

The Church Mouse - January 2021

First Congregational United Church of Christ 715-479-8501

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Happy
New
Year
2021

Message from Pastor Gail

Remember the Roman god Janus? His two faces look backward and forward. He is said to be the god of gates and doorways; the god of "liminal time" or transitions.

Of course, we worship the God Yahweh, but as an Interim Pastor, I'm all about these liminal times between past and future, and that is what the month of January represents.

In December, I read your church history, written in 2012 for your 125th anniversary. I enjoyed reading the impressions and memories of church members, some who have been here since birth, others who are fairly new to the area.

To understand anyone or anything, it helps to have some history of where they've been and what has shaped them. This helps us understand where we are now and where God might want us to be in the future.

As an Interim, I ask churches to remember and reflect as a means of gaining self awareness that will help you embrace and move forward with your next pastor. This winter, I hope to engage you in some group conversation about your church's history, including experiences from the long past, and your recent experience of losing a pastor in 2020. What are your significant memories and what do you want to learn from them?

Group conversation is more challenging in quarantine conditions, but it's not impossible! Plans are being worked out with Council, but you might be invited to join a Zoom or converse by phone. Be watching for invitations to share and listen to others as you reflect on the past, make peace with all that God has led you through, reconcile with each other as needed, and commit to continue walking as a united Body of Christ into the future.

May God lead us out of the strange year 2020 and into a New Year with stronger faith and the tools we need to continue healing bodies and souls in our community and world!

OFFERING ENVELOPES for 2021 are available to those who wish to use them. Here's how to get yours.

- Come by the church to pick them up on **Wednesday, January 6th from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.** Pastor Gail will be there to hand yours to you at the door during those hours.
- If you will not be needing envelopes, **let Nan know** and we will put them aside.
- If you are unable to come on Jan. 6th, let us know and we will find another way to get them to you by mail or delivery. **Thanks for helping, and thanks for giving to your church regularly.**

Update about gathering in the church building: This winter, the Wisconsin Conference UCC continues to encourage churches to avoid in person gatherings in light of the high infection rates in our state. In January, the nation will be returning to work and school after Christmas travels and family gatherings that may have spread the virus further. While infection rates have been slightly down, our hospitals are still at capacity.

Wisconsin Council of Churches Executive Director Rev. Kerri Parker says, *"We are able to worship, pray, provide faith formation and pastoral care, and address other community needs in ways that limit the risk of spreading COVID, to save lives and relieve the strain on the health system. We have a moral imperative to do so."*

For all these reasons, we are asking members to refrain from visiting the church building during the month of January.

Please note the following recommendations about use of our church building:

- **Weekly worship** will continue to be held on-line due to very high Covid infection rates in our area. Tune in to the weekly YouTube recording with your computer or cell phone, on our Facebook page, or by reading the print copy sent out on Thursdays. *Please let the office know if you are having trouble connecting with worship resources.*
- **Virtual Communion** will be shared on January 3rd and January 17th. Bring to your worship time some simple food to share spiritually with your church family.
- Wednesday afternoon **Faith Formation** will not meet in person in January. We will meet virtually on **Wednesday, January 20th at 6:30 p.m.** parents, watch your mail for more information coming.

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(Message from Pastor Gail continued)

- **Council** will meet virtually, opening the building only to those who need WiFi access for video conferencing.
- **The office staff is accessible by appointment only.** Please do not come to the building unannounced, *even if you have a key.* Office hours will be irregular this month, so please contact Nan or Pastor Gail if you need to come to the building for any reason and we will make an appointment for your visit.

Almost all our families have been touched by this virus, either with sickness or the need to quarantine because of exposure. Let's work together by staying apart!

Pastor Gail

“Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God, we open our doors and hearts to all in service and love, as modeled by Jesus Christ.”
(Mission Statement of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Eagle River, WI)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

JANUARY 2021

I am supposing that very few people are saying to themselves, “Wow, 2021 came quickly.” Most of us have probably been thinking, “Bring on the New Year and the vaccination, and don't forget the rural areas of the world.” Perhaps I'm echoing your thoughts. I know they are mine.

In addition I hope the New Year is filled with other positive strides: peace and love in our hearts, hope for a next twelve months of working together at all levels of human endeavor. We want all to share in the active joy that is the Christmas Spirit and the Epiphany; we want all to recognize that Jesus walks in the world and that we can help meet the needs of others in ways that say, “These are my brothers and sisters.” Please take a moment after reading this report, to think of ways you can keep the Christmas and Epiphany spirit alive among the people in your immediate world.

Here in First Church, the New Year may bring us many gifts. Let us look forward to seeing each other in our familiar pews in the foreseeable future and worshiping with Pastor Gail in person. It will happen, I am convinced. It will happen after we know we are bringing only good vibes and health into the sanctuary. Maybe I won't be able to hug you yet, but I will be able to worship with you. I feel it in my bones.

