

AUGUST 9, 2022

VOLUME 29 ISSUE 16

VHBC  
Connections

VESTAVIA HILLS  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
1972  
ORGANIZED MAY 1957

**SUMMER  
REVIEW**

THIS WEDNESDAY

# CONTENTS



STAY CONNECTED WITH THE HAPPENINGS AROUND VHBC!

### 03 WEDNESDAY SESSIONS

Fall sessions start again on August 17th! Check out the poster to see what's coming up!

### 04 FEATURED ARTICLE

Today's article is a story about tragedy and finding joy out of sorrow.

### 07 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Back to school means back to our regularly scheduled programming at VHBC!

### 08 NEWS & EVENTS

We're highlighting summer, fall kick-off events, and all kinds of news at VHBC this week!

### 09 FALL KICKOFF ON SUNDAY

Our children are being promoted and we're celebrating fall kickoff this Sunday!

### 10 LOOKING AHEAD ON WEDNESDAYS

Have you registered for fellowship suppers yet?

### 11 SPOTLIGHTS & THANK YOU'S

We're welcoming a new member, saying goodbye to a long term staff member, and celebrating 10 years of great work of another.

### 12 CONNECTED IN PRAYER

Stay updated with the prayer needs of our membership and missionary partners.

## THIS WEEK AT VHBC



**BLOOD DRIVE TODAY FROM 1-6 PM  
IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL**

**FELLOWSHIP SUPPER AT 4:45 & VHBC  
SUMMER REVIEW AT 6 ON WED**



## FIND VHBC ONLINE



**WATCH  
RECENT  
SERVICES**



**IN TUNE  
WITH VHBC  
PODCAST**



**CONNECT**



**GIVE ONLINE  
SHELBYNEXT**



**STAY  
UPDATED**



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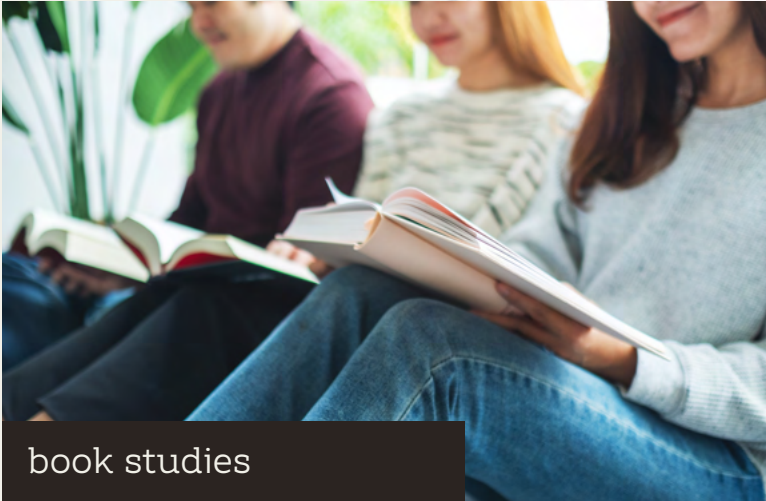
WWW.VHBC.COM



contemplative prayer



Bible studies



book studies



cooking classes



flexibility sessions



sunset vespers

STARTING

August  
17th

6 PM

# WEDNESDAY SESSIONS AT VHBC

visit [vhbc.com](http://vhbc.com) in the coming weeks to find out more!

 **FEATURED ARTICLE**

# TURNING MOURNING & GRIEF INTO THE JOY OF THE LORD

*By George Elliott*

TRAGEDY IS BUT A MOMENT AWAY FROM ALL OF US. ON A LATE AFTERNOON ON JUNE 26, 1995, IT VISITED OUR FAMILY. ON THAT DATE, NEAR ALPINE, ALABAMA, A TRAIN STRUCK THE CAR THAT OUR DAUGHTER, AMELIA, AND THREE OTHER YMCA CAMP COSBY COUNSELORS WERE RIDING IN. ALL FOUR CHILDREN DIED INSTANTLY.

When we received the news, the three Elliott girls who grew up at Vestavia Hills Baptist became two, and our family was devastated. In the midst of the long journey of grief that we embarked on, we asked God, "Why?" Why did He allow these precious children to be taken in the prime of their lives? I was angry. I wanted answers, but it didn't seem there were any. As a family we hurt so badly. A hole had been ripped in our hearts, seemingly never to be repaired.



