

Pastor's Corner
November 2020

**Life as a Pastor in a
Pandemic**

Steve Green is now an "old" contemporary Christian singer/songwriter. Kim and I used one of his songs as a part of our wedding in 1989 (We'll Build a Household of Faith). I have found myself singing the lyrics to one of his songs, "Find Us Faithful" throughout the pandemic. It also fits the theme of All Saints Sunday which we celebrated November 1. I want to share the Refrain with you:

*O may all who come
behind us find us
faithful, May the fire
of our devotion light
their way.*

*May the footprints
that we leave, lead
them to believe, and
the lives we live,
inspire them to
obey.*

*O may all who come
behind us find us
faithful.*

Lake Toxaway UMC

November 2020 Newsletter



Behind the scenes with Covid-19

Covid-19 has completely disrupted our traditional Sunday morning worship followed by fellowship in the Fellowship Hall where we visit and catch up with new and old friends over coffee.

Our services went from an overflowing attendance to a maximum of 10 persons while at the same time, we began a journey of livestreaming services to YouTube. Our new norm included air hugs, elbow bumps and masks; and weekly bulletins handed out via e-mail. We have been determined not to let Covid-19 stop us from outreaching to each other and to our community. Our creative concept of home church has added a whole new dimension to small group worship while maintaining social distancing.

This has been my prayer throughout the pandemic and continues to be my prayer. I am thankful for the ways in which God has brought persons to guide us in this unprecedented time in being the Church. I cannot express adequately how the Holy Spirit has used laity to help in moving to a livestream service, a different bulletin format, receiving tithes and offerings, home churches and many other things. I know this is evidence of God's work in calling us to be The Church in a time when we cannot meet in our building.

I never imagined serving in ministry in such a time as this, but I have learned so much about being faithful in a challenging time! I pray we will continue in faithfulness so that those who come behind us will find us faithful!

Marcus

Bringing us the Sunday Worship Service Livestream with Andy Harvill

What does a small church do when worship services as we know them are banned due to a pandemic? How do you keep your congregation together? You turn to your volunteers and you find that there are those that have been working with the technology for years. It turns out that before the pandemic, we did broadcast our services to YouTube but there were very few views and, on some Sundays, the services did not get posted at all. Andy Harvill was already working on these issues back in January before any of us had ever heard of Covid-19.

Andy is a graduate engineer from Georgia Tech and his skills had driven him to build an impressive audio-visual system for our small church. Andy knew that if we were going to be dependent on a virtual worship service to keep us worshipping together, then the virtual service had to be better, more consistent and more professional while maintaining the traditional worship service we all valued. His goal was to take LTUMC to live streaming the service so everyone could view and participate in worship just as it was happening. Although the effort took a number of weeks and a lot of back up DVD's just in case something went wrong, Andy made it happen. We now have a professionally produced live service that will continue to be produced long after the end of this pandemic. Seasonal and homebound congregants will have a viable and reliable option to worship together along with the entire congregation at LTUMC.

When Andy was asked what the total volunteer experience was like, he replied "it was way more than just implementing technology and pushing buttons at the right time, this effort made me get deeply involved with the worship service itself". And when asked about spiritual growth during this time, he said "Oh yes, that went right along with it!"

Finance Committee Update

Current YTD Outreach to Contributions Ratio is 78%!

Lake Toxaway UMC Sept YTD P&L				
INCOME		BUDGET		Over (Under)
		Sep YTD	Actual	
	General Contributions	\$199,856	\$118,304	(\$81,552)
	Other Income	\$25,144	\$28,045	\$2,901
	Total Income	\$225,000	\$146,349	(\$78,651)
EXPENSES				
	Staffing Expenses	\$87,296	\$78,151	(\$9,145)
	Operating Expenses	\$44,662	\$49,677	\$5,015
	Gifting/Outreach	\$93,038	\$91,630	(\$1,408)
	Total Expenses	\$224,996	\$219,458	(\$5,538)
NET INCOME		\$4	(\$73,109)	(\$73,113)

We give thanks for our 2020-2021 Officers & Leaders of LTUMC

Chair of Amin. Council

Tom Blackstock
(2021/second year)

Nominating

Marcus Dodson, Chair
Lay Leaders (Barb Kline
and Paula Markert)
Judy Brubaker (2021)
Kay Blackstock (2021)

