

The Northern Light

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

January 2018

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"Reflection"
Dr. Beth Bingham



Minister's Message

Perspective

Why do we do the things we do? Sometimes it is out of habit, or duty, maybe intrigue, or for one moment of pure pleasure. Regardless of why, there is probably a process for doing whatever it is we do, and that process will likely leave a mark.

I read a poem recently titled "proof" by Rajinderpal S. Pal. He was recalling his experience going to Amristar. It is a holy city for the Sikh faith in Northwest India named after the pool that surrounds the golden temple (Gudwara), which dates back to the early 17th century. On his trip he remembers the way the white turban he wore placed pressure behind his ears – a long-lasting heaviness. As part of the ritual, he walked into the pool from which the holy city derives its name, and instead of the temple taking center stage, all he can remember is the large fish in the brown water smacking his leg, and his rushing back to shore.

Finally, as he makes his way through the lines of people retrieving his meal, he is holding his metal tray with unbearably hot food placed upon it, which he must hold while in the line as children searching for their parents lost in the mass of people scream and run through legs. It is then that he realized something about the people around him. They didn't seem very happy considering the sacred place they had all come to experience.



His poem ends with a reflection:

as though in the end
on the final reckoning
what will matter are the scars of devotion

Why do we do the things do? How does it matter? Especially if the only evidence, the only “proof” left behind are the scars.

I can't always answer these questions myself. Why do we agonize through the steps? What is it exactly that we expect to happen on a Sunday morning, or on a trip to a place with spiritual significance? Sometimes I know why; other times, I wonder. But the doing of something is often very unrelated to how I feel about it. I try to approach the work we are doing with great intent, and with ample reflection as to why, but in the end it is the doing of the thing itself that gives the opportunity to gain perspective.

It is in the moments of acting where we find a new perspective. It is what gives the scars deeper meaning, even redemptive meaning. In the case of a Sunday morning, the familiar pattern of acting and reacting, week after week, builds over time. The ritual might feel like a tight turban at times, or maybe a disconcerting slap from an unseen fish, even perhaps a searing reminder of the pain we often carry with us or that which we see in the eyes of another.

May the familiar become an ever-new source of perspective, a new lens for seeing the world around you, even if it may seem that the only proof that it mattered is the scars of devotion left behind.

Rev. Jacob

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Moderator's Message

I am sure you have your new year's resolutions all in order. I have stopped making them as it all was forgotten by the end of the month I do have a short list: Count my blessings, Speak gently, Love much, Laugh a lot, Let go of what I can't control, work hard, Be productive, Just breathe and be happy.

I am looking forward to growth in our church for 2018. Rev. Jacob has begun new activities and study groups. Our members are such hard workers.

Keep up the good work. Thank you for your dedication.

Wishing each of you a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year. See you in church.

Louise Smith, Moderator

From Your Stewardship Ministry (Trustees)

Deborah Stauffer, Chairperson

The Stewardship Ministry met and the following summarizes their actions:

1. Reviewed the successful 2017 stewardship campaign. The 2018 budget is firmly in place. Fermen is excited to use our relatively new Quick Books software to close out 2017 books, prepare taxes and W-2s, and create the systems for the new year. FCC is more than fortunate to have Fermen as our finance “watch dog.”
2. FCC will continue accepting credit card payments.
3. Sanctuary lighting update – Light bulb costs are graciously paid due to an anonymous donor's kindness. Purchase and installation timeframe is not confirmed to date.
3. Sharon Higgins set up and offered a few special items left over from the Fall Faire that were “just right” for a holiday gift. Another \$250 plus was added to Sharon's long list of fund-raising achievements.

4. contracts for the parsonage rental to Hospice and Guardian Security were evaluated and determined to be appropriate for 2018.
5. the church rental to the Alaska Chamber Singers was a resounding success.
6. Stewardship meets 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 58 minutes! FCC is fortunate to have dedicated Trustees who work diligently for the good of the entire Church.

From Your Life and Learning Ministry

Marcie Errico, Chairperson

Life and Learning is looking forward to the New Year! We have our Sunday School curriculum following up on our Fall curriculum on the Prophets. We'll be looking at how the New Testament explains how Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament and what new prophecies Jesus makes. We're also excited about the Confirmation Class beginning in February, led by Rev. Poindexter. Finally, PF will have an outing on January 28th to the movies.

From Your Fellowship Ministry

Fellowship, Fun, and More in January

Your Fellowship Ministry has some new activities planned for the first month of 2018, so get out your calendar today and save these dates. The times TBA.

Friday, January 12 – An Evening of Instruments

Bring an instrument and music to share, or just come and listen. We'll see what we can play together, but in any case, we'll make a joyful noise!

Saturday, January 20 – Rounds and Psalms

More joyful noise, this time we'll be singing "Rounds and Psalms."

Sunday, January 28 – Dine and Mind with Dave Barber

After the potluck hosted by the Stewardship Ministry, we'll gather in Cary Mead Hall and find out Dave Barber's answer to "WX or Not." (Hint – his talk and pictures involve weather and climate.)

