

Covenant News

July & August 2021



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FROM THE PASTOR

Progressing Toward "Progressive"

You will know [the false and the true] by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit... Thus you will know them, by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-18, 20)

Back in the 1990s, Stanley Hauerwas, who was then a member of the faculty of Duke Divinity School, was writing volumes about the relationship of the church and the world. We are "resident aliens," he argued, "in the world but not of it." With United Methodist Bishop William Willimon, Hauerwas developed a radical concept for thinking about local churches and their role in the world.

They argued that one's Christian citizenship is registered in heaven, not on earth. We are each a sojourner in this existence. But while we are here, we can have a profound impact on the world around us, especially as individuals combining their skills and energies in a church. This is a demonstration of how "the realm of heaven has come near," as Jesus would declare (Mark 1:15). Willimon and Hauerwas renewed the call for Christian people to combine their efforts in working for faith-based societal reform and social justice.

First Church's history reflects this progressive sentiment – our pro-Union roots and advocacy for newly liberated African Americans; our harboring of Japanese Americans during the Second World War; our ordination of the first Black Congregationalist pastor in Missouri; our Open and Affirming Statement; our pressure on Scouting BSA to accept LGBT scouts and leaders; and in the last twelve months our series of Journey through Creation experiences encouraging environmental stewardship.

All of these efforts emerged out of an understanding of ourselves as people of faith providing advocacy and action, to make God's world a better, more just creation. We must persist, with a vision of bringing about and embodying the Shalom that is God's dominion coming to earth.

This August, I will be speaking with you about Christ's call upon us, to bear good fruit. Just to put us all at the same starting/refreshing point, I'm calling my series, "A Progressive Christian Primer." I will challenge us to imagine together how taking the baton we've received from past generations of First Church members may help to bring about "peace and justice for all people."

I hope you will join me in working to develop a renewing vision for ourselves, based on what we've been up to, throughout this church's history.

Peace.



WORSHIP NOTES FOR JULY AND AUGUST 2021

This schedule is subject to change, as need may arise.

Sunday worship each week will be shared in person for those who wish to attend and streamed live on YouTube, starting at 9:55am (bit.ly/FCCWG-YT).

At the time of publication, masking is required only for those who are not vaccinated.

- Sunday, July 4, 10:00am** – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost; *Sacrament of Christ's Table*. – 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Psalm 48. Partnering with Music Director Leon Burke III, Pastor Dave Denoon reprises and revises a portion of his "*Cantata for Independence Day*," featuring music by Irving Berlin, Woodie Guthrie, and Katharine Lee Bates.
- Sunday, July 11, 10:00am** – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost; first day of UCC General Synod 33. The Rev. Elston McCowan returns to the pulpit, this morning, to lead worship while Pastor Dave Denoon enjoys vacation (through August 1). Rev. McCowan will be a third-year student at Eden Theological Seminary, this fall. He was one of our student pastors, during the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Sunday, July 18, 10:00am** – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost; last day of UCC General Synod 33. The Rev. Merrimon R. Boyd, M.Div., newly graduated from Eden Seminary and almost finished with the process toward Privilege of Call in the UCC, brings the message of the day.
- Sunday, July 25, 10:00am** – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost; *Jazz Worship*. Rev. Cliff Aerie is joined by the Oikos Jazz Ensemble, for a service including his own special message of the day.
- Sunday, August 1, 10:00am** – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost; *Sacrament of Christ's Table*. – John 6:24-35. Highlighting Jesus' pronouncement of himself as "the Bread of heaven," Pastoral Assistant Halley Kim leads worship, with a special clergy guest serving Communion.
- Sunday, August 8, 10:00am** – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost; *Reception of New Members*. Ephesians 4:25-5:2. Pastor Dave Denoon returns, to begin a four-part sermon series, *A Progressive Christian Primer*. There are many different labels we put on Christianity nowadays, to identify specific movements within the church – evangelical, mainline, fundamentalist, progressive, and more. None of these labels is mutually exclusive of all the others. On this first Sunday of the series, Pastor Dave offers a definition of "Progressive Christianity" and then notes how this category is informed by, and distinguishes itself from, other Christian movements.
- Sunday, August 15, 10:00am** – Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. Ephesians 5:15-20. "*A Different Kind of Worldly*" is the title of Part 2 in the pastor's series on Progressive Christianity. Those familiar with First Church's historic commitment to "the unworldly life" might imagine the pastor is countering tradition, this Sunday. He reflects on the work of Stanley Hauerwas (see cover article) and others who have sought to advance the notion that Christians bear an obligation, as partisans of God, to speak truthfully to the world. We must be forgiving as the necessity arises (and it will arise), and leading the way to justice and peace, no matter the cost (and it will be costly).
- Sunday, August 22, 10:00am** – Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost; *Backpack Blessing*. Ephesians 6:18-20; John 6:56-69. "*How Much Is Left of the Old Doctrines?*" was a work authored in 1899 by the Congregationalist pastor Washington Gladden. Pastor Dave Denoon has chosen that book's title as the title of his third message in his Progressive Christianity series. Gladden noted in his book that, with the advancement of modern thought and methods for encountering scripture and tradition, some people perceived there to be an assault on the Christian religion taking place (sound familiar?). He wasn't worried about it, however; Gladden embraced it. Subtitled his volume, "A Book for the People," Gladden invited readers to join him in finding new ways to think about ourselves, our faith, and our foundational documents. *This worship service will include a "Not for Children Only" in which students' backpacks will be blessed as they prepare for their first day of school.*
- Sunday, August 29, 10:00am** – Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost; *All Ages Worship (Sunday School on hiatus)*. Song of Songs 2:8-13; selections from Mark 7. With each new day, God greets us – individual Christians and the church – eagerly and expectantly. In this last installment of his sermon series, Pastor Dave Denoon addresses our expansive theology. "*God Is Expecting Us*"

