

Tower Notes -February 2024

Celebrating 179 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

They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Mark 1:27

Dear Members and Friends of Janesville UCC,

February is the month of *looove* and it is also the month of *Lent*! With Ash Wednesday falling on Valentine's Day, one has to ask, 'What does love got to do with Lent?' The journey of Lent, the 40 days plus Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Easter, is a time of contemplation and renewal. It is traditionally associated with fasting and the fish fries celebrated at Catholic parishes. But fasting and giving up things is not really what Lent is about. The whole point of the season is to draw us closer to God and to let go of the things, the addictions, the 'demons' that get in the way of being in God's eyes the best version of ourselves we can be. It is also a time to learn more about who Jesus was so long ago with the disciples and who he is in our life today.

This year will be our last Lenten journey together and I want it to be all about:

Loving Our Spiritual Journey!

Wednesday February 14th from 9am-1pm Ashes and Prayers

5:30-6:00 pm Short Service w/Ashes on What's Love Got to Do With It?

How can you and I learn to love our spiritual journey? One of the ways we do that is by learning to love and celebrate who we are. What do you love about yourself? What are you proud of? Where do you see beauty in the life you have built for yourself? What gives you the most joy? What aspects of Jesus' life and ministry do you love most? How might you love a little bit more like Jesus? Jesus commands us, "*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" The second is this, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*" Mark 12:30-31. Jesus does not say go and give up chocolate and sweets and deny yourself. He commands us to love more deeply, more completely with our entire spirit. That kind of love

demands that we accept ourselves, love God who cherishes us, and find out what we love most about a guy who gave his life to save his friends because he loved them deeply.

Jesus was all about love, so Lent is all about looove too!

I cannot deny it and I would not even if I wanted to: *I have loved serving this church and I will miss you, but not just yet.* We have done amazing things together and we have a few amazing things yet to do together. So, if we have not seen each other in a while, please reach out, call, email, and stop by one of these Sundays and let us remind one another about the ways we see God's love in one another. Or join me for dinner....

Wednesday February 28th at 6:30pm 'Soup and Such'

February is sooo cool this year, it has an extra day (29) just for us to love on one another a little bit more! Wednesday February 28th we will have a Lenten 'Soup and Such' at 6:30 for fellowship and time for discussion. Do you make great soup? Bring a crock pot to share and we will sit and talk for a while and tell one another of how we are *loving our own spiritual journey!*

Come on along with me one more time.

Blessed to be a blessing,

Pastor Tanya

Worship in February

February 4: Still the Storm; Mark 4

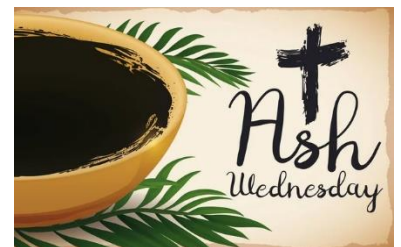
February 11: Possessed, Healed, Restored to Life; Mark 5 All Church Meeting

February 14: Ash Wednesday 9-1 Imposition of ashes w/private prayer in Fireside Room
5:30 pm short Ash Wednesday Service w/ashes

February 18: Walking on Water; Mark 6

February 25: Syrophenician Woman; Mark 7
Ministry Leaders Workshop 11:30 – 1:30

February 28: Soup & Such 6:30 pm



Thank you to our January liturgists: Sarah Beers, Nancy Stabb, Nathan Roehl, Barbara Bendlin.

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 January Fellowship Hour host: 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>

Meals on Wheels volunteers provide over 20,000 meals to the city of Janesville each year. Our church plays an important role in accomplishing this important service. We provide volunteers who navigate routes and bring warm meals to the doors of those in need. Our church supplied 16 wonderful volunteers last year. I am very grateful for their assistance. We are scheduled to cover routes March 4-8 and March 11-15 from 10:30 to 12:30. Would you please consider volunteering? You do not need to cover every day. Even a day or two of availability can be of great help. Please contact Diane Holtz at 608-751-2850 or email jdmholtz@charter.net for more information.

February **BIRTHDAYS**, Happy Day to All!

