

the Messenger

Volume 22, Issue 11 January 2021

The Monthly Newsletter of Myers Memorial United Methodist Church in Gastonia, NC

Upcoming Church Events

Ongoing Collection for Homeless Neighbors

- January 3: Epiphany & Communion Sunday Worship at 9a, 10:15-10:45a: Drive by pick up of Communion Elements
- January 10: Baptism of our Lord Sunday, Worship at 9a, Baptism Remembrance, Drive by 10:15a-10:45a
- January 10: Leadership Summit, 1p, Zoom
- January 13: Deadline for donations and volunteering with PIT Count.
- January 14&15: PIT Count Training
- January 26: Point in Time Homeless Count

ONGOING

Sundays & Wednesdays:
Children, Youth, Sunday School Classes & Bible Studies

Tuesdays: Grief Share & Divorce Care

Wednesdays: Morning Bible Study, Choir Ensembles

Thursdays: Soul Purpose

Fridays: Morning Prayer

Epiphany 2021

Epiphany is the day Christians remember the coming of the Magi to visit Jesus, bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The arrival of these visitors was a sign that the incarnation of God in Christ had been made known and was recognized by the heavens to the whole world, so that even Gentile wise men from the East come to pay him homage. It occurs every year on January 6, the 13th day after Christmas. At Myers Memorial we will celebrate Epiphany Sunday on January 3rd. Please join us for Worship at 9am, live on Facebook and YouTube and then drive by the church between 10:15a and 10:45a to pick up Communion elements, your annual scripture verse and chalk to mark your home with an Epiphany blessing.

Baptism of the Lord Sunday

On Sunday, January 10, we will celebrate Baptism of the Lord Sunday. This is the day in the Christian year we remember and celebrate the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. We will also remember our own baptism, that celebration of the love God has for each of us and all humanity. Join us for worship at 9a, live on Facebook and YouTube. Then drive by the church between 10:15a and 10:45a to touch the water and remember your baptism. If you have not been baptized and would like to be, please reach out to Pastor Sally as she invites you to acknowledge the grace God has poured out on you.

We're going to Thrive in 2021!

Without knowing it in 2019, we have truly lived into our 2020 word of the year, *Transformation*. God has a remarkable way of taking our human plans and turning them in to Godly work. We have surely **transformed our daily life, our worship and our minds**, so now it's time to Thrive! Our 2021 ministry theme word will be Thrive. *cont. pg. 2*

Thriving in 2021, continued

Merriam-Webster defines “thrive” as a verb, an action word, meaning *to grow vigorously; flourish; prosper; to progress toward a goal despite or because of circumstances*. What images come to mind when you meditate on this word? Be truthful. Are you just happy to have made it through another day? Are stress and worry rather than joy, peace and love filling your life? How has 2020 transformed your faith? How can you turn surviving into thriving in 2021? On Sunday, January 17, we will begin delving into what it means to thrive as individuals, as a church, and as the body of Christ.

Giving in 2021

If you rely on the church’s Vanco online payment option, please remember to log into your account **this month to renew your giving into 2021**. It’s important that you do this each year. If you have questions you may reach out to Angie Rutledge at arutledge@cbh.org or Sarah Davis in the church office. You may give online at any time by visiting www.MyersMemorialUMC.org/give. Thank you for your continued generosity to Myers Memorial UMC.

In-Person Worship

Worship will continue to be online. The Reopening Committee will reconsider our ability to meet for in-person worship once Gaston County is no longer labeled in red, or at risk for a critical community spread. Myers Memorial UMC has had 15% of our worshipping congregation diagnosed with COVID-19. While we continue to plan opportunities, we do this with an abundance of caution and are prepared to shift or cancel plans. Please continue to practice safe gathering habits and wear-wash-wait as we seek to do no harm.

Helping Homeless Neighbors

January is typically the coldest month of the year in our area. This January we wish to again prepare to help meet the basic needs of our homeless neighbors. We are collecting the following items during January. We hope to have most all the items at church by January 13th so we can deliver to the appropriate places for sorting and packing.

