

# Tower Notes - November 2025

Celebrating 180 years of Community Based Ministry



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

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#Love&JusticeChurch

Rev. Dr. Bob Gross



## Pastor's Message

Friends,

I have some good news to share. I don't generally like to use this space for personal matters. However, I'm going to be gone for two weeks this month, and, in the interests of transparency, I thought it best to share it here.

After extended conversations with my doctors, I have elected to go in for bariatric surgery. I will have a Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass (shrinking the size of my stomach). Maintaining a healthy weight has been a lifelong struggle. The older I get, the more concerned I am about living a long, healthy, and happy life. While not a magic wand, this surgery will be a helpful tool to live the life I want to live.

Surgery is set for the 13<sup>th</sup>, I will be out on Sunday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Rev. Neil Deupree will be leading worship on those Sundays. I pray you will use that as an opportunity to come to worship expressing your love for God and one another, even in my absence.

While this surgery is routine, and Froedtert has a top-notch cadre of doctors, it's not routine for me. I ask for your prayers for me, my surgical team, and my family. While I am gone, I will be healing, praying for you, and preparing for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

I look forward to worshipping with you on November 30<sup>th</sup>, the First Sunday in Advent.

Blessings

*Pastor Bob*

## November Worship Themes

November 2, Holy Communion, “Feeding Five Thousand,” John 6: 1-14

November 9, Stewardship Sunday, “A Dream Empowering Generosity,” Acts 10

November 16, Rev. Neil Deupree preaching; What are the signs of our times?

November 23, Rev. Neil Deupree preaching; Turn the light on Lord!

November 30, First Sunday of Advent, “Stay Woke,” Matthew 24: 36-44

Thank you to our October liturgists: Nancy Stabb, Sarah Beers, and Nathan Roehl.

*If you would like to be a liturgist, sign up in the Fireside Room on the clipboard.*

*We would love to have you host Fellowship/Coffee Hour. Please sign up on the clipboard in the Fireside Room.*



Our Parish Care members provide a confidential PRAYER CHAIN. You are invited to send your prayer requests to them any Sunday by using a yellow slip found in the pews or by calling the church office.

## SEEKERS BOOK CLUB NEWS

*Seekers book discussion group meets on Thursdays from 4:00-5:30 pm in the Atrium of the church. They are reading “Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian” by Paul Knitter.*

*You are invited to attend the discussion even if you haven’t read the book.*

*For further information, contact Barbara Bendlin at  
[Barbara.bendlin@gmail.com](mailto:Barbara.bendlin@gmail.com)*



## November BIRTHDAYS, Happy Day to All!

2	Elizabeth Dunwiddie	19	Lucia Hyzer	28	Garrett Mohr
11	David Arndt	21	Mary Ann Harris	29	Quinn McCabe
13	Sarah Gehri	23	Tony Dieckhoff	29	Jan Willeford
14	Janette Soddy	24	Audrey Burhans	30	Marie Hartung



## November ANNIVERSARIES, Congratulations

None



*If your name ever gets missed from the birthday or anniversary list, please let Becky know.*



We no longer collect 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, or at church. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

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

## ECHO November Needs:

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

## Free Community Dinner



Community Meal is an outreach that our church has participated in for over 15 years. We serve a healthy, balanced meal to those in our community who need or desire a freshly prepared meal. It is served the first Saturday of each month. We began serving it as an indoor sit-down meal but has transformed into a to-go style meal. We currently serve over 100 meals each month.

The next Community Meal will be on Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup> at 4:00. The menu is tator-tot casserole, fruit, and brownies.

Guests can drive up or walk up to the back parking lot door and meals will be delivered to them. Want to volunteer for Community Meal? You can donate desserts, food prep and assist serving meals on the day of the meal. Desserts can be dropped off during office hours or a pick-up can be arranged. Volunteer by contacting Nancy Stabb, Jeanine Fry or Bonnie Stalker, directly, email [bonniebrewer17@hotmail.com](mailto:bonniebrewer17@hotmail.com), or sign up in the Fireside Room on the clipboard.

