



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 60 Number 5

May 2016

Sunday School at 9:30 A.M.
Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M.
Second Helping Dinner at 5:15 P.M.
Thursday Evening Taizé at 7:00 P.M.

700 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, Kansas 66502
telephone 785-537-7006
www.uccmanhattan.org

Now the Green Blade Rises

A few weeks ago, I dropped my son off at school and then went on a walk in Washington-Marlatt Park. It's one of my favorite places in Manhattan. Tucked away just off of Seth Child on the far northwest side of town, I find that a lot of people don't know about it. I sometimes refer to it as "a little Konza." There are several mowed paths that wiggle around the park and lots of nooks and crannies to explore. One of my favorite things about Washington-Marlatt is that it is different almost every week of the year. On this particular early spring day, about half of the park was freshly burned.

As I walked the paths and marveled at the patterns made by the fires, I could smell the strong scent of a fresh fire, even though nothing was currently burning. And then I saw it – a little bit of smoke billowing out of a small pile of ash about 20 yards away from me. I walked over to it, poked at it, ground it down with my foot. And then I put my hand down near the earth, which was still warm from the recent fire. I grabbed up a *[continued pg. 2]*



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handful of ash and rubbed it in my hands. As it floated away on the breeze, I thought about all the new life that was about to spring forth in this particular place.

There's something about that very-Kansas image of tiny new bits of grass poking out of a charred landscape that soothes my soul. We know that humans have – for centuries – used controlled burning in an intentional way to shape the landscape. When I hold that ash in my hand, I feel a connection to the people who lived on this land thousands of years ago. Perhaps they also walked these hills and took a moment to touch the ground and give thanks for the new life springing forth.

The ash in my hand also makes me think about the times in my own life when I've felt like I was walking through fire – times of pain, heartbreak, emotional anguish, fear, hopelessness. Though I have sometimes doubted whether I would make it through those times – so far I have always emerged and the new me that springs forth from the times of struggle seems to be more resilient and alive.

The other day when I was at the LGBT and Allies meeting on campus, one of the students asked me how I managed to find hope when the world seems to be awfully messed up these days. I gave them some kind of answer. I'm not exactly sure what. It seems to me that we all have to find our own visceral experience of hope to claim as our own. But in sharing our own experiences, sometimes we get a glimpse of someone else's hope, and it's enough to keep us going for a time. One of my visceral experiences of hope is the feeling that washed over me when I was standing in the middle of a burned out field, rubbing ash into my hand and letting it blow away. In the midst of the destruction, I knew in my heart of hearts that new life was growing just beneath the surface, preparing to emerge once again. Thanks be to God.

Pastor Caela

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



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concern

- For more information, please contact the church office.

Helping

- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim/Carolyn Hodgson, Bill Pallett, or Jeff Keller.
- **Home Communion Visits** The Deacons can bring communion to your home on the first Sunday of the month. Visits at other times can be arranged with the pastor.

Lunch Bunch May 4

Join the Women of the Church for Lunch Bunch on Wednesday, May 4 at Longhorn Steakhouse (505 Tuttle Creek Blvd). It's not for women only—everyone is welcome to join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m. (See individual Lunch Bunch locations for the year by going to the church website at www.uccmanhattan.org and then clicking on Community Life/Events Calendar.)



From the Moderator

This month's spotlight will focus upon the Deacons and what a long history these individuals have had in the Christian church! Etymologically, the word deacon has both Latin and Greek roots, with the original meaning being servant, waiting man, or minister. The office and duties of deacon vary a good bit according to the Christian group with which they are affiliated, but our local church community defines deacon as one who "serves the spiritual life of the church, coordinating closely with the pastor on matters relating to worship." In so many ways, these men and women literally do just that, as when they serve communion to us or arrange for those who do. And they work closely with the pastor to extend the presence of the church to all its people in myriad ways. Since the worship service, itself, is never a static entity, deacons are also charged to oversee the service and its content to make sure that both are relevant and meaningful. I grew up holding deacons in high regard because my father was a deacon, and he was very mindful of the responsibilities that accompanied that position. He took the role seriously and served others in a way that made a young son very proud of his dad. And that experience, I think, was transformative in its own right, helping me to realize that, as Christians, we are always called upon to serve others--not as an onus but as a privilege and an opportunity to grow more fully into the better selves we aspire to be. Simply put, these wonderful people perform a function that is at the very heart of why we exist as a church community. These folks are at the front lines of literally transforming our mission statement into concrete actions. Stacy Shaffer has provided a brief overview below of what our deacons do for us. When next you see one of these individuals, I hope that you'll engage them in conversation and ask what you might do to help them go about their business of serving all of us! May it always be so!

