



ZION HAPPENINGS

ZION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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May 2020

The Pastor Note



OUR VISION

To be a church that follows Jesus so closely and makes disciples so well, that our community and town cannot help but be transformed.



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” John 17:17

These days, many churches in our denomination have been working hard creating new ways to serve and to maintain the local church engaged in mission during COVID-19 pandemic. We have been overwhelmed and challenged by the new way to do ministry, some have been challenged by the media, others with the few resources that they have available, other churches have been facing financial challenges, but despite all these, we know that we don't struggle alone.



The United Methodist Church is organized by a connectional system, which means that all the United Methodist churches share in mission in ministry and in prayers. Praise be to God! Many pastors received support from other pastors, churches received support from their Missional Network. Amen!!

God in his abundant grace has opened a way for us to do ministry. Zion has found ways to keep serving in this special time as we show God's love to our congregation. I don't have words to express my gratitude for those who are giving their time to record worship service every Friday, those who are sending cards, making phone calls, feeding the hungry. What a way to witness God's love!

I want to take also the opportunity to thank those who are making personal connections not only with the congregation but also with our community. It is not easy to do ministry in times like this. Every time we leave our home going to work, or to serve, or to buy essentials for our home or those in homebound, we run into the risk of being infected and affecting those who live with us. We trust that at the same time that God is sending us, God is protecting us with his grace.

When Jesus was ready to go to the cross, before the Father would glorify him, and after he prayed for himself, he prayed for his disciples. He was concerned for them and the ministry that was ahead. Jesus knew that their task would not be easy. So, he prayed that God would sanctify the disciples, that he would make them holy, that he would set them apart from the world for the ministry. This is how Jesus prayed (John 17:17): *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Jesus knew that they needed more power than their own strengths and understanding of their ministry; Therefore He asked God to sanctify them because sanctification comes by grace, it is a work of God in us and through us.*

As Jesus prayed God for his disciples, I also pray God that, as you continue serving in this time during the pandemic, God will sanctify you, and set you apart from the world and for his heavenly purpose. I pray that God will keep you safe in this time when people need peace, hope in their lives!



Peace in Christ,
Pastor Norma



NEWS....

The Journey Bags Mission for foster children is temporarily on hold. It will resume when we are allowed to gather again and enter shopping centers safely.

Easter baskets for our shut-in's were made and delivered by Pastor Norma.

Zion United Methodist Church will have a FOOD DRIVE.

Please bring food items to the church and place them in the Loaves and Fishes bin inside the church OR leave your donations in the bin on the porch outside the New Life Center. These donations will be taken to the local food pantry to be distributed.

Suggestions to leave— Canned goods—soups, stews, fruits, vegetables, pasta sauces, meats

Boxed foods—crackers, cereal, cake mixes, instant potatoes, mac and cheese, pancake mix, pasta, oatmeal, dinners

Toiletries--toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, shampoo

Baby needs-- baby food, cereal, diapers, juice

Staples--flour, sugar, rice, dried beans

Jars—peanut butter, jelly, applesauce, mayonnaise

*Please make sure the expiration date on the food has not expired and that the food does not need refrigeration.



So, enjoy a drive to the church and help others too! **In the month of April, we were able to donate 175 items!!** Side note--If you go by the church and notice food outside the door and you have a key, it would be a great help to Emily if you move it inside. It will be delivered to the pantry once a week. Thank you!!

Beginning Easter Sunday through May 15th—A collection will be taken for the Union County Crisis Assistance Ministries. This is an organization that has been around since the 1980's. It is a place where working families and Senior Citizens can go for help in times of layoffs, reduced work hours, and unexpected expenses. They meet the essential life needs of people during an urgent financial emergency. They will help many people who have lost their job due to this virus. If you are financially able and wondering how to help people who have been laid off, this is a way, Please consider mailing a donation to the church.

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*Make your check payable to Zion UMC and put Crisis Ministries in the memo line.

Happy Mother's Day!!

Deborah's Song

*"Listen, kings! Pay attention, princes!
I will sing to the Lord;
I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel."
Judges 5:3*

Women leaders were not common in the Israelite society, they were not counted, and they were not heard. In the times of the judges, when Israel was oppressed by the enemies God called Deborah, a prophetess, to be a leader, to be the mother of the nation of Israel.

The book of Judges chapter 4-5 tells us that while she was sitting under the palm tree of Deborah in the hill country of Ephraim (4:5) God commanded her to lead the nation of Israel into battle against the Canaanites. In those days, it was an honor to become a leader of the nation of Israel, so Deborah didn't hesitate to respond to the voice of God, and her song tells us a little bit of the chaos and the victory of the battle. The main theme in the song describes the joy and blessings in being a willing instrument of God. Her main job was not to be in the front lines or to be a warrior in this battle, but to chant a hymn of encouragement and a victory song:

*"Awake! Awake,
Deborah! Awake, Awake, sing a song! (5:12).*

After the victory, Deborah became a strong leader to the nation of Israel, Her strong faith and hope lead the nation of Israel to forty years of peace.

