



# The First Epistle

First United Methodist Church

900 Spring Street, Johnson City, TN 37604 Phone: (423) 928-9222

Email: [office@1stchurchjc.org](mailto:office@1stchurchjc.org) Website: [1stchurchjc.org](http://1stchurchjc.org)

April 2020 Newsletter

## UPDATE FROM THE PASTORS

Dear First Church Family,

I greet you with the words of Paul because I find them to be so true for me:

*"I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.*

*You are always in my heart!"* (Philippians 1:3-7)

I have been so blessed and inspired by your work for and support of the ministries of First Church. You have taken seriously the call to BE the church, the body of Christ in the world! Thank you so much for all you have done and continue to do.

As many of you know, our local government has issued a "safer at home" order for Johnson City in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. Many communities and entire states are under similar orders because health professionals have said and we believe that staying home means staying safe, not only for ourselves but also for our neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable.

With these changes and the increase in local cases of COVID-19, last week the Early Learning Center made the difficult but necessary decision to close, at least until April 13. They will monitor the situation and make decisions about when to reopen as that time approaches. The community has depended on the ELC for high quality child care for decades, and this closure (even though it is temporary) will affect many in our community. Please be in prayer for the ELC, the teachers and staff, and the children and families disrupted by this decision.

Our in-person church gatherings remain cancelled until further notice, by order of Bishop Taylor of the Holston Conference. Yet, as we continue in this time of physical distancing, I want to celebrate the ways we, as First Church, are staying connected.

Since March 15, when the order to cease large, in-person gatherings began, the staff and leaders of First Church have worked hard to create meaningful worship experiences available online each week. These worship services have averaged 225 views, with 838 impressions, meaning hundreds of people are watching the worship service videos and hundreds more are seeing the link for the videos and can view and participate in worship. In addition, many have shared the videos with friends and family members around the country who may never have the opportunity to join us in person but now worship with us regularly. We will continue to provide worship service recordings; however with the new order, many of the videos will be filmed "on location" where worship volunteers are staying "safer at home."

The children and youth ministries of First Church and the staff are going strong. Last week, the children received activity boxes with Bible stories corresponding to the sermons and supplies for each lesson. More lessons will be sent every few weeks to continue spiritual growth opportunities for our youngest members. The youth received "thinking of you" gift bags that included devotional readings, puzzles, snacks, and personal notes. The youth are also continuing their small groups through online video conferences and virtual prayer meetings.

Our Sunday School classes and small groups continue to support one another through regular phone calls, emails and text messages, online video meetings, Facebook groups and discussions, mailings, cards, and prayers- lots of prayers. New groups have even formed during this time to provide support through prayer and devotional thoughts.

### SEE WHAT'S NEW



Online worship service recordings



Wednesday Night Virtual Fellowship



Hands-on learning kits for children



Worshipping together while apart

Wednesday Night Fellowship is continuing in a new format. Fran Waterbury has presented her lessons on Jesus' final week through videos, which are available on the church website. And during the season of Easter, lessons on spiritual practices will be led by a variety of speakers so that we can learn new and different ways to practice our faith at home.

The food pantry was open on Saturday, March 28, and using careful guidelines, distributed 84 food boxes to our neighbors in need. All of those involved were grateful to give and to receive. In addition, 10 boxes were delivered to our children and youth who needed a little extra help with food.

As we look ahead, we do not know what tomorrow brings, but we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ who overcame death to bring new life to all of us. And I see that new life already springing up.

Though these times are different and difficult, First Church is finding more ways to reach out even farther than before. Your financial support is vital to these ministries, and I am so thankful for your generosity. Please consider giving to First Church online at <http://bit.ly/GiveTo1st>, setting up offerings through your own financial institution, or mailing in gifts to 900 Spring Street, Johnson City, TN, 37604.

In the coming weeks, as we approach Holy Week and Easter, I encourage you to stay connected to one another. Reach out to 5 church members that you haven't talked to and let them know you are thinking about them. And if you need someone to talk to or pray with, your pastors are always here for you.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Jodie and Pastor Gary

### FIRST CHURCH BY THE NUMBERS

#### 40 Kids Kits

Hands-on learning kits delivered to children

#### 84 Pantry Boxes

Free food distributed to neighbors in need

#### 19 Gift Bags

Thinking-of-you gifts delivered to youth

#### 10 Small Groups

Classes and groups connecting online and on the phone

#### 225 Video Views

Average views per week of worship service recordings

### WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Our FUMC Family would love to help you in ANY way needed – prayer concerns, medical appointments, pharmacy needs, groceries, ANYTHING!

Please do not hesitate to call on us!

Gerald Fields	423-943-4176
Steve Gross	423-647-7270
Jim Heaton	423-612-6507
Grace Holloway	318-547-2484
Wayne Holloway	318-267-6532
Mike Hopson	423-202-0354
Anna Kapoor	423-534-1280
Dan Mahoney	423-335-0917
Ben Peeples	423-557-6756
Calvin Robinson	828-242-4556
Miriam Robinson	423-747-7646

### STAFF AND LEADER CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Rev. Jodie Ihfe, Senior Pastor

jodie.ihfe@1stchurchjc.org (423)202-6164

#### Rev. Gary Ihfe, Associate Pastor

gary.ihfe@1stchurchjc.org (423)303-6851

#### Billy Walker, Dir. Of Worship & Music

billy.walker@1stchurchjc.org (423)361-9255

#### Kathie Battista, ELC Director

elc1986@1stchurchjc.org (423)943-1015

#### Steve Reis, Director of Outreach & Discipleship

steve.reis@1stchurchjc.org (614)208-3454

#### Kati Uelhof, Director of Children's Ministries

kati.uelhof@1stchurchjc.org (423)557-6844

#### Bree Nelson, Director of Jr. High Youth

bree.nelson@1stchurchjc.org (423)833-6016

#### Drew & Sharon Cradic, Directors of Sr. High Youth

sharon.cradic@1stchurchjc.org  
(423)676-5510 (D) (423)676-5511(S)

#### Susan Dove Fields, Organist

#### Wayne Holloway & Elisa Wardeska, Treasurers

treasurer@1stChurchJC.org

#### Jennifer Boarman, Bulletin Coordinator

jennifer.boarman@1stchurchjc.org (423)943-8388

#### Finley Cook, Wednesday Night Chef

finleyac1@gmail.com

Beth Louthian, Tammy Crawford & Emma Berning,  
Nursery

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