



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

431 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, Ohio 44870
firstconguccsandusky.com

December 2019 *Including Historical Highlights*



Last year at this time we were filled with excitement as we looked forward to the new year and the many ways we planned to celebrate our 200th anniversary. And celebrate we did! It was an absolutely amazing year. I have tried to recap all that we did in my final Historical Highlights edition included in this newsletter.

All that is left to do now is for me to update the book I wrote about our history back in 2004. That is not as easy as it may seem to those of you who are not writers. Not only do I have to sort through 15 years of newsletters, annual reports, pictures and my own memories, but I have to find the time to do that! It is my hope to have it completed and ready to distribute by our 201st anniversary in May.

If you read the earlier book, you know I highlighted several outstanding members of the congregation. Not wanting to decide myself who should receive special recognition, I appealed to the church membership to tell me who they felt should be highlighted. This time around I have a different approach.

I truly believe every member and faithful friend of the church deserves mention. Together, all of us are First Congregational United Church of Christ. Whether you have been part of the church family for decades, or only a few months, you are an important part of our history. This time, however, you will be providing the material that will be included in the book!

I will be sending out a letter in the next couple of weeks to encourage everyone to participate in this project. What I am asking you to do is to tell me, either in writing or through conversation, what the church means to you. You can share your favorite memory or simply explain what you love about us. It can be long or short and a picture will be included if you submit one. I just hope everyone will take advantage of this opportunity to be part of our recorded history. Those who don't will at least have their name mentioned so years from now when someone reads the book they will know who First Congregational UCC truly was in its historic 200th year. In order to meet my deadline, I will need all submissions by February 1st.

Let me close by thanking all of you for making this a truly awesome year! Shalom, Rev. Lenore

Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross

Our Board of Mission & Outreach invites and encourages you to join thousands of UCC members and congregations who will support the annual Christmas Fund Offering for our Veterans of the Cross. This will enable the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA), 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 who have served the church.

During this holy time of year, the offering is a profound gift. The recipients are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years. Now, in their time of need, you can be the church to them by making a donation this month in one of the envelopes found on the back tables in the sanctuary.



DECEMBER 1ST - WORLD AIDS DAY

Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day. It's an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness.

AIDS became a personal matter for our congregation in 1993 when the disease claimed the life of our choir director, Pete McAllister. We will observe World AIDS Day in memory of him and all AIDS victims by passing out red ribbons and lighting a red ribbon adorned candle on the altar before worship.

Wearing a red ribbon is the most broadly recognized way of showing your support on World AIDS Day. Red symbolizes blood, and the pain caused by the disease, anger about global inaction to fight the epidemic, a warning to take the disease seriously, and a symbol of love, passion, and tolerance towards those affected by the disease.

Later in the day (6:30 p.m. in the Boardman Room) there will be a viewing of the movie *Philadelphia*, referred to in Rev. Kure's sermonette that morning. Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington star in this 1993 film. It was one of the first high-profile Hollywood films to acknowledge HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, and homophobia.

Supper Club will meet Tuesday, December 3rd at Bell and Deli in the Marketplace at the Cooke (enter from the parking lot behind Daly's Pub - there is a ramp for those not wanting to climb the stairs.) Sign up on the bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary.

Friday, December 6th the **Book Club** will meet for a Christmas Tea and discussion of *Mr. Dickens and His Carol*. At that time the book for January, *Varina* by Charles Frazier, will be distributed. This is a historical fiction about Varina Howell Davis, Jefferson Davis' wife.



The Book Club meets at 2:00 p.m. on the first Friday of the month in Frosty's Activity Center at the Parkvue Health Care Center. Everyone is welcome. Books are available from the church office.

Our Church Family Is Growing

We will be receiving new members on Sunday, December 8th. If you have been considering joining the church, this would be a great time to do it. Contact Rev. Lenore if you would like to know more about it.

Rev. Lenore will be taking vacation time beginning December 9th. She will return to the office Monday, December 16th. If you have a pastoral emergency during that time, please call Rev. Bob Bottoms at 419-271-0086. He will be preaching on the 15th.



