

Congregational Comments

Vol. 20 No 12: December 2015

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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



*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 Christmas 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: Nov. 29- Dec. 5.

Our Gospel lesson is Mark 13:24-37. 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. 6-12.

Our lessons are Mark 1:1-8 and Isaiah 40:1-11. 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. 13-19.

Our Gospel lesson is John 1:6-8,19-28. 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 Four: Dec. 20-24.

Our Gospel lesson is Luke 1:26-38. 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, Luke 2.

You, O God, are born in us. Be born in us and your world today.

A merry and blessed Christmas to all!

Pastor Dave

Come experience God’s love and light every Sunday in worship
9:00 am Traditional and **11:00 am** Contemporary. Our Sunday School is held during both worship services. Come join us at **10 am** in the Fellowship Hall for delicious refreshments and great fellowship!

Check our great children’s and youth **LOGOS** program on **Wednesdays** 4:30-7:15 pm.

Please check the Special services and events listing in this newsletter.

Join us this Sacred Season and invite a friend!

Join us for these
SPECIAL DECEMBER Services and Events

Dec. 5 Progressive Dinner

Dec. 7 Holy Communion – 10:00 am Annual Mtg Votes on 2016 slate of ministry members and budget. Installation of ministry members.

Dec. 13 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!

Dec. 13 11:00 am

We'll have our Contemporary Worship Service featuring the music and message of Advent and Christmas. Come join us as we prepare for Christ's coming!

Dec. 13 12:30 pm 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. 20 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 Handbell Choir and our singing Christmas Carols.

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

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

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!!!

MERRY CHRISTMAS
FROM THE TAYLORS

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!!!

Pastor Dave

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Some people indicated a desire to know the recipe for a "trail-mix" dish Ellen and I took to the Church Thanksgiving Dinner.

NUTTY O's:

- 1 C packed brown sugar
- 1 C dark corn syrup
- 1/2 C butter or margarine
- 12 C Cheerios
- 2 C pecan halves or 2 C pecans
- 1 C whole almonds or 1 C dried fruit

In a large saucepan heat brown sugar, corn syrup and butter until sugar is dissolved. Stir in cereal and nuts; mix well. Spread onto greased 15x10x1 baking pans. Bake at 325 for 15 minutes; stir to loosen from pans. Cool completely. Store in airtight container.

Clint



PLAYMATES NEWS

November was a busy month here at Playmates. We enjoyed the mild weather and explored nature, looking for signs of fall.

Pastor Dave talked to us about being thankful at Chapel Time. He even taught us how to say thank-you in sign language.

All three of the classes will get together for our annual "Taste of Thanksgiving" at the end of November.

In December, we will spend the month talking about Christmas and learning its true meaning. On the 17th, we will have our Christmas program, "Mary, Mary, What Do You See?"

From your friends at Playmates Preschool, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"



REMINDER ON CHURCH BUILDING USAGE

BUILDING USE POLICY AND PROCEDURES Non-Wedding




First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCC) Decatur, Illinois is happy to provide a place for meetings of non-profit, community and private organizations. In turn, these organizations have responsibilities to the Church for the privileges of using our facilities. Political events, profit making ventures or events not consistent with the mission of First Congregational Church will not be permitted.

Any person/group using the church building must notify the office and complete the Building Use Application / Agreement.

For any non church related activity, a \$50 rental fee will be required in advance from all groups using FCC's building. \$25 will be refunded if the Church facilities and /or equipment are left in acceptable condition. For groups exempt from fees, gifts may be made to FCC to off-set costs assumed by the FCC.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
Church Services 9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship		1 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Adult Choir 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	2 4:45-7:15 7:30 Cho
6 Annual Meeting 10:00 between services	7	8 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Adult Choir 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	9 4:45-7:15 7:30 Cho
13 11:10 Worship Life/Music	14 5:30 Admin 7:00 Property	15 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Adult Choir 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	16 7:30 Cho
20 Music Sunday	21 7:00 Church Council	22 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	23 7:30 Cho
27 9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship	28	29 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	30 7:30 Cho

	Thu	Fri	Sat
5 LOGOS Choir	3 5:45 First Ringers	4 6:00 Macon County Youth Pride	5 5:00 Progressive Dinner
5 LOGOS Choir	10 5:45 First Ringers	11 6:00 Macon County Youth Pride	12
Choir	17 Playmates Christmas Service 1:15 Book Club 5:45 First Ring-	18 6:00 Macon County Youth Pride	19
Choir	24 7:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 	26
Choir	31 		

REMINDER

Please notify the church office if you have changed your e-mail address in the last year. You can call or e-mail your new information to Kapora at firstchurchdecatour@sbcglobal.net. Providing your updated e-mail will allow us to communicate information about upcoming events. Thank you.



