

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



We are looking forward to opening our doors for **in-person worship beginning on Easter Sunday, April 4, at 9:30 AM**. Many people have flat out said, "It's time." But it was not an easy decision to make. The pandemic is still with us. With Spring upon us, and vaccines more available, a general lack of caution and the presence of new, more contagious variants have led to a rise in case numbers and positivity rates throughout the state, and even in Goodhue County. We take this step not with certainty but with caution. As glad as we are to be able see the people we have missed in the last year, we are not celebrating freedom, but engaging in careful risk management. Not everyone is able or ready to return, vaccines or not. Members with compromised health, those who have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection, who are not yet outside the 2 week post-vaccination window, are advised to think twice about attending. Our services will be recorded and available online after Sunday each week.

For our safety, health, and comfort in worship, the guidelines below will be in place until the mandates and advice from *the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith, the Minnesota UCC Conference Minister, and related health and church professionals* indicate otherwise. They were developed by the Reunion Team and made available to all members in the annual meeting information in January. They will be amended as needed as conditions change.

- **Face masks are required.** Face masks will be provided if needed. Children under 2 yrs. of age should not wear a face mask. Persons who have difficulty wearing a face mask should consider not attending until masks are no longer required.

- **Please maintain proper social distance (6 ft.)** from anyone other than those in your household, while entering, exiting, and sitting. Pews will be marked with tape at 2 ft. intervals; every other pew will be kept vacant. This means there will be **no fellowship time after services** for the foreseeable future.

- **As you enter the building**, there will be a sign-in sheet should contact tracing be necessary. **As you enter the narthex**, there will be a table with the **bulletins** for the day; take one. There will also be a box for **offering**; we will not be passing plates hand-to-hand at this time.

- **Our heating system and the fans will not be in use** while we are in the sanctuary. These only recirculate the air, which is not safe. The sanctuary will be heated prior to worship as needed and windows and doors will be open as weather permits.

- **Only one person at a time will be allowed to enter each restroom**, unless the occupant needs assistance.

- There will be **no congregational singing** until guidelines say that singing is safe again; we will have music, however. **Spoken responses by the congregation** should be done with soft voices.

- It is recommended that indoor **worship last no more than 40-45 minutes**; the weekly liturgy has been and will continue to be adjusted to reflect that until the positivity rate, caseloads, and vaccination numbers indicate we are back to the best approximation of normal we can expect. The less time we spend in a room together, seated in a room with a closed system, even masked and distanced, the safer we will be. A Communion liturgy is being drafted that will allow us to again celebrate the Lord's Supper monthly, hopefully by the end of April, on or before Pastor Glen's last Sunday with us.

If you would like to participate in Tuesday Bible Study at 10 am on Zoom, let Pastor Glen know (pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com) and he will send you the Zoom meeting and the readings.

Also there will be Adult Study Group at 7:00 on April 7th and 14th on Zoom

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.

Pastor Update

The Church Council has begun to talk about the process for calling a new pastor.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at bill.peterson@sanlucasmission.org or by calling me at 612-325-3667.

Bill Peterson

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.

Prayer Partners

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

Our *Prayer Partners* this week we pray for Margaret Jensen, Elaine Ohnstad, Mary Ellen Sturm, and Trevor Sullivan.

Joys and Concerns

Diann Nelson (Wayne Nelson's wife) fell on rainy pavement and now has a concussion. She is home and recovering.

Jim Hvistendahl continues to recover from knee replacement.

Mary Ann Maneval has been dealing with a severe case of the shingles, but is recovering.

From the Mission Committee

There are no special missions for the month of April. Thank you for your support of the March food drive. Enjoy the spring weather and the opportunity to once again gather together at church.

Thought for the month, "Find the beauty in every day."

Note from Bill Peterson

Dear First Congregational,

You are truly a wonderful and generous group of people! In February the Mission focus was on the school in San Lucas Toliman. You donated nearly \$800 for educational materials so that 650 kids can keep learning, even during the times of Covid-19.

Your support will buy books, learning supplies and help keep both teachers and students safe. On behalf of the 650 students and 30 teachers and staff, Thank you! Or, as you would say in the Mayan Kakchikel language: Maltiox! (pronounced "mall - tea - osh"). Thank you!

