



September 2020

# The First Epistle

Newsletter of First United Methodist Church

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## Response to COVID-19 Update

Dear First Church Family,

We are beginning our 6th month since we have gathered in person for worship. I know that none of us thought it would last this long, and none of us know how much longer it will last. While this has been a difficult season, it has also been a fruitful season with so much ministry growing and changing. We have been able to continue worshipping together online, over the phone, by email, and through mailings, and we celebrate how the Spirit binds us together even though we are apart.

As we continue to navigate through the pandemic, a team of our church leaders has been meeting regularly to find the best path forward for our individual church. This Reopening Team includes: Debbie Eddy, Mike Eddy, Karl Kapoor, Anna Kapoor, Ernest Campbell, Jim Heaton, Jamee Roberts, Steve Gross, Alan LeClair, Nancy Honeycutt, and Rev. Jodie Ihfe. These leaders have studied the guidelines from the Holston Conference and statements from Bishop Taylor and are trying to discern what is in the best interest for First Church.

All of us recognize that *being* the church is important, so we are working on ways to maintain our connection. We will continue online worship services, and we are working to upgrade the video capabilities in the sanctuary to provide online worship for years to come. If you would like to make specific gifts to this project, donations are gladly accepted through online giving at <http://bit.ly/GiveTo1st>, setting up a gift through your own financial institution, or mailing in gifts to 900 Spring Street, Johnson City, TN, 37604.

While church buildings are still closed for indoor worship and activities, outdoor gatherings may be allowed under specific protocols and guidelines. Therefore, the Reopening Team is working on a plan for small groups to gather outdoors (on or off the church property), however the plan has not yet been finalized or approved. We know that outdoor gatherings will still entail safety procedures and may not look like what we are used to. Outdoor gatherings will require:

- Reserving outdoor areas
- Wearing masks
- Social distancing
- Taking attendance
- Completing forms
- Limited access to building
- Smaller groups
- No group singing
- No potluck or self-serve food

At this time, outdoor gatherings are still not permitted. The plan will need to be finalized and approved by our church council and our District Superintendent. But we are looking forward to future opportunities to gather in small groups outside. Some of you may have seen or heard of other churches in the area meeting as usual or gathering outdoors for worship, but this team (with the support of the church council) feels that now is not the time to return to large gatherings. These decisions are made not just to follow rules, but to love one another and our neighbors the best way we can right now.

One in Christ,  
Pastor Jodie and the Reopening Team

## First Church By The Numbers: August

### 65 Food Pantry Boxes Distributed

Free food to 102 neighbors in need, given out by 10 volunteers plus 2 volunteers from the security team

### 160 Meals Prepared for the Melting Pot

Ham and cheese sandwiches along with a granola bar, potato chips, and water, prepared by 7 volunteers

## Capital Campaign Update

Campaign Goal \$150,000

Total Donations \$87, 282  
(6/32/19-8/16/20)

Needed to meet goal \$62,718

Please prayerfully consider additional donations.

## Prayer List for September 2020

John Cradic	Bill Carter
Dalton Gough	Brother's Keeper
Jason Mills	FUMC Pastors and Staff
Steve Wilkinson	ELC
Catherine Cartus	Steve Holmes
Family Promise	Nate Berning
Samantha Sams	Teachers, Students, Schools
Hurricane recovery	United States
Treatment & vaccine for COVID19	

We extend our sympathy to the family of Elizabeth Wells, who passed away on August 23.

Please send prayer requests to Pastor Jodie at  
jodie.ihfe@1stchurchjc.org or  
call the church office 928-9222

## FUMC's Little Free Pantry

Om Patel, a member of Boy Scout Troop #36, is shown with the Little Free Pantry he has established in front of the First United Methodist Church Neighborhood Center, 210 W. Maple St.

Om has been in our church's scout troop for the past 8 years and has been working on his Eagle Award. He did renovations to the Neighborhood Center: painting rooms, tearing out damaged carpet and replacing ceiling tiles damaged by the leaking roof.

When he had completed those tasks, he wanted to do more and found an idea on a website that is catching much national attention, especially during this time of the coronavirus. It's called "Little Free Pantry."

Om felt this would be a great idea to help others in need of food and supplies. At the same time it provides an opportunity for others to give.

At 15 years of age, Om is a very compassionate young man who is serious about helping his community. He is industrious and desires to make a difference for the well-being of others. Om copied the plans for the pantry from the internet and set to work building it. He raised about \$300 for the needed materials. After 50 hours of labor, this attractive, unique Little Free Pantry is now on the church's property at the Neighborhood Center and is being well used.

Om continues to organize food collection drives with his scouting friends. He has donated food to our church's food pantry several times and is now collecting for both pantries. Om and the Church Council encourage church members to stop by and drop off non-perishable food items and/or paper products. If you would like Om to pick up your items, contact him at 423-946-7050 or littlefreepantry2020@gmail.com

