

Summer 2020
Mt. Zion Lutheran Church
Glad Tidings

*Our church is **open**.*

***Open** to patience and wisdom.*

***Open** to science and common sense.*

***Open** to discovering new ways to connect when
it is unsafe to “do it the way we’ve always done it.”*

***Open** to saving lives by giving up some of the
traditions and sacraments we hold dear.*

***Open** to wearing masks to show we love our neighbor.*

***Open** to keeping the sanctuary closed so more of us
can come back together safely when it is time.*

***Our** church is open to following Jesus who,
himself, spent time in the wilderness.*

*We will remain **open**,*

and someday, by the grace of God,

we will be able to worship together again.

~ Tom Trenney

While NC remains in Phase 2 of re-opening due to the pandemic, we are continuing to follow the recommendations from the NC Synod Council about gathering for worship and other events. This decision is made with love and care for those among us most at risk from the virus and firm faith in God to hear our worship and praise whether it comes from our homes or our church building.

Our plan is to cautiously re-gather for in-person worship about two weeks after NC moves to Phase 3. *If you have comments or questions on the re-gathering plan recently approved by the council, please talk with one of the members of the planning team (June Almond, Tyler Gordon, Cynthia Mills, and Pastor Ruth Ann).*

Mt. Zion Lutheran Church

111 E. Church Street

P.O. Box 86

Richfield, NC 28137

704-463-7280

SCCM items for June: canned meat – tuna, chicken, Spam, salmon
SCCM items for July: staple items – flour, sugar, vegetable oil, broth, cooking spray
SCCM items for August: canned or dried beans, canned tomatoes, rice

JUNE BIRTHDAYS:

1 – June Almond
2 – Steve Robertson
3 – Kenneth Huneycutt
7 – Marvene Rose
11 – Sandy Phillips
17 – Kirby Gordon
18 – Tommy Roseman
19 – Kellie Roseman
20 – Rusty Shoe
30 – Wayne Huneycutt

JULY BIRTHDAYS:

3 – Chaz Misenheimer
6 – Tyler Gordon, Alexandra Cabus
8 – Milas Icenhour
12 – Wayne Mills
13 – Heidi Smith, J.T. Smith
16 – Harper Hinson
17 – Gina Vanderflute
19 – Kris Rogers
20 – Clay Misenheimer
22 – Terry Deese
25 – Jim Misenheimer, Garrett Whitt
27 – Ruby Poplin
29 – Kay Cosgrove
30 – Lindsay Gordon, Robert Misenheimer

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS:

1 – Willa Rae Gordon, Wyatt Gordon
2 – Angie Lefler
3 – Robert Wilson
17 – Chris Wright
17 – Ruby Manus
19 – Samantha Shepherd
22 – Willow Hinson
28 – Dylan Smith, Johnny Smith

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES:

5 – Rich & Kay Cosgrove – 50
19 – Dan & Beth Huber – 38
21 – Michael & Chrissy Chandler – 23
28 – Andrew & Jenny Misenheimer – 6

JUNE DISCIPLES IN ACTION

Community Inn Meal:

Emily Misenheimer & Sarah Waller

Lawn Care: Rick Gordon

Sexton: Connie & Rick Gordon

JULY ANNIVERSARIES:

26 – Robert & Rusty Shoe – 46

JULY DISCIPLES IN ACTION

Community Inn Meal:

Libby Palmer & Joanna Wright

Lawn Care: Jim Barringer

Sexton: Cynthia Mills

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES:

3 – Terry & June Almond - 51
5 – John & Angie Lefler – 48
7 – Jim & Carolyn Thompson – 54
Mike & Teresa Misenheimer – 37
15 – Larry & Nancy Huneycutt - 55
17 – Laurel & Michael (Bucky) Hinson - 7
18 – Robert & Richardia Wilson – 64
23 – Jim & Brenda Barringer - 51

AUGUST DISCIPLES IN ACTION

Community Inn Meal:

Connie Gordon & Peggy Roseman

Lawn Care: Terry Almond

Sexton: Laura Smith/Cobrin Icenhour Family

From the Pastor

*[The people of Israel] were gathered at Jerusalem
in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.*

2 Chronicles 15:10

Here we are in the third month of the summer of 2020 already. I am really sorry that it has taken so long to put this issue of the **Glad Tidings** newsletter together! Because of the delay, I have included some information for June, July, and August, and you may find some repetition on these pages. I can only tell you that during the past few months I have waited – and waited and waited – for firm information to share with you. And I have written pages of information which was outdated before it was even published. I honestly still do not have many answers to the questions on all of our minds, but I have attempted to answer a number of them. ***Check out the pages of information under the heading of Ask the Pastor for more information!***

We have been counting the days, weeks, and months, much as the people of Israel counted the months and years of their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, or times of exile in Babylon and Persia, or the reign of kings like Asa. As I write this, it has been five months since I arrived home on Friday, March 13 and became aware that things were about to change very quickly. We are now in the 10th week after Pentecost and the 22nd week of the COVID-19 pandemic closure which began during Lent. We are living through something that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will likely be telling stories about for generations to come. Foremost in my prayers is the hope that all will remain safe during this time, so that we will all be able to gather again for worship when it is safe to do so.

