

First Things

Issue No. 21

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

May 31, 2020

A Message from Bishop Taylor

Dear Holston Friends,

As we move through this pandemic together, I want to say thank you for continuing to be in ministry through creative worship, Bible studies, reading books to children online, children's programming, online devotions, and caring for those in your congregations and community. It has been wonderful to watch so many great things happening throughout Holston Conference. You never cease to amaze me.

While the COVID-19 curve is beginning to flatten there is still a serious threat, especially for those who are most vulnerable among us. As the world begins to open up we need to remember that restrictions are still in place – social distancing six-feet apart, wear a mask when you are out in the community, wash your hands often, don't touch your face. And yes, stay at home as much as you can. These are not only ways we care for ourselves but how we care for one another.

Our founder John Wesley urged us to "do good, do no harm, and to stay in love with God." As you know, our church buildings continue to be closed. On Friday, in the cabinet meeting, we shared serious, hard conversations on what it will look like when we begin to worship together again in person. There is much to consider to put a good plan in place that will do no harm. We cannot go back to worship as we remember it. This coming week I will be meeting with a task force made up of members of the medical field, pastors from across the conference, and some members of the cabinet to put steps into place so we can gather together as safely as possible without putting one another at risk. We hope to provide a plan by Monday, June 1, 2020.

We understand these are difficult times. Thank you for the work you are doing to keep the church together during this time of separation. Your ministry is allowing the church to be a bright beacon of light to guide God's people through this challenging time.

Please know your Cabinet and I are praying for the pastors and congregations across our beloved Holston. We trust that you are praying for us as well.

God's grace, mercy and peace are always more than sufficient,

Bishop Dindy Taylor
Holston Conference
The United Methodist Church

Helping the Hungry Two Mission Opportunities

Community Food Pantry Drive Right now our church is participating in the Community Food Pantry Drive that runs May 26- June 7. Our local pantry shelves are emptying quickly. Our goal is to stock them up, hopefully through the summer.

Drop off at our church is 9:00-11:00 a.m. every day, M-F, or items can be placed in the collection bin located at the Welcome Center (Vienna Rd.) entrance.

Requested items include: Peanut butter, pasta sauce, canned veggies, canned fruit, canned meat, granola bars, cereal, canned soup, mac and cheese, toilet paper, cleaning products, formula, diapers and feminine hygiene products.

If you or your family unit are willing to help with sorting, please contact Nancy Kile, (fnpkile@comcast.net). Sorting will be done in shifts to maintain social distancing guidelines.

Let's fill up those shelves!

Deliver School Lunches Sign up to help deliver school lunches to families without transportation. Help is needed Monday-Friday to take lunches to several neighborhoods in Oak Ridge. You must sign up at: [TINYURL.COM/ORSMEALS4SUMMER](https://tinyurl.com/ORSMEALS4SUMMER). Sign up is required to volunteer for this mission. Contact Naomi Asher, (865.591.7636) if you have any questions.

Thank you, Church. I can think of no better way to offer Christ to our brothers and sister than helping meet the basic need for food.

Nancy Kile
Welcoming & Connecting Chair

Praying With Psalms

As we move into our third month of social distancing and lack of in-person worship, many of us are wrestling with this complex and confusing situation. We vacillate between desiring to stay safe and wanting to return to life as normal. For many, this time of isolation has brought up spiritual and personal questions. Where is God in all this? Why am I struggling right now? Is it okay to be happy and praise God when so many are suffering? How can prayer honestly capture the complexity of our experience?

The Psalms can be both comforting and challenging because they so blatantly express the rich expanse of the human spiritual experience. Psalms capture our highs and lows, from beautifully singing praises for God to unabashedly calling for violent retribution. To pray with the psalms, as Jesus did, is to be open to the challenging richness of the human condition and our complex, multi-layered relationship with God.

In response to the challenging complex life with COVID-19, Rev. Jenny Caughman will be offering a six-week exploration of the psalms. This class, which will meet via Zoom on Mondays, from 4:30-6:00 p.m. starting June 1, will focus on discovering ways of engaging prayerfully with psalms rather than being an intellectual study. When asked why monks pray with psalms, one choir master responded, "I like to think that I'm praying in the same words that Christ used." Come, learn about praying with the psalms, as Jesus did. To register or for more information, contact Jenny (jcaughman@fumcor.org).

Our Prayers:

Discharged: Johnnie Copeland

Congratulations to

Grace Malone in her marriage to William Ewell on May 16.

Our Gifts

Offering this Week	\$27,658
2020 Year to Date	\$618,572
2019 Year to Date	\$552,153
Monthly Special Offering	\$935



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June Special Offering: YWCA of Anderson County

The YWCA of Anderson County provides court advocacy and housing services, violence prevention, and education programs for victims of domestic violence. So far this year, YWCA provided housing for at least 39 women and 54 children.

In 2019 the YWCA of Anderson County was awarded grant money for two new programs.

- The "Game Changers Program," which helps middle school boys understand domestic violence and how to prevent domestic violence.
- A supervised visitation center for victims of domestic violence and their families, allowing an "abusive" parent to visit their children in a very controlled setting.

Please note "Special Monthly Offering" on your check, or indicate SMO if you give via other means.

Traditional Worship Services Transcript Available

Would you like to have a copy of the prayers, scripture readings, and sermon used each Sunday during this pandemic quarantine? Our staff will be happy to mail each week's manuscript to your home, so even if you cannot watch our online worship services, you can enjoy written copies of them. Please contact the church office (483.4357) if you are interested.

Kids' News

Summer Kids' Project—Our homebound members have loved all the cards and pictures they have received from our families. So let's keep it going this summer. We all know how it feels to have to stay inside for long periods of time, so a nice note or picture in the mail is uplifting. Email Megan Alden (malden@fumcor.org) to receive names if you would like to continue this wonderful ministry and brighten someone's day.

Sunday School Thank You

A special thank you to all the Sunday school teachers- Leigh Frost, Terry Pfeiffer, Autumn Bonifacius, Mary Flynn, and Kailin Hardwick- for joining in and making our classes so fun. Everyone does a lot of planning and prep work and all of them have a lot of love for the kids to make these classes happen. I appreciate you all.

-Megan Alden



June Homebound Member Birthdays

The following people are homebound members of our congregation who have birthdays in June. Please take a moment to send each one a card. You can get their addresses by either looking in the directory or contacting the church office 483.4357 or dgallagher@fumcor.org). Thank you for this expression of care and concern!

June 3	Patricia Brandon, Loraine Valentine
June 9	Glenn Haste, June Martin
June 16	Clyde Martin
June 21	Mildred Beasley
June 27	Cat Gray
June 28	Elizabeth Oakberg