

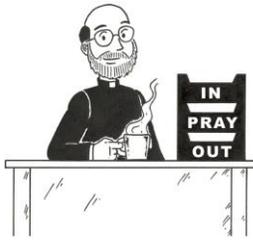
**STEEPLE NEWS**  
**DECEMBER/JANUARY**  
**2020/2021**



*“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 the Pastor**

Dear Friends,

We have entered into the Advent season and the preparation for Christmas and Epiphany. It is one of my favorite seasons of the church year. During Advent we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ in the birth of Jesus which took place a long time ago and we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ at a time we do not know. But we are also preparing for the coming of the Christ right now! The Christ comes to us each day, with each new breath we take. There is never a time when God is not coming to us as the Christ.

I hope you will find safe and happy ways to celebrate this season but most of all I hope that we will all find ways to allow the Christ to be born in us. Take some extra time to read scripture, to reflect on where Christ's presence is most needed right now, and to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to share words and acts that will make the Christ known in those places.

May the joy and wonder of this Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season resound in your hearts and lives this year.

Yours in Christ,

George+Reed, O.S.L.

## **Advent/Christmas Worship**

Due to the steep rise in Covid-19 infections the Conference and Association have asked that churches not hold in-person worship for the time being. We have decided to comply with that request and will be having video worship each Sunday through the end of the year. You can tune into YouTube and see the service. The service will begin showing each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and will be available to be seen after that time, as well. We want to send out an e-mail each week with a direct link to the worship service so you can easily find it. If you have not given your e-mail address to the church office, please send it to us.

While we are very sad to have to do worship this way, we feel it is the responsible thing to do to help keep people safe. Mask wearing, social distancing, cleaning hands, and avoiding even small crowds remain the best defenses we have against this virus. We do not want any of our people to get sick nor do we want to contribute to the spread of the virus in the community.

During this time the expenses and work of the church goes on and we ask that if you have not sent in your pledge card that you do so soon. Offerings can be sent to the church or made electronically. Thank you for your understanding and help during this difficult time.



## **Second Sunday Sharing**

Angel Closet  
Next Angel Closet  
January 16, 2021

**Peanut Butter**



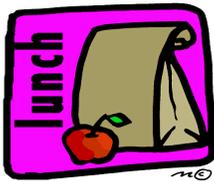
**Jelly Time**

Due to the closing of First Congregational UCC, the December 5th Angel Closet has been canceled. We are planning on having the next Angel Closet on January 16, 2021, 9:00 to noon at the Berlin Heights Community Center. We will be distributing the socks and undies collected in November. For January, we will be asking for donations of Peanut Butter and Jelly.

We are hopeful that we will again be worshipping in person beginning in January. If so, you may bring your donations on January 3 to place in the cart in the Narthex. You may also drop donations off at the church office on Monday and Thursday mornings.

*Your donations mean so much to those in need.*

**Thank you!**



## **Meal of the Month for January**

Vegetable Soup  
Homemade Cornbread  
Cinnamon Applesauce  
Brownie

The January Meal of the Month is brought to you by the Church Council. We will be taking orders January 3 through January 17. The cost is \$5.00 per meal. Order envelopes are available at the entrance to the Sanctuary. Place your order in the collection plate in the Narthex. Meals will be delivered to the sanctuary after service on January 24. Thank you for supporting this important fundraiser!

## *January Baskets of the Month*

Sadly, the closing of the church has also cancelled the December Basket of the Month drawing. As we look forward to being together again, you can be certain that there will be amazing January Baskets. We raised \$811.00 for the General Operating Fund this year even missing several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your support of this FUNdraiser!



### **Lending a Hand!**

Carter Bragdon puts the finishing touches on the installation of a new back screen door at the Parsonage. Bob Bement also helped with the project.



### **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 2019 Annual Report. Please have all reports to Natalie **no later** than **Dec 13**. All reports **must** be **typed** or emailed.



### **Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational United Church of Christ will be on January 10, 2021. We are hopeful that we will be worshipping in person. If this is the case, we will remain in the Sanctuary after service and immediately begin the meeting. This is a very important meeting where we will discuss what lies ahead for our church and the 2021 Budget. Please plan on joining us for this important meeting.