- ◇ Toothpaste/Toothbrush
- ◇ Soap
- ◇ Deodorant
- ◇ Wet Wipes/Baby Wipes
- ◇ Vaseline/Mineral Oil
- ◇ Lotion
- ◇ Chapstick
- ◇ Shampoo/Conditioner
- ◇ Leave-in Shampoo/Conditioner
- ◇ Ethnic Hair Products
- ◇ No Rinse Body Wash
- ◇ Underwear (men/women/children)
- ◇ Washcloths/Towels
- ◇ Feminine Hygiene Products
- ◇ Gloves, Hats, Scarves
- ◇ T-shirts
- ◇ Socks
- ◇ Rain Ponchos/Jackets
- ◇ Umbrellas
- ◇ Hand Warmers
- ◇ Flashlights
- ◇ Lap Blankets
- ◇ Tarps
- ◇ Sleeping Bags
- ◇ Trash bags
- ◇ Pop-top/Easy Open Foods
- ◇ Bottled Water

[#ourmissionistolove](https://www.instagram.com/ourmissionistolove)

Homeless Ministry

2020 started out with us looking closer at the reality of homelessness in our immediate area. **The problem hasn't gotten any better yet we have become more educated and seek to continue to understand and respond.** January is the coldest month of the year in our area. It's also the time when our homeless neighbors are the most vulnerable. You are invited to make a difference in the life of the homeless in Gaston County through a variety of activities this January.

Warm Up Sunday On January 13th in an effort to keep our neighbors warm we encourage you to bring the items on this list. We will receive these items, pray over them and pass them on to be assembled into care packages that will be delivered before the end of January. Shop the amazon list at www.MyersMemorialUMC.org/serve

Point in Time Study Tuesday, January 26, time to be determined, but will be after the sun goes down into the evening. Volunteers will go out into the community, accompanied by police officers who know our community the best, to gather information and share care packages with those in shelters and outside. The deadline to volunteer with the PIT count is January 13. And training will be provided on January 14-15. You may let Pastor Sarah know you are interested (churchoffice@myersmemorialumc.com). This effort is being coordinated by a number of community agencies under the leadership of Gayle Mahl with COVID precautions in place.



Love Feast and Lessons & Carols

Hundreds of people enjoyed candles, sugar cake and warm coffee at this year's Love Feast and Lessons & Carols online service which combined current and past imagery and music.

Support Groups

Connie Elzey, dce@myersmemorialumc.com
GriefShare and Divorce Care Support groups continue to meet on Tuesdays. A new session of GriefShare will begin January 12 at 10a in the Narthex. A new Session of Divorce Care will begin January 26 at 7p via zoom. If you or someone you know could benefit from one or both of these ongoing groups, please be in contact with Connie at the email above or call the church office, 704-864-3222.



Updated Church Directory

Heather is working hard to maintain our church directory. We would like to offer the most up-to-date version of our directory at the January drive thru ministry opportunities. We know college addresses **have changed, adult children have moved on, and maybe you've made a transition in 2020.** Do you still have that landline number? Help us remain connected. If you have any updates to make for your family, please contact Heather in the church office (704-864-3222).

Heather Steffey, heather@myersmemorialumc.com

Leadership Summit

Pastor Sally Queen, pastor@myersmemorialumc.com

If you have been asked to serve on a church committee in 2021, please make plans to attend the virtual 2021 Leadership Summit on January 10 at 1p. All members of teams or committees are encouraged to attend. This gathering will give us the chance to reflect on the 2021 Ministry Theme: Thrive. Our time together will be different than in year's past yet it will continue to be a time for designing goals to guide our work in 2021. The opportunities to serve like never before are plentiful. Our church is a thriving community of believers because of you! The program staff and I look forward to hosting this event each year and your participation is important to us. A zoom link will be emailed to you in a separate email and an RSVP to the church office is appreciated by January 6.

Youth Ministry

Tresca McSwain, thmcswain@gmail.com

January Youth Events will continue to be virtual. Parents and Youth, an email survey will be coming to you with questions for the new year! **We're planning new things but we want them to meet your needs and desires so please respond!** Summer Mission Week Save these days: July 18-24 as we seek to serve God's people through mission this summer. Our desire is to spend a week at Hinton Rural Life Center in rural western North Carolina.



Drive by Joy!

We have really enjoyed our drive through visits during 2020! We hope to see you and your smiling eyes in 2021!

