



From the desk of Pastor Scott

NEW in 2017

Adult Christian Education Opportunity- Study Discussion Group on FORGIVENESS

*Forgiving isn't easy. Most of us carry some spiritual scars over the hurt others have caused us. Whether family, or people who were once friends, or fellow Christians/ church members who have wounded us. Sometimes we wonder if a person deserves forgiveness, or even if we can forgive ourselves. Dare we even ask the question: Is there a time when we need to find forgiveness with God for things we blame God for? The new study will begin Thursdays, January 12, 2017 from 1pm-2pm every week. We'll meet in the church parlor. Each week I'll have a Biblical story for people to read in advance of the following discussion time that revolves around an aspect or challenge of forgiveness as we explore our own faith struggles and journeys with living into the kind of forgiveness Jesus teaches. It will run through February 23, for a total of seven classes. *If there is enough interest from working folks who cannot make this time I would also be open to hosting a 6:15am Thursday group that would meet for an hour. Please email Pastor Scott at pastorscott@uccdg if you are interested in a pre-work group.*

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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From the desk of Pastor Scott continues

A new LENTEN idea:

This year throughout Lent, we will have a midweek Wednesday night "Soup Supper" coupled with a Grounds of Hope Lenten worship experience in the fellowship hall. Each week we'd ask members and visitors to bring bread, salad or side dish to share, or volunteer to share a crockpot of soup. There will be two Wednesdays the youth group will prepare food as a fundraiser for their summer mission trip . Each service will focus on Spiritual disciplines to help guide us through the season of Lent- a season to reflect and consider more deeply what it means to follow Jesus here and now, and what it might cost us. Lent is a time for spiritual growth, meditation, and renewal. I hope you will consider joining us for one or all of our midweek offerings and take on a Lenten challenge to push your spirit this year!

ASSOCIATE PASTOR SEARCH UPDATE

The search committee has settled on a new associate candidate that they have unanimously recommended to come in to lead worship for a candidacy sermon this January to be voted upon by the congregation. By the time this article will appear we hope to have cabinet's approval as well as a date for the potential new associate to come preach and give you some information of themselves, their background, and spiritual gifts for ministry. I can share that this ministerial candidate has a lot of past experience working with many age ranges in ministry, and in particular with children, youth and collegiate ages persons/young adults. Please keep the search team and their efforts along with the church's discernment in your prayers.

Happy New Year 2017



Caring for Creation Resolutions

The beginning of a new year is a time for taking stock of where we are and setting new goals. With a new administration that has loudly denounced the findings of the scientific community regarding climate change, it is more important than ever that we continue to educate ourselves about the environmental crisis we face as well as possible solutions. We need to find ways to move forward as a society to relate more positively to our planet and to our sisters and brothers at home and all over the world. One step we can all take is to define our own goals for living in more environmentally sustainable ways. It can be daunting, given how busy we are and how little control we sometimes feel like we have, but there are concrete steps we all can take. In the words of David Mitchell, "My life amounts to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean. Yet what is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?"

If you have resolutions you would like us to include on the Caring for Creation website, please send them to scroleikis@sbcglobal.net. There will also be an opportunity to write them on a tablecloth in fellowship hall after a worship service this January. Here are some resolutions from members of the Caring for Creation Team:

I will review our investments and make changes to ensure the companies reflect good environmental sustainability and social justice practices. Tom Eisenhart

I will reduce my carbon footprint. Jan Hessler

I resolve to work at (1) being more active with state and federal legislatures on climate emission bills (2) eating less meat (3) getting our home more energy efficient. Scott Oberle

My goal is to grow more of our own veggies and buy the rest locally when the season allows. Robin Oberle

I resolve to find more ways to recycle household items. I will set up a recycling box to collect items to deliver to SCARCE for recycling. Laurel Carlson

(1) I will continue to search out companies to purchase from that state part of their mission is to be a better steward of this planet. (2) I will plan my shopping trips better so I am not driving everyday for a few items, often passing a store that I visited the day before! Pamela Toleikis

We will have plastic films placed on our windows to reduce heat loss during the winter. Kristin Cotts and David Keavney

