



Dear First United members and friends,

We all know that 2020 has been a year of unprecedented change, disruption, loss, and uncertainty, as the COVID pandemic and other societal changes have swept the world and our country. You know that First United responded quickly to the pandemic, moving to online worship, meetings, and small groups. This has been a season of continuous change and innovative response. A less vibrant and faithful church might have given up on being the church and offering Christ's love to one another and to our community. We could have said it's just too hard, or we can't or won't change as the circumstances call for us to change. We are proud to say First United is not that kind of church! Together, we stepped up and found ways to create online worship, zoom small groups, meet virtually, deliver flowers and notes and signs of care to the whole congregation, provide pastoral care in new and safe ways, deliver engaging children's Sunday morning lessons to their homes, reopen the Weekday School this fall, and provide food for the hungry and help of all kinds for neighbors who are struggling. Some of our ministries even grew during the pandemic. We continued to grow spiritually and move closer to God in service and relationship with our neighbors. We are proud of you and thankful to God for a church that lives out its vision of Changing Lives, Making Disciples – in good times and bad. Well done, church!

Last month we focused in worship on the theme of "Overflow." We were reminded again and again of God's overflowing, never-ending, amazing love and provision for us. We heard stories from members of how that overflowing love has created a need in them to give thanks and give back to God – through the faithful stewardship of their time and talents, participation in the life of the church, and of their financial tithes and offerings. We heard from them how a decision to be faithful in their giving in lean or difficult times led to deeper trust in God and unexpected blessings – because God always provided, not just what they needed, but an overflow of help, provision, and joy.

As we look ahead to 2021, we do not know what the new year will bring. We do know that God will be faithful to us, that we will still be a faithful, growing, welcoming, servant-minded church who will be needed more than ever, and that there will still be many ways for each of us to live out our vows to follow Jesus Christ through our prayers, presence, financial gifts, talents, service and witness. Now is the time to prayerfully decide how you will commit to those vows of discipleship for 2021. Enclosed with this letter is a Commitment Card and a Time & Talents Form where you can record your commitments for 2021. Please complete these and either bring them with you to worship on Consecration Sunday, November 22, or return them to the church office by that date.

We ask you to follow God's lead in providing an overflow of love, service, and giving – and to let the church know how we can count on you in 2021. "Put me to the test," says the Lord, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." (Malachi 3:10). Together, by our sacrificial and joyful giving, we can provide an overflow of God's love and blessing to all in our faith community, in Hendersonville, and throughout the world.

In Christ's service together,

Rev. Karen Easter-Bayne
Lead Pastor

Stewardship Team Members