



First Newton

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Becoming one diverse community

Worshipping Jesus passionately

Practicing unprecedented acts of hospitality

LOVING ALL PEOPLE INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

sometimes you just need a quiet place...



Since simply being in the sanctuary can be healing for our souls, we will open our sanctuary for a time of contemplative prayer and meditation. This will be an sign-up event opportunity in which you can drop by for a time of spiritual reflection. You may sign up for time by yourself or with your family. There will be a minister available to pray or talk with you. Communion will also be offered with our individual communion cups.

*The Sanctuary will be open on: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 from 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Thursday, September 10, 2020 from 4:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Sunday, September 13, 2020 from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM*

Please sign up through our [Sign Up Genius](#) or by calling the church office at 828-464-8422.

Please enter through the large front doors of the sanctuary into the Narthex. A volunteer will be in the Narthex to assist with any questions or needs.

Out of love and respect for each other, we are abiding by the current Phase 2 guidelines. Please adhere to the following:

Wear a mask at all times

Maintain Social Distancing of at least 6 feet

Use the Hand Sanitizer upon entering and leaving the Sanctuary

The volunteer will ensure that there are no more than 10 people gathering in the Sanctuary. A waiting line will form in the Narthex and outside if necessary.

We encourage you to limit your time in the Sanctuary to 15-20 minutes when others are waiting.

Please respect others' desires for quiet reflection – conversations should be conducted outside the Sanctuary.

Come and be refreshed and renewed in quiet reflection before God.

FROM
THE
PASTOR



A
MESSAGE FROM
JOSH

It's almost time for FALL!!!! I love Fall. It is my favorite for many, many reasons. Not least of which are Brachs Mellocreme Pumpkins! I don't mind candy corn but the pumpkins are way better. School is back in, the cooler air to run in, the decorations, the promise of the holidays around the corner - I think we could all use a little festivities and celebration in our hearts and homes. So let's do it!

I was fascinated even when growing up by the vast quantity and form of human religious expression found throughout the ages. One religious tradition I particularly enjoyed studying and learning about was Greek mythology. As fall rapidly approaches and winter looms after, we begin to see the change in all living things around us – trees going dormant, bears hibernating, insects finding protection until the warmth arrives again. This change in seasons reminds me of one of my favorite Greek myths. Below is the extremely condensed and polished story of Persephone and Hades:

Zeus, the king of all the gods, had three sisters.

Hera was both his wife and his sister. Hera was the goddess of marriage and the queen of all the gods.

Hestia, another of his sisters, was a much loved goddess by the woman of Greece - Hestia was the goddess of home and hearth.

His third sister, Demeter, was in charge of the harvest. All the gods jobs were important. But Demeter's job was very important. If she was upset, the crops could die. Everyone, gods and mortals alike, worked hard to keep Demeter happy. What made her happy was enjoying the company of her daughter, Persephone.

As the story goes

Persephone had grown into a beautiful young woman, with a smile for everyone. One day, while picking flowers in the fields, Hades, her uncle, the god of the underworld, noticed her. Hades was normally a gloomy fellow. But Persephone's beauty had dazzled him. He fell in love instantly. Quickly, before anyone could interfere, he kidnapped Persephone and hurled his chariot down into the darkest depths of the underworld, taking Persephone with him.

Locked in a room in the Hall of Hades, Persephone cried and cried. She refused to speak to Hades. And she refused to eat. Legend said if you ate anything in Hades, you could never leave. She did not know if the legend was true, but she did not want to risk it in case someone came to rescue her. Nearly a week went by. Finally, unable to bear her hunger, Persephone ate six pomegranate seeds. It seemed her fate was sealed. She would have to live in the Underworld forever.

Meanwhile, back on earth, Demeter was miserable. She missed her daughter. She was not able to care for the crops. She was not able to do anything much except cry. Zeus, king of all the gods, was worried about the crops. The people would die if the crops failed. If that happened, who would worship Zeus? He had to do something. Zeus did what he often did. He sent Hermes, his youngest son, the messenger, to crack a deal, this time with Hades. Even as a baby, Hermes was great at making deals. Everyone knew that. But this deal might be the challenge of his life. His uncle Hades, king of the underworld, was really in love. This was no passing fancy.

