

# The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971  
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*December 2009*

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN when most of us get up in the dark and get home after it has become dark. Some folks think and have actually said to me that they feel they have lived their entire lives in the dark. It would be easy to slough off comments like that; however I take those words and thoughts seriously. I do not have to tell you that there is a lot of darkness in the world of many kinds.

However, it is my belief that light is coming into the world. In this church as in churches around the world we begin Advent with the lighting of Advent candles, starting with one and increasing the light each Sunday until we reach Christmas when we light the Christ candle. At this darkest time of year, in the church, we celebrate the power of light.

I fully expect, that by Christmas Eve, when this grand old church is filled with people singing carols and lighting candles galore, that you and I will be immersed again in light. The power of the incarnation, of God dwelling among us, is old, and yet fresh today, because you and I find ourselves a part of the story. We will read and sing it with family and friends until it is ours again. It does not matter who you are, there is a place for you in the story. You may be a poor young couple caught up in mystery, or shepherds in a field with no promise of career advancement, or old, wizened wealthy magi suspected of spying. To all, light came into their lives, and that light signaled hope in a world where the odds were stacked against them. After seeing the light, everything else took a back seat.

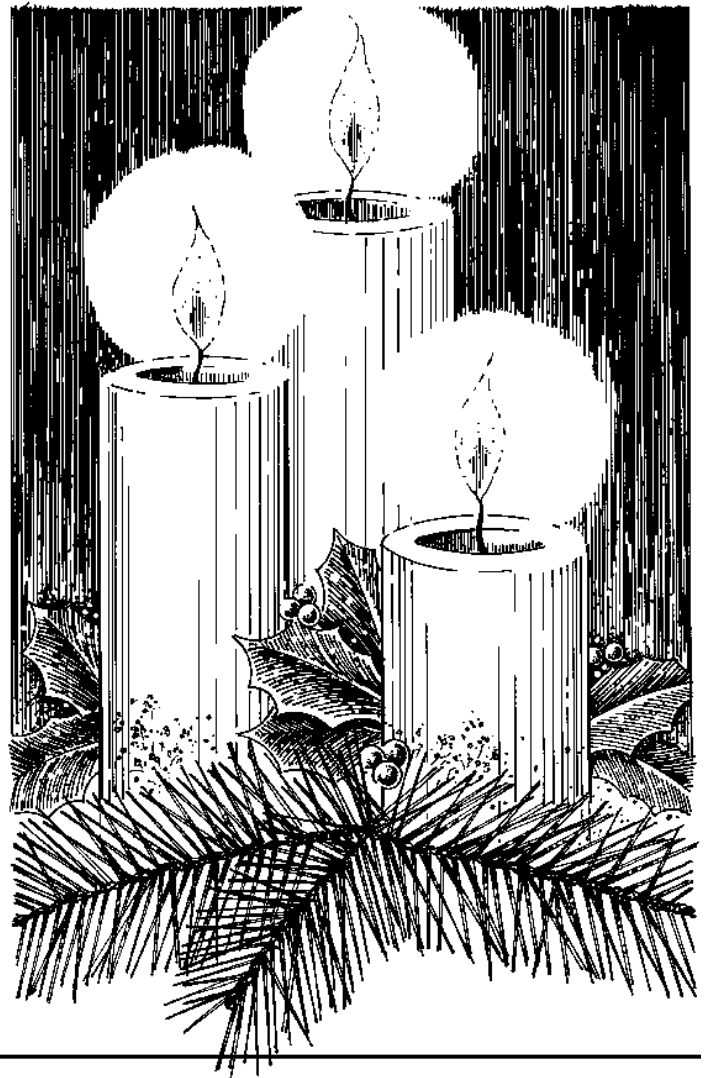
I remain an idealist, a romantic, an old fool who actually believes that a little light changes a lot. I am hoping to see more light in this dark time of the year. As ever, I live in hope. It may take a little faith for us to risk opening our eyes and looking for light but we are game

for adventure. It will take more faith to put our trust in the light when we see it, and bear that light ourselves. With each of us this season, I pray for light to shine in the darkness.

