

# The

# Northern

# Light

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

November 2017

## Inside

Page 1	Minister's Message
Page 3	Moderator's Message Vice Moderator's Message Life and Learning Ministry Stewardship Ministry
Page 3	Fundraising What Is the NACCC?
Page 4	Fundraising
Page 5	Just for Kids
Page 6	Puzzle Answers "The Ultimate Teaching Tool"



## Minister's Message

I did not progress through confirmation when I was younger. In fact, the church that I attended most of my childhood did not recognize members at all. People attended, and that was that. The nominated/elected elders made decisions as the leadership of the church. Of course, all of them were men,

and it seemed as though those positions were life-long-appointments rather than elected positions. It is what you might call a little "c" congregational church.

We are a big "C" Congregational church. Like many independent churches and so-called nondenominational (denomination in denial), we have local autonomy as a congregation, but that's really where the similarities end. Instead of a small long-term leadership team, or a founding minister who retains most of the control, each and every member within our congregation has an equal stake within the church. That includes, among other aspects: building and property management, worship planning and participation, education and spiritual formation, administration, mission and outreach, etc.

This means that each member needs to understand how our organization functions, and be given the opportunity to help form our organization into the future. Of course, an understanding of Congregationalist history is also important. Many of the opportunities and challenges we face have been dealt with before, and we have much to learn from those earlier Congregationalists. But first, people have to be given the



opportunity to exercise their membership, and then they have to do it.

So, you may be asking yourself: “Rev. Jacob, thanks for the history and membership pitch. What’s your point?” I am glad you asked. And may I commend such an astute and important question. FCC will begin a period of confirmation starting in February. We have active and involved young people who are beginning to accept and exercise leadership within our congregation, and it is time they claim their rightful place as full members and leaders within the congregation.

This is where everyone comes in. Each confirmand will be partnered with a current member as they go through confirmation. The mentor will attend 2-3 classes with her or his confirmand, work together on a project, and participate in Confirmation Sunday.

Professor of religious education, Denise Janssen, gives four reasons why it is important to connect youth and young adults within intergenerational bonds in the process of faith formation.<sup>1</sup>

- Fostering healthy identity entanglements with their faith.
- Making space for them to use their still emerging voices and discern vocation.
- Nurturing them with the sacrament of genuine relationships.
- Tethering them during times of faithful fallowness.

Jansen’s model includes periods of drawing in, listening, empowering, and grounding within the spiritual formations of people as they claim their places in a congregation. Fortunately, this process works in both directions. When new and forming members are aligned with experienced members, it creates a mutually beneficial environment for learning and growing, regardless of age.

Misunderstandings between generations, and times of conflict and difficulty will still remain. But if we create bonds of mutual formation across generations in moments such as confirmation, then when difficulties do arise, people can draw upon the connections that have been made in the past, and create something that we may not have imagined without one another.

The Life and Learning Ministry will be organizing the roster of confirmands very soon. In the meantime, if you as a member of the church would like to explore becoming a confirmation mentor, or if there is another member whom you think would make a great mentor, I would love to talk with you. Call or email so we can get started.

Happy Advent,

Rev. Jacob

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<sup>1</sup> Denise Jansen, “Redemptive Community Across Generations: Welcoming Youth and Young Adults,” in *Educating for Redemptive Community: Essays in Honor of Jack Seymour and Margaret Ann Crain*, ed. by Denise Jansen (WIPF & Stock: Eugene, OR, 2015), 142.



## *Moderator's Message*

After visiting my family in October, I realized the true importance of family. We hugged, laughed, cried, and told funny stories on each other. A family is not just mom, dad and siblings. It is any group or organization to which you belong. No family is perfect. We argue, we fight, and we have differences of opinion. We even stop talking to each other; but in the end, family is family. The love will always be there. Family is not defined by last name or by blood. It is defined as

commitment and love. The strength of a family, like the strength of an army lies in its members' loyalty to each other.

Our church has a strong family tie. During this holiday, pray for peace among us and other nations, and with each other.

Family is not an important thing...it is everything.

Have a blessed holiday season,  
Louise Smith

## *From Vice Moderator Sharon Higgins*

Our Moderator, Louise Smith, convened the Fall Semi-annual Congregational Meeting on November 19, 2017, immediately following the worship service. The 2018 Budget was the main topic for this meeting. After some discussion, the congregation voted to approve the budget as presented.

Rev. Jacob reported that the sound system renovation is complete, and the total is less than the amount the congregation approved at the Special Meeting on September 17, 2017. We are currently finetuning the settings and training a few folks to run the system.

Kathy Means noted that the Outreach Ministry has lost its loyal and dedicated member, Bob Rinehart, so they are hoping for a volunteer to fill out his term. If you are interested, please contact Kathy. She will report to the FCC Church Council, which will then approve the interim appointment.

## *From Your Life and Learning Ministry*

Marcie Errico, Chairperson

Life and Learning Ministry is looking for an Actress from our FCC family who would like to play the part of Mary (as a grandmother) in this year's pageant. It is a speaking part with quite a few lines. This is a new pageant for us. We are very excited about it and would love to have a new leading lady from our church family join in the fun. We will have just a couple of rehearsals after Thanksgiving. Please contact Marcie if you are interested in helping out.

