



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of March 5, 2020

Dear First Congregational,

Lent is underway and our “Immigration journey” at First Congregational unfolds. Where will God lead us?

As we consider the Bible’s teachings and our current context, how will we be led to act as people of faith? How will this Lenten journey influence our lives and our church’s mission?

Join me this Sunday as we welcome the Rev. Daniel Meyers, from Butler University (see bio below), who will explore this Lenten theme by preaching on the spiritual value of extending hospitality to the stranger. I am looking forward to being together Sunday for worship and lunch conversation with Rev. Meyers.

Peace,
Pastor Sarah

A Note about Emails from Pastor Sarah

It appears that several of you have received suspicious emails from someone claiming to be Pastor Sarah. Please check the email address for any emails you receive from Pastor Sarah. If the email is anything other than pastorsarah@fcindy.org, please do not open it. You may report the date it was sent and the email address used to Shannon at

snannon@rcindy.org, and she can report it to our IT support.

Worship



REMEMBER: This Sunday begins Daylight Savings Time, so set your clocks ONE HOUR AHEAD before you go to bed Saturday night!!!

Adult Class - March 8, 9:45 a.m.

This Sunday, our Student Pastor, Cassidy Hall, will lead us in a discussion on Black theology and Womanist theology. We'll discuss what these theologies are, why they're important, and some of the key voices within these theological movements. After this, we'll then consider their importance for our lives individually and as a church.

Sunday Worship Service, 11:00 a.m.

Guest preacher, Rev. Daniel Meyers will preach on "Better to Receive Rather Than Give: A Meditation on Hospitality."

This Sunday, we welcome Rev. Daniel Meyers, director of the Center for Faith and Vocation at Butler University, as guest preacher. A graduate of Willamette University (Oregon) in Biochemistry and Religious Studies, Meyers earned a Master of Divinity at Yale Divinity School, was ordained in the United Church of Christ, and completed a two-year position as Earl Hall Religious Life Fellow in the Office of the University Chaplain at Columbia University. He has served in his current role at Butler University since June of 2015. Daniel supervises the program that partners with our church's Just Peace Internship. Please join us in welcoming him and hearing what he has to share with us. **We will have a soup and bread lunch following worship.**

Scripture: Luke 9:1-6

A Note From Your Music Designer

Since my time here as music designer, I've explored many musical styles and ways to orchestrate them. Every organist brings to their congregation their preferred composers and repertoire. As many of you have witnessed, I often lean towards Mozart and Mancini, as well as several contemporary sacred and classical composers. This Sunday I would like to share with you another composer: me! Not only am I a pianist of classical and jazz training, an orchestrator and arranger, and singer; I am also a composer.

During this season of Lent, in addition to our church's Lenten journey focusing on immigration, I am also going through a personal Lenten journey aligned with a period of self-care, physically and emotionally. Therefore, I thought it was appropriate to share some of my own compositions born out of various reflections throughout my life. Like Mancini, many melodies I've composed have sometimes been repurposed for commercial uses such as music for television, film, and commercial recordings. However, no matter what the composition is used for, its creation always begins with inner reflection. Since a lot of times music for worship underscores the mood of the service, I am reminded of the similarity to how film music underscores the subconscious mood of the characters on the screen. To effectively compose melodies for film, the composer must reach into deep in the subconscious feelings and try to relate to the character(s). This is exactly how I compose melodies, whether for myself or for a commissioned purpose. Composition in this manner, to me, is different from songwriting where the focus begins with lyrics and an overt message rather than a subconscious mood.

The **Prelude** is entitled "The Lotus Spell." When I think about how a lotus lives on the surface of water, which a human is something we could potentially drown in and perish, I think of my spiritual faith and how beauty can come from darkness, perceived danger, and restlessness. I'm also reminded of baptism where we are first submerged in water and then brought back up to a new beginning.

The **Meditation** composition is called "Lenten Afterglow." This is a personal reflection on how achieving a rewarding, yet challenging journey through Lent can often leave a lingering and pleasant feeling upon completion. In both of these compositions, aside from spiritual growth, there is also a hint of wistfulness. For every new growth, what is left behind can linger as wistful memories.

