



The Witness

First United Methodist Church, 1610 Prince St., Conway, AR, 72034

Volume LIII

March 2020

Number 3

A Pastoral Letter Doing Church in New Ways

From Pastor Michael Roberts:

How do we be the church in the midst of a global pandemic? We are trying to figure that out, and in many ways, I think we are doing well. We are learning how important it is to help people know that God is with us and to find new ways to provide care and ministry in new ways.

A few weeks ago, we made the painful decision to not have public worship, but to bring the church together online. With much prayer, we have jumped full speed into learning how to connect in this way. I am so appreciative of the encouragement, the comments, the “likes,” and “shares” – and especially for the grace you have given as we till new ground. With online worship we are discovering that our overall attendance may be greater. People can sleep in and still make it!

On a serious note, this is how we are going to be connecting for a while. Until we receive other guidance from government officials and our Bishop, there will be no

public worship or gatherings of more than a few in our building. This even includes funerals. For such needs, our options will include graveside services with families and memorial services at a later date. Please know that with this need, and with all pastoral needs, we want to find ways to be there for you.

Also, I want you to know that there is so much ministry going on. Staff and others are preparing online Sunday School and youth gatherings, worship experiences and devotions. We are also working to prepare food for our new “drive-through” food pantry and curbside delivery for our Amazing Grace Café. Sunday School Classes, Prayer groups, and Bible Studies are happening via “Zoom.” And if you want to know more about that online meeting resource, please contact us. We even had our last church council meeting via this resource, and it went well.

See **NEW CHURCH** on Page 4

Do You Need Help?

If you don't feel comfortable and/or don't need to be going out in public during this time, please call the church for help. We have people that would be willing to get your groceries, medicine or any other necessities you may have during this time of social distancing.

Contact the church at 329-3801, or email Kisha Bumpers at kbumpers@conwayfumc.org.

The church office is being staffed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday with just a few people at a time in accordance with social distancing.

Ways to Connect Online Website

www.conwayfumc.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/conwayfirstumc

Michelle Morris Named New Associate Pastor

We are pleased to announce that Michelle Morris will be our next associate pastor, effective on July 1.

Pastor Michelle will bring a passion for teaching, leading worship, and equipping for growth in faith. She holds a Ph.D. and Master of Divinity from Southern Methodist University and a B.A. from the University of Arkansas.

She has served at Wesley UMC in Fort Smith, Cavanaugh UMC in Fort Smith,



as the associate pastor at First UMC in West Memphis, and as the Lead Equipper for the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality and Course Coordinator for the Center for Communication. She also has a book coming out in April titled “Gospel Discipleship.”

Michelle is married to Travis Morris and their son, Soren, is in high school. Please keep Pastor Michelle in your prayers as we move towards welcoming her into our congrega-

tion.

Michelle's new church email address for FUMC is mmorris@conwayfumc.org.

“At this point, I want to say to you that I truly believe we are getting a great pastor, even as we know the Vilonia United Methodist Church is getting a great pastor in Pastor Lauren,” said Dr. Michael Roberts, senior pastor. “Please keep both Pastor Michelle and Pastor Lauren in your prayers during this time of transition.”

Our Church Family is Staying Connected!

Several Sunday School classes, small groups, church committees, and prayer groups are finding ways to share time together online in virtual get-togethers using a variety of online conferencing tools.

For instance, the Genesis Sunday School Class had Sunday School on Sunday, March 29, via Zoom with 30 attending (see picture). This was a check-in time for class members to share a devotional together, prayer requests and to discover how each are handling their time in isolation. Beginning April 5, the class will have their normal Sunday School time together using Zoom, and will continue their regular class study.

If your group or class is meeting online, please let us know -- send a photo and we'll share it! If you need help setting up for a meeting or class, please reach out to Kisha Bumpers or Colleen Holt at the church.



A screen shot of the Genesis Sunday School class on March 29.

Veritas Helps Youth Grow With God

BY DARCI BURRIS:

Being the introverted individual that I am, I never imagined myself voluntarily entering a venue with 1,300 other teenagers and adults, but Veritas is worth every moment. It's not a secluded retreat conveying that you must escape your daily life to truly connect with God. It congregates teenagers from all over Arkansas in a setting more closely aligned with our daily lives, immersing you with the people, music, knowledge, and love of God.

Arriving is unlike any other feeling. I remember waiting for our first night of worship and turning next to my friend Lilli, sitting with her mouth gaping open. As it was her first time, I asked if it was like she expected. All she could reply was "bigger." The magnitude truly comes to life, however, once worship begins. As voices fill the room, you succumb to the presence of God's work within each individual. It's truly a beautiful thing when your faith is strengthened because of God's presence in those around you.

The connection you grow with God is furthered over the weekend as you build relationships with others in break-out sessions. Our poor attempt at yoga taught us the importance of giving our best self to God to better carry out His work. In a seminar entitled "We Are One", we sat with people we'd never met, finding our commonal-



ties bound us and our differences only contributed to our goal. Intertwined throughout the weekend were normal conversations, but, by intentionally placing God on our minds, we were capable of taking away more fruit than when our daily lives allow us to focus solely on our personal priorities.

The impact of the weekend, though, was the working of our speaker Shanterra McBride. She had a way of letting

her love shine through her words. Shanterra expanded upon the call story of Samuel while exemplifying the immense love God has for us. Samuel's story of being called by God as a young person reflected a different message to each youth.

As we navigate our place in the church, Shanterra helped us to see that we don't need to know how we are called, just that we are. Like Samuel heard God call to him, Shanterra called on us. For me, her words abetted my trials in my relationship with God. I often find myself planning my life, seeking the college that I think will provide the most opportunity to carry out God's work, but, upon hearing God speak through Shanterra, I remembered I am living through God now. Shanterra taught me I don't need to waste the time I have been given to figure out where God wants me. If I let who I am now be led by God, then I am living for Him in whatever way presents itself. Who I become through God is a continuation of His plan for me.

Shanterra, the band, and the hundreds of youth allotted Veritas to mold me yet again in God's image. Whether consciously or not, I grew in His grace through an experience unlike any other.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Darcy Burris is a junior at Conway High School, a member of our C1Youth, and a daughter of Todd and Tricia Burris.)

'Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood'



Movie Night
March 6, 2020



In Memory and In Honor

In memory of George Adkisson by: Charles & Charlotte Nabholz, Fletch & Sherry Smith, Martha Bumpers

In memory of Emily Montgomery by: Lauralee Ledbetter, Martha Bumpers

In memory of Laura Kendrick by: L. Gray Dellinger, Martha Bumpers

In memory of Barbara Henry by: Martha Bumpers, Joe & Linda Dickinson

In memory of Jan David Ellis by: Martha Bumpers

In memory of Flinn Echols by: Martha Bumpers

In memory of Pat Perry by: Martha Bumpers

In memory of Brad Graddy by: Bill & Cecilia Patterson, Martha Bumpers, Jackie Robinette, James & Margaret Kelly, Jack & Karen Jumper, Gene & Meredith Wilbourn, Marolyn, Brooks, & Evan Lee, David Lee, Sondra Gordy, Marion Baker, Russell & Carolyn Benton, PEO Chapter E, Claudia Davis, Larry & Hilda Malpica, Jamie Bird, Robert & Jolinda Bryant, Ruth Williams, Richard Puloma, Dan Elam, John & Pat Latimer, Lynne & Bobby Tiner, Betty Gene & Richard Mann, Monty & Peggy McMahan, John & Carla Smith, Sam & Carole Teague, Bob & Anita Morris

In memory of Joe Sparks by: Wayne & Rynnett Clark

In memory of L.B. Ward by: Claudia Davis, Sam & Carole Teague

In memory of Della Mae Gould by: Employees at STI, Randy & Elaine Goad

In memory of Tina Maxwell by: Sam & Carole Teague

In honor of Pebble Sutherland by: Susanna Sutherland

In honor of Kish Jones by: Charles Pittman

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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WWW.CONWAYFUMC.ORG

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NEW CHURCH from Page 1

I am writing much of this for those who are not as connected online as others. We want all to know what is happening. I do invite all of you to familiarize yourself with our website – conwayfumc.org. Videos and online resources are right on the home page and easy to access.

In addition, our church Facebook page may be the most popular way to stay connected. Please “like” this page and check that you want to receive “notifications.” And if you want to learn more about any of this, please call. We have people who can help you set up a way to connect.

Concerning giving, I do ask you to reflect upon

your tithes and offerings during this time.

Your giving supports ministries all over the world, and of course, among us as we cultivate the growth of God’s love. Opportunities to give online are available through our website, in addition to mail, or by coming by and saying “hello” – keeping appropriate distance of course.

In this time, I continue to turn to the scriptures, and Paul’s word to Timothy stands out. In this letter, Timothy is encouraged to “rekindle the gift of God that is within,” and to trust that “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (II Timothy 1:6-7). I hope this is a word for all of us. May this “spirit” grow here.

Let’s Put Out Our Easter Yard Signs

As an extension of our outreach ministries, Conway First United Methodist Church asks our members to place invitational signs in their yard during the Easter season. The signs, which are undated and can be used year after year, are intended as a way to send Easter greetings to your friends, neighbors and all who drive through your neighborhood. This year, reaching out to others in this way may be more important than ever.

Many of those who received signs for Easter 2019 kept the signs at their home for use in later years. Some returned their signs to the church for others to use in later years.

This notice is two-fold:

- 1.) If you received a sign during distribution for Easter 2019 and kept it for future use -- IT’S TIME TO PUT IT OUT! Thank you in advance!
- 2.) If you do not have a sign and would like one, we have several signs available at the church. Please stop by the church between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday to pick up a sign. They will be under the hospitality area portico.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH STAFF DIRECTORY

Senior Pastor — Michael Roberts
Associate Pastor — Lauren DeLano
Dir., Music/Worship Ministries — Janet Gingerich
Director, Children’s Ministries — Pam Lentz
Director, Lay Ministries — Kisha Bumpers
Director, Youth Ministries — Zach Schrick
Director, MidYouth Ministries — Sandra King
Assoc. Dir., Music (Children) — Linda Ball
Praise Band Leader — Stuart Holt

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Business Assistant — Todd Burris
Supervisor, Hospitality Ministries — Ed Spears
Financial Assistant — Laura Bounds
Communications Assistant — Colleen Holt
Kitchen Coordinator — Kathleen Caruthers
Elementary Assistant — Catherine Gatlin
Nursery Assistant — Paula Bruner

Contact staff by email at:
first initial of first name plus last name
@conwayfumc.org

Example: mroberts@conwayfumc.org

Our Core Purpose:

To cultivate faithful and fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ.

