

JUNE 2025

THE COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The monthly newsletter of Brown St. & Congress St. UMCs

GROWING YOUNG

By Maia Gibson & Sarah McCann

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Two summers ago, Pastor Ryan preached a series called “Growing Young,” focused on how churches can truly engage with kids, teens, and young adults. We talked about keychain leadership, empathizing with young people, and centering Jesus in all we do. We also emphasized being a welcoming, supportive community where young people feel seen and valued. There was energy. Our kids led worship. It felt like something new was really blooming.

On the surface, that may have seemed like that was it. We just moved on--Pumpkin Patch. Advent. The usual rhythm.

But for those of us in leadership, that message never really left us. We kept wondering: *What would it look like to build a church culture where all generations thrive together?*

So, when we had the chance to join a cohort of Indiana United Methodist churches working directly with the team behind Growing Young, we jumped at it. In November 2024, we were accepted, and Pastor Ryan and I built a team from both Brown Street and Congress Street. Since then, we’ve had meetings, webinars, and even a two-day summit. We read the book, asked hard questions, and shifted how we engage the young people already among us.

And already, we’re seeing fruit. Congress Street hosted an Easter Egg Hunt and a Flower Workshop that brought together kids from both our church and the neighborhood. Brown Street’s youth are showing up regularly for Family Dinner, helping in the kitchen, and working in the garden. And next month, we’re sending a group of kids to camp—with some of you serving as counselors! Hallelujah and amen!

More is coming. We’re planning a youth and young adult listening session and sending out a survey this summer to hear from all of you.

But this isn’t just a short-term program. Growing Young is a long-term cultural shift—one we believe is worth the effort. So as our team continues this journey, here are three things to remember:

1. **This is based on real research that works.** If you're curious, we're happy to share the book or chat more!
2. **Investing in young people doesn't mean disengaging in everything else.** We still deeply value all generations, our United Methodist roots, and, above all, Jesus.
3. **Everyone has a role to play.** Your presence, gifts, and relationships matter. We need you to help create a church where every generation belongs.

In the coming months, please be in prayer—for our children, youth, young adults, our cohort team (Sherry Coffing, Bill Fielding, Jim Hartwick, Chad Johnson, Sarah McCann, and Janelle Pearson), and for our wider church. We’d also invite you to consider: ***How might God be inviting you to show up for a young person in your life?***

As Pastor Ryan said two years ago: “If we have a church culture that celebrates the presence of children and youth, that engages them and loves them where they are, learns from them, tells them they are valued, and invites them to take ownership of what we do together, we won’t have to worry so much about the future. We might even start to leave a legacy of being forever young.”

What's Happening in Our Community

STAFFING CHANGES

As you all know, Congress St.'s former Pastor of Worship Arts, Jake Ohlemiller, resigned effective Easter Sunday, leaving an open appointment at Congress St. God, as always, has been working in mighty ways.

Our Bishop and Conference Superintendents have filled that open appointment.

On Sunday, 6/1, we announced that Bishop Malone and the Cabinet had appointed Maia Gibson as the Associate Pastor of Congress St. United Methodist Church and the community/local mission field, effective July 1, 2025.

While Jake was discerning a call to step away from pastoral ministry, Maia was discerning a call to pastoral ministry - something neither of them or Pastor Ryan were aware of. Only God had the full picture.

Maia will be first assigned to us as "pulpit supply" - technically still a lay person - until she completes License to Preach in the winter of 2026, at which point she will be formally appointed to us as Pastor Maia. Her responsibilities will begin to shift, however, on July 1st - taking on the responsibilities of our Associate Pastor, which will include deepening congregational connection for both newcomers and longtime members, continuing to lead our Growing Young team, as well as regular preaching.

This will, of course, mean that Maia is no longer going to be handling many of the administrative tasks she has been doing for the past nearly 3 years. We have a plan in place to ensure that there is a smooth transition and we will share more of those details soon, but we ask for everyone's grace and understanding as things may not happen exactly as they always have and Maia sets boundaries as she grows into this new role. That means she might have to tell you "no." :)

Additionally, Maia will continue to maintain a relationship with Brown St. serving alongside Pastor Ryan.

As we have more details regarding office hours and administrative plans, we will let you know.

It is a joy, a privilege, and a responsibility to be able to journey alongside a pastor who is starting their ministry. Together, we get to be a community that loves and encourages Maia in her call, and we ask for everyone's whole hearted support as we help her shift into a new role.



