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I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. — John 13:34-35 (NRSV)



Dear Church:

We are in Eastertide, when we rejoice in the good news of the resurrection, and yet so much our journey still feels like the wilderness. I continue to pray for you as we walk through these days of distancing together.

This week, some state governments are beginning to lift stay-at-home orders and allow some businesses and industries to reopen their doors. These reopening conversations are understandably raising questions about how and when churches should resume in-person worship services. These are difficult decisions, but I want to encourage you, as difficult as it is, not to rush too quickly back. It is not yet time to gather for worship in person.

I know that it is heartbreaking not to be able to gather. We want nothing more than to hug our loved ones and squeeze the hands of our grieving friends. We want nothing more than to worship together and join our voices together in song. We want nothing more than to break bread together at our beloved communion tables.

But the phased reopening plans developed by public health experts call for several benchmarks to indicate safety such as 14 days of declining case counts, widespread testing, and contact tracing. We are not there yet.

The economic impact of this pandemic is devastating, to be sure, and many of the decisions to reopen business are in response. There is and will be much work to do as we care for our hurting neighbors.

Church, we don't make decisions based on economics. We make decisions based on love. And here in this time, in the midst of this pandemic, the loving thing to do is not to gather for worship. Love, as we know from 1 **Corinthians 13:4-5, is patient. Love does not insist on its own way.**

It is not easy to love from a distance. It is not easy to overcome our own desire for being physically close to our church family. It is not easy to give up the familiar in favor of this new way of being.

It is likely we will never meet in quite the same way again. But we have a historic opportunity here. We have the chance to test new ways, learn creatively, imagine beyond old boundaries and grow in our understanding of the family of God.

Let me be clear: even as we have gathered in different ways, we are still the church. Even as we have worshiped on Facebook and YouTube from our living room couches, even as we have prayed over Zoom, we are the church, and God is at work in and through us. We will continue to be the church.

There are a number of resources available for helping congregations think through how and when to resume in-person worship services, and we have linked to several of them on our **COVID-19 resource page** www.disciples.org. I found this guidance from the Wisconsin Council of Churches and this pastoral letter from Disciples pastor Brandon Gilvin particularly helpful.

In addition, this letter from the College of Regional Ministers offers wisdom and hope. Many regional ministers are also offering guidance based on realities in your local context. I urge you to listen to them and to be in conversation with one another as you make prayerful decisions with your church leadership.

I have been inspired by the creativity, innovation, and compassion from Disciples over the past two months. You are already imagining new ways of being church, and I have confidence that we will face the future together with courage and grace, strengthened always by the love of God.

Grateful to be serving with you,

Rev. Terri Hord Owens
General Minister and President

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian Love: the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

This song has been stuck in my head. It was one of the early ones, taught to me by my Grandmother Daisy Violet Crow; at least I attribute it to her, because when I picture her she is seated at the piano at church. I still smell the wood and mildew of that small one room church house, still hear the echoes of the pianos, and I still feel the energy of the prayers and the hands laid upon me, and I haven't been there in nearly 20 years, plus those memories of laying hands are 35 years old. But still, I am there. Connected to my ancestors, connected through a song, a spirit, a prayer, a hope.

This song has been sung throughout my life: at church camps in Guthrie, OK and Okoboji, IA and Community of the Great Commission in CA, and at Suttle Lake, OR and every congregation I've ever called home. I've never had the second verse memorized but here it is in the hymnal today:

When we are called to part, it gives us inward pain; but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again. Amen.

At the beginning of all this, I imagined our return to normal in just a few weeks. I dreamt of filling the sanctuary with people joyously returning to worship and filling our bellies with food. I imagined the hugs, laughter, and smiles. I think we all realize now that it won't happen that way. Church life will look different and it will take us weeks and months to find that way together. But church life continues, we are being led by the Spirit, and we are not lost to one another. The energy and tie that binds us is strong. I feel your prayers, and Pastor Jerri and I have joined our prayers together now, creating a new bond for strength and discernment together. May God's love and the pursuit of science continue to guide us and may we continue to find ways to strengthen our connections to one another in this time. God bless you and keep you.