## *From Your Stewardship Ministry (Trustees)*

Deborah Stauffer, Chairperson

The Stewardship Ministry (Trustees) met and the following summarizes their actions:

1. Jim Walker presented an idea for the green space between the lower parking lot and King Career Center. Due to removal of brush and resultant wood chips remaining, he is investigating alternative covering to grass, i.e., currants or gooseberries. Recall, the brush was removed to prevent unwanted camping or loitering in the area.
2. Sound system update – the switch-out of old and new is complete. So far, sound appears to be exactly as planned. Stewardship is pleased that our estimate of “not exceeding \$20,000” was achieved (final amount has to be totaled but approximately \$19,000.) We are especially grateful to all those who contributed generously to the

- special costly upgrade. Those contributions totaled about \$4450. Please continue to report any suggestions for improvement to a Trustee or our minister.
3. To date, the Fall Faire and Garage Sale proceeds total approximately \$4200. Sharon Higgins is continuing to offer for sale a few special items that might be “just right” for a holiday gift. We are very appreciative to Sharon for her dedication and fundraising talents.
  4. The proposed 2018 budget was developed and will be submitted to the congregation for evaluation and ultimate approval during the November 19<sup>th</sup> congregational meeting.
  5. New window cranks to replace broken ones were received and installed. Continuing to investigate costs for replacing sanctuary light bulbs with LEDs.
  6. Parsonage rental to Hospice and Guardian Security contracts are being evaluated. Everyone probably noticed snow was removed in a timely fashion because the contract was signed just in time!
  7. A rental agreement for an OLE (Opportunities for Lifelong Education) painting class was approved if they are willing/able to pay the rental costs. The class is scheduled in Cary Mead Hall Mondays, January 8 - March 2, 2018, from 11a.m. – 3 p.m.
  8. Elevator inspection is scheduled for next month (December).
  9. Stewardship will meet in the Board Room the second Tuesday each month through April at 3:30 p.m. All are encouraged to attend. Meetings usually last about an hour or so. This meeting lasted 2.25 hours because of in-depth evaluation and discussion of the budget proposal. FCC is fortunate to have dedicated Trustees who work diligently for the good of the entire Church.

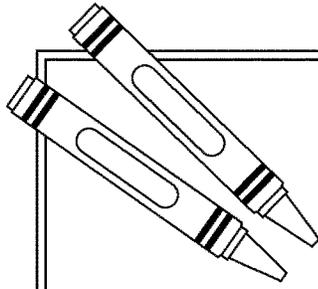
## FUNDRAISING

Thank you again to all who helped with the Garage Sale and Fall Faire 2017. To date \$4,069.76 has been raised.

We have decided to extend fundraising through November. You might have noticed some art work hanging on the walls in Cary Mead Hall that are priced. Additional items will be available during Fellowship Hour on certain Sundays. **The first Holiday mini-Faire will be Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>.** We want to make decorating and gift shopping easy and enjoyable. Please speak with Sharon Higgins if you have questions or want to purchase. Note from Kate: We accept cash, checks, and credit cards.



**PF Youth selling candles they made to raise funds they will send to provide hurricane relief for children and youth.**



# Just for KIDS

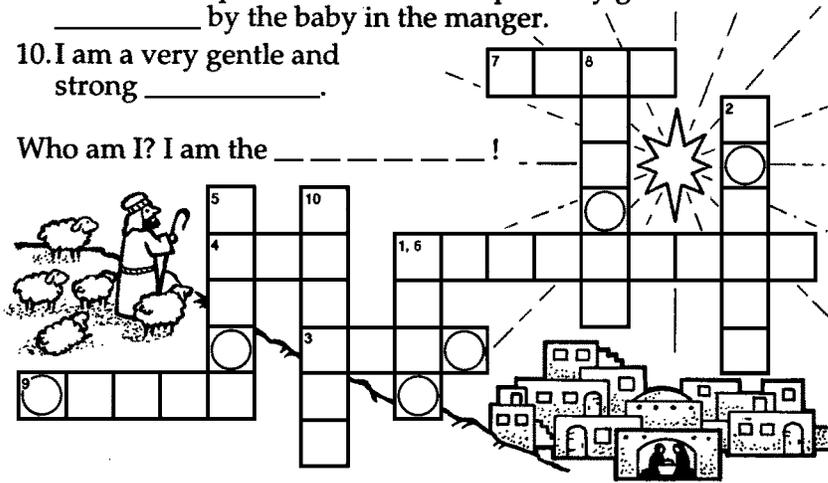
## Who am I?

Choose a word from the list below to finish each line. Fit it into the correct squares in the puzzle. Unscramble the circled letters to find the answer to the question.

