

Covenant News

September 2021



FROM THE PASTOR

First Church, Post-Colonial

Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God... your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Savior Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:1c-3)

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A hundred years ago the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves was operating five Sunday Schools at once, and before the 20th Century was half over, we had planted four churches. Today, all of them have ceased to be viable, while we persevere here at the corner of Elm and Lockwood.

We were busy, back then! First Church established Sunday School “colonies” at sites in Brentwood, the Greenwood neighborhood of Maplewood, and in Glendale and South Webster. Of these four, two coalesced into churches – Brentwood Congregational Church in 1922 and Faith Congregational Church (the former South Webster Sunday School) in 1955. We had already planted the Old Orchard Congregational Church in 1890, and in 1949 we cleared some of our pews to fill those of the newly formed Church of the Open Door.

Since then, we have prayed and cared as the Greenwood and Glendale Sunday Schools folded, followed by three of the four churches – Old Orchard (1948), Faith (1985), and Open Door (2013). Now we have received word that Brentwood will celebrate their last worship on Sunday, September 19. Our own Rev. Janice Edwards Barnes will be present with them on that day, representing us and affirming our historic bond.

Meanwhile, something of the Brentwood congregation will be with us, too. Over the last few months, they have been selling their building and most of its appurtenances. Along the way, they very graciously donated to us their octaves of handbells, and we have added these to our existing collection. You'll hear some of them, on September 19 in worship!

A history like this might cause one to imagine that this old colonizer of a church ought to be ready to go the way of its colonies. And, indeed, our wider society with its rampant church decline might lead us to that conclusion.

This is not my conclusion, though.

I am convinced that this is, pure and simple, a different era than that of a century past. We are, with the Holy Spirit's help, finding a new way together – different than we found then. Consider: We have more than survived the covid pandemic; we have emerged stronger – with new media and programs and ideas and events! We are listening, and we're flexible and sensible enough to receive and act on fresh inspiration from younger generations and those whose voices haven't been expressed before.

We are offering the challenging and uplifting word our neighbors and society are desperate to hear: News that is truly Good! We are providing hope and joy and living the positive change to which God calls us.

Peace.

Pastor Dave Deaton



WORSHIP NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER 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 in the sanctuary and halls of the building.

Sunday, September 5, 10:00am – *Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Sacrament of Christ's Table.* – Labor Day Weekend. – Isaiah 35:4-7a; Psalm 146; James 2:1-10, 14-17; Mark 7:24-30. The scriptures focus on their central message of welcome and embrace, and of salvation as liberation. Assisted throughout the service by Confirmation students, Pastor Dave Denoon continues his series, *Progressive Christian Primer*, with **"Hospitality and Us."** Baker Symes provides special music from the struggle for labor rights and collective bargaining.

Sunday, September 12, 10:00am – *Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.* – Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 19; James 5:13-18. Being the thinking and rational people that we are, so very strongly influenced by contemporary developments in the sciences and humanities, Progressive Christians might reasonably wonder why we ought to worship or pray. Surely, we're not imagining that we can influence or manipulate God; we don't believe in *that kind of God* anyway! In Part 6 of *Progressive Christian Primer*, Pastor Dave Denoon knows he's begging the question of **"Why We Worship"** by speaking about it in an actual worship service but does so anyway...

Sunday, September 19, 10:00am – *Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost; Just Peace Sunday; Rally Day.* – Mark 9:42-48. The Canterbury Bells and Chancel Choir make their triumphant return to the sanctuary on our first official day of the program year. With a dire warning from Jesus about what happens to those who stand in the way of justice, the *Progressive Christian Primer* continues with a reflection about **"Justice and Peace, for the Christian."**

Sunday, September 26, 10:00am – *Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost; ; Sunday after "Simchat Torah."* – Psalm 19:7-14; Mark 12:28-34. In Jewish tradition the annual celebration of Simchat Torah is the day on which they reach the end of their lectionary which traces its way gradually through the first five books of the Bible. On this day, the Torah scroll is re-rolled so that they may begin again, the following Sabbath. With music by Dr. Leon Burke's klezmer band, we observe this holy day by concluding our *Progressive Christian Primer* with a reflection on **"Why and How to Read the Bible."**

"SUMMER OF CONVERSATIONS" FOLLOW-UP



Thanks to everyone who has participated in our Summer of Conversations. We'll be continuing the calling to church members through (at least) the Autumnal Equinox, when callers will meet again to reflect on their experiences of growing acquaintance and deepening relationships. Please watch in October for a Covenant News report on this community project.

AID FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES

The Benevolence Committee and concerned members of the Congregation are combining efforts for the benefit of Afghan refugees – people who have worked diligently with our armed forces in Afghanistan over the past two decades. You are encouraged to provide assistance also – financial, material, and voluntary aid. We will be working with the International Institute of St. Louis.

A few years ago, when we sought to sponsor Syrian refugees coming to St. Louis, we learned that the International Institute no longer arranges direct sponsorships of families or individuals, as they did in the 1970s, pairing churches then with Vietnamese refugees. But they do provide for interested individuals and groups to be providing assistance to the refugee-seekers being resettled.

