

Congregational Comments

Vol. 18 No 12: December 2013

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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.



Pastor Dave Taylor

From the Pastor

A SACRED SEASON

“Tis the season” and off we run trying to get everything done before December 25th arrives. Yet what is this season? Well, **Advent** is a time to prepare, to open our hearts to the Son of God – born in humble surroundings. A time of new beginnings in our lives and the world. And **Christmas** is a time originally intended to celebrate the birth of Christ; marked by worship, getting together with family and friends and giving gifts. A beautiful season of lights and music. Sadly, also frequently it’s marked by excess of stress, spending, traffic and guilt. **A Question:** Wouldn’t it be wonderful to help each other combine the spirit of Advent and the beauty of Christmas, to simplify a bit, to discover what God’s up to this season and be part of that? Each year we speak of hope, peace, joy and love; what if we live them? What if, with God’s help, we make this a sacred season!

Each week in worship we will remember and celebrate God’s Son coming to our lives and world as we light our Advent Candles. Live out your faith with Advent Acts. Below are some suggestions for simple ways that we can all be a part of God’s rebirth of hope, peace, joy and love in this world with the coming of the Christ Child.

Hope: Week One: Dec. 1-7.

Our Gospel lesson is Matthew 24:36-44. What one thing can you do this week that can help renew hope and lessen fear? Watch for ways God is at work restoring hope in someone’s life. **Advent Acts:** Choose one habit you’ve wanted to break, and begin breaking it; visit a home-bound member; recharge your prayer life; watch less television-spend less time on the internet; donate to a helping agency your talents, time or money; bring food for the local food pantry.

Peace: Week Two: Dec. 8-14.

Our lessons are Matthew 3:1-12. How can you live more the peace of Christ in your life? Commit an act of peacemaking, whether in your own life, the community, or far beyond. Help children to be the best they can be in a safe community. Spend time in quiet, and in prayer listening for Christ’s Spirit in you, in the world, who brings peace to all creation.

Advent Acts: Write a letter to someone from whom you've been estranged or call them; check out the ucc.org website to see what the UCC is doing for peace; pray for peace; write your elected leaders expressing your views for peace and cooperation; learn to communicate, in compassionate, non violent ways.

Joy: Week Three: Dec. 15-21.

Our Gospel lesson is Matthew 11:2-11. Where do you find joy in your life? Is it deep and satisfying or shallow and fleeting? Discover again the joy of God's love – receiving it in your life as well as sharing it with others. In the midst of shopping, planning, rushing about this week, pause and appreciate what brings you joy, whether it is Christmas lights, carols, family time – what ever. Allow yourself time to enjoy. Give a selfless act of kindness to some one in need that you may share joy with another. Advent Acts: Make a list of three simple, free things that bring you joy and try to do at least two of them this week; be a secret Santa, give up one "ought to" activity; give one less gift and write a heartfelt note instead; spend less time in stores shopping and more time with loved ones; come to worship; listen to music; Laugh.

Love: Week One: Dec. 22-24.

Our Gospel lesson is Matthew 1:18-25. What is the most loving thing you can do this week? For God's world, for those you love, for yourself? Advent Acts: Read the Christmas story in Matthew 1 or Luke 2 slowly; send a card with a note or call someone who may be alone this week; read 1 Corinthians 13; be extra patient, extra kind this week; set aside time for those you love and tell how much they mean to you; for that tough relationship-ask yourself what is the most loving thing you can do?; spend quiet time in prayer, opening your heart to receive the love of Christ in whose birth we celebrate!

Christmas Dec. 25 plus the 12 days of Christmas until Epiphany, Luke 2. **You, O God, are born in us and your world today!** "O Come let us adore Him- Christ the Lord!"

A merry and blessed Christmas to all!

Pastor Dave

Come experience God's love and light every Sunday in worship **9am Traditional** and **11am Contemporary**. Our Sunday School is first service. Come join us at **10am** in the Fellowship Hall for delicious refreshments and great fellowship! During this time check out one of 2 Bible Study groups.

Check out our great children's and youth **LOGOS** program on **Wednesdays** 4:15-7:15 pm.

