

OTTERBEIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
176 West Market Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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Tidings



July & August 2026

The Tidings
Otterbein United Methodist
Church

176 West Market Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Office - (540) 434-7747
oumcharrisonburg.org

Tidings articles are generally due
by the 15th of each month.
You may either bring articles to
the church office or email them
to oumcdadm@hotmail.com

Sunday Schedule

9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Worship Service

Please check the calendar for
times of regular and special
events.

Weekday Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm



Have you checked out our Facebook Page? You can find us at facebook.com/OUMCHarrisonburg or through the link on our website. Please check out our page and share with your friends!

Our Staff

Rev. Laura Stratton
Senior Pastor
laurastratton@vaumc.org

Melissa Miller
Office Manager
oumcdadm@hotmail.com

Gary Edlind
Director of Visitation

Colin Cossi
Director of Music Ministries
oumcmusic@hotmail.com

Dan Curtis
Organist

Drew Dodson
Bell Choir Director

Melvin Falls
Custodian

Bonnie Andrade
Treasurer
oumctreasurer@hotmail.com

Office: 540-434-7747
x200 for Melissa
x201 for Laura

Otterbein in Prayer

David Angier
Rosalie Bailey
Gary Billingsley
Whitney Bradley
Millie Bruce
Rev. Louis Carson
Nissa D'Andrea
Cliff Davis
Jo Ellen Dickenson
Mike Earman
Samuel & Judi Espinoza

Zach Fickes
Mary Ann Glendye
Mary Ely Griffith
Ray Griffith
Richard Holmes
Fred Hopkins
Steve Lily
Chuck Macklin
Ann Miller
Maxine Perry
Bill Pollard

Judy Pruett
Ralph & Ann Sebrell
Brenda Smith
Dot Swartz
Carolyn Stroop
Michelle VanPelt
Hazel Willi
Rachel Wenger
Keith Wright

Dear Otterbein,

You have been such an important part of our life, from when we first walked in the doors in 2002 with a baby and a 2 year old, to these past few weeks of trying to find the right words to thank you for all you have meant to us. You saw us in the beginning trying to become good parents and trying to be good church members, and blessed us as Adam followed his call to Glossbrenner in 2007. Even then, you did not let us go completely - Rinky made sure to invite us back to Saturday Night Alive!

Through the mysterious ways of God and the United Methodist Church, we were thrilled to return to be with you all again in 2014. We have been blessed by your love through the mountains and valleys of life. You carried us through the difficult season of cancer, and we struggled together to re-learn how to be church during the pandemic, and afterwards. You witnessed and nurtured us through baptisms, confirmations, and graduations. You helped our whole family grow in faith and in love and in service, and I will treasure all these things in my heart forever. Thank you and may God continue to bless you all,

Christy Blagg

For Your Information

- ***Tidings* deadline** for the **September** issue is **Monday, August 17** by **9 am**. All groups, classes, and individuals are welcome to submit articles for the *Tidings*. Plan your activities and bring the written details to the church office or email to the office at oumcdadm@hotmail.com by the 17th.

An Otterbein Goodbye

Adam, for twelve years you've been at Otterbein
As our pastor and our friend,
And we hope because you're leaving,
It won't become the end.
You were here when you got your calling,
Some 20 years ago.
We've seen you progress through the years
And watched your children grow.
Here are a few choice words to say,
So you will keep in mind,
That having you here to shepherd us
Was a joy for Otterbein.
We will miss your Bible studies,
For they always made a mark,
And you saved on our electric bill
By working in the dark.
You ate the delicious luncheons
That Methodists organize,
And then you had to jog two miles
To get your exercise.
You've worked with numerous civic groups
To help the young and old,
And being a chaplain at Sentara,
You, many lives consoled.
We knew this day was coming
When we would go our separate ways,
May our hearts be linked together
In peace, love, and praise.
We've known your family for so long
It's hard to say adieu,
Best wishes at Calvary,
As new friends you now pursue.
Goodbye Adam and Christy,
Our pastor and our friend,
May the good Lord bless and keep you both,
Until we meet again.

Wilma Mitchell
June 14, 2026

This is the poem Wilma shared at Adam's Celebration on June 14.



Towards the end of John 1, we hear the story of how Andrew and another disciple decided to follow Jesus. They heard about Jesus from John the Baptist, and when they encountered Jesus, they asked him a question. Jesus answered, "Come, and you will see." So, they followed Jesus.

