



# First Congregational United Church of Christ

[eagleriverucc.org](http://eagleriverucc.org) December 2023

## A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

Well, it's the most busiest time of the year! As I write these words, we prepare to enter the Advent season with all the observances and festivities this holy time of year brings. One of the challenges that accompanies this annual liturgical observance is that the sacred and the secular always battle one another as Advent and Christmas collide in the usual way. In worship our goal is to honor Advent while invoking some Christmas images, including a mixture of carols. This year Advent and Christmastide literally intersect with one another. The last Sunday in December is both the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. We will have our normal morning worship at 9:00 a.m. and will return for a 5:00 p.m. service of lessons and carols. Hope you will plan to attend both! And do not forget, we will gather on New Year's Eve at 9:00 a.m. for a time of carol singing, devotion, feasting, and fellowship. This Sunday, along with four others, one each quarter, has become a wonderful tradition here at First Congregational United Church of Christ, Eagle River.

I would be remiss if I did not say a special thank you to all our stewardship devotional speakers as well as our chairperson, Trisha Moore. Our stewardship campaign has gone exceedingly well and has helped us get a good sense of our gifts for the coming year. The overall stewardship of this congregation is absolutely amazing, so many offering so many gifts of time and talent and yes, tithe. I am especially grateful for the numerous mission initiatives that this church is helping to fund. We are doing a whole lot of good in a whole lot of places. Outstanding!

Finally, as we enter a new calendar year, be watching for a schedule of Bible Study as we explore the parables of Jesus, our annual Lenten worship on Wednesday evenings with "Soup and Service", and a schedule of the upcoming Open and Affirming process. 2024 promises to be another busy year at this beloved faith community. We invite your participation whenever and as you are able.

I look to see you on Sundays!  
Timothy W. Shirley

## **FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Hello Congregation!

It feels like every month I say "I can't believe it's" . . . Christmas!

He is coming! The season of Advent, which in Latin means arrival, is upon us.

Advent is our faith celebration of light, much needed as our nights grow longer. Advent is a season of anticipation and of wonderment. This year Advent begins December 3<sup>rd</sup> and each of the next three Sundays will mark a traditional value of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. To paraphrase Pastor Tim, I am reminded of a classic song... "What the World Needs Now."

"Blessed are the peacemakers" and they are not just politicians. It is each one of us, every day, mostly in ways that are simple and small. My hope is that during this busy season we take time to reflect on how we are honoring the core values of the Advent season that each one of these Sundays gifts to us.

There is also special joy arriving on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Yes, the longest night, the winter solstice, the beginning of winter begins on this day. But there is hope in the days that follow as we gain an average of two minutes and seven seconds of daylight each day. By January 18<sup>th</sup> we will have gained an hour more of daylight.

Advent! The season of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. My wish for each of you is to find each one of these, every day. He is coming!

Merry Christmas!  
Donna Adams

## **CHURCH COUNCIL**

Church Council met on November 13<sup>th</sup> and approved the bid from Quality Heating to update and maintain our heating/cooling system. It was also approved to use funding up to \$11,000 from the General Investment Fund which was created for building needs. The amount taken will be reduced by your donations toward this project.

In other action Council approved the expenditure of \$8,750 from the Maggie Ball Mission Fund (MBMF), distributed to eight recipients that encompass local, national, and global projects as recommended by our unofficial mission group. They are Nath, Daniel Brunstad Eagle Scout Project, Maui Relief, First UCC Youth Mission effort/Trip, NPSD School Lunch Debts, Micah Project Honduras, Warm the Children, and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Additional funds are available for future needs that arise.

A task force has been formed to review and update the building use and fee schedule. Members are Mark Johannsen, Kristen Anchor, Eric Olsen, and Carol Marshall. Work is continuing to update the Church Constitution and the Safe Church Policy.

Church Council will be scheduling congregational meetings to discuss the ONA (Open and Affirming) process.

Because Christmas Eve falls on Sunday this year, there will be two services that day. The regular service will be at 9:00 a.m. and the Christmas Eve service will be at 5:00 p.m. There will be no Christmas Day service held on Monday.

A Longest Night or Blue Christmas service will be held on December 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. This service provides solace for those who may be grieving or who wish to experience a quieter, peaceful service during the holiday.

