

The



TIDINGS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (United Church of Christ)

An Open and Affirming Congregation

La Grange, Illinois - 708-352-0800 - Fax 708-352-0863

Web Site www.fcclg.org - Email info@fcclg.org

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No. 26

DECEMBER 24, 2011
Christmas Eve Services
5:00 Family Friendly Service
10:30 Prelude Concert
11:00 Candlelight Service

DECEMBER 25, 2011
10:00 a.m. Worship
Festival of Carols

January 1, 2012
10:00 a.m. Worship

From the Minister's Keyboard

A song and accompanying video has been making the rounds on emails, Facebook, and YouTube. It's called "Where's the Line to See Jesus." Supposedly the composer was at the mall, noticing the kids in line to see Santa, when a small boy tugged on his sweater and said the following: "Where's the line to see Jesus? Is he here at the store? If Christmastime is his birthday, why don't we see him more? Where's the line to see Jesus? He was born for me. Santa Claus brought me presents, but Christ gave his life for me."

If you are like me, you may be getting weary each year at this time, of the wrestling match between the Christian celebration of Christmas and the secular alleged hijacking of Christmas. The short answer to "where's the line for Jesus?" is AT CHURCH... or at home, or in your heart. The longer response is a bit more involved. But if you are looking for him at the mall, you are way off target.

The church throughout the centuries has celebrated Christmastide in the twelve days from December 25 through January 6 (Epiphany). The time leading up to Christmas is called Advent, when we prepare for Christ's coming. So if "true believers" want to start the argument about Christmas, they might wait until Christmas actually comes. In fact, many of the world's religious celebrations this time of year (including Christmas) originated in ancient pagan winter solstice festivals. Happy Solstice, by the way, as this Tidings newsletter should be coming to you on or about that day.

My strong hunch is that Jesus is not threatened by Santa. If some took the time to think about it, and learn a little history, they might realize that Santa is a form of the word "saint," and his tradition originated with the acts of a fourth century Christian bishop. I would claim that Christmas is enhanced by Rudolph, Frosty, and Charlie Brown (my personal favorite). When we mirror the magi by exchanging gifts in love... when we decorate our homes to reflect the star of Bethlehem... when we hang evergreens and put trees actually INSIDE our houses to witness to the resurrection... even when we sing "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" (especially the Springsteen version) we are keeping Christmas. So don't look for the line to see Jesus at the mall. We all know it's at the soup kitchen. A blessed Christmas to all.

God's peace,
Rich Wolf
Senior Minister

First Congregational Church/United Church of Christ 100 S. 6th Avenue, La Grange, IL 60525

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NEW CHURCH DIRECTORIES ARE HERE!

Stop by the office and pick up your copy of the 2012 member directory.

HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve worship opportunities begin with a 5:00pm "family friendly" service in the sanctuary. Our 11:00pm service includes special choir music, a Christmas message from Dr. Wolf, and a candlelight setting. A pre-service concert begins at 10:30pm. On Sunday morning, December 25 (Christmas Day) we will gather for worship at the usual 10:00am time, and share a "Festival of Carols." We will sing many sacred Christmas favorites throughout the service.

HOLIDAY CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

The Church Office will be closed on Monday, December 26, and Monday, January 2 for observance of the seasonal holidays.

GIFTS OF GRATITUDE THANK YOU!

"Thank you" to our congregation for opening your hearts to the children of our community who are in need this Christmas season. 240 wishes were received this year and each one was fulfilled by members of our church and through our Services Auction fund. To everyone who sorted, counted, bagged, tagged and delivered gifts, thank you! May Blessings and Peace be yours this Christmas! Debbie Jackson

THE CHRISTMAS FUND – RETIRED MINISTERS OFFERING

As the holidays draw close and we are once again reminded of all we have to be grateful for, let us not forget those who have given of themselves to serve as ministers in the United Church of Christ. It is this time of year when we take up a special offering, The Christmas Fund, to provide extra support to those retired. Offsetting daily costs of heating bills and insurance premiums, the funds gathered can also go towards providing disaster relief when earthquakes, hurricanes or other such natural disasters strike areas where retired ministers are living. Please consider donating to this special offering during worship on December 24, 25, 2011 or by submitting a donation to the church office.

