

# The Church Visitor

First Congregational United Church of Christ Church, Alexandria, MN 56308

## WORDS FROM PASTOR JILL

Dear Friends:

I have been enjoying our trek through the Psalms this summer, probably because it is the first time I have ever preached from them. Some have called the Psalms “Jesus’ Prayer Book,” and they are a good source for crafting our own prayers of praise, lament and intercession. A couple of Sundays ago, I invited us all to “go marveling”—to take a walk or walk through the day noticing those places where God shows up or where God’s goodness and grace is evident. For my article this month, I am going to “go marveling” as I walk through the past months of our life together as a community of faith.

The most obvious might be the new things that have been done with our facility. We have a new drinking fountain, new toilets, a new baby grand piano, a new laser printer that allows us to print in color, new furniture in the Cambridge Room, new lighting in the office/library suite, and swapping the library and pastor’s office to make the library more accessible throughout the week. We also have a newly fashioned baptismal font, new paraments, new banners with the invitation to “Be the Church” and with our mission statement, and a new display table cover with our church logo that we use for community outreach events. That’s a long list---and I am certain that it is not comprehensive! I marvel at all of the work that has been done, the gifts that have been received along the way, and the outstanding way in which our Administrative Board stewards our facilities.

I marvel at the generosity of this congregation toward our youth. We asked for support to send two youth and two adults to Washington DC this summer to learn about the political process and how to influence legislation. You showed up to eat breakfast on Easter Sunday and caramel rolls on June 18. You

### Leadership

**Moderator:**

Jane Harstad, 760-7044

**Assistant Moderator:**

**Administrative Board:**

Clayton Mielke, 766-2910

**Memorials:**

Sandy Grove, 491-2441

**Women’s Fellowship:**

President:

Ann Branch 320-491-0316

**Angel Care Team:**

Daisy Stahlberg, 763-9461

**Missions:**

Co-Chairs:

Judy Kuhlmann, 763-6033

Julie Thompson, 846-4768

**Connections:**

DiAnne Loch, 766-0610

**Christian Education:**

Pam Schauff, 852-7338

Kylie Schauff, 304-0045

**Music:**

Greg Kapphahn,

612-978-2944

**Stewardship:**

Ron Branch, 320-491-0135

**Worship:**

Marc Blakesley, 612-325-1467

**Library:**

LD Anderson, 763-6465

**Board of Spiritual Life**

Joy Wrolson, 612-277-4220

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Pastor Jill.....1-3

Moderator.....3

Treasurer.....4

Committee News .....5-7

Board of Spiritual Life....5

Angel Care/  
Community.....6

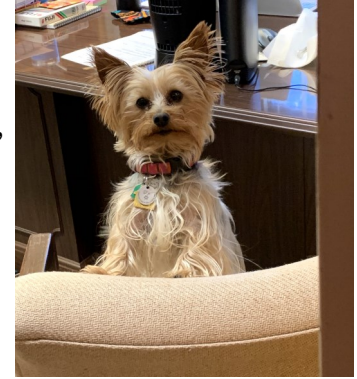
Women/Community.....7

Stay Connected/Special  
Dates.....8

July Calendar.....9

bought eggs and donated to the trip as payment. I marvel that with a month to go, we are \$44 dollars in the black! Thank you!!!

I marvel at so many who show up not just on Sundays but many days throughout the week to make pies and lefse and serve salads, to plan meaningful mission giving opportunities for our congregation, to repair this-and-that, to decorate our spaces, to facilitate spiritual conversations, to count offerings, to bring flowers, to fold bulletins, to move furniture, wield a paintbrush, practice anthems, and so many other necessary things. I marvel at those who spend a Saturday taking our church to the Pride Festival to express love when so many churches are filled with hatred toward the lgbtqia community. And I marvel at members of our congregation who take the lead in organizations like Lakes Area Pride.



I marvel at a congregation that approves its mission statement AND becomes Open and Affirming on the same Sunday---announcing to the world that everyone is welcome here—and that our welcome will be extravagant.

I marvel that, at a time when I had nearly given up on the church, God sent me to First Congregational United Church of Christ in Alexandria. I am so grateful to be your pastor---and thankful for each and every one of you. Thank you for sharing your lives with me, with one another, and with our community! God is working among us and through us. How marvelous is that?

