



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
 THE PILGRIM COLONY

**August 2023 at a glance:**

SUNDAYS	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education
SUNDAYS	11:00 a.m.	Worship — In-Person, YouTube, Facebook
TUESDAYS	3:00 p.m.	Staff Meeting (Zoom)
THURSDAYS	9 a.m.-12	Cassidy In-Office Hours
THURSDAYS	5:00 p.m.	Spiritual Support Group (Zoom)
Friday, August 4 <sup>th</sup>	11:00 a.m.	WISE team meeting
Wednesday, August 9 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 p.m.	Trustees Meeting
Thursday, August 10 <sup>th</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup>	1:00 p.m.	Men' Lunch
Friday, August 11 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 p.m.	NAMI Support Group
Tuesday, August 15 <sup>th</sup>	3:30 p.m.	Worship and Faith Board Meeting (Zoom)
Wednesday, August 16 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 p.m.	Council Meeting
Friday, August 18 <sup>th</sup>	5:00 p.m.	Special Event and Film at Church!
Monday, August 21 <sup>st</sup>	10:00 a.m.	Library Team Meeting
Thursday, August 24 <sup>th</sup>	11:45 a.m.	Women's Lunch
Friday, August 25 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 p.m.	Fourth Friday Films at Landmark Keystone

**Pastoral Care:** Sabbatical Pastors, Rev. Diane and Rev. Jerry Zehr are available for Pastoral care. You can reach them in the following ways

**Diane:** [dianezehr@gmail.com](mailto:dianezehr@gmail.com) • 317-414-1047

**Jerry:** [Jerryzehr1@gmail.com](mailto:Jerryzehr1@gmail.com) • 317-551-8455

**Office Hours:** Cassidy (church admin) is in office Thursdays from 9am-12. Meetings with the Zehrs by Appointment.

# A Message from Your Sabbatical Pastors

Our theme for worship during this sabbatical season is "Joy to the World." In July, we explored the part of this song, "When Heaven and Nature Sings." In August, our theme for worship will be "Repeat the Sounding Joy." Diane and I will explore how we can experience joy amidst life's challenges.

Helen Keller lived in a world of silence and physical darkness. Many people pitied her because she did not have the full enjoyment of her bodily senses as they did. But she said, "It is because they do not see the golden chamber in my life where I dwell delighted; for dark as my path may seem to them, I carry a magic light in my heart." She said, "*Faith, the spiritual strong searchlight, illumines the way, and although sinister doubts lurk in the shadow, I walk unafraid toward the Enchanted Wood where the foliage is always green, **where joy abides**, where nightingales nest and sing, and where life and death are one in the Presence of the Lord.*"

Hellen Keller was an inspiration to me and many others. She was able to awaken to the inner light inside of her and experience the joy of life that resides within her.

May we join this August and awaken to the joy within our lives.

**Shalom,**

**Rev. Jerry Zehr**

## Senior Councilor's Report

**Bob Cook, Lead Councilor (June-September)**

We are approaching the quarter mark of our sabbatical time focusing on "Joy to the World!" We've experienced it in the music for worship, through the words of the sermons, the additional live plants gracing the sanctuary and in the planning of unique activities for the rest of the summer.

Yet, how often do we express a feeling of joy?

The word "joy" appears over 100 times in the Old Testament and about 60 times in the New Testament. On top of that, it is often written as "great joy" or "exceedingly great joy." Those are fairly high benchmarks. Joy is also listed as one of the Fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps all of this hype hinders our capacity to feel or find joy.

Over the last decade, the topic of joy has been the cover story at least once each year in the publication Psychology Today.

From the May 2021 issue, we can find:

"Look for little daily moments of joy to build on."

"Don't put pressure on yourself to hold onto joy."

"Don't worry about joy's fleeting nature."

"Don't beat yourself up for not feeling more joy than you do."

"Enjoy the sensations and physical expansion that joy evokes."

"Joy can be cultivated from tiny moments."

