

PRAISE REPORT

April - June 2020



CALLING PEOPLE HIGHER

Pastor's Corner



The Church on Purpose

One positive result of this pandemic is that it has compelled us to focus on what really matters. It has caused us to question what we do and why. That kind of consideration just can't happen during the normal pace of life with which most of us are accustomed. I pray that you have not only been able to engage in some deep reflection, but also that the Lord Jesus has been restored to his rightful place as King in any way that he may have been sidelined.

This pandemic is also a good time to consider the purpose of the church. In his book *Purpose Driven Church*, Pastor Rick Warren identifies five scriptural reasons why the church of Jesus Christ exists: worship, evangelism, discipleship, service, and fellowship. These provide a metric against which to evaluate our priorities. My observations are anecdotal, but as I look back over the last three months, I see efforts and successes in each of these areas. Let me share a few.

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**Online Only Worship
At 10 AM on Sundays**

*Live streamed on Facebook
Also available at mountzion-umc.org
under Video Resources*

*Watch for up to date Worship times, and
resumption of ministry plans in the
Connect Weekly.*

WE ARE CALLED

To "love God with all your heart" is to WORSHIP
To "love your neighbors as yourself" is MINISTRY
To "go...make disciples" is EVANGELISM
To "baptize" is to incorporate into FELLOWSHIP
To "teach them...all things" is DISCIPLESHIP

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Worship: Mount Zion has been on a continuous quality improvement track to include people in worship online. We have purchased equipment, learned new ways to use it, tweaked connections, upgraded our internet speed, etc. We may never resolve all the potential issues and distractions, but we are working on it even as we begin to resume in-person services. Distant family members, folks from other churches who have not been able to access their own church's ministry, and first time guests have all participated in worship in the last months both virtually and in-person.

Evangelism: Mount Zion has been actively communicating the good news of Jesus Christ through both normal and novel means. We have posted a video to our website that walks you through God's plan of salvation making it easy to watch and share. Our virtual Family VBS provided coaching for parents about talking with their children about trusting Christ as Savior. Many in our church family have become more active in sharing their faith online. Often as much as a quarter of those who watch a worship service or video devotion do so because it was shared with them.

Discipleship: Though our learning and study opportunities have been more limited than normal, a large majority of responders to our survey (explained in detail elsewhere in this Praise Report) indicated spiritual growth.

Service: I have not been able to witness most of the ministry that is taking place from person to person, but I am quite sure it is going on and I have been on the receiving end of some of it. I am fully aware that our Care Ministers have been very active during the last months. They have not been able to visit in-person, so they have redoubled their efforts to send cards, call, and use whatever means available to pray with and encourage those who are sick or hurting. Our mission trip to Joy Ranch that is scheduled for August has nearly 30 people raring to participate. It is also noteworthy how well our facilities are being maintained even while few people are present to see it.

Fellowship: Of course, this purpose of the church is our greatest challenge right now. What normally happens so freely and easily, now requires more intention and creativity. Donna and I have hosted weekly Campfire Conversations in the parsonage backyard when the weather has cooperated. As restrictions are lifted, we will try to offer some more informal gatherings. Let's all make the effort to care for each other and enjoy one another. It is important to share life with each other.

I have never seen Mount Zion's parking lot so unused, but we are still the church. We are still doing what Jesus has instructed us to do. The work of the Holy Spirit is not restricted by our limitations. May we all continue to pray for wisdom to maintain godly priorities and inspiration to carry them out.

Your fellow servant, Pastor Leonard

PRAYER MOBILIZATION



Prayer Mobilization Team lead an online prerecorded **National Day of Prayer Service and 12 Hour Prayer Vigil on Thursday, May 7th.**

At the time of the publishing of this Praise Report, the service has received over 511 views on Facebook! We had over 15 adults and youth that read prayers, and or provided music for the prayer service. Over 48 people took part in the prayer vigil that covered topics or prayer focus from our world leaders, to our schools and churches. Each participant agreed to pray for 15 mins of their assigned topic. Thank you to Prayer Mobilization Team and to all that served to bring us a service where we are reminded of the importance of prayer for our communities, our government and our world. *If you haven't had the opportunity to view this service you still can at the link below.*

<https://www.facebook.com/MountZionUMC/videos/712763639525685/>

FINANCE



Over the past few months we were not always able to have in-person worship, but the wonderful people of Mount Zion found a way to continue to make their offerings to God.

