

First Congregational Church of St. Clair



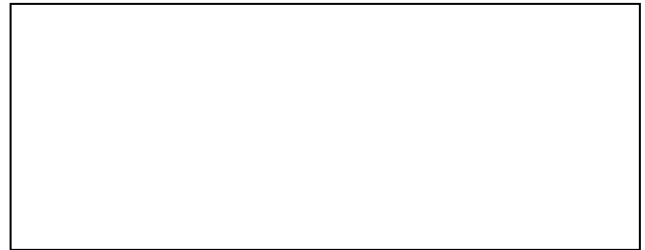
"A Just World for All"

www.firstcongrsc.org | 300 Adams Street, St. Clair, MI 48079

810-329-4142

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

2018



DECEMBER



THE CHANNEL

We are proud to be a Progressive Congregation

Worship & Sunday School: Sundays – 10 a.m.

Pastor: Reverend Alana Kelley

Communion: First Sunday of Every Month

First Congregational Church of St. Clair
United Church of Christ
300 Adams Street
St. Clair, MI 48079
(810) 329-4142
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Website: www.firstcongsc.org

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Mark 13:26-33

²⁶ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸ "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he^[a] is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." ³² "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert;^[b] for you do not know when the time will come."



Keep Awake!

I have a vague recollection of being a small child, trying with all my power to stay awake on Christmas Eve, wanting more than anything to hear or even see Santa Clause. I suspect I never lasted very long but fell deeply asleep after a short while. I suspect children today still try to do this on Christmas Eve.

The season of Advent is upon us. The church has been decorated or it's at least mostly decorated. Some of us have started Christmas shopping and arranging for family visits. Most of us are already deeply immersed in the busy-ness that preparing for Christmas requires.

We know that these days of Advent are meant to allow us to wait patiently for the birth of the child, Jesus. We'll once again remember and celebrate his birthday. Staying awake to the real meaning of this day we celebrate, December 25th, isn't easy. There are so many distractions during the weeks before us.

So much about Christmas has become secular. Many people love this holiday, as we who are involved Christians do. But for many, the meaning is simply a time to buy gifts for family members and close friends. Certainly, this is a nice thing to do. But then, Christmas becomes a strange and self-serving holiday. The part about celebrating the birth of Messiah has gotten lost somehow for so many of us. Yet Jesus' birth is the finest gift we receive.

And truth be told, even we who are faithful forget, for all of the distractions. Even we get lost in the tangle of consumerism. "What do you want for Christmas?" we ask. We may not remember that the most important gift is already given to each and every one of us. That gift is the promise of new life in Christ available to us even as we live life.

When we keep awake and remind ourselves often that we belong to Christ; that we live our lives to help other people come to know Christ, we receive the gift of Christmas each and every day of our lives. There is no other gift that can compare.

Take time in the midst of your preparations. Be with God and contemplate how marvelous this season is, and how blessed we are to live faithful lives in a world that presents difficult challenges.

Take time to think about the baby Jesus' story. And keep awake! He'll be here soon.

With You on the Journey,

Pastor Alana



Mary Beth Bolla, Carol LaVigne, Karen (Deuane & Mary Ann's neighbor), Phyllis Hart, Caroline Schultz' brother, Rick, Dave Swenson, Nancy Martin, Sue Waelens, Pearl Ewart, Stan Hirt & Family, Vicki Kling, Margaret Loranger, Sarah Flum's friend, Dan, Lexi Fullgrapp (David Bola's step-daughter).

Let us also remember

Dakota Hazel, Nathan Distelrath, Edwin Summers
and all who are serving in the military.



Remember, Newsletter article submission deadline is
December 20th.



Donald Whittaker – 8th

Ryleigh O'Connor – 8th

Robert Baden – 10th

Vicki Paret – 11th

Adelle Schwan – 15th

Nancy Kennedy – 17th

Brian Paret – 21st

Arthur Webster – 22nd

June Ingles – 31st



happy anniversary

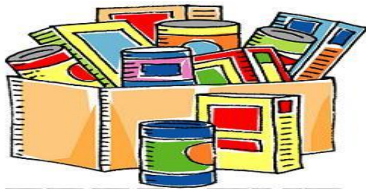
Rene & Kay VandeVoorde – 17th

Michael & Melissa Malcolm – 18th

“No matter who you are or
where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here!”

