



First Congregational Church Highlights Newsletter December 2019

*O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by your advent here;
Love stir within the womb of night,
And death's own shadows up to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel*

This darkest time of the year is the time in the church when we prepare our hearts to wait and watch for the coming of the Christ.

Advent is traditionally a time of fasting and almsgiving, a time of letting go of distractions so we can focus on the clear bright candlelight of our trust in our God who dawns among us as Christ, the Emmanuel – “God-with-us.”

The ancient teachings about Christian prayer are honest about the places of darkness in our lives, our feelings of having a thick cloud between ourselves and God. The wisdom is: “Learn to be at home in this darkness. Return to it as often as you can, letting your spirit cry out to God whom you love. ... If you strive to fix your love on God forgetting all else... I am confident that God in God's goodness will bring you a deep experience of themselves.” (from “The Cloud of Unknowing” by an anonymous 14th century English monk). Advent is a time to abide together in this way, as we light, week by week, the candles of the Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy we seek in Christ who is born on Christmas.

In addition to our Sunday Advent worship services, Monday silent prayer groups, and Christmas Caroling, I want to invite you to an ecumenical “**Darkest Night**” service hosted by **Pioneer Methodist Church**. This will be a time to gather and worship especially for those who find this to be a season of particular darkness, due to grief or depression. It will be **Sunday, December 22, 6:30pm** at Pioneer Methodist Church.

We rely on each other to make this Advent and Christmas spirited and spirit-full.

As in past years I'm putting out the call:

If there are any testimonials, poems, pieces of music, or other expressions you have to offer about those themes of Advent – Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy – please let me know so we can incorporate them into our Sunday worship this month.

“Wait for the Lord, whose day is near. Wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart.” – Taize Chant

Peace,

Pastor Nathaniel





Moderator's Missive

Dear Church Family,

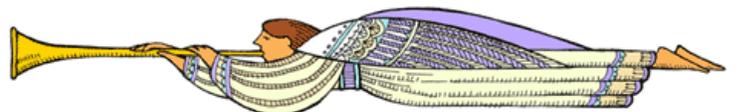
The Holiday season is officially upon us. I am feeling especially grateful this Thanksgiving season, and I derive a measure of warmth and kindness by glimpsing ahead to the Advent season that is soon to follow. I am grateful of family and friends right now, and I recognize that so many of them are alive and at work in the ministries, faith and fellowship of First Congregational Church. Thank you!

This time of year always feels momentous for our faith community, and perhaps this year especially. We have new and impactful ministries that are taking flight. Our youth ministry, under the leadership of Margaret Thomas, continues to grow and add meaning to the lives of our youth. A group of inspiring women has begun a monthly luncheon to not only cultivate fellowship, but also further critical outreach for our church. *Meaningful Movies* continues to engage our community with relevant, challenging themes. If this weren't enough, we have Christmas pageants, Thanksgiving potlucks, dinner groups and caroling parties to keep us warm. First Congregational Church embodies its stewardship campaign theme of *Reaching Up, Reaching Out*. I hope that along your spiritual journey you are finding, as I am, that “when we’re reaching we aren’t lonely.”

As the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons continue, I hope you feel a strong connection to our church, its mission, its meaning and its fellowship. Our *Stewardship Pledge Drive* is in its final stretch. I am pleased to report that this year’s campaign has brought several new partners into our stewardship fold. This is encouraging. We are just over half-way to our financial goal for 2020. At their meeting in mid-December, our trustees will take a careful look at our budget, note the resources we have, and set the strategic priorities we can afford. *Perhaps you have been meaning to make a pledge to the church for 2020, but have not yet taken the opportunity to do so. Not a problem. Please do take this step now so that your giving can factor into the planning, growth and promise of First Congregational Church in the year to come.*

Sincerely,

J.R. Van Slyke





Holiday Greetings from your Deacons!

