

Congregational Comments

Vol. 21 No 5: May 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

**WHAT A DIFFERENCE –
PENTECOST!**

"When the day of Pentecost arrived all the believers were gathered together in one place... They were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

What a difference! Prior to Pentecost, the first Christians were puzzled about the meaning of Easter, the resurrection, and were fearful that their association with Jesus would bring the wrath of the authorities on them. Then God's Spirit brought power, light, and courage to them.

What about today? We, too, need a dependable source of power to empower us. Our culture says wealth, a great job, a physically fit body, sellable skills, relationships of power; even fear and greed are sources of power. We remember the children's song, "The foolish man built his house upon the sand, and the house came tumbling down." These sources of power are incomplete, short-lived, and even deadly. -What is your source of power? -What vision and spirit empowers and guides you?

Pentecost celebrates God's empowering people like you and me with the Spirit of Christ. Peter was afraid of being linked with Jesus after the crucifixion. After he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached boldly to thousands of people and was even arrested for his bold witness. With this Spirit he "kept on going."

Pentecost shows us in Christ's Spirit, a source that never fails and keeps on going. Like past Eveready commercials, the Eveready bunny suddenly appears in other commercials "Still going"; God's Spirit is continually appearing and calling us to faithfulness in new and unexpected places, exciting and challenging ways.

I have seen that power in the yelps of joy from little ones as they found their Easter egg surprises; as our musicians inspired us with great Easter music; as we enjoyed the Easter Breakfast and visiting; as some of our members took colorful bits of yarn and cloth and knitted

them into amazing blankets of love; as canned goods and money helped feed the hungry here in Decatur and around the world, as children had a great time at LOGO'S Gratitude Banquet day. All these things are happening AND MORE because people – like you and me – allowed God's Spirit to do amazing things. Let God use you – today and everyday!

We, like many other UCC churches, we have also discovered that there are people from all walks of life, hungering to hear that message: that whoever you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. **On May 15th we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday by wearing red** clothing items, celebrating the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. As we enter this season, my prayer will be that God's Spirit will continue to enliven, sustain, and surprise us as we continue to follow the way of the risen Christ.

God's Spirit brings power today to each of us as individuals, within our church and beyond. We receive power:

- to love others in concrete ways as we have felt God's love;
- to forgive others as we have experienced God's forgiveness;
- to share yourself in caring relationships;
- to provide food to the hungry;
- to visit the lonely, in their home or nursing home;
- to help the Church be a living witness through specific actions of faith and compassion;
- to spend less on ourselves and share more with others;
- to share your talents and gifts with others -- with music, art, conversations, letters, sewing, cooking and more; children can draw a picture and share it;
- to seek and help provide new opportunities for the disadvantaged and oppressed;
- to stand with persons in times of crisis;
- to minister to the sick;
- to visit the imprisoned;
- to live and be witnesses for the risen Christ.

How is God's power being lived out in your life? How are you making Holy Difference with your family, church family, school mates, neighbors, co-workers and strangers?

Christ's Spirit is alive within us and around us! Live today in the Pentecost Spirit that surprises all of us with new hope and possibilities; and in whom that Holy Spirit ("Still Going") power fills our lives with God's amazing love and truth and mission!
Share God with someone today!

Have you seen our new facebook page? Share it <https://www.facebook.com/firstcongregationaluccdecatur/> with family, friends and others. Our thanks to Angie Miller for getting us on facebook.

MAY 22nd MUSIC SUNDAY **This is a great opportunity to invite** a family member or friend, or neighbor, or co worker, or classmate. Come check out our great music 9 AM for Chancel Choir and Handbells and 11 AM for Praise Band music. Don't miss this great opportunity!

See you in Church and in our community!

Come join us for worship at First Congregational United Church of Christ on Sundays at 9:00 AM for our Traditional Service and **11:00 AM** for our Contemporary Service. *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

OUR SYMPATHY AND LOVE for the family of Roger and Jan Kahlila. Roger's Mom passed from this life to life eternal in Jesus Christ. We remember Roger and Jan and their family in our prayers and compassion.

PLAYMATES PRESCHOOL GRADUATION MAY 18 at 6 PM

Come celebrate this special day with these wonderful children and their families. We give thanks for teachers and the students growing in knowledge, values and love.

IS CHURCH CAMP ON YOUR SUMMER CALENDAR?

There is still time to register for a great time at church camp event. Registration information is available by going to <http://www.ilucc.org/> - [the Illinois Conference website].

Click on the **Outdoor Ministries** line – then click on the **poster of outdoor ministries** which will show you the summer programs that are available.

