



OFFERINGS & REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY IS NOT SIMPLY ABOUT PROXIMITY



Photo by Dawn Matchinske
Decorations by Connie Harris

"If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance."

I Corinthians 12:26 (The Message)

In my devotional time recently, a faded piece of paper fell out of my journal. It contained a story I saw in [USA Today newspaper on October 7, 2015](#). The article read: "As floodwaters from the storm that South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and others have termed a 1-in-1,000-year event ravaged the state, several photographers captured what appeared to be mounds of floating fire ants. Amid the devastation caused by flooding, the state's invasive fire ant population found a little-known way to survive."

It seems that fire ants build their tunnels underground, and when the flood waters come, their tunnels are destroyed. With nowhere to go, the fire ants band together and form a raft with their bodies. Hundreds and thousands of ants quickly weave together, using pincers and mandibles and whatever they can to hold on to one another. The ants literally latch on to one another. A layer of hardier ants form the bottom of the raft, protecting the rest of the colony. The queen and the larvae are kept safe in the middle of the raft, out of harm's way. The exoskeleton of fire ants repels water so that woven together they form a waterproof fabric. Due to the tightly knit "weave" of the ants, water cannot penetrate the raft allowing the ants to stay dry. This water-tight nature provides the raft with the buoyancy force necessary to float. The ants can remain in the raft formation for weeks if necessary as the floodwaters subside and they are able to establish their colony in a new underground home. Individual ants, while somewhat water resistant on their own, will drown quickly in a flood. But the colony together, using all of their smarts and strength and natural abilities, this communal raft enables the colony to survive.

Now, of course they are fire ants, not humans, but we have the capacity for learning from metaphor, and perhaps we might take something from the raft of the fire ants.

As we enter the Easter Season, we are reminded that God is always working to bring new life and healing into the sick and broken places in our lives. One of the ways I am experiencing God bringing new life to us in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic is through the gift of community. While we are practicing social distancing, we may at times feel like we have "lost" our community connection - but, community is not simply about proximity. Every day, while I hear stories of the increasing numbers of persons who have contracted the virus and the rising death toll, I also hear stories of how people all over the world are re-learning how to be in community with one another - how to show compassion - how to slow down and have meaningful conversations with one another and how to listen to each other's fears and hopes, joys and longings. We're re-learning on a global level what it means to work together for the good of all God's children - and to me that sounds a lot like the beginnings of a resurrection to new life.



With God's love,

Becky Shirley



Worshiping in Love



Growing in Love



Serving in Love

WORSHIP MINISTRIES



Services Online

Although the doors of our church campus are temporarily closed due to guidance and directions from the health/government officials, and from our UMC South Carolina Conference in response to the coronavirus pandemic,

Worshipping in Love

we as a church body have adapted and remain committed to worshipping together each Sunday with the help of technology. If you haven't joined us online we invite you to set aside time at 11am to be in fellowship with us as we gather together for our Online Sunday Service which is being streamed on Facebook. Prayer, worship through music, a sermon lesson, updates about ongoing efforts to continue ministries where possible, and opportunities to interact live via the posting and sharing of messages with each other are all part of the new format service. For those who are not on the Facebook or other social media channels, we also post the service to the church's website where it can be easily viewed. The service is posted by 9am on Sundays and can be found on the [Homepage](#) under [Online Services & Select Sermons](#).

Worship Arts

Hoping all are safe and staying well. This is a time like no one has seen. But, as followers of Christ, we will keep the faith and come out on the other side of this time a stronger church.



The hard decision has been made for the children's musical/spring concert that was to be held in May to be cancelled as the children are not able to gather together for rehearsals. That is heartbreaking for all of us, but the program will resume in August in preparation for a Christmas musical.

Jim Lowder has created two YouTube channels to assist you in your personal worship. One has a contemporary flavor with songs from Christian artists and the other is a collection of favorite newer and classic anthems of the church. Click the link to find [Contemporary YouTube Channel](#) and the [Classis Anthems YouTube Channel](#)

These will be updated weekly. Our hope is that they give you comfort and inspiration as we traverse these next few weeks as a united people of Philadelphia UMC!



HOLY WEEK ONLINE SERVICES

All are invited and encouraged to join us online on Facebook and on our website for these Holy Week Services.

