

Congregational Courier

THOUGHTS FROM BOB LIVINGSTON
SENIOR MINISTER

Dear Friends:

Greetings! I stopped by a local store recently with my wife, Laura, who wanted to pick up a Christmas present for a family member. As we entered the store (masked, of course!), we were met by a masked clerk who directed us to the right area of the store. We, then, followed safe social distance floor stickers to the rack that had the clothing item we wanted to consider buying. After we made our choice, we were once again guided to a cash register to pay for our item, waiting in line at a safe social distance for the shopper ahead of us to check-out. Alas, when we were able to approach the counter, we set our item down, while greeting and talking with the cashier who was standing behind a Plexiglas shield. Finally, with our receipt in hand, we exited the store through the "exit only" door as we headed outside to our car and back on our way homeward. Wow! What a different world we live in this year...so maybe we need Christmas more this year than ever.

As you know from church history, it is unlikely Jesus was actually born during the month of December. However, those who decided to place the celebration of the nativity of Jesus on December 25 did so for a good reason. Being that December is the darkest time of the year for us in the Northern Hemisphere, Christmas comes at a good time for us, just after the winter solstice and just as our hemisphere begins to brighten and lighten...reminding us, of course, of the birth of Jesus, who came as the Light of the world and the Healer of humankind. As we read in the prologue to the Gospel of John, "What has come into being in him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

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Whatever Your Story, You're Welcome Here



Yes, Christmas comes at the time of year when we so badly need hope, and light, and a spiritual lift...again, I think especially this year. Indeed life may be woven with pandemics, disappointments, and shadows, yet we have the presence of God in our lives who loves us and promises to abide with us always and forever. No matter what...and no matter what the circumstances.

There is an "Advent Prayer" written by Henri J. M. Nouwen that I like very much. It goes like this:

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon
our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice
each day.

We who are anxious over many things, look forward to Your coming
amongst us.

We who are blessed in so many ways, long for the complete joy of
Your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of Your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To You we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

My dear friends, as we come to the end of a very rough, uncertain, and surreal year, may God bless you and yours during this blessed season of Advent and Christmas, and into the New Year. Please keep your chin up, stay safe, and take time to remember you are not alone. The peace and love of God are always with you.

Affectionately,



Bob Livingston
Senior Minister



DARCY CRAIN MINISTER



I was driving home the other day following the grisly mark of this 2020 pandemic. Our country had reached a quarter of a million deaths due to COVID. My partner, who works in healthcare, had lost 4 colleagues in the first wave and she anticipates she will lose more this wave. I lost my grandma to this in May and have not yet gathered with my family to grieve her. They are part of that statistic. I passed an empty Pioneer High School parking lot, as all sports had been cancelled and kids haven't been in school this year yet anyway. It all felt surreal.

Driving down Scio Church Rd. at about 5 p.m. I was gifted with a beautiful early winter sky of orange and pink and blue. I passed St. Nicholas, the Greek Orthodox church, and the silhouette of the cross on that beautiful building against the painted sky really struck me. It struck me so much that I decided to pull over to the shoulder of the road so I could just stare at it. It was a quiet reminder of resilience and hope. It was a visual reassurance that the world will spin madly on but there is beauty and comfort and faith waiting for us if we are willing to pull over and pay attention to it. I pulled out my phone to take a picture of it, in hopes that I could capture this feeling of calm and stick it in my back pocket for future use. But in looking at the image on the phone I put it back down. You couldn't capture it. You could only experience it. God gifted us with the memory of our experiences. It is that memory we can pull out of our back pocket to comfort us when we feel like we are caught up in the mad spin of the world.

I drove home slowly, and passed more steeples against the beautiful skyline. I thought of how resilient the church has been. I thought of how many people have turned to God this 2020 to help make sense of it all. I thought of how I spent my time that morning, behind different monitors in the church, checking sound levels, adjusting camera frames, learning how to make church available for our members and world who need it as desperately as I needed to pull off to the shoulder of the road that day. Resilience. It can be seen in a painted sky or in the mess of cables and cameras.

As we head into a new year, I encourage you to pull off to the side of the road and sit in the experience that moves you. Maybe it's a painted sky. Maybe it's sitting next to your kid on

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the couch and reading. Maybe it's hauling another carload of groceries to Cass Community Services. However it is you are struck by beauty and faith in the midst of this madness, grasp it. Sit in it. Be renewed by the feeling of resilience that is a gift from God; our tool to persevere. The world will spin madly on. But we are rooted in the love of our resilient God who will not get swept away and whose worship can never really be cancelled.