Treasurers Note

Please continue to send your donations written to "First Congregational Church-UCC", by mail directly to: Jon Sagers, 4006 343rd St., Stanton, MN 55018, or to the church. Thank you for your steadfast support!

Jon

Outreach Ministry Team

We are continuing to tape the sermon each week and have on cd available for pick up or to send to you. Contact the church office or Cindy Mae directly at 507-951-3117. Also we will have an Easter DVD available - we will let you know when that will be ready.

Building Rafts

(from April issue of Stewardship)

Some birds build nests right beside the water, sometimes only inches away. If there is a flood and the lake rises too high, the eggs will be chilled and won't hatch. This problem can be especially devastating in the case of endangered birds, such as loons, leading to dangerously low numbers of chicks being raised each year.

So scientists designed and built special rafts, covered them with cattails and other weeds, and then anchored them loosely in sheltered areas. Often, birds will use them for resting sites. If the lake floods, these



rafts will float, keeping the nests and their eggs safe from the water. In a way, raft-building is something all stewards do. Of course, they are usually not actual rafts. However, they do help others to stay out of harm's way.

Starting, running, and donating to a food pantry all help keep away the dangers of malnutrition. This is especially important for children, the sick, and the elderly. Providing school supplies and tutoring helps keep the dangers of ignorance away. In many cases, adults need help with learning just as much as children do.

Building and repairing homes keep the dangers of homelessness - crime, cold, lack of sanitation, to name just a few - away from people because of illness, disability, or unemployment are vulnerable to being on the street. Most importantly of all, maintaining a house of worship helps people keep the dangers of sin away from themselves. Comforting prayers, inspirational sermons, and joyous hymns can and do change lives. The water birds never than the scientists for the rafts. Stewards may not hear thanks as often as they should either. But the world is a better, more beautiful place for the birds in it, and likewise for the people who benefit from Christian stewardship.

While We Wait

Rev. Traci Blackmon, Assoc. General Minister

As we journey through this Holy Week, let us take our time. This is the second Lenten Season effected by COVID-19. Between last year and now we have suffered so much loss. Our world has shifted drastically. Globally, over 2.5 million people have died because of this virus and many more have died for other reasons, yet our rituals of mourning for them all have been interrupted. Let us not bypass the temple in our zeal to reach the empty tomb. Let us take the time to search our hearts and examine our actions. Let us ask the difficult questions:

What would Jesus say about our communities of worship? Are we living

sanctuaries of prayer? Is there healing in our midst? Are there any tables to turn? Let us not rush past the Mount of Olives where Jesus often went to pray. Let us spend time with God in prayer, sharing our own anguish and grief as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yet nevertheless, we go.

On our journey to the Cross let us accompany Jesus. Let us covenant together to guard one another against the temptation to lose our focus when our ways are misunderstood. Let us be purposeful in our actions and steadfast in our love.

And as we keep our eyes on Jesus even at the foot of the Cross, may we remember death could not hold him. Resurrection comes. Death has lost its sting. And even the grave becomes a journey into the presence of God.

Hold Us in Your Presence

*Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson,
Associate General Minister*

Holy One, as we wait in the shadows of this Holy Week, we pause for prayer as Jesus and the disciples did so long ago. Holy God, we are mindful that the season of Lent is an invitation to draw closer to you, to be present and intentional in contemplating the Holy. We are saddened by the events that surround us, holding our grief and pain, even as we remember the grief that marks the way to the cross and the death of Jesus. Hold us in your presence as we weep. Keep us through the valley of the shadow of death, with the knowledge, O God, that your presence with us is a source of peace and love – even through hardship. We tarry through the journey to the tomb believing in the purpose and the power of the resurrection we will celebrate. Rest with us on the way. Grant us peace and revelation through this Holy Week and beyond, as we covenant to journey together through the love of God made known to us through Jesus Christ. Amen.

He is Risen!

April, 2021

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

						
				1	2	3
				Maundy Thursday	Good Friday	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:30 am Worship 		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study	7:00 pm Adult Study Group on Zoom			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:30 am Worship		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study	7:00 pm Adult Study Group on Zoom			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:30 am Worship		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				
25	26	27	28	29	30	
9:30 am Worship		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				

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**

*Pastor email: pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com
Kileen email: cannonfallsucc@gmail.com*