



January 2021

# The First Epistle

Newsletter of First United Methodist Church

## The Year in Review

As a very strange and difficult year ends and we look ahead to the new year, I hope that we can remember the celebrations of the previous year and not just challenges. So many things were different during 2020, and there were so many events, activities, and people that we missed. But there have also been so many new and exciting opportunities that would not have been possible or imaginable previously.

Though we have not been able to gather for church services in person, we have established new ways to worship together. We started online worship services that allowed most of our members to safely worship at home. Some of our members who had not previously been able to attend in person due to work, health, or family reason could access the services and worship with us again. The online services also reached new people who had never been to First Church in person, but they could connect online. Even friends and family that live far away or who were out of town for various reasons could participate in our services. Even those who do not connect online have been able to worship with us through mailings of sermons, prayers, and other items. We also held outdoor worship services for a month and experienced worship in a new and interesting way.

Many of these new worship opportunities will continue even after in-person worship resumes. And people who are unable or unavailable to worship in person can join with us right where they are. This may include people who would never enter the doors of our church building but may find their way to our online worship services and find their way to Christ.

Though we have not been able to meet together for spiritual formation or classes, we have found new ways to learn and fellowship together. At least two of our adult Sunday school classes have been meeting online for the duration of the pandemic. We offered several sessions of Wednesday Night lessons. Classes have utilized email, text, social media, and phone calls to engage and encourage one another. Phone chains and email prayer lists circulate weekly among groups.

The youth and children's ministries have continued as well. The youth have meet online for classes, devotions, games, and prayer groups. The children have had prerecorded classes and received bible lessons delivered to their doors. During the summer, the children and youth received camp kits distribute by Camp in the Community since we could not meet in person. Also, during Advent, the youth received seasonal camp kits to celebrate at home. During the early fall, the youth gathered a few times in person for special events and devotional lessons. The time apart made the gatherings all the more significant to the youth.

Though we have not been able to maintain typical methods of mission and outreach, we have found different ways to offer help to those in need. The Food Pantry has continued to serve our neighbor throughout the pandemic. Through modified their distribution techniques, the food pantry volunteers have safely provided food during an especially difficult time. In addition, the Melting Pot ministry at neighboring Munsey Church had to make modifications, and the First Church volunteers stepped up to make bagged lunches every month for those in need. We also continued to support Family Promise though we could not host families in the typical way. Instead of housing families in the church building, we were able to support safer alternatives by providing funds for hotel rooms and food cards

Though 2020 was a difficult year, God was at work in and through you, the people of First Church. And I know that God is still doing great things among us! Thank you all for your support, engagement, and ministry in 2020; let's keep it up good work in 2021.

## First Church By the Numbers 2020

*A numerical estimate of ministry since March*

### 500+ Food Pantry Boxes Distributed

Free food to more than 1000 neighbors in need.

### 1600 Meals Prepared for Melting Pot

Sack lunches packed every month by First Church

### 20 People Hosted by First Church with Family Promise

Hotel expenses and food provided for 5 families

### 10 Small Groups and Classes

Staying connected online and on the phone

### 1200 Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Delivered

100 dozen to church families

### 50 Youth Prayer Meetings

Regular online prayer times for the youth

### 440 Care Packages, Gifts, and Study Materials

Delivered to senior and junior high youth

### 125 Bags of Candy Delivered to Children & Youth

Reverse trick-or-treating for our community

### 1600 Sunday School Lessons for Kids

Lessons delivered for 40 children for each week

### 120 Camp in the Community Kits

Kits delivered to children and youth in the area

### 180 "Love Thy Neighbor" Face Masks

Distributed to children, youth, and adults

### 87 Participants in Leading Worship

Including 12 youth, 10 children and 1 baby

### 21 Singers for Worship Services

More than 120 songs by soloists, duets, ensembles

### 15 Instruments Played by Musicians for Worship

Including piano, organ, brass, guitar, and percussion

### 800 Worship Packets Mailed to Church Members

Mailed every 2 weeks to about 40 households

### 577 Unique Viewers of Online Worship Services

Not including additional persons watching on the same device. That's more than our membership!

## Prayer List for January 2021

We **celebrate** the birth of Saejin Kwak Hopson on December 30, daughter of Sam & Jin Hopson, granddaughter of Mike & Nancy Hopson.

We extend our **sympathy** to the family of Joann Boyd who passed way on January 2, the family of Bo Miller who passed way on December 30, and the family, friends, and classmates of Caraleigh Helton who passed away on December 19.

Elizabeth Bailey  
Nate Berning  
Bill Carter  
Finely Cook  
John Cradic  
Ernie Cross  
Vivian Eckerson  
Phyllis Eorgan  
Gerald Fields  
Jim Furches  
Betty Gouge  
Dalton Gough  
Austin Green  
Nannie Greene  
Steve Harris  
Lynda & Fridaye Honeycutt  
The Huff Family  
Roy Lessly  
Luanne Love  
David McElveen  
Bo Miller  
Helen Mills  
Tom Palmer  
JoAnne Paty  
Joanne and Carla Peterson  
Spencer Pickle  
Steve Robbins  
Taylor Rodriguez  
Samantha Sams  
Kyle Shell  
Joe & Jessica Story  
Phil Torbett  
Steve Wilkinson  
Family Promise  
Brother's Keeper  
Treatment & vaccine for COVID19