



THE GOOD NEWS

Lake Gibson United Methodist Church

To be a joyful church family that is crucial to our community



From the Pastor

Life has sure changed in the last few months. What we once took as normal is no more. People walk around with masks on and there is no shaking of hands or hugging. There are no live sports on television or on the field, no concerts, no plays, no band, no gatherings for graduations or weddings or funerals and worst of all – NO CHURCH!!! Things have sure changed, but is it all for the bad?

This coronavirus has forced us to think of others more than ourselves. We consciously try to do no harm to others as we keep social distancing, wear masks and avoid large gatherings. It has forced us to put the Gospel out on the Internet so that it is available to more people than before and can be accessed 24/7. This virus, that we all despise, is allowing the Gospel to be spread to every corner of the earth in all languages.

COVID-19 slowed all of us down and reminded us that relationships are more important than material stuff. It reminded us how precious and fragile life is and what a gift of God every day on this earth is. Yet – we often lament over what we have lost – the old ways – and we spurn the new ways. I was thinking about this and wishing we could go back to the way church was and should be (in my mind) when God brought me up short. He reminded me that He was still God and I was not. He reminded me He is always here with us, no matter what our situation may be, and that He was the one that would do a new thing.

I started to think about the early church. They followed Jesus and sat on the shore while Jesus spoke, but suddenly Jesus was gone – back to the right hand of the Father, and they had to find new leaders, like the United Methodist churches undergoing pastoral changes this year. The early church met in the synagogue, but because of differences of opinion and theology they were asked to leave, like the UMC and the LGBTQ issue, and the General Conference that was to deal with how we would separate along different theological divides. When the church left the synagogue they had to find a new place and a new way of worshipping, like we will be doing with the social distancing and other CDC guidelines we will be operating under.

Things may be different, the physical space may look different, the décor may change. We may not be able to do some of the things we used to do – hug one another, pass a collection plate or communion tray, have pot lucks, gather in small groups and other things, but GOD IS STILL IN OUR MIDST AND IS DRAWING ALL PEOPLE TO HIM.

Take heart – God is doing a new thing. Rest in Him and give Him the glory.

Pastor Steve

Why Reopening a Church Is Different

The Bishop's Blog

May 19, 2020

Guest Blogger - Alex Shanks

Everywhere we turn, people are talking about reopening. Should churches simply follow the same guidelines regarding reopening as other institutions? I believe there are practical principles and theological reasons why reopening our church campuses requires a different kind of thinking. The church shouldn't be looking to sidestep the guidelines. The church shouldn't be simply reacting to what others are doing. The church should be leading the way by modeling a method of safety for others to follow.

Practical Principles:

1. Churches need to open their campuses faithfully, not just safely. Churches will need to consider how the changes required to reopen safely could adversely impact the nature and integrity of worship and ministry. Our expressions of church need to reflect the values and essence of who God has called the church to be. Churches should ask: What are the essential worship elements that express who we are and who we believe God to be, and how can we ensure those are done authentically in this new model? Figuring out how to faithfully do ministry in a world of social distancing while maintaining virtual church options for those who can't attend in person, will require a new wave of ingenuity and adaptation. *Some churches may choose to reopen their church campuses much later in order to open faithfully.*

2. Churches are built primarily on trust. People don't regularly attend a church where they don't trust their leaders to make healthy and informed decisions. If you lose the trust of your congregation during a reopening of your campus, you lose an essential glue that holds the organizational life together. One can only imagine the impact of losing the trust of the general public by being the next tragic headline. You may be concerned about people going to the church next door who is opening sooner than you are. *In the long run, people will attend churches based on trust and a feeling of safety, rather than when they reopened.*

3. Church finances should not be a primary consideration in the timing of reopening. Reopening the church campus does not mean giving will increase. Giving may or may not increase. Churches are not like businesses that had no recent income. Many churches have gained new giving units through online sources. Be skeptical of those who think reopening a church building will solve financial issues. Giving levels may be more impacted by the unemployment rates and the re-prioritization of family budgets in an uncertain time. If your church is fragile financially, reopening is not likely a solution – especially considering the costs related to reopening buildings safely. *Giving will more likely increase as we make faithful decisions.*

4. Reopening churches will require the building of a new culture. Churches are notoriously ineffective at getting people to follow new rules and guidelines. Even when we do, we always have an exception (picture the person in your family who continues to do things the way they have always done them despite all your efforts to change their habits!). Churches lack an enforcement mechanism and are often too kind for our own good. We need a new culture marked by a willingness to put the safety of others ahead of our personal preferences. We need people willing to call someone out in love when they see a new protocol slipping. The pastor cannot be expected to be the sole guardian of safety. Safely reopening will only be possible through a mass commitment to new norms and a culture that is constantly asking: "How can we help not make someone else sick?" *Reopening will require training a cadre of leaders who will champion a new culture of doing church.*

