



**First Central  
Congregational**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## **The Congregationalist**

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**www.firstcentral.org**

**May 28, 2020**

### **Prayers**

for the ***Bahnke Family***, on the death of ***Don Bahnke***; ***Audrey Malena***, now in hospice; ***Emily Martinez***, whose grandmother died last week; the family of ***Linda Livingston***, whose memorial service was held last week; ***Laurent Quenaud*** and family after his recent positive COVID test -0 he remained asymptomatic and his quarantine has ended; continued prayers for our most vulnerable members; ***Bud Cassidy***, hospitalized following a stroke (and subsequent surgery).

### **Joys**

***Alexandra Miniard & Jamar Craddock***, celebrating the birth of ***Athena Elizabeth***, proud grandparents are ***Kathy & Daniel Lockard***, proud great great grandmother is ***Kathy Felger!*** the ***Shee Lweh family*** has been accepted by Habitat and will receive a house sometime in the coming months; ***Claire Bouma***, awarded a ***2020 Nebraska Young Artists Award*** in music! ***Kamaal, Lizzie, and Kate Patterson***, celebrating the birth of ***David Bennett Patterson*** – proud grandparents are ***Dave & Sara Sharpe***.

### **Retreat Update**

The All-Church Retreat is still on the calendar for **October 2-4, 2020**. The Retreat Team has until September 1<sup>st</sup> to make a final decision about cancellation/postponement to 2021. We are still making plans for “Investigating Our Beginnings” by using resources at Platte River State Park to explore our connections to nature. ***Jan Riggenschach***, with her connection to plants, has

agreed to lead our Saturday morning session. Expect to hear more from us in June.

### **Strengthen the Church Offering**

The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.

This special offering may be sent to the church office – please indicate in the memo line that it is for the Strengthen the Church offering.

### **June Food Pantry**

Congregational Outreach Ministry is asking that June donations to our friends at First Lutheran Church’s Pantry be made in diapers! Diapers may be dropped off at the church most mornings between 9 and 11 a.m. Please call the office first. Thank you for your generosity!

### **Eves**

Eves will hold their annual planning meeting via Zoom on **Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup>** at 7 p.m. Please bring your virtual self, ideas, and any snacks or beverages you may wish to taunt others with 😊

## **Dirty Hands**

It's gardening season. And that has truly been one of the blessings of the quarantine. One of the few things to invade the mundane and now boring cycle of the days. At our house we've planted our flower pots and our garden beds. We early on stuck seeds in the ground and later our vegetables. And we've been tending to our lawn and watching our flowers bloom. The irises are currently opening. Except for chives, we are awaiting our first harvests, which looks like it might be radishes.

Fortunately, since his earliest years, our son has enjoyed the activities of gardening. He takes great pride in his tools and great delight in the growth of plants and the blooming of flowers. He enjoys finding a worm or roly poly. This year he's even started helping mow the lawn.

Getting your hands dirty is said to be good for you. That even chemicals in the ground help to battle depression. So, we shouldn't be surprised at the spiritual connection with the ground.

My favorite poet Wendell Berry, being a farmer, is deeply drawn to the spiritual meaning of dirt. I think of the opening lines of that beautiful poem ***The Sycamore,***

*In the place that is my own place, whose earth  
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old  
tree growing,  
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of  
itself.*

This connection between dirt and spirit has a long legacy. The ground is a key metaphor in the writings of the Medieval German mystic Meister Eckhart. For Eckhart, our ground is the core and center of our being, a place of pure possibility. He preached, "Go into your own ground and there act, and the works that you do there will all be living."

Our ground is, most importantly, where we connect with God for "God's ground and my ground is the same ground." In another sermon

Eckhart declared, "Now know, all our perfection and our holiness rests in this: that a person must penetrate and transcend everything created and temporal and all being and go into the ground that has no ground. We pray our dear Lord God that we may become one and indwelling, and may God help us into the same ground."

No wonder, then, that I find so much of gardening to be contemplative. The other day I was cutting some grass along the edge with small trimming scissors and Michael said, "We have tools that are better for that." I responded, "Yes, they are more efficient, but this is more contemplative."

The opportunity to slowly work at tending what grows is one reason I take pleasure in weeding. It is an act of contemplation, especially on a mild day when the sun is shining and the birds are singing.

Please take this chance of extra spare time to get your hands dirty. Let that be another opportunity to turn this moment into a spiritual experience.

Peace,  
**Scott**



## **Patio Resurfacing**

While we are away, crews began the resurfacing process on the patio. Upon completion, the labyrinth will be repainted, and the iron rails refinished. And hopefully, no more water leaks to the rooms underneath!



Like everything else, we've had to rethink the way we do ministry with kids in this current time of plague!

