

**Small Talk – September 1 2021**  
**By Michael Small**

On this first day of September, the signs of fall are in the air. Have you noticed? Some leaves are already beginning to change color. Cooler days, colder and clear nights, some rain (though too little), teachers, administrators, staff, and children are getting ready to go back to in-person school, hopefully safely with thought, planning, and care! Even tomorrow night, the Big-Ten (actually there are fourteen teams, not ten – I guess they are not so good at math) season kicks off when the University of Minnesota Gophers plays the #4 Ohio State Buckeyes at home. Fall is rapidly approaching.

President Biden announces the safe removal of most Americans and many other people from Afghanistan as he declares America's twenty-year involvement in the war in Afghanistan is over – though the conflict/war will continue to evolve. May we pray for and work for an ultimate peaceful transition for this war-torn land. We especially pray for the dignity and protection of all people – especially the women and girls throughout Afghanistan who have been lifted up for the past twenty years. Hopefully those twenty years of elevating the role of girls and women will plant the seeds that make the difference. Women of the world are a healthy and powerful force that make transformative change possible. There will be struggle, pain, and hurt – but may the good prevail.

The next challenge for Americans is, will we open our hearts to the those who left Afghanistan with almost nothing but the clothes on their backs? Will we open our doors by inviting those from Afghanistan to become the newest vibrant and healthy thread in the multi-colored tapestry of these United States of America. By bringing those who have fled a war zone into our nation – we will be made better and a “more perfect union”! For so many who have sacrificed so much, may we too sacrifice that we all can be made whole, (holy) the people we are called to be.

As our involvement in Afghanistan transitions, there are other battle fronts on the near horizon that are, in part, the result of unattended climate change. The horrific forces of Hurricane Ida have wreaked havoc in the south with destructive winds and excessive rain. Heat and humidity, without electricity have created a nightmare for those simply trying to make it through the day. For many the damage has been catastrophic, much like a war. The United Church of Christ has established an emergency fund **Severe Storms 2021**. Gifts may be made to this fund by going directly to [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org), or giving designated funds to Community Church of Walker – UCC. Flooding and devastating fires sweep through the nation, the world, from the north and the south, to the east and west. Lives are threatened and changed in almost and instant. In these late days of summer, it feels like we are at war with mother nature.

Added to the above challenges and tragedies is the ongoing pandemic and the rise of infections in Cass County along with the nation. Positivity rate is at 16% (prefer to be at 5% or less) and those with at least one vaccination dosage in Cass are at only 48.8%. We are still in the middle of a pandemic, it is not over, yet!

In these times of hardship – what are we to do? Love one another and may all our actions and interactions be loving toward the other and self. Too many in Cass County have not been vaccinated. Let's encourage each other and love each other into vaccination for the sake of our children and each other.

For those who have the resources, share those resources for those who are in need and find ways to promote and fund refugee resettlement programs. Volunteer this month, in helping to staff the Walker Area Food Shelf. Email [commchurchucc@arvig.net](mailto:commchurchucc@arvig.net) or call the church (218.547.1093) to volunteer for a Tuesday shift at the Walker Area Food Shelf.

Dickens wrote, "These are the best of times and the worst of times"! May we make these times better, kinder, and more loving for those we encounter and for those who are in a need of a helping hand.

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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