

Congregational Comments

Vol. 21 No 1: January 2016

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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

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 wishes, cards and gifts. We have

had a wonderful time with Christen and Kelly and Aaron and Becca and the heart-warming phone calls with family and friends as well.

As you may be aware, some of our members have had a tough time over the holidays. Please remember them in your prayers in the coming days.

Each year Bobbie and I buy a new kitchen calendar to put all our upcoming family events and appointments. It features photos of beautiful landscapes produced by the Sierra Club. What brings a smile - is all those blank little squares: a fresh start, with so many possibilities.

How true that is for us as we begin a New Year. Right now, while our calendars are still open, we can choose what our priorities will be for 2016. Now, before those days put their running shoes on, before the months gain speed, we can make some very fundamental decisions. Will God's grace be a guiding value, our default setting this year as we deal with other people and all the various situations we will surely encounter? Can we choose to trust each day that we are not alone, that Christ's Spirit is always with us, no matter what? Can we actually live in 2016, not in the past, or the future, but in the present?

I think in terms of mindset, attitude, and faith. These we can always control, even in light of all that happens that is out of our control. Soon those little squares (or computer spaces) will fill up. We will all get very busy with work and family and school and volunteering and more. I invite you to join me in choosing now, at this "anything-is-possible" start of this New Year, to allow God's grace and wisdom to guide us, to trust we will not be alone, ever, and to live fully in the abundant blessings of each day. Let us keep one another and our church family in prayers as we embark on this blessed journey of 2016.

Frederick Beuchner once wrote something to the effect *'that once*

Jesus has shown up in a manger there's no telling where he may show up next'. In these winter days, let us keep our eyes open and discover anew the presence of Christ everywhere.

Join us at First Church as we seek to be transformed by Christ coming to us – not just during the month of December, but every day. Come experience our Sunday Worship at 9 am and 11:00 am with Sunday School held during both worship services. At 10 am discover a new friend or renew a current friendship by visiting over delicious refreshments in Fellowship Hall.

May you have a blessed, healthy, peaceful, joyous, and Spirit-filled New Year!

Yours in Christ's Spirit,
Pastor Dave

Remove Christmas Decorations

January the 3rd after 2nd service we will be removing and packing the Christmas decorations. If you can help you might want to dress casually or have casual clothes with you to change if you wish. Just thought you might want to know in advance so you can plan accordingly. We will be quite grateful for all who can help

Thank you!

Clarence Elliott, Worship Life/Music Ministry chair

Religious Journeys of Exploration and Discovery

Starting Sunday, January 10, 2016, the Religious Journeys of Exploration and Discovery discussion group will explore the Gospel of John. You are invited to join the exploration and discovery. We expect the guide book we will be using will cost each participant approximately \$6.50. Please inform Bill Huebner no later than Sunday, December 20, if you would like to have a copy of the guide book ordered for you.

Learning into Lent

A Preaching and Worship Planning Workday

WHEN: January 7, 2016

Check in and snacks at 9:00 a.m.; work sessions 10 a.m.—3 p.m.
(Lunch on your own or with others from the group”

WHERE: First Congregational UCC, 3465 N. MacArthur, Decatur, IL

COST: A basket will be available for donations to cover the cost of snacks, copies and other materials.

WHAT TO BRING: Your favorite Bible translation, whatever plans you’ve already made, your energy and creativity and any resources you’d like to share.

Eastern Association Meeting

October 31, 2015

The meeting began with a stirring worship service with the message given by Rev. Melody Seaton. Rev. Seaton is the pastor of a new church in Sauk Village, Illinois.

The program for this meeting was given by Rev. John Thomas, past president of the United Church of Christ. His message was twofold: “Embracing the Vision: Learning From Our Past” and “Embracing the Vision: Our Hope for the Future”. In these two sessions, he spoke first of the past in how it supported racism. And secondly, where we go from here. We all believe we are not racists and see people of color as equals, but society as a whole does not. What do we do to remedy this? We need to search our hearts and seek out opportunities to correct the wrongs done long ago.

A story about his visiting his son who happens to live in an almost entirely black neighborhood. His son and wife were not at home but he was given a key to the apartment. As he was attempting to use this key (which did not work as expected), the police were not called. Could we say the same if we saw a person of color in our neighborhood attempting to enter a home even with a key?

After much discussion we were left with the charge to go forward and find those things we can do.

Respectfully submitted, Sandy Harmison

THANK YOU

Dear First Church Friends:

Dave and I want to express our gratitude and appreciation for all the prayers, cards, visits from Pastor Dave and members, and concern for both of us while Dave was hospitalized and recovering from surgeries. We have always appreciated you, but now we have a deeper, stronger, and warmer feeling for all of you. You are truly a blessing in our lives. May God bless all of you always.

