
The Good News

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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



Our weekly **Care Package** helps bring our members and friends closer together during this season of separation. Whether you receive it by USPS, email, or haven't seen one at all, this is some of what it looks like and contains. You are welcome to contribute. If you'd like to be added to the weekly **Care Package** list, just contact the church office!

Joys and Concerns

These are shared with members only, and not with the public without permission.

Ray Meglic is recovering from a successful surgical procedure earlier this week. **Karen Nowariak's mother, Donna**, was hospitalized after a fall, and then also diagnosed COVID-19 with a return of COVID-19. Again, her symptoms are mild, and she is recovering from her fall. **Bill & Emily Peterson** welcome a new grandson, born in St. Paul.

Please share your Joys and Concerns with Ki (cannonfallsucc@gmail.com, 263-2901) or Pastor Glen (pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com, 651-641-1832) by Monday of each week.

Prayer Partners

Each week, we pick staff and members or families at random for us to lift in prayer for the week, for no reason other than praying for one another is a good thing to do.

Our Prayer Partners this week are

Glenda Cooper, Bob & Judy Schlekewy, and the Woodman's (Jon & Julie, Maddy, and Noah.)

Reunion

You'll see elsewhere in this newsletter a report on our last in person worship, which we are doing once a month, on the last Sunday of the month, at Bill and Emily Peterson's home on county Road 24, just a bit west of 52. Living on a former farm, they have the space for us to gather with safe physical distance outdoors or in a barn (clean, hay-free, and well-ventilated), depending on the weather. Our hope is to continue this through October. By then, we hope to know better when and how we'll be able to gather in our own sanctuary. Obviously, the COVID-19 virus is not going away. ..

I keep seeing stories about COVID-19 cases in churches pop up in the news. I read about church basements being used for family reunions, birthday parties and anniversaries, and whole families getting sick. Small churches whose pastors infect half the congregation. That's where I get concerned. In small towns and in small congregations, the familiarity and trust we rely on to sustain us can also fool us when we get too comfortable with each other and think, "These people are my friends; they won't make me sick!" They're like my family! They're *nice* people!" A contagious disease does not care, and in an older congregation like we tend to be, we need to be extra cautious. That's why we are in no hurry to open our doors too soon. I'm not, anyway, and I know I am not alone.

This is not an easy time. None of my colleagues think it is. None of us are enjoying this. We miss Sunday mornings. I miss seeing you come through the door, smiling. Hearing about your week, whether it's been a good one or a tough one. Bumping into you at Family Fare, knowing I can call you and come over most anytime, or having you drop in when I'm in the office. Adult study time after worship on Sundays or lunch together when the day is done. Worship with you- not for you, as a performance, but with you, voices are joined in song, or our hearts one in prayer. I'm tired of what we are doing. But I continue to be grateful for who we still are, and already thankful for who we will be on the other side of this strange time of waiting and becoming.

- Pastor Glen

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.

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.

Daily Readings and Meditations

If you are interested in adding daily readings and meditations to your schedule during this time a part from community worship as a way to feed your spirit and deepen your faith, here are two resources:

1. The United Church of Christ has a team of gifted writers who offer **Daily Devotional**, brief scripture-based meditations available online. They appear in your inbox at about 3 a.m. every day. You can subscribe by searching for daily devotional ucc”
2. dailylectio.net provides a prayer, a Psalm, and 2-3 other readings each day of the week. They are thematically connected to the lectionary texts assigned for each Sunday, from which Pastor Glen draws for preaching. The intent of the daily readings is to highlight the connection between Sunday worship and the rest of your daily life.

Using **dailyLectio.net** puts you in touch with the cycles of stories and celebrations that carry us through the church’s year as well as enhance your personal faith development through scripture and prayer.

For those who do not access online resources, Pastor Glen will publish the references for the daily readings for the week ahead in the weekly mailing that Ki sends to you, that includes the text of any of his messages posted online.

