

# The Congregationalist

Volume 18 Issue 5

January 2018

The Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Westfield, NJ

## Senior Minister's Message Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea

Hi...

Later this month, the President will offer the annual "State of the Union" address to the nation. The "State of the Union" is meant to be both a review of where we are as a country at the end of the previous year, as well as a preview of where we need to go and how we will get there during the current year.

In November, however, the acclaimed writer Annie Proulx offered what has been labeled a "State of the World" address on the occasion of her receiving the National Book Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Proulx began by lamenting current conditions: "despicable political figures and sexual harassment reports"; "repetitive crowd murders by gunmen burning with rage"; "flickering threats of nuclear war"; "a population dividing into bitter tribal cultures"; "the accelerating destruction of the natural world".

Whew.

But then Proulx's address took a critical turn.

"Yet somehow", she continued, "old values and longings persist. We still have tender feelings for such notions as truth, respect for others, honor, justice, and sharing. We still hope for a happy ending. The happy ending still beckons, and it is in hope of grasping it that we go on."

We won't find it anywhere in the Bible - and I would never remotely imply that a writer of Proulx's rare abilities plagiarized them - but in my mind, heart, and imagination I have heard this "State of the World" address before - from God. We don't have those exact words from God, but what Proulx expresses is the exact message of Christmas. At Christmas, God, while lamenting the state of the world at that time, still had tender feelings for notions like truth, honor, justice and sharing. God still held hope for a happy ending. So God sent Jesus into that world as both the embodiment of those notions, and inspiration for humanity to believe in and grasp for that happy ending.

For those of us in the Christian spiritual tradition, it is fitting then that the beginning of each new year so closely follows Christmas. The start of each new year is our opportunity to recommit to the happy ending that God's "State of the World" message at Christmas reminds us is possible through the example and inspiration of Jesus.

New Year Blessings,

Mark



## WORSHIP NOTES

### Saturday, January 6 - "First Saturday"

Our monthly "First Saturday" Worship celebration takes place in the Sanctuary at 5:30pm. "First Saturday" is intended for those who find it difficult to be with us regularly on Sunday mornings due to work or family obligations, as well as those who desire a quieter, more contemplative worship experience on occasion.

### Sunday, January 7

Join us as we celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together for the first time in 2018. Also, the Bell Choir will bless us with an anthem on this day.

### Sunday, January 14

We remember and recommit ourselves to Jesus' call to work for justice for all God's people on this Sunday of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend. This will also be one of our "One Room Church School" Sundays.

### Monday, January 15 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westfield Interfaith Service

Westfield's annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Service will take place at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 414 East Broad Street, at 1pm. Please consider joining in this time of remembrance and recommitment to Dr. King's work for racial justice and equality.

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**Associate Minister's Message**

*Rev. Joy Mounts,*

**Snippets of Life**

I have been trying to keep up a daily SnapChat picture exchange with my youngest sister, Amy. Snapchat is an application with which you take a picture and it exists for only 24 hours. The pictures are like little snippets of life. My sister uses it to send our extended family pictures and videos of my nieces and nephews. But since Thanksgiving we have been trying to keep a streak going, i.e., we each send one to the other every day. So far, we have done well. A lot of hers are of waiting at the bus stop with my nephews at 6:40am. Mine are not taken that early!

What I like about them is that they truly are slice of life photos that keep us connected even though she lives in South Carolina. In a world where our connections seem less and less face to face oriented, getting to see their faces and the videos is one way to stay in touch. I know I look forward to getting a picture every day and she does too. Of course, as wonderful as these moments are they can never really take the place of an actual conversation. That bond, that connection, is more important than any app can convey.

Connection to family, friends, each other – this is all something that we crave. Connection to God is also something that we long for. And not just in a SnapChat way but a real, concrete and lasting way. We may wish that we had a way to do a Snapchat with God every day – “Here is what I am up to God, please send me a picture of what You are up to as well.” That would be wonderful, wouldn't it? But in a way, we can, because God is with us. We just have to open our eyes to see.

