



Thus Far...

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12 (NIV)

Spring 2020

When Pastor Vernon J. Charlesworth was Headmaster of the Stockwell Orphanage in London in the 1880s, he wrote a hymn that still speaks to us, especially in the current crisis:

The Lord's our Rock, in Him we hide
A shelter in the time of storm;
Secure whatever ill betide
A shelter in the time of storm.
O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,
A weary land, a weary land;
O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land
A shelter in the time of storm.

While we are "sheltering in place," we remember that Jesus is our shelter. Whatever happens to us, or to our families, or to our community surrounding us, we are secure with Him.

This current crisis will pass. We don't know when. We don't know the toll it will take. We do know that heartbreak, uncertainty and fear are a part of it, and will be through its aftermath.

But we also know that God will never leave us or forsake us, and that, though we are separate from each other, we are joined in love – love of God and of His son Jesus Christ, love for our church, love for each other, and love for those in our community and in our world.

Hold fast. Shelter in the Rock.

-- Bobbie Bauldock

"LOVE MOVEMENT" Still Moving

COVID-19 has not shut everything down. Our congregation is continuing to reach out to the community in a variety of ways, especially to ensure that our neighbors are fed. Many thanks to those who continue to find ways to share the love in these difficult times.

This issue of "Thus Far..." includes articles on the Healthy Harvest Food Bank and Ebenezer's own Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels (March 2020 was Ebenezer's month to deliver food to shut-ins), and the feeding of school children while schools are closed, as well as other items of interest.

While church activities have been cancelled through the end of April (at least), Pastor Rebecca continues to deliver God's message to us through email and live-streaming Sunday services via Facebook. And email, text messaging and just plain phone calls have kept us in touch with each other, providing comfort and fellowship even at a distance.

Now we approach Holy Week and Easter Sunday without being able to worship and celebrate together. However, let's celebrate Our Savior wherever we are: We are forgiven through His sacrifice! He is Risen! We rejoice!

HAPPY EASTER, EVERYONE!

Keep in touch. If you need a copy of the **EUMC Directory of Members and Friends**, leave a message at (804) 333-1064 or email b.bauldock@gmail.com.



Pastor's Ponderings ...

– by *Pastor Rebecca Rumburg*

March 8, 2020, was the last day we were together inside the physical building of Ebenezer UMC. The pressing issue at hand was the loss of an hour of sleep the night before, as Daylight Savings Time required we move our clocks forward an hour at 2:00 am. Some rejoiced at the instant increase of daily sunshine, while others mourned the loss of a precious hour of sleep.

The Worship Committee met after worship that day to discuss matters connected to the worship life of the church. Holy Week and Easter were on the horizon, and decisions regarding elements of those special Worship services needed to be in place sooner than later. There was talk of a virus, referred to as COVID-19, and various ways we needed to plan precautionary measures to insure (as best as possible) the safety and well-being of the people who call Ebenezer their church home.

Before the week was out, the harsh realities of this COVID-19 virus being a worldwide pandemic became **our** harsh reality. Ebenezer was to be closed for all in-person worship services and meetings for the next two weeks. Those two weeks have now turned into a minimum of seven weeks.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced us – or given us a gift, depending on your perspective – to live life differently. Life as we knew it has changed! There is no way around that fact. In almost all facets of life, we are learning to adapt.

We may not have gathered together within the physical walls of Ebenezer United Methodist Church, but rest assured the church has gathered for worship!

Worship looks different and for many it feels different, but through it all, the name of Jesus has been exalted, and the church has been reminded that **WE** are the church! God is not bound by a building. God is not bound by an insidious

virus. God is not bound by our limited understanding of Him. In the midst of all that is changing, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and every day yet to come!

The theologian Thomas Merton noted in his book, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander:

“In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and with its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love.”

This is our chance, Church! Are we recognizing the possibilities before us even in this pandemic? Are we open to Christ’s calling to be the church? Are we readied with courage and attention to embrace what is happening with courage, faith and hope? It is worth pondering.

