

FAQs

About the State of the Church

Just over one month ago, we made the painful but necessary decision to suspend all in-person programming and limit building access to essential personnel only. In Scripture we're told that to the Lord a day is like 1,000 years and 1,000 years is like a day. I don't know about you, but the last month feels like 100 years to me! In spite of that I have been so incredibly grateful for all that our staff and ministry leadership has accomplished. I want to take a few moments to give you an assessment of where we are today and answer some questions that we have received over the past week or two.

The church has cancelled all in-person programming and in-person worship, so what are we doing to accomplish our vision of shaping the heart of the community by creating a culture of love forged through relationship with Christ and others?

THE NEED TO HELP SHAPE THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY DOESN'T STOP WITH A LOCKDOWN, IT ACTUALLY BECOMES MORE VITAL THAN EVER!

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW WE ARE CONTINUING TO MAKE DISCIPLES, AND SHAPE THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY:

- Multiple departments are working hard every week to provide **excellent online worship experiences** every Sunday.
- Our **daily Field Guide devotions** are addressing the concerns and realities we are experiencing daily from a Christlike perspective.
- Many of our departments are thinking outside the box to create **online Bible studies, Sunday school classes, small groups, and fellowship gatherings**.
- Our **Children and Student Ministries** are providing interactive experiences through social media and remain in touch with our students and families via text, email, and phone calls.
- Our **Congregational Care team** has deployed our Stephen Ministers, Visitation Team, and 50 new volunteers in ministry, to call and follow-up with the most vulnerable in our congregation. We continue to collect prayer shawls and masks for medical personnel at Williamson Medical Center and surrounding medical facilities.
- Our **Pastoral Prayer Team** continues to meet regularly to pray over the submitted prayer requests and to follow up on pastoral care needs.
- We have **welcomed 40 new members over the past 3 weeks**, and each are paired with an Andrew Minister to help them connect and engage in the life of ministry through BUMC.
- **Our staff** have been, and continue to be, participating in **daily contact with our congregation**.
- **Our facilities team** is working with a skeleton crew but has been able to get ahead on preventative maintenance and other projects that would have normally been outsourced. We were also able to complete the parking lot treatment and restriping.
- We continue to **think outside the box** and explore additional ways we can continue being the church for our community during this crisis.

WHAT ABOUT OUTREACH AND MISSIONS?

The natural response in a crisis like this is to want to physically do something to help. Obviously, we are unable to do this in our current stay-at-home reality, while following the guidelines of state and local officials and local health care leaders who are working hard to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. The greatest thing we can do right now is provide financial assistance to those who are equipped to safely serve. In addition to our regularly budgeted support of many different local and global ministries, we have made the following special donations in the past few weeks:

- **Tornado Relief:** We have collected and distributed close to \$38,000 to organizations and individuals in need of assistance after the March tornadoes in Middle Tennessee. We've given \$6,000 to each of these partner organizations: Rooftop, Gideon's Army in North Nashville, GraceWorks of Williamson County, Community Care Fellowship. We've also given an additional \$2,000 to local church partners. Close to \$6,000 has been given or designated to individuals and families seeking benevolence assistance.

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WHAT ABOUT OUTREACH AND MISSIONS?

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- **COVID-19 Relief:** We have collected about \$12,000 for relief and assistance for organizations and individuals effected by COVID-19 due to layoffs, income loss, increased costs of caring for children, etc. This money is being distributed as needs arise and goes to individuals and families as well as organizations seeking to prepare and respond to their communities. These organizations include the Martha O'Bryan Center, MusicCares, and Feed the Front Lines Nashville (connected through Front Lines Nashville (HOPE-20).
- We have also been in contact with many of our **missional partners**, including our **strategic partners** (South Africa Outreach, Healing Housing, and Harvest Hands) and **local congregations** to assess their needs at this time. Many of them are serving their communities in profound and essential ways in response to the virus.

HOW HAS WORSHIP ATTENDANCE BEEN?

We've been doing virtual worship for six weeks now, with great participation! Our online worship attendance the first week was just under 5,000, and we've seen that number increase across the weeks, with worship attendance on April 19 of over 13,800 people. On Easter Sunday we worshipped with just over 38,000! (We are able to precisely see how many devices are connected to our services across the different platforms we use. For our worship attendance, we count views on Sunday, omitting those who are on for just a brief time and use a multiplier of 2.5 to account for the number of households who have more than one individual watching on a device.)