We really don't need SnapChat or any other application to help us see God at work in our lives. God is weaving God's presence through our days. We just need to lean into that presence, trust, listen, and let God in. To see that it is not the snippets of life that God wants to be a part of but our whole lives. All the moments – good, sad, fun, difficult and more – each and every moment.

It's a new year and a good time to look back and see all the times God was with us and then face forward knowing that God will continue to be with us in the future. That is the promise that God has made to us.

All we have to do is take the time to see.

Peace,

Joy

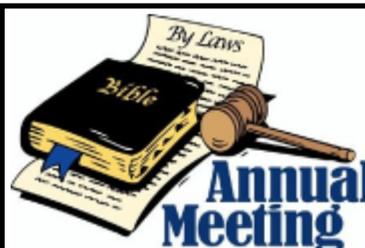
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**WORSHIP NOTES**

**Sunday, January 28 - Annual Meeting Sunday**

After the 10am Worship celebration, we gather in the Sanctuary to fulfill the sacred responsibility of discussing and voting on the governance and financial concerns of our spiritual community - the coming year's budget, the candidates for our board and lay leadership positions, and any other issues which need to be addressed under our democratic framework. (See more below)



One of the most important events of the year for our congregation takes place on Sunday, January 28.

Please plan to remain after Worship that morning for this year's Annual Meeting. At approximately 11:30am, we will gather in the Sanctuary to fulfill our sacred responsibility to discuss and vote on a new budget, the candidates for our boards and lay leadership positions, and any other issues which need to be addressed in keeping with our truly democratic form of governance. Please make every effort to be there. We are a vital and engaged community only to the extent that we are vital and engaged members. A critical factor in the health of our spiritual community is the active and informed participation of our members. Unlike many other Christian denominations and churches, we are almost completely self-governed. We have no hierarchy, bishops or other designated officials who we either take orders or receive funding from. Therefore, we need *everyone's* involvement in our “spiritual democracy” to remain the thriving place we are.

**YOU give them something to eat. Mt 14:16**

**January Communion Offering**



This month our Communion Offering will benefit the FCC Food Closet.

The FCC Food Closet is an on-site food pantry started as a Confirmation project in 2006. It has evolved into a regular source of non-perishables and toiletries. Donations are always welcome and needed. Unfortunately, the number of those who need its resources grows each year, and your generous donations of items and financial support are greatly appreciated.



**Advent and Christmas  
Gratitude**



From the lighting of the first Advent candle to the last strains of “Silent Night” at the conclusion of the Christmas Eve candlelight celebration, I would like to express my enormous gratitude to all of you for making Advent and Christmas of 2017 so blessed. Thanks be to God for:

- The consistently high worship attendance and spirit of our community
- The representatives of the community who led us in the lighting of the Advent candles
- The Children’s choirs for their joyful voices on Sunday mornings and Christmas Eve
- The Sunday School children for their musical presentation during the Advent Festival
- All those who put so much time and effort into the Advent Festival—especially, Denise Schifando, Bridget Andersen and Rev. Mounts.
- The Festival Chorus for once again lifting us all with their Advent program, *“The Joy of Christmas”*
- The Chancel Choir for their constant presence and significant contribution to **all** our worship celebrations
- The musical gifts and leadership of Dr. Barbara Thomson when it came to the Children’s Choir, Chancel Choir, Bell Choir, and Festival Chorus.
- The musical gifts and leadership of Joe Regan in preparing our Sunday School children for the Advent Festival and in providing musical leadership for our newest tradition of Christmas morning Worship
- The Deacons and other members who made our Sanctuary look so beautiful through obtaining and placing the greens, flowers and poinsettias; Many thanks as well to the Deacons for their skilled and devoted assistance during **all** our Advent and Christmas services
- The children and adults who together made another meaningful Christmas Eve pageant possible—especially Rev. Joy Mounts, who graced us with another original play.
- And of course, Jim Palme and Tom Lawler, who in their humble way keep things running around here so that we can do all the things above

Lastly, as I once read in an author’s book preface—“My apologies for any errors or omissions. The responsibility for them is solely mine.”