December is such a bustling time of year. We decorate, gift, party, gather family and friends, feast, sing and more...happy times! Yet for some of us, this special time of year illuminates the tremendous losses in our lives. Perhaps loss of loved ones, health, a sense of home or belonging. Instead of happy times, we might experience great sadness. May we all come together as one family this Advent season to worship and celebrate. Let us examine and experience anew this time of Advent and Christmas. Keep in mind why we celebrate, what we celebrate. Let us worship together as we anticipate, once more, the coming of this Christ child.

The first Sunday of Advent is December 1st! Come in anticipation!

Please join us in fun, fellowship, outreach and worship for these following events:

- Decorating the Sanctuary and Christmas Tree, Saturday, December 7th at 9:30-11:30 am. Linda Schopp, Gwyn Frasco and Linnea Keatts will lead the decorating work party.
- Ladies Lunch, Monday, December 9th at 12 noon. Elves will be busy at work.
- Christmas Pageant, Sunday, December 15th as part of our worship service. Many thanks to the children, youth and adults working together to create this event. Thanks to Christian Education.
- Caroling and Christmas Party! Sunday December 22nd! Time and place to be announced. The party will follow caroling at the McFarley's home. **Save the date!**
- Christmas Eve Service Tuesday, December 24th at 7 pm. A beautiful service of carols and candlelight.
- Hymn Sing, Sunday, December 29th at 10 am. We worship by singing hymns! Requests are welcome.

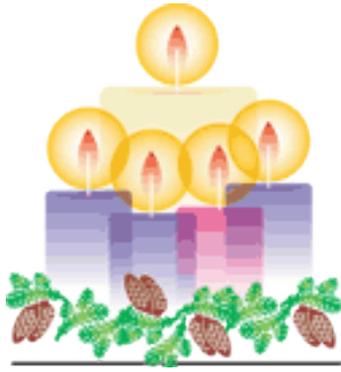
As we light the candles of our Advent wreath, one by one, this season, may we be renewed through the messages of hope... love... peace... and joy.

May your life be blessed by this blessed child,

Judy Chacon
Chair, Board of Deacons



Our Greatest Gift



Service of
Carols and Candlelight
Christmas Eve
December 24

7:00 pm

Please join us for our Christmas Eve
Service of Carols and Candlelight.

This favorite service always ends with
our traditional candle lighting and the
singing of *Silent Night* and is a
beautiful, gentle way to prepare for
the hustle and bustle of Christmas
Day.

This is a family friendly service —for
young & old. Bring a bell to ring if you
like.

Childcare will not be available.



Hallelujah!

**Jesus, Jesus,
Oh, what a Wonderful Child**

Jesus, Jesus, oh, what a wonderful child.
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek, and mild;
new life, new hope the child will bring.
listen to the angels sing, "Glory, glory,
glory," let the heavens ring!

~African-American traditional
Luke 1:30-35; 2:8-14



Sunday, December 29th

Join in as we raise our voices in
praise during this all hymn
service.

No sermon, much singing!



Music at the Spire

Sunday, December 15th, 3:00 pm

First Congregational Church Choir

and

Walla Walla Community College Vocal Ensemble

Directed by Julie Jones

Featuring Jackie Wood on piano & Phil Lynch on guitar

We invite you to join us as we enjoy a candlelit matinee performance of Renaissance and Baroque seasonal music.

This is a Free Public Event

Christian Education



It is the Holiday season and plans are afoot with our Sunday School children and youth group.

