

THE EPISTLE

Volume 25 Issue 4

April 23, 2020

Dear Members & Friends of First Church:



Out of care for one another during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are continuing to keep "social distancing." Worship Services, book and Bible studies continue to be suspended until further notice.

I will broadcast an abbreviated Service each Sunday that will be recorded and downloaded to our church's website (www.fairportucc.org) each Monday. All of our Church Boards and Church Council will conduct meetings via conference calls, Zoom, or email.

I encourage you to contact me at any time if you have concerns. I can be reached at: revgregrup.ucc@gmail.com; (585) 966-9416 (cell); 585-223-0224 (church).

Yesterday was Easter Sunday, and I know that many of you watched our broadcast Easter Service via our church's website and partook of the virtual Holy Communion Service from the safety of your homes. I spent most of Easter Sunday watching other preachers on TV and listening to various Christian singers lift their songs in praise of our Risen Savior. I missed seeing all of your faces and hearing our own inspiring Chancel Choir. I very much look forward to when we can safely gather together again.

Looking ahead at the appointed scripture readings for the month of May, I am experiencing a synchronous spiritual moment. The lectionary readings for May 3rd are Acts 2:42-47, Psalm 23, and John 10:1-10. The Acts passage tells us how the first followers of the Way of Jesus worshipped. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread [New Testament code word for Holy Communion] and the prayers . . . Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people" (Acts 2:42, 46-47). The crucifixion and resurrection event happened two thousand years ago, and, just like the first followers of Jesus, we are worshipping from our homes. Those first followers did so to avoid the Roman soldiers. We are forced to worship from our homes by a much more insidious and invisible enemy, the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of the first followers of Jesus were Jews. That's why they still attended the temple. They would have heard psalms like Psalm 23 being sung in worship. Like them, we can receive God's reassurance that the Lord is our shepherd. Can you hear the psalmist singing, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me?" (Psalm 23:4) Yes, God's presence will help calm our fears as we walk through this time of darkness. God is preparing a table before us in the presence of an unseen enemy.

Jesus is our shepherd who speaks to us, reassuring us that he goes ahead of us, leading us into green pastures. Jesus is also our gateway to God. He protects us from the danger of the many voices that whisper panicky messages into our ears. Jesus says to us, "I am with you always." Friends, we will make it through this present crisis. Stay in. Stay safe. Stay well. And listen for the voice of our Good Shepherd.



Peace Be With You!
Pastor Greg Rupright



May Worship Schedule

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MESSAGES (bold font indicates key scripture text(s) for the Message)

May 3rd

Fourth Sunday of Easter – Virtual Holy Communion

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23;

1 Peter 2:19-25; **John 10:1-10**

Website www.fairportucc.org Broadcast Message: “The Voice, the Gate”

May 10th

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16;

1 Peter 2:2-10; **John 14:1-14**

Website www.fairportucc.org Broadcast Message: “Don’t Be Troubled”

May 17th

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31; **Psalm 66:8-20**;

1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Website www.fairportucc.org Broadcast Message: “Pure Praise”

May 24th

Ascension Sunday

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47;

Ephesians 1:15-23; **Luke 24:44-53**

Website www.fairportucc.org Broadcast Message: “Who’s In Charge?”

May 31st

Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; **John 20:19-23**

Website www.fairportucc.org Broadcast Message: “Lively, Commissioning Spirit!”

CHURCH NEWS

THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAM MEETING

The Annual Program Meeting, originally scheduled for May 17th, will be held on **Sunday, June 14**, immediately following the 9:30 A.M. Service. Annual reports will be distributed, and the election of officers and board members will be held.

Each board must submit their Annual Report AND their roster of 2020-2021 board members to the church office by Monday, May 18th. Please email your report and your roster to vscherry.ucc@gmail.com



STEWARDSHIP

Dear church Friends and Families,

With Church Services on hold we still need your support. I know I will miss the chance to put in the weekly envelope. Well here's some good news! We have a variety of ways to continue our support.

1. Mail a check to the church covering your regular pledge amount (this is the one I will be using)
2. Use your own bank's online bill-pay feature.
3. Use our web site online giving option. (Note: PayPal charges a fee for this option)
4. Transfer Stock (you may want to let the market bounce back first).

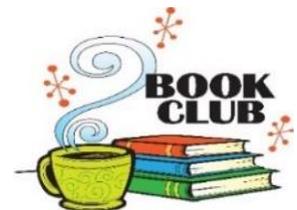


Whatever way you choose to continue your support know that our church family appreciates the ongoing support!

