, but personally, to my professor. Not only did I introduce myself, but I also made a concerted effort to build relationships with my colleagues and professors.

That one simple gesture, choosing to build a relationship instead of staying anonymous in the back row, opened doors I couldn't have imagined that day. A flurry of scholarships, leadership opportunities, study abroad, and more. Because here's what I've learned since: when people know your name, when they remember your face, they can advocate for you in ways a stranger never could. Relationships create opportunities.

So as our students step into new classrooms, new campuses, and new chapters this month, here's my encouragement for them and for all of us:

Build relationships. Introduce yourself. Learn names. Say hello to the person sitting alone. You never know which conversation will become a friend and an advocate.

Open your heart. New environments can make us want to guard ourselves. Growth happens instead when we stay open to new friends, new ideas, and new ways God might be shaping us.

Allow God to work in your life. Every new season is an invitation, not just a schedule change. Ask God to use this year, not just to get you through it.

A Few Practical Tips for the Year Ahead

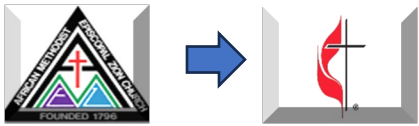
- **Start each day with a moment of prayer,** even sixty seconds before you walk out the door, can center your whole day.
- **Find your people early.** Whether it's a campus ministry, a study group, or just one friend who checks on you, community makes the hard days lighter.
- **Talk to your teachers and professors.** They remember the students who show up and speak up, and they can open doors you don't even know exist yet.
- **Give yourself grace.** New beginnings come with a learning curve.

To every student in our church family, grade school through graduate school: we are proud of you, we are praying for you, and we cannot wait to see who you become this year.

Rev. Torey Haynes, Associate Pastor

We're Going Back To School





CELEBRATING 160 YEARS: HONORING OUR FIRST SHEPHERD, REVEREND AND ELDER MATTHEW ALSTON * 1821-1884

Our church beginnings are simple yet complex because of shared and "peculiar" African and American histories. "WE" survived centuries-old pains and hardships because GOD reigns and has blessed us, His Children, to break chains of abuse to live. Joy was experienced at times by surviving it all for most ancestors focused on the **trinity** and **heaven**.

As we celebrate the 160th Anniversary of Warnersville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZC), now known as Saint Matthews United Methodist Church (SMUMC), we look backward with deep reverence to the giant upon whose shoulders our sanctuary stands: our very first minister. Genealogical records and obituaries for his specific lineage are limited, leaving his parents' and sibling names historically unrecorded and siblings undocumented due to the nature of his birth. Born enslaved to a Fayetteville, NC family, Reverend Alston's life was a testament to liberation, faith, and unyielding civic vision. Following a courageous escape to freedom during the Civil War, he answered a divine call to the ministry.

In January 1868, under the pioneering oversight of Bishop James Walker Hood, he was officially appointed to lead the Greensboro District and Mission. Because Matthew Alston spent his career serving both sister branches of the early Black Methodist movement, his name is enshrined forever in the official North Carolina Annual Conference Ledger. The minutes of the North Carolina Conference explicitly list Matthew Alston, alongside his birth year of 1821, as one of the few legendary "Original Founding Members" from the initial era of the AMEZC society's organization.

To describe the early efforts of his circuit riders, Bishop Hood frequently noted that early missionaries sent to the North

Carolina Piedmont were equipped "with little more than a Bible, a hymn book, and a burning zeal for the salvation of their people." He documented that early congregations had to meet in "bush arbors, tobacco barns, or under the canopy of heaven" before permanent sanctuaries could be erected. This is the first documentation of our church's early faith practices I have found. It corroborates with Harmon Unthank's historical note that "services were held in a tobacco warehouse." After the congregation was established, Alston registered our church deed in

1869. Hood praised these early circuit preachers like Alston for laying the bedrock of Black education and community autonomy in North Carolina. Reverend Matthew is credited as the liaison between the AMEZC and the Freedmen's Aid Society, which funded Bennett Seminary (he also helped to construct it). His funeral was held at our very first built church, sadly destroyed by an 1886 tornado just two years after his death.

