

### A word from Rev. Barry Andrews, Senior Pastor

It seems that life runs in multiples; it's certainly been true these last few months when it comes to funerals. Starting in August, we've been fairly busy with services and meals, mourning with those who mourn, and laughing with those who laugh.

We don't always have a funeral or memorial service, though. Sometimes the recently departed did not want one. This would be true for our fellow church member Iva Austin. For others, especially our church friends, the service is at another place, too far away for us to seriously consider attending. Phyllis Coston most recently comes to mind.

Yet, we still mourn and think of these, and others. We've only known them in their elder years, but they both had clear minds, if not slowed bodies, 'til the end.



Iva has been in a wheelchair for a while, with the long term effects of her dialysis and heart problems slowing her down considerably. In fact, about a year ago she was told she was not eligible for the procedure that would address her respiratory issues, and she only had at most a year to live. Let's be clear; very determined Iva wanted to take the bull by the horns and have the operation/procedure, but the hospital turned her down as too risky. She had a characteristic response --- she forged ahead. She had to move from her apartment, and her life was mostly turned upside down, but this was not the first time, and she, doing what she knew to do, continued to show up for church, as she could, and showed up for life. We call folks like her feisty, but determined might also apply.

Phyllis told me that Faith was her home church when she was in Jacksonville, visiting her cousin Alice Miller and family. She meant it --- she involved herself in the affairs of the church, coming to dinners, playing bridge, speaking at the UMW, and attending church. She wanted to know who, what where, and why was going on around here. Her lifetime of service, as a professor and an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church, did not end with retirement, and extended to her time here at Faith.



These two remarkable women expressed their faith in very different ways, and lived very different lives, but crossed our paths together here at the church. Our lives have been made richer because they were here, and we celebrate today the promise of Christ's resurrection, and eternal life, that they know today. We mourn, with their families and friends, our loss, but we rejoice in the goodness of God in eternal life. This, friends, is the Easter faith.

See Iva's obituary on page 2.

For Phyllis' obituary, go to <http://polingstclair.com/tribute/details/2059/Phyllis-Coston/obituary.html#tribute-start>.

Welcome to Karley Ruth Covey, baptized March 25, 2018.



*In Loving Memory of*  
**Iva Mae Austin**

*OCTOBER 17, 1939 – MARCH 23, 2018*

Iva Mae Padgett Densmore Austin, 78, of Jacksonville, FL passed away on March 23, 2018, after battling many health problems. She was born on October 17, 1939, in Owego, NY and was a resident of Barton, NY until moving to Jacksonville, FL in 1980. She was a former member of Oak Crest UMC for 30 years and was a member of the Choir until the Church closed in 2012. She then became a member of Faith UMC. She was a resident of Parkridge Nursing Center. She enjoyed playing Bingo, Cards, and Board Games. She was predeceased by her Husband Frank A. Austin Sr. of 40 years; first Husband, Joseph Densmore; Son, Stanley Densmore; Daughter, Violet Densmore Mantalas; Grandsons, David Densmore Jackson and Toby Densmore. She is survived by her Son, Joseph (Annett) Densmore of Norwich, NY; Daughter, Denise Densmore McCrary of Jacksonville, FL, & Son, Frank (Cheryl) Austin Jr. of Maryville, TN; Sister, Alice VanWinkle of Jacksonville, FL; Grandchildren: Kara Densmore, Natasha Wilbur both of Norwich, NY; Michael and Joshua Mantalas, Kristy McCrary all of Jacksonville, FL; Samantha McCrary Constable of Denton, TN; Brandon McCrary, of Chattanooga, TN; Dustin and Tyler Austin of Maryville, TN; 9 Great Grandchildren; many Nieces & Nephews; and very special friend Donna Thouin, of Jacksonville, FL. She was tough as nails, said things like she meant it, and did things her own way. She was a woman of great faith, experienced a lot of love, laughter, joy, and loss in life. She will be greatly missed by many but loved and never forgotten by all that knew her.

