



Congregational Courier

THOUGHTS FROM BOB LIVINGSTON

SENIOR MINISTER

Dear Friends:

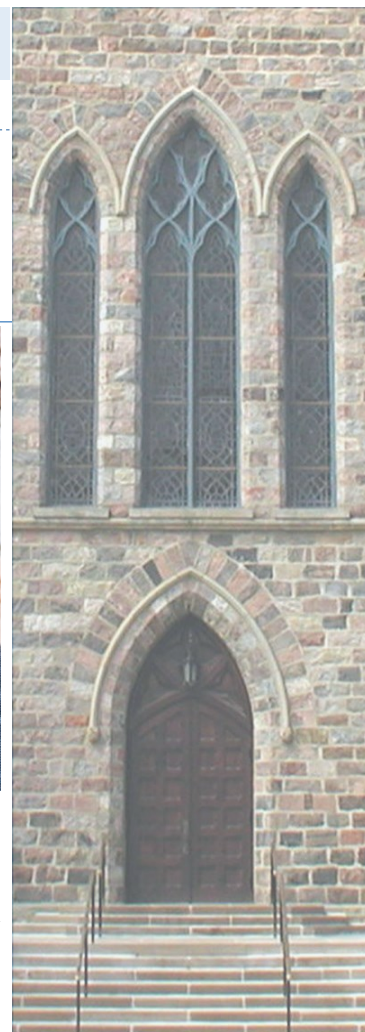
Recently I was talking with one of our church members who in response to the recent natural calamities wondered about the “why?” behind all of the destruction and suffering. Often, I think, such a question is really a God-question. My hunch is people are really asking, “Why does God allow such misery and suffering to occur?” Now, I do believe, the answer to such a question is shrouded in mystery, and I certainly don’t have any definitive explanation to offer. However, from a biblical framework, let me respond to the God question by saying this:



First, God is NOT the author, nor the promoter or facilitator, of this suffering or any suffering. The fact is, we live in a naturally evolving world bound by the laws of nature and human freedom. These recent hurricanes, fires (except those that are human caused), and earthquakes are the result of natural phenomena that fall under the laws of nature and within the natural order. Horrible? Yes. Tragic? Yes. Destructive? Yes. God’s will or God’s particular design? No!

Second, we are the ones whom God calls into responding to and caring for those in our worldwide human family who are suffering, and we are to do so in whatever capacity we are able. In this sense, I believe God expects us to reach out with help and support, and to be the hands and heart of God. Remember, it was Rabbi Jesus who said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did for one of the least of these who are members of my family (in this case meaning those who are left homeless and suffering), you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40b NRSV). As we reach out and care for others, we are serving and loving God.

Here, I must add, I am proud to be a part of a church community like FCC! I want you to know, immediately upon hearing about the flooding in Houston, our Mission and Outreach Committee met by email and set aside \$1,000 to send to the American Red Cross to aid their work there. And now



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Whatever Your Story, You’re Welcome Here

they and we are considering how we can help with relief efforts following Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean and Florida and Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, and where we will travel in early April with our intergenerational work trip to help, hands-on, with repairs. Yes, we are truly a church that seeks to be a compassionate and healing presence in the name of our Loving God...to incarnate what it means to be a beacon of light, love, and hope.

In conclusion, may I add, I am so glad you are a part of this spiritual journey with us!

I look forward to greeting you on Sundays!

Blessings,

Bob



FCC raised \$5,732
towards relief efforts!!



Our Mission: We are a beacon of God's love, hope, and Christian freedom.

DARCY CRAIN
ASSOCIATE MINISTER



"Dancing"

There is an event that happens at the end of September each year in Hell. Don't think purgatory, think geographical, like the city in Michigan close to Pinckney. It's called Dances with Dirt and it's a 50 mile team relay race through trails, rivers, swamps and a whole lot of hills. You, and four other runners take turns running between 3-6 miles legs until together you have completed the full 50 miles. You start at 7:30 a.m. and end sometime around 4 or 5. If you think this sounds crazy, it is, but a good crazy. The event is so popular that the race sells out within a week of its opening every year. There are team names, costumes, decorated cars, flags, traditions, and a lot of eccentric runners to be found.

I participated in my second Dances with Dirt this past weekend, but can say without a doubt that it was the hottest race I have ever competed in with temperatures in the 90s and runners feeling every degree of that heat. During one of the hottest parts of this heat, I found myself struggling on a 6 mile leg of the Potawatomi Trail, wondering about this title Dancing with Dirt. I did not feel like I was dancing. I felt like I was dying. I walked up a hill (or 10 of them) and a runner passed me to say, "Good job," another to say, "You got this." When we thought we were going the wrong way, a group of us backtracked to find our course and no one was mad about lost time. I passed a runner on the trail who had to pick up a leg for a hurt teammate, and whoever was around him provided encouragement and shared the 6 oz of water they carried.

