

UNY Conference kids show support to first responders



So many medical professionals are working long hours and putting themselves at risk by responding to the needs of patients with COVID-19. They are amazing. Children throughout the UNY Conference have been expressing their gratitude toward these first responders in creative ways.

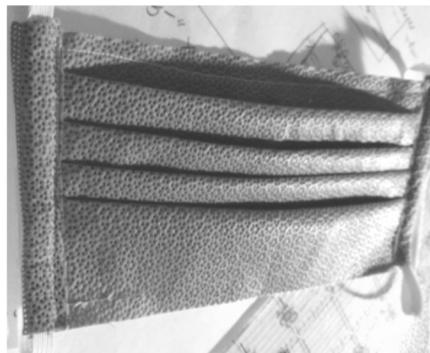
Children at Clinton UMC showed their support by posting signs in the church’s yard and in the church’s windows.

Endwell UMC youth have created a Kidz Connect message on their website called Courageous Heart— it’s a tribute to our medical community and first responders. On the web page you will find a fun song, video by Vivian, and how to make a Courageous Heart Thank You cards for our

medical community. Visit <https://bit.ly/Endwellyouth> to check it out.

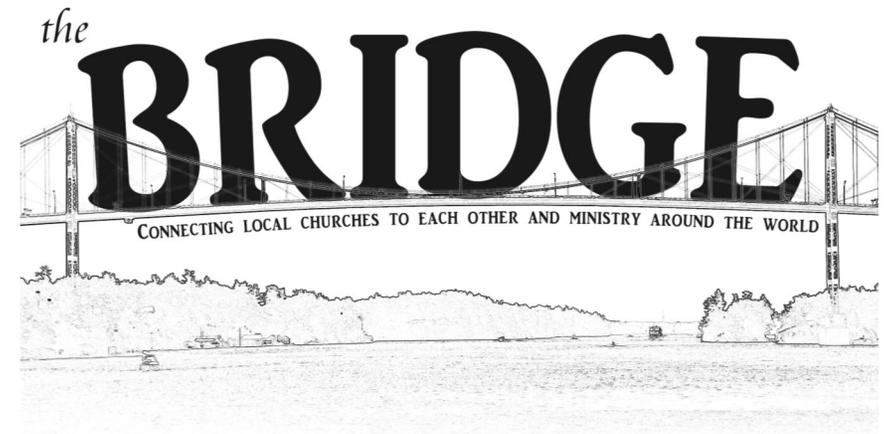
Broad Street UMC members make masks medical community

Broad Street UMC has started a face mask project for area hospitals and medical centers. One of the church’s members works in the ER at a local hospital and she realized they were running out of face masks and dealing with COVID-19 deaths already. Her mother started sewing masks and then Broad Street UMC pastor, the Rev. Rachel Barnhat, started organizing people in the church to help with the effort – she put up an information page on the church’s brand new website that she created to help keep her congregation connected and informed during this pandemic. She started directing people there for the project instructions and face mask directions. Visit <https://bit.ly/BroadStreetfacemasks> to read the full story.



The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org



The Upper New York Conference’s vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God’s love with our neighbors in all places.

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Positive stories from Upper New York United Methodists

Every time we turn on the television or click a news link related to COVID-19, we are learning more grim news, such as New York State having more COVID-19 cases than any country in the world. This news can easily depress us. There are good, positive stories happening too, like the hundreds of nurses across the United States, travelling to New York City to help.

In this issue of the *Bridge*, we include a few positive stories that come from United Methodists in our Conference. If you have a positive story of ministries your church is doing during the COVID-19 pandemic, we'd love to hear about it and share it with others. Please email your story to news@unyumc.org.

Chaplaincy in a COVID-19 World

Editor's Note: *Following is a perspective from Rev. Cathy Hall Stengel, who is serving as a hospital chaplain.*

- "I just pray," responded an RN when asked how she got through the code and death of a young man.
- "I imagine it's my brother because it might be next week," said a provider caring for a man in his 50s.
- "He's my daddy; I know he's sick, but he's the only daddy I will ever have," pleaded the daughter of a patient.
- "Can we check at security to make sure the family gets in since they don't speak English?"
- "I don't want them turned away because someone can't understand them," said the attending physician

at the death of a patient."

- "I know she's sick; can we just see her, please?" asked the children and grandchildren of a patient when a facetime visit was offered.

These are some of the things you might hear in the halls of the hospital, from the ICU nurses, the attending physicians, and the family members of the patients. Thank yous come more frequently – for the help, for the snacks, the pizza... thank you for the cheerleading and the thanks coming from far and wide. When the hospital made the decision to close the doors to visitors (except for birth, death, and NICU) and non-essential staff and visitors, the tone of the hospital changed. In some ways it has felt eerily quiet, but in other ways it has felt blanketed in grace, wrapped by the love and power of the Holy Spirit (in my Christian faith). There's a tenderness and vulnerability in the hallways, in the ER (which is usually tough as nails), in the COVID and non-COVID units. When a staff member finds themselves in tears, their team members are right there with encouragement. There continues to be laughter – it is the sound of life.

I sat outside a room at the computer station, an RN sitting at the computer beside me. She had watched me use FaceTime to help a family see their loved one in the ICU room, on a ventilator. Grandchildren called out "Hi Grammy!" in their joyful voices; children whispered, "oh mom" and then there

was love and prayer. All of that happened without taking one step into the room. The RN tearfully thanked me. I was humbled – "you are the lifesavers here; you are the ones who are trying to get this grandma home to those children, not me." She looked me in the face – eyes meeting over masks, and said, "I could NEVER do what you are doing; I would be crying all day; we have to do this together." So we sit together, each bringing our own gifts to the ICU and hospital village, trying to get as many patients safely home.

My role as a chaplain has changed dramatically in the past two weeks. The residents in our group were initially asked to work from home, calling family members and providing spiritual care. These were largely non-COVID-19 patients and families.

A week ago – things changed again, and I and another resident were asked if we would be willing to come back to the hospital to care for COVID-19 positive patients and their families. I serve in a COVID ICU and a COVID step-down unit. I begin by connecting with families by phone, offering whatever support might be needed and possible. How do you bring a family into the room or to the window of an ICU room when they aren't allowed in the building? Everyone wants to see and be with their sick friend or family member. Even with patients who are on ventilators and sedated we can connect with family by Skype, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, or other video platforms. Sometimes



that iPad goes right into the room and it's held by the patient's face. Families pray and sing; families look at their family members with eyes so tender they might as well be touching the cheek of the one they love.

One of the most exciting things technology has offered (twice for me) is the opportunity to call a family on FaceTime just after their family member has been taken off the ventilator – and they talk and smile and do a lot of crying.

We are all doing a new thing – and we are all stretched to use new skills, new mediums – new ways of expressing care. For all of us – there is life in the living and caring through this. I am more tired than I've ever been, and I am more alive each day.

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