- April 5th - Palm Sunday: 11:00am
- April 9th - Maundy Thursday: 6:00pm
- April 10th - Good Friday: 6:00pm
- April 12th - Easter Sunday: 7:00am (Website)
11am (Facebook)

When the current health crisis has passed, we look forward to returning to worship in our beautiful sanctuary, however, we remain committed in our faith and intent on celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus!



A MESSAGE TO OUR PUMC FAMILY FROM THE CHURCH COUNCIL ON ADAPTING OUR OPERATIONS & EXPENSES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by Gordon Connell, 2020 Council Chair



It seems that in the blink of an eye, our whole world has changed. We are having to rethink how we live our daily lives. How do we take care of our families? How do we stay connected? How do we budget our money? How long will this exile (social distancing) last? We simply do not have the answers to each of these questions. But this we do know, we have a God who loves us and gives us courage and strength to overcome life's struggles throughout scripture, but none, perhaps, so comforting in these times as Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

You should be aware that Pastor Becky, the staff, and ministry leaders are struggling with many of these same issues. Current technology has allowed meetings, ministries and even virtual worship services to keep many of us connected as a church family. However, some issues such as reducing or eliminating monthly operating expenses are much more challenging. The finance committee is continuing to ask that ministry leaders look at their budget needs and find ways to postpone some of those expenses. Efforts are being made to take advantage of mortgage relief for the building and parsonage monthly payments that are being offered through our bank. New concepts are continually being discussed and explored.

Church Council realizes that many of you may not be included in the "essential business" category and understand that you may be unable to make contributions to the church during this season of crisis. Therefore, we are prayerfully and humbly asking that those members who are able to do so, please continue your faithful financial support for Philadelphia. Any modest increase or special gift will help to offset the contributions that negatively impacted families cannot make at this time. These are the ways to submit your contributions:

- Online: visit our website <http://pumcfortmill.org/give>
- App: download Give Plus, type Philadelphia UMC and follow the prompts. More information can be found here: [Give Plus Video](#)
- Text: 844-281-2004 and enter the amount you wish to give and follow the prompts.
- Mail a check to the church:
PUMC, Attn: Finance,
1691 Hwy 160W, Fort Mill, SC 29708
- Zelle: app using your draft from your bank account.
- Bill Pay: contact your financial Institution.

As this crisis continues, we all have a responsibility to do our part no matter how important or insignificant it may seem. Let us therefore pull together to stay strong in our faith and connected to each other.

This letter was originally distributed on April 1, 2020 and is shared here again to ensure all members of PUMC are fully apprised of current affairs.

STEWARDSHIP & FINANCIAL REPORT

\$63,651 is needed each month to meet our annual budget of \$763,387

144,919 has been received as of 3/31/20 towards the General and Building Funds

\$162,874 has been spent as of 3/31/20 from the General and Building Funds

\$1,143,808 Loan balance for Building and Parsonage as of 3/31/20

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Safety & Security Task Force Update

The Safety & Security Task Force has developed a plan and training for all those interested in becoming the eyes and ears of the congregation during worship. Ideally, two "situationally aware" volunteers will be on the lookout for anything from the unusual to an actual emergency and will alert those in the congregation that can help notify proper personnel and/or authorities. Our plan has been to have training complete in May and enacting this new plan in June- timing dependent upon the COVID-19 status. Other plans for the safety of our church are

continuing to be developed. If you would like to serve your fellow church members in this capacity, please contact Connie Martin at 803-984-8898 or email connie.martin@duke-energy.com.

Kitchen Training

The trustees are planning to offer kitchen training at the church soon. No definite date has been set yet, but Jimmy Price and Ben Himes have agreed to conduct the training. They will offer instruction on general use and care of the kitchen, including proper use of the gas range, the dishwasher, refrigerator and freezer. We are asking that a member from each group/organization be in attendance.

UNITED METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE TO BE **POSTPONED**

The Executive Committee of the Commission on the General Conference has been notified by the Minneapolis Convention Center that they are restricting events at the venue through May 10, 2020, following recommendations by the Minnesota Department of Health, the Governor of Minnesota and the Mayor of Minneapolis to postpone or cancel events involving 50+ people in order to slow the spread of coronavirus. As a result of this decision, the Executive Committee is announcing that the General Conference will be postponed and will not occur May 5-15, 2020 as planned.

