

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

May 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 – May 2021

**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.*

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I'm sure you'll be surprised that I took another hike. This time, it was through a portion of forest that has been harvested more than once. I'm not writing about this to debate logging practices. What I did notice is the utter devastation in recently harvested areas. It made it hard to find the path as there were few trees left to put markings on that marked the trail. In other areas that had been harvested years ago, there were still ruts from the heavy equipment used in the harvesting that made the trail hard to follow. In still other areas, you knew that the area had been harvested, but it was harder to tell when and there were fewer long-term effects.

It got me to thinking about this pandemic. It has truly been devastating, and as I'm writing, it continues to worsen in Michigan. While I believe we will stay in-person for worship given that most of us have been vaccinated, the path ahead is not clear for us a congregation, or for the state or country. We know of the devastating effects of Covid-19, not only the number of people killed outright, but the loss of relationships, favorite stores and restaurants, family turmoil, workplace hardships. To say it has been devastating would be an understatement. Even with the hope of vaccines, the devastation continues.

The devastation will be felt for years to come. Some of the political divisions will be hard to heal, and the pathway toward re-establishing relationships, businesses, school routines, and workplaces without the extreme conflict, will be long and hard to find. Like my pathway in the woods, we'll start out on our way thinking we know where to go and how to get there, only to be detoured by the long-lasting marks left by the tragic disease. Like ruts in the forest floor made the trail hard to find, our way forward will be hard to find.

Continued on next page ...

Even well into the future, the marks of Covid-19 will remain. What they will be, and how deep the scars I'm not exactly sure, but I know this, we must find our way forward. There are many things out of our control as the church universal, let alone a local congregation. But I think to find our way, we'll have to together mark out a path forward. That path will include helping people to remain safe as they can, along with getting our own vaccines and helping to vaccinate others. The vaccines will not prevent the disease from ever returning, however, they will drastically minimize the desolation.

In our own case, we'll need to keep wearing our masks and taking precautions. With numbers on the rise, I can't see that we'll have fellowship time indoors, or be singing together in the near future. But we can find safe ways to congregate, and when we do, we can graciously welcome those who seek safer space within the church. People are hurting, they are lonely, they are stressed, but as we slowly venture out to whatever normal is, we need others who care enough to continue safer practices in the hopes that we can stop the destruction of Covid-19. No rules or government orders, or even laws, can stop Covid-19 without our participation and our care for others.

This means that we can be like the blue markers on the trails I hike, marking a path towards a desired future for everyone! We can point out the way for a nervous and downright scared public. It doesn't matter what other churches do. It only matters what we do, exemplifying Jesus' compassion and care for the last, the least, the lost, the lonely, and the left out. Many churches will ignore the needs of others and just go back to their old ways, not even noticing that dramatic impact this pandemic has had on everyone. Sure, we all want to get "past" it, but it will still be a part of who we are for perhaps a generation or more.

What can we do to help our "forest" (a.k.a. community) recover from this devastation? What can we offer that no one, or few others, are offering? What kind of "trail markers" will we be for those searching for a path forward? Jesus changed the world with 12 men and a small company of women. It's not how many we are, but the life of discipleship we live. I don't have all the answers. I don't need to. I only need to work with you to point the way forward for a searching community and trust God for the rest.

It will take each of us doing what we do best to find our way forward, and to lead others. I can't wait to partner with you in this God-given endeavor.

Faithfully,

Pastor Greg

VISITS

I would love to visit with you and get to know you better as your time and interest allow. I received my first COVID vaccine on March 18 and the second on April 9. I will still mask and distance and limit visits to around 30 minutes. If you would like to visit with me, I would like nothing more. It doesn't matter your age, family make up, location...no matter who you are, I would love nothing more than getting to know you. I completely understand that several of you will want to wait until the pandemic lessens or ends, but when you're ready, I can't wait to meet you!

If you would be willing to meet with me, please contact the church office, or email me at pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org.

LIVESTREAM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As you know, we have begun livestreaming our worship services. Each week, we gain more confidence in the system, and we're very able to train others to use the system. What we need is a couple more people to help us run the system. Even if you take the training, you can back out if it's more than you bargained for.

Livestream will continue even when we are back in person for worship. This is an important connection with our out-of-town participants and friends, and it also is a great way to share our church with the community. Many people check out a church online before they ever come in person. Please help if you are able.

Contact Mary Fox, Pastor Greg, or Jessica if you will help.

OFFICE HOURS CHANGE

Pastor Greg will not be in the office on Thursday, April 29 as he will be making his way to Houghton for his son's graduation from Michigan Tech. He will be back in the office Monday, May 3 around 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

May Blanket Month

We will be collecting money for blankets during the month of May but the actual day of celebrating of Blanket Sunday will be May 9. Blankets are distributed worldwide by Church World Service during disasters, emergencies, and to keep families warm.

A \$10 blanket goes a long way in helping during disasters.





