

The Church Mouse - April 2021

First Congregational United Church of Christ 715-479-8501

Interim Pastor: Rev. Gail Irwin pastorgail@eagleriverucc.org

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Message from Pastor Gail

For most of us, Easter is a single day of celebration, with the bunnies and blooming flowers and Alleluias. But to experience true resurrection and renewal can be a slow, gradual process that can be difficult to discern. The power of resurrection is easy to ignore, fear or deny. Forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, restoration — these things can take a long time, courageous work, and a lot of divine grace.

There is so much brokenness in our world right now. But there are also signs of hope everywhere you look. To experience resurrection is to train all our senses to see, hear and experience the signs of new life God offers us; and to respond with hope and positive action, embracing possibilities, taking risks, nurturing growth and health.

As we walk through this Holy Week, as we observe the return of birds and get vaccines, as the Search Committee progresses and protocols for in-person activity are written, watch for signs of resurrection. Maybe you will BE one of those signs for someone else!

Peace!

Pastor Gail

Holy Week Schedule

March 28th - Palm Sunday worship will be pre-recorded on line with a Communion liturgy included:

At 10:00 a.m. that morning, we will gather in cars outside the church for Drive-Up Communion and a Drive-by Palm Parade. Please park on either side of Division Street in front of the church between 10:00 and 10:30 and stay in your car. We will have prepackaged individual Communion elements and palm branches to share through your car window.

At 10:30 a.m. we will have a short car parade around the neighborhood with our palms, to let the world know we are followers of Jesus above all other powers!

April 1st - Maundy Thursday, we will worship in the building with limited seating by reservation at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Please call the church office in advance if you wish to attend one of these services. A maximum of 25 people may be present in the sanctuary. The service will include Communion with pre-packaged elements and will be posted on line during the day. Church doors will be opened 10 minutes before worship and worshippers will remain masked during the service. There will be music, but no congregational singing. If you have been unable to worship with us on line, you are especially encouraged to sign up and join us. This is an experimental event as our Council prepares protocols so we will be ready to worship again in person when it is safe to do so.

April 2nd - Good Friday - UCC and Prince of Peace Lutheran members will join us for an on line worship service featuring Paul Oman, artist of "Drawn to the Word" who will share an art presentation reflecting on the story of Good Friday. Watch for news in your Friday email about how to tune in to this worship presentation!

April 4th - Easter Sunday an on line service featuring our own Virtual Choir under the direction of Lori Hunter will be posted early on Easter Sunday morning (it will not be available before Sunday).

At 9:00 a.m. an outdoor Easter Sunrise Service will be held at the home of Lori Hunter (see directions below), *weather permitting*. Worshippers should plan to wear boots, dress for the weather and bring a blanket and chair if desired. A few chairs will be provided. **If the event is cancelled, an email notice will be sent out 24 hours in advance and posted on Facebook.**

Directions to Lori Hunter's home: 7484 Birch Tree Drive, Eagle River

From Eagle River:

Take Hwy 70 West out of Eagle River

Turn left on Hwy 17 S — travel about 8 miles to Hwy D (by the White Stag)

Turn right on Hwy D (the only way to turn); you will curve right on Hwy D where it meets Pine Lake Rd.

Travel to Hide-A-Way Drive, turn LEFT on Hide-A-Way (.6 miles) to Birch Tree Drive

Turn LEFT on Birch Tree (.5 miles) to house on the left

From St. Germain: take Hwy 70 East to Hwy O
Turn Right on O (3.1 miles to Hwy D)
Turn Left on D (4.2 miles) to Hide-A-Way Drive *(If you go over 2 bridges, you've gone too far.)*
Turn Right on Hide-A-Way (.6 miles) to Birch Tree Drive
Turn Left on Birch Tree (.5 miles) to house on the left.

We have a white mailbox and are across from a marsh; you will see a large 4+ car garage. Someone will be at the top of the driveway to let you know where to park.

Pastor Gail will be on vacation April 12th through 18th. If you have a need for pastoral care during that time, please contact the church office. On Sunday, April 18th, you will have several options for an online worship service to choose from. Watch your Friday email for information.

“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

EASTER. RESURRECTION. REBIRTH. SPRING. All of these words are sounding warm and inviting to me, as they are to you. The long winter which ended the long year has some promise built into it. The steps which we will take to come back together safely and hopefully are being built. We see reassuring details of vaccinations completed for some. All are signs of beginning again with the renewed faith that Easter promises. God loves us and we will serve God as First Church members, associates, and friends. Stay tuned because you know our church still lives through its purpose and our congregation holds together despite the separation of COVID. With Faith we are up to the challenge.