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING – June 16-18

You have an opportunity to learn more about our UCC Church by attending part or all of our Illinois Conference Annual Meeting Celebration. to be held in the **Embassy Suites in East Peoria, IL**. For more information go to <http://www.ilucc.org/> or contact Pastor Dave for more information.

A BIG THANK YOU to our Youth Ministry members and leaders who helped plan, prepare the sermon and led our Sunrise Easter Worship – sharing their faith and love with us. We are fortunate to have these great youth as part of our church...Malone Moretti (great Easter message!), Jullian Daley, Mitchell Daley, Tucker Clark, Zoey Clark, Christina Huckile, James Huckile, Devon Moretti! We also give thanks to our youth leaders Joe Moretti, and Susan Daley. Well done!

A BIG THANK YOU to all our Sunday School teachers, and Children's Ministry members and helpers for helping our students learn more about their faith and a job - WELL DONE! We also want say to our families, parents, grandparents and students - THANK YOU for making faith a priority in your life and life of your children and youth.

Our thanks to all our all of you, church family, for making faith education a vital priority and for remembering our Christian Education programs in your prayers and through your caring support of time, talents and money.

A BIG THANK YOU to our Adult Ministry members and friends who helped plan, set up, serve and clean up our Easter Breakfast. Shirley Zimmerman, Betty Cummings, Chris Leman, Mark Daley, Bobbie Taylor, Pastor Dave, Sandi Pleasants, Jim and Jodi Baldwin. Well done!

A GOOD MESSAGE from the Internet

One Sunday morning at a small southern church, the new pastor called on one of his older deacons to lead in the opening prayer. The deacon stood up, bowed his head and said, "*Lord, I hate buttermilk.*"

The pastor opened one eye and wondered where this was going. The deacon continued, "*Lord, I hate lard.*" Now the pastor was totally perplexed. The deacon continued, "*Lord, I ain't too crazy about plain flour. But you mix'em all together and bake'em in a hot oven, I just love biscuits.*"

"Lord help us to realize when life gets hard, when things come up that we don't like, whenever we don't understand what You are doing, that we need to wait and see what You are making. After you get through mixing and baking, it'll probably be something even better than biscuits. Amen."

Pastoral Care Ministry

Pastoral Care Ministry hosted a card-making day Saturday, April 9, in the Choir room. Those attending were Judi Carpenter, Betty Cummings, Bette Fankhouser, Sheila Mannweiler, Alice Huebner, Ellen Starace, and Jodi Baldwin. Sue Bunselmeyer was unable to be there but made cards at home. The group focused on making sympathy, get-well, birthday, thinking-of-you, and Mothers' & Fathers' Day cards. Pastoral Care sends cards to church members on the prayer chain, shut-ins, college students, birthday cards to members over 70, and anniversary cards to members married over 50 years. Monthly sales of cards help to purchase card-making supplies and stamps.

SMILE OF THE DAY

I was always taught to respect my elders, but it keep getting harder to fine one.



Children's Ministry

Congratulations to all of our LEGO's Party Gold Medal Winners! On April 17th the congregation was treated to a display of LEGO handiwork by our children. What a talented group! Thank you to all of them for sharing with us. Thank you to our judges Todd Wernecke, Don Carter, Stacey Carter, Dee Weneker, Dave Carpenter and Bill Huebner. Thank you also to Justin Rice (Bonnie and Ron Ruecker's grandson) for sharing his works with us!

Most Creative: Cameron Malone
Most Unique: Andrew Mower
Most Colorful: Quincy Janvrin
Most Adventurous: Logan Moster
Most Cool: Isaiah Janvrin



BIBLES

Congratulations to our 3rd graders who will be receiving Bibles during the 9:00 service on Sunday, May 22nd : Gehrig Bunselmeyer and Andrew Mower! God Bless you in your journey of faith!

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER RECOGNITION

God Bless our Sunday School Staff that will be recognized during both services on May 22nd. We thank them for their dedication to our children and for all the work that goes in to keeping the program fresh and interesting for the kids. Thank you to the following volunteers:

Kate Hammon
Debbie Moster
Missy Boldizar

Mindy Bunselmeyer
Stacey Carter
Katy Koyak

Devon Moretti
Alice Huebner (sub)
Carol Robertson (sub)

UCC Church Goals

Why church goals and where are we going?

Goals provide opportunities for groups, ministries, and the congregation to focus on activities where we may want to expand, improve, or just do something different with our ministry for God. Goals are typically intended to be pretty straight forward and understandable by all. But that does not mean they are always easily accomplished.

