

First Congregational Church of St. Clair



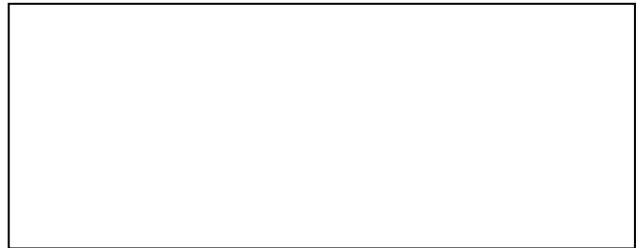
"A Just World for All"

[www.firstcongsc.org](http://www.firstcongsc.org) | 300 Adams Street, St. Clair, MI 48079

810-329-4142

\*ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED\*

2020



MAY

# THE CHANNEL

We are proud to be a Progressive Congregation

Worship & Sunday School: Sundays – 10 a.m.

Pastor: Reverend Alana Kelley

Communion: First Sunday of Every Month

First Congregational Church of St. Clair  
United Church of Christ  
300 Adams Street  
St. Clair, MI 48079  
(810) 329-4142  
Fax: (810) 329-4420

E-Mail: [firstconggsc@gmail.com](mailto:firstconggsc@gmail.com)

Website: [www.firstconggsc.org](http://www.firstconggsc.org)

Facebook: FirstCongregational.UCC.St.Clair

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13



Greetings and Happy Eastertide!

May 1, 2020

There is a Chinese curse that is simply this: *May you live in interesting times*. That is pretty profound, because interesting times are often times of instability. They are often stressful times. If you're living in interesting times, as we have been for over a month now, the learning curve is steep. Lots of questions arise and the answers are not crystal clear.

I hope by now we've all settled into a new normal. We've gone through Lent and Holy Week, we've celebrated Easter in the best way possible, and now we're heading toward Pentecost, the Sunday we celebrate the birth of the church. Life goes on.

More than any other thing right now, we may be learning that the church is not the building. The church is the people. We like to say this. Right now, we are experiencing this.

As I write, we still don't know when we'll be back together in the sanctuary. But, I have found that much good has come out of our invention of this new way of worshipping. It has been a matter of problem solving, considering and accepting the newest normal. Those who have been working at providing worship have become a pretty tight knit crew. I have loved this

about the experience. We have been forced to think in new ways and have become more inventive. It has been exciting!

There is a lot of creative thinking going on around us, it seems, as people devise ways of staying busy and helpful at the same time. I think of Ken Madeleine who does a thirty-minute set of music everyday outside of his house. Neighbors stop to listen. His wife, Debi livestreams him on Facebook. He even takes requests and if he doesn't know a song, he'll learn it by the next day.

Many people have stepped up and are making masks for regular people like you and me. Masks are good because they help us keep our germs to ourselves and they protect us, along with physical distancing from a virus that seems very good at sickening people. Kathy Cilluffo is making beautiful masks; Christine deNardo-Gorzan is too. And there are many other busy mask makers.

As the days ahead become a little less interesting, may we learn from this required slow-down. May we learn that slowing down is good for us sometimes. May we retain the lesson of living with less. May we appreciate more the flowers and the blue sky and the birds as we continue to celebrate new life through Jesus Christ. And may we appreciate daily God's gift of life.

With You on the Journey,

*Pastor Alana*

## IN NEED OF PRAYER

The family of Mary Beth Bolla, The family of Jim Liebetreu, Matthew Pennewell, Collette Carlsen, Rennie Fandrick, Brian Paret, Jr., Katie Paret, Cal Rock, Pearl Ewart. Also, remember Edwin Summers, Cameron Coverly, Dakota Hazel, Nathan Distelrath, all who are serving in the military, first responders, medical personnel, and our elected officials.



Remember, Newsletter article submission deadline is May 20<sup>th</sup>.

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!”

WELCOME



This month’s Community Meal is tentatively scheduled as CARRY-OUT ONLY  
May 19, 4:30pm-6:00pm.  
Stay tuned for more details.

## BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

Julie Rock – 2<sup>nd</sup>

Dakota Hazel – 4<sup>th</sup>

Doreen Vernier – 5<sup>th</sup>

Jill Scheel – 6<sup>th</sup>

Lisa Hughes – 6<sup>th</sup>

Devon Distelrath – 6<sup>th</sup>

Luke Sheedy – 7<sup>th</sup>

Timothy Galvin – 8<sup>th</sup>

Barb Arevalo – 9<sup>th</sup>

Patrick Rooney – 14<sup>th</sup>

Andrew Scheel – 22<sup>nd</sup>

James Light, Jr. – 26<sup>th</sup>

Gwen Galvin – 30<sup>th</sup>

Randy Verbeke – 31<sup>st</sup>



Don & Jennifer Whittaker – 6<sup>th</sup>

David & Alana Kelley – 11<sup>th</sup>

Richard & Katie Malcolm – 19<sup>th</sup>

Russell & Cathy Mollan – 24<sup>th</sup>

Steven & Lisa Hughes – 28<sup>th</sup>

*“The flower that follows the sun  
does so even in cloudy days.”*

*~Robert Leighton~*

Easter Lily Donations Were Given By:

The Currie Family in memory of

Theodore Currie

Marge Guinther in memory of

Karl Guinther

Reverend Alana Kelley  
Organist:  
Denise Gregg  
Vocals:  
Anna Moore  
Bookkeeper:  
Amanda Schwehofer  
Office Administrator:  
Julie Wendt  
Christian Ed Coordinator:  
Doug Bishop  
Nursery Staff:  
Olivia Carlsen  
Custodians:  
Dale & Cindy Frey



The Little Food Pantry needs non-perishable donations. Please help



#### **OPEN & AFFIRMING INCLUSIVE CHURCH COVENANT**

The members of the First Congregational Church of St. Clair,  
United Church of Christ, declare that we are a fully inclusive,  
open and affirming congregation.

We affirm the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and believe that all people are  
children of God. As such, we welcome to the community of faith all  
people of diverse race, physical and mental abilities, ethnicity, gender identity,  
sexual orientation, marital status,  
and socio-economic status. We covenant to provide to all a safe, loving,  
nurturing and compassionate community.



Sunday, May 10, 2020



## YOUR LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE...

Please feel free to contact any member of the Committee with any questions, comments or concerns. Serving alongside the Pastor are...

- Pat O'Connor - Moderator
- Nancy Rice - Vice Moderator
- Don Rice - Treasurer
- Dave Scheel - Church Clerk
- Don O'Connor - Member
- Randy Kling - Member
- Brian Paret - Member
- Jody Skonieczny - Member
- Marge Guinther - Member



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE

Christian education students and families are encouraged to continue checking the church's Facebook page for activities, videos, and weekly lesson plans. Also, families should be receiving letters, crafts, and activities through the mail to work on at home. We will continue to provide these updates until we are able to meet in person.



**PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS...**Nancy Rice, Carroll Simmons, and Barb Arevalo serve on the Pastor Parish Relations Team to support Pastor Alana in her ministry. The group meets quarterly. While you are encouraged to speak directly to Pastor Alana about concerns you have with her, sometimes it's easier to speak with a member of the PPR Team. Those Team members are available to hear your concerns and will share them with her.

We are now accepting donations for an updated Audio/Visual Equip. Ctr.



The A/V Team has begun researching various means of projecting and sharing our Worship Service during our gatherings and outside the walls of the church, and would be happy to hear your suggestions and/or ideas. If you would be able to donate to this project, please mark your check or envelope "A/V Equipment".

Any questions, please speak with Don Rice or Brian Paret.

### **MAY DUTIES**

TECHNOLOGY: David Kelley,

Don Rice, Brian Paret

MUSIC: Denise Gregg, Anna Moore

READERS: Fantastic Volunteers!

## **AN IMPORTANT LETTER FROM THE TREASURER....**

Dear Friends in Christ,

April 24, 2020

Here we are enjoying stay-at-home life as normal! I pray you and family are still well. Life as we knew it has certainly been altered by this pandemic. It is affecting many of us in ways we could not have imagined. Thankfully, as Christ's body on earth, we are assured that God is with us in everything we face.

Pastor Alana has performed exclusively focused on reaching us all with online church and interactions as much as possible under the current gathering restrictions. I would like to report that First Congregational Church of St. Clair's building structures, trees, shrubs, flower beds and lawn are in good shape. The care that some, especially Randy Kling, have given your property has it looking great for an Easter Celebration that we are eagerly ready to enjoy!

This letter is to address the curve we face financially due to the actions of your Leadership Committee and the affects from our country's shutdown. Some of us have lost jobs, been furloughed without pay, and cannot operate our businesses as we move through this period. These changes are a significant burden on those. Their pledged donations are understandably not expected now to support our budget. Quite a few of us are soundly retired and our retirement investment monies are affected by the major fall in the financial markets. It is a scary new future. Having God as our stronghold, we are assured even these fears will pass. It is with this confidence that your LC decided to continue paying our staff while understanding they were not performing the same tasks weekly, e.g. Christian Education. Doug Bishop has provided our youth with mailed activities over the Easter season to keep our young ones actively involved with their continued learning. Our expenses have continued while some have not been able to keep their pledges up to date.

