

**GRANITE FALLS
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
210 Ninth Avenue
Granite Falls MN 56241
Change Service Requested
THE ENCOUNTER
October 2020 Issue #10**

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DIRECTORY

PASTOR: RANDY MOE

OFFICE ASSISTANT: KAREN MOE

ORGANIST: Randy Moe

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Karen Moe

MODERATOR: JOHN BUTTERBRODT

TREASURER: Konnie Holtz

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Randy Moe

CHURCH ADDRESS: 210 NINTH AVENUE, GRANITE FALLS, MN 56241

CHURCH E-MAIL ADDRESS: uccgfmn@gmail.com

CHURCH PHONE: 320-564-2442

PASTOR E-Mail: Randy_Moe@ymail.com

CELL PHONE: 612-296-1210

PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS: Saturday 2:00pm-5:00pm or by Appointment

OFFICE HOURS: 10:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

WEB SITE: www.granitefallsucc.org

OCTOBER

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Oct 4 Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20, Psalm 19,
Phil 3:4b-14, Matthew 21:33-46
- Oct 11 Exodus 32:1-14, Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23,
Phil 4:1-6, Matthew 22:1-14
- Oct 18 Exodus 33:12-23, Psalm 99
1 Thess 1:1-10, Matthew 22:15-22
- Oct 25 Deut 34:1-12, Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17
1 Thess 2:1-8, Matthew 22:34-46

Anniversaries

Oct 14 Rob & Janie Ator

Birthdays

Oct 2 LaVonne Koenen
Oct 9 Barb Gustafson
Oct 11 Julie Butterbrodt
Oct 13 Mollie Londgren
Oct 19 Sue Selden
Oct 21 Sheila VanOverbeke
Oct 23 John Butterbrodt
Oct 24 Stan Kompelien
Oct 28 Gene Stukel
Oct 29 Babe Gatchell



STEWARDSHIP 2020

Manifesting the Image of God

In his book, *Free of Charge*, Miroslav Volf writes that there are two irresistible false images of God that we run between: God the negotiator and God the Santa Claus. Instead of the image of God as a purposeful and generous giver, the negotiator God can be cruel (earning your way into heaven) or the Santa Claus God becomes our self-absorption (He provides whatever I can take). Neither image, negotiator or Santa Claus, challenges or calls us to imitate the joy and the goodness of God the Giver.

Increasingly, you find four words stenciled beside the storm gates: "*we all live downstream.*" Selfishly (and at times we have all started at this point), we read into those words "I am the catch basin downstream so make sure only goodness is flowing my way." But, more ecologically and theologically correct, is that we are all midstream. If we are made in the image of God the Giver, we are a channel not the catch basin of God's good gifts. We are not the final destination of the Creator's gifts.

When we allow God's gifts to flow through us we emulate God the giver. When we emulate God the negotiator, we move from an economy of generosity to an economy of extraction. How can we cut the best deal? Or when we emulate Santa Claus is our magnanimity enabling insatiable desires and unaccountable behaviors because we cannot be bothered to be involved? Being involved with purpose, joy and grace is why it is so difficult for us to give and give well.

Again, when we allow God's gifts to flow through us we emulate God the giver. The gifts we give are not gifts that must be extracted from us or given for our exaltation but are gifts from God that have flowed through us. We are participants in something larger than us. God's giving began before us and will continue long after us. We are invited to participate in this generosity of spirit, love, and self. Our participation reflects the generosity of the initial giver who set grace in motion. Our lives show the image we have of God.

Stewardship Committee: Darrell Carter, Dick Anderson, Spencer Kvam, Sue Selden

A LETTER FROM RANDY

Dear Members and Friends of Granite Falls United Church of Christ,

Because our time of physical separation has continued for much longer than any of us anticipated, I want to take this opportunity to connect with each of you and share some important information during this unprecedented time.

At the September council meeting, the council decided that we need to continue to worship remotely for the immediate future. Early in the pandemic it seemed to many that Covid-19 was mostly a problem in larger communities, and we hoped that our rural area would be spared the worst. Unfortunately, with the coming of fall and the resumption of school and other activities, we're seeing extensive spread of the virus in our area. We believe that the best way for us to follow Christ's instruction to love our neighbor is to refrain from gatherings that might endanger anyone's health.