5. We can't return to the church as it used to be. This is not possible. Nor is it responsible. To return to the exact same church we left mid-March would not honor the learnings we have gained and the ways we have adapted. Returning to the way things used to be would fly in the face of the Jesus who warned against pouring new wine into old wineskins. We are creatures of habit and averse to change, so

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Why Reopening a Church Is Different, Continued

we will have to make every effort to create a new model of church. How will we welcome and engage the new people with whom we have connected? How will we incorporate new technologies? Additionally, how will we honor and give space to express the incredible loss and grief experienced in this time? To return to church without acknowledging the grief and loss of this time would be the worst kind of denial in the very place that should be modeling healthy grief work. We all want to go back to church, but we cannot go back to the same church we left. *Instead of returning to the same church, we should be re-launched as a new church!*

Theological Considerations:

1. **A church is not primarily a building.** The church is a people on mission together. Unlike others, churches have not been closed; rather we are preparing to reenter our buildings. In this time, we have been the church gathered virtually and distributed in service and mission. There is no theological congruence to the way God designed the church if our next steps to being the church are focused only on reopening our facilities. There are a variety of ways to connect to God and our neighbors prior to the reopening of our buildings. *We should remain focused on being the church and not just having church worship and ministries on campus.*

2. **The body of Christ must honor the most vulnerable parts of the body** as much as any other (1 Corinthians 12). In many ways, we are called to honor the vulnerable above all others. What does it say theologically about us if we open in a way that excludes the vulnerable? How do we need to adapt when it is the clergy person who is vulnerable? Didn't we read somewhere about the first shall be last and the last shall be first? In this season, what does it mean to be, as Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn, "united by your grace"? Christ's primary call is to serve others – especially the vulnerable, the weak, and the poor. Our reopening plans are not about what is best for the management of our institution, but what is best for the common good and greater community. *This is not a time to focus primarily on what we may be sacrificing by not gathering, but how we are serving and loving all our neighbors by not gathering too soon.*

So What Do We Do from Here?

Whatever we do, **churches should seek to exceed the basic health guidelines.** Churches are not the exception. By understanding all the ways the virus is still spreading, churches can take appropriate steps to mitigate risk. This includes following all the best guidance around limiting the size of gatherings, cleaning practices, social distancing, and the wearing of masks. The church will need to alter elements of worship like receiving communion, collecting the offering, the greeting time, and public singing. (Note: You can find the latest guidance on all the practical things to consider in reopening UMC campuses in Florida at <https://www.flumc.org/covid-19-virus-update>.) Any church, regardless of size and location, can reopen safely and faithfully if it will thoughtfully take its time, adapt and innovate.

Here are **five things** to keep in mind as you make your plans to reopen:

1. **Build a healthy church team** to do the careful work around reentering your buildings and re-launching ministry and worship. Include people who will see your blind spots. Be sure the team addresses what you will do when people ignore the guidelines, or you learn of a possible infection in your faith community.

2. **Learn as much as you can about the science of how the virus spreads.** If all you read is the guidelines, that is all you will be able to follow. If you begin to understand the science, it will push you to exceed guidelines and see the dangers unique to your context. Continue to look for best practices that you can implement in your church setting.

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Why Reopening a Church Is Different, Continued

3. **Communicate clearly and often.** Plan for the people and circumstances who will need you to communicate even more clearly and more often. Be prepared to clearly articulate the guidelines and answer the question of “why we are reopening our buildings at this time.” Use stories and visuals wherever possible. Helpful communication increases trust.

4. **Go slow.** This is not a race to reopen. Give space for thoughtful reflection on your values. Consider how much time it will really take to carefully prepare your space and train your team.

5. **Keep the faith.** You won't think of everything. You can't. But you do serve a God who is with you now and is calling you into this new reality with hope and confidence. Our ultimate faith is in a God who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3). God will guide us as we make space to truly hear, individually and corporately, from the God who is faithful – no matter when we are able to reopen.

As we reopen our buildings, may we seek to be in God's time and not our own. We follow a God of hope and resurrection who knows all about making all things new (Isaiah 43:18). That is where our ultimate faith lies. Remember, the church has never closed. The church remains open, even as we don't physically gather in our building. We do all of this so that we might fully love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31).

2020 Pandemic Response Fund

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been social distancing, staying home and eating in. Fortunately, we've found that avoiding one or two weekly visits to our favorite restaurants has actually left us with extra cash. Our emergency fund continues to grow.

We don't envision that everything will return to "normal" with a snap of our fingers. It will be a long transition. The new "normal" will be different from our old "normal". LGUMC is planning on how we adapt to these changes. Many changes require that we invest financially in our new "normal".