Please reach out to a Council member, the Pastor, or the Church Office if you have any comments, concerns, or other needs you would like us to know about.

Respectfully,

Donna Adams  
Church Council President



**Just a reminder that the Church Council meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. Church members are welcome to attend.**

**The next meeting is on January 8<sup>th</sup> (there will not be a December meeting).**

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## **MELODY OF COMPASSION**

Ushers are now once again passing the offering plates in worship.

The place in the order of service for the Offertory, the receiving of our gifts, is listed in the Worship Folder.

The *Melody of Compassion* has been our way of helping the Eagle River area needy for many years.

Please bring your coins to keep the Melody singing for others.

**We have collected \$2283.47 and have used \$3075.00  
to help those in need.**

**We currently have a deficit of \$791.53.**



“For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” *Isaiah 55:12*

As I write this article, I am looking out at the Colorado mountains and thought of this verse from scripture that is also a song of joyful benediction. We were fortunate to celebrate Thanksgiving with our son and daughter-in-law in the Breckenridge area with her family, who have truly become part of ours. We all went out in joy after a day and a half of giving thanks!

As we reflect upon moving from Thanksgiving to the Advent and Christmas seasons, we can become overwhelmed with the to-do list that keeps building in our minds. I know these seasons bring me joy but sometimes I forget to be “*laid back in peace*”. So, I keep asking myself, “Why must we be so frantic as we await the coming of the Child of Peace?”

Personally, I try to remember that there is a whole season before Christmas that we can forget about, the Season of Advent. Yes, Advent is a time of preparation, but it is also a time of reflection. As the Director of Music, I try to keep too much ‘Christmas’ out of the Season of Advent, unlike our secular world. So, our musicians will be preparing Advent music that helps us focus on the pending celebration of the birth of our Savior and the day we will see the Christ face to face.

We have a special Sunday service planned for December 17<sup>th</sup> that will be filled with music and will include the children as they help build the nativity scene in preparation for our Christmas Eve Service. We hope you will attend this service and maybe come a little early to enjoy some special gathering music as well.

I hope this Advent Season will not only bring you time to prepare for Christmas but also time to reflect upon the coming gift of a child who will bring peace and love to all creation!

Go out in joy and be laid back in peace, Lori.



## **Sunshine Visitors**

For those who would like to help put together our Christmas treats for delivery this month, we will be meeting in the church kitchen at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. We hope to have treats left over from the previous Sunday's Coffee Hour, but we might need a few more homemade baked goodies. If you are interested in adding your own treats to our plates or coming to help put them together, please contact Pat Fox, 715-891-5725 or Tobi Johannsen, 920-450-1402.



## **Sunshine Visitors Annual Christmas Caroling**

If you miss the fun of going Christmas caroling, here is your chance! The Sunshine Visitors welcome anyone who would like to come with us to go caroling and delivering treats. We will be visiting some of the senior living facilities and homes of some of our members and friends, some of whom are going through some difficult times. We will meet in the church Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup> to organize the groups who will be going out. The more people we have the more fun it is! We will be making joyful noise, so it doesn't matter how well you can sing. The only requirement is the desire to bring joy to others. If you have any questions or know of someone who should be added to our list to visit, please contact Tobi Johannsen at 920-450-1402 or the church office.



## **Backpack Program**

We pack the bags for the backpack program on the third Thursday of every month at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. This month we will meet on December 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. All are welcome to help and any donations to this mission are welcome. Thank you.



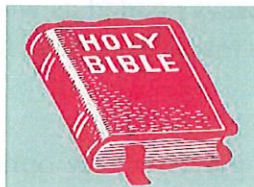
## **Happy December Birthday:**

Barbara Helmick, Carol Smart, Carol Trojanowski, Grace Florence, Larry Thompson, Linda Donner, Louise Krus, Lucas Aschbrenner, Patricia Adamaovich, Phil Garrison, Trisha Moore.



