

The Friendship News

March, 2022

Monthly Newsletter of Berea Friendship United Methodist Church

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

BFUMC's Forward Focus team worked faithfully and diligently for months in the midst of Covid. The team developed and proposed a way forward for this community of faith. They were an amazing group to work with! What is really amazing are the many books and documents now circulating, which indicate churches must do the very things our Forward Focus Team concluded. Our team was spot on concerning what Berea Friendship must do in this community.

I had a wonderful discussion with David Hagins recently. He said we had a mountain top moment at BFUMC - referring to Mike Guffee's ministry. Berea Friendship was full of people! Think back through the thirty years since, and all the plans and ideas discussed to jumpstart the church again. The net result was the church continued to do the same thing, expecting a different result, but gradually declining and downsizing. Cy Roger's ministry was the four year exception in my mind. My prayer is that our ministry together will be fruitful and hopefully a mountain top experience for another generation. Two years ago when Forward Focus began, everyone seemed to agree that it must be a five year plan. This congregation has a short window of opportunity. Thank God we have abundant blessings and options available to us.

Berea Friendship must attract new people into this fellowship - another generation. We can't do what was done 40, 30, 20 years ago, and expect any success. Today younger people are functioning through the smart phone in their hands, as are most in their 50s and 60s. Younger people even go to church via their smart phone, and give to the church the same way. We must connect to another generation through technology. Change is not optional, it's a necessity. And investment of money, time, and energy will be necessities. Again, we have blessings and options Berea Friendship.

Our goal should be to attract people of different ages, races, cultures, and circumstances. All people need a relationship with Jesus Christ and all need the Kingdom of God to come into their lives. In recent meetings I have heard many passionate pleas about saving the Church and growing the church. Careful! Our ideas of "church" make great idols. Berea Friendship is a vessel, a fellowship of people willing to be spent such that the Kingdom of God comes among us, and to others nearby. Berea Friendship exists to be spent - just as our Lord Jesus lived and gave his life. Our purpose should be His Kingdom come! As we seek first His righteousness, then everything else will be added unto the church. We must be all in and all working in one accord to attract new people. Our Forward Focus plan is a wonderful starting place! Humbled before God, with His guidance and direction, now we must be intentional about implementing the plan.

As teams and groups meet please let Scripture, the Grace of Jesus Christ, and our Forward Focus mission, vision, and strategic goals guide your discussions. **Our priority must be to attract new people - another generation.** Young people are an amazing resource, but I prefer to think new people. New people of all ages bring new strength, new energy, and new ideas. Look how greatly we have been blessed by our newcomers the past couple of years.

Strategic goal three is to enhance and expand worship experiences that honor God and inspire people to serve. To reestablish a traditional service at BFUMC is one of our goals. The processing of the information you provided is underway, and that service can come together quickly. If traditional is your desired approach of worship, then get busy inviting new people as we launch that effort. And keep inviting new people! Be intentional every day, every Sunday! There are many young people who will chose traditional if there are young people present elsewhere in the church.

Then there is the real issue before Berea Friendship - starting an alternative service or services that will attract persons desiring a less formal approach to worship. There will have to be contemporary music to attract younger audiences. To implement an alternative service at Berea friendship will be the most difficult thing done in this church since the original building plan was completed. Again, it will take all of us working in one accord to attract new people. We have the opportunity to make Berea Friendship a church young people can consider their own. We have the opportunity to make Berea Friendship a place that people in need call home. It will likely be a three to four year process at best. Favoritism for others is of God; it is the favoritism we must exhibit!

Start thinking about all we must have in place to support a younger generation! It is much bigger than just an alternative/contemporary service. Think about all that was going on during the mountain top experience of Mike Guffee's ministry. I have heard bold discussions from Outreach, Quilters, and UMM about how to move forward. **We must favor others and our priority must be to attract new people and new generations.** If ideas seem familiar, comfortable, or the same, then they are likely about us and not really about others. We have much to do in the coming months. In originally building this church, there were blueprints, plans on paper, and dollar figures attached to phases of construction. The fellowship was bound together by that vision and prospered. Without a vision communities of faith perish. This next great task before us will be even more challenging. We will have to depend on God as never before; we will have to operate by faith, things unseen. There is an amazing door of opportunity open before this congregation and we can be bound together again.

