

From welding to preaching: pastor answered the call to preach

Liz Johnson | Editor

AUGUST 2023

**Lexington United
Methodist Church**

*Where We Seek, Serve
and Share Christ*

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Lexington United Methodist recently welcomed its newly appointed pastor, Rev. Andrew Sanders, with his first message at the church including his testimony of how he was called to ministry. Using scripture from Judges 6:36-40, which is based on Gideon's testing of God to describe his calling, Andrew said he asked for God's confirmation of his calling and received it each time.

As congregants face a new year with a new pastor, and new leadership, the future looks bright and encouraging as they continue to follow God, receive his blessings and serve him and the community faithfully.

If the large attendance at the welcome luncheon following his first service, is any indication of what is to come, we expect a bright future as LUMC continues to move forward in a post-pandemic world.

Andrew is responsible for Lexington UMC and Waverly UMC. Meanwhile,

his wife, Rev. Julie Sanders, is serving Higginsville UMC (Grace) and Concordia UMC. All four churches had members attend the welcome luncheon in a steadfast display of community and connection.

Andrew was originally a welder by trade. He started out learning welding in auto body class at high school. He has worked as an EMT, too. Sanders also served in the Army National Guard for 8 years, which allowed him to utilize his welding skills.

Andrew was sent to Iraq from 2003 to 2004 with open-ended orders, meaning his time there had no end date. His unit was in the second wave of military sent to Iraq. Not only did he do some welding in Iraq, but he also drove trucks. Being the only welder in his unit, he traveled around quite a bit.

"I went in at peacetime," he said. "But soon we were at war. It was one

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“The church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.” ~ John Wesley

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thing when we were in Honduras, we were rebuilding ... then in Iraq, it was different. “I had to mentally prepare and focus on the welding and being able to work with the people.”

Andrew says he’s a lifelong Methodist, having taken a short break from the church when he was younger. His family moved to the Pomme de Terre area from California when he was 12.

His high school years were spent attending a Southern Baptist church. The pastor of that church was the first person to knock on the Sanders’ door when they moved to Missouri.

He credits the Baptist pastor with mentoring him. “I learned a lot about getting out into the community and caring,” he said. “I actually worked alongside him for a long time – doing gardening that we would then give away to the community.”

He added that the time spent with that pastor, “taught me a lot about how to reach out and be there for people. He taught me how to care for the community, for people, and to love the gift that God has given us ... in nature and the world.”

When Andrew returned from serving in the military, his family had stopped attending the Baptist church, and begun attending a Methodist Church. “It felt like home,” he said. “And we realized that’s where we should have been all along.”

Andrew met Julie when they were working as teenagers at Bubba’s Fast Food Restaurant at Lake Pomme de Terre. They married and have two daughters.

Destiny, 23, is Andrew and Julie’s eldest daughter, and works in the medical field. The couple also has a 17-year-old daughter, Drew, who will be a senior in high school this fall and aspires to be an actress.

Now a civilian, Andrew became a welding inspector and said he was happy in that vocation. However, one day he was driving to work and had, “an overwhelming feeling that I was being called (to preach).

“I knew what it was (the feeling). I began pouring over the Bible and things started popping out to me – and I was just on fire.”

It was that moment that Andrew referred to in his first message to Lexington UMC congregants. He kept asking God to clarify and confirm that he was calling Sanders to preach.

Then, God called to him again. “My oldest brother was being baptized and as I pulled into the parking lot it was overwhelming. Julie asked me if I was okay. And I said, ‘God just called me to preach.’”

Andrew said he tested God. “I didn’t think I was where I wanted to go. But, stepping into one’s call is different than working a secular job. I loved welding inspection. It can’t compare to being a pastor.”

He continued in the welding field while he served a church in one-quarter time (versus full time). After a time, he went to his district superintendent and told the DS that he wanted more. “I realized it was my calling,” he added. Even though he was told he’d never be more than one-quarter time serving a church, suddenly four churches in southern Missouri opened up. Andrew and Julie began serving in those churches.

Julie was a youth coordinator for a Methodist church prior to being called herself. Andrew said she was getting up and giving full sermons and he realized, “she’s going to be a pastor.”

As Andrew began his journey to becoming an ordained minister, he first went through the lay leader side. “I realized I wanted to become an elder in the United Methodist Church,” he

said. “I realized there was a need to unify and I wanted to have a bigger voice than I had as a lay person.”

So, he decided to become a licensed minister in the UMC. He attended school at Central United Methodist and United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio and finally as an undergrad at Southern New Hampshire University.

Ironically, Andrew shared that the very first college credit he got was from Wentworth Military Academy, a class he took in Hermitage.