The **Postlude** is called "In the Evening". God has created me for whatever reason to be a nocturnal being. This has served me well in my work as a performer, but this way of being began to manifest itself as early as adolescence which is exactly the time I began creating music. I often find my most productive prayer time very late in the evening. I also find my most

creative moments in the evening. A lot of the music I write for us here is usually done upon arriving home after a night of janitorial work. At the time of day when most are slowing down, the evening brings to me energy, creativity, excitement, and deep spiritual reflection.

If you recall our experiment with music and text a few weeks back exploring the Prayer of Our Savior, we learned that different interpretations or musical arrangements do not change the underlying meaning. Well, just to be fair, I'm giving my own music a similar test! These three compositions, originally set in various musical settings, will now be presented with infused Latin American rhythms. So, as you are reflecting subconsciously on my melodies and the reflections I've shared, you can also be reminded of our thoughts at the border.

— Sean Baker

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? Through community worship and small groups, everyone is invited on this Lenten immigration journey. Let's see where this journey leads us.

March 2 - March 20: Small Groups (sign up sheets are in the narthex)

April 5 - April 10 - Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday

April 12 - Easter



What's Happening at FC

(See [March Colony](#) for monthly announcements and further details.)

Corona Virus and the Church: A Message from the IKC UCC

It is a near certainty that by now you've heard about coronavirus, a virus that is responsible for the upper-respiratory disease COVID-19. In our role in helping keep our congregations and communities informed and prepared, we'd like to share some resources about this disease that will help you have accurate information and put into place some best practices for avoiding illness. Rest assured that while we at the Conference level and the national

level of the United Church of Christ are keeping alert in order to help you stay healthy and safe, there is not at this time any reason to put extreme measures into place or limit public gatherings.

The UCC is committed to "education, caution and common sense" concerning coronavirus. Below is some helpful information about preventing the spread of coronavirus, and, indeed, any of the typical flu and common cold viruses. Click on any of the links below for more information:

- [Short educational video on the "5 Things to Know About COVID-19."](#)
- [Latest guidance from the Center for Disease Control \(CDC\).](#)
- [Resources from UCC Disaster Ministries.](#)
- [Read Rev. Traci Blackmon's \(UCC Associate General Minister for Justice & Local Ministries\) response to coronavirus.](#)

Of course, if you feel like you may be ill with COVID-19 (the disease caused by this coronavirus), seek medical advice. As Rev. Blackmon reminds us in her statement, "Under no circumstances should the information relayed here be construed as medical advice. These are simply public precautions gathered from available websites and best practices of various denominations."

Thank you for your care of each other by following these common sense guidelines:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (try singing the alphabet song one time through or just count to 20 at a steady rate). Do this especially every time you enter your home (or church) from being out and about.
- Use tissues to cover your coughs and sneezes (or cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow) to prevent spreading germs around in the air.
- Throw out tissues immediately after use and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Clean doorknobs and frequently touched objects and surfaces in your homes and churches, so that germs that might be lingering don't get spread around.

With blessings for your health and the health of our world,
Rev. Chad Abbott, IKC Conference Minister &
Rev. Greg Denk, IKC Disaster Coordinator

TODAY! Men's Lunch - Thursday, March 5th at 1:00 p.m.

The next FCC Men's Lunch will be held at 1:00 PM on Thursday, March 5, 2020

at Claddagh (234 S Meridian St, Indianapolis, IN 46225). It's about two weeks before St Patrick's Day, so we thought we'd beat the rush.

Choir Rehearsal TONIGHT!

The FC Choir rehearses on Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. We welcome new members. If anyone is interested in joining the choir, please email Julie at juliehouston@comcast.net. We would love to have you join us!

World Day of Prayer (hosted through Church Women United throughout Indianapolis), **Friday, March 6**

This year's service was written by our sisters in Zimbabwe around this theme - **"Rise! Take up our mats, and walk!"** - a call to not stay sitting, but to act on the word of God towards love, peace and reconciliation. Everyone is invited to join together in this global movement! Here are some of the locations and times available - for more locations and times around Indy and other information please see <http://www.wdp-usa.org/> For other questions please contact Karen Walker or Nancy Dickinson.