Welcome to the Family

With Joy & Thanksgiving we welcome these children as members of the family of Christ. We will surround these children with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. *UMC Baptism Liturgy*

Payton Current & Maggie Current, daughters of AJ and Lauren Current, were baptized November 29

Sarah Atkins Rhodes, daughter of Thomas and Brinkley Rhodes, was baptized December 19

Luke Franklin Cabaniss, son of Ben and Jennifer Cabiness, was baptized December 20

Myers by the Numbers

As of 12/21/20	Nov. 29	Dec. 6	Dec. 13	Love Feast	Dec. 20
Offering	\$7,187	\$24,299	\$10,321	Lesson & Carols	\$14,986
Facebook Engagements (comments, likes, shares)	171	136	183	14	261
Estimated People Reached via Facebook	1,500	1,100	1,300	313	1,200
Peak Live Facebook Viewers	75	81	83		82
YouTube Views	134	84	87	156	57

December Blessings at Myers Memorial UMC

While we continue to worship through a digital platform, there are many ways that Myers Memorial UMC continues to be the church in the world. Thank you for sharing your prayers, presence, gifts, talents and witness!

- Advent Prayer & Meditations
- JOY-filled Drive Thru
- Gingerbread Sunday
- Lessons & Carols
- Youth gathering at Church
- Continued Outdoor Gatherings
- Collected 85+ Christmas gifts for Older Adults & Children through Salvation Army Angel Tree
- Donations to Cancer Services
- Collected items & delivered Blessing Boxes for dozens of School Children.
- Daily restocking of the Food Pantry in the Patch
- Staff Participating in ongoing Continuing Education
- Making 125 Sandwiches for W. Gastonia Boys & Girls Club
- Friday Morning Prayer Group, 7:15a
- Broadcast Weekly Live Worship simultaneously on YouTube and Facebook
- Abundant & Faithful Giving
- Shared the Peace of Christ through cards & phone calls
- Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts continue to meet at the Church
- NarAnon and Alanon meet at the church
- Cleared Wooded Lot at the Church under the direction of an arborist
- Youth Movie Night
- Angel Tree Sorting
- GriefShare and DivorceCare meet weekly
- Weekly FB Room Meetings with Children & Families to celebrate Advent
- Made ready a space for Pastoral Counselor
- CAM food collections
- Thousands of dollars donated to meet the mission needs of Myers
- Communion Pick Up
- Parking Lot Prayers
- Choir Gathering in Person and on Zoom
- Women's Bible Study
- Packing meals for Weekend Backpack Ministry
- Gathered for prayer and scripture reading
- Youth Virtual Christmas Party & Ornament Exchange
- 2020 Advent Sermon Series: Fear Not!
- Weekly phone calls and cards
- Committees meeting on Zoom and in person
- Christmas Gifts to Christ
- 2021 Stewardship Campaign
- Sunday School classes gather in-person & online
- Celebrated the Baptism of 4 children
- Cared for members and staff with Covid
- Celebrated Laity of the Year
- OneBlood Blood Drive, 18 units of blood given
- Reopening Committee spend time learning about new cleaning options.
- Mission Possible Work Day
- Ongoing book studies on "White Fragility"
- Serve as substitute Meals on Wheels Delivery volunteers
- Serve as Crisis Assistance Ministry Volunteers
- Ongoing discussions with meeting the needs of our Homeless Neighbors
- Continue to collect food and supplies for our neighbors with need
- Sending cards to members, visitors, and community members
- Engaged in Worship together through various opportunities to connect.



In December, 18 units of blood were donated. Since March, blood drives at MMUMC have collected 67 units with a community impact of 201 local patients and families!

Open for Ministry

The church has never closed, we've only modified how we do what we've always done - love one another. Our calendar continues to be filled with ministry groups who have scheduled to meet. Small groups are meeting inside, outside and online! Drive by worship opportunities continue to bring Joy to all who participate. We continue to love and serve our community in safe, meaningful ways. We look forward to the day when our doors will swing wide open for visitors; until then we want to connect with you. Please call or email your staff and let us know how we can best connect with YOU!