After two consecutive years serving at the same church, Andrew will be an “elder in full connection.” His time here in Lexington is considered a full-time appointment.

Andrew was ordained by the Missouri Conference of the UMC in Branson last year.

“Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as you can.”
– John Wesley

“These words are attributed to one of the founders of the United Methodist Church, Rev. John Wesley,” Andrew said. “As A Christian I like to believe that I live into Jesus’ call to, “love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:27n

“As an ordained United Methodist pastor, I believe my call is to love all person’s of the communities where I am sent, to do good,” he said. “As I fulfill God’s call, I am humbled by the many folks who naturally do good to one another. I believe as a church we understand the desire of Jesus to uplift the brokenhearted, bind the wounds of the masses, and care for all who have a need to be made whole once again. I look forward to serving in the Lexington and Waverly UMC’s joining their efforts in doing good.

MAY THE
GOD OF HOPE
 FILL YOU WITH
JOY & PEACE
ROMANS 15.13

Andrew Sanders | Pastor

Wow, here we are already a month into starting this new journey of ministry together. I am proud to be your pastor. I see the way that you interact with one another while strengthening your faith through attending service Sunday morning. I am encouraged by the level of excitement as we embark further on our Journey together.



Rev. Andrew Sanders

As I continue to meet people from both Lexington and Waverly, I love to hear the stories of the churches. The rich history of not only the buildings and the congregations but also what it means for individuals to be Christians in the United Methodist Church.

I believe that Jesus led His closest followers with a hope beyond measure. God continues to lead humanity with an exuberant Spirit. Allow the Holy Spirit to joyously guide your steps.

If we are filled with enjoyment, then we can share it with others. I know it may be daunting to share our faith with others. Our worry of religious conversation that could develop into theological discourses may keep us from sharing our faith. A person may not want to get into a theological conversation over pet food at the grocery store. Instead of letting our worry lead our conversation we should let the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts.

I believe that God put the Spirit of joy in how we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The joy of serving the Lord is what we should share with others. Tell those that you are in conversation with why you love your Lord and your church.

So, I ask you church, Where do you find joy and peace in your church?

Now, go share the answer to the previous question with someone who doesn't yet attend our church.

May the peace, love, joy, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ give us the power needed for the ministry of making new disciples.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY WORSHIP: 11 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal will begin again Aug. 27 at 9:45 a.m.

Mondays: Quilters at 1 p.m

Wednesdays:

Exercise Group: 9 a.m.

Praise/Worship Team: on hiatus

Youth Group: 7 p.m.

BABY GRACE: First & Third Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Lauren Negrete, volunteer)

MEN'S GROUP: First Saturday, 8 a.m. at McDonald's in downtown Lexington.

HARVESTERS DISTRIBUTION: Monday, August 14, 8 to 11 a.m.

WOMEN'S GROUP: Carry-in Lunch, Noon, August 11, in the Choir Room.

BACK-2-SCHOOL supply distribution, Tuesday, August 15, 6 p.m., Gazebo in downtown Lexington.

COMMODITIES: Thursday, August 24, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.



- 08/02 Cheryl Cooley**
- 08/10 Jeff Simpson**
- 08/17 Cain Vernon**
- 08/20 Cooper Davis**
- 08/20 Tanya Vernon**
- 08/31 Patty Skelton**
- 08/31 Ava Herbst**

REMINDER OF OUR ONLINE CALENDAR

Unsure of what is going on at LUMC? Do you want to rent some part of the building? Check out our calendar on our website: lexmoumc.org and click on "Calendar" in the top menu. For those wishing to reserve a room for a party/event, please contact Liz in the office: secretary@lexmoumc.org.

WORSHIP: Sundays 11 a.m.

Sunday School: on hiatus at this time

ONLINE: lexmoumc.org

REMEMBER

SAVING BROTHERS RECEIPTS:

We still save Brothers market receipts. Teri James has taken on that ministry to gather them, total and bring them to Brothers for redemption. Please bring your receipts to the church office. There's a file on the office door where you can place the receipts.

BABY GRACE:

Just a reminder that Baby Grace is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of the month. Volunteer Lauren Negrete handles all aspects of Baby Grace. For anyone in dire need and who can't make it to the days Baby Grace is open, reach out to Lauren at 660-251-8109 or Liz in the church office (Mon.-Thurs. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.): 660-259-2483.

LITURGIST SCHEDULE:

The new **liturgist's schedule for September 3 through December 31** has been emailed to all liturgists. Plus, a copy is hanging on both bulletin boards outside the sanctuary and hallway. Thank you all for your service to the kingdom of God. If you cannot fulfill a scheduled Sunday, please find a replacement and be sure to let Liz Johnson in the church office

know who is filling in for you. God bless!

BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPLIES:

Once again we are collecting Back to School supplies for Lexington students. A bucket is in the hallway outside the sanctuary. Our church is collecting: BACKPACKS, KLEENEX AND PENCILS. Drop off your donations before or after church on Sunday, or bring them to the church office, Mon.-Thurs., 9-2. Deadline for donations is Sunday, August 6. Supplies will be distributed at the Community Fair from the **Gazebo on Main Street, Tuesday, August 15 at 6 p.m.**

FOOD DRIVE CHALLENGE:

Grace UMC Men's Group has issued a challenge to our church (as well as Waverly and Concordia) to see who can provide the most bags and food for our local food pantry. **This is a monthly contest beginning Aug. 6 (for the first Sunday of each month).** Please donate nonperishable food. A box is in the hallway outside of the sanctuary. Monetary donations will be accepted—payable to Lexington Food Pantry (a Ministerial Alliance organization). Shelf stable items that are not out of code are welcome, especially staple items such as: *peanut butter, saltines, soup, canned meats (tuna, chicken, etc.), canned or dried beans, breakfast food, evaporated or dry milk, pasta sauce, pasta, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, canned vegetables, canned fruit, and more.* Please help us help those who are food insecure. The Lexington Food Pantry is open 9 to 11 a.m., Fridays at the Presbyterian Church.



Mission trip to Puerto Rico most successful mission to date



We were fortunate to have an apartment just blocks from the Atlantic Ocean beach. For most of our students, it was the first time on the ocean. Pictured are: Cat Harrelson, Chloe Neer, Avalon Stotts, Thomas Rowland, Brandon Nelson, Curtis Harrelson, Griffen Brady and Alexa Wastell.

Hello church family!

The older students of the Youth Group were very excited to return home from our Service Trip to Puerto Rico.

In our biggest adventure yet, five students helped to raise the funds and contributed a portion of the trip themselves to fly to the old Caribbean city of San Juan to help with the charity organization Saint Bernard's Project, which provides construction support for families affected by hurricanes.

Our team, which included three chaperones, worked in two groups on two houses. Both houses had been flooded and damaged by Hurricanes Maria in 2016 and Ian in 2022. As a result, SBP (national disaster recovery organization) had already started extensive remodeling to make the homes inhabitable again. Our team joined in to help with painting, concrete removal, new door installation, and bathroom tile installation! Our students not only had a chance to serve others, but learn some new construction skills, too!

It wasn't just work, though. The students had a chance to explore the Caribbean island. Some of their most memorable experiences were watching how Puerto Ricans drive (who needs stop signs?), exploring the 500-year-old colonial city of Old San Juan with its hidden park where the pigeons happily perch on you, climbing the mountain in the rainforest of El Yunque with its secret



The group climbed to one of the peaks inside El Yunque Rainforest, Puerto Rico, to a tower built by the CCC in the 1930s. Back row: Alexa Wastell, Griffen Brady, Brandon Nelson, Curtis Harrelson, Cat Harrelson, Thomas Rowland and Chloe Neer; front row: Destiny and Avalon Stotts.



The group took a cold swim in a natural lagoon and waterfall inside El Yunque Rainforest. Pictured are Cat Harrelson, Griffen Brady, Alexa Eastell, Brandon Nelson, Destiny, Chloe Neer, Avalon Stotts, Thomas Rowland and Curtis Harrelson.

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PASTOR WELCOME LUNCHEON



All four churches (Lexington, Waverly, Higginsville & Concordia) gathered for a luncheon to welcome Pastors Andrew & Julie Sanders. The event brought a large gathering and enjoyable fellowship. We hope all four churches can gather together again.

VBS

Vacation Bible School, sponsored by the Ministerial Alliance, was hosted by the Assembly of God Church in Lexington. More than 100 children were registered! Lexington UMC hosted the first night, Sunday, July 16, with a meal for the kids, while Pastor Andrew delivered the opening prayer. A pool party took place at the municipal pool on Tuesday evening. (Photos courtesy of Pastor Andrew)



More photos can be found on the Lexington MO United Methodist Facebook page.

Youth Mission Trip ... continued

waterfalls and mid-day rain showers, and kayaking in the supernatural bioluminescent bay where the plankton glow at night.

As always, we approach these important trips with three objectives: to model how we serve Christ and his kingdom by helping others, to encounter and engage with cultures outside of our comfort zone, and to give the students a chance to travel and make new memories through the church. In light of these objectives, this trip was possibly the most successful we've had yet!