While the sanctuary has been closed, we've brought in live-streaming equipment so that we can bring church services into our homes. We are actively pursuing the purchase of replacement audio equipment and improved lighting to enhance the atmosphere both within the sanctuary and for live-streaming. We are considering ordering additional chairs like the new ones in the Family Life Center, so we can practice social distancing when we return for services in the sanctuary. We are seeking quotes for painting the sanctuary ceiling and replacing the sanctuary carpeting. These are all new expenses not originally envisioned for 2020 by our Finance Committee.

If you are able, an additional donation to our "2020 Pandemic Response" fund would be most helpful.

Thank you,
Dwight Kitchens

Hope Always Shines

In this age of coronavirus, social distancing and staying in our homes, we wonder why the Lord would allow this to happen to the world. We know He loves us and calls us His children.

If we pray and ask Him to show us why, He will remind us to look around, and watch all of the good events and acts of kindness in the news. People giving out food, making masks, and those in the medical community risking their very lives to help others.

The air is cleaner around the world, wild animals are coming out of hiding, unafraid. Even our government, which generally takes, is giving out stimulus checks. Car accidents are going down and insurance companies are sending out premium refunds.

Children and grandchildren are visiting their grandparents at nursing homes through the windows or by video. We know that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose. He is blessing us even in this time of fear and uncertainty.

So remember, GOD IS GOOD. Let not your heart be troubled. Fear Not! God is with you and He will never leave or forsake you!

In Christian Love,

Rick and Debbie McLellan

Prayer Ministry

God reminds us we should be alert and take the time to pray for others. *“Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.”* Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us, but that also we will finally hear him.

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Prayer Ministry, Continued

Please call the church office at 863-858-5431 or email office@lakegibsonumc.com if you have any prayer requests or if you wish to become a prayer warrior for Lake Gibson UMC.

God Bless, and prayers for those with the COVID-19 virus and the caregivers and medical teams everywhere.

Prayer Ministry-LGUMC

Lay Leader's Page

I trust you enjoyed reading the book of Ruth during the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) as the Hebrews do, because Shavuot is a harvest time account of Ruth, a Gentile like you and me, who identifies with the Jewish people and falls into the arms of her “kinsman redeemer” by the name of Boaz and becomes a believer in Father God. Eventually she is the great-grandmother of King David and is included in the genealogy of our Messiah Jesus.

Shavuot was a season of incredible unity by the work of the Holy Spirit given on Pentecost. Paul describes this unity in greater depth in Ephesians 2:13-16: *The Lord makes us His by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (Who is our “kinsman redeemer”?)

So during this COVID-19 era, we are anxiously looking forward to when we can responsibly worship together again in compliance with the guidelines recommended by government and church leaders. I am absolutely sure Father God will keep and protect us while we are away and when we are together again.

SHALOM!

John Bernat, Lay Leader

United Methodist Women

Check Out the UMW's Blog, *FOR A TIME LIKE THIS*

A blog (short for "web log") is a publicly accessible web page that individuals or organizations use to share information, opinions, etc. with others. The United Methodist Women (UMW) have created a blog titled *For a Time Like This* to provide resources, prayers and advocacy to give support during the COVID-19 health crisis.

Go to the website, <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/blogs/for-a-time-like-this> to see the information about a wide range of topics of interest to Christians. You don't have to be a woman to check these topics out. There are 15 posts in April in the archive plus whatever number are available in May. A sample of recent topics include:

Spiritual Practice: Finding Ways to Focus

Art for Inspiration: Coloring Pages for Mother's Day

Prayer: Finding Justice

Making Masks in a Time of Need

Resource: When Face-to-Face Meetings Are No Longer Possible

Virtual Mission u on Wednesdays in June

In-person Mission u won't happen this year, but you can still participate in a four-part, in-depth Spiritual Growth study, **Finding Peace in an Anxious World**, online using Zoom. The dates are June 3, 10, 17 and 24 with the video conference starting at 6:15 and the actual class at starting at 6:30 pm. Pre-registration is required. The class is free and will include handouts provided by email for registrants. To register go to https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vcuGvqz8jEtZqBfK5cKhT3l_X043mIYRO (you may have to type this into your browser).

Finding Peace in an Anxious World, presented by staff of the Urban Village Church, uses the book of Proverbs and "The Serenity Prayer" as a guide to help Christians find their way through anxiety, worry and fear, and move towards God's peace that surpasses all understanding. Using "The Serenity Prayer" as a scaffold, we explore ways to discover peace through scripture and spiritual disciplines so that we can be rooted in God and energized to live fully as disciples of Christ. Our hope is that through this month-long, in-depth Mission Study, our church can address the tumultuous events of this spring/summer and present a framework for how to approach a God who desires peace for the hearts of God's people in times of anxiety.

