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Thursday, May 7th has been observed around the country for a number of years as the National Day of Prayer. It is headed by Prayer Force One headquartered in Oklahoma and observed in Ponca City with a noontime prayer with local leaders and ministers joining in a city-wide prayer at Veteran's Plaza. We're unsure what will happen this year. If it does not happen, then pray at home. Our nation needs all the prayer we can get.

Wayne Moore

NEW EMERGENCY RESOURCE AGENCY

N.E.R.A. is always in need of groceries. That is why we have the Food Sack Sunday. When worship in the church building resumes we will need to renew our efforts to bring groceries to be used by those in need. In addition to non-perishable food, egg cartons, paper and plastic grocery bags are always needed.



Friendship Feast Volunteer needed

One of the ministries of First Methodist is helping with Friendship Feast. We have three teams who work the third Monday once every three months to help prepare food trays. Grace Chism, who will be greatly missed, served on a team with Linda Heitz and Connie Scott. To volunteer to help, talk to Linda, Connie or Wayne Moore.

THE FLAME

Volume 50, Issue 5

MAY 2020



Strange things we take for granted...like gathering together in fellowship and worship. Everyone is anxious to get back to whatever this new normal is. The Church staff is meeting on May 4th to discuss the best way to reopen the church. Dates for things such as Vacation Bible School and possibly camps are up in the air. It is important for each of you to know you are not forgotten. If you need anything, even if its just a friendly voice, we are here for you. Just call the church number and we will do what we can to help. We are looking forward to that day when we can gather for worship, even if we can't hug or shake hands and have to maintain social distancing. God bless and keep you safe!



Pastor Don Griffin

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. A great deal has happened since the last issue of The Flame. Our church continues to follow the CDC guidelines of not having gatherings of more than ten people. I'm so thankful we can broadcast our worship on Facebook and Channel 68, but I miss you so much. This virus has attacked many of our members during this time period, including me. We experienced church members being hospitalized and very sick with the virus. We even experienced the death of a very precious lady to this disease. Yes, it has been a difficult month in all our lives.

Most of you have realized how much of a people person I tend to be. I'm very extroverted in my personality and thrive on being around others. I live for Sunday morning worship and being with my church family. I adore our Wednesday activities and fellowship. That Wednesday night meal is a highlight of my week, not just because the food tends to be better than what Seth and I eat normally. It's the community aspect of our lives together that is so special to me. I cherish that time and not seeing each of you this month has been tough.

I came down with this virus at the end of March. I eventually tested positive for Covid 19 a few days later. After I got through the intense illness part of the virus, the truly hard part started. I was quarantined

at home and depended on others to do basic things for me. I could not go to the grocery store. I could not run to the restaurant for food. When your life's work has been helping others by being the pastor, it is not easy to allow others to minister to you. Sadly, even those wonderful saints of our church who brought us groceries, meals and many wonderful "goodies" could not come in and visit because I was contagious. I would often wave from the door just to have some sense of connection.

I have been cleared by the health department and CDC guidelines for three weeks. I am so anxious for the Safer at Home limits we are living with to be eased so we can get back to normal. But the reality is life will never go back to the way it was prior to the Corona Virus infection. Our world has forever changed. The world of the church certainly has changed. Let me share with you a few things about the future.

The church facilities will be cleaned and sanitized before we return for public worship. Even though the virus is thought to only last a few hours on most surfaces, our Trustees have voted to hire a professional company to come in and help our own custodian Larry accomplish this task. The appropriate committees will be discussing other aspects of our church life and how we will need to altar them initially to keep everyone as safe as possible. Discussions have been occurring via email and phone conversations and "Go to Meeting" gatherings are planned soon to begin preparing a safe return to public gatherings.

I'm not certain of the time frame that we are looking at. Some states are beginning a return to normal life. As much as I want to be with you and yearn to have my spiritual family around me, we will be very cautious as decisions are made at our church about public worship and activities. Please continue to pray for our staff each day. We are working from home and this presents challenges. I hope you will continue to reach out to those who are sick and lonely. I pray you will participate in our worship each week via Facebook or channel 68. If

you have Facebook, be sure and follow the wonderful pictures of our children and youth in action doing chores and family activities.

God is still alive and working in Ponca's First Church. I am still convinced the best is yet to come for our church.

Pastor Don



Dear church family, During my recent illness you became my lifeline. I want to express my gratitude to Krista Harbeson for organizing meals and doing some grocery shopping for me when Seth and I could not get out of the house. I want to thank every person who called, texted, e-mailed, wrote me beautiful cards and brought by wonderful meals and treats to our house. Seth was especially appreciative to Cathie and Lonnie's Sonic runs. It's hard to be on the receiving end when you are so used to be the one who is there to help others, but I feel so blessed. Thank you for your love and care. I am so blessed to be the pastor of First United Methodist Church of Ponca City. We are going to get through this difficult time together.

