



THE MOUNT PLEASANT MESSENGER

Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church
3035 Mt. Pleasant Blvd. Roanoke, VA 24014

SEPTEMBER 2020
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From lay leaders of the UMC

Warren Harper, lay leader of the Virginia Annual Conference, shared this powerful letter from conference lay leaders across the UMC. ("Lay" or "laity" refers to the non-clergy folks of the church!)

This is an extraordinary time in the history of our church and world. As Conference Lay Leaders we gathered in February optimistically anticipating a future guided by vision and filled with action. We returned home to face a modern pandemic that has cancelled local, conference, and denomination-wide activities. Many of us are not gathering in our houses of worship right now. Clergy and laity are learning ways to minister differently. Weddings, funerals, celebrations – even times of breaking bread and fellowship -- have been postponed or reduced to minimized gatherings. Separation has brought challenges to how we meaningfully carry on our ministry and mission.

In the same time frame, the lives of Ahmaud Arbury, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and so many other Black lives have been violently ended because of the sin of deeply rooted racism. Pain, anger, denial and new realizations have further ripped the already frayed fabric of communities across the world.

Jesus gave us the Great Commandment, to "love one another as I have loved you." Discomfort, fear, loss, grief or anger do not excuse us from this command.

"But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you – from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted." (1 Peter 2:9, The Message)

We have been called through our baptism to steadfast leadership in this time.

God calls us to stand as witnesses to this dual pandemic. As laity we are 99.2% of the church and our voices matter. We cannot sit as observers to these events. We will not go back to normal. We cannot be silent. We are vital to the unfolding of God's hope for us, to be people who hold one another and the communities around us, in love. Our acts of witnessing are not those of a spectator or to record history, but to take action and cause change.

God calls us to care for one another during this plague that has taken the lives of over 775,000 people worldwide. Seasons of pandemic and cultural change do not excuse us from being aware and supportive of our neighbors. Rather, they call us to being there for one another, hearing, listening deeply and acting.

God calls us to open our eyes, ears, hearts, and minds to the systemic and individual realities of racism. We are called to raise our voices for God's kingdom, for the life we can all live together.

God calls us to acknowledge that when one person is denied freedom all are responsible to raise the voice of faith against systems of oppression. It is past time to use our voices.

We are called to act. As laity, consider actions you can take with your families, congregations, and communities.

- Lead courageous conversations about this dual pandemic. How can we be supportive while isolated? How can we see and understand the systemic racism that is so deeply rooted?
- Hold all of those in prayer who risk their lives to heal the sick and protest against the inequities around us. Advocate and work for God's justice and mercy for those who suffer. *(continued on next page)*

DO I NEED TO RSVP FOR WORSHIP?

If you're a regular, we have a space saved for you. Just call if you aren't coming. For others, it will help to "RSVP" so we can prepare the room. But if God puts it on your heart, just come!! Bring face covering and hand sanitizer. Put your mask on before leaving your vehicle. We also ask everyone to do a temperature check at home. A verbal "health update" as you enter (based on the enclosed form) is then all that is required! Thanks for your help!

FALL WORSHIP NOTES

SEPT. 27 – OCT. 11 "Surprising Stories" - Elisha (2 Kings 2), Judah (Genesis 38) and David (2 Samuel 9)
OCT. 18 – NOV. 1 Three weeks on REVELATION
NOV. 8 Remembrance (James 1)
NOV. 15 Faith Heroes (Hebrews 11)
NOV. 22 The Ever-Growing Circle (Matthew 15:21-28)
NOV. 29 – DEC. 20 Advent begins

OUR FAITHFUL PARTICIPATION

OUR PRESENCE

In-person worship resumed June 28. We have averaged 15-20 in attendance. (31 persons have attended at least once.) We receive limited info on the number worshipping online, but we average 25-70 views per week. (The actual could be higher, since more than one person may be viewing at the same time.) We also have a small number of people using the "sermon by phone" feature weekly. We urge you to stay connected, even if you choose to defer attending in person! And share the word to others about our online worship and "sermon by phone" opportunities!

OUR GIFTS

Thanks to ALL for your faithful and generous support during these trying times. For April through August, our regular budget giving has averaged \$8,020 per month. Normally our average monthly need would be about \$8,805. Since some expenses (like utilities) have been reduced a bit, we have been able to continue our ministry work at a 100% level of support. This is truly a miraculous sign of God's provision during difficult times. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

BIG THANKS for your response to the CANS 4 CONFERENCE food drive. Normally we have a big conference-wide food drive at annual conference. Since we are not meeting in person this year, we did the drives in each local church. During August, we received 126 food items (with a few more yet to come) which are being shared with the food pantry at PCC!

OUR PRAYERS, SERVICE AND WITNESS

Thank you for your daily prayers for the ministries of MPUMC, for sharing your prayer requests and praise reports, for giving time, energy and talents to make a positive witness for Christ and his church! Make an effort EVERY WEEK to be a positive influencer on someone for the Lord! Invite them to our church, or let them know about our online ministries!

