



Worship Themes for June, 2017

- June 4** The Book of Acts gives us the 'Cecil B. DeMille version' of the giving of the Holy Spirit while Paul reflects upon the working Holy Spirit in the Christian communities with which he worked. Which raises questions: What do we need from the Holy Spirit? How is it present in our lives and church? This will be the choir's last Sunday until September and will include Holy Communion. **Come celebrate!** 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 and Acts 2:1-21
- June 11** : **Pride weekend** is a good time to remember why we are Open and Affirming of people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, or are a part of what are called 'sexual minorities.' We begin with Leviticus 18:19-23, move to Romans 1:24-31, and conclude with John 13:23, 31-35. **God loves All!**
- June 18** **Paul the Problem.** Paul poses lots of problems for progressive Christians, but he may be our 'best friend' in the Bible. To get to know Paul and his relevance to us requires that we get behind 'Paul the Acceptable' to get to 'Paul the Authentic'. Galatians 1:13-24.
- June 25** **Peter the Solution: Unity amidst Diversity in Communities.** To read five contemporary scholars over the last thirty years is to gain five different perspectives on what the core of Paul's thought 'really' is. If you read the letter to the Romans in its entirety, however, taken as a whole Paul is working to create community amidst the diversity of peoples in Rome. Does this not speak to postmodern people who are also trying to create community out of our diversity? Romans 14

Pastor's Reflection

Unpacking Old Stories

I have been struck by two Biblical insights since arriving at First Congregational in 2015: first, people have told me in no uncertain terms that they did not like the Apostle Paul. He seems dense, difficult to understand, patriarchal, hierarchical, oppressive to racial minorities, oppressive to women, oppressive to life in general. The second realization has been that no other part of the Bible has undergone such a radical re-examination as has had Paul's themes and letters. From the dominance of European Reformation thinking before 1970 has come books suggesting 'Paul for a New Day', Paul as 'The Apostle to America' with an application of cultural studies approaches to Paul. Post Modern discourse theory, intertextuality, anthropology, Post-Freudian Psychology, American cinema---the list of themes and methods goes on and on. What comes of all of this is a Paul who is very concerned about how we live faithfully to God while under the law of 'the Empire', how we create a community amidst our human diversities, the ways culture seduces us from faithfulness---all themes that are very important to the wider progressive Christian community. So we will take

another look at Paul, try and figure out who he really was and what he is to us.

In my very first year of seminary I took the required New Testament class and then a course in Paul from Robin Scroggs, then at Chicago Theological Seminary before moving on to Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He had been at the very forefront of Pauline scholars. The summer after my first year I had an internship in a small church in downstate Illinois and had to write a reflection paper about them. What was the most useful class that I had taken during my first year? I wrote that I had found preaching from the Gospels the easiest, and what people seemed to appreciate the most, but August's reflections about June and July's experiences pointed to Paul being more insightful about us. I wrote no more but got a note scrawled on my paper off to the margins saying "I wish you would unpack this!"

Time to unpack!

– Rev. Michael H. Montgomery

A Little Library Coming Soon!

The Board for Witness and Welcome is seeking ideas and designs for a curbside 'Little Free Library' to be placed in the back parking lot. 'Little Free Libraries' are small boxes mounted on a pole or stand that contain books. When you want a book, to take one and replace it with another. We'll put ours in the parking lot for access by local dog walkers and preschool families. We are looking for designs that will:

- Cost under \$100;
- Have 'three stories', the top for books, the middle floor for a jug of water that will provide water for the water bowl for visiting dogs on the ground. (A 'canine hospitality center')!
- Waterproof top story to keep the books dry. It must have a door.

See <https://littlefreelibrary.myshopify.com/> for ideas and a general picture of what this will look like. The purpose is to provide hospitality and a little love to our neighbors. What should ours look like?

