



# The MESSENGER



*"But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." ~ Isaiah 40:31*

## **A Word From Your Pastor**

### **Highlights from 2020**

Dear First Family,  
We made it! Despite the disruptions and chaos lurking around us in 2020, we thrived!

As Covid-19 entered and spread throughout our country, I realized that it would soon affect Jacksonville and our congregation. I proposed a worship plan approved by our leadership team and our Bishop allowing us to worship via conference call. We soon transitioned to worshipping on Zoom resulting in larger church attendance and more consistent giving. Online worship also allowed members and friends outside of our city the opportunity to connect with us.



Last year was challenging as we faced a deadly pandemic, a global movement for racial justice, and the most polarized political race we have ever witnessed. First United Methodist found ways to serve our community as we faced these challenges. We made masks for Pinedale Elementary School and UF Health Hospital, became partners with the Feeding Northeast Florida Food Bank, and collected school

supplies, socks, hats, and underwear for those in need. The need of our neighbors was the beginning of our "Healing Hygiene Pantry."

Additionally, we took a deep dive into spiritual development as Wellness Wednesday became a wonderful spiritual formation outlet. We shared recipes, meditation exercises, had several speakers share their testimonies and others who facilitated sessions about Covid-19 and how to stay physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic. We became more involved with the Cathedral District and the Homeless Coalition as we lived out our motto of being "a Church with a heart for God and a heart for our City."

So, as faithful believers, let us embrace 2021 with joy and hope, not because of what the news says about the vaccine or the political shift, but because of our faith in Jesus. John 16:33 tells us that "On the night before Jesus goes to the cross, He tells His disciples that they will have trouble in this world." As followers of Jesus, we all are either facing a struggle or coming out of a struggle. Despite our challenges, we have Hope. The Word of God says, "Take heart, for I have overcome the world." Our biggest problems in this life are sin (separation from God) and death. In Jesus, both have been defeated forever. We must rely on the promises of God found in His Word: "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." "He works all things for good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose." "He promised never to leave us or forsake us." "For we are more than conquerors through Him, that love us." So, as we embrace this new year, we are comforted by knowing that He will guard us, feed us, and lead us.

I pray that God will bless us with gifts of health, peace, joy, and at some point, a renewal of community. But most of all, I pray that He will bless us with His eternal vision for us. Because of God's love, mercy, and grace, we can face life with the confidence that comes from being joined to Him, the ultimate Overcomer, Jesus the Christ!

Joy in Jesus!  
Pastor Tiffany McCall

Strengthen your faith and connect with your church family!

## CALENDAR

### WORSHIP

You are invited to worship **IN-PERSON** at First UMC, continue to use **ZOOM** just like we have since March, or **WATCH LIVE** on First UMC's Facebook page.

### SANCTUARY TUESDAY

### WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

### LENT & EASTER @ FIRST UMC

February 17, 2021 **Ash Wednesday Worship Service**

Pastor Tiffany McCall will be available for porch visits to your home for imposition of ashes if you do not want to attend the in-person worship! Please contact the church office to schedule!

March 28, 2021 **Palm/Passion Sunday Worship Service**

April 1, 2021 **Maundy Thursday Worship (online only)**

April 2, 2021 **Good Friday Worship Service (online only)**

April 4, 2021 **Easter Sunday Worship Service**

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*"The year 2020 has been difficult for everyone, however, FUMC exhibited strength during this challenging time. Our congregation embraced new technology; we*

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## **A Glance at Church Discipleship for 2021**

### **1. Reading the Bible through in a year**

The Bible Reading Plan we are using has been emailed to you. Although we are reading large units of Scripture, we will focus on a specific unit to help shape our understanding and application of God's Word as part of our Wellness Wednesday Program

### **2. Holistic Wellness**

We will have wellness coaches share healthy practices to include nutrition, exercise, prayer and meditation, other spiritual practices, and grief and mental health counseling.

## **Quarterly Mission**

### **1. Feeding Northeast Florida**

– continued participation

### **2. School Church Partnership with Pinedale Elementary**

– continued participation

### **3. Get Well Jax Campaign.**

Get Well Jax is a Fresh Expression initiative to reach our city by inspiring health and wellness through line dancing, square dancing, Zumba, chair and floor yoga, weekly devotionals, classes in nutrition, and family fun. First Methodist will host this ministry in partnership with other organizations in our community. The projected launch date is Friday, March 5 and March 19. It is my hope to develop this Fresh Expression as a weekly mission.

This is a wonderful opportunity to practice radical hospitality and love in our city. We will need volunteers to welcome and direct parking and the traffic inside the church. Please contact the church office if you would like to help make this a successful ministry.

### **4. Hygiene Kits**

Kits will be made and given away on the 1st and 4th Tuesdays.