I want to keep doing what I have been, but even more consistently. -Continue to use Robin's recipe for homemade laundry detergent. -Bring totes shopping whether I'm at the drug, grocery or hardware stores. -Use cloth napkins. -Keep using veggies from garden and go to the Farmer's Market for other fresh produce. -When the Farmer's Market's closed, continue to buy eggs and meat from the Staff of Life and Jake's when they make their winter drops at the DG train station. They are great people to know and shop from. Check out their websites. They both have "drops" this Saturday, but you have to place your order ahead of time. staffoflifefarms.com for eggs, chicken, beef, bread, honey, cookies, jam and more jakescountrymeats.com for mostly pork (great brats and bacon), but also fish, chicken, venison, maple syrup and more. -Put out a can of garbage only about once a month and recycle as much as possible. -Use the compost pile for all coffee grounds and tea bags, fruit and veggie scraps, egg shells and garden refuse. Grind up leaves and put into the vegetable garden. No fertilizer or pesticides. -Walk to church rain or shine, hot or cold unless it is really not possible. Peggy Gutzke



Building and Grounds

In early December, we met with our snow removal contractor to review plowing plans to clear the new driveway and handicap parking stalls after a storm. LaMantia will ensure there is no trail of plowed snow in front of the east and west entrance curbs as well as the four locations where the curb cuts allow easier access to the sidewalks.

Thank you to all members for their donations to the Capital Campaign and their patience that allowed for the completion of the new driveway, sidewalks, curbs, railings and underground storm water detention system this past summer. Along with the Park District's Rain Garden along our SW border and our design to divert rain water away from the building, we are better equipped to deal with moderate level rain events and reduce the likelihood of flooding in fellowship hall.

In 2014, our annual Nicor expense was \$19,360. This year it is \$9,160. This results from both lower natural gas rates and a 17% reduction in therms usage. The new roof (2014) and wrapped rooftop ductwork (2015) are paying dividends.

The Capital Campaign has allowed our church to make many improvements and upgrades over the past 30 months. And address some badly needed deferred maintenance issues. The new church office, sound upgrades, HVAC controls, lighting upgrades and improved exterior door security are some of these improvements. In 2017, we need to replace aging roof top air conditioning units that are beyond their useful life, replace the sanctuary lighting that illuminates the chancel and complete the security project by installing exterior cameras and a monitoring system.

Your church leaders are wrestling with the issues of funding these future projects, repaying the loan from the Endowment account and establishing a Reserve Fund that will lessen the need for future Capital Campaigns. You will be hearing more before the Annual Meeting. Please continue your support and we will continue to care for our church and all who we serve.



Greater Chicago Food Depository

The Greater Chicago Food Depository (<https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/>) was started in 1979 and FC UCC has been volunteering for 23 years! Last year, the Food Depository distributed 70 million pounds of food, 35% of which was fresh produce.

GCFD regularly needs volunteers to help with repacking donated food and other products. A majority of the food received at the warehouse comes in bulk quantities and volunteers break it down into more manageable sizes. In a repack session you might be sorting produce, looking over a shipment of bread, or repacking bulk dry goods (cereal, pasta, rice) into smaller quantities. The repack sessions are a great introduction to the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the work they do, and the need that is seen in Cook County. Our church participates in social justice and food justice is another variety - 1 in 6 residents of Cook County use the food network each year

Because of volunteers, GCFD efficiently distributes quality food to 650 partner agencies and programs including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. They distribute 160,000 meals every day. Your time, talent and hard work as a volunteer make this daily response to hunger possible. In 2015, volunteer hours accounted for the equivalent of 48 full-time employees; that savings in salary and benefits meant more money could be used for purchasing fresh produce.

There is another benefit to volunteering at GCFD. When we volunteer there, GCFD credits \$5 for each hour we work to the food bank that FC UCC supports; that enables them to purchase more food at a great discount!

Twenty-three years ago First Congregational started the Wednesday Night Re-Pack sessions; each Wednesday we still support them! The sessions are held at the GCFD warehouse at 4100 W. Ann Lurie Place, Chicago, IL 60632 from 6-8:30pm. There is a car pool from the suburbs and some members that work in Chicago commute via the Orange Line. Please join us if you are 14 years old or older on Wednesdays!

