

First Congregational United Church of Christ

December 31, 2023



Welcome to The Church of the Open Door.

Our door is open to you at whatever point you are in your journey of faith.

TODAY AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC, APPLETON

- 9:30 – 10:30AM Sunday Worship (No Children’s Ministry or Childcare) – *Chapel, Sanctuary, Upper Lounge*
- 7:00 – 8:00PM AL ANON – *Chapel / Alateen – Upper Lounge*
- 7:00 – 8:00PM First Things First AA Meeting – *Fellowship Hall, Commons Grounds*

We are glad you are here today! You are welcome to worship in person with us in the Sanctuary or watch it livestreamed in the Chapel, Upper Lounge, or Narthex. The Nursery also has livestreaming, on the other end of the building.

Baptisms are held on the third Sunday of each month. To schedule a baptism, contact the church office six weeks before your desired baptism date.

Childcare is available for ALL infants and toddlers. Please see an usher for directions to the Childcare Room.

Communion: The sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. Communion elements are gluten free. All are welcome to join us!

Donating to First Congregational UCC, Appleton: We have many convenient ways to donate. Giving envelopes are in the pews and may be put in the offering plates, checks can be mailed to the church, you can visit our webpage and click “Give,” or you can text FCUCC GIVE to 73256. *Messages and data rates may apply. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel.

Flowers: Today’s flowers were arranged by Cindi Ritcey Fox.

Hearing Loop: Need help hearing our service? Ask an usher. They can help get you in the loop!



Online Streaming and Podcasting are available on Facebook: FCUCCAppleton or Youtube: First Congregational UCC Appleton.

Open Door Announcements can be shared by emailing opendoor@firstcongoappleton.org or calling the office.

References to God in our worship may at times be gender specific. You are invited to substitute terms that reflect your understanding of the inclusiveness of God.

Sunday School: Our PreK - 5th graders begin in worship. After the children's message, they walk together to the CYF wing for our Children's Ministry Program. Youth gather on Wednesday evenings.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

December 31, 2023 9:30 AM
New Year's Eve ~ First Sunday after Christmas

PRELUDE

Joy of Every Longing Heart

arr. Lloyd Larson

Andrew Schmidt, *baritone* Shelley Nulton, *organ*

WELCOME

**Please Rise in Body or Spirit*

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: When the song of the angels is stilled,

All: when the star in the sky is gone,

One: when the kings and princes are home,

All: when the shepherds are back with their flocks,

One: the work of Christmas begins:

All: to find the lost,

One: to heal the broken,

All: to feed the hungry,

One: to release the prisoner,

All: to rebuild the nations,

One: to bring peace among the people,

All: to make music in the heart.

--Howard Thurman

*OPENING CAROLS

#136 *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*

REGENT SQUARE

St. 1 & 2

#137 *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

MENDELSSOHN

St. 1 & 3

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

(During the sermon, the prayer request cards will be collected. After the Children's Sermon, the children will follow their teachers to Church School.)

CAROL

#154 *In the Bleak Midwinter*

CRANHAM

St. 1, 2 & 4

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord’), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.’

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

There was also a prophet, Ann the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

SERMON “*Living on the Edge*”

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

*CAROLS

#149 *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*
St. 1, 2 & 5

CAROL

#159 *Love Came Down at Christmas*

WHITNEY

OFFERING

CALL TO THE OFFERING

(During this time, you are invited to a virtual offering. Please visit our webpage and click "Give" to make your weekly offering, or text FCUCC GIVE to 73256.)

MUSICAL REFLECTION

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

arr. Robert Elmore

*DOXOLOGY

**ALL: Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

(You are welcome to submit your prayer requests throughout the week to the church office, or email to a pastor for confidentiality.)

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us pray.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

*CLOSING CAROLS

#147 *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

W ZLOBIE LEZY

#160 *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*

GO TELL IT

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joy to the World

arr. Wilbur Held

THANK YOU TO TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

Pastor Dianne Droster

Shelley Nulton, *organ*

Andrew Schmidt, *baritone*

John M. Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, # A-714899. All rights reserved.

The church office will be closed Monday, January 1.

To receive a tax credit on church donations for the 2023 year, all contributions must be received in the church office drop box or on Realm by today.

