

Congregational Comments

Vol. 22 No 4: April 2017

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Office Hours: Mon. –Thursday, 8:00-4:30

Worship and Sunday School Times

9:00 am - Traditional Worship Service

9:15-10:15 am Sunday School

10:00 am - Fellowship Hour

11:00 am - Contemporary Worship
Service

11:15-11:40 am Sunday School



Our Mission is to worship God,
Welcome all who seek God, and
Express our faith in our actions.



Pastor Ryan Travis

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends in Christ:

Wow! It has been a fast – and busy – first month ministering with you. We've had joys (the baptism of Hollyn Wegman) and sorrows (the passing of Pastor Harold Harmison). We've applied the ashes of mourning during the start of Lent, and celebrated the power of Christ and his victory in confirmation class and the Lord's Supper. And we've only begun!

I've greatly enjoyed getting to know you, and I am starting to remember names apart from the Sunday morning name tags, though I still appreciate your wearing them and allowing me to cheat a bit, at least for a little while longer. I have found the people of First to be faithful, caring believers who are eager to offer encouragement and kindness. Thank you.

More people than I can count have asked if there's anything they can do for me, and in case you have the same question, I am going to say that, yes, I do need something – your prayers. Although all of us know that prayer is of primary importance, it's one of those things that we can allow to become an afterthought. When crisis hits, prayer is our natural response, but in day-to-day activity, we often overlook prayer. We can rush right through something, never once pausing to ask for God's blessing or the knowledge of God's will. This can be especially true in ministry. You'd think that our programs, plans, and ideas would be the first thing we'd lift up to the throne of God to make sure that we're on the right track. Granted, sometimes we do but certainly not often enough. I don't say this as a criticism of First Church – this is an issue that vexes the entire Body of Christ. Every believer is affected.

I ask that you pray that God will give me insight into how he wants me to lead. Pray for God's protection, that I would remain strong in the faith. Pray that God would bless the words of my sermons, so they would be used to impact human hearts. Pray for my family and for circumstances related to my move and relocation, that I might focus even more intently on the ministry work at hand. Pray that I'll sense when an idea or plan is good for our church or whether a different course should be taken. And, most importantly, pray that my joy and

love for the Lord will increase, that I might abundantly share it with you and our community.

In return, I pledge to continue praying for you – that the Holy Spirit would enlighten your hearts and draw out your spiritual gifts to be used for God’s service. I pray for the Lord to comfort you when you mourn and propel you forward when you are rejoicing. I pray that you will come to know Christ more intimately with each passing day and that you’ll be sensitive to the moving of God’s Spirit in your life and in the world. I pray that you will be a lamp on a stand and a shining city on a hill, that others would see your deep faith and be drawn to our worshipping community and a relationship with God.

Remember, praying for your pastor – and for one another – is the most helpful and important thing you can do to grow our ministry and increase our devotion to Christ.





**April 1 Men's Plus Breakfast
(Everyone Invited, Including Ladies)
Breakfast at 7:00 am and Program to Follow**

Charles Zweck will Present a Short Program on Computers and then open it up to questions. Please bring your questions on computers, software and other electronic devices. We may not be able to answer all your questions, but we will plan to have people who can answer your questions at later meetings.

Please let Bill Huebner or the church office if you would like to attend.



BIBLE STUDY– SECOND SERVICE

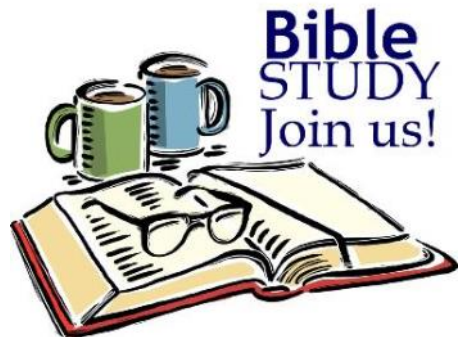
The "Still Speaking" Bible Study meets on Sunday from 10-11am in the room across from the boiler room. In the past we have used materials from the UCC's Still Speaking Writers. Currently we are studying Bad Girls of the Bible, by Barbara J. Essex. Join us and learn more about Eve, Lot's Wife, Delilah, Jezebel, and other women of questionable virtue.

