

# Congregational Comments

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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



Our Mission is to worship God,  
Welcome all who seek God, and  
Express our faith in our actions.



*Pastor Dave Taylor*

## **From the Pastor Discount Ministry? No Way!**

Americans are discount conscious. How else to explain the increase of discount shopping malls that dot our interstate highways? How else to explain the rise of huge discount stores Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Sam's Club and simultaneously, the demise of the "mom and pop" downtown stores? How else to explain the offerings by American automakers for new car rebates, and no interest loans? How else to explain the many garage sales? We all like bargains.

America is discount conscious. We assume that all services can and ought to be discounted, that full payment is never necessary. **Not so in the church of Jesus Christ. Not so in the true expressions of our faith and love. Not so in the church called First Congregational United Church of Christ.** Do we provide curriculum to only a quarter of our Sunday School or VBS students, or sheet music for just a quarter of the choir members? Ridiculous isn't it? **We cannot exist on discount faith or discount giving.**

While realizing our nation's flat economy, I want you to know that First Church is operating at a deficit at this time - as it has in the past. A number of "bad weather" Sundays in 2014 has resulted in lower worship attendance and offerings given. Your safety always comes first when the bad weather is present. Yet regardless of the weather our bills still come due each month. Our budget, though significant at \$208,968.58 is not fluff filled. Our belt has been cinched tighter. The incoming and outgoing dollar is monitored very closely. An older building with higher energy and maintenance costs, salaries, insurance, programming and administrative costs, as well as our UCC conference and national responsibilities easily account for the budget figure.

Simply put, our ministry budget demands more cost than we are presently giving. In the past we have had reserves to draw on yet much of the reserve is committed to needed maintenance projects.

## What Can Be Done?

- 1) **PRAY** for your church, not just to be able to pay our bills, but to help us understand and do our mission together in this place, at this time.
- 2) **Verify** – near the end of April you'll received your Statement of Giving – is it correct? Is your pledge current? Does your statement reflect what you want to give to God?
- 3) **Increase** your giving through a “**Second Mile Gift**”. Every gift helps.
- 4) **Make the support of your church a regular part of your weekly or monthly budget.** Know that your support makes a holy difference by investing in God's future now. Look at the wonderful LOGOS, Sunday School and Youth programs filling children and adults with faith, food and fun – touching lives inside and outside our church walls.
- 5) **Use your Bible to look up scriptural passages on giving that may help in your faith decision.** Here are a few suggestions: Matthew 6:19-21, 14:13-21, 25:14-30 Mark 12:29-30, 41-44, Luke 12:13-21,48, 16:1-13 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8: 1-15, 9:6-15, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 3:1-21, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19
- 6) **Consider moving toward the biblical standard of a full tithe (10% of your income)** as your faith commitment to God and your support of First Church.
- 7) **Support your church through your time, talents, and financial resources** as your church leadership acts on a variety of ideas to help grow First Church.

Will we rise in Christ's Spirit and meet the challenge or will we seek a discounted ministry for First Church? I believe we can meet this challenge because, *TOGETHER, WE CAN do all things through CHRIST who strengthens us.*

Come join us at First Congregational UCC Church on Sundays at 9 and 11 AM for worship and 10 AM for Sunday School and Fellowship Time with delicious refreshments. Come as we discover and live together what it means to be part of God's love here and in the world.  
In Christ's Love,

*Pastor Dave*



## **It's Thyme for Ladies' Night!**

Ladies, mark your calendars for May 9. It's Ladies' Night Out at First Congregational Church. Dinner will be served at 6:00. Afterwards, Mike King, of Mari-Mann Herbs, will join us and share his knowledge of herbs. Tickets are on sale in Fellowship Hall, between services or are available in the office. Prices are \$10 for adults, young ladies 12 and under are \$5.

### **Decatur Area Church Women United**

The Decatur Area Church Women United will hold their May Friendship Day on Friday, May 2, 2014 1:00 P.M. at the Christ United Methodist Church, 1503 N. Summit Avenue. Theme for this Celebration is "We are in God's hands and we are God's". Through God our hands can serve. Everyone is welcome to attend. Contact Darla Weltmer 877-7008 for further information. The host Church would like to have some idea of how many are planning on attending by Wed. April 30 so give Darla a call with your reservation.

## **Playmates Preschool**

Playmates Preschool year is coming to a close and we would love to have you join us for our graduation ceremony on Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30. The 4 year olds will be graduating and the 3 year olds will be recognized. They will have a short program and we will have cake in the fellowship hall. Thank you for all your support; it has been a great year!

## **Altar Flowers**

There are a few open slots for altar flowers if anyone is interested. Those dates are July 13 and 27, October 19, November 23 and 30, and Dec 7. If you wish to fill any of these openings, please contact Shirley at 468-2052. Thanks to all who have already volunteered to beautify our sanctuary."



