



# *The Methodist Messenger*

MAY 2020

Whiteville United Methodist Church

Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Communion Service - 6:00 p.m.



## SCATTERED REFLECTIONS ON CHURCH LIFE TODAY

### **Watching Out for Idols**

Two leaders of what we Protestants call the Reformation -- Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Germany and John Calvin (1509-1564) in France/Switzerland -- often warned the Church and her Christians to beware of idols. Luther and Calvin knew that people in this world, even Christians, were prone to fall for and worship idols. Idols -- be they celebrities or false gods/goddesses or ideas or institutions or movements or styles or fashions or lifestyles -- are more than willing to inform their followers how to order their entire lives, how their admirers might worship them, how they might bow the knee to them. Both Luther and Calvin knew that idols are in the business of seducing people away from knowing, trusting, and obeying the one, true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That idols serve the purposes of the evil one.

Karl Barth (1886-1968) of Germany and Switzerland, the twentieth century's greatest Protestant theologian, has been described as a "happy Calvinist" -- as opposed to a grumpy, unhappy Calvinist, I suppose. He, too, was concerned about idols and idolatry during his life and ministry in this world. As National Socialism was gaining respectability, and later grasping for the reigns of power, in Germany, Barth encouraged the Church to act "as if nothing had happened." According to Barth, in the midst of political idols running amok, the Church must continue to take its marching, ministerial, and missional orders from Jesus Christ -- not from the National Socialists and not from the anti-National Socialists. The Church orders her life according to the presence and guidance of Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Savior of the world. "As if nothing had happened." Not a bad goal. Even for us. Today.

### **Staying Open, Offering Witness**

During the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the Whiteville United Methodist Church has carried on, more or less. Weekly Word-and-Sacrament worship leads the way. Sunday morning Services of Worship are being broadcast by radio and internet -- with the Order of Service (if not the full bulletin) emailed in advance of Sunday, so that people in homes or in cars can join in the worship as much as possible. Wednesday evening Services of Holy Communion continue -- with fewer than 10, socially-distanced people attending. (Question: "Pastor, what if you are the only one who attends a Communion Service on a Wednesday evening? Would you cancel the service?" Answer: "No. Because Christ always shows up.")

The Food Pantry Ministry continues to distribute food.

From the bell tower, hours are chimed (9:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m., Monday-Saturday; and 12:00 noon through 6:00 p.m., Sunday) and hymns are played (at noon, Monday-Saturday; and at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday) for the neighborhood. All day and all night, the steeple, which holds high the cross, is bathed in light (thanks to the sun and to Duke Energy) -- so that it can shine forth The Light to all who look up. The old, rugged cross now planted in the front yard is draped with a white cloth that flows according to the breezes. Day after day, these public signs remind Christians and non-Christians alike: a dangerous virus does not rule the world.

The Fellowship Hall building is open. Letters are received and sent. (For example, this newsletter!) Bills are received and paid. Emails are sent, and received and answered. Telephone calls are made, and received and answered. The front-yard message board is changed a couple of times a week.

Needless to say, a governor's executive order has not stopped the Church's faith and life, mission and ministry. And the Whiteville United Methodist Church's faith and life, mission and ministry, provide much hope to many, near and far.

### **Surprises along the Way**

With the Fellowship Hall building remaining open, many people have dropped by for food assistance and a couple for financial assistance. Bags full of food, from the Food Pantry, were given -- most memorably to a grieving mother who had recently lost a young-adult son to gunshots. And assistance applications, which require volunteer work and worship attendance, were handed out.

Even though fewer and fewer people were gathering in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings for worship, due to health concerns, we continued to keep the doors open. One Sunday morning, unannounced, Mr. Bill Clark, who now

resides in western North Carolina, appeared. Because Bill was with us, several of us had an opportunity to chat with him.

On Palm Sunday, the first Sunday of the sanctuary's "closure," those preparing the sanctuary for worship were forced to become creative. So they moved the palm branches, the palm arrangements, and huge palm-like branches onto the front steps of the sanctuary building. The smaller branches were offered to those who happened to be strolling by. (One of the palm arrangements, intended for display in the sanctuary, must have grown legs and wandered away....)

