**Great Minds Think Alike . . .**

Pastor Kent recently received emails from two of our church members who shared a similar thought. Here are their thoughts:

**First, from Carole Viel:**
“Just a thought for my friends at UMC: please prayerfully consider helping with our current financial situation by donating a portion of your stimulus check for a "virtual fund raiser," since there will not be a spring plant sale, the golf tournament will be postponed or cancelled, and the train show was cancelled. You can help!! Amen.”

**And from John Beatty:**
“For the last few years, I have been advocating that those of us over 70 take advantage of the tax laws and use all or part of our RMDs to make our pledges to UMC Branford. In 2020, there is no RMD requirement, but that does not change the tax law. If you choose to make your pledges using IRA funds, you will get the same tax result.

In addition, I see another opportunity: the FREE MONEY that is being dropped into your bank account as we speak. Everyone under certain income limits will receive $1,200, no strings attached and tax free. **If you are fortunate enough not to need the funds, the church could use all or part of it to offset our loss of fundraisers because of the shutdown.** Even if each member tithed part of the free money, the budget would look much better. If you can participate in this "Virtual Fund Raiser," please write STIMULUS on the memo line of your donation check.”

**Ministry During Social Distancing**

**WORSHIP:** We will be worshipping online until the restrictions for social distancing are lifted. Our pre-recorded worship services will be posted on the website early Sunday morning. Please visit www.umcbranford.org to view the most recent worship service. Previous weeks’ services can be found on the “Sermons” tab.

**MEETINGS:** Committee meetings will be conducted via Zoom. Please go to www.Zoom.us and click “Sign Up. It’s Free” to create your account. All committee members will automatically be sent an invitation to their meetings. If you would like to receive an invitation to join a meeting, please contact Pastor Kent ahead of time so you can receive the log-in information.

**FINANCES:** As a result of not meeting in the church building, we are not receiving the offering during weekly worship. If you can, please mail a check for your tithes and offerings to the church. Or visit www.umcbranford.org and click on the “Give Online” button (lower right side of page) to make an online donation – please be sure to select "Tithes & Offerings" from the drop down list and enter your envelope number We will be making weekly deposits of offerings, which will enable us to stay current on all our financial commitments. We are also cutting expenses where possible. For example, we have cancelled the weekly altar flower delivery and the trash pick-up.

**COMMUNICATION:** Brenda has resumed her regular working hours in the church office from 9am to 2pm, Tuesday through Thursday. In the interest of social distancing, we are asking that you DO NOT VISIT the church office during those hours. If you must be in the office while she is working, please be sure to wear a mask.

Pastor Kent will not be holding scheduled office hours at this time. Please feel free to contact him for any Pastoral or ministry needs by text or phone (845-522-1233) or by email (umcbpastor@gmail.com).

**Pastor Kent**

**Ephesians 2:10**

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Please note: While social gathering restrictions are in place, no events (including Sunday morning services) are taking place at the church. Committee meetings and some activities are happening online. Please contact your committee chair for more information. Info for online activities are included elsewhere in this newsletter.

May Events
Wed, 5/6 afternoon Artis Nurses’ Day Parade
Wed, 5/6 7pm Trustees
Thurs, 5/7 9:15am National Day of Prayer
Wed, 5/13 6:30pm L&P Advisory Council
Mon, 5/20 6:30pm Staff Parish Relations
Wed, 5/22 7pm Faithful Stewards
Wed, 5/27 7pm Finance Committee
Fri, 5/29 6pm Community Dinner (to-go only)

WEEKLY CALENDAR

MONDAYS:
10:10am Monday Morning Quarterbacking: During the quarantine we will be meeting by conference call. Please dial in at (425) 436-6385 using access code 841200#

TUESDAYS:
7-8:30pm Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join.

THURSDAYS:
10am Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period via conference call. Please call (425) 436-6385 and use access code 841200#.

May Birthdays
1 Roger Gagné, Richard Robinson, Jr.
2 Allan Lang, M.E. Solomon
6 Savannah James
8 John Nickou
10 Beth James
12 Andrew Wolek
16 Christopher Blossom, Hayley Gregoire
20 Heidi Busch
23 Andrew Rezman
25 Ben James, Tony Luzzi
28 Louise Lind
31 Morgan McMahon, Susan McMahon

May Anniversaries
5 Robin & Andrew Wolek
15 Alice & George Klein
23 Judy & Michael Loukides

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
The 20th of every month - please send articles to Lori Cartwright at loriahlcart@gmail.com

Missed a Sunday? Unable to attend worship? You can catch the weekly sermon video at www.umcbranford.org

KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT’S HAPPENING AT UMCB:
https://www.facebook.com/umcbranford

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
HOW TO ATTEND CHURCH ONLINE

GET OUT OF BED AND GET DRESSED
it will put you in the right mindset for worship

GO THROUGH YOUR NORMAL SUNDAY ROUTINE
minus the “hurry up, we’re late” part

GATHER TOGETHER AS A FAMILY
no multitasking; worship is a family activity

STREAM TO YOUR LARGEST SCREEN IF POSSIBLE
it will feel like you are really “there”

SING ALONG LOUD AND PROUD
it may feel weird, but it also feels weird to the people leading worship in an empty room

PREACH WITH THE PREACHER
say amen, clap, shout and take notes; have a time of prayer at the end; make your home a sanctuary
Welcome, New Members!

