



## The Shining Light~ April 2023

<b>APRIL WORSHIP SCHEDULE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PASTOR'S MESSAGE/PRAYER OF MONTH.....</b>	<b>3-4</b>
<b>BOARD MEMBER'S MESSAGE.....</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>MARCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES .....</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<b>TREASURER'S REPORT-MISSION STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>EVENTS.....</b>	<b>8-14</b>
<b>SEASONS OF OUR LIVES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>APRIL CALENDAR .....</b>	<b>16</b>



## APRIL Worship

Worship is at 10:30AM in person and on Zoom

**April 2<sup>nd</sup> Palm Sunday**, we gather on Palm Sunday to remember the joyous parade that spontaneously happens to welcome Jesus as the Messiah/Christ and, hopefully, new king of Israel. Politics were very much involved in this day as the people cry out, “Hosanna!” which means “God save us.” Did Jesus understand that they would want freedom from the Roman occupiers? Why did he begin this parade if he didn’t want rebellion? Was this part of the plan or did he hope for something else?

**April 6<sup>th</sup> Maundy Thursday**, we will be gathering at 6:00 pm to experience the last night of Jesus before his betrayal and desertion to wash each other’s feet and break the bread of communion together.

**April 7<sup>th</sup> Good Friday**, we are invited to join the Spirit of the Wilderness at Maple Hill Church for a Stations of the Cross meditation at 5:30 pm.

**April 9<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday**, the resurrection of Jesus is a story we know probably better than any other story besides Jesus’ birth narrative. We know it so well we skip to the ending that Jesus is alive again. But, for those in the story, they had very little hope and were filled with fear, one and all. So much so that “Do not be afraid” is spoken twice in this short but important story. Do we have fears about today’s world? Do we have hope? What does it mean today to ‘not be afraid?’

**April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter**, Pastor Enno is gone on vacation this Sunday and we have a great guest preacher who uplift you all.

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**, this familiar story of two disciples walking with Jesus and not knowing who he was until the breaking of the bread has lots of substance in which we can sink our teeth into. This Sunday it is paired with 1 Peter 1:17-23 that talks about the steps of maturing our faith. Is our faith journey going somewhere, who are we walking with, and when has Christ surprised us?

**April 30<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**, it is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday so we will take a break from preaching and open up the time for questions and dialogue. Where you can ask about a previous sermon, a question of the Bible, or something that is happening in the world?

## PASTOR MESSAGE

We are coming up on the end of Lent. On our Wednesday Lenten Services we have been working on Building Hope. There are many struggles going on in the world right now and we are tired. To quote a new saying, “If you aren’t mad, you aren’t paying attention.” Doesn’t mean the world is falling apart or that only doom is on the horizon, but the journey towards a better world is a long one and the ‘long arc that bends toward justice’ needs our strength to push it in the right direction.

In our six gatherings we talked about simple practices to help center and ground ourselves so we may continue our quest towards creating the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. The first one we talked about temptation and discernment to make sure we were on God’s side. The second was about a different way to pray, the Ignatian Examen. The third was about cultivating gratitude which gives us strength and grounds us to remember the many blessings and the goodness of the world. The fourth was about prayer and Mary Ellen showed us another way we can pray always in all ways. The fifth was about defensiveness vs. vulnerability and staying on the issues and not focusing on ourselves. The last was about ways in which we may approach talking to someone with different agendas and opposing viewpoints.

There is hope for the future for me, for though this moment in time looks dim, I can remember how far we have come in our country in my lifetime. We now have marriage available to people of all genders, we have issues of police brutality being talked about and starting to hold them accountable, people of color and women are taking up more and more seats in positions of power, we are reckoning with our past with the First Nations and working to root out racism in our churches and other organizations in our country, and in our last election, most politicians who ran trying to bring more authoritarianism in our nation and steer it away from democracy lost.