God's answers don't always come when we want them to, but a few years later we discovered what His plan was. In January 1997, our church held a grief support group with speakers from Children's of Alabama. Jerrie and I attended the night that Reverend Joe McNulty, the hospital's Director of Pastoral Care, was the speaker. We did not know Joe, nor did he know us and that we were in the audience.

Amazingly, Joe began his discussion with the fact that on June 26, following the car accident that killed Amelia and her friends, the CEO of the Birmingham YMCA called Jim Dearth, the CEO of Children's at the time and asked that he provide someone to go to Camp Cosby to counsel with the staff and campers. Joe was the one elected to go. He spent several days at Camp Cosby helping out. From his experiences there, Joe was convinced that Birmingham needed a grief assistance center specifically for children and their families. In the year following the tragedy, Joe traveled to Portland, Oregon to The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families to be trained by the staff there.



**continued on  
next page**

That night Jerrie and I listened intently to Joe and his dreams. It was apparent to us that God had selected Joe to be there that night, and that the three of us were to meet. After he had concluded his remarks, we went up and introduced ourselves as Amelia's parents. He was surprised that we were there and also concerned that he may have hurt us by causing us to relive the tragedy again. We assured him that he had not, and that if he wanted to pursue establishing a grief center, then "let's do it."

SOMETIMES GOD PUTS YOU IN SITUATIONS OR ENABLES YOU TO MEET FOLKS SO THAT GOOD THINGS CAN HAPPEN.

And happen they did, rather quickly actually. Joe and I met several times with Jim Dearth, who thought establishing a grief center for children was something that would complement and enhance Children's mission to improve the physical and mental health of children. So, he asked us to make the presentation to the Children's Board of Directors, many of whom I already knew because of my community relations work with Bellsouth.

We made that presentation jointly and with it, it seemed, God's hand leading the way, the Board did approve the establishment of a grief assistance center as one of Children's offerings to the Greater Birmingham community. At the time of their decision, it wasn't called The Amelia Center. That came later when Jim Dearth asked if we would like it to be called The Amelia Center in honor of our daughter. We were overjoyed and soon the Center opened July 1997 with Reverend Joe McNulty as its first Executive Director. The symbol of the Center was to be a sunflower, Amelia's favorite flower. The motto was to be "a place of hope for grieving children and their families."



THE AMELIA CENTER

In the days to follow, the fine folks of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church began to help The Amelia Center. The Center's office was painted a drab gray, not a color to soothe a hurting child. Members of our Couples Sunday School class, wearing old clothes and wielding paint brushes, changed the Center's walls into a place of bright colors and comfort. Other church members donated hundreds of stuffed animals.

Many gave direct donations to the Center or to The Amelia Center Scholarship Fund, which had been set up at the church. Others prayed for its success. Merryl Cooper organized successful pancake suppers to benefit the Center. Perhaps, even more importantly, our church lifted our family up regularly in their prayers and supported us in so many ways. The church was Amelia's village, where you helped raise her and still remember her smiling face and laughter.

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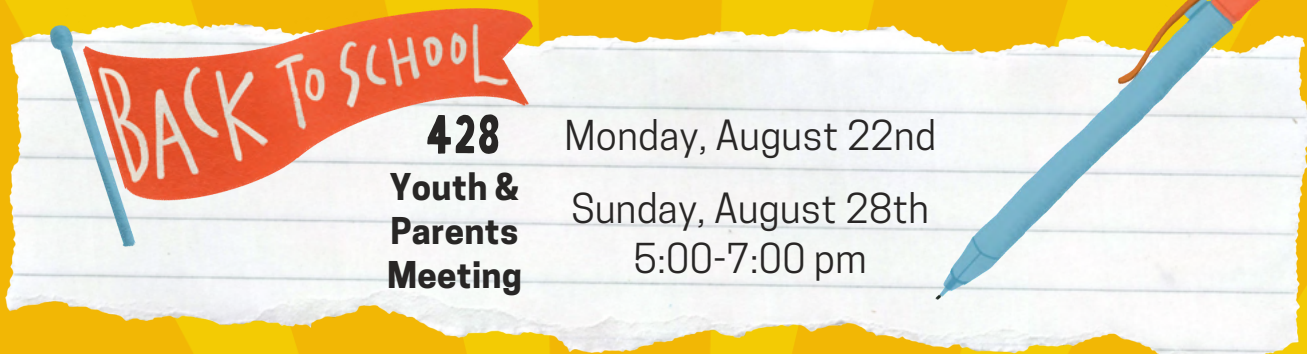
# VHBC YOUTH august 2022

