

Reflections

April 2020

317 S. Main Street
Monticello, AR 71655



WHERE IS GOD IN THE WHIRLWIND?

"The LORD said, "Go out and stand at the mountain before the LORD. The LORD is passing by." A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the LORD. But the LORD wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the LORD wasn't in the earthquake."—1 Kings 19:11 CEB

Yesterday President Trump and his pandemic response team announced grim news: with no action taken on our part, up to 2.2 million people could die from COVID-19 in the U.S. alone. 2.2 million is 1/3 of the number of Jewish persons who died in the holocaust. Even with mitigation (having extremely limited physical contact with persons who do not live in our home), experts believe some 100,000 to 250,000 people could die in the United States. 250,000 is the equivalent of *eighty-four* 9/11's, over *four* times as many U.S. casualties in Vietnam, and nearly *two thirds* as many U.S. civilian and military casualties in World War II. That's what happens *if* we stay away from people who do not live in our household.

People have already begun to ask where God was in all this. Some say that the pandemic came because God was angry at us. If we're completely honest, there are places where the Bible says that God brought disaster on folks. The story of the Flood is a prime example (Genesis 6-9). However, other times disasters just happen, with no divine cause. Sometimes the same tragic event is interpreted differently by different authors. We might say that every disaster is an invitation to introspection. How can we do better as God's children?

But I cannot square the God I meet in Jesus Christ with a God so full of wrath that He would send a virus to kill hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. In Jesus, we discover that God is more willing to die for sinners than to destroy us (Romans 5:6-10). Moreover, Jesus shows us that when disaster strikes, God is there with us, shouldering the burden of our pain and suffering with us. That's what we see in the cross.

Of all the characters in the Bible, Job represents all who suffer unjustly. Job was a good man who God had blessed with wealth and a large family who lost everything. After a period of introspection, Job determined that his suffering was unjust. He challenged God. In the end, God comes to Job in a whirlwind and says, "Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?" (Job 40:8-9). Job realized that God is beyond our comprehension: God is God, and we're not. When confronted by catastrophe, we too are drawn into the mystery that is God and become aware of our human limitations and sin.

Centuries after the story of Job was told, God came again in a whirlwind (Acts 2). As the disciples prayed, God's presence filled the house in a violent rush of wind. People of different nations and languages could understand one another. That is God's gift to us today. In this time of disaster, we come together to help our neighbors. We stay home and separate ourselves from other people—even those we love most. We send money to help with disaster relief through UMCOR. We pray. We check on loved ones. We learn new ways to stay connected with one another. Doing those things, God's presence is made known through the gifts of our hands, God's concern is made known through our prayers, and—most importantly—God's love is made known through our deeds of compassion. That's where God is when disaster strikes.

Grace and Peace!



HOLY WEEK WORSHIP & SPECIAL EVENTS

God's sanctuary has moved into our homes! Even in the midst of the pandemic, Christ remains risen. This year we will remember and celebrate the events of the last week of Jesus' earthly life with these special streamed services and events. We encourage you and your family to prepare a worship space in your home, using candles, crosses, or other Christian symbols you have on hand. Additional suggestions for each service are provided below.

Palm Sunday, April 5 at 9:00 A.M.

Please email Bro. Hammett a short (10 second) video of your family waving branches (any branch will do!) to hammett.evans@fumcmonticello.org. Videos need to be submitted no later than Thursday, April 2 at noon.

Children's Choir & Handbells Easter Musical, April 5 at 6:00 P.M. (rebroadcast from 2019)

Maundy Thursday Family Footwashing, April 9 at 7:00 P.M.

This service commemorates Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13. We encourage you and your family to have a small tub of water and towels on hand for this special service.

Good Friday Tenebrae, April 10 at 7:00 P.M.

Tenebrae means "shadows," and this service recognizes God's presence with us in the darkness. For this service, we encourage you to gather 13 candles. A dimly lit room is ideal.

