

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The Pilgrim Broadcaster
JANUARY 2024

Epiphany - Continued from page 2

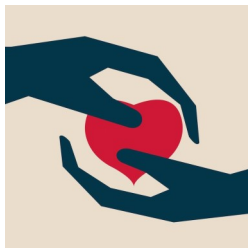
This man came to be with those whose lives were all disoriented. The paranoid mentally ill who shouted out to Jesus. Jesus healed them. The man who had a stroke and could no longer walk. Jesus healed him. Even Jarius, who fell to his knees because his daughter had died. Jesus wept with him. Jesus was with all of them when their world was tossed upside down.

Trust that God is with you.
Look to that star above.
Soon it will rest from its rising, and so will you. Amen.

Pastor Sara



LEND-A-HAND



Lend-A-Hand will meet again at 1:30 pm on Thursday, March 14, 2024. We hope you will join us!

Epiphany: January 6, 2024 Scripture Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We've seen his star in the East, and we've come to honor him." When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: "You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod secretly called for the Magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." When they heard the king they went; and look, the star they had seen in the East went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. They opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.
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Epiphany - Continued from page 1

Last spring we did a great job of sifting and winnowing, cleaning things out. One of my goals for New Year's was to clean out my cupboards and reorganize things. There were some things that needed to be sorted through, and some things that just needed to be shuffled and moved. But I know that when we move the spatulas, for the first month I will automatically open the drawer where they used to be and reach in, and the spatulas won't be there. Just like we have been doing.

It is like getting into a car that is automatic after being used to a stick shift for many years. Stomping on the floor again and again. A muffled cussing, 'darn it all!', the clutch is not there. We become disoriented when the patterns we've established get thrown out of whack. We put things in order for a reason.

Everything has its place, yet when we move what we have always been used to, we are thrown off. Somehow, we are triggered into a reminder that "ah, yes," and epiphany, if you will, and it becomes clear to us again.

The Wise Men became disoriented as they were looking for the Messiah to be born. They stopped in Jerusalem asking for directions. This is a miracle in itself. They saw a sign, a star, a rare star at its rising. They were astrologers, not theologians. They had no clue what this meant. But King Herod summoned those who did, and the priests and scribes declared, "The prophets say the king is born in Bethlehem." So off they went in the direction of Bethlehem and the star stopped where the manger was. And lo and behold, there lay Jesus.

All the disorientation of the journey was resolved and made right in this humble being. Disorientation happens in life. Looking deep into the cupboards, we see that pushed far into the back are the depression and anxiety meds that we take when we become overwhelmed. No one must know. And I am sure no one does know. We would be okay if it's just that we had to deal with losing a job. Or we just found out that our daughter has been using drugs. Or our grandson just told us he is gay. Go down the list, and there is much that causes us to spin in life and we reach up for some relief and for the glass to take a sip of water on a sleepless night, and dang it, they are not there.

We push in the pedal to shift into a slower gear in the pace of life, and darn it, it's not there. It is those moments we must do the one very thing that the Wise Men did masterfully, and that is to trust. Trust that the star will appear. Trust that the star will be there through the night. Trust that you will receive all you need to find yourself again. Trust that you find Immanuel, God is with us.

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NEON SUNDAY

“Let your light shine so that they may see your goodness and give praise to God.” Matthew 5:16 Let goodness be seen! **Wear your neon or something bright to worship!**

January 21, 2024

The winter is long and dark, but we are people of the Way who follow Christ. We are shown a light and that is a way to brighten another person's day.

All are invited to take a selfie or snapshot of a place where goodness is being shared in your life. Capture the places you volunteer your time, talent or tithe to be Christ to a neighbor. We will compile these photos to display. Please email photos to Pastor Sara (revsarafortucc@gmail.com) or drop off in the church office by January 14, 2024. Thank you!

Nurture will be hosting a **Soup Luncheon** after worship on January 21, 2024. Please join us in Plymouth Hall for delicious tasting soups. If you have a special recipe please bring the soup to share.

Thank You!

With deep appreciation Outreach would like to say, “Thank you to all for blessing others with your donations to Jefferson County Christmas Neighbors.”



Workshop to Examine ‘Just Peace’ Resolution

With the war between Israel and Hamas raging on, the **Wisconsin Conference Palestine Justice Working Group** will host a ZOOM presentation on the UCC’s 2021 Resolution of Witness calling for a just peace in the Middle East. The webinar, scheduled for **7 to 8:30 pm on Wednesday, January 3**, will be led by the Rev. Diane Dulin, a retired UCC pastor, and her husband, Tom Bellman, who served on the steering committee of the UCC Palestine – Israel Network. Go to Upcoming Events on the UCC site to register: <https://www.wcucc.org/>

The 2021 resolution, called “Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel,” marked the first time a mainline Christian denomination had officially labeled Israel’s military occupation of Palestinian territories an apartheid system.

