

STAY AT HOME - STAY WELL
MARCH, 2021 NEWSLETTER – CORONAVIRUS VERSION

“Hope Does Not Disappoint Us”

- Romans 5:1-5



From the Minister...

It's already March! And along with (hopefully) first signs of spring, many other things are going on in the life of North Church!

CROSSROADS on March 14th – See the signup genius on the website to join us as we go to our Detroit soup kitchen partner, Crossroads of Michigan, to make and serve hot lunch!

PARKING LOT EVENT, SATURDAY MARCH 27th – An all-church event from 11 AM to 1 PM, we'll gather in the parking lot for DRIVE UP COMMUNION at 11, followed by distribution of PALM SUNDAY PALMS, a children's EASTER EGG HUNT, CRAFT BAGS for families, a POSTER CREATION for everyone to work on (to be shared on Easter Sunday in our online worship service), drop off of EASTER OFFERING, and EASTER CARDS for volunteers to pick up and help send to everyone in the church. Mark your calendar, and watch for more details on this day where we can connect in a masked & socially-distanced time of preparation for Holy Week!

HOLY WEEK – We'll have online worship for all the events of this week –
PALM SUNDAY at 10:30 AM on March 28th,
WEDNESDAY INSPIRATION at 3 PM on March 31,
MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMUNION WORSHIP at 7 PM on April 1, and
GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP at 7 PM on April 2.

EASTER SUNDAY will bring a joyous online WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:30 AM on April 4th, as well as an EASTER ZOOM COFFEE HOUR at 11:15 with an Easter trivia contest, a time to greet one another, and more. Plan now to join in these times, as we move through the events that are at the center of our faith, from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem through the Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. As always, the worship times will be on Facebook Live, the church website, and YouTube.

LENTEN STUDY – It's never too late to join the North Congregational 2021 Lenten Study Group on Facebook – and if you're not on Facebook you can receive the articles and links in an email. To join, send Rev. Biedron a request to be added by email to ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com.

Do take a look through this Newsletter, and watch for the Planner every Friday in your email inbox, and plan to join in these events.

As we move from the dark time of the year into the light, I wish you an internal movement from dark to light as well, as we remember Jesus and then commit ourselves to loving and serving as he taught us.

Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron

Moderator's Notes...

It is a sunny, late February day. The temperature is a warm 45° F. Winter is still with us, but this is the type of day that hints of spring, and of hope and happier times.

Despite our hopes for better days, our Church family has again suffered loss. We mourn for Harriett Fairbrother, Ruth Kittel, and Al Poese. They will be missed – may God comfort their families and loved ones.

Last month I noted that, at the January meeting, I shared the recommendations of our Futures Task Team with Executive Council. The recommendations were focused on growing membership and fell into four broad areas: staffing, worship, social activities / fellowship, and missions / outreach. Since then I have been meeting with our Ministry Boards to review the recommendations, with an emphasis on the items that fall within the scope of each Board. The reception has been positive. Going forward, it will fall to the Ministry Boards, with support of Council and our Senior Minister, to consider and implement the recommendations.

A question I am often asked is: “when will we return to worship in our building”? I, along with Council and our Reopening Task Team, have been monitoring the pandemic situation in our area. The trends are certainly positive – you can find a summary dashboard on the Church website, in the Members’ Corner. As you may recall, we conducted a survey in November and December of last year that included questions about returning to our building. In short, the majority of respondents indicated that they would not do so until vaccinated. We plan to conduct periodic surveys of members and friends to collect data on how many of the North Church family have been vaccinated. When we reach a reasonable number, and depending on the status of the pandemic, we will return to in-person worship.

When that time comes, the Reopening Task Team has defined a phased approach for resuming activities in our building. Initially, it will be worship in the sanctuary, with masks and social distancing (in person coffee hour will come later). The Choir will continue to be virtual for a time. We have defined precautionary procedures for the ushers and for staff to help keep everyone safe.

It is Lent, a period of reflection, repentance, and relinquishment. We remember Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness, fasting and wrestling with temptation. I imagine that, during those days alone, Jesus at times also longed for fellowship, to return to the company of fellow worshipers.