It all begins on November 29th, with the lighting of the first Advent candle, at 10:30 a.m. I hope to see you there.

—Jack

## A LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS



# Welcome!

We've been anticipating your arrival! It's true, because we believe that every person who comes to join us for fellowship was sent by God. Here at First Congregational Church of Ripon, we want you to experience Christ and be greatly blessed. We look forward to getting to know you and to share with you the marvelous ways God is working in our church. It won't take you long to discover that we are truly a "church family," rich in the relationships that matter most. We grow, worship, serve, laugh, cry, learn and reach out to the world together. We reach out to you, as well. Our doors and hearts are always open.

If you've been thinking, praying, searching, or hoping for a place to belong, we would like, again, to say Welcome! We're glad you found us.

## Welcome!

...to new members of the church:

- Diane Falk
- Marilyn Hefty
- Chris Holland
- Liz & Ben Radke

## Worship Volunteers

Please sign up to volunteer for lector, greeter/ushers, coffee fellowship hosts, flowers and nursery duty. The new permanent location for the sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. We still have slots to fill for the current month and beyond. Thanks in advance for all your help!



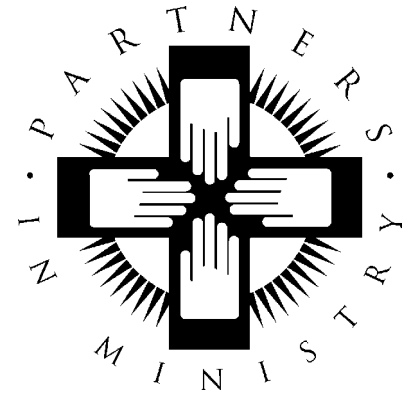
Our next newsletter will be for January, 2010. The deadline is Tuesday, December 22, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrichm@ripon.edu. Assembly and prep for mailing will take place on Wednesday, December 30, at 1:15 p.m. Please mark your calendars.



- |                    |
|--------------------|
| Wallace Abrahamson |
| Jan Kohl           |
| Dru Mansmith       |
| Nancy Royce        |
| David Williams     |
| Alysse Zabel       |

## First Sunday is Food Pantry Sunday

You are asked to bring canned goods and non-perishable items on the first Sunday of each month and place them in the box marked Food Pantry in the church narthex. You are encouraged to also bring your loose change that day and place it in the offering plate or in a basket by the food pantry box. Donations will go to the food pantry.



- Pastor . . . . . Jack Kraaz
- Moderator . . . . . Jennifer Aither
- Vice-Moderator . . . . . Janet Vossekuil
- Clerk . . . . . Maria Dietrich
- Treasurer . . . . . Tim Aither
- Administrative Ass't . . . . . Diane Falk
- Children's Choir . . . . . Stephanie Prellwitz
- Choir . . . . . Kurt Dietrich/Sarah Kraaz
- Christian Ed Dir . . . . . Stephanie Prellwitz
- Youth Group . . . . . Amanda Bolan
- Nursery . . . . . Hollie Becker
- Fellowship Ministry . . . . . Sue Loomer
- Finance . . . . . Rick Coles
- Historian . . . . . Nedra Martz
- Librarian . . . . . Lois Ellis
- Men's Group . . . . . Len Ringstad
- Organists . . . . . Maria Dietrich  
. . . . . & Sarah Kraaz
- Outreach . . . . . Robyn Volkmann
- PPRC . . . . . Audrey Lyke
- Women's Fellowship . . . . . Liz Ringstad  
. . . . . & Audrey Conant
- Worship . . . . . Nancy Coles

Pastor Jack Kraaz
Office: 920-748-5898
Fax: 920-748-5182
Cell: 920-229-5243
<a href="mailto:jkraaz@charterinternet.com">jkraaz@charterinternet.com</a>

## *Food Pantry in Desperate Need*

The Ripon Community Food Pantry is in desperate need of boxed meals!

All members of our church are asked to donate at least one boxed meal to the Ripon Community Food Pantry (2 doors down from Campus Cinema).

Boxed Meals are things like Tuna Helper, Hamburger Helper, that sort of thing. These can be purchased very inexpensively at Sav-a-Lot in a generic brand.