Looking Ahead

At its May meeting, the Church Council agreed to hold our Annual Ministry Planning event (**AMP**) on September 23 from 9 to noon. On this day all members are invited to come and brainstorm about the work that we want to do over the course of 2018. Mark your calendars! Boards and teams: set your agendas!

Attendance at Muslim Iftar Dinner

The Niagara Foundation is organizing a series of Iftar dinners to celebrate the end of Ramadan to which we are invited.

- Ramadan is the month-long time of fasting for Muslims during which they neither eat nor drink during the daylight hours.
- Iftar is the meal that is enjoyed after sunset each day. The Niagara Foundation has organized a group of primarily Turkish Muslims who will invite guests to their Iftar meals.
- To participate, go to <https://goo.gl/LWxr4G> and fill out the form. You will be notified as to whose house you will go to for this meal. Note: it will be after sundown, so in June that means 9ish, surely home by midnight.
- Why? To learn about how Islam is practiced and lived, to make friends across religious boundaries and to eat really, really well!

Neighbor Sign

When you come to church you will notice the sign from Indianapolis' Immigrant Welcome Center proclaiming "No matter where you are from, we are glad you're our neighbor." Proposed by the Board for Witness and Welcome and endorsed by the church council, this is an obvious extension of our commitment to love our neighbors as ourselves and to be a place of extravagant welcome to others. In addition, we have two signs, and if you would like to borrow the second sign to post at your house, you may check the sign out for a week. Call the office for help!

Young Adult Game Night

A young adult 'circle' is being formed at First Congregational, with its first meeting being a game night on Sunday, June 4 at 7 p.m. Bring a game and a friend (or one of the above!), we will order pizza and play games. Call Rev. Montgomery if you have questions!

Planned Music for Traditional Service in June

June 4 – Choir (last choir Sunday)

June 11 – Summer Quartet (Julie Houston, Sean Baker, Nick Fennig and Alice Rutherford)

June 18 – Men's Chorus

June 25 – Hope Fennig, soprano soloist

From the Moderator

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted. - Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

"Courage in the struggle for justice and peace." I have often used those words from our UCC Statement of Faith to explain to others how I see the United Church of Christ being unique from many other denominations. June is PRIDE month and is **one** of our many examples of courage in the struggle for justice and peace.

As early as 1969, the UCC Council for Christian Social Action adopted a resolution addressing homosexuality and the law which advocated the decriminalization of homosexuality. Then in June of 1972 on the 15th anniversary of the United Church of Christ, Bill Johnson was ordained as the first openly gay minister in the UCC.

Eventually as the Open and Affirming (ONA) movement gained momentum, New York City's Riverside Church became the first ONA congregation in 1985. Today there are over 1,400 ONA congregations and is recognized as the largest LGBTQ church movement in the US and Canada.

Joyfully join First Congregation this month as we celebrate PRIDE and continue our pursuit of justice and peace.

— Bob Cook, Moderator

Sunday Adult Class

All classes meet in the Library (room 212) at 9:45 a.m. All are welcome!

The adult class on Sunday mornings (9:45) will continue to interpret Jesus' life for us. We will continue delving into "The Acts of the Apostles" with the exception of June 11th when Michael Montgomery will lead us.

June 4 Pentecost - "The Birth of the Church"

How fortunate that the lesson on Pentecost comes on that actual day! This is the time to discover the meaning of Pentecost for our church now as well as what it meant for those witnessing the coming of the Spirit approximately 40 days after the resurrection. We will look at some significant points of apostolic teaching found in Peter's first sermon in Acts 2. In this lesson we'll try to connect Peter's points to his conviction that the church's identity is tied to Israel's history and prophetic mission. We'll also contrast features of early church life and life in our congregation and discuss merits.

June 11 "The Problems and Opportunities of Acts" Rev. Michael Montgomery will reflect on some of the challenges of interpreting the Book of Acts.

June 18 "The Power of the Gospel"

After reading about healing in Acts 3, we'll try to relate it to our church's healing ministry today. We will try to summarize the main elements of Peter's appeal to fellow Jews to

accept Jesus as God's Messiah. This lesson also points up the reaction of the religious authorities to Peter and John's ministry and the response of the early church to the council's attempt to silence them. This may resemble our denomination's attempt to be all inclusive and more conservative Christian's pushing restrictions on society. Discover where our contemporary church might engage boldly in Jesus' name.

June 25 "Challenges from Within and Without"

What do the stories of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira tell us about the attitude toward money in the early church? What was the early church's understanding of sharing resources and how does it compare with ours today? In this chapter we will discover the reasons the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin opposed the work of the apostles. What were the qualifications and responsibilities of the diaconal ministers selected in Acts 6. How did these relate to the work of deacons today? What do we think about eliminating the role of deacons in our church today?

New Creation Worship

New Creation Worship will continue to meet at the 5:30 time throughout the summer. We have several non-members who have been participating on a regular basis for whom that afternoon time frame works particularly well. As more folks find us during the summer months, we hope to see our numbers continue to increase. And of course, we always encourage our fellow FCC members to join us for a different approach – often interactive – to worshipping God. June worship services begin with celebrating Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit, God's love for people who are GLBT and a dive into one of the parts of the Bible that we often have the most difficulty with: the letters written by the Apostle Paul. Come join us!

Call to Service

"Here am I; send me!" Isaiah 6:8

Mission of the Month, Strengthen the Church

As some local churches are finding their pews less full in recent years, some are growing with vital ministries and mission. Occasionally a church just needs a little extra funding to revision itself and catch the Spirit of what it might be and whom it might serve.

Strengthen the Church (STC) is one of our four UCC offerings we take each year, and is a special mission offering to reimagine and build the future of the UCC. Shared at the conference and national levels, STC largely supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard.

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, our generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and help develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Although most congregations will receive the Strengthen the Church offering on Pentecost Sunday, June 4th (the "Birthday of the Church"), but for us, it will last the entire month of June.

— Nancy Dickinson, Outreach and Service Board

Pantry Items of the Month

During June we are collecting the following items: pudding or Jello mix, canned vegetables, toothpaste and dish soap.

Our Monthly Food Donations

Church members donated over 100 pounds of nutritious food to the Northside Food Pantry in April. While we don't see the results of our donations, we can be sure that they are significant and appreciated. Thanks to all who donated. Others who may not know of our program can bring nonperishable food to church when they visit, placing the food in the baskets in the narthex. The recommended foods of the month are posted on the garden door and are usually listed in the Colony.

What's Happening at First Congregational

July Colony Submission Deadline

The submission deadline for all announcements, articles, reports, and events is Thursday, June 15, 9 p.m.

Pride Sign Up

It's already May and summer is just around the corner. One of the highlights of summer time in Indy is the annual Circle City Pride parade and festival in June, held downtown. Pride Week begins June 3rd with activities throughout the week; many are free and family-friendly, including Pet Pride, and interfaith service at Central Christian Church at 701 N. Delaware St, family movie night, a bicycle marathon through Fountain Square, and Pride Night on June 9th at the Indiana Fever WNBA game at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. The grand finale will be the Pride parade and festival.

Once again, First Congregational has signed up to participate in both the parade and interact with festival attendees, listening to their stories, answering questions, and telling them about our church family. This year's Pride parade will kick off at 10:00 AM on Saturday, June 10th at the corner of Delaware and Michigan Streets and continue up Massachusetts Avenue toward College Ave, a reversal of the route taken in years past. The festival will begin at 12:00 following the parade. The parade will now be held at new location this year, Military Park near the IUPUI campus. Please note there is a \$5 admission fee this year, \$4 if purchased in advance.

We would love to have as many people as possible join us for this day of fun and diversity! If you are interested in walking in the parade, setting up the booth at the festival, or volunteering at the booth, please contact Nathan Howard in person, by phone at [765-376-4132](tel:765-376-4132), or by email at nahoward1984@gmail.com. We have a sign-up sheet for both the parade and festival in the narthex. If you are interested in helping with the booth, we would like to have someone there at 11:00 AM to greet any early visitors. Shifts are available throughout the day, and we would appreciate any help with tearing down the booth at 5:00 PM.

A full list of Pride week's activities can be found here: <http://www.circlecityinpride.org/>

If you are planning on participating in the parade and/or festival, FCC will be wearing new t-shirts with a 'GOD' logo designed by our own Sean Baker. At Traditional and New Creation services leading up to Pride, Nathan Howard will be taking orders for shirts online. The web site says 2 weeks for delivery, but so far the shirts have arrived within a week for people who already ordered. If you want to order online at home, here are the steps:

1. Go to <https://www.zazzle.com/>.
2. Login: info@newcreationindy.org Password: godisgreat
(We've created one account through which all shirts will be ordered to eliminate extra unused shirts the remainder of the year.)
3. In the top right corner, click on the human head icon, and then click 'Saved Designs.' You will then see an image of our shirt with the GOD logo available in both women's and men's sizes. Click on the image of the shirt you would like and select your size. Leave the shirt color as the default Deep Royal color if you are participating in Pride.
4. Click 'Add to Cart' to enter your method of payment and confirm your order. Please note that Zazzle Black is the default shipping option. This gives our account free shipping. Once you have placed your order, a confirmation email will be sent to Sean Baker. Please let Nathan, Sean, or Bob Cook know if you have any questions.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at Pride in June. The more the merrier!

— *Nathan Howard*, Witness and Welcome Board

Watch Our Garden Grow

The demonstration garden is nearly planted. We are using the square foot garden method to maximize gardening in a small space. We also are using some vertical gardening to again maximize our crops in the smallest space. The space is being gardened organically in that no artificial fertilizers or chemicals have been used on the garden. We have tried some companion planting as well where plants that seem to have an affinity for each other are planted close to each other, and we have flowers in the garden to attract pollinators and to repel common pests.

Mainly, be aware that this is a garden to advertise sustainability that even we urban dwellers can use, by growing a few of our own local vegetables. Also we are encouraging any members who garden, even on their patios, to grow a bit for the food pantry this church supports: the Northside Food Pantry. Fresh vegetables are difficult to get on limited incomes, and are sorely needed. Whatever we can provide will be welcome. We will have a method to get our produce to the food pantry in place in the next month.

Check out the garden and see what is coming up. Onions are up, beans are up, radishes, zucchini, and beets are up. Tomatoes and flowers are going in shortly.

— The Garden Team

Discussion Group/Pitch-In

The Discussion Group/Pitch-In will meet Saturday, June 17 @ 5:30, at the home of Rich and Jackie Gibson. The topic will be one of Reverend Michael's sermons (to be announced-- check the e-pistle for updates).

To RSVP, and to get an email with the sermon and any additional suggested readings, please contact Jackie Gibson at jackiengibson@gmail.com, or call 317-735-2895



Merom Conference Center still needs your bottle caps!

\$225.00 + 400 Pounds of plastic = one bench
Green Tree Plastics, Evansville

Caps from:

Juice

Milk

Soda

Sports Drinks

Water

Lids from:

Butter/Margarine

Cottage Cheese

Ice Cream Buckets

Medicine Bottles & Lids

Peanut Butter Lids

Soaps/Shampoos



Not useable: Carry-out containers & lids, pumps, straws, any metal caps, plastic bags, or drink bottles.

Recycle codes of 2, 4 or 5 are acceptable. If a cap or lid has no number, than clip off a small piece and place it in water. If it floats we can use it. If it sinks, we **cannot** use it.

Caps must arrive loose in large containers such as 55 gallon plastic bags or barrels after removal of all metal and other debris.

Benches may be purchased: Gray benches are \$225.00; other colors are an up-charge of \$50.00. Rainbow benches are \$300.00.



Calling all performers and artists!

**"FCC'S GOT TALENT!"
is looking for you
to help make Friday October 13
an evening to remember.**

**Sign up now to display your art work or give a performance
for an evening of fun raising and fund raising
to benefit the Special Music Fund.**

**Sign up on the signup sheet in the narthex.
Give us your name, how to reach you, and tell us about
the art you will display or about your performance.**

FAQ:

- 1. Everyone says I'm the life of the party when I tell a joke or two. Can I tell a joke or two for this event?** *Yes, humor is welcome. Just keep it clean and respectful.*
- 2. I like to do needle work. Could I display some of my pieces for the event?** *What a great idea! There will be various types of display areas for art work. Or did you mean you were going to sew something on stage before our very eyes?*
- 3. I've been secretly taking harmonica lessons. I'm a beginner, but I'd love to share my progress thus far. Would this be ok?** *Gosh you're brave...but why not?*
- 4. How much is this going to cost me?** *There is no fee to display your artwork or give a performance. Isn't that great? To enjoy all the other entertainment and great hors d'oeuvres will cost each adult a modest \$10.00 (children are free!). So little for so much enjoyment and such a great cause - and think of how good the applause will feel!*

Announcements from the Congregation

Small Groups

Men's Lunch

This lunch and discussion gathering for men of First Congregational meets at various restaurants in the greater Indianapolis area. They meet every other Thursday at 1 p.m. This month they will meet on June 1, 15 and 29. Please contact Randy Walker at (317) 796-2081 or rk10walker@gmail.com for information.

Women's Lunch Bunch

All women of the church are invited to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and fellowship. This month we will meet Thursday, June 22, at 11:45 a.m. For any questions or for information please contact Marla Dankert, 317-844-2559 or mwdankert23@att.net.

Circle II

Circle II is meeting Monday, June 5, at 6:30 at Marquette Manor.

Circle IV

Circle IV will be meeting at Sandy Wood's house, 8004 River Bay Drive, East, 317-863-8238 on Tuesday, June 20, 1:30 PM. All women of the church are invited to attend. For any questions or for more information, please contact Marla Dankert at 317-844-2559 and mwdankert23@att.net or Sandy Wood at csjlwood@att.net.

Financial Update

When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands

When we give to the ministries of First Congregational UCC, we are serving those inside and outside our church community. As 1st Peter 4:10 says: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, with whatever gift each of you has received."

Overall, we are positive to our budget, with income slightly ahead of budget and expenses below the budget. While some of the expense savings are true savings, others (Outreach and Service) are largely a matter of timing and will even out over the year.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

— Jim Lootens, Treasurer (lootens.jb@gmail.com)

1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary

1/1/2017 through 4/30/2017 Using 2017A

2017	1/1/2017 Actual	- Budget	4/30/2017 Difference
Category			
INCOME	85,919	83,293	2,626
M. Unrestricted Contributions	85,919	83,293	2,626
M.01 Pledged Offerings	76,628	71,011	5,617
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	3,510	6,500	-2,990
M.03 Surplus from Prior Year	4,479	4,479	0
M.04 Endowment Income 2016	0	0	0
M.05 Transfer from Minister's Fund	1,303	1,303	0
EXPENSES	83,354	88,017	4,663
A. Pastoral Leadership	33,606	33,730	124
B. Worship & Faith	13,694	13,133	-560
C. Care & Connections	164	183	19
D. Witness & Welcome	296	300	4
E. Outreach & Service	7,507	12,433	4,926
F. Trustees	59	200	141
G. Administration & Operations	6,848	9,208	2,360
H. House & Grounds	19,364	16,817	-2,548
I. Miscellaneous	1,817	2,012	195
Net Difference:	2,565	-4,724	7,289