



First Congregational United Church of Christ

eagleriverucc.org

January 2024

PASTOR'S REPORT

I confess that words do not convey my gratitude to all the church staff and the musicians who made the Advent and Christmas season really sing! I cannot name everyone who worked so hard because I will leave out someone, but I must give a special shoutout to our Director of Music, Lori Hunter. I so enjoy collaborating with her in our worship preparation. We are always on the same page liturgically which makes the process not only smooth, but a whole lot of fun! Our extra special services for the Third Sunday of Advent and for the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols were fabulous. I am deeply moved by all the talent we have here to enhance our worship experiences, adding much meaning every time we gather for services together as beloved faith community. And thank you to everyone who helped decorate the sanctuary, making this sacred space so absolutely beautiful. It truly does take a village! Yes, Lent and Easter beckon, but first we will travel on an Epiphany journey together.

As you are aware we will engage in the Open and Affirming process during the 2024 calendar year. We are looking for five to seven passionate church members to form a Task Force to plan and prepare for our congregational conversations, each gathering having its own emphasis, each one an essential step toward an ultimate decision. Yes, that also includes a point person, or preferably a couple to give leadership toward what will truly be one of the most important things we will do as a congregation. As you know, I will be leading our sessions, but it is imperative that we have strong lay participation in leadership as we move forward with this initiative. If you are interested, see me for more exciting details.

As we enter a New Year together, we will resume Wednesday evening Bible Study at 6:00 p.m. beginning on January 10th. We will be reading and discussing the parables, timeless stories that no doubt predate Jesus, the one who told these tales and made them famous in perpetuity! These stories were woven into the fabric of local culture, serving as object lessons for those who heard them. My hunch is that no one could spin these yarns better than the rabbi from Nazareth! I hope you will join us for this time together. These studies have proven to not only be informative but a great time of fellowship as well. What a great way to spend a cold, winter evening, yes, in the midst of warm company.

While it may seem way to soon to mention, Lent begins this year on Wednesday, February 14th—Happy Valentine’s Day—with our annual service including the imposition of ashes at noon on that day. Mark your calendar because we will continue our tradition of “Soup and Service” beginning on Wednesday evening, February 21st, at 6:00 p.m. and continuing up until Holy Week. Again, make plans to be with us!

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for their participation in our various mission enterprises here at First Congregational United Church of Christ. I am absolutely amazed at what this church is able to do, whether it be monetary or material donations, or whether it be hands on involvement in the various mission projects in which we gladly and enthusiastically participate. “What a Fellowship! What a joy divine!” It is your participation that truly makes us a local missional church in every way that evolving term seeks to convey.

I hope that all of you have a blessed and happy New Year, full of pleasant surprises, experiencing all the wondrously serendipitous ways that God comes into our lives and into our world. We have so many things for which to be grateful! I am thankful for each one of you! You make the position of pastor at this church seem like anything but work and that is indeed a blessing!!!

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

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FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Hello Congregation,

Welcome to 2024! The Church Council did not meet during December, so I am sure we will have a busy meeting in January.

Days become longer and Epiphany arrives on January 6th. For many it is also a time to reflect on what is working and what needs working on. An opportunity to reset.

As our congregation moves into the New Year, it is also a time for us as a Council to review what has worked and what needs to be done. I hope you will share your input, whether something you really liked, or something that could be done better, or if there is something you would like to see happen this year, that you will reach out to a member of Council or to Pastor Tim to share your thoughts.

Meanwhile we may rejoice in very unusual warm weather as we celebrate the arrival of the Christ Child.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy year ahead!

Blessings,
Donna Adams

**Just a reminder that the Church Council meets on the 2nd 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 8th.**

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JANUARY COLLECTION: Acts of KINDNESS

We are kicking off 2024 by collecting KINDNESS during the month of January.

Say, what? Yes, KINDNESS.

We all need KINDNESS in our lives. The whole world needs KINDNESS. So, let's give it to each other and to anyone else we can. In other words, as Pastor Tim would say, "Keep doing what you do so well." And let's be more aware of KINDNESS when we receive it and when we see it. But, for this to be a "collection," we need you to tell us about it!

Snowbirds, listen up: You can participate, too!

Here's how it works:

1. First, like all our collections, contributors will remain anonymous. This is not an effort to pat anyone on the back for the things they do. It's designed to help ALL of us keep KINDNESS top of mind – whether as a recipient, a benefactor, or observer – as we go through our daily lives.

2. If you see an act of KINDNESS, please write it down – no matter how big or small, routine, or unique, please take a minute to write it down on a post-it and "post it" on the bulletin board in the Narthex. (Post-It provided at the board.) Here are some examples. (but please don't be limited by them).

- a. A woman held the door open for me at Kwik Trip.*
- b. My neighbor was ill, so I did his grocery shopping for him.*
- c. I cleared snow from my neighbor's drive.*
- d. A clerk at the store was especially friendly and turned my day around.*
- e. I saw someone stop to help someone change a flat tire.*

3. Again, this is not about patting ourselves on the back. It's about making us more aware of the acts of KINDNESS taking place all around us, as well as making us more aware of how we are impacted by kind gestures, and how we can change the lives of others – perhaps only briefly – by being kind.

4. If you're a snowbird or otherwise gone during the month of January, you can participate, too. Just drop your KINDNESS contribution in the mail and send it to First UCC Kindness Collection, PO Box 1385, Eagle River, WI 54521, or email it to office@eagleriverucc.org. Please put KINDNESS in the subject line.

So, let's plaster the display area in the Narthex with acts of KINDNESS that we see, do and receive.
"In a world where you can be anything, be kind."

