



June 2020

# The First Epistle

Newsletter of First United Methodist Church

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## Update from the Pastors

It has been nearly 3 months since we gathered in person for worship, and I know it seems a lot longer than that for many of us. Though we have been able to gather together through recorded worship services, video conference classes and meetings, phone prayer chains, emails, texts, and calls, we have been anxiously awaiting the time when can return to “regular church.”

Bishop Taylor has called together a task force, which includes our own Dr. Donna Robbins, to create a plan for returning to in-person worship called *Taking Steps Forward Faithfully and Safely*. Below, I have outlined the key features of the plan, and the full document can be read on line at [www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org).

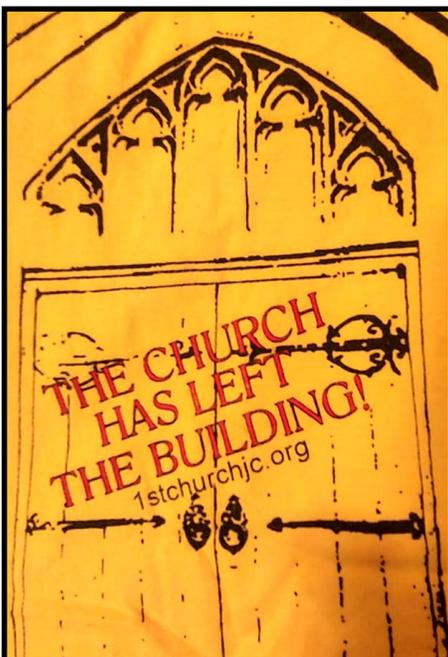
### Overview of Requirements for Reopening In-Person Gatherings

- Establish a team to prepare for next steps in returning to worship
- The plan for in-person worship must be approved by District Superintendent
- Timeline for reopening is based on regional COVID19 cases
- Online worship services will continue to be available
- Vulnerable & high-risk persons are encouraged to stay safe at home
- Face masks must be worn by every attendee at all times (those who are unable to safely wear masks should stay safe at home). Masks should be provided for those who do not have one.
- Social distanced seating is required with a minimum of 6 feet between households
- Documenting attendance with contact information is required should an attendee need to be notified of exposure.
- Cleaning and sanitizing are required for high-touch places, and hand sanitizer should be available throughout the building.
- No choirs or congregational singing (though soloists or small ensembles are acceptable with increased social distancing)
- All other in-person gatherings are restricted to 10 person limit and should not include the sharing of food.

Conversations about taking steps forward faithfully and safely have already begun among the church leadership. I have appreciated your support, encouragement and prayers during this time, and I trust that it will continue as we seek our best path forward.

Blessings,

Pastor Jodie and Pastor Gary





## Early Learning Center Is Open

The Early Learning Center has reopened at First UMC and is operating under strict guidelines at a reduced capacity. Parents are only allowed in the connector, children and staff are screened, and staff are wearing masks. Classroom activities and daily routines have been adjusted for social distancing, and family-style meals have been discontinued. Handwashing, cleaning, and disinfecting are frequent and consistent. The ELC is taking every precaution to ensure the safety of their students, teachers, and families.

## Camp Is Where the Heart Is

Holston Conference Camping Ministries made the difficult but necessary decisions to cancel summer camps at all of the on-site camp locations and Camp in the Community at the host church locations. The leaders of Camp in the Community have been working hard to create content and experiences for young people throughout our conference. Though First UMC will not host Camp in the Community in person, we will continue to partner as a host church to deliver *Camp Is Where the Heart Is* summer camp at-home kits. There will also be volunteer opportunities for church members to support our campers. Visit [www.campinthecommunity.org/ciwthi](http://www.campinthecommunity.org/ciwthi) for more information about Camp in the Community and to register for the special at-home summer program *Camp Is Where the Heart Is*.



## Holston Annual Conference Changes

The Holston Annual Conference, that was to meet June 7-10, 2020 at Lake Junaluska, NC, has been postponed and will be rescheduled as a Virtual Annual Conference on Saturday, June 27, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. Our theme for annual conference is "I Love to Tell the Story." There will be a pre-Conference briefing on June 7 to discuss all materials and procedures for our Virtual Annual Conference. Special events usually held during Annual Conference such as the Service of Commissioning and Ordination will be held at a later date when in-person gathers can be held safely. The 2020 Book of Reports can be downloaded from [www.ac.holston.org](http://www.ac.holston.org).