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

March 10, 2021 Council Minutes (meeting via Zoom)

Present: Mischelle Stone, Laura Hotelling, Greg Watling, Helen Mate, Sally Anderson. Maggie Wallin, Brenda Brummel, Roger Brummel, Mary Fox, Don Storing, Vicky Rigney, Doreen Dobosy

1. Maggie led a prayer to begin the meeting.
2. Vicky thanked those who are operating the live feed.
3. Helen M moved to accept the February minutes, Maggie seconded, and approval was unanimous.
4. Reopening Discussion
 - A. Greg noted that traditionally the largest church attendance is on Easter Sunday and that we don't know who would be there. The lowest attendance is typically the Sunday after Easter.
 - B. The plan is to have an in-person service on April 11.
 - C. Communion Sunday in May will involve self-contained elements.
 - D. Mischelle wondered how to enforce our practices.
 - i. Laura suggested that it helps to have multiple people.
 - ii. Maggie noted that it would be helpful to have masks and sanitizer there. Doreen later added that she has a donation of 100 masks to have available.
 - iii. Don added that we would hope people would have the courtesy to follow the rules but that it will be difficult to enforce.
 - iv. Brenda suggested sending those who won't follow the rules to fellowship hall. Mischelle noted that we could end up with many people there and reminded that we had discussed not using the hall.
 - v. Vicky added that there are signs with the rules all over the Methodist Church.
 - E. Rokko is not in favor of having live music.
 - F. Notes about how Charlevoix is open from Don
 - i. every other pew
 - ii. Pews are sectioned off.
 - iii. only one person singing
 - iv. The pastor and liturgist are the only people speaking.
 - G. With the trial reopening being April 11, we'll be able to evaluate how it went at the April 14 council meeting.
 - H. Regarding fellowship hall, Brenda would like to meet with the kids there eventually as it's well ventilated. They would probably meet at noon.
 - I. Sally wondered about how cleaning will work.
 - i. Mischelle suggested that because the church will only be open on Sunday and Thursday, there will be time in between for anything to dissipate.
 - ii. Vicky suggested that our cleaning person come twice a month.
 - J. Greg will talk to Jessica about sending out an e-blast regarding policies.
 - K. Doreen asked if our decision will depend on positive case numbers, and Mischelle added that numbers in Otsego County are still relatively low.

L. Sally suggested that it will have to be quite a while before we resume coffee hour.

5. Carillon Bell Discussion

A. Mischelle noted that there are not very many people who know about the history.

B. Several companies are willing to come in and give us estimates.

C. Other churches have spent between \$5,000 and \$7,000 to have their systems restored.

D. The old system doesn't exist anymore, so if we proceeded, we'd have to install a new system.

E. Mary asked the group to think about what else the carillon fund money could be spent on. She added that most memorial donations are under \$2,000 and that it's usually only a few hundred dollars.

6. Addition to Agenda

A. Kay Boughner wonders about having the collection plate in the back of church all of the time rather than just on special Sundays to reduce giving anxiety. Mischelle suggested that this could be a topic for Reaching In.

B. Doreen suggested that this could work during COVID to encourage non-contact.

7. Greg led a prayer to conclude the meeting.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

REACHING IN MEETING

April 5, 2021

Attendees: Rokko, Sallie, Helen C, Helen M, Brenda, Maggie, Pastor Greg

Opening Prayer offered by Pastor Greg.

Business Discussion: RE: Church Services:

First In-Church Service will be 4/11/21; all COVID protocols will be in place

COUNCIL will evaluate the success of the first In-Church Service on 4/14

Access to Restrooms will be evaluated to comply with Protocols

Offering Plates will be available in the Narthex

Communion Elements will be available when entering the church service on 5/9/21; Greg will explain the procedure for use when appropriate

Greeters and Ushers; at this point in time, only one Greeter is planned on for Sunday services

Recorded music will be utilized; words for hymns will be on the overhead screens, but there will be no singing.

Rokko is continuing to work on Special Music

Business Discussion: RE: Other Issues

The youth are working on a play, but it is not ready for production

Greg and Jessica will continue to schedule Liturgists; Rod Anderson will be 4/11; Roger Brummel, 4/18

We shall continue to utilize "We Make The Road By Walking" for sermon topics, Bible Study and Adult Discussion Groups, for 3 more months

Rokko will preach 4/18; 5/2 is undecided at this point in time.

Volunteers are needed to be trained and run the technology for the Virtual Worship Services. Each week is showing great improvements.

Thank you to Jean Sasso for making the church ready for the In-Church Service

Brenda will do some Children's Messages from home with her "much appreciated and loved" canine participants

Maggie closed us with Prayer

Next meeting will be May 3, 2021

Submitted by Helen Crandall

Reaching Out First Congregational Church

March 15, 2021

Present: Stephanie(Chair), Louanne, Roger, Mona, Greg(Pastor), Vicky(note taker)

Meeting started at 7PM

Nomination by Vicky 2nd by Mona Stephanie Kalember be chair of Reaching Out

Unanimous vote of all in attendance to approve this. Stephanie is Chairperson pf Reaching Out.

Winter clothing that was gathered for giving to area schools was not taken to the schools. It was decided to box them up and save for next school year. Stephanie will store them for us.

Louanne has been sending cards to church members.