Alfred

Spotlight: Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons consists of six volunteers. They are Mechelle Martinez (Secretary), Paul Hunt, Carrie Lewis, Jonathan Mertz, Dona Sidorfsky, and Stacy Shaffer (Presiding Officer and Representative to the Cabinet). Our Board meets on the first



Wednesday evening of the month and receives reports from Pastor Caela.

Our committee's main responsibilities are for worship, spiritual life, fellowship and pastoral care of the congregation. Much of the work that we do is weekly such as finding volunteers for greeting, reading scripture, flowers in the sanctuary and hosting fellowship hour. We also get the opportunity to host semi-annual Welcome Dinners and Covenant Celebrations, a church service and potluck in the park in late Spring/early Summer, organize Festive Feasters in the Spring and host Feast and Festival in the Fall.

Coming up on May 22nd is Worship in the Park where we will be Blessing the Animals and having a potluck. We ask that you bring your own table ware and a covered dish or dessert. The Deacons will be providing water for the luncheon.

Our committee has several new members that are getting up-to-speed quickly on traditions of the church and are presenting great ideas for enhancing our responsibilities as they have a wide variety of experiences in other churches. Currently, we are working on a new volunteer quarterly sign up and are looking into a church directory that has member/guests pictures accessible to easily put a name with a face.

We are always looking for ideas or volunteers from the congregation to help us with our responsibilities. Please share with us your thoughts and wishes.



Blessing of the Bicycles

Mark your calendar for Sunday, May 1st! As a part of Manhattan's Bike Month, we'll be blessing bicycles in our church yard immediately after worship. Plan to join us as we bless the bikes, remember lives lost, share in a brief ride around downtown, and enjoy refreshments together. Know someone who is a cyclist? Invite them to the blessing!

Ministry of the Decorative Scissors

The next retreat of the Ministry of the Decorative Scissors is from 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 5 until 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 7, in Andover Hall.

Everyone is welcome. There are no guarantees that you will complete any projects, but you will have fun and meet delightful people. Come for an hour or for the whole time! Feel free to bring a snack to share. For more information, contact Sue Gerth.



May Mrunch

We will be having a special Mother's Mrunch Celebration on Saturday, May 7th, from 11:30-1:30. Please email Heidi Casto for details and directions! Mrunch is a time for mothers of elementary age kids and younger (even if you are just expecting) to come and enjoy a peaceful supportive environment with other mothers in the same season of life.

Dinner Discussion: Global Ministries Visit

The Vitality and Outreach committee is excited to host the Board of Mission's guest speaker Gloria Vicente for the dinner discussion on Friday, May 20, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at First Congregational UCC. Ms. Vicente is a missionary in Guatemala and you can learn more about her on the Global Ministries website. We have invited our friends from First Christian Church to attend this event as well.



Spring Clean Up Day Saturday, May 7th - 9:00 a.m.

BYO gloves, rakes, trimmers, etc. Coffee and donuts provided. Indoor and outdoor tasks available. Kids welcome. The more hands the merrier.



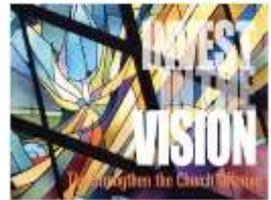
An Invitation to Connect this Summer

Summer will be upon us before you know it. Last year, Pastor Caela organized a couple of get-togethers for us....we got together for a walk on the Linear trail, a playdate at the park, drinks at a restaurant, and breakfast at the Chef. This year, we'd to invite YOU to consider organizing something. In particular, it would be wonderful if some of these activities were outdoors so we can get in touch with nature during the time of year when it's easiest to do so. More relaxed schedules and longer days make it easier to connect with one another. So....what ideas do you have? Splashing at City Park? A hike at Konza? Sitting by the water at Tuttle Creek? A simple stroll or bike ride with church friends? How about a picnic at Anneberg or Blue Earth? The sky's the limit. If you are interested in organizing something, the church office can help you advertise it to the congregation. So, please be in touch with Pastor Caela or Sandy and we'll get the ball rolling.