Sincerely
Brad Bowersox, Stewardship Chair

FIRST CHURCH BOOK CLUB

First Church book club is tentatively scheduled to meet in Fellowship Hall from 1:00-2:30 on May 18 (due to Memorial Day we are meeting on the 3rd Monday, not the last). The book selection for May 18 is *Carnegie's Maid* by Marie Benedict. Our discussion will be led by Paula Boisvert. All are welcome to attend. Our 2020-2021 planning meeting will be on June 29.



THE EPISTLE

WEEKLY PASTOR'S BLOG BIBLE STUDY & REFLECTION

Each Thursday, Pastor Greg uploads a Bible Study & Reflection based on the upcoming Sunday's scripture. Go to www.fairportucc.org and click on the Pastor's Blog.



A BIG THANK YOU!



A Big Thank You! goes Jim Franzen & Jim Rogers for recording the abbreviated 9:30 A.M. audio Sunday Services since March 22nd, to Dennis Dudley for videoing the Palm Sunday and Easter Services, to Cathy Dudley who set up the candles for Easter Sunday, and to Vicki Sherry for uploading these Services.

PERINTON LAUNCHES SENIOR HELPLINE

Perinton Town Supervisor Ciaran Hanna recently announced the launch of a senior helpline. Seniors can call the helpline at **(585) 209-3205** to reach a volunteer trained to assist with various needs. Volunteers are prepared to answer questions, connect seniors with services, assess food needs, and offer a listening ear.



"Our seniors are among the most at risk from COVID-19 and they are feeling the impact of this virus. Routine tasks such as going to the grocery store or picking up a prescription are now a challenge, especially for seniors." said Hanna. "We are here to help protect our entire community, especially our more vulnerable citizens. We hope the Perinton senior helpline will reassure our seniors and their families that we are here to serve them and help keep them safe."

The helpline is monitored around-the-clock, however, if a volunteer is not available to answer, callers can leave a voicemail and the call will be returned as soon as possible. The town is assessing the needs of local seniors and has found the most requested services to be grocery shopping, prescription pick-up, meal delivery, daily check-ins, and laundromat drop-off. Volunteers are ready to assist with those needs and more. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, residents should call 911, and any medical questions should be directed to a primary care physician. The Helpline is also available to caretakers or family members of seniors.

UCC'S DAILY DEVOTIONAL

If traditional Bible study is not your cup of tea, go to www.ucc.org, scroll to the bottom of the home webpage and click on [Daily Devotional](#). You will discover a spiritual reflection that speaks to the postmodern, millennial world. You can choose from a number of archived titles or subscribe to receive a daily devotional email each day. What follows on the next page is the Daily Devotional posted on March 30, 2020.



Everything Is Changing

Written by Molly Baskette

“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” - Matthew 6:34 (NRSV)

Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Jesus, you got that right. You know what the trouble is: a novel coronavirus that has an alarming fraction of the global population ill or dead, and the rest of us hurtling toward lockdown.

Are we allowed to worry now? Are we allowed to stock up on canned soup and toilet paper and ice cream? How exactly will God provide these things if we don’t take responsibility for getting them ourselves? Sometimes life provides us with a problem so big, so complex, it is undeniably a today-worry and a tomorrow-worry.

We are at the moment when we know everything is going to change, but we don’t yet know how—and that is the hardest part. We know people we love will be taken from us, but we don’t know who. We know it will threaten our retirement funds, our livelihoods and jobs, our mental health. We know that it will put some people who are already at the edge, economically and emotionally, over it.

We ask God the ultimate question, “What if it changes everything?”

And God answers, “What if it doesn’t?”

Because some things need changing.

Good things can be caught from this pandemic, as well as bad. Already, you are calling friends you haven’t talked to in ages or checking in with your mother every day. You are pulling out the watercolors, reading novels again, watching documentaries with your fur person, cuddling your kids.

The pandemic is revealing, once again, what really matters, and what the good gifts of life are that don’t arrive by two-day shipping. A particle one-900th thousand times the width of a single human hair has done what we were not able to do by ourselves: stop us in our tracks, personally and communally.

God didn’t send this disaster, but God will for damn sure use it.

Prayer

God, this pandemic will change everything. May it be so. Amen.