Grace and Peace: Pastor Jill

---

## Youth Trip to Washington D.C.

Two youth—Sydney Gauthier and Hannah Wille—and two adults—Barb Anderson and Pastor Jill—will join 50 other youth and adults from the Minnesota Conference for a week in Washington DC from July 21-28. While there, they will stay on Capitol Hill, be trained in legislative advocacy by the National Staff of the UCC, talk with their elected representatives serving in Washington DC, and observe the legislative process. They will also take in some of the national historical sites, including visiting the Holocaust Museum and engaging in conversation with a Holocaust survivor via Zoom.

We will commission this team in worship on Sunday, July 16. In the meantime, please keep them in your prayers as they prepare, travel and learn!

---

## Join us on a Pilgrimage!

*I am convinced that pilgrimage is still a bona fide spirit-renewing ritual. But I also believe in pilgrimage as a powerful metaphor for any journey with the purpose of finding something that matters deeply to the traveler. With a deepening of focus, keen preparation, attention to the path below our feet, and respect for the destination at hand, it is possible to transform even the most ordinary journey into a sacred journey, a pilgrimage.*

*Phil Cousineau*

Pastor Jill is hosting a Celtic Spirituality Pilgrimage, September 9-20, **2024** (fourteen months from now.) The geographical territory covered will be Ireland, Scotland, and a stop in northern England at the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

Our focus will be on Celtic Spirituality. It is hard to summarize Celtic Spirituality in a newsletter article, but here are some highlights. Celtic Spirituality is **monastic**. In other words, it is living the gospel in community. The emphasis is not so much on *knowing* spiritual truths as much as *living* them within the context of the human community. Celtic Spirituality sees life as **sacramental**, celebrates ordinariness and an earthed humanity. The Celts believed that nothing was secular because everything was sacred. Celtic Spirituality is **contemplative and missional**. It involves putting personhood before productivity, and acknowledging that we are human *beings* rather than human *doings*. Being and doing are held in balance---seeking God in the heart in order to better serve God in the world. Celtic Spirituality is characterized by **hospitality**. This is not the Martha Stewart kind of hospitality, but the act of welcoming God into one's heart and welcoming others because they could be the Christ. Celtic Spirituality is **creation-affirming**. The Celts had a strong sense of place and knew the importance of the land, of roots and of identity. They spoke of thin places and holy ground. The re-emergence of Celtic Spirituality in recent decades is likely due in no small part to pending ecological disasters of over-population, global warming, food shortages, pollution, AIDS, and industrial chaos. Celtic Spirituality emphasizes the **Trinity** because they understand that community begins in the heart of God. And, finally, although no means the end of a comprehensive list, Celtic Spirituality offers an understanding of **time as sacred**. Time is to be used wisely and well. The past, present and future are all linked to God's now.

The principles of Celtic Spirituality, if recovered and lived, have the potential to bring healing to our world. If you are interested in exploring further or taking part in this pilgrimage, please contact Pastor Jill for more information.

If you are able and would like to participate, please contact her for more information.

---

## THOUGHTS FROM OUR MODERATOR

Hey friends – Since we have affirmed ourselves as an “OnA” church, I have been thinking a lot about *inclusive vs exclusive*. Actually that's not true...I have always thought a lot about inclusive vs exclusive when it comes to religion.



When my husband invited me to this church, I was very unfamiliar with the UCC. But once I realized that this church believes that God is still speaking...and this church believes that *everyone* is welcome at God's table – I was all in.

When folks from other churches or faiths knock on my door, I never turn them away. When they ask if I know God or have a church – I firmly state that I do and that I am very happy with my church. I then invite them in and ask them to give me the opportunity to tell them about how it feels to be a part of a truly inclusive church family. I have a little speech I share with them, just as they had one for me.

While they rarely take me up on the offer, I have always believed that I have given them something meaty to think about - inclusive vs. exclusive.

I don't knock on doors, but I do take the opportunity to share about the inclusivity of our church whenever I can, with lots of different people. So many are searching for a spiritual home, and I know

that “open and affirming” is related to welcoming the LGBT+ community, but I think of it as much broader.

