

The Northern Light

Featuring the people and events of First Congregational Christian Church of Anchorage

April 2017

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Minister's Message

Do you consider yourself a spiritual outcast? Maybe a little odd or strange? I know I'm not what most would call your "typical" minister. Have you seen my sunglasses? Have you noticed my socks? How about my yoga shoes and pants? (I've never done yoga once in my life.) I've heard many Alaskans say, "The odds

are good, but the goods are odd." I'm odd. And I am very glad I am. It's something I have in common with those who started this great tradition and way of being a church that we call Congregationalism.

Way back when, the Puritans were not the revered "Fathers" of Congregationalism as we tend to think of them. They were considered odd, strange, blasphemous, evil, traitorous. In fact, they were considered worthy of death, and they felt that pressure and persecution, leaving their homes, lives, and families behind, not to bravely go where no man has gone before, but rather to escape sure and certain religious persecution and death. Rev. Fifield¹ writes, "they lived the life story they did because, for Christ's sake, they had become spiritual and social outcasts." Rev. Fifield describes this time in our collective history as "The Forgotten Heritage."

The sad thing is that it shouldn't be forgotten. We are like our ancestors in many different ways, which is far greater than what most would think. Just like the Pilgrims we are considered spiritual outcasts by many. There are many "Christians" today who wouldn't call us Christians (which is fine, but they may label our church as not authentic). Just like our ancestors, we are also social outcasts. The majority of Americans are not planning their



Friday nights, Sunday mornings, and social events around church, as most of us are. In a similar, but more life-changing way, the Pilgrims left the land of their birth for their church.

We have strong spiritual bonds and connections with those very first Congregationalists. In truth, we are the church of today because the Pilgrims, each and every single Pilgrim, made the church the church back then, right now, and into tomorrow. Together, surpassing the boundaries of time and space, we are the church with them. We are not descendants and ancestors; we are the one and the same, the same body of believers, the same pilgrims on a journey, both physical and spiritual. We are more than the same association or tradition. We are in fact the same, exact same, congregation, the same worshippers, the same church, and the same “leaders”! Hans Kung puts it this way: “It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all places and all ages and makes them into one people of God. It is one and the same Christ...and Spirit [who] unites all together in the same bond of fellowship.”²

Why am I writing this? Just like the Pilgrims, we are going somewhere we haven’t been yet. But, I think we will be just fine. The Pilgrims traveled for thousands of miles for their church; surely you can travel the couple of miles it takes for you to get to church each Sunday. You really should be here. You never know who, hundreds of years from now, will be writing about you as a source of inspiration. Maybe someone right now? Make this Easter a time of extra commitment to our church and the legacy we leave.

¹ Rouner, A. (1960). *The Congregational Way of Life*. Upper Saddle River, NH: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1-11.

² McGrath, A. (n.d.). *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (3rd Ed.). United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 497.



Moderator's Message

Change Is in the Air!

Seasons are changing, church leadership is changing, we are looking at having a new minister in the near future. Change is exciting but can be a bit scary. I want to reassure you that the coming changes will be good ones!

First of all, I think the winter sports enthusiasts are the only ones who will truly miss winter, and be assured that it WILL return. It always does. So get your summer hiking gear out and enjoy that until the snow flies once again.

As for new church leadership, my term as your moderator was jokingly (I hope!) referred to the other day as a benign dictatorship. It's definitely time for me to go and for someone new to assume the position. It's time for new ideas and new guidance. As well as a new moderator, we will be choosing a new vice moderator, a new treasurer, new financial secretary, and ministry members. New ideas for a fresh start.

The last change we have coming is a bittersweet one. We look forward to welcoming our new minister. (And here I'm making a pretty big assumption that you all will be as impressed with Rev. Poindexter as the search committee is, and he will be called to be our next senior minister.) That promises all sorts of wonderful possibilities, but means we have to say goodbye to Jonathan, whom we have grown to love.

We knew when he came to us that his time with us was limited. That is the nature of interim ministry. It can sometimes be hard to say goodbye, but if an interimship has been successful, a congregation will be prepared for its new minister, and I think we are. Well done Jonathan!

So change is in the air. Let's embrace it and move into the future with hope and joy using the past for our foundation, not our permanent living space.

The Past: Our cradle, not our prison; there is danger as well as appeal in its glamour. The past is for inspiration, not imitation, for continuation, not repetition. - Israel Zangwill

With great Love,
Claudia Kniefel,
Moderator

From the Pastoral Search Committee

Eric Johnson
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

INTRODUCING JACOB POINDEXTER
TO THE CONGREGATION OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AS A CANDIDATE FOR SENIOR MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday March 22, 2017, the Pastoral Search Committee voted unanimously to invite Jacob Poindexter to be presented to our congregation for voting to be our next minister. He accepted. This letter introduces you to Jacob and shares with you why your committee chose him.

