

ECCLESIA

April 2020



FIRST
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH
SALISBURY, NC
EST. 1783

IN THIS ISSUE



On the cover: Remember to Wash your Hands

A reminder to wash your hands properly, and use hand sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands. Prevent the spread of COVID-19 by staying home. In the meantime, we can still be the church! Pray for others. If you are able, be attentive to the needs of others.

If you have older neighbors, or know someone who is at a higher risk, offer to pick up their prescription refill/or pick up the groceries they need. If you are in need of someone to pick up groceries or prescriptions for you, let us know. The church has a number of caring people who have volunteered to deliver necessities for those who need to avoid leaving their home.

On page 9, learn to memorize Psalm 121 while you wash your hands!

Page 4: Staff Stories

We're so sad that our people are not able to gather right now. In the meantime, we want you to know about many of the ways our church staff has continued to serve and adapt!

Page 8: Retreats Before Social Distancing

Just before social distancing, and talk of quarantine began we had two groups who were still able to go on their planned retreats. We are so glad the women's beach retreat and the scouts river platform trips were able to happen.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Reverend Doctor Mark Conforti, *Senior Pastor*
The Reverend Stacey Lundy, *Associate Pastor*
Mrs. Becca Blackmon, *Business Administrator*
Mrs. Christine Maloney, *Administrative Assistant*
Ms. Jenni Fogt, *Director of Youth Ministries*
Mr. Mike Fansler, *Building Superintendent*
Mrs. Bailee Weisensel, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Mark@fumcsalisbury.org
Stacey@fumcsalisbury.org
Becca@fumcsalisbury.org
Christine@fumcsalisbury.org
Jenni@fumcsalisbury.org
Mike@fumcsalisbury.org
Bailee@fumcsalisbury.org

Rev. Garry Cook M.Div. LCSW,
Pastoral Counseling, Sanctuary Counseling Group
Mrs. Donna Fredrick,
Lead Teacher of After-School Child Care Program
Mrs. Patsy Langlais,
Director of Preschool
Ms. Beth Yelvington,
Lead Teacher of Summer Day Camp
Mrs. Carey Swanner,
Lead Teacher/Director of Child Development Center

gdcook@triad.rr.com
Afterschool@fumcsalisbury.org
Cplang94@gmail.com
Summercamp@fumcsalisbury.org
Cdc@fumcsalisbury.org

www.fumcsalisbury.org | 704.636.3121 | 217 South Church Street
Facebook: First United Methodist Church Salisbury
Instagram: fumcsalisbury

REMARKS

This upcoming April will not be what we had ever imagined. The COVID-19 virus (aka “coronavirus”) has held our entire world in a loose yet menacing grip. With the developing realization of the virus’ spread, the grip has grown tighter. Simple precautions quickly turned into strict behaviors. As a result, we find ourselves canceling our plans, staying at home, and purposefully keeping a distance from others.

And don’t forget about washing our hands more often and for a longer time! For twenty seconds, about the length of time to sing “Amazing Grace” or recite Psalm 121, we need to wash our hands with warm water and sudsy soap. “What am I, a kindergartner?” we ask ourselves. “Do I really need to learn how to wash my hands?”

Evidently, we do.

Moreover, we are re-learning other basics we should have mastered years ago. For example, about the human condition, we are re-learning our deep longing to be in community with other people. Along these same lines, we find comfort in reliable routines so that we can stay engaged with who and what is around us. When it comes to worship, we are re-learning that worship is all about God, not us being entertained. What else are we discovering?

I believe we are discovering a bedrock truth of Christianity: that God’s loving hands are stronger than the grip of the coronavirus. Nothing can separate us from God’s love in Jesus Christ. This is at the heart of Romans chapter 8, one of the Bible’s most profound articulations of the Gospel message. The Apostle Paul asks in verse 35, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Writing in today’s context, one can imagine Paul asking, “Will the coronavirus, or social distancing, or lock-downs separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul’s answer, and hopefully ours, is a resounding “No way!!” Paul continues in verses 37 & 38, strongly declaring that nothing in all of creation “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God’s loving hands are indeed stronger!