## KICKOFF SUNDAY IS AUGUST 14TH!

We will be welcoming our new 7th graders and celebrating the beginning of an exciting school year!

**BREAKFAST & WELCOME PARTY** 8:45-9:45 am

**KICKOFF YOSE** 5:00-7:00 pm



**428** Monday, August 22nd  
**Youth & Parents Meeting** Sunday, August 28th  
 5:00-7:00 pm

- ### DATES TO REMEMBER
- 8/10** Summer Review
  - 8/14** Kick-off Sunday
  - 8/17** Kick-off WNL
  - 8/21** YOSE
  - 8/22** 428
  - 8/24** WNL
  - 8/28** Meeting at 5pm



### KEEP UP WITH ALL THE THINGS ON GROUPME!

# WEEKLY SCHEDULE AT VHBC



## SUNDAYS

### 8:45 AM SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

- Children's Sunday School meets in the Children's Building. Please sign your child in at the front reception desk.
- Find our Welcome Team in the main foyer if you need assistance looking for a class for you and your family.

### 10:00 AM WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

- Worship guides and hymn sheets are available at the sanctuary entrances.
- If you are unable to worship in person with us, please join us online or over the radio at 91.1 FM.
- Worship Care for babies through Kindergarten begins at 9:45 am.

### 5:00 PM YOUTH ON SUNDAY EVENING

- All youth meet in the Student Building to play games, listen to a devotion, and prepare for the upcoming week.

### 4:45 PM FELLOWSHIP SUPPER

- Meet us in the Fellowship Hall starting at 4:45 every Wednesday.
- Register online weekly at [vhbc.com](http://vhbc.com) to reserve your meal!
- Adults/Youth \$6 per person
- Kids (K-6th) \$4 per person
- Preschoolers & College Students eat free!

### 4:45 PM HANDBELLS

### 5:30 PM CHILDREN'S CHOIRS

### 6:00 PM YOUTH ACTIVITIES

### 6:00 PM ADULT SESSIONS

### 6:15 PM CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

### 7:00 PM SANCTUARY CHOIR



## WEDNESDAYS (no Wednesday activities in July)

# NEWS & EVENTS

## AROUND THE CHURCH



### NAME TAG SUNDAYS

Wear a name tag each Sunday morning in August!

## Summer

### REVIEW AT VHBC

This Wednesday Night join us for dinner, starting at 4:45 pm, and a time of fellowship and testimonies as we witness what God has done in and through our congregation this summer. We will hear from children, youth, and adults sharing transformative experiences as participants locally and nationally in God's good work in our world. Make a point to be there to remember what God has done and see where God might be leading you to serve in the future!



## WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!

As we seek to connect our VHBC community to current and future small group offerings this fall, we need your input.

Please fill out the survey at the link below or visit [vhbc.com](http://vhbc.com) to help us organize our fall small groups for our adults at VHBC!



## VHBC

### children's ministry

#### UPCOMING EVENTS



### FALL KICK-OFF SUNDAY

Sunday, August 14th  
8:45 am - Begin a new year in Bible Study!  
10 am - **First Grade Bible Presentation**

### MUSIC & MISSIONS

Wednesday, August 17th for Preschool 4 - Grade 6  
Music meets from 5:30-6:15 pm  
Mission Friends, GA, & RAs meet from 6:15-7 pm

### WORSHIP SKILLS CLASS

Sunday, August 21, 10 am during worship  
All first graders & a parent invited to Seminar Room

### MOMS' NIGHT OUT

Tuesday, September 13 at 6:30 pm @ El Zun Zun  
Join us for a fun night of good food and great conversation! [RSVP HERE!](#)



