

The Evangel

Newsletter of Big Sandy and Western Chapel
United Methodist Circuit, June 6, 2021
From the Pastor's Pen:

Dear Friends,

This last newsletter article is a bittersweet one for me in that even though I said, “Yes” to the Lord regarding a new appointment, I didn’t expect to be writing this kind of article this soon! That’s the “bitter” part along with the fact that Lauralee and I will miss you all so much! The “sweet”, which far exceeds the bitter, has been getting to know you all and the love we’ve shared. I cherish the fact that while I will no longer be your pastor, I will always be your friend. That means: keeping each other mutually in prayer, sharing a cup of coffee at Annual Conference and occasionally sharing good news about our families through cards and social media.

I will also cherish knowing how much God showed up in our time together. I mean, think about it: We were in ministry together through most of the COVID-19 pandemic and yet it appears, we’ve about made it to the other side healthy. When it wasn’t safe to worship together, God showed up and inspired leaders to create parking lot worship, joining our congregations together in worshipping the Risen Christ. And even that coming together was a blessing, wasn’t it? If I heard it once, I heard it a dozen times, “I’ve so loved getting to know our neighbor-Christians better than ever before!” We’ve also started this little newsletter and now have a website! www.bigsandywesternchapel.org. And then, it was such a joy to see both churches pitch in and get involved in one of the best ways the circuit ever has, in memory of sweet Olivia from Western Chapel, for an above and beyond food collection for hungry families and children at Thanksgiving.

Finally, what a movement of God we’ve seen in Big Sandy and the community center; the formulation of a team that was trained and discerned a ministry caring for our seniors, that will soon be funded by NCRural. I have been saddened to hear of some churches that rather “rolled over” and gave up when the pandemic came, but our churches, by God’s grace and power, kept on growing and advancing the Kingdom. That is a real praise, isn’t it?

Another great joy that I will carry with me all of my days is the experience Lauralee and I had of the great love the churches extended to us, to other members and to the community. Many of you have heard me say that your former District Superintendent, Beth Crissman said to me, “Mike, these are the two most loving churches in the entire Blue Ridge District.” And Beth was so right! Because that’s the kind of people God’s love has shaped you all to be, both individually and as congregations. I know you all will continue to offer that same love toward Lisa Beth, your new pastor, to each other and to the community.

Finally, I leave filled with anticipation regarding what God will do in your tomorrows! Our God said, in Isaiah 43:19, “Behold, I am doing a new thing!” I can’t wait to hear of the new missions and ministry these two great congregations do with your new pastor. From the bottom of my heart, I join with Paul as he wrote to the church at Philippi, (Phil. 1:6) “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” This means, for Western Chapel and Big Sandy United Methodist congregations, the best is yet to be!

In Joy,

Michael F. “Mike” Bailey

Annual Conference News:

Due to the pandemic, Annual Conference will be “virtual” again this year. It begins on June 12th at 10 a.m. If you would like to “stream” the conference, go to YouTube and search: WNC Annual Conference 2021. This year, the conference is thanking Bishop and Mrs. Leeland for their faithful service, as they enter retirement in September of this year. The 2021 Annual Conference Offering will be evenly divided between two important ministries, *The Northern Haiti Mission Connection* and *UMAR*, as requested by Bishop and Mrs. Leeland.

The Northern Haiti Mission Connection partnership supports the work and ministry of Dr. Eugene Maklin and New Hope Hospital. Working with local Haiti leaders, collaborating partners place an emphasis on education, microlending, healthcare and clean water initiatives in Northern Haiti.

UMAR, a ministry founded here in Western North Carolina, promotes community inclusion, independence and growth for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through residential, employment and cultural enrichment opportunities.

Checks can be made payable to “WNCC Treasurer” and mailed to the WNC Conference Center at P. O. Box 2757, Huntersville, NC 28070.

Stewardship Corner:

The Paying and Praying Hands

“In the late fifteenth century when Albrecht Dürer was just a struggling student, he and a friend, Franz Knigstein, worked so hard and long they had little time for study and art. So they decided one day, by drawing lots, that Albrecht would continue studying while Franz would work to support him; and then when Albrecht became successful, he would support Franz while Franz finished his studies.”

“Albrecht succeeded brilliantly and returned to relieve Franz. Then he discovered what a great sacrifice his friend had made for him. As Franz worked at hard manual labor, his fingers had become twisted and hard. His long slender fingers and sensitive hands were permanently crippled. But even so, Franz had no bitterness— only joy that his dear friend, Albrecht, had attained success. His reward was making possible the work of an artist whose art lends beauty to countless millions even to this day, some 500 years later.”

“There is a sequel to this story. One day Albrecht saw his loyal friend kneeling, his rough and gnarled hands clasped in silent prayer. Albrecht rapidly sketched what he saw. From that sketch came one of the truly great masterpieces. Dürer gave it the simple but moving title: ‘The Praying Hands.’ That, too, was made possible because someone was willing simply to serve, to give.” [Pulpit Helps, Windows of Westminster UPC]



Christ calls each of us to give sacrificially for his work—but for an even greater cause—that his Spirit can live in the hearts of our children and people in our community who have not yet let him into their lives.

What kind of sacrifice are you planning to make for that cause?

Community News:

If you're looking for a time and place to celebrate the independence of the United States with your family and neighbors, consider dropping by the Sandy Mush Community Center on Saturday July, 3. For more details about the holiday festivities, chat with Keith Wells, Al Davis, Amy Surratt or Amanda Barnes.

Transition Sunday:

Because so many pastors and their families go through the arduous task of physically moving, Transition Sunday, this year is July 4th. By our conference directive we will have a guest preacher on July 4 to be announced at a later time. Pastor Lisa Beth is appointed on July 1, but she will be considered “in office” on July 5.

Let us all be in prayer that each of us have a safe and happy Fourth of July and Summer.