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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

e-pistle for the Week of September 13, 2018

Minister's Message

Dear First Congregational Church Family,

On Sunday, I will be preaching as we celebrate Just Peace Sunday with our focus on the wisdom of the prophets. Our guest Rev. Michael Neuroth will be joining us another time due to the hazards of travel with the forecasted hurricane hitting the mid-Atlantic region. Let's keep all who are in the path of the storm in our prayers.

This Sunday also begins our hosting week for guests with Family Promise. It takes about 60 people to fulfill all of the roles of this important ministry of the church. We still have volunteer openings and invite you to help out. We need afternoon van drivers, overnight hosts for Thursday, Friday and Saturday and also evening coordinators. Please be in touch with our co-coordinators Ann Leatherman (plantmom45@aol.com) and

Katie Booth (katie@takeflight.org) to sign-up to help.

Providing a safe environment for families who are experiencing personal crisis is the work of God. May God bless our church's ministry as we seek to be the hands and feet of Christ, welcoming the stranger and offering extravagant hospitality! Providing a safe environment for families is the work of God.

Blessings,
Pastor Sarah

God is Still Speaking....in the Magnificent Rays of Light Brian Schmidt captured this moment in the heavens that reflects the majesty of God's creation.



Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

TBD

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

Pastor Sarah will preach on "Wisdom Cries Out!"

Scripture: Mark 8:27-38

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

New Creation is moving – but not very far. This Sunday we begin a series of worship services in our sanctuary as we continue our focus on God's Radiant Light. Among the most beloved features of FCC's sanctuary are the numerous large clear windows which allow us to bask in God's

sunlight whenever it's available, so this seems like the perfect time for New Creation worshippers to enjoy and experience that feature. As Fall progresses we'll also experience the fading of the light in the late afternoons, and we'll thank God for those times as well. This Sunday we open ourselves to the healing light of God through guided meditation and Taize music. Please join us in this time of gratitude and healing.

Pastoral Care & Worship

Rev. Worth Hartman will be providing pastoral care to the congregation while Pastor Sarah's away serving the wider church as a mentor to young pastors in the Bethany Fellows Project (<http://bethanyfellows.org/>) in San Antonio, TX and for a family wedding in Duluth, MN from Monday, September 17-Sunday, September 23.

Rev. Worth Hartman will be leading worship with members of the Just Peace team on Sunday, September 23 at the 11:00am Traditional Service.

A Just Peace Call to Address Root Causes of Immigration

-written by Michael Neuroth

September 16th, many United Church of Christ congregations will mark "Just Peace" Sunday under the theme "Wisdom Cries Out!" The theme is based on the lectionary passage for that Sunday, Proverbs 1:20-33, which begins:

*Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks...*

This image of the Spirit crying out for justice at the city gates offers a call to action at a time when images of children tragically being separated from families at the border remain etched in our minds and hearts. Our Just Peace identity as a church challenges us to work for justice in a holistic way, and so we must address immigration not only at our border, but also examine the broader systemic push factors that impact our neighbors in Central America.

Family Separation

In May, the Department of Justice issued a new immigration policy that

featured the separation of parents and children at the border to serve as a deterrent to those fleeing violence. This was a change from previous immigration practices which have generally allowed families to stay together while people move through the immigration process. This resulted in the separation of more than two thousand children from their families, stoking outrage across the country and world. Although President Trump signed an executive order on June 20th formally ending family separation, the “zero tolerance” approach continues.

The United Church of Christ was one of many communities that spoke out critically of this policy. Our leadership issued a pastoral letter, critiquing the “*criminalization of the quest for freedom, and the caging of those whose only crime is to seek shelter from harm.*” Through our General Synod resolutions UCC has designated itself an Immigrant Welcoming Denomination and has advocated for just and compassionate immigration reform that reflects our view of the worth and dignity of immigrants. Additionally, as a Just Peace Church, and a denomination that maintains partnerships across Central America, our approach to these issues is not limited to seeing them as immigration concerns alone. Rather, we also understand that the intersecting issues of violence, inequality, corruption, and trauma that are the root causes of the current immigration push, are the result of many dynamics including U.S. foreign policy in the region.

The largest percentage of those seeking asylum at the boarder are from the “Northern Triangle” countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. These three countries consistently rank among the most violent countries in the world, and the violence experienced there is the result of the influence of drug trafficking, gangs, and political instability, among other factors. High rates of gender based violence and persecution of LGBTQ communities are particularly alarming. The trauma and violence experience by many, and in some cases the inability to meet certain basic human needs, are major push factors for those seeking asylum in the U.S. The United Church of Christ has spoken to these issues in various ways, including a 2013 resolution on Honduras, and continued accompaniment efforts from local churches and Global Ministries.

Yet, we also know we can do more.

As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors. As members of a Just

Peace denomination, we are called to welcome the strangers in our land. As part of that welcome, we are also called to address the sources of violence from which these neighbors are fleeing. U.S. foreign policy has been partly responsible for this. Too often, our approach has been over-militarized and self-serving, failing to prioritize international law and protect human rights in these nations. Although it is difficult to find ways to address these issues, one piece of legislation, the Central America Family Protection and Reunification Act (CAFPRO) will help. This bill would prohibit family separation while also calling on the State Department and embassies to report on and address the issues of gender based and gang violence in Northern Triangle countries that drives many to flee in search of safety.

As a denomination, we are already active in many ways. This week, the Southwest Conference with Justice and Witness Ministries is gathering over 100 UCC advocates for a "Faithful Witness **at/for** the Border" to draw attention to these concerns. Over the past couple years, many of our churches have declared themselves sanctuary congregations. In D.C., we advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, and passage of legislation like CAFPRO that would reshape U.S. policy in Central America to address the root causes of violence. And on September 16th, UCC congregations will mark Just Peace Sunday, by praying and following the Spirit of Wisdom in into our public squares and to our city gates, committing themselves to work for immigration policies that reflect our values as a church committed to building peace with justice.

What's Happening at FCC

Family Promise Week – September 16 – 22

The children are coming, the children are coming! We have eight kids currently experiencing homelessness that are bringing their parents with them to stay in our church this coming week. Come play with them. Come offer them the extravagant welcome that we want to offer all of God's children. Volunteer opportunities abound to provide a safe and

loving place for the families we are hosting. September 16-23. Ann Leatherman and Katie Booth are happy to help you find your niche.

Presentation on Hate Speech at CTS – Monday, September 17, 12:30 p.m.

CTS celebrates Constitution Day with a free event open to the public discussing potential 'conflict' between hate speech and the first amendment. As part of the presentation, participants will have a chance to rule what speech should be protected and what should be prohibited under the Constitution.

If anyone interested in leading carpool from church, please contact Karen Walker.

2018 Indiana AIDS Walk - Sunday, September 23

The Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center (450 West Ohio Street). Registration runs from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Step Off at 1:00 p.m. and lasts until 2 p.m. If you wish to walk with us, please wear your GOD T-shirt and register at the table. Sean Baker will be our contact person at the Walk that day. Call him (317-506-9614) when you arrive to find the location of our group.

Songs at 7171

On Saturday, September 29, at 7:00 PM come and hear Julie Houston perform some of her professional repertoire. Julie has a long history of performance, and she sings and plays Latin, jazz, pop, swing, old standards, and pretty much anything you might want to hear. We'll have the Mayflower Room set up cabaret-style with food and drink (non-alcoholic, of course) for all. Sean Baker is unavailable that night, so Julie will be accompanied by other artists. This is a fund-raiser for the Special Music Fund, so bring your checkbook along with your anticipation for a great night of music!

Choir Rehearsals - New Members Are Welcome!

Choir rehearsals are on Thursdays from 7:00- 8:30 p.m. in the second floor choir room. We welcome new members to join us. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the choir may email choir director Julie Houston at: juliehouston@comcast.net

GOD Logo

We have been enjoying increasing the exposure of our "GOD" logo

design - from t-shirts and bumper stickers to the street sign, the bulletin, the website, and now the e-pistle! We have heard many positive comments from members and visitors - it is very eye catching, memorable, and meaningful. Moving forward, there is a motion coming soon to the council to adopt this as the official logo for the church - so we can simplify and build consistency across all our communications - such as this epistle, the colony, letterhead, envelopes, etc. This would replace all of the orange 'fcc' logo materials we have been using. We invite any comments or questions about this - please contact Pastor Saraha, Bob Cook (chair of Witness & Welcome) or Karen Walker (chair of council) and they will be sure all of the board members and the council members hear all your thoughts and consider them as the motion comes forward. This comment period will be open for two weeks - until September 23rd. For a reminder of the origin of the logo, here is a link to the video shared at a buzz earlier this year: <http://fcindy.org/our-street-sign/>

Chautauqua Update

We're accepting applications through September 30th. That is, we hope to! If you have the slightest desire to get a free trip to Chautauqua next summer, why don't you fill out an application and give it to Shannon? Please check the bulletin board or contact Rich Gibson, Nancy Dickinson, Worth Hartman, Chuck Kiphart, or Pastor Sarah if you have any questions.

IKC Church Vitality Events

The Indiana-Kentucky Conference gladly presents our final **two** Church Vitality events connected to our Brown Grant. We are blessed to have national staff member, the Rev. Dr. Chris Davies sharing at both events. Chris will engage congregations on issues related to congregational vitality from the "Be the Church" Assessment booklet including:

- *Congregational Asset Assessment
- *Equipping Congregational Leadership
- *Assessing New Ministries
- *Collecting Community Data for Mission

- Saturday, September 22, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. (Central Time Zone) at St. Peter's UCC, 7014 Darmstadt Rd., Evansville, IN 47710

- Saturday, October 6, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time Zone) at St. Peter's UCC, 915 N Ironwood Dr., South Bend, IN 46615

To Register:

Email the following to ikc@ikcucc.org

- Date Attending
- Church Name and Location (for example: First UCC, City and State)
- Number of Persons Attending

**For more information or if you have questions, please reach out to Conference Minister, Rev. Chad Abbott atc.abbott@ikcucc.org

New Member Sunday!

Make First Congregational UCC your new church home and join with others on Sunday, October 28th during the 11am worship service. Pastor Sarah is looking forward to hearing about your faith journey and welcoming you into this church family. Contact Pastor Sarah to schedule a conversation about membership pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

Pastoral Transition Team

As Pastor Sarah continues to serve the congregation in her first six months, the church has a Transition Team to offer guidance, support and to ensure open and transparent communication between the pastor and the congregation. The members of this team are Randy Walker, Liana Campos, Jim Rutherford and Nancy Dickinson. Please feel free to be in touch with the Transition Team with any feedback, concerns, or comments that you wish to be addressed during this important time of transition and new beginnings.

Church Social Media/Website/Design Team Update

We are blessed by a talented team of volunteers who help with church social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), Website and design. Team members include Sean Baker, Angela Edwards, Josh Cody, and Pastor Sarah. Pastor Sarah leads this team and is the primary contact for members wishing to share church information on social media and the website. Thank you for helping to spread the good news about the mission and ministry of the church through the website and social medial. These are popular platforms for people to first learn about our

church and where most of our visitors find information about us. We want to hear from you, so please contact Pastor Sarah with your social media and website updates.

Green Team Tip

Have you checked your tire pressure recently? Fully inflated tires get better mileage.

September Mission of the Month is the UCC Mental Health Network.

The United Church of Christ Mental Health Network works to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of people with mental illnesses/brain disorders and their families in the life, leadership and work of congregations. Its stated values are

- Jesus has shown us the way to embrace those who are marginalized by society and advocate with and for them.
- Every person has value and worth and deserves love, dignity and respect.
- All people, regardless of mental health or disability status, have something to contribute to the life, leadership and work of their congregations.
- Community matters. A sense of belonging is important to us all, whether we face mental health challenges ourselves or not.
- True compassion in ministry and relationships is based on equality.

The Network also helps churches such as FCC that are considering becoming a W.I.S.E. Church (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) by providing resources and support to reach that goal and to do so by embodying the love of Jesus in the process. During the month of September your loose dollar bills in the offering plate or larger amounts in the Mission Offering envelopes marked "Mental Health Network" or checks with that notation will go to support its work.

Pantry Items of the Month

During September we are collecting the following items: soups, beans, rice, mac'n'cheese, paper towels, and body wash.

This Week at First Congregational

September 16 – Sept 22		Family Promise Week
Sunday, September 16	5:30 p.m.	New Creation
Tuesday, September 18	1:30 p.m.	Circle IV Meeting (at Marion Harcourt's)
Wednesday, September 19	7:30 p.m.	New Creation Planning Team
Thursday, September 20	1:00 p.m.	Men's Lunch
Thursday, September 20	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sunday, September 23	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, September 23	11:00 a.m.	Traditional Service with Rev. Worth Hartman & Just Peace Team
Sunday, September 23	5:30 p.m.	New Creation

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