Strengthen the Church: Invest in the Vision

On Sunday, May 15 we will receive the Strengthen the Church special mission offering.

Each day, visions and dreams are created in the hearts of many in the United Church of Christ. Through the Strengthen the Church offering, these visions and dreams can become a reality.



As God calls our congregations to be “church” in new ways, your generous gifts will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Because of this offering, many more will hear the good news that “God is still speaking.”

All gifts are directed to activities and programs within the local Conference, as well as the UCC's national ministries.

Additional information may be found at www.ucc.org/stc. Envelopes for your gifts are in the pew backs in the sanctuary. Your gift can be placed in the Sunday offering or mailed to the church.

— *The Board of Mission & Outreach*

Graduate Recognition



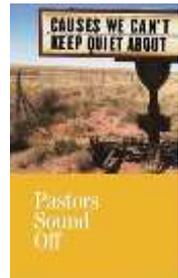
The Graduation season is upon us, and we would like to recognize all our graduates. If you are graduating or have a family member who is soon to be a graduate—high school, college, technical college, graduate school, or any other—please let the office know soon so that we may properly honor our 2016 graduates. We would like to feature the accomplishments of our graduates in the June church newsletter, so information in writing would be very helpful. Drop off information at the church office or e-mail it to office@uccmanhattan.org.

Adult Education

Stay up to date at <http://www.uccmanhattan.org/adult-education>

Causes We Can't Keep Quiet about (Apr. 10 - May 22) - Jim and Marilyn Mock facilitate a discussion of *Pastors Sound Off!*

From the publisher: "In this collection of brief and very personal essays, eleven pastors and preachers "sound off" on the issues that get them so worked up they can't shut up! These aren't impersonal position statements - they are passionate arguments, rooted in faith, written from very personal perspectives. From pretending racism is over, to churches in denial about addiction, these writers address social issues and justice concerns that you probably have strong feelings about, too."



Living, Loving and Learning the Psalms

Saturday, June 18 in Topeka

We may live in modern times, but we share many of the stresses that challenged our desert mothers and fathers. Through the psalms, the Israelites lifted their hearts to God and from their mouths came laments of suffering as well as shouts of joy. These songs offered them a healing balm, and they can do the same for us. Judith Galas (author, teacher, psalm cantor, and member of the KO Conference) leads a psalm workshop Saturday, June 18 in Topeka from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. For more information visit <https://kocucc.org/living-loving-learning-psalms/>

Christian Education

Christian Education Recognition – May 15th

Mornings are not for everyone. And yet, each Sunday morning a group of amazing volunteers arrive early at the church to be a welcoming presence for our congregation. They could have slept in. They could have stopped for coffee. And yet, here they are preparing a lesson, setting up a craft table, making copies, welcoming others into a time of study and growth.

As I reflect on the end of another year of Christian Education my mind wanders back to the days growing up in my church in Georgia. I can remember many of my Sunday School teachers, I can remember what the classroom looked like and I can remember some of the activities we did. Those teachers and those experiences made a mark on me and I know that I would not be as passionate about working in a church today without those formative experiences as a child. Many of you can probably reflect on your own similar experiences with Sunday School.

My job is made easier by the amazing staff of teachers we have here. This includes our children's Sunday School teachers Amanda Tross, Sue Gerth, and Paulicia Williams, our Kids' Worship leader Tim Tarkelly, as well as our nursery staff made up of Hannah O'Neil, Abbie Walker, and Anna Meyer. I am also thankful for our Director of Youth Ministries, Tai Amri Spann-Wilson who leads Youth Sunday School as well as the folks who have led adult Sunday School classes this past year (David Wood, Jim and Marilynn Mock, Kristin Mulready-Stone, Lesley Noble, Barrett Scroggs, Caela Simmons Wood, and Tai Amri Spann-Wilson).

On Sunday, May 15th we will celebrate our Christian Education volunteers and staff in worship. We will also celebrate with our children, youth, and adults who have committed to Christian Education in the past year. I invite you to join us on Sunday, May 15th as we honor these amazing individuals.

–Barrett

Youth Group

Dear Congregation:

Our StillSpeaking Youth Group is chugging along on the fun-raising road to this year's National Youth Event in Orlando, Florida. They have raised about \$840 of the needed \$3,300 and are looking to raise a great deal more in the coming months. Some ways that you can support them in this month of May:

Sunday, May 1st 10:45 a.m.: Attend the youth-led Sunday Service where you will get to meet our amazing youth group. Don't forget to bring any loose change you may have around the house as we will be taking up a special offering for our trip.