Bernie Hupperts

COUNCIL NEWS

Council met March 10, once again on Zoom, despite the various wifi problems that can exist for us in our homes. Council noted from the reports prepared by Paula Hendrickson and Cindy Schattner that our congregation continues to meet its pledge and we are financially healthy. During this month of March, Paula shepherded us through the paper work to qualify for another round of PPP federal money, amounting to \$20,057.

The Personnel Committee is beginning a search for a replacement for Amy Mehlhoff who has moved on to another position. Amy has helped us communicate regularly through various electronic channels. Her assistance as we have navigated a difficult year in leadership and change has been immense. Thank you, Amy, for dependable, faithful service to our congregation.

Council’s Vine Family Fund (VFF) discussion ended with approval of a motion that will also go to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. The motion stipulates use of 4.5% or approximately \$9,000 each year to honor the lives and teaching careers of Pat Vine and Betsy Simms, donors of the Vine Family Fund bequest of \$200,000.

We propose that \$1,000 of the fund be used each year for a VFF/UCC Literacy Gift. A committee-selected book will be presented to all 4th graders in the Northland Pines and Phelps school districts. A committee of UCC and school personnel will select a book each year with a theme that expands students’ knowledge of the variety and diversity of their world.

The remaining \$8,000 will be used for VFF/UCC teacher grants to be made on the basis of recommendations from another committee comprised of congregation members and school personnel. The 4.5% will be drawn from interest and principle invested by our Gifts and Endowments Committee. Council members are meeting with school people to define further parameters of how each part of the annual gift will be dispersed.

By fall the two proposed gifts should have defined parameters and be ready for discussion and vote by the congregation at our September Annual Meeting.

The next major item at the March Council meeting was how to proceed with the developments and approval on the various steps we need to take for in-person worship. Following the Wisconsin Council of Churches outlines, as well as those from local churches, the Council will be defining how to process through the phases and details of opening. Health and safety are the major factors. County health department statistics on the control of COVID and the recommendations from WCC regarding events began the discussion of return to

(continued)

the building this month. Following our April 5th meeting a full set of protocols will be published. As with all of you we look forward to being together in worship, and we're hoping Maundy Thursday will be a successful first step.

By the time you read this, we will have observed Palm Sunday with in-person Communion. Perhaps you added your vehicle to those in the Palm Parade. Special events mark the rest of Holy Week and Easter. Events that have added to our history as a caring and close group of Christians.

Council also approved another \$100 gift from the Maggie Ball Mission Fund. This gift with given to the fund at Eagle River's mBank for the Nettrour Family who lost their home to fire.

The May 11-15 Wisconsin UCC Association Annual Meeting is being held virtually with some meetings in the evenings on those days. A complete schedule is available on line. We are allowed two delegates at these meetings. Council is looking for volunteers who would like to learn more about UCC activities during this time.

Thanks for continuing to keep the faith here at First Congregational Unite Church of Christ, Eagle River.

Bernie Hupperts



APRIL SCRIPTURE READINGS

April 1 Maundy Thursday I Cor 11:23-26	Ex 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14 Jn 13:1-17, 31b-35	Ps 116:1-2, 12-19
April 2 Good Friday Heb 10:16-25 or Heb 4:14-16, 5:7-9	Isa 52:13-53:12	Ps 22 Jn 18:1-19:42
April 3 Holy Saturday I Peter 4:1-8	Job 14:1-14 Matt 27:57-66 or Jn 19:38-42	Ps 31:1-4, 15-16
April 4 EASTER I Cor 15:1-11	Acts 10:34-43 Jn 20:1-18 of Mk 16:1-8	Ps 118:1-2, 14-24 Now What
April 11 Second Sunday of Easter I Jn 1:1-2:2	Acts 4:32-35 Jn 20:19-31	Ps 133 Marks of Faith
April 18 Third Sunday of Easter Luke 24:36b-48	Acts 3:12-19	I Jn 3:1-7 Christ Among Us
April 25 Fourth Sunday of Easter I Jn 3:16-24	Acts 4:5-12 Jn 10:11-18	Ps 23 Enfolded by Love

Thank You

April Scripture Readers:

- April 4th Pat Tucker
- April 11th Iland & Ayla Shepherdson
- April 18th
- April 25th Ken Lynch



For the near future at First Congregational, weekly worship and other church programming will continue to be held online via YouTube, Facebook and email. 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.**

Zoom Coffee Hours are held on alternate Sundays as informal gatherings on line to check in with church friends.

