



Faith & Generosity

A quarterly newsletter for Foundation partners and friends

DECEMBER 2021

From David Snipes

Overwhelmed, exhausted...stronger?

Take a moment to think about how you do your job today compared to 10 years ago. Or the ways you communicate differently with friends and loved ones. Or the places you go to find news about what's happening in the world.

I think it's fair to say we are living through a period of change that is more disruptive than at any point in our lifetimes.

The dizzying pace can leave us feeling overwhelmed and, at times, exhausted. So, how are we to respond as faithful Christians? The apostle Paul offers guidance for these moments.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Paul says: "Our human body is wearing out. But our spirits are getting stronger every day. The little troubles we suffer now for a short time are making us ready for the great things God is going to give us forever."

Change is difficult even in the best of circumstances. Often, it's only when we reach our destination that we are able to look back, reflect on our progress, and realize the change was worth it.

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Overwhelmed, exhausted...*stronger*?

I've been thinking lately about changes in our WNC Conference, particularly as related to our leadership. Bishop Carter has challenged us to expand our thinking about how God is using us in this season. He urges us to embrace the importance of vital, sustainable congregations; engage in the hard work of dismantling racism; make sure the United Methodist Church is a place for everyone; and navigate our way to the other side of this pandemic.

In this edition of *Faith & Generosity*, you'll read about how the Foundation is acting on these priorities and making adaptations to expand and improve our service to you. In the past year, we've restructured our staffing and funded new ministry efforts that reflect the needs of your congregations and communities. Our 2022 budget includes the creation of a Hope Fund to support churches in crisis and a new loan program to assist with renovations to worship spaces.

If we are to answer God's call, we must be willing to let go of the familiar, accept the reality of change – and maybe even learn to embrace it.

Once again, we can turn to Scripture for encouragement. In Matthew 17:2, Jesus says, "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

On behalf of the board of directors and staff of the Foundation, we send you best wishes for an Advent season filled with grace, hope and wonder. May God bless you and all those you love.

David Snipes
CEO

Spotlight Story



HOW A 180-YEAR-OLD CHURCH ADAPTED TO STAY VITAL

Inside the revitalization of First UMC Asheboro

ASHEBORO - When First UMC Asheboro decided to turn an old bank building into space for a modern worship service, no one was sure if the idea would catch on.

Then again, the same was true when the church merged its youth group with the one at St. Luke UMC, a historically Black church down the street.

"If we listen, God will show us new ways and new things to do."

A willingness to try new things is a defining trait of this congregation, the first church established in Asheboro in 1834. It began with people meeting in houses to worship and break bread together.

"Sometimes we have to step out of the way and let God lead us," says Rev. Lynda Ferguson, the church's senior pastor. "And have the courage to do things that are maybe out of the ordinary."

Take, for example, a modern worship service launched in 2015. Inside a vacant former bank building next door to the church campus, volunteers set up a stage for musicians and brought in a few dozen chairs. A few years earlier, First UMC purchased the site with help from a low-interest loan through the United Methodist Development Fund loan program.

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HOW A 180-YEAR-OLD CHURCH ADAPTED TO STAY VITAL

"Our first Sunday, we thought, 'We'll be blessed if we have 50 people,'" Lynda said. "We had 187 people. And so we've remodeled. Prior to the pandemic, we were shoulder to shoulder in that building."

So another adaptation became necessary. This time, an outdoor service on Sunday nights welcomed people with fire pits, string lights, s'mores and hot dogs. It has proven more popular than expected. The setting allows for plenty of social distancing and coincides with fellowship night for children and youth.

Marveling at the crowd one recent evening, Lynda shared a smile with Tim Clements, the church's worship leader.

"We looked at each other and Tim said, 'You know, we never would have sat around a table and said, 'Hey, let's have a service on Sunday night and do lights in the trees.' The pandemic brought that to us. If we listen to God, God will show us new ways and new things to do.'"

