

The Church Mouse - February 2021

First Congregational United Church of Christ 715-479-8501

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Message from Pastor Gail

As promised, we will gather in small Zoom groups the first week of February, to share stories about your church's history, highs and lows, and where God has been leading you. I will be compiling all your memories and insights into a summary to share in a worship format and in writing. This is a way for you to hear each others stories of how God has guided you and brought meaning to your ministry. Sign up for one of these gatherings and join us! See your email for a Sign Up Genius post from Amy (or call the church office). If you want to participate, but cannot do so from a computer, call me and we will make an alternative plan. The dates are:

Sunday, January 31st, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Monday, February 1st, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 2nd, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 4th, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

I hope to see you at one of these gatherings!

Why did God Invent Winter?

On Sunday, February 7th we will experiment with a **live Zoom format worship service**. Instead of a pre-recorded service, we will gather by Zoom to celebrate God's gift of ... WINTER. We will sing winter hymns (muted), and share how we cope with the mixed blessing of snow and cold! We will also experience a Zoom Communion service, so bring some simple or creative Communion elements.

Because **this service will not be pre-recorded**, you can watch one of two ways:

- By tuning into the **Zoom broadcast at 10 a.m., Sunday, February 7th**. See your Friday email for a link to the service. If you have a camera on your device, you will be able to see and hear other worshipers live by Zoom. You can also participate by phone.
- OR, you can watch the service after it is posted to **YouTube** Sunday afternoon. Go to **YouTube** on your computer and search for **Eagle River UCC**.
- This is a one time experiment, so don't miss it!

Lent Season Plans:

Ash Wednesday is February 17th. With social distancing still essential, here are some ways we can embark on the Lenten journey together and apart:

- We will broadcast a short Ash Wednesday service on the 17th, which you can access the same way you tune into Sunday services.
- An **outdoor service is tentatively planned at 6:00 p.m.** that night, weather permitting, on the church property. Watch for more details coming.
- On **Tuesday nights during Lent**, we will gather by Zoom for an adult study, "What Is the Church For?" (see below for details)
- Faith Formation families will hear from Sharon about Lenten activities for kids.

Adult Study: What Is the Church For?

During this past year of quarantine, with churches unable to gather, you may have wondered,

If we can't gather on Sundays, what's the point of being the Church?

For five Tuesday evenings during Lent, we will study five purposes of the Church. In an era when some question the relevance of the Church, this study will help us get back to the basics of why Christ calls us together. Are churches still doing what Christ wants us to do? The class will help you think about how you personally embody the Church during quarantine; and how your congregation might continue ministry after quarantine is over. Oh, and you will learn some cool Greek words, too!

Watch for a Zoom link for Tuesday nights, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. starting February 23rd.

What is Sunday Zoom Fellowship? These are informal gatherings online to check in with church friends and talk about different themes. Watch for Zoom links in your Friday emails or on our Facebook page. With a little coaching, you can use your computer, tablet, cell phone or a land line phone to tune in. Call Pastor Gail if you need help connecting. The next Zoom Fellowship will be **Sunday, February 21st at 10:00 a.m.**

COVID-19 Update:

The Vilas County Dept. of Health reports that residents 65 and older *“will be eligible to receive the Covid vaccine on January 25. If you are 65 years or older, please contact your healthcare provider ... Please be patient with our health care systems as we all work on vaccinating our community.”*

Now that some in the community are receiving the vaccine, the Wisconsin Council of Churches has issued new recommendations for how churches proceed with quarantine and openings. You can read these recommendations at: **<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/01/14returning to church/>**

Remember that we ALL need to continue to mask, stay distanced, wash hands and avoid gathering with people outside your household, as it will be many weeks before the majority of us are vaccinated.