The four chapters each focus on a different aspect of the prayer—serenity, acceptance, courage, and wisdom—and each concludes with a spiritual practice to help further develop the biblical ideal of peace in our lives, our families and our church. The text (*Finding Peace in an Anxious World*) is available in hard copy from <https://www.umwmissionresources.org> for \$10 plus \$7.40 for shipping, or from Amazon for Kindle (\$5.95).

The registration deadline was originally May 23rd, but we received the notice very late and have asked for an extension. As soon as you register you will receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to join the meeting. You will need to download the Zoom Conferencing app on your computer, smart phone or tablet if you haven't already done so (your device must have a camera and microphone).

Phyllis Kitchens

Our Electronic Sign

Did you notice that we didn't change our electronic sign for a few days? Inquisitive minds may ask "Why Not?" Well, recent rains finally did some damage.

In order to talk to the sign from any computer, we have the sign linked, by modem, into our Internet connection. In mid-May our modem link failed. After looking up the error code and discussing it with the technician at Stewart Signs, the manufacturer, it was time to do some diagnostic work.



Replacing our Ethernet cable did nothing. Disassembling the modem attached to the office give us about one-quarter cup of water. Oops. The modem had been fried.

Unfortunately, the installer we were required to use, Davidson Signs, had mounted it upside down, allowing rain to run down the cable and into it. How were we to know?

Temporarily, every time we want to change our messages, we download them to a USB flash drive, carry it out the sign, and upload a new series of messages. While it works, it means that we can't change the messages from the comfort of our home or the office.

Our one-year warranty has expired. The cost of replacement for a set of paired modems (mounted on the office and the sign) runs just under \$500. We've ordered the replacements and will install them properly once they arrive. Then, we will submit a request with photos to the installer to reimburse us for the expense.

We did not install the original modem in the wrong position and don't believe that we should bear this expense. You will shortly see our new modem and antenna, attached to the side of the church office, pointing up (in the proper way to avoid water intrusion), not down. Hope you enjoy our community messages shortly.

Want to Get Involved?

OK, we know. You've been gone from the sanctuary for over two months. We understand. It's not as if you were given much of a choice. But, there are benefits to the congregation as a whole. We get better each Sunday with the ability to bring worship into your home.

The church took a leap into Live Streaming. Most of us knew little and had to learn much over a short period of time. We started having our services Live-Streamed on Facebook and linked to our website. Shortly thereafter we uploaded to YouTube (not sure that we'll ever go to Twitter as the permitted messages are too short).

We are rearranging our sound booth to fit both audio and video equipment. We've enhanced some of our equipment and will continue to upgrade it over the next few months.

As we return to in-person worship there will be a need to continue our Live Streaming worship services. Initially, we will have some limitations on how we worship together. Some may not feel comfortable returning to the sanctuary and joining the main body of our congregation for quite some time. This is understandable. We will continue to offer the ability to participate in worship through our Live-Streaming services.

Over time, **we will need to train a few more individuals in both mixing our worship music and preparing our vMix software for Live Streaming.** Our current audio/visual team will require sanity breaks every so often. You could be one of the backup individuals. We've proven that most of us can start from scratch and build a functioning system. Thankfully, we now have people who can help you learn.

Please consider volunteering to learn the audio/visual system and fill in where necessary. Call or email the church office if you can help (863-858-5431 or office@LakeGibsonUMC.com).

Dwight Kitchens

Changes with COVID-19

COVID-19 has caused us to make lots of changes in how we deliver our message. Financially, this has cost us. In addition to keeping all staff members on the payroll, we're making physical changes to our property in a time of declining revenues.

Thankfully, we were able to obtain a loan from the Small Business Administration's Payroll Protection Program. We hope that most of this loan will be forgiven. If so, it will have given us some breathing room over an eight-week period. If not, we will have a loan at 1% interest which we will need to repay over a two-year period.

But, this is also a time of opportunity. We are trying new things which we hope will show fruit. We hope that you will continue to support our missions as we recover over the coming months. Our church may not be exactly the same, but it will be our congregation forever.

The church needs your faithful tithes and offerings more than ever. We ask that you continue to support Lake Gibson UMC with your contributions just as you would have before this pandemic if at all possible.

Thanks for the Beautiful Altar for Memorial Day



Thank you to Glenda Hess for this simple, dignified altar arrangement to honor Memorial Day and those who gave all that we may be free.

This picture was "snatched" from the video file of the May 24th service.

Thanks for the Blessing Bags!

LGUMC members and friends made up Blessing Bags for the guests at Hope Center in late April. Below is a thank-you letter dated May 1st from one of the Hope Center volunteers. Please make some more for June; a list of the needed items (food and hygiene supplies) is included on page 13 of this issue.

