



First News

First United Methodist Church



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A Note From Pastor Toni

Dear Friends,

I've emerged from my basement office and am sitting at the dining room table working today. I'm going to re-create the sunroom office where I began working a year ago, to take advantage of the sounds of birds, windchimes and occasional dog barking.

Working from home has been a reasonable and productive option during Covid. It took a little getting used to, but it has worked well. After Easter I'll be spending more time in the office at church, but there will be times when working from the sanctuary of home will be the best option.

As I've caught a glimpse of the cardinal couple who return each year to the nearly dead bush outside the dining room bay window (that I will advocate not being cut down for the sake of this beautiful pair), I'm reminded of the changing of the seasons, about the constancy of change,



and our continued need to adapt to life in transition. I have always believed in planning ahead and visioning, but the possibility of Covid and how it has changed our way of doing life was completely unforeseen by me, and I'm relatively certain that you hadn't considered it either. And yet, here we are. (Been there, done that.)

I am more than excited about coming together again for worship. I am more than excited about worshipping together as a community at the United Church of Christ. I am so grateful they have welcomed us into their space, and look forward to that temporary home where we will be guests as we continue to move into the future with additional opportunities for connection and relationship. Despite the frustration we've felt at all the uncertainty, and the caution we have prac-

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A Note From Pastor Toni *continued*

(Continued from page 1)



ticed in order to keep everyone healthy, we have learned, and we will continue to learn lessons. They are lessons that make us stronger and better.

This cycle of change, much of which is familiar change, will require us, at least for a while, to practice social distancing, to wear face masks and to frequently wash and sanitize our hands (which has always been a good idea!). We won't be singing or speaking unison prayers, which means designing worship, and doing things the way we've always done them isn't possible. And yet, that's the "price" we pay for being together. I hope that you'll agree with me, that the price is worth paying.

It was so disappointing to not be able to come together last

Holy Week and Easter, but in this season of new life, our gathering back together a year later is somewhat of a resurrection in itself. As Jesus was resurrected from the dead, so, too, are we given new life. As Christ's Body, we will continue to do what Jesus has called us to do in this community, and beyond.

There will be dark days ahead, as we journey together through Holy Week. All of our questions won't be answered when we celebrate the empty tomb on Easter, and yet we have been reminded once again that our Savior lives, that the church is alive, and that we have work to do.

I am blessed to share in that task alongside you.

Easter blessings,

Toni

April's Community Meal

Wednesday, April 28th, the Community Meal will be serving from 5:00-7:00 pm, or until the meals are gone. The menu will be sloppy joe sandwiches, potato chips, coleslaw and brownies. It will again be carry out only.



Through prayer, I can reach God at any time and from any place

submitted by Dorothy Steinke

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying,
pray. *Philippians 4:6*

Happy Easter! My favorite Easter Hymn
is "**He Arose**":

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior

Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord

Up from the grave He arose

with a mighty triumph o'er His foes

He arose a victor from the dark domain

and He lives forever with His saints
to reign

He arose, He arose, Hallelujah Christ
arose.

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my
Savior

Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord.

Chorus

Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my
Savior

He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord.

Chorus

written by Robert Lowry 1826-1899

Mission Statement

I am a witness here at the bi-national communion service at the border Church in Tijuana, Mexico. We share through our faith to serve those most in need, those who have had their lives ripped apart by the current policies at the border. We here want to foster friendship; we want to forge unity among border communities. I am honored to be involved in creating friendship bonds and communion here and across the border.

Yabes Manokaran

Global Mission Fellow International from India serving in Mexico

You are invited to "A Night With John Wesley"

A Special Evening Worship Service with John Wesley

(AKA Rev. Bert Kite as John Wesley)

Sunday, April 25, 2021 at 5 pm (CST) at

Hamlet United Methodist Church, located at

200 S. Main St., Hamlet, IN 46532.

Refreshments to follow the service in the church dining room.



Social Concerns *contributed by Mary Kaufman, chair*



Happy Spring! Thanks to your continuing support of Social Concerns, we were able to give to the

following agencies in

March: Link to Hope \$300 (help for utilities and rent), Neighborhood Center \$200 (food pantry, many other services), Bread of

Life Food Pantry \$200, David's Courage \$100 (drug rehab. services). For the month of

April, we will be adding our church's community meal which resumed at

the end of March. We are also considering adding a new contribution to a project by the Poor Handmaids of Ancilla who are delivering 100 bags of food and paper goods. (Did you know that they cannot buy paper products with SNAP, formerly called food stamps?) These deliveries are

made Tuesday and Thursday to the trailer courts across from the park and the hotels north of town. It's a wonderful ministry as people need to be fed

before they can move forward to receive other services or even hear the word of God. Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that the needy can only use the food pantry at Neighborhood Center once a month and Bread of Life twice a month. There are periods of time when the needy of Plymouth don't have enough food. This program led by Sister Connie Bach helps to bridge that



gap to provide a steady supply of food. Our church's community meal is another important way to supply their nutritional needs. We hope you will continue to give to Social Concerns or become a new supporter of all these programs. God has called us to help the needy. It's an important part of our mission to serve others. John 13:35 says *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* God bless you!