## Mission Projects and Trips Postponed

Our district, Three Rivers, was assigned School Kits for our Annual Conference Hands-On Mission Project. The collection for School Kits and Home Buckets has been postponed to late summer or fall. Other districts that were assigned to collect Food Buckets and Health Kits are continuing with their projects.

UMCOR kit collection is postponed until the Three Rivers District office is reopened. Keep (or use if needed) the supplies that have already been collected for UMCOR buckets. When the District Office or other drop-off locations are opened, collection of the kits will resume.

The First Church youth group will not be going on their annual summer mission trip through Smoky Mountain Outreach. The deposit has been refunded and the trip will be rescheduled for June 2021.

In addition, First Church youth music ministries will not be attending the Montreat Music & Worship conference this summer. The deposits and fees have been refunded or carried over to summer 2021.



## First Church By The Numbers

### 270 Sunday School Lessons for Kids

6 weeks of lesson delivered to 45 children

### 155 Pantry Boxes Distributed

Free food to neighbors in need over 3 months

### 600 Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Delivered

50 dozen doughnuts to church families

### 10 Small Groups and Classes

Staying connected online and on the phone

### 263 Video Views

Average views per week of worship service recordings for past 5 weeks.

### 40 Youth Prayer Meetings

Daily online prayer times for the youth

### \$7500 Grant for Children and Youth Ministry

Awarded to First UMC by the Holston Foundation

### 490 Sandwiches Prepared for Melting Pot

Sack lunches delivered for the past 3 months

## Financial Report

Thank you so much for your generosity during this time of crisis. Because of your support, we have been able to sustain and expand the ministries of First Church. This small chart compares contributions January-April in 2019 and January-April 2020. As you can see, giving has been stable and expenses have decreased, however, we are still behind in our budgeted expenses verses actual income. Your continued support is vital to the work of our church in our community and beyond. If you have not already, please consider giving to First Church through your financial institution, mailing in gifts to 900 Spring Street, Johnson City, TN 37604, or giving online at <http://bit.ly/GiveTo1st>.

FINANCIAL REPORT	April 2019 year to date	April 2020 Year to date
Contributions	\$164,069	\$162,770
Expenses	\$211,262	\$196,519
Income/(Loss)	\$(47,192)	\$(33,749)

## Ghost Stories

### A Study of the Holy Spirit

### New Sermon Series Beginning

Pentecost, May 31, celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' followers and marks the birth of the church. During June and July, we will be studying the Holy Spirit as seen in popular and less familiar stories of scripture. Bible stories of the Holy Spirit include creation, the pillar of fire and clouds, Samson, the valley of the dry bones, and Jesus' baptism. So gather around and listen to the tales of God's Spirit at work in the lives of God's people.



### These Kids Are Getting UpGraded

First Church students are moving up to the next level of youth ministry. Even though we aren't meeting in person, we can celebrate the promotion of these youth!

#### *New Junior High Youth Promoting to 5th Grade:*

Mykenzie Edwards  
Maxon Everhart  
Gabby Greer  
Owen Henley

#### *New Senior High Youth Promoting to 9th Grade:*

Amaris Bradley  
Sam Henley  
Alyssa Parlier  
Abragayle Roe  
Macy Shell

## In Celebration

Congratulations to Wayne and Tegan Goins in the birth of their daughter, **Norah Denise Goins**, on May 18, 2020.

Congratulations to **Andrew Scott and Tori Cox** who were married on May 30, 2020

Congratulations to **Sam Hopson** who has been approved for Commissioning as a Provisional Elder in the Holston Conference

Happy 99th Birthday to **Elizabeth Wells** on June 10. Send cards to 401 Princeton Road, #304, Johnson City, TN 37601

## In Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to:

The Crowder and Puckett families in the death of Belle Puckett Crowder on April 25.

Michael & Lana Scott and family in the death of Michael's mother Kaye Scott on May 24.

## Prayer List

Aiden, Tiffany, and Brian  
Anthony Battista  
Bill Carter  
Brian Kelley  
Clay Wilkey  
Family of Ahmaud Arbery  
Family of Breona Taylor  
Family of George Floyd  
Gerald Kleven  
Holston Annual Conference  
Jerri Ann Williams  
Karl Kapoor  
Lynice Broyles  
Samantha Sams  
Tom Palmer  
The United Methodist Church  
Our Country  
Treatment & vaccine for COVID19

Worship Online each week at  
[www.1stchurchjc.org](http://www.1stchurchjc.org) or  
[facebook.com/1stchurchjc](https://facebook.com/1stchurchjc)

## Staff and Leader Contact Information

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