## **CONSISTORY MEETING OCTOBER 20**

After ratifying Deb Lalor as clerk, appreciations were expressed. Appreciations were given for Debbi Cox for her written Sunday School reviews which offer a review of Sunday School happenings and suggestions for parents. A second appreciation was given for Robyn Doege-Brennan for covering for Paul as he awaits a surgery,

Treasurer Nancy Stabb presented a summary of income and expenses for the month and year to date. Income for September was \$43,126.11 reflecting the generous \$30,000 anonymous member gift we received that month. Expenses were \$23,899.79. Year to Date Sept. 30. both income and expenses have exceeded our budgeted estimates with income slightly ahead. We do not expect any unusual expenses aside from those associated with moving Rev. Barlow to Wisconsin. Mission giving date is \$17,693.18.

We are off to a good start on our fund-raising to cover moving expenses for BJ and Megan. We will continue to receive weekly updates. President Darla Denovsek reported back on her attendance at a “Partners in Building” conference. She learned of many ways churches are utilizing their buildings to address the needs of church and community. The Personnel Committee passed a motion to release Pastor Bob from his obligation to the church on December 31, 2025. The Outreach Committee is looking to provide furnishings for an apartment for the Next Steps Resiliency Center located at the former Royce Elementary School in Beloit and into possibly providing gas and laundry cards for the Janesville Community Center. The finance committee reports a snow plowing contract was signed. The contract will pay for plowing per snowfall. The Membership Committee has ordered canvas signs to be placed outside the church to announce the arts, crafts and bake sale in December. They hope to have a baking time at the church in November.

The next Consistory meeting will be on November 17, 2025 at 6:30 pm at the church.

*Submitted by Deb Lalor, clerk*



On Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, Josephine French (age 1) and her sister Fiona Hemm (age 14) were baptized by Pastor Bob.

Parents are Nick and Sarah French.



## Year to Date Finance Report 3<sup>rd</sup> QTR

EXPENSES (Personnel, Building, Administration, Program)	\$239,603.49
INCOME (Donations, Rent, Fund Raising)	\$213,502.49
INCOME FROM RESERVES and MEMORIALS	\$ 42,876.38
<b>INCOME OVER EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$ 16,775.38</b>

### ADDITIONAL ASSETS on SEPTEMBER 30,2025

Wisconsin Foundation UCC	\$640,326.35
Wells Fargo Scholarship	\$ 37,838.78
Memorials	\$ 44,141.42
Scholarship etc. Checking	\$ 9,948.47
Building and Property Priceless:)	

Thanks to all who have kept up with their pledge and special thanks to those who have gone over and above.

Nancy Stabb Treasurer



Please mark your calendar for our Arts/Craft/Bake Sale on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-2:00. This sale will be open to the public on Saturday, and again on Sunday for church members and visitors who couldn't make it on Saturday.

We tentatively have 1 vendor (there's a lot of competition from other churches, Farmers Market, and Mega Market). If you know of anyone who would like to set up a table (their own), cost is \$10.00 plus 10% of sales.

There will be a silent auction with donated or gently used items and gift baskets. There are baskets/containers in the Fireside Room for you to use, or use your own gift basket.

We will have 2 other areas, "The Attic" consisting of new and gently used items (fall/winter/Christmas themes), and a coffee/hot chocolate/water sale table sponsored by Outreach.

This will be our first Arts/Craft/Bake Sale opened to the public. A very exciting event for our church family. If you have questions, contact Diana Huckstep 608-774-2648.

Blessings, Membership Ministry





# Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

Your 2025 stewardship packet should have arrived in the middle of October. We ask you to think about God's Dream of how your volunteer time and financial resources can make a difference. Please return your pledge card and time and talents card by mail or in person no later than November 9.

This year, we're asking you to fill out the pledge card even if you intend to leave the amount blank, so we know that you are still a part of God's Dream for our church in 2026.

Thanks for all you do to support your church and community!

Stewardship Committee members: Dave Schollmeier, Diana Huckstep, Nancy Stabb and Pastor Bob Gross

### From Search Committee:

Pastor Barlow and his wife, Megan, plan to start driving to Wisconsin right after Thanksgiving around Dec. 1. They have not yet purchased a home, but their Janesville realtor has booked a fully-furnished month-to-month rental place for them on the north shore of Lake Koshkonong with a lake view, and that place is available to them until May, so they will have plenty of time to find a house to buy. They are prepping the cats for the long ride by giving them treats in the car every day and taking them for rides when they have a house showing. Here's the last sentence of his email: "With each passing day our excitement for a new life and ministry in Janesville grows. I can't wait for January to get here! We will see each other in person again before we know it!"

The pastor's 'Moving Expense Campaign' is doing very well. We have covered 9 1/2 states out of 13 so far!