The curve mentioned is a rising path. The rise of our expenses continues as planned with the year's budget much like your household expenses. The second curve is the pledges submitted, another rising path. The expenses path is significantly above the submitted income path. This curve gap needs to be closed as fast as possible. Closing the gap is based on two things. First, everyone's pledge payments. Second, anything that can be done to help the shortfall of pledges due to family income uncertainty and collapse. This latter shortfall is being addressed by your LC in the form of the **Small Business Association's Payroll Protection Program** loan/grant.

Pastor Alana made us aware of the UCC guidance information and LC started discussing the process to submit the church's documentation the week of April 9<sup>th</sup>. Amanda Schweihofer prepared most of the financial forms on April 9<sup>th</sup>. When the news about the SBA PPP initial money shortfall was broadcast on April 15<sup>th</sup>, rapid action was taken to complete the documentation and submit the package to NorthStar Bank on April 16<sup>th</sup>, for consideration in the next FED funding to the SBA PPP. The documentation is in NorthStar Bank's que of submittals awaiting the PPP FED release of additional funds.

The Loan will be deposited to a fee-free NorthStar Bank account and will be converted to a Grant upon the submittal of documentation proving the money is used to continue payroll and expenses for the employees. The amount expected will cover five paydays at 2019 payroll rates. Your pledged income will be used to cover the 2020 increases each employee received this year over the same paydays. Amazing, Amanda will keep the records and distribute the necessary money to keep your books balanced.

I cannot stress enough the wish that you can make and catch up (where you are able) the pledges to date. The absolute best way is to set up direct payments from your bank to the FCC bank account! The next best way is to write a check and, until we can all be together again, mail the check to the church. The Tithe.ly link on the Church's website is an option that, though easy, does have a drawback. First, it is easy to use. Second, it requires you to open an individual registration with them to use the site efficiently (input to more than one account at a time). Third, it does require fees be paid for the use of this technology. The fees on bank account to Tithe.ly account payments are 1.1%. The fees on credit card to Tithe.ly account payments are 3%. The church will be paying those fees to make your giving more like everything else online the below 40-year-old generations are accustomed to. Check out this blog at <https://get.tithe.ly/blog/church-giving-fees>, if you have the time.

Please catch up with your pledged amounts, by using any of these methods, if that does not jeopardize your household finances.

Now, for revised instructions on how to use the Tithe.ly link from the FCCSC website at [www.firstcongsc.org](http://www.firstcongsc.org). The first new recommendation is to download the Tithe.ly app and create an account to track your giving.

Directly across the screen on the right is an icon Giving (in a rectangle).

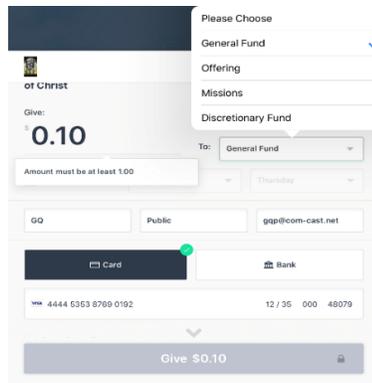
Step 1. Highlight the Giving icon and select.



Step 2. Know that we appreciate you! Select Give Today.

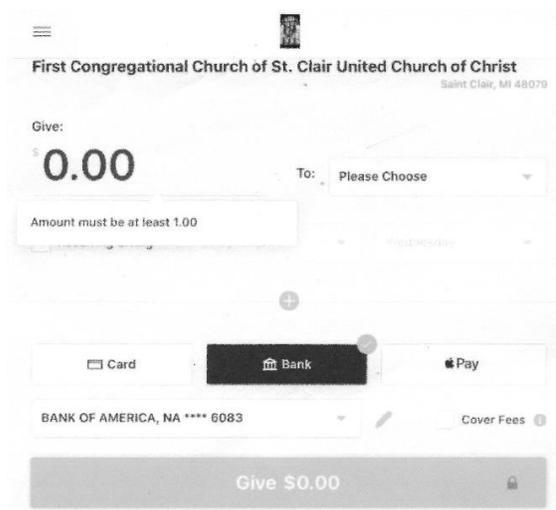


Step 3. With the Tithe.ly app installed on your smart device or computer. Sign into the application.