# **TWELVE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE**

**Led by Sharon R. Breit, Christian Education Director**



## **CONTENTS**

- Session 1:** Eve: Finding Lasting Contentment in the Truth
- Session 2:** Rebekah: Breaking Free of Feminine Stereotypes
- Session 3:** Leah: Overcoming Rejection and Insecurity
- Session 4:** Hannah: Surrendering in Waiting
- Session 5:** Abigail: Dealing with Confrontation in Relationships
- Session 6:** Gomer: Learning to Accept Unconditional Love
- Session 7:** Mary, Mother of Jesus: Moving from Comfort to Courage
- Session 8:** Mary Magdalene: Transforming from Outcast to Follower
- Session 9:** Mary of Bethany: Putting Our Faith into Action
- Session 10:** Martha: Finding Our Identity in Jesus
- Session 11:** The Woman at the Well: Turning Our Messes into Messages
- Session 12:** The Syrophenician Woman: Approaching God

*I have books for eight people but can order more.*

*I would like to limit the class to a maximum of ten.*

*Call or leave a message on my home phone (715-477-2163) or email me ([sharonrbreit@gmail.com](mailto:sharonrbreit@gmail.com)), if you are interested in attending.*

*We will then meet and determine a date and time to begin.*

*I am looking forward to great conversations.*



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**Scripture readers (Lectors) and ushers** are always needed as well as readers for the Concerns of the Church. You may sign up by visiting our website or you may also contact Joy Turpin at [joyfaithchapinturpin@gmail.com](mailto:joyfaithchapinturpin@gmail.com) or 715-479-6560.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, wearing masks is now optional. If we have cases of COVID within our congregation brought to our attention, we will notify everyone as soon as possible.

Online Giving is now available on the church website. With online giving, you can set up recurring or one-time gifts to be made automatically from your checking account or by debit or credit card. Online giving allows you to make gifts more conveniently, especially when not physically attending worship.

Designated offering envelopes are not necessary to make a gift and to receive a yearly contribution statement. With our new accounting software, we are recording contributions based on name and not by envelope number. Any cash offering that is placed in any envelope with a name on it, or a personal check will be recorded. If you would like to donate to a specific ministry, please indicate that designation on the envelope or on the check memo line.

**Advent and Christmas worship!** This year, the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve occur on the same Sunday. We will have our usual service of worship at 9:00 a.m. and will return at 5:00 p.m. for the annual service of lessons and carols. On New Years Eve, Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup> we will gather in Fellowship Hall for a devotion, feasting, and fellowship!

**Online donations** are always available through our website [www.eagleriverucc.org](http://www.eagleriverucc.org). Click on Ministries then online giving and set up your account.

The church is in the process of replacing two furnaces at a cost of \$10,450. We invite you to make a special donation as you are able to help offset the expense which will keep us from having to use maintenance funds.



**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

**If you would like to order a poinsettia,  
please fill out the order form at the back of the church or  
in the church office.**





## **Flower Calendar**

If you would like to give flowers for Sunday worship, please pick a Sunday and add your name to the Flower Calendar that is in the narthex across from the elevator. Flowers are ordered from Vintage Garden at a cost of \$35. Please write a separate check made out to the church. ***Please let Debbie Brown in the Church Office know the information you would like to have on the card.*** If you choose to get your own flowers, please let Debbie in the church office know that you are doing so. You are welcome to take the flowers home after the service. It is also helpful if you bring the vase back to return to Vintage Gardens as we then get more flowers for the money. ***What better way to honor anyone or anything than to share flowers with your church family on Sunday!***

### **December flower sponsors are:**

Tom and Barb Helmick, Mark and Kathy Holperin, and Barb Flaherty

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## **MAGGIE BALL MISSION FUND RECIPIENTS**

At its November meeting, the Church Council agreed to distribute a total of \$8,750 from the Maggie Ball Mission Endowment Fund to eight non-profit organizations. The fund was established several years ago for mission efforts from local to global (and everything in between) beyond those funded by the church's general budget.

Members of the congregation were asked to suggest possible recipients. In mid-October, Mary Lou Congdon, Susan Krivichi, Paula Henderson, Carol Marshall, and Barbara Helmick met to review the suggestions and make recommendations to Council. The group recommended the following disbursements, all of which were approved by the Council.

1. Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing, \$1,000
2. Daniel Brunstad's Eagle Scout project: ADA-compliant playground equipment for the Eagle River Memorial Playground behind City Hall, \$1,500
3. Maui Relief, \$500
4. First UCC Youth Mission Trip, \$2,000
5. Lunch debt reduction for students in need at Northland Pines, \$1,500
6. Micah Project in Honduras, \$1,000
7. Warm the Children Fund, \$250
8. Guide Dogs for the Blind, \$1,000

The above recipients were suggested by members of our congregation. If you have ideas for possible future recipients of the Maggie Ball Mission Endowment Fund, please either reach out to someone on Church Council, or talk with Barbara Helmick, who will continue to compile a list of possible future recipients.