Darcy

Advent and Christmas Virtual Worship Schedule

November 29 10 a.m. First Sunday of Advent

December 6 10 a.m. Second Sunday of Advent

December 13 10 a.m. Third Sunday of Advent

December 20 10 a.m. Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24 Christmas Eve

4 p.m. Family Christmas Pageant Service

8 p.m. Traditional Christmas Eve Service

RACHEL DUDLEY
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



A Savior is Born!

j l o r a m e j e s u s
 r e w a n p q o l u n m
 l s i t g o v s t x y a
 s o s h e p h e r d s n
 a p e l l n i p o o d g
 v y m a s l e h q i m e
 i w e z o g m a r y e r
 o l n u a l c u i n n w
 r s o f q o u b u a o t
 g r o c h r s t a b l e
 p e a c e i u l z e w s
 t o o g r a f w e p t f

manger
 Jesus
 wise men
 Mary

Joseph
 angels
 shepherds
 gloria

peace
 Savior
 inn
 stable



©2017 Sallie Borink

***Merry Christmas
 and
 Happy New Year!***



BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
VAL TOWERY - CHAIR

Family Service with Christmas Pageant
Christmas Eve, Tuesday,
December 24th at 4 p.m.

The tradition continues this year but in a whole new way! The Family Service with Christmas Pageant will be available to stream from our Facebook page and YouTube channel at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve. The service and pageant have been pre-recorded since our church is currently not open to the public. Thank you to the families that volunteered in October to help make this year's pageant possible!



HISTORIAN'S CORNER

BETTY BISHOP

While looking through some older records I came across two interesting accounts of communications at the First Congregational Church. The first was from January 1911 when it was noted that a telephone had been put in the auditorium, by means of which persons who were not able to attend the church service could hear the sermon and music at their homes. The instructions were "ask the operator, at the time of the church service, to connect you with the Congregational Church, Bell phone number 1738. Listen to such parts of the service as you may wish. Hang up your receiver when you have heard all of the service that you wish to hear, but not before. If you put a piece of cloth over the transmitter in your home, in case there is noise in the room, it will prevent this noise being transmitted to the church. Do not speak into the transmitter after the connection has been made for you by central office. The pastor will be grateful for reports from users of this phone if it does not work correctly."

Considering our use of Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, and other technology in the past months of the pandemic, it looks like FCC was doing some pioneering in this area over 100 years ago.

The church started having a newsletter, called "The Courier", in 1972, largely at the suggestion of Rev. Terry Smith. He felt there was a need for a weekly message to church families. For many years this newsletter was mailed to church members and friends. It provided information about upcoming events as well as inspirational materials. It was seen as being of real benefit to the church.

Over the years the weekly newsletter changed into a monthly printed and mailed newsletter which continued for many years, and now comes out every two months (with a few variations). It is now sent electronically to most members but still printed and mailed for those who prefer that version. The weekly Friday email – now with the very recent addition of the Monday email – provides a quick way to communicate and update people about the church and its activities. During the pandemic months of 2020 there have been many videos posted on Facebook, including prayers, updates on the construction process, and highlights of forthcoming sermons.





TIMOTHY HUTH ORGANIST

It gives me faith and hope knowing that when we gather for worship, although currently separated by space and time, we are still one as Church, the body of Christ. May we, as Church, be as those who are, as in Daniel 12:3, '...wise...shining brightly like the splendor of the firmament', and be reminded that 'those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.'

With Christmas, with the coming of Christ: God with us, we are reminded that BEING itself is a blessing. Let us receive Jesus with open, outstretched hands, for God's hands sketched us, and our foundation rests in the holy spirit of God. These themes of stars, light, Christmas, hands, what it means to be Church, all come together in the season of Advent and Christmas. At this time of physical separation from each other we can rejoice and take comfort. Pray that God may not be far. As Augustine says, 'Love, and God will draw near; love, and God will dwell within you.' Scripture reminds us the Lord is at hand; have no anxiety. God's love enables us to be loving. This time of year (this very time in history given Covid and social change) is the perfect season to reflect, but also to show forth the splendor of compassion, good, and merciful deeds to one another.

This Christmas, thru the ages, the Light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen over us.



*Merry Christmas, Blessed Christmastide, and
All best in the New Year to you.*

P.S. In light of our worshiping in home settings, I encourage all of you (singles, all members of families, the cat, the dog) to sing the hymns and responses out loud and with good posture. Sing with your heart and your being - the spirit of God is living and breathing as are we. It may seem awkward at first, but I highly encourage all of you to sing with heart, mind and voice. Sing, then rinse and repeat!

