

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

April 2021

*Embracing people at every age and every stage of life, helping them
to become the most loving version of themselves possible.*

Pastor's Column – April 2021

Entering April 2021 feels to me a lot like Holy Saturday, the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We know the realities, the death, the illness, the possible life-long effects of Covid-19. In fact, writing the name of the pandemic brings up all kinds of hurt feelings and sadness over what has occurred during the last year. I'm tired of talking about, thinking about, and living with Covid-19. I'm quite sure that I'm not alone in this feeling! That doesn't mean that everything has been negative this past year – far from it – but I think it's safe to say that there are few, if any, among us who want a repeat of 2020. I'm sure for Jesus' first followers, especially his mother and Mary Magdalene, they would just as soon never have another Good Friday. To watch their beloved die, the innocent victim of what can be a most violent world.

And yet, Holy Saturday also brings with it anticipation. Jesus had said that he would rise. The Romans (and the Chief Priests and Scribes, a.k.a. the church of Jesus's day) were so afraid it would be true, that they stationed guards at his grave, just to be sure he stayed in there. It's amazing how often we use power and weaponry to make sure that what is dead stays dead. But there was wonder and excitement about what if it is true! Maybe call it nervous anticipation? There might be better language, but you get the idea.

That is the threshold on which we stand today. The vaccines are here, and they are being administered quickly across the country. There are certainly missteps, misappropriations of the vaccines, and all sorts of problems. And yet, they're here. And with the vaccine, the hope of returning to "normal." I want to caution us about our desires to return to what was normal, pre-pandemic society. While many things were good, we had many problems: school shootings, racial inequality, divisive politics, unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, and a host of other issues. Not all of them went away with the pandemic, but some of our problems took a hiatus

Continued on next page ...

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ**
218 W. Second Street
Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-5726
www.firstuccgaylord.org

Pastor: Rev. Greg Watling
pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org

Moderator: Mischelle Stone
mstone359@gmail.com

**Communications
Coordinator:** Jessica Benoit
office@firstuccgaylord.org

Church Service: Sunday, 10 am
*In-person worship to resume April
11th, please see inside for details and
guidelines.*

In this issue:

From Your Pastor.....	1
Trustees.....	5
Reaching Out.....	6
Council.....	7
Reaching In.....	9
Prayer Requests.....	14
Birthdays & Anniversaries.....	15
Calendar.....	16

as we looked to how we could best care for others. Social distancing and masks also had great impact on the seasonal flu, saving many lives. School children and youth missed being in school, instead of complaining about being there. Many of us, who took family and friends for granted, longed to reconnect with old friends and family, and to create new relationships.

My point is that Jesus' resurrection was not about going back to "normal", pre-Good Friday culture and society, it was a wholesale change in outlook, passion, relationships, creativity, hope (especially for those on the margins), and a reminder of God's ultimate freedom and ability to change the world. We've "normalized" Easter in some ways, losing what truly was a transformative event in world history. Jesus rose. He overcame not only the grave, but the social order that put him there. He appeared to fearful disciples and pronounced to them peace (instead of seeking retribution for their failures). He ushered in a new faith, initially based on common good, mutual love and respect, and economic equality. In short, everything changed.

What about now? Could there be a true resurrection for the world in such a time as this? What could God be up to now, in this in-between time? Do we really want everything to go back to "normal"? Is there something better on the horizon? Will our nervous anticipation result in resurrection and hope? Will things fundamentally change – even if for a moment in history?

Many of those answers lie in our hands. I have no doubt that God has something in store. This is supposed to be a different kind of Easter – one that is full of life. What will be different after Easter? We plan to be back in worship, but will we just settle for old routines? I pray we will approach this moment with creativity, passion, hope and drive for something much better than "normal". May we be resurrected in word, spirit, heart, mind, and soul.

Happy Easter!

Pastor Greg

MAUNDY (HOLY) THURSDAY

We have decided not to have an in-person celebration/remembrance of Holy Thursday this year. Instead, there are two options to participate in this holiest of days: 1) On our website will be posted the service from last year, and 2) The sanctuary will be open for quiet meditation and self-serve communion that evening (April 1) from 6-8 p.m. Please mask and remain socially distant but come when convenient for you.

GOOD FRIDAY

The Good Friday service will be held in partnership with several area churches this year but will be virtual. The service will be posted on our church website by noon on Good Friday. The scheduled service time is noon, but of course, you can watch whenever your schedule allows.

EASTER SUNDAY

Our Easter Sunday service will be livestreamed and later posted to our website. The Council believes that this is safer for us this year not to be in person. The live service will be at 10:00 a.m.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of the five special offerings of the United Church of Christ. This congregation has traditionally participated in all five offerings. They are all important, and I'm thankful for any financial support we can offer to any of the five.

