

Life at Cokesbury

November 5, 2020

A Note from Our Pastor

This week has been tiring for our nation and our community. As a nation, the election has reminded us that we don't all see eye-to-eye. As a community, those divisions have shown up in neighborhoods and friendships and families. At the church, however, on Election Day we served coffee and hotdogs offering goodness and happiness to the process. It was fun, even though the majority of our precinct had early voted, to see people and offer them "democracy and a hot cup of coffee" or "democracy and lunch." For all of the contention that people might have been feeling around Election Day, Cokesbury UMC offered a kind of spiritual sacrament by our presence and smiles.

I guess this week I've reflected on what we give to the deeply conflicted divisions we find around us. In the midst of those political arguments, we sometimes get clear on what we believe (a good thing), we are sometimes met with conflict (could either be good or bad), and we sometimes find our relationships get damaged (not a good thing). I keep coming back to how God works through our human relationships—but sometimes it's so hard to remain curious and caring about others. The other challenge is to remember that no matter who wins or loses, God remains God and we remain God's children.

I guess the trick lies in the balance: knowing that God is still God, but not dismissing the importance of public policy to real human lives. I'll be the last person to tell you that politics doesn't matter because policies have effects on the economy, health care, the environment, civil rights, and even our democracy itself. But it's important to be careful about the esteem with which we hold our own views. We might be right, but we might also not know everything. Humility is possibly the most important spiritual posture for Christians to interact with the anger and frustration in the political culture. We honor the dignity of human beings rather than making an idol of a political ideology.

For the church, the most important posture has to be a kind of humble confidence. We remain humble because we know that we don't know everything. In fact, sometimes we have had to confess for our arrogance. However, sometimes we've had to confess that we were called to stick up for human beings and we haven't. While we remain humble about our beliefs, knowing that God is bigger than we can imagine, we also have to act with the full confidence that God calls us to share grace and love, especially where they are most lacking.

This week, I'm giving thanks that "this is my Father's world," but also that God would "make me a vessel of God's peace." I like when I'm right and I like when I can accomplish things, but the fullest calling on any of us is to be the humble and gracious people who sow love in our midst. That's my prayer for who Cokesbury would be known in our community.

Grace,
Jonathan

Consecration of 2021 Estimate of Giving Cards November 15

On Sunday, November 15, we will pray and consecrate the Estimate of Giving cards mailed back or presented as a part of our morning worship service. In next few days, you will receive an Estimate of Giving card for your prayer and consideration. Because we are not doing a massive "campaign", it falls to all of us to pray about what God might be asking us to contribute to Cokesbury in 2021. If we are all praying this prayer about the ministry that Cokesbury can accomplish this coming year, then we will be able to set an ambitious plan for our mission. Obviously, this collective information will guide the Ministry Board in setting our financial budget for 2021. If possible, do what is necessary to mail the Estimate of Giving card back to the church so that it can arrive by Sunday morning, November 15. At that time, no one will open those envelopes (they will only be opened by our financial secretary). The cards will be placed on the altar as an offering from our hearts to God's work through Cokesbury.

Hot Dog Service Changes

As the weather cools off and we get ready for the holidays, we are pausing our regular Saturday hot dog fun. This is to give our volunteers a bit of a rest, but also to give us a chance to evaluate and decide the best ways to use what we've learned so far. We know that we want to target some neighborhoods where we can take the cart to provide fun meals and Christian love. Stay tuned for what comes next...

Room in the Inn

This winter, Room in the Inn and shelter overflow will be consolidated into 2-3 large sites instead of at local churches, operated by professional, frontline staff. We can still help, primarily through food and in-kind item donations. There will be some limited volunteer opportunities, mentioned below.

Food Donations

Prepare and deliver bagged lunches. Volunteer-prepared bagged lunches currently serve motel and dorm locations and this winter, a third location will be added – the overflow shelter at the Giles Center on Statesville Ave. RITI volunteers are asked to focus on meeting this need.

Be a part of the "Cookie Connection" by delivering a delectable treat for those in the overflow shelter. We're asked to provide 2 cookies in a Ziplock bag for 130 guests. And, please keep the cookies consistent and refrain from using peanuts.

In-Kind Donations

Our neighbors will need quite a lot this winter – whether they have an actual shelter bed, or are staying at the nightly overflow shelter. The following items are what are especially needed for winter sheltering:

New towels and washcloths

New men's hats and gloves

New men's boxer-briefs (M, L, XL, XXL)

New men's socks

Masks (washable or disposable – homemade masks welcome)

Travel-size toiletries separated by like-items (please, no individual bags).

Shampoos

Shower gels

Toothpastes

Toothbrushes

Razors

Small cans of shaving cream

Hand sanitizer

How To Collect:

You can begin collecting now on your own, or send monetary contributions to Cokesbury to purchase these items. The Room in the Inn Innkeeper will be creating and posting an Amazon Wish List for your convenience. You are asked to wear gloves and masks while handling items.

In-Person Volunteering

A handful of volunteers will be needed for opportunities that will include organizing and transporting donations between shelters, and operating a phone hotline that will serve as part of the lottery process for the nightly overflow location. Additional on-site volunteering may be identified as we get into November and early December, depending on COVID trends and service needs. Examples of possible needs, include the distribution hygiene items, food, and monitoring the cell phone lockers.

Additional information will be provided as it is received. Contact Sue Keene with questions. (704) 618-4583 or sue.keene1805@gmail.com

Please Keep These People in Your Prayers

Dan & Kay Dumas, Deanna Long, Diane Bolster, Randy Pitcock, Karen Glazer, Katie Postel