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

3 - Kathy McClannen (BS)
7 - Maurice Uerkwitz (CS)
8 - Aaron Simms (BS)
13 - Jim Eberle (BS)
13 - Genevieve Traeger
23 - Kathie Cochran (CS)
23 - John Drews (CS)
27 - Pennie Ainsworth (CS)
28 - Sherry Coffing (CS)
28 - Sean Lutes (BS)

JUNE OFFICE HOURS

The hours listed below are the hours Maia is in the office. Pastor Ryan is in and out. If you need to meet with him, please reach out to him or Maia to schedule a time!

Brown Street:

Tuesdays: 10am - 4:30pm

Congress Street:

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 10am - 4:30pm

Fridays: Flexible

Pastor Ryan's days off are Friday & Saturday.

Maia's days off are Monday & Saturday.

The office will be closed on 6/5 & 6/6.

What's Happening at



MONTHLY MISSION: CARE FUND

Our Care Fund (also known as a Pastor's Discretionary Fund) is used to provide financial assistance to our neighbors in need at the Pastor's discretion. To donate to our Care Fund, mark your envelope "mission" and place it in the collection plate on Sunday morning or write "mission" in the memo line at brownstumc.org/give.

TUESDAYS AT BROWN STREET

Last month, we started our weekly work days in the garden and continued our Family Dinner! A special thank you to our kids, youth, young adults, friends at Home with Hope, and our neighbors for all your help in the kitchen and the garden! We are looking forward to continuing to serve together in June!



FAMILY DINNER

Tuesdays

Doors @ 5:00pm

Dinner @ 5:30pm

We could always use your help! Kitchen prep begins around 3:00pm and Table Hosts huddle at 4:45pm each week. Come help prepare/serve food, be Jesus to our neighbors around the table, and wash dishes! All are welcome!

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Thanks to our team of Tuesday night volunteers, all of our beds have been planted! Keep an eye out for updates on what produce is available.

Our weekly gatherings in the garden are continuing into June. **We will be meeting on Tuesdays at 6:15pm.** Join us for dinner and then come out to the gardens to help weed and water!

All are welcome; no previous gardening experience or knowledge required.

What's Happening at



CONGRESS ST.
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CIRCLE OF JOY

Next Meeting: Monday, 6/9/25 @ 6:30pm, Room 103

Hostesses: Susan Greer & Michelle Hart

Speaker: Jane Rhoda will be sharing her talent of painting! Come prepared to practice and learn about art.

All women are welcome to join us!

OPEN TABLE COOKOUT

Sunday, 6/8, after worship

Bring your family and join us for an afternoon outside! We'll grill up some lunch and have plenty of outdoor games and activities (including a bounce house!) for all ages!

We could still use help! If you're willing to run a game or man the grill, let Chad Johnson know at 765-490-2533.

Additionally, if you'd be willing to donate a salad or dessert, please let Sandy Oswalt know at skoswalt1948@icloud.com.

DONATIONS NEEDED: FOOD PANTRY

June is the month to collect food items and money for the Church Women United's food pantry. Place items in the hamper in classroom 201. Money is always welcome; please make checks payable to Congress Street UMC and note that it is for the food pantry. Questions? Please contact Ellen Barker at 765-447-0954.

Items needed: canned tomatoes, pasta sauces, canned veggies, canned fruit, beans, canned soup, mac & cheese, crackers, pasta, peanut butter, breakfast cereal

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Gardening season is upon us!

Ready for harvest: radishes, lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, collard greens.

If you have questions or want to volunteer, please contact Lynn

Nelson by email at:

nelson@cosumc.org or by phone/text at: 765-491-7856.

FLOWER ARRANGING WORKSHOP

Thank you to Bob and Kim for teaching our kids how to arrange flowers for Mother's Day! They made some beautiful bouquets!



BROWN STREET STAFF

Ryan Traeger
Pastor

Maia Gibson
Administrative Assistant

CONTACT BROWN STREET

905 Brown St.
Lafayette, IN 47904
765-742-1316
info@brownstreetumc.org
www.brownstumc.org

CONGRESS STREET STAFF

Ryan Traeger
Pastor

Rick Puckett
Pastor of Visitation

Maia Gibson
Administrative Assistant

CONTACT CONGRESS STREET

2010 Congress St.
Lafayette, IN 47905
765-447-4158
info@cosumc.org
www.cosumc.org

Shane & Teri Lynch
Custodians

WORSHIP WITH US

Sundays at 9am - Brown Street

www.facebook.com/BrownStreetUnitedMethodistChurch

Sundays at 10:30am - Congress Street

www.facebook.com/evolvingfollowers

**If you are able and interested in receiving this newsletter via email,
reach out to Maia at info@brownstreetumc.org or info@cosumc.org.**

Congress St. UMC
2010 Congress St.
Lafayette, IN 47905