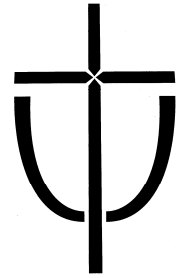


Still Speaking



Indeed, the word of God is living and active...
-Hebrews 4:12

May 2020

Not Sacrifice, but Solidarity, Science, and Sustainability

If you've been following the protests about "safer-at-home" policies that have broken out in the U.S., you'll recognize some common themes: people feel put upon, aggrieved, resentful, angry. Hence, the protests.

But behind these emotions there is something else going on. People who don't want to stay at home see THEMSELVES as victims of "the government." They think THEY are being asked to sacrifice, unjustly. They assert that THEY should have the freedom to associate, or worship face-to-face, or go to work, even if that work isn't crucial to basic needs. They completely miss the point of "safer-at-home." IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU. IT'S ABOUT OTHERS.

They also completely violate the point of the 1st Amendment and religious freedom: You do NOT have the "freedom" to do harm to others. That's not "freedom;" that's defiant immorality. That's not "freedom;" it's crime.

And let's get this out of the way once and for all: "safer-at-home" is not a policy asking us to "sacrifice" anything. We are being asked to social distance and stay at home as acts of solidarity with other people, as the result of clear science, and to sustain civilization. Social distancing, staying at home, and wearing a mask when we go out are ways we love our neighbors, as all major faith traditions command.

There is no doubt that this plague has brought real pain and suffering to the world. As of May 8, globally there were 3.8 million cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus; 267,000 people had died. In the U.S. alone, 1.26 million people have tested positive for the virus, and 75,000 have died. These numbers numb. But they point to people's sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers: real, unique, irreplaceable individuals.

The economic toll has also been severe: 33.5 million Americans have applied for unemployment benefits (1 out of every 5 workers). Many small businesses may not survive; some even large businesses have declared bankruptcy.

And yet, these are emphatically not "sacrifices." They should not be used in any kind of a calculus to determine "how many" deaths can be justified or acceptable or how many bankruptcies or failed businesses must be avoided in order to "open" the economy. Who can possibly weigh the value of even an individual life in economic terms? To do so is to erode the sanctity of life. Not a single life should be sacrificed for the sake of the economy.

After all, this pandemic is not God's way of punishing people in order to make them sacrifice. It is the result of a global economy out of control: the market as god, with many workers as its sacrificial victims. That some politicians are now bowing to

(continued on page 2)

The Inside Scoop

Newsletter Deadline

No newsletter in June or July.
Go to This Week at Union,
our weekly email blast, or to the
Union webpage, or to the Union
Facebook page, for the
most up-to-date information.

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this god and are willing to sacrifice people should not surprise. The religion of the market has killed more people in the last century than any terrorists.

The irony of this situation is that this plague is the effect of both our greatest accomplishments and our greatest weaknesses. We travel anywhere, trade with anyone, and communicate across continents. That's an extraordinary advance in human capacity—the result of advances in technology that have benefited civilization in countless ways.

But that travel is also how the virus spread, and the rapid advance of free trade around the globe has not been accompanied by the humility to recognize the damage such a pattern of human behavior can cause to people and the planet. In the last year, my carbon footprint has expanded considerably as I've traveled on a global book tour. That work is important, as I see it—promoting interreligious peace, and defending an individual (Fethullah Gülen) from slander.

But that travel also threw me into the heart of a system whose impersonality and loneliness I felt acutely. I was a "star," selling lots of books (whose royalties I donated). But there was a vague unease I felt throughout: what was I really doing to myself, to others, as I traveled from city to city, doing a 45-minute talk, signing books, and then moving on? I was talking about faith, about something I believed in deeply, and yet it often felt soulless. I was terribly lonely.

Now everyone can feel that loneliness. And yet as we stay at home to protect each other, we are in fact following the rational path of science, expressing solidarity with each other (via Zoom or whatever safe means necessary), and sustaining the planet. My carbon footprint has shrunk considerably—and I'm guessing so has yours.

The question is whether we can learn from these changes, and then build them into more sustainable patterns and policies for the long-term.

