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Something to think about ...

On February 16th, when Covid-19 had yet to appear in any great numbers in the US, I used my Children's Time to teach the kids the meaning of the math concept, "exponential growth." First, I had the kids stand in a line and pass along a handshake one by one, and we estimated how long it would take before everyone in the congregation had received that handshake. (A long time, we realized.) I then described the concept of exponential growth and had each child shake two people's hands instead of only one, with each of those two in turn passing their handshake to two more. This time we included the congregation in our experiment and it was amazing how little time it took before everyone in the sanctuary had received the handshake. The math is simple: when you double the contacts each time, within less than eight steps, you will be able to extend that first contact to a congregation of 75 people.

1 > 2 > 4 > 8 > 16 > 32 > 64 > 128

Little did any of us know that my February 16th Children's Time would be prescient. The very fact that I was asking everyone to shake hands with one another and that no one balked or immediately pulled out their hand sanitizer shows how unaware we were of the changes that were coming. On February 16th when I presented that Children's Time, the US had only 15 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 13 of which were in people exposed to the virus while overseas. As I write this just six weeks later, the US now has nearly 163,539 cases primarily transmitted locally, and the number is still growing. Our lives have been dramatically changed in the space of a few weeks as schools and stores have shut down, sports seasons have ended prematurely or been postponed, colleges have gone to on-line learning, and all of us have had to learn how to practice physical distancing and plumb the mysteries of Zoom. The speed with which we have had to accommodate these vast changes to our lives has left us anxious and weary and suddenly all too aware of the fragility of our expectations about what constitutes normal. The phrase "Exponential growth" which I used as a simple Children's Time illustration has taken on an aura of apocalyptic doom.

I want to return to that Children's Time, however, to remind us why I was teaching the kids about exponential growth back on that Sunday in February. The sermon for that Sunday was based on the story of the feeding of the 5000 when Jesus fed an entire crowd with just a little bread and fish. On my way to church as I mulled over my sermon and tried to come up with a related Children's Time, I pictured the basket of bread and fish making its

way through the crowd as each person shared it with those around them, and another teaching of Jesus' popped into my head:

"If you love those who love you," Jesus asked the crowd, "what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

In that teaching, Jesus, I realized, was encouraging us to practice kindness not reciprocally which yields a standard numerical growth (we are good to those who are good to us) but to practice it exponentially. If we are good to more than those who have been good to us, if we can show kindness even to just one more person than we would normally consider treating kindly, and if we encourage others in turn to include just one additional person in their sphere of concern, kindness can grow exponentially. It can fill the world as quickly as we filled the sanctuary with our handshakes. This is good news during these times when we feel helpless as we watch the horrific exponential growth of Covid-19 because we can take heart in Jesus' promise that kindness can match a virus's spread step for step. As we are intentionally disinfecting and maintaining our distance from one another to stop the spread of Covid-19, we can be equally as intentional in decreasing the emotional distances between ourselves and others as we spread kindness by practicing more patience, empathy, and forgiveness than we might normally be inclined to show. In fact, much of this has been happening over the past month as people around the globe have shared their stories, checked on their neighbors, shopped for those unable to leave their homes, reached out virtually to family, friends, and strangers, shared funny videos online to keep one another's spirits up, exchanged ideas for homeschooling, and generally treated one another with greater thoughtfulness and kindness than we have seen on the internet in a long time. On February 16th, when I taught our children about exponential growth, I was prescient, not about the pandemic which was about to wash across America but about the kindness that was to follow in its wake.



On April 12th, we would normally be celebrating Easter with its proclamation that in Christ we can trust that life will triumph over death and love will be victorious. Because of the pandemic, we will be delaying our "in person" Easter celebration but Easter's message will ring forth nonetheless. In fact, if anything I think Easter has come a little early this year because I believe that its message of love victorious is being proclaimed right now in every act of kindness, in every compassionate heart, in every word of support shared with another, in every smile bestowed, in every way small and large that we have taken care of one another during a time when the darkness is threatening to undo us. As the body of Christ, let us remember the Easter promise that even the cross could not extinguish Christ's love, and let us stand against our fear by unleashing a pandemic of kindness on the world.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim".

