



Worship Themes for January 2018

- January 7** Our candidate for our next settled minister will preach, followed by a congregational meeting for discussion and vote on this person's call to serve with us. Communion will be celebrated.
- January 14** **Beyond Whiteness.** On this Sunday of the weekend in which we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday we will look multi-culturalism and why it is so hard for us to accomplish what we mostly all want. Luke 10: 25-37
- January 21** **Beyond Conflict.** On the one hand, we can see all too clearly the horrible results of violence inflicted upon others. On the other hand, to engage in struggle, be it verbal or advocacy, can be experienced as violent. Is there another way? Matthew 5: 38-48.
- January 28** **Beyond Secularism.** At one level, 'secularism' is the agreement to keep religion out of the public sphere of social life. Governments don't enforce a particular religion, religions don't enforce their teachings on governments, and religion is 'happily private'. The problem with this division is that it domesticates religion and prevents it from addressing the 'principalities and powers' of the age. When we are silent, we let others define who we are and what we believe. How can we have a loving public presence? Ephesians 6:10-18.

New Creation Worship

- January 7** We celebrate Epiphany with a discussion on how the birth of Christ will make a difference in our lives this year.
- January 14** Before the beginning of Lent we are planning on a work project in the community as a way of carrying the work of Christ into the world. More details coming!

Minister's Reflections

January is about the new. We have a new year, with resolutions to make our own lives better (at least for a while). We will meet and vote whether we recognize the Search Committee's discernment that God has called Sarah Griffith Lund to be our next settled minister. We will have our annual congregational meeting to deal with the issues of our congregational life that call for discussion and vote.

Three thoughts seem particularly relevant:

- We are people with different but noble heritages, but we are a people who define ourselves not by our pasts but by the future to which we labor. And God has great work for us to join!
- The work we need to do in the world begins with our own transformations. As Gandhi put it, we must 'be the change we want'---if we want peace, we need to learn how to be peaceful, build for peace, and create justice in our own lives as well as in our world. Getting angry at injustice may be an essential step in awareness building, but living in anger does not move us to resolution or peace, it leads to really good, self-righteous fighting!
- The foundational issues of our society: opportunity, economic, social and environmental sustainability, justice for all, these deep social issues all have spiritual roots. What does it mean to be human, to be in community? What makes for justice? What does it mean for us to be created in the image of God and to be followers of Jesus, living by hope and faith in God's purposes?

There is a lot to do, but have confidence in this: God is with us and it will be a wonderful year!

— 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

The following excerpt is from TOXIC CHARITY by Robert D. Lupton.

"Trust is the foundation of all human relationships.. Without trust marriages dissolve, business partnerships collapse, loyalty evaporates. Trust is the bedrock upon which civil society is built.

Trust is also the essence of faith. We Christians believe in a God we cannot see. We pledge ourselves to a community charged with demonstrating selfless love for one another. The interests of others are to be held above our own. Learning to trust one another, to be trustworthy in our relationships, is the foundation upon which such a community flourishes."

Friends and members of First Congregational, we are entering a new year filled with new possibilities and exciting potential for the future of our congregation. However, we must first trust each other, the elected Boards of our church, our elected church leadership, and ourselves in order to achieve the best results. Let's take that leap of faith, endure that which may make us uncomfortable at first, and practice the necessary trust so that our faith community flourishes.

Looking forward to an exciting 2018

— Bob Cook, Moderator

Sunday Adult Class

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

The UCC as a Just Peace Church

Since its founding over 50 years ago the UCC's Statement of Faith has proclaimed to God, "You promise to all who trust you...courage in the struggle for justice and peace." In 1981, at the 13th General Synod, the UCC declared itself a "peace church". Since then there has been lots of study, further resolutions, publications, and conferences. The UCC has looked at previous models of Crusade, Just War, and Pacifist but has evolved a definition of the UCC as a "Just Peace Church". We affirm just peace as, "the presence and interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence". The UCC has developed a process and status for local UCC churches to affirm themselves a "just peace church" much like the the status of "open and affirming".

Through this past fall First Congregational's Adult Education Team has planned Sunday morning education sessions to incorporate bible study with exploration of the many faces of violence, violence of speech, hoarding, oppression and finding hope in the midst of violence. We have looked at scripture in the three Abrahamic religious traditions that speaks of peace and violence. This winter and perhaps in this year's Lenten study we are continuing to learn what it might mean to be a just peace church. We are exploring the concept of "shalom". It is a Hebrew concept including harmonious relationships between people, personal well-being, health, safety and security and the absence of war. We will explore scriptures addressing war and peace, conflict in the world, the good news of the peace Christ brings, Jesus words, "blessed are the peacemakers", and God's hope for peace on earth.

You are invited to join this process of exploring what just peace means in your life, within our congregation, in our community, country and the world. Look for announcements for opportunities to gather with others for prayer, study, and discernment about the Christian call to peacemaking. Following is the World Peace Prayer that as we offer it daily to God might help us on this journey of peace/shalom:

*Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our Universe.*

Specific class plans are as follows:

January 7 – "God of Peace and God of War"

January 14 -"The Challenge of Gun Violence in Our Communities" This session will be led by Ed Smith, Chair of Hoosiers Concerned about Gun Violence.

January 21 – "Good News from God"

January 28 – "Christ Brings Peace with God to the Believer"

Call to Service

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

Mission of the Month, Peace Learning Center

January's Mission of the Month is the Peace Learning Center (PLC). FCC member Worth Hartman was a founding board member twenty years ago and has seen the initial vision of Charlie Wiles and Tim Nation grow into a dynamic organization, now an international model for peace education and conflict resolution.

The Peace Learning Center educates, inspires and empowers people to live peacefully. Its vision is to build a community of peace where respect is primary and justice is real through

the modeling of behaviors, community collaboration, and by providing services. The PLC values:

- Peaceful resolution of all conflicts
- Strength of diversity in our community
- The potential of youth
- Responsible stewardship of the environment and community resources

The Peace Learning Center believes everyone can be a peacemaker. Each of its sessions teaches safe and simple ways to manage anger, solve problems, and develop appreciation for differing perspectives. The PLC works directly with schools, community nonprofits, businesses, juvenile correctional facilities, and faith groups to facilitate peace education sessions and reached 10,000 citizens in the past year. The PLC is a partner in our adult education and service and mission programs and we ask you consider a special contribution to this valuable community ministry. For more information visit www.peacelearningcenter.org

- Rev. Worth Hartman

Pantry Items of the Month

During January, we are collecting the following items: bread, soups, applesauce, deodorant and shampoo.

Our Monthly Food Donations

We did very well with our monthly food donations to the Northside Pantry again in November, donating a significant quantity of high quality food. We're doing our part to see that our needy neighbors have access to the food needed to live healthy lives. Please keep your donations coming; they are making a difference and are appreciated!

--Bill Gillette for the Missions Board

Important Information Concerning the Gift of Stock

In the past giving the church your gift of stock was a bit confusing. However, the good news is that we have finalized an easy way to complete this transfer! In all situations where you would like to donate stock, you just need to tell your broker to use the following information to deposit those shares into the First Congregational Brokerage account.

Fidelity's Depository Trust Company

DTC No: 0226

Account No: Z50424340

In all situations, Fidelity (our broker) is instructed to sell the stock when transfer is complete and then to move the money to our cash portion of the account. We then move the money to the account that respects the donor's wishes (such as Pledge). If you still have questions, please contact Jim Lootens.

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 1st Peter 4:10 says: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, with whatever gift each of you has received."

Trends through November:

- **Contributions** are running below our 2017 budget. Pledges are doing well – slightly ahead of our budget and significantly ahead of 2016. However, other unrestricted contributions are falling short of both our budget and last year.

- **Expenses** are being managed well. All controllable expenses are essentially on or below budget. Great job with administrative expenses – well below both our 2017 budget and 2016 actual!
- Through 11 months we have spent about \$6,600 more than we've taken in.
- As of this writing (Dec. 18), it looks like we'll end the year with a deficit. We have sufficient cash reserves to cover the deficit this year, but of course we can't sustain deficit spending indefinitely.

I will provide a final 2017 financial report in advance of the 2018 annual meeting.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Jim Lootens, Treasurer
lootens.jb@gmail.com

1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary

1/1/2017 through 11/30/2017 Using 2017A

Category	1/1/2017 Actual	- Budget	11/30/2017 Difference
INCOME	205,130	213,507	-8,376
M. Unrestricted Contributions	205,130	213,507	-8,376
M.01 Pledged Offerings	182,273	181,133	1,140
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	8,359	17,875	-9,516
M.03 Surplus from Prior Year	4,479	4,479	0
M.04 Endowment Income 2016	8,717	8,717	0
M.05 Transfer from Minister's Fund	1,303	1,303	0
EXPENSES	211,779	226,954	15,175
A. Pastoral Leadership	89,149	89,266	117
B. Worship & Faith	36,411	36,117	-295
C. Care & Connections	376	504	129
D. Witness & Welcome	644	825	181
E. Outreach & Service	20,564	26,267	5,703
F. Trustees	94	463	368
G. Administration & Operations	18,119	25,323	7,204
H. House & Grounds	41,429	42,033	604
I. Miscellaneous	4,994	6,157	1,163
Net Difference:	-6,649	-13,447	6,798

What's Happening at FCC

February Colony Submission Deadline

Please have your submissions sent to me by **Monday, January 15**.

The First Congregational Church Foundation

The Foundation board has elected to convert the securities held in our Endowment to ESG holdings. This new format is designed to avoid holdings that we don't want, such as manufacturers of guns, and alcohol as well as companies that pollute our environment. The performance of the new portfolio is expected to be similar to that of the old portfolio. [While we had avoided investing in certain companies in the old portfolio, the new portfolio does a better job of screening out undesirable holdings].

Announcements from the Congregation

Plymouth Rockers

The Rockers will meet at noon on Tuesday Jan 23 at church. We'll have a brown bag lunch followed by a program given by Tim Evans of the Indianapolis STAR. Tim will discuss the very successful "Call for Action" program that's sponsored by the STAR. Guests and non-members are welcome.

- Bill Gillette

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 January 11 and 25. Please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081 or aa28977rwalker@gmail.com for information.

Circle IV

Circle IV will meet on Tuesday, January 16 at 1:30 p.m. at the home of Marion Harcourt. All women of the church are invited to attend. For any questions or for more information, please contact Marion.