By purchasing land from fellow Black pioneer Harmon Unthank and establishing a permanent family homestead on Ashe Street, Reverend Alston ensured that his family—and our church family—would remain forever woven into the fabric of Greensboro. Today, he rests alongside his beloved wife, Caroline, in the sacred grounds of historic Union Cemetery. They had at least five children. One granddaughter we remember is the late Dr. Charlotte Alston, a Bennett College graduate, professor and provost, as well as the director of music and organist for Trinity AMEZ Church. His living legacy continues through 160 years of family, praise, education, and community empowerment.

"Well done, good and faithful servant."
-Matthew 25:21-

CELEBRATE AND WORSHIP WITH US:

Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 10:00 AM
Followed by SMUMC's History Exhibit
and Luncheon

Submitted by The Archives and History Ministry

IT IS HISTORY



Liturgical Arts Ministry

The first half of this year has been the busiest season the *FirstFruits* Ministry has performed “*The Glory Train*” since it began its journey in 2004. Our last stop was in High Point for the Hayworth Cancer Center, and what a blessing it was to share this Ministry with them during one of their Survivorship Programs. Next departure, 3:00 p.m. on August 2, 2026 from Holmes Grove UMC. “*All aboard!*”



Looking Ahead: *DayStar* Teens are holding extended rehearsals to devote more time to discuss the Dance Ministry’s core values, delve into the meaning of our motto, understand our *DayStar* Chant and learn related Scriptures. These young ladies are learning choreography for a few core dances that have been in our repertoire for years. Presently, they are preparing for the Homecoming 2026 dance and soon will learn the skill of creating choreography.



The *Liturgical Arts Ministry* continues to add expressive pieces to the worship services this season . . . presenting a few words, “*Standing in the Gap,*” about two Freedom Days . . . Juneteenth and Independence Day. Mrs. Beula Mae was back on the scene to have a talk with the Patron sisters about the upcoming Homecoming and Revival celebrations! The *FirstFruits* Drama Ministry plans each message with a dramatic approach with consideration to the set design, costuming, characterization, creative expression, and story line.



Something Beautiful is Happening at St Matthews UMC! Western NC Conference, United Methodist Church

One life changed can change everything. 💙

Congratulations to St. Matthews UMC in Greensboro, recipient of the 2026 One Matters Award! After recording no baptisms or professions of faith in 2024, the church celebrated 31 professions of faith and 8 baptisms in 2025, a powerful reminder that God is at work through faithful invitation, welcome, and discipleship. Watch their story and be inspired. ✨

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84RnJywEN0g&t=244s>

MEET OUR VOLUNTEER

Saint Matthews family, let me introduce one of our dedicated volunteers, Ms. Niya Robinson from Charlotte, North Carolina. She is a rising senior at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. She enjoys playing sports, especially basketball, working out, and spending time with friends and family. She has been volunteering weekly during the school year since the beginning of 2025, her sophomore year.

Niya stated "I especially enjoy coming and helping out at Saint Matthews UMC; it has truly become something very special to me. Volunteering here has brought me so much joy because I love being able to help others and giving back to the church community. Everyone here has been so welcoming and supportive, which has made my experience even more meaningful. Serving at this church has also been a great help with earning volunteer hours required for some of my college classes. I am very thankful for the opportunity to continue helping out and being a part of such a positive and caring environment."

Niya has served in the Food Pantry, assisted with the media ministry and helped with administrative work. Her willingness to take any assignment and complete it with excellence is greatly appreciated. She was instrumental in developing several of our advertising flyers and posters. I want to thank her for all the hard work so far and I am looking forward to another year. Debi McClendon



Pictured: Niya (left) & Jeff Lathan (right)

