

STAY AT HOME - STAY WELL

MAY, 2021 NEWSLETTER – CORONAVIRUS VERSION

“Hope Does Not Disappoint Us”

- Romans 5:1-5

From the Minister...



May is a month of new growth, renewal, and hopefulness! Our **REOPENING TASK TEAM** continues to monitor case positivity rate as it drops towards our target of 5% as well as other metrics. You can find the current dashboard, as well as documents outlining the decision-making process on the church website COVID-19 tab.

CROP WALK – MAY 2

Our second (mostly) virtual Farmington/Farmington Hills/West Bloomfield CROP Hunger Walk will have an in-person socially distanced kickoff at 1:30 PM May 2 at the Orchard Ridge campus of OCC – enter from Orchard Lake Road south of 696, and follow the signs! At press time, before walk day and final totals, we’ve received over \$41,000 in donations to help end hunger worldwide and right here at home! Thanks to everyone who’s contributed, and if you’d like to learn more or make a donation, go to our Walk page: <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/north-congregational-church-farmington-hills-mi>

SERVICES OF REMEMBRANCE AND CELEBRATION ON ZOOM

As we have been meeting virtually this past year, we’ve said many good-byes, and in May we’ll have an opportunity to attend one Zoom memorial service, for CAROL RASMUSSEN on SATURDAY, MAY 8 at 1:00 p.m.

To remember all our members, friends, and family members who’ve died out of this life since March of 2020, we will hold a ZOOM ALL-CHURCH MEMORIAL MAY 23, 1:00 P.M.

Both of these services will be recorded, so they may be shared after the fact with those who aren’t online. If you have memories or photos of a North Church member, friend or relative who should be included, please email me at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com

LINKS FOR THESE SERVICES ARE BEING SENT OUT IN THE FRIDAY PLANNER, to avoid zoom-bombing! If you can’t find the link please email me at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com

There’s a lot going on right now in the life of the church, thanks to the great work of our Ministry Boards and staff! I invite you to read through this newsletter and take note of the many ways that the church has been alive and well and in ministry in the world—and where you might join in our works of worship and service!

Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron



Moderator's Notes...

It is the last week in April. This coming Sunday will be the fifth Sunday in Easter, also known as Cantate Sunday. This name for the fifth Sunday in Eastertide comes from "Cantate Dómino" (Sing to the Lord), used on this day in the Catholic tradition.

O sing a new song to the Lord, for he has worked wonders; in the sight of the nations he has shown his deliverance, alleluia. His right hand and his holy arm have given him victory.

This coming Sunday is also Crop Walk, I hope you can participate.

It has been a busy month. We celebrated Easter and look forward to spring. You completed our reopening survey – I shared the results earlier. With the resurgence of Covid-19 cases in Michigan we decided to postpone returning to in person worship. Our Reopening Task team continues to monitor the situation with the pandemic in our area and make recommendations to Executive Council. We are hopeful that we will be able to return to our building soon. Meanwhile Sunday worship and Wednesday inspiration continue on Facebook live (and posted on the Church website).

Our Ministry Boards and committees were all busy during April. Many of their activities are noted below. One committee of note is Nominating. Our annual program meeting will be **June 27** (please mark your calendars!). At this meeting we will vote on Board member and officer positions for the coming year. The Nominating Committee is working diligently to fill the open slots.

Although we are not yet meeting in person every Sunday, the work of the Church continues. There are many opportunities to volunteer and help. If you are interested, please contact the Church office or one of our Ministry Board chairs.

Assets & Resources	Eric Schwartz	Fellowship	Tim Sirovy
Diaconate	Sandy Greer	Missions	Lori Rhode
Education	Karen Sirovy	Worship	Sara Lange

Executive Council Notes

Executive Council met on April 26 and considered the following:

- **Assets & Resources:** The Board approved contract for weed control. They also created a ‘look ahead’ document to help plan for future capital expenditures. The Investment Committee of this Board met with Comerica on April 28 to review the performance of the Church’s investments (they have been doing well).
- **Diaconate:** The Easter card packets were distributed during our ‘Palm Saturday’ event and were well received. Diaconate continues to keep in touch with our shut-ins.
- **Education:** The children events at our ‘Palm Saturday’ event were a success. Our Sunday School teachers are using a new curriculum that we acquired recently. It is going well, the Board plans to continue its use in the next school year.
- **Fellowship.** The Fellowship Board also contributed to our ‘Palm Saturday’ event. The Board continues to organize virtual events, most recently a virtual euchre party. The Men’s Breakfast Club has resumed meeting on Tuesdays. An upcoming event is our Strawberry Social, currently planned for the second Sunday in June. If you have suggestions for social events, please let them know!
- **Missions:** Our Missions Board continues to support Crossroads in Detroit. They are now working on providing hand-out kits on Mother’s Day for women who are Crossroads clients. This Board also approved benevolences for Samaritan Counseling, Starr Commonwealth (programs for children and families), and Crossroads.
- **Worship:** This Board is looking at procedures for our return to in person worship, in particular how we will arrange to safely have music (organ, piano, and soloists). The Board and Rev. Biedron are working with Meadowbrook and Royal Oak Congregational Churches on a group confirmation class.
- **Treasurer:** North Church received a second PPP loan from the Federal government, \$45,000. Our first such loan has been forgiven, we expect the second to be as well. Through March pledge revenues have been above and expenses below budget. Our endowment increased and is now back to its pre-pandemic level.
- **Communications:** This committee is looking at an electronic sign to replace our aging wooden sign on Twelve Mile. Rev. Biedron, Janice Thornton, and this committee have been working on a new website for the Church – stay tuned!
- **New Business:**
 - As noted earlier, our 2021 Program Meeting will be **June 27**. It is normally in May, but since it was delayed to September last year this gives the current Board members a bit more time in office.
 - Staff transition. Our business manager, Danny Hawkins, will be retiring in July (thank you, Danny, for all your work). Upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee and Structure & Governance Task Team, Council approved a transition plan wherein the Church will contract with an accounting firm for bookkeeping and routine reporting and a payroll firm to process staff payroll. We will not plan to hire an immediate replacement but move to this model utilizing outside firms and assess as we go.

- SOS bedding. The Church has bedding for South Oakland Shelter, some of which we inherited from St. Alexander, some of which we purchased. We will not be hosting SOS this year and have not yet decided about future hosting. So that the bedding can be used, Council approved its donation to an organization in Pontiac that will make it available to low-income households (some of whom may be SOS clients who are moving into apartments or homes).

May you all enjoy a spring of hope, health, and joy.

“For now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.” (Song of Solomon 2:11-12)

Kevin Gromley



A MESSAGE FROM REV. BIEDRON

After more than 24 years of service to our congregation and community, **Danny Hawkins** has announced his plans to retire this July. While we are excited for Danny (and Susie who is also retiring), we will certainly miss his leadership, partnership, and excellent service to our congregation.

Danny has had an outstanding career in various office roles at North Congregational Church. Enticed into working part time as the church bookkeeper by **Rev. Dr. Mark Jensen** when Danny was a stay-at-home dad with two young girls, he has adjusted his roles to the changing needs of the congregation several times during his tenure. He has been the Program Director and Business Manager of the church since September of 2011.

Please join us in congratulating **Danny** and **Susie** as they transition together into the next phase of their life. While they expect to spend as much time as possible traveling, Commerce Township will continue to be their home and North Congregational Church will continue to be their church family.

WEDDING NEWS

Congratulations to Andrew R. Tapert, and Ashley R. Wright,
on their wedding on April 24, 2021!

North Congregational Church
Year-to-Date Financial Summary as of
March 31, 2021

	Year-to-Date <u>Total</u>	Year-to-Date <u>Budget</u>	Percent Difference <u>vs. Budget</u>	Annual <u>Budget</u>
<u>Income</u>				
Pledges	57,287	49,600	15.5%	186,050
Other Income	5,563	4,570	21.7%	40,400
¹ Paycheck Protection Loan	45,000	0		0
Operating Income	107,850	54,170	99.1%	226,450
<u>Expenses</u>				
Payroll & Benefits	59,058	62,191	-5.0%	247,861
² Assets & Resources Min. Board (other)	3,482	464	650.4%	10,290
Utilities and Insurance	12,697	14,124	-10.1%	43,000
Building Maintenance	2,854	11,530	-75.2%	69,174
Grounds Maintenance	13,242	10,950	20.9%	20,800
Office Expenses	1,535	2,347	-34.6%	9,400
Diaconate Ministry Board	112	75	49.1%	500
³ Education Ministry Board	1,300	2,106	-38.3%	7,730
Fellowship Ministry Board	36	195	-81.6%	2,600
³ Missions Ministry Board	10,808	12,752	-15.2%	36,000
Worship Ministry Board (other)	67	140	-52.2%	500
³ Music**	8,789	9,090	-3.3%	27,484
Operating Expenses	113,979	125,964	-9.5%	475,339

Notes

1. We expect the \$45,000.00 Second Paycheck Protection Loan to be fully forgiven.
2. Audit payment of \$3385 did not match expected budget timing, expect to balance out during the year.
3. Net of Restricted funds usage.

