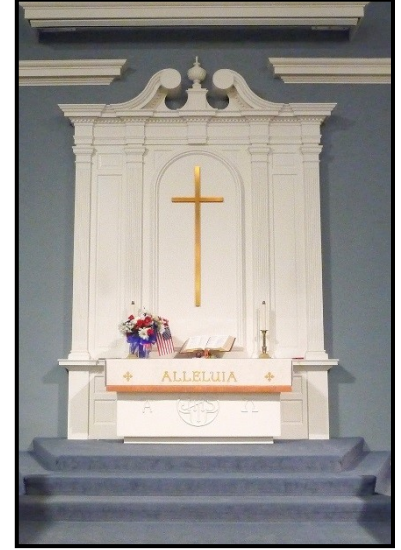


Congregational Comments



Vol. 24 No. 2: February 2019

Important Contacts in the Church

Pastor: Rev. Jan Johnson, 309-267-3260
 Email: PastorJan@firstchurchdecatur.org
Prayer Chain: Bette Fankhauser, 877-6723
 Email: bfankhauser@comcast.com
Playmates Preschool: Interim Director: Alfreda Tribout
Newsletter Editor: Bill Huebner, 876-1446, cell 855-7677
 Email: wshuebner.editor@prodigy.net

Church Contact Information:

3465 N. MacArthur Rd.
 Decatur, IL 62526
 Telephone: 877-2216
 Email: firstchurchdecatur@sbcglobal.net
 Website: www.firstchurchdecatur.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:

A Note from Pastor Jan	2	FFDO	6	First Church Sunday Morning	10
Information	3	Finance Notes	7	Calendar	11
Growing Hope Globally	4	Happenings	8		
Daily Devotional	5	Birthdays & Anniversaries	9		

A Note from Pastor Jan



Pastor Jan Johnson

Love Month

It's the month I call Agape Month. February. We have many holidays in February: Groundhog's Day (we sit around and watch Groundhog's Day with Bill Murray); Lincoln's Birthday (we all wear really tall black hats); Washington's Birthday (we chop down a cherry tree); Valentine's Day (we eat out, we eat chocolate, we send Valentine Cards); once in a while Lent begins and we have Ash Wednesday worship.

Agape month is more about the love God has for us, than the love we have for our husband, wife, partner, girlfriend or boyfriend. It's about learning how to love all people as God loves us: I Corinthians 13 says: "Love is patient, love is kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude; it is not irritable or resentful; love does not insist on it's own way; it does not rejoice in the wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." None of us can claim to love like this all the time. We do, however, get the opportunity to try every day! If someone asks you to get something for them – see it as an opportunity to respond in love – go get it with a positive attitude and caring attitude. Or if someone offers to help you with a task – say thank you and receive their gift of time and energy and care!

It's not always easy to love! Even those who love each other deeply get upset with each other once in a while. But when we love, when we love with God's love, we can forgive others and move on offering God's love back rather than, well, how we might respond outside of God's love.

Whatever you do this month – the Love Month, Agape Month – do it with Love.....the rewards are well worth the effort!

Blessings of Love!

Jan

Mark your calendar: **Ash Wednesday** begins the season of Lent. It is **March 6**. We will have Ash Wednesday Worship at 7pm. The Logos adults will be serving a meal before the service.

A little Pastor Humor

As a pastor is wrapping up his service, he tells his congregation "Next week I will deliver a sermon on the evils of lying. To prepare for it, I would like you all to read Mark chapter 17." The next week in service he asks how many parishioners read the 17th chapter of Mark. Every hand in the congregation goes up. "Mark has only 16 chapters," the pastor continues with a grin. "I will now proceed with the sermon on lying."

