



is a **Community of Christians**  
inviting all **people** to grow in  
their **relationship** with **God**  
and to live their **faith** in the **world**.

# ANNUAL REPORT

January 10, 2020



## 2020 CHURCH CONFERENCE AGENDA

*Meeting via ZOOM is due to the extreme circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER, OPENING PRAYER** DS (3 minutes)

**MESSAGE FROM THE DS and BISHOP** DS (5-8 minutes)

“WHY CHURCH?”

<sup>14-15</sup> The Messiah has made things up between us so that we’re now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.

<sup>16-18</sup> Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.

<sup>19-22</sup> That’s plain enough, isn’t it? You’re no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You’re no longer strangers or outsiders. You *belong* here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He’s using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home. (Ephesians 2:14-22 – The Message)

*For continual updates about the denomination, [click here](#) to sign up for the weekly NIC eNews or visit [www.umcnic.org](http://www.umcnic.org) (scroll to the bottom left of the page and click on “Newsletter signup”), you can also sign up at the United Methodist News Service at [www.umnews.org](http://www.umnews.org) for a daily or weekly news brief.*

**SHARING CONFERENCE SHEPHERDING TEAM VISION** DS (10 minutes)

**Goal 1: To Grow and Reach New Disciples of Jesus Christ**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 (NRSV)

## **Goal 2: To Live Out the Conviction that Racism is Incompatible with Christian Teachings**

[Jesus said] “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Matthew 22:36-39 (NRSV)

## **Goal 3: To Increase the Number of Highly Vital Congregations**

All of you together are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of that body. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

**PASTOR shares at least one achievement by the church for each goal listed above.**

## **HOLY CONFERENCING**

(10 minutes)

*(These questions may be used in breakout groups or for the church to engage in future conversations.)*

- What is your reaction to what the pastor shared concerning the three goals?
- What has the church learned during the pandemic about what is most important?
- Did you start any new programs or ministries that should be continued?
- Did you stop doing programs or ministries that now you realize should not be reinstated?
- How has your church made a difference during this time?
- Where has God been more visible during this time?
- What must you do to reclaim or increase the focus on the mission of the church?
- So, “Why Church?”

## **BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH CONFERENCE**

(15 minutes)

- Leadership Nominations and Election
- Clergy Compensation
- Ministry Recommendations
- Lay Servant Reports
- Additional Business

## **DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING**

\* \* \*

*The questions below are for your continued reflection and can be used by congregational leadership as is helpful during the upcoming year.*

**Goal 1:** *(Please note: new people come from new ideas. Suggest something you are not already doing).*

- How many baptisms has the church had in the past year?
- How many new members?
- When was the last time you had a conversation with someone who has no faith tradition?
- Where are non-Christians hanging out in your community? What is the church doing to connect there?
- What new things should we be doing to grow to reach *new* disciples of Jesus Christ?

*For some good ideas please consider the resources that Discipleship Ministries have provided at [www.seeallthepeople.org](http://www.seeallthepeople.org).*

**Goal 2:**

- Is it easy or difficult to talk about race? Why?
- What conversations have you had about racism in the last month?
- What is one thing your congregation can do over the next year to begin to grow in its anti-racism work?
- What is your understanding of privilege as it relates to the church and anti-racism work?

*For some good ideas, please consider exploring the resources at [www.gcorr.org/category/resource-types/discussion-guide](http://www.gcorr.org/category/resource-types/discussion-guide)*

**Goal 3:**

- What are the demographics (race/ethnicity, economics) in your church neighborhood? How does your congregation reflect these demographics? What is the plan to reach the people in your neighborhood?
- What are the felt needs in your community? How does your congregation respond?
- What are some things that will need to be done differently in the next three years to help you change or to allow momentum to continue?

*Check out [UMdata.org](http://UMdata.org).*

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## **Church Council Report**

Submitted by Allison Greer, Chair

Committee Members: Grant Bailey, Carol Barnett, Steve Betzner, Craig Chambers, Kim Coffing, Allison Greer (chair), Annie Johnson, Daniel Maerklin, Mike McGuire, Constance Williams. Senior Pastor Grace Imathiu

The Church Council of First Church was created to act as a unifying governance group. It connects the pastoral and professional staff members with the lay leadership, to help guide the ministries of the congregation in accordance with the Strategic Plan. The Church Council works with the Senior Pastor to develop the Strategic Plan, and then helps roll out the Plan to lay leadership committees by assigning a liaison to key committees. The Church Council strives to improve communication, facilitate decision-making, and maintain transparency, across all ministries.

Members served as liaisons to the following First Church committees in 2020: Finance, Trustees, Staff-Parish Relations, Adult Faith Formation, Mission & Outreach, Youth Council, Pastoral Advisory Team, Membership, Children's Council, Congregational Care.

- The Church Council started the year by celebrating “First Church by the Numbers,” highlighting the work of the church’s many ministries through numerical data (i.e., number of diapers distributed).
- With the sunset of the 2016-2019 strategic plan, the focus of 2020 was to be “increasing spiritual vitality.” This was the theme of our fall 2019 leadership retreat, during which leaders considered ways to infuse spiritual vitality into all facets of the church in the coming year.
- In March, the Church Council had planned to begin a new three-year strategic plan for 2021-2024. This process had to be delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At that point, the Council focused its work on supporting the senior pastor through navigating the shut down and pivoting to safe worship, fellowship, and ministry which included:
  - upholding acceptance of Paycheck Protection Program funds to protect salaries of First Church and Total Child Preschool employees
  - surveying the congregation around planning for returning to in-person worship
  - actualizing a Just and Resilient Communities grant from UMC Church and Society to address racial injustices in time of the Covid-19 pandemic which supported the summer drive-in prayer meetings at ETHS
  - approving policy recommendations from the ReTurn committee regarding protocols for in-person church activities
- In July, the Council was able to return to the strategic planning process. Church member John Bausch, a partner at Strategic Talent Solutions, volunteered to lead the Council through crafting a new three-year plan. During bimonthly meetings the Council has

prayerfully engaged in creating a vision for First Church in the year 2024 with robust discussion about our deepest values and goals. Church history and the very present conditions of confronting injustices both inside and outside the church have profoundly influenced the work. This process is in its final stages and will be ready to share with the church community in mid-February.

## **Reports from The Book of Discipline Committees**

### **Board of Trustees**

Submitted by William Brown, Chair

2020 included various large and small facilities repairs and improvements completed under the direction of the Board of Trustees.

#### High Rise Building Proposal

The Trustees became involved in a neighborhood issue which required significant effort to advocate for the church's best interest. A 17-story high rise building was being proposed for just west of the Church and parking lot. If approved, the building would have ruined the proportions of the built environment in the vicinity of the Church, and caused increased congestion in the alley which is already a major problem. In an organized effort by the Trustees, public comments were made at the meetings of the Evanston Plan Commission and the Planning and Development Committee allowing Pastor Grace and other members of our congregation to state our concerns. The result was that the plan, as currently conceived, was not recommended to the City Council. We are aware that the Developer has the right to return with a plan that more closely follows the zoning regulations for this area of the City.

#### Women's Transitional Shelter (Daisy's Place)

Due to the restrictions of the COVID 19 Pandemic, the renovation in the Church basement to partner with Connections for the Homeless in providing an overnight Women's Shelter in the basement of the Church was suspended. In essence, the leadership of Connections found another way to provide housing for the homeless of Evanston through the use of Orrington Hotel and others. As a result, Connections has modified their service delivery model for the homeless, and may not pursue the overnight shelter at the Church.

#### The Church Building Repairs and Improvements

The space at the northwest corner of the basement formerly used by the Rummage Sale has been cleared out, minimally modified and improved to serve as expanded storage and workspace for the Bundled Blessings Diaper Pantry operations.

There were a variety of plumbing repairs required over the year. Costs for these items has been made more cost effective by initiating a service contract with an Evanston plumbing and HVAC company, American Vintage Home.

Along with annual maintenance of the Church's perimeter planting and Garth landscape, a plan is being developed to enhance the landscaping in the Total Child playground area, just south of the Church. As well as beautifying for the area, the planting will allow for teaching opportunities in simple botany for the children in the TC program. If all goes well, planning and contracting can occur over the winter, with the actual planting work and equipment installation occurring in the spring.

### Special Purchase

The Trustees have recently approved the purchase of a Chamber Organ as recommended by our Music Director, Dr. Brian Schoettler. The instrument is the size of a large armoire. It can be effectively used in ensemble settings, and is easily moved to other locations in the Church.

### 1141 Asbury Ave Parsonage

Extensive work was done this past year on the gutter and downspout systems for this Parsonage resulting in better conveyance of water away from the structure, saving on exterior deterioration and potential water infiltration in the basement.

The French doors to the back deck were rebuilt, and the deck was refinished. This work included the replacement of some deteriorated boards that form the deck.

### 828 Ingleside Parsonage

A variety of maintenance items were performed at this Parsonage, including replacement of the back gate, some appliances, downspouts, and other small items.

### Building Access during the Pandemic

The Trustee Chair participated on the Task Force that developed policy and procedures for the appropriate access to and use of the building during the Pandemic. The work resulted in a detailed manual of information, which remains in effect during the period of limited use.

## **Investment Committee**

Submitted by Geoff Renk, Chair

Committee Members: Eric Alonso, Phil Crihfield, Geoff Renk, Karen Young, John Rea, and Bob Hetzel.

Ex-Officio Members: Grace Imathiu, Steve Betzner, Scott Freeman, Bill Brown, Nancy Braund Boruch and Tom Snider.

Since 1999, the Board of Trustees has required that the Church's endowment be managed by an investment advisory firm, in accordance with the principles and procedures contained in the Trustees' Statement of Investment Policy. The Policy Statement charges the Investment Committee with ensuring that the investment advisor adheres to the policies stipulated in that statement and with evaluating the investment performance of the advisor.

Wespath Investments ("Wespath"), a general agency of the United Methodist Church, has been managing the endowment since June, 2017. Wespath replaced William Blair & Company, which had managed the endowment since 1999.

The principal reason for changing advisors and selecting Wespath was to align the endowment's investments with the United Methodist Social Principles. With \$25 billion of assets under management, Wespath is the largest faith-based money manager in the United States and is among the one-hundred largest pension fund managers. All Wespath's investment offerings are guided by the Social Principles and incorporate sustainable investment practices focused on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors. Wespath has long been a leader in sustainable investing and has successfully influenced corporate practices and promoted government policies with regard to ESG factors.

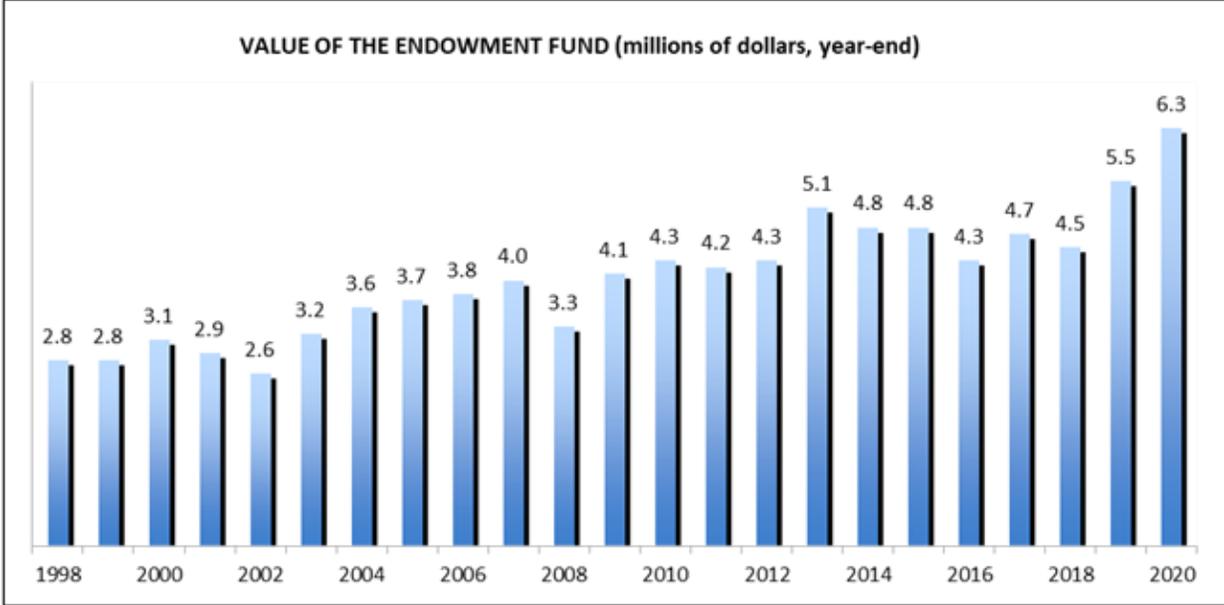
Also important in the selection of Wespath was its record of equity and fixed-income returns, which have been consistent with broad market indexes over the past 20 years. In addition, its investment expenses, which reduce our gross returns, are lower than of the previous manager.

As of December 31, 2020, assets in the endowment fund stood at \$6.3 million, up from \$5.5 million at the end of 2019. The total return on the endowment's portfolio was 15.9% for the year. As of September 30, 2020, our return matched the blended benchmark<sup>1</sup>. During 2020, withdrawals from the endowment fund assets totaled \$113,821, and were used to reimburse the Church's operating fund for incurred repairs, maintenance, capital improvements and other authorized expenditures.

As of December 31, 2020, 52 percent of the fund's assets were invested in U.S stocks, 10 percent in international stocks, and 38 percent in intermediate bonds. This allocation is consistent with the allowable asset allocation ranges stipulated in the Statement of Investment Policy. In late January, 2021, these investments will be automatically re-balanced to match the target

allocations (50% domestic equities, 10% international equities and 40% fixed income), an annual policy requirement.

The following chart reflects the market value of the investment assets in the endowment portfolio as of the end of each year.



## Finance Committee

Submitted by Rebecca Smith, Chair

### Financial Position, YTD 2020 Operating Performance, Committee Activities and 2021 Operating Budget

#### Financial Position

FUMC continues to be in a good financial position due to the generosity of past members of our congregation, dedicated pledge fulfillment by the current congregation even during a period of economic uncertainty of a global pandemic. FUMC continues to utilize control in budgeting and management of expenses by our staff, timely financial reporting, and stewardship of our resources by the Finance Committee.

The balance sheets below for the Operating Fund, Building Fund, and Endowment & Trust Funds detail the financial position of FUMC.

	Operating		Building		Endowment	
<i>(\$ in 000s)</i>	Audit 2019	Nov 2020	Audit 2019	Sep 2020	Audit 2019	Sep 2020
Cash & Equivalents	\$334	\$658	\$8	\$8	\$0	\$0
Due from Other Funds	0	0	24	0	0	0
Other/Buildings/Investments	326	0	7,452	7,476	5,518	5,697
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$640</b>	<b>\$658</b>	<b>\$7,484</b>	<b>\$7,784</b>	<b>\$5,518</b>	<b>\$5,697</b>
Due to Other Funds	\$24	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$79	\$19
Other Liabilities	129	156	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$153</b>	<b>\$156</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$79</b>	<b>\$19</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$487</b>	<b>\$502</b>	<b>\$7,484</b>	<b>\$7,784</b>	<b>\$5,439</b>	<b>\$5,678</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$640</b>	<b>\$658</b>	<b>\$7,484</b>	<b>\$7,784</b>	<b>\$5,439</b>	<b>\$5,697</b>

#### YTD 2020 Operating Performance

The results for 2020 are not finalized as of this reporting. The Operating Fund is likely to have a minimal surplus for the full year.

Preliminary 2020 results through November show the Operating Fund had an excess income of \$17,200 compared to the year-to-date budget Total Income. This is the result of increased Non-pledged Giving of \$18,000 and Pledged Giving of \$21,300. Other Income from Shared Cost Program such as Garrett graduation and JRC services was not realized for a loss of (\$22,100).

November year to date spending was approximately (\$49,000) below budget. Staffing has been retained at 100% with no decrease in wages for 2020. The Church building being closed generated utility savings of approximately (\$20,000). General Admin costs saw savings in office supplies, fellowship supplies, postage and printing costs year to date of about (\$7,000). Interest groups and programs also saw some year-to-date savings due to the pivoting of 2020 activities from in person to virtual due to restrictions from the pandemic. These savings have occurred in the support areas for Retreats and Creation Camp and Mission Trips and Supplies (\$14,500).

#### Committee Activities

In 2020, the Finance Committee designed an SOP outlining the process of the liaison relationships with the church staff and committee leaders. Focus for 2020 was to enhance details of its monthly financial reviews, so pivots could be made quickly in response to economic impacts from the pandemic.

