

# The Northern Light

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

May 2017

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## Minister's Message

### A Big Mistake

A common area where churches make mistakes is during the final stages of transition - when one pastor takes on the leadership of the church after another or previous minister.



In the excitement of welcoming a new leader, a new era and a new way of being, some key steps and processes can be overlooked. Along with the bittersweet goodbyes comes the temptation to make the "transition smoother," to leave some of the unpleasant tasks for "the new guy," to sweep under the carpet what we've been wanting to hide since day one of the current transition.

This tendency does help us feel better about things in the here and now, although it often ends up being a lot more difficult in the future.

I made a big mistake in my thinking the past couple of weeks. I had developed a certain "mindset" about my role, and possible impact, during these last months as your Interim Minister. I had begun thinking about myself as akin to a president during the final months of the last term. A "lame duck."

I was happy to think about myself and the final couple of months of our intentional transition together as pretty much complete. Being in a "lame duck" zone gave me the perfect excuse (quite legitimately) to stop working on the hard stuff and focus more on the celebration. I could pour my energy into updating the interior design of the minister's office. I could put together all of my liturgical notes and resources in a tidy, yet easy to understand

system for the next pastor. I could even get around to using my unused vacation time.

But NO!

Folks, I'm not done yet! We aren't done yet! We still have plenty of work to finish and a lot of growing to do.

One of the ways to prevent this is through self-assessment and evaluation. We aimed to make this transition more than just a result of circumstance. I believe we have achieved this so far. If we want to make this transition count, we can't stop so close to our ultimate goal. So, I'm inviting you all to journey with me one more time.

I'm hoping that the majority of you will be able to join me every Monday night during the month of May (starting May 8 and excluding Memorial Day) for our final Church Evaluation and Assessment series.

I realized that I had almost made a huge mistake as I started working on prepping for our final assessment and evaluation. We can still make concrete, tangible and measurable ways to better our preparedness for the next step. We still have time to prepare, to take stock, to assess our strengths and weaknesses. We can still workout and build a little more muscle, strength and stamina.

Gaining inspiration from author Karl Vaters (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/april/5-mistakes-more-likely-small-churches.html?paging=off>) our series will focus on-

- 1. What went right
- 2. What went wrong
- 3. Why it went right or wrong
- 4. What we can do to improve it the next time

If we want to be the best church, if we want to fulfil our potential, if we want to make an impact, we have to complete the work that is required. So, let's get and be intentional one last time.

Peace,  
Rev. JJ



### *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

**SAVE THE DATE:** On Saturday, May 6, 2017, we're gathering downstairs in Cary Mead Hall to meet and visit with Jacob Poindexter and his family. He will be preaching the sermon the next day and participating in the worship service. (See the Call to Meeting below). If you're able, please bring a sweet or savory finger food dish to share.

### **Call to Meeting**

#### **Special Congregational Meeting**

**Immediately after the worship service on Sunday, May 7, 2017,** FCC Moderator Louise Smith will convene a special congregational meeting to vote on whether to call Jacob Poindexter as the First Congregational Christian Church of Anchorage Senior Minister. This will require a quorum of members and associate members, so please clear your calendar and plan to attend this very important meeting. If you cannot be there, you may sign a proxy form. They are available on the Children's Altar in the Narthex, or Kate can send it to you as an email attachment or through USPS mail.

### *From Your Life and Learning Ministry*

In March PF helped out with the Bean-a-Fit donation collection before heading to Girdwood for their annual hike. All through April, the Pilgrim Fellowship collected donations for AKEELA House and then delivered everything to them on Sunday, April 30. They are currently working on the worship service for Youth Sunday, May 21 and invite everyone to join them in celebrating the youngest members of our church family.

### *From Your Worship Ministry*

Sandy Skaggs, Chair

Here is a paragraph that is worth sharing. It comes from exploring the internet to answer this question: HOW SHOULD WE PRAISE AND WORSHIP GOD

For us to know how to praise and worship God, we must first understand what it means to praise and worship. When we worship, we are expressing our reverent love and devotion to God. Worship is the act of doing something like reading the Bible, praying, or singing. However, worship is not limited to only these things.

When we praise, we are expressing our admiration for God; we are lifting him up in exultation. Praise is the act of celebrating or boasting about the Lord. Praise can be done through song, poems, or confessing the goodness of God to others. We should be giving God our praise and worship through our daily lives. We can do this at home, in our work place, in our car – wherever we are!

Praise and worship is a way of life, the very heartbeat of our relationship with God.

The Worship Ministry has been busy planning two upcoming services that will let us praise and worship God. Fifth Sunday allows us to show our thankfulness by appreciating our lovely church, and our young people. We are especially thankful for the beautiful music played by the handbell choir, piano, organ and various other instruments played by a number of dedicated musicians. Last but not least, we are thankful for our own Chancel Choir. We're thankful for the care, concern and giving ways of our Interim Minister Rev. Johnathan Jones. All of us have a great deal to be thankful for, being members of the First Congregational Church, where we worship God as a large, loving, extended family group.

