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### *Steve's Slant*

Two years ago this month, we suspended in-person worship for the first time. And so began a long journey straight into the heart of an unknown and inhospitable wilderness, an unremitting period of hardship that effected every aspect of our lives and forced us into countless adaptations: how we worship, how we do our jobs, how we shop for groceries, celebrate holidays and gather (or not gather) with friends, how our children “attend” school. The list goes on, and on, and on.

All other things being equal, the thought that we are now entering the third year of this horrible pandemic would be so grim as to not be worth mentioning in this space.

Except all other things are not equal. Last night in his State of the Union address, President Biden announced that with respect to Covid-19, the country is "moving toward more normal routines."

The announcement was rooted in three primary empirical considerations: One, some 75% of all Americans are now fully vaccinated and boosted. Two, because of that first number, across the country the rate of hospitalizations has dropped, on average, 77%. (More locally, it's worth noting that the rate of new infections has also dropped precipitously in areas with high vaccination rates, including here in Buncombe County.) Three, the president also cited substantial advances in the efficacy and availability of anti-viral medications and therapies, which have dramatically dropped the risk of hospitalizations even after a positive test.

For all these reasons, the president said that “covid-19 need no longer control our lives.” As if to verify this point, nearly everyone who gathered in the Senate chamber for the president’s address was maskless. We have lived under “the new normal” of mandatory, life-saving covid protocols for so long that what would ordinarily be an unremarkable sight – a room full of unmasked individuals – seemed almost shocking.

But the scene was a vivid reminder of what is now possible, thanks to the progress the scientific community has made, and the American public together has made, in preventing the spread of Covid. This includes the reassuring benefits that come with rapid tests, which were required prior to admittance to that venerable chamber.

Which brings us to the present moment.

Even as we now prepare to enter the Lenten season, and to set out on our annual forty-day journey toward Easter, that sight – all those people maskless in the same room -- struck me as its own kind of rising, a genuine cause for celebration and rejoicing.

The president also stressed, however, that the coronavirus has not been fully eradicated, and variants are still possible. And so, even as he encouraged Americans to ease back into more normal routines, he also underscored the need to remain vigilant.

We will heed the president’s counsel and do both of those things: we will take a moment to celebrate this good news around a return to more normal routines, and we will remain vigilant.

(Continued on page 7)

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Please call 828-298-9092 to speak with us or leave a message for us at the church. Thank you!

**March Birthdays!**

Betty Siviter	March 2	Evva Hamilton	March 6
Beth Newman	March 6	Catherine Showalter	March 7
Patrick Sanderson	March 10	Amber Crumpler	March 11
Bill Sanderson	March 15	Wendy Myer	March 18
Anne Hamilton	March 20	Harriet Cowal	March 22
Dennis Stockdale	March 24	Jonathan Crumpler	March 26
Andrew Pulsifer	March 27	John Bishop	March 29



The Warren Wilson Book Group will hold its March meeting at noon on Thursday, March 10 in Fellowship Hall. Bring your own lunch and beverage to enjoy from 12-12:30. The book discussion is held from 12:30-1:30. In March we will be discussing *This is Happiness* by Niall Williams and Marian will lead the discussion. New members are always welcome--come read with us!



Ash Wednesday

All are welcome to join our Ash Wednesday service in the chapel on March 2, at 6:00 pm. This is an intimate service of music, prayer, and the imposition of ashes to begin our Lenten journey.

**SPRING ABOUND!**

Join us on March 20<sup>th</sup> for an extended coffee hour on the Fellowship porch after the morning service. Tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils will be blooming! Bring finger foods if you are able. (Please be aware of covid protocol- No dips, or anything that requires a spoon or fork.)





**OUR HEALING PRAYERS GO OUT TO:** Pat Crumpler and family, on the death of her niece, Lauren Talton, Fran Roberts; Shane Reece, Nancy Garrison's son; Pat Wilson's son, Kell; Carolyn Cole; Gina Marvin; Blake Joslin; Erika Lytle; Jackie Ligon Cole; Rick Garrison; Doug Bradley; Fran Roberts' sister-in-law, Linda Briggs; Flo Bishop; Jon Hettrick and his family; Jon's mother, Marjorie Hettrick; Mark Laabs, friend of the Griswolds; Kim Reece, daughter of Nancy and Rick Garrison.

