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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

E-pistle for the Week of March 7, 2019

Message

Dear First Congregational:

What an exciting time in the life of our congregation. We are following our call to walk humbly with God this Lenten season and that means walking in new ways. I join our moderator Rich Gibson in his excitement about Carol Sowle starting her new role to support the church as Pastoral Care Associate. As we journey together, let us walk with humility knowing that we truly need one another as the Body of Christ.

In our Ash Wednesday service we enjoyed worship using mindfulness movement and meditation led by Shannon Abbott, embracing worship with all of our senses. I look forward to our Lenten small groups and our All-Church Retreat March 22-23 (still time to sign up for small groups and the retreat). We hope you join us on this sacred Lenten journey.

Blessings on the Lenten journey,
Pastor Sarah

Pastor Carol

If you weren't in church last Sunday, among the things you missed was an important story about how we, First Congregational UCC, have done a good thing for one of our own. You may be aware that Carol Sowle has been in discernment for several years. Recently, she decided that she's ready to take the step to become a Lay Minister.

You may not know that the United Church of Christ mandates that a minister must have a position. A person may feel the call very strongly to become a minister; but without position to serve in, it won't happen. Accordingly, we created the position of Pastoral Care Associate. It took the combined efforts and coordination of Pastor Sarah, the Personnel Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the Council to make it happen. (A side note to those who are concerned about the budget implications, and this should be EVERYONE: There is a very small impact on our budget. Pastor Sarah has generously offered to share her expense reimbursement funds.) The culmination was an interview with the Committee on Ministry of the Southeast Association of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference on March 5th, 2019. I am proud to announce that we have a new lay minister on staff, Pastor Carol Sowle!

Please don't hesitate to congratulate Carol the next time you see her. For an extra thrill, address her as Pastor Carol. Until she gets used to it, you're likely to get a blush and a very sweet smile.

- Rich Gibson, Moderator

Lenten Meditation (by Shannon Abbott)

The Lenten season dawns with a call to look deep into oneself, to examine how we can connect with the Divine through our minds, our spirits, and yes, even our bodies. Foreheads are marked with ash, reminding us of the reality of human life. We are asked to reflect on the Biblical words, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). At the same time, we are reminded that we are the body of Christ, united as one body. We recognize that there are times when individual members of the body may experience woundedness or brokenness. We remember that Jesus also suffered, was broken and wounded, and that through connection with the Divine within him, was able to overcome. Coming together as one body, we too can overcome the desert times of life through connection with the Divine and recognition that when one suffers, we all suffer. Not one part of the body is greater than the others. In working together as one body, we may all experience healing and wholeness found only when we connect with God through unifying the mind, the spirit, and the body.

So let us begin by intentionally seeking God right here in this moment...

I invite you to sit at the edge of your seat, close your eyes all the way or most of the way, to limit distractions. Bring the soles of the feet to rest on the floor. Feel all four corners of your feet, rolling them from side to side and forward and back, noticing any sensations you may feel as your feet press into the ground beneath you. Our feet serve to ground us in this moment of reflection.

We remember Moses removing his shoes at the burning bush, because he was on holy ground.

We remember Mary anointing Jesus' feet and wiping them dry with her hair.

We remember Jesus telling the disciples to wipe the dust off their feet if any did not welcome them.

If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body (1 Corinthians 12:15).

Bring your awareness to your breath, breathing in and out through your nose. Feel the cool air with each inhale. Feel the warm air with each exhale.

It is this breath that gives us life, and when this breath ceases, we return to dust, uniting with the One who made us from dust, and breathed into us the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Sense the presence of the Holy Spirit flowing through you with each inhalation...and with each exhalation.

We remember the aromas of the frankincense and myrrh that the wise ones brought as gifts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We remember the inviting aromas of the food Martha made to welcome Jesus into her home.

We remember the perfumes the women brought to the tomb to anoint Jesus, only to find he was not there, for he had risen.

We remember the breath of the Holy Spirit that flowed through the church of the Pentacost, uniting people of all nations and races, as one body of Christ.

If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? (1 Corinthians 12:17b).

We bring our awareness to the sounds around us...the rustling in our seats, the neighborhood traffic or the birds chirping outside...the sound of my voice...the sound of your breath...even the sound of silence. Take a moment to notice and to be thankful for the sounds around you. Also notice the sounds within you, the endless to-do lists we make in our minds, the mind chatter...coming back to your breath, breathing in and breathing out, bring stillness to the chatter, and listen....