Communion Sunday

You are invited to drive by the Bell Tower on Sunday, January 3 between 10:15a and 10:45a to pick up your blessed communion elements and park for prayers. January 3rd is also Epiphany, 12 days after Christmas. We'll be handing out chalk for you to bless your homes in 2021. The Health Cabinet reminds you to please follow the 3Ws: Wait the distance, Wear your masks and Wash your hands.

Children's Ministry

Connie Elzey, dce@myersmemorialumc.com

Celebrate Wonder | Include

This month we'll explore all that are included because of Jesus! Psalm 145:9 says: *The Lord is good and to everyone and everything; God's compassion extends, to all his handiwork!* A limited number of Sunday School packets will be prepared this month, please reach out to Connie if your family would like a packet. Packets can be picked up during office hours on December 31 or at the Drive by on Sunday, January 3. We continue to post lessons by our teachers in our Facebook group, sent via email and you can see bonus videos on Amplify Media (see article elsewhere in this Newsletter). Make 2021 a year where we include all of God's children in learning more about God's love for them and for us.

Reading in 2021

The 2021 UMW reading list is out and we are continuing this group of women who like to read together from this list. You do not have to be a member of UMW to participate in this reading group. As we seek to thrive in 2021, we will begin with [One Day I Wrote Back: Interacting with Scripture through Creative Writing](#) by Jane Herring. We will meet in late January to discuss this book via Zoom and pick our next selection.

You may order books from your favorite book retailer or via Amazon (remember to select THaKO as your charitable organization when shopping via smile.amazon.com).

The full UMW Reading Program list can be found at unitedmethodistwomen.org/readingprogram. If you are interested in the Women's Reading Group, we'd love for you to join us! Please contact Sarah Davis, churchoffice@myersmemorialumc.com or 704-864-3222.



Gingerbread Sunday

Many Thanks to Louisa Suggs for creating delicious gingerbread men for all to enjoy! Always a great addition to the season!



Randy Black, Jason Scofield and Glenn Fried pictured with our Lay Leader, Chris McCullen. We give thanks for their leadership with weekly worship and church-wide technology advancements.

Amplify Media

Have you check out Amplify? It's a multimedia platform that features thousands of videos you can use for study, reflection, worship and inspiration. Think of it as Netflix for the Christian Faith! Amplify has videos that can be used in your small groups, Bible studies, and of course in your own personal faith journey. You can access all of these videos anytime and on almost any device ~ for Free! Go to: my.amplifymedia.com/amplify. Enter Our Access Code: XJFVBY You will need to create a free account but then you can access hundreds of lessons, meditations, and more for children, youth and adults!

The Wesley Challenge

churchoffice@myersmemorialumc.com

You are encouraged to start 2021 with The Wesley Challenge! The Wesley Challenge is about going beyond words to develop spiritual habits, practices and actions that can lead toward a thriving Christian life. Using twenty-one questions developed by John & Charles Wesley, founding fathers of our denomination, we'll be challenged to work with one question per day for 21 days. For each question we'll have a few practical ideas as we develop our personal, healthy, sustainable rhythms of faithful Christian living well beyond 2021.

Pastor Sarah Davis will facilitate this study for adults and youth on Sundays beginning January 17. We will check in weekly on Sunday afternoons via zoom and utilize Amplify Media for watching videos from the author. Participant books for The Wesley Challenge by Chris Folmsbee are available on Amazon, Cokesbury, or other online retailers in various formats. We will also have a limited number of participant guides in the church office for \$12. You may make arrangements for pick up during office hours or at Sunday drive thru events. This challenge is not just something to complete, but the starting of a more authentic faith in relationship with God, self and others. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Church Office (704-864-3222) or via email above.

A New Office at Myers Memorial UMC

2021 will bring a familiar face back to Myers Memorial UMC! Rev. Eddie Ingram, has joined Spirit Song Counseling Group. Due to the commitment First UMC has with Sanctuary Counselling Group, Eddie is transitioning his office to the former Library at Myers Memorial UMC. Eddie will see clients virtually until safe to meet in person. To maintain confidentiality, Eddie and his clients will use a secure entrance facing Advanced Auto Parts. We look forward to Eddie sharing his gifts with Myers Memorial UMC in 2021. To contact Eddie, please email: Eddie@SpiritSongCounseling.com

*Myers Memorial
United Methodist Church*

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