



The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
☎ 920-748-5898 • office@riponcongregationalucc.org • www.riponcongregationalucc.org

January 2024

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!” — 2 Corinthians 5:17

It is never too late to change.

Recently I found a reflection written by one of my new favorite authors, Kate DiCamillo. (Actually, DiCamillo has been a long time favorite author of mine! But I have just now re-discovered her since my daughter Ainslie has brought home some of her books, like *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, and *The Magician’s Elephant* which was recently released as a movie.)

Kate DiCamillo recently wrote about reading Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, a story that is very familiar anyone who lives near Ripon. Every year Ripon celebrates

Dickens of a Christmas weekend shortly after Thanksgiving, and the entire downtown is filled with Living Windows and music inspired by *A Christmas Carol*, along with all the wonder and magic that comes during this time of year. It’s an event that inspires the child in all of us, and one of the reasons my family loves living in Ripon!

So when I read this thought from Kate DiCamillo, I was immediately struck by the hope, and the challenge, that Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* offers us:

“Every year, I read Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, and every year, it convinces me that it is never too late to change. In the same way, I remember reading Katherine Paterson’s *Bridge to Terabithia* for the first time,

encountering this sentence: “He felt there in the teachers’ room that it was the beginning of a new season in his life, and he chose to deliberately make it so,” and

feeling the promise of those words. Again and again, stories have delivered this life-saving message to me: it is ever-possible to change, to deliberately begin a new season. Thank you to all of you (teachers, librarians, booksellers, parents) who put books into the hands of readers, books that help us change, help us become our better selves.

This new year we have a lot to look forward to, and, I believe, we have a lot of hope that “it is ever-possible to change” and begin something new.

In fact, this is one of the promises of our faith: So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything

old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Where are you looking to make a new start in your life in the next year?

Using the stories of our faith, we are delivered with the lifesaving and Good News that it is possible to change.

New things have come to us in Christ, says the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. Join us in 2024 as we discover that it is never too late to make a change and make the world a better place.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

—Pastor Jeffrey



Prayers for health and healing...

Jack Moniz (broken collar bone, required surgery); **Kih Bergin** (eye appointment); **Aya V.** (hospital visit for heart issues); **Finn G.** (eye surgery 11/8); **Nate Del Ponte's** cousin **Jen** and her husband **Mitch's** 4-year-old son **Maverick** (brain cancer); **Bruce Schwemmer** (heart bypass surgery 9/18); **Mary Fish, Dawn Scholten's mother** (Double mastectomy 9/8); **Gary Fish, Dawn Scholtens father** (sarcoma surgery 9/18, broken leg 12/21); **Sarah Seidler's aunt Paula** (cancer); **Jeanne Williams' brother, Dan** (health); **Natay Warren** (cancer); **Kevin Reilly** (stroke); **Toni McLeod** (back surgery); **Tammi Kenton** (cancer); **Gary Scholtens** (cancer recovery); **Hunter** (health); **Ken Hill** (cancer); **Wendy Smith** (cancer); **Loren Boone** (cancer) and also for his wife **Deanna**, as **Loren** has entered Hospice); **Katie Del Ponte's** cousin and **Tony Reilly's** niece **Jessica** (cancer); **Grandmother Cindy** from the **Berndt/Selz** family (cancer); all who have lost a pregnancy or miscarried; all those experiencing health issues in need of prayer.

Prayers for peace in **Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine**, and around the world.

All affected by **COVID** this season.

Kih Bergin: for those traveling for the holidays to see friends and family.

Penny Allard: for peace in Israel and Gaza, and healing for the children of war throughout the world. Help us see Jesus in all the relatives with whom we will celebrate the holidays this year. Prayers for those who suffer from depression and have difficulty facing the holidays.

Katie Berndt: for her friend **MJ** who was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer and has spread to her liver.

Jeanne Williams: for her sister, **Jan Kilner**, who was battling pneumonia in late November.

Kaitlyn Boscailon: gratitude for all the support for everything her family has been through this past year, a divorce, a move to Green Lake, and new job opportunities.

Barb Mitchell is moving to DeKalb, Illinois. Many blessings on her new adventure and new home.