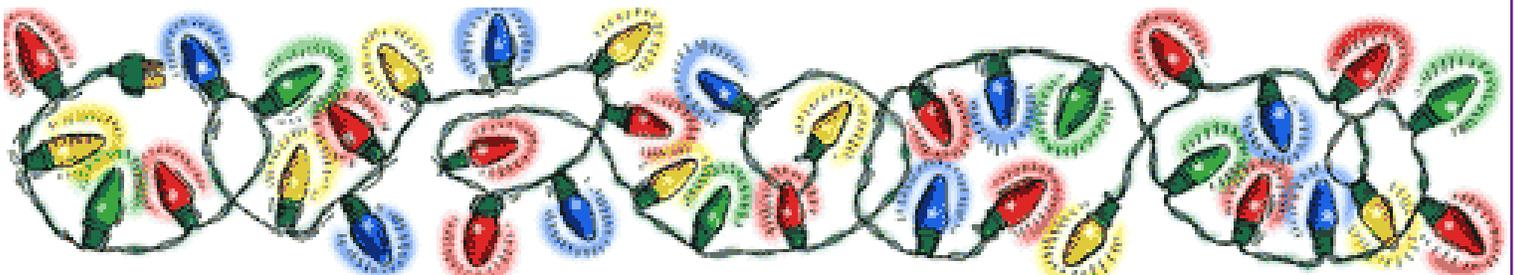
While our teachers prepare for the season in our Sunday School to share the good news about the birth of Jesus, others plan for the Christmas pageant and fund-raising for youth group trips this Spring and Summer.

Our Pageant this year will have the theme "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and will be based on the idea of "Peace". This event will take place in the church service on Sunday, December 15. Pageant singing practice for Sunday School children will occur on Nov. 24 and Dec. 8 after church service with Linda Schopp.

Dress rehearsal will take place with Emily Asmus December 14 from 9am to 10:30 in the sanctuary. Props for this event will be made during Sunday School classes.

The Fellowship of Youth Underground, as the youth group named themselves, will be busy studying the curriculum called "Peace Jam" on Sundays. They will also be fund-raising by raking leaves at peoples homes and selling items at a booth at the "Craft and Goodies Sale" here at church, on Saturday, December 7th from 11:00 am -3:00 pm in the atrium. Also they will also be preparing for the Christmas Pageant event.

Christian Education committee hopes that parents will help their children enjoy this religious season by supporting these programs at church.



2019 Christmas Pageant
Do You Hear What I Hear?
Sunday, December 15th

Youth ages 2-12 are invited to participate.

The theme this year is Peace. Pageant singing practice for the Sunday School children will be **December 8th**, after church service, with Linda Schopp.

Dress rehearsal will be in the Sanctuary, with Emily Asmus on Saturday, **December 14th from 9-10:30 am**.

Please contact the office at 525-8753 or office@fcchurch.net or Emily Asmus at emily@welcometablefarm.com if your child is interested in participating!

~Emily Asmus & Dot Willis



**Love Came Down at Christmas
Christmas Hymn and Carol**

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, love divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and to all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.



