Why Growing in Faith is So Important

*Trust God from the bottom of your heart;*  
don’t try to figure out everything on your own.  
*Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;*  
he’s the one who will keep you on track.  
*Don’t assume that you know it all.*  
Proverbs 5:5-6 The Message

Our Discipleship Team has asked a few people to share how small groups and Bible study have helped them grow closer to Christ, understand God and the Bible better, and live out their faith in real ways. This month I am sharing Katie Gent’s testimony about her small group experience. I pray it speaks to you about why part of our Vision is to Grow in Faith. I also pray hearing Katie’s testimony blesses you as much as it did me.

What Small Group Bible Study has done for ME

I’ve been a Christian my entire life. My mom and dad were both Lutheran and our family always attended church. As a teen, I participated in Catechism/Confirmation classes and became a confirmed member of the church. As an adult, I taught Pre-K Sunday School when my young daughter wouldn’t let me leave her alone in a room full of strangers. Fast forward a few years and I moved on to the Methodist Church where I attended pretty regularly. At the time, I felt that was all I needed, just go to church, listen to the sermon, sing a few hymns and go home.

During Pastor Ken’s ministry, I joined a class called Disciple I Bible Study. It was an extensive study that began in the fall and didn’t end until spring. It involved a lot of Bible reading then a weekly 2-3 hour group class. During this time, I had what I call an awakening of my faith. At one point I was so filled with the Holy Spirit I wanted to shout the Good News from the rooftops. Something just clicked inside of me that I had never felt before. Once this class ended, some of the ladies from the class decided to continue getting together as a small group. We would trade turns meeting at each other’s homes and we would do a study or read from the Bible and discuss what we read, or whatever we decided to do.

The atmosphere of the small group (5-6 of us) made it comfortable to speak my thoughts, my opinions, my beliefs . . . something I could never do in a large group setting.

We became close friends. All of us through time have each gone through sickness or loss or worry or tragedy or something else. We have prayed together and for each other. We have prayed for those we love, or for members of our church or co-workers we hardly know. We have done countless studies, or read a book of the Bible and analyzed it. We hold each other accountable for reading God’s Word and following in the ways of Jesus. I wouldn’t trade my group I lovingly call The Bible Study Babes for anything. I trust each and every one of them, I love them and I would do anything for them.

One of the babes started a weekday Bible Study via email. I participate in that study as well as our Wednesday night group. This addition to my daily routine has greatly enriched my life. We read a particular chapter of the Bible a day - she gives us a thoroughly researched and wonderful study to read and then asks a question of the day. For those who don’t have the time to physically go to a class, an online study similar to this one is a good way to get your much needed daily dose of Jesus.

I encourage everyone to at least try a small group. It could be life changing!

Katie Gent

See you Sunday,  
Pastor Amy
I want to share my thanks and deep gratitude to First UMC for many things. First, your love and support this year for what my parents have been going through has been amazing. I am so grateful for the opportunities I have had to be with my folks, especially in the last few months with my dad. Your prayers for my folks have been felt and have lifted their spirits.

I also want to thank you for your generosity with our staff through the Christmas Love Gift. Our staff works very hard to make sure we are following God’s vision, and your support of them is greatly appreciated. My family is equally grateful for your generosity this holiday season. I am so glad to be able to work with the staff we have. They are a blessing in so many ways.

I am very grateful for the leadership at First UMC. The leaders of our church have worked this year to celebrate 175 years of ministry, try new outreach and ministry, and have continued to bless us with their gifts of service. I am looking forward to 2017 and all that God has planned for us. I am grateful to be your pastor in this season.

Blessings,

Pastor Amy
Thank You Notes . . .
A heartfelt thank you to the Hope Chest, Kids First, and congregation for all your prayers, support, and gifts you continue to give us. Have a Blessed Christmas as we remember the reason for the season.
Pastor Harold & Joy

Dear Friends,
We were so pleased to receive the December issue of the church newsletter and the report of a very successful year. We have appreciated Rev. Harold Klinker’s visits and the ability to receive Communion. God Bless you all as you plan for 2017.
Sincerely,
Fred & Harriet Soldner

Dear Friends,
We so appreciate your many prayers. We believe in prayer and know that they work. Jim’s tumors are still there but have shrunk. We are hoping that the surgeon will be able to remove the esophageal stent on Dec. 13th. It has caused some discomfort but we have been grateful for it. We wish you all a blessed Christmas and meaningful 2017. Keep up the great prayer chain!
Fondly,
Jim & Elaine Hurst

DRIVERS NEEDED:
Golden Meadows and others in our community have requested rides to church on Sunday mornings. We are currently picking up 4 persons from Golden Meadows and a few people from the Wednesday night meal. We pick them up at 9 am and take them back after the 10 am service is finished. So far, Mike & Carol Pettibone have volunteered to pick up the first Sunday of each month. Steve & Mary Pilkington the second Sunday of the month. Scott & Shelley Porter have helped. We are looking for any help possible. You may commit to a set Sunday per month or any way this outreach fits your schedule. You would let Janet in the office know your availability and she will mail reminder cards with phone numbers and instructions. All our drivers are currently using their own cars.

