



THE SPIRIT

Of Union Congregational, United Church of Christ

122 East Bennett, Buffalo, Wyoming

March 2021

Church: 307:684-2958

Pastor Ken Thurow: 720-244-8674

Greetings From Pastor Ken

*“As the sun with longer journey melts the winter’s snow and ice,
with its slowly growing radiance warms the seed beneath the earth,
may the sun of Christ’s uprising gently bring our hearts to life.”*

Hymn by John Patrick Earls, OSB, copyright 1981, Order of St. Benedict

As I write this, the sun has been shining, snow-covered streets turned to slush, temps reached the mid-50s. Not that it’s going to last; tomorrow’s forecast includes snow, and all of lion/lamb March is still to come. But the days are lengthening (a word somewhere in the background of our word, Lent), and beneath the earth winter wheat and other seeds are beginning to stir, tree roots are waking from relative dormancy, animals will soon be giving birth to their young; it is a season of anticipation of new life.

And also for us. Lent is a season of preparation, contemplation, with a goal of new – renewed – life in Christ. We observe Lent in anticipation of Easter, the greatest moment in history and the greatest festival of the year. And in 2021 this season has a new ingredient, the sense that we are approaching the end of our dark night of pandemic. It is still with us, to be sure. Today brought the information that the US has passed 500,000 deaths, but with the arrival of vaccines, and with continuing caution and concern for one another, both St. Luke’s and Union are open to in-person worship. It is a joy to be face-to-face (even while masked) and to greet one another.

We will not all be on the same page; some will be vaccinated, others not, some not until mid-summer or beyond; some will choose not to receive vaccine and will simply decide their own level of readiness to be in group settings. In community, we will not be able to satisfy the boldest or wait on the most cautious; but we will respect all, care for all, and try to find an appropriate course for our life together. But is it too early to dream of a spring potluck?

Amid the pandemic and other world events, I have scarcely mentioned that February is **Black History Month** in the U.S.A. This is significant not only for our knowledge of history, but even more for our recognition of all the ways that that history continues to influence our life as a nation. The Johnson County Library has had a fine display of relevant books. At the moment I am well into *To Free a Family* by Sidney Nathans, the true story of a woman who escaped slavery only by leaving her family behind in hopes of finding a way to free them later. Also in 2021 I have read *Stony the Road* by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and *My Story* by Rosa Parks (the woman who sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott by refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus). In 2020 I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, written with Alex Haley, and *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein, an eye-opening book revealing the ways in which authorities ranging from school boards to neighborhood associations, to city, state, and local governments (often in avoidance of existing laws) acted to create and further segregation. If you have been reading or watching anything about Black History Month, good for you. If not, it is not too late to become more informed on this very important topic.

Peace be with you,
Pastor Ken Thurow

Worship continues:

Midweek Services at St. Luke's Lutheran, Wednesday evenings at 7:00, with Holden Evening Prayer and weekly message.

Maundy Thursday at Union Congregational, April 1, at 7:00 p. m.

Good Friday by Buffalo Ministerial Association, time and place to be determined.

My thanks to Pastor Bob Miller for leading the Bible Study on February 11, and to Pastor John Orwig for leading worship at St. Luke's and Union on Sunday, February 28 while Marlys & I are serving as officials at the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference indoor Track & Field championships at Black Hills State in Spearfish, SD.

Thanks also to Jan Nelson and Chris Jons for leading the upcoming March 10 Midweek Service.

Pastor Ken Thurow

Office Hours

Following the social distancing edicts, Pastor Ken is available for visits (please wear a mask), phone calls or Zoom meetings in the Union Congregational Church Office Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 10 to noon and is available by cell phone 720-244-8674 on other days. Emergencies: call any day.

Moderator's Report - March 2021



It is encouraging to see the Covid restrictions loosening a bit due to the availability of vaccine in Wyoming and Johnson County. For the present, we will continue to ask that masks be worn at in-person gatherings at Union Congregational as well as social distancing.

