



The Steeple

June 2020



FOOD PANTRY - Update

It was the summer of 2010 when our Missions Committee first conceived of a food pantry in South Hadley, and on January 22, 2011, Neighbors Helping Neighbors opened its (our) doors and has been growing ever since. Today, the food pantry is serving hundreds of families in South Hadley and Granby affected by COVID-19. We all have good reason to be proud and give thanks to God for those who persisted in the effort, despite general denial that a pantry was necessary.

Since April, when the impact of COVID-19 hit, we have been serving more than 150 new families! Our process allows them to remain in their cars and, continuing to be client choice, we read the menu, recording their choices. As we have always done, we put the groceries in their car. It is all no touch. Our families truly appreciate that we are there for them and we often hear, "God bless you," and they truly mean it. Many tell us they don't know how they would be eating if we were not there. It is so rewarding to be able to see the difference we are making in their lives.



It is important that you realize the very important part our church plays in the pantry's success. Beyond being responsible for its existence, you have allowed the pantry to use more and more space, and where COVID-19 has pushed the people out of the church, Neighbors Helping Neighbors is using even more space. Perhaps this falls under 'nature abhors a vacuum'! So while other churches have been sitting unused, ours is still working to be the hands and feet of Jesus, while we feed his sheep. Peter, Heather and Ann have had to navigate around the van, stacks of boxes, and people with hand trucks. One Wednesday afternoon, Peter drove into the parking lot (a difficult feat!) and a volunteer tried have him wait in line and take his turn to order groceries!

So, thank you, South Hadley Methodist Church, for blessing the people living in the towns of Granby and South Hadley. We invite you to come see what you are doing through Neighbors Helping Neighbors, but please wear a mask.

GET YOUR SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION



It is time for any of our students who are going into their second, third, fourth or more year in an accredited institute of higher education to apply for the North Main Street Churches Scholarship. Applications for this scholarship will be accepted until June 30. You can email or call the church office for an application.

PASTOR'S PAGE Coronavirus & Christ

If you're wondering what role God plays in the coronavirus pandemic, you're not alone. Lots of ideas are floating around. I even got a free book in the mail I didn't ask for, and it explains the virus.

Author John Piper (a pastor in Minneapolis) says **God sent the coronavirus**. Why? God's showing us a picture of the horrible punishment sin deserves, awakening us for the second coming, making us realize how valuable Jesus is, giving us opportunities to do good works in the midst of danger, and preparing the church to evangelize the world more effectively. He unpacks each of these; I'm just condensing. But the bottom line is: the pandemic is just one more thing God is doing. **Everything** happens according to God's will.

He's got a lot of Bible verses on his side. Would you like to throw some other verses at him, verses about God being good and generous and loving. They're in your Bible too, right? Don't worry--he's ready for you:

"God's goodness is his disposition to be generous," he writes. However, "His holiness and righteousness govern the bestowal of his goodness." He asserts that "while there are aspects of his character...that incline away from grieving us, nevertheless other aspects of his character dictate the holiness and righteousness of grieving us." God has conflicting desires, apparently. (He's a lot like me!) But his goodness gets overruled by his righteousness. So that's Piper's version of God.

You may wonder: what kind of righteousness is it that sweeps the world with a pandemic that kills half a million people, including little kids? Let's say you have some good desires, but your goodness is overcome by your urge to violently force others to behave the way you order them to. Then what good is your goodness? Piper's God is a third-world dictator. God's supporters try to convince peasants that the generalissimo is benevolent. But the peasants aren't fooled. Are you?

The virus is part of a larger picture for Piper. For instance, he believes God predestined you to heaven or hell. If you're a believer you're going to heaven. But God made you a believer; you had no choice. Your neighbor next door who died without becoming a Christian? Nope. Looks like she's in hell because God predestined her to damnation and didn't give her faith. End of story. Some creep breaks into your house and kills you? God made him do it. Piper doesn't explain that in this new book. It's not that he's not hiding his opinion. He just wanted to keep this book short and targeted to one subject. But his many writings are widely available on the web, and I assure you: his belief that God gave us the virus is just part of his larger belief that God determines everything, including who does evil and who does good, who's saved and who's lost.

Most of you will not find his book persuasive if you read it, and I don't either. But I mention it as just one example of the way many pastors are dealing with the virus. Piper is simply more consistent than most of them. And he's very influential.

Among United Methodists, there's still a remnant of this belief in God's control: many church folks say that God has decided when you'll die, that when the time comes, he'll "take" you. Out of all the "divine sovereignty" teaching from ages past, that's the final bit that persistently clings to most Christian souls. But if you're not willing to consistently see God as responsible for evil, as Piper is, why hang onto **this** scrap of it?

So what's God really doing in the pandemic? Fighting it, just as he fights every form of evil. "God is that factor in the world that introduces freedom, novelty, spontaneity, life, creativity, responsibility, hope, and love," said one of our teachers. See if you can catch God doing some of those things in the midst of all this suffering.

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS



Prayers & sympathy to the family of Richard Blodgett who died on May 7.

