



A FIVE-WEEK JOURNEY OF THANKSGIVING & DEVOTION



# THANKSGIVING & DEVOTION

## BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

Beginning this week and in the weeks to come, we will be asked to prayerfully experience Five Pilgrimage Points which will progressively ask us to listen, open and grow more deeply in our love for the One who is.

Franklin First UMC is a community of faith remarkable in so many distinct ways. Our age—at 217 years—makes us one of the oldest Methodist churches in America. Few churches are so blessed by God. Add to this the reality that we have now moved beyond the limitations of our landlocked downtown location that were hindering our potential growth—to this beautiful 107-acre campus with unlimited expansion potential—we can see how the Lord is inviting this historically rich congregation into a future with unlimited capacity to impact this lost and hurting world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is both joyous and humbling at the same time.

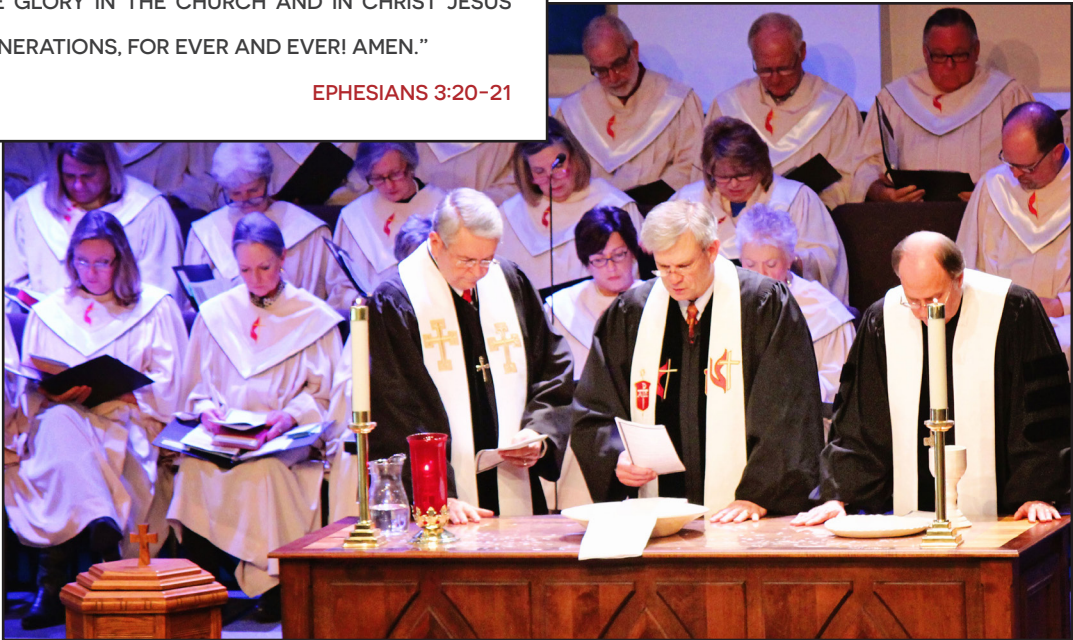
Each of us who today claim Franklin First UMC as our church home has a vital role to play in what the future holds for our congregation. Before we get ahead of ourselves and start considering the future, we have an exciting journey of pilgrimage we want you to take. It presents an opportunity to be grounded in the legacy we have inherited from those faithful individuals who were just like us, but have now graduated to life eternal, leaving to us this that they had advanced in their time in this place. This five-stage exercise will take little more than an hour a week to journey back in time to what historic Franklin was like in years past and discover for yourselves what a central role this church has played as a spiritual leader in this great city.

In the next several weeks, we will embark on a journey to explore all that is beyond us, but not beyond God. What if we trust in God to lead us beyond where we currently are, toward a place that is beyond our imagination?

Welcome, Fellow Pilgrims! We begin a month-long journey that will help us as followers of Christ find moments of inner solitude. We will learn to listen with open hearts to movements of the Holy Spirit. We will use prayer forms that have been practiced by Christians for centuries that will teach us to listen and discern God's will for us as we yearn to grow ever closer to our Creator.



"NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN ALL WE ASK OR IMAGINE, ACCORDING TO HIS POWER THAT IS AT WORK WITHIN US. TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS, FOR EVER AND EVER! AMEN."  
EPHESIANS 3:20-21





## WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

“BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.”  
(PSALM 46:10)

Prayer can be challenging. It isn't an easy decision to stop our busy lives and set aside time to deepen our relationship with God through prayer. Yet, we know that with God as our center, we can do nothing else but turn to our "Abba."

“WHEN YOU PRAY, GO TO YOUR INNER ROOM AND CLOSE THE DOOR. PRAY TO YOUR FATHER IN SECRET/SILENCE AND YOUR FATHER WHO HEARS YOU IN SECRET/SILENCE WILL REWARD YOU.” (MATTHEW 6:6)

Learning to listen is instrumental to hearing God's vision for us as followers of His Word. If we are talking to God all the time, how can we hear what God has in store for us? Beginning this week and in the weeks to come, we will be asked to prayerfully experience Five Pilgrimage Points which will progressively ask us to listen, open and grow more deeply in our love for the One who is.

## WEEK 1 PRAYER

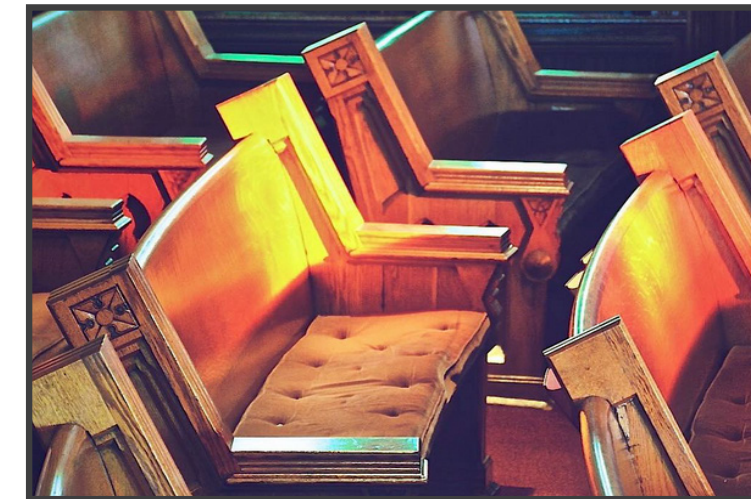
*“Oh Spirit within me, around me, **Beyond Me**, I commit to saying, “Here I am, Lord! Show me Your Ways. Help me find moments every day this week of solitude to practice letting go of my busy life that is so full of distractions. Distractions that keep me from sitting with You and opening my heart to listen to You. For I know that my relationship with You and my church's transformation can only happen when I intentionally take time to make You my center.” I will humbly hold this prayer in the quiet times that I spend with You, my Creator, my All. In Your Name, I pray. Amen.*

## WEEK 1 PRACTICE

This week, notice times throughout your day when solitude naturally occurs; early morning walks, time in your car, moments when your office door is closed, at home after everyone else has gone to sleep. Don't ignore these moments and don't try to fill them with stuff, mental "To Do" lists, phone calls. Appreciate these periods of solitude and savor them! Tell God that you are going to spend this time in quiet prayer, resting and listening. Tune into what may keep you from enjoying these moments. What feelings, situations, or images surface that keep you from just being with God? What distractions change your focus from gazing at your Creator to worrying about tomorrow, solving a work conflict, or anticipating the next scheduled event? Name that distraction, then let it go! This is your time with your God! When your time together is finished, the walk is done, you've arrived at your destination and life pushes you to the next thing, thank God for your time together and recommit to spending time listening again tomorrow. Your pilgrimage has begun and God is already there waiting for you!

## WEEK 1 PILGRIMAGE POINT HISTORIC SANCTUARY

**THE SITE.** The land for the historic sanctuary was purchased in 1869 and the structure itself completed in the spring of 1872. The building possesses an enchanting simplicity. As you are enjoying the deep solitude of the reverent space, you can sense the muffled sounds of the world outside. Walk slowly and prayerfully throughout the sanctuary. Take time to notice the details in the beautiful space.



**THE PEWS.** Examine the handcrafted pews that were built by a local carpenter whose shop was next to the railroad depot. Each pew is its own geometric study with a unique arc, length and angles. The wood, arriving on wagons as enormous oak logs, was hewn and crafted into these exquisite pews using the most primitive of tools almost 150 years ago. How easy it would have been to have a single aisle and make fifty identical pews like every other church.

