



Hopeful Connections

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Caring for Others and Caring for Ourselves

As I write this, the sun is shining in our windows and I hear the drip, drip, drip of the snow and ice melting off our roof. What a joyful noise that is! I hope that by the end of this day our sidewalks are defrosted enough for us to be able to take our dogs out for a walk without having to slip and slide along the icy paths.

Spring is almost here and as the daylight stretches out and we get those extra minutes of light before nightfall, I feel my mood lightening and energy returning. With this glorious sunlight shining in, I find myself planning all the things I want to do outside: what plants we will put in, what path I'll start walking each day, what parks to visit for hikes on Saturdays with Bob and the boys.

This energy and aspiration to get out and DO SOMETHING are felt even more strongly this spring because we have spent a year inside, socially isolated, living with a heightened level of fear, loss, and anxiety. What a strange anniversary we celebrate this month: March 15 – the day we all began sheltering in place in order to flatten the curve. Although the local, state, and national data shows that positivity rates and hospitalizations are declining in number, we have reached a tragic milestone with over 500,000 lives lost to this pandemic. These are not merely numbers, each is the loved one of those who mourn, including members and friends of our congregation. We will continue to pray for our brothers, sisters, and siblings who mourn for the lives lost to Covid, and also for those who have lost their beloveds to other illnesses and injuries during this year. Our tradition is that we gather in loving support to celebrate the lives of those who have died. This celebration reminds us anew of the promise of resurrection and the love with which God holds God's creation. While it is a challenge to celebrate this truth virtually, we look forward to being able to safely regather and celebrate the lives of our beloveds in person, together. That day will surely come.

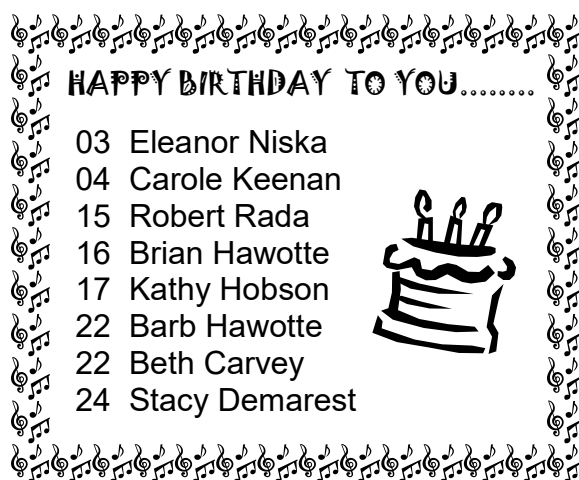
As we continue our Lenten journey, our Pilgrimage to the Promise, during this pandemic, I am more aware than ever of the need to care for ourselves as we care for others. When I was in a particularly stressful season my time in seminary, my mentor reminded me that I had to slow down a little and take care of myself or I wouldn't be any good to anybody. She was correct. She said, "When you're on an airplane, what is it they say during the safety speech? Put on your own oxygen mask before helping someone else put on theirs." She was correct of course. So please – put on your oxygen masks and care for yourselves. Get outside and stand in the sun. Eat that cookie! Spend time with God: read a devotional, offer a prayer, sit in quiet meditation. As you are renewed, you are able to be more present for others who look to you for support.

Care for yourselves. Care for others. Feel God's love present in your lives and return that love to God by letting it renew you and sharing it with others.

Together with you on this Lenten journey,
Pastor Santina

March Scripture

Mar 7	Exodus 20:1-17 John 2:13-22
Mar 14	Numbers 21:4-9 Ephesians 2:1-10
Mar 21	Jeremiah 31:31-34 John 12:20-33
Mar 28	Mark 11:1-11
Apr 4	1 Corinthians 15:1-11 John 20:1-18



Thank You

Thank you all for your prayers, and cards and condolences on the death of our sister Sue Hawotte. Losing 3 family members within 6 months has been very hard. But the support and love from our church family has helped us so much.

Judy Hawotte
Barb & Dan Hawotte

Congregational Sympathy

Congregational love and sympathy is extended to Judy Piper upon the death of her beloved husband Jerry. Jerry passed away peacefully on Wednesday, February 17. Our love and prayers are lifted for Judy and her family in this time of loss.

Wednesday Night Reflections during Lent

Please join Pastor Santina each Wednesday evening during Lent for a time of prayer and reflection. Each week we will explore a Psalm through word, prayer, and song. Each reflection will be livestreamed on Facebook Live at 7:00 p.m. and will be available to be viewed at your convenience on Hope UCC's You Tube channel. These short mid-week services are meant to be casual and comfortable. Please let the church office know if you would like to attend in person. All Covid safety precautions will be in place: properly worn masks and safe social distancing are required for in person attendance. Thank you for faithfully helping to keep each other safe and healthy.

Holy Week & Easter Sunday at Hope UCC

We have wonderful worship experiences planned for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and are determining how they will be shared with our faith community. Please stay tuned for announcements about when and on which technical platform they will be offered.

Throughout Holy Week we will have the opportunity to walk an indoor labyrinth that will be set up in Fellowship Hall. In order to make sure we keep everyone safe, we will be taking reservations and ensuring that Covid safety precautions are followed. Signups will begin the week of March 14.

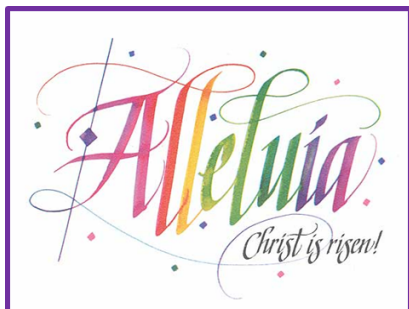
Easter Sunday Services

6:30 A.M. Sunrise Service in the Memorial Garden

Bundle up and join us for this chilly but very special service where we celebrate the Good News of Jesus's resurrection as the sun rises. Communion will be shared at this service.