## Send in Your Email Address

During the time we are not having service in the church, we will be using YouTube to provide an online service. A link to the YouTube site that has our service will be sent by email every week. The first one has been sent. If you did not receive this email, it might be because we do not have your email address. If you wish to receive this link, just send a request with your email address to the church email: [bh1stcong@gmail.com](mailto:bh1stcong@gmail.com). Or call the church office (419-588-2102) and Natalie will add you to the list.



## Lectionary Scripture

### December

#### Sun, Dec 6

2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2,8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

#### Sun, Dec 13

3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11; Psalm 126 or

Luke 1:46b-55

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:26-38

#### Sun, Dec 20

4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

#### Thurs, Dec 24

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

**Fri, Dec 25**

Christmas Day  
Isaiah 52:7-10  
Psalm 98  
Hebrews 1:1-4(5-12)  
John 1:1-14

**Sun, Dec 27**

First Sunday after Christmas  
Isaiah 61: 10-62:3  
Psalm 148  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

**Lectionary Scripture**

**January**

**Fri, Jan 1**

New Year's Day  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8  
Revelations 21:1-6a  
Matthew 25:31-36

**Sun, Jan 3**

2nd Sunday after Christmas  
Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20  
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

**Wed, Jan 6**

Epiphany  
Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

**Sun, Jan 10**

Baptism of Christ  
Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29  
Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

**Sun, Jan 17**

2nd Sunday after Epiphany  
1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)  
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
1 Corinthians 6:12-30  
John 1:43-51

**Sun, Jan 24**

3rd Sunday after Epiphany  
Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20

**Sun, Jan 31**

4th Sunday after Epiphany  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13  
Mark 1:21-28

**Children’s Activity Play Packs**

When we return, there will be Children’s Activity Play Packs available for little ones during church service. They will be hanging on the coat rack in the narthex. Children are to take them home after service. Please 1 per child per Sunday.



**EQUAL EXCHANGE COFFEE**

A shipment of Equal Exchange is expected very soon. Because of our limited access to the building, the coffee will be on display in the narthex / cry room. Please take a few minutes to check out the new items when we return in January. If there is anything that you are interested in, and don't see it, please see Becky Vaughan or drop a note in the money box attached to the display. We will try to find what you are looking for. Thanks!



**2021 Pledges Still Being Accepted!**

It's not too late to get your pledge cards in! If you don't have a card, a note stating the amount you wish to pledge with your signature will do! Please mail your completed card to First Congregational UCC, PO Box 66, Berlin Heights, OH 44814.



## End of 2020 Pledges

The year of 2020 is rapidly coming to an end! Fourth quarter giving statements will be mailed in early December. If you would like to complete your pledge, or give an additional contribution, please do so by Monday, December 28th. Contributions donated after December 28th will be credited in January of 2021. Final giving statements for 2020 will be given out in early January 2021. 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

## New Sensors To Be Installed

Our Church is insured by the Insurance Board. They are partnering with HSB Connected Technologies to provide their member churches with a valuable early warning system that uses the latest sensor technology. This technology will detect water and monitor indoor temperatures that may help avoid a damaging incident.

We have signed up for the program and have received the equipment needed. This consists of small sensors that can be placed in areas of possible problems. Sensors act as a “virtual watchdog” when we are not on site and send an alert to an app that will be available to download. This will help to avoid any major issues before they happen.

The sensors, online app, and HSB Monitoring Support Center have been provided free of cost by the Insurance Board through the end of 2021.



## All Saints Sunday



Rylie Mullen lights the candles as names are read and the church bell tolls.

All Saints Sunday was observed on Nov 1. Names of loved ones who had passed in the last year were read and a candle was lit. The church bell was also rung in their memory.





## **The Christmas Fund— Veterans of the Cross**

They came when you needed them. They answered the phone when you called. They baptized and married and buried your loved ones. They gave up weekend after weekend after weekend to care for your spirit, lead you in worship, and point to God in your midst.

Some of them did it for less money than they could easily live on. Some of them did it for less than they would have been willing to do any other job for, because of what they believe about who God is, and what they believe about who *you* are.

For all the sacrifices that clergy and lay church workers have made in our congregations, over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the **Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund**, to help support them in retirement and during times of emergent need.

The Christmas Fund provides Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks for retirees and those facing unforeseen financial hardship.

**Join with others in the United Church of Christ to make “the light shine in the darkness” for those who have given so much to our church.**

The Christmas Fund Offering is one of the 5 for 5 UCC Offerings. You may mail your offering to the church at P.O. Box 66, Berlin Heights, OH 44814.