**THE WINDOWS.** Look at the gothic arched windows with their handmade colored glass (a costly item in that day) with its uneven coloring and characteristic waves and imperfections. The interesting play of light and the traffic moving outside can be seen through the lighter colored panes. Notice the circular rosette shape at the top of each window, a design that is repeated in other places around the building.



**THE ALTAR RAIL.** Take time to kneel at the communion rail, original to the building, and imagine our spiritual forebearers who poured out their petitions before the Lord, received Holy Communion, were confirmed as members, or knelt to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. This may truly be one

of the most anointed places in the city. Please lift your own petitions to the Lord, and also pray that the generosity of our entire church would be inspired to rapidly pay down our debt so we can begin plans for the next phase of our new building which will be the formal sanctuary.



## WEEK 2 INTRODUCTION

“BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.”  
(PSALM 46)

As we continue to discover, even anticipate, moments of solitude in our daily lives, we begin to notice how God is present around us and in us. We want to know this God. We want to see more clearly our God who is immanent in every cell of His creations from a blade of grass to the stewards of His creations – US!

Our actions and intentions can either move us closer or further away in our relationship with God. We know that God is already waiting for us. We just need to figure out how to get out of our own way so that we can live lives focused on praising and bringing God's plan to fruition.

“Our Father, who art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name! Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!” This week, through a clear refocusing of our purpose as God's servants and with a certain indifference or detachment to our current circumstances, we will examine periods of our past and present in the way of St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises so that we can discern where God is at work in our futures.

## WEEK 2 PRAYER

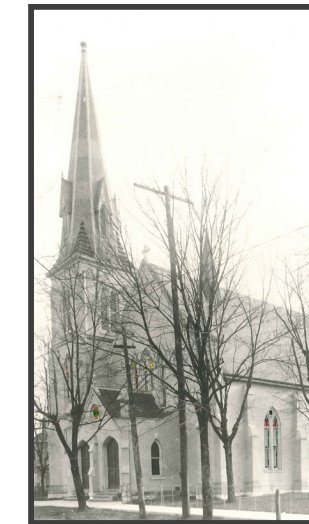
*Dear God, I desire to be in relationship with You **Beyond Today!** I yearn to know Your ways, to be held in Your gaze every moment of every day. Make me Your instrument of peace and reconciliation in a world that is separated from You. Help me to be Your face to my family, my church, my world. And as I search my soul to learn what You would have me learn, help me to know and follow the path that brings me closer to You not farther away. As Your humble servant, I pray. Amen.*

## WEEK 2 PRACTICE

Continue to spend time in daily solitude and reflection this week. In your quiet moments, become aware of an event, time or circumstance in your life. Reflect on it. Ask yourself, did you feel God's fullness or an emptiness? If you felt empty or lost, did you still desire to know God's plan for yourself? There are ways to know if what you feel or hear is from God or if you are forcing your plan on God. Even in the darkest of times, God is present to us waiting for us to acknowledge and surrender to His power and love. As you reflect on your choices, a pattern may present itself to you – moments of comfort and moments of misery. Feelings and thoughts that draw us deeper into God's fullness or take us further down a path of distraction and busyness holding God at arm's length. Practice this discernment process as your days unfold this week. Learn from your decisions that have brought you to this point in your relationship with God. Then look, listen and feel for those moments when God is drawing you closer, challenging you to know Him and to be His face and hands and heart in this world.

## WEEK 2 PILGRIMAGE POINT PRAYER WALK DOWNTOWN

We now invite you to explore on foot some of the forgotten points of interest as they relate to our church's heritage in downtown Franklin. You will make a four-block loop that begins and ends at the historic sanctuary. The stops on the tour encompass sites that were active parts of our church life throughout the span of over 200 years.



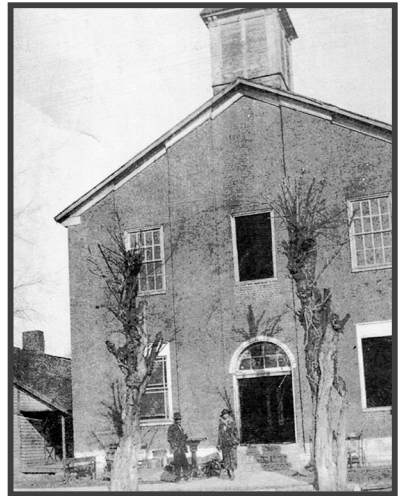
### EXTERIOR OF HISTORIC SANCTUARY.

