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First Congregational UCC
3465 N. MacArthur Rd.
Decatur, IL. 62526-1450

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Congregational Comments

Vol. 17 No 12: December 2012

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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

11:15-12:00 am Sunday School



*First Congregational
United Church of
Christ
"A united and
uniting church"*

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

Congregational Comments is a publication of 1st Congregational UCC, 3465 N. MacArthur Rd., Decatur, IL. 62526-1450. Published monthly, it is used to keep its members informed about programs of the church and to report news about First Church's people



Pastor Dave Taylor

Dear Members and Friends,

***O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!***

These familiar words herald the beginning of Advent. Like Lent,

Advent is a time of spiritual preparation, when Christians prepare themselves once again for the birth of Christ.

This is a season when many hearts are open, waiting, longing to hear again God’s song of love playing through their lives. In this season we remember and celebrate God who comes for everyone – both the naughty and the nice, bringing gifts of unconditional love, healing, forgiveness and new life through Jesus Christ.

Who knows what effect hearing a beautiful Christmas anthem or Christmas Praise Song sung in all its majesty, or the quiet ambience of candles being lit on Christmas Eve might have on one who is searching? Or the joy of children filled with wonder as a Children’s Message unfolds. Or the impact of simply being invited by a friend to come for an Advent or Christmas Eve service might have on someone feeling left out or forgotten by it all, or upon those who sense there must be something more?

Enclosed you’ll find a yellow invitation postcard in this newsletter as well each Advent Sunday worship bulletin. A yellow postcard you can address and mail or give to a family member, friend, co-worker, classmate or neighbor inviting them to *Come Check Us Out!* Want to email your invitation? Contact me for an e-file of our invitation postcard. Sometimes the simplest actions have the greatest effect of all.

A child is born in less-than ideal circumstances to fairly ordinary parents in a troubled, volatile time and place. It doesn’t sound so special, so unique on one level. Yet who could have known what profound impact, what life-empowering effect that birth would have on

the lives of countless others, on the life of the world? When the infant Jesus grew into adulthood he was heard to say “The Spirit blows where it will.” Through a cattle stall in Bethlehem, on hillsides in Galilee and Jerusalem, in the lives of those who remain open, waiting, longing again to hear God’s great love song, the Spirit moves still, even and especially in our troubled, volatile world.

To hear this awesome, sacred song we will need to calm our hearts, to move away from the noise, the “ultimate holiday sales” and the break-neck pace long enough to listen. It is there, waiting.

May you welcome anew
the one born in a humble manger,
Born not to keep us as we are
but born to change us,
To broaden our faith, increase our vision,
embolden our courage, to stretch our hope,
That the lion and lamb find a place together,
That there is a place at the table for everyone,
That deserts bloom with flowers.
When the promise seems beyond us,
You, O God, are born in us.
Be born in us today.

I invite you to join us for worship at First Congregational United Church of Christ during this Advent and Christmas season.

**Our Sunday worship begins at
9:00AM for our Traditional Service and
11:00AM for our Contemporary Service.**

At 10:00AM we have creative, faith growing Sunday School and Bible Study opportunities.

Also at 10:00AM discover a new friend or renew a current friendship visiting over delicious refreshments in Fellowship Hall.

Come join us join us in worship as we welcome Christ being born anew in our lives and our world.

May you experience a truly Blessed Christmas!
In Christ’s Spirit,

Pastor Dave Taylor



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. Carly Goodman
Nan Kelly
Mackenzie Kretsinger
David Walker
2. Sheila Mannweiler
3. Pamela Tucker
6. Tom Booth
Judy Sawyer
7. P. Douglas Kelly
8. Jeffrey Beck
Kelly Cantrell
Sandy Cummings
Jennie Wernecke
9. Mary Lou Phipps
Anthony Yonan
10. Wesley Bainbridge
11. Jill Robertson
13. Ashley Croxdale
14. Marilyn Cushing
Caitlin Tribout
Lynn Weltmer
15. Melissa Flies
Sally Lauer
Aaron Taylor
16. Paxton Mockaitis
17. Marilee Gordon
Andrew Hubner
18. Donna Knop
20. Jessica Hill
Korren Baltimore
23. Marie Anna Poland
24. Janet Brownfield
David Cheatham
Heather Stoa

