

*Dear congregation of First United Methodist Church, greetings in the name of
Jesus Christ our Lord and from your pastor.*

We are in the midst of an uncertain season of our lives. The fear and unknowns surrounding COVID-19 have paralyzed everyone and answers to our questions hang in the air unseen and unheard.

I have never had to minister in an atmosphere quite like this and I suppose the closest I have come would have been 9/11 and the days, weeks, and months following that event.

Here in this season, our church is seeking creative ways to minister to our community unable to utilize the common means and tools we have always used.

How do we worship, perform Christ honoring ministry that helps people, have Bible studies, conduct meetings and maintain the unity of the Body of Christ?

Your pastors are working to create new paths for these important elements of our faith to be realized.

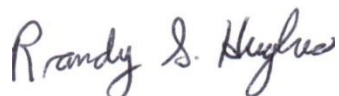
As we continue to live and grow in our understanding of John Wesley's focus of our discipleship, we can find new ways to express these tenets of our Christian walk.

1. Prayer – Always the staple and backbone of any church and one that we can exercise in a group or in the isolation of a room. **Consider calling folks in the congregation to check in on them and pray with them.**
2. Presence – the act of being together as the Body of Christ has taken on new hurdles for us to overcome. The COVID-19 disallows our understanding of church in church on a Sunday morning. Here is where technology can serve us. **Consider finding ways to attach to online videos of worship and or Facebook Live offerings. There are plans to livestream Bible studies in the near future using platforms like ZOOM and live.google.com**

3. Giving – Another area of struggle for us in these trying times is the ability we have to offer our tithes and offerings to our God through the life of worship in the church. If the ministry and mission of the church are to move forward into a community that is wracked with fear and uncertainty, the church needs to remain faithful to our responsibility to support the local church. **I humbly ask you to consider mail in and/or drop off you gifts at the office so as to support what God is doing through our church.**
4. Service – This aspect of our church is once again taking on a creative approach. We can't serve free banquets nor hand out supplies on the street corner. We are sequestered in our homes and live day to day in isolation. **Consider leading collection drives of N95 masks to be delivered to Lewistown hospital. Consider, for those able, donating blood. The opportunities are numerous.**
5. Witness – How we obey government regulations, our Bishop Park's directives, and our personal convictions as we continue to promote Christ in the world all speaks to non-believers of our allegiance to a higher Kingdom. **Consider obedience to the authorities that God has placed into power as a means of witness in these times of closure. Phone calls to encourage one another strengthen our church and community.**

I ask you upon reading this letter to share it freely with those who may not have access to it. Phone calls to others and reading the contents found here can be helpful in holding the Body together during these tenuous times.

Thanks for your attention to this missive and as always I love you.



Randy S. Hughes, Pastor