

Congregational Comments

Vol. 20 No 5: May 2015

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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

"And now faith, hope, and love abide, these 3; and the greatest of these is love."

I Corinthians 13:13

One of the things I am discovering about living in central Illinois is rain. During this time of year - along with others - I am ready to leap right from the last flakes of snow right into sunny days and summer...missing that season of spring, when it rains. You can hear the rain, feel it, the fresh earth smell fills the air, and the natural world gradually comes alive. I discover again the need for patience and springtime. Springtime seems to wash away the winter grit and replace it with green growth and fields of flowers. It is amazing to see the woods near our home come alive with wild flowers and wild flowering trees.

One would think with all the rain there also would be lots of rainbows to see, but that isn't always the case. Rainbows seem to surprise everyone, and they are always accompanied by an element of excitement and wonder. When I see a rainbow, I feel confident that the worst is over and new life is beginning.

Our church brings forth a similar feeling in me. In the midst of a world filled with so much pain and poverty, the church reminds me of the hope of new life symbolized in the cross; the rainbow and the leaf...all part of this season. In the cross we remember the worst is over - for Christ has paid for our sins and won the victory. The rainbow reminds us of the covenant we have as children of God. The green leaf calls us to new life, new growth, and new possibilities.

What a comfort and joy is God's gift of hope. Now we can walk confidently in the knowledge that God has promised to strengthen us, renew us and empower us to do ministry. Now there is liberation in knowing that our hope is not built on what we can do but on what God has already done for us. We are called to do amazing things through Christ who strengthens us.

Within the next few weeks local schools and our preschool will celebrate the academic achievement that leads to graduation for some of our youth. Be sure to offer each of our graduates your best wishes and God's blessing for a deeply satisfying life. We give thanks for

them as they are part of God's hope for the future.

May 20 at 6 PM is our Playmates Preschool Graduation. Come celebrate this special day with these wonderful children and their families.

Here are a couple more First Church opportunities that calls us to new possibilities .

May 8th Women's Night Out – come join us for great fellowship!

May 17 Music Sunday at 9 AM will feature up lifting anthems performed by our Adult Choir and Handbells' music and at **11 AM** will feature amazing praise songs by our Praise Band. Don't miss this great opportunity for your spirit to soar through God's Spirit of music.

Every Sunday we lift our voices in song, and proclaim in word and deed that we have seen God's rainbow, and are ready to share that hope in our church, our neighborhoods, and in our homes. Like the women on the first Easter morning, we will run quickly to tell what we have seen and experience. "Christ lives..." The hope we live in is that Christ does live -- as we discover the living possibilities of Christ every day - in every person - in every part of creation. May God bless us as we go about in the world to proclaim and live God's grace, mercy, justice and hope for all people.

We invite you to join us for worship at First Congregational United Church of Christ on Sundays at 9:00AM for our Traditional Service and **11:00AM** for our Contemporary Service and **at 9 AM and 11 AM we have creative Sunday School and Bible Study opportunities for children, youth and adults. At 10:00 AM discover a new friend or renew a current friendship visiting over delicious refreshments in Fellowship Hall.**

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Dave

In Honor of Mothers

My Mother, my friend so dear
throughout my life you're always near.

A tender smile to guide my way
You're the sunshine to light my day.

~Author Unknown~

GOT GRADUATES?

We want to celebrate with you! Let the church office know by May 17th if you, your child or grandchild is graduating from high school, college or graduate school this Spring. We would like to know. Thank you.

PENTECOST MAY 24th

We, like so many other UCC churches, have also discovered that there are many people from all walks of life, hungry to hear that message: that whoever you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. On May 24 we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday by **wearing bright red, yellow, orange, or blue** clothing items symbolizing the colors in a flame, celebrating the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. As we enter this season, my prayer will be that the Spirit will continue to enliven, sustain, and surprise us as we continue to follow the way of the risen Christ.

REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR AND VISIT MEMBERS WHO ARE IN NURSING HOMES

Primrose Retirement Community

Claude Young—Room 228

Hickory Point Christian Village

Mary Lou Phipps— Room 210

Celeste Ritter—Room 304

Walter Jones—Room 410

Imboden Gardens

Harriette Horn—Room120

Keystone

Carolyn Jones—Room 216

Vonderlieth Living Center, Mt. Pulaski, IL

Alice Roach



THANK YOU

Please thank all my church family for their prayers, food, flowers and cards. A special thank you to Pastor Dave and Bobbie, visits and cards hand delivered. Finally realized how sick I was when they let me stay in the hospital for 9 days, really glad to get home. All the gals that make blankets, cards were beautiful and much appreciated. Clarence thanks everyone for the prayers too, since he is the one who has to live with “crabby”.

