



COVENANT NEWS

The Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves

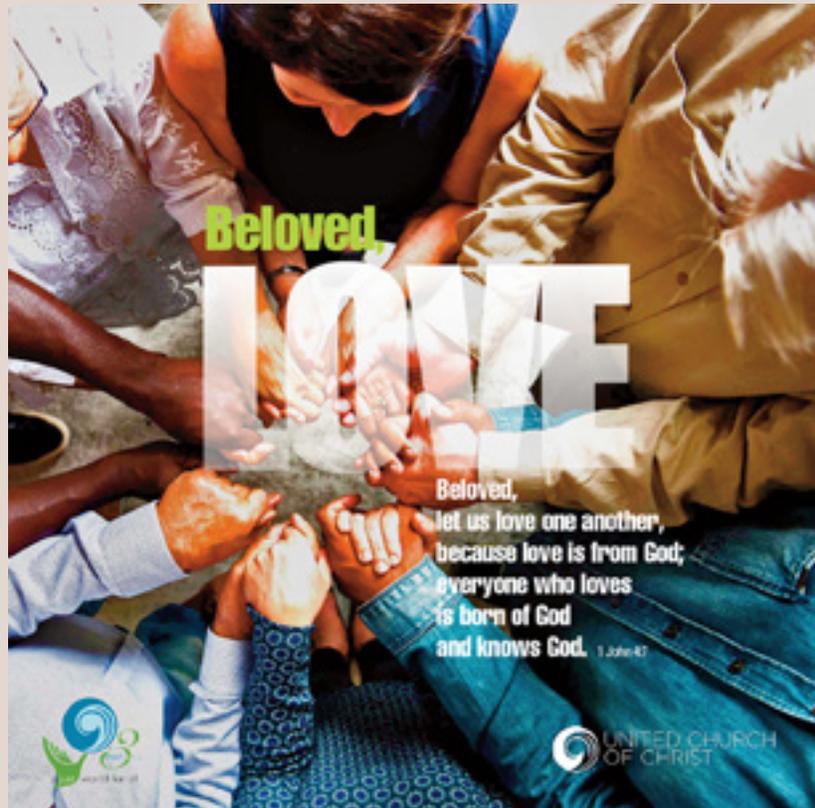
OCTOBER 2020

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FROM YOUR STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE



It's the time of year when we start to think about what we give back. During these pandemic times, we can drift away and become less involved with the church and each other. We on the Stewardship Committee are encouraging members to step up and support the church not just monetarily, but by making an overall renewed commitment. Think about how you can best use your talents. It may be working on one of the ministries, helping with the Benevolence Auction, singing in the choir or developing a way to serve on your own. Years ago, Bill Gardiner started his own ministry in which he would fix up old bicycles and give them to needy kids. On a personal level, commit to touching base with another member at least once a week with a call, note or email. The point is to renew your dedication to the church. Our Stewardship Campaign will begin on October 25 and wind up on Renewal Sunday November 15.

You'll be hearing more about it in the coming weeks.

Phil Shoulberg

MODERATOR'S CORNER OCTOBER 2020

October finds us praying for the continued recovery of Pastor Denoon from back surgery and his return to “his flock” with less pain and more agility. We miss you and your leadership that has been so valuable through these trying times. Thank you for all that you mean to this church.

Summer has departed and we now enter the heart of our church calendar still coping with COVID-19 and the impact it has had on our church functioning. The Restart Committee continues to evaluate the current COVID statistics and look at ways to resume in-church activities, including worship services. Although things could change quickly, a target date of November 1 has been set for a return to our Sanctuary for services. There are still several details and COVID protocols that need to be worked out before this can happen, but we are confident that this can be done in a way to minimize risk to our church family. Of course, there is always the chance that a sudden spike in the COVID numbers will force us to rethink our plans. Details will be released as we move forward.

As I mentioned in my September Moderator's Corner, a job description was posted regarding the full-time position as a Pastoral Assistant to help us meet the needs of Christian Education as well as other areas of support. We are getting a robust response and receiving a good number of applications for the position. Although we plan to move quickly, we will wait for the return of Pastor Denoon from his medical leave before focusing on serious candidates and starting the interview process.