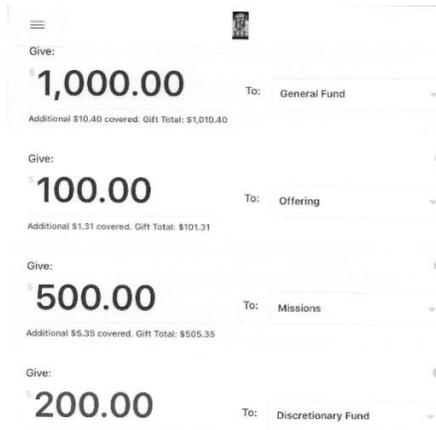
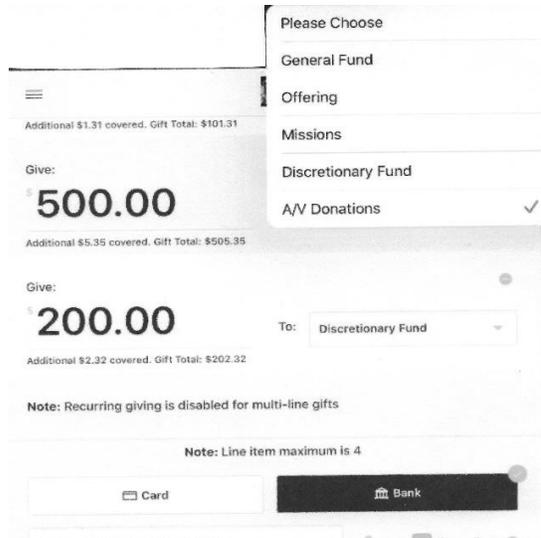


Step 4. Fill in your directions to the Church and which account you want the money going into. Add your credit card or bank information.

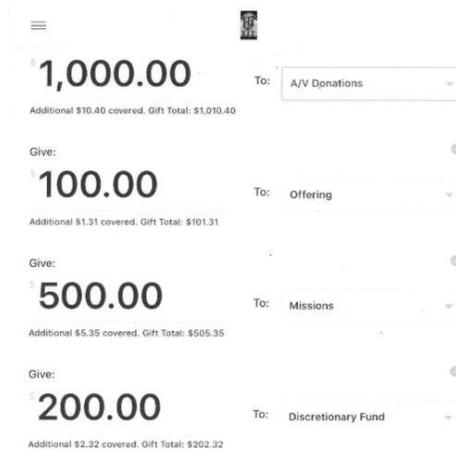
Working within the app you will see a + sign in the middle of the screen above the Card and Bank selection bars. Clicking this sign will allow you to choose three more fund names and designate your pledge accordingly.



Step. 5 Select another fund name. Input the amount.



Step. 6 Select the Give \$ dollar amount bar to complete the transaction.



Please note: Pledges can be given through Tithe.ly in one single reported sum on the Offering designation. The pledge will be divided according to your pledge card on file. If you need to update a pledge card, please ask and one will be provided you. We hope you can give your pledged amount as your contributions help the Church moving forward reaching others through our ministries.

Praying our Lord blesses you and your family with health, patience and strength now and forever. Looking forward to seeing you in person in our wonderful church building as soon as possible.

Respectfully yours,

Don Rice

Treasurer

**Online Giving**  
is simple and easy!

The option for ONLINE GIVING has been established through a program called Tithe.ly. A link has been posted on our Facebook page, on our web site, and through our weekly E-News. Please remember our stewardship of the church during this unusual period.

**ALL EVENTS HAVE BEEN CANCELED AT THIS TIME UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE STREAM THROUGH OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AND THE LINKS PROVIDED IN THE WEEKLY E-NEWS. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT PASTOR ALANA DIRECTLY FOR ANY PASTORAL CARE NEEDS. 440-935-2395**

## **Caramel Apple Upside Down Cake**

### **INGREDIENTS**

#### **FOR THE APPLES**

3/4 c. lightly packed brown sugar

1/4 c. butter

1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

Pinch kosher salt

2 apples, peeled, cored, and sliced 1/2" thick

## **FOR THE CAKE**

Cooking spray

1 3/4 c. all-purpose flour

3/4 tsp. baking powder

2 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. kosher salt

1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg

1/2 c. (1 stick) butter, softened

1 c. sugar

1/2 c. lightly packed brown sugar

2 large eggs

1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

3/4 c. milk

## **DIRECTIONS**

1. Preheat oven to 350° and grease an 8” round cake pan with cooking spray. In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt brown sugar, butter, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Cook until slightly thickened, 2 minutes.
2. Pour caramel sauce into prepared pan and layer apples on top.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, and nutmeg.
4. In another large bowl, using a hand mixer, beat together butter and sugars until softened. Add eggs one at a time, then add vanilla. Add half the dry ingredients to wet ingredients, beating until just combined. Pour in milk and mix until fully incorporated. Add remaining dry ingredients and stir until just combined.
5. Pour batter over apples and bake until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean, 1 hour. Let cool in pan 15 minutes then invert onto a cooling rack and let cool completely before slicing.