Watch for Zoom links in your Friday emails or on our Facebook page.

Call Pastor Gail if you need help connecting.

In April Zoom Coffee Hours will be **Sunday, April 11th and April 25th**



Thank you, Amy!

Our Information and Technology Director, Amy Mehlhoff, will soon be moving on to a new job and internship as she completes a degree in human services. She will continue to assist us in a limited capacity until we find a new IT staff member. Please take a moment to thank Amy for everything she's done to get our church through a tumultuous year on line! And special thanks to Kathy Holperin for assisting in the transition.

Thanks also to our new **Personnel Committee** for stepping up as we seek new staff! They are Paula Hendrickson, Kathy Holperin, Carlton Schroeder, Terry Posto and Mark Johannsen.

Pastor Search Committee Update - April

Good news, church family! We have completed our first very careful and time consuming task of editing the church profile. We have begun our second runthrough to check for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and to see if any wording needs to be tweaked. We are hoping to be done with this step of the pastor search this month and to move to the next step of sending it to Rob MacDougall (UCC Conference Minister) to review and get posted for potential pastoral candidates seeking a new church family to lead. We are happy with the updates we have made to the profile and will inform you as to when the profile has been submitted for potential pastoral candidates to see. Again, we thank you for your patience and trust in this very important task. As always if you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any committee member.

Respectfully submitted,
The Pastor Search Committee

Trista Langley Tyler (Committee Chair) - jewelry@metalurges-upnorth.com 715-617-1162	
Kelli Burrill - kelli.burrill@gmail.com	Kamie Kolb - kamiekolb1@gmail.com
Nancy Diepenbrock - petsx5@gmail.com	Doug Malinsky - doug.malinsky@gmail.com
Pat Fox - wpine2fox@yahoo.com	Patti Roberts - robertsupnorth@hotmail.com
Sandy Kaitchuck - skait85@gmail.com	Krista Wittkopf - copper4811@gmail.com

THANK YOU!

From 2021 Year of Giving recipients

“Dear First Congregational UCC, Thank you for your generous \$100 gift on March 1st. We will be using your generous gift to build a bunk bed this spring. Thank you for thinking of Re-Member and the Oglala Lakota Oyate. Sincerely, Jenn Sklener”

“Dear First Congregational United Church of Christ, Thank you for the \$100.00 contribution dated 3/1/2021. We appreciate your willingness to support the work we are doing at NATH. Your gift will provide needed support to our mission which is a commitment to ending and preventing homelessness. NATH exists to provide safe housing and basic needs to families and individuals who are homeless within an atmosphere of encouragement, respect, dignity and hope while nurturing and promoting self-sufficiency and independent living. The Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing, INC. will actively promote public awareness of homelessness by partnering with Northwoods’ resource agencies and educating the community. Tammy A. Modic. M.S.W.”

“First Congregational Church, On behalf of the Vilas Food Pantry, I would like to thank you for your generous donation of \$100.00. Your support helps us to continue to meet the needs of our community. Thanks for caring. Jacqueline Coghlan”

There is never a shortage of God's love.

A Message for the Faith Formation Kids
from Ms. Sharon

PEACE BE WITH YOU

This month's story is about one of Jesus' disciples who doubted something that was true. Today he is still known as "doubting Thomas". The story begins on the evening of the day Jesus was resurrected, the evening of the first Easter. The disciples were locked in an apartment or house, hiding. The women had told them that Jesus was raised from death, but the disciples were still afraid that the people that killed Jesus would come after them next. All the disciples were together except Judas and Thomas.

All of a sudden, Jesus was standing in the room. "Peace be with you," he told his disciples. He showed them the scars on his hands and his side from being nailed on the cross and stabbed with the sword, then told them to stop hiding. They were to keep doing the work of God that Jesus started -- teaching, preaching, healing, and helping others. He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them carry on that work, and then he left.

When Thomas came back, the other disciples were very excited and they told him about Jesus' surprise visit. But Thomas didn't believe them. He doubted. "Unless I touch his scars for myself, I will not believe," he said.

