



I am the vine, you are the branches
Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit." John 15:5

Mt. Zion family,

Below is a condensed version of the “State of the Church” report I shared at Charge Conference on October 28. I share it here to affirm and celebrate your ministry during this pandemic. I am grateful to be your pastor!

In Christ, Pastor Jonathan

State of the Church Report

A few months ago, church leadership guru Carey Nieuwhof called this pandemic a disruption that will forever change what “normal” ministry looks like. According to Nieuwhof, disruptions are accelerators. In other words, if an organization was already struggling, a disruption like this pandemic will speed up those struggles. If an organization is healthy, a disruption exposes the health already there.

It has not been easy going so long without all worshipping together in one place like before. However, I am in awe of the way this disruption not only has not stopped or weakened Mt. Zion’s ministry, but actually exposed its strength.

Prior to the pandemic, we had 80 to 120 people in weekly worship. While it is no replacement for in-person community, our online worship services have been viewed each week during the pandemic on 157 to 587 devices. People have generously given equipment and time learning to run it, allowing us to live stream even as some of the congregation has returned in-person. The pandemic accelerated efforts to increase our reach online.

The pandemic accelerated efforts to be in community across racial lines. In recent years, Mt. Zion has partnered with Central and Bethel UMCs for Lenten services, a Thanksgiving service, and Service of the Longest Night. The pandemic led us to recently worship together five Sundays (**continued on p. 2**)

in a row thanks to the kind hospitality of Central and Bethel UMCs.

At last year's charge conference, I shared a goal to equip people to offer one another congregational care. By early this year, three church members began checking on homebound members. But after the pandemic, 15 church members began making regular calls to our oldest and most isolated members.

The move to virtual small groups increased our participation. Zoom Sunday school for children and youth has allowed them to continue learning and growing. Participation in our Tuesday night small group reached as many as 16 people at one point. The virtual format has allowed for the formation of other small groups, including a recent Tuesday morning study led by Beth McWilliams. Virtual fellowship also allowed us to partner with Red Valley UMC in Boones Mill, Virginia for a 4-session Virtual Vacation Bible School using Cokesbury's biblical antiracism curriculum for children, the first time Mt. Zion has done a vacation Bible school in recent years.

Mt. Zion has a strong foundation of people who are eager to serve selflessly, give generously, and learn and grow together. Looking ahead, I see a few opportunities to build on that foundation. First, I encourage the church to pursue a discernment process (such as the Bishop's Forward Focus) in order to discern together a shared mission that God is calling us to accomplish and a shared vision of next faithful steps God would have us take the next few years.

Second, I encourage everyone to make a commitment to your own growth as a disciple through small-group community. I have been transformed through small group community over the past few months as I have engaged with others in meaningful conversations about Scripture and race. Moreover, as a mentor of mine, Mark Tidsworth, recently shared, the "front door" of the church prior to COVID-19 was worship. During the pandemic, the church's "front door" has become small group community. I invite everyone to participate in small group discipleship so that you will not miss out on the transformation that others are experiencing and to help grow Mt. Zion's "front door" wider and wider.

Mt. Zion is in a solid, healthy position. I look forward to using that strong position as a springboard into where God would call us to move in our next faithful steps together!

The Church Calendar at a glance

December 2 - United Methodist Women's Zoom meeting, 2:30 p.m.

December 4 - Outdoor Christmas Movie, 6 p.m.

December 13 - Children and Youth Christmas Party, 10 a.m.

December 23 - Spittoono Christmas outdoor community Christmas service, 5:30 p.m. at Spittoono field (in the Martin's barn in the event of rain)

December 24 - Christmas Eve services, noon and 5:30 p.m.

December 24-January 1 - Church office closed for Christmas/New Years

January 4 - Finance committee meeting, 6:30 p.m.

January 6 - United Methodist Women's Zoom meeting, 2:30 p.m.

January 7 - Church council meeting, 6:30 p.m.

January 24 - Children and Youth Ice Skating, immediately following worship

INDOOR WORSHIP
(BEGINNING OCTOBER 18 AT 11 A.M.)

UPON ARRIVAL
Disinfect hands with provided hand sanitizer

SIGN IN
Give your contact information if you have not signed up prior to Sunday

PHYSICAL DISTANCING
Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.

ENTRANCE AND EXIT
Enter through the sanctuary front doors. We will fill the sanctuary from front to back. At the end of the service, worshippers will be dismissed from back to front.

WEAR A MASK
Masks are required in all church facilities. If you do not have a mask, cloth masks are provided for you. There will be no congregational singing. Stay home if you feel unwell or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19.