2011 GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Please be sure that any donations that you would like credited to 2011 be in the office no later than Thursday, December 29. Thank you.

CALLING ALL BUILDING KEY HOLDERS

As we go into the New Year, we are also going into a new process of inventorying building contents and keys. If you have keys to any area of the church building and are not using them on at least a weekly basis, please **turn them into the office**. Should the occasion arise where you need to get into the building, please call the office and arrange for someone to assist you. Thank you.

"FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN"

The Ministry of Missions invites you to join us in giving back after the holiday season. Our church will be packing **life saving** meals for those in need throughout the world through the organization "Feed my Starving Children". The event will take place on Saturday, January 7 from 9:00-11:00AM in Schaumburg. Children in Kindergarten and up are welcome with an adult. Please sign up either after the service or email Sandy Wallin at swallin5@comcast.net to reserve your spot.

2012 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2012 offering envelopes will be available for pick up beginning Sunday, December 18 in the Founder's Room. Also, if you do not currently use, but would like to have envelopes, please inform the office and we will make sure that you receive them.

HANDICAPPED PARKING

Each Sunday morning, signs are placed along Sixth Avenue in order to reserve the street parking in front of the church for our worshippers with special needs. All those who park nearby are asked to please respect this handicapped parking area. Thank you for your cooperation.

THE ZACKLEY CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Zackley Christmas Party will be on Friday December 23rd from 5-7pm in the Zackley Room. All high school youth are invited to join us. Bring a friend! Wear your favorite ugly Christmas sweater and bring a wrapped silly gift (under \$10) for our White Elephant Gift Exchange. Pizza & soda will be provided - bring an appetizer or desert to share.

HOOKS AND NEEDLES

The Hooks and Needles gals will be stitching at home over the holidays. We will resume our get-togethers on Monday, January 16, at 7pm in the family room off the Chapel. Beginning knitters and crocheters are always welcome.

COFFEE HOUR

Do you enjoy coffee, delicious treats and the fellowship of our FCCLG family? Then please consider hosting a Coffee Hour one Sunday. Coffee, juice and all of the paper products are provided. You simply need to bring the treats of your choice, and serve the drinks. Individuals, couples, friends, and committees all are welcome to sign up! The sign up sheet is in the church office. Thank you. Ministry of Nurture.

BURNING CALORIES FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Mary Jo Benak -- certified Power Pilates instructor -- will be offering a Saturday morning Pilates class for beginners from 8-8:45 am. The cost is \$10/per class (cash only, please) and all proceeds support God's Closet, supplying free gently used and new clothing, shoes and supplies to people in need during the Saturday Meals Program. Come on Saturday, bring an exercise mat and dress comfortably. Use the NW Cossitt Ave. (glass door) entrance, and park on the street or in the La Grange Parking Garage only.

REMINDERS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

ZACKLY H.S. YOUTH GROUP: Zackley regular meetings are on Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Contact Katie Lancaster with questions, katie@fcclg.org.

GPS: Confirmation Dinner May 4th and Confirmation on May 5th. There will be another lock-in and a retreat to Pilgrim Park to be scheduled.



**HOSPITALIZED
(Currently and Recently)**

Plymouth Place Healthcare
Lexington Healthcare
La Grange Hospital
Hinsdale Hospital

Ruth Philbrook
Don Olson
Lydia Georgoff
Lois Earl

If you know of someone from our Congregation that is in the hospital, please inform one of the ministers or the office staff.

***** Please visit our website at www.fcclg.org. *****

Next Deadline for Tidings articles is THURSDAY, December 29 at 9:00 a.m.