



The SPIRE



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

December 2022

“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.” — Luke 2:7

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” — Romans 15:13



We are entering the season of Advent, a time of waiting, filled with hope and anticipation for God’s peace and love in the world. On Christmas Eve,

we come to the manger with our open hearts so that we might see and bear witness to God’s love, born in a tiny child. God’s love, given to us in just this way, is a gift.

This is a season when gifts seem to be on everyone’s minds: for parents and grandparents who are thinking about what to get their children and relatives; for little ones who are busy writing letters to Santa asking for what they want for Christmas; for those going to parties or get-togethers with friends and family who wish to thank their hosts with a small token of appreciation; for homeless shelters and soup kitchens which are collecting items to clothe and feed our community; for nonprofits asking one more time for a donation to fund their good work in the world.

We are wrapped up in a world of gifts - gift-giving

and receiving.

I think this is a good spiritual practice for our souls. Our family was at the library this week and picked up an ornament, a yellow star, on the community tree which has an item written on it and the age of a child. We get this gift for a child in our community and give it to them freely. Our children love to do this each year, and they help us wrap the gift and deliver it so that it can be presented to the child. This kind of generosity helps us stretch our hearts, and share the love and resources we have been so blessed to receive in our own lives.

In the Christ-child, God shares with us the greatest gift of all.

It is the gift of Christmas: Love, Hope, Peace, and Joy, all wrapped up together like the bands of cloth that swaddle the newborn baby Jesus. This is the meaning of Christmas.

Christmas might have many different meanings to us which we live out year to year in our various traditions, holiday celebrations, family get-togethers, and ways of giving gifts. Yet none of these matter if we do not first come to the manger - not with gifts, but with our open hearts - so that we might see and witness God’s gift, and be able to receive it.

Advent is the time we get to prepare our hearts. Each Sunday leading up to Christmas Eve, we will look at what Christmas means through the gifts of Love, Hope, Peace, and Joy.

(Continued on page 3)

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Prayers for health and healing...

For Health & Healing: Don Amsden (hospice); **Jeffrey Dodson** (pneumonia); **Tony Reilly** (health); **Marilyn Lehnherr** (surgery); **Sarah Joy** (broken toe); **Rae Miller** (broken jaw, ribs); **Jonathan Gatzke** (shoulder surgery); **Wendy Smith** (cancers); **Dawn Scholtens** (cancer); **Loren Boone** (cancer); **Katie Del Ponte's** cousin and **Tony Reilly's** niece **Jessica** (brain cancer, James-town Canyon Virus/meningitis); **Grandmother Cindy** from the **Berndt/Selz's family** (cancer); **Rose Marie Freeman** (sister of Al Jarreau, health); **Susan Osteen's** sister-in-law **Chona** (cancer); **Michele Wittler's** friend **Leslie** (hospice); **Bev Christ's** cousin **Tom** (care facility); retired Ripon College prof. **Evelyn Kain** (cancer); a young person in our community diagnosed with leukemia; all those experiencing health issues in need of prayer.

Prayers for **Tammi Kenton's** husband's mom (memory) and for caregivers who support loved ones. (10/23)

Prayers for safe travels for all, including:

for **Janet Vossekuil & Dave Gallop's** trip to Florida (11/6)

Tom & Debbi Konecny's trip to Colorado (11/27)

(Prayers continued on page 5)

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

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!



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

Julie Mathias whose sister **Carrie Nash (Stein) Bartik** passed away October 22. A memorial service was held on October 28. We keep Julie and the entire family of Carrie Bartik in our prayers. (10/30)

Mike Boscaljon's co-worker **Vicky's** niece's family died in a tragic car accident. (9/25)

Anne Flasch: Lily's dad died in a plane crash. (10/2)

The family of **Thomas Caestecker** and our community for his passing on October 6. A memorial service was held on October 29.

Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for January, 2023. The deadline is Wednesday, Dec. 21, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.



Pastor *Jeffrey Dodson*
 CE Director *Jeanne Williams*
 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 *Deanna Boone,*
 B. Christ, M. Lyke, A. Dalziel
 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

Office manager 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

Jeanne Williams, CE Director
 jeanne@riponcongregationalucc.org

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

December 2022 Worship Schedule

Each Sunday in Advent we will look at how we receive these gifts through the eyes of others:

What does Christmas mean to Scrooge and a local church pastor?

What does Christmas mean to the Grinch and an Amazon warehouse worker?

What does Christmas mean to soldiers fighting in World War II?

What does Christmas mean to a grumpy shepherd, his sheep and the stars?

How might you prepare your heart this season?

You can start by receiving these gifts:

- The gift of love for lovelessness.
- Hope for hopelessness.
- Peace for all that feels at war.
- And Joy for joylessness.