2020-2021 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY UPDATE

Update

Good News! We are in the process of updating our membership database. As was done in November with the Time & Talent sheets, there will be an all-church mailing going out in early December with the Membership Information Update sheet and a return address envelope. The update form will also be available online, once the letter has gone out. Please watch your mailboxes and the Friday Email for updates. Once the database has been updated, we will be able to upload a current membership directory to the website. We know how important an up-to-date directory is to everyone, so please be sure to get your correct information to us by January 8, 2021. Thank you!



1. Join the program

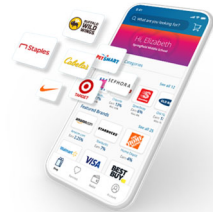
- First, download the RaiseRight mobile app from the app store using your smartphone or tablet.
- Then, enter the enrollment code to join: **484L973E22819**

2. Buy gift cards and earn for your organization

- Buy gift cards and earn for your organization. Browse bonuses, search for a specific brand, shop categories, and more.
- When you're ready to check out, sign up for secure online payments. You can link a bank account, add a credit card, or both.
- The brand gives back to your organization the moment you buy a gift card-at no extra cost to you.

3. Get and use your gift cards

- eGift cards are delivered to the app within minutes-view them in your Wallet. Physical gift cards are mailed to your coordinator.
- Many are reloadable so you can keep earning with the ones you have.
- Use both types in-store and online.



Get the app
www.RaiseRight.com

Profits from this fundraiser support the FCC mission/work trips. We greatly appreciate the involvement of our membership and their friends and family. We also appreciate the Mission and Outreach Committee for funding much of the CAN Christmas Gift project with Scrip cards. Thank you!

FCC CORE IDENTITY

Mission

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

Vision

**We are a joyous spiritual home, welcoming and valuing all people,
engaging God's Word, and enriching lives.**

Core Values

Compassion – We are a deeply caring faith community, demonstrating God's universal love and mutual respect.

Joy and Positivity – We are a faith community that faces life with open-mindedness, positivity, and a generous spirit.

Integrity – We are a faith community that builds trust through a commitment to authenticity and guided by the humility of Christ.

Courage – We are a faith community committed to persevere and grow in the midst of challenges and opportunities.

Inclusive – Whatever your story, we accept you as you are and believe God's doors are open to all.

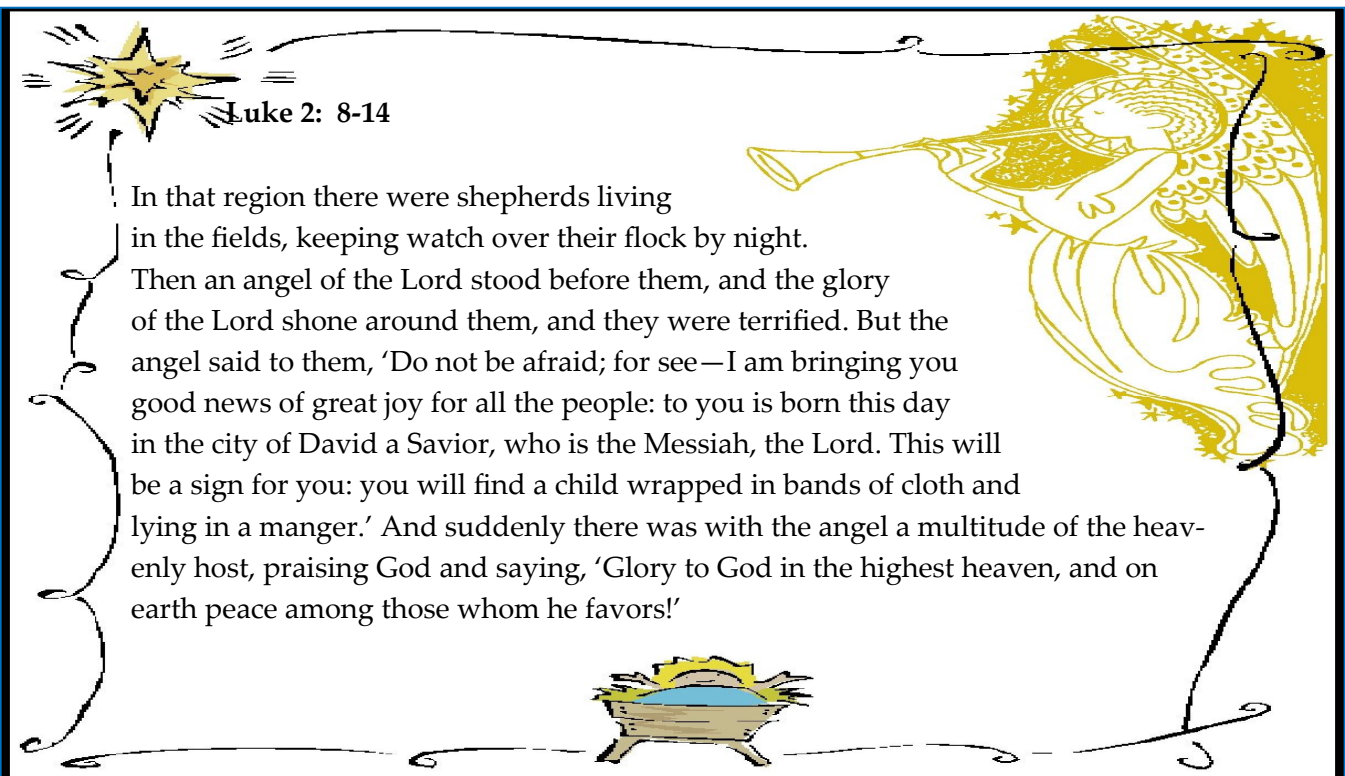
THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