To start the New Year, we are offering a Saturday session on 21 January from 1:30-3:30pm. Sessions on the third Saturday of each month include children! Any child who is at least 8 years old who is accompanied by an adult can volunteer. This is an excellent service opportunity for our youth of all ages!

Along with our regular Wednesday night attendance, look for announcements during the year of other Saturday opportunities to volunteer. If you have any questions feel free to contact David Hersemann at dah5@comcast.net or contact Char Wild at charwild@comcast.net.

To make it easy to find out more, there will be a table in Fellowship Hall during the coffee hours on January 8th, and 15th!

YOUTH NEWS

Thank you to our AMAZING YOUTH for performing in and helping with our Standing Rock benefit concert during Christmas week. Thank you also for serving with The Night Ministry outreach program on December 27 in Humboldt Park and for the MANY hats, gloves, scarves, coats, boots, blankets and sleeping bags you collected for our guests. Thank you to our Apostles Confirmation class for ALL the new white tube socks you collected during the month of December for our friends at The Night Ministry!

MISSION TRIP 2017! The deadline for this year's mission trip will be February 1st. Please make sure you are registered for Mission Trip 2017 with DOOR Ministries in Denver, Colorado. The second deposit of \$125 is also due February 1st.

SPONSORSHIP SPECTACULAR! Each youth attending this year's mission trip will have the opportunity to reach out to church members, family and friends to ask for sponsorships towards their DOOR Ministries trip to Denver, Colorado. Please turn in your summary to Mrs. Pro by the first week of January.

CONFIRMATION 2017 will start up on Wednesday, January 4th at 7:00 pm. Please mark your calendar for our first interfaith visit on Sunday, February 5th to Chicago. We will depart for the city at 9:30 am and return by 1:30 pm. MENTORS and PARENTS are encouraged to attend. Stay tuned and see what the Apostles Confirmation class will be collecting this month for our friends at The Night Ministry.

LIFE AFTER CONFIRMATION: ALL high school youth, please join our NEW Sunday morning discussion group that will begin Sunday, January 8th in the library from 11:00-12:00 pm.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP:

Sunday, January 15th UCAN Polar Peace March in Chicago. Hundreds of participants will be marching to STOP THE VIOLENCE in Chicago. St. Pauls UCC in Lincoln Park is the host of this event. Please meet by the west entrance at 2:30 pm. This event begins at 4:00 pm and we will return between 6/6:30 pm.

Sunday, February 5th Worship service at St. Pauls UCC in Chicago to watch the production of Bible Story Theater. Please meet by the west entrance at 9:30 am to leave. We will return by 1:30 pm. Bring \$10 for lunch. Drivers needed.

WINTER RETREAT! February 10-12. Details to follow.

NEW YOUTH/ADULT WINTER BASKETBALL LEAGUE! Beginning Sunday, January 22nd. First United Methodist Church across the parking lot. 3:00-4:30 pm. Games are the last two Sunday's in January, February and March. Don't miss out! Sign up with Mrs. Pro today.

Love and Happy New Year blessings, Dena Provenzano - Director of Youth Ministries



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC 150TH

Anniversary
Continuation of
150 years of
service

Our celebration of the work we have done during the last 150 years continues into 2017. Beginning in January, on the second Sunday of every month, we will highlight a different community service project and offer additional opportunities for those interested to become involved. If you would like to get involved, please contact Nancy Kupka at nancykupka@comcast.net.



WHAT WILL THIS YEAR BE LIKE... I WONDER.....

(From The Sound of Music)

The Mafia Murder Mystery fund-raiser is finished, the pageant went off without a hitch and the Junior Fellowship Christmas party is in the bag. Some time off, priceless! It has been a very busy but a very happy, successful fall for which I am very grateful.

Coming up...

Sunday school will resume on January 8th. Our spring musical rehearsals will begin in late January.

Winter Festival in February on February 12th.

Dena Provenzano and I are planning a lovely Women's Retreat for Sunday, April 2nd. Ladies "Save the Date". Invite your friends too. Watch for more information coming soon.

Vacation Bible School June 19 - 23rd. I hope your Christmas was filled with happiness and peace. I am looking forward to another exciting year with FCC.

Jan Barker - Director of Children's Ministries

Stop by and show your support.

