

First Congregational Messenger
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Serving God with love and faith



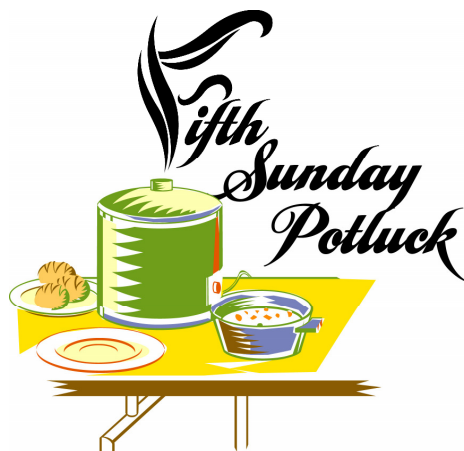
April 2023

Volume 5, Issue 102



The annual meeting of First Congregational UCC will be held following worship service April 23, 2023.

April 30 is the next potluck to raise money for the Scholarship Fund. Jane suggested that recipes might be used from the cookbook published in 1994 for the 125th anniversary of the church. Let Sue know if you don't have one.



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Monday-Thursday 10-4
Other times by appointment
May be out of the office for meetings or visits



Office Hours
Monday-Friday
8-12

Dying and Rising

For this newsletter, I didn't know what I would write about; and then yesterday I learned that a beloved classmate died by suicide. Jenn was an awesome and gifted young woman. I learned so much from her when I was at Eden Seminary. I am sad that she died, and my heart goes out to her family. UCC pastor and writer, Lillian Daniel wrote this reflection a few years ago:

When the Cause of Death is Suicide

When the cause of death is suicide, the living are left with the questions: Why? What did I miss? Could I have prevented it? Was it my fault? Was there a note left behind?

Most people who die by suicide do not leave notes. When they do leave them, they tend not to answer the big questions but hauntingly address such small ones: I keep the safe deposit box in the bottom drawer. The dog has been walked. The password on this computer is my birthday.

The note raises more question than it answers. So we turn to the living, and ask them to explain it, to tell us how we can help when depression hurts so bad you cannot live with it. One friend described it as a torment so awful you are convinced it can never end. And yet the person who told me that is alive. And someone else I love is not.

What made the difference? It was probably not me. Mental illness is a disease. There are many treatments. One day there may be a cure. Sometimes it is the cause of death.

But it is not your fault. Any more than someone else's cancer is, or someone else's heart disease. Don't blame yourself. Don't blame anyone else. Don't keep asking the unanswerable questions. You knew a precious person whose heart clenched in excruciating pain but also swelled in joy, whose beautiful brain contained so much more brilliance than one day's dark and deadly thought.

God embraces us all at the other side, whatever way we get there, whichever part of our human bodies gave out. Whatever our struggle in this life was. That is where we will get our answers. Until then, we see through a glass dimly, but one day, we will see face to face".



Prayer

"Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Amen

Blessings for Graduate



Kennedy Indra will graduate from Norfolk Senior High this spring! The congregation is invited to bless her by praying for her every day in April and drop notes of blessing, well wishes, and cards into her “blessing box” at the church. We will present the box to Kennedy on Graduation Sunday, May 14.

Please pick up a date (or 2) on which you will personally pray throughout the day for Kennedy. There will be small *dated prayer cards* on the table in the Narthex this month – just pick one or two up next time you are in church. OR, call Sue in the office and she will give you a date.

Kennedy is the granddaughter of Gene and Bonnie Kroeger and she has been an active participant in our youth outreach and Christmas programs.



Spring Worship Schedule

Sundays at 10:15 a.m. unless noted below

- April 2** Palm/Passion Sunday
- April 6** Maundy Thursday at First Presbyterian Church
6:00 p.m. Mediterranean Supper (sign up)
7:00 p.m. Worship
- April 9** Easter Sunday (no Sunday School)
- April 16** First Sunday after Easter
- April 23** Annual Meeting *immediately after* Worship ***
- April 30** Confirmation Sunday for Reese Uzzell
5th Sunday Potluck after worship
- May 7** Teacher Appreciation
- May 14** Graduation Sunday for Kennedy Indra
Last day of Sunday School
Mother's Day (carnations for all nurturing women)



March Outreach – Easter Cards for St. Joseph Rehabilitation and Care Center.

