

# PASTOR'S CORNER

## THREE YEARS!!

It has been my honor to be your pastor these last three years. Together we have faced the challenges of 'church' in 21st-century America. We have endured 14 months of Covid-19: on-line services, Zoom meetings, masks, no joyous singing (only joyful music) and social distancing. We are getting closer to being able to resume most activities, but not yet.

We are a small church in a small town. Our attendance is not what I would like it to be.

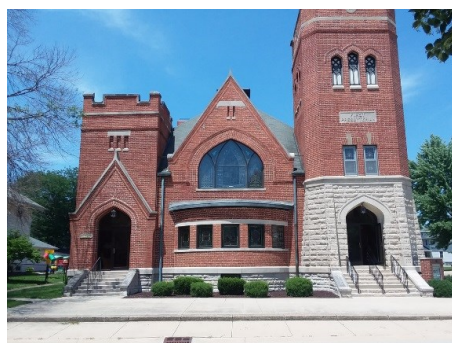
We have a large heart. We love one another. We love our neighbor. We are active in our community. We are living into our commitment to be a Mathew 25 church.

We are worshiping in-person, on-line, or by phone here. The Spirit is alive here.

God's will is being done here. We will be here as long as God wills it.

Peace and Grace,

Pastor Ray Lantz



## Continued from front page

Fightings and fears, within, without; O Lamb of God, I come, I come." That is very much my stance: Despite my doubts, my fears, my conflicts, and the journey of loss that I have experienced, I still come, I still come. My agnostic Christian mystic identity allows me to invite people both in the church and out of the church under the same tent. Interestingly enough, I find that my language is an equal opportunity offender. In the church I have to explain my agnostic element. Out of the church I have to explain my Christian element. For my own mental, spiritual and physical health, I have learned how to

provide a religious and spiritual presence to both communities, much like a chaplain moving from one hospital room to another. But I grieve that I have not been able to bring these two worlds together.

**PNS: How might this chaplaincy approach help church leaders navigate this grief or tension as they minister into what is an unknown future?**

HERON: This may be a reflection of being in the Pacific Northwest, but I believe the gap between the articulated faith of our churches and the emerging spiritualities of our neighbors is so wide that navigating without disruption is a near impossibility. Most of our churches are experiencing annual declines, which puts pressure on church leadership and clergy. I largely encourage our pastors to take a chaplain approach by saying to congregations discerning their future, "I can comfort you and take care of you for as long as you are here (a hospice-like approach) or I can walk with you on a journey of transformation. But it is important that the decision is yours. One road will lead to your eventual closure: the other to disruption and a radical re-orientation. Both can be faithful decisions." What I don't want is our pastors to internalize that tension because it leads to depression, anxiety, burnout, health problems and spiritual suffering. And the church remains paralyzed.



## Pastor's Office Hours:

Monday: Out all day  
Tuesday: 9am to Noon  
1pm to 3pm  
Wednesday: 9am to Noon  
1pm to 3pm  
Thursday: 10am to Noon  
by appointment.  
Friday: By appointment

## Weekly Scheduled Appointments:

Tuesday: Noon-1pm—Lions Club (when in session)  
Wednesday: 9:45-10:15 Head Start Reading (when in Session)  
Thursday: 8-9:30-GC Pastor's

Group  
1st Thursday of Month: Noon to 1-Chamber of Commerce

## Meladee's Office Hours:

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

# PRESBYTIDINGS

## May 2021

Pastor Ray Lantz



Worship: 10:30 a.m.

This Newsletter is a publication of First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City IL.

Website: [www.firstpresbygibson.org](http://www.firstpresbygibson.org)

Meladee Ferguson: Administrative Assistant

Mary Clow: Ministry Coordinator

Food for Thought from a Presbyterian Leader:

After seeing the Gallup Poll study, which came out during Holy Week, that for the first time church membership in the U.S. has declined to less than half the population, Presbyterian News Service reached out to the Rev. Brian Heron for some insight. As Presbyter for Vision and Mission in the Presbytery of the Cascades, located in Portland, Oregon, Heron lives and works in one of the least religious cities in the nation.