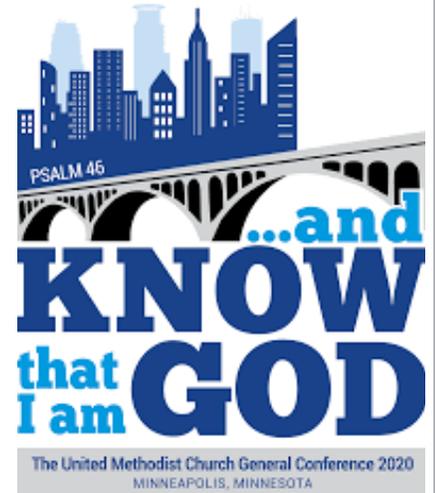
Out of concerns for the health and safety of all affected amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Executive Committee has been monitoring the situation for some time and had scheduled a teleconference meeting of the full Commission of the General Conference for March 21 to discuss plans for the event. Only the full commission is able to set a new date or decide on an alternate plan. That meeting will go forward as scheduled, although it is not known at this time how quickly they will be able to announce new dates.

“This news is not unexpected based on the current guidance from health officials and we expect to move forward with new plans as quickly as possible,” said Kim Simpson, chair of the Commission.

While the Commission was already considering many requests to postpone the event due to the growing pandemic and processing the complexities which would result from that decision, the announcement by the convention center that those dates will no longer be possible means that the church will not incur significant financial penalties for cancellation of the contract.

“Our focus in this moment is not solely on the gathering of the General Conference for the work we have been called to do, but is on the individuals, families, churches and communities around the world whose lives are being impacted by this pandemic,” said Simpson. “We recognize the struggle to deal with the physical, emotional and spiritual needs which come with the unknown. We are confident that local United Methodist churches will be finding new ways to be in community with their neighbors and meet their evolving needs.”

Commission on the General Conference - Press Release, March 18, 2020



PYG - PHILLY YOUTH GROUP

March 13-15 the youth enjoyed their spring retreat at Asbury Hills in Cleveland, South Carolina. We had the camp to ourselves to explore and spend time together and with God. Our theme for this year's retreat was Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle!

[a 2017 fantasy adventure comedy film]

Our lessons included

- Using our strengths and weaknesses to further God's kingdom,
- God equipping us for what we are called to do, and
- Regardless of the situation or outcome calling out God's name!

Ten of the fourteen youth and two of the four adults attempted the alpine tower- a 50+ foot climbing structure made of climbing rocks, swinging rope ladders, and floating pieces! We also had so much fun playing a very competitive set of archery tag games! We spent the weekend bonding, worshipping, and playing games and we had the best time!

The youth have been working hard to stay connected during these social distancing times. We have enjoyed using Zoom to meet together virtually! We have been able to continue our Sunday School meeting at 9:45am and continue with our curriculum- *Introducing the New Testament* by Rev Anne Robertson.

Sunday evenings we are connecting via Zoom as well and have had so much fun with things like a virtual scavenger hunt. Youth raced around their homes looking for items on the list including kitchen tools, cleaning supplies, and other household items! Email Maggie@pumcfortmill.org for more information or to be added to our upcoming virtual meetings!



Growing in Love: Our youth have a time of fellowship and spiritual growth and are able to bask in God's beautiful creation during their spring retreat at Asbury Hills in Cleveland, SC.

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRIES

The Coronavirus brought both obstacles and opportunities for the Children's and Family Ministries of Philadelphia Church. Over the past nine months, the Children's Ministry had been creating original short videos to go along with the Sunday School lesson. In God's providence, when social distancing became mandatory for our state, the Children's Ministry had already developed new tools to create video lessons and minister to families unable to meet in person.

PUMC Children's Ministry YouTube Channel

While much of the created material continued to be posted on the [PUMC Children's Ministry Facebook Page](#) and the [PUMC Facebook Page](#), the Children's Ministry created a [YouTube channel](#) to post videos created for the ministry. This channel has been invaluable during the quarantine because the ministry is able to distribute newly created Sunday School lessons and fun outputs for children and parents who could not see the content otherwise. What started out as a tool of necessity can now become a permanent feature to enhance the Children's Ministry and reach a larger audience with our original content. .

