

## *The Reverend's Ruminations - October 2020*

Throughout the last six months, my constant refrain seems to have been, "Stay tuned!" Well, I'm continually encouraged by how many of you have indeed "stayed tuned" for the many adjustments necessary to survive and thrive amid a worldwide virus pandemic. Spring brought unprecedented school, church, and business closures that had some of us in a bit of a panic. Summer enticed us with beautiful weather that allowed many of us to get outdoors for exercise and limited travel, but event postponements and wide-spread festival cancellations kept us from enjoying the warmth and sunshine in quite the way we're accustomed to. Now this fall's "new normal" includes evolving school schedules and off-then-on sports seasons. At least autumn in Minnesota brings the welcome constant of cooler weather, beautiful leaves, and what appears to be an early-and-bountiful harvest.

As these many weeks have passed, we've adapted to various "virtual" forms of worship, Zoom Board and Council meetings, and now progressed to a "hybrid" streaming worship service with limited in-person attendance, physically-distanced and masked Board/Council meetings, outdoor Bible study (until it gets too chilly), and a well-received drive-thru version of our Free Community Meal. Through it all, we've each learned new skills and terms, reignited old methods of entertainment (perhaps even some good old methods of communication), and striven to prayerfully support one another through what are surely the strangest days many of us have ever experienced.

If that wasn't enough, we've also tried to move forward through the seasons of the church. We've recently added a new method of communion for those who choose to attend in person, using pre-filled individual servings of juice and a wafer. The Christian Education Board has been hard at work cleaning and painting the Sunday School area on the church's third floor, only to have COVID-19 cases spike in Martin County and send the local school district into full distance learning—cancelling our annual Rally Sunday and Sunday School kick-off. But the refrain rings out again: "Stay tuned!" With a new curriculum to go along with the new-look Sunday School rooms, there are virtual options being prepared for our church kids. Emails will be going out to parents, but you're all encouraged to look up and "like" our new Sunday School Facebook page [\*@FirstCongoUCCSundaySchool\*](#) in order to keep up with the latest announcements and class options. Confirmation and adult options will be coming soon as well!

Now unless you've literally been living under a rock the last few months, you realize that there is something pretty important coming up in November. As your pastor, I have assured you in the past that I do not preach politics from the pulpit. Just like you, I have my opinions about the upcoming Presidential election; but one of the beautiful things about the United Church of Christ is that its membership encompasses a wide variety of personal political and social beliefs. Whether or not you have strong feelings one way or another, I absolutely encourage you to VOTE on November 3 (or by absentee/mail-in ballot if you do not feel comfortable going to a polling place amid the pandemic). As the prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator and general of Athens, Pericles, once said, *"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you."* We are all members of this democratic nation, and we each have a role to play in keeping government accountable to the people it serves.

We just finished several weeks of studying Paul's Letter to the Romans during our Sunday sermons, and although we didn't specifically unpack the first half of his thirteenth chapter, I encourage you to open your Bibles at home and spend a few moments examining his wisdom about Christians and their relationship to the governmental authorities of our day. His words ring true centuries after they were penned! As we move toward another major election, I pray that our nation can find ways to unite itself and truly be guided by principles pleasing to our powerful and grace-filled God.

Yours in Christ,

*Rev. Cory Germain*