

# The Messenger



A Newsletter of the  
Genesee 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational, United Church of Christ, Inc.

February, 2021 - Special Edition

Volume 15, Number 5.5

## From the Pastor



*Paging through the columns of times past, I noted these lines from one I wrote on January 1, 2020.*

*I feel moved at the first of this year to encourage us all to pay heed to epiphanies! We, who can be consumed by many great and overpowering things, need epiphanies... we need them now more than ever.*

*A year ago, I – we – may have been aware of the coronavirus that had barely made the news, but I am certain that we had no comprehension of it becoming a pandemic that continues to grip us to this day. I am sad to report that these words from last year ring true as we make our way, stumbling often, through this crisis. The annual reports of both congregations are in and the picture that they paint is increasingly bleak. At first, we rose to the occasion. Contributions at the beginning of the year were ahead of the pace of previous years. I will infer that some of this can be attributed to “shelter at home” behaviors. I suspect that you, like me, haven’t put as many miles on the car as in previous years. You likely have curtailed the number of times that you have ventured out, and you haven’t been frequenting your favorite restaurants or places of recreation. Consequently, the savings account has grown for most of us. Those who have lost jobs or income during the pandemic, I hold you in prayer certainly. I also gather that most of our membership have not seen a significant drop in resources. With all of that extra money at our disposal, many had fulfilled their pledged obligations to the church earlier than in non-pandemic times.*

*That is beginning to change now, and, while we maintain a robust attendance in our Zoom worship, there are clearly those who do not attend. The reasons for non-attendance vary. Some don’t have the means. Some don’t feel they have the knowhow and could “never” acquire it. Some just don’t think worship online is, well, worshipful. What has happened as a result is that both congregations have lost the offering of those who don’t pledge, but rather “pay as you go.” We are indeed feeling this hit to the budget significantly now. We can make*

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## Important updates from our moderator...

Mike Whiteley

First, with the upcoming and well-deserved retirement of Pastor Peter St. Martin on February 28th, we have formed a Search and Call committee. We are starting the process of finding an Interim Minister and beginning to compile our church profile for the search process this year. We have a candidate for an Interim Minister, and [by the time this goes to print] he has been interviewed. I feel he is an excellent candidate. More updates to follow.

Second, we need your help with giving. The last two months of offering has fallen off and we had to take money from savings to cover our expenses. November and December are usually our two best months for giving. This year they were not at all close to last year’s numbers. We need to turn this around. Please join me in making an offering to the church during these challenging times. I know it is hard for some to feel connected when we cannot gather for in-person services or hold other outreach events. However, our church has served its members and its community for more than 175 years. Now, more than ever, we need to stay faithful to our mission. As more people get vaccinated and infection levels go down, the closer we are to returning to in person-services. We will be back together again soon. We just need to get through these “in between” times. Please pray for God’s guidance in these efforts – and we thank you for doing so. Remember you can drop off offering at the church office or mail it to Angela Williams at any time.

Angela Williams  
W956 Miramar Rd.  
East Troy, WI 53120

or

Genesee Church office  
W306 S5075 Church St.  
Mukwonago (Genesee), WI 53149

Welcome to the February, 2021 Special Edition of the Messenger. Restrictions, due to Covid-19, are still not allowing us to have in-person services inside our church building. In lieu of “normal” Sunday morning worship an online “Zoom” gathering has been set up.

SUNDAY, 9:30 AM (VIRTUAL SERVICE) Join us as early as 9 AM.

To Join the group via Computer or tablet or smartphone, click on the following link or copy into your browser.  
<https://zoom.us/j/396301165> Password = 365422

You may also join by going to <https://zoom.us> and click on the “JOIN A MEETING”

heading at the top of the webpage.

When prompted, enter:

- Meeting ID: 396 301 165
- Password: 365422

To join meeting by phone (Audio only)

- Call 1-312-626-6799
- and enter when prompted:
- o Meeting ID: 396 301 165
- o Password: 365422

### Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month

As our Lord told the disciples on the *first* Last Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me,” we have returned to the regular observance of the Sacrament of Communion on the first Sunday of the Month during the 9:30 AM “zoom” service. Yes, it is quite a different experience, as we cannot share the elements. We encourage you to do what you need to do to make the experience meaningful to you. You may want to have elements (grape juice or wine / bread) with you to partake along with Pastor Peter as he breaks the bread, pours the cup and partakes on behalf of us all.