"The capacity to experience joy is ever-present."

"Joy makes us want to play."

The list goes on and on but the important theme is that joy can be simple, joy can be child-like, joy can be learned and joy can be practiced. At the end of our sabbatical time, let's take time to embrace our joys, share our joys and keep our joys for reflection and continuous nurturing of our souls.

**June -September Senior Counselor  
Bob Cook**

Out of concern for community health, we request that you remain up to date with your vaccinations. Mask as needed. Please stay home if you feel unwell.

**Come One, Come All: Join in the Joyous Events!**

The Sabbatical Implementation Team cordially invites you to attend a series of delightful and fun-filled activities which will be held at our church this summer. Many of you enjoyed the after-church ice cream social and tour of our church grounds on July 16, graciously hosted by Wendy Baldwin. Well, that occasion was just the beginning of a wonderful variety of events planned for the months ahead! So mark your calendars - and be on the lookout for announcements and updates regarding the following ways we will celebrate our congregational *Joy to the World!* **See additional Events in the Announcements Section.**



*An Evening*  
**AT FC INDY**

**6:00 PM** - DINNER (PIZZA AND SALAD)  
IN THE PARLOR AND NARTHEX

**6:45 PM** - GUEST SPEAKER REBECCA SUNDQUIST  
WILL EXPLAIN HOW WE MIGHT BEST EXPERIENCE  
A WALK THROUGH THE LABYRINTH

**7:30 PM** - SPECIAL VIEWING OF THE 30-MINUTE  
FILM "DAY OF A STRANGER," WITH DISCUSSION  
TO FOLLOW

**COME TO ONE, TWO, OR ALL THREE EVENTS:  
YOU ARE WELCOME AT ANY AND ALL!**

**Friday, August 18**

*Come to one, two, or all three events — you're welcome at all!*

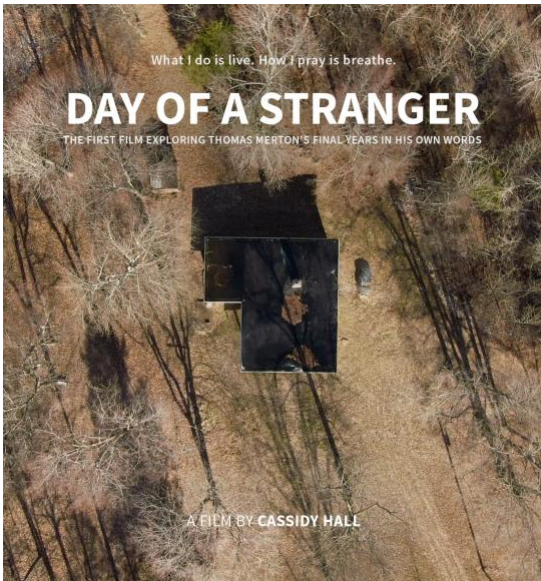
**6:00 PM** - Dinner (pizza and salad) in the parlor and narthex.

**6:45 PM** - Guest speaker Rebecca Sundquist will explain how we might best experience a walk through the Labyrinth (set up in the large nursery room) later in the evening and throughout the weekend.

**7:30 PM** - Special viewing in the sanctuary of the 30-minute film "Day of a Stranger," with discussion to follow. Note: This award-winning film, *created and directed by our very own Cassidy Hall*, is an intimate portrait of the renowned mystic, celebrated author, and Trappist Monk, Thomas Merton.

**8:00 PM** - Labyrinth will be open to visitors.

**MORE ABOUT THE FILM: DAY OF A STRANGER** is an intimate portrait of world-renowned Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, during his final years living as a hermit from 1965 to his untimely death in 1968. Interweaving meditative images of his hermitage nestled deep in the woods of Kentucky and rare audio recordings he made as a hermit; the film pieces together a first-person narrative of one of the twentieth century's most brilliant minds.