The single most important thing one generation must do is to make the church a place where the next generation wants to worship. The logic and necessity is obvious to us. As we are bound together in the purpose of sharing Jesus Christ with others, God will bless BFUMC. Here are some of the blessings we will experience: we will see God in control, we'll see our specific needs meet, our faith will be strengthened, our perseverance developed, our spiritual maturity will grow, we will become increasingly Christ-like, and we'll experience God walking with us. We will see the goodness God intends - infinitely beyond the little picture of our imaginations. I am looking forward to walking the mountain tops with you Berea Friendship!

In Christ,
Pastor Davon

Our Church Family

*March
Anniversaries*

06	Robert and Betty Bridges
13	Roy and Martha Oxley
18	Jose and Jayne Ferer
18	Jimmy & Susan Kruse
25	Tony and Carolyn Earnest
25	Jim and Margaret Rawson
29	Kenneth and Joyce Tucker

Happy Anniversaries!

March Birthdays

March 01	Christopher McClain
March 02	Roth Paxton
March 03	Alex Stone
March 03	Michael Cook
March 04	T.J. Melton
March 05	Debbie Capps
March 05	Elyse Evans
March 06	Bob Dunn
March 06	Cindy Hester
March 06	Bobby Taylor
March 10	Ronald Failor
March 11	Parks Evans
March 11	Mark Miller
March 12	Mark Wells
March 13	Henry Philpot
March 15	Rebecca P. Surett
March 16	Kay Moorehead
March 18	Brad Armstrong
March 19	Mike Hovious
March 20	"Tari" Beeson
March 26	Joel Sidney Disher
March 29	Betty Stover
March 29	Mark Nalley

The Friendship Circle
Meeting on Tuesday,
March 15, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.
in the Huckaby Classroom.

The Shalom Circle will have a brief
meeting after the Week of Prayer
Program on March 19th to plan our
April meeting

Men's Group Meeting
Saturday, March 19th 8:00 a.m.

Prayer List: Cindy Cooper, Henry Philpot, Carolyn Earnest, Miller Bogan, Nancy Hamilton, Larry McCants, Nancy McCants, Beverly Threatt, Janet Stone. Continued prayers for our Shut Ins. Our Shut Ins are being supported by Project Connect 2022.

Our Sincere Condolences to the family of Doris Elizabeth Hollingsworth who passed away on February 20th. Ms. Hollingsworth was Mother of our Carolyn Hunter and Glenda Argo.

March

2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 11:30 a.m. Quilters 5:45 p.m. A Shrove Tuesday Pancake Super & Prepare for Lent!	2 6:30 p.m. ASH Wednesday Service	3 Quilters 6:30 p.m.	4 7:00 p.m. World Day of Prayer Virtual Bible Study Zoom Mtg # 410 366 2426 Passcode 2N9cQf	5
6 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Live Streamed	7	8 11:30 a.m. Quilters 5:45 p.m. CDC Meeting	9 Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.	10 Quilters 6:30 p.m.	11	12
13 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Live Streamed	14 Outreach Ministries Meeting 6:30 p.m.	15 11:30 a.m. Quilters 10:00 Prayer Group Meeting 2:00 p.m. Friendship Circle	16 Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.	17 Inspiration Group St. Paddy Lunch 10:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Thrive Upstate 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Quilters 6:30 p.m.	18	19 8:00 a.m. Men's Club 11:00 a.m. UMW Week of Prayer and Self Denial Luncheon Shalom Circle Meeting after Luncheon.
20 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Guest Speaker Guest Soloist 10:00 a.m. Live Streamed Covered Dish Luncheon	21	22 11:30 a.m. Quilters	23 Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.	24 Quilters 6:30 p.m.	25	26 Dribble for Destiny, Inc. Basketball Tournament 8:00 a.m. until...
27 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Live Streamed	28	29 11:30 a.m. Quilters	30 Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.	31 Quilters 6:30 p.m.		

ASH Wednesday Evening Service March 2nd, 6:30 p.m.

in our Sanctuary

The Inspiration Group is hosting a St. Paddy Lunch March 17th in the Social Hall from 10:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Meat, Drinks and Paper Products will be provided. Register on the Sign-Up Sheet or by contacting Brenda Benton, Jan Smith, or the Church Office.

Basketball Dribble for Destiny, Inc. Spring Travel Basketball! If you are interested in helping with Set Up /Take Down of Bleachers, Open/Close of our building, Traffic, and Incidentals, please contact the Church Office. These are Saturdays: March 26th , April 2nd , April 23rd , May 7th , May 14th , and June 4th

Outreach Ministries News

Outreach ministries will have a meeting on March 14th at 6:30 p.m. in the social hall. All members are encouraged to attend. We will be working on our projects for 2022.

