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PATHWAYS

JANUARY 2021

*You show me the path of life. In
your presence there is fullness of joy.*
Psalm 16:11

Find us on Social
Media @FCCStow!



Youth Group This Sunday, January 10th

Include in kicking off the New Year by making plans
to come to Youth Group this Sunday!
We will meet from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Trustees Meeting, This Sunday, January 10th

The Trustees will gather at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall
to discuss the year ahead.
Following the meeting the outside Nativity will be put away.

Governing Board, Monday, January 11th, 7 p.m.

The Governing Board will meet via Zoom
Don't worry; this meeting will be over before kickoff! Go Buckeyes!

Loaves and Fishes January 17

Free monthly dinner! Drive-Thru/Carry Out, 4-6 p.m.
On the menu for this month: Chicken Potpie!
Volunteers are always greatly appreciated.
This will also be our first month offering a food pantry pick-up!
See inside this issue for more food pantry information.

More information on all these events and so much more inside this newsletter

FROM THE PASTOR



We made it! 2021 is here! Finally! Praise God from whom all blessings flow! How many sentences can I write at the beginning of 2021 that end with an exclamation point!? Five, apparently.

Nonetheless, it is a New Year and I love a good new year (even though I am always sad when the Advent and Christmas seasons are over.) A New Year is filled with possibilities and in my humble opinion, 2021 is filled with the wonder of even more possibilities than many of us have ever imagined because we have just come through a year none of us could have ever imagined. We have been given a whole new perspective, along with a heightened awareness of the world in which we live and the daily blessings we have likely taken for granted for so long. (I am speaking rather personally here to be certain.) Soon, we all pray, life as we know it will look and feel more like normal, however it is my hope and prayer that we won't go back to "business as usual." I hope and pray we will remember the struggle of 2020, remember the loss and pain, remember the frustration and how hard it all was because to remember such will make the new possibilities all the more incredible, beautiful, and blessed. And it will remind us that despite all we have had to endure; God is still at work to make all things new.

Which brings me to something else I hope all of us will remember to do in 2021...

*Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,
the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.
~Joshua 1:9*

These words of Joshua have been a source of comfort and reassurance to people of faith for generations, not just because they look quaint on greeting cards and wall décor, but because of the deep truth they hold. And they are so deeply true because we have read in scripture how after these words were spoken God did indeed go wherever God's people were, always blessing them, always leading them, always providing a way through even the hardest and scariest of times.

First Christian Church has persevered through hard times before because we have relied on God to

lead us. This way always has, and always will, give us hope, strength, courage, and the ability to take a leap of faith knowing God will be there to bless us with everything we need.

And not only do the words "*do not be afraid*" appear in the book of Joshua, the successor of Moses, these words and versions of them such as "*be not afraid*" and "*fear not*" are used another 364 times in scripture, even by Jesus himself. This tells me, and reminds me again and again, that we should dare not let fear rule our hearts and inform our decisions because we can be certain God is with us, God is at work in us around us and through us, and God's work is always for good. Our job is to be faithful to God and God's call and guidance, and have faith that when we do our job, when we follow God in the ways Jesus has shown us, everything will work out for good.

So let us move into this New Year of 2021 strong and courageous, leaving behind fear and discouragement. Let us be excited for what is surely coming, while remembering from where we have come. For to live in such a way will not only bring about the hope, peace, joy, and love we welcomed at Christmas, but it will empower us to live with it and share it with others. And that, without a doubt, will make for a Happy New Year all year long!

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan Rumburg

The Acme Community Cash Back Campaign ended Dec. 26th....

The box for the tapes is on the window sill inside the church if anyone cares to drop their tapes off. No amount is too small, so please drop off any tapes you may have been saving. I will be totaling and turning in our total the end of Jan. Thank you everyone for your help.

Rae Howard

Financial Update For 2020 Year-end

We are still finalizing the financials for 2020, so this is preliminary information.

