

First UCC Happenings



JANUARY 2021



“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” Genesis 1:1

Ever had one of those moments when you are struck in awe by one of God’s attributes? By the magnitude of His love, His might and incredible power, or His sheer enormity?

The other day I decided it was time to head out to the yard and do some work. The sun was shining, blue skies, not too cold nor too warm, the perfect weather for some yard work. As I was trimming bushes, flowers, and picking up a plethora of pine cones I was enjoying the fragrances of my yard. I began to thank God for being such a breath-taking Creator.

Not only is He a totally remarkable Creator, but on top of that God is not monotonous. I think people often get into the mindset that God is impersonal and stiff, and for lack of a better word – boring. Creation cries out that this is not the case.

God could have created the heavens and the earth any way that He wanted to. No one told God what to do. Indeed, God did create the world the way He wanted. Through that creation we can learn more about Him.

God saw fit to give us five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Through these senses we find out just how un-boring God is.

Using our sense of sight, we can look at God’s creation. What do you see? One thing I see is color. God could have created everything one color. We would’ve never known the difference. Instead, He used a full pallet of colors. Along with colors I notice that creation comes in different shapes, sizes, and patterns, to name a few.

Then there are smells. Isn’t it neat to discover such a wide range of smells? They can be pleasurable or not; some smells are meant to warn, while others invoke memories. A rose may be a rose, by any other name, but would it be as enjoyable if it smelled like celery?

When we think of food, it may be the flavors that come to mind at first. The purpose of food is to fuel the body; to fulfill that purpose it doesn’t need taste at all. Our Creator however, has given us flavors and a tongue with the taste buds to receive them.

I could go on and on about many other things that speak of God's creativity. There are the stars, the sounds of birds chirping, squirrels scampering up trees, the wonder of holidays like Christmas, birthdays, the feel of sand between your toes, the wetness of water, and more. There is one more thing I feel is important to mention. YOU! God created YOU, and each of YOU is unique – one of a kind. We have different colors of hair, or no hair at all. We have different builds, different likes and dislikes, different abilities... No, God is not boring, you and all creation testify to that fact.

As we enter into this new year, consider the ways in which you may discover God's creativity, then consider ways you may offer Him thanks in return. May God continue to bless and protect you and thank you for the privilege to continue to serve as your Pastor. Blessings in the new year!

Rev. Ed Lilley



From the Director of Music

Diane Drury

Merry Christmas!

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and I pray for all a much happier New Year in 2021. Thanks to a lot of encouragement and support from all of you, I was able to continue to make music with our church members in a variety of ways I never dreamed possible just last year. Virtual choir recordings have become a weekly ritual that I look forward to now, and I have really enjoyed working with those who submit recordings on their own and those who meet me for in-person, socially-distanced, masked recording sessions. The process, though extremely time consuming, is so very well worth it. I appreciate everyone who reads and listens to my weekly E-Worship services, and to those of you who join me for Zoom Evensong services and Zoom Hymn Sings each month. These special musical and social times are an important way of maintaining connections during this pandemic. I look forward to this new exciting year, when things in the choral world will move gradually toward how we formerly did rehearsals, worship, and music ministry at First UCC. More changes in activities will be coming in the next months. There will be things we can do proactively in order to build the skills we will need to meet together again. Future newsletter articles will discuss those baby steps we will start to take. Meanwhile, I hope that all of you can enjoy the music of the holiday season that we have spent months preparing.

Thank You, Virtual Choir and Ringers!

As I look through all my recordings and videos from the Advent and Christmas music we have created, I am truly amazed at the dedication of our Virtual Choir members and Virtual Handbell Ringer, Pat Kline. They have gone above and beyond to get their recordings done in time for our deadlines and the music they send me to work with expresses their deep love and joy for the season. Well done, good and faithful servants! I am giving the Virtual Choir and Ringers two weeks off and we will start back with the recordings after the New Year.

