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February 2021



From the MINISTER

It was no surprise this week when Punxsutawney Phil came out of his burrow at Gobbler's Knob and saw his shadow, predicting six more weeks of winter. After all, he emerged in the "dark winter" of the pandemic where gloom and doom abound.

Many have compared life during the pandemic to the experience of Bill Murray's character in the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day*. Due to some unknown cosmic reason, Phil Connors, a cynical weatherman, is forced to relive February 2nd over and over again in an endless loop. As we try to navigate our way through the COVID crisis, many of us feel as if we are trapped in an endless loop as well. Living in the monotony of near isolation we wake up every morning wondering if the day ahead will be any different from the 24 hours we just endured.

As depressing as that is, we need to remember that just as spring will arrive, this dark winter will pass. Vaccines have arrived and others are on the way. They may not be being distributed fast enough to please us, but medical personnel are doing their best to get everyone vaccinated who wants to be. I hope that includes you. The sooner we all get vaccinated, the sooner life can return to some form of normalcy.

There is confusion about where, when and how to receive the vaccine. According to a recent *Register* article you can register with the Erie County Health Department online at eriecohealthohio.org or by calling 567-867-8222. Likewise, you can contact the Kroger Pharmacy at 866-211-5320 or Kroger.com/OhioCovidVaccine. Appointments can also be made at Discount Drug Mart in Sandusky at 419-625-0733 or 419-433-4565 in Huron.

I am preregistered and anxiously awaiting the call to schedule my shot appointment. When at last I receive the vaccine, I am sure I will experience the feelings of a facebook friend who recently posted a picture of her vaccination sticker and these words, "With gratitude for the Fear Not mantra of my faith, and the community and science that made this possible. One step at a time."

As far as Phil and his prediction go, take heart. Since 1887 he has been correct less than 40% of the time. So there is hope that maybe spring is really just around the corner!

Shalom, Rev. Lenore

RECAP OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

In case you missed the Annual Meeting because of the bad weather on January 31st, here are highlights of what was discussed.

Pending lawsuit: It turns out that the company that was supposed to buy the old building is a sham. We will need to sue the individual involved and we have been told she may not have any money. This will be expensive and we may not receive any financial reward. However, in doing so, we could prevent others from being scammed by this person.

Leadership: Considering the impact the pandemic has had on our church life and leadership, we will suspend our constitution and leadership structure until we are able to return to some form of normalcy. Anyone interested in helping to oversee the day to day operations of the church is invited to come to a monthly Church Life meeting to be held on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m..

Finances: If we don't sell the old building, we may end up using all of our Endowment Fund by the end of the year. Scarlet reminded the congregation that every year our finances turn out to be better than we anticipated, thanks to the generosity of our members and friends. She expects it will be the same this year.

Sale of the old building: We presently have three interested parties, but no offer. Lowering the price was suggested to try and motivate them. Robin Pratt, Rev. Lenore, Scarlet Berry, Meredith Greenman and Glenn Gast were approved to negotiate the best deal possible if an offer is received and bring it back to the congregation for a vote.

Appreciation: On behalf of the congregation, Rev. Lenore thanked Scarlet for her many years of handling our finances as church Treasurer. She also expressed appreciation to everyone who helped with finding our new location and the move, especially Meredith and Robin. She personally was grateful to Meredith for making it possible for us to live stream the worship service during the shutdown last spring and presented her with a token of appreciation.

Copies of the Annual Report are available on the back table in the sanctuary.

FOOD BOX GIVE AWAY

Care & Share is back in business with a new program to feed the hungry. They will host a Food Box Give Away at 222 Meigs Street (former City building parking lot) on the second and fourth Tuesdays in February and March from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.. Food boxes contain a cookbook, recipe selections with ingredients, spices, and food staples similar to what Blue Apron provides for its customers.

Rev. Lenore will be taking vacation time February 10-16 . If you should have a pastoral emergency during that time, please call Rev. Bob at 419-271-0086. He will be preaching on the 14th.