"Hello,

Many thanks to my LGUMC family! A total of 23 food bags, and 10 hygiene bags were made today. Plus, a bag was made for a housebound lady suffering from a compromised immune system.

Today, Laura from Fuel Baptist Church and I will be distributing sack lunches and the Blessing Bags.

Next week, Hope House will be able to open to serve our folks outside. Praise God! Some of the donated food will be used for hot to-go lunches.

During this pandemic, LGUMC has shown their great love and support. I'm so grateful to be part of such a wonderful church family.

Blessing to you all,

Geri Mayo"

Photo from Ms. Mayo



We Need to Trim the Church's Organizational Structure

Ever wonder "Who's in charge?" Some think it is the Pastor, others the Lay Leader, the Trustees, the Finance Committee, the Staff-Pastor/Parish Relations (SPPR) Committee, or the Church Council. Altogether, it takes about 49 dedicated individuals on various committees to work through the issues facing our church.

Unfortunately, it takes time to schedule, meet, discuss, research and work through issues of concern. Personally, I believe we have too much "overhead." We need a lean organization which can respond to needs quicker. This has been done elsewhere, and may be something we want to consider as churches deal with a rapidly changing environment.

The Discipline permits a **Unified Church Board**. It might consist of members representing specific areas. Finance, SPPR, Trustees and Worship might be covered by three individuals each, with the Lay Leader and Pastor joining in. While there may be a slightly larger stand-alone SPPR Committee, most decisions would be made by the Unified Church Board composed of fourteen individuals. For day-to-day operations, our current committees would no longer be required.

What does this bring to the table? It would mean fewer recurring meetings. Concerns need not be layered, discussed first in lower-level committees and then elevated to higher-level groups for decisions. This leaner structure could quicken the ability to adapt to changing conditions.

We want an organization which learns of an issue, considers its ramifications, and makes decisions quickly. Our Board members should bring the attitude that we can accomplish what needs to be done. We want a church which focuses outward, on how we bring others to Jesus Christ, not merely maintaining the status quo. We desire a church which is proactive, sets a direction, and encourages all members to move in that direction. We need to act today.

This Unified Church Board would lessen the number of people appointed to church committees. How many of us have sought out our Pastor to ask to serve on a specific committee

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Trim the Church's Organizational Structure, Continued

this past year? I believe it works the other way around. Committee members had to be convinced to fill a mandated position in accordance with the Discipline. This proposal does not eliminate the ability of members to voice an opinion or take part in helping the church. We are asking that the church be given the capability of making decisions faster.

A Unified Church Board would require approval of our District Superintendent, and possibly our Bishop. But, it will never happen unless we collectively ask that we be permitted to form a leadership structure which is more quickly responsive to our needs.

Dwight Kitchens, Church Council Chair

You May Have Noticed Some Changes

While Stay-At-Home orders may have been removed, there are still common-sense concerns about returning to in-person worship services. By May 16th Polk City, FL went from 0 to 4 residents with COVID-19 infections. No nursing homes were to blame here. Polk County had 229 hospitalizations and 41 deaths by the same date.

Yes, the United Methodist Church is concerned about gathering sizes and reopening dates. No, we have no specific news as to when Lake Gibson United Methodist Church will reopen, nor whether we will limit the number of attendees. But, we do envision opening with social distancing, face masks, and any other newly developed restrictions.

Hopefully, each of you have been joining us on Sundays at 10:30 am for our online, live-streamed worship services. We started offering these in March. You can now find us on our Facebook page, on YouTube, and within our own church website. Both the service and a follow-on Children's Message should be available each week, both live and recorded for viewing after the service.

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Some Changes, Continued

While viewing our online service, you may notice some changes in the sanctuary. The chancel rail has been removed to make more space available for the praise team and choir. The piano has been moved onto the main sanctuary floor. The altar has been moved to the back wall under the cross. These changes are intended to provide more separation between the singers and musicians, in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

At least for the foreseeable future, a number of rows of pews have been put in storage. The front of the sanctuary, which has been opened up, has chairs spaced apart for social distancing. Hymnals, Bibles, and other printed materials have been removed from the pews because of the difficulty in sanitizing them. The liturgy and hymn lyrics will be shown on screens. Many of the social interactions (passing of the peace, hugging friends, gathering in crowds) we customarily engage in will be discouraged.

As a congregation with older members, we take seriously the possibility that one asymptomatic but infected person might pass this disease on to our entire congregation. All we can do is minimize the risk and pray for God's help.

We envision opening the sanctuary for worship before we open up to small group gatherings in the FLC. Part of this is social distancing. Another is the necessity of deep cleaning a second large area. We hope that you understand that we are taking a slow, methodical approach to reopening. More details will be coming the future weeks. Until then, we encourage you to view our online worship, submit your prayer requests, keep in contact with your neighbors, and express your Christian love in all that you do.

