

First Things

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October 25, 2020

Thanksgiving Drive-Thru Needs Donations

Our Thanksgiving drive-thru event (the first part of the Thanksgiving & Christmas Shoppe to support our community in need) is fast approaching ... November 19. We will serve up to 50 families and 200 children. Our focus is essentials—coats, shoes, or a blanket; underwear and socks; and a family activity. These necessities will be given to each family along with the Thanksgiving food/paper/hygiene products.

Focus this week:

- **T-shirts.** Girl Scouts are making 100 t-shirt bags to distribute our paper products. Any size/color t-shirt will work—just no stains or tears please. Drop shirts at FUMC or at the carport at 103 Clayton Way.
- **New coats/shoes.** Contact Nancy Kile (fnpkile@comcast.net) or Vicki Hinkel (vhinkel@comcast.net) to get specific sizes.
- **New, warm blankets** of all sizes.
- New manual can openers, Thanksgiving napkins, socks, underwear (all sizes, including adult sizes for older teens), kitchen towels, hot pads, books (all ages, including teens).

Check the church website (fumcor.org) for full details. Drop donations at FUMC when the office is open (M-W 8:00 a.m.–noon). Please hold larger donations until early November. Again, thank you, church, for your consistently compassionate responses to our community needs. Let's love our neighbors well this Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"Don't Know What You Got" (Till It's Gone)

"Don't know what you got till it's gone." That title of a 1988 pop song is true for more than just a lost love partner. The hardest part of COVID-19 is not being able to be with family and friends. This loss of community shows how important it is to our human makeup. God made us to be in communion with one another. I miss the community of all my First Church friends and Jesus followers. It is together as the body of Christ that we can find real meaning to life. First Church has provided that meaning to life for me for over 30 years now. Worshipping God together and doing God's business together has given me meaning and purpose. I have grown through sermons and Bible studies, through small groups and Sunday school classes, through mission trips and other church activities, always together with others. It is hard to be a Christian all by yourself. Thanks be to God for church and for First Church. I applaud our church staff for all their efforts and programming to keep our spirits alive during this COVID-19 era.

Sheila and I have been members of First Church since 1988. Two of our kids were baptized here. All four were confirmed here and sang in the youth choir. One was married here. Sheila has taught Sunday school to both high schoolers and senior adults. She has been a lay leader and the initial coordinator of small groups. I have been involved in the adult mission program, in "Pilgrimages to Compassion," and in controversial issue dialogues. Sheila and I value all the opportunities for personal spiritual growth and for community service at First Church. Along with investing our time, we believe that it is important to invest our treasure in God's Kingdom work too. At this time of our stewardship campaign, may you also feel so led. —Jim Michel

October 20 Church Council Highlights

- After discussing the rising number of regional COVID-19 cases, the Council voted once again to continue with virtual worship only. The Council will revisit reopening for in-person worship on December 1. The Council also approved continuing to allow small groups of no more than 15 persons to meet in-person in the church building, using safety protocols.
- More than \$30,000 has been donated to our Livestream project! Preparation work has begun in the sanctuary, but equipment is still backordered. Installation may happen as soon as late November but could easily run into December.
- Unfortunately, only five persons have shown interest in helping create a new recovery ministry. However, the Council has given permission for those five to explore a program of smaller scope than originally planned. The Council will still have to approve any plan before it is implemented.
- Our youth group had its first in-person gathering since March! This week, the group will go on a Halloween outing to the Little Ponderosa Zoo.
- The Scholarship Singers will give a recital on Facebook and YouTube (Sunday, November 1, 7:00 p.m.) in celebration of All Souls and All Saints days. Josh Sumter and Seth O'Kegley will lead a Hymn Sing (Sunday, November 22) on Facebook Live. Be prepared to request your favorite hymn and then sing along.
- The UMW Christian Homemaking Circle's October mission project provided 14 coats and 14 pairs of shoes to Oak Ridge Schools students.
- The Missions Committee distributed a total of \$13,500 in September (\$12,500 going to local charities and \$1,000 going to Honduras). An additional \$1,000 was contributed to the Food Pantry budget to provide food for local families.
- A Letter of Agreement with MHM architects was completed for a proposed First Steps Toddler Playground. When available, the estimated construction cost will be shared with the First Steps Board of Directors. When the Board and Trustees concur with a final cost, the final plans and estimated cost will be presented to Church Council for approval to start work.
- The Adult and Youth choirs will begin preparation for a virtual Lessons and Carols program that will premiere in mid-December. It will celebrate the seasons of Advent and Christmas with music and readings and can be experienced safely at home where everyone can sing along with their favorite carols.