BIBLE STUDY— FIRST SERVICE

First service Bible Study meets from 10:30 to 11:30 in the Choir room. We are presently using a bible study guide called "The Cross". By Jin Stott. This is a 13 week course getting the most out of the Cross.

We have studied a wide variety subjects from books of the Bible to various tropical studies. We have also covered a few books like "Autobiography of GOD" and others.

We would like to invite anyone that is interest in learning more about Christianity to join us next Sunday.



FFDO

First Friday Dinner Out for April will be on April 7 at the Main Hanger. Please let Sandy know if you can join us by emailing sharmison2002@yahoo.com or calling 877-4775. Thanks.

Sandy Harmison

PROPERTY WORK DAY

Property will have a Spring work day on Saturday, April 22nd from 8 am until noon. We will be trimming bushes, edging walkways, cutting weeds and other miscellaneous projects.





SAVE THE DATES for VBS 2017 at First Church! It is time to start thinking and praying about your involvement in this year's VBS program. It promises to be another action-packed, fun-filled week. Plans are taking shape, but we are looking for YOU to help us make it another successful year. Serving as director again this year is Marsha Mower. We have a few people that have already committed to join us, but will need lots of additional help to make this a wonderful experience for all involved. As we have the past few years, we want to make this a church-wide endeavor, involving as many people and ministries as possible. We are committed to reaching out to children in our church family and the community. So, don't miss out on this opportunity to be involved!

Our theme is *MAKER FUN FACTORY – Created by GOD – Built for a Purpose*. We will meet Decker, Tina, Bubba, Skyler and Abbee as they help us with our daily Bible Point, Story and Key Verse. We will have a week full of jaw-dropping experiences that will spark our imaginations. Kids (and adults) will discover they're lovingly crafted by God, experiencing God in new and wildly creative ways! Our mission project, through Operation Kid-to-Kid, will help bring clean water to families in remote villages in Peru.

The dates are Sunday, July 23 – Thursday, July 27 from 6:00-8:30, with the preschool children having the option of leaving at 8:05 and dinner available for the volunteers at 5:15.

Areas of need include: Adult Leaders and Assistants for Bible Discovery, KidVid Cinema, Imagination Station, Snack Factory, Game Makers, Spotlight VBS (videographer/photographer), Sound Wave Sing & Play Rock (opening), Funshop Finale and Tinker Tots Preschool; Crew Leaders and Assistants to shuttle the children through the events each evening; Registration; Decorations; possibly Child Care; Volunteer/Staff Meals and sound/digital projection tech. We will need help with set-up before and take-down after. Those children who complete 6th grade this school year are invited to join us as Assistant Crew Leaders. We also have "staff spots" for mature and responsible Jr/Sr High youth to assist in the various areas.

Please let us know as soon as possible where you will help. THANKS! Marsha Mower

Order Your Easter Flowers

Complete this form and remit with payment in the offering plate or to the church office. **THE DEADLINE TO ORDER IS APRIL 2ND.**

Please pick up your flower after Easter service.



- I would like to order # _____ lilies @ \$12.00/ea.
- I would like to order # _____ tulips @ \$12.00/ea.
- I would like to order # _____ daffodils @ \$12.00/ea.
- I would like to order # _____ hyacinths @ \$12.00/ea.
- In lieu of flowers, I would like my donation made to the Memorial Fund.
- In lieu of flowers, I would like my donation made to the Scholarship Fund.

Your Name: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Memorial of: _____

Questions? Call Shirley Kuhn at 468-2052 or Peggy at 877-2249.

LOGOS YOUTH NEWS

Thank you to the congregation for donating to our project to support the Oasis Day Center! On March 11th, Christina Huckile, James Huckile, Grace Stanley and I, delivered a car load of your donations to them. We were given a tour of the facility by the Associate Director, Mary. Every item will be used as they have a regular crowd of people who have no place to call home and others who need a little extra help. The facility is open day from 7am to 5 pm usually serving donuts, cereal or any other donated items. There are showers, lockers, and laundry services. Most clients walk over to the Good Samaritan Inn for a hot noon meal, and Oasis tries to provide some 4:00pm meals throughout the week. At closing time, clients can sleep at the Salvation Army or the Water Street Mission....all dependent on random drug testing and breathalyzers. Many clients walk to the Northeast Community Fund for clothing, coats, and food. What an eye opening tour! God calls us to care and provide for others food, clothing, shelter....merely the basics.....whenever we can. If you designate a portion of your weekly offering towards Outreach, a portion of those funds go to many of these organizations on a quarterly basis. God Bless all of these fellow Decatur residents trying to get by and the organizations serving them and all of you supporting them!

