



# February 2021 Bell Tower

First Congregational  
United Church of Christ

*We Are Open and Affirming*

1111 North Chicago Avenue,  
South Milwaukee, WI 53172



Pastor: Rev. Beth Abbott \* [firstcongsmpastor@gmail.com](mailto:firstcongsmpastor@gmail.com) \* (414) 762-3121

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Dear Church,

Lent \ 'lent \ *noun*: 40+ days when we remember Jesus in the desert preparing himself spiritually and emotionally for public ministry; also, when we *turn from* what keeps us from God and *turn to* what sustains and feeds our faith; also, season of preparation and renewal as disciples of Jesus; see also *wilderness time*

Typically, Lent is for naming what's broken, mending what's tattered, confessing what's keeping us from God. A "solemn darkness" accompanies this journey, and we "give something up" or "add to" our days with a devotional or other spiritual practice.

*Whelp.* Who's soul needs a season of darkness, loss, and solemnity right now? **It seems the traditional approach to Lent is far from what we need.** I value Lent. Typically, my soul *needs* to rid itself of what's not fitting for my faith. I *appreciate* Lent's quietness, confessional prayers, ability to hold or release what is hard. But, it feels as if we've been doing Lent for almost a year now--preparing for/encountering loss, abstaining, turning inward, journeying in a wilderness. Could your soul even handle *more* of that now?

**What if we leave some porch lights and night lights on this Lent?** Find what's meaningful in its scriptures but not carry it to its heaviest places? Offer soothing balm in practices that sustain and nourish? In that spirit, we invite you to take part in our...

- **Lenten Devotional Cards** for adults (*they will come to you before Lent begins*)
- Disciples-in-Training Lenten Packet (*coming your way as well; youngest ones too*)
- **Again & Again: Hope** Digital Adult Retreat
- 40-Days: Strengthening Emotional Stamina to Counter White Fragility

*Pastor Beth*

Rev. Beth Abbott

## Worship Online 'Together' in February:

Join us **10a Sundays** or after 6a via **FirstCongSMUCC** on youtube ('subscribe'),  
our facebook page, or the weekly church email link.

Watch or re-watch it anytime & continue to share it with friends & family!

**Feb. 7**      **Zoom Worship with Communion 10-10:30a** (Opens 9:45)

**Special Congregational Meeting follows**

Mark 1:29-39 Healing Simon's mother-in-law & Jesus seeks respite

**Feb. 14**      **Transfiguration Sunday**

Ps. 50:1-6 & Mark 9:2-9 Jesus' Mountaintop Experience with Disciples



**Feb. 17**      **Ash Wednesday** (*worship on our youtube anytime after 6a that day*)

**Lent Begins: *Again & Again, We're Invited In***

Isaiah 58:1-12 & Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Feb. 21**      **First Sunday in Lent: *Again & Again, God Meets Us***

Genesis 9:8-17 & Psalm 25:1-10

**Feb. 28**      **Second Sunday in Lent: *Again & Again, We are Called to Listen***

Psalm 22:23-31 & Mark 8:31-9:8



We are reminded that, again and again, suffering and brokenness find us. We doubt again, we lament again, we mess up again. And yet, God offers a sacred refrain: “I choose you, I love you, I will lead you to repair.” Again and again, God breaks the cycle and offers us a new way forward.

This theme for Lent provides a clear invitation in a time when much is unclear. Even worshipping apart, we come to God again and again with our prayers, our dreams, our hopes, and our doubts. Even from a distance, we continue to be community to one another—especially when it’s hard—by choosing each other over and over again.

In this season, we need rituals—both old and new—to remember and be transformed. Embodied practice builds muscle memory. Repetition helps retrain our neural pathways. We need the 46 days of Lent because this season shapes us into more faithful disciples. Join us this Lent as again and again, we bring all of who we are to God and trust that God will meet us, time and again, along the way.

*Worship Materials inspired and adapted from A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)*

### **Virtual Worship Thank You!**

Your on-line worship services continue to resonate with us. Please accept this check as a token of our thanks!