Financial Update through May 31, 2020

Total Contributions to General Fund	\$213,250
Interest Income(Gen Fund)	\$ 493
Less Total Budgeted Expenses	(\$174,859)
<u>Less Escrowed Apportionments</u>	<u>(\$ 25,590)</u>
Income Exceeds Expenses	\$ 13,294

Building Fund

Building Fund Carryover from 2019	\$413,398
Interest Earned on Building Fund CD's in 2020	\$ 867

<u>Individual/Family 2020 Contributions</u>	<u>\$ 4,045</u>
Total of Building Fund	\$418,310

Fundraiser

Ole Fashion Supper (100% to Missions)	\$ 7,819
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2nd Quarter Happenings

In May, Mount Zion mothers were recognized on **Mother's Day** with a tribute video. The church family was invited to send in a picture of their mom, or pictures of themselves with their children as we celebrated the dedication, love, and service of motherhood. We had over 75 photos submitted! *If you haven't had the opportunity to view this video yet, you still can at the link below.*

<https://www.facebook.com/MountZionUMC/videos/639866566567655/>

In June, Mount Zion fathers were recognized on **Father's Day** with a tribute wall. The church family was invited to send in a few sentences finishing this thought..."My Dad is.." We had wonderful responses, and had over 35 entries. *If you haven't had the opportunity to view the tribute wall yet, you still can at the link below.*

<https://www.mountzion-umc.org/my-dad-is>



Virtual Family VBS

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first ever Virtual Family Vacation Bible School! We had 22 families and about 43 youth and children join in on the fun. Our theme was "FOCUS" - *How we can focus on God.* Day 1 – Where we see God. Day 2 - How we can hear from God. Day 3 - How we can talk with others about what we believe about God. Day 4 - How we can live for God by loving others. God worked through each of us and all of our activities brought us to our memory verse for the week of Hebrews 12:2a "Let us keep looking to Jesus" this is a great reminder for all of us, every day!

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY



During this pandemic we are concerned about the needs and well being of the Mount Zion congregation. We conducted

a survey asking direct questions about how you are being impacted by the pandemic, and areas that you are struggling, or may have needs, as well as areas where you have grown or been blessed. We are so happy to share that through this survey God has allowed us to give resources to those who needed help as well as giving us direction in how best to pray and serve the church family. As God is so good, even in the midst of suffering, and hardships, God is growing, and teaching, and blessing his children. Let me share some of the amazing results of our survey. 81 households responded to the survey.

51 reported a deepening relationship with God (i.e. Devotion Time, Prayer Time, Trusting)

51 reported appreciating the importance of quality family time

23 reported that they were reorganizing their priorities to honor God better

19 reported understanding the importance of Sabbath

13 reported that they are participating in Worship more regularly

29 reported that they would like to be contacted to help others who had immediate needs

CONNECTIONS



Keeping Connected with each other during normal times can already be a challenge, but especially during this

pandemic. Staff are always prayerfully looking for ways to keep us connected to you, and for you to be connected to each other.

Congregational Care Outreach

Beginning in late March when the church family could no longer gather in person for worship the staff began reaching out to the church family through email, and phone calls. 261 Households were contacted. As staff, we were able to share the news about online worship, to let people know they were missed, cared for, and that their church family was praying for them during this time. It was wonderful to visit with our church family, and to hear from you how you are all doing. We currently are making a second round of outreach, to check in and again relay the message of hope in the midst of the chaos we are all living in.

