

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
"A vital church connecting with God and with each other...driven to serve"
Connections for August 2020



From the Rapid Response Team

Thank you to the congregation for the excellent response to the church survey sent out regarding procedures for opening the church when it is considered safe to do so. We received many good comments and we are taking comments into account as we try to figure the best way to move forward. Since there was a lot of support for having some kind of outdoor service until we can worship in the church, the Worship Committee and Rapid Response Team have set a date for the first outdoor service on Saturday, August 15 at 5:30 at Moore Memorial Park, 3050 Northridge Parkway in the Big Bluestem Shelter. In addition, we have booked it for September 12 at the same time. The shelter's capacity is 200 but we still will need to social distance and masks will be required. There are picnic tables available for seating, or people can bring their own chairs. As of this writing the restrooms are available, but the water fountains are turned off. This event is strictly a worship service with a chance to see, at social distance, friends from the church. There will be no refreshments, which includes water. Please watch future weekly bulletins and emails for more information as we plan for this outdoor worship.

The Rapid Response Team is monitoring the COVID-19 statistics for Story County in the hopes of holding worship in the sanctuary this fall. The number of hospitalizations and deaths need to be going down or at least be flattening for at least two weeks for this to happen. To ensure the safety of all who attend, it will take many volunteers to help with the process, both entering the building for worship and cleaning. Watch for further information in the September newsletter. So please stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask in public and practice social distancing. And in the meantime, worship through technology and join us on the livestream.





"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

*Opening paragraph to
A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens*

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." - Romans 8:28

If I did not know any better, I would have thought Charles Dickens was writing about our current world. COVID-19 has turned our world upside, accelerating ever-widening chasms between polarized factions and creating even more chaos. I have learned that "COVID-brain" is a real thing – the social distancing, quarantines, and extra precautions add stress to people's lives, reducing thinking capability by up to 30% (I wondered what was going on in my brain!). Organizations are being tossed back and forth as they attempt to keep up with constantly changing guidelines, while political factions have weaponized fear by demonizing opponents, claiming themselves to be the only "safe" choice. Sadly, this season will not just "blow over," but will be with us for a long time to come. Lord, have mercy!

At the same time, we have an incredible opportunity to explore and learn how to be "church" in these fluid times (and beyond) as we offer the timeless gospel to a sea-sick and weary world. The possibilities for reaching and serving people for Christ through technology are ever-expanding. Did you know that our own Nicole Smith developed a virtual VBS curriculum that has now been widely shared with other churches across the nation? I am very proud of the staff and members of FUMC – we continue to learn and move forward, even in the midst of the storm!

In order to continue to navigate this COVID season well, the staff and worship leaders focused on a simple strategy of "Connect & Engage" as we began to shift to on-line only worship. It has been very effective, and I propose that we expand that strategy to the whole church, along with two "next steps:"

1. **Connect and Engage:** At the very heart of "church" is relationship with God and others. Everything we do must preserve and build healthy relationships in and to our faith community, and beyond to those who are not yet here. When we began adjusting our on-line worship, we looked for ways to help people connect, and then engage (not just watch). More connecting was done by other groups: Our Member-Care Committee coordinates calling to check in with those who are most likely to be shut-in. Small groups are checking-in with their members. A new check-in called "Connections" was started on ZOOM for those who wanted more

group interaction than a phone call can offer. “Watching over one another in love” was one of the hallmarks of early Methodism – we need to do this now more than ever! Please pray for the staff and leaders who will be adjusting and designing programming to move to an on-line format for the fall, adding in-person programs as it becomes safe to do so. Our priority will be to set up systems and programs that help keep us connected and engaged with God and each other, whether we are in-person or physically distanced. Watch for more information in the coming weeks!

2. *Align All Ministries with Our Mission:* Shifting the church ministries to be flexible in uncertain times takes a lot of energy, people-power, and resources. COVID has also caused a dip in financial support, which makes it even more challenging. We want to be sure that everything we do aligns with our mission “**to make disciples of Jesus who serve beyond the walls**” so that our ministry will be as effective as possible, making the best use of the resources we have. This means that some things we have done in the past may not be done in the future, unless they can be aligned with our mission.
3. *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate:* Our communication systems weren’t stellar before COVID, and are now even more stressed. We were in the process of shifting from staff/clergy-driven ministry to staff/clergy partnerships with the congregation when COVID hit. Updating contact information for our congregation became very urgent, as did increasing email communications. Deb Benefield spent many hours doing just that (Thanks Deb!!) The church has purchased “Zoom Rooms” to host on-line meetings and small groups, which helps our work together move forward. However, most communication happens non-verbally, by watching body language and discerning a certain “feel” in the room that ZOOM can’t duplicate. Part of our challenge will be to create communication processes that will clarify expectations, negotiate balanced compromises, are easy to navigate, and will help us effectively connect and engage both with congregational members and those who are not yet a part of our church family.