Holy Week In-Person Worship Services

For those people who feel comfortable returning to a group setting, please refer to the following:

Sunday, March 28, 8:30 a.m. at FUCC* for Palm Sunday Worship Celebration +

Thursday, April 1, 7:00 p.m. at FUCC* for Maundy Thursday Service, with FUCC* +

Sunday, April 4, Easter Sunday Worship Celebrations (for both services, please bring a flower from home (potted or cut) to add to our “garden”).

8:30 a.m. at FUCC* +

10:30 a.m. at Centennial Park, Freyman Shelter (behind the tennis courts)

Bring your own chair, blankets, and bulletin.

*UCC = First United Church of Christ located at the southwest corner of Adams and Center Streets.

+ These services will be live-streamed on Facebook and posted shortly after the service is complete. You may watch them live, or at your convenience later.

General Information:

Masks and social distancing are required.

There will be no congregational singing.

If you would like a bulletin, please print one at home and bring it with you; no bulletins will be provided.



In-person services Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday at First United Church of Christ

Looking For Flower Sponsors!

With the return of in-person worship services, we will be having fresh flowers on the altar again. The cost of flowers is \$20 per Sunday. You may take the flowers with you following the last service of the day.

If you would like to sponsor flowers, please contact Kathy in the office and let her know if you want a specific week, or if you will sponsor when there is an opening. Thank you!



MISSION MINDED

Each month we will highlight a different organization that our church supports through offerings.



We support **Operation Classroom** with \$250 annually. This is given through the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church.
From their website:



“Operation Classroom is a non-profit organization that partners with the United Methodist Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone in an effort to empower the people to rise out of poverty through education.

Operation Classroom has provided thousands of scholarships that have allowed students who would otherwise be unable to attend school to get an education. We have shipped nearly 100 containers of school and medical supplies to these two countries during the war years and the Ebola crisis. We’ve sponsored Volunteer in Mission Teams that have provided the opportunity for hundreds and hundreds of Americans to have “hands-on” experience in mission.

We believe that simply providing for a people fails to address the root cause of the poverty puzzle. It is the behaviors, social systems and mindset that create poverty. The key to ending poverty lies in the capacity of a people to change their views and perspectives so that they can facilitate change and engage in productive enterprise. We help young men and women in Liberia and Sierra Leone to gain an education that alters their perspective of what is possible.”

Upcoming Mission Events:

MAY 16 - 22, 2021: WORK TRIP TO MIDWEST MISSION DISTRIBUTION CENTER



If you can count to 5 – you have the skills that are needed! The director at Midwest will have a plan and be ready to assign us jobs depending on what they need done the most. Sometimes there are additional jobs requiring sewing and carpentry skills for people adept in those areas. At Midwest we prepare “kits” that are then ready to be shipped when

disasters occur or requests are made. Some of what is prepared include cleaning buckets (passed out after natural disasters), school bags with school supplies, personal dignity kits, and new baby kits.

The group will leave Plymouth on Sunday afternoon, 5/16, and return on Friday, 5/22.

- There is still room for more participants! Carol Beiter, Bill and Donna Hemmig, and Sharon Westfall are committed to going. There are a few other people that are still considering the trip. Contact Carol with questions or to get signed up to join the group.

MAY 8, 2021: FISH FRY FUNDRAISER

Drive-thru Service in the Parking Lot

Walleye Fish Sandwich and Fries for \$10 (Ralph Smith cooking)



SEPTEMBER 11, 2021: FISH FRY FUNDRAISER

Drive-thru Service in the Parking Lot (Ralph Smith cooking)

OCTOBER, 2021 HENDERSON SETTLEMENT

Our annual work trip to Kentucky will take place in late October. It’s not too early to think about joining our crew. Mike Woolfington is the contact person for this trip.

Additional fundraisers may be scheduled depending on community restrictions.

Preaching Plan for April Easter Season Series: Dare to Dance Again

As Easter people, we are called to dance our dances of freedom for all the world to see—even and perhaps especially in times of great difficulty. Dances of hope. Dances of justice. Dances of love. During this season, post-resurrection stories point to the joy of living in the beloved community and extending that fellowship through our witness as we dare to dance again!



Theme: On a morning when all seemed lost, a stone had rolled away to uncover the feast of all feasts, the joy of all joys. The shroud of death had become a veil for gladness, for celebration, for dancing. What if we stopped trying to outrun one another in a race for things that do

not matter in the end, and instead ran toward life and hope and all the joy we can accomplish together, daring to dance again?