USHERS WILL ESCORT YOU TO A PEW
Families living in the same household will be allowed to sit together. IF THE SANCTUARY IS FULL WHEN YOU ARRIVE, AN USHER WILL SHOW YOU TO OVERFLOW SEATING DOWNSTAIRS.

RESTROOMS
Located through the door at the top of the sanctuary ramp. Our "potty patrol" will clean the restroom between users.

CHILDREN
Children will remain with their families in the sanctuary. No nursery at this time.

Worship

Blessing of the animals



Thank you everyone from Mt. Zion, Lawrence Chapel, and the community who came out for the Blessing of the Animals service on October 5 at Nettles Dog Park! Our furry friends got a blessing and some home-made treats!

All Saints Worship



On November 1, we remembered those saints who have gone before us and the faith they taught us. Our student intern, Zechariah Copeland, preached his first sermon and did a great job. Those saints who were connected to Mt. Zion who have passed away since last All Saints Sunday were Les Jones, Sam Miles, Terri Lee, Golda Noblitt, Tommy Reid, Robert Arrowood, and Kat Jones.

Please consider placing flowers in the sanctuary to make our worship even more beautiful! You can sign up on the flower calendar or email mtzion@nctv.com to request a date.



Coming Soon in Worship!



While you are probably familiar with stories about Jesus, you might not have ever heard the story of his life straight through, from the manger to the empty tomb. We will embark this Advent on a journey in worship and children's Sunday school that follows Jesus's life from the first whispers of his coming through his Easter resurrection. Join in worship and children's Sunday school each week as we embark on a journey together walking with Jesus!

Christmas worship opportunities



Outdoors: If you are more comfortable worshipping outdoors, bring your mask to 1569 Eighteen Mile Rd on **December 23** for an outdoor, socially distanced Christmas celebration!

Indoors: In order to promote social distancing and limit the number of people sharing space together, we will offer two services in the sanctuary on **December 24**, one at noon and the other at 5:30. Please wear a mask.



2020 UMW Special Mission Recognition



On, Wednesday, October 7, 2020, during our online meeting, Elizabeth Finley, Mount Zion – Central United Methodist Women’s President, presented Irene Buchanan with the United Methodist Women’s Special Mission Recognition pin for 2020. This Special Recognition Pin is a meaningful way to honor a person who has dedicated time and effort to service. There was also a monetary donation made to The Global Ministries of United Methodist Women in Irene’s name.

When the Eloise Gaines Circle reorganized, Irene was a beginning member. That was over ten years ago, and now the Eloise Gaines Circle and the Dolly Brock Circle have combined into one United Methodist Women’s group, meeting monthly here at the church.

Irene’s attendance at the monthly meetings is exemplary as she has not missed even one meeting! She has a willingness to attend Anderson District United Methodist Women meetings at different churches throughout our district.

Irene is a dedicated friend reaching out to members of the group. When we have work meetings for mission projects, we always can count on Irene to participate. She manages to go above and beyond, always willing to help where help is needed. Her eagerness and enthusiasm are contagious. Irene is always good at providing delicious casseroles and cakes for our church meals and our annual Valentine’s Luncheon. She enjoys joining the rest of us for our annual meetings and our special “meetings” that are held in restaurants at Christmas and at the end of the year.

It was our honor to recognize this special lady, Irene Buchanan, for her dedication, loyalty, friendship and positive influence on our United Methodist Women’s organization here at the Mount Zion – Central unit. We are so fortunate to have her as a member of the United Methodist Women.

48TH Anderson District Annual Meeting of United Methodist Women September 26, 2020 via Zoom

I would like to report to the congregation the outstanding results of the United Methodist Women of our church at the Annual District Meeting. In this time of pandemic, our ladies were able to accomplish all the necessary requirements for all the various goals set by the District and State UMW organization.

We successfully entered a **Census Report**. Myra Armistead and Irene Buchanan completed the **Reading Program**. We were also recognized as a **Five Star Unit** for meeting all the mission giving requirements as well as a **Mission Today Unit** for presenting the required information in our programs during our monthly meetings.

In addition, our group had activities that certified them as a **Charter for Racial Justice** unit. All these accomplishments qualified us as a **Diamond Unit**. Eleven churches in the Anderson District achieved this distinction.

