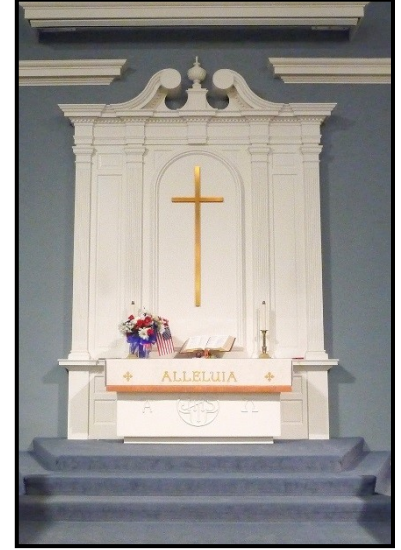


Congregational Comments



Vol. 23 No. 7: July 2018

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

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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:

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| A Note from Pastor Ryan | 2 | Church Cleanup Day | 5 | Happenings | 10 |
| Pastor's Information | 3 | Foods Resource Bank | 6 | Birthdays & Anniversaries | 11 |
| Vespers Tickets | 4 | Finance Notes | 7 | First Church Sunday Morning | 12 |
| Thank You | 4 | Children and Youth Activities | 8 | Calendar | 13 |
| Scholarships | 4 | Events | 9 | | |

A Note from Pastor Ryan

Pastor Ryan

Who's Interpreting Whom?

We are inclined to think that when we open the Scriptures, we're the ones reading and interpreting them. While it's true that we *are* reading and interpreting the Bible, whenever we encounter the written Word of God, something far more profound and transforming is taking place: *the Bible is actually reading and interpreting us!*

Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is living and active." The LORD said to Isaiah, "My Word that goes forth from my mouth will not return void [that is, it will not fail to accomplish something]" (Isaiah 55:11). Paul said, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Many people who become pastors, and most who are ordained in the United Church of Christ and our partner denominations, experience Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as part of their ministry training. During CPE, ministry candidates are placed in nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, mental health facilities, and other institutions to learn the art of "interpreting" themselves and other people. The process of understanding people based on the contexts from which they come, as well as discerning how God is moving both within the lives of the minister and the one being ministered to, is described in the language of CPE as, "reading the human document."

You're probably never thought of yourself as a document that can be read. While you might remain a mystery to others, or even yourself, you are very much an open book to God.

When you encounter the Bible and allow the Scriptures to read and interpret you, the veil on your life and be lifted, as you better come to understand yourself and the solutions God has designed to address your needs.

For starters, the Bible will inform you of those areas in your life where you fall short of God's plans and intentions. Paul wrote, "I wouldn't have known was coveting was, if the law hadn't told me 'Do not covet'" (Romans 7:7). Why do you do the things you do? The Bible will tell you. It will expose your strengths and weaknesses, and it will guide you to the Savior who will put your right with God and empower you by the Spirit.

When we approach the Bible from the position of ourselves as chief interpreter, we imply that the Bible must submit to us. If we approach the Scriptures with the attitude that the Bible is reading us with a God's-eye view, we can better appreciate how it is God wants us to live.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that the Bible is always easy to understand; it isn't. At the same time, everyone can benefit from approaching the Good Book with the intention of learning and being blessed. Before the Reformation, clergy were the only people who were authorized to interpret the Scriptures, reckoning that people weren't educated enough to understand them on their own. This worked until the clergy themselves misread the Bible, often under compulsion of the headquarters in Rome. A congregation whose members don't at least know and encounter the Bible on their own can never know if what they are being taught is accurate or not. Ideally, church members will read the Scriptures, pray for the inspiration of the Spirit, and then dialogue with clergy and each other to not only understand the text better, but to understand themselves better. Spiritual growth comes when we open our hearts and ears to the Word of God with humility and hopefulness.

Pastor's Information

A NOTE ON OFFICE HOURS AND PASTORAL COUNSELING FROM LAST MONTH

Last month, I wrote an article in which I listed the hours I have set aside for pastoral counseling. The times I listed in last month's article (Wednesday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon and Thursday afternoons from 1:30-4:30 p.m.) are **NOT** the only times I am in the building. Rather, these are times I have cleared on my calendar to make sure there are no outside conflicts – clergy gatherings, visitations, sermon prep, and the like – so that people with **pastoral counseling** needs are certain I will be there for them at that moment. I apologize for not making this clear in last month's column.

I have learned that some of you aren't familiar with pastoral counseling or why I posted those hours. Please allow me to explain. As a former hospital chaplain, I am trained in therapeutic techniques to help people, one-on-one or as couples and a family, to tackle issues like relationship strife, addiction, spiritual confusion, and overcoming destructive habits. This is not something all pastors are trained to do, and I am very happy I can share these skills with you – free of charge!

Pastoral ethics require me to list times available for counseling services, as well as making sure counseling only occurs during hours when other people are in the building. I am not permitted to counsel people in emotionally vulnerable situations if the individual and I are the only ones in the building – this is part of the recommendations that accompany "Safe Church" approaches and are critical guidelines to follow in the #MeToo era.

