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e-pistle for the week of February 8, 2018

Minister's Message

Life gets complicated. It always has been: in college people take classes to prepare for careers and to shape their lives and engage in the complicated processes of finding a life partner. It used to be that the June after graduation one was expected to get married. This really is not the case any more (although it still happens), but at college there are a lot of different life processes all going on at once. The same when we have children. The same when one retires. Complications are part of life!

At this time in the life of the church:

Board and team members (and anybody else!) will gather this Saturday for empowerment and initial organization. We will come out of that meeting with a clearer understanding of the work of the Boards, initial leadership and hopefully some confidence in going forward. It is an important meeting---every Board has members on them who have never served on a church board before.

We celebrate the last Sunday of Epiphany, the season of the church year where we look at how Christ is manifested in the world. Our exact sermon series is on what it means to be church and this Sunday we will look at being light to the world and what that means.

The New Creation worship services are finishing up a series on different ways of engaging with God. We've looked at playing with creativity and listening in silence. This Sunday we look at the lives of people who have influenced us, shaped our lives with the examples of how their lives were shaped by God. We start out with Duke Ellington, Jane Parker Huber and John Newton, and will go from there.

And next Wednesday we celebrate Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday. How we will put those together is going to be a bit of a complication (love hurts? Any number of Roy Orbison songs tie together contrition and love, like 'I've done a bad, bad, thing'). We will sing, chant and pray in the Taize style, offer ashes as a sign of spiritual renewal and communion as a sign of grace. And Lent begins.

Complicated? I suspect so. But complications are a sign of life!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Save the Date!

A Board Retreat will take place on Saturday, February 10 from 10:00 until 1:00. Coffee and light snacks will be served.

Lenten Breakfasts

The Southeastern Association of the Indiana Kentucky Conference is once again sponsoring a series of 'Men's Breakfasts' on Saturday mornings at 8 a.m. at different churches. Each breakfast includes a meal, a devotion and an offering that will go to support a ministry of the host church. The first breakfast will be:

Saturday, February 17

St. John (Cumberland) UCC
11910 E. Prospect St.
Indianapolis, IN 46239

Saturday, February 24

Ellenberger UCC
5520 E. 10th Street
Indianapolis, IN

Please note: we will host on Saturday, March 17.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

Our topic this week will be " Blessed are the Peacemakers - Part I ." Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

A Place of Light. Based on 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 and Mark 9:2-9. In times when it seems like the night rises among us, the insights Paul and the gospels have about Jesus being a source of light for our lives seems particularly important. What does it mean for the church to be a place of light, where we see more clearly and are a source of light for the world?

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

We continue our theme of expressing our devotion to God by looking at how other people's lives have influenced our lives of faith. Who have been our exemplars? Shaped us through their examples. Romans 16.

What's Happening at FCC

Important Announcement - Please Read!

Family Promise has alerted us that they have received new families into the program and now face urgent supply needs. If possible, **can you bring to Saturday's All Board**

Retreat or Sunday's worship service any of the following:

- New blankets (very urgent; they just did four intakes),
- Plastic spoons (also very low),
- 3T and 4T pull-ups,
- Liquid hand soap (large refill bottles, not dispensers),
- 39-gallon black trash bags (with built-in ties),
- Regular laundry detergent (pods are preferred)
- Dye-free laundry detergent (for parents with infants, usually labeled "free and clear"),

- Dryer sheets,
- Coffee, dry creamer, sugar in pourable/sealable container,
- Toilet paper (if you'll permit, they humbly request at least as many ply as you have thumbs).

Thank you sincerely for your consideration!

Mission of the Month, Indiana Youth Group (IYG)

Indiana Youth Group (IYG) was founded in 1987 by Franklin College grads and partners Chris Gonzalez and Jeff Werner. Both men volunteered for the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard in Indianapolis and noticed the huge number of calls coming from youth under age 21 with issues of homelessness, suicide and dropout.

For over 30 years the mission of IYG has been to create safe spaces, provide wellness programming and educate LGBTQ youth and the community. The result is self-actualized, competent adults providing leadership and advocacy in our greater community.

With the assistance of grants, donations and fund raising, IYG moved into a newer and larger facility a few weeks ago. The new facility is located at 3733 N. Meridian and will allow IYG to increase its programming.

This year our monetary donations will be used in the following areas:

- SWAP Closet- IYG youth can obtain appropriate clothing for job interviews, school, or other life situations. IYG is also accepting donations of gently used clothing for these purposes.
- Food Pantry – Each day that IYG is open meals provided by volunteer organizations are served to the youth. Often times this meal is the only food some of the youth have that day. The Pantry is available to provide nourishing food to youth for those days when the Center is closed.
- In late summer 2018, IYG and Trinity Episcopal Church will be opening Trinity House, an LGBTQ homeless shelter which will have space for 14 youth. Our donations will help furnish this facility to provide safe housing for youth who have been outcast from their families because they are LGBTQ.