## VOLUNTEERS AROUND THE CHURCH

### CHILDREN'S RECEPTION DESK

**Aug 14** Jay McFarland  
**Aug 21** Dick Bodenhamer

### WORSHIP CARE (9:45 am until end of worship)

**Aug 14**  
Babies & Ones: Prissy Sumners, Ashley Hattaway  
Twos-K: Jennifer Carter, Melissa McBrayer

**Aug 21**  
Babies & Ones: Billie Lochamy, Mindy Bodenhamer  
Twos-K: Shawn Owens, Mary Grace Cox

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

For the upcoming year, we have combined the Greeters and Welcome committees together to form the WELCOME TEAM. Our goal is to help make VHBC a warm and welcoming environment each week for members and visitors alike. Requirements: **Warm Smile & Friendly Manner!** Contact [Howard Finch](#) or [Nancy Akins](#) to volunteer!





## FALL KICKOFF AT VHBC



As the summer winds down, it is a natural time of transition. Students and teachers return to school, the sweltering heat slowly gives way, our favorite football teams take the field, and we look forward to what the change of season will bring in our lives. The changing seasons are but one way that our world is made new. Renewal is a gift that we can count on from God and it blesses us as both individuals and as a congregation.

We, as VHBC, are in a new season of life together and in the upcoming year we are excited to discover and explore how God will move in us and through us. We can expect to be blessed in some familiar ways, and in some new, even surprising ways. Our **2022 Fall Kickoff is this Sunday, August 14**, and it will mark the beginning of an exciting year. Come, and be a part, as together we join in God's Transformational Story, **ANEW!**

### SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:45 am **Children will be promoted to their new Sunday School classes in the Children's building.**

8:45 am **New 7th graders will join VHBC Youth and celebrate with a breakfast party!**

10:00 am **First Graders will be presented with Bibles during worship.**

10:00 am **Communion will be served during worship.**





# WEDNESDAYS THIS FALL



**FELLOWSHIP SUPPER HAS RETURNED! PRE-ORDER TODAY!**

Reserve meals for your family online, join our standing reservation list, or come when you can for dinner at 4:45 in the Fellowship Hall.

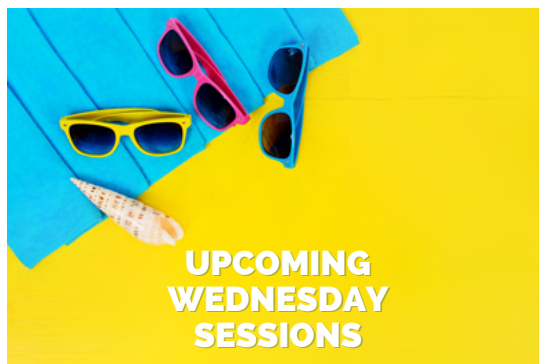
### AUGUST MENU

**10th:** Stuffed Shells, Roasted Eggplant, Garlic Bread, Dessert (Kids: Chicken Fingers & Fries)

**17th:** Poppy Seed Chicken, Basmati Rice, Roll, Dessert (Kids: Pizza & Fries)

**24th:** Chicken & Dumplings, Rosemary Carrots, Roll, Dessert (Kids: Pizza & Fries)

**31st:** Sausage Summer Pasta, Fruit Salad, Roll, Dessert (Kids: Chicken Fingers & Fries)



**UPCOMING WEDNESDAY SESSIONS**

**AUGUST 17TH**  
**A Call to Community**  
 with Eric in the Fellowship Hall  
 6 pm



**AUGUST 24TH**  
**New Creation: A Primer for Living in the Time Between the Times**  
 with Eric in the Fellowship Hall  
 6 pm

**AUGUST 24TH**  
**Contemplative Prayer** with George Van Kirk in the Chapel  
 6 pm

### **BEGINNING ON AUGUST 24TH AT 6 PM IN THE WILD GOOSE ROOM**



**A fall book study of *Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler**

Join Laura Tadlock and Alexis Johnson at 6 pm for a 4-part study on the book written Kate Bowler. "Kate was thriving in her job, married to her high school sweetheart, and loving life with her newborn son. Then she is diagnosed with Stage IV Colon Cancer. The prospect of her own mortality forces Kate to realize that she has been tacitly subscribing to the prosperity gospel, living with the conviction that she can control the shape of her life 'with a surge of determination.' Even as this type of Christianity celebrates the American can-do spirit, it implies that if you 'can't do' and succumb to illness and misfortune, you are a failure. Kate is very sick, and no amount of positive thinking will shrink her tumors. What does it mean to die, she wonders, in a society that insists everything happens for a reason? Kate is stripped of this certainty only to discover that without it, life is hard, but beautiful in a way it never has been before."

