First United Methodist Church—Gastonia
Church Council Meeting Reports for January 25, 2021

Staff Parish Relations Committee—Janet Long, Chair

SPRC held its first meeting of the year on Monday, January 11, 2021 via Zoom. We have hired a new Director of Music Ministries. Jim O’Dell will start work at FUMC on February 1, 2021. Jim attended our meeting last week for a meet and greet. We are very excited about this addition to our staff. SPRC members and members of the Music Selection Committee also met with participants in the music department the previous week regarding Jim’s hiring.

Staff updates were discussed, including the departure of Aaron Prilliman. We wish him well in his new job. Eddie Ingram’s departure was also discussed. He is no longer working out of our church. He has left Sanctuary Counseling and joined another group. Sanctuary Counseling will handle his replacement. Matthew is the contact person for this since that person is not employed by FUMC.

United Methodist Women—Bethe Rogers, Chair

UMW finished 2020 with hope and confidence that we can meet the needs for Mission under any circumstances. Even though collecting pledges without having Circle meetings was a challenge, we did meet our annual pledge to the Conference.

We held the third of our Drive-By/Drop-Off collection events for Crisis Assistance Ministry and the Robin Johnson Hospice House on October 31st, delivering an overflowing car load of supplies to each.

After much consideration and discussion, we decided it was not feasible to hold our annual frozen food and bake sale fundraiser. Instead, we asked our members to please donate the money they would have spent on the fundraiser for supplies, baked goods or purchases, so we could have some funds to support our local mission projects. Our ladies showed their commitment to mission and UMW is very strong!

We held our allocation meeting in November and were able to distribute $8,875.00 to the following organizations:

CHURCH WIDE: Backpack Weekend Food Program, Children's Ministry, Family Promise, Minister’s Assistance Fund, Parish Nurse Ministry, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Salvation Army Breakfast Teams, Scholarship Fund. Through the Week School, WGB&G Club Tutoring, Youth Ministry
COMMUNITY: Off The Street, Cornerstone Christian Ministry, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Voices for Kids/ Guardian ad Litem, With Friends, On Eagles Wings, Project AGAPE, Stable Resources, UMAR, UMCOR.

If anyone on Church Council knows of a need or program that UMW should consider for 2021, please let us know. We are always looking for opportunities to be in mission within our community.

We are looking forward to UMW Sunday on January 24th and another Drive-By/Drop-Off in February.
United Methodist Men—Harry Petrey, Chair

UMM plans to continue with the Monthly Hotdog Event. We reluctantly cancelled the January event due to the weather and intend to resume with February 5th as the next date. That is assuming that all the Covid protocols don’t change to the negative.

Our client participation remains constant at about 100-120 units distributed, and we still attract a smaller number of "needy," but that is to be expected by the challenges of the times.

We look forward to much greater volunteerism whenever this cycle lends our church community to congregate in person.

We have been contacted about providing some funding for appropriate outdoor seating for the enclosed patio area outside the FLC. Any suggestions shall be taken under advisement.

Music Program/Worship Committee—Susan Lisle (Michelle Graham, Chair)

Representatives from the worship committee successfully decorated the sanctuary and the theater for the season of Advent through Epiphany. The sanctuary was open daily for anyone to visit and pray. Altar design and parament colors are changed as needed. Our brass ensemble had a wonderful series of concerts during Christmas on the steps of the main building. Those who came for drive-by Communion enjoyed hearing the Christmas carols. Two complete Christmas eve services were recorded in the sanctuary. The 162 East Christmas concert/service was live-streamed.

Three different bell quartets rehearse on Wednesday afternoons. They were recorded for December services. We are hoping they can be live-streamed during the upcoming services of Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Easter.

Zooming continues to be the only way to meet with the children’s choirs, adult choirs, and the music committee.

We have successfully completed four virtual anthems and look forward to doing more of these projects. We thank our sound and visual technicians for editing and producing these. FUMC’s archives of video recordings since 2018 is a wonderful source of service music, and I cannot thank the cantors enough for the great job they do every Sunday morning leading the hymns. Don Turner continues to produce CD’s of our 11:00 service.

With the addition of the new chiller on Main Street, the floor of the main choir room, hallway and director’s office had to be dug up for new pipes. The carpet will be re-laid this week and furniture put back into place in time for the new director.

I am assisting 162 East with keyboard parts at Thursday rehearsals and Sunday mornings.

Outreach—Lezlie Hill, Chair

In December, FUMC was able to make Christmas a little brighter for 50 needy children at Pleasant Ridge Elementary for the angel tree.

Also, as in years past, we were able give 50 $25 gift cards to the youth after school program at the West Gastonia Boy’s and Girl’s Club.

Thank you to all the FUMC staff who were able to help out with both of these missions.
Becky Greene, Director of Spiritual Formation

I want this story to be my January report for church council. It highlights why we do what we do!

Dear Becky,

I wanted to share with you an exciting testimony regarding the amazing ways God is using our small group ministry!