(SW corner of Fifth and Church) Notice the red bricks, how they are actually painted red and are not really red bricks. The original bricks were made down by the Harpeth River out of river mud. The building was originally painted solid white. In the late 1800s it was painted solid red. The mortar was later repointed and the appearance of red bricks became noticeable. Notice the steep roof line and the stone caps on the parapet walls, also with the arch effects and rosette window above double doors of the narthex.

**CHURCH PROPERTY ACROSS THE STREET.** (Block between Fourth and Fifth) Prior to the move to the Main Campus in December of 2015 we occupied almost the entirety of the block across the street. Beginning in 1906 with our first purchase, each parcel of land and each building acquired or constructed had its own story as the church grew and each generation sacrificed and contributed the funds to add buildings to accommodate the growing numbers.

**SECOND CHURCH SITE.** (NE corner Second and Church) You can now walk two blocks east and stand at the corner of Second and Church. This is the site of the

second church building. This structure was occupied by federal troops during the Battle of Franklin and used as a hospital after it was over. The building was originally completed around 1830. In 1865 E.M Bounds was appointed pastor here immediately after the close of the war and helped lead the powerful revival that occurred during that time. After the war, and resulting from the revival, it was decided to purchase the triangular lot three blocks up the street. This previous building was sold to the AME congregation that is now Shorter Chapel. In the 1920s they dismantled the church and used the materials to build their present structure at Eleventh and Natchez.



**AFRICAN METHODIST CHURCH.** Still standing opposite the second church site sits the former black church that was built by the Northern Methodists as a mission church for former slaves. Now the home to the Pull Tight Players, you can easily read the inscription “Wiley Memorial M.E. Church” on the cornerstone. Interestingly in 1869, after our congregation moved and sold the A.M.E. church building, this M.E. (Northern) black church was built.

**FIRST CHURCH LOCATION.** (First Avenue at the terminal end of Church Street) In this empty field to the right of the silos is where the first building was built. Remarkably, it was a brick structure, unusual since most similar buildings of that era were of log construction. The site, called the “Meeting House Lot” in the original plat of Franklin, was set aside by founder Abram Maury, who was a Methodist. Founding American Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury preached there in 1812. We are one of the few continuing churches who can make that claim. In his journal he records it as “neat little brick house on the Harper [sic] River.



## WEEK 3 INTRODUCTION

Through our practice of last week, we find ourselves noticing how God is at work in our lives and in our relationships. We begin to see how interdependent we are as a people. We see the face of God in our neighbors, co-workers, people we pass on the street, people who need our help. We realize that God is in the faces of the homeless, in the creatures that inhabit our communities and our church property.

How do we respond to God's face in each of these situations? How do WE be the face of God to them? This is our spiritual journey. This week we will take some of our moments of solitude and move. Intentional walking as a prayer form is as old as the exodus of the Jews from slavery to freedom.

People from all over the world and from all faiths make holy pilgrimages to the sacred places in their religions – Jerusalem, Mecca, Allahabad, Gangetic Plains, Rome. Our spiritual walk this week does this on a much smaller scale, but just as powerfully. It's a journey toward God who wants to be in relationship with us and who wants to show us how to live our lives to the fullest. Movement through walking frees our minds and creates space for God to speak to us.

## WEEK 3 PRAYER

*Lord, you have opened my heart to the wonders of your ways. In this journey, You have shown Your face to me in the people I encounter and in my relationships. I see you in the sunrise, the scent of the garden after rain, the feel of the earth as I walk. Take the steps that I make as a sign of my desire to walk closer and more deeply with You. I may stumble or trip on this journey, but my focus is on You, Lord. My pace may be slow, but it is intentional. As I walk, I feel myself opening my heart to listen for Your transforming wisdom, so that I may always walk in your light. As my body moves through space, I ask you to create space in my heart for Your love. For I know that in this holy space, there is freedom. Freedom to live Your will. Freedom to live with a generous heart. Freedom to live **Beyond Giving**. Freedom to live as You would have me live. Take this journey and make it Yours. I humbly pray. Amen.*