The joint steering committee continues to explore the inclusion of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in the partnership of Union and St. Luke's Lutheran for increased fellowship and community service in combined church groups. The committee meets monthly to work out logistics and make plans for increased service to our community. Deane Bjerke and I represent Union Congregational at the steering committee meetings. Please feel free to talk with Deane or me if you have questions about this process.

We are pleased to again join with St. Luke's Lutheran for the MidWeek Lenten services. The services will continue to be held in-person at St. Luke's and available on Zoom. Maundy Thursday will be held in-person and Zoom at Union Congregational.

Enjoy the sunshine as March comes in like a lamb this year. This brief pause from the deep freeze February gave us reminds us that spring really is coming.

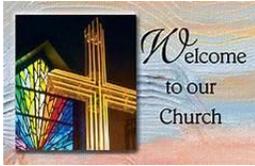
Ron McPhee, Moderator

UCC Administrative Contacts: To contact the Church Council, please call Ron McPhee, Moderator, at 307-217-1456. To contact the Church Secretary/Clerk, call Kathleen McPhee at 307-217-1455.

THE MISSION OF UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

*In Jesus' name, Worship God, Study Scripture,
Joyfully Help those in need*

March Sunday Worship Schedule:



March 7, 2021 – 3rd Sunday in Lent
First Scripture Reading: **Exodus 20: 1-17**
Reading of the Psalm: **Psalm 19**
Second Scripture Reading: **I Corinthians 1:18-25**
Gospel Reading: **John 2:13-22**

March 14, 2021 - 4th Sunday in Lent
First Scripture Reading: **Numbers 21:4-9**
Reading of the Psalm: **Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22**
Second Scripture Reading: **Ephesians 2:1-10**
Gospel Reading: **John 3:14-21**

March 21, 2021 – 5th Sunday in Lent
First Scripture Reading: **Jeremiah 31:31-34**
Reading of the Psalm: **Psalm 51:1-12**
Second Scripture Reading: **Hebrews 5:5-10**
Gospel Reading: **John 12:20-33**

March 28, 2021 – 6th Sunday in Lent
First Scripture Reading: **Isaiah 50:4- 9a**
Reading of the Psalm: **Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**
Second Scripture Reading: **Philippians 2:5-11**
Gospel Reading: **Mark 11:1-11**

Lenten Midweek Worship Schedule – at St. Luke’s Lutheran, in-person and on Zoom Weekly Themes:

- March 3** – Expanding the Circle
Reading of Scripture: **Luke 10:29-37, John 4:5-14**
- March 10** – Strangers No More
Reading of Scripture: **Mark 7:24-30, Luke 7:1-10**
- March 17** - Silent Siblings
Reading of Scripture: **Mark 15:33-37, Isaiah 55:12-13**
- March 24** – “All Things in Him”
Reading of Scripture: **Colossians 1:15-20, Rev. 22:1-5**



Peggy Bjerke	March 14
Ava Lulias	March 18
Kathleen McPhee	March 31



What’s Happening at Union Congregational in March?

- ✚ Men’s Breakfast, Wednesday, March 3, at 8 a.m., at St. Luke’s Lutheran, in-person, BYOBreakfast
- ✚ Women’s Fellowship, Wednesday, March 3, 1:30 p.m., in-person in Fellowship Room
- ✚ Council Meeting, Tuesday, March 9, at 2 p.m., in-person and by Zoom
- ✚ Bible Study, Thursdays, March 4, 11, 18 and 25, 10 a.m. at St. Luke’s, in-person and by Zoom
- ✚ Midweek Lenten Service, Wednesdays at St. Luke’s Lutheran, March 3, 10, 17, 24, in-person and by Zoom

- ✚ AA meets every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday at noon to 1 p.m.; Saturday 10-11 a.m.
- ✚ AIA non meets every Monday, 7 p.m.
- ✚ TOPS meets at 8 a.m. every Thursday morning

Women's Fellowship

Just a reminder that we will be having a Women's Fellowship meeting on Wednesday, March 3rd, at 1:30 in the Fellowship room of Union Congregational Church. We will have some great refreshments and will be putting together some little St. Patrick's Day treats for our friends!

May the luck O' the Irish be with you all month long!!!

