



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

THE PILGRIM COLONY

May 2020

Pastor's Reflections

The first days of May find us living in the midst of a global pandemic. We are sheltering in place for the third month. We last held worship together in the sanctuary on Sunday, March 15. Since then we've taken church online as best as we can for the health and safety of all, driven by our deep love for one another. Thank you all for your love and support, your dedication and faithfulness, your perseverance and generosity, your hard work and commitment to continue to support our mission and ministry.

One way to view this time is through the spiritual lens of pilgrimage. Rev. Dr. Sarah Drummond, a United Church of Christ minister, professor and founding Dean of Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, invites us to consider how this tragic time can teach us mindfulness. What might self-isolation show us about ourselves?

In her April 17 blog post "Pilgrimage Within" she says: "These days of self-isolation bear some resemblance to pilgrimage as a spiritual practice. Both pandemic self-isolation and spiritual pilgrimage strive toward worthy goals. Pilgrims set out on historic paths to deepen their connection with Christians through the ages and thus find new ways of loving God, a noble pursuit if I have ever heard one. Slowing the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect the vulnerable for whom this disease could be deadly is a cause in which I believe."

Dr. Drummond encourages us to consider this a time of pilgrimage. We can ask ourselves and ask one another, "What have you learned about yourself lately?" I would add for us, what have we learned about what it means to Be The Church?

One of the opportunities of this time is mindfulness, to take a pilgrimage within. In the midst of a horrible situation, here we are still living, still discovering ways to Be The Church, the Body of Christ, still worshipping, still connecting, still loving.

You are not alone. God loves you.

With hope,
Pastor Sarah

Pastoral Care and Support: Contact Pastor Sarah at pastorsarah@fcindy.org and (386)478-9012. We are here for you.



Pastoral Congregation Relations Committee

The pastoral office and other positions of staff leadership exist to build up the congregation as part of the Body of Christ and to equip the saints for the mission of the church. The particular relationship between a pastor and congregants should be tended deliberately, so that the ministries of both pastor and congregation complement each other and further God's grace in the world. As with any relationship, it must be respected and nurtured to grow in healthy and projective ways. For this reason, a Pastoral Congregation Relations Committee (PCRC) exists in a congregation to advise, assist, and promote the growth of this vital relationship.

PCRC meet quarterly and are available throughout the year for support and conversation. We are blessed to have both Pastor Sarah and Pastor Carol serve our congregation. Currently, Pastor Carol's focus is on the following areas: pulpit supply, pastoral care visits, Adult Education and Worship Leader coordination.

PCRC for Pastor Sarah: Randy Walker, Lianna Campos, Nancy Dickinson, Chuck Kiphart

PCRC for Pastor Carol: Bob Cook, Janet Selby, Clark Collier, susana-judith rae

Moderator's Reflections

Moonless nights. Rain squalls. Soupy fog. All were sailing conditions that were disorienting at best, nightmarish at worst. Under such conditions, when the boat was sailing along at 5-8 knots (nautical miles per hour), the possibility of hitting something unseen – another yacht, a freighter, a semi-submerged shipping container – was always frighteningly forefront in my mind. Each time, I breathed a profound sigh of relief and said a small prayer of gratitude when the skies cleared and the horizons came into view. I felt more in control with the ability to see beyond our boat's bow.

Navigating these days of the covid-19 pandemic feels something like those sailing experiences. Except that I always knew those sailing conditions were temporary. When we put our social lives on hold some seven weeks ago, I presumed the same in that action. Now however, there seems to be no real end in sight. In accordance with guidance from our Indiana-Kentucky Conference (based upon federal and state public health authority guidelines), Church Council has decided to continue our no in-person gatherings policy for at least another month, and possibly longer. It will be many more weeks before the threshold of declining cases and deaths is met in order for us to safely resume worship in our sanctuary. Even at that, latest notifications from the CDC suggest that covid-19 may wreak even deadlier havoc come fall and winter, causing ever greater needs for mitigation. For me, these times can feel like an endless moonless night fraught with rain squalls and soupy fog, with all the attendant fears and lack of control.

But I believe that we can find our way to a safe and comfortable harbor, even as the dark, rainy night goes on. A team has been created to determine safe and best practices for easing back into small gatherings, and to develop a plan for doing so at the right time. Worship is being expanded to include more voices and worship elements in order to make virtual church feel a bit more like sanctuary worship. Visitors to our virtual worship are being welcomed into our faith community. Times for connecting with one another are regularly available on Zoom for all who wish to participate. The life and ministries of our church go on, even in this unfamiliar manner, and I urge our church boards and teams to begin developing ideas for new ways to minister in these changing times. There is much that can still be done to bring God's light and love to our world.