HOWARD THURMAN

As we celebrate Christmas in December and launch into a New Year on January 1, 2021, here is an inspirational poem for you to contemplate. It is titled, "The Work of Christmas." The poem was written by Howard Thurman (1899 – 1981), an African-American civil rights activist and prophetic preacher and writer.

The Work of Christmas, by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.



CHURCH COUNCIL

CHRIS VERMEULEN, CHURCH COUNCIL SECRETARY



Elected Positions

Church Council Chair
Church Council Vice-Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Clerk
Historian

Lynda Norton
Bruce Pringle
Chris Vermeulen
Mike Dabbs
Peg Jacobs
Betty Bishop



Remaining Positions, Filled According to Role

Board of Deacons Co-Chairs
Board of Trustees Chair
Board of Christian Education Chair
Director of Children's Ministry
Missions & Outreach Comm. Co-Chairs
Music Committee Chair
Nominating Committee Co-Chairs
Activities & Fellowship Comm. Chair
Contemporary Issues Committee Chair
Ministers

Jane DeLancey, Michael Makin
Mark Schirmer
Val Towery
Rachel Dudley
Pam Dabbs, Greg Eggleston
Paul Fossum
Rick Muhs, Kristy Stoneburner
Robbie Sawitski
Sara Holmes
Bob Livingston, Darcy Crain

Current Activities

Task Force for Opening the Church:

- This task force formed to discuss the process and timeline of re-opening our church building to public meetings and worship following the latest science and health guidelines from the state and from local ordinances. At this time the building will remain closed through the end of December. Another review will be done in mid-December regarding the month of January.

175th Anniversary in March 2022:

- A group has started planning several events that will culminate in a celebration of the 175th anniversary of the Church in March of 2022. The group will be led by Betty Bishop.

Review of Bylaws:

- The updated Bylaws are available on the website for review by the Congregation. Currently, the plan is to present the revised Bylaws for approval at a special meeting once the building is reopened. The Bylaws Committee, appointed by the Church Council, met several times and had discussions with ministers, officers, and the Church Council. Most of the changes are clarifications, so the Bylaws are aligned with the

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CHURCH COUNCIL

CHRIS VERMEULEN, CHURCH COUNCIL SECRETARY

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operation of the Church. Following is a summary of the changes recommended:

- ◇ Clarification of membership status (see Section 3.1)
- ◇ Combining employment matters into one section (see Section 5.1.c)
- ◇ Clarification of responsibilities of Church Council (see Section 5.2.a)
- ◇ All the Treasurer and Board of Trustees to conduct an audit, BUT does not require an audit (see Section 6.4.b)
- ◇ Clarification of the budget process (see Section 6.4.c)

If you have questions, please contact Chris Vermeulen, Church Council Secretary.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Church Council with questions, comments, or concerns. We appreciate your feedback on the activities of the Church.

Next Scheduled Meetings:

January 18

February 15



FCC CORE VALUE STORY on COMPASSION

SARA HOLMES

Faced with the hardships brought on by the 2020 Pandemic, FCC members have chosen to show compassion and caring through their generous donations to Cass Community Social Services, an agency in Detroit that houses the homeless, feeds the hungry, and provides job opportunities. Since March when COVID first struck in Michigan, FCC members have donated food, cleaning supplies, masks, and paper goods to help the unemployed and homeless who are Cass's clients. Week after week FCC members dropped off grocery bags on the porch of Sara and Bob Holmes, who transported overflowing carloads down to Cass every Wednesday morning. FCC's generosity continued through the summer, when Darcy offered her porch for donations and Janet Allen transported the supplies periodically to Cass.