**WE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING HEALTH CARE WORKERS, AND PEOPLE WORKING AT MEDICAL FACILITIES:** Carolyn Cole; Richard Riddle; Laura Bethany Riddle; Kristin Williams; Lisa Mallory; Stacy Balzano, Toby & Sally's niece, and all those working to provide medical care to others in this time when both need and risk are great.

**OUR PRAYERS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS CONTINUE TO GO OUT, AS WE NEED THEM TO HELP WITH THE RUNNING OF OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. THANK YOU!**

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**THANK YOU CIRCLE OF WELCOME VOLUNTEERS!**



Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to be part of our Circle of Welcome for Elham and Farkhunda. You have already made a difference in their lives. Just to give you some idea how they are adjusting, that is Elham on the upper left in the white shirt, scaling a big climbing net, and that is Gretchen Williams, in the lower right, in the blue shirt. (The other figures are part of the background photo.) He already seems to be making new friends!

Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry needs children's clothing. Drop off Monday - Friday from 9:00 - 3:00. Need: Baby wipes, blankets new or gently used, winter coats, sheets and towels and washcloths, laundry detergent, cat and dog food. Thank you for anything you can give to our neighbors in need!



### Outdoor beautification Team

Are you interested in having some outdoor fellowship?  
Working with plants? Maintaining the outdoor spaces around the church buildings with church friends?

We are looking for **Worker Bee's** to join our Outdoor Beautification Team!

If there is enough interest, we will meet once a month for 2 hours of work with time following for refreshment on the fellowship Patio. Contact Bob Gambrell, [gambrell4@charter.net](mailto:gambrell4@charter.net), or Donna Eagle Joslin, [deagle@warren-wilson.edu](mailto:deagle@warren-wilson.edu).



If you have interest in helping with any indoor projects, please contact Bob.

### A SUCCESSFUL SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

A big "thank you" to all who supported our youth in their participation in the annual Souper Bowl of Caring. The goal of this brief, basically one day event, is to raise funds during the Sunday NFL football super bowl with all monetary and food donations remaining in our local area to address the issue of hunger.

This year our youth have recommended that our collections be directed to MANNA Food Bank. As of last Sunday, February 20th, our collection totaled 167 food items and \$1,021 in monetary donations.



## **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY NEWS**

Habitat's first House of Faith in the New Heights neighborhood was completed last year, and purchased by Leesa Flowers, on the left in the photo with her daughter and mother.



### **ASHEVILLE'S HABITAT CHAPTER WILL START BUILDING NEXT HOUSE OF FAITH AND SEEKS VOLUNTEER HELP AT THE SITE**

Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity recently announced that construction of the next House of Faith will start on April 22, and, with Covid safety precautions in place, it is seeking volunteers to help at the job site.

This new House of Faith will be a 4-bedroom, 2-bath single family home in Asheville's West Asheville New Heights neighborhood where 14 units have already been completed and 10 more are under construction.

Like all Habitat houses, faith partner houses rely on churches to not only help defray the cost of the building, but to also keep costs down by supplying volunteer helpers at the site. Habitat's announcement about this new house stated that they have been successfully building with volunteers during the past year.

Prior to Covid our church was a consistent leader for volunteer help, with as many as 20 members and friends working a half day, full day or multiple days at the job site.

Warren Wilson Church often put in as much as 200 hours at each site.

No special skills are needed to help and Habitat supplies all tools and materials.

Habitat will be hosting a kickoff meeting in March for the next House of Faith. They have reserved a Friday (half day shift, 8:30 - 12) and a Saturday (8:30 - 3:00) in May and June for WWPC volunteers, and our church coordinator, Larry Griswold, will contact all previous volunteers to ask if they can help on one of those days.

Anyone who has not volunteered before but would like to know more about this should call Larry at 575-2020 or email him at [larrygris@gmail.com](mailto:larrygris@gmail.com)

Can you call your legislators and ask them to urgently help Afghans access lasting safety in the U.S.?