One Great Hour of Sharing is the most important one of the five offerings for me. We do it in partnership with other denominations, it covers the world, and it meets needs most directly. In fact, OGHS offerings often reach disaster areas before government agencies. We don't get a lot of press for this, but lives are changed. OGHS works in the United States and many countries around the world.

In worship (and livestream) we will have a special video about One Great Hour on April 11, but offerings may be sent to the church anytime during the month of April.

This year's theme is "Let Love Flow" and is about water. What could be more important to offer the world but clean, safe drinking water! I hope you'll participate as you are able. Please make sure and mark your check "OGHS" so we can account for it properly.

Thank you!

Pastor Greg and the Reaching Out Ministry



Report from Your Trustees – April 2021 Newsletter

- As we begin a new year still abiding by pandemic restrictions, we continue to ask everyone to mail your contributions to our church office at 218 W. Second St. If you prefer the convenience of online donations, you can also contribute using the PayPal button on our website at www.firstuccgaylord.org.
- Our church budget for the current year – approved at our annual meeting last fall – calls for an average weekly operating income of \$1,842. Through March 14th, we averaged \$1,763. We appreciate everyone's generous donations.
- Live broadcast of weekly services has been underway for seven weeks, and we appreciate everyone's patience and support in this new undertaking. We'd like to expand our team of trained operators so that two people might be available each week, allowing one person to concentrate on streaming while a second is available to troubleshoot. If you have an interest in joining our live stream team, email Jessica in the office.
- We look forward to the option of again worshipping together in person in the near future! Whether you choose to attend in person or continue to worship online, we are *enormously grateful* for your ongoing financial support.

First Congregational UCC Gaylord			
Actual Compared to Budgeted Financials			
Month of February 2021			
	Budget Annual	Budget Monthly	Actual February
INCOME			
Operating Income	\$ 102,780	\$ 8,565	\$ 8,673
Ministries Income		\$ -	\$ 824
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 102,780	\$ 8,565	\$ 9,497
EXPENSES			
Personnel	\$ 71,230	\$ 5,936	\$ 5,635
Facility	\$ 20,730	\$ 1,728	\$ 1,043
Other Operating	\$ 8,185	\$ 682	\$ 501
Ministries	\$ 2,400	\$ 200	\$ 216
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 102,545	\$ 8,545	\$ 7,396
NET INCOME	\$ 235	\$ 20	\$ 2,101

IN-PERSON WORSHIP TO BEGIN APRIL 11, 2021



Please carefully read the following guidelines:

(guidelines have not changed)

- Open for worship only: to begin, Sunday, April 11 at 10 a.m.
- Live stream will continue for those who wish to watch at home
- Masks are required
- Only certain pews will be used to maximize social distancing
- No fellowship hall use or coffee hour during worship
- Offering can be placed in the offering plates near the guestbook in the entryway
- First in-person communion will be May 9 with self-contained elements
- No congregational singing for the time being
- Paper bulletins will not be used – please follow along on screens
- Coffee hour will continue via Zoom for the time being
- Please bring your own bible as there will be no bibles or hymnals provided

IN THEIR HEARTS HUMANS PLAN THEIR COURSE, BUT THE LORD ESTABLISHES THEIR STEPS.

PROVERBS 16:9

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

REACHING OUT FEBRUARY 15, 2021—MEETING STARTED AT 7PM

Present at meeting: Mona, Louanne, Greg (pastor) Vicky (note taker)

Winter clothing gathered over the last number of weeks will be taken to the high school and elementary schools in the next couple weeks.

Scholarship for the graduating seniors fund raiser. This will continue until the end of March.

Pastor Greg was pleased to tell us about the positive comments he is receiving from the Gaylord community. For a small church he is hearing how much we do in the community.

Elder and members we are not seeing at this time of pandemic quarantine was discussed with ideas shared.