While it's disappointing to be unable to gather for worship, it's important to realize that ministry of our congregation has not been stopped by the virus. We have been conducting worship services online since we stopped meeting in person, and I firmly believe that the ministry and outreach of our church has increased significantly during this time. Over the past several weeks, our services have generally been seen by between 50 and 60 Facebook users. Since we know that many of these include more than one person, our attendance is actually quite a bit higher than our in-person attendance before the pandemic. We have reconnected with many members and friends who hadn't been able to attend in person due to distance or health concerns, and with others who had become disconnected from our fellowship for other reasons. We also know of many others who have not been part of our congregation in the past who are now participating in our services remotely.

Our church is not "closed" at all; instead, we've been deployed to different locations for a time so that we can share the love of Christ in new and innovative ways. God has given our congregation a uniquely inclusive witness of the love of Christ for all people, and I'm grateful for new opportunities to share our message more broadly. Because of the expanded ministry our online services have brought about, we plan to continue to stream our services even after we're able to meet in person. Some new equipment has been obtained to make this possible.

We recognize that some of our members and friends have had difficulty joining our online worship. Some don't have the necessary equipment or internet connections, and others may be uncertain of how to connect, or feel that they lack the needed "computer literacy." If you or someone you know haven't been able to join us, please call me at 612-296-1210 or Karen at 612-296-7072 and we'll work with you to find ways to help you connect and join us in worship. At the end of this letter I'll include some basic instructions for viewing our services and taking part in our Zoom meetings.

RANDY'S LETTER PAGE 2

At this year's annual meeting we decided to try a different time for our worship services, and the final decision wasn't made before we stopped meeting in person. The council has recommended a service time of 9:30, which would "split the difference" between the previous time and the new time. The final decision will need to be made by a congregational vote. Please speak to me or one of the council members if you would like to express your opinion about the service time.

For some of you, this time of pandemic may be especially difficult because of isolation from family and friends, or because of job loss and other forms of economic hardship. Please reach out to me with any needs you may have, even if all you need is a listening ear. I'd like to encourage each of our members and friends to make a particular effort to stay in touch, and to check on those who might be feeling alone.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Randy

Instructions for Accessing Online Worship and Fellowship

Our worship services are available via Facebook Live. The services can be watched live while the service is happening, and can also be viewed any time after the service. You will need to have a Facebook account, and be a member of the group **Granite Falls United Church of Christ (Congregational)**. If you need help in setting up a Facebook account, please call me or Karen. You can use a desktop or laptop computer, a tablet, or a smartphone. If you have a Facebook account but have not joined the group, you can search for the group by name, and request to be added. Once you're a member of the group, you'll be notified when the service starts on Facebook Live. Later, you can scroll to the service you want to watch.

Zoom Fellowship

We hold a Zoom meeting after church each Sunday morning, generally starting about 10:50. We also have a Zoom fellowship and devotions meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7:00. Links and meeting ID information are sent out prior to the meetings, but be aware that the same meeting ID and links are used every time. You can participate from a phone, or tablet, and most laptops. If you have a desktop computer, you may need to add a webcam and speakers. Please contact me or Karen if you need help getting set up.

Alternatives

Some of you may have no access to a device or connection to get online. If so, please let us know and we'll make arrangements for you to get copies of sermons and devotions, and discuss other possible ways for you to participate.

INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW

REMEMBER TO CONTINUE TO GIVE

Please do not forget that the expenses of the church go on even when we can't be there so it will be appreciated if you continue to send your offerings to the church. You are all the best!

FINANCIAL SCHOLARSHIP NOTICE

All requests for financial aid scholarships for the up coming academic year must be received by October 15, 2020. Scholarships are available for camp registration, education, leadership and special training needs. The Memorial, Bequests and Special Gifts committee will meet about that date to consider and allot funds. All church members and friends are encouraged to apply.

COUNCIL

The church council will be meeting at the church on Sunday October 10th at 4:pm with safety precautions taken. Note change of date!! The Pastoral Relations Committee will meet just prior to this meeting.

CIRCLE OF STONES

Circle of Stones will meet on Thursday, October 22 at 7:00 in the Church. The topic is "Levi the Tax Collector". Matthew's (Levi) conversion represents with absolute clarity that Jesus both forgave and enlisted sinners into his band of followers. Looking forward to our discussion. Zoom information to follow. Blessings Peggy

MISSION EMPHASIS FOR OCTOBER IS OUR STEWARDSHIP DRIVE

By now you should have received your letter in the mail for Stewardship. It contains the letter from the Stewardship Committee and the commitment forms. It also contains a letter from Pastor Randy. Please be sure to send you commitment forms to the church office before November 1. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

OPENING OF THE CHURCH AND OFFICE HOURS

For now we will continue to hold our Sunday Services on FaceBook live at 10:00am with a Zoom coffee hour after. We feel it is safer to do things on line rather than in person. We have actually been able to connect with some extra people this way. Also please join us on Wednesday evenings for our zoom devotion-coffee time. It is a great way to connect with our church family. The church office will be closed until the church is open for services. I can be reached by email or phone as I am working from home. You can reach Randy at 612-296-1210 and Karen at 612-296-7072

SUNDAY SCHOOL

A packet of Sunday School materials and activities has been sent out to each child in our church. This will take place every month so they can have Sunday School at home.