Church News & Events

Lenten Project Update

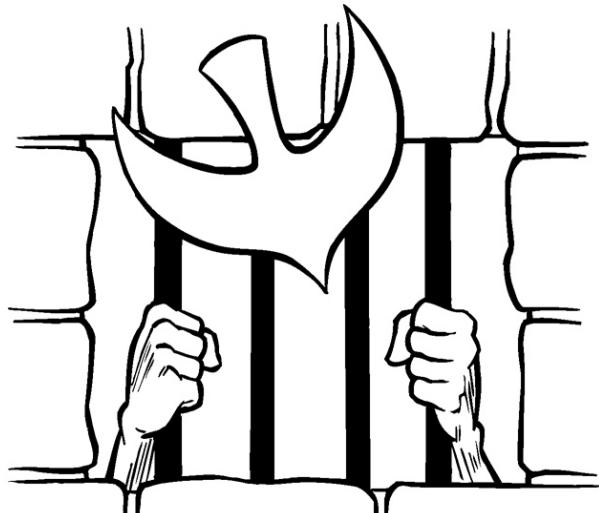
from Sophie Luo

Since I've posted our Lenten prayer and Lenten project on Twitter and Facebook, many of my friends have asked me to pass their respect and regards to the whole church family. A few friends in New Jersey and DC even wanted to visit our church and join our service. One of my best friends Yaxue visited us last Sunday and brought over 80 printed copies of the interview she did with Jiaxi as a gift for each family. She wants to show her respect and gratitude for your support to us, support to free Jiaxi. Please let me know if you'd like a copy, I can drop it in your mailbox or mail it to you. You are also more than welcome to give it to your friends if you've already read it online.

By the way, we have mailed the petition letters to China, and I'd like to thank everyone again for all the support to make it happen.

Please stay safe and healthy!

Best regards, *Sophie*



Lenten Project Will Continue

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Board of Elders decided that we would continue our Lenten project for the foreseeable future. So we ask that you continue your letter writing. You may drop letters and cards at the Church Center on Wednesday or Thursday afternoons. Sophie has provided addresses in both English and Chinese to ensure proper delivery.

The two new people to address cards to, Ms Lin Yanhua and Ms. Yang Hongni are the spouses of two other detainees.

Thank You to UUC

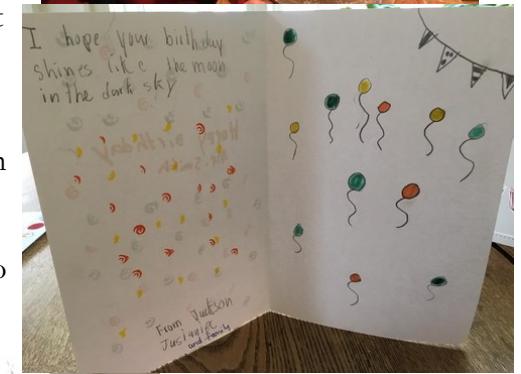
from Sharon & Roger Smith

Dear UUC friends, it was wonderful to join you (finally) this morning (virtual worship)—after my nephew explained to me last evening what I had to do to disable finger print ID on my iPad—and Roger was able to witness the last part of the service, which was great.

Here he is yesterday (his Big Birthday) when Laurel came by with an amazing chocolate cake. Our talented organist is “una bravissima pasticciera”!

And here is Roger — by yesterday afternoon totally overwhelmed — with your birthday cards that arrived yesterday at the P.O. ... and even delivered in person!

We are both overjoyed with abundance of love and community that you have showered upon us this week, as we “sheltered in place”, after awaiting this milestone for so many months.



Thank you, thank you!
Grazie infinite!!!

Sharon and Roger

Church News & Events, cont.

“Zoom” Church Virtual Worship

submitted by Rev. DeMott

Our virtual worship offerings have been enjoyed by our congregation and accessed in a number of ways. Looking at the number of shares, it is also obvious that many of you are passing along these links to family members and friends and it is heartening to know that the church is still very much alive in our world even if the church has “left the building.”

The following snapshot on March 31st will provide you some sense of the importance of our worship efforts for others. (The statistics continue to change every day as more people share the links during the week.)



On March 22nd and March 29th, we averaged 30 households joining us for live Zoom Church. More than half of those households were couples and families so our virtual live attendance has been nearly 50-75% of our regular attendance.

In addition, the audio version of the two services has been downloaded 31 times so far, and between Facebook and YouTube, the video recording of the two weeks of Zoom Church was viewed 107 times. The bible stories I have recorded for the children have been downloaded 27 times and the Sermon round-table between my sisters and I was viewed 159 times (not counting the viewings on Wendy and Sandy's Facebook pages.) Most importantly, the links to all of those offerings were shared 901 times! While that doesn't necessarily mean that 901 people viewed the share, it is cool that everyone is passing all of those links along. You've all become virtual evangelicals.

While virtual church is not as satisfying as church in person, I am glad to know that we are continuing to come together across platforms and create a sense of the body of Christ together.

