

DECEMBER 2023

Volume 37 - Issue 12

The Congregational COLUMNS

A Message from Julie

All of December is special in so many ways. We move into the opportunity to deepen our sense of God, coming to us in the vulnerability of a newborn child. Even as I invite you to open your time and spirit to pause, I can't help but acknowledge that we, the church, are part of the busy-ness and excitement that fills our calendars, schedules, and plans. So I simply invite you to see the "calendar of events" below, knowing it will be wonderful to be together when we worship, sing, and find meaning in the cadence of our gatherings. We will to share our stories of hope as well as losses, invite friends to join us, and welcome God again and again to guide us to The Way of Light.

I wish you all Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love which is given and received during these days. May it be yours to cherish and carry to others.

With love, Julie



Advent & Christmas 2023

Saturday, December 2

The Coming of the Light ~ Immanuel! (formerly the Advent Tea) 2:00pm - Social Hall

Sunday, December 3 / First Sunday of Advent

Adult Learning: Practicing Lectio Divina - Session 1 8:45am - Chapel

Kringle Coffee Fellowship 11:00am - Social Hall

Light of the World Book Discussion-Session 1 11:30am - Parlor

Wednesday, December 6

Light of the World Book Group-Session 2 Optional Lite Dinner..... 5:30pm - Room 107

Book Discussion.... 6:00-7:00pm

Saturday, December 9

Children of FCC Christmas Pageant 9:00am - Congregational Home

Sunday, December 10 / Second Sunday of Advent

Adult Learning: Practicing Lectio Divina 8:45am - Chapel

Breakfast with Baby Jesus 9:00am - Social Hall

Children's Christmas Pageant..... 10:00am - Nave

Light of the World Book Discussion-Session 2 11:30am - Parlor

Children's Christmas Workshop 3:00pm - Social Hall

Children's Workshop Supper..... 5:00pm - Social Hall

Wednesday, December 13

Light of the World Book Group-Session 3 Optional Lite Dinner..... 5:30pm - Room 107

Book Discussion.... 6:00-7:00pm

Embracing the Light (Don't Have Another Blue Christmas)..... 7:00pm - Nave

Sunday, December 17 / Third Sunday of Advent

Adult Learning: Practicing Lectio Divina-Session 3 8:45am - Chapel

Christmas Music Worship Service 10:00am - Nave

with FCC Brass Choir, Chancel Choir, Jr. Choir, Three Belles & a Beau, and Jubilation Ringers

Special Coffee Hour & Creche Display 11:00am - Social Hall

Light of the World Book Discussion-Session 3..... 11:30am - Parlor

Wednesday, December 20

Light of the World Book Group-Session 4 Optional Lite Dinner..... 5:30pm - Room 107

Book Discussion.... 6:00-7:00pm

Sunday, December 24 / 4th Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve

Worship Service and Carol Sing..... 10:00am - Nave

Christmas Eve Family Service & PF Play 4:00pm - Nave

Candlelight Lessons & Carols 10:00pm - Nave

THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN WAUWATOSA

Worship & Discovery

Women's Ministry

Tuesdays, December 5, 12, 19 & 26 from 8-9^{am}

Women's Ministry invites anyone interested to join us every Tuesday morning at 8:00 a.m. When offered, feel free to sit in on specific sessions of interest. All are welcome!

Adult Ministry

Sundays, December 3, 10 & 17 at 8:45^{am}

We will read Advent Scriptures using the method called Lectio Divina, that asks us to read and listen together through a passage several times in a process of prayer, contemplation and response. Sessions will meet in the Chapel.

Women's Ministry Retreat

Friday & Saturday-January 5 & 6, 2024

We will travel to Christ's Pond in Random Lake, Wisconsin, for our retreat. If you'd like more information or are interested in attending, contact Patty Reddy: patreddy@wauwatosa@gmail.com

Men's Ministry

Wednesdays, December 6, 13, 20 & 27 at 9^{am}

Join us in the Lounge for lively conversation on interesting topics. For more information, contact Hank Collis at hcollis@twc.com.



Breast cancer patients, caregivers and survivors are welcome to support one another on their journey.

JOIN US
2nd Thursday of the month, December 14
11:30 am – 1:00 pm in the Parlor

PLEASE REGISTER
Contact *Healing Hearts*
262.751.0874 / info.hhwc@gmail.com
Or visit www.healingheartswisconsin.org
to submit an inquiry.

A New Look at the Birth of Christ

During Advent, Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith will lead a book discussion about the *Light of the World* by Amy-Jill Levine. Levine is a Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace. The book will aid our discussion of the biblical text that give us the story of Jesus' birth.