Granite Falls United Church of Christ (Congregational)
Council Minutes
August 13, 2020 (7:00 PM) Rescheduled from August 12

John called the meeting to order at 7:04. Council members present: Bea, Dennis, John, Konnie, Peggy, Randy, Sharon, Spencer, Sue.

Devotions: Sue

1. Review, Modify, and Approve the Agenda: Add 8D—Newspaper. Approve: Peggy/Spencer/U.

2. Minutes of July 1, 2020 Regular Council Meeting: Approve: Dennis/Sharon/U.

3. Committee Reports:

Christian Education: Confirmation is Wednesday, August 19, at 7:00 pm in a private ceremony. It will be shared on Facebook Live. Christian Education has purchased gifts. Distance Learning Sunday School—packets will be put together and mailed out periodically. These could also be sent out to any grandkids. Rally Sunday is September 13th. Circle of Stones is Thursday, August 20, at the church and on Zoom.

Worship, Sanctuary, and Membership: Not met

Building and Maintenance: Steve has drilled holes to run the conduit and wires for the bell ringer. Randy can finish it and will ask Keith to help.

Stewardship: August mission emphasis is the UCC Disaster Relief fund. Sharon informed us that Chris Kleven is the one who cleaned up the tree on our property. A thank you note will be sent.

Memorials and Bequests: Not met

Pastor Parish Relations Committee: Not met

Wider Church Happenings: None

Our church's website fee has been paid for another year. Send Katie any updated information.

Approve: Spencer/Dennis/U

4. Financial Report: The checking account balance is \$4651.99. Konnie can borrow up to \$5,000 internally without contacting the council for approval. Approve: Spencer/Bea/U.

5. Moderator's Report: John has been in South Dakota most of the summer and will be starting school on Monday, which brings increased risk of his exposure to COVID-19.

6. Pastor's Report: Response to online services has been good. Randy and Karen will try to do Sunday's service from the church and add music to it. The internet provider has not been changed as it has been okay recently. We could get a repeater to improve access in all locations if needed.

It was suggested that we use our calling list to make contact with our members and see how they are doing.

7. Old Business:

Church Bell: See 3C.

Parsonage Fund Investment: Dennis found out that at Citizens' Bank a money market pays 0.1% and a 12-month CD pays 0.6%. At Granite Falls Bank the money market pays 0.15% and the CD pays 0.6%. Spencer hasn't yet talked to Thrivent about what their investment earnings are, but will do so for the next meeting.

Membership Approval of By-Law Changes: Tabled

Membership Approval of Church Start Time (Council recommends 9:30 AM): This can be discussed during Sunday's Zoom meeting. When we are ready to change the time, everyone will be notified by email or regular mail and asked to respond so that we know it was received.

Randy Moe Licensure with Minnesota Conference: Everything is sent and Randy is waiting for a meeting to be scheduled.

Fund Raising for Air Conditioning: Tabled

Junked Car in Parking Lot: The car is still there. Bea will get the number of a junk dealer in Willmar who advertises that he will pick up the vehicle and pay something for it. Dennis will contact him.

Consider Minnesota Conference Pandemic Assistance Grants: Randy is waiting to figure out what equipment will be needed to broadcast from the church. The Conference has indicated that there are still funds available.

8. New Business:

A. When do we reopen for in-person Sunday Services: Randy will start broadcasting from church and would like volunteers as liturgist after this Sunday, and possibly a couple of other attendees. Minnesota Conference offices are closed through at least December 31, 2020, which indicates that we don't need to hurry to open up the church.

B. Confirmation: See 3A

C. Distance Learning Sunday School: See 3A

Newspaper: The phone number listed in our church information is Steve's and he has no messaging. His number will be replaced with the church number and Randy will use Call Forwarding to send any calls to Karen's cell phone. Information about the service will include the Facebook Live service information.

Jared Mead, who was confirmed at GFUCC, died. Sharon will get a card to the family.

9. Church Use Requests:

✦ **Sharon Olson: Shower for Megan Odegard (August 29: 8 am to 1 pm):** Dennis will clean the basement before this.

Peggy Kvam: Christmas Community Project: Cathy Michaelson might need space for the donated gifts the kids purchase for their families.

