

Congregational Comments

Vol. 21 No 11: November 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



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



Pastor Jan Johnson

FROM THE PASTOR

Ah, November! The month set aside to offer God our thanks for blessings we have received all year long. How many blessings have you been gifted? Have you ever counted? Consider doing this! It's humbling. Try writing down every blessing you receive this month. I'm going to guess you will feel incredibly loved by our God! Now, we don't really need to write down each blessing just to know that we are blessed. But sometimes it's a good idea to remind ourselves how much God loves us! And THEN, think about all the other people in the world and how much God has blessed them, too.

With all the blessings swirling around this old world, why do we have so much depression and ill will and angst? Maybe because not everyone stops to look at the blessings they have. It is easy to gripe. (and we all do it!) But we have to stop and think to connect our hearts and minds to the blessings! Now why is that so? Is recognizing that we are a blessed people so foreign to our lives that we do not naturally think in those terms? Perhaps we are just too busy to recognize blessings when they come to us. Perhaps we don't consider small things to be a blessing. Do we consider a blessing something that costs a lot of money? Some people do. Our faith tells us that that is not so. Blessings come in all shapes and sizes and are brought to us by people we know and love, by strangers who have no idea they are being used by God to deliver a blessing! Sometimes they come to us in awkward moments or in rushed moments.

On my first Sunday at First Congregational in Jacksonville, I arrived in town early and stopped at Hucks Convenient Store on Morton Ave. While I was getting my coffee I upended the 20 ounce cup and it spilled over the edge of the counter on a chocolate candy display. Do you have any idea how fast Hershey Chocolate bars and Peanut Butter Cups melt when hit with really hot coffee?? Do you have any idea how much of a mess it makes?? I said, to no one in particular, "Well, crap!" and went about cleaning up my mess. A woman dressed for church, carrying a soft sided briefcase had come in just in time to see the spectacle. She heard my exclamation. She calmly came over and started

helping me, singing under her breath. I didn't know the song, but it was about Jesus' presence in all times and places. We got the mess cleaned up and I started over, pouring another cup of coffee (the attendant moved the display away from the coffee counter). I took my new cup of coffee, with its lid securely in place, to the checkout counter and started to pay for it and the attendant said the woman had already paid for me. I was both humbled and surprised at the same time. It was such a nice gesture! I suppose she thought I had had a rough start to the morning and maybe I needed a lift. I did!

I never did find out my helper's name. I don't know if she lives in Jacksonville or was just visiting. She was God's angel to me that morning! Did I say she was African American?

Yes, blessings come from all places and all peoples, at times when we need them desperately and at times when it's just a relief or a gentle reminder that we are all in this life together, why not be a blessing to each other!

The old adage is still a good idea: count your blessings instead of counting sheep when you can't sleep!

Happy Thanksgiving Month!

Jan

The Sunday's of November are filled with activity:

November 6 is Communion Sunday, November 13 is Memorial Sunday and Veteran's Sunday, November 20 is Thanksgiving Sunday and we will have a special Pilgrim's Service, November 27 is Advent Sunday with Communion.

Getting Ready for Advent - several of the members of the church will be asked to write a brief meditation for an All Church Advent Booklet. Watch for your letter with directions and suggestions (if you get writer's block). All devotions need to be back to Rev. Jan by November 15 in order to have the booklet completed for November 27th. If you would like to write a devotional, please let her know before October 30th.

Continued on next page

November 12 is the Eastern/Western Associations Fall Meeting at St. Paul's UCC in Pekin, IL. – Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, our General Minister and Executive Director of the United Church of Christ will be our keynote speaker that day. Even if you are not a delegate, please try to attend this meeting. It is not often we get to have the General Minister in our midst and this accessible to us all! If you think you might want to attend, please let the office know so we can get reservations made early. St. Paul's is accessible and there are 3 parking lots available.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

In an effort to save money and a lot of unnecessary paper, we have decided to reduce the number of contribution envelopes we order and also to discontinue the practice of mailing them. In the past many of you have asked that we not send them but it was necessary in order to get the cheapest postal rate possible. The total cost last year for the entire process was just under \$600. Last year we mailed fifteen to the church and it would be even more this year. We are sure you realize that amount can be better spent elsewhere.

