

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

South Haven, MI

December 2019

The Fabulous Smoked Turkey Dinner will be Sunday, December 8th at 11:45 a.m.

This is a wonderful dinner for the whole family provided by the men of the church. This fellowship event is a wonderful time to invite a friend to come and meet others. Coffee, juice and some appetizers will be available following worship and the goal is to be serving at noon.



More info on what you can bring and the ability to sign up will be in the December 1st bulletin and a mass e-mail will go out as well.

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. One of the special aspects of the Christmas Fund is that the funds do not support programs, make grants to institutions, or fund advocacy programs, but rather, they provide direct financial assistance to individual retired UCC clergy and lay employees. This offering is collected through December 22nd.

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.

Prayers for continued healing of our church family:

Terri Wakild
Lynn Gabel
Linda Cummins
Marian O’Niel
Len Walter
Rick Olsen
Rick Siler



Grieving

Family of Jack Martinke, father of Lynn Dick

FELLOWSHIP, LEARNING AND PRAYERS

Advent Calendars and Devotionals

In the narthex and office wing there will be some Advent Calendars and devotionals for people to use at home. Advent is a wonderful time to add some practices to your spiritual journey. Lighting candles in a Advent wreath, sharing stories of Christmas past, or reading a daily devotional.

One of the devotionals we have this year is titled, “Wonders of His Love” and goes along with our celebration of the carol, “Joy to the World.” Do consider picking one of these up and using it at home.

Advent calendars with children help them to mark the time to Christmas.

The Book of Joy is a delightful book - if you would be interested in discussing this book, see Pastor Dick’s article inside this newsletter.

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 Tuesdays during Advent. We have an Advent reading and a time for prayer and reflection. The group meets for one hour in the lounge and all are welcome.

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



SUNDAYS OF ADVENT

Worship will be based on the theme of Heaven and Nature Sing. This is a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Christmas Carol, "Joy to the World."

Composer Isaac Watt's interpretation of Psalm 98 invites us to sing a "new song"- and it is a powerful cosmic performance of all creation being renewed and freed. Rather than "joy" being yet another word for "happiness," we will discover that the depths of joy can be found especially in the midst of suffering, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion-all part of the coming of Jesus to this world and a message the world still so desperately needs.

Advent is a time of celebration for people of all ages. Children and youth will provide leadership during worship. There will be a "living" Advent Wreath each Sunday to help us on our journey to Christmas.

Celebrate Advent this year with devotions at home and engaging worship here at church.

Here is a brief look at worship during Advent.

Advent 1: December 1st "Prepare Him Room: Hopeful Joy"

Communion will be celebrated.
Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5 and Romans 13:11-14
Mary Pietenpol will be our musician.

Advent 2: December 8th "Repeat the Sounding Joy: Loving Joy"

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10 and Matthew 3:1-15

Advent 3: December 15th "Make the Blessings Known: Unabashed Joy"

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 1-10 and Luke 1: 46b-55

Advent 4: December 22nd "Make the Nations Prove: Peaceful Joy"

Scripture: Isaiah 7: 13-15 Matthew 1: 18-25

December 24th: Christmas Eve "The Lord is Come: Incarnate Joy"

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.

COOKIES AND CAROLS - Wednesday Dec. 5 th - 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!

Fresh Christmas trees will be available beginning December 1st. Contact Bob Linderman, 214-2550, if you would like to cut your own. These are short needle trees.



Christmas Train Display

The Lakeshore Model Railroaders

will have six different layouts of model trains on display at the church on Thursday, Dec. 19th and Saturday, Dec. 21st.

Call the church office for times. This is free and open to the public.

From Pastor Dick The Book of Joy

I am very excited for the season of Advent. Worship will begin each Sunday with a special Advent song and a live Advent Wreath presentation. Celebrating Joy is our focus in Advent and it is something we all could use more of.

Advent is a wonderful time to prepare for Christmas through reading scripture, using a daily devotional, exploring Christmas traditions, decorating the house and making wonderful Christmas treats. It is a great time to connect with family and friends as well as to serve others. I would enjoy hearing how you are preparing for Christmas. I would welcome the opportunity to visit with you this holiday season.

As I have been preparing for Advent, I have been reading a book titled, The Book of Joy. It is a series of conversations with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It is dynamic, powerful and speaks of lasting happiness in a changing world. These two spiritual leaders are good and dear friends who have spent time together. In April of 2015, the Archbishop traveled to India where His Holiness lives to celebrate his 80th birthday. The book tells the story of their time together.

I would enjoy discussing this book with anyone who wants to read it. If your interested, send me a note or talk with me at church and we will gather some people together to do just that.

Lastly, if there is a different book or movie you want to talk about with others, consider starting a small group to do just that. This group could meet once, or over a couple of weeks. If you want help getting started, give me a call. We can help that happen.

Have a wonderful Advent season.

Blessings of joy
Jeffrey Dick

OFFICE NOTES

2020 **Offering envelopes** will be available in the Narthex mid December. 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. Donations have to be deposited in the bank on the 31st to be included on your 2019 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 25–27 and January 1, 2020.

It's still early to start thinking about resolutions for the New Year, but FYI, **the Handbell Choir** would like to be near the top of your list. Seeking Beginners as well as returning ringers to ring in 2020. Music! Ministry! Laughter! Strengthen your awareness!



