

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

South Haven, MI

December 2018

Giving Opportunities During Advent and Christmas

Christmas Fund - Veterans of the Cross - this special offering is collected by the Mission Board and is given to the United Church of Christ. (see full article inside)

Project Christmas Hope - There are tags on the small tree in the Narthex. These are gifts for children in the community. This is in cooperation with We Care, I.N.C. and our Mission Board. Presents are to be returned by December 9th.

Christmas Offering - Our Christmas Offering will be received this year to benefit our mission and ministry with those experiencing need.

A quarter of the offering will go directly to our Food Pantry to help restock the shelves for the coming year. The pantry has served over 800 families this year. Another quarter will be given to the Diaconate Fund that helps with emergency needs.

The remainder will go into the general fund to support the pantry (utilities and building maintenance) as well as our ongoing ministries here at the church.

Advent Celebration December 2nd - 5:30 to 8:00

On this first Sunday of Advent, people are invited to gather for a time of preparing for Christmas in the midst of the hustle and noise of the season. Our night will include making some crafts, a celebration and meal. Crafts will be for all ages. We will also be assembling care packages for First Responders and College Students.

This is for young and old alike. Invite a friend. Begin your Advent preparations with good friends.

*The Fabulous
Smoked Turkey
Dinner* will be
Sunday,
December 9th
at 11:45 a.m.



This is a wonderful dinner for the whole family provided by the men of the church. Turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy will be provided. We are asking those attending to provide either a Green Bean casserole, stuffing, rolls, and of course, dessert.

This fellowship event is a wonderful time to invite a friend to come and meet others.

Prayers for continued healing of our church family:

Jean Stein
Bill Wood
Steve Siler
Joy Church
Patty Brennen
Karl Barden



Do you or someone you know need some help?

Maybe there's a need for a ride to a doctor's appointment or help shopping? Or maybe meals or simply a visit could be helpful? Perhaps prayers, flowers or receiving a card would be appreciated?

Grieving

Family of Betty Jean Montgomery,
mother of Marcia Claggett

The FCC Care Team has a group of volunteers willing to assist with all of these things but we aren't always aware of the need. If you or someone you know could use assistance, please contact the church office or Pastor Dick. The Care Team will do our best to respond to the need.



**A quiet evening before Christmas
Friday, December 14th at 7 p.m.
at Epiphany Episcopal Church
(corner of Superior and Kalamazoo)**

As we approach the holidays full of good cheer and anticipation, we recognize that there are those for whom the holiday can be difficult. Christmas is an emotionally charged season. There is a great deal of

pressure on people to not only spend a lot of money, but also to feel a certain way and experience a particularly joyous mood. All of this is coupled with an emphasis on remembering, togetherness, and family. For those who are hurting - for any number of reasons (death of a loved one, a divorce or separation, a family member serving overseas in the military, family unable to get together, or the loss of health) - the atmosphere of this time of year can amplify feelings of pain, grief, loneliness or despair.

The Longest Night Christmas Service is to provide a setting where people can come together, acknowledge their pain or sadness and know they are not alone in their feelings.

This service is open to all who would like to worship in a quieter fashion. A place where we can comfort one another and receive words of strength and hope. It is also a time to step away from the busyness and loudness of the season, and enter that still and quiet night.

Wherever you are at this Christmas, we all need to be reminded of God's presence and to enter into Christ's peace. Our service will feature soft music, candle lighting, sacred readings and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The service is being held at Episcopal Epiphany. It is sponsored by First United Methodist Church, First Congregational Church UCC, Episcopal Epiphany and Peace Lutheran Church.

Advent Opportunities for worship and fellowship

Worship will be based on the theme of Calm and Bright. This is a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the debut of "Silent Night, Holy Night." This hymn has become the best-loved worship moment of many Christians—even those who only come to church once a year. Something mystical occurs as we light our candles and sing the hope of "all is calm, all is bright"—peace and light for the world.

Each Sunday we will sing one verse of this carol, along with other Christmas Carols. We will light the candles in our Advent Wreath as we journey toward Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus.

During worship, people will be invited to come forward during the time of prayer. There will be candles on tables up front where you can light a candle for a friend, family member, yourselves or something on your heart. We will also be bringing forward our offerings at this time.

Advent is a time of celebration for people of all ages. Children and youth will provide leadership during worship. There will be no church school during Advent as families are encouraged to worship together.

Children will be invited to come forward for a time known as, "Discovering the Light." Children will think about what new babies need and relate it to peace, joy, hope and love.

Celebrate Advent this year worshipping as families and a community of faith.