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HOW A 180-YEAR-OLD CHURCH ADAPTED TO STAY VITAL

Responding to needs

Three miles from the church, another ambitious endeavor is taking shape. First UMC is working with partners to transform the former Calvary United Methodist Church into a much-needed shelter for women and children. Calvary closed its doors for worship in 2018 after the congregation had dwindled to about 20 people.

Named Lydia's Place, the shelter will share space in the former Calvary building with other new ministries to be collectively known as Francis Street Community.

Before taking a visitor on a tour of the site, Lynda paused to reflect on all that is happening in the life of the church.

"When I came here in 2014, this was a very prominent church, but it had dwindled down to about 160 in average worship attendance," Lynda said. "Over the years, we have grown from not having any families to having lots of young families. People often ask me, 'How did that happen?' The only way I can answer is to say God was in the middle of every bit of it."





END-OF-YEAR GIVING: WHAT YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW

Spreading the word about stock gifts, IRAs and more

Many people choose to make end-of-year donations through their IRAs or as gifts of stock as tax-deductible contributions to their churches. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Did you know: Churches receive an average of 30 percent of their annual donations in the month of December alone.

Required Minimum Distributions are back in 2021

If you have reached age 72 and are required to take a minimum distribution (RMD) from your IRA, you can authorize gifts from your IRA directly to the church. You reduce your taxable income, and the distribution counts toward your RMD.

Required minimum distributions were put on hold in 2020 but are required again in 2021.

Due to the CARES Act, individuals who take the standard tax deduction can deduct up to \$300 in charitable giving in 2021, and married couples who file joint returns can deduct up to \$600. This is a significant change, as, before the CARES Act, taxpayers who took the standard deduction could not take any deductions for charitable gifts.

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END-OF-YEAR GIVING: WHAT YOUR CHURCH NEEDS TO KNOW

To qualify for the tax credit, you must have your retirement plan administrator direct the distribution **DIRECTLY** to your church; it cannot pass through your hands or it will trigger an income taxable event for you.

If you have questions about how to execute this gift transaction, please contact Susan Cothorn at 888-450-1956, ext. 1507 or SCothorn@umfwnc.org and she will be happy to help you through the process.

Gifting stock and appreciated securities

Gifts of stock are tax deductible just like cash gifts **AND** donors can avoid capital gains taxes by donating appreciated stock rather than selling it outright and then donating the proceeds. The result is a lower tax bill for the donor and more of the gift going directly to the church or ministry.

Watch the video above to hear from Rob Byrd, our Board Treasurer and a certified public accountant for more than 40 years. Rob shares insights for donors, clergy and church finance officers.

“As we get toward the end of the year, a lot of people like to take advantage of planning their charitable giving,” Rob said. “Many times, they want to accelerate it into the current year.”

If you have church members who wish to donate appreciated stock, the Foundation will liquidate these gifts for you **AT NO COST!** For assistance with a stock transfer, contact Andrea Gutierrez at 704-817-3990, ext. 1504 or AGutierrez@umfwnc.org.

We send the proceeds from most stock gifts as a check to a church for its unrestricted use. Additionally, some donors have asked us to apply their gifts toward:

- The outstanding principal on their church’s UMF Development Fund loan
- An existing investment account held by their church and managed by the Foundation
- Creating a new endowment account to benefit their church
- Donor Advised Funds

All stock donations must be received no later than Dec. 31 to be considered a contribution for 2021.



STUMPED ON GIFT IDEAS? CONSIDER GIVING TO A FUND IN HONOR OF A LOVED ONE

You can support scholarships, Haiti relief efforts and more

This holiday season, consider honoring a loved one by making a gift to a permanently restricted endowment fund of the Foundation.

From college scholarships to Haiti relief, there are funds for every area of interest. Simply go to UMFWNC.org and click on "Give to a Fund" in the upper right hand corner.

We'll send you an acknowledgement letter for tax purposes and notify the fund's designated contact person.

