

GATHERINGS

First Congregational Church of Western Springs | 1106 Chestnut Street | Western Springs, IL 60558



Standing on the Mt. of Olives looking toward the Dome of the Rock

PRIME REAL ESTATE by Ann Stickman

While traveling in the Holy Land, the sound system on the bus plays The Holy City: "The sun grew dark with mystery, The morn was cold and chill as the shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill," the words so vividly describing the setting as the pilgrimage group passes through a tunnel in darkness. Emerging from the tunnel the song continues, "'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Hark! How the Angels sing, Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to your King!" as the city glistens in the sunshine. Tears stream down my cheeks uncontrollably. Tear-stained eyes fill the bus. I wonder, what will I experience in this blessed city that has the most desired real estate on earth? Within the week, I know Holy Week will never be the same for me, just as I will never read the Bible the same way again after visiting holy sites all over Israel.

This adventure has provided the privilege of **walking where Jesus walked** (feeling the joy on the Palm Sunday Walk, experiencing the weight of the world as we went down to the dungeon where Jesus was held by Caiaphas for trial, stepping on the actual steps Jesus walked on his way to be imprisoned, and retracing the 14 stations of the cross); **praying where he prayed** (contemplating what he must have been thinking in

SUNDAY MORNINGS IN APRIL

Worship services will be held at 9am and 10:30am unless otherwise noted.

4/7: On this 5th Sunday of Lent, Meredith will lead the congregation as we worship God and creation. The Chancel Choir will sing.

4/14: On this Palm Sunday, Katherine will lead the congregation, the bells will play and the Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated at the 9am service. Communion will be served.

4/21: On this joyous Easter Sunday, worship will be celebrated at 7:30am, 9am and 10:30am. Sunday school is available for Kindergarten and younger in the nursery.

4/28: This Family Worship Service will be led by Meredith. The Spirit Worship Band will play. Children in 2nd grade and older will remain in worship.

the Garden of Gethsemane, while a sun ray seemed to shine on me no matter where I stood, and wondering if God was showing me the actual spot that Jesus prayed that night); and **communing with God** (reflecting on God's Word on the teaching steps, receiving Communion at the Garden Tomb, and inserting my prayers into the Western Wall).

I struggle with internal and external contrasts, too. While the Old City's diverse cultures (Armenian, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian) seem to get along, the undercurrents throughout the world speak otherwise. When I ask my Israeli tour guide (a next-door neighbor to Caiaphas's house) if he thinks the groups will ever get along, he says no, due to the Temple Mount ownership dispute. Unexpectedly, all the Old City gate keys were held by Muslims except one—the one to Jaffa (*cont. on pg. 2*)



The Dome of the Rock

(cont. from pg. 1) Gate (the only gate where I as a Christian can enter each day).

As odd as it seems, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (housing the final stations of the cross) also exhibits a sort of religious pluralism. The church is shared by the Armenian Apostolic, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches, with an Ethiopian Orthodox Monastery coexisting on

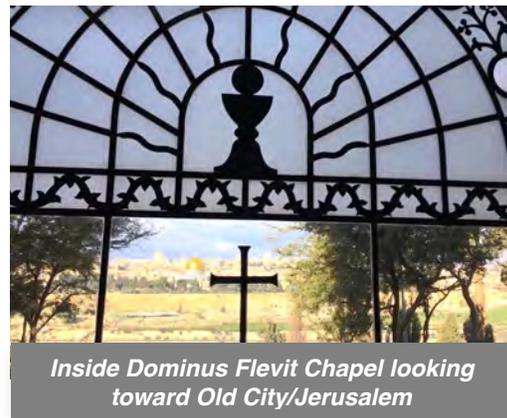


Garden of Gethsemane with 8 olive trees from Jesus' time

the roof for 1500 years. It is so jointly held, some pillars require approval for funding from two churches to make holy real estate repairs. Yes, they must work together. However, Protestants have no ownership in the church, so they celebrate resurrection at the Garden Tomb. And who do you think holds the 12-inch, half-pound key to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher?