After almost nine months of living with COVID, Cass is seeing an uptick of clients relying on them for food and shelter. Just as in the past, FCC will undoubtedly respond to this need with compassion and caring as they continue to donate food, cleaning supplies, and paper goods to help sustain people in need in Detroit. A gentle reminder that donations can be dropped off at any time on the porch at Sara and Bob Holmes, 507 Crest Ave., Ann Arbor and will be transported to Cass on Wednesday mornings.

Thanks to all who've contributed!

If you have a story that you would like to share that reflects an aspect of our FCC Core Identity, please submit it to office@fccannarbor.org. This is who we are...let's share our stories together!

TREASURER'S REPORT
MIKE DABBS

The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor
2020 – 2021 SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT
October 31, 2020

	ACTUAL	APPROVED	
	10/31/20	BUDGET	
		7/1/20 – 6/30/21	NOTES
REVENUE			
Pledges	\$114,301	\$500,000	1
Gifts – Operations	14,248	53,000	
Other Income	8,485	26,887	
Special Funds Transfer	<u>-0-</u>	<u>15,325</u>	2
Total Revenue	\$137,034	\$595,212	
EXPENSES			
Ministry	\$ 69,393	\$232,079	
Administrative/Office	75,947	325,668	
Christian Education	12,129	53,980	
Music	11,546	69,726	
Missions & Outreach	5,048	34,000	
Maintenance & Utilities	<u>12,602</u>	<u>106,060</u>	
Total Expenses	\$186,665	\$821,513	
NET REVENUE	(\$ 49,631)	(\$226,301)	
TRUST FUND DISTRIBUTION	-0-	+ \$184,550	3
	<u>-0-</u>	<u>+ 41,751</u>	4
BALANCE	(\$ 49,631)	\$ -0-	

Notes

- 1 Actual 2020-2021 Pledges expected to exceed Approved Budget by approximately \$20,000 for a total of \$525,000.
- 2 Pastoral Fund distribution of \$12,500 for staff education, M&O, and pastoral assistance. Memorial Fund distribution of \$3,325 will be made for 175th Anniversary Historian project.
- 3 2019-2020 Budget projected distribution from trust and endowment funds is 6%.
- 4 Additional distribution from trust and endowment funds, if necessary due to pandemic impact on church finances.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

MIKE DABBS

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Capital 2020-2021 Mortgage Principal payments will be \$32,406. Capital
Campaign Campaign will contribute \$30,000 for Principal payments. The Principal
Note payment is not reflected in the Annual Budget.

TREASURER'S NOTES

- The Financial Statement Summary reflects FCC's finances after the first four months of the year. Our pledge income continues to lag our budget for the first four months; however, since the last report, the revenue has picked-up. The next two months of November and December will be critical to our understanding of whether this is a timing issue of pledge receipts; or, if the pandemic is impacting our members ability to meet their pledge.
- We remain waiting for guidance on how to file for forgiveness of the federal government's PPP loan. BOAA continues to communicate with us monthly on this to ensure we have the latest information, which has been most helpful.
- Nearly all expenses remain at or less than budget, which we expected due to the pandemic's effect on church services and programs. The one exception is our bank fees and charges. These fees have already exceeded the full year budget of \$2,000. This is due to many more members making pledge payments and donations using their credit cards. We are appreciative of the payments; however, if at all possible, we would appreciate you including an additional 2 or 3 percent of your total payment to help cover these service fees. However, until we get a better idea of how the U.S. economy recovers and when the church is able to return to in-person services; we have asked the staff, boards and committees to limit all discretionary spending.
- UHY has begun their Annual Financial Review of this past Fiscal Year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). There has been a delay, so we now anticipate UHY'S Report to the Trustees will be delivered in December. As soon as this report is received and accepted by the Trustees, we will make it available to any interested member.

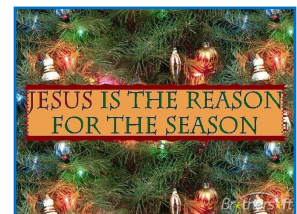
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

BRIAN CONNELLY, CHAIR

Earlier in November, as Phase II of the annual 2020-2021 Stewardship Campaign, the Nominating Committee sent out an all-church mailing requesting that the 2020-2021 Time and Talent Volunteer Information forms be completed and returned to the church. If you have already sent in your form, thank you very much. If not, please consider how you might be able to offer your time and talents to the wellbeing of FCC, and return your form before December 31. The form is also available on our website.

Thank you for your generous offerings. They are truly appreciated!



