



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 68 Number 3

March 2024

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
 Third Thursday Prayers at 7:00 P.M. telephone 785-537-7006
www.uccmanhattan.org

Nurturing An Expansive Vision of Ministry

I recently met with a person who is considering a call to ministry. Concerned with how long it would take to return to school to get a seminary degree, this person wondered if it was even possible to shift to professional ministry at their age. I gently reminded them that while serving as a pastor in a local church is ONE kind of ministry, it's certainly not the only way to have a professional identity as a minister. There are many ways to answer the call to the vocation of ministry. Being a pastor is just one pathway.

Since having that conversation, I've reflected on how grateful I am to serve as a pastor in our congregation, which has always supported an expansive vision of what vocational ministry can look like. While I have chosen the pathway of "local church pastor," I serve alongside people who understand that role to be focused on ministry to the wider community, not just our members. It's right there in my position description, which states a hope that in an average work week (what's that?!?) I'll spend about a third of my time on community engagement, outreach, and vitality. *(continued pg 2)*



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In my ten years as your pastor, I've served in leadership roles in the wider UCC, local clergy groups, and other community organizations. I've spent many hours mentoring new pastors and candidates for ordination. I've used my work week to write letters to the editor, meet with legislators, and attend rallies. I've traveled to Topeka and D.C. to advocate for justice, and you even gave your blessing when I felt called to be arrested in an act of civil disobedience during the Poor Peoples' Campaign. As your pastor, I've volunteered to serve on Site Councils in USD 383, the Manhattan Historic Resources Board, and True Colors. Everywhere I go, I have the privilege of representing our congregation to the broader community - sharing about the Spirit's expansive welcome and radical hospitality through my presence and actions. Thank you for your expansive vision of pastoral ministry.

In the past year, I've had the opportunity to expand my own ministerial identity in two new ways (and with our congregational leadership's support). The first is one you've already heard a bit about: upon completing my training as a spiritual director in 2023; I felt led to continue seeing just a few spiritual directees in private practice. Since then, I've been meeting with a handful of directees via Zoom. While this work happens outside of my work hours as your pastor, our congregation still sees benefits as this work stretches me in new ways, providing inspiration and ongoing training in deep listening, theological thinking, and spiritual listening.

More recently, I've gone through a lengthy process to become a volunteer chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). CAP is a public service organization focusing on emergency preparedness and response and leadership development for its 64,000 members (including 25,000 youth cadets). While my time commitment as a volunteer is low (2-3 hours a month with our local squadron teaching character development), the bar for becoming a CAP chaplain is high. Since CAP is the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, all volunteer CAP chaplains must meet the same high standards as Air Force chaplains. This means I've undergone a rigorous examination by the Committee on Ministry and national UCC "endorser" to receive an ecclesiastical endorsement to serve as a governmental chaplain. Essays were written, recommendation letters were obtained, interviews were

conducted, and many hours of online training modules were completed. The process has been reinvigorating, allowing me to contemplate my own expansive vision of ministry. I anticipate that, like my ministry as a spiritual director, serving as a volunteer chaplain will also help me learn and grow as a pastor.

Thank you for the many ways you support an expansive vision of ministry - not just for those called to vocational ministry like me but for all who seek to follow in Jesus’s footsteps. Loving “every single other” is certainly an expansive vision of ministry, and we are all very fortunate to have supportive companions for the journey.

Pastor Caela

Staff Availability

Pastor Caela will be away from the office from March 11-17 for vacation. Caela will not check e-mails, text messages, or voicemails during this time. If you have a pastoral care need during this time, please contact Pastor Sue or one of our Ministers of Care.

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.



Spring Forward March 10th

A reminder that the time changes on Sunday, March 10. Be sure to set your clocks forward one hour before bedtime on Saturday night.

Lunch Bunch: March 6 @ El Tapatio

We join together in an opportunity to get to know one another, Wednesday, March 6 at El Tapatio (2605 Stagg Hill Rd.). Everyone is welcome to join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m.



Sharing and Caring

Prayer Requests

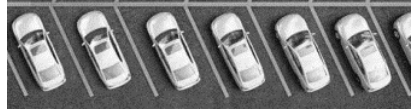
For more information, please contact the church office.

Helping

- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim/Carolyn Hodgson, Bill Pallett, or Jeff Keller.
- **Home Communion Visits** If you would like to receive Communion at home, please reach out to Pastor Caela or a Deacon to make arrangements.

Sunday Parking on Poyntz

Parking on Poyntz is somewhat limited on Sunday mornings. There is a sign at the west end of the block that reads “Parallel parking except Sunday AM.” You are encouraged to park at an angle to allow for more spaces on Sunday mornings, however, don't leave your car too long after the noon deadline or you will receive a ticket.