There are many things that are wrong and many things in our country and our world that could go wrong, but there are also many things going right and changes are being made every day around the world that reflect compassion, good will, and justice. Our Pride Celebration and Fundraiser was a success, even with the few protestors, and we raised much more than our goal because people in our county thought what the Pride Committee is doing is important.

Take care of yourselves. We are in a marathon, not a sprint. Be compassionate with all we come across. Let us continue to share the good news of God’s kingdom, Jesus’ love and call for the oppressed to be freed, the poor receive good things, and the least of these are lifted up.

Peace,

Pastor Enno

## PRAYER FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL

**By St. Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.  
Amen.

### A Message From a Board Member

Board Member message – Jenny Delfs

Happy Spring everyone!

Almost anyway. I hoped my trip to the West Coast, where things are starting to bloom, would buoy my spirits, but alas it only made me more done with snow and ice. (other than Mother Nature's dance party light show the other night ... wow, just WOW.)

I keep rereading one of my favorites of the late Arnold Lobel's Frog and Toad stories: The Corner. Frog Toad is in a similar mood about this season as I am. Frog tells him a story about looking for Spring around the corner when he was "not much bigger than a pollywog". He went around a lot of corners but didn't find it anywhere until "I went back home. When I got there," said Frog, "I found another corner. It was the corner of my house." "Did you go around it?" asked Toad. "I went around that corner, too," said Frog. "What did you see?" asked Toad. "I saw the sun coming out," said Frog. "I saw birds sitting and singing in a tree. I saw my mother and father working in their garden. I saw flowers in the garden." "You found it!" cried Toad. "Yes," said Frog. "I was very happy. I had found the corner that spring was just around." "Look Frog," said Toad. "You were right. The rain has stopped." Frog and Toad hurried outside. They ran around the corner of Frog's house to make sure that spring had come again.



- \* We have waited through winter for Spring's thaw and are anxious for the warmer seasons to come.
  - \* We have waited through the meanderings of Lent and are anxious for the promise and celebration of Easter.
  - \* We have lived through the last years of pandemic and are anxious for safer gatherings and times together.
  - \* We have suffered losses and are anxious for new beginnings...
- .... as we look around the corner.

The current Board of directors, after much discussion, set 3 goals for this year:

1. Facilitate adopting a new Mission Statement.
2. Encourage fellowship
3. Celebrate many ways people in this congregation are involved in outreach in the community and beyond.

The Board has been taking turns offering news of the community during the worship service. To meet our 3<sup>rd</sup> goal, we hope to celebrate specific outreach that folks are involved in or passionate about during this time. Please let a Board member know if you have something you want to highlight.

In the spirit of the first 2 goals and in search of spring, let's have a **Potluck Salad Bowl Lunch Sunday, April 16** after church service. We can gather round tables and discuss the mission statement together. If you can't bring something for the "pot", bring the luck. Bring your ideas and comments.

Our new mission statement current draft reads as follows:

*The mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Marais is to*  
*Welcome all.*  
*Explore the mysteries of faith.*  
*Celebrate and honor Creation.*  
*Work for justice and peace.*  
*Create community.*

We hope to vote on a new mission statement at the summer congregational meeting.



Also... Jeff and I would like to host the rebirth of **Loaves and Hot dish Potluck Suppers**. You are all invited to join Jeff and I at our home at 401 5<sup>th</sup> Ave W in Grand Marais on **Wednesday, April 12**. Gather at 5:30 pm and eat at 6pm. Stay as long as you can/want. This was something we enjoyed hosting pre-pandemic and are anxious to have gatherings in our house again.