ACTIVITIES AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

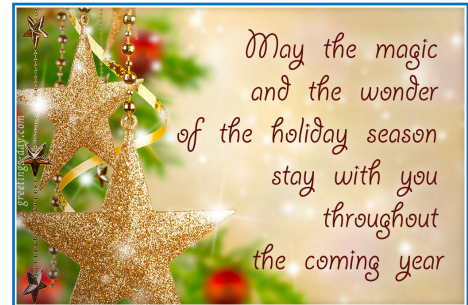
ROBBIE SAWITSKI, CHAIR



Your AFC is feeling the isolation these days, and really missing our opportunities to offer so many much anticipated all-church gatherings! Normally, we would be busy preparing for special holiday events such as the Advent Women's Evening and the Choir Appreciation Continental breakfast, as well as all the Christmas Eve festivities. Suffice it to say that we are so ready and able to jumpstart our activities. We are only waiting on the sidelines for the chance to have celebratory gatherings once again. And I can honestly say that every gathering will be a celebration, without a doubt! We may just have to have cake at every event for awhile. What do you think?!

During this holiday season of distancing, it will be important to remember that we always remain together in our faith, our friendships, and our love for our church and each other. We will keep the spirit of Christ alive as we live our days to the fullest measure, seeking to be that beacon of love for all to experience, and we will continue to hopefully look forward to those days when we are able to gather together again in grateful fellowship.

Wishing you peace always, and all ways, friends!



MUSIC COMMITTEE

CINDY BYLSMA, COMMITTEE MEMBER



Mission Statement

We enthusiastically support the creation and enhancement of music within the worship service.

Vision Statement

We embrace music as an integral part of our spiritual experience.

"Joy to the world" as the FCC Music Committee, music leaders, and musicians are continuing to serve FCC by providing music for the congregation. Each week, our Sunday morning worship service brightens our day, warms our hearts, delights our ears, and lifts our spirits. Our Sunday service seems so perfect as Tim, Josh, Terry and Darnell plan music with Bob and Darcy.

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MUSIC COMMITTEE

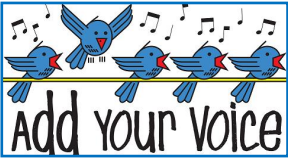
PAUL FOSSUM, CHAIR

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As we all look forward to Advent and Christmas this year, sadly, our Chancel Choir will not be presenting their annual Advent Special Music Program. Yet, FCC will continue to have music. Christmas Eve will soon be here, and FCC will offer two services. Special music is planned for both of these services. At the 4 p.m. Family Christmas Pageant service, a trumpet solo will be performed by one of our youth. During the 8 p.m. Traditional Christmas Eve service, Darnell Ishmel, FCC Interim Chancel Choir Director, is singing 'O Holy Night'. Barbara Sturgis-Everett and Tim Huth are performing a special selection for violin and organ. Terry Farmer, Music Worship Leader, and the Change of Pace musicians will be providing four Christmas classics (surprise). It's an evening you can't miss!



Furthermore, if you love to sing, please come and be part of a growing choir! All choristers, near or far, are welcome, and can join rehearsals via Zoom at any time. Please look to the Monday Emails for rehearsal dates. If you are interested, or would like more information, such as the Zoom meeting details, please contact our Interim Chancel Choir Director,

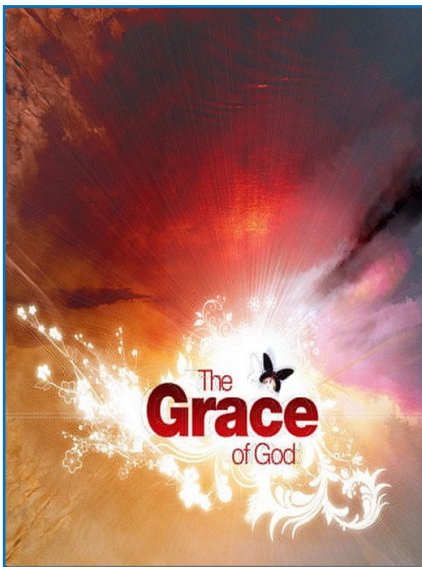


Darnell Ishmel at darnell.ishmel@gmail.com, or Robbie Sawitski at the church office at 734-662-1679 or office@fccannarbor.org.

Joyous Blessings!

