

**From the Pen of the Pastor-**

Greeting in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Center continues to be the church outside the building. Who would have believed that the building would still be closed through at least the month of June—3 1/2 months. But like everyone else, Center just didn't know how powerful and pervasive COVID-10 is. I know that businesses and churches have started opening in various ways. WNCC of the United Methodist Church is taking a slower and safer approach. As of now, Center and other Methodist churches will continue virtual services through the end of June.

I want to thank you for faithfully giving your tithes and offering by mail and through online giving. THoses are keeping the bills paid. But more importantly, I trust your giving continues to build and strengthen your faith and hope. As you will recall our faith is built through Bible reading and study , prayer, service , witness and giving.

In conclusion, printed below is a letter to Center that I asked Dr. Jennifer Yates to write to us about COVID-19 from a medical perspective. I thought you would like to know first hand how it is for a doctor on the front line day-in and day-out. Please always keep her and all other such workers in your prayers. Blessings, Cecil Donahue, Pastor

**An Open Letter to the Membership of Center United Methodist Church**

May 20, 2020

Dear Center Family,

I want to express my sincere thanks for the love, support, and prayers you have all provided for me and the other "COVID Warriors" during the COVID pandemic. Being on the frontlines is anguishing in so many ways, and yet I am buttressed by knowing that you are all lifting the frontline healthcare workers up in prayer on an ongoing basis.

This crisis has been such a strain on everyone – physically, emotionally, socially, financially. No one ever would have dreamed when we received that first email (on March 13 notifying us that Methodist churches throughout North Carolina would be closed) that churches would remain closed through at least the month of June. In hindsight, we may think that we closed society too early. But I would like to share a story that few people know. It involves a church elsewhere in our county who chose to hold in-person services on March 15, which was a devastating decision. At least 20 people in that congregation became ill from COVID infection – including the preacher, who required life support for a period of time and who has since recovered. 2 other congregants also required life support; one died and the other is still recovering in the hospital, 2 1/2 months later. I tell you this story because I was there with these patients. I cannot describe to you the agony of watching the suffering that they endured simply because they chose to worship the Lord in the church building a mere few days after we did.

Over time after that first week, things at the hospital settled down. Cases slowly increased, as social distancing worked and prevented an influx of patients. We went from 5 patients at the Green Valley Campus (GVC is the former location of Women's Hospital and was repurposed as the COVID hospital for Greensboro and the surrounding communities; smaller hospitals like the ones in Alamance County, Rockingham County, and Randolph County simply are not able to provide care for these patients and so also send them to our hospital) on April 14 to about 24 patients on May 8.

As expected, patients hospitalized with COVID infections began to slowly increase with the opening of Phase 1 in North Carolina on May 8. One week later, we were up to 44 patients. We again stabilized in the mid-50s as Phase 2 started, on May 22. As Phase 2 progresses, we expect the numbers to continue to rise – slowly, hopefully, so that we continue to have enough hospital beds, equipment, and staff to care for them. Hopefully, in another 4-6 weeks, our curve will have stay flat enough to support continued reopening, without the risk of a surge of the virus.

However, our community is still seeing a large number of new cases at this time. Many of them are from nursing facilities and from immigrant communities, but many of them are people who just happened to be exposed. They range in age from 19 to 94 (just the ones I admitted this week). Unfortunately, those who are older than 80 have a very high risk of dying from this disease. We are still learning about what works to treat it – Remdesivir seems to work; Actemra also has some data; having folks lie on their bellies for most of the day clearly helps – and what doesn't – early intubation or other invasive breathing strategies that have always worked before don't work well in these patients - and there are still a lot of things that may or may not help – steroids, antibiotics, hydroxychloroquine. The more we see the illness, the greater our knowledge and the further we progress. But we are not "there" yet, unfortunately. We don't have a cure, or a clear timeline for when we will have a safe and effective vaccine. We do not have "herd immunity." Studies have shown that singing may be among the most risky activities (there have been a number of church- and choir-related outbreaks, and one study prior to the onset of this disease found that projecting your voice louder increases and aerosolizes droplets and so may increase the risk of spreading the disease to a large number of people). I encourage you to continue to stay home as much as possible. Please keep wearing your masks and washing your hands and social distancing. As much as we all want to return to church – and really, just to "normal" at this time - from what I am seeing in the Greensboro community, it isn't time yet.

During this time, the church has been amazing. Much like the schools, churches have had to start over in how they deliver services. And yet I think we have realized that the church really is not a building, but a people. Our congregation remains strong and committed. Every day driving to and from work, I pass at least 5 of the signs that Center has distributed throughout the community, appreciating the COVID warriors. It touches my heart and builds my faith that we will overcome this every time I see one of those signs, or listen to a message from Cecil, or receive a Facebook or email message. Again, I thank you.

Love in Christ,  
Jennifer Yates

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GRADUATES!



***Ethan Cole***

*Northwest Guilford High School*

*Son of Kelly Cole Schmidt and Wallace Cole. He is the grandson of Alan and Brenda Redmon. Ethan has enrolled in the college transfer program at Guilford Technical Community College in the fall.*

***Wyatt Duncan***  
*Northern Guilford High School*

*Son of Scot and Heather Duncan and the grandson of Willie and Rachel Hudson. Wyatt plans to go to a community college in the fall.*



***Caleb Eubanks***

*Grace International, Thailand*

*Son of Val and Cassie Eubanks. Jonathan spent his high school years in the United States and 2 countries abroad.*



***Emilie Catherine Morton***  
*Northern Guilford High School*

*Daughter of Aaron and Melinda Morton, grand-daughter of John and Debbie Morton and great-daughter of Robert and Billie Lou Morton. Emilie will be attending UNC-Greensboro in the fall majoring in Business and Music.*

