

PRAISE REPORT

April - June 2021



CALLING PEOPLE UPWARD, ONWARD AND OUTWARD



Pastor's Corner

Looking back over the last quarter, I can think of much for which we can thank God.

I praise the Lord for continued pandemic recovery. As a nation, and as a congregation, we are recuperating from the impacts of the pandemic. Each Sunday, we are welcoming people back at in-person worship whom we have not seen since March 2020. I expect that in-flow to continue into the fall. If I have not seen you yet at the front doors of the sanctuary, I look forward to doing so when you return. Of course, it is great to be able to continue to connect online as well. People frequently ask me about our attendance, so let me share. We are now averaging close to 200 between the three in-person Sunday morning services. That is about 60% of what we would have anticipated before the pandemic. Our online attendance is declining as more people venture out, but is still averaging around 75. We are also consistently greeting guests and adopting new people into our Mount Zion family. As noted in other parts of this Praise Report, various Mount Zion ministries have also resumed in-person gatherings. The church vans are rolling again.

Continued on page 2

Sunday Worship

8:15 Traditional

9:30 Contemporary

11:00 Blended

12:30 Korean Sermon - Online Only

*The 9:30, 11:00 AND 12:30 are
livestreamed to our website at
mountzion-umc.org. View the stream
by clicking the "Watch Live Here" tab.*

WE ARE CALLED

To "love God with all your heart" is to **WORSHIP**
To "love your neighbors as yourself" is **MINISTRY**
To "go...make disciples" is **EVANGELISM**
To "baptize" is to incorporate into **FELLOWSHIP**
To "teach them...all things" is **DISCIPLESHIP**



mountzion-umc.org

Continued....

I praise the Lord for our revised Mission and Vision Statements adopted by our Administrative Council in April. Mount Zion's vision is to become a passionate body of disciples being transformed by Christ, growing through biblical teaching, and sharing the Good News to the ends of the earth. Mount Zion's mission is calling people Upward, Onward, and Outward. These help direct our focus and guide our priorities. Each ministry team and committee is reviewing and aligning their work around these statements.

I praise the Lord that Mount Zion has joined the Wesleyan Covenant Association. "The Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) connects Spirit-filled, orthodox churches, clergy, and laity who hold to Wesleyan theology. It is an association of individuals and congregations who share a common understanding of our Wesleyan doctrine and a desire to become a vibrant, faithful, growing 21st century church." [wesleyancovenant.org] This is something we have talked about for more than five years. The work of the WCA becomes ever more vital as the United Methodist denomination moves toward an expected amicable separation.

I praise the Lord for the many hands at work around our campus preparing, repairing, and maintaining our facilities and grounds for ministry. The investment of sweat, skill, time, and effort brings glory to God and demonstrates our future-looking focus.

Praise God for his work all around.

Your fellow servant, Pastor Leonard

The Gifts Team had 2 plaques installed on the Memorial Board in the Narthex this quarter. We give thanks with God for the lives of these individuals, and remember their friends and families in our prayers.

Charles Carroll 10/18/1933-2/5/2021

Julia Paul 9/27/1928-3/16/2019

SPRC



Jenni Ackerman

Next Generations Minister

We are pleased to announce that Jenni Ackerman has transitioned from her role as Care and Connections Minister to the role of the Next Generations Minister. The Next Generations Minister oversees the ministry needs of children and youth, ages birth through 12th grade, and their families. Jenni is looking forward to continue to work with children, and youth, as well as the dedicated volunteers who serve in this important ministry.



Cindy Brendle

Care Ministries Coordinator

Cindy's role as Care Ministries Coordinator is to oversee care of the congregation under the direction and leadership of the ministerial staff. The Care Ministries Coordinator invites, trains, encourages, and deploys Mount Zion's volunteer Care Ministers. In addition, this position also assesses the ongoing needs of the congregation and plans for additional ministry opportunities. Along with this new position, we are also introducing a dedicated phone number and email for the submission of care and prayer needs



Donna Rex

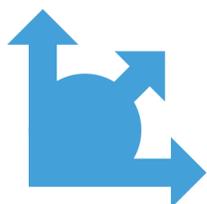
Connections Ministries Coordinator

Donna's role as the Connection Ministries Coordinator is to oversee the connections and spiritual growth of the Mount Zion church family under the direction and leadership of the ministerial staff. The Connection Ministries Coordinator helps guests experience a genuine sense of belonging, involvement, and spiritual growth by meeting people where they are and leading them to the next steps in their Christian walk. The Connection Ministries Coordinator facilitates the relational connection and spiritual growth of adults through various weekly services, Sunday School classes, Connect Groups, ministry teams, etc.