We remember Samuel who heard the voice of God, and replied “Speak God, your servant is listening” (Samuel 3:10b).

We remember Isaiah who heard the voice of God saying, “Who shall I send?”and he responded, “Here am I, Lord, send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

Listen for the still small voice of God speaking to you in this moment as you enter into this period of reflection.

And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body” (1 Corinthians 12:16).

Gently open your eyes, looking straight ahead.

Then with only our eyes, roll them up and then slowly around in a clockwise motion...hugging every corner all the way around the eye.....When you get back up to the top, slowly reverse the eye circles in a counterclockwise motion.....Then return your eyes to a forward gaze.

Bring your palms together, rubbing them together until they are warm, and then cup them over your eyes, feeling the warm, soothing energy radiating from your palms, offering gratitude and appreciation for all of the ways our eyes serve us and help us serve others. The eyes have been called the windows of the soul. Use your eyes to not only look at the external world, but use your inner eye to look inside and reflect.

*Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you...” (1 Corinthians 12:21a).

I invite you to bring your palms to your heart, either with palms together in prayer or palms open flat on your chest, sealing this meditation and all of these reflections inside of you as you begin your Lenten journey.

We remember the hands of Jesus, washing the disciples’ feet.

We remember the hands of Jesus that broke the bread and poured the cup.

We remember Thomas placing his finger inside the resurrection wound in Jesus’ palm.

And as we lift our hands in praise and surrender, we remember hands throughout history, raised in praise of the God who “*arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as God chose....As it is, there are many members, yet one body (1 Corinthians 12:18, 20a).*

Amen.

Worship

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

March 10: Ruth

Consider the vulnerability of widows and the difficult situation of foreigners in biblical times. Explore themes of loyalty, bitterness, courage, poverty, and seduction. What really happened on the threshing floor? What can we learn about the themes of hospitality and welcoming the stranger, refugee, or immigrant? What do Ruth's words mean to you?

Worship Service - 11:00 a.m.

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund will preach on "Walking Humbly and Stumbling."

Scripture: Luke 4:1-13

What's Happening at FCC

Lenten Small Groups



This Lenten season, you are invited to join a short-term small group. The small groups will meet 4 times over the course of Lent, and will explore and experience ancient spiritual practices. You may sign up for the small group that meets your scheduling and location needs in the narthex.

Saturdays at 10am (3/9, 3/16, 3/30, 4/6): in the church parlor.

Tuesdays at 7pm: (3/12, 4/2) at Aniseh & Jimmy's home, (3/26 & 4/9) at the Greene's home.

Wednesdays at 2pm (3/13, 3/27, 4/3, 4/10): at the home of Rich Gibson.

Thursdays at 1:30pm. (3/14, 3/28, 4/4, 4/11): at Marquette Manor.

If you are unable to be a part of one of these sessions due to scheduling, and would like to participate, please sign up with preferred days, times, and locations, and we will see if we can make arrangements. You may also inquire about and/or sign up for a small group by contacting Lianna Campos at lcampos33@gmail.com or 317-954-1601.

Lenten Breakfast Series



You are invited to join the Southeast Association UCC congregations to fellowship together during the season of Lent. The first Lenten breakfast will be held on **Saturday, March 9 at 8:00 a.m. at St. John UCC Cumberland - 11910 East Prospect Street, Indianapolis, IN 46239** (*Corner of Prospect St. & Carroll Rd.*)

**SOUTHEAST ASSOCIATION (IKC)
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

2019 LENTEN BREAKFASTS
Saturday Mornings at 8 am

“Living Under Tension”

MARCH 9: St. John UCC, Cumberland
“Believe in a Higher Spiritual Reality”

MARCH 16: Immanuel UCC
“Draw on the Power of Prayer”

MARCH 23: The Altenheim
“Our Deep Need for Community”

MARCH 30: First Congregational UCC
“When Means Determine Ends”

APRIL 6: St. John's UCC, Southport
“Keep Faith in Human Possibilities”

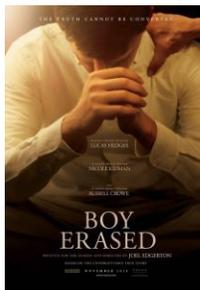
APRIL 13: Zion Evangelical UCC (Downtown)
“Becoming Christ's Disciples”
(With Communion)

IYG BUZZ & Pitch-in lunch – Sunday, March 10, 12:30p.m.



Maxx Pyron, Indiana Youth Group's volunteer coordinator, will join us to share information about IYG and opportunities how FCC can get more involved. IYG has served self-identified LGBTQ youth for over 30 years and is one of the nation's oldest organizations serving the gay community.

Movie & Pizza Night, Sunday, March 10, 5:30p.m.



As part of our 25th anniversary celebration of being Open & Affirming, we invite everyone to join us for pizza and a screening of the 2018 Golden Globe nominated film "Boy Erased." Based on real life events, this is the story of Jared Eamons, the gay teenage son of Baptist parents. When a fellow classmate outs him, Jared is sent to a conversion therapy program, which claims to turn him straight and his account of what actually went on during his time there. Stay for conversation after the film. See you on March 10th.

Spiritual Writing Workshop



Join Christian Theological Seminary to honor Phil Gulley and the power of progressive spiritual writing on March 12 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 100 W. 86th St.

Admission: \$25 (free for students)

Register [here](#).

Cabaret at FCC, March 16, 7:00 p.m.



Famous Indianapolis cabaret diva Jeannie Logan teams up with Sean Baker the Music Maker to present an evening of hilarious original cabaret. This show is

vaudeville for the mensa set! Lyrics fly fast and furious in this tour de force authored by New York composer & lyricist R. George Winters.



First Congregational Whole-Church Retreat

Different, Equal, and Whole: Coming Together as One

On March 22nd through March 23rd, you are invited to gather at the Benedict Inn in Beech Grove for our Whole-Church Overnight Retreat. Through scripture, worship, dialogue, and prayer, we will seek to encounter the Divine by recognizing the spiritual gifts in ourselves and one another. Registration is \$35 per person plus a modest lodging fee due March 13th. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sarah. Pick up a registration form in the narthex or download the .pdf here: [2019 FCC Retreat Registration Form](#).

Join in the “Days for Girls” Project



The I-K Conference and Outreach & Service project has begun. We have been challenged to put together 100 menstrual hygiene kits for girls in developing countries, where the lack of such supplies forces girls to miss school during their periods. Lots of helpers are needed to meet our goal. We need sewers, tracers of patterns and cutters of fabric, suppliers of the fabrics required, and people to buy such things as panties, washcloths, Ziploc freezer bags, travel size soaps, and twill tape for the drawstrings on the bags. Check out the poster and clipboards in the narthex for printed directions, specific requirements for items, and signing up. You may also contribute money for others to make purchases. Just put “Days for Girls” in the notation line of your check or on the Special Offering envelope. If you are buying supplies yourself and want them considered “in-kind” donations, save your receipts to turn in. For questions, contact Sue Chapman, Sally Coombs, or Shannon Abbott. Completed kits will be turned in by May 30 in time for the I-K Conference Annual Gathering.



Dress for Success

Spring Cleaning? Have gently used professional clothes you are no longer wearing? Dress for Success can give them to people who can't afford interview clothes to help them be better prepared when job hunting. Put donations in the cloakroom by the sign. Thanks!

Green Team Tip

As you begin spring housecleaning, take a survey of your home. Substitute chemical cleaners with non-toxic ones. Many good ideas can be found in *The Humble Art of Zen Cleaning*.



March Mission of the Month: One Great Hour of Sharing

Each year brings new disasters in the US and around the world. When you give to OGHS, you are there helping right away because OGHS has partnerships with local organizations ready for rapid response. OGHS also works with Church World Service to support refugee resettlement and to advocate for refugees and asylum seekers. This is the most important Special Offering of the UCC and one of the "5 for 5" offerings we at FCC have long been committed to support. Please be generous in your support. Use the special pew envelopes or put the notation "OGHS" on your check.

Pantry Items of the Month



During March we are collecting the following items: spaghetti, rice, juices, peanut butter.

Pastoral Care

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

THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

Thursday, March 7	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Saturday, March 9	8:00 a.m.	Lenten Breakfast @ St. John UCC, Cumberland
Saturday, March 9	10:00 a.m.	Lenten Small Group (parlor)
Sunday, March 10	11:00 a.m.	Worship
Sunday, March 10	12:30 p.m.	Buzz & pitch-in lunch
Sunday, March 10	5:30 p.m.	Pizza & Movie
Tuesday, March 12	7:00 p.m.	Lenten Small Group @ Jimmy & Aniseh's home
Wednesday, March 13	2:00 p.m.	Lenten Small Group @ Rich Gibson's home
Wednesday, March 13	5:00 p.m.	Mental Health Team Meeting
Wednesday, March 13	6:30 p.m.	Church Council