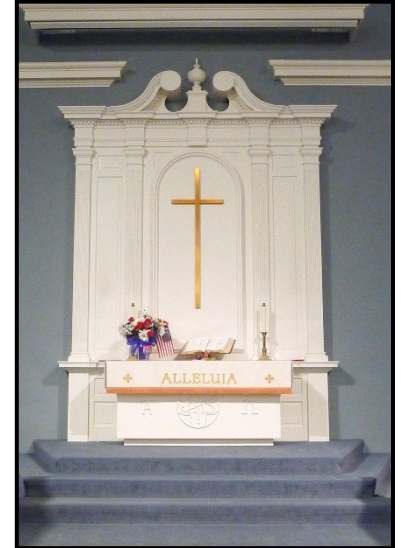


Congregational Comments



Vol. 22 No. 12: December 2017

Important Contacts in the Church

Pastor: Rev. Ryan Travis, 217-413-4272

Email: pastorryan@firstchurchdecat.org

Prayer Chain: Bette Fankhauser, 877-6723

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Playmates Preschool: Interim Director: Alfreda Tribout

Newsletter Editor: Bill Huebner, 876-1446, cell 855-7677

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Church Contact Information:

3465 N. MacArthur Rd.

Decatur, IL 62526

Telephone: 877-2216

Email: firstchurchdecat@sbcglobal.net

Website: www.firstchurchdecat.org

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.

Inside this issue:

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A Note from Pastor Ryan



Jesus Is the Reason for the Season – More So Than We Know

We've all heard that "Jesus is the reason for the season," by what does that actually mean? Sure, we all know the Santa Claus, trees, colorful lights, and endless hours of carols being broadcast on repeat in stores decked out since Halloween can't possibly be what Christmas is all about. So, we turn our minds to the manger scene, to poor Mary and Joseph shut out of an inn with no vacancy, and angels appearing to shepherds in the Judean countryside, singing hymns of glorious praise. Certainly Christmas is about those things, right? Well, yes...but there's far more to this story. Let's turn our attention to the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...And the Word became flesh and lived among us. (John 1-6, 14a, NIV)

No one knows when Jesus was actually born, but it almost certainly wasn't December 25. When the church was looking for a date to celebrate Christ coming into the world, it drew upon the text above. Jesus is the light coming into darkness. What better time to celebrate Christ's birth than what is the darkest time of year, in terms of the least amount of daylight? The very placement of Christmas on the calendar, therefore, is a theological statement meant to accentuate Jesus being light and life.

The meaning of Christmas is this: God became a human being. From everlasting Christ was one with the Father in the Spirit. Everything in the universe that exists, exists only because it was created through Christ. Jesus is the Word made flesh, that is, Jesus is the very mind of God become like you and me.

Mary was a willing vessel. Joseph was an honorable man of faith who stood by his fiancée. The shepherds and wise men and everyone else in the Christmas story all had a role to play. But the truth is this: we are celebrating that Truth himself, Life himself, Grace himself, Love himself broke through the barrier that exists between God and humankind. Jesus burst into the darkness with a blazing light that burns bright in our hearts and in our praises today.

The next time someone says "Jesus is the reason for the season," know that it's true. Know also that it is truer, deeper, and more amazing than any of us every imagined.

Thank You

Thank you all for supporting First Congregational Church with your financial contributions. When mailing in, bringing in, or placing your contribution in the plate on Sunday - please remember to note on the check, the envelope, or a piece of paper where you wish your donation to go. If we do not find a notation, it automatically goes to Current Expense. Thank you for your help.

EVENTS



FIRST CHURCH **FOODS RESOURCE BANK** **GROWING PROJECT**

Routed in Community Grounded in Faith

Fall harvest is complete! The 5-acre growing project averaged 249 bushels per acre. This is much more than we anticipated and more than last year. This will help because the price is lower than last year. The crop has not been sold yet and we will let you know when it is.

We also are planning a Sunday some time after the first of the year to select the food program that we wish to support with our earnings from this crop. More on that date will come later.

If you would like to make a donation to help pay the cost of planting this crop, donation envelopes can be found in the pews and may be placed in the offering basket or delivered to the church office. Please make your check payable to First Congregational UCC, and indicate that it is for our FRB growing project.

Our Foods Resource Bank growing project will teach people in some of the poorest parts of the world to feed themselves and their families and give them the dignity and pride of doing so. Thank you for your help with this mission project.

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship will hold their Annual Christmas Party on Friday, December 8th at 1:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. The program will feature Mary Lynn (Potter) author of "The Forgotten Life of Sarah Grady". She is a resident of Decatur and written this book based in Decatur. The book takes place in early 1900's. Its about the beautiful owner of #3 Millikin Place and her secret love letters. Please invite your friends and neighbors but let us know who is coming so we are all set and ready to "party".