There are countries that seem to be showing the way. New Zealand—with strict stay-at-home regulations, massive testing, and careful contact-tracing—has completely flattened the curve with none or one new case per day over the past two weeks. Similar policies in other countries have helped dramatically reduce new cases, while worldwide the number of cases continues to grow. Solidarity, science, and sustainability—not sacrifice—will solve this pandemic.

So, what does this have to do with faith? In worship (May 3), Pastor Bridget invoked the name of a scholar whose work I admire: the late Rene Girard. Girard taught for years at Stanford, and authored books like "Violence and the Sacred" and "The Scapegoat," among many others.

According to Girard, religions don't stay in the "boxes" of tradition and denomination that we like to put them in. They migrate. They work through what he called the "contagion" of "mimetic desire." That is, people learn what is desirable,

what is holy, what is sacred, by imitating the desires of others. The advertising industry is based upon this principle.

But the problem arises because mimetic desire can spin out of control. If everyone is pursuing the exact same object, collisions are bound to occur—conflict, violence, war. As is well-known, people's devotion to something they think of as sacred can produce violence. If the nation is sacred, then people will kill for it. If the economy is sacred, then some become expendable for its continued operation.

That is the logic of sacrifice: the supposition that someone, or some group, can quell rivalry by being expelled, by being a scapegoat, by being sacrificed. The rivalry of all against all becomes the violence of all against one.

It's easy to see how this logic applies to the pandemic. The "mimetic desire" of the religion of the market has "priests"—politicians, public officials, pundits—who communicate (with a sonorous voice) the logic of sacrifice: the economy must "open" even though some will be "sacrificed."

This logic is perverse. No, call it by what it is: evil. It is dressed up as "religious freedom," or "the American way," or "don't tread on me." But be assured: it is deadly, and it is as far from the spirit of The Bhagavad Gita, or of the Hebrew prophets, or of Jesus, or of Buddha, or of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as anything can be.

Worshiping the market at the expense of workers is the essence of idolatry: a killing religion that substitutes a thing (a job, a "right," an economy) for a living being.

And that idolatry has also led us to the climate crisis that lurks just on the other side of the pandemic—and from the same causes. When we burn fossil fuels, we sacrifice the planet. The logic of sacrifice is the logic of death.

The alternative, then, is to be truly pro-life: not protest, but more responsible living. Not some braying demand to "reopen" the economy, but ethical—and science-driven, policies. Not sacrifice; sustainability. That means rational, clearly-articulated, and accountable benchmarks that both gradually re-open the economy AND address the climate crisis.

As I preached on April 19, seen theologically, this crisis is an opportunity. When we see a loving God waiting for us on the other side, no weapon formed against us, not even a virus, shall prosper. When we see a loving God waiting on the other side of this pandemic—whatever the outcome might be for us an individual, we can act in ways that are ethical, responsible, and sustainable.

We may not "save" ourselves. But we might save another. And perhaps we can move a little closer to saving our planet—whose sustaining Spirit supports us all. May it be so.

In Christ,
Dr. Jon Pahl
Minister of Faith Formation and Community Engagement

Priorities and Budget Committee

At Union's Annual Meeting in January 2020, Pastor Bridget recommended that a committee be formed in order to evaluate the congregation's future priorities and overall budget, with the goal to ultimately recommend a budget that will be sustainable for years to come. This team was formed by Common Ministry, and has taken shape as the Priorities and Budget Committee.

We wanted to take an opportunity to provide the congregation with an update in regard to the work of the committee. We have been meeting on a biweekly basis since March 5, and we continue to meet outside of regularly scheduled meetings as necessary. The team has approached each conversation with the Bond of Union at the forefront of our minds: *to strive to do the will of God, and to make the Christ spirit dominant in our lives and in all human relations.*

The team's work has focused on the areas below as we look to create a sustainable budget:

- Our beautiful building
- Giving by church members
- Union's staffing model
- Loans and/or grants from Gifts & Memorials
- Church ministries

Clearly, there is a great deal of depth involved within each of the aforementioned subjects, and each subject carries different meaning to the entire congregation.

