

**STEEPLE NEWS**  
**DECEMBER/JANUARY**  
**2018/2019**



*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation;  
old things have passed away;  
behold, all things have become new.”*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*





## **A Note From Our Pastor**

We enter the Season of Advent on December 2, 2018. Advent comes from the Latin Adventus, which means coming or arrival. During the 4 weeks of Advent, we anticipate the arrival of the Christ child. Oh, we know deep down that he's not really born every year; he was born about 2000 years ago, but still we anticipate it. We decorate our homes and churches; we buy Christmas trees – or get our artificial tree out of

storage. We write our Christmas letter and address our cards, trying to remember to put a special handwritten note inside each one. We buy Christmas gifts for those we care about. We sing Christmas carols and attend special concerts of the music of the season. We plan and attend parties of the season and dress in green and red. Some people increase their attendance at Church. And people tend to be nicer to each other during the season, which is wonderful,

This year, though, I would like to suggest you add one more activity. Oh, I know, you're stretched enough as it is and you can't possibly add one more thing in your busy schedule. But I would counter that the activity I want to add will heighten the experience of the season. Ah, I can hear you say: okay, well what is this activity? It is, simply, taking a few minutes each day to stop, thank God for all the blessings that you have in your life, and reflect on the different person you are this year than you were last year. Then you can ask the Christ child to be born anew in you in whatever form you and God need to have him reborn in your life.

What does God have to say to us in the 4 weeks of Advent? How can God help us deal with our questions and concerns? How can God help us to prepare for Christmas – not all the trappings that go with it, but in our hearts and lives and relationships? How can God help us to be thankful for the blessings in our lives?

You know, God is always there in the midst of whatever we face, both the good and the challenging. And, at Christmas, we once again celebrate God coming to us in human form. May Advent be a time of reconciliation, of growth, of anticipation of new life born in each of us. I hope that you will join us in worship. I think that you will find your faith and your spirit renewed.

Before I close my note, I wanted to remind you about a few things:

The Christmas Card Mailboxes: The mailboxes for our Christmas card exchange will be up and “running” in the Cry Room on the first Sunday in Advent, December 2. Please remember to sort your cards by last name and please ONLY place cards in the boxes for those folks who regularly attend Church.

Service of Lessons and Carols: Our service will be on December 9. Come and sing and hear as together we anticipate the arrival (the “advent”) of our Messiah’s birth.

Our Christmas Pageant: On December 16, we will have our annual Christmas Pageant, following our new tradition (begun last year) of taking on roles in the Christmas story. Come and be a donkey or a sheep; or a Wise Person, or a shepherd, or Mary, Joseph or even baby Jesus. Come and celebrate together as we continue to move closer to Christmas Day!

After the service we will have our Annual Ugly Sweater Contest and, new this year, an Ugly Tie Contest! In addition, I have a new Jeopardy game with questions from a variety of topics. Prizes will be awarded. Stay and have fun and fellowship.

Our Candlelight Christmas Eve service: Our service will be at 7 pm on December 24. Come and hear and sing and join in the welcome of the Christ Child’s birth. Gathering music will begin at 6:45 pm. All is ready – O come, O come Emmanuel.

Then it’s time for your own Christmas celebration and, hopefully, followed by a little time for rest before welcoming in the New Year.

After the New Year, we welcome the Wise Men on January 6, which happens to be a Sunday in 2019. And the week after, January 13, we gather for worship and then continue into our Annual Meeting and Potluck.

God continues to bless us here at First Congregational United Church of Christ. May we continue to be a blessing to others, giving of ourselves, our time, talent and treasure as we share God’s love with the world.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”

Merry early Christmas and Happy New Year.

See you at Church.

Blessings, Rev. Casey

## Meal of the Month—January, 2019!!

Delivered Jan 27—\$5.00 per meal

Swiss Steak

Mashed Potatoes/Gravy

Green Beans

Dessert



## Christmas Card “Mailbox”

Rev Casey is placing a Christmas card “mailbox” in the cry room beginning on December 2, the first Sunday in Advent. It will remain in place through the first of the year. Please feel free to use this to “send” cards to others in our church family (and save the postage!). Also, check to see if you have “mail” . . . just look under the first letter of your last name! May you be both surprised and delighted by what you find!



