



# Hopeful Connections

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## Courageous Faith

Although it feels like it was over a year ago, it was only 6 months ago that we celebrated Epiphany Sunday. That was the Sunday we received our Star Words for 2020. When I printed them out, I never imagined the relevance they would have for me today. Our 2020 Star Words all centered on the theme of bravery because, at that time, entering a new program year, we planned to focus on how Hope UCC would be living into God's vision for our church which would require brave and bold faith and action. What was your Star Word this year? Was it *brave, daring, courageous, audacious, valiant, bold, confidence, assurance, undaunted, fearless, spirited, endurance, vision, or acceptance*? If you recall, our instructions were to let your Star Word guide your prayers and bring you into a new conversation with God and to trust that your word would have something to offer and bring some new understanding or insight for you this year. Part of the spiritual practice with a Star Word is to watch and see how the word appears and makes itself known to you in different ways.

And here we are today, ending our 4<sup>th</sup> month of Covid-19 social distancing. My Star Word – *courage* – feels so different to me now than it did back in January. Back then, I was asking God for courage in figuring out how to lead us through visioning and creating a strategic plan for our church. Little did I know that we would be facing much bigger challenges than planning for the future vision of Hope UCC. This pandemic has made planning just a few weeks ahead a challenge. Now I seek and experience courage just in my discernment regarding running errands. Even now that our state has entered Phase 4 of recovery, I still think twice about going out and ask myself if it is truly necessary to do so and worth the risk of exposure. Courage is definitely a gift that I continue to seek from God in my daily prayers as we navigate this new reality. What I have come to understand through prayer and study is how challenging it is to return to in person worship and that it requires courage to wait to do so. Halting in person worship back in March was a decision that had to be made for the health and safety of our congregation and our families. In some ways that decision was easy. What is very challenging and much more difficult is the decision to resume in person worship. I want this time to come quickly so that we can be together again. However, this is not the safest and most loving way to approach this decision. There are so many aspects to restarting in person worship: safety and disinfection procedures, spacing for seating, redesigned worship format, materials used in worship, and many others. Thankfully, I am not making this decision alone. Hope UCC's Church Council appointed a Covid Response Task Force who have been meeting and studying all the requirements and recommendations for houses of worship to resume gathering in person. Additionally, they gathered all your survey responses and used that

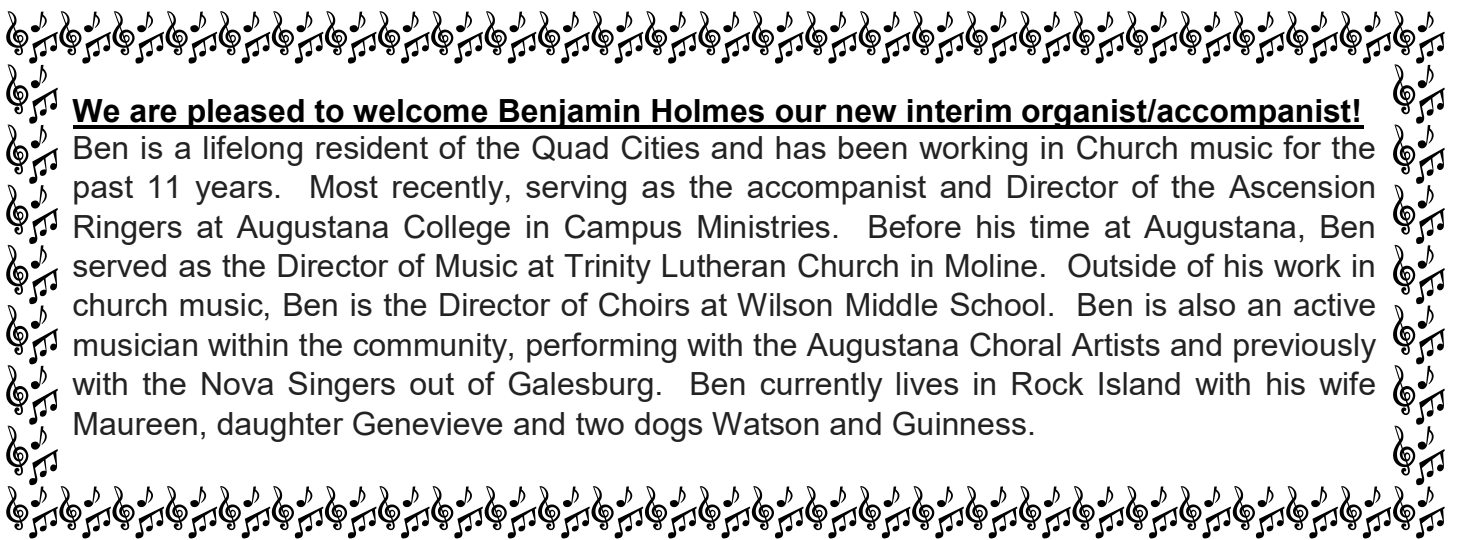
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information as well when they created our *Plan for Resuming In Person Gatherings*. Thank you for your honest and candid responses on those surveys! You will find a summary of their plan in this month's newsletter. Illinois enters Phase 4, which allows for gatherings of 50 or fewer people, June 26. Our Council has decided that it is most prudent to wait a few weeks following this date before we resume in person worship. Accordingly, please be watching for the information about that date.

