



November 20, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Particularly during the Thanksgiving season, I am thankful to God for Manchaca United Methodist Church. Over my ~30 years here, I have seen my family nurtured as well as countless persons come to faith in Jesus and deepen that faith. I have seen and often participated in a continuous stream of service to the church family, our Manchaca community and beyond. Using St. Paul's metaphor (I Corinthians 9:24), I have with others "run the race" of faith in this place at this time. It was through the generosity of lots of people that Manchaca Methodist was able to serve God and others.

Your generosity makes a lasting difference. When you give, it sets off a chain reaction of thankfulness and ignites ministries in our church, which enables others to find and experience God. ***If you have already returned your Estimate of Giving Card, thank you.*** As our focus on generosity ends, we hope to hear from every church family. This helps assure confident church planning that ministries and outreach programs anticipated can be confirmed and fulfilled in the next calendar year. All ministries our church implements are dependent on the generosity of God's people. We are asking everyone who may still be in the process of thinking about how to respond, to try to finalize prayers and thoughts this week.

If you feel you cannot estimate your giving due to your situation or life circumstance, do not let that keep you from worship and fellowship. God knows all about you, and in Christ, we all have great hope for the future. Consider returning a signed card without a specific amount, signifying your support of the church and your intent to keep the church in your prayers. Enclosed is another card if you need it. Return your card on Sunday while attending the 8:30 a.m. worship service or mail it to the church (Manchaca UMC, P.O. Box 460, Manchaca TX 78652). Alternatively, you can use the on-line version of the Estimate of Giving Card. Please go to <https://www.manchacaumc.org/give/stewardship/#Form>.

Please continue to pray for our church in the days ahead as we strive to follow God's path for us.

Sincerely,

Dave Bourell
Stewardship Chair



November 6, 2020

Dear Church Family,

I'm a big fan of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. I know the musical by heart, and I have even plowed through the 900-page unabridged novel from cover to cover. It's a grand story of justice juxtaposed against mercy, played out in post-revolutionary France. My favorite character in the book and the play is the priest. It's a very small part early in the story, but it is the simple, single, merciful act of the priest that lays out and enables the entire chain of events for the whole novel. The protagonist, Jean Valjean, is a broke, vindictive ex-con who steals silver from the priest and makes his getaway before anyone knows. The authorities arrest Valjean, haul him to the priest to confirm the charges and then intend to send him back to jail. The priest thanks the police for their service but says there is a misunderstanding. Not only was the ex-con allowed to take the silver, according to the priest's contrived explanation, but in his rush to leave, Valjean forgot to take the silver candlesticks as well. Valjean was set free and received the extra silver in addition to what he stole. This act of merciful grace changed the course of Valjean's life, both by changing his heart and providing the financial means to chart a new life course.

God is using Manchaca UMC to change lives as well. We have seen and heard about the heart of generosity the last few weeks, and we have had the opportunity to examine our own hearts and generosity. Like Valjean's story, our own corporate ministries and service are grounded and enabled by the availability of financial resources to effect and sustain these ministries. Sunday, November 15 is the culmination of our stewardship emphasis. If you are attending the 8:30 a.m. outdoor service that day, you will have the opportunity to turn in your enclosed estimate of giving card for 2021. If you are not attending in person, feel free at any time to "turn in" your estimate of giving card electronically. Visit the church website to complete the online card, manchacaumc.org/give/stewardship, and we would greatly appreciate your doing so on or before November 15. If you have family members who wish to pledge independently, feel free to either reproduce the card or pledge online.

Years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the World War II concentration camp in Dachau, Germany, a very sobering experience. I bought a book at the shop there. A chapter in the book dealt with the practice of Christianity among the prisoners interred at the camp, including worship and the Sacraments. In those dark days, the Holy Spirit was present and moving, and I was touched and inspired. The year 2020 will surely go into the record books as a dark time for many of us. I am hopeful that someday, someone will look back and see the movement of the Holy Spirit in this time and place, as well as the actions of faithful Christians like us at Manchaca UMC, who enable and witness to the mighty work of God. I am extremely grateful for your role in this blessed endeavor.

Sincerely,

Dave Bourell
Stewardship Chair



October 23, 2020

Dear Church Family,

It's been a really different year for the church from where we thought we would be just 10 months ago. Who could have ever predicted in January that we would be dealing with a major pandemic and all its consequences? Like many of you, this year I have had friends and family who have lost jobs, who have contracted COVID-19, who have had to make major changes to their lives and, yes, who have died. Now is the time the church should look to God for comfort, guidance and empowerment. I'm so grateful for Manchaca UMC, especially now. We have made major revisions to our church ministries: moving to 100% on-line worship, reconfiguring staff responsibilities, modifying ministries to children and youth, reallocating resources to maximize meeting new needs, innovating new ways to maintain contact and to foster human interactions, faithfully executing the Sacraments and rites of the church including Holy Communion and funerals and continuing to offer critical services to the community such as the food pantry and public school outreach to local public schools. I am excited to witness the heart and generosity from our church staff, leaders and congregants. We are caring people caring for ourselves and others in Christ's name.

As the Chair of the Church Finance Team, I view that part of my role with the Finance Team is to make sure that the church is in a fiscal position to engage responsibly and effectively in its many ministries. I am overwhelmed by the generosity and faithfulness of the church, especially during this time of unprecedented hardship and stress. Thanks to your generosity and the creative innovations of church leaders and staff, I am pleased to project that the church will end 2020 by meeting all our financial obligations, including paying 100% of our connectional apportionments.

The next four weeks, the church will be focusing on our stewardship, heart and generosity. We will celebrate the ministries that God has entrusted to us. In this moment of digital overload, we have opted to send you four weekly letters to support this effort, culminating with Pledge Sunday on November 15. That day, you will have an opportunity, either in person or electronically, to turn in an Estimate of Giving Card for 2021. Estimating your giving for next year helps the church to plan responsibly and to do the best ministries possible to serve you and others. Together, we will ensure that Manchaca UMC can continue to be faithful to God's calling to service and spiritual growth.

Sincerely,

Dave Bourell
Stewardship Chair