Blessings –

Dale Stohre and

Beth Meyer

p.s. Your Christmas Eve service was AMAZING!

## Worship & All Church Special Meeting Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>

We are having a special meeting for the purpose of asking church members to approve a second PPP loan (Payroll Protection Program loan).

Given the PPP timelines, the meeting will be held via zoom on February 7th following Worship, which begins at 10:00am. Please plan on virtually attending.

9:45 "Doors" Open

10-10:30 Worship

(brief break but all is part of the same call)

10:40 Special Meeting with Time Remaining for Fellowship

Outlined below are key factors in making the Trustees recommendation.

- Expected amount of loan projected to be around \$22,000 - \$23,000
- Proceeds are required to be used to pay employee salaries and certain eligible benefits
- Expect the loan to be fully forgiven (as was first loan received)
- Provide offsets to reduced donations since services have gone virtual and no APL School payments (~\$850 per month during this school year)

Here is the meeting invite info.

Lesley Buelow is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Worship & Special Meeting

Time: Feb 7, 2021 09:30 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97312669034?pwd=VGxaYkpYaTFSSjYNGpiZUdvSHd2dz09>

Meeting ID: 973 1266 9034

Passcode: 921638

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,97312669034#,,,,\*921638# US (Chicago)

+16465588656,,97312669034#,,,,\*921638# US (New York)

## From the UCC's Mental Health Network

*Some resources with trained professionals available to assist in crisis:*

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

## Trials & Smiles Prayer List

[Trials & Smiles](#) is our ongoing prayer list of concerns/joys. Put anyone on the list if you have their permission (or offer prayers for yourself or any place). You can also call the church office and leave a message and Rochelle will add your prayer to the list for you. Our listed prayers will not be shared during our youtube worship (additional privacy concerns), but we trust you'll be holding them in your prayers and caring for one another.

## Adult Retreat 2021

Save The Date.....The Adult Retreat is scheduled for February 13th, 2021 from 8:45-7:00. The Adult Retreat planning team is working to develop a virtual retreat full of peace, love and hope. More details will be forthcoming.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is

## Offering Envelopes Are Now Available

Offering envelopes are now available for pick-up. Please contact Ken Lauffer to arrange to get your envelopes. Egivers do not receive envelopes.

Ken Lauffer  
617 Oak Street  
South Milwaukee, WI 53172  
(414) 871-5800  
[kenlauffer@hotmail.com](mailto:kenlauffer@hotmail.com)



Hello,

I just wanted to let everyone know how wonderful it was to be able to send "Boxes of Love" this year. We were able to safely come together in the Fellowship Hall of the Church. I would like to give a special shout out to Sandy Traylor, Heidi Endicott, Geri Bitters and Pam Uhrig for all of their help.

We were able to maintain social distance and we all wore masks, but it was so good to see all of the Saturday Sisters dropping off treats that day.

Thanks to all who were able to donate. Some members donated treats and some donated money to the postage for the boxes. We were able to put together and mail 12 Boxes of Love to our college students and military personnel. We did have a surplus of items that we decided should be donated to Human Concerns.

We were all so inspired by the quick response of our church. Thank you for letting us give that tangible support to our community.

Love Always,

Judy Phillips



# Mission Opportunities

## Benevolence Giving Focus

We gave to **Hope House** for **January** and will give to **South Milwaukee Human Concerns** for **February**. Please feel free to give an extra mile offering for these charities. Note the name of the ministry partner on your check or envelope or egiving.

**Hope House** is an emergency and transitional living facility and community center. Provides services for homeless and low income individuals. Provides outreach to individuals needing healthcare, food distribution, financial assistance and educational opportunities.

**South Milwaukee Human Concerns** is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization receiving no taxpayer funds that delivers critical help and hope to needs-based residents through emergency food, clothing, and other essential services.