MOUNT ZION'S REFRESHED VISION AND MISSION

Vision Statement

Mount Zion's vision is to become a passionate body of disciples being transformed by Christ, growing through biblical teaching, and sharing the Good News to the ends of the earth.



*Mount Zion's mission is calling people
Upward, Onward, and Outward.*

Earlier this year, the Mount Zion Visioning Team presented their recommendations to the church Administrative Council. They were approved unanimously. The recommendations represented the culmination of the team's work over the past several months. The key recommendation was the adoption of a refreshed Vision and Mission Statement for the church. Our new mission is: Calling people Upward, Onward, and Outward. Upward is a focus on Jesus Christ in worship and devotion. Onward is the continuing process of spiritual growth and development. Outward is seeing the world through Jesus' eyes and pursuing ways to reach out in service and sharing the Good News of salvation. The new mission is centered around Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (Outward). Jesus tells us here that our priority as followers is to share the path to him with others. And, when asked in Matthew, "which is the greatest commandment" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Upward) 'This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Outward). Jesus makes it perfectly clear where our priorities should be placed. These Biblical imperatives came up over and over again as the Visioning Team prayed for guidance in its work. Of the three focus areas, the team felt strongly that we need to concentrate on our Outward focus going forward.

The question now is how we as a church can fulfill our new mission? What should we do differently? What do we need to change? What actions should we take? How do we make our new mission part of our DNA?

The answer to these questions lies in our new Vision Statement: Mount Zion's vision is to become a passionate body of disciples being transformed by Christ, growing through biblical teaching, and sharing the Good News to the ends of the earth. Note the phrase "passionate body of disciples." Our passion for Christ is what inspires and energizes us to serve Him and do His work.

This passion is already at work. For example, our Evangelism team is planning community outreach events for later this summer and fall, and Children's Ministries is taking VBS to the community this year. How better to turn our focus Outward and share Christ's love with our neighbors?

A team has also been formed to steer our overall Vision and Mission Implementation. A key responsibility of this team will be to support our efforts to become more outwardly focused by seeking out local Christian non-profits that we can partner with to provide more opportunity to our congregation to engage in local outreach missions.

Please pray for our church and for God's continued guidance to help us be more passionate and more focused on sharing the Good News outside our walls. **Stay tuned to the Quarterly Praise report for more news on what God has in store.**

2nd Quarter Ministry Recap

In each Quarterly Praise Report we will share the past ministry activities at Mount Zion, and match the main focus of each event to our Mission Statement - *Calling people Upward, Onward, and Outward*. Although several of these ministry activities could also fall under two, or even all three, we will strive to look at it's main focus.



UPWARD

Prayer Mobilization Team

Prayer Mobilization Team lead an online prerecorded National Day of Prayer. Thank you to the Prayer Mobilization Team and to all that served to bring us a service where we are reminded of the importance of prayer for our communities, our government, and our world.



UPWARD

Communion Sunday

Every other 1st Sunday of the month, we share in Communion. Choosing to participate in Communion gives each of us an opportunity to reflect on repentance of our sin and the forgiveness that is offered freely by Jesus Christ. We practice Open Communion, which means that anyone who would like to share in God's gift of grace is invited to partake, regardless of membership or background.



ONWARD

Sunday School

All Sunday School classes resumed completely in June. We have several offerings at 9:30 for Adults, and one at 11:00. Children and Youth Sunday School classes are offered at both 9:30 and 11:00; check the church website: [HERE](#) for up-to-date classrooms and times.

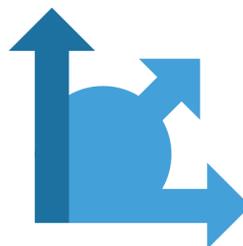


ONWARD

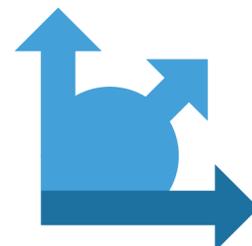
Connect Groups

Spring and Summer Connect Groups have been in session. Connect groups encourage spiritual growth of the participants by offering opportunities of fellowship, prayer, and study of God's Word. Connect Groups will be offered again this fall, so watch the *Connect Weekly* for information on group offerings.