FRESH EGGS FOR WED. NIGHT MEAL FISHES & LOAVES:
Tim Wellman (Decatur resident) has eggs available most weeks to donate to Fishes & Loaves. Tim is diabetic and has lost his legs and most of his vision, so he cannot drive the eggs to church. We are looking for a person or persons willing to phone Tim each Wednesday to see if he has eggs available and then pick them up. Tim lives on 200 E (7466 N 200 E) and his phone number is 260-223-2414.

Please include these opportunities in your prayers, and consider them as ways you can serve. You may contact the church office or Shelley Porter for more information.

Celebrate Life!
Baby Shower for the Hope Clinic
In support of Sanctity of Human Life month, our church is helping the local Hope Clinic by showering them with new baby items during the month of January, so they can bless moms and dads who have chosen life for their child. The following items are always needed: diapers, wipes baby equipment (crib, mattress, high chair, stroller, car seat, etc.), crib sheets bath items, laundry soap, pot chair/ring, pacifiers, teething toys, bottles and sippy cups, tableware, baby toys and baby clothes, and formula. Children’s books for infant through 3 years too! (please, no baby food, powder, or baby oil.) Bring your items starting January 8 through January 29 and place them in or near the bin marked “Celebrate Life” at the rear of the Sanctuary. The Hope Clinic is committed to giving women, men, and their children HOPE! Thanks, and any questions, contact Charlie Brune at 724-9046.

MISSING FROM YOUR HOME?
Did you provide a dessert, cake, or brownies for a recent Church function? A “collection” of “leftovers” glass and plastic containers, some with lids, are “stacking up” in the Church kitchen. Check out the “leftover collection” and see if a container belongs at home in your kitchen. Thank YOU!!

January Birthdays
1/04 Ryan Brickle
1/04 Angie Geimer
1/04 Rochelle McBride
1/04 Donna Owens
1/04 Corey Wilson
1/06 Doug Rieth
1/06 Harriet Soldner
1/08 Stan Allison
1/08 Mia Jackson
1/09 Elva Smith
1/12 Carson Friedt
1/13 Don Heimann
1/15 Remington Everett
1/15 Mandy Poling
1/18 Nateshia Witte
1/20 Lily Johnson (8)
1/20 Phyllis Mills
1/22 Chris Everett
1/23 Colleen Gaunt
1/23 Dot Vanhorn
1/24 Katie Gent
1/24 Jenny Littler
1/25 Deb Porter
1/25 Gail Taylor
1/27 Chris Covington
1/27 Linda Drake
1/27 Beverly Hill
1/28 Jason Brune
1/29 Richard Evans
1/29 Leah Thomas
1/30 Helen Walters
1/31 Jane Friedt
1/31 Brendan Gilbert (15)

January Anniversaries
1/09 Stan & Jane Allison
1/13 Rod & Teresa Simon
1/25 Richard & Janet Evans
1/31 James & Gail Taylor
Training for **EVERYONE** serving in Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, Fishes & Loaves, Double Blessings Visitation Ministry, or serving on staff.

Saturday, January 21
9-11 am
Fellowship Hall
Coffee and refreshments served
Childcare available
RSVP by Sunday, January 15 to church office
Office@firstumcdecatur.org

Leadership Visioning and Planning

For **ALL 2017 First UMC Leaders and Committee/Team Members**

**Sunday, January 22 following ONE worship service and lunch**

Fellowship Hall

We will celebrate and pray for our new leaders, 2016, and vision/plan for 2017

Lunch is provided—soup and sandwiches

Childcare available, must RSVP by Sunday, January 15 to office:
office@firstumcdecatur.org
Let’s Talk About...
“How We Can Raise Kids Who Love the Bible”

How about we start with a verse?
Psalm 1 “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

1.) The truth is, delightful meditation on scripture produces Fruitful Christians who spread a passion for God's glory. That begins at home. We adults have to show the children what it looks like to follow Christ all the time!

2.) Show kids that you love the Bible. How do we do that?
Talk about it often! Smile, be on fire, savor and delight in it. Have a verse a day emailed to you. Write verse on note cards and hang them around the house.

3.) Be in the Bible yourself so that kids can see that you are growing. John 15:8 says, “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” Let kids catch you reading or listening to the Bible regularly.

4.) Apply the Bible to real life. James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” We grown-ups can lead by repenting. We can be transparent and tell them when we messed up, and if they were involved in the situation we should ask them to forgive us. We should tell kids what we are struggling with and what verses God is speaking to us. Be specific!