Carol Robertson

CHILDREN'S NEWS

Mark your calendar for Palm Sunday, April 9th, and join us for our Palm Processional during both services as we remember the Praises to Jesus as he arrived in Jerusalem just days before he was crucified. Palm branches represented peace and victory and were waved along the streets and placed on the ground before Jesus. We will gather in the Fellowship Hall at 8:55 and line up to come into the sanctuary during the opening hymn. At 10:15 please join us between services for our annual Easter Egg Hunt. Alex and Angie Miller have agreed to help host this fun event for us! Get your cameras ready!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
2 Communion Sunday	3 Playmates Spring Break All Week	4 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	5 4:15-6:45 7:00 Choir
9 9:00 Kids Palm Processional 10:00 Easter Egg Hunt	10 5:30 Admin Meeting	11 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon	12 7:00 Choir
16 7:00 Service 8:00 Easter Breakfast 9:00 Service 11:00 Service	17 5:30 Council of Ministry Teams	18 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon	19 7:00 Choir
23	24	25 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	26 7:00 Choir
30	31		

Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7:00 Mens's Plus Breakfast
LOGOS r	6 5:45 First Fingers	7 6:00 pm FFDO Main Hangar
r	13 5:45 First Fingers 7:00 Maundy Thursday Service	14 15
r	20 1:00 Book Club 5:45 First Fingers	21 22 8:00 am Spring Work Day
r	27 5:45 First Fingers	28 29
		

HAROLD HARMISON—You Had to Know Him

By Kris Huebner DeLong

For years, each time I have tried to describe Harold Harmison to a friend, I have failed to really get at the core of the thing. I usually just find myself saying with a smile, “you just had to know him”. At his funeral, earlier this month, I found myself speechless when the pastor asked for eulogies, and I still regret it. It’s hard to put into words the impact that someone like Harold has on the world. It’s hard also, not to hear his voice saying “Oh c’mon kid! Don’t be so melodramatic! Just say what you want to say and do it quickly please. People have things to do.”

I want to say thank you, Harold.

Thank you for teaching me to cook pasta, and teaching me so many valuable lessons about life in the process. “Sauce is simple, kid. You only need a few basic ingredients and a little creativity. Throw in whatever you’ve got handy and taste a lot along the way. The best sauce has no recipe.”

Thank you for showing me how to share with abandon. There was never a limit placed on the number of unexpected dinner guests at the Harmison household. All were made to feel welcome; and regardless of how small the pot of pasta looked on the stove, it fed everyone around that table, and the nourishment was often more than just physical.

Thank you for fostering my love of reading, seeking and learning. I say fostering because that’s just what you did. My own parents introduced me to the world of books and higher learning; but when adolescence set in, and so many of your young mentees temporarily turned away from the values instilled by their parents, you were there to show us that seeking knowledge was eternally cool.

Thank you for being the anchor that served to hold me back from the precipice overlooking complete stupidity, which I so often danced wildly around. I think many of the youth you served at First Congregational may have avoided unspeakable self-inflicted tragedy, simply because we had a Body of Christ relationship with our church family. We made mistakes, yes. But then we could always come to you and hear your words of wisdom (and sarcasm) and your humble admissions of your own similar teenage stupidity. It made all the difference in the world.

There is so much more I'd like to say. But after paragraph 2, I began to feel your restless desire to interrupt me and tell me to "hurry up". And now that I have reached the sappy part, I can see you looking at the floor with a tear in one eye and telling me that it's not fair to make an old man cry. I've left out the more colorful language you might have used because, after all HH, it is a church newsletter. But, I think anyone who knew you can fill in the blanks.

And I know that anyone who knew you, will never be the same. I thank you for that, as well.



