

Nativity News

Volume 74, Issue 6

June 2020



Let me begin by saying, "I miss you." I miss worshipping in the sanctuary and hearing everyone singing. I miss how powerful it feels

when we all recite the Lord's Prayer together. I miss sharing my message with you when I can see your faces and respond to your non-verbal feedback. I miss connecting during coffee hours and being together at meetings. I miss the hugs (although I was grateful for the BIG HUG from the Middle High Youth) and I miss the handshakes.

Having said that, it's certainly a gift to be able to connect via Zoom for virtual meetings and Sunday coffee hours and to read the comments of those who watch worship using Facebook Premier. Email and phone calls keep us in touch and the positive messages about my Fireside Chats and our Sunday worship services keep me going. The music that Mike Copps, Sean Irawan and the talented soloists and instrumentalists share for virtual worship lift my spirit. Carissa's children's time makes me smile (loved the flannel board) and think. Seeing all of them, and the liturgists, when they come to the church to record, is a bright spot in my week. And, I will be forever grateful to Mike Reed who is the tech genius recording, editing, and posting virtual worship and Fireside Chats and the one who keeps our computers humming. It's all keeping us connected in new ways.

So what's on the horizon? It looks like it will be quite some time before we're able to get back together in-person. According to NYS, church worship will be Phase 4 of the opening process and even then, maintaining social distancing in our church building will be very difficult. We have a Task Force that will explore how this will happen.



In the meantime, we will continue doing what we're doing (and some new things, too), trusting that God's Spirit will guide and direct each of us, and our world, as we face this terrible pandemic together. I hope you'll tune in to our worship series throughout June. The theme is:

"Recognizing God in an Upside Down World."

Peace,
Pastor Ruth

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Our mission is to be a Welcoming, Nurturing, Empowering community of faith carrying Christ's love, justice & peace into our community & world.

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Hi everyone! This is to inform the congregation that on April 4th, 2020, the Church Council, with recommendation from the Trustees, unanimously voted to recommend that the church apply for the “Paycheck Protection Program

Loan Guarantee” (PPP loan) under the current CARES Act.

For those that are unfamiliar with this program, the CARES act was set up for small businesses to apply for a low interest loan (1%) through the SBA (Small Business Administration). For the first time, churches were included in the application process for a small business loan.

The Church Council learned on Sunday, May 3rd that the loan had been approved and just under

\$40K was deposited into our account on Wednesday, May 6th.

The Council decided the SBA loan was a good course of action. We expect our income to be less over the coming months. Members have lost their jobs which could result in lower pledge income. Rental fees from outside groups will be reduced or unpaid. The flower sale that provides income has been cancelled.

The best news yet: The PPP loan can be forgiven as long as the money is solely used for payroll and utilities. Since we have continued to keep our staff employed and utilities need to be paid, we expect these expenses to be forgiven. The amount of the loan to be applied for was computed by our bookkeeper Ed Bumanis. If for some reason the church does not use the whole amount of the loan, the Church Council did vote to “give” back the unused portion so there is no outstanding loan balance.

May you all stay healthy. Lots of prayers that we can be together soon.

Bev Schotz, Church Council, Senior Deacon



[CLICK HERE to schedule an appointment.](#)

Blood Drive Church of the Nativity

Dining Room
1530 Colvin Blvd
Tonawanda, NY 14223

**Saturday, June 13, 2020
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

For an appointment, please call
1-800-RED CROSS or visit redcrossblood.org
and enter sponsor code: nativitytonawanda



**Chiavetta's
Chicken Barbecue
Sunday, October 4th
12—5 pm**



Dear Nativity Friends,
I just finished my daily dose of Coronavirus updates from Governor Andrew Cuomo. The new normal continues. There does seem to be better news on the horizon, but it certainly seems to be a long time coming.