Our church welcomes all. No matter where you are on your life’s journey, no matter what your past sins have been, no matter your sexual or gender identity, we are here. For you. For all. Welcoming and loving, supporting and celebrating, blessing and forgiving.

Because we believe that *everyone* is welcome at God’s table. Why? Because that’s what Jesus believed.

*“Jesus will never reject anyone who comes to him.”*

- John 6:37

In peace and love, **Jane Harstad**, Moderator

---

## Treasurer's Report

This Report is based on my April and May 2023 Reports which were approved by the Church Council in our June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. It will cover both April and May since we did not have a separate June “Visitor.”

Here are figures from April, 2023, from May 2023, from March 2023 and from May, 2022 for comparison:

<b>April 2023</b>	<b>May 2023</b>	<b>March 2023</b>	<b>May 2022</b>
<u>General Fund Income</u>			
\$11,829.81	\$16,781.00	\$67,207.95	\$11,089.89
<u>Monthly Expenses</u>			
\$17,393.12	\$17,548.91	\$13,953.46	\$14,531.24

Let me begin by reminding you that the March 2023 income figure reflects a \$50,000 unrestricted bequest from the estate of Helen Jane Morrison. Let me also say that we are a very fortunate congregation in that such bequests and those received in the past mean that we are able to pay our bills, even though our monthly expenses usually exceed our income. These May figures may be a bit confusing to Council Members who receive much more extensive reports of our financial situation. This is because the General Fund Income quoted here includes mounts which go into Reserved and Restricted funds in their reports. For the Council, Reserved and Restricted Funds are subtracted from useable balance in the General Fund checking account which leaves a lower balance than the figures above might seem to indicate.

As we move forward together under the wonderful leadership of Pastor Jill, our Church Council, and our Board of Administration, I am thankful for the faithfulness of those who have gone on to the next life. I would also remind you that, in the midst of this busy, almost too summery summer, the work of our church continues and needs your generous support. I thank each of you for all that you do.

--**Greg Kappahn**, Treasurer

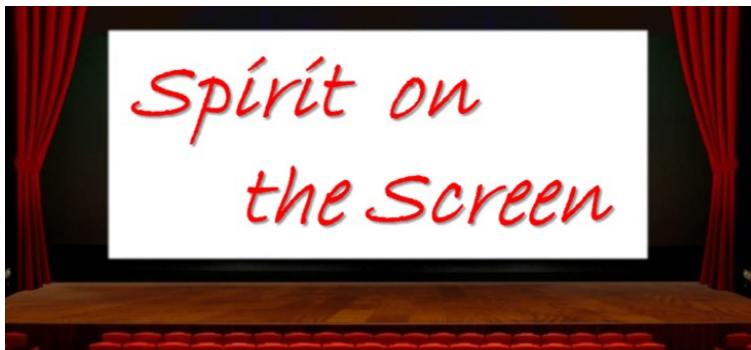
## FROM THE BOARD OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Open and Affirming Taskforce is so proud of our congregation and proud to announce that we are the 1818<sup>th</sup> Open and Affirming Congregation in the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. Our number is significant and I will get to that soon. Our adoption of our own open and affirming statement makes us part of a larger community within the UCC that honors the dignity of each person created in God's image.

Our number 1818 is significant. In 2015 after marriage equality had become law in the United States, the Coalition with the support of the General Synod has announced the campaign to reach all of the UCC congregations. In 2018 the coalition and the UCC welcomed congregation 1500. In 2023 we are 1818, and since May 21 they have welcomed 10 more congregations. So we as the overall church have a ways to go as we welcome all of God's children, but we will get there and as an individual congregation we will do our part. We had a booth at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual pride event and we will help pave the way for other local congregations to be welcoming of all of God's children too.



We look forward to a formal celebration later this summer. Next year we will also have a community service during Pride month.