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

From The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry



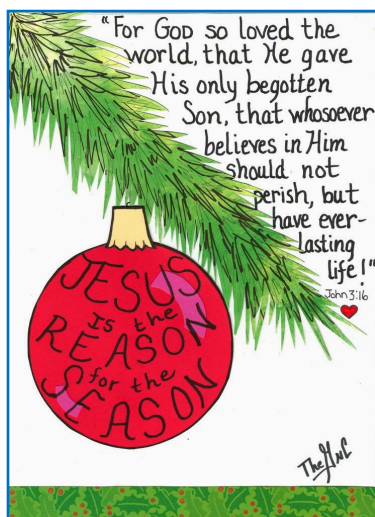
"When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free."

~ Wendell Berry

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

PAM DABBS, CO-CHAIR



\$1850

Peace House



Our committee is happy to report that we have allocated the money we are giving out in grants for 2020-21. Our theme this year is: "Love Thy Neighbor During Covid!" There are so many needs out there as a result of this virus that we have decided to hold a little more money in our "Life Happens" fund for emergency community/national/world needs, and give the following amounts out to local organizations:

\$1400

Avalon Housing	Corner Health
Dawn Farm	Friends in Deed
Hope Clinic	House by the Side of the Road
Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels	
Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels	
Ozone House	SafeHouse
SOS Community Services	
Shelter Association of Washtenaw County	

In addition we are collecting short videos from these organizations telling us how the money has been used. We hope to use them individually before church services or as part of our social media offerings.



COMMUNION TABLE FLOWERS AND LAY READERS

The need for communion table flowers and lay readers has been put on hold until the group guidelines for the COVID-19 pandemic is relaxed, and we are able once again to resume public worship services. Though we have no idea when we will actually return to the sanctuary, *hope springs eternal*. You will be the first to know when we are, once again, in need of lay readers and flowers. Please look to the Friday Emails and the church website for updates. Your willingness to participate in the worship service in these ways is greatly appreciated.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DAN JACOBS, CHAIR

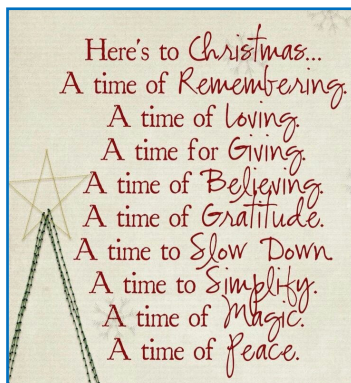


2020 has certainly not been a banner year by most measures, but when it comes to FCC it has been better than one could have imagined. First, the congregation donated 1.6M towards the Capital Campaign, and then, followed that up by donating an additional \$350,000 more towards the projects. Finally, when they found out about Wish List opportunities, they stepped up and donated another \$80,000 toward a total of over \$2M. We did this all the while continuing to maintain our outreach and benevolence to community charitable organizations.

The furniture and appliances are finally arriving and everything is falling into place. We have elevated our first impression to new and existing members thru the 2020 Project. We no longer feel stuck in the 50's. The new Smith Welcome Center is inviting and will provide the space to linger and stay connected with fellow members before and after church. The offices will all be completely redone due to the generous donations to the Wish List and the labor provided by members.

We have reduced our carbon footprint by replacing all of the lights on the main floor, the second floor, and in the public spaces of the lower level with LED bulbs and occupancy sensor switches. Appliances have been replaced with energy efficient models. All plumbing fixtures have been replaced with water conserving fixtures. The fixtures have been supplied with touchless flushing and washing. In these Covid-19 times, toilets have been designed to be as free of germ spreading ability while also being barrier free.

Accessibility is the key word. Access into the building and within the building has been designed in order for us to be barrier free, so we are truly welcoming to all. Accessibility highlights include: a new sloping walk to the William Street entry, a new ramp from the north vestibule to the Smith Welcome Center, new steps at the north and south entries with code conforming handrails, and even a barrier free Mayflower Kitchenette.



2020 may have been a bummer to many, but it has breathed a breath of fresh air into our church. Thank you all for your generosity and willingness to believe in the possibilities of what our updated church could be. The Trustee Capital Campaign Design Committee looks forward to you seeing what has happened to our church.

Happy Holidays to you all.



SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all gatherings at the church have been cancelled. Many meetings are being held electronically. Your group leader will contact you, or please watch your Monday Email for more information regarding all church meetings and gatherings.

TUESDAY NIGHT STUDY ~ TNS

In January, we are hoping to offer a couple of TNS gatherings on Tuesday evenings, from 7 - 8 p.m., via Zoom. Bob will notify the congregation in the Monday Email with the details, dates, the time, and Zoom link connection. Whether you have participated in the past or are newly interested, please watch for more information, or contact Bob at bob@fccannarbor.org.

