Pastor’s Letter

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life…In Noah’s six hundred first year…

Genesis 7:11, 8:13

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Happy New Year!

This year a “Birds of North America Calendar” will be gracing my office wall. Each month features a bird family. January features parulidae or new world warblers. Forty warblers are identified for January. Maybe 2019 will be the year I will be able to identify all forty in the field!

As we begin a new year, we ponder what events will unfold.

In his 600th year, Noah experienced the great flood. And he spent his whole 600th year on the ark—obedient to God’s will and discerning God’s ongoing activity in creation. After sending out the raven once and the dove twice, Noah discerned that the flood waters had dried up. For that year, Noah cooperated with God to bring about salvation to all the creation. Without Noah and his family, the animals and humanity would have drowned in the flood.

Certainly, God can act without the assent of humanity, but the scriptures witness to a God who partners with humanity to save the creation from evil and violence. This is most notable in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the divine human partnership comes to full fruition. Divine and human will became one.

Regardless of what events unfold this year, may we like Noah and Jesus be attuned to the divine will of bringing salvation to the creation. Noah built the ark. Jesus called and taught disciples.

Christ’s Servant,

Rev. Joseph A. Johnson

Photo: Northern Parula Wood Warbler
IMPORTANT VOTE for UNITED METHODISTS coming up in FEBRUARY.
A UMC.org Feature by Joe Iovino*

Understanding what United Methodists will consider at the Special Session of General Conference, February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri, can be confusing. Because the work is “limited to receiving and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based upon the recommendations of the Council of Bishops,” that report is a great place to start.

The report of the Commission on a Way Forward (COWF) is available free online.

When opening the report, it is tempting to skip ahead to the proposed plans and legislation. But taking the time to read the context, history and background information the Commission provides, leads to a better understanding of the recommendations.

PLEASE CLICK ON THE FOLLOWING LINK for INFO: http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know

And don’t forget to pray.

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For the Advent and Christmas Seasons, First Church is displaying this painting. It currently resides where Warner Sallman’s portrait of Christ did. Pastor Joe invites you to a conversation about the painting and images of God and Christ on January 6, 2019 following worship.

The artist, Zolo Azania, was a former political prisoner and death row inmate. Learn more about the artist and his context at https://prisonersolidarity.net/prison/zolo-azania

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CHANGE LIVES
Become a Literacy Dupage Tutor

Orientation at Elmhurst Public Library
Thursday, January 31 9:30-11 am
For more info:
www.literacydupage.org

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PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD
We are One in Christ

UMCprays.org • A UMC Prayer Community
Youth Group being BOLD by GIVING & SERVING

SHOP & WRAP for our GIVING TREE
Spending a wonderful afternoon shopping for the Children's Christmas Tree on December 2, First Church Youth then wrapped all the gifts.

The joy of Christmas giving continued with Youth Breakfast Ministry on December 15. We served around 100 people — eggs, pancakes (regular and holiday M & M pancakes a la Maya), sausage, toast, cold cereal and fruit. Wesley Hall was jam-packed with holiday spirit made even more festive by the presence of none other than Santa Claus himself (bearing a fairly strong resemblance to our very own Bob Lee) and wonderful holiday music performed by an awesome brass quartet which included two of our own members, Dane Hindsley and CeCe Stumpf. For the second year in row, we were secretly visited by an anonymous person who generously left lots and lots of new toys for us to give out to the children who are our guests at YBM. They loved receiving those wonderful toys. The comment we hear most from our guests is what a blessing YBM is to them.

We are grateful to be part of this church which chooses to live out Jesus' teachings in this way and so many others.
CHRISTMAS GIFTS have been delivered to children from Lord's Lambs Ministry in Pembroke Township and at Bethany Pastor UMC in Chicago. “Thank you! Thank you so much! We are so blessed with your generosity and gifts,” was heard over and over again. Once again -- you, the members of our First Church congregation, have brought smiles to so many children. Thank you! Thank you.