- Second Presbyterian Church, Milner Chapel (10:00 AM), 7700 North Meridian Street, 46260
- Northwood Christian Church (10:00 AM), 4550 North Central Avenue, 46205
- Shalom Mennonite Church (11:00 AM), 6100 East 32nd Street, 46226
- Robin Run Village (1:30 PM) - (Nancy Dickinson is playing a large part in planning this site's service), 5354 West 62nd Street, 46208
- Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (2:00 PM), 6417 Zionsville Road, 46268
- New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church (7:00 PM), 1535 Dr. A. J. Brown Avenue, 46202

Lenten Devotionals: For the Beauty of the Earth

Lenten devotionals are available for pick up in the narthex.

Lenten Breakfast Series: "God's Open House"

Saturday Mornings at 8:30 am

*** March 7: "Peace in the Home"**

Zion UCC (Troy Avenue)

8916 E Troy Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46239

*** March 14: "Justice in the Home"**

First Congregational UCC

7171 N. Pennsylvania St, Indianapolis, IN 46240

*** March 21: "Renewal in the Home"**

St. John (Cumberland)
11910 E Prospect St, Indianapolis, IN 46239

*** March 28: "Unity in the Home"**

Methodist Hospital (Downtown)
1701 N Senate Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46202

*** April 4: "God in the Home" (with Communion)**

Zion Evangelical UCC (Downtown)
603 N New Jersey St, Indianapolis, IN 46202

Take Action to Protect Refugee Resettlement with the GRACE Act

Join us in calling on Republican Members of Congress to co-sponsor the GRACE Act (S.1088 and H.R.2146).

The GRACE Act will help protect the refugee resettlement program by setting a minimum refugee admissions goal at 95,000 (the historic average since 1980) and increase congressional authority to hold the administration accountable to operate the resettlement program in good faith.

The GRACE Act has only Democrat cosponsors - now is a critical time for Republican Senators and Representatives hear that their constituents welcome refugees and want to see them co-sponsor the GRACE Act, so it can reflect the strong bipartisan support we know exists for refugee resettlement.

CALL YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES at (202) 224-3121.

Rep. Susan Brooks, 5th district

Rep. Jim Banks, 3rd district

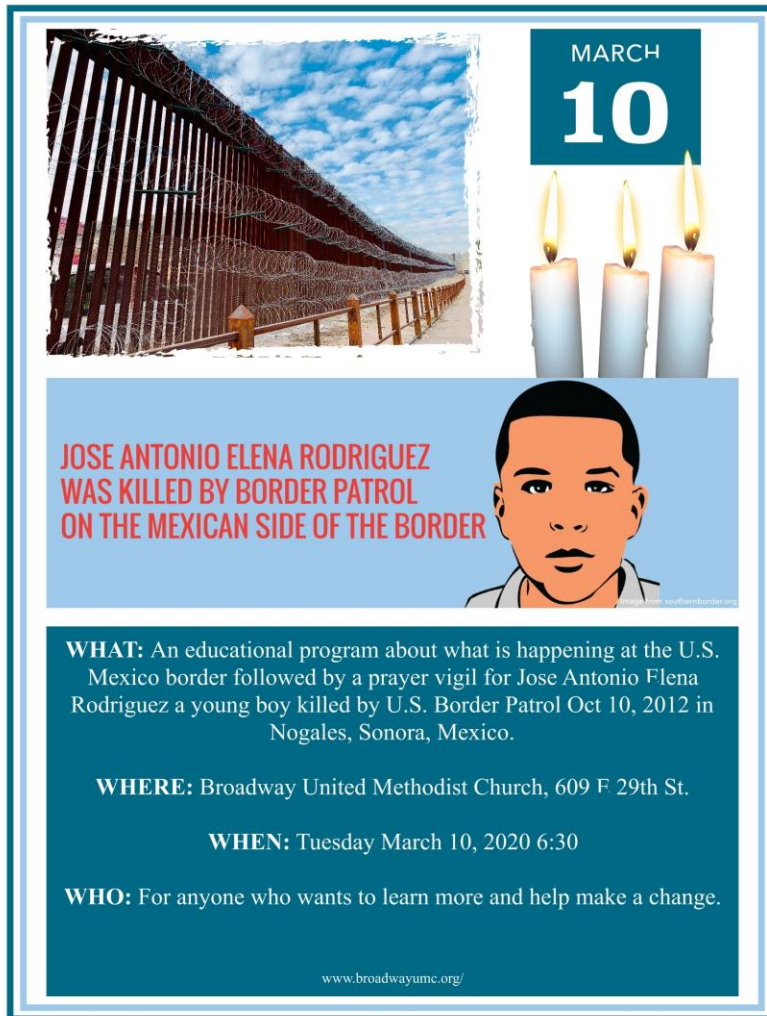
Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, 9th district