The Saturday recordings for the Sunday services continue. Pastor Ruth, Mike Reed, Sean Irawan, Carissa Gigliotti and I have established an order of recording so that only the people recording need to be in the Sanctuary. We all come and go as Mike Reed video shoots all the separate parts including the Liturgist segment. When all the parts have been recorded, Mike then blends the segments together to create the seamless service we all see on Sunday mornings (or whenever you choose to view the service).

With the continuing hope of maintaining safe and social distancing, we still are only using a small number of participating musicians each week. The singers who have shared their talents with us since Easter are: Mother and son duo Sue and Steven Copps, Laura Garrett, Jeannine Campbell, another mother and son duo Debbie and Aaron McDuffie, and Sharon Schlegel.

We had a couple of musical highlights this month. Sue Copps pulled out her French Horn to play the obligato part to the beautiful "I Have Not Seen but I Believe" by Sally DeFord. Of course, that Steve Copps kid was the soloist. We also had the opportunity to premiere the new song "Shelter Me" by Michael Joncas who is also the composer of the very popular anthem "On Eagle's Wings." On March 27 of this year he wrote "A Prayer-Song in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic. These are difficult times for all of us, individually and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life as normal and called for acts of corporate and individual heroism in the face of present suffering and an uncertain future. People of faith may be struggling to articulate their

belief in an all-good and all-powerful God in this new era. "Shelter Me" is my attempt as a church composer to find God's presence even in these fraught times. Based on the beloved Psalm 23, my paraphrase adapts the psalmist's sentiments to respond to our present anxieties." Former Praise Team singer Jeannine Campbell was able to come back and join Steve Copps for this haunting duet. We plan to present this recording to Linda Tomsen in the hopes that she will create another one of her uplifting videos.

The Chancel Choir continues to Zoom meet every other Thursday evening. These meetings allow us the chance to check in with each other. So much is changing every day. We have shared updated church news and events, personal situations and needs and a fair share of good news and laughter. We had

nineteen folks join in the last time we Zoomed. It's proving to be a decent way to have socially distanced fellowship. The Youth Choir has also had several Zoom meetings. This too has been a great way to check-in with the kids about doing school-work at home, coping with siblings, and of course, boredom. Most of the kids are actually doing quite well considering. Their main concern is the new homework load. We have been having virtual rehearsals together at each Zoom. Since the kids already have copies of the cantata at home, it made sense to give it a try. So off we went practicing "The Big Fish - Jonah's Whale of a Tale." The plan is to keep working on the piece in the hopes that we may get to perform it for the congregation in the future.

It is hard to believe that summer is fast approaching while life is still in the pause mode. I expect that we will be posting a summer soloist sign up sheet as soon as we can. Stay tuned! Until then,

Blessings to all and stay safe,
Mike Copps, Music Director



**Like Us on Facebook,
Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ**

Hi all,

Now that this pandemic has been rolling through all this time, I am sincerely hoping that everyone is staying safe and keeping the peace that we have from God.

Just a few updates from the Praise Team. As you can see from the online worship every Sunday, the Praise Team and Mike Copps with soloists have been alternating the schedule and take turns every other week. We've also started to slowly add more people into our recording sessions, but in order to fulfill our commitment to keep everyone safe, we strictly follow our safety guidelines by setting a maximum limit of five people at a time and making sure that we keep our distance at all times.

Hi Members & Friends of Nativity,

Work continues in Nativity's church office & its satellite office in my den. Unlike most of Nativity's staff, I never worked from home before the pandemic. Boxes of files, mailing materials & binders are a new feature of my home décor!



Part of my usual job is to greet friends, members & visitors who come to the church & make them feel welcome. While people are not currently just stopping in, I certainly hope I am still making you feel welcome when we correspond by phone or email and I answer your questions or point you to the person who can. Please don't hesitate to call or email me, I love hearing from you!

Serving as Liturgists in June:

Liturgists will record their parts of the service in the Sanctuary on Saturdays at 1:45 pm. The recording dates are listed below. Thanks for your willingness to serve!