The entire Congregation is excited to meet and welcome Jacob Poindexter to our church on Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup>. Jacob will be preaching the sermon and taking an active part in the service. We encourage everyone to come to church that Sunday. After the service, we will vote on whether to call him as our full-time Senior Minister.

### *From Your Outreach Ministry*

During the summer, your Outreach Ministry is going to focus on supporting F.I.S.H., as their food pantry is often empty this time of year. On Sunday, MAY 14, we will have a "Can You Bring a Can?" kickoff event, where we are asking everyone to bring a can (or two or three) to church to help supply F.I.S.H.'s food pantry so they can continue to deliver food to needy recipients. Then, during the summer, please try to make it a habit to bring a can (or two or three) of food with you to church and put it in the plastic bin in the Narthex.

### **An Opportunity to Serve – An Opportunity to Give**

A message from the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (FCC is a member of this voluntary organization)

*If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.* Isaiah 58:10 (NRSV)

All-Conference Mission project! Each year the host committee for the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference chooses a mission project. True to our 2017 theme, *Dreaming ~ Talking ~ Acting*, this year the AMC, NAPF, and HOPE conferences are teaming up with **Rise Against Hunger** to package over 25,000 meals for starving people around the world! THAT is a *dream* worth *talking* about and *acting* upon!

Rise Against Hunger provides all the food, packing materials, and delivery to people throughout the world for twenty-nine cents a meal! The NACCC Missions and Outreach Ministry Council has kicked off the donations and our host committee is dedicating the AMC Sunday offering to this mission. You have the opportunity to participate, too. Donations will continue to be accepted in Piedmont at the host table. I look forward to working alongside you as we continue *Dreaming ~ Talking ~ Acting* to bring light into the darkness.

Financial donations may be sent to the Oak Creek office and clearly marked for 2017 Piedmont mission project. Thank you!

Send donations to:  
NACCC 2017 Piedmont Mission Project  
PO Box 288  
Oak Creek, WI 53154

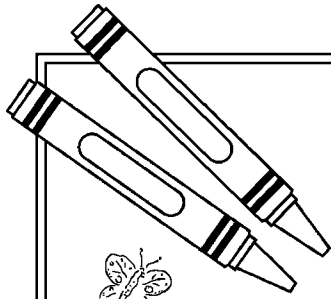
[We will have a basket to collect donations in the FCC Narthex. Please address your checks to NACCC and write 2017 Piedmont Mission Project on the memo line. If you have questions, talk with Kate O'Dell or Sharon Higgins.]

# May 2017

## Summer Outreach Project – Support F.I.S.H.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	<b>2</b> 5:30-8:30 C.C.P..D.	<b>3</b> 4:30 pm Worship Ministry 5:15 Handbells 6:30 Choir 7 Wings of Love Prayer Meeting	<b>4</b> 1:00 Primary Purpose 5:30-8:00 pm CWU May Friendship Day Service 6:00 Inner Peace 6:30 Chugach Mountain Investors	<b>5</b> 6:30-10:30 Denali Dancers	<b>6</b> 6:00-8:00 Wings of Love Assembly 9:00-Noon Organist 5:00 Potluck Fingerfood Reception for the Poindexters
<b>7</b> 8:45 Handbells 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship – Sermon by Jacob Poindexter 11:30 Special Congregational Meeting to vote on calling Jacob Poindexter as our Senior Minister 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly	<b>8</b> 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	<b>9</b> 5:30 Stewardship Ministry 5:30-8:30 C.C.P..D	<b>10</b> 6:30 Choir	<b>11</b> 10-1 Mabel T. Caverly Social 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace 5:30 Interfaith Council APU Campus – Carr-Gottstein Bldg.	<b>12</b> PNACCC Annual Meeting – Maltby, WA 6:30-10:30 Denali Dancers	<b>13</b> 6:00-8:00 Wings of Love Assembly 9:00-Noon Organist 9:00-2:00 Weavers & Spinners Guild annual potluck PNACCC Annual Meeting – Maltby, WA
<b>14</b> <b>Mother's Day Hat Sunday</b> <i>Can You Bring a Can?</i> 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:15 Outreach Ministry 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly PNACCC Annual Meeting – Warden, WA	<b>15</b> 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	<b>16</b> 5:30-8:30 C.C.P..D	<b>17</b> 1:00 Worship Ministry 6:30 Choir	<b>18</b> 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	<b>19</b> 6:30-10:30 Denali Dancers	<b>20</b> <b>Armed Forces Day</b> 6:00-8:00 Wings of Love Assembly 9:00-Noon Organist
<b>21</b> <b>Youth Sunday</b> <b>Communion Sunday</b> 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 12:15 FCC Church Council 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly	<b>22</b> 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	<b>23</b> 5:30-8:30 C.C.P..D	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 1:00 Primary Purpose 6:00 Inner Peace	<b>26</b> 6:00 Wedding rehearsal	<b>27</b> 6:00-8:00 Wings of Love Assembly 9:00-Noon Organist 3:00 McMillen-Pritchard Wedding
<b>28</b> 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 2:00 Wings of Love Assembly	<b>29</b>  <b>FCC Office Closed</b> 6:30-8:30 Primary Purpose	<b>30</b> 5:30-8:30 C.C.P..D	<b>31</b>			