**Copies of this book are available at Amazon.com and all major book retailers!**

# spotlights & thank yous

## Welcome Jean Spivey!



Jean Spivey joined Vestavia Hills Baptist church in June, 2022 after moving from Gainesville, Florida, where her son Eric (now our pastor) pastored First Baptist Church of Gainesville. She now lives at Truewood Assisted Living in Hoover.

Mrs. Spivey was born in Dublin, GA. Her parents moved to Macon, GA when she was four years old. She lived there for 25 years until her marriage to her husband, John, who was a Baptist pastor. She went to college at Mercer, and worked as a high school English teacher for 25 years.

She and her husband lived in Indiana while her husband was in seminary in Louisville, KY. They returned to Georgia, where John pastored churches throughout the state. John died at age 65. In recent years, Mrs. Spivey has moved to new cities when her son Eric and his family have relocated.

Mr. and Mrs. Spivey adopted two children: Eric, who is now our pastor at VHBC, and Amy. Amy lives in Seattle, WA, where she works in tech support for a Presbyterian school. Mrs. Spivey has two grandchildren: Sarah Margaret, who lives with her husband Dan Shelton in Birmingham, and Sydney Spivey, who is a senior at Western Carolina University in North Carolina.

Mrs. Spivey has been attending Sunday school classes since coming to VHBC and plans to visit others. She loves to read, and John Grisham is her favorite author. She has enjoyed traveling and she participates in activities offered at Truewood. Mrs. Spivey's given name is Imogene, but she prefers to be called Jean, and she is Mama Jean to her family. We are so happy to have Mrs. Spivey as part of our church family at VHBC!



## Thank you from Martha Neill

Thank you so much for a wonderful 20th Anniversary and Retirement celebration in the service on August 7th. It was a wonderful day! It was great to see so many of you. My family and I are so grateful for all the well wishes and the love offering. I certainly felt the love. I will miss seeing you on a regular basis, but I will still be around.

## Let's Celebrate Gilda Coker!

Gilda Coker has served as our Paid Childcare Coordinator for **10 years!** In this vital role, Gilda hires, schedules, and supervises college

students and adults to care for our preschoolers on Wednesday nights and for all children at special events. The ministry of childcare makes it possible for our church to provide a safe and happy experience for children. Gilda is highly responsible for the children in her care, and her preparation and work reflect her heart for engaging children in meaningful activities.

Gilda's ministry reaches far beyond childcare. She is a beloved preschool Sunday School teacher, a member of the Fellowship Sunday School class, and she serves as VHBC Wedding Coordinator.

Anyone who knows Gilda is familiar with her servant's heart and her love for this church. Since joining VHBC in 1984, Gilda's involvement has included leadership in Mission Friends, Preschool and Children's Sunday School, Youth Ministry, and Vacation Bible School, just to name a few; and she was ordained as a Deacon in 1993. She has participated in countless mission engagements ranging from Seed Camp in Perry County to partnering with Shane and Dianne McNary on our mission teams to Slovakia. Our church's Missions Committee, New Member Ministry Team, and Child Development Center have all benefited from her creativity and insight.

Whether our church's doors are open for a churchwide workday, or a special event, or Serve Day, count on Gilda to be there. Always ready to help, she adds a special touch to every task. We celebrate all the facets of Gilda's involvement at VHBC as we thank God for the blessing she is to our church family.



