



431 Columbus Avenue  
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FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## February 2017



### HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY!

Groundhog Day, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, falls 40 days after Christmas, on the date of Candlemas Day, the day to honor the day of purification according to Jewish tradition for Mary, the mother of Jesus. The church made it a holy day in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which came to be called Candlemas after the distribution of candles as part of the ritual.

February 2<sup>nd</sup> is also halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, and so was also sacred to European pagans. Weather prediction was part of pagan observances - their weather wizard was a badger or a hedgehog. Weather predictions soon became part of the church's activities on that day as well. The tradition is mirrored in folk poems from several countries. From England comes this verse:

*If Candlemas be fair and bright, Winter has another flight.*

*If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Winter will not come again.*

German immigrants brought this tradition to America, substituting the groundhog for the badger. The first documented mention of the tradition here dates to February 4, 1841, when James Morris of Morgantown Pennsylvania wrote in his diary, "Last Tuesday, the 2nd, was Candlemas day, the day on which, according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate" (Wikipedia - Groundhog Day).

Modern celebrations center around watching a groundhog emerge from its burrow and observing whether or not it sees its shadow. If it does, winter will supposedly continue for another six weeks. In southeastern Pennsylvania, however, the celebrations are more elaborate. Groundhog lodges (*Grundsau* Lodges) hold social events called *fersommlinge* during which they serve food, make speeches, and perform skits called *g'spiel*. Only Pennsylvania German is allowed to be spoken at these events - those who speak English are fined for every non-German word spoken, placing change in a bowl in the center of the table. So, Happy *Grundsaudaag*!



The newspaper coverage of my recent participation in the Women's March on Washington sparked many hateful responses from members of the community who like to anonymously comment on the Register's blog. As a liberal pastor living out my passion for peace and justice in this conservative area, I wasn't surprised. I'm used to criticism from fundamental Christians.

However, I was surprised by the initial reaction of many marchers in Washington when they realized I was a pastor. Before even talking to me to find out where I stand on certain issues, I was met with confusion and even suspicion over why I was there. Even though I was wearing my rainbow clergy stole, the assumption was made that because I'm a Christian I consider homosexuals to be an abomination, demand the overturn of Roe vs Wade and condemn to hell followers of other religions, as well as those with no religion at all. Of course once we talked and I explained myself, everything was fine and many thanked me for participating in the March.

I was also surprised by the number of people who had no idea that my stole identified me as clergy. They would say things like, "I love your rainbow scarf." Then when I would tell them I was a pastor, I was again given that look of suspicion, sometimes even disgust. It didn't take long for me to realize that many, if not most, non-church people lump all Christians together. We are all perceived to be like that hateful bunch of Register bloggers! No wonder churches are having trouble attracting people these days. Who would want to be associated with people like that?

While I was mulling the unfairness of all that around in mind, I was suddenly filled with increased compassion for our Muslim friends. The hurt and frustration I was feeling as a Christian is no doubt what Muslims around the world have experienced since 9-11. Because of the words and actions of a small number of fanatics who claim to be Muslims even though they don't adhere to the true teachings of Islam, they are all being treated as potential terrorists.

I hope you will remember that and defend Muslims the next time you hear someone bashing them. Somewhere, someone is doing the same thing to Christians.

*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

Shalom, Rev. Lenore

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### OUT OF THE OFFICE

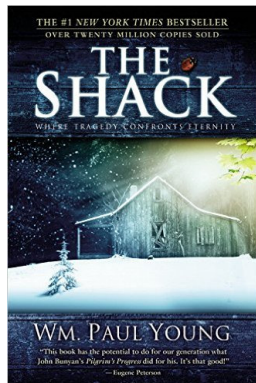
Rev. Lenore is heading to San Diego for her granddaughter's birthday. She will be on vacation February 1<sup>st</sup> through February 6<sup>th</sup>. If you have a pastoral emergency during that time, call Rev. Bob Bottoms at 419-271-0086 (cell). He will preach on February 5<sup>th</sup>.



### BOOK CLUB

When the Book Club meets Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, they will discuss Ordinary Grace by William Kent Krueger.

At that time the book for March, The Shack by William P. Young, will be distributed. This bestseller was extremely popular a few years ago and caused quite a stir in religious circles. Through the anguish of the story's main character, Mack, it wrestles with the timeless question, "Where is God in a world so filled with unspeakable pain?"



Missy, the youngest daughter of Mackenzie Phillips, is abducted during a family vacation and evidence is found that she may have been brutally murdered in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later, in the midst of his Great Sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him

back to that shack for a weekend. Against his better judgment he arrives at the shack on a wintry afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare. What he finds there will astound you and perhaps transform you as much as it did him.

All readers are invited to join the Book Club's lively discussions held the first Friday of the month at 2:00 p.m. at the Parkvue Health Care Center's Frosty's Activity Room. Copies of the book are available from the church office.