Please watch your weekly eNews and bulletin where information will be posted about how you can help.



RELIEF FOR HAITI



This has been a difficult year for Haiti. President Moïse was assassinated on July 7. On August 14, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck near the city of Jeremie, killing about 2,000 and leaving tens of thousands homeless. Three days later, tropical storm Grace dropped 5 to 10 inches of rain across the region, causing flooding of areas already devastated.

It is difficult to imagine where to begin to help there, but

Church World Service is intervening with supplies and personnel. If you would like to contribute to their relief efforts, please consider a gift to Church World Service. You can give directly through their website - <https://cwsglobal.org/donate/haiti-2021>. Or you can send a check payable to First Congregational Church, 10 W. Lockwood Ave., Webster Groves, MO 63119, and include the word “**Haiti**” in the memo line.

INQUIRERS CLASS OPPORTUNITIES SEPTEMBER 12 & 15

A session for those curious about membership in the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves will be offered by the Pastor and Parish Life Ministry, live and in person on Sunday, September 12, at 11:05am, OR live as a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, September 15, at 7:00pm (<http://bit.ly/JehovahJava>).

The pastor takes participants on a tour of our building in this 90-minute session, introducing them to the church’s history, denomination, and activities. To register, please contact Pastor Dave Denoon at (314) 962-0475, ext. 11. If he does not answer, please leave a message indicating the number in your party and any restrictions you may have accessing different areas of the building (e.g., if you are unable to climb stairs or walk certain distances).



MODERATOR'S CORNER SEPTEMBER 2021 — TO RALLY

Most years I have approached Rally Day as a noun: an assemblage of people for a cause, in our case, the cause of being called into a Christian community. This year my mind seems to be stuck on the word as a verb: to come together again after “a dispersion.” Most certainly we have had “a dispersion.” And while we have been coming together in person and on-line for worship since May 2, there are some of our number that we are still eager to see and people newly acquainted with us on line that we are eager to meet. So switching to the noun, it would be delightful to have a big Rally on September 19.

Another “switch.” For over four decades New Years Day for me was always the first day of school. January 1 was just another holiday on the calendar. The excitement of meeting new people and starting new programs on the first day of school was irresistible. This year Rally Day is the start -- the start of the new church program year, and I feel a similar excitement. This issue of Covenant News will include information about a number of forthcoming opportunities to be and grow together.

The program for **Lady Elect** in the year to come is previewed. This women's group is open to all with, as you will see, a varied program. For more information, or to participate, contact Laura Cooper.

Director of Music, Leon Burke, will preview the upcoming **Music Season** at First Church. Leon's extensive music network in the St. Louis area and beyond yields marvelous music opportunities for us all. In addition, he leads worship participation by the Canterbury Bells and the Cancel Choir. If you have a yen to ring or sing, contact Leon. You do not need to be accomplished at either. Leon is a patient teacher.

SAGE will gather for planning in September and schedule our first event in October. SAGE will resurrect the trip to White Haven, the U. S. Grant Historic Site that we had to cancel in 2020. The park historian will tell us about the marriage of Ulysses and Julia after which we will spend time in the home and the museum. Suggestions for SAGE programming are always welcome. To share ideas contact Jane Porchey or me. **Social And Growth Experiences** is open to all members and friends of First Church. Watch future issues of Covenant News and the weekly E-News as the program unfolds.

And **Rally Day** will launch the new church year for children. We will begin to call it **Kids Church**, just in case children are tired of “school” by Sunday morning. Halley Kim, our new director of Christian Education, has exciting plans for the children. We hope your children and grandchildren will be part of this playful learning experience.

To kick-off the new program year for children, children from “miles around” will be encouraged to gather in our east parking lot on **Saturday, September 18**, for a **Vehicle Fair**. Thanks to the industrious work of Phil Shoulberg a fine array of large vehicles will be assembled. In the spirit of “Not for Children Only” if you long to climb on a Back Hoe or an End Loader, or inspect an Ambulance, or just come for an ice cream, a cup of coffee and enjoy the children, you will need to park on the Gore lot, unless you come driving a bucket truck or a tank. Bring your children, grandchildren and young neighbors to enjoy the morning.

In addition to children's programming, the Christian Education Ministry is planning a series of monthly events after worship for adults. They are also open to suggestions for topics you would like to see included in the **Adult Education** series. To offer suggestions, contact Doug Miller.

So, let us all plan to have a **Rally** on September 19: an assemblage in support of First Church as we worship together. And in addition, let us plan to **rally** throughout the new program year to renew our spirits in our Christian community.

In Covenant,
Joan Musbach

FROM THE PASTORAL ASSISTANT

I am so excited about our upcoming Vehicle Fair! We will have a fire engine, a backhoe, a bucket truck, an ambulance, a tow truck, a police car, and more for kids to touch, climb in, and explore! There will be an ice cream truck selling everyone's favorite treats, and we will provide beverages. Please make sure to put this event on your family's calendar: Saturday, September 18th, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm in our east parking lot.