Molly Baskette is Senior Minister of First Congregational Church UCC in Berkeley, California, and the author of the best-selling *Real Good Church, Standing Naked Before God*, and her newest baby, [*Bless This Mess: A Modern Guide to Faith and Parenting in a Chaotic World*](#)

FACE MASKS AVAILABLE

If you need a face mask to be safer during the Corona virus pandemic, we have some available for free at church. They are 100% cotton, with a wire across the top to mold to the bridge of the nose. They have elastic that goes around the neck and the top back of the head. They have a pocket for a filter. The CDC says that coffee filters work well. To sanitize after use, machine wash and tumble dry. If you need a fabric mask, please email Vicki Sherry at vsherry.ucc@gmail.com or call the church at 585-223-0224 and leave a voice message (include your name, address, phone number, and the number of masks you need). Pastor Greg or Jill O'Connor will deliver the mask in a Ziplock bag to your porch.



MISSIONS

SUSPENSION OF VOLUNTEERING AT SALEM NUTRITION CENTER

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, members of our church are encouraged NOT to volunteer at the Salem Nutrition Center.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY



Perinton Congregations Habitat for Humanity sponsors a house every three years. They are sponsoring a new house this year. The house will be built by Flower City Habitat for Humanity. This house will cost \$65,000; \$3000 of which has come from First Congregational UCC. Groundbreaking is scheduled for May 16, 2020 at 79 Lime Street in Rochester, NY. The house will be two stories with three bedrooms and 1½ bathrooms.

Anyone wishing to volunteer can visit <https://perintonhabitat.org/> after May 1, 2020.

AN INVITATION FROM THE ADVENT HOUSE

We cordially invite you to attend our Twenty-sixth Annual Advent House Dinner Dance and Auction at the Monroe Golf Club on Friday, **May 22, 2020** from 6:00 p.m. until midnight (rescheduled from April 18). This festive, fun-filled evening is one of our major fundraisers and helps to meet the expenses of providing "no-cost" care to our Residents and their families. Your support would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in attending or making a donation of goods for the auction or placing an advertisement for the booklet, please call Advent House at 223-6112 for further information. Again, we thank you and look forward to seeing you on the 22nd of May.



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

SYMPATHY & CONDOLENCES

The members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fairport, NY, extend their heartfelt sympathy and condolences to:

The family and friends of George Baxter. George entered eternal life on March 29, 2020. Rest eternal grant George, O God; may light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to:

Judy Baxter
24 Woodcrest Circle
Fairport, NY 14450

Laurie DeLong
21 Shannon Glen
Fairport, NY 14450

Kathe Baxter
96 Garfield Avenue
Danbury, CT 06810

Steve Baxter
323 Taylor Road
Honeoye Falls, NY 14472



The family and friends of Charlotte Jackson. Charlotte entered eternal life on April 3, 2020. Rest eternal grant Charlotte, O God; may light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to:

Dee Jackson
37 West Street
Fairport, NY 14450



The family and friends of Robert Fredette. Bob entered eternal life on April 13, 2020. Rest eternal grant Bob, O God; may light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to:

Chris Fredette
3 Cabernet Circle
Fairport, NY 14450



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

My huge thanks and sincerest appreciation to my church family for your prayers, cards, positive thoughts and good wishes during my recent hospitalization and rehab; who says prayers and positive thoughts don't work??!!

It's so good to be back home again and continuing to build up strength. I so look forward to seeing you all when we once again can worship together

~Pat Mosher



I would like to thank all the people who sent one or more get well cards, calls, emails, and visits while I had surgeries and hospitalizations this fall and winter. All this helped brighten my day. I am feeling much better now."

~Tom Bigelow



LIGHT THE NIGHT



Thank you to Sue and Bill Harris for keeping the steeple lights burning bright during the month of April in memory of their parents.

Thank you to David and Janice Coon for keeping the steeple lights burning bright throughout the month of May in honor of Carolyn Coon.



REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Gerry Hammond
Mary Lou Woodhouse



Next "Epistle" Deadline is
May 21, 2020
(The Third Thursday)



Frequently our church will take photos or videos of members, including children and youth, involved in church related activities. These photos and videos may be used in church-produced publications, on our website or on social media including but not limited to Facebook. If you do not wish to have photos or videos of yourself or your child used, please see Vicki Sherry in the church office to sign an exclusion form.

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Webpage: fairportucc.org

Church Service Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 9:00-3:30
Monday through Friday (Monday-Thursday in July and August)

Rev. Gregory J. Rupright, Pastor
Rev. Dr. John N. Cedarleaf, Pastor Emeritus
Administrative Assistant: Vicki Sherry
Church Moderator: Doug Strong
Organist: Beatrice Benedict
Director of Music Ministries: Heather Watras
Business Administrator: Sue Brooks
Wedding Coordinator: Betty Shamblen
Sunday School Teacher: Yaliza Frank



First Congregational United Church of Christ
26 East Church Street
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