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times! Be sure to treat each other gently (including yourself!). Use that big, wide “umbrella of grace” as we continue to work together for the sake of Christ. At the same time, please bathe all of what we are doing in prayer. God is bigger than COVID, fear-mongering, ugly politics, and factions. In fact, Romans 8:28 reminds us that “**ALL** things work together for good for those who love God” – even in the middle of a COVID storm. We believe, O Lord; help our unbelief!

Yours for the Journey,
Pastor Kerrin

CHILDREN, FAMILY & INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRIES NICOLE SMITH - COORDINATOR

Confirmation Corner

Confirmation for 2020-2021 will begin online using Zoom. Dates and times for the classes are yet to be determined but will be sent out to the families, students, and mentors soon. There will be an Introduction and Covenant Session via Zoom in late August with the date and time to be sent out directly to those involved. If you have an eighth grader or older for the 2020-2021 school year who is interested in the Confirmation classes, please contact Nicole (nicole@fumcames.org) or Pastor Nikki (nikki@fumcames.org)

All Age Level Ministries

Teacher Training and Safe Sanctuary

There are two dates offered for Safe Sanctuary and Teacher Training prior to the start of this school year. Those dates and times are Sunday, August 16 and Wednesday, August 19. Both dates will have a two-hour time frame. The first hour will be spent covering Safe Sanctuary training for anyone who has NOT completed this training in 2018 or 2019. If the last time you completed Safe Sanctuary was prior to 2018, you will need to attend one of these training sessions if you plan to lead or assist with any of the age-level ministry areas (adult ministries included). The second hour will cover a brief overview of the most important policies and procedures of Safe Sanctuary and any basics for teachers and then be broken down into age-specific ministries. The meetings will take place via Zoom. The age-specific ministries will take place in breakout rooms within the Zoom meeting. Times are yet to be determined for these trainings so pay attention to the weekly bulletins, emails from the office, and emails from the ministry teams.

Intergenerational Ministry

Special Story and/or Song Times for Children and Families

We would LOVE to have you help create special story and/or song times for children and families! We have had so much fun with this over the summer so far and want it to continue. If you would like to make a video sharing a special song for children or reading a story for them, please let Nicole know. You can meet up with Nicole on Zoom to make your recording or you can make your own recording too. OR, Nicole can meet you for an outdoor recording session. If you make your own video or are interested in this opportunity to share something fun with the children and families, please contact Nicole at nicole@fumcames.org

**CHILDREN, FAMILY & INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRIES
NICOLE SMITH - COORDINATOR**

Intergenerational Pen Pals

Back in May we had some children write letters to congregation members and a pen pal relationship started. If you would like to be a part of this Intergenerational Pen Pal activity, please contact Nicole at nicole@fumcames.org or call the office and give Deb your name and address. We will make sure you get a letter from one of the children or youth of the church!

Rainbow Garden is Growing!

The Rainbow Garden is growing and we need your help to take care of it. We are at a point now where watering and harvesting are the main things that need to be done. If veggies need to be harvested, they can be picked and delivered to the Food at First free market. All information can be found at the sign up at: <https://tinyurl.com/RainbowGarden2020> Please remember - one family/household unit sign up per date so we can continue to observe social distancing guidelines. If you have questions, please contact Nicole at nicole@fumcames.org or 515-450-2258. Thank you!

Wonderful Wednesday Women

It's been so long since we've met! But we WILL meet again soon. Nicole will be contacting anyone who has been a part of Wonderful Wednesday Women in the past year to discuss possible meeting options and how they could work for you. If you are interested in being a part of the Wonderful Wednesday Women group, please contact Nicole at nicole@fumcames.org or 515-450-2258.



