From: elmhurstucc@sbcglobal.net,
To: camayal1@aol.com,
Subject: Tree of Life Newsletter – December 2021
Date: Wed, Dec 1, 2021 12:02 pm

DECEMBER 2021

CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH US

Celebrate the Light of Christ with First Congregational

Advent Worship Services – Sunday Mornings at 10:00 a.m.
- December 5  Worship and Lighting of the Advent Candles
- December 12  Youth-Led Christmas Program “To the Manger”
- December 19  Worship and Lighting of the Advent Candles

Advent Study – “Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas”
- Wednesday Evenings: December 1, December 8, December 15
  Dinner at 6:30 p.m. with Discussion & Study at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
- December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

WORSHIP MINISTRY

The Worship Team is still meeting joyously every Wednesday to plan out worship services. We are so excited to share, together, in the beautiful Advent services that are upon us!

As always, we are working hard to secure guest ministers that challenge our minds, lift our spirits and bring us all peace. We look
forward to hearing your feedback on the extraordinary group of ministers visiting us.

We continue to encourage in person worship. We are a family ... a spiritual family. And together we are reminded how blessed we are to have each other and share in Sunday worship.

We look forward to experiencing all the joy of the Season ... together.

Sincerely, Martha Mendoza, Jim Molina, Don Haraf and Margaret Chittaro

ALL CHURCH EVENT

Our Mission and Christian Education boards are so excited to be carrying out this outreach effort in person again.

The need for this Christmas effort has stood the test of time as we celebrate 16 years of bringing a smile to the children of some of our most poor communities in Illinois. Thank you for your unwavering support. First Congregational of Elmhurst is proud to be partnering up again with San Lucas United Church of Christ in Humboldt Park, Chicago and God Can Ministries in Ford Heights, IL.

Here's how you can participate: Pick out some gift tags which are on the hospitality table in the church foyer. Don't forget to write your name and contact information on the sign-up sheet. This is important as it helps us know what tags have been taken and who is responsible for buying the gifts. When buying your gift, stay in the $25.00 value range. Do not wrap your gifts. Bringing them in a decorative gift bag is nice but not necessary. Please have your gift to the church by **Sunday, December 19**. We encourage everyone to buy their own gift. It can be very meaningful to pick out a gift for a child especially if you are doing it with a family member.

For those of us that would like our gifts purchased for us: You can pick out your tags and get your check and tags to either Diane Wells or Martha Mendoza and they will arrange the purchasing of your gifts. You can also put your donation for gifts into the offering plate on Sundays or make your donation using the Tithely app the finance office will inform us of the donation for the Magi gift. Please have your envelope of check state Magi Gifts.

"On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11

PULPIT SEARCH COMMITTEE

Fritz Baumgartner, Margaret Bixler, Margaret Chittaro, Gayle Dawson, Vanessa Jackson, Bob Kanzler, and Janet Russell

The Search Committee is pleased with the progress we are making in our search for a new pastor. We have several interviews with ministers who have a wide range of ministerial styles and interests. We have begun discussions about the structure of the second interview process and have extended our first invitation for a second interview. We have also begun discussion regarding hearing finalists preach at a neutral pulpit.

THE TRUSTEES

Fritz Baumgartner, Margaret Chittaro, Jan Davis, Mike Hennel, Bob Kanzler, Carrie Stone
We have just about wrapped up our 2022 Stewardship Campaign with strong participation. 80% of our past supporters have already made a new pledge for 2022 with the average pledge amount increasing. Notably, 10% of pledges are from new supporters. It is not too late to submit your pledge on-line or via pledge card, call the office if you need any help. Thank you so much!

Many members have commented about how great the building looks from the exterior. The new parking lot, landscaping, and power washed stone are terrific! You may be aware of on-going flood remediation projects which are required before we make much desired upgrades to our interior spaces. Work completed on the north side of the building and the parking lot allowed us to upgrade the Tree Town space. This spring we will complete the remaining flood remediation on the south side of the building. This will prepare us to make investments inside the building. Expect us to share our capital expenditure plans in the coming year for review with staff, Council, and the Congregation!

We look forward to being together and preparing together during the Season of Advent. As your Trustees, we seek to support our church family's efforts to share our faith and love in a broken world. We are inspired by you to care for our building and our staff so that we have a wonderful platform from which to share God's Love. This gives us hope!