Betty Wheatley, Sandi Pleasants for your special help. Thank you !!!!!
Carolyn Elliott

I want to thank my church family for making my 100th birthday so memorable. I received so many beautiful cards and well wishes. I especially want to thank Alfreda Tribout, Sue Bunselmeyer and Helen Johnson for the cake, punch, fruit (and Alfreda’s mints) reception between services, and for the basket full of cards and beautiful flowers. It was truly a very special day.

Thank You,
Mary Hamman

Pastoral Care Ministry

Pastoral Care Ministry wants to thank all the card-makers who attended the Card-Making Day on Saturday, March 28: Judi Carpenter, Paula Cordts, Sue Bunselmeyer, Betty Cummings, Sheila Witts-Mannweiler, Alice Huebner, Shelly Smith, and Jodi Baldwin. Cards made included Easter, graduation, Mothers' Day & Fathers' Day. Our next scheduled card sale is Sunday May 3.

Celebration of Service

I just returned from a banquet at the Decatur Correctional Center where volunteers were honored with lunch, music, and several speeches recognizing their generous contributions of time and talent to the offenders at DCC. My husband and colleague, Alex Miller, was particularly celebrated as he was presented with the 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award. Currently mounting his 4th production with the program he runs, "Shakespeare Corrected," *Macbeth* opens to an audience of offenders, their families, and a few members of the general public next week. When you see Alex, please join me in congratulating him on all that this selfless project does for the offenders, their families, our community, and the lives of the Millikin students who get involved in the project. The work he does with these "unbroken" ladies touches more lives than we can possibly count.

An informational video on what Shakespeare Corrected does: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSC11q2H27k>

Recent press about the upcoming production of *Macbeth*:
<http://will.illinois.edu/news/story/meet-the-women-inmates-of-decatur-shakespeare-corrected>

All the best,
Angie

Angela Fleddermann Miller
Assistant Professor of Theatre & Dance
Millikin University
Shilling Hall, 211C
<http://angelaflleddermannmil.wix.com/trashcake>

In memory of Jennifer Lee Wilson: <http://www.achancethroughliteracy.org/>

High School Graduates

Worship/Music Ministry plans to recognize those from this congregation that are graduating from high school this year. Please notify the church office with the name of the graduate, school graduating from and the future plans of the graduate. Thank you.



EASTER BREAKFAST

As always, a great breakfast was put on by the Adult Ministry.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
3 Pastoral Card Sale	4 2:00 Memorial Committee	5 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	6 7:30 Adu
10 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service	11 5:00 Admin	12 1-3:00 God's Busy Hands. 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	13 7:30 Adu
17 Music Sunday	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 Playmate Graduat
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
31 9:00 Traditional Service 11:00 Contemporary Service			

	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2
It Choir	7 5:45 First Ringers	8 Ladies' Night Out	9
It Choir	14 1:15 Book Club 5:45 First Ringers	15	16
es on	21 Playmates Picnic 5:45 First Ringers	22	23
	28 5:45 First Ringers	29	30
			

First Church Book Club

Invitation to Readers

First Church Book Club invites YOU to join us for good discussions and fine fellowship. We meet once a month (except during December, when we don't meet) on the third Thursday at 1:15 p.m. to talk about the book we've agreed to read and discuss. April's book is *Delicious* by Ruth Reichl. We will read *Unravelled* by Robin Harding for our May meeting. So if you've ever considered checking the First Church Book Club out, this would be a great time. Contact Judi Carpenter if you have questions. Or just show up at our meeting on April 16th. You'll be welcomed!



MARCH 2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Mar 15</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$17,753.08	\$53,259.24
Budget Expense	\$17,437.57	\$52,312.71
Income	\$20,380.52	\$56,841.78
Expenses	\$21,277.08	\$52,510.28

VBS 2015

VBS 2015 at First Church! Plans are underway for this year's VBS program. It promises to be another action-packed, fun-filled week. We are still looking for YOU to help us make it another successful year. Serving as co-directors again this year are Marsha Mower and Maureen Ruski. Several people have already committed to join us, but we still need more 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 *EVEREST - Conquering Challenges with God's Mighty Power*. We will meet Klymer, Cliff, Mallory, Pike and Veddy as they help us with our daily Bible Point, Story and Key Verse. We will have an amazing adventure that will help kids (and adults) explore God's incredible power and love for his children. The dates are Sunday, July 26 – Thursday, July 30 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 Assistants for Imagination Station, Mountaintop Treats and Spotlight VBS (videographer/photographer). Preschool Peak needs a couple of Assistants. We also need someone to coordinate and lead Volunteer/Staff Meals, a sound/digital projection tech and possibly Child Care. We will need help with set-up before and take-down after. Those children who complete 6th 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

So, Is Church Attendance Necessary?

Brad Fry

1. It is because God commands us to not forsake the assembly. Hebrews 10:24,25 says, "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." Of course one does not "forsake the assembly" by missing a service. One forsakes the assembly when they don't come to church anymore.

But that life of not attending church often starts with occasionally missing for whatever excuse. Before long any reason seems a justifiable one. As time goes by one might claim to be a member of a certain church, but they wouldn't be able to prove it by attendance and involvement.

2. It is because God tells us that we have a "one another" responsibility. Too often folks look at church as a full service gas station. They pull up, demand to be filled up and speed off. Each Christian has a responsibility to be devoted to one another and give preference to one another (Romans 12:10); to build up one another (Romans 14:19); to accept one another (Romans 15:7); to admonish one another (Romans 15:14); to speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19); to comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18); etc. How are we to give and receive these things if we don't assemble with one another?

People have long comforted their consciences with statements like "I can be a Christian without going to church". Yeah, and a fish is still a fish without staying in the water. But just as the water is the essential environment for the fish's health and survival, so the regular fellowship of the church is to the Christian. And we know what happens to a fish out of water.

NEW BOOK

New Book on Book Cart

To children, parents and grandparents of First Church: Every Monday Morning, written by Linda Hutton and illustrated by Karen O. Murley, a story about Mr. Peters and his little dog, Joey, and their walk around the neighborhood, is being added to the Book Cart.



Linda Hutton, the youngest of twenty-one children, is never at a loss for fascinating writing material. A nationally published author, she is also the founder of two literary journals and a local women-in-the-arts group. Linda lives in Decatur, IL.

Alice Huebner

LOGOS

LOGOS has concluded our 14th program year, ministering to 13 children/youth (and a host of adults!) on Wednesday evenings. We celebrated our staff, families, children and youth at our closing banquet, *Finale Fun*, with bubbles to signify how they all "Blew us Away" this year! We end our program year in good financial shape for our start-up of year 15 in the fall. We thank God for the blessing of serving Him and First Church in this ministry.

Found – Yarn and Blankets

A bag of yarn and a white tub of crocheted blankets was found by the south door of the church. Thank you! If you tell us who you are, we would love to extend a personal "thank you" to you! The yarn and blankets will find a good home!

God's Busy Hands



God's Busy Hands



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 3

LITURGIST: Bonnie Ruecker
FLOWERS: Don & Debbie Moster
COFFEE: Kristin Hargrove
USHERS/GREETER: Charles
Zweck, Gary Weiss, Ellen
Starace , Marilee Gordon

MAY 10

LITURGIST: Chuck Zweck
FLOWERS: Clarence & Carolyn
Elliott
COFFEE: Kristin Hargrove
USHERS/GREETER: Dave
Carpenter, Gary & Pat Weiss,
Darla Weltmer

MAY 17

LITURGIST: Mindy Bunselmeyer
FLOWERS: Jerry & Peggy Ruff
COFFEE: Don & Dee Wenneker
USHERS/GREETER: Howard
Beede, Tom & Paula Cordts,
Sheila Mannweiler

MAY 24

LITURGIST: Bobbie Taylor
FLOWERS: Mark & Mindy
Bunselmeyer
COFFEE: Tom & Paula Cordts
USHERS/GREETER: Howard
Beede, Sandi Pleasants, Dave &
Marlene Gant

MAY 31

LITURGIST: Ellen Starace
FLOWERS:
COFFEE: Laurel Lorey & Betty
Cummings
USHERS/GREETER: Jerry &
Elizabeth Scherer, Dave & Marlene
Gant

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

MAY 3

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

MAY 10

USHER/GREETER: Wes
Pietsch
REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

MAY 17

USHER/GREETER: Betty
Wheatley
REFRESHMENTS: Betty
Wheatley

MAY 24

USHER/GREETER: Howard &
Nancy Beede
REFRESHMENTS: Howard &
Nancy Beede

MAY 31

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



Playmates

It's hard to believe we are almost finished with another school year at Playmates! Our graduation and recognition ceremony will be May 20th at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. A reception will follow in the Fellowship hall. We will be having our year end picnic at Scovill Zoo.

As we say goodbye to this year, we are looking forward to the next. There are some changes coming to the preschool. We are currently in the process of updating classrooms with paint and some new furniture.

We are also excited to welcome Melanie Brown to our staff. She will be the other 3's teacher along with Mrs. Tribout next fall. She is familiar with our program as her 2 boys have attended Playmates.

Lastly, I have to give a big hand to my class. Every year we celebrate our 100th day of school with a party and different activities. This year our class had a goal to collect 100 cans of food to donate to the local food pantry. They were able to collect 129 cans! I am so proud of these kids!

Have a blessed summer and we will see you in the fall!

Amy Miller