## Sunday Morning

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque. It was covered with names with small American flags mounted on either side of it. The seven year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex." "Good morning, Pastor," he replied, still focused on the plaque.

"Pastor, what is this?" "Well son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in service."

Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the plaque.

Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear, asked, "Which service, the 9:00 or the 11:00?"

Taken from God's Shelter of Love newsletter.

## Sunday School

A Sunday school teacher asked her little children, as they were on the way to church service, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?"

One bright little girl replied, "Because people are sleeping!"

Taken from the St. James and Zion-St. Peter UCC newsletter.



April 17, 2014

## Emily C. Heath

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* - John 13: 34-35

No one really uses the word "maundy" anymore in their daily lives. Which is why today can seem a little murkier than some of the other holy days in Lent. We get Ash Wednesday, and Palm Sunday, and Good Friday...but what's "Maundy Thursday"?

The word "maundy" comes from a Latin word: *mandatum*. And *mandatum* means "mandate" or a "commandment." And when we talk about "Maundy Thursday" we're talking about "mandate Thursday." We're talking about the night before he died, when Christ told his disciples exactly what he expected them to do next.

And if you read a book or watch a movie about almost anyone else, you might think the lead character right about now would be saying something like "avenge my death" or "make sure there's payback" or "don't let them get away with this ... strike back."

But this isn't any other story. This is a story that turns everything on its head. Instead, the mandate that Jesus gives is this: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

It's not my job to rename Christian holy days. But if it were, I might change the name of Maundy Thursday. I might change it from this word that none of us really know anymore to something we would all understand. Something like "Love One Another Thursday" or "The Last Thing Christ Really Wanted Us to Know Thursday."

There's a song that many of us learned as children: "and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love...and they'll know we are Christians by our love." It might not sound all that radical...but it is. It's a song that reminds us of Christ's true mandate. And it's still the gauge of how well we are following him. Because, if we take Christ's word for it, love is more than our mandate as Christians. It's our calling card.

## Prayer

God of love, help us to remember the mandate that Christ has given to us, on this sacred Thursday, and always. And God, may they know we are Christians by our love. Amen.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
<p><b>9:00 Traditional</b>  <b>10:00 Fellowship</b>  <b>Hour</b>  <b>11:00</b>  <b>Contemporary</b></p>			
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Pastoral Care</b>  <b>Card Sale</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>1:00 God's Busy</b>  <b>Hands</b>  <b>7:00 AA: Al-anon</b>  <b>8:00 AA</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>7:00 Cho</b></p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>12 2:00 Memorial</b>  <b>Committee</b>  <b>5:30 Admin</b>  <b>6:00 Worship/</b>  <b>Music Ministry</b>  <b>7:00 Property</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p><b>1:00 God's Busy</b>  <b>Hands</b>  <b>7:00 AA: Al-anon</b>  <b>8:00 AA</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p><b>7:00 Cho</b></p>
<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p><b>7:00 Church</b>  <b>Council</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p><b>1:00 God's Busy</b>  <b>Hands</b>  <b>7:00 AA: Al-anon</b>  <b>8:00 AA</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p><b>6-7:30 PI</b>  <b>Graduati</b>  <b>Fellowsh</b></p>
<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p><b>Memorial Day</b>  <b>Office closed</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p><b>1:00 God's Busy</b>  <b>Hands</b>  <b>7:00 AA: Al-anon</b>  <b>8:00 AA</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>



	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>
	<b>1</b>  <b>10:00 UCC Clergy Fellowship Hall</b> <b>5:45 First Ringers</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ir</b>	<b>8</b>  <b>5:45 First Ringers</b>	<b>9</b>  <b>6:00 Ladies Night Out</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ir</b>	<b>15</b>  <b>1:00 Book Club</b> <b>5:45 First Ringers</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>aymates on ip Hall</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Playmates Picnic Fellowship Hall</b> <b>5:45 First Ringers</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  <b>Robertson Wedding</b>
	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>



## MARCH 2014 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>March 14</u>	<u>YTD</u>
<b>Budget Income</b>	\$15,672.57	\$47,017.71
<b>Budget Expense</b>	\$17,414.05	\$52,242.15
<b>Income</b>	\$18,749.85	\$54,668.10
<b>Expenses</b>	\$22,928.01	\$54,761.09



## Kroger Rebate Program

In Nov. we received a rebate check from Kroger for \$212.25. As they say on ABC World News, "That's real money!" You may get your Kroger card in the church office during the week, or from me on Sundays. Every card is worth \$20, and is easily loaded for more at Kroger. At the end of Jan. we received a Kroger rebate check for \$201.88.

### THANK YOU

MANY THANKS to Dee Wenneker and crew (Marilee Gordon, Joe Robertson and Bill Huebner) for their recent efforts in cleaning out old files and items from the church office. Thanks also to Children's Ministry and their crew for cleaning out the Associate Pastor's office. Your efforts were greatly appreciated! Admin Ministry



Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated.

