



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*We are a  
progressive,  
inclusive,  
spiritually alive  
servant community.*

## THE PILGRIM COLONY

May 2017

### Worship Themes for May, 2017

- May 7**     **Devoted, Growing.** One of the themes of the Book of Acts is how the followers of Jesus continued to think, learn and grow in their faith. It is remarkable in many ways that twenty years after Jesus' death there were followers of his who were being persecuted for their belief in him. Why was this? Acts 2:42-47
- May 14**     **Witnessing, Loving.** Stephen made a witness about God's love in Jesus, and was executed for it. Even in his death he commended people to love those who were in fact killing him. We will reflect on Acts 7:55-60 and practice this witness of love with our participation in the Bread for the World offering of letters in support of governmental policies that keep people alive.
- May 21**     **In Powerful Dialogue.** Part way through the book of Acts, the 'action' shifts from the early church to the journeys of Paul as he attempts to go to Rome. Here he is in Athens, making a witness to people who believe in other gods. We don't have to go so far: how do we make a witness to the world around us? Acts 17:22-31
- May 28**     **In Memoriam.** In my office is the bronze plaque rescued from the old building of those 70 men and women who served our nation in World War I. We were extraordinarily fortunate: there was only one death of that 70, Lieutenant Ann Lee Merrill, a nurse who died when her plane crashed in the Himalayas. Memorial Day ought not to glorify the wars or even the living who fought in them. On this day we remember those who served and died for their service. John 14:1-14.

### Pastor's Reflection

If you follow First Congregational's Facebook page you know that we have reposted the Daily Devotionals prepared by the Still Speaking writers group of the UCC. On Monday mornings I look at the previous week's devotionals and pick three or four that are suitable for our page. Not all are of equal quality! But the week after Easter I realized that I couldn't do that in that week. The devotionals written before Easter focused upon Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, his arrest and crucifixion. But now we were living after Easter, and everything was different.

This is a good point to ponder: what's changed with the resurrection? It is very easy to live as though nothing has changed. But it is important to live recognizing that much has changed:

- the resurrection gives us hope,
- the life of discipleship changes from a more passive following role to a role in which we are discovering new ways of living Christ's presence in our lives, and
- the life of faith shifts from one that was by definition focused upon following Jesus as an individual to how we follow Jesus as a community of believers.

Our worship services in May will focus more on these communal acts of faith: how we live together, grow in faith and service and (dare I say?) convert people who follow the gods of

consumerism, greed, fear and hyper-individualism. What's it mean for us to be church in this day and age?

### **Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Three Conversations with Jewish Neighbors**

A few years ago I saw the 'Sodastream' home carbonation system for sale just before Christmas. I drink a lot of carbonated water (La Croix, Perrier, etc.), and thought that this would be perfect as a way to save some money. I added it to my Christmas list, but then learned that our partner churches in Palestine had requested that consumers boycott the product. The issue was complex: while the factory was built on land in an Israeli industrial park that was illegally seized from its Arab owners, the factory itself intentionally employed 500 Palestinians who otherwise would not have jobs. It was a request from our partner churches, though, and I took it off my gift list. The boycott grew, Sodastream closed its plant and the 500 Palestinians lost their jobs. Did I take the right action?

### **BDS**

Consumer boycotts, investor resolutions and negotiations, sanctions against companies that do business in places or ways that oppress people and divesting one's investment portfolio of companies that do business in countries that practice injustice, are part of a movement called 'BDS', or Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' that first emerged in action against the Republic of South Africa back in the 1970s. There they enjoyed some success as a means of applying pressure on the Apartheid government that practiced racial oppression. Native Africans were willing to lose their jobs in order to gain political rights. In recent years these strategies have been employed against Israel.

### **The UCC**

At the last General Synod there were two resolutions brought forward, technically by the Massachusetts Conference but with the active support of our Board for Global Ministries and a Jewish Peace organization called 'Jews for Peace'. One resolution, endorsing the study and implementation of strategies of BDS by church bodies, passed. The other, equating Israeli Zionism with Apartheid and hence sinful, failed. The same resolutions came before other denominations, passing in some and not in others.