Most Afghans evacuated to America following the withdrawal of U.S. military forces received only temporary protection, known as humanitarian parole, that will expire this summer or next, respectively. We must keep our promises and ensure that vulnerable Afghans evacuated to the U.S. receive lasting safety through the passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act.

**Afghanistan will not be safe for our Afghan allies when their parole ends.** Consistent with adjustment acts that Congress has passed for every other generation of U.S. wartime evacuees, Congress must pass legislation to ensure that Afghans are able to apply for lawful permanent residency.

**Afghans who lost their country and who barely escaped with their lives through the historic evacuation face an uncertain future that was not of their making.**

Congress must act now: our Afghan allies do not have the luxury of time. Each day marks one day less of assured protection in the U.S. We must call on our legislators to introduce and pass the Afghan Adjustment Act. This bill will make sure that America honors its promises to our allies and that vulnerable Afghans can rebuild their lives in their new home.

(Submitted by Jamie Dale)



Congratulations to Allee Williams, on her election to Session as our new Youth Elder. Allee brings to the table a deep compassion for the marginal and vulnerable members of wider community, which finds its expression in a passion for social justice. She has participated in Black Lives Matters marches and in marches for women's rights. She recently received a commendation from her school for the welcome she extended to a new Afghan student in her class. As for Allee's faith, here's how she herself described it in the faith statement she wrote as part of her confirmation journey: *I like to think of my faith as a toolbox as I go into life. Those tools give me hope, forgiveness, relief, and most importantly passion. Passion to do good, to help the community in any way that I can through the church, and on my own*

## CLERK'S REPORT

At its stated meeting on February 15, 2022 the Session

1. Accepted the financial reports for January, 2022 with thanks to Leslie Sayyar and Barbara Escalante for their prompt preparation of these reports.
  2. Following another interruption to in-person worship due to the January spike in Covid infections, approved a motion to resume in-person worship with appropriate safety protocols effective Sunday, February 20, 2022.
  3. Approved a motion to give individual Ministry Teams the prerogative to decide whether they hold indoor, outdoor, or online meetings in coming weeks.
  4. Heard and voted to approve a report from Ken Murchison on the annual statistical report to be submitted to Presbytery.
  5. From the Moderator, heard a report on the status of our support of two Afghan refugees with the good news that housing for the young woman and her younger brother has been arranged through a program of the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry. These people will be needing many other types of assistance with Vicki Collard and Jamie Dale taking the lead in this effort.
  6. Sandy Brauer reported the Souper Bowl event to support hunger programs in this area through Manna Foodbank conducted by our children and youth program was very successful. Allee Williams reported nearly \$600 in cash and almost 170 food items were donated.
  7. The Session approved a recommendation from the Administrative Management Team that as requested by Sarah Grace Montgomery, our new parish associate, half of her salary will be designated as housing compensation, a common tax-related arrangement used by many ministers.
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### *Steve's Slant continued...*

To spell that out more specifically: on the vigilance side, we will continue to observe the safety protocols that we have followed since we were first able to resume in-person worship and that have kept us safe and healthy to this point. So for now we ask that you continue to wear your mask in the sanctuary and maintain a safe distance from one another.

But we will also convene our in-person worship team next week to consider whether we might finally be able to relax some of these protocols, and whether there are aspects of our normal life and routines here at church that we can safely resume.

On my way into the office this morning, I listened to a beautiful song called "The Time for Flowers" by a young singer/songwriter named Emily Scott Robinson. In light of this good news about the pandemic, and with Spring about to bloom all around us, the chorus seemed to capture this moment we are now in perfectly.

And so, I leave you with this:

*The time for flowers will come again  
Maybe in one year, maybe in ten  
There are days despair will win  
But the time for flowers will come again*



## MARCH

At Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church we are mothers and fathers, single and married, gay and straight, young and old, black and white, prosperous and poor, uncertain and sure, broken and whole - and everything in between. Together we are the many faces of humanity, yet as a joyful, caring and loving community of faith, we are committed in our diversity to be one in Christ!

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church  
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*The Extended Family*