

Tower Notes - January 2024

Celebrating 178 years of Community Based Ministry



First Congregational United Church of Christ
An Open & Affirming and Immigrant Welcoming Church

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Rev. Dr. Tanya Sadagopan

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Pastor's Message

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him. Matthew 2:1-3

Dear Members and Friends of Janesville UCC,

As you are reading this newsletter in the early days of 2024, did you know that this time is actually the liturgical season of Christmas? It is Christmas until the beginning of Epiphany on January 6th when we enter the season of Epiphany. Epiphany is a season of learning and enlightenment. Like the magi, the wise ones who followed their guiding star, on January 7th in worship we will celebrate the starlight in our life and choose a Star Word to guide our year! Then with Sunday January 14th we will begin to weave our way through the entire Gospel of Mark. Don't worry, it's a short book in the bible!

Have you ever read the entire book of Mark? It is the shortest book that tells us about the life and ministry of Jesus. Within Mark you will not find a birth story, nor will you find multiple resurrection appearances. The word "immediately" is used quite a bit in this gospel. Jesus is always on the move! Like Jesus, we are going to be *on the move* during this month. Each week I am inviting us to read at least one chapter in the gospel story. Go ahead and read chapter one in preparation for January 17th if you like! See what new things you might learn along the way.

Beginning on February 14th we will change liturgical seasons once more. Lent happens to begin on Valentine's Day in 2024. Lent is a season of contemplation, learning and preparation. We will continue reading the gospel of Mark together leading up to Holy Week on Palm Sunday March 24th! That week we will read more of the Gospel story! This is when things in the life of Jesus begin to shift and change as tensions rise. I hope you will join me in reading this classic gospel that invites us to go deeper in our own walk as disciples of Jesus in this new year!

February 11 will be our Annual Meeting of the church after worship. We hope you will make arrangements to attend. Our ministries, committees, and teams are working hard to prepare the annual report for you to learn about this past year and where we are headed for 2024. Thanks to our amazing volunteers our ministries are continuing to adapt in the changing world of church! A special thanks to you for your faithful giving and special donations through fundraisers, outreach opportunities, and one-time special giving. We are in a stronger financial position than we were just a few months ago. We are grateful! 2024 looks brighter because of YOU!

Happy New Year in Christ's Service,

Pastor Tanya



Worship in January

January 7: Epiphany; Star Words—Visioning Our Year

January 14: Baptism of Jesus; Epiphany; We Trust Our Belovedness

January 21: Healing Paralytic

January 28: Appoints the 12

Thank you to our December liturgists: Bonnie Stalker, Neil Deupree, Mike Rundle, Nathan Roehl, Diana Holtz, Benjamin Fraunfelder.

If you would like to be a liturgist, sign-up in the Fireside Room, or logon to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508084aaba722a0f85-fall/124247659#/>

Thank you to our December Fellowship Hour hosts: Kirsten Almo & Larry Beck, Diana Huckstep.

We would love to have you host Fellowship/Coffee Hour, sign up on the clip-board in the Fireside Room, or use this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508084AABA722A0F85-fellowship>



A great big shout out to First Congregational Church. Our Arts/Crafts/Bake Sale fundraiser was a great success. In the beginning we thought we would have just one table, we had eleven! Thank you to everyone who baked goodies and made their beautiful crafts to sell. And thank you to those who shopped with us.

Crafters Group

January BIRTHDAYS, Happy Day to All!

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 3 Jennifer Grossen | 13 MaryJo Manus | 25 Wyatt Hyzer |
| 3 Janet Hay | 14 Jim Holtz | 25 William Streeter |
| 4 Sarah Beers | 17 Roger Willeford | 26 Jim Hay |
| 5 Niki Halson | 18 Katie Prom | 26 Nancy Stabb |
| 6 Ben Fraunfelder | 22 Joy Myers | 27 Kelsey Stalker |
| 6 Becky Kingsbury | 23 Becky Behling | 27 Madeline Condon |
| 12 Tani Abendroth | 23 Coleen Deck | 28 Denise Caldwell |
| | 25 Joan Gruenwald | 29 Gary Teubert |



January ANNIVERSARIES, Congratulations

- 1 Becky Behling & John Brown
 19 Jim & Janet Hay



We will no longer be collecting for Grocery Bag Sundays each month, but ECHO is always in need of food and non-perishables, which you can drop off during their business hours. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

*Life is an echo...
 what you send out,
 you get back!*

ECHO January Needs:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Diapers (sz 4-6) | Toothbrushes | Spaghetios |
| Peanut butter & jelly | Feminine products | Tuna Helper |
| Spaghetti & sauce | Deodorant | Toilet paper |
| Diced tomatoes | Canned Tuna | Laundry soap |
| Paper bags | Shampoo | Hamburger Helper |
| Breakfast bars | | |

Free Community Dinner



The next Community Meal will be on Saturday, January 6th at 4:00 pm. Brown bag lunches will be available that include meatloaf, mac n cheese, green beans, applesauce, bread/butter, cake.