Sunday, January 7, 2024 Worship Service

"I Was Thirsty"

Pastor Nick Hatch

Matthew 25:31-46

Musicians: Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organ*; Sanctuary Choir

Worship Notes (space for your personal notes/thoughts)



Dear friends,

Many, many, thanks to everyone who was able to be present in spirit, in-person and online for our 3+ joy-filled hours of worship on Christmas Eve Day/Night!

Thank you to each musician, each soloist, each choir (Bells, Children's, and Sanctuary), and each instrumentalist! Thank you, John and Nathan for your expertise in providing the beautiful music of Advent and Christmas. Thank you to "occasional" pianists/organists: Joan, Chris, and Shelley. Thank you, *Karma's Mailbox*, for providing songs Christmas Cheer for the December "First Wednesday Meal."

Thank you to all for giving poinsettias and for helping to deliver 60+ plants to grateful members and friends. Thank you to all who came out to "hang the greens," and to those who served pizza. Thank you to Fellowship Team "soup and sandwich makers" on the December "First Wednesday."

Thank you to families who led the Advent Candle-lighting liturgies. Thank you, Bill and Cindi, for coordinating the Christmas décor and for your work as "church mice" ...as decorations kept appearing inside and out!

Thank you to the "early risers" who filled the 9:30AM sanctuary and the children who helped to tell the Christmas story by identifying the *David and Cindy Cook Nativity Scene* figurines. Thank you to "do-it-yourself" shepherds, angels and wise persons who took part in the Christmas story at 4:00PM, complete with unforgettable "flying sheep," little angels hovering over the upper railing and wise persons of all ages...all coordinated by Sarah and Pastor Dianne. Thanks to those who helped "change the scenes" between services! Thank you to all those who joined in the 8:00PM Service, and who arrived as early as 7:15PM to get a good seat! Thank you to those who shared their little candles when we "ran out!" Thank you to ushers who became candle-lighters, and musicians who filled in for those who were unable to be here.

Thank you to our childcare providers: Danielle, Alexa, and Steph for taking great care of our little ones.

Thank you to our great AV Team: Matt, Rick, John, Kris, Dave, Shannon, Tim, J.D., Rod, Steve, and Kyle, for audio and visual clarity, and camera-mastering. Thank you for last-minute decisions, flexibility and always going the extra mile in anticipation of every service of Worship.

Thank you to candle-lighters, Communion servers, and Communion element preparers. Thanks to each one who has read parts in scripts and scriptures. Thanks to ushers for warmly welcoming in nearly 1000 worshippers! Thank you for distributing bulletins, candles and little chubby (stuffed) angels to the children. Your smiles will long be remembered.

Thank you to our Custodial Staff: Bart, Tom, Pat, Tim, and Ben, for keeping the building always “ready for company,” and for the variety of set-ups and take-downs.

Thank you to the Main Office staff: Zaina, Sheila, Pamela, and Ann who have been on the scene and *behind* the scenes getting ready for this day of celebration for many weeks...posting communications, coordinating and printing bulletins, mailing out weekly e-news and copies of sermons, while, at the same time, having *a disagreement or two* with the printer.

Thank you to all who by your generous gifts of time, talents, and treasures (assembling letters, bulletins, honey pots...) have made it possible for the outreach and ministry of our faith community to be possible year after year. Thank you to Siri for your bookkeeping expertise, throughout it all!

Merry twelve days of Christmas and a healthy new year! May your eyes close tonight trusting that God is up to something good in 2024! Be sure to keep one Christmas ornament hanging up all year round, to keep joy of Christmas close-by!

Pastor Nick and Pastor Mary Jo

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR
Noel Hallelujah Merry Christmas Happy New Year

Joys and Concerns of Our Faith Community

Please keep these people in your prayers and greet them with a loving word when you see them.

Please call the church office if you have a prayer request: 920-733-7393

In cases of a pastoral emergency, please call 920-810-2600.