I continue to be awed by the commitment of our Church Council who sometimes struggle through Zoom connections, but are always creative in their solutions to problems which come before the Council. Like many of you, I grasp for the Christmas spirit through pastor Gail's creative use of her telephone camera, and her direct, comforting approach to delivering meaningful messages each week.

Many people deserve our thanks this month for actively helping in the church. Sharon shepherded the Christmas Legends children's pageant to a masterful reality. Pastor Gail has made worship and congregational conversation happen through Zoom. Mike Mettler discovered some water deposits in the upper room which Bruce Kaitchuck is undertaking to repair. Lori brought members of the choir, with new choir masks, together to sing Christmas music for our Christmas Eve service, and she edited a rendition of “Christmas Medley” where choir member sang individually in their homes and then were brought into harmony with other choir members through Lori's tech-savvy background. Cathy Palmer brought her enthusiasm to creating our Candlelight Christmas Eve outdoor service, complete with fire and snowplowed paths.

COUNCIL REPORT

Our last Council meeting of the year was held through Zoom on December 13, 2020. We sincerely miss the input of some members because of health or the instability of the internet. But we have always had more than a quorum of members actively contributing to discussion and building firm directions for the life of our church congregation.

Council is charged to appoint two new members to the Pastor Parish Relations Committee. We regretfully accept the resignations of Donna De Pape and Paula Hendrickson. Both Donna and Paula have been members since before our new constitutional organization. Their contributions to the life of the church and its continuing mission during these past years have been monumental. Along with working with the staff,

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(Council report continued)

they have seen Pastor Mary Anne off to warmer climes, worked with Pastor Dale Bishop and Pastor Jane Courtright, and welcomed Pastor Gail.

The Vine Family Trust, \$200,000 in memory of Patsy Vine and Betsy Simms, has been received. The gift is unrestricted and the Council is seeking proposals from congregation members as to how best to use the endowment and also honor Patsy and Betsy who were teachers in their professional lives.

Later in the MOUSE you will learn that Faith Formation led by Sharon Breit and her assistant Louise Krus will be on holiday for January. Sharon and Louise plus all the children were certainly the featured actors and singers in our Christmas Legends story. These children and Grace Florence who has been an assistant in the Faith Formation Wednesdays were delightful in their roles, and most enjoyable to work with. They have earned a rest during this most critical cold weather time. The more sequestering they and we do, the safer we will be from the pandemic.

The final portion of the Council Meeting was devoted to discussing Pastor Gail's role in helping us prepare for a settled pastor. Among ideas that Pastor Gail will address in the near future is how our congregation can encourage reconciliation and growth by making peace with the past, as mentioned in her letter in this issue.

We're off to a new year; enjoy it!

May there be God's blessing as we go forward.

Bernie Hupperts

Council President



JANUARY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 3 Second Sunday after Christmas	<i>Another Road</i>
Jer 31:7-14 Ps 147:12-20 Eph 1:3-14 Jn 1:(1-9), 10-18	
Jan. 10 The Baptism of Christ, First Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Defining Moments</i>
Gen 1:1-5 Ps 29 Acts 19:1-7 Mk 1:4-11	
Jan. 17 Second Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Known and Loved</i>
1 Sam 3:1-10 Ps 139:1-6, 13-18 1 Cor 6:12-20 Jn 1:43-51	
Jan. 24 Third Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Follow Me</i>
Jon 3:1-5, 10 Ps 62:5-12 1 Cor 7:29-31 Mk 1:14-20	
Jan. 31 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Power to Do</i>
Deut 18:15-20 Ps 111 1 Cor 8:1-13 Mk 1:21-28	

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." | John 4:7

As of December 29th, we have received 58 pledges totaling \$127,180 toward our 2021 goal of \$150,000.

Your pledges are VERY IMPORTANT and MUCH NEEDED FOR 2021.

It's never too late to pledge!



CAMCORDER We have a new camcorder for use in getting our church services on to the internet, especially once we have in-person services. If you would like to learn how to use the camcorder, and how to upload to YouTube for general viewing, please let me know. The more the merrier. But we do need help! Thanks!

Bernie Hupperts 715-617-9468

Epiphany begins on January 6th and ushers in a new “season” of the Christian year lasting 9 weeks, continuing until Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Epiphany Day is the day of the adoration of the magi (wisemen). Tradition has it that they actually came to visit the Christ-child at a time later than the night of his birth, even though we are quite used to seeing them portrayed in creches as being present at the stable on Christmas Eve.



