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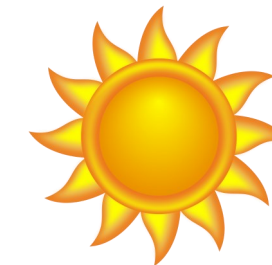
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The Methodist Messenger

First United Methodist Church
Edinburg, Texas

June 2022



*"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."
Matthew 6:34*

Every time I read this scripture I wonder how the Creator of the Universe who knows all things, brings all things into being, who knows me inside and out, thinks this is possible? Don't worry? Don't worry. Frankly, it's easier for me to love my worst enemy than to not worry. Worrying is my cardio. It comes from a lifetime of people pleasing and approval seeking. Now, however, my worry is demonstrated in over-functioning and carrying the weight of responsibilities that are not mine to carry, or at least, not mine alone.

Lately, I keep getting asked the question, "So, what is your attendance like on Sundays? Are people coming back? Is your church going to make it?" ...or variations thereof. I'm asked by colleagues, conference staff, members, random people who find out I'm a pastor and are curious about the "state of the church in America" or some such thing. Then the next set of questions are generally along the lines of, "What are you doing to get people back?", like I should offer door prizes or some sort of incentive to come worship God. "How are you relaunching your ministries?" "What are you doing to 'fix' attendance, giving, lack of (fill in the blank)." "What are you going to do if you can't (increase attendance, increase giving, relaunch programs successfully)?" To be fair, I ask myself these questions on a weekly (sometimes daily) basis.

But here's the thing. They are not "my" questions to answer. They are "OUR" questions to answer. And when I say "OUR", I don't just mean you and me, I mean, GOD, you, and me. WE are the church. And among us, we have all the gifts, graces, resources, finances, and volunteers that we need. I will say this though. I don't necessarily think the answers will produce the "quick fix" we'd all like. We are already starting to take more holy risk with re-imagining how we reach out to the community as the "church" – our partnership with the HUB, the walking trail, Market Day, Evening Market, the return and re-imagining of potlucks (more info in the newsletter). I believe that these things are good steps in the right direction. Not because they are more programs, but because they are creating new opportunities for relationship and hopefully, eventually, discipleship.

That's where I'm doubling down. That's what lifts all the burden of worry about "the state of the church". Discipleship. My hope is that we will find the right cause and effect relationship of growth (not attendance per se) by pressing more deeply into Jesus and our individual and communal discipleship. The more deeply we press into being transformed into the likeness of Christ, the more we accurately live out Christ's heart in the world, the more we dig into loving our enemies, neighbors, and strangers, then we create more space and opportunity for others to experience the God who loves them. Sure, there are "programs", but these programs, events, studies, or whatever else are about creating slow, real, authentic relationships. They are but a means to establish long-term investment in each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm going to try not to worry about all the questions and expectations. Instead, I'm going to remember that Jesus changed the course of existence starting with 12 faithful disciples. We're so many more than just twelve. Are we ready to be more in our discipleship?

**In Jubilee,
Pastor Michelle**



SUMMER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES – SUMMER 2022 SIGN-UPS GO LIVE APRIL 18TH!

There are numerous ways to connect and get involved with Project Transformation Rio Texas and this summer their program is requiring hundreds of volunteers to operate! To learn more about the volunteer opportunities and how to get started volunteering visit PTRioTexas.org



Summer Food Pantry Plans

Our May food pantry distribution was a success even with our drippy chicken. We had lots of help filling our grocery bags on Thursday, May 19. Thank you to all those who were there to help. We also heard from our scout troop helpers and they will be at the church to help on May 21, Saturday. Then they are going on summer break for June, July and August.

This is our alert that non-scout help will be needed for our summer food pantry distributions on Saturdays; June 18, July 16, and August 20. I would like to answer a question posed to me about the amount of money spent on our 100 bags of groceries every month and here is what I found out from my receipts and the receipts of others. (some who donate items to the food pantry)

Our normal distribution to one person/family consists of :

- 1-10 pound bag of chicken leg quarters @ \$4.89.
- 1- \$5. fresh produce bag (whatever is available at Buster Lind Produce).
- 1 can of tomato sauce @ \$0.39.
- 1 box of fideo @ \$0.46.
- 1 package of 12 corn tortillas @ \$1.00.
- 1 bag of rice (2 lbs) @ \$1.68.
- 1 bag of pinto beans (2 lbs) @ \$1.84.
- 1 container of oatmeal @ \$1.76.
- 1 can of vegetables @ \$0.84, (or canned fruit @ \$1.03) and
- 1 can of chicken @ \$3.00.

This brings the total of one family/person's allocation of groceries to \$20.86 (if there is no canned fruit included.) If canned fruit replaces the one can of vegetables the grocery total is \$21.05. When this amount is multiplied by 100 I see that we spend approximately \$2,086- \$2,105. every month for our food pantry distribution (the grant the food pantry received was completely spent by November, 2021). If we have extra food donations beyond the ones listed, we include those only when we have 100 similar items, so every bag will receive about the same type/amount of food. The money amounts listed above do not include all the time and effort of many volunteers that make this distribution happen. Again I want to remind you that the food pantry people believe that our church is **blest to be a blessing**...in this neighborhood. Please keep the food pantry in your prayers and may the Lord let our miracle of providing food to our community continue... Amen. My thanks to you all.