Information

From the Interim Task Force

The 'sacred Trinity' I am thinking of is the one that is **Kergyma, Diakonia, Koinonia or Word, Mission, Fellowship**. A church needs all three to be vital and productive!. Here is what I have witnessed here at First Church:

Word comes in many forms: At First Church we have 2 different Bible Study possibilities, Sunday School for old and young, Children's Message(shared with the children but the adult children like it), too!, Scripture reading, sermon, daily devotions. Are we attentive to God's Word in our daily lives? Do we live out the message of the Scriptures? How do each of us do this? Being vital means we must attend to God's word in our daily lives! We can do that!

Mission happens on many levels: We are a 5 for 5 Congregation and we participate in OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission), we collect food for the food pantry and for Thanksgiving baskets. Harvest of Hope is a really good Mission outreach that this church undertakes each year! Reaching out to our elderly home bound and nursing home members as well as hospital patients is part of our mission ministry to one another. God's Busy Hand's blankets go to babies and elderly alike, each one is a gift of love and warmth and our graduates receive one as well! We provide food for our Veterans in November and the White Gift offering in December went to the victims of the California fires this past fall. Mission giving and mission mindedness is a great strength of First Church!

Fellowship happens all the time: at Logos the kids became friends and the adults were like extended family to one another and to the kids who attended. The Youth Group meets and addresses the interests and needs of young people in ways that develop relationships and deepen friendships. Adults enjoy one another at the Sunday Breakfast/Brunch hour and before worship members catch up with each other as they visit.

First Church has some of each of that 'Sacred Trinity! But I'm guessing some folks here are missing the fellowship that they experienced in past times through Women's Guild, Men's Fellowship, maybe a church sport's team like softball or bowling. We can do that again! The men who gathered for the cluster in December will be called back together and all the men of the church will be invited. A steering team is working on this as I type and you read! We are seeking at time for Working Women to come to a Cluster – perhaps after church on a Sunday or a Saturday morning or a weeknight after work? From there, who knows what friendships and fellowship will develop?

Women's Fellowship Tea

Women's Fellowship will host a Valentine Tea on Friday, February 15th at 1:00 in Fellowship Hall. Save the date and plan to join us that day. We need to elect Officers at that meeting also.

For further information contact Lmweltmer@juno.com

877-7008

Darla

Growing Hope Globally



Formerly Foods Resource Bank

There is a change to our world mission project. It has a new name! With CEO Marv Baldwin's retirement and the transition to a new leader, it was an opportunity to create a new name and logo which would better reflect the mission and meaning of this organization.

The new name, **Growing Hope Globally**, reflects our agricultural roots and the key role the growing projects play in helping people across the globe lift themselves out of poverty and hunger, providing hope for generations to come.

The logo contains three, interrelated parts: a circle, a green heart, and three lines of soil.

Symbolizing rows of crops and levels of transformation program participants go through as they lift themselves up, the **lines of soil** also show the deep roots of our Christian faith.

The **green heart** symbolizes growing projects and the seeds of hope that they plant for people across the globe. It also represents the belief that people living in extreme poverty can grow and flourish when provided the opportunity.

Devotion to people around the globe is shown by the **circle** enclosing the elements.

All of the meaning behind the new name and logo remains **unchanged**. It is simply further enriched. We remain part of a community of people motivated by our faith to help our brother and sisters in need around the world. Our growing project continues as it has for 13 years. First Church will continue to send our profits to a program of our choice that focuses on sustainable solutions to help the hungry lift themselves out of poverty. First Congregational Church, together with Growing Hope Globally, has made a positive impact in the lives of the world's hungry people, helping more than 1.6 million people know the dignity and pride of providing for themselves.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sue Bunselmeyer

Chance to Volunteer

Do you know how you can give the gift of caring?

St John's Hospital Hospice Program provides comprehensive care for people who are terminally ill as well as their families and loved ones. Becoming a hospice volunteer creates a way for you to make a tremendous impact on your community by giving families your help when they tend to need it most. If you are looking for a fulfilling, rewarding experience, and a feeling of community spirit, then this is the place for you. Volunteer duties include a variety of services based on the needs and strengths of each volunteer. For more information about St. John's Hospice Volunteer Services in Decatur and the surrounding areas, contact the Cassie Delaney at (217) 685-0702, or e-mail me at Cassandra.Delaney@shs.org.