5.) Show kids the big picture of the Bible.
Summarize... God reigns, saves and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ. That means we are all longing, we try and fill the longing with idols, but we were designed to find joy in Christ.
The Bible can be broken down something like this...
God - The main character of the Bible is NOT you.
Glory - We are supposed to do everything for the glory of God.
Kingdom - The kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all the universe. It’s also a spiritual rule over the hearts and lives of those who willingly submit to God’s authority.
Covenants- God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah and it all points to Christ!
Bible is not preeminently about us it’s about God.
Let’s Talk About...

“How We Can Raise Kids Who Love the Bible”
continues

6.) We need to teach kids the Bible is not just a subject at school or in church it’s part of life. The Bible is part of history and there is history in the Bible.

7.) We can relate other curriculum they are learning to the Bible. Teach kids to look at everything through a Christian worldview, also know as our Bible lenses. How does whatever we are learning fit in with what the Bible says?

8.) Allow kids to ask questions and show them how and what to research. We don’t need to have all the answers, we can research together, think about it together, and get help if we need to. We can learn about what it means to have a Christian Worldview, learn apologetics, learn how the Bible connects to real life, learn about God’s character, and God’s plan. “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” 1 Peter 3:15

9.) Lastly we can, “Pray without ceasing” 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Remember, the Lord is infinitely more interested in the salvation of children than we are.

Is it time you joined a Bible study to learn more about the word yourself?

Are you feeling called to serve in Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry or to start an adult study group?

Want to talk? I’d love to here from you!
Annette Gower
Email: gowercrew@gmail.com
Cell: (260) 223-2288 Home: (260) 301-2244
Thanks to everyone for your continued support with our many projects in the past year. We are so thankful to have a wonderful church family and a community who supports us in the work we do. Last year we filled Easter Baskets, helped with school supplies and at Christmas, we were able to help several families have a better Christmas with our Christmas jar project. Thank you and may you feel the Love of Christ in your heart in the coming year!

The Hope Chest Staff
Tana's Colorful Words

The New Year Brings

Oh the joy of another new year! A time to throw out the old and ring in the new. Wait! Some things that age are wise, antique, memories, even more precious. Christmas, ended the year bringing new gifts, toys, clothes, maybe register. We've all been children, have children or grandchildren and enjoy seeing the fun of unwrapping gifts and receiving new toys to play with, new clothes to wear, and some unexpected surprises.

Then comes another celebration, Happy New Year! A time to start all over again. We get back into our daily routine, meeting friends, learning, sharing our "gifts," and praising God! This new year, shall we all try to live each new day to its fullest? It's really simple and easy to see all things special when we're aware and share His love! Enjoy the new fresh snow, new daily sunrises, enjoy good health, have fun finding the good in each new day. Let's express kindness, smile a little more, laugh a little longer, enjoying and making precious memories with our old and new friends.

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it "Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39

That's A Fact

Wow, What A Year

Yes, what a year! God, was very good in 2016 to Kids First ChildCare Ministries. "Thanks be to God" for letting us all feel love and success.

Did You know...

In 2016, Kids First ChildCare Ministries... Great Parents Partnership! Perfect attendance for Annual Parents meeting. "Applauded!"

In 2016, Kids First ChildCare Ministries... Celebrated 20 years! First UMC has been our home for 20 years. "Thank You!!!"

In 2016, Kids First ChildCare Ministries Welcomed! Enrolled 16 new children to our Kid's First Family. "Super!"

In 2016, Kids First ChildCare Ministries Hired! We added to our staff Jenni Covington and JoAnn Sanford. "Welcome!"

In 2016, Kids First ChildCare Ministries Flexible schedule! Daily attendance 44 children. "Wow!"

In 2017, Kids First ChildCare Ministries hope is to continue to grow, connect, and serve our community. Our prayer may all our families and friends share and receive love, kindness, good health, and happiness. And all God's children said Amen.

Until the come out Again!
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<td>7 pm-Life Group at Parsonage</td>
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<td>8:15 &amp; 10:00-Worship 9:30-Sunday School 5-7 pm-Youth</td>
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<td>6:30 pm-Boy Scouts &amp; Cub Scouts</td>
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<td>ONE Worship Service at 10 am, 11:15-Soup Lunch, Leadership &amp; Planning after lunch, 5-6:45--Bible Study at Java Bean, 5-7 pm-Youth</td>
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<td>6:30 pm-Boy Scouts &amp; Cub Scouts</td>
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Newsletter Deadline

28
9 am-noon-District Staff Parish Training & 9 am-noon-District Stewardship & Budget Strategy at Aldersgate UMC Ft. Wayne
Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
CONNECT—GROW—SERVE

Sunday, January 1
ONE Worship Service at 10:00 am

Sunday, January 22
ONE Worship Service at 10:00 am
Soup Lunch at 11:15 am
Leadership Visioning and Planning after Lunch