First Congo at a Glance: Member in Discernment, Searainya Bond-Frojen

- Communications and media ministry involved authoring the church blog, joining Jen in "Not-a-Podcast" on Thursday evenings, and serving on Church Council.
- It was beautiful to be able to provide a wide variety of ways to engage in community during a year of pandemic.
- Over the next year, I hope to continue offering blog posts from time to time, and I will serve as Council Chair

First Congo at a Glance:

Henri Nouwen wrote, "Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not, 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed, but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers."

Our group has flourished in the past year, and while most of us would say we *prefer* in-person gatherings to Zoom, Zoom has surprised us all with its effectiveness at building connections.

In Person

Momentum

Expand relationships

First Congo at a Glance: Council's Work, Patrick O'Dell, 2020 chair

Council led the Congregation through a year of ongoing pandemic, wildfires, community advocacy, sanctuary renovation and reimagined worship by serving as the leadership and decision making body in service to the First Congregational UCC community.

We saw God in one another as we navigated opportunities and challenges

Next Year - continued anti-racism work, advocacy for the unhoused, questioning structures of supremacy in our community, and "back to normal?" The Church had received a bequest from Myles Criss to abate the asbestos in the sanctuary. The Council decided that this time of COVID when the Church was closed was a perfect time to take on the abatement and renovate the Sanctuary.

This group consisted of church members of different ages and backgrounds. Group members worked closely together, bringing in their unique perspectives, and a new picture for the Sanctuary emerged that none of us individually would have come up.

First Congo at a Glance: Sanctuary Renovation, Rev. Walter Balk







 The work of the Sanctuary Renovation Committee is complete!
 The work of the Sanctuary Renovation Committee needs to be celebrated!

First Congo at a Glance: Care, Rev. Carline Zaworski

Provide support, education, and presence for parishioners around health-related concerns. As an ordained UCC minister I also assist the Pastors with various aspects of Pastoral Care, help to support the Caring Circle in their ministry, and assist with other aspects of our communal faith life.

Despite the Pandemic I have been blessed to minister with you as many of you have continued to ask for and receive my offers of care. I receive from you, as well, for it is in giving that we receive and wherever two or three are gathered, Jesus meets us. I always sense the presence of God as we meet, wherever we meet.

> Apart, but together ...

First Congo at a Glance: The Caring Circle, Rev. Caroline Zaworski, R.N.

The Caring Circle has a longstanding tradition within the Congregation. Its function has been to support members who feel isolated or struggle with illness and crisis situations. Rev. Caroline Zaworski, our parish nurse, has provided support around health questions.

In its outreach and caring the group embodied the presence of God. The presence of Caring Circle members with members of our Church has been inspiring in the midst of the pandemic.



- Continue connecting with members by phone, email, cards, meals and, if possible, in person
- Expand the understanding of the ministry of the Caring Circle within the Congregation: Its ministry does not only happen in crisis situations, but is there to enhance the fabric of connections between members of our community
- Explore the option of having a group of Caring Circle members who are able to be a welcoming person-centered presence on Sunday morning.

First Congo at a Glance: Facilities Care, Sally Robertson

 Unique and special places bring people together to be a community, The building and grounds that provide a special place for First Congregational UCC need tending.

Members of the Trustees use their talents to ensure that there is a special place for the growing of the community. Volunteers taking care of downed tree putting up wall padding in Gatton Hall, cleaning stoves, raking leaves, cleaning gutters, moving furniture, and so much more.

More members to lighten the load,
 Evaluate the plantings around the grounds.

Continue the general maintenance of the building and grounds

Upgrade air supply filters to reduce risk from potential SARS-Cov-2 and variant aerosol

First Congo at a Glance: Racial Justice Ken Crouse →Bonds were for

The Race Matters Ministry Circle strives to promote the cause of racial justice within our church through education, witness and direct action. We participate in the activities of local and state groups doing social justice work in areas such as immigration, policing, diversity and inclusion, and white supremacy. We provide opportunities for members of the congregation to learn about critical race-related issues by giving presentations, offering study groups and participating in direct actions.

Bonds were formed that opened space for sharing spiritual insights and motivating faithful justice responses.

In the next year we hope to continue working with our partners within the UCC and other churches, increase our connections with local organizations serving people of color, and advocate for racial justice in Corvallis and across the state.

First Congo at a Glance: Earth Justice, LarryWeymouth>II

The Integrity of Creation (IOC) ministry circle \geq endeavors to nurture a reverence for creation and share that with others to inspire actions that lead to a more sustainable balance between humans and the natural world. Fighting runaway climate change, which is an existential threat to life on the planet as we know it, is presently our main focus. The group also provides ongoing monitoring of church facilities energy usage and materials recycling to identify the effectiveness of conservation measures and environmental education efforts. In early June, a multifaith delegation of 200 people, with support from their local faith organizations including FCUCC, gathered in prayerful protest in northern Minnesota to protect God's life-giving water and air from fossil fuels pollution.

We have hope that because of our actions the congregation and city will continue to transition away from fossil-fuel dependency and support climate justice.



First Congo at a Glance: Justice for the Poor, Aleita Hass-Holcombe As a peace advocate, we believe what Oscar Romero said. "If you want Peace, work for justice!"
 Focusing on our houseless neighbors is a justice issue we can tackle.

>As our work has transitioned from its first encounters, there is no doubt that God has been with us in every step. Seeing the miracle of Safe Camp and knowing that it is continuing to be an example of justice reinforces God's presence in our work.

>Advocacy & Activism

No Sweeps Sanctioned Camping More partnerships for micro shelters Positive city/county movement on HOPE recommendations

First Congo at a Glance: Justice for All, Mike Huntington

Our country's health care system is in crisis. It allows needless suffering, cost, and death. We organize with other faith-based groups to heal our healthcare system, advance social justice, and honor the teachings of our faiths.

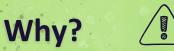
We see God at work as we meet and collaborate with so many kind and generous people in our church, church conference, and beyond, fighting passionately for health care justice. They are God's hands and feet at work.
Cooperate with five more UCC congregations and two other UCC conferences to share the knowledge and join in the fight for health care justice.



First Congo at a Glance: Wisdom & Spirit Group, Rev. Caroline Zaworski Wisdom and Spirit is the name chosen by a group of older women in the congregation who began meeting to explore spirituality as we age—the unique gifts that the insights of age bring to one's spiritual life.

> We have seen God working in each other's lives as we have met and in the communications between meetings, as we have shared fears and losses and celebrations and found the Spirit moving in our midst as we were vulnerable with each other.

The group is trying to meet twice a month in person, although with the current COVID surge this will continue to be flexible. The group is open to anyone who considers themselves to be "older" (of any gender identity or none) who seeks to deepen their spiritual life amid a small community of seekers.



To unite the women of this church in Christian fellowship

- To be in relationship with each other and create a community of love and support
- To seek understanding of God's guidance in all areas of human life and to participate in the work of the entire church as it serves the community, nation, and the wider world in the spirit of Christ



First Congo at a Glance: Women's Fellowship, Ann Hawkins