Join with me in prayer: “Christ Jesus, we have not been made perfect, but we press on to lay hold of that for which You laid hold of us. We do not consider ourselves yet to have attained it, but one thing we do: forgetting what is behind and stretching forward to what is ahead, we press on toward the goal to win the prize of the upward call of God in You.” (based on Philippians 3:12-14)

Let it be so. Amen!

Praying for you,
Pastor Rebecca



Playground Keeps Evolving

Our church playground continues to improve. The major structures are completed, and we have recently installed swings, including those designed for very small children. On the approval of the Church Council, two colorful metal benches have been purchased and will soon be put in place to give visitors a place to chat and watch the kids.

The Trustees decided at a recent meeting to pay the remaining costs of the playground project (\$6,027.23) from funds over which the Trustees have oversight. Many thanks to the Trustees for that donation.

We look forward to the official opening of the playground sometime in the near (we hope!) future.

“Meals on Wheels” Rolls On...

Ebenezer is one of seven churches in Westmoreland County that participate in the Meals on Wheels program. Each church has one month in which volunteers deliver meals to seniors each Friday. March, 2020, was Ebenezer’s month.

Despite COVID-19, three teams of Ebenezer stalwarts delivered meals according to plan each Friday. Our teams were Bruce and Mary Beahm; Sarah and Margaret Withers; and Peggy Beahm with Kacky Sanford (week 1), Liz Headley (week 2), and Kathy Davis (weeks 3 and 4).



MEALS on WHEELS

Meals on Wheels visits are important not just to provide food but to check on the well-being of the participants and to share a few moments of neighborliness. While we must maintain “social distance” right now, we can still show our love just be being there.

Thanks, teams, for being there!

SPROUTS



[Editor’s Note: An article about the children participating in Easter in Kinsale has been overcome by events, so we offer the following, reprinted from a recent edition of the Oldhams Times-Dispatch.]

Boffo Christmas at Ebenezer

– by Goodman Writesalot, Theatre Critic

Three months have passed since the Ebenezer Sprouts Repertory Company presented “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” but the buzz about this imaginative, exciting production continues to circulate around Virginia’s Northern Neck.

Based on the popular television production, the Sprouts gave a joyful rendition of the Peanut characters’ joyful rendition of the Christmas story. With a flawless reading by Ms. Joy Clarke, the Sprouts spoke and danced and sang their way into the hearts of their audience.

Such was the reception of the debut performance on Saturday afternoon that the Sprouts gave an encore performance at the Worship service on Sunday morning. Under the direction of Kim Shortell and Amanda Birdsall, the production was a wonder to behold. Ebenezer’s young actors were fully immersed in their characters, spreading the Good News of Jesus’ birth.

We look forward to their next production. Bravo!

Amanda and Kim have provided two craft projects for kids in this issue of “Thus Far...”. See page 8.

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Many thanks to those who contributed to this issue of **Thus Far...**: Ralph Fallin, Cindy Flickinger, Scott Flickinger, Amanda Birdsall, Kim Shortell, Stacey Canter, Phyllis Worsham, Kacky Sanford and Pastor Rebecca.

The Challenge to Westmoreland County Schools

– by Ralph Fallin

[Editor’s note: Ebenezer’s own Ralph Fallin, as Chair of the Westmoreland County School Board, is in a unique position to speak to the challenges facing our school system during the COVID-19 pandemic. We thank Ralph for his unflagging efforts on their behalf.]

Across the country, just about every school division has closed, at least temporarily, to prevent spread of the coronavirus. As of this writing, six states have closed schools for the remainder of the academic year and more are expected to soon follow.

The coronavirus pandemic and associated school closures have had a devastating effect on our students, teachers, and administrators. All students are striving to cope with the loss of school performances, athletic events, recognition ceremonies, and socializing with their friends. High School students and especially seniors are trying to deal with the postponement or cancellation of year-end traditions such as proms, senior trips and graduation. Also, they are dealing with the loss of educational opportunities, concerned about being academically prepared for college or jobs, worried about catching the virus and possibly suffering with poor emotional health.

Three major issues have emerged with the shutdown of schools: the need for educational continuity; the need to feed our children; and the need to take care of children of healthcare workers.

The last is an issue broader than education that we hope will be addressed at a county level, so let’s focus on the first two issues.