October is also the start of our Stewardship Campaign. The Stewardship Committee has been hard at work preparing for this important church process. In past years the Campaign has been focused on generating operating funds through financial pledging. This year the Campaign is going to broaden its scope to focus on a renewal of our commitment to First Congregational Church of Webster Groves. This commitment is more than financial pledging. It means that we affirm this as our church home by being active members and involved in church activities regardless of your financial pledge. The pandemic has created an environment where it is easy to drift away from each other. It is time renew our congregation in many ways. Currently the committee is planning to replace Consecration Sunday with Renewal Sunday to be held on November 15. Stay tuned for the plan being put forth by the Stewardship Committee... it will involve you!

In some ways the past seven months have sped by, and in other ways it has moved at an extremely slow pace. We find ourselves wishing for things to return to normal while realizing that there will be a “new norm” in the future. Without a doubt, some ways of doing things will change and this can be a good thing. As a church it will be important to capitalize on the opportunities that these changes present for us to impact our community in keeping with our commitment “to work for peace and justice among all people”.

Together in Christ,

Mark Edwards
Moderator

WORSHIP NOTES – OCTOBER 2020

This schedule is subject to change as need.

Worship services are available for streaming on our YouTube channel (www.bit.ly/FCCWG-YT), and Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/FirstChurchWG), beginning on Saturday afternoons.

Join the worship **Worship Watch Party** on Sundays at 10:00 am on Zoom, so members and friends can watch it together.

Virtual Coffee Fellowship on Zoom begins at 11:00 am.

To participate with Zoom, install the Zoom app on your favorite device, then go to <http://bit.ly/JehovahJava> using a web browser (Be sure to capitalize the Js!). Or open the Zoom app on your favorite device and enter the Meeting ID 975 1194 9295

To listen and participate to the service on your phone, call 1 312 626 6799, and enter Meeting ID 975 1194 9295.

You will arrive in a “waiting room” when you log on. A member of the staff will admit you.

Pastor Dave Denoon will be on medical leave until October 19, when he will be returning to the office. Here is the preaching schedule during his absence:

October 4, *World Communion Sunday* – The Rev. Janice Edwards Barnes

October 11 – “Journey through Creation: Earth, Art, and Faith... Alive!” special program designed by our Calvin Vital Worship Grant Team, with Storyteller Valerie Tutson and Ecologist Jean Ponzi

October 18 – The Rev. Cliff Aerie



First Congregational Church's CROP Walk Team

The St. Louis CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) Walk will take place this year on October 25. Walkers are invited to cover a 1 or 3 mile loop alone or in a small group, as we cannot safely gather en masse. Seventy five percent of the money raised goes to the relief and development efforts of Church World Service (CWS) in the U.S. and around the world. The remaining 25% stays locally, with Operation Food Search, Circle of Concern, and Webster-Rock Hill Ministries. These agencies are helping to feed the one in six Americans who are experiencing food insecurity. CWS is supported by 37 denominations, including our own UCC. It serves refugees, survivors of natural disasters, those affected by COVID, and those with few resources. Your support has never been more important. Please join the FCC team as a walker or a sponsor by going to www.crophungerwalk.org/saintlouismo/fccwg and registering as a walker and/or making a pledge. If you would prefer to donate by check, please make it out to CWS/CROP, send it to the church office, and we will get it to the walk organizers.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Below are the church operating results for the six months ending August 31:

Statement of Financial Activities					
	2020	2019	Budget	Change to Prior Year	Change to Budget
Income				Higher/(Lower) Income	
Pledges and Gifts	\$ 265,151	\$ 245,027	\$ 233,333	\$ 20,124	\$ 31,818
Transfer from Endowment	80,000	80,000	121,333	-	(41,333)
Benevolence	23,934	22,953	10,000	981	13,934
Use of Space and Miscellaneous	24,173	44,296	40,410	(20,123)	(16,238)
Income					
Interest Income	14,254	15,915	8,933	(1,662)	5,320
Total Revenue	407,511	408,191	414,010	(680)	(6,499)
Expenses				(Higher)/Lower Expense	
Human Resources Expense	\$ 262,791	\$ 276,504	\$ 283,687	13,712	20,896
Facilities and Finance Expense	\$ 98,111	\$ 99,881	\$ 103,866	1,770	5,756
Benevolence Expense	\$ 34,449	\$ 32,614	\$ 21,333	(1,836)	(13,116)
Christian Education Ministry Expense	\$ 1,824	\$ 1,921	\$ 2,733	97	909
Parish Life Ministry Expense	\$ 2,977	\$ 4,265	\$ 7,467	1,288	4,489
Executive Ministry Expense	\$ 124	\$ 2,507	\$ 4,800	2,383	4,676
Total Expenses	400,277	417,691	423,887	17,414	23,610
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ 7,235	\$ (9,499)	\$ (9,877)	\$ 16,734	\$ 17,111