FROM LAY LEADERS... (continued)

- Shine light on those invisible biases in our relationships, congregations, conferences, and the Church that diminish the voices of some while strengthening others.
- Question our assumptions about the way our church works. Seek ministry and mission that expand our understanding of others. Where can we advocate for justice? How can we reach out to the world and help build God's Kingdom here, for everyone?
- Renew our commitment to love one another, fully embracing the knowledge that sometimes this means we need to let go of old ways and old thinking that may allow us to think that some people are better than others and deserve more, while accepting that other people, ideas or dreams are disposable.
- Collectively use our voices to question, confront, resist, and heal. Every single one of God's Children needs safety, protection, and support. Most of us benefit from larger systems of government, education, health, transportation, recreation and more; are they realistically and equally available to everyone in the community?
- Participate in learning that equips laity to engage with justice and mercy efforts. Learn together through books, movies, listening, and taking the risk to think differently.

If all this seems daunting, let's remember together that God will not give us a task too large nor will God leave us on our own. If we move beyond our comfort zones or encounter disapproval from others, we can think about the late John Lewis whose whole life was grounded in his Christian faith. Mr. Lewis, a great American statesman and advocate for the beloved community once said, **"let's get in some good trouble together."**

The season for change and transformation is NOW! In all our own places, let us follow God's call.

**God's blessings,
The Executive Committee of the Association of
Annual Conference Lay Leaders**

MINISTRY WITH ALL AGES!

Chrismon-making project!

The Christmas season will be here before we know it. This year certainly has been different and challenging, and many families are spending more time at home and with each other. Last year, we adorned the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary with Chrismons made from church members many years ago. Due to their age, most of the Chrismons were not in great shape. We have the chance to make new ones while we are in our homes and we can make them as a family or individually. If we are able to be together as a church family in December, we will have a special Sunday to have them blessed, and we will place them on the Christmas tree. This can be a very meaningful service.

We would like to know how many of you are interested in making this happen. Please e-mail me (Terri Beck) at tbeck57@outlook.com or call me at 343-0035. We will send you copies of the Chrismon symbols and what they mean, along with the way to make it. You can choose which one you would like to make. You can make one or as many as you would like. We may ask you between now and the first of December why you chose that particular symbol and it's meaning to you. If you agree, we may use it in the virtual worship service that we are now using.

If you are interested in making a Chrismon but are financially unable to do so, please let me know and we'll provide the materials for you.

As we continue to wait to be "together" physically, let's do this "together" while we are in our homes and with family.

Your sister in Christ,
Terri Beck

October collection for Samaritan Inn

Samaritan Inn (a day shelter on Salem Ave.) needs our help. During the pandemic it is serving breakfast and lunch through the front door. During October, we will collect money and Sam's or Walmart gift cards to help the shelter purchase food and supplies. Hopefully, Samaritan Inn can finally open and offer dry, warm day shelter this fall and winter.

Please contribute to this local mission. Gift cards will be collected, or you can make a check to the church (and mark it for Samaritan Inn) and include it with your regular offering. Thanks!

Con-GRAD-ulations!

Best wishes to Isaac St. Clair as he graduated from Roanoke Valley Christian School and just began basic training in the U. S. Navy! God bless!

United Methodist Women...

Mt. Pleasant UMW will meet after worship on Sunday, Sept. 20 and at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13. The October meeting will include the "World Thank and Pledge" service. We will wear masks and practice social distancing at these meetings.

Our local unit collected \$300 for school supplies for Henry Fork Outreach children!

Youth stuff...

10-MINUTE MOMENTS: PLUGGED IN is a daily devotional book for teens that's set up as a journal. Students read a Bible passage, poke their brain with a few questions, get some suggestions on what to pray about, and then HAVE space to write down their thoughts. This teen devotional includes a one-month plan that's easy to read and easy to stick with. And, if you hadn't guessed from the title, each "lesson" only takes about 10 minutes.

This time around, they'll tackle the five biblical purposes of our lives: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, and Evangelism. Keep 'em on hand for new students, pass 'em out as graduation gifts, or just hide them in their backpacks. You can't lose with these relatable youth devotions! See me for more info!

Krae

Music notes...

Many thanks to Jane Burks for all of her faithful service to the music ministries of MPUMC. After her fall, she had to mark an end to weekly piano ministry, and then shortly after that, we went through the pandemic shutdown. She has continued to help us with special solos for our worship time.

Choirs in the Virginia Conference are sadly "on pause" for the time being, but we look forward to resuming when we are given the green light. Many thanks to Selah Wright who has come on board to assist us with piano and singing since the end of June.

You can help!

Thanks to our lawn volunteers who have kept the church lawn looking so nice this summer. Grass has definitely grown quickly this year! Your faithfulness means so much, and it is a good witness to our community even during this time of quarantine. Our church finances are helped so much by having volunteers for this task. God bless you!



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I have wonderful memories of my seminary years (1977-1981) at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. Our second year core curriculum had four quarters on the core ministries of the church.



“CELEBRATING & PROCLAIMING” (on worship and evangelism).

“EDUCATIVE & SERVING” (on how we help people grow in their Christian learning and servanthood. “PROPHETIC & MISSIONAL” (the outreach and social witness of the church). “CARING & HEALING” (the personal touch of ministry, especially at the most difficult times of life).

As I reflect on the last six months of pandemic ministry, I realize that all of these areas have been strikingly affected. Worship looks and feels different. We are learning new ways of evangelizing. Serving and learning cannot happen in the ways to which we have been accustomed. The ways in which we care for each other have been so very difficult (like having socially distanced graveside services and doing hospital ministry by telephone). The outreach and social witness of the church have never been more needed, but sometimes we feel ill equipped for the task.

Despite my 41 years as a pastor, in 2020 I feel like a rookie trying to lead. I thank you for the many kind words you have shared. I know some pastor colleagues who have been through extremely stressful times, sometimes facing anger and inappropriate responses. And I can't begin to imagine what it is like for my pastor friends who were assigned to new appointments this summer. Imagine entering a church as the “new pastor” without the customary ways of getting to know one another.

I pray that you are finding new ways to be the church for one another. “ONE ANOTHER” ministry has always been the heartbeat of the New Testament vision for church. Instead of bemoaning the things we don't have, perhaps we can keep a focus on Christ's presence in the midst of these unusual times! If there is anything going on with you that needs a special touch of God's presence, please don't hesitate to call!

Pastor Robert

NOTES OF THANKS

We have posted these notes of thanks to the church family on the bulletin board, but wanted everyone to be able to see them, even though some have been around a while!

Salvation Army Turning Point Shelter

A huge thank you to Mount Pleasant Elementary School, Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church and the Mount Pleasant Community for the wonderful gift of 110 hand-crafted masks to fight coronavirus in Roanoke. Your creations were gratefully received by Captain Jaimie Clay of the Salvation Army for use at the Turning Point domestic violence shelter and other Salvation Army ministries in Roanoke.

Specific thanks to Jenny Basham and Karen Tate who coordinated the effort through the church and crafted masks too. Thanks to Winky McCann who led us to Debbie Adler (Ray Arthur's niece). She generously donated masks to this project and to other members of the Roanoke community who needed masks. Thanks to Betsy Stutes for making masks, and Joyce Ison for donating cloth.

Pinnacle Living (Hermitage)

For over 70 years the Samaritan Program has assured peace of mind to residents who have been blessed by longevity but have outlived their financial resources. Your gift of \$270 (7/23/20) to Hermitage Roanoke Samaritan Program helps us fulfill a promise we have made since our first resident moved in, a promise which has been integral to our mission from the beginning.

Over the past ten years, the amount of benevolent care support for Pinnacle Living communities has exceeded \$8,075,766. On behalf of our residents who depend on the benevolent care provided by the Samaritan Program, thank you for your gift.

Charles W. Wickham

Blue Ridge Women's Center

Yesterday we provided an ultrasound to a client who when she came in initially was abortion-minded. She left that day wanting to parent, and was now back for an ultrasound. She brought her mom with her. As her mom saw her grandchild on the screen, she and her daughter cried tears of joy. Lives changed!! Thank you!! Your thoughtful and generous gift from Mount Pleasant especially now makes that possible. Thank you congregation for us please. Blessings.

T. B.

Presbyterian Community Center

PCC remains operating as it began this pandemic – with food distributions two days each week. Clients call for an appointment with no contact except through proper safety procedures and transfer of food orders. We could not fill the current need without the help from generous supporters and advocates.

The timely Hunger Buster delivery from MPUMC was a HUGE blessing that helped prepare the pantry shelves for the months that followed. We also received a donation of \$180 for our Emergency Services Program during the COVID-19 crisis, providing food and financial aid to the most vulnerable among our neighbors.

We also received the summer donation of \$200 for food to provide meals and snacks for our students during their summer enrichment activities. On behalf of our clients, the staff and Board of Directors of PCC extend a heartfelt thank you to the congregation of MPUMC for partnering with us in serving those less fortunate in our community.

As we all weather this crisis, the work of PCC has never been more vital to the well-being of our community, and it would not be possible without your generosity. Thank you for supporting your neighbors. Thank you for supporting the PCC.

Be safe. Stay healthy.

Cheryl H. Poe and Karen McNally

From Blanche Hill

To all of our members. I thank you all for being such great and caring people. #1. All my love forever and God's blessings. How I miss you all. Stay as great as you all are.

Roanoke East Gideons

Dear Pastor Robert Stutes. We are praying for you, your family and your church especially this week. If you have any specific concerns for which we may intercede, please notify our camp chaplain – KirbyJoss@gmail.com – *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)*

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