When people hoard, when the economy tanks, when people fall ill, and even when people die from illness, God’s love will always be there. This reality can give us a strong sense of assurance, granting us confidence to face life unafraid.

So what will we do with our hands? Wash them? Yes. But we are called to do so much more.

Remember, there have been other moments throughout history when widespread illnesses wrought suffering. During those times, the Christians knew sensed their calling to alleviate pain. For example, when yellow fever struck Memphis, Tennessee in 1878, the community was rapidly depopulated due to death or people moving away. It was a faithful group of nuns who stayed behind to nurse the sick, tending to their physical and spiritual needs. Many of those nuns died as well, though the legacy of their loving kindness remains as a testimony of God’s love during an extreme epidemic.

What else will we do with our hands? We will lay the tracks as the train moves forward. We are navigating a pathway together day by day, week by week. As we chug along, we use our hands to care and to serve. That’s who we are as the Body of Christ! Even though this April will not be what we had ever imagined, God’s strong and loving hands are holding us.

May God continue to bless you,

Pastor Mark



STAFF STORIES

Most of the time the articles and pictures in our Ecclesia do not include many pictures of our staff. We like to keep the focus on our wonderful church members! In light of our current situation, we recognize that many of the articles we had written for the April 2020 Ecclesia have needed to be revised. Knowing that the church is needing to adapt through this quarantine experience, we want to keep you informed of the work our staff is doing behind the scenes to carry on the mission of the church.

SERVING TOGETHER



We had the opportunity to serve together at Rowan Helping ministries, packing food for our community in need. We packed 40 boxes of food from the Department of Agriculture that will be distributed by RHM.

These boxes supplement food for families in Rowan County who qualify for assistance. We expect the need to grow as many lower income families are affected the most by business closures and current limitations. We as a staff have committed to returning to serve weekly, or as often as we can, during the pandemic.

STAFF STORIES CONTINUED

MIKE, BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT

Along with closing the church at the Bishop's direction, the decision was made out of an abundance of caution to proactively deep clean and disinfect our facility. The areas below have thus far received treatment which includes, but isn't limited to hand contact areas (doorknobs, light switches, push bars, bathroom fixtures) floors (slate tile, carpet) surface areas (tables, desks, furniture, pews). We are using cleaning products certified by the CDC to kill strains of the coronavirus, and are deep cleaning carpets while the building is closed.

Locations already cleaned and treated are:

Lobby and Stanback Room
Office suite
Elevators and stairwells
Music suite
Sanctuary
Tower and Column rooms
Nurseries, Nest, Parlor and other classrooms
Bathrooms in the new building and crossover hall
Hallways, from lobby to crossover hall



In the coming weeks the remaining areas of the church will be cleaned including the education building, fellowship hall, chapel, etc. The safety of those who worship with us and use our facilities is my highest priority.

CHRISTINE, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Christine has been hard at work to make sure members' information is correct and up to date so that we can be in contact with you. She has been working to update email addresses in Constant Contact so that everyone can receive our eblasts. Christine is always on a quest to make sure our records are accurate and up-to-date, so contact her for any changes to your information!

Christine has been making calls to church members, and collaborating with the pastors to make sure we are mailing information to our members who do not use email. We typically mail the Ecclesia to our home bound members, we are extending that list to include some others who will not have easy access to church information in the coming weeks.

BECCA, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

I can certainly say that I have been missing my many visitors during this most unusual time. My hope is that everyone is following all the protocols and staying healthy!

Once again, I want to tell you what a wonderful congregation you have here at FUMC. Even when we can't be together you have continued to make sure your tithes and offerings have gotten to me. You are all so incredibly generous.

I really enjoyed seeing all of you who came by during the drive thru last week. Remember, I am going to be in the porte cochere every Thursday from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. I would love to see your smiling faces!

I have been busy keeping up with all the regulations so that we as a staff can be prepared! Also, the work of the church is truly never done and bills still have to be paid. I am currently preparing for month end and quarterly taxes along with administrative work that is required from time to time. I am always available by phone and I want you to feel free to contact me at anytime and please let me know if you need anything!