THE DIACONATE
Don Haraf, Calvin Jackson, Carolee Luppino, Claire Richter

All of us are excited with the coming of Advent. As all of us fill up our calendars with December festivities we are again asking our members to find time to sign up to be Sunday Scripture readers during this holiday season. There is a sign-up sheet on the board in the foyer or email dharaf@comcast.net and we can sign you up.

The Deacons would also like to express their gratitude to all that came out to be a part of the Hanging of the Greens. It's so good to have decorated and be ready to celebrate in our church this year. Thank you.

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
Brian Brigman, Dorothy Hamby, Chair Tammy Hicks, Vanessa Jackson, Martha Mendoza, Lynette Rosen, Jeff Sloma, Karen Sloma

Advent Study "Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas"

Don't let the busyness of the season get the best of you! Join us on the following Wednesdays for dinner and an enlightening discussion in our beautiful parlor. No reservations are required.

Dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. with the discussion & study beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 1
Preparring the Way

Wednesday, December 8
Spiritual Practices During Advent

Wednesday, December 15
Advent Traditions and Practices
We look forward to having you be a part of this time together.

**Youth-Led Worship and Christmas Program**  
"To the Manger"  
Sunday, December 12, 2021

There is no better way to kick off the season then with some heavenly chaos that only children can provide. Please mark your calendars and plan on joining us for a joy filled morning as our youth lead morning praises and our children present a retelling of the sacred Christmas story. We look forward to celebrating with you!

**Bakers Needed!**

As part of our morning festivities on Sunday, December 12, we are carrying out a Christmas Bake Sale. Bakers are needed to bring their favorite Christmas cookies and treats to be sold after the worship. All of the proceeds support our youth work trip this summer.

**Order for the Holidays!**

The Board of Christian Education is excited to be kicking off our 2nd Annual Gingerbread House Fundraiser! This year’s mini gingerbread house kits are locally baked by Life’s Sweet Bakery & Café in Chicago.

Each kit comes with all you need and costs $25.00. Consider purchasing more than one kit to share the fun with family & friends. Create a new family tradition by bringing these kits to your Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. We have ordered a limited quantity so reserve your kit soon!

To purchase your kit, please click the red box below. Please complete the order form and drop off or mail to the church. Payment can also be made online through Tithe.ly by choosing "Gingerbread House Fundraiser". All proceeds of this fundraiser will benefit this summer’s work trip to Puerto Rico.

Once you have completed decorating your gingerbread house, send a selfie/photo with your decorated gingerbread house by December 27 to Brian Brigman at bbrigman9700@gmail.com for a friendly competition and a chance to win a prize. We will be featuring all photos on our church’s website and Facebook page to celebrate your creativity.

If you have any questions, please contact Vanessa Jackson vanny.jackson1107@gmail.com or Brian Brigman bbrigman9700@gmail.com. Thank you for your support!

**Children’s Sunday School & Pageant Rehearsals**

In anticipation of Christmas children attending Sunday School during this month of December, will be focusing on the Christmas Story.
will also be using our time together to learn more about the roles of some of the biblical characters God empowered to announce and prepare the way for Jesus’s birth.

Our children’s Christmas Pageant will reinforce our learning by carrying out their “To the Manger” presentation as this year’s gift to God and our congregation.

Pageant rehearsals will be carried as follows
- During Sunday School on December 5 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. and after worship in the sanctuary from 11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Saturday, December 11 in the church sanctuary from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Our pageant will be carried out on Sunday, December 12 at our 10:00 a.m. worship service.

Hope you can join us!

MUSIC MINISTRY
Jim Molina

As the Music Ministry prepares for Advent and Christmas, we are constantly reminded of the hope that Jesus teaches us. The hope for peace, for a better world, for a better life. The songs we sing reach us deeply with their words that tell the story of our faith. Our Advent Cantata tells such a story; the coming of a baby who has come to fulfill the prophecy of God’s love. We reflect on these powerful words in the song, “I Wonder as I Wander”…the lyrics at the end say, “I wonder as I wander out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die”. It is the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate gift.

The Music Ministry prays that we fulfill our promise to bring praise to God through our music and other means. We wish you all a meaningful Advent season and a joyous Merry Christmas.