During the month of March we will continue to collect items for Triune Mercy Center. A list is located on the door at the back of the sanctuary and on the table at the back of the sanctuary

Salkehatchie 2022

Aldersgate United Methodist Church will be hosting a information event for Salkehatchie on Sunday, April 3, 2022 from 5 p.m until 8 p.m. They are looking for people that participated in Salkehatchie to come and share their experience and help promote this ministry. Salkehatchie is supposed to up and running this summer. If you would like to participate in this, please contact Vickie Failor and she will get you in touch with the representative from Aldersgate UMC.

Easter! The Children’s Ministry Team needs empty Egg Cartons and Plastic Eggs! You can help by donating Egg Cartons and Plastic Eggs by April 10th. Please place your donations in the “BOX” at the back of the Sanctuary.

EASTER EGG HUNT Saturday, April 16th. 1:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. Mark your calendars now. Look for more details coming soon. This fun event is sponsored by the Outreach & Children’s Ministry committees.

CDC BOARD MEETING: March 8th, 5:45 p.m. Board to discuss Finances, Grant, Ways to reach CDC Families.

MENS GROUP YARD SALE APRIL 9th: Doors open at 7 a.m. Contact Bobby Taylor 864-630-3676

This **YARD SALE** will take on a different **FACE!** We are looking for good stuff y’all !!

THRIVE UPSTATE visits on March 17th! We are happy to have them back with us! Come help us make this ST. Patrick’s Day special for Thrive Residents!

Mass Notification System

Our Church has purchased through a generous donation a calling service, One Call Now, is a service where we can send out mass communication by either phone, text, email or all three to everyone on the list. We are going to be compiling a list of numbers, and emails.

Please complete the enclosed list and return it to the church via email, offering plate, or US mail, so we can put together this service. This service will be available for every chairperson/leader to use for their own groups and for the church office to use as a way to easily get information to the congregation.

One Call Now Service

I would like to register to receive messages from the church or groups I am associated with by the following means. You can pick one or all ways of notifications.

_____ Email - my email address is _____

_____ text - my cell phone number is _____

_____ Phone call - my phone number is _____

My Name is _____

If you have any questions about this service, you can contact Vickie Failor and she will be happy to explain it to you.

COVERED DISH LUNCHEON

SUNDAY MARCH 20, 2022

March your Calendar for Sunday, March 20th. Joining us during our Morning Service will be Guest Speaker Stacey Ashemore of the JUST SAY SOMETHING Program and Soloist, Orrie Burdine. We look forward to hearing from them. Please join us following this Service for a Covered Dish Luncheon. Bring your favorite meats or vegetables to share! Beverages will be provided.

TRUSTEES 2022

Trustees on board this year are the following: Robert Bagwell, Barry Childs, Cindy Cooper, Carolyn Earnest, Rick Greer, Dena Nalley, Alex Philpot, Buddy Stover, Rob Wallace. There are many projects onboard for Year 2022 and more to be published. Please reach out to our Trustees if you see items that we need to address and we will add them to our list!

United Methodist Women

The Executive Board has planned several meetings for the entire unit and all the ladies of the church for the year. Please keep a eye out in the newsletters and bulletins for information on these events. If you would like more info on the UMW, please ask any of the ladies on the board, Anne-Marie Wallace, Vickie Failor, Jane Walker, Vivian Day, Martha McWhite,, Laura Childs, Brenda Benton

The United Methodist Women will host the annual Week of Prayer and Self Denial luncheon on Saturday, March 19th at 11:00 a.m. A registration list will be available at the back door to the sanctuary. All ladies of the church are invited to join us for this meaningful service.

The Greenville District United Methodist Women will be hosting a World Day of Prayer virtual bible study on Friday, March 4th at 7:00 p.m. The link for the meeting is Zoom meeting ID: 410 366 2426 passcode: 2N9cQf. If you would like to participate, but do not have a way to zoom, contact Anne-Marie Wallace and she will work on a way to host the event at our church for everyone to attend as a group.

Concessions during Basketball Tournaments!!