For the near future at First Congregational, weekly worship and other church programming will continue to be held online via YouTube, Facebook and email (a brief Ash Wednesday service may be held, weather permitting). See your Friday emails for information about church programs and how to access them. ***Please let the office know if you are having trouble connecting with worship resources.***

The office staff is accessible by appointment only. Please do not come to the building unannounced, *even if you have a key.* Please contact Nan or Pastor Gail if you need to come to the building and we will make an appointment for your visit. Let’s work together by staying apart!

Pastor Gail

“Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God, we open our doors and hearts to all in service and love, as modeled by Jesus Christ.”
(Mission Statement of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Eagle River, WI)

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I hope you all plan to attend one of pastor Gail’s Zoom history exchanges about First Congregational United Church of Christ Eagle River. Interesting challenge, isn’t it, to think back over the years we each have spent as part of this congregation. When Marlyn (Eagle River native) and I were first married, I was certain we would never spend more than some weekends or holidays in Eagle River, and here we are 60 years later part of the community for almost 20 years — and members of this very church into which she was born.

Even in the last twenty years, with the changes of leadership, the loss of members who have moved or passed on, the gradual aging of our congregation — ourselves along with the rest — I still see no other place I’d rather be. Our UCC congregation has strength as an active part of Eagle River and beyond. Look at the banner above the south entrance: there is the comma because God has not finished speaking to us and there is our extravagant message that Jesus rejects no one and neither do we. That two-part message, paired as it is, has a history here at this church. It is a message with which I agree (I have not always succeeded with this message, but thank goodness God meets me where I am as I strive to improve.)

Pastor Gail’s intention to have us remember must also thrust us forward. We have excellent opportunities to move forward within our church and within the communities we can impact. In recent years the Council has devoted a one-time yearly gift of \$100 to mission ideas which have been promoted by the congregation. These donations come from the Maggie Ball Mission Fund. You received an email or a letter explaining that our deadline is the Council meeting February 10. So, I am asking again: if you had \$100 to give to mission endeavors, what would you give it to?

Last year members suggest the following charities of missions: Caritas, Bible Foundation, Chick a Dee Acres Farms, Inc., Kalmar Center, Salvation Army, Vacationland Voices, Okoa Toto Inc., Children’s Home in Kenya, Wild instincts, FORK, and Melody of Compassion. Council also gave additional funds to FORK twice during the year.

JANUARY COUNCIL REVIEW

In the early part of the meeting we held financial discussion noting that our pledged amount still stands at \$127,000, short \$23,000 from our needed pledges of \$150,000. Part of the discussion concerned our giving patterns, which have had to change because of COVID. No offering plate is passed; the office is not accessible, so pledged offerings need to be sent in, as did the pledge cards. If you have not pledged for this year, please look ahead to the time when we will be open, and we will need our full budget for completing the 2021 goals.

Council approved the scholarship amounts for the awards given to seniors at the local high schools. Students will learn of these scholarships through the high school Guidance Departments, and when applications are received our scholarship committee under the chairmanship of Ursula Charaf will begin its process of winnowing to selection of the winners. As in the past all graduates and current university or technical school students from our congregation are eligible for the Jane Zipperer Scholarship funds.

The Search Committee is completing our profile, which is quite intense and will provide potential Settle Pastor candidates with a thorough understanding of who we are.

One of the major topics involved the Vine Family Fund, the \$200,000 bequest from Pat Vine and Betsy Simms. Five outstanding proposals were received. Council will consider each proposal and possibly combine some of them before its March meeting. The proposals all demonstrate a creative approach to maintaining the principal for as long as possible.

During Pastor Gail's report we learned of the National call to toll church bells for each of those who have died from COVID on January 19 at 5:30 p.m. (The bell was rung; the church was lit. Those who stood outside to observe were deeply moved by the sound of bells in the community.)

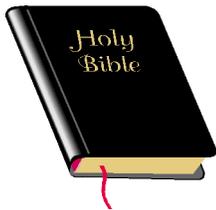
The Zoom discussion of the congregation's recent and past history was approved by the Council. Results of the Zoom conversations will be compiled by Pastor Gail and used during our Lenten services.

