

# *The* **CONNECTIONS**

## March 2017

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### WORSHIP IN MARCH

*Sunday mornings – the heart of our life together!*

- 9:30 a.m.** Nursery care begins; **First Hour Faith Formation for All Ages**  
**10:30 a.m.** **Worship in the Sanctuary for All Ages; nursery care continues**  
**11:30 a.m.** **Coffee and refreshments in our Gathering Room.**  
**(The Rev. Anne Swallow Gillis, preaching)**

*The Season of Lent invites us to focus on the person and teachings of Jesus. Following the Gospel portions of the Revised Common Lectionary through this month, we will consider the question “who is this Jesus?” Each Sunday we will explore Jesus’ interactions with a different individual. Each encounter provides a slightly different perspective on Jesus. Varied perspectives can help us better answer this question, “who is this Jesus,” for ourselves.*

**March 5 – First Sunday in Lent , Holy Communion and New Member Welcome #1.** Immediately following his baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus retreats to the wilderness and is challenged to his core. In Matthew 4:1-10, Jesus encounters the “the evil one” (sometimes referred to as the “devil”) who taunts and tempts him. Jesus is revealed as a resister of evil in its many guises.

**March 12 – Second Sunday in Lent and New Member Welcome #2.** We leave the Gospel of Matthew and enter the mysterious world of John’s Gospel. In John 3:1-17, Jesus has a late-night visit from the Pharisee and scholar Nichodemus and speaks of “being born again.” This powerful metaphor of human transformation enables us to know Jesus as a giver of new life.

**March 19 – Third Sunday in Lent.** In an encounter unusual for its day, Jesus converses at length with a woman drawing water from a well. This passage from John 4:5-42 invites us to know Jesus as provider of “living water.” Pastor Anne will be joined by Rev. Philip Rohler in exploring how our church’s valuing of inclusivity is “living water” for our wider community. At a Congregational Meeting following the service, the membership will be invited to approve a revised “Open and Affirming” Statement, proclaiming our welcome of and advocacy for the LGBTQ community (see proposed Statement on page 3).

**March 26 – Fourth Sunday in Lent (guest preacher).** In this John 9:1-41 text, Jesus heals a man blind from birth. What kind of healer is Jesus in our day? Pastor Anne will be on a week of study leave, and the retired UCC pastor, The Rev. Jeff Crews, will preach and lead worship. Rev. Jeff enjoyed a career as an architect before later heading to seminary and pastoring churches in Hawaii and northern California. Pastor Anne and he currently serve together on the Minnesota Conference Committee on Ministry.

## **From your Interim Pastor**

*The Rev. Anne Swallow Gillis*

As I shared with those of you able to attend our January Annual Meeting of the Congregation, I will be retiring from full-time pastoral ministry during 2017. I am finding that as each liturgical season cycles around, I am saying to myself: “This is my last Christmas pageant, late night Christmas eve service, Epiphany party around a bonfire in the snow, and now my final Annual Meeting with these dear people! Here I am in the final sessions of my last Confirmation class, my last times to preach this part of the Common Lectionary Cycle. Yikes!” I am filled with both deep gratefulness to be concluding my pastoral ministry with all of you this year, and also sadness that I won’t be here with you for many more yearly cycles to come.

As we spiral around to the season of Lent once again, I’m wondering how we might use this time most effectively to engage with God at a deeper level. Unfortunately, Lenten traditions have often been misused, with too much introspection or mindless refraining from some “tid-bit of affluence,” as one of my preaching mentors, Fred B. Craddock, used to warn. The forty days before Easter have been a time of self-reflection and repentance throughout church history, but some of us Protestants are wary of too much shaming sin-talk. Is there a better way of preparing ourselves for the transformative possibilities of Easter?

I think a well-observed Lent can help us spread our spiritual wings a bit. Unlike the season of Advent before Christmas, the weeks of Lent are not filled with busy holiday plans. There is a spaciousness in the five weeks, where we can engage some new spiritual practices, learn more about the teachings and persons of Jesus, and discover new ways to serve in Jesus’ name.

Your Adult/Intergenerational Ministry Team, as well as the Worship and Outreach Ministry Teams are busy working with me on various themes and programs for this time. Our music staff is exploring ways to deepen our worship experience through different types of music, and I’m planning a sermon series called “Who Is This Jesus?” We’re planning Wednesday night Lenten suppers and a host of small group learning times.

Dive in with us, spread your spiritual wings, ponder some questions and see what this Lenten season might bring to you and your life! Prayerfully consider the offerings described in this newsletter, and see where God is calling you to get involved.