## First Congregational United Church of Christ Board of Directors Meeting Minutes March 21, 2023 on Zoom

Present: Carol Bennett, Jen Delfs, Kevin Levoir, Bruce Tyler, Carol Winter, Tom Yuhsey; Pastor Enno Limvere, ex-officio. Absent: John Bottger

Call to Order, 5:04 p.m., by Tom Yuhasey

- Minutes taken by Bruce Tyler
- Tom Y read Mission Statement
- Joys and Concerns shared
- Pastor Enno posed his Question: When did you feel God's presence in a challenging situation?
- Tom Y read the Communications Agreement

## Immediate Business

- All acknowledged approval of February Minutes
- March agenda: Jen D moved acceptance, Kevin L seconded, approved unanimously
- Kevin L gave Financial report: February closed with about \$6000 surplus; March expected to close with a surplus as well. The endowment, as expected, has lost value as the market continues to be volatile. Building use donations provide modest but helpful ongoing contributions to the budget. Kevin resolved an issue with the MN Department of Revenue concerning a reporting requirement; the church does not need to report income at present. Report acceptance moved by Jen D, seconded by Carol B. Unanimous.
- Jen Delfs will submit newsletter article, due Friday, March 24.
- Next board meeting Tuesday, April 18, 2023.

## Old and New Business

- Pastor's Report sent separately. Very pleased about how the Congregation continues to be involved in community affairs, worked together for Bob Carter's Memorial service, and engaged in worship and community-building experiences.
- Pastor Enno asked for clarification on additional Sunday off request. Yes, it was approved. Tom Y to make addendum to Minister's Employment agreement.
- Plymouth Church Choir coming June 9-12. Will lodge in our building, sing at service on June 11.
- Pride Weekend events, June 9-11 in Grand Marais.

## **•Mutual Ministry Goals:**

Mission Statement revision: Plans forming to have another listening session, possibly in conjunction with a potluck lunch following services, on Sunday, April 16 (week after Easter) in order to finalize a statement to present to the June Congregational Meeting for approval.

Community Building: Additional community potlucks, Game Nights, etc., to be planned

Outreach: Continuing collaboration with MN Interfaith Power and Light, CCLEP, Zero Waste, Earth Day Fair on April 22. Request for someone other than Pastor Enno to convene the local MNIPL chapter.

•Child Care/Nursery Proposal. Changes still need to be made in the lease agreement concerning type of business, insurance coverage per our insurance company representative. To be forwarded to the consulting lawyer.

Our expenses would include legal fees of approximately \$500 for writing the lease, annual property taxes of ~\$1400, insurance rider of \$138 to cover a childcare facility, plus a share of the utilities.

Jen D moved to "proceed with the lease starting at \$800 per month, with the provision that there be yearly increases over 3 years to bring the rent to \$1000, the estimated local market rate value." This should be negotiated with the childcare provider and written into the lease.

Motion seconded by Carol W. Unanimous approval (including one reluctant approval).

## •Update on Custodian, Office Manager Position searches.

Custodian: Mary Jane and Aria have agreed to resume custodial duties through the summer. No formal interview needed since they are former employees and familiar with the requirements.

Advertising for permanent custodian will need to start in July for September employ.

Office Manager: One response to ad, but no follow-up from respondent. Nancy Backlund agreed to serve through April 14. After that, will need someone to handle office duties.

Jen D moved to increase the wage offer to \$20/hour. Carol B seconded. Unanimous.

Sunday Announcements needed to prospect for applicants.  
Kevin L agreed to be supervisor for these positions.

•Recruiting Delegates to Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting June 9-10 at College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN  
Looking for 2 adult delegates, one youth. Pastor Enno is on planning committee.  
Theme is Protecting the Environment. (Bruce is interested in going)  
Sunday Announcements needed

•Request for Tech Equipment

Pastor Enno requested the purchase of a condensing microphone, a bluetooth speaker, and 2 cables for use in audio-visual ministry. The board was polled prior to the meeting and approved the expenditure of ~\$230. Kevin noted the funds should come from the Sanctuary Fund. Kevin moved, Carol W seconded. Unanimous.