Another unexpected answer: not any Christian person or group, but two Muslim families who have been in charge of the keys since 1187. Things seem to work. However, in Palestinian-held Bethlehem (which is basically Muslim with a small percentage of Christians) a sign seems to scream, "The entrance for Israeli citizens is forbidden." In contrast, I sit at a young Palestinian Christian couple's dinner table in Bethlehem and realize the younger generation is working to promote unity.

Leaving Jerusalem, I once again have tears in my eyes as I think about the injustices of the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews for centuries; the sadness for the Palestinians being confined to areas, refugees in their homeland; elation about my own range of emotions and the connectivity to God the city has provided; and a feeling as if I were



Inside Dominus Flevit Chapel looking toward Old City/Jerusalem

leaving my homeland. I ask myself as I leave, *Why did Abraham's descendants fight and continue to fight for so long?* I remember a Bible verse that seems to have the answer: **James 4:1-2 NIV** "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God." Perhaps we will realize it is NOT the Holy City that is the most desired real estate, but the inner spiritual real estate (our hearts and souls) that is most valuable. Jesus died so we could give up sins/fights/quarrels and focus on the beauty of our sacred lives—forgiveness, faith, hope, and the greatest of all: LOVE. All we have to do is ask and battle the desires within us for the most holy real estate: Jesus Christ in our hearts.

Location (FAITH). Location (HOPE). Location (LOVE).

LENT & HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday, Apr. 14, 9am & 10:30am in the Sanctuary

On Palm Sunday we remember when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem riding a donkey, greeted by cheering crowds waving palms and branches. It is a celebratory day, but we know that the same crowds that cheered on Sunday soon jeered, turning on him.

Maundy Thursday, Apr. 18, 6:30pm in the Chapel; 8pm in the Sanctuary

On this night, we remember the night before Jesus was betrayed, when he shared the Last Supper with his disciples and gave them a New Commandment: Love one another. At our new 6:30pm Family Service in the Chapel, we remember that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as a sign of that love. At our 8pm service, the choir sings and members of the diaconate read passages about Jesus' trial and death as candles are

extinguished. Communion will be celebrated at both services, and the Labyrinth will be available to walk.

Good Friday, Apr. 19, 10am in the chapel; 5pm in Plymouth Hall

We remember with great sorrow that Jesus suffered and died on the cross, a powerful symbol of God's love for all. At our 10am service, families will be led through developmentally appropriate worship stations. Childcare will be available in the Youth Room. At 5pm, we will move through a contemplative Stations of the Cross service. Following the service, the Labyrinth will be available to walk.

Easter Sunday, Apr. 21, 7:30am, 9am, & 10:30am in the Sanctuary

At our 7:30am sunrise service, we will hear the Good News that death does not have the final word, and that Christ is Risen! We will participate in the flowering of the cross. At the 9am and 10:30am services, choir and brass will help us enter into profound celebration of resurrection and new life.

Additional Spiritual Offerings

Reflective Gathering, Apr. 14, 10:15am in the Seim Room

"Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." We'll use this passage, which has profound historical context in Matthew, Mark and Luke, to reflect on our duties as citizens and the responsibility we've accepted as Jesus' followers. Many opinions have been written about this story. If you're able, refer to the Wikipedia entry on "Render unto Caesar" before we meet.

Ten years ago we needed a large group of volunteers with muscle and enthusiasm to clean the basement of a house heavily damaged by backed-up storm sewers, so I reached out to Mike Tilden to recruit from the PF group. Mike's team performed admirably bringing energy, enthusiasm, enormous appetites for pizza and utterly no experience fixing houses. Once the basement was cleared, I put my neighbor's teenage son with a group of PF girls painting the kitchen cabinets. They ended up covered in paint and the cabinets looked OK, but the real artistry was the face painting two of them had done on each other. They ended up dating for 2 years! Another year, a friend on his second date invited his girlfriend to a Rebuild Together event. I thought he was crazy, but apparently I was wrong: She couldn't stop talking about how sweet he was to be helping.