Cheryl



January 12, 2021 - Church Council Minutes (excerpts)

© Can Stock Photo

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Ron. Present were Council Members: Ron McPhee, Judy Firnekas, Dick Reimann, Don Scantling, Deane Bjerke, Barb Millett, Larry Gerard, Pastor Ken and church secretary, Kathleen McPhee. Pastor Ken opened the meeting with prayer.

The Minutes of the December meeting were approved. Treasurer Dick reviewed the financial statements as of December 31, noting that the property insurance premium of \$4800 will be due in February. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

The 2021 Budget to be presented at the Annual Congregational meeting for approval was reviewed.:

- Parking Lot. The bid from Simon Construction is around \$30,000 to seal the cracks and cover the lot with 2" of asphalt. Other contractors were discussed, but it was noted that the Council should settle on the more thorough repair as proposed by Simon Construction. It was decided that the Council not add the Parking Lot repair to the budget now, but get bids again in the spring and then go to the congregation to approve an addition to the budget if necessary. It was noted that the east part of our Parking Lot is the alley owned by the City. Council members will check with the City repairs to the alley.
- Alex McCool has repaired the straps holding the chimney on the west side of the building at no charge to the Church.

The 2021 Budget was unanimously approved.

Pastor's Report. Pastor Ken described the good response to delivery of Meals on Wheels on Christmas Day; in-person worship services are going well with church attendees observing Covid mandates.; and the Covid vaccination program has begun in Buffalo.

We will join with St. Luke's Lutheran again this year for Lenten Mid-Week services.

An inquiry from St. Luke's Episcopal Church has been received about the possibility of their church joining the partnership with UCC and St. Luke's Lutheran.

We need to pray for the welfare of our nation at this time of political unrest, quoting from Jeremiah "we are in the world, but not of the world." Our church wants to be a positive influence on our community and nation.

Buildings and Grounds Committee. No further discussion.

Mission Committee: A free meal ticket was delivered as a gift with the Meals on Wheels dinner on Christmas Day. Gifts were delivered from our congregation to the Adopted Family.

Worship Committee: The Committee has been working on the Lenten Mid-Week Services.

OLD BUSINESS:

The Annual Congregational Meeting on January 24, 2021 will be on Zoom as well as in person. Members not able to attend are asked to sign a proxy appointing another individual to represent them. The quorum required is 15 members.

NEW BUSINESS: Preliminary discussions have started on expanding the partnership between UCC and St. Luke's Lutheran to include St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Larry's and Ron's 3-year terms on the Church Council will expire on January 31, 2021. The Council is required to have from seven to eleven members. Both Ron and Larry agreed to serve another term on the Council if re-elected at the Annual Meeting. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Mission Committee

The month of March marks the first of 4 United Church of Christ special offerings Union Congregational Church participates in as part of our wider mission in our world. This special offering, *One Great Hour of Sharing* is one way for us to "**Let Love Flow!**" This offering involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place. Out of every dollar donated to OGHS, 95 cents is used directly for these needs. Thank you so much for choosing to contribute by putting your donation in the envelope provided and dropping it into the collection plate or mailing it to the church by March 14, 2021!

Remember to sign up for a month to sponsor our **Compassion International Child**, Prince, by providing a donation of \$38. We will also be celebrating our sponsorship this month!

We continue to support our local **Bread of Life Food Pantry** with a monthly donation of \$100 to provide fresh milk. Please contribute to our Milk Fund anytime by using one of the brightly colored Milk Fund envelopes and dropping it into the collection plate.

Keep our **adopted family**, a single mother with 2 daughters, in your prayers. Mom celebrated a birthday in January and her oldest daughter will be nine years old this month. They received a Valentine's Day gift basket from all their friends at Union Congregational Church! St. Patrick's Day will give us another opportunity to provide them with a little gift to lift their spirits and let them know we are thinking of them.

The Mission Committee has also donated to the **Johnson County Mentoring Program** and sent donations to **2 medical emergency funds** set up in our community for Adam Millhouse and Aiyana Roche, both involving ski accidents with serious injuries. Our annual contribution of \$500 was transferred to the **Ministerial Association** to help with community and individual needs as they arise throughout the year.

