

The Evangel

Newsletter of Big Sandy and Western Chapel

United Methodist Circuit, May 2, 2021

From the Pastor's Pen:

Most of us have some knowledge of the times when Jesus sent out folks to minister in His name. I have counted at least a dozen times Jesus did this. Those who followed Jesus kept up His model. In Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas, with prayer and fasting, ordained elders (The KJV says) and appointed them to the churches. In Titus 1:5 Paul reminded Titus that he was to order the church and appoint *elders* (in United Methodism this is a title used for fully ordained ministers) to every town. All of these Biblical precedents are very familiar to our denomination, particularly for those who've been to Annual Conference and seen the Ordination worship service and the closing service of the Annual Conference where the Bishop officially appoints the ministers.

Every minister is appointed to a church one conference year at a time. Both churches and ministers can share their *preference* each conference year regarding their appointment. But because it is only a preference, some churches desiring a change have their pastor re-appointed and vice versa. And some pastors requesting to be re-appointed find that the Spirit led the Bishop and Cabinet to do something different. Having served on the Cabinet for 3 years, I've seen this happen and believe in the words of Jesus, "Where two or more are gathered in my name there I am also." My faith tells me this is true especially when the Cabinet meets: Christ is there with them.

This past fall both the circuit-wide Staff Parish team and I requested that I be re-appointed. However, a couple of weeks ago, our superintendent based in Asheville and the superintendent located at Lake Junaluska, asked me to meet with them. They explained they knew how much I loved my people and my appointment but they also wanted me to pray about a different appointment for a church undergoing a great change in Waynesville.

Throughout my ministry I have been blessed and gifted by God to help churches going through transitions or significant changes. The appointment the Cabinet asked me to pray about is one where my gifts and experience are suited for this church at this time and this was something God kept impressing upon me. More so, both DS's assured me that they were confident about a wonderful person laid on their heart to follow me at Big Sandy UMC and Western Chapel UMC. Therefore, they asked me to prayerfully consider my gifts, experience in "change situations" and God's calling on my heart.

After much prayer, listening to the Spirit and seeking to be obedient to my holy vows at ordination, to always go where sent, with a heavy heart, I realized I need to follow the Holy Spirit's leading. Like Isaiah and so many other servants, I must say, "Yes. Here I am. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8). I truly struggled with this decision and was reminded of many others who dedicated themselves to the Lord's service and were obedient to His directives. I think of Jonah, not wanting to be sent to Nineveh and wanting to go to Tarshish instead but ending up in Nineveh in spite of *his* desires! I think of Paul, with his heart's desire to evangelize Spain. But that didn't happen. God needed him elsewhere.

The way I've been contemplating this unexpected change is encapsulated in the title of an old Broadway show, "*Your Arms are Too Short to Box with God.*" My human side, my "old man" as Paul puts it in Romans 6:6, says to me, "follow the desires of your heart and emotions, stay where you love being and are being loved." But in Christ and with my vows to go where sent, I have told the superintendents and Bishop Leeland, "Yes, I will be obedient to follow God's will as discerned by the cabinet and go where sent." I will be your pastor until June 30 and hope and pray we will work together to lean into "completing the work that was begun in you" in Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

In Joy,

Pastor Mike

Big Sandy News:

Please keep your Community Impact Team in your prayers. They have focused in on ministry to help the seniors in our entire area, regardless of religious affiliation. The team also includes team mates who are on the board of the Sandy Mush Community Center. It is truly an example of collaboration with an organization that shares some of the church's values. In mid-May, our church team will be presenting to other churches in the program, from all across North Carolina, for their feedback. Please keep the team in prayer. More, even today (May 2) following church, the team will meet with the senior outreach specialist of the NC Council of Churches by Zoom and follow that with a meeting of the executive director of the Buncombe County Council on Aging. This is very typical of your team in that following church last Sunday they met with our church's coach, the Rev. Dr. Heather Kilbourne for a similar amount of time. The "end game" of the Community Impact Team is a defined, articulated plan to help seniors with a \$15,000 grant from NCRural funded by the Duke Endowment.

Western Chapel News:

Western Chapel celebrates the May 2, worship service, named by our UM Book of Worship, "An Order of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child" for Mason Landreth. More, the Western Chapel church, since safe, socially distanced worship has resumed, has also resumed its tradition of food collection on the first Sunday of each month. If there is a catastrophe in the community, such as a fire, the food is delivered there. If, thankfully, there has not been a catastrophe, the food is delivered to a ministry where it may be given to folks in need. Please add bringing food to your calendar for those locally living in the shadow of food insecurity, on the first Sunday of the month, if you worship at Western Chapel.

Stewardship Corner:

Sociologist George Barna writes, "Adults who attend church regularly but do not donate to their church are clearly different from those who attend regularly and give. The differences are revealing" "Simply put, the more firmly an adult embraces fundamental Judeo-Christian principles, the more likely he or she is to donate to a church. Donors are more certain about the existence and the reliability of God; they are more likely to consider the church to be relevant to their own lives and needs; they more commonly think of affiliating with a church as a positive, beneficial relationship; and they are more apt to believe that the Christian faith has all the answers to leading a successful life. The differences do not end there. Donors are also more likely to believe that the pursuit of personal spiritual development is an important and necessary component to meaningful living. They are also more likely to view the church's efforts at raising money as a means toward enabling the church to provide ministry services than to characterize it as a self-serving act. In other words, donors are more likely than nondonors to align themselves theologically with traditional Judeo-Christian thinking and teaching. Adults who attend church but do not donate ... possess neither a true ownership of the Christian faith nor a sense of urgency about the mission of Christianity." [George Barna] What does your giving say about your believing?

Keep up!

A great way to serve Christ and our local congregations is to keep up with both district and conference news. Both news sources offer funding, ideas, important dates, seminars and ways to reach folks in mission and evangelism for Christ. Visit the conference website at www.wnccumc.org and click on news and subscribe, or have a loved one do so and print out or read the results. You can do the same thing for the district, visit: www.blueridgedistrictumc.org.

Annual Conference will be virtual again this year on June 12 due to the Covid19 pandemic. If you'd like to listen in, visit the conference website at www.wnccumc.org.

Remember, if you have news for the circuit wide website, for the good of the circuit or the community, please send information to: big sandywesternchapel@ gmail.com