And special warm thanks to the God's Busy Hands group for the soft warm (and amusing pattern) blanket Alice Huebner delivered to Dave while he was at DMH. It was an uplifting gift and continues to get some use when Dave (and the cats, who are most enamored of the blanket) take naps!

Judi and Dave Carpenter

THANK YOU FROM OUTREACH MINISTRY

Our mitten tree in Fellowship Hall was loaded with 48 scarves, 57 hats, 58 mittens and gloves, 6 pair of cozy socks and 1 fluffy teddy bear. 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 help.



[Christen Cantrell, Aaron's sister, invited First Cong. UCC members as well as students and staff of Mt. Zion schools to donate items and funds to send care packages to USS George Washington sailors.]
Aaron replies:

Greetings from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean,

I'm sitting here somewhere off the coast of who knows where writing you this with the biggest smile on my face because of what all of you have done for me, my friends in Reactor Electrical, Reactor Training, and Reactor Auxiliaries divisions! Last week I received a phone call while on watch that roughly 250+ pounds of mail arrived on the ship for me. After getting several guys to help me carry it to my berthing where I live, I opened it up and was surprised to see 1 gallon care baggies in all of them. It was awesome! There was soap, toothpaste, candy, cards, puzzles, magazines, snacks, drink mix, granola bars, and toilet paper. With us nearing the end of our deployment, the ship's store is not stocked with the essentials that we need, so these care packages were a life line! Thank you to all of you who donated items or money in order to make this happen. Over 200 sailors aboard the USS George Washington received items. Many, if not all, who received a bag shared it with someone else ensuring that more people were able to benefit from these care packages.



Sailors dive into care packages

Again, thank you so much for your thoughts, prayers, well wishes, and donations. They are all greatly appreciated and I look forward to coming home and thanking you in person.

Sincerely,

*EM3 Aaron Taylor
USS George Washington
"Spirit of Freedom"*

Dear Friends,

*Thank
You*


We want to thank everyone of you, for the support and love you have shown our sailors. We thank you, also, for the items you donated to the sailors. Your most generous gifts of money went a long way to-

wards the cost of nearly \$900 to ship the 24 boxes 12 x12 x 12 and 11 boxes 12 x 12 x 6 containing 200 1 gallon "care" baggies and additional supplies $\frac{1}{2}$ way around the world.

We were surprised Tuesday evening (after Thanksgiving) to get a phone call from Aaron on the ship. He was able to share goodies with every sailor in his division, with enough extra to share with other divisions on his ship! They were all overwhelmed. At first some of them grumbled when they had to carry all of "Aaron's mail parcels" the length of 3 football fields from the back of the ship, where they were delivered, to the front of the ship, where Aaron berths. When Aaron told them what the packages were, they all pitched in! And oh were they happy and thankful about the contents! The sailors who have been in the Navy for a long time told Aaron they'd never experienced such a thing. Again, thank you from all of us Cantrells and Taylors, and all of the shipmates, for your generous support of our Navy. You are truly special!

May God bless you,
Christen and Kelly Cantrell
Bobbie and Pastor Dave Taylor

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
3 Pastoral Card Sale	4	5 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	6 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu
10 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service	11 5:00 Admin 7:00 Property	12 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	13 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu
17 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service	18 6:00 Worship/ Music 7:00 Church Council	19 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	20 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu
24 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service	22	26 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	27 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu
31 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service			

Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2
5 LOGOS Adult Choir	7 5:45 First Ringers	8 9
5 LOGOS Adult Choir	14 5:45 First Ringers	15 16
5 LOGOS Adult Choir	21 1:15 Book Club 5:45 First Ringers	22 23
5 LOGOS Adult Choir	28 5:45 First Ringers	29 30
		

New Years wishes from your Financial Secretary

1. Your 2016 contribution envelopes are being mailed soon (if not already). Please use your present booklet with your present number for 2015. You will notice a new number on your 2016 booklet. Please do not use the 2016 booklet until 2016. Don't panic – your previous contributions will switch over to the new number.
2. In order to get a reduced rate from the post office (40 cents each compared to \$2.40 each), we have to send 50 lbs. There are those who give electronically and those who do not give every week – and yes, I realize that – but we are saving the church money by mailing you envelopes. You can always bring them back to church to be used as pew envelopes.
3. ;A Note to Electronic Givers – If you change banks or change account numbers or do anything that might have bearing on your electronic giving, please let me know so I can make the change with Vanco. It is much cheaper for me to do that than for the bank to notify Vanco. Thank you for saving the church money.



