

# First Things

Issue No. 28

A weekly publication of First United Methodist Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

July 19, 2020

## Reopening News

In an emergency Cabinet meeting on Friday, July 10, the Bishop and District Superintendents decided that due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in our region, all churches in Knox and Anderson counties will be closed for in-person worship through at least July 26. The Bishop and her Task Force will offer more information about churches reopening in the future. Our Church Council will take up the question of our reopening in their meeting Tuesday, July 21.

## Our Reopening Protocol Has Been Updated

To eventually reopen for in-person worship, our Protocol has been updated to meet the guidelines created by Holston Annual Conference and approved by our District Superintendent. A copy of our updated Protocol is available in the Virtual Chapel on our church website. In addition to the Protocol, several leaders of our congregation had to sign a "Church Compliance Certification." Below is a copy of that statement.

## Church Compliance Certification

Dear Church Leaders,

As we are "Taking Steps Forward Faithfully and Safely" in our churches, it is absolutely critical the guidelines and requirements we have issued be widely communicated, well understood, and complied with each and every one of our churches.

**We therefore ask you to covenant to the following:**

- We have received, read, and understand the guidelines and requirements issued by Bishop Taylor with respect to reopening of church buildings.
- We have distributed these documents to all members of our Church Council.
- We understand compliance with these requirements is a life and death matter and must be taken extremely seriously.
- We will implement the required measures needed to ensure a safe environment in all spaces where members, outside groups and staff may be present.
- If we encounter obstacles to implementing these measures, we will prioritize **safety over in-person gatherings** and will immediately consult with the District Superintendent for advice.
- We will promptly report any new outbreaks of COVID-19 within the congregation, outside groups, and staff to the District Superintendent.
- We will ensure our church is in compliance with all protocols for childcare and preschool activities and settings.
- We have checked with our insurance carrier for any special requirements.
- We have completed the "Worksheet for Protocol Planning and Preparation" and have attached all referenced plans to this covenant agreement.
- We will complete the Holston Annual Conference "Checklist for Worship Events" for each in-person worship event we host and keep the checklist on file in the church office.

\* This document was signed by Rev. Mark Flynn, Lead Pastor; Jerry Van Fossen, Chair of Trustees; and Keith Jeter, Church Council Chair.

## FUMC Office Hours

During this time of safety guidelines, the church office will not be holding normal office hours. Danielle currently works M-W, 8:00 to ~12:00 noon. If you need anything, call the church (483.4357), she checks the messages regularly.

## Congratulations to

Tyler, Destinee, and Turner Trent in the birth of their son and brother, Tate McCoy Trent, on July 9.

## In Loving Memory

**Gene Grassel**

who joined FUMC on January 18, 1981 and died on July 10. We extend love and sympathy to his family and friends.

## Our Prayers

**Personal information removed for privacy**

## Our Gifts

Offering this Week	\$24,135
2020 Year to Date	\$772,705
2019 Year to Date	\$734,589
Monthly Special Offering	\$1535

**July Special Offering:  
Girls Incorporated**

## Interested in New Classes Online?

As we move into our fifth month of the church being officially closed we continue to adapt and learn. The feedback staff has gotten, from the survey and emails, is that people have enjoyed our online programs and concerts and would like our offerings to be expanded. As we look to do this it would be helpful to know what interests you. Are there topics or areas of study that you would like to know more about? Are there forms of prayer or theologians you would like to study? Are there questions you have about programs or committees of the church and how and why we do what we do? Are there questions for certain staff members about their area of ministry? What else, such as concerts, would you like to be able to watch? Please, let us know what you would like to see, listen to or learn more about and we will see what we can do. Send any suggestions/inquiries to any staff or Jenny Caughman (jcaughman@fumcor.org).

## Youth News

Online Youth group and Sunday school are continuing through the summer. Youth group is on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday school happens at 11:00 a.m. All youth grades 6-12 are invited, and more information can be found on our website (fumcor.org/youth).



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## New Online Bible Study Has Begun *Letting Bible Study Get Back to Basics*

Have you been reading the Bible much during COVID-19? If not, have you thought about trying to do it more? Wednesday evening Rev. Chris Black began a 5-week Zoom meeting called, *Letting Bible Study Get Back To Basics*. He discussed various timeless tools that are deceptively simple, but that can lead to a richer understanding of our sacred text. If you have ever thought, "Where should I begin with the Bible?," "I don't understand this at all," "Is a commentary really necessary?," "I am honestly a little intimidated by the Bible," this class is for you. Classes begin at 8:00 p.m. and will last ~40 minutes. There will be a link for the Zoom meeting in the Virtual Chapel on our website (fumcor.org). If you have questions, please contact Chris (cblack@fumcor.org). It is not too late to join.

## New Online "iStudy Christ" Coming

Rev. Mark Flynn will soon begin a new, online Bible Study class on Wednesday nights from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Beginning July 29 and running through September 9, "iStudy Christ" will explore the topics of Grace, Humility, Sacrificial Love, and Jesus' Passion. This 7-week Bible study with daily readings is open to all; you do not need to have taken previous iStudy classes to participate. The free study guide is available in the Virtual Chapel on our church website, as is the zoom video conference link you will need to participate. Be sure to have finished the first week's reading prior to Wednesday, July 29!

## Directory Photos Sessions Postponed

Once again, FUMC is postponing the scheduled photo sessions for the new church directory. We feel strongly about trying to get as many people in the directory as possible and believe that come this September, families just won't be willing to gather for sessions. The staff decided to wait until next year, 2021, to start scheduling photo sessions. The new dates to be planning for are February 10-13 and 25-27. Watch for how to sign up for an appointment in January.



## Virtual Praise Song Opportunity

One of the most difficult parts of the pandemic for people who enjoy singing together is knowing that, according to experts, singing in a group setting carries a high likelihood of spreading the virus. For now, it seems as though singing together virtually is the closest we can come. You may have seen examples of these virtual singing videos online - our Contemporary Band has a playlist on the FUMC Oak Ridge YouTube channel. Singers record themselves and then send the recording to someone who edits all the videos together to create the final piece with all the voices combined. It takes a great deal of time and effort to produce the final video.

FUMC singers now have the opportunity to participate in a virtual praise song video. Singers who wish to participate will be asked to record themselves singing a portion of *To Our God* by Bethel Worship. Details on exactly what to sing will be available soon.

If you are interested in singing, contact Jeff Kile (jkile@fumcor.org). Let us sing praise to God together!