Get to know our two newest members, Chrissy Blakney and June Whitford! During service on Sunday, March 1, Chrissy and June became full members of UMC Branford. And, of course, we celebrated with a cake during Fellowship Hour!

CHRISSEY BLAKNEY
I come to UMC Branford from the outreach ministries you provide to the community, by the grace of God. The AA meetings on Tuesday and Saturday night brought me here, as well as the ministry our church supports at Artis Senior Living across the street, where my mom lived until she passed. Pastor Kent did Mom’s funeral at Clancy’s in January of 2019.

I have almost 10 years sober, with a heart full of gratitude.

Born and raised in Connecticut, I have lived all over the East Coast. I have four children. One is in heaven; my two boys (Peter, age 24 and Kevin, age 23) are in New Hampshire, and my daughter (Heather, age 29) is in Worcester, Mass.

I love our church, and to me our church family represents Jesus with skin on. We are the love of God in action. The ministries of our church bring people in to hear about the love and mercy of God, through Christ Jesus. I am honored to be a part of all that jazz.

Much love to my new church family!!

JUNE WHITFORD
I live in Meriden, formerly from East Haven. I am the oldest of 6.

I grew up in a very religious home, but got away from God for a long time.

I have 3 children that live close to me, 7 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

I worked in the trucking industry as office manager and dispatcher until retirement.

I have been looking for this church for a LONG time.

[Photo of Chrissy Blakney and June Whitford with Pastor Kent]
[Photo of cake for Chrissy & June]
As you are aware, the current pandemic has presented L&P with significant challenges. Here’s a quick update on the present situation at our Christian early learning center.

The Center has been closed since March 16 for the COVID-19 Crisis. At that time, we continued to pay the staff their full salary, even though we were not charging tuition. As of April 18, all L&P staff members were furloughed. This was a very difficult decision, as we know that this may have significant financial impact on our employees and their families. The decision was made because we want to ensure the long-term financial viability of Learn & Play. During the furlough, we will continue to pay the staff’s medical premiums in full.

The church has been approved for a loan through the Paycheck Protection Program (part of the CARES Act), which will cover eight weeks of salary going forward. The PPP loan funds have been received, and all staff have been rehired as of April 27.

We truly appreciate the partial tuition payments received from many L&P families. This support will strengthen the ministry as we continue to navigate through the present financial challenges. We are looking forward to reopening Learn & Play and welcoming back all the children as soon as the present health crisis allows.

**How Can You Help?**

Learn and Play is a vital ministry of UMC, Branford. As with any ministry, the funds available often limit how long things can be sustained in the event of an emergency that lasts as long as the current one has. This is where your help is needed. If you can make a special donation to this ministry, it would be...well...a Godsend!

Checks can be made out to Learn & Play and mailed to the church – please write “L&P Ministry” and your envelope number in the note. Or visit www.umcbranford.org and click on the “Give Online” button (lower right side of page) to make an online donation – please be sure to select “Learn and Play Ministry” from the drop down list and enter your envelope number.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact Laurie Gagné, facilitator for the L&P Advisory Council, at gagnes@snet.net.
Small Study Groups Continue

Our Tuesday 7pm and Thursday 10:10am Study Groups continue to meet online during the quarantine period. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join the Tuesday evening study. The Thursday morning group is meeting via conference call. Please call 425-436-6385 and use access code 841200#.

Our curriculum is The Prodigal Prophet by Timothy Keller. Those who want to participate in the study are encouraged to pick up a copy of the book in Connector Hall. A donation of $15 is requested.

The story of Jonah is familiar to nearly all Christians, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. In The Prodigal Prophet, Bible scholar and teacher Timothy Keller takes readers beyond the Sunday school basics to uncover the connections between the rebellious prophet Jesus and the prodigal son Jonah. Why would Jesus compare himself to Jonah? And what does it mean for His followers today? Providing insight into Jonah's unusual conclusion, Keller shares the Gospel message at the heart of this parable.

Monday Morning Quarterbacking

An opportunity to dig deeper into the Sunday Sermon! Pastor Kent shares additional insight into the scriptures and the participants are encouraged to ask questions and share reflections on the material which was preached. Please consider attending on a weekly basis or occasionally as the Spirit moves. During the quarantine, we will be meeting by Conference Call at 10:10am. Please dial in at 425-436-6385 using access code 841200#.

AA Online Meetings

For those in need, links to online and voice meetings can be found at: https://www.aa-intergroup.org/directory.php

Holiday Festival 2020

We are thinking positively that we will still hold the Festival in November. I'll be checking with Evergreen Woods and others to see what their planned dates will be.

