

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

January 2020

*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
218 W. Second Street
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Pastor: Rev. Greg Watling
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Moderator: Rokko Jans
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Communications
Coordinator: Jessica Benoit
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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

This month as we begin the new year, I want to share with you a prayer I came across while reading Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations from the Center for Action and Contemplation. These daily meditations are free and found at www.cac.org. The following is from the remarkably hope-filled book Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans. Howard Thurman contributed the following prayer-practice:

"O God, I Need Thee"

I Need Thy Sense of Time

Always I have an underlying anxiety about things.

Sometimes I am in a hurry to achieve my ends

And am completely without patience. It is hard for me

To realize that some growth is slow,

That all processes are not swift. I cannot always discriminate

Between what takes time to develop and what can be rushed,

Because my sense of time is dulled.

I measure things in terms of happenings.

O to understand the meaning of perspective

*That I may do all things with a profound sense of leisure—of
time.*

Continued on next page ...

I Need Thy Sense of Order

The confusion of the details of living

Is sometimes overwhelming. The little things

Keep getting in my way providing ready-made

Excuses for failure to do and be

What I know I ought to do and be.

Much time is spent on things that are not very important

While significant things are put into an insignificant place

In my scheme of order. I must unscramble my affairs

So that my life will become order. O God, I need

Thy sense of order.

I Need Thy Sense of the Future

Teach me to know that life is ever

On the side of the future.

Keep alive in me the forward look, the high hope,

The onward surge. Let me not be frozen

Either by the past or the present.

Grant me, O patient Father, Thy sense of the future

Without which all life would sicken and die.

Howard Thurman, "O God, I Need Thee," (1951), in *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, ed. James Melvin Washington (Harper Collins: 1994), 183.

FROM YOUR MODERATOR

Mischelle Stone

Happy New Year, everyone! I am so grateful for the confidence you have placed in me to serve as your Moderator for the coming year! Please join me in thanking Rokko for serving as Moderator over the past two years. The leadership he displayed in shepherding us through the Search and Call process was invaluable, and he has left some big shoes to fill. I am so appreciative of his good will, good humor, and generosity of spirit. I am also very grateful that he will continue to serve the Church as musical director, as he brings so many skills and talents to our lives.

I also want to thank each and every one of you for your service to the Church during these challenging times. That we have been able to hire a new pastor, continue our Reaching In and Reaching Out activities, and meet our financial obligations has been nothing short of miraculous and is a reflection of everyone's commitment to the Church. One of the most important lessons learned from our experience over the past year is that there can now be no doubt that the "Church" is so much more than just the building. The many ways we have come together to continue our commitment and service is something we can be very proud of. I share Pastor Greg's sentiment that this is a time to celebrate the many successes we have had over the past year, and I send a virtual hug to all of you for the part you have played in them.



Of course, one of our priorities for 2021 is to be able to physically gather once again. The Council continues to closely monitor the opportunities for this. Among the factors that affect these opportunities are 1) to always be sure to be inclusive in the opportunity for everyone to attend, and 2) making sure that we follow recommended guidelines for safely gathering in ways that minimize the risk of transmission of the virus. I want to assure you that members of the Council are monitoring this closely, and when we can be assured that it is safe to do so, we will schedule an "in person" service to bring us back together once again.

Please know that your Council is here for you! As the Moderator and legal representative for the Church, I ask that you keep me informed of your activities and wishes, and this will help me to share them with the Council during our monthly meetings. I have asked Jessica to forward the meeting minutes from each of the committees to me so they can be shared with the Council. Also, please let me know how the Council can support you in your service to the Church. I want to thank you again for your continued commitment to the Church and to each other. I am confident that we will gather in person once more in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, know that the challenges before us provide a terrific opportunity for us to grow, both individually and as a Church.

Peace and Blessings,

Mischelle

Reaching Out

Dec 14th, 2020

Reaching out committee met via zoom. Vicky Rigney, Louanne Spearman, Cathy Otto, Pastor Greg Watling.

Although the past few months have been a challenge for the committee we would like to thank the congregation for the generous way they contributed to the Angel Tree and for the hats, mittens and sock collection. Half of the hats, mittens and socks were delivered to the Brighton One Stop Shop earlier this month and the remainder will be give to the Gaylord Area Schools to be given to students after the holidays.