MODERATOR'S CORNER JULY & AUGUST 2021

I have something in common with John Adams.
If you know anything of his personality, I hope grumpy, stodgy or pedantic were not
the first thoughts that came into your mind! 😊

John Adams described himself as “a church going animal.” Throughout the demanding work of making a revolution, writing state and national constitutions, representing the new nation abroad and governing a young country, John Adams typically attended multiple church services on Sunday, eventually sampling all of the various churches wherever he happened to be. His letters to Abigail describing many of these are truly interesting. In addition, he read widely in the texts of both western and eastern religions expressing the hope, in his retirement correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, that the texts of the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim faiths would be available and read by Americans in succeeding generations.

I too am “a church going animal.” Reared to sit quietly beside my parents through the entire Sunday morning service, we then returned for the evening service as well. At the evening service the youth of the church read the scripture and the hymns sung were often of the rousing, revivalist tradition making the evening service more enjoyable than the morning experience. “Church going” became a habit. A “church going animal” was created.

Sitting in the pews at First Congregational, I have been observing and recording the Sunday morning attendance for over a decade, sending greetings to visitors via email or USPS when contact information is provided. Over time, many members have said, “We need to attract new members,” “We need to get some young families into our church.” Based on years of observation, I can tell you what each of us needs to do to accomplish these important goals. **Be present in the pews on Sunday morning!** Every Sunday morning we have visitors in our sanctuary. They come seeking a vibrant church community where they see themselves fitting in spiritually and personally. They come seeking a group of children for their children to join for a religious education. They seek a church home; a church family.

These visitors experience the extravagant welcome of our First Friends team. They sit and mediate in a beautiful worship space. They enjoy wonderful and varied music. They experience a meaningful worship service. They are welcomed by our members after the service. But as they look around at those gathered in the pews, do they see the vibrant faith community with a demographic range that accommodates them and their needs? **When you are present, the answer will be “yes.”**

The “church going animal” is an endangered species. You can help save it from extinction. Make church going a habit; the rewards to you, your family and your church will multiply as we all truly take on the “joys and struggles of discipleship.”

Joan Musbach

FROM THE PASTORAL ASSISTANT

Among the many fabulous components of the Earth Walk concert was the reading of quotes about preserving our planet. I have been meditating on this one specifically: “*We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.*” This saying has been attributed to many possible authors, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Native American Chief Seattle to Wendell Berry. While the source of the quote remains uncertain, the meaning is clear: our world is not a gift that we own, but rather a loan that we’ve been entrusted to protect for the next beneficiaries.

