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# The Parish Caller September 4, 2020

Greetings!

I am back on my first day from sabbatical. This week's Parish Caller will contain my report of the last three months.

I plan to have parking lot office hours from 10-noon on Friday and Saturday. A six foot long table and chairs will be in the shade next in the parking lot by Alarcon Street, You are welcome to stop by. Also during these hours, Tom and I will have the lower Alarcon door propped open for you to come by and see the inside of the church again! Of course practicing social distancing from others; mask wearing; no touching of surfaces; no lingering in closed spaces with others; no use of the bathrooms. Yikes, our new normal.

Speaking of our new normal, eight weeks of declining Covid-19 cases looks like it may happen sometime in October. We would be able to have 50 worshipers with masks, social distancing, no congregational singing, etc. The experience will not be normal by any means. We may plan some church parking lot smaller gatherings during the good weather of September and October. The Cabinet is meeting September 10th to discuss our options and let you know our plans.

This Sunday I begin a sermon series making our way through the Book of Joshua. Chapter 1 is this Sunday and the title of the sermon is "Crossing Over." As we cross over to our new normal, we will see how the children of Israel did as they crossed over to the promised land. J.J. spent the summer touring the south and has come back with a bit of a southern twang. Watch Sunday as he tries to ride his bike for the first time.

Finally, I will be updating this email list - if you wish to be removed, please let me know. If others need to be added, let me know that as well.

Grace to you,

Jay

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## A Message from Pastor Jay

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**Pastor Sabbatical Report**

I am profoundly grateful for the gift of a three-month sabbatical during June, July, and August. Based on previous experiences of burnout, many conferences, including our own, began to make the sabbatical part of pastor contracts years ago. The five-year mark was chosen, and I can testify to feeling the need for one by the end of May. I thank our Cabinet and congregation for this privilege. I feel refreshed and ready for this challenging time to be a pastor and to be church.

I thank Moderators Ralph and Barbara and Cabinet members for leading the church through these months. Thanks to Rev. Gary Gard, Rev. Bill Linson, Rev. Harry Strong, Rev. Lloyd Evans, Jane Cheek, and Rev. Michael Friday for lending their preaching and pastoral care skills to us. Thanks to Staci for doing the Caller; Julie M. and Susan for taking care of the finances, Tom, David, and Rev. Bill for tending to the church building; Brian, Jane C, and Deana coordinating the music, and all the musicians who performed. The video capabilities of Jim were a God-send. I am sure there are others – forgive me for not including you. And, of course the congregation that has stuck with us personally and financially through this pandemic.

Like all of you, my travel plans were mostly cancelled. We did travel by car to Denver in early June to deliver a car to our kids there (and see a new granddaughter). The rest of the time was spent at home in study, reflection, prayer, and long days of manual labor – just what every pastor needs! I will explain all of this as I summarize my experience of each month away.

I began the month of June with that trip to Denver. We stopped in Santa Fe for the night, and I was struck by how much more serious New Mexico was taking the virus than Arizona. Masks were required. I will probably not experience the Santa Fe square so empty ever again. We made our way to the Brown Hotel in downtown Denver. Again, Denver required masks at that time, so the contrast with Arizona was striking. The horrible death of George Floyd blanketed the news and profoundly disturbed me as I am sure it did you. The shock of watching the video made me want to understand the deep-seated racism that made it possible. I knew I could not go back to business as usual in September. We watched the protesters march pass the hotel each night on the street below. Some damage was done to the hotel windows but not inside. My plans for the coming church year began to formulate.

I experienced anger, frustration, and embarrassment as I watched how our state and nation responded to the pandemic – testing forever promised and not delivered; no mask requirement; thinking we could just open up and the virus would go away. I thought we would probably not be able to meet in the sanctuary all summer. We would all have to get used to a new normal. Crossing over to this new reality made me think of the book of Joshua. It lends itself to this theme. I preached through the book twenty years ago, so I looked at my files from back then and developed a plan for the fall. Sadly, the sermons are terrible, so no help there, but the division of the book into a preaching outline still works. I spent some time studying Joshua during June. I also did online continuing education about how to move the church to an online only experience. None of us signed up for this!

