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# The Good News

*First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ*

220 West Main Street, Cannon Falls, MN 55009 (507) 263-2901

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*A loving congregational family that celebrates God's presence among us*



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## Less of me, more of You

I'm a member of a Facebook group for pastors of small churches. "Small Churches" is loosely defined, but it tends to be membership of less than 100 and/or attendance in double digits. Staffing tends to be quite like here at First Congo – full or part-time pastor and part-time support staff – office manager, custodian, music, maybe youth/Christian Education. There's a lot of conversation about congregational life and the nature of ministry, but, by design, little about theology or Biblical interpretation. Sometimes that's hard, because while theology shapes church polity and practice, theological debate can also lead to unhelpful and divisive conversations. If someone is seeking advice, it has been proven unhelpful to offer that the pastor is being tested by Satan rather than good counsel on how to contract with a roofer or how to deal with a conflict that has arisen with or between members.

Although there are times in ministry I've felt a good exorcism might just do the trick. Haven't yet run into that here in Cannon Falls. Not yet, anyway...

It's been helpful to see what colleagues deal with, read how they struggle, hear their successes, and share their hopes for their congregations and for the Church itself. It helps keep me focused, and above all, keep my ego in check. There's no one right way to do any of what I am called to do, except be honest and kind, be as transparent as someone bound to keep confidences can be, and rely on God and on others to lead the way each and every day. Most of which goes against my nature.

Which is why the Gospel stories in the first weeks of Epiphany have been enlightening to me. Where do I, do we, experience God's beloved-ness? To what am I, are we, being called? Where is Jesus leading us next? How is the story we are living a part of the story God is trying to tell? Are we, like Israel in the desert with Moses, dreaming of our past, or are we looking to whatever future might be unfolding before us?

I have no doubt my hopes and fears, my hold on my past and my worries about the future, become the filters through which I read the Bible and hear God speaking to me, to us, through scripture. We all do that, and what I wrestle with every week is to put those filters aside so I can see with as clearly as I can the fullness of what the Word is saying.

And part of my call as your pastor is to engage you in that process, to look at and listen to the word of God in ways that you may not have before: to both comfort and challenge, to find hope in times of despair, and to see yourselves and our God in ways that can strengthen your faith and encourage your walk with Jesus.

And so I pray, not just every Sunday, as I prepare to preach, but all week, as I study and write my sermon, "Let there be less of me, O God, and more of you." That's I prayer we can pray together. A pray not just for your preacher, but for those who listen. A prayer for all of us as we seek to better follow Jesus in our lives, with our lives, long after any sermon is preached and our time in worship is ended.

Less of me, and more of you, O God.

## **Pastoral Care Needs**

Call Pastor Glen in the event of a pastoral care need. Either call his home 651-641-1832 or cell 651-757-0314. Email pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com. *During his vacation from February 8<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>, contact Rev. Chris Engstrom at (507) 263-3042 for pastoral emergencies*

## **Volunteer Schedule**

### **Sunday February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Greeter: Bruce and Laura Hemmah  
Reader: Laura Hemmah  
Sound Technician: Cindy Mae Nelson

### **Sunday February 9<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Cindy Mae Nelson  
Reader: Cindy Mae Nelson  
Sound Technician: Roman Mercier

### **Sunday February 16<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Kathy Gerbracht  
Reader: TBD  
Sound Technician: Steve Sullivan

### **Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Greeter: Gloria Strain  
Reader: Linda Nelson  
Sound Technician: Byron Nowariak

### **Ash Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Jim and Bonnie Hvistendahl  
Reader: Bonnie Hvistendahl  
Sound Technician: Byron Nowariak

## **Prayer Chain**

**Morning** - Bonnie Hvistendahl 263-4120

**Evening** - Mavis Johnson 263-2857

When you are in need of prayer for yourself or others, your request will be passed along to the above prayer chains.

## **February Serving Committee**

The Serving Committee for February is Joe and Stacy Coyle, Fred and Rhonda Foster, and Karen Kronberg.

