



First Congregational

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

THE HERALD

FEBRUARY 2021

## Minister's Musings

Dearly Beloved,

It is hard to believe that Lent is just around the corner. I have been working with our Spring Seasonal Worship Team (co-chaired by Eunice Baer and Elizabeth Endicott) to plan worship for Lent, Holy Week, Easter and the season after Easter. Our theme will be **VESSELS**. Lent is traditionally a season of fasting, of almsgiving (giving money to the poor), and prayer. It is a time when Christians have sought to empty themselves of those behaviors, foods, or habits that separate us from God and from who God is calling us to be. Lent can also be a time of filling. Instead of giving something up, we may add a practice of attention or intention through which we seek to see, hear and experience God's presence more clearly or to better align our will and actions with God's. But what is it that we empty? What is it that we seek to fill? Our bodies? Our minds and spirits? Our time? Our lives?

This Lenten season, instead of focusing on emptying or filling, on giving up or adding on, we invite you into a time of reflection on that which is emptied, that which is filled -- **the vessel that is you**. How do we open ourselves for either emptying or filling? How do we allow ourselves and our lives to be molded and shaped by our Creator? What kinds of spaces lend themselves to receiving, holding or pouring out hope, faith, peace, and love? What happens when a vessel gets cracked? When we are broken? Leonard Cohen suggests that this can be a gift -- for the crack is, after all, where the light gets in.

This Lent, we will reflect on what it means to be a vessel. We will also consider the vessels around us: literal and metaphorical containers such as pottery, buildings, sanctuaries, chrysalises, tombs, ships or sailing vessels, a home, family, community. What vessels hold us? What vessels move us? Who or what shapes those vessels? What vessels promote growth or enable transformation? How do we become and co-create vessels through which the Holy Spirit can work and flow?

Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> with Ash Wednesday, and you're invited to a 7:00 pm Zoom worship to mark the beginning of the Lenten season.

In addition to looking ahead to Lent, I have been working with our leaders to prepare for my 10-week parental leave. Much as I would like to control when and how baby arrives, we all know that's something to let go of, trusting God, trusting this baby and trusting my body. However, we are working with baby's due date of March 27<sup>th</sup> to plan for my leave. Rev. Elizabeth Endicott, an ordained minister in the UCC and a member of our congregation will provide part-time coverage during my absence. Elizabeth will prepare for and lead worship, preach and provide emergency pastoral care as needed. Please join me in being in prayer for Elizabeth and our congregation as we prepare for these 10 weeks.

In love and gratitude,  
Thandiwe

# Sunday Morning Worship, 10:00 am

## Zoom Call-In

Dial: 312 626 6799

When prompted for the meeting ID, Enter: 966 390 616#

## Zoom Meeting By Computer

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/966390616?pwd=eXBIRC9Kc0V6S3BxM3NBQzIDaHRTdz09>

Meeting ID: 966 390 616; Password: 773088



## Sunday Worship on Facebook Live

You *DO NOT* need a facebook account to watch our worship on Facebook Live

<https://www.facebook.com/LovelandUCC>

## Sunday Sermon on Facebook Live (starting around 10:40 am)

Please note that the sermon is being shared on Pastor Thandiwe's Facebook Page for greater reach. <https://www.facebook.com/thandiwe.daleferguson>

## Church YouTube Channel

You can find previous sermons as well as some of the other worship videos we are creating on First Congregational Church Loveland UCC's YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrrCKy5GPVQ6Po7hW6qOqPw/>

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# Thank You to Our Outgoing Leaders!

We are so blessed to have talented, faithful, generous leaders and volunteers in our congregation! We want to offer a special thanks to those who have completed their terms and are stepping down from leadership positions:

Tena Britt - Assistant Moderator

Jim Croissant - Assistant Moderator

Noe Cantu - Trustees, Faith Formation, and A/V Team

Dawn Briggs - Deacons and ushering

Larry Schuetz - Nominating Committee

Jennifer Ogle - Faith Formation

Carol Schuetz - Memorials

Kathy Miczulski - Deacons

Betsy Burns - Usher

Jay Britt - A/V Team

Additionally, we want to acknowledge and thank all those who have helped to lead Adult Education classes and opportunities in 2020:

Nora Smith -- Assisted in planning and coordinating Adult Ed in 2020.

Sandra Drage – "The Heart of Christianity" book study

Grace Haskins – "Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time" book study

Paul Heintzleman, Alexandra Stanke & Craig Bialy co-led Dismantling Racism 101

Julie Ferguson & Rhonda Racicot who co-led Aging in Place with Grace

Craig Jump, Jan Smith, Diane Levy and Dana Stanke co-led "Falling Upwards" book study

# Open & Affirming Discernment Team

## **Congregational Meeting presentation (1/17/2021)**

There were two paragraphs in the midweek emails about Open and Affirming, one in late August advertising for volunteers and one in late October announcing the team. Those two paragraphs in the midweek emails may be all that anyone has heard about the Open and Affirming Discernment effort. But that is about to change.

The team has been continually active during the meantime. Our primary assignment from the Church Board is to “help guide our congregation through the discernment process”. For the last three months, we have been in prayer and educating ourselves on the discernment process, on Open and Affirming, and on gender and sexuality.

What is the discernment process? The book, The Way of Discernment by Elizabeth Liebert, describes discernment as the traditional Christian practice of seeking God’s call in the midst of the decisions that mark one’s life. Discernment may be the single most important Christian spiritual practice for dealing with all the forces, options, and decisions that characterize modern life. Entering into discernment means becoming increasingly able to notice where God is at work in the world and in one’s own life, and increasingly generous with one’s own life in response. A discerning person seeks, in all that she or he does, that which better responds to God’s call in the moment.

