



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 65 Number 6

June 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

An Invitation to Regather in our Sanctuary Beginning June 27, 2021

Dear First Congregational members and friends,

Over the past 15 months, we know we've written you a lot of letters about Being the Church During a Pandemic. We are so grateful for all you've done to prioritize the health and well-being of our community, especially those most vulnerable among us. Throughout the pandemic, our leadership has been carefully and prayerfully following all kinds of metrics, awaiting the day when we could write you THIS particular letter.

In hope and thanksgiving, we prayerfully plan to open our sanctuary for in-person worship on June 27, 2021. *[continued pg. 2]*

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We also remain committed to providing a robust online option for those who don't yet feel ready to return to in-person worship, need to worship at home for other reasons, or live outside the Manhattan area.

We've been listening to public health experts and will continue to do so. We considered many factors when choosing this as a target date: vaccine availability and rates of vaccination in our county, positivity rates in our area, decreased hospitalizations, the health and wellness of our staff, and our ability to provide quality in-person and online worship at the same time. If we've learned anything this past year, it's that things sometimes change rapidly. We remain committed to loving our neighbors by listening to science and protecting our community, so if we need to slow down or take a step back in the future, we will do so.

Beginning June 27, you will be welcome to worship in-person at 10:45 a.m. in our sanctuary. You can view our full COVID policies on our website, but here are the highlights:

- Everyone over the age of 5 will need to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose, regardless of vaccination status. Please keep in mind that many people, including all children under the age of 12, are still not able to be vaccinated and we remain committed to creating the safest environment possible for them. You can read more details about our current masking policies on page 6.
- The pews will mark spaces that are available for seating. You may choose where you would like to sit, maintaining at least six feet distance from those outside your household. At this time, we don't anticipate requiring advance sign ups, but if that changes we will be sure to let you know.
- We will not be providing nursery or other childcare this summer, but are working towards offering those options in the fall.
- We will continue to limit singing and wind instruments, as we know these activities carry an increased risk of spreading the virus. Our current plan is to sing one hymn each Sunday. We will ask people to sing quietly and we will, of course, all be masked while singing.
- We ask that people leave the building as soon as the service ends and encourage you to bring a lawn chair or blanket to enjoy distanced fellowship on the lawn together after worship. You may remove your mask outdoors, if you'd like.

We are so delighted to be taking this next step together. The past 15 years - oops, months - have taught us that God continues to show up wherever we are. What a gift. We can't wait to see how the Spirit continues to move among us at 700 Poyntz AND in our homes and Zoom rooms and everywhere else in the whole wide world.

As we prepare for this transition, we encourage you to reach out if you have any questions about our plan. We continue to give thanks for your flexibility and grace as we move through this period of holy experimentation. We know we will get some things right and other things wrong as we continue to move and shift and transform under the Spirit's care. We'll do it all together - and we trust that God accompanies us every step of the way.

In gratitude for your faithfulness,

Pastor Caela

Jeff Watson, Moderator

Pastor Caela Away June 7-20th

Pastor Caela will be away from the office from June 7-20th. The first week will be a week of family vacation and the second week Caela will be attending her summer residency with the Souljourners program as she is trained to become a spiritual director. 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 after hours.

On Call Minister of Care:

June 7-12: Stephanie Reeck

June 13-20: Mary Ellen Titus

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.



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

- For more information, please contact the church office.

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.

Let's Get the Building Ready!

As we prepare to regather in the building on June 27th, the Board of Facilities invites you to join them for some spring cleaning on **Saturday, June 5th from 9am-noon**. We'll be working on indoor building spruce up, cobwebs, general once over to help ready the building for re-gathering. All are welcome, we will follow our COVID policies and social distancing rule. Please bring you favorite cleaners!

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.

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.

Update from Cabinet about Masks

...we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. (1 Cor 8:1, NRSV)

In light of recent guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control advising that vaccinated Americans can go without masks or social distancing in most public settings, you may be wondering, “What does this mean for our congregation?” Our Church Cabinet discussed this question at our May meeting. We’ve been following helpful guidance from the Wisconsin Council of Churches throughout the pandemic and they are currently recommending following a “two out of three” approach. So for indoor gatherings, masks + distancing are recommended. When outdoors, distancing is sufficient. [1]

Our current policies regarding masks are:

- Indoors: We continue to require masks for everyone over the age of five, regardless of vaccination status, inside the church building and at indoor church events. If you forget your mask, we have some on hand to share.
- Outdoors: Masks are not required at outdoor church gatherings where distancing is maintained. You are still very welcome to wear a mask if you’d like.