Committee Business

- Pastoral Committee\_ fully staffed now: Jodie Yuhasey, Ann Russ, Mike Carlson, Sandy Stover.
  - Finance: Weekly updates continue to be sent on deposits, etc.
  - Stewardship: Letters sent to previous donors who have not pledged. One response.
    - Kevin has information from National Church and Banco on ways to conduct a successful stewardship campaign. Plan to use in fall.
    - Discussion of a Time and Talent survey as part of Stewardship—outlining opportunities to serve within congregation and in outreach; current participation or interest. Also need for Procedures Descriptions for many worship and food service activities for consistency and not relying on one individual who knows the ropes.
  - Children and Youth: Last family day was successful, plans for possible middle school day end of April or early May. Many youth are currently involved with the Spring Play so not able to attend regularly. Need to have Youth write/do announcements at services for their Fundraiser Shares for the summer trip. Reservation money due by June 15.
  - Memorial Committee: a donation was received in memory of Bob Carter
  - Outreach: Rooted and Rising- planters in collaboration with Community Gardeners, tree and shrub saplings available around May 11. Announcements closer to time.
    - Concerns with the Food Shelf, about rotting fresh foods. Only dry goods can be kept in the main room. Fresh produce must remain in the back room and be monitored.
    - Suggest we install a covered compost bin for disposal of such items. Bruce to investigate if still available from Soil and Water District.
  - Building and Grounds: North light switch needs replacing—expensive, multi-circuit type.
    - \* Architect search: 3 interested replies from 7 Requests for Proposal.
    - Worship Committee: Wonderful to have both Linda Noble and Ann Russ on this! “Our Angels!”
  - Food Team: Kudos for a great event for the Bob Carter memorial. Many hands made it work.
- Adjourned: 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bruce Tyler

## Treasurer's Report for April 2023 Newsletter

The February 2023 (latest fully available information) Financial Report shows a total income of \$19,576.79 and expenses of \$12,751.83 (See Detail Below). This means that the Church's Income was more than its Expenses by \$ 6,824.96..

<b>Income for February 2023</b>	
Pledged Donations	\$ 8,659.22
Non-Pledged Donations	\$ 401.00
Loose Plate Offering	\$ 251.44
Building Use	\$ 1,107.00
Income from Outside Sources	\$ 195.00
Special Gift	\$ 2,520.00
Syrian Relief	\$ 300.00
Profit Sharing ODDZ and ENDZ	\$ 6,140.45
Youth Fund Offering	\$ -
Interest Income	\$ 2.68
	<u>\$ 19,576.79</u>
<b>Expenses for February 2023</b>	
Pastor	\$ 7,168.03
Staff	\$ 1,110.95
Business	\$ 1,440.55
Worship	\$ 750.00
Education	\$ 92.95
Building and Grounds	\$ 1,509.68
Parsonage	\$ 505.97
Loan Principle	\$ 173.70
	<u>\$ 12,751.83</u>
Difference	\$ 6,824.96

The full report for February is available in the Church office.

### Notes from the Rooted and Rising Climate Action Group

Our reading group is finishing our study of Inhabiting Eden, by Patricia K. Tull. Chapter 7, "Environmental Fairness," proposes that Environmental Justice is not only consistent with biblical values but is at the heart of the charter of the Environmental Protection Agency. "Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies." Further, "The EPA works 'to provide an environment where all people enjoy the same degree of protection from ecological and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.' "

(US-EPA, Environmental Justice Basic Information.)

However, there is a wide gap between law and practice. Powerful corporate interests and systems involve indirect destruction of human health and life...through the direct destruction



of land, water, and air. Individual choices are important but collective action through traditional democratic tools is required to effect change. There is hope in “Small Wins”, actions which improve the situation for specific communities. (pp.117-19)

Our group continues to plan for the coming growing season, preparing the planting boxes for use by Community Gardeners, planting a variety of trees and shrubs for shade and fruit on the church property, studying alternative turf planting ideas, and considering the next phase of rain garden maintenance. After Easter our group will resume regular planning and work sessions. If you are interested in joining our efforts, contact Bruce Tyler or Suzanne Weber for further information and watch the newsletters for meeting dates.