Christian Education

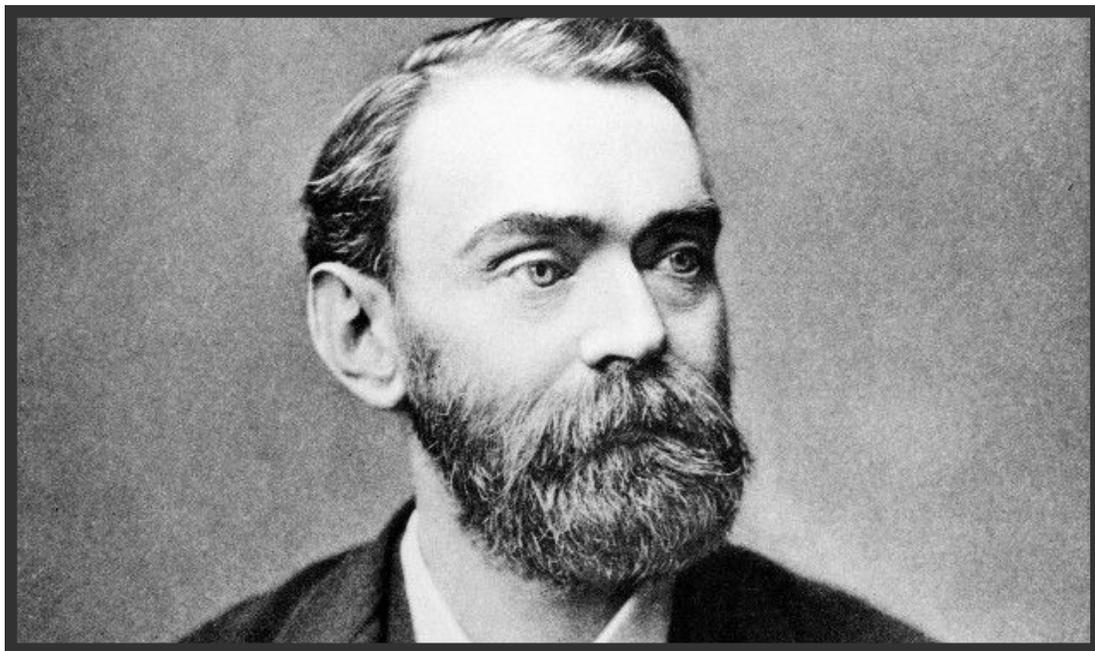


"Notes from the Underground"

– Fellowship of the Youth Underground, that is.

PeaceJam is well underway, and it is amazing to watch the passion, insights, and righteous impulses of our youth!

Did you know Alfred Nobel was known as “The Merchant of Death”? It is the legacy of his invention of dynamite that funds the Nobel Prizes. But Alfred was a pacifist! He never intended his invention to cause harm. Indeed, he was relieved by the enormous destructive (and to his mind, deterrent) power of dynamite ~ for no one surely would dare risk unleashing a weapon of mass destruction. Dynamite would put an end to all wars!

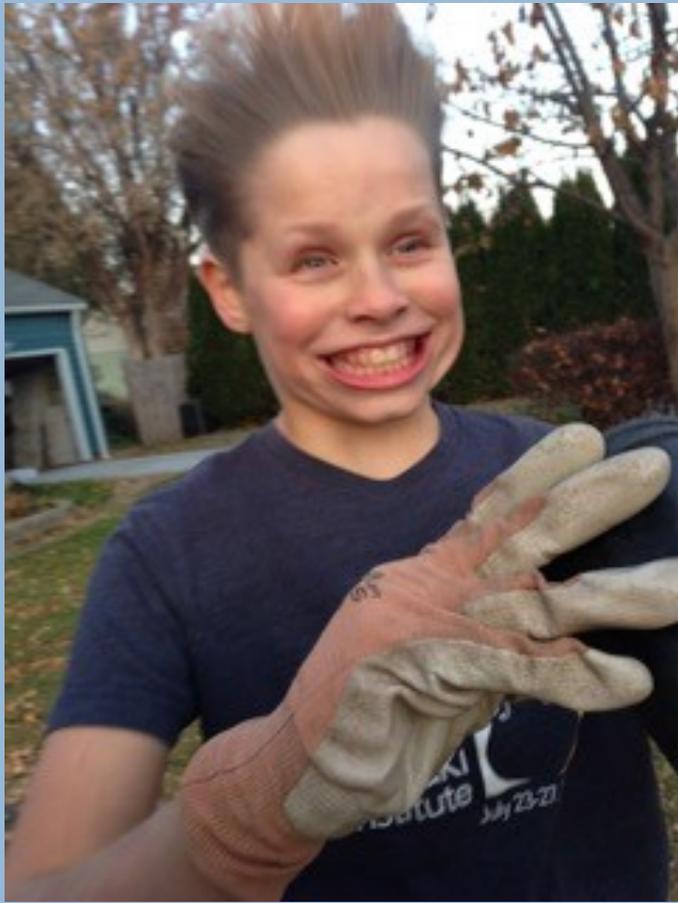


The object lesson we learn from Mr. Nobel comes not from his great achievements, but rather from his great failure of imagination - his failure of **EMPATHY**. He was unable to stand in the shoes of the war-makers. "Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer." Empathy is hard to conceptualize, and even harder to practice? but we of the Youth Underground are striving forth!

It's in every one of us to be wise, find your heart, open up both your eyes..."
~ Kermit the Frog

Youth at Work

~ Leaf Raking is serious business!