We came around the bend of a trail and all I could see at first was a ridiculously steep hill. But eventually I was able to ignore the burning in my legs long enough to see beyond the hill to the sky, and through the sky, the trees, and the edge of a lake. There was beauty in the midst of the heat and there we were, a bunch of crazy runners, willing our tired and sore bodies through the beauty of God's creation. As we did so, there was encouragement and community; lifting one another up. As I plodded along the path, I repeated scripture to myself, a habit I got into when I started distance running. First I repeated: "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will rise with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Then, that got a bit lengthy so I switched to: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." And finally, for the last mile just a prayer: "Help me, help me, help me, please, please, please."

Sometimes when we are in the midst of the suffering we cannot see the dancing, we can only see or feel the dying. But there are invitations to dance all around us. I saw dancing in the encouragement of runners to one another. I saw dancing in my teammates who would greet me with cheers and cold water. I saw dancing in the strength I felt when I repeated scriptures as my feet pounded up and down the hills of those trails. This year, even though it felt like dying at times, I truly danced with dirt, with God's beauty of creation, and with God's most beautiful of creation, people. May you be able to see the dancing through whatever it is you are suffering, and may you be encouraged along the trail by others on the journey, by your own prayers, and by our God who invites us to dance.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darcy".

RACHEL DUDLEY

INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



“How Did I Get Here?”

I found myself smiling for no reason and content as I sat in my new office in the church school area this week. There is nothing as wonderful as feeling like God has me where he wants me at this very moment! I’ve been praying for peace often over the past months and was shocked when I felt it, sitting by myself in the basement of the church. This calm sense of peace led me to reflect on the past year and my journey with First Congregational Church. It has been a beautiful whirlwind of an adventure that I could have never planned.

My husband and I visited FCC for the first time last October after research, lists, and intense debate over leaving the church in which we were married. We were blessed to meet the ministers and Diane Coxford the first Sundays we attended First Congregational Church. Diane’s introduction to the church and to others was a refreshing change from what we had experienced at other churches we had been visiting. Diane became our wing woman at church, and she even started sending me weekly emails with information about events and groups around town that we had discussed. She sealed the deal, and my husband and I knew we wanted to be part of the FCC family.

We were invited by Darcy to the Wednesday night 20/40 small group and were blessed to find a group of people who weren’t afraid to be human. Evenings of raw discussions about current topics and God were refreshing and challenging (in a good way). These new friends welcomed us into their group and into their families. From current event Bible studies, to trivia nights, to getting stuck in the rain at the petting zoo, we wouldn’t trade this group for the world.

To make sure that our new friends were stuck with us, my husband and I joined the church with the next new member class.

Becoming a deacon helped me learn my way around the church and has provided endless opportunities to meet people.

In early August I received a call from Renee saying that VBS needed one more volunteer. As we followed Sarah’s lead, the VBS program started, and it sure was an experience! It was a joyfully exhausting experience filled with Bible stories, robots, games, songs, and more. The volunteers that worked alongside me were supportive, caring and had my back as I attempted to keep my energy level as high as the kids.

One afternoon during VBS I was called down to the principal’s (Bob) office. Bob and Darcy presented me with an offer to become the Interim Director of Christian Education while they continued looking for Sarah’s replacement. They asked me to think about it, and I agreed to consider it. When I returned to my VBS group, I discussed it with Ellen Rambo and others who were knowledgeable and had experience with the position and program. That was the same day I found out that I had been working all week with the President of the Board of Christian Education, Ellen.

A few weeks later I met with Bob and Darcy and we made everything official. I accepted the position of Interim Director of Christian Education. Sarah graciously showed me around, gave me notes and instructions, left lesson plans and then it was Kickoff Sunday! There have been overwhelming offers of sup-

port and assistance at every step. I would like to thank all who have been there in big and small ways during this year-long journey. It has brought me to a place where peace, love, and joy do abound!

