



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC • 31 W. Milwaukee Avenue
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538**

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Rev. Dr. Sara Rabe: revsarafortucc@gmail.com

Yet, as it was proclaimed, “The voice of the one crying out in the wilderness.” “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The darkness of night did not overcome it.” Against all odds, “Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” The stars, the stars, the heavens are telling the glory of God.

Thanks be to God on our journey of Advent, through Christmas and into Epiphany.

Pastor Sara

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the sky manifests the work of God's hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, and nor are there words; their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. - Psalm 19

SAVE THE DATE! Thursday, February 8 – Saturday, February 10, 2024

Daycholah Retreat Redux! By late winter, we all need something to look forward to and this is definitely it! We are organizing another retreat at the wonderful UCCI **Daycholah Center** on the shore of beautiful Green Lake. We'll enjoy modern accommodations, cozy chats by the fireplace, and excellent food prepared by Daycholah staff. You may choose to participate in group activities or spend restorative time on your own in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Watch for more details coming soon!



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The Pilgrim Broadcaster
December 2023
Monthly Newsletter

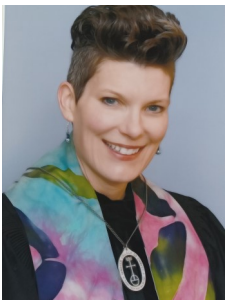
Seeking something more...

“The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.” Deep meaning and theology resonate with the Christmas hymns and the meaning remains the same as it did long ago.

When we think about the stars in the bright sky looking down where He lay, it reminds me of the creation story and God's creation of those stars before the earth took shape and form. They are the same stars that were spoken of in the time of Abraham when God said, “Your descendants will be as many as the stars.” The poetry of the Psalms used this creation imagery again and again to give word and articulate the vast magnitude of the God they witnessed and knew even as a grain of sand that resided within them.

The stars that the shepherds and the wise men followed were the same stars that God flung into the sky so long ago. These stars have seen it all and on that humble night in Bethlehem, they looked down on the world below and saw a child who was the hope of the world.

“The heavens are telling the glory of God and the sky manifests the work of God's hands.” (Psalm 19) Those who composed these words had no conception of the baby Jesus lying in the manger, but these words speak profound truth about how the world for so long, “Day to day pours forth speech, and night unto night unfolds knowledge.” There is mystery, awe and wonder about God's speaking to us, and the awareness of God revealed even in the black of night. There is no speech, and there are no words that can capture what God has done for the universe, and, for this tiny baby born on a hushed night even to those who refused to hear the cry. God is here. God is here. “Their voice is not heard.”
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**ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE—
January 3, 2024**

Annual Meeting: It is that time again! The date for our **Annual Meeting** is **January 28, 2024**. Annual Reports from all Ministries and committees will be needed by Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

Please email them to the Clerk, Nancy Onufer at clerk.fortucc@gmail.com. Thank you!



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
December Babies!**

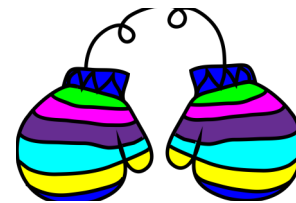
- Megan Eske.....2
- Abigail Macklem6
- Rita Gray6
- Kurt Wesemann.....8
- Sophie Kloplic 10
- Laura Rogers..... 14
- Karla Bingham..... 17
- Mary Crane 17
- Connie Czech 18
- Khloe Figliuzzi..... 18
- Max Jaeger..... 19
- Brett Dunkleberger 21
- Heidi Siefkes..... 22
- Kevin Knapp..... 23
- Kay Becker..... 24
- Mitzi DeForest 26
- Jack Negus 27
- Tori Ehlers..... 28
- Kelsey Haukom..... 30

**Hot Cocoa Bar—Sunday, December 17
Following Worship**

Celebrate the sweetness of the season with Hot Cocoa, Coffee & Tea! Enhance your hot beverage experience with marshmallows, whipped cream, candy toppings, sprinkles, etc. If able, please bring your favorite holiday snack to share. The **Nurture Ministry** welcomes all helping hands!



Christmas Neighbors of Jefferson County is asking for donations to help families have a brighter Christmas this year. Your donations will go to the Activity Center at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. On an assigned day, accepted families will be able to shop in the Activity Center. Items needed are:



- Rolls of wrapping paper***
- Scotch tape***
- Blankets***
- Children’s gloves, hats and scarves***

Collection bins are now located in the church narthex. Please have your donations at the church by **December 10th**. Thank you!

Ugly Christmas Attire Sunday is almost here! All are welcome to wear their best ‘extra-festive’ Christmas attire and/or holiday best sweaters on Sunday, **December 17!** There will be a **photo booth** for self-portraits and Facebook-worthy shares!



Holiday Market Update!

On **Saturday, December 2**, First Congregational Church—UCC hosted a Holiday **Winter Market** in partnership with the Fort Atkinson Chamber of Commerce. Special thanks to all who have worked so diligently planning and coordinating this event, and for your donations of baskets, basket items, and most importantly, your time! There were food items for sale, baked goods, raffle items and baskets, cheese, brooms, peanuts and more. There were also a number of vendors and artists selling their wares. The Basket Raffle drawing will be held on **December 11 at 11:15 am**. Winners need not be present.