There are two schedule options for the four-session discussion:

Wednesdays - November 29, December 6, 13 and 20 optional lite dinner 5:30^{pm} - discussion 6-7^{pm}

Sundays - December 3, 10 and 17 from 11:30am to 12:30pm

Because of the timing, a light dinner will be available for the Wednesday group at 5:30^{pm}.

You'll notice that there are only three sessions on Sunday. If you choose the Sunday schedule, you are invited to join the Wednesday evening group on December 20th to complete the discussion.

A limited number of the books are available from the Office for \$14. Or you can purchase the book from your favorite bookseller. Amazon, Christianbook and Cokesbury, as well as other sellers, offer the book.

CONGREGATIONAL COLUMNS

A monthly newsletter produced by the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa to keep members and the community up to date on activities at the church.

www.FirstChurchTosa.org

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Tessa Kathryn Urban
Associate Minister

Jim Harris
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Rhonda Kwiecien
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Ellen Shuler
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Like us on Facebook!

Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of October 2023

	2023	2022
Pledge Base Rec'd	78.0%	76.0%
Pledge Income	\$385,010	\$355,247
Total Income	\$529,251	\$499,211
Total Expense	\$479,533	\$403,467
Net Income	\$49,718	\$95,744

Detailed financials available in the office

Get to Know One of Our Benevolences: ALAS

In a world filled with challenges, it is heartening to know we can rely on the generosity of First Church to support organizations dedicated to making a positive impact on our community. We are proud to support ALAS and its mission. Alianza Latina Aplicando Soluciones (ALAS) is a non-profit organization in Milwaukee that supports and empowers the families of children and youth with disabilities, primarily in the Latino community. ALAS provides information and referral, educational workshops, parent support groups, and community-building events.

With our continued support of ALAS, more youth with disabilities and their families can achieve their goal of increased independence.

The Board of Stewardship and Benevolence would like to hear from you! If you know of a non-profit organization that you would like First Church to support, please reach out to us, and it will be considered.

Board of Stewardship and Benevolence

- Kristin Stern, Debbie Hayden, Bobby Russ, Fred Kingsley,
Sharon Raymond, Dylan Thomas

Year End Online Giving

First Church offers secure, online giving. If you'd like to set up pledge contributions online, visit the FCC website (firstchuchtosla.org) and click on the Giving icon from the menu at the top of the page. To set up your account, go to the "For Members Online Contributions" box and click on the Login Page. Then click Create Account. If you already have an online account, use the same process, type in your username and password and click on Sign In. Click on the three horizontal bars next to your name at the upper right side of the page for Giving options and your Giving history.

If you plan on making an online contribution for 2023 and want it included on your year-end statement, please make your contribution by Wednesday, December 27th. There is typically a 3-day lag between the time you enter your contribution and when the funds are received by our bank.

If you have any questions, please contact the church Office at 414.258.7375.

Jim Harris, Administrator

Celebrate the Season Through Music!

**Join us on Sunday, December 17th at 10am
for our special Christmas Music Service.**

The Junior Choir, Chancel Choir,
Three Belles and a Beau, and Jubilation Ringers
will share Christmas music throughout the service.

We hope to see you there!!

End of Year Information for Pledgers

The Board of Stewardship and Benevolence is gratified by the many Estimates of Giving cards that have been turned in for 2024. We encourage those who have not done so yet to bring or mail your card to the church Office as soon as possible to aid the Budget & Finance Committee, which has begun planning for the 2024 budget.

The past year has brought great excitement and energy to First Church through the leadership and guidance of Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith. This fall we have been blessed by the ordination and addition of Rev. Tesha Kathryn Urban to our ministerial staff. Pastor Tesha has already begun vital work with our church and the community. We are committed to supporting her position in the budget for 2024. With your financial support, our theme for the campaign is "Funding the Future."

As 2023 comes to a close, we want to make sure we apply your pledge payments to the correct year. If you plan to donate toward your 2024 estimate this month, please write 2024 on the memo line of your check. You are welcome to combine your pledge contribution with a donation to the Christmas Special Offering, but please indicate on your check the amount for each.

Any contributions to your 2023 pledge must be delivered to the church Office no later than noon on Friday, December 29th, to be included in your 2023 year-end statement. You will receive your year-end statement in early January.

Please call the Office at 414.258.7375 if you have any questions.

We thank all of you whose support has made it possible for First Church to meet its operating budget and support the benevolent needs of our community and the missionary work of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

Your Board of Stewardship and Benevolence

- Fred Kingsley, Dylan Thomas, Bobby Russ, Kristin Stern
and Debbie Hayden

Say You Care with Cookies

Make holiday cookies for our members who are homebound or in senior facilities.