I am also conscious of a longer span of time – an anniversary that we marked quietly a couple of months ago - because Holy Trinity Sunday marked my tenth anniversary as pastor at Mt. Zion. This past decade has been a time filled with joys as well as sorrows. It has been my privilege to walk with you through difficult times as well as joyful ones: surgeries, illnesses, deaths, and funerals as well as births, baptisms, weddings, and other celebrations. I have visited with many of you in your homes or in hospital rooms. We have prayed together by phone, text, email, and in person. We have shared much; but nothing more than our faith in God.

An even longer span of time comes to mind when I think about the 125th anniversary of Mt. Zion which we have been observing this year. We have not been able to do all the things that were planned, so some events may spill over into 2021, but we have still been the church, praying and praising God, and **Giving and Serving** in our community.

While we have not gathered for worship services these past few months, we have still been on this journey of faith together. We have had opportunities to study and serve together. You have all been on my mind, in my heart, and in my prayers. If we have not talked as often as you would like, please know that you can call me anytime!

Walking together through this extraordinary time,

Pastor Ruth Ann

p.s. Since this newsletter has been delayed, it includes columns written by both Vicar Natalie and Vicar Mike!

We ARE the church even when we cannot gather AT the church!



To everyone who has provided portions of our shared worship services via audio and/or video, including members & friends of Mt. Zion, St. Stephen's, Mt. Gilead, and St. Martin:

June Almond, Ken Burleson, Tim Hahn, Diane Hill, Michael "Bucky" & Laurel Hinson, Tim Honeycutt, Ruby & Lily Manus, Charlotte Maness & Carmella Hedrick, John Lefler, Cynthia & Wayne Mills, Cindy Misenheimer, Robert & Emily Misenheimer, Joyce Osborne, Joy Pinto, Judy Shelton, Doreen Shoe, and Sandy Smith. Liturgy really IS the work of the people, even when we cannot gather!

To the Women of the ELCA who provided refreshments and gifts for the June birthday party at Trinity Place!

To everyone who provided bingo prizes for the residents and treats for the staff of Trinity Place.

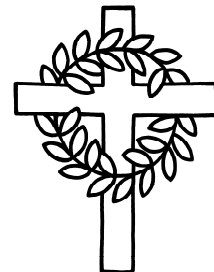
To June Almond who has spent the past several months researching and writing! Her book, **In the beginning... OUR CHURCH OUR TOWN OUR PEOPLE** is now available. She placed copies in many of the mailboxes at church. Additional copies are available on the table in the fellowship hall nearest the office. *Please let Pastor Ruth Ann know if you would like a copy mailed to you!*

To Terry Almond and Bonnie Smith who have been regularly serving as tellers to deposit offerings received in the mail.

We extend our Christian Sympathy:

to the family of Jean Parker, who died at home on May 23, and **to the family of Carrie Barbee**, who died on July 30.

Even as they grieve, may they always trust in the sure and certain promise of the resurrection to eternal life.



Congratulations to:

- + **Mary and Brad Cress on the birth of their son, Ty Fisher Cress**, on June 2. Ty weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces and was 20 and 1/2 inches long. We celebrate with them and their families as we rejoice in God's gift of new life!
- + **Chris & Joanna Palmer Wright** who were married on May 14 and **Mason and Mary Katherine Smith** who were married on June 13. We celebrate with them and their families as they begin their new lives together!

Congratulations to another 2020 graduate:

Lauren Luscuskie, daughter of Charles and Marian (Wagoner) Luscuskie, graduated from Florida State University Medical School on May 16. Lauren, who is also a Lieutenant in the US Navy, will complete her four-year medical residency assignment in anesthesiology at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, followed by a four-year naval assignment.



Do you know someone we should thank, congratulate, or offer our sympathy?
Please tell Chrissy Chandler or Pastor Ruth Ann, because we don't want to overlook anyone!

Council Highlights:

At the regular meeting on May 17 (via Zoom), the congregation council:

- + Approved the minutes from the April council meeting.
- + Received the April treasurer's report. There was a check from Thrivent which has been placed in the general fund, but may belong in the internship fund.
- + Marilyn Robertson report that our insurance does not cover loss of income due to events like the pandemic, as churches are expected to move to online giving. She also noted our insurance company states that we need to do due diligence to avoid any liability due to the pandemic.
- + Received the pastor's report, including joys and prayer concerns. There are few events planned at this time, but Midweek Prayer and bible study are ongoing.
- + Approved moving Midweek Prayer from Zoom to in person, outside in the picnic shelter.
- + Approved use of the picnic shelter for small group events held by the Stanly County Amateur Radio Club on June 13, 20, and 27.
- + Discussed preliminary ideas for re-gathering for worship.
- + Received a request from Rev. CeCee Mills for a joint council meeting with St. Stephen's on May 31, to be held on Zoom.
- + Approved donating the second quarter Social Ministry funds (\$400) to support Blessing Boxes, which is a project of Crossroads Connection and several local churches to provide food for families in lieu of Backpack Buddies at this time.
- + Received the vicar's report.

At a called meeting on May 31 (held on Zoom), the congregational councils of Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's shared an update with Rev. CeCee Mills and heard suggestions on checking in with members of the congregations and next steps in the yoking process.