So rather than feeling stalled or tossed about on these stormy seas, let's set our sails to make our own way through this coronavirus tempest. Our home port of church life as it was may be forever in our wake, but God leads us toward a new horizon. As we have always done, let's follow together in faith to find the new places to "Be The Church" that God is calling us to.

- Alice Rutherford, Moderator

Intern Reflections



Student Pastor Reflections: Dear Church, I never thought my first experience of being a student pastor would include a pandemic. But here we are, and here we are *together*. I've been really amazed by the resilience and determination of each of you. The way you're tending to yourselves and your loved ones amid this time has inspired me and increased my vision of what it really means to be The Church. Thank you. As we approach the end of my semester, we also approach my one-year anniversary at FC Indy (April 28). Thus, I am hopeful to transition into a "Member-In-Discernment" (God-willing!) and would

appreciate your prayers through that process. I also want to let you know that I will be taking some time off as your Student Pastor over the summer, but am humbled and thrilled to say I will be back in the fall once again in the Student Pastor role! Thank you for the gift of being able to continually accompany you as we move through life and all of life's challenges together. Learning from Pastor Sarah and each of you has given me so much hope in the future of the church. You can count on me not being a stranger and seeing me online, too! :) Also, if you're up for some reading, [I recently wrote a piece about the importance of grieving, slowing down, paying attention, and staying tender: https://bit.ly/2XIH66u](https://bit.ly/2XIH66u)

My love and appreciation to each of you!

- Cassidy Hall, Student Pastor (studentpastor@fcindy.org)



Just Peace Intern Reflections: Serving as your Just Peace intern this semester has been such an amazing experience and, even though our time together may have been cut short, I am so thankful for how welcoming you all have been. You all have supported me from the first day and I am so glad that I had the opportunity to work through the issue of immigration with you and keep expanding the reach of the Just Peace Covenant. I was so inspired by the congregation's commitment to advocacy and inclusivity and the passion for helping the community. This has been an incredible opportunity for my personal growth and education. I am grateful to you all and can't wait to see how Just Peace grows and how you continue to make a difference!

Thanks!

Olivia Bradley, Just Peace Intern

WORSHIP & FAITH

Elizabeth Price, Chair

Sunday Adult Class, 9:30-10:30 am

Class will meet via Zoom (see instructions below)

- **May 3 - WISE presents**
- **May 10 - write letters for Bread for the World**
- **May 17 - "Quotable Scriptures"** Do you have a favorite scripture? Maybe one that you repeat over and over in the dark or on sleepless nights? One that is helping you cope with the coronavirus pandemic? Share a favorite scripture and, if you like, reflect on its meaning in your life. Or draw a picture of your scripture and share it via the share screen feature of Zoom. This is an opportunity to share something of our individual faith journeys with one another. (try searching for "free scripture coloring pages" on the internet for examples.)
- **May 24 - "Devotion to Generosity"** with Wendy Baldwin
- **May 31 - TBD**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9264494206>

Phone call only: 1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago), you will be prompted for the meeting ID 926 449 4206, followed by the # sign. If you don't have a device with visual display, you can simply call in and participant as a 'conference call'.



May Worship Theme: Enjoy this Life

In continuing our "Be the Church" focus in worship over the next few months, throughout the month of March we will engage in what it means as the church to **enjoy this life**.

Just Peace Team: A Way to Achieve Peace

"There is a future for peacemakers" (Psalm 37:37 The Inclusive Bible).

When stressed, frazzled, disconcerted, and not the least bit peaceful, what do you do to relax? Repeating the longer version of "The Serenity Prayer," attributed to Union Theological Seminary professor, ethicist, and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), is a favorite way for some of us to calm ourselves:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

*Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;*

*Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.*

Many times this prayer has brought me inner-peace; however, i've puzzled over the suggestion that accepting hardship is "a pathway to peace." How about you? Does accepting adversity seem an effective route to achieve peace or to calm down? Won't you join me in brainstorming ideas about Niebuhr's unusual path to peace?

What have been adversities in your life? Now that we have experienced many surprises that accompany a global pandemic, would you call some of your recent challenges "hardships"? If so, where might you put other seeming hardships on a continuum of mild to major ones? How do you think your COVID-19 challenges and other life challenges compare in intensity with those of people of color? With the severity of current living conditions in Europe? In Asia? In South America? In Russia? In Africa? With children in the U.S.? According to Jason DeParle's April 17, 2020 *New York Times* article "A Gloomy Prediction on How Much Poverty Could Rise," poverty is soon ["likely to rise disproportionately among children."](#)

After the COVID-19 challenges, might we have more gratitude for how God daily takes care of us? Will we stop taking for granted the many ways that God has blessed us throughout life? Will we make it a priority to heed what is our part to achieve peace? What might we learn from our various adversities? Might difficulties increase our empathy and compassion for impoverished people throughout both the U.S. and the world? How might recent concerns about the future of the U.S. call attention to our nation's self-obsessing tendencies and sense of entitlement? When we hear about, see, or notice instances of other people's troubles being far harsher than whatever we currently complain, whine, or grumble about, might that realization ameliorate us? How could serenely accepting hardships change our outlook on life? How might living one day at a time increase our inner peace? How might enjoying one moment at a time influence us to see hard times as Niebuhr saw them?