Virtual 35th Annual Ring in the Season Concert Update

Thank you to everyone who was a part of the music creating process for our virtual benefit concert, and for those of you who watched and shared the link with family and friends. We will never know for certain how much we were able to raise, but I assure you that checks are coming in from all over the country because of our efforts! I received this email from Habitat the other day:

Diane,

I watched the 35th Ring in the Season concert and you outdid yourselves! Having participated for the past 15+ years in Ring in the Season, I felt like I was there. THANK YOU dear friend for putting this entire concert together virtually. We will let you know approximately how many contributions we have received and promise to thank all those donors as well.

Again, Diane, THANK YOU for all your time and effort on Habitat's behalf. Please, continue to stay safe and healthy and we look forward to celebrating with you IN PERSON for the 36th concert in 2021.

Janet V. Green

CEO

Habitat for Humanity Peninsula & Greater Williamsburg

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Christmas CDs Delivered to Our Shut In Members

One of our favorite church traditions is the annual All-Church caroling to our shut ins. Unfortunately, this cannot happen this year. I couldn't bear the thought of not sharing this joyous music with our loved ones, so I compiled CDs of some of our church Christmas music. A lot of time and energy has gone into creating the music for Advent, Christmas, and the Ring in the Season concert, and we wanted to share this gift with

those who were not able to come to church or to access the music online. The CDs were delivered this week. I hope that this small gift from our Music Ministry conveys how much each one of our homebound members is thought of and prayed for all year.

Zoom Caroling a Big Success!

I'm sorry for those who missed coming to our Zoom Christmas Caroling Event on Thursday, Dec. 18. What a joyous time we had, and we thoroughly enjoyed singing all our favorite carol and Christmas songs. We had a lot of guests this time, and it was fantastic! Our next Zoom events will be in January. Zoom Evensong will be on Thurs., Jan. 7, and Zoom Hymn Sing will be on Thurs., Jan. 21. Social time starts at 6:45 pm, followed by the music at 7 pm. Don't miss these great opportunities to see our friendly faces as we join in the music.



Beloved, Love Your Neighbor

“Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.” - Margaret Mead

Woven throughout the entire Bible, there are stories that compel us over and over to Love our Neighbor. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that the greatest commandment of all is “Love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” To this, Jesus added a second, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

Founded in 1976, San Lucas United Church of Christ, located in the Humboldt Park community of Chicago, is a small church with a big heart. Representing a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and intergenerational community, the congregation embodies “Loving their Neighbor.” Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagan-Banks, members and volunteers have created a committed team. Amid hunger, homelessness, violence, and economic challenges, exacerbated by gentrification, this team offers a presence of hope. San Lucas UCC's community meal is an excellent example of one of the offerings presented to the community. Every Tuesday, volunteers from Chicago neighborhoods and suburbs, serve over 100 hot meals to those in need. No one is turned away. Carmen Flores-Rance, lay

leader and longtime member, stated, “We do Church here every day, we serve the people of the community here every day – not just on Sunday. That’s what makes San Lucas such a special place.” This humble, Humboldt Park church, boldly and fearlessly, lives into God’s commandment to Love thy neighbor.

Philanthropist Charlotte Lunsford Berry reminds us, “We won't always know whose lives we touched and made better for our having cared, because actions can sometimes have unforeseen ramifications. What's important is that you do care and you act.” So, let us act so that “They’ll know we are Christians by our love” as the hymn goes, and may we be known by our acts in love of neighbor.

As you reflect on the stewardship of resources and sharing provisions to create a just world for all, I invite you to consider how you Love your neighbor through your church community. Who is your neighbor? A single parent, refugee, or elder? Someone across the street or town, or in the pew next to you? Beloved, Love your neighbor.



First UCC Weekly Offering

Nov 29	\$ 1,851.00	Dec 13	\$ 2,520.00
Dec 6	\$ 1,148.25	Dec 20	\$ 2,747.00

Thank you to all who have practiced stewardship through your gifts during this challenging time. Prayerfully consider your tithing to support the ministries and staff of First UCC. Thank you!