Senator Todd Young

Sample Script: "I'm your constituent from [CITY/TOWN] and I urge you to protect refugees and rebuild the U.S. refugee resettlement program by cosponsoring the GRACE Act (S.1088/H.R.2146). The GRACE Act would restore the refugee resettlement program to the historic average of 95,000 since the program's inception in 1980 and hold the administration accountable to operating the refugee resettlement program in good faith. My community welcomes refugees, and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by cosponsoring the GRACE Act."

Just Peace at the Border: Border Information and Vigil- March 10 at 6:30pm at Broadway UMC

Please join us at Broadway United Methodist Church for the second vigil in memory of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez. For more information, contact Cyndi Alte at cdalte@aol.com



**JOSE ANTONIO ELENA RODRIGUEZ
WAS KILLED BY BORDER PATROL
ON THE MEXICAN SIDE OF THE BORDER**

WHAT: An educational program about what is happening at the U.S. Mexico border followed by a prayer vigil for Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez a young boy killed by U.S. Border Patrol Oct 10, 2012 in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.

WHERE: Broadway United Methodist Church, 609 F 29th St.

WHEN: Tuesday March 10, 2020 6:30

WHO: For anyone who wants to learn more and help make a change.

www.broadwayumc.org/

WISE Mental Health Team

Would you like to join our W.I.S.E. Mental Health Team? We meet the **second Wednesday of each month at 5:00PM**. For more information, talk with Sandy Wood or Pat Larracey.

- **Mental Health First AID - 4/18, 7:30AM - 4:00PM** - Please sign the clipboard in the narthex for the MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID CLASS, April 18, 7:30 to 4 PM. This is a great way to build an awareness of mental health symptoms!
- **Sunday, May 17 is W.I.S.E. Mental Health Sunday**, AND, the first **Spiritual Support Group** for Mental Health & Wellness.



Food Donations for the Northside Pantry

Donations have been generous and are appreciated. Please keep them coming! We are grateful to the Meridian Hills Nursery School and Kindergarten who has joined us in donating and delivering food to the pantry.

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.

Pantry Items of the Month

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

Pastoral Care

Pastor Sarah may be reached at (386) 478-9012 or at pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

Thursday, March 5	1:00 p.m.	Men's Lunch at Claddagh
Thursday, March 5	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Saturday, March 7	8:30 a.m.	Lenten Breakfast @ Zion (Troy Ave) UCC
Sunday, March 8	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class w/ Student Pastor, Cassidy Hall
Sunday, March 8	11:00 a.m.	Worship w/ guest preacher, Rev. Daniel Meyers
Sunday, March 8	12:00 p.m.	Lunch with Rev. Daniel Meyers

Tuesday, March 10	6:30 p.m.	Border Vigil @ Broadway UMC
Wednesday, March 11	5:00 p.m.	WISE Mental Health Team
Wednesday, March 11	7:00 p.m.	Church Council
Thursday, March 12	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Saturday, March 14	8:30 a.m.	Lenten Breakfast @ FC
Sunday, March 15	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, March 15	11:00 a.m.	Worship
Sunday, March 15	12:15 p.m.	Student Pastor Support Group
Sunday, March 15	12:30 p.m.	Lenten Group
Sunday, March 15	12:45 p.m.	PCRC w/ Pastor Sarah

 [FirstCongregationalUCCIndy](#)

 [Forward](#)



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of March 12, 2020

ALL in-person church activities are CANCELED through the end of March 2020, effective IMMEDIATELY.

