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# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of December 19, 2019

**Dear First Congregational,**

It is delightful to imagine all of Creation welcoming the birth of the Christ child. As we come near to this holy night, we are invited to pay special attention to the Earth. Look at all the snow!

On Sunday I shared in worship this poem by e.e. cummings "little tree" and offer it to you here for your reflection.

little tree  
little silent Christmas tree  
you are so little  
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest

and were you very sorry to come away?  
see i will comfort you  
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark  
and hug you safe and tight  
just as your mother would,  
only don't be afraid

look the spangles  
that sleep all the year in a dark box  
dreaming of being taken out and allowed to shine,  
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy threads,

put up your little arms  
and i'll give them all to you to hold  
every finger shall have its ring  
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed  
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see  
and how they'll stare!  
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands  
and looking up at our beautiful tree  
we'll dance and sing  
"Noel Noel"

I hope you can join us for our second annual Blue Christmas service Friday, tomorrow night at 6:30pm in the sanctuary followed by a lite soup and bread supper in the parlor. Our Student Pastor Cassidy Hall will guide us for a time of support and caring during a time of year where our emotions might be a mixture of terror and delight, anxiety and hope, sadness and joy or we may not be able to feel much of anything. That's okay. Come as you are and know that you are loved!

Blessings,  
Pastor Sarah

### Warning on Fake Emails using Pastor Sarah's name

This warning (see article below) comes from Rhode Island, but both Rich Gibson and Bob Cook received solicitation emails from what looked like Pastor Sarah's authentic email address. Be careful out there!

<https://www.episcopalri.org/warning-email-and-text-message-scams-targeting-church-members-by-impersonating-clergy/>

### Church Office Closed for the Holidays

The church office will be closed Dec 24 – Jan 1.

## Worship

### Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

For December, the Adult Ed class will move through the Advent Season by taking up the first four sessions from *Hallelujah: The Bible and Handel's Messiah*, a curriculum from Kerygma. We will be listening to parts of *Handel's Messiah*, and engaging with the scriptural references. Come and be awed!

- Dec 22 – (led by Pastor Carol) – "**Glory to God in the Highest**" (Luke 2:1-14; Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 11:28-29)

### Sunday Worship Service - 4th Sunday of Advent: Love

Pastor Sarah will be preaching on "Dream God's Dream."

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25





**Sneak Peek at Upcoming Special Worship Services - Please Mark Your Calendar!**

**Blue Christmas** - December 20, 6:30pm

**Christmas Eve** - December 24, 7:00pm

### **What's Happening at FC**

(See December Colony for monthly announcements and further details.)

#### **Choir Rehearsal TONIGHT!**

The FC Choir rehearses on Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. We welcome new members. If anyone is interested in joining the choir, please email Julie at [juliehouston@comcast.net](mailto:juliehouston@comcast.net). We would love to have you join us!

#### **TOMORROW! Blue Christmas Service: Friday, Dec 20, 6:30 p.m.**

Already feeling weary of the holiday season? You're not alone.

Blue Christmas is back at FC Indy on Friday December 20th at 6:30pm until about 8:00pm (or whenever you need to leave). The night will be a quiet evening of poetry, prayer, remembrance, music, and connection. There will be a time in the evening when you will be invited to participate in lighting a candle of remembrance and love for something or someone in your life along with other attendees, but there is no expectation or need to participate in anything. The night can be what you need it to be: A remembrance of a lost loved one, an openness that the holidays might not feel joyful or exciting, a time to breathe amid the stress of the season, a mourning of lost tradition, a sigh of lost light, a night to know—and be reminded, you aren't alone. Come and just *be* with us, your presence is more than enough.

As your Student Pastor, I will be leading the night with some friends from my cohort at CTS and music from Sister Sinjin. The evening will conclude with a provided soup and bread dinner. Thoughts or questions? Email me: [studentpastor@fcindy.org](mailto:studentpastor@fcindy.org)

#### **Friday Night at the Movies: December 27, 6:30pm**

Note a change of date in December from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday to the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday – 12/27, 6:30ish. Join us this month on 12/27 to avoid the hectic Christmas shopping season. We'll meet at 6:30ish at Keystone Art Cinema in the Fashion Mall at Keystone, and decide which film(s) to see, get refreshments, and socialize. Then, after the movie, hang out at the Indie

Lounge for more fellowship. Questions? Contact Wendy Baldwin

### **Annual Stewardship Campaign – Devoted to Generosity**

Thank you to all who have turned in a pledge card and/or Time & Talent card for 2020. The ministries of our church depend on our faithful gifts. If you have not turned one in, extra cards are available in the Narthex, or by contacting the church office; to help with our planning, please turn these in by December 31. Thank you for all of the generous ways that you give to the church and to the world!

### **Thank You for Your Generosity!**

Outreach & Service thanks everyone who contributed to the Giving Tree and the Mitten Tree. This week we were able to deliver \$640 in gift cards to Family Promise so that the After Care Families can buy gifts for their families. We also delivered three large trash bags full of hats, gloves, scarves, and socks to Exodus Refugee for their clients. Many of the lovely items were hand knit or crocheted. You can also show your generosity by continuing to participate in the Reverse Advent Calendar and in providing gifts for the hygiene kits for the border. "

### **A Chance to Offer International Help**

Shannon Abbott, Cassidy Hall and Sandy Wood will be going to the U.S. Mexico border January 14<sup>th</sup> with a group from the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the UCC to witness what is happening there. Outreach and Service Board is making 25 **hygiene kits** for our host congregation, Good Shepherd UCC in Tucson, AZ. to use in their work with migrant shelters there and in Mexico.

The Board is providing most of the items for the kits, but has asked the congregation's help in obtaining hand towels and white adult size tube socks. The tree in the Parlor which had gift cards for Family Promise will now contain ornaments specifying an amount of socks or towels to buy. Please take an ornament, buy the item(s) on the ornament, and return the item(s) and ornament to the tree by Sunday Jan 5<sup>th</sup>. On Sunday January 5<sup>th</sup> we will assemble the kits after worship. If you have questions, please contact Sue Chapman, Cassidy or Sandy. **Thanks for your efforts to help refugees!**

### **Will You Serve on a Board in 2020?**

Most of the ministries of our church are planned and managed by our 5 boards. We currently have several openings for 2020. This is a great way to get involved, and make a difference in people's lives. Our boards are: Worship & Faith, Care & Connection, Witness & Welcome, Outreach & Service, and Trustees. Also, we are looking for a new Financial Secretary; this position records our pledges, gifts, and donations, and one needs to have a comfort level with numbers and tracking details. If you would like to learn more

about these opportunities, please contact Wendy Baldwin.

### **The Green Team wants YOU!**

The Green Team could use more members! Fresh off our success in getting solar panels installed, we have fresh ideas for 2020--but could use some help dragging them across the finish line. If you have any interest in joining up to help, please contact any of us, particularly Rich Gibson, Nancy Dickinson, Bill Gillette, Ann Leatherman or Katie Booth

### **Green Team Tip**

Though they take more time, think about simple homemade gifts that show love. (If you want to share a green habit, please send it to [hoot.gibson.tds@gmail.com](mailto:hoot.gibson.tds@gmail.com).)



### **Food Donations for the Northside Pantry**

Donations have been generous and are appreciated. Please keep them coming! We are grateful to the Meridian Hills Nursery School and Kindergarten who has joined us in donating and delivering food to the pantry.

### **December Mission of the Month: The Christmas Fund**

The Christmas Fund is one of the "5 for 5" offerings of the United Church of Christ that FC has committed to support. The Christmas Fund, formerly known as the "Veterans of the Cross Offering," gives congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in loving compassion, providing assistance to those who have so faithfully served our churches and now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. These funds enable the Pension Board's Ministerial Assistance program to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, pension supplements, health premium supplements, emergency grants for health or unexpected travel expenses, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to individuals and families in need.

This year's theme is "A Light Shines in the Darkness." Your gifts this December will bring light into the darkness of financial need of deserving retired church workers and keep needed funds coming in the year ahead. Watch for the weekly bulletin inserts during Advent for stories of how individuals and their families have been helped by the Christmas Fund.

### **Pastoral Care**

Pastor Sarah may be reached at (386) 478-9012 or at [pastorsarah@tcindy.org](mailto:pastorsarah@tcindy.org).

### **Holiday Pastoral Care**

While Pastor Sarah is visiting family for the holidays from Dec 25 – Jan 3, Pastor Carol may be reached at (317) 496-9732 or [casowle@gmail.com](mailto:casowle@gmail.com).

### **THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL**

<b>Thursday, December 19</b>	<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Men's Lunch</b>
<b>Thursday, December 19</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Choir Rehearsal</b>
<b>Thursday, December 19</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Winter Solstice Celebration @ Unitarian Universalist Church</b>
<b>Friday, December 20</b>	<b>6:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Blue Christmas Service &amp; Soup Dinner</b>
<b>Sunday, December 22</b>	<b>9:45 a.m.</b>	<b>Sunday Adult Class</b>
<b>Sunday, December 22</b>	<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent</b>
<b>Tuesday, December 24</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 25</b>		<b>Christmas Day</b>
<b>Sunday, December 29</b>		<b>NO ADULT CLASS</b>
<b>Sunday, December 29</b>	<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship w/ Pastor Carol Sowle preaching</b>