



Amicable Congregational Church United Church of Christ

Friendly Messenger January 2021

Stewardship Campaign

Hello friends: Just a friendly reminder to those who have not yet made their pledges to the 2021 Church Budget: PLEASE: let us know what you plan to pledge soon! We are almost to our goals. We need your help to get there. If you have misplaced a pledge sheet and wish another, please contact me at 401-624-7367 and I'll mail you one or simply contact the church treasurer, Roger Gauthier, and let him know your intentions. You do not need to pledge to be eligible for free offering envelopes from the church. If you would like to have a set, just ask Roger.

Thank you, Charles Simonson, Stewardship Team

Pledge Forms and Offering Envelopes for 2021

Pledge forms for 2021 are available via email for those that would like one. Offering Envelopes for 2021 are available as well. If you have any questions about Pledging or would like Offering Envelopes please contact the treasurer, Roger Gauthier.

Rev. Sterrett Away/Guest Preacher

Rev. Sterrett will be on vacation from Monday, December 28, to Monday, January 11. Rev. Dr. Leslie Simonson will lead our virtual worship on Sunday, January 3rd, and Rev. Dr. Charles Simonson will lead the virtual worship on Sunday, January 10th. In case of a pastoral emergency, please contact Pat Campion (401-297-7323).



God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. - I John 4:16b

Last year, in this space, I shared with you a testimonial written by Sue Cory, which was read in worship in October 2019. I am sharing this space again, because I have had the enormous good fortune of having Jamie Poulton share with me a poem they wrote. As soon as I read it I knew I wanted to share it. Jamie gave me permission to do so.

Here is what they wrote:

love tells a story
by Jamie Poulton

LOVE CAME down
with arms wide open
and met us
met me, specifically
Head On.

I say head on because, me and love, we have some differences
When Love says unconditional, I don't always believe it.
Love sounds a lot like the popular kid in school inviting you to sit at her lunch table.
There has to be a catch.
When Love says unconditional, I say "Are you sure about that?"
Because Love looks like a child, bouncing and laughing ...
They don't know what the world is like
Yet.

Love looks up smiling, "Come on, stay with me!!" unconditional.
I don't think Love knows quite what they're getting into
"Have you met me?"
I say, I lie
I leave
I push people away, and
I hurt others.
There are days when I am a mess of anxiety and fear and anger and frustration and not a whole lot else.
There are days when I don't get out of bed.
I continually avoid confronting my demons
I have demons
I have made some really stupid mistakes
I am a failure.
I lose
I doubt
I hate others and sometimes myself.
I'm queer and trans for goodness sakes, you have to have something against that

Love gives me a look.

She is in full drag, face done, wig on, all-over sequin dress, glaring down at me over the glasses halfway down her nose, one perfectly drawn eyebrow slightly raised, "Honey."

We have this conversation almost every day, and I really should have seen this coming.

Unconditional. Un. Con. Di. Tion. Al. Period.

Love tells me a story.

Of when

They judged and misunderstood Love

And Love stayed.

They ignored Love

And Love stayed.

They did not believe Love would stay.

And Love stayed.

They threatened Love,

And he stayed.

They betrayed Love, denied Love,

mocked, interrogated, beat, whipped, and tied Love to a cross.

They drove iron nails through the bones in Love's wrists

Hung Him up by the hands and feet, until there was no more blood to flow.

No more strength to hold on to.

No more breath to breathe.

Love died.

And they were so sure that Love was never coming back.

Some days I believe that Love is never coming back.

That Love doesn't want me.

That I, that the world, is capable of pushing Love away for good.

There are days when we think that Death, that Fear, that Depression, Anxiety, Shame, Doubt and Hatred have won.

And Love stays.

I thank Jamie, not only for sharing their poem, but for the many, many ways they have been and continue to be a blessing to Amicable Church and all whom they encounter. It is my hope that their words will encourage you to reflect on the Holy One's unconditional love and how you have experienced this love in and through your relationship with Amicable Church.