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Rachel



YOUTH MINISTRIES

HIGH SCHOOL

SAVE THE DATE: FALL RETREAT
November 19

High School Discussion Dates:

- October 8
- October 22
- November 5

PENNY SEATS THEATER

THE TURN OF THE SCREW



Showtimes	
Thu Oct 5, 2017	8:00PM
Fri Oct 6, 2017	8:00PM
Sat Oct 7, 2017	8:00PM
Thu Oct 12, 2017	8:00PM
Fri Oct 13, 2017	8:00PM
Sat Oct 14, 2017	8:00PM
Thu Oct 19, 2017	8:00PM
Fri Oct 20, 2017	8:00PM
Sat Oct 21, 2017	8:00PM

Please join us at the First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor as we host the spine-tingling adaptation of Henry James' famous ghost story.

Jeffrey Hatcher's script guides two actors through this tale involving an isolated Victorian manor house, a benevolent but stern benefactor, an impressionable governess, two children, a kindly housekeeper, and--maybe--some ghosts. It's Halloween perfection, and it's just 70 minutes from start to finish. For groups of 10+ people, tickets are just \$10! Door tickets will be \$15, so advance tickets are recommended!

Appropriate for ages 13+.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES—2ND SUNDAY

CLARK MCCALL

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2017

11:10 a.m.

Mayflower Room

A presentation on **Interfaith Peacemaking in a World of Fear and Hostility** will be the first Contemporary Issues Second Sunday presentation for 2017-2018. George Lambrides is the presenter.

While conflict has always been part of the human condition, today's political and social climate seem to illustrate just how prone we are to "not get along." In this context, do people of faith and faith traditions have a significant role in peacemaking? Rev. Lambrides will draw from his leadership in the Interfaith Round Table and from his knowledge of peacemaking efforts around the world to discuss these issues both at a personal and national level. There will be plenty of time for questions and feedback.

Rev. George Lambrides has been the Executive Director (now co-director) of the Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County since 1998. The IRT is a local organization of 30 religious congregations representing fifteen faith traditions whose mission is to help create a culture of understanding and inclusion. His career has also included work as an American Baptist minister since 1967 and a Protestant Chaplain for the University of Michigan Health System from 1997 to 2008 with an emphasis on palliative care. He is a graduate of Houghton College, N.Y., and has master degrees from the Denver Seminary and the University of Oregon.



FCC Vision Statement: We strive to be a joyous spiritual home, welcoming and valuing all people, embracing God's word and enriching lives.

TREASURER'S REPORT

MIKE DABBS, TREASURER

	ACTUAL 2017 GAP YEAR 6/30/17	BUDGET 2017 GAP YEAR 01/01/17 - 06/30/17	NOTES
REVENUE			
Pledges	\$ 239,434	\$ 230,000	
Gifts - Operations	\$ 25,914	\$ 37,500	
Pre-paid Pledges	\$ 43,150	\$ -	
Other Income	\$ 22,345	\$ 12,500	
Total Earned Revenue	\$ 330,843	\$ 280,000	
EXPENSES			
Ministry	\$ 106,616	\$ 113,716	
Administrative/Office	\$ 135,788	\$ 158,929	
Christian Education	\$ 23,105	\$ 26,050	
Music	\$ 34,438	\$ 34,325	
Missions & Outreach	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	
Maintenance & Utili-	\$ 65,217	\$ 63,300	
Total Expens-	\$ 369,664	\$ 400,820	
NET REVENUE	\$ (38,821)	\$ (120,820)	
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,270	\$ -	
TRUST FUND DISTRIBUTION	\$ 75,000	\$ 86,238	Note 1
MEMORIAL FUND CONTRIBUTION	\$ -	\$ 5,000	
2016 UNSPENT MARKETING ALLOC.		\$ 35,504	Note 2
BAL-	\$ 34,909	\$ 5,922	Note 3

NOTES

- 1 Actual use of trust funds less than budgeted
- 2 \$25,020 of the \$35,504 was spent and is reflected in the Administrative/Office line above
- 3 Balance will be used in 2017 - 2018 year.

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

BETTY BISHOP

Some Building History

By the early 1900s the present church, dedicated in 1876, was getting too small. An architect drew up plans in 1904 and a building fund was started. Some members wanted to sell and move to a new location while others were in favor of remodeling and expanding the church. One plan proposed adding a tower at the northeast corner to serve as a study for the pastor and an enlarged vestibule. In 1907 the church did spend \$4,702.56 for Hochrein and Company, Contractors, to remodel and add galleries to increase seating in the sanctuary

and to create stairs and doors for easier access. It is probably about this time the church also added the first indoor toilet or water closet; previously there had been a path to one or two outhouses behind the church. Heating was an ongoing concern with stoves being used to heat the Sunday school rooms and wood also used in the church furnace. The janitor's yearly wages were increased from \$175 to \$225 with sawing of wood for the stoves being added to his duties; this was in 1894.