Bob Willome leading choir members Eric Hines, Bev Hines, Dave Hess, Glenda Hess and Barbara Allen-Coil during May 24th service (capture from video file)



The following two opinions express differing views of how the church should operate during the COVID-19 crisis.

Opinion 1 on Closing Our Church During the Pandemic

Our First Responders are not the medical community, the grocery employees, the maintenance personnel, etc. The true Heroes and Heroines are the PRAYER WARRIORS.

We really are lost sheep in dire need of our Savior. Where are the people who say with Job 13:15, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . . ?* Who believes Isaiah 41:10, *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* (Right hand of righteousness is JESUS.) Do we really believe Psalm 91 or for that matter, do we believe in the resurrection?

After 9/11 people filled the church. Did they find 2 Timothy 3:5, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof . . .* Where are our FEARLESS leaders? Perhaps our singing "Power in the Blood" is as productive as the sacrifices of goats and bulls. Gideon was afraid, but he sought God in putting out a fleece. The Conference is not **our** God --- just like the law we should obey, until as with Peter and John, should we obey men or God? (Acts 5:29).

What is sad is that we could meet and obey the law. People wearing masks have broken the law. [Editorial Note: It is wearing a mask *with the intent to break the law* that is forbidden. See article on page 12 with expanded quote of this law.]

876.12 Wearing mask, hood, or other device on public way.—No person or persons over 16 years of age shall, while wearing any mask, hood, or device whereby any portion of the face is so hidden, concealed, or covered as to conceal the identity of the wearer, enter upon, or be or appear upon any lane, walk, alley, street, road, highway, or other public way in this state.

We need to realize that all these things and people we depend on are like power tools . . . power tools are no good without power . . . our

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Opinion 1 on Closing Our Church, Continued

power is in God alone. Tools are to be used and the power in them is to be respected. People are to serve one another [and] God in them is to be honored. Proverbs 17:17, *A friend loves at all times . . . No greater love has anyone than to lay down his life for his friend* (John 15:13).

Jesus said "Whosoever" but the religious leaders did all in their power to keep people away from the source of healing. Is it much different now? Do you believe your friend Jesus is worth laying down our lives for? Are we not like Moses the one saying Lord heal, like Job praying for friends, like Abraham praying for Abimelech to be healed . . . we are living as if we have no faith in God . . . Is it true that Jesus will find no faith when he returns?

There have been precious few who have despite the obstacles come to services and made my heart glad for their love and devotion to the building we put God's name on. I know our bodies are the temple of God but we become cold embers without the fire of fellowship with other believers . . . we become a law unto ourselves. (Matthew 24:12)

Not everyone should be out, for as when David was going to get his people back, some stayed with the stuff and others continued on. Both were given the same reward. There would have been no reward if all had stayed back, and there would have been no place to return to had not some stayed and rested (1 Samuel 30:21-25). The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:1-3 in the last days men shall be lovers of their own selves . . . Without natural affection . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God . . .

Can we say with Job *"I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my **necessary food**"*? Who are we united with? Fear or God? It is time to examine what we believe and how we live it . . . Christian means little Christ.

The churches *leadership's* reaction to this germ has made me want to say **"I AM done"**. Prayer Warriors, please pray that I will worship God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24).

Debbie Moore

Opinion 2 on Closing Our Church During the Pandemic

Common Sense

Wikipedia's Definition: Common sense is sound practical judgment concerning everyday matters, or a basic ability to perceive, understand, and judge that is shared by ("common to") nearly all people.

Those who have fought the COVID-19 virus may be working against "common sense". They have joined in a fray to fight an invisible enemy which can cause dire consequences. They may be expressing faith in a higher being, have hope that their skills and knowledge will assist in protecting them, and have boundless love for their fellow human and profession. We, as Christians, know that faith, hope and love are virtues we should all possess, especially the greatest of these, love.

Most of us have neither the skills nor knowledge to be on the front line of this fight. But, collectively, our common sense tells us that this invisible enemy is dangerous to a large percentage of our population. Unless we accept the premise that our population is too large and the planet would benefit from a decrease, we want to reduce the impact that COVID-19 has upon the world.

If you have viewed the news over the past few months, you may have seen examples of how large gatherings permitted the rapid spread of coronavirus. The Super Bowl in Miami was one such example. Another was a choir practice in Mount Vernon, Washington with sixty-one choir members rehearsing, fifty-three falling ill and two dying.

Is there a reason that both the State of Florida and the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church are issuing guidance regarding religious gatherings? I believe that common sense yields a resounding "Yes" in reply.

Eventually we will start gathering together in worship once again. But, the new normal may be different from what we have experienced in the past. Gone may be the hugs, fist bumps, handshakes and crowded pews of our recent past.