Two good examples could include that over the last 10 years our Sunday church attendance has decreased by nearly 50 percent and secondly, no matter how hard we try we have difficulty filling our ministry positions. These are two important building blocks that require focus.

Some actions to achieve goals can be implemented immediately like expand/improve fellowship activities within our church. We just need to identify what we want to do, plan those activities, and attend. Those actions are being worked as you read this article and will continue. Others like increase attendance and assuring we are in alignment with other small churches within UCC take much more effort.

So with the more difficult and perhaps complicated goals the question becomes; **where are we going with these?** Currently we are working with senior UCC leadership and other successful small UCC churches to understand what actions they have taken for success. We know we do not want to try to recreate the wheel and have a strong desire to learn from others success.

Admin and the Church Council will be working very closely over the next few weeks to evaluate and determine if there are recommendations that we may desire that have the potential to improve the staffing and effectiveness of our ministries.

Should we identify significant recommendations and/or any actions that require congregation approval we have tentatively discussed that it may be necessary to have a special meeting, perhaps October, to share and discuss those activities.

Should anyone have additional follow-up questions please do not hesitate to touch base with Pastor Dave, Marsha, or Gary.

UCC GOALS FOR 2016

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

As you will note in the box below our goal no. 2 is to develop a social activity for each month. This can be any group activity or combination of groups sponsored by the church.

Some ideas have surfaced to include such things as old fashion ice cream social, pie making contest with a meal, invite a singing group for an evening, etc.

The real question is what would you like to do, what would you enjoy, and/or what would bring our members and guests to the table for a wonderful evening/event?

Share your desires/recommendations with anyone on Admin or place a note in the offering...

UCC GOAL NO. 2		
CONTINUE TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES WITHIN OUR CHURCH TO CAUSE MORE SOCIALIZATION AND COMRADERY BETWEEN ATTENDEES OF BOTH SERVICES, AGE GROUPS, AND THOSE WHO LEAD OUR MINISTRIES.		
JANUARY Senior Dinner	FEBRUARY Youth - Sweetheart Dinner	MARCH Adult Program - Soup Challenge Easter Social & Egg Hunt Women's Fellowship Luncheon
APRIL Open	MAY Music Sunday	JUNE Praise Band - Open Mic Night
JULY Vacation Bible School	AUGUST Open	SEPTEMBER Rally Day
OCTOBER Children's Halloween Social LOGOS - Trunk or Treat	NOVEMBER Thanksgiving Dinner LOGOS - Vets Appreciation	DECEMBER Progressive Dinner Music Sunday Caroling

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
1 Pastoral Card Sale	2	3 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	4 7:30 Cho
8 Church Services 9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship	9 5:30 Admin 6:00 Worship/Music 7:00 Property	10 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	11 7:30 Cho
15 Strengthen our Church	16 7:00 Church Council	17 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	18 Playmat Graduat
22 Music Sunday	23	24 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	25
29 Church Services 9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship	30	31 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	

	Thu	Fri	Sat
oir	5 5:45 First Ringers	6 6:00 MCVP	7
oir	12 5:45 First Ringers	13 6:00 MCVP	14
es ion	19 Playmates Picnic 1:15 Book Club 5:45 First Ringers	20 1:00 Mothers Day Tea 6:00 MCVP	21
	26 5:45 First Ringers	27 6:00 MCVP	28
			

Shipwreck Story

A story tells about a single survivor on a shipwreck that washed up on a small, uninhabited island. The survivor prayed feverishly for God to rescue him. Every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood and palm branches to protect himself from the elements and to store his few possessions.

One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames with smoke rolling up to the sky. He felt the worst had happened and everything was lost. He was stunned with disbelief, grief and anger. He cried out, **“God! How could you do this to me?”**