Sunday, May 1st 6:30 p.m.: Join us for a Variety Show and Bake Sale at the church where you and your family can be entertained and can take home some delicious baked goods from our youth group and their families. (If you pre-ordered truffles they will be available for pickup on May 1st after the morning church service or at the Variety Show.)

Sunday, May 7th: Consider sponsoring a youth for Spring Cleaning Projects at your home.

Other donations can be directed to the church office at (785) 537-7006.

We hope you can all be a part of what G-d is doing with our youth.

Amen,

–*Tai Amri*

Youth Group Calendar

Sun., May 1 10:45 a.m. - Youth Sunday!

Sun., May 1 6:30 p.m. - Variety Show

Sun., May 8 3-6 p.m. - Meredith's B-day Mini-Golf Adventure

Sun., May 15 3-6 p.m. - 2nd Helping

Sun., May 22 - Stone Sister Going Away Party

Cobb Corner — Going Green

“One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin.” —
William Shakespeare

Acting in solidarity with others on climate change issues strengthens not only resolve but our effectiveness. The national United Church of Christ recognized this when it divested from fossil fuels. Our local church does this when it encourages the use of Fair Trade coffee, buys a more efficient dishwasher, when we use a vacant plot for providing food for the hungry and when we recycle.

In recent days, have you noticed how our community including its birds and squirrels seemed to relax after the long-delayed rains? Before that there seemed a sense of unease. In much of the world that unease still exists. Crops are failing all over the globe, from the failure of monsoons in Africa and India to flooding in many Pacific Island nations and Houston! We can't solve global problems alone, but we can all help.

Take water shortages: Water levels in Kansas are dropping much faster than they are being replenished. What can an individual do? If the average shower is eight minutes and takes 17.6 gallons, a 4-minute shower plus a low-flow shower head can save 2/3 of that. Close the drain and use water from showers and baths for houseplants, washing garden tools, mopping the floor.

Take bees: The decline in bees to pollinate crops has threatened much of our agriculture. Plant asters, coneflowers, sunflowers for example. No yard? Put in pots on balcony, patio or porch. Check for bee-killing neonicotinoids which are ironically in dozens of garden products.

Take action: There's no shortage of causes to organize around. For example, over 67 million acres of PUBLIC lands are leased to the fossil fuel industry – a size 55 times larger than Grand Canyon National Park and “with 43 billion tons of potential carbon pollution.” (Friends of the Earth, 2015 annual report, p.5).

Take it to the next generation: Use children's time as Leo Schell did recently to encourage children to take specific actions on behalf of the planet. Do our youth see us practicing environmental stewardship?

Take it to the City Park! May 6th is Spring Furniture Amnesty Day. Drop off unwanted furniture 10:00-3:00 in Baker's Field. Need furniture? Go shopping for free 11:00-4:00.

— Linda Richter

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 25-35 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." We are particularly in need of individuals who would be willing to serve as Head Cook and Church Host. If you are interested in learning more about either of these positions, or volunteering in other ways, please contact Mary Ellen Barkley.

May 1, 2016

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Ann Gleason, Lukus Ebert, Mariya Vaughan, *2 volunteers needed*

Chief Cook: Andy Barkley

Church Host: Mary Ellen Barkley

May 8, 2016

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Ann Gleason, Manhattan Mennonite Church

Chief Cook: Bob Atchison

Church Host: Jeff Feist

May 15, 2016

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Youth Group (lunches), Dress Barn

Chief Cook: Brent Maner

Church Host: Susanne Gilmore

May 22, 2016

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: ESA sorority

Chief Cook: Gretchen Lewis

Church Host: Jim Lewis

May 29, 2016

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Lukus Ebert, Mariya Vaughan, *2 volunteers needed*

Chief Cook: Andy Barkley

Church Host: Mary Ellen Barkley

**Volunteer by going to
uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups**

Worship & Volunteers

May 1, 2016

Greeters	<i>volunteers needed</i>
Scripture Reader	Youth
Word for Children	Pastor Caela
Fellowship Hour	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Flowers	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Lawn Care	Brett Parsons (<i>Apr 28-30</i>)

May 8, 2016

Greeters	<i>volunteers needed</i>
Scripture Reader	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Word for Children	Barrett Scroggs
Fellowship Hour	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Flowers	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Lawn Care	Brett Parsons (<i>May 5-7</i>)