Pastor Gail suggested other Ash Wednesday and Lenten plans which you can find in her report earlier in the MOUSE.

Bernie Hupperts, Council President

FEBRUARY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 7 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	Isa 40:21-31	Ps 147:1-11, 20c
1 Cor 9:16-23 Mk 1:29-39		Source of Strength
Feb. 14 Transfiguration	2 Kings 2:1-12	Ps 50:1-6
2 Cor 4:3-6 Mk 9:2-9		Compassionate Community
Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isa 58:1-12	
Ps 51:1-17	2 Cor 5:20b-6:10	Matt 6:1-6< 16-21
Feb 21 First Sunday in Lent	Gen 9:8-17	Ps 25: 1-10
1 Peter 3:18-22	Mk 1:9-15	God's Loving Paths
Feb. 28 Second Sunday in Lent	Gen 17:1-7, 15-16	Ps 22:23-31
Rom 4:13-25 Mk 8:31-38 or Mk 9:2-9		Always Close



February 17th

The Lenten season may not be the longest season in the church year but it is one of the most important seasons. It is a time for spiritual preparation through repentance and growth in faith for Easter. It is the time of the church year when the passion and death of the Savior come into focus. Lent begins with a special day of repentance, Ash Wednesday, and ends in the depth of sorrow and tragedy on Good Friday.



A MESSAGE FOR THE FAITH FORMATION KIDS

The day of Epiphany is January 6. the word Epiphany means manifestation or appearance. It commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child. Some of the customs include Epiphany songs, having one's house blessed, consuming Three Kings Cake, as well as attending church services. It is customary for Christians in some places to remove their Christmas decorations on Epiphany Eve.

We are going to celebrate it by making a KING CAKE. The ingredients for the cake vary by country but in most cases a feve (fava bean) such as a figurine is hidden inside. The person who has the feve in their piece of cake is the king or queen for the day or they must provide the cake for the next year's celebration.

KING CAKE: Your King Cake kit will be available on Friday, January 29th from 4 - 6 p.m. at the church. I will be making a video about how to make the cake. You will receive an email on Friday for the video link and also the ZOOM link. The ZOOM session will be on Wednesday, February 3rd at 6:30 p.m. I can't wait to see your cakes! Yes, you can eat the cake with your family that night.

EPIPHANY SONG: "As With Gladness"

As with gladness sages bold did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, true Morning Star, may we evermore your splendor see.
As with joyful steps they sped to the lowly manger bed,
There to bend the knee before One whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet ever seek your mercy seat.

Prayer: Dear God, make us truly wise. Help us to know the stories in the Bible and to understand their teachings.

Sharon R. Breit youthministry@eagleriverucc.org

Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone. It has to be made, like bread, remade all the time, made new.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Feb. 1	Sandra Mettler
Feb. 2	Myrtle Bucholtz
Feb. 3	Leta Cole
	Ann Dunphy
	Kim Kaitchuck
Feb. 11	Mark Johannsen
Feb. 13	Tim Holperin
Feb. 18	Kerry Griebenow
Feb. 20	Tobi Johannsen
Feb. 23	Keenan Roberts
	Laurie Stoutz
Feb. 24	Steven Thompson
	Char Thomson
Feb. 25	Charles Hill
Mar 7	Ned Loar
Mar 9	Dawn Parker
Mar 10	Jerry Stadler



The Family of Robert "Bob" Cole

who died January 4, 2021 at the age of 89. "Bob" attended the 10:00 worship service regularly with his daughter Linda and granddaughter Leta.

The Family of Chris Thomson

Chris died January 8th, 2021 at the age of 83
Chris and Char joined our Church Family Oct. 4, 1970, and were "early bird" 7:30 worshippers with Chris serving as an usher for many years.

