

From Pastor Moira's Desk... Cautious Steps Back

I'm pretty sure that I went to seminary to be a pastor ~ to teach and preach; to help people in their walk of faith; to comfort and counsel those who are struggling; to speak truth to power, advocating for God's understanding of justice and peace; to laugh with people, cry with people, and live with people. However, sometime in mid-March it all changed. With the coming of covid-19, the shelter at home orders, and everything that has come into our lives I became a televangelist, online outreach pastor, video recording editor, telecommunications specialist (charging my phone twice a day to do pastoral care by telephone), delivery driver scheduler, as well as reminding myself of the fancy mathematics I learned in college to understand the thousand different charts that explain the virus, and revisiting my days as a biology student to understand epidemiology (how viruses spread and can be contained), not to mention learning a whole lot more about economics and politics to try to make sense of the long-term impact all this will have on us, our churches, our communities, and the world.

My imagination is pretty amazing, but never in my wildest dreaming did I think pastoring would look like this. Still, here we are 74 days later (or according to my computer you could also think of it as 1,776 hours, or 10 weeks and 4 days, or 20.22% of the year). You have all been gracious, kind, and compassionate as we have adjusted to this way of being. You've shared your emails with me, learned to watch worship videos online, and helped make deliveries to folks without internet access. You've sent cards to one another, made a million phone calls to check in with each other, delivered groceries and meals, and generally been the amazing, incredible people you already were.

I said at the beginning of the pandemic that this time would prove who we really were and it has. We have proven ourselves to be strong, faithful, compassionate, caring communities of faith who are truly committed to walking together in faith, whatever life brings. So now we step into another phase in our life together ~ slowly reentering the world, returning to some of our pre-pandemic activities, always grateful for the folks who have essential jobs and they never stopped doing them, adapting to new safety and health practices, and finding a new way forward that keeps us connected in all kinds of ways. The beginning of the pandemic felt like a light switch ~ on Thursday things were pretty usual and by Tuesday everything had shut down completely. Coming out of this will be a different kind of bumpy ride.

Folks are confused, and uncertain, and scared and considering everything that's happened it's completely understandable. We aren't sure what exactly the situation is because even our best scientists and medical professionals don't know for certain. We have things we can do to protect our health, but we can't be sure and there's no vaccine for this deadly virus we're up against. Some folks will feel like they're ready to jump back into everything, others will be more cautious, and others somewhere in between. Each of us will have to think about how we will balance risks and benefits of going out or staying home. We will have to think about our health (physical, spiritual, and emotional) and the health of those we interact with. It's going to be a process so let's not pass judgement on others, or ourselves, for how we take the next steps individually, and as a community.

Later in this newsletter you'll read about the steps we're taking to resume worship, the events that have been rescheduled or cancelled, and the meetings that are happening in the coming weeks. Through it all, my friends, I pray we might be cautious and faithful, trusting in God and in the scientists and doctors God has given us. I pray we might all be gentle with each other and the different approaches people are taking. Just as there were different ways to approach the beginning of the pandemic and shelter at home, there will be different ways to approach this next phase in our lives together. I pray we might be hopeful and dream together of a truly new normal that values all human life, and all creation. I pray we might become more and more who we truly are, beloved children of God, strengthening the connections that make our parish, our congregations, our communities and our world stronger, kinder, and more nurturing places for all.

In peace and grace, *Pastor Moira*

Year of Giving ~ Strengthen The Church (STC)

Strengthen The Church is a special offering of the UCC that helps our entire denomination think in new ways about how we are called to be the church in this particular time and place. This offering helps start (plant) new churches, as well as renew and revitalize existing churches. This fund also helps develop the spiritual life of our youth and young adults through ministries designed to engage the next generation with the possibilities of church life and leadership. Conferences may use up to 50% of the offering for local and regional efforts such as the Wisconsin Conference **UCC's Lay Academy and other programs to help support clergy and congregations through times** of transition, conflict, and change. Strengthen The Church is an annual opportunity for everyone in the UCC to share the gospel in new ways – starting new churches, renewing existing churches, nurturing new leaders, and growing the UCC as a community of extravagant welcome.

Changes to worship going forward...

As we slowly resume in-person worship together, we will be making changes to help ensure our collective health & safety. Please talk with Pastor Moira if you have any questions.