Dear First Congregational,

Please refer to the **Pastoral Message of Love in a Time of Global Pandemic** explaining the cancellation of church activities.

During this time, the building will still be accessible by using the door code, so you may come in and use the sanctuary for personal meditation, check out one of our new mental health books in our library, or drop off pantry items.

Although staff will be working remotely, they will still be available. You may reach Pastor Sarah at pastorsarah@fcindy.org or (386) 478-9012. You may reach our office administrator, Shannon at shannon@fcindy.org.

Peace,
Pastor Sarah

Worship

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

* See instructions below to connect via Facebook Live

Pastor Sarah will preach on "In a Mirror Dimly"

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

A Note from your Music Designer

As we continue into Lent, I have been reflecting a lot on my personal Lenten journey as well as our church's Lenten mission. I began to "reflect" on mirrors. We often use mirrors to help us see what we cannot see ourselves. This led me to three songs that talk about a mirror (sometimes called a looking glass) and inner reflection.

My **Prelude** is a song by Henry Mancini with lyrics by Leslie Bricusse called "Life in a Looking Glass." Many of us are also going through personal Lenten journeys. It is a song about personal reflection and learning to accept what we see in the mirror and embrace change. A portion of the lyrics say, ♪ *"If you look at your life in a looking glass, you may see some things you don't want to see....in your heart you'll agree that's life that you see. And you'll know who you are, and be glad you're you."* ♪

For **Special Music**, I present a song recorded by Aretha Franklin in 1966 called "Take a Look." This song really fits our overall theme. In this "mirror," we as a society are asking ourselves to look at who we are and what's happening to our children and God's dream. The opening phrase is, ♪ *"Take a look in the mirror. Look at yourself, but don't you look to close. 'Cause you just might see the person that you hate the most."* ♪

The **Postlude** is a song recorded by Michael Jackson in 1988 called "Man in the Mirror." Michael has recorded many songs throughout his career that deal with spirituality and social justice. "Heal the World," and "We are the World" come to mind. The mirror in this song is also a personal reflection, but a reflection of how we are individually as evangelists for doing justice. ♪ *"I see the kids in the street with not enough to eat. Who am I to be blind? Pretending not to see their needs....If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself, and make a change."* ♪ — Sean Baker

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 at 6:30 PM in the sanctuary - We will observe the last three days of Jesus' life in a Tenebrae service as we continue to explore the shadowy aspects of immigration.

April 10 - Good Friday -

April 12 - Easter



What's Happening at FC

(See March Colony for monthly announcements and further details.)

Staying Connected Through Technology: A Technology Help Guide

1) Are you signed up for the all-church e-mail list? If not, pause and send a request to be added by emailing Shannon at shannon@fcindy.org

2) Do you have a Facebook account already? If yes, skip to number 4 below.

3) If you don't have a Facebook account yet, go to www.facebook.com, and follow the instructions to "Create an Account." You don't have to use your Facebook account for anything else if you don't want to. You don't have to make friends, share photos, read the newsfeed, anything. You can use your account simply to stay connected to the church.

4) Once you're set with Facebook. Please do the following:

4a) make sure you have followed the Facebook

PAGE: <https://www.facebook.com/facebook/>, and know how to navigate to it.

4b) Then go to First Congregational UCC's Facebook

Page: <https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/>

We will begin live streaming worship THIS SUNDAY, March 15.

5) We are all still here for you and will stay connected. You can still contact Pastor Sarah (pastorsarah@fcindy.org), Pastor Carol (casowle@gmail.com), our Office Administrator

Shannon (shannon@rcindy.org), our Moderator Alice Ruthertford (alice@caloosaspirt.net), and our Vice Moderator Larry Eckel (lspeckel@comcast.net).