“CAN WE GET A REFUND IF THE SERMON
ISN'T THAT GOOD?”

OCTOBER 2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Oct 15</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,753.08	\$177,530.80
Budget Expense	\$17,437.57	\$174,375.70
Income	\$16,674.00	\$171,135.82
Expenses	\$13,567.63	\$163,842.54

GENERAL INFORMATION

Stewardship Update from the Consecration Sunday Program: We have received 79 cards back this year and they have committed \$171,712 for Current Expenses and \$20,807 for Outreach. This is a total increase over 2015 of approximately \$9,394. Thank you to everyone for your commitment of faith to First Church and its ministry.

Custodial Reminder: There is a notebook in the "custodian" mail box outside the main office to utilize for any "notes" to the custodian, Scott. (Please keep in mind, this is only a 15-hours-a-week job!)

THANK YOU to everyone who helped make our 15th Annual LOGOS Trunk or Treat event a success. The recipient of the coveted "trophy" is the Youth - congrats!

THANK YOU to those who attended our 13th Annual LOGOS Veterans Night. We appreciate you sharing yourselves with us.

ANNUAL MEETING will be held in the sanctuary Sunday, December 6, 2015 at 10:00 a.m., for the purpose of: approving the minutes of the December 7, 2015 Annual Meeting; approving the new Endowment Foundation directors; financial update and stewardship campaign report; presentation and approval of the 2016 budget; installation of officers and ministry members for 2015; introduction of the new president; and any other business to come before the congregation. Supporting materials will be available to the congregation in the narthex by November 29th.

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR CHURCH-WIDE CHRISTMAS CAROLING. We will meet in Fellowship Hall at 12:30 on Sunday, December 13 and visit those in our church family who are unable to get out for the holidays and spread a little holiday cheer. Trust me - this will be a very worthwhile investment of your time! Any questions, see Marsha Mower.

ANNUAL REPORTS for 2015 are due no later than January 9, 2016 for pastor, officers, ministries, committees and other organizations. Please get these written and sent to the church office and Marsha Mower as soon as possible. Thanks

THINKING AHEAD - - -

I know you think this is early but - it is never too early to plan ahead.

This message is a reminder to all of you who claim charitable deductions on your income tax. The last deposit/posting of accounts for the year will be made on Monday, December 28. Because Christmas falls on Friday, December 25, all contributions mailed or brought in person must be received in the office by noon on Thursday, December 24. The Sunday collection of December 27 will be counted on December 28 but mail delivery does not arrive until after the deposit is made on Monday. So please plan ahead – if you are not going to be in church on December 27, please mail or bring your last contribution of the year in plenty of time. If you are considering a contribution being sent from a financial institution in your name, please do it in early December. In order for contributions to be shown on your 2015 statement (which you will receive in January), they need to be in the office by noon on December 24th. Thank you for your continued support of First Congregational United Church of Christ.

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

Primrose Retirement Community

Claude Young—Room 228

Lois Shelton—Room 132

Imboden Gardens

Harriette Horn—Room 120

Keystone

Carolyn Jones—Room 216

Vonderlieth Living Center, Mt. Pulaski, IL

Alice Roach

Fair Havens Christian Home

Al Wilson—Room 425

Evergreen Place

Mary Lou Phipps— Room 333



YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Parent's night out

This holiday season the Youth Group is pleased to be bringing back our parents nights out fundraiser. The youth and adult leaders will be hosting two nights when parents are welcome to bring their kids to the church and enjoy an evening off. They will provide a kid friendly dinner, activities, games, laughter, and fun.

The first date corresponds with the annual progressive dinner, providing parents with an opportunity to enjoy an evening of friendship, fellowship, and hassle free child care.

