

INFORMED & inspired

CONNECTED AT FAYETTEVILLE FIRST UMC

Loving God and loving neighbor as we reopen

Rev. Dr. Thomas Martin

As we anticipate reopening for worship on June 28, I look forward to being together. I miss being in worship with all God's children. I miss opening the doors and seeing the breadth and depth of God's love. We are working out the details to safely reopen and will be sending those to you soon.

I was recently asked about this current pandemic, "Why do you think some churches are so defiant in reopening?" I had to think for a minute because I desperately want to be back together. I miss the thing we do as the body of Christ. I know that when we do gather, some things I want to do will need to be done differently. I also know that every church is unique and a church with only 10-12 people in worship can probably safely open sooner than a church with 150-200 people in worship.

Here is how I responded to that question:

"I think that by and large, churches in America forgot what it means to be the church. A large number of American churches have forgotten that following Christ is more than a once a week activity. Many churches in America traded in truly following Christ for checking a box for weekly worship. Most people give less to the church than they do in country club dues or cable and internet bills. For the churches that are so defiant to resume in-person worship, maybe it's because worship is all they have left and they are more concerned about saving the institution of church rather than preserving the people who are the church."

Thank God that is not the case here at Fayetteville First! Over the last few months as we have been physically apart, we have been the church. We have given more than 3,000 pounds of food to Fayette Samaritans. We allocated resources from cancelled events to feed children in our county when the school lunch program was shut down for a week. We have begun the summer lunch program. Groups continued to meet using technology that we may never have thought of using. We raised more than \$9,000 for the benevolence fund at church. We never stopped being the church.

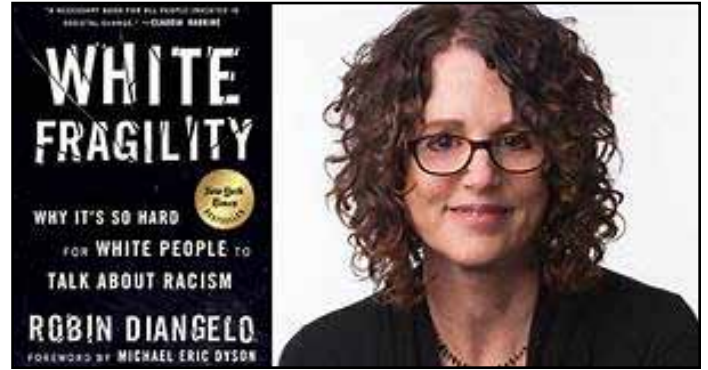
We want to resume in-person worship, but we will not do so at the expense of others. We will resume in person worship but it will not be done in defiance. That is not of God. When we resume, it will be done in love for God and love of neighbor. On these laws are all the words of our faith. Love God. Love Neighbor. Be safe. Take care of one another.



Online worship connects us now and will continue to be offered after in-person worship resumes.

These are confusing times Rev. Allyson Lawrence

We live in a time when the whole world and its history is instantly available to us through the internet. We can learn of events from across the globe within seconds of their initiation. Medical experts and theorists pump information out faster than we consume it. During this COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen information transmitted faster than ever before. Hypotheses being tested in the lab are suddenly presented to the general populace through non-expert media and social media platforms are touting them as new “scientific discoveries” and proven theories despite their infant and experimental status. Our exposure to racial tension is no different in this fast-paced age of information. We witness gruesome deaths and murders that enrage us at our core and we scream out for justice. We witness protests and riots that confuse us and infuriate us for the injustice done to struggling business owners. We see hate directed toward those who have sworn to protect and serve all Americans.



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I know the reality of these words is not new news to you. Many writers and speakers have more eloquently addressed these issues and have likely done them greater service. I cannot slow down the flow of information be it through the internet or the 24-hour televised news programs. I can, however, educate myself and develop a better, clearer lens for consuming the constantly available stream of information, particularly as it relates to race relations in the United States.

I'm starting with a study of the book “White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism” by Robin DiAngelo. I have ordered printed copies of this book, but unfortunately they are on back order and I do not know when they will arrive. The book is available however through ebook sources and also as an audio book. If you are interested in joining, please acquire the book, in whatever form you can, and let me know you're interested in joining the conversation. Email me at alawrence@fayettevillefirst.com.

The first session will be via Zoom and will cover the introduction and the first four chapters of the book. We will begin Thursday, June 25, from 5:30 - 7 p.m. We will also meet July 16 and July 30 at that same time.

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Summer Lunch Program underway

Serving up 139 lunches to 80 families each Tuesday: that's the goal of the 2020 Summer Lunch Program. Veteran volunteers and drivers are packing and delivering lunches in our area including three mobile home parks. If you would like to be placed on an “as needed” volunteer list, please send your contact information to Valerie Mallon at vmallon70@gmail.com.

Want to donate? Here's what is needed:

- small bags of chips
- pre-packaged store-bought cookies
- applesauce cups
- mandarin orange cups

Please mark donations for “Summer Lunch” and drop them off at The Drive-Thru any weekday from 11 to noon at the church office.



Valerie Mallon and a small crew pack and deliver lunches each Tuesday for the vulnerable in our community.