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SUMMER 2020

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace to you! After a crazy night of storms and tornado warnings, our family safely moved into the neighborhood. The song of cicadas greeted us, along with fresh meals and helpful hands. Thank you for your prayers, assistance, and warm welcome!

In the past week, the labyrinth outside my office has hosted a number of meaningful (and socially distant) conversations, which feels like an appropriate metaphor to remind us that, even though the whole church can't get back together yet, where two or three gather, Jesus is with us. As you enjoy loosening restrictions, stepping into neighbors' backyards or the driveways of friends from church, take a moment to sense the spirit of Christ in those connections. Don't take them for granted!

I am also mindful that some of you have still not been able to connect with others face to face. You may live alone, are immune-compromised, or just want to be cautious. To you also, Jesus says, "I am with you always." Please let us know if there is any special care you need as we try to make up for some of this distance by seeing each other's precious faces on Zoom on Sunday mornings.

As we view the larger landscape, where more and more people are willing to see the ways systemic racism has shaped layers of society and of our own experience, I imagine Jesus showing up alongside every person. Jesus is with each one, whether they know it or not. Sometimes he comforts, sometimes he confronts, sometimes he listens, sometimes he liberates. Always, he loves. It is my hope that we as a church will commit together to let Jesus' presence humble us, change us, and lead us into holy response that participates in God's healing of the whole world.

Here's to doing the work together,
in grace and peace,

Pastor Julie



Congregational MEETING

**Sunday, June 28
@ 11 am**

Agenda Items include:

- Presentation of Annual Reports
- Presentation and Approval of Nominating Slate
- Report from Governing Board Chair
- Report from Pastor

The meeting should be brief and will be held via Zoom, following a brief break after Sunday worship.

Annual reports and the slate are available at fccfaithful.org/congregationalmeetings

UNRAVELED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART

“What happens when our world falls apart?”

How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? What do we become when our identity - or the path we're on - comes undone? What if all of this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope - with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed. This series explores stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, dreams, and expectations. These are stories where God meets us in the spiraling, unraveling of our plans - and us - into something new.”



WORSHIP

In our time of worshipping from our homes, we have experimented with a variety of worship styles and formats. We are grateful that Pastor Julie's arrival gives us opportunity to finally worship under her leadership. As we continue to worship in a variety of ways, we ask for your flexibility and patience as we learn new technology and assess how we can best meet the needs of our congregation related to worship. Information regarding worship will be included in our-weekly eblasts.

June 14, we began our new summer series, “Unraveled: Seeking God When Our Plans Fall Apart*” which includes worship resources, a collective art project, and reflection opportunities.

On the first Sunday of each month we will partake in communion together, and we ask that you gather a candle, bread/cracker, and wine/juice/ beverage prior to worship.

REFLECTIONS

WEDNESDAYS WITH PASTOR JULIE

**Beginning Wednesday June 17
at 10 am & 7:30 pm**

Join Julie to reflect on the story/scripture each week, using the artwork from Unraveled, centering prayer, personal and shared reflection. These gatherings will be held as a Zoom Meeting, and the link will be shared in the weekly eblast.

FACEBOOK LIVE WITH BETSY

**Second and Fourth Sundays
of the month at 5 pm**

Betsy Hanzelin will host Facebook Live Reflection and Prayers, as she has since mid-March, but instead of weekly gatherings, these will occur twice each month. She will be sharing thoughts on the Unraveled theme and story of the week, reflections on events of the week, sharing prayers, and time to check in with one another. Please send your joys or concerns to Betsy at bhanzelin@fccfaithful.org before 4 pm on the Sundays when we gather.

ART PROJECT

All are invited to be a part of an amazing intergenerational project which weaves together prayers and reflections into a piece of art. This project helps us embody the promise of the great weaver—that our loose ends can be woven into something new, something beautiful!

Our project will be set up in the back parking lot near the Columbarium and you are invited to visit weekly to contribute pieces to the project. Pieces of fabric will be available for you to write your prayers or responses to reflection questions, and our Art Project Leaders Pam Rodey, Emma Hanzelin, and Eva Van Til will weave these pieces together as our project grows and grows throughout the summer.