Mark

**Finances at FCC**

The key word in the phrase “First Congregational Church of Westfield” is the word “Congregation”. While FCC is part of the greater United Church of Christ, it belongs to the congregation. The UCC constitution says it best: “The basic unit of life and organization of the United Church of Christ is the local church.” Independence and local control have made this a vibrant community that reflects the values and beliefs of its members. Part of that independence includes responsibility for all aspects of the fiscal life of the church.

Our church depends on three revenue streams: 1) pledge income from members, 2) rent from the Compass Schoolhouse and other organizations, and 3) funds from our endowment. With these monies we tend to the facilities, pay the utilities, pay the salaries of our wonderful ministers and staff members, and support church activities and outreach efforts. We do not receive income or fiscal support from the United Church of Christ. In fact, we provide substantial support to the UCC’s Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) program every year.

The congregation is responsible for approving the budget. The budget is presented and voted on at the Annual Meeting. Copies of the proposed budget are included in the Annual Report. It is strongly recommended that members of the congregation attend the Annual Meeting to learn more about the workings of FCC, the fiscal future of the church, and to exercise their right to have a say in the budget process.

The 2018 annual meeting will be held after Worship on January 28, 2018.



**2018 Holy Land Trip**

Having looked at several different tour packages, Journeys Unlimited appears to have the most reasonable rates. We would travel for 10 days beginning either on October 15, 2018 or November 5, 2018. The price would be approximately \$3500 for the 10 days. This includes airfare, hotels and most meals. A complete itinerary can be found at <http://www.journeys-unlimited.com/>, then click on “Tours” and then “Holy Land” and then “10 Day Holy Land Seminar”. We would like a group of at least 8-10 people, but the more the merrier!

While 10 days away from home, work and family is a long time, I urge you to prioritize this trip if you want to see the Holy Land. Deposits need to be made by February 15, 2018.

Please contact me as soon as possible to let me know if you would like to join the trip. Merry Wisler - (908) 403-7609 (text is best or after work calls) or email: [merry.wisler@gmail.com](mailto:merry.wisler@gmail.com)



**Adult Studies Resumes in January**

We begin the New Year with the return of one of our most popular courses in recent years:

**“Great Decisions”**

Mondays: January 22, 29; February 5, 12, 19 and 26  
7:30-9:00pm  
Coe Hall

“Great Decisions” is a video and discussion based educational series offered by the Foreign Policy Association. For six weeks, we will explore a variety of current topics of deep importance both nationally and internationally, with commentary from notable political, academic and media figures.



**WaySharers**

On Friday, January 5 at 7pm we will have WaySharers Yoga in Ketcham Hall.

Then on Friday, January 26 at 7pm the Confirmation class will join WaySharers for a game night in Coe.

For more information about WaySharers, call Cynthia Mathis (908) 233-0180.



The Readers and Riders gathered for their annual Christmas lunch. This year it was held in Patton Auditorium. Good food, fellowship and carols with Dr. Thomson at the piano!

**Calling Interested Adults To Sign Up For The Spring 2018 FCC Adult Retreat!**

Another exciting adult retreat is in the works, and we are encouraging anyone who is interested to sign up now and reserve your spot. We identified a new facility this year to accommodate a larger group, and we are excited to be back in Ocean Grove in what looks to be a beautiful retreat facility, located only a few blocks from the beach.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Friday, April 27 (evening) - Saturday, April 28 (late afternoon) 2018</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Grove Hall Christian Conference &amp; Retreat Center, Ocean Grove, NJ</b> <a href="https://www.oceangrove.org/grove-hall">https://www.oceangrove.org/grove-hall</a>
<b>Who</b>	Open to FCC adults of all ages, friends, and family members s
<b>Cost</b>	Cost is <b>\$150</b> per person <b>\$50 deposit</b> is requested to reserve your spot <b>by Jan 15.</b> Rooms can accommodate 1 or 2 people, depending on your need/interest.
<b>Retreat Theme</b>	<i>Christian Soup – What do we Gather from our Spiritual Garden?</i>

Feedback on previous years’ retreats has been very positive, and those who attend typically feel very enlightened, relaxed, and refreshed afterwards. This is a great opportunity to step away from your daily routine and spend some quality time with others from our FCC community. The schedule will be flexible, and you can participate in as much or little of the structured program as you wish. The activities are being designed around the theme of “Christian Soup – What do we Gather From our Spiritual Garden?”