#### 2021 Operating Budget

The budgeting process at FUMC is coordinated by the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee consolidates budgetary “asks” from each church committee and interest group to establish the Expense portion of the budget. The staff provides zero based budgets for General &

Administrative and Building & Grounds expenses. The Income portion of the budget is derived from the results of the annual Stewardship Campaign. The 2021 Operating budget is currently not balanced as of January 10, 2021 and will be presented at a February date for consideration and approval.

## **Nominations and Leadership Development Committee**

Submitted by Grace Imathiu and Mary Taylor-Johnson

Committee members: Lynelle Diener, Pat Haughney, Jack Hinz, Grace Imathiu (chair), Jack Kalil (youth), Kris Kallembach, Jim McHolland, Chris Nieuwsma, Greg Pool, Stacy Schultze, Mary Taylor-Johnson (staff), Bryan Wagner

The work of the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee is to strengthen the laity of the congregation: specifically to identify, develop, employ, and assess the gifts/skills of lay persons (persons other than clergy). This work is often invisible to many.

The year 2020 marked a significant change for the “Nom Comm” at First Church. Whereas for years this committee has focused nearly exclusively on the “nominations” side of its work — identifying and recruiting persons for openings on committees and other roles — in 2020 the committee was challenged to engage the “leadership development” piece.

Our focus on leadership development led to these outcomes:

- Creation of a gifts and passions survey (“Where Is God Calling You?”) that 287 persons have taken so far. Church member and NU statistics professor Beth Tipton, served in a consulting role for this project. The survey was launched in May and has been given to current and new members. Persons who have not yet completed this tool or who wish to retake the survey in light of gifts and passions discovered during the pandemic, are encouraged to do so at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WhereIsGodCallingYou?> .
- Preliminary conversation as a committee and informal conversations with two seasoned committee chairs about the needs of church leaders and they might be better supported. We are putting together a small work group to pick up and continue that work.
- Intentional recruitment of youth as members of committees and initial conversation about how to best support our youth leaders. Currently we have eight youth serving on committees, including Church Council, Children’s Council, Finance, Nominations, and Youth Council.
- Greater visibility for lay leadership and the work of lay persons. Church leaders were celebrated in Virtual Worship this summer (when the new leadership slate was approved) with a photo montage and worship leadership participation. In addition, the e-news since the fall has included a block highlighting a committee, with photos of committee members and a description of the group’s current work.

Certainly, there is more we can do in all these leadership development areas, and we look forward to doing our part to strengthen church lay leadership.

While the leadership development piece was new and exciting, the committee still needed to identify and recruit leaders for nearly 80 positions — a daunting task in the best of times and equally so during a pandemic. Yet the group put together what we think is a solid leadership slate that includes wide representation of our congregation. We worked hard to include diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and tenure at the church.

We are so grateful for our Nom Comm members who approach this work so thoughtfully. Thanks also to the 2019-20 leaders who all extended their term of service by a month to allow some additional time to finalize the 2020-21 church leadership slate. A heartfelt thank you to all current and past leaders in this faith community. Your service to First Church is greatly appreciated.

## **Staff-Parish Relations Committee**

Submitted by Todd Bowen, Chair

SPRC supported the life of the church by focusing on the following in 2020:

- Retained the services of Ministry Architects to recruit a Director of Children's Ministry
- Hired and onboarded Colin McDonald as Director of Children's Ministry
- Supported pastoral staff as the pandemic began and as online church developed
- Shifted responsibilities for Calvin Cheema to interim AV specialist
- Comforted and supported Pastor Jane Cheema through the loss of her beloved spouse
- Determined need for Director of AV for the online services, developed job description, interviewed and hired Nate Smith
- Granted short renewal leaves for the pastoral staff in the summer in response to the stress burdens of the pandemic
- Coordinated church services on May 24, 2020
- Total Child Director Laura Carr began in July.
- Provided feedback to the pastoral staff in lieu of the traditional process that was waived by the District Superintendent

- Continued to support all church staff through the end of December 2020 with salary and benefits allowing them to work from home as possible
- Eliminated the receptionist position effective December 31, 2020
- Granted Pastor Grace Imathiu leave to travel to Kenya for her brother's memorial
- Began discussions on a post-Covid church and future staffing needs

Respectfully submitted on behalf of SPRC: *David Cerra, Muriel Clair, Kitty Dutenhaver, Jack Hintz, Julie Karnes, Jason Lewis, Daniel Maerklin, Matt Peters, Marta Rudy, Grace Imathiu (Senior Pastor)*

Todd Bowen, Chair

## **Programmatic Committee and Interest Group Reports**

### **Adult Christian Education Council**

Submitted by Mari Leonard

Committee Members: Jaeyeon Chung, Marcia Epting, Connie Gillman, Mitchell Jackson (staff), Mari Leonard (chair), Dennis Moore, Jonathan Ng, Stephanie Peters, Tom Scott

Our Council's biggest challenge in 2020 has, of course, been to find a way to serve our First Church community in the midst of a pandemic, when we cannot be physically together. Zoom has been the key to being able to continue to provide a wide range of options to the congregation. Because we do not have to arrange access to the church building, we have been able to offer classes on a more flexible schedule so that folks can participate in more classes and groups than they typically could when many classes/groups meet at 9:15 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

The mission of the Adult Council is to provide opportunities to learn, reflect, and explore in a supportive community so that we grow in our relationship with God and each other, and live our faith in the world. Adult Council oversees programming that involves both short-term, single-topic classes meeting on Sunday mornings before worship or during the week for 2-5 sessions, and small groups that meet regularly throughout the church year. Our goal is to offer formats and topics that appeal to a variety of demographics.

These small group studies have been critical in keeping our members connected and involved in a time when we cannot gather together in weekly worship. We offer several long-term ongoing groups that are thriving. The Abide group, which explores ways to live our Christian faith in our daily lives, typically takes the summer off. This summer a small contingent decided to meet

every Sunday morning throughout the entire summer to discuss two books that deal with social justice issues around race. Additionally, the group did another book study that met on Wednesday nights in the fall. Other groups that are thriving are Progressive Christianity, a reading discussion group, Listen, a reading group on race in America, the Wednesday morning Bible study, and God's Story, Our Stories lectionary Bible study. Finally, we had the One Church One Book study of Bruggeman's *Virus as a Summons to Faith*. These groups have had regular participation of 136 to 161 people.

In the fall we offered a range of new classes and a re-boot of a class that has been taught several times in the past. For the most part these classes were well received, but there were a couple classes that had no registrants. Our challenge is to continue to come up with class ideas and hope that they find an audience. We currently list our class offerings in the weekly church email, send out an email specifically for Adult Christian Education, and put our classes on the church calendar. We currently have three classes offered for the winter, and 21 people have registered for them so far.

We are planning to send out evaluations to folks that have taken classes this fall to find out what compelled them to register, and to evaluate the benefits and shortcomings of the class. We also want to provide a questionnaire to congregants that have not participated to find out what might appeal to them. We continue to push ourselves to provide meaningful classes and to promote them in a way that our congregation can find them and get connected during this trying time.

## **Progressive Christianity Reading Group**

Submitted by Dennis Damon Moore, group convener and facilitator

This group, co-founded several years ago by Dean Francis and Cate Whitcomb, meets weekly in Zoom sessions on Thursdays at 2:00 p.m. for lively conversation about books of new or continuing interest chosen by those at the table each year. Everyone is welcome to join at any time and to participate as individual schedules permit. Our interchange is serious but not solemn, informative but not presumptuous, and variously focused on religious matters, personal history, and current affairs.

In 2020, our group met in virtual sessions weekly since March, including more informal sessions last summer continued largely for fellowship and support. We normally begin our time together with a few minutes for sharing slices of life, our own or others', then turn to roundtable discussion of whatever readings, guided in part by notes and queries prepared by various members of the group week by week. This year, perhaps because of the social restrictions that have challenged all of us, virtual attendance at our sessions has been substantial and steady, averaging 12-14 participants on screen each week.

Even as public restrictions have somewhat reduced normal activity in this interval, national developments have loomed larger than usual, prompting us to continue an expanded range of current and classic readings in and beyond the faith. The former have recently included Tich Nhat Hanh's *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, Liberty Hyde Bailey's *The Holy Earth*, Jonathan

Sacks' *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*, Marcus Borg's *Speaking Christian*, and C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. The latter have included Tara Westover's *Educated*, Cornel West's *Race Matters*, Jemar Tisby's *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, and Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*.

However, some of our richest and most memorable discussions have featured shared personal experiences and perspectives: our own episodes, discoveries, comeuppances, journeys, and safe refuges in the faith. As noted in the informal Credo for our group, published under the heading of "Why We Come to This Table":

In a world roiling with conflict and the controversial aftermath of two recent presidential elections, we come to reaffirm, nay, celebrate our faith in a like-minded community of adherents and seekers exploring, learning, and—sometimes—resolving a diverse array of issues, questions, and concerns along the way. We come to be welcomed, accepted, comforted, encouraged, and inspired to stay the course in our good-faith efforts to find our path and our place as Christians. Surely our mission statement of reconciling welcome at First Church implies positive possibilities in that regard: First Church is a vibrant, accepting congregation that welcomes all who seek God, inclusive of age, race, education, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and special needs. In short, we aim to provide a safe religious haven for all who seek such sanctuary in their lives.

For questions about the readings or the group and its dynamics or to obtain Zoom entry information, be in touch with group convener Dennis Damon Moore at (847) 859-6557 or [djmoore1941@gmail.com](mailto:djmoore1941@gmail.com) at any time.

## **Archives Committee**

Submitted by Cate Whitcomb and Patty Baker, Co-chairs

Archives Members: Marcia Epting, Bruce Greene, Mitchell Jackson, Janet Lutz, Laura Mills, Joann Rea, John Rea, and Chris Webler.

In the first two months of 2020, work by the Archives Committee continued in several areas:

- Documents were sorted, categorized and placed in acid-free folders.
- Events and people in old photos were identified.
- Finding tools, including a list of topics and a shelf list, continued to be developed to aid in adding and retrieving materials.
- Work began to update the church symbolism booklet and create other brief handouts, e.g., a time-line history of the church.
- We responded to requests about former members and events.

When the church building closed in March, that in-person work ceased.

- Patty and Cate continued to represent First Church at quarterly meetings of the church archivists from ten other Evanston churches, the Evanston History Center, and the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. This group provides a valuable exchange of information and mutual support.
- Collaborated with archivists from Second Baptist and Willard House tracing the records of the first African American member of First Church, Maria Murray Robinson.
- Cate responded to requests for copies of membership documents or affirmation that earlier generations of family members were members of the church that were received by email.
- Several committee members took a 12-week online course presented by the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History. It provided affirmation of the work we have done, and also much information on resources for expanding our work. We will discuss as a committee what we have learned there.
- Cate prepared and presented a brief history of the building as part of the annual stewardship campaign which was part of the virtual church service on November 15.

Donated archival files and records have been received during the time we have not worked in the church building. We look forward to resuming our work when the building re-opens.

## **Children's Council**

Submitted by Judith Campbell

Current Council Members: Don Baker, Michael Boutross, Judith Campbell (chair), Mary Hetzel, Grace Johnson, Virginia Lee, Catarina Maerklin, Katie McCarthy, Eleanor Nicholson, Ann Wehmeyer, and Colin McDonald (Director of Children's Ministries as of 6/1/20).

The Children's Ministry Team also includes Pauline Omboko, Lisa Gresch, Krys Juleen, and Alex Rea.

This has been a year of change and transition for the Children's Council. At the start of 2020 we invited Ministry Architects, a national search firm, to evaluate our Children's Ministry Program and guide us in the process of hiring our first full-time Director of Children's Ministry. The outcome was most successful, with Colin McDonald joining our team on June 1st.

At the end of January, Ministry Architects provided us with a lengthy assessment, shedding light on our strengths as well as on areas needing attention and/or change. The report became the focus of the Children's Council. We needed to consider: What can be addressed immediately? What will need time to build? What do we want to work on with a new Director of Children's Ministry? As we entered the month of March not only did we see the pandemic take hold, we

also began the search process, with Ministry Architects, for a full-time Director. The process was undertaken through zoom; over several months and after a national search with many suitable candidates, we hired Colin McDonald, who coincidentally was in the process of joining our church along with his wife Lauren. I tell this story, because it is an example of how God has worked in our midst.

Suddenly, before Easter came we found ourselves shifting Children's Chapel to Zoom and Sunday School closed its doors. By the time May came we cancelled Creation Camp and Family Camp, wondering how we would manage other camp experiences. Life was changing quickly, and we continued to ask on-going questions: How do we minister to the children in our congregation? What do our families need?

Through summer and fall, as we continued to live in a pandemic, programs have continued. In addition to Children's Chapel via zoom, VBS also took place in July. New programs have been explored such as Story Hour, Family Worship during Advent, and our first ever Virtual Pageant. Some ministry programs have been done in person with the necessary precautions. In lieu of a "backpack blessing" during worship, children gathered one of two Saturdays in the park for a "device blessing" followed by the appearance of the ice-cream truck. The third graders received their Bibles individually on the doorstep of their homes with a visit by Pastor Grace and Colin. Home visits were made on other occasions and supplies mailed to our young disciples.

Meanwhile the Council has met monthly and is currently involved in writing our Core Competencies that we want for the children and youth of First Church. This was one of the big challenges that Ministry Architects pointed out to us: we need to have clear expectations and direction of what we want from our Children's Ministry. This will also lead us in developing a mission statement and set goals.

During these unique times, the work has evolved and continues to do so. It is clear that Colin McDonald has been the leader we need as we seek to minister to families and children. What hasn't changed is that God's spirit is creatively at work in Children's Ministries at First Church.

## **Communications Committee**

Submitted by Jim O'Connell and Mary Taylor-Johnson

Committee members: Melissa Appelt, Liz Blackwell, S.E. Brick, Jim O'Connell (chair), Henry Pleas, Martha Rudy, Andy Shotwell, Mary Taylor-Johnson (staff)

In our report a year ago we reported four areas of focus for the "Comm Comm" in the winter, spring, and early summer of 2020. The first focus was to create a new website.

As that report stated, we had "begun some preliminary work for a new website, with the goal of a new, easily navigable and more informative website as soon as resources allow." After identifying and analyzing several church websites we liked and starting to outline a process for proceeding, COVID caused a pause in that work for several months as energy was needed elsewhere.

In the late summer and early fall, with new members on the committee, we revisited our preliminary work, realizing that getting the new website done right rather than done quickly was the proper course of action. Our new committee members bring really helpful expertise to the process.

In December 2020 we submitted RFP's to several agencies for website development and look forward to receiving their proposals this month. We are eager to move forward and committed to doing this work carefully and thoughtfully.

On other communication fronts, our e-news has been critical in keeping the congregation (members and prospective members and visitors) informed during the pandemic about virtual worship, learning, serving, and fellowship opportunities, program development, administrative work, news from the Northern Illinois Conference, and items of interest in the Evanston community. The e-news has expanded since March to compensate for the weekly First Things First worship bulletin insert (hard copy) we've had in the past.

Pastor Grace's Grace Note messages continue to inspire and compel us on the faith journey and to keep us connected, which is critical in these times.

Since March we have also stepped up our Facebook presence. A number of new FB groups for the church were created in March, and several of those are quite active.

The quarterly Faith at First newsletter has continued with a special May issue on COVID, a Rally Day issue, and an Advent/Christmas issue. Beginning with the Rally Day issue, the newsletter is digital, which is a considerable cost savings to the church and also in line with the church's commitment to environmental stewardship.

Several groups have become more active on Realm, using that platform as a primary communication vehicle for group members. This development is likely a natural development as Realm continues to be rolled out to the congregation — but the pandemic and human need for connection may be a contributing factor.

For now, the Comm Comm's priority and main focus is the development of a new website, and that work may demand our full attention. After the website, our focus may turn to expanding social media efforts and to developing vehicles for communicating about specific ministry areas to more targeted audiences (e.g., perhaps a monthly Mission and Outreach — or Social Justice or Adult Christian Education—email for those persons who subscribe to it). And, of course, we'll need to assess what the communication needs of our congregation are in a post-pandemic world.

During this time when effective communication is so critical we are grateful for our terrific committee members and for this congregation's support.

## **Congregational Care Committee**

Submitted by Cherie Asante, Chair

Committee members: Steve Armstrong, Don Baker, Hazel Barnett, Fay Godman, Alex Rea  
Staff liaison: Rev. Bonny Roth, Pastor of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation

During 2020 the Congregational Care Committee, not surprisingly, shifted and expanded its ministry in response to the pandemic. While we look forward to revitalizing some of our traditional ministries, we have gained important insights from pandemic ministry that will serve our congregation well into the future.