Desi Martin had a great idea: Let's make cards for St. Joe's. On Sunday, March 19, Reese and Grace designed cards and in the afternoon Darlene and Pastor Jackie joined with them to fold and stuff 90 envelopes. Thanks to Darlene who gathered the stencils, markers, and envelopes. The church may also mail a few to those of us in our church community who may have cabin fever by now!

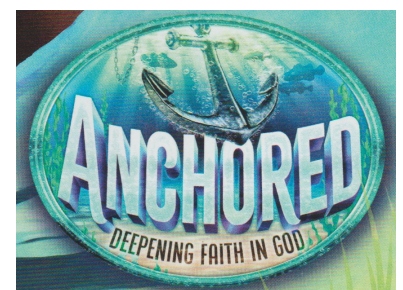


Faith Journey: a Youth Sunday School Project

Reese Uzzell has been interviewing church members and friends about their faith journey. She has completed editing two videos and is working on a third. We plan to show these during worship starting in April. Questions to ponder: "When have you felt God's presence in your life?" "Give an example of someone in the church who demonstrates God's presence today."



VBS planned for June 12-13.



Dear Friends,



March 21, 2023

I wanted to take a moment to give up an update on staffing.

Continuing or New Staff Hires:

(A) The Tri-Conference Ministries Board voted to call Rev. Kendy Miller as our Designated full-time Associate Conference Minister. The Board also voted to call Rev. Jonna Jensen as our part-time Associate Conference Minister. These are both 18 month designated positions as we continue our discernment and planning around the Tri-Conference Ministries. I want to congratulate them both!

(B) I hired Jane Estrada to serve as our Administrative Assistant for Ministry Support. Jane has been working for our Conferences and now enters this new position. Congratulations Jane!

Goodbyes:

As the Communications Specialist position is being significantly downsized in our new staffing structure, Aidan Spencer will be leaving the Tri-Conference Ministries at the end of March to follow other career paths. Aidan has served as our Communications Specialist for three and a half years and has been an amazing part of our ministry team. We want to thank her for her work and send her into the next part of her journey with our blessings! In discussions with Aidan we have decided that sending cards and emails of thanks and blessings would be most appreciated. So please do that! You can send an email to Aidan at aidan@spencerberg.com or a card to this address: 2016 W Greenleaf Ave., Apt. 2A, Chicago, IL 60645

Searches for Open Positions:

(A) This means we have one **part-time Associate Conference Minister** position available. This is a ¼ time position and we are looking for candidates from the Nebraska and South Dakota Conferences. [Here is a link to that job description](#) and if you are interested in applying for the position or have questions please email me at Phil@ucctcm.org.

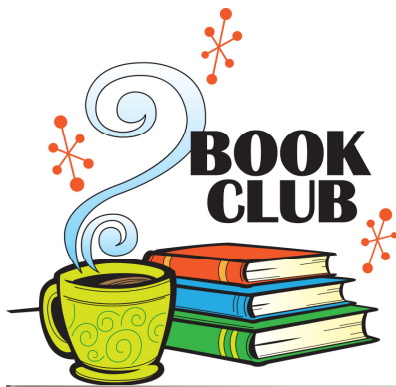
(B) **Communications Assistant** - This is a 5 hour per week position that will focus on website updates, weekly news update emails, and Facebook updates. If you are interested in this position, please email me at Phil@ucctcm.org.

I would ask for your patience as we make these important staffing transitions. Our guiding principles remain those given to us by the Conferences at our Annual Meetings of a sustainable budget, and local-church and authorized minister focused ministry from TCM staff.

Blessings on you all as we continue our way to the cross and the empty tomb.

-Phil

Rev. R. Philip Hart
Interim Conference Minister
Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences
United Church of Christ



Book Club will meet April 12 in the **Unity Room**. *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat* by Javaka Steptoe. The books can be found in Fellowship Hall or you can contact Jane Uzzell.



Dear Church family,

We feel your prayers and thank you for them. Bobby is stable after 6 months of double treatment and radiation. He is able to continue with 22 more months of once a month chemo. We would appreciate that the prayers continue.