The food pantry is very under-stocked right now due to the unusually high demand for food. The food pantry usually provides around 250 bags of groceries to families during a month's time, with November, December and January doubling that number! Last month (October) they provided 400 bags of groceries to families. That means that November, December and January could easily reach 600-800 bags of groceries needed.

Please do your part if you are at all able!



## *Enchanted Forest*

During the Dickens of a Christmas weekend, stop in at the Enchanted Forest, where you can vote for your favorite decorated tree while listening to Christmas music performed by a variety of local musicians. Admission fee of \$2 per person goes to the Barlow Park Relay for Life team's fundraising efforts for cancer research.



*Community Dinner*

Our next Community Dinner will take place on Tuesday, December 22 from 5–6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome!

## *Memorial Service*

A memorial service for Barbara Lu-eck, a former member of the First Congregational Church UCC, Ripon, will be held Tuesday, December 1, at 11:00 am at the First Congregational Church, Algoma Street, Oshkosh.

## *Church Women United Update*

On behalf of Church Women United I would like to thank the many people who have been associated with the organization over the past thirty years. So much volunteer time and effort went into the many programs that CWU was a part of and so many people from many Churches helped to make the organization the success that it was.

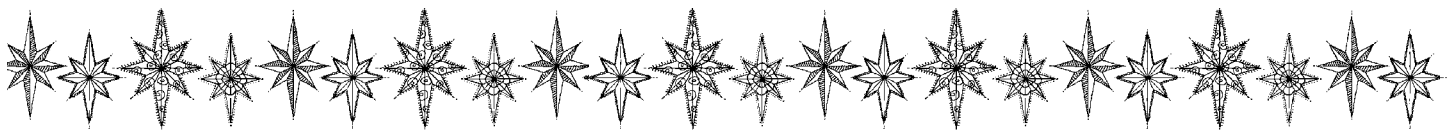
Our final meeting was held August 20, 2009. We have decided not to continue as a local unit since we did not have three of the four officers' positions filled. The membership, after much consideration, felt that we did not have the resources available to maintain an effective organization in the coming year. The money that remained in our local treasury has been forwarded to the State Church Women United treasurer.

Plans are in progress for continuing the Living Nativity for Dickens of a Christmas.

Although there is regret at being unable to continue as a local unit of Church Women United, there is hope that the ecumenical bonds formed while working together will remain and that it may be possible that a less-structured alliance of Christian women could evolve in the Ripon area in the future.

God has blessed our community with many wonderful people who see Christ in every person regardless of religious affiliation. We remember them and their accomplishments with gratitude.

—Kris Clausing, past-president Church Women United





# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Dear Sunday School Students/Parents;

As we begin the holiday season we have a few events/dates for you to put on your calendar:

1) Christmas Program December 20th

The story to be presented to the congregation is "A Dozen Silk Diapers: A Christmas Story." All children are welcome to participate. Practices will be:

1. Sunday, December 6th – during Sunday School
2. Saturday, December 12th – 3:00–5:00 pm
3. Sunday, December 13th – during Sunday School
4. Saturday, December 19th – 9:00 am–12 noon
5. Sunday, December 20th – during Sunday School

The Children's Program will be Sunday, December 20th during the regular worship time.

2) Any student who would like to play a short piece on their musical instrument before the start of the children's service, please contact Stephanie Prellwitz or Mary Lyke.

3) NO Sunday School – November 29th (Sunday after Thanksgiving)

4) Family Event – Saturday, December 12th

"Old Befana" - Pilgrim Center – in the new Ley Chapel (see flyer enclosed)

Following the Christmas program practice on Saturday, December 12th there will be a pizza supper served in the Fellowship Hall and we can go together to see the holiday show, "Old Befana" at the Pilgrim Center. Cost \$3.00 per person for the tickets. Please RSVP by November 30th to the church office at 748-5898 or to Mary Lyke at 748-4857 so we can reserve tickets.