Educational Continuity

Providing an equitable education for all students in rural areas such as Westmoreland County is a major challenge due to the high cost of Internet service and gaps in its availability. An important part of equitable education is providing learning opportunities to our students with special needs and is best accomplished within the schools.

During the first two days of school closure, our teachers and administrators worked tirelessly to provide two weeks of instructional material. During the remainder of the school year, we will be relying on both online classes and instructional material for our students, with details still to be decided.

Distance learning can be challenging, especially for those who are economically disadvantaged, those lacking Internet access and those who are in households with low parental educational levels. Our school administrators and teachers now have the daunting tasks of calculating student grades for promotion, retention and graduation without completing a large portion of the school year. Another major concern is that state revenue is likely to decline significantly, possibly resulting in a reduction in our already stressed school budget.

Feeding Our Children

Since the first week of school closure, breakfast and lunch have been delivered to our students each school day, and we plan to continue with food deliveries for the remainder of the scheduled school year. Our school division is operating under the summer program feeding provisions, which allows us to feed all children under 18 in the county, regardless of whether or not they attend our schools. What a delight it is to see the school bus approaching a house and watching excited children run out to receive their meals! We sincerely thank our dedicated volunteer bus drivers and our dedicated food service personnel who are making sure our children are fed during this stressful time. They have received many thanks and well-deserved compliments for their time and service.

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Libraries Still Open Online!

Libraries are always a great learning resource and are accessible from homes with Internet access. Our own Phyllis Worship, a library technician, reports that, while the entire Central Rappahannock Regional Library System is closed, electronic resource like Libby, RBDigital and Lynda are still available. Check out Kanopy Kids, an online story hour for children. Visit librarypoint.org on the web to discover new worlds of fun and information!

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Richmond County Schools Respond to COVID-19

– by Stacey Canter

[Editor's Note: Stacey Canter, a teacher with Richmond County Schools, responded to an invitation to share how teachers are dealing with school closures. Stacey is one of the teachers who, along with the school bus drivers, have volunteered to deliver food to our children.]

Thank you for the email and wanting to know about school with the kiddos being out. Here is what the teachers in Richmond County have done and will continue to do to help the students.

First, let me say, I do miss my students! I miss seeing their smiles in the morning and knowing that when they enter, they are safe. I know their home life, and for some, school was/is their happy place.

Meals (breakfast and lunch) are being delivered to the children by school bus on the normal bus routes. On Monday, they are given meals for Monday and Tuesday; on Wednesday, meals for Wednesday through Friday.



Richmond County is delivering food to all of those who are in need, even if they don't normally qualify for free/reduced meals. If you need food for your child, you simply let the school know and then be at the bus stop to receive it. This will continue until school reopens. Teachers without children or elderly folks living with them are volunteering to ride on the buses to ensure the food is delivered, and others have volunteered their time too.

As far as their learning is concerned, I email or send a letter each week to my students to say "Hello" and keep in touch. Many of us are doing this, as we feel it lets the students know we are still here for them even if we may not see them.

We have all sent home to every student a packet of reading and math lessons to work on, a calendar with what to do each day and for how long, and a writing prompt. We have encouraged them to start a diary or journal to write about their days since we are out. This will also be helpful to them when they get older, as they can reflect on this time as a "remember when."

Our grade level has a website set up for the students to visit, and they can find links to other websites there. They have websites they were working on in the classrooms, and they can access those at home at any time. (We also included these in the packet of information and work which was mailed to them.)

Google Classroom and Class Dojo have also been set up for the students so that the older ones can complete their lessons online with their instructors. At least 3 times a week, the older students are getting emails, podcasts and lessons with work to complete and send in virtually. This is much like homeschooling for all of the students.

I am sure many other districts are doing the same, but this is what we in Richmond County are doing.

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Time for a Laugh ...

How many Christians does it take to change a lightbulb?

Pentecostals: Ten. One to change the bulb and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

Presbyterians: None. Lights will go on and off at predestined times.

Roman Catholic: None. Candles only.

Baptists: At least 15. One to change the light bulb and three committees to approve the change and decide who brings the potato salad.