25. Mary Yonan
26. Malinda Dicken
29. Clinton Whitrock
30. Sandy Harmison
Michael Longstreet
31. Rachel Ogden
Robert Bunselmeyer
Joe Robertson

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!*

11. Keith & Paula Carmichael
17. James & Holly Riewski
18. Wallace & Tonita Reifsteck
21. Dick & Gloria Cheatham
22. Gary & Patricia Weiss
27. Tom & Carol Cooley
29. Brian & Natalie Young
31. Clinton & Ellen Whitrock

DECEMBER

FIRST SERVICE VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 2

LITURGIST: Dee Wenneker
FLOWERS: Randy & Mary Beck
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: Darla Weltmer, Jodi Baldwin, Todd & Christina Clark

DECEMBER 9

LITURGIST: Marilee Gordon
FLOWERS:
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: Ted & Darby Mitchell, Tom & Paula Cordts

DECEMBER 16

LITURGIST: Mindy Bunselmeyer
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: Jennie Wernecke, Jodi Baldwin, Alexis Fankhauser & Susan Daley

DECEMBER 23

LITURGIST: Amy Leman
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: Joe & Carol Robertson, Mark & Jeanette Flenner

DECEMBER 23

LITURGIST: Carol Robertson
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: The Bunselmeyer Family

DECEMBER 30

LITURGIST: Judi Carpenter
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE:
USHERS/GREETER: Don & Dee Wenneker, Frank & Shelly Smith

SECOND SERVICE VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 2

USHER/GREETER: Sandy Harmison
REFRESHMENTS: Sandy Harmison

DECEMBER 9

USHER/GREETER: Mike Koyak
REFRESHMENTS: Mike Koyak

DECEMBER 16

USHER/GREETER: Bruce & Debbie Whitney
REFRESHMENTS: Bruce & Debbie Whitney

DECEMBER 23

USHER/GREETER: Betty Wheatley
REFRESHMENTS: Betty Wheatley

DECEMBER 30

USHER/GREETER:
REFRESHMENTS:



SPECIAL DECEMBER SERVICES

December 9

Sunday during worship- Come experience the spirit of Christmas through our wonderful Children's Christmas Program. Come enjoy Christmas through our children.

December 23

Sunday will be our amazing Christmas Music Services.

9:00 am will feature inspiring selections by our Adult Choir and Handbell Choir and our singing Christmas Carols

11:00 am will feature our amazing Praise Band leading us in many Christmas favorites.

Come be uplifted through the many wonderful expressions of spirit and joy in song this Christmas.

December 24

7:00 p.m., This special service is for everyone.

We'll sing favorite carols and share in lighting candles and hear the Christmas story. Join us as we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child whose Spirit continues to transform us today.

"HAVE A BLESSED CHRIST-MAS!"
FROM THE TAYLORS

Thank you for the opportunity to share our lives together in ministry and friend-ship. May the true Spirit of this Christmas sea-son...its joys, its beauty, its hopes, its abid-ing faith, bring the blessings of God's peace and love to you and yours now and always.

In Christ's Spirit,

Pastor Dave, Bobbie, Christen, Aaron



Adult Program News



Progressive Dinner

Please join us December 1 for the annual Progressive Dinner. We are changing the format slightly this year, by having only two courses, appetizers and desserts. We will begin our evening at 5:00 at the home of Peggy and Jerry Ruff (5527 N Oakland). Our hosts for desserts are Christina and Todd Clark (610 W Forsyth Parkway). Please call the church office to leave your reservations. If you have any questions, contact Alfreda Tribout.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

.Calling All Church Members!!!

You don't have to be in the choir or sing in the Praise band. In fact you don't even have to sound good.

You just need to join in.

Our Annual Christmas Caroling Extravaganza is set for Sunday, December 16, 2012

We will meet in the fellowship hall at 12:30

for instructions and route details and plan to leave church at 1:00

Watch for more details and reminders in your church bulletins.



Youth Activities

Youth Thanksgiving Baskets

PARENTS NIGHT OUT

For those who have always wanted to attend the Progressive Dinner at Church but didn't have a sitter, here is your chance. December 1st is the first Parents Night Out for the Christmas Season and the Progressive Dinner.