I can't promise you'll find Cupid at a Rebuild event, but you will find a day of sweat, grit, laughter and friendship with good people helping less fortunate neighbors and asking for nothing in return. It really is very rewarding.

This year we're partnering with the Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn. **If you'd like to join us, reach out to Cari Melby at ccmelby@yahoo.com.** On April 27, volunteers can carpool from the church parking lot at 7:30am or meet the team at the project house. If you can't stay for the full event or aren't skilled in home repair, you're still welcome and needed.

— Steve Kruchko

MISSION & OUTREACH

is working with Rebuild Together on **Saturday, April 27 from 8am to 4:30pm** to help a homeowner in Chicago Heights make her home safe, warm and dry. This is the 19th year our congregation has volunteered to help improve the life and home of our neighbors living in poverty. Our congregation has rebuilt kitchens, porches, roofs, bathrooms and painted many rooms. However the most memorable moments are the friendships I've seen formed during the 1-day rush to rebuild a home.



The Called to Care ministry is comprised of 15 trained individuals who offer one-on-one companionship, support, compassion and prayer to members who may no longer be able to attend church or are experiencing an illness. If you or anyone you know would like to request a Companion, or if you'd like to become a Care Companion, please contact Deb Stankiewicz at debbie@wscongo.org or Rev. Meredith Onion at meredith@wscongo.org. All relationships and conversations are held in confidence.

A Different Approach to Heart Health: A Personal Perspective



As a faith community nurse, I'm always looking for user-friendly ways to better my health. What I've learned in 30 years of practice is that when I share stories of my own successful health promotion strategies, members are more likely to try it!

Peace of mind and spirit are vital to good heart health and self-care in general. Regular meditation is known to decrease heart rate and blood pressure, improve mood and promote neuroplasticity. Last fall, I came across an article in the Tribune's Health section on a popular meditation app called Insight Timer, "the largest library of free meditations on earth." I started using it daily and then during the night when I had difficulty sleeping. After

several weeks of using it, I was not only sleeping better but noticed a difference in mood, a palpable sense of spiritual grounding and improved eating habits. Four months later, I'm absolutely loving the app, which has become a daily health habit.

You don't have to be an expert to do Meditation Facilitation or cultivate your own meditation practice—you just need a Smart Phone or iPad. Why not implement Meditation Facilitation, a standardized nursing intervention, as part of your Spring efforts to promote heart health? You can download Insight Timer for free and receive guided meditations on a multitude of topics, including stress, anxiety, motivation, gratitude and sleep. There's also a large collection of meditative music tracks and you can filter by length of meditation time and topic. Optional educational podcasts can also be purchased for a nominal fee. Check it out!

by **Deb Stankiewicz, MS, RN-BC, HTCP, Faith Community Nurse**

LET'S GET READY TO RUMMAGE

April 30: 6–8PM

May 1: 10AM–12PM & 6–8PM

Sale set-up begins April 24

Rummage collected April 27, 9AM–1PM & April 28, 1–3PM
with convenient drive-thru service in the church parking lot.

Unfortunately, we cannot accept TVs, computers/monitors, printers, fax machines, infant car seats, cribs, large sofas/furniture, unframed mirrors, chandeliers, ceiling fans, paint or toxic chemicals, food/liquids, mattresses, or large area rugs/appliances.



VISIT WSCONGO.ORG

FOR MORE INFO OR TO VOLUNTEER

Surely by now, long-time Western Springs residents know that every year as sure as winter turns to spring, the First Congregational Church of Western Springs gears up for its annual Spring and Fall Rummage Sales signaled by the erected tents and orange fencing. Within a matter of days, the church's Education Building and north and west lawns become a repository for gently used toys, furniture, books, sporting equipment and more. The 2-day, 7-hour event boasts sales of approximately \$30,000, with all profits going to local, national and international charities.