# CONNECTED IN PRAYER

## IN THE HOSPITAL

Linda Whitt - UAB Spain 840  
Gay Thomas - STVHS

## IN RECOVERY & ONGOING TREATMENTS

Betty Bamberg      Mona Fisher  
John Bell             Barbara Price  
Jason Cooper  
LaWayne Fleming

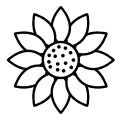
## HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Maxine Ammons	Dot Lowe
Juanita Blackburn	Al Lowery
Libby Brown	Samson Mathangani
Ann Bush	Kitty Newell
Carolyn Cain	Leon Nix
Esther Evans	Margaret Northrup
Milton Fullman	Gaynell Pinson
Pat Gillespie	Jerry & Lorelle Singleton
Sandy Gillis	Alicia Stigler
Bob & Mavis Hardy	Hazel Turner
Ruford Hodges	Bobbye Weaver
Peggy Jones	Doris Wilson

## CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

## MISSIONARIES AROUND THE WORLD

Dianne & Shane McNary - Slovakia  
Awon Shanglai - India  
Marco & Omar Vallejo - Mexico  
Richard Owiti Kogola, Paul Mbogo,  
Benson Mwangangi, & Josphat Thiori - Kenya  
Chuck Tarter - Ireland  
Candy & Paul Huynh - Cambodia



## featured article from page 4

Now, 25 years later, **The Amelia Center**, with its five full-time counselors and two interns, all wonderfully talented and compassionate in what they do, have brought hope again to over 20,000 individuals. They have trained school counselors and professionals such as clergy and first responders in positive ways to deal with grieving people. Each Spring, at least before Covid, they sponsor an educational seminar, featuring nationally known experts on grief. Each December, the Center hosts a candlelight vigil on National Children's Memorial Day, a time when the children who've died the previous year or before have their names read and photographs shown, and each child is remembered.

Often we come into contact with individuals who have lost a child, and they say "We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for The Amelia Center. Or there's the young lady who came to the Center, after suffering a miscarriage, who saw Amelia's picture on the wall in the lobby and said, "Oh, my God, that's Amelia Elliott. She was my counselor at Camp Cosby, and she told me, 'If you ever need me, I'll be there'... and she was." One of Amelia's best friends has said, "The establishment of The Amelia Center is the epitome of turning our mourning and grief into the joy of the Lord. He has blessed the Center and it's been used in countless ways to help and heal the families of our city and our state. So it has, and so it will continue to do so.

We are often credited with starting the Center. That's not so. We believe that God, while weeping over Amelia and the other counselors' deaths, put into motion all the parties who had an interest in helping grieving children and led them to establish a special place that would bring joy out of sorrow. He has stood in the midst of our tragedy, and He stands in the midst of yours. He wants us to make good overcome sorrow, and if we listen, will show us how.

We are grateful that we can be a part of this ministry to others. The Center is Amelia's legacy, and we are proud of it. Her spirit lives on in the midst of her tragic death. At Camp Cosby, there is an outdoor chapel dedicated to the four counselors who died. It's called the G.R.A.C.E. Chapel - **G**inger, **R**obin, **A**melia, **C**hris, **E**TERNITY, a fitting tribute. Likewise, The Amelia Center is a tribute, too - to making good things come out of bad situations.

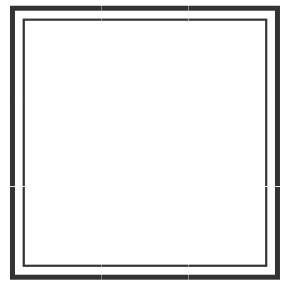
TRAGEDY IS JUST A MOMENT AWAY FROM ALL OF US, AND YES, WE WILL GRIEVE AND HURT TERRIBLY. BUT, IF WE LISTEN CLOSELY GOD WILL LEAD US TO NEW WAYS OF MAKING JOY COME IN THE MORNING.



**THE AMELIA CENTER**  
205-638-7481

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VHBC CONNECTIONS IS PUBLISHED BIWEEKLY  
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**VHBC MINISTRY STAFF**

- NANCY AKINS, MINISTER TO PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN**
- TYLER JOHNSON, MINISTER TO STUDENTS**
- MIKE MCBRAYER, ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR**
- DR. ERIC SPIVEY, SENIOR PASTOR**
- MARTY WATTS, MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP**

**Fall kick-off** is coming Sunday, August 14th!  
Read more about it in today's newsletter.

back to  
school  
EDITION



**RIISING 2ND THROUGH 7TH GRADERS ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 7TH FOR  
MS. NANCY'S BACK TO SCHOOL PARTY!**