



# The Congregationalist

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## Prayers

*Jan Kensler*, recovering from surgery on her arm; *Deb Welk* and family, on the death of *Ken Welk*; *Rebecca Crosby*, beginning chemotherapy again; *James Grove*, *Melanie Naughtin's* brother, hospitalized in Wisconsin.

## Joys:

*Bud Cassidy*, continuing to improve!

**DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS MARCH 14<sup>th</sup>!**

## Evergreen Thrift Shop

With the infection rates dropping in Douglas county, we are please to announce that EverGREEN Thrift is now open again to the public. Mask are required, and customers/volunteers must maintain proper social distancing. For now, shoppers are welcome on **THURSDAYS** from 10 AM - 2 PM and **SATURDAYS** from 10 AM - 1 PM, but please know that hours will be expanded as it becomes safe to do so. If you have donations to drop off, stop by during business hours, or call ahead to see if Sam or Gary could be available to help with your items. Happy Shopping!

## In Person Worship

The Regathering Task Force reminds you that the sanctuary **IS OPEN** for in-person worship. Please enter **ONLY** through the main, front doors (or the south handicap entrance) and follow the instructions of the greeters/ushers. Masks are required while you are in the building, and the pews are marked to help you know where to safely sit.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we transition into a blended/hybrid worship.

(We will continue to live-stream worship on both our [YouTube channel](#) and **Facebook Live** via our [public Facebook Page](#).)

## Lent

Our theme for Lent this year is "Ascent." Minister of Music, **Stephen Bouma**, is writing a a set of organ voluntaries focusing on this theme! Each weekly piece will depict ideas of lifting, rising, climbing, soaring, reaching and searching through the music.

## THANK YOU!

When a pipe burst in the third floor kitchen last week, help was already in the building. Even though the church staff had been making regular checks of the building, one sneaky pipe was no match for the frigid temperatures. Fortunately for us, Minister of Music **Stephen Bouma**, and his wife **Lyn**, just happened to be at the church when water started pouring from the ceiling in the parlor (and then into the gym below). Within minutes, a whole crew was on site to turn off the water main and begin clean up! Most of the water was contained to the parlor outside of the kitchen, and a great deal of it was cleaned up that evening thanks to volunteers with shop vacs and fans.

Insurance adjusters are already assessing the damage and working with ServePro to replace and repair the damaged flooring. But thanks to the rapid response of lots of folks, a major catastrophe was avoided! The parlor will be ship shape again in no time.

## Lent Means Spring     *David Finnegan-Hosey*

I had mixed feelings presiding over Ash Wednesday services this year. For one thing, the COVID precautions we have instituted at the college where I serve as chaplain meant that we did not sing together and that, instead of the usual and meaningful act of imposing ashes on foreheads, we distributed ash in individual packets. More than the oddness of a quiet, music-less, safely-distanced service, however, I wondered about the need for a reminder of mortality and human limitation this year of all years.

But then again, perhaps this is exactly the right time for us to hear an ancient reminder that our mortality, our humanity, is the context in which the good news is revealed. In Jesus Christ, we meet God stepping fully into the human condition – stepping into the humanity, the mortality, the limits, to announce the gospel. The reign of God is near; and it's to this reality to which we are called to return in Lent.

It has been difficult this year for me to think about Lent, a season I usually find deeply meaningful. In my own walk with mental illness, I have often appreciated those seasons of the year which allow church folks to gain a comfort with the more jagged or messy aspects of our faith. But the usual Lenten themes, of relinquishing and repentance, desert and danger, solitude and simplicity, wilderness and woe, all seem harsh after a full year pandemic-induced isolation and anxiety. In fact, my wife Leigh and I agreed last week that we're not going to take up any particular practice for Lent this year; between the hardships of the last year and the joys and challenges of a newborn, we feel like we've had enough ascetic discipline to last a little while.

But I am reminded that the word Lent comes from an Old English word that simply means "spring." That while I have generally associated the season of Lent with the shadow of the cross, it is also a season of looking forward, with hope, to the Resurrection. Perhaps my Lenten discipline this year will be a springtime practice: to keep an eye and an ear out for signs of new life, new birth, and new hope. Lent means "spring." May we return to hope and listen for good news.