This film explores the final years of Merton's life when he moved to a hermitage on his monastery property. While there, he continued to write, take photos, and even record audio that included excerpts from his journal, thoughts within the day, and more. The film pieces together footage from his hermitage alongside some never-before heard audio which our team gained exclusive access to.

From 1965 until his death in 1968, Merton lived in this small hermitage on the Gethsemani Abbey property in the woods of central Kentucky. The film focuses on this specific time-period and the important work that emerged from this tiny cabin in the woods.

**ABOUT THE TITLE OF THE FILM:** In May of 1965, the earliest draft of one of Thomas Merton's most beloved essays was written: *Day of a Stranger*. The essay was published in Latin America as a response to a journalist's question about what a typical *day in the life* was like for Merton in his new hermitage home. Unbeknownst to Merton or the journalist that this would be his final home and "*Dia de un Extrano*," (*Day of a Stranger*) was published in *Papeles*, a journal from Caracas, Venezuela in July of 1966 (also published in [The Hudson Review](#) in the summer of 1967).

## Pastoral Congregation Relations Committee

PCRC for Pastor Sarah: Lianna Campos, Nancy Dickinson, Chuck Kiphart, Chair-Randy Walker ([aa28977rwalker@gmail.com](mailto:aa28977rwalker@gmail.com))

## How to Join Zoom Meetings with FC Indy:



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'.

## WORSHIP & FAITH

The Worship & Faith Board is excited to be working with our sabbatical pastors, Jerry and Diane Zehr, to provide new, meaningful, and joyful worship experiences to our faith community as we address the "Joy to the World" theme of Pastor Sarah's sabbatical. **On July 30 our worship service will focus heavily on the joy of music**, as we offer a variety of musical presentations by some of our own members. Come and be inspired by one of God's greatest creations – the gift of music!

Over the next couple of months we plan to offer a time for children twice each month. On the first Sunday one of our pastors will present a children's message, and on the third Sunday one of our board members will share another. Our kids are important members of our family of faith, and we want to show them how much we enjoy having them in worship.

Watch for some tweaks in our prayer segments each week, as we'll be doing some more experimentation with how we offer our prayer concerns. Cards will be available in the pews and in the narthex for sharing with the pastors any prayers that we want offered that day. Please take a moment to write down your prayer concern and give it to Pastor Diane or Pastor Jerry prior to or during the service. She or he will share your prayer aloud with the congregation, and it will be passed on to the prayer team for ongoing prayer during the week. Jerry and Diane will keep the cards for reference during the week and will be in contact as appropriate. We hope this new twist will enhance the worship experience – especially the vital segment of communal prayer – for all.

**–Alice Rutherford, Chair**

**Sean Baker, Abbie Bryant, Gini Coomer, Aurelia Holt-March, Cristy James, Alice Rutherford**

### Adult Ed

**Join us on Sunday mornings, 10:00 AM at church for a time of fellowship, learning, and discussion.**

Our Adult Ed gathering takes a new direction in August as we delve into the history of our own church, FCC, and of our denomination, the United Church of Christ. Our own resident church historian, Marion Harcourt, will be presenting three talks this month on the topics listed below:

**Aug 6:** "The travels of the library's stained glass window"

**Aug 13:** "An Introduction to the history of FCC"

**Aug 27:** "An Introduction to the American Missionary Association, and their work to establish the Historic Black Colleges and Universities."

**On August 20th**, Wendy Baldwin and company will share their stories of "Making All Things New," the theme of the 34th Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis this year from June 30- July 4. Come and enjoy their excitement and insights.

## ***Ways to Connect for Worship:***

In-Person at 7171 North Pennsylvania Street Indianapolis, IN 46240

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

 **YOUTUBE** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWV9wqAvPiUKSkEbjav6Zpw>

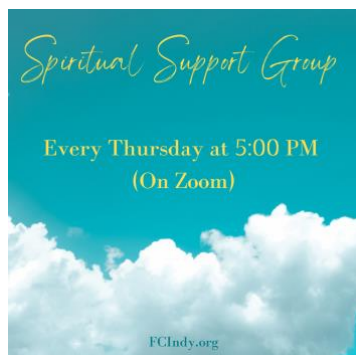
- YouTube Live broadcasts at 10:45am with 15 minutes of gathering music. The service begins at 11am.