Episcopalians: Three. One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks and one to talk about how much better the old one was.

Methodists: Undetermined. Whether your light is bright, dull, or completely out, you are loved. You can be a light bulb, turnip bulb, or tulip bulb. Church-wide lighting service is planned for Sunday. Bring bulb of your choice, and a covered dish.

www.christianforums.com/threads/methodist-jokes.7551915

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**EUMC Food Pantry:
Same Mission, New Methods**

– by Scott Flickinger

[Editor’s note: Beginning March 15, all worship services and other activities at Ebenezer that would bring together groups of people were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Ebenezer’s intrepid Food Pantry leaders didn’t let that dissuade them from finding new ways to distribute food to those that need it, especially now.]

Despite the decision to cancel our March 21 Food Pantry, four Ebenezer members and one client volunteer moved our Pantry operation to a nearby open pantry, at Zion Baptist Church in Tucker Hill. A sign outside our Fellowship Hall told our Pantry clients to go to Zion Baptist.

On a cold rainy morning, the Ebenezer team served 26 families via a drive-through distribution out of the Healthy Harvest Food Bank truck. Those 26 families are only about a fourth of the number of families we normally serve. However, it appeared that the Zion Pantry served about 20% more clients that day than is usual for their Pantry. Similar increases in the number of families served were observed at Wicomico UMC and Kilmarnock Baptist Church just days earlier.

Because we served fewer of our clients than normal, we ended up with a lot of extra food. All the USDA dry goods and USDA frozen meats were taken back to the Healthy Harvest Food Bank for storage and distribution at April’s Pantry. However, the Food Bank authorized Scott Flickinger to distribute the disposable USDA foodstuffs at Scott’s discretion. The following donations were made:

- Two hundred and fifty 3-pound bags of fruit (apples, pears, and oranges) to the Westmoreland County school system to be distributed via the five bus routes that daily deliver breakfast and lunch to the students (see related story on page 4).
- Eighteen 2-pound packages of cheese to Colonial Beach Bay Aging.
- Around two hundred pounds of bakery products, produce and cheese, as well as some pre-bagged dry goods to the Warsaw Manor.

Here is what is planned for April:

Warsaw UMC is having a drive-through pantry on April 3. Wicomico UMC is repeating their March 18 drive-through pantry on April 15.

Ebenezer Pantry leaders are proposing a drive-through Pantry at Ebenezer on April 18. This modified Pantry will not include our typical breakfast offering or socializing in the building. Serving our clients this way won’t be as labor intensive as usual, so fewer volunteers will be needed on Friday and Saturday.

Regardless of the Virginia mandates for business closings, quarantine, and/or sheltering in place, “the charitable food network will always be exempt. Our work on the front lines to fight food insecurity across the Commonwealth is considered life-sustaining work” (Feed More and Healthy Harvest web page). Access to safe and nourishing food through our network is needed now more than ever.

Please follow the CDC precautions and the Virginia UMC Conference guidance for safety, including exercising social distancing. However, if you are under 65, healthy and able, you are encouraged to help out at our April Food Pantry by sorting food on Friday, April 17 (only 3 or 4 volunteers are needed) and/or by distributing food at our drive-through Pantry on Saturday, April 18 (only 5-6 needed). Together, we will support and feed our community during this time of uncertainty.

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Grace Notes –

News of Ebenezer's Music Ministries

Easter Celebration on Hold

Until mid-March, fourteen members of Ebenezer's Music Ministry had been meeting to practice our Easter cantata, *The Lamb – Redemption's Price is Paid*.

Easter services may have been cancelled, but when we meet together again, we have some wonderful music to share to celebrate the Resurrection, the foundation of our faith and our hope.

Our choir, Abundant Joy, has a new member. We are happy to welcome Elizabeth Yates (a soprano!) into the group. We are also happy to have Fran and Bill Taylor, K-K King, Cindy Flickinger, and Vicky Clarke join us for the cantata.

Rod and Kim Shortell have volunteered to be the narrators for the cantata, and once again Scott Flickinger will be our sound engineer.

Keep Singing!