We are in a "come and see" moment in our faith journeys. I am coming to y'all, eager to see and learn how Jesus is showing up and working at Otterbein UMC and in the Harrisonburg community. Y'all are welcoming me, ready to see how I will fit into your picture. We come together knowing that God is the one who has brought us to this place, and God will be our guide.

I have already been learning about the wonderful ministries you have engaged in with Pastor Adam, and I can tell God is busy at work in and through y'all. I am grateful to Pastor Adam, to SPRC Chair Mike Earman and the SPRC team, to Office Manager Melissa Miller, and the rest of the staff for helping me in this transition time to get my bearings. But I am looking forward to meeting the rest of y'all and learning more! I look forward to listening to your stories, to learning what you love about God and Otterbein UMC, and what your hopes are for our shared future together in ministry.

You are already in my prayers. I am praying for y'all in this time of transition as you say goodbye to Pastor Adam. I know it is not easy to say goodbye to a beloved minister, and I am grateful that you are willing to open your hearts to me and my family, just as you welcomed Pastor Adam and his family. I also am grateful for your prayers as we are settling into our new home and into Harrisonburg.

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I also thought I'd take this moment to let y'all know a little bit about myself.

I have been serving as clergy in the United Methodist Church since 2013. I was ordained ten years ago, back in 2016, and I am excited that we also are celebrating 70 years of women's ordination in the Methodist church this year! Otterbein UMC will be my third appointment. I spent 8 years at Page UMC and the last 5 years at Scottsville UMC & Mt. Zion UMC in Esmont.

Before becoming clergy, I served as a minister of music in Northern Virginia, and I have played piano in church since the eighth grade. I am excited to work with the wonderful musicians at Otterbein!

I also have a heart for prison ministry, and I worked with the UMC in Russia after I graduated college in 2007.

I love learning, and right now, I especially enjoy listening to The Bible Project podcasts.

Outside of church, I enjoy reading and crocheting basic projects. I drink too much tea, and my current favorite is Harney & Son's Hot Cinnamon Spice tea, though I generally enjoy all kinds of tea, except those with a floral flavor. My family and I are big fans of the Washington sports teams, primarily the Washington Capitals and the Washington Nationals.

I look forward to sharing my call story with y'all in my first sermon, and then I will spend some time this summer in worship sharing a few of my favorite things about God and our faith.

Thanks be to God for Otterbein UMC and for our ministry together!

In Christ,

Pastor Laura

Welcome, New Members!



During worship on May 24, we welcomed **Isaac Lightfoot Wilson** through baptism. Isaac is the son of Shawn and Marion Wilson, and the grandson of Kent and Kestina Carneal. We also received **Joe and Ginny Whitehill** by transfer of membership to Otterbein.

On May 31, we celebrated the baptism of **Diane Lynn Ritchie**, as well as **Cora Susanna Shotwell**, daughter of Stuart and Leigh Shotwell. In addition, **Samuel Aaron Malabad** took his confirmation vows. Samuel is the son of Paul and Melissa Malabad, and the grandson of Marylee Huffman.

It is with joy and thanksgiving that we welcome them all as members of the family of Christ, and to the fellowship of Otterbein UMC.



Words are inadequate to express the great joy I and my family experienced June 14th as we celebrated together our years of ministry together. Your outpouring of love was evident in each thank you, gift, and parting embrace. We will always think fondly of our time at Otterbein and cherish the connectional nature of being United Methodists which will allow us to continue to be connected, albeit in a different way. We are especially thankful for the lovely gifts and Christy and I are looking forward to a fall trip to Savannah! Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Adam Blagg

From the Staff Parish Relations Committee:

Rev. Laura Stratton will be received at Otterbein as our pastor during Worship on July 5th. On Sunday, July 12th following Worship we will have a **welcome lunch** for Pastor Laura and her family. The Hospitality Team will provide fried chicken and beverages, and they request you **bring your favorite side dish or dessert to share**. Please make plans to help welcome the Stratton family!

Clothes Closet could use

Men's and Children's clothing AND white socks.

Please NO women's clothing. THANKS !!



Weekday Religious Education
Christian Education Employment Opportunity

Weekday Religious Education (WRE) is seeking **Classroom Assistants** for several Elementary schools: Elkton, John C. Myers, McGaheysville, Mountain View, and River Bend. These are all schools traditionally requiring walkers to assist in transporting students to and from the WRE building. This is a part-time, paid position teaching Bible classes for 2nd-4th grade students during school hours.

