



# ***Richmond First United Methodist Church***

401 West Main Street, Richmond KY

(859)623-3580

[www.richmondfumc.org](http://www.richmondfumc.org)

*...growing disciples who make a difference*

November 19, 2020

Dear Church Family,

I think we can all agree that 2020 has been a year like no other!

As we move into the Advent Season, we recognize that things have been out of joint for the bulk of the year. We are doing practically nothing the same way we were doing it this time last year, and looks like this whirlwind of change will be with us for months to come.

As of this writing, it's not altogether certain that we will be able to come together in our church building for worship at any point through the entirety of the Advent Season. With this possibility in mind, we've made an effort to get this packet into the hands of every member of our church family. We also thought this would be a good time to try to deliver some updated information to the congregation, especially to those who have not been keeping up with us electronically.

While a lot of our in person ministries have been placed on hold this year, I want you to know that we have still been very active. Worship and Sunday School have shifted to online spaces and continued on something very close to their original schedules. If you've been out of touch with those ministries, there is a sheet included in this packet to help get you reconnected. If you have any questions about this, please give us a call at the church office. **WE WANT TO STAY CONNECTED WITH YOU.**

The staff has been constantly shifting their footing. Almost none of us are doing exactly the same job we had at this time last year, but we have all been very busy keeping things moving along. If you missed the announcement, our Youth Director, Jonathan Kleppinger, stepped down during the summer months to invest himself in home schooling his children. We are happy to report that we were able to fill his position by hiring Jamelle Jones, who was a volunteer with our youth program during his college years and has been serving as a youth pastor in Texas for the last five years.

As fall rolled around, we realized that many of our usual fall activities needed to take a new shape. With so many uncertainties, we felt like changing key leadership positions was a questionable move. We also acknowledged that any work we could do on a 2021 budget would be guess-work in the extreme. About the only thing we DO know is that what we have been doing together this year has been working. I'm in regular contact with a number of my fellow pastors, and we have weathered the COVID crisis much more smoothly than almost any other church I can name.

We also know that each of us faces uncertainty on the home front. With this in mind, we opted not to do our traditional Stewardship campaign in 2020. We hope that each of you is able to continue to support the church with your generosity as you have been doing. However, if your life circumstances have changed, and you need to change your giving habits, just give us a call in the church office and let us know.

We have continued our community ministries throughout this time of crisis. We continue to partner with other churches in the community to provide daily lunches for those in our community who need them. In addition, we supply two evening meals a week. These used to be sit down dinners, which, of course, we cannot do under the current COVID restrictions. However, we have been delivering meals to members of our community who think of Richmond First United Methodist Church as their church home. We have also transformed our food closet (a couple of cabinets in Jamie's office) into a ministry that delivers a cart of groceries from God's Outreach a couple of times a month to households that demonstrate need.

As cold weather rolls in, we know there are many in our community who do not have access to shelter. The team that put together our *Room In the Inn* program last winter has reimagined it in light of COVID, partnering with the city of Richmond and a local hotel to make sure that people have access to shelter on dangerously cold nights

Our youth ministry and children's ministry programs are also being reimagined to create disciples within an online context.

Many of you may be wondering if our church can possibly survive the impact of the COVID 19 crisis. My answer is that we shouldn't be aiming to survive. We should be aiming to grow and flourish. I believe we have learned to do some things in response to this crisis that are BETTER than some of the things we were doing before. As the community and church reemerge on the other side of COVID, I anticipate that we will not emerge crippled, but strengthened.

Now, about the packet...

You have, in addition to this letter, a devotional guide that we hope you will use to join our church family as we celebrate Advent together this year. The devotional guide is accompanied by an Advent Wreath, which is a gift to you from your church family. We will continue to have our worship services... in person if possible, but ALWAYS online... each Sunday. Next Sunday (November 29) we will celebrate the Hanging of the Green together in a special online service.

At 6:00 PM on December 24, we will have a very special online candle-light service to light the Christ Candle from our Advent Wreath together. We will then invite each member of our church family to carry their Christ Candle out into the community. If you are able to park somewhere along Main Street or Lancaster Avenue near the church that evening and step out onto the sidewalks of Main or Lancaster, that would be fantastic. If not, just step into your yard and join as we sing the good news of Christmas to our community.

Finally, at 11:30 PM on Christmas Eve, you are invited to join us for an online service of Holy Communion as we usher in Christmas morning together.

We pray that these gifts and offerings will make this Christmas one to remember... not in terms of what we could NOT do... but in terms of the light we were allowed to shine together during a time of darkness.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Bruce Nettleton