



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 65 Number 7

July 2021

Sunday School at 9:30 A.M. (when school is in session)
 Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M. 700 Poyntz Avenue
 Second Helping Dinner at 6:00 P.M. Manhattan, Kansas 66502
 Thursday Evening Prayers at 7:00 P.M. telephone 785-537-7006
www.uccmanhattan.org

Confirmed in Love. Rooted in Love. Reaching out in Love.

“They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season.” Psalm 1:3a

Later this month, I’ll be “traveling” (in quotes because it’s all virtual this year) to the 33rd Synod of the United Church of Christ. I’m serving as a part of the Kansas-Oklahoma delegation and the theme of this year’s gathering is “Rooted in Love.” It will be a very different type of Synod experience, of course, and I appreciate the theme because it helps me remember how important it is to stay rooted in love during this ongoing time of transition.

As I talk with people these days, many are feeling some sense of “normalcy” creeping back into their lives. Some have excitedly told me “everything feels normal again,” while others are remembering that there were things about the Before Times *[continued pg. 2]*

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they don't want to return to. Those who live with unvaccinated or immunocompromised family members often tell me "normal" still seems like it's off on the horizon and not here yet. Many of us are still very aware that the pandemic isn't over and that we cannot simply gloss over the immense grief and losses the world continues to suffer. And even those who are enjoying a return to some normalcy tell me it's all quite an adjustment.

My guess is we, as a congregation, will continue to live in the midst of all this tension, too. It's so good to be able to continue to expand the ways we can be together in person safely...and it's not exactly like it used to be. It's wonderful to have in-person AND online worship...and we are going to continue to see growth and changes and challenges in the ways our ministry continues to evolve and respond to the needs of an ever-changing world.

As much as I might want to done with liminal time (please and thank you very much, Jesus), it seems it is still very much with us. In this time, I find myself clinging to the image of a big, tall, strong tree. Rooted in Love, reaching deep down into the soil for nutrients and high into the air for the sunlight. Flexible as it waves in the breeze. Changing with every season. Responding to all the changes happening around it and growing bigger in love. When I feel discombobulated (which is often these days), I sit with this image of a tree, rooted in God's love, and find some measure of peace.

What images are speaking to you during this time of ongoing change? What small glimmers of hope on the horizon are giving you strength? Have you made time to sit with the Spirit and share the pain you've experienced? And the joys, too?

One of the joys that's coming up in our congregation is the confirmation of 8 youth on July 11th. Wow! As we confirm them in love, let's recommit ourselves to being rooted in God's love....big, strong, flexible trees reaching down, reaching up, reaching out to share that love with all we encounter in the world around us. I encourage you to take a moment and read about how you can be a part of sharing God's love with our confirmands by writing down your favorite Bible stories on post it notes (page 7) and by welcoming Christ in our midst by looking out for new faces at Sunday morning worship (page 6).

Pastor Caela

Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

- For more information, please contact the church office.

E-MAIL PRAYER CHAIN – If you wish to be added to the First Congregational e-mail prayer chain, please contact the church office. It is a quick and easy way to stay up to date with your church family.



**Office Closed July 5
for Independence Day**



Connecting with Pastor Caela

Caela keeps her own calendar, so if you'd like to connect, the simplest thing is to e-mail, call, or text to set up a time. Mondays through Wednesdays are typically best for routine meetings, as Thursdays are used for sermon and worship preparation and Friday-Saturday are her days off. Caela tries to honor work-life balance by responding to non-urgent text and voicemail messages only during regular work hours. Please note that if you ever have an emergency between the hours of 10pm-7am you will need to CALL Pastor Caela, not rely on text messages, as she does not receive them overnight.

UCC General Synod: Online July 11-18

Every two years, the entire United Church of Christ gathers for our General Synod. This year, Synod is July 11-18 and is happening entirely online, which means it's much easier to attend all or part of the event! Keynote speakers include social justice activist Valerie Kaur and Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, president of Sojourners.

You can sign up to receive updates and register to be a General Synod visitor on the Synod website www.generalsynod.org/. Pastor Caela will be participating in Synod as a part of the Kansas-Oklahoma delegation in her role as Vice President of the KO Conference.

