



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 63 Number 12

December 2019

Sunday School at 9:30 A.M. (when school is in session)
 Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M. 700 Poyntz Avenue
 Second Helping Dinner at 6:00 P.M. Manhattan, Kansas 66502
 Thursday Evening Taizé at 7:00 P.M. telephone 785-537-7006
www.uccmanhattan.org

Advent: How Do You Wait?

This year's Advent Devotional from A Sanctified Art asks us to ponder "what can't wait" as we prepare to, once again, welcome God's Love in human form this Christmas. Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation. We light the candles on the Advent wreath each week and contemplate the themes of the season: hope, peace, joy, love. Like Lent, this liturgical season is about preparation...pausing to consider how we might labor alongside all of creation to bear Christ to the world again and again.

Waiting takes lots of forms - perhaps we pull our phone out of our pocket to kill time while waiting in line, or distract ourselves by counting sheep as we wait to fall asleep. Since this season is about waiting for birth, I am reminded of the ways people wait when they are welcoming a new child into their family. Lists and more lists of things to borrow or buy, spaces to prepare, classes to take, memories to capture. It's an active waiting. A time of anticipation and excitement as the way is prepared for love to take root and bear fruit.

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This Advent season, in the hustle and bustle of all that December brings, I invite you to contemplate the quality of waiting that you bring to this season. I tend to be a list-maker by nature and I have to admit Advent is no different for me. As the days grow shorter and Christmas draws nearer, I check my list to see if I have savored all the joy and peace I can this season. Did I remember to find time to camp out in our living room and spend the night by the Christmas tree with my kids? Did I find time for a cold hike on the prairie? But....I also try very hard to make sure my active waiting includes margins of grace for the Spirit to work her magic. Like an expectant parent growing close to term, I find that Advent makes me crave SPACE so I make sure I haven't scheduled every moment full. Moments of silence and nothingness where I can simply be and allow myself to bear witness to the presence of Christ in and among and through everything that surrounds me.

Advent is a gift to us. A season that is set apart, different than the rest of the year. Whether your Advent waiting needs more intentionality or less formality, it is my prayer that you experience the movement of God's unstoppable hope, peace, joy, and love this season. I encourage you to take a look at the special events and worship services happening in our congregation this month and consider inviting a friend, neighbor, or co-worker. Together, we join together and prepare to welcome Love Incarnate again and again.

Pastor Caela

E-MAIL PRAYER CHAIN – If you wish to be added to the First Congregational e-mail prayer chain, please contact the church office. It is a quick and easy way to stay up to date with your church family.



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

- For more information, please contact the church office

Helping

- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim/Carolyn Hodgson, Bill Pallett, or Jeff Keller.
- **Home Communion Visits** The Deacons can bring communion to your home on the first Sunday of the month. Visits at other times can be arranged with the pastor.

Lunch Bunch December 4

We join together in an opportunity to get to know one another, Wednesday, December 4 at Mr. K's (3901 Vanesta). Everyone is welcome to join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m.



Wedding Coordinator

Love is in the air! Sean Weston & David Williams will be married in our church on April 25 and we're looking for a wedding coordinator for that weekend. If you're interested in this, or would like more information about what is involved, please contact Gina Davidson.

Ministry of the Decorative Scissors

The Ministry of the Decorative Scissors meets December 12-14. Everyone is welcome. There are no guarantees that you will complete any projects, but you will have fun and meet delightful people. Come for an hour or for the whole time! Feel free to bring a snack to share. For more information, contact Sue Gerth.

Covenant Celebration – We Welcome New Members

We will welcome new members to our congregation during worship on Sunday, December 8th. We welcome members and non-members to be a part of our ministry here at First Congregational. At some point in your journey, you may discover that you are feeling a pull to deepen your commitment to our faith community. If that sounds like something you've been considering or something you'd like to learn more about, please reach out to Pastor Caela (pastor@uccmanhattan.org) or leave a note in the sign in pad so we can visit together and answer your questions.

Financial Reminder

In order to "close the books" and make a timely Annual Report, final deposits for 2019 will include monies received up to and including Monday, Dec. 31. Monies received after that time will be welcomed and included in the 2020 reports. If making pre-payment on 2020 pledges, please mark this clearly on your check so that we are able to credit it as you intend.

