

FIRST CONNECTION MAY 2020



COMMUNITY CENTERED COMMUNITY FOCUSED COMMUNITY MINDED

Dear Church Family!

I miss seeing all of your smiling faces. I am encouraged by all of your supportive feedback, text messages and emails that you have taken the time to send me over these past few weeks. I wanted to let everyone know that I am just as anxious for us to meet face to face again. I am keeping myself informed of the recommendations being made by Governor Ricketts and Mayor Leirion Gaylor-Baird as it pertains to easing restrictions on social gatherings. I am also wanting to make sure that we are as safe as can be in doing so. Therefore, how we come back together will also include a careful consideration of data and health measures from the CDC and Department of Health and Human Services. I just want to make sure that in doing no harm, that we are mindful that even when social restrictions ease, while there are still active cases of this virus in our county; it may not be wise to meet face to face just yet. In addition, Bishop Reuben Saenz



advised, “for now, churches with an average worship attendance of more than 50 should continue to hold online worship services and record from home or the sanctuary with a small group of people. If a church chooses to have multiple services, several preparations must be made. There must be a plan for managing the number of people per service and a plan to safeguard contact behaviors and rituals (seating, communion, baptism, passing offering plates, singing, fellowship, passing the peace, after-church receiving lines, handing out bulletins, etc.). Churches that choose to gather must provide personal protection equipment such as gloves, masks and hand sanitizer, and disinfect surfaces between services. A plan should carefully consider the safety of children in nursery care, and there should be a plan for informing the congregation about the scheduling of different worship times, restrictions, and expectations.”

In the meantime, our worship team is committed to doing our best to bring worship to your homes to ensure the safety for all. For we are the church! Furthermore, in these uncertain times, there is a tremendous opportunity for us to explore other ways of doing church and community together. With that said, one of the new worship opportunities that I am excited about launching soon is a new online worship service called “Recovery and Renewal” (aka; First UMC R&R service). I want to give a shout out to Shirley Baum for proving the Renewal name idea to this new worship community.

The pandemic crisis has created an awareness within our worship team how much ministry is changing and evolving, right before our very eyes. Having a regular online worship experience that is contemporary leaning, I believe will reach a sector of people who may not ever step into our sanctuary; but will still be a part of the First UMC community. This new



service will also honor the beautiful Sunday worship traditions that we already have; to ensure that all stories and styles of worship are honored and valued.

The idea behind “Recovery and Renewal,” would be to speak weekly to a community that may be struggling with areas surrounding addictions of all forms, faith, gender, race and more. The sermon structure will be more collaborative; the sermon topics will be more relational and intimate; the music will be non traditional but hopefully just as meaningful. When we do meet face to face, the doors will always be open to those who might want to sit in while we are filming live weekly. However, planting a regular online offering on Saturday evenings I believe will help us to reach a broader audience. Wouldn't it be incredible to have worship communities in Rhode Island and Nebraska at the same time? So stay tuned for more details regarding this exciting next step in sharing our story to the world.

Finally, the Interfaith Peacemaking Coalition Committee had to postpone our event. We plan to still have it once it safe to do so. However, I did get to participate this past Sunday on a Zoom panel discussion led by Nebraska Interfaith Power and Light. We were all invited to watch the film “The Human Element,” which is on Amazon prime video. We then had a very meaningful discussion about ways that we can contribute to addressing the climate needs of our world. It was very meaningful and great to connect with other conscientious climate leaders in our community.

As always I am so grateful to be able to serve as your Spiritual Leader.

These times are challenging, but I am seeing evidence of God's radiant glory shine in the midst of it all. So stay safe, encouraged and hope filled friends. For God is here and we are a community that always knows how to rise above with the grace and love of



God!

Peace and Love,
Kirstie Engel

YOUTH MINISTRY

Dear First Church,

First Church and St. Marks led an amazing Learn and Serve Trip to Dallas, Texas. Our Group were able to serve at the VNA Meals on Wheels and North Texas Food Bank. On Sunday March 8th, we worshiped with Aaron Black, Sr. and Aaron Black, Jr and was a great experience and being able to finally meet Rev. Aaron Black, Sr. We look forward to sharing our experiences at some point in the near future when we get back from this coronavirus pandemic. I believe I can speak for our group; we thank you for your continued support for the Youth Ministry and giving our youth life-changing experiences that will carry with them throughout their lives. We ask for your thoughts and prayers as we continue to educate and serve our communities that we feel called too.

This July, First Church Youth and Adults will be taking part in the last **Learn and Serve Trip to Oakland, California on July 16th-28th**, which will be led by Matt Borland and with assistance of Mike Sterns, Alisha Simonson (the parent of Keyan Simonson), and Nyla Witzel. In addition, we will learn about what has been going on in Oakland and we will visit museums and surrounding areas to learn about the community. The youth going on this journey are Olivia Gentert, Chloe Lyons, Kaitlyn Watson, Emily Holland, Savannah Woundedarrows, Michael Ault, Julian Estrada, Jaheim Curry, Jaquez Curry, Jalen Curry, and Keyan Simonson. Our goal in raising funds for this 2020 Summer Learn and Serve trip is by the end of June and Mid-July is to



FLOWER MINISTRY

A touch of tradition in our livestream services was seen on Palm Sunday with palm branches and on Easter with a small but lovely Easter Sunday Flower Garden. Many thanks to church members who provided a

raise \$20,000 for this trip and to further support the Youth Ministry. .

We appreciate all the donations and support to First Church Youth Ministry and advocating for our Learn and Serve Trips. If you would like to support **our 2020 Learn and Serve Trip to Oakland, California**, checks can be made out to 'First United Methodist Church' and put "Youth Trip" on the memo line. Thank you once again!

These past couple weeks I have shared our youths reflections on how much First United Methodist Church has meant to them on the Facebook page. If you were able to read and see those posts, you can see that our youth hold First United Methodist Church dear in there heart. I have been staying connected with the youth of the Church and they are doing good. I have been able to have devotionals with small groups of our youth and look to start zoom bible studies this week. I am so thankful to be your Youth Minister and being able to lead our young people in the community.

As we continue to battle and go through this pandemic, I would like to let you all know that First Church Youth Ministry will continue as planned. We have been staying connected with our youth to see how they are handling this and forming those relationships the best way we can. Regarding our 2020 Learn and Serve Trip to Oakland, it is still as planned and will not make a change until July 1st if that is applicable. I believe these trips are life changing and can make a difference in their lives, so I will not be making any quick decisions until then.

Blessings,

Matt Borland, Director of Youth Ministries

flowering potted plant or fresh cut flowers: Zita and Ed Schneider, Dietrich Frye, Carol Houborg, Amy and Jon Francis, Marty and John Eischeid, and Judy and Les Lane.

As we proceed forward with livestream services and on to the time when we return to the church building, we will continue with flowers and greenery in fresh or dried form. We also plan to include some colorful origami butterflies and birds in upcoming arrangements. Origami is an art form in which paper is folded to create flowers, animals, and other sculptures. Watch for these colorful shapes to appear in our worship spaces.

It is time to plan our summer gardens. Please consider planting some flowers that could be donated for summer arrangements. There are many possibilities and we would love to hear from you about providing flowers for the Sanctuary and West Vestry.

You can contact Judy Lane at 402-937-4914, judithblane@yahoo.com or Marty Eischeid at 402-540-0317, jjischeid@hotmail.com.



CHURCH CONFERENCES SIDETRACKED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The full inclusion of LGBTQ people in leadership in the United Methodist Church will continue to be an issue



MUSIC AND WORSHIP DESIGN MINISTER

Blessings,

Wow, I cannot believe that I haven't spoken to so many of you in over a month. It seems so foreign not to be in person and able to celebrate this Easter Season with my church family. With all the changes occurring I would love to have my church family's voice heard through song and familiarity. I want to remind all of you that I am happy to hear your voice of music, poem, scripture, or anything that speaks to you. Having individual's voices heard during service is so uplifting to us as a worship team, even if we are the ones speaking for you. So please reach out to me if anything inspires you or has been a comfort for you as we never know who else needs to hear these words.

I want to thank our flower ministry for all the contributions that they have given to enhance our services, creating some normalcy. The arrangements were so beautiful for Easter, it was breath taking and inspiring for worship.

I also want to recognize Pastor Kirstie, for her strength, guidance, and leadership through all of this uncertainty. Pastor Kirstie has helped me grow as a leader, and find a different voice from music. It was definitely a pleasure, yet challenge to plan and prepare a sermon or devotional word for Maundy

for at least another year. We had been looking forward to early May when the quadrennial General Conference of the UMC would convene and consider several proposals to address the issue, along with many other topics of church governance and business. Some of the proposals could split the denomination over biblical interpretation, and whether LGBTQ people can be ordained as ministers and eligible for other leadership positions, including election as bishops.

2020 General Conference was scheduled to meet May 5-15, but the Minneapolis Convention Center canceled events into May to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. New prospective dates for the denomination's top lawmaking assembly are Aug. 31-Sept. 10, 2021. The United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies have held a General Conference at least every four years since 1792.

The 2020 session of the Great Plains Annual Conference, originally scheduled to begin the end of May, is now set to convene in a special session on October 1-4, 2020. New dates must also be found for the five jurisdictional conferences, where new U.S. bishops are elected. They were originally scheduled for July.

We at First Church will continue to affirm the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations and abilities, as declared on the new "All Are Welcome Here" sign on our front lawn.

We will continue to support the elimination discriminatory language in the Book of Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons, and affirm their sacred worth.

John Lee, Lay Delegate to Annual Conference
and member of the FUMC Alignment Committee

Thursday. Thank you for encouraging me to use Salts that I didn't see in myself, and guiding me to see new paths in ministering to our church. Peace to All,
Mandy West
Minister of Music and Worship Design
Mandy@firstumclincoln.org



JOHN SPILKER, ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF MUSIC AND FAMILY

JUST MERCY SMALL GROUP THU MAY 7 @ 6PM:

As we reset after Easter, and still experience social distancing, I feel called to re-start our Just Mercy small group using Zoom. To be inclusive of interested newcomers, let's start wherever you are in the book. If you don't have the book, let's talk about the movie. Please email me and I will give you the Zoom link to join the meeting: johndspilker@gmail.com. If you need help, let me know. I'm here for you.

COVID-19 PHONE TREE MINISTRY:

Many thanks to everyone who continues to support this ministry; it bears witness that we all belong to such a generous church family that cares and tends for one another.

I wish you strength and peace as we continue to weather social distancing. During the past month, it has been challenging for me to re-create structure and routine.

I miss teaching on campus and swimming laps. I long for the weekly interaction we share at First United Methodist Church on Wednesday evening for dinner, small groups, and choir and then on Sundays for the 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. services. As I work to embrace the surrender of social distancing and "not knowing," I have found peace from taking evening walks with Lily, listening to her stories and sharing my stories. She's helping



GIVING REPORT I just finished paying the bills and am pleased to report we have \$71,350 in our church bank account. We have slowed down on paying mission shares but are still well ahead of 2019 in that regard. At the end of April in 2019 we had less than \$40,000 in the church checking account. I've watched almost all of our worship services and been inspired by the music and preaching. No, it's not the same, but not all churches have the talent and creative leadership we experience. Your generosity has also been inspirational! We will soon be "live" and I know your generosity will continue as we return to normal.
Chuck Leypoldt, Church Treasurer



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Hi Everyone! I hope this finds you well. We are all a little anxious I am sure, so I thought a great verse for you to talk to your children about is Isaiah 41:10. This is a great reminder that God is with u through everything. All other Sunday school activities and classes will be postponed until we are able to meet again. In addition, I am waiting to hear word from Camp Fontenelle to see if summer camps will still be taking place. With use unprecedented times we must be fluid in our planning, and I appreciate your understanding and support. For now, we are still planning to have our summer vacation bible School at the scheduled time listed.

Grace and peace to you all! --Charity Helter



The boxed sets of giving envelopes are in. Laura is in the office on Monday and Tuesday mornings at 9 if you feel safe to come get a set. We will have a table set up in the East entryway. If you can't get here, leave a phone message and a team can get them to you.

me be an adaptive parent during social distancing. I also do exercise walks on the bike trail and daily yoga alone or with Lily. It's helping me to force myself to get up at 6 a.m. each day and continue my research on racial justice. It has been a joy to be with you online through Sunday worship and my Facebook "music & spoken word" video messages: Steal Away and Wishing for the Clothes of Heaven.

Peace and blessings, John (and Lily too).



MIKE COFFEY, PRAISE AND WORSHIP MINISTER

My heart goes out to each and every one of you as we seek to find the light at the end of this tunnel. As a relatively new member of First United Methodist Church, I am so eager and excited to build relationships with you and I felt like that had been put on hold due to social distancing; I truly grieve that. Throughout the time of social distancing I have been moved to find ways to share music and love on the Church's Facebook page in new and innovative ways. As a servant and a friend, I ask you to please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, suggestions, or conversations we can have. I look forward to seeing you once again. Blessings!

402.499.0297

Mike@firstumclincoln.org



Hunger and Poverty Response Ministry

Matthew 25:35

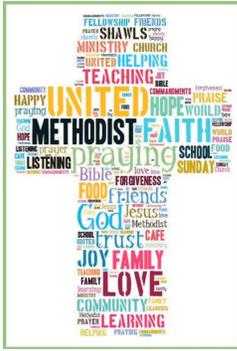
"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Even though our church family and community are being quite courageous and positive during this time of social distancing, it seems there have been endless stories of lost opportunities with family and friends. A disappointment that the Hunger and Poverty Response Ministry has experienced is with the March cancellation of the Lydia Patterson Institute program featuring LPI graduates Brayan Martinez and Rubi Vega. Brayan and Rubi wanted to share their personal experiences as students at LPI with us and the formational role Lydia Patterson Institute, our United Methodist School, has played in their lives. During this time together, they also wanted to take a few moments to thank their First Church family for welcoming them warmly while students at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Rubi and Brayan have both spoken of their deep gratitude for the friendships, support and opportunities to serve at FUMC. While they are not personally soliciting support, it is known that Brayan and Rubi need help with their housing and food service bills. If you feel called to help these students, write your check to FUMC and write NWU Room & Board for Brayan Martinez and/or Rubi Vega in the memo. Please contact Peggy Hall for more information. peggysintek.hall@gmail.com

Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach continues to impact the lives of individuals and families with nutritional meals available for pick-up twice daily. FUMC helps with the lunch time meals-to-go on the second Saturday of each month. If you would like to share in this mission work by providing fresh fruit such as apples, oranges, bananas, or grapes, it would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Liz Zeff for more information. ezeff64@gmail.com

The third mission opportunity we would like to lift up this month is for Huntington Elementary. Huntington Elementary has an Emergency Fund to help families living with food shortages, or challenges in paying for basic utilities. If you would like to share your gifts with Huntington Elementary, write your check to FUMC and write Huntington Emergency Fund in the memo. Please contact Alan Eighme for more information. aeighme@lps.org

How many times has it been stated that we are living in challenging times? And while this is true, First Church continues to lead the way in generously sharing gifts of time and treasure. You are an inspiration, and the Hunger and Poverty Response Ministry Team is grateful for your passion and overwhelming response to the mission projects offered monthly. Together, we are putting our faith into action and working to end hunger in our time. Thank you Church!



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Hold on to your garage sale items just a little longer, please. The UMW garage sale is being postponed until later in the year. We will be announcing a new date just as soon as we can, because we're looking forward to helping you make more room in your closets while raising money for UMW mission work with women, children, and youth.

We are also postponing our guest night, which had been scheduled for May 7. Again, we will be setting a new date once the virus crisis has passed.

While we're not able to be together face-to-face our leadership team is working on ways to keep everyone connected with each other and with the important mission work UMW supports. Here are just a few suggestions:

Reach out to one another by phone, mail, email, or social media. It doesn't matter what you talk about: share recipes, discuss a book, brainstorm some mission ideas, chat about family, or commiserate over the challenges of being confined at home. The important thing is that we stay in touch with each other, paying particular attention to those who may feel more isolated due to health or other issues.

If everyone in your circle or group is comfortable doing so, consider holding a virtual meeting using a conferencing platform like Zoom. Free accounts are available and participation by phone is possible.

Use your extra time to participate in the UMW Reading Program. Many of the books are available as e-books or in hard copy through Amazon, making it easy to get the books without leaving home. The list is available at <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/readingprogram>.

Are you into podcasts? The United Methodist Women Faith Talks podcast series is available on the UMW website or wherever you get your podcasts. If you want to participate in the conversation, not just listen, register in advance to join in at <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/faithtalks>. (There is also a response magazine podcast series, so great listening abounds.) Are you more visually oriented? UMW has a YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/umwomen>

Things may not be working out the way we planned, but, with God's help, they will work out in a way that allows us to continue to be faith, hope, and love in action.

Submitted by Joyce Gettman

We have two youth who have or will be graduating from high school this May. Those two young men are Christian Bacon and Jalen Curry (two on the right). Jalen is graduating from Parkview Christian High School and Christian from Kearney High School. These two young men have been very involved at First United Methodist Church and active members of the youth group. I am very proud of these two young men who are graduating from high school and making their next step in life. Their plans are to go to college in the fall and get a degree. As you see them at Church or in the community, just know First Church you nurtured these young boys to men and provided them love and comfort. We celebrate their accomplishments and their future endeavors!



Matt Borland, *Director of Youth Ministries*



STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

"First United Methodist Church is needing our support even more in these challenging times. Although the doors are temporarily closed, the ministry and outreach continue. The cost of ministerial staff, building operations and outreach to the community and through our Mission Shares are ongoing. Please continue your generous giving as you are able.



FIRST CHURCH RESOURCE LIST

A Resource Page with sections to assist individuals with needs including Food Insecurity, Abuse & Neglect, and Medical & Health related issues has gone out through an email blast. Because of the constant change in the time and nature of the services offered in the agencies and businesses listed, please call for updated information for the specific service you need. If you need a copy

You can do so by check, bank draw, or through PushPay (on the website). The church may be called upon in the coming times to become even more directly active as a response entity for critical human needs; our continued support will help be in a position to respond."

Glenn Johnson

of this list, please contact the First Church Office.

Submitted By:
Shirley Baum

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

To stream the 10:45 services on your computer without having FACEBOOK:

- Click on the 1UMC Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/FirstUMCLincoln/> and ignore the "Log In or Create an Account" at the bottom of the screen.
- Click on "Not Now" when later you are again faced with the "Log In or Create an Account."
- Scroll down on the Facebook page to find the videos that Kirstie has created.
- You should be able to actively stream Sunday's session, starting at 10:45.
- Previous videos are available as well (look at the dates on the videos)

Submitted By:
Ed Schneider

How to Watch Worship Service Online



WORSHIP, MEDIA AND SOUND MINISTRY

Hey First UMC!

I'm working hard to make the Sunday service accessible to all. I have DVD copies of the service available to all who request, and we are hoping to be back on local access ASAP. I'll keep you posted. Please feel free to contact me directly @ 531-500-2809 with questions or concerns. Morgan



Prayer Requests:

For the Family of Bev Kissinger, in the passing of her husband Dean
For the Family of Katherine Lent, in her husband Karl's passing.
Ike Schlegelmilch, Omaha Children's Hospital, friends of Jan Blue

Ron Gaddis, home
For the Family of Dorothy McKee
Margaret Fuller, Memorial Service
cancelled
Lauree Turner, home
Richard Voeltz, Gateway Vista
Jeremy Hickenbottom, home
Lester Shaw, Kiley Taylor's dad.
Jim Neumann, home
Sondra Atkins, home
Roscoe Shields, Van Dorn Legacy
Dixie Gannon, home
Emajane Crossley,
Lancaster Manor Rehab
Dorothyann Haar, 11405 Farnam
Circle, Omaha
Jim Leypoldt, home