Rehearsals will start AFTER church on January 5, if enough people indicate their interest (and their resolution!) before Christmas. Please notify Ann Habicht.

Looking Ahead

Dec 29th: No Adult Class. Worship at 10:30 will feature the Christmas readings and Christmas Carols.



January 5th: Epiphany Sunday - Communion will be celebrated. The Adult Class will be held.

Special Recognitions

Thank you to the following people for the services they have rendered to First Congregational Church.

-Ron Dotson and fellow employees of the City of South Haven for installing a water shut off and water meter.

-Deryck Gruber of Guardian Home Inspection Services, 269-449-7611, for the in depth inspection and complete report of the church parsonage.

-Nick Terpstra of True Reflections, Holland, 616-292-6283, for working with First Congregational Church in selecting and replacing 128 windows in Fellowship Hall and the Sunday School area in the lower level.



A note of thanks

Dear Pastor Jeff,

Please pass on to the entire congregation my heartfelt thanks for the compassion and support they provided to me/and the entire family. The flowers, the Prayer Group card, and all those who came to the visitation and funeral mass were all a source of inspiration!

Thanks to the congregation for being there!

Sincerely,
Dan Thompson

Snow Closing Policy approved at November Council Meeting

Are we meeting? Is there Choir tonight? There is always confusion when the schools close because of snow. Boards on an individual basis are trying to figure if they should meet that evening. Then you are trying to make sure you get a hold of everyone of that board or running an activity. Not everyone has the internet. Someone always shows up and didn't 'hear about it'.

So a proposal was approved at the November Council meeting that if the South Haven Public Schools are closed due to the weather the church office will be closed. This also includes any activities/meetings that are scheduled for that day & evening.

The Thursday Night Supper and the We Care Food Pantry already follows this policy.

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 15th**.
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.

The Calvin Scholarship

What is it? In October it was presented as a scholarship facilitated by our congregation since 1979. It began with a bequest to First Congregational from the estate of the late Grace Calvin, who directed we set up a scholarship program to help graduates of South Haven High School planning to get post high school education.

Since that date 470 students have been helped, some for one year and some for four full years of study. Most have attended colleges, but some of the grants have been used for technical, medical, business, even culinary arts education.

The amount of the grants varied from \$250 in the early years to the current scholarships of \$3000. The terms of Miss Calvin's will specify a total of \$3000 per student, but with the help of the Kalamazoo Foundation, which has been handling the finances, the Advisory Committee hopes to increase that amount, due to the high cost of further education and the amount of money the fund has earned.

What is most interesting about the scholarship winners is the number who have returned to live and share their skills with the South Haven area. Seventeen returned to teach in our school system: thirteen returned to create, manage or work for local businesses. Three share their education as government, legal or community leaders. Two went into the local medical field and one serves as a pastor of a local church.

Miss Calvin's contribution has been long, far reaching, and much appreciated. If you would like to know more about her as a person, please ask her nephew Jerry Gruber.



Dear Reverend Dick and
First Congregational Church,

It is with pleasure that I write to announce the recipients of the 2018-2019 *First Congregational Church Scholarship* established here at Lake Michigan College.

As you are aware, private support is vital to advancing the College's mission of assuring accessibility to students who have dreams of advancing their own educational and career goals. Here are some thank you notes from them. I know your gift is welcome and warmly received.

On behalf of everyone here at the College associated with the scholarship program, thank you for your generous support of this scholarship and these aspiring scholars through the *First Congregational Church Scholarship*.

Kind regards,
Barbara Craig, Exec. Director
LMC Foundations

(thank you letters from the recipients follow on the next page)

REMINDER the deadline for the January newsletter will be December 15th.

Looking at December

Lay Assistant

1– Theresa Gleason
8– Don Kitchin
15– Jeff Muck
22– Chris Valentine
29– Jeffrey Dick

Ushers of the Month

Art Ayers, Barb Wittkop,
Nancy Daugherty

Nursery

1– Terri Wakild
Chloe McNicholas
8– Sue & Dave Murphey
15– Keri & Terry McGarr
22– Patty Brennen and
William or Kitty
29– Lynn Dick
Keyana Dick

Hospitality

1– Terry Tatsch
8– *Smoked Turkey Dinner*
15– Sue & Dave Murphey
22– Kris & Art Ayers
29–

Financial Counters

1– Aaron Strebeck
Wes Stephens
8– Ted Guimond
Dave Daugherty
15– Mike Nelson
Terry McGarr
22– Chris Valentine
Doug Gruber
29– Patty Brennen
Marcia Claggett

Birthdays

12/01 Tony Cochran
12/03 Scott Raue
12/04 Zach Hanner
12/08 Margaret Guimond
12/09 James O’Niel
12/09 Joseph O’Niel
12/15 Nancy Daugherty
12/17 Sue Gillett
12/17 Faith Spies
12/18 Michael Crews
12/27 Donnell Miller
12/28 Adam Peterson
12/30 Bob Straits

Anniversaries

12/22 Matt & Tammy Larson
12/17 Robert & Theresa Gleason
12/30 Don & Elaine Kitchin

Deacons of the Month

Art Ayers
637-8762

Barb Wittkop
637-5890

Nancy Daugherty
637-7316