In ministry with you, through one more Lenten season,  
*Pastor Anne*

## PASTOR ANNE ON STUDY LEAVE

Monday, March 20 – Monday, March 27

Included in my compensation package is the provision for two weeks of study leave per year. I have engaged in a variety of continuing education classes and workshops while serving as your interim pastor these last 2+ years. I have benefited from the opportunities to interact with teachers and clergy colleagues across the country, and deepen my intellectual understanding of the Bible, theology and how all of this intersects with our world today. Other times, I have focused on a more quiet, spiritual retreat, where I spend time in silence, prayer and reading to nurture my own soul.

Later in March, I will take time away for a contemplative week, staying at the Episcopal House of Prayer up in Collegeville, near St. Joseph's and St. Benedict's colleges. I look forward to worshipping daily with these two Benedictine communities, as well as the solitude afforded me by room at the beautiful House of Prayer. I plan to soak myself in the Holy Week and Easter scripture texts, ponder some current New Testament scholarship, and do some deep thinking about my Easter season preaching.

On the following weekend, I will delight in joining my extended family near Philadelphia, for the celebration of my mom's 90th birthday! In my absence, The Rev. Jeff Crews will lead worship and preach here at Falcon Heights Church.

The Rev. Victoria Wilgocki, Pastor of St. Anthony's Park United Church of Christ, will be available to you for pastoral emergencies while I am gone. You can reach her at the church office at (651) 646-7173 or at her home number (612) 722-9411.

Thank you, all of you as the FHCUCG congregation, for your support of your pastors' need for continuing education and spiritual renewal!

### CALL TO A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

March 19, following worship

#### Agenda:

1. Vote on the proposed expansion of our "Open and Affirming" statement. The new statement proposed by the Executive Board's working group reads:

*"As seekers and servants growing in God's transforming love, Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ joins with the 15th General Synod of the UCC in recognizing and affirming persons of any sexual orientation, gender identification, and gender expression as equal recipients of God's love.*

*We celebrate the proclaimed truth in Galatians 3: 26, 28: "In Christ Jesus we are all children of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus."*

*We pledge to covenant our four core values of inclusivity, love, community, and spirituality as a congregation of faith to work for full inclusion of all. We commit ourselves to making justice and inclusivity a reality in this congregation and in the world."*

2. Update on the work of the Foundation Board and vote on extending the 5 year terms of current Foundation Board Trustees Bonnie Russ and Joe Vance.
3. Update on progress from the Pastoral Search Committee.

## OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

### **GENEROUS SPIRIT FOOD DRIVE** **Benefiting Interfaith Action of greater Saint Paul's** **Department of Indian Work Food Shelf** **March 1 to 27**

The Generous Spirit Food Drive is part of the **Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign**. During the month of March, every dollar or pound of food donated to the Department of Indian Work food shelf will be multiplied, thanks to incentive grants from Minnesota FoodShare. This is a major source of their funding for the year, so it is the time to give generously.

Hunger and poverty in Minnesota are increasing at alarming rates. Adults, children, and seniors made more than 3 million visits to Minnesota food shelves in 2015; almost 9,000 people per day seeking food assistance!

Bring your donations of canned or dried food stuff, especially canned protein, to our church Lobby by Sunday, March 26 for timely delivery!

### **A NEW CONVERSATION OPPORTUNITY WITH IMMIGRANT WEAVERS** **Interested in helping newcomers practice their English?**

A group of older generation Karen women weavers meet weekly at the Freedom Library in St. Paul. They are trying to preserve their intricate art. They would like volunteers interested in working on very simple, low level fun English on Wednesdays after 11 am. It could be every week or every other week. If you are interested, contact Nancy Duffrin at [nduffrin@gmail.com](mailto:nduffrin@gmail.com) or 651-348-7880 for more details.

### **MANY THANKS FOR YOUR ON-GOING FOOD SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN** **NEED AT FALCON HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!**

Our church budget is now supporting 7 weekend backpacks of food, through the Sheridan Project, for kids who have qualified for help. We also add cold cereal, instant oatmeal packs and individually wrapped snack bars to the weekend backpack. Donations of oatmeal packs and snack bars are still needed through the end of this school year! Please leave your donations in the white bucket in the church Lobby.

### **OUR ANNUAL "ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING"** **OFFERING WILL BE RECEIVED MARCH 26**

Each spring, we join other United of Church of Christ congregations across the country in giving to our denominations special offering, "One Great Hour of Sharing." This offering supports our partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic disaster response. The funds are administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources.