See the full obituary with great grandchildren's names at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/jacksonville-fl/iva-austin-7801400>.

The hope of Easter sunrise is found at the tomb amid the darkness and disbelief.  
By *Kenneth H. Carter Jr.*, bishop of the Florida Conference of the UMC.  
Easter Sunday Sermon, *April 24, 2011.*



I was in Nashville with colleagues, and a few of us had made our way to the Bluebird Cafe, which might be called the mother church for country music songwriters. A quartet of men and women sang and played guitar for about 80 people from 9 p.m. to around 11. The music was beautiful, and I wandered out of the café with the honest testimonies of human nature and destiny stirring within me. Later I reflected on the recurring themes in the songs: missed opportunities, love taken for granted, the grind and monotony of work, failed relationships, the destruction of substance abuse, broken hearts.

The themes in the best of our indigenous music—blues, country, jazz—have a way of flowing from Saturday night into Sunday morning, as the Saturday night crowd brings its stories into the Sunday congregation. The hope is for a word that transcends all of the pain, confusion and boredom, or at least makes some sense of it. The Christian story offers that hope as it carries us along this same continuum, from Saturday night to Sunday morning, from the descent into hell to an empty tomb and a risen Lord.

"So if you have been raised with Christ," Paul writes to the Colossians and to us, "seek the things that are above." The church reads this passage at Easter for at least two reasons: it seems to be rooted in baptismal instruction, which was embedded in the vigil of the ancient church, and it is filled with the imagery of resurrection. In a concise way it connects the reality of the first Easter with the necessity of a present Easter. The past flows into the present moment, and all of this is located in the word *above*.

We Christians believe that there must be an above. If there is no above, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, if the dead are not raised, then we may as well "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." If there is no above, life is nothing more than a series of missed opportunities, failed relationships and refrains from our favorite blues or country songs. It is difficult to seek the things that are above, but the alternative is more challenging: to make our way through life as if there were no above. If that's the case, then nothing computes: not the broken hearts, not the grind and monotony of ordinary work and not the passage of time.

I am aware of the danger posed by seeking the things that are above: the reader may worry about my cosmology or wonder if it's escapist. I hear you. But whenever I am around pastors in mainline Christian congregations and the devout women and men who sustain them, a recurring set of stories emerges—testimonies about missed opportunities, failed relationships or the rapid pace in which their children grow up.

We who make our way to sanctuaries on Easter morning might not have articulated these experiences with music accompanying us, but we have likely, in our own ways, descended into hell.

The hope of Easter sunrise is found at the tomb amid the darkness and disbelief. The shocking turn of events leads the disciples out of their grief and despair, and Paul claims this reality not only as apostolic testimony but also as existential promise: "When Christ who is our life is revealed, then you also will appear with him in glory."

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Across 28 years of ministry I have learned that Easter is not only theologically essential, it is pastorally necessary. I am drawn to the hope, once again, that there is simply more to life than this life. Although I am attuned to politics and culture, to strategies and outcomes that are somewhat within my own control, I hear the words of Paul as a corrective to my own in-stincts: "Seek the things that are above," he insists. C. S. Lewis put it this way: "Aim at Heaven, and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither."

On Easter morning we will sing the words of the best theologian in my own tradition, Charles Wesley. Before we reach a particular stanza, one that's buried deep within the hymn, a momentum is building with the affirmation, "Christ the Lord is risen today." I imagine the hymn sung in country churches where a young teenage boy is playing the trumpet, and I can see the relief on his face when he's finished; I can also imagine a small orchestra of professional musicians accompanying a large city congregation, with every seat filled. In either setting, singers come to the midpoint of the hymn and declare, "Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia! Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!" Then comes a phrase that reminds me of our true human nature and destiny: "Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia! Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!"