As with so many things, everyone is different. Some of you give weekly, some monthly, some quarterly, some semi-annually, some annually. If you give weekly, you may decide you still have to have those envelopes. We will be ordering some. Everyone can help by using a pew envelope - take one home on Sunday for your next contribution - or by using a plain envelope from home. Be sure to put your name and number on the outside. The amounts of your Current Expense and Outreach contributions need to go inside the flap for confidential purposes and so the money counters know your wishes. Otherwise, it all goes to Current Expense. There is also the opportunity to give electronically with your contribution taken from your bank account and put into the church's account on the 1st and/or 15th of each month. If you would like to join others who do this, Marilee has a form for you to complete.

Before Marilee orders, please let her know yes or no to envelopes for you. This can be done one of several ways: in person, by phone (428-8468), by email (MShppr1@gmail.com), by a note in her church mailbox (top right corner of mailboxes in the hallway by the office).

If you have - or will have - unused contribution envelopes, consider bringing them to church. We will white out date and number, thereby enabling us to use them as pew envelopes.

Thank you for your consideration of this new method and prompt reply.

A Love Story – Chapter 2

The youth group met the visiting kids at the church door and helped them into the building. There were kids in wheelchairs and they could roll themselves into the church and down the hall to the youth meeting room. There were kids on crutches with only 1 leg and a little girl who had two legs in braces and both arms were sort of being held by her crutches. There were a couple of kids in wheelchairs who had other young people pushing their chairs for them and there were kids who walked in on their own two legs and looked completely ‘normal’ – whatever THAT is. It took a few minutes but finally we were all in the room together. It was really quiet. No one spoke for a long time.

Finally our advisor offered the others some soda and chips and they all smiled! One of the wheelchair kids had a tray over his lap that hooked on the chair handles. On the tray were square pictures and words. When he was asked what kind of soda he would like, he pointed to a square with a picture of an orange on it! He couldn’t speak but he could talk with the board!! Cool! I went to get his orange soda and one of his aide’s said he needed a straw. I took the soda to him and put the straw in it and set it on the board. He pointed to the words “THANK YOU”. I pointed to the words “YOU ARE WELCOME”. He sort of grinned and laughed. Well, sort of laughed. It was actually more like a screech. I smiled at him and told him I’d be right back; I needed to get my soda and some chips. He pounded on the board and I turned back to see what he wanted. He pointed to the picture of potato chips. I shook my head and went to get us our chips.

At the kitchen I picked up two bags of BBQ potato chips and my soda and started to go back to the youth room when the pastor called my name. He asked me why I needed two bags of chips and I told him they were for my new friend. “What’s the new friend’s name?” he asked. “Uhhhhhh, I don’t know!” I stammered. “I forgot to ask!” Pastor just smiled.

We had thought we would play a game to get to know each other but I wasn’t sure that would work. We started to just say our name and we went around the room. Many of us could speak our name. A couple of the kids signed their name and their aide translated for us. My friend with the picture board spelled his name by pointing to each letter in his name on the alphabet section of his board. His name was Nate.

Now THAT’s an OUTREACH!

Find the commonality in the differences between us and you will begin seeing the world’s people as God sees us.

Jan

OPERATION CHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES

This year Children's Ministry has chosen to focus our shoebox efforts towards the teen boy and girl age group. In addition, we are using a list provided in part by the Samaritan's Purse Organization to help fill the boxes. On Sunday Oct 23rd and 30th, you will have an opportunity to sign up for item(s) on the list that you would bring to church on or before Sunday November 6th. Please see, Debbie Moster, Robert Ruehrup, or Carol Robertson for that list before or after services. There will be a large box in Fellowship Hall for collection. You are also welcome to make your own boxes and bring them by Nov. 6th and Sue Bunselmeyer has agreed to deliver these to Sharon Methodist Church for distribution. If you would like to contribute towards postage, \$7 per box, please make your check payable to First Congregational Church with "Children's Activities" in the memo. On November 6th we will do partial assembly of the contributions during Fellowship time so please come and join us!

