

# From the desk of Pastor Jonathan



**105 E. Main  
Street**

**Ionia, MI  
48846**

**Service**

**9:30 am**

**www.ioniafirst.  
com**

**June  
2020**

**Newsletter**



## “No Reward”

“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’? Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

Luke 17: 7-10

Dear Friends,

First, let me express my hope and prayers that each of you are as well as can be under our current circumstances. I can tell you that my experience of this pandemic has been emotionally debilitating, physically exhausting, and spiritually challenging. I can only imagine that each one of you have had your struggles, ups and downs, fears, and frustrations. My prayer has been for the peace of Christ to move steadily and continually through our lives; and my discovery has been that when I am attentive to Christ, he most certainly is attentive to me. Keep the faith, dear friends. In the midst of negative feelings, exhaustion, and challenge: Keep the faith.

One thing stands in our way of keeping the faith, however, and that is our cultural relationship to authority. There is an odd rhetoric to these times which uses words like, emptiness... or nothing... or stasis... or boredom, et cetera, as though everyone remaining separate from each other were entirely unproductive. But I was reading the May 27 interview between Dr. Anthony Fauci, a key member of the President’s Covid-19 task force, and Judy Woodruff, anchor of the PBS Newshour, and Dr. Fauci highlighted several times that staying home and staying separate is a necessary and direct action against the spread of the Coronavirus: an action that the whole nation must take together for it to work. Does sitting for weeks on end, separate from your community, friends, and family, feel like direct action to you? Probably not. But why?

One part of our response has to do with how we respond to authority. A second part of our response has to do with our inbred emotional need for recognition. As the parent of a toddler, I have fresh firsthand experience with these two things. On the one hand, human beings – and Americans in particular – don’t like to be told what to do. But the reality is that perspective and knowledge and experience are what make someone’s opinion valuable. While talking about reopening our country for instance, Dr. Fauci said this to Ms. Woodruff:

...there are certain fundamental, basic things that, no matter what stage you’re at, you need to do it. And that’s things like wearing masks, staying physically distant, avoiding crowds, washing hands. Those are things you should do no matter what. (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour>)

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Church**

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That's Dr. Fauci's opinion. Then my neighbor Jim, a very intelligent person, well read, and a doctor of jurisprudence says, "Anyone who wears a mask is bowing to tyranny!" That's Jim's opinion. But part of Jim's opinion has to do with the fact that Jim doesn't like to be told what to do. It has to do with authority. If you told Jim it was wrong to mow his lawn on Sundays, Jim would only mow his lawn on Sunday. And he'd make sure 'Ol' Glory' (the stars and stripes) was flapping in the breeze as he did so. But the truth of the matter is, that when it comes to a global health crisis, Jim's opinion doesn't matter because he is not in possession of the medical perspective, knowledge, and experience which are required in this situation to form an opinion that benefits the entire population. To put it simply, on the issue of wearing a mask, Jim's opinion doesn't matter. And when it comes to reopening our churches for the public worship of God and other ministries, we're going to trust the opinions that do matter.

This brings us to our second problem: affirmation. At breakfast, when my 2 year old eats his cereal – as I've asked 3 times – before grabbing another handful of raspberries, I applaud and say, "Yay! you did it! Good job Elliott!" And that's how all of us are with everything. But there's no overt, outward, audible applause for doing the kinds of things Dr. Fauci has insisted upon. No one will congratulate us for staying home: we've only obeyed the authority that matters. No one will applaud when we put on a mask as we exit our vehicles, or before entering a store: we've only done what we were asked. No one will thank us for washing our hands repeatedly to the point of mental fatigue: we're only doing the minimum of what is necessary.

Because of these two problems, authority and affirmation, our nation has not weathered this storm as well as other countries where the population simply obeyed the recommendations of people who knew what they were talking about. New Zealand, for instance, a country of 5 million people. Almost immediately after the news broke from China, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern took the advice of her public health officials and shut the country down completely. New Zealand has had about 1500 confirmed cases of the coronavirus, and 21 related deaths... and no new cases for several days. We've topped 100,000 deaths in the United States. Why? Because we're not united. Period.

This problem follows us into the church, where allegiance to our own point of view and those who agree with us often overrides the commandment to love each other unconditionally. But if we're going to come out of these circumstances stronger as congregations, we have to trust the person whose authority means more than anyone's feelings or opinions: Jesus Christ. When you feel like getting mad at a fellow church member, or at me: don't. When you feel like giving up on your faith community: don't. Trust the Spirit to give you strength, and your trust will be rewarded, not with any outward sign, but with the inward witness that you have done what you were asked by the One who loves you.

"The only thing that counts is faith made effective through love." Gal. 5:6

May it be so among us. God bless you,

Jonathan

### **S.P.R.C.**

There is very little to report from the Staff Pastor Relations Committee. Like most of you, we are waiting for permission to open our church and put our employees back to work. In the meantime, send a note of congratulations to Sari for a job well done in the Ionia Public School District. She will not have a celebration at school for her retirement, but a card shower from us would be wonderful.

