

Congregational Comments

Vol. 19 No 1: January 2014

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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

Happy New Year!

I hope your Christmas was wonderful, your days filled with friends, family and time to enjoy the season. Bobbie and

I want to thank everyone for all the kind Christmas wishes, cards and gifts. We have had a wonderful Christmas – Aaron had leave time from the Navy thus he was able to be with us, and Christen and Kelly were able to be with us too. We enjoyed sharing heart-warming phone calls with our family and friends as well.

As you may be aware, some of our members have family members or themselves dealing with serious illness. Please remember our “family members” with special needs in your prayers in coming days.

Most of us are creatures of habit. We have definite ideas about when to take down the tree and put the decorations away. Some folks may eat certain foods for good luck for the coming year. And many of us faithfully make resolutions for the coming year, regardless of how last year’s promises turned out.

Before the new year gets away from us, this is the time to get off to a great start spiritually. All the other parts matter — the commitment to exercise more, to eat better, to work on our relationships, on finances, whatever aspects we intend to improve. What holds the other parts together, that which brings peace at times when things don’t go so well with them, is our spiritual life: our ongoing relationship with God.

How to make a good beginning for the year ahead? We can take a cue from our New Year’s habits: leave behind the old and welcome the new. Consider what is not working: a lifeless prayer routine, entertaining negative thoughts without seeking help with them, simply not making

the time to take care of your spirit. Whatever the obstacle is, - like a dried up Christmas tree - toss it out! Let it go. It's taking up space in your soul that is needed for something much better God has in mind.

And take on something new: get out of your comfort zone and come to a Sunday morning Bible Study class or a weekday Bible Study group, begin a daily time of prayer, read a good book about faith issues, come and worship more often.

Throughout the coming weeks and months there will be a variety of opportunities for you to enhance your spiritual well-being. I hope you

will join me in making your spiritual life a priority for 2014.

As we enter the season of Epiphany, may we be especially watchful for God's revealing light. May we be attentive to the Spirit as we learn to carry God's light within us always, no matter what the road may bring. May we share the light and love of Christ wherever we are with all persons, especially, those in need.

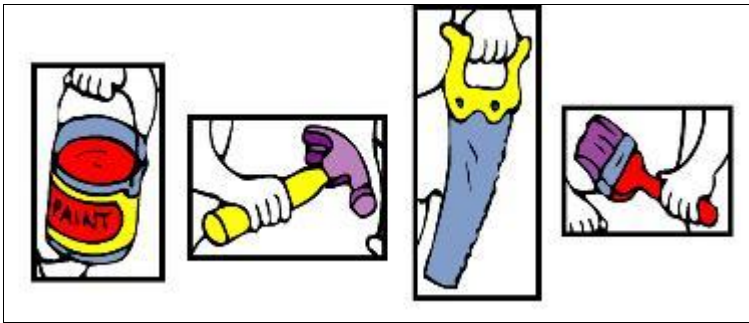
A blessed, healthy, peaceful, joyous, Spirit-filled New Year to you all!

Join us at First Church as we seek to be transformed by Christmas – not just for a month, but every day. Our Sunday Worship is at 9am and 11:00 am. There is Sunday School for Children, youth and adults. At 10 AM come on down to Fellowship Hall for great fellowship and delicious refreshments.

Pastor Dave

THANK YOU

As property chairman for 2013, I would like to thank all the committee members for their tireless efforts to keep the building running smoothly. A special thanks to Willis Parker and his son for making and installing hand rails on the steps entering and leaving the storage area for Christmas and seasonal decorations. Also to Bill Huebner for his work as the light and heat man and Brandon Janvrin for his efforts on workdays and painting contracting. Paul and Ruth DeBruine guided the mowing crews as they employed the new mower. Excellent work



Welcome
2014!

THANK YOU

From the Sunday School -- for your donations to Operation Christmas Child! The Sunday School students packed 16 shoeboxes with gifts, and in addition, other church members made another 23 boxes, making a total of 39 shoeboxes shipped overseas from First Church to brighten the holiday season.

From Playmates Preschool -- for your gifts to Playmates Preschool Christmas Shop! The preschoolers had a wonderful time shopping for presents for their families. As a result, Playmates Preschool has over \$500 to purchase new learning resources for their classrooms. Thank you for your generous support of this project.

From Meals on Wheels -- for all the ways you give, especially to Meals on Wheels. This year 500+ volunteers delivered over 50,000 meals totaling at least 7,000 volunteer hours. First Church volunteers were a part of this effort.

From Outreach Ministry -- for a Mitten Tree loaded with 25 scarves, 59 hats, and 68 pairs of mittens and gloves. Many of these items were beautifully knitted and lovingly crocheted by our church family. All of these have been delivered to DOVE for their Community Christmas baskets. Many families will be warmer this winter thanks to your generosity.

