

You have come down to...

OUR LAKESHORE



epiphany

JANUARY 2021

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS...

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A Happy New Year to all! We just began a New Church Year and now it's 2021, a new civil year. It's like everything is new. One thing that isn't new is that we make the stories our own of the Feasts of our Savior's Birth, Epiphany, and Baptism of Christ. We know the New-born Christ Child as the eternal image of the Holy One

beyond our understanding and limits of time and space. We can't limit God's love. All of this celebrating awakens the mystery of the living God within us. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. We are created in God's very image. All are children of the One God.

Epiphany is God's amazing embrace. Knowing that this happened centuries ago, we make the story new and vibrant for each generation. This is a living reminder that our lives are held by the Source of Life. Being transformed we are called to transform the world around us with this Good News. I trust that we will have many years together, despite Covid19, of sharing our lives in the One who loved us first. Part of the story tells us that God's love is for all. God is inviting all into God's warm and loving home.

Isn't it odd how day by day nothing seems to change, but when you look back, so much is different. Change has its inherent risks. One never knows how something will turn out until one tries. Let's imagine a new and different way to be the followers of Jesus in this coming year.

2021 will be a magnificent year if we have understood the lessons we learned in 2020. We will see things much more clearly. Our insight will be heightened and brightened to envision all that God is doing with and for us. Don't overlook a miracle only because it doesn't come in the package you expect it to.

I would like to share with you the Summary of Grounding and Compassionate Action by Rev Richard Rohr. This is from his daily online devotional for December 27:

Our theme for the Daily Meditations in 2020 has been Contemplation and Action. We hope that you, our larger CAC community, have found some sort of regular contemplative practice to be sustaining in these challenging times. We hope contemplation has helped you discern what actions have been yours to do to confront systemic injustices and to help those most affected by the pandemic. Looking ahead, we trust that our contemplative practices will support us as we seek a path forward for healing, respect for those with whom we differ, and pursuit of unity in our world.

At the Center for Action and Contemplation, we seek to ground compassionate action in contemplative, nondual consciousness. When we experience the reality of our oneness with God, others, and creation, actions of justice and healing naturally follow. If we're working to create a more whole world, contemplation will give our actions nonviolent, loving power for the long haul.

The civil rights leader John Lewis (1940–2020) has been an inspiration to many of us this year. How did this saintly public man avoid deeper recognition for so long? His words read like a prayer for contemplative action:

Study the path of others to make your way easier and more abundant. Lean toward the whispers of your own heart, discover the universal truth, and follow its dictates. Know that the truth always leads to love and the perpetuation of peace. Its products are never bitterness and strife. Clothe yourself in the work of love, in the revolutionary work of nonviolent resistance against evil. Anchor the eternity of love in your own

soul and embed this planet with goodness. Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won. Choose confrontation wisely, but when it is your time don't be afraid to stand up, speak up, and speak out against injustice. And if you follow your truth down the road to peace and the affirmation of love, if you shine like a beacon for all to see, then the poetry of all the great dreamers and philosophers is yours to manifest in a nation, a world community, and a Beloved Community that is finally at peace with itself.

In an interview several years ago, I offered the following words, which are still applicable now: “Some form of contemplative practice is the only way (apart from great love and great suffering) to rewire people’s minds and hearts. It is the only form of prayer that dips into the unconscious and changes people at deep levels—where all of the wounds, angers, and recognitions lie hidden. Only some form of prayer of quiet changes people for good and for others in any long-term way. It sustains and deepens the short-term wisdom we learn in great love and great suffering.”

This year let us open up our minds and hearts.
Peace on the journey

Peter David

CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!



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I hope everyone had a Blessed Christmas with your family and a Happy and safe New Year.

In December we had a problem with the small kitchenette in the parlor and found it needed to be replaced. We have replaced it with a new kitchen sink and counter. Next time you are at church please check it out. A big thank you needs to go out to Bob Smith, who removed the old unit and installed the new sink and counter. Nice job Bob!!!!!!

The Food bank continues to provide food to people in the community. This is a nice outreach for our church. We received a very generous donation from the Eastlake VFW post for the food bank this month. People who are receiving the food appreciate this service and express their thanks every time they come.

Please remember to return your pledge cards to the church as soon as possible. This will help us prepare our budget for 2021. The offering envelopes are available on the table in the Narthex. Be sure to pick yours up when you come to church.

Stay safe and be sure to wear your mask when you are out and about. We all need to help stop the spread of this disease.