Dave reminded us two Sundays ago that the purpose of the church is not primarily to cure loneliness or to provide a forum for diverging opinions, but instead to transform the world in the Way of Rabbi Jesus. Inspired by his words, I reached out to the leaders of our church's ministries and informal teams to request their partnership with our participation in the weekly Vigil for Black Lives. Part of our transforming work, after all, is the dogged insistence that racism is evil and that Black lives matter. As disciples of The Way, we will proclaim this message as long as it takes.

It may be a more subtle element of The Way of Jesus, but I feel the Vehicle Fair is also transforming work. When I think about the New Testament stories of Jesus, many of them are about encounters with people in the wider community. On the Communications Team we talk about outreach "beyond our walls," and it's clear that Christ's concern certainly extended beyond his inner circle. Beyond the border of the Elm-Lockwood-Gore block is a vibrant Webster community we can and ought to serve.

Sometimes transformation looks like demonstrating on street corners, but other times it looks like indulging the desires of young children. Transformation means justice, and it also means welcome. It means coffee for parents. It means huge trucks. It means ice cream sandwiches. It means doing a kindness for the people in our midst, as we read about Jesus doing in the gospels.

Bring your family and friends to the Vehicle Fair. If they become curious about our church, that's wonderful, but it's not the reason to invite them. Invite them because we want to transform the world — and fire engines and happy kids are a little step in that direction. It's neighbor love. It's what we are called to, and it is its own reward.

The Church is not for us — the Church is for the world. Join the transformation work on September 18th!

Halley Kim,
Pastoral Assistant

FROM THE ORGANIST'S BENCH



The summer has been a leisurely time for many but a busy one for me. I attended this year's conferences of the UCC Musician's Association and The Handbell Musicians of America. Another time-consuming thing is, because of the surge of the new COVID variant, already-made plans go into endless revisions as the rules that keep us safe keep changing. I am sure that I am preaching to the choir here (pardon the pun!) about the uncertainties that we are all experiencing as so much has changed locally, nationally, and internationally.

I am gearing up for another church year with many plans for improving what I and our ensembles offer to the church and toward that end I would like to announce that with the help of my friends around town and my friends at the Intercultural Music Initiative (IMI), the Artist Presentation Society (APS), Price – Rubin and Associates, and the Community Music School at Webster University we will have special guests every month of the church year. Of course, all these plans could be affected by conditions beyond my control.

In September we will have ***Klezundheit!*** join us for morning worship on September 26. They are a klezmer band: the type of band that would play at European Jewish celebrations (think Jewish Dixieland band). The occasion is the beginning of the church year, and this band normally plays at several synagogues in the area for Simchat Torah – the celebration of the unwinding and rewinding the scrolls of the Torah to begin the cycle of readings again. The Jewish calendar this year celebrates Simchat Torah on the weekend that includes September 26. At some point you may want to get up and dance at church that day.

Coming in October will be the ***IMI Chamber Players*** opening their St. Louis season with a concert on the afternoon of the 10th featuring Ebonee Thomas (Flute) and Alison Buchanan (soprano) and APS award winner, Anna Laurenzo (soprano) in recital on the afternoon of the 24th. On November 20th we have another APS award winner, ***Leah Stevens (flute) in recital***. All these recitals will be at 3:00 PM. And, for a special ***Kwanzaa celebration***, the McCowan family will be joined by the ***Sonic Safari African Drum and Dance Ensemble*** from IMI for a very special December 26th church service!

The coming calendar year will include a ***recital by Christina Harnish*** (finally!) featuring Women Composers, a ***concert by the St. Louis Chamber Chorus***, Scott Kennebeck (tenor) will sing a recital of Irish favorites in honor of St. Patrick's Day, and concerts by advanced students from the Community Music School at Webster University. In June the ***Missouri Chamber Music Festival*** finally returns to our church.

As you can imagine, we have been busy with plans and clearing the decks to get to work on all of the Music Department's special projects and church services: the looming special projects are Rally Sunday and Hanging of the Greens! Stay cool out there. Be well and stay safe!

Leon Burke, Music Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

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

Statement of Financial Activities

	2021	2020	Budget	Change to Prior Year	Change to Budget
Income				Higher/(Lower) Income	
Pledges and Gifts	\$ 205,894	\$ 208,823	\$ 183,750	\$ (2,929)	\$ 22,144
Transfer from Endowment	70,000	70,000	151,083	-	(81,083)
Benevolence	23,527	23,934	8,750	(407)	14,777
Use of Space and Miscellaneous	61,621	20,668	27,484	40,953	34,137
Interest Income	8,952	9,412	6,767	(460)	2,185
Total Revenue	369,994	332,837	377,834	37,157	(7,840)
Expenses				(Higher)/Lower Expense	
Human Resources Expense	\$ 253,006	\$ 235,885	\$ 251,028	(17,122)	(1,979)
Facilities and Finance Expense	\$ 77,874	\$ 82,338	\$ 94,602	4,465	16,729
Benevolence Expense	\$ 11,215	\$ 32,799	\$ 18,667	21,584	7,452
Christian Education Ministry Expense	\$ 613	\$ 1,457	\$ 2,392	844	1,779
Parish Life Ministry Expense	\$ 5,087	\$ 1,592	\$ 6,533	(3,494)	1,447
Executive Ministry Expense	\$ 1,076	\$ 10	\$ 4,200	(1,066)	3,124
Total Expenses	348,871	354,081	377,422	5,211	28,551
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ 21,123	\$ (21,244)	\$ 412	\$ 42,367	\$ 20,711