# **DECEMBER COLLECTION:**

## **Holiday Dinner items for Frederick Place residents**

Once again, our monthly collection is a bit different. That's because we want to do something special for the residents of Frederick's Place, a shelter for people without a place to call home. It is operated by the Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing (NATH) and located in Rhinelander.

Normally, our church provides a delicious chili meal once a month. Given the Christmas holiday, we plan to provide something a bit more special in December: ham dinner with all the trimmings on December 28<sup>th</sup>!

We will purchase the ham. We would like your help in providing side dishes. We're looking for:

- Casseroles (9x13 pan): Mac and cheese, veggie, potato, or something else of YOUR choice
- Cookies and bars (three people to contribute 2 dozen each)

You can also help by contributing to the cost of the ham.

Please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. If you have questions, please reach out to Mary Lou Congdon or Susan Krivichi.

**Thank you for your continued generosity!**

**IDEAS FOR FUTURE COLLECTIONS** Do you have an idea for a future monthly collection? If so, we'd love to hear about it. Please reach out to Mary Lou Congdon or Barbara Helmick. Thank you!

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## **BOOK CLUB**

***Start the New Year with the Book Club.***

***Consider joining us for our monthly gathering.***

We will meet January 11, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the Church Parlor.

The book *My Grandfather's Blessing*, by Rachel Naomi Remen with discussion facilitated by Donna DePape.

The December books include *Going Home* by Jon Katz, facilitated by Deb Stolze,

OR *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder, facilitated by Carol Marshall.

These books may also be included for January. (To be determined in a group email discussion.)



## REMINDER OF RECYCLING MISSION

We collected 8 bags totaling 58 pounds! Another great month of collecting!



Our overall total is 105 pounds.



A reminder to keep bringing in your soft plastics as this is an ONGOING mission. You can encourage other family members, friends, neighbors . . . to give you their soft plastics to bring in and help our cause. We want to make sure to keep as much of these plastics out of the landfill as possible!

\*Remember that the plastics need to be **SOFT** and able to stretch when you push a finger against it. You can also check the back to see if it has the recycling symbol No. 4 or No. 2. **\*\*NO PET FOOD/ BIRD FEED BAGS, CELLOPHANE WRAP** (example, used to wrap flower bouquets) **OR HARD PLASTIC CONTAINERS** as none of these plastics stretch when a finger is pressed against it.





## COFFEE HOUR 'Refreshment Schedule' through January 2024!

December 3	Linda Sanborn	Trista Langley-Tyler
December 10	Tom Helmick	Nancy Diepenbrock
December 17	Barb Flaherty	Cathy Palmer
December 24	Joy Turpin	Phoebe Spier
January 7	Pat Fox	Patti Roberts
January 14	Mary Lou Congdon	Pat Adamovich
January 21	Tom Helmick	Sharon Breit
January 28	Barb Flaherty	Cathy Palmer

Hello Friends, above is the schedule for providing treats for Coffee Hour after church. We're happy that so many of you have volunteered to provide this nice addition to the coffee hour social time that enhances our worship together. Here are a few notes regarding your duties etc.:

1. You are only responsible for providing a treat on the assigned Sunday. If you want to set up the coffee maker prior to the service either Joy or Susan can show you how that is done. We have assigned two people each Sunday to make it less of a burden. There have been as many as 60 people at the 9:00 a.m. service.
2. You may bring pastries, cookies, bars, fruit, cheese and crackers or any other items you think would be nice for the social time. Please make sure that your item is ready to serve (i.e., bars cut up, placed on a plate if needed, provide a serving utensil etc.) There are some gluten free treats in the cabinet above the sink. There are plates and napkins and coffee cups in the Parlor to be used for coffee hour.
3. If you cannot provide treats on your assigned Sunday, please **first** contact another person on the list to see if you can switch your Sunday assignments. The contact information for all of those who volunteered is listed at the top of the schedule. If that fails, please contact Susan or Joy to let them know that you will not be available on a given Sunday.
4. You **are not** required to clean up afterwards, so please do not worry if you can only drop off your treats and leave. We will make sure everything is cleaned up afterwards. If you can help clean up, that is great, and there is a very nice vacuum stored in the church office on the wall charger that can be used to vacuum the carpet after. Coffee grounds can be placed in the garbage can in the parlor and the pot should be emptied and rinsed.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Susan or Joy with comments, concerns, or suggestions. We look forward to working with you on this service to our church.