Or, you can go shopping. Take in a movie, or just relax and let our youth and adult advisors entertain your children for a few hours with food, games, crafts and a possibly a movie.

And, there will be a second **Parents Night Out** this year on Friday, December 14th from 5 pm to 10 pm.

Youth Annual Christmas Cookie Walk

The 10th Annual Youth Cookie Walk is set for December 23rd in the fellowship hall between services. Just in time to stock up on the most delicious goodies for Christmas entertaining.

Calling all who love to bake; the youth are looking for volunteers to help by donating as many baked goods as you would like. This is a very big event that everyone enjoys. Please let any Youth Group or Youth Ministry know what you will be bringing.

All proceeds will go toward funding the 2013 Youth Mission Trip,

CROP WALK RESULTS

Thank you to the First Congregational UCC 5 walkers and all our First Church sponsors, who supported our walkers of the Greater Decatur CROP Walk held October 7, 2012 providing \$796 to fight hunger. Of that \$796, 25% will remain locally to help Northeast Community Fund and AMELCA's food pantries and the Good Samaritan Inn. The remaining portion will be sent to Church World Service/CROP to help alleviate hunger world-wide. Our First Praise Band (7 members) was asked again to provide the Opening music prior to the walk. This was their 6th year in a row providing the opening music for the CROP WALK! They did a awesome job providing about a 1/2 hour of Praise music that was sung along with and listened to. Well done – First Praise Band members. Well done everyone!

In Christ's Spirit,
Pastor Dave Taylor



THANKSGIVING DINNER

Our church family enjoyed a great Thanksgiving dinner at the church on November 11. There was plenty of food for everyone and “too” many desserts. Thank you to Adult Program ministry for putting it on.



CONGRATULATIONS PASTOR DAVE

35 Years as a pastor



Hanging of the Green

On Nov 25, after the second service, we are asking for volunteers to assist with the "Hanging of the Greens". We need help moving the decorations from the attic to the sanctuary and also with putting up the Christmas tree and hanging the ornaments. We are enticing you by feeding soup and sandwiches beginning about 11:30 to those who can attend to give you a little extra energy. Hope we will see you then !!!!



Nativity Sets

On Dec 2 we would like to have anyone who is interested share their Nativity Sets with a display in Fellowship Hall. We will have tables set up and would like a brief printed description of who the set belongs to and any history or memories associated with the set. If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Kuhn 468-2052 or Clarence Elliott 875-1692.



Gaudy Christmas Sweater Contest

Do you have that ugly Christmas sweater hiding at the back of your closet???? Well, on Dec 16, we are having a "Gaudy Christmas Sweater Contest." Please wear it to church that morning and it could win you a pie if you are the winner. There will be one winner from each service.

Poinsettia

Christmas is almost here and the symbolic Poinsettia will soon adorn our sanctuary. You can order your flower in honor of or in memory of a loved one by using the order form in the church bulletin. The charge this year is \$10.00 each and the last date to order will be Dec 10th. If you would rather not order a Poinsettia, you may contribute to the Memorial Fund or the Scholarship Fund of First Church. If you have questions, please contact the church office at 877-2216 or Shirley Kuhn 468-2052.

Central Illinois Honor Flights

Taking our Heroes to see THEIR Memorial

Two men from First Church were on the flight on November 10-11



Claude Young with Gerry and Peggy Ruff



Don Merritt

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 5:00 Progressive Dinner 5:00-10:00 Parent's Night
2 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	3	4 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	5 4:15- 7:15 LOGOS 1st-12th grades 7:30 Choir	6 5:45 First Ringers	7	8
9 9:00 Service Children's Christmas Program	10 6:00 Worship/ Music Ministry 7:00 Super Monday	11 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	12 4:15- 7:15 LOGOS 1st-12th grades 7:30 Choir	13 5:45 First Ringers	14 5:00-10:00 Parent's Night Out	15
16 10:00-11:00 Children' Social Music Sunday 1:00 Christmas Caroling	17 7:00 Church Council	18 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	19 7:30 Choir	20	21	22
23 Youth Cookie Walk	24 7:00 Christmas Eve Service	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					