CPTU MEETING FEBRUARY 11th

At the next Center for Peace Through Understanding meeting, February 11th at 6:30 p.m., last month's discussion of plans for this year will continue. Topics will include hosting an anti-gun violence program in the fall in partnership with the NAACP and other community organizations, as well as promoting understanding through a series of outdoor programs, similar to the Pause for Peace events held last year. Come and share your ideas

EMERGENCY CANCELLATIONS

If the weather is unfavorable and you aren't sure about leaving the house for worship, or any other church event, please check the "iAlert" on News Channel 3 WKYC or go to [wkyc.com](http://www.wkyc.com). You can also sign up (<http://www.wkyc.com/news/mobile/text/>) for free text alerts that will send i-alert notifications directly to your mobile device.

We will also notify local radio stations WCPZ(102.7 FM) and WLKR(96.1 FM) of any cancellation involving the church. Obviously, if a level 3 snow emergency has been declared, everything is cancelled! You can always call Rev. Lenore to find out what is, or isn't, going on (419-366-8729).



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARY

Barbara Petersen	2/3
Jerry Boros	2/8
Robert Baker	2/11
Joy Berquist	2/12
Jacki Warren	2/15
Gary & Scarlet Berry	2/16
Nette Simon	2/21
Kathy (Harris) Collins	2/25
Elmeda Schwartz	2/27



Marc Austin, Vicki Deissler, Iretta Gast & Ruth Asmus, Mike Graham, Sam Greenman Sr., Debbi Keller, Ruth Maier, Christian Moore, John Rainey & Gene Finnegan, Kayli Reno, Mary Richards, Samantha Smith, Tim Sprouse, Brittany Stahl, Debby Neese-Voltz, Maureen Wright, the Baur, Beverick, Burks, Conroy, Ouriel, Pulse, Schwartz, Walton and Wells Families. Homebound: Ruth Baker, Anne Johnstone, Elmeda Schwartz and Christine Vroman

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

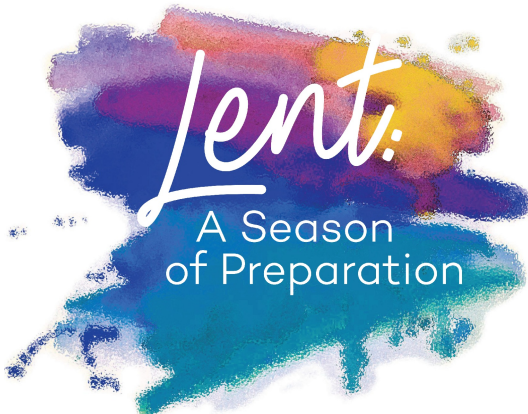
We received letters of thanks from the Erie County Senior Center and United Church Homes for the last of our 2020 quarterly donations.

To Our Church Family,

Thank you for your kind gifts this past Christmas. We were once again touched by the generosity of the members and friends of First Congregational.

Sincerely,

Rev. Lenore, Marc, Jerry, Robin, and Charles



There are many secular holidays in February - Ground Hog's Day, Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day. For Christians, the most important day in February is not a holiday, but a holy day, Ash Wednesday. This year it falls on February 17th, with Easter being April 4th this year

We will host what has become our own traditional Ash Wednesday service, including Holy Communion, but not the imposition of ashes at 7:00 p.m. that evening. A few modifications will be made because of the pandemic and masks must be worn and social distancing practiced.

The 40 days in Lent correspond to the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and praying as he prepared for his public ministry. While Lent began in the 4th Century as a time of fasting

and personal sacrificing, in many denominations like ours, it is now a time for introspection and reflection, often leading to growth in our spiritual lives. So instead of “giving something up” for Lent try adding something to bring you closer to God like reading one of the gospels or perhaps a daily devotional. You might try journaling as a way to communicate your innermost thoughts to God, much like the palmists of long ago. If you do that, you will be giving something up, a few hours of time, and for most of us that is a significant sacrifice.