- inn
- born
- kinds
- animal
- Joseph
- star
- Mary
- angels
- knees
- Bethlehem

1. I made an important journey from Nazareth to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I walked beside a kind man named \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I carried a young woman named \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I was patient when there was no room at the \_\_\_\_\_ and we had to keep looking for a place to stay.
5. I stood with many \_\_\_\_\_ of animals in a stable on that special night.
6. I watched as Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_!
7. I saw the bright \_\_\_\_\_ in the sky.
8. I heard the \_\_\_\_\_ singing.
9. I met the shepherds and their sheep as they got on their \_\_\_\_\_ by the baby in the manger.
10. I am a very gentle and strong \_\_\_\_\_.

Who am I? I am the \_\_\_\_\_!



Puzzle answers on p. 6 of this newsletter.

## FCC People

### Interim Minister

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Caroline Valentine, Organist,  
Director, Northern Lights  
Ringers

Lori Wasco  
Director, Chancel Choir

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**Serving the NACCC**  
Sharon Higgins,  
Year-Round Delegate

**Serving the PNACCC**  
Claudia Kniefel  
2017 Delegate

## Puzzle Answers

1. Bethlehem
2. Joseph
3. Mary
4. Inn,
5. kinds
6. born
7. star
8. angels
9. knees
10. animal.

*Who Am I? I am the donkey.*

[From Kate: I'm sharing this article because I think it can show us how to communicate across cultures and in whatever setting we find ourselves.]

## The Ultimate Teaching Tool

By H. Ní Aódaigáin

*The Oregon Quarterly*, Autumn 2017, 66.

"Hola! ¿Como fue su fin de semana?" Another Monday morning Spanish class begins. Some students are alert, ready to start. Others straggle in late, excuses tumbling from their mouths. A few students are reticent to engage, even though it's the sixth week of class. I make a special effort to reach out to them.

"How was your weekend?"

"I had to work," was the standard reply.

But sometimes their eyes meet mine, and I confront a face clouded with grief.

"My grandma died."

Students attending Umpqua Community College (UCC) aren't your typical undergrads. They didn't participate in the local rite of passage, the one-hour drive north to attend the University of Oregon. They are the sons and daughters of the working class of Douglas County, whose median poverty rate rests at 20 percent. They've watched the timber industry – the foundation of the region's economy – be decimated. Their dads, after years in the woods, might sit beside them in class as part of job retraining.

Domestic violence, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy form the fabric of many of these students' lives. But so does the strength of their faith, the joys of hunting and fishing among the exquisite forests and green-gold waters of the Umpqua, and the multi-generational ties of family, a web that remains resilient against all odds. A student who mourns her grandmother mourns someone who kept her safe, told her she was smart, or, without needing words, that she was loved.

Coming from a long line of educators, I believe in the power of teaching to change lives. Upon receiving my master's from the UO in Romance Languages in 2000, I felt a duty to bring the larger world to students whose exposure was limited. I used the mechanics of Spanish as the first step toward introducing them to a bigger perspective.

...It began simple enough: reciting the ABCs or counting to 10. Learning the basic question words to the tune of "Jingle Bells" had students in stiches. *Maybe this Spanish stuff wasn't so bad after all.* Through the conjugation of verbs and teaching the difference between "el" and "la," I communicated to each person that I believed in their innate ability to acquire knowledge.

"I can't learn a language. I failed Spanish in high school," they'd wail.

"You learned English. That's a language. If you couldn't speak English, then I'd agree. But you've already learned a language."

My method of teaching – acknowledgment of each student’s inherent worth, and their right to be treated with dignity – grew from interacting with the distinctly unique individuals I taught: flawed, wounded, beaten down – yet still hopeful, alive, yearning.

My students taught me that encouragement, authentic caring, and respect are fundamental to the nurturing of a soul. In a classroom environment in which positive feedback – however small the achievement – was the underlying philosophy, students who were afraid to speak raised their hands, older women who had been told they “didn’t have the smarts to go to college” aced their tests, and eighteen-year-olds who hadn’t ever stepped onto a plane became to dream of visiting Paris.

...From Mandy who couldn’t find Mexico on a map, to the former drug addict who gained entry into a highly competitive UO program, each student had a story worth telling. My job was to listen for it behind their self-deprecation and lack of confidence. Once I heard even a whisper of what a student wished for and was capable of, I drew out the most powerful tool I possessed and wielded it with fervor.

...The subject was Spanish. The teaching tool was love.

*On October 1, 2015, a UCC student shot and killed his professor and eight students. This essay is dedicated to the professor, and my colleague, Larry Levine; to the students who lost their lives while educating themselves, and to their families, for whom no words can ever console enough.*

H. Ní Aódagaín, MA, '00, taught Spanish for 15 years at Umpqua Community College. To read her full essay, visit “Reaching through the Portal” at [www.hnauthor.com](http://www.hnauthor.com).

Language exerts hidden power, like the  
moon on the tides.      -Rita Mae Brown

The best way to solve problems and to  
fight against war is through dialogue.  
Malala Yousafzai

The most important thing in communication is  
hearing what isn't said.      -Peter Drucker

To effectively communicate, we must realize  
that we are all different in the way we perceive  
the world and use this understanding as a guide  
to our communication with others.  
-Tony Robbins

I have noticed that nothing I never said  
ever did me any harm.      -Calvin Coolidge