To find out more or to obtain an application, please call the WRE office at 540-438-9997 or 540-908-1964, or by email, WRERocks1929@gmail.com.



**United
Women
in Faith**

***United Women in Faith** seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.*

Greetings, sisters in faith!

Otterbein, with your help and donations, we packed 72 hygiene kits and 50 feminine hygiene kits, for a total of 122 kits! All were taken to Vision of Hope UMC to be delivered to the UMCOR hub in Pennsylvania with kits prepared by our Shenandoah River District churches.

Our toothpaste for Kingsway Ministries resulted in 42 tubes of toothpaste for their collection. We will promote this again in the fall. Thank you from Kingsway!

Enjoy the days of summer with friends and family, giving thanks for the beauty of God's good creation! The next book for our Reading Program discussion is **Seventy Times Seven** by Alex Mar. We will **meet Tuesday, August 11 at 11 am** for our regular meeting followed by the book discussion. More information will be given later. Questions? Call me!

***Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us...
Psalm 90:17***

Grace & Peace,
Pat Wingert

Celebrating Kits for Conference

The Shenandoah River District is heading into Annual Conference with something to celebrate. Thanks to the dedication and faithfulness of our churches, the district contributed 157 buckets, 2,360 health kits, and 176 feminine hygiene kits, totaling more than 2,500 kits that will go to people who need them most.

A special **thank you** to the volunteers who helped with loading across the Conference. This is the connectional church at its best.

Otterbein UMM News



Otterbein United Methodist Men's Sunday is scheduled for **August 23 at 10:30 am** during the Morning Worship service.

Shenandoah River District Superintendent

Rev. Kyungsuk Cho will bring an inspiring message.

The Men's Choir are making plans to sing. All men are invited to come and sing, *no experience needed!* Mark your calendar and plan to be present for this special service.



Our on-going service project this year to collect canned food donations for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank continues to go well. **On the first Sunday of each month in 2026**, colorful collection buckets at the front of the church and near the breezeway are available for your donations. Our second mile giving project has concluded. Over 300 pounds of dried beans and rice were collected in support of the Waterman Elementary School backpack program organized by Community Mennonite Church. Your *amazing* donations provided many Waterman School families with food for the weekends. *Thank you for your continued support of these community projects.*



Join Us For Breakfast

The regular Saturday meetings through the rest of the summer months will be **June 27, July 25, and August 22**. We meet in **Memorial Hall** at the church beginning at **7:30 am**. Breakfast is provided each meeting. Our short business meeting is concluded with devotions and group and individual prayers. An RSVP to Bill Pollard (pollard716@gmail.com or 540-421-3256 text) on the *Wednesday before* each meeting is appreciated!

For additional information concerning our fellowship, please check our website <https://www.oumcharrisonburg.org/united-methodist-men>

Leadership/Planning Team:

Mike Earman
Bill Pollard
Carter Ritchie

Creation: The Four Seasons

In the beginning God created nature for a special reason, and in order for man to accomplish His plan, there had to be a season.

Springtime comes with budding, when nature is renewed. The farmers plow and plant their crops, providing us with food.

Summer brings vacation, as we smolder in the heat. The crops are being harvested and prepared for all to eat.

Fall brings frosty mornings and leaves come floating down. It's time to rake and mulch, replenishing the ground.

Winter's freezing weather, and snow covers valleys and hills, provide the fields with moisture, and children with laughter and thrills.

Spring and Summer,
Winter and Fall,
These are the four seasons
and God made them all.

"And God saw that it was good."
Please be "good" stewards to your neighborhood.

Wilma Mitchell

"You observe days and months and seasons and years."
Galatians 4:10



CREATION CARE TASK FORCE

Ways to Enjoy Your Summer

On July 4th, our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. On July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson noted in his "Weather Memorandum Books" that the weather was cloudy and the temperature 76°F. What will the weather be on July 4, 2026?

July 4th and summer bring hiking, picnics and cookouts, as well as outdoor camping. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot, watch for ticks, and avoid mosquitoes and snakes if possible!

July and August are usually the hottest months, so protect yourself from sunburn and heat exhaustion by wearing sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and light colored clothing. If you do get a bad sunburn, apple cider vinegar will take the red out. We always took vinegar to the beach. Never leave a child, older person, or pet in a parked vehicle with or without windows open. Drink plenty of liquids and reduce your protein intake. Air conditioning is your best friend.