Ours is a congregation with a broad swath of beliefs and perspectives, but I think we generally agree on the critical importance of turning the tide on climate change. As Cliff and Jan’s excellent work on *Journey Through Creation* illustrated, the future of our planet is bleak and our church family is collectively concerned. We are disturbed that some do in fact view the earth as a possession to be exploited for their own gain, and not as a blessing to be treasured until we pass it on to younger hands.



It occurs to me that what is true of the Earth is also true of the Church – *we do not inherit the Church from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.* This got me thinking: what if we applied our environmental mindset to the Church?

We know how to gaze fifty years down the road in terms of the environment, but for understandable reasons that’s harder to do for the Church. Despite the difficulty, I’d argue forward thinking is just as necessary for the church’s survival as it is for the planet’s.

Jesus said that he did not come to be served, but to serve — as disciples we are called to follow that example.

Christ proclaimed that the first will be last and the last will be first. Naturally, we’d all like to have things our own way (I am as guilty of this as anyone), but we preserve this congregation not by putting ourselves first but by putting ourselves last. Moreover, we survive by putting the “last” (children, the marginalized) *first*.

Jesus upended the cultural and religious narrative on many topics, with his famous phraseology, “You have heard it said...but I say to you...”. Our nation must transition from conventional energy sources to renewable options to avoid an inescapable climate crisis. Similarly, the Church must transition from conventional approaches to new patterns that are meaningful to the generations missing from the pews.

Our beloved church is not our own. Like the earth, it belongs to our children. They are the future of the earth, the future of the faith, the future of everything. Will there be a Church left for them? If we embrace the mentality that we are only borrowing the Church from our descendants, and therefore center their needs, I have some hope we can answer that question “yes.”

Halley Kim,
Pastoral Assistant

VIGILS FOR BLACK LIVES CONTINUES

Inspired by the testimonies of Halley, Leon, Debbie, and Elston in worship earlier this month, I'd like to share a few words with you, my faith community.

As an overwhelmingly White congregation that means well and has good intentions regarding the march toward racial justice, I think we are missing an opportunity to "pray with our feet" in a meaningful way: our Friday evening Black Lives Matter vigils. In partnership with other Lockwood Avenue churches, we stand on the corner of Lockwood and Elm from 6:00-6:30 pm each Friday in solidarity with our Black and Brown neighbors. We hold signs and wave, and receive thumbs-up and honks (and the occasional single finger, I'm sorry to report). It is a vigil, not a protest. We are simply acknowledging the unjust treatment of our siblings in Christ.

I felt nervous and vulnerable at first, but found that this very small, simple (and easy) act of kindness and compassion felt satisfying and uplifting. I am dismayed that most Fridays, only one or two people from First Church are standing up for what we say we believe.

Why is that? Other Webster Groves community members participate. What is keeping more of our First Church family from spending 30 minutes putting action to our intentions? Are you nervous or afraid? I encourage you to walk through those feelings right onto the parking lot. Are you busy? For now, put one Friday night vigil on your calendar. I think you'll find it is a welcome disruption to your week - and to your mindset. Too much weather of one sort or another? Dress appropriately. Do you feel exposed or vulnerable? Bring a family member, friend, or neighbor.

Make a commitment to join First Church in putting faces and feet outside - but not very far outside - our glass doors. Want to talk about it? Let's chat.

Andrea Coe Welnick, 314-378-7970, andreawelnick@charter.net



FROM THE ORGANIST'S BENCH



Now we are in summer mode! Areas are being spruced up, music is being refilled, I research new anthems and bell choir pieces, plan for the coming year, and putting systems in place to communicate better with my various musical collaborators. Yes, summer may be a down time for the regular programming of the church but the workload does not slack much. I am currently lining up musical guests for our summer worship services and enlisting the choir's help in leading the hymns during the summer.

For those of you who missed our organ's 26th birthday party / recital, you missed something remarkable! Our guest organist, Andrzej Zahorski, gave us an utterly amazing overview of baroque organ music focused on the order and passion of the music and the music. I am a competent organist but Andrzej is a concert artist. I

personally found him to be an inspiration and the robust applause from the crowd signaled their appreciation for his artistry.

I am excited to announce that this coming fall we should be having a featured concert in our sanctuary every month featuring friends of mine, winners from the Artist Presentation Society, and the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus. I hope you all find rejuvenation this summer and we will return to the "program year" with Rally Day on September 19. See you on Sunday!