Outdoor Service, July 26

Fourteen members came to the second Outdoor Service held on Sunday, July 26 in the barn on the property of Emily and Bill Peterson just south of Cannon Falls. Rain showers sent the celebration indoors; fortunately, the barn proved to be a delightful, comfortable, safe place for the group to gather. In his welcome, Bill reminded us all that it was fitting for the service to be taking place where it all started, after all, Jesus was born in a barn. All those in attendance enjoyed the rustic hospitality and look forward to future services.

To keep everyone safe, all participants wore masks, sat safe distances apart, and members took communion separate paper cups.

At this time, outdoor services are planned for Sundays August 30, September 27 and October 25 at the Peterson’s. The service was recorded and edited and has been posted on our YouTube channel for those unable to attend.



From the Mission's Committee.

Sandra spoke to Sue Banks, head of the Cannon Falls Food Shelf, to ask if there were any updates on specific items needed now. This is the list she provided:

- Canned vegetables
- Canned fruit
- Toilet paper
- Laundry detergent
- Dish soap
- Shampoo

Feel free to drop items off at the church and we will see that they are given to the Food Shelf

Also, keep bringing in Family Fare grocery receipts for the Cannon Valley Senior Center. We continue to monitor the collection box and bring receipts to the center.

Treasurer's Note

Sanctuary Roof Replacement Project
Update: "We are pleased to announce that on June 17, 2020, Roman Mercier, Trustee's Chairman, signed an agreement with Atlast Roofing Co., Inc., Ryan Endres, to replace our sanctuary roof. We expect the roof will be replaced within approximately 2 months, with GAF Timberline HD Limited Lifetime architectural shingles in "shakewood" color; which should look very nice and protect the church well. The total cost is estimated at \$27,150, payable upon project completion. We have received \$10,500 donations from two generous member households already. One donor said "We gave our COVID-19 stimulus check and we ask others to prayerfully consider doing the same". Trustees ask members and friends to contribute what they can to close the \$16,650 gap. Please send your checks, with "ROOF" noted on the memo line, to Treasurer, Jon Sagers, at 4006 343rd Street, Stanton, MN 55018 or to the church office. Thank you for your generous gifts to your church.

Thank you and stay well!

Jon

Outreach Ministry Team

When COVID-19 hit, and the church could no longer meet, the Outreach Ministry Team, consisting of Mary Pat Kleven and Cindy Mae Nelson, quickly started looking at using our technology to help us continue to be "church." Starting with simple pastor's messages on Facebook to full edited services on YouTube, the team has been working hard behind the scenes to develop the skills needed to deliver a weekly service to our members and community.

Each week, Cindy Mae records Pastor Glen's scripture, sermon and benediction for the week. Dawn submits her recorded prelude and hymn to her and Cindy Mae adds the lyrics so people can sing-along as if they were in church. These files are uploaded to a Google Drive set up for the Outreach Team, allowing Mary Pat to then download the material for editing. Using video and audio editing along with PowerPoint for graphics. Mary Pat puts the music, graphics and messages together to create the weekly 30-minute service that she posts on the church YouTube channel, Facebook page and website. Mary Pat uploads the completed video to the Google Drive for Cindy Mae to access again as she creates DVDs for church members who don't have convenient access to the internet.

Cindy Mae and Mary Pat estimate that they each spend about 3 hours a week on each service; not counting the weekly phone calls, emails and texts between the two as they critique and improve processes for the next week.

By June it was evident that the online effort that we thought would last for a couple months would be continuing much longer, and the team was concerned about sustainability. Fortunately, our requests to the church for help were answered, and Emery Kleven, Ella Coyle and Noah Woodman have joined the team. As a retired farm broadcaster, Emery has years of experience working with audio. Ella and Noah are currently attending college and are adept at the latest technology. Mary Pat is currently working on making sure the team is trained and has the resources they need

to do their work, and is looking forward to new ideas from this talented group.

The trustees approved the use of Room 2, a former Sunday School room, as a temporary studio, allowing Cindy Mae and Emery to set up mics, stands, lighting and backgrounds needed for recording in a space that won't be disturbed. Much of the equipment that we are using belongs to members of the Outreach Team, and we appreciate that we'll have a secure place to do our work.

