



CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Weekly Newsletter

April 19, 2021

Sunday, April 25th @ 10:30am: Pastor Jack's message is "Field Trip or Tripping in the Field?"

From your computer or smartphone, watch at facebook.com/waterfordcumc/live or at facebook.com/waterfordcumc/events.

Dear Friends,

I've spent a portion of this Monday morning looking for information about the Covid-19 numbers in Michigan. I've also read several articles about our political parties fighting over any number of issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is plenty of blame and name-calling being thrown around. I am tired, disappointed and sickened by most of the leadership in our nation and state. I have never identified with any particular party, I have never campaigned for any particular candidate at any level and I have never voted a straight ticket. I have voted based on the integrity and performance of candidates as I have tried to educate myself about those candidates. My number one criterion has long been whether or not the candidate has the best interest of their constituency as his or her priority.

Increasingly over the last couple of decades, those candidates have been in short supply. The Covid-19 pandemic is not a political football to be grasped and controlled by a team running toward the goal of power and self-aggrandizement. It is a deadly virus that has and is killing people. I am frankly bewildered by any person refusing any measure that could curtail the virus, even after receiving a vaccination. I've buried enough people who have died of Covid-19. I've talked with enough people who have suffered through the disease. People cry out wondering when the Pandemic will end when there is only one answer to that question; the Covid-19 pandemic will be over when it is over.

My concern is what will be left of our nation, our world, society in general and the church—our church! With the anonymity of the Internet already eroding common courtesy and civil discourse, the pandemic has become the latest issue over which we can argue and further establish division.

It is usually at this point in writing this little weekly article for our newsletter that I give up and delete my rant and find something else to write about. Except I don't think I want to do that this time. Can you accept that your pastor is angry and sad? I am angry because of all the posturing people are putting forth in defense of their opinions and actions, disregarding anyone who disagrees.

I am sad, because all of this conflict takes away from what we truly should be about—cue Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. "Humanity is our business. The common welfare is our business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence are all our business," to paraphrase Jacob Marlow. Of course the actual quote is "Humanity was my business. The common welfare was my business . . ." I'm afraid that the original quote is more accurate—the world "was" being the crux of the issue.

During the service yesterday I mentioned the four goals of our church, which I hope will keep us on a trajectory of humanity being our business. May it be so!! I look forward to seeing you in worship on Sunday and pray for the day when we can be together in each other's presence! Until then, be safe and continue to care for one another.

Because of Christ,

-Pastor Jack

Celebration of Calling Virtual Event

Join churches engaging in living out our callings at a C3 virtual conference on Thursday, April 29th from 7–9:30 pm. "A Calling Spirituality: Following God into New Callings" is a time to reflect on where God is calling you in your life and to

hear from Rick Steves. Rick is a travel guidebook author, TV and radio show host, and Lutheran. Rick's callings to travel changed dramatically as the pandemic shut down the globe. Come hear Rick's reflections about calling and take time to reflect on your own. Register today at hopin.com/events/a-celebration-of-calling.

Calling All Graduates!

We will be celebrating your accomplishment during worship on Sunday, June 13th. Please share your plans and a photo with us. Use the form found at WaterfordCUMC.org/grad2021/ to submit your information. **Please have your information to us by May 31st.** Thank you!

Central's 2021 Missional Initiatives

A few weeks ago you learned about Central's upcoming 2021 initiatives. There are still opportunities to grow in your faith by participating on one of these committees. To recap, these initiatives are:

- Engaging with Remote Worshipers
- Expanding Central's Congregational Care System
- Expanding Central's Hunger Ministries
- LGBTQ+ Inclusiveness

If you'd like to get involved, please contact the church office via email or phone at (248) 681-0040 or indicate your interest on the online connection card you fill out after Sunday worship. You can also learn more about each of these initiatives and indicate your interest by visiting our website at WaterfordCUMC.org/centrals-2021-missional-initiatives/.

Z-Chat with Your Central Friends

Bob Swartz is leading Zoom fellowship sessions on Thursday evenings at 7pm. Nothing is required for these sessions; just a chance to check in with your church friends. [Email Bob \(racerbob@comcast.net\)](mailto:racerbob@comcast.net) for the Zoom link if you'd like to participate.

Scholarship Applications are Available

Scholarships applications for high school, college, and skilled trade students can now be accessed on our church website at WaterfordCUMC.org/forms/. The application deadline is May 3, 2021. These scholarships help Central Church members reduce the financial burdens of their continued education and are funded by memorial gifts and generous members. If you would like to establish a continuing education scholarship in your name, please contact the church office at info@waterfordcumc.org or (248) 681-0040.