The Congregational Giving budget amount for 2020 was \$22,384 per month.

In December we received \$26,051. For the month this is above the budget amount by \$3,667.

For the full year we received \$251,818. This is below the annual budget amount by \$16,790.

Our expenses continued to be lower than budgeted, with the limited building use. We expect the final numbers to show our expenses coming in as less than our income for the year and will share those final numbers in the February Pathways. We thank you all for your faithful giving throughout 2020!

Here is the Congregational Giving information in table format:

2020	Dec	Nov	Oct	Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun	Jan-Mar	YTD
Budget	\$ 22,384	\$22,384	\$22,384	\$67,152	\$67,152	\$67,152	\$ 268,608
Actual	\$ 26,051	\$ 23,973	\$ 19,049	\$62,780	\$63,050	\$56,914	\$ 251,818
Actual - Budget	\$ 3,667	\$ 1,589	(\$3,335)	(\$4,372)	(\$4,102)	(\$10,238)	\$ (16,790)

2021 Budget Update

As we have shared throughout December through letters, emails and announcements during our worship services, the budget approved by the Governing Board and by the congregation for 2021 has the total expenses higher than the total income. We refer to that gap as our Leap of Faith, with the hopeful expectation that throughout the year we will be able to both increase our income and control our expenses appropriately.

With the final pledges received, that Leap of Faith amount is \$20,046. Total budgeted expenses are \$274,223 and total budgeted income is \$254,177. Though still higher than what we would like to see, it is a substantial improvement from when we first presented the information to the congregation. We will continue to share this information as we move through 2021.

Thank you to all of you for your prayerful consideration of how to best support our church financially. Collectively we will continue to faithfully use our resources, always keeping as our priority God's direction and guidance.

Youth Group in January

Christmas vacation has come and gone and that means it's time to get back to school! Wait! It means it's time to get back to Youth Group!

The Youth Group will meet this month on January 10th and then again on January 24th.

On the 10th we will help take down and store Christmas decorations from around the church, and then maybe play some mega beach ball volleyball. If anyone wants to that is. And we will also discuss the possibility of a special outing for our January 24th meeting. (Might it be...ice skating? Who knows?! No, really, who knows. Can you go ice skating during a pandemic? Asking for a friend. Parents, please consider what you think about this idea.)

Loaves and Fishes

The monthly Loaves and Fishes meal will be on Sunday, January 17, 2021. The time will be between the hours of 4 pm till 6 pm. Dinner will be TAKEOUT only. This month's dinner will be chicken Potpie. If you know anyone that needs dinner, feel free to take one to them. As always workers are needed. Bakers, please make oatmeal cookies.

Thank you,
Outreach Team

The Nest Preschool

The Nest Early Learning Center will be enrolling for the 2021-2022 school year in February! Members of First Christian Church of Stow receive 20% off tuition on all preschool programs. Check out www.thenestearlylearningcenter.org for more information or email missannepreschool@gmail.com to add your child to the enrollment list.

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Anne Reiman
The Nest Early Learning Center
Administrator/Head Teacher

Ingathering 2020:

In this pandemic year, when nothing seemed normal, little went as planned, and almost everything was controlled by a deadly virus; I'm pleased to say that this year's program went off smoothly and safely.

Although we spread out the pick-up for families over two days with scheduled pick-up times for each family, and the recipients were in masks and gloves, each recipient still had the opportunity to obtain coats, hats, gloves and scarves, socks and underwear and school supplies in addition to the food baskets and gifts for the children. This year we provided assistance to 48 families encompassing 111 children. In a year when so much was cancelled or postponed, I am very grateful we were able to provide some small slice of hope, a tiny measure of peace in this most difficult year for everyone.

We are so very appreciative for all who contributed, purchased gifts or food, shopped for coats, collected boxes, helped with distribution or in any way supported this amazing ministry. A special thank you to our community partners:

Hudson United Methodist Preschool
Cascade Imports
Redmon Funeral Home
Marhofer Chevrolet

This ministry would not be possible without the efforts of many. This is a ministry which is most appreciated and sometimes life altering for recipients who are friends and neighbors, right here, in our community.