**Presbyterian News Service:**

**So, what are you seeing and learning in what many refer to as the unofficial capital in the U.S. for the spiritual, but not religious?**

Heron: I say this with some humility, but I have heard it enough to believe that there might be some truth to it. What is happening in Cascades and in the Pacific Northwest may be a foreshadowing of things to come for the rest of the nation. In 2020, we experienced a full 6% loss in membership in the presbytery and 60 of our 95 congregations are now under 100 members. At the same time, we are in the middle of a strategic planning process and one of the statistics that is driving our decisions is that our mission giving from churches (apart from per capita) has dropped 68% over the last 17 years, adjusted for inflation. But while all of that is sobering news, we also know that membership statistics and mission giving don't capture the whole story. Most of our churches now have a significant percentage of non-member participants and local mission initiatives are growing at a stunning rate.

If we in Cascades have a message for the wider church, it is this:

Our membership model must change. Christian communities and mission continue to be important and attractive, but membership appears to be going the way of the phone booth.

**PNS: How do you see the pastor's role changing for churches in the future — and how does that relate to those church leaders feeling great anxiety and also to those who are incredibly excited about potential changes in the church?**

HERON: This is the most difficult question to answer as anyone who is honest with themselves doesn't really know what is around the ecclesiastical corner. This is truly pilgrimage time when God lays out only enough of the picture to keep us moving forward, but not enough to truly project and plan. I believe that whatever is happening is actually happening at the molecular level. In other words, the anxiety and wondering by some — and the near giddy anticipation of others — is telling us something. Some are intuitively feeling that a world is ending along with their place in it; others are feeling that a new world is opening up, giving them new opportunities. This is a time of deep discernment and radical trust. My message to pastors and churches is largely this: "Trust what God is doing in you personally. The institution will adapt to what God wants, not the other way around."

**PNS: You've made the observation that church leaders often minister in ways to avoid people leaving the church — and that ironi-**

**cally this drives away those who are ready to have deeper conversations about their faith and the church. What do you think is at the source of this dynamic?**

HERON: I think the spiritual needs of our communities have become so diverse that pastors are in the position where to preach to one group almost excludes another group, by definition. We choose churches that reinforce our religious and spiritual worldview. Where it gets tricky is when a church says it wants to grow and the pastor finds herself in the impossible situation of reinforcing the beliefs of the faithful in the pew while trying to reach the "unchurched, spiritual, but not religious, ethnically diverse" community around the church. It is a near-impossible task, and while the pastor attempts to hold onto one group, another group quietly slips away. I personally made peace with this impossibility years ago as I adopted a chaplain's approach to my work. When I work with churches, I adopt the language and assumptions at the core of who they are. When I meet with the "spiritual, but not religious" groups in our community, people know me as that "agnostic Christian mystic biker-guy." The latter is closer to my authentic identity and represents my evolution as a "person of the cloth."

**PNS: How can you be "agnostic" and still be a church leader?**

HERON: When I get this question in the church I remind them that we have an agnostic thread in our hymns: "Just as I am, though tossed about; With many a conflict, many a doubt;

Continued on back page . . .



# May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2 10:30 a.m. Worship</p> <p><b>I John 4:7-21</b></p>	3	4	5	6	7	<p>1 Recycle 8</p>
<p>9 10:30 a.m. Worship</p> <p><b>Happy Mother's Day Communion</b></p> <p><b>I John 5:1-6</b></p>	10	11	12	13	14	<p>15 Recycle</p>
<p>16 10:30 a.m. Worship</p> <p><b>I John 5:9-13</b></p>	17	18	19	20	21	<p>22  FPC to work at Food Pantry</p>
<p>23 10:30 a.m. Worship</p> <p><b>Acts 2:1-21</b></p>	24	25	26	27	28	29
<p>30 10:30 a.m. Worship Communion</p> <p><b>Romans 8:12-17</b></p>	<p>31 Memorial Day— Church office closed</p>			<p>5:30 Session</p>		

Pastor Ray will be preaching on the scripture listed in bold on each Sunday.

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCH . . .

**Please note:** The previous week’s sermon will broadcast at 7:45 a.m. every Sunday morning on WGCY.

**Please note:** Online Live Sunday Services will be available on our Facebook Page noted below:

First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City

[https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=142499619134911&ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=142499619134911&ref=br_rs)

**Meladee’s new working hours:** Meladee will be in the church office from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please make note of these new church office working hours. Pastor Ray’s hours will remain the same.