Come and Find the Quiet Center

Lent is the perfect season to carve out time for uninterrupted prayer or contemplation. You can use the sanctuary for quiet meditation whenever the building is open. If you're coming from a distance, you might want to call ahead to ensure no one else is using the space or to ask for the temperature to be adjusted. Pastor Caela has put together a basket of Prayer Resources that you can use while you're in the sanctuary. There are books featuring the writings of Howard Thurman, Marian Wright Edleman, Henri Nouwen, Rumi, Sarah Bessey, Ross Gay, and more. You can also share your written prayers in our spiral-bound prayer notebook for others to read. Just grab the basket from the bookshelves in the corner of the main lobby and return it when finished.

Connection Points

Sundays: Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. for adults (hybrid) and children (in-person only) | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link. (*When school is in session.*)

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 in-person or via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Tuesdays: Tuesday Book Group from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Third Thursdays: Taizé at 7:00 p.m. in-person

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

Holy Week Details

Palm Sunday, March 24

We will gather with friends from other downtown churches at 9:30 a.m. in City Park (south shelter) for a Palm Parade. Join us to sing a couple of songs and share a brief prayer together before we walk/roll/drive down Poyntz waving our palms.

We will also have our palm processional during worship, of course! After the service, the kids will present "Walking through Holy Week."

NO Sunday School on Palm Sunday.

If you need to pick up a palm BEFORE Palm Sunday (if you're worshipping at home), you can come by the church any time on Friday or Saturday, March 22-23. We will have the palms in a Rubbermaid bin outside the office doors.

Maundy Thursday, March 28

Meal and Liturgy in Pioneer-Blachly at 6:00 p.m.

Or download the at-home liturgy at uccmanahttan.org/holy-week

“Maundy” comes from the same root as “mandate,” and this holy day is when we remember Jesus’s commandment to love and serve one another. We gather for a simple meal provided by the Deacons at 6:00 p.m. After we eat, we share prayer and singing together and remember Jesus’s last supper with his friends through the sharing of Holy Communion.

ONLINE OPTION: If you aren’t able to join us in person, we are also providing an at-home liturgy with links to music, videos, and recipes so you can create your own remembrance of this Holy Day at home with family, friends, or on your own. You’ll find that at-home service at uccmanhattan.org/holy-week

Good Friday Noon Vigil, March 29

Drop in 12:00-1:00 p.m. in the sanctuary or via Zoom (regular worship link)

Join us over the noon hour on Good Friday in our Sanctuary. Mary Ellen Sutton will play the organ from 12:00-12:20 p.m., Pastor Caela

will hold silence and read some scripture from 12:20-12:40 p.m., and Alicia Santee-Davis will play piano from 12:40-1:00 p.m. Set aside five minutes or the whole hour to mark this day.

ONLINE OPTION: Log in to the regular worship Zoom anytime between Noon and 1:00 pm to join us.

Holy Saturday, March 30

Paschal Fire Lighting at 7:49 pm (sunset) at Tuttle Creek Overlook

Join us at sunset on Holy Saturday as we kindle our Paschal Fire together at the Tuttle Creek Overlook. This is our take on the ancient tradition of the Easter Vigil, where we gather in the darkness of night, light a new fire, and prepare for the joy of Easter morning. We thank the Ministry of the Decorative Scissors for making our Paschal Candle. Please bring a lawn chair for this service.

Directions: From Manhattan, take Tuttle Creek Blvd. (US 24) north approximately 5 miles. Turn right onto K-13 Hwy towards the dam. Take the first left onto Tuttle Cove Road, then an immediate right into Observation Point. We will gather in the parking lot at the top of the hill. View Google Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/XY8Gmeo4x5CQkK7L6>

ONLINE OPTION: We will share a pre-recorded Paschal Fire lighting on our Facebook page at 7:49 p.m., or you can watch it anytime on our YouTube channel.

Easter, March 31

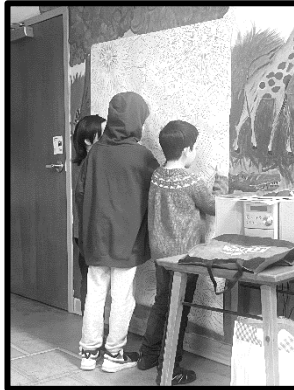
Join us for a celebratory Easter morning on March 31st. At 9:30 a.m., we'll have a potluck breakfast in our fellowship hall. Bring your favorite breakfast food to share, and we'll have the coffee ready for you. Please bring your own table service to help us care for the environment and simplify clean up.

Easter worship is at 10:45 a.m. in our sanctuary or via Zoom. We'll have special music with our brass ensemble and our Easter tradition of flowering the cross. We encourage you to arrive EARLY to enjoy music from the brass beginning around 10:30 a.m. Plan to stick around for the Kids' Easter Egg Hunt immediately after the service.