Women's Circle invites you to contribute cookies to its annual Christmas Cookie Delivery program. The Circle packages an assortment of cookies for individuals who are unable to make it to church services and, along with volunteers from the congregation, delivers them to the list of recipients. This December's schedule is below:

- **Thursday, December 14** – please bring your Christmas cookies to the First Floor Catering Kitchen by 2:30 pm.
- **Saturday, December 16** – Women's Circle will meet in at 9:00 am in the Lounge to package the cookies.
- **Sunday, December 17** – packages of cookies will be available for delivery. Please check the names on the packages to find someone you know or who lives nearby, and take their cookies for delivery as you leave.

Your participation will help us to, once again, bring smiles to church members we don't often see.

Introducing the Pastoral Relations Committee

The Council has approved a one-year trial period for a Pastoral Relations Committee for First Church. In anticipation of your questions, we are providing the following, basic information.

What IS a Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC)?

A PRC is a small group of church members that offers intentional, structured, and consistent support for the minister(s). It provides a safe and confidential setting in which the minister(s) can express feelings, concerns, hopes, and ideas with respect to the church, and their roles as pastor, as well as receive information, feedback, guidance, and encouragement.

Why Do We Need a PRC?

- A PRC can foster and help maintain an open and healthy relationship between the ministers and the congregation, allowing the church to more effectively achieve its mission.
- As a sounding board, a PRC provides the minister(s) with a place to explore thoughts and ideas before making a proposal or suggestion to an established board or committee.
- A PRC can increase the minister(s)' awareness of the congregation's concerns and hopes.
- A PRC can assist in clarifying the expectations and needs of both the ministers and congregation.

Why Do Our Existing Committees and Boards Not Fulfill the PRC's Functions?

Existing boards and committees have broad responsibilities, leaving little time to perform the function of a PRC in an intentional and consistent manner. In addition, existing groups cannot effectively

provide the type of support a PRC is designed to offer because they are open (not confidential) and large in size.

How Does the PRC Relate to the Council and Church Boards?

- A PRC member will attend Council meetings (without voting privileges) to stay informed about church issues.
- The PRC will report to the Council that the PRC has met.

What a PRC is NOT

- A task or action group.
- A customer relations committee.
- A complaint department or arbiter of disputes or contentious issues.
- A group that assumes roles/responsibilities of other boards or committees.
- An extension of the Personnel Committee regarding performance and compensation reviews.
- A barrier between the minister(s) and the congregation.

We are not writing on a blank slate. Rev. Julie and Marty Hall (Sr. Minister, North Shore Congregational Church) worked with a PRC and experienced the support and good relations this type of committee brought to their work.

The initial PRC committee consists of Joe Berte, Jane Boyd, Elizabeth Carger, Barb Dunham, and Marty Vander Velde, who met in early November to frame their beginnings. The PRC will meet in January, and then once every three months. At the conclusion of our trial year, the church will discuss implementing the PRC on an ongoing basis, with a rotation of committee members.

Please feel free to reach out to any PRC or Council members, Rev. Julie, or Rev. Tesha with any questions.

Living Gracefully

Ralph Ehlert Shares His Wisdom *By Sarah DeYoung*

This month, Living Gracefully is catching up with Ralph Ehlert. Does that name ring a bell for you? Well, Ralph might ring a bell both figuratively and literally. Let me explain.

Ralph was born and raised on the south side of Milwaukee and attended South Division High School. After graduating, he attended the University of Wisconsin and earned a master's degree in physics. During his time, there he participated as a cornet player in the marching band, performed with the handbell choir, and played the carillon on campus for four years. Ralph played the carillon bells each day at 1:00^{pm} and 5:30^{pm}.

Following college, in the early 1960s, Ralph and his wife Ruth started attending First Congregational Church when Ralph was asked to be a substitute organist. A few years later he became the church's first handbell director when a set of bells was purchased. At that time the bell choir members were all high school students. So you see, Ralph Ehlert most definitely could ring a bell!

Besides ringing bells and playing the organ, Ralph has lived gracefully among us as a voice in our church choir and a cornet player for special occasions like the Christmas Brass Choir. Ralph and

Ruth's children Sue, John, Ann, and David, all attended First Church as children and youth. They are now living scattered in the Midwest between Wisconsin, Indiana, and Minnesota.

Here are Ralph's responses to a couple of our questions:

Question: *Can you describe how an experience with First Church has been important for your faith journey?*

Ralph: *I was given a love for making music. At church I gave my love for music and that gave me many friends and lots of joy. Those people and experiences lifted my spirit many times.*

Question: *The ups and downs of life teach us many lessons. Can you share a life lesson that might help others on their own life journey?*

Ralph: *Continue to do the things that bring you joy. That thing you do can be a gift of joy for others.*

Ralph resides at The Congregational Home and exercises his green thumb by tending the many plants that thrive near his windows. I wonder if he plays music to them?



JUST FOR YOUTH

December 2023



Sunday School for ages 4 – 5th grade
 Sunday, December 3, 10, 17
 Children begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and then dismissed to Sunday School.