Rev. April Oristano, Co-Pastor



Thoughts from Co-Pastor Jerri Handy
jerri@heartofeugene.org

The hard work is done, well almost. I arrived in the area on April 18. I found a place to live, signed the lease, have keys in hand. All of my belongings arrived in UBoxes and were unloaded into the house last week. I still have many boxes to unpack but I am making steady progress. All of that to say I have arrived!

I have attended zoom meetings, messenger meetings and have more of them scheduled in the next few weeks. I have enjoyed getting to know leaders through the Sunday morning worship service. Preaching Live On-line was a first for me, I felt Spirit moving. I thank you for your comments as I was preaching.

All of this is good. But it feels a bit like being hired to be a shepherd, given a staff, a map of all the best pastures but the sheep are all scattered safely in their homes. I cannot see them, visit them, call them together. (We are all practicing staying home, social distancing, 20 sec hand washings, mask wearing to cover nose and mouth, and even donning rubber gloves in many places. Right.)

This is what we can do. We can begin sharing our story's. I will be available starting Wednesdays and Thursdays. May 13th will start us off with this prompt, "What I love best about Eugene/Springfield is..." If you would like a time slot on Wednesday or Thursday (13 or 14) email me so that we can set an appointment time. These are our stories to share, we are in this together.

OUR COMMUNITY



As a community, we take time to pause and give thanks for the gift of mothers.

We celebrate and give thanks, for our mother.

The woman who carried us in her womb, gave birth to us, brought us into life.

We celebrate and give thanks, each of us, for those who have been as mothers to us; our aunts and pseudo-aunts, big sisters, friends, mentors and teachers.

The women who have nurtured, taught, encouraged, shaped us with love. We give thanks for the many strengths and gifts of the women in our communities.

We celebrate, those of us who are mothers and grandmothers, the joy and privilege it is to collaborate with you in the creation of life. We honor the paths of all women and the beauty they create and participate in here on our Mother Earth.

We celebrate, we give thanks, for you, our mothering God, whose wings enfold us like those of a mother hen, who gives birth to all that lives, who loves fiercely, protectively, and with great delight.

We celebrate what we know of you as like a mother.

Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS Patty Weller for being nominated to serve as the Regional Treasurer! Thanks be to God for your special talents that you can share with the wider church and thank you for blessing FCC Eugene with a deeper connection to our Regional Church!

Congratulations!

Greetings from the Personnel Committee

We have a few important updates to share during this month of May.

First of all, we officially welcomed Reverend Jerri Handy this week. Jerri made it to Oregon safe and sound and preached her first sermon this last Sunday. She has secured housing and is moving into her new home this week. Be on the lookout for upcoming information about opportunities to connect with Jerri. She is looking forward to building relationships and hearing our stories.

Secondly, the church received the PPP grant. Thanks to several days of hard work by Michael Kennedy, First Christian Church received a federal small business grant. This grant will cover the payroll for our staff for 2.5 months. This means none of our staff will be furloughed during these hard times. Thank you very much, Michael, for all your time and hard work.

Finally, Sunday Breakfast/Downtown Food Hub Coordinator Joshua Purvis and the First Christian Church of Eugene have parted ways. We appreciate the contributions Joshua made to our ministry and wish him well. The Downtown Food Hub services will continue.

PRAYER PODS 2020

We will be doing prayer pods this year, but we're going to need to be creative in how and where we meet. When you sign up, you can choose your preferred method of connecting with others.*