## WEEK 3 PRACTICE

This week, in your times of solitude, walk intentionally, slowly. Focus on slowing your breath, feeling the ground under your feet, noticing the natural rhythm of your walk. This isn't a race or a distance competition. Walk in a circle if you need to, but walk with a listening heart, listening to what God is trying to tell you. Maybe it is as simple as "Slow down;" "Take better care of yourself." Or maybe your walk opens your eyes to the needs of those you pass. Maybe your walk stimulates an appreciation for God's creation or a sense that you need to do more to protect it. Wherever your walk takes you, make it purposeful. You are on a spiritual journey, a pilgrimage to discern what God has planned for you. Open yourself through your walking. God is there waiting.

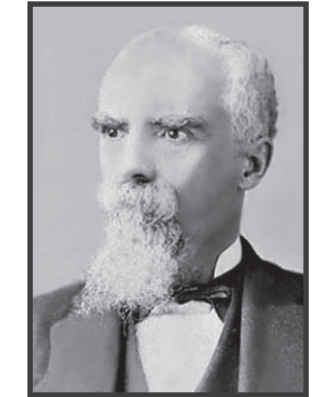
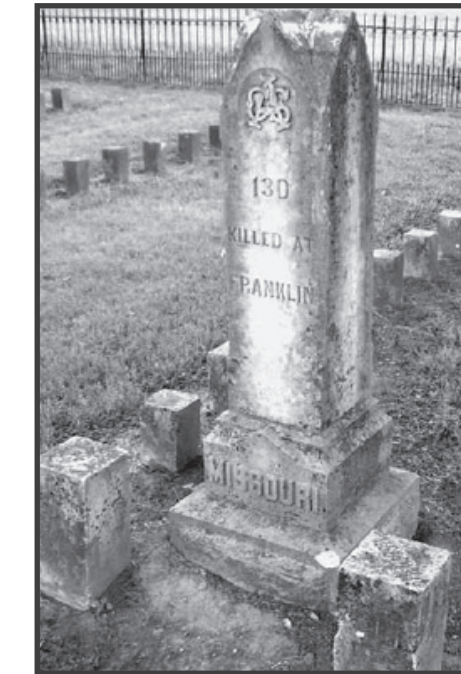
## WEEK 3 PILGRIMAGE POINT CARNTON CEMETERY

We now consider one of Franklin's darkest and most defining moments in its history. The McGavock Cemetery is a haunting and enchanting place of contemplation. Few people know of the deep tie this hallowed place has to the Methodist church and its beloved pastor E.M. Bounds. You can locate the cemetery by driving the new road into the Eastern Flank Battlefield Park that includes the Carnton Plantation.



**E.M. BOUNDS** Following the devastating loss of around 6,000 soldiers at the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864, the dead were hastily buried in fields on the southern side of Columbia Avenue, down and across from the Carter House. It was a great burden that former Missouri regimental chaplain, now the Franklin Methodist's pastor, E.M. Bounds, carried to see

the brave soldiers were properly buried. He spearheaded the formation of the Carnton Cemetery on the McGavock plantation and personally supervised the relocating of the graves to the new site. He also returned to his native Missouri to raise funds for the Missouri regiment's marker. E. M. Bounds is reported to have carried a small list of his lost Missouri boys in his wallet throughout the remainder of his life.



Take the time to walk through this most beautiful of cemeteries and imagine the gruesome, yet purposeful work of relocating these graves. Imagine our pastor's deep love and respect for these young men, boys really, and his resolve to see that their death was appropriately respected with a proper burial.

**FOR THE PAST 200 YEARS FRANKLIN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HAS BEEN INTENTIONAL ABOUT RESTORING HOPE TO OUR COMMUNITY.**





## WEEK 4 INTRODUCTION

In our fourth week, we have established times of quiet contemplation where we are open to listening and reflecting on God's movement in our lives. We have tried different prayer forms to help us open and be present to God. We are committed to transforming our lives with God as our Center.

While maybe trying new ways to deepen our faith, we are still grounded in His Living Word. We know that we can learn much from the stories and teachings of Jesus. We also know that we can experience and deepen our relationship with God through the sacred reading of scripture.