Thanks. – *Jeff Keller, Financial Secretary*

Reimbursement Reminder

The end of the year is here, and the financial records will close on December 31. **If you have receipts for budgeted or approved expenses, and you'd like to be reimbursed**, please have your receipts to the office as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, December 27. Thanks. – *Sandy Nelson, Bookkeeper*

Bylaws Review

The Cabinet is currently reviewing changes to the church bylaws. The proposed revisions will be available to the congregation in December. In January, the moderator group will hold three forums to explain the proposed changes and their significance. The first will be on January 5, at 9:30 a.m. (as a Sunday school class). The remaining sessions will be after church on January 12 and 19. The Congregation Annual Meeting will be January 26.

Sue Gerth
Moderator-Elect

Annual Reports due Monday, Jan. 6

Please have your annual reports to the office as early as possible. You are encouraged to turn in your report by Dec. 31 if at all possible. All reports should be received by **Monday, January 6, 2020** in order to be included in the Annual Report Book.



Advent & Christmas

at First Congregational UCC

- Sun., Dec. 1 - World AIDS Dinner, 5:30pm
- Dec. 1- Dec. 22 - Adult Sunday School on prayer
- Dec. 1 - Yoga+Donuts, 9:30am
- Dec. 8 - brass ensemble in worship
- Sat., Dec. 14 - Kids' Advent Morning, 10am-12pm
Pizza-and-salad lunch, Noon
Christmas Caroling, 1:00pm
- Dec. 15 - Christmas Pageant, 10:45am
- Dec. 22 - Lessons and Carols, 10:45am
- Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Worship, 7pm
(gathering music at 6:45pm)
- Dec. 29 - Carols & Poetry Worship, 10:45am

uccmanhattan.org/christmas

Advent Devotionals and Calendars Available

We are excited to announce that Advent devotional booklets and family activity calendars are available. The season of Advent is a time of quiet and joyful anticipation for Christmas. We hope you'll consider observing the season seven days a week and these resources make it easy to do so. The devotional centers on the theme "What Can't Wait." It features scripture, prayers, full-color art, action prompts, coloring pages, and space for reflection. The family advent calendar can be used by people of all ages, but is especially geared towards families with children. Post it on your refrigerator and move the magnet each day to count down to Christmas. Activity prompts on the calendar are simple and will create a lovely rhythm for you this season. Both resources are from A Sanctified Art. You can pick up copies in the lobby beginning Nov. 17th or request one anytime in the office.

World Aids Day

Our Vitality & Outreach committee would like to invite members of our congregation to mark their calendars for **World AIDS Day, December 1st**. Our church annually hosts a service of remembrance and hope for the Manhattan community. This year, we will be trying out a more interactive event featuring a panel discussion with Kevin Stilley and others from the community. A light soup supper will be provided and we will be having a short tutorial on how to make your own homemade soup and bread from scratch. As the days grow colder, it's good to gather together and find warmth. Details are still being planned, but please save the date for the evening of Sunday, December 1st. If you would be interested in providing a pot of soup to share, please contact Jennifer Edwards, Presiding Officer of Vitality.



Name Tags = Hospitality

As we prepare to welcome newcomers in the new year, a quick reminder to please wear your name tag each Sunday during worship. Name tags help new people learn our names and faces quickly. They also make it easier for you to identify a new person when they are attending worship - and welcome them warmly! If you do not have a permanent name tag, please contact the church office to ask for one. When new name tags are made, they "debut" in the lobby next to the stairs so you can find them easily. If you see a new person, please ask them if they'd like a name tag and let them know they can simply make a note of it in the attendance pad on Sunday morning. Another way you can greet our visitors warmly is to offer them a bag of popcorn and thank them for "popping in." The popcorn is located in the small table in the narthex at the back of the sanctuary. If you see families with young children, be sure to help them by showing them the pew cards with information about our children's ministries. And, as always, it's always lovely to offer to walk someone into coffee hour after worship, visit for a few minutes, and then introduce them to someone new. Thanks for making First Congregational UCC a warm and welcoming place for newcomers.



Free Money!

Do you participate in our Dillons fundraiser? Link your shopper card at dillons.com. If you need help, contact the church office. (Our organization number is # QQ452.) Check your enrollment by checking the very bottom of your Dillons receipt. You should see "...donating to First Congregational UCC."

If you ever shop at HyVee, the church can gain support through your use of pre-purchased gift cards from the church (which buys them at a 6% discount). Please contact Dave Manning and let him know of your interest.