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. We look forward to getting to know you and to share with you the marvelous ways God is working in our church and beyond. 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.



Prayer Requests

If you wish to see your prayer request listed in next Sunday's bulletin or The Spire, please notify the church office.



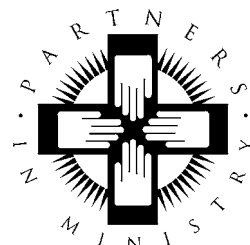
Our Condolences

...to those who have experienced a recent loss:

Debbie Wammer, wife of **Steve Wammer**, and friend of **Barb Mitchell**, passed away Nov. 6, 2023.

Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for February, 2024. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, January 17, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.



- Pastor *Jeffrey Dodson*
- Communications and CE Director *Ashley Dodson*
- Moderator *Erin Ter Beest*
- Vice-Moderator. . . *Michele Wittler*
- Clerk *Justus Paul*
- Treasurer *Andy Lyke*
- Choir Director *Kurt Dietrich*
- Faith Formation . . *Barb Splittgaber*
- Finance. *Judy Neill*
- Historian *Robin Patzloff*
- Maintenance Officer *Lyle Mathias*
- Membership. *Bev Christ*
- Nominating. . *J. Christ, T. Konecny*
- Organist. *Maria Dietrich*
- Outreach *Dawn Scholtens*
- PPRC *Michele Wittler*
- Women's Fellowship *Susan Osteen*
- Worship *Kathleen Hones*

Church Contact Info

Director of Administration & Communications and Director of Children's & Family Ministry: Ashley Dodson: 920-748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org

If not in the office, Pastor Jeffrey Dodson can be reached at ...

Cell: (719) 330-8549 or by email, at jeffrey@riponcongregationalucc.org

Rod & Peggy Freeman – Church Custodians - Cell: 920-896-2152



**KEEP BRINGING IN
YOUR PLASTIC
BAGS AND FILMS**

**COLLECTED
218.3 LBS**

GOAL: 1,000 LBS

ANNUAL MEETING

*Annual Meeting
January 21*

Save the Date: 2023 Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024 at 11:30 p.m.

Our church cabinet is pleased to announce the date for our Congregational Annual Meeting, set for Sunday, January 21, 2024, following the worship service. The Annual Report will be provided to the congregation in the coming weeks. All members and associate members of the congregation are encouraged to attend, and vote, on our 2024 budget, slate of nominees for committees and the cabinet.



COMMUNITY DINNER

Our Community Dinners, held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, are now in a drive-through format. Our next dinners will be held on Jan. 23, serving at 5:30 p.m.



Help Stock the Pantry

During the month of January, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of pancake mix and syrup, hot cereal, and rolled oats. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such as a deodorant, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Cash donations are always much appreciated as well. Donations may also be dropped off at the church and will be delivered to the pantry. Thanks for your help!

—Outreach Committee

**DISCUSSION
GROUP**
Thursdays at 10:30

Each Thursday at 10:30 a.m. join us in the Chapel for coffee or tea and lively discussions on various topics of the day using faith, politics, and the daily news. All are welcome!

Coffee Fellowship

Friday Coffee Fellowship takes place at 9:30 AM at Mugs Coffee Shop. Join us!



Sharing your special event, memory, or in honor of someone is special with a bouquet of flowers for our Sunday morning worship. It is also a lovely touch to our altar on Sunday morning.

Flower coordinator Julie Mathias is available to discuss an altar flower arrangement requests. We will discuss what you would like, the date you would like to reserve, and your dedication for the arrangement. Contact Julie Mathias by phone or text message. 920-229-2305.

Prayers of Joy

Natay and Adria Warren moved into their new home in Oshkosh on December 3.

Brian Smith, Professor Emeritus of Religion from Ripon College, preached about politics and religion during worship on November 12.

The **Pie Sale** for our camp scholarships on November 19 raised over \$400. Our First Congo Kids thank everyone who bought a pie!

First Congo's 173rd Anniversary on November 21, 2023.

Tim Lyke was inducted into the Wisconsin Newspaper Hall of Fame on November 9. Congratulations, Tim!

