



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 65 Number 8

August 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

God: As Close as Our Breath

Have you ever had the experience of picking up a book or listening to a lecture and suddenly feeling like you're looking in a mirror? You think to yourself, "YES! This is what I've been thinking/feeling/experiencing all along but I didn't know there was a name for it!" or perhaps "This person is explaining what I already know so much better than I ever could!"

This was my experience recently when attending one of my monthly class sessions with the Souljourners program. I am wrapping up my first year in this three-year training program for aspiring spiritual directors. Each month we've gathered over Zoom for a weekend-long class on topics like world religions, the Reformations and Counter-Reformations, mysticism and more. We also focus each month on a particular skill that will help us in our work as spiritual directors. Recently, our topic was Celtic Spiritualities and despite being married to a person who speaks Irish Gaelic and knows a lot about Celtic cultures, I went into the session with very *[cont. pg. 2]*

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| ➔ ➔ ➔ ➔ | Inside this Newsletter | ← ← ← ← |
| Sharing & Caring 4 | Christian Education 8 | |
| Celebrations of Life 6 | New Artwork! 11 | |
| News and Events 5 | Second Helping Update 14 | |

little knowledge about the topic. Imagine my surprise when I found myself thinking again and again, “Wait! This is so very similar to the Christianity I already know! And it sounds so much like what I’ve heard preached and taught in various UCC gatherings over the years!”

We learned about how Christianity grew among Celtic peoples and was interwoven with earlier ways of experiencing the world, creating unique strains of Christianity that have a different flavor than those developing in Rome, Northern Africa, or the Eastern Church. I love learning about how diverse Christianity is and has always been. You’ve often heard me say “Christianity is a big place,” and this has been true since the beginning. We have never been a religion of one mind (as much as some parts of the Church wish it were so). Instead, regional flavors and cultural differences have always existed within our faith. What holds us together as the Church is simply a desire to stay in covenant with one another - not some agreement on points of doctrine.

Celtic experiences of the Holy easily made room for diverse ways of understanding God because the hierarchy of the larger Church was not privileged as much as in some other parts of Christianity. God was seen as intimate, present in all aspects of daily life, “as close as our breath,” and fully accessible to all people. God isn’t found only in the walls or rituals of the Church, but in everyday life, especially in nature. The two great teachers of the faith in these traditions are Scripture and nature - because God is believed to be Still-speaking in ancient stories and in the natural world around us. The emphasis of faith is not on “knowing about God” but “knowing God,” and prayers are meant to be experienced as unceasing. There are prayers for milking the cow, chopping the vegetables for dinner, tending the hearth in the morning and night. Prayer is not seen as something we create on our own, but as a posture of awareness and joining our own spirits to an ancient, unfolding song of thanksgiving that already exists in the world.

So many of these aspects of Celtic Christianities remind me of what many of you tell me you’ve experienced in your own faith journey this past year - an awareness of the Holy in nature, a deep knowing that God can be found anywhere in the world, and a sense that God journeys with us in the day-to-day moments of our lives. If you’d like to learn more about Celtic Spiritualities, you might want to Google “Carmina Gadelica” to read a selection of old prayers passed

down orally through generations and preserved by Alexander Carmichael in the 19th century. I also recommend the book *Listening for the Heartbeat of God* by J. Philip Newell as a short, but comprehensive overview of Celtic Christianities.

Pastor Caela

Important Note About Staff Availability

Pastor Caela will be away from the office from July 31 - August 5 on a family vacation. During this time Caela will not be checking e-mail, text messages, or voicemail. If you have a pastoral care need during this time, please contact the church office during the day or the On Call Minister of Care, Deane Lehmann, after hours.

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.

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



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

- For more information, please contact the church office.

Celebrations of Life

Frank Sidorfsky

Saturday, August 14 at 2:00 p.m.
at First Congregational Church

Tod Kerstetter

Saturday, September 4 at 2:00 p.m.
at All Faiths Chapel, K-State

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.

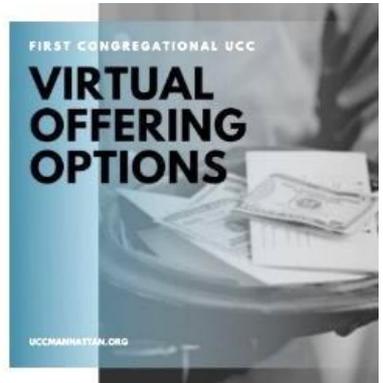
Options for Giving

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.

