

Life at Cokesbury

November 19, 2020

A Note from Our Pastor

Well, a year ago, I certainly didn't anticipate this would be the Thanksgiving letter I'd be writing: Joan is retiring; in-person worship is suspended; Sunday School is suspended; we are worshipping together online; we are handing out food two days a week; we bought a hot dog cart; Room in the Inn is suspended; I'm working from home; I can't visit you when you're in the hospital; I can't visit you in assisted living; we don't have any in-person activities; and we don't even know how we'll be able to worship on Christmas Eve. A lot has changed and yet I'm so thankful.

Every challenge that we face can be a gift. For example: Joan's dedication to our church has been a blessing and, I hope, we've been a blessing for her. But now she has other journeys she wants to travel and we can be grateful for what she's taught us and the gazillions of things she's helped us become—a gift!

I think that's got to be the way we face our challenges—with gratitude, seeing the gift through eyes that are often squinted, tear swollen, or blinded. Sometimes our eyes haven't had time to adjust to the nightfall of winter and other times we are blinded by the sun. In all things, the Bible tells us, we should give thanks. I don't think this is out of guilt but out of the recognition that God is in all things and always with us.

Challenges confront us with our limits: sometimes pushing us beyond our comfort and sometimes reminding us that we aren't omnipotent. In every case, meeting challenges requires our humility—the most important virtue for growing our faith and deepening our spiritual connectedness.

To be sure, I don't always appreciate the pain that comes from challenges. I haven't appreciated the loss of any of my loved ones. I've sometimes felt lost without them. Sometimes the grief blinds my vision, but in the end I can't escape the truth of God's presence even in the darkest times. Once my vision cleared, that presence often seemed even more profound even when the circumstances did tremendous damage.

This is not the kind of season I anticipated, nor is one I would have chosen for us, but it is what's on our plate to deal with. We aren't facing our challenges alone. We have each other. God has never abandoned us. Our circumstances will certainly change us, sometimes leaving us hobbled and scarred.

One thing we might remember is that the first disciples recognized the resurrected Christ: not by his face or appearance, but by his scars and wounds. Give thanks for the sideways blessings of our challenges, because the wounds make us who we are—the children of God.

Grace and peace,
Jonathan

Your Estimate of Giving Cards for 2021

You should know that your Estimate of Giving Cards are focused on you, your commitment to Cokesbury, and your own calling to give yourself a financial contribution goal for 2021. In other words, this exercise is about your faith, ultimately making our church budget a faith-based budget. It's based on your faith and calling.

Thank you to those who were able to get your Estimate of Giving Cards to the church office. Others of you are still praying over yours and some of you might not normally submit an Estimate of Giving Card. Hopefully, everyone who is part of the congregation can turn in a card. If possible, it would be much appreciated if they can be delivered to the church office by November 22.

Farmers Market Continues

The outstanding volunteers who make our Tuesday and Thursday Farmers Market have chosen to

continue making fresh produce available to anyone who wants it. Our volunteers have worked since August giving out produce to the people of our neighborhood. This gift has been received with a deep gratitude. This ministry will continue through December, but we will stay attentive to the needs of our volunteers and the neighborhood.

In this coming week, we will serve on Tuesday, but will be closed on Thanksgiving Day. We will restart the following week serving on both Tuesday and Thursday.

We accept donations, but in making fresh food freely available, there is no charge. That means that we could not have continued this ministry without the tremendous generosity of our church members giving from your hearts, a community grant from Williams Subaru and the MoRa Community, a grant from the Community Foundation of Dalton, GA, a grant from Park Financial, a gift from Harrison United Methodist Church, and the Metro District of the Western NC Conference.

If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to the church office: (office@cokeburyumc.net)

Worship Is Available on Livestream

Due to the recent spike in coronavirus cases, our in-person worship has been suspended until we receive new guidelines and we feel confident about hosting in-person worship. We are blessed by the generosity of our congregation that we were able to purchase the necessary audio-visual equipment so that we can broadcast our Sunday morning worship service via livestream on Facebook Live and on YouTube (simply search for Cokesbury UMC Charlotte).

