



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## THE PILGRIM COLONY

September 2021

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# Church Gathering Update:

While Marion County is in orange and red, Sunday worship will NOT be in-person but offered via livestream at 11:00AM on Youtube starting August 22nd.

We will continue in-person Outdoor Patio Psalms and Prayers, Sundays at 9:30AM.

## Pastor's Reflections

What can we say about these times we are living in? God is with us. No matter who we are or where we are on life's journey, God is with us. As people of faith, we hold onto this truth: we are not alone and we are loved.

As a family of faith, we remind each other of this spiritual truth. In the face of natural disaster and human disaster, we can find comfort in knowing God love us. As a church, we can comfort one another by creating a community of belonging, healing, and loving. This is our mission: to share the love of Jesus with one another and the world. I can't think of a more important effort right now. We show our love through prayer, through masking, through vaccinations, through sharing our resources with those in need, through working for justice and peace. We show our love through caring for each other and our neighbors.

Jesus teaches us this timeless spiritual lesson: when we love our selves and love our neighbors we are loving God.

As we journey forward in faith, thank you for all the ways you generously share your talents, time, and treasure with First Congregational. As the world around us changes in uncertain, confusing, and complex ways, one thing remains: God loves us.

Here is a poem from Mary Oliver to remind us that we each one of us belong here, in this human family. You matter. You are beloved. No matter what

### **Wild Geese by Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

Blessings,  
Pastor Sarah

**Pastoral Care and Support:** Contact Pastor Sarah at [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org) and (386)478-9012.

## **Senior Councilor's Report**

Steve Coomer, Lead Councilor

This being my last month of submitting an article for the Colony, I thought I would take this time to thank all of you for your cooperation and to also say how thankful I am for this opportunity to serve this church and congregation. It seems as though many of you have returned to worship and are supporting our church with your thoughts, prayers, and tithes.

Again please understand that even though the return to worship still isn't the same as it was in the past, we are truly trying to implement as many of the elements of worship that we had before Covid-19. Presently the rate of infection is rising again, but we do all know that like many other things this too will pass. We as a mindful congregation just have to keep trying to get everyone vaccinated and being as careful in our everyday lives as possible. We need to believe that there is a positive outcome from this, that we will learn from this time, and move forward and build upon our belief in Christ.

I know that during my time as Lead Council I have seen some amazing things happening within our church and I will be forever grateful. I have learned a great deal from my fellow Senior Council Members and Pastor Sarah. I have seen our Council come together. I know everyone on the Council is concerned about all of us coming together as a truly united church and keeping everyone as safe as possible.

I know that if we work together for the common good, believing in Christ's guidance, and staying true to our mission, anything is possible for us to attain. As of October 1, I am passing the Lead Council torch into the capable hands of Alice Rutherford.

- Steve Coomer, Lead Senior Councilor June through September

## **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: Gloria Boedeker, Nathan Howard, Betty Schnur, Bill Gillette

## Thank You



What a joy it was to worship with you the Sunday before my final week as your Office Administrator. Thank you for your outpouring of love and well wishes. And thank you for the beautiful gift of the stole. I will always think of you when I wear it.

As I move on into my new role as a pastor, I look forward to our congregations partnering together in the Southeast Association, the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, and the wider United Church of Christ.

Blessings to you all,  
Rev. Shannon Abbott

## External Communications Manager & NEW Office Administrator

Hello, Church! I'm humbled and delighted to be stepping into Shannon's role as Administrative Assistant alongside my current role as External Communications Manager. I'm really looking forward to learning more about the church and more of the "behind the scenes" work that goes into our communication, especially amid these times where communication has become such a central part of our church's functioning. Thank you in advance for your forgiveness and grace as I step into learning many new things as quickly as possible. During this time, I'll also be finishing up my studies at CTS, where I'm set to graduate with my MDiv and MTS degrees in December! Thank you for your continued support of my pursuit of ordination and your overall support of me as a fellow church member. It is truly an honor to walk with you in these many ways. Feel free to reach out anytime: [cassidy@fcindy.org](mailto:cassidy@fcindy.org)



## Just Peace Intern

We welcome Allison as our Just Peace Intern beginning the week of August 30 and ending the week of December 6.