***You can bring your offering to church and place it in the envelope provided on March 26, or send it to the church office.*** Be sure to make your check out to Falcon Heights Church, with "OGHS" in the memo line so we can send it in the right direction!

*Many thanks, from your Outreach Ministry Team*

## **LOOKING AHEAD – SPRING MUSICAL!**

**Directed by Margot Olsen with accompaniment by Patti Holmes  
Featuring cast of children, youth and adults –  
all are welcome to join in!**

**Rehearsals will begin on Wednesdays in March and April, 6:20-7:30 pm  
Performance date is still TBD - either April 23 or May 14**

### **“Table for Five...Thousand!**

#### **The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes”**

By Tom S. Long and Allen Pote

Our 2017 spring musical tells the account of Jesus feeding the five thousand. This is the only miracle, apart from the resurrection, that is reported in all 4 gospels. In this version of the story we use details from all 4 but particularly on the narrative as it appears in John. One young boy with five loaves and two fish is the catalyst for everything that follows. We don't really know anything about the boy other than his apparent willingness to share, but we know the results! It was an event so startling members of the crowd wanted to proclaim Jesus as king.

Later, the event leads to an even greater revelation as Jesus tells his disciples: “I am the Bread of Life. Those who come to me will never never go hungry.”

Mother Theresa said, “We can do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.” Let's do this wonderful thing together at FHC: Come join in telling this wonderful story and learning more about how God is with us in everything we do. Songs, movement, lines for all and of course BREAD and FISH for EVERYONE!

Contact Margot Olsen at [margot@olsenfamilycircus.com](mailto:margot@olsenfamilycircus.com) for more information.

## **NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE** **Pastoral position is posted online**

The green toy truck overhead in our lobby has turned a corner this week, and so has our pastoral search process: The position of lead pastor is now posted on the jobs websites of both the national United Church of Christ and the Minnesota Conference UCC.

Co-chairs of the Pastoral Search Committee report that within the first few hours that the position was posted on the national UCC website, they had received several clergy profiles for consideration. Profiles continue to come in and the search committee is excited about the possibilities. Stay tuned!

## **NEW ADULT FAITH FORMATION SERIES STARTS** **NEXT SUNDAY, March 1 – 9:30 a.m.**

Through the five weeks of Lent, we will focus on the question “Who Is This Jesus?” by looking at a series of encounters Jesus had with different individuals. Each interaction gives us another view of how to understand who Jesus is for us today. This scripture study will be based on the passages used in that Sunday's worship, and sessions will be led Pastor Anne, Rachele Roeckeman, Larry Schumacher and Bonnie Schumacher. Drop in when you can for an interesting exchange of views!

## MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT DISCUSSION!

### PBS Frontline Series on “From Jesus to Christ” at the WEDNESDAY NIGHT LENTEN SUPPERS beginning March 8 at 6:00 p.m.

All ages are invited to gather for soup supper, provided by the Intergenerational Ministry Team. At 6:30 p.m., kids will head to the spring musical rehearsal in the Sanctuary. Adults will join in viewing and discussing the PBS Frontline series on “From Jesus to Christ.” The series includes a number of historians, Biblical theologians and archeologists, exploring how the early Christian movement transitioned from remembering the historical Jesus, to experiencing the presence of the one they called the Risen Christ.

Contact Sue Gramith at [suegramith@hotmail.com](mailto:suegramith@hotmail.com) if you can help with making soup.

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

The following is a list of March birthdays and anniversaries that were collected on Sundays during coffee hour last fall. Is your's missing and would you like to share it among us? Please call or send your information to Colleen, our Office Administrator, at 651-646-2681 or [office@falconheightsucc.org](mailto:office@falconheightsucc.org). We want to celebrate YOU!

### **Birthdays**

Bryan Seyfarth, March 2      Paul McCune-Zierath, March 5  
Carol Meeter, March 7      Marcus Flockencier, March 8  
Sue Gramith, March 16      Marilyn Baden, March 22  
Ian Bradbury, March 22

### **Anniversaries**

No known anniversaries this month

## PRAYER CONCERNS

The Falcon Heights Church Prayer Ministry Team prays regularly for our congregation, and specifically for people in need when requested. Our current prayer list includes:

- Pat Moore, residing at Johanna Shores Home
- Faith Ohman, on hospice care at Episcopal Homes
- John Paulsen, recovering at home from recent liver transplant surgery
- Ron Bartz, recovering at home from hip surgery
- Alex Casey, grandson of Helen & Dwight Brown, health problems

If you have a request for prayer, please contact Helen Brown ([dbrown@umn.edu](mailto:dbrown@umn.edu)), who will pass on your request to the Prayer Group. If you would like prayers for someone other than yourself, please obtain permission from that person first.