Council Highlights—November 2023

Holiday Market: Our church will be a venue for the Fort Chamber Holiday Market on 12/2/23. We will be again featuring our Congregational Peanuts, cheese, bakery, lunch, and a basket raffle. We will also welcome outside vendors from the area. Come out and enjoy this special day and season in our church and city!!

Christmas Eve Worship: The Worship Ministry along with the Council have determined that we will have one service on Sunday, **December 24** at **5:00 pm**. This will be our traditional **candlelight service**. Please join us!

Sunday School: Pastor Sara reported that the new children's Sunday School program is going well. Thanks to all of the teachers who are assisting with the lessons!

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.

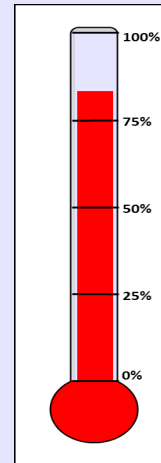
Annual Meeting: The date for our Annual Meeting is January 28, 2024. The church and childcare budgets are being formulated. Annual Reports from all Ministries and committees will be needed by Wednesday, January 3, 2024. Please email them to the Clerk at clerk.fortucc@gmail.com

Complete Council Minutes are available in the church office.



Sunday, December 31, Renewal & Healing

On Sunday, December 31, 2023, we will hold a special service of **Healing & Renewal** during our 10 am service. At this worship service, there will be a time designated for individuals to come forward and receive a blessing & anointing for healing, new life & renewal in this new year of potential ahead.



2024 Stewardship Campaign progress!!

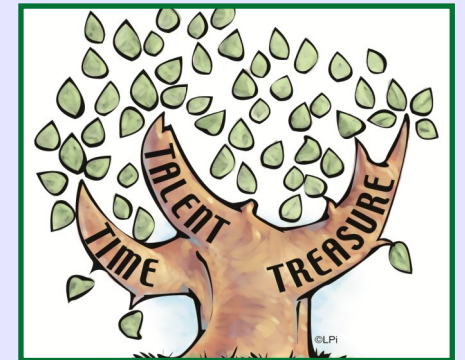
Goal: \$200,000

Received as of Nov 30, 2023:

\$168,082

84 pledges received

Percent of goal achieved: 84%



Helper Schedule for December

Date	Greeters	Ushers	Lay Reader	Tech Support
December 3	Amy Elvekrog	Nancy Onufer, Mike Rankin	Vicki York	Bob Buell
December 10	Linda & Jeff Glendon	Marsha & Roger Anderson	Susan Woods	Kurt Wesemann
December 17	Eunice Ann & Joe Slaney	Patty & Tom Sehnert	Mike Rankin	Kevin Becker
December 24	Open	Rich Frame	Open	Bob Buell
December 31	Patty & Tom Sehnert	Mary & Larry Narkis	Open	Kurt Wesemann

IMPORTANT DATES

Saturday, December 2
9 am—3 pm
Winter Market

Sunday, December 3
10 am Worship
Lighting of the Advent
Wreath
8:30 am Confirmation Class

Monday, December 4
Peanut Production

Tuesday, December 5
7 pm Men's Dartball

Wednesday, December 6
7 pm Choir Practice
Bulletin Article Deadline

Thursday, December 7
6 pm Bell Choir

Sunday, December 10
10 am Worship Service
11 am Worship Team Mtg.
11:15 Basket Raffle
Ugly & Extra Festive
Christmas Attire Sunday!

Monday, December 11
8 am Peanut Production
Broadcaster Deadline

Tuesday, December 12
1:30 pm Church Relations
Committee
7 pm Men's Dartball

Wednesday, December 13
12 pm Bulletin Article
Deadline
7 pm Choir Practice

Thursday, December 14
7 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 17
10 am Worship Service
Children's' Sunday School
11 am Nurture Committee
Hot Cocoa Bar

Monday, December 18
8 am Peanut Production

Tuesday, December 19
5:30 pm Moderator Mtg.
6 pm Council Meeting
7 pm Men's Dartball

Wednesday, December 20
Quilt Ministry 9:15 am
7 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 24
**5 pm Christmas Eve
Worship—Candlelight
Service**
No Morning Worship

Monday, December 25
Office Closed

Tuesday, December 26
Office Closed

Sunday, December 31, 2023
10 am Worship Service &
**Time of Healing &
Renewal**

Monday, January 1, 2024
Office Closed

Tuesday, January 2, 2024
Office Closed



Sincere thanks to everyone who donated shoes and boots for over **50 children** in the area in partnership with Jefferson County Head Start. Your generous support makes a difference!

THANK
YOU

END-OF-YEAR GENERAL INFORMATION from the FINANCIAL SECRETARY

As in past years, I will create 2023 Contribution statements shortly after January 1, 2024. These statements will be available for pickup in the Narthex on January 7, 14, 21 and 28. Those not picked up after January 28, 2024 will be mailed.

Contributions to fulfill 2023 pledges must be received no later than **December 24** to be included in the 2023 statements.

Contributions received at the Christmas Eve service for the General Fund will be considered a Christmas (Holiday) donation. If your contribution at this service is meant to be credited to your 2023 pledge, please so indicate on the MEMO line of your check (or on the envelope provided for your use).

Requests to start or alter automatic fund transfers to fulfill pledges in 2024 must be received **no later than December 13**. This is a deadline imposed on me by VANCO, our ACH processor. Thank you for your understanding.

Blessings,
Robert "Charlie" Knapp

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