What might Christmas mean to you this year? And how will you receive the gifts of this season so that you can receive the blessing of God's gift to all of us found in Jesus Christ?

The good news is that taking the journey toward the manger is what moves us toward these things, even though we do not yet fully know what they mean, or know what the journey of our hearts will be like. All we need, it turns out, is a desire to receive a gift.

Merry Christmas, and may you be blessed with the gift that awaits you at the manger,

—Pastor Jeffrey

Sunday, December 4 | Communion Sunday | Second Sunday of Advent | The Meaning of Christmas: Hope

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

Sunday, December 11 | Third Sunday of Advent | The Meaning of Christmas: Peace

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

Sunday, December 18 | Fourth Sunday of Advent | Children's Christmas Pageant | The Meaning of Christmas: Joy

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

Saturday, December 24 | Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

4:00 pm Worship IN-PERSON and Live ONLINE

Sunday, December 25 | No Service | Merry Christmas!

Sunday, January 1 | New Year's Day | Donuts and Pajamas Sunday!

Dress casually (Pajamas encouraged!) and join us for a Christmas Hymn-sing for Worship in our Fellowship Hall.

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

Sunday, January 8 | Epiphany Sunday and Communion

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



RECYCLING UPDATES



We are currently working with
NexTrex
and
Bic Corporation

1 DECEMBER, 2022

THANK YOU SO MUCH

FOR YOUR RECYCLING EFFORTS

To date we have collected 320 pounds of plastic! We have about 180 more pounds to collect! Please continue to bring in plastic film (bags, bubble wrap, overwrap for water bottles, etc.). If we make our goal we will earn a bench made from recycled materials for our church grounds.

Keep Collecting that Plastic!

From the Outreach Committee

Are you a gardener? Do you have knowledge about native plants? The church is looking for a few individuals who are interested in looking into installing a native plant and/or pollinator garden at the church. We have the opportunity to apply for a **Kairos Creation Care grant** from the Wisconsin Conference to fund the project. The ad hoc committee would look at the grant application, determine if it is appropriate to apply, and then make a garden plan to submit to the grant committee. If this is something you would be interested in helping with or you know someone whose skills and knowledge could be of assistance, please contact Erin Ter Beest at erin.terbeest@gmail.com or 920-344-6758.



Puzzle!

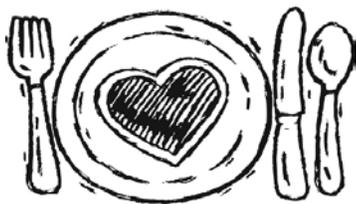
Unscramble the Christmas-themed words below, writing each extra letter on the blank to the right. Then place those extra letters in the correct spots below to discover what we receive at Christmas.



1. TGLBEHHEME _____
2. NEAGLO _____
3. NRMEDAG _____
4. ODEKSNY _____
5. AMGYR _____
6. OHESJIP _____
7. EFJUSS _____
8. ITEENMSW _____
9. SPHDSREEO _____
10. EMCFAL _____
11. TLSRA _____
12. CSSNUEO _____
13. HEVSPE _____
14. ENIN _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9		10	11		12	13	14

Answers: Bethlehem (C), angel (O), manger (D), donkey (S), Mary (G), Joseph (I), Jesus (F), wise men (O), shepherds (O), camel (F), star (L), census (O), sheep (V), inn (E), God's gift of love



COMMUNITY DINNER

Our Community Dinners, held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, are temporarily in a drive-through format due to COVID-19. Our next dinner will be held on December 20.

Help Stock the Pantry

During the month of December, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of tuna and hamburger helper. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such a deodorant, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Cash donations are always very much appreciated as well. Donations may also be dropped off at the church and will be delivered to the pantry. Thank you for your help!

—Outreach Committee

(Prayers, continued)

Prayers for peace in Ukraine and Russia and around the world.

Prayers for our world, as MLK said: "Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (10/9)

Prayers for those involved in the shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs on November 19, and for our Open and Affirming congregations, our transgender, nonbinary, and LGBTQ friends and family. (11/20)

Prayers for peaceful elections in our community and country. (11/13)

For those rehabilitating themselves, whether in prison or because of addiction. (11/13)

Congratulations to our Community Dinner team who served 200 Thanksgiving dinner meals on November 22.

Congratulations and welcome to our newest church members: **Marilyn Lehnerr, Aelwyn Tumas, Dan Halwas & Sarah Seidler, Nate Berndt, and Becca Parker.** (See article on page 6.)

Prayers of joy for **Jack & Bev Christ** for family **Nikki and Kenneth's** visit this fall (10/16)

Joy for our First Congo Players, performing during Advent Worship Services.