In addition to Children's time during the worship services, we will be meeting every Sunday at 1 pm via Zoom for

## SUNDAY SUMMER CAMP

Check your email for more information!

We are also working on an online-based VBS this summer, so keep an eye out for that info, and THANK you for your patience as we navigate this new reality!



During social distancing, the youths will be meeting every other Sunday via Zoom for games and fellowship and discussion, and are looking to add some outdoor in person gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so

Sunday night Zooms:

June 14 & 28

July 12 & 26

August 9 & 23

## Wednesday Church Night

Our regular Wednesday programming will be breaking for the summer for Pre/K and Youth, but the *Adult Bible Study will continue at 3 pm.*



## FIRST FORUM Adult Education

Third Floor Parlor 9:15 - 10:15 AM  
*Childcare available in the 1st Floor Nursery*

\*\*FIRSTForum has moved ONLINE! Sundays at 3 pm via Zoom! Please contact the church for a web version of the link!\*\*

**Sundays 3 pm: The World of Biblical Israel-** Have you ever thought of coming to First Central's adult ed program, First Forum, but didn't want to get up so early on a Sunday morning? Well, now is your chance! We're starting a new series on *The World of Biblical Israel*. We'll be holding it over Zoom, so you can attend from the comfort of your home, and we've scheduled it for the civilized hour of **3:00 pm** on Sunday afternoon. We'll watch videos by biblical studies professor Cynthia Chapman, and we'll talk with one another about our reactions to the information she presents—all through the magic of Zoom. (If you haven't used Zoom before, call **Deb Kirwan** (402-556-0811) before the first class, and she'll help you get set up.) Here's the link to join the class at 3:00 pm, Sunday, April 26:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83878875290?pwd=ZW90dU0yekVZOGVUWkxGa2VBbUNndz09>

**Saturday, June 7, 10 am:**

### Economic and Justice Impacts

The fourth in our series of Zoom Forums on the implications of the coronavirus pandemic will explore *Economic & Justice Impacts*. **Senior Minister Scott Jones** will facilitate a discussion with these panelists who are members of our congregation:

- **John Else**--a retired community organizer, university professor, and non-profit executive with experience living in Africa and consulting in Africa and Eastern Europe
- **Steve Jackson**--a public health professional, with decades experience related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic
- **Tracy Zaiss**--a business owner and author of a book about the UN Sustainable Development Goal on education

For the link, email [education@firstcentral.org](mailto:education@firstcentral.org)

## Sunday Mornings

*All on hold until further notice*

- 9:00 Coffee in the Parlor  
9:15 First Forum (Adult Education), 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
9:15 Nursery Care to 11:45 a.m.  
10:30 Service of Worship  
FIRSTKids (church school for Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) *unless otherwise stated*  
11:30 Coffee Hour, Parlor

*Please keep in mind that there may be additions or deletions to any activities. At this time, we are unsure of what health directives may be as we enter June.*

## Week of May 31

### Sunday, May 3

YouTube On-line worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Strengthen the Church special offering  
Sunday School for kids through 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
1 p.m. on Zoom  
First Forum, 3 p.m. on Zoom

### Monday, June 1

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, June 3

Bible study on Zoom, 3 p.m.

### Saturday, June 6

Zoom Forum, 10 a.m., *Economic and Justice Impacts of Covid19*

## Week of June 7

### Sunday, June 7

YouTube On-line worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School for kids through 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
1 p.m. on Zoom  
First Forum, 3 p.m. on Zoom

### Monday, June 8

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study  
Eves, 7 p.m. on Zoom. Planning Meeting.

### Tuesday, June 9

Council, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Wednesday, June 10

Bible study on Zoom, 3 p.m.

### Thursday, June 11

Book Club, 7 p.m., Zoom

## Week of June 14

### Sunday, June 14

YouTube On-line worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School for kids through 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
1 p.m. on Zoom  
First Forum, 3 p.m. on Zoom  
FirstYouth, 8 p.m. Zoom

### Monday, June 15

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, June 17

Bible study on Zoom, 3 p.m.

## Week of June 21

### Sunday, June 21

YouTube On-line worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School for kids through 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
1 p.m. on Zoom  
First Forum, 3 p.m. on Zoom

### Monday, June 22

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, June 24

Bible study on Zoom, 3 p.m.

## Week of June 28

### Sunday, June 28

YouTube On-line worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School for kids through 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
1 p.m. on Zoom  
First Forum, 3 p.m. on Zoom  
FirstYouth, 8 p.m. Zoom

### Monday, June 29

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, July 1

Bible study on Zoom, 3 p.m.

### Friday, July 4

Independence Day. Office closed.

Please send address changes to:  
First Central Congregational Church  
421 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St  
Omaha, NE 68131.