Advent Music Worship Service on December 9

There was lots of special music at our Advent Service on December 9 — the Chancel Choir, the Joyful Noise Singers, a baritone solo by our own Doug Peters, and an instrumental solo on saxophone by Bruce Hook. But it was the Chapel Chimers, our Handbell Choir, who transformed our First Church children into absolute angels.

The service was followed by a splendid Brunch Buffet hosted by the Fellowship team.

We were richly filled.
First Church Library  
Treasures on the Lower Level

ALDERSGATE ROOM for BOOK DISCUSSION on FEBRUARY 3

Even though our Library is closed for renovation, we can prepare for our February Discussion on *If You Can Keep It: The Forgotten Promise of American Liberty*. *New York Times* bestselling author Eric Metaxas delivers an extraordinary book that is part history and part rousing call to arms, steeped in a critical analysis of our founding fathers' original intentions for America.

In 1787, when the Constitution was drafted, a woman asked Ben Franklin what the founders had given the American people. "A republic," he shot back, "if you can keep it."

More than two centuries later, Metaxas examines what that means and how we are doing on that score. This book also tells us the story about the impact of Wesleyan ideas on the intentions of the founding fathers.

No need to buy the book. The Elmhurst library has a copy and there are many copies available from our partner libraries through LINKin.

Put February 3 at 3:30 pm on your calendar now for this lively discussion led by Lola Hotchkis.

Church School Artists at Work
DuPagePads
The Solution to End Homelessness

First Church is again partnering with Bethel United Church of Christ and Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish to be support churches for PADS. We will be at the same site in Medinah IL but the name of the church is now Jubilee Community Church. We provide a hot meal, a safe place to sleep, a breakfast, and a bag lunch for approximately 40 people who have no home. **Volunteers are needed for all shifts from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am.**

If you have other questions about participating in this local hands-on ministry, please contact: our church PADS Coordinator, Marlene Stratton (630-953-2454 or mstatton23@hotmail.com).

**NEXT OVERNIGHT is JANUARY 5 & 6.**
**IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO VOLUNTEER. Contact Marlene ASAP!**

Save the Date for our next PADS WEEKEND: March 2-3
Strengthen & Grow

Sunday Morning Adult Study Series ~ 9:15 am in Aldersgate

Weekly Service of Prayer using the Anglican Book of Common Prayer continues through January 6 at 8:45 am in Aldersgate.

Light of Lights Devotional Series continues at 9:15 am through December 30.

New Series begins January 6

How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus

The world’s foremost Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan shows us how the New Testament parables not only reveal what Jesus wanted to teach but also provide the key for explaining how the Gospel writers sought to explain Jesus to the world. In this meaningful exploration of the stories told by Jesus and the Gospel writers, Crossan combines the biblical expertise of his The Greatest Prayer with an historical and social analysis that harkens closely to his Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography, creating an illuminating and nuanced exploration of the Scripture. (From Google Books)

In 1969, I was teaching at two seminaries in the Chicago area. One of my courses was on the parables by Jesus and the other was on the resurrection stories about Jesus. I had observed that the parabolic stories by Jesus seemed remarkably similar to the resurrection stories about Jesus. Were the latter intended as parables just as much as the former? Had we been reading parable, presuming history, and misunderstanding both? —from The Power of Parable

So begins the quest of renowned Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan as he unlocks the true meanings and purposes of parable in the Bible so that modern Christians can respond genuinely to Jesus's call to fully participate in the kingdom of God. In The Power of Parable, Crossan examines Jesus's parables and identifies what he calls the "challenge parable" as Jesus's chosen teaching tool for gently urging his followers to probe, question, and debate the ideological absolutes of religious faith and the presuppositions of social, political, and economic traditions.