**Here are some suggestions for action each one of us—according to our abilities and situations—can take to slow Climate Change and preserve the Planet. Both individual and group actions are equally important. (See #28)**

### **Thirty Climate Actions in Response to the Latest Climate Report**

By Anne-Marie Bonneau. See: [Zero-Waste Chef](#) for the full article with explanations and additional information.

1. Have a Conversation, Share information, concerns with others
2. Join a Climate-Focused Organization. Support and use their group power to work for change.
3. Reduce Food Waste. Plan fully use up what you buy
4. Mine the Black Gold in your Compost Bin, Turn unused vegetable matter into enriching soil. Food waste buried in a landfill generates harmful methane.
5. Cut up your Big-Bank Credit Card. Does your bank invest in fossil-fuel production and usage?
6. Register to Vote. Support candidates who share your values, will support climate mitigation measures.
7. Read a Local Newspaper. Stay informed on local issues.
8. Eat a Plant-Rich Diet. Reduce the amount of meat consumed. Meat production requires much more energy, fossil fuel, and water.
9. Turn Down the Plastic Spigot. Plastics clog the earth, are non-degrading, and use fossil fuel for manufacture and transit. Write your preferred food makers urging them to find more earth-friendly packaging materials.
10. Contact—Write, Call, Tweet-- Your Representatives in local, state and national legislatures. Urge them support climate action ordinances and bills.
11. Power up on Clean Energy. Urge your local utility to source renewable energy.
12. Get the Most Out of Your Energy. Use it wisely. Consider upgrading appliances to electricity from gas or oil.
13. Read, Listen, Watch. Share books, podcasts, broadcasts related to climate issues.
14. Consider a Climate Career. Workers have many opportunities in climate-infrastructure industries and advocacy organizations.
15. Move your Money Out of Banks that Fuel Climate Chaos (See #5)
16. Embrace Your Inner Tree hugger—and Trees. Plant a tree, help increase the tree canopy; Advocate against deforestation, especially in rainforests.
17. Conserve Water During A Drought. Heavy use of groundwater in agriculture causes the ground to sink and contaminates--such as arsenic—to poison aquifers.
18. Push for Change at Work. Urge your workplace to adopt and encourage these practices.
19. Get Around with Less Carbon. Gas powered passenger vehicles account for 40 % of transportation emissions. Walk, bike or take public mass transit when you can.
20. Support Small, Local Business. Money spent remotely does not support the local community.
21. Find and Build A Local Community to share skills and build local resiliency.
22. Become A Climate Leader. Find training and resources online to help you be a leader.
23. aware Learn How Improved Clean Cookstoves Save Lives, Cool the Planet. Cooking with wood, gas or coal emits greenhouse gases and causes deforestation.
24. Buy Less Stuff. Wait a few days before buying impulsively. Chose fewer, but higher quality, clothing and household articles that will last.
25. Take Care of Yourself. Eat well, sleep enough, and exercise regularly to maintain health, resilience, and the energy to do your climate change actions.
26. Regenerate the Soil. Encourage and employ regenerative agriculture.
27. Fight Dis-Information Online. Social media cater to your viewing habits. Be before sharing.

28- Know You Make a Difference. Both individual action and group action for change are equally important. Avoid the divisive wedge claims of change opponents.

29- Help Spread the News. Connect extreme weather events to the effects of climate change.

30- Get More Native Plants in the Ground. Natives require less water and fertilizer, and support native pollinators and other wildlife.

## Washington D.C. Youth Trip

MJ Wharton

In July 2023, the Grand Marais United Church of Christ (UCC) will send 3 local youth and 3 adults to participate in a youth advocacy trip to Washington D.C. This trip is hosted by the Minnesota and North Dakota UCC's. The youth attending is involved with the Grand Marais UCC 7-12th grade youth group, called Pizza and Social Justice (PASJ).