Guests can drive up or walk up to the back door and meals will be brought out to them. Contact Bonnie Stalker or Nancy Stabb for more information or to volunteer for food prep or meal delivery.

Consistory Highlights from December 18th

Consistory expressed appreciation to Debi Cox for her leadership in the intergenerational Christmas program and to those who participated in the program, to all those involved in the crafts fundraiser, to Bonnie Stalker and Nancy Stabb for their work in preparing the stained-glass windows for sale, and to Rich Harper and Patti York for teaching the new AV technician how to stream video on the large screen in the sanctuary.

At the end of November, year-to-date pledges were about \$16,400 below the budgeted amount. However, due to some lower than anticipated expenses, the church's year-to-date income is only \$136.48 short of year-to-date expenses. Estimated income from the crafts fundraiser is about \$2,500.

The Nominating Committee is working to fill 2024 church leadership positions. If you are interested in serving on a ministry or committee, please contact nominating committee chair Kathy Arndt, Tom Clippert, or Pastor Tanya.

The annual meeting is set for February 11 after worship. On February 25, church leaders for 2024 will be installed during worship and then gather for a leaders' workshop after the service.

Pastor's Report Highlights

- On December 31, the Rev. Lori Powell will be the guest preacher.
- Beginning in January and continuing through Easter, Pastor Tanya's sermons will follow the Gospel of Mark.
- Robyn Doege-Brennan has accepted the position of Director of Music and will begin on January 7 and continue through April 7.
- Sarah Beers has designed and painted an ornament that Parish Care will give to approximately thirty members who are unable to attend church.
- The two new stained-glass windows will be installed by the middle of March.
- The six music scholars were recognized at worship on December 17. The church hopes that these six young people will continue to be part of the choir in 2024.

Church Ministries

- Outreach Ministry—The congregation has donated \$1,300 to the ECHO Toy Drive.
- Christian Education Ministry—Sunday School lessons beginning in January will introduce heroes of faith, both biblical and present day.
- Finance Ministry—Sixty-eight pledges totaling \$159,000 have been received along with another \$10,000 to \$12,000 anticipated from persons who choose not to pledge. Regarding caring for church property, a person has been contracted for snow removal, and Mike Rundle and Bryan Rundle will install the extra renovation carpet tile in the church office area.
- Membership Ministry—The church's membership roll has been updated and a copy is available. Fellowship hour following the Sunday service is so well attended that the location may move from the fireside room to the events center.

Submitted by Linda Stehura

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS

HEROES

New Series starting January 7, 2024

What is a hero? Are they real? Are there heroes in the Bible? Are there heroes in the world? America? Janesville? Our church? Are you a hero? Your Mom? Why does the teacher ask so many questions?



INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS PUPPET PAGEANT 2023

Thanks so much to everyone who was a part of this fun. I treasure every one of you, and I cannot wait to see what crazy idea we work on for 2024!

INTERGENERATIONAL ART CLASS January 28

We will be having an **Intergenerational** Art event on Sunday January 28 following church. We will have lunch and learn to do a new technique. **EVERYONE** is invited; there will be a sign-up sheet so that we can see how many are coming. The art will be appropriate for all ages and abilities. There will be a small fee for supplies.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION CLASS January 14 – February 18

Pastor will be teaching a Faith Formation Class following church. All teens and adults are invited, whether you are a member or not. More info soon!



Debi Cox
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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
OPEN & AFFIRMING
IMMIGRANT WELCOMING



54 S. JACKSON STREET, JANESVILLE, WI 53548
JANESVILLEUCC.ORG

Director of Music—Specific Term Jan 7-April 7

We are delighted to share that Robyn Doege-Brennan has agreed to take the position of Director of Music from January 7-April 7th to provide us some stability for both Lent and get us through Easter. She aptly stepped in to direct both the Chancel and Bell Choirs for our December 17th and Christmas Eve services. The members of the choirs respond well to her direction. Robyn is an accomplished director of voice and works with students at Parker including some of our Music Scholars. Please welcome her to our staff!



The Music Scholars program began as an idea of Pastor Tanya's to support then Director of Music Dr. Brian Knutson to continue to strengthen the chancel and bell choirs. The idea was to provide honorariums each semester to musically talented high school students while encouraging them to grow in their faith expressions and religious musical offerings. The program began in fall of 2017 with a gift provided by the estate of Darlene McWilliams. A memorial gift designed to sustain the program was given in memory of Gregory Anderson who prior to his death sang in the choir for

many years. The gifts from both McWilliams and Anderson allowed the program to launch and become a sustainable part of the music ministry of Janesville UCC! You may make a contribution to the Music Scholars program by sending us a check with "Music Scholars" in the memo or contact the church office for more ways to contribute to this special ministry of our church!