There will be a Cookie exchange for those wishing to participate. Just bring a dozen or more cookies and take home a dozen or more with you. We would also like you to bring a dozen of your cookies to share with those attending. The cookies for exchanging will be set on another table. For further information contact Darla Weltmer, 877-7008.

Please call in your reservations by Wednesday 6th noon so we can plan accordingly.
Call Martha 877-7468, Ellen 875-0835, Norma 877-3952 or Darla 877-7008 or
e-mail Lmweltmer@juno.com

YOUTH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK

The Annual Youth Cookie Walk is set for December 17th 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 or Youth Ministry member know what you will be bringing.

All proceeds will go toward funding the Youth Activity Fund and Youth Community projects.

Important - Please Read

Church Building Usage Reminder

Applicable to all church-related groups (i.e.: ministry teams, committees, fellowship groups, Playmates Pre-school, etc) as well as all outside groups.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is happy to provide a place for meetings of our own ministries and entities, as well as non-profit, community and private organizations. In turn, these groups and people have responsibilities to the Church for the privileges of using our facilities. ALL groups/people are responsible for the area(s) used. All messes are to be cleaned up, including trash and floors; any spillage is to be wiped or mopped up; all furniture is to be returned to its original position; all doors and windows, including storm windows, are to be closed and locked; all lights you used are to be turned off; the thermostat is to be reset to the previous setting and all trash is to be collected and placed in the dumpster on the north side of the building. While we do employ a custodial person, the hours are limited to 15 per week and do not cover cleaning up after building usage groups/people. Thanks so much for helping us keep our facilities in tip-top shape!

Marsha

THANK-YOU to everyone who supported the recent LOGOS Butter Braid fundraiser. Thanks to your support, we realized a profit of approximately \$750 will help provide scholarships to any child/youth in need.

REMINDERS:

The Balcony Project is underway, to ensure our sound and digital projection concerns are taken care of. The congregation still has the opportunity to contribute to the \$4000 balance and you are encouraged to do so at your earliest convenience.

The Elevator/Lift Project is "in the works," with a formal proposal to be presented at our Annual Meeting on December 3rd. The projected cost is \$118,150 with \$56,254 available from the Capital Campaign and Elevator Funds. The congregation is invited to make contributions or pledges at this time, so we have a minimal balance to fund following the formal proposal. We assure you all contributions will only be used for this project.

Calling all Carolers! Please mark your calendars for our annual Christmas caroling event. Sunday, December 17th, we will meet in fellowship hall at 12:30 and carol to those in our congregation that are typically unable to get out for worship. We hope you will join us as we share the music of the season with others. Trust me - you will get as much or more out of it as those we visit! Don't worry if your voice is "good enough" - it is the voice God gave you and He invites you the "sing a joyful song" with us. Questions - contact Marsha Mower.

Marsha

LOGOS Veterans Dinner



LOGOS Veterans Dinner November 8, 2017



Photos by Dave Carpenter



The annual *Christmas Progressive Dinner* will be
Saturday, December 9th from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

If you are willing to host appetizers, the main course, or dessert,
please let Shirley Zimmerman know at 875-7302 or sdzcomm27@comcast.net

Poinsettias for Christmas

TIME TO ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS



Complete this form and remit with payment in the offering plate or to the church office. **THE DEADLINE TO ORDER IS DECEMBER 10th.** Please pick up your poinsettias after Christmas Eve Service!

\$ Amount

_____ I would like to order # _____ poinsettia/poinsettias @ 12.50/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.

PLEASE PRINT FOR LEGIBILITY

Your Name: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

****If you would like to buy poinsettias AND contribute to the Memorial/Scholarship fund(s) the checks must be made out separately, however, both checks should be made out to First Congregational Church.**

If you have any questions, please call Shirley Kuhn at 468-2052 or Peggy in the church office 877-2216.

Hanging of the Greens

HANGING OF THE GREENS – Please join the Worship Team in the traditional Hanging of the Greens on Saturday December 2nd at 9:00 a.m. Coffee, juice and breakfast pastries will be available in Fellowship Hall beginning at 8:30 a.m.

All are welcome and many hands will make for joyful work! We have jobs for young and old and hope to see you there!