This year, the PASJ group has focused on learning about different Social Justice movements and connecting socially motivated youth in our community. So far this year, we've met with many community leaders such as Ann Russ about the Environmental movement and Denny Fitzpatrick on community organizing.

On July 2023 Washington D.C. advocacy trip, participants will meet with state legislators to address issues that are important to youth, a few being the treatment of the environment and environmental justice, and school safety. This trip is an opportunity for our local community youth to have a real impact, connect with youth from around the region, see the nation's capital, and learn how to go about making change.

Community members are invited to contribute to this opportunity by "purchasing a share of the trip" for \$50, and in return will attend a dinner and presentation hosted by the attending youth and adults. You can purchase a share and support our youth by going to the Grand Marais UCC website and visiting the Washington D.C. trip page.

<https://www.grandmaraisucc.org/store/share-of-washington-dc-trip>



## Minnesota Annual Meeting & Delegate

### Protecting God's Gift of Creation – Psalm 24:1

Minnesota Conference 61st Annual Meeting

June 9-10, 2023

College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN, with an online option

#### [REGISTER](#)

We acknowledge the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University occupies the original homelands of the Dakhóta and Anishinaabe peoples. We honor, respect, and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples forcibly removed from this territory, whose connection remains today.



The Minnesota Conference will gather in June, building on the hybrid model we inaugurated last year of virtual and in-person workshops, meetings, and worship. We seek to engage our youth and young families, our local congregations, our state, and the Spirit to participate in protecting and renewing the Earth, which is God's and the fullness thereof.

The sacred gift of creation entrusted to us by God is being destroyed. As we imagine and live into the church of the 21st century, let us remember, "The earth is God's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1) Let us come, as children of this sacred creation and the enduring body of Christ, as we are being called forward with the charge of protecting God's gift of creation.

We know that the work of conservation and eco-justice is a familiar one to many of us, while others have struggled to find traction or see any other way forward. Our keynote speaker will be the Rev. Michael Malcom, ordained in the United Church of Christ and founder and executive director of the People's Justice Council in Birmingham, Alabama. He will share how he created an unparalleled opportunity for faith communities throughout Alabama to unite and raise their voice against environmental racism, economic oppression, environmental injustice, and climate change.

In addition, we will create space for your efforts to be uplifted as well. If you have a "Green Team" or lay leadership at your church who wants to share or learn from what other churches are doing, look out for our online workshop earlier that week. Plus, many other workshops will return in-person this year.

## Open Positions:

### Office Administrator

First Congregation, UCC, Grand Marais, is seeking a part-time (hours 8-12 a week) office administrator. This position manages the church office and supports ministry and mission of our church. Main duties are weekly bulletin and electronic news, working with website, communications, and monthly newsletter. Maintaining office files, calendar, and office are also a part of the job. There is flexibility of work hours and some may be done from home. Send resume and three references to: First Congregational Church PO Box 095, Grand Marais, MN 55604-0095.

### Office Administrator

Location: First Congregational Church, UCC, Grand Marais, MN

Work Schedule: 8 - 12 hours weekly; actual schedule to be determined

Pay Rate: Starting at \$20.00/hour

*This position manages the church office and supports the day-to-day ministry and mission of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ.*

#### **Duties include those associated with an office setting:**

- Answering phones and greeting visitors
- Procuring and maintaining office supplies
- Creating content, proofreading, copying, collating, mailing
- Composing and sending electronic communications (MailChimp)

Maintaining a calendar of church/pastor activities

#### **Duties also include those specific to First Congregational Church UCC:**

- Maintaining/entering/editing data in "Realm" (church specific software)
- Picking up mail and maintaining filing system (digital and paper).
- Maintaining/creating content for/updating church's website (Square Space)
- Providing support and feedback to the pastor on various aspects of church communications and concerns
- Providing a listening presence in a welcoming, hospitable atmosphere for members and visitors
- Having an awareness of the needs of the congregation and providing necessary support

Keeping the physical space organized and inviting

#### **Accountability**

- The pastor is the immediate supervisor.
- There will be a yearly review of responsibilities, goals, and wage increases.