### "Wall-E"

July 12, 2023

6:00 PM

**Cambridge Room**

We are continuing our summer series of lighter fare. Wall-E is our second Pixar film of the summer. What if mankind had to leave Earth and somebody forgot to turn the last robot off? After hundreds of years doing what he was built for, WALL•E discovers a new purpose in life when he meets a sleek search robot named EVE. EVE comes to realize that WALL•E has inadvertently stumbled upon the key to the planet's future, and races back to space to report to the humans. Meanwhile, WALL•E chases EVE across the galaxy and sets into motion one of the most imaginative adventures ever brought to the big screen. We will have a beverage and popcorn. Bring a snack or your dinner. Join us as we discover that things can be light hearted, for kids but still have lots to say about life, the universe, love and faith. **Sponsored by the Board of Spiritual Life**

\*\*\*\*\*

### OUR JOURNEYS CONTINUE

We are still enjoying our Walk & Talk together on Thursday mornings. We walk in nature as much as we can and we both talk and contemplate nature and our faith. We will walk at any pace to accommodate all abilities. **NOTE: We are meeting at Big Ole Park 9:00 am** We welcome anyone to join us. So come on along!

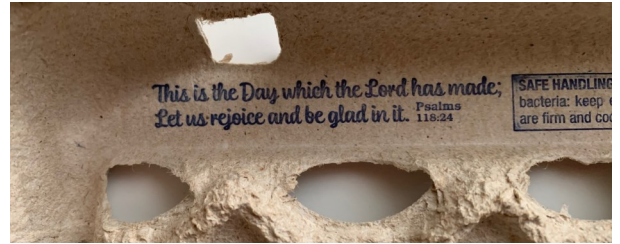




## CAMBRIDGE ROOM

The other morning I was going to make eggs and I looked at the egg carton and inside the lid was a bible verse. Psalms 118:24

" This is the Day which the Lord has made  
Let us rejoice, and be glad in it: "



I couldn't believe it as this was perfect for what I wanted. Jo Udem and I had been asked to redecorate the Cambridge Room and we were thinking of writing a note to the congregation on our thoughts about the room. First we would like to thank the people who supported our vision with a monetary donation: Barb Cichy-Anderson, Kathy & Phil Midtvedt, Women's Fellowship and Memorial monies from Dona Wagner and Helen Morrison. This support allowed us to purchase furniture and lamps. We had dreams bigger than our budget and would love to fulfill them. (you can ask us what they are}.. We hope you all will enjoy the room and "rejoice and be glad in it!"

Look in your egg carton and you may find a perfect verse for your day!

Mary Mische Jo Udem

---

## Thank yous

Thank you to Roger and Mary Jo Hochsprung for hanging our banner in the east "entry" area.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you to Barb Anderson for donating caramel rolls and to Wendy Hoff for donating eggs for our Washington D.C. Youth Trip Fundraiser. And thank you to all who supported us by eating caramel rolls and buying eggs! We are grateful for such a generous congregation.

Sydney, Hannah, Barb and Pastor Jill

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your community. We are so grateful to have grown in our faith alongside such wonderful people. We head to Denver this Friday (June 23). What a crazy adventure!

We will never forget your kindness and the way we felt in First Congregational. All the best to you all.

Lily Anderson and Roi Arroyo

(Lily and Roi moved to Denver, Colorado, where Roi has accepted a new engineering position.)

## ANGEL CARE TEAM

Joy Wrolson will be the angel for July. If you need a visit, let her know 612-227-4220 (or call the church office). We need new volunteers to flesh out the rest of our months. Anyone willing to be an Angel is encouraged to contact Daisy: 320-763-9461. .



## WOMEN'S SECTION

### SALAD LUNCHEON

It is such a joy to be back doing events with our community. Women's Fellowship invites you all to participate in our Salad Luncheon and Bake Sale to be held on Thursday, July 13, 2023. The hours are 10:30 to 1:00, with the luncheon being served from 11:00 to 1:00. There are many opportunities to help that day and on lefse making day, July 11<sup>th</sup> at 9 AM (Contact Ann Branch for lefse making) There are sign up sheets in the back of the church for both working the day of the luncheon and for salad donations and lefse making donations. Quilt ticket sales will be ongoing in the back of the church each Sunday as well as on the day of the luncheon. The Bake Sale is a very popular part of this day, so your donations of baked goods will be welcomed. Your help in making this event a success is very much appreciated. So sign up today and be part of this fun day of mingling with old friends and meeting new faces as we enjoy serving our community. .