Diana L. Kurzawa



ABOUT THE FEASTS

THE INCARNATION

In the early centuries of the church there was one Great Feast known as the Incarnation—God taking on flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It became such an important part of who we are as Christians that by the 4th century the Feast was divided into many parts so that the entire story, as each of us could begin to comprehend it, might be told. That original Feast was on January 6. The Birth of Jesus (Christmas—literally the Mass of Christ) was moved 12 days earlier to December 25. Hence the 12 Days of Christmas. Each day had a different commemoration, Mary his mother on the 26th, Joseph and James on the first Sunday after and in between a remembrance of the Innocent Children slaughtered by Herod, January 1 as the Circumcision of Jesus. With the change January 6 then became known as Epiphany which means a *revelation*. Christian communities commemorated different things that day as well as during the Christmas season. In some places Epiphany remembered the Magi, the Three Kings, as its known in most Spanish speaking countries. Some communities and churches looked at Epiphany as a remembrance of the Baptism of Jesus, while others chose that for the following Sunday. When looking at Epiphany as the baptism it also became known as Theophany which means a revelation of God where the Trinity is clearly seen as the Voice of God, the Man Jesus, the Spirit in the form of a Dove. If this sounds confusing, don't worry, it eventually becomes clear as we live all of this out in our daily lives and in our common life as People of Faith. One of the reasons Christians have so many ways of celebrating and commemorating these events is that we cannot comprehend the Incomprehensible One.



The church mouse

Holidays have really been different this year. I hope that everyone will keep their celebrations small so we can get through this pandemic. There are a lot of friends and family in nursing homes and assisted living that we are unable to visit. Please keep them in your prayers.

Our January birthdays include Rae Kinnaird, Nicole DePasquale, Nancy Reeb, Ernie Finch, Aubrielle Rose Ellis, Peter Herrin and Cady Alexander.

Thought I would share a Christmas poem by Joanna Fuchs:

True Christian Christmas

Christmas isn't showy gifts
Or glittering decoration;
It's honoring our Savior, Jesus Christ
In humble adoration.
It's serving those less fortunate,
Meeting their needs before our own;
It's making sure at Christmas time
That no one is alone.
It's taking what we would have spent
On things that no one needs,
And using it to help someone
With service and good deeds.
Our Savior showed us how to live
With charity, faith and service.
It makes the holidays a joy,
More peaceful, and less nervous.
So let's remember Christmas is
About our Savior's birth;
That's the way to happiness,
The way to peace on earth

Words of Wisdom: If you're refusing to wear a mask due to concerns your brain won't get enough oxygen, I think that ship has already sailed.

Wishing you a joyful and safe holiday season.



POINSETTIAS

*The flowers truly helped make our sanctuary beautiful!
We give thanks and prayers for your loved ones*



Giver

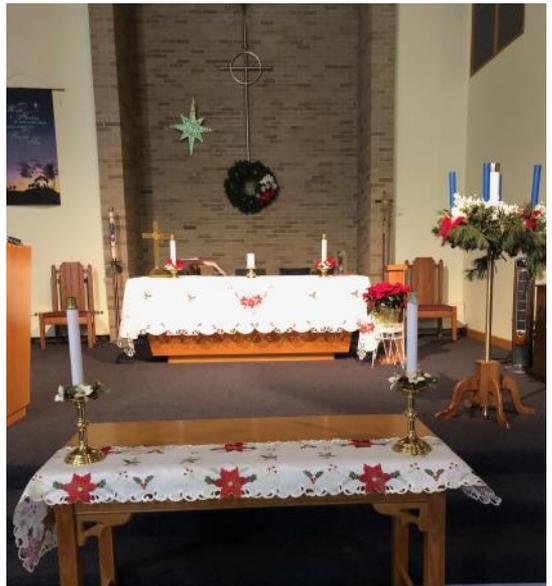
Judy DePasquale
Rev David & Peter Herron
Helen Karpoff
Diana Kurzawa
Charles & Merry Rumbold
Congregation
Congregation

In Memory of

My Beloved husband, Alfred
Members of First UCC
My beloved husband, Walt
Robert & Maude Hunscher
Our Parents
Lois Frazier
Aaron Boyce



Christmas 2020





ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

**January 17 after worship
(Council Meeting January 10)**

Agenda

- ◆ **Comments and questions on various reports**
- ◆ **Approval of 2021 Budget**

The 2020 Annual Report will be available in church by Sunday January 10. This will give you two weeks to read it and be able to ask questions on the 19th if you have any! They will not be mailed out this year. Call the office should you not be able to pick one up at church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Eternal Memory

In December we had two funerals a week apart. Lois Frazier, a long time member of Fellowship and First. And Aaron Boyce, son of Sherry and Pat Boyce. May their Memory be Eternal and may they find rest in the loving arms of God.

2021 Directory

If you have any changes to your entry, please let Pastor David know by January 10.

Church Council

January 10 after worship to finalize Annual Meeting..

UCC Christmas Fund

We collected slightly over \$153 during Advent and Christmas

Mitten Tree & Coat Drive

Our mitten tree was covered with 30 pairs of gloves, mittens, socks, and scarves. Blessings to all who donated. They are being donated Hope Shelter in Painesville. Thank you!

Thanksgiving & Christmas Collections 2020

Thanksgiving \$155. Christmas \$300.

2021 Pledge Cards

If you haven't returned your pledge card, please do so.

