Dear Members and Friends of Union,

There’s enough stress to tide us over for a while.

Schools, offices, isolation, anxiety- everyone I know doesn’t need additional reminders. The Fall will be busy, perhaps really challenging for parents and students, for everyone.

May you drink deeply of August, the last full month of summer. May you enjoy a warm sunset or a backyard grill. Maybe you can escape to the mountains for a night or two. Perhaps you can stop and notice the bees doing all of their work in your yard or during a moment of peaceful reflection in our Memorial garden. May you take Wendell Berry with you this summer. May you exhale, trust that God is enough, that the community is enough, that you can be free because you have had an encounter with grace...

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry

Dave
Worship
August 2020
10:00 AM Worship Service


Please remember - we will continue hosting worship via Zoom until further notice.

Outdoor Worship
Wednesday, August 12th at 7 PM
Bring a lawn chair and enjoy a time of “social distancing” fellowship and worship. We ask that we love our neighbors by keeping 6 feet apart and wearing masks at all times while here at Union. We hope to see you then!

New Contact Information
While our physical location remains closed until further notice, if you would like to call the main office, please contact Emily at 973-304-5651. If you need to call Angie in the financial office, please call 973-264-9487. Please note - email is still the best way to reach the staff during this time.

COVID-19 Re-opening Task Force

The COVID-19 Re-opening Task Force has met weekly by Zoom, continuing to consider how we might resume various aspects of our community life as the situation with the virus in New Jersey continues to change.

As you know, we had an outdoor worship service on Wednesday evening, July 1, at 7 PM. About 40 people attended, all wearing masks and observing social distancing. We enjoyed a brief sermon, prayers, and music by Eric on the keyboard, as well as time afterwards for socially-distanced greetings. A small number of youth met with Katrina and one or two in-person youth meetings are planned for later in the summer.

Eighty-eight people responded to the congregational survey that was sent in late June. Three quarters of those respondents indicated that their spiritual and communal needs were being met by the current offerings. Many appreciated the Zoom worship and the innovative work by the staff to make this effective. Some hope we can keep Zoom worship even when we open again, particularly those for whom getting to church is difficult. Several people commented on the music, appreciating it but hoping the quality of the sound and hymns could be improved. The staff is working on this. A few people noted that the chat comments during the service are intrusive. About one-third said they would be likely to attend outdoor gatherings this summer, while about the same proportion said they would possibly attend, or would not be likely to attend. Reasons for not attending mainly focused on concern about the presence of the virus and lack of vaccine, and also involved more personal reasons such as hot weather or chronic health conditions. Many expressed gratitude for being able to continue worship and the warmth of the Union community during the pandemic.

While working towards opening the Nursery School this fall with limited class sizes and other precautions, we also are considering our long-standing outreach programs involving youth. As of now, we are unsure about whether Side Door or S.M.A.R.T. will be able to open in the fall; much depends on the school schedules for Montclair and Newark. We will continue to evaluate these programs as the situation changes.

Please contact any member of the Task Force with any questions or suggestions.

Sara Olson for the Task Force: Tim Crist, Karen Ermler, Kayla Jackson, Dave, Katrina, and Marcie.
**August Education**

For Kids:
Aug 2—Abide in Love
Aug 9—Faith Like Abraham
Aug 16—Jews & Gentiles
Aug 23—United in Christ
Aug 30—Chosen as God’s People

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**Zoom Learning Centers in August**

LCs continue via zoom. We log in at 9:25 and conclude by 9:55. This gives us just enough time to check in with highs and lows, hear the bible story and do a short activity.

We will be down to one room in August with Catherine Hopkins and Betsy Richardson leading the lesson. Stories this month cover friendship, trust, togetherness, and being united.

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**Compassion Camp—Available Anytime**

The Family VBS curriculum is available to anyone interested in exploring compassion with their child(ren) or for themselves. The PDF packet contains everything you need for a complete experience that includes, bible story, songs, yoga, crafts, service projects, reflection. It is divided into 5 units:
- Compassion at the Table
- Compassion to the Neighbor
- Compassion for Myself
- Compassion Along the Way
- Compassion for the World

Contact Betsy if you would like the file emailed. ceucc@unioncong.org.

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**Youth News From Katrina**

The youth group was happy to be able to be together in person (outside, masked, and socially distanced—pictured left) in July. We added some beauty and positive messages to the church sidewalk one evening and celebrated the end of the school year. We will be taking a break in August and will be back with programming in September.
From Marcie and Tom

Dear Union Cong Members and Friends,

It’s hard to believe we are in the middle of summer already. I have always referred to this time of year as the “lazy, hazy days of summer.” Given our current virtual lifestyle, I’m not sure it feels like that any more. All the work of the church continues with many virtual Zoom meetings. Buildings and Grounds has been completing myriad tasks on the church/nursery school campus. Kudos to the Green Team for their commitment to making our campus look beautiful, even with extremely hot temperatures.

