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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Debria Upton
Pastor

June 30, 2020

Greetings and Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Our relaunch of Center's in-person 10:30 am worship service Sunday was definitely different and surprisingly in spite of the restrictions, the majority who attended the service voted that the church should remain open, so if you missed the in-person service, you are invited to join us this coming Sunday. The service was broadcast via Facebook live as well as Zoom, so there are several ways to join if you choose not to attend in person. Since we do not have a sound or tech person, once I start those platforms, it is difficult for me to monitor them, and so the up close and personal connection of the 8:30 am worship service is not there. As I continue to learn and adapt to the Zoom platform or someone volunteers to step in, perhaps I will be able to make it happen in the 10:30 am service. It is odd not having many normal things like an offertory, but as we work through our restraints perhaps we can figure ways to adapt and be safe. I do appreciate the kindness and grace of all of those who were present either virtually or in-person Sunday as we work through the kinks. Please know your pastor is trying to make our return to an in-person service as worshipful an experience as possible. Know that your pastor is working tirelessly to accommodate as many people as possible while preaching and sharing the Good News, but everyone is not going to be happy. As I shared in the sermon Sunday, please remember to love through hospitality instead of hostility. If you are not happy, then sharing your unhappiness with everyone around will certainly ensure that other people will not even attempt to join us for worship. COVID is an opportunity to show the love of Christ in spite of a bad situation. Like the old saying, perhaps we can take the lemons we don't like, add some sugar and water to make lemonade which will attract more folks.

If you are coming in-person, the church opens at 10 am to begin our entry procedure following the **COVID** guidelines which require 50 people or less in each room wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. Temperatures will be taken at the door and if the temperature requires an oximeter's reading, then that will be taken. Singing will not be allowed unless you wear a personal face shield, but humming behind your mask is ok. I know some people wanted to sing, so I would ask you to pick up a personal face shield to wear so you can sing. You can take those home with you and you will notice the tiny particles your singing or speaking leave on your face shield. I made them so everyone who wishes to sing can do so using the face shield. The Plexiglas partition separating me from the congregation as I sing and preach replaces the personal face shield I wore during the drive-in services. Even though the hymnals and bibles have been put away, you are encouraged to bring your own. Bulletins with everything you will need will be placed in the seats where you are permitted to sit. The PowerPoint slides will be used. We aren't able to have coffee fellowship, but you are welcome to bring your own coffee or beverage for yourself. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated as we seek to reopen with everyone's safety in mind. Please, if you are vulnerable or feel ill on Sunday, as much as we would love to see you, please remain at home and join us for the Zoom worship. It is my prayer that all of you do what you feel is necessary in maintaining your health and protecting yourself.

Remember that access to any worship is posted on our www.umcofcenter.com website, so feel free to go back and watch what you may have missed and forward it to your friends. The Zoom worship services are also posted on www.slvumc.org website as well. These are also posted on our website and the www.slvumc.org website. I am still doing the Story behind the Songs on Facebook Live every Wednesday at 1 pm. During this common time between Pentecost and Advent, I'm posting daily Morning (7:30 am) and Evening (6:30 pm) Prayers on our Facebook page. These are meant to develop our acts of piety through prayer, reading scripture, and daily devotions. The Disciple bible study on *Under the Tree of Life – The Writings – John- Revelation* this Wednesday, has begun and will continue every Wednesday evening at 6:30 pm using our Zoom platform. Remember the Zoom platform can be accessed by a telephone; you don't have to have internet or a computer to participate; you just dial the number. When participating in any of the virtual services or bible studies, we will be using our Zoom platform which allows us to participate via phone or computer. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8678651613?pwd=VlVDejlBRVBJT0tYNXVtUG42QTFNdz09> is the link and if you click on it or copy and paste the address in the browser, it should take you to our Zoom platform. If you have the Zoom

app, you can go to the app on your phone or your computer and type in Meeting ID: 867 865 1613 and enter the password: 2618860. If you wish to use your phone (cell or landline) without internet call +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston) or +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose). Enter the Meeting ID: 867 865 1613 and then the Password: 2618860. You can call me at (504)261-8860 if you need assistance.

Our fitness center is open, but we are asking that you call the church office or text me when you are coming, so we can make sure you can safely use it. We have a new treadmill and everything in the fitness center has been cleaned thoroughly and is ready for use. Nancy has contacted me and we are able to resume Yoga in July 17th at 9:30 am. She is anxious to see everyone and for us to resume our Yoga practice.

Thank you, thank you so much for your continued generosity. It has been a blessing to witness your faithfulness. We deeply appreciate all who have graciously supported us with their donations. Offerings can be left on the pew when you leave and someone will pick them up and Sue will deposit them later. Online donations can be made at www.umcofcenter.com or you can text the amount you wish to give to (719)628-1830 which will walk you through the secure donation. There is a fee that is charged the church when payments are made online and by text. Both the online and text options are secure and the funds are immediately processed into Center UMC's bank account. Donations still can be mailed to P. O. Box 626, Center, 81125.

We are approaching our thirty day commitment of prayer at 8 a.m. and p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, to pray for all persons of color who suffer at the hands of injustice and oppression, pray for our church as we take a stand against racism and injustice in a concert of prayer heard around the world. This UMC commitment to pray for our nation, our world, and our denomination for God's grace, mercy, wisdom, and direction as we move forward demonstrates our willingness to turn to God for guidance. I appreciate those of you who have joined me in this commitment and after July 6th, it is my prayer that we continue our time of prayer on our own.

Since COVID canceled our Cooking with Your Neighbor group activities, we have sought to Cook for Our Neighbors instead. These Friday evening meals have tried to offer a cooked meal and personal contact especially for those alone. As we open back up, it is still unsafe to have pot luck meals as a gathering; however, there is still a need and we would love your help. I would like to thank Betty Felmlee for volunteering to join our Cooking for Our Neighbors group. If you would like to help, please contact Charleen or the pastor for ways you can help. If you have been a recipient of these Friday or Saturday meals and no longer wish to have them delivered, please let Charleen or the pastor know. If you know of someone who has not been receiving these meals and should be receiving these meals, please let Charleen or the pastor know. This is one way to share the love of Christ in a unique way.

Another way we will be sharing the love of Christ to our community is with resuming our Movie Night. In an effort to have fun and maintain safety, it will be held outside where people can stay in their cars and watch the movie or they may bring their lawn chairs to watch the newly released *Scooby-Doo*. This is meant to bring a little joy as an outreach to the children in our community, as well as chance for some of you all to get out of the house for a night out at the drive in movies. You are invited to bring your own concessions. As part of our missions, we are preparing individual bags for the children who attend the evening. We need your help. If you are willing to help stuff the bags, please show up with your mask next Tuesday, June 30th evening at 6:30 pm in Drummond Hall. Remember many hands make light the work.

Also to help out with our UMW's annual Health Kit project, throughout this month and July we are collecting washcloths, combs or small brushes, bath soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, Band-Aids, fingernail clippers, and deodorant. There is a box at the church for donations which can be left during the week or on Sunday.

There are many things we can do, especially during these difficult times. Please share your ideas and let's see how we can make them a reality.

Our AA group has resumed virtually on Saturdays at 10 am. If you are interested in that, please contact Pastor Debbie via text (504)261-8860. Please feel free to reach out to me to ask how to share in this unique time, especially with prayer requests and concerns. I am available via phone or text at 504-261-8860. You can always reach me via email dupton@iliff.edu or message me via our Center United Methodist Church Facebook page. Stay safe and remember we are all essential people in the family of God.

Peace and grace for the journey,

Rev. Debra Upton