-Betty Bishop, Church Historian



Healing Space

Where music, meditation, and prayer meet.

**Please join us SUNDAY OCTOBER 8th
from 7-8 p.m in Pilgrim Hall.**

Healing Space on October 8th will feature music by members of Ann Arbor's Threshold Choir. This a cappella choir's mission is to sing for those at the thresholds of life, whether facing illness or death or challenging life experiences. Their songs of

comfort and healing are calming to all who hear them. Our own choir member Suzanne Hopkins is one of these dedicated volunteer singers. The October 8th session will also include both silent and guided meditations, a reflection on "PEACE" and a time for prayers.

This new group meets the 2nd Sunday of each month from 7-8 p.m. in Pilgrim Hall. If you need further information, please contact Gail Haynes or Liz Larrivee. Input is welcome and all are welcome.



CROP HUNGER WALK

MARY MOSTAGHIM

Date: Sunday, October 15, 2017

Time: 1 p.m.: Turn in funds/canned goods/register

2 p.m.: Begin walk at Trinity Lutheran
(1400 W. Stadium, end location TBD)



PLEASE DONATE CANNED GOODS

Look for OUR FCC CROP HUNGER WALK BOXES near the back entrance lobby and upstairs in Pilgrim Hall on Sundays.

Please put your canned and non-perishable food in the boxes. Crop Hunger Walk donates food and funds to local food pantries.

PLEASE DONATE FUNDS

Any size donation (cash or check to “CWS/CROP”) will be accepted in Pilgrim Hall by Mary Mostaghim or Suzanne Price, our FCC Team leaders, through October 15, or you can donate online at <http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/goto/fccannarbor>.

PLEASE CONSIDER WALKING WITH THE FCC TEAM

Enjoy a beautiful fall day walking with your church friends in this year's 1, 3, or 5 miles walk. **See FCC Team leaders: Mary Mostaghim or Suzanne Price** after church to pick up a CROP WALK Packet in Pilgrim Hall on Sundays in September for your own donation and the support of your sponsoring friends and neighbors **or register to walk online (see website above).**

This Washtenaw Ann Arbor CROP Hunger Walk raises funds and awareness of hunger relief through Church World Service and local food charities.

*CROP stands for: Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty

Our Core Values:

Caring: We are a loving and mutually supportive faith community.

Proclaiming the Good News: We believe in a living and loving God.

Respect: We embrace openness, diversity, and individual faith journeys.

Compassion: We serve and support the needs of others.

Fellowship: We celebrate and enjoy life with each other.

Check out our Small Groups!

Mind & Spirit
(1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month)

20/40
(Wednesdays at 6:30 pm)

TNS
(TUESDAYS AT 7 P.M.)



Knight's Lunch Group
(4th Monday of each month)



Text Breakfast
(Wednesdays @ 8:30 a.m.)

Circle of Friends

SMALL GROUPS—TEXT BREAKFAST

We gather informally with senior minister Bob Livingston every Wednesday morning at 8:30 a.m. at the Classic Cup Café (4389 Jackson Road) for lively discussion. We discuss the scripture for the upcoming Sunday sermon, sharing our understanding, insights, and our questions. We wrap up our morning about 10 a.m. We look forward to seeing you on Wednesdays! Please join us.

SMALL GROUPS—KNIGHT'S LUNCH CLUB

Please join us on the FOURTH Monday of the month for monthly lunch get-togethers with Bob Livingston and other FCC friends. Next month, we are meeting on October 23 at 11:30 a.m. at Knight's on Dexter Avenue. Our lunch gatherings are highly informal and lots of fun, with welcoming and wide-ranging conversations. Everyone is welcome! We hope you can join us!

SMALL GROUPS—TUESDAY NIGHT SERIES (TNS)

Please join us on Tuesday nights, now through Tuesday, November 7 (We will not meet on Halloween night, October 31st), for our series of theological discussions based on six lectures by the popular, fascinating, and renowned Bishop John Shelby Spong. This 6-week series includes the following topics: "Separating the Fourth Gospel (John)", "The Cross in John: Not Tragedy But Triumph", "The Mother of Jesus: A Symbol of Judaism", "The Fourth Gospel Warns Against Literal Reading", and "Honest Prayer" (parts I and II). We meet on Tuesday nights in the Mayflower Room from 7-8:30 p.m. Please come and join us.

SMALL GROUPS—CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

The Circle of Friends lost four of our "friends" this year who were supported and visited by devoted members. We gained one member and would welcome more! Elizabeth Goodrich will continue to do her great work scheduling flower deliveries to our friends. The year ended in May with a wonderful brunch in which we exchanged resources for Seniors and enjoyed each other's company.