Dear God who is closer to us than the air we breathe, we give you thanks for the ways you connect us to one another. Your love is woven in and through us and, together, we are a tapestry of your Divine Peace and Joy. Keep weaving us together, God, even if we are physically distant from one another for a time. For we know that you are always with us, no matter where we are. Amen.

If you have questions, please reach out to us!

WISE Mental Health Books

There are new Mental Health books on a designated shelf in the Library ready for checkout. Thank you to our WISE Mental Health Team for purchasing these books, and to our Library Team for organizing them on our library shelves.

“Love of Creation” Spiritual Retreat – April 24-25

Pastor Sarah will be leading a joint spiritual retreat for First Congregational and St Peter's. It will begin with dinner at 6 pm on Friday, April 24 and end at 3 pm on Saturday, April 25. The retreat is at Waycross Conference Center in Morgantown, about an hour south of Indianapolis. The cost is \$150 for a single room or \$120/person for double occupancy, and includes dinner, breakfast, and lunch. Rooms are limited, and a signup sheet is available in the Narthex. Reservations must be confirmed by Friday, April 10. Questions? Contact Wendy Baldwin

Food Donations for the Northside Pantry

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March Mission of the Month: One Great Hour of Sharing

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Pantry Items of the Month

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Pastoral Care

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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 March.

 [FirstCongregationalUCCIndy](#)

 [Forward](#)



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of March 19, 2020

ALL in-person church activities are CANCELED through the end of March 2020.

Dear First Congregational,

As we enter into our second week living into our new realities of social/physical distancing, we remain committed to three key ways to **Be The Church: Worshipping, Connecting and Loving.** We will worship together Sundays [at 11am](#) using our church's Facebook Live. [This Sunday](#) I am going to spend a little time at the beginning of worship inviting us to comment and share morning greetings with another. I also encourage you to create a home worship space. This could be as simple as a candle, a flower, a bible, a favorite work of art, plant, photo or snuggling your favorite pet or stuffed animal. However you want to create a sacred space at home, I encourage you to try it. I will invite you to share photos of your sacred space. On Facebook Live worship, we will offer hymn singing, scripture, message, prayer, passing of peace, sharing ways to give and serve. We will worship together and God's heart will be made glad by our worship. Our hearts will be made glad because through worship we will connect

with each other and connect with God.

We will **Be The Church through Connecting**. Our Care and Connections Board is working hard to organize ways we can connect with one another. We are committed to reaching out and building up our church family during this time. I encourage you to reach out to one another, make phone calls, send texts, emails. We have a new Facebook Group for our church members and friends called "First Congregational Indy Fellowship." This is a place for us to connect, share photos, stories, prayers and check in with each other. We are also making use of technology such as Zoom Video Conferencing. Please let me know if your Board, Committee, Team or Small Group would like to use Zoom and we can schedule a meeting time. If you need directions or guidance, we can walk you through the process.

We will **Be the Church through Loving**. Our love for one another is what will get us to the other side. Love begins in our hearts, moves into our thoughts, our words, and blossoms in our deeds. I invite us to use this time to nurture the love within our hearts. Meditate on God's love for you and the whole world. Share words of love with each other. Let this love inspire your actions. One way to put your love into action is through supporting organizations that are offering help, hope and healing. Consider making your donation online to First Congregational and other organizations (see notice below).

For now, all in-person church activities are cancelled through the end of March. Our Church Council will hold a special meeting next Wednesday to discuss our plans for moving forward and make some decisions about our life together for the coming month of April. We will consider the CDC guidelines and take into consideration the best interests and wellbeing of our congregation. We will provide you an update following the council meeting on March 25.

As always, reach out to me if you need any help, would like to talk, or have a joy or concern to share. My cell is (386) 478-9012. We are learning together how to Be The Church in important ways and I give God thanks for our amazing staff and lay leaders who are working faithfully to Be The Church. I give God thanks for our church family and for each one of you.

Peace,
Pastor Sarah



(Photo Credit: Shannon Abbott, altar)

Worship

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

Pastor Sarah will preach on "God is With Us."