Thank you from Char and family for the many cards, calls, and messages they've received.

The Family of Dennis Burgy

who died January 22, 2021 at the age of 73

Do you or someone in your family have a birthday in February/early March that isn't listed? Call the church office and we'll add you to our list.

*You don't have to reveal your birth year.
Thank you!*



Monday, February 15th

"Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire, called conscience."

-George Washington-

"It is impossible to righteously govern the world without God and the Bible."

-George Washington-

"The Lord prefers common-looking people. That is why he made so many of them."

-Abraham Lincoln-

"A person will be just about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

-Abraham Lincoln-

To Our Church Family,

"One person with courage is a majority."

If you know of someone who would benefit from a call, a visit, or a card, let the pastor know.

pastorgail@eagleriverucc.org

Cell phone: 920-883-7887



It's not very often that we have **BABY** news to report and this is special:

Marlys Lee now has 23 great grandchildren with the births of:

Bodhi Christian, December 31, 2020

Son of Michael and Hailey Otto
and

Wells William, January 19, 2021

Son of Lucas and Meagan Otto

Congratulations, Great Grandma Marlys!

Happy Valentine's Day February 14th



Pastor Search Committee Update - February

Greetings, Church Family,

As we continue to work on the profile we have combed through four of the six sections. We have examined information that will be shared with potential candidates in regards to general information of the church, visions and goals of the church, who we are as a church, what it is we would like to see our new pastor be involved with as a spiritual leader within our church, community, as well as neighboring communities; some history of our church to give insight as to our constant spiritual growth and movement to maintain and attract new members. In doing this we want to be positive and honest when giving and sharing this information. We thank you for your patience and entrusting us with this very important task. Again if you have any questions, feel free to contact any Search Committee member.

Respectfully yours,

The Search Committee

Trista Langley-Tyler (Committee Chair) jewelry@metalurges-upnorth.com 715-617-1162

Kelli Burrill: kelli.burrill@gmail.com

Nancy Diepenbrock: petsx5@gmail.com

Pat Fox: wpine2fox@yahoo.com

Sandy Kaitchuck: skait85@gmail.com

Kamie Kolb: kamiekolb1@gmail.com

Doug Malinsky: doug.malinsky@gmail.com

Patti Roberts: robertsupnorth@hotmail.com

Krista Wittkopf: copper4811@gmail.com

Growing Spiritually

Setting aside time with God is one of the basic Christian ways for spiritual growth. Devotionals are found in many different formats. Booklets are probably the most popular, but there are also some very good ones on websites or apps. I would like to invite a group of members to come together for Zoom discussions, maybe once a week or twice a month, to share our insights and growth through devotions that we will all be reading during the weeks. There is a specific app I have in mind called the "3-Minute Retreat." You can find it in the App Store, and it is free. The devotions are short readings with a couple of questions and a prayer that follows. I've used this devotional for many years and have found them very helpful to quiet myself and connect with God. It does come from a Jesuit Ministry, but I just ignore the sparse references in Catholicism. They truly aren't very often.

I am still working out the specifics of how this will work, but would like to know if there are any of you who would like to join me in doing this. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me, Even if you're not interested in meeting with us, check out the devotional app. It might be just what you're looking for.

God's Peace— Tobi Johannsen, 920-450-1402 or tjharleygal56@gmail.com

First Congregational UCC Contact People - 2020 –2021

Pastor Gail Irwin Cell: 920-883-7887 Church: 715-479-8501

Email: pastorgail@eagleriverucc.org

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Office Mgr. - Nan Pophal, 715-479-9882

Info Tech - Amy Mehlhoff, 801-425-5214

Clerk - Norma Yaeger, 715-477-1984

Director of Christian Education: Sharon Breit, 715-477-2163 youthministry@eagleriverucc.org