Two groups make up the United Methodist Women at Mt. Zion: the afternoon combined circles group, now called United Methodist Women; and The Guild which meets in the evenings. However, we would be nothing without the full support of the congregation in all our endeavors for meals, collections, our shoe box ministry, the pastors' cook-off and much more. **Thank you all** for your support and encouragement, men and women. **GOOD JOB!**

Sincerely, Elizabeth Finley (President)

Operation Christmas Child



Thanks to everyone who brought in shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child and blankets for Helping Hands! Together we filled 62 boxes and collected more than 50 blankets. A huge thanks to Dean and Elizabeth Finley for delivering the boxes and blankets. Way to go Mt. Zion!

Discipleship for Children and Youth!



Children's and Youth Sunday school!

Stay connected with other children and youth through these weekly Bible lessons led by caring adult leaders!

Zoom ID: 871 6710 1740

Passcode: 650438

Stumphouse Tunnel!

Children and their families had a blast at our recent trip to Stumphouse Tunnel! It was a beautiful day for outdoor, socially distanced fun!



Christmas Outdoor Movie Night, December 4!



All children, youth, and their families, neighbors, and friends are invited to a double feature of outdoor, socially-distanced Christmas fun! We will watch *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Please bring your own mask and a blanket or chair.

More Discipleship for Children and Youth!



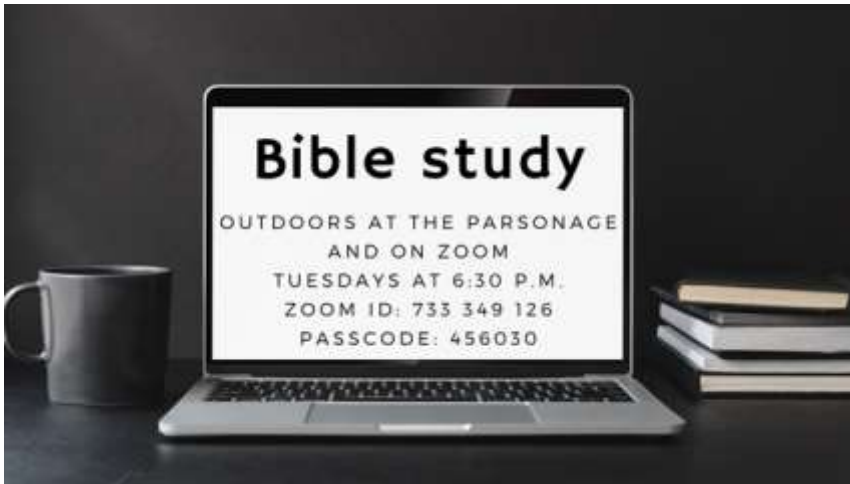
Please [RSVP](#) if you plan to attend the Christmas party and wear a mask.

Ice Skating - January 24!



All children, youth, and their families and friends are invited to caravan to Ice on Main immediately following worship on January 24. We will stop for a drive-thru lunch on the way there. The children's ministry committee will cover the cost of ice skating for the children and youth and for everyone's lunch. Please RSVP so that the children's ministry committee can purchase tickets in advance. If you are viewing the newsletter online, you can RSVP [here](#).

Discipleship for Adults!



Report from 2020 Annual Conference by Peggy Bodie



In an unprecedented year, the 2020 UMC Annual Conference was held virtually on Saturday, October 17th. Prior to the conference, videos from all of the standing committees were sent to registered ministers and lay delegates. The recorded conference can be viewed at <https://www.umcsc.org/ac2020/>

All committee reports were approved as presented.

Two items of note:

- (1) Election of quadrennial committee members has been extended to January 1, 2022.
- (2) Approval of Resolution of Predatory Lending that encourages reducing the negative impact of high cost lenders, including consumer finance, payday lending and auto title lending on low-income populations in South Carolina.

December Birthdays

2nd Susan Drexler - 7th Isaac Harris - 9th Kathy O'Dell
19th Allan Bomar - 26th Kris Bowman - 30th Mason Sims

January Birthdays

2nd Susan Pressley - 3rd Irene Buchanan - 11th Anderson Mullinax
13th Buddy Evatt - 17th Ava-Rae Six - 18th Bobby Garrett
18th Kyle Cook-McCrary - 19th Charles Baker
23rd Heather Cumbie - 25th Quint Cumbie - 26th Amanda Mullinax
29th Ashley Malmgren

December Anniversaries

1st Danny & Susan Pressley
20th Jerry & Sharon Chandler
29th Lane & Jan Miller
31st Terry & Mary Handegan

January Anniversaries

16th David & Allison Wingard

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 186
310 Church Street
Central, South Carolina 29630

Address Correction Requested



Thanks to John Reeves for providing and putting up the beautiful Christmas tree and to the Beverly Smith Guild for preparing the sanctuary for Advent!