Leon Burke, Music Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

Below are the church operating results for the two months ending May:

Statement of Financial Activities

	2021	2020	Budget	Change to Prior Year	Change to Budget
Income				Higher/(Lower) Income	
Pledges and Gifts	\$ 178,234	\$ 174,499	\$ 131,250	\$ 3,736	\$ 46,984
Transfer from Endowment	50,000	50,000	107,917	-	(57,917)
Benevolence	23,527	24,049	6,250	(522)	17,277
Use of Space and Miscellaneous	15,331	17,737	19,631	(2,406)	(4,300)
Interest Income	8,811	9,197	4,833	(386)	3,978
Total Revenue	275,904	275,482	269,881	421	6,023
Expenses				(Higher)/Lower Expense	
Human Resources Expense	\$ 165,367	\$ 172,720	\$ 179,305	7,353	13,938
Facilities and Finance Expense	\$ 51,602	\$ 53,469	\$ 67,573	1,867	15,971
Benevolence Expense	\$ 8,715	\$ 30,299	\$ 13,333	21,584	4,619
Christian Education Ministry Expense	\$ 190	\$ 1,185	\$ 1,708	995	1,518
Parish Life Ministry Expense	\$ 2,971	\$ 1,057	\$ 4,667	(1,914)	1,696
Executive Ministry Expense	\$ 686	\$ 10	\$ 3,000	(676)	2,314
Total Expenses	229,531	258,740	269,587	29,210	40,056
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ 46,373	\$ 16,742	\$ 294	\$ 29,631	\$ 46,079

Statement of Financial Position

	2021	2020	Variance
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 176,129	\$ 235,026	\$ (58,897)
Prepaid expenses	65	(2,724)	2,789
Pledges receivable	158,597	169,590	(10,993)
Property and equipment	29,331	30,789	(1,457)
Minister housing long term receivable	60,000	60,000	-
Total Assets	\$ 424,123	\$ 492,681	\$ (68,558)
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Unrestricted Designated Funds	37,629	29,219	8,411
Restricted funds for:			
Funds in Endowment Trust	45,815	39,419	6,396
Churchyard	36,007	33,760	2,247
Kishlar/Dickens Room Maintenance	58,096	58,096	-
Temporarily restricted funds for pledges	158,597	169,590	(10,993)
Memorial Funds	39,019	83,814	(44,796)
Long term liabilities	60,000	122,300	(62,300)
Unrestricted Net Assets	(11,040)	(43,517)	32,477
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 424,123	\$ 492,681	\$ (68,558)

To keep everyone employed during the pandemic, the church applied for loans through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) of the CARES Act. In total, the church has received \$124,600 from the CARES Act programs. Our first loan was forgiven in December 2020 and we will work with Enterprise Bank to apply for forgiveness of (Continued)

the second loan also. Without this help, our cash balance would only be approximately \$80k which is less than two months of cash operating needs for the church. Thankfully, our pledge income continues to be strong. Thanks to all!

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

Thanks
Jennifer Jones
Treasurer



Connie Kitchen – July 2
Kara Hoganson – July 6
Katie Didriksen – July 9
Loryl Breitenbach – July 10
Katy Ver Hagen – July 11
Barbara Krewson – July 12
Marilyn Davis – July 13
Jeanene Harris – July 13
John Shoulberg – July 19
Greg McCoy – July 28
Emma von Weise – July 29
Alice McHugh – July 31



Susan Stepleton – August 10
John David Paci – August 13
Edward Hoganson – August 18
Julie McHugh – August 20
Sharon Beal – August 23

SUMMER VACATION SCHEDULES

Darrell Lakies — July 6 - July 12
Rev. Denoon — July 7 - August 1
Halley Kim — August 3 - August 8
Debbie Tolstoi — August 9 - August 13

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JULY AT FIRST CHURCH

Sunday, July 4

Independence Day
Sacrament of Christ's Table
9:00 AM Brown Baggers
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available
10:00 AM Worship
10:15 AM Sunday School
11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, July 6

10:00 AM Memorial Service: Fred Kaul
12:00 PM Communications Team

Wednesday, July 7

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room
6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, July 9