We will present Jacob Poindexter to the congregation at the service on May 7, 2017. There will be a congregational meeting immediately following the service to vote on his calling after he has preached to us. We plan to have a get together the day before where church members can meet him for themselves and ask any questions they may have before making their decision. Committee members are also available now as well to answer any questions you may have.

BACKGROUND

He is married to Krystal and they have two children: a daughter, Clarice, aged 8 and a son, Eli, aged 7. They live in St. Louis, Missouri where Jacob will complete his Master's of Divinity at Eden Theological Seminary in May. He will then be ordained in his home church, Plymouth Congregational Church, in Wichita, Kansas on June 18th. Krystal is finishing her Bachelor of Arts degree in Women's Studies.

Jacob was born in 1983 in Medicine Lodge, Kansas where he was raised on his father's ranch. While growing up he was active in church including religious retreats in High School and as a DJ at a local Christian radio station. Jacob studied Percussion Performance at Wichita State University for 3 years, but completed his degree in Ministry/Management at Central Christian College of Kansas. He then worked as a General Manager and Operations Manager for a restaurant chain in Wichita, Kansas, where he managed the flagship location and supervised other General Managers for seven years. During this time he volunteered with the youth program at Plymouth Congregational Church in Wichita. He also volunteered regularly within the prisons in Kansas since 2004, spending countless hours supporting and counseling inmates. Jacob facilitated weekend events in the prisons and has spoken one-on-one with inmates in a pastoral role.

While in seminary at Eden Jacob was awarded the Highest Academic Rank. It was here that he was commissioned as the Solo Student Minister for the Villa Ridge Christian Church, a small congregation outside of Saint Louis, where he has served as their minister for two years.

THEOLOGY

Jacob's theology is left-of-center like our church on average, but he believes ministers shouldn't declare what members ought to think, but help each along their chosen path. Jacob believes that "God is not partisan." He thinks that "God is a mystery, a divine presence that draws humanity out of itself and into another way of being." "Salvation is God's creative and liberating work within creation." "It is the re-imagining of life liberated and continually orienting towards God, the source of life." "This is where the Spirit is working." "The

sacraments and practices of the church are the communal expressions of this.” For Jacob, the Bible “is not a cosmic rulebook,” rather “it is evidence and hope in the very human striving for a God that defies understanding; the relentless prophetic pursuit of justice that sees value where the powerful refuse to look; the steadfast love of God that never ceases.”

CONGREGATIONALISM

The congregational church does not have a seminary. Instead the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) mentors seminary students through a fellowship called The Congregational Foundation of Theological Studies. “Graduates of CFTS are uniquely prepared to meet the challenges of today’s churches through the vibrant traditions and practices of the Congregational Way.” Jacob is a graduate of CFTS, which is the closest one can come to have graduated from a Congregational Seminary and he understands how Congregational churches function. He has also attended multiple NACCC annual meetings.

PREACHING

The Search Committee listened to two sermons, one on DVD and one live. We enjoyed both. His delivery was well prepared and well-paced, making it easy to hear and understand. He has an excellent speaking voice and says he follows the lectionary about half the time. He uses personal anecdotes but does not believe they need to be given all the time.

MUSIC

Jacob thinks music is very important. He has studied performance in percussion. He also thinks hymns are little packets of theology and have a long-term effect on how we see God. Musical choices should complement everything the church is doing.

PERSONALITY

The first thing you learn about Jacob when you meet him, is that he loves conversation. He spent an entire workweek with the committee here in Anchorage. During the many meetings and meals together he never tired of talking about the church, its members, Anchorage, his family and his background. And a big part of the conversation was his willingness to listen. The committee interviewed him by Skype in February. After our questions, he interviewed us. He knew everything in the pages of information about the church that we had supplied and questioned us about much of it, especially our Revitalization efforts. We talked for an hour and a half. Then when he visited us in Anchorage, we interviewed him again face to face after he presented his live sermon to us. Again, we talked for another hour and a half. After which we voted unanimously to invite him to be presented to you to be voted on for the new minister for our church. He accepted immediately and the committee spontaneously raised a cheer.

WHY WE CHOSE HIM

Besides the information presented above, and Jacob’s unassuming, easy-going manner, the committee was impressed that he raised his family while going to seminary, which shows his commitment to what he is doing. The committee felt an almost instant connection with Jacob from the moment we began speaking in the first interview. At that time Jacob was not going to be available to our church until April of 2018 because of a commitment to teach in Ghana. We were so impressed with him that we wanted to hire him now even though we would have had to wait a year for him to begin his work here. It was only in the last month that Jacob and Krystal learned that their daughter Clarice has Type 1 diabetes. Because they had concerns about the quality of health care where they would have been in Ghana, they decided to forego that arrangement and be available to us, if confirmed by the congregation, sometime after mid-July.