Pastor Don



2020



SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 10:00 Worship Online	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 10:00 Worship Online 	11	12 6:00 Trustees Meeting	13	14	15 Early Bird Camp Registration Ends	16
17 10:00 Worship Online	18	19 8:45 Intercessory Prayer	20	21	22	23
24 10:00 Worship No Evening Activities	25 Memorial Day 	26 8:45 Intercessory Prayer	27	28	29	30 Early Bird Camp Payment Deadline
31 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship 5:00 WOW	As the CDC modifies its recommendations for gatherings, dates for upcoming events will be announced on Facebook, our website, and by email.					



Dear Churches, Parents, and Friends, In this challenging time of life and ministry, we have a few updates about the coming OK Camps summer camp sessions. As of now, we are still planning on providing a full OK Camps summer camp season, but our team is evaluating the probability of this on a weekly basis. We will update you further as the situation develops. Updated Refund Policy. If any OK Camps are closed or cancelled this summer, any fees paid for that camp will be fully refunded. If you

sign up for camp at this time, rest assured you will receive all of your money back if the situation changes to the point of cancellation. Early registration allows our leaders to better prepare for camp. We are extending our Early Bird registration deadlines for 2020. We recognize that these are challenging times for churches, campers and their families, and would like to lessen the burden as best we can.
•The NEW Early Bird Registration deadline will be May 15th, 2020
•The NEW Early Bird Payment Deadline will be May 30th, 2020.
Our OK Camps office is currently closed, but staff are working remotely. You may reach our staff

with any questions by using the following communication channels:
Email: oklahomacamping@okumc.org
Phone: (405) 530-2017 leave a voice message, and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Please be in prayer for the Camping Ministry, Local Churches, all campers/families involved, and all people worldwide that are affected by this devastating virus. We are praying for all of you. Please let us know if there are any specific ways we can pray for your families and ministries. God will lead the way, through every drought and storm.
Thanks and Blessings,
OK Camps

Worship Through Giving
Greetings friends! I miss seeing you and hope you are doing well. I hope you've been able to enjoy the services that the staff has put together for you on Facebook & on cable Channel 68. Even in these times of a "new normal" and adapting to the new social distancing guidelines, the work of the church continues and I wanted you to be aware of the various ways you can continue to contribute to the ministries of First United Methodist. We have several options:
By Text: Just text the donation amount to 1-580-324-3101 (no need to include the "\$" sign - just text the numerical amount). You'll receive a text back from Vanco requesting your

payment info and the funds will be transferred to FUMC and you'll receive a confirmation text back from Vanco.
Online: On our website, www.fumcpc.org, go to the tab named "Member Info" and click on "Contributions" and you can donate by Paypal, credit or debit card.
By Monthly Autodraft: Call my cell 580-763-2196 and I'll get you set up for a monthly draft from your checking or savings account.
By Stock Transfer: We have an account with TD Ameritrade for easy transfer of stock to the FUMC account.
By Mail: Our FUMC mail is being held and I pick it up from the post office weekly. That address is 200 South 6th Street, Ponca City, OK 74601. Or you can mail checks di-

rectly to my house: 1401 Academy, Ponca City, OK 74604. Please consider these options for what is best for your family and don't hesitate to call me with any questions. When church services can be held again in the building, we may need to consider new options for how we things, including "passing the plate" and possibly having secure boxes at the front or the back for offering collection instead so now might be a great time to switch to one of the electronic versions of giving if you are interested. Hope to see everyone soon!
Cynthia



Table with 6 columns: Name, Birthdate, Name, Birthdate, Name, Birthdate. Title: MAY BIRTHDAYS



Living Hope Pregnancy Center
Each year the United Methodist Women of First Church make a decision as to which missions the unit wants to support. One of the missions this year that we supported was Living Hope Pregnancy Center. The mission of Living Hope: Living Hope offers hope and gives loving support and education to individuals and families before, during and after pregnancy. The services provided by Living Hope include self-read pregnancy tests, option counseling, limited ultrasound scans, adoption education and referrals, post-abortion counseling, breast feeding education, maternity and infant clothing, basic parenting classes, healthy pregnancy education and ongoing support. All the services of Living Hope are free and confidential. Living Hope is a non-profit, faith-based organization that operates using Biblical principles. They are motivated by the belief that life is to be valued.

A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial
A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial is our opportunity to rise up and meet God in the margins, dwelling with our brothers and sisters in need. As children of God we are more than partners, we are family and are not whole until all are whole and until all have the resources to thrive. This is so apparent right now as we all go through a never before time in the life of the world and the church. Sacrificial giving of our dollars says we trust God and we are in community.
When we give: We trust God to transform our dollars into everyday miracles that bring our brothers and sisters into wholeness. We become actively intertwined in

mutually supportive community with people down the street and around the world sharing in the body of Christ. We are transformed not only by hearing the cares and concerns of our neighbors, but by the opportunity to act within God's plan to create a world where we all thrive. 100% of the money given through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial goes directly to women, children and youth. Just as Paul encouraged people in the church of Corinth, so too are we called to create opportunity for our brothers and sisters so that all may have enough to thrive.