Not far into the pandemic our Lay Visitors, members of the committee, and other volunteers began an extensive network of phone calls and handwritten notes to members who are isolated. In the process of connecting, the callers and writers have enjoyed renewing past and developing new relationships with people they hardly knew or have not yet met in person. We believe these relationships are essential to living our faith, even when we are physically distanced from one another.

When we no longer needed to provide transportation to in-person worship, our work shifted to linking non-computer-users with computer users. Computer users connect by speaker phone with non-computer users. That allows non-computer users to listen to virtual worship by phone and enjoy conversation before and after worship.

Our meals-for-care ministry suspended its operations when there were questions about the risks involved with sharing home-cooked meals. As CDC guidelines have allowed, we have started that ministry again.

Our greeting card ministry continued throughout the pandemic and reached over 150 homes with holiday greetings. Again, we expanded the holiday connections through the efforts of additional volunteers, who wrote personal notes and included their contact information.

A highlight of our year occurred in February: we hosted for the first time a Caregivers Luncheon. With characteristic teamwork, we enjoyed delicious food in a lovely setting that created a loving atmosphere for hearing one another's stories. The exchange of ideas and information is helping us plan for additional ways of supporting these unsung heroes.

We are grateful for the many ways our congregation cares for one another, in many cases through informal relationships. We always welcome ideas and offers of help in this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cherie Asante

## **Faith Formation Council**

Submitted by Emily McClintock, Chair

Council Members: Jim Johnson, Liz Lithio, Lee Rader, and Ann Robbins. Lionel Smith served until his death. Staff liaison: Rev. Bonny Roth, Pastor of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation

The Faith Formation Council was formed by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee and held its first meeting on Zoom on October 18, 2020.

Our goal is to focus on small group development as a means to encourage members in their personal and communal faith development. We work with our staff liaison Bonny Roth, Pastor of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation, to support ongoing small groups, plan new groups, and assess the functioning of them. Our Council also functions as a small group that supports each other in our faith.

Our first action was to contact existing small group leaders/members to assess how they were doing, ask for suggestions on improvement and seek any ideas for new groups for 2021. We currently have seven small groups meeting through Fall 2020: Abide, Read Pray Love 2, Grace Circle, Moms in Prayer, God's Story Our Stories, Sunday Morning Grief Support Group, Wednesday Morning Bible Study.

In the fall we offered two series: Prayer 101 and an Advent group called Sharing Holiday Joy that met six Sundays leading up to Christmas.

In winter 2021 we are launching a Night Prayer Service (Compline) meeting weekly for eight Tuesday evenings.

Winter Covenant Groups begin the week of January 10 and continue until Lent.

In the coming year we will continue to assess groups and add groups as we see the need in keeping with our goal to encourage our congregation's faith formation.

## **Fellowship Committee**

Submitted by Greta Connor, Chair

The health and safety measures around Covid 19 have presented challenges for fellowship in our congregation to happen in usual ways. Thankfully, committee group leaders have been creative and continued to connect with members online or in a socially distant manner. The upheaval of the pandemic has caused some congregants to seek fellowship in a different capacity.

Congregants who previously joined fellowship groups as a form of enrichment or an additional point of connection with the church are now seeking fellowship to stave off isolation and loneliness. This kind of fellowship has a sense of urgency about it. The fellowship that has emerged during the pandemic seems to be a hybrid of pastoral care and traditional fellowship.

The Limitless group, that welcomes all kinds of adults, has shown considerable growth during the Covid crisis. Many single adults connect weekly to play trivia or other games on Zoom.

Limitless has developed into a cohesive and devoted group who have been able to support one another through these times of isolation.

Most groups have continued to meet during the pandemic, either online or in person, which is heartening and inspiring. When it can be difficult to muster the energy to attend another online meeting or to plan another online event, our congregation has been remarkably resilient in the face of this challenge. The church's database, Realm, has proven invaluable as a way to connect and communicate. Realm has proved effective in streamlining how we notify members of upcoming events and reach out to new folks. Fellowship Groups offered during the pandemic:

**Rainbow Connection:** People who identify with the LGBTQIA+ Community are invited to join Rainbow Connection. This group is multi-generational, multi-racial, and members have vast religious backgrounds and familial structures. Social events are held quarterly on Zoom.

**First Flicks:** Discuss and share via Zoom reactions about a current (or sometimes not-so-current) movie. People of all ages are welcome. **First Hands:** Adults of all ages gather each month for fellowship with a purpose! This group has fun together while helping with a service project. We have packed diapers for Bundled Blessings and bagged food for The Chicago Food Depository.

**First Feet:** This walking group of all paces meets every Saturday morning at 9:00 at the corner of Church and Hinman for an hour walk on the lakefront – usually followed by coffee at Peet's.

**On the Same Page Book Club:** This group meets monthly to discuss mostly fiction books. **Friends at First:** A group of active adults, who are retired or semi-retired, volunteering, traveling, and/or taking care of grandchildren! This group was meeting outdoors in members' yards when weather permitted.

**Coffee, Conversation, & Friends:** This group of women of a certain age gather twice a month for informal conversation on a wide range of topics: books, the news, restaurants, grandchildren, & places to visit. Meeting by Garrett Chapel outdoors.

**Men's Breakfast:** Men of various ages gather for breakfast on the second Thursday each month for informal conversation and fellowship, currently meeting on Zoom.

**Mom's Night Out:** Gather with moms of any age for snacks and socializing. Come as you are after work, the gym, or gardening to connect with moms from First Church. Meeting outdoors in members' yards.

**Limitless:** Zoom meetings on Thursdays at 8:00 p.m. for Trivia, Scattergories, Bingo, and more. All adults are welcome! All ages, singles, or couples welcome.

(Couples Salon, Turntable for 8, Single or Solo, Softball Team, and Young Adult groups have not been meeting during the pandemic. We are hopeful that they will resume when it is safe to do so.)

## **Membership Committee Report**

Submitted by Michael G. Bergmann, Chair

Committee Members: Karen Bailey, Jonathan Easter, Mark Henry, Leah Holzwarth, Elisa Lindstrom, Devin McDonough, Abbey Ogunbola, Cheryl Price, Mary Taylor-Johnson (staff)

Like so many things, the work of the Membership Committee was upended due to COVID-19. All of the usual ways and processes for welcoming, engaging with, and maintaining the relationship with visitors to and members of First Church were had to be reconsidered over the past year in light of physical distancing and virtual engagement. To tackle the work of the committee, two subcommittees have been created to guide our work.

The Welcoming & Engaging Subcommittee is being chaired by Cheryl Price and is looking at how we can provide a welcoming environment at First Church while we continue in a virtual environment, and how we can ensure members are aware of opportunities for engagement with the larger First Church community. Some ideas that are being considered include: a new members virtual gathering for those who have recently completed the Inquirers Class, a virtual welcome spot to be offered monthly following virtual service, and a virtual program fair to spotlight the different ways to be involved at First Church.

The Data & Systems Subcommittee is being chaired by Mark Henry and is looking at the data we currently collect (as well as considering data we would like to have but don't currently collect), how we collect that data and what we do (or could/should do) with that data. The subcommittee is reviewing data in Realm, that was received in response to the "How is God calling you?" survey and other sources. The subcommittee has also been conducting outreach to recent new members of First Church to talk to them about their experience in engaging with First Church. The goal of the subcommittee is to ensure we have the membership data we need and that we make good use of that data in order to fully connect with and engage visitors and members of First Church at all stages of their participation.

Please be on the lookout for a call for volunteers for our monthly virtual Welcome Spot and for information about our program fair.

## **2020 Membership Report**

Submitted by Mary Taylor-Johnson  
Director of Communications and Membership Engagement

### Membership Totals

**719 total professing members**  
**469 households**

In 2020:

32 member additions  
20 member subtractions

Also participating in our worshipping congregation:

28 ordained clergy  
148 children and not-yet-confirmed youth  
49 constituents  
45 prospective members

MEMBER ADDITIONS: 32

**Reinstated (0)**

**New Members (32)**

*2018 Fall Inquirers Class — joined in January 2020 (2)*

Cheryl and John Price  
(both transfers from another UMC)

*2020 Winter/Spring Inquirers – joined in June 2020 (8)*

(5 transfers from another UMC; 3 transfers from another denomination; 1 associate member)  
Connie Gilman  
Colin and Lauren McDonald  
Lee Rader  
Justin Sabrsula and Lindsay Theile  
Scott Schaedel  
Amy and Andrew Schumacher

*2020 Fall Inquirers - joined in December 2020 (12)*

(7 transfers from another UMC; 4 transfers from another denomination; 1 profession of faith)  
Don and Vanessa Bender  
Amanda Cacich  
Katy Clusen  
Robert Harris  
Jake and Savannah Hemminger  
Sally and Tom Jacob  
Dianne and Todd Kibbey  
Marlyse Wiebenga

*Youth Confirmands (10)*

(All joined via profession of faith)  
Jonathan Bundy

Sydney Chow  
Matthew Clemson  
Kirby Cox  
Charlie Kalil  
Olivia Kibbey  
Brendan McLean  
Grace Olson  
Charlotte Price  
Emily Vance

*Baptisms (2)* — Note that baptism does not make one a professing member.  
Kirby Cox

MEMBER LOSSES: 20

**Withdrawals and Transfers (13)**

Kirsten Alischoewski and Dave Simmons — transferred to Northminster Presbyterian  
Rick Doyle — withdrew; has settled in California  
Elizabeth and Chris Farabaugh — relocated to Virginia; expect to join another UMC  
Mark Kessel – withdrew; moved to Lake County and has not yet found a church home.  
Randy Meyer - withdrew; moved to Texas  
Amanda Schultze — withdrew; lives in Washington D.C.  
Lance and Lorraine Tyson - withdrew  
Anne Marie Williams - withdrew  
Everett Williams - withdrew  
Elizabeth Yamashiroya - withdrew

**Status changed from member to clergy (1)**

Matthew Mariani

**Deaths (4)**

Kris Daggett  
Roy Larson  
Nick Nicholas (clergy)  
Sally Raedle  
Mason Scholl (clergy)  
Lionel Smith

**Removed by Charge Conference Action - 2**

Katherine Rae Cramer, Paige Doyle

**Candidates for possible removal via charge conference action**

*For removal now:*

Jonathan Long, Sam Stahl

*For removal in one year:*

Nikolas Appelt, Brian Armstrong, Sam Crain, Michelle DeTolla, Nick Dlouhy and Sarah Snow, Ann and Arthur Eubank, Scott and Jennifer Gwilliam, Laura Harrier, Jesse Hunt, Malik Kemokai, Jayne Kenney, Janet Loecker, Molly and Ryan Montes, Will Niemira, Debby Pool, Noah Pool, Will Pool, Becky Ramsey, Eva Sue Schwinge

### Worship Attendance (January-December 2020)

168 Sunday morning average (down 39% from 2019)

12% weekly visitor average

618 total worshippers (27% of total are nonmembers)

## **Mission & Outreach Committee**

Submitted by Stephanie Clemson

Committee Members: Steve Brawn, Katie Brick, Jane Cheema (staff liaison), Stephanie Clemson (chair), Pete Henderson, Alli Henry, Tina Kalil, Jessica Kline Radcliffe, James Watts, Ann Weatherhead

Mission and Outreach at First Church encompasses a wide range of activities of many subcommittees, programs, and partnerships. The Mission and Outreach Committee (M&O) is charged with the oversight of these activities with a goal of caring for people in need and supporting the congregation as we live our faith in the world through experiences, education, and support.

2020 got off to a strong start for the committee, but March brought us a new set of challenges as we adjusted to the reality of living with the Covid-19 virus. In keeping with our mission, we worked to find ways to continue to care for those in need and also to try to find ways that First Church members could live their faith in the world and be in service to others. In the early months of the pandemic, we relied on a dedicated group of volunteers who never stopped serving our neighbors who were experiencing homelessness. As the pandemic continued, we tried to come up with a range of mission opportunities to allow First Church members to connect with our community in a way that they felt comfortable with.

We continued to meet monthly on Zoom, and in August welcomed new members to our committee. We are grateful to those who completed their service on M&O, especially our outgoing chair, Craig Chambers, and excited to welcome our new members who have already sparked great discussion and ideas for how we can support and expand the mission work of First Church.

Some of the many activities and programs that M&O coordinated include:

- **Interfaith Action and related programs:** Interfaith Action of Evanston is a group made up of over 40 faith organizations in Evanston brought together to serve hungry and homeless people, pursue interfaith dialogue, and engage in advocacy that promotes social justice. Membership is open to any faith organization that actively participates in that mission. Each participating faith institution has one delegate who serves as a liaison between that institution and Interfaith Action to participate in occasional meetings and help to disseminate information. Tina Kalil is the current delegate, who took over the role from Melissa Appelt, who went on to become the secretary for Interfaith Action's Executive Committee.

The primary events and activities that Interfaith is currently engaged in are: the monthly Producersmobile, the emergency overnight shelter, sponsoring (some of) the community soup kitchens, hosting a daily (week day) hospitality center, and hosting a warming center during the cold winter months. Interfaith also has 2 fundraisers to support their programs: the Walk for Warmth (in its second year) and the Vision Keeper's dinner, honoring action heroes from the community. Through the work of the M&O committee, First Church is directly involved in several of these programs. First Church members are involved in many others.

- **Soup Kitchen:** This year's soup kitchen operated, business as usual, every Thursday from FUMC until March 12, when the church closed its doors due to the pandemic. From that point on, the Thursday soup kitchen operated out of the First Congregational Church House at 1417 Hinman. They graciously gave us permission to serve out of their facility because of our relationship with their Friday Sack Lunch coordinator (Mary Beth Roth) and also because they remained open for the aforementioned lunch ministry. Eventually getting the key to access the new facility, Tina Kalil (with occasional assistance from Beth Ruppe) would open the building every Thursday, and help the serving group set up so they could in turn distribute the meals.

Due to the pandemic, and out of extreme caution, individually pre-packaged meals were distributed from the front door to the guests, maintaining a social distance from the servers to the guests. No more than 2 servers were required and they remained indoors, masked and gloved. No guests were permitted entry. Most groups, on Thursdays, and throughout the week ordered food from caterers and restaurants. On occasion, some of the serving groups would prepare the meals with their parishioners, but for the Thursday groups, neither kitchen facilities at FUMC or FCCE were used. The one exception to this was on Thanksgiving when Tina Kalil received the meals the Tuesday prior and used the refrigerators for storage and then the ovens on Thursday to heat the food (with Paul Kalil). The (Stephanie and Pete) Clemson family then helped to transfer the food from one church to another and served the Thanksgiving meal, along with additional supplies, procured and assembled by Stephanie, using funds generously donated by FUMC members.

On the weeks when FUMC was the serving church, Tina would order food from area restaurants and serve, along with one other church volunteer (often a member of her household). Beginning in August, Beth Ruppee, Jane Cheema and

Cherie Asante became part of the regular rotation to facilitate with opening the facility for the serving organizations.

Additionally, regular communication (multiple times a week) has been maintained between soup kitchen coordinators (both Interfaith Action and non IAE affiliated) to share information, resources and problem solve together, beginning in March and continued throughout the year.

- Emergency Overnight Shelter: After successfully hosting the Emergency Shelter for three weeks in December 2019 and January 2020, we looked forward to serving again in December 2020. There was a dedicated team of First Church volunteers who helped open, host, and close the shelter. When the pandemic hit, we were forced to reevaluate our ability to safely host the shelter. We were fortunate that Interfaith Action was also concerned with the health of the shelter guests, and worked to set up protocols to help keep everyone healthy. Interfaith hired extra staff, which meant we did not need to find volunteers. They also limited the shelter to 20 beds (still not enough, but better than not having the shelter). With the protocols in place, we were able to host the shelter during the two weeks in December when the Total Child Center was on winter break. This allowed us to use the Great Hall, which made it easier for guests to maintain physical distance. Although we were not able to provide the level of hospitality that we have provided in the past, we were glad that our building was able to be in service to our community.
- Walk for Warmth: 2020 was the first year that Interfaith Action had this fundraiser. It was a walk through Evanston, stopping at the faith communities that host the emergency overnight shelter. First Church served as the gathering place for participants, and also as the final stop on the walk. The event was a huge success and it was wonderful to be able to share our Great Hall with our community to kick off this event in support of Interfaith Action's work.
- Vision Keeper's Dinner: Each year, First Church nominates a member who has been a leader in serving and supporting our mission and service work. to be recognized at the Interfaith Action Vision Keeper's Dinner. This year our honoree was Tina Kalil, who was recognized at the February dinner along with other volunteers from Evanston faith communities.
- **Bundled Blessings**: Bundled Blessings had an amazing 2020 despite the many obstacles we faced due to the pandemic. After being deemed an essential service, creative problem solving and amazing volunteers have kept our pantry receiving, bundling, and distributing diapers each month. Though our total distribution numbers are almost the same as last year (just over 240,000 diapers) due to several agencies closing and having no way to distribute for several months, we are back to a full distribution schedule once again, giving out diapers through our 11 local agencies to over 440 children each month.

