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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

*fccucc@citlink.net www.cannonfallsucc.org*

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



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## **We began with a cross of ashes...**

The gospels are clear, at least to me, that Jesus' message was not about anyone's personal salvation but about the dawning of the kingdom of God, a new realm in stark contrast to the empire of Rome. To any empire of human construction, in fact. Empires have always had the interests of a few above the interests of many, and created systems of oppression to maintain privilege, power and control based on gender, race, class, religion, ability, language - any way we have imagined we can divide people against each other. And it is especially heinous when religion cooperates with the empire as if God blesses such oppressive regimes.

None of this is what God intends. As Paul reminds us, there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28) As followers of Christ, we are not only called to love our neighbors, but to love our enemies, and pray for those who oppose us, who make our lives difficult. Jesus carried on in the prophetic tradition of welcoming for the stranger, caring for widows, orphans, and the poor; I take that to mean, befriend and support those who have no family. We are to make them our family because they too are children of God and they are family.

Salvation takes place here and now, in this life. Our salvation is tied up in how we renew a broken world, restore broken lives, and rebuild broken relationships.

Empire requires brokenness. Wholeness, or the illusion of wholeness, is reserved for a few. And religion, bad religion, profits from a belief in our inherent brokenness, rather than blessedness, when we are in fact beloved by God, who is not out to punish us but only wants to love us and have us love each other.

Jesus was executed because he challenged the unholy alliance of "church and state" in Jerusalem and throughout the Roman Empire. His teachings about the coming Kingdom of God threatened their power, and the fear of a revolt was growing. They thought putting him to death would quell that threat. So they did the worst they could do - they publicly executed him on a cross.

But Jesus made a mockery of their power once again. The resurrection made a mockery of the empire, revealing it was ultimately powerless against the coming Kingdom, which is everything the empire was not: freedom, not oppression; peace, not fear; hope, not despair; joy, not grief; justice, not apathy; abundance, not need; truth, not deception.

On Ash Wednesday, we began Lent by donning a cross of ashes, a reminder that no empire, no human system of governance, including the church, can fully possess, contain, or control the power and presence of God that Jesus reveals in his teachings about the Kingdom of God. It is our way of reminding ourselves and the world in whose reign we choose to live, who is it we serve, to whom we are loyal, whose claim is on our lives, whose call we seek to answer. Lent is a time to listen deeply for that call to follow the one who has already asked us to be a part of that kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

## **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](mailto:pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com).

## **Volunteer Schedule**

### **Sunday March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Greeter: Bruce and Mavis Johnson  
Reader: Mavis Johnson  
Sound Technician: Jim Hvistendahl

### **Sunday March 8<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Glenda Cooper  
Reader: Samuel Coyle  
Sound Technician: Cindy Mae Nelson

### **Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Chuck and Carol Emery  
Reader: Carol Emery  
Sound Technician: Roman Mercier

### **Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Greeter: Byron and Karen Nowariak  
Reader: Karen Nowariak  
Sound Technician: Steve Sullivan

### **Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**

Greeter: Jerome and Merva Swanson  
Reader: Barb Herrington-Hall  
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.

## **March Serving Committee**

The Serving Committee for March is Jackie and Steve Sullivan and Carol and Chuck Emery.

## **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.

**Sunday Morning Study** begins after worship, except for the last Sunday of each month. With excerpts from *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, well-known saints, apostles and martyrs will be introduced 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.

## **Congregational Meeting**

A Meeting of the Congregation will be held on March 8 after worship. The purpose of the meeting is to vote on proposed changes to our Bylaws, primarily how committees, boards and ministry teams are organized, and the Church Council's function in relation to the ongoing ministry of the church. Every member household should have received a copy of the current Bylaws and proposed changes. Copies are available electronically and in print.

## **From the Mission Committee**



*We believe that God wants to take care of our needs and give us enough to share with others. As individuals and as the church, it is our privilege to give generously to people in need; locally, regionally, nationally, and abroad.*

This month the Mission Committee will be focusing on Minnesota FoodShare.

The largest grassroots food and fund drive in the state, the Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together various community organizations, businesses, and faith communities to help stock nearly 300 food shelves statewide. In 2017, over \$8 million dollars and 4.7 million pounds of food were raised by Minnesota food shelves and Minnesota FoodShare.

Minnesota FoodShare envisions a Minnesota where all residents have access to healthy food and no one struggles with food insecurity. The March Campaign addresses these issues directly and we invite you to join our efforts and advocate for long-term solutions to food insecurity and poverty in

our communities. Learn more at [mnfoodshare.org/marchcampaign](http://mnfoodshare.org/marchcampaign).

Items Needed for Cannon Falls Food Shelf

- Progresso soups
- Campbell's Chunky Soup
- Canned peaches, pears, and mandarin oranges
- Tooth brushes
- Tooth paste

## ***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

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](mailto: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. We will host March's supper on **March 29th** at 5:00 pm.