With Deborah's story, I would like to congratulate all the mother of Zion who has been willing to be a joy, a blessing, and an instrument of God to lead your children to win their battle. Perhaps, you are not a leader of this nation, or you are not a leader of your town, but you are a leader to those around you. In this time, God has called you not only to be a warrior but also to be a prophet. As you celebrate this mother's day, I pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to hear his voice, to feel his nudges, and to recognize the opportunities that God is bringing to your life and the life of those who God is calling you to lead.

Happy mother's day!!!!
Peace in Christ,
Pastor Norma

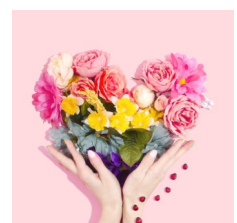
Although we are unable to meet in person on Sundays, we have a virtual Sunday school meeting at 9:00 AM, anyone is welcome to join

April 2020 Collection
Online Collections Tithes: \$7,500
4/16 Tithes: \$3,182
4/16 Youth Fund: \$100
4/16 Lent Study Books: \$91
4/30 Tithes: \$1,755
4/30 CVOID-19: \$100
Total: \$12,918

COVID-19 funds are discretionary funds given to impact our members in positive ways

Until we can have a regular service again, music in our hearts, looking forward to when we can all be together again. We will be doing our Easter Cantata when we return.

**Keep practicing!
Love to all,
Barbara**



From the WNC Cabinet: Considerations Before Reopening

1. What if your worship gathering is initially limited to no more than 100 people?

Remember that we have been limited to gatherings of no more than 10 people in the recent past. If we are limited to a smaller number of people by our government leaders, what is the plan at your church to provide a place and time for them to worship?

2. What adjustments will you make to observing the sacraments of Communion and baptism? Your Choir ministry?

Do you believe you can conduct communion like you have in the past? What about baptism? What do you do about your choir since people standing side-by-side may not be practical or safe?

3. Are you holding Vacation Bible School or delaying it until later?

This is a big question on people's minds. There are alternatives, of course. Many churches that are delaying VBS until August are using it as a big back-to-school event. Other churches are using their VBS materials in backyard Bible clubs with smaller groups. Other churches are going to do VBS over 5 weeks, one day a week (such as Sunday night), or they plan to use VBS resources during the fall.

4. Is a physical "pass the plate" offering a thing of the past?

would you feel if you were the 100th person in a worship service to touch the offering plate that 99 other people just touched? Would you be worried about COVID-19 transmission? How will you take up your weekly offering? Will you install boxes at the doors of the sanctuary or in the lobby so that worshipers can slide their envelopes, cash, or checks into secured boxes?

5. What are you doing now to sanitize and sterilize your church building?

Now is the time to wipe down all classrooms (especially those where children meet because of the toys and other items they touch during a Sunday or weekday class experience). Have you sprayed pews and chairs with disinfectant? Who is wiping doorknobs and handles? Have you had the carpet cleaned and disinfected? Now is the time for this to take place to be prepared for the "you can go back to church" announcement by government officials.

6. Are you going to continue offering children's church?

Can you guarantee moms and dads that their children will be safe in a room in which a group gathers for a children's worship time? As an alternative, is it time to encourage family worship as the primary option in these COVID-19 days? Should parents take their children to worship, practice physical distancing, and keep a close eye on their little ones? How might your service need to change to engage children in worship? How would such changes affect the physical space of the sanctuary or narthex?

7. Are you going to continue hosting special events?

Will your church continue to host weddings? How about funerals? Revivals? Children's programs? Which special events will continue, and which ones will be put on hold? And how will you explain which ones continue and which ones do not?

8. Are you continuing to provide coffee and refreshments?

Is that a good idea anymore? Tables and chairs may need to be placed in storage so that people do not congregate within a couple of feet of one another.

9. Will you continue offering virtual online worship?

Some churches may think of their recent foray into Facebook Live as a means to provide a worship experience for their people a thing of the past – a stopgap measure during some really strange days. Happy they can meet together again; Facebook Live services may give way to worship in the sanctuary. But is that the right strategy? Many church leaders report that their worship attendance and Bible study attendance are up – significantly – because people are finding them online. How can you include this option as a part of the ministry of your church?

10. What is your plan when volunteers step down?

What happens when your older volunteers share that they do not feel comfortable teaching the preschool and children's classes until a vaccine is readily available? They are concerned that it is just too risky for them because they are most at risk from COVID-19. Younger families may be hesitant to return because of the fear of exposing their children to COVID-19. If you cannot find enough volunteers what will you do?

11. What is your strategy to clean and sanitize your church in real time?

In addition to preparing in advance for people to return to the church building, how will you keep the place clean and disinfected? Does this give rise to a new team of people on campus whose ministry it is to walk around wiping doorknobs and other surfaces? Who is going to clean restrooms throughout the time that the church building is open?

