

THE CHURCH WINDOW



**MAY
2021**



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FROM THE PASTOR'S KEYBOARD

Dear Ones,

The spring brings us so many signs of hope, doesn't it?! There's something about the sunshine, blue skies, flowers and fresh air—there's even something about the spring showers and cloudy skies, that reminds us that this world is brimming with life and new beginnings! They help us get past those Michigan spring snow showers and knowledge of surging Covid cases.

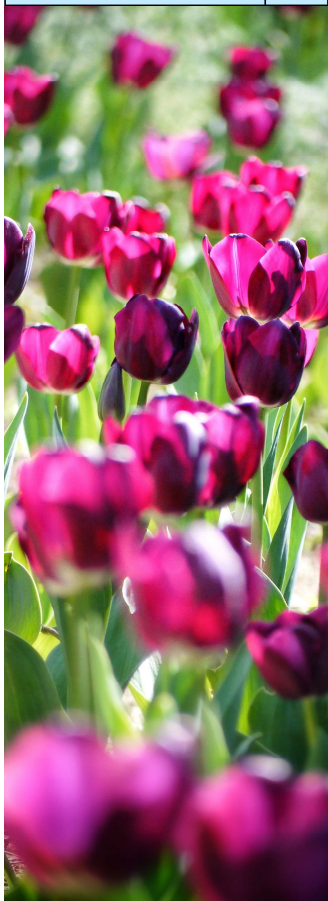
But, having said that, I also want to acknowledge how very difficult these times are, especially for those of us struggling with mental illnesses. The isolation, the increased stress, the losses of loved ones, jobs, health, our sense of normalcy—these all have exacerbated or caused mental illness in so many of our beloved siblings. What makes this harder is that our society seems to have such a stigma around mental illnesses. We don't talk about them enough or the struggles they cause, which results in an even more profound sense of isolation and loneliness.

So I want to say to any of you who have a mental illness, you are not weak or somehow less-than because of your illness. We don't call someone weak because they get a cold or a genetically predisposed illness, like Crohn's disease or heart disease, right? Depression, anxiety, addiction, bi-polar, schizophrenia, psychosis, PTSD, self-harm behaviors, obsession-compulsion disorders, eating disorders, personality disorders, all mental health illnesses—these are things you are born with or they are somehow done to you by experiences or medications. They are illnesses, and you are not weak or wrong for experiencing them.

I also want to say that you truly are not alone—not in your struggle, not in your illness, not at any time in your life. Did you know that approximately 1 in 5 adults, and 1 in 6 children, experience a mental health disorder each year in the U.S.?^[1] One of the things I have heard many times from people who have gone into in-patient mental health care or group therapy is the surprise and comfort in knowing that they are not alone. They find that there are others who walk their same journey (or worse), and others who have found their way through to a sense of health and wholeness. So please know that there are others like you, there are groups that can support you, therapists who can help you. At the end of this article, you'll find some resources, if you find that you are struggling with a mental illness and would like help.

But the other reason that you are not alone is because you have God and your church. It can be hard to see that or feel it sometimes, especially in the midst of a mental health crisis. But God truly does walk along side you, or even carry you, at those moments when

[1]National Alliance on Mental Health, <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions>, 2021.



FROM THE PASTOR'S KEYBOARD continued

things seem the most out of control. There are multiple prayers and verses in scripture that can support you and help you to believe in this presence, even if things are so rough that you can't quite feel it. And so I am inviting you all to share any prayers or verses with me, plus a short explanation about how or why it has helped you. I would like to share them anonymously on our May 16th worship service, which is dedicated to mental health. I will then print them and they will become a resource for all of us. Please email them or drop them in the bin outside of the church by May 8th.

My beloved ones, for some of us, mental illness steps into our lives for a time, we get medication and/or counseling, and it goes away. For others, it is a part of who we are; it is a health condition that we care for, like any other chronic condition. So remember that you are God's beloved child, fearfully and wonderfully made, just as you are!

Blessings, Pastor Laura

Below are a few hotlines and websites that can help with a mental health crisis. Along with this newsletter, you will find a longer list of resources, provided by the Eaton Regional Education Service Agency. The following was taken from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) webpage (nami.org):

- [The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) provides referrals to support groups and mental health professionals, resources on loss, and suicide prevention information (888-333-2377)
- [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) provides 24/7 crisis intervention, safety planning and information on domestic violence (800-799-7233)
- [The Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) connects callers to trained crisis counselors (800-273-8255)
- [Psychology Today](#) offers a national directory of therapists, psychiatrists, therapy groups and treatment facility options
- [SAMHSA Treatment Locator](#) provides referrals to low-cost/sliding scale mental health care, substance abuse and dual diagnosis treatment (800-662-4357)
- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America \(ADAA\)](#) provides information on prevention, treatment and symptoms of anxiety, depression and related conditions (240-485-1001)
- [Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#) provides information and referrals on ADHD, including local support groups (800-233-4050)
- [Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance \(DBSA\)](#) provides information on bipolar disorder and depression, offers in-person and online support groups and forums (800-826-3632)
- [International OCD Foundation](#) provides information on OCD and treatment referrals (617-973-5801)
- [National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders \(NCEED\)](#) provides up-to-date, reliable and evidence-based information about eating disorders (800-931-2237)
- [Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America \(SARDA\)](#) offers Schizophrenia Anonymous self-help groups and toll-free teleconferences (240-423-9432)
- [Sidran Institute](#) helps people understand, manage and treat trauma and dissociation; maintains a helpline for information and referrals (410-825-8888)
- [Treatment and Research Advancements for Borderline Personality Disorder \(TARA\)](#) offers a referral center for information, support, education and treatment options for BPD (888-482-7227)

MEMBER AND FRIENDS SPOTLIGHT

For the last few years, we have been blessed with many guests and new friends to our church. This number has increased, as we have taken our services on to Facebook live. But since we can't meet in person, it's terribly hard to get to know people. So we are starting a new column in the monthly newsletter which will help introduce new friends to long-time friends and members. I'm excited that our inaugural column is written by our newest member and choir accompanist, Chuck Byam, his husband Troy (our weekly liturgist), and his dear friends--our choir director, Brandon Frost, and our virtual worship coordinator, Chad Frost.

We are pleased to be the first to contribute to this new addition to the monthly newsletter. This is an interview with the 3 guys that have been my rocks through the past year as we have navigated our way through the Covid-19 crises. Brandon, Chad, Troy and I sat down to answer a few questions set forth by Pastor Laura.

What brought you to FCUCC Grand Ledge?

BRANDON: My job. I found a job posting on Facebook and applied.

CHAD: My husband!! It had been a couple of years since his last job as a choir director and I could tell he missed it. I was delighted when I realized his new job was at a church I could see myself attending.

CHUCK: It was after meeting Brandon at a party. We became friends instantly. He had just started a new job in Grand Ledge directing a church choir. I decided to check it out after his glowing recommendation. I went and loved it. It was the same church my Grandparents belonged to. WOW!!

TROY: It was my husband. The first service I attended was a Taize just before Covid-19 locked us down. I loved the ambience and the spiritual feeling the service provided.

What has encouraged you to stay with us or what do you like about this congregation?

CHUCK: This is right!! It is the congregation!! When you enter you feel the love. This congregation is giving, diverse, caring, spiritual and kind.

TROY: I feel the openness of all the folks I've encountered.

BRANDON: My job and the church community. You're an odd bunch for a "farming" community. There is a lot of openness and love to share.

CHAD: I enjoy many things about FCUCC – the messages, the music, the fellowship times – but the people are what makes everything worth coming back for.

Can you tell us a little about yourself – where you're from, your religious background, what do you enjoy doing?

TROY: I grew up in Michigan. I traveled all over the USA but I came home to help my family. My mother is a Jehovah's Witness, my dad an agnostic. I consider myself more spiritual than religious. What do I enjoy? I am so domestic.....and I love it!!!

CHUCK: I'm a married gay man. (love that I can say that) I'm somewhere north of 50. I'm generation 5 to live on my family's farm. I have a sweet little puppy named 'Drina. She's an adorable Pomeranian. I was raised Methodist and baptized at the Wacousta United Church. I attended this church until I was told that I was going to hell. I left organized religion at this point. I missed the church but not that congregation. So to move on, I enjoy taking care of my farm, the house and the grounds, and I also love a fabulous cocktail party!!

BRANDON: I'm from Sterling, Oklahoma. I've lived in Michigan since 2006. I have no religious affiliation. I love church music and the community that surrounds it.

CHAD: I've never spent much time in a church growing up when I realized I was gay as a teenager. I heard so many negative things being said by supposedly "Christian" people in the media and in my community. I assumed I'd never be welcomed into a church while still being allowed to be myself.

MEMBER AND FRIENDS SPOTLIGHT continued

What are some things you'd like the church to know about you and what are some things you'd like to know about the congregation?

TROY: I'm happy with my life!! I'm openly gay and married. I love our great home and I love entertaining old friends and welcoming new ones into our circle. I have a great group of friends. As far as how I feel about individuals and groups, it all boils down to a simple question – are you nice? Everything else is just fluff to me.

BRANDON: I enjoy painting, which I rarely make time for. Come to think of it, I should start! I'm an antique collector. I love a great find. I also enjoy early Russian history.

CHAD: I love traveling! Domestically or internationally. There is such an amazing variety of lived experiences. I love our differences and the things that make us all so unique, yet I'm always left feeling that we're all so similar. We all want to be loved, to feel joy, and to feel like we're a part of something/belong. I enjoy a good old fashioned piano party or a Japanese-style Karaoke. No matter which one I'm at, a cocktail or two is a must!! As far as the church goes, I've enjoyed learning more about everyone there. Personal experience is an amazing teacher and I look forward to hearing everyone's stories from the past year at the future coffee hours!

CHUCK: I'm from Eagle and I belong here. I try like most to be a good person. I have had my setbacks but I feel I'm on the right path now. I love being able to use my God given talents to bring music to our church services each week. I sure hope it makes people smile and sing along!! It has been great getting to know my new church family. We'll be together again soon.

SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY KITCHEN NEEDS OUR HELP!

Our FCUCC families have volunteered for several years at the Southside Community Kitchen, helping serve lunch once every other month. SCK closed down due to Covid19 but also had to find new food preparation and serving locations. They have recently moved to a wonderful new setting in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing (UU) at 5509 S. Pennsylvania Avenue, Lansing 48911. It's directly on a CATA bus line (Route #8) and just off the South Lansing Pathway, in south Lansing. They've completed upgrades to the new pantry area, got health inspector approval, and are now ready to start Phase 2. Phase 2 includes doing necessary upgrades to the kitchen before applying for their new license. Their original guesstimate of \$30,000 has grown larger as we all know that remodeling costs have skyrocketed over the past year or so. Marcia Beer, executive director of SCK, is seeking grant money, which would be a match for donations, and is asking churches such as ours and other community organizations to help with remodeling expenses such as flooring, new appliances, labor from electricians, plumbers and restaurant supply experts.

If you would like to donate, you are invited to send a check directly to:

Southside Community Kitchen
P.O. Box 80844
Lansing, MI 48908

Or donate by clicking on the donate button on their website at [Donate - \(southsidecommunitykitchen.org\)](https://southsidecommunitykitchen.org)

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Josh Gooley – 3rd
Sandy Sipes – 4th
Bobbie Tanasse – 5th
Olivia Westfall – 5th
Ted Westfall – 5th



Kyler Posey – 10th
Paul Oatman – 12th
Mike Pier – 24th
Lisa Reed – 26th
Pam Westfall – 27th

If you would like your birthday included in the newsletter, please contact the office administrator at 627-2336 or office@grandledgeucc.org

BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK

A big thank you to Gary, Kathy, Bruce, Karen, Charlene, and Cheryl for packing the bags for the student at Blessings in a Backpack on Wednesday, April 14, 2021. They worked very diligently and our bags were packed in about a half an hour.

Blessings in a Backpack Grand Ledge is an all volunteer organization that could not be successful without the help of the people of our church and community.



CONGREGATORS

Beloved Congregators!

May has arrived with its gorgeous and prolific blooms! We all grew up with the saying ‘April showers bring May flowers’ but this year spring flowers started blooming in April. At this writing we may see some snow flurries today. We love Michigan and its changing seasons! Congregator lunches at the Log Jam continue to be on hold with Covid numbers in Michigan climbing again. The early morning Easter service outside in the Fitzgerald memorial garden was enjoyed by the 18 or so people who were there so hopefully we will do that again some Sunday in weeks to come. Until then, we continue to connect on Facebook Live at 10:30am Sunday mornings. In the meantime, as always, please be sure to get in touch with one of us if we can help you in any way! Or simply call to have a chat! We love talking with you!

...Jim (517.627.7968), Sandy (517.420.2121) or Charlene (517.281.5019)

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Just as individual prayer time is very important to each of us, so is **prayer as a faith community**. We invite you to call the **church office at 627-2336** to notify the pastor of any prayer concerns you would like to share.

Health concerns: Pray for family and friends with health concerns and those who have the Coronavirus.

Those who are struggling be it: financially, mentally, spiritually, individually, or collectively.

Those in a time of transition or turmoil.

Those who serve: soldiers, teachers, police officers, firefighters, counselors, public servants, our congregational leaders, politicians, and many more.



Prayer request: Please pray for those affected by the Coronavirus as well as all those on our prayer list: Pam and Jim P. , Ben B., Corey, Kaleb, Beth P., Doris B., Lili B., Kathy H., Cindy G., Carole S., Barbara N., Geri L., Robert E., Larry and Carol S., Jim H., Anna C., Sandy S., Marty S, Maryann, Patricia R., Sarah B., Stacy S., Jenna P., and Philip C.

In being consistent with the HIPAA Law and people’s privacy, we only list individuals with their explicit permission and no last names. During worship, please do not use personal identifiable information for others when asking for prayers.

Sunday Schedule for May 2021

Date	May 2 5th Sunday of Easter White	May 9 6th Sunday of Easter White	May 16 7th Sunday of Easter White	May 23 Pentecost Sunday Red	May 30 Trinity Sunday White or Green
Text	Acts 8:26-40 John 15:1-8	Acts 10:44-48 John 15:9-17	Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 John 17:6-19	Acts 2:1-21 John 15:26-27	Isaiah 6:1-8 John 3:1-17

Sunday Schedule for June 2021

Date	June 6 2nd Sun after Pentecost Green	June 13 3rd Sun after Pentecost Green	June 20 4th Sun after Pentecost Green	June 27 5th Sun after Pentecost Green
Text	1 Sam 8:4-20 (11:14-15) Mark 3:20-35	1 Sam 15:34-16:13 Mark 4:26-34	1 Sam 14:(1a,4-11, 19-23), 32-49 Mark 4:35-41	2 Sam 1:1, 17-27 Mark 5:21-43

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

March 23, 2021

Call to Order

Moderator Leah Horn called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

This meeting was conducted electronically due to the Covid-19 virus distancing recommendations. Most members logged on to the Zoom website and some were connected by telephone.

Board Members present: Leah Horn, Anita Calcagno, Lynn Hart, Chris Cypher, Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Charlene Avery, Lisa Reed, Fay Schroeder, Thea Oatman and Bil Turner.

Spiritual Reflection

Karen offered thanks to God for longer days, sunshine and the gift of hope. We look forward to Easter and gathering with families.

Open Forum

No one was present for this item. However, Leah informed the Board that we have received a thank you note from Rich Brown for the gift card sent to him as a token of thanks for his service as Moderator. He noted that he was sure the Church is good hands.

Consent Agenda

It was noted that the February and March (to date) income includes some families who have paid their pledges for the entire year, and some who have gone beyond that. OGHS special offering receipts to date are \$840. With that understanding, the Consent Agenda was accepted.

Action and Discussion Items

Pastor's Report

Pastor Laura is on vacation.

Pandemic Preparedness Plan

The proposed plan had been submitted by email to the Board. The Team was Fay, Pat Reed and Sue Sackett. Fay reported that their submittal was a pared down version of the plan available to them, primarily because we have no parsonage or church owned vehicles. The Board discussion expanded to include details of launching back into in person Sunday Worship Services. It was suggested that before details are discussed we need to poll the members to see how they feel about reopening the church. No action taken, item tabled.

New Phone System

The two base phones have problems. Angela has researched available systems and reported that we can buy a system with two base phones and two cordless phones for approximately \$300. Moved by Bil, seconded by Charlene to authorize purchase of that system. Motion passed.

Pulpit Supply Team

Chuck Byam has agreed to become involved with the Pulpit Supply effort. Help is also needed with scheduling Fresh Perspectives speakers. Anita agreed to help in this area.

Weed Control in parking lot and grounds.

A general discussion about these topics took place. Charlene will get prices quotes from Dukes and McClung

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES *continued*

to do the spraying. A work party would be helpful for spring clean up. A long term plan for the landscape would be useful. Lynn, Anita and Chris Cypher will work on the long term plan item.

Update/Change in Submission of Materials for Worship.

Chad has been called back to work and will no longer be as available to coordinate the submission of materials for Sunday Worship. We will need someone to help with this. Also our Dropbox account is approaching our capacity limit. Bil will download the outdated Exec Board material to a flash drive. Karen will contact the Conference Office about deleting the Search Committee Candidate materials.

New Business

Chris Cypher mentioned that Palm Sunday palms will not be available at the Church until Friday afternoon. There will be a sign at the back door to that affect.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM

The next Executive Board Meeting will be Tuesday, April 27th, 2021 at 6:30 PM. (Very likely a Zoom meeting)

Respectfully submitted,

Bil Turner, Church Clerk

COVID-19 INFORMATION

The following link will help guide you to vaccine locations in Michigan:

[*Michigan Vaccine Information and Locations*](#)



Please follow these links for accurate and up to date information:

[*Michigan Coronavirus Information*](#)

[*Center for Disease Control Coronavirus Information*](#)

The following link is for individuals experiencing mental and emotional health challenges during this time:

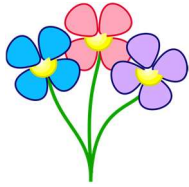
[*Michigan Dept of Health and Human Services*](#)

INCOME & EXPENSE BALANCE SHEET

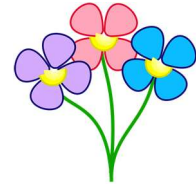
	Actual March 2021	Actual Year-to-Date	Budget Year-to-Date	Annual Budget
INCOME	\$ 13,972.00	\$ 45,300.06	\$ 30,811.00	\$135,714.00
EXPENSES	<u>11,563.41</u>	<u>30,745.50</u>	<u>36,170.25</u>	<u>144,681.00</u>
BALANCE	\$ 2,408.59	\$ 16,484.86	(\$ 2,241.75)	(\$ 8,967.00)



Once again, your generous donations and fulfilling your pledges this past month, we are at a positive balance. We do have large bills of insurances still due this month and the heating bill is in the winter mode. Please remember that your pledges and donations are very important to the continuation of this church serving you and our community.



MAY 2021



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

						1 10am AA Women
2 5th Sun of Easter 10:30am Facebk Worship Service 12:00pm Zoom Café Fellowship	3	4	5 6pm AA 8pm AA	6	7	8 10am AA Women
9 Mother's Day 6th Sun of Easter 10:30am Facebk Worship Service 12:00pm Zoom Café Fellowship	10	11	12 6pm AA 8pm AA	13 Ascension Day	14	15 10am AA Women
16 7th Sun of Easter 10:30am Facebk Worship Service 12:00pm Zoom Café Fellowship	17	18	19 6pm AA 8pm AA	20	21	22 10am AA Women
23 Pentecost Sun 10:30am Facebk Worship Service 12:00pm Zoom Café Fellowship	24	25 6:30pm Exec Board Zoom Mtg	26 6pm AA 8pm AA	27	28	29 10am AA Women
30 Trinity Sunday 10:30am Facebk Worship Service 12:00pm Zoom Café Fellowship	31 Memorial Day Office Closed					



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*Following Jesus, our mission is to serve God
 by building an inclusive community
 where uplifting worship and relevant messages deepen spirituality
 and inspire acts of justice, service, and compassion.*

Mission Statement for First Congregational UCC

STAFF	EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS & BOARD CHAIRS
Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage Angela Spialek, Office Administrator Brandon Frost, Choir Director Darlene Banks, Bell Choir Director Judy Nielsen, Organist Chuck Byam, Choir Accompanist Sue Sackett, Custodian Nicole Finney, Nursery Care Provider Rev. John Baumgartner, Pastor Emeritus	Leah Horn, Moderator Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Vice Moderator Bil Turner, Clerk Fay Schroeder, Treasurer Lynn Hart, Financial Secretary Charlene Avery, Member-at-Large Kim Dible, Member-at-Large Lisa Reed, Member-at-Large Thea Oatman, Christian Education Chris Cypher & Kim Dible, Congregational Life Chris Clark, Christian Outreach