The webinar will examine the prophetic and historic role of Resolutions of Witness in the UCC and why Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem and several denominations have labeled Israel an apartheid system. The webinar will examine the prophetic and historic role of Resolutions of Witness in the UCC and why Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem and several denominations have labeled Israel an apartheid state. The session will allow time for audience questions.



ANNUAL MEETING January 28, 2024

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Our Annual Meeting will be held on January 28, 2024, immediately following worship. Church Directories and **Annual Reports will be available for pick-up beginning of January.** If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Onufer via email at clerk.fortucc@gmail.com. Thank you!

Winter Retreat

Come join us for a wonderful winter retreat at Daycholah Center on the southeast shore of beautiful Green Lake from February 9-11, 2024. Enjoy a weekend of relaxation, along with many fun and inspirational activities. This sacred place is the ancestral homeland of the Menomonie, Ojibwa and Ho Chunk Nations.

We’ll nestle into the comfortable accommodations of Oak Mound Lodge, where most guest rooms accommodate two or three people in twin-size beds, while two of the rooms have four beds. All bedrooms have bathrooms directly accessible—some with a private bath and some that share a bath between two bedrooms.

Activities may include contemplation, fireplace chats, prayer, reading, Bible study, arts/crafts, music, games, worship, and more!

The fee of \$220 per person includes two nights and five meals in the beautiful Daycholah Center. The retreat will begin at 3:00 pm on Friday, February 9, and participants will depart on Sunday, February 11 following a special Worship Service. Please drop registration and check in offering plate of d

Daycholah Center: <https://ucci.org/daycholah-center/>
W1010 Spring Grove Road, Ripon, WI.



Fort Atkinson Food Pantry

The Fort Atkinson Food Pantry is seeing more and more families needing assistance, and the current year may have the highest number of families served at the Food Pantry since the organization began 41 years ago.

Besides serving families, the Food Pantry also distributes 180 ‘Smarty Packs’ weekly to students in the Fort Atkinson School District who qualify for free lunches. The *Smarty Packs* ensure that student have food to eat on the weekends.

Distribution needs are up and family needs are up, but giving is down. The past two years are tracking to be the lowest giving years in the past decade. From **December 17, 2023 to January 14, 2024, Outreach is asking for monetary donations** for The Fort Atkinson Food Pantry. Please make checks out to First Congregational Church UCC. Envelopes marked for the Food Pantry will be placed in the pews. Thank you as you lend uplifting support to our community!



Volunteers Needed for Meals on Wheels—February 2024

We are fortunate to be part of **Meals on Wheels**, is a community-supported program, as volunteers who deliver a noon meal to elderly, homebound residents in Fort Atkinson and to those who may find it difficult to make a meal. Meals are prepared by the kitchen staff at **Fort Memorial Hospital** and delivered by volunteers from 9 different churches within the city, including First Congregational Church UCC, who take turns throughout the year. **February is one of the months that our church provides volunteer drivers to deliver meals, Monday through Friday at 11 am.** Delivery takes about one hour. Since we now have two routes in it’s very helpful to have two people for each route. If you can just drive, we will pair you up with someone who can do the extra walking!

We need volunteers from **Feb 5th –March 1st, 2024.** You will be richly rewarded when you participate in this outreach ministry of our church! If you wish to volunteer, please call **Mary Ellen Miller @ 920-563-9085** or the **church office @ 920-563-4802.**

Council Highlights – December 2023

Holiday Market: The Market was a fun and busy day! Many thanks to all the volunteers and those who donated the bakery goodies and beautiful baskets for the raffle.

Homeless Coalition: Joe Slaney presented a report on the Fort Atkinson Homeless Coalition. They have 2 houses that are being refurbished and placed in an area near the hospital. These are designated for families to live. They will be responsible for rent and utilities based on income. The Coalition assists people with housing at local motels, rent assistance, food and more. They coordinate with other agencies within Jefferson County. The council has approved a donation to the Coalition to continue their work.

Childcare Center: We are sad to report that our Childcare Director, Jen Graf has accepted a new position. She has been with us for 13 years! Council will be searching for her replacement. Good luck to Jen!

2024 Ministry Members: Most of our Ministry positions have been filled for the new year, but there is always room for more! If you are interested in serving on a Ministry or on Council, please contact the church office or Sandy Czech, Vice Moderator.

Annual Meeting: The date for our Annual Meeting is January 28, 2024. The church and childcare budgets have been approved by Council and will be voted on by the membership at the Annual Meeting. Annual Reports from all Ministries and committees will be needed by Wednesday, 1/3/24. Please email them to the Clerk at clerk.fortucc@gmail.com

Complete Council Minutes are available in the church office.

Helper Schedule for January

Date	Greeters	Ushers	Lay Reader	Tech Support
Jan 7	Clarice & Pete Fernelius	Larry & Mary Narkis	Donna Abel	Kevin Becker
Jan 14	Susan Simonson Bill Wild	David & Sharon Wisch	Zach Finch	
Jan 21	Connie Czech Sandy Czech	John & Holly Andrews	Martha Firari	
Jan 28	Bob & Donna Abel	Paul & Sandy Hankowitz	Linda Glendon	