Office Administrator is asked to give 4 weeks written notice for resignation and will be given 4 weeks written notice in case of job termination unless fired for cause.

## General Synod

Synod is asked to affirm commitment to transgender, nonbinary dignity amid legislative attacks (by [Kayla Berkey](#) | published on Mar 21, 2023)

*The [2023 General Synod](#) of the United Church of Christ will consider 17 resolutions and several bylaw changes when it meets June 30-July 4 in Indianapolis. This is the first in a series of articles about them. Full texts of each of the proposed resolutions are available at the [General Synod website](#). When the state of Alabama passed a law to [criminalize the provision of gender-affirming healthcare](#) to youth in April 2022, punishable as a felony with prison time, it was the first of its kind.*

The Rev. Paul Eknes-Tucker, pastor of [Pilgrim Church UCC](#) in Birmingham, Ala., joined a group of parents and medical providers in the state [to file a lawsuit against it](#), and a judge blocked its enforcement while the case proceeds.

“This dangerous law is an unthinkable infringement on parental rights and the freedom of pastors and other faith leaders to counsel their own parishioners. This law is destructive not only to families in Alabama, but to the freedoms and values Alabamians hold dear,” Eknes-Tucker said, describing his stake in the case in [a press release from the Human Rights Campaign](#).

The law is one in an unprecedented wave of anti-LGBTQ legislation, with [more than 150 bills proposed in the last year](#) that would restrict the rights of transgender people. It’s amid this flurry of U.S. state legislative actions that General Synod of the United Church of Christ is being asked to actively [affirm the dignity of transgender and nonbinary people](#).

### ‘Pay attention and engage’

“What sparked this was the bills coming up against youth and children, but it really is a comprehensive resolution,” said the Rev. Kim Wood, Conference minister of the [Southeast Conference](#), one of the Conferences proposing the resolution.

“There have been so many oppressive acts — not just from this time, but for a long time — and we felt that since the UCC has clearly made a statement that we stand with, stand for, accompany and value people who are transgender and nonbinary, that we needed to go a step further. We really needed to pay attention to what is happening now and engage in it.”

The resolution comes from the geographical area where many of these bills have originated — the Southern United States. It was submitted by the [Florida Conference](#) and the Southeast Conference, which includes the states of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and northwestern Florida. Contributing writers also come from the [Cathedral of Hope](#) in Dallas, Texas. Writers consulted with Carmarion Anderson-Harvey, the Alabama state director for Project One America

### Bring commitments to the forefront’

The resolution of witness is also one of reaffirmation. It invites the UCC to actively engage in its commitment to being an [open and affirming denomination](#) and to recognizing in the

‘present moment that all people are created in the image of God. It builds on a 2003 resolution passed by General Synod [affirming the ministry and rights of transgender people](#).

“We wanted to make sure that we were not just repeating something that had already been done on the floor, though we wanted to call attention to those resolutions that General Synod had passed before so we could bring those decisions back to the forefront and remind us all of what we committed to,” Wood said.

The proposed resolution adds a focus on meeting the needs of trans and nonbinary youth and seeking to protect equitable rights for all trans and nonbinary people while they are being actively threatened. It cites high rates of harassment experienced by gender expansive students and points to studies that show the harm of excluding trans people from sports teams consistent with their gender identity.

It also notes higher rates of violence and death experienced by trans and nonbinary youth and adults compared with peers, with disproportionately high amounts for transgender women of color.

### **‘Advocate and empower’**

The resolution calls for response and action.