We will return to worship in person once again, but please remember that worship will look and feel very different than it did on March 8 – the last time we had in person worship. We have to change some of the ways we experience worship in order to try to maintain the safety parameters to limit exposure to the virus. *However, what will not feel different and never change is the love that holds us together and the Spirit that guides and strengthens us.* God's love and Spirit have never left the building – when we have worshipped in the sanctuary or gathered virtually in these months and the months ahead – we carry that love and Spirit with us wherever we go. Each of our Star Words focuses on some aspect of courage and bravery. I pray that you all will continue to seek out and discern how God is still speaking to you and guiding you through these days and our life together as a community. What new opportunities is God revealing in all of this change and discernment? I will continue to look at my Star Word each day and continue to pray for courage to be felt within each of us as we face each new day and the opportunities for love and joy to be known even when challenging decisions have to be made. Stay safe and stay hopeful. Hope Grows!

Yours in the journey, Pastor Santana



**We are pleased to welcome Benjamin Holmes our new interim organist/accompanist!**

Ben is a lifelong resident of the Quad Cities and has been working in Church music for the past 11 years. Most recently, serving as the accompanist and Director of the Ascension Ringers at Augustana College in Campus Ministries. Before his time at Augustana, Ben served as the Director of Music at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moline. Outside of his work in church music, Ben is the Director of Choirs at Wilson Middle School. Ben is also an active musician within the community, performing with the Augustana Choral Artists and previously with the Nova Singers out of Galesburg. Ben currently lives in Rock Island with his wife Maureen, daughter Genevieve and two dogs Watson and Guinness.

**Union Congregational UCC's Legacy of Caring for Community**

Although Hope UCC's adoption of Union Congregational UCC was celebrated in 2019, there were still many items that had to be taken care of by the stewards of that great congregation. Jan Varga has been working hard all these months to complete the bookkeeping and financial paperwork required for the dissolution of the business of Union Congregational. The last week of June was a milestone for Jan as she was able to tie up the final loose ends of the finances. The wonderful result was determining the balance of Union's checking account and deciding what to do with it. In consultation with the former Union Council members, the decision was made to make a donation to the Riverbend Food Bank. Thanks to the generous hearts and faithful stewardship of Union Congregational, a donation of \$4,483.18 was donated for Riverbend's programs and services. What a legacy of loving care Union has left in the Quad Cities!



