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e-pistle for the week of January 4, 2018

Minister's Message

Changes

With the new year comes some necessary changes: those of us who still write checks have to remember that it is 2018 now, many of us are now in a new fiscal year for financial reporting, and regardless of when our birthdays are, now we are really another year older. Yesterday was the last moment for a century when every living adult had been born in the 20th Century, and every living child had been born in the 21st Century! Talk about generation gaps!

To be sure, these feel like dramatic changes but changes rarely happen so suddenly. What really changed between Sunday and Monday? Real change takes time, preparation, a change of culture, clarity of roles and purposes, a rededication to what we are about now, which may be different from what we were about then. This Saturday you will have the opportunity to come and meet the person who is the candidate for the next 'settled minister'. On Sunday they will preach and then the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ will meet to discuss and vote as to whether to extend a call to the candidate to be the next minister.

This is what we have worked for these past two and a half years: gaining clarity over the conflicts that arose in 2014-15, structural issues that made such conflicts inevitable, grieving over the loss of valued friends and restructuring, re-focusing on a mission that is clearer and more focused. At least for now. We never solve all our problems, we merely replace the ones that have dogged us with a new set of hopefully better problems for the future.

The plan is that if the congregation extends the call to the candidate, that person will start full time service here on March 1. While there is such a thing as anticipatory grief, the two months will be a long time, filled with the details of what needs to happen now, what will have to wait and why is this taking so long?

The truth of the matter is that the clergy do not exist for themselves, but for you, the church. We are here to help you in your walk of faith, to help this congregation in its faithful service of our God. You have grown and changed in these past few years, just as you will continue to grow and change in the next few years. All to the glory of God! Blessed be change!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

The topic for discussion will be "Division, Illness & Conflict: The World As We Know It". Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

Our candidate for our next settled minister will preach, followed by a congregational meeting immediately after this service for discussion and vote on this person's call to serve with us. Communion will be celebrated. Please join us for this important day!

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

We celebrate Epiphany with a discussion on how the birth of Christ will make a difference in our lives this year.

What's Happening at FCC

Mission of the Month, Peace Learning Center

January's Mission of the Month is the Peace Learning Center (PLC). FCC member Worth Hartman was a founding board member twenty years ago and has seen the initial vision of Charlie Wiles and Tim Nation grow into a dynamic organization, now an international model for peace education and conflict resolution.

The Peace Learning Center educates, inspires and empowers people to live peacefully. Its vision is to build a community of peace where respect is primary and justice is real through the modeling of behaviors, community collaboration, and by providing services. The PLC values:

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Pantry Items of the Month

During January we are collecting the following items: bread, soups, applesauce, deodorant and shampoo.

Urgent: A Congregation Needs Our Help This Winter

Central Christian Church (701 N Delaware) in downtown Indy has requested our help, and it is both important and urgent. Every winter, Indianapolis shelters start a "Winter Contingency Plan." Gyms open up to make sure NOBODY is on the cold streets at night in winter. A mat in a gym is not ideal, but it's better than freezing to death.

Last winter, Wheeler Men's Mission—the largest men's shelter—overflowed its capacity many nights. This year, Central Christian Church, just a few blocks away, generously said they would help with overflow by opening up *their* gym.

Central Christian needs five volunteers each night from January 1 to February 28. No experience necessary. Volunteers must be over 21 and be able to climb some stairs. Duties include:

- Setting up mats and blankets, then taking them down and cleaning them.
- Directing folks to restrooms.
- Keeping exits clear.
- Grabbing rest when able.

Shifts start at 8:30 p.m. and end at 6:30 a.m. (Half shifts available)

A Wheeler staff person will be on-site all night to respond to emergencies.

They reached out to us because our participation in the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

[Click here to immediately sign up for a shift](#)

Pastoral Care

Please contact Rev. Michael Montgomery at (708) 691- 0003.

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e-pistle for the week of January 11, 2018

Minister's Message

Reflections

In amidst all the doings of the first full week of January (we called the Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund to serve as our next settled minister, the Trustees met and figured out a balanced budget for 2018 and last night the Council met and surely did great things), my wife Peggy slipped, fell and presumably broke her wrist. So it may be that I was at the Council meeting, and it may be that I was not, and was home tending to my wife in the hospital.

Journeys are like that: you can do all of the work, the important things can all run smoothly and the goals easily accomplished and then a little thing (a slip) brings everything to a crashing halt. Life is like that--I am grateful that it is just a wrist, as painful as that is, but minor mishaps can have major consequences.

This is true for churches as well. We now celebrate the calling of a new pastor, whom we love and are greatly excited about, as well we should be. This congregation will do great things with her, and that is a reason to be excited. Come March 1, many things will move ahead, there will be new challenges and problems and new people and, and, and.

The key words include 'Come March 1'. Now is the time to practice good community remembering that she joins us then, and not now. Good community requires good boundaries. It may be nice to invite her to your next meeting or get together, but it places her in a very awkward position. How can she say no? And yet she must say no, because she is not our minister yet. If we cannot maintain good and healthy relational boundaries now, how will we do so later? We risk slipping on the ice!

Until then, Randy Walker, Bob Cook and I will serve as her 'appointment secretaries' and will keep her well and effectively scheduled for her ministry with us, come March 1!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Save the Date!

A Board Retreat will take place on Saturday, February 10 from 10:00 until 1:00. Coffee and light snacks will be served.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

The topic for discussion will be "The Challenge of Gun Violence In our Communities." This session will be led by Ed Smith, Chairman of Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence. Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

Beyond Whiteness. On this Sunday of the weekend in which we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday we will look at multi-culturalism and why it is so hard for us to accomplish what we mostly all want. Luke 10: 25-37

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

New Creation worship this Sunday will focus on "Responses to God: Jonah's, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, and ours." Our Bible passages include: the story of Jonah and selections from Psalm 139.

