



**First Central  
Congregational**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## The Congregationalist

**Volume 25, Issue 6**

**www.firstcentral.org**

**December 30, 2020**

### Prayers

*Bud Cassidy*, now at home and doing well; the *Syster, Acker, Blazek*, and *Roche* families, on the death of *Cheryl Roche*; *Nikki Zimmerman*, recently hospitalized; the family of *Yuri Skrypnik*, who died recently.

### Joys:

*Jordan Acker Anderson & Josh Anderson*, celebrating the birth of *Isaac Beau Anderson*. – proud grandparents are *Janet & Andy Acker*; *the Lowndes family*, celebrating the birth of *Rosemary Mina!*

### Food Pantry

Donations are happily accepted at church. Checks may be mailed to First Central with “pantry” in the memo line. Frozen meats are now being accepted (and are needed).

### Siena/Francis House

Congregational Outreach Ministry is collecting **NEW hats**, **NEW mittens/gloves** and **GENTLY USED coats** through December/January. Men’s items are especially needed. Drop off boxes are in the glass entry – please call before you come.

### Save the Date!

Annual reports are due to [sara@firstcentral.org](mailto:sara@firstcentral.org) by Friday, **January 8<sup>th</sup>**. Which can mean only one thing – the Annual Meeting is coming **January 31<sup>st</sup>**! The report will be posted at [firstcentral.org](http://firstcentral.org) under

*Member Resources*, and the meeting will be held on Zoom. Hope to “see” you there – we’ll have to wait until next year for ruebens ☺

### COVID19 Precautions

The office continues to be closed to the public. If you need to drop off a donation, or have an appointment, please call first to make sure someone is here to let you in.

The Evergreen Thrift Shop remains closed. If you have donations to drop off, or have an urgent need to shop, please call *Gary McConnell* or *Sam Pfeifer* to make an appointment.

Worship is online only for the time being. Only worship participants will be in the sanctuary. If you would like to be the liturgist, and feel comfortable being here, please let [sara@firstcentral.org](mailto:sara@firstcentral.org) know, and we will get you on the schedule.

### *Together Apart*

May new traditions - and inventive ways of embracing the old ones - bring you joy and hope in the year to come.

***Happy New Year  
from the Staff at First Central!***



**Guest Columnist: Fred Nielsen**

*Originally published December 9<sup>th</sup>*

This the first real Advent of my life.

There were other Advent seasons, of course, all of them arriving precisely on schedule according to the liturgical calendar, all of them lasting four weeks. In theory, they were times of waiting and preparing for a promised arrival. In practice, however, those Advents often revealed how impatient we can be. How many of us wait four weeks for the tree and the lights and the Christmas music?

The Advent that began in the spring of 2020 is a profound challenge for those of us unaccustomed to waiting. There is no calendar to tell us when it will end. And so we wait, as most of us have never waited before. We can have new appreciation for a hymn that yearns for the arrival of the “long expected.”

It’s tempting, and completely understandable, to want the world to return to “normal.” Some are so impatient that they’ve hardly modified their thinking and behavior. We must live as we always have, they tell us.

But Advent doesn’t promise that we can make the world great again by returning to our usual ways of thinking and acting. Advent anticipates the coming of something new, the beginning of something better.

Waiting should never be wasted. Whether stuck in a long line, put on hold, or living in the longest Advent of our lives, we can play music in our heads, we can contemplate, we can think . . . and we can prepare, a central purpose of the season. How and

when this Advent ends, and what follows it, will be partly a result of how we prepare now.

Speaking in Memphis on the night before he died, Martin Luther King declared, “The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land. Confusion all around.” His words – “the nation is sick” – remind us that while some viruses attack our bodies, there are others that attack our souls and minds. We don’t fight them by returning to “normal.” That just prolongs the waiting. Because we don’t always wait wisely or well, some Advents take a long time to end. King went on to observe that “only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars.” Whether an Advent lasts the liturgical four weeks, 40 years in the wilderness, or the 400 years since the first slave ship arrived in Jamestown, there are stars.

There are always stars.

“It’s been a long, a long time coming

But I know a change is gonna come. . . .”

“Come thou long expected. . . .”

“O come, O come. . . .”



*Artwork by Joyce Wilson*



Please check out our FIRSTKids YouTube Channel for our Quarantine series...

## FIRSTKids CORNER

Join Pastor Katie every other Sunday for YouTube Sunday school, in which we will be discussing some classic and not-so-classic Bible stories and how they relate to our pandemic lives!

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Twice-A-Month  
**FIRSTKids IN PERSON  
ON HOLD**

Due to the virus rates in our community, our plans for in person Sunday school are on hold. We hope to be able to offer this in the new year, but it will depend on numbers. Keep an eye on your email and this space for more info.

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### FIRSTKids VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

This year, our annual Christmas pageant looked a little different... but no less joyful or meaningful! If you would like to view the pageant, check out the church Facebook page OR go to YouTube and search for "FIRSTKids Corner".

Many THANKS to the adults and kids and pets and dolls who participated in pageant!



During social distancing, the youths will be meeting on **Sundays @ 8 pm via Zoom** for games and fellowship and discussion, and are looking to add some more outdoor in-person gatherings.



January 13th at 5:45 pm on Zoom:

*Dangerous Religious Ideas*

**Rabbi Dr. Rachel Mikva**

What makes a religious idea dangerous? What are our own dangerous religious ideas? Dr. Mikva will be joining us on zoom for a conversation about this and about her new book.

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## VESPERS

**Wednesdays, 6:00 pm**

**On Facebook Live**

Grab a cup of tea or hot chocolate and join Rev. Katie for a simple midweek service of song, prayer, scripture, and reflection.

## Week of January 3

### Sunday, January 3

YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Food Pantry Sunday

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, January 4

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, January 6

Vespers with Katie, 6 p.m., FaceBook Live

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Friday, January 8

Annual Reports due!

## Week of January 10

### Sunday, January 10

YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, January 11

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Tuesday, January 12

Council, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Wednesday, January 13

Adult Education, 5:45 p.m., Zoom

Vespers with Katie, 6 p.m., FaceBook Live

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

## Week of January 17

### Sunday, January 17

YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, January 18

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Office closed.

### Wednesday, January 20

Vespers with Katie, 6 p.m., FaceBook Live

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

## Week of January 24

### Sunday, January 24

YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, January 25

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

Eves, 7 p.m., Zoom

### Wednesday, January 26

Vespers with Katie, 6 p.m., FaceBook Live

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

## Week of January 31

### Sunday, January 31

YouTube online worship, 10:30 a.m.

Annual Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Zoom

FirstYouth, 8 p.m., Zoom

### Monday, February 1

Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study

### Wednesday, February 3

Vespers with Katie, 6 p.m., FaceBook Live

Choir, 7 p.m., Zoom

Please send address changes to:  
First Central Congregational Church  
421 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St  
Omaha, NE 68131.