This Holy Week we have been to both the cross and the grave. Some of us are carrying heavy crosses. Some of us, in this season, have been to the grave. But now it is Easter, and once again there is a miracle: we have died, and our lives are hidden with Christ in God. Look! The stone is being rolled away, and we hear the promise of the Risen Lord: "Because I live, you will live also." We will set our minds on the things that are above. Yes, ours is the cross and the grave, but yes, ours too are the skies.



## April is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Month

April 29<sup>th</sup> will be a beautiful day at Faith UMC as we collect our fifth Sunday offering for the Children's Home. This offering is what keeps our Children's Home in business and it does so much good for so many children. Monetary gifts can be given at any time but the fifth Sunday is the most special. Thank you for your prayers and support.



## News of the Madison Ranch Children's Home

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, there will be a special dedication at the Ranch for the new Chapel and Counseling and Support Services Center. The gates will open at 10:30 AM with the dedication at 11:30 AM, followed by lunch at noon under The Big Tent. Campus tours will resume after lunch. The horses will be available for visiting at the stable. This is a whole day trip and if anyone is interested in going, please notify me or Pastor Barry as soon as possible.

Cynthia Shank, Local Church Representative



## A Day on Campus at Enterprise

At 8:00 AM on Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, thirteen church members and NOMADS left Faith UMC in the church bus headed for the Children’s Home in Enterprise with Pastor Barry at the wheel. We arrived around 10:00 AM. The weather was beautiful and hundreds had already arrived. We headed to the Welcome Tent, where coffee, water, cookies, and a variety of fruits were available. United Methodists never go hungry.

Since the program did not begin until 11:00 AM, it gave us all time to visit several buildings, including the gift shop, and take notice of the tables the different groups had set up. Many of the children were there to let us know about the different programs available to them. We were also able to board the trams for a trip around the facility to see the cottages, chapel, pool, tennis courts, and special buildings which we would later be able to explore.

At 11:00 AM in the gymnasium, about a thousand gathered for the program. We were welcomed by President and CEO Kitwana McTyer and Board of Trustees Chair, Dr. Charles Lever. Awards were given out in several areas in the northern counties of Florida:



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| Church of the Year:                      | First UMC in Madison                       |
| Pastor of the Year:                      | Rev. Michael Holley, Rock Springs UMC      |
| Local Church Representative of the Year: | Shirley Eck, Bellview UMC                  |
| Mission Work Team of the Year:           | Keystone UMC and First UMC at High Springs |

Throughout the program the children and staff presented skits depicting a day in the life at the Home. During several of the skits, middle and high school-aged children played and sang and acted.

Testimonies were presented by both an alumnus and a youth on campus. The alumnus, Dennis, told how he had come to the Home at 13 years old and how his life had been made better by being there. After graduation, he had a scholarship to Jacksonville University to play football, but when injured he had to drop out. He worked a while, got back in touch with staff members at the Home, and is now working on campus until he can go back to college. The Spark Praise Band sang “Every Praise” for the finale. Some of these children are extremely talented.

After a benediction and grace for lunch, we all adjourned to the Big Top Tent for a box lunch from Jason’s Deli. I didn’t see anyone go out hungry. A number of the close-by churches send volunteers to assist the staff on Day on Campus to help with lunch.

After lunch the trams took everyone to the chapel, daycare, cottages, and other areas to visit and see the interiors of different buildings. Ice cream, popcorn, and water were available around the grounds.

Around 2:00 PM, Pastor Barry gathered everyone back on the bus and we began our ride back to the church, arriving about 4:00 PM. What a great day. Maybe we’ll do it again next year.