My name is Allison Welz and I am a senior at Butler University. At Butler I am studying Biology and Religion and I am a member of Young Life, Biology Club, and Greek Life. I am originally from Evansville, IN and I am adopted from China. My hope is to attend medical school in the fall of 2022 and do medical missions at some point in my life. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn and grow with you all this semester.

- Allison

### This Month at FC\*

<b>SUNDAYS</b>	<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Patio Psalms and Prayers (FC patio)</b>
<b>SUNDAYS</b>	<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship (In Person, YouTube, Facebook, Dial In)</b>
<b>SUNDAYS</b>	<b>12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Coffee Hour (after worship when virtual only)</b>
<b>THURSDAYS</b>	<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Spiritual Support Group (Zoom)</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept 2</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Men's Lunch</b>
<b>Wednesday, Sept 8</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Trustees (Zoom)</b>
<b>Sunday, Sept 12</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>All Church Buzz (Zoom)</b>
<b>Wednesday, Sept 15</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Church Council (Zoom)</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept 16</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Men's Lunch</b>
<b>Wednesday, Sept 22</b>	<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>WISE Mental Health Team (Zoom)</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept 30</b>	<b>11:45 a.m.</b>	<b>Women's Lunch Bunch</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept 30</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Men's Lunch</b>

**To join 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. You can call in and participant as a 'conference call'.

## Church Council

### Comeback Team: Current Building Policy

(Approved by Church Council on 7/28/21; amended on 8/11/21)

As of August our covid protocols are based on the county color coding represented on the <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2393.htm> website. We encourage everyone to review that site as you are able, and we will post in each week's Epistle (as well as on the patio door) the color for that week.

In mid-August Marion County turned orange, so at that time in-person gatherings were suspended until such time as the county returns to yellow. Per our protocols, the church grounds are open for outdoor gatherings (with masking) when Marion County is orange but closed if the county turns red.

We ask that people prayerfully consider using practices that keep themselves safe as well as others.

Marion County "color"	Indoors	Outdoors
<b>Blue, positivity is decreasing</b>	Masks are <u>optional for vaccinated people</u> , and <u>required for unvaccinated</u>	Masks are <u>not required</u>
<b>Blue, positivity is increasing</b>	Masks are <u>encouraged for vaccinated people</u> , and <u>required for unvaccinated</u>	Masks are <u>not required</u>
<b>Yellow</b>	Masks are <u>required for all</u>	Masks are <u>encouraged for vaccinated people</u> , and <u>required for unvaccinated</u>
<b>Orange</b>	Building is <u>closed</u> for in-person gatherings	Masks are <u>required for all</u>
<b>Red</b>	Building is <u>closed</u> for in-person gatherings	No church-sponsored outdoor gatherings



**IT'S OUR SHOT, HOOSIERS**  
COVID-19 VACCINE

**Are you ready to get back to the people and activities you love?**

Your vaccination brings us one day closer to controlling the pandemic and reopening Church.

**Get your vaccine ASAP!**  
Register at [ourshot.in.gov](https://ourshot.in.gov) or call 211.

## **WORSHIP & FAITH**

Aurelia Glennan-March, Chair

### **Adult Ed for June: Patio Psalms and Prayers, 9:30 AM**

Patio Psalms and Prayers will continue to meet through September on the patio, weather permitting. Bring a chair and come and join us as we continue to reflect on the Psalms and the diverse ways they are speaking to us today.

Sept 5 – Psalm 14

Sept 12 – Psalm 15

Sept 19 – Psalm 16

Sept 26 – Psalm 17

### **Ways to Connect for Worship- Sundays at 11AM**

**IN PERSON Worship** will be determined based on the Marion County Covid risk status as indicated in the Council approved Covid protocols (See page 5-6).