## Cookies With Santa and Cookie Walk!



The jolly elf himself will be here on December 8 from 10 to noon! That's right, Santa will be stopping by to visit with his friends here at the church! Children can have their picture taken with Santa and then enjoy some hot cocoa and cookies. There will be a craft for the children to make and other activities for them to do. There will also be cookies for sale by the pound that day as well. Please plan to attend this family event and share in the magic of the season.



A new **Equal Exchange** shipment has arrived just in time for the holidays! There is a sale basket with items are out dated but still perfectly good. They are on sale for half the marked price. Check out the display and see what is new and maybe find a bargain or two!

Have you always wanted to be in a Christmas Pageant? Did you want to play a certain part and never got the chance? Let your dreams come true with this year's All Church Christmas Pageant on Dec 16! No lines to memorize! No rehearsals! We have a narrator, and you can each play any part you want. We will provide simple masks and costumes, and you just need to come forward when the part is mentioned. Let's all celebrate the birth of Jesus together!

**the  
Best Christmas  
Pageant**

## *All Saints Sunday*



All Saints Sunday was observed on Nov 4. Names of loved ones who had passed in the last year were read and family members came forward to light a candle. The church bell was also rung in their memory. In addition to this, Rev Casey honored the lives lost at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The congregation gathered in a circle to pray and candles were lit in their memory. A card was created to be sent to the Tree of Life Synagogue which the congregation signed during the service.



## **CHRISTMAS SERVICES**



**SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS**—Our Annual Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on December 9, when we will read scripture and sing carols.

**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**—Our Christmas Pageant will be on December 16. Please come and hear the Christmas story told in a unique way. Rev Casey will host the Ugly Sweater and Tie contest and games afterwards.

**CHRISTMAS EVE CANDELIGHT SERVICE**— We will have a time of gathering carol singing beginning at 6:45pm. The service will start at 7:00pm.

**NURSERY AVAILABLE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE**- There will be a Nursery available beginning at 6:30 until 15 min. after the end of the service. Parents with children ages 5 and under are welcome to use the Nursery which will be staffed with qualified early child care givers.

## **Lectionary Scripture-December**

### **Sun, Dec 6**

First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21: 25-36

### **Sun, Dec 13**

2nd Sunday of Advent

Malachai 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79; Philemon 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

### **Sun, Dec 20**

3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Isaiah 12:2-6; Philemon 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

### **Sun, Dec 23**

4th Sunday of Advent

1 Samuel 2:18-20; Psalm 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

### **Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97

Titus 3:4-7

Luke 2:(1-7),8-20

### **Christmas Day**

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14(15-20)

### **Dec 30**

First Sunday After Christmas

1 Samuel 1:18-26, 26; Psalm 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

## **Lectionary Scripture-January**

### **New Year's Day**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Psalm 8

Revelations 21:1-6a

Matthew 25:31-46

### **Sun, Jan 6**

Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

### **Sun, Jan 13**

The Baptism of Christ

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

### **Sun, Jan 20**

2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

### **Sun Jan 27**

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Luke 4:14-21



Steve Hohler helps to prepare the church for a December 1 wedding.



## **OCWM—Changing Lives**

### **That's Our Church's Wider Mission**

**No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.**

Because we believe in extravagant welcome, we insist that God's table is open, not closed, and God's gift and claim in baptism are irrevocable...

We demonstrate this through public professions of our identity and purpose: multi-racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, accessible to all.

We advocate justice for all as an extension and expression of faith.

We are open to new ways of being church and forming Christian community.

We affirm that cultural differences expand our ability to welcome more people.

We strive to keep our perspective global in our partnership with people of faith around the world.

**Gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission benefit the full range of the United Church of Christ mission across the country and around the globe.**

**Find more information at [ucc.org/ocwm](http://ucc.org/ocwm)**

**Fisher-Titus Medical Center**  
**Health Ministry Program**  
**Healthy Habits**

This month with all the holiday feasting, heartburn can happen. What is heartburn? Your stomach produces acid to aid with digesting the food you eat. The acid normally stays in the stomach. Every now and then a small amount of the acid may get into the tube (esophagus) that connects your stomach and mouth. When the acid goes up into the esophagus you may feel a burning sensation, which is called heartburn. It has nothing to do with the heart. You can keep heartburn at a minimum by eating smaller meals, avoid caffeinated drinks, acidic foods such as tomatoes, as well as less fatty and spicy foods. Smoking and alcohol can also trigger heartburn. It can be difficult to tell the difference between chest pain and heartburn, so see your healthcare provider or emergency room if unsure. (Taken in part from Seasons for Wholeness: Vol. 1)

***“He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house.” Proverbs 15:27.***



**Stewardship Sunday Potluck**—On November 11, members were asked to pledge their time talent and treasure to support our church in 2019. A potluck was held after the service sponsored by the Christian Enlistment Ministry Team.