Here is a brief look at worship during Advent:

December 2nd: First Sunday in Advent

Sleep in Peace. Communion will be celebrated. The candle of Peace will be lit. Scripture lessons: Isaiah 2: 1-4 and Isaiah 9:2-7

December 9th: Second Sunday in Advent

Glories stream. The candle of Joy will be lit. Scripture lessons: Psalm 86:9-11 and Luke 2:8-20

December 16th: Third Sunday of Advent

Redeeming Grace - Love. The Candle of Love will be lit. Scripture Lesson: John 1:1-18

December 23rd: Fourth Sunday in Advent

Let us Sing of Hope. The Candle of Hope will be lit this morning. Scripture lesson: Matthew 2:1-12

December 24th: Christmas Eve

7 P.M.: A traditional Christmas Eve service that will include the singing of all four verses of Silent Night, Holy Night and the lighting of individual candles.

There will be a special time for children, the reading of the Christmas Story and the singing of many Christmas Carols.

Outside the church will be luminaries to light the night and guide us forward.

This service is designed for all people of all ages. Do know you are most welcomed here.



FELLOWSHIP, LEARNING AND PRAYERS

Adult Class: Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m.. Meets in the lounge. Discussion of the scripture for the day.

Prayer Fellowship: This group will meet on Tuesday, Dec. 4th and Tuesday December 18th at 1:30 p.m. They meet for one hour and all are welcome.

Chapel Prayer Time: Each Wednesday of Advent from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Pastor Dick will be in the chapel. There will be candles lit and soft music playing. Devotional pamphlets will be available. You can drop in for a time of prayer, conversation or meditation. This is an informal time with no set procedures. Prayer is an important part of our life and Advent is a wonderful time for reflection and prayer. You can stay for a short time, or longer. Up to you. Very informal.

Thursday Night Suppers: Each Thursday at 6 p.m. Open to the community. Come to eat, come to serve, or both.

Christmas Train Display: The Lakeshore Model Railroaders will have six different layouts of model trains on display at the church from Thursday, Dec 13th through Sunday Dec 16th. Call the church office for times. This is free and open to the public.

Womens Fellowship



COOKIES AND CAROLS Wednesday Dec. 12th - 9:30AM

Women's Fellowship will begin in the Food Pantry where we will prepare our cookie tins which will be taken to shut-ins. We will then go to the lounge where we will enjoy our refreshments Karen Ruesink will lead us in

singing along with Mary Pietenpol or Sue Murphey who will play the piano and lead us in Christmas Carols. A short business meeting will follow.

All women who attend First Congregational Church are automatically members of Women's Fellowship. Please ask Nancy Garber or Shirley Sollman if you have any questions.

BRING OR DROP OFF 3 DOZEN CHRISTMAS COOKIES PLEASE!

Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross

Since 1902, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and Emergency Fund – today one of four UCC Special Mission Offerings – has provided assistance to clergy and lay employees who, after years of service to others, now find themselves facing unexpected needs. In addition to pension supplementation, Christmas “thank you” gift checks and emergency grants, the Pension Board-administered program also grants quarterly health premium supplementation to individuals and families in need.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Special envelopes will be in the pews for your donation through Sunday, December 23rd.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks next December to lower-income retirees.

(The Christmas Fund and the Christmas Offering written about on the front page are two different donations.)

OFFICE NOTES

2019 **Offering envelopes** are available in the Narthex. If you do not have a packet and would like one, please contact the church office.

Year end gifts to the church need to be received by December 31st, NOON, to be included on your 2018 statement. Statements will be mailed out in January. Thank you for your support of the ministry of FCC

The church **office will be closed** December 24 through January 1

Looking Ahead

Dec 30th: No Church School and no Adult Class. Worship at 10:30 will feature the Christmas readings and Christmas Carols.

January 6th: **Epiphany Sunday** - Communion will be celebrated. Church School and Adult Class will be held.

AND THE WINNER IS...

The FCC chili cook-off was held on Saturday, November 10. Nine chili chefs shared their chili. Thirty-five to forty taste testers sampled and voted for their favorite chili. Phil Rood made the prize winning chili!

It was a fun evening and we hope to make this an annual event. Be thinking about your recipe for next year.

Swimming to the top!

The 200 medley swimming relay team placed 15th at the State Meet, but they broke South Haven's school record and their names now appear at the top of the Record Chart that is hung in the swimming pool area. The team is made up of Sierra Garber, Ellie Frost, Caroline Meyer, and Elise Postma.

And they aren't done! Ellie Frost is now the state champion in Division 3 at the 50-yard freestyle race.

Although not coming in first, Frost and Meyer broke other South Haven school records.

Overall, South Haven's girls swim team placed 13th, out of 50 teams, at the State Meet that was held at the Holland Aquatics Center.

Amy Crews, another member of our church, is their swimming Coach.

Way to go girls!

Special Thanks to Tom and Karen Ruesink for the fabulous Harvest decorations during November. Just beautiful. They have been doing this for many years and each year is inspiring and adds so much to our worship. Thank you for your creativity.

Here is what the sanctuary looked like.