If you know of any community mission needs, please let us know!!!

Cheryl-217-0497 Kathleen-217-1455

Letter from Our Compassion Child: A letter from Prince Geniel is attached to this newsletter. You will note that the letter is written in their native language as well as in English....just look for the English paragraphs.

Worship Committee

Reading scripture during a worship service is a task with much more significance than reading a speech, a poem, or a proclamation. Since the Scriptures are the Word of God, and worship is a dialog between God and his people, reading the Scriptures in worship is an act of worship in which the voice of God is heard. The word "liturgist" in Greek means "work of the people". Serving as liturgist gives an opportunity for members of the congregation to become more involved in worship.

The Committee welcomes volunteers to serve as liturgists. A sign-up sheet is provided in the narthex. The scriptures to be read will be emailed to the liturgists midweek prior to the Sunday service to give an opportunity to become familiar with the readings.

The Committee thanks you for your willingness to serve in this way.

This is the United Church of Christ

Or What I should remember from membership class

Provided by Rev. Bob Miller

GET CAUGHT IN THE UCC WEB

Have you ever played around in the web site of the United Church of Christ? You can find it at www.ucc.org. There you will find a treasury of resources for the church and for you own personal faith exploration. You can subscribe to a free daily devotional. You can learn how your contributions to the five special Conference offerings are used for missions throughout the world. You can explore the rich history of the UCC from its origins in the Congregational Church. You can learn of outstanding programs of ministry from local churches all across the country and beyond. You can get to know the brilliant leaders that make up the national staff.

Each of the 37 Conferences that make up the United Church of Christ has their own web site. You can find our Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference at www.mnwcucc.org. Learn about the work going on within the Conference to offer resources to local churches. Believing that the earth is the Lord's and God gives us (human kind) dominion, the **Green Team** encourages study and activities for churches to claim responsibility for the earth and its environment. The **Social Justice Team** offers assistance to churches in their continuing struggle to promote freedom and justice for all. The **Faith Formation Team** works to promote spiritual growth. The **Outdoor Ministries Team** provides opportunities for year round spiritual learning activities for all ages. Although the Conference no longer operates Camp Mimanagish, outdoor ministry is still available. Conference staff personnel are responsible to the **Human Resource Team** just as a local minister is responsible to a Pastor/ Parish Committee. The **Clergy Wellness Team** stands to support local clergy.

The Conference website also carries news from the 27 partner churches as well as a monthly Conference newsletter, directory and links to wider church resources.

Discover more than you ever knew about the denomination we are part of.



Please send committee reports and articles to be published in The Spirit to ucucc@vcn.com or to mcphee@vcn.com by the 24th of each month to allow us to get our newsletter out by the 1st of each month. Thanks!

Union Congregational Church History Corner



Excerpts from *History of the Congregational Church Building* by Dorthea E. Knepper, written in October 1981.

On the morning of September 20, 1922, a fire broke out in the church and caused considerable damage to the interior and the furnishings. One irretrievable loss was the beautiful stained glass window in the west wall, the largest window in the church. Cause of the fire was believed to have been spontaneous combustion of oily rags or mops left in the coal room. The church was without a minister at the time, Reverend Horace Mann having resigned in March and a new minister not yet found. Insurance paid \$3760 toward repair and refurnishing, and in early October a plan for reconstruction submitted by W. A. Garson was approved and a committee appointed to get the work started. By the time of the annual meeting on February 23, 1923, the work was completed and the congregation was much pleased with the changes made in the arrangement of the kitchen and coal room and with the redecoration of the church and social room.

[Next month we will continue to share the history of our church as written by Dorothea Knepper in 1981]

Established October 12, 1884, Union Congregational Church has continuously served God, our parishioners, and the community from the days before the Johnson County Cattle War to the present time. The church looks forward to being of ever-increasing service in the future.



