

## **Banner Elk 2020**

The annual mission trip to Banner Elk NC has been a 25-year tradition that has brought meaning and comfort to those served and those showing God's love to the underserved in rural North Carolina. Unfortunately for this year, *the MPC Session has determined that this mission trip cannot be supported due to concerns related to COVID 19*. The trip, if it occurs, will be privately planned and organized by the Banner Elk planning team and not supported or endorsed by MPC based on the recommendation of the MPC Medical Task Force and legal counsel due to the pandemic.

In this time of uncertainty and disruption, the Banner Elk planning team finds themselves reviewing and revising plans for the summer. This team (Bob and Susan Young and Dale Belville) has given considerable thought to how they might continue this important MPC tradition. They have proposed a scaled-down trip for this year that would involve only work projects – there would be no special programming for children and youth. Parents would be responsible for their children/youth who would join the adults on work projects as their parents felt appropriate. Evening programming is still to be determined but would likely include the usual "housekeeping" items related to work projects and a simple devotional that would be led by volunteers. The trip would be entirely volunteer led.

They have been in contact with both Avery County Habitat and Resort Area Ministries (two of the largest mission partners in the area) and discussed precautions and restrictions in place. Both need volunteer support and are working to implement appropriate precautions for social distancing (projects will be outdoors) as well as appropriate hygiene regimens. They have also been in contact with Holston Camp and reviewed their precautions to reduce risk of virus transmission.

At this time, the Banner Elk planning team would like to gauge interest in the trip in order to make a decision about the feasibility of moving forward with planning. Please be aware the trip will only occur if it is determined to be safe and feasible, and that if circumstances change, it could be cancelled at the last minute. Hopefully this will not happen, but they do want to be sure everyone is aware of the possibility.

If you are interested in attending the trip, please let them know no later than Wednesday, June 17 so they can move forward with planning. Please send an email to [bannerelk2020@gmail.com](mailto:bannerelk2020@gmail.com) to indicate your interest and the number in your family who would like to attend.