Meeting ended at 7:30pm

Submitted by Vicky Rigney

Next meeting March 15 7PM

Most recently approved

February 10, 2021 Council Minutes (meeting via Zoom)

Present: Helen Mate, Stephanie Kalember, Greg Watling, Doreen Dobosy, Maggie Wallin, Helen Crandall, Mischelle Stone, Laura Hotelling

1. Laura led a prayer to begin the meeting.
2. Maggie moved to accept the January minutes, Stephanie seconded, and they were unanimously approved.
3. Reopening Discussion
 - A. We don't have proper air extraction at church. The previous filters we'd discussed are at Traverse City. In addition to the expense to purchase them, we would need the furnace to run continually, which poses an additional expense.
 - B. Sanitizing
 - i. Mischelle has researched hand vacuum sized sanitizers/sprayers, and the office she asked had favorable reviews.
 - C. There's enough space with our current congregation to spread out and sit in every other pew.
 - D. Once it's warmer, outdoor services are possible, but Greg pointed out that we wouldn't be able to livestream from outside.
 - E. Greg asked if there is a vaccinated level that would feel safer to most? Doreen pointed out that with the new variants, it's looking like people are going to have to get a booster each year.
 - F. Mischelle pointed out that it doesn't seem as if anyone is overly anxious to start in-person services.
4. Succession/Livestream
 - A. We need more people trained in how to do the livestreaming.
 - B. There have been some sound/connection issues, but we're learning more every week.
 - C. Facebook blocked a song, so we're adding our license number to the opening screen, hoping they'll realize we're legal.

-
- D. We need to have someone else trained in how to upload the file the Facebook, but we want to keep Brenda as involved as possible.
 - E. Maggie has agreed to be moderator next year.
5. Carillon
- A. Don Storing informed Mischelle that the system was removed and that it would probably cost \$2,000-3,000 to replace it.
 - B. The question is whether or not the expense is worth it.
 - C. Maggie suggested that the system could be a good suggestion when people ask what memorial donations could be used for. She also wanted to know if there is a memorial committee, and Helen C believed it's part of trustees.
 - D. Mischelle will work on getting a bid, so we at least have the info.
 - E. Helen C suggested that Mary Sanders probably has info on the previous memorial committee and on the carillon.
6. Rokko Donation
- A. There was more discussion about donating to Rokko's annual concert.
 - B. It was brought up that the charity changes every year.
6. Greg noted that the Ash Wednesday service is planned and that ashes will be available in the sanctuary from 5:30-7:30. Jessica will do an e-blast.
7. Pastoral Visitations
- A. Some former church attendees (the McMasters) contacted the church because Mr. McMaster was in the hospital, so Greg got to visit him.
 - B. Greg wanted to know everyone's thoughts about visiting people. He'll work on coming up with a wording, so there's an offer to those who want a visit.
 - C. Mischelle asked if there were concerns from the pastoral committee, and Greg answered that there were not but that they want to make sure visits are done safely.
 - D. Mischelle also wondered if there's a possibility of non-church members requesting visits, and the answer was yes, as long as there's not an ethical concern (like stepping on the toes of another minister).
8. Maggie led a prayer to conclude the meeting.
-

REACHING IN COMMITTEE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC
GAYLORD, MI; MARCH 1, 2021

ATTENDANCE: Rokko Jans (chair), Helen Mate, Sallie Anderson, Maggie Wallin, Brenda Brummel, Rev. Greg Watling

Rokko opened the meeting with prayer.

The current sermon series (We Make The Road By Walking) is receiving high marks. New folk have joined our discussion groups. We will get Judy Bird a book.

Jessica and Greg have assumed responsibility for keeping the liturgist position filled, and will adopt a pattern (weekly?/monthly?) based on response their outreach. Don Storing has agreed to be liturgist to begin March.

Ash Wednesday 2/17 in the sanctuary went well, with a small group gathering. There was quiet music, and Covid protocols were followed.

March 21 will be a Women's Sunday, with Dee Brock and Women's fellowship leading service.

Our Livestream FaceBook production (introduced 1/31/21) continues to improve (even as we remain in a "learning from our mistakes" mode). The donation of a new mixer and continued tweaking of the system by the tech team and the professionals have addressed some of the sound issues. By the end of February, a body-mike for Greg was introduced. Week by week, new volunteers are being trained to run the system during worship. We shared our notes on items that still need addressing.

Greg's worship-schedule has changed because of an upcoming zoom conference. He will preach 4/11, and Maggie volunteered to preach 4/18.

Holy Week and Easter plans are still forming. Greg will be part of an ecumenical Good Friday zoom service (if needed, we can supply some music.) Brenda, Rokko and Greg are meeting further to plan Easter music and worship.

The committee discussed pastoral concerns, and shared Helen Crandall's report. Special prayers for the family to whom Brenda has been ministering (whose son died of suicide).

Next Reaching In Meeting: April 5 (day after Easter) noon

Greg closed the meeting with a prayer.

JOIN US!

BOOK & BIBLE STUDY WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

HOW WILL WE USE THE BOOK?

It will provide our themes for worship from Jan. 31 – May 16, including special services between now and then.

In Bible Study, Thursday mornings at 11am following the theme used in worship.