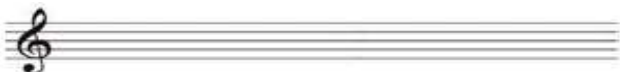
While we can't sing together corporately, we can certainly continue to sing praise to God. Go outside, and sing "In the Garden." Call someone on the phone, and sing "When We All Get to Heaven." Feel stressed about sheltering in place? Sing "I'll Fly Away."

Sing "Jesus Loves Me" with your children or grandchildren or just to yourself; we are all God's little ones. In place of a spoken grace at the table, sing "Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow." Look up at the night sky in wonder, and sing "How Great Thou Art."

As the choir sings at the beginning of each practice,

I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice
to worship you. O my soul, rejoice!
Take joy, my King, in what you hear.
May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear.

May *your* sweet sound ascend to God until we all sing His praise together once again.



The Tree



The tree had stood tall and proud for many years at the edge of the yard. It was so much bigger than all the others nearby; it took 3 men to circle it. The grandmother would repeatedly say to anyone listening, "One of these days that tree is going to fall in a storm and land on the house."

The uncle would laugh and say, "That tree has been standing there since before anyone travelled this way, and it will be standing there when we are all dead and buried."

The grandmother persisted, though, constantly worrying about that tree. So, she hired some men to cut it down, telling them she wanted a flower bed in that very spot.

After the tree was down and the branches removed from the yard, she still could not have her flower bed, because the stump was still there. So, she spent more money to remove the stump and roots. The tree had planted its roots straight down.

When the men were through digging out the stump, she still could not have her flower bed, for a spring had been struck, and it flowed with a mighty gush.

The uncle said, "That is why the tree had grown so tall and large, for it had sunk its roots in the water of life."

We need to be like the tree and sink our roots in the water of life, Jesus Christ, so that we can grow tall and straight in God's eyes.

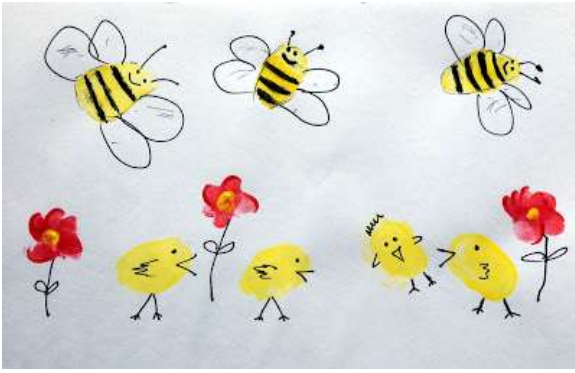
[Editor's Note: Cindy Flickinger's mother passed away in December 2019. Cindy found this devotion among her mother's papers and wanted to share it with us.]

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Craft Corner for Kids

Hey, Sprouts! Here are two fun projects for Spring! Ask an adult for help. Have fun!

Bees and Flowers Finger Painting



What you'll need:

- Tempera Poster Paint (any colors)
- Paper (white or light blue will work best)
- Markers

Directions:

- 1) Choose the first animal to create and paint your finger that color. Press your finger on the white paper. Do the same thing again for more animals.
 - 2) Wait for the paint to dry, and then add details with markers.
 - 3) Add a background if you like!
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A Fluffy Sheep



What you'll need:

- A paper plate (small or large depending on how big you want your sheep to be)
- Black paper
- White paper
- Cotton balls
- Glue

Directions:

- 1) Carefully glue enough cotton balls onto the paper plate to cover the plate.
 - 2) Using the black paper, cut out 1 large oval for the head of the sheep, 2 small ovals (of the same size) for the ears and 2 small circles for the eyes.
 - 3) With the white paper, cut 2 circles a little larger than the black circles for the eyes.
 - 4) Glue the paper for the eyes together.
 - 5) Attach the ears and the eyes to the head of the sheep.
 - 6) Glue the head gently onto the cotton balls.
 - 7) Using the black paper, cut out 2 large ovals for the legs of the sheep
 - 8) Glue the black ovals to the bottom of the back of the paper plate.
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If you want to, ask your parents to take a picture of your creations and send it to Mrs. Birdsall by email (amandaelbird@gmail.com) or post it on Facebook.