Due to Covid we were unable to host different church and community groups each month to bundle diapers so we relied (and continue to do so!) on family pods to accomplish this task each month.

Bottoms Up 2020 turned into a virtual event this year complete with a wonderful emcee, Christian Farr, a diaper toss showcasing all of our agencies as well as info about the pantry. We are grateful to this church and the greater community for its success. We were able to make just over \$23,000. Another wonderful addition this year was our first annual Pack-the-Truck diaper collection day where we collected over 26,000 diapers and pull-ups in front of our church. Both of these events gave people a chance to engage with our work in different ways, depending on what they were comfortable with.

This past year, with a grant from the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN), the trustees, and many volunteer hours we were able to clean out, repair and build shelving in the old rummage room under the front stairs to make room for an anticipated delivery of 200,000 diapers from the NDBN and Huggies at the cost of shipping. This was available to us only if we could find the space to store that many diapers and a loading dock big enough to receive over 24 pallets. This all came together in late November. We are feeling incredibly blessed to be chosen to receive this large shipment.

We continue to order diapers through the bulk-ordering program of the NDBN. These are delivered to a Northwestern University loading dock and picked up by our volunteers and brought to our pantry. The pull-ups we order through McKesson Medical Supply have had to be delivered to a committee member's home this past year, as the church has not been open to receive them. Yet another example of pivoting to meet needs in a difficult year.

We look forward to fewer complications, more efficiency, and the chance to be together again as we continue to provide diapers for the most vulnerable in our community.

Bundled Blessings Team: Nancy Brown & Sue Hagedorn (co-chairs), Dexter Bailey, Janet Bice, David D'Arcy, Pam Kendall, Krys Juleen, Mike McGowan, Caroline Wagner.

- **Sack Lunch program:** At the beginning of the year, the Sunday Sack Lunch Ministry volunteers were continuing to provide 40 lunches weekly for Connections for the Homeless in Evanston. However, we had to make adjustments when Covid-19 became an issue. Connections secured housing in hotels for many of their clients, so their need was reduced to 20 lunches per week. Since we were no longer meeting at church, individual church members stepped in and continued this ministry from home. They continue to deliver 20 sack lunches every Monday morning to the Connections location on Dewey Street. Tina Kalil and her family initially took over this effort, followed by the Asantes, the Chadwicks, and Deb Hays.
- **Women's Shelter:** One of our major projects from last year was working with Connections for the Homeless to transform space in the basement of First Church into "Daisy's Place," a long-term shelter for women experiencing homelessness. In the early months of 2020 we were working on plans for transforming the space and securing the necessary permits. All of that was put on hold when the pandemic hit. Connections for the Homeless was able to house many people in Evanston hotels, and their experience prompted a wholesale reevaluation of how they deliver services to this community. At this time, there are no plans to move forward with the women's shelter but we look

forward to continuing our partnership with Connections to explore how First Church can continue to work to support those who are experiencing homelessness.

- **Habitat for Humanity:** A small but dedicated crew served on a Habitat for Humanity build in February 2020. The consensus was that it was a great event but that it was a little bit too costly. We agreed that if we could find a way to do it that would be less expensive, we should consider another similar service day. Also, the lower cost might allow more people to participate.
- **Adult Mission Trips:** Although two of the trips that were scheduled for 2020 had to be cancelled, in October Jane Cheema led a group of adults to serve with ASP. The group was on site during the first week that ASP welcomed volunteers back to the field, and it was both a service trip and a training trip. The hope is that these adults, who are now familiar with the Covid-19 protocols in place at ASP can serve as leaders for the youth ASP trips in the summer of 2021 if those are able to go forward.
- **Star Tree:** This was First Church's 23rd year supporting YOU students and families through the Star Tree program, and the challenges of the pandemic were no match for Bev Otey and her committee of dedicated volunteers. Despite having to change plans several times in just a few weeks, they created a program that allowed First Church families to support more than 120 families. Rather than shopping for individual gifts, we contributed gift cards and YOU either presented the gift cards directly to the families or did the shopping for the families and presented the gifts.
- **Alternative Christmas Giving:** As with so many things, we had to make adjustments to this year's Alternative Christmas Giving program since we were not meeting in person. Thanks to the help of the FUMC staff we were able to set up a straightforward website where people could purchase gifts and then receive "honor cards" to give to the recipients of their alternative Christmas gifts. The M&O committee decided to focus on local, Evanston-based organizations. These were: Curt's Café; Young, Black & Lit; the PTA Equity Project (PEP); and The Laundry Café. We raised \$1645 to support these organizations.
- **Refugee Committee:** Under the leadership of Pam Kendall and the Refugee Committee, we continue to support two families. One of the families moved to Indiana in 2020 and we were able to help them with various costs relating to their move, as well as with costs related to welcoming their new baby. The congregation was also able to sign up on a registry to purchase items for the new baby and was also able to support the family in Skokie with a registry for basic household supplies.
- **Missionary Helen Roberts-Evans:** In 2019, FUMC continued its support of Liberian Missionary Helen Roberts-Evans with an allocation of \$2500.
- **Change for Change (formerly Pennies for Poverty):** This program takes the loose change that is dropped in the collection plate on Sundays and directs it toward various organizations through \$1000 mini-grants. We designated the January and February

money to offset the cost of our Habitat for Humanity project. We intended to allocate the next \$1000 raised after March 1, 2020 to the Chessmen Scholarship Fund and were considering a grant application from Erie Family Health Foundation's Reach Out and Read Program for our next recipient. Once in-person worship stopped, we were no longer able to collect loose change but we look forward to being able to support these organizations once we are able to gather together and restart this fun and successful program.

## **Social Justice Committee**

Submitted by Tom Butler, chair

Committee Members: Sue Callison, Mary Cauble, Jane Cheema (staff liaison), Sandy Durkin Ford, Ezechiel Habwawihe, Robert Harris, LeAnn Pope, Matt Rader, Beth Tipton

The committee's focus is anti-racism and the multiple ways to address it. We have been on a journey to determine what will be a faithful response to what has divided our country and unsettled our church. As been said before, this is a marathon, not a sprint effort to produce not just some visible indicators, but a transformation in how we think and practice our Christian faith.

It is important to identify some of our efforts, both to ourselves as a committee, and to the congregation in the direction we are moving in. Initially, it was important to have a physical sign in our solidarity with Black Lives Matter in the banner that was placed outside the church. Then we began to look at how we can support black businesses, to examine community issues like reparations and where we can be in partnership in likeminded efforts of social justice with other congregations. Lastly, but what is on our current agenda is a dual effort of laying out a plan to engage ourselves and the congregation in Courageous Conversations for education and personal growth.

Like on many a journey, we are curious and hopeful for our future.

## **Earth Care Task Force**

Submitted by Nancy Landrum, Chair

Task Force Members: Phyllis Bird, George Bond, Kathryn Calkins, Barbara Harrison, Bob Henderson, Susan Henderson, Bill Horstman, Sally Hunt, Jane Kotten, Melinda Kwedar, Sigrid Perry, Phil Perry, Ladonna Taylor.

Staff Liaison: Mitchell Jackson

The Earth Care Task Force works to raise awareness of our environmental challenges and to enact our Christian responsibility to be caretakers of God's creation.

We launched 2020 with a list of projects to complete that were based upon the interests of Task Force Members and Friends. However, due to the pandemic, planned projects were either significantly modified or canceled until it is safe to return to the church building.

Accomplishments of 2020:

- **Spring 2020 Birdhouses.** Mitchell Jackson, Jane Koten, and Jim Niemira built 3 birdhouses and they were placed in residential yards in Evanston.
  
- **Summer 2020 Creation Care series.** We hosted weekly witnesses during the worship service who testified about our need to be attuned to and care for various aspects of our natural world. Each week's online worship service had approximately 185 attendees who heard our Earth Care message on the following topics.
  - Lake Michigan watershed led by Jane Cheema, First United Methodist Church of Evanston
  - Oceans & microplastics led by Shantha Alonso, Creation Justice Ministries
  - Freshwater led by Clare Tallon-Ruen, Evanston citizen
  - Throwaway Culture led by Mary Beth Schaye, Collective Resource
  - Bird led by Mark McReynolds, A Rocha International, Southern California
  - Landscaping led by Kathryn Calkins, First United Methodist Church of Evanston
  - Habitats led by Phyllis Bird, First United Methodist Church of Evanston
  - Soil led by Tim Eberhart, First United Methodist Church of Evanston
  - Transportation led by David D'Arcy, Evanston citizen
  - Climate Change led by Ben Whitehouse, Whitehouse Studio
  - The Commons led by Mike Schuck, Loyola University Chicago
  - Energy led by Jonathan Nieuwsma, First United Methodist Church of Evanston
  
- **Fall 2020 Earth Care Adult Education.** Classes were held during the month of November. The class covered a different topic each week and had approximately 6 attendees.
  - Migration led by Kathryn Calkins
  - Waste and recycling led by Nancy Landrum
  - Climate change led by Phyllis Bird
  - Local food production led by Mitchell Jackson
  
- **Fall 2020 Styrofoam Collection Event.** On Saturday, November 7, Phyllis Bird spearheaded a Styrofoam collection event and transported the items to a collection center for recycling. Five families dropped off Styrofoam and a full carload of Styrofoam was diverted from the landfill.

## **Stewardship Committee**

Submitted by Ed Webler

Committee Members: Candi Boutwell (staff), Grace Imathiu (staff), Linda MacCracken, Matt Moy Johnson, Clayton Root, Bryan Wagner, Ed Webler (chair)

Stewardship did all its work in the fourth quarter of 2020. We came up short of \$1,100,000 goal by 12%. Considering Covid, financial difficulties for our membership, and the economic challenges in general, we did ok. But we hoped for more.

All our members are preparing reviews of our campaign. We are confident that with good planning the 2022 committee will have success. As chair I was most fortunate to work with inspiring committee members.

## **Clergy and Program Staff Reports**

### **Jane Berman Cheema Pastor of Mission and Discipleship**

I have been incredibly blessed to serve in ministry with the amazing, loving, and gifted community here at First Church or the past 24-ish years. This has been the most challenging year of my ministry and I am grateful for this community and for my colleagues.

2020 was a hard year for many of us with new challenges as the COVID pandemic spread and we had to quickly adapt and change our ministry plans with very little warning and with no road map of how to do this. My experience of this hard year was personally devastating because of my husband's illness with cancer and his death in April of 2020. As Nick's cancer spread, an amazing team of leaders from this church community stepped up to help with ministry, taking on teaching and organizing for our ministry that had moved online. I am grateful for all the help I received and for the support of our Senior Pastor Grace Imathiu and our SPRC who allowed for time away from work for me to grieve and mourn in the month after Nick's death.

As a Deacon appointed to this local church, my job is to help connection the gifts of the church to the needs of the world and my passion for this in expressed through ministry with Youth, Mission and Outreach and advocating for Social Justice.

My ministry in 2020 included the shift in my role from fall of 2019 as I temporarily stepped away from duties with Mission and Outreach and the Social Justice Committee and stepped into a role to help guide our Children's Ministry with our Children's Council and chairperson Judith Campbell. Part-time Children's Ministry leaders, Katie Hiscock, Alex Rea, and Lisa Gresch were also part of the team who helped during this transition in Children's Ministry. During this time, our SPRC led the work with Ministry Architects to complete our search for our new Children's Ministry Director and were completely delighted to welcome Colin Mc Donald in June as our new Director of Children's Ministry.

**Children's Ministry** started 2020 with Sunday school classes led by a wonderful team of 30 individuals who served as volunteer teachers for 4-8 weeks at a stretch and others who stepped in for a week or two. All these persons were recruited and trained by the Children's Council and Judith Campbell. Our classes used curriculum from our United Methodist

Publishing house and enjoyed adapting and enhancing the lessons with fun resources that the different volunteer teachers added to lessons each week.

Children's Chapel met each week with lessons designed to help connect children to our worship life and liturgy. Katie Hiscock led the younger children and I led the older children with help from volunteers including members of our youth group! Each week we learned prayers, heard scripture and stories connected to scripture about children acting in the world for change and we had music and lots of dancing! Grateful for the 12 individuals who served as Chapel volunteers and brought our lessons to life each week. As the pandemic made meeting in person not possible, we pivoted to Chapel going online and celebrated with students and parents each week through the end of May.

I was part of the team that welcomed Colin Mc Donald and was able to work with Colin in June to hand off the Children's Ministry programs and to share knowledge of our program. Colin and I continue to work closely together to align our goals for ministry for Children and for Youth Ministry. It was a great honor to be able to help with this transition and to spend time with children and their parents. I am grateful for the amazing rich history of ministry with Children in our faith community and for the incredibly bright future with Colin leading this ministry.

**Youth Ministry** is a very big piece of my heart and this has been reconfirmed during this pandemic season as being physically distanced from groups of youth has been incredibly hard to withstand. In 2020 we started the year with classes and mid-week fellowship gatherings and were also busy planning for fundraising for summer Mission trips, registering students for these trips and summer camps when the pandemic slowed us down for a bit. We had already registered over 36 youth for our ASP trip and 10 youth for our Middle School trip by mid-March- it was predicted to be a busy summer. In mid-March we pivoted, and these things happened to keep youth ministry moving along and forming community.

Our Confirmation Class was going strong when the pandemic forced us online and Jim Hagedorn kept us on track, and we continued to meet each week through the end of May. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade students met with Jim, Pastor Grace and me at the end of May to discuss their Confirmation and how and when it might happen. The students were united in their desire to be Confirmed in person and together. We had to wait until July and then we were able to have most amazing Confirmation service ever in the Church Courtyard and Memorial Garden. This included "sprinkling" each student as we reaffirmed their baptism, a butterfly release and anointing. We shared communion together and all of this was done with safe social distancing made possible by creative collaboration! We celebrated 11 students at this amazing service.

During the Summer we had a Virtual Youth Mission Experience focused on understanding Urban Poverty- we had 18 participants including 2 from Glenview UMC. As part of this experience we were able to take a small team of 6 youth to work in person at the United Church of Rogers Park in their Peace Garden.

In addition to this experience, we also organized 3 workdays at the church to help our Diaper Pantry expand their ministry. Youth worked to clear out a room in the basement and packed

diapers for the pantry as well. Over 15 youth helped with these projects as well as 6 adult leaders.

High School youth fellowship happened in person this summer twice a month. We would gather to share a meal and devotions. This really helped keep us connected during the pandemic and helped bridge us to the fall when we started our programs for the year.

This fall our Youth Program has been busy with a new Confirmation Class starting, a High School Meet Up on Sunday mornings as well as Journey, our mid-week high school group that meets on Wednesdays and Middle School Youth Group on Saturdays.

We have gathered for Journey and Middle School Youth Group both in person and online. Journey- small group for High School meets twice a month and Middle School Youth Group meets once a month. Each month we have had over 25 persons involved in youth ministry gatherings. These are led by our incredibly gifted and loyal youth workers: Grant Bailey, Steve Brawn and Katherine Logan.

Confirmation Class meets each week and through November was able to meet in person once each month. Our Confirmation Mentors have joined us twice this fall to help mentor students and accompany them on their faith journeys. We average 12 people each week. (this is a historically small class of students and next year we go back to our large group of 20-25.)

Our High School Meet Up on Sunday mornings has been on Zoom and has been a wonderful place of connecting to the scripture lessons in worship as well as learn through the lens of Social Justice about our call to live our faith in the world. This group has averaged 6-8 students depending on the week.

In November, Youth Ministry hosted a Social Justice Workshop for students and parents with over 35 people attending on Zoom. Two local activists, Juliet Bond and Rina Campbell led us in unpacking what it means to be an Ally and how we might act in for justice and change in our own communities.

The work of ministry with students and families involves being present and providing pastoral care which I am part of along with my clergy colleagues.

