

 [FirstCongregationalUCCIndy](#)

 [Forward](#)



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of December 17, 2020

Dear First Congregational,

During Advent our worship services have ended with a special benediction that reminds us of the ongoing work of God's Spirit bringing the world hope, joy, peace, and love. Here are the words from our Advent series benediction created by our worship design partner Marcia McFee:

*"We wait for justice, but we do not wait to work for change;
We wait for restored health, but we do not wait to work to heal;
We wait for wholeness, but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;
We wait for peace, but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.
And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news that God is ever-present with us,
continue to fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy. Go into your lives
humming the tunes that keep that joy alive in you and that spur you on in your work
of justice and reconciliation."*

I thank you for your faithful support of the mission and ministries for our beloved

First Congregational throughout 2020. Thank you for your end of year gifts, for your pledges to support our ministries for 2021, and for sharing your love through acts of service, prayers, and kindness. I am grateful for our gifted and hardworking staff, lay leaders, and members of our church. May we each find “the tune that keeps joy alive in you and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.”

Blessings,
Pastor Sarah

PS: Please register on this link (click [HERE](#)) for Friday’s Blue Christmas at 7pm led by Student Pastor Cassidy Hall in partnership with the Indiana-Kentucky Conference.

THIS SUNDAY

Sunday Adult Education, 9:30 a.m. (Zoom)

December 20: This Sunday we will read and reflect together on the Advent devotion for December 27 from the Advent devotional made available to our members this year.

Advent

As we look toward our last Sunday of Advent, we’re aware that Christmas is near. We continue this Sunday with another passage from Isaiah (chapter 9: 2-7) and the opening verses of John’s gospel (chapter 1: 1-18). Both writers speak of God’s holy light coming to humankind to shine in the darkness of despair, so this Sunday we light a candle of peace. **Christmas kits** are available for pickup again this Saturday (or any day after). Everyone will want to have one on Christmas Eve for our Lessons and Carols, along with our candle-raising to “Silent Night”! If pickup is not possible, feel free to contact Wendy Baldwin (wendy.baldwin@rci.com or 317-319-0806) for a delivery.



The Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship, 11AM (YouTube, FaceBook, Dial In)

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:2-7 & John 1:1-18

Sermon: Advent of Peace

Mission of the Month: The Christmas Fund

Coffee Hour via Zoom, immediately after worship

Sunday Vespers – Cancelled due to wintry weather, until further notice. If temperatures allow, we'll have “pop-up” outdoor Vespers, and we will notify folks via email.

Thank You for Your Support of First Congregational UCC

Please continue supporting the mission and ministries of your local church at <http://www.fcindy.org/online-giving/>

THIS WEEK AT FC

How to Access our Zoom Gatherings

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9264494206?pwd=dmtWbWE5UXRBTK5pcHZlYlB0aEFVUT09>

Meeting ID: 926 449 4206

Password: 7171

If you click on the URL, you should not need to enter in the Meeting ID and Password.

To dial in by phone: +1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID 926 449 4206, Password 7171.

TODAY!

- **Women's Lunch Bunch - Thursday, 12/17 at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom** - For questions or more information please contact Sue Chapman at (317) 259-1806 or carolsuech59@gmail.com.
- **Men's Lunch - Thursday, 12/17 at 1:00 p.m.** - for more information aa28977rwalker@gmail.com Please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081 or
- **Spiritual Support Group, 5:00-6:00 PM** - You can contact Pastor Sarah at (386)478-9012 or pastorsarah@fcindy.org, or Pat Larracey at plainandfancy1963@att.net, or 317-625-6801 for more information.

TOMORROW! IKC Blue Christmas Service - Friday, 12/18, 7:00-8:00PM



Join us for an intergenerational service of prayer and lament. This service is co-sponsored by FC and is led by Student Pastor, Cassidy Hall. Register in advance for this

meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEsdu2hrDsiHtVmZwBkU-f4_DbtOITZsdFo

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

THIS SATURDAY! Monthly Neighborhood Walk – Saturday, 12/19, 10-noon

We'll take a walk in the neighborhood at 11 am. As a “thank you” for being a part of our church, we have a small poinsettia for you to take home, to remind you of your church family, as well as picking up your “Christmas kit” to prepare for Christmas Eve.

Virtual Giving Tree 2020 - Deadline THIS SUNDAY, 12/20!

Family Promise still has several items to be selected on the Sign Up Genius. We still have a few days until the deadline of this Sunday. There are only two gift cards left to be selected on the Target registry for Trinity Haven which is great. And Sara Hindi of Exodus emailed to say she's received gifts from the wish list from our congregations. Please continue to give generously!

Exodus Refugee: Click this link here to support Exodus Refugee. These items will be delivered directly to Sara Hindi of Exodus Refugee. To learn more about this organization please visit: <https://www.exodusrefugee.org/>

Family Promise: We are sponsoring two families experiencing homelessness. Please click here to use Sign Up Genius to let us know what you are pledging to purchase. Please purchase the gifts online and have them sent to **St. Peter's UCC 3106 E Carmel Dr. Carmel, IN 46033**. Gifts will be delivered to the families in a safe contactless way. To learn more about this organization, please visit: <https://www.fpgi.org/>

Trinity Haven: In an effort to support this new organization which offers safe, supportive, and affirming housing for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults, we will purchase \$25 gift cards from Target & Kroger. Follow the links below to purchase:

Target: <tgt.gifts/TrinityHavenIndy>

Kroger: <https://giftcards.kroger.com/our-store-cards/kroger-enterprise-egift>.

When asked for email recipient please insert Jenni's email from Trinity Haven: jenni@trinityhavenindy.org

Trinity Haven has specifically asked for gift cards so that they can purchase items based on their current and evolving needs. To learn more about this organization, please visit: <https://www.trinityhavenindy.org/>

Soul Care with Pastor Sarah - Join us on **Tuesdays from 5:00-6:00 p.m.** for a time to check-in and to pray together. Here is the Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/494018938?pwd=a3BrdnNyWWEza0tFMUgwek1C>

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* Please note that this Zoom link is different from the Zoom links used for other FC events.

Zoom Vespers on Tuesdays from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Join us for a time of togetherness, Scripture, and sharing of joys and concerns.

Wellness Wednesdays: 10:30AM (Zoom)

Throughout most of December, we will use excerpts from the Advent devotional, *Draw Near*, to guide us as we nurture ways we can connect with one another and connect within ourselves.

Wednesday, December 23: Nurturing Essential Wellness

Personnel Committee Staff Review Survey

If you have not had a chance to complete the staff survey (click [HERE](#) for link), please complete it by this Sunday. For those who have filled out the survey - thank you! - your feedback will help shape future work. If you have any problems with it or questions, please contact Karen Walker (317-319-8950 or karen.e.d.walker@gmail.com) or Bill Hummel (317-875-8388 or whummel001@comcast.net).

Mission of the Month for December: The Christmas Fund

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you! For more information, go to: <https://www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home>. To contribute to this effort, write a check to First Congregational, and designate Christmas Fund in the Memo line, or go to <http://www.fcindy.org/online-giving/>.

COMING UP

Devoted to Generosity – Annual Campaign to Fund our Ministries for 2021

Thank you to those who have already mailed in your pledge card and Time & Talent sheets! If you haven't, please prayerfully consider how you will help First Congregational with its transforming ministries in 2021, and mail your response to the church as soon as possible. Your support of our church makes a difference to so many lives! Questions, or need the materials, contact Wendy Baldwin



Holiday Zoom Worship & Fellowship Schedule:

- Dec 18, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. - IKC Blue Christmas Service
- Dec 24, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Worship (FC Zoom)
- Dec 24, 8:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Zoom Fellowship
- Dec 25, 3:00 p.m. – Christmas Day Zoom Gathering

Please click [HERE](#) to view the December Colony with more information and events happening this month!

CONNECTION & SUPPORT

FC Facebook page (click [here](#))

“First Congregational Indy Fellowship” group on Facebook (click [here](#)).

Pastoral Care

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

Pastor Sarah's Sabbath Days: Mondays & Saturdays

The congregation covenant with Pastor Sarah to provide 2 days per week for personal rest and family renewal. On Mondays and Saturdays, Pastor Sarah is not available unless it is a pastoral emergency. Thank you for honoring this sacred gift of Sabbath time for our Pastor and her family.

Additional Church Support Contacts

Pastor Carol (casowle@gmail.com)

Office Administrator, Shannon (shannon@icindy.org)
Moderator, Alice Rutherford (alice@caloosaspirt.net)
Vice Moderator, Larry Eckel (lspeckel@comcast.net)

Mental Health Support:

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline:** 1-800-985-5990, or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746.
- **National Suicide Prevention Hotline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (press 1 for veterans, 2 for Spanish)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** Information HelpLine provides information and referral services. 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) and www.nami.org.
- **The Trevor Project hotline** offers support for LGBTQIA+ youth and families struggling with mental health challenges at 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (488-7386) and www.theTrevorProject.org

FC Covid Protocols:

Effective immediately, the church building is closed to in-person church gatherings until the following parameters are reached, based on guidance from Dr Virginia Caine, Marion County Public Health Director:

A 7-day average of 5% (or less) positivity among unique individuals tested for a two-week period, and new cases per day at 35 or under in Marion County, per the metrics shown on www.coronavirus.in.gov.

At that time, the Council will decide reopening measures.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

3 Ways to Connect for Worship

YOUTUBE

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWV9wqAvPiUKSkEbjAV6Zpw>

- YouTube Live broadcasts at 10:45am with 15 minutes of gathering music. The service begins at 11am..
- Use this option for live interacting and messaging. You must have or create a

user account and be logged in to message live.

FACE BOOK

https://www.facebook.com/pg/FirstCongregationalUCCIndy/posts/?ref=page_internal

- The video will be posted at 11am.
- This is for viewing only. For live interacting and commenting, please use the YouTube option.

DIAL-IN

- Dial **317-204-3862**
- Landline is preferred for clarity.
- If calling with a smart phone, setting your cellular setting to Wi-Fi calling will be clearer.

How to Access our Zoom Gatherings

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9264494206?pwd=dmtWbWE5UXRBTk5pcHZlY1BoaEFVUTo9>

Meeting ID: 926 449 4206

Password: 7171

If you click on the URL, you should not need to enter in the Meeting ID and Password.

To dial in by phone: +1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID 926 449 4206, Password 7171.

Weekly Calendar

Thursday, Dec 17	11:30 a.m.	Women's Lunch
Thursday, Dec 17	1:00 p.m.	Men's Lunch
Thursday, Dec 17	5:00 p.m.	Spiritual Support Group
Friday, Dec 18	7:00 p.m.	IKC Blue Christmas Service (IKC Zoom)
Saturday, Dec 19	11:00 a.m.	Neighborhood Walk (at FC)
Sunday, Dec 20	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, Dec 20	11:00 a.m.	Fourth Sunday of Advent/Communion Worship (YouTube, FB, Dial In)
Sunday, Dec 20	12:00 p.m.	Zoom Coffee Hour
Tuesday, Dec 22	5:00 p.m.	Soul Care w/ Pastor Sarah
Tuesday, Dec 22	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Vespers
Wednesday, Dec 23	10:30 a.m.	Wellness Wednesday

Thursday, Dec 24	7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship (YouTube, FB, Dial In)
Thursday, Dec 24	8:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Zoom Fellowship
Friday, Dec 25	3:00 p.m.	Christmas Day Zoom Gathering
Sunday, Dec 27	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, Dec 27	11:00 a.m.	First Sunday of Christmas Worship (YouTube, FB, Dial In)
Sunday, Dec 27	12:00 p.m.	Zoom Coffee Hour

***All events are on Zoom unless indicated otherwise.**