WELCOME

Be the Church gathering is set for the fourth
Tuesday of every month. Due to Christmas
falling on that Tuesday this year, the next
meeting will be held Tuesday, December 18th,
at 7pm, following the
Community Meal – 4:30-6pm.



**FEED THE
HUNGRY**

THE LITTLE FOOD PANTRY NEEDS
NON-PERISHABLE DONATIONS. PLEASE
HELP SUPPORT THIS WORTHY MISSION.



STAFF LISTING...

Pastor:
Reverend Alana
Kelley
Organist:
Denise Gregg
Vocals:
Anna Moore
Bookkeeper:
Amanda Schwehofer
Office Administrator:
Julie Wendt
Christian Ed Coordinator:
Doug Bishop
Nursery Staff:
Olivia Carlsen/Lori Lewis/
Custodians: Dale & Cindy Frey

MALLARD'S LANDING SERVICE takes place the third Thursday of every month. Please join us as we provide a much-appreciated communion worship service for some of the residents. You will enjoy getting to know 'the regulars' and seeing the members of this church who live at Mallard's, too! This month's service is on Thursday, December 20th, at 9:15am.





YOUR CHURCH COUNCIL...

Please feel free to contact any member of your Church Council with any questions, comments or concerns.

Lisa Hughes - Moderator

Robert Rood - Vice Moderator

Ken Schultz - Treasurer

Caroline Schultz - Church Clerk

Deuane Martin - Trustee & Finance

Kathy Rood - Worship & Music

Mary Ann Martin - Mission & Ministry

Penny Malcolm - Christian Education

Pat O'Connor - Member at Large

Alana Kelley - Pastor



Children's Christmas Program will be held Sunday, December 9, 2018, during worship at 10:00 a.m. There will be a rehearsal on Saturday, December 8, 2018, from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Lunch will be provided.



Please mark your calendar for our
Congregational Budget Meeting on December
2nd, 2018, immediately following worship.



Our sanctuary is decorated for the Christmas season through Epiphany. We are using poinsettias around the altar area and ask for your contributions to purchase these poinsettias. Poinsettia Envelopes are located on the back table in the sanctuary. Please mark your contribution towards poinsettias in honor of family members or friends or in memory of a loved one. Place the envelope in the offering plate, or mail it to the church office. Your gift will be acknowledged in the Christmas Eve bulletin and in the January issue of The Channel.



OPEN & AFFIRMING INCLUSIVE CHURCH COVENANT

The members of the First Congregational Church of St. Clair, United Church of Christ, declare that we are a fully inclusive, open and affirming congregation. We affirm the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and believe that all people are children of God. As such, we welcome

to the community of faith all people of diverse race, physical and mental abilities, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, and socio-economic status. We covenant to provide to all a safe, loving, nurturing and compassionate community.

**FRIDAY MORNINGS AT
NEIMAN'S CAFÉ..**

Every Friday, 10:30 a.m-12:00 p.m.

You are welcome to stop by for a chat with Pastor Alana, enjoy some good coffee, or just appreciate a relaxing end to your week!



The Alzheimer's Support Group will meet the fourth Thursday of the month at First Congregational Church. All are welcome. The meeting in December will be Thursday, December 27th, at 1pm. For further information, please call the church (329-4142) or Mary Ann Martin (326-0798).





Volunteers make up FCC's various committees. If you would like to participate in the stewardship of the church, or have any questions or concerns about what the committees do, please reach out to the committee chairs:

Administration: David Scheel

Altar: Adelle Schwan & Liana Cherni

Altar Flowers: Marge Guinther

Care Team: Karen Galvin

Christian Education: Penny Malcolm

Inside Maintenance: Don O'Connor

Memorials: Caroline Schultz

Mission & Ministry: Mary Ann Martin

Open & Affirming: Pat O'Connor

Outside Maintenance: Randy Kling

Parish Nurse: Mary Ann Martin

Parsonage: Don Rice

Pastoral Relations: Bob Rood, Nancy Rice, Carroll Simmons

Treasurer: Ken Schultz

Ushers: Tim Galvin

Worship & Music: Kathy Rood



DECEMBER DUTIES

LAY READERS:

- 2 – Bonnie Landschoot
- 9 – Elsa Pennewell
- 16 – Pat O'Connor
- 23 - Mary Ann Martin
- 24 - Open
- 30 - Paul Lydy

USHERS:

- 2 – A. Thourlby / D. Vernier
- 9 – S. Hughes / C. Eschenburg
- 16 - B. Rood / R. Kling
- 23 - D. Scheel / D. Kelley
- 24 – Open
- 30 – P. O'Connor / D. O'Connor

POWER POINT:

- 2 - Lisa Hughes
- 9 – Pat O'Connor
- 16 – Lisa Hughes
- 23 - Adelle Schwan
- 24 - Open
- 30 - David Kelley

COFFEE HOUR:

- 2 – O'Connors / Cilluffo
- 9 – Need a Volunteer
- 16 - Need a Volunteer
- 23 - Need a Volunteer
- 24 – Need a Volunteer
- 30 - Need a Volunteer

DECEMBER 2nd COMMUNION SERVERS: Don O'Connor, Pat O'Connor,
Ken Schultz, Caroline Schultz

ALTAR DUTIES: Cathy Light

TRUSTEE: Don O'Connor

THANK YOU!... Dear Church Family: Thank you, thank you, and thank you for the visits, prayers, cards, flowers and transportation to treatments. You are a blessing and a gift.

God bless my church family! –

Mary Beth Bolla





DECEMBER, 2018

MISSION MOMENTS

DECEMBER, 2018

2018 has been a wonderful year. We have accomplished much and have had a good time doing it! Our 2nd Annual Ye Olde Christmas Shoppe at Harbor Impact Ministries was a huge success for all involved. We had 25+ people setting up on Monday and 15+ helping on Tuesday. There were about 400 families who enjoyed picking out their treasures to decorate their homes for the holidays. We worked hard, but it was worth it. I would like to personally thank all who were involved. It was a heart-warming experience. December 18 is the next Impact Day. Come join us!

5 families received a turkey, gift card for perishables and fixings for dinner on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. The same families will be receiving the same for Christmas, plus gifts for the children involved in the families. What a blessing it is to be able to help those who need it the most. What generous and compassionate people we have in this congregation (and beyond) to make these things happen. Special thanks to the Lights and Galvins who organized the giving and delivering!

Mission and Ministry will be meeting on Wednesday, January 9 at 2:00 pm. I invite you to join us and find your spot to serve. There are so many opportunities and so many warm hands and hearts to welcome you!

In God's Love,

Mary Ann Martin, Chair

Mission and Ministry Team



THE LIGHT IS SURELY COMING!

The Christmas Fund

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

For over a century, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, United Church of Christ members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

In 2017, UCC congregations and members generously contributed over \$1,500,000 to the Christmas Fund. This enabled the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Supplementation of Small Annuities, Retiree Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals in need.

The theme of this year's Christmas Fund Offering is *The Light is Surely Coming*. Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of your gifts are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years, and now, in their time of need, you can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to join thousands of UCC members and congregations who will support this year's appeal and trust the light is surely coming.

The suggested date for receiving the Offering is December 23, 2018. As always, we will accept the Offering anytime in the month of December. As a 5 for 5 church, I encourage you to join in this worthwhile effort. On behalf of the hundreds of clergy, lay employees, and their families whose lives are touched by your support of the Christmas Fund Offering, we offer our sincere thanks for your generosity!

Your Mission Chair - Mary Ann Martin



WHO'S RINGING THAT BELL?... The Rotary Club of St. Clair participates with other churches and organizations in the Annual Bell Ringing Kettle Collections. Ken Schultz is on the Rotary Club Bell Ringers committee and will have a sign-up sheet available at the church on the next 2 Sundays. You may also call Ken at 326-4100, for available one-hour time slots. Bell Ringing will take place at Nieman's Market

from 9am to 9pm on the following dates: Thurs-Dec. 6, Fri-Dec. 7, Sat.-Dec. 8 – Thurs-Dec. 13, Fri-Dec. 14, Sat.-Dec. 15. Students under 18 who are looking for "Honor Society Achievement" points can also sign-up with an adult volunteer. Adults looking for "Admission to Heaven" points may sign-up singly or as couples. Thank you for any time you can volunteer. You may also wear your UCC T-shirts over your coats/jackets to represent our church specifically. When you are shopping at Nieman's, please drop some money in the kettle! Ken Schultz – 810-326-4100