Epiphany, was, in fact, the first accepted date for celebrating Christmas. During the 4th century, most of the Christian Church observed the nativity during this time, and even after December 25 was settled upon as the date to celebrate Christmas, Epiphany played an important role. The Christmas celebrations which began on December 25 culminated in the “Twelfth Night” celebration of Epiphany. That is the tradition behind the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas.”

The word “Epiphany” means “appearing” or “manifestation.” The season celebrates the appearing of the Truth, or the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer.

A LESSON FOR THE FAITH FORMATION KIDS

From

Sharon R. Breit, Christian Education

Read Mark 1:14-20 DROP EVERYTHING

Right after Jesus was baptized He began His ministry, and He chose men to come with Him as He traveled and preached. You might think these guys were special somehow, but they were regular people like you and me. They weren't perfect, they didn't do anything to deserve traveling with Jesus. But they did do one thing that made them kind of special; they dropped EVERYTHING and followed Him.

The first two men Jesus called were brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were fishermen, so they spent their days out on the Sea of Galilee. Fishing provided them with food to eat and they sold their leftover fish at the market. The money bought other foods, clothes and probably fishing supplies. So for Simon and Andrew fishing was EVERYTHING. It took up all their time and provided them with EVERYTHING they needed to survive. But, remember, they dropped EVERYTHING. Then Jesus chose 10 more and they dropped EVERYTHING. They became His disciples.

I can't imagine what it must have felt like for them, leaving EVERYTHING, even their families to follow a stranger. We are blessed that we don't have to drop EVERYTHING in order to follow Jesus. Being a follower of Jesus means that we are following Him and His ways. It gives us life. We are practicing loving Him with all our heart, soul and mind. We are loving our neighbors as ourselves and we are inviting people to join this story with us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we are your hands, feet, heart and mouth to those around us. Help us to follow your will and your word. Amen.



Our 1st Zoom will be Wednesday, January 20th at 6:30 p.m.

You will be receiving more information by email and/or postal mail

SEE YOU THEN!

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Jan. 1	Wilma Frisque
Jan. 2	Chris Thomson Myrna Wright
Jan. 3	David Adler
Jan. 4	Paula Hendrickson Barbara Mather
Jan. 10	Phil Jensen Gary Stevens
Jan. 13	Kathy Holperin
Jan. 14	Sharon Breit Marlys Lee
Jan. 15	Barbara Mattes Julia Nesbitt
Jan. 17	William Schattner
Jan. 18	Joe Panci
Jan. 20	Drew Schulta
Jan. 22	Gene Welhoefer
Jan. 28	Gary Gilbert Marilyn Nelson Bette Vande Hey
Jan. 29	Mike Mettler
Feb. 1	Sandra Mettler
Feb. 2	Myrtle Bucholtz
Feb. 3	Leta Cole Ann Dunphy Kim Kaitchuck

Do you or someone in your family have a birthday in January/early February that isn't listed? Call the church office and we'll add you to our list.

*You don't have to reveal your birth year.
Thank you!*

January 18th

Martin Luther King Jr. Day



"More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the fateful words and actions of bad people but for the appalling silence of good people."

—Martin Luther King Jr.—

To Our Church Family,

"Don't live in the past. Don't live in the future. This is the moment God has given us to be useful."



If you know of someone who would benefit from a call, a visit, or a card, please let the pastor know.

pastorgail@eagleriverucc.org

Cell phone: 920-883-7887



Heading off to warmer weather for the next few months?

PLEASE up-date your address change before you leave so we can keep you current on our mailing list!

12 healthy hoorays for the New Year

1. Our hope is in the Lord. Even though we have considered all the facts, there is still hope in Christ!
2. Ask for help. God's gifts are in the people around you.
3. Laugh out loud —at yourself, with others, and give people permission to laugh.
4. Take care of your body — it's the only one you will ever have!
5. Say "thank you" to people as often as you can.
6. Look for trouble — more specifically, look for the troubled, the lonely, the sick, the naked, those who think God has forgotten them.
7. Talk to children regularly.
8. Remember your present mood is never permanent.
9. On a scale of 1 to 10, your friends deserve a 12.
10. Remember that life is not fair, but God is gracious.
11. Be the biggest picture window to the Gospel that you can be!
12. Things are not always as they seem. See life through the cross and the Easter resurrection.

Thank you to all our Christmas angels!

Advent candle lighters and readers; Cathy Palmer and family for bringing fire to our outdoor Christmas Eve service; Luke Aschbrenner for playing guitar. Pat Tucker for help with Advent kits; all who helped decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. Mark Shepherdson for putting up the new banner outside; children and Faith Formation leaders for their Christmas play; Lori Hunter and the choir for creative Christmas music; prayer group for your prayers.

Well done, good and faithful servants!