Sue Ahrens	Kathy Lannoye
Jill Anthony, her sister & her nephew	Nancy Kandler
Katie Behl and her sister, Barbara	Kandy Kueler
Don Brittnacher	Helen McKean's daughter, Larri Jacquart
Chris Brittnacher's brother, Steve Reinkober	Richard Miller's son-in law, Rick Kramer
Karen Crawford and her niece, Lori	Our friends in Kerio Valley, Kenya
Beth Detienne's mother	Stephen Otto's brother, Gerald
Jim and Rachel Edwards	Gretchen Revie
Heidi Mendonca Erstad	Larry Schiedermayer
Erstad's family friend, Silas, and his family	Frank and Pat Severin
David Galow	Mike Seymour's mom, Debbie
Art Gandler	The family of Paul Siket, as they grieve his passing.
Esther Gehrt and her sons, Steve and Ken	Mark Spindler
Ken Geiger	Kinsley Tarr
Margaret Hankwitz	Gloria Tate
Judy Hanson	Jack Thiel
JoAnn Helms	Peter Thiel
Shirley Hoft	James Totzke
Misty Hofman	Jean Van Wagenin
Joan Jenson's son, John	Brian and Lecia Wardle's daughter, Mya
Jean Jepson	Diane White

The Open Door Announcements

For more information on these announcements and other events, please visit our website, weekly e-newsletters, and social media.

First Wednesday Night Dinner: Join us Wednesday, **January 3**, 6:00-6:30PM for tacos. Dinner is on the first Wednesday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is welcome, you do not need to be involved in other Wednesday evening activities, you do not need to sign up in advance, and there is no cost (although a freewill offering will be taken). Also, we could use a few extra hands in the kitchen for any First Wednesday Night Dinners. Time commitment is from about 4:30-6:45PM. Are you willing and able to help do a little prep work and serve? We'd love to have you!

Help Pillars get new mattresses with a \$10,000 matching gift provided by the Doug & Carla Salmon Foundation! Pillars is in need of 50 new mattresses at the Adult Shelter, but we need your help. **When you donate by today, December 31**, you will help give the gift of a good night of sleep. Help us start 2024 with new, clean mattresses for all our Adult Shelter clients! All online donations or checks mailed and postdated by the end of the year will be eligible for the match. All gifts beyond \$10,000 will be used for Pillars' greatest need. Pillars serves around 900 people in our shelters each year. Did you know Pillars provides new sheets and pillows for clients when they move into shelter? Clients can even keep the bedding when they move out! [DONATE ONLINE](#) or checks can be mailed to: Pillars, Inc., 605 E Hancock St., Appleton, WI 54911.

Pillars Meal Sign-up: Time to Create a Nourishing Meal for Pillars Thursday, **January 4**, 2024. Check out the link to sign up! [PILLARS SIGN UP](#) We will be making soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. It's a great way to meet new people and enjoy fellowship. For questions contact Shelley Nulton, snulton@att.net or 920-202-4419.

Begin 2024 with a "Listen Up!" Bible Study, led by Pastor Mary Jo Laabs:

Romans Part 1: Chapter 1-8,

Six sessions on Wednesday nights, 6:30PM, on Zoom only: **January 3- February 7**

Romans Part 2, Chapter 9-16,

Six sessions on Wednesday nights, 6:30PM, on Zoom only: **February 21- March 28**

Sign up when you pick up your study guides in the office. There is no cost for the books available in the church office.

Zoom only: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87950957498>: Meeting ID: 879 5095 7498

Looking for Post-High School Young Adults, ages 18-23: Join us as we make breakfast together after the worship service on Sunday, **January 7**. We're looking forward to catching up with you! -Pastor Nick, Pastor Dianne and CYF Director Sarah

A Book Study, presented by the Adult Education Committee and led by Derek Elkins, will begin in January. The book, "Falling Upward" by Richard Rohr, is available in the church office for \$8. Join us from 10:45AM-12:00PM on **January 21 and 28, and February 4 and 11** by Zoom and in person. Childcare will be available.

SAVE THE DATE: "Come Away - A Women's Day Retreat on Prayer"



Led by Rev. Nancy Zorn Micke

Including a book discussion of Anne Lamott's "Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers"

Saturday, **February 10**, 2024, 9:00AM - 4:00PM
at First Congregational United Church of Christ

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

Mental Health Task Force (MHTF): Due to scheduling conflicts, the MHTF will meet next on Monday, **January 22, 6:00-7:30PM** in the Upper Lounge. In February we will return to our regular schedule - the 2nd Monday of the month. If you have questions, please contact Mary Sullivan msullivan623@yahoo.com or 920-740-9452.

Adult Education Session: You are invited to attend a session on **January 7, 2024**, 11:00AM-12:30PM in the Upper Lounge on the topic of "Challenges and Opportunities for Ministering with Older Adults." For over a year, John and Susan McFadden have been participating in the Wisconsin and Michigan Conferences' Innovative Conversations on Older Adult Ministries. Susan will highlight the work they have been doing with this group and will report on the results of survey responses they have collected from congregations about their older adult ministries. The ways faith communities in the Fox Valley have been contributing to efforts to make our region more age and dementia-friendly will also be shared.