Staff Availability

Pastor Caela will be away from the office from July 12-18 and July 31-August 5. The first week, she'll be serving as a delegate to the UCC General Synod with the KO Delegation. The second week will be a family vacation. During General Synod Caela will have limited access to e-mail, text messages, or voicemail. During her vacation she will not be checking messages at all. If you have a pastoral care need while Caela is gone, please contact the church office during the day or the On Call Minister of Care after hours.

Minister of Care on Call

July 12-18: Brent Maner

July 31-Aug. 5: Deane Lehmann

Building and Staffing Reminders

The office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - Noon and 1:00-3:00 p.m. If you need access to the building during the week, please buzz at the office door and we will let you in. Please visit the welcome table in the lobby to sanitize your hands and grab a mask if you need one. Sandy may have her door closed, but please just knock if you need to speak with her. If you need to talk with staff, they might suggest that you visit in a larger space than their offices to ensure six feet of distance can be maintained.

We are still receiving mail at 700 Poyntz. Please ensure that you write a return name and address on any correspondence you send. We do not open mail that is missing a return address and we want to make sure your letter reaches its intended recipient.

You can find the most recent COVID-related updates and policies at uccmanhattan.org/COVID.

Health Policy Updates

The Church Cabinet recently made some updates to our COVID policies and we wanted to share those with you.

Updates:

Small groups of 15 or fewer are now permitted to meet INDOORS in the church building or offsite, following all of our general policies like masking, distancing, etc. (We still ask that boards/committees meet via Zoom as we continue to work on setting up options for hybrid meetings and discuss the best ways to meet in the future.)

When you are in the church building, you may remove your mask if you are in a room alone or with only members of your household (please put your mask back on if someone enters the room)

You can read the full policies online anytime at uccmanhattan.org/COVID. if you have any questions, please reach out to our Moderator, Jeff Watson.

Welcoming Christ in Our Midst

As some of us return to the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings, we are thrilled to see one another and probably feeling a bit of awkwardness as we try to recognize faces beneath masks and children who have grown by leaps and bounds in the past 15 months. If you come to worship on Sunday, you'll find people you've been seeing regularly, people you haven't seen in over a year, new guests and first-time visitors, and we will all have forgotten some names.

It will help us all if we remember to wear our nametags, be on the lookout for new faces, and greet each other warmly. If you need a nametag, please let the church office know and we'll get you one soon! We want to rejoice in reconnecting with old friends AND we also want to make sure newer folks feel welcomed and included. The Rev. Don Miller from the KO Conference recently wrote a great article about the importance of welcoming guests during this season and you're encouraged to read it.

(<https://www.kocucc.org/news-events/welcoming-church-visitors>)

And, of course, those of us who continue to worship on Zoom can warmly greet guests and each other in the chat, sign up to be Zoom greeters, stay for Fellowship Hour on Zoom and more. Whether you're worshipping online or in-person, there are many ways to seek and see the face of Christ on Sunday morning!

Options for Giving

We are grateful for your financial support as we continue to Love Unconditionally, Challenge Spiritually, and Minister Fervently together.

Options for giving:

- 1) Place in the plate on Sunday morning or mail your contribution to 700 Poyntz Ave., Manhattan, KS 66502.
- 2) Donate online via PayPal (no login required). Go to uccmanhattan.org and scroll down to the DONATE button.
- 3) Setting up a recurring online gift is a convenient way to provide consistent financial support to the church. Your bank may be able to do this for you OR you may contact the church office for a copy of our authorization form and we can set it up for you.

Thank you for your continued support and please contact the office if you have questions.



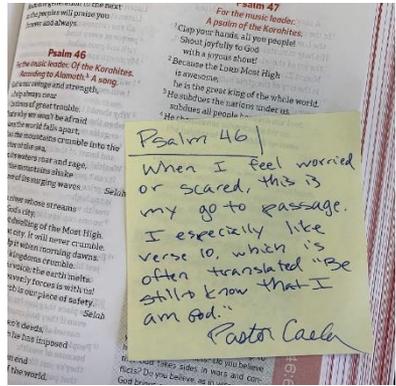
Confirmation Sunday – Share Your Favorite Bible Stories

On July 11th we will be confirming 8 youth. We can't wait! The youth will be leading worship that day and the Deacons will host a special fellowship hour on the lawn after worship. We hope you'll be able to join us.