After his period of time in the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee, renewed and empowered, and began his ministry and his long journey to Jerusalem. When we are back together again I hope we will also feel renewed. Remember – hope will not disappoint us.



Through all this, the work of the Church continues. **Rev. Biedron** continues her virtual Sunday worship and Wednesday inspiration series. We continue to support charities such as Crossroads and other benevolences. Our Mission Boards continue to meet and do God's work.

Executive Council Notes

Executive Council met on February 22 and considered the following:

- **Assets & Resources:** This Board is reviewing possible investments in our building HVAC systems, against our return; ongoing building maintenance continues. North Church may be eligible for a second PPP loan; A&R, our Treasurer, and our Business Manager are following up.

Please complete and submit your pledges for 2021, either via mail-in card or on the Church website. This is vital input into our budgeting for this year.

- **Diaconate:** The Diaconate continues develop a Calling Ministry to reach out with cards and phone calls to our shut-in members and friends – they are looking for some volunteers to help with this activity. The Diaconate will be preparing an Easter card mailing, similar to what we did at Christmas (check out the planner and emails from the Church).
- **Education:** Our Education Board is trying out a new set of curricula materials, more attuned to virtual classes. These materials are for all grades and appear to be more engaging for the children and youth. The Education Board is also preparing craft packets and an Easter egg hunt for our parking lot event (see below).
- **Fellowship:** Our Fellowship Board is working on developing a Movie Club, analogous to our book club. They are also planning virtual social events (trivia night and euchre). If you have suggestions for social events, please let them know!
- **Missions:** Our Missions Board is looking at developing programs for youth to acquire service hours. They will be coordinating with local schools on this initiative.
- **Worship:** The Worship Board, with our Senior Minister, is planning a parking lot event for Palm Sunday. This will be the prior **Saturday, March 27**. They will distribute palms; the other Boards will also be participating. See the Church planner and website for more information
- **New Business:**
 - As noted last time, our 2021 Program Meeting will be **June 27**. It is normally in May, but since it was delayed to September last year this gives the current Board members a bit more time in office. At our last Program Meeting we approved a trial period for our new Church structure (Ministry Boards). That structure appears to be working well, but we have not had

the opportunity to experience it during ‘normal’ times. Consequently, Council feels that we may ask the Congregation to extend the trial period to refine our model before we vote on new bylaws reflecting that.



- During the pandemic NCC has been operating as a virtual Church. Rev. Biedron and all our Church staff have done a marvelous job during this transition. Once we return to in-person worship, we will doubtless continue with an expanded on-line presence. This will create new activities and resource requirements. Consequently, Council approved an initiative to look at our Church staffing model, with a view to our post-pandemic future.

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” (Luke 4:14-15)

Kevin Gromley

BOARD MEETINGS on ZOOM:

Education Ministry Board – Monday, March 8, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – Tuesday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m.

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – Wednesday, March 10, at 7 p.m.

Missions Ministry Board – Sunday, March 14, at 11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – Tuesday, March 16 at 7 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board – Sunday, March 21, at 11:30 a.m.

Executive Council – Monday, March 22, at 7 p.m.

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:

MEN’S BREAKFAST CLUB has suspended going to Moe’s on Ten until further notice.

BOOK GROUP on Zoom, Wednesday, March 10 at 1:00 p.m. (Please see article)

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**.

NORTH CHURCH ARTICLES AND ACTIVITIES



MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

The Breakfast Club suspended their breakfast meetings at Moe's on 10 until further notice.

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 the church where Danny is picking up his mail 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 charged 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.

EASTER POSTAL EXPRESS needs your help

The Diaconate Christmas card project was a huge success. Easter provides another wonderful opportunity to share some North Church love. Here's how you can help:

- ***Donate unused Easter cards*** - Drop them in the box outside Door 2 at church from ***March 1 to March 19.***
- ***Address and send cards*** – Be one of the lucky 18 volunteers! Come by the Palm Sunday parking lot event at church on March 27 and pick up a packet. The Diaconate will have them packaged with stamps, an insert with information about Easter Week activities and a list of 10 people. If you are unable to pick up cards, email **Danny Hawkins** at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com, or call the Church Office. We would be happy to deliver them to your home.