**FACE BOOK**

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/posts/?ref=page_internal)



**YOUTUBE**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWV9wqAvPiUKSkEbjAV6Zpw>

- YouTube Live broadcasts at 10:45am with 15 minutes of gathering music. The service begins at 11am.



**DIAL-IN (available after 1PM)**

- **Dial 317-204-3862**
- Landline is preferred for clarity.
- If calling with a smart phone, setting your cellular setting to Wi-Fi calling will be clearer.

### **Time for a Buzz!**



The Worship & Faith Board, Worship Design Team, and Hybrid Worship Team invite all to a Buzz on **Sunday, September 12, at 1:00 PM [on Zoom](#)**. Our focus will be our vision for hybrid worship as we continue to “Be The Church” in the digital age. We have learned much over the last 18 months of virtual worship, and we want to build on some of the benefits of those “lessons.” We believe hybrid worship is the path to follow that God has set before us, and we’re happy to share why and how

we've arrived at that belief. We also want feedback and input from all congregants regarding how our efforts so far at hybrid worship are being experienced, and what improvements can be made. So save the date – Sunday, September 12, 1:00 PM – and bring your questions, comments, listening ears, concerns, and ideas to share.

- Alice Rutherford

## **House Parties are coming in September!**

Faith In Indiana is growing - they have been able to hire more staff and more congregations are being called to be active for social justice. As we enter this season of "Encounter and Renewal" we are focused on building our 'base' – as we build our connections and shared vision, we build our power to influence and drive change.

Watch the next epistles for invitations to the various times and locations (and virtual options) to get involved. At these 'house parties' interested people can join and discern the changes that we want to be focused on in the coming legislative session. They will give us a chance to invite others as well as get to know each other, our stories, and what we are passionate about.

If you have any questions, please contact the chair - Worth Hartman (worthgrover@sbcglobal.net) or the communication lead - Karen Walker (karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com ).

Thank you!  
Karen Walker

## **OUTREACH & SERVICE**

Alice Rutherford, Chair

It's hard to believe it's already September in this fast-moving year. This month brings a new focus for Covenant Outreach. From September through December we'll focus on our Open & Affirming covenant, so Covenant Outreach will be supporting Indiana Youth Group, Trinity Haven and, and Damien Center – all organizations that provide support to LGBTQ+ folks of all ages.

[Indiana Youth Group](#), a day center for LGBTQ+ youth, "creates safer spaces to foster community and provides programming that empowers LGBTQ+ youth and magnifies their voices." First Congregational has supported IYG for many years, and we look forward to continuing and perhaps expanding our ministry with them.

[Trinity Haven](#) is a new facility for LGBTQ+ young adults, but not a homeless shelter or drop-in center. From their website: "Trinity Haven's Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides a safe, welcoming, and affirming home for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults ages 16-21 who do not have homes of their own. The goal of Trinity Haven's TLP is to intervene before youth experience chronic homelessness, and to help them pursue their education and develop the skills to thrive in the world independently...."

[The Damien Center](#) is another organization long-supported by FC. "Founded in 1987, Damien Center is Indiana's oldest and largest AIDS service organization



(ASO) and serves more than 4,000 individuals affected and infected by HIV/AIDS through a comprehensive, innovative approach to HIV care and prevention.”

Based on our ONA covenant we continue to explore ways to be helpful and compassionate partners with these organizations. We encourage all to visit the websites of these non-profits, and to watch for more information on getting further involved. Please donate generously to Covenant Outreach over the next four months in support of these ministries.

- Alice Rutherford, Outreach & Service Board Chair

## Mental Health Team

The WISE Mental Health team would like to thank all boards, teams and committees who responded to our survey. We truly appreciate your feedback and will use it to chart the future progress of our team in fulfilling our covenant. **Our next meeting will be Sept 22nd from 5-6:15 p.m. on the church's Zoom account.** If you would like to attend and/or are interested in joining the team, please contact Sandy Wood @ 317-225-6206 or [csjwood@att.net](mailto:csjwood@att.net). We are always welcome anyone interested in mental health to our team.

