



The Methodist Messenger

PASTOR'S NOTES

Easter People

As I mentioned last Sunday, this time of year (halfway through Lent) I begin to feel a push to get on to Easter and the resurrection. And, I can't help but wonder if Jesus felt that way himself, especially during those last few weeks of his life on earth. Was he in a hurry to "get it over with", or rather did he dread the approaching hour of his crucifixion and death? Perhaps even a little of both? Recently someone asked me if I was ready for Easter. My initial reaction is probably the most honest. No, I'm not. I don't know that I'm ever truly ready. I'm certainly not ready for the days leading up to Easter and the emotional exhaustion that comes with contemplating Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Moving through the dark days of Holy Week is hard. Recognition that our own sinful nature was responsible for Jesus' crucifixion and death leaves a heavy burden on the hearts of many of us. It doesn't matter that these events took place among a particular group of people, a long time ago. Certainly we would feel more comfortable if we could point our fingers back toward some other people, place, and time, but we are just as culpable. We cannot simply wash our hands, and proclaim ourselves innocent of this blood. The blood of Christ that was shed for us, that cleanses our sin-stained souls, also condemns us for the sinners we are, as certainly as if we'd pounded those nails in ourselves. And yet, by that same blood we know we are saved to a new life in Jesus Christ. And so we must push through. There's no way to get to Easter, to celebrate God's victory over sin and death, without going first to the cross.

Lately there's been some who have questioned whether we (The United Methodist Church) still hold that resurrection is one of the foundational tenets of our faith. The answer is and always will be YES! Just as the apostle Paul once wrote to the Church in Corinth, **"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."** Karl Barth, an esteemed theologian of the 20th Century once said that what brings people to worship is the unspoken question that clings to their hearts and minds, "Is it true?" The question is never so relevant as it is when we approach Easter morning. In a few weeks, Christians around the world will gather in their places of worship to do one thing... to celebrate the risen Christ and share the Good News that brings. The truth is, I think most people have already answered that question in their hearts before they arrive. I think people who come to church these days, and especially on Easter, do so for lots of other reasons. For some, it may be a sense of habit or an obligation to family members. Others seem to enjoy the experience of corporate worship and feel a need to be a part of a community of believers. Perhaps the most important reason we gather, is that we all need to hear the good news again. We need the blessing of Easter to restore our hearts to a joyful condition. We all need to be reminded of that hope we have, that God has made a way for us to be with him through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus. When Easter morning has come, we can again breath a deep sigh of relief. 'Yes Karl, it is true.' Jesus did rise, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty...or almost empty. Faith, Hope and Love were left behind for all of us who came later. Peace be with us all, my fellow Easter People.

*-Pastor Howard
Whiteville UMC*



STAFF

Rev. Howard James,
Pastor

Morgan Simmons,
Secretary

Chalmers Waddell,
Custodian

Gus Cothorn,
Music Director

Nan Leggett,
Organist

Geneva Ashley,
Pianist

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

To recap 2023, Sunday Morning Worship Service attendance averaged 59, up 2 from 2022. The average, following the disaffiliation vote, was 46. Our offerings and other income were \$3,620 less than our expenses of \$238,071. Other income was substantial and included transfers from the Pridgen Local Missions and the Caroline T. High Preaching endowments, as well as a grant from the Duke Foundation. Many thanks to several members who increased their offerings generously. Conference apportionments were paid in full.

On to 2024, Sunday morning worship attendance for the first two months averaged 45. The Adult Sunday School moved to the cozy church parlor and is enjoying it, especially on these cold Sunday mornings. Please come and join us as Pastor Howard leads us as we explore the book of Genesis.

We began 2024 with a slightly smaller budget. Included in the reduction was the conferences commitment to pay half of the pastor's health insurance and pension expenses. That will save us \$13,288. Additionally, we received a grant of \$7,000 to be applied to our apportionments.

Through February our expenses were \$34,127 and exceeded our offerings by \$5,636. We had funds on hand to cover the shortage. Our offerings through February are only \$2,191 less than last year. Thanks for your support.

The challenge is to match our smaller congregation, and resulting smaller offerings, with our staff salaries and building maintenance. Our payroll and property costs alone exceed \$200,000. We have the resources to continue our programs and missions for a reasonable time, but must grow to continue them at their current level.

Please continue to pray for our church stewardship and be as generous with your participation and offerings as possible. Thank you for your stewardship response to God's faithfulness to us.

Tom Leggett, Finance Chairperson

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have
everlasting life John 3:16*

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 4th– United Women in Faith
- March 12th–Trustees Meeting
- March 18th– Church Council Meeting
- April 8th– United Women in Faith

NURTURE COMMITTEE

We have been involved in planning the Lenten lunches that are after the services on the Wednesdays of Lent. Many thanks to all who have volunteered their time to help with the lunches! They have been well-attended and everyone seems to have enjoyed the food! I would like to welcome Sue Lennon to the Nurture Committee. She has been a wonderful addition! As we approach the Easter season, may everyone feel a new commitment to their faith and become closer to our Lord and Savior who sacrificed so much for us!

