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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

e-pistle for the week of December 20, 2018

Minister's Message

Dear First Congregational Family,

As we enter into the days leading up to Christmas, I wanted to take a moment to thank each one of you for making 2018 one of the best years of my life. Now, that may seem like an exaggeration, but it's not. I LOVE being a pastor and I LOVE being your pastor. To be here with you serving in ministry at First Congregational UCC is the best gift. So this Christmas I feel especially grateful that we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ together.

In the spirit of Christmas, I invite you to make a special end of year financial gift to First Congregational UCC as a way to support this season of growth and new opportunities to fulfill our mission together. Thank you for all the ways you share in supporting the ministries of the church so that we can be a servant community of Jesus Christ.

In the coming days, we will welcome members, guests, family, friends and new faces as we prepare room in the sanctuary and in our hearts for God's greatest gift: the love we share in Christ. Consider inviting a neighbor or friend to join you for worship. We will gather for a special **Blue Christmas tomorrow (Friday) at 6pm, Sunday morning at 11am, and Christmas Eve for a candlelight service at 7:30pm.**

Come, let us worship,
Pastor Sarah

Worship

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

No Adult Class on Sunday, December 23rd.

Blue Christmas Service, December 21st, 6:00 p.m.



We often think of the holidays as a time of joy, but for many it is a time of loss, depression, and generally feeling "blue." For this reason, the Worship and Faith Board is offering a Blue Christmas Service as a time of prayer, comfort, and support during a season that can be difficult for people feeling "blue." Worship begins at 6pm in the Sanctuary followed by a light meal of soup for fellowship and conversation.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

This Sunday Pastor Sarah will preach on Blessed by Loving Mercy.

Scripture: Luke 1:39-55

The Advent Wreath will be lit by Roxanne and Miles Vaden.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship, December 24th at 7:30 p.m.



“For unto us a child is given, unto us a Savior is born and the order of the world will be upon his shoulders.” With the birth of Jesus, our lives are forever changed. We are transformed by his model and message. Let us join together in celebrating the light of the world, the birth of Jesus the Christ through worship, special music, and the lighting of candles to represent this light which is the center of our lives.

Prayground

As the Christian body prepares our hearts, our minds, and our spirits for the coming of the Christ child, at First Congregational Church UCC, one way that we are leaning into this concept of welcoming is by providing a Prayground. Located in the front right in the sanctuary, the Prayground offers children and families a space just for them and allows all to fully engage in meaningful worship. The Prayground has soft foam mats along with liturgically and age appropriate worship materials.



The Prayground will be evaluated for permanency after an estimated six to twelve months. As time goes, we commit to asking for and listening to feedback from the congregation to best support everybody's faith development and worship experience, and to best welcome our children and families. With the full support of the Worship and Faith Board, the FCC Mental Health WISE Team, and the Church Council, the Prayground will be available for use beginning December 2nd. As we prepare our hearts to welcome the Christ child, let us prepare a dedicated space in our sanctuary that welcomes all children.

For feedback, questions, concerns, and/or comments, please talk to Lianna Campos (lcampos33@gmail.com, W&F Board Representative to Council) or Nancy Dickinson (dickinson.nls@gmail.com, Chair of W&F Board) or Pastor Sarah (pastorsarah@fcindy.org).



What's Happening at FCC

What Shall We Bring?



Thank you to those who have responded to our 2019 Annual Campaign! To date, we have received 49 pledges for almost \$166K of financial support in 2019.

For those who have not yet responded, please consider the following:

1. Your pledge of financial and service resources greatly benefits FCC's planning for 2019;

2. Your pledge is an intention to give, and can be changed, either to give more or give less, based on your circumstances;
3. Your pledge is a way to bring your whole self to God and be generous with your life.

Please try to turn in your pledge by late December in order to assist our boards with preliminary planning. Pledge and service cards are available in the Narthex, and can be deposited in the basket or the offering plate. Or you can contact Shannon Abbott in the Church Office to have cards sent to you.

What shall we bring? Thank you to all who share your gifts and help First Congregational be dynamic and vital, energized to be a servant community of Jesus Christ!

The Giving Tree



Again this year we will be collecting gift cards in \$25 denominations from big-box stores such as Target, Meijer, or Wal-Mart or gas cards for the After-Care families of Family Promise. These families now have housing but are under the watchful care of Family Promise for up to two years to assure that they succeed. Please attach your gift cards to the bows on the tree in the parlor, and please bring them in **by THIS SUNDAY, Dec. 16** so families will have time to shop before Christmas.

Mittens and More!



This Christmas season we will be collecting the usual mittens, gloves, scarves, hats, and socks for the refugees who are served by Exodus Refugee Immigration. But in addition we will also collect new or gently-used winter coats for all ages as well as blankets. Winter is a difficult time for refugees, who often come from warm climates and are not prepared for Indiana weather. Having to supply a whole family with warm outerwear is a burden, and we can help with our generous donations. Put small items on or under the “Mitten Tree” and coats and blankets in the Exodus box in the coat room. Monetary donations in the offering plate marked “Exodus—Winter” are welcome too. Donations will continue to be accepted after Christmas as well. Thank you.

Green Team Tip

If you are fortunate to gather with friends and family this Christmas, what can we share with them about “living green?” What will we learn from them?

December Mission of the Month is The Christmas Fund

The UCC’s Christmas fund assists retired pastors and their spouses living on reduced incomes. This offering provides funds for pension supplements, health premium supplements, emergency health or unexpected travel expenses, and Christmas “Thank You” checks. Use the special envelopes for your gifts or make a notation of “Christmas Fund” on your check to FCC. Single dollar bills in the offering plate will also go to this offering. Please be generous in your support of those who have served the church and now need our help.

Pantry Items of the Month

During December we are collecting the following items: Muffin mix, Noodle, Cereal, and Laundry detergent.

Holiday Office Hours

The Church Office will be closed December 25-26, and January 1. We will hold abbreviated office hours from 10 a.m.-Noon on December 27-28, and will return to regular office hours on January 2.

Pastoral Care

Pastor Sarah may be reached at (386) 478 - 9012 or at pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

This Week at First Congregational

Thursday, December 20	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Friday, December 21	6:00 p.m.	Blue Christmas Service
Sunday, December 23	11:00 a.m.	Traditional Worship
Monday, December 24	7:30 p.m.	Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
Tuesday, December 25		MERRY CHRISTMAS!
Wednesday, December 26		Church Office Closed
Thursday, December 27	1:00 p.m.	Men’s Lunch
Thursday, December 27	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sunday, December 30	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, December 30	11:00 a.m.	Traditional Worship Service with Carol Sowle

preaching