



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

420 East Main Street ~ Union City, Tennessee 38261 ~ Phone 731.885.3573

Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors

Guidelines and Procedures for Our Life Together in a Time of Pandemic

Monday, November 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

In recent weeks reports from the Center for Disease Control and state and local health officials reveal an up-tick in the number of new COVID-19 cases, not only in Obion County but in the surrounding region. Our current Presidential administration has identified Obion and surrounding counties as part of a "red zone" meaning there continues to be a steady up-tick in new cases. By now, most everyone has either been impacted directly or indirectly by the virus. Locally, new cases are being diagnosed almost daily. The impact of this virus is not just global, it is impacting the lives of our loved ones and friends locally. Any indication that the effect of the virus will begin to diminish as we move into the winter months is simply not on the horizon. While many of the world's best minds in public health are working to develop a vaccine for the virus there are no indications one is near ready for distribution.

In light of our current circumstances it is important that each of us be concerned and responsible for our own personal health and well-being. Additionally, choosing as individuals to bear the name "Christian" and align ourselves with the teachings of Christ call for a deeper degree of concern for the health and well-being of (our neighbors) others. The teachings of Jesus Christ, revealed in scripture, guide us in how to live in "right" relationship with God and others. Some of those teachings are as follows:

Matthew 22: 37-39 *Jesus declared...*

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

I John 4: 7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The **Welcome Home Team** of First United Methodist Church was established last spring in response to the direction of our Bishop, William T. McAilly and his directive that all congregations in the Memphis conference call together and give full authority to a team of individuals to make decisions, set guidelines, establish, and implement procedures in response to the current pandemic for the purpose of protecting the health and well-being of their local congregation, its members, and friends.

Whereas statistics show the number of new positive COVID-19 cases is on the rise in Obion County and in the surrounding region, it is important that we (FUMC) have in place a clear plan of precautionary efforts to protect the health and well-being of our local congregation, its members, and friends. We have grave concerns about the health and well-being of our congregation and staff due to the increase in COVID-19 cases and deaths. We are also aware that there are those who wish to remove or disregard altogether our current safeguards concerning COVID-19. This type action is not advised as it puts the health and well-being of self and others at risk, and destroys the covenant made at our baptism to care for one another as Christ cared for others. In an effort to further clarify what steps we can take individually and collectively to diminish the impact of the virus and to fulfill our responsibility as followers of Christ to care for one another, each of us, with grateful hearts, are asked to abide by the following guidelines and policies effective immediately.

- While on campus the wearing of masks, social distancing, and temperature checks will be practiced at ALL church-sponsored events and or functions.
- Preparation and serving of meals by all groups and/or individuals are discontinued until further notice.
(This does not apply to First Friends or PDO per state guidelines)
- While church staff members are employees of the church, hired in part to lead and care for the members of the congregation they **will not** be expected to prepare for or participate in any function and or church-related event that places them in jeopardy of either being infected or infecting others with COVID-19.
- The sanctuary choir will be discontinued until further notice.

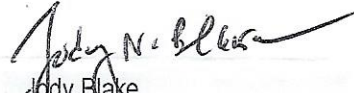
- Congregational singing will be allowed while practicing social distancing and the wearing of masks.
- Sunday school classes and small groups may continue to meet with mask and social distancing. There should be no common coffee pot or refreshments.
- Team leaders and staff are encouraged to conduct church business/meetings via a combination of ZOOM teleconference, conference phone call, or e-mail whenever possible. This will eliminate the gathering of groups and the potential spread of the virus.

***This is the official position of First United Methodist Church. Out of an abundance of caution and care for one another all members and friends are asked to allow these guidelines and practices to steer how we relate to one another in this important time.**

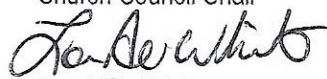
***At the directive of our District Superintendent and Bishop, deliberate disregard, or failure to abide by these guidelines shifts the burden of liability to those in violation in the event they or someone in attendance contracts the virus, are hospitalized or eventually dies as a result of their negligence.**



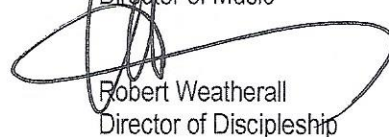
John Hale
Church Council Chair



Jody Blake
Director of Music



Lou Anne White
Church Lay Leader



Robert Weatherall
Director of Discipleship



Jim Emmons
First Friends/PDO Board Chair



Sally George
Church Administrative Assistant



Rev. Dr. Douglas N Norfleet
Pastor