Thank You to Joan Gillis

Today marks the final work day for Joan Gillis as our church secretary. For 22 years Joan has been the voice that answered the phone, the person who welcomed us during the week, the thoughtfulness that kept our church office running, the editor of our bulletins and newsletters, the organizer of many of our ministries, and the steady presence that defined our congregation for all of those who worked with Cokesbury and our ministry. So much of the foundation of Cokesbury has been established by Joan. She has served during the appointments of five different pastors and countless membership and community changes. We are deeply grateful for Joan and the profound service she has offered. Thank you, Joan! You are always a deep part of this church family.

We will have a brief Facebook Live service on Thursday, Nov. 19, at 11:30am to thank Joan and pray over her for her future.

Work Day

Volunteers are needed Saturday, November 21 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. to help clean-up the church grounds.

Dear Cokesbury Family,

Thank you for all your efforts to comfort my family when my dad passed. Thank you for being his church family when he was alive – he loved all of you. Thank you for every smile, every handshake, every greeting, every kind word you shared and every prayer you bestowed. You showed love and our lives are forever changed. Thank you to all those who worked so hard so that we could enjoy a meal. Your kindness will never be forgotten.

Sincerest thanks,
Joanna (Saito), Scott, Jack, and Graham Betz

Room in the Inn

This winter, Room in the Inn and shelter overflow will be consolidated into 2-3 large sites instead of at local churches, operated by professional, frontline staff. We can still help, primarily through food and in-kind item donations. There will be some limited volunteer opportunities, mentioned below.

Food Donations

Prepare and deliver bagged lunches. Volunteer-prepared bagged lunches currently serve motel and dorm locations and this winter, a third location will be added – the overflow shelter at the Giles Center on Statesville Ave. RITI volunteers are asked to focus on meeting this need.

Be a part of the “Cookie Connection” by delivering a delectable treat for those in the overflow shelter. We’re asked to provide 2 cookies in a Ziplock bag for 130 guests. And, please keep the cookies consistent and refrain from using peanuts.

In-Kind Donations

Our neighbors will need quite a lot this winter – whether they have an actual shelter bed, or are staying at the nightly overflow shelter. The following items are what are especially needed for winter sheltering:

New towels and washcloths

New men’s hats and gloves

New men’s boxer-briefs (M, L, XL, XXL)

New men’s socks

Masks (washable or disposable – homemade masks welcome)

Travel-size toiletries separated by like-items (please, no individual bags).

Shampoos

Shower gels

Toothpastes

Toothbrushes

Razors

Small cans of shaving cream

Hand sanitizer

How To Collect:

You can begin collecting now on your own, or send monetary contributions to Cokesbury to purchase these items. The Room in the Inn Innkeeper will be creating and posting an Amazon Wish List for your convenience. You are asked to wear gloves and masks while handling items.

In-Person Volunteering

A handful of volunteers will be needed for opportunities that will include organizing and transporting donations between shelters, and operating a phone hotline that will serve as part of the lottery process for the nightly overflow location. Additional on-site volunteering may be identified as we get into November and early December, depending on COVID trends and service needs. Examples of possible needs, include the distribution hygiene items, food, and monitoring the cell phone lockers.

Additional information will be provided as it is received. Contact Sue Keene with questions. (704) 618-4583 or sue.keene1805@gmail.com

Please Keep These People in Your Prayers

Dan & Kay Dumas, Diane Bolster, Linda Horne, Katie Postel, Angie, friend of Kenna

Zach Fowler - 4th
Jim Dinkler - 10th
Doug Hargett - 12th
Nancy DeVries - 13th
Tom Helms - 14th
Mickey Helms - 15th

December Birthdays

Madison McKenzie - 16th
Antionett Hart - 20th
Mary Freeman - 22nd
Ott Ulrich - 27th
George Lemmert - 30th

New Office Email Address

Please use office@cokeburyumc.net to send emails to the office.