We appreciate all of your hard work!!



Look for us @ the
Christmas Collectibles &
Craft Sale, Saturday Dec.
7th, 11:00am to 3pm.

Margaret
509-386-0398





Ladies Lunch

Monday, December 9th at 12 Noon



Merry Christmas Ladies

The Ladies will meet in December on Monday the 9th at noon. Lunch is provided, so just come and enjoy the fellowship and if you can stay for the second hour you can help fill Christmas Stockings. They will be handed out during caroling to those who can't be with us on Sundays.

If you want to bring some small items to add to our stockings, feel free to do so. If you signed up for a specific item and can't remember what it was, just give Becky a call at 525-4144.



All Church Caroling and Christmas Party



Caroling - Sunday, December 22nd, 1:30 pm

Christmas Party after caroling, 3:00 pm

We are inviting everyone in the church to go caroling on Sunday, December 22. We will meet at the church and then go.

Following our singing, we are invited to the home of Kyle & Heidi McFarley, 415 McKinley, Walla Walla—for more rejoicing.

There is also a group of gals who are planning to join Santa at Wheatland Village on December 16th in the afternoon. If you are interested in joining the Singing Elves, It's sure to be a good time and entertaining for all. There will be a sign-up sheet in the Atrium for both caroling events.

Please sign up so we can better organize the events.

If you have any questions, call Becky Kirtley at 525-4144.



www.meaningfulmovies.org

Social Justice Documentary Film,
and Community Discussion

Showing This Month

“Fix It: Health Care at the Tipping Point”

**Saturday, December 14th, at 6:30 pm
First Congregational Church
73 S. Palouse Avenue, Walla Walla**

Whether you're a senior citizen, a young and vital member of the workforce, or a business owner desperate to provide the most basic benefits to your employees, you are not immune from the damages inflicted by rising healthcare costs. The film presents impassioned viewpoints from each of these segments of the population in the United States.

Their insights clearly implicate a system which is operating in full crisis mode, and failing the people it's designed to protect. In the past decade alone, premium costs have doubled. Businesses have felt the crunch, and in some cases have had to decrease their employee base just to keep their head above water. Even in the wake of President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, citizens have seen their life savings dwindle simply because a member of their family has become ill.

The effect on the economy as a whole is equally devastating as fewer people possess the disposable income that allows commerce to thrive. Wages stagnate, infrastructure crumbles, and more people become sick from the added stress and anxiety. For many citizens and small to medium businesses, the hurdles presented by the current healthcare system cannot be overcome.

The filmmakers speak with doctors, business owners, healthcare reform advocates and ordinary members of the working class in an attempt to not only diagnose the problem, but to uncover pragmatic solutions for it as well. Collectively, their narrative illustrates the pitfalls of a private insurance industry that values rising profits above all else. The film also looks to other countries whose populations receive exemplary care for a fraction of the cost.

We have a special guest, Cris Currie, who is a member of Physicians for a National Health Plan (PNHP). Cris has been a working nurse for most of his adult life and speaks from the voice of professional experience.

To learn more about this movie or about Meaningful Movies, visit our websites.

<https://meaningfulmovies.org/>

<https://meaningfulmovies.org/neighborhoods/walla-walla/>

See you at the Movies!!



Holiday Collectibles and Crafts Sale

Saturday, December 7th, 9:00 am-3:00 pm

&

Sunday, December 8th, 9:00 am-12:00 pm

You won't want to miss the handcrafted items & unique and collectible treasures which were collected from the last 18 years of rummage sales. Perfect for Christmas giving!

Proceeds will go to various church programs



Youth Group Crafts & Goodies Sale

Saturday, December 7th, 11:00 am-3:00 pm

Our Youth Group will be set up in the Atrium, selling their handcrafted items & homemade goodies!

Proceeds will go to funding their special activities



CALLING ALL CHRISTMAS DECORATORS!