Longest Night Service

Our annual Longest Night Service will be held Saturday, December 21st at 6:45 p.m.. Beginning with 15 minutes of harp music and including prayers, reflection and Charles and Robin's beautiful music, this service is designed to bring peace in the midst of the holiday stress. The title comes from the fact that it is held on what is literally the longest night of the year.

Following the worship service on December 22nd there will be a **congregational meeting** to vote on the 2020 budget. Copies of the proposed budget will be available December 15th.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

We will hold our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service at 5:30 p.m.. Rev. Lenore will host a reception in the Boardman Room following the service. We want to extend a welcome to everyone - please invite your friends and neighbors to join us.



Our final **Loose Change Sunday** of the year will be December 29th. Please round up all the coins you have stashed away in your home and/or car and add them to the Parish Relief Fund. This fund enables Rev. Lenore to assist members in need.

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 or go to [wkyc.com](http://www.wkyc.com). You can also sign up (<http://www.wkyc.com/news/mobile/text/>) for free text alerts that will send i-alert notifications directly to your mobile device.

We will also notify local radio stations WCPZ(102.7 FM) and WLKR(96.1 FM) of any cancellation involving the church. Obviously, if a level 3 snow emergency has been declared, everything is cancelled! You can always call Rev. Lenore to find out what is, or isn't, going on (419-366-8729).

"The Birthday of a King"

The Sandusky Choral Society will present their 83rd annual Christmas concert on Friday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul Episcopal Church, 87 W. Main St, in Norwalk, and Sunday, December 8th at 3:00 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church, 315 Wayne St.. The concerts are free and open to the public. Bob Bottoms, Sari Kelley, Jacki Warren and Tim Work are members of the Choral Society.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Eric & Amber Warren	12/03
Jack & Rhonda Neese	12/06
Ruth Baker	12/10
Denise Roberts	12/12
Bill Roche	12/14
Samson Greenman, Jr.	12/19
Alex Wilhelm	12/20
Jerry & Libby Boros	12/28
Mat Justice	12/30



We received a letter of appreciation for the donation made in honor of Jess Saffran to Zero - The End of Prostate Cancer. Jess was one of our Shoreline speakers. Acknowledgments were also received for our quarterly donations to Volunteers of America and Care & Share of Erie County. The American Red Cross sent a thank you for our special \$200 donation.

Directory Update: Big T (Johnnie) Turner
215 E. Shoreline Dr. Apt. 811
Sandusky, OH 44870
(419) 366-8719

Deb Butler, Rev. David Culp, Larry Goldstein, Bonnie Karr, Debbi Keller, Barb Reilly, Laurie Jo Webb, Cathy Work and the Baxter, Downing, Fries, France, and Fantozzi Families

Homebound: Ruth Baker, Anne Johnstone, Elmeda Schwartz and Christine Vroman



WHEN A MOB RULED THE CITY

Rev. Lenore was asked to deliver the opening prayer at the November 8th event downtown acknowledging the lynching of William Taylor on September 4, 1878. Church members who were in attendance that day asked that her prayer and remarks be shared in the newsletter.

In 1878 First Congregational Church, an abolitionist church proud of its involvement in the Underground Railroad, stood over there, just across Columbus Avenue where the sunken garden is. That means the lynching mob passed right before it on the way to Market Street.

Being the church's historian, in addition to pastor, I have a copy of the sermon our pastor at the time, Rev. Josiah Strong, delivered on September 15th of that year. As I read his impassioned words, something struck me that I had never thought about before. There were children who witnessed this sickening brutality. I know this because Rev. Strong said, "We must consider the influence of such a spectacle on the youth who witnessed it for such scenes have an educating power."

I shudder to think of the lesson those young minds learned that day about lawlessness...hatred...and brutality. We can only hope that what we are doing here today in the same area will be a positive learning experience for our youth, a lesson in the good a crowd can do in refusing to deny the horrors one race inflicted upon the other.