Thank you First Congregational Church for your thoughts and prayers during Harold's illness and after. The service was wonderful and the number of folks who came to pay their respects was quite a tribute to him. I cannot possibly write enough thank you cards, so please, know that my children and I are most grateful. Also, the number of cards I am still receiving warms my heart. Thanks to Bill Huebner and Clarence Elliott for ushering, to Joe Moretti for being the tech guy, to Rev. Jean Pennell for her impromptu piano playing, and to Pastors Ryan Travis and Laurie Hill for their words. I also thank Harold every night for the amazing obituary and service that he wrote some time ago. I had no idea it would be needed so soon! Your prayers are giving me the strength to continue on.

Sandy Harmison

From Your Church President.....

As we begin the 2nd quarter of 2017 at First Church, we celebrate our “transition” to the new Ministry Team model and the successful start we have enjoyed. Our Co-Leaders have been working very hard on their areas of responsibility and many, many, many of you have stepped up to volunteer for some aspect of our church work. THANK YOU to everyone for working together to further God’s work inside and outside our church building. Our Council of Ministry Teams will continue reviewing and evaluating on a monthly basis, making any needed “tweaks” as the year progresses. We will continue to “listen” with an open ear for the plans God has for us, work together to discern what God is calling us to do and be, and trust Him to lead us where He would have us go.

I’d like to take this opportunity to remind you of the goals the Administration Team and Council have set for 2017 and give you an update.

Goal No. 1 - Review our organization structure to better align with other United Church of Christ churches of our size and improve the staffing and effectiveness of our ministries.

(2017 will see a revision/consolidation of our Constitution, By-Laws and Organizational Manual that will be presented to the congregation for approval in the 4th quarter. The plan was to settle into the model in the 1st quarter and begin the rewrite in the 2nd quarter. We are on track to begin that work.)

Goal No. 2 - Develop new Outreach ministries to Decatur and the surrounding area.

(Our Outreach Ministry Team has been meeting to get a thorough understanding of our current outreach projects and/or donations. They have plans to visit all the local agencies we support in the coming months and devise a proposal for who we support and at what level.)

Goal No. 3 – *(is still “in progress,” but will be something around spiritual growth. Pastor Ryan is working on a proposal for this area.)*

Pastor Ryan Travis began his ministry with us on February 20 and has been VERY, VERY busy ever since. We had a team of folks who painted, cleaned and updated his office before his arrival. A new computer was purchased and installed, as well as a new window in his door. Many thanks to all who helped get things ready and to everyone who has assisted with the transition of pastoral leadership. God led us to Ryan and Ryan to us – we are truly blessed!

Our outdoor security system is up and running, with the automatic

door unlocking almost completed. A new computer is on order for our Office Manager, which will hopefully put to rest the many computer issues she has dealt with in her time with us. Plans are in the works to update the computer, software and projector in the balcony to enhance our worship services.

I look forward to your continued patience, prayers and support this year. GOD IS GOOD and continues to bless us with new opportunities! We have much to be thankful for and much to be in prayer about. 2017 is shaping up to be another exciting year at First Church and I look forward to continuing to serve as your president.

May God richly bless each and every one of you! Marsha Mower



Photos from Sandy Harmison

Harold at Work

FEBRUARY 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Feb 17</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$18,288.92	\$36,577.84
Budget Expense	\$17,714.72	\$35,429.44
Income	\$12,563.60	\$33,193.34
Expenses	\$18,850.80	\$32,153.70

Got a letter from my old friend Zeke t'other day. He allus did try to look out fer other folks an' he's at it again. Well sir, Zeke says:

“Dear Gramp”

“Are you ‘soft soaping’ God? “**DUZ** you **DREFT** along with the **TIDE?** **VEL**, now is the time to **CHEER** up. If you want **JOY**, the **TREND** is to **BREEZE** to church Sunday mornings.

“Too many **WOODBURY** their heads in a pillow and remain in bed, or work to make their **SPARKLE**, or take their **SWEETHEART** for a drive to the **SURF**. Maybe we ought to **DIAL** them and remind them of the **IVORY** palaces up yonder.

“This is not just a sully **BAB-O**, Worship is intended to **AD ZEST** to your **LIFEBOY**. So why not **WISK** yourself out of bed on Sunday morning, dress **SPIC AND SPAN** and **DASH** like a **COMET** to God's house? Then as you sing **PRAISE** to God, you'll get a wonderful **CLEANSER** for your soul.