Thank you for your support of this worthwhile Giving of Christmas project!



Adult Ministry

Thanksgiving Dinner—Join us for Thanksgiving dinner at noon on Sunday, November 13th in Fellowship Hall.

email Shirley Zimmerman at sdzcomm27@comcast.net if you will be joining us.

LADIES....Help Devon Moretti and her classmates meet a requirement for their nursing class this semester by joining us in Fellowship Hall on Friday, November 11th at 6 p.m. to listen to their presentation "Promoting Bone Health".

Light snacks will be served.

Contact Shirley Zimmerman at 875-7302 or email to sdzcomm27@comcast.net

First Friday Dinner Out

First Friday Dinner Out for November 4 will be at Tandoor Indian Grill. Come and experiment with a different cuisine at 6:00. Please let Sandy Harmison know if you will be coming by November 3 so that arrangements can be made. Phone 877-4775 email sharmison2002@yahoo.com



GENERAL INFORMATION AND DATES

ANNUAL MEETING will be held in the sanctuary Sunday, December 6, 2015 at 10:00 a.m., for the purpose of: approving the minutes of the December 6, 2016 Annual Meeting; approving the new Endowment Foundation directors; financial update and stewardship campaign report; presentation and approval of the 20167 budget; installation of officers and ministry team co-leaders for 2016; and any other business to come before the congregation. Supporting materials will be available to the congregation in the narthex by November 2th.

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR CHURCH-WIDE CHRISTMAS CAROLING. We will meet in Fellowship Hall at 12:30 on Sunday, December 11 and visit those in our church family who are unable to get out for the holidays and spread a little holiday cheer. Trust me - this will be a very worthwhile investment of your time! Any questions, see Marsha Mower.

ANNUAL REPORTS for 2016 will be due no later than January 7, 2017 for pastor, officers, ministries, committees and other organizations. Please send your written reports to the church office and Marsha Mower. Thanks.

MEMORIAL SUNDAY – November 13th will be our recognition of the loved ones we have lost in the past year. Please notify the church office or Pastor Jan if there is someone who should be remembered that was not a member of our church family.

HANGING OF THE GREENS – Mark your calendars for Saturday, November 26th! We will gather in the Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. to decorate the church for Advent. Come early and share coffee and pastries in Fellowship Hall beginning at 9:00 a.m. It takes many hands to accomplish this task each year. We have jobs for everyone – short & tall, old & young. Everyone is welcome!

USHERS NEEDED – Ushers are needed for the November and December 9:00 a.m. services. Ushering is an easy way to put a smile on your face through your greeting of members as they enter the Sanctuary. If you are willing to volunteer for one or more Sundays, please contact Darby Mitchell at church, by phone at 972-5690 or 864-3083 or e-mail at ktafinancial@sbcglobal.net . Your help is appreciated!

OFFICE FURNITURE – Ted and Darby Mitchell have donated a desk and two work tables for use in the church office. The maple furniture was built by Edward Redmond, Darby’s father and a former member, in 2000 for Darby and Ted’s office. Woodworking was Ed’s hobby and he spent many hours in his workshop building many pieces of furniture for his wife and daughters. It is a fitting memorial to Ed that some of his beautiful handiwork be used at our church.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
Church Services 9:00 Traditional 11:00 Contemporary Worship		1 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Adult Choir 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	2 4:45-7:15
6 12:00-2:30 Confirmation Class	7	8 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	9 4:45-7:15 Veteran's
13 Thanksgiving Dinner	14 5:30 Admin	15 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	16 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu
20 Thanksgiving Food Baskets (Youth Ministry)	21 5:30 Church Council	22 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	23 7:00 Adu
27 Advent Begins	28	29 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-anon 8:00 AA	30 4:45-7:15 7:00 Adu

	Thu	Fri	Sat
	3	4	5
5 LOGOS	5:45 First Ringers		
	10	11	12
5 LOGOS s Dinner	5:45 First Ringers		
	17	18	19
5 LOGOS lt Choir	1:15 Book Club 5:45 First Ringers		
	24	25	26
lt Choir			
5 LOGOS lt Choir			

From Your Church President.....