## **Education/Fellowship**

*Anyone is welcome to join us at any time!*

**Tuesday Bible Study** meet weekly at 10 am. We usually meet for just over an hour. Pastor Glen leads the study, focusing on the text(s) planned for the coming Sunday's

sermon. *We will not meet on Feb. 11 or 18 (Pr. Glen's vacation) or Feb. 25 (don't ask...)*

**Sunday Morning Study** begins after worship, except for the last Sunday of each month. On Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will begin discussing selections from *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*. Well-known saints, apostles and martyrs will be presented alongside lesser-known Biblical figures, theologians, artists, literary figures, social reformers, and others who have influenced thought and lives into our day. 2-3 short biographies will be offered each week. Upcoming readings will be available in advance at church or from Pastor Glen. *We will meet on Feb. 2 and then again weekly beginning March 1.*

## **From the Mission Committee**

On 23 February, we will receive one final offering for Tom and Monica Liddle, our Global Mission Partners in East Timor. Their ministry concludes this spring, and they will be returning to Minnesota, speaking about their ministry beginning in April, and "trusting that God will lead us into whatever is next."

We can celebrate their ministry and honor their wishes with scholarships for students with whom they have been working, so the clinic in Dili and the church in Lospalos will be in good hands as they leave. **Checks should be written to our church with Liddle Mission on the memo line.**

Last year you generously donated to the following: Tom and Monica Liddle Mission, Food Share Month, Community Table Meal, Neighbor in Need, Good Samaritan Fund, Feed My Starving Children, One Great Hour of sharing, Operation Christmas Child, Goodhue County Christmas Project, Christmas Fund, The Gardens Nursing Home, Prayer Shawls and Family Fresh Receipts.

This community continues to have a generous and volunteering spirit. You DO make a difference.



## ***Lent Soup and More***

Join First Congregational Church for our Lenten Soup Suppers on Wednesdays, 6-7 pm

Homemade soups, crackers, bread with dessert and coffee provided for a free will offering. All are welcome!

You may also enjoy the following presentations.

- March 4<sup>th</sup> Bill Peterson - Friends of San Lucas (Guatemala)
- March 11<sup>th</sup> Ella Coyle - Group Work Camp staff
- March 18<sup>th</sup> Maddy Woodman - Philadelphia w/Local Church Ministries
- March 25<sup>th</sup> Pastor Glen - United Church of Christ in the Philippines
- April 1<sup>st</sup> Stacy Coyle - weekend backpacks for school kids

## ***Choir Schedule***

Practice Time: Sundays 8:30-9:30am

Practice Dates & \*Performance Dates

February: 2/9 & \*2/16 &

\*Ash Wednesday 2/26 (6:00pm rehearse)

March: 3/15 & \*3/22

April: 4/5 & \*Maundy Thursday 4/9 (6:00pm rehearse) & \*Easter 4/12

May: 5/10 & \*5/17

Director: Dawn Husmann

Phone: 507-298-0267

Email: dmhusmann@gmail.com

## ***Yoga at Congo***

In addition to the Monday Yoga Classes at 4:00 and 6:15 pm, Yoga Chair Classes have been added at 2:00 pm.

## ***Women's Coffee***

Join us every 3rd Thursday at 10:00 am for coffee at Hi-Quality Bakery.

## ***CCIC Monthly Supper***

The Community Churches Interaction Council (CCIC) holds monthly suppers on the last Sunday of each month at FCC. February's supper will be hosted by St. Pius V Catholic Church on **February 23<sup>rd</sup>** at 5:00 pm.

## ***Lectio Divina***

In the United Church of Christ, we often say that we take the Bible too seriously to read it literally. Once we have determined to take the Bible both seriously and not literally, how do we approach this sacred text? One way is through the practice of Lectio Divina, which is Latin for "divine reading." Lectio Divina, an ancient way of reading the Bible, was introduced by a gentle and loving theologian named Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395). Lectio Divina is not complicated. A scripture passage is read four times, and each time the experience of the passage is deepened. You can practice Lectio Divina on your own, with a prayer partner or in a small group. This week set aside twenty minutes to try Lectio Divina with the passage from today.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:1-4

**Prepare** Find a quiet place where you will be comfortable. You might want to light a candle, play some inspirational music, or spend a few minutes with a beautiful or sacred image. Invite God to join this reading with you, by praying a short prayer like "Meet me here, God."