Susan Krivichi and Joy Turpin

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If you have ideas for articles or other information you would like to see in the Church Mouse or the Sunday Concerns of the Church, please let Debbie Brown in the Church Office know.



# First Congregational United Church of Christ

105 North First Street PO Box 1385

Eagle River, Wisconsin 54521

[office@eagleriverucc.org](mailto:office@eagleriverucc.org)

715-802-8501

[www.eagleriverucc.org](http://www.eagleriverucc.org)

## **Church Office Hours**

Monday – Thursday - 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – CLOSED ON FRIDAYS

## **CHURCH COUNCIL**

President, Donna Adams  
Kristen Anchor  
Steve Burrill  
Carol Marshall  
Trisha Moore  
Eric Olsen  
Deb Stolze  
Clerk, Norma Yaeger  
Pastor Parish Relations, Tobi Johannsen  
Women's Fellowship, Sharon Breit  
Sanctuary Arts Group, Patti Roberts  
Facilities, Donna Adams  
Finance, Paula Hendrickson  
Gifts and Endowments, Bill Marshall  
Safety and Security, Carlton Schroeder  
Scholarship, Ursula Charaf  
Service Support Team, Joy Turpin

## **CHURCH STAFF**

Timothy W. Shirley, Pastor  
Debbie Brown, Church Administrator  
Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education  
Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music  
Norma Yaeger, Pianist  
Christine Clough, Cleaning Services

## **Worship Service**

**SUNDAYS, 9:00 A.M.**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8am - Choir Practice 9am - Worship 3:45pm - Cub & Boy Scouts	8:30am - Yoga 9:45am - Qui Gong 4pm - Chime Choir 6pm - AA Meeting @ First	6pm - AA Meeting @ First 6pm - Soul Sisters	9:45am - Qui Gong 11am - Many Ways of Peace	6pm - Eagles AFG 6pm - Narcotics Anonymous	6pm - AA Meeting @ First	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9am - Worship 3:45pm - Cub & Boy Scouts	8:30am - Yoga 9:45am - Qui Gong 4pm - Chime Choir 5:45pm - Church Council 6pm - AA Meeting @ First	6pm - AA Meeting @ First 6pm - Soul Sisters	9:45am - Qui Gong 11am - Many Ways of Peace	6pm - Eagles AFG 6pm - Narcotics Anonymous	6pm - AA Meeting @ First	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
8am - Choir Practice 9am - Worship 3:45pm - Cub & Boy Scouts	8:30am - Yoga 9:45am - Qui Gong 4pm - Chime Choir 6pm - AA Meeting @ First	6pm - AA Meeting @ First 6pm - Soul Sisters	9:45am - Qui Gong 11am - Many Ways of Peace	9:15am - Backpack Packing 6pm - Eagles AFG 6pm - Longest Night Service 6pm - Narcotics Anonymous	6pm - AA Meeting @ First	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
9am - Worship 3:45pm - Cub & Boy Scouts 5pm - Christmas Eve Service	8:30am - Yoga 9:45am - Qui Gong 4pm - Chime Choir 6pm - AA Meeting @ First	6pm - AA Meeting @ First 6pm - Soul Sisters	9:45am - Qui Gong 11am - Many Ways of Peace	6pm - Eagles AFG 6pm - Narcotics Anonymous	6pm - AA Meeting @ First	
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
9am - Gathering 3:45pm - Cub & Boy Scouts						



# The Northwoods Singers

## Carols by Candlelight

- 4 pm, Sunday, December 10, 2023  
Ely Memorial Church  
4302 Hwy B, Land O'Lakes, WI
- 4 pm, Sunday, December 17, 2023  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
5030 Hwy 70 W, Eagle River, WI

### Dr. Pamalyn Lee, Director

Linda Brainard, piano  
Beth Hassler, violin/viola  
Percussion Ensemble

Admission is free  
Refreshments after the concert  
Donations gratefully accepted



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