

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

South Haven, MI

January 2019

Star Words

I recently came across an interesting Epiphany tradition that a number of churches have been using. It is called Star Words. Each year, on Epiphany Sunday, each worshiper randomly selects a star shaped piece of paper upon which a word has been written. This becomes the person's "Star Word" for the year. Worshipers are encouraged to resist the temptation to dig around for a "better" word or to swap their word with someone else, receiving their star word as a serendipitous gift from God.

On Epiphany Sunday, you will receive a Star Word. If you can't attend that service and would like a word, let me know and we will get one to you.

Do note the following:

**You may find it is a word that fits you perfectly. If so, celebrate that, and see how you can be more intentional about sharing your gift with the world.*

**You may find it is a word that offers you the encouragement or challenge you need. If so, receive that gift and let it shape you in the days, weeks, and months ahead.*

**You may find yourself resisting the word or even wanting to reject the word. If that is the case, I encourage you to sit with it for a while, explore the source of your resistance, and be open to what this word may have to teach you.*

Live with your word, reflect upon it, journal about it, talk about it with others, share your thoughts with me. Discover how this Star Word may shine its light on you and on your path throughout this coming year.

This new tradition reminded me of a poem by Ann Weems, called Star-Giving. Let these words be my prayer for you in this season of Christmas and Epiphany.

Jeffrey Dick, Pastor

Star-Giving by Ann Weems from Kneeling in Bethlehem

What I'd really like to give you for
Christmas is a star. . . .
Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of
your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out
or tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness
of this world.
But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words
and wishes and
packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds
who stood
beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps, if you ask, God will give
you a star.

Prayers for continued healing of our church family:

Jean Stein
Bill Wood
Steve Siler
Joy Church
Glenn Pietenpol
Shelly Cowles
Karl Barden, Watervliet
Patty Gruber
Jackie Protheroe—mother of
Peggy McClendon
Hilda Sinclair, mother of
Laura Bos

God 
Answers
Prayers

Grieving

Family of Marian Brennen,
mother of Bill Brennen

**Martin Luther King, Jr. -
Day of Community Service**

**Monday - January 21st - 10 am to noon
LC Mohr High School**

A day of community service where individuals and groups will come and help to package a ton of rice and beans for area food pantries. A lunch will follow in the cafeteria. Contact Pastor Dick if you would like to help. Boy Scouts from Troop 188 will be helping with the collection of canned goods and delivering the rice.



As a part of the day of service, people are invited to donate canned goods for the We Care Pantries. Even if you can't come and work, help stock the food pantry with your donation this day.



JANUARY WORSHIP

January 6th—Epiphany Sunday

We will explore the story of the Magi as found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 2. We will sing the Christmas Carol, “We Three Kings”.

On this first Sunday of the new year, we will also celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

January 13th

The Baptism of Jesus as found in Luke 3:15-17,21-22

January 20th

The Wedding at Cana of Galilee and turning water into wine is our focus this morning. This story is found in John 2:1-11.

January 27th

Jesus begins his ministry with a proclamation in the temple. What is he saying? Find the story in Luke 4:14-21.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS HELPERS

Many individuals have made our Advent and Christmas here at First Congregational Church meaningful and blessed.

Decorations: The many members of the church who decorated the church, it looks wonderful as always. Larry and Barb Wittkop decorated the lounge and assisted the Diaconate with the Sanctuary. Nancy Daugherty oversaw the decorations in Fellowship Hall. Dave Murphey helped hang the wreath in Fellowship Hall. The 9 foot Christmas Tree was gift a from Randy and Karen Morey and

Phil Rood decorated it. Many people made the stars hanging in the sanctuary - Ted Guimond and Brandon Dick hung them. Our special Christmas Eve Decorations were created by Phil Rood.

Advent Worship: We had a different format for worship in Advent and many of our young people provided leadership for the service, including many in the Confirmation Group. Participants included: Liam Cochran, Sophia Cochran, Jasmine Dick, Joshua Dick, Kyle Bos, Erin Bos, Camborley Gleason, Katherine Brennen, Filimon Saucedo, Chloe McNicholas and Faith Spies.