How do our difficulties compare with Jesus'? What has Jesus' life taught us about peace? When you find yourself complaining, moaning, or wailing, can you imagine quickly moving on to counting your blessings? Have you ever felt sheepish to realize that whatever your current misfortunes are, they could be worse, often far worse?

As we stay home more now, how might we use the time to better ourselves, such as reading to increase our empathy for others? Matthew Sanford's amazing, inspirational 2006 book *Waking; A Memoir of Trauma and Transcendence* could do that. It's the true story about how a car accident left Sanford paralyzed from the chest down. Likewise, let's consider films and TV shows, such as the 2008-2009 episodes of *Raising the Bar*, to heighten empathy for others. Watching its various episodes has increased my compassion for the clients of public defenders.

Does a Camelot life seem less desirable if we give special attention to hardships possibly being a path to peace? Does a coddled, overindulged life eventually lead to the opposite of peace? How has pondering these ideas and questions affected your thoughts and feelings about a relationship between hardships and peace? Though Niebuhr's unique perspective may always befuddle us, maybe considering, reflecting on, and discussing these unusual ideas would be a good exercise for us all.

- susanna-judith rae, Just Peace Team member

OUTREACH & SERVICE

Ann Leatherman, Chair

May Mission of the Month: UCC Mental Health Network

May is Mental Health Month. As a W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) congregation, FC is supporting the UCC Mental Health Network as the Mission of the Month. Please send a check to the church with MOM: UCC MHN in the memo line, or donate online at: www.mhn-ucc.org



Mission

The United Church of Christ Mental Health Network works to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of people with mental illnesses/brain disorders and their families in the life, leadership and work of congregations.

Vision

We envision a future in which:

- * People with mental illnesses feel welcomed, supported, valued and included seamlessly in the life, leadership and work of their congregation.
- * UCC congregations have eliminated stigma, and their members offer true compassion and support for people with mental illnesses and their families.
- * UCC churches are collaborating with other faith communities to widen their welcome to people with mental illnesses.

Values

- + Jesus has shown us the way to embrace those who are marginalized by society and advocate with and for them.
- + Every person has value and worth and deserves love, dignity and respect.
- + All people, regardless of mental health or disability status, have something to contribute to the life, leadership and work of their congregations.
- + Community matters. A sense of belonging is important to us all, whether we face mental health challenges ourselves or not.
- + True compassion in ministry and relationships is based on equality.

History

In 1992 the Mental Health Network (formerly the Mental Illness Network) began with a grant from the American Missionary Association of the United Church of Christ. We began as a response to the need for families and others to communicate among themselves about their experiences as families, and in congregations. We are, therefore, a network and not a committee.

Who are those with a mental illness?

We are your brother, your sister, the man across the street, the person next to you in the pew. In a given year, one in every four people (26.2%, according to the National Institute on Mental Health) is dealing with a mental illness, also known as a brain disorder.

Why widen the welcome to all?

Jesus reached out to people who were marginalized, to those who were ostracized, and to those who were the outcasts in the eyes of society. Jesus' compassion and embrace exemplified what His followers ought to do: reach out to the least, the lost and the lonely. The way of Jesus was comfort, not ridicule; it was love, not indifference; it was empathy, not hostility. The way of Jesus is our spiritual calling. It is the way we are to acknowledge and affirm the worth of everyone, especially those who are deemed less than, not enough, and not deserving of respect. Jesus' way is to overturn the customs that put the lowly down and to lift up those who have been shut out. **It is our spiritual calling to follow Jesus that leads us to widen our welcome.**

Partner with us

- + While the diagnosis and treatment of serious mental illness is undergoing a revolution, the discrimination against persons with mental health concerns is still a fact of life.
- + We believe that education through our churches is one key to changing this discrimination.
- + We believe that networking together within the UCC and with similar networks in other denominations and faith groups will help us in our efforts.
- + We believe that advocacy for individuals and for social and legislative change will improve the life of many.
- + We believe that through our own policies and within our own ministries we can model for the rest of society how to be caring congregations and a compassionate denomination. The UCC Mental Health Network exists to provide resources so that individuals and congregations may engage in these ministries.