June 06 ~ Laura Westfall
 June 13 ~ Tim Collins
 June 20 ~ Helen Cyrulik
 June 27 ~ Karen Billingsley

I also want to give a shout out to our Praise Team members as well as everyone else who has stepped



out of their safe zone at home to come to the church so we all can have our weekly worship in the comfort of our own homes.

Please stay safe and healthy,

Sean Irawan, Praise Team Director
 (917) 601-5501 | sean@nativityucc.org

Since most outgoing communication is now electronic & the emails are sent out through our database software, this has been a good opportunity to weed out old email addresses & to correct any errors we had in the system. When we first started doing this, more than twenty emails bounced back, the last few weeks it's been zero. If you're currently getting our publications by postal mail but do have an email address, please consider sharing it with us by sending it to office@nativityucc.org. This way you'll get all communications almost immediately.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Middle High Youth Group & their wonderful leaders, Barbara & Janet Vaughan & Mike Reed, for the "big hug" I received in the mail recently (*see page 7*). It made my day!

I hope & pray that you are all safe & well,

Sandy Mathisen, Office Manager



Youth & Family Ministry



May is always a joyful month at Nativity. The first Sunday is Confirmation and the fourth Sunday is Teacher Recognition, two days I look very forward to each year, as do many of you, I'm sure.

On Confirmation Sunday, I get to present gifts to our Confirmands. I look forward to reading their essays and watching as Pastor Ruth and the Senior Deacon lay praying hands on them as they join the church as adult members. I look forward to seeing what Neil Lange has come up with for their beautiful cake and how Friendship decorates the Dining Room in their honor. I love standing with them in the doorway as they greet the congregation together.

On Teacher Recognition Sunday, I love hearing our children sing the songs they've been working on for their teachers. I love being able to present small gifts to our volunteers. I love seeing everyone smile. I love getting to thank everyone for their truly monumental commitment to our young people, ranging in age from birth to 18. I am so proud, especially on these days, of the work our volunteers do and the many hours our Child & Youth Education Committee puts into making our events and regular activities a success. All of these moments feel like prayers of thanksgiving to God for this ministry that I am humbled to be a part of.

This year, these celebrations will be somewhat different. We will still have a Confirmation Sunday, but it may be over the summer or even fall, depending on what the changing face of the pandemic will allow. Nevertheless, the Confirmands have completed their journey in the classroom, have written their essays, and are ready to be welcomed into the full fellowship, membership, leadership, worship, and sacramental life of our congregation as "adults" of the church for the first time. Child & Youth Ed is working on some surprises for our volunteers that will take place outside the church and will be joyful in their own ways.

I am still grateful and humbled to be a part of this

ministry and maybe even more so this year as I've watched everyone stick together and adapt to so many changes. In next month's newsletter, I look forward to telling you a bit more about the amazing high school graduates I have had the privilege to have worked with. If any of you have a college graduate in your family who you'd like us to recognize, please send an email to Carissa@nativityucc.org so that they can be included as well! I have no idea what the near future will hold, but I do know that God is with us and the Holy Spirit will be moving in and through us as we seek to follow Jesus.

Senior High Youth Update:

Our Senior High Youth Group continues to meet every week via Zoom for about an hour to check in and chat. We took the week off for Mother's Day so that our youth could spend the day with their families. I hope to add some additional activities, like some virtual game nights, etc. to our rotation once everyone gets through their exams and end of year work. If you are a youth or parent of a youth and are not receiving my Remind notifications with the Zoom information, please email Carissa@nativityucc.org with your preferred contact method (email or cell) and I will add you.



Recent SHYG Alums (18-22 year olds):

Now that finals are nearly over for those of you in college, I would like to plan a Zoom meeting for everyone to get together and catch up. I already have some of you on my alumni Remind group, but there are many of you whose contact info we don't have. If you or a member of your family was a member of the SHYG and is now in this age range and would like to be involved and periodically receive updates from me about events, please email Carissa@nativityucc.org with your preferred contact method (email or cell) and I will add you to my Remind group. I look forward to seeing some of you on Zoom very soon!