Sandy



## Need a Lift in Your Spirit? Join us every Thursdays for Spiritual Support Group for Mental Health at 5:00-6:00PM [on Zoom](#)

This gathering is open to everyone and is an informal time to check-in about how you are doing, get emotional support from church family, and offer prayer for one another as we navigate nurturing positive mental health in these difficult days.

We are an open group with confidentiality guidelines. Sessions are on Zoom and led by Pastor Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund and Rev. Dr. Patrick Larracey, co-chair of the church's WISE Team. Please feel free to call or email either of us if you have questions: Pastor Sarah: [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org), or 386-478-9012.

## CARE & CONNECTIONS

Wendy Baldwin, Chair

## Happy Birthday in September!

Jim Lootens     Janet Selby     Karen Walker

If you're having a birthday in September, and you are not on this list, please contact Wendy Baldwin, so we can add you to our master list for the future!



## Coffee Hours

For a few weeks in August, it was so nice to be able to see people IN PERSON for worship in the sanctuary. Did you notice that there weren't any refreshments or drinks available? While Marion County was "yellow", we were requiring mask wearing inside, and recommending them for outside. So this made eating and drinking a bit more difficult.

Unfortunately, the infection rates increased and Marion County became “orange”, which meant that we returned to online worship. For the past year and a half of online worship, we have enjoyed being able to chat with each other on Zoom, following worship. **When we are not able to have in-person worship, join us [on Zoom](#) after our YouTube worship!**

## TRUSTEES

Steve Coomer, Chair

### Contributions Gratefully Welcomed:

In July, the Trustees approved funding for 2 projects that we are moving forward with. One of the projects is to purchase equipment and consultation to enable us to have **hybrid worship** where we can worship in person and also have online worship for those unable to attend; new equipment will also enable us to do projection in the sanctuary to enhance our worship experience; cost about \$10K-\$12K. The other project is to repair the paving in the **Memorial Garden** walled area – due to growth of tree roots, the brick and paving stones are dangerously uneven and need to be relevelled; cost is \$9000.

Funds are available in our various restricted accounts, but these expenses will greatly reduce what is available for other work in the future. If you would like to contribute to these projects, please indicate “Hybrid Worship” or “Memorial Garden” on your gifts. Thank you for your generosity!

### Financial Update

#### *When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands*

Here are the financial results through July 31, 2021.

#### 1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary 1/1/2021 through 7/31/2021 Using 2021 Budget

021	Category	1/1/2021 Actual	- Budget	7/31/2021 Difference
	<b>INCOME</b>	<b>128,207</b>	<b>137,505</b>	<b>-9,299</b>
	M. Unrestricted Contributions	128,207	137,505	-9,299
	M.01 Pledged Offerings	112,691	101,018	11,673
	M.02 UnPledged Offerings	2,350	5,921	-3,571
	M.03 Rollover Prior Year Surplus_D...	-21,284	-21,284	0
	M.04 Foundation - Endowment Fund...	0	17,400	-17,400
	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
	M.09 PPP Loan Forgiveness	34,450	34,450	0
	<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>147,993</b>	<b>152,889</b>	<b>4,896</b>
	A. Pastoral Leadership	72,559	72,926	367
	B. Worship & Faith	19,035	19,217	182
	C. Care & Connections	309	109	-200
	D. Witness & Welcome	0	286	286
	E. Outreach & Service	10,475	10,080	-395
	F. Trustees	0	79	79
	G. Administration & Operations	13,416	14,977	1,561
	H. House & Grounds	28,256	30,505	2,249
	I. Miscellaneous	3,944	4,712	768
	<b>Net Difference:</b>	<b>-19,787</b>	<b>-15,384</b>	<b>-4,403</b>

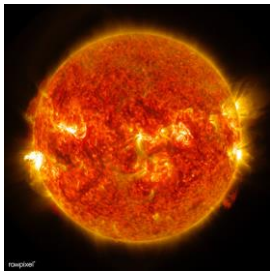
## Highlights:

- **Income** for the first six months was \$128,200 – \$9,300 below budget. However, we had anticipated \$17,400 in income from a draw from the FCC Foundation which we did not need. Adjusting for that timing issue, income was \$7,100 above our 2021 budget, thanks to really strong pledge income.
- **Expenses** of \$148,000 were \$4,900 below budget, with savings in administration as well as house and grounds.
- **Cash** was strong at over \$48,700. This reflects \$34,700 of 2021 funding from the federal Payroll Protection Program. These funds allow us to continue to pay our employees and musicians throughout 2021 as if we were operating fully in person. The funds will also reduce the amount we will need to draw from the FCC Foundation to balance the 2021 budget.

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

Jim Lootens, Treasurer  
lootens.jb@gmail.com

## Green Team



We've always been able to rely on our sun for light and heat, and for energy too, but it's always been a delicate balance. Some planets are too close to the sun for life to exist and some are too far away. Here on earth we're in just the right position for plants to grow and for animals, including us, to thrive. We must also have the right surrounding atmosphere for the necessary amount of sunlight to penetrate. I wonder – are we in the process of upsetting the light-penetration balance and throwing away this gift by air pollution and our generating too much carbon dioxide? Our overfishing and contamination by trash and fertilizers are harmful to our earth's outer layer. Our descendants who live, or can't live, on a less hospitable earth may view us as the generations that could have helped but didn't care. Do we care enough to change our ways while there's still time? Our legislators are the ones who could change our future. If we do care, we should let them know now.

- Bill Gillette for the Green Team

## COMMUNITY

### The Joy of Reading Obituaries

"Someone who is always thinking about happiness is a fool.

A wise person thinks about death" (Ecclesiastes 6:4 *Today's English Version*).

Perhaps you, like some other *Pilgrim Colony* readers, expressed surprise that in my July 2021 essay titled "Growing Older," i noted that i often enjoy reading obituaries. In this month's column, i am presenting parts of two obituaries that i have especially liked.

One obit, written about eight years ago, emphasizes the simplicity, and power, of a short, declarative sentence (though also an exclamatory sentence) that effectively informed readers a great deal about "Henry," who lived to be

about 90 years old. Here's what a family member wrote: "Henry loved daffodils!"

A flower lover myself, perhaps my sons someday will add a similarly simple sentence about me at the end of an online obituary, such as, "Mom loved tulips of various colors, sizes, and types," along with a link to a mail-order tulip bulb company to show [beautiful colorful photos of tulips galore](#).

My second obituary example is one i happened upon on October 29, 2019 in the *Indianapolis Star's* "Today's Obituaries and Death Notices." After spotting the name "Feeney, Thomas Martin," i turned the page and saw a black-and-white photo of a familiar-looking elderly man i had not seen in person for almost 50 years.

"Ah, surely that's the kind," capable OB/GYN who delivered [my firstborn] Rob," i told myself. With joy, i read a lengthy obituary about the many awards, prestigious appointments, and honors the good doctor had received throughout his 87 years. One sentence especially thrilled me: "During his career he delivered approximately 8,000 babies."

Of course, reading Dr. Feeney's obit took me back to July 5, 1969, in St. Francis Hospital's delivery room when this very competent physician grabbed onto the sweet little feet and legs of my about-to-be-born breech baby (bottom first) and guided them down the birth canal and then into the delivery room.

Robby's birth was magnificent! Through watching the reflection in a large, well-placed mirror, i had joyfully seen Robby's little ragdoll-appearing body hanging feet first out of the birth canal. i appreciated that Robby's dad, clad in a sterilized, surgical gown, stood right by my side throughout this joyous birth; fortunately, in the late 1960s more and more couples were choosing to have both moms and dads of newborn babies in delivery rooms, along with adept, eager, and willing doctors like Dr. Feeney in charge.