**New Email Addresses:** As part of the hardware and software upgrade for our church’s technology, there are now new email addresses as noted below:

Pastor Ray:  
[Ray@firstpresbygibson.org](mailto:Ray@firstpresbygibson.org)  
Meladee  
[Office@firstpresbygibson.org](mailto:Office@firstpresbygibson.org).

*There are always flowers for those who want to see them.*  
*Henri Matisse*

## GIBSON CITY COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS AVAILABLE

The First Presbyterian Church in partnership with Railside Golf Course will be sponsoring a Community Garden at the Railside Golf Course.

Individual plots will be available for \$10 per season with water included at no charge. The plots are being cleared and prepped for planting.

If you are interested in reserving a plot, please call the First Presbyterian Church at 217-784-5422 or email [Office@firstpresbygibson.org](mailto:Office@firstpresbygibson.org).

Once your request is approved, you will be given a gift card for \$20 to help you purchase seeds or plants to start your garden.

Please note as the First Presbyterian Church is managing this program, we ask that you not contact the Railside Golf Course with questions regarding this program.



BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES		K. P. Duty and Charlie Schultz	
May		May: Mary Jane Roth	
June		June: Trudy Lantz	
02: Emma Swanson			Communion Set-Up
07: Jesse Swanson			May 9: Sharla Williams
09: Trudy Lantz			June 20: Mary Jane Roth
10: Ruth McClure		Second Sunday Offering	
14: Mary Jane Roth		May 9: Because of Cody	
14: Michele Schultz		June 13: Hanley School Supplies	
17: Ray Lantz			Flower Vases to CM
20: Mac and Ruth McClure			May: Sharla Williams
22: John Davis		Ushers	June: Mary Jane Roth
26: Ron and Mary Clow		May: Dale Ashmore and Jean Williams	
		June: Gene & Mary J Roth	
			Communion Servers
		May 9: Rick & Anneliese Kerchenfaut	
		May 30: Ron & Mary Clow	
		June 20: Danny Heustis	





**Pastor Lantz and FPC Elders:** Your kindness is special and so are you! We cannot thank you enough for your generous gift! The last 12 months have been difficult and with the cost of gloves, we struggle to keep up our stock of essential P.P.E. Because of your gift, we were able to purchase TWO CASES (2,000 gloves) and a case of masks! God Bless, Nicole Miller, Pioletti's Spaghetti



Mary Clow visited with Vickie Craig at her home where she provides daycare services. Vickie wanted everyone in the congregation to know how grateful she was for the donation from our church and sends a big THANK YOU!

Thank you for your thoughtfulness. The Hair Hutch is no longer in business and I am retired. I am returning your check so you can help someone else. This is a wonderful gesture you are doing for our community! Hair Hutch, Curley McNutt

Marla Kuder, a childcare provider, wishes to thank everyone for their gifts from Missions.

I can't express the surprise when I received your generous gift. Thank you so much for including my shop in your Mission of generosity. The gift will go a long way in keeping my customers safe from Covid. Thank you. Bonnie Farmer, Bonnie's Home Salon

Thank you again and again. I feel so blessed for the support you have shown me during these trying times. I have done daycare for almost 45 years in our wonderful community and knew from day one that it was my calling from God. Thank you does not seem like a big enough word. Truly blessed, Jimmie Lange

Thank you so much to all the members of the First Presbyterian Church. Your thoughtfulness for our local community during these hard times is extremely appreciated. I am so grateful to be part of such a wonderful community. The donation will come in very useful for some supplies we need to keep Covid safe! Thanks again. Katie Garrett, owner of Emerald Shears Salon and Tanning

Dear Presbyterian Church, Thank you for the large donation. This will help us pay for our upcoming canoe Tripat Boundary Waters. This donation will help guide more young men to have the opportunity to help others on their journey to become Eagle Scouts. We appreciate your support in helping us grow our finances. Boy Scouts: Mason Donovan, Mitchel Quinley, Phillip Littell, Bryce Hewitt, Will Mussman, Max Moody, and Conor Ray

Greetings First Presbyterian Church, The Girl Scouts of Troop 2548 wish to thank you for the generous donation of \$ 250 (\$ 250 also went to the Brownies). We hope to use the money to improve our community and to help those in need. Thank you once again and God Bless, Lily, Ella, Molly, Katelynne, and Lori



I would like to extend a sincere Thank You for your gift. I am not sure at this time what to enhance in my playground for the kids, or possibly some new education tools. Whatever I decide I will pass it on to you when I do. Violet, Blake, Jaxson, Calvin, and Lucy send their thanks, too. Thanks again, Donna Holt

I am returning your check. Thank you so much for thinking of me but I feel like there are more people in need of this money. I really do appreciate the thoughts and prayers from all. Thank you again! LeeAnn Ennen, Headliners Hair Styling Salon.