Every Thursday – Creating Liturgia

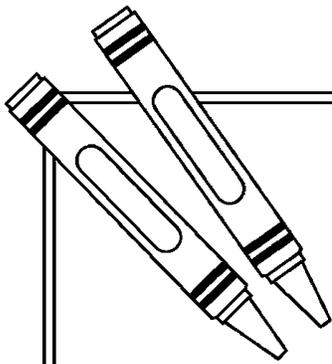
Liturgia simply means "the work of the people." It is often associated with Sunday liturgy, but the work of us as a people is not strictly confined to moments of ritualized worship. Service to people and the church takes imagination, collaboration, and time.

In this spirit, we gather in the Board Room at 10:00 am every Thursday to collaborate and create tangible items for use by individual people and/or for the liturgical and communal life of First Congregational Church.

During the first three months of 2018, this time will also be devoted to making comfort caps and fleece blankets for our friends, neighbors, and especially children who are going through chemo treatment for cancer. We have yarn and fleece as well as patterns, but feel free to bring your own.

Christmas is the perfect time to celebrate the love of God and family and to create memories that will last forever. Jesus is God's perfect, indescribable gift. The amazing thing is that not only are we able to receive this gift, but we are able to share it with others on Christmas and every other day of the year.

-Joel Osteen

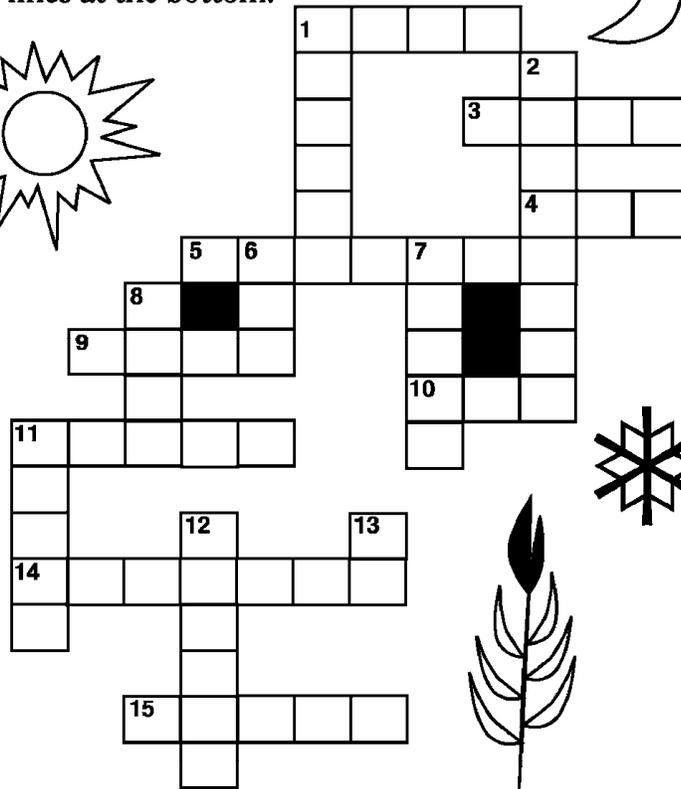
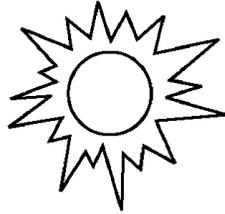


Just for KIDS

God's Promise

The Lord made a promise to Noah in Genesis 8:22. It was a covenant. Fit the words from the list into the crossword puzzle. Then use the numbers to match the words to the blank lines at the bottom.

- as
- and
- the
- day
- cold
- long
- heat
- will
- earth
- night
- never
- cease
- winter
- summer
- harvest
- endures
- seedtime



“

_____ 13 _____ 8 _____ 13 _____ 10 _____ 7 _____ 14 ,

_____ 2 _____ 6 _____ 5 , _____ 9 _____ 6

_____ 3 , _____ 12 _____ 6 _____ 1 Down , _____ 4

_____ 6 _____ 11 Across _____ 1 Across _____ 11 Down _____ 15 ”

Puzzle answers on p. 6 of this newsletter.

FCC People

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Claudia Kniefel
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Puzzle Answer: "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease"

[from the January 2018 issue of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the newsletter of Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona, CA]

Reflection

By Dr. Beth Bingham, Senior Minister

A prayer by Ted Loder moves me each time I read it, and I remember well how it literally changed the life of a person in the church in Anchorage who was bearing the deepest pain. It helps settle the soul to get ready to work for a New Year filled with hope and promise and peace.

Here are some excerpts:

Patient God, the clock struck midnight and I partied with a strange sadness in my heart and confusion in my mind. Now I ask you to gather me, for I realized the storms of time have scattered me, the furies of the year past 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 days.' 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...Help me not to let my life slip away from me.

O God, as 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...

O Patient God, make something new in me, in this year, for you.
Ted Loder, *Guerillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*, pp. 114-116.

[Editor's Note: Members of Pilgrim Congregational Church will celebrate Dr. Bingham's 25 years as their Senior Minister in January. Dr. Bingham was Senior Minister here at First Congregational Christian Church of Anchorage from 1987 to 1993.]

Those who gave thee a body,
furnished it with weakness; but
He who gave thee Soul, armed
thee with resolution. Employ it,
and thou art wise; be wise and
thou art happy. -Akhenaton

Let our New Year's
resolution be this: we
will be there for one
another as fellow
members of humanity,
in the finest sense of
the word.

-Goran Persson