Carissa Gigliotti
Youth & Family Ministry Director



Celebrating our Sunday School Volunteers

The Child & Youth Education Committee would like to thank all of our 2019-2020 volunteers for everything they have done in service to our children and youth this school year. They have all certainly



lived out our theme: God's Helping Hands! Normally, we would have had a special day in May to

thank them in church. In lieu of that, we plan to honor and appreciate them here, as well as in a "secret mission" that will happen outside the church via appropriate social distancing sometime this month! A huge thank you to the following people:

Nursery Volunteer Coordinator: LoriAnn Fink

Nursery Volunteers: Elaine Acker, Lynn Benner, Norma Hess, Margaret Hilligas, Debbie Komorowski, Sherran Lockwood, Jane Piduch, Barbara Riedel

Sunday School Teachers:

PreK-K: Leslie McKnight, Laura Sanford, Laura Westfall with LoriAnn Fink

1&2: Nichole Dracup & Jessica Ireland

3&4: Joy Crawford & Denise Galatioto

5&6: Mike Reed

7&8: Amy Crosson & Dylan Gruber

Sr. High: Amy Albright & Felix Coniglio

Superintendent: Kristin Strong

Confirmation Co-Teacher: Faith Reed

Middle High Youth Advisors: Barbara Vaughan, Janet Vaughan, Mike Reed

Senior High Youth Assistant Leader: Dylan Gruber

Acolyte Coordinator: Amy Skorupa

Sunday School Music: Denise Galatioto & Sheri Leiser

Child & Youth Education



**GREAT
BIG
beautiful
WORLD**

**VBS 2020
August 17-21
9:30 am - noon**

*You can register online on
our homepage at
nativityucc.org*

We are monitoring the changing situation and will provide updates as they are available.



That Warm Feeling You Get from a Hug

When we were three years old it seemed like an eternity waiting for Christmas or our Birthday party. When we are “older” it seems like time just flies by. These months staying home from Church have both characteristics. It is hard to believe we started this in March and that it is already the middle of May. On the other hand, it seems like an eternity

“Time moves slowly but passes quickly.”

~ Alice Walker

since we have seen each other’s smiles and shared a hymn, prayer, or cup of coffee together. We feel like we are 3 years old bursting at the seams to see our Church Family!

As leaders of the Middle High Youth Group, we are fortunate to be able to share this time with the Youth. Each Friday we meet with the group, talk a little, smile a little, even play games together, and of course, pray together. This month they had a scavenger hunt hosted by Pastor Ruth! There were some very unique items that they had to find! Their smiles and laughter make our days pass more quickly.

This past month we even joined another youth group from the Jewish Federation of Buffalo for a game night (right). We played what usually is a board game on the computer using

the Zoom program. The youth were able to see and virtually meet each other. We look forward to arranging an in-person meeting in the future.

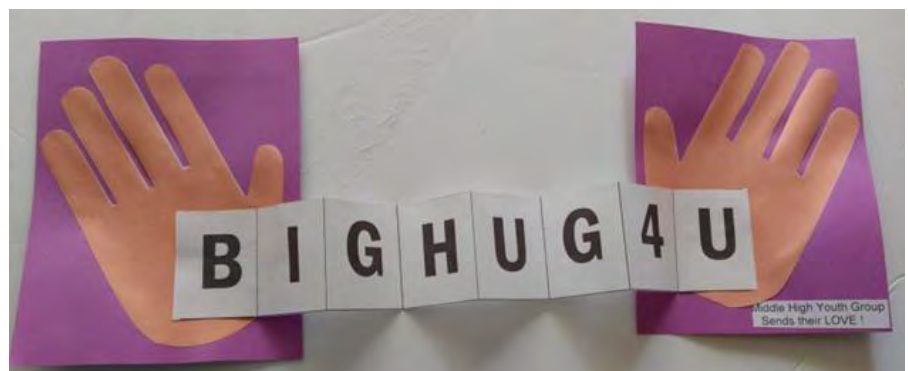
We have heard from so many people that one of the things they miss the most is being able to hug their friends and loved ones. This is especially true for grandparents who are not able to be with their grandchildren. So, the Middle High Youth wanted to help and sent the next best thing to some of their Church family members. They made and wrapped HUGS in an envelope (bottom) and sent them to give you that warm feeling you get from a hug and to let you know how much you are loved.