After Robby's loud, howling cries seemed to proclaim, "i am here; all is well," a nurse gently took him over to a scale and announced that the newborn weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces and was 20 inches long. Throughout the delivery of the placenta, Robby lay nearby in a clear plastic hospital bassinet and made delightful whimpering sounds.

i found fascinating Dr. Feeney's remarkable, detailed impromptu lecture on the description, purpose, and workings of the placenta, which he eagerly talked on and on about. He did this as he spread out the placenta in both of his large, proficient hands for Robby's parents to see. The doctor's audience was not only captive, but enthusiastic.

50 years, 3 months later, when i read Dr. Feeney's obituary, i was most grateful that my first son Rob was one of the fortunate 8,000 or so babies Dr. Feeney so capably delivered.

*Good and Loving God, thank You for the richness of people's lives and for the obituaries that loved ones write to honor family members and friends. May we celebrate the lives of family, neighbors, friends, fellow church members, and*

other loved ones as they depart their earthly existence and go to be with You, dear God, in Heaven. Amen.

-susanna-judith rae

## **Time, Tenderness, and Terror: Reflections from a Hospital Chaplain (CW: Death, dying, grief, loss, infant loss)**

"Callouses form easily," I was recently told in a meeting, "endurance takes time." And I add to these words perhaps endurance's movement *into healing and growth* takes both time *and* tenderness.

I've been learning that working at a Level One Trauma Hospital for the summer creates its own heap of secondary trauma and invitations into the agony of humanity and oneself.

At the beginning of the summer learning goals were discussed and my foremost goal was to not become numb to human suffering while also developing an endurance for care, empathy, and human accompaniment. I asked, "*how can I build endurance without becoming desensitized to human suffering?*"

Shortly after developing these goals, I encountered a number of unexpected deaths and grieving families during on-call shifts. One, a brand new baby who was well before birth and simply never began breathing. The other, a father, husband, and grandfather on Father's Day. More recently, I was asked to tend to the bedside of a "terminal wean," where ventilatory support is withdrawn from the patient as they begin to travel through the threshold of life into death. Another time, a notification on my pager to come to the bedside for "end of life." In this instance, as I stood in a room with a family whose dear one was dying, I put my hand on the dying—holding them in the gratitude of what they brought to this earth by their presence. I put my other hand on the back of the grieving, as they wailed in disbelief, pain, and anguish. I shared and prayed no magic words, offered no comforting thoughts, and was only present to the moment. **The waves of grief dominated these lives and rooms, as they do under these circumstances, and together we allowed the waves to roll through the space like a tsunami while striving to keep each other safe.**

**The inexplicability of death never ceases to haunt my imagination.** The ways death offers no real response to the question of *why* stops us all in our tracks. Believing all of life is entwined, I realize how little I stop to ask *why* a tree dies in the middle of a burning forest or why I perpetually participate in the ocean's walk towards death. Why isn't the hope of new growth in the garden as astonishing as a brand new human life or the sight of a patient on the other side of a heart transplant? How can I celebrate and grieve in the fullness of life's connectivity? And still somehow these moments of accompaniment in alongside the dying and their loved ones are simultaneously holy and horrifying.

If I've learned anything about grief and human accompaniment this summer it's simply that there are absolutely no proper words or language to offer to the grieving. I've gone into the summer knowing that there are plenty of *wrong* things to say and quite simply *nothing* right to say. In this way, **the presence of personhood and accompaniment is an offering beyond words. The statue of immovable presence and peace amid unfathomable loss is at best a**

**sentiment.** A presence which can affirm the anger, frustration, sadness, pain, worry, grief, loneliness, agony... **A presence to witness human suffering and acknowledge the terror of all that is unknown and unknowable.**

On the more difficult days I often ask myself, *how does one mark the death and grief of total strangers with whom they've accompanied in some of the most impossible and insufferable moments of life?* Are these moments tattooed on my soul like a mark of memory, are they (the dead and their families) now threaded together within the expanding quilt of my existence, or are they lost in the ether of full and busy days with little to no time for sacred pauses? Maybe instead, grief becomes a part of me —of us, like a new limb, an added layer of emotion, or the daily piece of jewelry we put on before we begin our day.