Finance Notes

OCTOBER 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Oct 17</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$18,288.92	\$182,889.20
Budget Expense	\$17,714.72	\$177,147.20
Income	\$18,890.66	\$164,997.06
Expenses	\$13,379.56	\$162,695.98



From Your Church President

As we head into the last month of 2017 at First Church, I write my final “president’s letter” to you. Serving as your Church President the past two years, has been a true blessing. We’ve gone through many changes, with each and every one of you having a part in the positive outcomes we have enjoyed. Whether you prayed for the leadership of the church, had hands-on involvement in the many tasks or shared words of encouragement, we couldn’t have made it through without you! God has been very good to us, bestowing upon us many blessings. We truly have lots to be thankful for and celebrate!

I’d like to take this opportunity to share some “personal” news with you. My husband, Skip, and I are buying a house in Minnesota and we will be moving “up north” very soon (probably by Christmas). This was one of those rare, God moment kind of things, that started as a “hmmm... what if” and has grown a life of its own, with all the pieces falling into place much quicker than we ever imagined. Ironically, my normal insecure, worried, fretting, no-risk-taking self is very calm and at peace with this decision and I am confident it is where God is leading us for the next phase of our lives. I cherish all the times we have spent together - in work, in play, in worship, in friendship, as family and friends, in good times and not so good times - those memories can never be replaced. I will be back to visit, since our youngest son and only grandson live here and our doors will always be open to visitors! Words cannot express what a true blessing each and every one of you has been in my life over the years. First Church will always remain my “home,” as it has been for 60+ years.

As we look towards the future at First Church, we have settled into our ministry with Pastor Ryan, who spiritually leads, guides and challenges us to be who God has called us to be. Our newly approved Constitution and By-Laws are in place, that support the new church structure of Ministry Teams. The Outreach Ministries of First Church have been revitalized and many exciting new things are in the works. During the Lenten season, an exciting new small-group Bible Study will take place - *“Who is Jesus – A Six Week Journey of Faith.”* Very soon we will have our balcony project completed, which will ensure our sound and projection needs are met into the future. And we look forward to the much-needed elevator/lift being approved at our Annual Meeting. My heartfelt thanks to everyone for working together to further God’s work inside and outside our church building. May we always “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.

In closing I would like to thank our dedicated staff - Pastor Ryan Travis, Peggy Mennel, Laurie Matheson, Bette Fankhauser, Rick Boldizar, Jillian Daley, Christina Huckile, our Preschool director and teachers *and* our Administration Team – Gary Baker, Sharon Burbes and Sandy Harmison. We are truly blessed by their ministry with us! And thank you to all of you, for your friendship, love and support all these many years.

May God richly bless each and every one of you!

Marsha Mower, Church President



DRESS OUR MITTEN TREE

Once again First Church will be collecting new mittens, hats, gloves, and scarves for boys, girls, men and women on the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall. These warm winter offerings will be given to DOVE to be included in the Decatur community Christmas baskets. The last day to dress the tree with your gifts is Sunday, December 17. Thank you from Outreach Ministry.

LOGOS

LOGOS THEMES 2017-2018

NOVEMBER

- 1 – Western Hoedown
- 8 – Celebrate Veterans
- 14 – Butter Braid pick-up 4:45
- 15 – Give Thanks
- 22 – NO LOGOS
- 29 – Setting Sail

NOVEMBER 2017						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER 2017

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

DECEMBER

- 6 – A LOGOS Christmas
- 13 – NO LOGOS
- 17 – Christmas Pageant 9:00
- 20 – NO LOGOS
- 27 – NO LOGOS

JANUARY

- 3 – NO LOGOS
- 10 – Fiesta!
- 17 – Strikes and Spares
- 24 – Renaissance Night
- 31 – Rise and Shine

JANUARY 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY 2018

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

FEBRUARY

- 7 – NO LOGOS
- 14 – Ash Wednesday
- 21 – thgiN sdrawkcaB
- 28 – Taking Flight

LOGOS meets 4:15 – 6:45pm, unless otherwise noted.

Decatur Area Church Women United

The Decatur Area Church Women United will hold their Annual Luncheon on December 11th, 12:00 noon at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, 530 W. Mound Road. All are welcome to attend.

Reservations are necessary by Thursday, December 7th to Darla Weltmer 877-7008 Lmweltmer@juno.com

There is no charge for the meal but a basket for your donation will be accepted. For more information contact Darla.

