

A JOYFUL NOISE!

April 2020

Dear Fellow Travelers,

It is Tuesday afternoon and I sit here at my dining room table, that has now become my office, as both Sam and I are working from our respective homes for the time being, staring at my emails. I am reminding myself that I promised Sam this letter this afternoon.

I have been scrolling through my church emails, deleting so many of them. They are replies and responses to the deluge of Covid – 19 emails. All the facets of being a church are being affected by this virus. I can only believe that my inbox is not the only one.

And I promised Sam this letter this afternoon.

In the midst of the past two weeks I find myself with more emotion than words, and yet I am called to use words. Words of support, care, and comfort.

Yesterday the sentence of the day was, “Last week felt a month long”. And it has; it was. It was the first full week of no school and intentional social distancing. It was the beginning of what the church is called to be and do during this time. It has been a time for BACN, the Baby Pantry, and Habitat for Humanity to define how they will continue to support the community. I have an email from the Chamber of Commerce reminding me that we are #BenzieUnited.

And here is the letter for Sam to put in the Blast.

In the midst of all that is going on and all the things done and left undone and unable to be done: Breathe.

Breathe deeply. Exhale. Repeat.

Feed the cat and the chickens. Have the kids read a book with you. Take a walk. Turn off the news. Check in on your neighbors and call your aunt. Fix mom her supper and Facetime your grandchildren.

Breathe deeply. Exhale. Repeat.

May the peace of Christ be with you.

See you along The Way,

Patty

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Steve Elrick
- 4 Joan Harwood
- 5 Anna Nordbeck
- 5 Maridee Cutler
- 6 Scott Neveu
- 9 Earl Schopp
- 12 Shirley Wolfe
- 13 Steve Davidson
- 15 Barb Brian
- 16 Amanda Case
- 18 Jean Bowers
- 22 Olivia Brian
- 27 Mary Wulke
- 30 Jaxon Brown



APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

- 23 David & Phyllis VanHammen

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

- Nancy Reynolds Zeke & Wyatt
- Pat Forrester Larry Wulke
- Helen Pickard
- Elisabeth Case
- Geri Thornell
- Harriet Stone
- Peg & Randy

UCC SISTER CHURCH OF THE MONTH

As part of our continuing efforts to work together as a community of faith, we pray for UCC churches in our United Northern Association. You are invited to pray this month for the ongoing mission and ministries of Harrison UCC.

FLOWERS

If you would like to supply flowers, please sign up on the sign posted on the bulletin board. You may then bring in your own flowers or donate \$30 to the church to make the arrangements with a local florist.

THANK YOU TO OUR APRIL VOLUNTEERS

COFFEE

NURSERY

- Apr 5
- Apr 12
- Apr 19
- Apr 26

HEAD USHER:

MONEY COUNT:

What is BIG Sunday?

BIG stands for Bring In Groceries; groceries brought in on BIG Sundays are donated to Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN) to help provide a meal to those in need. BIG Sundays are the first Sunday of every month — as are Holy Communion Sundays — and are a great way for us to share the love and feast of communion and community.



THANK YOU NOTES

Check out all of our thank you notes on the bulletin board!

Note from the Trustees

As we go through this time of isolation, we hope that you are well and staying safe.

We understand that this can be a difficult time financially for many of us. We may not be gathering as the church, but we continue to be the church. We ask that you continue to support the work of First Congregational Church of Benzonia, United Church of Christ by mailing your contributions to the church, PO Box 234 Benzonia MI 49616.

With God's love and care, thank you.

Dear God, please help me see this moment as an opportunity to unite and connect with others rather than isolating. Help me see this moment as one in which I can practice radical compassion, radical empathy, and radical caring. This is a moment of shared humanity and vulnerability. Please help me be up for it. Amen,
—from Maria Shiver Paper, through Beth Sheets

Calendar + COVID-19

Currently, everything at the church remains closed and cancelled through April. However, as we all know, this is a moving date, subject to change with COVID-19 developments. Stay home, stay safe, stay tuned — we'll keep you posted!

April's BACN Focus

Our focus this month is Laundry Products.

All contributions are welcomed, whether they fit the monthly focus or not!

While BACN is not currently accepting donations of physical goods, you may wish to hold onto contributions until donation collection resumes or support their efforts through financial donations.



2020 Festival of Trees

The 2020 tree for the Festival of Trees will have a “Bloom Where You Are Planted” theme. The tree itself will benefit Habitat for Humanity. As we do every year, we will distinguish our submission as a Tree with a Purpose. Throughout the year, Christian Education will be collecting brand new underwear, tagged or in the package. There will be a bucket under the coat rack for your donations.



MI Conference Happenings

Want to keep up with the Conference? Head to <http://www.michucc.org/> and click “News” in the upper righthand corner.

Baby Pantry Updates & Info

The Baby Pantry at St. Philip's will continue to operate, although at a limited capacity through a pre-order form. If you hear of folks in need of baby supplies, please send them to the Baby Pantry! The Pantry is open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays.

Women's Fellowship

The April Fellowship Meeting has been *cancelled*. You will be receiving the Spring Thank Offering by letter, and you can send your offering to the church. We will try to meet in May if at all possible; if not, we will see you in the fall!

Returnables Collection



Christian Education is once again collecting returnable bottles and cans this year. The money collected from the returns will be used in the fourth quarter to purchase winter boots for the Benzie County Baby pantry. Returnables can be placed behind the door in the large Sunday School room.

BACN Updates & Info

As BACN is unable to accept any donations of food or clothing, if you wish to support BACN with a financial contribution, it can be mailed to PO Box 93, Benzonia MI 49616.

Food Program

- Pre-packaged foods will be available for pickup by Neighbors between 10am and 2:30pm on Monday—Thursday (2 visits per month). Neighbors must call ahead to check in. Food bags will be delivered to the car or Benzie Bus.
- BACN will have “Blessings in a Backpack” bags available. Parents must call ahead to arrange to pick-up a bag.
- The Senior Food Bag service will continue as usual.

Clothing Program

- The clothing center (donations and shopping) will be closed until further notice.

Financial Assistance

- Limited financial assistance (bus passes, gas cards) will be available by appointment only. Appointments will be scheduled after 2:30pm Mondays—Thursdays.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will no longer be available at BACN. Neighbors will be referred to their main office.

Adult Education and Career Assistance

- Adult Education and Career Assistance Services will be suspended until further notice.



First Congregational Church of Benzonia UCC
901 Barber Street, P.O. Box 234
Benzonia, MI 49616
Phone: (231) 882-4922

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BENZONIA UCC
BENZONIA, MICHIGAN



Office Phone: 231-882-4922
Office Hours: M—Th 9am—Noon, F 8:30am—11:30am
Office Email: secretary@benzoniacongregational.org
Our Website: <http://www.benzoniacongregational.org>
Our Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/BenzoniaCongregational