Our church family is the best!

Adult Program News

Thanks to all of you who came out for our annual Progressive Dinner. A special thanks to our hosts, Ron and Sherry Palmer, and Paul and Ruth Debrune. We also would like to thank Mark Bunselmeyer for once again preparing prime rib for our carving station. It was delicious.

THANK YOU

Worship/Music Ministry thanks the following for helping decorate the church on November the 24th:

Dr. Howard Beede, Nancy Beede, Keith Carmichael, Rev. Paula Carmichael, Martha Crookshank, Kayla Doherty, Peggy Druessel, Carolyn Elliott, Clarence Elliott, Dave Gant, Marlene Gant, James Huckile, Everett Kuhn, Shirley Kuhn, Darby Mitchell, Ted Mitchell, Andrew Mower, Marsha Mower, Ronald Palmer, Cathy Richardson, Robert Ruehrup, Chuck Zweck

Clarence Elliott



We have scheduled removing the Christmas decorations from the sanctuary and storing them in the attic at noon on Sunday, January the 5th. Please all that are available and able plan to help.

Thank you, Worship/Music Ministry Clarence Elliott

THANK YOU

From **Mano a Mano International**, 925 Pierce Butler Route, Saint Paul, Minnesota to First Congregational United Church of Christ, Decatur, Illinois.

God's Busy Hands,

Dear Amazing Blanket Makers from First Congregational United Church of Christ, George Mackey just stopped by to bring the blankets you made all the way from Decatur, IL and we just wanted to send you our warmest thank you for all your hard work! These will be shipped in our next containers and should arrive in the hands of Bolivian mothers + children by next Spring.

All of us at Mano a Mano wish you the happiest of holidays this year - thank you for your continued generosity! God Bless - Dana

Mano a Mano International



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
<p>Church Services</p> <p>9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship</p>			<p>1</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:00 Adm Meeting 7:30 Adu</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>7:00 Super Monday</p>	<p>14</p> <p>1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA</p>	<p>15</p> <p>4:15—7:1 LOGOS 7:30 Adu</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <p>7:00 Church Council</p>	<p>21</p> <p>1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA</p>	<p>22</p> <p>4:15—7:1 LOGOS 7:30 Adu</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA</p>	<p>29</p> <p>4:15—7:1 LOGOS 7:30 Adu</p>

	Thu	Fri	Sat
	2	3	4
15 Youth Lit Choir	9 5:45 First Ringers	10	11
15 Youth Lit Choir	16 1:00 Book Club 5:45 First Ringers	17	18 5:00 Youth Senior Dinner
15 Youth Lit Choir	23 5:45 First Ringers	24	25 5:00 Youth Event
15 Youth Lit Choir	30 5:45 First Ringers	31	

THANK YOU

Thanks to Tom Cordts and Brandon Janvrin for changing the light on the pulpit. Tom had to order special bulbs, they had to move two pews, carry a long ladder up to the Sanctuary and then Brandon had to climb up to the top of the ladder to change the bulb. They then had to put everything back together again. It is great that we have people who are willing to take the time and effort to take care of our church.



NOVEMBER 2013 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Nov 13</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,568.17	\$193,249.87
Budget Expense	\$17,685.50	\$194,540.50
Income	\$15,626.99	\$173,082.73
Expenses	\$15,848.21	\$170,721.14



FOODS RESOURCE BANK

Here is a wrap-up on the Foods Resource Bank growing project for 2013.

We had a fun September Harvest Celebration in the field, with combine and wagon rides for all. Our corn crop made a record-breaking 212 bushels per acre! But, the market price had dropped and we only sold for \$4.40 a bushel. This is just the opposite of last year when we had a high price with low yield. With this sale amount added to the funds donated to the FRB growing project, we have \$7,128.14 for our donation to Foods Resource Bank.

Ten percent of this amount was designated to the general operating expenses of the Foods Resource Bank and the remaining 90 percent supports a sustainable food program in Kenya. This program is teaching the people of Kenya conservation agriculture and application of manure and crop residue to improve soil and water-retention qualities. The people are learning to plant in trenches where they have replaced the rocky soil with more suitable planting material. Small animals such as rabbits, goats and chickens are “loaned” from which the families are expected to pass on offspring to other families. It is hoped that the children who have left school to help their parents in the work force will be able to go back to school when the food supply is more stable. If you are interested in learning more about this program, check out the reports from FRB visits on the Outreach bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

Thanks to all for helping the people of Kenya experience the dignity and pride of feeding themselves.