***A special thank you to Mary Martha Guild for the 100 fleece blankets that were provided to the Ingathering recipients.

Elders Meeting

Monday, January 25th, 7 p.m. via Zoom

The Elders of the church will gather via Zoom on Monday, January 25th at 7 p.m. This will be the first official meeting for new Chairperson Tom Safford, and for newly elected Elders Laurie Robinson, Beth Weiser, and Dave Helmick. We extend our deepest thanks and appreciation for those Elders who have completed their terms: Dianne Haywood, Judy Mahaffey, and Rick Lloyd. Their faithful leadership has been a blessing and a gift to the church.

Help Return to In-Person Worship

As we look to return to in-person worship it will be an imperative that our building is prepared to host those who will gather. But this important work will require a broader cleaning regiment than what is normal from our custodians. It will also require people who are willing to welcome, host, and direct those who will come for worship on Sunday mornings.

To do this work the Elders are looking to create a team of folks who are willing to coordinate, facilitate, and implement the policies and procedures needed to make in-person worship happen.

If you are willing to be a part of this important team please reach out to the church office, Tom Safford or Jonathan and let them know. Anyone can be part of this team and your participation will be immensely appreciated!

Financial Peace University

We are currently exploring options to once again offer the class Financial Peace University via online Zoom gatherings. If this is allowable classes will begin in the coming weeks.

Financial Peace University is a nine week course that has helped over 5 million people learn to pay off debt, save and invest for their future. Financial Peace University is led by world renowned financial advisor and author Dave Ramsey and his teaching team who will walk you through the basics of budgeting, dumping debt, planning for the future, and much more. Classes include watching a video, followed by workbook exercises, and open discussion. The purchase of a FPU class kit necessary, and is filled with resources and tools that will contribute to your success. You don't have to feel overwhelmed and powerless about your money.

Keep an eye out for more information as it comes available, or reach out directly to Jonathan about your interest and/or any questions you have.

Zoom Study Group
New Year-New Night

Wednesday, January 13th, 7 p.m.

After two successful book studies the group expressed the desire for the studies to continue, however, it was discussed that meeting on Thursday evenings created scheduling issues. And so with the New Year comes a new change to this weekly evening time study group.

The group will now meet on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., but will still meet via Zoom. And for the first study of the New Year we will not be reading a book, but instead will be viewing video shorts to serve as our discussion fodder.

A Zoom link will be shared with anyone who would like to join the group for these faith based discussions aimed to help us all broaden our perspectives, heightened our awareness, and deepen our faith through thoughtful, attention-grabbing, fun, amusing, and meaningful conversation. Contact the church office or Jonathan to get yourself on the study group email list.

New Year's Greetings
from the Membership Team!

We hope you all felt the love and presence of Christ during the Christmas season and rejoice in His coming! We want to thank all who helped create or came through to enjoy our beautiful display for the Colors of Christmas community event. We had over 100 cars come through our portico to enjoy our winter wonderland light display, a cheerful Christmas greeting, and a delicious cookie treat that was generously donated by the folks at Polar Express. We were able to spread Christmas cheer to around 300 people. What a blessing!

With COVID protocols still in place, we will unfortunately not be able to enjoy our annual Super Soup Cook-Off this year. We are looking for opportunities to come together safely. If we get some snowy weather, we may schedule a sled riding event or participate in the City of Stow Snow Fun Festival which includes snow carving. So if there is a big January snow, watch and listen for information on these events!

We continue to pray and think of all our church family. Hoping 2021 will bring brighter days for all and opportunities to come together. Keep shining His light through these winter days.

Blessings from the Membership Team
Jonathan, John and Janice McCreight, Diane Waite, Barb Bell, Bill and Cora Dowey

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

We are excited to announce that it is time to enhance our Loaves & Fishes into Loaves & Fishes + Pantry.