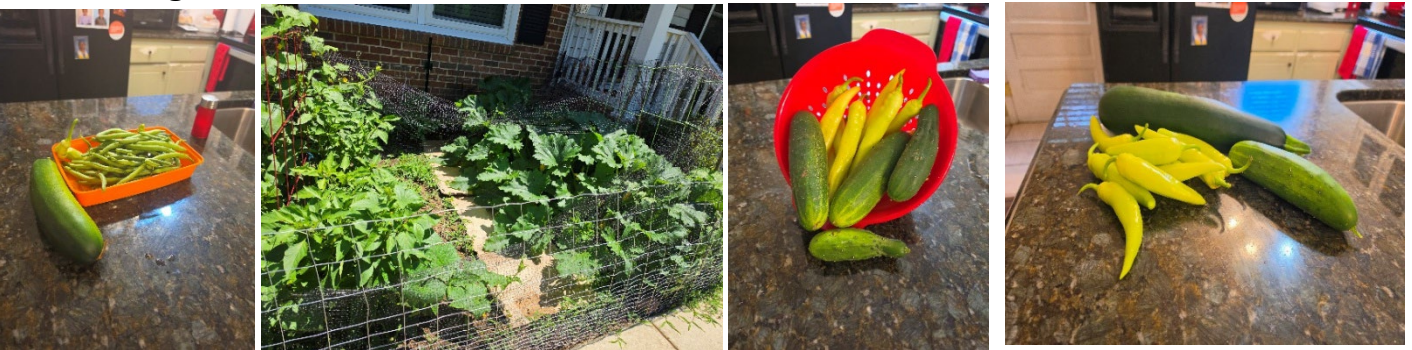
Shirley Ballard Foster's Prayer Garden

I lose myself when I am in my garden. I have no worries and the world seems peaceful.

I know God is in the garden with me. He brings the hummingbirds, yellow finches, robins, jay birds and the squirrels that get their share of the bird food. The butterflies dance from one flower to another.



Charles Edgerton's Bountiful Garden



Our very own Brianna Beck, currently living in Los Angeles, California, has been passionate about fitness and wellness since her teenage years. She has turned that passion into a successful career, continuing to inspire others through her dedication to health and wellness.

We are excited to share that Brianna's image has been featured on a billboard in West Hollywood, California—a wonderful recognition of her hard work, commitment, and growing impact in the fitness community. This is truly a proud moment for all who know and support her.

Congratulations, Brianna! We celebrate your accomplishments and look forward to all that you will continue to achieve as you inspire others to live healthier, stronger lives.

Michelle A Thompson



Scout Troop 441 conducted a Court of Honor on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, and eight Scouts receive seven rank advancements and completed seven merit badges. On June 17-19, 2026, Duvall Nowlin attended Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) at Guilford College. The RYLA is put on by District Rotary Clubs and youth learn about themselves and community service.



On June 28th through July 3rd, six scouts attended summer camp at Camp Cherokee in Yanceyville, NC. Scouts completed 12 merit badges during the week of camp and Duvall Nowlin received the Tommy Murray Honor Camp Award. Scouts will work to finish any incomplete merit badges later in the fall.



ABC

BACK TO SCHOOL

ST MATTHEW'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

600 E. FLORIDA ST. GREENSBORO NC 27406

AUGUST 15, 2026

2:00 PM-5:00PM

FREE BACKPACKS STUFFED WITH SUPPLIES FOR SCHOOL WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

GAMING TRUCK, FOOD ICE CREAM, MUSIC & FUN

336-272-4505

WE GOT YOUR BACK!!!

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH & BOOKBAG DRIVE

SMUMC is preparing for our annual Back to School Bash & Bookbag Drive on August 15th. We provide local students with bookbags and school supplies to help prepare them for the new school year. Monetary donations are now being accepted through August 3rd by cash, check or online. Make checks payable to St. Matthews United Methodist Church. Please list "Backpack/Bookbag Program" in the memo section of your check, on the church envelope or in 'Other' section for online giving.

We need volunteers!! If interested use this link to sign up

<https://forms.gle/hwHneEQWQQBq93bc9>

or contact Ramona Miller at ramonamiller01@gmail.com.

Thank you for your generosity.