When Hermes heard that Persephone had eaten six pomegranate seeds, he had to think quickly. The deal he made with Hades was that if Persephone would marry Hades, she would live as queen of the underworld for six months out of the year. However, each spring, Persephone would return and live on earth for the other six months of the year. Hades agreed. Zeus agreed. Persephone agreed. And finally, Demeter agreed.

Each spring, Demeter makes sure all the flowers bloom in welcome when her daughter, Queen of the Underworld, returns to her. Each fall, when Persephone returns to Hades, Demeter cries, and lets all the crops die until spring, when the cycle starts again.

Of course, this fanciful story explains the existence of the seasons and the coming and going of fall and winter. There were stories like this to explain all the different truths and realities of human existence. By the time Jesus came the Romans had adopted most of the Greek myths as their own, including this one. The names changed somewhat but the thrust remained the same. There were numerous (polytheism) gods who controlled the earth and were by their nature flawed and oftentimes even petty. As the Apostle Paul traveled the Roman world, as a Roman citizen no less, this was the prevailing religious mindset he faced as he shared the good news of Jesus Christ to those he encountered in his travels. How do you explain to these petty polytheistic believers not just the existence of a solitary omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God who singlehandedly created all things out of nothing but also a God that loved this creation and had a personal stake in it's temporal and eternal fate?

When Paul arrived during his travels in the Greek capital of Athens he was faced with this daunting task. This is what the account in Acts 16 tells us:

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

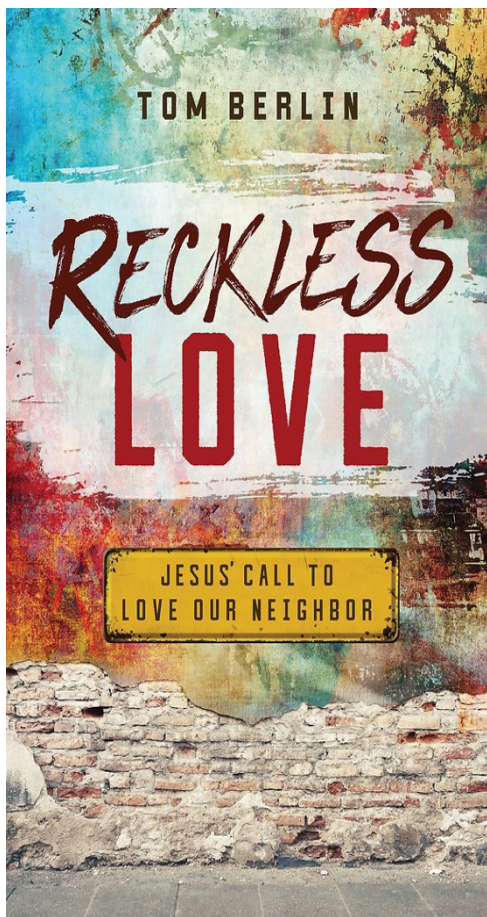
When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

An "unknown" God – a perfect opening for Paul to expound on the gospel and to share the truth of Christ in a way that they would not only understand but would also be convicted. While I still love the Greek myths and can appreciate them as enlightening historical nuggets, I can also thankfully and with great joy proclaim that they are inadequate and insufficient attempts at revealing the nature of human and divine existence. I, we have the great privilege of knowing the ONE who truly created all things and who continues to sustain existence through the cycle of the seasons by the power of the Holy Spirit. With each splendidly colored leaf that falls and each cool blast of the wind, we can give thanks and praise to God for all that God is and has done.

But just as Paul, we are also have the great responsibility of sharing the truth and call of the Triune God with all those out there who have their own modern day pantheon of gods to which they give homage, allegiance, and worship – money, sex, power, technology. You see the gods' names have changed again but they are still very much around. And just as Paul did with the Greeks, we must share the gospel and call them not only to repentance but also into a saving relationship with the God that created them, redeems them, and sustains them. The God that for this moment is "unknown" to them but must not remain that way. This is both our responsibility and privilege. I hope we are up to the challenge!

Blessings to you all!
Josh

PS – We are still looking for new and engaging ways to do church as the pandemic continues. Be on the lookout for more opportunities!