FC's WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged) Mental Health Team

Sunday, **May 17th** is **Mental Health Sunday**. We hope to have some Good News in announcing our twice postponed "Mental Health Spiritual Support Group" will be going to ZOOM! Sandy and I will be sharing in the adult class Sunday morning, May 3 on ZOOM at 9:30. Join us to learn more about your church's WISE Mental Health Team as we share about what we do and what the spiritual support group is all about. Many, according to Pastor Sarah, have been seeking assistance and support through these troubling days and your WISE Team wants to help. We will be seeking a time and day for this to happen and will announce final details soon. The Guidelines for this group have been shared in the Colony and will be again. Watch your Epistle and upcoming Colony newsletters closely!!

*"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love and sound judgment."
2 Timothy 1:7*

The air we breathe these days is tainted by fear. Our anxiety for ourselves, our loved ones, our community, and the world is having a field day. There are numerous ways for each of us to release our fear and find the power that comes from trust. Trust that we, human beings, will find a way through even when some walk through the shadow of the valley. We can consider what we can control and what we cannot control. That in all things we can receive, find and offer love to one another. And we can be judicious as we move on this changing earth. This is encouraging and it can boost our faith system, too! [This paragraph from our UCC Mental Health Network by Rev. Johnson.]

Peace to all,

Rev. Dr. Patrick Larracey, co-chair of our WISE Mental Health Team.

"Isolation" (by Alan Johnson, chair UCC Mental Health Network)

You can subscribe to these "The Journey" articles from mhn-ucc.org

Dr. Johnson shares in his recent article, "We all know there continues to be significant impact by the coronavirus . . . has lead to cancellations of many programs . . . I want to offer some suggestions about a mental health perspective:

Things you can do to support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
- Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know if it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn to cope from you.
- Limit your child's exposure to media coverage. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or church, help them back to their regular activity.
- Be a role model: take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.

It is normal to feel vulnerable and overwhelmed about this outbreak. It is especially true if you have experienced trauma or a mental health problem in the past. Additionally, if you have a long-term physical condition that makes you more vulnerable to the effects of the coronavirus.

- It's important to acknowledge these feelings and remind each other to look after our physical and mental health. We should also be aware of and avoid increasing habits that may not be helpful in the long term, like smoking and drinking.
- Try and reassure people you know who may be worried and check in with people who you know are living alone.
- Stigma and xenophobia are two aspects of the of the societal impacts of pandemic infectious outbreaks. Unfortunately, many Chinese individuals have been shunned and ridiculed because the coronavirus started in 'their country'. Chinese restaurants in major U.S. cities have lost business. Xenophobia against individuals of Asian descent because of this virus has gone unnoticed. This is hate and racism to the core.

Perhaps you are finding trusted and authentic ways or even new ways for you to live through these days and weeks of uncertainty about the coronavirus. Do not be silent if you find yourself withdrawing and confused. Reach out. Ask others to hear you as you listen to them. Ask for God's compassion to be by your side. Even in the darkest valley, the light of Christ will shine upon us as we walk faithfully."

Bread for the World Offering of Letters, 2020

The Offering of Letters in 2020 will be different than in other years since we are in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. We will not be meeting in person on **May 10**, when our **Offering of Letters** was scheduled. Our Indiana Bread leaders are encouraging us this year to write, email from home and report whom we have contacted to the church office at shannon@fcindy.org. That information will be turned in to our Indiana Bread leaders for a summary report. We have a goal of 50 letters from First Congregational.



For children summer is the hungriest time of year with only 1 in 5 who receive school lunch getting lunch during the summer. Indiana ranks 41st in the nation for eligible children actually accessing summer feeding programs. Traditionally children gather in parks or schoolyards to get summer lunch. But this year CDC guidelines on "social distancing" and limiting the size of groups make that method unfeasible during the pandemic. Even under normal circumstances only 16% of eligible children receive summer lunches. Consequently BFW is recommending support for the Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act (S 1918) for Summer EBT for families that are eligible for SNAP (food stamps). Electronic benefits transfer (EBT) is the state agency's method by which SNAP benefits are distributed to families and individuals. EBT cards look just like a credit or debit card and work similarly, and help reduce the stigma of nutrition assistance by eliminating conspicuous food stamps. Summer EBT

would expand and strengthen effective pilot projects in which funds are deposited to parents' EBT cards so they can buy extra food for their families in the summer.

Bread is also recommending an immediate 15% increase above the maximum SNAP benefits to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to the resources they need. SNAP benefits help people buy enough food and the purchases stimulate the economy. At a time when the jobless numbers are over 22 million, SNAP benefits are more important than ever. Those who were already receiving SNAP benefits are among the most vulnerable during this pandemic. They are not able to work from home and if working, put themselves at risk. They are more likely to be using public transportation and also have more underlying health issues. We are also asked to remember our neighbors world-wide by urging our legislators to support legislation that strengthens U.S. leadership and increases funding for global nutrition. People both here and abroad who get proper nutrition are less likely to succumb to illness.