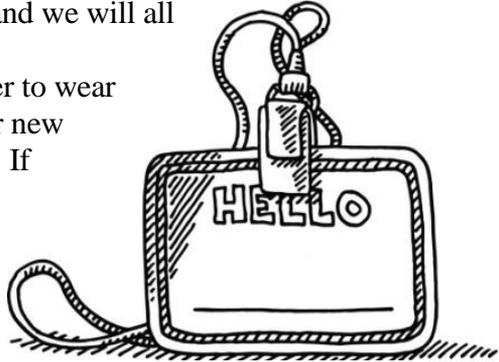
Thank you for your continued support and please contact the office if you have questions.



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!

Dear Friends,

If any of you have home grown flowers in mid-August, I would love to have some for Frank's celebration of life service on August 14th. It doesn't have to be many. Please don't buy any.

Gratefully,
Dona Sidorfsky

Join the Tech Team!

Did you know that we have people from out of town (and out of state?) join us each Sunday for worship via Zoom? We are grateful for the way technology has kept us connected this past year AND we are excited to continue to offer Zoom worship as an option for those who live elsewhere, are traveling, or may have other needs that make online worship the best option.



Our heroic tech volunteers have done SO MUCH to get us to the point we are at today. We are grateful. Our next step is recruiting 4-5 more people to join the tech team and learn how to run the video camera, Zoom meeting, and sound system on Sunday mornings. Our hope is to have enough people on the team that each person can volunteer about one Sunday morning a month. Please prayerfully consider whether you might be called to this ministry and, if so, please let the church office know!

“Teach Us To Pray”—August Sermon Series

Once upon a time, Jesus’s friends asked him, “How should we pray?” For once, he answered the question instead of just posing more questions, and followers of Jesus have been praying that prayer in many languages and versions ever since. Join us worship online or in-person from August 8 through September 5th as we explore The Prayer of Jesus. We’ll be unpacking it bit by bit and we hope that this series will give you a sense of freedom as you explore your own prayer life as summer comes to a close.



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.

Believe it or not, school is starting soon which means that we have a lot coming up!

August 15th- Blessing of the Backpacks and distribution of backpack tags and teacher bookmarks.

This will happen as usual in the service, but we know not everyone is comfortable back in person yet and that not everyone can make it that Sunday. If you'd prefer your tags porch dropped or picked up, or mailed if you are further away, please let Brandy know! We would love to get these tags in your hands!



August 22nd at 9:30 am- Children's Sunday school is back!

We will be starting with worship leader training including acolyte training and teaching kids about other ways they can serve the church. We plan to follow all COVID precautions and may move outside when possible. We understand that not everyone is comfortable coming back yet, so Brandy will also be recording weekly Sunday school lessons you can enjoy at home. We are also so excited to be introducing a children's bell choir Sunday each month this year! Brandy will be emailing out more details on all this very soon.

Also, we have tentative plans to reopen the nursery on August 22nd! Parents - please watch your emails for information regarding the COVID protocols we are taking to ensure we can do this safely. We are also hoping to start Kids Worship back up this fall, again, stay tuned!

Finally, if you have children ages birth through 5th grade and are not currently getting Brandy's emails, please contact her at brandy@uccmanhattan.org.

Adult Sunday School Fall 2021

August 22-September 5 we finish up our series of parables from *Short Stories by Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine.

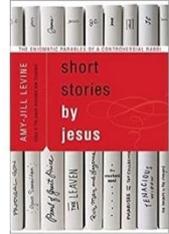
August 22: The Kingdom of Heaven is like Yeast.

Led by Deane Lehmann

August 29: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Led by Sue Zschoche.

September 5: The Rich Man and Lazarus.

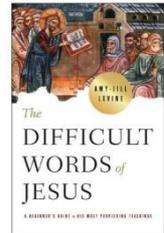


We are in the process of developing classes to help us explore and define what it means to be a progressive church. We are also working on classes based on the work of Rob Bell and the Nooma series. Would you be interested in leading a class? Please let us know!

The Tuesday Bible Book Club

11:30 to 1:00 every Tuesday via Zoom

The Tuesday Bible Book Club will resume its meetings on August 24th. Our first book of the fall will be Amy Jill Levine's new book, *The Difficult Words of Jesus*. In this book, Levine takes on six of the most confounding words spoken by Jesus -- words that both challenge and confuse us (e.g., are we really supposed to sell all our possessions and give all the proceeds to the poor?!). Levine helps us to understand how those words would have been understood when Jesus first spoke them. And she helps us to grapple with the meaning of those words for our own times. Best of all, the class will include short video comments from Levine herself. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Sue at sue@uccmanhattan.org.



