



**First Central
Congregational**
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Congregationalist

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Prayers

Kathy McConnell, recovering from hip replacement; for **Jorden Carlson** (niece of Susan & David Fortina) & **Brooke Benecke**, grieving a second miscarriage.

Joys

Savannah Kirwan, celebrating the birth of **Elliott Jacob Combs**, born last week – proud Great Grandmother is **Deb Kirwan!** **Will & Meg Sharpe**, along with big sister **Greta**, celebrating the birth of **River Paul Sharpe** – proud grandparents are **Dave & Sara Sharpe!** **Mobarak & Hawa Khamis**, along with big sister **Jannat**, celebrating the birth of baby girl **Jihan!**

Labyrinth Re-Birth

If you haven't already, you are encouraged to stop by the church and take a look at the new labyrinth on the patio. **Daryl Malena, Elliott Mitchell**, lots of



church volunteers, as well as Scout volunteers, have been working hard the past few weeks. Daryl says there are a few more final details to complete, but for the most part, it is ready for friends and neighbors to enjoy a peaceful stroll.

Singing Together

Now that we are gathering together again in-person for worship, there have been some questions about singing hymns on Sunday

mornings. For clarification, Minister of Music, Stephen Bouma weighed in:

"For most people, singing at worship is fine as long as you wearing a mask correctly over your nose and mouth. If you are a trained singer, you should probably either mumble or hum. If you regularly sing quietly, don't worry at all. The precautions from the CDC regarding singing were in reference to trained, 'projective' singing. That should be done only with extra distance and caution. When in doubt, keep your tone soft and subdued, and there will be no problem. We are planning to have a miked cantor singing without a mask at a distance of at least 20 feet from the back of the choir loft to help people hear and understand the hymn texts."

Looking Ahead to Fall

The staff has been working on options and ideas for programming opportunities as we head into the new season. There are several things in the works for September that will make life **almost** feel normal! So watch for details in the coming weeks, but please make note of this event for **August**.

CHOIR RESUMES - virtually - Wednesday August 26th!

Stephen and Lyn will plan to host Zoom meetings weekly at 7 p.m., for basically, good old-fashioned hymn singing (for the time being). Please watch your in-box for details and invitation links, and plan to swing by the church one day soon and borrow the copy of the black hymnal in your choir cubby so you have it at home.

If you haven't yet sung with the choir, but would like to participate in this on-line endeavor, please email Stephen and request the Zoom link!

Katie's Musings: Covid Consent

To mask or not to mask... that is the question.

.... no actually, it really isn't a question. #WearAMask and #ListenToTheScientists Realistically, unless there are widespread policy changes, this next year (at least) is going to be a huge lesson in boundaries, consent, and good ol' human compassion.

As I thought about this and how I would navigate what I've dubbed the covid dance, a framework came to mind: a guide that does not diminish individual agency in decision making and places consent and compassion into the covid context.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMPASSIONATE COVID DANCE OF CONSENT

1) Individual consent – what covid risk level am I personally comfortable with?

Where do I feel safe and able to maintain a 6' distance from people unmasked? If I get covid, then what? How comfortable do I feel being unmasked around friends? Does it depend on the friend? Does it depend on whether or not that friend is quarantining to my level? Do I have underlying health conditions? What is my work environment like and how safe do I feel there without a mask on?

2) Household consent – what covid risk level am I comfortable exposing my household to?

Given the contagious nature of covid, anything I am exposed to has a good chance of being passed to members of my household. What is their risk consent level? What are their underlying health conditions to take into consideration?

3) Friend groups/non-household family consent: What covid risk level are we all comfortable with?

What is the risk consent level of the folks I want to hang out with? Are we at the same risk consent level? Are we quarantining similarly? Do we feel comfortable with the potential risk (presented to us as individuals and to our households) enough to remove our masks? Does EVERYONE feel comfortable with the choice?

4) Public indoor space consent – what is the covid risk level of the people I may come into contact with there?

What is the risk consent level of the people in this store/place? Can I guarantee I know what that is

for every person I may encounter? Does the store have a mask policy?

AND THEN... this is the tricky part, but then comes the COMPASSION part of the dance:

If I am a compassionate person and committed to living into that compassion, committed to respecting boundaries and consent... I have to cater to the strictest risk consent level I will encounter in any of those spaces.

I may not agree with their caution, but I have to respect their boundaries and consent. I may feel safe in spaces they don't, but I have to respect their boundaries and consent.