Our Youth Ministry program has been guided this fall by a new Youth Council- that I am the Staff Liaison to that is an amazing group of people who are dedicated to our youth and this ministry. The Youth Council has been making plans for ministry through this pandemic and for transitioning to in person ministry as we are able. They planned for Care Packages for students to be delivered this year and we are about 60% complete with this project. They have also worked to plan for classes, an online retreat in February of 2021 and Summer Mission opportunities for 2021.

**Supervision for Seminary Intern Alexander Dungan-** I have had the distinct pleasure of serving as Alexander's Site Supervisor in 2020 meeting weekly for planning and for theological reflection.

**Mission and Outreach.** I am the staff liaison to the M and O committee and was able to transition back to this work in May as we were close to our new Children's Ministry Director being hired. It was wonderful to be reconnected to this committee and this work which is a big part of my call as a Deacon. We agree that monthly meetings are great because we are all so excited to see each other! Our Diaper Pantry has been serving more and more children in this pandemic and their team has been incredibly creative and hardworking to pack diapers, to raise money and to engage more interest from our local community. Co-Chairs Sue Hagedorn and Nancy Brown have been incredible with their work. A big thanks once again to Pastor Grace for helping us get back to packing diapers and serving families safely. Our Soup Kitchen and Sack Lunch Ministry also kept going and serving people in need of a meal.

**Social Justice Committee-** I am the Staff Liaison to this committee. Early in 2020 the Social Justice Committee with the Adult Council, Christian Ed Director and Senior Pastor hosted Rev. Neal Christie from the UMC's General Board of Church and Society for a weekend series of workshops and classes on the new Social Principles of the UMC. It was amazing to have Rev. Christie with us for the weekend! Beginning in August of 2020, a new SJC guided by Chairperson Tom Butler began to meet monthly.

**Worship Leadership** It was with great joy that I was able to return to leading worship each week in June. I had been away from worship leadership for a good part of the previous 8 months and had missed this. I especially enjoyed working the Pastor Grace and the Earth Care group to help bring more liturgy centered on caring for Creation to our Summer worship. And loved working with Pastor Grace and Deacon Bonny Roth on the Prayer Meeting held in the ETHS parking lot this summer.

**Continuing Education.** I had the opportunity to be trained as a UMC Earth Keeper at the end of 2019 just before my husband's illness and hoping to be able to complete my project this year and develop curriculum for youth around watershed discipleship. I had the opportunity this year to do some continuing education through an online Pilgrim Principles class learning about how to nurture the sacred in the everyday- a good skill to focus on this year.

**NIC Connections and Service** I serve on the District Superintend Committee Hoping to return to working with NIC Mission group on developing training for VIM leaders and ERT teams- this has been on hold during the pandemic.

I am grateful for this community and for my colleagues especially in 2020. I am looking forward to serving in partnership with all of you in the coming year.

Grace and Peace,

Jane Cheema

## **Bonny Stalnaker Roth**

### **Pastor of Pastoral Care and Adult Faith Formation**

On Friday, March 13, I met a friend for breakfast. By mid-afternoon I had postponed a dinner meeting with another friend because of dramatic reports about the risks of COVID-19. On Saturday morning Jim O'Connell recorded our first virtual worship—socially distanced--using his iPhone. Remembering that weekend feels like waking from a bad dream.

Within days hospitals started limiting visitors, then ended all visits within a couple of weeks. Nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and other congregate living facilities closed their dining rooms and served meals in individual rooms and apartments. They closed their doors to family and friends of residents and imposed further restrictions on residents.

Our church building closed, too, and CDC-guided safety protocols were put into place to protect staff and members from spreading the virus. Yet our church staff and members learned the wonders of Zoom and adjusted to recording our portions of worship at home using our laptops and iPhones. Ministry among us and around our community continued and developed in new ways.

Pastoral care has not only continued; it has expanded during the pandemic.

Toward the end of March, I made my last member hospital visit to Sally Raedle the day before she died. Over the following nine months I've prayed by phone with in-patients and pre-surgery patients. I've prayed in city parks, on patios and decks, over fences, and on socially-distanced, mask-wearing walks.

Wherever and however my ministry opens doors, my goal is to encounter persons with openness and compassion. To hear their disappointments, sorrows, celebrations, challenges, questions, stories. To invite them to look for God's presence and love in their lives. To accept God's unconditional love and grow in love with God and all God's children. In all things to live in peace with all creation as a faithful disciple.

Email and phone calls have allowed me to contact every church family to offer pastoral care. Many of those connections led to return notes of joys and concerns and offers of support. Thanks to the dedication of Lay Visitors, Congregational Care Committee, and other volunteers, dozens of new relationships have formed among members who haven't met in person. Their phone calls and emails and snail mail notes not only forged new congregational connections, but they also wove a wider, tighter fabric of love and care supporting our members and all whom they encounter.

Our response to member deaths had to transform. The last 2020 sanctuary memorial service celebrated the life of Rev. Emery Percell, one of our former pastors, on February 2. Some deaths haven't been celebrated publicly, while virtual services allowed loved ones around the world to celebrate the lives of Paul "Nick" Nicholas and Lionel Smith. An outdoor, masked and socially-distanced family service celebrated the life of Mason Scholl.

My pastoral care and faith formation ministries benefit immeasurably from collaboration with the Congregational Care Committee and the Faith Formation Council. Details of their work are

outlined in their respective reports. I am deeply grateful for their commitment. Congregational Care suspended the meals-for-care ministry during the early days of the pandemic because of uncertainty about the safety of preparing meals in our home kitchens and delivering them to member families in crisis. But that ministry has resumed. The committee has also served as an integral part of the extensive phone calls and personal notes described above. Instead of organizing drivers to transport members to worship, we have organized phone callers so that non-computer-users may listen to virtual worship services through speaker phone with their worship partners. In February the committee hosted an exciting new event: the first Caregivers Luncheon. This beautiful, delicious, congenial gathering laid the groundwork for future support for those among us caring for loved ones.

The Faith Formation Council, formed through Nominations and Personnel Committee, came into existence in 2020. Their work with small groups, short-term classes, covenant groups, and prayer services is described further in their report. At this point First Church has six ongoing small groups, one of which has met for over ten years: Abide, God's Story Our Stories, Grace Circle, Moms in Prayer, Read Pray Love 2, and Wednesday Morning Bible Study.

In response to the isolation and grief evoked in the pandemic, a Sunday morning support group began meeting in the spring. That group has become an important source of connection for a number of members. Our three Summer Covenant Groups offered a significant connection and source of faith formation for participants. We have organized four Winter Covenant Groups beginning in January.

Beyond their importance for growing our faith, these groups are revealing new facilitators ready to further our individual and communal formation. Witnessing evidence of faith development and emerging leadership skills contributes to my growth in the faith and gratitude for the honor of serving this congregation.

It seems like a former life when I was granted a renewal leave that would occur in five-to-ten-day segments from June 2019 to June 2020. My project to draft a book-length spiritual memoir benefited from a few weeks of leave prior to the pandemic. Yet, as with so many, many parts of our lives, my leave was interrupted by the pandemic. But I do look forward to a time when I may resume that work and schedule time for the remaining weeks of my leave.

To support the work of our Northern Illinois Conference, I serve on the Residency Leadership Team as chaplain. Our ten-person team plans and implements the continuing education component required of provisional deacons and elders as they prepare for ordination. My first four years on the team consisted of an annual overnight retreat and four all-day meetings with provisional clergy, along with three days providing support during annual interview days of candidates. This fifth year is another example of shifting to Zoom meetings. While participating from an upstairs bedroom has eliminated hours of driving, I have missed our face-to-face discussions and worship.

My part-time ministry with First Church has allowed me to continue serving in a limited capacity as an On-Call Chaplain for NorthShore University HealthSystem. Before the pandemic altered my fifteen years of chaplaincy, this ministry extended my reach, as well as the church's reach,

into the broader Evanston and North Shore community. It also enhanced my effectiveness as a pastor to our members, especially those who are patients in one of the NSUHS hospitals. I regularly facilitated a group conversation on faith and life on the Intensive Care Psychiatric unit. This group offers hope to patients and renews my faith in the Holy Spirit's movement among God's beloved children. I look forward to resuming more in-person chaplaincy after I have received both coronavirus vaccines.

This year of dramatic change has deepened my understanding of familiar lessons in pastoral care. I have learned anew the lesson of the half-empty glass from witnessing people's inability to accept changes, even changes in worship experience, and to initiate connection with others. I have learned anew the lesson of the half-full glass from people who faced changes with a willingness to live into a new reality and find meaning and gratitude in their growth. I have learned anew the lesson of the overflowing glass from people who embraced changes and challenges by drawing from a deep well of joy, hope, and compassion. I pray the half-empty folks will join me in opening themselves to the inspiring witness of the half-full and overflowing folks.

I give thanks every day for my colleagues in ministry, for their faithfulness and dedication to this congregation. I am honored to serve our First Church congregation with their faithfulness and commitment to caring for one another and touching the lives of so many beyond our doors. I look forward to the day when we may again open wide the physical doors and celebrate God's eternal presence with hugs, handshakes, high-fives, and fist bumps.

In Christ,  
Bonny

**Mitchell Jackson**  
**Director of Christian Education & Young Adult Ministry**

2020 was a year to forget. COVID hurt businesses and schools; it angered, scared, and confused people across every social, economic and political line; and it exacerbated an already tense election year. It was a brutal year...

BUT! Out of the trauma of COVID we saw some positive developments in the ways we interact with one another. In Christian Education, we saw an increase in participation. Ongoing groups like ABIDE, Progressive Christianity and the Wednesday Bible Study witnessed a steady turnout for their weekly gatherings, and some groups even saw an increase in numbers throughout the fall. New groups like LISTEN, the Hymns of Charles Wesley, Proverbs, The Color of Compromise, Shelter for the Spirit and God's Creation also had steady attendance. Over one hundred people participated in Christian Ed. this fall, which includes over 30 for One Church One Book, over 50 for new classes, and over 50 for ongoing classes. Nearly half of our congregation participates in a class or a small group!

We look forward to meeting again in person, however, after the pandemic ends, we'll want to continue offering online classes (as well as in-person classes), because we noticed a positive trend: attendance remains steady in an online class. Having to get dressed and drive across town (especially in inclement weather) is a lot more labor intensive than firing up the computer and throwing on a sweatshirt. We found that the low-octane commitment to an online class encourages regular participation, and so we want to keep that up. This will be a valuable asset for us during the winter, when driving is difficult, and during the summer, when schedules are packed with extracurricular activities. Meeting in person will be great, but we also look forward to growing our online opportunities after the pandemic.

## **Colin McDonald**

### **Director of Children's Ministries**

In my first six months serving as Director of Children's Ministry at FUMC, the program has pivoted in ways that have challenged, strengthened, and inspired our conception and practice of children's ministry as well as its place and import in the church as a whole. I came on in June, just in time to take part in the last virtual Children's Chapel meeting of the 2019-20 program year; a Sunday morning class offering for children of all ages courageously and faithfully seen through in the midst of upheaval since March by former Children's Chapel Coordinator Katie Hiscock (who, in August, resigned to pursue a field education position at First UMC Crystal Lake) and current Children's Council Chair Judith Campbell. After personally experiencing the trials, technical errors, and unforeseen blessings of creating and shaping content online and fruitfully gathering around a "virtual table" during July's weeklong Vacation Bible School, Children's Ministry returned in the fall, having solicited feedback from First families in August, with a concerted offering of "live," asynchronous, and in-person events, classes, and at-home materials designed to provide consistent support and spiritual nourishment, in consideration also of reprieves and opportunities offline, to children and families of FUMC.

Our regular Sunday morning class schedule, comprised of Children's Chapel for ages 3 through 4th grade and Connect56 for grades 5 and 6, has adapted to expanded age-ranges, condensed timeframes, and more malleable curriculums designed with virtual learning environments in mind, with the creative challenge of relating previously disjointed emphases on Bible stories and worship exploration, as formerly, loosely divided between Sunday School and Children's Chapel/Connect56, in light of our decision to make the most out of less time online. How the current adaptive structure will take shape in the near future is something Children's Council will likely have to address in 2021 as it continues to construct Children's Ministry's long-term vision and goals. While our current volunteer roster and needs have decreased from last year, we are indebted to Children's Council member Mary Hetzel and field education intern Pauline Omboko for their tireless and loving support, providing an invaluable assurance of consistency and admiration for our youngest disciples. In addition to weekly meetings, both classes send participating families monthly e-mail communications, featuring summaries and extensions of lessons and related materials for optional further reflection and play, while Children's Ministry News continues to send updates, events, and various other means of engagement to all Children's Ministry households.

Other highlights have included our two-part Rally Day “Blessing of the Devices and Ice-Cream Truck Social,” in partnership with Youth Ministry, which treated more than 50 children and adults to a safe and sweet outdoor gathering in Lunt Park, reminding us all of our freedom and faith in the midst of increasingly necessary technologies to treat them as tools of connection rather than isolation and distraction. Opportunities for fellowship continued through the fall with monthly family fellowship meetings online and, throughout October, outdoors and in-person prior to in-person worship recording sessions. These meetings featured music, storytelling, introductions to individual and communal spiritual practices, and the dissemination of related materials for at-home use, temporarily taking the place of former Children’s Ministry fellowship groups such as J.U.M.P. and Club 123, while more generatively leaning into the reality and opportunity for authentic family discipleship and spiritual growth in our shared time physically apart. This attention to shared if “remote” family discipleship also gave rise to our recent Advent wreath mailings, classes, and devotionals, all intended to support children and families and attempt to conceive of changes in routine as hopeful processes of faith formation. We look forward to offering similarly integrated programming for all ages in the coming year, with the benefit of cross-generational exposure and influence, while concurrently providing opportunities for age-specific groupings to blossom.

Over the summer, we recognized and made efforts to respond to the disruptive nature and circumstances of the pandemic and its potential both to damage and impel the building of relationships by seeking and creating opportunities for tangible connection. Nursery Coordinator Alex Rea delivered homemade sensory play boxes to nursery age children, many of whom are unable or limited in their ability to engage virtually. As one family shared in response, “this physical activity was especially meaningful for us as a way of connecting.” Connect56 Coordinator Lisa Gresch provided 5th and 6th grade participants with personal student workbooks to help them explore, question, and reflect on their developing faith in and beyond class and away from screens. “New in town,” I too was eager at the very least to start putting faces to names and arranged to make brief visits and special deliveries of nature jars and “Carry the Flame” postcards to as many Children’s Ministry households as possible from June to September.

Along with the postcard came an invitation for children to sign up to be pen-pals with older members of our congregation who might especially appreciate their reaching out. This truly intergenerational activity, organized in partnership with Pastor Bonny Roth under the umbrella of Pastoral Care, is just one example of Children’s Ministry working in concert with other areas of ministry and discipleship at FUMC as we strive to glorify God in our consideration and celebration of children’s active involvement and instruction in the life of the church. Other instances include our ongoing work with Minister of Music and Organist Dr. Brian Schoettler in shaping a canon of sorts of hymns and songs as part of Children’s Ministry’s burgeoning core curriculum, evinced during our recent work together leading rehearsals for First Church’s 99th annual (and first ever virtual) Christmas Pageant, as well as Dr. Schoettler’s monthly guest appearance in Children’s Chapel to help share our denomination’s and congregation’s richly varied, theologically attuned musical heritage with children in and outside of the choir. And, of course, the program’s regular participation in virtual worship has shown up in the welcome form of numerous children-led readings of Scripture, prayers, candle lightings and more, making

visible FUMC's increasing investment and belief in children as presently active and meaningful members, not only of FUMC but the body of Christ, in a year when we may have most needed their light.

Here then are a few more beacons in the last six months of Children's Ministry:

**12 "Compassionate Campers"** signed up for virtual Vacation Bible School.

**8 "Summer Story Times"** celebrating God's people and creation were recorded and shared between June and August.

**9 families** were personally delivered sensory play boxes for nursery age children.

**8 3rd graders** received Bibles, bread, and communion outside their front door from Pastor Grace and "Mister" Colin.

On average, **10 children age 3 through 4th grade** have weekly attended Children's Chapel and **7 5th and 6th graders** have weekly attended Connect56 since Rally Day.

**40 envelopes** containing Advent wreath-making materials, instructions, and invitations to family Advent classes plus nativity sticker sets featuring diverse characters and interchangeable stable, grotto, and first century Palestinian home backgrounds were mailed to Children's Ministry households.

**23 children** helped herald good news in FUMC's 99th annual (and first ever virtual) Christmas Pageant.

**8 budding epistolers** penned letters and drawings to older members of the congregation, inviting them to be pen-pals.

At the time of this writing, **25 worship worksheets and unique, lectionary-based coloring sheets** have been distributed Sunday mornings since mid-July.

## **Brian Schoettler** **Minister of Music & Organist**

The Music Ministry of First Church continued throughout our move to Virtual Worship due to the pandemic. Some notable milestones were:

March 15 – our first virtual service

March 29 – our first service with on-screen music-making by staff musicians

April 5 (Palm Sunday) – our first virtual choir video: the hymn "All glory, laud, and honor"

April 9 (Maundy Thursday) our first virtual choir anthem: "Ubi caritas" by Maurice Duruflé

June 14 – first Sunday with music recorded from the sanctuary  
September 13 (Rally Day) – first service taped by all worship leaders in the sanctuary  
December 13 – our 99th annual (but our first virtual) Christmas pageant

I am thankful for all of the musicians who sang and played as part of our worship this past year. Just before the pandemic, First Church welcomed church musician Mark Miller to our sanctuary on the weekend of March 8 for workshops, worship, and a Justice Songfest featuring his music. The following weekend First Church quickly shifted to Virtual Worship which continued to unfold and grow into its current form. In addition to the milestones above, some memorable musical projects from our first months in this new medium included our sing-along “Hallelujah Chorus” and hymn medley on Easter, the recording of “This is my child” and a hymn in multiple languages on Pentecost, and Rally Day with string quartet.

During the summer months we supplemented our 10:30 a.m. Virtual Worship with a 9:00 a.m. Prayer Meeting service in the west parking lot at ETHS. These services centered around social justice and addressed the systemic racism and police brutality that has impacted so many lives. In addition to scripture and social justice, our summer worship and music also focused on care for creation. Instrumental solos at ETHS were focused primarily on spirituals and other works by African-American composers. Toward the end of the summer, we prepared to record worship in the sanctuary. Special thanks to David Cerra, Calvin Cheema, Jake Hemminger, Holly Keene-Gefvert, and Frank Rose for sharing their expertise as we determined the equipment needed to upgrade our audio, video, and lighting.

The fall temporarily brought our ministry back to our sanctuary for Saturday worship recording sessions that allowed for limited, socially-distanced, in-person worship. A socially-distanced string quartet joined us once each month this fall to enhance our worship in the absence of live vocal music. Instrumental music was also offered at the outdoor service in Lunt Park in September and October which included a trombone ensemble, the Juliani Ensemble, and a brass quartet, and other musicians. The Handbell Choir also briefly resumed rehearsals in the fall but eventually discontinued rehearsal when cases rose and attendance at Saturday services was no longer safe. Both the Children’s Choir and the Chancel Choir resumed weekly rehearsals on Zoom at the start of the program year.

The fall also included our virtual Festival Choir concert featuring “Messe solennelle” by Louis Vierne. In November, First Church children began recording music for our virtual pageant which involved over 20 children telling the Christmas story through scripture and song. Christmas was filled with excellent music and our choir recorded 30 musical selections that were included in our Christmas Eve and our Christmas Lessons and Carols services.

Lastly, I extend my personal thanks to the congregation and choirs for their support through what was already a difficult year. Thanks to Cody Michael Bradley for his assistance in leading our Music Ministry as I recovered from several unexpected eye surgeries. In the midst of everything I also completed my Doctor of Musical Arts degree in April and am thankful for the support of the congregation and the constant encouragement of my colleagues on staff and our choir members.

While we stay safe and do no harm, our song goes on. Let's continue to "tell the story and sing the song" whether from our sanctuary or our living rooms. "Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of God's mercy each day."

In Christ,

Dr. Brian Schoettler

## **Mary Taylor-Johnson**

### **Director of Communications and Membership Engagement**

My daughters are 16, which tells me that this month marks 15 years since I was hired at the church for a part-time job to create a new program. In those 15 years, I've held five different positions; each time my job changed in response to a strategic plan goal or to fill a gap when a staff member stepped down.

In August 2019, the work of church communications was added to my responsibilities in membership growth and engagement. Since then my work has fallen into three large buckets:

**Communications** — Developing and guiding the church's communication strategy; producing the weekly e-news, quarterly Faith at First newsletter, and (until March) the First Things First bulletin insert; maintaining a social media presence (Facebook for now); maintaining the church website. *See the Communications Committee Report.*

**Membership Growth and Engagement** — Welcoming visitors and encouraging exploration and connections in the church; leading the Inquirers Class with Pastor Grace; working with others to help new members connect to places of interest within the church; keeping *See the Membership Committee Report, the 2020 Membership Report, and the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee Report.*

**Infrastructure** — Serving as admin for Realm, the church database (I oversee the membership side of the database; Candi Boutwell, our Church Business Administrator, oversees the financial side); supporting staff and church member use of the platform; rolling out this relatively new platform (an ongoing project); developing processes to help the congregation and visitors effectively and efficiently connect with our ministries.

#### Highlights of 2020

**Getting to know and welcoming our Inquirers** — Always my favorite part of working at the church, Inquirers had a different feel as part of the winter/spring Inquirers class and all of the fall class was online.

**New Member Sunday** — In early December 12 persons took membership vows via Zoom in the presence of perhaps 30 other members. To have new members at all during the pandemic and to have 20 total adult new members in 2020— that is quite extraordinary.

**Where Is God Calling You? Survey** — The Nominations and Leadership Development Committee (with guidance from Beth Tipton) created this tool specifically for First Church; we used Realm as the repository for the data and set it up, and then we drew heavily on that data in our work to identify and recruit 2020-21 church leaders. This was a huge undertaking completed in a relatively short period of time. Since then two other faith communities have asked us to share our tool.

**Faith at First Special COVID issue** — This timely May 2020 issue told the story of how First Church had already pivoted in several areas to continue ministry, how new initiatives were well on their way, and how the pandemic personally affected some of our church members. I believe this was one of the best Faith at First issues since this publication began in 2009.

**Expanding the E-News** — I am proud of how we anticipated the congregation’s need for more communication during this time when we aren’t in the building and have intentionally included a greater variety and more detailed material.

**This Congregation** — You don’t realize what you have until you don’t have it. I miss seeing all of you! For now I relish online gatherings that provide opportunities to talk informally or to share meaningful personal experiences.

### My pandemic questions

Since March I have been trying to figure out what online church means for my work and for our collective work. A lot of questions swirl around my head these days, and I offer them here.

1. What amount of communication (almost exclusively digital) to the congregation is the right amount when we seem to be living much of our lives online?
2. Are those persons who aren’t getting email communication (or choosing not to open their email communication) feeling left behind, or are other kinds of outreach (through congregational care efforts, clergy and staff contact, and church members supporting each other) helping them feel sufficiently connected?
3. When does absence from virtual worship and disengagement from digital communication signify that folks are simply “zoomed-out” versus feeling dangerously isolated and needing intervention versus “church just isn’t part of my life anymore” ?
4. How do we know if our worship attendance numbers are good, bad or average for this unprecedented time?
5. What does membership growth look like in this new time? One of the individuals who joined the church in December has *never* set foot inside the First Church building; all of her experiences with our faith community have been virtual and all since March. Regular visitors to virtual worship include others who live in California, Iowa, Minnesota, South

Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Virginia. Some of them attend our service as well as a service at their home church. What does that mean in terms of how we understand membership? Engagement?

6. Virtual worship is here to stay even when we eventually open the doors for in-person worship. Who will choose to stick with virtual participation, and how will that affect the congregation and our worshipping community?
7. What will our congregation be post-pandemic? How can we make sure we learn from this pandemic experience so that we move ahead and not simply slip back into the way things were before?
8. What kind of infrastructure will we need post-pandemic? In a recent daily post from Casey Nieuwhof (who does work around leadership in ministry settings), he suggests that post-pandemic churches need to focus not on *gathering people* but on *helping people make connections*. That certainly has implications for our infrastructure, staffing, programmatic ministry, and probably more.
9. What will “church” be like for my daughters in 10 years — and will they find church relevant to their lives?

#### With appreciation

I am incredibly grateful for all the terrific leaders in our congregation whose efforts remind me that I have gifted and capable partners in this work—namely Mike Bergmann and the Membership Committee, Jim O’Connell and the Communications Committee, and all the faithful folks on the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.

The work of my colleagues in their respective areas is essential to membership growth, engagement, and communications. I appreciate their efforts and good humor this past year; I know it is has not been easy for any of us. Thanks to Pastor Grace for her support and patience with all the questions I ask each week.

A special thanks to Kelsey Morton, our part-time administrative assistant, whose assistance makes it possible for me to carry this workload without feeling too overwhelmed most days.

## **Additional Reports**

### **Lay Members to Annual Conference Report**

The 181st Session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, originally scheduled for June 7-9, 2020, was postponed due to COVID-19. Instead of an in-person, three-day conference it became a virtual season beginning in October with Bible study and culminating on November 14 with the legislative session and clergy retirement worship service. In between were opportunities to learn about legislation, both administrative and programmatic, participate in a memorial service, and learn the technical aspects for conferencing virtually. All documents and videos referenced herein may be found at <https://www.umcnic.org/AC2020> unless otherwise noted.

We commend to you the Bible studies led by Rev. Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary for Discipleship Ministries. The three sessions offered theological reflection and practical applications lining up with Northern Illinois Conference's three goals adopted by the Annual Conference in June 2019 (<https://www.umcnic.org/shepherdingteam>). Both recordings and PowerPoint slides are available.

A Service of Lament and Hope premiered on November 12 with the theme "We are yet alive". FUMC's own Jack Bremer, Bernice Klosterman, Nick Nicholas, and Emery Percell, were memorialized.

In addition to the consent calendar items, there were four pieces of legislation that were discussed and voted upon.

- Clergy Anti-Racism Training (700-02 as amended by the Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF); passed 427-82) – Authored by the ARTF, the action requires that all active clergy participate in anti-racism training at least once per quadrennium.
- Reduction from Six Districts to Five (700-01; passed 406-112) – Authored by the NIC Cabinet, Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST), and Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA), the action reduces the number of districts from six to five effective July 1, 2021. This reflects changes in how District Superintendents do their work and the decrease in congregations across the conference. Bishop Dyck, in consultation with the NIC Cabinet, in accordance with the Book of Discipline, has identified new geographic boundaries and names for the districts. First UMC Evanston will be in Lake: North.
- Budget (600; passed 469-27) – Authored by CCFA, the \$4.4M budget is a reduction of \$172,295 relative to the 2020 budget. This reduction includes an anticipated six-month savings from reducing the number of districts. You may find more detailed information about the budget and other areas of NIC finances under Briefings and Services, "Deep Dive into NIC Finances".

- Nominations (the slate as amended by Annual Conference action; passed 441-38) – Authored by the Committee on Nominations, the slate is a list of new Annual Conference leadership and committee participation. First United Methodist Church, Evanston, continues to have laity in service through Northern Illinois Annual Conference committees.\* A special thank you to Barb Miller who completed ten years of service on Spiritual Formation and Abby Ogunbola who completed eight years of service on CCFA. Anyone interested in becoming part of the Northern Illinois Conference work should complete an interest form ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd23uZNGldPL2\\_inZ6SAm57s9vM6MT1DIPIA7zRoQnOiQv1Qw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd23uZNGldPL2_inZ6SAm57s9vM6MT1DIPIA7zRoQnOiQv1Qw/viewform)) or contact Nancy Pendergrass (773.443.6943, [pendergrass@nualumni.com](mailto:pendergrass@nualumni.com)).

Bishop Sally Dyck retired effective December 31, 2020, after serving the Northern Illinois Conference for eight years. This year's Bishop's Appeal recipient is the Global Mission Secondary School with The United Methodist Church in Tanzania. When completed it will be a co-ed boarding school for children ages 13-18. More information and ways to donate may be found at <https://www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal>. This year's Mission Challenge was to collect hurricane relief items for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

We received a video message from our incoming interim bishop, Bishop John Hopkins. He retired to Indianapolis in 2016 but is expected to serve Northern Illinois for one year, until the North Central Jurisdiction meets in November to elect and appoint bishops for the remainder of the quadrennium. Bishop Hopkins' message of greeting can be found at 5:34:34 of the Annual Conference session.

The Conference celebrated Rev. Anne Hampson's 19.5 years of ministry during the Clergy Retirement Service. Her reflection may be seen beginning at 12:30.

The Ordination Service was postponed a second time due to rising COVID numbers.

Respectfully submitted,

S. E. Brick, Philip Crihfield, Barbara Miller, Elaine Moy Johnson, Nancy Pendergrass, Martha Rudy, Grant Bailey, Tom Butler, Kathy Cheney-Egan, Jack Hinz, Dennis Moore

\* Grant Bailey (Retreat & Outdoor Ministries, Commission on the Status & Role of Women), Nancy Pendergrass (Nominations, Annual Conference Shepherding Team), Martha Rudy (Trustees, Annual Conference Shepherding Team), Rebecca Smith (Finance & Administration), and Beth Swanick (Pension & Health Benefits)

## **Ministry in Moheto**

Submitted by Barb Miller

The partnership between First UMC in Evanston and the Moheto First UMC in Kenya began on September 1, 2019 when Pastor Grace was invited by Pastor Kennedy Mwita, to preach in worship and to be present for their all-church meeting during which they took a unanimous vote to associate with the UMC Reconciling Ministries Network. They are the first United Methodist congregation in Africa and outside of the US to make this bold commitment.

As we learned more about this church and the many outreach ministries they are engaged with in their village and the surrounding area, we also learned about some of the challenges they faced in doing this work of the church. One of the biggest health challenges in their community was disease due to lack of affordable clean water. With a donation from a family in First UMC Evanston, we were able to work with Pastor Ken to fund a well and a generator to power the pump that now provides affordable clean water to anyone in the community for a cost of less than \$.01 for 20 liters. The cost for the water helps to offset the expenses of running the pump. There is a church committee that oversees the operation of the well. The well was completed on Dec. 5, 2019 and was dedicated on Jan. 5, 2020 with 3 members of First UMC Evanston participating in the service of dedication.

Another ministry of Moheto First UMC is a community health center, which they built next to their church building. The church began building this clinic in 2003 with donated funds from a variety of sources and the building was completed in Dec. 2019. The clinic officially opened on Dec. 26, 2019 with a staff of 1 nurse and 2 nurse aides. Before this clinic was opened, people in the village of Moheto had to travel by foot or take a motorbike taxi (a 30 min. trip) to a neighboring city 7 miles away. As a result, many in the village could not access adequate healthcare in a timely manner and some could not access it at all. First UMC Evanston has helped to support this ministry with some funds to secure their staffing as the clinic opened.

During January 3-13, 2020 David Conda, Steve Betzner and Barb Miller of First UMC Evanston journeyed to Kenya to provide small business training to 21 members of Moheto First UMC's table banking group (Moheto SACCO). It was a wonderful time of connection as we provided tools and training that these small business owners can use to improve the viability of their businesses. A highlight of the experience for us was our visits to each one of the small businesses and to see the pride that each of the business owners have in their unique business.

In early March 2020, Pastor Ken came to the US to participate in and preach with Pastor Grace at the Reconciling Ministries Network gathering in Nashville, TN. He was able to arrange to visit First UMC Evanston before and after traveling to Nashville. During his visit with us, he preached at one of our worship services, met with church leaders and learned about some of the ministries that our church is involved in.

As of now, plans are beginning for another mission trip to Moheto in the future, as well as some additional financial support for the clinic and the Moheto SACCO group.

Financial Information for the Moheto First UMC partnership:

### Expenditures

\*\*All funds provided to Moheto First UMC in 2019 and 2020 have come from individual donations. This was not a budgeted item in the church budget in these two years.

2019 Pastor Grace's trip to Moheto UMC: \$372.39

Moheto UMC Capital Well Project: \$38,100.00

Moheto UMC Generator: \$8,000.00

Moheto Clinic: \$23,602.87

2020 Moheto Mission Trip for 3 participants: \$6,113.00

### Targeted donations received but not yet spent:

2019 Pastor Grace's trip to Moheto UMC: \$552.61

Moheto UMC SACCO: \$850.00

Future Moheto Mission Trip: \$3,887.00

Total funds in Moheto UMC Accounts as of Dec. 31, 2020: \$5,289.61

## **ReTurn/Health Committee Final Report**

Clark Federer and Christine McGuire, Co-Chairs

### **Protocols and Guidelines for Church Building Use and In-Person Events**

#### **Overview:**

This document outlines First United Methodist Church of Evanston's health and safety protocols for the resumption of church programming during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The committee drafting this document is composed of FUMC clergy, staff, and church members with a variety of backgrounds and expertise. We recognize that there is a spectrum of human reaction to the pandemic's health threats, economic challenges, and individual isolation. The church offers opportunities for all members to participate in the life of the church whether in-person, over the phone or virtually. With this document, we have tried to balance the human need for social connection while keeping members' and visitors' safety in mind. We also expect that members and visitors will consider their own need for safety, and tolerance for risk, when deciding whether or not to participate in church-related activities.