**Lectio (Read)** You may want to read the passage aloud. On the first read, listen carefully for any words or phrases that jump out at you. What do you notice? What catches your attention? What surprises you?

**Meditatio (Reflect)** Read a second time. This time ask yourself if you can imagine being part of this story or passage. What does it look sound, taste, smell, feel like to be part of this scripture? How does the passage remind you of themes, thoughts or feelings in your own life or in the world today?



**Oratio (Respond)** Read a third time. Ask, "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? How is God inviting me to change? From the lens of scripture, what transformation might be possible in my life?" You may want to record your thoughts in a journal.

**Contemplatio (Rest)** After the final reading, spend a few moments in silent contemplation, to listen for the voice of the still-speaking God.

*Note: February is Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month*

### **Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking**

*By Samson Nangole (Kenya East)*

Dear Loving Heavenly Father, We come to you today in praise and thanksgiving for creating all human beings in your likeness and image. We are all your beloved children and precious in your sight. We come before you today in solidarity with the millions and millions of people who suffer each day from human trafficking. We pray for healing and restoration for those who have been victims of trafficking. We ask that they may be liberated and that you will restore their freedom and dignity.

We pray for all the work of The Salvation Army, including our project here in Kenya, that that you will use our contributions to protect, defend, restore and empower the victims of human trafficking and help stop this evil in our country. May they find comfort in your loving arms and find hope in your name.

We particularly pray a fresh sense of awareness within our communities. May we be so burdened that we are stirred into action. May your church, your Army, be so unsettled and so offended by these injustices that we become active in working with others to end human trafficking. We pray that you would strengthen our resolve and commitment to fight for justice. Help us to be people who can be trusted, people who will take a stand, and people who are ready to speak out. Give us all hearts full of

compassion so that people we work with who have been victims of human trafficking may see your love from them reflecting in us. Keep safe the many people and children in our country, many living in extreme poverty, who are vulnerable to the exploitative and manipulative ways of the human traffickers. Help us to grow communities that prevent and protect.

We pray for a change of heart of the perpetrators and organizers of human trafficking. We ask for a miracle, that you would touch the hearts of the men and women who enslave others. We pray that your light will break through their darkness and they will turn from their ways. Help us all to claim the freedom that is a gift from you. Father, above all, we pray that human trafficking will end and both traffickers and the people they traffic will find their hope in you.

We make our prayers as people of hope. Amen.

*Samson Nangole is Project Field Coordinator for the Simba Anti-Trafficking Project in Eastern Kenya. Samson works with communities, truck drivers and border officials along the Mombasa Highway*

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**Sunday Worship:** 9:30 am

**Holy Communion:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month

**Bible Study:** 10:00 am Tuesday

**Moderator:** Bill and Emily Peterson

**Ministers:** ALL MEMBERS

**Minister:** Glen Herrington Hall

**Church Organist/Choir Director:** Dawn Husmann, [dmhusmann@gmail.com](mailto:dmhusmann@gmail.com), 507-298-0267

**Church Secretary:** Kileen Swedenborg

**Custodian:** Dick Welch

# February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> 9:30 am Worship w/communion	<b>3</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>4</b> 10:00 am Bible Study	<b>5</b> 6:00 pm Praise Band	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b> 9:30 am Worship	<b>10</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>11</b> 6:30 pm Trustees	<b>12</b> 6:00 pm Praise Band	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Pr. Glen on vacation - contact Rev. Chris Engstrom (507) 263-3042 for pastoral emergencies						
<b>16</b> 9:30 am Worship	<b>17</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 6:00 pm Praise Band	<b>20</b> 10:00 am Women's Coffee	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
Pr. Glen on vacation						
<b>23</b> 9:30 am Worship w/All For You 5:00 pm CCIC Dinner	<b>24</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 6:00 pm Praise Band	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>

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*Kileen email: cannonfallsucc@gmail.com*