

THE MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER MAY 2020



First Congregational Church UCC 412 4th Street Manistee Mi



From The Pastor

Dear Friends,

To say that we are in uncharted territory feels like the understatement of the century. But we are in uncharted territory. It feels like not too long ago I was working hard to try to put together a slide show to go along with our lenten worship series. Simply figuring out how to use the projector for worship felt like a huge and sort of scary technological step for our congregations. And now just a little over a month later we are participating in weekly services on line. On Sunday morning we have people tuning in from Manistee, other parts of Michigan, Montana., Massachusetts, Missouri, and even some international friends. So much about how we live our lives has changed. As we learn to do church, fellowship, and community during this time I have found myself feeling a wide range of emotions, but more anxiety, and worry than I'm used to. My mind has been wandering quite often to one of my favorite writers, Julian of Norwich.

If you aren't familiar with Julian of Norwich, a little background information. She is considered to be a very holy person, although she was never canonized as a Saint. Choosing to live in solitude, or isolation in a cell of her abbey. During her lifetime a large portion of the population died of the black plague. And she became very sick at the age of 30. Most people believed that she would die because of her illness and she was given last rights so that her soul could enter heaven. While she was gravely ill, she received a series of 16 visions from Christ, during one of which Christ tells her this phrase that people have remembered for centuries since, "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well." Despite her intense illness, Julian of Norwich went on to recover from her illness and her journals and manuscripts have been studied ever since by scholars, theologians, clergy and laity.

Her words, "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well". have been repeating over and over in my mind in the last few weeks. These words have reminded me that this isn't the first time in history when people have faced a time like this. Things are not easy, and we are already experiencing heavy grief, and there will be more. We have missed out on plans, we have had to forgo being with some of the people we love. We have missed birthday parties, spring break vacations, graduations, proms, weddings, confirmations, Easter Sunday, and so much more. There is no denying that these are unique, hard and scary days. But let these words remind us that no matter what challenges the world might bring us, all things will be well, there will be a time when these days are a memory. We will find a way through this. God has promised to be with us through the good and the horrible and all things in between, Faith in God's goodness will see us through this. And all things will be well. Stay healthy, stay well. I miss being with you in our worship space, and continue to walk this journey with you.

Pastor Liz.

Fellowship

While we are not able to gather together for coffee hour. But that doesn't mean we cannot connect in other ways. Several people do stay on after the worship on Sunday morning and chat with each in the conference call. The fellowship team also encourages everyone to reach out to church friends by phone or even sending a card. Please stay tuned to the weekly email blasts for other fellowship opportunities that Pastor Liz is trying to put together! We are still a community and we are all in this together! Stay Healthy!

From Worship Team

While we wish we were able to be together in our beautiful sanctuary we cannot safely gather at this time. Please know the worship team is working hard to support Pastor Liz as she works to provide us with an online version of worship each week. We are happy to announce that calling in for worship just got a little easier! To join us for worship simply follow the link below or call the phone number to join by phone. We now have one call in number so you no longer need to type in an access code.

Dial-in number (US): (551) 258-5244

International dial-in numbers: <https://fccdl.in/i/lizziehoy>

Online meeting ID: lizziehoy

Join the online meeting: <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/lizziehoy>

If you have trouble getting into the meeting on your phone, 'Call Me' to the Dial-In number above and you will be called into the conference. Message and data rates may apply.

You may also find our worship streamed live on facebook, through the churches facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ManisteeFirstCongregationalChurch> look for us to start around 10:00am each week.

Our Easter Series is called "The Heart of the Matter" and was specially designed by The Worship Design Studio to be adapted for online worships as many faith communities are worshiping from home. You don't need anything other than a phone or computer to call in, but we encourage you to have a candle, a worry stone, and something to eat and drink when you join us for worship.

On Stewardship

If you are wanting to continue to send in offerings and pledges there are a couple of ways to do that while we aren't able to gather in person. You can give online through our donation portal. <https://www.uccmanistee.org/donate>

Or you can mail a check into the office at 412 4th street, Manistee MI 49660.

Moderators Musings

The strangeness continues, but it seems that perhaps we've turned a corner, or crested the proverbial peak, or name your own adage. In any case, we as a church are surviving and taking it all somewhat in stride.

It has been uplifting to "see" many of you on Sunday mornings. It seems that our Vicar is well on her way to becoming an internet sensation, as our online/Facebook attendance is nearly on par with a normal Sunday, although some of the faces are new. In the coming days & weeks, we'll be discussing how best to start phasing back to a more traditional mode of operation, while still doing everything practical to keep everybody safe and healthy. If you're a little reluctant or queasy about jumping right back in, that is completely understandable. Please don't forget to visit the church's website -

<https://www.uccmanistee.org/donate> -and set up online giving. Thanks to one & all for keeping up on your weekly giving over the past weeks. It has helped, and by all accounts, we should weather the storm reasonably well financially.

On the financial front, some additional good news – We applied and were approved for an SBA Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan through West Shore Bank. The program provides for 2-1/2 months of payroll for our staff. The "loan" is fully forgivable, assuming that we use the money as intended, which we will. It does allow that 25% of the loan amount can be used for utilities and some other operational costs, which shouldn't be necessary. You can go to the SBA website – www.sba.gov - if you want more details on the program.

A couple of Sundays ago during 'Fellowship', I said that the plasterwork was done. It turns out that I misspoke. There are a few deficiencies that I have asked the contractor to remedy. I expect that he'll be back as soon as the lockdown has been lifted, then we can start talking about paint.

In my March Musing, I put in writing that spring was springing...I might have been wrong on that. Since then we've been subjected to plenty of winter-esque weather interspersed with the occasional spring teaser. I'm still optimistic that brighter days are coming. Hang in there!! See you in church (soon)

Duane.

Friday Futurecast and Church Updates

One of the best ways we have found to stay in touch with one another while we are not able to gather has been through weekly email blasts. In these email blasts you will find a worship companion guide for each week, links to music that can help you create a sense of worship in your own home, as well as intergenerational activities that you and your family can do together.

You will also be able to find dial in information for worship as well as other opportunities to connect as a faith community.

If you receive the newsletter in your email inbox you should also be on the mailing list for the email blasts. If you do not think you are on the email blast list please check your spam folder. You can also email Pastor Liz at mfcucc@gmail.com and she will be sure to add you to the email list.

Easter Flowers

The office did not actually place the order for Easter Flowers this year. If you ordered some and would like a refund please contact Deb in the office and she will make arrangements to return your money to you. Thank you!

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United Church of Christ
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