Christian Education

Please contact Brandy McDonald (brandy@uccmanhattan.org) or Brittani Frost-Shank (brittani@uccmanhattan.org) for more information about options for children and youth.

December Children's Ministry Schedule

December 1st- Shining Light Yoga

December 8th- Pageant rehearsal

December 15th- Pageant rehearsal and performance (during worship)

December 22nd- Special kids activity!

December 29th- No Sunday School

As always, please contact Brandy at brandy@uccmanhattan.org if you have any questions about the children's ministry program.

Advent Adult Sunday School: Prayer and Our Lives

Sundays, Dec. 1 through Dec. 22 at 9:30am

Led by Deane Lehmann

Prayer. It so simple and so hard. How do we do it? What does it mean? join us for a series of questions, a look at the Lord's prayer, and guest speakers from our congregation.

Not able to attend but want to participate? We would love to hear from you. Write about your prayer life and we will share it in class. Here are some questions to get you started. What does prayer mean to you? What does praying do for you? How has praying changed you?



Christmas Eve is a time for singing carols by candlelight and remembering the gift that came to us in a tiny town all those years ago. Join us at 7:00 p.m. on December 24th as we celebrate the birth of Christ by hearing the story once again and sharing Communion at Christ's table (open to all!). People of all ages are welcome at this service. Pre service organ music from Dr. Mary Ellen Sutton will begin at 6:45pm.

All Church Christmas Caroling

Join us on Saturday, Dec. 14th at 1:00pm for some good ol' fashioned Christmas caroling. We will gather at the church and divide up into groups to spread some Christmas cheer in our community. We plan to visit some folks from our congregation as well as Meadowlark Hills. All ages and abilities are welcome. You are also welcome to join us for a pizza and salad lunch just before caroling at Noon. If you'd like to come for the lunch, please RSVP with the number in your party to office@uccmanhattan.org by Friday, Dec. 13th at Noon. If you're only coming to carol, no need to RSVP. Questions? Check in with Brent Maner or Cassidy Moreau. This event is brought to you by our Ministers of Care.

Poetry and Pajamas

Christmas Sunday is Dec. 29th. The service will be centered around an offering of Christmas Poetry. If you are interested in volunteering to read poetry during worship, please contact Pastor Caela. Children are invited to come to worship in their pajamas on this low-key, comfy morning.

Take Time for Taizé

Each Thursday evening at 7:00 pm we gather in Pioneer Hall (our original church building) for a worship experience very different from Sunday morning. Taizé (pronounced tay-zay) is a 30-40 minute service of singing, scripture, prayer, and silence based on the pattern of worship in use at the ecumenical community at Taizé, France. It is a contemplative, candlelight service in which we sing and pray together. The music is that of the Taizé community in France, consisting of simple chants and rounds that are easily learned and quite beautiful. Taizé worship is intentionally ecumenical and we welcome regular worshippers and guests from throughout Manhattan and the world. NOTE: No Taizé on Dec. 26th.

Board of Mission

Filling The Blessing Box

The final charge of our Church Mission Statement commits our faith community “To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.” Every week, our Second Helping Sunday night supper and our support of our Blessing Box attempt to do just that. Because of the great need in our community, the Blessing Box is challenging to keep filled; the contents are often emptied within less than an hour. During our November meeting, the Board of Missions brainstormed ways we could broaden our efforts to keep the Blessing Box as full as possible during the week. In addition to reaching out to members within our own congregation, we discussed ways in which we could invite participation from others outside our church. There is good news: during the last month, we have been the recipients of cash donations from the Gamma Alpha Lambda Zeta Chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority at K-State, and Thrivent, a financial organization with original Lutheran ties that helped us with the Backpacks of Hope earlier this year. We also know that other folks from the community leave donations on an individual basis, and for these we are very grateful. However, we would also like to encourage other community groups to consider becoming partners with us in our efforts. We discussed the possibility of approaching downtown businesses to partner with us, but we would also like to encourage our church members to engage in a bit of personal invitation and introduce the the Blessing Box to their own community groups. For example, one member of the Board announced the Blessing Box at her yoga class at the Senior Center, and this inspired the upcoming addition of a smaller blessing box coming to the Senior Center itself in December. Because of a presentation at a Common Table meeting earlier this summer, there is now a Blessing Box at the Vineyard Community Church in the Northview area, and efforts are underway to set up a Blessing Box at another downtown church. We know that we cannot totally end the stress of food insecurity in our home community, but if, in the words of the spiritual, “we keep so busy working for the Kingdom”, we can make a difference. Consider bringing two to five donations of soup, instant macaroni and cheese or other instant or canned meals, peanut butter, crackers, breakfast bars, instant breakfast, applesauce, or tuna

to the Blessing Box each Sunday, and encourage your friends to do the same.