A very special thank you with sincere appreciation. We greatly appreciated your generous donation to help offset PPE costs. We did use it to help offset our costs and used the remainder in our fund to deliver meals free to those who need them due to Covid-19. Should anyone in your congregation find themselves quarantined and in need please contact us and we will be happy to do free contactless deliveries to them. We would also be happy to help in anyway with your upcoming celebrations in the fall. Thank you! Raymond and Trecia Goin and family at Go-in Places Catering.

We at the Speak Easy Salon are truly touched by the donation from the First Presbyterian Church. It's very heartwarming to see one of the local churches rally around the small business of our beautiful, thriving community!! Thank you and God's blessing for your LOVE!! Teresa McRae



Dear Presbyterian Church Family: Just wanted to say THANK YOU very much for the check I received in the mail from your church. I was surprised and very honored to receive the check. I will definitely be using it towards my home daycare in Gibson City. Thank you very much for thinking of the daycare providers and the job that we

do to provide care to the kids in Gibson City and surrounding communities. Thanks again for thinking of me and my business! God bless you for this most generous act of kindness! Sara Zumwalt



You made my day . . . Thanks! I am beyond thankful for your sweet unexpected gift! We so appreciate it. We bought a new chair and all new salon towels which both were overdue!. God bless, Lyndi Barnes, Thank you from Main Attraction Salon



**McCormick Tutoring Program Update:** Sharla Williams is happy to report that the McCormick tutoring Program has really taken off and is helping many students at the GCMS School District. There are 4 tutors at the Elementary school, 1 tutor at the Junior High and 1 tutor at the High School. A total of 23 students received tutoring services with 8 students at the Elementary school, 8 students at the Junior high and 7 students at the High School. Our church is grateful to have this program as an important Mission of our church.



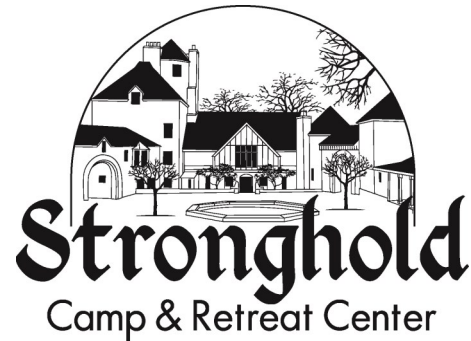
Ron Clow, Pastor Lantz and Rick Kerchanfaut strategize on the layout and tilling needed for our Community Garden.







Danny and Vonna Heustis, Tim Swanson, Mary Jane Roth (not pictured) and Pastor Ray Lantz added flowers to the Easter cross on Easter Saturday. The cross was admired by all attending services on Easter Sunday. The flowers will remain on the cross until Memorial Day and then will be replaced with flags. Thank you, Deacons



Congratulations to Pastor Lantz who was elected as the chair of the Stronghold Board. Stronghold is now a subsidiary of Blackhawk Presbytery. Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center is a year round camping and retreat center located on the Rock River in Oregon, Illinois. CONGRATULATIONS PASTOR LANTZ



Charlie & Cheryl Schultz enjoy time with their 8 month old grandson Sutton in historic downtown Paducah, Kentucky while visiting their son Jordyn and wife Jamie who lives in Benton Kentucky.



Congratulations to Nick Retherford who graduated from the Illinois State Police Academy and was assigned to District 21.



Phil & Jean Noellsch enjoyed the day with their 13 year old grandson, Ethan, as he was confirmed at St. John's Lutheran Church in Lombard, IL.



Addison Kerchenfaut and teammates. They ended their season 7-1.