Moving from parables by Jesus to parables about Jesus, Crossan then presents the four gospels as "megaparables." By revealing how the gospels are not reflections of the actual biography of Jesus but rather (mis)interpretations by the gospel writers themselves, Crossan reaffirms the power of parables to challenge and enable us to co-create with God a world of justice, love, and peace.
Birthdays

Dec 2   Elizabeth Cooke
        Adriana Potter
Dec 3   Jacki Riek
        Gail Upson
Dec 4   Krista Ladd
        Beth Miller
        Tom Riek
Dec 8   Curlie Engdahl
Dec 9   Brett Clark
Dec 12  Nancy Goodner
Dec 15  David Akre
Dec 16  Alex Blust
        Scott Rawlings
Dec 17  Erica Achepohl
        Tom Dimond
        Jim Rogers
Dec 18  Kathryn Hagstrom
        Mary Massie
Dec 19  Sharyl Kung
Dec 20  Darren Goodner
        Lisa Wiese
Dec 21  Mike Meehan
Dec 22  Robert Potter
        Beth Valdez
Dec 26  Sue Pinkowski
Dec 27  Joe Laurx
Dec 28  David Olsen
Dec 29  Carol Murray

Who’s got the Birthday Candles????

Anniversaries

January

Jan 1   Barbara Dyer
        Joe Johnson
Jan 2   Lola Hotchkis
Jan 4.  Jason Janes
Jan 7   Elizabeth Hagstrom
        Phil Jannusch
Jan 8   Janet Soltys
        Kevin Wiese
Jan 9   Laura Graham
        Elaine Ratliff
Jan 12  Eric Dyer
Jan 13  Dave Hansen
        Doug Hindsley
Jan 15  Damon Mooren
Jan 17  Henry Toledo
Jan 19  Danny Jannusch
Jan 20  Russell Maloney
        Kay A. Michael
Jan 21  Alex Jannusch
Jan 23  Addy Hindsley
Jan 25  Elizabeth Rudakas
Jan 28  Clare Toledo
Jan 29  Jamie Falconer
        Diego Graham
Jan 31  Chelsea Bjerkan
        Melissa Maloney
        Dylan Mooren

December

December 7 ~ 22 years
        Carey & Sue Pinkowski
December 28 ~ 53 years
        Tom & Ellen Hueltgen
December 31 ~ 35 years
        Michael & Jacki Bogolia
January 1 ~ 67 years
        Cecil & Jane Stinson
January 24 ~ 22 years
        TP & Sharyl Kung
A BUILDING UPDATE from the TRUSTEES. The unexpected pipe burst under the floor of Classroom 102 on November 24 resulted in a mighty flood of the lower level. While the water has been evacuated and the basement is dry, it is necessary to close off the Classrooms and Library and Choir Room and the hallway connecting them until the whole area can be cleaned up and restored. We expect everything to be fully refreshed and ready by Easter. The good news is that the Downstairs Restrooms, the Clothing Center, and Asbury Hall are fine and all activities in those spaces will continue as scheduled. Access to the lower level is now available from the SOUTH STAIRWELL.

Recent Concerns ~ Family & friends of Alan Johnson (father of Pastor Joe) who passed away on December 27; Julia Williams; family & friends of Joyce Gross (aunt of Jason Gross) who passed away on December 18: Laurie Provencal; Wayne Spohr (father of friend of Ann Gills); Emma Rogers; Donna Wood (mother of Eric Wood); family & friends of David Rice (director of Elmhurst Children’s Theatre); family & friends of Lee Weiss (aunt of Ed Miner) who passed away on November 26; family & friends of Yuet Tai Gee (mother of Jim Gee) who passed away on November 29; family & friends of Carol B. (friend of Marlene Stratton); Jim & Diane Sutty (brother and sister-in-law of Chris Mertz); John Hazelton; Diane Rosenthal Hirt (friend of Ellyn Gehrke); Karen Kottwitz; the family & friends of Eileen Bellerud (aunt of Pam Locke); Eddie Cooke; Christina Houser (fiancée of June Muncy’s son); Marie (sister of Mike Capra); Isabel Shick; Al White (friend of Kelley Hook); Barbara Keeler (mother of Lisa Rogers); Kay Michael; Chris Ladd; Alex Hamilton; Ron Foster, Rick Stanley, Joan Cortesi, Sharon Gomez, Ray Lynn Ruth (friends of Jamie Falconer); Doug Peters, Sr. (Doug Peters’ father); Matt Johnson; Rachel (daughter of Kathy Hansen’s friend); Darlene Gee; Tony Sekera (Curlie Engdahl’s son-in-law); Madeleine Rodriguez (Amy Strauss’ daughter).