We continue to work weekly, making improvements to our online worship experience. We plan to offer online worship as an option, even after we are able to worship again in person.

We have more members attending online worship, along with more visitors across the Middle Tennessee Area, and more people across the country than we've ever had before. We have seen an increase of visitors who connect and engage with us in ministry. Our Welcome Ministry is following up with these individuals to connect them with our congregation in a personal way.

ARE OUR WORSHIP LEADERS OBSERVING "SAFE SOCIAL DISTANCING" WHILE LEADING WORSHIP?

Yes. The camera angles make the worship leaders and musicians appear closer than they are. They've been at least 6 feet apart, and we have been able to limit the number of worship leaders in the Sanctuary to 10 or less people at all times.

HOW ARE THE CHURCH FINANCES DOING DURING THIS SHUTDOWN?

We are grateful for our faithful and generous congregation! Our giving has remained strong over these past weeks. While our giving was not quite up to budget, the decrease in expenses allowed our first quarter to end with positive cash flow. BUMC has a long history of generosity coupled with faithful and disciplined spending from our staff and finance committee. This has allowed us to build up a sizeable reserve and strong balance sheet for such a time as this. Our Finance Committee feels confident we can manage a deficit for the next few months, if need be. Our staff is also working on a revised budget in case we need to cut ministry spending. We do not feel any need to panic, but we are monitoring our giving and spending closely and being very prudent.

We have seen a significant increase in online giving and want to continue encouraging our members to set up recurring giving at bumc.net/give. You can also mail your contribution to: Brentwood United Methodist Church
Finance Department
309 Franklin Road
Brentwood, TN 37027

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MASTER PLANNING?

We had already paused our work toward a capital campaign and master plan. We anticipate these discussions will not resume until we are better informed on the impact of COVID-19.

**WILL THE CHURCH APPLY
FOR THE SBA LOAN
AVAILABLE TO
CHURCHES AND
NON-PROFITS TO HELP
ENSURE PEOPLE ARE
NOT LAID OFF?**

We applied last week and were approved and should be funded next week! This money will go a long way toward making sure we continue to pay all of our staff at 100 percent. Because of this loan our preschool teachers, as well as all of our hourly employees, are able to continue to be paid at 100 percent of what they are used to at least through the end of May. Because we will use this loan to pay salaries, it should be forgiven and most likely not have to be repaid.

**WHEN WILL THE CHURCH
OPEN AND WHEN WILL
WE RESUME OUR
REGULAR WORSHIP,
PROGRAMS, AND
EVENTS?**

Like all of you, we continue to watch how the coronavirus impacts our daily lives. We will follow the guidelines and mandates handed down by our state and local officials and also consider what is safest for our congregation and community as we make decisions on when we can gather again in person. We do not anticipate any in-person gatherings of any kind through May 31, 2020, or any in-person large group gatherings or trips through July 31, 2020. Given the size of our church, we want to stay spiritually connected while also prioritizing the safety of our congregation and staff. We are heartbroken at what we will miss – our Women's Summer Sabbath, our choir tours and mission trips, Vacation Bible School, and other ways we are used to spending the summer worshipping, learning, serving, and playing together. However, we are working hard to offer as many of these experiences as possible in a virtual setting. And we are positioning ourselves to be able to respond quickly if and when we are able to gather in small groups.

The church building will remain closed through May, with only limited essential staff being present on a very limited basis. We will consider phasing in some church office hours or on-site programming in the summer months as mandates and restrictions permit. However, we anticipate this will be done using the precautions currently recommended, including health screening, wearing a mask, maintaining 6 feet of physical distance, and rigorous personal hygiene.

Our Lead Team and directors are in conversation weekly – sometimes daily – monitoring information coming from our state and local officials. And we are working with our lay leadership as well as we make decisions about next steps.

**IF YOU NEED US,
WE ARE HERE!**

Financial Assistance: Rev. Toi King, tking@bumc.net

Prayer Requests & Pastoral Care Requests: bumc.net/care

Finance Office: finance@bumc.net

Subscribe to Communications: bumc.net/email

Membership Information: Rev. Shelby Slowey, sslowey@bumc.net

Missions & Outreach: Lisa Edge, ledge@bumc.net

Adult Groups: Lisa Edge, ledge@bumc.net

Student Ministry: Rosanne Schenck, rschenck@bumc.net

Children's Ministry: Kathleen Argueta, kargueta@bumc.net

General Information Regarding COVID-19: bumc.net/covid19

General Questions: Leslie Hotzfeld, lhotzfeld@bumc.net