Please pray for Jonathan, our staff, and the congregation. So many changes have already taken place. Be safe, stay well.

I know I have appreciated the wonderful care Jonathan has given us in his Sunday sermons.

"Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt, and cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith." Alfred Lord Tennyson

Jan

support to those with which you have worked.

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE CONGREGATION

from Linda Ciangi

Dear Ionia First Congregation,

Janet Winter and I visited by phone following Monday's rainstorm. She was checking water levels in a nearby creek, and I kept an eye on my basement. Janet is staying positive and using common sense during the pandemic, and she recommends both approaches. The church service packages from Pastor Jonathan are something we both appreciate. Postal service employees walking their route and stopping at my house are a sign of normalcy I treasure. Janet continues to plan and prepare for the days ahead. In remembrance, we miss the wit and wisdom of Jerry Winter who was a blessing to Ionia First and a valued member of the Ad. Board on which he served.

No one will be surprised to learn that Ken Felice check the church building every few days to make sure there are no leaking pipes or other problems. He assure me when we do get back together there will be plenty of "paper products". Ken misses Sunday service, coffee fellowship (where he is the resident expert), and also the Wednesday morning prayer and Communion service. Ann is thankful for Pastor Jonathan's Sunday messages, and with two church families to care for, that he is keeping in touch with both congregations. No small task with an active little boy to care for, and another one due in November!! Food delivery service from Meijer has been a welcome convenience for the Felice household. Sister-in-law Gladys Stout is moving to Pilgrim Manor in Grand Rapids this week. The Irby's are also residents of this facility, as is Avis White. Correspondence from First Church/friends will be most appreciated.

Car racing is a family affair for the Felice family, but events for this summer are uncertain. What is not uncertain is the care and genuine thoughtfulness this family brings to our congregation.

On a personal note - my sister-in-law, Sue Ciangi Kelly is recovering from a triple bypass heart operation. My daughter, Beth, lives just 5 minutes from "Aunt Sue" who lives in Ada. Beth and her family will join Sue's husband, Mike and sons, Bret and Blake in looking after Sue as she recovers. Please keep her in your prayers.

## **Sunday-School**

There is nothing to report at this time.

### On The R.I.S.E

There is nothing to report at this time.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ioniaontherise/>

### VBS

VBS has been cancelled for this year due to the Coronavirus.

Family Ministries Coordinator  
Jodi Courtland  
616-841-0288

## **June Monthly Mission**

### **The NOAH Project**

The NOAH Project operates a Community Center in downtown Detroit for homeless and low income individuals. They use their Bag Lunch Program as the beginning of a trusting relationship with their clients. NOAH provides case management, wellness counseling, a computer lab, an art program, a quarterly Earn-A-Bike Program and quarterly dental clinic. The mission of NOAH is to empower low income and homeless Detroiters to achieve stability by serving as the first step on the journey to self sufficiency.

## FROM THE TRUSTEES

Things are starting to change again. I have been called back to work. There are Safety Mandates such as wearing of face masks, hand sanitizer, no close contact, temperature checks, etc. This makes things a little more challenging, but nothing impossible.

First Church is also getting closer to having services again, however, as at the company I work for, things will not be the same as when we last met. How it will look, and what restrictions we will need to have is still being worked out. Things like coffee time, greeting your neighbors, hand shaking, just to name a few, will all be much different. We will need to disinfect after each service and possibly in between services. The taking of individual temperatures may be needed. We need to protect ourselves and all our Church brothers and sisters.

Trustees will be meeting on the first Monday in July if situations permit. If you have an issue, or know of something which needs attention, please contact one of the Trustees.

Colossians 1:11

Take Care, and stay safe

Joe Brown - Trustee Chairman

### *Gladys Stout has moved*

Her new address is: Gladys Stout  
c/o Pilgrim Manor  
2000 Leonard St., N.E., #402  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

**PLEASE PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD  
FOR:**

(E-mail prayer requests to  
[sharron67@charter.net](mailto:sharron67@charter.net))

**Prayers for those in the military:**

**Adam Cook-Green Beret, Afghanistan**

**Nick Murray, Retired, Bremerton WA**

**Andy Hoort-Nurse, Ret. Royal Oak, MI**

**Ross Marshall, Navy, Submarine, Groton, CT**

**Daniel Zander-Major U.S. Army retired**

**Duane Baliff**

**Austin Campbell - Air Force**

**Prayers for:**

Katherine Asher

Bill & Kathy Berry

Liz Bode

Justin Owings

Hunter Wagner

Elisha & Crystal Stock

Maybelle Drake

Lew Slater

Lisa Dvork

Sharon & Bill Hartman

Robert Zander

D.S. Margie Crawford

Joanie Carle

Loren Carle

Al & Marge Irby

Stuart Weisgerber

Jack & Millie Bartholomew

Lucille Leslie

Joe Felice

Penny Wineman

Ron Dankenbring

United  
Methodist



Women

## UMW NEWS

Hi Everyone,

I sincerely hope and pray that all of the members of First Church are doing ok. Joe and I are also doing fine. He went back to work on the 18th of May, so things are getting back to normal slowly in our home. I had forgotten exactly how early in the morning 5:00 a.m. really is. Joe wants you to remember if you need anything to please call him even though he is back to work. His number is 517-285-2737. He is here not just to help me, but to help any and all of our Church Family. We both are. Anytime you ever need us just call.