Come join us for good music, activities, reflections, food, and worship. Sign up by contacting Ruth Indelicato at [ruth566@live.com](mailto:ruth566@live.com) or Lyn Kelman at [lynkelman@gmail.com](mailto:lynkelman@gmail.com).

We look forward to seeing you there!

The FCC Adult Retreat Planning Team

**Readers and Riders**

Make a resolution to start the New Year with fun and fellowship by joining Readers and Riders at 12:30pm on Thursday, January 4 in Patton Auditorium.

The soup pot will be simmering. - just bring your own sandwich.

After lunch we will enjoy watching the movie “Going in Style” which features Morgan Freeman, Michael Caine, Alan Arkin, and Ann-Margaret on the new 75-inch TV. The stars are all ‘oldies but goodies.’



Please call Bev Heinrich at (908) 233-8656 by January 2 to sign up or for more information.



**January**

- 7 11:30am Class in Middle High Classroom
- 11 7:00pm Bridges Sandwich Making
- 12 5:00pm Bridges Run – NYC
- 14 11:30am Lunch at the Westfield Diner with Mentors
- 21 11:30am Class in the Middle High Classroom
- 26 (Friday) 7pm WaySharers Game Night
- 28 11:30am Attend Annual Meeting after Worship

**Christmas Eve Pageant Thanks!**

Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make the Christmas Eve Pageant such a success! Thanks to the cast, parents, angel wranglers and more. Thanks for all of your hard work! Pictured is the cast of “The Goat Herders’ Christmas.”



HAPPY NEW YEAR



**Youth Fellowship Update**

December was a busy month for Youth Fellowship even though we only had one meeting. We helped to run several tables at the Advent Festival on Sunday, December 3, including a ribbon craft and Christmas cards for our Compassion International child – Arnel Diana – who is from the Philippines. On December 10, we had a meeting led by YF Leader Sophia Andersen where we played lots of different games. Then on Sunday, December 17, we had our annual YF/Confirmation Christmas Party with over seventy students, mentors, parents and siblings in attendance and held in the newly renovated Patton Auditorium. It was a lot of fun, especially the Annual Christmas Quiz which was once again emceed by Dr. Boyea. Lots of Christmas socks were won!

Many of the YF are also in the 5pm Christmas Eve pageant or helping to read Scriptures.

In January we will have two regular meetings and a Bridges Run to NYC on Friday, January 12. It is for senior highs only. However, we will be making bag lunches and sandwiches on Thursday, January 11 and that is open for all the YF to help with.

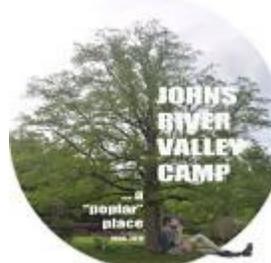
We will continue to work on the Mission Trip planning and fundraising. Coming up in the winter/spring are our trip to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for Nightwatch, our work day in NYC with YSOP, a possible ice skating trip and our annual paper airplane making contest and race. Stay tuned for more details!

Please see Rev. Mounts if you have any questions or concerns.

**January**

- 7 5pm Meeting
- 11 7pm Bridges Sandwich Making
- 12 5:30pm Bridges Run – NYC
- 14 No YF
- 21 No YF
- 28 5pm Meeting

**Mission Trip Update**



As of this writing we have sent in the Mission Trip deposit to the Johns’ River Valley Camp to hold the third week in July, 2018 for our FCC group of fifty. We will be doing lots of different outreach and service projects during that time. We will also work with their team to custom create the mission week for us. We will soon begin planning our fundraisers so please keep an eye out for

information in the future *Congregationalists*. Our first one will be the Spaghetti Supper and Talent Show on Saturday, March 3 at 6pm. So be sure to save the date.