In the meantime, I hope you are using the downtime you may have to create crafts and other things for the festival. Worst case scenario: we can save them for next year!

Stay well. See you soon.

Ginger

Branford Home Delivery Service

The Town of Branford, realizing the importance of keeping our residents safe during this COVID-19 pandemic, has initiated a program designed to help senior citizens and/or immunosuppressed individuals with their shopping needs. In cooperation with local vendors Caron’s Corner and Big Y, the Town has developed a food delivery program to help those residents who are considered high risk is contacting this virus. These include senior citizens and immunosuppressed individuals. This program is free to Branford residents.

Branford Counseling & Community Services (BCCS) staff will be responsible for processing the food order via telephone or email, Monday through Friday 9am to 12pm.

To place an order, complete a Grocery Order Form or Caron’s Corner Prepared Meals Form. Download the forms at: www.https://www.branford-ct.gov/departments/counseling-center/branford-home-delivery-service Email completed forms to Hollye Lane at hlane@branford-ct.gov.
LOOKING FOR YOUR SODA CAN TABS!

Keep saving your tabs and we’ll collect them when we come back together

Please continue to help support our friend at Ronald McDonald House. It’s an easy way to support the Ronald McDonald House New Haven so they can continue to provide their services at no charge.

It’s easy! All you need to do is remove the tab from each can before you recycle it. It’s fun! You can involve community groups and your family in supporting the cause without a lot of effort. Approximately 1,200 tabs make up a pound. Put a small jar on your counter and you will be surprised how fast it will fill up.

SEWING FOR GOD

We still are not meeting during May, but hope to resume our gatherings at the church in June.

Please note that even though we haven’t been meeting, we’ve been busy making face masks - check out the photo of our handiwork! Gayle and I have been making face masks for Yale New Haven Hospital, Days for Girls ministry, the West Haven VA, Evergreen Woods, and anyone else who needs them. To date, we have made over 200+ masks between us. If you would like a mask or know of a group that needs them, please contact us:

Email: rosemary.llam@gmail
Call/Text: 203-589-1620

Please note, there is no cost for the masks - we are not looking to be personally reimbursed. However, we ask that you prayerfully consider making a donation to Sewing for God so we can replenish supplies as needed in the future.

Passing of the Peace - Video Edition

We are hoping to be able to share the Peace of Christ with each other, even though we cannot be in the same room. Please consider recording a short video of you and your family saying your name, a special message and end with "Peace be with you."

When recording the video: press start and count to 5 (in your head) before speaking. Then count to 5 (again, in your head) before hitting stop. This will give some buffer before and after so that the video can be stitched cleanly together with others.

If you will be contributing a video, please send it to umcbpastor@gmail.com by Friday. This will give Roger time to add them to the service video during editing.

Ladies Luncheon

Until this pandemic is over, we will not be meeting. Just think when we get together again, we will celebrate to the fullest! Stay safe, everyone!
My thoughts, prayers and love are with all of you!

Rosemary

To All The Secret Pals

Say a prayer for your Secret Pal to be protected and safe Under God’s gentle hand With his love always.

Pass the peace please.

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Pass the peace please.
**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER**

**Thursday, May 5**

The National Day of Prayer exists to mobilize unified public prayer for America and belongs to all Americans. It is a day that transcends differences, bringing together citizens from all backgrounds.

This annual observance is held on the first Thursday of May, inviting people of all faiths to pray for the nation. It was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of the United States Congress, and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman.

The National Day of Prayer has great significance for us as a nation, as it enables us to recall and teach the way in which our founding fathers sought the wisdom of God when faced with critical decisions. It stands as a call for us to humbly come before God, seeking His guidance for our leaders and His grace upon us as a people. The unanimous passage of the bill establishing the National Day of Prayer as an annual event, signifies that prayer is as important to our nation today as it was in the beginning.

Learn more: https://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/

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**Friday, May 29, 6pm**

We will be making food and serving to any and all via "curbside" pickup.

Please pull into the church parking lot and into one of the spaces. One of the volunteers will bring out dinner(s) to you wrapped up and ready for travel.

"Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

-- John 6:35 --

So dinner will be ready. Come be fed.

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**Dear God,**

**Please be with my family and friends who are in quarantine. Cover the ones who are going to their jobs. Please God, show an end to this storm and put Your Peace in our hearts. Amen**

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**Nurses Day Parade**

On Wednesday, May 6, Artis Senior Living is having a Nurses Day Parade. They have asked us to be part of it, so we need your help!

We are looking for as many cars and drivers as possible. You can decorate your vehicle with signs showing support of the nurses and support staff. If you can't join us for the parade, you can make "Thank You" cards to be given to the Artis Nurses.

We will be traveling from Artis to Guilford House to Branford Hills in the afternoon. If you're interested in participating, please contact Pastor Kent.