EVEN MORE STAFF STORIES

PASTORS MARK AND STACEY



Staff and Lay Leaders Zoom Call

Your pastors have been hard at work shifting the mode of church life! We have quickly learned and sharpened skills at all sorts of technologies to share information and the life of the church including: YouTube livestreaming and video posting, video editing, Zoom meetings, and more!

We've mobilized our Sunshine Visitors to check on homebound members, and have been at work making contact with church members. Our goal is to be a "non-anxious presence" and keep us centered in the good news of the gospel and the mission of the church.

BAILEE, CHILDRENS DIRECTOR

I have greatly missed seeing all of the wonderful smiling faces of our Kids First kiddos and families!

Along with leading Kids Connection and Club45 via Zoom, I have been communicating with children & families (postcards, social media, emails, phone), and using Facetime to connect with children one-on-one.

Sharing in these virtual meetings has been a bright spot and highlight of my weeks! I look forward to the day when we will see each other face to face, until that day comes know that I am thinking and praying for each of you!



JENNI, YOUTH DIRECTOR



We are living in strange days, and in this challenging time I am so glad the church has the opportunity to provide connection over distances, provide care for those who are grieving, and be a calming presence in a chaotic time. These are some of my goals as a youth director right now.

I am continuing to lead youth group, we have moved our gathering time to the video conferencing platform Zoom until we can be together in person. It is so wonderful to be able to see one another's faces. We're also using Zoom to check in with one another, and using email/phone/social media platforms to stay connected.

I have also been working on some administrative work (including continuing to produce the Ecclesia), and making hopeful plans for summer and beyond!

CHURCH HISTORY

"Looking back, moving forward"

Eighteenth Century Christianity in Rowan County was one of unresolved variety. Each new immigrant group introduced the religious traditions of their European homeland. Germans brought Lutheran and Reform traditions, the Scotch Irish brought Presbyterianism, and the English brought Anglicanism. The first Rowan church buildings appeared in rural communities where each ethnic group settled.

With the chartering of Salisbury in 1753, the Royal government established the Saint Luke's Parish of the Church of England. The governor expected all Rowan citizens to support the state church through a tax. However, most citizens rarely paid the tax and the Episcopal Church existed more on paper than in reality. Money was scarce, priests were hard to find, there was no house of worship, and church members were almost non-existent. When the Revolutionary War began, the Anglican bishop in London ordered all Episcopal priests to leave America. Most did, and Saint Luke's parish was not reorganized until 1824.

Lutherans constructed Salisbury's first church building in 1768. It was a log structure on North Lee Street where only the Old Lutheran Cemetery remains. Lutherans used the building for worship but made it available to other denominations when not needed by their congregation.

The first Methodist settlers arrived in America in the 1760s. Essentially a lay renewal movement within the Church of England, Methodism quickly spread across the colonies as worshipers met in societies "to watch over one another in love." In the absence of Anglican Clergy during and after the Revolutionary War, Methodism rapidly filled the ecclesiological gap.

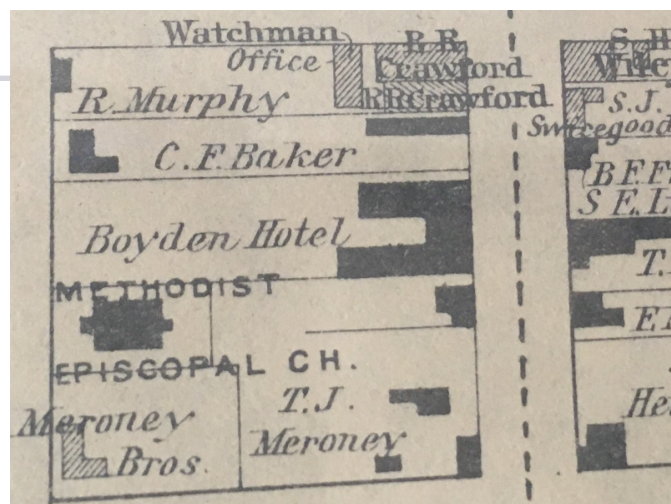
In 1781, Beverly Allen, a lay preacher, arrived in Salisbury charged with organizing a Methodist society. He began his ministry in a school house. Three years later, the infant society became Salisbury's First Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation originally met in homes or public buildings. It was not until 1831 that for \$100 they purchased the third lot from the corner of Church and Fisher Street to construct a log cabin house of worship. A Methodist Church has remained on that site for almost 200 years.