Please check the Special Services listing in this newsletter.
Join us in this sacred season and invite a friend!

Join us for these
SPECIAL DECEMBER Services and Events

Dec. 7 Progressive Dinner

Dec. 15 9:00 am Children's Christmas Program.

This Sunday during worship, come experience the spirit of Christmas through **our wonderful Children's Christmas Program**. Come join us for a wonderful service as we prepare for Christ's coming!

Dec. 22 9:00 am and 11:00 am

This Sunday will be our amazing Christmas Music Services.

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

11:00 am We'll have our Contemporary Worship Service featuring the Praise Band and message and music of Advent and Christmas.

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

Dec. 22 Christmas Caroling

We'll share the spirit of Christmas and love with homebound members through song, spirit and presence. This is a double blessing - warming the hearts of others as well as your heart too. Come join us!

Dec. 24 7 pm Christmas Eve

This special service is for everyone. We'll sing favorite carols and share in lighting candles, hear the Christmas story, share Christ's Communion and there'll be something for the children. Join us as we celebrate the birth of the Christ child whose Spirit continues to transform us today. Everyone is welcome!!!

Join us this Sacred Season & invite a friend!

MERRY CHRISTMAS

From Pastor Dave and Bobbie

Bobbie, and I want to thank each of you for the opportunity to share our lives together in ministry and friend-ship. We especially thank you for the kindness you have shared with us this past year. We wish you a blessed Christmas sea-son and a happy and healthy New Year!!!

Memorial Committee

We received a THANK YOU from Olivia Wernecke for the Scholarship check awarded to her. With interest rates down we were hoping to give a larger amount but with our Church members donations in lieu of flowers we were able to fund \$560.00 to Olivia & Katie Malone.

"I would like to thank the scholarship Committee at First Congregational United Church of Christ for the gracious gift of \$280.00. This will help cover the cost of college and relieve a lot of my stress. I am so thankful for this scholarship and I am very happy to have such a loving Church family.

I will be beginning my third semester at Richland this January and will be able to put the scholarship toward the cost of my third semester. I am currently working towards my Associate in Science. I will graduate from Richland next December and will then transfer on to a University where I will be majoring in Elementary Education. Thank you again.
Sincerely, Olivia Wernecke"

The Memorial Committee certainly hopes that you will remember the Scholarship fund in' lieu of flowers this December. Thank you all for your continued donations.

Darla D. Weltmer, Chair

Playmates Preschool

The children are getting very excited about Christmas. We are talking about the special baby Jesus that was born on Christmas Day. The children are looking forward to our Christmas shopping day. We appreciate your generous donations every year so that we can provide a day for the children to purchase Christmas gifts for their families. A big thank you to Sue Bunselmeyer and Amy Leman for making all the arrangements. We will also be having a birthday party for baby Jesus on December 19th. The children will be bringing a baby gift to donate to the New Life Pregnancy Center. From all the children at Playmates, Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Children's Ministry is coordinating "Operation Christmas Child" with the filling the shoe boxes for children around the world. The children filled shoe boxes on Nov. 17. Thank you to everyone who gave items for the boxes or filled boxes on their own.



Pictures by Susan Daley

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Paula Cordts recently returned from a trip to China and she has agreed to share her experiences with us on Friday, December 13th. Her experiences involved a lot of one on one with the Chinese and she has some really terrific pictures and tales to share with us. We will meet in Fellowship Hall at 1:00 p.m. Drinks will be furnished. Please bring a finger food to share. Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to join us.

GOD'S BUSY HANDS

Recently a member of Christians In Mission came to our meeting and talked to us about their mission. His talk was very interesting and he told us that the University of Illinois had recently given them 400 bunk beds to give to those in need. However, they do not have enough bedding for these beds. In response to his talk, it was agreed that we would donate 36 of the fleece blankets that we have been working on.