Wherever you are on or about May 10, please take part in our virtual Offering of Letters and then report your actions. You will need to mail your letters yourself. Remember to use the legislators' Indiana addresses, not the DC ones. Some are as follows:

- Sen. Todd Young, 251 N. Illinois S., Suite 120, Indianapolis, IN 46204
- Sen. Mike Braun, 115 N. Penn. St., Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46204
- Rep. Andre Carson, 300 E. Fall Creek Pkwy., Suite 300, Indianapolis, IN 46205
- Rep. Susan Brooks, 11611 N. Meridian St., Suite 415, Carmel, IN 46032
- Rep. Jim Baird, 355 S. Washington St., Suite 210, Danville, IN 46122

A sample letter will be coming in a special E-pistle early in May. Thank you for your participation, and please remember to report your letters, e-mails or calls to the church office at shannon@fcindy.org.

TRUSTEES

Steve Coomer & Randy Walker, Co-Chairs

Financial Update

When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands

Here are the financial results through March 31, 2020.

1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary - Last quarter 1/1/2020 through 3/31/2020 Using 2020 Budget 1

20

Category	Actual	Q1 2020 Budget	Difference
INCOME	65,100	72,243	-7,143
M. Unrestricted Contributions	65,100	72,243	-7,143
M.01 Pledged Offerings	45,972	51,891	-5,919
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	3,801	5,025	-1,224
M.03 Rollover Prior Year Surplus_D...	15,327	15,327	0
M.04 Foundation - Endowment Fund...	0	0	0
M.05 Foundation - Minister Fund Draw	0	0	0
M.06 Foundation - Trad. Music Fund...	0	0	0
M.07. Transfer from Youth Fund	0	0	0
M.08 Other Transfers from Restr Ac...	0	0	0
EXPENSES	67,138	65,310	-1,828
A. Pastoral Leadership	30,254	30,663	408
B. Worship & Faith	10,195	10,473	278
C. Care & Connections	188	105	-83
D. Witness & Welcome	369	241	-128
E. Outreach & Service	4,171	4,089	-82
F. Trustees	0	12	12
G. Administration & Operations	5,765	5,247	-518
H. House & Grounds	14,567	12,935	-1,632
I. Miscellaneous	1,629	1,546	-83
Net Difference:	-2,038	6,933	-8,971

Highlights:

- **Income of \$65,100** was \$7,100 below budget. There is a shortfall in both pledge receipts and other contributions. As expected, there has been a drop-off in contributions after the church closed due to the virus.
- **Expenses of \$67,100** were over budget by \$1,800, due to over-budget expenses in building maintenance and IT support.
- Our **cash position** at March 31 was sound - \$34,000 aggregate in our checking account and money market account.
- Our March 31 **net position** (cash plus investments minus restricted funds and other committed obligations) was \$6,500 negative, a \$4,000 decline for the month of March.

Mission of the Month – March

One Great Hour of Sharing: \$1,766.41

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

- Jim Lootens, Treasurer
lootens.jb@gmail.com

WITNESS & WELCOME

Aniseh Ebbini, Chair

This pandemic has moved much of our lives online. Virtual meetings, virtual book clubs, virtual school lessons, and virtual worship services. Last month I invited our congregation to give a warm and extravagant virtual welcome to visitors we see on our Facebook Live Sunday services. So many of you have made great efforts to welcome and engage our virtual visitors. Thank you for embodying the spirit of First Congregational Church.



CARE & CONNECTIONS

Wendy Baldwin, Chair

Care and Connect

Our church is known for its warm welcome and care; let's show this quality by reaching out to others in our church family while we are not able to be together in person! Can you contact 3-5 people each week, by phone, text, e-mail, or a card in the mail? Think of the people that you say 'hi' to at church on a "normal" Sunday, and continue that tradition while we are apart. Reach out to different people each week so we broaden our circle. If needed, a recently updated 'address directory' is located in the "Minutes" section of our website (password protected), or let me know if you need a copy. Let's "Be the Church" within our church family during this time of isolation.

Fellowship and fun!

During this time of no in-person church gatherings, please check the weekly e-pistles for opportunities to be in community.

The following Zoom gatherings are scheduled for May:

- **Friday Fellowship:** Fridays at 5 pm, a time for us to visit
- **Sunday "Coffee Hour":** Sundays at 11:30 am, or immediately following worship
- **Buzz: Q&A –** Sunday, May 3 at 12:30 pm

To join these Zoom meetings, click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9264494206?pwd=dmtWbWE5UXRBtk5pcHZlYlB0aEFVUT09>

Meeting ID: 926 449 4206

Password: 7171

To Join by Phone call only: 1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago), you will be prompted for the meeting ID 926 449 4206, followed by the # sign, and the Password 7171, followed by the # sign.