What's Happening at FCC

Two Critical Deadlines- Please Read!

Annual Report articles are due Monday morning, January 15. I will be in the office on Monday afternoon to create the draft.

Articles for the February Colony are due by EOD Monday, January 15.

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[Click here to immediately sign up for a shift](#)

Plymouth Rockers

The Plymouth Rockers will meet in the Parlor at noon on Tuesday, January 23. We'll bring our own lunches (Brown bag it), then have a program by Tim Evans of the Indianapolis STAR, entitled "Indy Star Call for Action." All church members and guests are welcome.

Pastoral Care

Rev. Michael will be in Chicago this week so please contact Carol Sowle or Worth Hartman for pastoral care.

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e-pistle for the week of January 18, 2018

Minister's Message

Reflections

This week I am up in Chicago from Tuesday to Friday leading a seminar for clergy who have written the first draft of what will ultimately be very fine contributions to our understandings of ministry with domestic violence, hearing the voices of women and removing the stigma of mental illness from churches, especially those in the African American community. They are going to be marvelous!

The initial point of pain will be the realization that will come on the first day that they are not already marvelous, they are first drafts for a project that will require three or four drafts.

We like to think that we are the final edition of our lives, both as individuals and as a congregation. Aren't we perfect in every way already? Or at least better and better, each and every day? Sadly, no. There is always more to do, strategies that could be better, improvements that could be made.

Good, better, best. Never let it rest. 'Til your good is better and your better is best. St. Jerome is alleged to have said. "Perfect is the enemy of better" goes a business

slogan. We remain in times of change and growth as we move forward, practicing our faith, practicing the work of the church. Getting better at being church. Never perfect, always getting better at what we do. Because our final draft will be marvelous!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Save the Date!

A Board Retreat will take place on Saturday, February 10 from 10:00 until 1:00. Coffee and light snacks will be served.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

The topic for discussion will be "Good News from God." Meet in the library.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

Beyond Secularism. At one level, 'secularism' is the agreement to keep religion out of the public sphere of social life. Governments don't enforce a particular religion, religions don't enforce their teachings on governments, and religion is 'happily private.' The problem with this division is that it domesticates religion and prevents it from addressing the 'principalities and powers' of the age. When we are silent, we let others define who we are and what we believe. How can we have a loving public presence?
Ephesians 6:10-18.

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

New Creation worship this Sunday will focus on **Being found by God**. If the story of Jonah begins with Jonah running from God as best he could, Jonah can't run far enough, hide well enough not to be found by God. How do we respond to being found by God?

What's Happening at FCC

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Plymouth Rockers

The Plymouth Rockers will meet in the Parlor at noon on Tuesday, January 23. We'll bring our own lunches (brown bag it), then have a program by Tim Evans of the Indianapolis STAR on his successful ongoing "Indy Star Call for Action" program he supervises. Come and bring friends; all church members and guests are welcome.

Green Team Tip

When the dishwasher has finished running (before it goes to the dry cycle), open the door to let the hot, humid air put warmth and humidity into the house. Do the same with the shower door.

Pastoral Care

Rev. Michael at will be in Chicago this week so please contact Carol Sowle or Worth Hartman for pastoral care.

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e-pistle for the week of January 25, 2018

Minister's Message

An Ice Storm Moment

As I write this E-pistle on Wednesday morning there is a long line of cars driving slowly up Pennsylvania St. past the church. The bad news in this is that it probably means that there has been an accident on Meridian. The good news is that there will be another hundred people or so who might think to themselves “Hey! There’s a church here!”

This led to two thoughts: We struggle at times to be known in Indianapolis. This means that we are not likely to get drop in visitors who want to try us out. We are also safer than many churches---one of our neighbors spent \$20,000 last year on security and were looking at a twenty four hour a day contract that would raise that budget item to \$200,000. Sometimes it is not so bad to be well hidden! But it also means that for us to be easily found requires a fairly aggressive approach to getting our name out. You can help with this by ‘liking’ the church’s Facebook Page, sharing the occasional posting. Our alternative (and we might need to explore this in the years to come) is a fairly constant series of advertisements in newspapers or selected radio stations. One time ads don’t work very well, an image has to be built up over time. That is expensive, or we would already be doing it. For now we are content with an active webpage (fciindy.org) and Facebook

presence and having activities that are worthy of notice both in our lives and in our community.

The second thought is about surprises. We know about the wrong, bad news, kind. But there are also pleasant surprises. Of friendship when you didn't expect it, of beauty that is simply there in our lives. Like a church up a gentle hill on Pennsylvania Street!

-Rev. Michael Montgomery PhD.

Save the Date!

A Board Retreat will take place on Saturday, February 10 from 10:00 until 1:00. Coffee and light snacks will be served.

Worship for Sunday

Adult Class - 9:45 a.m.

Dr. Ulrich Moeller, the Ecumenical Officer of the Church of Westphalia in Germany, will be our guest presenter at the Sunday adult class this week.

Traditional Service - 11:00 a.m.

Beyond Secularism. At one level, 'secularism' is the agreement to keep religion out of the public sphere of social life. Governments don't enforce a particular religion, religions don't enforce their teachings on governments, and religion is 'happily private.' The problem with this division is that it domesticates religion and prevents it from addressing the 'principalities and powers' of the age. When we are silent, we let others define who we are and what we believe. How can we have a loving public presence?
Ephesians 6:10-18.

New Creation - 5:30 p.m.

We begin a series of worship services in which we explore different ways of expression our devotion to God. On this Sunday there will be music by our New Creation Ensemble to which we will contribute by drawing and writing, utilizing our creativity to respond to God.