Congregational Action from Special Called Meeting
October 16, 2016

Many thanks for your prayers, input and support of the process that has resulted in us approving a new "structure" for God's work at First Church. I am very excited for what this step forward in faith can mean to our future! Now, with your help, we continue the hard work required for a successful implementation, with the sure knowledge that God will always be by our side, guiding our thoughts and actions. Following is a synopsis of the congregational action on October 16:

Goal 1 Action Plan, was unanimously approved by the congregation, as recommended by Admin and unanimously approved by Church Council September 16. (*Goal No. 1* - *Review our organization structure to better align with other United Church of Christ churches of our size and improve the staffing and effectiveness of our ministries.*) A diagram of the new structure is at the end of this article.

Suspending The Organizational Manual for one year while the approved changes are being implemented, was unanimously approved.

At the recommendation of Nominating/Stewardship Ministry, allowing President (Marsha Mower), Vice-President (Gary Baker), Secretary (Sandy Harmison) and Treasurer (Sharon Burbes) to remain in their positions for 2017, during the one-year implementation, was unanimously approved.

"Setting aside" verbiage in the Constitution and By-Laws during the implementation in 2017, that is impacted by the approved action plan was unanimously approved. References in both documents to *Church Council* shall be understood to now be *Council of Ministry Teams*; terms of office for the 2016 president, vice-president and secretary are extended for another year during the implementation; Article VIII in the Constitution (Church Council) is understood to be Council of Ministry Teams; and Article 1 in the By-Laws (Organizational Manual) is suspended for 2017.

Now, begins our work towards the implementation in 2017. Over the next few weeks, Nominating/Stewardship Ministry and Admin will be working closely together to find persons with the gifts, talents and willingness to serve in the Co-Leader positions on the five ministry teams. These persons, along with the officers will be elected at the Annual Meeting of the congregation on Sunday, December 4th. In addition,

current ministry members will be asked if they still have a passion for volunteering in the areas they currently serve. Time and Talent sheets will go out very soon to the congregation to determine what areas each person feels called to volunteer/serve. It will be very important for everyone to prayerfully consider this and respond. A big piece of our successful future lies with utilizing the talents and passions of ALL our congregants – members, friends, visitors alike! Admin will be working on further detail for each ministry team, illustrating the areas of service involved. This will help us make sure we have everything covered to begin the year and assist us when we re-evaluate and confirm our commitments in 2017. Beginning in the 2nd quarter of 2017, Admin will begin working on combining our Constitution, By-Laws and Organizational Manual into to one document. Throughout 2017, we will evaluate our progress and make any needed adjustments. This will be a year of “patience and grace” for all of us, as we work together through this transition and implementation. We anticipate holding a Special Called Congregational Meeting in October 2017 to approve a final document. Admin’s “doors” are always open for your thoughts and suggestions.