At the regular meeting on June 14 (held on Zoom), the congregation council:

- + Approved the minutes from the May council meeting.
- + Received the April treasurer's report, noted some funds placed in the general fund last month were actually designated for the internship fund.
- + Received the pastor's report and vicar's report.
- + Discussed how to plan for re-gathering for worship; decided to mail out a survey to members; and appointed a task force (June Almond, Tyler Gordon, Cynthia Mills, and Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe) to review the results and develop a plan for re-gathering.
- + Discussed property issues, including a recent roof leak in the sanctuary and water accumulating in the furnace room.
- + Voted to table further discussion on yoking until we can gather in person for worship.

At the regular meeting on July 12 (held via Zoom), the congregation council:

- + Approved the minutes from the June council meeting.
- + Received the June treasurer's report, noting that income covered the expenses for the month, but we are still behind for the year.
- + Discussed results of the survey on re-gathering and approved the suggestions from task force. These guidelines will be mailed to members of the congregation.
- + Received the pastor's report, which included cares and concerns, and an update on internship.

Council Highlights (continued)

At a called meeting on July 26 (held in person in the picnic shelter, the congregational council:

- + Discussed the need for naming someone to sign checks while Marilyn Robertson is ill.
- + Named Cindy Misenheimer as assistant treasurer
- + Added Cindy and Cynthia Mills to the checking account as authorized signers.

At the regular meeting on August 9 (held in person in the fellowship hall), the congregational council:

- + Approved the minutes from the July council meetings.
- + There was no treasurer's report available for July.
- + Welcomed Vicar Mike Lang.
- + Received the pastor's report, which included cares and concerns, as well as some proposed schedule changes and upcoming events.

Financial Update for April:

Annual Budget	\$ 107,350.00
April Regular Giving	11,848.50
April Actual Expenses	<u>(6,260.20)</u>
Monthly Balance	\$ 5,588.30
YTD Balance	\$ (1,797.17)

Financial Update for May:

Annual Budget	\$ 107,350.00
May Regular Giving	4,694.98
May Actual Expenses	<u>(8,657.55)</u>
Monthly Balance	\$ (3,962.57)
YTD Balance	\$ (5,759.74)

Note: May expenses include our annual copier maintenance and an adjustment for giving recorded in April as regular giving which was designated for the 2020-2021 internship fund.

Financial Update for June:

Annual Budget	\$ 107,350.00
June Regular Giving	8,606.79
June Actual Expenses	<u>(8,190.92)</u>
Monthly Balance	\$ 415.87
YTD Balance	\$ (5,343.87)

NOTE: there is no financial update available for July at this time.

Please do continue to support the congregation financially during this time, either by giving electronically (visit our website www.mtzionrichfield.org and click on the **Give Now** button) or by mailing your offering to the church at P.O. Box 86, Richfield, NC 28137 (our tellers will be depositing those donations). Either way, your contributions will go into the church account and be recorded by our financial secretary.

Help Needed:

We have an ongoing need for disinfecting wipes which have been very difficult to locate in store and will be needed to clean the restrooms and other high contact surfaces throughout the church in the coming months. Thanks in advance to anyone who is able to purchase some and donate them to the church! *You can place them outside the pastor's office or in the kitchen.*

Manage Your Giving Online!

Secure online giving is available! Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet.

Our electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much needed donation consistency for our congregation. You will no longer need to write out checks or prepare envelopes. And, when you are not able to attend worship, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis.

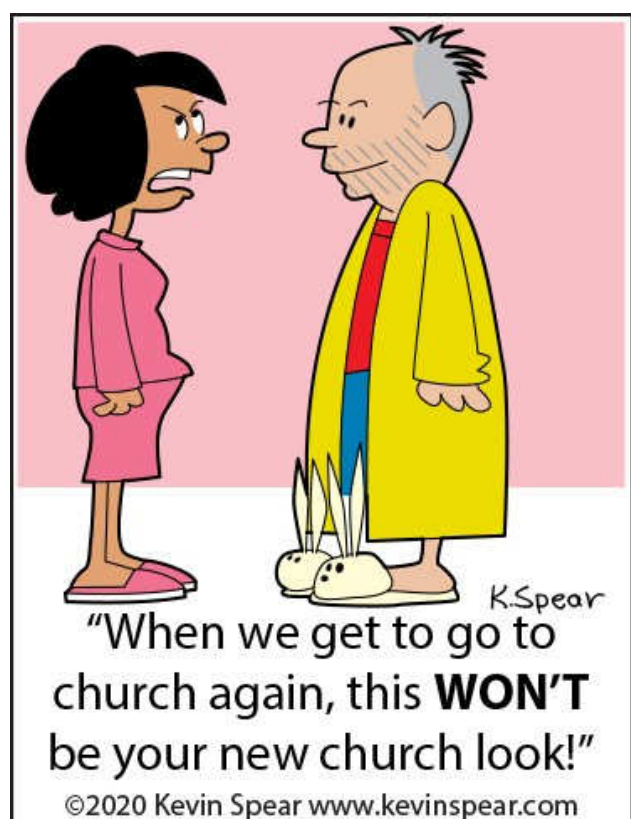
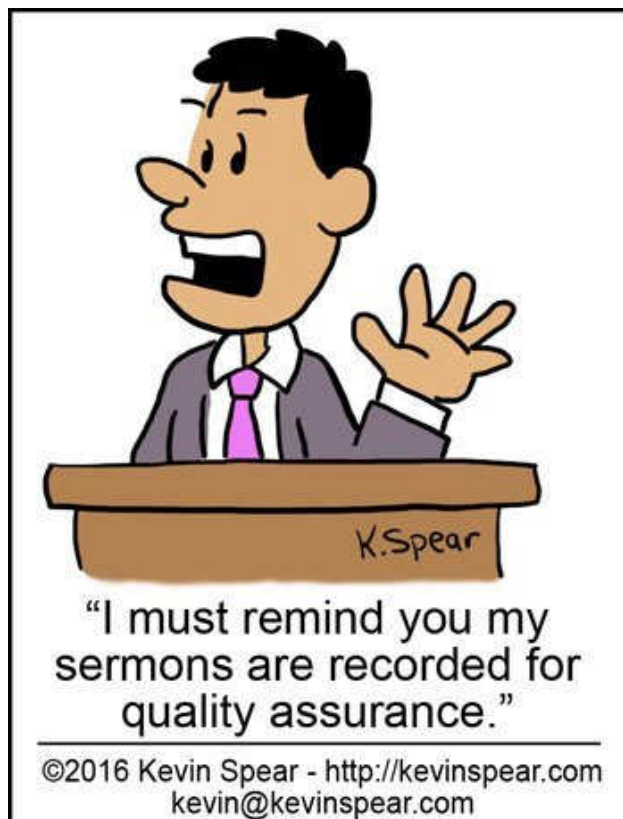
Visit www.mtzionrichfield.org and click on  to set up a one-time or recurring donation to our General Fund, Building Fund, Fifth Sunday Offering, or the Fisher Wilhelm Fund)