Easter Sunday's Holy Communion -- which was received in fact by the pastor and by desire (or spiritually) by the few present in the sanctuary and by those listening to the service -- was most unusual, to say the least. The Whiteville United Methodist Church longs for Holy Communion, in the larger congregation, again. It will be a blessed event!

#### **Until Then**

All of us miss the Sunday School classes, the Bible Study gatherings, and the regularly scheduled meetings. We miss the fellowship. I also miss visiting in hospitals, assisted-living facilities, and homes.

Soon a semblance of social life will begin to return. Until then, to the greatest extent possible, trust and obey our good Lord, Jesus Christ -- hour after hour, day after day -- "as if nothing had happened."

In Christ,  
Pastor Paul

#### "METHODISM DIVIDING"

That is the title of an essay that appears in the May 2020 issue of First Things. It is filled with historical information, on Methodism in America, that most of us have not yet encountered. That is to say, this article teaches all of us a thing or two.

"Methodism Dividing" is written by Dr. Kevin M. Watson, an Assistant Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. The concluding paragraph of Dr. Watson's article is powerful: "The agonies of the United Methodist Church and their roots in Methodist history teach an important lesson. The dominant culture has little need for nominally Christian chaplains. Let the dead bury the dead, as Jesus teaches. We need an approach to cultural engagement and sexual ethics that is anchored by Methodism's founding mission to 'spread scriptural holiness,' rather than one that drifts along with and is determined by the prevailing cultural moment."

You are invited to pick up your copy of

"Methodism Dividing" from the table across the hall from the Church Office. You will, methinks, find it challenging and helpful. (PTS)

#### ANNUAL CONFERENCE GOES VIRTUAL, GENERAL CONFERENCE INTO 2021?

Because of concerns surrounding Coronavirus, the 2020 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference will be held virtually on June 18, a Thursday, from 10:00 a.m. until 12 noon. Worship will occur, and essential votes will be taken. On September 19, a Saturday, the clergy of the Annual Conference will meet in an Executive Session and participate in an Ordering of Ministry Service.

Because of similar concerns, the 2020 General Conference, which had been scheduled for this month (May 5-15), has been canceled. At the present time, August 31-September 10, 2021 is being discussed as a possible time for the next General Conference.

Bishop Sally Dyck, the bishop of The Chicago Area, recently noted: "I hope we [bishops in particular and/or United Methodists in general, the context is not clear] apply a post-coronavirus perspective that life is fragile and life is random. We're not in control.... We have wanted to control the church. We have wanted to control God. We have wanted to control each other. And controlling is a pre-coronavirus perspective." (Jim Patterson, "COVID-19 could push the church toward change," UM News, April 20, 2020) Hers is a true insight, which was made possible by the worldwide spread of a virus. But that insight has always been a part of the Church's ancient faith: Jesus Christ is Lord of all and therefore Lord of the Church. The Church is not in our hands, not under our "control." A lethal virus was not required to uncover that reality. (PTS)

#### REVEREND DR. TERRY HUNT

Reverend Dr. Terry Hunt will lead us as our new minister in the Sunday Worship Service on June 28, 2020. Pastor Hunt comes to us from First United Methodist Church in Laurinburg. Dr. Hunt holds a B.A. from University of North Carolina at Pembroke (1998), a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary (2002), and a Doctorate of Ministry from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois (2016). Pastorates served include the North Carolina and Kentucky Annual Conferences. He is married to Gloria Hunt and they have three daughters: Kelsey, Lindsey, and Illya; and seven grandchildren: Peyton, Camden, Laiken, Zoey, Luke, Noah, and Nya.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Please remember your financial support of the Whiteville United Methodist Church. Your gifts can be left at the Church Office/Pastor's Study or mailed to Whiteville UMC/902 Pinckney Street/Whiteville, NC 28472. They will be most appreciated.

