



August 2020

The First Epistle

Newsletter of First United Methodist Church

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Update from the Pastors

As many of you know, our region has seen significant increases in COVID-19 cases. And these increases are affecting the school system, churches, athletics, arts, entertainment, and community events in addition to the ongoing economic, physical, mental, and emotional strain that has been prevalent since March. On July 14, the Washington County mayor, Joe Grandy, issued a county-wide mask mandate, and the Johnson City mayor, Jenny Brock supported the mandate. The mandate, if not reinstated, is set to expire on August 3, but I encourage you to keep wearing your face coverings in public. We do not have much control over the coronavirus or our community, but we do have control over our individual actions. Masks are not a perfect solution, but it is the most effective tool that we have right now against the spread of COVID-19.

Jesus says: "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31) This is known as the "golden rule" and helps guide us in our decisions and treatment of others. If we want others to be cautious and considerate, we have to start with ourselves. Jesus also said: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27). And Paul continued this teaching in Romans and Galatians, and it can also be found in James. Loving our neighbors and treating others the way we want to be treated are foundational practices of our Christian life. And during this current crisis, wearing a face covering is a simple and practical way to love your neighbor and live out the golden rule.

Blessings, Pastor Jodie and Pastor Gary



Back to School?

In a typical year, August would begin with a fun back-to-school bash, distributing lots of needed items to our youth, and special prayers for all teachers, students, and school personnel as they return to school. However, this year, in the midst of the pandemic, the start of school is as uncertain and stressful as everything else in society. Some schools are starting back at full-capacity, some are starting with a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning, some are moving to virtual learning for every student. Many parents are tasked with the difficult decision of choosing to send kids to school in person or keep them home for virtual learning. And many parents and guardians struggle with needing to work and needing to care for their children who will not be attending in-person school. Some teachers are choosing between risking their health and risking their career. And teachers are dealing with constant change in the ways they will teach and work with their students. All of the school administrators and school board members know that whatever they decide, some people will disagree and be upset. During this very difficult and anxious time, let us pray for teachers, students, caregivers, school staff, and administrators as we learn together what it means to go “back to school.”



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-June in 2019 and January-June 2020. (As a note, in June 2019, earnings from a trust were moved to the operating budget which accounts for an increase in contributions for that year.) Overall, 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	June 2019 year to date	June 2020 Year to date
Contributions	\$292,419	\$248,858
Expenses	\$296,484	\$280,199
Income/(Loss)	\$(4064)	\$(31,342)



God calls Moses to lead the people out of bondage in Egypt into freedom following God. Along the way, God gives the people a set instructions, what we often call the Ten Commandments, to help them live out their new-found freedom. Beginning August 23, Pastor Jodie and Pastor Gary will start a new sermon series teaching about these ten words from God. Join us for worship online as we discuss these familiar words and discover God’s Ten Ways to Live Free.



Worship online at bit.ly/1stchurchYT

First Church By The Numbers

139 People Served at Food Pantry

Volunteers distributed 67 food boxes in July

102 Camp in the Community Kits

Shared with Coalition4Kids through First Church

205 Video Views

Average views per week of worship service recordings for past 8 weeks.

Prayer List for August 2020

Anthony Battista	Jason Mills
Elizabeth Wells	Nate Berning
Nate Rader	Nic Spurlock
Samantha Sams	Will Gott
Treatment & vaccine for COVID19	
Teachers, Students, Schools	

We extend our sympathy to: the Gentry and Berning families after the death of Gladys Maupin in July, and the family of Nancy Jewell after her death on July 29