- ♥ signs at all entrances reminding people to keep social distancing, 6 feet apart from people they have not been with during the pandemic (if you don't live with them, don't sit with them);
- ♥ interior doors will remain open whenever possible to limit the number of surfaces you have to touch (this means sanctuary doors, classroom and office doors, but also the inside entrance doors at Black Creek's west entrance, etc.);
- ♥ hand sanitizer available at every entrance to each of our sanctuaries;
- ♥ an encouragement to please wear a mask, and disposable masks available at each sanctuary;
- ♥ no passing of the peace as we've done it before, but we will share in God's peace together in non-contact ways;
- ♥ for at least the first couple of weeks, worship will be more like what we've done in these weeks, a shorter service as we ease our way back into worship together and limiting the amount of time we are together in a relatively confined space;
- ♥ no congregational singing – at least for a while; singing has been proved to be an incredibly efficient way to spread the virus so for at least a few weeks we will listen to songs, and hum along in our heads and hearts, and maybe something interactive that I recently dreamed up;
- ♥ communion will be changed to limit physical contact ~ prepared by folks wearing masks & gloves and for serving, wafers will be in individual paper cups (like for cupcakes) and will be handed to folks along with their wine/juice by servers wearing gloves and masks;
- ♥ the offering will be collected in plates at each door rather than passing the plates;
- ♥ no fellowship time unless it involves prepackaged food and drink and social distancing;
- ♥ we will take a record, by name, of who is present in worship in case contact tracing becomes necessary (that's where someone tests positive and they need to know who might have been exposed), when the crisis has ended these records will be destroyed;
- ♥ and there may have to be other changes to our shared life together as we get information from scientists, public health officials, denominational and parish leadership.

Cancellations, Postponements & Delays ... Oh My!

It will come as no surprise to anyone that there are changes in events scheduled for our parish and our community in response to the ongoing covid-19 situation. None of the decisions to change these events has been easy, or come lightly, but all of them have been made out of concern for our collective health. Some things could be postponed to another day, later in the fall; other things had to be cancelled; and yet other things we are still hoping to reschedule as things reopen. Here is a list of changes (in chronological order):

- ♥ Black Creek Women's Guild ~ no meeting on June 3rd; next meeting will take place on Wednesday July 1st at 1:30pm
- ♥ Black Creek Family Daze ~ rescheduled from June 6th to Saturday August 29th; St. John's Black Creek is providing the games after the parade!
- ♥ Trinity New Hope Circle ~ no meeting on June 10th; next meeting will take place on Wednesday July 8th
- ♥ Black Creek Rummage Sale ~ cancelled for June 18-20 and June 25-27; we are looking at other dates later in the summer when it might be rescheduled, but no decisions have been made at this time
- ♥ Shared Ministry Team Meeting ~ postponed from June 23rd to a date not yet determined
- ♥ Black Creek Ice Cream Social ~ cancelled for July 16th and will not be rescheduled

Resuming, Carefully & Cautiously ... Yippee!

We're watching the numbers, and doing the math, and listening to scientists, and stocking up on sanitizer and masks, and we are going to do our best to resume some church activities beginning in June. The following meetings and ministries will take place:

- ♥ Black Creek Council meeting ~ Tuesday June 9th at 6:30pm
- ♥ Trinity Council meeting ~ Thursday June 11th at 5:30pm
- ♥ Cecil Consistory meeting ~ after worship on Sunday June 14th
- ♥ Black Creek Worship & Music Committee meeting ~ Tuesday June 16th at 6:30pm
- ♥ Cecil Community Closet ~ work day is Thursday June 18th beginning at 9am and distribution is Tuesday June 23rd from noon to 3pm

As we've all learned in these weeks, everything is subject to change if the number of positive tests increases, particularly in our area/counties. Your parish leadership ~ the Black Creek Council, Cecil Consistory, and Trinity Council, along with Pastor Moira ~ is working hard to find a balance in a gradual reopening without moving too quickly, putting any of us at unnecessary risk. As with all things, each of us will have to evaluate what our comfort is in returning to pre-pandemic activities, assessing our personal and family risks and responsibilities. There will be no judgement from anyone if you need to wait, want to continue receiving materials online, and aren't ready to be in larger groups of people.

St. John's United Church of Christ Financial Secretary's Report

April 2020

	4/14/2020	4/30/2020				Direct Deposit	Total
Checking deposit	3,483.00	3,317.00				300.00	7100.00
General Fund	3,205.00	3,092.00				150.00	6447.00
Building Fund	258.00	75.00				150.00	483.00
OGHS*							
NIN*							
STC*							
Christmas Fund							
Fuel Fund							
Total Member Contributions	3463.00	3167.00				300.00	
Other Income							
Special Offering	20.00						20.00
Loaves & Fishes		150.00					150.00
Total Other	20.00	150.00					
Total Checking Deposit	3483.00	3317.00				300.00	
*OGHS = One Great Hour of Sharing NIN = Neighbors In Need STC = Strengthen The Church							

During the pandemic, deposits were only made twice a month.