Sincerely,
Pastoral Search Committee

From Your Life and Learning Ministry

In March PF helped out with the Bean-a-fit donation collection before heading to Girdwood for our annual hike. All through April, the Youth will be collecting donation for AKEELA House. The list of needed items is included below and will be an insert in the worship service Bulletin April 9. We will collect donations in a specially-marked bin beside the Children's Altar in the Narthex. Then PF will deliver the donations on Sunday, April 30.

Pilgrim Fellowship Service Project 2017

Addiction is a struggle faced by many people in Alaska. Addiction has a devastating effect on the individual's life and the lives of their loved ones. Many times society forgets about these people and their daily life struggle to be clean.

The Pilgrim Fellowship (PF) youth group wants to support recovery efforts being made by the clients of Akeela House Recovery Services. Akeela House is one of the longest-running recovery programs in Alaska. The PF youth group plans to support this organization through a donation drive. During the months of April and early May, we will be collecting much-needed items from our friends, neighbors, and the FCC Congregation for the clients of Akeela House.

Items listed in the order that they are needed include:

- bath soap & body wash
- deodorant
- women's ankle socks & low-cut underwear (sizes M, L)
- men's athletic socks & t-shirts (sizes L, XL)
- skin lotion
- toothbrushes & toothpaste
- gift certificates for use at WalMart to purchase underclothing
- shampoo & conditioner
- shavers & Qtips
- note pads & ink pens

Clients of Akeela House are encouraged knowing that they have support from the community in their recovery efforts. They would not be able to excel without the help of generous people like you. You will be giving them an opportunity, and a positive experience that they would not encounter without your donation.

Thank you in advance for your support in helping us help those who need to know our community cares about them and supports their efforts to live clean and healthy lifestyles. Please bring your donations and/or items to the church and the PF youth will hold them and make their delivery to Akeela House on Sunday, May 8th



From Your Worship Ministry

Sandra Skaggs, Chair

The Worship Ministry has been involved with the organization and carrying out of our Lenten services. A very special thanks go to Lynn Barber and Kathy Means for the beautiful Taizé services they are leading every Tuesday afternoon at 5:30 pm. I attended this week's service and was quite moved by the lovely music played by Lynn on the dulcimer, Kathy on the cello, Eric on clarinet, Sue on recorder and Caroline on piano. There were shared responsive readings, singing and silent meditation, all lasting for about 40 minutes. You are missing some beautiful, quiet, and reflective moments if you haven't attended one of these Taizé services yet. Do try and join us on Tuesday, April 4 and April 11. You will walk out refreshed and glad that you attended.

Reverend Johnathan Jones is doing a fine job of preaching sermons that help us to think about the meaning of this Lenten season. He is encouraging us to look forward and not dwell on the past when planning for the future of our church.

Please remember to support the Church by ordering your Easter flowers. The Worship Ministry has ordered 20 special flowers for Easter, 10 are kalanchoes and 10 are azaleas. They are assorted colors, come in 6-inch pots decorated for Easter, and are \$25 per pot. They will be delivered to the Church on Saturday, April 15th, and arranged to decorate around the pulpit and lectern. You may then pick up your pot after the worship service on Easter Sunday. The sign-up sheet is in the Office. Please pay when you order your plant.



At this special season of our Christian year, we look forward to seeing many of you at our church taking part in the Lenten, Taizé, Palm Sunday and Easter services.

From Your Outreach Ministry

Outreach reaching out

March's potluck Bean-a-Fit was a delightful event. We had six different featured soups prepared by Claudia Kniefel, Kate O'Dell, Rev. JJ, Kathy Broome and Kathy Means. Thanks to Tom Stearns for selling bags of bean soup mixes and to Erin Binek and her daughter's Reagan and Avery for collecting donations, all of which go to Bean's Cafe to help feed the homeless.

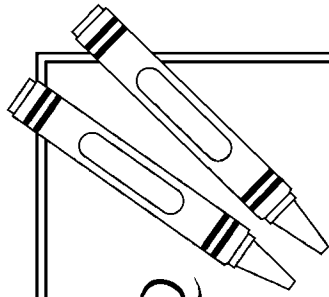
We will be selling bean bags after church on Sunday, April 2, so there is another chance to donate. The donation to Bean's Cafe will be in honor of Paul Hancock, who was very active in the organization.

Saturday April 15 is our spring **Grandfamilies Brunch!** This is always a fun time for all. Please sign up in the Narthex to bring fruit, bread, egg dishes, etc., or to help set up, clean up or help with crafts for the kids. The Brunch will be from 10:30 am to noon, but if you're helping set up, you should be here at 9 a.m.