Though we know many in our congregation are vaccinated (yay! wonderful!) we also know that our congregation is blessed with the presence of many children under the age of 12 and others who are unable to be vaccinated. Continuing to wear our masks is an act of hospitality and care for the most vulnerable among us. Masks and social distancing will help ensure that children and others who are unable to be vaccinated won’t have to guess at the vaccination status of everyone at our public gatherings.

Our Conference Minister, Dr. Edith Guffey said it well in a recent communication to the KO Conference: “While the church is indeed a public space, not all public spaces are the same. Not all public spaces declare themselves to be the Body of Christ as churches do. Consequently, not all public spaces are as concerned about the common health of ALL who share the space.” [2]

Thank you for caring about the common health of our entire community - especially the young children and others in our community who cannot receive the vaccine. The simple act of continuing to wear our masks while attending indoor church events is an act of hospitality and Christ-like love for our wider community. Our leadership will continue to listen to scientists and public health officials as our practices evolve over the coming months. You can view our full COVID policies at uccmanhattan.org/COVID. If you have any questions, please reach out to Moderator Jeff Watson.

Notes:

[1] Recommend using 2 out of 3 of the following mitigation strategies - being outdoors, masks, distancing.

<https://www.wichurches.org/2021/05/13/love-builds-up-a-response-to-mays-cdc-masking-update/>

[2] <https://mailchi.mp/2b50b8919b9f/recent-cdc-guidance>

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) 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.

Blessing of the Animals & Outdoor Communion at Long's Park

Join us on Sunday, June 6th after worship for our annual blessing of the animals. We will gather at 12:15 p.m. at Long's Park (17th and Yuma). Please bring along your lawn chair. Pets of all kinds are welcome and kids can also bring stuffed animals for a blessing.



We will still have our regular worship service via Zoom at 10:45 a.m. that morning - this is just an additional opportunity to get together that day.

We will bless the animals together, share a brief communion prayer, and then you can stay to play and visit as long as you'd like. You are also encouraged to "fill the breadbasket" for the Second Helping. Please remember to show your care for our wider community by reviewing (and following!) our current COVID policies for church events at uccmanhattan.org/covid.

Wow! Thank You!

The Gifts, Investments, and Endowment Committee says "thank you" for your support of the First Congregational Church during the Grow Green campaign. The money raised from Grow Green will be used to pay for some important updates to the church's air handling system and media equipment. We had 61 donations totaling over \$19,000.00. We will receive a 50% match which will boost amount of the church's investment at the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation.



Strengthen the Church Offering: June 27, 2021

The Strengthen the Church Offering is the second of the four national UCC denominational offerings which our local church supports each year. Often held in connection with the celebration of Pentecost in late May or early June, the Strengthen the Church Offering supports local UCC congregations in many ways. During the month of June, you will hear about some of the specific ways in which funds generated by this national offering have supported individual congregations across the UCC in our Friday news updates. On June 13th, Board of Mission member Martha Mather will tell you more about the Offering in our Zoom worship service. We are very excited that we will celebrate our official opening of live worship services in our church sanctuary on June 27th by receiving this offering together on that morning, but if you would like to make your donation earlier in June, we would also be very happy to take it at any time during the month. Thank you from the Board of Mission.



Zoom Helpers Needed for Worship

Each week, we need two Zoom Greeters to monitor the waiting room to let people in throughout the service and help greet and answer questions in the chat. We also need one Zoom Lead to "share screen" throughout the service (this requires a desktop/laptop computer with Power Point).

If you'd like to be a Zoom Greeter, please sign up on our regular "worship volunteers" sign up sheet at uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups. If you're interested in learning how to be the Zoom Lead, please contact Pastor Caela (pastor@uccmanhattan.org).

First Congregational to Participate in Leadership Transformation Program with KO Conference

The Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the UCC is honored to be one of the recipients of a 2021 Leadership Transformation Grant from the Kansas Leadership Center. The KLC is a non-profit founded by the Kansas Health Foundation. KLC provides training to foster leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous Kansas communities. Through the Leadership Transformation Grant, KLC partners with organizations to help them create a culture of leadership that embraces change, tackles problems and seizes opportunities.

As a part of this grant, the KO Conference is sending 50 participants to participate in a two-day training with KLC. Our congregation was invited to put together our own delegation and we welcome your prayers as we prepare to learn and grow this summer. Janet George and Cassidy Moreau will participate in the KLC leadership training on May 5-6. Deane Lehmann, Jeff Waston, Craig Weston, and Pastor Caela will be attending the same training on June 2-3.