Nearly 300 volunteers from the church and community come together to set up shelves and racks, sort and price, man check-out tables, then put it all back together again. Onlookers would marvel at the sight: Tuesday and Wednesday, the church is stuffed to the rafters with rummage and buzzing with shoppers and volunteers, and by Thursday afternoon, after the final half price and bag sale, the exhale is palpable, and there is scarcely a trace of the week's event. It's akin to a modern day miracle. To be a part of it all is truly a blessing and one of First Congo's most beloved outreach ministries.

Ellie Roberts, a long-time member of the church and its Woman's Society, which sponsors the sales, shared how it all came to be: *It began quietly, motivated by generosity during the Great Depression. The church office received many requests during those difficult years for food and/or clothing. Where the church office is now located, there was once a large coat room that doubled as the lost and*

found. If forgotten items lived there too long, they were given to those in need. My mother told of that custom growing as people began to bring items to be given away. Soon, women began sharing baked goods and home-canned food items from their gardens. My mother shared her canned beans, tomatoes, Michigan peaches, and one of the 3 loaves of bread she baked weekly. Items were stored in that large coat room that became known as the "Keeping Room." That generosity quickly morphed into a kind of small "store" as both a fundraising effort for Woman's Society and a pride-saving service to those in need. Very nominal amounts were charged for the food and clothing, eliminating the stigma of charity for both church and community members in need of help. It wasn't a big operation, just a small, quiet supply of help to those in need.

As prosperity returned in World War II, requests for such help disappeared, but, accustomed to having a place for what we now call "rummage," the women of Woman's Society began organizing an annual sale of the clothing that accumulated in the Keeping Room. Voila! The Rummage Sale was born! Like the proverbial oak tree, that small seed of generosity grew into the magnificent effort Woman's Society sponsors today. Thousands and thousands of dollars of charitable giving, bargains for those in need and for those who just love a bargain, and the opportunity to share our time and talent—all from the generosity of those women 80 years ago! We pay it forward! What a blessing!

by Meg Heinz

ECOLOGY

A Words & Music Event

April 14
5:00pm
Plymouth Hall



Invites you to a first

GREEN EXPO

Sunday, April 7, 9am - Noon

1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs • 708.246.1900

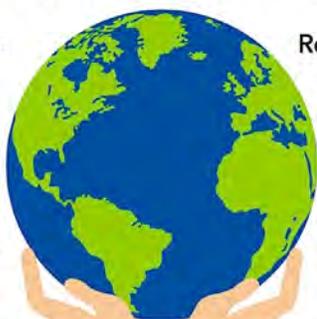
Learn how to make a positive impact!

"Green" Products

Lawn & Garden

Proper Recycling

Bees, Butterflies & Worms



Reducing Plastics

Openlands

Solar Energy

Hazardous Waste

Refreshments & Door Prizes!

Children's Ministry Update

It is not too late to participate in the family Lenten devotional. The devotional, **Breaking the Chains**, can be found on the First Congo website. Complete the activity for the date listed or select another activity. Spend time together as a family and reflect how you can share Jesus' love with all.

Several family events are taking place at First Congo during the month of April:

- **April 7, 9am – 12pm:** The Green Team is hosting a Green Expo.
- **April 18, 6:30pm – 7:15pm:** A family Maundy Thursday service will take place in the Chapel.
- **April 19, 10am – 10:30am:** A Good Friday service for families will be held in the Chapel.

We hope you can attend one of these important and "kid-friendly" worship opportunities.

A BIG thank you to the Christian Education committee and the Children's Ministry Committee for all the help with the Family Communion Event in March. More than 120 people learned about the Sacrament of Communion and enjoyed fellowship and dinner.