Easter Sunday, April 12 at 9:00 A.M.

We will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The service will feature a baptismal renewal, so please have a small bowl of water nearby.

NEW WAYS TO GIVE

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, our Executive Council decided to offer new ways for our church family to honor their vows to support our church family with their gifts.

We now offer online giving. The Executive Council chose the company recommended by the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of the United Methodist Church (our denomination's "Finance Committee"). Vanco Payment Services handles online giving for the denomination, including UMCOR. It is also the company utilized by our Annual Conference. Because we will not be meeting at the church for some time, **we encourage every family who can to transition to electronic giving as soon as you are able.** There are three ways for you to do that:

Go to www.fumcmonticello.org/give. Currently, gifts may be made only to the General Fund. We will be adding the other funds (memorials, building, youth, etc.) over the coming weeks. Sign up for an account. It's free, simple, and secure.

Download the Give+ app to your phone or smart device (<https://giveplushelp.vancopayments.com/>). Set up an account for ease of use.

Contact your bank to set up an automatic draft to the church.

For those who choose to give by check, please mail your gifts to the church office at 317 South Main Street, Monticello, AR 71655. However you choose to give, God will honor and bless it for the building of God's Kingdom in Monticello and beyond.

FUMC MONTICELLO IN THE PANDEMIC:

a Word from Bro. Hammett

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we closed the doors to the church facility on March 13. The church staff and I have moved our offices to our homes. The office phone and mail are being forwarded to our Administrative Assistant, Lynne Russell. Feel free to call her at (870) 367-2471. Here are answers to some of the questions I have received.

Why is the church facility closed? Because people can be contagious with COVID-19 without showing symptoms. Most, if not all, of our interactions within the building put us in close proximity with one another. That puts all of us at risk, especially those who are most vulnerable.

How long will the building be closed? I don't know. Bishop Mueller and the cabinet restricted in-person gatherings of any kind through at least the end of April. All of us are waiting for "the peak" of this first wave of the crisis. The peak in Arkansas will be later. We are monitoring that and will resume in-person activities when it is deemed safe to do so.

How are our pastors and staff doing? We're holding up well as we go through what everyone else is going through. There is no manual for how churches and pastors are to navigate these waters. I encourage you to pray for each of us and our families.

What have the pastors and staff been up to? We began with two goals: 1) Provide pastoral care, and 2) Create community online. Regarding pastoral care, our congregation is comprised of over 250 individual families. When we include persons who participate regularly but aren't official members, it's more like 275 (perhaps even 300). Lori and I are focusing on those who need a pastor the most—those who are sick, grieving, or experiencing a loss. I have asked the leaders of our groups to serve as a "shepherd" for their members. This includes any group, study, class, or ministry team of any age. I'm checking in with the leaders weekly to see if there are pastoral needs that require clergy attention. We are now in the process of identifying families who aren't a part of a group or class, and we will recruit a group of people to serve as their "shepherds." If you're interested in serving as a shepherd, please email me at hammett.evans@fumcmonticello.org. Pastoral care has been the priority. At the same time, we have been creating connections through technology. In many ways we are blessed to live in a time when we can see and communicate with each other online. Worshiping on Facebook isn't like worshiping in a sanctuary, and meeting in Zoom isn't like meeting in person, but it's better than not being able to see and worship with one another at all.

How can I give? Our congregation is very generous. Even in the midst of global economic turmoil, people want to give. The best way to support your church family financially is to sign up for online giving at www.fumcmonticello.org/give. You may already give to the general ministry fund and will soon be able to give to all the other funds.

Why doesn't *this technical thing* work the same? I'm running the live stream from my home, and our A/V Minister, Michael Reed, has been bringing me up to speed. We're working on streaming simultaneously to Facebook and the website. On down the road, we hope to include singers and musicians in our online service as well. Please be patient. It should improve on a weekly basis.