Two Easter Activities for All Ages

Melissa Jusianiec borrowed, with permission from the Wellsville Development Corp., an activity for all ages to participate in:

Alfred-Almond's EASTER EGG HUNT

- 1 Create an Easter egg and display it in your yard (or window)
- 2 Leave it up April 8th-15th
Get outside, walk or drive, and
③ find other eggs in the area
- Only rule is to be sure to
★ maintain 6' social distance
- Post pictures of your egg hunt
using #ALFREDALMONDSTRONG

Photo idea borrowed, with permission, from Wellsville Development Corp.

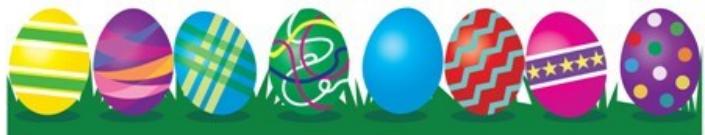


The Jusianiec family is making an outdoor sign for us to use at the Church Center and we are asking everyone in the congregation to find a time to venture down to the Church Center between April 8 and 15 with a permanent ink black Sharpie in hand and write their names on our Easter sign along with a word of hope.

We hope everyone can find a way to participate in both activities:

1. Placing an Easter egg in your window or yard
2. Signing the egg in the Church Center yard.

Pictures would be welcome! You can send them to uuc@frontiernet.net. We'll post them to the church Instagram account.



Church News & Events, cont.



Mission of the Month



Support a Small Business

The Elders have agreed to designate April's Mission of the Month as "Support a Small Business." They encourage you to send a donation, buy a gift card, or make a purchase from a local small business that may be suffering during this time.

Stewardship Campaign

The church's annual stewardship campaign has been postponed until after the week after Easter. The church's financial year ends April 30th so we hope that will still give you time to consider your giving for next year. In the meantime, please send your weekly offering and pledges to Joan Bowden at 53 Sayles St. Alfred NY 14802.

Virtual Meetings

Book Group: The Book group will try to meet virtually through Zoom on **Wednesday, April 1st, at 12:00** to discuss if and how we can continue to meet during the month of April. The link for that meeting is <https://zoom.us/j/618180468>

Parents: Rev. DeMott is inviting parents to a Zoom parent's meeting to discuss how life is going during this enforced homeschooling period (and because she's curious to know how everyone is coping.) **Thursday, April 2nd, at 12:00 noon.** Bring a bag lunch and the beverage of your choice. Here is the link:

<https://zoom.us/j/114888560>

Meeting ID: 114 888 560

Palms for You

Palms for Palm Sunday were ordered well before Covid-19 hit NY and by the time it arrived it was too late to cancel our order because the palms had already been harvested and shipped. Palms were delivered on Tuesday and are available outside the Church Center entrance Wednesday, April 1 through Saturday, April 4. Help yourself to as many as you can use.



Memorial Easter Flowers

As part of our Easter celebration we ask people to donate plants in memory of loved ones. Even though we will not be together in the sanctuary we are asking you to submit names of loved ones along with the name of a favorite flower. We will create a virtual memorial garden for use during our Zoom church Easter service. Please send names and your flower selection to uuc@frontiernet.net.



Easter Flowers

Church News & Events, cont.

HOLY WEEK



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday - April 5, 2020

They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord — the King of Israel!" John 12:12-13



Holy Week begins with a Palm Sunday Zoom church service and virtual communion. Please have bread or crackers, and juice, wine, or the beverage of your choice available at the start of the service so that you may participate in communion from you home.

Sunday Zoom church will start at 10:00 with a half an hour of Prelude music. The service will begin at 10:30.

The link will be the same every week: <https://zoom.us/j/954089812>

If you do not have access to a computer, smart phone, iPad, or internet, you can call in to the Zoom church service using a regular telephone. This will allow you to listen to the service and to talk if you wish. To participate using a phone, call +1 (646)558-8656 followed by the # key. When asked for a meeting ID, enter 954-089-812 followed by the # key. (Ignore the request for a participant ID and just stay on the line.)

Maundy Thursday - April 9, 2020

Re. DeMott is still considering options.

Good Friday - April 10, 2020

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit - Luke 23:46

Reverend DeMott will record and post a Good Friday prayer service to Facebook, Youtube, and our church website

(www.unionuniversitychurch.org)

on Good Friday, April 10th, at noon. She will email links to that next week so please check your email



Easter Festival - April 12, 2020

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Luke 24:5

Our Zoom Church Easter celebration will follow the same format as the Palm Sunday service with the addition of a virtual memorial garden.