Christian Education

Please contact Brandy McDonald (brandy@uccmanhattan.org) for more information about options for children and youth.

In February we were excited to get back to regular Sunday school after winter break and snow days kept us from



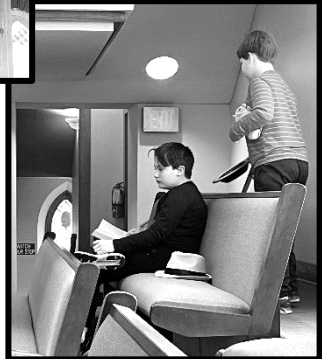
it! The kids enjoyed hosting Friendship Donuts, having important discussions in Sunday School, and hosting a very successful snack drive for True Colors!

March Schedule:

March 3, 10, 17: Traditional Sunday School

March 24: Palm Sunday. No Sunday School (watch for communication from the church regarding Palm Parade). After church we will be hosting Walking Through Holy Week! Watch for communication about this from Brandy!

March 31: Easter Sunday: No Sunday School, Easter Egg Hunt following church!



Staff Training for Emergencies:

Twice a year we do refreshers for our staff on emergency procedures including fire, weather, medical emergencies, lockdowns, and general safety procedures. We spent the month of February doing these training sessions to prepare for the storm season. In the case of an emergency requiring evacuation of the nursery either outside or to the basement, our staff is trained to proceed directly to the safety spot and meet up with parents there, their priorities being to get themselves and the children to safety as quickly as possible.

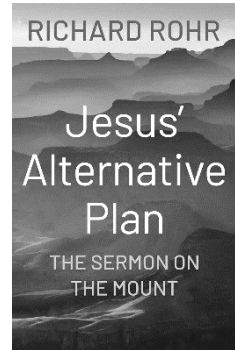
Please always feel welcome to contact Brandy if you have questions!

Tuesday Book Study

Jesus' Alternative Plan by Father Richard Rohr

The Tuesday Book Club is reading Father Richard Rohr's book on the Sermon on the Mount. Titled *Jesus' Alternative Plan*, Father Rohr argues that in this famous sermon, Jesus offered a blueprint for a new way of being in the world: a way that overturns conventional wisdom and challenges all the power structures that seek to control human life. The Way of Jesus is the way of justice and mercy, and, a profound transformation in what we humans think of as "the good life."

The Tuesday Book Club meets every Tuesday from 11:30 to 1:00 via Zoom. It's not too late to join as we discuss this book. Our weekly conversations are always marked by lively questions and deep contemplation of what we have all read. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Pastor Sue.



March Adult Sunday School

March is the month of Lent and we will follow Peter on his journey with Jesus. The devotional will be from Sanctified Art: Wandering Hearts – Figuring Out Faith with Peter. “Ultimately, in Peter’s story, we are reminded that God loves imperfect people – in fact, time and again, that’s precisely who God claims and calls.” March 24 is Palm Sunday and March 31 is Easter. There will be no Sunday school these days. Be with us in person or by Zoom.

3 March: Wandering Hearts – “Praise the Mount”

10 March: Wandering Hearts – “I’m Fixed Upon It”

17 March: Wandering Hearts – “Teach Me”

24 March: Palm Sunday. No Sunday school

31 March: Easter. No Sunday school

Easter Memorials and Recognitions

As we prepare our hearts during Lent, First Congregational UCC also prepares for Easter Sunday on March 31st. We would like to join together to provide a display of beautiful lilies for Easter Sunday! Lilies are available for a suggested donation of \$10. We encourage you to donate in dedication or honor of a loved one. You can take your lilies home after worship on Easter Sunday.



You can place your order using the form in the church bulletin on Sunday morning or by emailing office@uccmanhattan.org. Please indicate in whose honor or memory the order is being given. Your dedication will appear in the bulletin on Easter Sunday. If you have any questions, contact the church office (office@uccmanhattan.org).

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. Go to uccmanhattan.org/giving.
- 3) Set up a recurring online gift. It 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.



TAKE TIME FOR TAIZÉ

Join us on third Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. for Taizé Worship. Taizé is a 30-minute service of singing, scripture, prayer, and silence based on the pattern of worship in use at the ecumenical community at Taizé, France.

Second Helping Volunteers Needed

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: Les Kuhlman, Second Helping Volunteer Coordinator.

Current Second Helping 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 Jean or Linda for info.
- **Sunday evening volunteers:** 2 or 3 volunteers on Sunday evenings. Contact Jean
- **Lunch volunteers:** Making the sack lunches during any time before Sunday. Contact Shari. She also welcomes homemade goodies to put in the lunches.

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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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
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