Pastor Search Committee Update

We continue to edit and carefully go through each section of the church profile. This is a process that requires great thought and time as we want our profile to express and represent what our church family and community is about and attract a potential pastor who will fulfill our needs, and help us heal and move forward. We really want to feel great about the profile before we move on to the next step of submitting it to Rev. Rob MacDougall (UCC Conference Minister) who will then put it out for possible pastor candidates to see. We want to assure you we are working hard to get this done. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any committee member. Again, please be patient as this is a very time consuming process that we do not take lightly.

Respectfully yours,

The Search Committee

Trista Langley-Tyler (Committee Chair) jewelry@metalurges-upnorth.com 715-617-1162	
Kelli Burrill: kelli.burrill@gmail.com	Nancy Diepenbrock: petsx5@gmail.com
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Patti Roberts: robertsupnorth@hotmail.com	Krista Wittkopf: copper4811@gmail.com

IN NEED OF PRAYER?

If you have a prayer request or know of someone in need of prayer, we do have an active prayer group here at UCC-Eagle River. We pray individually after receiving the prayer request by email or phone call. To share a request to be added to the list, call or email either Tobi Johannsen (920-450-1402), Pastor Gail (pastorgail@eagleriverucc.org) or Nan at church: 715-479-8501.

We are always looking for more prayer partners. If you feel led to join us, please contact me. Tobi Johannsen: tjharleygal56@gmail.com



Book Lovers Reading Group aka The Knights of the Reading Round Table

We ARE planning to meet in January! Anyone interested in discussing our January book is invited to join our Zoom meeting.

The January selection is **THE ART OF HEARING HEART BEATS** BY Jan Philipp-Sendker. Set in Burma, the book is a rare novel telling the story of a young blind man's journey through a world of auditory intensity. Jan-Philipp Sendker renews one's faith in the possibility of real, pure love.

Due to my schedule I have moved the meeting; it will be **Thursday, January 14th at 7 p.m.** Because we are using Zoom, invitations are needed and will be sent out via email to anyone wishing to join. If you don't already have a copy of Zoom on your own computer it's easy to download which you will need to do ahead of time.

Please contact me if you have any questions. My email is spindle257@gmail.com phone: 715-617-1710.

It will be so good to see everyone and have a chance to share our enjoyment in reading.

Donna DePape



Sunday Zoom Fellowship - These are informal gatherings on-line to check in with church friends and talk about different themes. Watch for Zoom links in your Friday emails or on our Facebook page. With a little coaching, you can use your computer, tablet, cell phone or a land line phone to tune in. Call Pastor Gail if you need help connecting. January Zooms will be: **Sunday, January 3rd at 10 a.m.** and **Sunday, January 17th at 10 a.m.**



RECIPE FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Clean thoroughly 12 whole months.

Divide into 365 parts, set aside, preparing one part only at a time as follows:

Mix well into each day:

- 1 part patience
- 1 part work
- 1 part courage

Add to each day:

- 1 part each of hope, faithfulness, generosity and kindness

Blend with:

- 1 part prayer
- 1 part meditation
- 1 part good deed

Season the mixture with a dash of good spirits, a sprinkle of fun, a pinch of play and a cup of good humor.

Pour mixture into a vessel of love. Cook over radiant joy, garnish with a smile. Serve with quietness, unselfishness and cheer.

Yield: 1 HAPPY YEAR



The best things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.

Words to start the New Year It is a mistake to be always turning back to recover the past. The law for Christian living is not backward, but forward. Leave the things that are behind, and reach forward to those that are before, for on each new height to which we attain, there are the appropriate joys that befit the new experience. Don't fret because life's joys are fled. There are more in front. Look up, press forward; the best is yet to be!

First Congregational UCC Contact People - 2020 –2021

Pastor Gail Irwin Cell: 920-883-7887 Church: 715-479-8501

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Info Tech - Amy Mehlhoff, 801-425-5214

Clerk - Norma Yaeger, 715-477-1984

Director of Christian Education: Sharon Breit, 715-477-2163 youth_ministry@eagleriverucc.org

CHURCH COUNCIL

President: Bernie Hupperts 715-617-9468

Vice President: Mark Johannsen 920-475-7576

Molly Jaeger: 715-479-4505 Trisha Moore: 715-617-1102 Shirley Thompson: 715-479-8753

Cathy Palmer: 715-617-6373 Luke Aschbrenner: 715-358-6579

Pastor Parish Relations Committee - Tobi Johannsen 920-450-1402

Women's Fellowship - Linda Sanborn, 715-479-8091

Sanctuary Arts Group (SAG) - Patti Roberts, 715-479-6191

Performing Arts Music - Bernie Hupperts, 715-617-9468

Music Director - Lori Hunter, 715-493-8078

Organists/pianists - Linda Brainard, 715-479-5043; Lori Hunter, 715-493-8078,

Norma Yaeger, 715-477-1984