

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for your generosity that makes our ministry possible! As many of you know, McAllen FUMC made hard, sacrificial budget cuts for 2021 so that we could have a budget that matched historic giving. For the past several years, the approved budget was set beyond what actual giving supported. Reducing the budget was hard, but will allow us, over time, to replenish our depleted reserves.

This has been a lean year, but we are happy to report that mid-year, we are just about even. Our amazing staff has found ways to cut even further, meaning that we are currently \$23,000 *under* budget. I want you to know that all your staff and pastors have been, and continue to, pay for ministry out of their pockets to keep the church in the black (we have reimbursement accounts, but no one is submitting receipts). All of us, pastors, staff, and laity are giving, serving, and sacrificing so that God's work can be done in this church and community.

Which means, even in a lean year, we are doing more than "making it." This hard year hasn't made our ministry fold. Not at all! This time of crisis has pushed us to reach out in new ways:

- Since January, we have fed 18,477 people through our feeding ministries, providing basic resources to keep children and families from being hungry. This includes meals for the homeless, delivered by Emily's Meals servant volunteers at our church.
- Worship is online as well as in-person and we're now live-streaming worship, memorials and other services.
- We're outside with the community offering communion and prayer: Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, Easter Outdoor Worship, and Drive-Thru Communion at the Manna Food Pantry and along McColl Road on the evening commute.
- We helped 12 graduates from the church and community celebrate their accomplishment.
- 25 Pre-K4 students completed a wonderful school year at our Day School! Our safety protocols kept our kids healthy and learning throughout the year!
- Children's ministry continued online but also re-opened *in person* including our nursery.
- We have been hosting Mercy Chefs since April 1. In the past months, this partnership has provided 93,122 meals, as of Sunday, June 27! At this time, they prepare 1,500 hot dinner meals each evening! These meals have gone to immigrant/refugees at the Respite Center, Customs and Border Patrol agents and the homeless in McAllen (through our Emily's Meals team).
- We welcomed 8 new young people into our church family through confirmation
- In the first half of the year, 26 people have joined our church. 12 by professing their faith in Jesus! Wow- talk about life change!

*If you would like a copy of your giving quarterly statement, please contact Stephanie, our church receptionist, at 956-686-3784 or email your request at sruiz@mcfirst.com We are no longer mailing out statements unless you request one, in effort to save money on postage.

Our church family is thriving and doing it with joy:

- A big THANK YOU to Chris Julian (right) and his team Joe Thomas (left) and Ray Villarreal (not pictured), for stepping up for three days of service. They came to our church kitchen to cover for Mercy Chefs while they were out of town! They took care of preparing and delivering food for the dinner service at the CC Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen. Praise God for these men who answered God's call to serve!
- The Parkinson's Support Group led by Becky Rankin had their first in-person meeting this the second week of June and it was a great success!
- The Rio Texas Annual Conference met online once again this year. Our pastors attended and participated from their church office. And if you have not heard yet, the rumor is that it should be in person next year - in McAllen!!

- How do you keep your staff engaged and practice team building? You load them up in the church van and go to Progreso to do some shopping and have lunch.
- Thanks to a team from Huntsville FUMC who came to work on a home being built in response to flooding in 2018-19. This home will not flood again! This is in the same area our church worked in 3 years ago! Our RGV Long Term Recovery is still at work following disasters. Thank you Tim Voss from our Church for serving in building this home and others and Roland Pecina for his leadership as the the Construction Coordinator for the Long Term Disaster Response. Susan Hellums serves as part of the leadership for this Response, as well.
- Generosity is contagious:
- Choco-flan thank you from ARISE.
- Fruit Basket "THANK YOU" from ARISE South Tower for Food Pantry we have been hosting for their area!
- Here is the first Friendship Sunday school class meeting in a year! Several more joined the class by zoom and some of those were out of state!
- The women's Road Back to You book study of the Enneagram.
- The Children's Ministry teaches our children about Jesus in fun ways and also has places where they can give back and lead!
- Our Church Family is growing! Congratulations to our new moms, dads, big sisters and big brothers!!
- Below are the mission projects the Children's Ministry we will be doing throughout the week of M&M Camp:
 1. Helping Mercy Chefs prepare dinner for the Humanitarian Respite Center
 2. Making thank you cards for the caseworkers at the Child Protective Services offices in McAllen and Edinburg
 3. Preparing fun goodie bags for the children served through Faith Ministry in Reynosa.
 4. Assembling a gift for the teachers at Hendricks Elementary for the beginning of school
 5. Bagging rice and beans for our Food Pantry
 6. Preparing a snack for the Emily's Meals ministry which takes lunch to the homeless in our community
 7. On Wednesday will be zooming with the children residing at Casa de Esperanza Children's Home in Nuevo Progreso, getting to know them and singing with them.
 8. On Thursday we will go out to the National Butterfly Garden, 9:45am – 1:15 pm. We will take a sack lunch out that day to eat before we come home.
 9. And MORE if time permits!

**** We are also going to collect \$10.00 gift cards to fast food places in town for us to give to the caseworkers at Child Protective Services. The caseworkers often are in the position to buy a quick meal for children as they have to be removed from a difficult family situation. This will help lighten that responsibility for them.

A member told me that, in a strange way, the pandemic gave him hope. He said, "Our church didn't fall over. This hard time made us stronger. We increased our outreach, we fed people, we stood on roadsides, we went online. I see what we did and it gives me hope."

May you be hopeful, too! God is doing great things through our church. Thank you for your giving. Your sacrifice makes all this ministry possible!

Pastor Laura