### **The Votes Are In: Hope UCC is an Open and Affirming Congregation!**

***Hope United Church of Christ invites and welcomes into our faith community persons of every ability, age, race, nationality, economic and social status, faith background, marital standing, family structure, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. We commit ourselves to the ongoing work of being an ONA (Open and Affirming) congregation – one that lives out the belief that God is still speaking. With God's grace, we journey together in Christian faith.***

Last month we held our Open and Affirming (ONA) congregational vote by mail in ballot due to the suspension of in person worship. The votes came in – thank you for your wonderful response! On June 25, at their monthly Church Council meeting, our Council ratified the vote: 93 yes votes to accept the ONA Covenant and become an ONA congregation; 6 no votes; and 8 votes to abstain.

With the congregational adoption and affirmation of this covenant, Hope UCC is officially what we have always known ourselves to be: a congregation who welcomes into life and leadership all of God's children as they are created - an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ. We thank you for your participation in the many conversations, studies, programs, and discussions that brought us to this place. Please know that the work to live as an ONA congregation continues past the vote. Going forward, this will be a continuing conversation and stewardship of this ONA covenant is necessary. We will celebrate our ONA vote as soon as we can gather again in person. In the meantime, please know how much being an ONA congregation means to so many folks who are not welcome in other spaces due to their mental or physical abilities, age, race, economic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. When we say no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here – WE MEAN IT. Thank you to our wonderful ONA Committee for guiding us through this process: Caridad Ramos, Jan Birdsell, Bob Tallitsch, Sue Grchan, Becky Newton, Walt Lysell, and Kathy Hobson



### **Cultural Partnership Team with World Relief QC**

*He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God. ~Micah 6:8*

World Relief Moline is a not-for-profit agency providing services to refugees and immigrants in Western Illinois and Eastern Iowa. World Relief's mission is to serve vulnerable populations in and through partnership with local churches, agencies, and the community-at-large. The agency seeks to provide financial, emotional, cultural, and spiritual support to refugees – victims of war and persecution around the world – who are being placed in the Quad Cities. Hope UCC has been invited to participate in the launch of

their new local initiative, the *Cultural Partnership Team Program*. This program will partner a team from our congregation with a recently arrived individual or family with the intention of welcoming them and accompanying them as they learn, adjust, and settle into their lives here in the Quad Cities. World Relief creates a partnership team that is made up of the recently arrived client, a World Relief case worker, and the cultural partner team. The length of time of this partnership is 6 months, but the relationships built and the impact made will last a lifetime. World Relief has a great plan in place to train and support the volunteer team, and provide the management and support necessary to make this partnership a success. Each volunteer team could have 4-6 people on it that each help in some way with the newly resettled individual/family. This could mean planning a monthly outing together (picnic, zoo, bike ride, etc.), help with transportation to appointments, calling in to check on them, conversations to assist with English language development, and other things to build relationships and support. World Relief has many resources and, together with their case worker and partnership team, the client is more fully embraced by our community and finds comfort and balance in their new life here.

How does Hope UCC fit into this? Our Mission and Outreach Ministry is asking that you prayerfully consider volunteering to serve on a partnership team. This is an opportunity to live out our faith and our mission to serve and love as Jesus teaches us. You can do this as an individual, with your friends, or with your family members. This is a 6-month commitment and World Relief has extensive training and support and resources available to help make this experience one that expands and deepens your faith and spirit. If you would like to learn more about this opportunity, please contact the church office to let us know and we will gather for a meeting with Leslie from World Relief so you can receive further information. Call or email the church office: 309-762-1419 or [office.hopeuccqc@gmail.com](mailto:office.hopeuccqc@gmail.com). You can also speak to our Mission and Outreach Ministry members: Jenny Hookey, Barb Hawotte, Kathy Hobson, Donna Werner, Lisa and Brian Williams, and Charley Poor. Thank you for prayerfully considering how you will answer God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves.



## **Church Return Survey Results**

It is hard to believe that we were last together in our sanctuary on March 8. In the 13 weeks since then, we have learned new ways of being the church. For years, people of faith have said, “The church was never about the building.” Now we are living that message and coming to a new and more profound understanding of what that means. Gathering for worship using technology has had its challenges, but it has also widened our message of God’s love and grace.