The team is aware that even when we return to church, we'll need to continue to record the service for those who don't feel safe attending. The Outreach Team will be looking at what will be needed to do this and will be discussing options with the trustees.

The most eye-opening discovery from this effort has been the tremendous response from the church for the online services. Clearly, Pastor Glen's weekly messages are needed now more than ever. Typically, our in-church attendance would run about 35 – 40; while our YouTube views are at least 50-55 each week. This does not include people who watch together as a couple or family, so the number of people watching is really much higher. First Congregational Church is in that group of churches that appears to not only be surviving COVID-19, but thriving in adversity, and the Outreach Team is honored to be able to help.



A House Divided

(July 12, 2020 back of bulletin)

The story begins,

*“Listen! A sower went out to sow...”
And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up...*

There was the time I did not get very far. I had just started on the path, just begun to follow Christ, when I got scared and stalked out. I was eaten up by worry and doubt.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away...

There was a time when I believed if only I studied or thought enough, I would be able to understand Christ's way. I did not know that Christ's way had to be grounded in my heart as well as my head. My faith withered away.

Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

Another time, I tried to turn toward Christ, but became distracted. It wasn't too long before I was choking on the expectation of our consumerist culture and my own grasping heart.

Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

And yet again, I arrived in a community, a congregation like this one. Sometimes there were weeds and rocks. But like rich soil, that community nurtured me, helped me to grow strong in my faith.

Let everyone with ears listen!

We aren't, any of us, only one thing. Most of us have had all of these experiences at one time or another. Let this be our prayer: “Whether we get carried away or wither, suffocate or grow strong, help us to remember that you are with us always, Holy God. Amen.”

A Nice Thank you

Thank you so much for your generous donation of \$189 to the Cannon Valley Senior Center. We are a non-profit organization and without the support of the community, it would be difficult to meet our goals in serving our aging population. Your donation will help the center with its yearly programs and events and help us meet our goals in serving our aging population. One hundred percent of our budget comes directly from the Cannon Valley area and we thank you for giving back to our seniors.

Our programs are designed to help seniors with their physical social and emotional well-being, all of which are essential to the quality of life. We are continually looking into the development of new programs and opportunities as we adapt to the growing needs of our senior population in an environment where they feel welcome and safe. In addition to our programs, we connect seniors to vital community and county services, when needed, to help them stay healthy.

For tax purposes, your gift is tax-deductible to the extent of the law since we provided no goods or services to you in relation to your contribution. On behalf of the Cannon Valley Senior Center, we thank you again for your generous gift and support.

Sincerely,
Lora Bremer
Executive Director

We also received a nice thank you card that read "Thanks to all of you for your very generous donation! It is a much needed gift with our fund raisers being cancelled at this time. We are doing well and hope all of you are too. We're still waiting to see when our doors will be open to the public. Take care all of you!! Lora and the Board."



Care Package for Everyone

Who knew, when social distancing started, it would go this long, or what it would feel like? We want to keep our relationships strong, to continue to build up our body, knowing that we are still not sure when we will be opening our doors for all to join us for worship again. To that end, we will begin to publish and make available (by e-mail or through the USPS) a weekly **Care Package** which will include:

Joys and Concerns: Please submit yours to the church office; they will only be shared in-house, for members only, not with the wider public.

Selfies: Send us, electronically or hard copy, photos of what you have been up to around the house, around the neighborhood, at work or on the road, to occupy yourself during these days of social distancing.

Prayer Partners: Members, individually or by families, will be randomly selected, for us to pray for - not connected to any particular need or request, but only to lift each other up and remind ourselves that we are part of a remarkable body where all belong and all matter.

Reuniting: Updates on the discussions that will be taking place regarding our moving forward toward in-person worship; see the pastor's lead article in this newsletter.

Please send your Joys and Concerns, Selfies, and other news to share with the congregation to the church office by Monday of each week. cannonfallsucc@gmail.com

Rev. Arne Enslin

Rev. Arne Enslin served First Congo from July, 1970 through December, 1978, and is now retired. He celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination and first pastorate (here) on July 15th. He had hoped to visit us as part of his anniversary celebration, but the pandemic has changed those plans.