Secretary

Beth Holimon
(2021/second year)

Lay Leaders

Paula Markert
(2021/second year)
Barbara Kline
(2021/third year)

Treasurer:

Don McSwain
(2021/first year)

Asst. Treasurer

Andy Harvill (2021/first
year)

Board Members at Large

Judy Lefler (2022)
Doug Bailey (2022)
Chip Brown (2022)
John McColskey (2022)

Our LTUMC financial position is manageable considering all of the unexpected circumstances of this year. Our Total Income is below the budget by \$79,000 YTD, overwhelmingly driven by General Contributions being down by \$82,000 YTD. General Contributions are down due to the disruption of regular church services throughout most of this year.

Total Expenses are under budget by \$6,000 YTD. Staffing expenses are favorable to budget while operating expenses were unfavorable to budget due to a new HVAC system for the sanctuary.

We are very proud that we have maintained our giving plan as shown in Total Gifting/Outreach line totaling almost \$92,000 YTD. This brings our YTD Gifting/Outreach to General Contributions ratio (sometimes called the 50/50 goal) to 78% YTD which is well above our long-range target of 50% and is the highest ratio of outreach to contributions for LTUMC in recent memory. By the end of the year LTUMC will have Total Gifting/Outreach totaling \$124,000. We are blessed to be a blessing for the larger community through outreach, particularly in this year.

In summary, we do have a Net Income shortfall of \$73,000 but we are hopeful and prayerful the deficit will be reduced substantially in the 4th quarter which traditionally is a most significant quarter for gifting. In any event, LTUMC is blessed with reserves that will be more than adequate to handle a shortfall of this magnitude.

An inside view from Charlie Steele our organist

Along with Pastor Marcus Dodson, Administrator Saunders Grommesh, and key volunteers from our congregation, Organist Charlie Steele eagerly stretches out to allow the Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church to provide worship service availability to all during the daunting restrictions of COVID-19.

Charlie came to our staff in July after filling in on an interim basis shortly after the sad loss of our beloved Ruth Cech. He has outstanding credentials to guide our worship music, including Doctor of Musical Arts Degree at the University of Kentucky, and 34 years guiding the worship music at several local churches.

Charlie retired with fanfare from Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian in July of 2018, but his love of music and his Christian devotion have led him to come back to his gift of uplifting worship music.

Finance Committee

Andy Harvill/Chair
(2023)

Chip Brown (2022)

Don Guffey (2022)

Staff-Parish

John Lefler/Chair
(2021)

Becky Shoemaker
(2021)

Paula Markert (2021)

George Bagwell (2023)

Trustees

John Holbrook
(2021/Chair)/Extension
of one additional year

Don Guffey

(2021)/Extension of
one additional year

Carole Guffey

(2021)/Extension of
one additional year

Barb Kline (2021)

Sue Hester (2021)

Bob Fussell (2021)

Outreach

Fred Markert
(Chair/2023)

Char Holbrook (2021)

Cathie Fussell (2022)

Kay Blackstock (2022)

Gerrie McSwain (2023)

He has worked closely with Pastor Marcus Dodson to prepare and perform music coordinated to scripture and sermons. During the pandemic, Charlie has gone the extra mile for the church, including providing accompanying musicians, as well as preparing, planning, and performing in multiple services to allow video recording and additional Sunday services to adhere to directed pandemic restrictions.

When asked what it is like to provide his service during the pandemic, Charlie answers with typical understated humility: "My function during the time of Covid-19 was not nearly as demanding for me as for the pastor and leadership of the church. Being retired, I have flexibility to the times that worship takes place. I have been accustomed to multiple Sunday services during my long career in church music, but video recording of the services does put a little more pressure on the performance.

Perhaps the biggest adjustment has been that prior to Covid-19, the congregational hymn singing at LTUMC had been rather strong; the change in attendance to small groups has affected that somewhat. However, even the small groups do their best to sing robustly. I am glad that circumstances permit me to 'roll with the punches' as the church navigates through this time."

We thank Charlie Steele for his ongoing devotion to our church community.