Happenings

FFDO

No Dinner
This Month



God's Busy Hands

Tuesdays

1:00 - 3:00 pm



God's Busy Hands

Choir

Wednesdays

7:00 pm



Sing With Us

First Ringers

Thursdays

5:45 pm



Christmas Progressive Dinner

Saturday, December 9

5:30 - 8:30 pm



Admin Meeting

Monday, December 11

5:30 pm

Council of Ministry Teams

Monday, December 18

5:30 pm

November Birthdays and Anniversaries

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
6. Judy Sawyer
8. Kelly Cantrell
Sandy Cummings
Jennie Wernecke
9. Mary Lou Phipps
14. Marylin Cushing
Lynn Weltmer
15. Sally Lauer
Aaron Taylor
17. Marilee Gordon
24. Janet Brownfield
29. Clinton Whitrock
30. Sandy Harmison
31. Robert Bunselmeyer
Joe Robertson

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

11. Keith & Paula Carmichael
18. Joe Seitz
21. Dick & Gloria Cheatham
22. Gary & Patricia Weiss
27. Tom & Carol Cooley
31. Clinton & Ellen Whitrock

Remember to Pray for and Visit Members

Who are in Assisted Living, Nursing Homes or Shut-ins

Primrose Retirement Community

Claude Young—Room 228
Marian Simpson—Room 130

Randell Residence

Carolyn Jones—Room 216

Vonderlieth Living Center, Mt. Pulaski, IL

Alice Roach

Hickory Point Christian Village

Al Wilson—Room 202
Patricia Weiss—Room 325

Evergreen Place

Mary Lou Phipps—Room 208

Fair Haven Christian Home

Lois Shelton—Room 113

Decatur Rehab Health Care

Beverly Capshaw -Room 22

Lincolnshire Place

Marie Bauer—Room 213




First Church Sunday Morning

	Date	9:00 AM Service	11:00 AM Service
 LITURGISTS	December 3	Ellen Starace	
	December 10	Mindy Bunselmeyer	
	December 17	Marsha Mower	
	December 24	Dara Wiltmer	
	December 31	Penny Butts	
	December 3	Randy & Mary Beck	
	December 10		
	December 17	Poinsettias	
	December 24	Poinsettias	
	December 31	Poinsettias	
	December 3	Betty Cummings, Laurel Lorey	Missy Boldizar
	December 10	Ted & Darby Mitchell	Wes Pietsch
	December 17	Pat & Margie Malone	Sandy Harmison
	December 24	Everett Kuhn	Mark/Jeanette Flenner
	December 31	Lynn & Darla Weltmer	Ruby Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman
 USHERS	December 3	Chuck Zweck, Darla Weltmer, Don & Dee Wenneker	Fonseca Family
	December 10	Dave Carpenter, Marilee Gordon, Robert & Penny Butts	Wes Pietsch
	December 17	Mike & Toni Longstreet, Gary Weiss, Darby Mitchell	James Huckile
	December 24	Bunselmeyers	Mark/Jeanette Flenner
	December 31	Ted & Darby Mitchell, Martha Crookshank	Ruby Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

Thank you to all who participate in these very important activities!

November Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 6:00 MCYP	2 8:00 AA 9:00 Hanging of the Greens
3 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow- ship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	4	5 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	6 4:15—6:45 LOGOS 7:00 Choir Practice	7 2:15 Girl Scouts 5:45 1st Ringers	8 1:00 Women's Fellowship Christmas Tea 6:00 MCYP	9 8:00 AA 5:30-8:30 Progressive Dinner
10 Music Sunday	11 5:30 Admin 7:00 Proper- ty Meeting	12 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	13 7:00 Choir Practice	14 2:15 Girl Scouts 5:45 1st Ringers	15 6:00 MCYP	16 8:00 AA
17 Children's Programs	18 5:30 Council of Ministry Teams	19 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	20 7:00 Choir Practice	21 10:00 Pre-School Program 2:15 Girl Scouts 5:45 1st Ringers	22 6:00 MCYP	23 8:00 AA
24 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow- ship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	25  CHRISTMAS DAY	26 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	27 7:00 Choir Practice	28	29 6:00 MCYP	30 8:00 AA
31 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow- ship Hour 11:00 Contemporary						



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

2017 Church Goals

Your Council of Ministry Teams has approved the following 3 goals for 2017:

2017 Church Goals

Living into who are (or have become). The reality is we are a “small church” and need to celebrate what we can do, let go of what we can’t do and look at organizing/working together in a way that is supported by our true size, utilizing our resources in the best possible way.

- 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.
- Goal No. 2 – Develop new Outreach ministries to Decatur and the surrounding area.
- Goal No. 3 - To come to understand for ourselves, and be able to articulate to others, who Jesus is to us, both as individuals and as a community.

The current status of these goals is as follows:

- Goal 1 - New church Constitution and By-Laws presented to congregation on October 22, 2017
- Goal 2 – Outreach Ministry Team Co-Leaders, Joe Moretti and Gary Baker, have developed a new plan for Outreach..
- Goal 3 – Pastor Ryan is crafting a First Church-specific study that would include small groups that meet for a series of six weeks or so to discuss a specific topic while getting to know each other more intimately. A Six Week Journey of Faith” will take place during lent, beginning February 14