## OUTREACH & SERVICE

**Mental Health Team**

**Outreach and Service Board**

**Questions?** Contact Larry Eckel at [lspeckel@comcast.net](mailto:lspeckel@comcast.net).



**Need a Lift in Your Spirit? Join us 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.

## CARE & CONNECTIONS BOARD

**Wendy Baldwin, Chair**

**Happy Birthday in August!**

Marion Harcourt	Judy Kaufman
Angie Hartman	Judy Larracey
James Hodges	Carol Slocum
Michael Johnson	

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

**Fourth Friday Films:** Paused during the pandemic, we are now back to our Fourth Friday Films monthly fellowship event. We meet at Landmark Keystone Cinema about 6:30-6:45, decide on which movie(s) people want to see, and then gather afterwards for beverages and discussion. Join us on August 25 for this fun time together!

**Greeting Cards in the Narthex:** If you are worshipping in-person on Sundays, please be sure to stop by the "card station" to sign that week's cards. These cards are for birthdays or to let someone know that we are thinking of them, and are part of our ministry to extend love within our church family.

**Transportation Help:** Several in our church family need rides to church on Sunday. A few of our members have been providing transportation, but we could use more to cover when people are out of town. Please contact Wendy Baldwin, [wbaldwinindy@gmail.com](mailto:wbaldwinindy@gmail.com), if you would be willing to assist.

## TRUSTEES

**Fundraising and Other Updates from your Building Manager:** Thank you to those who have contributed to our Capital Improvements campaign! After paying the \$138,000 bill for the new heating system, we now have about \$10,000 on hand for other projects needed to maintain our 66 year old building and grounds. Of course, there are additional projects we would like to do, so your gifts to “Capital Improvements” will help us to provide a safe and comfortable setting for our worship and ministries. Thank you!

You may recall that our front sign blew off its post in a freak wind storm in April. Much of the wood supporting the sign was rotten, and Randy Walker worked to provide a sturdier framework for the sign, and it is now installed.

Then, the week of July 9<sup>th</sup>, our mailbox fell off of its wooden post. This was another case of rotten wood! Randy Walker and Jimmy Hodges were able to install a new metal post, and attach the mailbox on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Now there is another situation of water-damaged wood that needs to be dealt with. A couple of months ago, I noticed that the wood trim on one of the levels below the steeple showed some alarming deterioration. We have now contracted with Cornett Roofing to replace copper flashing that is causing the wood rot, and to fix the wooden trim. The cost will be more than \$15,000, and thanks to a generous gift of \$10,000, we are able to move forward with this repair. It should be done in August.

Work continues on weeding and clearing out invasive plants along the north edge of the driveway, and other areas. In the past, this area has been quite overgrown with thistle, honeysuckle, and other weeds. Chuck Kiphart has been a big help with this effort. If you would like to work on helping to keep our grounds in good shape, please let me know – I will identify a few target areas, and you can work when it is convenient for you. I also plan to have some group “work days”, so look for those announcements.

**–Wendy Baldwin, Building Manager**

**Questions or comments for Trustees**, contact current Chair, Steve Coomer, 317-255-9328, [s.coomer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s.coomer@sbcglobal.net)

## Financial Update

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

Here are the financial results for the first six months of 2023.