## FINANCE REPORT

Thank you for your continuing financial support during these trying times. Presenting our tithes and offerings takes extra effort without live Sunday morning services and other programs. Options are US Mail or dropping them off at the church. Dropping them off is made more difficult by irregular office hours due to the virus. Thanks again for your extra efforts to support our church.

Our weekly offerings have averaged \$2,525 since March 15. Our budget requires \$5,946 per week. As of April 19 with the "stay at home order," we are \$19,912 behind last year and \$26,442 behind budget. I am told that there is approximately \$5,900 in offerings that have not yet been deposited.

In response, we are deferring apportionment payments and non-operating expenses. Additionally, the Finance Committee has asked for and received approval to make application for a Federal Coronavirus Disaster loan under the CARES Act. The loan will be forgiven if we continue to pay staff salaries through May. Of course we will pay salaries even if the loan is not approved. Unfortunately, we are told that even with the additional funds recently approved, there are already more applications in process to exhaust the additional funds. It is likely we will not receive funds unless many of the pending requests are declined.

Please stay safe and trust that God will meet all our needs if we are faithful.

FYI: The CARES act contains a little known benefit for those over 70 1/2 years of age who have an IRA. The required minimum withdrawal has been waived for 2020. You have the option of skipping the taxable withdrawal this year.

– Tom Leggett, Finance Chair

### THE 2020 SAM T. AND THELMA G. GORE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Applications Are Now Available  
in the Church Office.

Completed Applications Are Due  
by May 25 to the Pastor.

The Scholarship Will Be Awarded  
during the June 28 Worship Service.

## PARISH NURSING

Thanks to Jo Anne Biser for sharing the following tips from the Myers Park United Methodist website! I hope you will find them helpful.

TEXT 5 people each day to check on them.

CALL 5 people each week to check and pray with them.

WRITE 2 notes each week filled with encouragement and support.

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* – Romans 15:13

– Pat Ray, Parish Nurse

### BIRTHDAYS IN MAY

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Margie Rabon
5 <sup>th</sup>	Mary Williamson
12 <sup>th</sup>	Leah Pait
13 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Georges
18 <sup>th</sup>	Pat Ray
20 <sup>th</sup>	Keith Sellars Beth Walters
26 <sup>th</sup>	Hugh Daniel
28 <sup>th</sup>	Laura Beth Owens
31 <sup>st</sup>	Margaret Hicks

### "A Hidden Life" (2019)

This movie is the stirring story of an Austrian farmer who refuses to sign a loyalty oath to Hitler. Its picture of marriage and family life is elevating and joyful.

Whiteville United Methodist Church  
The Parlor  
May 31 (Sunday)  
5:00 p.m.

## WHITEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT LETTER OF THANKS

April 16, 2020

Dear Mrs. Hankins:

We would like to thank the ladies of the Whiteville United Methodist Church for the baked loaves of bread you all provided to the Whiteville Police Department. We certainly appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness.

If the Whiteville Police Department can ever assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,  
Douglas W. Ipock  
Chief of Police



Whiteville United  
Methodist Church  
902 Pinckney Street  
Whiteville, NC 28472

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 38  
WHITEVILLE, NC

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant  
Monday-Thursday/8:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian  
Monday-Friday/7:30-11:30 a.m.

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

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Pastor

Whiteville United Methodist Church  
email: [wumc@whitevilleumc.org](mailto:wumc@whitevilleumc.org)  
mail: 902 Pinckney Street/Whiteville, NC 28472  
telephone: (910) 642-3376  
website: [www.whitevilleumc.org](http://www.whitevilleumc.org)

Our Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM and 103.9 FM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at [www.Kool1039radio.com](http://www.Kool1039radio.com). Click on the “Web Audio Player” applet. To listen to the entire service, go to: <https://lynx.prostreaming.net:2199/start/unitedmethodist/> and click on the Web Audio Player applet. For either choice, you may need to enable Adobe Flash. There is now a link to the radio station on our church webpage at [www.whitevilleumc.org](http://www.whitevilleumc.org). Click on “Stream Live Service Sundays at 10:00 a.m.”

Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church  
As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ’s name.