10. Devotions for Next Meeting: Sharon

11. Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 (7:00 PM)

12. Adjourn with the Lord's Prayer: 8:35 Spencer/Dennis/U

Granite Falls United Church of Christ (Congregational)

Council Minutes

July 1, 2020

John called the meeting to order at 7:11. Council members present: John, Peggy, Randy, Sharon, Spencer, Sue. Attending by Zoom: Dennis, Konnie.

Devotions: John

1. Review, Modify, and Approve the Agenda: Add 8E—Review commitment to 16 solar panels. Approve as modified: Sharon/Spencer/U.

2. Minutes of March 11, 2020 Regular Council Meeting: Approve: Peggy/Spencer/U.

3. Committee Reports:

Christian Education: not met

Worship, Sanctuary, and Membership: not met

Building and Maintenance: no report

Stewardship: not met

Memorials and Bequests: not met

Pastor Parish Relations Committee: not met, John will talk with Randy to set up a convenient date to meet again.

Wider Church Happenings: Clergy in Metro area, including Shari Prestemon, marched quietly in response to George Floyd slaying.

Accept reports: Spencer/Dennis/U

4. Financial Report: April Maint/Supply expense of \$1348.72 includes the assessment payment, which did not get paid off as previously planned. We owe for 4 more years. We need to put out another appeal to members for pledged funds and mission moment giving. There is currently \$8923.08 in the checking account. Accept: Peggy/Dennis/U.

5. Moderator's Report: The Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting was a 2 ½ hour Zoom meeting in which John participated. Shari Prestemon talked about the unprecedented times and that the issue of racial justice is a priority for all of the UCC. John suggested everyone look up the website about a 21-day racial equity habit building challenge: <https://debbyirving.com/21-day-challenge/>

6. Pastor's Report: Sunday worship and Wednesday night meetings are going well. Randy has been dealing with racism issues—we need to help those people willing to learn and change. John thanked Randy for holding us together.

7. Old Business:

Church Bell: Randy has the mic and cables to install. It was suggested that he contact Keith Koerlin about helping to install them.

Parsonage Fund Investment: John suggested forming a subcommittee to investigate options in addition to the Racial Justice Investing that the UCC offers. Dennis suggested keeping the money local. In addition to CD or money market accounts, Spencer mentioned Thrivent. Dennis will check bank offerings and Spencer will check Thrivent to find the best rate of return on investment and liquidity factors.

Membership Approval of By-Law Changes & D. Membership Approval of Church Start Time: Start time will be left at 10:00 until we have been open for a while, by-law changes need to be announced two weeks prior to a congregational meeting. It was also suggested to continue using internet capabilities when services are open at the church. A good tripod and a tablet would be needed to do this. Randy will check with the conference about the Pandemic Assistance Grant to purchase these items. The internet access needs to be upgraded to cable for reliability. Motion to have Karen and Randy research the best choice and switch our provider accordingly: Peggy/Spencer/U.

Randy Moe Licensure with Minnesota Conference: The interview has not yet been rescheduled. Randy also has to submit transcripts.

Fund Raising for Air Conditioning: We will wait a while before starting an appeal.

8. New Business:

A. Junked Car in Parking Lot: John gave the plate number to the police and they contacted Randy with the name of the owner of the broken-down vehicle, who is from Sacred Heart. John talked to Greg Meyer about removing the vehicle. Motion to give Greg Meyer \$50 for removal: Sharon/Spencer/U.

B. Consider Minnesota Conference Pandemic Assistance Grants: See item 7 C & D.

C. Transient Fund: Designate Differently (YME Food Services): The Stewardship Committee voted by email to switch from the Transient Fund, which is no longer being used, to YME Food Services. There is currently \$370 available from 2019 and earlier this year. Dick Anderson will write up information for the bulletin if anyone wishes to make further donations this year.

D. When do we reopen for in-person Sunday Services?: We will not open yet and when we do it must be done carefully. Randy suggested that Dr. Darrell be involved in the plans. This will be discussed further in August.

Review commitment to 16 solar panels: The panels generated \$182.72 for the 7 months. Another year will cost around \$800 and we might get about half of that in return. We will renew our commitment to the 16 solar panels: John/Peggy/U. John will call the city and get back to Konnie on the amount.

9. Church Use Requests: Bev Nordang's granddaughter will be baptized July 18 in a small, private ceremony.

10. Devotions for Next Meeting: Sue

11. Next Meeting: August 12, 2020 (7:00 PM)

12. Adjourn with the Lord's Prayer: Spencer/Konnie/U