I'm still a little bit in mourning since my last Sunday at FCC on 12/10. I miss you already.

I feel so blessed to have been part of this wonderful church for so many years (at least 30)! I have so many things to be thankful for:

Thanks to my inclusive, compassionate church family who always made me feel welcome and valued, as is the case with all who enter our church;

To Mark & Joy for leading this church on the right path – the one that Jesus would have us travel, and for the wonderful sermons that were inspirational, incisive, and always on-point.

To Barbara and my choir family for filling my heart, and the congregation, with beautiful music. I will miss the great sense of humor displayed at choir rehearsals, and though it seemed at the time that we couldn't figure out how to sing a piece of music, it always came out great in the end!

To the Board of Outreach, on which I served for many years-many thanks to the Board members who work very hard to serve our community and our church - always ready to reach out!

To Jim Palme, our Church Administrator, who is greatly appreciated, especially for all the work that has to be done and mailings to go out for the Marc Hardy Award program. That time is coming up again!

Thanks to Judy and Alan, for putting me up (or putting up with me), in their loving home. Thanks to those who offered their homes as well. Barbara, your house is next!

I will be back occasionally for Festival Chorus, the Marc Hardy Award, and whenever I can.

If I can find a church in Delaware that is ½ as good as FCC, I should be ok!

Thank you all again – I feel that I've received much more than I've given. I will never forget your kindness and the way you made me feel.

One of my favorite quotations is: 'Life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful'. Well, FCC may not have always been perfect, but it was always wonderful!

Sincerely,

Sharilyn Brown

## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Service 31<sup>st</sup> Year

Join Us!



***Bridging the Divide: Race in America***  
***Guest Speaker: Freeholder Linda Carter***

**Monday, January 15, 2018 at 1:00 pm**  
**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
**414 East Broad St. Westfield, NJ**

***Also, Join Us in Our March to the Service***  
**Our march begins at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument (located between the Town Bank and the traffic circle). Meet at noon. The march to the Church will begin at 12:15 pm.**



### Keep Someone Warm this Winter Collecting Coats and Duffel Bags!

The cold weather is coming and there will be many families in Union County who will need coats to stay warm this winter. As you go through your closets, please remember the families at the Elizabeth Coalition. Gently used coats and jackets of all sizes are needed (baby sized through adult).

The Coalition also needs Large Duffel Bags and Large Sports Bags for the homeless in their winter shelter, Operation Warm Heart. This shelter serves the chronic homeless, who are usually living on the streets or in abandoned buildings. Each client is given a bag with personal items when they begin the program. The Coalition needs large sized bags that can hold a blanket, toiletries, towels and a change of clothes. Bags with a zipper closure and shoulder strap are preferred, sports or duffel bags are ideal. All donations can be dropped off at the church - look for the big blue bins outside of Patton.

**Church School News**



**Bible Study for Church School Teachers**

We will be offering two Bible Study Teacher’s Prep sessions for the Church School teachers in January. The first will be held on Thursday, January 4, at 7pm in the Chapel Lounge. We will look at the scripture lessons for the January. The second will be held on Thursday, January 25, at 7pm in the Chapel Lounge. We will look at the scripture lessons for February. Please let Alida Woods know whether or not you will be able to attend.

**Many, Many Thanks To . .**

**Joe Regan** for once again for preparing and leading our children in their lively rendition of “Must Be Jesus” with its surprise ending, and the more traditional “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” during this year’s Advent Festival! This entertaining musical presentation was enjoyed by all. Thank you, Joe, for your creativity and dedication to the youth of our church and for helping to make this another wonderful event!

Many thanks also go to our piano player: **Madeline Rehwinkel**, who accompanied our singing children during the Advent Festival. Thank you for sharing your talents with us!