If you don't have a device with visual display, you can simply call in and participant as a 'conference call'.

Instructions for Zooming:

1. If you plan to use your smart phone or tablet, you need to download the Zoom app before the meeting. Find it in the app store for your mobile device.
2. If you plan to join the meeting via your computer and don't already have ZOOM on your computer, you'll be asked to download it. It will self-install and then you'll be taken to the meeting.
3. **NOTE: you do not have to register or set up a free account to be a participant in a meeting. You can join a meeting without signing in.**
4. You will be asked whether you want to join with video (I hope you say Yes) and what type of audio you wish to use, your phone or your computer.
5. To use your phone's audio, you will have to select "use internet audio."

Due to the recent reports of Zoom meeting hacks, the Host will be using the 'waiting room' option to only allow recognized people into the Zoom gathering.

Need Toilet Paper & Disinfectant?

Even though stores are trying hard to re-stock supplies, it is still difficult to find these items. First Congregational is expecting a shipment in early April from its supplier. We will have 2-ply toilet paper, spray disinfectant, paper towels, and gloves (our supplier is also out of stock of hand sanitizer and wipes). Please contact Wendy Baldwin to arrange delivery. Donations to cover the cost of the supplies will be gratefully accepted.



Photo: USA Today

COMMUNITY

Meridian Hills School

Some of you may have seen and read this before. If so, it's worth another read. If this is your first time seeing it, take your time reading and processing. This is not my work. This was sent to me and well worth sharing with you all. During this Covid-19 stay at home time, I have spent many hours reflecting on life past, present and future. I have talked with friends, family and neighbors. For me, it's a healthy way to get out of my head at times and also hear ideas and thoughts from others. I am sure many of you have felt the same. I am also sure many of you have heard many of the same comments that I have heard as well. "Can't wait to get back to normal". "We need to get back to the way things were". "Boy it'll be good once we reopen everything". Each time I heard one of these comments, something just kept gnawing at my brain. Do we really want everything to go back to the way it was? Was everything going so wonderfully before..? I was hoping that this break from our routines and always having everything at the ready, might cause us to pause and reflect.

It has been interesting chatting with folks and reading comments posted during this time. I have seen many learn new skills-in the cooking department, art department, needlework department, building department. I have seen families rediscover board games, outdoor activities, and creative ways doing things together. I have noticed a movement towards simple, almost 'old-fashioned activities and lifestyles. I've seen fun mail showing up at people's homes. This warms my heart. My hope is that we don't lose this excitement and (re)discovery. I have also read where folks complain about not being able to have their specialty needs and services around. Maybe during these times they might discover that some of their 'needs' are actually 'wants' and might not be as necessary as they once

thought. I truly hope that there is a shift in the way people look at their lives and the world around them.

As I was hearing and reading all of these comments and reflecting on my own, a friend sent this to me. And suddenly, many things seemed to be clearer for me. An 'Aha' moment you might say.

" 40
The official lockdown started March 23 and will likely end May 1st.
That is EXACTLY 40 days.
The Latin root of the word 'quarantine' is 'forty'.
So what does the Bible say about 40?
The flood lasted 40 days.
40 years Moses stayed on Mount Sinai to receive the Commandments.
Exodus lasted 40 years.
Jesus fasted for 40 days.
40 days for a woman to rest after giving birth.
Optimum number of weeks for human gestation is 40.
A group of theologians thinks the number 40 represents 'change'. It is the time of preparing a person, or people, to make a fundamental change.
Something will happen after these 40 days. Just believe and pray. Remember, whenever the number 40 appears in the Bible, there is 'change'.
Please know that during this 'quarantine' rivers are clearing up, vegetation is growing, the air is becoming cleaner because of less pollution, there is less theft and murder, and healing is happening.
The Earth is at rest for the first time in many years and hearts are truly transforming.
Remember we are in the year 2020, and $20 + 20 = 40$.
Also, 2020 is the year of the United States Census. Jesus was born during a census.
Lastly, 2020 is perfect vision. May our sight focus on the Lord and living according to His perfect vision for us knowing He holds us in the palm of His hand.
May these days of 'quarantine' bring spiritual liberation to our souls, our nation, and our world."

I realize that changes are occurring daily/weekly surrounding Covid-19 and that the quarantine may not actually be 40 days. The message still stands and I hope that people will take this time to reflect, rebuild, refocus and reconnect.

Be Safe,
(Virtual) Hugs,
Linda

Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ (IKC UCC)

Weekly Prayer and Conference Minister Pastoral Word

We have begun 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.



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, Rev. Chad Abbott. He will address us each week at 12:15pm over these next several weeks.