*Thank You for this gift of food You've placed upon our table.  
And help us all to do Your work in any way we're able.  
Amen*

# SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS

17



Fall Sunday School 2025 Sunday Morning at 10 AM  
following the Children's Moment with Pastor Bob



Sunday Dec. 14, 2025

**Our Pageant will be Inter-Generational and so much fun. See Debi for a part!**

## WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR FIRESIDE ROOM BANNER?

Last spring many of you turned in slips with your favorite things about our church. We had a huge response and they have been compiled and voted on. The banner and the winning phrases have been given to our artist (Mary Jo McManus) to draw up the outline. When it is ready, I will be asking for people to help me color it in. Interested in helping with the coloring?

Sign up in the FIRESIDE ROOM!

AGES 14-23

Winter Solstice Retreat  
JANUARY 16-18 2026  
Reserve your scholarship now!

Are you watching service on-line?

It is a great option when you can't  
Be here in person!

I can email you Sunday School  
materials for at Home use.

Contact me if you Are interested. →



Debi Cox

Director of Christian Education

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Church: 608-752-8716

Mobile: 651-387-4552

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC

OPEN & AFFIRMING

IMMIGRANT WELCOMING



54 S. JACKSON STREET, JANEVILLE, WI 53548

[JANEVILLEUCC.ORG](http://JANEVILLEUCC.ORG)

At the August 18, 2025, Consistory meeting, changes to our **by-laws were approved**. Here are some of the highlights of the changes:



- Language was updated for easier reading and roles, relationships and duties were clarified.
- The Consistory, ministry groups and committees are smaller to reflect the size of our congregation.
- Ministry and committee members are elected for staggered terms.
- Interim committee or ministry appointments are to be approved by the Consistory.
- The “Shared Ministry” committee name is reverting to its previous name, “Pastoral Relations”.
- The Nominating Committee chair no longer has a term limit.
- Consistory, ministry and committee meetings may be held in person, using electronic media, or a mix of the two.
- The president of the congregation may serve no more than two consecutive terms.
- There is no assumption that the vice president of the congregation will move up to be president when their term ends.

Changes to the Constitution are also being considered. After they are shared with the Consistory, they will be presented at the next congregational meeting for approval.

If you have any questions or would like more information about any of these changes, please feel free to contact any member of Consistory.

## THANKSGIVING KRINGLE FUNDRAISER



ORDERING CLOSES: NOVEMBER 13TH AT NOON  
PICK UP: NOV 22 10am -noon OR NOV 25TH 1-4PM AT ECHO  
JUST IN TIME FOR THANKSGIVING

<b>\$18 EACH</b>	
-Almond	-Pecan
-Apple	-Raspberry
-Cherry	-Turtle
-Cherry Cheese	-Wild Blueberry
-Cinnamon Roll	-Wisconsin
-Cream Cheesecake	



Order online or stop into the ECHO office  
[bit.ly/4hnC58K](https://bit.ly/4hnC58K)  
[earthur@echojanesville.org](mailto:earthur@echojanesville.org) for questions



 Award Winning Kringle From Racine, Wisconsin – Since 1949 



Join us on Saturday, Nov 15, 1-4 in the church kitchen to bake and freeze cookies for our December 13<sup>th</sup> Arts/Craft/Bake Sale. You could also bake Christmas cookies at home and bring them to decorate. Contact Diana Huckstep, 608-774-2648, to reserve your spot.



**Thought for the month:** A moment of **patience** in a moment of **anger** saves you a hundred moments of **regret**.





First Congregational Church  
54 South Jackson Street  
Janesville, WI 53548



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

## First Congregational United Church of Christ

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

Ministers

Interim Pastor

Christian Ed. Director

Music Director

Pianist/Organist

AV Technician

Secretary

Bookkeeper

Nursery Coordinator

Custodian

All Members of First Congregational UCC

Rev. Dr. Bob Gross

Debi Cox

Robyn Doege-Brennan

Paul Finger

Kaydence Troia

Becky Kingsbury

Denise Caldwell

Gwen Charlet

Matthew Charlet

### Church Leadership & Volunteers

President

Treasurer

Finance Chair

Gardeners

Lawn Mowers:

Darla Dernovsek

Nancy Stabb

Mike Rundle

Barbara Bendlin, Jeanine Fry, Tani Abendroth, Nancy Stabb,  
Mike Rundle, Doug Newton, Martin Huckstep, Tim Green