### BAKE SALE

A price list is being prepared for the pricing of baked goods for our Bazaar and bake sale! However, due to the difference in cost of supplies, we would appreciate it if the person donating an item for the Bake Sale would give a suggested price to be charged. This worked so well last year! Remember eggs? We would also appreciate receiving all items on Wednesday afternoon or 8:00 on Thursday morning so that they can be arranged and ready for sale when the doors open! Many thanks! They do love our pies and cookies!!

LEFSE DAY is Tuesday, July 11, 9:00 am!

We will be making lefse to sell at the Summer Salad Luncheon and Bake Sale. We need donations of mashed and/or riced potatoes, using the recipe below. We also need 5 or 6 lefse griddles and wooden turners, pastry cloths for rolling on, and rolling pins. Other donations needed are 2 qts. and 1 pt. of whipping cream, 10 pds. of flour, and 120 – 1 qt. size ZipLock bags. **AND** we need workers. We need people to mix the potatoes, to roll lefse, to fry and flip, and 1-2 people to work on clean-up. MEN and WOMEN, TEENS, and ADULTS are welcome. The sign-up sheet is at the back of the sanctuary. Questions? Call or text Ann Branch at 320-460-0316.

### BEST LEFSE RECIPE

Boil 5 pds. Russet potatoes. Mash with 1/2 c. butter (1 stick). Put mashed potatoes through a ricer if you have one. (There is one at church) Let potatoes cool some and then store in a large ziplock bag or covered container and refrigerate overnight.

## INVITATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM PASTOR JILL

Pastor Jill is still meeting folks at Dunn Brothers Coffee (between Wal-Mart and Fleet Farm) every Monday at 10 am. Join us, grab a cup of your beverage of choice—and join the conversation about the biblical text(s) for the upcoming Sunday!



Caffeinated Christianity

*Drop-Ins Welcome*



And we're still gathering for Holy Happy Hour, Thursdays from 4:30-6:00 pm, at Pike & Pint in the dining room. Come for all or part of the time, and feel free to bring something you would like to talk about. We look forward to getting to know you! Questions? Contact Jill Sanders 319.361.0737

## STAY CONNECTED!!!

**Stay Connected!!!** Our worship services can be found on YouTube and also each weekday morning at approximately 11:45 on Charter cable channel #181.

**To watch our recorded services or to watch live on Sundays,** our direct link to YouTube is: <http://tiny.cc/firstcongo> All videos should be listed there, and you can choose the one you want to watch. We continue to use the screen in worship, which you can see at home, so you can follow and sing along if you wish. If you have questions, please call the Church office. We are trying to keep everyone “connected” as a Church family.

*Like Us On....*



**Or follow us on**

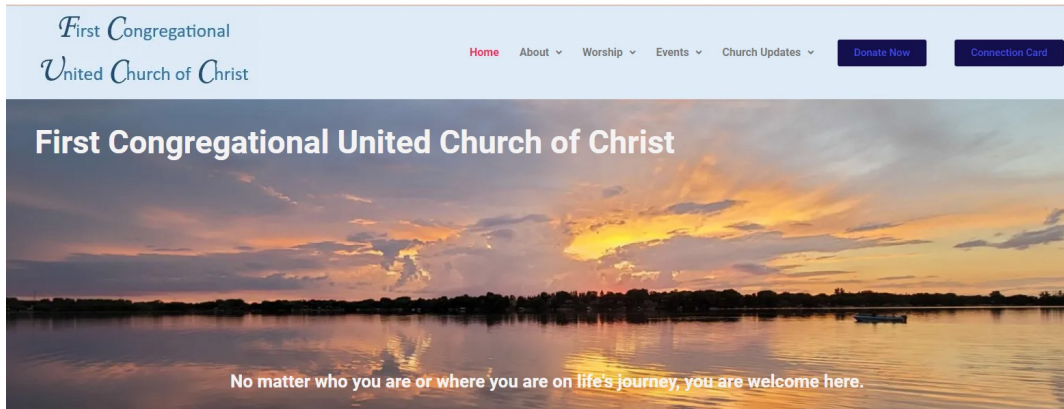


*Instagram*

**We also have online giving available!** Check out our updated website: [www.firstcongregationaluccalex.com](http://www.firstcongregationaluccalex.com).