OR simply scan this QR code with your smart phone to set up an online payment.

NOTE: Please use your bank routing number and checking account number to create an ACH transaction and avoid additional charges to the church which result from credit or debit card transactions.



To contribute to other funds at this time, please mail your contribution to the church.



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FROM THE MAILBOX



Thank You Very Much

It was such a thoughtful gesture.

We thank you for your generosity. Everyone enjoyed the delicious snacks. We distributed them at all the nurses' stations and break areas. It made the day extra special.

Thanks again, Trinity Place Staff

Thank you sincerely for ***Sharing our Sorrow.***

Your kindness is deeply appreciated and will

Always be remembered by our family.

The family of Jean Parker

I would like to thank each of you that sent Jean a card, said a prayer for her, or offered kind words to me over the last year. Everyone's friendship, love, and support meant the world to her in her final days. She and Eddie thought so highly of Mt. Zion and so many of the members.

God bless you all,

Lauren Bolton

Resources:

NOTE: Most of these are available on the table in the fellowship hall nearest the pastor's office. ***Please let Pastor Ruth Ann know if you want to receive a copy by mail.***

- + Printed copies of the **2020 Yearbook.** *Please let Pastor Ruth Ann know if you need a link to the PDF.*
- + **Christ in Our Home** devotional booklets for July, August, and September
- + **Copies of June Almond's** book on the early members of Mt. Zion:
In the beginning... OUR CHURCH OUR TOWN OUR PEOPLE
- + **ELCA Prayer Ventures**, including prayer requests for each day of the month.
- + The NC Synod prepared a summer bible reading plan again this year. It's not too late to read **Moments with Matthew.** Find them at <https://nclutheran.org/?s=moments+with+matthew>

Weekly Events:

Join us on Zoom for Sunday school on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. This is an opportunity to visit with others and discuss the text from Romans for the day. (It's also a good way to stay in the habit of gathering on Sunday morning!)

Midweek Prayer will be moving indoors to the Fellowship Hall this week. We begin at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. There are some guidelines that we will need to follow for safety: everyone must wear a mask and maintain social distance. ***Please do not come if you are ill or have a temperature. Please do bring your own green Lutheran Book of Worship. You can also join us via Zoom.***

Join Sunday school and Midweek Prayer on Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7151403155>
You do not need to have a computer to join us! To join by phone, just *call* 1-646-558-8656, and enter Meeting ID: 715 140 3155. NOTE: While Zoom is free for everyone to access online and by phone, some phone companies may charge you for conference calls even when you have free long-distance service. Windstream DOES charge for the long-distance calls to access Zoom meetings.

Coming Events:

A series of small group gatherings (both in person and on Zoom) **are being planned for the coming weeks. We invite you to attend any of these for an opportunity to meet Vicar Mike:**

Tuesday, August 18	7:00 p.m.	on Zoom
Thursday, August 20	7:00 p.m.	at the Mt. Zion Picnic Shelter
Sunday, August 23	2:00 p.m.	at the St. Stephen's Picnic Shelter
Tuesday, August 25	7:00 p.m.	at the St. Stephen's Picnic Shelter
Thursday, August 27	7:00 p.m.	on Zoom
Sunday, August 30	2:00 p.m.	at the Mt. Zion Picnic Shelter

NOTE: *Please help protect the health of others: Do not come to any of the in-person sessions if you are sick; do wear a mask; and plan to social distance. Please let Pastor Ruth Ann know when you plan to attend, so that we can plan for the number in attendance.*