UMW
Although our groups will not be meeting in May, there are still activities that you can take part in while we are apart. There are so many good books in the UMW reading program that you can read and learn from or be inspired by. You can find the list of books online at unitedmethodistwomen.org. There are devotionals for Lent that you can use for your personal devotions. Yes, Lent is over but the devotionals are still very good. You can find those online. We are still going to collect money to buy chicks for Cookson Hills Mission. The people of Cookson Hills are probably going to need assistance more now than ever before. Be in prayer for the world, the church, and our UMW and the activities that are so important to assist women, youth and children around the world.

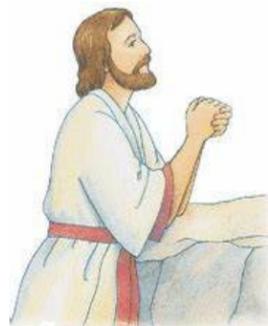


SEVEN GARDENING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Stuck at home with kids. What a great time to start a garden. Here are a few tips to get you started.

- 1 Know Your Region. It may sound obvious, but not everything grows everywhere, so what you plant is determined by where you live.
2 Test Your Soil. Kits can be bought at Lowe's to test the pH level. Soil should be easily shoveled and crumble in your hands. Add fresh soil and compost as needed.
3 Start With Easy Plants. Growing vegetables is a great way to introduce kids to gardening, and results are relatively quick.
4 Create a Plan. Do your research. How far should plants be spaced. Remember to take into consideration how tall or short the plants will grow,
5 Water Carefully. Plants need consistent and ample water. The amount of water needed will be determined by what you plant. Newer plants need more water.
6 Keep Up the Good Work! Deadhead, weed, prune and tidy up will keep you in tune with what your plants need to thrive.
7 Be Patient. Gardening is a process. Don't overwater or fuss too much with your plants. Monitor them regularly, but unless something looks wrong, let them be.

HAPPY GARDENING!



PRAYER CORNER

Lord Jesus, as God's Spirit came down and rested upon you, may the same Spirit rest on us, bestowing his sevenfold gifts. First, grant us the gift of understanding, by which your precepts may enlighten our minds. Second, grant us counsel, by which we may follow in your footsteps on the path of righteousness. Third, grant us courage, by which we may ward off the enemy's attacks. Fourth, grant us knowledge, by which we can distinguish good from evil. Fifth, grant us piety, by which we may acquire compassionate hearts. Sixth, grant us fear, by which we may draw back from evil and submit to what is good. Seventh, grant us wisdom, that we may taste fully the life-giving sweetness of your love.

Prayer of St. Bonaventure



NOVELS AT NIGHT

I was excited to finish the book, *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek*. The pack horse library project was established in 1935 and ran until 1943. The service was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration and an effort to create jobs for woman and bring books and reading material into Appalachia. The history in this book was fascinating. If you did not get a chance to read this one, I recommend you do. I have a copy I will leave on your porch! We left May open to your reading recommendations.

We talked about reading *The Lost Letter* by Jillian Cantor. A historical novel of love and survival inspired by real resistance workers during World War II Austria, and the mysterious love letter that connects generations of Jewish families. Austria, 1938. Kristoff is a young apprentice to a master Jewish stamp engraver. When his teacher disappears during Kristallnacht, Kristoff is forced to engrave stamps for the Germans, and simultaneously work alongside Elena, his beloved teacher's fiery daughter, and with the Austrian resistance to send underground messages and forge papers. As he falls for Elena amidst the brutal chaos of war, Kristoff must find a way to save her, and himself. Los

Angeles, 1989 . Katie Nelson is going through a divorce and while cleaning out her house and life in the aftermath, she comes across the stamp collection of her father, who recently went into a nursing home. When an appraiser, Benjamin, discovers an unusual World War II-era Austrian stamp placed on an old love letter as he goes through her dad's collection, Katie and Benjamin are sent on a journey together that will uncover a story of passion and tragedy spanning decades and continents, behind the just fallen Berlin Wall. *The Lost Letter* shows the lasting power of love.

Please be in touch and let me know what YOU are reading. I miss you all.

Gineta



Deepest sympathy to the families of Grace Chism and B.J. (Betty) Cohenour.



Hey youth,

This quarantine has changed how we do things, but we know that eventually it will be over and we will go back to having fun learning about God's word. With that said, this month we will just go with the flow. We started a challenge back in April. The youth receive credits for doing stuff and sending us pictures. As of right now we have the top 10 youth, and I will be send out more info soon. We are excited as we look forward to seeing you soon!!

Blessings to all,
Lindsey and Heather



The LORD will comfort Israel again and have pity on her ruins. Her desert will blossom like Eden, her barren wilderness like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found there. Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.

Isaiah 51:3

Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind words are the roots,
Kind thoughts are the flowers,
Kind deeds are the fruits.

Take care of your garden
And keep out the weeds;
Fill it with sunshine,
Kind words and kind deeds.