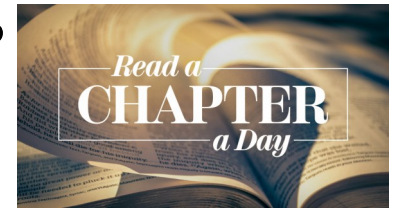
Heat is the top weather-related killer, causing more fatalities than lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined.

Stay safe and have a great summer!
Happy 250th birthday to our country on July 4th!

The Creation Care Taskforce

Read a Chapter a Day: 2026

Galatians, Ephesians,
1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy,
Titus, Philemon



September 8 - October 19, 2026

Since 2024, UMC Discipleship Ministries have been inviting people to join them in reading a chapter of scripture every day for a season. This year, they are continuing with the previous readings that ended in 2 Corinthians and moving through the New Testament to read more of the apostle Paul's letters. They will start in Galatians and read through Philemon. There are forty-two chapters, so the *Read a Chapter a Day* journey will take forty-two days, six weeks. The reading plan is designed for everyone—both new and mature believers—who wants to engage with scripture daily. A weekly Bible study component offers deeper reflection and group discussions.

To find out more about the initiative and sign up to be added to the email list to receive the reading plan, small-group discussion questions, and a guide for reading scripture as a daily practice, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ReadAChapterADay>.

Why Read a Chapter a Day?

Cultivating a daily habit of reading scripture invites us deeper into relationship with God. Specifically, reading regularly:

- Shapes our imagination with the stories of humanity, faithfulness, and God's redemptive plan for the world through Jesus.
- Connects us to people of the past and to Christians around the world for whom Scripture is our common Story.
- Provides a practice in which we can cultivate awareness of the Holy Spirit's continuing voice in the lives of the reader/hearer.
- Inspires, instructs, shapes, and challenges individuals and communities who engage it to grow up into maturing as a follower of Jesus.
- And more! The Holy Spirit grows us in new ways as we read the Bible.

OOTSP (One of the Sweetest People)

OOTSP (One of the Sweetest People) for this month is someone who regularly attends Otterbein UMC, but whose wife couldn't attend for a long period of time and has now gone to heaven.

Arthur (Art) Mitchell and his wife, Mary Jo, have both been sweet people in the history of the church! I met Art as I visited Mary Jo in VMRC for many months. Art was born in Mt Solon Virginia. He said that he and his sister and parents were poor, but they didn't know it. They had a farm in Augusta County, so they always had food and Art learned how to work hard - He said that he thought his name was "Get wood!" because his father yelled that at him all the time! He was never asked to go to church; it was just what the family did every week.

He went to North River High School, Ferrum College, and then Virginia Tech where he got his Masters in Education Administration. He financed his education by spending many years in the Army National Guard.

He dated Mary Jo in his senior year of high school after they had both been in the senior play. They married in 1959 and she was always by his side. He taught Agricultural Education in Roanoke and then was a teacher in Montevideo High School. They bought their farm in Keezletown in 1967 and built their house there. After teaching and farming it for many years he had a terrible farm accident in 1978 when he lost both his legs. He was in ICU in RMH hospital for 70 days and he credits a lot of prayer and the grace of God for his survival. He and Mary Jo then started a support group for farm accident victims and he has travelled a lot teaching farm safety, especially to 4-H clubs. Besides faithfully attending church, Art volunteers for RMH driving the parking lot shuttle on Tuesdays and Fridays. He and I are now discussing starting a support group for men who have lost their wives. Also, many church members remember when Mary Jo Mitchell was managing greeters for the church - it was often said in the halls "Watch out! Here

continued next page...

comes Mary Jo with her clipboard asking for greeters!"

Art & Mary Jo will be long-remembered for their work in the church. They have truly been two of the sweetest people! So greet Art in church each Sunday and thank him for their great legacy in the history of Otterbein United Methodist Church!

Gary Edlind - Director of Visitation OUMC

Creation Care Sunday

Sunday, June 28th

10:30 am

Rockingham Park at the
Crossroads (Rt. 33 East)
Picnic Lunch to Follow!

The Creation Care Taskforce invites you to the annual outdoor worship service at Rockingham Park at the Crossroads (Rt. 33 East). The worship service is at 10:30 am with a picnic lunch to follow. Bring your favorite picnic dish to share. Chicken and drinks provided. Plenty of parking and restrooms.