Like a lot of events this year, the CROP Walk will be going virtual. There will be no event at Brookside Park on October 11, but we're hoping you'll take a walk and remember the people who walk long distances to access healthy food and clean water. You can donate online to the FUMC

Team at - <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/amesia/>

Although this year's event will be different, the mission has not changed. We're still working to end hunger in Story County and around the world. Questions? Call/text Ellen Johnsen at 515-708-1472. If you take your own walk, send a picture!

From the Youth Corner:

Our Summer Youth Zoom sessions have now come to an end. Many thanks to all that either taught OR participated OR ensured that your kiddos participated. Whatever your role-we appreciate you!

We will use August to get prepared for our 2020/2021 year. We have a couple of youth leader trainings planned for this month, along with plans to decide on curriculum, etc. Even though we have a lot of unknowns for what the future holds (thanks to COVID), we have been blessed with new opportunities as we become more and more comfortable and adapted to working in a more virtual environment.

Specifically there will be several opportunities for Youth Leader and Safe Sanctuary Training. Here are the dates:

August 8th, via Zoom, Youth Leader Training provided by Simpson Youth Academy (SYA). This training does require that you sign up for it. Please contact Kim at kim@fumcames.org to get connected with SYA to sign up.

August 16, via Zoom (Time TBA), there will be safe sanctuary training followed by Youth Leader Training.

August 19, via Zoom (Time TBA), the same safe sanctuary training will be offered, again followed by Youth Leader Training.

Many thanks for all the support you give our youth! As always if you have any questions related to youth activities (5th-12th), please let me know at kim@fumcames.org.

The Margaret Smalling Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship was established in 1998 with memorial contributions after Margaret's passing. We now are able to give three \$500 grants with the money available. When my mother, Helen Smalling, passed away in 2010, we added her memorial money to the fund.

In order to qualify for the scholarship you need to be a member of First United Methodist church, be a full time student (12 hours or more), and have completed one year in college.

Applications may be picked up in the entry way at the church during office hours. If you are not awarded a scholarship, your application will be carried over for future consideration. **The deadline to turn in your scholarship application is August 15, 2020.**

Jack Smalling



WORSHIP FRAME FOR AUGUST Nehemiah: From Shambles to Renewal

August 1st: "Lament, Discernment, & Call: The Foundation for Reform"

August 9th: "The Night Ride: "Launching Reform"

August 15/16th: "Sabotage and the Status Quo: Fear, Intimidation, & Attack" (Outdoor

service at Moore Park on Aug 15th, weather permitting)

August 23rd: "Renewal: A Return to Covenant Living"

August 30th: "The Honeymoon's Over: "Reform Again...and Again..."

September 6th (Labor Day Weekend) (Tentatively Confirmation Sunday)

Holiday Fair News

It won't come as a surprise to anyone that we will not be able to safely have Holiday Fair 2020 in October. Too many things are uncertain to allow planning for the Fair as we know it. UMW Leadership has met to discuss some options and will continue to do so during the summer. Since our main goal is to raise money for local, national and international missions to support women, children and youth, it is important that we find ways to earn at least some money to continue this support.

We are so thankful for the efforts of Marlene Erickson who baked from her home (and her heart) to raise \$677 in the past few months, and Joan Peterson who picked strawberries from her garden and raised \$362!

We would love to hear if others in the congregation might have creative ideas to raise money, either as our church slowly opens or even if it is months before we can safely open. If you have an idea you think might work, please contact any of the Co-Chairs below and watch the September and October Newsletters for updates.

Carolyn Yorgensen (515-292-5648) or cyorgen38@gmail.com

Joan Peterson (515-451-3011) or iowagardener@aol.com

Donna Banker (515-419-4966)

Margaret Torrie (515-231-9111) or mtorrie@iastate.edu

UMM AUCTION

The United Methodist Men don't know if and when they will have their Fun(D) Auction. There has been some discussion about having online auctions. We would like to have some input from church members as to whether or not they would participate in such an auction. Please contact me at dean.8843@gmail.com.
Dean Sampson

**First United Methodist Church
516 Kellogg Ave
Ames, IA 50010**

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 188
Ames, IA



If you have ever been in Pastor Kerrin's office, you know that she loves books! She's always glad to lend a book to share that love. With all of the craziness that we have had going on, have you borrowed a book from Pastor Kerrin's library and perhaps forgotten to return it? She's noticed she's missing a couple. So, if you've finished reading one of her books, you can return it to the church even though we are still closed. If you haven't finished your book, just send her an email and let her know that you have it. Thanks!