### Lectionary Bible Study

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 This is your opportunity to learn about the Bible scripture for the upcoming Sunday. It is held every Thursday, at 10 AM. Like our “zoom” services, it is a “virtual” event. To Join the group via Computer or tablet or smartphone, click on the following link or copy into your browser. <https://zoom.us/j/324446460>

You may also join by going to <https://zoom.us> and click on the “JOIN A MEETING” heading at the top of the webpage.

When prompted, enter:

- Meeting ID: 324 446 460
- Password: 789656

To join meeting by phone (Audio only)

- Call 1-312-626-6799
  - and enter when prompted:
  - o Meeting ID: 324 446 460
  - o Password: 789656
- .....

## Events Calendar

### FEBRUARY - MARCH events

Listed here are the dates of meetings, holidays and events in February and March. All dates are correct at the time of publication. All events are at the Ed. Center, unless otherwise noted. Virtual “Zoom” worship Services are 9:30 AM each Sunday morning. Lectionary Bible study (via “Zoom”) is each Thursday, 10 AM. For “zoom” LINKS see Page 2.

#### FEBRUARY

- TU 2 GROUND HOG DAY**  
**SU 7** 9:30 AM – Communion during “Zoom” service  
**TU 9** Executive Board – 5 PM (virtual)  
**SU 14 VALENTINE’S DAY**  
**MO 15 PRESIDENTS’ DAY**  
**WE 17 ASH WEDNESDAY**  
 Penitential Service – 6:30 PM (via zoom)  
 (see zoom instructions, page 3)  
**SU 21** Deadline for March – April Messenger  
**SU 28** Pastor Peter’s Last Sunday with us

#### MARCH

- SU 7** 9:30 AM – Communion during “Zoom” service  
**One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering**  
**TU 9** Executive Board – 5 PM (virtual)  
**SU 14** Daylight Saving Time (DST) begins  
 Spring ahead one hour.  
**WE 17 ST. PATRICK’S DAY**  
**SA 20** Vernal Equinox (Spring begins)  
 4:37 AM (CDT)  
**SU 21** Deadline for April (special edition) Messenger  
**SU 28 PALM SUNDAY**

### Ash Wednesday Penitential Service

**Feb 17, 2021, 6:30 PM**

This will be a service of confession and self-reflection to begin Lent. Due to the pandemic, we will not administer ashes. But we can still confess.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85784884132>

- Meeting ID: 857 8488 4132
- Passcode: 975595

To join meeting by phone (Audio only)

- Call 1-312-626-6799
- and enter when prompted
- Meeting ID: 857 8488 4132
- Passcode: 975595

From the Pastor – continued from Page 1

the plea to folk on Sunday, but frankly the ones who love our churches, those who are not with us on Sundays, need to be reached.

Please understand. We cannot meet until it is safe. When it is safe enough – for there has always been a risk for any number of communicable infections – the doors will open. The doors will open, IF we keep paying the bills that don't care whether we meet or not! Such dedication to our church families is a significant expression of true stewardship. Offering is not supposed to be an investment for services as if you were a customer. It is not the "price of admission," nor is it a quid pro quo because you received Sunday worship or some other service rendered. Offering to God is an expression of devotion with no expectation of personal return. It is a commitment to ensure that God's work is done in the world in all times. In this age, giving to the church is an expression of hope and a test of one's mettle as to the true reason for giving.

I implore you all to contribute to your church and its ongoing ministries. Yes, that includes the light bill, but we are still reaching out to minister to those in need, and the need has grown for many in this world. We still hold worship each week, and Bible study, and I hope more of you muster the means by which to find a way to make this worship worshipful. The day will come when the doors will be open. The ruling committees of each congregation are working on infection and vaccination rates as determination factors. They are heeding guidance from the State, the Wisconsin Conference and the Wisconsin Council of Churches to articulate the milestone that we must reach to be safe. Sadly, the circumstance is nowhere near the safety level we need, but there is hope. The news at this writing declared that vaccines are rolling out ahead of schedule, and we should see a marked change in the number of people vaccinated.