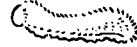
The most up-to-date calendar is available on the website ([www.fccak.org](http://www.fccak.org))



# Just for KIDS



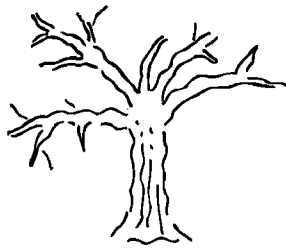
## Changes



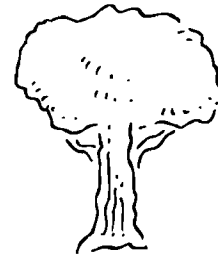
Everyone experiences changes in life.  
Sometimes they make us happy – sometimes not!  
What does the Bible say about this?



Find Ecclesiastes 3:1 below.  
Change some letters – then read the verse.



**Change:**  
L's to T's  
J's to E's  
Q's to I's  
K's to S's  
W's to N's  
Z's to O's  
P's to H's  
X's to R's  
B's to A's



“  
L P J X J Q S B  
L Q M J F Z X  
J V J X Y L P Q W G' B W D  
B K J B K Z W F Z X  
J V J X Y B C L Q V Q L Y  
U W D J X P J B V J W”

Puzzle answers on p. 7 of this newsletter.

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### ***Serving the NACCC***

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### ***Serving the PNACCC***

Claudia Kniefel  
2017 Delegate

## **Puzzle Answer:**

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.



[His Holiness Pope Francis, Filmed in Vatican City, First shown at TED2017]

To see and hear the Pope's heartfelt message, go to the web site [https://www.ted.com/talks/pope\\_francis\\_why\\_the\\_only\\_future\\_worth\\_building\\_includes\\_everyone?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/pope_francis_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone?language=en)

Good evening – or, good morning, I am not sure what time it is there. Regardless of the hour, I am thrilled to be participating in your conference. I very much like its title – "The Future You" – because, while looking at tomorrow, it invites us to open a dialogue today, to look at the future through a "you." "The Future You: "the future is made of yous, it is made of encounters, because life flows through our relations with others. Quite a few years of life have strengthened my conviction that each and everyone's existence is deeply tied to that of others: life is not time merely passing by, life is about interactions.

As I meet, or lend an ear to those who are sick, to the migrants who face terrible hardships in search of a brighter future, to prison inmates who carry a hell of pain inside their hearts, and to those, many of them young, who cannot find a job, I often find myself wondering: "Why them and not me?" I, myself, was born in a family of migrants; my father, my grandparents, like many other Italians, left for Argentina and met the fate of those who are left with nothing. I could have very well ended up among today's "discarded" people. And that's why I always ask myself, deep in my heart: "Why them and not me?"

First and foremost, I would love it if this meeting could help to remind us that we all need each other, none of us is an island, an autonomous and independent "I," separated from the other, and we can only build the future by standing together, including everyone. We don't think about it often, but everything is connected, and we need to restore our connections to a healthy state. Even the harsh judgment I hold in my heart against my brother or my sister, the open wound that was never cured, the offense that was never forgiven, the rancor that is only going to hurt me, are all instances of a fight that I carry within me, a flare deep in my heart that needs to be extinguished before it goes up in flames, leaving only ashes behind.

Many of us, nowadays, seem to believe that a happy future is something impossible to achieve. While such concerns must be taken very seriously, they are not invincible. They can be overcome when we don't lock our door to the outside world. Happiness can only be discovered as a gift of harmony between the whole and each single component. Even science – and you know it better than I do – points to an understanding of reality as a place where every element connects and interacts with everything else.

And this brings me to my second message. How wonderful would it be if the growth of scientific and technological innovation would come along with more equality and social inclusion. How wonderful would it be, while we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brothers and sisters orbiting around us. How wonderful would it be if solidarity, this beautiful and, at times, inconvenient word, were not simply reduced to social work, and became, instead, the default attitude in political, economic and scientific choices, as well as in the relationships among individuals, peoples and countries. Only by educating people to a true solidarity will we be able to overcome the "culture of waste," which doesn't concern only food and goods but, first and foremost, the people who are cast aside by our techno-economic systems which, without even realizing it, are now putting products at their core, instead of people.