“**MR CLEAN**, “Zeke, that is

REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR AND VISIT MEMBERS WHO ARE IN ASSISTANT LIVING AND NURSING HOMES

Primrose Retirement Community

Claude Young—Room 228

Keystone

Carolyn Jones—Room 216

Vonderlieth Living Center, Mt. Pulaski, IL

Alice Roach

Hickory Point Christian Village

Al Wilson—Room 202

Evergreen Place

Mary Lou Phipps— Room 208

Fair Haven Christian Home

Lois Shelton—Room 113



FOODS RESOURCE BANK GROWING PROJECT

By the Numbers



1 FRB growing project with
5 acres of corn and
9 pies auctioned in our
11th year of participation helping
30 countries around the world and
56 different programs supporting food security.
230 bushels of corn harvested per acre
in **2016** provided

\$7,598.84 to help the people of Umsning, India, to learn alternative farming methods to prevent erosion and improve depleted soil, while producing a variety of nutritious crops. They established kitchen gardens, received training on animal husbandry, and created self-help groups with community leadership with the goal of improving nutrition and producing enough food for 10-12 months of the year. These opportunities aim to increase livelihoods so they may learn to feed themselves and experience the dignity and pride in doing so.

Our guests from India last July are leaders in this program. Watch the outreach bulletin board for more information

Substitute Sunday School Teachers

NEEDED! Substitute Sunday school teachers for both services. We have a regular teacher for our grade school children during the first service and have 3 of us sharing the preschool children. Would like to have more names of people willing to teach once in awhile for 1st service. We have a regular 2nd service teacher, but need someone willing to share teaching at least one Sunday per month. Our teachers would appreciate the opportunity to be able to hear our new Pastor! Please contact Carol Robertson (413-1257) if you are willing and Thank You!



God bless you on your birthday and each day the whole year through. May all His blessings bring you joy in everything you do.

1. Norma Jean Lingenfelter
4. Michael Koyak
Elizabeth Scherer
7. Jeanette Flenner
9. Paige Tsuda
14. Betty Henry
16. Janiece Traugber
17. Sandi Pleasants
Bruce Whitney
Katie Hammon
18. Brittany Kappler
19. Joe Moretti
David Taylor
20. Bob Butts
23. David Gant
25. Megan Hartman
26. Kristin Hargrove
28. Mark Bunselmeyer
29. Logan Moster
30. Kay Janvrin

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:

And may the many blessings that have come from God above fill your hearts with all the joys of His enduring love. Happy Anniversary!

15. Patrick & Margie Malone
16. Roger & Melinda Redman



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

APRIL 2

LITURGIST: Amy Leman

FLOWERS:

COFFEE: Chuck Zweck

USHERS/GREETER: Ev Kuhn,
Marilee Gordon, Dave Carpenter,
Ellen Starace

APRIL 9

LITURGIST: Judi Carpenter

FLOWERS: Palm Branches

COFFEE: Peggy Druessel

USHERS/GREETER: Ted &
Darby Mitchell, Todd & Jenny
Wernecke

APRIL 16

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower

FLOWERS: Easter Flowers

COFFEE: No Coffee

USHERS/GREETER: Darla
Weltmer, Normal Lingerfelter, Jodi
Baldwin, Martha Crookshank

APRIL 23

LITURGIST: Melinda Redman

FLOWERS: Bill & Alice Huebner

COFFEE: Sheila Mannweiler

USHERS/GREETER: Tom &
Paula Cordts, Ellen Starace,
Marilee Gordon

APRIL 30

LITURGIST: Ellen Starace

FLOWERS: Kathy Richardson

COFFEE: Jim & Jodi Baldwin

USHERS/GREETER: Ev Kuhn,
Rob & Kathy Moore, Sandi
Pleasants

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

APRIL 2

USHER/GREETER: Mark &
Jeanette Flenner

REFRESHMENTS: Mark &
Jeanette Flenner

APRIL 9

USHER/GREETER: Wes Pietsch

REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

APRIL 16

USHER/GREETER: Shirley
Zimmerman

REFRESHMENTS: Missy
Boldizar

APRIL 23

USHER/GREETER: James
Huckile

REFRESHMENTS: Sandy
Harmison

APRIL 30

USHER/GREETER: Kathy
Richardson

REFRESHMENTS: Kathy
Richardson