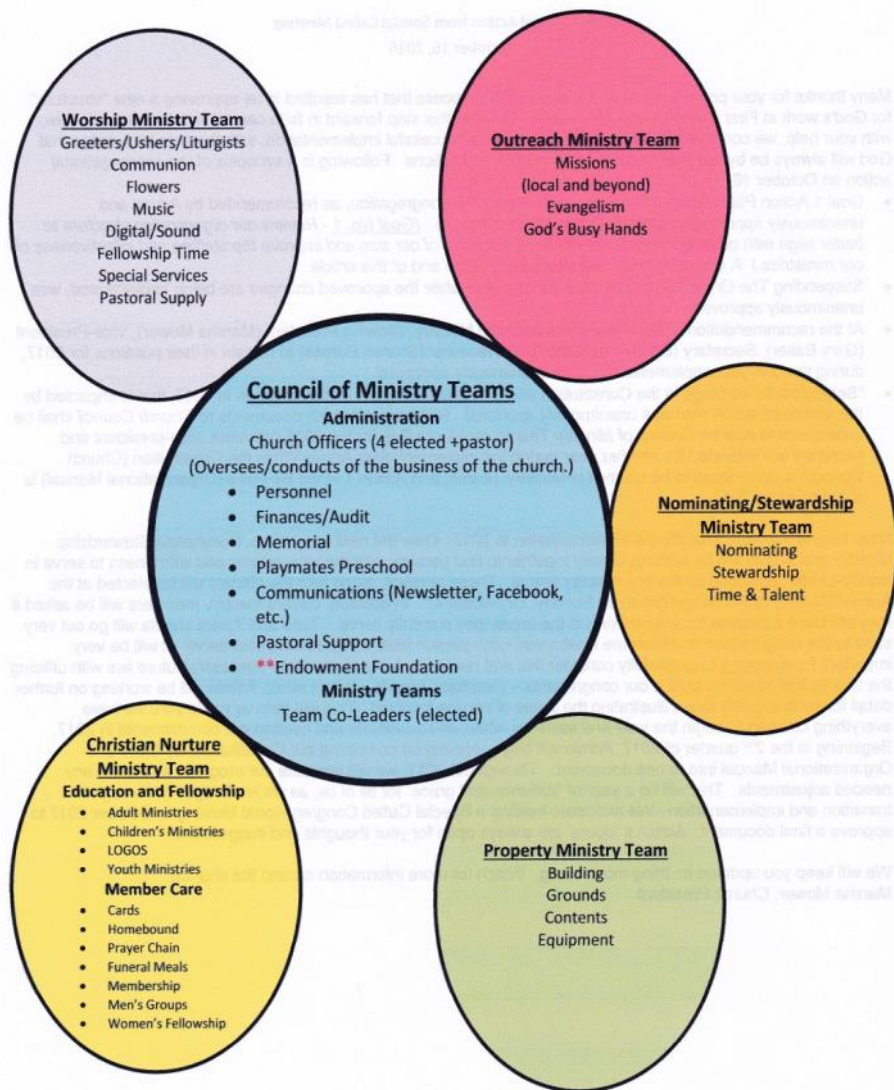
We will keep you updated as things move along. Watch for more information around the church!

Marsha Mower, Church President

The whole Church Congregation owes Marsha and Gary a big “thank you” for the hours and hours they have put in working with our District Guru Tom Norwalk – and they aren’t beginning to be done! Any and all former church officers are saying a quiet prayer of thankfulness that all of this has come up during their watch and not during their own time of serving.

Betty Wheatley

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, DECATUR ILLINOIS



**The FCUCC Endowment Foundation is a not for profit corporation, separate from The Church and its affairs are managed by its Board of Directors. The Church's only function in relationship to the Foundation is to elect new Directors as needed at a congregational meeting.



THE VOTES ARE IN – After a second vote to break a tie, the congregation voted to use the proceeds from our 2016 FRB growing project corn crop to support a food program in INDIA. Results of the voting are:

INDIA - \$255

UGANDA - \$113

HAITI - \$54

The total \$422 generated from this voting process will be added to our Foods Resource Bank growing project fund now destined for India. Thanks to all!

Thanksgiving Baskets

Its basket time! Once again this year the Youth will be collecting monetary and food donations in preparation for one of our favorite annual service projects. Food donated at the Church through the month of November will be used for this project. We will assemble and deliver the baskets on Sunday, November 20th. Thanks again for your continued support!

SEPTEMBER 2016 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>Sept 16</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$18,431.00	\$165,879.00
Budget Expense	\$17,971.56	\$161,744.04
Income	\$13,853.50	\$158,494.71
Expenses	\$9,313.04	\$144,745.17

First Church Book Club

Book Club meets in the lounge the third Thursday of each month except December. We have room for more readers. Come join us for spirited conversations and fellowship. Everyone is welcome (yes, that includes you men, too!). At our October meeting, we will have chosen books for the coming year and will be announcing the list in a future newsletter. In the meantime, we have one more meeting this calendar year. The book we'll read and discuss is:

November 17 -- The Pursuit of Mary Bennet by Pamela Mingle

Do consider coming. You'll be under no obligation and you just might be surprised and really enjoy yourself! If you have questions, please contact Judi Carpenter.