Debbie Conway, chair



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Some of our members attended a Mission Study at Harbor Church in Wilmington on Saturday, Mar. 2nd. We will be sharing highlights of the study with our members at a future meeting. It was a very informative and uplifting study. Our March meeting will be on Mar. 4th and we will be doing a craft project for the clients of the Food Pantry for Easter. We also are bringing items to donate to the many mission groups that come here to repair and rebuild homes of people that need help. They stay at our youth house and we are providing toiletries and paper goods to them as needed. We plan to continue to do that throughout the year. Once a month, one of our members provides food for the families and visitors that have loved ones in the Hospice Care Center on Warrior Trail.

Our April meeting will be Apr. 8 at 6:00 pm in the parlor. We hope everyone has a glorious Easter season!

Debbie Conway, President



GIVING BACK

For Valentines Day our church provided treats for the faculty and staff at Edgewood Elementary School. Several staff members stopped to offer their thanks for the kind gesture, including school principle Pam Sutton.



THANKS

Thank you to each person who has contributed this Lent season. We have been blessed with helpers in the kitchen for Lenten lunches, an abundance of food donations made to our food pantry, and so much more.

Our church recently held its spring blood drive. We would like to thank our workers who came together and helped make our blood drive a great success.

We have and continue to be a blessed church family.

Blessings!

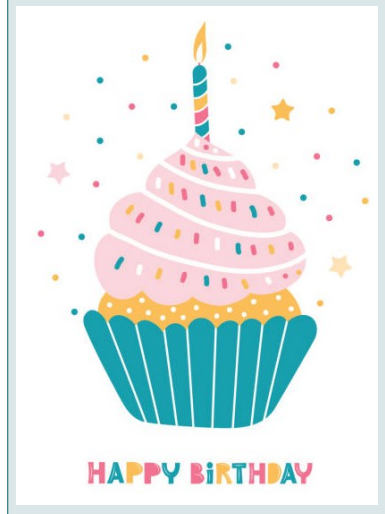
BIRTHDAYS

MARCH

- 2nd Hunter Deifes
- 5th Matthew Farmer
Dale Cichero
- 7th Elizabeth Gibson
- 13th Ethan Barnhill
- 16th Emily Williamson
- 19th Maggie High
- 20th Katie McLam
- 21st Margaret High
Ann Sauls
- 24th Sydney High
Andrew Bullard
- 25th Crystal Gore
- 29th Carolyn Hankins
- 30th Nan Leggett
- 31st Ann Simmons

APRIL

- 4th Phyllis Merritt
- 10th Grace High
- 11th Sue Wells
- 23rd Robin Gilmore
- 26th Ryleigh Owens
- 30th Laci Lewis



March 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 <i>United Women in Faith 6:00p.m.</i>	5 <i>-50+ Exercise</i>	6 <i>-Food Pantry -Choir Rehearsal -Morning Bible Study</i>	7 <i>-50+Exercise</i>	8	9
10	11 <i>-Trustees Meeting</i>	12 <i>-50+ Exercise</i>	13 <i>Choir Rehearsal -Morning Bible Study</i>	14 <i>-50+Exercise -Caregiver's Support 1:00 (parlor)</i>	15	16
17	18 <i>-Church Council Meeting 6pm</i>	19 <i>-50+ Exercise</i>	20 <i>-Food Pantry Choir Rehearsal -Morning Bible Study</i>	21 <i>-50+Exercise</i>	22	23
24	25	26 <i>-50+Exercise -Reaching Out 6pm</i>	27 <i>-Choir Rehearsal -Morning Bible Study</i>	28 <i>-50+Exercise Maundy Thurs. Service 6pm</i>	29 <i>Good Friday</i>	30
31 <i>Easter</i>						

April 2024

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

	1	2 -50+ Exercise	3 Food Pantry Choir Rehearsal	4	5	6
7	8 United Women in Faith 6:00	9 -50+ Exercise	10 Choir Rehearsal	11 -50+ Exercise Caregivers Support 1:00 p.m. parlor	12	13
14	15	16-50+ Exercise	17 -Food Pantry Choir Rehearsal	18 -50+ Exercise	19	20
21	22	23-50+ Exercise Reaching Out 6pm	24 Choir Rehearsal	25 -50+ Exercise	26	27
28	29	30-50+ Exercise				

WHITEVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

902 PINCKNEY ST.
WHITEVILLE, NC 28472



Rev. Howard James, Pastor
Tuesday-Friday/ 8:30 a.m.– 3:00 p.m.

Mrs. Morgan Simmons, Administrative Assistant
Monday-Thursday/8:30 a.m.– 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Chalmers Waddell, Custodian
Monday-Friday/ 7:30-12:30 a.m.

Ms. Tammie Anderson, Treasurer
Friday/4:00-6:00 p.m. (or later)

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