



THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

August 2021

Chill the bubbly!

Prep the streamers and noisemakers!

Cheer on the final days & efforts!

THE NEW BUILDING WILL OPEN ITS DOORS THIS MONTH!

What a wonderful, mysterious, awe-inspiring project has emerged before our eyes over the last seven months. The New Building will house Sapphire Early Learning Center (SELC), gather folks for fellowship and study groups, and host community members in their services and business, becoming a true and tangible extension of God's vision & mission for Stevensville UMC.

WE HAVE SO MUCH TO CELEBRATE.

- ♦ We've embraced an attitude and heart that envisioned the love that needs to happen under the roof even as we consider how to take care of and honor the legacy of a historic building.
- ♦ We've undergone extensive changes and shifts and pivots through the pandemic.
- ♦ We've remained engaged with the community through continued involvement with AA, Pantry Partners, Clothes Closet, Scouts, Summer Meal Program, and gifts through Loaves & Fishes Fund.
- ♦ We've endured setbacks and even major inconveniences. (Remember a building without heat?!)
- ♦ We've continued to be in connection with each other through cards, calls, and visits.
- ♦ We've begun to invest with financial generosity to a significant capital improvement and long-term ministry.

You are invited with GUSTO to be a part of these final days and weeks to help us finish strong in construction and launch toward living the vision at SUMC.

- ♦ Join the Painting Party the week of Aug. 3rd. All materials are on site. Come Monday at 9am or show up when you can. Each day we'll be painting from 9-4, with evening sessions on Tuesday 8/3 & Thursday, 8/5 from 6-8pm.
- ♦ Attend a "Reconnect & Vision Gathering" in August & September. Enjoy a time together with 8-10 people sharing what invigorates them about SUMC and what vision they have as we consider the upcoming generosity campaign & opening SELC. (See pg. ? for more details)
- ♦ FINAL Summer Concert, Friday, Aug. 13 at 7pm. A celebration of chamber music will feature faculty from University of Montana. The indoor concert invites a free will donation to benefit Sapphire Early Learning Center. All ages are welcome.
- ♦ Open House for Enrolled Families & Community, Thursday Aug. 26, 6-8pm. Take a tour of the new facility, ask questions of programming and enroll new kiddos.
- ♦ Ribbon Cutting & Dedication Service on Sunday, Aug. 29 at 10:30. We will worship all together on the last Sunday of August and then dedicate the new building afterward with blessings, a ribbon cutting, and goodies.

SAPPHIRE EARLY LEARNING CENTER OPENS FOR BUSINESS, TUES. SEPT. 7.

Thank you for your commitment to the vision, effort, and celebration. All of this happens when a community comes together with a common goal and mission. Let us finish and claim joy for the richness of all that God has done in our midst and through us.

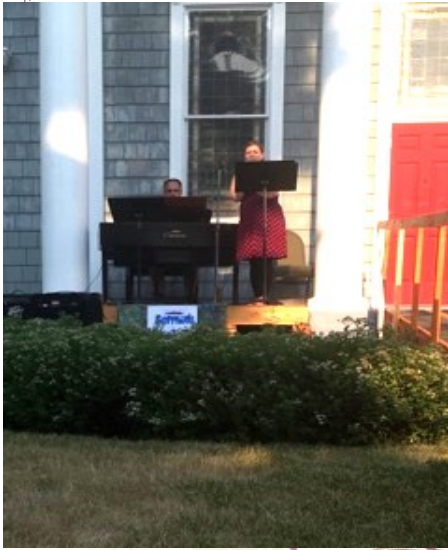
Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. ~Hebrews 12:1-2



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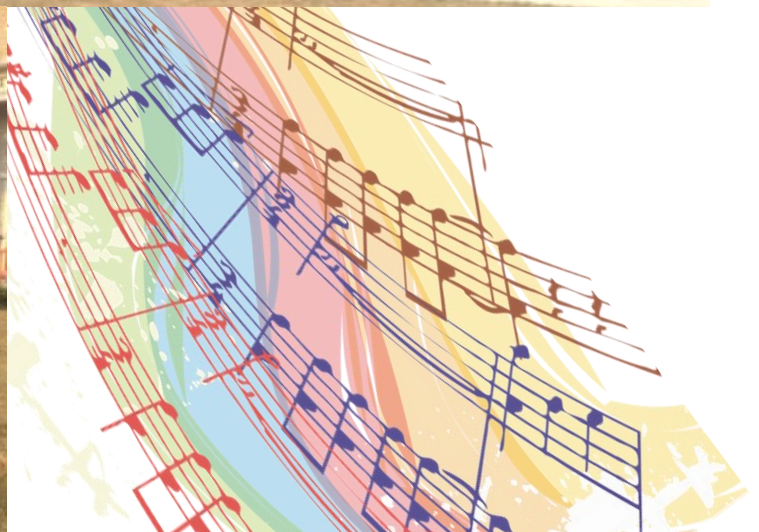
August 2021



