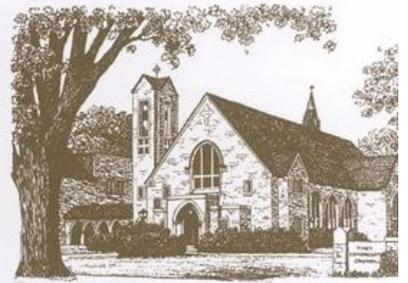


# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH *of Western Springs*

1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs, Illinois 60558 † 708/246-1900



## GATHERINGS

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH

DECEMBER 6, 2016

### *An Advent Prayer*

*Lord Jesus, master of both  
the light and the darkness,  
send your Holy Spirit upon  
our preparations for  
Christmas.*

*We who have so much to do  
seek quiet spaces to hear  
your voice each day.*

*We who are anxious over  
many things look forward to  
your coming among us.*

*We who are blessed in so  
many ways long for the  
complete joy of your  
kingdom.*

*We whose hearts are heavy  
seek the joy of your  
presence.*

*We are your people,  
walking in darkness, yet  
seeking the light.*

*To you we say, "Come Lord  
Jesus!"*

*Henri Nouwen*

### COMING UP THIS SUNDAY, DEC 11

#### WEE WORSHIP † GIFTS OF HOPE † ACE

At our 9:00 and 10:30 services, Rich will preach on the theme of *plenty*, and we will light the advent candle of JOY. Members of our handbell choirs and steel pan bands will share their musical gifts. After First Steps, children ages three through first grade will be dismissed to Wee Worship with Mrs. Sabbagha. (Please drop them off in Room 117 and pick them up from the Chapel.)

Our Annual Gifts of Hope Market will open at 9:30 in Plymouth Hall. Come and enjoy refreshments and Christmas music while you shop for Christmas gifts that bring hope to people in need. See details and this year's "Shopping List" under Latest News. Cash, check and credit cards will be accepted at the market.

At 10:15 in the Seim Room, Dr. David Foxgrover will return to conclude his three-part series on Critical Issues in Religion and Politics. These are stand-alone sessions, so all are welcome. Also at 10:15, confirmands will have class in the youth room.

At noon, members of our high school youth group will head to Chicago for their annual Christmas party with the children of San Lucas UCC. At 4pm, all ages are invited to meet at Plymouth Place for a Christmas carol singing extravaganza. Contact Jeannette Lloyd with questions. (Song sheets will be available.)

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### LOOKING AHEAD TO SUNDAY, DEC 18

#### RENEW † CHRISTMAS MUSIC & PREP

At our 9:00 and 10:30 services, Rich will preach on the subject of *patience* as we arrive, at last, on the fourth Sunday of advent. We will light the candle of LOVE, and our Chancel Choir will treat us to a selection of Lessons & Carols. From 8-8:45 in the Chapel, Marv Baldwin of our Christian Ventures Committee will lead a time of readings and reflection centered around the theme of Christmas.

Also in the morning, our Library Committee will meet at 10:00, our kids' choirs will rehearse at 10:00 and 11:35, and our confirmands will have class at 10:15. From 1-3pm, a Christmas pageant rehearsal will take place in the Sanctuary, and at 6pm, PF will have its annual Christmas party. (Location TBA)



## Christmas Eve, Morning & Beyond

As is our custom, we will hold four services on **Christmas Eve:** two identical family services at 3:30 & 5pm and two traditional services with lessons and carols at 8:30 and 10:30. (Infant/childcare —up through two years — will be cared for during the afternoon family services.)

We will hold a single worship service on **Christmas morning** at 9:30. (Infant/childcare and Sunday school will **not** be offered on Christmas morning.)