April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 9:00-Noon Organist 12-4 Three Barons Fair Planning
2 8:47 Lenten Study Group 8:45 Handbells 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:15 Worship Ministry 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly PF Akeela House Donation Project begins	3 6:30 Primary Purpose	4 5:30 Lenten Taizé Service 5:30 Crow Creek Pipes & Drums	5 5:15 Handbell Choir 6:30 Choir	6 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace 6:30 Investment Club	7	8 9:00-Noon Organist 9:00-1:00 Anchorage Weavers & Spinners Guild 12:30-5 Three Barons' Faire Planning (CMH) & 5:30-6:30 Board Room 6:00 Family Game Night
9 Palm Sunday 8:47 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/No Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:15 Outreach Ministry 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly 5:30 Litany of the Passion	10 6:30 Primary Purpose	11 5:30 Lenten Taizé Service 5:30 Crow Creek Pipes & Drums 6:30 Stewardship Ministry	12 5:15 Handbell Choir 6:30 Choir	13 Maundy Thursday 10-1 Mabel T. Caverly Social 1:00 Primary Purpose 5:30 Eucharist and Meal 6:00 Inner Peace	14 Good Friday 3:00 Stations of the Cross 5:30 Good Friday Service	15 Holy Saturday 9:00-Noon Organist 9-1 Grandfamilies Brunch Noon to Sunset: Holy Saturday Vigil
16 Easter Sunday Communion Sunday 8:00 Sunrise Service 8:45 Handbells 9:30 Adult Forum/Choir 10:30 Worship/No Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly	17 Tax Day 6:30 Primary Purpose	18 5:30 Crow Creek Pipes & Drums	19 5:15 Handbell Choir 6:30 Choir	20 1:00 Primary Purpose 5-7 Handbell Workshop 6:00 Inner Peace	21 3-7 Regis-Smith Wedding	22 9:00-Noon Organist
23 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 11:30 Spring Semi-annual Congregational Meeting 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly PF Activity	24 6:30 Primary Purpose	25 5:30 Crow Creek Pipes & Drums	26 5:15 Handbell Choir 6:30 Choir	27 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	28	29 9:00-Noon Organist
30 Music Appreciation Sunday 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 11:45 Potluck 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly PF Akeela House delivery						

The most up-to-date calendar is available on the website (www.fccak.org)



Just for **KIDS**

Easter Surprises!



Connect the dots to find 2 symbols of Easter.
Write the words in order on the lines below.

17 • 18 • 19 • 20 • 21 • 22 • 23 • 24 • 25 • 26 • 27 • 28 • 29 • 30 • 31 • 32 • 33 • 34 • 35 • 36 • 37 • 38 • 39 • 40 • 41 • 42 • 43 • 44 • 45 • 46

holy righteous He died to

The loving one save

Son His again rose us

God He

Christ

Jesus gave day Easter on And sin

us

2	4	6	8	10	12	14
16	18	20	22	24		
26	28	30	33	35	37	38
40	41	42	43	44	45	46

Puzzle answers on p. 9 of this newsletter.

FCC People

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Serving the PNACCC

Claudia Kniefel
2017 Delegate

Puzzle Answer:

God gave us Jesus Christ,
His Son, the holy, loving
righteous one. He died to
save us all from sin, and on
Easter day, He rose again!

From Sharon Higgins:

As my thoughts and prayers have gone out to those we have
lost, knowing they will never be forgotten, The Train of Life came
to mind and I wanted to share it. --Sharon

The Train of Life

At birth, we boarded the 'train of life.' We met our parents,
and once believed that they would always travel on by our
side. However, at some station our parents will step down
from the train, leaving us to continue our journey alone.
Other travelers will board our train, and they, too, will be
significant; siblings, friends, the love of our life, children.
During our trip many of these will step down from the train at
their destinations, leaving a permanent vacuum in our lives,
while the departure of other passengers will go unnoticed,
and we won't even realize they have vacated their seats. The
train ride will be accompanied by joys, sorrows, fantasy,
discoveries, expectations, hellos, and farewells. A successful
journey requires that we give the best of ourselves while
having as good a relationship as possible with our fellow
travelers.

The great mystery to all passengers alike is this: The ticket
never tells us the station where we will depart the train.
Thus, we must travel through life as best we can; love,
forgive, and offer the best of who we are to our fellow
travelers. It is important we do this because, when the time
comes to leave our seat and step down from the train, we
should leave beautiful memories of us for the passengers who
will be continuing their journey on the train of life.

I wish you a joyful and rewarding train journey. Reap success
and give lots of love and, more importantly, thank God for the
trip.

Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my
train.

*Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We
are the Easter people and hallelujah is our
song.*

Pope John Paul II