Daily Devotional

Daily Devotional

The Waters of Life

Talitha Arnold

January 10, 2019

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them." - Isaiah 41:17

For twenty years, the New Mexico congregation I serve has organized "immersion trips" to the Arizona/Sonora border. Our goal is to immerse youth and adults in the issues of the borderlands and to learn about the people who live there.

The groups attend immigration hearings and witness parents in shackles being sentenced to deportation. They visit the Wall (it's already up) and meet with Rev. Randy Mayer of El Buen Pastor UCC, who's been involved in immigration issues for decades, and also meet with Border Patrol agents to hear their stories. They visit the Sonoran Desert Museum to explore a landscape that stretches across all our human-made borders.

And they experience that desert. With *Los Samaritanos* volunteers, youths and adults walk the migrant trails. They put out water jugs and pick up abandoned backpacks, sandals, stuffed animals, children's clothes. Sometimes they come across wooden crosses that mark where someone has died.

For all its beauty, the Sonoran Desert can be unforgiving. Summer temperatures reach 120. Finding water is always a concern. Even in winter, a person can die of dehydration. Water jugs along the trail make the difference between life and death. Sometimes the groups find jugs slashed to drain the water out. That's as hard as seeing the crosses.

According to Isaiah, God is intimately concerned with providing water for the poor and those in need. "When their tongue is parched with thirst," the Prophet proclaims, "the Lord will answer them." God promises not to forsake them. Neither should we.

Prayer

You give us the waters of life, O Lord. Help us offer life to others.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Talitha Arnold is Senior Minister of the United Church of Santa Fe (UCC), Santa Fe, New Mexico. She is the author of [*Mark Part 1 and Mark Part 2*](#) of the [*Listen Up! Bible Study series*](#) and [*Worship for Vital Congregations*](#).

FFDO

February 's First Friday Dinner Out will be on Feb 1 at 6:00 at Filippo's in Mt Zion. Filippo's takes only cash. Let me know if you will be joining us.

Sandy Harmison

Volunteers Needed

One of Dove's services is a clothing room for children located at Prairie Avenue Christian Church on the corner of 22nd Street and Prairie Avenue. Each month a family can have three outfits per child along with socks and underwear. The clothing room is 'manned' with two volunteers who assist the clients with their choices, sort donated items, and replenish the racks. Dove needs more volunteers. The clothing room is open Monday through Thursday from 1:00 until 3:30. If you think you may be interested, please give Sandy Harmison a call. She would be glad to talk to you about it.

Bible Study Group

As you know, there is a Bible Study meeting on Thursday evenings. This group is reading a portion of the Bible daily and discussing it once a week. Our reading should bring us to the New Testament on February 1. So, on February 7, discussion of the New Testament should begin. Please feel free to join us.



Finance Notes

DECEMBER 2018 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Dec. 18</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,420.92	\$209,051.04
Budget Expense	\$17,269.15	\$207,229.80
Income	\$23,252.53	\$207,720.19
Expenses	\$18,747.84	\$191,703.65



Happenings

FFDO

Filippo's
February 1
6:00 pm



God's Busy Hands

Tuesdays
1:00 - 3:00 pm



God's Busy Hands

Admin Meeting
Monday, February
18

5:30 pm

Council of Minis-
try Teams

Monday, February
18

6:30 pm

Choir

Wednesdays

7:00 pm



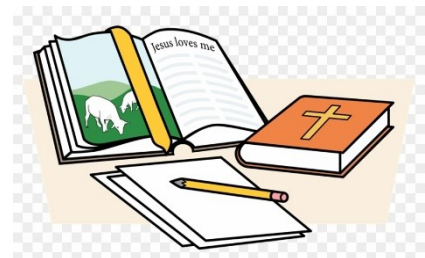
Sing With Us

Interim Task Force
Members

Gary Baker
Jeanette Flenner
Kelli Fonseca
Erick Hubbard
Alice Huebner
Shelia Mannweiler
Robert Ruehrup

Exploring Christian Faith Study Group

Sundays at
10:30 am
Choir Room



February 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.

