

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

“Hope Does Not Disappoint Us”

- Romans 5:1-5



From the Minister...

April begins with events that lie at the very heart of our faith as followers of Jesus: Maundy Thursday (April 1), when we remember Jesus in the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the cup of the new covenant to love one another; Good Friday (April 2) when we once again live through the horror of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, signs of the how the world confronts the message of love and rejects the presence of the Kingdom of God, and concludes with Easter Sunday (April 4) as we discover that nothing and nobody – not even death—can prevent Christ from bursting forth in life, can prevent the Kingdom of God from breaking into the world.

This year, these themes are perhaps more pointed than usual: we have lived through more than a year with the global pandemic, and even as vaccines are being administered, the future still seems hazy, our path forward still unclear. It can be hard—and frustrating!—to be unable to plan, and yet, remembering the proclamation that the Kingdom of God is here right now, we are called upon to walk in faith.

Part of that walking in faith is planning to return to in-church worship, even as the online service continues (though at a different time, later on Sunday afternoons). Currently, that’s planned for **April 18 at 10:30 a.m.**, depending on stabilization of the case rate. It will be very different – there is no “normal” anymore – with social distancing, masks, no coffee hour or social time, no singing, no choir, no music. Even so, God will be present among us, both gathered in person and gathered on the internet, just as God has been most present as we’ve been walking through the valley of the shadow of death all year. So please do join us as we continue to seek ways to love and serve God by loving and serving God’s people – and the whole world.

Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron

Moderator's Notes...



Hallelujah! He is risen!

I am writing this on the Friday before Palm Sunday. We look ahead to Holy Week, to a renewal of spirit and hope. I trust you and your families will take the time to celebrate Easter and reflect on all it means to us today.

We are looking ahead to the day when we can resume worship in our building. To that end, we have a survey under way to ascertain the Congregation's views on this. If you have not completed it yet, please take a moment to do so (it's very short). You can find the survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F72JN5Q> The results will be shared with all of you.

In addition to the survey, the Reopening Task Team and Executive Council have been working on the procedures we will follow when we do return to in-person worship. We will proceed cautiously. Initially masks will be required, we will not have the Choir or singing, seating will be spaced out, and there will be no coffee hour. As the pandemic in our area recedes we return to our normal worship routine. We post a summary dashboard on the Church website of the pandemic status, you can find it under "Members' Corner / Covid-19 Info".

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 March 22 and considered the following:

- Assets & Resources: This Board is reviewing possible investments in our building HVAC systems, against our return. The Board approved contracts for spring landscaping and yard work.

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 reported preparations for our March 27 pre-Palm Sunday parking lot event.
- Education: Our Education Board continues to gain experience with the new Sunday School curriculum materials we recently obtained; the results thus far have been positive. The Education Board also reported that they are preparing craft packets and an Easter egg hunt for our parking March 27 lot event.
- Fellowship: The Fellowship Board held a virtual trivia event that was fun and successful. They are working on developing a Movie Club, analogous to our book club. They are also planning

other virtual social events (such as a euchre tournament). If you have suggestions for social events, please let them know! This Board also reported the preparations they are making for our March 27 parking lot event.



- **Missions:** Our Missions Board organized North Church participation in Crossroads (downtown Detroit) on March 14. Looking ahead, the Board is working on providing hand-out kits for women who are Crossroads clients.
- **Worship:** The Worship Board reported their work on preparations for our March 27 parking lot event and for Holy Week.
- **Treasurer:** North Church has been approved for a second PPP loan from the Federal government. We have received the \$45,000 loan; like the first such loan, we expect this to be forgiven at some point.
- **New Business:**
 - As noted earlier, 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. Looking ahead to this meeting, Council launched a Nominating subcommittee to recommend candidates for open Board positions. If you are interested in serving on one of our Ministry Boards, please let the Board Chair know.

Hallelujah! He is risen! Rejoice!

“But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ (Matthew 28:5-7)

Kevin Gromley

BOARD MEETINGS on ZOOM:

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

Education Ministry Board – Monday, April 12, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – Tuesday, April 13, at 7:30 p.m.

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – Wednesday, April 14, at 7 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board – Sunday, April 18, at 11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – Tuesday, April 20, at 7 p.m.

Executive Council – Monday, April 26, at 7 p.m.

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB resumes breakfast meetings at Moe's on Ten on Tuesday, April 6 at 9 a.m. They meet every other Tuesday.



BOOK GROUP on Zoom, Wednesday, April 21, 1 p.m.

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

HOLY WEEK – We'll have online worship for all the events of this week –

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.