Due to the pandemic, there has been a change to our usual plans for the **Second Harvest/Stanly Community Christian Ministry Mobile Food Pantry** in North Stanly on Friday, August 21. This DRIVE THRU pantry, sponsored by Mattons Grove UMC, will be held at Richfield Park. *Please let Pastor Ruth Ann know if you can help us that morning.*

This year, beginning the first week in September, everyone is invited for a time of weekly prayer, study, and conversation based on the book **We Make the Road by Walking**, by Brian McLaren. The weekly reading in preparation is usually three short scripture passages and four pages in the book. Rev. Jennifer Orr from **Crossroads Connection** will also be joining us for this conversation. We are planning to meet every Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. We will initially meet on Zoom and may transition to in-person as pandemic conditions allow if that suits participants best. Copies of the book are available on Amazon in paperback (new and used) and on Kindle for about \$14.00. *Don't forget to use Amazon Smile when you order to benefit the congregation! Please let me know if you need me to order a copy for you or have other questions.*

Giving and Serving This Month:

During August we are collecting school supplies. You can drop off any donated items on the pew at the of the fellowship hall and we will deliver them to either Richfield Elementary and/or North Stanly Middle School. Specially requested items this year are: rigid pencil cases, large Ziploc bags (gallon size or bigger), and large backpacks.

God's Work. Our Hands Update

During this time of Safer at Home and social distancing, it can be more difficult to help others, even though the need is even greater.

Thanks to everyone who has helped several Crossroads Connection programs recently:

- + by donating books for **Reading Rangers – Life Changers**. These books will go to students at Richfield Elementary School
- + by donating money or food items for the **Blessing Boxes** distributed to local families in need this summer

There will be an increased need for weekend food for school children this fall – in part because the backpack program at Richfield Elementary ended abruptly. We plan to participate in **Backpack Buddies** for both Richfield Elementary and North Stanly Middle School this fall. If you would like to bring items for the backpack bags, you can bring them to church and place them in the fellowship hall. Here are the suggested items:

Boxes of 100% juice or shelf-stable milk
Fruit or pudding cups
Protein-containing items (Foil pack of tuna, meat/noodles, or soup cup, etc.)
Pack or cup of Ramen noodles
Non-sweet snack (crackers & cheese, peanut butter cups, etc.)
Nut snack packs
Individual breakfast cereal packs (instant oatmeal, individual cereal box, etc.)
Chewy granola bar

You may now bring items that we normally collect for a variety of ministries and leave them in the fellowship hall to be delivered. Or you may prefer to mail contributions directly to one or more of these ministries during this time:

Stanly Community Christian Ministries
P.O. Box 58
Albemarle, NC 28002

Homes of Hope/Community Inn
1816B E Main Street
Albemarle, NC 28001

Crisis Assistance Fund
P.O. Box 1432
Albemarle, NC 28002

Pregnancy Resource Center
P.O. Box 1091
Albemarle, NC 28002

The Mary & Martha Center
138 South Street
Albemarle, NC 28001

Esther House
P.O. Box 734
Albemarle, NC 28002



A question I continue to hear is:

When will we gather for worship again?

I wish that I could answer that question with certainty. What I can do is continue to share with you the guidance we have received from the North Carolina Synod Council and Bishop Tim Smith. At the present time, we have been asked not to gather more than 10 people indoors or 25 outdoors for worship or other events, while NC remains in Phase 2 (which has now been extended through at least September 11).

There are several opportunities to stay connected with others, to worship, and to study. **Weekly worship resources** are available in PDF and video formats via email, and in print by mail. These worship resources and Sunday school are shared by all four of the congregations that Vicar Mike, Pastor Ray, and I serve: St. Stephen's/Gold Hill, Mt. Gilead/Mt. Pleasant, and St. Martin/Concord, in addition to Mt. Zion. **Sunday school** and most other meetings are on Zoom, which is available both online and by phone. **Midweek Prayer** has moved from the picnic shelter to the fellowship hall and is also available on Zoom. Vicar Natalie led a weekly bible study, and a study on three of the ELCA's social statements on Thursday evenings before the end of her time with us. Vicar Mike will be available to meet folks at several events in August. We are planning special small group study opportunities both on Zoom and in person beginning in September.

Over the past several months, Vicar Natalie and I worked together on these resources and on staying in touch with everyone in our faith community. Now Vicar Mike has arrived and we will work together with my husband, Pastor Ray to continue preparing worship, leading Sunday School, staying in contact with members of the congregation and pray that each of you - and your families - will remain safe and well during this time. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns!

The NC Synod council has also provided guidance on what we should consider in order to re-gather as safely as possible. Several weeks ago, we mailed out a survey with some questions seeking input on returning to worship. Thanks to everyone who replied to the worship survey. It provided helpful information to our task force who met to discuss how we can safely re-gather when North Carolina moves from Phase 2 to Phase 3. A tally of the survey results is included in this newsletter and you should have already received a copy of our Re-Gathering Plan in the mail. There were many helpful and supportive comments. There were also some comments and questions that I would like to answer here.

There was concern was that the church building has been closed. Some are concerned about the care of the building and others expressed a desire to come and pray in the sanctuary, even if we cannot gather for worship. Thanks to those who have continued to care for the building – to those serving on the property committee to address specific concerns, and to the volunteers coming to clean the building and tend the lawn regularly!