Choose Shawn's Adventure



If you are not already aware, the Children's Ministry has a "mascot", Shawn the Sheep who appears in many of original videos and goes on many adventures to teach children the various Bible lessons. In order

to continue interacting with children during the quarantine, the Children's Ministry had a contest where kids could send in their

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

First and foremost, let us be thankful! Thankful for our health, our families, neighbors, and friends. Once we can gather again, invite your families, neighbors and friends to visit with us at Philadelphia UMC to thank God for our blessings.

During this time, may we pray that we are all looking to the future and asking God what we can do to make life better for members and guests who come through our doors? And, what can we do throughout the community of Fort Mill and beyond to bring Christ to people and people to Christ?

The Evangelism Team is working to bring the Welcome Packet into the 21st century so that visitors and guest can truly understand and appreciate the ministries and opportunities available at PUMC and how they too can be part of our wonderful family.

ideas for Shawn's next adventure. Many children participated and we chose one idea and created a video of that suggested adventure.

Green Screen Technology

As the Children's Ministry continues to create original video content, we are using green screen technology more and more. There is understandably a learning curve involved. Does anyone have any experience with lighting green screens to enhance video productions? Additional experience in this would be helpful to us. Contact Nicolas Gold to help at nicolas@pumcfortmill.org.

ROCKY RAILWAY VBS

Vacation Bible School is still planned for June 22nd thru 25th. We are already well into the planning stages with over a hundred



children already registered. We do need volunteers to help us make this VBS extra special. So climb aboard for mountains of fun at Rocky Railway! On this faith-filled adventure, kids discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs. Rocky Railway VBS is coming to Philadelphia Church June 22nd thru 25th from 9:30am-11:45am. Register today to participate and volunteer: <https://vbspro.events/p/events/b4aed5>

We will be working with staff and the communications team to produce a packet that not only informative, but appealing to all.

Additionally, a training session is being organized for greeters. We are in need of greeters! We want those who visit us to feel the love of God as soon as they walk through a door and we want people, not just papers, to answer questions about our ministries. Won't you join us and be a friendly face for PUMC?

If you have not committed to this ministry you can do so by email: jmanring.jm@gmail.com with your name, email address, and the service you attend.



Growing in Love

MISSIONS COMMITTEE



Based on directives from our national and local leaders, we've adapted our thoughts with Missions and how we're going to need to move forward in this "temporary new normal".

The Missions committee has decided because of the daily changes with COVID-19, closures as well as Mecklenburg County Stay Home Order, that Sleep in Heavenly Peace will be postponed until the Fall. We will let everyone know as soon as we have a new date. We also still plan to support Classroom Ready and Habitat for Humanity this year. We will wait in moving forward with those dates as we pray for an end to COVID-19.

As brothers and sisters of Christ we still want to Serve in Love to our families, neighbors and friends in the safest way possible. At this time, with the goal to keep as many people as possible safe and healthy and out of the hospitals so they are not even more overwhelmed, we hope that you all are able to stay home so we can slow down the curve of COVID-19.

We must be aware that some of our neighbors, family and friends need assistance at this time. If you are called and able to do so safely for yourself and others to help serve in some way I've listed some websites of groups that our church serves throughout the year. PLEASE make sure you contact any group you want to serve beforehand as all have adapted their rules and guidelines during this time. With all of the new restrictions we will not be organizing anything through the Missions committee at this time. If you feel called to serve, you may find the resources below helpful. My continued prayers are with you all at this time that you are able to stay safe and healthy and when we all are able to see each other again that I will be able to greet you with a huge hug.

Please remember to check websites and contact FIRST as all have adapted guidelines to COVID-19.

- <https://www.fortmillcarecenter.org/>
- <https://www.urbanministrycenter.org/>
- <https://www.foundationforfortmillschools.org/>

The Fort Mill Care Center

The Fort Mill Care Center has served the Fort Mill area since 1987 remains open during as it certainly needed during times such as these. Although your aren't able to bring your donations to the church right now, food and hygiene products still are urgently needed and can be brought directly to the care center located at, 2760 Old Nation Road in Fort Mill Mon, Wed and Fri from 9am-12.