The United Methodist Women will be running the concessions stand for the Dribble For Destiny basketball tournaments. The dates are March 5th, March 26th, April 2nd, April 23rd, May 7th, May 14th, and June 4th. We would love to have a group of ladies to rotate on these days, so everyone does not have to be there all day. If you can volunteer to help, please contact Anne-Marie Wallace, UMW President. The session stand opens when the games start and we close them during the last quarter of the game. The games are normally scheduled from 9 a.m. until 7-8 p.m. The length of the tournaments depends on how many teams are playing.

Prayer Focus

Our prayer focus for March is on the Emma Norton Services in St. Paul, Minnesota. They were founded in 1917 by the United Methodist Church and have been supported by United Methodist Women.

Their programs include providing housing for the homeless and those with mental illnesses, chemical dependency, and chronic health conditions. They also work with children and youth in the area. Their focus is on social and emotional learning, providing homework help, and offering many extracurricular activities. Their SOAR program provides help with the application process for receiving supplemental security income for those who may qualify.

Their mission - provide transformational housing for women with young children on their journey to recovery.

Their vision - boldly expand, empower, and transform lives through education.

Their values - community, accountability, perseverance, innovation, protecting and valuing the whole human spirit.

Their goal - to use their collective power to build collaborative communities and partnerships to achieve systemic change.

Birthday cards will be sent to missionaries Doris Frazier in Kentucky and Laura Kirby in North Carolina.

Bringing Light to the Journey

Wesley Community and Health Centers in Phoenix offers health and wholeness to its changing communities.

by Nile Sprague, with Tara Barnes

Wesley Community and Health Centers began in 1950 as a small community center in south central Phoenix. Today, Wesley has three Phoenix campuses, and it continues to grow. Its health clinics and community centers work together to provide a holistic approach to well-being and build what Chief Executive Director Blaine Bandi calls a vibrant, effective connection with the community.

The health clinics offer a wide range of services, including family medicine, prenatal care, chronic disease management, vaccinations, breast cancer screening, counseling and more. The health center services are offered on a sliding scale based on family size and income for those who are uninsured. The community center offers exercise and nutrition classes and gym as well as a community garden and kitchen. It also offers English-as-a-second-language classes and afterschool and summer care for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Community center programs rely on grants, donations and partnerships to provide programming for free or reduced rates.

As a national mission institution, Wesley is supported by United Methodist Women through grants, training, technical support and member involvement. Members' generous Mission Giving is what enables United Methodist Women to help organizations like Wesley across the country uplift their communities.

Whole-person care

Wesley has always served low-income, primarily Hispanic communities. Almost all staff are bilingual. The original community center focused on adult English classes and citizenship activities, then expanded to include more children's programming as a gymnasium was added. The mother and baby clinics of the 1970s and 1980s also expanded into more comprehensive health-care offerings. The original building, on 10th Street, known as the Phoenix Campus, is a physical example of Wesley's growing outreach as additions were built onto the site as the centers needed to expand.

The Golden Gate campus, about 7 miles from the Phoenix Campus is the biggest and most active, with modern facilities built to meet health-care and community needs. Like the original location, it has clinics and a gym, and this is also where the garden and community kitchen are located. The third location, the Health Center at Coffelt, is a small clinic near an affordable-housing complex and low-income housing neighborhood next to a nice park.

What makes Wesley unique is its understanding of the social determinants of health, which are often a much better predictor of health status than genetics, Bandi explained, factors such as education level, first language and housing and employment status. So Wesley intentionally offers additional support to clinical care.

"This is where the community center comes in," Bandi said. "The community center wraps services complementary to treating people and keeping them well and healthy. There probably isn't an exercise class where you go to the doctor. We do have exercise classes. Your doctor probably doesn't offer an ESL class or a class that will help you find a job. We do that here. More than likely there isn't an afterschool program where you go to the doctor. Here, we do that. The health centers and community centers complement each other in helping us be better stewards, better respondents to the needs of our community."

Equipping for change

About 30 women were exercising in the gym when I arrived at the Golden Gate Campus early on a Thursday morning. In the kitchen I met Lucia Sisterna, who had just started her job as the kitchen manager a few months before. She was making a peach and kale salad for the women to eat after their exercise class, which was being led in Spanish by J-Lee Stewart. Sisterna partners with Stewart to offer participants natural and healthy foods.

“I love this job because I love to cook,” Sisterna said about her first professional cooking job. “And I also like that I can help people understand that good food isn’t necessarily bad tasting. It’s very simple. And it’s still pretty yummy.”