Covid-19 has brought a new understanding of how we must care for each other. It was with that love and care for others that we made the decision to follow all the health and safety guidelines of our state and county who are following the advice of medical and science professionals. As we continue to do so, we look forward to the gradual reopening of our worship space to in-person worship, gatherings, and meetings. In order to ensure that Hope UCC is ready for this phased in, gradual return to in person worship, our Covid Task Force was formed and they began the hard work of discerning a policy to safely and faithfully do this. The survey results provided us with a great deal of information to help in the creation of Hope UCC’s plan. Thank you for your responses - we received 84 survey responses out of the 124 that were sent out – that is a great response!

We learned that 82% of the folks responding will return to worship as we are able to safely return to in person worship. Some of that number will feel safer waiting a few weeks to do return after we begin, but will plan to attend. There is still some concern about returning and there are a few folks who answered that they are not sure or will wait for some time before returning to in person worship.

The overwhelming majority of responses regarding what safety precautions you expect Hope UCC to take to ensure the health and safety of our members and friends, to the best of our ability, are completely in line with the recommended safety measures from the CDC and Illinois Department of Health, the National Council of Churches, and the United Church of Christ. Your positive response to these safety precautions will help us shape our policy at Hope UCC. These precautions include requiring masks in the building, keeping the required 6 feet distance between seats and personal space, disinfecting and cleaning procedures, and changes in the order of worship and format of worship.

Another overwhelming majority of positive replies were offered when asked if you would be willing to attend an in person worship service at a different time than usual in order to keep our numbers in compliance with safe spacing between seats. The first phase of return to in person worship allows for 50 or fewer people in attendance. Therefore, it is likely we will need two services to comply. Most likely, the extra service will be at 8:30 a.m. Sunday morning. As we plan, please be assured we will keep you all informed. We will also initiate a plan for folks to let us know that you plan to attend a certain service. This will ensure that we are in compliance with safety and health guidelines. We will continue to livestream our 10:00 worship service for the foreseeable future. The survey results and comments indicated that our congregation has appreciated the online access and would like to see it continue.

I wish I could say that ‘church’ will always be the same for us. But in reality we know that God is always on the move and Spirit is here with us leading us into new possibilities. Church has always been changing – and now we have new ways of understanding God’s creative activity in our lives and in our faith journeys. The most important thing to remember though is the ‘why’ around all these changes and adaptations. The reason why we are discerning our way ahead with such prayerful care is love. Our love for each other and all of God’s children. This is our commitment at a faith community and a people of God.

Grace and peace,

Hope UCC Covid-19 Response Team

## **Hope UCC Covid 19 Task Force Plan for Resuming In Person Gatherings**

Restore Illinois has a 5 Phase recovery plan. Phase 4 allows for gatherings of 50 or fewer people with the proper safety measures. Here is the metric for Phase 4:

*There is a continued decline in the rate of infection in new COVID-19 cases. Hospitals have capacity and can quickly adapt for a surge of new cases in their communities. Additional measures can be carefully lifted allowing for schools and child care programs to reopen with social distancing policies in place. Restaurants can open with limited capacity and following strict public health procedures, including personal protective equipment for employees. Gatherings with 50 people or fewer will be permitted. Testing is widely available, and tracing is commonplace.*

### 1. What supplies do you need to plan to have available for good hygiene?

- 8 freestanding, touchless hand sanitizing stations have been ordered (arriving early July)
- 8 Gallons of hand sanitizer (refill) has been ordered (arrived)
- 100 disposable masks have been ordered (arriving early July)
- 2 gallons of Envirox 22 disinfectant/virucide (concentrate) will be purchased from Great Western Supply in Davenport (arrived)
- our paper towel order will be increased as necessary
- antibacterial soap is available in all restrooms and sinks
- Purell is out by doors as well.
- Clorox (type) wipes will be purchased as they become available

### 2. What is your plan for disinfecting gathering spaces, restrooms, and other points of contact on a regular basis?

Before resuming worship & activities: Custodian will come in and do a complete clean up/disinfect spaces. Custodian should be coming in regularly now that we are back in the building during the week.