Our generous support will help make a better present for the young people in our community. Within the last decade there has been a national project titled “It Gets Better”

to give hope to LGBTQ individuals. It can be better, today with our assistance

Pantry Items of the Month

During February we are collecting the following items: bar soap, jelly/jam, canned spaghetti, and canned tuna/chicken

Ash Wednesday February 14 - 7 p.m.

A time of focus and blessing. We will celebrate Taize-style with chanting and reflection with optional communion and the imposition of ashes. And it's St. Valentine's Day! What could be more appropriate (we are working on how to fit these two themes together!)

Our congregation is invited to this new and exciting workshop!

Environmentally Responsible Investing for Congregations Workshop

Date: Thursday, March 1st, 2018

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

St. Luke's United Methodist Church

100 W. 86th Street


Indianapolis, IN 46260

Environmentally responsible ways to invest endowment funds and other pools of money is a topic of frequent debate in many organizations including congregations. These discussions are often fueled by media coverage or by single issue advocates but do not apply a more systematic approach using key environmental and creation care principles. This workshop addresses directly the important role congregational investment leaders can play in developing key principles, assessing responsible investment choices, assuring financial performance and communicating the principles, practices, and results to the congregation and community. The workshop is also targeted for individuals within congregations that perceive the benefit to this approach as well

Please RSVP [HERE](#) for this FREE event!

Pastoral Care

Please contact Rev. Michael at (708) 691-0003.

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e-pistle for the week of February 15, 2018

Minister's Message

What to like about this church

Any change brings about its own confusion as one way of doing things is replaced by another way. The new way may be infinitely better, but it is still a *change* and takes some getting used to. So in the next couple of weeks some patience is called for as the church says good bye to myself and welcomes Rev. Sarah Lund as its minister.

It helps to reflect a bit on what you are good at:

- FCC has networks of caring that create life long friendships and bonds between people. Dedicated volunteers call on people who are ill or shut in. The men's lunch group, Women's lunch, Circle IV, young adults group and others provide opportunities for friendship and bonding for more than business meetings, and this is important. We've got some work to do here---at the very least a younger women's/general adult group are called for to meet the needs of other age groups. But with a historic level of six fellowship circles, we have four empty slots!

- FCC is good at worship. I say that with a bit of trepidation, because one of the truths about our worship services is how they have changed over the years and with a new settled minister there will be additional changes to come just by the difference of personalities. We are not done changing! Visitors have told me that they liked our worship service because it feels like worship and has an informal formality to it. The sharing in prayer requests is a hall mark of that, even first time visitors feel comfortable in lifting up prayer requests (and that is remarkable!).
- FCC is good at spontaneous organization. That may be an oxymoron, but when something needs to happen, we rally around the person who lifts up the issue and leads. That happens again and again, so can be seen as part of our culture. We are 'good team players' with the wider church, within our church and within our denomination.
- FCC is good at being attentive to the needs of God in the world. We are not trapped in what we've always been (well, mostly) and are both today and historically willing to engage any issue.

The list goes on, I'm sure that you would want to add some aspects that I have left out. First Congregational is a wonderful church and does great work for God

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Lenten Breakfasts

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Saturday, February 17

St. John (Cumberland) UCC
11910 E. Prospect St.
Indianapolis, IN 46239

Please call the host church by Tuesday, February 13 if you plan to attend. The phone number is 317- 894-7958.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

Our topic this week will be " Blessed are the Peacemakers - Part II ." Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

A Place of Christ's Presence. Based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and Ephesians 4:1-16, we look at what it means for the church to be the Body of Christ.

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

Lent is a time when Christians prepared for baptism and formally choosing to follow Christ. Which raises the question of other than penance for our sins, what is important to progressive Christians in following Jesus? We begin by asking the basic question: "What's Important about Jesus?"

What's Happening at FCC

All Material for the March Colony is due TODAY!

Mission of the Month, Indiana Youth Group (IYG)

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This year our monetary donations will be used in the following areas:

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- Food Pantry – Each day that IYG is open meals provided by volunteer organizations are served to the youth. Often times this meal is the only food some of the youth have that day. The Pantry is available to provide nourishing food to youth for those days when the Center is closed.
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Pantry Items of the Month

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Celebrating Rev. Michael!

Please join us on Saturday, February 24, at 5-6:30 p.m. for a celebration event of Rev. Michael’s ministry with us. This is a time for us to have fun and give thanks for Rev. Michael, and wish him well on his future journey. As part of the event, we will have a pitch-in dinner and fun activities. A signup sheet is available in the Narthex. Please plan to come, even if you can’t contribute to the pitch-in, for this time of community, celebration, thanksgiving, and well-wishing!