Thanks So Much!

Betty Johnston

Betty is presently at the Fair Havens Christian Home



THANKS FOR YOUR HELP IN "RAISIN THEM UP RIGHT"

... to our staff for volunteering your time and talents to serve in this important ministry.

... to our parents and guardians for sharing your children and youth with us.

... to our children and youth for participating in LOGOS this year and letting us be part of your "Raisin Up."

LOGOS Ministry - First Congregational United Church of Christ



## VBS 2014

SAVE THE DATES for VBS 2014 at First Church! It is time to start thinking and praying about your involvement in this year's VBS program. It promises to be another action-packed, fun-filled week. Plans are taking shape, but we are still looking for YOU to help us make it another successful year. Serving as co-directors this year are Marsha Mower and Maureen Ruski. We have a few people that have already committed to join us, but will need lots of additional help to make this a wonderful experience for all involved. As we have the past few years, we want to make this a church-wide endeavor, involving as many people and ministries as possible. We are committed to reaching out to children in our church family and the community. So, don't miss out on this opportunity to be involved!

Our theme is *Weird Animals – Where Jesus' Love Is One-of-a-Kind*. We will meet Axl, Fern, Milton, Shred and Iggy as they help us with our daily Bible Point, Story and Key Verse. We will have a wonderful week that will help kids (and adults) experience and be empowered by all of the unexpected and, yes, weird ways that Jesus demonstrated unconditional love.. The dates are Sunday, July 20 – Thursday, July 24 from 6:00-8:30, with the preschool children having the option of leaving at 8:05 and dinner available for the volunteers at 5:15.

Areas of need include: Adult Leaders and/or Assistants for One-of-a-Kind Bible Adventures, KidVid Cinema (I think Chadder retired!!!), Imagination Station, Critter Cafe (snacks), Untamed Games, Spotlight VBS (videographer/photographer), Sing & Play Stampede (opening), The Tail End (closing) and Ozzy's Preschool Park; Crew Leaders and Assistants to shuttle the children through the events each evening; Registration; Decorations; possibly Child Care; Volunteer/Staff Meals and sound/digital projection tech. We will need help with set-up before and take-down after. Those children who complete 6<sup>th</sup> grade this school year are invited to join us as Assistant Crew Leaders. We also have "staff spots" for mature and responsible Jr/Sr High youth to assist in the various areas.

Please let us know as soon as possible where you will help. THANKS! Marsha Mower



*God bless you on your birthday and each day the whole year through. May all His blessings bring you joy in everything you do.*

- 3. Carol Robertson
- 5. Tom Kotal
- 9. Noah Harmison
- 10. Dale Capshaw
- 12. Jessica Robertson  
Jacob Harmison
- 17. Martha Crookshank
- 20. Todd Wernecke
- 21. Melinda Bunselmeyer  
Debbie Whitney
- 22. Emily Carter  
Emma Cordts  
Robert Young  
Jerry Stemple
- 23. Matthew Cordts
- 27. Cameron Malone
- 30. Maurine Boyer  
James Jordan

### **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!*

- 1. Gerald & Peggy Ruff
- 2. Todd & Jennie Wernecke
- 18. Roy & Kim Tsuda
- 25. Skip & Marsha Mower
- 26. Ronald & Janet Brownfield
- 29. James & Marilyn Jordan



**FIRST SERVICE**  
**VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE**

**MAY 4**

**LITURGIST:** Paul DeBruine  
**FLOWERS:** Bob & Betty Henry  
**COFFEE:**  
**USHERS/GREETER:** Chuck  
Zweck, Ted & Darby Mitchell, Dave  
Gant

**MAY 11**

**LITURGIST:** Bonnie Ruecker  
**FLOWERS:** Kim Withrow  
**COFFEE:**  
**USHERS/GREETER:** Todd Clark  
Family

**MAY 18**

**LITURGIST:** Mindy Bunselmeyer  
**FLOWERS:** Dave & Pat Mahr  
**COFFEE:**  
**USHERS/GREETER:** Mark Daley  
Family

**MAY 25**

**LITURGIST:** Allen Gerhold  
**FLOWERS:** Joe & Carol  
Robertson  
**COFFEE:**  
**USHERS/GREETER:** Dave & Mar-  
lene Gant, Don & Dee Wenneker

**SECOND SERVICE**  
**VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE**

**MAY 4**

**USHER/GREETER:** Joe Moretti,  
Maureen Ruski  
**REFRESHMENTS:** Joe Moretti,  
Maureen Ruski

**MAY 11**

**USHER/GREETER:** Ruby  
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman  
**REFRESHMENTS:** Ruby  
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

**MAY 18**

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

**MAY 25**

**USHER/GREETER:** Ashley  
Lofland  
**REFRESHMENTS:** Missy  
Boldizar