A week later, the disciples were together again. This time Thomas was with them. Again Jesus came and stood in the room with them. Again he said, "Peace be with you." He walked up to Thomas and told him to touch the scars on his hands and side. "Do not doubt. Believe," Jesus said. Thomas touched Jesus' scars and finally believed. "My Lord and my God," he said.

Jesus answered him, "Do you have to see me to believe? How happy are those who believe even though they can't see me."



Jesus wasn't angry at Thomas for doubting, just a little disappointed maybe. But Jesus did say that those who believed even though they couldn't see him or touch his scars, would be blessed and very happy. **WE ARE THOSE BLESSED AND HAPPY PEOPLE!**

Let's Pray: Dear God, we believe in Jesus even though we don't see him like the disciples did. Thank you for the special blessing of faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Message of the Robin

I have one preacher that I love better than any other on earth. It is my little tame robin which preaches to me daily. I put his crumbs on the window sill. He hops on the sill and takes as much as he needs. From there he always flies to a little tree close by, lifts up his voice to God, sings his song of praise and gratitude, tucks his head under his wing and goes to sleep, leaving tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher I have on earth.

—Martin Luther



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

April 3	Marilyn Dunphy
April 5	David Holperin Gene Yahr
April 7	Jeff Collins
April 8	Connie Hill
April 9	Matt Kaitchuck
April 10	Abigail Thompson
April 16	Davany Fox
April 19	Vickie Brown
April 21	Roger Lauritzen Helen Welch
April 23	Larry George Kay Scharpf
April 24	Landon Fox Jean Haack Noah Wittkopf
April 25	Chuck Kemp
May 1	Allison Liddle
May 3	Pat Fox Sally Kemp
May 7	Barb Pevytoe
May 8	Dan Holperin Lori Hunter
May 10	Ayla Shepherdson

Do you or someone in your family have a birthday in April/early May 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.



Helena Roerdink
has a new address

Phelps Care Center
4288 S. Maple Road
Phelps, WI 54558

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING

Thanks to all who donated to One Great Hour of Sharing.
A total of \$1,255 received.

In God's love we are secure

We are richer today than we were yesterday — because
We have laughed often.
We have given of ourselves.
We have forgiven others.
We have made new friends.
We have treasured old friends.
We have made stepping stones out of
stumbling blocks.
We have thanked God for each new day.
We have placed our trust in God, knowing that
in his love, we are secure.



Growing Spiritually

Our "Coffee With God" group is still meeting, but for the rest of March and the first half of April, we will be meeting on **Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m.** We Zoom for 20-30 minutes each time.

Our conversations have been very insightful and we truly enjoy the connection each week. We always have room for more to join us. If interested in seeing what it's all about, please contact me ...

Tobi Johannsen Cell: 920-450-1402 Email: tjharleygal56@gmail.com



NATH - Frederick Place - Most Needed Items

1. Gallon Ziplock bags
2. Quart Ziplock bags
3. Bathroom cleaner
4. Scotch tape
5. Black Sharpies
6. AAA batteries
7. Yellow highlighters
8. Brooms

If you would like to donate items from the "Wishlist" bring them to the church, rap on the door and we'll take them from you. They can also be taken to Frederick Place in Rhinelander at 204 W. Frederick St.
Monetary donations are always welcomed!
nathnorthwoods@gmail.com



BOOK LOVERS READING GROUP

We will meet via Zoom on April 15th at 7 p.m. The link will be posted in the Friday, April 9th notice of events sent out by Pastor Gail.

April's book is "**My Name is Mary Sutter**" by Robin Oliveira. We had planned to meet in March but many folks in the group had not finished the book so we postponed our gathering until April.

Here is a summary from the publisher.

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 Stipp 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 capital.

Like Charles Frazier's "Cold Mountain" and Robert Hicks' "The Widow of the South", "My Name is Mary Sutter" powerfully evokes the atmosphere of the period. Rich with historical detail (including marvelous depictions of Lincoln, Dorothea Dix, General McClellan, and John Hay, among others), and full of the tragedies and challenges of wartime, "My Name is Mary Sutter" is an exceptional novel.

And in Mary herself, Robin Oliveira has created a truly unforgettable heroine whose unwavering determination and vulnerability will resonate with readers everywhere.

Hope you are enjoying or will enjoy the book. Anyone can join us for our discussion. Contact Donna De Pape via email spindle257@gmail.com or phone at 715-617-1710 with questions or concerns.

One person can make a difference — everyone should try.

First Congregational UCC Contact People - 2020 –2021

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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