Thank you for helping us all stay connected!

MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD



What do you have on your calendar for **Sunday, March 14**? Turn your clock ahead 1 hour for daylight savings time! Anything else? If not, how about coming to Crossroads to work with your North Church family in preparing a great meal for some of the neediest people in Detroit. We probably won't be back in the sanctuary by the middle of March, and hopefully many of us will have received our Covid vaccinations by then. We will be practicing social distancing, mask wearing and frequent hand washing while preparing and serving some delicious homemade chili, and 2 hotdogs on buns. It's a little change from the usual soup and sandwich, but change can be fun in these unprecedented times. Of course, we are going to need your delicious, homemade cookies for dessert, packaged 2 cookies/baggie.

Due to the restrictions on the number of volunteers we can accommodate at Crossroads, North Church will not be partnering with the Farmington Muslim Mosque for this event. **We will need about 10 volunteers for the morning shift, and between 10-12 volunteers for the afternoon shift.** Since the pandemic, we have been running an abbreviated day at Crossroads, starting to serve lunch at 11:00am. **The morning shift will run from 8:15am - 10:30am, and the afternoon shift will run from 10:30-2pm.** Unlike past years, we are now usually cleaned up and out the door by 2pm. Whether you can make cookies (we need 67 dozen cookies), or are able to come down to Crossroads to work, please visit the NCC website - a signup genius will be coming soon!

P.S.

If you are able to work the morning shift, and have swimming goggles, please bring them with you! We will need some brave and strong volunteers to chop onions for the hot dog toppings :)

PERSONAL CARE KITS FOR CROSSROADS – YOU CAN HELP! DROP-OFF DEADLINE - FRIDAY, MARCH 12

The number of meals served at Crossroads during the pandemic has been down, but client needs continue to be great. Hand sanitizer, and other basic personal care items are often requested. Last year, North Church members packed Hygiene Kits distributed through Church World Service; this year our goal is to pack and distribute 150-200 personal care kits for clients served at Crossroads on March 14.

There are 10 travel size items suggested to pack in these kits: hand sanitizer (2oz), lip balm stick, toothbrush (individually wrapped) toothpaste (2oz), shampoo, bar soap (regular size), hand lotion, shaving razor, small size of shaving cream, and hand cleaning towelette. Hand sanitizer is the #1 item requested by Crossroads clients.

You and your family can help in one of two ways: either pack a gallon zip lock bag(s) with all 10 items in it OR choose one or several items to purchase in bulk.

To help with collection of a diverse assortment of items, please use the SignUp Genius link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0A4DAEA72BA13-crossroads>.

Shopping for the best prices on these items? The Dollar Tree, Costco, Sam's, Bed, Bath & Beyond and Target have the best prices on travel sizes. During ordinary times we collect hotel soap bars, hand lotion and shampoo, these are the items can also be used for the kits.



Items can be dropped off in a bin at NCC's Door 2 through Friday, March 12. Bulk items will be packed in baggies March 14 during Crossroads meal preparations.

BOOK GROUP ON ZOOM

Meeting **Wednesday, March 10, 1:00 p.m.** on zoom (email Rev. Biedron at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com or see the Planner for zoom link)

The Dutch House by Ann Patchett - Set over the course of five decades, *The Dutch House* is a dark fairy tale about two smart people who cannot overcome their past. Despite every outward sign of success, Danny and Maeve are only truly comfortable when they're together. Throughout their lives, they return to the well-worn story of what they've lost with humor and rage. But when at last they're forced to confront the people who left them behind, the relationship between an indulged brother and his ever-protective sister is finally tested.

DIACONATE BENEVOLENCES for March, 2021

Samaritan Counseling Center, CARES Food Cupboard, Starr Commonwealth, SE Michigan Association of Congregational Churches, Crossroads Meal

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 NO CONTACT deliveries to these parishioners to provide for some of their basic needs. Please contact **Danny** at 248 217-1750 or NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com 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: www.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 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.
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1IAO7BVZ1TLPM?ref =wl_share