**2019 Pledges Still Being Accepted!**

It's not too late to get your pledge cards in! If you need a pledge card, they are available in the Narthex. Give your completed card to Natalie Link or mail to First Congregational UCC, PO Box 66, Berlin Heights, OH 44814.



**End of 2018 Pledges**

The year of 2018 is rapidly coming to an end! If you would like to complete your pledge, or give and additional contribution, please do so by the Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> service. Contributions donated after December 23<sup>rd</sup> will be credited in January of 2019. Final giving statements for 2018 will be given out in early January 2019. Thank you so very much for your faithful giving! Blessings to you all for a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. Natalie Link—Treasurer

## November Happenings!

### Berlin Heights Has Talent!



On Nov 10, the Berlin Heights Community Center held a fundraiser featuring the many talented people who live near (or close by) Berlin Heights! Linda Phillips introduces and plays with her band, The Moorhens. Also on the talent line-up were the BAAS - Rylie Mullen, Marianne Weaver, Natalie Link and Becky Vaughan.

### Pilgrim Sunday



On November 18, the congregation worshipped much as our ancestors the Pilgrims did. Men wore collars and ladies donned bonnets and each sat on opposite sides of the sanctuary.



Also on Pilgrim Sunday, Scouts and congregation members gathered to dedicate the Angel Closet shed built by Zach Kibler. Rev Casey held the service indoors due to the steady rain. Brave scouts and Rev Casey and Marianne Weaver then posed outside for the picture!

First Congregational UCC is the Charter Organization for Cub Scout Troop 236. Every year the charter has to be renewed. Signing this year's charter is Institutional Head—Bob Bement, Charter Representative—Marianne Weaver and Scout Representative—Pam Bursley.



## Church Council Notes

- The Trustees reported that railings will be installed soon in the front of the church and in the parking lot. New lights have been installed in the Fowler Room. The front pew on the pulpit side of the sanctuary will be removed by Dec 9.
- Rev Casey mentioned the Christmas Card Mailbox will go up on Dec. 2. Service of Lessons and Carols will be Dec 9. There will be a wedding on Dec 1—please pray for the couple being married. Rev Casey is also working on getting caregivers for Christmas Eve.
- Point of Light stated that they are refurbishing the kids activity bags for the children to use during worship. They are in need of cookies for Cookies by the Pound. They are also creating an ALL-CHURCH Directory with contact information.
- Diaconate has divided duties among their members and is preparing for the Christmas services.
- The Treasurer will send giving statements with a reminder to complete pledges by Dec 23. Final 2018 giving statements will be sent in early January 2019.



## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational United Church of Christ will be on January 13, 2019. There will be a potluck luncheon after service followed by the Annual Meeting. This is a very important meeting where we will discuss new ministry opportunities, and the 2019 Budget. Please plan on joining us for the potluck and meeting.

## Board and Ministry Teams Annual Reports

The end of the year is rapidly approaching and it is not too soon for the Chairs of our Boards and Ministry Teams to start thinking about submitting their reports for the 2018 Annual Report. Please have all reports to Natalie **no later** than **Dec 12**. All reports **must** be **typed** or emailed.

## Cancellation of Church Activities due to Weather

The decision to cancel Sunday morning activities and special worship services is made by the Pastor and the Moderator. If closing, Rev Casey will initiate a phone tree to inform members. The closing information will also be listed on our Website and will be broadcast on WJW Fox 8 and WKYC—TV 3.