A final quick story about the Blessing Box: after the November Decorative Scissors event, there appeared many, many beautiful hand crocheted winter hats in all sizes. They were done by a new attendee who lives in Salina, and is not a member of our church. The yarn came from a donation from one of our neighbors from the Second Helping, who brought in a large box of yarn recently when she came to dinner. Share the love!

Thank you from the Board of Mission

The Christmas Fund Offering

Every year on Christmas Eve, we collect the last of the four special denominational offerings. The full title of this offering is The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, and its purpose is to provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC clergy and lay church employees. Our retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses rely on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, and living and medical expenses. It is a way to say thank you and to give back to the men and women who have served and given tirelessly to churches and congregations in the UCC throughout the country. We take this offering on Christmas Eve because it seems an appropriate time to show love to those who have loved us, but you can make a gift to this fund throughout the month of December. Thank you for your concern and generosity.

Mission Statement

The Mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is

- To love and accept others unconditionally as God loves and accepts us, and by example, to encourage others to do the same.
- To challenge ourselves to grow spiritually through worship, education, nurture, reflection, discussion, fellowship, and outreach.
- To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.

We hold ourselves accountable before God for this mission.

Finding First Congregational Friends - Our Church Directory



Did you know we have a church directory where you can find contact information for other folks who are a part of our congregation? You can ask Sandy for a print copy OR access it online or via the free smartphone/tablet app. Instructions are available at www.uccmanhattan.org/church-directory. It's also important to be sure and keep YOUR information in the directory up to date, so please contact Sandy

(office@uccmanhattan.org) with any changed information or to share a photo. Photos make it easier for everyone to put names with faces and any digital photo can be shared with the office and we will upload it into the directory.

People's Health Care Bill

The Kansas Poor People's Campaign is working with Kansans to develop a People's Health Care bill starting with the stories of ordinary Kansans and the challenges they face to access affordable and quality health care. We know many Kansans face high costs for medicine, testing, and insurance as well as medical debt, and many need access to Medicaid or other programs but can't meet eligibility requirements and go without coverage. We are piecing together resources that never quite take care of our needs and leave us in financial dire straits.

Come to a strategic conversation on December 5 from 6-8:15 pm at the First Congregational Church.

We'll share our stories and start to build a different future--**build a People's Health Care Bill.** We know that expanding medicaid is important, but we also know that there are many more unmet needs. Help us quantify and qualify these needs for the 2020 legislature.

Cobb Corner — Going Green

“How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore one on Monday?” – Shane Claiborne

“Preach the Gospel always and if necessary use words.” – St. Francis of Assisi”

As we move into the holiday season – at once the most sacred and materialistic time of the year – I hope we can keep in mind the quotations above. They are inextricably linked to our political, economic, social and physical environments.

Bill and I recently returned from Branson, Mo., where there is a dazzling mix of music of all genres, lovely trails, lakes, and hills and 18 thrift shops linked to animal shelters, churches and other non-profits. Christmas shopping was fun and inexpensive and all cash exchanged benefitted good causes. No January credit card shock!

Moreover, numerous studies have shown that clothing manufacture and later disposal are a huge source of pollution. As one study noted “the equivalent of one garbage truck full of textiles is incinerated or added to a landfill every second!” (“After a Fashion” *The New Yorker*, October 21, 2019, p.30.)

By patronizing thrift shops you and the earth are spared on-line purchases in cardboard boxes made from trees, more desperately needed for oxygen. No need for a Ring doorbell so you can see someone stealing boxes off your porch!

We even bought our coffee at a combo café and cat adoption center called Mochas and Meows! Petting the cats and kittens was more nourishment than the food.

Here at home the T. Russell Reitz Animal Shelter is having reduced adoption prices on its older inmates. Not ready for a kitten or puppy? How about love and comfort from a more mature buddy? You could be their Christmas present even as they are yours.

Whatever you do for Christmas I hope you enjoy the music, message and hope associated with the birth of Jesus.