Thanks to all who attended our outdoor concert on July 9th! Our next concert will be August 13th at 7 PM. ***“The Joys of Chamber Music”*** will be an indoor performance featuring flute, clarinet, cello, and horn from the ***University of Montana Music School faculty***.

Admission is free, but we will be collecting a goodwill offering for the new playground at the church. Thank you for your continued support of the arts in the Bitterroot Valley.

Mac Merchant



We hope you will join us! However, if this is not possible you may join us virtually on our YouTube Channel & Facebook.

- o YouTube: Search for “Stevensville United Methodist Church.” Look for the video that says “Live” in the bottom right corner.
- o Facebook: Search for “@SteviUmc.” Scroll till you see the concert.



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August 2021 Worship

God Speaks in the Objects

The wisdom, grace, calling, and justice of God are conveyed in the most unlikely of places, including the objects of our lives. How the nourishing bite of bread or sturdiness of a rock can capture the character of God! In this summer worship series, we will explore the depth that reside in the objects we encounter everyday. Such exploration can hone our awareness, gratitude, curiosity, and worship as we praise God in the everyday.

Prayer Practice: Gather the object of the week to eat, hold, look at, or fill up. Take a moment to give thanks for the object and then consider this reflection:

How does this object remind me of God's character and mission?

How might I be like this object to others, the natural world, and myself?

August 1: The Bread of Life ~ Communion Sunday

Jesus names himself "The Bread of Life" which encompasses all of the moments when God delivered people with sustenance. The nourishment for the day and assurance of God's presence met the Hebrews moving through the desert, the prophets during famine, and the crowd gathered on the hillside listening to Jesus. This Bread of Life sustains for all of history even as Jesus promises to feed more than just our bodies. We can take heart that even if we come to God- baskets empty, bellies hungry, souls famished - we will be met with just what we need.



Scripture: John 6:26-35

Prayer: Merciful Father, you heard the prayers of your people in the wilderness and fed them bread from heaven despite their sin. Graciously hear us today and feed us too with the Bread of Life from heaven, even our Lord Jesus Christ, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

August 8: The Rock

Across cultures and generations, the elemental object of the rock holds great significance, symbolism, and assurance. The rock has stabilized a weary traveler by showing him the way, provided comfort and rest, and even marked a sacred place. From a rock gushed for water and on a rock we are called to stand. The analogy can ground us in our daily lives while also becoming a richer metaphor for love. How can love take on the characteristics of a rock? If so elemental an object, might we find similar ease, familiarity and daily interaction with love?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:15, Psalm 18:1-3, Matthew 7:24-27

Prayer: Strong and powerful, guiding and intimate God of all creation, we humbly pause to recognize our place in the all of it. The rocks we might toss in our hands represent an entire world that expresses fortitude, majesty, and strength. Still you meet us as a refuge. Give us wisdom to embody your character, made real in a rock and empowered in love. Amen.





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August 15: Digging for the (w)hole: Blessing of the Animals

Some of the best stories develop in our own backyards, playing with pets, petting a horse or discovering the resident bugs. It seems to be only in hindsight that we truly see the gem of truth and wisdom “dug” up by our pets. And such wisdom resides at the heart of God in ways that holy providence both prepares us and our animal friends for one another and then helps us see the meaning and richness shared in mutual blessing with one another.



Scripture: Genesis 2:18-20, 9:9-10

Prayer: May we learn to return/ And rest in the beauty/ Of animal being,
Learn to lean low,/ Leave our locked minds,/ And with freed senses/ Feel the earth/ Breathing with us.
“To Learn from Animal Being” from *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O’Donohue

August 22: “Hold on Tight” with Sacred Places



We hold on tight to places for they give us courage and strength. They can remind us of a great success or a moment of delight. These places can also become sacred for how we see God working in and through that space, grounding us in truth and hope.