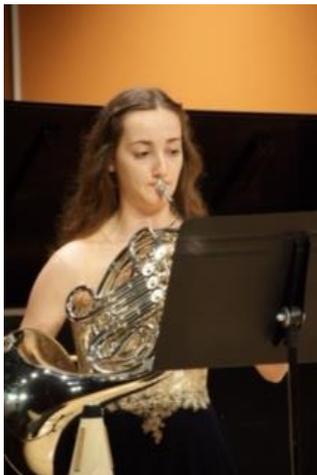


## Holy Humor



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## PROUD GRANDPARENTS!



Bob and Barb Bement's granddaughter, Isabelle, performs at her Senior Concert at Bowling Green State University. Isabelle hopes to become a music teacher.



They also became grandparents to baby Koura, daughter of their son Rob and his wife Stephanie. Congratulations, Bob and Barb!

# *Worship Leaders*

## **Dec 2**

Ushers: Linda Phillips, Martha Burnham,  
Adam Link  
Acolytes: Rylie Mullen, Kathryn Krueger  
Liturgist: Serena Dawkins  
Children's Moment: Rev Casey Cain  
Social Hour: Congregation

## **Dec 9**

Ushers: Linda Phillips, Martha Burnham,  
Adam Link  
Acolytes: Julianna Burnham, Trinity Schafer  
Liturgist: None needed  
**Lessons and Carols**  
Social Hour: Pauline Malone, Trish Bragdon

## **Dec 16**

Ushers: Linda Phillips, Martha Burnham,  
Adam Link  
Acolytes: Marianne Weaver, Steve Hohler  
Liturgist: Marianne Weaver  
**Christmas Pageant**  
Social Hour: The Robson Family

## **Dec 23**

Ushers: Linda Phillips, Martha Burnham,  
Adam Link  
Acolytes: Trish Bragdon, Marianne Weaver  
Liturgist: Natalie Link  
Children's Moment: Adam Link  
Social Hour: Adgie Hill/Trish Bragdon

## **Dec 30**

Ushers: Linda Phillips, Martha Burnham,  
Adam Link  
Acolytes: Julianna Burnham, Audrianna Burnham  
Liturgist: Linda Phillips  
Children's Moment: Serena Dawkins  
Social Hour:

## **Jan 6**

Serena Dawkins, Rylie Mullen  
Linda Phillips  
Trish Bragdon, Trinity Schafer  
Pauline Malone  
Serena Dawkins

## **Jan 13**

Serena Dawkins, Rylie Mullen  
Linda Phillips  
Marianne Weaver, Natalie Link  
  
Children's Moment: Lynn Van Dyke  
Annual Meeting Potluck

## **Jan 20**

Serena Dawkins, Rylie Mullen  
Linda Phillips  
Rylie Mullen, Kathryn Krueger  
Linda Phillips  
Children's Moment: Adgie Hill

## **Jan 27**

Serena Dawkins, Rylie Mullen  
Linda Phillips  
Audrianna Burnham, Julianna Burnham  
Serena Dawkins  
Serena Dawkins



*First Congregational United Church of Christ*

**5 East Main Street**

**PO Box 66**

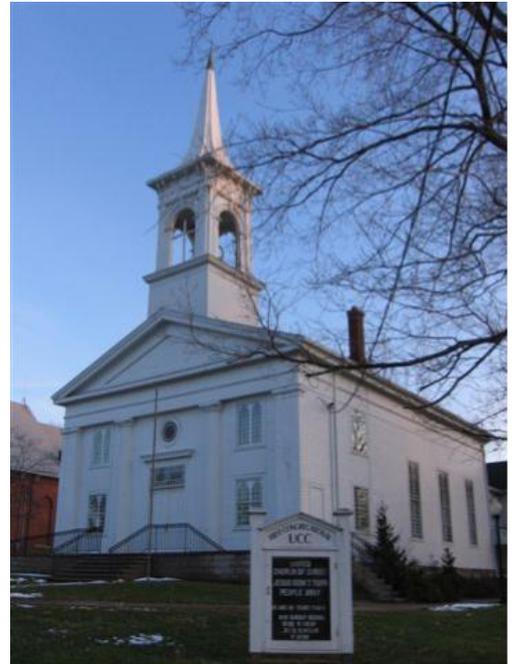
**Berlin Heights, Ohio 44818**

*Reverend Casey Cain*

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**Worship 10:00**

**Social Hour 11:00**

**StoryTime 11:15**

**“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey,  
you are welcome here.”**