1 Tessa Hopkins	6 Nancy Seely	19 Dean Smith
1 Joan Rost	9 Olivia Swenson	22 Julie Budrow
2 Gale Rundle	16 Willa Bagley	25 Kayla Hartung
2 Erin Stalker	16 Desiree Halson	26 Diane Henrichs
4 Andrea McCabe	16 Patti York	26 Jean Schollmeier
		28 Josh Grossen



February **ANNIVERSARIES**, Congratulations

None



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 February Needs:

Diapers (sz 4-6)	Toothbrushes	Spaghettios
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		

BIG NEWS:

We are saddened by the news that Pastor Tanya will be leaving us. Her last Sunday with us is April 28th. "While I deeply cherish each of you and the incredible ministry we have shared over these 9 years together, I have received news of God's call in my professional life to serve as the newly settled minister of South Church UCC in Concord, New Hampshire."

Please plan to stop in and say goodbye sometime before then.

We will have a reception on April 28th to formally release her.

Consistory Highlights from January 23rd

Consistory expressed appreciation to George Tucker for his help in training our new AV technician, to all those who have said yes to the Nominating Committee when asked to serve on a ministry or committee, to David Arndt for keeping the church's heating equipment running, and to Joellyn Merz as she completes her service on Consistory.

Upcoming after-church gatherings include the multigenerational art activity on January 28, a presentation of the 2024 budget on February 4, the annual meeting on February 11, and the church leadership planning session on February 25.

In the weeks leading up to Easter, Pastor Tanya will continue to build her sermons on the book of Mark. Music Director Robyn Doege-Brennan, working with Pastor Tanya, has selected music for worship services through Easter. Additional plans for Holy Week are underway.

The two new stained-glass windows will be installed in early March. These windows, as well as the Spiritual Arts Center, will be dedicated on March 24. All donor families will be invited to this special event.

The Nominating Committee has almost completed its task of recommending church leaders to be approved at the annual meeting. A few positions do remain open.

The music scholars have returned for the spring semester and will be with us in worship through June 2.

The church's 2023 income was only about \$100 short of the year's expenses. Member contributions, however, were about \$13,500 below the amount anticipated in the 2023 budget.

Rental contracts have been adjusted to reflect the rising cost of utilities. In 2024, the YMCA, Rock County Diversion, and Orion Family Services will be occupying space in our building.

The Finance Ministry and the Endowment Committee met together to plan for the consolidation of endowments. A report on decisions made at that meeting will be available.

To end on an exciting note—over the next two months, Pastor Tanya hopes to finish writing her book *From Outlaw to In-law: How Multicultural Couples Can Become Agents for Social Change*.

Submitted by Linda Stehura



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS

SUNDAY SCHOOL WINTER SERIES 2024

We have been talking about what makes a hero and learning about Wise Men, Deborah, David and Jonah. Also, modern heroes like Astronauts, the Wright Brothers, Amanda Gorman, Jakhil Jakson (look him up and be impressed) and Sargeant York. Also examining what the comics have to say about heroes.



We will take a break from Heroes for Lent and then resume after Easter.



Our Lent Sunday School curriculum is "Wandering Hearts" from Sanctified Arts. We will learn by following Peter in his travels with Jesus.

INTERGENERATIONAL ART DAY January 28



This event was a huge success! 25 people attended and learned to paint in the style of Ted Harrison. Teacher Mande Zierath did an awesome job. Feedback has been very positive. Great fellowship and fun with people of all ages and art ability. Thanks to everyone who allowed us to display their work during our MINI ART SHOW during Coffee hour on Feb. 4.

COLORING WITH FRIENDS SATURDAY, FEB. 24 1:00 - 3:00 Come when you can, leave when you must. Informal, INTERGENERATIONAL. Contact Debi for info.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION CLASS continues with Pastor Sundays at 11:30 through February 18



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54 S. JACKSON STREET, JANESVILLE, WI 53548
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February 25 Ministry Leaders' Workshop—Mark Your Calendar

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. We will start with a potluck luncheon at 11:30 before the meeting which should end by 1:30.

From Outreach:

February Mission -- Palestine Children's Relief Fund

The Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) is a registered 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization founded in 1991 by concerned humanitarians in the USA.

The PCRF's mission is to provide medical and humanitarian relief collectively and individually to children throughout the Levant, regardless of their nationality or religion.

Over the years, the PCRF has sent over 2,000 affected children abroad for free medical care, has sent thousands of international doctors and nurses to provide free medical care in local hospitals, and provided tens of thousands of children with humanitarian aid and support they otherwise would not get.