I spent several weeks in July praying and planning for the church year – September to next July. I worked on setting up bulletins for all the Sundays and selecting themes and sermon titles. I decided to plan the church year through the lens of the pandemic and systemic racism. As I mentioned, Joshua seemed to fit for guiding us through this new reality we find ourselves in. This series will take us up to Advent. It is Advent and beyond that I feel called to lead us through some tough racial territory. It will not be an easy journey. I understand if some may not be ready for it. Based on what has happened, and what continues to happen in our country, I just cannot follow the lectionary once again and stay on familiar ground. In my study in June, I came across an interesting idea for Advent. I realized I may not be aware of how much light/dark aesthetics influences my subconscious. Light is better than dark, etc. We do tend to focus on the light during Advent. So, the Advent series will be entitled “Dark is Good/Godly – The Problem with Light/Dark Aesthetics.” Be thinking of ways dark is good. The first Sunday of Advent will be about the Via Negativa. Darkness can be good! Darkness is often the setting for Divine encounters.

The Lenten series will be based upon *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo. A recent Oprah's book club selection will also be considered: *Caste – The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. And I am sure many other books you will recommend. We may do something jointly with Pastor Kendra and the Dewey church. Kendra is now pastor of the church. We look forward to her installation service in the months ahead. I will be inviting her to join me in the recorded service sometimes to be worship leader and help with communion.

January 17 will be MLK Jr. remembrance. We will remember John Lewis and Bloody Sunday on March 7. On Pentecost Sunday, we will remember the lynching of George Floyd. Trinity Sunday will be: "Trinitarian Tears," the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tulsa Black Wall Street Massacre." June 13 we will remember "Juneteenth" (19<sup>th</sup>). On a lighter note, April has Easter, Holy Humor Sunday, and Blues Sunday. June 6 brings a "Sermon on 6 legs – Consider the Ant"(Proverbs 6). I had to preach on ants because I spent the summer observing them while walking down the sidewalk. I am grateful for the study time to plan the year ahead.

The last part of July and most of August were taken up with moving. We decided this summer might be a good time to downsize and move to the house on Mount Vernon Avenue. Preparing the house to list, leaving for showings, and the stress of waiting for a buyer was a lot to handle. And then came the actual move - and boxes, and boxes... The timing turned out to be perfect, because I do not think I would have been worth much trying to pastor the church and prepare weekly worship services while in the midst of moving. We still have some weeks to go before being settled, but I am glad to have the move in the rear-view mirror. I can now walk to the church from our house!

A few other items from my sabbatical time. Like any vacation, you come back with less stress and a better perspective not to take things so seriously. Sabbatical did that for me. We certainly all need grace right now for ourselves and others. I also reconfirmed my belief in the power of the Word of God written. Pandemic or no pandemic, the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, and the fellowship of believers define the church and send it forth to work for peace and justice. The pandemic hit home several weeks ago when my older sister passed away from the virus. She had cancer surgery and was going to daily radiation treatments when she contracted it. She only lasted a few weeks after that. We hope to get together next summer in Michigan to celebrate her life. A weird and sad new normal. Finally, my goal this year is to understand my country's history and current reality, and that can only happen when I come to terms with its history of racism and the systemic racism that keeps the status quo going. It will be challenging. Thanks you once again for the gift of a sabbatical!

Serving Christ with you,

Jay

## SUNDAY BULLETIN

**First Congregational Church of Prescott**

**United Church of Christ**

216 E. Gurley Street

Prescott, AZ 86301

[www.fccprescott.org](http://www.fccprescott.org)

[www.facebook.com/FccUccPrescott](https://www.facebook.com/FccUccPrescott)

928-445-4555

**Founded September 26, 188**

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 6, 2020

### GATHERING TO WORSHIP GOD

*Worker God, whose hands built the earth, molded our bodies, and sowed the stars across the sky, we gather in your presence this morning with praise and thanksgiving for your mighty deeds. Meet us here, Worker God; strengthen our hearts and our hands to work with you in the building of a world filled with racial justice and peace.*

Opening Song: "Morning has Broken" Randall Sensmeier Ann & Caleb Flanagan

Words of Welcome – Announcements - \*Passing of the Peace

Opening Prayer

Pastor Kendra Hobson

L: Loving, Working God, on this Sunday we ask your special blessing on all people who labor, either for pay or as volunteers, in jobs or at school, in the workplace or at home, in the U.S. and around the world.