Please feel free to reach out to our youth either with a phone call or drop them a note. They love to get mail too! If you need a number or address call us at 310-4580.

Youth Advisors,
Barbara Vaughan, Mike Reed & Janet Vaughan



Game Night with the Jewish Federation of Buffalo Youth Group. Group Leader Mike Steklof is second from left in the top row.



Virtual hugs delivered by the postal service!



During this time when we are not able to worship in person, donations can be made using the PayPal button on the homepage of our website, www.nativityucc.org or by mailing a check to Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, NY 14223. You can also use electronic bill pay options offered at all financial institutions.

Yours in Christ,
Betsy DiVita, Chair

TRUSTEES MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Period	GENERAL FUND - YEAR TO DATE								
	Pledge Income Received (3)	Additional Revenue (1)	Total Revenue	Weekly Average Pledge Income	General Fund Expenses	Building Fund (2)			
						Beginning Balance	Revenue	Expenses	Ending Balance
1/1-4/30/2020	\$ 93,517	\$ 7,449	\$ 100,966	\$ 4,797	\$ 107,694	\$ 3,378	\$ 432	\$ 1,956	\$ 1,854
1/1-4/30/2019	\$ 95,416	\$ 22,303	\$ 117,719	\$ 4,998	\$ 98,460	\$ 1,334	\$ 243	\$ -	\$ 1,577

(1) Additional revenue from Holiday Offerings, Fundraising Revenue, Facilities Use donations, Endowment Fund Transfers, etc.

(2) The Building Fund is a separate fund that is kept in the General Fund checking account as of July 2017. On 2/20/2020, the Church purchased floor cleaning/stripping/waxing equipment in the amount of \$1,956.

(3) 2019 amount includes \$2,590 in pledges received for 2018.

The information above is based on weekly activity. Please be aware that the impact of the weather, the date of the holidays on the calendar, and other circumstances may affect revenues and expenses for each year.

Giving by Mail

We are so grateful to all those who have been faithfully sending in their offerings by postal mail. Here are a few tips to make the process easier for you & work more smoothly on Nativity's end for the counters & for Ed Bumanis, our volunteer bookkeeper.



- ◆ If you are making a donation to the Deacons' Fund, which helps those in need, please write a separate check. These donations are deposited into a separate bank account.
- ◆ If you normally pay your pledge using the boxed envelope sets, it is not necessary to send in all

the envelopes for each week that your check covers. Just put the check in one envelope as your offering will be counted in full for the week in which the check is received.

- ◆ You can use one check to donate to the General Fund & the Building Fund. The Building Fund is not a separate account, it is contained within the General Fund account. Just note on the Memo line how much of the check is to be credited to each fund.

Worship with us from HOME

You may access our pre-recorded virtual worship service through the YouTube link we send by email or via our Facebook page, Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ. We “premier” our recorded service

on Facebook on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am. You can check-in, say “hi”, or share a comment. Carissa is online to moderate the feed and reply to any comments. (Please remember that like everything else on FB pages, comments you make will be public and can be seen by anyone.) Once the video is over, it remains on the page for those who wish to share the post or watch it later.

Did you know that people from South Carolina, Ohio, California, and Minnesota are connecting with us on-line? How exciting is that? If you like a particular worship service, we hope you’ll consider sharing our worship link or Facebook page with friends or family.

How About Connecting for Coffee?

Join us for Nativity’s Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom, Sundays at 11:00 AM! What is a Virtual Coffee Hour? This is our opportunity to connect with each



other like we did when we were worshipping in the building, except you provide your own snacks and coffee. During this time, we’ll do a quick connect and then Carissa, or another member of Nativity staff, will facilitate a “Question for Reflection” discussion based on the service for that day. If we have more than fifteen people, we can even divide into smaller groups. This is another way we can stay connected and “be the church, without being in the church.”