PCRF's impact also includes establishing two pediatric cancer departments in Palestine, a new PICU and pediatric cardiology department in Ramallah, and many more critical projects to bolster the region's healthcare system.

PCRF relies on grassroots efforts, supported by a worldwide network of thousands of volunteers, to fulfill its humanitarian mission.

Please visit their website for more information: <https://www.pcrf.net/about-us>, and consider joining us in supporting this great cause.

Donations may be made through EasyTithe at: <https://app.easytithe.com/App/Giving/janesvilleucc>, by cash or check using the donation envelopes in the pews, or at the PCRF donation portal at: <https://pcrf1.app.neoncrm.com/forms/general>.

Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Pk4XrCEis4>

SEEKERS BOOK CLUB NEWS

Seekers book discussion group meets on Thursdays from 4:00-5:30 pm on the 2nd floor of the church. They are reading the book, "Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White" by Adam Hamilton. You can attend even if you haven't read the book. For further information, contact Barbara Bendlin at bbendlin@centurytel.net



Free Community Dinner



The next Community Meal will be on Saturday, February 3rd at 4:00 pm. Brown bag lunches will be available that include spaghetti with meat sauce, lettuce salad with dressing, garlic bread, fresh fruit, and cookies.

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. In January we served 92 meals.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Scholarships available are designed to assist persons in their educational advancements. Applicants may seek support for vocational preparation in technical, collegiate, or post-graduate work. They must be members of this church.

- There are three separate scholarship funds for which the scholarship application may be used. The qualifications and purposes although similar, are not identical.



The application is to be considered for:

- Bidwell Scholarship – Eligibility for this scholarship is limited to two years and you must be under age 27
- Saenger, Frick, McBlair, Lee Fund (this scholarship is limited to a total of 5 years.)
- General Scholarship Fund (this scholarship is limited to a total of 5 years.)

Applications are available in the Fireside Room, on our website, or contact the office.
They are due March 31st.

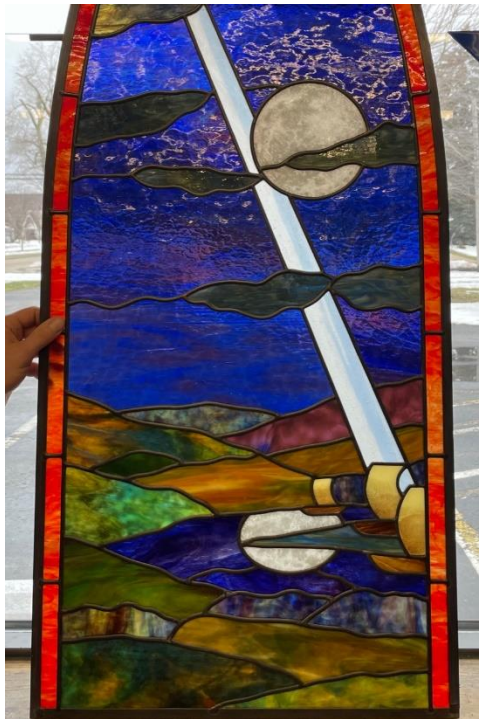


STAINED GLASS WINDOW UPDATE:

We have more photos to share from the two new stained glass windows getting ready to be installed in our sanctuary. Our Silent Night of Refuge is nearing completion. It is based on this scripture among others: *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you.* Psalm 5:11 NRSV

The Our Silent Night of Refuge window is given in loving memory of Lillie Markham and Greg Anderson by their families. The Caring for God's New Creation is given in honor of Dick and Joan Skyles.

The installation of both windows will happen in early March. We are inviting everyone, especially our donor families to join us for the dedication of both windows on Palm Sunday March 24th during worship.

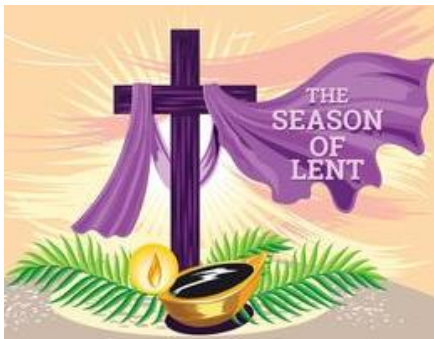




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54 South Jackson Street
Janesville, WI 53548



*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.

Ministers	All Members of First Congregational UCC
Pastor	Rev. Dr. Tanya Sadagopan
Christian Ed. Director	Debi Cox
Music Director	Robyn Droege-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