Treasurer’s Report as of 12/22/2020

General Operating Checking Account Balance	\$ 13,758.21
Breakdown:	
Bills to Be Paid Through 12/30/2020	\$ 723.01
Mission & Evangelism	\$ 1,112.35
General Fund	\$ 11,774.70
UCC Local Missions Grant	\$ 148.15
Reserve Fund Balance	\$ 1,007.46



**Church-Wide Prayer:
Pray with us each day at noon**

January 1-15

Father, Thank you for your great love and blessing over our lives. Thank you that your favor has no end, but it lasts for our entire lifetime. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting that you are intimately acquainted with all of our ways, that you know what concerns us, and you cover us as with a shield. We ask that we would walk in your blessing and goodness today. That your face would shine on us. That you would open the right doors for our lives and for our loved ones, that you would close the wrong doors and protect us from those we need to walk away from. Establish the work of our hands and bring to fulfillment all that you have given us to do in these days. We pray that you would make our way purposeful and our footsteps firm out of your goodness and love. Give us a heart of wisdom to hear your voice, and make us strong by your huge favor and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

January 16-31

Lord, At the start of each day, help us to recognize you above all else. Enlighten the eyes of our heart that we might see you and notice how you're at work through our lives. Give us wisdom to make the best choices, fill us with a desire to seek after you more than anything else in this world. Let your Spirit and power breathe in us, through us, again, fresh and new. Thank you that you are greater than anything we may face in our day. Thank you that your presence goes with us, and that your joy is never dependent on our circumstances, but it is our true and lasting strength, no matter what we're up against. We ask that your peace lead us, that it would guard our hearts and minds in you. We ask for your grace to cover our lives this day. We love you Lord...we need you.

In lieu of our Annual Congregational Meeting, annual reports will be published in the February newsletter.

Please have your reports submitted to firstuccyo@verizon.net by the morning of Wednesday, January 27th so that they may be included for all to read.

Thank you!

Wider Missions & Outreach

We are blessed with such a generous congregation so willing and eager to help those in need.

We received a note from Darlene Baker of the Appalachian Community Action and Development Agency. She wrote, "Thank you so much for thinking of us and sending this box of gloves and hats. It will be a blessing to all of those that receive them this winter."

Thanks to your generosity, our Angel Tree family had a wonderful Thanksgiving & Christmas! They were a single mom with 3 boys. Her oldest son died earlier in the year, so job loss & grief have taken their toll on the whole family. Thank you for your love & caring.

Our Mission emphasis for January will be HELP. The organization has many needy folks asking for assistance. You can send money to the LaSalle Ave office at:

H.E.L.P.
1320 LaSalle Avenue
Hampton, VA 23669.

Pat Kline & Carol Diehl, Chairs



POINSETTIAS GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD

DECEMBER 2020



IN HONOR OF:

First UCC, "Thank you for sponsoring us!"

GIVEN BY:

El Roi Child Care Center

IN MEMORY OF:

Nancy Reinfeld, my very special friend

Charles Bocklet, Jr.

Albert Travis

Ann and Francis Holloman

Pauline and Forest Eckert

Julia and Bill Chapman

Delores Golembieski

Mom, Daddy, Harold, and Aunt Faye Bowen

Tommy Bratton

George and Virginia Miller

Margaret C. Richmond

Ruby Yung and Cathy Liggins

Those who have died of Covid-19

GIVEN BY:

Dianne Forbes

Betsy Bocklet

The Travis Family

Pat Kline

Doyle & Frances Eckert

Troy, Kathy, & Blair Rary

Dorothy Bratton & Sons

Beverly Sledge

John E. Richmond

Tony & Gail Nelson

Courtney Phillips

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Kathy Rary
- 2 Larry Molnar
- 3 Courtney Phillips
- 4 Doyle Eckert



- 9 Kayla Jillson
- 11 Curtis Edwards
- 13 Marlene Read
- 18 Betsy Bocket
- 28 Jacob Bryant
- 29 Amanda Bryant

If you have a birthday and it's not on the list, please let us know so we can correct our records.

January Anniversaries

None at this time

*If you have an anniversary in January, February, or March, please let us know, so we can correct our records.

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TOGETHER Worshipping God
Growing Spiritually
Serving Others

**Indoor Worship Services
Sundays at 10:30am**

**Annual Reports Due
January 27th
(See Page 6)**