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

Since many of our Men's Breakfast Club members have received their Covid vaccinations, we have decided to once again meet for breakfast at Moe's on Ten. It has been a long and difficult year for all of us. It's time that we gather together for a morning of spirited conversation, and just a good ole therapeutic time.

Starting on the first Tuesday in April, at 9:00am, April 6th, we will meet at Moe's on Ten. We will plan to continue meeting every other Tuesday from then on. I have spoken with Moe and his wife and they are very appreciative that we will be coming back to their restaurant. They have promised to accommodate our needs for social distancing and provide a clean and safe environment. Please do not feel any pressure in joining us for breakfast at this time. Not everyone has received their vaccine, nor does everyone feel comfortable eating out with the general public at this time.

Please let me know (stephenlange@me.com) if you will be joining us at Moe's on Ten for

breakfast on April 6th at 9am. I look forward to reconnecting with everyone and hearing how you have fared the past 12 months.



EASTER OFFERINGS

Donations given through the Easter offerings are used to fund a portion of the Diaconate's benevolence budget for the current calendar year. Their 2021 budget, approved by the congregation at the Business meeting in January, includes \$6,000 of income from the three seasonal offerings – Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thank you for your support of our missions in the community.

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.

BOOK GROUP ON ZOOM

Meeting **Wednesday, April 21, 1:00 p.m.** on zoom

This month, we're reading *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. From the Washington Post review: "Reinvention and erasure are two sides of the same coin. Bennett asks us to consider the meaning of authenticity when we are faced with racism, colorism, sexism and homophobia. What price do we pay to be ourselves? How many of us choose to escape what is expected of us? And what happens to the other side of the equation, the side we leave behind? *The Vanishing Half* answers all these questions in this exquisite story of love, survival and triumph."

Come and join the conversation! To receive the zoom link, see the church planner, or email **Rev. Biedron** at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com

FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY BOARD

Zoom Euchre Tournament, Saturday, April 24th, 7:00 p.m.



Using Zoom breakout rooms and the card game website Trickster, we will be running a virtual Euchre tournament at the end of April. Players will be randomly assigned to rooms and partnered up for play. We'll plan to play for one and a half to two hours. Sign up by emailing **Danny Hawkins** at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com

FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY BOARD

We are trying to gauge interest in a **Movie Discussion Group**. This is very similar to the Book Group except in this case, a movie is selected which all participants watch ahead of time. A time is then setup for the group to discuss the movie (Zoom sessions initially, and likely in-person once Covid no longer poses a risk). Though this is primarily aimed at adults, the audience can vary depending on the movie selected -- a G rated or PG rated movie could involve the whole family. There is no cost to participate, though some movies may require nominal rental fees or a ticket (assuming theaters are open). Discussions can be as short or as long and as frequent as the participants want. Please let **Danny Hawkins** (NCCBusinessManager@gmail.com) know if you are interested and we will follow-up with you with more details.

MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD BENEVOLENCES for April, 2021

NACCC – Missions, NACCC – Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, NACCC - Center for Congregational Leadership, NACCC – One Great Hour of Sharing, NACCC – Christmas Fund, NACCC – Congregational Church Development, NACCC – Missionary Society Administration, NACCC – Hurting Churches Fund.

CROSSROADS UPDATE...from Sara and Steve Lange

Greetings! Thank you to everyone who participated in making Sunday 3/14 a great day for those in need at Crossroads Soup Kitchen. We served 340 clients a tasty lunch of freshly made chili, 2 hotdogs on buns with all the fixings, banana, lemonade, bottled water, coffee and finished off with your delicious homemade cookies. Kudos to the onion choppers for their difficult job! Hygiene kits were made by many of you, containing toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, razors, shaving creams, lip balms, hand sanitizers, and gratefully received by those in the lunch line. There were volunteers outside in the parking lot assisting clients to receive donated coats, jeans, shoes, socks and plarn mats. Your efforts truly touched many of the neediest in Detroit, giving them a hand up and the gift of hope.

North Congregational Church has been a friend of Crossroads for over 35 years, and we've been working at the soup kitchen frequently during the pandemic. On October 25, 2020, NCC came to Crossroads to serve a freshly made lunch. Many organizations during this time were finding it difficult to procure enough volunteers to serve lunch, let alone make lunch for the clients. Some

Sundays the staff at Crossroads were the only people working to serve pre-made meals (pizza, KFC, etc.). The staff at Crossroads felt very dedicated to keeping the soup kitchen open every Sunday, and we helped! Volunteers from NCC staffed the soup kitchen on December 20, 2020, providing a warm meal and welcoming smile to those waiting in the snow for their lunch. On January 24, 2021 we sent down the hats, mittens, scarves and warm weather donations that the Women's Fellowship collected through the Sock Project and the Knitting Tree. Some of you helped work outside prior to the snow squall, distributing these essential warm clothes to the homeless and needy. That particular day, we had about 9 homeless men show up early, eager to find clean clothes and blankets to keep them warm. Many Sundays, members of our congregation are working down at Crossroads serving lunches, making condiment packets and helping in whatever way they can on their own time.