FINANCE



UPWARD



ONWARD

Giving/Tithing

When we give, we are expressing worship in a tangible way by putting God first in our lives. Bringing our gift to church is an opportunity for us to give God our thanks and show Him that we trust Him. Giving regularly allows us to move forward in our onward spiritual walk and to take part in the important work of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Financial Update through May 31, 2021

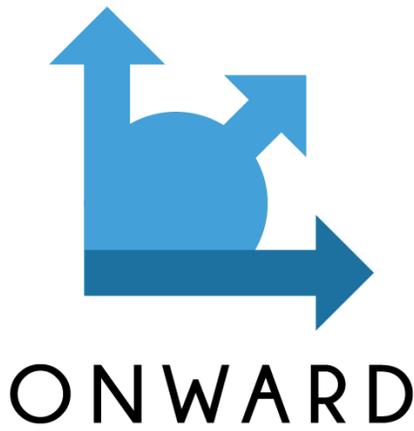
Total Contributions to General Fund	\$248,205
Interest Income (Gen Fund)	\$ 22
Unrealized Gain on Investment <small>(Subject to market conditions)</small>	\$ 24
Less Total Budgeted Expenses	(\$185,255)
<u>Less Escrowed Apportionments</u>	<u>(\$ 24,651)</u>
Income Exceeds Expenses	\$ 38,345

Building Fund

Building Fund Carryover from 2020	\$489,621
Individual/Family 2021 Contributions	\$ 8,127
Interest Income	\$ 401
<u>Unrealized Loss on Investment <small>(Subject to market conditions)</small></u>	<u>(\$ 2,098)</u>
Total of Building Fund	\$496,051

Endowment

Endowment Principal 1/1/21	\$ 60,900
<u>Unrealized Gain <small>(Subject to market conditions)</small></u>	<u>\$ 13,228</u>
Market Value 5/31/21	\$ 74,128



Family VBS 2021

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Family VBS! We had a great time, and had over 95 people come out over three days. During this week families played, laughed, learned, and grew in their walk with Jesus. On Day 1, we were reminded of who Jesus is and how we can have confidence because we are known by Him. On Day 2, we focused on how Jesus changes everything, from our hearts and our lives, if we let Him. On Day 3, we learned that Jesus shows his love for us by the way he searches for those who are lost. Our Mission focus for VBS week was "Crossing All Borders," who are located in Angier, NC. Crossing All Borders (CAB) crosses geographic, ethnic, economic, educational, and denominational borders to help those in need. "CAB" strives to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ through donations of tangible goods. Their desire is to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit to reach people for Christ and to provide opportunities for spiritual growth through missions.

We look forward to Family VBS 2022!



Senior Adult Ministry

The Senior Adult Ministry Team took the opportunity to organize two gatherings this spring for our Senior community. The first was in April and was an outdoor catered picnic lunch. Guests gathered under the Lord's Shelter for great food, fellowship, and a time of devotion. It was so wonderful to have the opportunity to see people that we haven't seen in over a year. There were over 57 that attended! The second one was an indoor potluck/covered dish luncheon. Over 41 attended that event. Keep watching the *Connect Weekly* for more upcoming gatherings.



New Members



Choosing to join a church family is another *Onward* step in our spiritual walk. We celebrate that during this past quarter, we have received new members to Mount Zion.

**Tom Breci, Jinho Hwang and Sarah Lee,
& Bill and Danna Poske**

Easter Services



We celebrate that we were able to have “in-person” Easter services this year. We were reminded of the blessings and value of worshipping together; especially in lieu of the previous year, where we could only worship together online. We thank God for all who were able to attend.

Sunrise Service

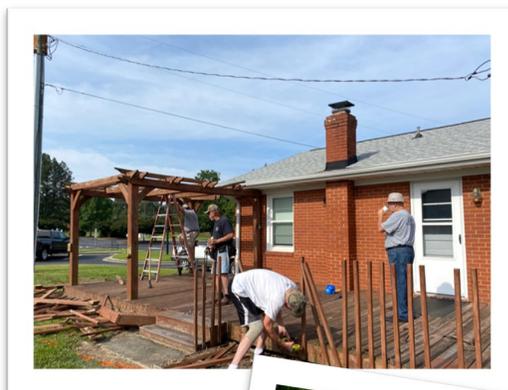


Our Mount Zion Youth led this year’s Sunrise Service in the Mount Zion cemetery. The youth led the scripture reading, prayers, and helped to lead the morning’s worship through music. The outdoor worship service provided another opportunity for people to worship on Easter. The service was livestreamed as well.

Walk to the Cross



During the season of Lent, Mount Zion offered an *Onward* focused ministry opportunity where participants were invited to walk through the last days of Jesus’ ministry. We are please to say that not only did it help people move *Onward* in their walk, we also drew many people from the community to the event.



Improvements/Repairs

Please join us in celebrating all the wonderful volunteers that give of their time to care for the building and property of Mount Zion. From the Yard Team, Trustees, and Maintenance.

Several projects were completed over this last quarter. The remainder of the parsonage driveway was paved, replacing the gravel drive that was there previously. The protective Plexiglas inserts that are over the stained glass windows on the chapel, were replaced. The windows now shine through and also look brand new! Also, the deck on the Church Office building was torn down due to deterioration. Trustees will continue the work in the coming months to landscape that area. There were also repairs to lights, blinds, cooling units, as well as toilets and ceiling tiles.