From behind the mask by Saunders our church administrator

After a few ZOOM interviews (It was the first time being interviewed remotely) I joined LTUMC in the middle of April under the new Covid-19 quarantine guidelines where overnight we moved to washing our hands more frequently, wearing masks, air hugging and socially distancing ourselves. The distancing part has been the hardest adjustment for me as I am a social person and a hugger. I felt thrown into a bubble where I quickly noticed little to no eye contact in the grocery store and everyone moving about with fear and trepidation to speak to one another. I did NOT find this to be the case with anyone from LTUMC. Although I have been greeted with everyone wearing masks, ***I am welcomed with smiles and true hospitality.*** I can tell when someone smiles even behind a mask; I look at the eyes as they light up. I have enjoyed getting to know and serve you the LTUMC family behind the mask but can't wait to see smiles again.

We have experienced a lot of instant change through social distancing interactions via Zoom meetings, phone calls, texts and e-mails. I am excited by the creativity and innovation I have observed among the committees, staff and the Council of LTUMC. The email

Worship Committee

Marcus Dodson (Pastor)

Barbara Kline

(Chair/2022)

Gerrie McSwain (2022)

Mary Collins (2021)

Charlie Steele (ex-officio member)

The following offices and committees fall outside the Book of Discipline but have been determined to be helpful to the function of Lake Toxaway UMC's ministry.

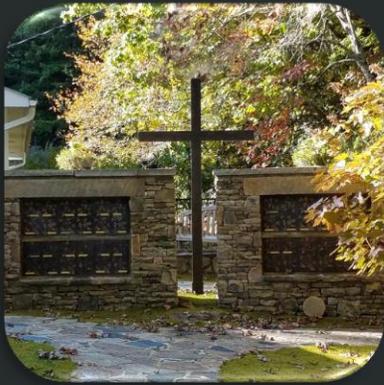
Hospitality

Leslie Brown, Chair

Don and Carole Guffey

Memorial Garden

Fred Markert, Chair



list allowing for push communications, the live stream church services, the periodic newsletters and the home church opportunity, at two homes over the summer, are all very exciting and neat ways to maintain our fellowship and keep everyone more informed of the activities of the church.

Covid-19 is serious and scary yet I have witnessed everyone adapting and pulling together to do what they can: call a friend who cannot get out, write a note, send an e-mail or text to one another. We are learning new and different ways to safely reach out to each other. There are many moving parts to LTUMC and all our committees and the committee chairs are working hard to ensure things are running as well as possible. I am honored and blessed to be here to help LTUMC grow our outreach in our community and follow the Wesleyan Way of Living: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.

Thank you for your hospitality, support and love,
Saunders Grommesh, LTUMC Church Administrator

WHAT HAS SUSTAINED A SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT THROUGH COVID-19?

Calee Lance, one of our scholarship recipients, appreciates all that our LTUMC family does for her and shares her thoughts about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected her. "School during COVID-19 has been interesting to say the least, but I have made it this far and have stayed safe." Calee, a Criminal Justice major, states in the beginning students were abruptly sent home and she was separated from her best friend with whom she generally spends much time and is really close. Constant contact, whether through text messages or video calls, kept them strong and grounded during their time of separation. The most difficult thing for this junior at Gardner Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC was being separated from her friends and having to finish her spring semester online at home. She states, "I feel many things have sustained me during this difficult time: my friends, family, and God. Grounded by my faith in God, I knew that things would be okay. I spent a lot of time with family, and I grew to realize what really matters to me in life and what is really important. My family and friends are what's most important to me, not the material things that many were deprived of."

As the fall semester is soon ending, Calee finds her family and friends keep her going as she constantly gets daily reminders of what her goals are and encouragement to keep going. She recently said, "Student life has changed since COVID-19: some classes have been online, some are hybrid, and others are seated. This semester



I have three online courses and one that is seated but was originally hybrid. It has been nice to be back on campus with my friends and be able to have a somewhat normal college life. I have been extra cautious and have managed to stay safe thus far. The things I miss most are in regards to living a somewhat normal life where we don't have to wear masks everywhere, can hug the people we love, not living in fear, etc. I long for the day I can hug people again because I am a bit of a hugger."

After Calee graduates in May '22 with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice, she plans to work for the SBI and later transfer to a federal agency. Calee is very grateful for our continuous prayers, mentoring from Cathie Fussell as well as our financial support.



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
 P O Box 83
 Lake Toxaway, NC 28747