

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

February 2021

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

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Church Service: Sunday, 10 am
**at this time, all services are being
held virtually. Please visit our web-
site.*

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From Your Pastor

I'm doing a lot of reading right now. Living School has reading requirements (*Integral Spirituality* by Ken Wilbur), a new men's spirituality experience has reading requirements (*The Great Conversation* by Belden C. Lane), I was given a book to read by one of our church members (*The Way of Jesus* by Toby Jones), and of course, I've started reading *We Make the Road by Walking* by Brian McLaren. The last book soon will be a big part of what we do here at church. The reading group, Bible study and worship will begin in the middle of McLaren's book, as it matches up with the liturgical season of Lent and Easter. But I have started at the beginning, just to get a feel for the book. Today, I read his chapter called "Getting the Slavery Out of People". As you might guess, one of the scriptures for that chapter was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-21). Without spoiling the chapter, I want to share a few of the quotes I found meaningful. Maybe some of these will resonate with you as well. I hope these quotes tease you into joining this spiritual journey. Come as much as you can. We need as many voices as possible in this journey. I hope you'll bring yours.

Continued on next page ...

Here's some of what McLaren has to say in this one chapter:

“From top to bottom, the whole system survives by plundering the planet, purchasing this generation's luxuries at the expense of the next generations' necessities.”

“Like those who've walked before us, we need to know the grumbling and complaining can be more dangerous than poisonous snakes or the hot desert sun.”

McLaren then rewrites in the Ten Commandments in a more up-to-date language. Here is how he re-wrote the 10th Commandment:

“In fact, if you really want to avoid the violence of the old slave economy, deal with its root source – in the drama of desire. Don't let the competitive desire to acquire tempt you off the road of freedom.”

All of those are good, but his last paragraph hit me directly in the heart.

“There are no shortcuts. The road cannot be made by wishing, by whining or by talking. It can be made only by walking, day after day, step by step, struggle by struggle. It's easier, it turns out, to get people out of slavery than it is to get slavery out of people. So, people, let us walk the road – right through the middle of the desert.”

I invite you on this road to freedom that we are embarking on together. Anyone is welcome. No matter who they (you) are or where they (you) are on life's journey, they (you) are welcome here. Contact Jessica if you want to order a book.

Always seeking, always growing,

In Christ,

Pastor Greg

COMING SOON!

We are excited to announce that we will soon be live-streaming services!

Be sure to check bulletin and emails as information becomes available!

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.

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

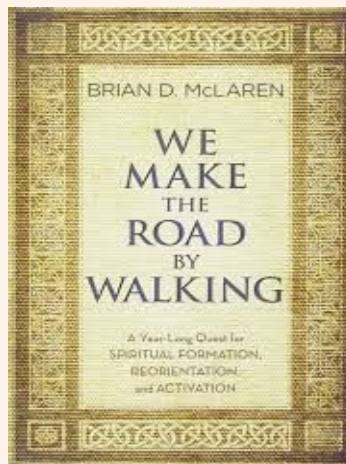
Discussion questions are included!

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"



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."

Reaching Out

Reaching Out: January 18th, 2021

Those present via Zoom:

Louanne, Mona, Stephanie, Vicky, Michelle, Roger and Pastor Greg ,
Laura

We will meet the third Monday of the month, Some of the things we talked about was having Stephanie Kalember reach out to the schools to donate the hats, gloves and socks that the Church members gave out of Love, Also the Community meal is applying for a grant thru The Community Foundation, We are still going strong, still having drive up meals until we can meet safely in person, having smaller groups working together to keep everyone safe. We talked about the Scholarship fund and how much has been collected so far, We are extending the time to collect until April, What ever you may gave will be Greatly appreciated, They will be four kids getting the scholarships.

Pastor Greg closed us with a Prayer.