12. Do door greeters do their jobs differently, or at all?

In a COVID-19 world, do you really want a door greeter holding the door open while a parishioner walks by within a foot or two of them? That is not in line with good physical distancing practices, is it? The new normal may be for greeters to stand back six feet, inside the church building, and welcome people verbally without opening the door for them.

13. Is this the time to end your church's passing of the peace ("meet and greet") time?

Because of physical distancing rules, it is. Many churches have already abandoned it because of its ineffectiveness with guests, not because of COVID-19 concerns. Is that true for your church?

14. Because people may return very slowly to church, how will you count attendance and effectiveness?

The question has already been raised about should we or should we not take attendance during online worship and online group Bible studies. It is almost a sure thing that worship attendance will not be what it was pre-COVID-19. You need to decide now how to add online attendance, too. How will group leaders take a count in their online groups and go about reporting that?

15. Should you add and/or shorten worship services to allow for social distancing?

If physical gatherings are limited in size, you have a few options: (1) offer more services (2) encourage people to continue worshipping online (3) remove chairs from your worship center to help people avoid close contact (4) block off pews so that people no longer sit right behind someone, reducing the chances of them sneezing or coughing directly into the back of the person in front of them. If your church reopens with the “worship only” option, you will have to decide these things now.

16. What are you going to do about larger Sunday School groups?

Do you feel good about letting 25 or more senior adults meet in a room that holds, well, 25 or 30 senior adults? There is not going to be a quick and easy solution to this.

17. Will you reopen the doors of your church with a “worship only” strategy?

This option might be the best choice whenever we meet again in our church buildings. If necessary, you can add services, remove chairs, practice social distancing, and focus on regaining momentum in worship. Bible study and other small groups could remain online for safety in the short-term and be added back in time.

18. Do you have a plan for reducing expenses if your church offerings do not rebound?

Churches need to be thinking, “What if...” – what if our offerings do not hold steady because of rising unemployment of members? Before the church returns to the building, every church needs a “plan B” strategy just in case giving drops in late summer or early fall.

19. How will you deal with the rise of COVID-19 related addictions?

One mental health expert said in a webinar meeting last week, “I’m hearing that porn sites are giving away free memberships during COVID-19...just what people don’t need.” In that same webinar, the presenter assured the audience that substance abuse is on the rise, too. Alcohol sales are soaring. He cautioned us to be ready to refer people to professionals in our post-COVID-19 reality.

20. Are you going to decrease the fellowship time between worship services or between worship and Sunday School?

Churches often value the opportunity to gather, have coffee, and fellowship. In a COVID-19 world, it is a good idea not to let that happen. Shorter times between events and the elimination of refreshments will help keep people moving to their next destination, a worship service, small group, or Sunday School class, and it will help reduce the possibility of “hanging out and giving each other COVID-19.”

21. Should you be investing in new digital equipment right now?

Yes, we have all hopped online and used Facebook Live to broadcast our worship services. Some of us are doing that with iPads and other devices, but is this the time to admit that online worship is probably here to stay? If yes, then it makes sense to invest dollars now so that cameras and other equipment can be purchased that will help the church be more professional in the new online world of worship.

Across our conference, clergy and laity have continued to be creative, innovative, and courageous in leading ministry in this unprecedented time. Your faithful oversight of the ministries of the local church has been exemplary. We give thanks for all that you and the churches you serve are doing to be the Church, offering the light and love of Christ in the midst of this pandemic. We thank our God “through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.” Romans 1:8.



Annual Conference 2020

Bishop Leeland and the Cabinet have made the decision to postpone the Western North Carolina Annual Conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of our traditional three-day event, the decision has been made to hold a one-day Annual Conference session on the afternoon of Saturday, August 8 at Lake Junaluska. Additional details about the gathering and plans for the clergy session and the ordering of ministry service will be announced soon. Alternative options continue to be explored, in the event that restrictions on gathering remain in place through the summer months. Any updates will be communicated as decisions are made and finalized.

IgniteUS

The IgniteUS middle school retreat scheduled for April 24-26, 2020 has been cancelled. We grieve with the members of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM) who made this difficult decision, especially the high school seniors who were looking forward to their final year of leadership for this event. Churches who had already paid registration fees have been issued full refunds.

Local Pastor and Member of Other Denominations Workshop

The Local Pastor and Member of Other Denominations workshop scheduled for April 25 at Milford Hills UMC in Salisbury has been canceled. You will receive a refund for your registration within the next few weeks.

Seeds of Change

The Seeds of Change course that was scheduled for April 28-29 has been cancelled. The next scheduled Seeds of Change course will be June 1-2 in the Appalachian District at their District Office.

UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat

The UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat scheduled for June 12-14 at Lake Junaluska has been cancelled. See statement and additional information on the WNCC-UMW website at <https://wnccumw.org/events/spiritual-growth-retreat-2020>.

WNCC United Methodist Women - Mission U

Mission U, scheduled for July 23-26, 2020 at Pfeiffer University, has been cancelled for 2020. See statement and additional information on the WNCC-UMW website at <https://wnccumw.org/events/mission-u-2020/>.