April 4

Easter Sunday

Text: John 20:1-18

Title: **For All Peoples a Feast: Dare to Dance Again**

April 11

Second Sunday of Easter

Texts: John 20:19-31; 1 John 1:1-2:2

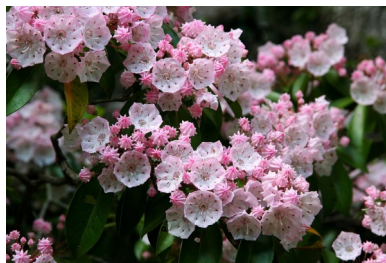
Title: **With Great Power: Dancing Together**

Theme: Dancing requires that we pay attention to our dance partners. It requires finding a rhythm together. The Sunday after Easter brings the story of Jesus appearing to the

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The Miracle of Spring...

In Frances Hodgson Burnett's book, The Secret Garden, young Mary Lennox's guardian, Mr. Craven, asks her if there is anything that she wants such as toys, books, or dolls. Mary's reply takes him by surprise when she simply asks him, "Might I have a bit of earth?" When Mr. Craven asks the reason for her unusual request she says, "To plant seeds in--to make things grow--to see them come alive."



could be that we, like Mary Lennox, want a bit of earth "to plant seeds in—to make things grow—to see them come alive", and to observe the miracle of Spring.

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;

The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven -
All's right with the world!
~Robert Browning

Perhaps that is why we yearn for Spring. It could be that we all long for a peaceful, verdant garden. After all, life began in a garden. It




April Birthdays

4/2	Mike Boys	4/18	Dick Tobias
4/2	Keith Stewart	4/19	Betty Laramore
4/5	Ronald Smith	4/19	Sarah Smith
4/6	Angie Kelso	4/20	LuAnn Evans
4/9	Connie Kendall	4/20	Ruth Van Vactor
4/11	John Finlay	4/23	Juli Macey
4/14	Anne Benner	4/28	Rita Beck
4/14	Mike Goebel	4/28	Herta Thomas
4/17	Grace Cupka		

OOPS!

It was brought to my attention that I had forgotten Joan Troup's birthday in March. This was merely an oversight and I do apologize for it. Hope you had a great birthday, Joan!



PLEASE—If you see that I have forgotten someone or have something incorrect, please call the office, send an email or note and let me know.

Thanks, Kathy

Moving Forward Committee

The Moving Forward Committee did not meet during the month of March. However, during the late February meeting, the committee did review, discuss and accept a report that will eventually be submitted to the Church Council.

The committee will now be entering into a phase of discussing options in rebuilding First Church. As said before and will again be repeated, the Moving Forward Committee is an ad hoc commit-

tee developed through Church Council to begin to explore and bring forward information for consideration in the rebuilding process. The committee does not have the ability to make decisions for the membership; it can only provide information and, if possible, recommendations.

Brent Kaufman, Chair

Moving Forward Committee

Developing a Cooperative Relationship *(Another) note from Pastor Toni*

We have talked about it informally during the time I've been with you, and I'm guessing that this is not a new conversation. It most likely began in 1968 when Trinity and First Church both became United Methodist congregations. Situated about 10 blocks apart, marking the entry and exit into the downtown proper (determined by whether you're heading north or south!), there have been cooperative endeavors, community worship services, combined choirs, and district cluster activities. We have moved in and out of relationship, each seeking to serve Christ and His Church in the Plymouth community and ultimately, to fulfill our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We are now in the process of exploring an intentional relationship of cooperation between our two congregations. As Trinity prepares to receive a new pastor and as First Church prepares to make a decision about how we will proceed with our sanctuary, we find ourselves in a unique position of sharing. It will be an opportunity to consider our best strengths, and how they might positively influence our sister congregation. It will be an opportunity

to partner—in whatever ways we determine—to better serve Christ in this community.

A plan is NOT made out for us. There have been mergers and combined relationships in other places, but there aren't specific steps outlined for how—or even if—we “should” join together cooperatively. This is not a merger. We're not being told by “The District” or “The Conference” that this is something we must do. And yet, with over 100 years of ministry in each of our congregations, we believe that together we can be better.

Over the next few months, we'll be considering the possibilities.

We'll look for ways to relate and share. Our leaders will talk, our pastors will talk, we'll consider and reject, reconsider and adapt. I'm excited about the possibilities that await as we launch this adventure. Let us be in prayer for our churches and our community as we consider what God might do through our combined efforts.



Happy April from the Outreach Committee

In spite of the growing number of Covid cases in our community, we are blessed to recognize that many in our church family are being vaccinated....

As Demond Tutu reminds us: "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." An inspirational way of saying that God is providing light at the end of the tunnel.