Let's pray. Almighty and most gracious God...in the coldness of this morning as we gather to acknowledge the cold reality of this city's blemished history, we pray that your spirit will be with us, warming our hearts and souls in the knowledge that what we are doing here this morning is right and good, even if long overdue.

And so we give you thanks Lord for those who brought this hidden incident to light that we might acknowledge this horrendous wrongdoing, grieve the violent death of William Taylor, and be encouraged and empowered to continue our fight against the racism that still exists in this city and around the country with renewed strength, motivated by a passion for justice, not hatred or bitterness.

In gratitude for your presence with us throughout this solemn occasion Lord, we pray in the name of your son, the Prince of Peace. Amen.



REPORTS FROM OUR BOARDS

Christian Education

Jacki Warren-Chairperson Board

The Board met with Rev. Lenore on Tuesday, November 5th. All members were present: Patsy Hicks, Phyllis Bottoms, Kathy Hunscke, and Jacki Warren.

Sunday School: Patsy will be looking for new curriculum for next year. Methods of attracting more children were discussed, including using the church website. Check out the new furniture in the classroom. It is very inviting and Patsy provides stimulating and fun activities for the children.

Parkvue Book Club: The next meeting will be December 6th, our annual Christmas Tea which will include prizes, delicious treats and fun activities. We will be discussing the book *Mr. Dickens and His Carol* by Samantha Silva. It should be a wonderful way to get in the Christmas spirit.

Study Group: The group is reading the second book in the Exploring the Bible series, *Introducing the Old Testament*. This is a very challenging and interesting series which is producing truly exciting and thought provoking discussions. The complete series should end in January.

Confirmation Class: Meets on Sunday afternoons. Rev. Lenore and Sammy are enjoying the time together.

Budget: The Board chose to budget the same amount for 2020, \$700

Center for Peace Through Understanding: The Board considered possible business for the next meeting of that board which will be Sunday, November 17th at 2:00 p.m..

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.

Board of Finance

Scarlet Berry-Treasurer

In this Christmas season, it's time to thank our Pastor and church staff for the fine job they do. You may give your contribution directly to me, Scarlet Berry, or put it in the offering plate, but please be sure to mark it "staff gifts" and turn it in by Sunday, December 15th.

Board of Mission & Outreach

Barb Petersen-Chairperson

At their last meeting the Board reviewed the 2019 budget and decided not to make any changes for 2020.

They would like to thank everyone for their donations to the Neighbors in Need offering. The total collected was \$346.

The annual Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross offering will we received throughout the month of December. You can find more information about this special offering elsewhere in this newsletter.

Research and Exploration Team

We met Wednesday 11/13/19 and reviewed the suggestions given to us. St. Stephens, The Shalom Temple, and The Nehemiah Center are not options. We're still looking into a couple other suggestions.

Rev. Lenore and Mark Pifer will be meeting with some folks from the Norwalk and Sandusky Episcopal churches to discuss our common challenges with small congregations and large, old buildings.

Sharing worship space in a "Community Worship Center" with other churches is under consideration. With that in mind, two churches will be coming to check out our church. If we do this, either at our church or elsewhere, there would be a main sign with each church and their worship time listed separately.

Our next Research and Exploration Team meeting will be held January 8, 2020 in the evening.

Meredith Holman
Chairperson

ADVENT 2019

Advent is the time when we prepare our hearts and minds for celebrating the birth of Jesus. The Advent Season, begins the first Sunday in December when Sammy Greenman ("our confirmation class") lights the first candle on our Advent wreath. Four candles (three purple and one pink) are arranged on the wreath. Purple reminds us of the royalty of Jesus and the penitential nature of the season. Pink symbolizes joy. A fifth candle, placed in the center of the wreath, is the Christ Candle.

December 1 Lighting the Candle of Hope on World AIDS Sunday

December 8 Lighting the Candle of Love

December 15 Lighting the Candle of Joy

December 21 Longest Night Service at 6:45 p.m.

All the candles on the wreath will be lit during this service of prayer and meditation designed to bring comfort to those having difficulty finding joy this holiday season.

December 22 Lighting the Candle of Peace

December 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 5:30 p.m. ~ Lighting the Christ Candle