The message then, is to keep looking for "epiphanies" to encourage you in this difficult time. They won't be the ones we have usually relied upon, but look for them. They are there! Hope and trust in God. We will get through this. 'Twas grace that brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us back to the sanctuary!

Pastor Peter

e-mail: [stmartpb@msn.com](mailto:stmartpb@msn.com)  
(c) 262-720-6939; (h) 262-201-4033

## EXPLORE GOD'S WORD DAILY

Copies of the devotional booklet: *"The Upper Room"* for January – February, 2021 are available at the office. On every page is an inspirational reading and accompanying Bible verse for each day.



Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Ludtke

## Silent Night, Frozen Night

In addition to our 7 PM Christmas Eve "zoom" service, we also held a 5:30 PM Drive-up service at Genesee Church. An estimated 15 people braved 10° F temperatures for the 20-minute service. After a very brief message on the topic of the nativity, Pastor Peter, guitar in his frozen hands, gave a memorable rendition of "Silent Night." After 20 minutes of standing in the cold, we all got back in our warm cars and went home.

## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS)

Through your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing, you have the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of other people... Case in point:

Luisa knows the land. She has lived near El Panama, Nicaragua for most of her 34 years. She is teaching her two sons to know the land. In 2015, Luisa joined a 5-year agricultural project through the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD). With farmers like Luisa, CEPAD is working for holistic change. On her 1.5 acres, Luisa has improved soil quality with manure and mulch. Drip-irrigation techniques provide consistent water. Luisa has increased her harvest.

Her first focus is seeds. Training in seed selection enable her to plant quality seeds which she is also sharing with her neighbors. Luisa's hopes stretch further than just next season, though. She hopes the added income will fund her son's education to become a professional. At the same time, she is teaching them, the land is part of their future – they are responsible for protecting the spring on their property. With support from CEPAD and One Great Hour of Sharing, Luisa is planting seeds that will bear abundant fruit for today, tomorrow, and years to come. With God's help and contribu-

tions from people like you – these seeds will bear far more than we can imagine.

On Sunday, March 7, we have the opportunity to support One Great Hour of Sharing. Please give an extra, special monetary gift that Sunday. Mark your check, or cash envelope, “One Great Hour of Sharing” or simply “OGHS.” Thank you for your support.

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### **MESSENGER AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL**

If you are not receiving your newsletter via e-mail, and you have an e-mail address, send an e-mail to [LTLBURD@aol.com](mailto:LTLBURD@aol.com) and the secretary will get you on the e-mail list. Also, let us know if your e-mail address changes by sending an e-mail using your new e-mail address. Thank you for helping us save mailing costs.

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### **MORE BULLETIN BLOOPERS**

The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.

Evening message – 6 PM

Stewardship Offertory: “Jesus Paid It All”

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### **A FINAL NOTE** 🎵

The deadline for the March - April, 2021 edition is Sunday, February 21. The deadline for the April special edition is Sunday, March 21. To submit an article, event information, or to receive your newsletter via e-mail, send e-mail to: [LTLBURD@aol.com](mailto:LTLBURD@aol.com). Articles submitted in person need to be typed or written legibly.

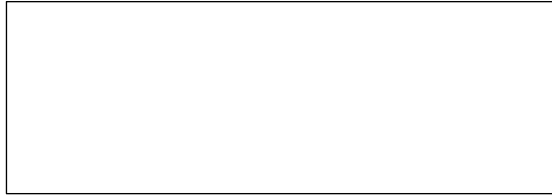
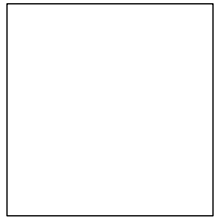
Scott W. Burdette



GENESEE 1<sup>ST</sup> CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, INC.  
W306 S5075 CHURCH ST.  
MUKWONAGO (GENESEE), WI 53149-9732  
262-968-3849 [www.geneseechurch.org](http://www.geneseechurch.org)

NEWSLETTER FEB 2021

TIME VALUE MAIL  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



**9:30 AM**  
**Sunday**  
**Virtual Worship**  
(see Page 2 for LINK)  
**6:30 PM, February 17**  
**Ash Wednesday Penitential**  
**Service**  
(see Page 2 for LINK)

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