God, indeed, provided light with our participation in worship at the First United Church of Christ. Beginning on Palm Sunday we will gather face to face and our Easter worship will continue at 8:30 at FUCC and 10:30 at Centennial Park in the Freyman Shelter.

Future plans will be provided soon, but aren't we blessed to be together and provide support and outreach to each other? Of course, all Covid precautions will be in place, but, by now, mask wearing and social distancing and hand sanitizer are parts of our normal routine!!

Blessed Bookies will continue to gather on the 4th Monday at 5:30 PM. in Fellowship Hall:

April 26, 2021: "The Girl with the Louding Voice" (Abi Dare)

May 24, 2021: "Gray Mountain" (John Grisham)

June 28, 2021: "Dutch House" (Ann Patchett)

July 26, 2021: "In an Instant" (Suzanne Redfearn)

Bad Girls will now be meeting **ONLY** on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 11:00 AM.

Beginning March 9, "flunking sainthood" by Jana Riess has been the focus of this group's discussion. This book describes "A Year of Breaking the Sabbath, Forgetting to Pray, and



Still Loving My Neighbor." If you are interested in participating in either or all of these discussions, please contact Kathy at the office, or swautelet@aol.com for more information.

The Lunch Bunch will gather again beginning April 16th. We will be dining at The Mean Bean in Bremen. Please contact Carol Beiter beiter800@gmail.com if you are interested in attending. This group always gets together the third Friday of the month!

April 16: Mean Bean in Bremen

May 21: Frida's in Culver

June 18: Boat House in Warsaw


Again, we want to extend heartfelt thanks to Pastor Toni, Kathy, Jeff, Tom, Cindy, Kay, Sarah, Ralph, Katie, Donna, our trio of singers and all those who made it possible for us to worship on Sunday mornings these past months. Our online presence continues to grow, so we are reaching many who would be unable or unwilling to attend in person service. We are reminded that the technology that we used to complain about now enables us to maintain contact with those we hold dear. However, that being said, it will be wonderful to meet face to face without the benefit of technology!

Once again, thank you for spreading love, and remember....God is good....all the time!

The Outreach and Support Committee

Susan Wautelet, Carol Beiter, Norma Booker, Betty Kay Eley, Cindy Flagg, Ed Kelso, Bert Rans, Irma Slack, Sarah Smith, Genie Tobias, Beth Pinkerton, and Anthony Witt

April 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
KEY: ☘ 6 am Early Birds ☺ noon Joy Breaks		☩ 12:30 pm Women's Bible Study ❖ 6:45 am Men's Bible Study		1 7 pm at FUCC 	2 Good Friday Office closed	3
4 Services: 8:30 at FUCC 10:30 at the Park	5	6 7 pm Missions	7 ❖	8 ☘ ☺ ☩	9	10
11 8:30 am and 11:15 Services at FUCC begin	12 6:30 pm Social Concerns in FH 6 pm SPRC	13 11 am Bad Girls	14 ❖ 6 pm Moving Forward in FH	15 ☘ ☺ ☩	16 Noon Lunch Bunch at Mean Bean in Bremen	17
18 8:30 am and 11:15 Services at FUCC	19	20 6 pm Finance	21 ❖	22 ☘ ☺ ☩	23	24
25 8:30 am and 11:15 Services at FUCC	26 5:30 pm Blessed Bookies 7 pm Youth & Ed	27 5:30 pm Trustees	28 ❖ 5-7 pm Community Meal	29 ☘ ☺ ☩	30	Beginning 4/1/21, small groups of 15 or fewer may meet again in Fellowship Hall.



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Love God ~ Love Others ~
 Serve Others



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Preaching Plan for April: Easter Season Series: Dare to Dance Again *cont'd*

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disciples and breathing the Holy Spirit on them. Other scriptures this week point to the power of being together, of finding fellowship in the presence of Jesus and the presence of the community. What does it take to dance together?

April 18

Third Sunday of Easter

Texts: Luke 24:36b-48

Title: While in Their Joy: Dancing Sure

Theme: Sometimes we are unsure about our steps in this world. For the disciples, even “while in their joy” at seeing Jesus post-resurrection, they were still “disbelieving and wondering.” But 1 John reminds us that even though we may not know our next steps, we can be sure in them because we are “beloved” children of God and we will be like the one in whose steps we can surely follow — the res-

urrected Jesus.

April 25

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Texts: John 10:11-18; 1 John 3:16-24

Title: By This We Will Know: The Dance of Love

Theme: How do we know the rhythm and dance of our lives is faithful? Drummer of the Grateful Dead, Mickey Hart, wrote: “To fall in love is to fall in rhythm.” It is love for each other by which we know we are followers of Jesus, the ever-attentive shepherd. In the face of societal rules and attitudes that strive to foster “everyone for themselves,” they will know we are Christians by our love. How can we listen to the music that draws us together, “falling in rhythm” with neighbor in order to build up the whole?