Scripture: 1 Kings 8: 22-30, 41-43

Prayer: Redeeming Sustainer, visit your people and pour out your strength and courage upon us, that we may hurry to make you welcome not only in our concern for others, but by serving them generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

August 29: Packing for Success: Blessing of the Backpacks

Open your backpack, satchel, purse, briefcase, or wallet and see what it holds. Do the contents help you move through the day, giving you assurance and knowledge, hope and tools to do your best? As we send students off to school and invite new kiddos and families into Sapphire Early Learning Center, we pray that they might be packing all they need for success: support, honesty, empathy, curiosity, patience, and play.

Jesus sent out his disciples with very few possessions, but they did have all the tools and trust from him for the adventures ahead.

Scripture: Mark 6:7-13

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank you for sending us on the road ahead, to school, work, play, and adventure following you. Help us pack just what we need. Help us leave behind the stuff that will weigh us down or distract us from what you would have us be and do. And for all those we encounter carrying heavy loads, teach us how to come alongside to lighten the burden. Amen.





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Blessing of the Animals ~ August 15th

Bring your fur babies to church to have them blessed. Great and small the Lord God made them all.



Summer Free Meal Program

Popsicles, swimming pools, and baseball bring smiles in the summer.

And so does breakfast and lunch!

Beginning June 28, SUMC has teamed up with Revive Church and Light of the Valley Assembly Church to provide free summer meals to kids ages 0-18. This state sponsored program needs partners on the ground to prep and distribute in communities. During the school year, Stevi Schools

provide free meals to over 40% of the student population and 30 backpacks each weekend to supplement nutrition for families. This translates to a real need during the summer, too. So far we have served 44 children with a week's worth of breakfast & lunches. That's 440 meals, several cart loads of food from Costco and more than 180 volunteer hours.

Blessing of the Backpacks

August 29th

School will begin soon. Bring your backpacks to church to be blessed.





Sapphire Early Learning Center News:

Vision Comes to Life

Doors open Tuesday, September 7, 2021!

In the final weeks before the doors open and kiddos find a new space of learning and growth, the team with Sapphire Early Learning Center (SELC) are gathering all the pieces for a successful beginning.

LaRee Jessop, the director of SELC, serves as the main point person for all inquiring families. "My email is just blowing up with excitement," she said at the July 19th SELC Board of Directors Meeting. This translates to an enrollment of 27 children to date. With a capacity of 75 kids, there is still room for others to take advantage of this awesome opportunity. However, the Board recognized that if SELC was at 50% enrollment by opening that would be a huge victory.

Meanwhile, LaRee, John Fisher, and many other hands (and garage sale fans) are gathering supplies and furnishings for the new space. Toddler size tables and chairs will welcome little ones to share meals family style, discover the wonders of play dough and paint wild pictures for their families. Each classroom will have space for books, age appropriate toys and learning games along with tables for meals, diaper changing areas and/or bathrooms, and a door to the outside world and playground.

The major push in August will be toward hiring team members. In the competitive job market, the SELC Board decided to increase starting wages above usual market rates, create opportunities for paid time off and health benefits.

SELC, a non-profit learning center, will provide four programs: Infant Care, All-day Daycare Care with preschool, Half-day Preschool, and Afterschool Care. Any donations of money or in kind gifts can receive a tax receipt for charitable giving.

All interested families looking to enroll children or applicants who value building up the next generation of leaders contact LaRee at director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com.



SELC is Hiring!

We are excited to announce a new addition to the Stevensville community, Sapphire Early Learning Center. We are a licensed childcare center that will serve children ages 0-12 years of age.

SELC will provide high quality childcare/preschool and it will show with our new state of the art center and technology to support families and team members.

If you are passionate about learning and growing in the Early Childhood Education profession this may be the career for you. We are now accepting applications for Early Childhood Lead teachers, Early childhood teachers, Assistant Director, and a Cook. If you love children and watching them grow, this may be the right field for you. Pay is DOE. Early Childhood experience, High School diploma/GED, CPR and First Aid are a plus, but not necessary. All training will be provided at no cost to you.



Staying Connected: A Visit with the District Superintendent

In her one opportunity to visit SUMC, Rev. Jan Witman, District Superintendent of Montana West, delighted in an in person conversation with members of the church on Tuesday, July 27. In her role as support person from the Mountain Sky Conference, Rev. Witman led a discussion about weathering COVID, considering challenges and identifying priorities with the crowd of 11 people who spoke candidly and hopefully about life at SUMC and in the Valley.