During the Phase 1 Stay at Home Order, we did discourage people from entering the building, in order to comply with the state order and to keep from spreading the virus. When it was believed that the virus was easily spread by contact, we asked that anyone who entered sanitize the surfaces they touched (doorknobs, railings, etc.), and that is still a good practice in addition to wearing a mask. But at no time has the building been locked or off limits. Individuals or small groups of people come and go regularly to perform necessary tasks and simply to spend time in prayer.

There was also concern that people will get out of the habit of coming to worship. That is certainly a possibility, but I know that God is walking with us and holding us close during this time. Many have found this a great opportunity for personal prayer and devotions. I predict that when it is possible, we will re-gather for worship gratefully! In the meantime, we are continuing to provide worship, study, and prayer opportunities, both online via Zoom and video, as well as printed worship materials for those who do not have internet access. If you need more information about those, please let me know!

Finally, a question about internship was raised, specifically how we could begin another internship during this time, when our income so far this year is less than our expenses. The internship expenses are separate from our general fund. Members and friends of both Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's were invited to pledge above and beyond their regular giving toward the internship budget. We have received pledges from individuals totaling over \$16,000 in addition to the \$10,000 pledged by Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. We have also applied for grant funding from three other congregations which have mission endowment funds. Finally, the North Carolina Synod has assured us that this internship site is important to the synod and they will support it, so we should not let concerns over finances hold us back. In short, we are relying on the generosity of many people to help us provide this learning opportunity to Vicar Mike Lang this year, for the benefit of the wider church.

I would also remind you that we are frequently behind on giving versus expenses at this point in the year, because our largest annual bill, for our insurance, is paid in March. Many times we spend money from savings to pay that bill and then catch back up in coming months. This year is unique, because while we are not gathering for worship, many of our normal expenses have not been reduced. Thanks to everyone who has continued to give electronically or mailed in their donations!

NOTE: If you made a pledge toward internship expenses, now would be a great time to send in your contribution (or at least a portion of the amount you pledged).

Finally, I want to share this lament written recently by the Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber as a heartfelt prayer and a reminder that we are not alone in this situation:

I do not know when we can gather together again in worship, Lord. So, for now I just ask that:

*When I sing along in my kitchen to each song on Stevie Wonder's **Songs in The Key of Life** album, that it be counted as praise.*

And that when I read the news and my heart tightens in my chest, may it be counted as a Kyrie.

And that when my eyes brighten in a smile behind my mask as I thank the cashier may it be counted as passing the peace.

And that when I water my plants and wash my dishes and take a shower may it be counted as remembering my baptism.

And that when the tears come and my shoulders shake and my breathing falters, may it be counted as prayer.

And that when I stumble upon a Tabitha Brown video and hear her grace and love of you may it be counted as a hearing a homily.

And that as I sit at that table in my home, and eat one more homemade meal, slowly, joyfully, with nothing else demanding my time or attention, may it be counted as communion. Amen.

Please share your questions with Pastor Ruth Ann so they can be answered here!

Worship Survey Results

During this time I/my family have been (check all that apply):

- 6 Using worship resources received by mail
- 6 Using PDF worship resources
- 21 Watching our worship videos
- 8 Watching synod worship services
- 19 Watching other online or televised worship services
- Other: _____

When the NC Synod and state government lift the guidance against gatherings, which best describes your attitude toward returning to a worship service at church?

- 7 Our family will return at first opportunity with no reservations
- 12 Our family will return at first opportunity but with some concerns and precautions
- 2 I will wait several additional weeks before I attend
- 4 I will wait even longer before I attend
- Other: _____

What precautions, if any, do you expect our church to take for worship gatherings?

- 6 Limit handouts of any kind (bulletins, newsletters, inserts, etc.).
- 19 Practice social distancing in the sanctuary.
- 14 Prop doors open so people do not have to touch handles
- 5 Set up one-way foot traffic entering and exiting the building.
- 19 Provide hand sanitizer stations.
- 18 Discourage passing of the peace.
- 10 Require everyone to wear masks
- 7 Require worship leaders and assistants to wear gloves
- Other: _____

When the NC Synod and state government lift the guidance against gatherings, which of the following would you prefer for our church?

- 11 Resume in person worship service at our church immediately?
- 1 Continue on-line services only?
- 3 Begin a drive-in parking lot service?
- 18 Offer both in-person and on-line worship services?
- Other: _____

29	Surveys Returned
45	Surveys Sent
64%	% Returned

*Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

– Joshua 1:9

Have you wondered, “What has Vicar Natalie been up to in the pandemic?” Don’t worry, ministry is still happening even though we are apart. Honestly, I feel like I have had two internships. The first one was the first six months when we did everything “normally,” and the second one was the next six months when everything went virtual. I am not glad we are in a global pandemic, but I am thankful for all that I am learning.

I have grown in my ability to teach over this pandemic time. When stay-at-home orders were put in place, Pastor Ruth Ann and I decided to switch from my bible study on Sabbath to a bible study on the Book of Numbers and the Book of Joshua. Why would we do that, you ask?

The Hebrew title for the Book of Numbers is **בְּמִדְבָּר** *Bemidbar*, which translates as *In the Wilderness*. In English, we call this book “Numbers” because of the two censuses that are taken, one in chapter 1, and another in chapter 26.