Outreach continues its wonderful work by focusing on local food insecurity and rent payment. To date, we have given $20,000 to CUMAC, Toni’s Kitchen, and four other entities, all serving many more beneficiaries than before the pandemic. CUMAC is in need of volunteers at this time. If you are interested in helping, go to www.cumac.org, click on get involved, click on volunteer, scroll down to “SIGN UP” and you will arrive at CUMAC’s Sign Up Genius page.

Virtual Worship continues to allow us to connect spiritually to our faith community. Vicki Paulson, Chair of Worship, shared during the July Leadership Council meeting that ~75% of people who responded to a recent survey described feeling satisfied with Zoom Sunday services, and we now see consistently higher numbers than we had in person before the pandemic. In August, the Worship Team will start to explore the programming year, with Dave and Katrina, which will begin in the fall.

Finally, as a Leadership Council, we are excited to discern how we, as a church, will support the Poor People’s Campaign. In August, Dave and Katrina will present to the Leadership Council their vision for forms our engagement might take. Poor People’s Campaign themes have already been incorporated into Dave’s preaching, and we will continue to include those values in our programming for fall, under the larger umbrella of hope.

Hope, gratitude, and faith are what sustains us as a church. As a Leadership Council, we hope you take the time to slow down and enjoy the beauty that surrounds us. We have gratitude for the faith community that supports us, and we have faith that we will live into growing as the people God calls us to be. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Blessings,
Marcie and Tom

Did You Know?

Many people have been asking questions about how we can do more to help local non-profits. Can we help serve or prepare meals? Can we purchase food or other products and help distribute them? Can we package goods for delivery?

The reality is the constraints on social distancing and the ability to congregate inside are limiting the physical assistance we can provide. We cannot make meals but places like CUMAC are looking for some volunteers.

Furthermore, the buying power of groups like CUMAC afford them deep discounts on anything we can buy on their behalf, even when shopping at places like Costco.

So, while we applaud the energy and desire to help further, the greatest support we can provide at the moment is financial. You can contribute directly or you can provide funds to Union and indicate the local group you would like to support.

Thank you for your continued generosity.
For the past several years, Union has engaged Sobel Associates to conduct an audit process confirming that our financial statements achieve legal conformity. Sobel’s audit of our 2019 financial statements, which included the adoption of new revenue accounting standards that were released in 2019, showed that our assets and investments increased last year due to renovations in the assembly room and a strong market, though revenue from the nursery school went down. A footnote added this year notes that the church faces uncertainty due to COVID-19, with respect to our investments, which were down 4% as of June 30, 2020. Sobel believes that our funds appear to be managed very effectively. Treasurer Ted O’Dell noted we are, indeed, currently facing a budget shortfall of approximately $11,000, YTD. While expenses are about $40,000 under budget, closure of the campus has led to a notable revenue decrease. Receivables are on track, though. People are paying their pledges on time, a good and comforting data point. The Finance Team recommended that the Leadership Council accept the 2020 Audit Report from Sobel Associates, and a motion to authorize the Treasurer to sign the representation letter, and the Finance Team to finalize the report with Sobel Associates passed unanimously.

Also unanimously approved was a motion to approve Kathleen Kelly as Deacon to replace Nancy Herron, and Tim Crist as a member of the Nominating Committee.
Matamoros Report

With everything else going on in the world, I did not want us to forget about our brothers and sisters in Matamoros, Mexico whom we have supported so much in the past.

Fleeing violence and political tyranny, the asylum seekers have risked their lives coming to the border, only to find it closed indefinitely. New families cannot even enter the encampment. Restaurants have been unable to deliver meals for a couple of weeks. There has been a request by Mexican immigration to stop holding in-person classes for the school children. This is all because of Covid-19. As Andrea Morris Rudnik, one of the Team Brownsville leaders says: “These people are in the middle of a pandemic - a human health disaster on top of an ever growing human rights’ disaster.”

As far back as October 2019 when Janet Frick, Roxanne Kent and I went down to help at the Texas-Mexico border, court cases were already being postponed. Now Covid-19 is being used as a political tool to make it virtually impossible for the migrants to legally exercise their right to request asylum.

Jan Hjelmaas Fliegel, another member of Team Brownsville shared with me that because of the virus, volunteers are no longer allowed into the encampment, for the asylum seekers’ safety as well as their own. Jan said that their county is one of the hardest hit in Texas, so they are being very careful.

A person with a confirmed case of the virus is being treated at a Doctors Without Borders’ facility, away from the camp. Others with symptoms are quarantining in a tent set up for this purpose, but they have not been tested yet. A fellow asylum seeker named Xochilth is cooking for them and taking care of them. Jan said Xochilth is an amazing woman with two daughters of her own.