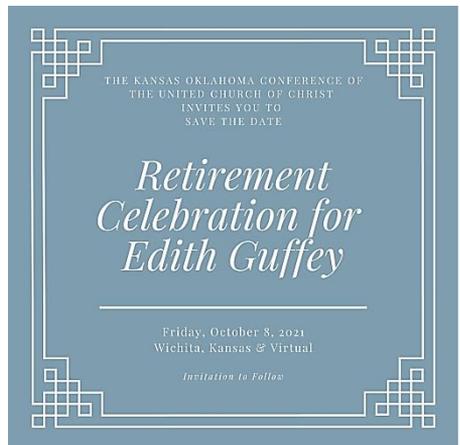
UCC General Synod

The first-ever all-online UCC General Synod has come to a close. You can find many articles detailing the resolutions that were considered and learn more about what this "special edition Synod" was like. Just go to <https://www.ucc.org/news/> and look for the most recent updates. You can also view the worship services from General Synod by going to YouTube and searching for United Church of Christ General Synod 2021. The next UCC General Synod will be held in 2023 in Indianapolis, IN.

Conference Minister Search Updates

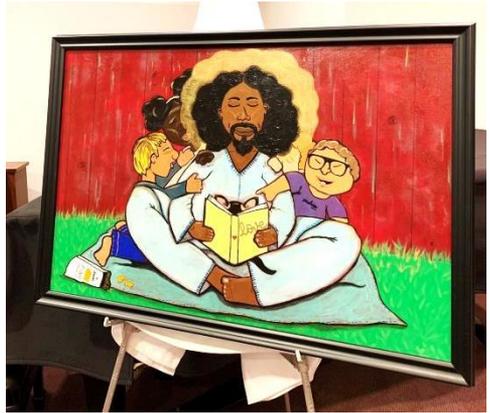
The Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the UCC prepares to welcome a new Conference Minister later this year. Edith Guffey will be retiring at the end of 2021 and our Conference Search Committee has been hard at work for over a year to call a new Conference Minister. A special meeting of the Conference will be held on Saturday, August 21st via Zoom to affirm the call of the candidate that was selected by the Search Committee and affirmed by our Conference Council. The Rev. Lorraine Cenicerros will be available at several "meet the candidate" Zoom sessions ahead of the special meeting and you are invited to attend one and get to know her! You'll find information about Rev. Cenicerros and the Zoom sessions at <https://www.kocucc.org/lorraine-cenicerros>. Contact the church office if you're not able to access the website.

We will also prepare to celebrate Edith Guffey's retirement. That event will happen online and in Wichita during the KO Annual Meeting this fall. Save the date for Friday, October 8th and sign up for the KO eNews to ensure you get updates. You can sign up for the eNews at [kocucc.org](https://www.kocucc.org).



New Artwork for our Church Building

On Sunday, July 25th we blessed new artwork for our building. "Jesus Loves," was created by local artist and church member Paulicia Bender Williams at the request of our Board of Justice & Witness. The painting will be hung in our main lobby and we are grateful for several donors who provided the funding for the artwork. It's such a gift to hear God's stillspeaking voice through art and we are so blessed by this painting. In case you missed the unveiling during worship, we wanted to be sure and share a bit from the artist about the painting.



"Jesus Loves," 2021

Statement from the artist,
Paulicia Bender Williams

local artist and member of First Congregational UCC:

Considering what we already know about Jesus and what his values were, I imagined what he'd be doing if he was still on Earth. I felt he'd be consistent. He'd still teach Love by being it and showing it through the way he treats the weakest among us. The ones who require the most love, patience, and compassion- our children. Love seemed the perfect name for the book he reads from and, if you look closer, you'll notice the scars on his hands and feet.

I painted the children to represent the beauty and diversity in our own. The 'goldfish' crackers are a play on when Jesus fed the multitudes with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. The blue blanket is inspired by when he walked on water, and the rainbow stitching in the blanket represents our LGBTQ+ community.

Jesus' clothing, a shalwar kameez, is a common style worn in parts of the Middle East and Africa. He is also seated by a barn, a place that may bring him peace due to the circumstances of his birth. The barn is a freshly painted blood red, made new again.

This is actually my 2nd attempt at this painting. I kept getting the sense that I was supposed to start over and include our seal point Siamese Daryl in the finished piece. The feeling was so overwhelming I obeyed. Daryl was in the vet hospital due to complications from feline diabetes and a week later he died. This, and the love we have for FCUCC, makes Jesus Loves extra special for our family.

Cobb Corner — Going Green

May the sun bring you new energy by day.
May the moon softly restore you by night.
May the rain wash away your worries.
May the breeze blow new strength into your being.
May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty
all the days of your life.

—*Apache Prayer*

This call for peace with nature struck me with unusual force after hearing of a resident's expensive struggle to kill tiny plants growing in a few places in his lawn. Hundreds of dollars later the plants were poisoned along with the bees who loved it and brown streaks dotted the yard. Watering will restore the grass, but the poison will wash down the gutters to the sewer. Birds, worms and all life in touch with that poison will sicken or die.