Joy for the **Boscaljons'** 6-year anniversary of adopting Scout. (10/9)

Joy for the **Green Lake Association** for winning a Land Rover, and the GLA employees and volunteers of our church who worked to help make that happen: **Stephanie Prellwitz, Tina Solberg, Andy Lyke.** (11/13)



A Covenant for First Congregational Church of Ripon

In the love of God who creates us the witness of Christ Jesus who redeems us and the guidance of the Holy Spirit who sustains us, We Covenant with one another to build a community of hope and to share its good news with neighbors near and far.

We wish to grow in spiritual insight by...

- our promise to be thoughtful in speech and action, respecting each person's journey of faith;
- our honoring of all gifts shared and all leadership offered in love, working for a partnership of laity and clergy;
- our commitment to peace and justice for God's people, seeking social awareness at home and around the world;
- our recognition of diverse background and opinions, striving to embrace and work through differences, and
- our dedication to strengthen the life of compassion in Ripon, engaging our churches, city and college.

To these ends, we pledge our lives to our fellow members of Christ's church, through...

- our regular participation when the congregation gathers for worship;
- our ongoing study of the knowledge and spiritual insight of our of faith;
- our voluntary assumption of a personal ministry on behalf of the congregation;
- our invitation to others to become part of our fellowship; and
- our support of our life together by the offering of prayer, time and treasure.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, we are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Welcome to New Members!

Joined October 16, 2022



Marilyn Lehnherr has been attending First Congregational Church of Ripon since Easter ser-

vices in 2022. She is originally from Watertown, Wisconsin, and most recently lived in Yuma, Arizona, for the past 10 years before moving here to Ripon to be closer to family. Marilyn is a retired day care worker.

Joined November 20, 2022

Aelwyn Tumas



I was born in California, and grew up in various places, including Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado, before

moving to Ripon in 1996. I went to Whitman College in Washington state and earned a BA in studio art, which has been a lifelong passion. After graduating I spent 2-1/2 years teaching English in Argentina and Spain before returning to Ripon. After several years' work in hospitality, graphic design and other areas, I decided to pursue a BS in Nursing at UW-Madison, and I begin my first RN position in Med/Surg this November at Ripon Community Hospital. A few of my loves include making art, photography, cooking, mountain biking, music, reading, enjoying the outdoors, traveling and spending time with my friends, family and two cats. I have attended First Congo since I met Daniel in 2014. Current favorite quote: "The human soul doesn't want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed, exactly as it is." — Parker Palmer

Becca Parker



I'm currently the Housekeeping Lead at Daycholah Center as well as one of the Children's Ministry staff members at the church.

Because of my work at Daycholah Center, I've spent a lot of time in the Ripon area in the past few years, but I finally decided to get my first apartment in town this fall. I've recently gotten into cooking and am always on the hunt for new vegetarian recipes! I also love to curl up with a good book alongside my cat, Leia. I'm looking forward to continuing to become a part of the community! Everyone has been incredibly welcoming and I feel at home here. I've really appreciated how much I already feel like a part of the community despite only starting to attend recently as part of the CE staff.

Dan & Sarah Seidler-Halwas

Sarah has lived in Ripon since the fall of 2010 when she began teaching German and Spanish at Ripon High School. Dan moved to town in 2013 when they bought a little gray house on Jackson Street and decided to make their home here. Around that same time, Dan finished his electrical apprenticeship with Moraine Park and began working for CF Power, a small



company based out of Mount Calvary, where he has been employed ever since. They were married by Pastor

Joanna at First Congo on October 28, 2017, and began attending worship here regularly after that. They are dog parents to two rescue dogs, Simba and Nala, who are both German Shepherd mixes. They enjoy traveling, grill out and board game nights with great friends, spending time with siblings and nieces and nephews, and attending concerts together. They hosted a big Thanksgiving celebration, with about 15 family members coming to town for turkey dinner.

Nate Berndt

I was born in Fairwater, went to school in Markesan. I was a former member of Zion Lutheran Church in Fairwater. I married Katie Berndt (Selz) in 2020 and we live in Ripon with our kids, Gregory, Lorrin, and Bella. Due to medical complications Pastor Jeffrey came to my bed side and opened my shut door of faith, through my faith I have a profound and better understanding of my family, my past, and a renewed and better understanding of what my future could be with Christ. What drew me to seeking membership at First Congregational Church was the open arms and listening I received from



the church and pastor Jeffrey. To bring my family closer and to live through Jesus

Christ's teachings. I am the (acting) Manger of distribution and operations for the USPS in Green Bay (in charge of letters/parcels). Hobbies include hunting, Fishing, grilling, and spending time with family.