Shirley Zimmerman, who attends second service, was given 100 bed covers by the Fairfield Inn in Forsyth. She felt that our group would find some way to make use of these coverlets. Since they were rather narrow, it was necessary for us to take out the hems on one side and sew two coverlets together to make them big enough for a twin bed. Several of the ladies helped to remove the seams and sewed some of them together. On Thursday afternoon, October 17th, and all day Friday, October 18th, 8 individuals met in Fellowship Hall to sew the coverlets together. Upon completion, 35 coverlets were donated to Christians In Mission.

We are currently working on making fleece blankets for the Pediatric Trauma Unit at a hospital in Minneapolis, MN. This project should result in approximately 40 blankets.

We have also donated blankets to the Cancer Center, a dialysis unit in Decatur and Baby Talk, just to name a few.

As you can see, we live up to our name of God's Busy Hands.

This group is open to anyone who may wish to join us. You do not need any special talents, just a willingness to help others.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
1 Pastoral Card Sale	2	3 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AI-anon 8:00 AA	4 4:15 - 7:15 LOGOS 7:30 Cho
8 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service	9 6:00 Worship/Music 7:00 Super Monday	10 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AI-anon 8:00 AA	11 4:15 - 7:15 LOGOS 7:30 Cho
15 Christmas Program	16 7:00 Church Council	17 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AI-anon 8:00 AA	18 4:15 - 7:15 LOGOS 7:30 Cho
22 Christmas Sunday Music	23	24 7:00 Candle Light Service	25 CHRISTMAS Church closed
29	30	31	

	Thu	Fri	Sat
15 ir	5 5:45 First Ringers	6	7 5:00 Progressive Dinner
15 ir	12 5:45 First Ringers	13 Woman's Fellowship Christmas Tea	14
15 ir	19 9:30-12 Playmates Christmas 5:45 First Ringers	20	21
CHRISTMAS DAY office	26	27	28
			

SHARE YOUR NATIVITY

Last year in December, the Worship/Music Ministry sponsored a “share your Nativity” event on a Sunday morning. Many of you participated. Taking that as a sign of interest, we are sponsoring just such an event on December the 8th. Although, if you have a favorite Christmas decoration that may not fall into the category of “Nativity” you are encouraged to bring it to share as well. **December the 8th** Worship/Music Ministry



OCTOBER 2013 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Oct 13</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,568.17	\$175,681.70
Budget Expense	\$17,685.50	\$176,855.00
Income	\$15,360.00	\$157,455.74
Expenses	\$9,987.85	\$154,872.93

LOGOS Trunk or Treat

God blessed us once again with a small window of opportunity, so we could continue our OUTSIDE Trunk or Treat tradition. A great time was had by all, in spite of a little drizzle! There were approximately 50 children through our parking lot and many adults came out to share their "trunks and treats." Many thanks to all who made this another successful endeavor for our own children and well as those in the community. The winners of the coveted "trunk trophy" this year, were Bruce and Debbie Whitney.



MITTEN TREE

Beginning December 2, a Christmas tree will again grace Fellowship Hall providing a collection place for hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to be donated to DOVE for inclusion in their Christmas baskets. When the branches are full, please feel free to add your gifts to the skirt below to help make a warmer holiday season for others.

Outreach Ministry



Youth Activities

Youth Annual Christmas Cookie Walk

*Join the
Youth Group*

Just in time for the Christmas guests; the Annual Youth Cookie Walk is set for December 22nd in the fellowship hall between services. Come help the youth earn money toward the 2014 Youth Mission Trip and stock up on the most delicious goodies at the same time.

The youth are also 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 or Youth Ministry member know what you will be bringing.

Adult Program News

Progressive Dinner

Please join us December 7 at 5:00 for the annual Progressive Dinner. We will begin the evening at the home of Ron and Sherry Palmer, 4525 Nicklaus Court, with hearty appetizers. Mark Bunselmeyer will once again prepare prime rib for our carving station. Our second stop will be the home of Paul and Ruth Debruine, 423 Greenway Lane. There we will finish off our evening with desserts. To sign up, call the church office. You will be asked to bring either an appetizer or dessert.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Despite stormy weather earlier in the day, over 70 members of our church family gathered together to share in our annual Thanksgiving dinner. We had plenty of tasty food and lots of fellowship. Our ministry would like to extend a special thanks to all of you who jumped in and helped out. From clearing tables, washing dishes, putting away tables and chairs, and laundering tablecloths your help is so appreciated. You made a big undertaking so much easier.