It is our policy to remain fully compliant with state and local restrictions which may change in upcoming months. The protocols outlined in this document were drafted in August 2020 while Illinois is in Phase 4 of the governor's reopening plan. Updates to these protocols will be made as appropriate. The protocols are informed by guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Evanston Health and Human Services (EHHS), and the Northern Illinois Conference ReTurn Committee Plan. When subsequent phases change public guidelines, either more or less restrictive, we will follow that guidance.

Thank you,

First United Methodist Church ReTurn Committee: *Jordan Bloem, Will Borders, Candi Boutwell, Bill Brown, Laura Carr, Rev. Jane Cheema, Clark Federer, MD, Connie Gilman, RN, Colin McDonald, Christine McGuire, MD, John Price, and Senior Pastor, Rev. Grace Imathiu.*

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1. General Guidelines for Staff, Members, Volunteers and Other Participants at All Church Events
2. Entry Process Upon Arrival at FUMC
3. Guidelines for Church Staff During Daily Activities
4. Protocols Undertaken by FUMC at All Church Events
5. Protocols by Event Type:
  - a. Indoor Worship in Sanctuary and Chapel
  - b. Staff meetings, Volunteer access, and other non-worship activities
  - c. Indoor special events - weddings, funerals, etc.
  - d. Outdoor events
  - e. FUMC Fellowship Activities
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### **1) General Guidelines for Staff, Members, Volunteers and Other Participants at All Church Events**

All persons entering FUMC for any reason or participating in any official FUMC event are expected to follow the guidelines listed below.

- **Stay home if sick.** If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, even if you are otherwise feeling well and would typically go out, **you MUST NOT attend events at the church.** COVID-19 symptoms include but are not limited to fever and/or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

- Many people who are spreading virus do not know that this is the case. They are asymptomatic but can infect other people. If you are in close contact with a known infected person please self-isolate.
- If you know you have traveled to an area that has high infectivity then please refrain from personal contact with others for a currently recommended period of time. Contact your physician for further guidance.
- All attendees must wear masks or cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who do not live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
  - Face covering must cover both nose and mouth.
  - Children under the age of 2 years are not required to wear a face covering.
- Use social distancing when interacting with people who do not live in your household (stay at least 6 feet away from others).
- Minimize time of personal interaction however possible. The more time you spend in contact with someone who is infected the greater your chance of becoming infected yourself. Any meetings or volunteer activities should minimize contact time. People who are in the early stages of infection do not know they are infected, and some people are infected and never have symptoms. The absence of symptoms can be deceptive so minimize direct interaction time.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to coming and when you get home.
  - If soap and water are not available, approved hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used instead. Visibly soiled hands need to use soap and water.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes. Do not remove your mask in order to cough or sneeze.
- Avoid use of items in group situations that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- All people around you have the right to ask for more space, even more than 6 feet. We should all be proactive in asking others during fellowship, "Are you comfortable?" or "Am I standing too close?" Your perception of a safe distance may not feel safe to another person.
- FUMC staff, ushers and volunteers will be on the lookout for individuals or situations that are likely to make others feel uncomfortable given the wide variety of responses and levels of concern. This includes ostensibly ill persons, for instance.
- Individuals who wish to engage in church events or fellowship in any form must accept the risk of possible exposure to disease by an unknowing fellow participant. Coronavirus, for example, can have a lengthy asymptomatic phase before symptoms appear.
- Individuals should exercise self-awareness of their personal risk factors for illness and avoid fellowship or church events if appropriate. According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), certain people, including older adults and those with

underlying conditions such as heart or lung disease, obesity, or diabetes, are at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19. This is only a partial list.

## **2) Entry Process Upon Arrival at FUMC (all persons)**

- Health Self Checks will be conducted for all persons entering FUMC on any day including, but not limited to, all church staff, volunteers, event attendees, cleaning staff, and any other person that may need to enter the premises. These checks shall include temperature checks that are completed according to CDC guidance as well as a sign in sheet with times of arrival.
- Thermometers will be operated by each individual themselves. Sanitized pens will be available for individual logging of entry time and health status information. Hand sanitizer will be made available to clean hands after logging.
- The reason for logging entry into the building is to assist contact tracing if an asymptomatic or early phase infected person is traced back to our building. Contact tracers will need to be able to reach out to anyone who possibly had significant contact with the infected person.

## **3) Guidelines for Church Staff During Daily Activities**

- Staff should seek to stagger presence in the building to minimize human-to-human interactions This will require adjusted open office hours to achieve the same goal.
- Staff have the option to work remotely, if desired, with the approval of Senior Pastor or Director of Total Child Center as appropriate.
- Each Staff member is responsible for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in their private office at least once a week.
- A custodian will frequently clean and disinfect all door handles, railings, faucet handles, interior and exterior doors, and common area hard surfaces. When a custodian is not available, another staff member must take over these duties at the direction of the senior pastor. Please see Appendix A- Cleaning Schedule.
- Use of the microwave and Keurig Coffee maker is prohibited at this time. Sharing of food and implements is prohibited in the building.
- Main Office Copier Machine must be wiped down by each user after each use.
- Online forms to be utilized whenever possible.
- Main Office Conference room to be used for shortened periods of time with small groups, when

Zoom meetings are not possible. The conference room doors should be opened during small group meetings to aid in better airflow and ventilation.

- Each Staff Member's Office will be provided with hand sanitizer. Any visit to a staff member's office mandates the visitor or staff member perform cleaning and/or sanitizing per protocol of that space.
- Upon arrival to the church, staff members must log in their time of arrival, temperature (contactless thermometers will be provided), answer health screening questions and sign in. The senior pastor or designate will periodically spot check that staff observe this log-in process.
- The 1st floor bathrooms are limited to the number of stalls (closed stalls, not urinals) at one time.
- No staff or visitors are allowed on the second floor/Total Child Center unless cleared by the director.

#### **4) Protocols Undertaken by FUMC for all Church Events**

- While Illinois remains in Phase 4, all FUMC gatherings will be limited to 50 or fewer people. Maximum number is further limited by the size of the space utilized to allow for adequate social distancing. See Appendix B. Any change in official limitations will apply as we move forward.
- FUMC is committed to providing a safe and clean environment for all events, including undertaking the following measures:
  - Regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces including doorknobs, light switches, shared equipment, toilet handles, sink faucets, and sign-in areas.
  - Implementing a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. For more detail, see Appendix A.
  - Ensuring adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed on every table, if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, additional cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal or open trash cans.
  - Personal protective equipment will be provided to custodial staff to facilitate the personal safety of the custodians. This will include additional devices, such as goggles and/or splash guards that are not ordinarily expected for most persons in the building.
  - Wherever scheduling or contamination circumstances may dictate, various rooms and areas may be sealed off for a period of time to minimize aerosolized particles, which fall or otherwise dissipate over time. This will be done to minimize the risks of exposure to the cleaning personnel. Scheduled events may be cancelled if this occurs.
  - Custodians and/or staff will insure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep them away from children.
- Signage will be posted outside all entrances consistent with this document restricting entry of anyone with symptoms of illness/respiratory infection.
  - Any volunteer, member, or other visitor to the church suspected of having COVID-19, diagnosed with COVID-19, or having been in contact with persons

suspected of or diagnosed with COVID-19 shall refrain from in-person worship and Church events for 14 days, and/or until cleared by health authorities or their personal physician. Such clearance can simply be reported verbally by the involved person.

- When a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19 they may not return to Church or events until written documentation is provided by the staff member's physician that the staff member is no longer communicable and may return to work.
- Persons refraining from in-person events shall be offered an alternative method for participating in the life of the church.
- As everyone enters the Church or event each person must attest to their lack of symptoms and perceived health relative to COVID-19. This is accomplished by signing an attendance log and declaration of health, temperature, and so forth. A list of questions will be posted next to logs at entrances. Non-touch thermometers will be provided for this purpose at the doors.
- Healthcare workers are exempt with regard to the provision of contact with persons suspected and/or diagnosed with COVID-19 while acting in their work capacity. When not at work, they will be expected to comply to general contact guidelines.<sup>1</sup>
- If multiple services or events are scheduled in the same space, FUMC will schedule events far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces.
  - Communication regarding events and offerings occurring through FUMC, Total Child, weddings, funerals, diaper pantry, soup kitchen, and other fellowship group activities shall be communicated through a shared Google calendar in order to minimize mixing of groups.
- FUMC will notify all exposed persons in accordance with Department of Public Health recommendations when COVID-19 or any communicable disease or condition has been introduced to the building. Other church members and others, as deemed appropriate by the senior pastor, may also be notified. See Appendix C.

## 5) Protocols by Event Type

**In addition to the general protocols listed above, FUMC will** implement the additional protocols as needed for specific event types as listed below.

### A. Indoor worship, Sanctuary and Chapel

- Indoor in-person worship will initially be on Saturday evening, and will be used as part of the broadcast service on Sunday (virtual worship). As we move forward, scheduling will change at the decision of church pastors.

- In-person worship will be a shortened worship service that will be capped at 50 people. This maximum number will be adjusted as official guidance changes and/or depending on the worship space chosen.
- Congregants will need to register beforehand to ensure attendance does not exceed 50 people (including staff and volunteers present to assist with filming). This registration process will be administered by Church pastors via Google drive or similar platform.
- All guests must sanitize hands before and after worship, wear face masks, and maintain physical distance, including assigned seating.
- Family members will be required to sit together and children must stay with their parents. Wandering of children and others will be directly discouraged by ushers. Family members do not need to sit 6 feet apart from one another, but the family grouping must be at least 6 feet from any other person.
- Congregational singing will not be allowed until further notice.
- If Communion is offered, the Church pastors will provide a protocol.
- Coffee and fellowship hour will not be conducted until further notice.
- Worship participants will need to log-in when entering the church, including temperature self-checks and self-certification of symptom-free status. Parents may sign-in for their children.
- Ushers will be used for all ordinary worship as well as special events in order to uniformly assure that protocols are followed. Ushers will be recruited and trained to assure that we are compliant with the protocols. Ushers may be asked to supervise special events in order to assure we are always compliant with these protocols.
- Unexpected or numerically excessive attendees will be politely handled by the ushers. Seating of unexpected attendees will be at the ushers' discretion, but never in conflict with official limits of attendance.
- Unseated and/or unexpected attendees will be instructed regarding virtual worship options. Ushers will see that Church staff is informed so that appropriate follow-up with these persons can occur.
- Certain performers may be granted exception to the restrictions on singing, speaking without a mask, playing wind instruments, and so forth where Plexiglas enclosures/barriers are properly utilized.
- Tittle Chapel has a forced air system that filters air while it is circulated. The Sanctuary has a large air volume but is not ordinarily circulated. Availability of these spaces will be limited in attendance capacity, length of service, and interval between services to minimize risk of respiratory transmission of COVID-19. See appendices for attendance limitations.
- Restroom access when larger numbers of people are in the building will be increased to no more than the number of closed fixtures (urinals will not be counted) in the restroom. All persons must remain masked, refrain from conversation, and minimize touching of common surfaces.
  - The restrooms cannot logistically be cleaned between individuals.

- If you use a restroom, you assume an added risk that you must balance against the need to use the restroom.
- Adult and Children’s Sunday school offerings will continue virtually until further notice.

**B. Staff meetings, Volunteer access, and other non-worship activities**

- All staff or volunteers will enter the building from Church Street doors or through the kitchen in the back of the building. All persons entering the building will log their presence as described above.
- FUMC will limit all non-essential visitors.
- Communication regarding events and offerings occurring through FUMC, Total Child, weddings, funerals, diaper pantry, soup kitchen shall be communicated through a shared calendar in order to control mixing of groups.
- FUMC will be prepared to offer personal protective equipment (PPE), including, but not limited to, face masks, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, and other routinely expected items in the event an individual forgets or fails to have these items
  - Staff shall wear a non-vented mask at all times when indoors
  - Sharing of food is prohibited
  - Staff shall wear a face mask when arriving at and leaving the FUMC, when in hallways, restrooms and throughout the day, except when in office working alone, or eating alone.
- Church Staff Members and other visitors shall not enter the 2nd floor where Total Child Preschool is located without notification to the Director and a health screening per school policy.

**A. Indoor special events - weddings, funerals, etc.**

**All guidelines for indoor events, as listed above, apply for special events.** In addition to those standard policies, the following precautions will be put into place for special events:

- Any special event cannot exceed the capacity of the space limited in size to allow social distancing. Ushers at special events will monitor attendance counts and limit admission to established limits for the space.
- Guests to indoor special events will be limited entry to the Church to 30 minutes prior to the start time of the event and will be required to exit within 30 minutes of event conclusion.
- No food service will be allowed before or after weddings or funerals.
- No items may be thrown during weddings (rice, flower petals, etc.) and blowing bubbles will be disallowed.

- Wedding parties will not be allowed to use additional spaces in the Church to get ready for the wedding (e.g. doing hair, makeup, getting dressed, etc.). Less indoors time equals less potential viral exposure.
- Sanctuary will not be available for Saturday weddings due to the short time frame for custodial staff to thoroughly clean the Sanctuary before Saturday worship.
  - Availability for Fridays will be determined by availability of custodial staff to adequately clean the Sanctuary before regular scheduled worship.
  - Instead, we will offer the Tittle chapel. This is a forced air space and believed to be safer due to rapid turnover of air, which interferes with respiratory disease transmission.
- Additional fees will apply for pandemic cleaning. These fees will be paid by families or organizers of special events on a pass-through basis. We will not permit families to do the cleaning themselves or to hire their own cleaning crew. This will ensure that our usual protocol for cleaning and sanitizing will be reliable and consistent.
- Distancing diagrams and room capacity charts are attached as an Appendix.

## **B. Outdoor Events (any type)**

As part of this committee's preparations, we closely studied and verified the relevant science of viral transmission. Events conducted outdoors pose dramatically less risk for transmission of Coronavirus and other respiratory pathogens. Consequently, we recommend outdoor settings for meetings, worship, fellowship and special events, weather permitting.

- Outdoor worship and special events conducted by clergy will adhere to relevant protocols in this document
- Fellowship event organizers wishing publicity for their event by the Church must still request formal approval for outdoor activities (see below and Appendix C). The request must demonstrate intention to follow our protocols. Any fellowship activity that occurs in a non-formal fashion is nonetheless encouraged to follow the protocols.
- All personal expectations from other sections of this document apply including, but not limited to masking, hand hygiene and distancing of human-to-human interactions.
- All basic principles outlined in other sections of this document should be followed including, but not limited to:
  - (a) Logging of participation in the event or worship
  - (b) Similar special cleaning and sanitizing efforts must be performed for high touch surfaces such as outdoor railings, tables, chairs, and so forth.
  - (c) Event organizers should properly distance attendees. Ushers and/or marking of spaces is encouraged. Orderly ingress and egress should be planned.

- (d) Event organizers should consider other basic considerations such as access to restrooms, availability of hand sanitizer, providing additional masks for those who forget or lose theirs, and so forth.

### **C. FUMC Fellowship Activities**

Fellowship at FUMC ranges from large group events to volunteerism to informal gatherings of friends. Fellowship takes place in multiple settings. We encourage mindful fellowship in its many forms and settings within the following guidelines:

- Individuals who wish to engage in fellowship in any form must accept the risk of possible exposure to disease by an unknowing fellow participant. The virus typically has a lengthy asymptomatic phase before symptoms appear. Also, we know that many people are infected and never have any symptoms whatsoever.
- Physical interactions between people should follow the protocols mentioned elsewhere in this document. No gatherings can exceed numeric restrictions set forth by current IDPH guidelines and our calculated thresholds for social distancing intrinsic to various areas of the building. Please consult the maximum capacity of each room listed in Appendix B. Fellowship outside the church building, such as in a private home, should be carefully arranged to limit attendance capacity to maintain appropriate distancing.
- In general, any fellowship outdoors is safer than indoors. The virus is primarily spread by respiratory droplets, which are quickly dispersed and therefore less infectious outdoors. Outdoor fellowship that also incorporates distancing, masking, hand hygiene and self-awareness carries minimal risk of transmission.
- Fellowship inside the church building must adhere to the limitations outlined in other sections of this document. Distancing, masking, hand hygiene, logging your presence within the building, and attention to other specific expectations is essential. Anyone who refuses to observe these fundamentals may be asked to leave by staff or ushers or may not be able to participate in future events.
- The pandemic makes us fearful of the unknown. A sense of chaos sets in and we naturally seek worship and fellowship to see our way forward. We must remain tolerant and compassionate to the range of individual fear of the virus. At the same time, we must tolerate and embrace the essential social needs we have as human beings.
- All attendees of fellowship activities will be required to adhere to the personal guidelines as outlined in Section 1 of this document.
- Fellowship groups that wish to gather in-person will be requested to submit gathering proposals to designated Church staff outlining how their intended gathering will meet safely. This applies to any official FUMC group that would use Church facilities or resources and also off-site gatherings.
  - An example proposal can be seen in Appendix C

- Fellowship groups that submit acceptable proposals will have their meetings listed in the Church calendar, fliers, and related documents.
- Groups that do not submit proposals do so outside the officially supervised efforts of the Church. We encourage fellowship, but the Church is not responsible for contact tracing needs that might arise from an unofficial gathering.
- Church staff will review proposals relative to the protocols outlined in this document and communicate the outcome in a mutually acceptable and timely fashion.

