

**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ**

6494 South Belsay Road  
Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439  
Phone: (810) 695-0550 • Fax: (810) 695-5117  
Email: secretary@fcucc.com  
www.uccgrandblanc.org

**Pastor**  
Reverend Gary Bagley

**Director of Youth Ministries**  
Tracy Loomis

**Church Secretary**  
Peggy Riley

**Director of Music**  
Kasie Johnson

**Bookkeeper**  
Carla Meier

**Learning House Director**  
Mariah Bailey

**Maintenance/Custodian**  
Tom McLaren

**Organist**  
Lavonne Bomeli

**Parish Visitor**  
Mary Powers

**First Congregational**  
United Church of Christ  
April, 2020

The  
**Congregator**



**VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY**

Since we are unable to gather,  
I am going to be hosting a **Zoom Bible Study**.  
Through "Zoom" (a meeting program), we will be able to carry on a  
study and discussion and still maintain our social distancing.

The study will begin on April 14 at 10 AM and go for six weeks.

It will be based on the book, "**Renegade Gospel; The Rebel Jesus**" by Mike Slaughter. In preparation for the study, I invite you to order the book on Amazon and begin reading. It is an exciting new way to look at Jesus and the road to the Cross.

*"Jesus didn't come to start a religion. The rebel Jesus came with a renegade gospel to start a revolution. Pastor and Author Mike Laughter presents Jesus and his challenging message to inspire us during Lent, Easter and through the year."*

If you would like to be a part of this study, please send an email to me at [garyb@fcucc.com](mailto:garyb@fcucc.com) so I can make sure you get the zoom information. Don't forget to order your book. I look forward to going through this study with you.

~ Pastor Gary ~

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:3,4  
The voice of the one that cries in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...

A WORD OF HOPE

And so, it was. In March, we at First Congregational received the word that our normal way of life and doing ministry were about to drastically change and it did. A dangerous, highly contagious virus, COVID-19, was sweeping the land and the most expedient solution in impeding its spread would be to retreat into the surrounding wilderness, away from the hub of our community efforts. The media, medical community and the politicians are busy creating new definitions, like social distancing, to describe this new agenda. Isolation, however, is not a new idea.

Many of the superstars of the Bible were experts at isolating. It actually was their normal way of life. The most famous was Jesus, of course, who not only embarked on those 40 days of fasting and prayer that always usher in the Season of Lent, but who also reserved frequent solitary retreats as regular periods of spiritual refreshment. He was in good company in his reclusive practices. The ancient monks called it solitudinarianism. Prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah and John the Baptist were model reclusive, as was the servant Hagar, whose forced desert isolation with her son, Ishmael, resulted in the birth of a new nation.

A large percentage of our world must feel like Hagar these days. She was excluded from the family unit of Sarah and Abraham through no fault of her own. Sarah, the matriarch of the Hebrew people, had made sure Abraham's son by Hagar would be out of the competition against her own son Isaac as the leader of their people. Sarah must have seemed like a disease to Hagar. But

Hagar conversed with and confronted God; finally establishing Ishmael in his role as the leader of another tribe, the Ishmaelites, still revered as the ancestors of the Muslims today.

Isolation has a number of different effects on individuals. There was a time in his solitude when Elijah propped himself up against an old tree and just prayed for death. Jesus used his wilderness experiences as times of refreshment, renewal and commitment. Hagar didn't like it there in the desert but knew God never lost sight of her and she never gave up.

In which direction will isolation take us? I have no doubt our church will emerge from this experience stronger than ever. Though we may be "socially distanced", we are still a cohesive community. Our Biblical predecessors didn't have the advantages of Skype, Zoom, remote access, cell phone videos, YouTube networks and social media. Our survival is imminent because, like Hagar, God has not lost sight of us, or of you, either.

PRAYER

In our isolation, we are together in desiring the wellbeing of all. Jesus isolated for 40 days contemplating the same goal. May we discard any feelings of loneliness in favor of the refreshment that can be born in solitude. In our silence, may we hear your voice. Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 CONFIRMANDS



Brendan Sly, Son of Bethany & Michael Sly  
Kaylee Heisey, Daughter of Tiffany & Nathan Heisey  
Marcus Simon, Son of Michelle & Michael Simon

HOME OFFICE SUPPLIES

If anyone needs help with getting high demand supplies (ink cartridges, scanners, electronics), Toshiba has offered to assist us. Please contact Peggy at the church office to put you in touch with our representative.

Thank you to EVERYONE who is continuing to send in their monetary gifts! You are enabling us to keep the church up and running and to meet our obligations.



Weekly Prayer List

We encourage you to send in your weekly prayer requests to share, as we do each week when we meet together. Pastor Gary will

include them in the Pastoral Prayer portion of his weekly sermons and they will also get emailed to our "prayer list" recipients.

Send them to secretary@fcucc.com.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you would like to be added to our "prayer list" recipients and get a weekly prayer email, let us know that as well!

**"Our Mission is to enable disciples to change the world to the glory of God by living the teachings of Jesus our Christ."**