FALL SMALL GROUP STUDY

“Reckless Love”

Love God more deeply by learning to love your neighbor better

BEGINNING September 1, 2020

(In person / Gomedela Room / Masks required)

Maybe we have it a little backward. As Christians, we strive to follow Jesus’ teaching to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength which, in turn, we hope will help us better love our family, friends, and leaders...our neighbors.

But what if we turned that around and put the emphasis on loving our family, friends, leaders, and, yes, our neighbors? Might we then find that becoming a better neighbor leads us into the deep and loving relationship we’re striving to have with God? In Reckless Love, you will consider how to follow the Greatest Commandment and learn how your love for the people around you can completely renew your faith and give you a new experience of loving God.

Call or Email the church office to register and your book will be ordered for you. Call (828) 464-8422 or Email office@firstnewton.org.



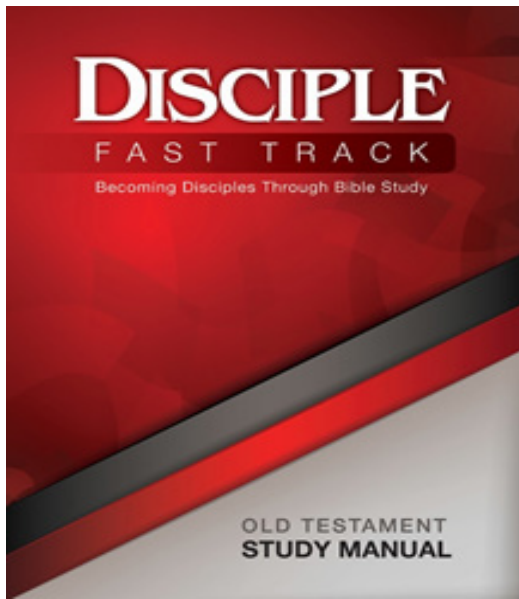
Confirmation Class 2020-2021

We have five 6th grade boys who will be participating in Confirmation this year. Josh and I are excited to journey alongside these youth as they learn more about the Bible, the UMC, and following Jesus. Please be in prayer for Caleb, Evan, Jack, Vance, and Chance; if you are interested in serving as a Faith Friend (mentor) for one of these boys, contact me. ~Deacon Shannon



Kids for Christ will look a little different this year because of Covid-19 and the current state of the activity room (not suitable for use). On Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons we will have CLUB - interest based small groups for children and youth to fellowship, learn something, and have fun.

We will offer Spanish Club, Recreation Club, Jewelry Club, and Art Club. If you are interested in helping with a club, please see Deacon Shannon. CLUBS will take place in the fellowship hall and the garden patio & basketball court (weather permitting).



Disciple Bible Study

Bible Study for Busy Lives

This 12-week study immerses the participant in the Old Testament. Studying the Bible is essential to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Disciple Fast Track, an adaptation of the original, bestselling Disciple Bible Study, provides a viable option for busy people seeking comprehensive engagement over time with the entire biblical text. Groups meet for a total of 24 weeks, devoting 12 weeks each to the Old Testament and the New Testament. Participants read a manageable 3-5 chapters of the Bible daily in preparation for the weekly meetings, which last approximately 75 minutes. A brief, illustrated review video enables participants to recall important facts and ideas; lively and engaging video presenters then offer insights into the current week's session. Participants have the opportunity to take a spiritual gifts assessment and determine meaningful ways they can serve and live out their discipleship commitment.

Duration: 24 Weeks (OT for 12 Weeks in Fall and NT for 12 Weeks in Spring)

Setting: In Person – Will meet in Fellowship Hall to allow social distancing.

**TO SIGN UP EMAIL JOSH: josh@firstnewton.org
or call the church office: 828-464-8422**

Seniors and COVID-19

If you are an older adult and/or caregiver living in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, or Catawba counties, there is assistance available to help you during these challenging times.



HERE IS HOW WE CAN HELP

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging is the recipient of funding from the CARES Act. These funds are to support older adults and their caregivers in response to the pandemic.

The WPCOG AAA can help older adults and caregivers with needs such as meals, groceries, pharmacy items, cleaning supplies, assistive technologies, incontinence supplies, face coverings, and more.