Bob & Nancy Brown



Do you go grocery shopping? At Lou's? At HyVee? **We have an easy way to bump up your donation to the church budget**--use a Lou's or HyVee gift card when you go shopping or get gas. You can buy them **Sundays** in Fellowship Hall. We currently get \$25, \$50 and \$100 gift cards.

See you at the table in Fellowship Hall! Please help out. The gift cards fit right in your billfold by your dollar bills, so it's even easy to remember to use them when you go to pay for your groceries. Questions? Leave a message for Jane Uzzell at (402)640-6623.

APRIL



Birthdays

4th Adam Gamerl
5th Jane Uzzell
18th Henry Gamerl
21st Katie Gamerl

Anniversary

16th Rick and Jill Waterbury



April 2 Palm Sunday

Communion: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Ushers: Suzan Podliska and Tom McConnell

Greeters: Ed Lindsay and Barb Koenig

3 Readers: Reese Uzzell, Verletta Olson, Randy Neuharth

Leader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers: Palms

April 9 Easter

Ushers: Charlene Fosdick and Jane Uzzell

Greeters: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Reader: Ben Uzzell

Flowers: Lilies

April 16

Ushers: Ed Lindsay and Evonne Burkink

Greeters: Charlene Fosdick and Suzan Podliska

Reader: Grace Uzzell

Flowers: Scott and Lori Williams

April 23 Annual Meeting

Ushers: Scott and Lori Williams

Greeters: Evonne Burkink and Mike Synovec

Reader: Lori Williams

Flowers: Erik and Katie Gamerl

April 30 Confirmation

Ushers: Grace Uzzell and Verletta Olson

Greeters: Verletta Olson and Bonnie Dewell

Reader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers: Brian Seier



May 7

Communion: Evonne Burkink and Sue Surber

Ushers: Bonnie Dewell and Barb Koenig

Greeters: Jane Uzzell and Rita Woodard

Reader: Kay Neuharth

Leader: Tom McConnell

Flowers:

May 14 Mother's Day/Graduation Recognition

Ushers: Mike Synovec and Rita Woodard

Greeters: Tom McConnell and Chuck Balsiger

Reader: Chuck Balsiger

Flowers: Scott and Lori Williams

May 21

Ushers: Sue Surber and Suzan Podliska

Greeters: Scott and Lori Williams

Reader: Scott Williams

Flowers:

May 28 Memorial Weekend

Ushers: Randy and Kay Neuharth

Greeters: Sue Surber and Barb Koenig

Reader: Tom McConnell

Flowers: Garry and Suzan Podliska

Please notify the office if you are not able to attend a service.

March

From 3/1/23 through 3/31/23



Checking account information

Beginning balance	\$ 2,344.17
OGHS	\$ 361.40
Lilies	\$ 64.00
<u>Weekly deposits</u>	<u>\$ 14,057.86</u>
Subtotal	\$ 16,827.43
Salary	--\$ 7,138.06
Church Maintenance	—\$ 2,942.18
Office Expenses	—\$ 412.76
Continuing Education	—\$ 70.00
Worship Ministry	—\$ 20.00
OCWM. OGHS	—\$ 1,370.40
<u>Renner's</u>	<u>—\$ 500.00</u>
Final Balance	\$ 4374.03

▶ April 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Renewed Hope 4-7 FH	5:30 PM Girl Scouts FH	5:30 PM Girl Scouts		Maundy Thursday First Presbyterian 6 PM Supper 7 PM service		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10:15 Worship Easter	6 PM Girl Scouts	5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10 Book club Lifeline Screening 8-6 FH		1 PM FH Delphians	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship		5:30 PM Girl Scouts			Girl Scouts Overnight start at 5 PM	Ends at 10AM Yard cleanup 9-12
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Annual Meet- ing Unity Council	6 PM Girl Scouts	5:30 PM Girl Scouts				
30						
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Confirmation Potluck						

► May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	3	4	5	6
7 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Youth at Ani- mal Shelter 2-4 Renewed Hope 4-7 FH	8 6 PM Girl Scouts	9 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10	11	12 Sue out for the day	13
14 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	15	16 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	17	18	19	20
21 10:15 Worship	22 6 PM Girl Scouts	23 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	24	25	26	27
28 10:15 Worship Pentecost Wear Red to church	29	30	31			