People highlighted the messiness of COVID, how much fun it was to do church at home in pajamas, and gratitude that SUMC offers a space where people can gather again. The subject of the pandemic led to good reflections, including hard learning curves and resilience of connection and finances.

Noting that normal attendance and revitalized engagement are challenges that face this faith community, many people chimed up about the priorities to guide our work together including helping SELC be a success, honing in on facility management and maintenance, and “introducing newer, younger people part of the whole thing,” said Judy Fraser.

“A priority is our presence in this town,” reflected Paul Ludington. “What we’re doing [with the building project and SELC] is proof that we can step out into faith, and that the community matters to us.”

“It’s a marvelous chance to be relevant in this community and whole valley,” Molly Hackett tagged on in considering the new ministry of SELC.

Rev. Witman encouraged the group and this church to continue to be the Body of Christ, right here, right now, even if decisions at the global level of the United Methodist Church are undecided. “You are an inspiration to the conference. ‘Remarkable, creative’ are words that people are saying about this church. Well done.”

Rev. Witman will join SUMC for the annual church conference and continue to cheer on its vital ministry no matter when she connects in person again.



“Reconnect & Vision Gatherings”

The end of summer provides a unique opportunity to reconnect with the community of faith as we join together in a new season of faith-filled living. We’re emerging from the pandemic, looking ahead toward a new season and energy, and committing ourselves again to each other and God’s heart.

The Open Doors Campaign Team invites you to a **Reconnect & Vision Gathering** to fellowship with a small group, share excitement and observations about the current reality at SUMC, and vision together about the mission of this church. We will talk about the *Open Doors Campaign of Generational Blessing*, the effort to highlight and evoke generosity that will serve the *whole ministry* in and through SUMC. The official campaign will follow our gatherings on September 19 and conclude with Consecration Sunday, October 17, 2021.

Please consider contacting one of these hosts to join a gathering:

Tues. Aug 31, 2-3:30pm with Julie & Paul Ludington, prelud@live.com.



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Staying Connected

Join us for the last of the Summer Concert Series in Stevensville of LIVE professional performances. August 13: The Joys of Chamber Music with a special performance from UM Music School Faculty (Indoors). Open to everyone, bring your family and friends,. Music begins at 7:00 PM at The United Methodist Church, 216 College Street, Stevensville.

The events are free.

Any goodwill donations will support the Sapphire Early Learning Center opening in the fall.

Look forward to our next Town Hall on August 15th!
August 15th, 12PM: Town Hall
in person and on Zoom Meeting—
ID:89880390275



**RIBBON CUTTING
AND TOUR OF THE
NEW BUILDING!**

Stevensville United Methodist Women sponsor fundraisers to raise money for a multitude of charities that work with women, children, social justice and climate issues.

Rummage Sale will **not** be held this year due to construction but donations to UMW would be appreciated so we can continue to support charities. If you would have spent money at the Rummage Sale, please send your donation to Stevensville UMC with a note that the money is for UMW so we can continue in these support efforts. Thank you in advance.



JOIN US SEPTEMBER 17th

for our regular meeting at 10:00 at the church.

Hopefully, we will be in the new fellowship hall with food and an exciting program.

Peggy McCarthy, UMW President

More Sapphire Early Learning Center Excitement!

- **Ribbon Cutting and Dedication Service, Aug. 29, one service at 10:30**
- **SELC Open House** for Families & Community with tours, Q&A, Aug. 26, 6- 8pm
- **Grand Opening Celebration** for SELC for the Bitterroot Valley, Sept. 9, 6-8pm
See the new early learning center to support working families
Learn about enrollment and hiring opportunities
Donate to fund a new playground for SELC & community

Ways to Contact Us

Office phone: 406-777-5443

Office email: steviumc@gmail.com

Pastor Sarah's email: revsarahmerchant@gmail.com

Church website: steviumc.org

Office hours: Tues. through Fri. 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.



Ways to Connect:

In Person Worship: 9:00 AM Outside (weather permitting) & 10:30 AM Inside.

Live Streaming Worship at 10:30 on YouTube Channel & Facebook.

- o YouTube: Search for “Stevensville United Methodist Church.” Look for the video that says “Live” in the bottom right corner.
- o Facebook: Search for “@SteviUmc.” Scroll till you see the service.

~ CHANGES OF ADDRESS ~
Bulk-rate mail is not forwarded.
If your address changes, if we have it wrong,
or if you no longer want to receive this newsletter,
please let us know.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

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The Glad Tider

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