We thank everyone for their efforts and commitment to the upkeep of our church facility.



Mount Zion has so much to celebrate in the area of Outward focus ministry this quarter. Below are just some of the ways that Mount Zion is reaching out to those in our community.

Smithfield Rescue Mission

During this quarter, the Missions Team collected hand soap, laundry detergent, coffee, beans, hotdogs, macaroni & cheese, Jell-O, tea bags, sugar, large vinyl gloves, spaghetti sauce, and noodles. We thank everyone for their donations to this important ministry in our community. We choose to partner with Smithfield because of their focus and dedication to their mission, which is to proclaim the love of Jesus for those who are homeless and in crisis by providing shelter and necessities of life and life changing programs to break the cycle of poverty.

HOPE Ministry (*Homeless Outreach Providing Encouragement*)

Missions Team has collected socks over the past quarter for Hope Ministry. HOPE is an outreach program designed to provide homeless people a break in their day and week, while offering them a safe and encouraging environment. This ministry offers many valuable services to our homeless community, including: home cooked meals, hot shower, and a change of clothes - when available. Volunteers that serve at HOPE Ministry are blessed by having the opportunity to witness to this great group of men and women.

Endowment Disbursement

Endowment Committee was pleased to announce that during the 2nd Quarter, they made a \$2,000 donation with the first ever disbursement from the Endowment Fund. The recipient was Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU), in particular the ministry that is on the UNC Campus in Wilmington. CRU's mission is to win, build, and send, Christ-centered multiplying disciples. CRU is on over 5300 college campus' worldwide, and are helping students come to know Jesus, grow in their faith, and go to their families, communities, and the world to share God's love. CRU Wilmington is led by Matthew and Ashley Spivey. Matthew is the son of Rex and Debbie Spivey.

ZOE EMPOWERS - 2021 - 1st Case Study Report

Last year Mount Zion, through the leadership of our Missions Team, entered into a partnership with Zoe Empowers Ministry. Mount Zion donated \$25,000 to support a group of families for 3 years as they progress through the empowerment program. Zoe Empowers is guided by the core belief of not doing anything for these young people that they can be taught to do for themselves, equipping orphaned and vulnerable children to overcome extreme poverty by addressing multiple barriers simultaneously. In the areas of food security, children learn to grow or buy their own food, yielding enough to eat nutritious meals daily, share with other children, and sell surplus to the community. They will also help the children secure housing, which is often rented at first, and is acquired through purchasing land and building materials with excess business income. In the area of health and hygiene, the children are taught to avoid disease, and are provided access to healthcare when young people do fall ill. ZOE understands the importance of education. Child-led families will be given the tools and motivation to re-enroll in, or begin a formal education, with some even attending college to maximize their futures. Income generation will be a focus, which will include training them to have a steady stream of income in place; children own multiple businesses employing their siblings, orphans, widows, and other community members. Child Rights training enables children to stand up for themselves and those around them. Their group gives them the social structure needed to successfully enforce their rights, ending heinous abuses. Community connections will be emphasized, which gives them a sense of belonging to their peer group, transcending into larger society as they move from being beggars, and sometimes thieves, to entrepreneurs and leaders, who are respected and valued by their community. Throughout the whole process, there will also be a focus on Spiritual strength. Children will experience the gospel in action in ways that are always inviting, but never coercive. The Zoe Empowers program facilitator has provided a report on the activities and achievements of one household that is supported by our partnership. You can view that report [HERE](#).

2021 GRADUATES



Izabelle Frankie Marie Ackerman

Izzi graduated from Longleaf School of the Arts. Izzi will be attending Montreat College this fall to pursue a degree in Outdoor Ministry. Izabelle is the daughter of Tim and Jenni Ackerman.



Blair Cheryl Wright

Blair graduated from Johnston Community College, with an Associates in Applied Science in Medical Sonography. Blair is the daughter of Bob and Kathryn Wright.



Camryn Grace Aikin

Camryn graduated from West Johnston High School. Camryn is the daughter of Brian Aiken.

Paul Anderson Miller

Paul graduated from Appalachian State University, with a Major in Industrial Design and a Minor in Metals. Paul is the son of Pam Miller.



Robert Ryan Beall

Ryan graduated from Fuquay-Varina High School. Robert is the son of Robert and Lisa Beall.



Natalie Renay Locklear

Natalie graduated from Cleveland High School. Natalie was awarded the Goodnight Scholarship at NC State, where she will pursue a degree in Health Science. Natalie is the daughter of Roger and Anita Locklear.



Jack Francis Romano

Jack graduated from West Johnston High School and will be attending East Carolina University, where he will pursue a degree in Sports Medicine, specializing in Physical Therapy. Jack is the son of Alfio and Deb Romano.

Congratulations