Being the leader of a small group, I chose a seven-week study on the life and ministry of Elijah, by Priscilla Shirer.

Those of you organizing and facilitating this ministry had worked hard to set up a system whereby people could view recorded video promos from each small group leader online through our church website.

The evening before our Elijah study was to begin I received an email notification that someone had signed up for this class whose name, email and phone number I did not recognize. I looked up the area code and found that it was from PENNSYLVANIA!

I called the number and was astonished and thrilled to hear this lovely lady tell me her story! She said she had always appreciated the teachings of Priscilla Shirer, had heard she had published this new study on Elijah, and very much wanted to participate in one.

She searched the internet and found several churches in the country who were offering it. But she found OUR PROMO VIDEO ON FACEBOOK and just "knew" this was the one she wanted to try. The fact that it was being offered on Zoom made it possible for her to participate.

We had our first class today. She joined us and expressed her profound gratitude for our being there, offering this class and welcoming her. She shared her story to everyone's delight.

Ten minutes after class I received an email from her thanking us again for being there and for providing the kind of in-depth Bible study and warm fellowship she was feeling such a deep need for, especially in these difficult times.

THAT is why we do what we do in small group ministries, isn’t it?! Not only are we ministering to those among our own flock, but the unusual circumstances which have led us to online communications is touching lives as far away as Pennsylvania.

Thank you to each one who works for, ministers through and attends small groups! May this ministry continue to bear much fruit for our good and His glory!

In His Grace,
Marti Sell
Student Ministries—Stephanie Jenkins, Director

The youth program continues to adapt with Covid restrictions. The youth met in-person in a large group from October through November with no FUMC member Covid cases from our meetings. Now that we are only able to meet in smaller groups, we are balancing zoom and small group gatherings. The youth prefer to be in-person and are “zoomed out.” Some students are in school 5 days a week; others are in school 2 days a week. There are very few who are doing the virtual option this Spring. I did a survey (15 parents responded) and most would like to meet either every Sunday or 1 Sunday a month. The parents are supportive and are appreciative of the continued ministry. We are still striving to be that stable faith community for them to lean on. We continue to reach out to youth in-person, online, and through small group leaders. Thank you for continuing to pray for our students and their families.

Recap from October 22nd - January 22nd (See attached photos!)
• November 8th - Hike to Crowders Mountain
• Dec. 6th - College Student Sunday (many college students submitted videos to be able to participate in a special moment during worship)
• Video Christmas Carol with Sign Language
• Nov. 22nd Outreach - fed 70 families from the Boys & Girls Club & Crisis Assistance Ministries along in partnership with First Presbyterian (Packed Thanksgiving Meal Boxes) (See picture)
• Youth participated in worship during Advent (Reading Apostles Creed)
• Special thanks to the Penegar & Rowe family for hosting two bonfires for the youth so we could meet outside - one for the youth, and one for our college students while they were home on break
• Youth Leader Appreciation Zoom (Delivered appreciation bags to youth counselors & Sunday School teachers
• Jan 17th Outreach - Packed 120 Friendly Neighbor bags with a bottle of water, package of crackers, wet wipe, chapstick and travel size tissue + a note that lists area resources. These are available for pick up at the reception desk for neighbors. (See picture) We encourage anyone to come and pick up 5 or fewer bags to distribute when you are out and about in Gastonia.
• Jan 24th Zoom about "Emotions/Big Feelings" for youth & youth parents with Dr. Trish Murray - youth leaders delivered bags to ALL students
• Winter Sr-Hi Mini-Mission Trip/Mid-Hi Lock-In cancelled due to Covid.

Coming Soon
• March 14th - Youth Sunday
• May 23rd - Graduate Sunday (Earlier this year as school gets out earlier!)
• Scholarship Application Process
• July 11 – July 17, 2021 Sr Hi Mission Trip to NC Coast with CCC (TBD - with task force approval)
• July 25 – July 31, 2021 Mid Hi Mission Trip to NC Coast with CCC (TBD - with task force approval)

Other Updates from Stephanie:
We had a blast making the Christmas Story in 2020 Video Drama. If you didn’t get to see it.... here’s the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAFVGAR13wo
Preschool and Children’s Ministry--Kristi McClellan, Director

Quick Summary/Updates:

- The Preschool has been in session since October, with no covid cases. We have been successful with our small class pods. We have a very long waiting list and are hopeful that we can maybe slowly expand in the spring and summer.
- The parents have been very supportive and have expressed how thankful and pleased they are with the preschool.
- The Preschool Christmas Program was done over video and turned out very cute.
- Fall CARnival was so much fun. The parents expressed how much the children loved it. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers for your help with the hot dogs and touchless games. We had members of the community come through too; they said they follow us on social media. I even had two other Children’s Directors come through and say that they follow us to get ideas for their smaller churches.
- We also had positive feedback from the pre-recording of some of the children’s time videos thru Advent. The congregation likes seeing the children and the children focus in on the service better when they see themselves or their friends.
- Advent materials and gifts were mailed to Camp Sunshine children.
- Advent bags were prepared and given out at the drive-thru; thank you to Julie Heath for helping me put these together. They received a lot of positive feedback. Also, thank you to David, Bee, and Carol for their help delivering to shut-ins. These bags even went to other states. Grandparents even mailed them to Florida and other places.
- Children’s ministry has continued with drive-thrus, over zoom, through daily suggestions on a REMIND app, and the parent’s weekly email, FUMCKids Monday Memo (picture below: Mission Monday, Table Topics Tuesday, Wacky Wednesday, Thankful Thursday and Family Fun Friday). These daily activities take the Bible stories for the week and encourage families to talk and play with their children before Sunday mornings. Sunday school lessons are posted on Facebook on Sunday Mornings with a video. I am also trying to send home Sunday school items, like the “remember your baptism craft”

Coming Soon:

- Continuing in the winter and spring, choirs and Bible story time have come together on zoom for Wacky Wednesday at 5:30. We are trying to limit the zooms as to not overwhelm the parents. It is fun to share the story, play a game, sing and pray.
- Butterfly Orders will start soon. They are due by Ash Wednesday.
- Pancake Mix Pick-up for Families (week of Feb.8th -12th) for Shrove Tuesday and Lent bags (6 items to reflect each week of lent, butterfly orders, stickers sheets, pancake activities, giving, prayer pail ideas, etc.)
- I am working on getting families to support this new ministry that Juta/David/Bee/Avery are connecting multi-generations and shut-ins. Boxed cookies will be delivered soon.

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**Advent Baggie Full of ways to worship this advent season.**

*In the advent bag:
- Advent Wreath Magnet
- Advent Devotions
- Christmas Morning Offering Envelope
- Glow Stick
- Jesus Birthday Cake Recipe
- Nativity scene activity
- Other service & worship ideas

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**FUMC’s Fall CARnival**

Join us for Fall Carnival from the comfort of your car:

**Wednesday, October 28**

5:30-8:30pm
Communications/FLC Director—Alyssa Morris Overcash

Hello! 2021 is off to a busy start!
As you know Livestream has ramped up during the pandemic, so I am grateful for the help from Stephanie Jenkins. We have been busy on Sunday mornings and recording and creating videos for services and social media. Stephanie has a big job with the Youth, so we are looking for volunteers to help out with the Livestream! I have posted about getting volunteers for Sunday & Wednesday livestreams. I have had multiple people reach out, so I am excited to start training this week and hopefully implement a schedule and have people join us!

We are learning lots of new technology to make sure that the livestream is the best of our ability! Bill Todd & DT have been great helps at 162 East as we they to navigate the sound system and they are teaching me lots of new things, so thank you for your patience on some recent sound issues!

We have started small groups, and the small group booklet was sent out with the January Newsletter to save money on postage. It can also be viewed online here. I had a big job with the booklet and so Stephanie J. was able to help out and did a great job on recording and editing the videos of each small group leader. I scheduled each video to post on social media leading up to their meeting and I think we got a lot of traction with those and sign ups looked good online. Thanks to Clara Harris for her work on organizing all the information Becky Greene gave her for the 2021 winter/spring small group season.

Thankful for the busy season in the communications world (not to mention my personal world as I navigate being a wife) and thankful for a church that helps support what we do!
Buildings and Campus: FUMC and Digitrol completed installation of a new chiller for the HVAC system in early January 2021. The chiller we replaced had given 25 years of reliable service, but one of the two compressors failed forcing us to look at two options: repair or replace. The Buildings and Grounds Committee sought proposals from three firms to repair or replace the unit. Due to the unit being at the end of its service life, and with the real possibility the second compressor could fail even after a $45k-50k repair (forcing a second $45k-50k repair), the B&G Committee settled on replacement and contracted with Digitol (our current HVAC provider) based on their favorable pricing and their knowledge and experience with the current HVAC system. Total Cost was $143,750, including substantial electrical work.

COVID-19 Response: FUMC staff and campus visitors continue to diligently mask and distance for their safety and the safety of others. Custodial Staff disinfects common areas multiple times per day. FUMC hosts small groups (currently 10 people max) and meetings on campus following safety guidelines from the Bishop’s office, Gaston County DHHS, and our own Reopening Task Force. However, the majority of meetings still take place via Zoom, and are likely to continue in that manner at least until the summer. FUMC has hosted, in partnership with Kintegra Health, a number of drive-thru COVID-19 Testing events over the past several months. Additionally, we have offered to host COVID-19 vaccination drive-thru events should a local entity wish to use our campus for such a purpose.

Paycheck Protection Program: First United Methodist Church received a loan under the Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program (first round) in April 2020. The Finance Committee at its most recent meeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, tasked the Business Office with exploring FUMC’s eligibility to participate in a Second Draw PPP loan. I have been in touch with United Bank (FUMC’s bank) and have started compiling data to determine if FUMC qualifies for the second round of PPP.

Respectfully,

Dave H. Davis
Business Administrator