Continued on the next page . . .

Opinion 2 on Closing Our Church, Continued

Social distancing may mean fewer people within the sanctuary, with overflow in the FLC, and alternative means of offering Bible studies. Possibly Zoom group conferencing studies will be in our near future.

Our population, by age, is more susceptible to infections, whether we are discussing COVID-19 or the more common yearly strain of flu. Those common sense actions we can take to minimize our vulnerability seem to be a way God's people can reflect their love for their fellow worshipper.

Dwight Kitchens

Florida Statute 876.12 - 876.15

The provisions of ss. 876.12-876.15 apply only if the person was wearing the mask, hood or other device:

(1) With the intent to deprive any person or class of persons of the equal protection of the laws or of equal privileges and immunities under the laws or for the purpose of preventing the constituted authorities of this state or any subdivision thereof from, or hindering them in, giving or securing to all persons within this state the equal protection of the laws;

(2) With the intent, by force or threat of force, to injure, intimidate, or interfere with any person because of the person's exercise of any right secured by federal, state, or local law or to intimidate such person or any other person or any class of persons from exercising any right secured by federal, state, or local law;

(3) With the intent to intimidate, threaten, abuse, or harass any other person; or

(4) While she or he was engaged in conduct that could reasonably lead to the institution of a civil or criminal proceeding against her or him, with the intent of avoiding identification in such a proceeding.

Florida United Methodist Children's Home (FUMCH)

Unless you receive emails from FUMCH, you might not have heard much about them this year. They closed access to volunteers working at the facility in early February. This meant that LGUMC has over 20 repaired bicycles awaiting delivery. It has also meant that LGUMC has not been able to issue new bicycle helmets or repair broken bicycles on campus. Over time, as COVID-19 comes under better control, we envision another opportunity to visit and work on campus.

We regret that the annual Day on Campus was cancelled. It is a great opportunity for our congregation to see how we Methodists care for the less fortunate. We hope that you will plan on attending the next one in 2021.

May 31st is a 5th Sunday during which we normally would take up a special collection for FUMCH and our own Children's Ministry. Just because we have not been physically together for worship, we hope that you won't forget the needs of these two special groups. Please take a moment to place something in the 5th Sunday offering envelope for May 31st, or annotate an online offering specifically for these two missions. It's OK to be a little late.

Children don't often say "Thank You" unless encouraged by an adult, so on their behalf, we'll say "Thank You" from the bottom of our hearts.

Phyllis and Dwight Kitchens, FUMCH Reps

Editorial Policy

The articles contained in *The Good News* express the opinions of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect policies of the United Methodist Church or of Lake Gibson United Methodist Church. The purpose of the newsletter is to foster better communication of ideas and opportunities for worship and service among LGUMC members and friends as we seek to share God's love and make disciples of Jesus Christ. All members and constituents are encouraged to write articles and share their thoughts and photos with the congregation.

Phyllis Kitchens, Editor
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Blessing Bags

Due to circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 virus, it has been necessary to suspend full-scale operations inside the Hope Center on U.S. Route 98.

This has left the participants “out in the cold” for many essential services. Those who previously volunteered have looked for an alternative means of providing support.

One means is by **providing both food and hygiene items in bags** which may be given out on a one-on-one basis. Here are suggestions as to the type of items requested. Due to limits on availability, please use your imagination and provide what you can.

Food items for 2 days such as:

- Pop-top cans (stews, soups, pasta, etc.)
- Vienna sausages
- Tuna or chicken salad kits
- Small, to-go containers of peanut butter
- Sandwich crackers (Lance, Nabs, etc.)
- Granola bars
- Fruit cups/non-refrigerated puddings
- Individual packets of instant tea or Crystal Light
- Bottled water

Hygiene items (small packs for 2 days):

- Razor blades
- Deodorant
- Body powder
- Face wipes

Please deliver all Blessing Bags to the church office on Thursday mornings between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm. (Mark your donations as Blessing Bags to avoid confusion with our Food Pantry donations.)

Debbie Moore and Dwight Kitchens

Hope Center: Reopening with Social Distancing

We are so grateful to **Kathleen Baptist Church** for allowing us to do a *limited reopening in May* and to Governor Ron DeSantis for easing some of the restrictions on food service facilities. We wanted all of our friends to know we are going to be serving **to-go lunches** and maintain social distancing, and to provide a **to-go supper or at least Chef Boy-R-Dee spaghetti meal pop-top cans for supper** at our guests' tents.

The Hope Center is a good example of churches sharing a great mission. Each day is slightly different, but the volunteers have great respect and love for each other and for our homeless guests. The denominational variety of Christians doing this work together is a tribute to the leadership of Brent Lipham from Kathleen Baptist Church who coordinates all of us and maintains everything.