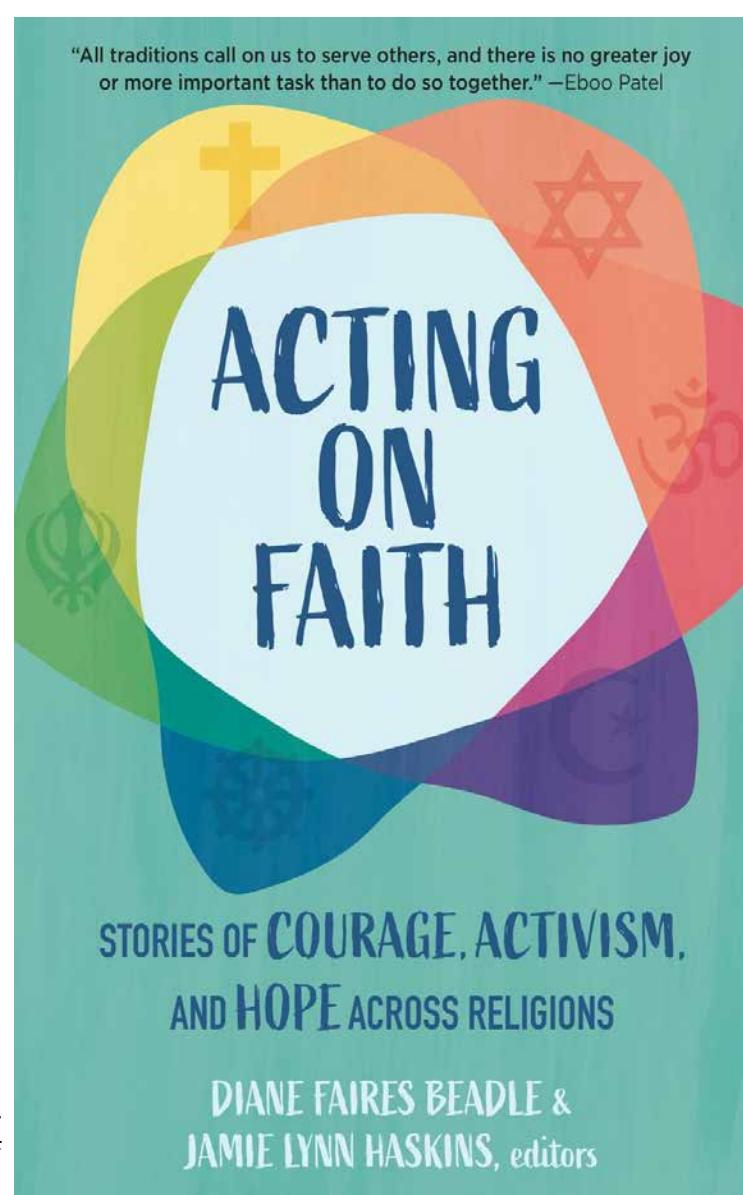
If you're new to First Christian, you might be wondering what the heck is a prayer pod? Prayer pods are small groups of people who get together for fellowship and spiritual and emotional connection around a book chosen for the church as a whole by the Spiritual Formation Committee. Pod members meet weekly for a few weeks and discuss the topics raised in their reading.

This year's book is *Acting on Faith* (2020), edited by two Disciples ministers. From the back cover: "In these first person stories from diverse voices of faith, learn how our different religious beliefs inspire courageous acts of justice and love amid the world's violence and divisions. *Acting on Faith* cultivates hope in our common values and encourages personal action through concrete examples of faithfulness, justice, and love..."

Each of the book's six chapters centers around a particular issue of importance to all faith traditions: environment, race, refugees, sexuality, women's leadership, and religious extremism. Each chapter is followed by reflection questions designed to deepen readers' conversations and understanding.

You will be able to register for a prayer pod via a link in FCCs weekly eNews or by calling the church office at 344-1425. The deadline for registering is Friday June 5. Sign up is simple and requires your name, contact information, and options you have for virtual meetings.

Acting on Faith is available from Chalice Press (chalicepress.com) for \$11.89, Amazon (amazon.com) for \$15.33 (\$5.99 for Kindle), and of course from your preferred local bookstore.



Hello Congregation,

I hope you are staying safe and well. We have been discussing what we should do with Dining

Dollars this year. It is a line item for income on the church budget. We were wondering if you would be

interested in Hosting or participating in a Virtual Event Online. Last night I played Online Pictionary

with three family members from Maui. It was incredibly fun. There are all kinds of Virtual Games Online.

There are Virtual Zoom Happy Hour Parties. Yvette is going to send out a Doodle Survey to find out your interest in this.

Stay Safe
Patty Osborne,
Resource Committee



What's Happening



May 16, 10:00-11:30 am

Instead of meeting in person at Salem First Christian Church, May 15-16, the Assembly will meet online only on Saturday, May 16, and will plan another day of gathering, to be either online or in person in September 2020.

Due to continuing concerns about the Covid-19 virus, many regions, including Oregon SW Idaho, have changed their spring Assembly plans. More information will come out about this by May 1.

Please save the date of Saturday, May 16, starting at 10:00 a.m. to participate in an online gathering of the 2020 Regional Assembly.