The meals aren’t just served to the program participants. They also learn how to make the meals and often take ingredients home. Some of the ingredients are grown right in the center’s garden. The exercise and nutrition classes, according to Stewart, aren’t just about losing weight but are also about disease prevention and mental health.

“The feedback that I get from the participants is great, because they see the changes,” Stewart said. “They gradually start feeling better, and then say they have fewer back problems, fewer headaches, fewer joint problems. They’re stronger. They feel more awake and have more energy. They sleep better. They get less angry. They’re a little bit happier. And the more they do this, the more they feel the change that they were looking for. They improve their health—physical, mental and emotional.”

The students at the afterschool and day-care programs provided at Wesley also learn about good health and nutrition and exercise. It’s part of Wesley’s goal of caring for the whole person and the whole family. The children’s programs also offer homework assistance, structured physical activity, arts and crafts, snacks, gardening and educational activities in science, math, reading and cultural awareness.

Graciela Ohlmaier says she’s seen improvements in her grandchildren’s behavior since they’ve been attending Wesley’s programs. She often helps take care of her four grandchildren, who have been in the program for about six years. She appreciates the positive changes she’s seen in their lives.

Connecting care

Ohlmaier is also a patient of Wesley’s health clinic. A regular checkup in July found abnormalities in her mammogram. A biopsy, which she also received at Wesley, showed that her breast cancer had returned. She’s now receiving treatment.

“I’m not afraid because I have a lot of faith in God,” she said. “The size of the tumors is quite small. I caught them just in time.”

Among its other clinical offerings, Wesley is a Well Woman HealthCheck Program contractor and a Title X Family Planning site. The health centers offer culturally competent family-planning services, including exams, testing, education, birth control and treatment to uninsured or low-income community members. WWHP provides free breast and cervical cancer screening for those who are low income, uninsured or underinsured.

Nancy Vasquez is Wesley’s patient navigator for WWHP. A casual conversation she had with Ohlmaier is what encouraged Ohlmaier to get screened. Vasquez’ role, as her title implies, is to help patients navigate the health-care process. She helps them with paperwork and communication and connects them to services—and not just clinical services but counseling and financial resources. She says she loves the one-on-one with patients.

“A patient recently told me that his wife had gone to many different places, but it was here that his wife was finally diagnosed and treated, and she’s doing so much better,” Vasquez said. “He said they’d gone to specialists and spent so much money that they didn’t have, but at Wesley she was diagnosed with the right illness and they didn’t have to spend their whole life savings getting her treatment. Stories like that just really touch your heart.”

Vasquez helps empower patients to ask questions, advocate for themselves and come to her if they need help. She’s often a shoulder to cry on. She’s a connector, a way Wesley goes out into the community as well as being a place to which the community can turn. She helps eliminate barriers.

“Our job at its core is eliminating barriers, building bridges, making it easier for people to access services,” said Bandi.

Mikala Balk is Wesley’s family planning and women’s health program manager. She manages Wesley’s federal family-planning grant. She too emphasizes the importance of supporting patients throughout the process.

“We take someone through the screening and the diagnostic and the biopsy. But if Nancy has someone she’s navigating because they’ve been diagnosed, part of my role is to make sure that we have somewhere for those patients to go after that,” she said. “We’re not just saying, ‘Okay, now go figure it out.’ We find somewhere for them to go and services for them beyond us.”

The Health Center at Coffelt opened in March 2021 to provide health care to people where they live. Raven Burrell is a physician assistant who works at the health center to provide all-encompassing care, as she describes it. At the location, which includes a laboratory, patients come for well-woman checks, well-child checks, diabetes and blood pressure management, mammograms and prenatal care, among other services.

“We’re a primary-care home to make sure patients’ entire well-being is cared for, not just physical health but their mental-emotional housing as well,” Burrell said. “Looking at the social determinants of health, we try to make sure that we treat the whole person.”

“I love the site here,” she continued. “I think it is wonderful that we get to work here in the Coffelt area to be a primary-care home. Access to transportation or even just to a provider can sometimes be difficult. Working right here in the community is fulfilling for me to connect with patients on the health level but also just to see how they’re doing to bring them some light to their journey.”

Extending reach

I spoke over Zoom with Tringo Werke and her daughter, Addisalem Atnafu, who served as translator for her mother, a role she also fills when Werke visits Wesley’s health clinic for checkups. Werke worked as a teacher in Hawassa, Ethiopia, before moving to the United States to live with her daughter and three grandchildren. She’s lived in Phoenix for seven years. Wesley’s clinic helps her manage her diabetes.