August Happenings at “The Crossroads”

Health & Welfare meeting via zoom 6:30 pm ...August 3

Praise & Prayer with Pastor Tammy via zoom every 1st Tuesday ... August 4

Back to School Bash Planning Meeting via zoom 7 pm ... August 6

Nurture Education & Congregational Car meeting via zoom ... Aug 11

Back to School Bash ... August 15

Trustee Meeting via zoom 6:30 pm ... August 18

United Women of Faith Meeting ... August 22

Girl Scout Meeting @ 1:30 CHJ Fellowship Hall ... August 25

Friends, Faith & Fellowship Sunday 10 am under tent on MLK Parking Lot...Aug 30

United Methodist Men's Labor Day Barbeque ... September 7

Here are a few practical tips to help kids transition smoothly back to school:



- **Adjust Sleep Routines Early:** Start shifting bedtimes 15 to 30 minutes earlier each night a week or two before school starts so waking up early isn't a shock.
- **Organize the Night Before:** Lay out outfits, pack backpacks, and prepare lunches before going to bed to keep mornings stress-free.
- **Set Up a Dedicated Study Spot:** Create a quiet, well-lit area at home stocked with supplies specifically for homework and reading.
- **Tour the Campus or Meet Teachers:** Attend orientation or visit the school grounds to help ease any first-day jitters and build familiarity.
- **Talk Through First-Day Feelings:** Ask open-ended questions about what they are excited or nervous about, validating their feelings and offering reassurance.



Come Join Us for Worship

You are invited to join us in person every first through fourth Sundays for worship services at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., and fifth Sundays at 10 a.m. Services are also available via the social media platforms below:

Digital Options for Worship Services:

FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/stmatthewsgreensboro>

YOUTUBE <https://www.youtube.com/@SaintMatthewsUMC-GSO>

Creation Care Corner

Community Garden

Topic: Bee Balm

Common Name(s): Beebalm, Bergamot, Horesemint, Oswego Tea

6 “Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. 7 Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.

Numbers 24:6-7

Happy Summer from the Creation Ministry! So far, the community garden hasn't produced too many flowers, regrettably. This year's garden was planted with species to support pollinating insects for the most part; approximately seventy percent. While spending time in the garden this year I have noticed birds eating the seed (in theory) for one thing. Furthermore, 2026 has altogether been rough on gardens with the excessive heat and little rain.

Some of the chosen pollinator plants take time to establish themselves. That means that substantial growth may not be noticeable for a few years. However, as a newly commissioned United Methodist Earthkeeper (twice over) my hope is to be awarded grant funding that will allow the church to build a free standing, fenced garden space. If allocated, the updated garden area will be used to grow vegetables replete with accompanying pollinator supporting plants to

It is with great happiness that several Bee Balm plants within the Saint Matthews UMC community garden have produced blooms! Take a look at the pictures!

Key Pollinating Insects and Wildlife

- Long-Tongued Bees
- Butterflies: Species such as the *Swallowtail*, the endangered *Karner Blue*, and the *Raspberry pyrausta butterfly* rely heavily on bee balm.
- Moths
- Hummingbirds: While not insects, these birds are major pollinators for red bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), as their long bills easily extract nectar from the tubular flowers.
- Predatory Wasps



encourage healthy, consistent growth and crop production!

Having said that, here is some additional information about Bee Balm. To note, it is one of the suggested plant types per training I attended back in the winter entitled, *A Guide to Creating Diverse Habitats for Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects*, Chatham County Cooperative Extension Office, Pittsboro, NC. (I also recently completed *Becoming a Pollinator Ambassador* Training at the Iredell Country Cooperative Extension Office, Statesville, NC).

Monarda is a genus of herbaceous perennial plants in the family, *Lemnaceae*. It is native to North America, with a recognized 25 species! Bee Balm typically grows 2 to 4 feet tall and taller! Generally, blooms occur during the spring or summer in a variety of colors. The spiky flowers are pollinator "magnets". These plants are a must for sunny pollinator gardens (like ours)!

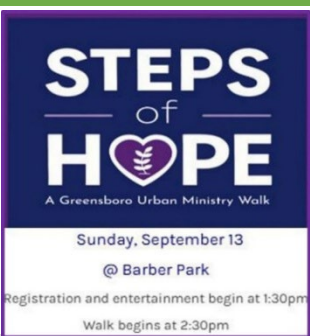
FUN FACT: The genus name honors Nicolás Monardas (1493–1588), physician/botanist from Seville. He was known for his work on the medical plants of the West Indies.