Please note, if you are unable or unwilling to visit the garden, your prayers and reflections can be emailed to Pam Rodey (pamelarodey@gmail.com) and she will write them on the strips of fabric to be included.

**“Unraveled” worship series was developed by A Sanctified Art*

FCC Adult Education Committee has decided to offer several class sessions this summer from our Fall '19 and Spring '20 curriculum. These topics are perennially relevant, but may be of special interest to you because of renewed energy to the civil rights movement for Black lives this past month. Committee members will facilitate weekly Zoom meetings, giving participants an opportunity to consider and discuss the following articles and audio-visual resources.

Perhaps you could not attend one of these classes the first time, or didn't hear of it at the time. Or, maybe you attended and value revisiting the content again for review and re-enrichment. Either way, we'd love your presence and participation! Classes are free. Content is generally appropriate for all ages. No prior study is required, and all are welcome!



POWER AND PURPOSE OF PROTEST

June 22

This session will be a group-read-aloud and conversation using a brief article from the Anti-Defamation League's blog called *Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events*. "Power and Purpose of Protest" examines the reasons for and history of protests and non-violent resistance. Our conversation will be generated by the list of conversation questions at the end of the article.

"WHY BRING IT UP?" RAISING RACE CONSCIOUS CHILDREN

June 29

This session will be an introduction to a parenting resource: a website called *Raising Race Conscious Children*. We will read and discuss "Why Bring it Up? Pushing Back Against White Supremacy" in which a parent describes their process of using multiple daily interactions to help children start noticing how majority white culture is presented as the default culture.

EXCERPTS FROM *THE 1619 PROJECT*

July 6, 13, 20 & August 3

Our discussion will rely heavily on the August 18, 2019 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* called *The 1619 Project*. This Project was created with the goal of re-examining the legacy of slavery in the United States and timed for the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans in Virginia.

The living artists, writers, and scholars who contributed to this magazine issue and the broader project will receive the primary focus and place of honor as our course teachers. We will take time to appreciate, in general, their broader life work, but also the courage and care they offered in wrestling with a particular topic or event of US Black history to make their individual contribution to the Project.

July 6: Journalists - Ida B. Wells-Barnett & Nikole Hannah-Jones

July 13: Poets - Eve Ewing & Tyehimba Jess

July 20: Filmmakers & Plotmakers - Barry Jenkins, Gabriel Prosser & Denmark Vesey

August 3: Historians & Photographers - Anne C. Bailey & Dannielle Bowman

SLURS AND BIASED LANGUAGE

August 10

This session will be an overview of a resource from an Anti-Defamation League blog called *Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events*. The article "Slurs and Biased Language" provides a list of open-ended questions that caregivers can use as discussion starters with children, and ideas of how anyone could respond when in the presence of slurs or biased language being used to target someone.

PHASES OF REGATHERING

Churches fall into Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois Plan (*right*). FCC is constantly reviewing Illinois and CDC guidelines for leadership on reopening. Our Governing Board has approved our own FCC Phases Of Regathering which we will follow in conjunction with the Restore Illinois plan. We will continue to move forward with an abundance of caution to protect our vulnerable members and the community, implementing a 2 to 4-week delay behind “Restore Illinois” phased re-openings to ensure caution and safety. (We are currently in FCC Phase 1, looking to move toward Phase 2 in the coming weeks, providing there is no spike in area cases.)

Restore Illinois Plan Phase 5 – Illinois Restored:

“Testing, tracing and treatment are widely available throughout the state. Either a vaccine is developed to prevent additional spread of COVID-19, a treatment option is readily available that ensures health care capacity is no longer a concern, or there are no new cases over a sustained period. All sectors of the economy reopen with new health and hygiene practices permanently in place. Large gatherings of all sizes can resume.”