Statement of Financial Position			
	2020	2019	Variance
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 215,616	\$ 164,320	\$ 51,296
Prepaid expenses	1,500	-	\$ 1,500
Pledges receivable	84,441	91,625	\$ (7,184)
Property and equipment	30,391	31,981	(1,590)
Minister housing long term receivable	60,000	242,429	(182,429)
Total Assets	\$ 391,948	\$ 530,356	\$ (138,407)
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ (6,481)	\$ 14,674	\$ (21,155)
Long term liabilities	122,300	241,767	(119,467)
Designated funds for:			
Community Infrastructure *	18,172	14,671	3,501
Environment	7,554	10,701	(3,147)
Music, Arts and Worship	17,506	9,440	8,066
Youth and Education	15,746	12,802	2,944
Restricted funds for:			
Churchyard	33,760	34,093	(333)
Building Maintenance	66,251	68,889	(2,638)
Memorial Funds	83,674	74,609	9,065
Temporarily restricted funds for pledges	84,441	91,625	(7,184)
Unrestricted Net Assets	(50,975)	(42,915)	(8,059)
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 391,948	\$ 530,356	\$ (138,407)

* Community infrastructure is defined as facilities, programs, and social networks that aims to improve people's

Continued

Items to note regarding operating income:

1. August Pledges and Gifts income was twice the prior year amount due to two significant pledge payments received. These pledges are historically received in December.
2. With the church building being closed, the use of church income is down approximately \$20,000 compared to last year

Items to note regarding the balance sheet:

1. Cash and short term investments on hand were:
 - a. June 2020 - \$215,616
 - b. June 2019 - \$164,320
2. Included in cash and short term investments are the funds from a loan provided by the Paycheck Protection Program of the CARES Act. The \$62,300 loan has a two year term with 1% interest, with no penalty for early prepayment. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP loan) was created to provide loans to help organizations keep their workforce employed during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The PPP loan has the potential for a portion of the loan to be forgiven if the funds were used for payroll, benefits, rent and utilities. We are currently gathering information for the forgiveness application. The loan is showing in the line item long term liabilities. If forgiven, it will be recorded as income

If you have any other questions or want further detail, please let me know.

Thanks

Jennifer Jones, Treasurer

BLACK LIVES MATTER VIGILS

We continue our ongoing weekly silent vigil on Fridays from 6:00 to 6:30 pm, proclaiming that Black lives matter and supporting racial equity in every aspect of US society. We begin with a prayer promptly at 6:00, so you may want to arrive a few minutes early. Please join us (with a mask) as you are able. If you wish to hold a sign or a candle, please bring it with you.

ONLINE WEEKLY PRAYER GATHERINGS WEDNESDAYS AT 3:00 PM

Prayer Gatherings on Wednesday afternoons will take place at 3:00PM on Zoom (at bit.ly/JehovahJava). Student Minister Elston McCowan and Pastor Dave Denoon invite church members and friends to meet them with their joys and concerns to be shared in the moment and with the Congregation in the coming Sunday's Worship. During the pastor's medical leave (September 14 - October 18), Elston will host these himself with special guests.

WE'RE SEEKING "NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY" PRESENTERS

We invite church members to contribute their own talents, gifts, and insights in our worship service's "Not for Children Only" segment. If you are an adult of the Congregation and have a special story, song, skit, or other way of getting a message across to young people, please contact Pastor Dave Denoon after October 19, when he returns from medical leave, to discuss this with you!

If you are a child or youth in the Congregation and would like to offer something of your own crafting - a lesson, story, song, or other performance art - please have a parent or grandparent contact Pastor Dave. (There's a reason why we call it "Not for Children Only"!)

HISTORY... DID YOU KNOW GLIMPSES INTO THE LIFE OF A MODERATOR – QUOTES FROM PAST MODERATORS



The Hardest Thing?

Dealing with Professional Staff 's personnel issues, which always need to remain confidential.

The hardest thing for me was the waning enthusiasm and energy of the Pastor for leadership, which was exacerbated by the diagnosis of a critical illness.