Our group will reassemble in October on Sunday the 8th at 9 a.m. in the Mayflower Room. Our meeting on Sunday, November 12th will feature a speaker, Sara Eggleston, who will explain how she measures adults for wheelchairs so they can have the most comfortable fit. We will also be planning Christmas gifts for our friends.

If you would like to join us, please call Mary Ann Marquardt at [313-303-1989](tel:313-303-1989).

SMALL GROUPS—MIND AND SPIRIT BOOK GROUP

The Mind and Spirit Book Group is a community of women of all ages. We enjoy reading and sharing our life stories as a means of personal and spiritual growth. We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 10:15-11:45 a.m. in the Mayflower Room. We are now reading and discussing *Seeing Allah, Finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi. Qureshi, an American-born Muslim, tells of his Muslim upbringing and how he became a Christian.

SMALL GROUPS—20/40 GROUP

We are a group of people in our 20s through 40s who are interested in trekking through the terrain of young adulthood, relationships, parenting, grad school, and more in a faithful community setting. We are single, married, and parents, and we have a blast together.

We gather at church on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Childcare is provided. On the last Wednesday of every month, we meet at Wolverine State Brewery (2019 W. Stadium Blvd) for trivia from 7-9 p.m. Please contact Darcy (darcy@fccannarbor.org) to be added to our email thread of what's happening and when.

We continue our study from the UCC "A Listen Up Bible Study" where we have explored Ecclesiastes. We start studying Sustaining Creation on October 18. The schedule is below:

October 11	Ecclesiastes 7-12	FCC	6:30 p.m.
October 18	Sustaining Creation	FCC	6:30 p.m.
October 25	Pub Trivia	Wolverine	7-9 p.m.



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FCC Office Hours
Mon. — Fri.
9 a.m. — 3 p.m.

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*Whatever Your
Story, You're
Welcome Here*

SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- 8:30 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room
8:45 a.m. Continental Breakfast, Pilgrim Hall
9:00 a.m. Change of Pace Service, Pilgrim Hall
9:30 a.m. Communion Service, Douglas Memorial Chapel
10:00 a.m. Traditional Service, Sanctuary
(Church School during 10:00 a.m. worship service)
11:00 a.m. Friendship Hour, Pilgrim Hall

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OCTOBER 2017 CALENDAR

- | | | |
|------------|------------|---|
| Oct. 5-7 | 8:00 p.m. | Penny Seats Theater (Sanctuary) |
| Oct. 8 | 9:00 a.m. | Circle of Friends Brunch, Mayflower Room |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Contemporary Issues 2nd Sunday |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Healing Space, Pilgrim Hall |
| Oct. 9 | 5:00 p.m. | Investment Committee Meeting |
| | 6:15 p.m. | Trustees |
| Oct. 10 | 7:00 p.m. | TNS (Mayflower Room) |
| Oct. 11 | 8:30 a.m. | Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café) |
| | 6:30 p.m. | 20/40 (Meeting Room) |
| Oct. 12-14 | 8:00 p.m. | Penny Seats Theater (Sanctuary) |
| Oct. 15 | 9:00 a.m. | Special Animal Blessings
(Rain Date will take place in spring) |
| | 6:00 p.m. | JH OWL (Meeting Room)
OWL Parent Discussion (Mayflower Room) |
| Oct. 16 | 7:00 p.m. | Church Council (Mayflower Room) |
| Oct. 17 | 7:00 p.m. | TNS (Mayflower) |
| Oct. 18 | 8:30 a.m. | Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café) |
| | 10:15 a.m. | Mind and Spirit Book Club (Mayflower) |
| | 12:30 p.m. | Marketing Meeting |
| | 6:30 p.m. | 20/40 Group (Meeting Room) |
| Oct. 19-21 | 8:00 p.m. | Penny Seats Theater (Sanctuary) |
| Oct. 21 | 10:30 a.m. | Pumpkin Patch Family Ministry |
| Oct. 22 | 11:00 a.m. | New Member Brunch (Mayflower) |
| Oct. 23 | 11:30 a.m. | Knight's Luncheon Club |
| Oct. 24 | 7:00 p.m. | TNS (Mayflower Room) |
| Oct. 25 | 8:30 a.m. | Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café) |
| | 7:00 p.m. | 20/40 Group Trivia (Wolverine Tap) |
| Oct. 29 | noon | JH Leaf Raking (Please RSVP to
rachel@fccannarbor.org) |
| Oct. 31 | | Have a Safe and Happy Halloween! |