With that, here is our "ask" to each of you: Please prayerfully consider what is important to you within Union UCC as we look to the future. Do you feel there is a particular need that is not being met today? Do you feel that Union focuses too much energy on a potentially minimal/non-value added area? What do you really value as a disciple of Christ that you feel Union needs to continue doing? Nothing is off-limits – we want to hear it all!

You will soon be sent more information as to how you may provide us with your thoughts. This information is critical as we want to ensure that the voices of our members are heard during this process. The survey is meant to be short, and take no more than 5 minutes of your time. All information collected will only be utilized by the Priorities and Budget Committee as we continue our work. We would urge at least one individual from each household to complete the survey.

We look forward to your feedback as we continue this important work. Ultimately, the team's goal is to return to the congregation with a solidified plan forward in September 2020. Thank you.

Priorities and Budget Committee

Heather Collins (chair), Jeff Gibson, Ryan Rieth, Barbara McClure-Lukens, Susan Forsythe, Nicole Polarek, Betty Hartman, Bridget Flad Daniels, Sandy Polarek

On the Mark Dyslexia Clinic Update

On the Mark Dyslexia Clinic has arranged for online tutoring of our students during the COVID 19 pandemic. We put in a large order of student readers from Wilson and delivered them to lots of porches. We are grateful for the help of a student at the clinic and his older brother (a student at UWGB) who voluntarily drove around for three hours doing deliveries for us. Delivering our lessons online is not ideal, but it is keeping the learning going so skills aren't lost over this time period.

All students who were interested in receiving online tutoring have been accommodated. We have 45 out of 51 students and 14 tutors participating. We have extended our school year session through May 21 and are hopeful that we will still be able to offer a summer session at the clinic that is supposed to begin on June 15.

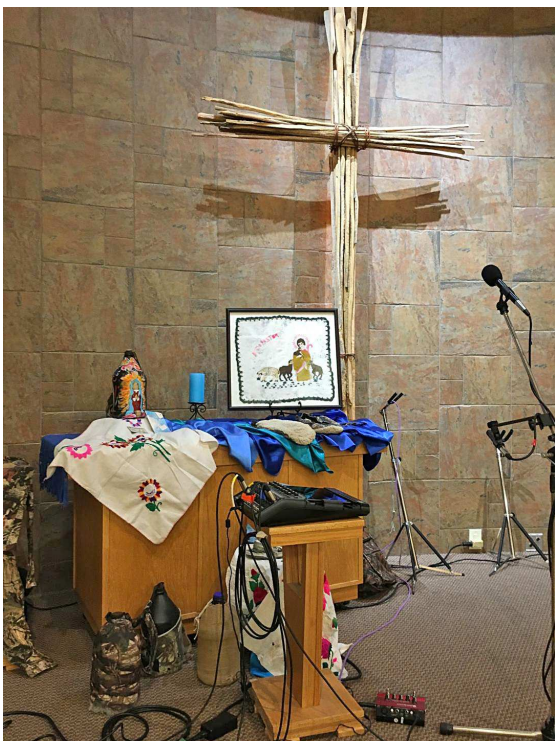
We also have a training scheduled from August 10-12 at NWTC. Our tutors receive a free seat at the training. Application forms for tutors are on our website onthemarkdyslexiaclinic.com under the tutor tab. We accept and encourage registrations from local schools to fill the remaining 30 seats. The cost for non-tutors is \$550 for the 3-day training. Feel free to pass the word to anyone that might be interested or to direct any questions to Pat Shafer at otmdyslexiaclinic@gmail.com or 920-469-1661.

Encounters at the Border

By Barbara McClure-Lukens

Before highlighting experiences from the mission trip to the Arizona/Mexico borderlands, I want to share why I went. I have served on Union's Immigration Advocacy Team for several years. It has been particularly meaningful to hear undocumented immigrants share their stories of what it is like to live in our community, at a time when their status is uncertain. Each person's story is unique, as they talk about the path that brought them here and how they seek to provide for their families. The issue of immigration justice has become intensely personal; it calls me to act. Acting meant visit the border, in order to bear witness. I could then speak authentically, after having encountered and listened to those experiencing the border crisis.