Handling phone calls from disgruntled members. I got my first answering machine to screen calls. It was reassuring to me that if I called someone back a day later and said something like, "I wasn't taking church calls yesterday!" I never got a negative response.

An all church meeting, which wrestled with the idea of transferring endowment money into the general operating budget.

Most Proud Of?

Maintaining reasonable fiscal stability during a period of controversy and declining membership.

We implemented a streamlined, improved financial reporting system thanks to the efforts of Ken Musbach and Treasurer Jane Porchey. We adopted a plan of fiscally responsible budgets under the leadership of Jan Ver Hagen. The Church's Renovation 2000 bridge loan debt was retired due to Will Rath's generous bequest.

Transparency. Particularly regarding our financial position, but in all things not confidential. I believed it important to be open and offer as much information as possible.

The way the Congregation dealt with the Scouting crisis.

Kay Roush, Historian

HOW TO GIVE TO FIRST CHURCH WHILE WE'RE APART

If you are accustomed to putting an offering in the plate on Sunday mornings, you're kind of stuck right now. Believe it or not, even at this time, the church's expenses continue, and keeping current with your pledge is possible.

Either send a check made out to "FCCWG" and mail to:

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
10 W. Lockwood Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119

or visit the "DONATE" page of our website, to make an electronic contribution.

On the other hand, if you have been laid off or your business cannot operate during the "shelter in place" order (or if you just need to decrease your pledge), you can adjust the amount you have committed by contacting Treasurer Jenny Jones. She will make a confidential record of your adjustment, no questions asked.

WORSHIP ONLINE WITH FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WEBSTER GROVES

The complete service is prerecorded and offered for streaming from our Facebook Page and YouTube Channel, beginning on Saturday afternoon, for members and friends to watch at their leisure. Or, join us on Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM for a Worship Watch Party. Download a PDF transcript of the service at:

<https://firstchurchwg.org/sunday-bulletins-spring-2020/> so you may follow along at home.

Mailed transcripts will be distributed the week after worship, by request (If you already receive worship transcripts by mail, you will continue to receive them.).

After worship on Sundays, enjoy Virtual Coffee Fellowship with your spiritual siblings by meeting them in a Zoom meeting, every Sunday at 11:00AM. Either stay connected after the Worship Watch Party, or join us at 11:00 AM by connecting with our Zoom Link. (Instructions on page 3)



Joyce Haynes-McCowan October 3

Kathy Weyhrich October 3

Linda Smith October 5

Patrick Byrne October 7

Ian Didriksen October 7

Jean Shoulberg October 8

Rod Cooper October 10



Barney Kitchen October 11

Marilyn Claggett October 18

Judy James October 19

Pete Grace October 24

Andrew Kaalberg October 25

Carol Mallette October 26

Dave Denoon October 30



Journey through Creation

Earth, Art, and Faith... Alive!

The Ministry of Imagination, Creativity and the Arts (MICA)

Our Story as Earth's Story

Thank you to the many who attended our first webinar last Saturday. It was a great evening. Jean Ponzi and Valerie Tutson were informative and inspiring as we explored our journey as stewards of God's Creation. The jazz of the Oikos Ensemble and the creative interpretation of the Logos Readers rounded out a great online event. Our next webinar will take place after the winter solstice.

If you were not able to be with us, or want to view it again, you can watch the full program at our church's you tube channel at <https://tinyurl.com/jtc-fccwg>.

Wild blessings!
Cliff



Looking ahead . . .

Our four-phase program will emphasize the following themes:

- **Exploring** the blessings and wonder of God's Creation.
- **Discovering** our role as co-creators with the Creator.
- **Pursuing** ecological justice for the earth and its inhabitants.
- **Celebrating** our Journey Together as God's Children.

"Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries."

~ Jimmy Carter

*This program is a brought to you by our Ministry of Imagination, Creativity, and the Arts (MICA), the **First Congregational Church of Webster Groves, UCC**, and is made possible through a Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc.*



**FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH** of Webster Groves
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

MISSING OUR CHURCH FRIENDS

While we are unable to be together, we can still reach out to each other. Telephone, write and mail notes, email or text at least one church friend each week. We all need to make an effort to be together in new ways. If you know of someone who needs support from the church contact Faye Dyer or Joan Musbach. Our Parish Cares team is active even during the pandemic and would like to know of needs to be met.

FOLLOW US ON

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SoundCloud

www.soundcloud.com/firstchurchwg

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