Junior Choir K-8th grades
 Sunday, December 3, 10, 17
 Meet at 9:15 in LL4
 Children will sing once a month.

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF) grades 6-12
 Sunday, December 3, 10, 17
 Teens will begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and will be dismissed to PF during the service.

Covenant Class

December 3 & 17 Group meets at 8:30^{am} in the Conference Room.

December 10th in the Social Hall



Breakfast with Baby Jesus at 9^{am}

Join this First Church tradition of celebrating our children. Our families with young children are invited to this event, and they can wear their pajamas, bring their favorite stuffed animal, and enjoy a light breakfast and Christmas cheer.



Christmas Workshop at 3^{pm}

followed by

Pizza Supper at 5^{pm}

Workshop cost: \$5 per child for all crafts
Supper cost: \$5 for adults, \$2 for children

About the Christmas Special Offering

The Board of Stewardship, Benevolence and Church Relations has chosen the Milwaukee Rescue Mission and two international missions, supported by the NACCC, as beneficiaries of the Christmas Special Offering.

Milwaukee Rescue Mission

The Rescue Mission's core values are love, dignity, community, and missional integrity. It offers practical assistance such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as transformative programs that help hurting people get off the streets and turn their lives around. It serves the homeless and people in need with short- and long-term assistance, education, pastoral care, help in overcoming substance abuse, job training and much more. Last year it provided over 293,000 meals and more than 61,000 nights of shelter.

Happy Life Children's Home, Kenya

Founded in 2002 by Pastors Peter and Faith Ndungu, Happy Life Mission aims to provide hope for the abandoned children of Kenya through its three-fold ministry, providing:



Happy Life toddlers are well cared for by the mission.

- a Rescue Mission for over 150 vulnerable and abandoned children with the goal of finding a "forever family" for each of them through adoption by Kenyan families.
- quality Christian education to nearly 400 children who have not been adopted, as well as other children in the wider community.

- comprehensive pediatric medical care and maternity services through the Jesse Kay Children's Hospital.

Happy Life is based on the belief that God has a plan for each of these children, to give them hope and a future.

Panamerican Institute, Mexico



Panamerican Institute is a mission school founded by the late Congregational minister, Rev. Edgar S. Welty, in the early 1960s. The school is located in Tijuana, Mexico, south of San Diego, California. Its operation depends 100% on donations. Panamerican Institute provides technical education to students from poor families in Tijuana. The Institute, NACCC's mission partner for many years, is focused on helping kids graduate and work towards a better future. Contributions enable the mission to provide hope for a better life for their students and their families, creating a stronger Christian community.

Please support the work of these charities with a special offering this Christmas season.

Board of Stewardship, Benevolence and Church Relations

- Fred Kingsley, Dylan Thomas, Bobby Russ, Kristin Stern, Sharon Raymond, and Debbie Hayden

Fall was a Time for Welcoming Friends Back Home!

The Reverend Tesha Kathryn Urban was ordained at FCC on October 29th, following a vicinage meeting the previous day. The vicinage drew Congregational ministers from throughout Southeast Wisconsin. They convened in the Nave to hear Tesha talk about her faith and answer questions about her calling to the ministry, her understanding of the Gospel, and more. A report from the Ecclesiastical Council of the Vicinage expressed support for Tesha's ordination. Sunday, Tesha's joyful ordination service was folded into the 10:00 am Worship Service for an exciting experience filled with hope and love. A long-time member of First Church, she was away for several years as she pursued her religious education and pastoral care training. The ordination was a jubilant homecoming.

Rev. Tesha and Rev. Julie join the choir in singing Draw the Circle Wide.



There was much joy and celebration at Pastor Tesha's Ordination including the Junior Choir singing, Communion and a Fellowship Board's Halloween Coffee Hour Reception.

The Care Board facilitated another homecoming on Sunday, November 12th when it provided transportation to the 10am Worship Service for church members who are homebound or living in senior facilities. It was a gala occasion as about 35 members were treated to a luncheon in the Social Hall and a concert featuring Bridger Brass Quintet from Montana. It was an opportunity for people to reconnect and catch up!

Good fellowship abounded at the luncheon.



Helen Milne and Alida Smith....Gaye Clark along with others, catch up with one another.

The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa
1511 Church Street
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Support our *Stop by our table*
December 3rd, 10th & 17th

Youth Mission Team

Colectivo
COFFEE



*Great
Hostess, Teacher
& Neighbor Gifts*

Homemade
Peppermint Bark



**TAKE HOME
TODAY**

PEPPERMINT BARK \$8/BAG

COFFEE
DEL SOL Breakfast Blend \$15#
VELO Classic French Roast \$15#

DECAF DREAM HARDER
Signature Blend \$15#
HOT COCOA \$8/TIN