Click on the word “donate” at the top of the screen.

Or you can text the word “Give” to our new number: (844)987-4483 to give to our general fund. .



Welcome Home

### Birthdays

Mamie Clark	07/07
Jay Diebold	07/07
Cindy Fleming	07/09
Shari Mohabir	07/10
Joe Capistrant	07/15
Carolyn Chlian	07/15
Joan Carlson	07/16
Renee Norling	07/16
Mike Doxey	07/17
Harlan Campbell	07/18



Steve Mohabir	07/24
Kay Sukovich	07/26

### Anniversaries

Chlian anniversary	07/17/71
Hochsprung anniversary	07/18/69
Wrolson/Beal anniversary	07/24/04



# JULY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
<b>2 KXRA Sunday</b> 9:00 Choir rehearsal 10:00 Worship in person & online	<b>3</b> 10-11: "Caffeinated Christianity" @ Dunn Bros.	<b>4</b> Fourth of July Office closed	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 9:00 Walk@ Big Ole 4:30-6 Holy Happy Hr @ Pike & Pint	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9 Communion</b> 10:00 Worship in-person & online Set up Fellowship Hall and Plymouth Room for Bake Sale and Luncheon	<b>10</b> 10-11: "Caffeinated Christianity" @ Dunn Bros. 5:30 online Pilgrimage informational meeting	<b>11</b> 9 am Lefse making 12-4 Elder Net.	<b>12</b> Salad Prep 6:00 "Spirit on- Screen	<b>13</b> no walk this week 10:30-1 Bake Sale 11-1 Salad Lunch- eon 4:30-6 Holy Happy Hr @ Pike & Pint	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 10:00 Worship in-person & online/	<b>17</b> 10-11: "Caffeinated Christianity" @ Dunn Bros.	<b>18</b> 11:30 Lunch Bunch Grand Arbor 5:45 Ad Board 7:00 Council.	<b>19</b> "	<b>20</b> 9:00 Walk @ Big Ole 4:30-6 Holy Happy Hr @ Pike & Pint	<b>21</b> <b>News items            due for Au-            gust</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 10:00 Worship in-person & online	<b>24</b> 10"Caffeinated Chris- tianity" @ Dunn Bros.	<b>25</b> 12-4 Elder Net	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 9:00 Walk @ Big Ole 4:30-6 Holy Happy Hr @ Pike & Pint	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 10:00 Worship in-person & online	<b>31</b> 10"Caffeinated Chris- tianity" @ Dunn Bros.					

**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
221 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue West  
Alexandria, MN 56308**

“Like Us” on Facebook!

E-mail: [office@firstcongregationaluccalex.com](mailto:office@firstcongregationaluccalex.com)  
Our web page: [www.firstcongregationaluccalex.com](http://www.firstcongregationaluccalex.com)

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC – CHURCH INFORMATION**

**REGULAR SCHEDULE**

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 am  
now: in-person and on line  
with Fellowship for all ages 11:00 am  
Mondays 10:00-11:00 am  
“Caffeinated Christianity” @ Dunn Bros.  
Tuesdays 6:00-6:30 pm  
“Prayer Connection” on Zoom  
Thursdays 4:30-6:00 pm  
“Holy Happy Hour” @ Pike & Pint  
Sunday School (F.R.O.G. Club)  
every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month  
(Oct – May) 11:15 am – 2:00 pm  
Women’s Fellowship  
Sept – June (except Jan, Feb & July)  
1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month, 12:00 noon



**CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jill Sanders  
Organists: Margaret Kalina & Greg Kappahn  
Custodians: Cliff & Phyllis Roers (summer)  
Church Office: Joy Wrolson  
Church phone: 320-763-3341  
Church Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays,  
and Thursdays, 10:00 am til 2:00 pm (or so)  
**Mission:** We are an inclusive community that  
welcomes extravagantly, seeks God and follows  
Jesus into the world.