– *Linda Richter*

Share ideas for future Cobb columns with Linda Richter

The Second Helping

Our Second Helping ministry continues to be a wonderful way in which our church extends its mission to the community of Manhattan. We regularly serve 30-40 people each week. Many of you have helped with this mission in a variety of ways, and that is much appreciated!



Currently we are hoping to add some more volunteers to our list of "regulars." We are particularly in need of individuals who would be willing to serve as Head Cook and Church Host. If you are interested in learning more about either of these positions, or volunteering in other ways, please contact the church office at office@uccmanhattan.org or (785) 537-7006.

December 1, 2019

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Jennifer Rodriguez, Betsy Barrett, Shari Tedford, Matthew

Dodds, Sam Cashman, Chole Houston, Bonnie Lynn Sherow

Chief Cook: Linda Thurston

Church Host: Pastor Caela

December 8, 2019

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Arnold Air Society, Morgan Budde

Chief Cook: Karen Franz

Church Host: *volunteer needed*

December 15, 2019

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Morgan Budde, Ali Kempcke, Betsey Bean, Rachel Whetstone, Mechelle Martinez

Chief Cook: Brent Maner

Church Host: Martha Mather

December 22, 2019

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: ESA Sorority

Chief Cook: Gretchen Lewis

Church Host: Jim Lewis

December 29, 2019

Dessert: *volunteer needed*

Volunteers: Jackie and Joshua Hinrichs-Toburen, *3 volunteers needed*

Chief Cook: Di Hinrichs-Toburen

Church Host: Kathy Bleam

**Volunteer for Sunday Services by going to
uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups**

SATURDAY, DEC. 14 AT 1:00PM

Christmas Caroling

All ages and abilities welcome.

Join us for lunch at noon (RSVP to
office@uccmanhattan.org by Friday, Dec.
13) or just show up to carol at 1pm.



Poinsettias The Advent season brings the opportunity for you to provide poinsettias in honor of someone important to you as the church is decorated for Advent and Christmas. The cost to donate Poinsettias is \$10.00 per plant. Please complete the form below and return it to the church office with your check made out to “First Congregational UCC.” 700 Poyntz Ave., Manhattan KS 66502.



In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Appreciation of: _____

Given by: _____

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
700 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, KS 66502
(785) 537-7006
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Advent 1 8:30 Choir rehearsal 9:30 Yoga+Donuts 10:45 Worship and Communion <i>Fill the Breadbasket</i> 5:30 World AIDS Day Service 6:00 Second Helping 	2 5:15 Yoga 6:45 A Cappella 7:30 NA mtg	3	4 11:30 Lunch Bunch 5:15 Yoga 5:45 Deacons mtg 7:00 AA meeting	5 5:00 Community Acupuncture 7:00 Taizé 7:30 NA mtg	6 7:30 NA mtg	7 Brass rehearsal GSA Troop mtg
8 Advent 2 8:30 Choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship – <i>Brass in worship, Covenant Celebration</i> 6:00 Second Helping	9 6:45 A Cappella 7:30 NA mtg	10 11:30 Book Study	11 5:15 Yoga 5:30 CE mtg 5:30 Mission mtg 6:30 Vitality mtg 7:00 Trustees mtg 7:00 AA meeting	12 5:00 Community Acupuncture 7:00 Taizé 7:30 NA mtg	13 7:30 NA mtg	14 10:00 Kid's Advent 12:00 Pizza lunch 1:00 All Church Caroling
15 Advent 3 8:30 Choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship – <i>Pageant</i> 6:00 Second Helping	16 5:15 Yoga 7:30 NA mtg	17 11:30 Book Study	18 5:15 Yoga 7:00 Cabinet mtg 7:00 AA meeting	19 5:00 Community Acupuncture 7:00 Taizé 7:00 MLK mtg 7:30 NA mtg	20 5:00 Newsletter Deadline 7:30 NA mtg	21
22 Advent 4 8:30 Choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship – <i>Lessons & Carols</i> 6:00 Second Helping	23 7:30 NA mtg	24 11:30 Book Study 7:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day	26 5:00 Community Acupuncture 7:30 NA mtg	27 7:30 NA mtg	28
29 8:30 Choir rehearsal 10:45 Worship – <i>Carols & Poetry</i> 6:00 Second Helping	30 5:15 Yoga 7:30 NA mtg	31 11:30 Book Study				