## 1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary

1/1/2023 through 6/30/2023 Using 2023 Budget

Category	1/1/2023 Actual	- Budget	6/30/2023 Difference
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>132,731</b>	<b>117,861</b>	<b>14,871</b>
M. Unrestricted Contributions	132,731	117,861	14,871
M.01 Pledged Offerings	82,646	62,400	20,246
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	22,944	28,320	-5,376
M.03 Rollover Prior Year Surplus_De...	-13,409	-13,409	0
M.04 Foundation - Endowment Fund...	16,000	16,000	0
M.05 Foundation - Minister Fund Draw	20,000	20,000	0
M.06 Foundation - Trad. Music Fund ...	0	0	0
M.08 Other Transfers from Restr Accts	4,550	4,550	-0
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>141,818</b>	<b>136,333</b>	<b>-5,485</b>
A. Pastoral Leadership	65,441	66,126	685
B. Worship & Faith	17,173	16,246	-927
C. Care & Connections	119	150	31
E. Outreach & Service	5,120	6,859	1,739
F. Trustees	0	0	0
G. Administration & Operations	18,681	17,620	-1,061
H. House & Grounds	31,761	25,697	-6,064
I. Miscellaneous	3,523	3,635	111
<b>Net Difference:</b>	<b>-9,087</b>	<b>-18,472</b>	<b>9,385</b>

### Highlights:

- **Income through June 30** of \$132,700 was \$14,900 above budget thanks to pledge receipts running \$20,000 ahead of budget. Note that these figures exclude the designated gifts of around \$150,000 to fund the new boiler and other capital improvements. Even excluding these large gifts, overall contributions were \$14,500 better than last year – a positive trend!
- **Expenses** of \$141,800 were \$5,500 above budget due primarily to House and Grounds (building maintenance and natural gas) and Admin (office software and support).

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

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

**Note:** Cash donations of \$1.00 or less are counted as donations to the current Covenant Outreach. Cash of \$5.00 or more should be put in pew envelopes with a designation of Pledge/Contribution, Covenant Outreach, or the specific charity. Unless designated, cash over \$5.00 will go to the church budget.

### A Note on our Current Covenant Outreach Giving

Our current Covenant Outreach focus is related to our WISE Covenant, and the recipients are **UCC Mental Health Network, The Julian Center, and the Trevor Project.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Additional Events from the Sabbatical Team:  
Sunday, September 10**



1:00 PM - Congregational picnic and games outside following worship. (Held indoors if weather necessitates.)

Planned activities: Bounce House; Cornhole; Visiting Magician; Ladder Ball; Ring Toss; Snow Cones; Prizes; and more!

### **Sunday, October 1**

3:00 PM - The Indianapolis Women's Chorus performs a one-hour "Season of Joy" concert in the sanctuary. We suggest you sign up in advance since this event will be open to the public. Plan to arrive between 2:30 and 2:45 PM. Refreshments will be served in the parlor following the concert.

### **Sunday, October 8**

12 Noon - Celebrating the return of Pastor Sarah with a Hawaiian-themed catered meal following worship. Hawaiian shirts and dresses are encouraged!

**WORDS FROM THE LIBRARY TEAM:** The Library Team is busy processing new books for the Upstairs Library and the one being expanded for children in the Family Room. Special thanks to Paul Terheide, Marion Harcourt, and Angela Hodges for their many contributions in each location. The updated spine labels are nearing completion upstairs as well. Please take time to visit your church libraries soon. **Gini Coomer, Nancy Dickinson, Janet Selby, and Sandy Wood**

**Women's Lunch Bunch:** All women of the church are invited to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and fellowship. This month we will meet on Thursday, August 24 at 11:45 a.m. For any questions or for more information please contact Sue Chapman at 317-259-1806 or [carolsuech59@gmail.com](mailto:carolsuech59@gmail.com) .

**The FC Indy Blog "Pew Reflections":** Please email your submissions to Cassidy ([cassidy@fcindy.org](mailto:cassidy@fcindy.org)) anytime to be shared on the blog.

**Acts of Kindness Fund** - Members can make requests for use of this fund to assist themselves or others in our church family who might not ask for help. These gifts can help support financial needs, as well as help with ride-share transportation, shovel or plow snow, pay an unexpected expense, etc. Honoring the dignity of the recipient, all requests for use of this fund will be confidential, and privacy will be respected.

