

Reflections

August 2020

317 S. Main Street
Monticello, AR 71655



Grace AND *Truth*
ΧΑΡΙΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ

NOT ONE LOST

“What man, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, doesn’t leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go to the lost one until he finds it?”—Luke 15:4

Among all the various and sundry clergy items I inherited from my parents and grandfather, one of my favorites was a gift to my dad from the congregation he served the longest: a shepherd’s crook. The word *pastor* is the Latin word for “shepherd.” The crook is the tool of the shepherd’s trade. By tapping the crook on the ground, the shepherd guides the herd. When sheep get into fights (as they are wont to do!), the shepherd uses the crook to separate the sheep from one another. If a sheep gets sick, the shepherd employs their crook to separate it from the herd. If a wolf or another predator comes to harm the sheep, the shepherd fends it off, using their crook as a weapon.

As your pastor, I pray daily about how to effectively shepherd our congregation through the pandemic. Often I pray about Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-6). You remember the story. One sheep out of a flock of one-hundred runs away into the wilderness. The shepherd takes off after it, leaving the ninety-nine to fend for themselves. Finding the lost sheep, he throws it over his shoulders, rejoices, and invites his neighbors over to celebrate. There’s much to Jesus’ story. At its core is the message that every sheep is sacred to God, every single one.

One out of one hundred: one percent. Right now the mortality rate for COVID-19 is 1-3%.* In our congregation, that’s two to seven sheep in our “little flock” who would be lost to this disease if all of us get sick.

As I write, it’s been 142 days (20 Sundays!) since we have gathered to worship in person. Our hearts ache for one another. This pastor’s heart aches for us to be together again. Every night as I pray, I lift up to God anything new we have learned about the virus and the way it spreads. “What if we did this? What if we did that?” God always brings me back to reality with one simple question: “How many of your sheep should be lost because you gathered your flock?” “Not one, Lord. Not one.”

Grace and Peace from Your Pastor!



Drive-In Backpack Blessing August 23 at 6:00 PM

We plan to hold our first drive-in worship event at the church August 23 at 6PM. Bibles will be presented to our rising 3rd graders and 3-year-olds, and we encourage children and youth to bring their backpacks with them in the vehicle to be blessed. Please remain in your vehicle for the duration of the service. Watch your email for instructions for registration, parking, and how to tune in via your car radio.

Disciple Bible Study

Register online at <https://bit.ly/2EMAEDX>. Disciple Bible Study is a unique opportunity to enjoy an in-depth Bible study with a small group of people who grow as Jesus' disciples together. Each week includes daily Bible readings and a 90-minute class session which combines group discussion and a study manual to go deeply into God's word. \$35 covers the cost of the manual. Class(es) will begin in Zoom and may transition to in-person if possible. You will also need to purchase **one of the following study Bibles: *The Common English Study Bible* (ISBN #1609260295), *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (ISBN #978-0687278329), *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (ISBN #978-0060786847), or *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (ISBN #978-0195289602). Having the Apocrypha is helpful, but not required.** Devotional Bibles are great in other settings, but will not work for Disciple 1.

DISCIPLE 1: a 34-week survey course of the entire Bible. *Prerequisite for all other studies.*

YOUTH DISCIPLE: a survey course of the Bible for older youth (ages 16-18).

DISCIPLE 2: a 32-week in-depth study of Genesis, Exodus, Luke and Acts.

DISCIPLE 3: a 32-week study of the prophets and the letters of Paul.

DISCIPLE 4: a 32-week study of the Old Testament Writings (books not in the Torah or Prophets) and the Johannine writings, James, and Jude in the New Testaments

DISCIPLE: JESUS IN THE GOSPELS: a 32-week study of the way each Gospel writer portrays Jesus and expresses his significance.

SHORT-TERM DISCIPLE STUDIES: Dive in deeper to a particular biblical book with one of these 8-12 week studies.

CHRISTIAN BELIEVER: a 32-week study of the classic doctrines of the Christian faith.

Transition to Online Giving

Thanks to everyone who has made the transition to online giving. Because we won't be "passing the plates" in worship for the foreseeable future, **we encourage every family who is able to transition to electronic giving.** There are three ways for you to do that:

- Go to www.fumcmonticello.org/give. 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.

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UPDATE: 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. 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.

When will in-person church events, including worship, resume? In the early stages of the pandemic, we received guidance to wait until there was a fourteen-consecutive-day decline in active cases in our state to enter Phase 1. Although our state leaders and some churches chose not to follow that guidance, a fourteen-consecutive-day decline remains the best metric indicating a decrease in risk to our families. Thus far, the only in-person church events have been Feed Our Neighbors and the drive-by parades. Conditions permitting, we plan to have a drive-in Backpack Blessing the evening of August 23 as schools reopen. If everyone strictly follows the guidance for distancing and masks, etc., we will have more of these drive-in events.