CHURCH COUNCIL

President: Bernie Hupperts 715-617-9468

Vice President: Mark Johannsen 920-475-7576

Molly Jaeger: 715-479-4505 Trisha Moore: 715-617-1102 Shirley Thompson: 715-479-8753

Cathy Palmer: 715-617-6373 Luke Aschbrenner: 715-358-6579

Pastor Parish Relations Committee - Tobi Johannsen 920-450-1402

Women's Fellowship - Linda Sanborn, 715-479-8091

Sanctuary Arts Group (SAG) - Patti Roberts, 715-479-6191

Performing Arts Music - Bernie Hupperts, 715-617-9468

Music Director - Lori Hunter, 715-493-8078

Organists/pianists - Linda Brainard, 715-479-5043; Lori Hunter, 715-493-8078,

Norma Yaeger, 715-477-1984



**2021 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE NOW ON
OUR WEB SITE www.eagleriverucc.org**

General Scholarship: open to graduating seniors of the Class of 2021 from the Northland Pines, Phelps, and Three Lakes School Districts
(two—\$1,000 scholarships)

Jinny Paterson Environmental Scholarship: open to graduating seniors of the Class of 2021 in the Northland Pines, Phelps, and Three Lakes School Districts. (one—\$2,000 scholarship)

Roger Rieckman Engineering, Mathematics, Science Scholarship: open to graduating seniors of the Class of 2021 in the Northland Pines, Phelps, and Three Lakes School Districts (one \$1,500 scholarship)

Bird's Nest Scholarship: open to all students from the Northland Pines, Phelps, and Three Lakes School Districts who will be enrolled in a college, vocational school or another institution of higher education in the fall of 2021. Home schooled students also qualify.

Kranz Scholarship: Applicants must be either graduating seniors from a **Vilas County High School, residents of Vilas County,** or demonstrate a compelling connection to **Vilas County.**

Zipperer Scholarship: open to **MEMBERS of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Eagle River,** who will be enrolled in a college/vocational school or any other institution of higher education in the fall of 2021. Students may re-apply each school year.

DEADLINE FOR ALL APPLICATIONS: FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 2021

**Mail applications to: First Congregational UCC
PO Box 1385, Eagle River, WI 54521 Email: office@eagleriverucc.org**

BOOK LOVERS READING GROUP

We will meet via Zoom on February 18th at 7 p.m.

February's book is **THREE THINGS ABOUT ELSIE** by Joanna Cannon. There are three things you should know about Elsie: First: she's my best friend. Second: She always knows what to say to make me feel better. And the third: might take a little bit more explaining.

84 year old Florence has fallen in the flat at Cherry Tree Home for the Elderly. As she waits to be rescued, she wonders if a terrible secret from her past is about to come to light; and, if the charming new resident is who he claims to be; why does he look exactly like a man who died sixty years ago?

From the author of **THE TROUBLE WITH GOATS AND SHEEP**, this book will teach you many things, but here are three of them:

1. The fine threads of humanity will connect us all forever.
2. There is so very much more to anyone than the worst thing they have ever done.
3. Even the smallest life can leave the loudest echo.

March's book is **MY NAME IS MARY SUTTER** by Robin Oliveira, an enthralling historical novel about a young woman's struggle to become a doctor during the Civil War.

In this stunning first novel, Mary Sutter is a brilliant, headstrong midwife from Albany, New York, who dreams of becoming a surgeon. Determined to overcome the prejudices against women in medicine and eager to run away from her recent heartbreak, Mary leaves home and travels to Washington D.C. to help tend the legions of Civil War wounded. Under the guidance of William Stiff and James Blevens — two surgeons who fall unwittingly in love with Mary's courage, will and stubbornness in the face of suffering — and resisting her mother's pleas to return home to help with the birth of her twin sister's baby, Mary pursues her medical career in the desperately overwhelmed hospitals of the capitol.

Hope you can join us. Contact Donna De Pape: spindle257@gmail.com or 715-617-1710 with questions.