In addition to Sundays, I am normally in the office Mondays through Thursdays – save for meetings or visitations and such -- so please feel free to knock on my door and share anything with me or ask questions. You also can call my cell at (217) 413-4272, text me, or drop me an email at pastorryan@firstchurchdecatour.org anytime, as some of you do on a regular basis. I usually respond quickly. Those of you who've gotten my 11 p.m. texts, 9 p.m. phone calls, or 5 a.m. emails know I'm within reach 24-7, and that I am working even at hours well outside 8:30 to 4. This is the modern reality for my generation of pastors, as technology makes us accessible for even routine matters at all times.

Even during those designated pastoral counseling hours, you still can pop in to discuss any other issue, even if it isn't counseling related. You don't have to wait to catch me on Monday or Tuesday instead.

I am encouraged by the number of people who have responded to my invitation and have already come to see me for counseling or stated they plan to do so. We've definitely seen an uptick in people inquiring about this since I announced it, and if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please let me know!

NOTE: Please understand that pastoral counseling is NOT licensed professional counseling. If I ever sense your situation would be better addressed by a mental health professional, I am legally and ethically obligated to refer you to one.

Blessings,

Pastor Ryan

Vespers Tickets

A Message from Ramona on Vespers Tickets

For the past number of years, it has been my pleasure to provide a way for friends at First Congregational to obtain good seats at a reduced rate at Millikin's annual vespers program. This year will be no exception, but the procedure will be different.

The procedure is as follows: Make out a check to Ramona Borders for the total amount of the tickets you wish to order. They are \$10 each, and you may order as many tickets as you wish and may even combine orders in the same envelope.

Include a self-addressed stamped envelope (unless you see me at church, and no stamp is required). Orders mailed to me will not be processed without the stamped envelope.

Make a note of any special requests, such as near an aisle, in the middle, whom you wish to be seated with, etc.

Mail or give to me by Thursday, July 5. Requests received after that date will be returned.

Tickets this year will be for the 2 p.m. performance on Sunday, Dec. 2. Seating will be in Rows 11, 12, and 13 – probably on the left or right side.

If you have questions, please call me at 877-2963. My address is: Ramona Borders, 651 W. Karen Ct., Decatur, IL 62526.

Please feel free to spread the word!

- Ramona

Thank You

Marlene Grant would like to thank the person who returned her lost ear ring to the office.

Scholarships

There were no applications for Memorial scholarships, so there will be no scholarships awarded for 2018.

Dave Mahr

Church Clean-up Day

June 2 Church Clean-up Day

On June 2 the following dozen people helped during clean-up day. They performed the following activities and more.....

Don Carter - weed whacking of grass and church trees, sidewalk, play ground, parking lot and landscape area along with sweeping bush cuttings. Chuck Zweck - bush clipping and cleaning of outside overhead sanctuary light fixture. Dave and Marlene Gant - Flower bed clean-up activity and designing. Dave Mahr - Parking lot planter box clipping, weeding, and clean-up. Robby and Kathy Moore - Planter box clipping of bushes, weeding, light pole hedge, and clean-up. Paul Debruine - Clipping bushes along church side flower boxes, weeding, and disposal of clippings. Shirley Zimmerman - Clipping of bushes in church flower beds. Sandy Harmison - Cleaning and weeding of flower beds. Jim and Jodi Baldwin - Clipping bushes and tree branches in flower beds, weeding, and bagging of refuse.

The morning was nice and cool. Fellowship was fantastic. Hope to see you all again during the next church clean-up day, which will likely be in September or October. Anyone who could not attend, please come and participate this coming fall. Thank you all for your help and support.

Property



Dave Mahr and Paul Debruine



Shirley Zimmerman



Jim Baldwin

Foods Resource Bank



FIRST CHURCH FOODS RESOURCE BANK GROWING PROJECT

Routed in a Community Grounded in Faith



Our 5-acre corn crop is growing very quickly. As you can see by this picture, the crop is almost as tall as Gehrig. It is enjoying the rain we received the week of June 10. We will be approaching pollination in about a week. Pollination is when the tassels appear and produce pollen to fall on the silks. When pollinated, each silk will form one kernel of corn on an ear. This is the most important weather period for corn. We want adequate moisture and no excessive heat.

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 baskets 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.

Thank you for helping with our Foods Resource Bank growing project which will help people in other countries learn to feed themselves and experience the dignity and pride in doing so.

Finance Notes

MAY 2018 FINANCIAL REPORT

| | <u>Apr 18</u> | <u>YTD</u> |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Budget Income | \$17,420.92 | \$87,104.60 |
| Budget Expense | \$17,269.15 | \$86,345.75 |
| Income | \$13,275.84 | \$86,330.88 |
| Expenses | \$14,996.27 | \$77,971.51 |



Children and Youth Activities



Sunday, July 22 – Thursday, July 26

VBS this year will be from 6:00—8:30 pm , Sunday, July 22 to Thursday, July 26. (Preschoolers will have the option of leaving at 8:05). Volunteer meals will be served at 5:15 pm each night. The theme is Shipwrecked: Rescued by Jesus, and it looks to be another fun year. If you can help out in any way, please contact Carol Robertson or Maureen Ruski.