My early impression from participating in the Border Issues conference, hosted by Good Shepherd UCC in Sahaurita, Arizona, was how intensely engaged that congregation is in responding to the needs of migrants in distress. With a membership of 300, the church is modest in size, yet clearly energized by its clarity of mission. In practice, Good Samaritan is a healing presence on the border. The church's commitment is reflected in the placement on the altar of items found in the desert, now memorials—a backpack, a water bottle, a hand-embroidered tortilla cloth (*bordado*)—to the migrants attempting to cross the Sonoran desert.



The conference began with a choice of field trips, including the experience of a desert walk to migrant memorials. Our small, multigenerational group of mostly church folks from around the country, spent a morning navigating rock-strewn, ragged, dusty and difficult trails in the Sonoran desert. It was a silent walk. We were left to our thoughts of how desperate a crossing would be in this hostile place. We paused to observe reflective moments at four separate memorials, each marked by a makeshift cross and found personal items. After prayer, song and silence, we concluded with a collective shout of *Presente*, bearing witness to the unnamed—*desconocido*—person whose life was lost.

Those lost in the desert die 2 times—they lose their breath in physical death; they lose dignity and become a number, lost to family and all loved ones.

Alyson Ball, immigration issues expert, conference presenter

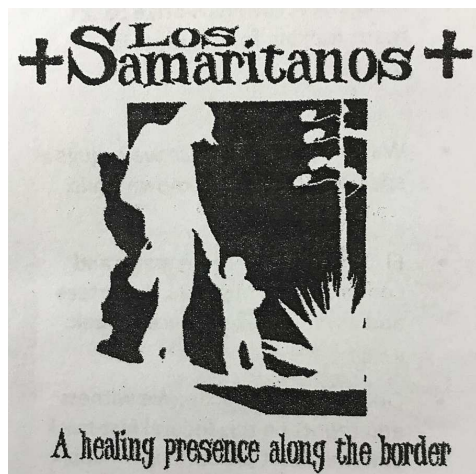
But each person, each family, has their own history, their own set of stories that define them and locate them in the world, their own networks of love and friendship and suffering, their own human potential. To reduce them to a faceless mass...is a crime against humanity.

The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives.

Viet Thanh Nguyen, editor. 2018.

During the conference, we talked with several members of the Samaritans project. The Samaritans' mission is simple and profound: *to save lives and relieve suffering in the Arizona borderlands.* Samaritans are a non-denominational group of volunteers of all ages, joined in a common belief and purpose: *Samaritans provide food, water and medical assistance to people in need. We believe in respect for human rights, the rendering of humanitarian aid, and one's ethical responsibility to assist those who are suffering.*

(continued on page 5)



At the Nogales port of entry, we crossed the border to see the artwork on public display on the Mexican side of the border wall. Walking along the Calle International, we were struck by the fierce expressions of protest painted on the corrugated iron bars of the wall. Some sections of the wall are topped with razor wire, surveillance cameras are positioned at frequent intervals.

One of the largest artworks is the *Paseo de la Humanidad* (Parade of Humanity) created out of scrap metal by Nogales artists Alberto Morackis and Guadalupe Serrona. Composed of metallic panels and human-like figures, the metal mural is on a standalone metal support just in front of the wall. The distinctive, brightly colored metal figures, using Aztec symbols and imagery of modern mass-consumption items, represent the cultural shock, the overwhelming feeling of misunderstanding between Latin and North America.

The mural artists wanted their art to serve as a warning for would-be migrants. "It's a way for the migrants to see the dangers that are behind the wall in the desert," observed artist Serrona.



A mother, with her metallic body covered in poinsettias, carries her son as she attempts to cross the border. Figures coming from the opposite direction are carrying home a covered person on their shoulders, a fellow migrant who may have perished in the dangerous desert crossing.

We will continue to share our stories through public presentations about the border crisis. Our talks will include resource lists, and specific steps to taking action on behalf of immigration justice.

Mission participants 2020: Tina Bechtel, Judy Larmouth, Barbara McClure-Lukens, Lou Norsetter

Flad Daniels Baby Shower

Bridget and Scott's daughter, Josie, arrived on Sunday, May 3! While we were not able to hold the church baby shower prior to her arrival due to physical distancing, we are looking forward to holding a welcoming event **later in the summer** when we are able to safely do so. Please plan to bring your favorite books and any other gifts that are not needed in the first few weeks of bringing baby home to that event.