## CARE & SHARE

Don't forget - the first Sunday of every month is Care & Share Sunday. Please place your non-perishable food, cleaning and hygiene items and plastic bags in the Care & Share basket at the back of the sanctuary.

## 2017 CHURCH DIRECTORY

The church directory will be available February 5<sup>th</sup>. Please pick up a copy on the table in the back of the sanctuary.



## SILENT AUCTION

The silent auction will conclude on Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. All proceeds will benefit the air conditioning fund. Call Joy Berquist at 419-656-1029 if you have questions.



## SUPPER CLUB

Break out of the winter doldrums for dinner and fun with the Supper Club! This month we're meeting at the Olive Garden at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>. Reservations are required so be sure to add your name to the sign-up sheet at the back of the sanctuary.

## THE PEACE GATHERING

The Peace Gathering will be on Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup> in the Boardman Room, gathering at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and conversation before the meeting gets underway at 7:00. Everyone who has an interest in working toward peace in our community, our nation and within ourselves is invited to come and bring others.

## MOVIE NIGHT

Movie Night continues on Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 p.m.. In honor of Presidents' month, the movie will be the hilarious screwball comedy, *GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE* starring Jack Benny, Ann Sheridan, Hattie McDaniel & Percy Kilbride! This adaptation of the George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart farce is the story of a confirmed Manhattanite who suddenly becomes the country landowner of a rotting old Colonial with decayed floors, a leaking roof, an access road that turns out to belong to someone else, no water, no indoor plumbing, and a hopeless, hilarious resident handyman.



Popcorn will be provided - Remember to bring your own beverages. Bring a friend or 10! All are welcome!



## GAMES NIGHT

Games Night will continue Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.. Everyone is asked to bring a favorite game. Light refreshments will be provided. Faster-paced and inclusive games are recommended, as we hope to have players rotate and try out new games in the course of the evening, but all favorite games are welcome. Please contact Tim Work with any questions or suggestions for favorite games at 419-271-2227.



## ASH WEDNESDAY

Our Lenten journey begins on Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> with our own unique traditional Ash Wednesday service, including Holy Communion, but not the imposition of ashes. Please join us in the Boardman Room at 7:00 p.m..

## DONATIONS NEEDED FOR THE AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

We are still collecting items for the AIDS Resource center in Mansfield. The list of hygiene items the Center needs is posted on the elevator bulletin board. Please place your donations in the hamper by the elevator.



## ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

If you have an email address, you can access this newsletter electronically instead of receiving a paper copy. Save the church a little money on the paper and postage budgets by contacting Paula in the church office by phone (419-625-8105) or email ([FirstCongrUCC@aol.com](mailto:FirstCongrUCC@aol.com)) and ask to be added to the electronic newsletter list.



Barbara Petersen	2/3
Jerry Boros	2/8
Robert Baker	2/11
Joy Berquist, Michael McGookey	2/12
Marnay Schrock, Jacki Warren	2/15
Gary & Scarlet Berry	2/16
Kathy (Harris) Collins	2/25
Kathryn Baker	2/26
Elmeda Schwartz	2/27

Since the last newsletter, we have received letters of thanks from the Boys & Girls Club of Erie County, Care & Share, Crossroad, the Erie County Senior Center and the Volunteers of America for our mission donations, and from Church World Service for our Sugar Bowl donation to the Best Gift program.



Donny Brooks, Wendy Brown, Charlotte Burge, Lisa Hecht & Nemeth Family, Rebecca Howell, Debbi Keller, Rev. Cathy Lawrence and Mike Dowdell, Rhown Paul Lombardo, Bill Michaels, Julianne Owings & friends, Mark & Cathy Pifer, Darlene Round & Family, Marnay Schrock & Leslie Conant, Evalyn Vroman, Joe Work & Family, Mark Pifer's Mission Team  
**Ongoing:** Carol Antonelli, Bowyer Family, Brock Family, Keagan Grames, Izabella, Waddington Family  
**Homebound:** Ruth Baker, Jane Brock, Mary Fenker, Anne Johnstone, Elmeda Schwartz



## IT'S TIME TO PLAN FOR OUR SHORELINE SERVICES!

It may be cold and snowy outside, but it's time to be scheduling speakers for our summer services down at Shoreline Park! They will begin May 28<sup>th</sup>, Memorial Day weekend.

Please keep your eyes and ears open to possible speakers. Remember, the speakers get to choose the non-profit organization that will benefit from the offering. Sometimes that is a motivating factor in getting them to participate. Please give your suggestions and contact information to Rev. Lenore, and she will follow up.

### COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Dear friends and family of First Congregational,

December 31<sup>st</sup> was our last community breakfast of 2016. I want to thank everyone who showed up to volunteer and who donated money to buy breakfast items. Even though we only served 20 of God's children, those 20 were served a good, warm breakfast. So I would call that a successful breakfast.