**Learn more about Sabbaticals** from this [Sabbatical Resource Guide](https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/ASF-SabbaticalLeave.pdf).  
<https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/ASF-SabbaticalLeave.pdf>

## **FROM UCC NATIONAL: Comfort, not keynote: Nadia Bolz-Weber speaks to General Synod about hope amid 'fear, anxiety, worry and regret,' by Tiffany Vail | published on Jul 2, 2023**

The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber began her keynote to the [34th General Synod](#) of the United Church of Christ by saying she wasn't giving a keynote at all.

Instead, she said, her speech was a "thinly veiled attempt to comfort myself."

Bolz-Weber, a renowned Lutheran pastor and best-selling author, spoke to 2,000 Synod attendees Saturday, July 1 about the global anxiety levels of the last few years and where to find hope in the face of fears and regrets.

She started out by listing nine things that are currently "scaring the heck" out of her, including a society that seems to be fraying at the edges; the safety of her Black friends, gay son and young adult daughter; and the possibility that we have already lived through the

most peaceful and prosperous period of history without realizing it, and that we can't get it back.

"I don't know about you," she said to the crowded plenary hall, "but some days I have enough fear, anxiety, worry and regret to fill this whole room. And I have yet to find a vision statement or a church consultant or a five-year plan or a lifestyle change or a meditation app that is an effective remedy for fear, anxiety, worry and regret.

"But I have found parts of our Christian faith that bring the goods ... and I really need to remind myself of those things right now," she continued. "And so, this morning, I am preaching to myself, and I am allowing you to overhear it."

Bolz-Weber went on to speak on those themes individually — fear and anxiety, worry, regret, and hope — and how scripture has addressed them.



The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber speaks to a packed house at General Synod.

## **Fear and anxiety**

First up: fear and anxiety. Bolz-Weber talked about how institutions that she had never thought to doubt before – such as democracy — are starting to show cracks.

She talked about the temple in Jerusalem, where through the centuries various churches and temples and mosques replaced each other at that same site, with each religion seeing themselves as “king of the Holy Hill” favored by God. She compared how they must have felt when they were on top to how mainline Protestants felt in the 1960s, when churches were full.

But then, she asked, did each group feel that God had abandoned them when they were replaced by someone else?

“It is always tempting to say — when our lives are good — that it is because God is good,” she said. “But when the walls fall down, what are we left with?”

“Wars will happen, there will be destruction and famine, there will be pandemics and fake news, there will be the *Left Behind* series of books,” she went on. “There will be churches that

close, there will be family trouble, there will be loneliness, there will be natural disaster .... All of this will happen; all of it is real."

And, she added, almost none of it is in our control, which is a "real affront to popular notions of wellness and so-called spirituality these days, when there is a million-dollar industry convincing us that we can manifest everything we want, that we can pray or positive-think our way into never getting a cancer diagnosis or never needing financial help.

"I get the appeal. Powerlessness is terrifying. But what about when the thing happens with our life, in our churches, in our society, that no amount of purpose-driven drivel could have ever prevented?"

That, she said, is when we need to listen to Jesus, who told us: "Do not be afraid."

"Because these things may rock your world, but they cannot harm your soul," she said.

## **Regrets**

Part two of Bolz-Weber's address centered on regrets.

"Sometimes, I get stuck in tidepools of resentment toward myself and others. Stuck, swirling in an eddy of my own remorse. Caught in the shame of what I have done, what I have left undone, what has been done to me," she said. "I have yet to see a single thing from a lifestyle influencer on Instagram who has freed me from it in the way that Jesus has."

Bolz-Weber recounted going on a silent retreat and spending it filled with regret. Until, she said, 11 words came to her: "But what if you've already been forgiven of all of that?"

"I mean, the audacity of God," she said. "My cheeks were streaming with tears before I was even aware I had started crying. The man Martin Luther once said it is not God but the devil who rummages through our garbage looking for our sins to rub our noses in it."