You can learn more about the training at <https://kansasleadershipcenter.org/yourleadershipedge>.



**KANSAS
LEADERSHIP
CENTER**

Save the Date for Confirmation Sunday - July 11th

We are so thrilled to be confirming 8 youth in our congregation this summer. The confirmands are in 6th-8th grades and will lead worship and be confirmed on Sunday, July 11th. The Board of Deacons is working on plans to help us celebrate them, so watch the Friday e-mails and church announcements for more information about that as it develops.

Joshua Hinrichs-Toburen
Keira Kuhlman
Quinn Kuhlman
Elsa Lewison
Marlena Lewison
Henry Maseberg-Tomlinson
Jameson McDonald
Delaney Saucier

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!

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.

Weekly Connection Points

Practice Physical Distancing....not Social or Spiritual Distancing. Join us online! If you have trouble accessing any of these resources, please contact the church office so we can assist.

Sundays: Worship at 10:45 a.m. via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link (in person June 27)
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 6th 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

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 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 2021 graduates. We would like to feature the accomplishments of our graduates in an upcoming church newsletter. Drop off information at the church office or e-mail it to office@uccmanhattan.org.



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

Get outdoors this spring and 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

“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs, or of goats.”

– Isaiah, 1:11, p. 661, *The Green Bible*

Cautionary words as we enter the barbecue season! Keep up those Meatless Mondays!

It is another environmental hazard I want to stress today as fire season starts in the West and the Flint Hills burn: air pollution.

The April, 2021, issue of *National Geographic* has an exceptional account of this subject on pp. 40-66. Over seven million people are estimated to die prematurely annually from air pollution. In fact more people died of air pollution even in this year of lockdowns than from Covid! This figure is five times the number from auto accidents.

I first became aware of huge-scale air pollution more than 50 years ago while living in India. In winter the air was choked with smoke. Even our kids noticed. Three-year old Mark would toddle over to vendors cooking corn or bananas over charcoal fires and wave his finger and warn “No No, Hot Hot”. The population today is 300% higher and 9 of the 10 most polluted cities are in India.

Forty years ago I was traveling with K-State librarian, Sylvia Blanding, just as China was opening to tourists from non-Communist countries. There were millions of bikes, but few cars and buses there. Still the coal fires in December had blackened the skies. Despite my glasses a lump of coal dust got in my eye and it was so big it required medical attention to remove it. Even then people wore masks in the winter.

It has been 50 years since the U.S. passed the Clean Air Act but 45% of the population still breathe bad air. In December, 2020, the Trump administration’s E.P.A. declined to adopt a recommended standard that was estimated to save 12,000 lives a year!

Getting involved politically is essential if we are to do justice to the world we’ve been given.

– Linda Richter— *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 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

Wear Orange June 5

An invitation from the Board of Justice & Witness: The first Saturday in June, June 5, is Wear Orange Day. Across the country hundreds of events will occur to raise awareness of the nearly 40,000 Americans killed every year by gun violence.

The Manhattan-Area Moms Demand Action group will have an in-person event in Triangle Park. They will be collecting donations for the Crisis Center, a community organization that assists victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Domestic violence and gun violence are closely linked.

Contributions can be made from 12 noon to 7 p.m. at Triangle Park.

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.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2021</h1>		1	2 5:15 Deacons 7:00 AA Meeting	3 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	4	5 Spring Cleaning Work Day 9:00-noon Wear Orange Day
	6 Blessing of the Animals 10:45 Worship and Communion via Zoom 12:15 Blessing of the Animals at Long's Park Communion <i>Fill the breadbasket</i> 6:00 Second Helping	7 7:30 NA mtg	8	9 5:30 Christian Ed 6:30 Justice & Witness, Mission 7:00 Facilities 7:00 AA Meeting ----- Caela vacation -----	10 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	11
13 10:45 Worship via Zoom 6:00 Second Helping	14 7:30 NA mtg	15	16 7:00 Cabinet mtg 7:00 AA Meeting ----- Caela at Summer Residency -----	17 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	18	19
20 10:45 Worship via Zoom 6:00 Second Helping	21 7:30 NA mtg	22	23 7:00 AA Meeting	24 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship 7:30 NA Meeting	25 Newsletter deadline	26
27 In-person Worship Strengthen the Church offering 10:45 Worship 6:00 Second Helping	28 7:30 NA mtg	29	30			