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e-pistle for the week of February 22, 2018

Minister's Message

Last Words

These next two weeks are filled with the duties of leave-taking: packing up the office, Writing one last worship bulletin, arranging for activities that have to happen, delaying those that don't. Trying to think of what to say as part of my good-byes.

There actually is abundant research on famous good-byes. Jazz drummer Buddy Rich died after surgery in 1987. As he was being prepped for surgery, a nurse asked him, "Is there anything you can't take?" Rich replied, "Yeah, country music."

And the words of a general in the Civil War, on the front lines rallying his troops, responding to a soldier urging him to get down, "Bah! They couldn't hit the broad side of a barn from this dis..."

Abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher said as he lay dying, "Now comes the mystery." More apropos to our situation is the reminder of Karl Marx, that "Last words are for fools who haven't said enough."

My leaving is quite different from those people: part of the job of an interim minister is to leave, and leave well in order to empower the minister who follows to have a smooth as possible transition into the church and to have to deal with a different set of issues than those that caused such difficulties at the beginning of that ministry. And even more importantly, as I leave neither you nor I have died. So this is a time for good byes but not those more permanent endings. Whew!

My last events include

- A Saturday night party at 5 p.m. here at the church after which, I believe, I will be 'well done' (as in roasted). Fortunately, there will be food!
- Sunday morning worship at 11 o'clock at which I will give some final thoughts for the church going forward.
- Sunday evening's New Creation worship will focus on how we follow Jesus by living lives of compassion for others.
- Tuesday the 27th is my last night at Starbucks. After that, they are on their own!
- Friday, March 2 there will be a 'help Michael load the van' party. An email will follow, aim at 11 a.m., done by noon.

Interims do not so much 'end' their ministries as we 'pass the baton' of the church's ministry on to the person who comes next. You have chosen well, you will do well. Praise be to God!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

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Saturday, February 24

Altenheim Community
Corner of Hannah and Sherman Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46239

Please call the host church by Tuesday, February 20 if you plan to attend. The phone number is 317- 788-4261..

Lenten Program for February 28

Our leader for next week's Lenten program will be Carol Johnston, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture Emerita at Christian Theological Seminary. Carol has worked on environmental issues for both the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Episcopal Church, and has taught adult-education courses in churches and lectured as far afield as Singapore on issues of economics and environment, justice, Bible and nature, and the public roles of churches. Our Green Team here used her booklet on the Bible and ecology called "And the Leaves of the Tree Are For the Healing of the Nations: Biblical and Theological Foundations for Ecojustice" as a basis for our Earth Day worship a few years ago.

Please join us at 6:15 for soup supper or 7 p.m. for the program.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

Our topic this week will be "Christians as Peacemakers." Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

A Place of God's Blessing. Based on Genesis 12, 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 5:13-16, we reflect on the church as being a place where people discover God's blessings. This will be Dr. Montgomery's last Sunday with us!

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

Theme: How do we follow Jesus? By showing compassion for others!

What's Happening at FCC

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Unifying our Voices through Caring Communication

A Lenten program at FCC Sunday March 4, 1:00-3:00 PM.

You are invited to a workshop on communication presented by guest speaker Cynthia

Drouin. Ms. Drouin graduated from Christian Theological Seminary in 2016 with a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counseling Associate, with a wealth of training as can be seen in her professional bio below. She is skilled at teaching groups of diverse people ways of communicating that help them set and meet their goals while at the same time affirming one another even when compromise is necessary. Ms. Drouin has a history with FCC; she grew up in our church and is the daughter of the beloved Rev. Waldo and Priscilla Savage. Come join us for an afternoon of learning and practicing ways of communicating within the beloved community. If you wish, bring a sack lunch. Refreshments will be served during the break.

Bio: Cynthia Drouin, MA, LMHCA graduated summa cum laude from Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in 2016 with a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor Associate, has completed all training as a Clinical Mental Health Counselor, and now is accumulating supervised, post-graduate clinical hours for LMHC licensure in 2018. In addition to working from a foundation of psychodynamic psychoanalytic theory, Cynthia is advanced Gestalt trained and currently is engaged in learning Mentalization Based Treatment skills. Cynthia is a relational therapist who sees clients in private practice and works as a Mental Health Clinician at the St. Vincent Stress Center. Areas of special interest and clinical expertise include interpersonal communication, assisting individuals, couples and groups with personal crisis management, grief and loss, depression and anxiety, life transition adjustment, relationship concerns, life review and aging, addictive behaviors, wellness, life-limiting illness and disability, creative expression, self-esteem and perception. Cynthia welcomes the opportunity to return to First Congregational UCC where she grew up as the daughter of Reverend Waldo and Priscilla Savage.

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