St. John's United Church of Christ Treasurer's Report

April 2020

Building Fund	Deposits	\$483.00
	Interest	\$8.48
	Disbursements	(\$2,000.00)
Memorial Fund	Deposits	\$0.00
	Disbursements	\$0.00
Organ Fund	Deposits	\$0.00
	Disbursements	\$0.00
General Fund	Deposits	\$6,617.00
	Disbursements	(\$8,304.63)

As we begin reopening,
if you are more comfortable,
please feel free to continue
sending contributions by mail:
Contributions can be sent to:

St. John's UCC
PO Box 264
Black Creek, WI 54106

If you have questions, please be
in touch with our financial
secretary, Gary VanderLinden

Totals	Beginning Balance	\$218,179.54
	Deposits	\$7,100.00
	Interest	\$8.48
	Disbursements	(\$10,304.63)
	Ending Balance	\$214,983.39

General Fund	\$12,227.10
Building Fund	\$13,702.82
Memorial Fund	\$21,099.47**
Organ Fund	\$4,997.00
Parsonage Fund	<u>\$162,957.00</u>
TOTAL	\$214,983.39

YTD Membership Giving	\$37,036.25
YTD Expenses	(\$38,138.82)
Net Amount*	(\$1,102.57)

- excludes contributions and disbursements for special offerings

**of which \$15,060 is designated for building projects

Scripture Readings

June 7, 2020

Genesis 1.1-2.4

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13.11-13

Matthew 28.16-20

June 14, 2020

Genesis 18.1-15

Psalm 116.1-19

Romans 5.1-8

Matthew 9.35-10.23



June 21, 2020

Happy Father's Day

Genesis 21.8-21

Psalm 86.1-17

Romans 6.1-11

Matthew 10.24-33

June 28, 2020

Genesis 22.1-14

Psalm 13

Romans 6.12-23

Matthew 10.40-42

Reader & Greeter Schedule

No, Pastor Moira didn't forget to include it. At least for a little while, as we ease back into our worship life together, Pastor Moira and Randy will be readers. Part of this is to limit the number of people who are speaking during worship to reduce the number of people who might spread the virus. Additionally, we all need some time to readjust to worship, to being out and about in the world, well, to everything that we didn't do during the preventative distancing time. And finally, we aren't sure what greeters will be doing going forward because of the virus' limits and restrictions on close contact. This will also allow Connie Wheeler additional time to get the schedule into shape for the summer and fall months. If you know of a week when you aren't available, or if you'd like to be added to the rotation, please be in touch with Connie or with Pastor Moira.

Church Council "Preliminary" Meeting Minutes

Due to the ongoing public health emergency, the Council did not meet in May. They reviewed the financial secretary and treasurer's reports as well as Pastor Moira's activities (primarily getting us connected for worship during these days) via email. There will be an in-person Council meeting on Tuesday June 9th at 6:30pm

June 2020

How to reach Pastor Moira: phone 715-851-3080
email pastormoira73@gmail.com
Sunday Schedule: 8:45 am Trinity Worship
10:15 am Black Creek Worship
7:00 pm Cecil Worship

Pastor's Office Hours

All are welcome at Black Creek
 As we ease back in, Pastor Moira will be in the office two days a week, but the schedule is still uncertain. Please call/text to find out or make an appointment.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
♥ In person worship will resume at all three churches on SUNDAY JUNE 7th ♥ Worship materials will continue to be emailed and posted to the parish website & Facebook pages ♥ If you want to continue receiving PRINT materials, please be in touch with Pastor Moira						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
If all goes well with the virus, in-person worship resumes!!		6:30pm BC Council		5:30pm T Council		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
C Consistory after worship		6:30pm BC Worship & Music Committee	5-7pm ALC Food Pantry	9am C Closet work day		9-11am ALC Food Pantry
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
		Noon - 3pm C Closet distribution				Tori Scott wedding
28	29	30	Key to locations: BC = St. John's U.C.C. Black Creek T = Trinity U.C.C. outside Nichols C = St. John's U.C.C. Cecil ALC = Ascension Lutheran Church Navarino			

"The purpose of this congregation is to be a faith community promoting the kingdom of God through worship, teaching, and action ... get ready!"

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United Church of Christ
www.ucc.org



June 2020 *Newsletter*