1

(we are currently here)

- Virtual worship only
- Encourage small groups to be created and connect via Zoom and other digital means
- No baptisms
- Outdoor graveside or Columbarium funeral services for less than 10 people with Pastor approval only; no Diaconate reception
- Small Weddings for less than 10 people considered with Pastor approval
- Limited staff onsite (DCO, Maintenance, Pastor)
- Very limited outside facility users approved on case-by-case basis in accordance with needs of the community

2

- Restore Illinois Phase 3 has been implemented
- Virtual Worship Only
- Small groups of less than 10 meet outdoors with strict health and safety guidelines in place.
- Additional Staff allowed staggered onsite as needed
- Additional outside facility users approved on case-by-case basis in accordance with needs of the community

3

- Restore Illinois Phase 4 has been implemented
- Continue offering virtual worship
- Explore in-person worship experiences for groups of less than 50 with strict health and safety guidelines in place.
- Additional outside facility users approved on case-by-case basis in accordance with needs of the community
- Consideration of opening Community House to public use with less than 50 in attendance

4

- Restore Illinois Phase 5 has been implemented.
- Building fully opened with new health and safety guidelines in place.
- Full staff onsite
- Facilities re-open for space sharing

FCC FINANCIAL NEWS



Summer has finally arrived . . .

. . .and none too soon! A lifting of some restrictions, a little more mobility, and perhaps a little more appreciation of the beauty of nature brings many of us some comfort and feeling of relief. Summertime is also a time when church finances take a short vacation, so perhaps now is a good time to share some financial news.

As most will recall, at our January 26 congregational meeting, our members approved the 2020 deficit budget of <\$36,521>. Further, due to decreases in revenues from the previous year, it was necessary to suspend gifts to mission grants in 2020. One other important budget item to mention is that the largest revenue component of our annual budget is the \$600,000 in planned Pledge Revenues. Achieving our pledge revenue budget is the foundation of supporting the operations and ministries of FCC!

It is with much thanksgiving that I am pleased to report that thru the first 5 months of the year our Pledge

A word from our Treasurer & Finance Chair

Collections are at 95% of budget. Our actual Pledge Collection budget thru May is \$250,000 with actual Pledge Collections at \$237,449. It is evident that our members are making a faithful and deliberate effort to maintain their pledge commitment in a timely fashion. This is so important to our operations and decision making of the Governing Board. We are hopeful that your faithful effort will continue thru the summer months.

It is also important to note that several other revenue sources have been impacted during this time of separation and building closure. Some of that revenue loss has been offset by lower operating costs, such as reduced utilities & program expenses. Also, Jamie Ford, our Director of Operations, has been successful in renegotiating several annual maintenance contracts with outside suppliers.

In March our Stewardship Committee issued a challenge to the congregation inviting 300 individual contributions of \$258 each to offset the revenue difference from our 2019 budget. Meeting the Stewardship challenge will allow us to reach our \$600,000 pledge budget and reestablish our mission grants in 2020. To date, members have responded with 2020 Challenge gifts of over \$17,000.

Thru May our combined 2020 Pledge commitments & 2020 Challenge commitments total \$585,621 against the pledge budget of \$600,000. That means we are now just a little under \$15,000 short of achieving our annual pledge revenues as we move into the

2nd half of the year. It is hoped that further 2020 Challenge gifts will lift us to our pledge budget goals and propel us to be able to reinstate much of our mission grants by the end of the year.

Let me once again express appreciation for the faithful and deliberate effort by our members for their timely pledge contributions. As well, many members and friends of the church have been faithfully sending special offerings in support of the operations and ministry of FCC. Thank you.

Most importantly, if you are sorting through the financial impact of the pandemic in your own life, please know that your needs and those of your family must come first. Please advise us of any temporary suspension of your pledge. That will also inform us to be able to reach out to you in ways that may be of support.

Should you have pledge adjustments, special needs, questions or concerns over the summer period, please contact Judy Jensen, our Financial Manager, at judyjensen@fccfaithful.org and we will be sure to respond.

Please also continue to pray with us as we stay committed to each other and to carrying out God's ministry at FCC.

Bob Norby, Treasurer/Finance Committee Chairperson

FCC HAPPENINGS



The End of an Era

Due to the stay-in-place order it was with great sadness that we had to make the difficult decision to permanently close our Bargain Box resale shop this past April.

Created in the 1940's as a resale exchange by women of Flossmoor Community Church, the Bargain Box has operated in its present day store location in Homewood's Southgate since 1958. Thanks to decades of dedicated volunteers, proceeds from the store have supported important area ministries ever since.