Who can I contact about a care or concern? Call or text me at (501) 944-9719 or email me at hammett.evans@fumcmonticello.org.

FUMY News



Reminders:

**FUMY Zoom Meeting
ID:967-973-1140**

Sundays @ 6 pm

Wednesdays @ 6 pm



COMING in May -
FUMY Envelopes of
Support fundraiser for
mission trip & mis-
sions... envelopes rang-
ing from \$1 to \$5 to
\$200 (in \$5 increments)

April 2020

FUMY had a fun & exciting first half of March! March 1 was our last day of Veritas and we loved praising the Lord with over 1500 youth and adults from across Arkansas. We spent an incredible weekend learning what it means to be united in Christ and united together. We came home on a spiritual HIGH! On Wednesdays, we talked about dating & relationships and what it means to regard our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. We discussed what it means to have boundaries and how to have healthy relationships. On Sundays we discussed prayer and what it means to pray to God.

And then everything was halted.... All of our lives changed in an instant! We have learned to ZOOM! FUMY has met 3 times now... at our first Zoom we discussed what it means to be present with people. What a time to talk about presence! God wants us to be present with Him and to be present in our lives. We had a SCAVENGER HUNT in our own homes & Megan Stephens won first place! We even had small groups on zoom one night. I do want to share that since Ash Wednesday, I have been sending out short lent devotions 3 times every day and those continue to go out and encourage. **Anyone is welcome to receive them... text @fumylent to 81010 and you will get them, too.**

I am thankful for the many social media opportunities I have to connect with our youth while we are physically separated and I am continually learning new ways to engage with them and their families.

Right now we do not know what April holds for FUMY. We will continue to meet on ZOOM at 6 pm on Sundays and on Wednesdays.... Other meetings time will come as we figure out our lives in quarantine.

We WILL celebrate our high school graduating seniors. Please pray for Brendon Berry, Kate Brown, Nick Griffin, Blake Howard, Rubin Langley, Reid Merrell and Harrison Whitaker. Their senior year has been turned upside down! Originally, we were going to celebrate them on May 3 but that day is on hold at the moment with the uncertainty of everything. We will let everyone know when we have a confirmed date.

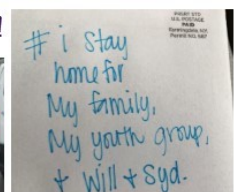
Our annual "Envelopes of Support" fundraiser will begin in May. We are still planning to go on our mission trip to Oklahoma City, OK, in June. We welcome everyone to give when the time comes... either online or by taking an envelope with a specific dollar amount and enclosing the amount and dropping it in the mail or an offering plate. Thank you for the many ways you support our group so that our youth can go on a mission trip in June and to do mission work each month of the year!

Pray for our youth. Pray for their parents. Pray for each other. We are in uncertain times but we hold tight to the MOST CERTAIN THING... **God loves each one of us and God is always, always with us!**

In closing, I want to share that I have challenged my youth to write on paper who they stay home for! I challenge you, as well. Send me a pic of who you stay home for during this pandemic: fumyminister@gmail.com

Easter is April 12 & we are Easter people! He is RISEN!
He is risen indeed!

Christ above all, Lori



Coming MAY 2020: FUMY - Mission Trip Fundraiser
“Envelopes of Support”

How it works: Envelopes on display boards (in Family Life Center or sanctuary) OR there will be a sign up genius in **five dollar increments from \$1 to \$200**

Reason: This one fundraiser *eliminates* bothersome fundraising!

What is the money for: The money is for the youth group’s mission trip to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, **June 21-27, 2020**

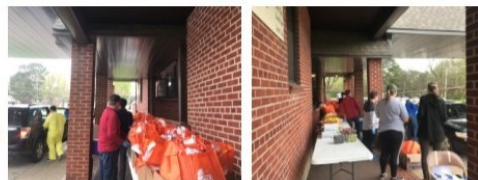
How the youth group will respond to the gifts:

Worship “moments” where the youth share about the mission trip

Each student pays \$200 to go on mission trip but it costs \$500 per student. After paying mission trip costs, remaining funds will be used to do monthly mission projects and to support registration costs for other youth events.