During the early days of the pandemic our Loaves & Fishes team switched from a sit down meal to a take out meal. Since making that switch our number of people served has increased five-fold. This tells us that the need in our community is greater than ever and that increased service was necessary.

In 2021 we are expanding our Loaves & Fishes takeout to include a take out bag with a selection of shelf-stable food items that will help those in need stretch their food budget.

Our first Loaves & Fishes + Pantry is on Sunday January 17.

Here is our proposed time table:

1. We will obtain the shelf-stable food from the Akron Canton Regional Food Bank (ACRFB) during the week before the meal.
2. On the Saturday afternoon before the meal we will pack the food. For January that will be on the 16th.
3. On the meal date we will check in the guests and distribute their food (put in in their car).

We will need volunteers to make this work and be sustainable. If anyone has a cargo van or pickup truck we may need your help going to the ACRFB to pick up the food.

Covid-19 protocols remain in effect so please maintain social distance and wear a mask during L&V+P activities.

This enhanced program is major step forward for our church and will be a spiritual and physical blessing for the poor and hungry.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Tom Safford at either tom.safford88@icloud.com or 330-715-6019. You can also contact the Church office.

"The Messiah's Invitation"

An Easy Homework Assignment Based In Matthew 2:1-15

For the start of the New Year leaders around the church were asked to complete an easy homework assignment. In as few or as many words as they wished, they were asked to answer the following question: *Just as God guided the Magi and Joseph, how and where do you see and hear God guiding you and our church in 2021?*

The responses collected from this easy homework assignment were going to be used for the January 3rd sermon from Matthew 2:1-15, the story of the Magi searching for Jesus and their encounter with Herod, and then how God gave directions to the Magi and Joseph to go another way. Much to my pleasure, it seemed my "windbag preacher" ways have rubbed off on folks because there was way more content than could be used in a single sermon. Yet the context of the responses was so good it pained me to only use sampled parts from each person. That's when I came up with the brilliant idea to post every word of every response in the January 2021 issue of the Pathways.

I hope you will take the needed time (perhaps over the course of a couple of days) and read these thoughtful and faithfully crafted responses from your church leaders. And then I invite each of you to take some time to consider the question for yourself and craft your own faithful response to this question. And I would be thrilled if you shared your response with me!

Let us all be open to hearing how God is leading us in this New Year, and let us follow God to those good and faithful places in 2021. Blessings, Jonathan

Jim Hindel

This has been one of the worst years of my life, if I look at everything that I went through. I actually now thank you for getting me to do a sermon, one that had to do with anger and adversity. I realize now, more than ever God never said he would always make things easy, that things would work out exactly as we think they should.

So through an extremely stressful Pandemic, we have incurred many deaths, financial losses, businesses being closed, etc. We have also heard and seen the cries of racial injustice. People have become angry, lost.

My take for 2021 is to stay positive, to realize that life is not always joyful and happy, we are not guaranteed to be free of problems. What I can do, is to lead in a manner that shows God is our keeper. We are here really as preparation for God's plan, and my final goal, that is eternal peace. Adversity can bring people closer together. As I have always said about our church, when something is needed they come through. So staying positive, trusting in and being faithful to God, that helps me with what's most important to me, and those things are God's love, my church, birth and marriage families, and people in communities that continually need our help. Our church, I believe will become stronger through adversity, we have the people with attitudes to make that happen. Continuing to grow our community outreach is in God's plan for us, already started with the Foodbank. If we talk to God, and continue to be faithful, we will succeed in his plan. We need to remember he has told us through scripture to help others, be kind to others, love others, so these are the things we must do to accomplish his perfect plan, that of eternal peace.