**Sunday, January 7 – Expanded Communion at FCC**

On Sunday, January 7, children, 3 years old through Grade 8, will again join their families in the Sanctuary to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together. After the morning’s Message, the children will be escorted by their teachers into the Sanctuary during the hymn to rejoin their families.

**A Time to Share**

The children really enjoy a snack during Church School. It is a time of prayer and sharing – not just eating! However, we need to stock up on our juice and snack supply, so we are asking for a donation of a half-gallon bottle of juice and/or a snack (such as a box of pretzels, gold fish or graham crackers). Your generosity is very much appreciated.



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

First and foremost, we'd like to thank the First Congregational Church, the Compass Board of Trustees, and the Compass families for their steadfast support, enabling Compass to consistently innovate, be flexible, and maintain the courage to change. We certainly would not be where we are without these groups behind us.

Our Annual Holiday Show which showcased the Compass 3’s, 4’s, and Kindergarten students was a wonderful event, made even more special because of its setting - the beautifully decorated sanctuary, filled with the scent of natural pine.

We were thrilled to be one of the first groups to experience a gathering in the beauty and warmth of Patton Auditorium for the Compass holiday party. Staff and guests marveled at the newly renovated space and were hopeful to be able to return for the 2018 holiday season!

We were happy to partner with FCC for the Pajama and Coat drives in December. Compass families donated over 90 pairs of pajamas and 85 coats for families in need. We look forward to working together on more events in 2018, beginning with the BRIDGES run in January for which our students will be decorating the lunch bags that will contain the meals.

With the assistance and guidance of two of our Compass parents, the creation of the Outdoor Classroom in the back of the playground is moving along. The Outdoor Classroom's vision is simple: children benefit from spending more time outdoors, especially in natural places. Its goal is equally simple: to increase the quantity, quality, and benefits of outdoor experiences for our students. By moving children and their activities outdoors, the character and type of what they do are transformed. We hope FCC members and Sunday School classes will have the opportunity to use this area.

We are certainly looking forward to continuing to work together to institute positive change to our communities and help maintain their encouraging atmospheres, vibrancy, enthusiasm, and hope for all in 2018!

Sue DeWeever  
Director



FCC Art Gallery

Featuring Art Work from our Church School Classes’ Gratitude Wreaths – Remembering God’s Blessings in the Past Year

Pictures from Advent Festival







Youth Fellowship  
Christmas Party





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**Worship & Church School**  
**Sundays, 10am**

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Tom Lawler, Church Custodian/Sexton



**Next Deadline: January 16**

## Marc Wesley Hardy Human Rights Award

The Board of Outreach Ministries is currently seeking nominations for the *Marc Wesley Hardy Human Rights Award* for 2018. Candidates must be young people between the ages of 16-22, living in Westfield or the greater Union County area, who have distinguished themselves in the area of human rights. It will be offered to a person who has shown:

Openness and friendliness to persons of all races, creeds and nationalities; involvement and leadership in organizations and activities committed to improving human relations; unusual personal dignity; the willingness to risk for what he or she believes is right; unqualified acceptance of others; respect for diversity; personal integrity; caring and willingness to listen; and the ability to lead by example.

The award consists of both a Certificate as well as a monetary award. Nominations must be received no later than **March 23**.

The award is named in honor of Marc Hardy, a member of our church, who was killed in a car accident in 1990 shortly before his graduation from Westfield High School. He was a national merit scholar, a gifted singer and actor, and was very much interested in human rights.

Please click on the following First Congregational website link for information about eligibility, requirements and award criteria: [www.fccofwestfield.org/outreach](http://www.fccofwestfield.org/outreach)

Nominations must be received no later than **March 23, 2018**. Mail/email nominations to:

First Congregational Church of Westfield  
125 Elmer Street  
Westfield, NJ 07090  
[uccfcc@verizon.net](mailto:uccfcc@verizon.net)

Please direct any questions to the Church Office at (908) 233-2494, or any Board of Outreach Ministry member.

It would be wonderful to consider one or more nominations for a member of our church!