In a book discussion group, Thursday evenings at 7pm following the theme used in worship. We hope to meet in person and via zoom in a hybrid-fashion. ****Evening classes ONLY cancelled 03/25 & 04/01; they will resume 04/08.**

Readings each week will include 2-4 bible verses and 2-4 pages in book!

Discussion questions are included!

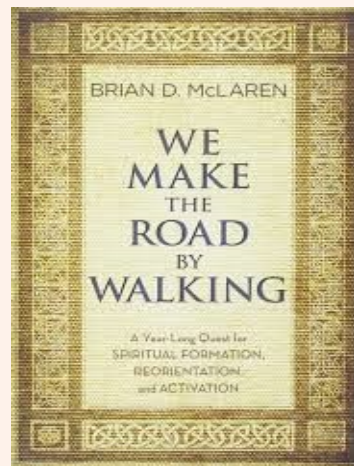
Participate as your schedule allows!

Books are \$12.80

Please have exact change to reimburse church or checks may be made out to:

"First Congregational UCC Gaylord"

**THERE ARE
STILL BOOKS
AVAILABLE!!!!**



Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83233232069?pwd=WlNmd3NlZVZSbnJFS3BVdEZnN0dtdz09>

Meeting ID: 832 3323 2069

Passcode: 447689

Dial In: 1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

FROM THE BACK COVER...

"This book's fifty-two (plus a few) readings offer everything you need to explore what a difference an honest, living, growing faith can make in our world today. Organized around the traditional church year, these readings give an overview of the whole Bible and guide an individual or group of friends through a year of rich study, interactive learning, and personal growth.

If you're seeking a fresh way to experience and practice your faith, if you are a long-term Christian seeking a new vitality, or if you feel out of place in traditional church circles, this book will inspire and activate you in your spiritual journey.

Dare to venture off old maps into new, uncharted territory and discover how we make the road by walking."

5 for 5

from your Reaching Out Team

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Basic support for the Michigan Conference and National Settings.

Collected on an ongoing basis

One Great Hour of Sharing

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic response.

Collected in April

Strengthen the Church

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, young and young adult ministers within conferences.

Collected around Pentecost

Neighbors in Need

One third supports Council for American Indian Ministry and two-thirds is administered to Justice and Witness Ministers to support a variety projects. Due to Covid-19 the elected UCC officers have deemed this to be a priority.

Collected in October

Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired UCC ministers and lay employees and spouses.

Collected in December

Current Meeting Times

All are welcome to “attend” these meetings

Reaching In will meet the first Monday of each month at noon:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86109266574>

Reaching Out will meet the third Monday of each month at 7 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7913585725>

Council will meet the second Wednesday of each month at 7PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81455642087>

Trustees will meet the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09)

[pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09)

This meeting requires passcode 452218



~ *In Our Prayers* ~

During the month of April, the UNA is holding the Charlevoix church in prayer.

The Family of Ginny Titus – as they grieve her recent passing.
The English Family– as they battle cases of COVID-19 within the family.

Ariah House – as she is back at Mary Free Bed. Please pray for complete healing.

Mardee Storing's daughter, Lori – as she navigates brain cancer. Please also keep Lori's family in your prayers, and of course, Mardee and Don.

All of those working on the frontline to fight COVID-19, those that are considered essential workers, those without jobs, those ill, and those affected by this pandemic in anyway.

Prayer requests are received by the church office. Names will appear on the list for two months; please let the office know if this time needs to be extended, or if it is time to remove a name.



Prayer Requests

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

April Birthdays

- 1 Anna Kalember
- 3 Doreen Dobosy
- 4 Duncan Palmer
- 8 Paige Kassuba
- 9 Anna Fry
- 14 Ben Fry
- 14 Scott Fry
- 16 Cathy Otto
- 19 Aaron Hotelling
- 19 Caroline Compton



April Anniversaries

- 4 John & Margaret Hellenberg
- 25 Bill & Maxine Dely



April 2021

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

				1 Maundy Thursday Virtual Bible Study, 11am Women's Fellowship, 12:15pm Communion, 6-8pm	2 Good Friday Community Meal	3
4 Easter Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	5 Reaching In, noon	6	7 Council, 7pm	8 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	9 Community Meal	10
11 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	12	13	14 Virtual Trustees, 11am Virtual Council, 7pm	15 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	16 Community Meal	17
18 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	19 Reaching Out, 7pm	20	21 Trustees, 11am	22 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	23 Community Meal	24
25 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	26	27	28 Church Book Club, 1pm	29 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	30 Community Meal	

All Sundays will have virtual coffee hour at 11am unless otherwise notified, all are welcome!