FROM THE BOOKKEEPER... Please note that contributions to be recorded on your 2018 statement must be received no later than December 30th. Expenses to be paid in 2018 must be received in the office no later than December 30th. Offering envelopes for 2019 giving will be out and ready for pick-up on December 2nd. Reminder: As the year-end approaches, please remember your pledge.

December brings the Christian Education Christmas Pageant!

Rehearsal is scheduled for Saturday, December 8th,

From 10:00am-11:30am – with lunch provided.

**Performance will be on Sunday, December 9th,
during worship.**



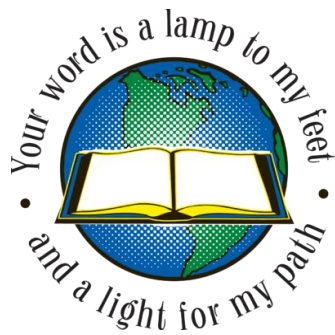
DO NOT PASS BY a man
IN NEED, FOR YOU MAY
BE THE *hand of God*
TO HIM.

-Proverbs 3:27

ADOPTED FAMILIES...

Thanks to a very caring congregation, Thanksgiving and Christmas were made much brighter for five local families. Thank you for your generous contributions of food, gifts, money, deliveries, and time. Together we can do so much!

Cathy Light – Adopted Families Chair



MARK YOUR CALENDARS for a Bible Study session focusing on the birth narratives in the New Testament. Every Thursday, November 29th - December 20th...1pm-2pm. Everyone is welcome!

December 2018 at First Congregational

1	Saturday	Weight Watchers 8am
2	Sunday	WORSHIP 10:00am / Communion / Congregational Meeting re. Proposed 2019 Budget
5	Wednesday	Amanda Here 9am-12pm Trustee Reports Due
6	Thursday	Garden Club Choir Practice 9:30am-12:30pm Bible Study – 1:00pm-2:00pm O&A Meeting – 6:30pm
7	Friday	Neiman's Café 10:30am-12:00pm Chime Choir Practice 10am FCC Holiday Progressive Dinner 5:30pm
8	Saturday	Weight Watchers 8am CE Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 10am
9	Sunday	WORSHIP 10:00am / Children's Christmas Pageant / Choir Sings! / Sing-Along with Maker's Trio at Murphy's 5-7pm
11	Tuesday	Trustees' Meeting 4pm
12	Wednesday	Amanda Here 9am-12pm Council Reports Due
13	Thursday	Choir Practice 10am-12:30pm Bible Study 1-2pm
14	Friday	Neiman's Café 10:30am-12:00pm Chime Choir Practice 10am
15	Saturday	Weight Watchers 8am Choir Practice 9:30am-11:30am

16	Sunday	WORSHIP 10:00am / Choir Holiday Performance / Chimes Play! / Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service 7pm – St. Peter’s
18	Tuesday	Community Meal – 4:30pm-6:00pm Council Meeting 6pm Be the Church 7pm
19	Wednesday	Amanda Here 9am-12pm
20	Thursday	Mallard’s Landing Service 9:15am (Choir Sings) Last Bible Study 1-2pm Channel Deadline
21	Friday	Neiman’s Café 10:30am-12:00pm Chime Choir Practice 10am
22	Saturday	Weight Watchers 8am
23	Sunday	WORSHIP 10:00am / Christmas Fund Offering
24	Monday	CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 5pm
25	Tuesday	CHRISTMAS DAY!
27	Thursday	Music Meeting 9:30am Choir Practice 11:30am-12:30pm Alzheimer’s Support Group 1pm
28	Friday	NO Neiman’s Café Hours this week
29	Saturday	Weight Watchers 8am
30	Sunday	WORSHIP 10:00am / Hymn Sing Service / Intergenerational Service
31	Monday	New Year’s Eve