I look forward, as I hope you are, to serving more of his children starting on April 29<sup>th</sup> with our first community breakfast of 2017.

Sincerely

Chris Michaels

Community breakfast leader

### EMERGENCY CANCELLATIONS

If the weather is unfavorable and you aren't sure about leaving the house for worship, or any other church event, please check the "iAlert" on News Channel 3 WKYC. We have also registered with local radio stations WCPZ (102.7 FM), and WLKR(96.1 FM) who will also be notified of any cancellation involving the church. Obviously, if a level 3 snow emergency has been declared, everything is cancelled!



Hello to the Congregation,

Good wishes to all of you in this New Year. The Boys & Girls Club is celebrating the New Year with the same thing that the rest of America celebrates each year at this time, football, right? Well I'm not making the case here, even though I love football. There are more important things to look forward to, but when you are working with kids you have to bring those lofty ideas down to earth and play.

Hence, we were out playing football last month. There isn't a better thing in the world than stealing some warm weather days in the middle of an Ohio January. When old man winter comes around the corner, we're going to laugh, ditch and run. It's been so pleasant here in Sandusky, we may have to call this town a Florida getaway.

Ms. Carol is back at homework and the library, keeping the students on their academic toes. Ms. Sari Kelley celebrated the Chinese New Year again with a small project for the kids. Nothing sparks a child's imagination more than something foreign to their young minds, like yurts, century eggs, chopsticks and the Years of a Rooster and a Rat.

I do not speak for the Boys & Girls Club as a whole, but personally, I enthusiastically supported Pastor Kure's trip to Washington D.C. There is a need for marches all over that town, every day. Freedom to speak and gather is one of the things that makes our country great.

*"The Master said, the gentleman understands what is right, whereas the petty man understands profit."*  
(Analects 4.16) — Confucius

David Icsman, Youth Center Director



**The PrayerNet**, our electronic prayer chain, offers anyone with e-mail a chance to be part of this special prayer ministry. A prayer list is sent out at the beginning of each week, and team members are asked to pray for those on the list. If you would like to join, please e-mail Paula at [FirstCongrUCC@aol.com](mailto:FirstCongrUCC@aol.com).



## REPORTS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM AND BOARDS

### Leadership Team

*Halley Leffler- Chairman*

1. We are short people for the Leadership Team and Boards.
2. Our annual meeting and potluck is January 29th.
3. We have 100 members to start the 2017 year.
4. About \$11,000 was pledged last year but not contributed. About \$5,000 of that was from active members. Please pay your outstanding pledge balance for the 2016 year. It's not too late.

### Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education met to review the year and found it to be good.

*Love your Muslim Neighbor as Yourself* will be offered again on Sundays if there is enough interest. Please call the church office if you would like to be included in that 5-week study.

Study Group will be using *At the Crossroads* on the five Thursdays during Lent to coordinate with the Wednesday Lenter Series.

We continue to extend a welcome throughout the community to attend our monthly Peace Gathering.

We will once again have our Annual Retreat in September.

Parkvue Book Club had a very meaningful and important discussion of *Being Mortal*. February's selection is *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger.

~ Jacki Warren, Chairman

## AIR CONDITIONING FUND UPDATE

Thanks to pledges and other contributions, the Air Conditioning Fund grew by \$456 in December. Our total as of January 1<sup>st</sup> was \$52,123.84, leaving \$9,566.16 yet to be collected. An additional \$2,945 is pledged through June, 2017.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2017</h1>					<b>At Grace Episcopal:</b>  Tu & Th 10 am BonesandBalance	
			1	2 11 <sup>th</sup> Step Meeting 1:00 p.m. Study Group 7:00 p.m.	3  Book Club 2:00 p.m.	4
5  Communion Care & Share Silent Auction	6	7  Christian Education 11 am Staff Meeting 10:30 a.m. Supper Club 6:00 p.m.	8	9  11 <sup>th</sup> Step Meeting 1:00 p.m. Study Group 7:00 p.m.	10	11
12  Mission & Outreach 11:00 a.m. Unitarians 2 pm	13  Staff Meeting 10:30 a.m.	14  Leadership Team 6:30 p.m.	15	16  11 <sup>th</sup> Step Meeting 1:00 p.m. Peace Gathering 6:30 p.m.	17	18
19	20 Staff Meeting 10:30 a.m.  Presidents Day	21  Movie Night 7:00 p.m.	22	23  11 <sup>th</sup> Step Meeting 1:00 p.m. Study Group 7:00 p.m.	24	25
26	27  Staff Meeting 10:30 a.m.	28  Games Night 7:00 p.m.	<b>Unless otherwise noted, our typical Sunday schedule is:</b> 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Fellowship <b>Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - Noon</b>			

**The Boys & Girls Club hours are 2:30 - 7:00 , Monday through Friday.  
 12:00 - 6:00 p.m. on February 7<sup>th</sup>; CLOSED February 20<sup>th</sup>.**