**P: We especially pray for your blessings on workers who do not have jobs and for those whose inadequate pay does not allow them to live a full life.**

L: Creator God, help us to build a new world in the midst of the old.

**P: A world where all workers are valued.**

L: A world where those who clean houses are also able to buy houses to live in.

**P: A world where those who grow food can also afford to eat their fill.**

L: We pray for the coming of a world where all workers everywhere share in the abundance that you have given us.

**ALL: We ask these things knowing that you give us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary. Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Pastor Jay

O God, we bear the imprint of your face: the colors of our skin are your design, and what we have of beauty in our race as human beings, you alone define, who stretched a living fabric on our frame and gave to each a language and a name. Where we are torn and pulled apart by hate because of our race, or skin is not the same; while we are judged unequal by the state and victims made because we own our name, humanity reduced to little worth, dishonored is your living face on earth. O God, we shared the image of your Son whose flesh and blood are ours, whatever skin. In his humanity, we find our own, and in his family our proper skin. Christ is the brother we still crucify; his love the language we must learn...or die.

Assurance of  
Forgiveness

Pastor Jay

Lord, where shall we find the courage to envisage a new beginning? Out of the depths, Father, Mother, we come to you. In our confusion we cry to you...and suddenly comes the exciting news: You, who abide in heavenly realms, you have come to us! You have not considered the smallness of our planet or the ephemeral nature of our lives. It is grace--pure, unlimited grace! Our human predicament you have made yours, and now you announce a new morning, a new beginning - And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God See, I am making all things new.

Song: "Hosea" Gregory Norbet

Ann & Caleb Flanagan

## **PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD**

A Time for Children of All Ages

Pastor Jay

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion is open to all)

*We come to the Lord's Table. All are invited!*

Invitation to the Table

Pastor Jay

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic differences, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. All are welcome at this Table of Grace.

Words of Institution in 1 Corinthians 11 & Prayer

Pastor

Kendra

Sharing of Communion

Pastor Kendra & Pastor Jay

Scripture Reading: Joshua 1

Pastor Kendra

Sermon: "Crossing Over"

Pastor Jay

## **RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE**

Prayers of the People / The Lord's

Prayer

Pastor Jay

Pray for those who are hungry. Pray harder for those who will not feed them.

Pray for those who struggle each week to pay their bills.  
Pray harder for the wealthy who do not care  
Pray for those who are homeless. Pray harder for those who deny them shelter.  
Pray for the sick and lonely. Pray harder for those who will not give them comfort.  
Pray for those who cry out for dignity. Pray harder for those who will not listen.  
Pray for those oppressed by unjust wages. Pray harder for those who exploit them.  
Pray for those who bear the yoke of prejudice.  
Pray harder for those who discriminate against them.  
Pray for those whose basic needs are denied.  
Pray harder for public officials who cater to the greedy and ignore those bound unjustly.

