

The Happening

August 2025

MISSION OF THE MONTH

Watoto

Watoto is a community of villages in Uganda that raises children to young adults, giving them love and support throughout their growing years in faith and vocation. In the Watoto villages, homes are all identical in that they have three bedrooms (one for boys, one for girls, and one for the mother) a living room, a dining room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. All the homes have a full-time mother who cares for the children as if they were her own. The mother of each home prepares meals for her children and the children are given chores and duties to share the responsibilities of each home. The children's villages also have a primary and high school on-site. Once the children begin attending university they shift to apartments or hostels near the school they are attending. The homes are arranged in clusters or circles of nine homes to mimic a typical African community. The center space inside the circle becomes a common space for children in those homes to congregate, interact, and play.

Since SCCUMC has been sponsoring children since 2011, many of the children are now older. Watoto's support for the children continues through university or vocational training. Watoto is grateful for the faithful support that has allowed them to continue caring for these children to the point that some have even graduated from the program and transitioned to independent living. Let's meet our sponsored housemother, youth, and young adults.

Housemother, "Mama" Martha Akello



Martha attended the Watoto Church – Suubi, when she lived in a nearby community. At church she learned about Watoto Child Care Ministries and their vision to rescue needy children. Filled with a desire to serve God, she felt led to apply to be a housemother. After careful screening and training, Martha was accepted and moved into the comfortable Watoto Village. Martha is giving leadership to a family of precious Watoto children in her Watoto Home. Martha loves children so much and desires to give care to these dear ones who have lost their own parents. She lovingly guides and nurtures the children spiritually and physically. In the Watoto Home, she ensures that they are always well fed and neatly dressed. Martha sends the children off to school each weekday with a prayer.

On Sundays, Martha accompanies the children to the Watoto Church where they receive spiritual guidance and nourishment. Martha took Jesus into her heart as Friend and Saviour in 2011. Please pray for her to daily receive godly guidance as she continues her ministry.



Francis Junior Onyango: Aug. 4, 2009

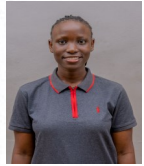
Francis's mother died in 2009. Two years later, his father passed away too, leaving Francis and his siblings in the care of a relative who found that she just could not cope with the extra responsibilities. The local authorities learned about the children's plight and requested Watoto Child Care Ministries to take Francis and his siblings into their fold. They were brought to a welcoming Watoto Village.

Francis now enjoys the comfort of his new Watoto Home. His devoted housemother, Mama Martha, lovingly nurtures him and prepares him delicious meals. He is surrounded by Watoto brothers and sisters who watch out for him and are now his cherished companions. Now Francis is old enough and is receiving a quality education at the Watoto School.

Ishmael Baributs: Mar. 15, 2002

Both of Ishmael's parents died as a result of HIV/AIDS. Ishmael was left in the care of his elderly grandmother who could not adequately provide for even his basic needs. She requested Watoto Child Care Ministries to take Ishmael under their wings and Ishmael was brought to a Watoto Village, where Mama Martha welcomed him. He has caring Watoto brothers and sisters in the Watoto Home, who have helped him fit into his new surroundings. He is a great help to Mama around the house. Ishmael is receiving quality education at the Watoto School and is enjoying his studies and making new friends.

Ishmael likes to go to the Watoto Church with his family on Sundays and is being taught from the Word of God. Please pray for Ishmael to respond positively to this spiritual mentorship. He is grateful to the Lord for his many blessings at Watoto.

Maimuna Nakibuuka: Mar. 24, 2003

Maimuna lost both her parents and was left in the care of her grandmother. Unfortunately, she was in no proper position to meet her granddaughter's needs as desired. Concerned local authorities reached out to Watoto and referred Maimuna to our care and protection. Since then, Maimuna has lived in our welcoming Watoto Village where she has a devoted Watoto mother, Mama Martha, and Watoto siblings to share life with. Maimuna graduated from Watoto High School and enrolled at one of the best vocational schools in the country and is doing a course in Tourism Operation and Management. Being very extroverted, Maimuna enjoys the field trips and internships done in the course because through these she has met many people and visited many parts of Uganda. Maimuna is thankful to God for Watoto Church where she has grown in the Lord through the weekly church services, discipleship programs, and small group fellowships. Along with her peers, she shares and learns from the Word of God.