You can join the Virtual Coffee Hour three ways:

1. With a computer/laptop;
2. With a tablet/smartphone;
3. With a home phone. **To**

join with video on your laptop,

all you need is a camera, which most already

have, and to click on the

Zoom link that is sent via email. **To join with video**

using a smartphone or tablet,

you must first download the Zoom app from your App Store/

Google Play Store (it's free) and then click on the link. Once you click on the link, you will be asked

for the meeting password which will be the same every week. If you prefer not to use video or don't

have any tech gadgets, that's ok! **You can also call**

into the coffee hour using a cell phone or a land

line. Those who are calling in will have to enter the Meeting ID (sent via email) on your phone

along with the password. Please do not share the link, ID, or password with anyone not from Nativity.

This will allow us to keep the meeting secure.

If you have any technical issues, you can contact Carissa and she will try to help. **We hope some of**

you will join us for Virtual Coffee Hour one

Sunday!



Prayer for the Month

God of Life,
you have promised to be with us every day,
also in difficult days, like in times like these.
Give us
clarity in our minds,
strength in our work and discernment,
rest as we sleep,
peace in our minds.

Be with those
who need help
more than we do ourselves
help us to see what we can offer
from your love.

Amen.

~ General Secretary
of the World Council of Churches

Virtual Worship

“Being Church without Being in Church”



Fireside Chat

The empty chair signifies God’s presence



More Comments from the Congregation

On Pastor Ruth’s Fireside Chats:

Thanks Pastor Ruth! I always find your Fireside Chat messages inspirational and calming in our current world situation. It’s much appreciated that you take the time to do them for all of us.

* * * * *

Thank you Ruth! I am sure there are many of us out there now, who can really use this message today. 😊

* * * * *

Ruth, your Fireside Chat was an inspiration and came across loud and clear.

On Virtual Worship Services:

Today's worship service was wonderful! Fantastic message & beautiful music! We watched at 10:30 this morning then joined the virtual coffee hour. That was great! Hope we can do it again. So nice to see all who participated! We miss you & our church family!

* * * * *

Very beautiful, uplifting, and inspirational.

* * * * *

Thank you for the wonderful services!

The 'In' Fashion Accessory of the Season

Since we are all required to wear masks in public and it looks like we may need them for some time, there seems to be a need for hand sewn masks. If you are already making masks or if you are willing to do so, please contact me at kristineghanson@verizon.net, and we can coordinate a group to make masks for members of the congregation or even the community at large. We could also consider making children's masks to order- made to measure, to be a correct size.



Kris Hanson, Outreach Committee Co-Chair

The Clean Air Coalition During the Time of Pandemic

As previously conveyed in May's *Nativity News*, the Clean Air Coalition (CAC) hasn't missed a step. Rather, we've actually stepped it up. Utilizing Zoom meetings three to four times a week, usually for 90 minutes, we are vigorously planning and working on our various causes. And, of course, there's homework.

If you didn't have a chance to "attend" our virtual **Open House** held Thursday, May 28, you still may be able to see it online. The plan is to have it posted on our website (cacwny.org). This was an opportunity for people to learn about the workings and the projects of this vibrant social justice environmental group. Our history, campaigns, details on our new Handbook, some entertainment and activities also allowed people to learn how to become members.

One of our causes is our attempt to counter attempts to weaken the EPA. As part of our campaign, I wrote an article for *Another Voice* for the Buffalo News entitled "Citizens, states must fight against the weakening of EPA." We hope to prompt NY's Attorney General to take action against the Trump Administration. Besides detailing the various aspects of the issue, we are working with many other groups in taking action.

We are pushing to effect substantial change at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC has two major operations to clean up environmental disasters. One is called the Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) and the other is the State Superfund (SSF). They both offer very little public input/involvement in their respective programs. We aim to change that. Modeled after the setup for the EPA's Superfund, we endeavor to create Citizen Advisory Groups (CAG) for the BCP and SSF programs. This is in line with our goal of having business and governmental entities be transparent and accountable.