Bolz-Weber said the world may send a message that our failings are inescapable and unforgivable, but that is simply not true.

"If Jesus can defeat death and the devil, I'm pretty sure giving you his grace isn't going to be that hard for him," she said. "In Christ, who you are is not to be found in the garbage can of your life. Who you really are is forgiven."

Bolz-Weber said she wishes the church talked as much about forgiveness as Jesus did, and she lambasted those who have "weaponized talk of sin" and put conditions on forgiveness or on God's love.

"Christianity is not supposed to be about controlling the masses. Christianity is not supposed to be some mild Elks Club with Eucharist, it's not supposed to be about morality and superiority. Christianity is supposed to be about raising the dead," she said.

## **Worry**

Her third topic was worry.

She talked about how worrying that the world is going to collapse or about any of the other things on her list, "doesn't do one thing" to keep her safe and secure. But, she said, worrying does take something away.

Referencing Matthew, Bolz-Weber quoted Jesus as directing those carrying worry to look to the birds in the sky, who do not worry about reaping or sowing but are still fed by God.

"I think it's more than him saying, 'Look, literally, birds are better at trusting God than you,'" she said. "I think Jesus gets that the beautiful things that surround me are meant to be enjoyed today. And that they are the exact same things I totally miss out on when I'm busy worrying about tomorrow."

Bolz-Weber said that no one has yet discovered another place in the universe with the exact conditions to support life as we know it.

"13 billion light years across, and only here are there birds and flowers and puppies and pizza and Beyoncé," she said.

## **Hope**

The fourth thing Bolz-Weber spoke about was hope.

"I want to admit to you that sometimes my anxiety can make prayer difficult," she said. "So, if you too are anxious and can't pray ... maybe what we can do is just pray for a conversion of our anxiety. Because when anxiety is converted, do you know what it becomes? It becomes hope.

"If you have anxiety now, you are almost hopeful," she said, drawing laughter.

Bolz-Weber apologized for not having anything "sexier" to offer than "Jesus, prayer and the Bible," saying: "Those are the only load-bearing structures I know of right now."

She said scripture gives us an important perspective in anxious times.

"When all we can see and feel and think about is all the personal and political crap happening now, it's important to remember we are part of an old, old story. One that starts in the beginning of time and brushes the skin of the present and reaches into the promised future, and the promise that God is not done," she said.

She went on to say our hope is not in the Dow Jones, in the government, in the nonprofit industrial complex but in the God of Abraham and Sarah and Isaiah and Mary Magdalene and Mother Teresa.

"When we stand on the rock of this big story, with one hand reaching back to the hope of the prophets and one hand reaching forward to the promises of God, we can stand firmly in the reality of the present and not have that reality consume us," she said.

"Despite our anxieties of faith, we still dare to get our hopes up," she said.

"Despite our anxieties of faith, we still dare to get our hopes up," she said.

## **Questions and opinions**

Bolz-Weber finished her time taking some questions from the audience.

One person asked how to balance forgiveness of the sins of ancestors with responsibility to repair the wrongs they committed. Her response was that "forgiveness is not the same as exoneration" and said clearly there is much work to do around systemic issues. She called for a system of restorative justice in the United States.

Another person asked how people can be OK with the closing of churches when those institutions are what hold communities together.

"Our deepest faith can't be in our institutions," Bolz-Weber responded. "Our deepest faith has to be in God's faithfulness to us. When they do let us down — and they will — it doesn't destroy our relationship to God.

"I love the church. I don't want to see churches close. I don't want to see denominations do badly. But at the same time, if institutions end up failing in some way, the church will be fine."

Another person asked Bolz-Weber how she manages to hold on to hope even when her anxiousness is palpable.

"I sometimes have to borrow other people's hope, other people's faith. Sometimes, we are the one lowering our friend through the roof to Jesus, and sometimes we're the ones being lowered," she said.