Ongoing Prayers ~ Jim Morris (stepfather of Chris Squier); Shirley Hazelton; John Hazelton; Russell and Karen Whiles (Susan Boyd’s cousin and his wife); Terse Stamos (Richard Norgaard’s sister); Mary Gaier (Lola Hotchkis’ mother); Cherie Kupcik (Sandy Terrell’s niece); Doree Kaforski (friend of June Muncy); Tom Mitchell (son of Diane Mitchell); Kathleen Gallagher & Anthony McElligott; Juanita Daniels (Steve Strauss’ mother); Marge Farrell (Ed Locke’s aunt); Pat Lind; Eric McMillian (son-in-law of Darlene Van Meir); Erv and Marge Blasius; Philip Williams; Janet H. (friend of Marlene Stratton); Margie Finley (Audrey Klang’s mother); Curlie Engdahl; the homeless; the military; those who struggling with depression and anxiety; those who are homeless or in shelters; those in nursing homes; and caregivers.

Prayer List

Staff Directory

General Office: (630) 834-2440
Rev. Joseph A. Johnson, Pastor, ext 101
mobile: 630-991-6632
joseph.johnson@umcelmhurst.org
Sharon Phillips, Church Administrator
admin@umcelmhurst.org ext 100
Doug Peters, Director of Music Ministry
douglaspetersbaritone@gmail.com
Lisa Rogers, Dir of Children & Youth Ministries
jlr204@comcast.net ext 103
Richard Stultz, Organist
dckens1120@aol.com
Jennifer Jordan, Financial Services
jordan daily money management
jennifer@jordan-dmm.com
Mike Capra, Custodial Services
Capra Janitorial Services
All-Church Event

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2-4:00pm

First Church will staff the Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) volunteer site in Aurora, IL on Saturday, February 23 during the 2:00-4:00 shift (Note the new time from previous years).

80 volunteers from our church will be needed to fully staff the designated time. Volunteers can range in age from 5 years old (K-2nd graders each need to be accompanied by one adult) to older children, youth and adults. After the packing session, join us back at Portillo’s in Elmhurst (RTE 83) for a casual dinner. Friends and extended family are invited too!

Mark your calendars now to participate in this meaningful experience.

Enjoy Trivia?

Come for a night of fun to support the Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry

Saturday, January 19, 2019

EYFP is hosting a trivia night at the Knights of Columbus Hall at 537 S. York Road, doors opening at 7:00 p.m., trivia beginning at 8:00 p.m. In addition to a fun night of trivia, there will be raffle prizes donated by local merchants, a split the pot raffle and prizes for winners. Light dinner will be served and a cash bar will be available. Tickets are available at www.eyfp.org (Click on “buy tickets” at the top of the page). The price is $25.00 per person and tables of ten are encouraged. All proceeds will benefit the Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry. Come and enjoy a great night of fun to support our assistance to feed our hungry neighbors.
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<td>EYFP Trivia Night</td>
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<td>February 2 GROUND HOG’s DAY</td>
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The Clothing Center at First Church is open to guests three times a month on the 1st Thursday of the month from 9-11am and from 7-9pm, and on the 3rd Saturday of the month from 9-11am. DONATIONS of clothing, shoes, bedding, books, toys and other household goods may be dropped off from 9-5pm Monday-Friday at the main north door. Tax receipts are available at the drop-off area. Volunteers are always welcome.

The Youth Breakfast Ministry, coordinated by our middle school and high school youth, provides a free breakfast to our Clothing Center Guests on the 3rd Saturday of every month from Oct-Apr.