## **FHC TO HOST COMMUNITY MEETINGS ON VALUES AND POLICING**

Falcon Heights Church will be the venue for several public conversations that the Falcon Heights Inclusion and Policing Task Force is holding to gather input on building a more inclusive community and developing policing practices that reflect community values. The effort is one of several taking place in the aftermath of the police shooting of Philando Castile last year.

“At each conversation, part of the evening will be spent in a large group and part will be spent in small group circles,” the city’s newsletter explains. “Circles are guided by restorative values that foster deep, courageous, honest, and self-reflective dialogue.”

The next session is from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. next Thursday, March 2, in the church Gathering Room and meeting rooms. Participants will help to develop options for how the city can live out the community’s values in its activities, policies, policing policies and practices. Future sessions at our church will be April 3, May 5, and a date to be determined in May or June. More information can be found in the city newsletter.

## MARCH CALENDAR

Wednesday, March 1 – Outreach Ministry Team, 6 p.m.; Chancel Choir, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 2 – Worship Ministry Team, 1 p.m.; City of Falcon Heights Listening Session, 6 p.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.

Friday, March 3 – Women's Fellowship, 10 a.m.

Saturday, March 4 – House of Charity, 8:30 a.m.; Priority Working Group #1, 10 a.m.

Sunday, March 5 – First Hour Faith Formation, 9:30 a.m.; Worship w/Communion (First Sunday Offering), 10:30 a.m.; New Members joining.

Monday, March 6 – Pastor's Sabbath Day-off; Meals on Wheels, 10:45 a.m.

Tuesday, March 7 – Bible study with Pastor Anne, 10 a.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8 – Communication Ministry Team 10 a.m.; Youth Group, 5:45 p.m.; Wednesday Night Lenten Suppers and Program, 6-7:30 p.m.; Chancel Choir, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 9 – Men's Breakfast @ Pippins, 8 a.m.

***\*\*\*Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday March 12...Remember to set your clocks ahead 1 hour before you go to bed on Saturday night.\*\*\****

Sunday, March 12 – First Hour Faith Formation, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 10:30 a.m.; New Members joining.

Monday, March 13 – Pastor's Sabbath Day-off

Tuesday, March 14 – Bible study with Pastor Anne, 10 a.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.; Executive Board, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15 – Youth Group, 5:45 p.m.; Wednesday Night Lenten Suppers and Program, 6-7:30 p.m.; Chancel Choir, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 16 – Children's Ministry Team, 6:30 p.m.; Deadline for April Connections

Sunday, March 19 – First Hour Faith Formation, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, March 20 – Engaging Retirement w/Rev. Philip Rohler, 10 a.m.

***\*\*\*Pastor Anne on Study Leave, Monday, March 20 through Monday March, 27\*\*\****

Tuesday, March 21 – Bible study led by Rev. Philip Rohler, 10 a.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22 – Youth Group, 5:45 p.m.; Wednesday Night Lenten Suppers and Program, 6-7:30 p.m.; Chancel Choir, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 26 – First Hour Faith Formation, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 10:30 a.m. with Guest Pastor, Rev. Jeff Crews

Monday, March 27 – Meals on Wheels, 10:45 a.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 28 – Bible study with Pastor Anne, 10 a.m.; Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29 – Youth Group, 5:45 p.m.; Wednesday Night Lenten Suppers and Program, 6-7:30 p.m.; Chancel Choir, 7:30 p.m.

**Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ 1795 Holton St., Falcon Heights, MN 55113**  
**Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m. First Hour Faith Formation all ages at 9:30 a.m.**

**Office hours:** 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. weekdays

**Office Administrator:** Colleen Degnan

**Interim Pastor:** Rev. Anne Swallow Gillis

**Sunday Nursery Attendant:** Sara Nedeau

**Choir Director:** Joel Johnson

**Organist:** Karen Johnson

**Phone:** 651-646-2681

**Email:** office@falconheightsucc.org

**For Emergency Pastoral Care, call Pastor Anne's cell phone:** 218-370-9318

**Website:** www.falconheightsucc.org

**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/fhcucc

**Twitter:** www.twitter.com/fhcucc