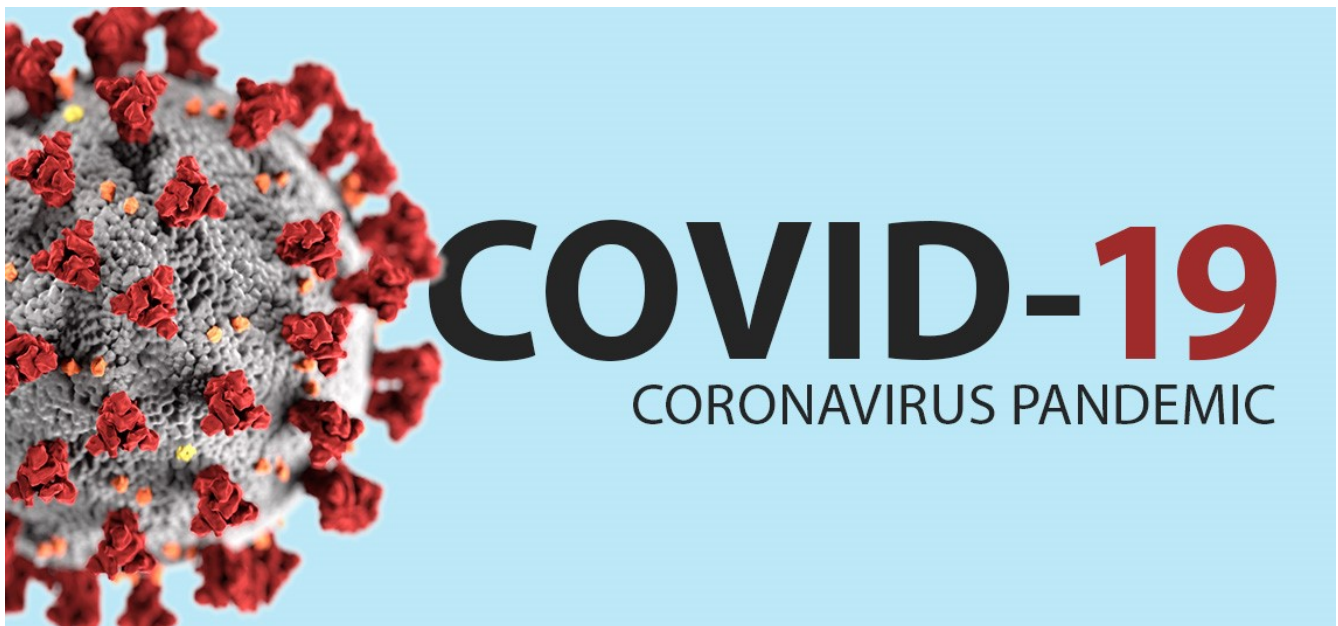
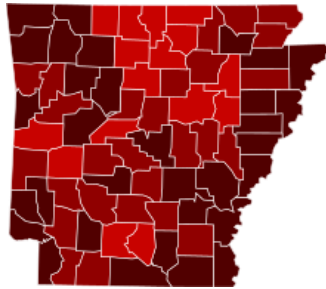
What about Sunday school classes, Small Groups, Circles, etc.? The limits on indoor gatherings (no more than 30 minutes, all in masks, everyone distanced at least 6ft apart at all times) severely limit what we can do inside. It isn't the same as meeting in person, but right now Zoom is the best option we have. The church staff and I are working on online options for discipling children, youth, and adults for this fall. I will be facilitating adult Bible studies and short studies in Zoom and I would be glad to work with any group or class to coordinate meeting in Zoom.

How long will the restrictions be in place? Bishop Mueller has provided pastors with guidance for re-opening in three stages. We will enter Stage 1, allowing groups of 10 persons or less to meet, once we have had fourteen consecutive days of declining cases in the State of Arkansas. In-person, indoor gatherings will be phased in over time, and will include strict enforcement of safety measures like wearing masks and physical distancing. Stage 2 allows for groups of less than 50, and Stage 3 allows for groups of more than 50 with strict enforcement of the restrictions. According to the current guidance, the church will fully re-open without restrictions and safety measures in place when there is a vaccine or 95%-effective treatment for COVID-19.

What can I do? Support our church family through your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, and keep yourself and your family safe and healthy. This includes the following:

- Wear a mask or facial covering anytime you are near people who do not live in your household. It is true that cloth masks aren't 100% effective, but they do *reduce* your risk of infection, especially when everyone is wearing one and you maintain at least 6ft of physical distance.
- Maintain a minimum of 6ft of physical distance between yourself and anyone who does not live in your household. Wear a mask if you have to be indoors with them for any length of time.
- Limit your time indoors with people who do not live in your home. Being indoors – in a home, in a restaurant, or in a vehicle – is *highly* risky. Do not allow anyone in your home who does not live with you. If you must enter someone else's home, masks are essential for everyone, and limit the time you are together. Contracting COVID-19 involves both distance from infected persons and duration of exposure. Based on current research, 5 minutes of conversation in close proximity is enough to transmit the disease. An hour or more of conversation in a home or restaurant is more than enough to spread the disease.