Offering of Ourselves and our  
Gifts

\*Prayer of  
Dedication

Song: "O God, My God" Iona Community

Tom Macy

\*Benediction  
astor Jay

P

### **Serving the Church**

Ministers All the People of the Church

Pastor Rev. Dr. Jay Wilcher

Pastor Emeritus Rev. Robert Bradstreet

Worship Leader Pastor Kendra Hobson, St. Luke Ebony Christian Church, Dewey

Alter Notes Director Melissa Gates

Organist Brian Moore

Bell Choir Director Carole Sue Linson

Co-Moderators Rev. Ralph Wagner & Barbara McCollough

Minister of the Building Rev. Bill Linson

Facilities Coordinator Tom Macy

## SEPTEMBER MISSION NEWS

### **Mission Outreach Update:**

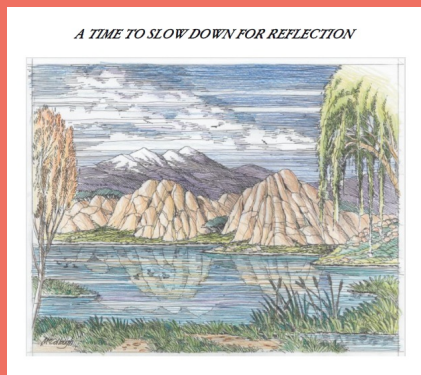
Throughout the year, we support multiple mission outreach projects. **In August**, your donations helped to support our DACA Fund. Money from this fund assists our "adopted" DACA student, Franceny, and her two brothers, Francisco and Fernando. We have issued checks from this fund to both Franceny and Francisco to help them pay their college tuition expenses. Fernando has earned a full scholarship to

Yavapai College in pursuit of his certification in Construction Management.

**This month's mission emphasis** in our denomination's special offering, **"Neighbors in Need"** (NIN). NIN is the UCC's annual offering to support ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Through a network of justice advocates, work is accomplished to address such issues as; voting rights, federal budget priorities, immigration, hate crimes, health care, civil liberties, pollution of our natural environment, and Native American ministries. Check donations can be made payable to the church, with the memo line note, NIN.

As always, your mission outreach team (Becky & Bill Bryant, Helaine Berman, Patty Gard, Linda Moore, Staci Robbins, and Gary Gard, chairperson) thank you for remembering that we are blessed to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).

## PASTOR JAY'S SABBATICAL



My thanks to Dennis McCollough for doing this artwork for my Sabbatical! Pastor Jay

## TREASURER'S REPORT

8/31/2020

So much has changed since the beginning of the year, and our financial expectations and activities are no exception. At this point in the year (end of August), our budget as approved in January had anticipated that our expenses would now be in excess of \$140,000. In actuality, expenses to-date are \$118,000. Much of this reduced spending is due to the church being closed and because many of our parishioners have stepped up to volunteer for tasks previously done by paid staff. Together we are making this work!

As for income, total receipts to-date are more than \$125,000! Congregational giving remains on target. (THANK YOU!) The loss of income from facility use by outside groups is more than offset by the reduced expenses. The net income to-date is more than \$7,000. Our checking account has a healthy balance in excess of \$30,000.

Just a note about our investments: not surprising, the value did take a large loss in February and March (-\$16,000) but the market

## SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH DURING CORONAVIRUS!

- Online – go to our website: [www.fccprescott.org](http://www.fccprescott.org) and look for the tab on the front page
- You can set up regular, ongoing giving or one-time giving.
- Use your credit card and get some points!
- Your bank may have free online bill pay. You find the tab on your online account, fill in the details of the check as you would a regular check, and the bank mail will mail it for you! You can set up a one-time check or recurring scheduled check amount.
- Mail a check out to the church and mail it to 216 East Gurley Street, Prescott, AZ 86301

The church office is closed going forward, however, someone will pick up the mail on a daily basis to place checks into the safe.

Visit our website

Watch Services Here



bounced back, and that loss is now a gain of \$9,000.

Julie McCurdy, treasurer



## Celebrating YOU!!!

### **Anniversaries**

WAGNER, Ralph & Susan Lemons	09/05
GILGES, Ralph & Cheryl	09/09
BRYANT, Bill & Becky	09/22
JAQUETTE, Julie & Sandra Johns	09/24
FONE, DJ & Marita Callaway	09/28

### **Birthdays**

BEESON, Al	08/03
BRUHN, Mary	08/03
PREBLE, Murl	08/08
CHRISTOPHER, Jim	08/10
IMBIEROWICZ, Angela	08/11
OSBORN, Jane	08/12
WALKER, Brent	08/18
JONES, Tarah	08/22
GILGES, Cheryl	08/27
SANDSTROM, Paul	08/30
BROUSSARD, Suzanne	09/06
DINSMAN, Christy	09/07
MCCOLLOUGH, Dennis	09/09
MACY, Tom	09/14
MATSUMOTO, Yoichi	09/18
RELTH, Arlene	09/22
WILSON, John	09/28
KAUL, Linda	09/29