This Week at Church

Wed. Nov. 13
7:00 p.m. PADS (Community Room)
7:00 p.m. Worship Ministry Meeting (Library)

Thurs. Nov. 14
7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal (Community Room)

Sat. Nov. 16
6:30 p.m. Pick-a-Party #7 (Klein-Collins home)

Sun. Nov. 17
8:30 a.m. Missions and Social Action Ministry Meeting (Library)
10:00 a.m. Worship
10:15 a.m. Elementary Sunday School
11:15 a.m. Christmas Pageant Rehearsal (Clark Room)
2:30 p.m. ACE Meeting (Community Room)
2:30 p.m. Transgender Day of Remembrance Gathering (Sanctuary)
6:00 p.m. Middle/Jr. High and Sr. High Youth Group

Mon. Nov. 18
7:00 p.m. Women’s Spiritual Gathering (Library)

Tues. Nov. 19
7:00 p.m. Council of Ministries Meeting (Library)

Wed. Nov. 20
7:00 p.m. Worship Ministry Meeting (Library)
7:00 p.m. PADS (Community Room)

**Thurs. Nov. 21**
10:00 a.m. Men's Discussion Group (Library)
7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal (Community Room)

**Sat. Nov. 23**
3:00 p.m. Pick-a-Party #1 (Redux) (Community Room)
7:00 p.m. Pick-a-Party #2 (Redux) (Fireside Room)

**Sun. Nov. 24**
10:00 a.m. Worship
10:15 a.m. Elementary Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Advent Decorating (Sanctuary)
11:15 a.m. Christmas Pageant Rehearsal (Clark Room)
11:15 a.m. Chili Cook-Off and Sunday School Art Fair (Sanctuary)

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**Serpmon**
“I Have Bad News and Good News”

**Scripture**
Isaiah 5:1-7, 11:1-5

**Liturgists**
Rhonda Carpenter
Bev Parker

**Children's Time**
Denise Majewski

**Greeters**
Sally Pentecost
Jeanie Guenther
Greetings friends,

Sunday morning was truly a special day for our congregation. For the first time in our 186 year history (so far as I know), we had a blessing for gender transition in our morning worship service. Hopefully you’ve seen the picture of this beautiful moment in our Facebook group. I invited folks forward for the laying on of hands, and nearly all of you came forward to bless Ellis Billington in his transition!

Several of you have conveyed your appreciation and affirmation of this event, while at the same time asking about how it came about.

As a minister of Word and Sacrament, I am prepared to bless or pray for any of you in the significant moments of your lives. Some of you would prefer such moments happen privately, which is fine. Others are okay with a little more attention. Ellis and I talked about various options for spiritually commemorating this moment in his life, and he chose to do it in a Sunday morning worship.

The benefits of doing it on Sunday morning are that we all get to bear witness to this sacred moment, and Ellis also gets to feel the affirmation of his community. But also, more practically, it helps so that Ellis doesn’t have to continually be coming out to people, or correcting them on pronouns over and over. We can support each other as we support him in this process!

Friends—this is church at our best! Surrounding people in love when they’re going through momentous occasions, moments of risk, moments of stepping further into themselves—this is what we do! When we bring casseroles to people when a loved one died, or when we check in on folks who are sick or haven’t come to church in a while, or when we send congratulatory cards to
young people when they do something amazing—this is church! Our job is to manifest the love and grace of God in this time and place, and do it with sincerity and generosity, as best we can.

If you were there on Sunday—thank you for participating in such a beautiful moment. And if you weren’t there, well, when you don’t come to worship, you might miss something!

Grace and peace,
Mark

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**Transgender Day of Remembrance Gathering**

This Sunday, **November 17** at 2:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, First Congregational Church will be hosting a gathering and conversation for Transgender Day of Remembrance.

We’re going to honor the memory of those who have died in the struggle for gender justice, and talk about what this day means to different folks in the gender diversity community.

Join us!

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**Poinsettia Fundraiser!**

Purchase a poinsettia in honor or in memory of a loved one, to decorate the church, your home, or give as a gift!

**Orders are due on December 2.**

Please click [here](#) to order a poinsettia!
ACE will hold its next meeting this Sunday, **November 17** at 2:30 p.m. in the Community Room. ACE welcomes Professor Michael Seng from the John Marshall Law School to open a discussion about impeachment, its history in the Constitution, its applications in the early years of our republic and more recently, and what procedures we can expect going forward. A Q&A will follow.

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**Little Friends Giving Tree**

Once again, First Congregational UCC will be hosting a Little Friends Giving Tree.