Do not go to the main building as that is being used for food distribution. Instead, drive down the gravel road alongside the main building and back to the warehouse. There are signs on the warehouse doors directing you. Knock on the door during the hours listed above and a staff member will take your donation. You may want to call beforehand (803-547-7620). Currently, their greatest needs are: jelly, peanut butter, grits, pancake mix and syrup, canned fruits, pull up diapers and adult depends. Please donate as you are able and be sure to let the staff know that you are donating on behalf of the Philadelphia United Methodist Church in Fort Mill. May God bless you for supporting this ministry.

Connexion Crew

With everything happening these days, our Connexion Gang will be continuing our efforts to reach out to each other and so many of our PUMC members to check in with them.

We will have a work session at the church to help Nic prepare materials for Vacation Bible School in June. No decision has yet been made on the VBS schedule. When we are able to help during that special week, our members traditionally play a crucial role in assuming a myriad of responsibilities.

We will be lending our hands and hearts to the Mission Committee's planned Sleep in Heavenly Peace that will now be rescheduled to later in the year.

These dates on your calendars will have to remain "wait and see". Despite that uncertainty, the Connexion Crew will be there when they occur. As all of us try to stay busy in our homes completing a lot of tasks we have left "undone" due to our busy schedules, let's remember to keep all our crew in our prayers and reach out to some of our members who have no one around to cheer them up! Please, please stay safe and feel our love.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about our Connexion Crew, please don't hesitate to contact Pat and George Wilson gpwilson71@gmail.com.



Serving in Love: Connexion Crew helped at Samaritan's Purse to prepare for the shoeboxes. Many aren't aware that this is a year-round ministry.

NURTURE COMMITTEE

The PUMC Nurture Committee's Shut-in Ministry is still going strong, in spite of the limitations due to the Coronavirus. I made a surprise visit. I got positioned outside the window her family opened the blinds and she was so happy to be remembered during this difficult time. The picture was captured right when she and I were trying to say "I love you" with our hands to our hearts, because we couldn't hear each other. I would love to encourage everyone to reach out in various ways – especially calling folks, since we are all somewhat homebound. Some of us are also making meals and/or treats and driving them around leaving them on doorsteps. Nurture committee helps reach out to those we are closely aligned with and supports, in both stable times and during times of crisis. It's important for all of us to stay in touch and reach out, while social distancing, so people still feel a sense of connection. Many cards are still being sent and calls being made as events and needs become known to Nurture Committee teams. Each one of us may find opportunities to extend love, grace, mercy, and nurture to others as we think about who in our communities could benefit from a blessing. Jennifer's visit was featured on CN2: link <https://www.cn2.com/cn2-picture-of-the-day-3-24-2020/>

Lunch Bunch

With the restrictions, we did not meet in March and have made no plans to meet in April. Hopefully, May will be a good opportunity to meet. Watch the May newsletter for update. - Donna Schaefer



Serving in Love: Jennifer Gaia making a surprise visit to one of our homebound friends. Jennifer says "She did not know I was coming, we set it up as a surprise."



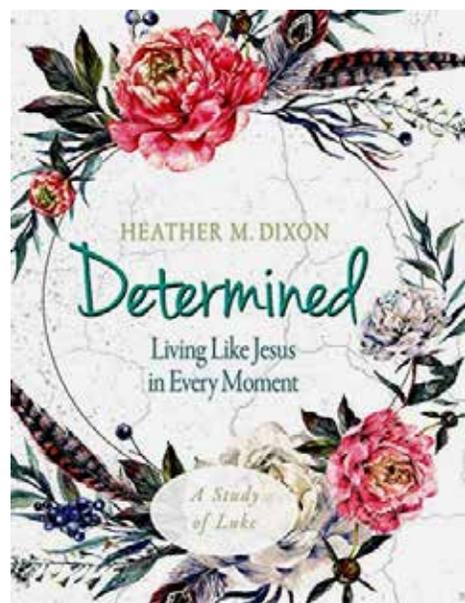
Growing in Love: Ladies Bible Study now meets by Zoom, as do many other PUMC groups.