This pattern repeats with other Salisbury denominations. Saint Luke's Episcopal congregation constructed Salisbury's oldest surviving church building in 1828. The First Presbyterian Church dates from August 1821, and The First Baptist Church began organization in 1849 but was reorganized in 1876 following a period of neglect. The first Roman Catholic mass was celebrated in a Salisbury home in the 1830s, but it was 1881 before the congregation had a full-time priest who saw to the construction of their first building in 1882. Sadly, there were no African American Churches in this early period due to their almost universal enslavement.

Looking back, the Christian faith survived and even thrived for many years in Rowan County without church buildings. While a building can be a tremendous asset, it is not essential for effective ministry. The maintenance needs of a structure can even sap a congregation's financial resources and take priority over outreach ministry.

Moving forward, Christians need to focus on their core missional priority to "make disciples of Jesus Christ" rather than on the preservation of historic structures. If the Gospel message spreads and Christian communities grow, there will be adequate funds for property maintenance.

- Fred Jordan, Church Historian



MISSIONS



Event Rescheduled New Date: June 6

Our Rise Against Hunger event has been postponed, and will now be on June 6. We plan to pack another 20,000 meals with the help of friends from other UMC churches within our missional network.

WOMEN'S RETREAT



We originally planned to take our Women's Beach Retreat in the Fall, but along came a hurricane. Graciously, we were allowed to move the weekend to March 13-15. We did not know how beautiful a gift that would be. We missed all who longed to join us but could not- we will have another retreat!

With the advice of our Bishop and Governor, the Sunday services on March 15 needed to be moved online. However, our group of 11 women were able to continue to the beach as planned. What a gift of grace! No TVs were turned on (except to watch a movie together), so we were surrounded by fellowship, the beauty of the ocean, and a palpable sense of God's grace and peace.

Together we reflected on spaces of transition (called "liminal space") we experience. When in these in-between spaces, we can often freeze or try to run away. The alternative is to surrender to the One who can transform us and bring change. This felt extremely important as we began to see the reality of changes we needed to make to face the effects of COVID-19, as well as the things upon our hearts. We reflected on scriptures such as Jesus calming the storm and freeing a man from demons (Mark 4:35-5:20), the healing of Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), and the woman at the well (John 4). The group sang beautifully from our hymnals. We feasted well on the gift of Word & music, fellowship, and delicious food prepared by the group!

SCOUT TRIP: RIVER PLATFORMS

I can't say enough how great these kids and leaders were on this last trip. It was a long drive to and from, it rained, and it got cold. Yet I heard little or no whining.

There are so many moving parts to a large undertaking like this trip. It took four vehicles, 11 canoes, two trailers, and a church bus to get it all accomplished.

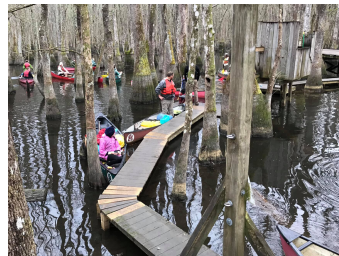
Our leaders are the best. I'm thankful for Daryl, Mark, David, Mike, Lacy, Anne, Rob, both Roberts, and Greg! They kept us safe, drove for hours, caught fly balls, set up tents, kept an eye on everyone, and cooked a Low Country Boil so good you couldn't buy it in a restaurant.

We also have a wonderful chartered organization in First United Methodist Church to get the bus fixed in time for our long journey and support us the way they do. We could not have made this trip affordable to the average scout without the support of FUMC. Thank you so much.

Hopefully our scouts, while they are locked up in quarantine for the next little while, will think back to when the sound of the water moving under their tents and the Barred Owls sung them to sleep.