Saturday, December 7th, 9:30 am -11:30 am

The sanctuary tree will be up in its simple glory Sunday, December 1 heralding the beginning of Advent. We plan to decorate the following day, Get yourself in the Holiday mood and join in!



Linda Schopp and Gwyn Frasco will have available all kinds of Christmas decorations to be placed in the narthex, balcony and sanctuary.

Bring your fresh ideas on decorating the tree, windows, balcony railing, back of church tables and the altar area.

We also have wreaths for the church doors on Palouse and the big parking lot entrance doors.

We are looking forward to your help in making our church a beautiful and welcoming place during this special Advent season.

Gwyn Frasco

& Linda Schopp



Christmas Baskets



The donation of Christmas baskets to families of need in Walla Walla has been a tradition with First Congregational Church for over 30 years.

The tags on the tree are all gone!

All gifts are due in the office by Wednesday, December 11th before 2:00 pm. Please have the gifts wrapped and with the tag attached. It would also be helpful if you could get a gift receipt and include it in the wrapped gift.

If getting out to shop is difficult and you would like to contribute, monetary gifts for the food baskets are most gratefully appreciated.

The Christmas Basket Party will take place on Saturday, December 14th in our Atrium.

Thank you for your caring generosity and for helping brighten this Christmas season for others.





GOINGS ON

Worldwide Candle Lighting in Honor of Children Gone Too Soon **Sunday, December 8th, 7:00 pm** **Land Title Plaza**

The local chapter of The Compassionate Friends (TCF), a volunteer-led organization, that offers support to those who have lost a child, will take part in a World-Wide Candle Lighting

This event is open to those who have lost a son, daughter, grandson, brother, granddaughter, or sister or for those supporting one who has lost those loved ones. **Please arrive by 6:30 in order to distribute candles in a timely manner.**

Hundreds of thousands of persons will light a candle to honor a child gone too soon. Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, this event creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light moving across the time zones.

THE DARKEST NIGHT SERVICE

Sunday, December 22nd
Pioneer Methodist Church
7:00 pm

The Darkest Night Service Is an acknowledgement that the Christmas holidays are a difficult time of year for some. This will be a time to gather and worship especially for those who find this to be a season of particular darkness, due to grief or depression. Please join us in this ecumenical and contemplative service.

Highlights Newsletter Deadline

SUBMIT
YOUR
ARTICLES



By
Tuesday, December 17
Please plan on having
your submissions in by
that date.

December 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

VOUCHERS

Please have your vouchers turned in by the
dates indicated above.
Thanks!



Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 6:00 pm

Council Meeting

Sunday, December 15, 11:30 am

Deacons Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 6:30 pm



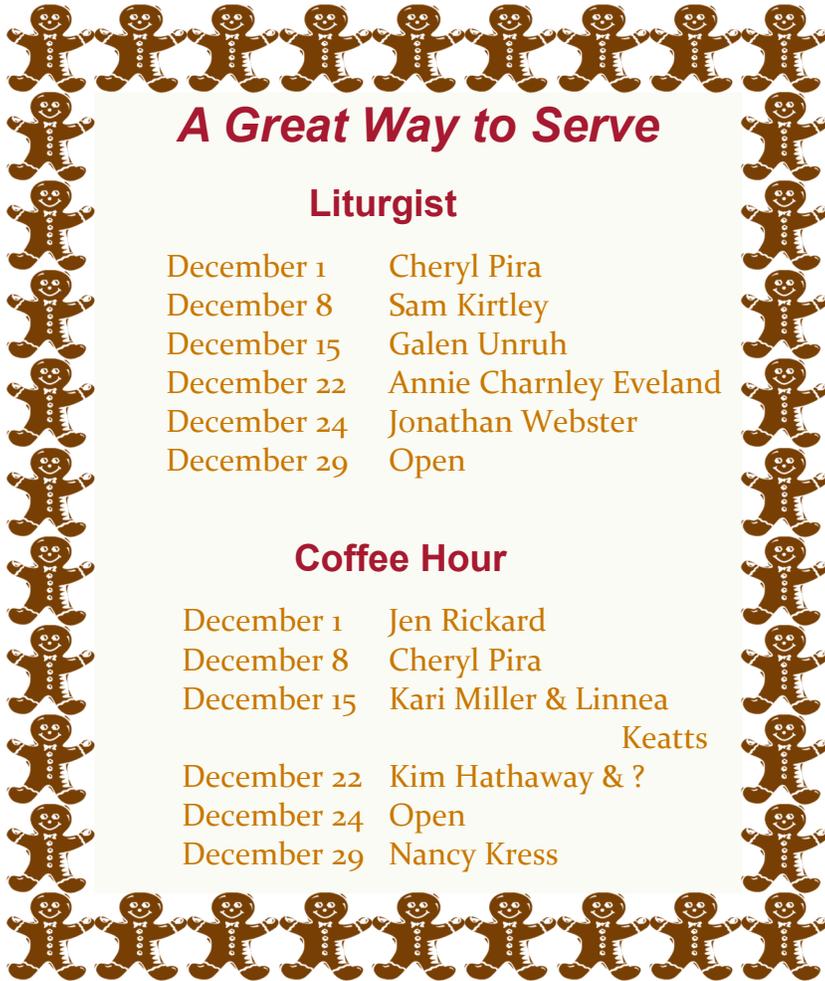
**Men's Breakfast
Canceled for the month of
December.**