We will hold one service at 9:30 on Sunday, **January 1**, followed by our annual Resolution/Revelation Labyrinth Walk in Plymouth Hall. Sunday school will not be held, but infant/childcare will be available during the 9:30 service.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### **MEN'S FAITH & FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST**

will be held this Saturday, December 10, at 7:45 in the Seim Room. After a light breakfast, Rich will lead a discussion on the possibility of discovering wisdom in the rhythm of the Advent season. The group, comprised of all ages, will view two brief video reflections and discuss the group's vision of hope for the future.

**WOMAN'S SOCIETY** will have its General Meeting at 12:30 on Thursday, December 15, in Plymouth Hall. Following lunch, all are welcome at 1:30 to attend the program portion of the meeting, featuring North Central College's a cappella group, The Sonata Problem.

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### *Rest Within the Rush Advent Services*

#### **7pm Wednesday, December 7**

Join us in our Chapel to hear the beautiful story of Mary saying "YES" to God. This **Taize** style service will include prayers, songs and candle-lighting.

#### **7pm Wednesday, December 14**

Those who find rejoicing difficult during this time of year due to the loss of a loved one, stress, loneliness or other worries may find a temporary respite during this **Blue Christmas service**.

#### **6-8pm Wednesday, December 21**

Allow your inner vision to sharpen its focus as you enter the stillness and beauty of the candlelit **labyrinth**. With live harp music to accompany you, journey inward on this, the longest of winter nights. *From Darkness into Light*, this walk is designed to prepare for the coming of Light of Christ and also provide a time to remember those who are no longer with us this holiday season. Guides will be available to offer assistance as needed.

### **PRIMETIME CHRISTMAS PARTY.**

PrimeTimers (approximate age: 50-65) will celebrate together on Saturday night, Dec. 17 at the WS home of Brian and Zada Clarke. Red wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided; those who prefer beer or white wine should bring some to contribute to the collective bar. All guests are asked to come at 6:30 with a hearty appetizer or dessert to share, as well as a children's book for Aunt Mary's Story Book Project. RSVPs are helpful but not required: [RSVP@wscongo.org](mailto:RSVP@wscongo.org)

### **CALLING THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO CARE.**

Members interested in learning more about this new ministry of compassionate care and who are available to attend the three training dates below, should contact program coordinators, Ben Pershey or Mary Lee Gosz.

- Saturday, January 14, 11:30-5:00
- Wednesday, January 18, 6-9pm
- Wednesday, January 25, 6-9pm

### **INTERSECTIONS: CONVERSATIONS**

**ABOUT FAITH AND CULTURE.** Last year's book discussion group will continue in 2017 and will meet at 11:45am on January 29. Discussion leader Katherine Willis Pershey has recommended the highly acclaimed book *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Newcomers are welcome to join the informal group, which will meet in the Seim Room. Guests are invited to bring a sack lunch. Please contact Katherine with questions.

### **DATE SET FOR JANUARY MEETING OF WOMEN IN FAITH.**

Our new intergenerational, once-a-month group will meet next on Wednesday evening, January 25, at 7pm in the parlor. This group will also read and discuss *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Members and friends of the church are welcome to participate as their schedules permit. For more information, contact Katherine at [katherine@wscongo.org](mailto:katherine@wscongo.org).

# GOD'S GARDEN PLANT SALE

Work has begun on the fellowship fire pit and is expected to be done in mid-December. Plans for the garden that will surround the fire pit are being finalized and include large evergreen trees, small boxwoods and hydrangeas, as well as abundant annuals, native perennials and a butterfly and hummingbird garden. (Outdoor lighting and in-ground irrigation will also be installed.)

The hope of this properties subcommittee is that this garden will open eyes and ears to the spirit of God in ways that do not occur indoors. It is expected to be a place where youth groups will enjoy fellowship, preschoolers and Sunday school students will read stories, small groups will meet, individuals will pray, and all will grow and revel in the beauty of God's creation.