This is an extreme case but I suspect most of us have used a toxic substance for less than a vital reason. The irony is that we or our descendants may become victims of our carelessness.

Now to make amends. Recycling is extremely important to slowing climate change but we need to do it correctly or we'll gum up the machinery and endanger those operating it. *Mother Earth News* (Dec/Jan, 2021, pp. 56-59) highlights the problem in an article titled "The Worst Things to Throw in the Recycling Bin:"

- Lithium-ion batteries –These can catch fire. Instead go to www.Call2Recycle.org, punch in your zipcode for closest location.
- Shredded paper –It can clog machines. Compost or take to shredder events.
- Plastic bags, film, tarps –Turn into grocery or other chain stores.
- Hoses, wire and extension cords –These can play havoc with machines.
- Sharp objects, syringes and medical waste.
- Glass food and beverage containers can be recycled but NOT mirrors, windows, or bakeware.

Additionally the article noted disposable diapers as a particular menace of which nothing can be recycled. I would have noted the cost! Cloth diapers are cheap, can last through several children

and can be eventually used as rags. Disposables are convenient for traveling but one can spend over \$2000 a child on them if they are used exclusively!

Finally, the article noted the U.S. currently recycles about 35% of its trash which is up from 10% in 1960. San Francisco recycles over 75%; Alabama only 9%. How does your household compare?

— *Linda Richter*

Share ideas for future Cobb columns with Linda Richter.

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

Second Helping Update

Second Helping volunteers have had a busy year so far in 2021, assuring that our guests have hearty and healthy to-go hot Sunday suppers and sack lunches. We are serving around 60 hot meals and 50 lunches every Sunday. In the first 6 months of this year, we have served **1,799 hot meals** to guests, including 11 or more weekly meals to the Pawnee Crisis Unit. We also provided **1,368 sack lunches**. That's a total of 3,167 meals! A HUGE THANK YOU to the cooks, Sunday helpers, lunch makers, dessert makers, grocery picker-ups, meal deliverer and all who have donated cash and food items to this mission.



If you are interested in being part of this important mission of our church, these are our needs:

- **shelf-stable food:** oatmeal packets, peanut butter snack crackers, cereal bars, canned vegetables (and we LOVE big cans) and slaw, ranch and Italian salad dressings.
- **cash donations:** for food items needed for meals and lunches and for To-Go supplies
- **Dessert Makers:** need homemade desserts for 60 every week. To sign up go to www.uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups.
- **Head Cooks or cooking teams:** cooking teams in the kitchen are usually family members. Contact Di, Jean or Linda for info.
- **Sunday evening volunteers:** 2 or 3 volunteers on Sunday evenings. Contact Di or Jean
- **Lunch volunteers:** Making the sack lunches during any time before Sunday. Contact Shari. She also welcomes homemade goodies to put in the lunches.



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

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.

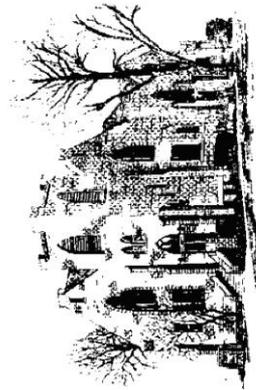
We hold ourselves accountable before God for this mission.

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
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700 Poyntz Avenue
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(785) 537-7006
uccmanhattan.org

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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 10:45 Worship <i>(Communion moved to Aug. 8)</i> 6:00 Second Helping | 2 7:30 NA mtg | 3 | 4 11:30 Lunch Bunch 5:15 Deacons 7:00 AA Meeting | 5 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting | 6 | 7 |
| ----- Caela vacation ----- | | | | | | |
| 8 10:45 Worship and Communion <i>Fill the breadbasket</i> 6:00 Second Helping | 9 7:30 NA mtg | 10 | 11 6:30 Justice & Witness, Mission 7:00 Facilities 7:00 AA Meeting | 12 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting | 13 | 14 |
| 15 10:45 Worship <i>Blessing of the Backpacks</i> 6:00 Second Helping | 16 7:30 NA mtg | 17 | 18 7:00 Cabinet mtg 7:00 AA Meeting | 19 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting | 20 Newsletter deadline | 21 |
| 22 9:30 Sunday School begins Kids' Worship Leader Training 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping | 23 7:30 NA mtg | 24 11:30 Book Study | 25 7:00 AA Meeting | 26 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting | 27 | 28 |
| 29 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping | 30 7:30 NA mtg | 31 11:30 Book Study |  | | | |