“I’m very thankful to have the clinic,” Werke said. “The doctors are very caring.”

Atnafu, who works as a hostess in a local restaurant, appreciates the low cost of checkups.

In response to the pandemic, virtual visits have increased, and it’s a service Wesley intends to continue as another way to meet people where they are.

To help extend its reach, Wesley partners with other community organizations.

“We partner with other entities because there will always be more need than we can address on our own,” Bandi said. “And we shouldn’t feel like we need to try and address it on our own.”

Bandi talked about a mobile food market for which Wesley hosts food drives, the mobile health-care unit from a nearby hospital that visits its parking lot, and working with the Mayo Clinic for clinical services and with Arizona State University to deliver free internet to their neighborhood. They’re also a training site for medical students, some of whom later become Wesley employees.

Bandi says Wesley really looks to the community for guidance in the programs and services it provides.

“Half of our board members are made up of people who utilize our services,” Bandi said. “We need their input. We need to understand. We need to show the community that this is their facility, their services, and that it’s community directed what we do.”

Wesley and United Methodist Women

One of Wesley’s great community partnerships is with United Methodist Women. Bandi calls Wesley’s relationship with United Methodist Women historic, long lasting and consistent, and that in addition to support from the national organization as a national mission institution, local members are ready to volunteer and provide donations and supplies.

“Many of the local members here support our afterschool program with supplies and backpacks when kids go back to school. They also support the big Christmas party for our kids and kids in the community, many of whom otherwise wouldn’t get a Christmas present or a gift. They donate everything you can imagine, from necessities like socks and underwear and pants and shoes to toys and games and others and everything in between,” Bandi said. “United Methodist Women at various churches have been very, very kind in meeting those needs and others.”

Members of United Methodist Women in the Phoenix area and Desert Southwest Conference credit longtime executive director Betty Mathis for the deep connection between the national mission institution and United Methodist Women members.

“Betty had such a wonderful connection with the women and great enthusiasm,” said Beverly Secrist, a United Methodist Women leader in the Desert Southwest Conference and frequent Wesley volunteer. “I sincerely believe that many women supported Wesley because of her. I have always believed United Methodist Women should support their regional mission institutions, and Betty made that easy.”

Bandi trained under Mathis before she retired in 2019. Mathis passed away in August 2021. Bandi calls Wesley’s continued growth a part of Mathis’ legacy. One of Mathis’ traditions Bandi continues is speaking about Wesley to local churches and United Methodist Women gatherings.

“I first met Betty Mathis in the 1990s, when she came to my church to give a program on Wesley Community Center and how we can help,” said Carla Whitmire, conference communications coordinator for the Desert Southwest United Methodist Women, who has volunteered at Wesley since the mid-1990s. “I had a relationship with her for over 30 years that was filled with great joy. One of the first things I did was participate in the Christmas gift program. I went to Wesley to help record information from parents about what the kids wanted as Christmas gifts. It was wonderful to see the new program just getting started. And it’s been fun since then to see the program change and grow. My United Methodist Women unit donates gifts every year.”

Whitmire also said that when the health clinics first opened, Mathis encouraged United Methodist Women members to come get care and spread the word. Local and district United Methodist Women also held meetings and gatherings at the center, a tradition that continues as Wesley is able to open up more safely. Whitmire praises Bandi as well, knowing the large shoes he has to fill, especially for how the centers responded to the COVID pandemic.

“He was quick to respond and create ways to maintain services to the community, both with the health-care center and with the afterschool program, which became a school program when it brought the kids in so that they could do their remote learning here. For so many in the community who didn’t have internet options or child care, Wesley was a source of help.”

Wesley, like many United Methodist Women-related national mission institutions, knows how to adapt and change. Its original location is now in the flight path of the growing Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. The original Golden Gate community is now the rental car terminal. A new home built next to the 10th Street location is the first built in years, Bandi said, as the government continues to buy property to expand the airport and community members move. The Phoenix campus is now harder to get to as well. Yet Wesley continues to take care of its community while growing and changing and reaching out, kind of like United Methodist Women.

“We want the community to know this is where you can go for care, for services that are designed specifically for you, for you the way you are, how you are, who you are,” Bandi said. “We’re here for everyone, not just for those with nowhere to go. And we will never give up.”