## **Ongoing Ministries**

### **Prayer**

Tuesdays in person in the Sanctuary at 10:00 am

Fridays via conference call at 10:30 am

Call: 425-436-6303

ID: 798388#

Passcode: 32202

### **Young Adult Bible Study**

"Lit Learning" Every Tuesday with Shakeria ages 17-21

"**Bold Move Bible Experience**" with Maya on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month

**First Kids:** Weekly connected with Kitty & Caden

## Coming soon: Summer Break Stop

What is this? I am so glad you asked. The Summer Break Spot Program, also known as the Summer Food Service Program, is a federally funded program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and, in Florida, administered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Sites are locally operated by nonprofit organizations (sponsors) that provide the meals and receive reimbursement from USDA. It is my hope that First United Methodist becomes a site and host "Bread & Bible Break Spot". This is a wonderful way to serve the children at Pinedale, Butler, and others in our community.

### Let's Do It!

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*"As many of you know, I was in the hospital many times from the winter of 2019 to the fall of 2020. During those times I was comforted by Psalm 55:22a: "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you." I prayed and gave everything to Him because I had no other choice. I could not help myself because I was so ill and weak. God kept His promise and sustained me during each hospitalization. He kept my body free of pain, kept me peaceful in spite of all the noise that goes on in the hospital, kept my mind clear so I could decipher what doctors were saying to me, and He even kept me calm during my repeated storms of ill health and recovery. He became my constant companion because no visitors were allowed in the hospital.*

*The Lord truly lifted my head and filled me and my room with a peace that is difficult to understand or explain. The Holy Spirit made Himself so well known that the nursing staff used my room as a refuge from their trials as caretakers for a few minutes each day. We joked, laughed, and talked about God, His goodness, and testified to His sustaining power when things get rough. Truly I was blessed. God proved Himself as a Comforter over and over and also gave my witnesses (my caretakers) a testimony. I gave Him my burdens and He sustained me...just as He promised. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen!"*

Oweta Hegeman

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## ACTS CIRCLE NEWS

The ACTS CIRCLE will be meeting on Zoom in February to plan the new projects for spring 2021. Watch for an email and announcement for details. Be ready for some new ideas!

*"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" **Acts 20:35***

# Acts



## CHILDREN MINISTRY

### First Kids are Blessed to Be A Blessing to Others During Holidays

Between home-delivery of a month's worth of Sunday School materials and Zoom Sunday Get-Togethers, the pandemic could not deter **First Kids** from collecting 18 Blessing Bags for the homeless in our downtown community. While learning about how God blesses us in our study "Blessings and Birthrights - Jacob & Esau, Elizabeth & Zechariah", the kids realized how simple things we take for granted are treasured blessings to others.

The Gallon bags we created contained items for men/women such as crackers, bottled water, soap, razors, deodorant, wipes, toothbrush/toothpaste, and a pair of socks. We collected those bags on November 21, 2020, and delivered them to the office to be given out on Thanksgiving and Christmas. A homeless man helped us bring in these donations and class materials on a cart. I gave him a Blessing Bag and he told me to tell the kids "THANK YOU" and that he was out of everything in his backpack.

"THANK YOU!" to the parents, grandparents, and First Kids for supporting this mission project to our community.

Kitty McGill  
Children's Ministry Leader

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## PARISH NURSE

Every year in January, many of us reflect on creating New Year's resolutions, so we can improve on something we did not do very well the year before.



This past year has been difficult for so many reasons, COVID-19 risk and illness being significant. Many of us have been physically separated from friends, family, events, social engagements, and church participation. We have also been mentally and emotionally separated from these occasions as well. Sometimes the anger, stress, isolation, and loneliness may have been overwhelming. Speaking for myself, sometimes when I get angry or stressed, I may think, say, or do something that I later regret, but cannot forgive myself.

There is a spiritual dimension to consider when thinking about making forgiveness to self with all things. One definition of forgiveness can be defined as the decision to let go of resentment, anger, and thoughts of revenge because of a real, or perceived offense, hurt, or wrongdoing against you. That brings me to the spiritual part of all of us that is always present. Perhaps you are trusting Jesus with the "big" things, but you still think you can handle the "small" things that may happen daily in our lives. However, some of the small things that we try to handle spiritually turn out to hurt the most. Self-forgiveness is "an acknowledgment that you are human, like everybody else, and that you have reached the stage in your life journey at which you are able to give yourself greater respect" (Celebrate Recovery, Lesson 17).

Through reading the following Bible verses, I hope you can follow the story of self-forgiveness from Old and New Testament verses and other references:

**1. The life journey is at a crossroads, where I must decide which road to follow. Should I follow my heart or my mind?**

Psalm 25: 16-17 (MSG) *Look at me and help me! I'm all alone and in big trouble. My heart and mind are fighting each other; Call a truce to this civil war.*

In Celebrate Recovery's Principle 1 we learn that pretending the hurt isn't there or that it doesn't bother you anymore won't solve your problems. **This option seems like my head is speaking.**

**2. My heart is telling me something different:** *Jeremiah 6:14 (TLB) reminds us that "You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!"*