NOAHH Needs: NOAHH is looking for donors to help a family to cover the cost of driving school. Its cost is \$350. NOAHH has received many thank you notes to those who have helped out this year. Call Barb at: 920-832-5515 Human Services with your donations. Thank you, Sue Ahrens

The First Congregational UCC Racial Equity Group wants the entire congregation to be aware of our recently developed Vision and Mission Statements. Anyone who would like to be part of the Racial Equity Group can contact the church office or Wanda Van De Hey at wanvandh@gmail.com or 920-203-1500.

Vision Statement of the Racial Equity Group: First Congregational United Church of Christ Appleton acknowledges the racial inequity that has been perpetuated from historical, financial, and educational policies and procedures throughout society for generations. We work to promote racial justice. Together we advocate for all people to live free from discrimination and acts of violence. We actively support structures and systems that enhance God's creation.

Mission Statement of the Racial Equity Group: The Mission of the Racial Equity Group at First Congregational United Church of Christ Appleton is to support and encourage our church as it works toward becoming a just, equitable and antiracist community of faith. In partnership with other church advocacy groups, as well as community partners, we will continue to provide education to heighten awareness of whiteness, racism, inclusion and break free from our implicit biases. We seek opportunities to increase our awareness about systemic racism and what we can do with that awareness.

Our goal is to create a safe and equitable community where we respect and celebrate the diversity of God's people. We wish to serve as a resource to move, through actions and awareness, towards becoming a Just Peace Church, a designation from the National United Church of Christ as we strive to truly be the church of the Open Door to all.

Guidelines for Worship Service Announcements

- Requests for announcements must come to both pastors a week in advance (not the week or day of the service). These must be submitted in writing and less than 100 words; these are brief announcements!
- We have a maximum of three announcements per week, first-come, first-served at the discretion of the pastors. Multi week announcements are discouraged.
- Generally, the pastor leading the worship service that week makes the announcement themselves. Exceptions are made.
- If the pastor cannot fit this request into worship, it will go into the bulletin, and the one making the request notified as time allows.
- Mission Moments are also available on a limited basis. These are longer and highlight critical needs or commitments for our faith community.



First Congregational Members and Friends,

The Pastoral Search Committee is excited to announce that we have found an amazing candidate to partner with Pastor Nick and become our next pastor! Because her appointment is not official until after the congregational vote, we are keeping specific information about her confidential through mass communications until after the vote takes place. We will have printed information about our candidate available at church on the Sundays leading up to the Call Weekend so you can learn a bit more.

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming **Call Weekend which is January 13 and 14**. Following is a list of activities that we welcome all of you to attend:

- **Saturday, (01-13-24) Welcome Reception at Church:** Please join us to meet the new pastor and her family. We will gather for fellowship and some light hors d'oeuvres in the Fellowship Hall from 3-5pm. Please RSVP by Friday, January 5 to the church office either by email (zgonzales@firstcongoappleton.org) or phone 920-733-7393 so we have an estimate of attendees. Thanks!
- **Sunday, (01-14-24): Sunday Service with the Pastor:** This important worship service will take place at 9:30am and will be an opportunity for the congregation to hear our candidate preach for the first time! Please plan on attending in person or joining us online.
- **Sunday, (01-14-24): Congregational Vote and Celebration:** After worship, we will hold a congregational meeting where there will be an opportunity for members to learn more about our candidate, to ask questions of the Search Committee, and to vote to approve her as our new pastor. You will also be able to join online.

Our committee has truly felt the prayers and patience of the congregation through this lengthy and important process, and we appreciate your words of thanks and encouragement over the past 18 months. We are excited to welcome this gifted individual and her family into our church family. We are also excited about how this role has transformed from a Senior Minister position to a Co-Pastor leadership role with Pastor Nick, along with support of a business director; a leadership structure we are confident will create an environment to best support our congregation's future direction. Should you have questions about the above, please reach out to Mike Radtke, Search Committee Chairperson, at 920-716-4192. We look forward to celebrating with you in the coming weeks!