Camp Scholarship Applications are Available

Because of the past generosity of this congregation and the cancellation of the 2020 summer camping season, we do not need to take a special camp offering this year. To apply for a scholarship to attend camp during the 2021 season, please complete the form found at WaterfordCUMC.org/forms/.

Sympathies

Our condolences are with Sarah and Ciro Spigno on the passing of their granddaughter, Bette Stutts. Our prayers are with the family.

Song of the Week

I am wishing you all joy and health as we watch Michigan become one of the biggest hot spots for Covid variants in the nation. Please be safe in your dealings as we make it through this next wave of the virus. I know I have heard about more Covid diagnoses and tests among people I know the last few weeks and I am sure you have as well. All of our hearts go out to the health of our friends and hope for safety and health for everyone in the coming weeks.

Lately, I have been thinking about expanding empathy in our lives. I believe that empathy is one of our most important traits to develop, but sometimes it isn't characterized as a strength in our society. We have competing narratives that are rooted deep in our culture. One is empathetic and shows how our large brains developed to work through complex social signals so that as a species we could work together to complete tasks that were beyond us individually. We can see this from early humans taking down large prey together to feed their tribe to our current collective efforts to do something amazing like pool our knowledge into a virtual forum that can be shared around the globe and allow teams of people to work on studying and combating a virus that has caused a worldwide pandemic. Where would we be without the ability to work collectively on these giant tasks? But there is a competing narrative of self-reliance that we have heard throughout our lives as well. When we are young, this often takes the form of taking responsibility

for our actions, not relying on others to do the work we should be doing, and any number of other lessons in putting forth our best effort and understanding our responsibilities. But I wonder if this messaging is helpful in the long term as, unchecked, this also can lead to antisocial behaviors such as a reluctance to ask for help when needed or, in the extreme, a callousness and dismissiveness of others' needs or even actively working to break down support networks or unjustly persecuting those who are viewed as different. This ability to not recognize others as valuable is at its heart a problem of empathy, and I think if we recognized its value in society and in our lives more fully, perhaps it would be looked at as a great strength for us to embrace.

But perhaps above all, our collective morality is at its heart an empathy equation. Watching the most vehement battles in our nation, it always boils down to who is more or less deserving of our empathy. But that is why it's a false choice. Shouldn't we be more empathetic of everyone? Isn't the idea of being less empathetic towards one group exactly the opposite of an argument for empathy? When I choose who gets my support, I often frame my choice between who is excluding others vs. who is advocating for others. This doesn't make every situation clear, but it clarifies more often than not. Because isn't this what we are called to do? If we are to follow the example of Jesus, isn't he the one who eats with prostitutes and tax collectors without passing judgment? Doesn't Peter take his mission to the Gentiles because everyone is deserving? And isn't the golden rule at its core just an exercise in empathy with others? I don't think it is a coincidence that every religion has a version of the golden rule at its heart. This is universal to human experience and success. To expand our empathy, to be able to truly understand another person's joys and sorrows, to recognize their challenges and successes, and to appreciate them for everything they offer, support them in everything they need, and help them to become everything they might be able to so that their light may make our world brighter. I hope you will embrace the idea of joining me over the next several weeks as I explore different aspects of expanding our empathy for everyday life.

I want to thank Rainy Stephenson who shared this song with me recently, and I think it is a perfect way to start out an exploration of empathy. There are many wonderful versions of this song, but I chose the Joan Baez version with her clear vocals and easy diction because the words are very powerful, but I encourage you to explore the Hank Williams Sr.; Peter, Paul, and Mary; or other versions to find the one that speaks to you. It is a reminder that we find opportunities for empathy everywhere in life, and are called to take full advantage of each opportunity, for that is where we find the divinity within ourselves.

[Tramp on the Street - Joan Baez \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBx8ViPnDYY\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBx8ViPnDYY)

With Love,
-Kevin

Connect with Central

Central's Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/waterfordcumc>. Find the upcoming live stream worship service and recordings of previous services, faith development videos and daily inspirations.

Central's YouTube Channel - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCn5n6YzaUUu9lqei6z-bg_g. Find recordings of past services, choral and dance recordings, Pastor Jack's weekly devotionals and more.

Central's Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/waterfordcumc/>. A private group that allows members to support one another with posts and inspiration.

Central's Website - <https://www.WaterfordCUMC.org>. Find recordings of sermons, upcoming events, the latest COVID re-opening plan, Central's member directory (login code CUM51) and the worship attendance form.