



# What's the News?

October 2021

## What's a Pastor?

I had the privilege of attending (virtually) the annual Leadership Institute at Church of the Resurrection outside Kansas City last week. Adam Hamilton, its lead pastor, convenes this Conference each Fall, drawing together clergy and laity from across the UMC to learn from one another and to create a vision for the future.

In one of his evening addresses, Hamilton shared a story from a recent wedding. While there, he was introduced to a family with two boys, age 7 and 10, as the pastor who was going to lead the service. The kids looked at him and asked "what's a pastor?" They had no experience with church with which to understand this title that those of us within these communities know and understand. There was just no frame of reference - pastor? What's that?

I've had similar experiences myself, during weddings but even more so after funerals. In these times when the foundations of our world are shaking, whether in beginnings or endings, people are open to hear and experience God's grace in a powerful way. It's important to remember that, for some people, weddings and funerals may be the only religious services they experience across their entire lifetime. No pressure, pastors.

If you think you're off the hook, too, know that you may be the only practicing Christian someone speaks to regularly. You may be the only Jesus that person ever sees. No pressure, disciple.



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Even though COVID has changed the way we have done many things at First UMC, we were still in mission to our community, our nation and the world.

When the Missions Team met on Sunday, October 3, the group made plans to expand the church's outreach.

Here's what will be coming up in 2021 and into 2022. As always, everyone in the congregation is welcome to take part. Often mission activities are open to people of all ages, from our elders to our children.

**HOME:** We will continue to work supporting homeless families through HOME. If the COVID numbers decline, HOME will restart its emergency shelter program in January. First UMC will be taking two HOME weeks in early 2022: February 13-19 and April 3-9.

**Jersey Cares Coat Drive:** Bring your gently worn winter coats to church the week before Thanksgiving through January 9. Like last year, you may drop your coats off either in church on Sunday or in the parking lot.

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(What's Pastor, Cont'd)



What are we to do? This is the environment in which we, together, seek to be faithful to what we believe to be true about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and all the rest. Things may have been different 30 or 40 years ago, but this is where we are now: dad, what's a pastor?

That question actually gives me great hope. Maybe we aren't up against negative perceptions about Christians or Sunday sports or any of the other bogeyman we have pointed to to explain why our churches are less full than they used to be. Maybe we just haven't shared the right invitation.

Trust me, after a wedding service or a funeral, the people who come up and want to talk to me the most are those who aren't involved in any service. They share that these services are beautiful and meaningful. Those times to remember and reflect were restorative and healing. There is an inbuilt hunger for God's grace in each of us, and when we get a small taste that hunger grows.

Our opportunity, church, is to invite, encourage, and bless these thousands and thousands of people in our neighborhoods who haven't connected to a church yet.

Let's get to work!

Rev. Ben Lee

(People Helping People, Cont'd)

**Diaper Drive for Maker's Place (Trenton):** First UMC will have a drive for diapers, wipes, and other baby care items in November.

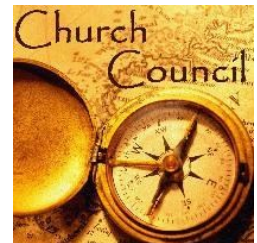
**SHIP:** Since SHIP has lost nearly everything when their building was flooded by Hurricane Ida, they are in need of money to replace lost equipment. They have a GoFundMe account online at their Facebook page.

**The Church Has Left the Building:** One Sunday every year, FUMC would have a short worship service and then go out to be in mission to our part of New Jersey. The work usually consisted of making sandwiches for SHIP, taking veterans from the VA Hospital to lunch, special events like participating in a walk for suicide prevention, and holding a free rummage "sale." While all the activities will not be back quite yet, the church will be holding a free rummage event this Spring.



If you'd like to be part of planning and brainstorming mission work, join the next Mission Team meeting on Zoom, November 7, at 12:15 p.m.

**Next meeting of Church Council**  
**October 20, 7:30 p.m.**  
**On Zoom**



**Turn back your clock**  
**On November 6!**

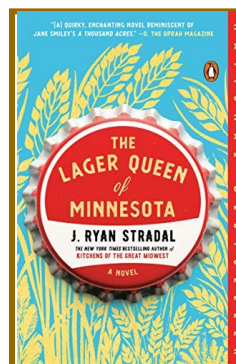
**CROP HUNGER WALK**  
**ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME**

The Central Somerset County Crop Walk is scheduled for October 17. It's not too late to sign up or to donate! The walk will start at the United Reformed Church (100 Main Street, Somerville).

Get your walking shoes, grab your family, friends, or dog (dogs are always up for a walk!) and join the gang in raising money to help end hunger.

Go to the link to enter or to make a donation::  
[https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/centralsomervillenj?](https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/centralsomervillenj?fbclid=IwAR1DyqhOSi5JXkjqrUIKAi1mT6Aexic9Hxgglnu3zoTFxZWY0KvbrmA7guA)

[fbclid=IwAR1DyqhOSi5JXkjqrUIKAi1mT6Aexic9Hxgglnu3zoTFxZWY0KvbrmA7guA](https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/centralsomervillenj?fbclid=IwAR1DyqhOSi5JXkjqrUIKAi1mT6Aexic9Hxgglnu3zoTFxZWY0KvbrmA7guA)



**Book Club**

Join the group on Monday, October 11 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom to discuss *The Lager Queen of Minnesota* by J. Ryan Stradel.

Contact Mike Ultee or Pat Dedert for more information.