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

- 3. Judi Carpenter
William Huebner
- 8. Katherine Koyak
- 10. Christen Cantrell
Thomas Cooley
- 12. Keith Carmichael
- 13. Andrew Mower
- 15. Rick Boldizar
- 17. Nellie Brookhauzen
Clarence Elliott
Alice Roach
Hannah Cordts
- 18. Devon Moretti
Marsha Mower
- 20. Benjamin Carter
Mable McCane
- 27. Quincy Janvrin
- 28. Pat Mahr



First Church Sunday Morning

	Date	9:00 AM Service	11:00 AM Service
 LITURGISTS	February 3	Marilee Gordon	Wes Pietsch
	February 10	Darla Weltmer	Mark & Jeanette Flenner
	February 17	Sharon Butler	Steve & Kelli Fonseca
	February 24	Amy Leman	Betty Wheatley
	February 3	Randy & Mary Beck	
	February 10	Clarence & Carolyn Elliott	
	February 17	Skip & Marsha Mower	
	February 24	Ted & Darby Mitchell	
	February 3	Ted & Darby Mitchell	Wes Pietsch
	February 10	Frank & Shelly Smith	Mark & Jeanette Flenner
	February 17	Lynn & Darla Weltmer	Missy Boldizar
	February 24	Kristin Hargrove	Betty Wheatley
	February 3	Robert & Penny Butts, Bill & Alice Huebner	
	February 10	Gary Weiss, Norma Lingenfelter, Martha Crookshank, Ellen Starace	
	February 17	Mindy Bunselmeyer, Susan Daley, Mac Butler, Chuck Zweck	
	February 24	Montana & Hayley Daniels, Bob Bunselmeyer, Shelia Mannweiler	

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

February Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<i>1</i> 6:00 MCYP	<i>2</i>
<i>3</i> 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i> 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	<i>6</i> 7:00 Choir Practice	<i>7</i> 6:30 Bible Study	<i>8</i> 6:00 MCYP	<i>9</i>
<i>10</i> 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	<i>11</i> 7:00 Property Meeting	<i>12</i> 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	<i>13</i> 7:00 Choir Practice	<i>14</i> 6:30 Bible Study	<i>15</i> 1:00 Valentine Tea 6:00 MCYP	<i>16</i>
<i>17</i> 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	<i>18</i> 5:30 Admin 6:30 Council Of Ministry Teams	<i>19</i> 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	<i>20</i> 7:00 Choir Practice	<i>21</i> 6:30 Bible Study	<i>22</i> 6:00 MCYP	<i>23</i>
<i>24</i> 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i> 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	<i>27</i> 7:00 Choir Practice	<i>28</i> 6:30 Bible Study		

We have received this word. . .

January 6, 2019

Dear Friends at First Church,

It has been such a pleasure to serve among you and make many friendships with you! May God bless your ministry into the future!

Tom

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. . . God has made everything beautiful in its time;” Ecc. 3

I have in recent months been in a time of discernment with God, my family and colleagues and made the decision that as I approach my 65th birthday in May that it is clear that God is leading me to a new season in my life. I have decided in consultation with both Rev. Char Burch and Rev. Justo Gonzalez that I plan to retire as of May 31, 2019. In my consultation with Rev. Justo, we deemed it appropriate to share this plan now so that the Personnel committee could begin its considerations for new leadership to serve in this role. I have been honored to be a partner of the leadership team of this Conference for nearly eighteen years. I love this Conference and want to provide every opportunity for its continued success and I will pray for the future vision and vitality of the Conference as new leadership is called. I will work diligently to assure that this time of transition will be a blessing for all.

Blessings,

Rev. Tom Norwalk