YIS

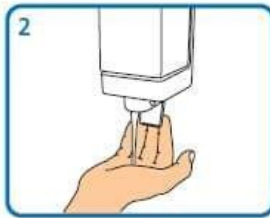
Bruce Kolkebeck, ASM T442



Hand-washing technique with soap and water



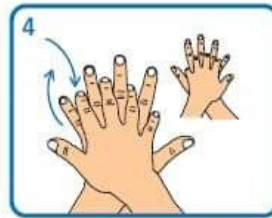
1 I lift up my eyes to the hills.



2 From where does my help come?



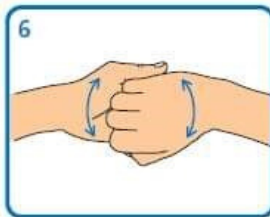
3 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.



4 He will not let your foot be moved;



5 he who keeps you will not slumber.



6 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.



7 The LORD is your keeper;



8 the LORD is your shade on your right hand.



9 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.



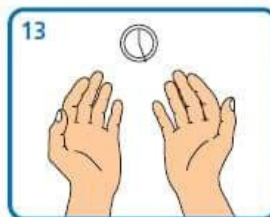
10 The LORD will keep you from all evil;



11 he will keep your life.



12 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in



13 from this time forth and forevermore.

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APRIL BIRTHDAYS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

1 Deneen Jones
Jean Watts

2 Mary Roakes

3 Bruce Kolkebeck
Patty Meyers

4 Marlene Spencer
Jeff Whittington

5 Angie Basinger

6 Terri Carnes
Parks Watson
Leah Wyrick

7 Mike Faggart
Angie Pipes

8 Benjamin Baker
Larry Cordts
Matthew Gouge
Katie Howard
Chloe McGee

9 Alex Basinger
Peggy Feezor
Bill Noell

10 Mark Conforti

11 Steven Heard
Ben Mastro

12 Tamara Murphy

13

14 Tim Howard

15 Coleman Emerson
Chris Foote

16

17 Sara Banish
Gregory Smith

18 Stella Smeltzer

19 Don Champion
Melissa Conrad

20

21 Tonda Coutu
Jay Duke

22 Spencer Basinger
Evelyn Dymond
Elizabeth Edgeworth
Ann Ellis
Ben Dunkin

23 Rita Reynolds
Ryan Disseler

24 Jenny Kribbs
Michael Leonard

25 Sherry Dillard
Riley Peltz

26 Rick Eldridge
Lisa Vaughn

27 Henry Buck
Ron Gobble
Betsy Kimball
Susan Shumaker

28 Corydon Johnson
Emily Mueller

29 Marie Leonard-Hampton
Barry Stokes
Anne Wilson

30 Harry Cooke
Sam Nash



FUMC FAMILY AND EXTENDED FAMILY TRANSITIONS

In Remembrance

Please keep the family in your prayers

JAMES WILLIAMS

February 1, 1936 - February 26, 2020

RICHARD LARUE HANNOLD JR.

Husband of Nancy Hannold

February 28, 1946 - February 27, 2020

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1

THANK YOU

From the family of Richard Hannold

Dear Pastor Mark and FUMC,
We are so appreciative to you for your support,
guidance and kindness. Our honor to have met you.
- Nancy, Chris, and Greg Hannold

*Thank
you*

DIRECTORY UPDATES

Please note the following changes in your directory:

Betty Wilhelm

548 White Oaks Dr., #10C
Salisbury, NC 28147

Sally Roberts email

aroberts901@gmail.com

John Holshouser email

jhol19@att.net

Alisha Mastro email

aamastro@gmail.com

FINANCIAL UPDATE, MONEY SAVING STRATEGIES

To control spending during this time, the lights in unused rooms remain off.

The heating/cooling in unused rooms is minimal; we need to keep the sanctuary heated/cooled in order to preserve the recent organ maintenance. Printing is kept to a minimum, too.

Recent financial standing:

<i>As of 03/08/20</i>	<i>2020</i>
YTD Income	\$ 144,362.86
Less YTD Expenses	\$ (117,102.49)
Sub Total	\$ 27,260.37
*Cash on hand 12/31/2019	\$ 23,750.70
Cash on hand 03/08/20	\$ 51,011.07

ECCLESIA

NEWLETTER OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