Statement of Financial Position

	2021	2020	Variance
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 162,341	\$ 187,043	\$ (24,702)
Prepaid expenses	65	-	65
Pledges receivable	132,244	139,260	(7,016)
Property and equipment	29,066	30,524	(1,457)
Minister housing long term receivable	60,000	60,000	-
Total Assets	\$ 383,717	\$ 416,827	\$ (33,110)
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ -	\$ 1,531	\$ (1,531)
Unrestricted Designated Funds	32,098	19,560	12,539
Restricted funds for:			
Funds in Endowment Trust	45,815	40,309	5,506
Churchyard	36,007	33,760	2,247
Kishlar/Dickens Room Maintenance	58,096	58,096	-
Temporarily restricted funds for pledges	132,244	139,260	(7,016)
Memorial Funds	55,697	83,814	(28,117)
Long term liabilities	60,000	122,300	(62,300)
Unrestricted Net Assets	(36,240)	(81,803)	45,563
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 383,717	\$ 416,827	\$ (33,110)

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. In June, Enterprise Bank recommended that the Small Business Association forgive our second loan also. We deposited the second PPP amount in (Continued)

the Endowment to maximize earnings until the church needed the funds. In August, we needed the funds and transferred \$35,000 to cover operating costs. 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

BENEVOLENCE 2021

THANK YOU to our very generous 2021 donors! You made it possible for First Congregational Church of Webster Groves to continue its long tradition of benevolence giving. This year we raised \$23,427!

Benevolence Giving has been a part of our church since its founding. In 2009 when the budget for Benevolence was reduced, our members came up with a new way to raise funds to distribute to partner agencies. This began the annual Benevolence Auction Dinners. The first Auction Dinner included a dinner, silent auction and oral auction. We have held some variation of these dinners each year since then. As many of you know, it takes an incredible number of volunteers to make these successful. And we are grateful for their work.

In 2020, we held the Auction just prior to the COVID pandemic shutdown. In 2021 we had to re-think how we could raise funds when we were unable to meet in person. The Benevolence Committee came up with a new way-we made our case for giving and asked folks to give. We also opened the Giving Store, an online platform to buy goods and services with the proceeds going to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. In total, we raised \$23,427. In addition, our church sets aside \$15,000 to give to Our Church's Wider Mission.

The committee met in July and made awards to partner organizations. This year, we focused on giving to partner agencies with a UCC connection allowing us to focus more dollars to these partners. In some cases, like our internal outreach programs, there was a healthy balance remaining in the fund and it was not necessary to allocate funding this year.

See the following page for a complete list of our 2021 Benevolence Recipients

Thank you all for making this possible again this year!

Benevolence Committee

Jeanene Harris, Chair

Judy Borutta • Cathy Buerk • Pastor Dave Denoon

Jane Porchey • Joan Whitford • K Wentzien

Benevolence Auction Committee

Jane Porchey, Chair

Jeanene Harris • Joan Musbach • Kay Roush



2021 BENEVOLENCE RECIPIENTS

Beyond Housing – Provides affordable housing, helping families achieve and sustain homeownership, fostering the well-being of families, and identifying and addressing neighborhood needs. Comprehensive approach addresses the key areas identified as crucial to community success-education, housing, health, job training and access, economic development, and personal finance.

Care And Counseling - St. Louis – This agency is a pastoral counseling center which incorporates spirituality in psychodynamic clinical work. Services include mental health services for children, adults, and families, as well as congregational and clergy training and psychoeducation programs.

CHADS Coalition for Mental Health – CHADS provides programs to advance the awareness and prevention of depression and suicide. Provide adolescents and young adults ages 25 and under and educational programs, for parents, educators and community members.

Emmaus Homes – Based on unique needs and goals, Emmaus provides homes and programing for adults with development disabilities to help them live their lives as independently as possible, housed in numerous group homes throughout St. Louis and St. Charles.

Gateway 180 – Gateway 180 is a valuable resource for those experiencing the burden of homelessness. Provides temporary shelter and support systems.

Gateway ONA Coalition – The mission is to serve as a resource for churches who seek to embrace the diversity of God's people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Open and affirming organization within UCC churches that recognizes gender choices and concerns.

Habitat for Humanity – Christian housing ministry to build houses in partnership with families in need. This local branch of the national organization builds affordable housing. Each year there is one home built by UCC churches throughout the area.

Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis – Diverse faith group offering a public voice on matters of religious, moral, and ethical issues. Our church is a member of the organization.

Lydia's House – Lydia's House is the only transitional housing program in Eastern Missouri that is specifically for battered and abused women and their children and that offers immediate community. They have 50 confidentially located homes and apartments for women and their families. Provides transitional housing with comprehensive, goal-oriented support services, and access to community resources for abused women and their children.