Solidarity is a term that many wish to erase from the dictionary. Solidarity, however, is not an automatic mechanism. It cannot be programmed or controlled. It is a free response born from the heart of each and every one. Yes, a free response! When one realizes that life, even in the middle of so many contradictions, is a gift, that love is the source and the meaning of life, how can they withhold their urge to do good to another fellow being?

In order to do good, we need memory, we need courage and we need creativity. And I know that TED gathers many creative minds. Yes, love does require a creative, concrete and ingenious attitude. Good intentions and conventional formulas, so often used to appease our conscience, are not enough. Let us help each other, all together, to remember that the other is not a statistic or a number. The other has a face. The "you" is always a real presence, a person to take care of.

There is a parable Jesus told to help us understand the difference between those who'd rather not be bothered and those who take care of the other. I am sure you have heard it before. It is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. When Jesus was asked: "Who is my neighbor?" - namely, "Who should I take care of?" - he told this story, the story of a man who had been assaulted, robbed, beaten and abandoned along a dirt road. Upon seeing him, a priest and a Levite, two very influential people of the time, walked past him without stopping to help. After a while, a Samaritan, a very much despised ethnicity at the time, walked by. Seeing the injured man lying on the ground, he did not ignore him as if he weren't even there. Instead, he felt compassion for this man, which compelled him to act in a very concrete manner. He poured oil and wine on the wounds of the helpless man, brought him to a hostel and paid out of his pocket for him to be assisted.

The story of the Good Samaritan is the story of today's humanity. People's paths are riddled with suffering, as everything is centered around money, and things, instead of people. And often there is this habit, by people who call themselves "respectable," of not taking care of the others, thus leaving behind thousands of human beings, or entire populations, on the side of the road. Fortunately, there are also those who are creating a new world by taking care of the other, even out of their own pockets. Mother Teresa actually said: "One cannot love, unless it is at their own expense."

We have so much to do, and we must do it together. But how can we do that with all the evil we breathe every day? Thank God, no system can nullify our desire to open up to the good, to compassion and to our capacity to react against evil, all of which stem from deep within our hearts. Now you might tell me, "Sure, these are beautiful words, but I am not the Good Samaritan, nor Mother Teresa of Calcutta." On the contrary: we are precious, each and every one of us. Each and every one of us is irreplaceable in the eyes of God. Through the darkness of today's conflicts, each and every one of us can become a bright candle, a reminder that light will overcome darkness, and never the other way around.

To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow. Hope is the door that opens onto the future. Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree. It is like some invisible yeast that allows the whole dough to grow, that brings flavor to all aspects of life. And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. A single individual is enough for hope to exist, and that individual can be you. And then there will be another "you," and another "you," and it turns into an "us." And so, does hope begin when we have an "us?" No. Hope began with one "you." When there is an "us," there begins a revolution.

The third message I would like to share today is, indeed, about revolution: the revolution of tenderness. And what is tenderness? It is the love that comes close and becomes real. It is a movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands. Tenderness means to use our eyes to see the other, our ears to hear the other, to listen to the children, the poor, those who are afraid of the future. To listen also to the silent cry of our common home, of our sick and polluted earth. Tenderness means to use our hands and our heart to comfort the other, to take care of those in need.

Tenderness is the language of the young children, of those who need the other. A child's love for mom and dad grows through their touch, their gaze, their voice, their tenderness. I like when I hear parents talk to their babies, adapting to the little child, sharing the same level of communication. This is tenderness: being on the same level as the other. God himself descended into Jesus to be on our level. This is the same path the Good Samaritan took. This is the path that Jesus himself took. He lowered himself, he lived his entire human existence practicing the real, concrete language of love.

Yes, tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women. Tenderness is not weakness; it is fortitude. It is the path of solidarity, the path of humility. Please, allow me to say it loud and clear: the more powerful you are, the more your actions will have an impact on people, the more responsible you are to act



humbly. If you don't, your power will ruin you, and you will ruin the other. There is a saying in Argentina: "Power is like drinking gin on an empty stomach." You feel dizzy, you get drunk, you lose your balance, and you will end up hurting yourself and those around you, if you don't connect your power with humility and tenderness. Through humility and concrete love, on the other hand, power – the highest, the strongest one – becomes a service, a force for good.

The future of humankind isn't exclusively in the hands of politicians, of great leaders, of big companies. Yes, they do hold an enormous responsibility. But the future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognize the other as a "you" and themselves as part of an "us." We all need each other. And so, please, think of me as well with tenderness, so that I can fulfill the task I have been given for the good of the other, of each and every one, of all of you, of all of us. Thank you.