When events resume: Custodian works 10 hours a week: In those 10 hours, it is expected that the campus will be cleaned following the final worship on Sunday and before 11:00 a.m. Monday. In addition, church campus will be cleaned/disinfected prior to Sunday worship. Doors and restrooms and other common spaces will be cleaned/disinfected during the week.

Volunteers will clean/disinfect sanctuary, doors, and restrooms between Hope UCC service and Holy Ghost Assembly service.

In the event that we have more than one worship service on Sunday, volunteers will clean/disinfect the sanctuary, doors, and restrooms between the worship services.

If there is a special event, custodian will be required to clean/disinfect before and following the event. Custodian will be compensated for and must include this additional time to his/her/their hours, even if it exceeds the 10 hours for the week.

### 3. How will restroom use be managed to minimize potential contact between individuals?

Custodian & volunteers will clean as described in #2. In order to maintain social distancing guidelines, we will ask that 1 person at a time use the restroom (unless they are in the same household). We will have an 'occupied' sign on each restroom door and ask people to remember to indicate accordingly when they enter or exit.

### 4. How will you space out and limit the number of people who can gather?

Each pew will be marked with blue tape with seats that are spaced 6 feet apart (in front & behind). For families of more than one, we will adjust the seating in front and behind the family accordingly. Glass doors in front and rear of buildings will be propped open before and after worship (they will be closed once service begins). Enter and exit building through either of these doors.

Brown accordion wall between Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary will be open.

Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall doors will be propped open. Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall doors will be marked with "Enter" and "Exit" signs.

Enter Sanctuary: East doors in Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall.

Exit Sanctuary: West doors in Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall

Hallway floor will be marked with blue tape to indicate 6 feet spacing intervals.

Ushers will be trained to assist with traffic flow directions and seating.

5. Do you have outdoor space in which to gather safely for activities?  
 We could have tailgate type gatherings in the parking lot. Small group activities can take place in the parking lot or Memorial Garden.  
 If any activities are taking place outside, the same rules for use of restroom apply as they do for church gatherings: one at a time in restroom as indicated through using 'occupied' sign.