Many of us can agree that not only is healthcare in America a broken system, but so too are its hospitals. The [lighting](#), [the noise](#), the [anxiety](#), the [loneliness](#), even its spiritual care programs which often offer little spiritual care for their own – this is a difficult place to heal *and* grieve. And when it comes to working in these spaces: detachment often means survival, disconnect allows for life beyond the walls of work, and disengagement is frequently a way to stay sane.

So as I reflect more deeply on my impossible goal of building “*endurance without becoming desensitized to human suffering*” I instead ask “*how can I offer time, tenderness, and presence amid the mystery and terror of death?*” The tsunami of grief comes when it comes, stirring up unfathomable emotion and unknowable pain. I can only be present to yours, mine, ours, show up, and offer some small sense of solidarity in the midst of all that is unknowable.

And, so, all of the answers to my questions land here: There are no answers. There's no way to perfectly witness or accompany human suffering. There is no ideal way to witness grief. It can only be honored, tenderly seen, lovingly acknowledged, and **any forms of healing and growth are both a process and an art.** An art tethered to uniqueness by the way that each human interaction is unique.

As I walk out of the hospital on the more difficult days, I pause for a moment of acknowledgment in the hospital chapel. I speak names in my heart and shake my head with the tension of emotions. **I offer the unknowable to the unknown, the mysterious to the mystery, the hopelessness to the possibility of hope.**

*“For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.”* (- James Baldwin, Nothing Personal)

- Cassidy Hall

## **IKC UCC Southeast Association Eviction Ministry**

### **How can YOUR CHURCH help?**

- Does your church have funds set aside to help with emergency needs in your community? If you do, **we are gathering a resource list**, so we will have churches to contact when we receive calls for utility assistance.
- If your church does not currently have such a fund, will you consider creating an emergency fund, so **you can be a part of a network of churches** we can call on to help support families in our communities?

### **How can YOU help?**

- Join our Team - We welcome new members who want to join our team.
- Legal resources - If you have legal experience with the eviction process, we would love to talk with you to gain better insight into the legal process.
- 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 support,

- Rev. Shannon Abbott ([sgabbott78@gmail.com](mailto:sgabbott78@gmail.com)), Pastor Sarah Friche-Mouri Hannigan ([pastorsarahzucc@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsarahzucc@gmail.com)), Walter Ziebell ([wziebell@gmail.com](mailto:wziebell@gmail.com))

### **IKC Women's Retreat: Sept 17-19**



***E**strogen **E**xcitement and **E**mpowerment*

*A Retreat For Every Woman*

**Friday September 17 – Sunday, September 19**

**Deadline to Register is September 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Cost: One night is \$75, Two nights is \$100**

**Click the link below for details and the registration form:**

<https://files.constantcontact.com/8206d75f001/a5d10db5-6bf9-4c62-82dd-f4c2ef036773.pdf>

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**October Colony Submission Deadline:** Please email your submissions to Cassidy ([cassidy@fcindy.org](mailto:cassidy@fcindy.org)) no later than **Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**.

**Women's Lunch Bunch:** After many months of Zoom lunches and a summer recess, we plan to resume in-person lunches in September as long as the Covid situation allows. We will gather on **Thursday, Sept. 30 at 11:45 a.m.** This group welcomes all women of the church to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and fellowship. For any questions or for more information please contact Sue Chapman at 317-259-1806 or at [carolsuech59@gmail.com](mailto:carolsuech59@gmail.com).

**Men's Lunch:** This lunch and discussion gathering for men of First Congregational meets every other Thursday at **1:00pm**. This month, they meet on **September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, & 30<sup>th</sup>**. For more information, please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081.

**Women's Book Circle** is taking a break for the summer. For more information please contact Karen Walker at 317-319-8950 or [karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com](mailto:karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com)

**Members In Need Fund** - The Members In Need Fund is available to support financial needs for any of our church family who find themselves in need. To request funds for you or your family, please contact Pastor Sarah by email [pastorsarah@fcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org) or cell (386) 478-9012.