Minister's Discretionary Fund – FCCWG — Provides funds for individual church members, families, and other people in the community in need. May include food gift cards, gas money, money for prescriptions, or other needs. For 2021 this was funded through the Giving Store.

Operation Food Search – Distributes food and necessities to 330 community partners in the City of St. Louis and surrounding counties in Missouri and Illinois.

Prevent + Ed (*Local affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse*) – Provide counseling, education and resources on the harms of alcohol and drug abuse. Programs offered through education, intervention and advocacy. Provides resources and services that promote safe and healthy living.

Shepherd's Center Webster-Kirkwood – This is an interfaith volunteer organization that provides senior programs and services for supporting older adults. Our church is considered a sponsoring organization.

(Continued)

United Church of Christ-Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) – Our Church's Wider Mission supports the national setting of the UCC, providing national leadership and guiding local congregations with worship and faith-forming publications, resources, and education. OCWM also supports the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the UCC including Missouri churches and those in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee. First Church is a “5 for 5 Congregation” of the UCC, supporting not only OCWM but also the annual special offerings for Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, The Christmas Fund, and Strengthen the Church.

United Church of Christ-St. Louis Association – The St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference conducts local UCC programs and agencies that support and reach out to people in need. Some of the programs supported by the Association include Isaiah 58 Ministries, Union Community Ministries, Lydia's House and Doorways.

Unleashing Potential – (Formerly Neighborhood Houses) Seeks to close the opportunity gap for children and youth by building on their strengths. They offer Early Childhood education, after school programs, youth development and enrichment camps.

Webster-Rock Hill Ministries – This agency is a cooperative effort of Webster Groves and Rock Hill member churches to fulfill their mission to serve people in need in our community. Programs assist individuals and families who are unemployed or in financial difficulty. Operates a food pantry. Our church is a founding member of the organization.

ACTION FROM OUR RECENT UCC GENERAL SYNOD

The UCC prides itself on its historic firsts, and our recent General Synod gathering continued that tradition as the **UCC became the first mainline Protestant denomination to affirm and declare that nature has rights.** For those who are unfamiliar with the rights of nature movement, the focus of the resolution may at first blush sound like the off-the-beaten-path concern of a few environmentalists, but it is not. The global movement for the rights of nature has become a significant force over the last 15 years. Ecuador has embedded the rights of nature in its constitution, while other nations such as Bolivia and New Zealand have made significant strides to acknowledge the rights of nature. In the United States, there have been locally enacted laws recognizing the rights of nature, and notably, the Ho Chunk Nation enshrined the rights of nature in its constitution.

Indigenous environmental leaders have frequently been at the forefront of the movement with Winona LaDuke of Honor the Earth and Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network being key proponents in the United States. For Christians, affirming the rights of nature is especially significant because it is a central part of decolonizing our faith. **Too often, misguided conceptions of “dominion” over nature have gone hand-in-hand with a conquer and plunder ethos that treats nature as something to own and exploit.** At its heart, the rights of nature movement replaces such worldviews with both an **affirmation of our interconnectedness with nature and a recognition that the rest of nature inherently deserves to flourish and thrive.** Truly caring for God's creation requires this fundamental outlook. With gratitude to the Rev. Robert Shore-Goss for authoring the resolution and the New Hampshire Conference for spearheading it, let's celebrate this critical advancement in our faith tradition.

Brooks Berndt

UCC Minister for Environmental Justice

OUR CHURCH DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

Excerpts From 2020 *Reflecting & Sharing* by Church Members

Mark & Mary Edwards

As we ponder the world as it is now, Mark and I are grateful to be in a much less stressful situation than oh, so many people! We have enjoyed almost daily walks, fortunate to have good weather and beautiful spring flowering trees and plants to observe. We've accomplished WAY more yard work this early than ever before. I've completed kitchen tile patchwork and trim that has been waiting for me for the past 5 or 6 years! And Mark has scanned several thousand photos that we can now categorize a multitude of different ways to find someone, some thing or some place without trudging through boxes and boxes!

Tom Waltz

Linda and I returned from a trip to Israel, Egypt and Jordan on March 13. I immediately got sick and Linda followed. I was tested and had the coronavirus. Linda's test was inconclusive. So I was sick for two weeks and spent a third regaining strength. Happily, good weather has now allowed us to work in the yard and take walks. I've been reading and we search Netflix and other services for movies. I'm learning more about Zooming and Skyping with grandkids. So here I am on 4/14!!!! What a life!!

Laura Cooper

First, I have a long prayer list, for both those who needed prayer prior to the pandemic and now those affected both medically and financially. Second, I have increased my walks, bike excursions and hikes. I am enjoying yard work, and beginning vegetable and herb gardening as well. Third, have occupied my time with phone calls and Face Time with friends and family, and sewing for Charity. I am on my 7th jigsaw puzzle! Our kids will appreciate that I am also de-cluttering.

Diane Weber

John and I have taken in a boarder during this time of social isolation. Her name is Mildred. She is imaginary. She takes the blame for misplaced items, unwashed dishes, poor communication and other disagreements. She has become a valued family member as she provides a buffer, a little humor and a bit of grace we give each other when each of us feels unable to cope with responsibilities and life's confusions. It is just easier to blame Mildred. We have asked her to stay on when this pandemic is over.

Janet Fales

I have been spending my at-home time recalling memories and reconnecting to some special people in my life. My cousins and I were all raised in Iowa although we live all over the U.S. now. I have also been reconnecting with some college friends and reminiscing about our college life 67 years ago. We laugh about panty raids and not being allowed to wear slacks or jeans to class. We were required to attend vespers on Sunday evening and convocation on Tuesdays at eleven o'clock wearing a hat and gloves. We had to be in our dorm by 10:00 pm on weeknights and midnight on Saturdays. Despite all the restrictions, we had many good times and did manage to get a very good education.

A PREVIEW OF OUR GROUPS PROGRAMMING FOR 2021

Practicing Our Faith

Practicing Our Faith is a small group of women that has met for over 10 years. The group includes women from our church as well as the community. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month in the Inglis Room (unless noted), at 6:30 pm, to support each other on life's journey. We generally read one or two books each year and use the books as a starting point for discussion.

We are currently reading *Women Rowing North* by Mary Pipher. The next book we are considering is *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter* by Susan Monk Kidd.

We are always open to new members. Feel free to contact any of the current members for questions.

Members include:

Jan Barnes, Jeanene Harris, Halley Kim, Ann Leonard, Barb Moore, Lynda Morrison, Libby Reimers
Linda Smith, Chris von Wiese, Andrea Welnick

Lady Elect Program Calendar

All women of the church are welcome to attend our monthly meetings. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month, except in November and December. The meetings are held in the Parlor at 7:00 pm, unless noted.

Here are our plans for the upcoming program year:

September 28, 6:30 pm – Kick-off Potluck
October 26, 7:00 pm – program by Young at Harp
November 16, 7:00 pm – Thanksgiving pie making (to donate to appropriate agencies)
December 14: 7:00 pm – Christmas Cookie exchange, at Pat Doyle-Grace's house
January 25, 7:00 pm – Book talk (attendees share two to three titles of books they recommend)
February 22: 7:00 pm – Religion of Our Founding Fathers – Presented by Joan Musbach
March 22, 7:00 pm – Collage in Liquid Acrylic – Hands on Project led by Jacquie Bryant.
April 26, 7:00 pm – Wine tasting with food pairings. Location to be announced.
May 24, 6:30 pm – End of Year Potluck

Please contact Laura Cooper with any questions or if interested in attending any program.

SAGE Is Coming Back!

Mark your calendars! SAGE is going to resume its Social And Growth Experiences and hopes you will be a part of them. Our first outing will be a visit to the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site for a park ranger's talk about Grant and his relationship with Julia Dent followed by a self guided tour of White Haven. Our talk and tour will take place on Tuesday, October 12 at 10:00 am. Lunch will follow for those who wish at Maggie O'Brien's Irish Pub and Restaurant. Over lunch perhaps our group can plan some future activities. Those who wish to carpool are welcome to meet at church at 9:45 am. Questions? Call Jane Porchey 314-961-0283 or Joan Musbach 314-821-0678.

In-Person Adult Ed Presentations Restarting in September

We are excited to be able to offer in-person Adult Ed presentations starting in September. We are in the process of arranging a series of talks that should be both educational and enjoyable.

September – Derrick Bastion, the newly-stalled Executive Director of Webster Rock Hill Ministries, will update us on the status and upcoming events at the Ministries. FCC has had a productive, mutually enjoyable and fulfilling relationship with the Ministries for several decades now, so this should be a very interesting and welcome update.

October 24th – Pastor, Elston McGowan will be providing the sermon, which will include comments about environmental justice. This will be followed by a Q&A Adult Ed session exploring this topic in greater detail. Congregants have already expressed an interest in hearing Pastor Elston's thoughts on this salient issue, so this presentation should prove very engaging.

November – Mark Cereghino, Bob Moody, and Jenny Jones will offer Part I of *"Estate Planning and Tax-Savvy Ways to Contribute to FCCWG,"* a follow-up of a similar, and well-received, talk two years ago. Look for notices in the eNews closer to the time for more details about the speakers and their topics. There will be no Adult Education events for the month of December, as we typically have a number of enjoyable activities planned for after worship in this festive month.

We are also developing an exciting group of offerings for 2022. These include: (a) Vaccine Hesitancy, by Halley Kim and Doug Miller; (b) Estate Planning and Tax-Savvy Ways to Contribute to FCC, Part 2; (c) Exploring Systemic Racism in America, a two session event by Joan Musbach and colleagues; (d) Community-University Collaborations in and for Nature, by Nicole Miller-Struttmann, hosted by Doug Miller; and (e) God is Still Speaking, organized by Linda Kopetti.

Look for dates and details regarding these talks in eNews nearer to the time for these presentations.