GREEN TEAM
Karen Pachyn

Green Team Tip of The Month - December 2021

There are many difficult things about living in Illinois - high taxes for example. But at last, we have something of which we can be truly proud. In September, Governor Pritzker signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (SB2408). This is a nation leading climate and equity bill to phase out fossil fuels in the power sector and require electricity providers to source at least 50% of their power from renewable energy. It sets a goal of getting Illinois to clean energy by 2050, builds an equitable clean energy future for all Illinoisans and holds utilities accountable. Both climate and equity were prioritized in this bill—working together to build a stronger economy that benefits all Illinoisans, while cutting fossil fuel emissions and protecting the planet. For more information about CEJA see the Faith In Place website: https://www.faithinplaceaction.org/post/we-finally-did-it-celebrating-illinois-passing-the-climate-and-equitable-jobs-act Faith In Place was instrumental in getting the act passed.

While we’re celebrating the passage of CEJA, we look forward to celebrating Christmas too. One of the ways the Green Team will be doing that is with our annual holiday lights recycling event. There will be a container in the Tree of Life foyer in which you will be able to deposit your lights beginning on Sunday, November 28 and will remain there until early January. Lights will be taken to Elmhurst City Hall as part of a wider community recycling event.
Have a joyful and safe holiday!

The Green Team
Don Haraf, Jennifer Hennen, Carolee Luppino, Chris Murray, Shirley Myers, Gail Ogdon, Karen Pachyn, Claire Richter, Bob Tracy

HERITAGE BUNCH

Greetings …

We are called the Heritage Bunch
We meet 10 to Noon …yes, just before lunch
Two Wednesdays a month and we really have fun
It’s interesting talk … from when we start till we’re done!

We solve the world’s problems, of each other we care
We talk and we laugh and we end with a prayer.

If you’re looking for a group, but you don’t just know where
There’s nothing we’d like better than to have you right there.

Come join us …
2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

PASTORAL CARE
Rev. Jan Davis

Caring for One Another
Supporting our members during everyday occurrences, ailments, and even the passing away of a loved one is highest among our calling as a church. During this period of a pastoral search, Rev. Jan Davis will be providing pastoral care. She will be reaching out to those of us that have enjoyed regular pastoral visits and for any emergency that may arise.

If you have any pastoral needs, please don’t hesitate to contact the church office at 630-832-2580.

CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS

| 3 Dorothy Hamby | 15 Dan Briggs |
| 6 Margaret Bixler | 16 Pam McCann |
| 8 Jim DuBois | 22 Jean Dixon |
| 14 Carolee Luppino | 24 Karen Sloma |
| 15 Carol Ringhoff | 25 Nick Bresnahan |
| Katie and Baby Carlson | Louis Reed |
| Angela Burrell | Janet Rowe |
| Dan Dallas | Basia Rudy |
| Ed Eckert | Bob Tracy |
### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December</th>
<th>Event/Room</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advent Study Dinner and Discussion</td>
<td>6:30 – 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:30 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advent Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Children’s Christmas Pageant Rehearsal</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch – Parlor</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Advent Study Dinner and Discussion</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Children’s Christmas Pageant Rehearsal</td>
<td>10:00 – 11:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Youth Led Worship Service with Christmas Pageant</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Christmas Bake Sale</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch Christmas Party</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Advent Study Dinner and Discussion</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:30 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Advent Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:30 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Christmas Eve Worship Service</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:30 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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### TITHE.LY GIVING

Give with Tithe.ly from anywhere at any time. Download the Tithe.ly giving app to get started. You’ll find First Congregational United Church of Christ, Elmhurst, IL. Your gift is safe and secure and goes directly to our church.

[Click HERE for more info on Tithe.ly](https://mail.aol.com/webmail-std/en-us/PrintMessage)
Support First Congregational each time you make a purchase on Amazon. Sign up and shop at smile.amazon.com and a portion of your purchase will be donated back to First Congregational at no cost to you. This is an easy way for us to earn some extra money! Please make sure you sign up to participate. Thank you!

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Partners in Christ's Service

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(630) 400-7747

Church Staff
Martha Mendoza, Director of Christian Education
Jim Molina, Director of Music
Heather Cross, Bookkeeper
Kim Brigman, Office Assistant

Rev. Dr. Ernest H. Huntzinger, Emeritus Minister

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