IKC Annual Gathering Will Meet Virtually

Dear Indiana-Kentucky Conference,

We bring you updates from our IKC Board in regards to our Annual Gathering plans, the business of the church, and the ways in which we will gather as a Conference community. In a slight adjustment to our previous Annual Gathering dates, we will meet **virtually using electronic, online platforms the last weekend in June, 2020. Specific dates and times will be forthcoming. Mark your calendars and keep an eye out for the registration announcement, coming soon.**

Normally, we would come together in discernment, prayer, and fellowship in person at our Annual Gathering. In light of the continuing concerns about COVID-19, our Board has come to a consensus about how we will gather this year to maintain the integrity of the work we do at Annual Gathering and to keep our work going in the safest way.

- We **will not meet in person** for Annual Gathering this year. We will meet through electronic means on virtual platforms.
- Our business meeting will be conducted electronically with attention and adherence to the requirements of our Constitution and Bylaws.
- We will offer both a time for education and for worship.
- We will extend the nominations period through May 15. You can submit nominations for open Board positions and General Synod delegates by clicking [this link to fill out the online nominations form](#), or [this link for more information about other ways to make a nomination](#).
- We will meet in shortened sessions.

Details about how and with what technology we will gather are forthcoming. We are looking at options that will include as many people as possible in the most efficient way possible and will be communicating more information soon. **Registration is coming soon, so mark your calendar.**

We thank you for your patience and willingness to be flexible, nimble, open-minded, and open-hearted in this time.

With blessings on all the ways that you are Christ in the world,

Rev. Chad R. Abbott, Conference Minister &
Jill Olinger, Chair, Board of Directors



The Indiana Kentucky Conference WISE (for Mental Health) Team has been busy over the past three weeks connecting with our pastors and chaplains. We currently have two projects—one connecting with our chaplains and one connecting with our active pastors.

Many of our twenty-two chaplains are serving on the front lines of hospitals, hospice care, universities, or the military during this covid-19 outbreak. During this time it is important to help them feel cared for and supported in their ministry. The WISE Team has offered to provide a meal to each of our chaplains. Members of our team have placed the meal order at a

restaurant of their choice, arranged for the meal to be pick up or delivered, and we have paid for these meals. This is gift is an expression of our covenant relationship of love for each of them during this time.

In addition, the IKC Board of Directors sent out a survey to get a sense of the needs of our churches and pastors. In response to that survey a group of clergy and lay people indicated a willingness to help provide spiritual care to others within our conference. According to the survey our clergy are grieving, hurting, and seeking community. The WISE Team was tasked with creating a Spiritual Care Team to connect with and support our clergy by providing spiritual and mental health care, and resources. Every active pastor in our conference will be receiving a phone call every two weeks to check-in.

One of the members of our Team, Rev. Shannon Abbott has written several mediations to help people take a quiet moment in the midst of these challenging days. You can find that video in the April 2020 INKY News.

One of our on-going projects is to provide mental health resources.

Crisis Helpline: Dial 2-1-1

- This is a free, confidential referral and information helpline that connects people of all ages to the essential health and human services they need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, This helpline puts you in touch with local organizations that provide critical services that can improve and save lives.

National Suicide Prevention Helpline:1-800-273-8255

Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

- Connects veterans in crisis (and their families and friends) with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

- provides 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline:1-800-950-6264 Or Text "NAMI" to 741741 M-F 10 am – 6 pm EST

- provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives

Please be safe, wash your hands, stay home as much as possible, trust that God is in the midst of this pandemic and pray.

Blessings on the journey,

Rev. Dr. Monica Ouellette Association Conference Minister for Search, Call and Congregational Transitions WISE Team chair

WISE and the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network

I'm excited to have the opportunity to tell you about the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network, UCC Mental Health Network web site, which is your online resource for learning more about becoming a WISE Congregation for Mental Health. What does WISE mean? WISE = Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged for mental health.

UCC Mental Health Network has a 15-page booklet you can download for free which will help interested churches and Conference entities to create their own WISE Covenant for Mental Health. It is full of ideas for starting and navigating the process, how to become certified, and what do to when you become a WISE Covenant congregation or group. The web site also has lots of resources for mental health, trauma, youth mental health, support for those dealing with substance abuse, and resources for addressing dementia.

Another other great resource through the UCC Mental Health Network web site is their frequently updated blog, "The Journey." Articles include:

- The Importance of Rituals
- Workplace Bully
- Elder Mental Health

For those planning worship around issue of mental health, their web site suggests Mental Health Sunday liturgy, Blue Christmas ideas, and toolkits. For help with outreach and missions, you can check out their sections on how to help others, how to start a mental health ministry, or watch their videos.

Want to dig deeper? On November 7, 2020, you can attend the national meeting of the UCC Mental Health Network at First Congregational UCC in Indianapolis. The workshops are great. Last year I attended one on how to start a Spiritual Support Group for Mental Health and Wellness. I'm looking forward to launching that group at church this spring so that we can support folk with mental illness and those who live with them and their families and friends.