Online Daily Devotions

We began with daily Facebook live stream devotions Monday - Friday at 8 AM. Staff taking turns sharing a 10 - 15 minute devotion, to encourage our church family to start their day together and with God.

Online Sunday School

This past Sunday, we also started Online Sunday School. Good Samaritans, Bible Seekers, and Youth meet online at different times on Sunday to study God's Word together.

If you have any questions on how to join one of these online opportunities, please contact Jenni Ackerman.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Noah James Ackerman graduated from JCECA with his high school degree and from JCC with his Associate of Arts degree. Noah will be attending Campbell University in the fall to pursue a degree in English. Noah is the son of Tim and Jenni Ackerman.



Mary Kendall Kuhn graduated with High Honors from West Johnston High School. She was National Honor society president, and will be leaving for college to UNC Wilmington to study psychology and forensic criminology. Mary is the daughter of Ken and Lisa Kuhn.



Riley James Goshorn graduated from Cleveland High School. Riley is at Fort Benning Georgia for basic training and AIT and will start at ECU in the spring where he will pursue his bachelors degree in kinesiology. Riley is the son of Leighton and Cindy Goshorn.



Sarah Puckett graduated from Cleveland High School. Sarah will be attending Appalachian State University in the fall to study nursing. Her long term plans include eventually going to med school to become a doctor. Sarah is the daughter of Ray and Suzanne Puckett.



Savannah Jane Hicks graduated from Southern Wake Academy. This fall she plans to attend Wake Tech CC and transfer to a university in a couple of years. Savannah is the daughter of Tommy and Allison Hicks.



Justus Wayne Sorrell graduated from North Myrtle Beach High School, SC. Justus will be attending Horry-Georgetown Technical College where he plans to study HVAC. Justus is the son of Son of Doug and Emily Sorrell, and Crystal Hepner.



Brooks William Honeycutt graduated from West Johnston High School. He will be attending Wake Technical CC and pursuing an AAS Degree in Cybersecurity. He also has plans to obtain a degree in Marine Mechanics at Carteret Community College. Brooks is the son of William and Brenda Honeycutt.



Brionna Stewart graduated from Garner Magnet High School, Summa Cum Laude. She will be attending Meredith College in the fall where she will major in Biology and minor in Marine Biology. Brionna is the daughter of Mike and Penni Stewart.



Joshua Ray Johnson graduated from Cleveland High School. He graduated Summa Cum Laude. Joshua will be attending UNC Charlotte to major in Civil Engineering. Joshua is the son of Phillip and Christine Johnson.

Class of
2020

COLLEGE GRADUATES



Brendan Shjon Boyd earned his Bachelor of Science from the College of Health and Human Performance at East Carolina University. Brendan is the son of John and Jennifer Boyd



Wade Lambert Eatmon graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Wade is the son of Alan and Martha Eatmon.



Seth Goodnight graduated from NC State with degrees in Meteorology and Mathematics. Seth is the son of Jimmy and Lou Ann Goodnight.



Mychaela Brown graduated from East Carolina University, Magna Cum Laude, with a BS in Neuroscience and BA in Psychology with an Art minor. Mychaela is the daughter of Carolyn and Les Brown.



Alexandra Knight graduated from Wake Tech with an Associates in Arts. Lexie will be attending Triangle School of Dental Assisting this fall. Lexie is the daughter of Tim and Dianna Knight.



Sarah Marie Cowell graduated from North Carolina State University with a Masters in School Administration.



Katherine Louise Nobling graduated from Appalachian State University Summa Cum Laude with a BS in Elementary Education degree. Katie is the daughter of Craig and Trish Nobling.



Thomas Lewis Earley graduated from East Carolina University with a BS in Criminal Justice. Thomas is the son of Randy and Myrtle Earley.



Daniel Alexander Rex Graduated from Campbell University with a BS in Homeland Security. Daniel is the son of Leonard and Donna Rex.



Iva Virginia Earley graduated from the University of Miami with a Masters Degree in Sports Administration. Iva is the daughter of Randy and Myrtle Earley.