It is that time of year again to place your order for Christmas Poinsettias. If you have any questions, contact the church office (877-2216) or Shirley Kuhn (468-2052).



ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS

_____ I would like # _____ Poinsettia/Poinsettias @ \$11.50 each

_____ 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.

(Please Print)
In Honor of

OR

In Memory of

TO ORDER: Complete this form and remit with payment to the church office or the offering plate. Deadline to order is December 8, 2013.

Please pick up your poinsettia after Christmas Eve Service!



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

2. Sheila Mannweiler
3. Pamela Tucker
6. Judy Sawyer
7. Jeffrey Beck
Kelly Cantrell
Sandy Cummings
Jennie Wernecke
9. Mary Lou Phipps
13. Marylin Cushing
Lynn Weltmer
15. Sally Lauer
Aaron Taylor
16. Marilee Gordon
23. Marie Anna Poland
24. Janet Brownfield
29. Clinton Whitrock
30. Sandy Harmison
31. 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. Wallace & Tonita Reifsteck
21. Dick & Gloria Cheatham
22. Gary & Patricia Weiss
31. Clinton & Ellen Whitrock



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 1

LITURGIST: Bill Huebner
FLOWERS: Randy & Mary Beck
COFFEE: Pat & Margie Malone
USHERS/GREETER: Alexis Fankhouser, Everett Kuhn, Don & Dee Weneker

DECEMBER 8

LITURGIST: Al Gerhold
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Paul & Ruth Debruine
USHERS/GREETER: Dave & Marlene Gant, Kristin Hargrove, Carl Jacobs

DECEMBER 15

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Clarence & Carolyn Elliott
USHERS/GREETER: Bill & Martha Crookshank, Jim & Jodi Baldwin

DECEMBER 22

LITURGIST: Mindy Bunselmeyer
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE: Tom & Paula Cordts
USHERS/GREETER: Frank & Shelly Smith, Judi Carpenter, Tom Cordts.

DECEMBER 24

LITURGIST: Chuck Zweck
USHERS/GREETER: The Bunselmeyer Family

DECEMBER 29

LITURGIST: Sharon Burbes
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE: Bill & Alice Huebner
USHERS/GREETER: Mark & Susan Daley, Bill Huebner, Sandi Pleasants

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 1

USHER/GREETER: Jeanette Flenner
REFRESHMENTS: Jeanette Flenner

DECEMBER 8

USHER/GREETER: Mike Koyak
REFRESHMENTS: Mike Koyak

DECEMBER 15

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

DECEMBER 22

USHER/GREETER: Betty Wheatley
REFRESHMENTS: Betty Wheatley

DECEMBER 29

USHER/GREETER: Missy Boldizar
REFRESHMENTS: Missy Boldizar



Stewardship Campaign Thank you - Delight in Giving

As the Stewardship Campaign is drawing to a close, the ministry members (Betty Cummings, Alice Huebner, Pat Mahr, Kathy Moore, Sherry Palmer and Sheila Mannweiler) wish to thank the Route Captains for steering the notebooks around the routes! The Captains were: Christina Clark, Sherry Palmer, Darla Weltmer, Alice Huebner, Betty Cummings, Dave Carpenter, Chuck Zweck, Janet Tiede, Don Wenneker, Kathy Moore, Pat Mahr, Mike Koyak, Joe Moretti, Sandi Pleasants, Shirley Kuhn, Paula Cordts, and Sheila Mannweiler.

A big “Thank You” to all who received the Notebooks, filled out the information for the enclosure envelope and passed the notebook along to the next member on the church family route! Also, to be thanked is Bill Huebner, who assembled the photos and the Narrative Budget information which made up the notebooks. Photos were received from Sherry Warner, Susan Daley, Clarence Elliott, Dave Carpenter, Sue Bunselmeyer, Mindy Bunselmeyer and Bill Huebner.

Alice Huebner
Nominating/Stewardship Ministry