Armstrong Memorial Preaching Fund Supports the preaching mission at First UMC, Belmont NC Donate	Barden Memorial Scholarship Provides a scholarship to United Methodist student(s) from the North Wilkesboro District Donate	Barnhardt Family Scholarship Provides a scholarship for a student pursuing a degree in accounting, religion, or education Donate
Ben Thomas Lawson Jr. & Megan Carrier Fund Supports Centenary UMC, Winston- Salem NC Donate	Benn Duff Endowment Supports the Asbury Nursing Center Supplemental Assistance Fund, Aldersgate Retirement Community, and the WNCC Board of Pensions Donate	Betty & Ed Mooney Endowment Supports Madison UMC, Madison NC Donate



FOUNDATION PLANS NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2022

Saving Grace, Hope Fund for emergencies and loans for worship spaces

Blessed with a strong financial performance and the faith and trust of our partners, Foundation board members approved a 2022 budget that funds a number of church-building initiatives.

Included in the budget is a 10 percent tithe of income to the WNC Conference for approximately \$184,000, an expression of gratitude for the Conference's role in our growth. The Foundation has contributed surplus dollars in the past, but this represents the first ever commitment from the general operating budget.

"We're able, through our resources, to impact so many different ministries."

Among the endeavors to launch in 2022:

- A personal stewardship series called Saving Grace, created by UMC Discipleship Ministries, to help participants develop faithful practices in the areas of saving, earning and giving.
- A Hope Fund to immediately respond to churches who suffer a loss of property due to fire, flood, storm, accident, vandalism and other crisis situations.
- A loan program to help churches make minor renovations to their worship spaces to improve hospitality, accessibility, mobility, technology and energy efficiency. This is a collaboration with the WNC Conference, Wesley Community Development and Boundless Impact, a nonprofit in Greensboro that fosters inclusion and innovation.

"I'm excited about all the numbers, but I'm even more excited about the lives we touch and how we're able, through our resources, to impact so many different ministries," said board chair Tom Jordan.

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FOUNDATION PLANS NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2022

There is also a renewed commitment to support pastors in improving their financial health. The Clergy Debt Reduction Loan Program allows a typical participant to save \$350 per month by consolidating debt at an interest rate of 1.5 percent. Since 2016, the program has helped clergy refinance \$4.6 million in collective debt. This is a partnership with WNCC and The Duke Endowment.

“These are ways we are giving back and truly living into our mission statement,” President David Snipes told the assembled group, “to build the Church for generations to come.”



Board Chairman Tom Jordan (left) and CEO David Snipes share a lighter moment.



Welcome!

AMANDA GOEDERT

NEW STAFF MEMBER JOINS THE TEAM

Amanda is our Executive Support Specialist

The Foundation is excited to welcome Amanda Goedert to the staff as our Executive Support Specialist. This position will serve the administrative support needs of David Snipes, Susan Cothorn and Brad Crossley.

A native of Mount Airy, Amanda resides in Huntersville with her husband, Jerry. The Goederts have been foster parents with Mecklenburg County for the past 10 years and adopted a son through that service.

Community involvement has always been a source of pride for Amanda.

“I see this position as an opportunity to continue serving,” Amanda said. “I look forward to working alongside all of you in this ministry.”

Amanda has also served the homeless with Block Love Charlotte for several years, and is currently involved with the Lake Norman Elks Lodge #392.

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Amanda!



Foundation Happenings



Foundation staff took a walk in the woods during a recent staff retreat.



On Sept. 17 at 11:42 a.m., our own Caroline Cox and husband, Brian, welcomed Andrew Duncan Cox, 7 pounds, 8 ounces and 21 inches.



Bishop Ken Carter spoke to Board Chairman Tom Jordan and Amy Coles, assistant to the bishop, prior to the Foundation's November board meeting.



The Reynolds Leadership Academy for Evangelism and Discipleship hosted clergy in October to share ideas and consider new ways to lead the Church.



Foundation board members Wanda Musgrave and Tom Latimer spoke at a memorial service for Harley Dickson, former executive director of the Foundation. Harley passed away in August at age 92.

Good news is happening in your ministry. The Foundation can help you share it.

Contact Matt Garfield, Director of Communications, at MGarfield@umfwnc.org or 888-450-1956, ext. 1500 to discuss how we can partner to help you share your news.