Clothing Drive

Participating: our Church, Youth Group, BSA Troop 1919, and GSA Troop 71256. Please bring in clothing, bedding, drapery, shoes.in black plastic bags. Please weigh them and fill out one of the pink forms that will be located on the back table. The collection will end on March 14. The donations will be given to Savers who will pay us .23¢ per pound. Each group will be responsible for their own collection and weighing.

STILL-SPEAKING DAILY DEVOTIONAL

MISSING

Mary Luti

This will be a sign for you ... a child, lying in a manger.” - Luke 2:12

We know all we know about the first Christmas Eve from a few Gospel stories, all written decades later, all different in detail. They have this in common though: no animals are mentioned at Jesus’ birth. No lowing cattle, no braying donkey, no stamping sheep, no droopy-eyed dromedaries parked outside.

Which is why, when it comes to Christmas, imagination is more reliable than Holy Writ. Christians know what to do with the bare bones of a good story: add flesh.

No animals? But there’s a manger, so there must’ve been animals! The evangelists probably just forgot. Surely God wants this corrected. Henceforth, then, let us sing about the donkey in the corner stall, paint loveable lambkins into the scene, arrange cattle in crèches where they belong and, while we’re at it, throw in Godzilla and a cat.

Thus have animals become gospel. It wouldn’t be Christmas without them.

I once got a card showing Little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. An ox muzzles at it, stink-eyeing the babe, as if to say, “You’re cute, little boy, but you’re lying on my dinner.” Ugh, I moralized, there it is on a Christmas card – humans monopolizing all the space, making life hard for every animal but us.

But I also felt glad. Glad the ox was even there. Glad that we humans, so self-centered most of the time, noticed for once that a vital part was missing and rushed to paint, write, and sing it back in. Glad, too, more than I can say, that tonight is born for us the One in whose bright realm no one is ever missing, no creature great or small left out of Love.

Prayer Newborn Child, give us imagination to see who’s missing and bring them right back in.

Theology Thursday

Adult & Family Education

Who was Mark? What is different about his Gospel from the other three? Why does he spend half the book on the death and resurrection of Jesus? How does his message speak to us today? These and other questions are examined in this four-part study on Mark.



We will have a Bible Study on Theology Thursdays during the month of January. We'll study the Gospel of Mark as it is this year's major gospel. Please pick up a copy of the 4 sessions. On the back table.

Session One: The identity of the author is explored, as well as why, when, and to whom he wrote the Gospel.

Session Two: What does it mean to call Jesus the Son of God? We'll see how Mark understood this.

Session Three: What does it mean to be a Christian disciple. How do we faithfully follow Jesus?

Session Four: Mark's account of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Why did Jesus feel forsaken on the cross? What does that mean for us? Why is the cross a symbol of our salvation?

If you choose not to
find joy in the snow,
you will have less joy
in your life but still the
same amount of snow.



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JANUARY WORSHIP & SCRIPTURE READINGS FROM THE LECTIONARY

January 3—*Epiphany*

ANOTHER ROAD

Isaiah 60.1-6 Psalm 72.1-7,10-14

Ephesians 3.1-12 Matthew 2.1-12



January 10—*Baptism of the Lord* **POSSIBILITIES**

DEFINING MOMENTS

Genesis 1.1-5 Psalm 29

Acts 19.1-7 Mark 1.4-11



January 17 —*Second Sunday after Epiphany*

KNOWN AND LOVED

1 Samuel 3.1-20 Psalm 139.1-6,13-18

1 Corinthians 6.12-20 John 1.43-51

January 24 —*Third Sunday after Epiphany*

FOLLOW ME

Jonah 3.1-5,10 Psalm 62.5-12

1 Corinthians 6.12-20 Mark 1.14-20

January 31 —*Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*

POWER TO DO

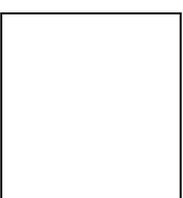
Deuteronomy 18.15-20 Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8.1-13 Mark 1.21-28

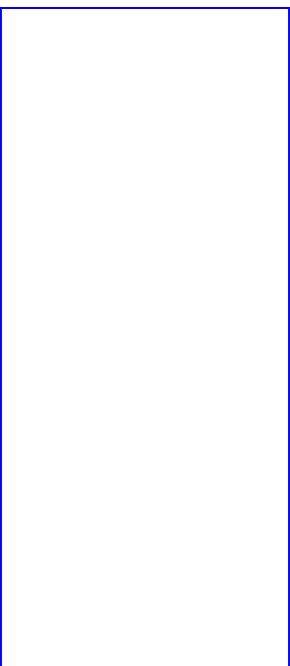
BLESSINGS FOR NEW YEAR 2021

If you would like to have a pastoral visit in your home, or simply need to talk, please call Reverend David at the church office at 440.951.0291 or on his cell at 216.832.3453 or by email at pastorfirstucc@gmail.com. He will be pleased to meet with you.

*The Lakeshore
First United Church of Christ
36721 Lake Shore Blvd + Eastlake Ohio 44095*



First Class Mail



**No matter who you are or where you are
in life's journey, you are welcome here!
And we mean it!**