For any gifts that would be valuable immediately, if possible, please have them delivered directly to Bridget and Scott. If you've already purchased things they could use right away, Heather Collins has volunteered to help out with getting them delivered safely. Please contact Heather Collins (920-639-8821 or hblue621@gmail.com) to coordinate. Thanks!

Lectionary Readings

May 17 — 6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 24 — 7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

May 31 — Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

June 7 — Trinity Sunday

Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

June 14 —

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 18:8-21 and
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
Or Exodus 19:2-8a and Psalm 100
Romans 5:1-8
Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)

Who's Graduating?



If you are a graduate, or if you know of a graduate you'd like us to recognize, please let us know. We would like

to recognize our 2020 graduates in June. Let the church office know (437-9266 or office@unionucc.com) if you will be a 2020 graduate (high school, college) and what type of degree (associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctorate, etc.) you have earned. We would like to say congratulations and give others a chance to do the same!



Your Church Library

by Cathy Putman

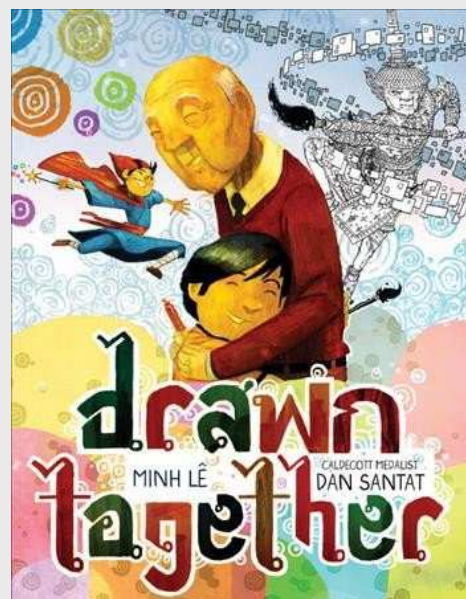
New Books in the Church Library

Families that are staying safer at home realize with frustration that children and adults don't seem to speak the same language. The picture book "Drawn Together" shows this predicament. A boy, left by his mother to spend time with his immigrant grandfather, are at odds until they begin drawing together. While their drawing styles and image vocabularies differ, the duo show similar stories of action and adventure on their drawing sheets.

Another new book is the 2019 novel by Indian writer Amitav Ghosh, "Gun Island." It's a smidge of fantasy and a dash of romance in a double strand plot line that links the Indian Bengladeshi border with the city of Venice. Ghosh takes the length of the book to trace the effects of climate change on communities and animals. Vivid scenes of the natural world in full on flux contrast with private computer and internet based scenes. A light, but thoughtful read.

On the nonfiction side, we just acquired "The Illegitimacy of Jesus." This early feminist analysis of the virgin birth stories in the Gospels caused a big stir when it was published in 1987. With careful scholarship and a female point of view, author Jane Schaberg examines the texts and suggests that the descriptions of Mary's pregnancy have elements which suggest seduction or even rape, possibilities she claims male critics have failed to consider.

Though I do not know when the church library will be fully open, if you are interested in any of these books, please contact me and I can arrange to get them to you. Cathy Putman, 435-1540 or cputman@new.rr.com.



Faith Formation Needs You!

Faith Formation needs many people to help with all aspects of Sunday and Wednesday Faith Formation. Please volunteer (once a week, biweekly, once a month, as needed, etc.) to help our youth have quality programs. We need teachers, assistants, leaders, kitchen helpers, cooks and substitutes!

We need you to help our youth have a meaningful experience. Please contact Nancy Gibson (njgib@aol.com) or Jon Pahl (jon@unionucc.com). Thank you for considering this.