### **Indianapolis**

Flash forward to last spring and I attended the Indianapolis Holocaust Remembrance service at a local synagogue, and heard one of the speaker promise that her organization would utterly oppose the BDS movement and its efforts to organize Jewish youth. 'This,' I thought to myself, 'is a hot issue.'

It is a hot issue because especially at this time it is discussed and argued about in a time of fear about the spread of Anti-Semitism in this country. It is a hot issue because of the difficulty of the issues: just who owns the land on the West Bank? What will it take to make for peace? Are the tactics of the BDS movement just one more tactic that will lead to the destruction of Israel and Jewish life, or are there important strategies to bring about justice for those who have suffered greatly?

With this in mind I initiated a conversation with Lindsey Mintz, the executive director of the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council. She visited our booth at the Spirit in Place festival last fall, and we agreed that we had some things to talk about. After reporting this to the then Diaconate, they endorsed pursuing some programs to expand our conversations, which grew into three sessions in May. The Sunday sessions will begin after New Creation worship and some 'substantial hors d'oeuvres', or 'heavy noshing'. Eating begins at 6:30 p.m., the programs begin at 7 and will be done by 8:30 p.m. There will be no hors d'oeuvres on Wednesday! The programs include:

Sunday, May 7: Anti-Semitism in the United States Today

Wednesday, May 17: The BDS Movement: A Jewish View

Sunday, May 21: Working for Peace and Justice in Israel/Palestine

**These will be important conversations! Please plan on attending!**

## **Abrahamic Traditions Dinner on May 8**

The annual 'Abrahamic Traditions' dinner will be held on Monday, May 8 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Indiana Interchurch Center. This dinner features food and discussion on a key topic of interfaith relations. This year's theme is "How does our faith instruct us to respond to discrimination, bullying and hate speech and action?" Sign up on the sign-up sheet in the narthex or call the church office if interested in attending.

Blessings and Peace,

– Rev. Michael H. Montgomery

## **From the Moderator**

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted. - Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

Activities have certainly kept many people hopping around FCC this past month as we live our mission. This list of "Thanks" is certainly not complete but we do want to lift up names:

- \* The many members who pitched in during our week of hosting Family Promise- especially Katie Booth and Ann Leatherman who coordinated the week.
- \* Karen Walker for organizing the Easter Egg Hunt for the church and the preschool.
- \* Sally Coombs and Susan Larson who decorated the sanctuary with flowers for Easter.
- \* The vocal choir, Julie Houston and Nick Fennig who provided so much inspiring music for Lent and Easter.
- \* Steve Coomer and the Da Musica Brass Quintet for the festive Easter music.
- \* Wendy Baldwin and crew who made sure our building and grounds were in order for Easter "company" arrived.
- \* Andrea Clough and Bill Gillette who transport food to School 42 and Northside Food Pantry.
- \* Sandy Woods who is advocating for the students at School 42 as past practices are being challenged and new administrative ideas are considered.
- \* The Green Team and bell choir for leading our Earth Day worship service.
- \* Ushers, greeters, child care volunteers and coffee hours providers who make every Sunday a pleasure to be at First Congregational.

— Bob Cook, Moderator

## **Memorial Day Sunday**

This year we will again remember those members of our church who have died in the service of our country by reading the list of both those who have died in combat and those who served and have since died. We learned to our surprise that the only member of this church who died in World War II was a woman, Lee Ann Merrill who died when the plane she was in as a nurse crashed in the Himalayas. This year we add another woman, Minnie Vautrin, Chinese name Hua Qun. A Congregational missionary in China, she worked as the head of a refugee shelter in Ginling College and protected over 1000 women and children from massacre by opposing armies. Haunted by the suffering she witnessed and the many thousands whose lives she could not save, she returned to the US in 1941 and died in Indianapolis. In our worship service on May 28 we will read the list of those who died both in our nation's wars and from its effects.