I may feel inconvenienced, but I have to respect their boundaries and consent. (IT'S A DARN MASK AND WEARING IT IS NOT A HARSHIP but I know there are folks for whom this is an issue)

Will it mean turning down invitations? Totally.

Will it mean awkward questions and conversations with friends and family members? Absolutely. At first. But I'm pretty sure such questions will become commonplace in a short amount of time.

Pandemic world is weird. We are all struggling with how to navigate it. But I'm pretty sure boundaries, consent, and compassion are a good way to start.

Technology Update

If you have been watching worship services from the comfort of your own home, you may have noticed some changes and updates these past few weeks. That's because our new broadcast system is up and running and working like a charm! Special thanks to **Garret Higginbotham** for investing countless hours since March, and his continued commitment to the upgrades that ensure worship could continue for all of us.

To date, we have invested around \$2,800 in new equipment, and a few more items may need to be added as we continue the transition back to in-person worship while still live-streaming. If you would be interested in helping us off-set the cost of our technology purchases, please call the church office, or simply drop a check in the mail noting "video equipment" in the memo. Thanks, in advance, for your continued generosity!



Please check out our FIRSTKids YouTube Channel for our Quarantine series...

FIRSTKids at HOME: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Join Rev. Katie for YouTube Sunday school, in which we will be finding new perspectives and ways of looking at things through adventures! No adventure too big or too small!

FAMILY HIKING DAY

Saturday, September 26

Neale Woods, 9:00 AM

Bring bug spray, water, sunscreen, hat, masks, and any snacks you may want

DRIVE-IN MOVIE NIGHT

Friday, September 11, 8:00 pm

Disney's *ONWARD*

Bring chairs and your own concessions and enjoy a night under the stars watching a movie (observing social distancing, of course!)

Pastor's note:

As with everything in the time of covid, we are continually looking for new ways of being the church and gathering together, in person and virtually. All events are subject to change, depending on virus numbers, weather, etc. I thank you for your patience and your support as we all try to figure out this whole "church-in-a-pandemic" thing out together. And if there is any additional support your family could benefit from, please do not hesitate to ask!

Sincerely, *Rev. Katie Miller*

FIRSTYOUTH

During the fall and social distancing, the youths will be meeting on Sundays via Zoom for games and fellowship and discussion, and are looking to add some more outdoor in-person gatherings.

SUNDAY AUGUST 30, 5:30 pm

BYOEverything Picnic

All youths (6th-12th grades) and their families are welcome at Obner State Park for a socially distant picnic in their backyard!



FIRST FORUM Adult Education

Third Floor Parlor 9:15 - 10:15 AM

Childcare available in the 1st Floor Nursery

Due to the pandemic and the necessity of online gathering, it has been decided to shift First Forum to **Wednesday nights at 5:45 pm on Zoom** (hopefully) beginning on Wednesday, **September 9th**, forums TBA.

If you have questions or Forum suggestions, please forward them to the church or education@firstcentral.org.

VESPERS

Wednesdays, 8:00 pm

On Facebook Live

Join Rev. Katie for a simple midweek service of song, prayer, scripture, and reflection, hosted by church families and friends in the area.

Sunday Mornings

All on hold (except worship) until further notice

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

Please keep in mind that there may be additions or deletions to any activities.

Week of August 30

Sunday, August 30

- In-person worship, 10:30 a.m.
- YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.
- FirstYouth picnic, 5:30 p.m., Obner State Park

Monday, August 31

- Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study
- Stewardship meeting, 7 p.m., Zoom

Wednesday, September 2

- Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom
- Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

Week of September 6

Sunday, September 6

- In-person worship, 10:30 a.m.
- YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, September 7

- Labor Day. Office closed.

Wednesday, September 9

- Adult Education, 5:45 p.m., Zoom
- Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom
- Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

Friday, September 11

- Drive-in Movie, 8 p.m. in the back parking lot

Week of September 13

Sunday, September 13

- In-person worship, 10:30 a.m.
- YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, September 14

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

Wednesday, September 16

- Adult Education, 5:45 p.m., Zoom
- Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom
- Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

Week of September 20

Sunday, September 20

- In-person worship, 10:30 a.m.
- YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, September 21

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

Wednesday, September 23

- Adult Education, 5:45 p.m., Zoom
- Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom
- Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

Week of September 27

Sunday, September 27

- In-person worship, 10:30 a.m.
- YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, September 28

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

Wednesday, September 30

- Adult Education, 5:45 p.m., Zoom
- Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom
- Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

Please send address changes to:
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