When: December 5th and 19th 5pm-10pm

Where: First Congregational United Church of Christ

RSVP: An RSVP is appreciated but not required. You can RSVP by calling the church office or by calling Joe Moretti at 217-433-0522

Cookie Walk

'Tis the season of love, peace, hope, joy, and Christmas Cookies! The Youth group is once again proud to present the annual cookie walk. They will present an array of delicious treats to meet all of your holiday needs. Donations of baked goods are always appreciated.

When: December 20th 10:00 am, between services.

Where: First Congregational United Church of Christ, in Fellowship hall.

LOGOS

THANK-YOU to all who participated in the recent LOGOS Trunk or Treat event. A great time was had by all, even though it was cold and rainy. The youth "trunk" won the coveted trophy this year. Congratulations to them for their efforts.



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
8. Jeffrey Beck
Kelly Cantrell
Sandy Cummings
Jennie Wernecke
9. Mary Lou Phipps
14. Marylin Cushing
Caitlin Schrein
Lynn Weltmer
15. Sally Lauer
Melissa Flies
Aaron Taylor
17. Marilee Gordon
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
18. Joe Seitz
21. Dick & Gloria Cheatham
22. Gary & Patricia Weiss
27. Carol Cooley
31. Clinton & Ellen Whitrock



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 6

LITURGIST: Dee Weltmer
FLOWERS: Randy & Mary Beck
COFFEE: Dave & Marlene Gant
USHERS/GREETER: Joe & Carol
Robertson, Pat & Margie Malone

DECEMBER 13

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Martha Crookshank,
Betty Cummings
USHERS/GREETER: Martha
Crookshank, Dave & Marlene
Gant, Marilee Gordon

DECEMBER 20

LITURGIST: Mindy Bunselmeyer
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE: Ted & Darby Mitchell
USHERS/GREETER: Gary Weiss,
Chuck Zweck, Ellen Starace, Jodi
Baldwin

DECEMBER 24

LITURGIST: Marilee Gordon
USHERS/GREETER: The
Bunselmeyer Family

DECEMBER 27

LITURGIST: Allen Gerhold
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE: Betty Henry
USHERS/GREETER: Jim & Jodi
Baldwin, Frank & Shelly Smith

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 6

USHER/GREETER: Joe Moretti
REFRESHMENTS: Maureen
Ruski

DECEMBER 13

USHER/GREETER: Wes
Pietsch
REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

DECEMBER 20

USHER/GREETER: Mark &
Jeanette Flenner
REFRESHMENTS: Mark &
Jeanette Flenner

DECEMBER 27

USHER/GREETER: Sandy
Harmison
REFRESHMENTS: Sandy
Harmison



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's Fellowship will meet in Fellowship Hall for our annual Christmas Tea on Friday, December 11th at 1:00 PM. As discussed at our Nov. Gathering, all who wish to participate are asked to bring 1 dozen Christmas cookies to share and if they wish to have a cookie exchange to bring another dozen or two. That way you will get to take 1 or 2 dozen cookies back to your home for enjoyment later.

Our entertainment will be by our Bell Choir with Bette Fankhauser and her ringers so plan to be entertained by some great music and perhaps we'll get to sing along with a few Christmas Carols. We never seem to get to sing enough Christmas songs.

Invite your friends to come join us for a relaxing fun good eating afternoon. So we know we have "room enough" please let one of us know if you are coming and who you plan to invite or bring along. Surely you have a good friend or relative you would like to invite to come and enjoy this wonderful season and time of the year.

Call Martha Crookshank 877-7468, Ellen Whitrock 875-0835, Norma Lingenfelter 877-3952 or Darla Weltmer 877-7008 by Sunday December 6th. See you there.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWS

THANK YOU.....

To all of you that contributed to Operation Christmas Child Shoe Boxes, a program of Samaritan's Purse! We sent 43 boxes to be shipped around the world to children of all ages. Whether you contributed items to go in the boxes or money for postage, there will be happy children because of your generosity!

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL FROM THE CHILDREN

Please join us during 1st Service on Sunday, Dec. 13th to see and hear the children of our church and LOGOS classes share the Christmas spirit! Angels abound in this special treat, led by Mindy Bunselmeyer.