Youth Ministry Update

Confirmation:

- April 7, 5pm: Class in the Seim Room
- April 14, 10:30am: Confirmands attend worship with parents followed by Future Freshman Lunch in the Seim Room & Plymouth Hall
- April 21: Easter — no class
- April 27–28: Overnight Retreat at Camp Manitoqua (Saturday, 10:30am – Sunday, 10:30am)

JRneys: Middle School Youth Group Meetings take place in the Youth Room at 7pm unless otherwise noted:

- April 3: PF & Work Tour Discussion
- April 10: Kids' Choices Conversation
- April 17: "Minute 2 Win It" Games!
- April 24, 6:30 – 8pm: Rummage Help

Plymouth Fellowship (PF): High School Youth Group Meetings take place in the Youth Room at 7pm unless otherwise noted:

- April 3, 8:15 – 9pm: Bible Study
- April 7:
 - * PF Presidents report on Spring Work Tour at both 9am & 10:30am services. PF members encouraged to attend the 10:30am service.
 - * Reflection Service in the Sanctuary
- April 13, 10am – 1:30pm: San Lucas Soup Kitchen
- April 14, 6 – 8pm: Progressive Dinner (Off-site)
- April 17, 8:15 – 9pm: High School Bible Study
- April 28: Girl/Guy Meeting @ homes

It's not too late to purchase Spring flowers (tulips, daffodils, lilies) to decorate the altar for our Easter Sunday worship services! If interested, please complete this order form and return it, along with a check payable to First Congregational Church, to the church office by April 12. Be sure to note "Easter Flowers" in the memo line of your check.

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

If you'd like your plant(s) displayed in memory, honor or celebration of someone, please indicate here: _____

Please check all that apply: I will pick up my plant(s) after the 10:30am Easter Sunday service.

I'd like to donate my plant(s) to a church member in need of Easter cheer. Please contact Meredith Onion at 708.246.1900 if you know someone who'd enjoy receiving a plant.

I'd like to make 1 or 2 flower deliveries on Easter Sunday and will pick them up from church at 11:30am. It's not necessary to donate flowers in order to deliver them.

Joys & Concerns

WEEPING WITH THOSE WHO WEEP: The Memorial Service for **Gary Jenkins** will be held on Saturday, April 6 at 11:00am. Please hold **Mary Jenkins & family** in your prayers. If you're able to assist with the reception or donate sweets, please contact Harriet VerGowe at hkv13@aol.com.

The life of **Evelyn Biegert**, wife of Rev. John Biegert, Pastor Emeritus, First Congregational Church of La Grange, was celebrated in a Memorial Service on March 23. Please hold her family in your prayers.

IN OUR PRAYERS: Please keep the following individuals in your prayers: **Sharon Bachmann** (receiving cancer treatment), **Susan Becker** (recovering from surgery), **Stephanie King-Myers** (on the death of her stepbrother), **Jan Norris** (recovering from surgery), **Chris & Tim Gavlin** (on the death of their daughter-in-law), **Marty Keller** (home after surgery), **Judy Arndt** (extended care), and **Michael Roche & family** (on the death of his wife Carol).

WELCOME TO THE WORLD: **Matilda James Wold**, born March 22 to Missy & Jeremy Wold.

FINANCE CORNER

The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has made it harder for many taxpayers to deduct their charitable contributions, but here are three suggestions for maximizing the value of your gifts to the church and other charities:

- 💰 Seniors (70 ½ and over), you can donate your required minimum distributions from traditional retirement accounts *directly* to church or charity. You will avoid income taxes on your RMD up to \$100,000.
- 💰 All taxpayers can "bunch" their charitable deductions to help them itemize in some years. Rather than giving the church \$2,500, you might give \$7,500 one year and none the next two years if that pattern allows you to itemize for one year. In the off-years, you would take the standard deduction. (First Congo will spread your gift over several years of pledges, if you wish.)
- 💰 You can also open a donor-advised fund, which is like a charitable investment account that supports your causes. You can generally donate a big amount upfront and take an immediate tax deduction, then have your contribution disbursed to your causes over a number of years.

—Adapted from Money on-line article by Elizabeth O'Brien, 1/17/19



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