In Christ – Doug Miller and the Christian Education Team



Laura Cooper 3rd
Bob Moody 4th
Bob Borutta 5th
Doug Miller 6th
Jeff McCoy 7th
Megan Miller 13th
Nancy Rudolph 13th
Chip Isringhaus 14th

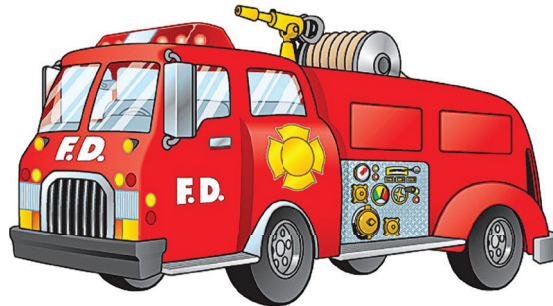
James Jaeger 18th
Sarah McHugh 18th
Mark Cereghino 20th
Debbie Tolstoi 20th
Elaine Coe 22nd
Jane Porchey 24th
BJ Kaul 25th

Philip Roush 25th
Kedra Tolson 26th
Janice Aerie 28th
Jennifer Gomez 28th
Lynn Hoganson 28th
Beatrice Byrne 29th
Herb Niemeyer 30th

First Congregational Church of Webster Groves presents

Community Vehicle Fair

Saturday, September 18, 2021



9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Parking Lot at Lockwood at Elm

Come explore all your favorite vehicles!

Ambulance • Tow Truck • Police Car

Backhoe • Bucket Truck

Fire Engine & More!




Ice Cream Truck Onsite

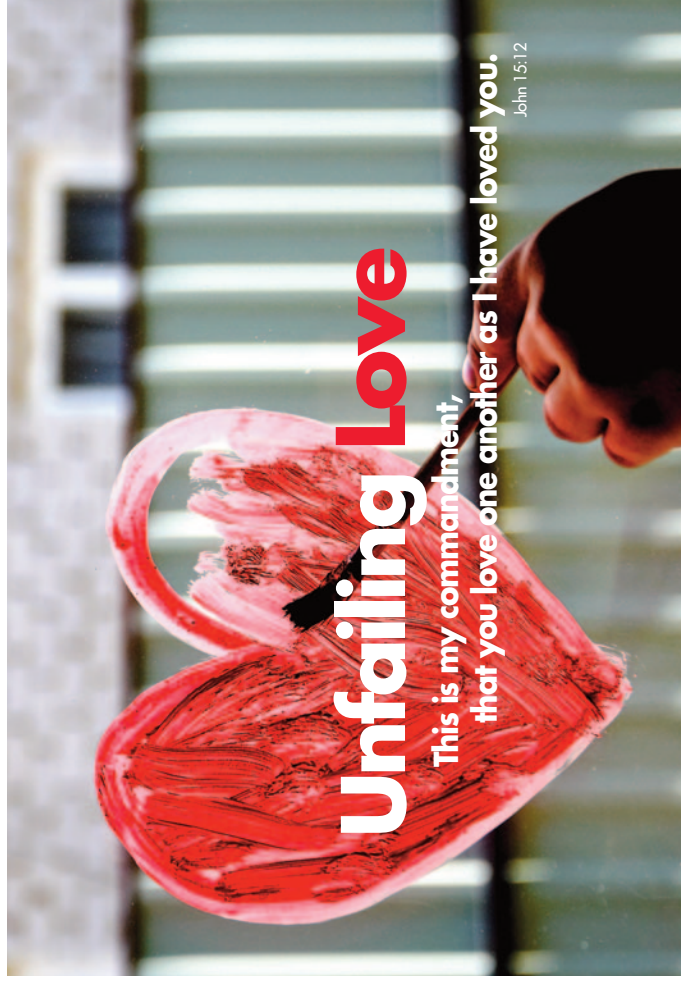
9:30 am to 11:30 am

Coffee and Water on us!



SEPTEMBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene 1:00 PM Center for Counseling and Healing	2 6:15 PM Canterbury Bells 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301G 7:30 PM Chancel Choir	3 6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives	4
5 – Sacrament of Christ's Table 9:00 AM Brown Baggers 9:00 AM Nursery Care Available 10:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Kids Church 11:05 AM Fellowship	6 Labor Day Office Closed	7 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM Communications Team 6:30 PM Pastoral Relations Committee	8 9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene 6:00 PM Bridge Club	9 6:15 PM Canterbury Bells 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301G 7:30 PM Chancel Choir	10 6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives	11
12 9:00 AM Nursery Care Available 10:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Kids Church 11:05 AM Fellowship	13 1:00 PM Center for Counseling and Healing 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301B 7:00 PM Three Ministries (Zoom)	14 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 6:30 PM Confirmation Class 6:30 PM Practicing Our Faith	15 9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene 6:00 PM Bridge Club	16 6:15 PM Canterbury Bells 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301G 7:30 PM Chancel Choir	17 6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives	18 9:00 Community Vehicle Fair
19 – Rally Day 9:00 AM Nursery Care Available 10:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Kids Church 11:05 AM Fellowship 2:00 PM Memorial Service: Robert Wolford	20 4:00 PM Executive Ministry (Zoom) 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301B	21 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 7:00 PM Boy Scout Leaders	22 – First Day of Autumn 9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene 6:00 PM Bridge Club	23 6:15 PM Canterbury Bells 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301G 7:30 PM Chancel Choir	24 6:00 PM Vigil for Black Lives	25
26 9:00 AM Nursery Care Available 10:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Kids Church 11:05 AM Fellowship	27 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301B	28 10:30 AM Staff Meeting 6:30 PM Confirmation Class 7:00 PM Lady Elect – Potluck	29 9:30 AM Yoga with Jeanene 6:00 PM Bridge Club	30 6:15 PM Canterbury Bells 7:00 PM Scout Troop 301G 7:30 PM Chancel Choir		