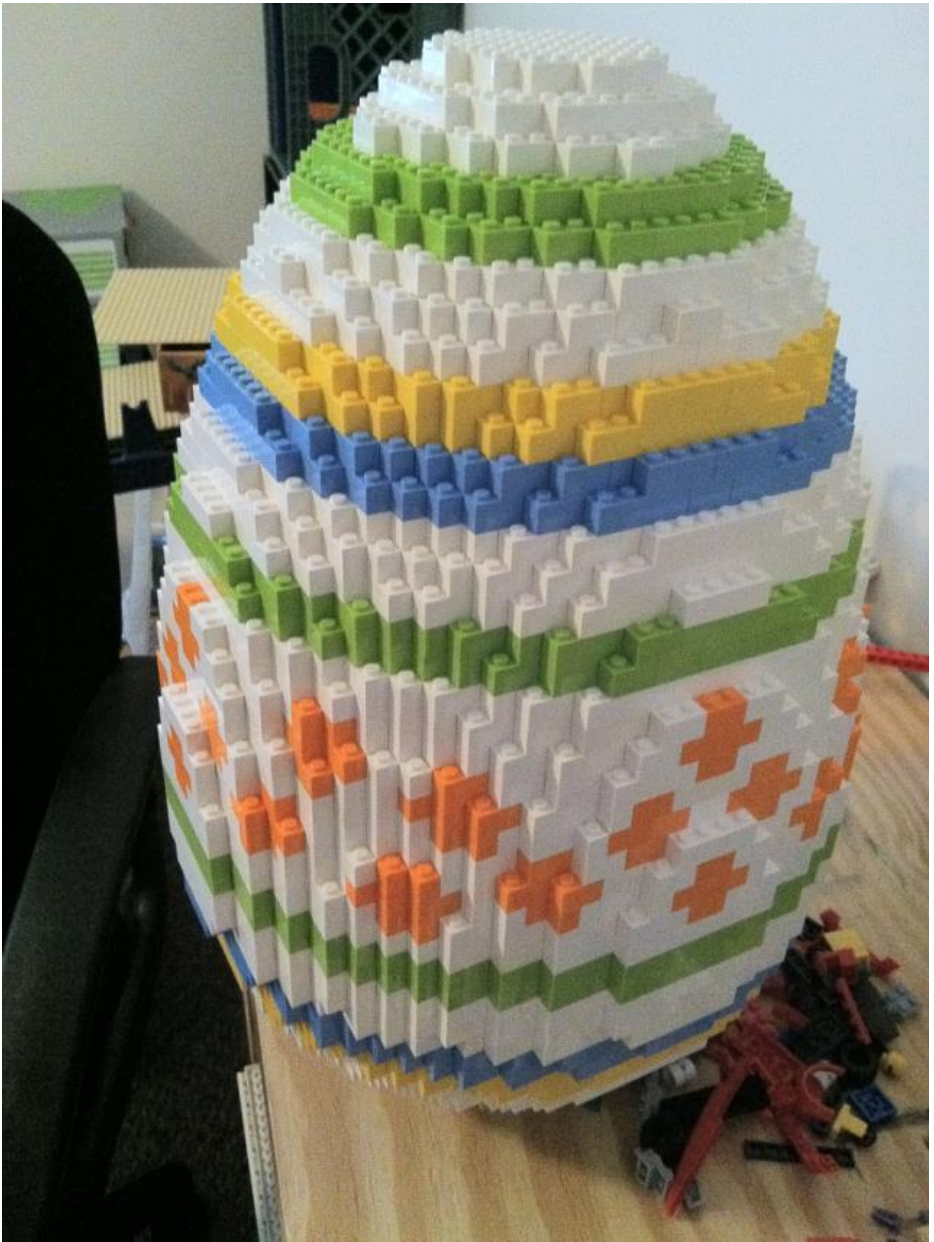
Early the next day, he was awakened by the sound of a ship’s horn approaching the island. It had come to rescue him! ‘How did you know I was here?’ asked the weary man of his rescuers. ‘We saw your smoke signal’ they replied.

*** THE MORAL OF THIS STORY ***

It’s easy to get discouraged when things are going bad, but we shouldn’t lose heart because God is always at work in our lives, even in the midst of our pain and suffering.

Remember that the next time your little hut seems to be burning to the ground: it just may be smoke signal that summons the Grace of God—your rescue ship.





A Big, Big Lego Easter Egg

Playmates News

It's hard to believe that our school year will soon be over. The children at Playmates have grown and learned so much since September. Our graduation and recognition program will be May 18th. Until then, we are enjoying the spring weather.

Thanks to all of you who stopped by our Open House. We loved showing off the updates to our preschool rooms. Our public Open House was also a great success. We had a lot of new faces come in and look around. Thanks to Darby and Ted Mitchell for their help in greeting our current and prospective families.

We have begun registration for the fall. If you know of anyone looking for a preschool, please let tell them about Playmates Preschool.

KROGER UPDATE

Our latest Kroger check was for \$341.80. It has come to my attention that we must re-register each year during the month of April, according to the Kroger Community Rewards brochure. Some of my informants re-registered earlier when they noticed that their Kroger receipt no longer listed FCUCC as the beneficiary. You can re-register online by logging in to your Kroger account, or, perhaps even easier, by calling the number on the back of your card. Thank you for taking the time to re-register. If you have questions about this re-registering, please call Jeanette Flenner as 217-855-4751

MARCH 2016 FINANCIAL REPORT

	No data available	
	<u>March 16</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$18,431.00	\$55,293.00
Budget Expense	\$17,971.56	\$53,914.68
Income	\$	\$
Expenses	\$	\$

LOGOS and VBS

LOGOS has concluded our 15th program year, ministering to 11 children/youth (and a host of adults!) on Wednesday evenings. We celebrated our staff, families, children and youth at our closing banquet, *An Attitude of Gratitude*, with s'more packets to signify how "We need S'more people like you!" We end our program year in good financial shape for our start-up of year 16 in the fall. We thank God for the blessing of serving Him and First Church in this ministry.

VBS 2016 at First Church! Plans are progressing 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 director again this year is Marsha Mower. Several people that have already committed to join us and we thank you for volunteering! 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 *Cave Quest – FOLLOWING JESUS – THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD*. We will meet Sal, Mawtha, Radar, Olivia and Ray as they help us with our daily Bible Point, Story and Key Verse. We will have an over-the-top underground adventure that will ground kids (and adults) in the rock-solid foundation of God's and love, a love that takes us through life's dark times. The dates are Sunday, July 24 – Thursday, July 28 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 Cavern Cafe, Spelunker Sports & Games, Spotlight VBS (videographer/photographer); Crew Leaders and Assistants to shuttle the children through the events each evening; Registration; Decorations; possibly Child Care; Volunteer/Staff Meal helpers. 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.

Decatur Area Church Women United

Decatur Area Church Women United will hold their May Friendship Day Celebration on Friday, May 6th at 1:00 PM to be held at the First United Methodist Church, 201 W. North St.

"Finding Grace at the Table" is the theme for the Celebration. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. For further information contact Darla Weltmer, 877-7008.

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

Everygreen Place

Mary Lou Phipps— Room 333



YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Babies and Mothers in Need

Seniors from our Youth Group and the Youth Group in Moweaqua are going on a week-long mission trip to Daytona, Florida. The main mission of this trip is to provide donations of baby clothes, baby blankets, and other items that a mother may need for a new baby.

After arriving in Florida, the seniors will use any monetary donations to purchase bulkier items (diapers, baby food, and formula) that would take up too much space on the long trip.

The seniors on this trip have fond memories of their mission trip to Daytona two years ago and the community is dear to their hearts. While in Daytona they will make stops at the UCP center and other places that they previously served so they can again visit and share some Love with a community in need.

Please consider donating to this worthy cause. You may give your donations to Joe Moretti, Malone Moretti, Chuck Zweck, or the Church office. All donations must be to the Church by June 1, 2016. Thank you for your support of such an important mission!

THANK YOU

Thank you on behalf of our patrons, volunteers and staff for your generous gift of \$1,860.31 on March 29, 2016. Your support provides the funds to fulfill our mission statement and it is an essential part of our continuing efforts to serve the less fortunate in our community. Without your help, we would be unable to perform our mission on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Once again, we are greatly appreciative of your benevolence and look forward to remaining loyal partners with you in serving the less fortunate of our community.

Sincerely,

The Good Samaritan Inn



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. 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!

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
30. Mark & Susan Schleeter



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

MAY 1

LITURGIST: Bill Huebner
FLOWERS: Homer & Nancy
Leoucis
COFFEE: Kristin Hargrove
USHERS/GREETER: Kristin
Hargrove, Ev Kuhn, Dave &
Marlene Gant

MAY 8

LITURGIST: Chuck Zweck
FLOWERS: Don & Stacey Carter
COFFEE: Jim & Jodi Baldwin
USHERS/GREETER: Pat &
Margie Malone

MAY 15

LITURGIST: Darla Weltmer
FLOWERS: Kathy Richardson
COFFEE: Ellen Starace
USHERS/GREETER: Frank &
Shelly Smith

MAY 22

LITURGIST: Mindy Bunselmeyer
FLOWERS: Jerry & Peggy Ruff
COFFEE: Sheila Mannweiler
USHERS/GREETER: Ellen
Starace, Dave & Marlene Gant,
Darby Mitchell

MAY 29

LITURGIST: Bill Huebner
FLOWERS: Dave & Pat Mahr
COFFEE: Frank & Shelly Smith
USHERS/GREETER: Dave &
Marlene Gant, Don & Dee
Wenneker

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

MAY 1

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

MAY 8

USHER/GREETER: Wes
Pietsch
REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

MAY 15

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

MAY 22

USHER/GREETER: Sandy
Harmison
REFRESHMENTS: Sandy
Harmison

MAY 29

USHER/GREETER: Praise Band
REFRESHMENTS: Missy
Boldizar