Sydney Tumwebaze Female: Jul. 28, 2008

Baby Sydney was born prematurely at a hospital in Kampala. Two weeks later, her mother abandoned her. Her impoverished father was unable to look after the infant and local authorities asked Watoto Child Care Ministries to take the baby girl under their wings. Sydney was malnourished when she arrived at the Baby Watoto-Bulrushes Home and had difficulty in eating. With proper care and attention from her nannies, Sydney thrived. She learned to walk and loved playing in the baby swimming pool. In due time,

Sydney was moved into a comfortable Watoto Village where a loving housemother, Mama Martha, and Watoto brothers and sisters welcomed her warmly into their Watoto Home. Sydney is a happy, lively, and bright girl who enjoys the company of others. Sydney has begun a quality education at the Watoto School where she will study until she graduates from high school. On Sundays, Sydney goes to the Watoto Church with her family, where she is learning about Jesus' love for her. Please pray for Sydney to accept Christ into her heart when she reaches the age of understanding.

Paige Natukunda: Aug. 5, 2008



Paige, was born prematurely at a Kampala hospital and was abandoned soon after birth. Local authorities requested Watoto Child Care Ministries to take the baby girl into their fold. As Paige lay in her cot battling a fragile heart condition, staff at the Baby Watoto-Bulrushes Home lavished her with love and attention. Soon her heart was miraculously healed and Paige became much stronger.

Although she was smaller than most other babies in the nursery, Paige always went out of her way to play with her new friends. She loved being cuddled and going on outings with her nannies. In due time, Paige was moved into a safe Watoto Village where Mama Martha and Watoto brothers and sisters welcomed her warmly into their Watoto Home. She is a happy child who loves being with others. Paige will soon begin her education at the Watoto School and she will continue to learn there until she graduates from high school.

On Sundays, Paige goes to the Watoto Church with her family, where she is learning about Jesus' love for her. Please pray for Paige to accept Christ into her heart when she reaches the age of understanding.

Phillip Isabirye: Mar. 7, 2005

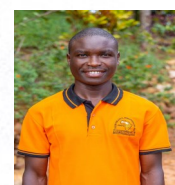


Phillip lost his dad to a chronic illness leaving him and his siblings in the care of their mother. His mother stays in a one-roomed house with her seven children. With no income to support the children and living in poor conditions, Watoto was requested to help by providing care to Phillip in the Watoto village. Under the care of Mama, Phillip has grown into a very calm gentleman. He has a passion for fixing things around the house, and currently, he is pursuing a Certificate in Plumbing at Watoto's Hope

Technical Institute. He spends his free time playing soccer and doing voluntary work. Phillip likes to help around his community.

On Sunday, Phillip attends fellowship at the Watoto church. Here he serves as an intercessor. He is part of a small group that meets every Wednesday to nourish themselves with the Word. It is our prayer that Phillip will live a life that glorifies God's name.

Stephen Rubangakene: Dec. 3, 2003



Rebels abducted Stephen's mother from her village in northern Uganda and she gave birth to Stephen in their camp. Later, she managed to escape with her young son and reached the relative safety of a "Displaced Person's Camp." Shortly thereafter Stephen's mother died as a result of HIV/AIDS, leaving him without any guardian to give him proper care. Watoto Child Care Ministries took Stephen into their fold. Stephen was warmly welcomed into the Watoto Village by a loving housemother,

Mama Martha. He has Watoto brothers and sisters in the Watoto Home for companionship. Stephen feels secure and gladly does his share of the household chores. At the Watoto School in the Village, he is receiving a quality education. Stephen's favorite subjects are Literature and English and he enjoys playing soccer in his free time. He hopes to be a truck driver some day.