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

MELODY OF COMPASSION

During the Offertory we invite you to give your coins for the Melody of Compassion.

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.



It is the day after Christmas and all through the house, it is quiet! I am having my morning coffee as I write this, and it is a nice time to reflect on all that has happened in the month of December. I must say it was a whirlwind of a month!

After recovering from Covid I was amazed at the dedication of the choir, soloists, and other musicians to pull together and bring such a beautiful music centered service with the children on December 17th. This service included Advent music to keep the theme of "Joy!" central while hearing the Christmas story and music as the children created the nativity scene with such enthusiasm and joy! We were very fortunate to have Pat Tucker and Carol Marshall working behind the scenes to stage all the characters for this to happen. It was also nice to have Norma Yaeger able to rearrange her schedule to accompany the choir and I cannot thank the choirs and other musicians enough! The chime choir under the direction of Susan Krivichi set the mood with their amazing procession and introit. Connie Pellman had a real workout on the flute along with a flute duet with Dale Bishop and then with Mindy Bergman on the violin. It was lovely to hear the duet by Mindy and Tom Bergman and the solo by Phoebe Spier. What a beautifully delivered worship experience for all!

Then we put that aside and got right back to work for Lessons and Carols for Christmas Eve! Again, I want to thank everyone who participated in the preparation for this service. It was a very worshipful experience. But I do need to highlight and thank Seren Spiers-Olsen for her first church solo, it was superb! And then we were blessed to hear Phoebe with "O Holy Night". Due to illness, we lost a couple choir members and then needed to make a very last-minute change, so thanks to Connie for stepping in and helping out! Thanks to Mark Holperin for his solo and Luke Ashbrenner on guitar.

I was going to close by stating that this is my last task for 2023 as Music Director, but alas there is still one more service on December 31st! As I reflect on what has been accomplished musically at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Eagle River, Wisconsin, I can truly say I am grateful and feel blessed to work with such a great group of musicians. As we hear in the song, *Thankful*, "and even though there is so much more to do, there's so much to be thankful for!" And I am!

Merry Christmas and may 2024 be kind to us all. Thanks be to God!

Lori

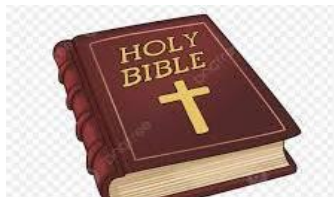
Backpack Program



We pack bags for the Backpack Program on the third Thursday of every month at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. This month we will meet on January 18th at 9:00 a.m. All are welcome to help and any donations to this mission are appreciated. Thank you.

TWELVE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Led by Sharon R. Breit, Director, Christian Education



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

Sharon has books for eight people but can order more.

She 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), if you are interested in attending.

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

Sharon is looking forward to great conversations.



HAPPY JANUARY BIRTHDAY

Barbara Mather, Carl Gromoll, David Adler, Gary Gilbert, Joseph “Joe” Panci, Kathy Holperin, Michael Mettler, Paula Hendrickson, Philip Jensen, Seren Spier-Olsen, and Sharon Breit.

Church Office

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 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 are always available through our website www.eagleriverucc.org. Click on Ministries then online giving and set up your account. 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.

Your weekly envelopes are now available at the back of the church.

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.

FLOCK

January Flock will meet sometime in January 2024 at the home of Bobbie Fleishman. Date to be determined.

FLOWER CALENDER

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!***

BOOK CLUB

Here is the list of dates and books for the first half of the 2024 reading season. We take break for summer and resume in September 2024.

January 11, *My Grandfather's Blessing*, by Rachel Naomi Remen, host :Donna De Pape
February 8, *Demon Copperhead*, by Barbara Kingsolver, host: Susan Krivichi
March 14, *The Sweetness of Water*, by Nathan Harris, host: Marti vonKluck
April 11, *Ladder to the Light*, by Steven Charleston, host: Patti Roberts
May 9, *Lessons in Chemistry*, by Bonnie Garmus, host: Marion Arndt
June 13, We have two possible selections for June, which is later than we usually go. *Going Home* by Jon Katz, host: Deb Stolze, and/or *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder- Host: Carol Marshall. And who knows, we might decide to discuss both books the same gathering.

Several of the books mentioned are available on Overdrive, Libby, or as audiobooks

We are happy to have new folks join us. Sometimes we come to a gathering even if we didn't finish reading the book. Remember that if the book intrigues you but you haven't read it you are still welcome to join the group.

Hope to see you January 11th.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

We are still hoping to get a group together to help plan the community garden for the summer. If you are interested in helping, please contact:

Deb Stolze - dayk57@gmail.com

Mary Lou Congdon - mlcongdon@charter.net

Barb Flaherty - barb0araflaherty58@gmail.com

Susan Krivichi - skrivichi@gmail.com

REMINDER OF RECYCLING MISSION

As we begin a new year let's keep the momentum going of bringing in your soft plastics. We had a great start in 2023 so let's continue to strive to increase our soft plastics collection in 2024. Remember 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 #4 or #2. **NO PET FOOD/ BIRD FEED BAGS, CELLOPHANE WRAP (ex. used to wrap flower bouquets) OR HARD PLASTIC CONTAINERS as all of these do not stretch when a finger is pressed against it.**



**Once again we want to thank this amazing small church and what they can do.
We provided the makings for the residents of Frederick's Place to make a ham
dinner with all the trimmings. Thank you, Thank you!!!!**



COFFEE HOUR 'Refreshment Schedule' through January 2024!

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

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

715-802-8501

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.