In recent years the store has weathered an increase in operational costs alongside a decrease in sales, and has unfortunately suffered an unsustainable loss due to the current climate. After much thoughtful reflection, the decision had to be made to permanently close its doors. When we are able to gather again, the Men's & Women's Association will plan to honor the history of the Bargain Box, it's countless wonderful volunteers, and Lora Blythe, who served as the store manager. Many thanks to Lora Blythe and a crew of faithful volunteers who worked to empty the store and donate everything to local charities by the end of April.

As Lora Blythe noted, "We had a great run and have helped thousands of people in the process". To our volunteers, "You will never know how many lives you have touched with your kindness & generosity. I feel honored to know and have worked with each and every one of you".

Thank you to Lora and Sis Flor for their guidance and support during this difficult transition phase. To our volunteers and our congregation, we look forward to celebrating all that the Bargain Box was to not only the livelihood of FCC, but also to the HF community!

Knowledgeable Gardeners Needed

Can you identify the difference between a weed and a perennial?

Are you skilled with dividing and replanting plants?

We are in need of experienced gardeners to volunteer their time helping to weed and divide our beautiful perennial beds. In exchange, you might even walk away with some cuttings for your own garden!

Please contact Jamie Ford, Director of Church Operations, at jford@fccfaithful.org if you are able to lend your green thumb and a little time in our little slice of heaven.





*Although FCC's building closed on March 13, FCC's staff has continued working throughout the pandemic to keep our congregation connected - **Apart, Yet Joined By Faith.** Here's just a bit of what they've been up to!*

Betsy Hanzelin

Director of Congregational Enrichment

Since our building closure, Betsy has been hard at work assisting with online worship, organizing volunteers, and helping with the pastoral transition between Fred's departure and Julie's arrival. She also runs a Facebook Live time for prayer requests and reflections every other Sunday.

Brooke King-LaBreck

Director of Communications & Community Engagement

Brooke has been sending out the weekly e-blasts, running our social media, learning new software, editing online worship videos and recently, helping facilitate our Zoom worship on Sundays.

Jamie Ford

Director of Church Operations

Jamie has been in the church building most days, managing several contract negotiations and coordinating the completion of a long list of 'to-do' items with Dave & Bob which are best completed with fewer people in the building.

Dallas Collins

Director of Weekday Preschool

Dallas and the Weekday teachers worked to find lots of new and creative ways to safely engage the preschool students during stay at home orders. Dallas is currently accepting online registration for the 2020-21 school year and preparing for a variety of unknowns, with a commitment to high health and safety standards.

Travis Adams

Director of Youth Ministries

Travis has been busy engaging with the youth where they were already quite comfortable - online! He's been running weekly meetups, studies and game nights as well as coordinating confirmation and graduating senior interviews and assisting with online worship.

Katie Van Heel

Music Ministries Coordinator

Katie has been coordinating music recordings to assist in online worship and is searching for more! If you are interested in contributing either an audio or video recording, please contact Katie at kvanheel@fccfaithful.org.

Megan Maginity

Administrative Assistant

Megan has been keeping track and managing facility usage reservations and refunding deposits as needed. She recently coordinated a large "FCC & Me" directory for Pastor Julie.

Leslie Maxie

Director of Children's Ministries

Leslie has "zoomed" everywhere facilitating weekly Zoom Sunday School sessions, hosting Zoom parties, and holding a ceremony recognizing the older kids who received their crosses.

Judy Jensen

Financial Manager

Judy's work has never slowed, keeping our finances balanced, bills paid, and checks deposited. She's worked closely with Jamie and Bob Norby to qualify the church for the Payment Protection Program.

Randall Tate

Assistant to the Pastor for Pastoral Care

Randy has been assisting with online worship and making regular calls and check-ins to be sure no one is without a lifeline to the church. If you or someone you know needs a regular call or check-in, please contact Randy at rtate@fccfaithful.org.

Pastor Julie Van Til

Although Julie has only just arrived June 1, she hit the ground running! Amidst her new Summer Worship series, she has been holding socially distanced meetings outdoors at the church.



Flossmoor Community Church
Where Christ is Central and Diversity is Cherished

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