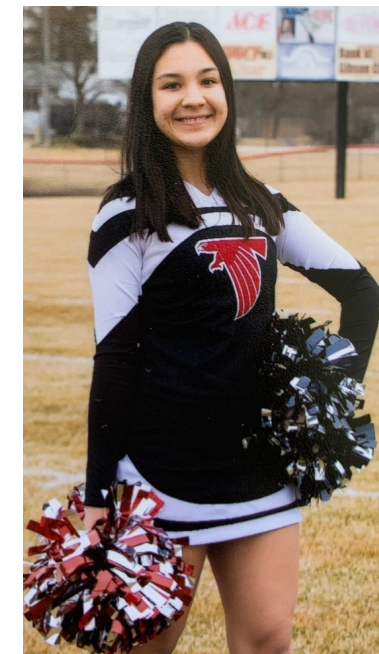
Charlie Kerchenfaut—Basketball



GCMS HS is pleased to present its 2021 Prom Court. From left, Kennedy Fanson, Sarah Koss, Emma Swanson, Karleigh Kietzman, Ethan Garard, Noah Nugent, Alex Freehill and Rylan Davis. The king and queen will be crowned at Prom on Saturday night, May 1st, at the Ford County Fairgrounds in Melvin.



Addison Kerchenfaut - Volleyball



Anneliese Kerchenfaut—Cheerleading

## OUR CHURCH FALCON FAMILY

Way to go Emma! Your church family is so proud of you. Congratulations to GCMS Senior Emma Swanson for bringing home the “Best in Sculpture” award for the Central Illinois High School Art Exhibition. The entire show can be found at [https:// ih-sae2021.artconnected.org/](https://ih-sae2021.artconnected.org/) Awesome work, Emma! You make us #Falcon proud!



## GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021





Know Your Members



Danny and Vonna  
Heustis  
Danny Heustis

I was born on September 17, 1946 to Lester and Audrey Heustis. My siblings were Larry Heustis, now deceased, John who died of polio at age 5, and Jane, now deceased. We lived in Loogootee IL which is 15 miles south-east of St. Elmo. Loogootee had a population of 60-70 then-now it is about 30.

I went to a one-person school-house in Loogootee for three years. Then I went to St. Peter, three miles south, where we had four classrooms, two bathrooms, and a gym. I went to high school in Farina, IL for four years, 1960 -1964. I studied agriculture all four years. I was in FFA all four years. I was the second person to get the Illinois State Farmer award from our high school. My brother, Larry, was the first in 1960, then me in 1964. I was enrolled at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale when I was drafted in 1967. I served in Vietnam in 1968-1969. I returned to SIU to finish my BS degree in plant science by the Spring of 1971, I married Marsha Root in September, 1970. We had a girl, Hilary in 1975, and boy, Michael in 1978. We divorced in 1997.

I worked in agricultural jobs all my life—as an FS salesman in Marshall IL; at an elevator and feed mill in Saybrook; and the last 29 years of my career I

worked at Heartland Ag in Farmer City. I retired in 2011.

I met Vonna in 1998 and got married in January of 1999. We have been happily married for 22 years.

My family attended the Lutheran (Illinois Senate) Church in Loogootee. When we moved to Saybrook, I attended the Methodist church. After Vonna and I married I joined the First Presbyterian Church in Gibson City. I have served as both an Elder and a Deacon.

I have been the mayor of Saybrook for four years and am running for another term in 2021.

Vonna Heustis

I was born on November 20, 1935 to Roy and Birdella Shull. I grew up in Gibson City. I was the youngest of ten children. My five brothers and four sisters are now all deceased.

I attended Gibson Elementary School and Drummer Township High School. During my freshman year, our girl’s basketball team was the first freshman class to win the Little Brown Jug tournament. Starting in the second grade and until I got married, I delivered newspapers for my brothers’ paper routes.

I met Phillip Robbins while working at Murphy’s Drive-In in Gibson City. We married and had three children—Russ, Anita, and Rick. Our first home was in Indiana, then we moved back to Gibson City. Phil and I built our home in Saybrook in 1953 and lived there until 1972. We moved to Fisher until Phil took early retirement, following a heart attack, in 1988. We lived in Branson MO for five years then moved back to Saybrook in 1995. Phil passed away in 1997.

I was blessed to meet Danny in 1998. We married in 1999 and have been happily married for 22 years.