Stephen attends the Watoto Church with his family on Sundays, and is learning more about Jesus' awesome love for him. Please pray that he will daily grow in the love and knowledge of the Saviour. He is very grateful to the Lord for all his blessings at Watoto.



I am happy to tell you that I have received letters from each of the young people and Mama Martha. Each have expressed their gratitude to SCCUMC, thanking us for the financial contributions we make. Please keep all of them in your prayers. If you have any questions, you may contact David Childs at, flyfisher170@msn.com.

A Word From Our Pastor

Dear Friends,

The summer is quickly coming to a close and Pastor Travis and I have celebrated our first anniversary of ministry with you on July 1. It is such a joy to serve as your pastors and the photo/memory books that Jennilyn Crawford made for each of us with highlights of the first year were truly special. Now we look to the future with equal enthusiasm.

In the month of August we will be preaching on the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. This will take us into the deep and abiding biblical themes of faithfulness and struggle as well as God's provision and love. We hope you will join us in person or online as we Dive into Daniel!

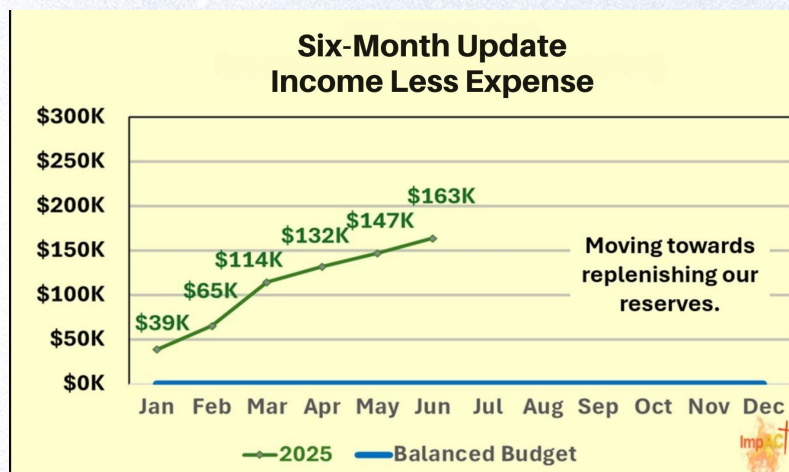
The incredible work of our ministry areas keep moving with the Stewardship team reconvening in August to begin plans for the fall, the youth group having its fall kick off (yes, school starts again soon!) and our congregational care team continuing its good work at connecting with our church members who are ill, in need of visits or receiving communion at home.

Please stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to serve. This is an exciting time in the life of our congregation and I am so grateful to be in ministry with you.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Cynthia

Six-Month Finance Update



As reported in worship on July 20, 2025, our year-to-date finances are strong with a current surplus of over \$163,000. This is due to increased giving, decreased expenses and high concert ticket sales. We are grateful for your generosity and invite you to continue your strong support of our church. The finance committee's first goal is to replenish depleted reserves with any annual surplus. These reserves are needed for unexpected expenses including the need for a required deductible on our insurance if a hurricane were to damage our property. Our goal is to steward the church finances well in order to strengthen our ministries and outreach in the world. Thank you for all that you are doing and for your interest in the financial health of our church.

Lasting Reflection on My Summer Internship

As my time as an intern here comes to an end at the beginning of August, I am taking some time to reflect on all this summer has meant to me. Interning at this church since the final week of May has been an absolute honor, delight, and adventure. What a gift from God you all have been to me!

I have learned a great deal about the realities of ministry by working and serving alongside you in various services, events, and programs, by worshiping God with you, and by shadowing so many of your staff and laypersons who give of themselves with great devotion. I have immensely enjoyed my time here in Florida (even with the summer heat!) and have come to understand why so many of you have chosen to make this place your home.

Thank you for opening your hearts and homes, sharing your knowledge, experience, and insight with me. Thank you for your laughter, constant encouragement, and guiding words. Thank you for welcoming me before I even arrived and filling my time here with such love and genuine care.

I pray God has used me to show more of His character and His love to you all, as He has undoubtedly used you to reveal to me more of Who He is. Church, I leave you with this blessing and this charge: You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Walk in the boldness of the Spirit of God and go into this world shining His Light so that all may see and come to know the faithful, loving, merciful character of our Lord. He knows you, He loves you, and He holds you. Go in His Name to all the world!

In His service,
Zoe Lawless



DONATE BLOOD

**Sun City Center United
Methodist Church**
Sunday, August 3
8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

All donors receive*:

- **\$25 eGift Card**
- **Top Handle Drinkware**
- **Wellness Checkup** including blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count, and cholesterol screening.

Fact: Only 3% of those who are eligible actually donate blood.

Donors
Receive

\$25
eGiftCARD



Walmart
amazon

...and more!

- PLUS -



- PLUS -



Appointments are encouraged, please visit **oneblood.org/donate-now** and use **sponsor code 15721**

ID REQUIRED

*One offer per donor, per donation. No cash value. Not-transferable. Gifts may vary. For more information please visit oneblood.org/details.

oneblood
Share your power.

Celebrating our Volunteers!

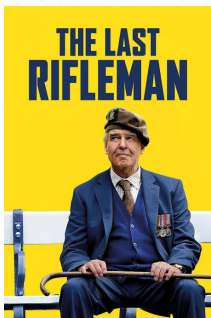
July presented us with two significant events that required an enormous amount of work, and our volunteer teams truly rose to the occasion. Both of these events involved hundreds of hours of careful planning and execution, supported by a large volunteer committee, who had an abundance of patience, flexibility, grace, and heart.

The first event was our True North Vacation Bible School, led by Rees Kirkorian and Debe Allen, that we know children are still talking about. Through their vision, they transformed the LEC and Creason, bringing Alaska to us. Our second event was our annual Community Back to School Drive, led by Victoria Sorensen and team. The LEC and other meeting spaces again were transformed into a one-stop shop for everything back to school for families in our community.

We feel incredibly fortunate to have such talented individuals on our team. Their leadership is invaluable, reminding us that it takes a village to organize events like these. We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many other volunteers who contributed their time and efforts!

Friday *Night* at the Movies

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8TH AT 6:00PM



THE LAST RIFLEMAN is a moving and heartfelt drama that follows Artie Crawford (Pierce Brosnan), a World War II veteran living in a care home in Northern Ireland, who has just lost his wife. On the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, Artie decides to secretly escape his care home and embarks on an arduous but inspirational journey to

France, to pay his final respects to his best friend and find the courage to face the ghosts of his past.

This is a free event for our community and church.
Doors open at 5:30PM.

WORSHIP

Jeff Jordan

Well, here we are, about halfway through our sometimes-grueling summer months and everything's 'humming' right along. July is the month that many of our staffers take one or more vacations and that's true of Lisa and me as well. We've planned a trip to Pueblo, CO to visit with Lisa's folks and to visit some of sights in that area like Pikes Peak and the Garden of the Gods! I can't wait as I've never been to that part of the country before, and her parents genuinely are lots of fun! Another week in July we'll be heading down to spend a few days at our favorite beach on the so-called "Suncoast" of FL, Anna Maria Island! Yes, it'll be hotter than a 'stolen tamale' on the island AND the water won't do much to cool us off that time of the year, but we still love the vibe of this beach community that retains much of 'old Florida'!

Looking back to last month, I'd like to thank all the folks that came out to hear the recital that Teo and I performed on June 22nd as well as those who supported our annual patriotic cantata on the last weekend of the month. Playing with Teo is one of the joys of being in ministry together. She is such a fine musician and we're very lucky to have her on our staff!

As you probably have gathered, the Chancel Choir and handbell ensembles are off for the month of July, so you'll be enjoying a variety of special music in worship this month. Teo is also spending the month back in Romania with her family, so there won't be much music coming from our fine hybrid organ. Thanks to everyone who is pitching in musically and to our church family for extending an extra measure of grace during this period! Choir and Bells will be back in August, and the community vocal ensembles (Men's and Women's Choruses) will be back 'in business' come September. If you are interested in participating in any of our church or community ensembles, or you play an instrument and would like to share your talents with your church family, PLEASE call, text, or email me in the next several weeks. I look forward to hearing from you!!!

Jeff Jordan
(813) 260-0153 [mobile]
(813) 634-2539 [ext. 1005]
jeff@secumc.com

Wishing all my church family and friends a safe and blessed rest of the summer!

Soli Deo Gloria

Jeff



Center 4Life Learning

Come Learn and Be Entertained

2025 Summer Class Still Available

Cut the Cord and Stream

Instructor: Phil Sorrentino

Wednesday, August 13 | 10:00AM-11:30AM

For class descriptions and instructors' bios, visit our website or Center office.

Center 4Life Learning's upcoming trips and tours!



Holly Dolly, Musical Comedy
Manatee Performing Arts Center

October 23, 2025

On the Farce Day of Christmas, Lunch
and Comedy - Early Bird Dinner Theater

November 20, 2025



SunKicks, Lunch and Christmas Show
Suncoast Broadway Dinner Theater

December 18, 2025

Once Upon a Mattress, Musical,
Manatee Performing Arts Center

January 22, 2026



The Cemetery Club, Dramatic Comedy,
Manatee Performing Arts Center

February 25, 2026

Bright Star, musical Production,
Manatee Performing Arts Center

March 5, 2026



Reservations Fill Up Fast – Register Today!

Contact the Center 4Life Learning office at
813-634-8607

email at center4life@sccumc.com,
or visit our website at www.sccumc.com/4lifelearning

GriefShare Starting Soon

Healing From Loss is a Journey: Everyone Experiences Grief Differently

A new GriefShare session will begin on Wednesday, August 27th, from 6:30 PM–8:00 PM in room 19. This 13-week grief support group will be led by Pastor Debbie Marion, Minister of Pastoral Care, and focuses on important grief topics associated with the death of a loved one.

Weekly videos feature nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories of people, followed by a group discussion where confidentiality is key to this program.

Many grieving people find they are only beginning the work of healing while friends or family members have returned to their daily life routines. Too often people tend to repress their grief and allow fear of what others may think keeping them from what could be helping them. Your bereavement experience may be recent, or not so recent. The hope is that you will find encouragement, comfort, and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, sibling, other family members, or a friend. No matter what the cause of your loved one's death, this is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling. You will learn how to recognize the symptoms of being stuck in your grief and that you do not need to stay there. You will learn valuable information about dealing with the changes in your life and renewing your hope for the future. I hope you will consider being part of this valuable ministry.

To register for this group, please go online to griefshare.org/findagroup and search for our church's group. You will also find additional information and resources there.

For more information contact Pastor Debbie Marion at 813-634-2539 ext. 1016 or email at debbiemarion@sccumc.com



Thank God It's Variety - Larry Hirschak

With many people traveling this time of year, we also take some time off from the steady series of concerts and recitals that we host. However, we are beginning to prepare for another exciting and outstanding lineup of artists this year that I'm sure you will enjoy!

In upcoming newsletter articles, I will provide a little more detail about the artists for the newsletter month, but right now I would like to give you a peek at what we have in store for the rest of this year. There are a few dates open yet so this is not a complete listing of what is to come.