Some of what it resolves includes promoting equitable laws for transgender and nonbinary people, committing to “lift up our religious text” and stand in solidarity against the harm done, and addressing ways to “develop gender-affirming space and inclusion in all aspects of the United Church of Christ.”

It names that it is the UCC’s responsibility as a Christian denomination to “advocate for and empower” transgender and nonbinary people who “God is already working through to enrich the whole life of the body of Christ.”

### **‘Where rubber meets the road’**

This proposed resolution is seen as another UCC response to the current political climate. Another, most recently, was [a statement from leaders across the denomination](#) affirming the value of trans youth lives.

“As we were engaged in this, it was really important to us to draw the wider Synod and denomination to the touchpoints of places where we have been in acknowledging people who are transgender and nonbinary and supporting, caring for, including and engaging them, to where we are now,” Wood said. “Now it’s a full political scale in huge ways and this place where the rubber meets the road, and all that we’ve talked about being – it’s here.

“Can we engage in those ways that we’ve called ourselves to?”

## SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

***For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.***

***(Ecclesiastes 3)***

**Time to Celebrate....**

### **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

4/1 Anne Swallow Gillis

4/6 Fran Smith

4/9 Jean Ljungkull

4/12 Ben Steckelberg

4/12 Donald Davison

4/13 Cayden Zimmer

4/15 Sherry Thompson

4/17 Kaitlyn Bohlin

4/20 Dean Jacobsen

4/23 Amelia Hedstrom

4/24 Nona Smith

4/26 Nicole Bockovich



*Please help keep us up to date by letting us know if you'd like to be added (or removed) from our Birthday and Anniversary newsletter announcements.*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 9:30am-2:30pm Piano Lessons
2 9:00am Sunday School 9:30am Choir Practice 10:30am Worship 4:00pm Journey Group	3 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 5:30pm Pride Planning Meeting 7pm ALANON  Pastor Enno's day off	4 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	5 2:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study  2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 3:30pm Rooted & Rising Book Study	6 9:15am Chaplin Meeting 10:00am TaiChi 11:00am Building & Grounds Mtg 12:00pm Women A A(FS) 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 6:00pm - Maundy Thurs-	7 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	8 9:30am-2:30pm Piano Lessons
9 9:00am Sunday School 9:30am Choir Practice 10:30am Worship 2:00pm Care Center Church Service	10 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 5:30pm Pride Planning Meeting 7pm ALANON  Pastor Enno's day	11 10:30pm Small Church Collective 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	12 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 5:15pm Pizza & Social Justice 5:30PM Leaves & Hot dish Potluck @ Kerns/Delfs	13 10:00am TaiChi 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	14 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	15 9:30am-2:30pm Piano Lessons
16 NO Sunday School 9:30am Choir Practice 10:30am Worship Salad Potluck Following services	17 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 5:30pm Pride Event 7pm ALANON  Pastor Enno's day off	18 12:00 pm Clergy Cluster 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 5:00pm BOD meeting 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	19 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 2:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study	20 10:00am TaiChi 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 12:00pm Echo Preacher mtg 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	21 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	22 9:30am-2:30pm Piano Lessons
23/30 9:00am Sunday School 9:30am Choir Practice 10:30am Worship	24 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 7pm ALANON	25 Enno Gone: All Day Chaplin Training 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	26 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons 3:30pm Rooted & Rising Book Study	27 10:00am TaiChi 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 4:00pm Pastor Relations 5:00pm Library Board of Trustee	28 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch 2:00-6:00pm Piano Lessons	29 9:30am-2:30pm Piano Lessons

FS—Fireside Room SH—Social Hall MR—Media Room SA—Sanctuary N—Narthex/Lobby SR—South Room LL—Lower Level

BOD—our Church Board of Directors AA—Alcoholics Anonymous ALANON—Families and Friends of Alcoholics  
CODA—Co-dependents Anonymous