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

August 2020

Important Reminders:

- **August 2:** 8 pm Jr High FUMY Zoom
- **August 3:** 8 pm FUMY Girls Only Zoom: *Haircare Tips*
- **August 5:** 8 pm **All FUMY** Zoom
- **August 9:** 8 pm Jr High FUMY Zoom
- **August 10:** 8 pm FUMY Girls Only Zoom
- **August 12:** 8 pm **All FUMY** Zoom
- **August 16:** 7 pm Jr High Zoom and 8 pm Sr High Zoom
- **August 19:** 7 - 8:30 pm **All FUMY** Zoom
- **August 22: FUMY 17th Annual Planning Day via ZOOM, 10 am - 12 pm**
- **August 23:** 7 pm Jr High Zoom and 8 pm Sr High Zoom
- **August 24: School resumes**
- **August 26:** 7 - 8:30 pm **All FUMY** Zoom
- **August 30:** 7 pm Jr High Zoom and 8 pm Sr High Zoom

FUMY welcomes 8 new 7th graders to our **awesome** youth group! We are hosting Jr High Zooms every Sunday night at 8 pm and we welcome all of our 7th and 8th graders to attend.... We play games, share stories, give prizes and have a devo! It's been such fun getting to know each other.

I miss our youth so much! We look forward to the day when we can gather again in the youth room and watch movies, play games, play ping pong, eat some delicious junk food and just hang out! But until we can safely do that, we will continue to Zoom together.

Special thank you to **Michelle Pounds** for teaching our FUMY Girls how to do Yoga! We had a fun night together and we made a promise to have yoga in person as soon as we can safely do so.

Our youth helped with Vacation Bible School in early July! Special thanks to **Ember Davis** on a job well done as director for a completely virtual VBS. Our youth made some cool videos and helped share Jesus with the children. The end of July brings our **first** FUMY Mission Virtual Experience! We are meeting via zoom on July 30, July 31 and August 1 for worship singing and videos plus small groups. AND our youth are doing mission work projects (more on this next month) all while safe distancing and wearing masks!

August is here and with it comes more challenges, mission opportunities and planning our FUMY year in ministry. On August 22nd we will have our 17th annual FUMY planning retreat only THIS year it will be entirely via Zoom! We will see what direction we plan to go in with the pandemic still raging and once our community sees a decline in active cases, how we can start meeting together in person. Plus we will elect our FUMY officers for 2020-21 AND decide where we will go on our Summer 2021 Mission Trip! We are reminded through all of this that God is ALWAYS with us! We are never alone.

As always, we invite any youth going into the 7th - 12th grade to join us! I am always looking for people to share their faith story to our students on a Wednesday night via zoom. ALSO! We are always looking for new mentors for our youth. So if you feel God tugging on your heart, please let me know. We'd love to get to know you!

Please continue to pray for our youth & their families. Pray for each other. Life is UPSIDE down & we need to lift each other up in prayer.

*In closing, I want to leave you with these words from Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong! Be courageous! Do not be afraid! For the Lord your God will be with you." **God is always with you!***
Christ above all, Lori



Children's Ministry News

THANK YOU to Ember Davis who did an outstanding job as our director of online VBS. When many churches are holding out to try this, Ember took the initiative needed to get ours started and saw it through to completion. It was such a success! The twenty-five children who signed up and watched our online VBS enjoyed these daily: the 'Welcome' and closing by Ember, the prayer and greetings from Bro. Hammett, Sparky the dragon, daily Bible stories and interaction, singing, crafts, and science experiments.

THANK YOU to these who were in the videos to help make VBS come alive for us: Macy Tolin, Luke Tolin, Maddox Smith, Hampton Gilbert, Ryan Wilkerson, Megan Stephens, Cantley Gosdin, Sydney Fallon, and Mallory Fallon.

Thank You to these Children's Sunday School teachers who filled the bags with the many craft items needed that were used daily by the children: Isabel Bacon, Diantha Beer, Kimberly Fletcher. Thank You to Michael Reed for putting the videos together. Thank You to Adalynn Felts who sang along with Jennifer Fryer, Kathy Borchardt, and Bro. Hammett for VBS Sunday online worship.

Ms. Brenda

"And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them." Mark 10:16

*Memorials were given to the glory of
God and in loving memory of:*

Carolyn Brown by: Belinda & Dave Carpenter and Sandra West

Betty Jane Andrews Davis by: Belinda & Dave Carpenter

Wes McCoy by: Belinda & Dave Carpenter

Keith Montgomery by: Sandra West

Judy Ryburn by: Belinda & Dave Carpenter

Jenny Smith by: Sandra West

*And in loving honor of
Elgenia Ross' birthday* by :
Ralph Cotham

Weekly Events

Sundays

9:00 AM Online Worship

Wednesdays:

6:00 Online Wednesday meeting



Due to the increased numbers of Covid-19 the Council cancelled the weekend Camporees for Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts originally scheduled in July and August at Camp DeSoto. We are still having a Camp in the Box of Merit Badges planned by the Council for Boy Scouts the week of August 10 and Cub Scouts the week of August 17. These will be all virtual events. Troop 67 is alternating small group meetings outside and zoom meetings each week and has an August challenge of whoever completes the most merit badges for the month receives a Sonic Gift Card. Stay tuned to find out our winner!

Thanks for your continued support!

First United Methodist Church
317 S. Main St.
Monticello, AR 71655