

The Northern Light

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

January 2017

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Minister's Message

*"May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you when people and their causes need you the most,
And by making you anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope, and joy to you for the year ahead!"*
— St. Thomas à Becket (1118 or 1120—1170)

The preceding prayer/poem reminds us that life is not about being eternally happy, possessing overflowing riches or knowing everything. Those things would make life easier, but not authentic. Authentic lives come from experiencing life. As you start your new year, I encourage you to think of the stress and trials that accompany life as uncomfortable lessons that help us to become more authentic. This same concept can be applied to our church, and us as people of faith and community, during this time of change and transition.

May God bless you this year.

Rev. Johnathan Jones
Intentional Interim Minister,
First Congregational Church Anchorage



January



Moderator's Message

Joy to the World

I know, Christmas is long gone. My decorations have been stored for another year, and I think I only missed one item. So what's with this "Joy to the World" nonsense?

I recently saw an interview with the Dalai Lama discussing the topic of Joy, which had been the topic of discussion between himself and Bishop Desmond Tutu at a recent meeting. The result was a book, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, which I immediately went to Kindle and purchased (along with the audio rendition) for a price I rarely pay for any book - and I felt a great joy in it!

Never have I encountered two people who should be angry, austere, bitter, staid - I could go on at length, but you get the idea - but who are loving, kind, peaceful, childlike - joyful!

This has been a difficult year for many of us, and 2017 holds both challenges and promises. But let us all look for the joy that is within us and share it with our neighbor, for it is in sharing that our joy is increased.

Joyful New Year!
Claudia Kniefel, Moderator

From Your Life and Learning Ministry

In December, PF's outing was to see the Gingerbread Village at the Captain Cook Hotel and then we all had cocoa and donuts at Kobuk on Town Square. The youth also were responsible for the Advent readings and candle lightings, and a variety of the children were able to participate. The pageant was a success with the help of the youth and several adult volunteers—thanks to all for sharing the message of Christmas. In January, there will be no Sunday School during the holiday break on January 1 and 8. PF will have an outing to the movies after the potluck on January 29.

Marcie Errico, Chair

From Your Worship Ministry

The Worship Ministry has had a very involved, busy and beautiful Christmas month. We held our monthly, well attended, meeting on December second.

Verona Gentry and Jeanette Dillon as deacons serving for the month of December, have done an outstanding job. Thank you so much.

Communion was served on the second Sunday, so that the children's Christmas pageant could happen on the third Sunday. It was very effective and lovely this year. Our Worship Ministry hosted a wonderful, tasty, potluck following the pageant. Kudos to everyone who contributed to our holiday feast.

The Deacons served for a beautiful, candlelit, Christmas Eve service enjoyed seeing all of you there plus many other folks that we don't see very often and welcome. On Christmas Day, Rev. Johnathan led a more informal but inspiring church service at the regular 10:30 a.m. time.

The Worship Ministry wishes you the gift of His love, peace and joy this Christmas season and throughout the coming year.

Sandra Skaggs, Chair



"We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but for potential." —Ellen Goodman

Fundraising

From Sharon Higgins: Willing hands and generous hearts made the 2016 Fall Faire a success, raising over \$3,000 dollars.

Thank you again to all the volunteers.

Circle the first Saturday of October (10/7), 2017. It is never too early to start planning. Chefs will cook and bake; worker bees will gather, and all will plan a success. Thank you in advance.



Irene Stewart with her handmade treasures



Make Your Plans Now for June in Georgia

By Sharon Higgins, NACCC Year-Round Delegate

If you haven't been to a National Association of Congregational Christian Churches Annual Meeting and Conference because of the expense, this year will be the perfect time to go. One housing option will be to stay in the dorms at Piedmont College, which will be available Wednesday, June 21 thru Thursday, June 29 and will cost \$60 per person for a total stay. That's not per night, it's for the whole time you're enjoying this inspirational and convivial gathering of Congregationalists from around the world.

Go to the NACCC web site <http://www.naccc.org/2017-amc-information.html> for information about the special rates on Delta Airlines and other details. You can also chat with me, Claudia Kniefel, or Kate O'Dell about the meeting .

From the January issue of *Pilgrim's Progress*

(the newsletter of Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona, CA)

Library Committee member Patty Schelling has brought this idea to our attention from www.americanlifestylemag.com

Challenge yourself to expand your reading horizons.

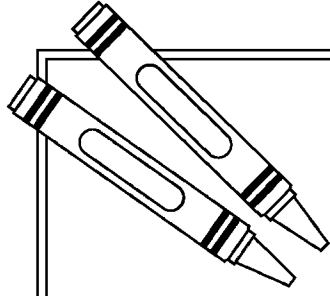
1. A book you can finish in a day.
2. A book you *should have* read in school.
3. A book published before you were born.
4. A book you own but haven't read yet.
5. A book that intimidates you.
6. A book of short stories.
7. A graphic novel.
8. A book written by a celebrity.
9. A *New York Times* best seller.
10. A book that is becoming a movie soon.
11. A book on *Time* magazine's top 100 list.
12. A non-fiction book about a subject you want to know more about.