Little Friends School empowers clients with autism and other developmental disabilities to thrive in our community. Founded in 1965 by long time First Congregational Church member Dottee Krejci, who passed away in 2017, Little Friends serves adult clients who live at or below poverty level and more than 25% of the students enrolled in their three school programs qualify for free and reduced lunch initiatives. This program provides holiday gifts for children, adults and families in financial need and served by Little Friends.

The Giving Tree is in the narthex and will hold gift tags with the client's name and their Christmas gift request. Simply choose a tag from the tree, purchase and wrap the gift, secure the tag to the gift, and return the gift and place it under the Giving Tree.

The last day to place the gifts under the tree will be Thursday, **December 12**. On Friday, December 13, Little Friends staff or North Central College student volunteers will pick up the gifts, sort them, and deliver them to clients across the agency.

If you have any questions, please contact Vicki Keller.

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**Sanctuary Christmas Tree - Help Needed!**

On Sunday, **November 24** (right after worship), we need help to carry up the sanctuary Christmas tree from the furnace room.

Younger men and women are needed to carry up totes, the Christmas tree, and the large wreath. We will have some of our "senior advisors" on hand to help guide the setting-up process, but we are now at the time when we need younger members and friends to take over some of this responsibility.
The more help we have, the quicker we can get this done, and then everyone can go to the Community Room and have some chili!

Thank you!
Arts in Worship

THANK YOU to the more than 80 families who have generously pledged to support our church's ministries and missions for 2020, including eight families who did not pledge for 2019!

The Stewardship Ministry is looking forward to being able to share the details of this generous response, but we are still waiting to hear from several more families, so please turn your pledge in this week if you haven't already. Thank you!

Picture Directory

It’s that time again - time to have our family and/or individual pictures taken for our church directory. You can even include your pet, and the pictures will be available in time for Christmas!

Signing up is no problem. Click here and follow the easy directions. The available times are:

Tuesday, November 26, 2:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Friday, November 29, 12:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 30, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Questions?
Contact Bev Parker or Todra Oken.
Calling all Chili Cooks! Yes! This Means You!
The senior high youth are again hosting The Great Chili Cook-Off!! Come compete for bragging rights on Sunday, **November 24**, right after worship. Sign up after worship, or email Jessie Winters to enter your chili! Tickets will be sold after church, and again at the door.

Prices are: ADULT: $8; CHILDREN: $5/child (4 and older); and FAMILY: $25

There will be chili, mac and cheese (for those who don't care for chili), rolls, drinks and dessert all for the ticket price. Proceeds will go help support High School Youth Group.

**Sunday School Art Fair**
The Fall Art Fair for Sunday School will be on Sunday, **November 24**. We will proudly display what the children have been doing all fall in their Sunday School classes!

**Third Annual Christmas Cookie Coffee Hours**
What a GREAT response to our first Sunday sign up. Almost all of the slots are filled on December 8 and 15, so if you are excited to share your family's best Christmas cookie recipe, sign up today [at this link](#) or after church in Coffee Hour.

You don't need to make coffee or clean up, just bring 1-2 dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies and a recipe to share on December 8, 15, or 22. It's a great excuse to try out a new recipe or revisit an old favorite. Whether or not you're baking, make sure to come to Coffee Hour after worship so you can try them all!

**Celebrate Birthdays**
Green Team Tip
Check your tires to make sure they are properly inflated. This saves gas and also provides a smoother ride.

The Matthew 25 Challenge
Matthew 25:35 "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me…"

On Friday, October 25, members of our congregation lived out their Matthew 25 commitment. When plans were made for the Kalamazoo College Singers to visit our church and provide a concert for us, we put out a call for overnight hosts for the students and help with preparing a meal. Our members responded, and we had a great experience with the students and their director, Dr. Chris Ludwa. And, the concert was
terrific! Thanks to Chris and Tom Farthing, who are Kalamazoo alums, for planning, preparing and setting up a great meal. Thanks to all those who welcomed strangers – Sherry and John Healey, Lori and Marty Shepard, Doreen Schweitzer, Todra and Jeff Oken, Penelope Schaschwary, Joyce Trier, Barb Kling, Christopher and Val Lorimer, Rae Ellen and Randy Hostetler, Gene Wollaston, and Barb Stonewater. A special thanks to Christopher Lorimer, who took care of all the logistics with Chris Ludwa and publicity.

Would You Like to Contribute to Our Church Online?
You can make credit card or direct debit payments below.

You may also donate to special offerings, as well. Thank you!
Publication of the Leaflet

Articles for the Leaflet must be in the church office no later than Mondays at 10:00 a.m.