In another project, we are investigating using the land bank idea to deal with the aftermath of the Battaglia Demolition case. Also, Tesla is emerging as a civil rights hotbed involving some pretty bad business practices that violate the rights of some of their workers.

If you are inspired by the social and environmental justice agenda of the CAC, we always welcome the creativity of concerned and dedicated citizens of Western New York. Become a member now.

Gary M. Schulenberg
Campaign Leader of the CAC

Nativity's own Welongo Lutengya (really far right) holds the certificate he earned by completing the Green Shoots Program at the Brewster Street Farm, Journey's End Refugee Agricultural Program. This urban farming program teaches adult immigrants many skills as they maintain the farm and sell their produce at markets. Welongo has enjoyed volunteering at the farm since his arrival in Buffalo.



The 2020 Ken-Ton CROP Hunger Walk During the Pandemic

Are we going to have our highly successful annual CROP Hunger Walk? We definitely will, maybe...



CROP Hunger Walk

We doubt it will be the usual Walk. Our idea of a party *during* the Walk seems unfeasible. Our gathering as a faith community will need to be changed, probably drastically. Nonetheless, we are planning to have some type of Walk. It might be possible to gather and walk in accordance with governmental and medical directives. It just wouldn't be the usual bunches of walkers but instead a (hopefully) very long line. We might have people walk on their own on a designated day or days (Saturday or Sunday). We might ask them to keep a video-log of their walk and post it online somehow. Pledges would probably have to be online, which

we already do but on a limited basis. We are planning on having it, in whatever form, the third or fourth Sunday in September.

As of press time, we haven't "attended" a CROP webinar to be held in a couple of weeks. CROP already has a number of ideas on its website to deal with these trying times.

So stay tuned for information when we give out the details of our decisions and ways for people to participate and donate. It should be extremely obvious that the Ken-Ton CROP Hunger Walk is more important than ever.

We are called and we will answer!

Gary M. Schulenberg
Chair of the Ken-ton CROP Hunger Walk 2020

Dr. Monica and Rev. Tom Liddle, UCC/DC Global Ministries mission coworkers recently returned from serving 4 years in East Timor. They were to have spent 2 weeks speaking at churches and groups in WNY. Since they can't currently travel, they taped a downloadable presentation that you can find at <https://Vimeo.com/410634543>. Watch on your phone, tablet or computer. It's about 25 min. long and very interesting. I recommend it.

~Kay Woike



Healing a Community by Phyllis Byrd

"We live in hope, in spite of civil wars and feeling like outcasts because of the Ebola pandemic that devastated our country in 2014." These are the words of one official at the Mission of Hope School in Liberia. The school is owned and run by the International Christian Fellowship Ministries, one of the Organization of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC) member churches in Liberia.

"We don't have time for lamentations," said the Global Missions Director, "because Liberia lags so far behind in education. We had to close the school because of how fast the Ebola virus was spreading. Students stopped coming to school for a year or more."

The Mission of Hope school was once a leading school in educating children all over Liberia. The school had a reputation for producing students that excelled so well they went on to study in various universities in Liberia as well as other coun-

tries. The school sits on 500 acres of land and they have become a lifeline for the community. The community benefits from the school's models for farming, fishponds, and fruit trees such as avocados, grapefruits, almonds, and cashews.

It's been 3 years since Liberia was declared Ebola-free and Mission of Hope is in the process of re-establishing themselves as an institution of excellence. They have little resources but great faith and a vision

to rebuild the dignity of the community that has been eroded due to wars, Ebola, poverty, etc. Global Ministries accompanies Mission of Hope through OAIC as they join with the community to transform the entire area into a village of hope.

Phyllis Byrd serves with the Organization of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC) in Kenya. Her appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church's Wider Mission, WOC, OGHS, and your [special gifts](#).

Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.

~Jeremiah 17:14