Happy New Year and Blessings!

Yours in Christ,



Worship Themes

January 3 Rev. Dr. Leslie Simonson will be leading worship on this Sunday while Rev. Sterrett is away. Communion will be a part of this Sunday's virtual worship and the theme is "House of Bread", which is the translation from the Hebrew of the word "Bethlehem".

January 10 Rev. Dr. Charles Simonson will be leading worship on this Sunday while Rev. Sterrett is away.

January 17 This Sunday falls on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend. Guided by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 49:1-7) we will focus on the legacy of Dr. King's ministry and what it means to be "chosen by God" and "a light to all nations."

January 24 Central to this Sunday's worship service will be baptism. The baptism of Christina Youd and her daughter, Orianna, recorded in Amicable's sanctuary on January 17, will be the focus of this service and the sermon will be based on their baptismal blessing verses.

January 31 On this Sunday, 33 years ago, Rev. Sterrett preached a "trial sermon". At the end of that worship service Bill and Barbara left the sanctuary and waited in the upper hall while the gathered congregation voted on whether or not to covenant with him as "settled pastor of Amicable Church". The vote was in the affirmative and the rest is history. This Sunday service will be an opportunity for Bill to reflect on that day and the years since.

Baptisms

On Sunday morning, January 17, with just a few family members present Rev. Sterrett will be baptizing Christina and Orianna Youd in Amicable's sanctuary. The baptism will be recorded and be the central part of worship the following Sunday, January 24.



Love Sunday: Renewal and Recommitment

Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday this year and we would like to take this opportunity to focus on LOVE, specifically in all its complexities. We recognize that many of our relationships (spouse, partner, siblings, family, friends, even pets) have been tested this past year due to the stresses brought on by COVID19, be it from job loss, financial worries, health concerns, schooling, anxiety about the future, or being together in the same space for a prolonged amount of time. We invite you to renew your commitment to one another by writing new vows to each other, sharing a special poem or song, a meaningful quote or phrase. You may videotape yourselves reciting these vows or other writings, or submit them to share during the service. Please

send your submissions to Vaughn Bryner via email at vaughnbryner@msn.com by 5 p.m. on Thursday, February 4. Please include the following in the subject line: Love Sunday Submission.

Please contact Vaughn via email with any questions.



Thank You!

You, the members and friends of Amicable Church, never fail to amaze and surprise me. We have not met in person for worship since March 8th. Our communication is by Zoom and virtual worship and an occasional phone conversation. Yet you somehow managed to communicate with one another and, once again, put together a Christmas gift for the staff of Amicable Church. Your outpouring of love and generosity never fails to take my breath away. From the bottom of my heart, with deep and abiding gratitude for all you are and have been to me, I thank you for remembering me and my family this Christmas in this way.

Blessings!
Bill Sterrett

Thank you!

Dear Amicable friends: Thank you so much for your very generous Christmas gift and your support in so many ways, even at a time when things are so difficult for so many. I look forward to another year as one of your staff, working at a congregation I have come to value and love more with each passing year. Happy New Year to you all!

Best,
Vaughn Bryner

Christmas Baskets

Because of all the generous donations from the church and community for the Thanksgiving baskets, we were able to provide those we felt were most in need

and distribute 20 Christmas baskets to them. We were able to make an impactful difference on these families' Christmas.

Thank you,
Pat Campion

Ways to Contribute: Pledging vs. Using Envelopes vs. Loose Collections

Amicable's members and friends can contribute financially in many ways; and in general, as well as to specific purposes (e.g. Operations, Benevolence, Christian Ed, an Endowment Fund, in Memoriam, an Honorarium, an established project such as Haiti Project or Accessibility Project, etc.).