I just want to remind everyone of our food drive to help Zion Church's food pantry to be refilled. That will be on the first Sunday we have an in church service. They have been hit really, really hard during these strange times, and I believe that as their Christian Brothers and Sisters we need to step up and help them. It will probably cost you a little, but that little will go a long way. Any type of canned or boxed food is accepted as are paper goods especially women's products. Please find it in your hearts to help locally right here in Ionia. Bring what you can and we will get it down to Zion Church. Thank You.

It was a busy time for us when Joe was home. We had bought most of what we needed to fix the house the way we wished it to be when we moved in. However, I became ill and we had to face the reality that things were going to change. Home fixes were put way back on the back burner while we dealt with medical issues. Here we were six weeks ago and we looked at each other, and became very busy. Everything from taking up old tiles (with a sledge hammer) , me to putting in a new floor, also me to new plumbing fixtures, Joe to a whole lot of shelving, painting and papering. We also did a lot of praying as I am sure you also did that we would be kept safe, and everyone around us that we are connected to would also be safe and healthy. God has graciously heard our prayers. I hope he has heard yours.

You will notice when you come back to Church eventually, that the pile of rock and stone and dirt have been taken care of, finally. Another problem taken care of with a little prayer and some work.

I guess what I am trying to say here today is, yes, I know it's hard to be home all the time, yes, it's hard to wear those masks, and yes, I miss going to Church too, but the thing we need to remember is that all this time while we have been doing what we are supposed to be doing, is that God was with us and still is.

Yours in Christ, Rebecca Brown Chair, United Methodist Women

	Attendance	Giving	Needed
May 3	No Church	Not available at this time	\$2,949.00
May 10	No Church		\$2,949.00
May 17	No Church		\$2,949.00
May 24	No Church		\$2,949.00
May 31	No Church		\$2,949.00

## Finance Report

I pray everyone has continued to stay healthy during this Corona virus/Covid 19 crisis, and that I hope we will soon be back at IFUMC to worship together. As you know, Alicia and I started to sort out the financial situation mid December 2019 along with help from Pastor Jonathan and Marie. After going through stacks of unorganized files and making calls, we discovered multiple bills unpaid as far back as June 2019. One of the Consumers Energy accounts was going to an email somewhere, and was 8 months behind. Some of the bills that were behind were the UMC Pension Fund (Benefits Ministry Share) at \$300.00 a month, our Conference Ministry Shares at \$1,596.00 a month, and the payment on our Promissory note at \$1,177.74 a month, and some others. Paying many of these between January and March 2020 meant that we ran a deficit between income and expenses of about \$8000. Happily, at this point we are turning things around and are starting to figure out where we are financially.

Pastor Jonathan and myself have spent many, many hours organizing the church finances to get accurate numbers for all line items. We have put new policies and procedures in place that make everyone and everything accountable. At the end of March we have most bills current. We have balanced and accounted for all credits and debits for 2020. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. Thank you for your patience while we unraveled the paper work for IFUMC.

Ronda Bestrom

### **General Fund**

May Giving  
\$7,510.00

### **Special Fund**

May Giving  
\$205.00



## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Ken Felice
- 4 Bill Carr
- 4 Riley Mercer
- 8 Maybelle Drake
- 9 Alison Manciu
- 10 Kylie Sibley
- 13 Shane Fulcher
- 14 Frank Schumacher
- 14 Fred Schumacher
- 18 Jack Bartholomew
- 23 Marilyn Nash
- 24 Carley Fulcher
- 27 Grayson Alfaro



## June Anniversaries

- 5 *Jack and Millie Bartholomew*
- 12 *John and Janice Fate*
- 15 *Stuart and Marie Church*
- 19 *Christopher and Carrie Felice*
- 21 *Jack and Sue Manciu*
- 24 *Jason and Danielle Sibley*
- 26 *Glenn and Mariel Joy*
- 30 *Miller and Deanna Hotchkín*

## June

### Greeters

- June 7 Would you like to be a greeter? If so contact
- June 14 Marie in the church office, and we will sign
- June 21 you up.
- June 28

Note: If you have agreed to serve as a greeter on a Sunday morning, but find that you cannot do so, please call the church office (527-1860).

## June

### Liturgists

- June 7 Eric Asher
- June 14 Kayla Hagen
- June 21 Jackie Christiansen
- June 28 Jan Powell

If you are unable to serve on the day for which you are scheduled, it is up to you to switch with another liturgist, and notify the church office.



# June 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Mission: NOAH Project	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Father's Day Mission Sunday	22	23 Newsletter Dead- line	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



**105 E. Main Street**

**Ionia, MI 48846**

**Service 9:30am**

**Check it out!**

**[www.ioniafirst.com](http://www.ioniafirst.com)**