## **Sunday Adult Class**

*All classes meet in the Library (room 212) at 9:45 a.m. All are welcome!*

The adult class on Sunday mornings (9:45) will continue to interpret Jesus' life for us. Themes during May follow:

**May 7** Bread for the World Team will review successes from past years' issues and the status of hunger in the U.S. and across the world. We will present issues to highlight for our present legislators. (Refer to BFW article in this Colony.)

**May 14** There is no formal class in order to give church members opportunity to begin writing our senators and representatives in Congress.

**May 21** We will commence a new unit of study: "Into the World: The Acts of the Apostles." This follows naturally our study of the book of Luke. The writer/editor of Luke also wrote Acts which will lead us through Pentecost, the beginnings of the church and the stories about Paul as well as other disciples, now apostles, carrying the message of the Risen Christ throughout the Roman World. This first session will help us link Luke and Acts and decipher Luke's purpose in writing Acts. We will touch on three major themes of Acts and study why this book is important for the church today.

**May 28** We will focus on preparation for the church's birth including the meaning of Christ's "ascension." We will examine the qualifications of an apostle, according to Luke, and compare the early church and our church today.

**June 4** is Pentecost, described in the second chapter of Acts, and has been observed as the "birthday" of the church, even though Peter and the early disciples rooted it in Israel's history and prophetic mission.

### **New Creation Worship**

Themes for upcoming New Creation Worship services include:

**April 30** The Jewishness of Jesus: What does it mean for us?

**May 7** In the Hebrew religion the Bible is divided into three parts (and not the New Testament!): the Torah, the first five books of the Bible that take us from creation to the entry into the Promised Land. In this service we will share favorite stories of the Torah, and what they mean for us.

**May 14** The second part of the Bible are the stories and writings of the prophets. We will practice a little prophecy in speaking truth to power by writing letters to our congressional representatives

**May 21** The third part of the Hebrew Bible are called the 'Writings': Psalms, proverbs, words and stories of wisdom. What speaks to our hearts?

**May 28** Probably a celebration of those of our number who have served and died for us for our country.

### **Call to Service**

*"Here am I; send me!" Isaiah 6:8"*

### **Mission of the Month, Exodus Refugee**

During the month of May we will have the opportunity to support the work of Exodus Refugee Immigration during a critical period for the agency. Exodus is a local, independent, nonsectarian, not-for-profit 501 C3 organization that resettles legally admitted refugees who have experienced persecution in their home countries and are unable to return. Since 1981 Exodus has been welcoming thoroughly vetted refugees and helping them achieve self-sufficiency in their new homes in our community. Now, with the recent executive orders suspending new arrivals for 120 days and cutting the total number of refugees to be admitted, Exodus and Catholic Charities are struggling. Fewer refugees being admitted means less money coming in from the State Department. Exodus has had to cut its staff by nearly 40%. However, the work of the agency needs to continue to provide services to those who arrived before the travel ban and cuts. And once the 120 day period is over, new arrivals will be coming, though not in the numbers previously projected. Exodus not only meets the basic needs of these newcomers but provides a full array of services including social and medical services, English language training, cultural orientation, and employment services, all of which help these new members of the community settle in and thrive.

Please give generously to support the important work Exodus does. You may contribute dollar bills in the offering plate or larger amounts in the "Mission Offering" envelopes in the



pew pockets. If you choose to write a check, make it out to the church and mark "Exodus" on the notation line. At a time when we sometimes wonder "What can I do?" this is something we **can do** to make a difference. Exodus and these newcomers will greatly appreciate your help. Thank you for your support.

— Sue Chapman, Outreach and Service Board

### **Pantry Items of the Month**

During May we are collecting the following items: ramen noodles, macaroni and cheese, soup, canned fruit.

### **Our Monthly Food Donations**

We had another great month, donating 182 pounds of nutritious food in addition to 14 pounds of nonfood items. We set another new record! The Pantry is very appreciative of the donations, and the clients receive significant benefits. Keep those donations coming!

## **What's Happening at First Congregational**

### **June Colony Submission Deadline**

The submission deadline for all announcements, articles, reports, and events is Monday, May 15, 9 p.m.

### **A new website!**

Our website has changed! Look at [www.fcindy.org](http://www.fcindy.org) and you will discover a totally new website! We chose this model because it will be easy to update and change over time. So please do give it a look and send suggestions for changes to Rev. Montgomery at [revmichael@fcindy.org](mailto:revmichael@fcindy.org). We know from our own experience that people who come to us as visitors first find us on line. And thanks to Lindsey Hummel (layout and design), Carol Sowle, Joshua Sanders, Marion Harcourt and Michael Montgomery (photographers) for all the hard work in putting it together!

### **Mother's Day/Bread for the World Sunday**

May 14 is Mother's Day, but at FCC it is also Bread for the World Sunday. It seems appropriate to combine the two since the focus of this year's Offering of Letters to our members of Congress is on issues that relate especially to the needs of mothers and their children. Given the budget that has been presented by the new administration, which favors defense spending over the needs of hungry people, Bread for the World, its covenant churches, and other supporters are urging support of programs that meet those needs both in the U.S. and internationally.

First Congregational has been a covenant church with Bread for the World since 1983, so supporting their annual Offering of Letters is "in our DNA." For our newer members, Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decisions makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Bread equips its members to communicate with Congress and to work with others on advocacy. It educates members on hunger-related issues and inspires members to be legislative activists as a way of putting their Christian faith into action.

According to the latest figures available (2015), more than 42 million Americans lived in households that struggled to put food on the table, including 1 in 6 children. More than 43 million Americans lived below the poverty line of \$24,250 for a family of four. However, SNAP, formerly known as "food stamps," reached 45 million low-income Americans, moving 4.6 million adults and 2.1 million children out of poverty in 2014. We don't want to see these people fall back into poverty because of a lack of support for that program. Also, more than 8.2 low-income women and young children benefitted from the WIC program, which provides nutritious food and nutrition education for pregnant and post-partum mothers and their children up to the age of five who are deemed at nutritional risk. This Mother's Day we want to remember the needs of these mothers and children and support funding for the programs that help them.

Internationally more than 767 million people live in extreme poverty. Although this is less than half the number in 1990, there are still 795 million people around the world who are chronically malnourished. Forty-five percent of all childhood deaths are linked to

malnutrition. The most critical time to be malnourished is the 1,000 days between conception and the child's second birthday. Those who survive this period are likely to suffer from stunting, which causes physical and cognitive development. One in four of the world's children are stunted. The U.S. government has been a leader in providing humanitarian assistance in emergency situations and development aid for the longer term. Such assistance has saved millions of lives every year and is a stabilizing force in those areas. These kinds of assistance are actually a tiny percentage of our overall foreign aid package.

Please join the Bread for the World team during the education hour on Sunday, May 7 to learn more about these issues and then on May 14, Mother's Day, write your members of Congress urging them to support a budget that includes sufficient funding for the programs that do make a difference in combatting hunger. And remember, a budget is a moral document!

### **Continue to Celebrate Mother Earth**

Spring so far is spectacular this year, with the forsythia and daffodils still hanging on while the red buds, maples, peaches, pears and cherries start exploding with color. It should be easy in springtime to recall that we are meant to be stewards and protectors of all this beauty that the Creator has surrounded us with. If we practice hard enough, perhaps we can get into a daily habit of appreciating the Creation and doing something, however small, to preserve and protect it.

We all know the challenge is especially hard now. Despair is an option too many of us are prone to. I advise you earnestly: look out the window! Look at all that beauty! It isn't gone, yet. There's still time to do what you can. We'll have more advice for concrete steps you can take; but for now, flush out that despair with wonder and gratitude for all of creation's beauty. Bottom line for now: if you act out of desperation or grim determination, you may be on the wrong track. If you act out of love and gratitude, your odds are much better; and well begun is half done.

### **Reuse, Reduce, Recycle Rummage Sale is Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>**

Begin now to identify things that you will be selling at our sale, sponsored by your Green Team. The hours are 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. with set-up Friday afternoon, the day before.

The rules:

Tables are \$10 each.

You bring and sell your things.

You keep your proceeds.

You clean up whatever is not sold.

There will probably be a joint trip to Goodwill at the end of the day for things you do not want. Questions? Ask any Green Team member or contact Nancy Dickinson (251-3671; [rdndjnsd@earthlink.net](mailto:rdndjnsd@earthlink.net))

### **Pride Sign Up**

It's already May and summer is just around the corner. One of the highlights of summer time in Indy is the annual Circle City Pride parade and festival in June, held downtown. Once again, First Congregational has signed up to participate in both the parade and interact with festival attendees, listening to their stories, answering questions, and telling them about our church family. This year's Pride parade will kick off at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 10 at the corner of Delaware and Michigan Streets and continue up Massachusetts Avenue toward College Ave, a reversal of the route taken in years past. The festival will begin at 12 p.m. following the parade. The parade will now be held a new location this year at Military Park near the IUPUI campus. Please note there is a \$5 admission fee this year, \$4 if purchased in advance.

We would love to have as many people as possible join us for this day of fun and diversity! If you are interested in walking in the parade, setting up the booth at the festival, or volunteering at the booth, please contact Nathan Howard in person, by phone at 765-376-4132, or by email at [nahoward1984@gmail.com](mailto:nahoward1984@gmail.com). The more the merrier!

More info on Pride can be found at the following link:

<http://www.circlecityinpride.org/>

### **Pride Shirts**

While Indy welcomes a new layout of the city's Pride celebration, First Congregational will be debuting our shirts with a GOD logo designed by our very own Sean Baker. We have a new web site and few steps to order shirts.

1. Go to <https://www.zazzle.com/>.
2. Login: [info@newcreationindy.org](mailto:info@newcreationindy.org) Password: godisgreat  
(We've created one account through which all shirts will be ordered to eliminate extra unused shirts for the remainder of the year.)
3. In the top right corner, click on the human head icon, then click 'My Profile,' then click 'Saved Designs.' You will then see an image of our shirt with the GOD logo available in both women's and men's sizes. Click on the image of the shirt you would like and select your size. Leave the shirt color as the default Deep Royal color if you are participating in Pride.
4. Click 'Add to Cart' to enter your method of payment and confirm your order. Please note that while shipping is free, shipping can also take up to 2 weeks, so orders need to be submitted by May 24th to arrive in time for Pride.

The Witness & Welcome board will be on hand after both Traditional and New Creation services to walk you through the order process.

### **Coming in October - FCC's Got Talent!**

FCC's Got Talent!, an evening of celebration and fun for all of us, will be held Friday, October 13. It is designed to include both fine art and crafts, as well as silly/nonsense "acts" that make us smile. This evening will be a fund raiser for the Special Music.

### **Performance Art Ideas**

A piano solo by your granddaughter/A flute duet/A cute monologue  
Something by Shakespeare/A poetry reading/Haiku/ A silly group Skit  
Funny or serious vocal solo/Barbershop quarter/Dance (ballet, tap, modern, etc)  
Pantomime/Saxophone solo/Music or drama from Broadway/Dialogue from a favorite play

### **Applied Arts and Craft Ideas**

Oil/watercolor painting/Finger painting/Sculpture/Woodworking/Needle point  
Knitting/Crocheting/PotteryPen and ink/Paper mache/Quilting/Decoupage/photography

Team meeting will commence after Easter. If you would like to help the team plan this event, please contact either Susan Kent at [susankent510@sbcglobal.net](mailto:susankent510@sbcglobal.net) or Carol Sowle at [casowle@gmail.com](mailto:casowle@gmail.com). This will be an evening featuring US for US being US! Please be thinking about how you might like to participate!

## **Announcements from the Congregation**

### **The FCC Foundation Board**

As the financial markets did well in the first quarter of 2017, our Foundation did too. The Board met on April 18 to review the status of our four accounts and to consider any changes that might be beneficial. For further information, feel free to contact Board members Judy Fletcher, Mark Zelonis, Rev Michael, Al Moore, or Bill Gillette. Contributions are welcome, are deductible, and are significantly helpful to the church.

### **Small Groups**

#### **Men's Lunch**

This lunch and discussion gathering for men of First Congregational meets at various restaurants in the greater Indianapolis area. They meet every other Thursday at 1 p.m. This month they will meet on May 4 and 18. Please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081 or [rk10walker@gmail.com](mailto:rk10walker@gmail.com) for information.

#### **Women's Lunch Bunch**

All women of the church are invited to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and

fellowship. This month we will meet Thursday, May 25, at 11:45 a.m. For any questions or for information please contact Marla Dankert, 317-844-2559 or [mwdankert23@att.net](mailto:mwdankert23@att.net).

## Circle II

Circle II is meeting May 1 at 6:00 p.m. Location TBD.

## Circle IV

Circle IV will meet on May 16, at 1:30 at Marion Harcourt's home. All women of the church are invited to attend. For any questions or for more information, please contact Marla Dankert at 317-844-2559 and [mwdankert23@att.net](mailto:mwdankert23@att.net) or Marion Harcourt at 317-251-4436 or [marion.harcourt@icloud.com](mailto:marion.harcourt@icloud.com).

## Plymouth Rockers

The Rockers will meet at noon on May 23 at Robin Run on W 62<sup>nd</sup> Street. We'll enjoy lunch, and then a program on Crime Prevention and Personal Safety, given by a member of the Marion County Prosecutor's Office. Details on the meal and location will arrive later. . All are welcome.

## Financial Update

*When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands*

*When we give to the ministries of First Congregational UCC, we are serving those inside and outside our church community. As 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:10 says: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,*

Overall, we are slightly positive to our budget. Pledged and un-pledged contributions are below budget, but expenses are also less than planned. Looking ahead, income in April has been strong so far. On the expense side, some of the first quarter savings are true savings while others (Outreach and Service) are largely a matter of timing and will even out over the year.

I'm honored to serve as your treasurer. I'm new to the role and I welcome your input! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Jim Lootens, Treasurer  
[lootens.jb@gmail.com](mailto:lootens.jb@gmail.com)

Category	Actual	Q1 2017 Budget	Difference
▼ INCOME	62,589	65,728	-3,138
▼ M. Unrestricted Contributions	62,589	65,728	-3,138
▶ M.01 Pledged Offerings	54,238	55,071	-833
▶ M.02 UnPledged Offerings	2,570	4,875	-2,305
M.03 Surplus from Prior Year	4,479	4,479	0
M.04 Endowment Income...	0	0	0
M.05 Transfer from Ministe...	1,303	1,303	0
▼ EXPENSES	60,095	64,624	4,529
▶ A. Pastoral Leadership	24,114	24,134	20
▶ B. Worship & Faith	9,641	9,850	209
▶ C. Care & Connections	164	138	-26
▶ D. Witness & Welcome	296	225	-71
▶ E. Outreach & Service	5,524	10,600	5,076
▶ F. Trustees	59	163	103
▶ G. Administration & Operations	5,147	6,906	1,759
▶ H. House & Grounds	13,781	11,100	-2,681
▶ I. Miscellaneous	1,370	1,509	139
<b>Net Difference:</b>	<b>2,494</b>	<b>1,104</b>	<b>1,391</b>