Scripture: Psalm 23

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

As we all burrow in and hunker down at home, let's find as many avenues for connections as possible. Anyone who hasn't yet dabbled in Facebook, now is the perfect time. Not only can you participate in our live streamed worship service on Sunday, but if you're busy Sunday morning you can also access the service at a later time on the same **FC Facebook page** (click [here](#)). Also, check out the "**First Congregational Indy Fellowship**" group on Facebook (click [here](#)). It's specifically for FC family and friends, and it's a great way to continue to share with the group what's going on in our lives. If you've set up a Facebook account to get the live streamed worship, you can easily join the "Fellowship" group simply by searching for the page and hitting the "join" button. I look forward to catching up with as many of you as possible as the weeks drag on, and Facebook is a great way to do that. See you there! – Alice Rutherford, Moderator

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.

Additional Church Support Contacts

Pastor Carol (casowle@gmail.com)

Office Administrator, Shannon (shannon@fcindy.org)

Moderator, Alice Rutherford (alice@caloosaspirit.net)

Vice Moderator, Larry Eckel (lspeckel@comcast.net)

From your W.I.S.E. Mental Health Team (Welcoming+Inclusive+Supportive+Engaged)

We have received several pages of support and resources from our United Church of Christ Mental Health Network that we want to share with all of you. We want all of you to know that Pastor Rev Dr. Sarah Lund is available, Pastoral Care Associate Pastor Carol Sowle are

always available especially during this pandemic.

We share these Words of Encouragement from Rev. Alan Johnson, chair of the UCC Mental Health Network:

“Many words have been written to address the uncertainty we are experiencing as we live into the presence of the coronavirus in the world. Our routine congregational life has been disturbed. Our customary routines to keep our community bonds strong are unraveling. Our Sunday worship services, committee and board meetings, support groups, fellowship gatherings, ...all these are being canceled, through new technologies to bind up our connections as faith communities. As chair of the UCC Mental Health Network, I know the healing power of personal stories and the resilience and strength that come through our congregations. In particular, persons who are affected by any mental health challenge already know that finding a safe place and people where their story can be marshaling the spiritually woven forces of trust, love, and wisdom to become even more vital. . . . The phrase “social distancing” has a chilling edge to it as well as a reality so as to prevent spreading the virus. Paying attention to the downsides of the pandemic can lead to some creative ways to sustain the connections even when the physical connections are not recommended. Being attentive to any who are disconnecting due to this virus, whether or not there is a mental health challenge, the well being of everyone can be enhanced. That can be a boost to one’s immune system itself!

“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!”

Do Not Fear by Karl Shallowhorn, board member of the UCC MHN:

“So do not fear, for I am with you: do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

"The events of the last week have changed the course of life as we know it in the US. In the end, it isn't about who's the blame or what could have been done. It's too late for that now. We have to all work together to prevent what is quickly becoming something that is proving to be a very formidable enemy.

One thing I do know, however is that many people, including myself, have had their anxiety heightened by the virtual uncertainty of the future. Now, I've never been one to have anxiety

(although I do live with bipolar disorder) however the situation we are in has even got me more on edge.

But this is where, as I told a friend today, I need to use my tools. First and foremost, I need to remember to **breathe**. Deep. Breathing can do wonders to alleviate anxiety and help reduce stress.

Secondly, I need to **have faith**. Faith can not only move mountains, it can help to provide a deep sense of assurance that things will be okay.

Third, I can **use my supports** to provide to each other amidst the tide of turbulent waters we are in. There is nothing quite like having someone to talk to, to just let it all out.

Fourth, I need to **reach out** to those less fortunate and who may be in need. Most of us probably know someone who may be more isolated as a result of the current environment we are in. Not only does it help them, but it also helps me to get out of my own head. When I help someone else I know that I am doing what I, as a Christian, have been asked to do.

Next, I need to **attend to my self-care**. Sleep is a big one as is physical exercise. The combination of the two can be very beneficial in helping to regulate my system. And I cannot forget to meditate. Even just being still and quiet for as little as ten minutes can do wonders for the mind, body and spirit.