We will be presenting each confirmand with a student Bible and **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** You are invited to write down a note about a favorite Bible story or

passage on a Post It note for each Bible. You can make 8 copies of the same note or pick a different passage for each confirmand. At fellowship hour that day we'll have you stick your note in each confirmand's Bible. This will give them a jumping-off point for exploring their new Bible as they are surrounded by our love and care at this stage of their faith journey.

You can bring your Post It notes with you on July 11th OR the Deacons will have some available at fellowship that day if you'd like to write them there. The photo shows a sample of what we're inviting you to do, but if you have any questions, please reach out to Brittani or Pastor Caela. If you cannot be at worship on July 11th, you can mail your Post It notes to the office ahead of time and we can place them in the confirmands' Bibles for you!



Mission Statement

The Mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is

- To love and accept others unconditionally as God loves and accepts us, and by example, to encourage others to do the same.
- To challenge ourselves to grow spiritually through worship, education, nurture, reflection, discussion, fellowship, and outreach.
- To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.

We hold ourselves accountable before God for this mission.

Christian Education

Please contact Brandy McDonald (brandy@uccmanhattan.org) or Brittani Frost-Shank (brittani@uccmanhattan.org) for more information about options for children and youth.

Summer Youth Group

As our confirmation group wraps up, the youth are making plans for summer gatherings on Tuesday nights. If you have a child or grandchild in 6th-12th grades who is interested in youth activities over the summer, please reach out to Brittani (brittani@uccmanhattan.org) to make sure you're receiving updates from her about our plans!

Weekly Connection Points

Sundays: Worship at 10:45 a.m. in our Sanctuary or via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link.

Fellowship Hour immediately following worship via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Tuesdays: Youth Group | contact Brittani@uccmanhattan.org

Thursdays: Prayers & Fellowship at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

For more information about kids and youth activities, contact Brandy@uccmanhattan.org (age 3 through 5th grade) or Brittani@uccmanhattan.org (6th-12th grades).



WEEKLY CONNECTION POINTS

Sundays: Worship & Fellowship Hour
Tuesdays: Youth Group
Thursdays: Prayers & Fellowship via Zoom

UCCMANHATTAN.ORG/ONLINE

Summer Fun with First Congregational: Text us for more info about Meet Ups

Get outdoors this summer and enjoy making new friends or visiting with longtime friends you haven't seen in a while! Text your name and the name(s) of the group(s) you're interested in to 785-380-7772. We'll sign you up for a GroupMe and the group organizer will text you updates and when/where to meet up. You do not have to have the GroupMe app to participate, just a phone that can text. If you don't have the ability to text, please contact the church office so we can make other arrangements.

All groups take place outdoors and participants agree to follow our congregation's COVID safety measures. You can read full details at uccmanhattan.org/covid. The highlights are: don't come if you're sick/quarantined, wear a mask, maintain at least six feet distance from those outside your household, keep track of who attends in case we need to complete contact tracing.

Easy Riders - Join us for easy bike rides in and around town. (And if you want to coordinate some more challenging rides, that's okay, too). This group is facilitated by Chad Moreau and Brent Maner.

Playground Meet Ups - Meet up at local playgrounds and the kids can play while the adults visit on the sidelines. You don't have to be a parent/guardian to join the group. You can also just come and visit with others in a comfy seat. BYOC (bring your own chair - and mask, of course). This group is facilitated by Brandy McDonald.

Craft & Chat (or just chat!) - You don't have to be a crafter to join. That's just a fun name. If you have any craft projects you like to do with your hands OR you just want to enjoy a comfy seat while visiting with friends, join us. BYOC (bring your own chair - and mask, of course). This group is facilitated by Deane Lehmann.

Walk & Talk - Stroll with friends and enjoy conversation while you walk. We will meet up at City Park or other easy-to-walk places with sidewalks (i.e. not strenuous hikes). This group is facilitated by Greg Eiselein.

Have an idea for another group? Great! Please let Pastor Caela know.