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Paano Ako Magsaya

(How I Have Fun)

Date: November 11 2020

1. Kapag libre ang a1<:ing oras. gusro 1<ong mag1arog...

(During my free time, I like to play...)

mag bobola

2. Kapag ako ay nasa 100b ngbahaY, gusro Kong...

(When I am inside the house, I like to...)

manood ng TV



3. Kapag ako ay nasa labas ng bahay, gusto kong...

(When I am outside the house, I like to...)

mag lalaro kasama ang mga baibigan

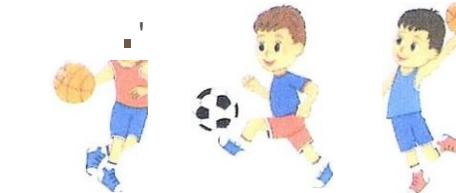


4. Kapag ako ay walang magawa. gusto kong...

(When I am bored, I like to...)

mag-organisa ng mga proyekto

mag-organisa ng mga proyekto



5. Ang paborito kong laro o sports ay...

(My favorite game or sport is...)

mag basa

Translation

1. During my free time, I like to play basketball.

2. When I am inside the house, I like to watch TV.

3. When I am outside the house, I like to play with my friends.

4. When I am bored, I like to organize projects.

5. My favorite game or sport is reading.

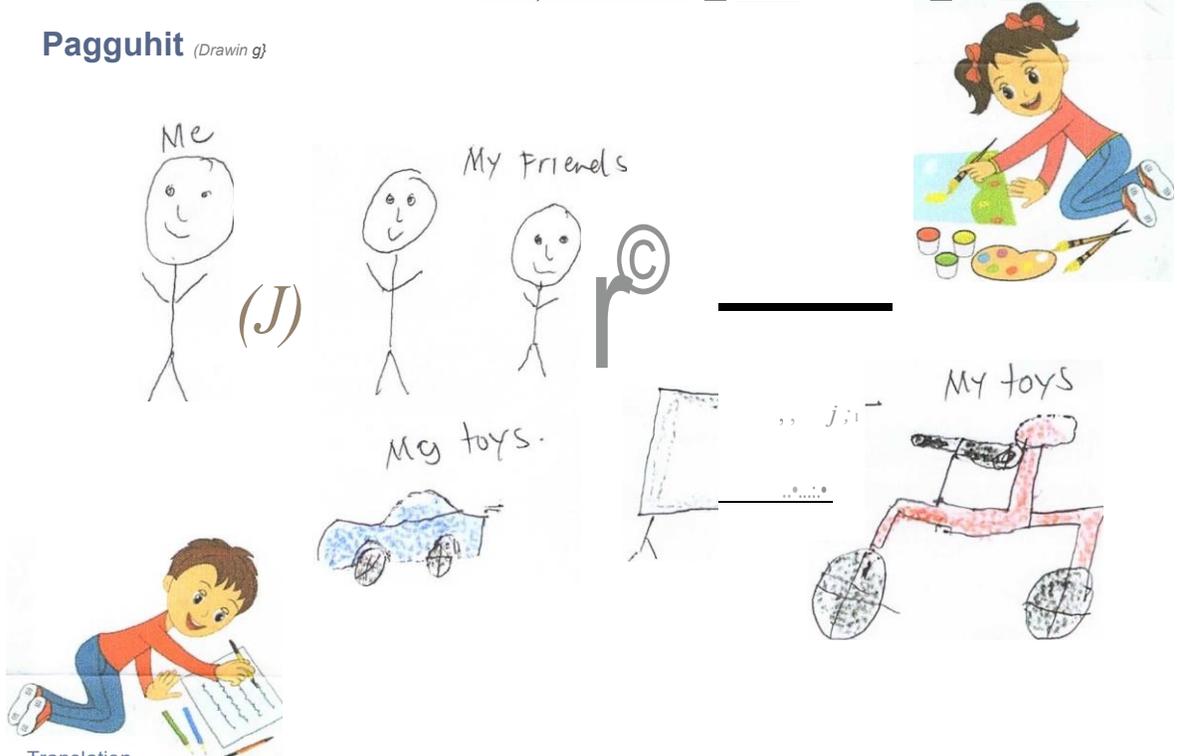


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Translation

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The Spirit

Of Union Congregational Church