Please call the AAA if you need assistance or have questions at 828.485.4257

WPCOG
Area Agency on Aging

FM Radio Channel 103.1

bring your lawn chairs or golf carts



First Newton
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



JOIN US



**SUNDAYS IN
SEPTEMBER**

10am

Social Distancing Rules
and Masks Required

(we will have disposable masks available)

**please follow FUMC Newton

OUTDOOR WORSHIP GUIDELINES

SEPTEMBER SERMON SERIES



**Elephants, Donkeys, and a Lamb:
Politics and the Church**

With a high profile election this fall and the rancor and divisiveness of politics at an all-time high, join us every Sunday in September as we discuss a Christian approach to political engagement and how the Church can be an example to the culture at large. We will look at how politics and political insiders have hijacked the church's message for their own gain and what can we do to take it back, what attributes of both parties would Jesus approve and disapprove of, Church vs State and how we deal with this dualism, and the politics of Jesus. This is a great opportunity to invite folks!

Sunday, September 6
"Hijacked"

Sunday, September 13
"Red or Blue?"

Sunday, September 27
"The Politics of Jesus"

Sunday, October 4
"Jesus for President"
World Communion Day

Stewardship

A way of living



Are you tired of being reminded that things aren't how they used to be? I most certainly am. But every time I think about another part of my life in the context of the pandemic, I realize it has changed. The same is also the case for church stewardship – both for each member and for the church as a whole. We don't pass around offering plates anymore and yet the mission of the church continues. For instance, First Newton will be opening its fellowship hall and providing free WiFi for students during the school week so they can be in a safe, social environment while they learn and their parents are at work. This takes resources and our giving helps make that possible. Another exciting and long overdo thing that is about to happen is the parking lot is about to be repaved! Woohoo! Our giving in action!

One of the first things I did when I arrived at First Newton was setup my regular giving using the online method the church provides called Vanco. I knew that if I didn't that I would forget to give altogether! I know there are some people who still love to write their checks and put them in the offering plate. Such an intentional action for them is a show of their love for God and an act of worship in itself. However we give, not just of our financial gifts, is an act of worship and faithfulness toward God. Yet, if one thing is clear, things are a bit different in this season. I am ever aware of that for members of our church. Our fearless Music Director Ron Sinclair posted this on Facebook the other day...

*We are not all in the same boat.
We are in the same STORM.
Some of us are in yachts. Some of us are in rowboats.
Some of us are in the water clinging to driftwood.
We are all in different boats in the same storm.*

These are wise words. And a reminder to be kind and generous to our neighbors, all of them! What this means in relation to our giving to the church is that our financial situations may be the same but they also may have dramatically changed. Maybe you used to be able to give but can't now or maybe the opposite has happened. So, I'm not sure which one is you but please know that God walks through us through ALL storms. As we continue to give and support the church through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, we do so according to our ability and God's guidance while acknowledging the storm around us. I have been constantly impressed and grateful for the generosity of this congregation and feel fortunate to be your pastor. Thank you for all you have done, do, and will continue to do through your faithful discipleship.

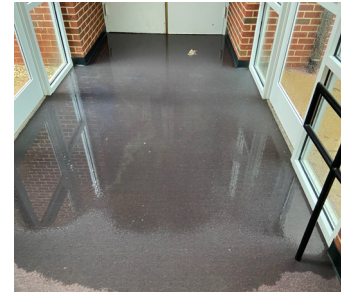
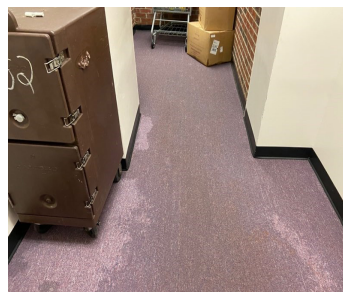
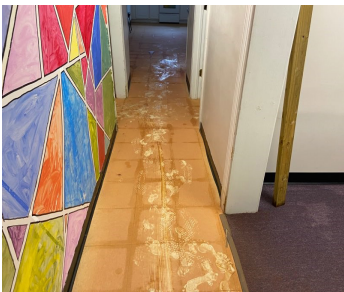
*Blessings,
Josh*

PROPERTY UPDATE

Painters have finished repairing and painting the columns of our beautiful church!