Thankful for Our Volunteers



*“Love
each other
as I have
loved you.”*
JOHN 15:12, NIV



A Great Way to Serve

Liturgist

December 1	Cheryl Pira
December 8	Sam Kirtley
December 15	Galen Unruh
December 22	Annie Charnley Eveland
December 24	Jonathan Webster
December 29	Open

Coffee Hour

December 1	Jen Rickard
December 8	Cheryl Pira
December 15	Kari Miller & Linnea Keatts
December 22	Kim Hathaway & ?
December 24	Open
December 29	Nancy Kress

Sign-up sheets are available in the atrium each Sunday following worship or you may call the office at 525-8753.

Volunteer Opportunities

Christian Aid Center:

- Donation Storage Room Organizer
- * Breakfast Cook
- * Registered Nurses

For more information, please contact:

Jeannette Regalado,
Volunteer Coordinator
(509) 525-7153 ext. 114
christianaidcenter.org.

Thank You

2019, it's been a year full of activities, events, and blessings in this church.

Heartfelt gratitude and thank to each and every one who lent their time, talent and financial support, we couldn't have achieved it all without you!



Share the Bounty

We collected 191 pounds of food for The Pantry Shelf in November!

Thank you for giving.



In order to protect the privacy of our members and friends, we do not display personal information in the web version



You can read Pastor Nathaniel's sermons in his online blog at:
<https://thedandelionwayblog.wordpress.com>
Or hear them on our website at:
www.firstchurchuccww.org.

First Congregational Church United Church of Christ

Ministerial Leadership

Minister Rev. Nathaniel Mahlberg

2019 Church Officers

Moderator	J. R. Van Slyke
Past Moderator	Mary Wilen
Vice Moderator	Jennifer Rickard
Clerk	Larry Frank
Treasurer	Kim Croft
Financial Sec.	Bernie Newman
Asst. Fin. Sec.	Jonathan Webster
Head Usher	Sam Kirtley
Diaconate	Judy Chacon
Christian Ed	Dot Willis
Trustees	Dana Taggart
Mission/Social Concern	Heidi McFarley
Music	Open
. . . and Affirming	Open

Staff

Admin. Asst.	Gayle Kubrock
Bookkeeper	Kim Croft
Custodian	Irina Kostenko
Organist	Jackie Wood
Choir Director	Julie Jones
Webmaster	Emily Asmus

Church Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday
9 am - 2 pm

Pastoral Assistance

Church Office 525-8753
Rev. Nathaniel Mahlberg
(608) 469-1406

We celebrate our diversity as an expression of God's Creative love. We welcome persons of all age, race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and physical and mental ability.