*David Finnegan-Hosey is the author of Christ on the Psych Ward and Grace is a Pre-Existing Condition: Faith, Systems, and Mental Healthcare. He serves as College Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministries at Barton College. He holds an M.Div from Wesley Theological Seminary and a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education from the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center. He is certified by Mental Health First Aid USA to provide initial help to people experiencing depression, anxiety, psychosis, and substance use disorders. In 2011, David was diagnosed with bipolar disorder after a series of psychiatric hospitalizations. He now speaks and writes about the intersections among mental illness, mental health, and faith. David lives in Wilson, NC with his wife Leigh, their daughter Laila, and their dog Penny Lane.*

## Food Pantry

Sunday, **March 7<sup>th</sup>** is Food Pantry Sunday. You are welcome to bring donations to the church, or mail a check, designating Food Pantry in the memo line. Donations of non-perishable foods are needed, as well as frozen meats. Household cleaning items, paper goods, and hygiene products are also welcome.

## Eves

Know any good toasts? Make a list, and Zoom with Eves on Monday, **March 15<sup>th</sup>** at 7 p.m. We can toast one another from the comfort of our own couches. Hey, it's almost St. Patrick's Day!

## Pandemic Blessings

We are quickly approaching the one-year mark of the pandemic way of life. Every one of our lives has changed, but has it changed for the better in any way? Have you learned something that was only possible during isolation? Tell us about your hidden blessing from the past year in an email or letter! Submissions will be used in the coming weeks as we mark this milestone.



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

## FIRSTKids CORNER

Join Pastor Katie every other Sunday for YouTube Sunday school, in which we will be discussing some classic and not-so-classic Bible stories and how they relate to our pandemic lives!

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Twice-A-Month

## FIRSTKids IN PERSON

Assuming virus rates remain low/steady, we will return to in person (socially distanced and masked!) Sunday school twice a month!

**Beginning March 14, we will meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month** during worship: children will be dismissed to class right after the Children's Conversation. All ages will meet in Memorial Hall, with designated areas for the children to remain in, individual craft supplies, and other safety measures. Following the service, children will meet their adults on the patio.

Masks will be required for all children and adults involved at all times!

We recognize this still presents Covid risk, and encourage you to decide what is best for your family and your safety at this time. FIRSTKids Corner videos will be posted on the non-in person weeks, and we are investigating zoom options for families who do not feel safe coming to church but still wish to participate in the in person option.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Pastor Katie at the church or via email: [Katie@firstcentral.org](mailto:Katie@firstcentral.org)



During social distancing, the youths will be meeting on **Sundays @ 8 pm via Zoom** as scheduled for games and fellowship and discussion, and are looking to add some more outdoor in-person gatherings.



## FIRST FORUM Adult Education

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

**March 6, 10 am on Zoom:**

***Better Health for America* Paul J. Nelson, M.D.**

The past year has taught us a lot about the healthcare system in America: what works, what doesn't work, and what hasn't worked for a very long time.

Join First Central member, ***Paul J. Nelson, M.D.***, for a discussion about his new book, *Better Health for America*, which takes on this complicated and nuanced question: "How can we reconfigure our nation's population and its healthcare?"

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## VESPERS

**Wednesdays, 8:00 pm  
On Facebook Live**

Grab a cup of tea or hot chocolate and join Rev. Katie for a simple midweek service of song, prayer, scripture, and reflection.

## Week of February 28

### Sunday, February 28

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

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, March 1

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

### Wednesday, March 3

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

### Thursday, March 4

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

### Saturday, March 6

Forum, 10 a.m., Zoom

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## Week of March 7

### Sunday, March 7

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

Food Pantry Sunday

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, March 8

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

### Tuesday, March 9

Council, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Wednesday, March 10

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

### Thursday, March 11

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

### Saturday, March 13

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## Week of March 14

### Sunday, March 14

#### DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS

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

FirstKids, 10:30 a.m.

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, March 15

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

Eves, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Wednesday, March 17

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

### Thursday, March 18

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Congregational Care Ministry, 7:30 p.m., Zoom

### Saturday, March 20

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## Week of March 21

### Sunday, March 21

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

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, March 22

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

### Wednesday, March 24

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

### Thursday, March 25

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

### Saturday, March 27

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## Week of March 28

### Sunday, March 28

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

FirstKids, 10:30 a.m.

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, March 29

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

### Wednesday, March 31

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 8 p.m., FaceBook Live

### Thursday, April 1

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, TBA

### Saturday, April 3

Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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