10:00 A.M. Festival Easter Service

Our most joyful service of the year. Whether we are regathered in person or you watch our livestream service, plan to invite friends and family to celebrate! Communion will be shared.



Hope's Adopt a Park Program

With spring just around the corner, I think we are all looking forward to being able to get out and see flowers, the green grass and to enjoy sunny days. Your Mission & Outreach is looking for ideas and volunteers to help care for God's creation. We have adopted McCandless Park in Moline. For a further description of the Adopt a Park program, visit <https://www.moline.il.us/1212/Adopt-a-Park>.

Caring for our park includes cleaning and beautifying it for our community to use and enjoy.

Want to help? Have ideas? Email me at dbrianw@gmail.com or call [309-716-5106](tel:309-716-5106). All are welcome to participate in this ministry.

What a great way to help Hope grow in our community this spring!



Covid Task Force March Update

We are relieved that Rock Island County is beginning to show some improvement in our Covid Positivity Rate and Hospitalization Rate. It is also VERY good news that so many members and friends of Hope UCC and individuals throughout Rock Island County are scheduled or have already received both doses of the vaccination. The return to in-person learning in our schools, relaxing the safety mitigations, and vaccinations being administered in our area are all encouraging signs that better days are coming. Out of

an abundance of caution and with our call to faithfully care for our community, Hope UCC's Church Council has decided to continue with our policy of only virtual gatherings for worship, meetings, and programs through the end of March. This decision was made based on the very small percentage of vaccinations administered in Rock Island County at this time as well as the risk from new and more easily transmitted variations of this virus. We are hopeful to be able to safely regather in person after March, but please remember that all services, meetings, programs, and other events are available using technology which is the safest way for our congregation to gather. We will continue our policy welcoming in person anyone without the ability to join electronically as they feel safe doing so.

The question has been asked about a possible return to in person worship for Easter Sunday – with proper safety measures in place. Hope UCC's Church Council will discuss this at their February meeting and we will let everyone know when a decision and plan to regather is in place. State restrictions place a 50 person limit on in person gatherings, and if we regather, this will be our maximum occupancy as well. Please be assured that all services will continue to be livestreamed whether we have returned to in person worship or not. Please watch for notifications about changes in policy!

We continue to adhere to our safe building policy. Anyone in our building and sanctuary must be correctly masked and maintain social distance guidelines. We thank you for your patience and for always complying with our Covid safety guidelines. We will remain faithful in doing so as this is an act of caring and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. If you have any questions or concerns about Hope UCC's Covid plans, please contact the church office, any member of the Covid Task Force, or our Council President, Grady Birdsell. Thank you again for your cooperation and support during this challenging year.

While We've Been Apart, One From the Other ...

As we prepare for the change of seasons, it is tempting to wax poetic.

Can't you see the seasons changing?

Winter is turning into Spring.

Can't you hear the birds announce it?

Listen to them sing!

For our Trustees Ministry, though, this time of year is less about the bells and whistles of the heart than it is about the dollars and sense of building maintenance. As we start to think about what we need to do to re-open the church for meetings and services, we thought it worth a moment to update you on some of the work we have done around the property, while we have been apart.

As last summer turned to fall, we replaced the 30-year old air conditioning unit that supplies air to the office. More recently, at the height of the deep freeze in early February, several tile squares in the front entrance of the church (between the two sets of double doors) worked themselves loose and became a tripping and slipping hazard. In response, we have replaced those tiles with a one-piece laminate with a rough texture that looks nice and should provide solid footing for years to come. Additionally, we have ordered the materials for a similar repair to the men's room floor which we expect to have completed in March.

Meanwhile, we have included additional resources in our church budget to ensure we have the needed cleaning supplies, hand sanitizers and spare face masks to ensure everyone's safety as we transition to more traditional in-person worship and meetings.



Youth Group Spring Gatherings!

Youth Group meets from 3:00-4:30 Sunday afternoons, unless otherwise noted for special events. In order to faithfully and safely gather, all activities require properly worn masks and social distancing guidelines are enforced. Please stay home if you do not feel well or think you have/have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for Corona Virus. Thank you for complying with the safety guidelines – it is an act of caring and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.

March 7: 3rd Sunday of Lent - God's Promises and Our Journeys

Exodus 20:1-17: God's love frees us to live a life reflecting God's love.

Activity using our names and celebrating our identity as children of God

Spiritual Practice: Journaling & Labyrinth

March 14: 4th Sunday of Lent - God's Promises and Our Journeys

Ephesians 2:1-10: Our covenant to serve and share is explored. We will make bird feeders for McCandless Park and discuss a summer service project.

Spiritual Practice: Nature Walk (weather permitting) & prayer journal reflection

March 21: 5th Sunday of Lent- God's Promises and Our Journeys

****Time Change: 11:00-1:00****

Youth Group will serve as liturgists for worship and will stay after church for our gathering. Lunch will be provided!

John 12:20-33: No matter where we wander, God remains with us.

Spiritual Practice: Pretzel making & prayer journal reflection

March 28: Palm Sunday

Field Trip to McCandless Park to put up bird feeders (weather permitting) and park clean up.

Prayer journal reflection at the park

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Thanks to Wally Axmann (See Matthew 14:14-21) 03-02-2005

I'D LIKE FIVE FRIES AND TWO FISH
SANDWICHES PLEASE