Hello everyone, unfortunately we have had three episodes of heavy flooding in the basement of the main building in the Activity Room and downstairs kitchen. To prevent mold growth and make sure the space is clean and healthy for our children and youth, we will need to remove and replace some sheet rock, floor tile, and cabinets after the initial cleanup. Your Property Team is hard at work to make that happen. So until further notice, we ask that you not enter the bottom level under the sanctuary. Thanks for your understanding! Josh





Our newsletters will now be featuring a segment highlighting church members to help us get to know each other better! We hope you enjoy reading about this Member Spotlight, a member of this church for over 17 years, Elizabeth Branton.

Elizabeth Branton was born in Charlotte, NC but grew up in the Newton-Conover area. Elizabeth is a 17 year old (lifelong) member of our church. Her parents are John and Teena Branton. Elizabeth is a recent graduate of Discovery High School, which she says, “was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.” She loved the small number of students and staff at the school, which made it easier to form close bonds with one another.

Elizabeth is very social and loves meeting new people. She describes herself as being “very outgoing since I was a child”. When asked what brought her to FUMC Newton, she answered, “My family and I have been attending FUMC long before I was born. I love my church family and I’m forever grateful I was raised in the church.”

Elizabeth’s music taste is “all over the place”, in her own words. She loves all kinds of music, including country, pop and alternative! During her free time, she enjoys hanging out with her friends. They like to drive around, go shopping and hang out at each other’s houses.

We asked Elizabeth a number of “This or That” Questions. These were her cute answers:

This or That?

- *Newspaper or Online/App News?
- *Disney World or the Bahamas?
- *Music Festival or Broadway Show?
- *Selfies or group photos?
- *Museum or movie tickets?
- *Cat or dogs?
- *Pancakes or waffles?
- *Morning or evening person?
- *Tea or coffee?
- *Chocolate or vanilla?
- *Pasta or pizza?

Elizabeth Says:

- Online/App News
- The Bahamas
- Music Festival
- Group photos
- Movies
- Dogs!!!
- Waffles
- Evening person
- Coffee
- Chocolate
- Pizza

We also asked Elizabeth a series of “Would You Rather Questions”. Get to know her better:

Would you rather...

- ...look 10 years older from the neck up or the neck down?
- ...have a Lamborghini in your garage or a bookcase with 9000 books and infinite knowledge?
- ...have free Wi-Fi wherever you go or have free coffee where/whenever you want?
- ...have a personal maid or a personal chef?
- ...watch nothing but Hallmark Christmas movies or nothing but horror movies?
- ...eat no candy at Halloween or no turkey at Thanksgiving?

Elizabeth Says:

- Neck up
- 9000 books
- Free WiFi
- Personal maid
- Horror movies
- No candy

When looking towards the future, Elizabeth hopes to graduate from college, possibly have a family of her own where she can, “create good memories with my own kids like I experienced as a child...I’m just taking life one day at a time.”

THANK YOU, Elizabeth Branton for being our first Youth Member Spotlight! We hope these spotlight stories help you to grow closer to your church brothers and sisters!

church council **MEETING**

First Tuesday of Every Month via Zoom - 7 p.m.
(next meeting: September 1st)

As a reminder, meetings are open for anyone to attend.

Email Debbie Rights, Council Chair, for Zoom invite link at debbie.rights@gmail.com

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

Josh Sherfey, Pastor

P: 704-881-2488 | E: josh@firstnewton.org

Shannon LeMaster-Smith, Deacon,

Minister of Discipleship - Children, Youth & Outreach

P: 336-460-1769 | E: DeaconShannon@firstnewton.org

Beverly Underwood, Church Administrator

P: 828-464-8422 | E: office@firstnewton.org

Ron Sinclair, Director of Music | E: ronsinclair@firstnewton.org

John Coffey, Organist | E: johnnyjava@earthlink.net

Gina King, Dir. of Communications | E: communications@firstnewton.org

P: 828-320-3883

Hank Weddington, Praise Team Leader

Kim Boston, Nursery Coordinator

Kristi Harvell, Preschool Director

P: 828-465-6397 | E: newtonmethodistpreschool@gmail.com

Jonathan LeMaster-Smith, Scholar In Residence

E: jonathan.lemaster-smith@garrett.edu

IN TOUCH



300 N. Main Ave.
PO Box 926
Newton, NC 28658



828-464-8422



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