Growing up, my entire immediate family were members of the

First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City. After Phil and I married, I attended the Christian Church in Saybrook. When we moved to Fisher, I became a charter member of the River Valley Church of Christ. While in Missouri, Phil and I attended the Presbyterian Church in Branson. After Danny and I married, I re-joined the First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City where I have served as an Elder and a Deacon.

I was a Cub Scout/Boy Scout den mother and an assistant troop leader for the Brownies and Girl Scouts. I worked at the grocery store in Saybrook for several years. After we moved to Fisher, I was the office manager for a small printing company in Champaign.

In the mid-1960’s I was responsible for organizing and administering one of the first polio clinics in central Illinois. I am a member of the DAR—Governor Thomas Ford Chapter, having served as chaplin for 17 years.

TWELVE COMMANDMENTS FOR SENIORS

# 1 - Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice

# 2 - In Style are the clothes that still fit.

# 3 - You don't need anger management. You need people to stop making you mad.

# 4 - Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.

# 5 - The biggest lie you tell yourself is, I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it. "

# 6 -On time is when you get there.

# 7 - Even duct tape can't fix stupid - but it sure does muffle the sound.

# 8 - It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller?

# 9 - Lately, You've noticed people your age are so much older than you.

# 10 - Growing old should have taken longer.

# 11 - Aging has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.

# 12 - You still haven't learned to act your age, and hope you never will?

And one more:

"One for the road" means going to the bathroom before you leave the house.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MISSION COMMITTEE INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH \$10,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS HAVE BEEN AWARDED TO THE FOLLOWING:		
Internal Scholarships for members		
Emma Swanson .....	\$1,000	Parkland
Nicole Schultz.....	\$1,500	Murray State in Kentucky
Mission Committee - Nursing Scholarship		
Kennedy Fanson.....	\$1,000	U of IL
Presleigh Warner.....	\$1,000	Parkland
Abigail Sizemore.....	\$1,000	Olivet Univ
Mission Committee -Trade Scholarship		
Hailey Ferguson.....	\$1,000	Paul Mitchell Cosmetology
McCormick Tutoring – General Scholarship		
Emma Swanson.....	\$1,000	Parkland
Nathan Kallal.....	\$1,000	Iowa State
Nicole Schultz.....	\$ 500	Murray State in Kentucky
Mission Committee -Saybrook Senior Scholarship – not part of GCMS		
Awarded by Danny and Vonna Heustis		
Cody Windel	\$1,000	
MISSION COMMITTEE APPROVAL 4-29-21		
Starting Balance approved 3-25-21.....	\$44,500.00	
Credit for 2 returned Daycare checks.....	- \$ 1,000.00	
(Osiris Johnson Daycare, Laurie Hoelscher Daycare)		
Credit for 7 returned Beauty Salon checks.....	- \$ 3,500.00	
(Al’s Barber, Shanna’s Hair Salon, Hair Hutch, Hot Heads, Uptowne Hair Design, Headliners, and Linda Moody Hairdresser)		
Credit for American Legion dues not needed.....	-\$ 350.00	
Subtotal after credits.....	\$39,650.00	
GCMS FFA.....	\$ 500.00	
Paxton Animal Clinic—Ford County Animal Control .....	\$ 850.00	
2021 Harvest Fest Sponsorship - Gold Membership.....	\$ 1,000.00	
Heifer International Feed Your Faith – 1 Heifer.....	\$ 500.00	
Community Garden additional if needed – Gift Cards .....	\$ 1,000.00	
Community Garden Rent.....	\$ 500.00	
Two additional nursing college scholarships.....	\$ 2,000.00	
Iroquois West Upper Elementary Library in honor of Sharla Williams.....	\$ 1,000.00	
GC Youth Boys Baseball Ages 5 to 14.....	\$ 2,500.00	
GC Youth Girls Softball Ages 5 to 14.....	\$ 2,500.00	
GC Youth Coed Soccer Ages 3 to 14.....	\$ 2,500.00	
GC Youth Football/Cheerleading Ages 5 to 14.....	\$ 2,500.00	
GC Youth Wrestling Ages 5 to 14.....	\$ 2,500.00	
Subtotal...April.....	\$ 19,850.00	
Total to Date 2021.....	\$ 59,500.00	