Thank you,

—Mary Lyke, Christian Education Chair

## *Donate for Drapes*

Custom drapes were purchased by Women's Fellowship (with the help of Rae Miller and her committee) to cut the glare in the room from the western sunshine. They also may help with acoustics. The cost was \$4,439. We need to raise \$1,000 to pay the balance. If you wish to help pay for the drapes, please send a check to either:

A. The church — Women's Fellowship Pass-Through Account or...

B. Mary Lyke, treasurer; N9213 County Road FF; Ripon, WI 54971

## *Worship news*

The dedication of the new sound system will take place during worship on Sunday, December 6.

The Hanging of the Greens will take place after church on Sunday, December 6. After the greens are hung there will be a small lunch for the "hangers."

Christmas Eve Service at 8 p.m. with hot cider, coffee and goodies after the service.

We are seeking guest pulpit leaders for Sunday, January 3 and January 10, 2010.


## *RMC Lights of Love*

The Ripon Medical Center Associates Inc. is sponsoring its 22nd annual community holiday project "Lights of Love." Each bulb on the large Christmas tree outside the Medical Center will have a special meaning. Colored bulbs are in recognition/appreciation of a living friend or family member, while white bulbs are in memory of a loved one. Names of those honored or remembered are placed on a special wall tree in the Medical Center lobby.

If you wish to contribute to this community project, forms are available in the church office. Donations collected this year will fund equipment for a new Bone Density Heel Scanner to increase public awareness of health risks associated with osteoporosis.

A special tree lighting ceremony will take place on Thursday, December 10th at 7 p.m. in Central Admitting. Everyone is invited to participate in this fun and meaningful event. Refreshments will be served. We will also have music and carols.

# DECEMBER 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 6:30 pm Confirmation class	30	1	2 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	3	4	5
6 9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship & Hanging of the Greens, lunch 6:30 pm Confirmation class	7	8	9 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	10 1–3 pm Women's Fellowship meeting	11	12 3–5 pm Christmas program practice 5–6:30 pm Pizza, Fellowship Hall 6:30–8 pm "Old Befana" at Pilgrim Center
13 9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	14	15 6:30 pm Cabinet	16 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	17	18	19 9–noon Christmas program practice
20 9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship with children's Christmas program 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	21	22 1 pm Newsletter Deadline 5–6:30 pm Community Dinner, Fellowship Hall	23 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	24 8 pm Christmas Eve Service! 	25	26
27 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	28	29	30 1:15 pm Newsletter prep for mailing 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	31	1	2
					Future Events: January 31: Annual Meeting	



You are invited to purchase poinsettia plants to help beautify the Sanctuary during the Advent season. The plants will be large, trimmed florist quality plants and will be provided by our friends at the Flower Basket. This year's cost is \$16 each. The poinsettias will be on display in our Sanctuary through Wednesday, December 24. After that date, you are welcome to take your plant home, leave it for continued use at church, or use it as a gift for a friend or shut-in. Please fill out this form by 1 p.m. on Monday, December 1; You can place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church along with cash or a check.

Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$16.00 = total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) as you wish them to appear: \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional): In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional): In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

# Schedule of Morning Worship Volunteers

*Thanks*  
for your participation

Please try to meet this schedule. If you cannot help on the Sunday assigned...

- Try to switch Sundays with someone else
- Notify the appropriate Worship Committee member
- Notify the church office (748-5898)
- We all appreciate your participation!

## LECTORS:

12/6 Jack Kraaz  
12/13 Nancy Coles  
12/20 Tim Lyke  
12/24 TBA  
12/27 TBA  
  
1/3 TBA  
1/10 TBA  
1/17 Claire Aither  
1/24 TBA  
1/31 TBA

## GREETERS/USHERS:

Janet Vossekuil  
Rick & Nancy Coles  
Claire & Jenn Aither  
TBA  
TBA  
  
TBA  
TBA  
Tim & Jenn Aither  
TBA  
TBA

## COFFEE HOSTS:

Audrey Conant, Ruth Birge, Merle Good  
TBA  
Jeanne Williams  
TBA  
TBA  
  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA

## FLOWERS:

TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA  
TBA

Are you interested in being a Worship Volunteer? Sign up on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall entrance. Ripon College student Hollie Becker is handling the nursery for the duration of the school year.

## First Congregational Church of Ripon

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ  
220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

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**Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve**