



APRIL 2020

FUMCT  
CONNECTING POINT

Welcome

TO FIRST UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH TUSCALOOSA



Dear Friends,

In August of 2019, the Staff Parish Relations Committee and Clinton began talks with our bishop and district superintendent about the appointment of our next Pastor of Contemporary Worship. We were able to express to them the background, characteristics and experience that we wanted in our new Associate Pastor. I am pleased to tell you that the Rev. Amy Howard fills every desire we expressed.

Amy is currently the Discipleship Pastor at The Church at Stone River, a United Methodist Community in southwest Decatur, Alabama. This is a new faith community, started in summer, 2017 that is a blend of three churches with traditional and contemporary styles of worship.

Amy is married to Josh Howard who serves as the Mission and Student Pastor at Stone River. They have two children, Cora who is 7 and Bryson who is 4. Amy has been a pastor in the United Methodist Church for seven years. I hope you will join me in welcoming Amy and her family. We expect that her first Sunday with us will be **July 5th**. The SPRC would also like to thank Stephen Stroud for stepping in and filling the role of Interim Pastor since January. Stephen will continue his fine work in our Student Ministries and we look forward to seeing what exciting fall programming Stephen is planning.

If you would like to contact Amy before she gets here, email her at [ahoward@umcna.org](mailto:ahoward@umcna.org). Join me as we pray for Amy and her family and eagerly anticipate her ministry in Tuscaloosa.

Sincerely,

*MICHAEL CASE*

Mike Case,  
**SPRC Chairperson**

# GET TO KNOW

Amy Howard



Most of us remember middle school as some of the worst years of our lives—that in-between time when peer pressure and your changing body make almost every day a painful adventure. Not so for Rev. Amy Howard! That is when she first felt the call to ministry.

Growing up in Aldersgate UMC (now named New Creation UMC) in Chesapeake, VA, Amy Novakoski was elected to be a delegate to Annual Conference while in middle school. During the ordination service, Bishop Penel invited anyone feeling a call to ministry to come forward. Amy met him at the altar and there began her career in ministry. She became a certified lay speaker in high school and filled the pulpit for vacationing pastors.

After high school, Amy was awarded a full scholarship to play softball at Miami-Dade Community College and moved to Miami. She transferred from there to Martin Methodist College in Pulaski, TN to play softball and majored in Christian Education. That is where she met Josh Howard. They married in 2009 and moved to the D.C. area for seminary. Both studied at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC and received M.Div. degrees. While in seminary, she worked at Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA as the Spiritual Life Coordinator. She and Josh have been married 10 years this past December!

Amy says that Josh is the life of the party, talkative, bright, fun and quick on his feet. He characterized her as a deeply caring person, ready to walk with you through any struggle, pain or joy.

In 2013, Amy became the pastor of Moulton First UMC in northwest Alabama. In 2016, she and Josh moved to Mobile for his work and she became the pastor at Spring Hill Avenue UMC. Bishop Wallace-Padgett called her and proposed a challenge. Would she work with Rev. Ted Amey to start a new church in Decatur, AL?

"I didn't know Ted but he and I talked and decided we wanted to work together to start this new church," she said. There were three churches in the area that had declining congregations—only 50 to 75 on the rolls. "On the afternoon of the last Sunday of June, we met and started flipping the church," she recalls. "We were

totally changing the St. Luke's building, rebuilding the sanctuary, and trying to incorporate some elements from each of the three churches into this one building."

The next Saturday night, they carefully set up 150 chairs in the gym and prayed for each person that would *hopefully* sit in those chairs on Sunday, July 2nd. "We thought we were praying big," she said. Over 400 people came that Sunday morning to worship! The Church at Stone River was born.

Josh serves as the Student and Missions Pastor there. Amy is pleased with the community and the relationships that they have formed there. As the Discipleship minister, she has a specialized ministry and preaches about once a month. "I am excited about the next stage for Stone River," she said with a quiver in her voice.

At FUMCT, Amy will be the Associate Pastor and the Pastor of Contemporary Worship. She will be preaching every week in the Bridge and fully involved in all the ministries of the church. "I can't wait to get to Tuscaloosa and start!" she said. "Working with the congregation and the staff, especially Clinton will be so great," she said.

Amy and Josh have two children, Cora who will be a second grader and Bryson, who will be in kindergarten. They describe Cora as a girly girl. She loves to dress up, put on make-up and do ballet. She is artistic, too.

Bryson is a live-wire, always on the go and loving and cuddly too. He enjoys soccer. Rounding out the family are Buck and Rosie, two Labrador retrievers.

Amy and Josh will be moving here in late June. If you would like to contact Amy to welcome her to Tuscaloosa, her email is [ahoward@umcna.org](mailto:ahoward@umcna.org). Amy posts on Facebook and Instagram, and invites you to connect with her there. Use her full name, **Amy Novakoski Howard** to find her.

As the Israelites are beginning their conquest of the Promised Land, you will find Amy's favorite verse. God says in Joshua 1:9, *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* God our Father, be with the Howards as they join us at FUMCT.



# YEARS *of Ministry*

## 2010-2012

Spiritual Life Coordinator,  
Shenandoah University,  
Winchester, VA

## 2013-2016

Pastor, Moulton First  
United Methodist Church,  
Moulton, AL

## 2016-2017

Pastor, Spring Hill Avenue  
UMC, Mobile, AL

## 2017-PRESENT

Discipleship Pastor,  
The Church at Stone River,  
Decatur, AL





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CONNECTING POINT INFORMATION

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## Fun Facts **ABOUT AMY**

**WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING ON NETFLIX?** Cat and the Hat series (with my 4 year old)

**WHAT DO YOU DO FOR SUMMER FUN?** Hiking. We all love the outdoors.

**WHAT IS A QUIRKY HABIT OF YOURS?**

I still pronounce some words like pecans and crayons with a Virginia accent.

**WHAT'S THE BEST CONCERT YOU HAVE SEEN?** Johnnyswim at the original Ryman Auditorium.

**WHAT IS THE CRAZIEST THING YOU HAVE EVER DONE?** Graduated high school and moved over 900 miles from home to Miami, FL.

**IF YOU COULD ONLY LISTEN TO ONE SONG FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?** I Need to Never Get Old by Nathaniel Rateliff and the Night Sweats

**WHAT IS YOUR NOT-SO-FAVORITE FOOD?** Bread pudding and anything gelatinous.

**ENNEAGRAM TYPE?** 2 with a 3 wing.

**AUBURN OR ALABAMA?** The family cheers for the Tide.