This prayer form is called Lectio Divina and was formalized in St. Benedict's Rule centuries ago. Lectio Divina involves a special way of listening, reflecting and speaking through scripture to discern what God has planned for us. This prayer will encourage us to be open to the movements of the Spirit.

## WEEK 4 PRAYER

*Jesus, teach me your ways. You are the Living Word of God... I hear your words in church. I may start and end my days reading your words. I want to dig deeper in my understanding of Your plan for me **Beyond Sunday**. Help me open to your transforming love as I practice sacred reading of scripture. You named me even before I was born. You ground me and sustain me through scripture and prayer. My time with You moves me to do Your will. Keep me on this path of silence, listening, opening and changing. All things are possible through You. I humbly give my life to You every time I hear You call. Amen.*

## WEEK 4 PRACTICE

**Step 1:** Read Matthew 25:14-23 slowly several times. Don't focus on the literal meaning of the words and story. Let the words sink into your body as you reread them. Let the words fill your inner sacred space. After awhile, the process of reading becomes listening. Listen for a word or phrase that speaks to you. God is reaching to you. Listen.

**Step 2:** Focus on your word or phrase. Repeat your word. Let go of the scripture passage. Let the word ruminate in you. God will take it from there. Allow yourself to listen and follow where God will lead you.

**Step 3.** At some point, you may be moved to speak to God. Wait for the words to come. Choose a few to express yourself. In silence, speak your thought or question to God. Then practice listening for a response. This is the ebb and flow of a conversation between parent and child, between close friends.

**Step 4.** In every conversation, there comes a time when everything has been said and words are not necessary. Now it is time to just be with God. Open yourself to resting in God's love, to being held in your Creator's loving gaze. God sees you as your true self made in God's image. Express your gratitude as your time together comes to an end.

## WEEK 4 PILGRIMAGE POINT

### MAIN CAMPUS

The inspiring new structure that is now our Main Campus was designed to have many architectural features reminiscent of our beloved Historic Sanctuary downtown. Many of these are obvious at a glance while some of the other historical treasures are not so visible. We invite you to take some quiet time to acquaint yourself with your amazing new church home. As you do so, remember some of the characteristics of the downtown church. We have attempted in many ways to honor the legacy of those whose sacrifices and loving made it possible for us to so courageously take the risk of trusting God in this bold venture.



### OLD BECOMES NEW

E.M. Bounds and the Holiness Tabernacle are central figures in our five-week pilgrimage journey. In 1866, Rev. Edward McKendree Bounds (E.M. Bounds), the former Missouri regimental chaplain during the Battle of Franklin and our pastor at the close of the war,

gathered a group of members on Tuesdays to pray for reconciliation and revival. For over a year they prayed until the Lord answered with a mighty outpouring of his Holy Spirit. This tremendous revival is what ignited a fire that has yet to be fully spent. It's important to tell a bit more about the Holiness Tabernacle since many of its elements are incorporated into our new church. The tabernacle, built as a sister structure to the now-named Ryman Auditorium, was built in response to a second major revival which began here in 1894. This revival was centered in the Methodist Church but spread across the city. The leaders in a number of churches joined to construct the 2,000-seat auditorium at Fourth and Margin Streets. Remember that Franklin only had about 2,000 residents at this time. Some thirty years later after the

revival had died down, the tabernacle was used mostly for political rallies and other meetings. By 1929, the building was in poor repair and ultimately was condemned by the city. Ironically, the materials were sold to a Nashville gambler who built a speakeasy at Moore's Lane and Franklin Road. During WWII this building became a residence that has stayed in the Owen-Maddox families ever since. When the property was sold for development in 2015 the Maddox's offered the wood to the church to be salvaged and again used for sacred purposes. This reclaimed wood was creatively used in the construction of our new facility in many ways. Spend some time exploring the building and discover some unnoticed features of our marvelous new church home.



**E.M. BOUNDS PRAYER ROOM.** This room is prominently located off the central narthex and signals that prayer is vitally important to our lives as believers. The room is named for Edward McKendree Bounds (E.M. Bounds) who, in the decades following his pastorate here, became a distinguished author of books on prayer. Few (if any) authors have such strong legacy of continual popularity. In the one hundred years since his death his numerous books on prayer have been republished in countless editions by a number of prominent publishers. The prayer room has the rough hewn wood flooring that was salvaged from the tabernacle. A replica section of the Historic Sanctuary's communion rail is at the center of the room. Two pews that once were used in the downtown church face each other and create an intimate seating arrangement. Additional marble top tables and Victorian chairs were once in use in the church downtown as well.