Volunteer Coordinators Needed for Ecumenical Storehouse

After 10 years of service, Ron and Linda Battle are stepping down from their volunteer service to the Ecumenical Storehouse (on behalf of FUMC). Board member and long-time volunteer Betty Lou Alspaugh has also indicated her desire to step down. FUMC is in need of a Coordinator for our Ecumenical Storehouse responsibilities. The Ecumenical Storehouse provides vital services for people in need in our community.

Our church provides volunteers for the Ecumenical Storehouse one out of every seven months. Responsibilities of the coordinator include:

- Recruit five to six volunteers to work Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m.–noon to help clients select items for their houses.
- Recruit volunteers to pick up donations of household goods locally on Saturdays 10:00 a.m.–noon.

Many of our church members support the Ecumenical Storehouse and volunteer to help when our church is in charge. We ask you to prayerfully consider serving as the Storehouse Coordinator. Contact Ron or Linda Battle (483.4544, battle45@gmail.com); Betty Lou Alspaugh (310.1693, alspaughbl@gmail.com); Martin Grossbeck (483.1446, mgrossbe@utk.edu); or Rev. Chris Black (483.4357, cblack@fumcor.org) for more information.

The mission of the Ecumenical Storehouse is to provide usable household items to those in crisis from Anderson, Campbell, Morgan, Roane, and Scott counties regardless of race, faith, gender, or handicap. Clients pay nothing for the items they receive.

In Sympathy

We extend love and sympathy to Jackie and Jeff Shipwash in the death of Jeff's dad, Sidney, on October 18.

Hospitalized

Personal information removed for privacy

Our Gifts

Offering this Week	\$32,415
2020 Year to Date	\$1,084,294
2019 Year to Date	\$1,076,248
Special Offering	\$990

Together in Christ Campaign Update

This past Sunday, October 18 was Commitment Sunday for our 2021 financial stewardship campaign, "Together in Christ." We are very pleased and excited to announce the current (but obviously ongoing) results of this important part of our congregation's life. **As of Wednesday, October 21, our Finance Office has received 145 Estimates of Giving (which represents 50% of our goal of 290) for a total of \$737,824 (which represents 62% of our goal of \$1.2 million)!**

This is a wonderful beginning for our 2021 campaign. Although our leadership would have loved it if everyone had turned in their Estimates of Giving by this past Sunday, we expect commitments to continue to arrive over the course of the next month.

Please help our leaders have an accurate understanding of the amount of income they can expect in 2021, so that our budget for the coming year can be accurate as well.

If you have not yet turned in your 2021 Estimate of Giving, please do so as soon as you can. You may mail your Estimate of Giving card, call the church's Finance Office with your information, or fill out an electronic version of the card on our website. If you did not receive a letter and Estimate of Giving card from the church, contact the church office (483.4357).



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Scholarship Singer Recital in November

Throughout this wilderness experience, our scholarship singers have provided beautiful choral music in the Traditional worship services. Join them and the Music Ministry on November 1 at 7:00 p.m. for a recital celebrating All Souls and All Saints. Recital premiere can be viewed on the church's Facebook or YouTube Channel.



Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat at 6 feet

Kids, come in costume and drive through our fun (and not-too-spooky) event on Sunday, October 25, from 3:00–5:00 p.m.! We will be playing it safe with masks and social distancing. Turn onto Tulane Ave. off Oak Ridge Turnpike and turn right into the upper parking lot.

If you would like to participate by decorating your trunk and handing out treats, contact Megan Alden (malden@fumcor.org). What a fun way to spend an afternoon by decorating your car or truck and putting a smile on kids' faces.

October Special Offering: Oak Ridge Area Food Pantries

This month's mission offering will support the Oak Ridge area food banks and food pantries. Many more people in the area are suffering reduced income due to fewer work hours in small businesses. That calls on us to step up. Our church has been collecting food and money to distribute to established food pantries. In addition to giving food directly, we help stock 14 other local area pantries. The need has not diminished and will probably increase as government aid runs out as COVID-19 continues. We hope you will help by designating a gift for "Food Pantries" for the October Special Offering.