### **3. I need to grow in my spiritual life, like my life used to be, Christ-centered.**

Hebrews 6:4-8 (MSG) 4-8 *Once people have seen the light, gotten a taste of heaven and been part of the work of the Holy Spirit, once they've personally experienced the sheer goodness of God's Word and the powers breaking in on us—if then they turn their backs on it, washing their hands of the whole thing, well, they can't start over as if nothing happened.*

Celebrate Recovery Step 1 Realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable. (Step 1)

Jeremiah 29:11 *11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, & plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

### **4. Allow the Holy Spirit to heal your soul.**

1 John 1:9 (NIV) *9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Ephesians 4:32 (MSG) *32 Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (RSV) *17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; [a] the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.*

### **5. Forgive ourselves: If God forgives us, we must forgive ourselves .**

C. S. Lewis (goodreads.com) *For good judgment and common sense, trust in the Lord completely; don't ever trust in yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.*" (Proverbs 3:5-6, TLB)

### **Wrap-up**

As you take the necessary steps of forgiveness, you will discover that you are letting go of the guilt and shame. You'll be able to say, "I'm not perfect, but God and I are working on me. I still fall down, but with my Savior's help, I can get up, brush myself off, and try again.

We can say, "I forgive myself because God has already forgiven me, and with His help, I can forgive others."

When you forgive yourself, you don't change the past, but you sure do change the future! Celebrate Recovery 2011 Please take good care of yourself and others by wearing a mask, observing social distancing, washing your hands often, and staying home if you are sick.

Be well, do good,  
Nancy O'Rourke RN, MSN, EdD  
Parish Nurse

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*See more upcoming events  
Donate to keep our community thriving*

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*"We can all agree that 2020 brought us many unexpected events, both good and bad. Being a list maker, I made lists for both kinds of changes. I discerned my "good" list was much longer than my "bad" list.*

*We have slowed our pace to evaluate our priorities in life. We have been given a chance to get rid of bad habits and clutter - in both our minds and our homes. We*

*discovered we don't really need things we thought were necessary. All of this has given us freedom. Now we have time to appreciate a sunrise or sunset, try new things, and communicate with friends by Zoom, email, and even snail-mail. We can consider and pray about the future of our church when life isn't so hectic.*

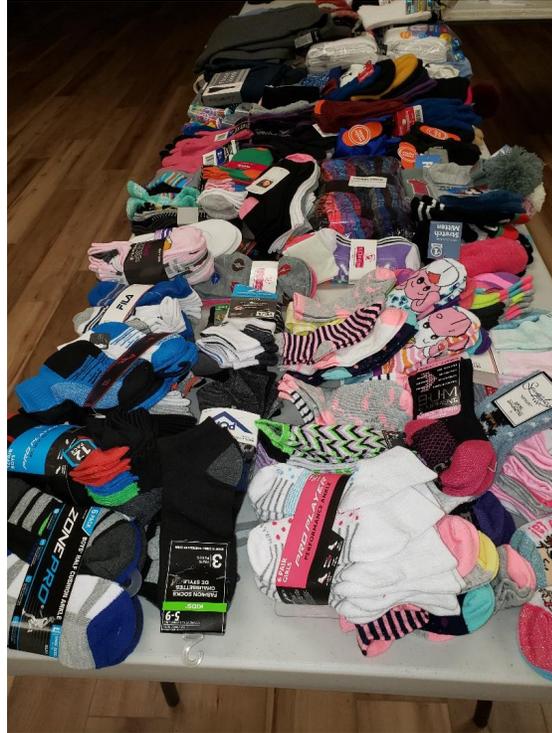
*We can celebrate the resilience of our members old and new who continue to support FUMC. We can also celebrate those who support those in need through our projects. We can appreciate the gift of life, whether old or young. Life is good, God is good, and we have much for which to be thankful."*

Susan & Fred Russell

## **SOCK TREE 2020**

Thank you so much for all your donations to the First UMC Sock Tree 2020. Together with donations from the Fortuna Senior Center we were able to bless DESC with

Men's Socks 108  
Women's Socks 102  
Girl's Socks 98  
Boy's Socks 95  
Adult Gloves 54  
Adult Hats 25  
Ladies Knitted Hat/Scarf 1  
Ladies Knitted Headband 1  
Ladies Bandanas 4  
Ponytail Holders 24  
Girl's Hat & Gloves Set 1  
Boy's Hat & Gloves Set 1  
Kid's Gloves 6  
Ladies Sweaters 2  
Ladies Winter Scarf 1  
Ladies Jackets 2  
Men's Polo Shirts 3  
Men's Undershirts 5  
Men's Underwear 4  
Girl's Teen Jeans 1  
Men's Fleece PJ Bottoms 1  
Ladies Leggings 1  
Ladies Hair Brushes 2  
and \$150 donation from the ACTS Circle for Boys/Girls Underwear !



Thank you so much for your generosity!  
God is good!

*"When I look at our congregation, I am reminded of the story of Gideon (Judges 7) and how God chose 300 men from Gideon's army to route the Midianites. We are small in number, however, I believe that God will use our small number to accomplish His plans for our city. We have to believe(as Gideon believed) and act on it."*

Gregary Ross

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