First Tuesday of the Month

from 4 to 9 pm



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PRAYER CONCERNS

Rick and Genevieve Franz, Osborn family,
Craig and Jay DuSold, Margaret Craig,
Anne Albert, Michael Ode, Ken Klintworth



BLOOD DRIVE

You Can Make a Difference. Our next Blood Drive is being held on: Tuesday, January 17, 3:00-7:00 pm. One unit of blood helps three people. More than 4.5 million patients need blood transfusions each year in the U.S. and Canada. Someone needs blood every two seconds: 38,000 pints of donated blood is used every day.

Blood can be donated every eight weeks. Come and see how easy and safe it is to become a lifesaver at our next

Blood Drive!

Happy New Year 2017

PADS THANK YOU

Gracious thanks to all members and friends who volunteered or donated food, coats, or gift cards for PADS this Christmas season. It was a brighter, warmer holiday for over 80 PADS guests including 10 families with 25 kids. Special thanks to Duncan Owen who collected donations and gift cards totaling \$170 for his birthday instead of receiving presents. The gifts and cards were received with many smiles and a few tears—and a couple of hugs. Thank you for making this happen again this year.

**WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP - LADIES OF THE MORNING AND EVENING**

All women are always welcome to any of our events. Invite a friend or new member.

January Gatherings:

First, we're going out for breakfast! Date:

Friday, January 6, 2017 Time: 9:30 am

Where: Honey-Jam Café 3000 Oak Grove Dr. Downers Grove 630/963-2233 (Across Butterfield (south side) from Portillo's, just east of Finley/Belmont) If you plan on coming please email or call me. It is nice to have some idea of how big a table to get.

Second, we'll stay at the church for Stitch and Chat in the parlor Friday, January 20, from about 9:30-11:30 am. You don't need to bring anything to stitch, but can just hang out and chat. This is a very casual gathering. Come if and when you can, even if for only a few minutes. If you have any questions contact

Peggy Gutzke 630/971-1382 peggy.gutzke@gmail.com

MUSIC MINISTRY

Greetings from Music Ministry! Teen Choir will be starting up Sunday, January 8! Please come sing with us! We'll be doing arrangements of contemporary tunes. I'm also looking for some of our youth to play instruments with the Teen Choir, so if singing isn't your forte, that's ok!

Chancel Choir will be starting Easter music as early as January 5. We would love for you to join us as we prepare for the Lenten season!

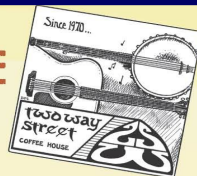
And finally, if you have a musical talent that you would like to showcase (vocal or instrumental), we would love to have you share your gifts in our Prelude or Offertory slots. Please feel free to contact me at kcalpin@uccdg.org and let me know what you'd like to perform! -Kelley Calpin

LIVE MUSIC Every Friday Since 1970!