Annual Conference Ordination Service

Our music ministry has been asked to provide the music/ worship for the Annual Conference Ordination Service this year. Annual Conference is being held in McAllen this year at the McAllen Convention Center. **The service of ordination is Friday evening at 8pm in the Ballroom.** Please come to support our incredible music ministry!

Market Day

We are super excited to announce that during the months of June, July, and August we will be having our Summer Night Market! With our first Night Market on Saturday, June 4th, from **5 pm-9 pm**. We will have a Market filled with live music, food, and many vendors! We hope you all will join us and be a part of this fun-filled event!



Women's Retreat: Walk to Emmaus in November.

I have been asked to be the Spiritual Director for the women's Walk to Emmaus retreat Nov. 3 – 7th. If you've never been on this retreat, it can be a powerful time of connecting to God and other women as we press more deeply into our discipleship. It is a time for spiritual and emotional healing. A time to discern how we can offer our gifts and graces to God. A time to celebrate all we have been created to be in Christ Jesus. Start praying about signing up for this weekend. If you've already been, start praying about whether or not you might be willing to serve on team, make agape, and/or help provide food for the retreat. You are a beloved daughter of God. I hope you'll join me. (I promise we'll have fun!)

It's a Potluck, But Not Like You Remember!!

We are excited to announce the return of potlucks with a fresh flavor! On **5th FRIDAYS** we'll be hosting Fifth Friday Food Truck Potluck! On those Friday evenings, we'll invite out a food truck from whom we'll buy our "main dish" (everyone purchases their own) and we'll bring our best potluck sides, drinks, and desserts! We'll have outdoor seating, live music, we'll be inviting our neighbors and having a great time. Our first one will be July 29th! Many of our teacher go back to work that first week in August and our students by the 15th of August. So, our July 29th Food Truck Potluck will celebrate teachers and students in a Back to School Bash.

The Return of PUMPKIN PATCH!!!

Even before COVID, EFUMC was struggling to find enough volunteers to sustain a successful Pumpkin Patch. The event and its delicious bread at EFUMC have long been a community tradition that we are ready to re-imagine to best serve the church and the community. The Ad Board has voted to do a "short patch." We'll open the patch for the last 2 weeks of October (15th – 31st roughly). We'll only be ordering a half-truck of pumpkins, but will still need EVERYONE'S HELP to make this a fun, successful event. We are looking for a volunteer to oversee/coordinate the different aspects of the patch and different individuals to head up teams for each piece of the pumpkin patch pie.

We need people who will:

- ⇒ Help prep the space for the pumpkin set up (we may move to a different space on the property)
- ⇒ Help decorate and create "picture taking" spaces
- ⇒ Help set up additional lighting
- ⇒ HELP UNLOAD PUMPKINS
- ⇒ Help lead stories or crafts on the 2 Saturdays of the patch
- ⇒ Help with games and activities on the 2 Saturdays of the patch
- ⇒ Help WORK THE PATCH!!



Put it on your calendar and start dreaming of fall when you feel the summer heat!

VBS VOLUNTEERS

We are in the process of deciding whether or not to do VBS/Children's Ministry this summer. Our first big question is, will we have enough volunteers? We are considering 2 options. The first is a "traditional style" VBS - 4 days the first week of August for 2 - 3 hours each day. OR... we offer a weekly 1 hour "fun in the sun" on Saturday mornings starting mid-June to the first week of August. It would be a bible story, games, maybe a craft, some time to play on the playground, and perhaps a snack. We would need 2-3 volunteers each week to try our summer fun (depending on how many children participate). If you would be willing to help with VBS or Fun in the Sunday- please respond to this email. Once we determine if we have the volunteer support, we'll begin planning!

Blessings,
Pastor Michelle and Susan Wiesehan.

Courageous Congregations Collaborative (C3)

Several of our leadership have been participating in a church vitality cohort. This is an initiative of TMF (Texas Methodist Foundation) leadership development. We have been working through a metaphor of "strengthening the muscles" a church needs for vitality, resilience, and improved health. These muscles include: 1. Grieving Well, 2. Discerning Purpose, 3. Walking Alongside 4. Distribution of Power, and 5. Expanding Imagination. This cohort group will be breaking for the summer and resuming in the fall. However, during the in-between, we, as a church, need to start having prayer and conversations about who we are and who God is calling us to be. It isn't about just "getting more people to church" but instead, connecting more people to the life-saving, transforming love of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest gifts we have to demonstrate that God is real and present is by being God's "good" in the world. Over the next few months, we'll start offering invitations to have casual conversations about what God might be inviting us into. Let's bless and let go of the things that have served their purpose but no longer bear fruit. Let's begin to re-imagine what might be meaningful, purposeful ministry for our community. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to Marty Engelbrecht, Gary Henrichson, Chris Rierison, Judy McClelland, Chris Cowan, or myself (Pastor Michelle).

THE HUB

Thanks to everyone who helped make our 2nd annual Tomato Fest a great success! We'll continue to have Saturday morning farm stands from **9-11 am for the month of June.** After that, the market will take a break for the summer heat and start up again when things cool down in the fall. Thanks for all the support!