Why talk about this now? At an IKC board meeting this winter, the board voted to approve our WISE Covenant and bring a resolution to the 2020 Annual Gathering to become a WISE Conference! The IKC mental health team met monthly leading up to the board vote, including a two-hour gather in gathering of 37 people to draft the covenant; the approved draft was our fifth!

Locally this has meant a lot for my own congregation. We now have in our church library a designated shelf for mental health books and literature and we have scheduled Mental Health First Aid class which has been fully funded by the Center for Congregations. We are also putting together a resource booklet of agencies both national and in the area, publications for more information, and so much more for distribution at church. We also have invited and will continue to seek out and host guest speakers to visit our church. These include Rev. Rachel Keefe who wrote *The Lifesaving Church*. She writes, "If we want church to be lifesaving, then this is our task: to see those who are on the margins of existence—physically, emotionally, socially, or spiritually—and offer them a place of healing where they can be re-membered, rejoined to the Body of Christ.

And so we will continue to Become WISE. Not just in my congregation, but as a Conference, and this IKC WISE Team invites you to Become WISE, too.

- Rev. Dr. Patrick Larracey, IKC WISE Team



We are calling on IKC members and partners to contribute to efforts to make cloth face masks. Here are the details, and you can download a PDF with this information here: [IKC Cloth Face Mask Initiative](#).

The Disaster Preparedness and Response Ministry Team (DPRMT) is initiating a project and asking our IKC church communities to participate. With the COVID-19 spreading in the US at an alarming rate there is much concern for our health care workers. The shortage of personal protection equipment (PPE) at the hospitals, nursing homes, etc. has presented us an opportunity to make a difference in protecting those who are caring for us. Would you consider making cloth facemasks for your community's health care personnel? If so, here are some things to consider.

- There are many websites providing information on how and what materials to use to make the cloth face masks. One such resource is <https://deaconess.com/>. Once you go to their website type "How to make a Face Mask" in the search window.

Also, our own Rev. Dr. Monica Ouellette, Minister for Search, Call and Congregational Transitions, has been making masks and offers this website, <https://www.craftpassion.com/wp-json/mv-create/v1/creations/19/print>. You can contact her directly if you have questions.

- Determine where you want to take your masks. However, be sure the facility you select has a need. Also, be sure to speak with their staff to determine if they have certain criteria for making the masks.
- Please keep a tally of how many masks you make and where they were distributed. We want to recognize your efforts. Please send your tally information to gdenk5258@att.net at the end the month.

Together this body of Christ, referred to as the IKC churches, can make a difference. We look forward to your participation in the service project to combat the spread of COVID-19.

- Greg Denk, IKC Disaster Coordinator

ANNOUNCEMENTS

June Colony Submission Deadline: Please email your submissions to Shannon at shannon@fcindy.org by **May 19th**.

Men's Lunch: This lunch and discussion gathering for men of First Congregational is meeting via Zoom. They meet every other Thursday at 1 p.m. Please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081 or aa28977rwalker@gmail.com for information.

The Women's Book Circle is meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, **May 19th at 1:30 p.m.** Contact Karen Walker at (317) 319-8950 or karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com for more information.



ACTION CALENDAR: MEANINGFUL MAY 2020



MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

"Start Where You Are. Use What You Have. Do What You Can" ~ Arthur Ashe



4 Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't do

5 Send friends a photo of a time you all enjoyed together

8 Take a step towards one of your life goals, however small

7 Let someone you love know how much they mean to you

8 Set yourself a kindness mission. Give your time to help others

9 Look out for positive news and reasons to be cheerful today

10 Tell someone about why your favourite music means a lot to you

11 What are your most important values? Use them today

12 Be grateful for the little things, even in difficult times

13 Today do something to care for the natural world

14 Show your gratitude to people who are helping to make things better

15 Find out about the values and traditions of another culture

16 Look around you and notice five things you find meaningful

17 Take a positive action to help in your local community

18 Hand-write a note to someone you love and send them a photo of it

19 Find a way to craft what you are doing to give it more meaning

20 Reflect on what makes you feel really valued and appreciated

21 Share photos of 3 things you find meaningful or memorable

22 Ask a loved one or colleague what matters most to them and why

23 Share an inspiring quote with others to give them a boost

24 Do something special today and revisit it in your memory tonight

25 Give your time to help a project or charity you care about

26 Recall three things you've done that you are really proud of

27 Today link your decisions and choices to your purpose in life

28 Tell someone about an event in your life that was really meaningful

29 Think about how your actions make a difference for others

30 Find three good reasons to be hopeful about the future

31 Look up at the sky. Remember we are all part of something bigger

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

31 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together

Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind