

STAY AT HOME - STAY WELL
NOVEMBER, 2020 NEWSLETTER – CORONAVIRUS VERSION

“Hope Does Not Disappoint Us”
- Romans 5:1-5



From the Minister...

In my notes for this month, I had planned to highlight all of the celebrations that were going to take place in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and the establishment of the Congregational Church in North America. But events in our own time have shouldered that celebration aside; many of the events are re-scheduled for next year (with virtual components as well as in-person options). Meanwhile, we are called to reflect on what it means to call ourselves Congregationalists in 2020.

A FREE PEOPLE

The Mayflower brought a group of people who had made a formal proclamation of their freedom to practice religion separately from the political control of the King of England. They established a church headed by Christ and Christ alone, governed by the congregation, and risked punishment and death to affirm that freedom. When they came to North America, these early Congregationalists were more focused on their own freedom than the general concept; however, in the subsequent centuries, Congregational churches and church members have looked beyond their own doors to insist upon abolition, equal education and full rights for women, equal access to public education, and more. At the start of November, we are on the verge of a challenging election in a polarized political climate – and it’s a good time for us to remember the value of freedom not FROM any and every restraint, but freedom to be used FOR the sake of all of God’s beloved children.

A GATHERED PEOPLE

Another important assertion of the Pilgrims was that the church – throughout its existence and as a theological truth – is gathered by the work of the Holy Spirit. For them, this meant that they were not assigned to parishes based on where they lived, but instead were free to choose their worshiping community. We still affirm that the Spirit gathers the church (and our church), calling persons from different communities, economic brackets, and ethnic backgrounds to worship and serve together, enriched rather than threatened by the wide variety of the human family.

A PILGRIM PEOPLE

The Pilgrims who landed on Cape Cod 400 years ago didn’t see their arrival as the end of anything; rather they understood themselves as serving a “divine errand” to follow where God was leading them – a process of devotional and devoted living in the world. This pilgrimage had – and has – no end point in this world; it is continuing still, as we seek to “walk in all God’s holy

ways” for the sake of the world. As he blessed the Mayflower at its outset, Pastor John Robinson affirmed that God has yet more truth and light to break forth into the world. May we serve that same end, as we join our footsteps with those who’ve gone before, seeking to love and serve God by loving and serving all humanity, and celebrating the presence of God’s Kingdom among us, even in the most unsettled times and places.



Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron

Moderator’s Notes...

I write this in the last week in October. This weekend we ‘fall back’ to standard time. One of my friends said on Facebook that she won’t be doing so – she doesn’t want to spend an extra hour in 2020.

This has certainly been a challenging year. Foremost, of course, has been the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on the Church and on all our lives. I have recently had members of the Congregation ask me when we are going to return to worship in our building. It is a good question, so allow me to spend some time answering in this note.

Back in April Executive Council formed a **Reopening Task Team**. This Team (which includes members with medical backgrounds, as well as members of our staff) has looked at the question of reopening. The Team has developed a staged plan for reopening and detailed procedures for when we do return to worship in our building.

What do those stages look like? There are more details, but to summarize:

1. Return to worship in our building. Masks, marked and spaced seating, social distancing, initially no coffee hour. Stages within that:
 - a. Initially no choir or singing, organ and possibly string instruments.
 - b. Later, soloists.
 - c. Later, choir.
2. Board / Committee meetings resume in our building in designated rooms.
3. Coffee hour resumes, with special protocols for food and drink.
4. In-building Sunday School resumes.
5. Rentals and other building use resumes.

The Team has defined rough metrics to determine when we are ready for each stage. For example, before we resume Sunday School in the building we would want to see that local schools have successfully resumed in-person classes for some time.



When might we return to in-building worship? The short answer is I don't know. The Reopening Task Team and Executive Council are monitoring the status of the pandemic in our area. While we have not set hard and fast numbers, we would want to see: steady, low case counts in Oakland County; State guidelines that allow indoor meetings of our size (even though churches are exempt from formal restrictions); successful track record of opening experience in other churches, theaters, and similar venues. You are probably aware that some churches in our area have reopened. Many have not, and some have dialed back their reopening plans as local cases have increased. We should be mindful of the risk; this month, for example, some 50 Covid-19 cases in Western Michigan were linked to two reopened church locations.

Council's discussions did highlight two areas. One is improved communication with the congregation about the issue. This note is a first step. We will also be sending out a survey to get your views on reopening, our current virtual Church, and what we might be doing differently or better. Another area is looking for ways to increase social interactions within our congregation even as we are worshipping virtually. Our new Fellowship Ministry Board is working on this with Rev. Biedron. (If you have ideas, share them with **Rev. Biedron** or **Tim Sirovy** or any member of the Fellowship Ministry Board.)

Through all this, the work of the Church continues, for today and for our much-anticipated return to worship in our building. Rev. Biedron continues her virtual Sunday worship and Wednesday inspiration series. We continue to support Crossroads (serving last Sunday) and other benevolences.

Executive Council Notes

Our new Executive Council had its first meeting on October 26. Council consists of the chairs of our new Ministry Boards: **Eric Schwartz** (Assets & Resources), **Sandy Greer** (Diaconate), **Karen Sirovy** (Education), **Tim Sirovy** (Fellowship), **Lori Rhode** (Missions), and **Steve** and **Sara Lange** (Worship co-chairs). The office and ex-officio slate continues: **Judy Campbell** (Clerk), **Brinton Butler** (Treasurer), **Dan Beardslee** (Assistant Treasurer), **Mimi Biedron** (Sr. Minister) and **Danny Hawkins** (Business Manager). During this first meeting Council considered the following:

- **Fellowship.** Upcoming Trunk or Treat event, plus further ideas for the Thanksgiving season.
- **Missions:** We discussed possible mission activities for the Advent season, including a food drive with reverse Advent calendar.
- **Financial Status.** Our Treasurer, Trustees, and Business Manager continue to monitor Church finances closely. Income and expenses are both down; net we are about \$14,000 worse than last year. However, the Church received a \$43,700 Payroll Protection loan. We have continued with all our staff, so we expect this loan to be forgiven. Our endowment fell somewhat in September and finished the month about \$378,000 below the starting value for the year, though well above the March low point. *Note: please continue your pledge*

donations; you can do so in the Members' Corner on our website or by mailed check to the office (Danny will get it).



- **Reopening.** Council discussed the report of the Reopening Task Team and the issue of reopening, as described above.
- **Voting.** The Church is a polling location. Rev. Biedron reported that procedures are in place for November 3.
- **Volunteer Activity Teams.** Our new organization model is centered on the six Ministry Boards. The intent is that these Boards are forward-looking, focused on planning and organizing and trying new things. We do not expect them to do all the work of the Church themselves, but instead to organize volunteer teams for specific events and activities. The original thinking was that we would have a 'be the Church' sign-up day in Fellowship Hall. Obviously, that is for the future. Council discussed approaches to defining and filling these volunteer opportunities.

As noted, this was the first meeting of this new Council. There was a great deal of positive energy and new ideas. I look forward to working with them.

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

Kevin Gromley

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS...

Sunday, November 1st. Please remember to move your clock back one hour on Saturday night before retiring.

STEWARDSHIP 2021

"Turning Pledges into Ministry"

North Church is a community of ministries in service to God and the world. These ministries continue even when we are unable to meet in person, through our online connections and our prayerful commitment to love and serve God by loving and serving all God's people.

The needs of our community and the world are certainly ever-changing going into 2021. During online worship these past few weeks we have heard from representatives of a few of the ministries we help support. The resources to sustain these vital ministries come from us, the members and friends of North Church.

We invite you to consider your support of all our ministries, which are listed on our web site. Our pledge goal this year is \$192,000. By making a pledge to be fulfilled throughout 2021, you support North Church's ministries and enable planning with a clear sense of our resources.



In addition to the Stewardship materials you received in the mail you may pledge through the church website or by emailing the Business Manager at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com. As always, only the Business Manager knows the giving estimates and actual contributions from our members and friends.

As we think about what North Church means to us and to the world, remember our mission statement. "We are a Christian community growing in faith and spirit, welcoming and serving our neighbors with joy and love, worshipping together with mutual respect, and making a difference in our lives and our world."

COVID-19 GIVING OPTIONS

There are two options if you wish to keep up with your church donations while we wait for the building to reopen and worship services to resume.

You may make donations by mailing checks, made out to North Congregational, to **Danny Hawkins** at his address in the church directory (it's been the same for 26 years so it doesn't matter how old your directory is) or to the church where Danny is checking and picking up checks at least twice a week.

You may also consider the North Congregational Church electronic option for making ongoing, one time and special offerings. Contributions can be debited automatically from your bank account or processed using your credit card (with a 2.6% fee to the church). Our electronic giving program offers convenience for you and donation consistency for our congregation. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. And, when travel, illness, global pandemic or other circumstances prevent you from attending worship services, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis.

You may sign up at the church website, NorthCongregationalChurch.org, using the Online Giving button on the right side of the home page or you may contact **Danny Hawkins** at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com for an authorization form for him to set up your giving.

VIRTUAL CHURCH

As we continue to stay safe by keeping our building closed, many parts of church have come online!

WORSHIP:

SUNDAYS, 10:30 a.m., are **recorded** on the North Congregational Church Facebook Page, and available on the church website afterwards, at <http://www.northcongregationalchurch.org/video-messages.html>.

Audio versions of the same may be found here:

<http://www.northcongregationalchurch.org/listen-to-a-sermon.html>.



Worship includes a children's message, scripture and sermon, music from the North Church archives as well as currently recorded music from our musicians, prayers, and a Virtual Coffee Hour where messages and greetings can be shared.

WEDNESDAYS, 3:00 p.m., a shorter time of inspiration from **Rev. Biedron**, recorded on the North Congregational Church Facebook page; as well as on the church website, NorthCongregationalChurch.org.

BOARD MEETINGS:

Missions Ministry Board – by Zoom on Sunday, November 8, at 11:30 a.m.

Education Ministry Board – by Zoom on Monday, November 9, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – by Zoom on Tuesday, November 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – by Zoom on Wednesday, November 11, at 7 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board – by Zoom on Sunday, November 15 at 11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – by Zoom on Tuesday, November 17, at 7 p.m.

Executive Council – by Zoom on Monday, November 23, at 7 p.m.

NORTH CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY BOARDS

The board members for the trial period of our Ministry Board governance structure were filled at the September Annual Meeting. The new boards have had an orientation and organizational meeting to begin their work of coordinating all the functions and activities of the church. Look for opportunities to volunteer for specific roles and tasks related to each board's role in the life of the church. The boards are currently planning to meet as follows, should you have questions or suggestions for them to consider.

- **Asset & Resources Ministry Board** – Cares for the physical and financial assets of the church.
 - Second Wednesday of the month
 - Eric Schwartz is their chairperson

- **Diaconate Ministry Board** – Provides spiritual care for the congregation.
 - Second Tuesday of the month
 - Sandy Greer is their chairperson

- **Education Ministry Board** – Provides educational opportunities for North Church families and friends, maintains the church Library and communicates to members and the community.
 - Second Monday of the month
 - Karen Sirovy is their chairperson
- **Fellowship Ministry Board** – Promotes fellowship among church members, friends, and visitors.
 - Third Tuesday of the month
 - Tim Sirovy is their chairperson
- **Missions Ministry Board** – Defines and carries out the Church’s mission and benevolence activities.
 - Second Sunday of the month
 - Lori Rhode is their chairperson
- **Worship Ministry Board** – Assists the Senior Minister with worship services, including the participation of the laity.
 - Third Sunday of the month
 - Steve Lange is their chairperson



FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:

MEN’S BREAKFAST - In person, social distancing, at Moe’s on Ten at 9:00 a.m. Contact **Steve Lange** at stephenlange@me.com for updates on their schedule.

BOOK GROUP on Zoom, November 18, at 1:00 p.m. See article for further information.

MASCOT’S – Meets via Zoom. If you would like to be included in the invitation email list for future meetings, please contact **Danny Hawkins**, NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com.

Got an idea for a virtual fellowship? Interested in leading a Bible study or a class on zoom? Speak with **Rev. Biedron** or Program Director **Danny Hawkins**.

TRUNK OR TREAT AT CHURCH **Saturday, October 31st, from 2 – 3 p.m.**

Join us for some Halloween fun as the Fellowship Ministry Board hosts a Trunk or Treat at church with vehicles spaced throughout the parking lot handing out individually wrapped treats with tongs and gloves to the kids. Cider and donuts would be handed out to all attendees. Proper protocols for handing out the food will be practiced.

We will also have collection vessels for UNICEF so everyone can deposit their extra change (or folding money) if you wish to make a donation.

Please RSVP to **Danny Hawkins** at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com so we can plan appropriately, and contact everyone planning to attend should we need to cancel the event on Thursday or Friday depending on the weather forecast for Saturday afternoon.



Men's Breakfast CLUB

The group of North Congregational Church men who meet for breakfast at Moe's on Ten Mile (just west of Haggerty) every other Tuesday morning at 9:00 o'clock has resumed live breakfast gatherings. If you are comfortable meeting indoors in a socially spaced environment and are interested in a little lively conversation with your breakfast, join the group on **Tuesday, November 3rd at 9 a.m.** Please contact **Steve Lange** at StephenLange@me.com, so that he can add you to their email and reservation list.

MASCOT³S

As we settle in for the long haul of the COVID-19 pandemic we are not having any physical social gatherings for Mascot³s. Until we resume Sunday Worship, we will occasionally have virtual Happy Hours on Zoom to share laughs and catch up with one another. The next one will be **Friday, November 13th at 5:30 p.m.** A Zoom link will be in the weekly Planner on November 8th or you may contact **Danny Hawkins**, at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com if you would like to be included in the invitation email.

BOOK GROUP – Meeting by Zoom, November 18, at 1:00 p.m.

We'll be reading the nonfiction book Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson. The prizewinning author of The Warmth of Other Suns looks at the idea of caste, and how it has influenced racial assumptions and relationships in India, South Africa and the United States. Email **Rev. Biedron** at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com for the connection link.

A THANK YOU FROM CROSSROADS

Hi Sara and North Congregational Church,

Yesterday, I had so much fun working alongside each of you. Everyone did a *superb job* preparing and assembling Sunday's meal for our community. *Special thanks to our culinary geniuses who came to the kitchen on Saturday for food preparations for Sunday's meal!* This made it possible for an easier day, and a great day of meals being executed in a timely fashion. Thank you so much Sara and North Congregational Church, for always going, *Beyond the Call of Duty!* *Awesome job on the homemade cookies! Kudos, kudos.*

Appreciative,
Chef Mike, Crossroads Soup Kitchen

ADOPT A FAMILY

Women's Fellowship and the Fellowship Ministry Board will be hosting **Adopt a Family** this year. Look for Sign Up Genius in the coming weeks where you may sign up to participate. More details to come!



KNITTING TREE

Women's Fellowship is sponsoring the Knitting Tree for this coming Advent Season. This is a tradition for us. This is a "heads up" to please begin knitting or purchasing hats, mittens, gloves, scarves and socks for our Christmas Knitting Tree.

All of the items will be donated to the Farmington School District Homeless Department. Further information will be in the next newsletter.

Women's Fellowship and the Fellowship Ministry Board thank you for your support of this project. Please contact **Carol Turner** if you have any questions.

ASSISTANCE AND DONATIONS

North Congregational Church: COVID-19 Helping our Parishioners

We may have people in our congregation who are unable to acquire food or medications on their own - either because of mobility limitations, illness, or underlying health issues - during the COVID-19 outbreak. **Danny Hawkins** has coordinated a group of people who are willing to make deliveries to these parishioners to provide for some of their basic needs. We will be pairing up those in need with volunteers for a NO CONTACT delivery of the necessary items. Please contact **Danny** at **NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com** or **248 217-1750** if you are a parishioner in need of a food or pharmacy delivery.

Food Banks: To find a food bank in your community, please visit the following websites:

- * Feeding America: ww.feedingamerica.org/takeaction/coronavirus?s_onsite_promo=lightbox
- * Meals on Wheels: www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals
- * Gleaners Community Food Bank: Distribution sites for families and children in Metro Detroit
- * Lighthouse: www.lighthousemi.org/update-on-covid-19/

CARES of Farmington Hills:

Serves Farmington, Farmington Hills (248-474-8231), Southfield, Redford, Livonia, Novi, Northville, and West Bloomfield.

Food Pantry Hours are listed - You must call for an appointment.

- * Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:30am - 2:30pm
- * Thursday, 9:30am - 2:30pm; 5:00pm - 6:30pm
- * Saturday, 9:30am - 11:30am

Salvation Army: Grocery and food, including meat

- * Monday – Friday – 9 AM – 3 PM Emergency Food Assistance
(Only by appointment - Please call ahead of the time and make an appointment, so the food bag will be ready to grab and go.)
- * Wednesday – 10 AM – 12 PM
(Drive thru Food assistance – groceries and meat)
- * Thursday – 4 :30 PM – 5 PM – Drive thru grab and go dinner to add on to the food bags.



S.O.U.L. (Source of Universal Love): Food and necessary items

- * Alcohol, Lysol, Hand Sanitizer, Antibacterial Wipes, Disposable Gloves
- * Non-perishable Food
- * Gift cards for Food or Gas
- * Order on Amazon and your donation will be delivered directly to SOUL.

Click on the link below:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1IAO7BVZ1TLPM?ref =wl_share

S.O.U.L. Holiday Party - Saturday, December 19th, 1-3pm

In order to follow the guidelines established by the State of Michigan for Covid-19, the party will be held at our **SOUL office parking lot located at: 23023 Orchard Lake Road, Building F, Farmington, Michigan 48336**

With the increase of families anticipated this year due to the pandemic, we are now accepting wish lists for ages 12 and under only. It is our hope and intention to provide gift cards to those ages 13 and up. **If you know of someone in need, who because of their circumstance will not be able to afford a Christmas for their family, please contact Patty at (248) 672-0616. Wish lists should then be sent ASAP to: soulnonprofitorg@gmail.com.**

Please include the following with your wish lists:

- Current name, address, email and phone #
- Separate list for each member under the age of 12 to include... full name, age, sex, and descriptive list of item desired (sizes, names, etc.) **please be specific
- Include name, age, sex of all members in the household to be included in the gift card program. (those age 13 and up)
- Include your pet(s). Please tell us type of dog, cat, etc., along with size, age and name

NOTE: A current or updated intake must be on file in order to be a part of our holiday program. Contact Patty with questions or for more information at **(248) 672-0616**

S.O.U.L. Thanksforgiving Giveaway

Sunday, November 22nd from 11a.m. - 5p.m.

The Giveaway will be at the S.O.U.L. office parking lot located at, 23023 Orchard Lake Road, Building F, Farmington, Michigan 48336

If you would like to donate any of the food items, please contact Patty (248) 672-0616 at S.O.U.L., to set up a day and time for the delivery. Please see attached flyer for further information.