Join us for
Christmas



AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

NOVEMBER 27- ADVENT 1 *LOVE*- 10:30 AM
DECEMBER 4- ADVENT 2 *HOPE*- 10:30 AM
DECEMBER 11- ADVENT 3 *PEACE*- 10:30 AM
DECEMBER 18- ADVENT 4 *PAGEANT*- 10:30 AM
DECEMBER 24- *CHRISTMAS EVE* 4 PM
DECEMBER 25- NO SERVICES- MERRY CHRISTMAS!
JANUARY 1- *DONUTS AND PAJAMAS*- 10:30 AM



The Grumpy Shepherd



Sunday
December 18
10:30 AM

Rapping angels? Motown stars? Join us December 18 as First Congo Kids Present The Grumpy Shepherd. We will surprise you along the way as Joram, the notoriously grumpy shepherd follows the angels to meet the baby Jesus.



First Congo Kids



Friday, December 9th

Fellowship Hall
5:30-8:30 PM

FREE



Snacks, games, and other activities will be provided.



Please plan to provide dinner for your child/ren before dropping off!

CHRISTMAS
PAGEANT
PRACTICE
10 AM
←

Campbell.



"What a morning! The angels were devils and the wisemen were wise guys."



Faith Formation - It's Pageant Time!

Shepherds, Sheep, Angels, Stars, Mary, Joseph, and a Special Baby

Every year we tell a variation on the same story. Some of the children can tell you from the title how the pageant story will play out. This year, the main character is a Grumpy Shepherd. I'll bet you can figure out how the story will end, but we will surprise you along the way! Rapping angels? Motown stars? Come see what we have created during worship on December 18th.

Parents - We will be rehearsing during Sunday School time for the next few weeks. You can drop kids off any time after 9 AM. We will work on the script and music and will sort out parts along the way. Please plan on having kids at church on Wednesday, December 14th at 4 o'clock for our dress rehearsal and pizza dinner. We should be done by 6:15 or so.



Thanks for Participating!

Thanks to everyone who participated in our annual Trunk or Treat event. It was a great success.

Thanks also to everyone who helped us deck the Fellowship Hall by making ornaments and helping us trim the trees.

Family Activities for December - See the graphics in this issue of the Spire for more information.



- Friday, December 9th - Parents' Night Out - 5:30-8:30 PM. Snacks, games, and other activities will be provided.

- Wednesday, December 14th - Pageant Practice, Recording, and Pizza Dinner - 4:00 -630 PM.

- Sunday, December 18th - Christmas Pageant and Family Lunch.

— Submitted by Barb Splittgaber, Faith Formation Committee Chair, and Jeanne Williams, C.E. Director



Worship Volunteer Schedule

Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Worship Slides	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
Dec. 4	Judy Neill	Lynn Grout-Paul & Justus Paul	Gary Scholtens	December birthday cupcakes
Dec. 11	Tammi Kenton	Janet Vossekuil	Tim Lyke	Osteen/Boscaljon families
Dec. 18	Kathleen Hones	Mary & Tim Lyke	Erik Dietrich	Dietrich and Wittler families
Dec. 24	Worship Comm.	Worship Committee	AVAILABLE	Worship Committee

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!

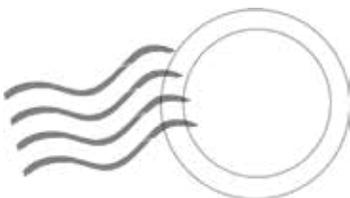
DECEMBER 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Pre-Conf/Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		4 pm CCF Men's Small Group	5:30 pm Youth Group	6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Pre-Conf/Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		4 pm CCF Men's Small Group	5:30 pm Youth Group	6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs 5:30 pm Parents' Night Out	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Pre-Conf/Confirmation 12 pm Worship committee 4 pm Online Worship		5 pm Sharing the Table at Grace 6:30 pm Cabinet meeting	4 pm Pageant Practice 5:30 pm Youth Group	6 pm NA meeting 7 pm Membership Committee	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship with Children's Pageant 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Pre-Conf/Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		10 am STRIVE 11:30 am Ripon Noon Kiwanis 5:30 pm Community Dinner	12 pm Spire deadline	6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	4 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight service
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		11:30 am Ripon Noon Kiwanis		6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	



Get Connected on Facebook

Want to learn more about what is going on at the church? Wish you could get updates and see photos about community outreach and other church events? It's easy! "Like" us on facebook at www.facebook.com/RiponCongregationalUCC.



Paper and ink and postage - oh my! If you're getting a hard copy of this Spire and would prefer an electronic version, please give the church office your email address. Send it to office@riponcongregationalucc.org. Thanks!

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