An extra special
THANK YOU to our 3 groups
of volunteers that helped with the
truck unloading, box packing &
food distribution.

We gave out 140 boxes/bags plus
some perishable food to some
families and to our local hospital
in our Food Distribution on
Saturday, March 21, 2020





During this time of “stay at home,” your church office is still functioning. I am working from home, and the phones have been transferred to my cell phone. I am receiving the mail and paying the bills. I am making deposits as needed. If you need anything, please do not hesitate to call the church office. We are here for you. If you don’t already have it, the phone number is 870-367-2471, and my email address is lynne.russell@fumcmonticello.org. Stay safe.



SAMARITAN'S FEET

A story from FUMC Samaritan feet shoe distribution:

One of our workers was helping a little girl about seven years of age. The worker washed her little feet with warm soapy water. She then dried those little feet and put a new pair of clean socks on her followed by a brand new pair of tennis shoes. Then the worker, expecting the little girl to jump right up, said, “There you go! New shoes!” But the little girl sat there. The worker looked at her and said, “Are your shoes OK?” The little girl nodded. “Are you ready to go?” asked the worker. And the little girl answered, “You put soap on my feet.. We don’t have soap at home. I’m afraid my feet will slip.”

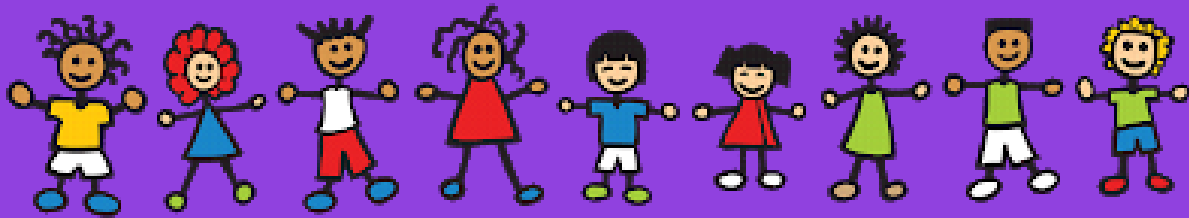
We are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God!

We have entered a time of real uncertainty. But there are some things that are very certain—our children will need shoes and coats next fall. We will continue to take contributions for this distribution. Our goal is \$12,500 and to date we have raised!
Thank you for your help in adding our Drew County children.

Committing \$1.00 per day during the Season of Lent will purchase two pairs of shoes or two jackets for a child in our community.

Camp Tanako News



Children's Ministry April 2020

Confirmation Camp was held at Camp Tanako March 6-8. Alex, James Pierce, Kolton, and Rylan enjoyed staying at Tanako (none had ever been before), getting to know other confirmands from throughout Arkansas, and learning more about what it means to be a United Methodist and a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Our trip was more than just a trip to Tanako. On Friday we toured the Congregation B'nai Israel in Little Rock before joining their congregation in worship. Again, this was something that was new to these confirmands. What a great experience for them! Thank you, Isabel Bacon and Bro Hammett, for joining me on this journey.

We have really missed seeing YOU our children on Sundays and Wednesdays. You will be receiving some of these (texts, emails, cards, fun activities, and more) from your Sunday school teacher and from our Wednesday (WACK) team.

Everyone, please do what you can to keep yourselves and those you love safe!

“And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.” Mark 10:16

Brenda

Missing these wonderful faith filled singers for Jesus at FUMC Monticello!

I hope everyone is staying home, washing hands, listening to mom and dad, doing their school packets and singing our songs we have performed at church and for the community!

Prayers and Love to all of you! 🙏❤️🎵🏰



First United Methodist Church

317 S. Main St.

Monticello, AR 71655