## WEEK 5 INTRODUCTION

In our final week, we can look back at our journey to deepen our relationship with God. We can look at the ways that we have grown in our spirituality. God has spoken to us, and we have responded.

So where do we go from here? We know that this is *Beyond Us*. Our growth comes from the grace of God through the Holy Spirit working within us. So, we continue to stay grounded in prayer as God's people. We look and move through our world with renewed spirits and open hearts. We know that God is with us all the time, gently guiding us through prayer practices that attune us to movements of the Spirit.

How can we affect the change that God calls us to make? What are our talents and our gifts?

How do we faithfully give of ourselves and give of our resources?

As people named by God, what does our transformation look like, and how is it reflected in the service of our hands and hearts? "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

## WEEK 5 PRAYER

*O Holy Spirit, continue to heal, challenge, and permeate my being. I will continue to open and listen to You. I am moved to be Your face and hands to the world. Here I am, Lord. Use me to do Your will. I commit to spending time with You in solitude, prayer and service. I will do my part to hear Your words and feel Your restorative love. I will move faithfully among the world touching Your creation in spirit-led ways that are **Beyond Us**. You are my Center, and all things are possible through You. I am Your humble servant. Amen.*

## WEEK 5 PRACTICE

Practice, practice, practice! Remain in prayer! That is how we are in an ever-deepening relationship with God. When we are lost, we return again and again to the solitude where we can rest in God's love. In our final week of practice, we have tasted the Fruits of the Spirit. As a community, as a church, we will continue to pray for an increasing awareness of the movements of the Spirit.

God has shown each of us His face, and God shows us as a church how to be church to others through honest reflection, empowerment of our members, humbly sharing of our gifts and talents, detachment from our material goods, desire for a stable environment and community so that we ALL may grow in faith. All these are gifts from God. All these are challenges and opportunities to share, grow and serve. God is waiting for us. Here we are, Lord! Your humble servants are listening. Show us Your way!

## WEEK 5 PILGRIMAGE POINT THE JOURNEY

After you have had the opportunity to spend these past few weeks in thoughtful contemplation and gratitude for the rich heritage we all share as members of the body of Christ known as Franklin First UMC, there is one more activity where we would like you to engage. In the experiences you have recently completed we are asking you to imagine the faithfulness of our forefathers and foremothers in the church for the more than 200 years we have worshipped here in our beloved community of Franklin.

**A STONE OF MEMORIAL.** Just as the Israelites stacked stones on the bank of the Jordan River as a memorial when they crossed over into the Promised Land, we are all engaging in a ritual of thanksgiving and remembrance. By the act, we now ask you to imagine the future. Outside the east-facing doors of the main entrance to the Main Campus there are piles of small boulders or smooth rocks. We ask you to select a stone (one for each member of your family) and write a Bible verse on it. The verse can be selected from a list provided or you can choose one yourselves. You only need to write the verse number, for instance John 3:16, using the marker pens provided.

After you have done this, you can take the stones to the tented area in the middle of the large field on the other side of the main drive. Add your stones to those already placed there. This is the location of the future sanctuary which will one day be built to accommodate the future generations of Franklin Methodists who will call Franklin First UMC their church home. We do this as an act of faithfulness, representing our intention to stand unified in our commitment to see that the great work of this church continue its uninterrupted progression.

Just as we have seen additional property purchased and facilities expanded all throughout our history including 1799, 1830, 1872, 1880, 1895, 1906, 1916, 1949, 1958, 1965, 1972, 1975, 1981, 1995, 2007, and most amazingly in 2015, we have seen a heart-inspiring pattern of sacrifice and provision as God has continuously called the members of our church. They have been called each in their day, not only increase the size of the church for their own family's use, but looking to what is ahead in



order to welcome all to experience the inclusive love of this great church. We are the beneficiaries of their extravagant generosity as we have worshipped and been taught in buildings that, for the most part, we didn't finance or build. Imagine with gratitude the 217 years of witness and sacrifice the previous generations have given to this mighty congregation that we now call Franklin First United Methodist Church.

**IMAGINE WITH JOY AND AWE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR OUR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.**

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