Pledging:

- Allows members/friends to indicate your planned contributions for the year in support of covering Operation and/or Benevolence expenses.
- Indicates frequency & amount of pledge (e.g. \$x weekly to Operations and/or \$x monthly to Benevolence).
- Provides income data to Treasurer, Trustees, & Deacons to better help them manage finances for the year.
- Is not a formal commitment but an indication of intent, so there is no official balance owed if the planned total (e.g. \$10 wkly = \$520 for the year, or \$200 mthly = \$2400 for the year) is not achieved by year-end.
- If a Pledger finds out during the year that they will not be able to meet their intended pledge, they may change their pledge (just inform the Treasurer – this helps with church financial management).
- Pledgers use numbered envelopes or checks so that the Treasurer can keep track of their contributions in order to provide status vs. your pledge.
- The Treasurer will provide the status of a Pledger's contributions vs. their pledge periodically during the year. The current plan is to provide this status quarterly, i.e. at the end of March, June and September. (E.g. "Your contributions through March (25% of the year) represent about 24% of your year's pledge.") The plan is to provide this status via email whenever possible. If a Pledger doesn't want this periodic status, wants it more frequently, or wants a special status or detailed accounting at some point during the year, just let the Treasurer know.

Contributing & Using Numbered Envelopes:

- Members/friends can certainly contribute without having to pledge.

- The use of numbered envelopes or checks by Contributors, even if you do not pledge, allows the Treasurer to keep track of your contributions in order to provide you with year-end records & tax-deductible info.
- If you would like to have a box of numbered envelopes, just ask the Treasurer.

Loose Collections:

- This refers to cash that members/friends place in the Sunday offering plates without using numbered envelopes or checks.

Year-End Contribution Forms:

- The Treasurer will provide each known contributor (i.e. Pledgers and Contributors who use numbered envelopes or checks) with the specific status of the designations and total amounts of your contributions at year-end for tax deductibility purposes.
- All Pledgers, as well as those Contributors with at least \$250 in total contributions for the year, will be provided a form, although a form can certainly be requested by any known contributor.
- The goal is to provide these contribution forms by January 21st. IRS regulations state that a contributor should have all appropriate proof of contributions prior to declaring those on Federal Tax Forms.

Questions: Contact the treasurer, Roger Gauthier



Homelessness Awareness Mission Project

With the conclusion of our Thanksgiving Basket Project in November, Amicable turns its focus to growing our awareness of homelessness and helping to ease the pain of those homeless in our community. Our Homeless Awareness Mission

Project officially began with our Advent Mitten Trees and will continue with activities at the end of January into the beginning of February.

Here are the activities:

First Step Inn

The First Step Inn is a program providing safe shelter and daily nutritional meals to at least 20 homeless persons in the City of Fall River daily. Case Management services provided at the Inn connect guests to housing, employment, entitlements, behavioral health, and an array of other services. These services, provided in a safe, comfortable environment, help homeless persons become housed in stable, permanent housing. Guests become engaged in all supportive services needed and as a result, successfully transition into the community and experience housing stability and an improved quality of life.

The mittens, gloves, scarves, and hats we brought to church and hung on our Mitten Trees went to First Step Inn, who will share these gifts of warmth with their guests.

Food Drive

Our annual food drive will be from January 24 – Monday, February 8. All are invited to drop off non-perishable food items in the church's north entrance to share with those in our community who are food insecure. All donated food items will be shared with the food pantry at Old Stone/First Baptist Church.

Homeless Awareness Overnight

The youth group's night in the cold to raise their awareness of the physical effects of homelessness has grown over the years into a weekend of awareness for the church and community. This year's overnight (our 21st) will be held virtually. Rev. Sterrett plans to be the lone representative on the hill in front of the church and the youth will be encouraged to shelter-in-place in their back or front yard. As always, the overnight begins at 7:00 PM. This year on Saturday, February 6. We are seeking sponsors and raising funds for First Step Inn.