Prayer for: Carol Brunelle, Carol Szulc, Eunice Mittler, Harry Thomas, Beth Dietz, Pauline Kiakis, Samantha Snopek, Adele Reynolds, Bev Pead & Family, Doug & Dee Brooksbank, Frank Hudgik, Dave Fanaras, Tom Deren, Tim O'Donnell, Vinnie Deitner, Darlene Dout, Stafford Bent

Prayer request: Barb Granger is to have knee replacement surgery on Thursday. Her husband, Jim Anspach, won't be able to go inside the hospital due to the virus restrictions, so please pray for both.



STEEPLE LIGHTING



The Steeple is lit during the month of June in memory of women from our church who have passed during the last year: Doris Gagnon by the Methodist Women.

If you would like the steeple lit for one month, the fee is \$25.00. Forms are in the back of the sanctuary or call the church office or you can email the office at churchoffice@thesteeplesinthefalls.org. More than one person/family may participate.

Congratulations!

- The family of Laura Chantre are celebration her graduation from 8th grade.
- Congratulations to Heather Labonte on being one of the recipients of the Entrepreneurship awards from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

CASSEROLES

Fourteen casseroles were delivered in May to Kate's Kitchen. Casseroles will be delivered at 9:30 a.m. on June 28. If you need your casserole picked up call Ann 695-1212 or Carol at 575-1491 and make arrangements for your casserole to be picked up curb side.

BRING YOUR OWN BREAD (and juice)

That's how we'll do Holy Communion this coming Sunday, at the suggestion of one of our members yesterday. We haven't shared Holy Communion since the first Sunday of March, due to the virus. But we'll do it this Sunday, and here's how: all are invited to bring their own bread and juice. You'll stay in your car. I will conduct the ritual for Holy Communion the usual way on the little hill by the stockade fence. When it comes time for receiving the bread and the cup, serve yourself. Simple, right? The downside is that you'll miss being together with other church members at the chancel rail. The upside is that you can consume as much of the bread and juice as you want!

Some of you watching from home yesterday experienced difficulty in getting the livestream of the service. Mark is working on correcting that.

Peter Milloy



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES

Gabe Chantre	So. Hadley High School
Jason Cooper	So. Hadley High School
Brady Marion	So. Hadley High School
Garren Fugiel	Easthampton High School
Aubrey Fugiel	Easthampton High School
Kyrin Walsh	Wilbraham & Monson Academy
Matthew Walz	Granby Jr.-Sr. High School
Brian O'Donnell	(Tim O'Donnell's nephew) Yale

PRAYER

Oh God, this week we feel tested.
We feel as if you have sent your refiner's fire to purify us.
We, your people, have been through fire and floods, wind and snow, pandemic illnesses, and unemployment, food insecurity and fear.
As I read the Psalmist, I hear promises that you will bring us out to a spacious place.

Those who were in exile will return home.
Those who had no home find a home in you.
I live for those promises.
I am comforted that you have listened to our cries, our pleas, our prayers.
Thank you for not removing your steadfast love from us. Amen.

By Rev. Megan Stowe, Central MA District Superintendent
Scripture: Psalm 66:8-20

UPDATE ON RE-OPENING

Some members are asking when we'll resume having worship in our sanctuary. The short answer is that we don't know yet, but leaders of our congregation having been kicking around ideas on when and how. Leaders of our New England Annual Conference held a webinar Wednesday evening to give us all some guidance about re-opening during the current phase. I'll give you the main take-aways:

- Singing indoors is not safe.
- We shouldn't be running fans or AC.
- It's not safe to let people touch hymnals or offering plates.
- Same goes for distributing Holy Communion.
- All the surfaces that anyone might touch have to be wiped down with disinfectant between Sundays.
- And of course we can't pack people in too closely, so we have to make sure we stay within our state's guideline, which in Massachusetts is 25% of the occupancy limit.

With regard to that last bullet point: According to our official permit from the town, the building commissioner determined that the occupancy limit for our sanctuary is 250, so if we're looking to restrict occupancy to 25% of that, we will have to start turning people away when 62 people are already present. Something tells me we're pretty safe there unless revival breaks out and people start pouring into churches.

With regard to AC, some will disagree; I'm just reporting what they said. People who know more about HVAC can discuss that and advise the trustees. We can't open the windows.

Some people will say, "If we can't even open up our hymnals and sing something, why bother being in the sanctuary at all?"

And other people have wondered who has the time and energy to wipe down all the pews every week.

So for the present, we'll continue to have worship in the parking lot. If the weather gets so warm that people don't feel comfortable staying in their cars, some can bring chairs from home and set them up in the shade provided by the bushes and the pavilion in our playground area.

And then sooner or later we'll enter another phase of the re-opening, and we can figure out what to do then.

Peter Milloy
413-310-5027



Click on the link to see **video message from Pastor Peter**.

<https://youtu.be/hXC29lb7mOM>

The link to the service on Sunday is

<https://www.facebook.com/TheSteepleInTheFalls>

All are welcome! Join us for worship or join in one of our missions.

South Hadley Methodist Church

30 Carew Street

South Hadley MA 01075



Love. Grow. Serve.

Rev. Peter Milloy: 413-310-5027

Worship Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Church office: 413-532-0500

e-mail: churchoffice@thesteepleinthefalls.org

web site: www.thesteepleinthefalls.org

Dr. Heather Reichgott, Minister of Music

Ann Felsentreger, Secretary

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: 413-437-7593



All are invited to join our parking lot service on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.



SOUTH HADLEY METHODIST CHURCH

30 Carew Street

South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075-2705

Return address service requested.