January 2017

CAWS Cause for January & February Comfort Caps and Scarves

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Celebrated as Epiphany New Year's Day Guest Minister: Rev. David Barber 10:30 Worship/NO Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:30-6:30 Wings of Love Assembly	2 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	3 1:00 Worship Ministry 5:30-8:30 C.C.P.D	4 7:00 Wings of Love Assembly	5 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace 6:30 Chugach Mountain Investors	6 Epiphany	7 9:30-11:30 Organist
8 10:30 Worship/Sunday Sch. 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:00 Outreach Ministry Degreening of the Church 2:30-6:30 Wings of Love Assembly	9 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	10 5:30 Stewardship Ministry (Trustees) 5:30-8:30 C.C.P.D	11 5:15 Handbells (?) 6:30 Choir 7:00 Wings of Love Assembly	12 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	13	14 9:30-11:30 Organist
15 Communion Sunday 8:45 Handbells 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sun. Sch. 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:00 FCC Church Council 2:30-6:30 Wings of Love Assembly	16  Martin Luther King Day 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	17 5:30-8:30 C.C.P.D	18 5:15 Handbells 6:30 Choir 7:00 Wings of Love Assembly	19 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	20 6:00 Family Game Night	21 9:30-11:30 Organist 1:00 Irish Club of Alaska Annual Meeting 3-9 Hanson Clarinet Recital
22 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sun. Sch. 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:30-6:30 Wings of Love Assembly	23 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	24 5:30-8:30 C.C.P.D	25 5:15 Handbells 6:30 Choir 7:00 Wings of Love Assembly	26 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	27	28 9:30-11:30 Organist 9:30-1:30 C.C.P.D
29 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship/Sunday School 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:30-6:30 Wings of Love Assembly	30 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	31 5:30-8:30 C.C.P.D				

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



Just for KIDS

New Year's Resolutions

Use the code to read some important words to live by.

CODE:

A=1	D=4	H=8	L=12	P=16	T=20	X=24
B=2	E=5	I=9	M=13	Q=17	U=21	Y=25
C=3	F=6	J=10	N=14	R=18	V=22	Z=26
	G=7	K=11	O=15	S=19	W=23	

8 1 22 5 14 15 15 20 8 5 18 7 15 4 19
 2 5 6 15 18 5 13 5
 8 15 14 15 18 25 15 21 18 6 1 20 8 5 18
 1 14 4 , 13 15 20 8 5 18
 4 15 14 20 , 13 9 19 21 19 5
 7 15 4 19 14 1 13 5
 11 5 5 16 20 8 5 19 1 2 2 1 20 8
 8 15 12 25
 12 5 1 18 14 20 8 5 20 5 14
 3 15 13 13 1 14 4 13 5 14 20 19

Puzzle answer on p. 6 of this newsletter.

FCC People

Interim Minister

Rev. Johnathan C. Jones
907-229-1352, 907-272-8363

Revjj.fcccak@gmail.com

Caroline Valentine, Organist,
Director, Northern Lights
Ringers

Lori Wasco

Director, Chancel Choir

June Skinner
Nursery Attendant

Contacts

**Administrative Assistant &
Editor**

Kate O'Dell 272-8363

FCC Church Sexton

Scott McClure 272-8363

Wedding Coordinator

Barbara Widtfeldt 377-1673

Serving the NACCC

Sharon Higgins,
Year-Round Delegate

Serving the PNACCC

Sharon Higgins,
Delegate

Puzzle Answers:

Have no other gods before me. Honor your father and mother. Don't misuse God's name. Keep the Sabbath holy. Learn the Ten Commandments.

As we begin a new year, Rev. Beth Bingham (a former FCC Senior Minister) of Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona, CA, invited us to reflect on this poem in the January issue of their newsletter, *Pilgrim's Progress*:

I Hold My Life Up to You Now

Patient God,
the clock struck midnight
and I partied with a strange sadness in my heart,
confusion in my mind.

Now I ask you
to gather me,
for I realize
the storms of time have scattered me,
the furies of the past year have driven me,
many sorrows have scarred me,
many accomplishments have disappointed me,
much activity has wearied me,
and fear has spooked me
into a hundred hiding places,
one of which is pretended gaiety.

I am sick of a string of "have-a-nice-day's."

What I want is passionate days,
wondrous days,
dangerous days,
blessed days,
surprising days.

What I want is you!

Patient God,
this day teeters on the edge of waiting
and things seem to slip away from me,
as though everything were only memory
and memory is capricious.

Help me not to let my life slip away from me
O God, I hold up my life to you now,
as much as I can,
as high as I can,
in this mysterious reach called prayer.

Come close, lest I wobble and fall short.
It is not days or years I seek from you,
not infinity and enormity,
but small things and moments and awareness,
awareness that you are in what I am
and in what I have been indifferent to.

It is not new time,
but new eyes,
new heart I seek,
and you.

Patient God,
in this teetering time,
 this time in the balance,
 this time of waiting,
make me aware of moments,
 moments of song,
 moments of bread and friends,
 moments of jokes
 (some of them on me)
 which, for a moment, deflate my pomposities;
moments of sleep and warm beds,
 moments of children laughing and parents bending,
 moments of sunsets and sparrows outspunking winter,
moments when broken things get mended
 with glue or guts or mercy or imagination;
 moments when splinters shine and rocks shrink,
 moments when I know myself blest,
 not because I am so awfully important,
 but because you are so awesomely God,
 no less of the year to come
 as of all the years past;
 no less of this moment
 than of all my moments;
 no less of those who forget you
 as of those who remember,
 as I do now,
 in this teetering time.

O Patient God,
make something new in me,
 in this year,
 for you.

via Ted Loder

~ *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*