Christmas Eve was a joyous and festive occasion. Worship included many out of town people visiting their families and seeing whole pews filled with one family is always such a joy. Helping were Ben Meyer, Jake Meyer, Elian Garcia and Yamil Garcia.



Financial gifts to the church to support its ministry and missions were amazing this Christmas. Gifts to the Christmas Fund (formerly known as Veterans of the Cross) totaled \$ 900. These funds are used to support retired pastors, many who served small churches and have small pensions. Some funds are used in emergency situations for these former church workers.

The Christmas offering this year was designated to be split between our own Food Pantry, the Diaconate Discretionary Fund and the General Fund (which provides the building and utilities for the Pantry). We received \$ 1,069. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Adult Groups Forming

A book group led by Art Ayers will start in January. They will be reading the book, *Them* by Ben Sasse. The full title is *Them: Why We Hate Each Other and How to Heal*. Mr. Sasse is a senator from Nebraska. If you are interested in being a part of this group, contact Art or the church office.

Other groups are being planned for February and March. Stay tuned.

Women's Breakfast returns to Thursdays

Beginning this week our breakfast at Six Chicks, 8:30 a.m., returns to Thursdays each week. All women are welcome.



Friday, January 18th

beginning at 6:30 p.m. This is for all ages, although young children should be accompanied by an adult. Pastor Dick has some new board games he is looking forward to playing. You are welcome to bring a game to play, either a board game or card game. Coffee and hot chocolate will be available. Bring a snack to share.

Another game night will be held on February 15th.

ODDS N' ENDS

Christmas card

We received a Christmas card in the office that was to be shared with you all.

Dear Church family,

All is well in North Carolina! We hope you all enjoy a healthy and happy holiday season.

-Ed and Mona Eggers

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Congratulations to Iza Graham whose graduated. She plans to work until she applies for Law School.

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Thank you to everyone who took part in the recent Smoked Turkey Dinner. The donation will help many people being served by the food pantry.

We appreciate your help!

-John & Sue Gillett

LOOKING AHEAD.....

February 3rd - Communion Sunday
Mark 1:29-39

February 10th - Scout Sunday
Mark 9—the Transfiguration

Looking at January

Lay Assistant

6– Don Kitchin
13– Larry Wittkop
20– Jeff Reber
27– Ted Guimond

Acolytes

6– Camborley Gleason
13– Kitty Brennen
 Chloe McNicholas
20– Erin Bos
 Kyle Bos
27– Ben Meyer
 Jake Meyer

Ushers

6– Dave & Susan Murphey
 Scott & Ann Raue
13– Don & Elaine Kitchin
20– Don & Elaine Kitchin
27– Dave & Susan Murphey
 Scott & Ann Raue

Nursery

6– Linda Olsen
 Chloe McNicholas
13– Elaine Stephens
 William Brennen
20– Virginia and Sam Guzman
27– Elaine Kitchin
 Yamil Garcia

Financial Counters

6– Chris Valentine
 Dave Daugherty
13– Patty Brennen
 Terry McGarr
20– Aaron Strebeck
 Doug Gruber
27– Ted Guimond
 Marcia Claggett

Birthdays

01/03 Carey Frost
01/04 Theresa Gleason
01/05 Caroline Meyer
01/07 David Daugherty
01/08 Kris Ayers
01/08 Cathy Siler
01/12 Alice Warfield
01/21 Philip Rood
01/22 Terry Tatsch
01/22 Joseph Nelson
01/23 Ed Bierhalter
01/23 Tony Martorano
01/28 Megan Larson



Anniversaries

01/04 Art & Kris Ayers, 45th
01/27 Scott & Ann Raue

Hospitality after worship changed in the last few months of 2018. Each board/group has agreed to provide hospitality on a scheduled Sunday **UNLESS** individuals would like to step in and choose it.

The sign up sheet is in the Narthex and will have two spots for each Sunday. The **FIRST** is for anyone wishing to provide the hospitality and the **SECOND** will be a chosen board/group.

So, go check it out. For now this is how January looks:

6– Men's Breakfast group
13– Music board
20– Christian Ed. board
27– Trustees board