God Bless

Louanne



Report from Your Trustees – February 2021 Newsletter

- We wrapped up calendar year 2020 with some generous donations, resulting in tithes and offerings of nearly \$95,000, exceeding our budget for the year. Thank you for your amazing support of our vibrant church community and its ongoing ministry.
- 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 new audio-visual system has been installed, with training now underway. We look forward to being able to live-stream services in the relatively near future. We're asking for your patience, as there will undoubtedly be a learning curve with this new technology.
- We've been very fortunate to have Brenda, our resident video-production expert, supporting development of weekly on-line services. *Thank you, thank you, Brenda!* While the live-stream capability will enable us to spread support duties among a number of volunteers, it may take some time to become fully proficient.
- If you have an interest in expanding your technical skills to support broadcast of weekly services, please contact our church office and make your interest known.
- We look forward the time when we can again worship together in person. Meanwhile, we are abundantly grateful for your continued financial support.

First Congregational UCC Gaylord			
Actual Compared to Budgeted Financials			
Calendar Year 2020			
	2020	2020	
	Budget	Actual	Notes
OPERATING INCOME	\$104,280	\$95,426	<i>investment income transfer was not needed</i>
EXPENSES			
Payroll	\$73,130	\$29,835	<i>ten months without minister's salary</i>
Facility	\$20,650	\$20,443	<i>includes new furnace (\$6,600)</i>
Other Operating	\$10,500	\$15,187	<i>includes online production and recruitment costs</i>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$104,280	\$65,465	
NET INCOME	\$0	\$29,961	

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

This meeting requires passcode 452218

~ *Other Announcements* ~

Bible Study – every Thursday at 11:00am! All are invited. Please join us virtually by using either the following link or phone number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83040403820> Dial by your location: +1 929 205 6099; Meeting ID: 830 4040 3820

SNOW – we are looking for volunteers to clean the snow this coming winter. Please contact Jessica in office or Don Storing.

Church Book Club – Meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 1:00pm.

Virtual Coffee Hour - click the following link to join our virtual coffee hour this Sunday between 10:45 – 11 am; <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83811276546> call or text Rokko (773) 398-6767 or Brenda (810) 623-1691 if you have any difficulties connecting. Dial in phone number is: (929) 205 6099

McLaren Book Study—every Thursday following worship from January 31st —May 16th. https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83233232069?pwd=WlNmd3NlZVZSbnJFS3BVdEZnN0dt_dz09 Meeting ID: 832 3323 2069 Passcode: 447689 Dial In: 1 929 205 6099 US (New York)



Do You Feel Different Now Than You Did Before COVID? It May Have A Purpose

By Cathy Wille, retired pastoral/mental health counselor

Have you been feeling tired, sad, empty and lack energy more than usual? Are you feeling some disorientation and are unable to focus? Are you feeling abandoned? At the end of the day, do you feel overwhelmed or like you have not accomplished anything? This note is written to let you know that you are not alone.

Psychologists know that being connected with one another is part of our DNA. Community, collaboration, and networking are all ways we connect with one another, and at their very core give us greater feelings of security and safety. Unfortunately, that is what COVID-19 has taken away from us at many levels. Our physical safety is challenged with the possibility of illness. Many of us are challenged financially. And, of course, our relationships – family, friends, colleagues, fellow worshippers – have all been limited, with some of us experiencing total isolation from our social interactions.

These changes cause us stress and trigger anxiety and depression, for some people one of these phenomena and for others both. Both of these mental conditions are often viewed with negative expectations – “pull yourself up by your boot straps” – “you obviously don’t have enough faith.” Those of us who have struggled with anxiety and depression have heard these platitudes, along with other comments which try to shame us into feeling differently. These feelings are real!

I would like to offer another perspective. God created us with anxiety and depression as mental states which insure our survival. I remember when my Dad, following his cancer prostate surgery, became depressed. I called the doctor, concerned. His doctor responded and said, “Depression helps us to slow down and manage the stressors in our life. In your Dad’s case it is appropriate for him to be depressed, because his body needs time to heal, and the depression will slow him down so that can happen.”