TWO WAY STREET COFFEE HOUSE

1047 Curtiss Street • Downers Grove, Illinois 60515 (across from the Public Library)

www.twowaystreet.org • 630-969-9720

ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULEFriday December 30
8:15pm \$10**PETE NORMAN'S Post-Christmas Blues Fest!** — 32nd annual show (!) sure to banish *your* post-Christmas blues! Great songwriter Pete and his guests present folk, blues, ragtime & fun songs. Guitar, Dobro, fiddle, banjo, more!Friday January 6
7:30pm \$10
(note!)**WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY** — Talented mice on our volunteer staff perform while Dave is away: **Thirsty Night Pluckers, Lonesome Eagle, John Risinger, Woodshop Boys, Kilty Pleasure, Amelia Sweet Bluebird, Stephen Davis, PJ&B, & Karen Jensen!**Friday January 13
8:00pm \$10**OPEN MIKE** — All welcome! Great variety of acoustic artists! So popular we may limit number of acts. **2 – 3 songs, 10 -15 minutes.** Open 7:30 for signups – first come, first served. **Show starts 8:00.** Info: 630-968-5526.Friday January 20
8:15pm \$10**AMY LOWE with Dave Katzman** — Award-winning, singer-songwriter, storyteller & teaching artist, she performs her songs & historical musicals throughout North America and beyond. Catchy lyrics, singable tunes, guitars, & bass.Friday January 27
8:15pm \$10**DAVID ROKOS** — Heard years ago at our Last Thursday Open Mikes, he returns as a popular Chicago-area singer-songwriter combining pop-punk and rock influences with heart-on-your-sleeve lyrics. "Punk singer goes acoustic!"Friday February 3
8:15pm \$10**EARNEST & TROUBLED** — James Curley and Ilisabe O'Connell are an acoustic Americana/alt-country duo featuring their original tunes, plus covers of the Carter Family, Dylan, Guy Clark and others with guitars, banjo, and ukulele,Friday February 10
8:15pm \$10**(Ice Sculpture Festival!)****MARK DVORAK** — a modern day troubadour who's been called "a folk singer's folk singer" with "an encyclopedic knowledge of traditional songs." His original songs are described as "wondrous" and "profound." Guitar & banjo.Friday February 17
8:15pm \$10**PAUL KAYE** — Mainstay on Chicago's blues/ragtime scene, playing with Junior Wells, Harmonica Hinds, Buddy Guy, Andrew Bird. He's featured on the late Honeyboy Edwards' last CD. But he's at his best alone, belting out his deep-rooted originals!Friday February 24
8:15pm \$10**BIANCA DE LEON with Eric Lambert** — From Corpus Christi, TX, her Tex-Mex songs speak of the tragedy, resilience, romance and hope of the borderlands. Her connection with Townes Van Zandt is also ingrained. Eric adds masterful guitar.¹Featured on WFMT 98.7 "Folkstage" with Rich Warren. ²Featured on WDCB 90.9 "Folk Festival" with Lilli Kuzma.

Saturday Feb 11, 8:00pm \$5 (Ice Sculpture Festival!)	Old Time Barn Dance — Reels, squares, line dancing, waltzes and more, plus the music of our great live band. Fun for the whole family! All dances taught and called by our expert leaders. No experience, costume or partner needed. Plank Road Folk Music Society is co-sponsor.
2 nd Tues, 7-9pm Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 14	2nd Tuesday Song Circle — BYOS (<i>Bring Your Own Songs</i>). A monthly opportunity to informally & acoustically perform <i>your</i> songs or covers for the circle. Plank Road Folk Music Society co-sponsors.
Saturdays, 2-4pm Dec 3 & 17, Jan 7 & 21 Feb 4 & 18, Mar 4 & 18	Sing-Around — Our popular song fests where beginners and experienced musicians can learn and/or share songs. Listeners and singers welcome too! Songbooks provided. Plank Road Folk Music Society co-sponsors. First and third Saturday afternoons of every month at 2:00 pm.
Saturdays, 2-4pm Dec 24, Jan 28, Feb 25	Bluegrass Jam — Musicians of all experience levels gather to improve skills, learn/share tunes, & have fun! 4th Saturdays (except Dec 24) 2:00-4:00pm. Plank Road Folk Music Society is co-sponsor.
Saturdays, 2-4pm Dec 31 (!)	5th Saturday Country/Western Jam — Whenever there are five Saturdays in a month, beginners and experienced musicians jam! 2:00-4:00pm. Plank Road Folk Music Society is co-sponsor.
Thursdays Dec 29, Jan 26, Feb 23 7:00-9:30pm FREE!	LAST THURSDAY! — Monthly open mike for high school & college age students. Last Thursday of every month. Music, poetry, any performance art — 10 min. max. Signups begin 7pm — first come, first served. Info at twowaystreet.org , on Facebook, or call 630-968-5526.

Live entertainment is featured every Friday night beginning at 8:15. Doors open by 7:30. \$10.00 donation requested. Beverages and snacks available. The **Two Way Street Coffee House** is a not-for-profit community project of the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Downers Grove. Member: Plank Road Folk Music Society, Fox Valley Folklore Society, Old Town School of Folk Music, Aural Tradition, Folk Alliance International. For current entertainment listings and updates, booking and other information, visit us on the web at www.twowaystreet.org and on Facebook.



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The Rev. Dr. Robert D. Schieler, Pastor Emeritus

UNITED IN GOD'S LOVE 150TH YEAR

THE PILGRIM JANUARY 2017 EDITION

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