Diane Waite

This "easy" assignment has brought many thoughts to my mind about how and where I see and hear God guiding me and our church in 2021. I appreciate the previous responses about how 2020 has compelled us to bend and stretch in both our personal lives and our church life to adapt to life during a pandemic. I see 2020 as a period of cultural awakening that is a result of our current health crisis and our collective increased awareness of inequality and systemic injustice affecting all of our brothers and sisters. I like the theme of inclusiveness that Joni brought up in her response for this reason. I want to maintain creative and inclusive momentum in our church in 2021, as we have developed and sustained exciting new ways to "be" the church. I challenge the Elders to think about how we will continue to deliver Peace, Joy, Hope, and Love to our church family and to our community in 2021. Does our church family have ideas to bring to the table, but they need our support as Elders to bring their idea to life?

On a personal level, my goal in 2021 is to find inner peace and balance despite my circumstances. In 2020, I have been humbled completely in my many roles as a woman, an Elder, and a professional and the cost has been very high to my own inner peace. I want to use the old analogy of putting on your own oxygen mask on the airplane before you try to help someone else with theirs. This is my personal struggle to overcome in 2021. I need to find my own peace and balance so that I can be the best that I can for my family, my church, and my profession. Without sounding too pessimistic, I know that 2021 will not have a pandemic light switch to turn off once immunizations roll out. I think it is possible that we have all changed in a real way, personally and as a church, because of 2020 and 2021 will be a year of healing and growth. I am beyond thankful for this group of Elders and Jonathan as we forge ahead in 2021. Blessings in New Year to everyone, and welcome to the new Elders!

Tom Safford

I'm not sure what destination we're being guided towards. But between the pandemic, the sabbatical, our budget, and changes in church staffing I'm confident that our church will emerge from 2021 in a different and stronger position. The nuts and bolts of our church, finance, building maintenance, outreach, membership and the rest are all in good and capable hands. As long as we keep our focus on serving those in need, within and without our congregation, we will be following the light of the Lord.

Laurie Robinson

Personally, I feel that I am being led toward a more organized and purposeful life. I feel that God is leading me to take the next steps in my professional life and begin the PhD program at Kent. I feel that He wants me to work on balance both in my life and within myself, so I am working on taking steps to do so. It is hard to articulate where I feel God is calling our church. I know where I feel the church should go, but I am not sure if I feel that God is necessarily calling us there, if that makes sense. What I would love to see is more classes or groups held at our church. I would love to be a part of a good Bible study, prayer group or Sunday school class. The unfortunate thing is that needs volunteers to run them and we already have an issue with that. I personally would love to be a part of one, but with the boys and everything else going on, I wouldn't want to lead one. I see this being the next step though, where even if people don't come to church service, we could get them to come to some kind of group or be holding something off campus in conjunction with our church to reach people. I don't even know what that would look like.

From my background, I have heard of churches holding health fairs and such things. We have plenty of nurses within the congregation. Playing around with an idea for the College of Nursing, but would also work for our church is some easy Facebook live or short video of some sort that just deals with positive living and good feels (recipes, exercise, guided meditation, spiritual meditations, prayer, inspirational quotes, etc).

Andrew Robinson

I'm a firm believer in the idea that the phrase "God only gives you what you can handle" is dumb. I don't think God would put us in terrible situations just to challenge us, make us grow, or teach us a lesson. Having said that, the challenges of 2020 have brought about a level of creativity, ingenuity, philanthropy, inward reflection and self-growth that would have been unheard of at the beginning of the year. We have learned new ways to worship and share God's Word through Facebook and Youtube; we have learned new ways to reach our local community through drive-through dinners, pop up pantries, etc; we have learned where our priorities lie and are learning how to focus on those. As individuals, and as a church, we need to continue focusing on, and working towards, those priorities and strive for those things that allow us to accomplish what we can in the current climate heading into the coming year. For a lot of people, and I would include myself in this category, this year has been significantly focused on self-preservation. How do I stay healthy, maintain financial security, find ways to occupy my time when I can't do my normal social functions, etc? What I need to be better about going into 2021 is reflecting on what I can do to capitalize on my role to help those around me. I'll be honest that I don't necessarily know what that role is yet. As a church, our role will continue to be a light within the community, adapting to what we are able to do, but serving those around us through our presence, message, resources, and programs. We have the capabilities, we have the desire, the opportunity is there - it may take some new perspective and deeper conversations on how to make plans come to fruition. But I wholeheartedly believe we can do it and we'll make it happen in 2021.

