LIGHT

A prayer by John Philip Newell

May the angels of light
glisten for us this day.
May the sparks of God’s beauty
dance in the eyes of those we love.
    May the universe
be on fire with Presence for us this day.
    May the new sun’s rising
grace us with gratitude.
    Let earth’s greenness shine
and its waters breathe with Spirit.
Let heaven’s winds stir the soil of our soul
and fresh awakenings rise within us.
    May the mighty angels of light
glisten in all things this day.
    May they summon us to reverence,
may they call us to life.

(from Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace, 2011)
Dear Members and Friends,

It’s Spring, a time for new beginnings and hope, when we look forward to things opening - flowers and outside activities. And so it is here with First Congregational.

We’ve been through a long dormant period with our building being closed by the pandemic, even as much has been happening under the surface. And now, we too can look forward to a time of re-opening.

It will happen in phases. Sheryl Tellier will return to the office part-time in early May. Initially, there will be some pretty stringent restrictions - which are outlined in another article in this month’s Chronicle. After that, we’ll look to allow small groups for meetings, and then, later in the summer, opening the sanctuary for inside worship. We have a long way to go, but we are beginning a return to normalcy.

Let me say though, as with many other areas, things have changed, and “normal” will look different. For instance, we are setting up a team to investigate live-streaming capability. We’ll soon have hands-free sanitizer stations. And it’ll be some time before we can resume some of our cherished activities, such as Coffee Hour and Fellowship Dinners.

I’m asking for your patience for just a while longer. A number of people have had questions: Why can’t we go back inside, when other churches have? And on the other end of the spectrum, is it safe yet to even be thinking about this?

The answers to both questions are grounded in two guiding principles we have followed from the beginning: 1) The well-being of our congregation is of primary importance, and 2) Follow the science.

Being aware that our congregation is vulnerable, we’ve taken a very conservative approach to our activities: starting outdoor services later than some churches, keeping our building closed to all but absolutely necessary activities, and strictly adhering to the CDC safety protocols.

On the other hand, the science is clear about the decreasing risk as more and more people are being vaccinated. We’re closely monitoring COVID science on a daily basis, and will continue to adjust our actions based on our local situation here in Henderson County.

Meanwhile, I hope you are able to get outside and enjoy our beautiful mountain springtime. Be safe, and especially, be kind.

Phil Taylor,
Moderator
PHASED CHURCH RE-OPENING
by The Re-opening and Moving Forward Task Force

In his Moderator’s column, Phil Taylor wrote about our church re-opening soon. He mentioned it would come in three (3) stages, with the staff returning first, followed by small group meetings, and then opening the sanctuary for indoor worship. Here, we’re going to cover the initial details of how this will work.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches has issued excellent and comprehensive guidelines for churches to consider as they address re-opening. The UCC has endorsed their approach, and we are using their guidelines. You can view their document at: https://www.wichurches.org/2021/01/14/returning-to-church/

Our Council approved plan is as follows:

**Phase 1 - Staff.** Sheryl Tellier will return to working in the office the first week of May. However, some restrictions will be in place. The doors will remain locked, and all visitors must use the “R” entrance, even those with keys. We encourage visits only if there is a real need to do so, and that visitors are vaccinated. Visitors must make an appointment, register on a Sign-in Log, and observe mask-wearing and social distancing protocols while in the building. We will look at relaxing these rules as conditions improve.

Also, since Sheryl is extremely busy, we ask that you avoid social visits at this time.

**Phase 2 - Small Groups.** If all goes well with Phase 1 and the metrics show it is safe, small groups may resume meetings in the building in June. Initially, all meetings will probably be only in Fellowship Hall and groups will be responsible for wiping down surfaces. More details will follow in future months.

Small groups could begin some pre-planning to assess the comfort level of their members about returning to meetings in the building.

**Phase 3 - Indoor Worship.** We hope to return to the sanctuary later in the summer. For now, in-person worship will be held outdoors, and Karla and Mark will continue making the weekly videos. With social distancing requirements, we can only have small numbers inside. Outdoor worship is the only way we can accommodate everyone who wants to come.

We’ve made several upgrades in the building to make it safer, including air purification systems and hand sanitizer stations. We’ll be continuing to look for ways to make our church safer.
Financial Report
Ron Miller reported that all is well - income is up, and expenses down. He sees a potential income downturn in April, and may need to access the Heritage Fund in May.

Reconciliation and Renewal Update
A Zoom presentation was made to the congregation on 24 March with information related to the Departed Clergy situation. The presentation material was sent to everyone afterwards via Constant Contact. All incoming emails have been answered. Future emphasis will be on moving forward.

Live Streaming
◊ Sheryl Mendenhall is putting together a team to address live streaming and a sound system replacement for the sanctuary. We will contact other area churches to leverage their research.
◊ Even after live streaming is in place, videos will continue in some form.

Building Reopening
The Reopening Task Force recommended, and Council approved, a phased re-opening approach, based on guidance from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Staff will return in early May. Small groups might be able to start meeting in the Fellowship Hall in June, with indoor worship later in the summer. The situation will be constantly assessed for safety.

Karla’s Report
◊ Karla announced a virtual Retreat for 8 May, 9.45am - 12 noon. Speaker is Paula D’Arcy.
◊ Two memorial services scheduled - Steve Hogenboom and Geoffrey Naylor.
◊ Karla will be on self-care leave from 18 April through 7 May. Mark will provide pastoral services where needed.
◊ Parking Lot services are going great - 110 attended Easter, since then, average attendance is in the 80’s.

Ministry of Worship
A team is forming to start preparations for resuming indoor worship. Mark Acker is the contact for all who want to help.

Dawn Kucera,
Clerk

A REMINDER: Council Meetings are open to all congregation members and visitors are welcome.
At this month’s meeting the team discussed various service opportunities including the success of drive-thru Migrant Workers Needs on April 10. The meeting opened with an effusive thank you from Israel Olivares, a Henderson County Migrant Education specialist, who works with the incoming population, assuring us every item will be used and is greatly appreciated. All donated items were sorted and delivered by our members.

In mid-June, when migrants have found housing, with some of the donated funds, we will purchase 100 box fans to cool the various migrant camps and trailers. Everyone’s support is critical and much appreciated. Another agency which thanks us for our donation of 12 Grab and Go Picnic Packs, each serving 16 people, is the Veterans Healing Farm which will consume them during their summer program.

The team decided that every other month would be a thematic drive-thru college event with those themes to be decided next month. We learned that once again this year, the Hunger Walk will be virtual and we will probably be a sponsor.

After much deliberation, the team also allocated $3300 to eight vetted agencies dealing with Crisis Intervention. Next month the Environment and Inclusivity agencies will be discussed.

For more information about the Service & Giving team, for which new members are always welcome, contact co-facilitators Linda Laderach, lladerac@mtholyoke.edu or Bill Shaffer, wdsiii333@gmail.com. Next meeting is May 13 at 10 via Zoom.

Written by:
Pat Argue, Secretary
The beautiful First Congregational Pet Memorial Garden is now complete. The Pet Memorial Garden is located in the atrium, between the reception area and the choir room. The garden will be open to receiving the ashes of our beloved cats and dogs when the building opens for small groups, which we hope will be in mid-June.

This amazing area was designed and developed by FCC member Lin Stogner, who is a Master Gardner. The previous plants in the atrium were overgrown and Lin, assisted by her husband Craig, worked tirelessly to clear the atrium so that she could begin this project with a clean slate. All of her plans were approved by the Ministry of Physical Resources.

The new Pet Memorial Garden features plants with year-round color, and it includes encore azaleas, Lenten roses, nandina, coral bells, daffodils, hosta, and three pots that are filled with annuals and perennials. It is a peaceful and spiritual place to honor our fur babies, as well as a place for spiritual reflection. A podium holds a memory book for families to place a page honoring their special pet’s memory. Two children’s books are also there: “Dog Heaven” and “Cat Heaven,” both by Cynthia Rylant.

*Continued next page……*
Only ashes may be scattered in the Pet Memorial Garden. An application form, with a suggested donation of $25 for the upkeep of the Garden, can by obtained from Sheryl Tellier, our church administrator. A brief memorial service, led by Karla or Mark, will be held for each pet’s ashes scattered in the garden. For the immediate future, a maximum of five persons can attend this brief service, due to Covid guidelines for safe distancing.

The FCC Pet Memorial Garden is a beautiful place, and we are so thankful to Lin Stogner for her vision, work, and ongoing upkeep of this gift to the spiritual life of our church. I am also grateful that my sister and I could provide the funds for the Pet Memorial Garden, which is given in honor of our parents; they both loved pets, and my mom’s poodle (Daisy) brought her daily joy for mom’s final five years on earth.

For more information on the FCC Pet Memorial Garden, please contact Sheryl Tellier

sheryl@fcchendersonville.org
COVID has heightened our need for resilience, or “bouncing back” from difficult experiences. Dr. Jan Remer-Osborn, keynote presenter at a recent UCC education forum, suggested a number of ways to build your resilience.

**Chart out a path** of small steps to wellness and healthy living

**Choose an accountability buddy** to keep you on track

**Focus on one change** at a time, and make the goal doable

**Five minutes of daily physical activity** builds the habit

**Healthy foods** only in your grocery chart

**Adequate sleep** – routinely

**Go outdoors** into nature and breathe fresh air

**Celebrate** small accomplishments

**Reduce negative thoughts** by tuning-up positive thoughts and their resulting emotions

**Count your blessings** – be thankful in all circumstances, including self-compassion

**Focus on what is good in your life**, using prayer, meditation/mindfulness practices

**Visualize** a hopeful future, while still accepting reality and setting realistic goals

**Improve your circumstances** by reviewing your core strengths

**Draw upon those strengths** – identify how they can enhance your flexibility and adapting well

**Motivate yourself today** by recalling what worked in the past

**Stay connected and seek people** who support you, while avoiding those who pull you down

The presentation may be found on our website: [Social Justice (fcchendersonville.org)](http://fcchendersonville.org)

Gary Cyphers, on behalf of the Wellness Action Group
FCC Church Retreat
With Paula D'Arcy

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 9:45 a.m. to Noon

Paula has a powerful story to tell about her own life's journey following the death of her husband and daughter. In our retreat, Paula will talk about "When the stories fall Away." She says: "Change begins when we release the expectations and images we’ve been holding onto all our lives. We finally say to life "Show me the way." Newer questions emerge: "What's being given to me right now? What wants to be known?"

Don't miss this amazing morning on Zoom!
This retreat will renew your heart.

REGISTER HERE (free)

BEAUTIFUL AZALEAS
Photo compliments of Dawn Kucera
Hummingbirds are arriving now! Have you filled your feeders?

Photo compliments of Dawn Kucera

EASTER
SUNDAY

IN ALL ITS
BEAUTY

AND
DELIGHT
<table>
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| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting  
  3:30 PM Reopening Task Force | 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Private parking lot use | Worship Video Recording | Worship Video Editing | Worship Video Editing | Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School |
| 2            | 3                       | 4                           | 5                          | 6                         | 7                       | 8                         |
| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting  
  1:30 PM Reconciliation and Renewal Team | 10:00 AM Church Council | Worship Video Recording | Worship Video Editing | Worship Video Editing | 9:45 AM - 12:00 PM Church Retreat with Paula D'Arcy |
| 9            | 10                      | 11                          | 12                         | 13                        | 14                      | 15                        |
| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting  
  11:00 AM Racial Justice Group  
  1:00 PM Private Memorial Garden Service  
  3:30 PM Reopening Task Force | 10:00 AM Church Council | Worship Video Recording | Worship Video Editing | Worship Video Editing |  |
| 16           | 17                      | 18                          | 19                         | 20                        | 21                      | 22                        |
| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting | 1:30 PM Human Relations Ministry | 10:00 AM Church Council | Worship Video Recording | Worship Video Editing |  |
| 23           | 24                      | 25                          | 26                         | 27                        | 28                      | 29                        |
| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30           | 31                      | 1                           | 2                          | 3                         | 4                       | 5                         |
| Worship Video Service  
  11:00 AM Outdoor Worship Service  
  11:00 AM Sunday School | 9:00 AM Staff Meeting |  |  |  |  |  |
Sunday School Monthly Report - March
Ginger Zemp, Sunday School Teacher
Dede Walton, Nursery Teacher

Monthly Theme: Rebirth and Renewal

This month has been exciting because we have returned to in-person Sunday School! We are celebrating rebirth in nature and renewal in our friendships and faith. The children have enjoyed starting each Sunday with the adults in the parking lot, walking the labyrinth with purpose, reacquainting themselves with the creek, and playing bocce ball and sharing snacks with friends. It is amazing to see the physical growth and emotional maturity that has taken place in the past year!

BETWEEN FRIENDS

Hello Art Aficionados, Friends, & Out-of-Towners,

If you were unable to attend my “Rising Up” exhibition in person, I want to share it with you virtually. It was inspired by the recent happenings in our country, and this is my positive expression of what evolved from it. Below is the link to the exhibition on my gallery's website:

https://www.artmobstudios.com/artist-blooms

Thank you for viewing and, as always, please connect with me for comments, questions, dialogue, and interest.

Connie Knight, www.costanzaknight.com
828-693-4545 knightcolor@gmail.com
PRAYER LIST

Family & friends of Norman Daly (friend of Anne Cain)
Kay Davis
Al & Joan Diaz
Sue Eastin (friend of Becky Rowland)
Joy Greenfield (friend of Trisha LaGrange)
Ruth Heckman (friend of Kevin & Joyce Tierney)
Esther Jillson (friend of Becky Rowland)
Rob Kievit (son of Nancy Irving)
Yvonne Kyker
Trisha LaGrange
Carol Marra (friend of Kevin & Joyce Tierney)
Kathleen Martini (friend of Carol Woeppel)
Patsy McCurry
Anne Ogburn
Betsey Parker
Gerry Pasternack (friend of Ed & Pat Argue)
Barbara Rathbun
Joanne Schenck (friends of Al & Joan Diaz)
Richard Tyler
David Vandre
Phillip Wiles (friend of Al & Joan Diaz)

Thank you for letting us know of people who need to be added to our prayer list as well as those that

For words of encouragement, appreciation, hope, caring, gratitude and love, just take a breath, pick up the phone and call:

Ben Coonrod 828-284-0695  Ed O’Keefe 828-890-4889
Joady Perrett 828-243-3337  Sammye Whitney 570-664-1141
Romella Hart-O’Keefe 828-890-4889
May Birthdays

01: Maryett Carl
02: Carolyn Schmalz
03: Ariel Marsh
05: Diane Swift
06: Karel Bodamer
07: Debbie Callis
07: Dana Vannoy
09: Zachary Cone
12: Phillip Thomason
13: Connie Knight
14: Nancy Gorno
14: Bruce Mills
19: Liz Hill
19: Rick Laws
23: Jon Arthur
25: Annie Fritschner
25: Sharon Johnson
26: Anne Cain
31: David Kelly
31: Cole Novak

May Anniversaries

01: Craig & Lin Stogner
01: Nancy Anderson & JoClare Wilson
04: Carol Inman & Carol Woeppel
07: Bob & Dottie Koopman
14: Robert & Susan Palmer
16: Al & Joan Diaz
18: Jon & Joan Nobling
23: Gary & Judy Cyphers
24: Hank & Pamela Federlein
25: Charles & Pam Rogers
25: Raymond & Rachel Stone
ATTENDANCE

April 2021
Virtual Worship

Service      Zoom

YouTube Views Sunday School & Outside Worship & Zoom Worship

Mar. 28  138  No Sunday School
Apr. 1:   88  Maundy Thursday
Apr. 4    252  Easter 3
Apr. 11   189  4
Apr. 18   155  4
Apr. 25   181  4

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Sheryl Tellier, Administrator (sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)
Dora & Charles Littleton, Custodians
Rev. David G. Kelly, Jr., Pastor Emeritus

Next Chronicle deadline
May 20 2021