



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of March 26, 2020

**ALL in-person church activities are CANCELED through the end of April.**

**Dear First Congregational,**

The sunshine this week blesses my soul. There are too many clouds these days, both in the weather pattern and in our social patterns. The global pandemic of COVID-19 is a massive cloud of the unknown. We don't know its full impact and there is so much we don't know. This is why we need to **Be The Church** now more than ever. We remain committed to being a place to belong, a place to heal, and a place to love. We will continue to live into our mission as we seek to **Be the Church** by **Worshiping, Connecting,** and **Loving**. Our church leaders are faithfully and wisely working to ensure that we are able to take care of one another while living into our mission.

One practical way we are showing our **LOVE** for one another is by creating an **EMERGENCY FUND** for church members in need. This is a new fund that is seeking your donations. You can send a check to the church with "emergency fund" on the memo or make a donation on the church website. To request funds for you or your family, please contact me by email [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org) or cell (386) 478-9012. This fund seeks to support your housing, food, and medical needs if you find yourselves unemployed or underemployed. We want to **LOVE** one another and that is an important way to show our **LOVE** in ways that matter.

Remember that you are not alone and you are loved.

Peace,  
Pastor Sarah

## Worship

### **Sunday Adult Worship, 9:45 a.m.**

Greetings to all! Last Sunday 11 of us gathered via Zoom to connect and to reflect on the devotion on page 29 in our Lenten Devotional, "For the Beauty of the Earth." Did you know that trees are connected with one another? Check it out.

This Sunday we will read "Worshiping with the Wood Thrush", page 36. We will read the scripture Matthew 13:31-32. We will also read the poem "Such Singing in the Wild Branches" by Mary Oliver (you can find it on the internet <https://blog.pachamama.org/poem-such-singing-in-the-wild-branches-by-mary-oliver-2>). We will have some time to reflect and share how these readings touch us in this time of limited physical touch. Zoom in and join us, 9:30 - 10:30.

Join us by clicking on this link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/819129758?pwd=VWNBQWZOSVpSWU1JaERZRVIRd3J0QT09>

### **Sunday Worship Service on Facebook Live, 11:00 a.m.**

Pastor Sarah will preach on "Renewed Hope"

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14

**Worship services at Christian Theological Seminary** have moved to Zoom, and our own **Lianna Campos (MDiv student and UCC Member in Discernment) is preaching!** You are invited to join her for this worship service on **Wednesday, April 1st at 11:30 a.m.**

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://bit.ly/digitaldevotional> Meeting ID: 271-556-982

Password: cts

### **First Congregational Lenten Immigration Journey**

Through the season of Lent, we will explore, reflect, and pray about the biblical and contemporary theme of immigration. What does the Bible say about immigration? What is the Still Speaking God saying to the church today about immigration? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in light of the complex realities at the US/Mexico border?

**April 5 - Palm Sunday**

**April 9 - Maundy Thursday**

**April 10 - Good Friday**

**April 12 - Easter**



## **What's Happening at FC: Support While Social Distancing**

### **Staying Connected**

**FC Facebook page** (click [here](#))

**"First Congregational Indy Fellowship"** group on Facebook (click [here](#)).

### **Pastoral Care**

We are all still here for you and will stay connected. You can contact Pastor Sarah for pastoral care needs at (386) 478-9012 or [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org).

### **Additional Church Support Contacts**

Pastor Carol ([casowle@gmail.com](mailto:casowle@gmail.com))

Office Administrator, Shannon ([shannon@fcindy.org](mailto:shannon@fcindy.org))

Moderator, Alice Rutherford ([alice@caloosaspire.net](mailto:alice@caloosaspire.net))

Vice Moderator, Larry Eckel ([lspeckel@comcast.net](mailto:lspeckel@comcast.net))

### **Super Easy Guide to Zoom Meeting**

The Unsure how to use Zoom? Feeling overwhelmed with new technology? Click this link ([here](#)) for super easy instructions on using Zoom meeting to connect. If you're still having difficulty understanding it after these instructions, please let us know and we will do all we can to assist you.

### **What Can We Do: Mental Health and Well-Being**

**Save Lives: Help Support Groups Meet Online**

The current reality of COVID-19 has called churches and spiritual leaders to respond in creative and imaginative ways. Churches are stepping up to offer the community encouragement, companionship, and care in new ways. We're adapting to online worship services, member phone trees, and online meetings. These Spirit-Led actions help us remain connected, even as we engage in the practice of social distancing. The UCC Mental Health Network would also like to start the conversation about how we might reach out and help the broader Mental Health community. One such way is to help empower the life-saving mental health and substance use support groups that gather in our buildings to continue to meet by sharing our online meeting technology.

### **Zooming to End Isolation and Despair**

As church buildings lay vacant for the larger good, mental health support groups, like NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) groups, and AA meetings, are left with no place to gather. Those of us struggling with Mental Health challenges are particularly vulnerable to isolation. This can increase anxiety and decrease opportunities to support sobriety, share concerns, and practice skills related to mental well-being.

Most of these support groups are entirely volunteer-run, and members may be struggling with economic insecurity. They may not have the capacity to pay for an online meeting account. Providing an hour or two of access on Zoom or another online meeting platform to support groups promotes the well-being of the broader community.

One example is Mountain View United Church, a WISE Congregation for Mental Health in Aurora, Colorado. They have been hosting NAMI and Aurora Mental Health Center support group meetings through their Zoom account ([www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)). This account costs \$15 a month, and a staff member sets up the sessions for both church groups and external support groups. Once the meeting is set up, the church hands over technical control to the meeting facilitator, this helps support group members know their conversations remain confidential. It takes about 5 minutes of staff time per meeting but provides immeasurable help.