Cynthia Shank, LCR



**Faith UMC Good Neighbor Team**

Imagine arriving in a strange country at 10:00 at night, with a young boy, a baby, and all your belongings in two suitcases. You are met by three women – only one speaks your language. They take you to a house, show you around, and leave. Over the next few days people bring you groceries, warm clothes, and other needed items. You struggle to understand what is going on – everything is so different – the language, the food, everything. So much happens in the next few weeks. The baby is walking and has three teeth! The boy is going to school and was given his first Birthday Party! You are taking English lessons and learning to navigate the bus system! You and your family went to the beach for the first time! Your family is encouraged to fully participate in the activities of the church. Your support system is World Relief and the Faith UMC Good Neighbor Team. They help with transportation to school and appointments, with learning English, with how to set-up and organize a household, with how to use appliances, thermostats, and locks, with babysitting, all provided with love and friendship.

The Faith UMC Good Neighbor Team is comprised of volunteers from the church, trained by World Relief to partner with a refugee family during their first six-months in the US. We appreciate your donations to the Missions/Refugee fund – thank you for helping us help them! We ask you to keep the Team and this family in your prayers.

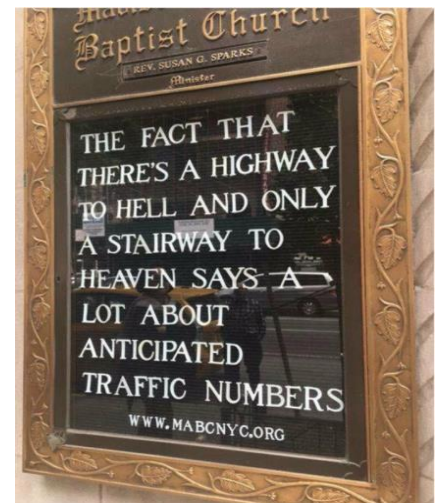


Thank you for your prayers for the ladies who attended the Northeast Florida District’s Spiritual Enrichment Experience in St. Simon Island, GA, on March 9-11. The Lord truly did “Open the eyes of our hearts”.





FUNNY CHURCH SIGNS



## Showers of Blessing

*Ezekiel 34:26 (NIV)*

*26 I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing.  
I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing.*

Do you remember the song based on Ezekiel 34:26, "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing"? In honor of our April showers the lyrics to the song are typed below, but you only have locate the **bold** words running forwards or backwards, and horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

G	R	G	A	B	D	Y	H	U	S	I	C	G	F	C
R	O	E	G	N	I	S	S	E	L	B	O	N	A	Y
A	S	D	F	L	T	R	O	X	S	C	N	I	L	C
N	J	U	L	R	E	S	D	U	H	P	F	V	L	R
T	J	A	O	W	E	A	E	O	N	F	E	I	I	E
T	C	D	O	I	E	S	N	A	A	D	S	V	N	M
S	H	H	R	L	C	O	H	B	S	L	S	E	G	D
U	S	G	P	O	R	E	U	I	O	O	I	R	G	Q
S	V	D	I	V	W	N	R	R	N	P	N	O	W	V
E	J	S	E	M	D	O	D	P	R	G	G	S	A	U
J	T	V	E	A	N	E	E	D	H	I	L	L	S	P
V	O	R	N	N	D	C	V	V	Y	X	L	I	T	O
L	K	C	Y	K	D	J	H	M	O	E	M	O	C	N
I	E	P	R	O	M	I	S	E	Y	B	F	A	M	C
R	O	I	V	A	S	Z	E	S	D	Y	A	D	O	T

**Showers of blessing**, Showers of blessing we **need**;  
**Mercy**-drops round us are **falling**, But for the showers we **plead**.

There shall be showers of blessing;  
This is the **promise** of **love**;  
There shall be **seasons refreshing**,  
Sent from the **Savior above**.

There shall be showers of blessing—  
**Precious reviving** again;  
Over the **hills** and the **valleys**,  
**Sound** of **abundance** of rain.

There shall be showers of blessing;  
**Send** them **upon** us, O **Lord**!  
**Grant** to us **now** a refreshing;  
**Come**, and now **honor** Thy **Word**.

There shall be showers of blessing;  
O that **today** they **might** fall,  
Now as to **God** we're **confessing**,  
Now as on **Jesus** we **call**!