Blessings,

The Pastoral Search Committee

Mary Ballerstein, Julie Gamm, Sophia Guttormsen, Dr. Marcus Lewis (chaplain), Bob Pagel, Mike Radtke (chair), Susan Robertson, and Sandra Vanden Boogaard (secretary)

RECEPTION

TO

Welcome

**THE NEW PASTOR
AND FAMILY**

Saturday, January 13, 2024
3:00 - 5:00pm
Fellowship Hall

Please join us to meet the new pastor and family for fellowship and light hors d' oeuvres

RSVP BY FRIDAY, JANUARY 5TH

Email: zgonzales@firstcongoappleton.org

Phone: 920-733-7393



ON REALM

This Week's Schedule

Monday, January 1 - *Happy New Year! ~ Church office closed*

Tuesday, January 2

11:00AM - 12:00PM Staff Meeting - *Upper Lounge*
1:00 - 2:30PM Chrysalis - *Upper Lounge*
6:30 - 7:30PM Living Sober AA Group - *Common Grounds*
7:00 - 9:00PM Worship and Music Ministry - *Upper Lounge*
7:45 - 8:45PM Fireside AA Group - *Common Grounds*

Wednesday, January 3

12:15 - 1:00PM Loving Acceptance Meditation - *Upper Lounge*
5:45 - 6:25PM Youth Handbells - *Sanctuary*
6:00 - 6:30PM First Wednesday Dinner: Tacos- *Fellowship Hall*
6:00 - 7:30PM MS Youth Group - *First Wednesday Dinner, Clean Up/Hang Out - Fellowship Hall & Kitchen*
6:00 - 7:30PM HS Youth Group - *First Wednesday Dinner & 6:30 HS Group*
6:30 - 7:30PM Bible Study: Romans 1:1-2:16 - *Zoom only*
7:00 - 8:30PM Sanctuary Choir - *Sanctuary, Choir Room*

Thursday, January 4

10:30 - 11:30AM Tech Meeting - *Upper Lounge*
12:00 - 1:00PM AA - Search for Serenity Group - *Common Grounds*
12:00 - 1:30PM Theology Discussion Group - *Chefo's Pancake House*
7:00 - 8:00PM Fox Valley 94 AA - *Common Grounds*

Friday, January 5

7:00 - 8:00PM Al-Anon - *Upper Lounge*
7:00 - 8:30PM N.A - *Common Grounds*

Saturday, January 6

11:00AM - 12:00PM Debtors Anon - *Common Grounds*
7:00 - 8:00PM Fox Valley 94 AA - *Common Grounds*

Sunday, January 7

9:25AM - 12:00PM Childcare - *Childcare Room*
9:30 - 10:30AM Sunday Worship - *Chapel, Sanctuary, Upper Lounge*
9:30 - 10:30AM Children's Ministry - *CYF Wing*
10:30 - 11:30AM Children's Choir - *Choir Room*
11:00AM - 12:30PM Susan McFadden: Challenges and Opportunities for Ministering with Older Adults - *Upper Lounge*
5:00 - 6:00PM LU Music Scholars' Rehearsal - *Choir Room, Sanctuary*
6:00 - 8:00PM First Things First AA Meeting - *Commons Grounds*
7:00 - 8:00PM AL ANON - *Chapel / Alateen - Upper Lounge*

Land Covenant

The land now occupied by Appleton, Wisconsin and surrounding areas - including the current site of First Congregational UCC - was the home, hunting, gathering, and farming land of the First Peoples of this territory: the Ho Chunk Nation and the Menominee Nation. Other tribes were forcibly re-located to this region by the actions of colonialism. Despite centuries of reprehensible treatment, the peoples of these sovereign nations are robust and enduring among us.

We are truly saddened by the genocide of their ancestors, the seizure of their lands, and the repression of their cultures and languages. We acknowledge that we benefit from the economic and social legacy left by settler colonialism.

We are grateful that many members of these original Nations have honorably served and defended the United States. We strive to honor their cultures and their insightful stewardship of this land and all creatures on it, recognizing our common interest in protecting its air, water, soils, and web of life for all future generations.

We commit ourselves through study and immersion experiences to learn the history and cultures of these peoples and their traditional knowledge.



We are "The Church of the Open Door," a welcoming and inclusive Christian community.
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



724 E. South River Street | Appleton, WI 54915
920.733.7393 | firstcongoappleton.org
Office hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00AM – 3:00PM