Sue Bunselmeyer



Join the
Youth Group

Youth Activities

CELEBRATE OUR SENIOR MEMBERS

On January 18, 2014, dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall for those who are in the 'Over 60' crowd. This will be our fourth '**Celebrate Our Seniors Dinner**' and will include beautiful table settings, wonderful service by our youth, and music from the '40s, '50s and '60s.

Please RSVP to the church office (877-2216) or to Joe Moretti at ajmo40@comcast.net by January 13, 2014. Please let us know when you RSVP if you would like to come and need a ride.

SUPER BOWL

It will soon be time for **THE SUPER BOWL**. You can't stop it, so you might as well get prepared for it, and the Youth Group has a great idea. On February 2, 2014, if you are having a party or just relaxing in your arm-chair, why not enjoy the game with a big plate of **Chili Mac** prepared for you by our very own Youth Group. You can even pick it up between services that morning.

The Youth will be taking orders between services in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, January 26. You can also call the Church office (877-2216), email Joe Moretti at ajmo40@comcast.net, or tell any Youth Ministry member how much you need by January 30 and it will be ready for you on February 2.

All proceeds will go toward the Youth Mission Trip in July 2014.

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS – MARK, MATTHEW, AND LUKE

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED:

- WHY MATTHEW AND LUKE HAVE BIRTH STORIES
- FOR JESUS, AND MARK DOES NOT?
- AND WHY THE STORIES ARE DIFFERENT?
- AND WHY THE GENEALOGIES ARE DIFFERENT?
- WHY MANY OF THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN THE
THE LIFE OF JESUS WERE “IN FULFILLMENT OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES”?

STARTING ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2014, AT 10:30 A.M., THE RELIGIOUS EXPLORATIONS AND DISCOVERY GROUP WILL SEEK ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AS THEY EXPLORE THE QUESTION: WHY WERE THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS WRITTEN THE WAY THEY WERE?

THE RELIGIOUS EXPLORATIONS AND DISCOVER GROUP WILL DO THIS BY READING AND DISCUSSING THE EXPLANATION EPISCOPALIAN BISHOP JOHN SPONG PUTS FORTH IN HIS *LIBERATING THE GOSPELS: READING THE BIBLE WITH JEWISH EYES* OVER SEVERAL SUCCEEDING SUNDAYS.

YOU ARE INVITED TO COME, READ, DISCUSS, AND DISCOVER WHY THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS WERE WRITTEN THE WAY THEY WERE.

TO OBTAIN A COPY OF BISHOP SPONG’S BOOK SEE BILL HUBNER SOON.



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. Emily Beck
4. Alice Huebner
Laura Gerhold
8. Ross Hartman
10. Paul DeBruine
Wallace Reifsteck
Kathy Richardson
11. Carolyn Elliott
Joshua Smith
13. Ann Gerhold
14. Ellen Henry
15. Ted Michell
Jerome Scherer
19. Gloria Cheatham
Betty Johnson
20. Gary Sawyer
21. Charles Stringer
22. Homer Leoucis
23. Ned Cummings
Susan Daley
25. Marlene Gant
26. Mark Daley
27. Russell Tiede
29. Carol Blackwell
Shirley Zimmerman

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!*

4. William & Martha
Crookshank
20. Mark & Jeanette Flenner



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

JANUARY 5

LITURGIST: Carol Robertson

FLOWERS:

COFFEE: Peggy & Gerry Ruff

USHERS/GREETER: Ted &
Darby Mitchell, David & Judi
Carpenter

JANUARY 12

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower

FLOWERS:

COFFEE: Ev Kuhn

USHERS/GREETER: Pat & Mar-
gie Malone, Joe & Carol Robertson

JANUARY 19

LITURGIST: Dee Wenneker

FLOWERS:

COFFEE: Ann & Allen Gerhold

USHERS/GREETER: Sandy Cum-
mings, Mike Koyak, Bill & Martha
Crookshank.

JANUARY 26

LITURGIST: Chuck Zweck

FLOWERS:

COFFEE: Mancy & Homer Leoucis

USHERS/GREETER: Marilee Gor-
don, Carl Jacobs, Mike Koyak, Jodi
Baldwin

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

JANUARY 5

USHER/GREETER: Maureen
Ruski

REFRESHMENTS: Maureen
Ruski

JANUARY 12

USHER/GREETER: Ruby
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

REFRESHMENTS: Ruby
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

JANUARY 19

USHER/GREETER: Bruce &
Debbie Whitney

REFRESHMENTS: Bruce &
Debbie Whitney

JANUARY 26

USHER/GREETER: Betty
Wheatley

REFRESHMENTS: Betty
Wheatley



