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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Epistle for the Week of January 2, 2020



Dear First Congregational,

Happy New Year beloved ones of God! I pray that 2020 greets you with kindness, peace and love. Know that as we begin a new year together that God is with us. God's love surrounds us. You are loved by God today and every day. Here is one of my favorite blessings that I share with you for the New Year:

St Patrick's Breastplate (an excerpt from this famous prayer, attributed to St Patrick - patron Saint of Ireland)

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

Blessings,
Pastor Sarah

Worship

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

In January, Adult Ed will study "Embracing the Prophets in Contemporary Culture; Walter Brueggemann on Confronting Today's 'Pharaohs'."

Jan 5 - "Moses, Pharaoh, The Prophets and Us"

Sunday Worship Service: Epiphany Sunday & Blessing of the Solar Panels

Pastor Sarah will be preaching on "God's Good Light."

Scriptures: Matthew 5:16 & Ephesians 5:8

This Sunday, we will have a special Blessing of the Solar Panels ceremony during the 11:00 service to dedicate our solar panels.

A Note From Your Music Designer

At night while we slumber in our beds, the sky is dark with only pinpoints of stars hinting at the hope of light to come. We awake to the sun's brightness and warmth peeking over the horizon, once again bringing us a new day's light. As we await the light while darkness reigns at night, we remember that our brothers and sisters on the other side of the planet are enjoying their light until their day ends. This ever-constant resource from God which brings life to our planet's waters, plants, and animals is a reminder that we share all that is given to us with everyone, and everyone is entitled to the sharing and giving.

God not only sent us light in the form of the sun, but with a son. Jesus brought light and brightened awareness to a world of dull darkness and separateness.

Our personal lives are often filled with darkness at times. Then in waiting we suddenly

come back to light. This constant cycle of dark-to-light-to-dark-to-light reminds me of the construction of our beloved Psalms. First there is disorientation, then new orientation.

Music is full of all the drama that mirrors God's creation. It can be warm, cool, fast, slow. Its sound can make us feel many emotions. When I think of the undulating hills and valleys starting at the top and sliding down. It's as if the violins are slowly descending in a portamento as the contrabasses then meet at ground level and take the portamento down to the depths of the valleys, only to again climb back up to the heights of elation. Music has cycles of breath and rest. A good phrase begins a statement, develops it to a climax, and then as it concludes, it takes a pause while another voice is taking their turn in the musical community.

This week I have orchestrated a piece of music by my favorite composer, Henry Mancini, which will occur in the middle of the service. When I thought about light and how it is reflected in music, this piece spoke to me. There is a constant subtle cycle from major-to-minor-to-major-to-diminished-to-major that reminds me of the cycle of the Psalms and the cycles of day and night. In music, in order for the lightness to be recognized, it must be balanced in undulation with darkness (i.e. major/minor). Though this motif cycle continues throughout the piece, I find it interesting that I started it in the key of F, but towards the end decided to raise it to the higher (lighter) key of Ab. This melodic theme is filled with small light/dark cycles, but its overall arc is the journey from dark to light—like night to day where the sun's energy brings us new life. In reflecting on this musical idea and then preparing the orchestration, it occurs to me that this musical journey very much mirrors our individual life experiences. I hope you can meditate on your own life's Psalm cycles but also appreciate how our hope has brought us light from Jesus feeding our souls in addition to light from the sun feeding our solar panels to further our ministry here at First Congregational Church.

-- Sean



What's Happening at FC

(See [January 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. We would love to have you join us!

Annual Reports Due by TOMORROW, January 3rd!

All Board Chairs, Committee Chairs, and Team Leaders need to be writing up their annual reports! The deadline for all Boards, Committees and Teams is **January 3rd**. Please forward your reports to Shannon Abbott (shannon@fcindy.org) in a timely manner. Thanks to all who have already submitted your reports!

Assembling Kits for the Border, THIS SUNDAY, Jan 5

Please join the Outreach & Service Board in the narthex **after worship on Sunday, Jan. 5** to help assemble the hygiene kits that will be taken by our delegation to the Southwest border later this month. Extra hands will make light work. Thank you.

Buzz & Pitch In Lunch: Inclusive Language - Sunday Jan 12

Worship and Faith is hosting a Buzz on the use of Inclusive Language in our worship services. We will have a panel discussion with members of our congregation on **January 12 after worship**. You are invited to bring a dish and voice your experience of the recent changes we have made in our use of scripture, doxology, and prayer.

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

Looking for smart ways to recycle Christmas cards? Three organizations re-use the fronts of Christmas cards for crafts (Zionsville Public Library, Boone County Senior Services) or for re-sale (St Jude's Ranch for Children). The latter cannot use Hallmark, American Greetings, or Disney cards. Contact Janet Selby for more information at 317 873 9539. (If you want to share a green habit, please send it to 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.

January Mission of the Month: Indiana Youth Group

Indiana Youth Group (IYG) - Mission of the Month

In 1987 the Indiana Youth Group was founded by two volunteers in order to provide a safe space for social gatherings for self identified LGBTQ+ high schoolers. IYG has grown from a group of about a dozen youth to a social service agency providing resources for almost 1,000 youth and their families. Our donations to IYG help assure that the mission of IYG will expand throughout Indiana and act as a witness to FCC's ONA commitments.

Pantry Items of the Month

During the month of January, we are collecting: noodles, muffin mix, cereal, shampoo

Pastoral Care

Pastor Sarah is still visiting family for the holidays and may be reached after January 3rd at (386) 478-9012 or at pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

Holiday Pastoral Care

While Pastor Sarah is visiting family for the holidays through Jan 3, Pastor Carol may be reached at (317) 496-9732 or casowle@gmail.com.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

Thursday, January 2	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sunday, January 5	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, January 5	11:00 a.m.	Worship – Epiphany Sunday & Solar Panel Blessing
Sunday, January 5	12:30 p.m.	PCRC (Pastor Carol)
Wednesday, January 8	11:00 a.m.	Worship Design Team
Wednesday, January 8	5:00 p.m.	Mental Health Team
Wednesday, January 8	7:00 p.m.	Joint Trustees & Church Council
Thursday, January 9	1:00 p.m.	Men’s Lunch
Thursday, January 9	7:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sunday, January 12	9:45 a.m.	Sunday Adult Class
Sunday, January 12	11:00 a.m.	Worship
Sunday, January 12	12:30 p.m.	Buzz & Pitch In : Inclusive Language