Currently food and supplies for the asylum seekers are being bought in Matamoros, Mexico. Team Brownsville is alternating delivery of food one week with delivery of supplies the next. About ninety little kitchens with stoves have been rigged up so that people are cooking more for themselves these days. A set group of people gets fed regularly at each small kitchen. Team Brownsville has also supplied the asylum seekers with generators, large wagons and small solar panels to charge their phones.

Hurricane season has begun and it is extremely hot where these people are living. The asylum seekers still need a lot of support as they wait out the interminable days. If you are so moved, please send an individual check or supplies (cloth masks, food handling gloves, hand sanitizer and antibacterial soaps are especially in demand) to:

Team Brownsville
P.O. Box 3945
Brownsville, TX 78523

To donate online, please go to: TeamBrownsville.org/donate

Thank you for caring enough to do something,
Annelie Fahlstedt

Men of Union Make Alternate Plans as Fall Retreat is Cancelled

The Men of Union have, as usual, been planning their annual retreat for October but unfortunately, we have decided that we should not go forward this year in light of the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

While we are deeply sorry to miss our time of fellowship and reflection, we are making plans for activities to bring us together in safe and productive ways.

We are considering having a ‘mini-retreat’ via zoom on Saturday, October 3, which would have been the main day of the in-person retreat. The plan is yet to be fleshed out, but we will develop a theme for the discussion and provide more information in the coming weeks.

On October 24, the men will spend a Saturday at CUMAC to refurbish the garden boxes that we built for them. We will spend the day there and if the boxes are still in good shape, we will take on other projects that they may have, with Armen Khachaturian to organize and lead the effort.

Please consider making a donation to Crossroads as the they will be very negatively affected by the loss of the retreat income this year.

Please join us for these upcoming Men of Union events!
**Men & Women’s Breakfasts**

Neither the Men nor Women of Union groups will be hosting a breakfast in the month of August.

**Weekly Prayer Meetings**

Senior Deacon, Ina Isobe, will continue hosting our weekly prayer meetings on Thursdays at 12:30 PM through the month of August. To join, please use the meeting information below:

Meeting ID: 824 4043 6137  
Password: 529236

If you have any questions, please contact Ina at ina.isobe@gmail.com.

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*When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matt 14:14*

Bob Cassels  
Roxanne Raymonde Curran, friend of Jane Seaman  
Madeleine Guthrie  
Andrea Landis  
Joy Mishkin  
Ernie Nardone  
Melissa Raak  
The Santeramo family - Mike Santeramo, a close friend of Jim Van Dyke's

_We Hold in our prayers...._

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18*_

We give thanks for the life of former Union Cong President Walter J. Hunziker Jr who passed away on July 19 at his home in Massachusetts. If you would like to send condolences to his spouse, Norma Holmes, the address is PO Box 2838, Edgartown, MA 02539.

Steve Lindo and family on the passing of Sigi Lando. If you would like to send condolences to the family, the address is 3 Gap Head Road, Rockport, MA 01966. They would be much appreciated. A Memorial Service for Sigi will be held via Zoom on August 15th.

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**August Birthdays**

1. Marilyn Yeutter  
2. Lourie Azeglio  
3. Andrew McCarthy  
4. Declan Epstein  
5. Peggy McMillan, Jade Holmgren  
6. Marley Kim, Richard Batchelder  
7. Heather Sweeney  
8. Payton Haley  
9. Luna Ambrosi  
10. Catherine Spinella  
11. Firth Fabend  
12. Barbara Littlefield, Valerie Ruddy, Patricia Devine Harms, Scarlett Hennessy  
13. Jackson Emma  
14. Susan Dale, Robin Lobsitz, Margery Kerr  
15. Catherine Black, Roger Dolden  
16. Karen Lindholm  
17. Walter Gillespie  
18. Clifford Lindholm IV, Kate Brooks  
19. Noah Francis, David Quigley  
20. Catherine Ann Hopkins, Megan Awerdick  
21. Matthew King, Jake Skorzewski, Catherine Wallace  
22. Henry Szumski, Harriet Strott

**August Anniversaries**

10. Charles & Janet Metz  
15. Noel and Mark Wilson  
16. John & Kathryn Osborne  
26. Robert and Sheila Cassels

Pictured above: the refinished Assembly Room Floors, our small part in showing love to our neighbors and the beautiful landscaping organized by the Green Team.
Union Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
176 Cooper Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07043-1886

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Dated Material
Mailed July 31, 2020

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Kristine Hart  kristinewinkler@hotmail.com  Ext. 214, Director of the Children’s Choirs
Richard Gillyard  Bell Choir Director
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Susan Johnson  sidedoor@unioncong.org  Director of The Side Door
Jose Crespo, Weekday Morning Custodian  Errol Martin, Weekend Custodian