## ***Reflect, Repent and Reconnect***

By Cory Driver

Lent is a time of introspection, and even penance, as we look forward with humble awe and deep gratitude to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. The modern practices of Lent have ancient pedigrees. The term "Lent" comes from the Old English word *lencten*, which referred to the "lengthening" of the daylight hours during spring. Christians in northwestern Europe and the British Isles appropriated this term for the spring liturgical season.

Lent was traditionally a time for preparing both longtime believers and new converts for the welcoming of new Christians into the community through their baptisms, which were celebrated during Eastertide. Lent continues to be a time of preparation of self and the community as we look forward to the expansion of God's reign and the defeat of sin and death.

Lenten practices traditionally fall into three broad categories: justice toward God, justice toward oneself and justice toward others. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to meet these goals.

The following activities can help mark this important season:

### **Justice toward God**

- Rededicate yourself to living into your holy vocation to extend God's reign in your daily life.
- Meditate on God's faithful and sacrificial love for us to cultivate deep and abiding gratitude.

### **Justice toward oneself**

- Remember in humility that you are created of dust and to dust you shall return.
- Take time to honestly, critically and gently evaluate how you have loved God

and neighbor-or not-and how the Spirit might be calling you to do better.

- Fast from rich and delicious food to help yourself consciously break patterns of selfishness and overconsumption.
- Repent of patterns and habits that harm yourself and/or others.

### **Justice toward others**

- Continue the traditional Lenten practice of increased giving to people experiencing poverty.
- Commit your time, energy and resources to supporting social justice causes through organizations and programs.
- Invite acquaintances (or strangers!) to share a meal and share their stories.
- Take steps toward reconnecting with those from whom you've been estranged (if healthy for all).

One of my favorite practices during Lent is a modification of the Jewish ritual Tashlikh. A person will go to their closest flowing water source, such as a stream or river. I like to survey the path my local Mud Creek takes on its way to the Gulf of Mexico, which helps me remember my responsibility to be a good custodian of local waterways. Then I recite, among other prayers, Micah 7:18-19:

*Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger the forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."*

Lint (for Lent!) taken out of ones pocket-or perhaps a tiny bit of bread or a handful of soil-is cast into the stream or river to be carried away to the sea. The water carrying away the tinybits of lint that accumulate in my pocket helps me visualize how God takes away my sins and injurious habits that also accumulate over time, so that I'm freed to serve God and neighbor once again.

On Thursdays during Lent, I try to discern patterns that harm myself or my neighbor,

and when I come up with something of which I would like to repent, I take from my pocket or wallet a tiny bit of cotton or linen lint (something that will biodegrade quickly and not harm fish or amphibians). On Good Friday, I toss the small collection of natural fibers into the creek, repenting and thanking God for carrying; away my sins.

However one practices Lent, it's a time of introspection and preparing to celebrate Jesus' taking away of our sins, sinfulness and embrace of death over life. It's important that we don't wallow in self-contempt. Rather, with confidence in Jesus' salvation, we should repent of negative patterns and live into Jesus' calling to love God and our neighbors.

*Cory Driver is a deacon and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy*

### **A Steward's Prayer**

*(from February Stewardship issue)*

**Father of all mankind**, throughout this day help me to remember that a very real portion of your Kingdom has been placed in my keeping. Therefore teach me to love you:

**With all my heart...**that I may love those whom you love, giving back to the most unlovable and difficult, your own everlasting mercy and compassion;

**With all my soul...**that I may seek fresh ways in which your divine power may surge through my commonplace routine, from morning till night;

**With all my strength...**that my hands may work the works of God who sent me, that my energy may be poured out for the needs of your family, until all I own or earn or gain may be spent in a stewardship of loving kindness and,

**With all my mind...**that I may think your thoughts from moment to moment, making beautiful and significant such expenditure, always placing you first, that your Kingdom may come through my sharing, my caring, my daring...for your name's sake. Amen

# March 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> 9:30 am Worship w/communion 10:45 Adult Education	<b>2</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>3</b> 10:00 am Bible Study	<b>4</b> 5:30 pm Praise Band 6:00 pm Soup Supper	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> <b>Daylight Savings</b> 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Congregational Meeting 11:00 Adult Education	<b>9</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>10</b> 10:00 am Bible Study 6:30 pm Trustees	<b>11</b> 5:30 pm Praise Band 6:00 pm Soup Supper	<b>12</b> 7:00 am CCIC Meeting	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 8:30 am Choir Practice 9:30 am Worship 10:45 Adult Education	<b>16</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>17</b> 10:00 am Bible Study 	<b>18</b> 5:30 pm Praise Band 6:00 pm Soup Supper	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:30 am Worship w/Choir 10:45 Adult Education	<b>23</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>24</b> 10:00 am Bible Study	<b>25</b> 5:30 pm Praise Band 6:00 pm Soup Supper	<b>26</b> 10:00 am Women's Coffee	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 9:30 am Worship w/All For You 5:00 pm CCIC Dinner	<b>30</b> 2:00 pm Chair Yoga 4:00 & 6:15 pm - Yoga	<b>31</b> 10:00 am Bible Study				

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