Union Church Calendar

May 17—June 21, 2020

(all meetings online unless otherwise noted)

May 17 6th Sunday of Easter

10:00 a.m. Worship

May 20 Wednesday

2:00 p.m. Seminary Secrets

6:30 p.m. Seminary Secrets

May 21 Thursday

6:00 p.m. Common Ministry

May 24 7th Sunday of Easter

10:00 a.m. Worship

May 26 Tuesday

5:30 p.m. Worship Ministry

May 27 Wednesday

2:00 p.m. Seminary Secrets

6:30 p.m. Seminary Secrets

7:00 p.m. Budget and Priorities

May 31 Pentecost Sunday

10:00 a.m. Worship

11:00 a.m. Virtual Church Picnic

June 2 Tuesday

4:00 p.m. Outreach Ministry

5:30 p.m. Worship Ministry

6:30 p.m. Education Ministry

June 3 Wednesday

2:00 p.m. Seminary Secrets

6:30 p.m. Seminary Secrets

June 7 Trinity Sunday

10:00 a.m. Worship

(Steve Hartman preaches)

June 11 Thursday

5:00 p.m. Inreach/Membership

Ministry

6:00 p.m. Common Ministry

June 14 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 a.m. Worship

(Jan Davis preaches)

June 21 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 a.m. Worship

Jazz Ministry Grant Continued Through November

Matt Hillman and Rissel Peguero to Lead Worship Music on May 24

Recognizing the complications for worship resulting from COVID-19, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has agreed to extend the grant provided to Union Church to fund this new ministry through November.

Written into the original grant, you may recall, was travel for jazz team members to study exemplary (and long-standing) jazz ministries around the U.S. and Canada (Vancouver, British Columbia alone has 18 churches incorporating jazz in some way). Obviously, this was not possible since March, and may not be possible into the near future. Some flexibility already existed in the grant budget, but we have proposed utilizing the "travel" section of the grant to help support musicians through November by paying them for their contributions to our worship. We think this is a wise use of the resources, both in support of an emerging ministry at Union, and to support musicians who have otherwise lost income from performances.

Along those lines, we'll have the joy of having recording artists Rissel Peguero and Matt Hillman (MAR Jazz Duo) lead us in worship music on May 24. The service, on Memorial Day Weekend, will (in the spirit of the original Memorial Day) support and recognize peacebuilders in history and the Christian tradition.

We hope you'll look forward to the service, streamed as usual at 10 a.m.

Virtual Church Picnic

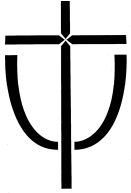
Sunday, May 31

Share Your Favorite Picnic Recipe!

We may have to stay at home, and definitely will not be able to gather yet for our annual church picnic scheduled for May 31. That doesn't mean we still can't have a fun time, lively worship, and some good food! Stay tuned for some activities and games for all ages, some sing-a-long music, and some picnic recipes you'll want to try.

Over the next week or so (and definitely by May 27), please send your favorite picnic recipe to Denise Olson at myersolson22@gmail.com and we'll start building an online "recipe book," with recipes in each week's email blast. Then, on the day of the picnic, we'll invite you to post pictures of your picnic fare to the Facebook Live "Comments."

(P.S.--it's easy)
Virtual deliciousness!



Union Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Green Bay, WI 54301

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A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Members

The members of Union Congregational United Church of Christ are so excited to welcome you to our church family. We are confident you will find UCC to be a church home at which to worship, serve others, and create lifetime friendships.

With the Covid-19 safer-at-home orders, we have had to postpone our New Member induction and potluck social. Our intention is to introduce all new members at one worship service later this year. However, we want you to know that you are welcome to participate in any of the church functions, volunteer opportunities, and education classes that are currently offered. We sincerely hope you take advantage of one of the many virtual offerings available. If you do not already receive the weekly email and monthly newsletter, please contact the church office to get on the list for these mailings.

Once again, welcome to Union Congregational Church!

—Inreach/Membership Ministry

Union Congregational United Church of Christ

716 S. Madison Street
Green Bay, WI 54301
e-mail: office@unionucc.com
(920) 437-9266

Rev. Bridget M. Flad Daniels

Senior Minister

Dr. Jon Pahl

Minister of Faith Formation
and Community Engagement

Sandy Polarek

Moderator

Church Office Hours

Mon.-Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

For more information about us,
visit our web page
at <http://www.unionucc.com>