During this study, we caught on to a pattern: the people would cry out, God would help them, the people would decide that what was provided was not good enough for them and they would complain, and this happened over and over to the people of the first generation (in the first census). We would say, “Bless their hearts,” because God *was* providing for them what they needed. We journeyed with the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness and looped back and finally made it to the Promised Land.

I identified with the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness because the church was wandering through the virtual wilderness. In the beginning, churches were wondering, if we can’t gather, what will we do? As people began to meet online through video meetings, the church did the same. Theologian Phyllis Tickle made the argument that about every 500 years the church has a reformation of some sort. As you may remember, we just celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. I think this pandemic spurred the church into a virtual reformation.

We are connecting the members of the Body of Christ in ways we have never seen before! I realize change can be daunting, but as we wander through our wilderness, God goes with us, too. Sometimes we have to be brave as we follow the Spirit. We would close each Bible study session with prayer, and I’d like to close by sharing the Prayer of Good Courage:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good
courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your
love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Christ’s love,
Vicar Natalie

From the Vicar

July 2020

Let all that you do be done in love.

~ 1 Corinthians 16:14

I have really enjoyed being with y'all - both at Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's - this year. What a year it has been! We have shared joys together and concerns together. We entered the pandemic together.

The hardest part of internship, to me, is saying goodbye. I have already told some of you that, as an intern learning to be a pastor one day, I must stay away and not communicate with y'all until about a year from my internship so that y'all can get to know Vicar Mike Lang. Please know this is a practice in good boundaries, and I still care very much for all of you. I miss y'all already.

Luckily, though, feel free to follow me on Facebook or Instagram (if you are over 18, that is; sorry kids). Don't worry, an intern does not forget their internship congregation(s)! As I experience other "firsts" in ministry, I have the memories that we share to look back on. This is not goodbye forever. I'll see y'all at future homecomings, and both congregations will be invited to my ordination when the day comes. In the meantime, let all that you do be done in love.

Blessings and peace to all of you.

In Christ's love,

Vicar Natalie

Address updates for 2020 Yearbook:

Please add this address for Mason & Mary Katherine Smith:

2001 Sapphire Road
Rocky Mount NC 27804

Please add this contact information for Vicar Mike and his mother Edith:

Vicar Mike Lang	Phone: 252/916-1929
P.O. Box 182	4981 St. Stephen's Church Road
Richfield, NC 28137	Gold Hill, NC 28071

Office Hours

Pastor Ruth Ann and Vicar Mike are NOT holding regular office hours at this time, but are readily available. You can reach Pastor Ruth Ann on her cell phone: 704/322-0660 or by e-mail: pastor@mtzionrichfield.org or Vicar Mike on his cell phone: 252/916-1929 or by e-mail: vicar@mtzionrichfield.org.

From the Vicar

August 2020

*Late in the spring, internship assignments for 2020-2021 were announced. **Mike Lang, a NC Synod candidate for ministry**, was assigned to Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's for the coming year. Vicar Mike arrived in early August to serve his internship year with us. Here is a letter of introduction from Vicar Mike:*

Hello everyone. My name is Mike Lang. I look forward to seeing you in August. I was born in Raleigh, NC and grew up on a tobacco farm 15 miles south of Greenville, NC. I have an older sister and brother, five nieces, a nephew, two great-nieces, and a great-nephew. My pastimes include traveling, fishing, and reading. Meeting new and old friends along the way is one of the great joys in my life.

Prior to starting the official seminary process, I worked in a couple different industries. I first worked in water and sewer construction all over Eastern NC. After I got older and less flexible, I watched golfers and alligators as I worked on golf courses in Brunswick County.

As a member of St. Luke's, Ocean Isle Beach, I felt called to ministry. In order to follow this call, I first needed to complete my bachelor's degree, graduating from the University of Mount Olive in August 2016.

During the first two years of seminary at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC, my teaching parish was St. Matthew's, Lexington, SC. In my senior year, I was appointed by the SC Synod to serve as the stated supply pastor at Our Shepherd in Darlington, SC. I completed my Master of Divinity degree in May 2020.

I look forward to serving as vicar in your congregation. Please introduce yourself when we meet. I will try to learn names as quickly as possible. Feel free to correct me if I get your name wrong. Names are important.

Thank you for inviting me to walk this journey with you.

May God bless you and watch over you,

Vicar Mike Lang

Dear Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's,

Thank you very much for the help that you gave in helping my mother and me unload the U-Haul van. It went amazing smooth and graceful. We also thank you for the food stuffs and paper goods that you provided. The dinner that awaited us was delicious. You have greatly helped us get comfortable in our new home.

Thank you for the warm welcome.

Vicar Mike Lang and mom Edith Lang



August 2020

Mission: Connecting neighbors and building compassionate community through education, food, healthy living, and relationships.

Vision: Crossroads Connection will share God's love through a strong network of faith, business, education, and neighborhood partners. This network will rely on compassion, community assets, and authenticity as we watch for unexpected transformations.



Blessing Boxes

Thank you to the network of churches, businesses, and neighbors who worked together to create 31 Blessing Boxes. Through your support of donations, prayers, and time, we have served 31 families with food each month beginning in April. You are building compassionate community one Blessing Box at a time.

Backpack Buddies

As we move into the new school year we will once again fill backpacks with weekend food items for children in need. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, please email crossroadsconnection.nc@gmail.com. Rev. Jennifer Orr will connect you to Backpack Buddies coordinators.