Joni Fitch

A couple of weeks ago I was asked to consider three words to describe how I want to show up in 2021. I responded with intentional, creative and inclusive. I feel like these words also describe how God will guide us into 2021. The global pandemic forced us to change the way we do things - practicing agility, creativity and faith (and lots of prayer)! It helped us not take things for granted and to find blessings in places we maybe didn't before. I believe 2021 offers us a unique gift - this year will once again prove different and things will likely change rapidly - but it provides us the opportunity to reset, again, and reshape some things for an even better future. We can be intentional, creative and inclusive as we create not the "new" normal, but the "even better" normal for us, our church and our church family. As Elders - I think God will guide us to help Jonathan and our church prepare for a successful (and intentional) sabbatical that will result in growth.

A friend recently introduced me to the word Sankofa. It is an African word from the Akan tribe in Ghana. She described it to me as looking back to see where we've been and what we've learned to move forward. I think God will help us learn from 2020 as we take on 2021 with love, mental & physical (hopefully) presence, and open minds & hearts.

Beth Weiser

I think we have made immense strides in our outreach ministries over these last 9 months and I am prepared to support these programs and was glad to see an increase in the budget for this even though the commitments were down! I think this is how we show God's love in the world. We can't be together as a church, but we can still BE THE CHURCH. I never feel God's presence more than when serving the community. I never regret the time I spend at church doing any of these things and I feel it is often the same faces over and over again. I think we have seen an increased in participation in these outreach programs and would like to get more church members involved.

I know I miss in-person church and I know my family is struggling to receive God's message without it, so I look forward to discussing ways we can make that happen.
2021 bring it on!

Sue Hobson

Personally I am being called to join a church committee which I haven't done yet due to time constraints, but hope to. As a church, I think we are being called to be more involved in our local community, serving as a resource to those in need with food, i.e.

Foodbank, Bulldog bags, loaves and fishes. . . Maybe we could expand to help with other needs, especially ones due to Covid such as isolation, mental health issues, jobs, tutoring... Could we host community forums (on Zoom for now) to help people?

We are in a unique location in the city. Maybe we should re-brand ourselves "at the corner of ... and..." Perhaps the Elders and church leaders could help to connect our church with other organizations to see where we might partner to support the community-library, other churches, schools. Everything shouldn't be on pastor's shoulders. Make it more intentional with assignments.

Pre-pandemic our church was exploring racial issues. Maybe we could partner with an inner city Akron church to explore together.

Rick Lloyd

Knowing that my term as elder is ending I have been thinking about where to go next to continue to serve the church. It led me back to a position I have held before, a trustee. Not just holding the office of Trustee but the meaning behind the word trustee, which represents the interest of the patrons of a church. Meaning making sure everything is in order so functions of the church can operate smoothly.

During the last nine months I think we, as a church, have seen more than ever before that the church isn't just a building. But our building and church facilities are vital tools that enable us to reach out to our members and our community. Using these tools and our abilities we have reached people through Facebook Live and YouTube. We have served carry-out meals from our kitchen for Loaves and Fishes dinners. We have provided a home for The Bulldog Bags program to distribute food during the summer to school children.

A new program just starting is working with the Akron Canton food bank to provide a distribution point for food for those in our area. This is all in addition to groups using our building such as AA, Al-Anon, Boy Scouts and the list goes on.

Maintaining our building and facilities allows these programs to continue. It allows us to reach outside our four walls. To share our love and faith in God with hundreds, maybe thousands of people who would never fit inside our building.