Cobb Corner — Going Green

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

It’s time to talk about dirt! Not a religious topic? It should be because it is absolutely critical to our planet’s future. An area of soil about the size of Costa Rica is permanently destroyed every year. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates 1/3 of the world’s soil is degraded or simply dead dirt while other experts say only 60 years of topsoil are left in the world! (“Soil Not Oil—The key to Curbing Climate Change” *Green America*, 2015).

What’s ruining our living soils? Monocropping – from corn to lawns with pesticides, plowing and deforestation, drought, urbanization – the list goes on. Water shortages, famine, and the movement of climate refugees have already begun.

Even as individuals living in towns and cities we can make a difference by our actions. Here are just a few of the ways my neighbors are helping: (1) Many compost, avoiding commercial products that can be dangerous. (2) Some of us are planting trees, native grasses, vegetation for pollinators, and eliminating or reducing our lawns. (3) Some have rain gardens or rain barrels. I personally count on about 1200 gallons of rain water each year. (4) Still others tend our traffic circles or roundabouts, thereby beautifying and making our streets safer.

As the population grows and our options to deal with climate change narrow, it is imperative we each protect God’s creation by keeping our soil and souls enriched.

— *Linda Richter*

P.S. On July 10 from 8:30-11:30 Kansas soil experts will be discussing this topic of carbon sequestration from many angles. Professor Larry Erickson has for many years organized excellent conferences at K-State on the environment. These are free and open to all. This year’s conference will be on zoom. I am particularly interested in the 10:25 session on soil health, site restoration and tree planting. To view the program and register for the event, visit: <http://www.engg.ksu.edu/chsr/sustainability/dialogs/>

Share ideas for future Cobb columns with Linda Richter.

The Second Helping

Our Second Helping ministry continues to be a wonderful way in which our church extends its mission to the community of Manhattan. We regularly serve 60-70 people each week. Many of you have helped with this mission in a variety of ways, and that is much appreciated!

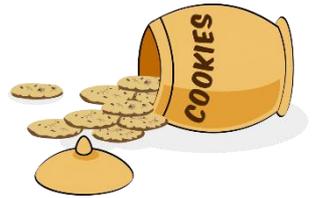


Currently we are hoping to add some more volunteers to our list of "regulars." If you are interested in learning more about either of these positions, or volunteering in other ways, please contact:

Jean Steiner

Second Helping Volunteer Coordinator

Cookies!!



The Second Helping freezers are **EMPTY OF COOKIES**. We just used the last of our wonderful home-made cookies to use for lunches and as back-up for Sunday supper desserts. What a good summer activity for: kids, grandkids, Sunday School classes, Scouts, bridge clubs, happy hour groups, book clubs.....

So – bake and bag some cookies – one large or 2 smaller cookies per bag. We need 50 servings for lunches and about 6 dozen for Sunday Suppers. But any amount would be very welcome. Drop them off at the church or text Linda and she'll pick them up.

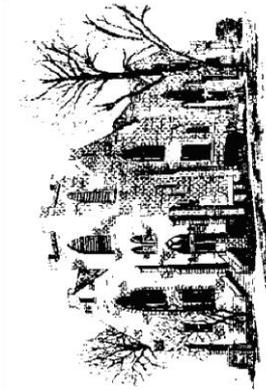
Thank you! Home-made goodies are a special treat for our guests!

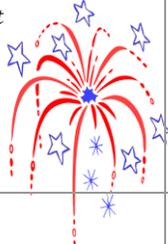
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 2021				1 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	2	3
4 10:45 Worship and Communion <i>Fill the breadbasket</i> 6:00 Second Helping 	5 Offices Closed Independence Day 7:30 NA mtg	6	7 5:15 Deacons 7:00 AA Meeting	8 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	9	10
11 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	12 7:30 NA mtg	13	14 6:30 Justice & Witness, Mission 7:00 Facilities 7:00 AA Meeting	15 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	16	17
----- Caela away / General Synod -----						
18 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	19 7:30 NA mtg	20	21 7:00 Cabinet mtg 7:00 AA Meeting	22 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	23 Newsletter deadline	24
25 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	26 7:30 NA mtg	27	28 7:00 AA Meeting	29	30	31 Caela vacation --- through August 5