Prayer, especially listening for God’s call, is central to the discernment practice. One of our team’s prayers is to be guides worthy enough of this congregation.

The spirit of Graceful Engagement is used throughout every aspect of the discernment practice. The spirit of Graceful Engagement requires deep listening and treating each person as a beloved child of God. It is about listening, sharing one’s own story, hearing one another’s perspective, finding shared experiences, and building relationships.

In the next couple weeks, we will begin this Graceful Engagement with a mailing to everyone containing a letter of introduction and an anonymous survey. Please take the time to complete and return the survey to the church office or a team member. The survey will provide an interesting view of our congregation. There were a couple unexpected insights from just the team’s survey results. The compiled results of the surveys will be shared with the congregation.

Following the mailing, team members will begin scheduling one-on-one or small group conversations to pray and to discuss discernment, Open and Affirming, and the survey results. Our goal is to engage everyone in the congregation in the discernment practice and conversations. This task is obviously problematic and complicated by the Covid-19 warnings. We anticipate that most of these conversations can be held over the phone or on Zoom. We will also work with people that prefer to have in-person discussions. The conversations should and will be Covid-19 safe and comfortable for all participants.

Although there are roadmaps of other congregations’ Open and Affirming journeys, our conversations when completed, will determine the path and next steps in our congregation’s discernment journey. Please join with all of us to pray, to listen, to build relationships and community, to discern God’s call for our community, and most of all, to follow and live His call in our lives, everyday and everywhere and with everyone.

Linda Greaves  
Brian Schuetz

Sandra Drage  
Daniel Gardner

Dawn Briggs  
Frank Kauffman

Pat Kukus  
Craig Jump

## In Need of Financial Assistance?

Our congregation has set aside some funds to assist members of our congregation and extended community (your neighbors, friends, family) with money for groceries, rent, mortgage payments and medical bills. **Please reach out to Pastor Thandiwe or one of our deacons.**

## Online & Text Giving is Now Available!

**ONLINE GIVING:** First Congregational Church is now ready to accept online donations! Please go to: <https://FCCUCC.breezechms.com/give/online>



**TEXT TO GIVE:** Simply text the amount that you'd like to give (e.g. 10) to 720-674-7372. You will be directed to a secure link to give to the church!

## Serving in February

### LAY READERS:

2/7 Rhonda Racicot  
2/14 Mary Kauffman  
2/17 Paul Heintzleman  
2/21 Craig Bialy  
2/28 Bev Laing

## Financial Notes

Budgeted Offerings through December: \$171,000

Offerings Received: \$194,179

Donation of Goods/Services in December: \$121

## February Celebrations

### Birthdays

Myer Haux  
Anthony Stelwagon  
Brian Schuetz  
Jenny Richardson  
Darryl Dale-Ferguson  
Frank Kauffman  
Helen Koch  
Steven Depperschmidt  
Shirley Sterkel  
Jeremy Jackson  
Fern Whitson  
Troy Jackson  
Darrell Depperschmidt  
Donna Yelek  
Laura Jackson

**If your birthday or anniversary is NOT listed, please let the office know.**



# FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 Virtual Worship 10 am Virtual Youth Group 12:30 pm	1	2 Virtual Lectio Divina 8 am Pastor's Office Hours 10 am Virtual Deacons 7 pm	3	4 Virtual ONA Discernment 7 pm	5	6
7 Virtual Worship 10 am	8 Virtual Mission & Outreach 3:30 pm Virtual Trustees 6:30 pm Virtual Church Board 7:30 pm	9 Virtual Lectio Divina 8 am Pastor's Office Hours 10 am Staff Meeting 1 pm	10 Virtual Creative Worship Design Team 7 pm	11	12	13
14 <i>Valentine's Day</i> Virtual Worship 10 am Virtual Youth Group 12:30 pm 	15 <i>President's Day—                      office closed</i> <i>Newsletter                      Deadline</i>	16 Virtual Lectio Divina 8 am Pastor's Office Hours 10 am	17  <i>Ash Wednesday</i> Virtual Ash Wednesday Service 7 pm	18 Virtual ONA Discernment 7 pm	19	20
21 Virtual Worship 10 am	22	23 Virtual Lectio Divina 8 am Pastor's Office Hours 10 am	24	25	26	27 Virtual Leadership Retreat 10 am
28 Virtual Worship 10 am Virtual Youth Group 12:30 pm	1	2 Virtual Lectio Divina 8 am Pastor's Office Hours 10 am Virtual Deacons 7 pm	3	4 Virtual ONA Discernment 7 pm	5	6

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## House of Neighborly Service Food Drive

House of Neighborly Service assists and advocates for people challenged by the effects of poverty or situational crisis in the city of Loveland. It is our privilege at Loveland UCC to sponsor a food drive for HNS every February. This year, you may choose to drop off non-perishable food items to the church, as per previous years, OR make a monetary donation. If you choose to make a monetary donation, please mail a check to the church, specifying "HNS" on the memo line. Thank you in advance for your continued generosity to this worthy organization.

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## Thank You's

**Namaqua Center:** On behalf of the children and families served by the Namaqua Center, I would like to express my most heartfelt gratitude for you generously hosting a holiday giving tree. The kindness of your group helped to provide wonderful Christmas memories for our clients.

**Meals on Wheels:** Thank you for your donation to Meals on Wheels of Loveland and Berthoud! Your gift really makes a difference to the older adults and homebound individuals in our community. Please pass along our gratitude to everyone in your congregation for your loyal support for home-delivered meals!

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## Birthday Sock Success

Thanks to Greg's birthday sock campaign, 587 socks and 27 hats were donated to Salvation Army and 137 Homeless Connection!



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## Easter Flowers Coming Soon

You will have the opportunity to purchase Easter kalanchoes again this year. Watch the midweek emails for more information soon!