Our anxiety has the job of alerting us to a danger which could threaten our survival. Fortunately, we also have the thinking part of our brain that can help us mediate the anxiety. So, if we are walking through the woods and we hear a rustling in the leaves, we have the ability to recognize that we saw a squirrel several feet back and make the decision not to run away. A deer that hears the same thing immediately runs away. On the other hand, if we are sleeping, wake up startled (anxious) and smell smoke, we know we need to move and get out of the house.

Fortunately, the thinking part of our brain allows us to discern whether or not we are in danger.

Both mild to moderate depression levels of anxiety can be managed. At the top of the list of interventions is self-care. Eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising, even if it means doing exercises we can do in a chair, tapping into our creativity, engaging our hobbies, perfecting a skill we haven't had a chance to do previously, limiting watching the news, limiting social media, slowing down, spending time reading, listening to music, playing games with family, taking walks, taking time to reflect/meditate/pray and giving ourselves time to "veg" are ways which allow our bodies to deal with the stress we are experiencing.

As people of faith we also have the comfort of the scriptures. In Isaiah 54:7-8, Isaiah shares that God said: "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer."

The theologian, Walter Brueggemann says: "In its season of abandonment, Israel had not forgotten – and always remembered – that the performance or covenantal fidelity – even amid abandonment – consists in radical, restorative neighbor actions for those left behind. To the familiar triad of 'widow, orphan, immigrant,' the prophet adds 'the poor.' Action toward the left behind who are treasured by God is a primary strategy for resisting despair in abandonment."

Brueggemann suggests that we continue to do justice and this will give us a sense of purpose and meaning which is so important in countering depression and anxiety.

All that being said, mild to moderate levels of depression and anxiety are manageable, and there are ways we can reduce the stress. But, certainly, for those in which depression and anxiety become more acute, know that there are therapists and/or doctors who can help people with talk therapy and/or medication which helps bring a person's ability to function to a point again of managing the stress.

As we navigate the pandemic during this holiday season, know that we are not alone. All of us, at some level, have suffered some or all of the above feelings. Know that God so loved the world that God gave us God's only son, that who so ever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) Know that Christ's church is there and is willing to support one another as members care for one another in the midst of this struggle. Know that there are ways to manage our depression and anxiety. Know that there are professionals who are there and willing to encourage us. Know that God has compassion for God's people and has been with us, is with us and promises to be with us as we move forward during this unprecedented time. Especially at this Advent and Christmas time, Jesus will be born in us again.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are some examples of negative messages you have heard or learned about depression and anxiety?
- What are some examples of how anxiety and/or depression have been helpful for you or someone else?
- In this time of pandemic, many of us have experienced some level of anxiety and/or depression. How unhelpful has this been for you? How has it been helpful?
- How have you experienced God Emmanuel (God with us) during this pandemic time?

This piece was provided by: The Wisconsin Conference UCC—Supportive Ministries Task Force

~ In Our Prayers ~

During the month of February, the UNA is holding our church in prayer.

The Family of Lorene Parshall – as they grieve the loss of Lorene.

Margaret Soller and Family — as they grieve the recent loss of Margaret's father.

Brenda Brummel—as she mourns the recent loss of her cousin, Jerry.

Mardee Storing's daughter, Lori – as she has now been diagnosed with brain cancer. Please also keep Lori's family in your prayers, as well as 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

February Birthdays

- 6 Joanie Sietsema
- 7 Callie English
- 7 Evelyn Pratt
- 10 Margaret Hellenberg
- 18 Aysia House
- 27 Jay Anderson

February Anniversaries

- 13 Roy & Cleveann Wolf
- 28 Jim & Vicky Rigney



February 2021

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

	1	2	3	4 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Women's Fellowship, 12:15pm Book Study, 7pm	5	6
7 Live Virtual Worship Communion Virtual Coffee Hour	8 Virtual Reaching In, Noon Pastor Parish, 1pm	9	10 Council, 7pm	11 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	12	13
14 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	15 Reaching Out, 7pm <i>Presidents' Day</i>	16	17 Virtual Trustees, 11am Virtual Council, 7pm	18 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	19	20
21 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	22	23	24 Church Book Club, 1pm	25 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	26	27
28 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour						

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