## Appendix A: Cleaning Schedule

<b>FUMC Pandemic Cleaning Procedures:</b> <i>During a pandemic, additional cleaning to minimize the transmission of the virus, particularly high use surfaces (eg: sinks, door handles, railings, toys, tables and bench tops) will take place. Most disease transmission is thought to be via the human respiratory tract. However, Covid-19 is viable on many surfaces for days. Unintended transfer of virus to otherwise clean hands can occur. Consequently, cleaning of environmental surfaces with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended for most surfaces. Pews and fine furniture surfaces should be cleaned with non-damaging cleaners followed by appropriate furniture polish if appropriate. Glass can be cleaned with multisurface cleaner and followed with ordinary glass cleaner to avoid the appearance of streaking or dirtiness with antibacterial residue. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned more often.</i>				
Type/Area	Procedure	Clean Type	Times/day	Notes
Reception area/desk	Wipe down with a general deaner followed by a solution of bleach and water.	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution	2x	Spray bleach solution on cloth and wipe surface down.
Hand Rails	Wipe down with a general deaner followed by a solution of bleach and water.	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution	2x	Spray bleach solution on cloth and wipe surface down.
External Door Handles/Knobs	Spray with In-Cide disinfectant and wipe down with a clean cloth.	In-Cide or bleach and water solution	2x	
Internal Door Handles/Knobs	Spray with In-Cide disinfectant and wipe down with a clean cloth.	In-Cide or bleach and water solution	2x	
Light Switches	Spray with In-Cide disinfectant and wipe down with a clean cloth.	In-Cide or bleach and water solution	2x	
Tap Handles in classrooms and bathrooms	Spray with In-Cide disinfectant and wipe down with a clean cloth.	In-Cide or bleach and water solution	2x	
Tables when used for food prep and meals	Wipe down with a general deaner followed by a solution of bleach and water.	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution	2x	Before and after use
Worship areas - pews and other objects that are touched or subject to respiratory spray	Vulnerable furniture surfaces wiped down with furniture polish (multisurface cleaner). Plexiglas protective items are cleaned with Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution	Multisurface cleaner		After activity use
Mixed use tables	Spray with In-Cide disinfectant cleaner or bleach and water solution	In-Cide or bleach and water solution		After activity use
<p><b>Child Toys/Objects - Children's Church Nursery on 2nd Floor:</b> Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used. Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body fluids should be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with Activate, rinse again, and air dry. Objects may also be cleaned in a mechanical dishwasher. Be more mindful of items more likely to be placed in a child's mouth such as play food, dishes and utensils. Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as envelopes, are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures. However, any concern about contamination that can be controlled with cleaning is reasonable.</p>				
Changing tables	Clean with multisurface deaner and disinfectant (clorox)	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution		After each use
Handwashing sinks and faucets	Clean with multisurface deaner and disinfectant (clorox)	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution		End of the Day
Counter tops	Clean with multisurface deaner and disinfectant (clorox)	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution		End of the Day
Toilets	Clean with multisurface deaner and disinfectant (clorox)	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution		End of the Day
Diaper Pails	Clean with multisurface deaner and disinfectant (clorox)	Multisurface cleaner* and bleach and water solution		End of the Day
Floors	Clean using a mop with a floor deaner/disinfectant	Floor Cleaner Disinfectant		End of the Day

\*Other cleaning items that may be used are Ozium (kills particles in the air); Pledge Antibacterial Multisurface Cleaner;

## Appendix B: Recommended occupancy limits for various areas of the Church

Although our calculations of all possible spaces are not included, we have performed room measurements and calculations for maximum attendance with proper distancing of participants. The calculator utilized was endorsed by the United Methodist Northern Illinois Conference <sup>2</sup>.

The Sanctuary, Great Hall, and Tittle Chapel all have square footage capable of supporting well beyond the 50-person limit in place at the time of writing.

<b>Space</b>	<b>Measured footage</b>	<b>With 6-foot separation, and no clustering of family groups, the maximum number of people permitted in the space:</b>
Conference Room	225 sf.	6 People
Dining Room	2,108 sf.	58 People (50 limit)
Glenna Hall	1,127 sf.	31 People
Kitchen	1,056 sf.	29 People
Tittle Chapel	3,684 sf.	102 People (50 limit)
Garth	approx. 2,000 sf.	55 People (50 limit)

### **Appendix C: Proposal Guidelines for In-person Fellowship Event**

Fellowship groups that seek FUMC endorsement of their gathering must notify Church staff of their intentions to follow the recommendations found in this document. In general, there is a staff member that is assigned or interacts with each fellowship group. That staff member must receive in written form comments addressing the following essentials:

1. Date and times involved for the planned event. Indicate if this is a repeated event.
2. Number of expected attendees
3. Location of the event and adequate description of the physical plant’s ability to accommodate your group for adequate social distancing
4. Describe any expected conflicts/contacts with others in the physical space you have chosen. If your event is going to take place within the church building you must attempt to avoid simultaneous presence with other groups. A Church calendar will be maintained by staff to assist in this endeavor.
5. Logistics that you will communicate and follow for controlling potentially infectious behavioral situations, such as use of masking, physical distancing, outdoors versus indoors (respiratory transmission risk is less outdoors), ingress and egress of attendees, and so forth.
6. Your plans for preventing direct physical transfer of virus (e.g. how you will serve food without having multiple hands touch the same surfaces)
7. Your plan to clean the common areas before and after the event
8. Your plan to offer masks, hand sanitizer, and other items to attendees
9. Your plan to handle attendee needs for restrooms
10. Your method for logging attendance and self-reported healthy status of attendees
11. Any other efforts you plan to do in the effort to hold a safe event

An example of what this might look like is below.

## Total Child New Family Orientation Proposal

While many things will seem different with new procedures in place for the safety of all, the mission of the Total Child Preschool and Childcare Center, as a ministry of First United Methodist Church (FUMC) of Evanston, will continue to be committed to serving the greater community and support families by providing affordable, quality childcare in an environment that values and embraces economic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity. **We will continue to provide a program that works with parents to affirm and encourage children and to nurture children's social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual development** through a child-centered, play-based pedagogy.

This proposal will lay out the recommended practices as we invite our new families to Total Child for an orientation gathering, scheduled for Wednesday, August 5th at 5pm. These health and safety protocols are in place to maintain a healthy school environment for children and their families during the orientation event.

**It is proposed that 9 new families to the toddler program will be joining the two teachers and the school Director outside in the Memorial Garden of FUMC on Wednesday, August 7th, 2020.**

- *Families will enter through the outdoor gates located on Hinman.*
- *It is requested each family bring a blanket to sit on and physically distance themselves from others in a safe manner.*
- *PPE and Hand Sanitizer will be available for families if needed.*
- *All adults must wear a mask.*
- *Upon entrance into the Memorial Garden, the Director will be equipped with a touchless thermometer to conduct a wellness check. After taking temperatures, each family will be asked the following questions: 1) Does anyone in your family have symptoms of COVID, such as dry cough or shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches, lack of taste or smell? 2) Was anyone in your family exposed to someone with COVID in the past 10 days? 3) Has anyone in the family taken any fever reducing medications today?*
- *Signage will be posted outside the gates as well as the "health check table" for families to review symptoms, reminders to wear a mask and cover cough, and to maintain a 6-foot distance from other families.*
- *Families will be assisted by the classroom teachers as to placement of blankets throughout the Garden in order to maintain a safe physical distance from one another.*
- *Teachers will share stories and provide some individual activities for families to participate in on their blankets as the Director or classroom teachers escort families 1:1 into the building (using the entrance/exit door to the Garden) and up the elevator to Room 23 for a brief 5-minute visit. Applying hand sanitizer upon entering the building will be required.*
- *The bathrooms will be closed for use at this time.*

Once Orientation has been completed (1-hour time frame). The Director will sanitize all door handles/knobs, handrails, light switches and elevator buttons before departure.

Hand Rails	Wipe down with a general cleaner followed by Activate Sanitizer.	Multisurface cleaner and Activate sanitizer
External Door Handles/Knobs	Spray with Activate Sanitizer and wipe down with a clean cloth.	Activate
Internal Door Handles/Knobs	Spray with Activate Sanitizer and wipe down with a clean cloth.	Activate
Light Switches	Spray with disinfectant cleaner or wipe with disinfectant wipes	Clorox/H2O Solution or Clorox wipes

**Appendix D: Example COVID-19 symptom checklist**

<b>Team Member COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire</b>	
<p><b>Are you currently experiencing any of the following symptoms?</b></p> <p><i>If you answer "Yes" to any of the questions, please contact your manager before beginning work</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Fever</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i> <i>(Above 100.4 degrees per CDC guidelines or a specific temperature range as outlined by local ordinance)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shortness of Breath</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cough</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Chills</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Muscle Aches</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sore Throat</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>New loss of taste or smell</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
<p><b>Have you been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting to receive test results?</b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Have you been tested for COVID-19?</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>

**Have you tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 2 weeks, or has your doctor decided that you are positive for COVID-19 based on your doctor's assessment of your symptoms?**

Have you tested positive for COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID by a doctor or licensed health care professional?  
Yes No



## **Appendix E: Draft Letter if someone tests positive for COVID-19 at FUMC**

Please note – It is our policy to cooperate with all required contact tracing efforts extended by the Illinois Department of Public Health and/or Evanston Health and Human Services. This is our reason for logging all entries into Church property and official events. We will release to authorities the names and contact information of anyone on our logs deemed at risk. Contact tracers will contact at-risk individuals based on their current criteria. We will simultaneously contact all involved individuals ourselves since it is our policy to be completely transparent when this situation arises. Furthermore, at the senior pastor's option, we will email notification to rest of the church members when this occurs. In all such situations we will maintain patient privacy consistent with federal law.

Dear Church Member,

We have been notified that an individual present at FUMC on [Date] tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19). We have been in contact with the [Evanston Health and Human Services and/or Illinois Department of Public Health] and will continue to follow their guidance. We will provide you with any additional updates as a result of this confirmed case.

We understand this may cause you concern, and assure you that we continue to take the COVID-19 situation very seriously and are following official recommendations to protect our staff and parishioners. Daily cleaning completed by our custodial team aligns with and exceeds CDC expectations for cleaning and addresses potential spread through high touch surfaces. In addition, out of an abundance of caution, we have ordered a one-time special enhanced cleaning of the entire office and relevant church building spaces.

Every day employees, visitors and pastors self-certify that they do not have symptoms of Coronavirus before coming into FUMC. We will continue with this policy and will require it of you if you enter the building or attend an officially recognized event. We all have a role to play in staying healthy, and we remind everyone to wash your hands and use hand sanitizer often. Respiratory contact risk is best controlled by wearing a mask in public, keeping a distance of 6 feet between yourself and others at all times, and to always cover your cough and sneeze even when wearing your mask.

DO NOT COME TO FUMC or venture into public if you have symptoms of COVID-19. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the church office or one of our pastors.

Thank you for helping us prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Sincerely,

Candi Boutwell

FUMC Church Business Administrator

## **Total Child Preschool Board**

Submitted by Deborah Hays, Chair

Because of the sudden and unanticipated departure of the director at the beginning of last school year, difficulty in finding a replacement, and then the challenges brought by Covid 19, it was an extremely difficult year at Total Child. We are now, however, on solid footing in both leadership and financials.

Thanks to the dedication and adaptability of our staff, and the contributions of a few generous and talented board members, Total Child continued to adhere to the highest standards. Nancy Ansorge, a former Total Child teacher, assisted with remote learning, meeting weekly with teachers to brainstorm and problem-solve in order to offer meaningful curriculum activities to students and families. Cherie Asante stepped in as program administrator to help with daily operations, answering emails/phone calls, and communicating with parents. Kyle Davis, as the staff liaison, spent countless hours on-site and on the phone communicating with staff during the months there was no director. Finally, Brian Starr, treasurer, did a phenomenal job helping the board make decisions that kept the staff paid and the organization financially sound. Total Child would not be in operation today if not for Brian's financial acumen and the commitment and dedication of the aforementioned board members.

The new director, Laura Carr, was hired in July and has done an incredible job taking over during unprecedented times. She established procedures that allowed Total Child to reopen on-site mid-July, and has fostered staff morale, which had taken a hit. Laura has also secured several large grants, which, along with the federal PPP loans that were secured with the

assistance of the church, have kept Total Child's financial status in good shape. Without these grants we would be in a much more difficult position financially.

We do expect, and accept, that we will be operating at a deficit next year because of 1) changes in how we staff and fill rooms to meet pandemic-related requirements, 2) difficulty in filling some spots because of reduced demand, and 3) additional costs for PPE and other sanitation equipment needed to get up and running again. In addition, we committed to providing more financial assistance/scholarships to families this fall than in the past since we had additional capacity in a few rooms, and because we believe it is the center of our mission as part of the church, particularly during this time of greater need for some families.

Total Child continues to be one of the finest preschools in the area thanks to its financial strength, its high caliber staff, its caring and committed board, and its strong new leadership.

## **University Christian Ministry**

Submitted by Dennis Damon Moore, First Church UCM Board Representative

In a nutshell, while in-person interchange was radically reduced in March in accordance with State and University responses to COVID-19, new modes of contact and activity have continued the presence of UCM as a faithful haven for NU students here and away.

In fact, in some respects there have been what might be called atmospheric improvements in place this fall. Last year featured less than stellar overall student leadership, requiring more hands-on administration than usual on the part of Director Jule Mitchell and Administrative Assistant Jacquie Linney. Connections with Garrett interns were frayed, and few students rose to the organizational challenge which Bible study, worship, and other special activities typically present. This year, on the other hand, has been much better on all fronts—especially welcome at a time when the real challenge is to maintain virtual connections with engaged students without seeming and feeling overly remote. (As some at First Church may know, this year NU welcomed juniors and seniors on campus but worked with first- and second-year students at home or otherwise away.)

On campus, Julie continues to provide regular ministerial service and counsel to approximately thirty individual Northwestern students. In this year haunted by COVID-19, she has had to be much more intentional in her ministry. Accordingly, while some of this provision is being made in Zoom sessions, email, and telephone, up to this point many of Julie's most effective contacts have been made by arranging outdoor walks with individual students, masked and distanced as required. "Operating in safe situations is our most important concern at this time," she reports. Such walks will probably be less regular in winter weather, but I have no doubt that she will continue to serve in whatever ways in 2020-21.

This fall, UCM student leadership has been especially creative, e.g., arranging a virtual pumpkin-carving contest with kits provided and online pictures posted for judging the winners. UCM has established a Zoom Room for regular interaction, with students checking in from as far away as South Korea. Meanwhile, there continue to be 14-18 attendees for virtual Bible study and worship each week. While the usual modes of activity have been curtailed, the challenges of this year have prompted extensive student discussion of the definition and value of “church” at this moment in ways which will continue to bear fruit in time to come. In the meantime, Julie also had regular virtual interactions with other campus ministers that are more valuable than ever this year.

Two very positive recent developments: The United Methodist Northern Illinois Conference has made a full fourth-quarter allotment of c. \$10,000 to UCM this year, and after a long dry spell, Northwestern has been able to appoint a new University Chaplain who will soon take office. Both bring a notable sense of relief to our undertaking in a year otherwise replete with unknowns. First Church budgetary contributions have been very minimal since the demise of the rummage sale. NIC support will be reduced in 2021, and, understanding that First Church will have its own challenges, I call upon our institution to provide better for this affiliated program—one of only two on our roster—in the months to come.