



First United Methodist Church

North Wilkesboro

March 22, 2020

Greetings in the Name of Our Risen Saviour!

Social distancing. Just two weeks ago, we had never heard of the term and today, it's part of our everyday vernacular...and it hurts. I don't know about you, but I miss you! Unfortunately, we're just starting this practice of social distancing.

Last week, the towns of North Wilkesboro and Wilkesboro, and Wilkes County, issued an order that prohibits the gathering of fifty or more people until April 30th and churches are not exempt. While we hope and pray that they will be able to rescind this action beforehand, the sober truth is that it may have to be extended or become even stricter.

So, where does that leave the church? Well, brothers and sisters, it leaves us right where history shows us that the church has always prospered. It leaves us right where God and God's people have been, are, and will be...living in a strange world. I am reminded of a hymn in our United Methodist repertoire, *We Are the Church*, especially the first line:

The church is not a building;
the church is not a steeple;
the church is not a resting place;
the church is a people.

Yes, the church has a different face, a different look, a different feel right now, but **We Are Still the Church!** We still have our mission – to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World; that has not changed. The only thing that has changed is how we live out this mission.

I am inviting you to take this opportunity to recommit to your vows of membership at First. I believe as you prayerfully remember these tenets, you'll feel your heart strangely warmed as you envision yourself living them out in a world that desperately needs to experience the peace and joy of Jesus Christ. Let us consider them once again:

PRAYER

- The season of Lent is a time of quiet, spiritual reflection. With an unexpected turn of events, we have been graciously afforded time to do just that. Let us take the time to prayerfully ask, "How is it with my soul?"
- Begin building on your spiritual discipline of prayer. Grow in your faith by praying not for your will to be done, but earnestly seeking God's will and how you can be a part of God's plan of restoration.
- During this season, I encourage you to spend time in prayer for our elected leaders; local, state, and national. All of these persons are in a very difficult situation and need our prayers for God's wisdom and strength to be upon them. Also, prayer for strength and wisdom for those who are charged with developing the treatment of the coronavirus and especially for all those in working in healthcare services: doctors, nurses, technicians, emergency responders, and the new national heroes: the manufacturers, warehouse workers, truckers, stockers, cashiers, and so forth who are working to greater extent to ensure that we have the goods we need to live. May God richly bless them as they take on a new role as protectors.

PRESENCE

- While we cannot be physically present with one another, we are blessed to live in a time unlike any time before where we can come together via Internet for meetings, group study, and even worship. Please embrace these following opportunities:
 - ***Virtual Worship***
 - Facebook Live – each Sunday at 8:45 and 11:00 on our Facebook page. You'll also be able to find these services stored in Facebook's video archive.
 - YouTube – For those of you who do not have a Facebook account, you can also find these services stored on our YouTube channel. You do not need to sign up for anything for this service. Follow the link on our church webpage firstnw.org for a link to our YouTube channel.
 - CDs – For those who do not use a computer or the Internet, we still are able to provide CD recordings of the services for you to use. Please call the church office to request this resource.

- **Youth** – The Youth are virtually meeting by Zoom. Please contact Laura Brooks to learn how to connect.
- **Wacky Wednesday** – Also utilizing Zoom to be able to connect our children in Christian Education
- **Weekly Bible Study** – We have started a study of Adam Hamilton’s *24 Hours That Changed the World* using Zoom each Wednesday at 10:00am and 6:30pm. This study will take us through April.
- **New and Creative Ways of Engagement** – We encourage you to let your imagination go wild and figure out ways to connect together. Maybe a virtual Sunday School class or virtual small group gathering. We will be happy to help you get your ideas started.

GIFTS

- God has blessed each of us with the opportunity to give of ourselves through our tithes and offerings. Although we may not be gathering together in person, the church still has the same financial obligations and we pray that you will continue you faithful giving. Here are some ways that allow you to do so:
 - **Automatic Bank Draft** – have your tithes and offering debited directly from your bank account. Contact Marie Chambers, Financial Assistant, to help you get this service established.
 - **Bill Pay** – Check with your local bank to see if they offer Bill Pay as a provided service. If so, add First UMC as a payee. Use this mailing address: PO Box 1145, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
 - **Mail** – We still receive mail each workday. You may mail your check to this address: First United Methodist Church, PO Box 1145, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
 - **Bring It In** – While the church is closed, our office is still operating as usual, though behind locked doors. You may come by during our operating hours, Monday – Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm
 - **Online Giving** – Consider giving online by going to our webpage, firstnw.org, and find the link on the homepage that will direct you to a page that allows you to securely give online
 - **QR Scan** – Using your mobile device, scan this QR code to direct you to a secure site that will allow you to give your tithe and offering



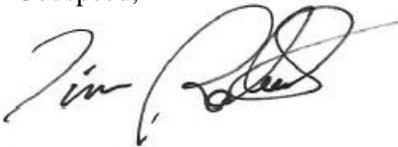
SERVICE

- We are excited to introduce a couple of new ministries which we are rolling out this week to help serve our community and keep us connected
 - o **Holy Rollers** – This ministry is directed to helping those who are unable to or anxious about shopping for groceries and/or pharmaceuticals. Our ministry will match up people in need with volunteers who will go to pick up items/groceries needed and deliver them to the homebound door. Here are two groups needed:
 - Drivers (Holy Rollers) – We are looking for persons who will give of their time to pick up and deliver the groceries and pharmaceutical items.
 - Persons Homebound – We need the names and contact information of people who can use this ministry service! These folks can be members or any of our neighbors in the community.
 - Please contact Brad Shinaman to volunteer to be a Holy Roller or to register yourself or someone else as a recipient.
 - o **Phone Tribe** – We want to make sure that we are still connected. We are creating tribes, about ten families or so, which Tribe Leaders will routinely contact, just check up and remind each other that we are loved and connected. We need Tribe Leaders who will commit to calling or contacting your tribe families on a regular basis. This is a great ministry for those who are looking to use some spare time to make others feel remembered. Contact Brad Shinaman to get more information about how you can make this your ministry.

WITNESS

- Finally, my brothers and sisters, Be People of Hope. Of all the people who are voicing their take on what is happening in the world today, voices of hope are the ones that need to be heard most. We are so loved by a God who has promised always to be with us, even in the darkest of moments. Let the love of Jesus Christ shine brightly through you. Speak always words of Love and Hope.

Godspeed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Pastor Tim