Words of Comfort

The Peace of Wild Things

by Wendell Berry

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.



"But those who
hope in the LORD
will renew their **STRENGTH**.

They will **SOAR** on
wings like eagles;
they will **RUN** and
not grow weary,
they will **WALK**
and not be faint."

Isaiah 40:31



Covid-19: A Prayer of Solidarity

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*For all who have contracted coronavirus,
We pray for care and healing.*

*For those who are particularly vulnerable,
We pray for safety and protection.*

*For all who experience fear or anxiety,
We pray for peace of mind and spirit.*

*For affected families who are facing difficult
decisions between food on the table or public
safety,*

*We pray for policies that recognize their
plight.*

*For those who do not have adequate health
insurance,*

*We pray that no family will face financial
burdens alone.*

*For those who are afraid to access care due to
immigration status,*

*We pray for recognition of the God-given
dignity of all.*

*For our brothers and sisters around the world,
We pray for shared solidarity.*

*For public officials and decision makers,
We pray for wisdom and guidance.*

*Father, during this time may your Church be a
sign of hope, comfort and love to all.*

Grant peace.

Grant comfort.

Grant healing.

Be with us, Lord.

Amen.

April Board Members of the Month

Deacon.....Amie Acton (actona85@gmail.com; 607.382.3143)
Elder.....Alicia Taylor-Austin (alicia.taylor-austin@houghton.edu; 315.778.0020)
BOCE.....Sophie Luo (djxlsc@gmail.com; 607.281.5132)
Fellowship.....Cathy Rees (catherinesrees@gmail.com; 607.587.9598)
Trustee.....Brad Bowden (fbowden@alfred.edu; 607.587.9145)
Who do you call? Flowers or lay leading—call an Elder; greeting or coffee hour—call a Deacon;
Sunday school—call BOCE; building issues—call a Trustee.

Sunday School Teachers



Upcoming Sunday Leaders

If you are not able to serve as scheduled, please switch with someone listed on the charts below and notify the Church Office. If you are unable to find someone to switch with you, please contact either the Elder of the Month or the Deacon of the Month.

Date	Greeter	Lay Leader	Flowers	Coffee Hour	Usher
April 5 Palm Sun			Virtual Communion		
April 12 Easter			Virtual Flowers		
April 19					
April 26					
May 3	Burdick	V. Burdick	Communion	Soule	Meacham
May 10	Soule	Meissner	Bellows	TBD	Meacham
May 17	Mindy Smith	Whittemore	Cartledge	Napolitano	Meacham
May 24	Daisy Wu	Schulze	Could	TBD	Meacham
May 31	Meacham	TBD	Casey	Buckwalter	Meacham



Mission of the Month

Small Business Month

April 2020

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

			1 12pm Zoom Book Group	2 12pm Zoom Parent's Meeting	3	4
5 10:30 Zoom Church, Palm Sunday, virtual communion	6	7	8 Easter Egg Hunt	9 Easter Egg Hunt	10 12pm Recorded Good Friday service	11 Easter Egg Hunt
						
12 10:30 Zoom Church, Easter Sunday Easter Egg Hunt	13 Easter Egg Hunt	14 Easter Egg Hunt	15 Easter Egg Hunt	16	17	18
						
19 10:30 Zoom Church	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 10:30 Zoom Church	27	28	29	30		

Just for Fun

A Matter of Interpretation

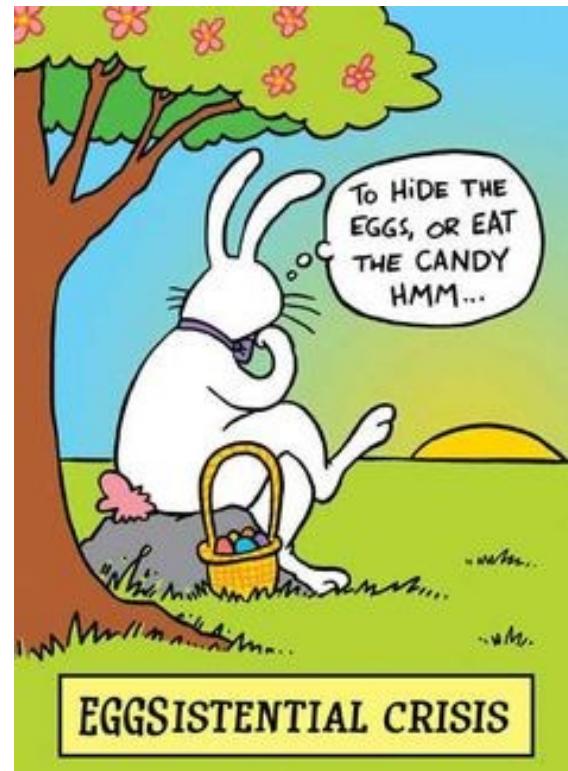
A British Jew is waiting in line to be knighted by the Queen. He is to kneel in front of her and recite a sentence in Latin when she taps him on the shoulders with her sword. However, when his turn comes, he panics in the excitement of the moment and forgets the Latin. Then, thinking fast, he recites the only other sentence he knows in a foreign language, which he remembers from the Passover Seder:

"Ma nishtana ha layla ha zeh mi kol ha laylot."

Puzzled, Her Majesty turns to her advisor and whispers, "Why is this knight different from all other knights?"

Money Is No Object

A man, his wife, and his cranky mother-in-law went on vacation to the Holy Land. While they were there, the mother-in-law passed away. The undertaker told them, "You can have her shipped home for \$5,000, or you can bury her here in the Holy Land for \$150". The man thought about it for awhile and told the undertaker he would just have her shipped home. The undertaker asked, "Why.... why would you spend \$5,000 to ship your mother-in-law home when it would be wonderful to be buried here and spend only \$150?" The man said, "A man died here about 2000 years ago. He was buried here and three days later, he rose from the dead." "I just can't take that chance."



Another Matter of Interpretation

A Jewish man took his Passover lunch to eat outside in the park. He sat down on a bench and began eating. Since Jews do not eat leavened bread during the eight-day holiday, he was eating Matzo, flat crunchy unleavened bread that has dozens of perforations. A little later, a blind man came by and sat down next to him. Feeling neighborly, the Jewish man passed a sheet of matzo to the blind man. The blind man handled the matzo for a few minutes, looked puzzled, and finally exclaimed, "Who wrote this nonsense?"



Settings entering a meeting: When you enter, you can decide to enter muted or not, and with your video on or not unless the host has predetermined those settings.

(For Zoom church, I usually set it to automatically mute everyone and automatically turn their videos off. I allow people to choose whether their video is on but I keep the mute on until I unmute everyone.)

Speaker vs Gallery View: (Top menu on desktop, left top on iPad, swipe left on iPhone)

What you choose will affect only your screen and not anyone else's. (The recording that Laurie posts is from her screen.)

Gallery View will show everyone present at the meeting.

Speaker View will show the person speaking.

Muting/unmuting and Showing/not showing your face (If the host gives you that option)

Desktop: Click on the microphone icon on the bottom menu to toggle muting and the “Stop/Start video” icon to toggle whether your face appears

iPad: Click on the microphone icon on the top menu to toggle muting and the “Stop/Start video” icon to toggle whether your face appears

iPhone: Click on the microphone icon on the bottom menu to toggle muting and the “Stop/Start video” icon to toggle whether your face appears

Pinning a Speaker video

Pinning a video: When everyone is unmuted, Zoom may pick up background noise and make wrong assumptions about who is actually speaking (which is why I often mute everyone.) To keep one person in your speaker view, pin their video box

Desktop: Highlight the person's video box, and from the “....” drop down, choose “Pin video.” You can still switch to Gallery but until you Unpin that person (same menu), they will always be the “speaker” in speaker view.

iPad: In speaker view, tap the box you wish to be the speaker from the gallery at the bottom of the screen.

iPhone: Double tap in the video box you wish to pin, double tap again to unpin.

Advanced:

1. You can change what appears as your name in your video box:

Desktop: highlight your video box, and choose the “....” menu

iPhone: Go to Participants menu on the bottom of the screen, tap on your name, and choose “rename”

iPad: Go to Participants menu on the bottom of the screen, tap on your name, and choose “rename”

2. To set a picture to appear when you turn off the video instead of a box with your initials, you need a Zoom account (which is free). In your account, edit your profile and upload the photo of your choice.

3. Raising your hand, chat, answering yes/no, thumbs up, applause, and other feedback:

Desktop: Chat is in the bottom menu, thumbs up and applause are under reactions in bottom menu, and raised hand and other feedback are in the participants menu.

iPad: Choose Participants menu at top. Chat and options for feedback are at the bottom of the list of participants

iPhone: Chat, applause, and thumbs up icons are under the “More” menu at the bottom. To raise your hand, go to the Participants menu at the bottom of the main screen. (You can close the box once your hand is raised. Your raised hand will appear on the host's screen.)



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April, 2020 Newsletter