### **Connecting to Care**

In addition to offering online meeting access, we can enhance everyone's mental health by sharing information on mental health resources, like the following:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline offers confidential help at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (press 1 for veterans, 2 for Spanish),
- The national Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7/365 crisis counseling & emotional support and continues to be available for anyone experiencing distress or other mental health concerns during the ongoing COVID-19 infectious disease outbreak. Calls (1-800-985-5990; press "2" for Spanish) and texts (text TalkWithUs to 66746) are answered by trained counselors from a network of independently operated

crisis centers located across the U.S.

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Information HelpLine provides information and referral services. 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) and [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).
- The Trevor Project hotline offers support for LGBTQIA+ youth and families struggling with mental health challenges at 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (488-7386) and [www.theTrevorProject.org](http://www.theTrevorProject.org)

In a time where panic can sometimes push aside our faith in God's presence with us, we can be a voice of hope and imagination for those in need. By reaching out and offering the opportunity for support groups to meet in our virtual churches we continue to create community, show compassion, and connect with one another.

For more information on becoming WISE and offering mental health resources at your church, go to the UCC Mental Health Network page at [www.mhn-ucc.org](http://www.mhn-ucc.org).

Rev. Amy Petré Hill  
Minister of Mental Health & Inclusion  
Mountain View United Church, Aurora, CO  
& UCC Mental Health Network

Rev. Dr. Jason Whitehead, LCSW  
Denver Presbytery Mental Health & Wellness Task Force

### **Indiana to Offer Psychological First Aid Trainings**

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and American Red Cross Indiana will launch two virtual psychological first aid training courses for healthcare and social services professionals. The training is to help individuals exposed to a traumatic event or disaster. They'll take place from 1 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7 to the first 30 participants to register for each session.

- <https://ddrsprovider.fssa.in.gov/Events/Public/Register.aspx?ReturnTo=Calendar&CalendarMonth=4&CalendarYear=2020&CourseID=857>

Anyone feeling anxiety from the pandemic should be encouraged to call the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline at 800-985-5990**, or **text "TalkWithUs" to 66746**. Users will be connected with trained crisis counselors.

### **From the IK Conference Office: Weekly Prayer and Conference Minister Pastoral Word**

Last week we began a weekly tradition that will last the duration of this virus by praying on

wednesdays together at noon. Someone from the Conference will offer a written prayer that we will post online each week and then we just ask that you consider pausing at noon on Wednesday just to pray with your siblings in Christ across the conference. This week you can expect two other things to accompany this prayer time.

1. In addition to the prayer time, in the email you will receive with the prayer, you will also receive a short video of the Minister of Music at St. Andrew UCC in Louisville, KY, J.R. Cannaday, providing us with a musical offering of the song "Let Your Faith Be Stronger Than Your Fear." May it be a thin place of connection with God during this time.

2. Just after prayer, at 12:15pm Eastern/ 11:15am Central, please go to the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Facebook page to experience a live pastoral word from our Conference Minister, the Rev. Chad Abbott. He will address us each week at 12:15pm over these next several weeks.



### **March Mission of the Month: One Great Hour of Sharing**

The Mission of the Month in March is One Great Hour of Sharing. This is one of the five special offerings of the UCC and provides support around the world for disaster relief and community restoration. Begun after the devastation of World War II, Christian churches from a number of denominations responded to the call for international relief. Each denomination raised and directed their own funds but did so as a part of a common effort that beginning in 1950 has been called One Great Hour of Sharing. In 2020, the UCC will use our offering to respond to international disasters, to assist refugees in the United States, and to help communities become more sustainable with programs that help people to help themselves. This offering is our opportunity to share with the people of the world and be present when our love and support are most in need.

**DONATE ONLINE** at: [https://www.ucc.org/oghs\\_gifts](https://www.ucc.org/oghs_gifts)

### **Pantry Items of the Month**

During the month of March, we are collecting: spaghetti, rice, juices, peanut butter, and bar

soap.

### **Food Donations for the Northside Pantry**

Donations have been generous and are appreciated. Please keep them coming! There is great need for this support right now! We are grateful to the Meridian Hills Nursery School and Kindergarten who has agreed to continue helping us deliver the food to the pantry.

### **Continue Your Support of First Congregational UCC**

Please continue supporting the mission and ministries of your local church at <http://www.fcindy.org/online-giving/>

### **Support Your Local IN-KY Conference Through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)**

The staff of the IKC are working tirelessly to support local churches as we all discern best practices and how to get through this time together. Please remember to support the work they do and the many ministries they support through your **OCWM**

**Giving** at: <https://ikcucc.org/connect/donate/>

### **Eviction Ministry Donations**

The Eviction Ministry is a new ministry of the SouthEast Association of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the UCC. The purpose of this ministry is to offer assistance to those who do not qualify for other state or local assistance programs and without such assistance would be evicted from their homes. During this time of increased financial concerns and unemployment, we anticipate an increase of requests for assistance. Please consider making a donation. **Checks can be made out to: Southeast Association of the IKC UCC.** Please include in the **memo line: "Eviction Ministry."**

Donations can be mailed to the treasurer at:

SE Association Eviction Ministry

Attn: Margie Potter

726 Coach Rd.

Indianapolis, IN 46227

Thank you for your generosity!

- Shannon Abbott, Eviction Ministry Team

### **Feeding Families**

Gleaner's and Second Helpings are two of the food banks currently offering food to children who usually get their meals from school.

Donate to **Gleaner's** by clicking on the link [here](#).

Donate to **Second Helpings** by clicking on the link [here](#).

**THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL**

**Sunday morning worship 11AM via Facebook Live**  
at <https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/>

**All other events have been canceled through the end of April.**