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, July 11

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available
10:00 AM Worship
10:15 AM Sunday School
11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, July 13

10:30 AM Staff Meeting
6:30 PM Practicing Our Faith

Wednesday, July 14

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room
6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, July 16

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, July 18

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available
10:00 AM Worship
10:15 AM Sunday School
11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, July 20

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 21

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room
6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, July 23

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, July 25

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available
10:00 AM Worship
10:15 AM Sunday School
11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, July 27

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, July 28

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room
6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, July 30

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUGUST AT FIRST CHURCH

Sunday, August 1

Sacrament of Christ's Table

9:00 AM Brown Baggers

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available

10:00 AM Worship

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, August 3

St. Louis County Special Election

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

1:00 PM Communications Team

Wednesday, August 4

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, August 6

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, August 8

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available

10:00 AM Worship

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Monday, August 9

7:00 PM Three Ministries (Zoom)

Tuesday, August 10

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM Confirmation Class

6:30 PM Practicing Our Faith

Wednesday, August 11

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, August 13

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, August 15

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available

10:00 AM Worship

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Monday, August 16

4:00 PM Executive Ministry (Zoom)

Tuesday, August 17

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, August 18

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, August 20

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, August 22

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available

10:00 AM Worship

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, August 24

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM Confirmation Class

Wednesday, August 25

9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM Bridge Club

Friday, August 27

6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives

Sunday, August 28

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Nursery Care Available

10:00 AM Worship

10:15 AM Sunday School

11:05 AM Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, August 31

10:30 AM Staff Meeting

MEAL-A-MONTH JULY SHOPPING LIST

Canned Beef or Chicken
Canned Green Vegetable (low or no salt)
Canned Fruit in own juices
Powdered Milk, shelf stable milk, soy milk
Whole Wheat Flour
Cold Cereal (no sugar)
Plain Oatmeal (no sugar)
Sugar free juices in plastic bottles

MEAL-A-MONTH AUGUST SHOPPING LIST

Canned Chicken
Brown Rice
Canned Soup (low or no salt)
Canned Corn (low or no salt)
Canned Fruit in own juices
Powdered Milk, shelf stable milk, soy milk
Diapers
Diaper Wipes
Formula with Iron





Webster Groves Family & Friends

invites you to join us on the 1st Annual

“Steeplechase” Walk

7:30 am, Saturday, July 10

Starting & Ending at Old Community Baptist Church
238 W. Kirkham

This event requests your donations to help WGF&F fund its annual college scholarship program for need-assisted students distinguished in community service.

Donations can be made at www.wgfamilyandfriends.org

It's a family-friendly 2.3 mile route through the North Webster neighborhood that connects and celebrates seven historic North Webster churches:

Old Community Baptist Church
Blackwell Chapel AME Zion
Unity United Methodist Church
Gospel Temple Church of God in Christ

Nazarene Baptist Church
Parks AME Chapel
First Baptist Church of Webster Groves



10 West Lockwood Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
314-962-0475
www.FirstChurchWG.org

Contact Information

Moderator – Joan Musbach
JWMusbach@gmail.com

Pastor – Rev. David A. Denoon
DDenoon@FirstChurchWG.org

Pastoral Assistant – Halley Kim
Halley.Kim@FirstChurchWG.org

Office Administrator – Debbie Tolstoi
Admin@FirstChurchWG.org

Director of Music & Organist – Dr. Leon Burke
Leon.Burke@FirstChurchWG.org

Facilities Manager – Chip Isringhaus
cti1234@FirstChurchWG.org

Custodian – Darrell Lakies

Assistant Custodian – Gus McLean

Director, Center for Counseling & Healing
Rev. Linda E. Smith, BCRN, HTCP/I
lesrhs@sbcglobal.net

Director of MICA – Rev. Cliff Aerie
cliff.aerie@gmail.com

Eden Campus Chaplain – Laurel Hayes
laurel.hayes@sbcglobal.net



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

MISSING SOMEONE?

Have you been missing someone for a while from worship and other church events? Please, let Pastor Dave Denoon or Mary Edwards, know. Either will be happy to follow up for you.

Follow us on

Facebook

www.facebook.com/FirstChurchWG/

SoundCloud

www.soundcloud.com/firstchurchwg

YouTube

<http://bit.ly/FCCWG-YT>