Louanne will explore sending cards to The Brook (an assisted living facility)

Scholarship special collection will continue till the end of March.

Mona and Vicky will look into starting the Salad Luncheons. Plans will need to be presented to Church Council.

Our special offering for April will be One Great Hour Of Sharing.

Next meeting Monday April 19, 2021 at 7pm

Submitted by Vicky Rigney

Report from Your Trustees – May 2021 Newsletter

- Although continuing to exercise appropriate caution, it was indeed exciting to have the option of in-person worship beginning on April 11. The energy in the room was wonderful! Regardless of whether you worship in person or from a distance, we appreciate your ongoing support. At least for the time being, collection plates are available in the Narthex to enable touchless drop off. We also know that many participants enjoy the convenience of mailing their offerings or donating online; both options are also welcome. Feel free to mail contributions to 218 W. Second St. or utilize 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 April 11th, we averaged \$1,823. We appreciate everyone's generous donations!
- Our first-quarter financial summary is shown below. The areas in which expenses exceeded budget are attributable to timing – including building insurance, pension catch up, and January payment of prior-year expenses – all approved by Trustees in advance. Rest assured that your Trustees monitor these matters carefully on a monthly basis.
- Live broadcast of weekly services continues, even as we return to worshipping in person. As live streaming becomes more and more routine (meaning less unexpected glitches!), we'd like to expand our team of trained operators. If you are willing to help in this manner – or, if you know of someone with an interest in new technology – please email Jessica.
- We appreciate the *option* of again worshipping together in person! Whether you choose to attend in person or continue to worship online, we are enormously grateful for your financial contributions.

First Congregational UCC Gaylord			
Actual Compared to Budgeted Financials			
January-March 2021			
	Budget Annual	Budget Quarterly	Actual First Qtr
INCOME			
Operating Income	\$ 102,780	\$ 25,695	\$ 22,759
Ministries Income		\$ -	\$ 2,346
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 102,780	\$ 25,695	\$ 25,105
EXPENSES			
Personnel	\$ 71,230	\$ 17,808	\$ 21,179
Facility	\$ 20,730	\$ 5,183	\$ 5,802
Administration	\$ 8,185	\$ 2,046	\$ 1,277
Ministries	\$ 2,400	\$ 600	\$ 2,064
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 102,545	\$ 25,636	\$ 30,322
NET INCOME	\$ 235	\$ 59	\$ (5,217)

Announcements

Mary Sanders shared this recent beautiful photo of our friends, Roy and Cleveann Wolf



Volunteers Needed:

Liturgists, Greeters, and Lawn Mowers!

Please contact the office if you are able to help.

Other News:

The community meal applied for a grant to the Otsego community foundation. We got it!

The amount given is \$2,500. A big thank you to everyone that helped us get this Jan Kellogg (AAUW), Mary Fox, Brenda Bremmel, pastor Greg and Tony. They all had a part in helping to get this grant. A very special thank you to Margaret Hafner, Dave Henson, Don and Mardee Storing for writing letters of support.

A BIG THANK YOU

Community Meal needs help on Friday nights from 2pm-5pm. Help with cooking, serving, and clean up and maybe some cookies once in a while. We have many weeks to cover in May and June .

Cookies to The Brook of Gaylord

On Sunday May 16 the church is taking cookies to the Brook. We would like volunteers to donate cookies for this event.

Please let Louanne or Vicky know by phone or email.

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 May, the UNA is holding the Lewiston church in prayer.

Chuck Falk— as he recently cut three of his fingers.

Brad Derenzy—as he awaits having to reschedule a needed surgery due to COVID.

Bo & Carol Leser—as Bo is struggling with health issues.

The Crandall Family – as Don continues under the care of hospice.

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 finally home, but still in need of prayers for healing.

Mardee Storing's daughter, Lori – she is doing better, but still in need of prayers for treatment.

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

May Birthdays

- 4 Pat Sepura
- 8 Brenda Brummel
- 10 George Dunn
- 15 Norm Dressel
- 17 Lani English
- 17 Don Storing
- 22 Pat Dressel
- 25 Mackenzie Fobar
- 26 Roy Wolf
- 31 Alaina Anderson



May Anniversaries

- 20 Rollie & Louanne Spearman
- 25 Pete Amar & Mary Fox

May 2021

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

						1
2 In Person Worship, 10am Virtual Coffee Hour	3 Reaching In, Noon	4	5	6 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Women's fellowship, 12:15pm Book Study, 7pm	7 Community Meal 4pm	8
9 In Person Worship, 10am Virtual Coffee Hour <i>Mother's Day</i>	10	11	12 Virtual Council 7pm	13 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	14 Community Meal, 4pm	15
16 In Person Worship, 10am Virtual Coffee Hour <i>Cookies to The Brook</i>	17 Reaching Out, 7pm	18	19 Virtual Trustees, 11am	20 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	21 Community Meal, 4pm	22
23/30 In Person Worship, 10am Virtual Coffee Hour	24/31 <i>Memorial Day</i>  <small>© 2021, Sarah's Heart</small>	25	26 Church Book Club, 1pm	27 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	28 Community Meal, 4pm	29

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