May 15, 2016

Greeters	<i>volunteers needed</i>
Scripture Reader	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Word for Children	Pastor Caela
Fellowship Hour	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Flowers	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Lawn Care	Leo Schell (<i>May 12-14</i>)

May 22, 2016 – Worship in the Park

Greeters	<i>volunteers needed</i>
Scripture Reader	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Word for Children	Barrett Scroggs
Fellowship Hour	Potluck at the park
Flowers	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Lawn Care	Brent Maner (<i>May 19-21</i>)

May 29, 2016

Greeters	<i>volunteers needed</i>
Scripture Reader	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Word for Children	Pastor Caela
Fellowship Hour	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Flowers	<i>volunteer needed</i>
Lawn Care	Jim Lewis (<i>May 26-28</i>)

Electronic giving

Contributions can now be securely debited automatically from your checking or savings account. Our new electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much-needed donation consistency for our congregation. Collection basket offerings can fluctuate significantly from week to week due to travel, illness and other circumstances, but when contributions are automated, the church receives funds on a steady, uninterrupted basis. To set up your electronic donation, ask treasurer Dave Smit for an authorization form or stop by the church office.

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 statement.

Worship in the Park and Blessing of the Animals
Sunday, May 22 • 10:45 a.m. • Longs Park
Potluck following

Please bring a main dish and a side dish or dessert to share and your own table service. Drinks provided. You can help vegetarians and those with diet restrictions by putting a label on that casserole to let us all know what's in it. If there is heavy rain or if severe weather threatens, we will worship at the church and picnic in the fellowship hall. Lawn chairs welcome.





Summer Camps 2016

It's all on the website! - whitememorialcamp.com

Taking part in The Camp White Experience is the perfect way for your youth to make new friends, grow faith in God, learn new skills, and create lifetime memories in a safe, beautiful, natural environment. There are residential camp sessions for a wide variety of ages and interests. Registration forms are available at the church. **Scholarships are available. Contact the church office for more information.**

Adventure Camp – Junior
(completed gr. 4-7)

Sunday, June 5 – Saturday, June 11

Young Campers
(completed gr. K-2)

Sunday, June 5 – Tuesday, June 7

Adventure Camp–Senior
(completed gr. 8-12)

Sunday, June 5 – Saturday, June 11

Last Blast!

(completed gr. 4-12)

Sunday, July 31 – Saturday, August 6

Fill a Backpack of Hope

Thanks to everyone who has already contributed to the Backpack of Hope program. The backpacks are overflowing! **We continue to collect items throughout May, and our first shipment goes out May 31. Find a list of needs at: www.uccmanhattan.org**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

700 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, KS 66502
(785) 537-7006
uccmanhattan.org



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**Return Service
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This newsletter is printed on recycled paper
made of 100% post-consumer content.

**Spring Clean Up Day
Saturday, May 7th**



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - Youth Sunday 8:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship & Communion <i>Fill the Breadbasket</i> 6:00 Second Helping 6:30 Youth Variety Show	2 5:15 Yoga 6:45 Timeless A Cappella	3 6:00 Living Positive 6:00 MAPJ mtg	4 11:30 Lunch Bunch 5:30 Mission 7:00 Deacons & Trustees 7:00 AA meeting	5 7:00 Taizé	6	7 9:00 Spring Clean Up 11:00 Mrunch
Ministry of the Decorative Scissors						
8 8:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	9 5:15 Yoga 6:45 Timeless A Cappella	10	11 6:30 CE Board mtg 7:00 Vitality mtg 7:00 AA meeting	12 7:00 Taizé	13	14
15 Strengthen the Church 8:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	16 5:15 Yoga 6:45 Timeless A Cappella	17 10:00 N.C. Clergy Mtg.	18 7:00 Cabinet meeting 7:00 AA meeting	19 7:00 Taizé	20 5:00 Newsletter Deadline 6:00 Dinner Discussion	21
22 Outdoor Worship 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship in the Park 6:00 Second Helping	23 5:15 Yoga 6:45 Timeless A Cappella	24	25 7:00 AA meeting	26 7:00 Taizé 7:00 MLK mtg	27	28
29 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	30 Memorial Day Offices closed	31 Backpacks of Hope shipped	<h1 style="color: purple;">May 2016</h1>			