All who helped decorate the church for Advent and Christmas during the **Festival of the Greens** on November 26. The sanctuary looked beautiful!

Rae Miller's 96th birthday on December 12.

First Congo Kids Christmas Pageant, A Star Shows the Way, was marvelous! Many thanks to all the children and youth, parents and volunteers who helped make it happen! And a special thank you to **Ashley Dodson** for coordinating the pageant!

New Members who joined the church December 10: **Kih Bergin** and **Meg Schwemmer**.

Ransom Street Carolers who spread Christmas cheer with songs on Sunday, December 10 at the homes of several church members.

Winter 2024 Worship Schedule

Sundays: 9:00 am Faith Formation

10:30 am Worship in-person (4 pm online) • 11:30 am Fellowship
Communion every first Sunday of the month

Sunday, December 31 | New Year's Eve | NEW:Year | First Night Celebration & Carols | *Join us for a relaxed worship experience in the Fellowship Hall as we celebrate New Year's Eve using story and song. Dress in New Year's Eve attire for this morning family friendly service.*

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, January 7 | NEW:Gift | Epiphany Sunday & Communion - A Celebration of the 12 Days of Christmas

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, January 14 | NEW:Life | Baptism of Christ & New Member's Sunday | Second Sunday after Epiphany

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, January 21 | NEW:Leadership | Annual Meeting Sunday | Third Sunday after Epiphany

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON followed by Annual Meeting| 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, January 28 | NEW:Idea | Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, February 4 | NEW:Menu | Communion Sunday | Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, February 11 | Souper Bowl of Caring | NEW:Paradigm | Transfiguration Sunday

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Tuesday, February 13 | Mardi Gras | Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner

5:30-6:30 pm Fellowship Hall

6:30-7 pm Service of Ashes, burning of palm branches

Wednesday, February 14 | Ash Wednesday

12 noon -1:00 pm Noon Distribution of Ashes

5:30-6:00 pm Evening Distribution of Ashes

Sunday, February 18 | First Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, February 25 | Second Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, March 3 | Third Sunday in Lent | Communion Sunday

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, March 10 | Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Sunday, March 17 | Fifth Sunday in Lent

10:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE

Let's Get Started - Prayer Cloth Ministry



If it has been a while since you picked up a pair of knitting needles, if you are just getting started, or if you are an experienced knitter, our Prayer Cloth Ministry is for you.

Prayer cloths are a tangible reminder of God's love. They are also reminders that someone is thinking about you and praying with you. Prayer cloths provide a way for members of a faith community to connect with one another during times of celebration, transition, pain, or crisis.

What's a prayer cloth ministry? Simple. A group of folks make small knitted pieces (see photos) to give to people as reminders of God's love and the love of our faith community. You can make the squares on your own and join others for a knitting circle once a month to learn new skills and see what others are doing.

Our first knitting circle will take place on Monday, January 8th at 6:30 PM in the chapel.

In the meantime, if you would like to try your hand at making a prayer cloth, here's a simple pattern that will make a cloth similar to the ones in the picture. If you are interested in making larger prayer shawls, the group can move in that direction once we've gotten started with these smaller projects.

Prayer Cloth Instructions

What you need:

Yarn - About 25-30 yards of worsted weight yarn (You can use other weights of yarn, but the size of the cloth will vary with the size of the yarn and needles.)

Needles - Size 8, go smaller with lighter yarn, bigger with heavier yarn.

Notions - Two stitch markers, a yarn needle, (Optional) charms or beads

Instructions:

1. Cast on 22 stitches using long-tail cast on or your preferred cast-on technique.
2. Knit 4 rows. You can create a selvedge edge by slipping the first stitch of each row.
3. Set up row - Knit 4, place marker, purl 14, place marker, knit 4. Knit 4 stitches at the beginning and end of each row to create a frame for the cross image. Steps 4-8 create the cross pattern on the center 14 stitches.
4. For the next 3 rows, alternate Knit 1 row, purl 1 row on the center 14 stitches.
5. Set up row for cross - On center 14 stitches, purl 4, knit 6, purl 4.
6. For the next 13 rows, on center 14 stitches alternate these rows (1) knit 4, purl 6, knit 4 and (2) purl 4, knit 6, purl 4.
7. Cross Bar - For the next 6 rows on center 14 stitches, alternate rows of knit stitches and rows of purl stitches, ending with a purl row.
8. For the next 6 rows alternate rows on center stitches as in step 6 above.
9. Next 4 rows, alternate rows of purl and knit stitches, starting with purl.
10. Finishing rows, knit all stitches for the next 4 rows, removing markers.
11. Bind off all stitches using a simple bind off technique or your preferred technique.
12. Use a yarn needle to weave in ends. You can also add a tassel at one corner, a cross charm or other embellishments as you prefer.

Faith Formation - Sunday School News



A Star Shows the Way

Thank you to everyone who participated in our pageant!. It was a fun production to put together! Special thanks to Mary Lyke, Wendy Smith, Kathleen Hones, and Dawn Scholtens for participating as the Wise Star Council; Rev. Dodson for assisting with music and tech, and Maria Dietrich for playing music!

Giving Tree

The Faith Formation Committee set up a Giving Tree by the church office. Please check it out!

Please take a mitten or two off the tree and grant a classroom wish for the children of the church! All items will be used by children on Sunday morning and during special events. Items can be dropped off at the church office and do not need to be wrapped.

November Pie Sale

Children, along with the help of Jeffrey Dodson, Jeanne Williams, and Gary Scholtens helped prepare pies for our pie sale on Sunday, November 19th. We sold 18 pies and also received a matching grant from Websters for \$475- this money will be used to provide scholarships for children and families to attend UCCI programs.

Faith Formation Hour: Sunday School and Confirmation will resume January 7 at 9:00 AM

If you are around on December 31,2023 for the 10:30 worship service | **First Night Service- A New Year's Eve Celebration service of story and song.** We will create New Year's Eve poppers!

Spring Programming

Look for a schedule of family activities for the spring semester soon!

Submitted by Ashley Dodson, Director of Children's and Family Ministry

Worship Participation Schedule

Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Tech Booth	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
Jan. 7	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Tony Reilly/Scott Henke	Gary Scholtens	Flasch and Grout-Paul
Jan. 14	Erin Ter Beest	Grace & Ruth Retzlaff	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Christ and Minch
Jan. 21	Amber Dalziel	Gary & Dawn Scholtens	AVAILABLE	Smith and Schwemmer
Jan. 28	Gary Scholtens	Andy Lyke/Janet Vossekuil	Daniel Volkmann	Nelson/Harper and Konecny
Feb. 4	Daniel Volkmann	Mary & Tim Lyke	Erik Dietrich	Warren and Dalziel
Feb. 11	Kaitlyn Boscaljon	Confirmation Class	Daniel Volkmann	Williams and Christ
Feb. 18	Andy Lyke	Sara Seidler & Dan Halwas	Gary Scholtens	Ter Beest and Prellwitz
Feb. 25	Tom Moniz	Katie & Nate Berndt	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Volkmann/Tumas, Hones

Thanks
for your
participation

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

- Please switch Sundays with someone else and then notify the church office (748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org) of the change.
- We all appreciate your participation!

JANUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	1	2	3 5:30 pm Youth Group	4 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	5 9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	6
7 9 am Faith Formation 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	8	9 5 pm Sharing Table at Grace 6:30 pm Cabinet	10 5:30 pm Youth Group	11 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	12 9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	13
14 9 am Faith Formation 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Outreach, Worship	15	16	17 Noon - Spire Deadline 5:30 pm Youth Group	18 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	19 9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	20
21 9 am Faith Formation 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Membership comm	22	23 5:30 pm Community Dinner	24 5:30 pm Youth Group	25 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	26 9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	27
28 9 am Faith Formation 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	29	30	31 5:30 pm Youth Group	1 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	2 9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	3 5 pm FOG

Future Events:
 Feb. 13 - Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras
 Feb. 14 - Ash Wednesday
 March 24 - Palm Sunday
 March 31 - Easter Sunday



Happy New Year ♡ *Happy New Year* ♡ *Happy New Year*

First Congregational Church of Ripon

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve

