



December 2022 at a glance:

SUNDAYS	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education (In-Person Only)		
SUNDAYS	11:00 a.m.			
TUESDAYS	1:00 p.m.	Staff Meeting (Zoom)		
THURSDAYS	5:00 p.m.	Spiritual Support Group (Zoom)		
Thursday, December 1, 8, and 22 nd	1:00 p.m.	Men's Lunches		
Sunday, December 4 th	11:00 a.m.	The Rev. Dr. David M. Mellott Preaches		
Sunday, December 4 th	12:15- 12:45	Playground Playdate		
Sunday, December 4 th	After Worship	All-Church Buzz and Pitch-In with Just Peace Intern Delaney Beh!		
Tuesday, December 6 th	3:30 p.m.	Worship and Faith Meeting		
Wednesday, December 7 th	7:00 p.m.	Trustees Meeting		
Thursday, December 8 th	11:45 a.m.	Women's Lunch		
Friday, December 9 th	7:00 p.m.	Blue Christmas Service (Zoom)		
Thursday, December 15 th	4:00 p.m.	WISE Team Meeting		
Sunday, December 18 th	After Worship	Christmas Celebration		
Wednesday, December 21st	7:00 p.m.	Church Council		
Saturday, December 24 th	7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship Service		
Sunday, December 25 th	11:00 a.m.	Worship ONLINE ONLY (YouTube)		

A Message from Pastor Sarah

Dear Church,

This Advent season we are exploring the theme "Reflections of the Sacred." When you think of something that is sacred, what comes to mind? After all of the trauma (political, pandemic, injustices) that we have experienced collectively and individually, what comes to my mind as sacred is the experience of belonging to beloved community. In a time where it is easy to lose hope and feel despair, God invites us to see reflections of the sacred everywhere.

Thank you for the ways you share God's light and love with the world. You are a reflection of the sacred. Please consider supporting the mission and ministry of First Congregational with a special end of year financial gift to the church. We will be blessing our stewardship pleages on Sunday, December 18 during worship. Pray about how God is calling you to reflect the sacred through your generosity, sharing of time, talents, and treasure.

May this Advent season bless you and fill you with God's love.

Blessings,

Pastor Sarah

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



A Message from our Church Council regarding COVID: While we navigate the continuing pandemic, we request that you remain up to date with your vaccinations. Mask as needed. Please stay home if you feel unwell. –Church Council resolution of November 16th, 2022

Senior Councilor's Report

Steve Coomer, Lead Councilor (October-January)

Here we are in the month of December, the time of peace and joy. As I said last month, we have a great deal to be thankful for and now we need to be thankful for the joy and peace that the Lord has given us. It seems to be how we handle that peace and joy and recognize that it is a gift that is most important. Sometimes we can become so involved in business or our work that we are only trying to win in the race. Winning the race isn't the only thing, we need to learn how to work with others in the most peaceful and loving way possible. I know sometimes I have a problem in only trying to prove my point that I forget to listen to others. I wonder how many of us share some of that same trait? We must learn how to" turn the other cheek" sometimes and move on. Sometimes proving our point of view is the most important thing to us, but it is listening to others and understanding their point of view. We have a very accepting and open church and I wonder how many of us are able or willing to practice that acceptance and openness in our daily lives.

We need your continued support of FCC spiritually and monetarily. What can you do to help our church move forward? Is it being on a board that works with caring for others, activities which support the church's missions, maybe it's helping with the services themselves and activities, or possibly working in the financial area? We can use many more people getting involved in the church and its activities. Is it time for you to get involved?

We are engaged in a Stewardship Campaign for this next year. We really need your help to make this successful and hope you will give to your church as generously as you can.

We, again, invite all of you who have been watching and participating in worship with us online to join us in person, if possible. The month of December is a great time to come to church and see the sanctuary in all of its glory with the beautiful greens and music that goes with the birth of our Lord. Our doors are open to everyone. As we say, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at FCC." The live service is a real treat as compared to being in front of your computer.

We all need to come together in order to move our church forward. We may not do everything to your liking, but we are trying to be as open and affirming to everyone as possible. We welcome your suggestions and just maybe they will be incorporated, but we need to hear from you.

May the peace and joy of the season be with all of us.

Steve Coomer, Lead Councilor (October-January)

Pastoral Congregation Relations Committee

<u>PCRC for Pastor Sarah</u>: Lianna Campos, Nancy Dickinson, Chuck Kiphart, Chair-Randy Walker (aa28977rwalker@gmail.com)

PCRC for Pastor Carol: Gloria Boedeker and Betty Schnur

How to Join Zoom Meetings with FC Indy:



To join Zoom meetings, click this link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9264494206?pwd=dmtWbWE5UXRBTk5pcHZIYIB0aEFVUT09

Meeting ID: 926 449 4206 Password: 7171



To Join by Phone call only: 1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago), you will be prompted for the meeting ID 926 449 4206, followed by the # sign, and the Password 7171, followed by the # sign. You can call in and participant as a 'conference call'.

WORSHIP & FAITH

Aurelia Glennan-March, Chair

Adult Education Worship and Faith

Advent is once again upon us! (Where did this year go?) The Worship & Faith Board has been diligently planning our Advent services with some surprises for all. During this sacred season we are choosing to focus on Reflecting the Sacred. Where do you find the sacred? In our sanctuary on Sunday mornings? Listening to sacred music? Praying to God? These are all traditional avenues to the sacred, but maybe it's possible to find the sacred in our everyday lives and activities. This will be our focus throughout Advent and into Christmas, so please join us on this sacred journey.

It's become something of a recent tradition to offer a service of music during Advent, so we're continuing that tradition this year. December 18 will be an occasion to hear music from a variety of groups – bells, instrumentalists, vocalists – so be sure to bring your listening ears that day for a celebration of music during this holy season.

On Christmas Eve we'll share a service of Lessons and Carols at 7:00 PM. Please be a part of this special evening worship as we listen to sacred stories and lift our voices in song in celebration of the Christ Child's entry into our world once again. It seems that every passing year brings a greater need for this new light in our world.

Every now and then Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. This year, in recognition of the needs of families to spend that morning together, we'll be offering a prerecorded service only (no in-person) at 11:00 AM, with the opportunity and encouragement to view the service at any convenient time during the day. Consider this a Christmas gift from our staff and the Worship & Faith Board. We hope it goes without saying that all of our Advent and Christmas services will be available to our online worshippers. Members and friends who worship remotely, either from home or while traveling, are valuable members of our faith community, and we continue to seek ways to incorporate and engage our online worshippers as much as possible. Suggestions for improvement are always appreciated.

In other news, our first-of-the-month Playdates continue to be popular with our younger families, so they will continue through May in our newly redesigned Family Room. See the church calendar for the exact dates (December 4,

January 1, February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7). By the way, we're including January 1 as a Playdate – a great way to ring in the New Year! Thanks to all who participate in worship and faith formation at First Congregational UCC!

-Alice Rutherford

Aurelia Glennan-March <u>ahofmarch@gmail.com</u>
Cristy James <u>cristysails@gmail.com</u>
Alice Rutherford alice@caloosaspirit.net

Adult Education and Faith Formation Gathering in December

Note: Adult Ed will not meet on Sunday December 25.

For December 4, 11, the Adult Ed class will meet in the library to discuss a chosen Advent reflection, which will be handed out that morning. There will be time for sharing our reflections and stories about what Advent means to us. Come join us and join in!

Ways to Connect for Worship:

In-Person at 7171 North Pennsylvania Street Indianapolis, IN 46240



FACEBOOK

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



YOUTUBE

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWV9wgAvPiUKSkEbjaV6Zpw

 YouTube Live broadcasts at 10:45am with 15 minutes of gathering music. The service begins at 11am.

OUTREACH & SERVICE Mental Health Team Outreach and Service Board

Blue Christmas service, December 9, 2022, 7pm on Zoom: Join this Event for FCC members and friends. Sponsored by the WISE Mental Health Team of FCC. Where do people go who really feel sad and lonely over the long month of the December holidays? What do you do when you have no energy to plan that special meal? How do you explain yourself when the question is asked "where are you going for Christmas break"? Especially difficult is what do you do when those precious loved ones you celebrated with in past years are no longer with you?

We have a tradition at FCC for the past several years to help all of us find answers to these questions/dilemmas. We are going to explore what Christmas means to us and find meaning in all this materialism. A guest speaker, Bec Crandell, will join us to offer her guidance and wisdom with navigating through this holiday season. Please plan to join from the comfort of your home or office

as we have determined that a zoom event will be the best venue for this service.

WISE Mental Health Team hopes to prepare you for the holidays so they can be enjoyed without the stress and expectations and pressure that we undergo from others and from our own attitudes during the month of December.



More about our speaker for Blue Christmas:

Bec Cranford is a selfidentified Bapticostal-misfit from Atlanta,
Georgia floating in the mystical world of
ecumenism and interfaith conversations.
She's also one tough mother and an
urban missiologist wrestling with just
practices and charity.

Bec has worked in churches, nonprofits, and in higher education. Previously, Bec taught at Candler School of Theology as a contextual education supervisor from 2015 until 2022. Bec served as the Director of

Community for Wildgoose Festival, as well as their volunteer coordinator from 2017-2020. And from 2012 until 2022, Bec spent her time as the Director of Community Engagement at Gateway Center, Atlanta's largest homeless service agency.

Bec received her B.A. in Biblical Theology and Practical Theology in Missions at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. She received her MDiv from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in May of 2013.

Bec cares deeply about those that society has rejected, and those religiosity and systems of power continue to alienate. Bec focuses on ecumenical unity, interfaith justice work, and humanitarian endeavors in her spare time, speaking at many events and conferences.

Questions? Contact Sandy Wood: csilwood@att.net

Need a Lift in Your Spirit? Join us Thursdays for Spiritual Support Group for Mental Health at 5:00-6:00PM on Zoom

This gathering is open to everyone and is an informal time to check-in about how you are doing, get emotional support from church family, and offer prayer for one another as we navigate nurturing positive mental health in these difficult days. We are an open group with confidentiality guidelines. Sessions are on Zoom and will be led by Pastor Sarah.



Donations for the Northside Pantry:

First Congregational regularly collects donations of non-perishable food and supplies for the Northside Pantry, where the need is great! The pantry greatly appreciates our participation in providing regular donations. You can place your gifts – including plastic and paper bags – in the baskets in the Narthex. In

December, we are doing a "reverse Advent calendar" of giving for the Christmas season. Thank you for your donations to help others in need!

CARE & CONNECTIONS BOARD

Wendy Baldwin, Chair

Happy Birthday in December!

Sally Coombs Susan Kent Richard Kent

If you're having a birthday in December, and you are not on this list, please contact Wendy Baldwin, so we can add you to our master list for the future!

Christmas Celebration, Sunday, December 18, after worship

Join us for Christmas goodies and fellowship as we gather in the Parlor after worship. Hope you can stay after church for this time of community and sharing!

TRUSTEES



From Bread and Cup to Faith and Giving:

Your gifts to First Congregational make a difference! Won't you please consider making a pledge for 2023 of financial gifts, as well as giving of your time & talent? Prayerfully consider all the ways that First Congregational blesses your life and the lives of others, and respond by turning in a pledge card and Time & Talent form. You can:

- Put them in the offering plate during worship
- Or, mail them to the church. Pledge cards and Time & Talent forms are available in the Narthex, or can be mailed to you by contacting Cassidy Hall at cassidy@fcindy.org. Please respond by December 18.

Thank you for your faith and your gifts to provide for our ministries!

Chair, Steve Coomer

Questions or comments for Trustees, contact current Chair, Steve Coomer, 317-255-9328, s.coomer@sbcglobal.net

Financial Update

When We Give, We Reach Out With Helping Hands

Here are the financial results through October 31, 2022.

1. Current Year Actual vs Budget Summary

1/1/2022 through 10/31/2022 Using 2022 Budget

Category	1/1/2022 Actual	- Budget	10/31/2022 Difference
INCOME	226,772	216,824	9,948
M. Unrestricted Contributions	226,772	216,824	9,948
M.01 Pledged Offerings	4,720	5,607	-887
M.02 UnPledged Offerings	156,880	154,945	1,935
M.02.a Plate_Usher Counted	101	1,440	-1,339
M.02.b Contributions	155,036	153,000	2,036
M.02.c Miscellaneous	1,713	500	1,213
M.02.d Investment Income	30	5	25
M.03 Rollover Prior Year Surplus_De	9,272	9,272	0
M.04 Foundation - Endowment Fund	38,900	30,000	8,900
M.05 Foundation - Minister Fund Draw	15,000	15,000	0
M.06 Foundation - Trad. Music Fund	2,000	2,000	0
M.08 Other Transfers from Restr Accts	0	0	0
EXPENSES	227,785	232,381	4,596
A. Pastoral Leadership	106,914	107,215	301
B. Worship & Faith	24,116	29,011	4,895
C. Care & Connections	296	250	-46
E. Outreach & Service	14,059	16,560	2,501
F. Trustees	0	180	180
G. Administration & Operations	32,715	28,062	-4,654
H. House & Grounds	43,739	44,802	1,064
I. Miscellaneous	5,946	6,301	355
Net Difference:	-1,013	-15,557	14,544

Highlights:

- **Income** of \$226,800 was \$9,900 above budget. However, \$8,900 of the excess was timing of draws from the FCC Foundation. Adjusting for that, our actual income was about \$1,000 better than budget.
- **Expenses** of \$227,800 were \$4,600 below budget. Savings in Worship and Faith (mostly lower music expenses) and Outreach and Service (mostly timing-related) were partially offset by higher-than-budget Administrative Operations expenses.

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

Jim Lootens, Treasurer lootens.jb@gmail.com

Note: Cash donations of \$1.00 or less are counted as donations to the current Covenant Outreach. Cash of \$5.00 or more should be put in pew envelopes with a designation of Pledge/Contribution, Covenant Outreach, or the specific charity. Unless designated, cash over \$5.00 will go to the church budget.

A Note on our Current Covenant Outreach Giving

Our Current Covenant Outreach focus is related to our Open and Affirming Covenant (September – December) Our current outreach recipients are Indiana Youth Group, Trinity Haven, and the Damien Center.







ANNOUNCEMENTS

UCC General Synod 2023 The IN-KY Conference is thrilled to be hosting the General Synod of the United Church of Christ on June 30-July 4, 2023! This event, held every 2 years, is a time for the UCC to gather to make important decisions, share ministry, and be in community with one another. It will be held

at the Convention Center in Indianapolis, and we need lots of volunteers to put this together! Wendy Baldwin is on the Local Arrangements Committee, so please let her know if you are interested in helping out in the months before and/or during the event.

Circle IV Book club via church Zoom, Circle IV is taking a break until January 17th when we will meet via Zoom at 2:00 (note permanent time change). Our next read is "The Light we Give" by Singh.

Caring Crafters, Not meeting the month of December

Women's Lunch Bunch: All women of the church are invited to get together once a month for lunch, friendship, and fellowship. However, due to the holidays **we will have a combined Nov.-Dec. gathering on Thursday, Dec. 8 at 11:45 a.m.** For any questions or for more information please contact Sue Chapman at 317-259-1806 or <u>carolsuech59@gmail.com</u>.

A Message from the Financial Secretary: If you are planning to make a yearend financial contribution to the church or a pre-payment for 2023, please be sure to get it in a week before the end of this month. Whether on-line, mailed in, or donated in church, there are time lags, such as bank closings for holidays, in getting donations posted and deposited that can affect getting such donations posted in 2022. Thank you!

From Bread and Cup to Faith and Giving:

Your gifts to First Congregational make a difference! Won't you please consider making a pleage for 2023 of financial gifts, as well as giving of your time & talent? Prayerfully consider all the ways that First Congregational blesses your life and the lives of others, and respond by turning in a pleage card and Time & Talent form. You can:

- · Put them in the offering plate during worship
- · Or, mail them to the church.

Pledge cards and Time & Talent forms are available in the Narthex, or can be mailed to you by contacting Cassidy Hall at cassidy@fcindy.org. Please respond by December 18.

Thank you for your faith and your gifts to provide for our ministries!

Donations for the Northside Pantry:

First Congregational regularly collects donations of non-perishable food and supplies for the Northside Pantry, where the need is great! The pantry greatly appreciates our participation in providing regular donations. You can place your gifts – including plastic and paper bags – in the baskets in the Narthex. In December, we are doing a "reverse Advent calendar" of giving for the Christmas season. Thank you for your donations to help others in need!

Calendars for Exodus Once again we are collecting new calendars for Exodus Refugee. They need them for their new arrivals as well as for already settled refugees. Over the coming months please leave them in the box in the narthex labelled "Calendars." Thank you! Sue Chapman Carol Sue Chapman carolsuech59@gmail.com

The FC Indy Blog is here, "Pew Reflections": Please email your submissions to Cassidy (cassidy@fcindy.org) anytime to be shared on the blog.

Acts of Kindness Fund - Members can make requests for use of this fund to assist themselves or others in our church family who might not ask for help. These gifts can help support financial needs, as well as help with ride-share transportation, shovel or plow snow, pay an unexpected expense, etc. Honoring the dignity of the recipient, all requests for use of this fund will be confidential, and privacy will be respected. To request funds or gifts, please contact Pastor Sarah by email pastorsarah@fcindy.org or cell (386) 478-9012.



Holiday Stress Management Tips

The Holidays can be a source of cheer, excitement, and lofty expectations. It can also be a source of unwanted stress, depression, fatigue, and shattered dreams for many. Psalms 3:5

"I lie down and sleep, I awake because the Lord sustains me"

Here are some tips and biblical strategies for reducing stress and management of your mental health through the holidays:

1. Acceptance

Management of your mental health during the holidays first requires acceptance of yourself and your flaws. If you struggle with chronic anxiety, depression, situational factors, addictions, or have a diagnosed personality disorder, thinking that you should be different during the holidays can lead to negative thought patterns that will influence your feelings and behavior.

Ephesians 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

2. Eliminate Hurry

It can be tempting to get in a rush during the holidays. Learning to say "no" to all the events on your calendar is a fantastic way to avoid overpacking your schedule and overextending yourself. Management of stress is important to avoid decreasing your immune system responses as stress kicks in. This is important as the respiratory virus season is at its peak! Plan virtual meetings if it reduces travel and keeps you safe!

3. Manage your expectations

Avoid setting unrealistic expectations of yourself during the holidays. This is especially important for individuals with mental health challenges as one can easily become susceptible to depressive feelings or anxiety when things do not measure up. Social media and marketing strategies paint an unrealistic view of how the holidays look for others. Speaking with your loved ones or your spouse when these feelings come up can help you to remain accountable.

4. Take Care of yourself

a. Maintain Healthy Habits

Holiday season is notorious for ruining your healthy habits. While it is okay to include in the holiday festivities, big dinners and parties can take us off track. It is important to remember to take all medications, manage portion size, and avoid the temptation to cancel therapy appointments. Use an accountability system or trusted support to help you realize when you have gotten off track and to help you stick to your goals!

b. Stick to a Routine

Try to stick to your normal routines as much as possible. Finding a balance between activity and rest is important. If you are lucky enough to have more time off during the holidays, try to plan for movement, going outdoors, and participating in activities that are meaningful. Avoid oversleeping and inactivity. Create relaxing surroundings.

1 Corinthians 10: 31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

5. Respect and Accept Differences

Holiday movies and family gatherings can create a feeling of nostalgia. This can be incredibly difficult if family relationships have experienced tension or if there are long-rooted differences. Refer to number 3 first and make a personal goal to respect differences amongst family members. Try to forgive this holiday season in a safe, personal, and appropriate way and recognize that it does not mean that healing must be accelerated. Go at your own pace. Try to replace feelings of tension with something productive and meaningful.

Colossians 3:13: "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

6. Manage your Spending

Plan and stick to a budget. Make sure that the essentials remain covered (I.e., lights, water, mortgage, car payments, and credit card payments). Identify how much is reasonable to spend on family members and be creative with gifts to avoid overspending. Be honest with family members if your budget does not warrant gifts and find other ways to show them you care. Avoid financing the holidays with high interest as this can contribute to negative feelings once the holidays have passed.

Mark 4:19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful

7. Avoid Comparisons

Avoiding unhealthy comparisons to others is a wonderful way to avoid negative thoughts and feelings that arise during the holidays. Try gratitude meditation, gratitude lists, and journaling for helpful reminders for yourself.

Galatians 6:4-5 Each of you must examine your own actions. Then you can be proud of your own accomplishments without comparing yourself to others.

Sheronda Moore OTR/L, LMHCA is an occupational therapist and mental health counselor associate in Indianapolis, IN. Mental Health Educator IKC UCC.

PRESS RELEASE: First Congregational United Church of Christ is a grant recipient for the 2022 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations

For Immediate Release: November, 2022

Contact: First Congregational United Church of Christ 7171 N. Pennsylvania St.

Indianapolis, IN 46240, FCIndy.org 317.257.5397, pastorsarah@fcindy.org

First Congregational United Church of Christ has received a grant of \$50,000 to enable its minister, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund, to participate in the 2022 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is one of 30 congregations in Indiana selected to participate in this competitive program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. During the summer of 2023, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund will engage upon her sabbatical focusing on the theme "Joy to the World," a theme chosen communally by the minister and her congregation.

Ministers whose congregations are awarded the grants use their renewal experiences to engage in reflection and renewal. The approach respects the "Sabbath time" concept, offering ministers a carefully considered respite that may include travel, study, rest, prayer and immersive arts and cultural experiences.

Congregational needs during the minister's renewal experience also are considered. The grant will also create the support and finances needed to fund an interim pastor, as well as for renewal activities within the congregation. "Pastors play an important role in nourishing the spiritual lives of individuals and in guiding the work of the Christian congregations they serve," said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's vice president for religion. "Through these grants, we seek to honor pastors for their extraordinary service and enable them to engage in a brief period of rest and renewal. We have learned that such experiences invigorate the leadership of pastors and bring new vitality to their congregations as well."

Dr. Robert Saler, director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs, noted that the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations integrates key attributes of healthy congregations, including a mutual respect for the renewal needs of both ministers and the congregations they serve.

"The program provides an opportunity for congregations to express appreciation for their ministers' service and leadership," Saler said. "At a time when leaders are often praised for their pace of innovation and productivity, the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations pays homage to the timeless wisdom embedded in the practice of reflection and renewal."

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR FOR THE NORTHSIDE PANTRY

				Dec 1	Dec 2	Dec 3
				Peanut Butter	Jelly	Crackers
Dec 4	Dec 5	Dec 6	Dec 7	Dec 8	Dec 9	Dec 10
Canned Meat	Soup	Pasta	Spaghetti Sauce	Kleenex	Cereal	Mac 'n Cheese
Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13	Dec 14	Dec 15	Dec 16	Dec 17
Canned Vegetable	Beans	Rice	Vegetable Oil	Stuffing	Oatmeal	Chocolate Chips
Dec 18	Dec 19	Dec 20	Dec 21	Dec 22	Dec 23	Dec 24
Canned Fruit	Raisins	Dish Soap	Deodo- rant	Tooth Paste	Hand Soap	Mashed Potato mix
Dec 25						
Your Choice!						

Regular sized products are preferred.