[Monarda \(Beebalm, Bee balm, Bergamot, Horsemint, Oswego Tea\) | North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox](#)

Garden Benefits

Beyond its role as a pollinator magnet, bee balm has a minty fragrance that naturally deters deer and rabbits. **DID YOU KNOW...**leaving the hollow stems standing through the winter provides a crucial hibernation habitat for native, solitary bees? [bee balm pollinating insects - Google Search](#)

Submitted by Karlah Burton, BS, BA Chairperson, Creation Care Ministry
General Board of Global Ministries Earthkeeper
Western NC Conference Team Ministry
NC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener
Volunteer-Guilford County, NC





TO: Church Members & Friends
FROM: Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, UMC-G.C.
Secretary of Religion and Race
RE: The Supreme Court Ruled

"The Supreme Court's decision allowing the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), protections for Haitian and Syrian nationals have intensified fear for families who have built lives, raised children, paid taxes, served churches, staffed businesses, and strengthened neighborhoods. Courts may frame the matter in terms of executive authority and judicial review. But the gospel presses a deeper question upon us: Will we be a people who make room for safety, or will we make peace with policies that place our neighbors in harm's way?

At the same time, the Court's affirmation of birthright citizenship speaks to another sacred question: Who belongs? Birthright citizenship is not a loophole, a favor, or a fragile permission slip. It is a constitutional promise that a child born in this country is not born into uncertainty about whether they count. It declares that belonging is not reserved for the powerful, the wealthy, the documented, or the already secure. It affirms that a child born here is part of the "we" of this nation.

These two decisions sit side by side in a painful moral tension. One reminds us that legal protections can be fragile for people who have already fled danger. The other reaffirms that children born here belong here. Together, they expose the spiritual urgency before us: safety, home, and welcome cannot remain slogans. They must become practices, policies, prayers, and public commitments.

This is where the church must speak and act with both prophetic courage and pastoral tenderness. The church cannot claim to follow a migrant Savior while remaining indifferent to migrant suffering. We cannot bless families at the altar while ignoring the fear that follows them home. Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to welcome the stranger, protect the vulnerable, do justice, love mercy, and remember what it means to depend on grace.

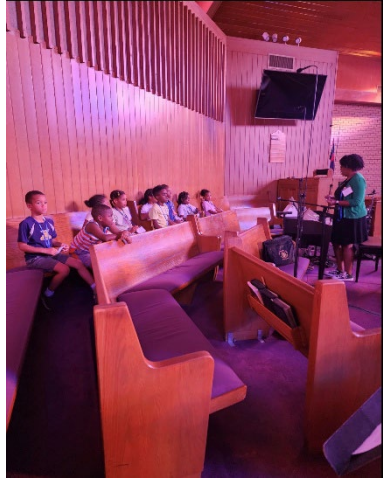
Hospitality is not merely coffee after worship. It is advocacy, accompaniment, legal clinics, pastoral care, language access, emergency support, sanctuary, and the holy courage to say that our neighbors' safety matters to God and must matter to us. It is also sitting beside families in moments of uncertainty and reminding them that neither a court ruling nor a policy debate can erase their God-given dignity.

In this 250th anniversary year, may we recommit ourselves to building a country and a church where welcome is more than a word and belonging is more than a promise. In such a time as this, welcome is not weakness, safety is not optional, and home is not a privilege for the few. They are the beloved community God calls us to build." SMUMC shouts Hallelujah! Rev. Arroyo's message is extracted from the Gen. Conf. on Religion and Race (7/6/26).

It is up to us as individuals or a church family to act for good on behalf of our neighbors. The what and how is not prescribed, **YOU DECIDE**

"Be the change you want to see in the world."
Mahatma Ghandi and Arleen Lorange

Submitted by: Peggie Horton and Albertina McGirt
R-2 Committee Co-chairs



VBS 2026

MEMORIES

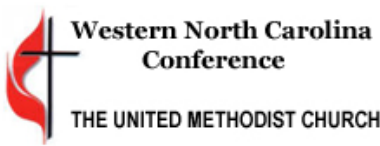
**Thanks to all who
helped make it a
success!**



Deadline for September Newsletter articles is August 20, 2026. Theme is “Fall in love with Jesus” Send all articles & photos to Media Ministry at smumcgreensboro@gmail.com.



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St. Matthews