I cannot thank enough the adults and youth that participated in this event - those that contributed food and money, building the haunted maze or participating Halloween night. Without these hard working people taking precious time from their busy schedules this event would not have been the success it was. You guys are awesome!

On Halloween night the church sponsored a haunted house to support the We Care Food Pantry. Donations of food items and cash were collected as part of admission into the event. The event took in close to 200 food items and collected over \$100.

A special shout out has to go to Robert and Theresa Gleason and Robert's mom "Grandma Sandy". It was Grandma Sandy's motion activated monsters and other scary Halloween items that made the haunted maze such a success. In addition, Grandma Sandy helped manage the game room on Halloween night.

Included in the activities of the haunted house were Holy Hospitality- Coffee and Cider and fellowship were provided outside the narthex to warm passers by on a beautiful Halloween evening. Information about the church and candy were given to those who passed through the church.

And last but not least, a shout out to the following youth for all their help:

The Haunted House itself had three main activities:

William Brennen - Shepherd
Camborley Gleason - Bloody Maze Monster
Elian Garcia - Maze Monster
Chloe McNicholas- Bloody Maze Monster
Joe Nelson - Construction Supervisor
Kitty Brennen - Scary Shepherd
Sophia Cochran - Construction Assistant
Yamil Garcia - Very scary Cheerleader Monster
Zach Haner - Construction Assistant
Filimon Saucedo - Shepherd
Jazmyn Rodriquez - A bovine Shepherd
Liam Cochran - A horsey Maze Monster
Kyle Bos - A Maze Monster in a "Scare" mask
Faith Spies - A great "Haunted Waitress"
Samantha Vanden Berk - Feline Game Manager
Rebekah Torres- Game Manager

A "non scary" room where younger children could play games, have their fortune told and get their picture taken with a group of "monsters".

A "haunted" maze full of scary monsters- both living and robotic.

A "haunted kitchen" full of severed fingers and crunchy eyeball, monster blood punch and zombie ice cream.

By any measure the evening was a success:

Again, THANK YOU!

Over 300 people passed through the haunted house and many more were turned away when the doors closed at 7:15 pm. At 7:00 the line of people extended all the way back to the sidewalk and back east along Phoenix.

-Rick Olsen

18 adults and 13 youth participated in various roles. The youth were "shepherds" guiding people, game managers, Maze Monsters and a Haunted Waitress.

Looking at December

Lay Assistants and Acolytes for December will be members of the Confirmation Class.

Ushers of the Month

Barb Wittkop, Nancy Garber,
and William Brennen

Nursery

2– Chris Valentine
Liam Cochran
9– Jim and Sue Mears
16– Ann Raue
Kyle Bos
23– Nancy Daugherty
Sophia Cochran
30– Theresa Gleason
Camborley Gleason

Hospitality

2– Mission Board
9– (Smoked Turkey dinner)
16– Scott & Ann Raue
23– Women's Fellowship
30– (none)

Financial Counters

2– Chris Valentine
Marcia Claggett
9– Patty Brennen
Dave Daugherty
16– Aaron Strebeck
Terry McGarr
23– Ted Guimond
Jeff Reber
30– Mike Nelson
Wes Stephens



Birthdays

12/01 Tony Cochran
12/03 Scott Raue
12/04 Zach Hanner
12/05 MaryAnn Overhiser
12/08 Margaret Guimond
12/08 Kameron Daugherty
12/09 James O'Niel
12/09 Joseph O'Niel
12/14 Karl Barden
12/15 Nancy Daugherty
12/15 Avery Daugherty
12/16 Aaron Strebeck
12/17 Sue Gillett
12/17 Faith Spies
12/18 Michael Crews
12/24 Jessica Hentschel
12/26 Brittny Buck
12/27 Donnell Miller
12/28 Adam Peterson
12/30 Bob Straits

Anniversaries

12/05 Scott & Joy Church
12/22 Matt & Tammy Larson
12/17 Robert & Theresa Gleason, 10th
12/30 Don & Elaine Kitchin, 40th

Deacons of the Month

Barb Wittkop
637-5890

Nancy Garber
767-3920

William Brennen

Christmas Flower Fund



This year for Christmas we are offering you the opportunity to order a poinsettia that will be used for adorning our Sanctuary during this Advent season. After the Christmas Eve service you are encouraged to take your poinsettia home with you or share it with someone. Please let us know on the form if you will be doing that.

You may order a flower for a donation of \$15 /each, or more, which can be in memory or in honor of someone. A list of donators will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

To make a donation, fill out this form and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office by **December 16th**.
Thank you.

I wish to give \$ _____ in memory/honor of
(circle one)

I wish to give \$ _____ in memory/honor of
(circle one)

I wish to give \$ _____ in memory/honor of
(circle one)

Signature

Note: Whatever name(s) that appear for the signature is what will be printed.

I will be taking my poinsettia home with me.