Future plans include welcoming each year's new members with a daffodil, each new baby girl with a pink tulip, and each baby boy with a blue

hyacinth; and fall mums may be planted in memory of loved ones who have passed away. Our Green Team has suggested a citizen science sunflower component. It will be a treasure for all to enjoy.

Funds for the fire pit were contributed through private donations and a private memorial fund. *Capital Campaign dollars and monies from the operating budget are not being used to build God's Garden.*

If you would like to help fund God's Garden, tax deductible donations of any amount are being accepted. Please find the donation link on the God's Garden page under Latest News at [wscongo.org](http://wscongo.org). (An order form is also enclosed with this newsletter.) Those who purchase a shrub or evergreen will be identified for a season with a copper plant marker. Questions regarding this project can be directed to Jane Booth or Jay Barnes.

## Congo Market



If you're looking for a hostess gift or something for a special church friend, items from the list below might fit the bill. Call or stop by the church office to make a purchase:

Watercolor Notecards by Peg Taylor (\$5 for 6pc set)

Books authored by Katherine and Paul (\$10-16)

Custom-made church ornament (\$20)

Earth Steward Canvas Bag (\$8)

Woman's Society Cookbook (\$10)

Music CDs (\$10)



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

*Due December 13, 2016*

If you'd like to purchase a Christmas poinsettia used to decorate the altar for our Christmas Eve worship services, please complete this order form and return it, along with a check made payable to First Congregational Church, to the church office by **December 13**. Be sure to note "Poinsettia" on the memo line of your check.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No. of plants @ \$13 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed

If you would like your plant(s) displayed in memory, honor or celebration of someone, please indicate below:

Please check all that apply:

- I will pick up my plant(s) after the 10:30 Christmas Eve Service or after the 9:30 Christmas Morning Service.
- I would like to donate my plant(s) to a church member in need of some Christmas cheer.  
*Please contact Meredith Onion if you know of someone who would enjoy receiving a plant (246-1900, ext. 222).*
- I would like to make 1 or 2 flower deliveries on Christmas morning. *(It is not necessary to donate flowers in order*

PASTORAL STAFF

Rich Kirchherr  
Senior Minister

Katherine Willis Pershey  
Associate Minister

Meredith Onion  
Associate Minister

Deb Stankiewicz  
Parish Nurse

*Gatherings* is a biweekly publication of the First Congregational Church of Western Springs. Articles for inclusion should be submitted to Meg Heinz at [gatherings@wscongo.org](mailto:gatherings@wscongo.org).

*Gatherings* is emailed to members and posted on-line at [www.wscongo.org](http://www.wscongo.org).

## BITS & PIECES

**IN OUR PRAYERS.** Please hold in your prayers this week: **Katie Palermo** (home); and one-month-old **Tyler James VerGowe** (home).

**STRAIGHT FROM HEAVEN.**

Congratulations and best wishes to **Janay and Crawfie Ward** on the recent birth of their daughter, Frances (Frankie) Judith Pond. And, congratulations to friends **Tracy and Geoff Valentino**, who welcomed Magnolia Jeane into the world on November 24.

**WEEPING WITH THOSE WHO WEEP.**

Our condolences go out to **Anne Shay** and her children and grandchildren on the recent passing of Anne's husband, Jerry. Jerry died suddenly on November 20 at the age of 79.

**2017 PLEDGE SUPPORT.** To all who have submitted their pledge form for 2017, thank you. To those who have yet to do so, please submit it as soon as you are able so that our Finance Committee can finalize our 2017 budget well before our Annual Meeting on Sunday morning, January 22.

**SPEAKING OF PLEDGES....**In mid-October First Congo received a gift of appreciated stock transferred through Merrill Lynch. Lori O'Neil (ext 221 or [lori@wscongo.org](mailto:lori@wscongo.org)) is hoping to find the donor. Please let her know if it was you.

**JUST A REMINDER:** If you or a loved one is hospitalized, please be sure to let us know so our clergy and parish nurse can offer pastoral support.