TEXT BREAKFAST

Please join us Wednesday mornings from 9 - 10 a.m. with Rev. Bob Livingston on Zoom! Our lively discussions include sharing our understandings, insights, and questions about the text for the upcoming Sunday sermon. Please watch the Monday Email for the scripture that will be discussed. Please email Bob at bob@fccannarbor.org if you would like to join us. All are welcome!



MIND AND SPIRIT BOOK GROUP

Mind and Spirit continues to meet on Zoom on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10:15 - 11:45 a.m. In December we will continue our discussion with our reading of White Fragility. The book has helped us to become more aware about racism as well as exploring ways to address systemic racism. Darcy Crain will join us on Wednesday December 2nd for her insights.

In these coming months we will read Nerves of Steel by Tammy Jo Shults. We will also read a book on the Suffrage movement, a book by Benedictine nun Joan Chittister, and a book by an author of color. We welcome women in the church to join our group. It's a wonderful way to stay in touch with others in the church as well as read interesting books.

Please contact Gail Haynes at gehaynes@aol.com for more information.

20/40 SMALL GROUP

We are a group of young adults in our 20s through 40s, some with kids, some without, who love gathering and studying together. Like the rest of your lives, our gatherings currently take place over Zoom. Our Zoom calls are anything but formal. Grab your dinner, corral your kids, kick your feet up, and join us for community time, laughs, commiserating when needed, prayers, and a video-based study of how to understand the history and context of our Bible. We gather Wednesdays from 6 - 7 p.m. If you have any questions or would like to be added to the distribution list, please email Darcy at darcy@fccannarbor.org.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
AN OUTREACH MINISTRY OF FCC
MARY ANN MARQUARDT

Circle of Friends is a visitation and assistance ministry that links home centered members, including those in long term care facilities, and *Circle Friends* (active members of First Congregational Church) in a one-to-one relationship. Circle of Friends provides a caring connection to the church through regular visits, spiritual support, and other kinds of assistance as appropriate for both parties.



We have not had any meetings due to Covid-19. Our group reaches out to seniors who are in assisted living facilities, living with family, or at home, and are unable to get to church. Our members have been able to stay in touch. Some of our seniors have had to stay in their rooms at senior facilities and are very lonely. We send our friends cards and talk by phone.



This year our member Gail Haynes started a group for church members who have lost a spouse. We introduced ourselves at a luncheon and several of the women have kept in touch with one another.

If you are interested in our group, please contact me by phone at 313-303-1989 or by email at maryannmarquardt73@gmail.com. Thank you!

CURBSIDE COMMUNION - WINTER BREAK



Luke 22:19-20

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'

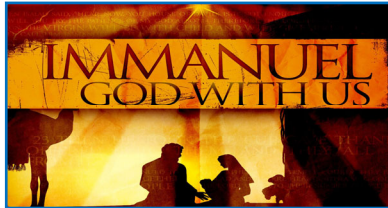
Every Sunday morning before our worship service, we have been offering weekly "Curbside Communion" from 9 - 9:30 a.m. on the William Street side of the church. Due to weather concerns and the rise in Covid-19 cases, it is unlikely we will offer Curbside Communion after December 20. We will keep you updated in the Friday Email , so please watch for future details.



fccannarbor.org

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REACHING OUT TO YOU AND STAYING IN TOUCH

- 9:00 - 9:30 A.M. CURBSIDE COMMUNION (see pg. 19)
- 10:00 - 11:00 A.M. LIVESTREAM SERVICE During the Covid-19 pandemic, we are broadcasting live on YouTube and Facebook. Our single service is a blended one, utilizing our wonderful traditional and contemporary musicians. We think you will like the variety! Links can be found on our Facebook page, our YouTube page, and on our website. Links will not be live for the current service until approximately 9:50 a.m. Our Communications Specialist, Crystal, will be monitoring the live-stream and will be able to help with most technical difficulties. Please join us on Sunday mornings as we worship online together.



- If you have not seen it yet, please check out the Black Lives Matter section on our website. At FCC, we are committed to social concerns and continued education as a way to inform our faith through open and honest conversations. We are a church that cares, and are on a journey together, as we seek to be a beacon of God's love, hope and Christian freedom.



- To keep you connected, on most Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, we are posting videos, and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, we are posting devotionals and prayers. These videos and written pieces are being prepared by various staff and other guests. Please check these out daily, as a way to "Look Up During Uncertain Times," by going to the link <https://www.fccannarbor.org/news-blog/>.

- Although the church building is closed, the church office is *VIRTUALLY OPEN*. Robbie is available Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. She has full access to the office files and calendar. The office phone number, 734-662-1679, rings through to her cell phone during these hours. After hours, messages come to her email, so you are always in touch with us.



Please call anytime!

Engaging God's word and enriching lives.