- On August 22nd, get ready to be transported back in time as The Jewel Tones takes the stage to serenade you with an unforgettable evening filled with the soulful sounds of Motown.
- On August 24th, we will be having another Rasmussen Artist Series recital with the Mackle Shaw Duo. Anna Kate Mackle, the principal harpist with the Florida Orchestra and her husband, John Shaw, who is the principal percussionist with the Florida Orchestra, will be presenting a very special recital with harp and percussion! Anna Kate presented a solo harp recital last year that was well received and attended. You won't want to miss this one!
- On September 19th, we will once again have Billy "Elvis" Lindsey performing for an Alzheimer's Benefit concert. Billy has been graciously presenting a concert at a very reasonable cost to allow for most of the proceeds to go to this much needed cause.
- On September 26th, America's Funniest Comedy Magician, Dewayne Hill, will be here to dazzle the audience with a night of comedy and magic. We will have both adult and child tickets for this event.
- On October 17th, Libby Servais and Stephan Stubbins will present a spectacular performance titled *Broadway In Love*. Both have performed on Broadway for many years and are now taking their talents to audiences throughout the country! Check this one out for sure!!
- On October 24th, Dove Award winning Christian Artist Lauren Talley will be presenting an inspirational evening of many of her top charting hits. She is one of the top Female Vocalists in the Christian music field today!
- On November 14th, Comedian Chad Thornsberry will be here to present "Smart Comedy From A Dumb Accent." Drawing on experiences ranging from growing up in a trailer park, being a former public school teacher, marriage, kids, and all of life's everyday problems, Chad's own clean unique view of life has him becoming one of the most sought after corporate comedians today!
- On November 21st, Pieces of Eight will be performing all of the great hits of Chicago as they perform a tribute to that group's many hits and long-time popularity! This will be another one of those very popular "back in time" tributes you won't want to miss!
- On December 14th, the ever popular and spectacular Christmas performances of the Toast of Tampa and the Herald's of Harmony will surely have you deeply in the Christmas and Holiday spirit!! These two acapella internationally known groups have been entertaining audiences for years!
- Finally, on December 19th, the Cypress Creek Jazz Band will be presenting "All That Christmas Jazz." Come and enjoy many of your favorite Christmas selections performed in a unique Dixieland Jazz Style with a seven-piece Jazz Band!!



Keep your eyes out for a few more that may be added that are not on this list as there are a few dates that have not been filled. Thank you for supporting this special outreach ministry of the United Methodist Church of Sun City Center!!

Larry Hirschak,

Thank God It's Variety Concert Coordinator

Break Away with 'Breakaway'

-Renee Tisdale

Breakaway Creations is now open for your shopping pleasure! Inside the LEC lobby stands two bookshelves that serve as our store; where you can find pens, plant stakes, bottle lights, wrapping paper and more! All items are created or assembled by both our friends and volunteers of Breakaway.

We've welcomed two new friends to our program this month. We would be able to accommodate a couple more if we could get a few more volunteers. Come and check us out one Monday or Wednesday and see if you might enjoy becoming a volunteer. Summer vacations have caused our group to shrink but we would love to be able to run at full capacity! Please consider volunteering, you will be serving God while meeting wonderful people and having wonderful times!

We celebrated the 4th of July before VBS turned Creason Hall into a northern wonderland. Just as soon as we were done with our Alaskan adventure we returned to summer décor just in time to celebrate Christmas in July. We enjoyed visits from Santa, several Elves, a Snowman, a Gingerbread Man and Pastor Debbie riding a flamingo, because what's more Christmas in Florida than a flamingo!

Frames with Friends was a hit. Our friends decorated wooden frames that we then filled with pictures of each of them with one of our amazing volunteers! The frames turned out so well that we've made a few available for purchase, check them out in our store!

If you enjoy cooking or baking, we need both lunches and desserts for the month of August. Monday lunch is thankfully taken care of by Freedom Plaza, but we need to feed about 40 people every Wednesday, too! Please contact me if you're interested.

We have a few sure-to-please, events coming up. Our annual country/western day is a fun-filled celebration with music, dancing, and delicious food. Dust off those cowboy boots and hats, and come join us. Next, we are hosting our first Literal Fashion Show, where outfits are inspired by literal words or phrases. This will be a showcase where creativity know no bounds! Be sure to check out our page on Facebook for pictures!