These are unprecedented times, but the generosity and effort shown to Crossroads by the members of North Congregational Church has been exceptional during these difficult days. Sister Liz was telling me on Sunday that they will still be serving the clients their lunch via an open door, keeping them out of the lunchroom for now. There are plans to put up tables and chairs in the parking lot, socially distanced, allowing the clients to have a seat to eat their lunch this spring. As everywhere, things are continuing to change at Crossroads. Stay tuned for more volunteer opportunities!

A CROSSROADS THANK YOU

A very special Message of Gratitude to North Congregational for your sponsorship of the 3-14-21 meal at Crossroads Soup Kitchen, and to the members of North Congregational who prepared the meal, served the meal, and cleaned the soup kitchen and dining room at the end of the meal, and to you Sara and Steve who recruited the soup team and planned, ordered, delivered, prepared, and served the meals AND served as managers for Crossroads.

Dear North Congregational Church and Sara and Steve,

On behalf of Crossroads' mission and the wonderful people we serve, I am writing to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude for sponsoring Sunday, 3-14-21 meal at Crossroads Soup Kitchen Meal. You were great partners with us in feeding the hungry. Graciously you purchased, prepared and served a nutritious meal and helped us maintain a clean, safe, welcoming environment for all who came hungry and in need of help. Also, you engaged many volunteers in this important work and we all were blessed with the meeting and mixing with you and family and friends.

Your meal was delicious. You brought hard-working volunteers. The teams worked diligently and got the tasks done. The size of the teams really helped to make for a beautiful day. Our guests felt welcome and respected, and they were well nourished.

We are so very grateful. Your presence, service, and meal were a blessing for the hungry and destitute people who came to Crossroads. The number of meals served was 379, counting everyone who came during the serving and after 2:00 PM until the staff departed later in the day.

Also, the hygiene packs and the clothing drive were deeply appreciated. On Monday, the whole staff said WOW!



For me, as always, it was gift and blessing to work with you.

The wonderful people we serve needed you on 3-14-21., and you came through for them mightily. We do hope and pray that you will be able to come to Crossroads forever, and ever until hunger ends!

Gratefully,
Elizabeth Walters, IHM – (Sister Liz)

CROP WALK IS HERE!

Have you been dismayed seeing the long lines of cars waiting for food during the pandemic, as well as in natural disasters such as the fires in California or the deep freeze in the south? Did your heart break at the sight of starving children in Yemen on the news? Have you wished that there is something you could do to help? You can do this: support the CROP Hunger Walk, which raises funds for hunger relief. North Church has been involved with the Farmington/Farmington Hills/West Bloomfield Crop walk since we came to this community, and **Rev. Biedron** has been the general chair of the Walk since 1999.

Our 2021 annual CROP Hunger Walk to raise funds for global and local hunger relief will kick off on May 2, with a car rally at 1:30 pm (location TBD). Our fundraising has moved to the internet, and we're hoping to have a number of North Church walkers join with churches, mosques and synagogues as well as local agencies to raise funds. Of the total amount raised (generally between \$30,000-\$35,000) 25% will come back to our designated community partners: CARES, Neighborhood House, Salvation Army Farmington Hills Branch, Yad Ezra Kosher Food Pantry, and Zaman International.



YOU CAN HELP! Sign up to be a walker and join the North Congregational Church team at <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/north-congregational-church-farmington-hills-mi> - scroll down and click “join the team” to walk and raise funds.

If you wish to donate, you can look up one of our walkers and donate via their own fundraising page or donate to the whole North Church team. If you'd like to contribute directly, you can send a check to North Church with CROP Walk in the memo line. Even a small pledge will go a long way towards helping hungry folks!

To learn more about CROP Walks and Church World Service, you can visit their home page, <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/home>

COMMUNITY REWARDS

Meijer and Kroger allow us to raise funds to support our ministries every time you make a purchase.



Meijer

If you shop at Meijer, please make sure your rewards are credited to Organization #276777. If you have any questions, you may ask at the service desk of your local Meijer or check online at Meijer.com/rewards. You may also apply for a Meijer Credit Card at any Meijer store or visit Meijer.com/creditcard.

Kroger

April is the month when every participant in the Kroger program must renew their designation for the Community Rewards program. Log in to <https://www.kroger.com/communityrewards>, go to Community Rewards and enroll or renew your cards affiliation with north Congregational Church.

ASSISTANCE AND DONATIONS

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