Next year's committee plan to meet the third Monday of the month @ 7 via zoom until it is safe to meet in person. The zoom link will be listed soon and all are welcome to join.

Blessings,

Cathy



Report from Your Trustees – January 2021 Newsletter

- We celebrated our annual Stewardship drive with a dedication on Sunday, November 22. THANK YOU to everyone who turned in a pledge for the coming year. Your pledges enable us to budget and plan responsibly, continuing our unique ministry within our community and beyond.
- Fear not, if you have been delayed in sending in your pledge for the coming year it's not too late. We've received 35 pledges thus far, with a goal of 45 to match the number of pledges returned last year. To date, pledges for 2021 total \$56K, compared to \$71K for the current year. You can email your pledge to Jessica (office@firstuccgaylord.org) or mail it to 218 W. Second Street in Gaylord, 49735.
- We are so very grateful for our many church participants who have faithfully mailed in financial contributions throughout the pandemic. Through 50 weeks we have received \$86,022 in tithes and offerings. While this is *slightly* below our budget of \$89,000 for the same period, it is quite remarkable given these unprecedented times. If you have not been doing so on a regular basis, we urge you to make a contribution before year end. You can contribute through our website using PayPal, or mail a check to our church office at 218 W. Second St.
- Installation of our new audio-visual system began on December 14, and the Reaching In team is anticipating use of the new system beginning in January. Implementation was delayed nearly two months because high demand, combined with pandemic-related production interruptions, made it difficult for our vendor to acquire some of the necessary electronic components.
- We look forward to the time when we can again worship together in person. Meanwhile, we are *abundantly grateful* for your continued financial support of our vibrant church community.

First Congregational UCC Gaylord - Financials

	2020	<u>Through November</u> <u>30, 2020</u>		
	Annual	Budget	Actual	Diff
TOTAL INCOME	\$104,280	\$89,173	\$83,2	(\$5,966)
EXPENSES				
Payroll	\$73,130	\$67,036	\$22,9	\$44,040
Facility	\$20,650	\$18,929	\$19,5	(\$593)
Other Operating	\$10,500	\$9,625	\$11,9	(\$2,333)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$104,280	\$95,590	\$54,4	\$41,113
NET INCOME	\$0	(\$6,417)	\$28,7	\$35,147

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

~ 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. January’s book is “Delicious” by Ruth Reichl. Please fill out sign up sheet if you borrow a book (in fellowship hall).

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



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

*Our contributions to
One Stop Shop...*



*Thank you to everyone who came
out to sing "Silent Night" on
Christmas Eve!*



~ In Our Prayers ~

During the month of January, the UNA is holding the Clare Church in prayer.

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

Pastor Greg Watling and Family — as his stepmother, Glenda, recently passed away after being infected with CV-19.

Helen Mate — as she recovers from surgery to treat her recent bladder cancer diagnosis.

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.

Chuck Falk — as he recently underwent heart surgery.

Dave Henson — as he recovers from having stents put in last month.

The Boughner Family — as they grieve Becky's passing.

Tony Fobar-Dockery's Father — as he recovers from injuries.

Mirja "Miss Sue" Hoeft — as she recovers from a serious fall, leaving her with a fractured shoulder. She is currently resting at her daughter's home, downstate.

Jim's Brother Bernie Boughner — as he deals with health issues.

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

January Birthdays

7 *Diane House*

9 *Jill Brazelton*

18 *Joanna Morse*

21 *Larry Ward*

21 *Pastor Greg*

22 *Jeff Kalember*

27 *Rokko Jans*



January 2021

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

					1 <i>New Year's Day!</i>	2
3 Virtual Worship <i>Communion</i>	4 Virtual Reaching In, Noon	5	6 <i>Epiphany</i>	7 Virtual Bible Study, 11am	8	9
10 Virtual Worship	11	12	13 Virtual Council, 7pm	14 Virtual Bible Study, 11am	15	16
17 Virtual Worship	18 Virtual Reaching Out, 7pm	19	20 Virtual Trustees, 11am	21 Virtual Bible Study, 11am	22	23
24 Virtual Worship	25	26	27 Book Club, 1pm	28 Virtual Bible Study, 11am	29	30
31 Virtual Worship						

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