MAY MEETINGS on ZOOM:

Missions Ministry Board – Sunday, May 9, at 11:30 a.m.

Education Ministry Board – Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – Tuesday, May 11, at 7:30 p.m.

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – Wednesday, May 12, at 7 p.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – Tuesday, May 18, at 7 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board – Sunday, May 23, at 11:30 a.m.

Executive Council – Monday, May 24, at 7 p.m.



FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB has resumed their breakfast meetings at Moe's on Ten. (See article.)

BOOK GROUP on Zoom, Wednesday, May 19, 1 p.m.

MASCOT'S – Meets via Zoom. If you would like to be included in the invitation email list for future meetings, please contact **Danny Hawkins**, NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com.

Got an idea for a virtual fellowship? Interested in leading a Bible study or a class on zoom? Speak with **Rev. Biedron** or Program Director **Danny Hawkins**.

NORTH CHURCH ARTICLES AND ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

The Annual Meeting of North Congregational Church will be held on Sunday, June 27th, immediately following worship. Board chairs, council members and association representatives are reminded to begin work on their report, and when finished email **Debbie** at ncc.churchoffice@ gmail.com. The deadline for reports is June 11th. Thank you.

Mother's Day Crossroads Women's Hygiene Kits

The mission's ministry board needs your help with a Mother's Day project for women at Crossroads.

Thank you for the toothpaste, soap, shaving cream and razors and other items dropped off and used in the Crossroads Hygiene kits distributed in March. 90 kits went out! Even so, we are asking for your help again. Instead of requesting items to be signed up for and dropped off at church, the mission's ministry board comparison shopped on 5 items. We found the best prices. To join the effort for this project, make a monetary donation and mail it to the church office, or contribute on-line at the church's website.

While sorting donated clothing at Crossroads this past winter, a worker said there are some needs that clients are embarrassed to ask for. The majority of the homeless who come for a meal are men, but women are also served regularly. Feminine hygiene items are tucked inside purses amongst the clothing available for pick up.

The missions board is preparing 6 item hygiene kits for women. The kit contains sanitary napkins, a Dove soap bar, deodorant, small bottle of hand lotion and shampoo, and lip balm. We will pack 40-50 kits which cost about \$8 each to fill.

If you have purses to donate for packing these items, please drop them off in a bin located outside the church's door 2. The kits will be packed May 7 or 8, and delivered to Crossroads for Mother's Day.

Thank you! Lori Rhode Missions Board Chairperson

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

A group of North Church Men meet every other Tuesday for breakfast at Moe's on Ten, at 9:00 a.m. They will be meeting on **May 4** and **18** this month. If you would like to join them, please contact **Steve Lange** at stephenlange@me.com.

COVID-19 GIVING OPTIONS

There are two options if you wish to keep up with your church donations while we wait for the building to reopen and worship services to resume.



You may make donations by mailing checks, made out to North Congregational, to **Danny Hawkins** at the church where Danny is picking up his mail at least twice a week.

You may also consider the North Congregational Church electronic option for making ongoing, one time and special offerings. Contributions can be debited automatically from your bank account or processed using your credit card (with a 2.6% fee charged to the church). Our electronic giving program offers convenience for you and donation consistency for our congregation. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. And, when travel, illness, global pandemic or other circumstances prevent you from attending worship services, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis.

You may sign up at the church website, NorthCongregationalChurch.org, using the Online Giving button on the right side of the home page or you may contact **Danny Hawkins** at NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com for an authorization form for him to set up your giving.

BOOK GROUP ON ZOOM **Wednesday, May 19, at 1:00 p.m.**

This month's book is **The Four Winds by Kristen Hannah**. Goodreads review: Texas, 1934. Millions are out of work and a drought has broken the Great Plains. Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as the crops are failing, the water is drying up, and dust threatens to bury them all. One of the darkest periods of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl era, has arrived with a vengeance.