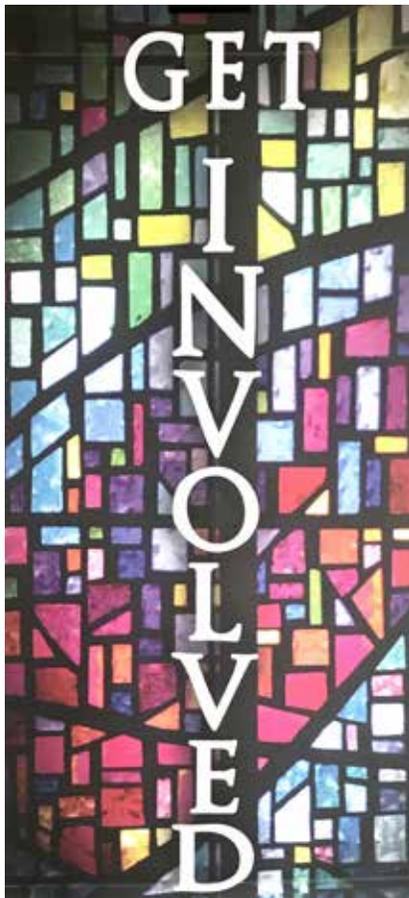
Ladies Bible Study

The Ladies Bible Study (LBS) group from our church normally meets on Fridays at 10 am. During this period of the Covid-19 pandemic we have had to suspend our physical meetings and planned study. However, there is more than Bible study going on with our group. We have started to meet weekly on Zoom, thanks to Pam Brenwald's expertise and Jean McDade's leadership. We have a devotion, prayer, share our needs and concerns and prayer requests, and catch up on each other's lives. We celebrate our joys and our friendships, and support one another. This has been a blessing and a lifeline during our time of "social distancing".

Our study this year is on the Gospel of Luke, and the focus is "Determined, Living Like Jesus in Every Moment." For us, that means continuing to nourish the invaluable relationships we have made. Our plan is simple and basic: using our membership list, each member contacts a different person each day, starting with the name listed after our own, and working on through the list. We can make contact by email, text or phone call, whatever works. We share prayer concerns, chit chat about our day, or whatever is on our minds, while sharing in the love of Christ.

The LBS is open to all women. We start a new study each fall. Jean McDade is our leader and teacher. Linda Jacoby is co-teacher and Jennifer Gaia is secretary and council connection.





JOIN PUMC CROSS SCAVENGER HUNT

Just because we're social distancing, doesn't mean we can celebrate the joy of Easter with one another. We just need to be creative.

Join the PUMC Cross Scavenger Hunt! We are encouraging each of our PUMC households to display a cross in your front window/yard/door to celebrate Easter! Feel free to use a cross decoration you may already have or you can make one of your own. Many people are painting their windows with washable paints like the Lowdermilks. Please email your pictures to maggie@pumcfortmill.org by noon on Saturday! Include your neighborhood and street name only (ex. Baxter, Derick's Crossing). We will be sending the list of neighborhoods/street names to our members who wish to go on the cross scavenger hunt on Sunday after worship. If you would like to receive the list of crosses and the scavenger hunt neighborhoods, please email maggie@pumcfortmill.org.

Happy Easter!



Worshipping In Love: Many families like the Lowdermilks are showing the beauty of the Easter season by painting their windows. This can be a family project using washable paints and painters tape.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Men in the Mirror

Men in the Mirror Men in the Mirror will be held on Saturday, April 18th by Zoom conference call. The topic will be More Thorns than Roses. That is the same topic from the meeting we had postpone in March. You will get an email with details of how to join or contact billnoneray@yahoo.com



Charlotte Knights vs Norfolk Tide April 21st - a family event - **POSTPONED**. Baseball 2020 regular season will be delayed. We have purchased a block of 14 tickets for this game. We will get a refund or a rain check depending of the policy of the Knights.



Gun Safety and live fire, Friday April 24th - a family event - **POSTPONED**. This popular event is outdoors, but typically has well more that 10 people involved. We will reschedule this event following the guidelines of South Carolina health authorities.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

We would like to offer grocery shopping, errands or meals to anyone that needs assistance at this time. Know that we will use proper safety precautions and can simply drop off items to your house. Please contact Cindi Cahaly, Cahaly@comporium.net or 803-493-5440 if you or someone you know needs help.

Address	Contact	803-548-0102 Office Hrs: Mon - Thurs 9am - 12:30pm info@pumcfortmill.org www.pumcfortmill.org	Staff	Senior Pastor - Rev. Becky Shirley Director of Worship Art - Jim Lowder Director of Children & Family Ministries - Nic Gold Director of Youth Ministries - Maggie Justus Office Manager - Denise Watson Financial Secretary - Stefanie Hill
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