Altar Flowers Needed

We need volunteers to place flowers on the altar for three different weeks in January. If you are interested, please contact Worship Music , the office or Shirley Kuhn.

NOVEMBER 2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Nov 15</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,753.08	\$195,283.88
Budget Expense	\$17,437.57	\$191,813.27
Income	\$19,024.77	\$190,160.59
Expenses	\$1,710.60	\$177,439.24

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT



A big THANK YOU! To Mindy Bunselmeyer for directing the children in this years' pageant! The children did a superb job and shared their talents in a meaningful message about the Christmas story and it's true meaning



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

THANK YOU to all who went Christmas caroling (Rick and Missy Boldizar, Judi Carpenter, Peggy Druessel, Marilee Gordon, Christina and James Huckile, Marsha Mower, Stratus Roberts, Carol Robertson, Robert Ruehrup, Grace Stanley, Pastor Dave Taylor). We visited 11 folks and had a great time. What a wonderful way to share the blessings of the season with those around us!

GENERAL INFORMATION

LOGOS is on winter break until Wednesday, January 6

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 into the church office (with a copy to Marsha Mower) as soon as possible, but no later than January 9th.

First Church Book Club

First Church book club needs more members! We meet the third Thursday of each month (except December) in the library/lounge at 1:15 p.m. If you would like to check us out, consider joining us for the January discussion of *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. And if you have questions, call Judi Carpenter at 875-0092. We hope you'll consider becoming a part of the group. Our meetings generally run about an hour, and we know there are readers in congregation.

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

The following letter was received from one of the people the youth gave a Christmas basket to:

Dear Church,

Thank you for your thoughtfulness and kindness. It really made me smile.

We are grateful for the abundance of food you gave us. May God bless you all. Happy Holidays.

The Hartmans



FOODS RESOURCE BANK GROWING PROJECT *By the Numbers*

1 FRB growing project with
5 acres of corn in our
10th year of participation helping
29 countries around the world and
50 different programs supporting food security.
In **2015** our project provided

\$7,161.78 to help the people of Zambia with drought resistant crop diversity, animals, water and waste disposal, and credit opportunities to increase livelihoods so they may learn to feed themselves and experience the dignity and pride in doing so.

Look on the outreach bulletin board for more information on this FR program.



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
Kathy Richardson
12. Carolyn Elliott
Joshua Smith
13. Ann Gerhold
14. Ellen Henry
16. Ted Mitchell
Jerome Scherer
19. Gloria Cheatham
Betty Johnson
20. Gary Sawyer
22. Homer Leoucic
24. Ned Cummings
Susan Daley
25. Marlene Gant
26. Mark Daley
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!

20. Mark & Jeanette Flenner



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

JANUARY 3

LITURGIST: Amy Leman
FLOWERS: Poinsettias
COFFEE: Bill & Alice Huebner
USHERS/GREETER: Marilee Gordon, Sandi Pleasants, Martha , Crookshank, Gary Weiss

JANUARY 10

LITURGIST: Melinda Redman
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Frank & Shelly Smith
USHERS/GREETER: The Clark Family

JANUARY 17

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower
FLOWERS: Mark & Jeanette Flenner
COFFEE: Dave & Judi Carpenter
USHERS/GREETER: Joe & Carol Robertson, Kristin Hargrove, Marylin Cushing

JANUARY 24

LITURGIST: Allen Gerhold
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Peggy Druessel , Betty Cummings
USHERS/GREETER: Tom & Paula Cordts, Ted & Darby Mitchell

JANUARY 31

LITURGIST: Carol Robertson
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Ted & Darby Mitchell
USHERS/GREETER: Ellen Starace, Darla Weltmer, Dave Carpenter, Sheila Mannweiler

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

JANUARY 3

USHER/GREETER: Wes Pietsch
REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

JANUARY 10

USHER/GREETER: Joe Moretti
REFRESHMENTS: Maureen Ruski

JANUARY 17

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

JANUARY 24

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

JANUARY 31

USHER/GREETER: Praise Band
REFRESHMENTS: Missy Boldizar





Playmates News

December was busy here at Playmates. We spent the whole month learning about the real meaning of Christmas. Our focus was sharing our love with others as God did when he shared His son, Jesus with us. The children made cards for people in nursing homes and hung mittens and hats on the Mitten Tree. Our program, "Mary, Mary What Do You See?" told the story of Christmas.

We look forward to coming back in January and learning about snow and animals in winter. We would like to thank Dave Mahr for fixing our climber. With winter weather ahead, we'll probably be playing indoors a lot more.

