November 10, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_UMC,

We know that the pandemic we are experiencing now is not the first that our church has withstood. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years ago, community members in our area began gathering as a Methodist congregation. During the global pandemic of 1918-1919, our congregation continued ministry with those in need and they had much more limited resources.

While little else is known about how our local congregation experienced this earlier pandemic, historical records describe how some people complained that churches across the United States were closed when schools and billiard halls remained open. Church members were called “churchless” while they honored the Sabbath day at home. Instead of leading worship in sanctuaries, pastors printed their sermons in newspapers and focused on offering pastoral care to the sick and grieving. Church treasurers reminded people to send their offerings in by mail so ministry from a safe distance could continue. While some things have not changed, technological advances have likely made our experience easier.

Modern technology today has enhanced our ability to stay connected and to encourage each other to grow in faith, making a positive impact on the world as followers of Jesus Christ during this pandemic. Even though we long to sing together, share meals and greet one another with handshakes, hugs and laughter, I give thanks to God for your patience until we can meet again.

I am confident that our congregation will not only survive this pandemic like it did a hundred years ago, but I anticipate that we will continue to find ways to thrive even more. We have numerous committed, hard-working volunteer leaders and staff organizing our worship services, small groups and missions. Thank you sincerely for continuing to faithfully support the ministries of our church with your time, talents and treasures.

Your generosity helps us coordinate our efforts for discipleship through learning, relationship-building and caring for those who are suffering. Thank you sincerely for continuing to faithfully support the ministries of our church with your time, your talents and your treasures.

Would you please prayerfully consider how God is calling you into deeper discipleship in 2021 with the enclosed goal card? Share with us how God is stirring in your life and how you desire to grow in faith, even in the midst of the challenges we are facing. This will help us plan our ministries strategically and include you in the ways you specify. I look forward to growing in faith with you this upcoming year.

 With love and prayers as Thanksgiving approaches,

 Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_