Planning Questions: Worship

6. Will your community consider starting with outdoor services?  
 No we will not begin with outdoor services. Hope UCC's parking lot does not lend itself to this type of worship. We will have our service in the park later this summer when we locate an appropriate location for us to gather with the safe distance between people.
7. Will you have more than one worship service on a Sunday? How will you clean between?  
 We will wait to begin in person worship until Illinois permits 50 or fewer to gather. We will set up for that number in the sanctuary and use Fellowship Hall for overflow to ensure 50 seats are available. Based on survey results, we will have a good feel for how many people plan to return to in person worship at the first opportunity possible. If that number is close to 50, we will plan to offer a second worship service. That service will either be at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning and/or Saturday evening at 5:00 p.m. (or both!). We will ask people to email, text, or call the office to let us know when they will attend worship so we can stay in compliance with the State of Illinois guidelines and be prepared for visitors and unexpected numbers.  
 Cleaning: After Saturday evening service and/or between Sunday services (to include following 10:00 a.m. service prior to HGA worship service) volunteers will clean/disinfect doors, restrooms, sanctuary. Custodial staff will clean/disinfect after final service on Sunday (anytime before 1100 Monday) as well as throughout the week and prior to/following any special events.
8. How will you organize social distancing in relation to where folks sit?  
 Seating will be available at 6 feet distances, staggered seating between pews will be marked with blue tape. Chairs will be set up 6 feet apart in Fellowship Hall (no tables set up in the hall).  
 Floor throughout hallway will be marked at 6 ft. intervals.
9. How will you encourage wearing masks in worship and other gatherings?  
 Masks will be required in the building unless a person has a physical and/or medical reason for not using a mask. If this is the case, that person (people) will sit in the front pew (lectern side). We will encourage people to bring their own masks but we will have disposable masks available for those without. Masks have been ordered and are estimated to arrive by July 7. Signs with the requirements (masks, social distance, hand washing) are posted on all entry doors and the office door.
10. How will you distribute and dispose of worship materials safely (use projector and not print, designated collection and drop off bins, etc.)?  
 Bulletins: We will have print bulletins available (they will still be emailed/mailed to everyone as well). Print bulletins will be placed on the marked seats in each row ahead of the service. Projector will be used as well. Recycle bins will be placed by doors so individuals can dispose of their bulletins as they exit.  
 Attendance sheets: The pew pads will not be in pews. Ushers will welcome and sign people in and/or take an attendance count. Visitor cards will be in the pews for folks to fill in and leave in offering baskets as they exit.
11. How will you plan to share the peace without handshakes or hugs for at least the next 6 months?  
 The peace offering will still be included in our liturgy, but it will be a no contact peace offering.
12. How will you collect offering, without passing plates or baskets?  
 Call to Offering and the Prayer of Dedication will still be included in the liturgy; however, the offering will be placed in the baskets at the entry and exit doors. Ushers will not collect the offering. Directions for offering will be given in the bulletin and in the Call to Offering. Electronic giving will continue.
13. How will you celebrate the Eucharist?  
 Pew communion will be celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. We will ask that people bring their own elements for the bread and cup. However, we will have individual bread and cup servings available for anyone who does not have their own. Cubed bread and juice will be put in individual plastic containers with lids (condiment size). These will be on tables in sanctuary for anyone who needs one (self-serve).

14. Will you have Vacation Bible School this summer?  
Probably not, but this will be discussed with Faith Exploration. If so, it will be via take home materials and via zoom or other web-based technology.
15. Who will contact your insurance company to learn of restrictions, recommendations, or requirements related to your policy coverages? Caridad Ramos
16. How do your committees and councils intend to meet remotely to discuss business?  
Council, ministry meetings, and committees will continue to meet via Zoom. We will have hybrid Zoom/in person meetings so that those who are not comfortable being in person will still be able to attend.
17. Will you offer online worship, devotions, and Bible study?  
We will continue to live stream our Sunday worship services (10:00 a.m. Sunday only). Thursday night contemplative service will continue to be available via Zoom but we will welcome in person attendance as well.  
Tuesday Lectionary Bible study will continue to be offered via Zoom but we will welcome in person attendance as well.
18. Will you resume Sunday school? Will you utilize other means for education?  
We will not resume children's Sunday school in person on Sunday mornings before worship as we have previously. Faith Exploration will explore options for ways to continue faith formation for our little ones.
19. Which activities will you continue to restrict for the time being?  
After church coffee hour will be suspended for a while. Monthly potlucks suspended; however, BYOL (bring your own lunch) picnics, tailgaters, gatherings may be substituted. Zoom coffee gatherings, happy hours, other social gatherings will be scheduled. Small group activities with 10 or fewer with masks and social distancing will be encouraged.  
Holy Ghost Assembly will be able to meet in sanctuary when Hope UCC returns to sanctuary. Their congregation will need to follow the same safety guidelines that Hope is implementing.
20. Have you made plans to reduce expenses if offerings do not bounce back?  
We have been given a PPP loan of \$10,800 which will help with salaries and utilities for 2 months. At this time we do not expect to have a drastic reduction in income, but the PPP loan helps to relieve that stress. There is not much to cut in our budget so this could be a very challenging conversation.
21. How will you address weddings, funerals, baptisms?  
We will follow state guidelines on limits to number of attendees. We will livestream and/or Zoom any service as necessary. If a party wishes to reschedule for a later date when they think more people can attend, they are welcome to do so.
22. Who will make the decisions to resume activities? To suspend again, if necessary? How will that be announced?  
Our initial re-entry plan will be designed by the Covid Task Force. It will be given to the Trustees who will make recommendation for adoption to Church Council. It will be mailed/emailed to all members and friends as well as posted on church website and social media.  
We will follow state and local guidelines regarding continuing and/or suspending activities and in person worship.
23. What will you do if volunteers decide to stay away? How will you encourage vulnerable volunteers to stay away (per CDC guidance this includes ALL members over 65 and those with underlying health conditions)?  
We will continue to have open and clear communication about what is safe and what is not. We are basing our decisions on the science and research and most of all a profound love for our members and friends and the desire to keep everyone safe and healthy.
24. When will you resume visitation to shut-ins? What precautions will you take?  
Now that the Stay at Home Order has been lifted, Pastor Santina will call and make appointments to visit members and friends with the proper safety measures in place. Visits will be offered ONLY if the member/friend is comfortable having a visitor. As much as possible these visits will take place outside or with pastor Santina outside and the member/friend inside behind the screen door. Priority of visits will be with those who have not had internet connections to church family and/or who are more isolated and at risk.