At last, but certainly not least, I need to **pray**. In the course of my life I have faced incredibly difficult situations, all of which I've been able to get through by actively praying. Not only with words but also with action. When I pray I co-create with God thereby allowing for the process of becoming the person I was intended to be. In terms of today, I need to pray to let God know that I need God's strength and guidance to be able to maintain my mental and emotional stability.

If I practice these simple tools, I have a much more likelihood of weathering the storm of uncertainty we are all facing.

While the days ahead are going to be very hard for many, if not most of us, it is important to know that with God in our lives there truly is nothing to fear."

There is more to come from your church's W.I.S.E. Mental Health Team.

United Church of Christ Mental Health Network: mhn-ucc.com

Shine: www.virusanxiety.com

Mental Health America: https://www.mhanational.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwjcfzBRCHARIsAO-1_Oqvf39RdYaqM4bj_NdW_wU1v6fNYNH5Wti-e3uKsrCQI7Gf_CcKNCUaAnVhEALw_wcB

CDC on Coping with the Stress & Anxiety Related to COVID-19:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

WISE Mental Health Books

There are new Mental Health books on a designated shelf in the Library ready for checkout. Stop by and pick one (or more) up (use the door security passcode) to read during this time of social distancing.

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, March 24 and 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=3&CalendarYear=2020&CourseID=856>
- <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

During this uncertain time it is important that we stayed tied together as a people of prayer and support. Weekly we will send out a prayer for the world and our conference churches on Wednesdays. We also encourage each of you to stop what you are doing at noon on Wednesdays and pray wherever you are. Our staff will be praying wherever they are and together we will offer prayers for our world at this time.

Peace, Blessings, and Compassion,
Rev. Chad R. Abbott, Conference Minister

Bread for the World COVID-19 Update: 2020 Joint Offering of Letters in Indiana*

Learn more about Bread for the World's national response to COVID-19 (aka coronavirus),
and hear an update on how you can *still* participate in the 2020 Joint Offering of Letters — even in quarantine.

Life just changed radically for many people around the world — including Hoosiers. As known cases of the coronavirus continue to grow, our schools are closing, sending children home, away from the benefit of school meals. Houses of worship are replacing in-person worship for virtual opportunities to “be together” — and making tough decisions about how to continue to serve some of the most vulnerable populations in our midst through food pantries, and the like. **As Bread President David Beckmann says: COVID-19 “is a hunger issue.”** While we want to exercise caution in *how* we gather, Bread for the World - Indiana still plans to keep you engaged in advocacy that is needed now more than ever. But we are exploring ways for you to participate from the safety of your own home.

Register [here](#) today, then join us by computer or by phone for a 90-minute webinar for advocates like you.

Saturday, March 21 (10am - 11:30am) - We press on with the **2020 Joint Offering of Letters** because the coronavirus only *emphasizes* the need for our current letter-writing campaign.

“Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow” focuses on asking Congress to ensure more children in the U.S. and abroad receive proper nutrition. Good nutrition builds strong immune systems. In the face of this global pandemic, our communities are only as strong as the weakest immune systems among us. ***Please share this invitation with other hunger advocates. Send them the registration***

link: https://webinar.ringcentral.com/webinar/register/WN_S41GzClqSAOkImBcP7wgYg

**This webinar offers a virtual replacement for the previously planned, in-person 2020 Joint Offering of Letters event for Indiana Bread for the World: “Cultivating Common Ground to End Hunger.” We look forward to Jeremy Everett, Texas hunger advocate and author of “I Was Hungry” joining us in Indiana, at a time yet to be determined.*



March Mission of the Month: One Great Hour of Sharing

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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

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 March.



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 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.

Additional Church Support Contacts

Pastor Carol (casowle@gmail.com)

Office Administrator, Shannon (shannon@fcindy.org)

Moderator, Alice Rutherford (alice@caloosaspirit.net)

Vice Moderator, Larry Eckel (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). 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.
- 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

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.

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

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

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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.



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Indianapolis, IN 46227

Thank you for your generosity!

- Shannon Abbott, Eviction Ministry Team

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