THIS MONTH'S
EDUCATION STORIES

Reading Rangers Goal Has Been Met!

Thank you to everyone who donated to the book drive! We collected enough books, or monetary donations, that each Richfield Elementary student will have their own book waiting as they come on the first day of school. We are building compassionate community one book at a time..



Coming Soon: Reading Corner

Watch the Crossroads Connection Facebook page for *Reading Corner*, a story time for children of all ages. Community members and partners will read short stories, or chapters of longer stories. If you are interested in being a reader, please email crossroadsconnection.nc@gmail.com.

THIS MONTH'S
FOOD STORIES

HOW ARE THESE
CONNECTED?
**FOOD,
SPIRITUALITY,
COMMUNITY**



Food and Faith: How They Fit Together

Do you ever think about how food reflects our faith? Or how faith might impact our food choices? At the end of August, we will begin an 8-week conversation surrounding food and our faith. If you are curious or would like to participate, please email crossroadsconnection.nc@gmail.com. The day/time of the conversations will be decided upon by those who will participate in the discussion. We



Email:
crossroadsconnection.nc@gmail.com
to join an 8-week
conversation beginning
in September.
Day/time TBD by
participants and will be
held on Zoom.



are connecting neighbors one conversation at a time.

Good Neighbor Pantries

Please consider picking up extras of these items to leave as a blessing to others: TP, paper towels, bottled water, cereal, canned meat, canned veggies, canned fruit, instant potatoes, peanut butter.

Good Neighbor Pantry locations:

Richfield UMC: 204 North Main Street, Richfield

Bethany UMC: 2411 US-52, Albemarle

Salem UMC: 20987 NC-73, Albemarle



If you are unable to drop items off at one of the Good Neighbor Pantries, you can also leave items in the lobby of First Bank, one of our community business partners. We are building compassionate community one meal at a time.

THIS MONTH'S HEALTHY LIVING STORIES

JOIN US VIRTUALLY TO LEARN ABOUT

TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

Speaker: Courtney Swain, MS
Community Health Educator
Butterfly House Children's Advocacy Center
Atrium Health-Stanly

AUGUST 18TH AT 7:00 PM

Email verma@preventionservices.org or
message us on the Stanly County Project
Lazarus FB page to get the link
to the meeting invite

Trauma and Resilience

The Stanly County Health Department provides opportunities to learn via Zoom. These learning opportunities are open to everyone.

The next opportunity is August 18th at 7pm with guest speaker Courtney Swain who will discuss trauma and resilience. Please register by emailing verma@preventionservices.org to receive the Zoom link.

We are building a compassionate community one healthy choice at a time.

Medication Take-Back

On July 12, 10 cars drove through the first ever medication take-back in Stanly county. The Misenhiemer Police graciously gave their time to work the event. Chief McGinnis also lent a popup tent to be used to keep everyone cool. Pfeiffer University loaned tables and chairs as well as space right on HWY 52 in front of Stokes Student Center. We are grateful to our community partners for making this event a success. Chief McGinnis informed us, "The weight of the surrendered pills was 7,763 grams or 17 lbs 1.832 oz."



THIS MONTH'S RELATIONSHIP STORIES



Deepening Our Prayer

Do you need a moment to stop and get centered in the midst of a busy week? Centering or silence is an ancient practice of connecting with God. Jesus himself took time to stop, be still, and be silent with God. Centering prayer is a great practice to reclaim during all the uncertainty around today.

Every **Thursday at 9 am on Zoom**, you are invited to join a 30 minute time of silent reflection and silent prayer led by Anne Lipe. This time is open to everyone, first-timers or those who have practiced centering prayer for many years. All are welcomed. Join us as we connect neighbors and build compassionate community one relationship at a time.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89007795905>

THIS MONTH'S
PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Addison's Blessing Bags

Addison, an elementary student in our area, serves our neighbors by packing bags with hygiene products. These Blessing Bags are placed in the Good Neighbor Pantries. She packs the bags and includes Scripture. Addison would like our help on her mission by collecting hotel or full-size hygiene products. Items can be dropped off at Salem UMC on HWY 73 or by counting the Crossroads Coordinator to arrange drop off. Addison would love to include these items: soap/body wash, shampoo, conditioner, alcohol-free mouthwash, toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs, personal wipes, deodorant, body lotion, quart ziploc bags.

Ongoing support of Crossroads Connection

As a part of the Body of Christ, here is how you can support this ministry:

1. Pray Psalm 145 every Thursday at 1:45 pm.
2. Listen to your neighbors. Share their dreams and ideas with the Coordinator.
3. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for up to date information on community events, opportunities to serve our community, and ways to connect with neighbors.
4. Share your talents, passions, and financial gifts. Crossroads Connection needs your support to grow. To volunteer, email our Coordinator. To give financially, please make checks payable to "Uwharrie District, WNCC" with "Crossroads Connection" written in the memo line. Mail to Uwharrie District, P.O. Box 1307, Albemarle, NC 28001. Please include a note if you would like to designate your gift to a specific project.

Together, we are connecting neighbors and building compassionate community.

Grace and Peace,

The Crossroads Connection Board of Directors



P.O. Box 5.
Richfield, NC 28137
crossroadsconnection.nc@gmail.com