Dave Helmick

I would like to thank God, Pastor Rumburg, and everyone else at First Christian Church Stow for the many blessings, supportive prayers, and guidance that is allowing me to embrace this new role as elder at FCC.

I felt a strong calling from God to embrace my church life more. Ever since Covid has forced us to worship remotely I have yearned for a larger connection with the church and our church family. I had been praying for ways to embrace the church more and I get a text from

Jonathan asking to speak with me. He presented the nomination for elder and I couldn't be more happy for this adventure!

This is God guiding me in 2021! God presents opportunities in our lives, and from my sports background I know you will miss 100% of the shots you don't take. Well, I am taking this shot, I am embracing offering more to the church and to others in 2021. God's guidance is guiding us to opportunities in 2021, and we need to be prepared to say, "YES!" to those. I also know that these opportunities can be small and seem insignificant at the time; however, small changes can lead to big rewards. With Gods guidance I hope to help prepare and embrace future opportunities for the church in 2021.

So some might ask what these opportunities are? The age old saying that God works in mysterious ways holds it truth here. We cannot be certain in what opportunities will present themselves in 2021; but we can be prepared to answer them. With devoted prayer, staying well informed with the societal and political implications, and consciously evaluating FCC's mission and purpose in serving the community.

I know God presented me with this opportunity to help better myself, my faith to God, and my commitment to helping others.

John McCreight

I think I see us being called to reach more people in new ways, as well as the current ways we serve. Both services and outreach have had to get creative, during the Virus, to keep our missions alive. The new ways called us to get out of our comfort zones to be able to accomplish this. I think we've been shown the door (out of that comfort zone) and we need to not return to it and close that door. We need to continue to try to find ways to reach and serve others. And be willing to discontinue such ways that do not work.

This will require us to get more of our congregation and friends to help. But aren't we seeing some of all these things occurring already? Maybe not in droves, but I've seen several masked faces and new (to me) names of folks getting involved that I had not seen before!

We've done the "build it and they will come" too long. Take the creativity and energy discovered this last year and keep up the momentum! It has to be less complicated once we get past the Virus.

Anna Lloyd and Richelle Aukeman

In 2020 the Christian Ed Team was not able to host our annual Easter Egg Hunt, in-person Vacation Bible School, Sunday School / Jr Church or have Christmas Activities. These were all disappointing, but the CE Team got more creative to reach our FCC Stow families and local community with an At-Home Vacation Bible School videos, Jr Church At-Home Edition and hosting a scaled down Trunk or Treat event, in addition to our Sunday livestream worship services.

Looking ahead to 2021 the Christian Education Team is hopeful we can get back together for our traditional events-- Easter Egg Hunt, in-person Vacation Bible School, Sunday School/Jr Church and Christmas activities. We have learned a lot this year and gotten more creative to make CE activities and events stronger and better than ever in 2021.

Lisa Roseman

My first thought is that I don't know because I don't slow down enough to listen/ascertain what God may be trying to make obvious to me. So I guess that highlights the first thing I am hearing— that I need to change that, and slow down, find ways to actually listen.

We are so blessed, (my family and my church) to have had minimal impact from the pandemic. Most of our work can continue with adjustments and our financial situation has some challenges but not really major ones due to the pandemic.

Being forced to do things differently should allow us to see brand new opportunities. How do we stay connected in ways that don't require being in the physical building? How do we make sure everyone in the congregation is doing ok when we don't see them every week? How do we jump over obstacles of awkwardness in reaching out by phone or letter? What opportunities for getting involved in discussions or outreach can we provide for folks who feel the need to still stay isolated?

What new needs are there within the congregation and the community that we can help with? Maybe find a way to assist with families struggling with remote school? Are there ways we can help heal the divisiveness that the political climate has shown? Can we model respectful intelligent sharing of ideas among people who do not agree on many things?

Are there ways we can collaborate with nearby congregations who are struggling in similar ways? If we snoop onto their fb/youtube services would we learn anything new about how they are communicating? What new ways can we come up with to share some fun a