In this uncertain and dangerous time, Elsa Martinelli—like so many of her neighbors—must make an agonizing choice: fight for the land she loves or go west, to California, in search of a better life. *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American Dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.

Come and join the conversation! To receive the zoom link, see the church planner, or email **Rev. Biedron** at ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com

MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD BENEVOLENCES for May, 2021

Haven, Mission Mazahua - Mexico, Casa Colibri - Guatemala

CROP WALK IS HERE!

Have you been dismayed seeing the long lines of cars waiting for food during the pandemic, as well as in natural disasters such as the fires in California or the deep freeze in the south? Did your heart break at the sight of starving children in Yemen on the news? Have you wished that there is something you could do to help? You can do this: support the CROP Hunger Walk, which raises funds for hunger relief. North Church has been involved with the Farmington/Farmington Hills/West Bloomfield Crop walk since we came to this community, and **Rev. Biedron** has been the general chair of the Walk since 1999.



Our 2021 annual CROP Hunger Walk to raise funds for global and local hunger relief will kick off on May 2, with a car rally at 1:30 pm at OCC Orchard Ridge Campus, Parking Lot #2. (Enter off Orchard Lake Rd.)

Our fundraising has moved to the internet, and we're hoping to have a number of North Church walkers join with churches, mosques and synagogues as well as local agencies to raise funds. Of the total amount raised (generally between \$30,000-\$35,000) 25% will come back to our designated community partners: CARES, Neighborhood House, Salvation Army Farmington Hills Branch, Yad Ezra Kosher Food Pantry, and Zaman International.

YOU CAN HELP! Sign up to be a walker and join the North Congregational Church team at <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/north-congregational-church-farmington-hills-mi> - scroll down and click "join the team" to walk and raise funds.

If you wish to donate, you can look up one of our walkers and donate via their own fundraising page or donate to the whole North Church team. If you'd like to contribute directly, you can send a check to North Church with CROP Walk in the memo line. Even a small pledge will go a long way towards helping hungry folks!



To learn more about CROP Walks and Church World Service, you can visit their home page, <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/home>

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Thank you to the members and friends for all the household cleaning supplies donated at the drive-by event on March 27th. We were able to deliver 182 household cleaning supplies to CARES. They were thrilled to receive the supplies. We appreciate your support of this endeavor.

NAPF / HOPE Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 20th through Sunday, June 27th

Given the unfortunate circumstances we are still dealing with the NAPF-HOPE Planning Team decided to make the best of it and for the first time ever, NAPF-HOPE for 2021 will be virtual!

Each church group will complete one registration form and will then receive a kit a few weeks prior to the conference which will include the usual conference swag, like t-shirts, booklets, & new this year...facemasks!

- Each church group will then plan their own week, but will have access to four pre-recorded messages by four different individuals that have spoken within the last five years at NAPF-HOPE.
- Each group will also be encouraged to do a local mission project.
- Finally, on Sunday, June 27th in the afternoon/evening, we will do a LIVE virtual gathering which will include fellowship, worship, mission project sharing, & communion.

More details are being worked out. We encourage the youth and young adults of your church to participate in this year's one of a kind conference. We will be miles apart; however, we are always connected to one another in faith.

Look for more details as they become available at
<https://www.naccc.org/youth1.htm>

YOUTH UNITED SERVICE CAMP
Tuesday, August 3rd through Thursday, August 5th

Celebrating the multi-cultural diverse community of Farmington Hills, Youth United, has conducted a service camp experience the last few summers for middle school and high school students. Interfaith youth have been able to join together and give back to their community in a positive way and work to build peace by making bridges. Youth United has worked each summer to benefit **CARES of Farmington Hills**, a village of hope in our community that demonstrates the power of treating all neighbors with compassion and dignity.

The good news is that there will be a Youth United this summer; the pretty good news is that it will be a mixed virtual and in person camp to avoid larger groupings of people.

- Mornings will feature virtual camps, providing opportunities for games, faith discussions, and projects to benefit CARES and its clients, using Zoom.
- Afternoons will consist of optional in person work sessions at the CARES campus

Registration information will be on the North Congregational website Summer Camps page when they are available. For answers to other questions, email YouthUnitedFH@gmail.com.