## St. Vincent de Paul Meals Program

February is the month of love. Guests at the St. Vincent de Paul meal site love your home baked desserts. The site boxes up meals daily, Sunday thru Friday. **Our church delivers desserts on the second Friday of the month.** Bars, cookies and cupcakes, home baked or store bought can be dropped off at 421 Hawthorne Ave. before 3 pm on Friday and will be delivered on Feb. 12th. Let's provide them with some extra love this month. Thank you to everyone who has supported this mission.



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Dear First Congregational Church Parishioner's and Staff,

On behalf of South Milwaukee Human Concerns and your neighbors in need, I wish to express my deepest thank you for your help this holiday season. Because of your generosity, we were able to provide Christmas assistance to 712 children this year. Please believe me when I say if it were not with the help of you and our caring community, we would never be able to continue our mission. Thank you for your continuing support. Hope your holidays were filled with joy.

Very Truly Yours,

Debra DeBoer, Director  
So. Milw. Human Concerns, Inc.  
414-764-5340  
smhumanconcerns.org  
debrahcsomilw@gmail.com

## Directory Updates in Bold

Please notify the office if you have any directory updates or corrections: [firstcongsm@gmail.com](mailto:firstcongsm@gmail.com).

### Treasurers Report - Ending Dec 31, 2020

#### Operating Account

Beginning Bal.	\$ 6,666.01
Receipts	\$ 16,972.16
Expenses	<u>\$ 10,438.08</u>
Ending Bal.	\$ 13,200.09

#### Benevolence Account

Beginning Bal.	\$ 0.00
Receipts	\$ 7,107.22
Expenses	<u>\$ 7,107.22</u>
Ending Bal.	\$ 0.00

### We are thankful for your faith-filled giving!

*Whether large and small, your giving enables us to God's calling for us "Beloved, Love."  
Thank you for all the ways you give! Further suggestions for supporting our faith community:*

- **Switch to E-giving;** visit [firstconguccsm.com](http://firstconguccsm.com) to sign up with VANCO
- **Mail a check** (1111 N. Chicago Ave. South Milwaukee, WI 53172) or drop your offering in the secure, parking lot mail slot
- **"Bill pay" your offering** through your bank as you might with other bills
- **Use PayPal** via [firstconguccsm.com](http://firstconguccsm.com)

*Whichever way(s) you support our ministries, **we are thankful** for your generosity and your deep passion for our church.*

**Do you want to inquire about alternative methods of giving to the church  
(e.g. stock dividends, IRA disbursements, adding the church to your will, etc.)?**

Contact Treasurer Rochelle Connor or a Member of the Trustees

## 40 Days Antiracism Lenten Practice

What an incredible journey you can participate in this Lent! Our co-sponsors, Faith Formation & Mission, invite you to join others in our church in this online & offline spiritual practice. **Learn more below & let us register you!** Please do not register yourself: [email Rochelle to add your name to our church's group](#). Sponsoring committees pay the group rate, so there's no additional cost to you; if desired, free will offerings accepted. Questions? Ask Pastor Beth, Sandy C, or Chris M. **Deadline to sign up: Fri. Feb. 5.**

### 40-Day Lenten Practice: Strengthening Emotional Stamina to Counter White Fragility

February 16 – March 31, 2021

Instructor: Beth Godbee. Meet Beth in the brief (1:30 min) video below.

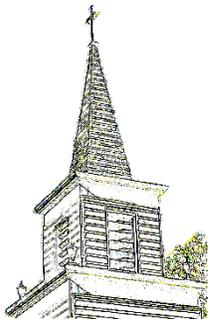
When you purchase this course, you will receive:

- A digital workbook for the core 40-day practice
- Access to four online workshops (participate live or view recordings on your own time): Tuesdays, 6:00-7:30 p.m. CST, February 16, March 2, March 16, March 30
- An online community for ongoing reflection on your experience

Throughout the practice, you'll have the opportunity to:

- engage in contemplative practices (meditation and journaling, among others)
- receive support for processing difficult emotions and countering white fragility (the myth, the harm, and the learned behaviors)
- articulate commitments that drive everyday decision-making
- **set intentions and increase readiness for showing up for racial justice in 2021 and beyond.**

# DAMASCUS PROJECT



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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