The Regional Board will meet, either online or in person (also to be determined) on Saturday, June 6. The board will confirm a date and a format for the second regional church gathering to be held in September. Watch our newsletter, Constant Contact emails, website or Facebook page for updates.



Friends,

Over the past few weeks your regional staff has been working to decide the way forward with camp this summer. Last week, after consultation with camp directors and members of the regional executive committee, we came to the painful decision that we would not be having camp at Suttle Lake this summer.

The Suttle Lake facility is closed and they are uncertain of whether or not they will even be open by the end of summer. If they do reopen, they may be hosting their own camps during that time.

We are working on a way to create space for the kids to gather online via video or chat during the time they would have been at camp. We are also hoping that when the physical distancing order is lifted we will be able to join together at one of our many beautiful church facilities for a weekend retreat or rally.

We will be in touch as we work through details and as new understandings of our situation come to light. We join with you in prayer as you too work towards understanding your daily lives in a new way.

Peace and Blessings,
Stacy Shelton
Camp Coordinator for Oregon
CCOSWI

Interfaith Family Shelter 2020

Thanks to all who donated to our week serving the Interfaith Family Shelter and supported us with your prayers. The shelter was so different for us this year!

Normally the Kennedy-Kozlowski team plans meals, shops, and our congregation volunteers donate funds and foods, prepare meals for the shelter families, and clean up the kitchen. The virus changed all that, and suddenly we were facing the possibility of "contactless meal prep" and helping to arrange "take away" breakfast foods so that the families could shelter in place in the St. Vincent DePaul Family Shelter Annex.

Then wonderful things began to happen. Burrito Amigos promised us a meal absolutely free. Claim 52 donated gallons of soup, Albertsons arranged a fried chicken dinner for a very reasonable cost, Papa's Pizza gave us an amazing price on a pizza party, and Erin's Table (one of our neighbors on Willamette) not only arranged a fundraiser to pay for the week's food costs, but donated her kitchen for caterer Tamisha Heacox-Jackson of Mishjacks catering to prepare four wonderful dinners.

While we missed the interaction with the families at the shelter, our hearts were warmed by the loving kindness we met at every turn. Thanks to everyone! And if you get a chance, please consider patronizing our wonderful partners: Burrito Amigos, Claim 52, Papas Pizza, Albertsons, Erin's Table, and Mishjacks Catering.

Tom & Jean Kozlowski, Michael & Connie Kennedy



Ways We Can Help



Eugene FCC will be holding a **"No Contact Food Drive"** on **Saturday, May 16**. If you would like to contribute non-perishable food items, please contact Marilyn Reid at reid1838@comcast.net no later than Wednesday, May 14, 6:00 p.m. You will then receive a reply email or phone call with instructions on where and when to place your donation outside of your home. All non-perishable items are welcome with the greatest need being: Peanut butter, tuna, canned stews, soups and chili.

If you would like to volunteer as a driver to collect the food denations, pelase contact Marilyn Reid by Friday, May 8.



<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/3262820/true#/invitation>

**DONATE
ONLINE**



Use your phone to scan this QR code for CDM payments and updates



Use the SQUARE app or our online store: <https://heartofeugene.square.site/>



Just Mail It!

In the heart of Eugene at
1166 Oak Street
Eugene, OR 97401





1166 Oak Street
Eugene, Oregon 97401

Church Staff

The Reverend Jerri Handy, Co-Pastor

The Reverend April Oristano, Co-Pastor

Yvette Diggs, Office Manager

Melody Doll, Bookkeeper

Nancy Anderson, Music Director

Chris Turner, New Celebration Director

Ron Dalton, Church Custodian

Larry Wahlstrom, Event Manager

Ric Satterwhite, Audio Visual Manager

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Mission Statement

We believe in love of God for all people

We gather as a worshiping community of faith to follow Jesus Christ

We delight together in what God is doing through us to bring: healing within brokenness; unity within diversity; joy within grief; and power within weakness

Our mission is to strengthen relationships we have with God, with each other, with our families, and with our world.

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation and people of all orientations, and gender identities are welcome in the full life and ministry of our church.

We are a global ministries church and we join and with global and local partners to work for justice reconciliation and peace.

We are a Green Chalice congregation and we strive to demonstrate the fullness of God's Shalom through living out our faith by caring for God's creation.