In a letter to the congregation, now posted in the church, he writes about his first Sunday here, 50 years ago.

On that day, I preached my first sermon as pastor, celebrated my first baptism, and in the afternoon, performed my first wedding service. From then on, we grew together - worshipping, celebrating, loving, working, learning, enjoying relating, being together as a family of God's people. I recall on one of my early Sundays as I paced in the rear of the sanctuary, one of the members got out of his seat, came back to me with an extended hand and said, "we're friends here!" What a gift that helped me go forward! And, we became friends. I especially remember you trusting and our adventuring as we planned and celebrated regular and special worship services. Your support as you allowed me to serve as chaplain at the treatment center and other opportunities to serve the community are remembered. Overall, we "lived and loved and laughed and cried and grew and served together" for eight and one half years. They were good, and I remain grateful to God and to you.

Some of you are still members and valued friends. Regarding those who are gone, I can still "see" so many in their pews on Sunday morning. Even though their spots are now replaced with new faces, their spirits, stories, and our relationships are remembered with deep meaning. What also means much is recalling the sanctuary - the shape of the pews that embrace and the windows that silently and beautifully proclaim. By the way, the windows continued to speak to me from pictures of them in my offices. They were presented to me in behalf of you by John and Jeanette Burch at my leaving First Church.

I continue to be blessed in retirement. I feel especially blessed as I remember our time together where the love of God was experienced in so many ways. I pray for continued blessings on your ministry as the Spirit leads you, loving and serving God, one another, and your neighbors.

In gratitude and love,
Arnold Enslin

Pray

This is from an excerpt of the September 22, 2019 bulletin back - it seems apropos for this trying time.

We can, and should, ask our leaders hard questions and, when necessary, call them to account. But whether we follow their lead or dig in our heels, the first step is to pray. This week, try adding the leaders in your life to your prayer time, and see how it changes them and you.

Monday: Pray for leaders of your congregation. Pray for pastors, officers, deacons, lay leaders and teachers.

Tuesday: Pray for leaders of your community, county or city. Pray for elected leaders as well as leaders in local advocacy and activist groups.

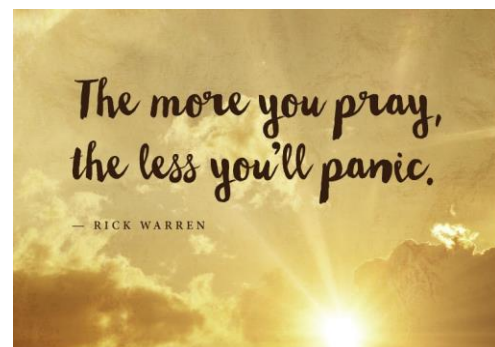
Wednesday: Pray for leaders of the nation. Pray for elected officials in the three branches of national government - judicial, legislative, and presidential. Pray for the senior staff members in these branches.

Thursday: Pray for the leaders of the world. Pray that world leaders understand that we are a global family so they can make good decisions about immigration, climate, economics and other issues that transcend borders.

Friday: Pray for the future leaders being formed now. Pray for children and youth who are making their voices heard, and for those who have no voice yet.

Saturday: Pray for yourself as a leader. Pray to be strong, insightful, compassionate, and faith filled. Pray to be shown opportunities where your unique gifts and skills might be used to lead.

Sunday: Sunday is the Sabbath day. Pray for adequate rest for all leaders.



August, 2020

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

							1
							
2 On-line Message	3	4 10:00 am Bible Study	5	6	7	8	
9 On-line Message	10	11 10:00 am Bible Study	12	13	14	15	
16 On-line Message	17	18 10:00 am Bible Study	19	20	21	22	
23 On-line Message	24	25 10:00 am Bible Study	26	27	28	29	
30 9:30 am Outdoor Service with communion	31						

Our building is closed but the Church is always open when we are the Body of Christ in the World. Stay safe and healthy until we see you again

**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
507-263-2901**

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