- Due to the Stock Market fluctuations & continued market uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the withdrawals from Amicable's General Endowment and Special Endowment funds planned for the 2nd and 3rd quarters of this year are not being taken. Instead, holdings in Amicable's BankNewport checking & savings accounts are being used. To help cover this Endowment Fund income loss, Amicable applied for & obtained a PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) SBA loan for \$24,100. These funds will be used primarily for payments of employee salary, wages, and benefits over the 8 week period from April 22 through June 16. When used in this manner the loan will essentially be turned into a grant with no need for repayment.
 - Changes were made/approved by the Government to the PPP SBA Loan requirements & process in early June/July, with additional updates and different types of Loan Forgiveness Applications being defined, so the application process for obtaining loan forgiveness continues to be delayed month by month.
 - Trustees decided to postpone the budgeted repair/repainting of the Sanctuary ceiling until at least 2021.
 - The Thrift Shop re-opened in June, under Covid19 protocol, after being closed for 12 weeks, and had excellent July & August income – even enough to cover for the 12 weeks!
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- The Thrift Shop had great receipts again in November & December. It had a great year.
 - December contribution receipts were good. The year's budget for pledged donations and regular contributions was met and slightly exceeded. People used a combination of Amicable Website's donate option, mailing or dropping off checks, or using banking electronic fund transfers & PayPal to send in pledged, standard, as well as special contributions.
 - With the church closed for most of the year, many typical maintenance, supply, and utility expenses were low, or in some cases none or very small.
 - The Operation Account will end the year with a surplus, even while not taking the typical 4th Quarter General Endowment withdrawal. Trustees will decide at their early January meeting how to utilize the surplus (probably a combination of adding to the safety Operation Carryover Balance Account and using the remainder as special 2021 Operation Account income).
 - The Benevolence Account was able to fulfill its planned contributions to SNE-UCC, RI Association, and continue to support UCC missions such as OGHS and NIN. The Thanksgiving Basket mission was again very successful, with funds remaining that the Standing Committee will decide how to utilize in 2021. The special Christmas Missions, "Bags of Hope" and "Mitten Tree", were also quite successful, both with donated items and monetary contributions.
 - The Christian Education Account had very minor expenses in 2020 with the church being closed, with the Garey Scholarships (announced and mailed out in June) being the primary ChEd expense. These are funded from the yearly payout from the Garey Scholarship Endowment Fund.
 - In early November BankNewport provided the required information (as obtained from SBA) and the application form for small loans, so that we were able to submit Amicable's SBA PPP Loan Forgiveness Application on November 14th. BankNewport reviewed it and sent

it on to SBA for their review. On November 25th, we received word that our loan forgiveness application was accepted, thereby converting our \$24,100 loan into a grant. This grant of course contributed to our 2020 Operation Account surplus.

- A very crazy year and hopefully 2021 will slowly allow us to re-open the church to more activities and to start seeing each other again in person.
- Thank you all for continuing your support and keeping Amicable's spirit alive and well!

Respectfully Submitted: Treasurer, Roger Gauthier 624-2323

Milestones



- 1/04 Keith Lewis
- 1/08 Ken Becker
- 1/09 Gavin Winn
- 1/13 Gina Francis
- 1/15 Julienne Dufour Tully
- 1/17 Sarah Martin
- 1/20 Judy Dufour
- 1/22 Martha MacNaught
- 1/24 Meaghan Priest
- 1/25 Elizabeth Glover, Ellen Tavares
- 1/28 Thelma Durfee
- 1/29 Shawn Martin

January 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 Worship 10 am Facebook	4	5	6 Church Council Zoom 6:30 pm Choir Zoom Chat 5:30 pm	7	8	9
10 Worship 10:00 am Facebook	11	12 Trustees Zoom 4:00 pm	13	14	15	16
17 Worship 10:00 am Facebook	18	19	20 Choir Zoom Chat 5:30 pm	21	22	23
24 Worship 10:00 am Facebook	25	26	27	28 ACTS 10:00 - 2:00	29	30 ACTS 10:00 - 2:00
31 Worship 10:00 am Facebook						