## **Pastor’s Discretionary Fund Offering**



The Pastor’s Discretionary Fund receives its funds from the Christmas Eve Offering. This is not the same as the UCC’s Christmas Fund. The Pastor’s fund is used at the discretion of the Pastor when a situation arises, usually an emergency plea for help from those in need. For example, it has been used to keep gas and electric from being shut off to families with small children. Please consider sending in what you would have given on Christmas Eve. Thank you.

## Church Council Notes

**November 8, 2020**

- The Treasurer reported that contributions are steadily coming in. We made \$1200.00 on the Silent Auction. We have made a total of \$800.00 for Meal of the Month in 2020. She also presented the budget for 2021.
- The Pastor stated that he and his wife Betty are getting settled in at the parsonage. They appreciate all the work that was done to prepare the parsonage for them. He said the house is very comfortable for them. They are really pleased with the newer appliances in the kitchen and the workspace that the island provides.
- The Moderator reported that the search committee will start after January 1, 2021. Plans are being made to have 3 Christmas Eve services, Thursday December 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm, 7:00pm, and 9:00pm with reservations being taken so that we can keep people as safe as possible. We are beginning to contact members of the congregation regarding special music for these services. The Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup> after the church service. There will be no potluck.
- **Meal of the Month:** The January meal of the month will be prepared by members of The Church Council. The menu is vegetable soup & crackers, cornbread, apple sauce, and a brownie.
- Becky Vaughan, as chairperson of Point of Light Ministry Team shared with us that they are not comfortable with hosting "Cookies with Santa" in December.



### **A Note from the Treasurer**

Once again, we find ourselves in a situation not of our choosing. Not being able to worship in our beautiful church, especially during the Holidays, is very difficult for all of us. As before, the business of the church continues even when we are not meeting on Sunday. I am asking that you PLEASE continue to send in your pledges and contributions that you would have given had we been in church. If you have yet to send in a pledge card, please do so soon. Without EVERYONE'S support and steady giving, we will soon find ourselves in a serious situation. The bills do not stop. I will continue to work on Monday and Thursday, and I will be checking the mail and making regular deposits. Our pre-addressed contribution envelopes can be used to mail in your pledge/offering by just adding a stamp. If you do not have these at home, our address is PO Box 66, Berlin Heights, OH 44814.

I am confident that working together we can get through this. Thank you, Natalie.

# Holy Humor



Three Wise Women



A little girl was sitting on her granddad's lap while he read her a story. She kept taking her eyes off the book and reaching up and touching his old, wrinkled face.

After a few times doing this, she finally asked, "Grandpa, were you made by God?"

"Yes, dear," he replied. "I was made by God a long time ago."

The little girl paused for a moment and then asked, "And did God make me?"

"Of course, dear," replied her grandfather. "God made you not long ago."

The girl felt her own face and then her granddad's again, thought for a moment and then said, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"



## *Worship Leaders - January*



**January 3**

Liturgist: Natalie Link

**January 10**

Liturgist: Pauline Malone

**January 17**

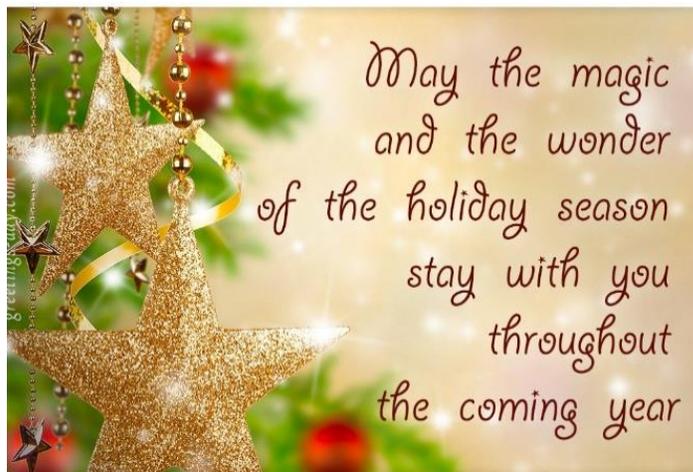
Liturgist: Rylie Mullen

**January 24**

Liturgist: Peggy Bast

**January 31**

Liturgist: Serena Dawkins



*First Congregational United Church of Christ*

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**Rev George Reed**

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