25. How will you inform members and others of the safety guidelines? Who will monitor and ensure compliance?

We will mail out an official letter listing all guidelines and procedures to all members and friends. It will be included in the monthly newsletter, on homepage of website, and on our church social media. We will encourage anyone with questions to call or email the church office so we can clarify anything as well as set up an appointment to meet as necessary. The Covid Task Force, in conjunction with Trustees will monitor for compliance.

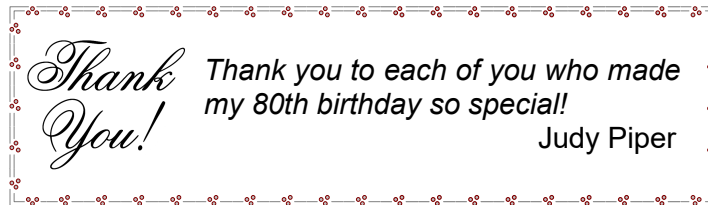
26. How will you notify people if someone who has been in the building is diagnosed with COVID-19?

We will send a letter via US mail as well as email. We will identify level of intensity of illness. We will also make phone calls using volunteers to split up the director. We will follow CDC guidelines.

We will make sure in all our signage, correspondence, webpage, and newsletter that it is clear that if you do not feel good or are showing any symptoms of being sick with anything, please stay home.


27. What changes to order of worship will we expect to experience?

Welcome & Announcements, Prelude, Call to Worship from Pastor, Opening Prayer congregation  
Prayer of Confession from Pastor, Silent confession congregation, Assurance of forgiveness from Pastor  
Offering of Peace (visual only – no contact) *Hold up hands and all will say, "Peace be with you!" at same time.*, Special Music, Pastoral Prayer, Scripture, Sermon



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.....**

- 01 Dennis Beug
- 04 David Newton
- 05 Donald VanWychen
- 09 Sherry VanWychen
- 11 Ken Curtis
- 13 Kathy Lewis
- 13 Phyllis Dull
- 15 Denny Black
- 15 Lisa Powell Williams
- 18 Linda Brown
- 18 Marjorie Gottwalt
- 19 Sheila Goderis
- 20 Mary Tallitsch
- 28 Marilyn Rada
- 30 Sue Grchan
- 31 Tina Voss



**July Scripture**

July 5	Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
July 12	Genesis 25:19-34 Psalm 119:105-112 Romans 8:1-11 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
July 19	Genesis 28:10-19 Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 Romans 8:12-25 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
July 26	Genesis 29:15-28 Romans 8:26-39 Matthew 13:31-33. 44-52





AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE INDEPENDENT OF  
EVIL AND AN ETERNITY OF PAIN AND  
SUFFERING ... WHEN DO WE GET  
FIREWORKS?