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

Primrose Retirement Community

Claude Young—Room 228

Keystone

Carolyn Jones—Room 216

Vonderlieth Living Center, Mt. Pulaski, IL

Alice Roach

Hickory Point Christian Village

Al Wilson—Room 202

Everygreen Place

Mary Lou Phipps— Room 333

Fair Haven Christian Home

Lois Shelton—Room 113



LOGOS

LOGOS will be holding its 14th Annual Veteran's Night dinner on Wednesday, November 9, from 5:15-6:45 in fellowship hall. We will be honoring all those in our First Church family who have served in the past or are currently serving as either active duty or reservists and their spouse/significant other. We also include the widows and widowers of our Veterans. If you are one of our distinguished guests, please RSVP to the church office by November 7. Transportation can be arranged, if needed

LOGOS' Butter Braids and Show Me Dough Cookies/Pizza Fund-raiser begins on Wednesday, October 5th at LOGOS.

Orders will be taken October 5 - November 9. Payment must be made at the time of ordering.

Make checks payable to: First Congregational UCC-LOGOS

Pickup of items will be on Tuesday, November 15, 4:45 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

Butter Braids (\$14.00) are 22 oz. pastries in the flavors of: Apple, Cherry, Cinnamon, Cream Cheese, Raspberry, Strawberry Cream Cheese and Caramel Roll.

Show Me Dough Cookies (\$17.00 / \$16.00) are 40 pre-portioned cookie dough, ready to bake, in flavors of: Candy, Oatmeal Cranberry White Chunk, White Chunk Macadamia Nut / Chocolate Chip, Peanut Butter and Snickerdoodle.

Show Me Dough Pizzas (\$18.00) are 2 delicious full-size 11' pizzas in each box, ready to bake, in flavors of: Four Cheese, Ultimate Pepperoni, Meat Lovers and BBQ Chicken.

These are FANTASTIC for the holidays, so stock up NOW!!!

LOGOS ministry will be in the Fellowship Hall between services and in the narthex after the 11:00 a.m. service on October 16, 23 & 30 and November 6 to take orders **OR** see a LOGOS participant **OR** LOGOS ministry member to place an order. Ministry members are: Sharon Burbes, Jeanette Flenner, Sandy Harmison, Sheila Mannweiler, Marsha Mower, Maureen Ruski and Chuck Zweck.



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. Paula Cordts
4. Miranda Miller
5. Tyler Wernecke
Katie Wright
9. Linda Connelly
10. Bradley Malone
Peggy Ruff
12. Maureen Ruski
Brian Traughber
13. Peggy Druessel
14. June Coleman
David Mahr
16. Nancy Beede
20. Debbie Moster
21. Howard Beede
22. David Carpenter
Jake Sawyer
Robby Moore
25. Patrick Carter
26. Jodi Baldwin
27. Laurel Lorey
Emily Flies
28. Ramona Borders
Chase Leman
William Mitchell
30. Valerie Janvrin

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!

8. Ned & Sandy Cummings
Craig & Pam Mueller
24. Joe & Carol Robertson
25. Mark & Pat Jaberg
30. Gary & Judy Sawyer



FIRST SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER 6

LITURGIST: Marsha Mower

FLOWERS: Sharon Burbes

COFFEE: Sandi Pleasants

USHERS/GREETER:

NOVEMBER 13

LITURGIST: Marilee Gordon

FLOWERS: Helen Johnson

COFFEE: Don & Dee Wenneker

USHERS/GREETER:

NOVEMBER 20

LITURGIST: Judi Carpenter

FLOWERS: Pat & Margie

Malone

COFFEE: Kristin Hargrove

USHERS/GREETER:

NOVEMBER 27

LITURGIST: Dee Wenneker

FLOWERS: Betty Henry

COFFEE: Bill & Alice Huebner

USHERS/GREETER:

SECOND SERVICE
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER 6

USHER/GREETER: Sandy
Harmison

REFRESHMENTS: Sandy
Harmison

NOVEMBER 13

USHER/GREETER: Wes
Pietsch

REFRESHMENTS: Wes Pietsch

NOVEMBER 20

USHER/GREETER: Ruby
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

REFRESHMENTS: Ruby
Voyles/Shirley Zimmerman

NOVEMBER 27

USHER/GREETER: Praise Band

REFRESHMENTS: Missy
Boldizar