February 25 Ministry Leaders' Workshop

After worship on Sunday February 25th, after the installation of officers, we will be having a workshop to support all members of consistory, and other ministries.

All who serve on ministries in the church are invited to attend. Those who serve on Membership, Outreach, Finance, Christian Education and Consistory are expected to attend. We will discuss best practices, communication avenues, fundraiser nuts and bolts, and ways we can envision the coming year together as a church. We realize that being together in person provides us a sense of connection, collaboration, and creative problem solving on the opportunities before us. Please encourage your ministries and your newcomers to plan to attend.



From Outreach:

Outreach's giving opportunity for January is Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), which supports four overall ministries: the Office of General Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and Justice and Witness Ministries.

The Office of General Ministries is home of the UCC President, the General Minister, and the Publishing, Identity, and Communications Office. The latter, among other responsibilities, maintains the UCC's social media/web presence so that access is available everywhere.

Local Church Ministries provides training and other support for both aspiring and current UCC Pastors, and Justice and Witness Ministries brings training to church members and friends so that they develop the leadership and citizenship skills for participation in social justice work, including the shaping of public policy.

Wider Church Ministries contains both Disaster Ministries and Global Ministries, which respond to both natural and human-caused disasters and overall work for justice, reconciliation, and peace around the world.

We humbly ask the congregation to consider giving to OCWM this month to support these various ministries, either electronically through EasyTithe or using the designated envelopes available in the pews. Your gift will help to shape a future of justice and peace both locally and around the globe.

Our many sincere thanks,
--Kira Myers, Outreach

January wish list for GIFTS:



December **Giving List** 

Donations can be dropped off at any time at our shelter
1025 N Washington Street, Janesville, WI 53548



- **Pre-made meals that can be frozen to feed 30**
- **Coffee/ powdered coffee creamer**
- Large canisters of sugar-free flavored drink powder
- Vegetable oil
- Sugar
- Q-Tips/cotton balls
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream
- Kleenex
- Nail Clippers
- Razors
- 3-n-1 Shampoo
- Spray cleaners
- 55 and 32-gallon trash bags
- Toilet paper/paper towels
- Hairbrushes/combs
- Backpacks
- Earbuds
- Boxers and briefs in men's sizes medium, large, and extra large
- USB C or Micro USA chargers for the Samsung/Android phones
- White copy paper
- Grocery store gift cards (Janesville locations)
- Mattress covers, water cooler, drink dispenser, can opener--see our Amazon list.



Two New Members

We were delighted to welcome returning member Jan Leach on Sunday December 17th in worship. After many years of being away, she has returned to our church. She attends monthly when Carolyn Brandeen can bring her from her senior living facility.



During our Christmas Eve Family service Coleen Deck joined our congregation. She is the fiancé of member Alex Clark. It was a happy day!



Parish Care

Our gratitude to Parish Care member Sarah Beers, a talented artist, who created 30 painted ornaments for our “at home members” to receive as a gift from Parish Care. We identified 30 people who were sent these hand painted ornaments in the mail or dropped off by a member of the Parish Care team. We are invited to rejoice even when we are weary! Thanks Parish Care Team!

The Parish Care Team is a group of dedicated and compassionate people who call, write notes, pray for, and visit with some of our members who face greater challenges than most. They meet monthly to share their contacts with the membership and to partner with the

Pastor in caring for the whole of our congregation. If you would like to become a part of this special team, please contact Pastor Tanya, Pat Scott or the office with your interest.



First Congregational Church
 54 South Jackson Street
 Janesville, WI 53548



*This page was
 attached to the
 Tower Notes that
 were mailed.*

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday mornings 9:00 - 1:00 or by appointment.

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|------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Ministers | All Members of First Congregational UCC |
| Pastor | Rev. Dr. Tanya Sadagopan |
| Christian Ed. Director | Debi Cox |
| Director of Choirs | Robyn Brennan |
| Pianist/Organist | Paul Finger |
| AV Technician | Kaydence Troia |
| Secretary | Becky Kingsbury |
| Bookkeeper | Denise Caldwell |
| Nursery Coordinator | Gwen Charlet |
| Custodian | Matthew Charlet |

Church Leadership & Volunteers

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| President | Tom Clippert |
| Treasurer | Nancy Stabb |
| Finance Chair | Mike Rundle |
| Volunteer Coordinator | Diane Holtz |
| Gardeners | Nancy Stabb, Barbara Bendlin, Jeanine Fry, Tani Abendroth, Tabitha Ebert & Josh Streeter |
| Lawn Mowers: | Mark Carlson, Dave Schollmeier, Mike Rundle, Josh Streeter, Doug Newton, David Arndt |