I call **Monday Family Worship Center day**. Dynamic volunteer, Kelly, represents them. She is now doing first and third Mondays.

Tuesdays are Lake Gibson United Methodist Church day, as Rick and Debbie are members there. We have been volunteering for six years. We used to work with Rick from Hope Community Presbyterian Church, and Marshall from Victory Church, but they are temporarily out right now. We were originally trained by a wonderful couple from the Hope Church named Bob and Sue.

I call **Wednesday Fuel Church day**, the beloved lead volunteer is Laura, assisted by Geraldine.

Thursday is also Fuel Church day, normally led by an energetic lead volunteer named Jane, from Fuel Church, but she and her assistant Jim, from St. Anthony's Catholic Church, are out at present, and Laura and Geraldine have been filling in.

Fridays right now are being handled by John Quirk from St. Vincent de Paul CARES ministry, but on a *temporary* basis.

Continued on the next page . . .

Hope Center Reopening, Continued

Please pray for all of our volunteers, especially those who are out due to sickness or other temporary situations. Please pray for our guests, that God will work in their hearts and lives. Please pray for our **bare pantry**; we need pop-top ravioli, spaghetti etc.

And be sure that, if you are receiving this, you are appreciated and always in our thoughts and prayers.

God's Richest Blessings to You All,

Debbie and Rick McLellan

WE ARE BACK AT HOPE CENTER!! TUESDAY, May 5, 2020

We are grateful for the relaxing of some coronavirus restrictions and thankful to Brent and Kathleen Baptist Church for our being back and having some inside access. We can only allow two guests inside at any one time, but we can now offer showers, laundry, shaving in the bathroom and access to our clothing room.

We set up a table from home to serve to-go lunches and got great cooperation trying to maintain social distancing. We had a wonderful day today with our guests spread out in the front yard. At the start, Rick McLellan led in prayer and a devotion from St. Luke chapter 19, FOUND ON THE EDGE.

Today Debbie and Rick gave out brown bag lunches, featuring a Bar-B-Q chicken breast sandwich, a bag of chips, a Publix cinnamon applesauce fruit squeeze pouch, and a Bud & Al's big iced chocolate cookie. We also brought our cooler with ice and ice cold bottles of water. Each guest also received a pop-top can (choice of Chef Boy-R-Dee spaghetti, ravioli or Beefaroni,) which they took to their tents for their supper meal. We served 16 guests by the end of our day.

Debbie was busy and gave out toiletry kits, socks, razors, Neosporin, Band-Aids, Motrin, cough drops, mosquito repellent, and radio and lantern batteries. Debbie had been making cloth masks for family and friends and brought a few for our guests.
Continued . . .

Hope Center May 5th, Continued

We brought some clean towels and washcloths with us from home for showers, and had 11 guests take showers. We brought home the dirty ones used while we were there, and will sanitize and wash them and bring them back next week. We only had 2 guests who brought dirty laundry and used the washer and dryer.

There was a very agreeable attitude from our guests today, and we feel that Jesus has made today's guests realize that the Hope Center is a Blessing from God in their lives.

God's Richest Blessings to You All,

Debbie & Rick McLellan

Contact Information

Pastor Steve Polk, 863-858-5431; fax 863-853-1625; pastor@lakegibsonumc.com

Kristie Summers Otte, Administrative Secretary, 863-858-5431, office@lakegibsonumc.com

Office Hours: Office is closed except for Thursday morning's food pantry, 9:30 am to 11:30 pm

Sue Heishman, Bookkeeper

Debbie Moore, Children's Director

Glenda Grant Hess, Music Director

Latisha Cook, Director of A Little Bit of Heaven Child Enrichment Center, 863-858-8400.

Debbie Moore, Kristie Otte, Lexie Otte, David McPherson, Audio/Visual Team

Video Bible Study Starting June 4th

Pastor Steve is picking up where we left off in Romans 10:1 on **Thursdays at 1:00 pm**. This will be a Zoom video conference and everyone is invited to join us. Please call the office (863-858-5431) if you would like to receive the email invitation. If you don't have a computer, you can participate by telephone. Download the Zoom app for your computer, IOS or Android system before the first class on June 4th, 1:00 pm.



Birthdays in June

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>
6/1	Tom Burns
6/1	Dick Lammey
6/1	Pat Moon
6/5	Reginald Jenkins
6/7	Shirley Addems
6/10	William "Rusty" Collins
6/11	Tom Fischer
6/11	Tyler McKnight
6/17	Tammie Clark
6/17	Linda Osborn
6/19	Dave Meyer
6/30	Corey Fredrikson



Anniversaries in June

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>
6/24	Mimi and Dave Meyer
6/26	Betty and Tom Fischer
6/30	Lee and Rick Mueller