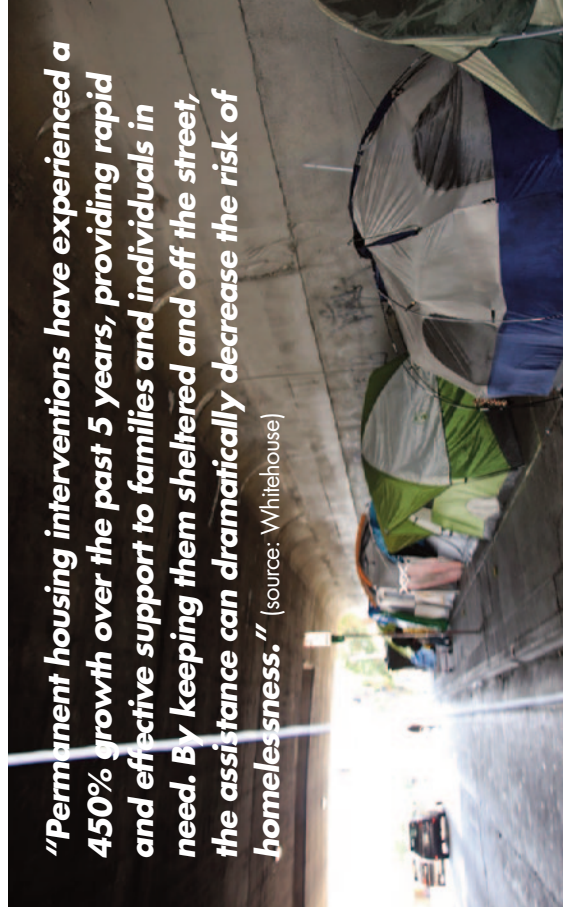
In a Just World, UCC advocates
fight for **permanent shelters** for those who
are **unhoused**.

Did you know?

(5 facts as listed by US News & World Report)

- 1** The average life expectancy of a homeless person is just **50 years**.
- 2** **39.8%** of homeless persons are African Americans.
- 3** **61%** of homeless persons are men and boys.
- 4** **20%** of homeless persons are kids.
- 5** **42%** of street children identify as LGBT.

Here's a promising statistic on homelessness stating that permanent housing intervention has grown by **450%**.



"Permanent housing interventions have experienced a 450% growth over the past 5 years, providing rapid and effective support to families and individuals in need. By keeping them sheltered and off the street, the assistance can dramatically decrease the risk of homelessness." (source: Whitehouse)

The most actionable bill to address housing access and homelessness is the **American Jobs Plan**. It proposes **\$213 billion** for housing programs, including **\$40 billion** to improve public housing. These investments emphasize affordable housing assistance. We'd like to see more focused on homelessness prevention programs, and there is legislation currently in negotiation.

Please join us in supporting the 2021 Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering as we place our attention on this important issue. Thank you!

Two-thirds of your donations to NIN support advocacy, programming, and grants. One-third of your generous gifts directly support CAIM.

 www.ucc.org/nin. **Thank You!**





Rise Up and raise our voices in support of **permanent housing** for women, men, and non-binary persons.

The National Coalition for the Homeless categorizes homelessness into three types:

- 1 Chronic homelessness** are people who consider shelters as their permanent home rather than just an emergency arrangement.
- 2 Transitional homelessness** pertains to those who go to shelters for a short period of time before transitioning into a more stable home.
- 3 Episodic homelessness** are individuals who go in and out of the homeless situation due to their personal problems regarding mental health, unemployment, and substance abuse.

Did you know that approximately **17 people per 10,000** experience homelessness each day?



"With 552,830 US individuals living in a state of homelessness, things are just not looking great. Still, it is a small percentage compared to the overall US population — which counts over 327.2 million." (source: Whitehouse)

As we begin to pivot away from a world too long shrouded under the grip of a pandemic, there will be those whose households were tragically impacted economically. **To that end, 2021 NIN grants will support the needs of the unhoused/homeless.**

For more information visit: <https://nationalhomeless.org/>

With your generous support, the UCC, through the 2021 NIN offering, helps its members live out their beliefs via acts of service.

Two-thirds of your donations to NIN support advocacy, programming, and grants. One-third of your generous gifts directly support CAIM.

 www.ucc.org/nin. **Thank You!**





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 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.

SEPTEMBER MEAL-A-MONTH

Beef Stew • Canned Carrots (low or no salt)
Canned Fruit in own juices • Cornbread Mix (no eggs)
Powdered Milk • Shelf Stable Milk • Soy Milk
Toothbrushes • Tooth Paste • Dental Floss

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>