Recycled Aluminum Cans

Dave Gant sold 109 recycled aluminum cans collected at the church for \$49.05. This money will be used for the Children's and Youth Summer Outreach Project.



EVENTS

Lynn and Darla Weltmer



Lynn and Darla Weltmer are going to celebrate Sixty Five years of marriage on Saturday, July 14th at First Congregational UCC with an Open house - 2:00 - 4:00 in Fellowship Hall.

With 2 teachers and kids starting back to school in August (actual date is August 15th) we are celebrating early!! After being married that long of a time they have everything they need they request only your presence. Hope to see you that day to meet our extended family coming from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Delaware, Florida, Missouri and Illinois to meet and greet our wonderful congregation.

RSVP Lmweltmer@juno.com or 877-7008 by July 1st.

Bill and Alice Huebner would like to thank everyone who attended their 50th wedding anniversary open house on June 16.

Happenings

FFDO

No Dinner

In July



God's Busy Hands

Tuesdays

1:00 - 3:00 pm



God's Busy Hands

Admin Meeting

Monday, July 9

5:30 pm

Council of Minis-
try Teams

No meeting in July



July 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.

1. Toni Longstreet
5. Joe Seitz
6. Shirley Kuhn
Nancy Leoucis
7. Robert Blackwell
Gerald Ruff
Darla Weltmer
Cole Mitchell
9. Aiden Miller
13. Christina Clark
15. Carl Jacobs
Charles Zweck
19. Lindsay Malone
21. Ellen Whitrock
22. Connor Butts
Gavin Butts
23. Zoey Clark
26. Hayley Bunselmeyer
Alexis Fankhauser
27. Sharon Burbes
28. Lois Shelton

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

7. Jerome & Elizabeth Scherer
9. Christopher & Amy Leman
19. Mark & Melinda Bunselmeyer
24. Nicholas & Sally Lauer
25. Robert & Carol Blackwell
Richard & Sheila Mannweiler
27. Kelly & Christen Cantrell



First Church Sunday Morning

| | Date | 9:00 AM Service | 11:00 AM Service |
|---|---------|---|-------------------------------|
|  LITURGISTS | July 1 | Mindy Bunselmeyer | Shirley Zimmerman/Ruby Voyles |
| | July 8 | Ellen Starace | Wes Pietch |
| | July 15 | Dee Wenneker | Mark & Jeanette Flenner |
| | July 22 | Darla Weltmer | Betty Wheatley |
| | July 29 | Chuck Zweck | Kelli Fonseca |
|  <i>Altar Flowers</i> | July 1 | Mark & Jeannette Flenner | |
| | July 8 | Robert Ruehrup | |
| | July 15 | Lynn & Darla Weltmer | |
| | July 22 | Ruby Voyles | |
| | July 29 | | |
|  <i>Fellowship hour</i> | July 1 | Julie Keck | |
| | July 8 | Dave Carpenter | |
| | July 15 | Frank & Shelly Smith | |
| | July 22 | Jerry & Peggy Ruff | |
| | July 29 | Chuck Zweck | |
|  USHERS | July 1 | Ev & Shirley Kuhn, Robert & Penny Butts | Shirley Zimmerman/Ruby Voyles |
| | July 8 | Robert & Penny Butts, Mark & Mindy Bunselmeyer | Wes Pietch |
| | July 15 | Kristin Hargrove, Dave & Marlene Gant, Gary Weiss | Mark & Jeanette Flenner |
| | July 22 | Don & Dee Wenneker, Darla Weltmer, Melinda Redman | Betty Wheatley |
| | July 29 | Tom & Paula Cordts, Bob Bunselmeyer, Jodi Baldwin | Kelli Fonseca |

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

July Calendar

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|---|--|--|-----|-----|
| 1 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary | 2 | 3 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AA: Al-anon 8:00 AA | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary | 9 | 10 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AA: Al-anon 8:00 AA | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary | 16 | 17 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AA: Al-anon 8:00 AA | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 6-8:30 Vacation Bible School | 23 6-8:30 Vacation Bible School | 24 1:00 God's Busy Hands 6:00 VBS 7:00 AA: Al-anon 8:00 AA | 25 6-8:30 Vacation Bible School | 26 6-8:30 Vacation Bible School | 27 | 28 |
| 29 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellowship Hour 11:00 Contemporary | 30 | 31 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 AA: Al-anon 8:00 AA | | | | |



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

2018 Church Goals

Your Council of Ministry Teams has approved the following 3 goals for 2018:

2018 Church Goals

Working on goals for 2018, let one of the church officers know if you have an idea for a goal.

1. Create a safe church policy and conduct training to support this policy.
2. Reestablish an active evangelism ministry.
3. Initiate a second Bible study for this year.