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Website: [www.firstcongoappleton.org](http://www.firstcongoappleton.org)

Stephen P. Savides, Senior Pastor

Jane B. Anderson, Co-Pastor

Maynard E. Beemer, Pastor Emeritus

Gene Sinner, Church Administrator

Deb Burich, Director for Volunteer Ministries

John M. Albrecht, Director for Music Ministries

Jon D. Riehle, Organist

Kara J. Woodford, Director for Children's Ministries

Lyssa Fish, Director for Youth Ministries

## WORSHIP CALENDAR AND SPECIAL MUSICAL EVENTS

**DECEMBER 23, 2007 8:45 and 10:30 a.m.**

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

**Sermon: Reverend Steve Savides**

8:45 a.m. Paula Ducas, John Albrecht, and  
Barbara Boren, soloists

10:30 a.m. The Sanctuary Choir  
No Church School or Child Care

**DECEMBER 24, 2007**

**2:00 p.m.** Family Service

First Congregational Organ Scholars

**4:00 p.m.** Family Service

First Congregational Organ Scholars  
Children's Choirs

**7:00 p.m.** Carols by Candlelight

Brass Quintet, Women's Trio, Chamber Choir

**10:00 p.m.** Lessons, Carols and Communion

Sanctuary Choir, Brass Quintet,  
Soloists and Instrumentalists

**DECEMBER 30, 2007 10:30 a.m.**

**ONE SERVICE ONLY**

Sermon.....Pastor Steve Savides

**Congregational Carol Sing**

**There will be NO infant through Grade 6 Church  
School Classes**

Market Committee have been plentiful. What I didn't expect was the degree to which I would see *the blessings of community engagement* unfold before my eyes on November 18. I was overwhelmed by the seemingly miraculous transfiguration of the fellowship hall as many hands joined together in the common cause of giving the world a gift this Christmas season. My heartfelt thanks go to ACM committee members Steve Hirby, Dwight Seuser, Julie Coenen and Deb Burich for their indispensable time and skills, Bert Poi for extended duties, Fellowship and Congregational Life for providing a delicious breakfast, Joyce Hanstedt and countless members for donating hundreds of delectable baked goods, talented calligraphers for adding an elegant flair to our gifts, greeters and all-around helpers to keep things running smoothly, Jane Miller and crew for managing the SERRV room, and member representatives of the Kenya Partnership, Fair Trade Coffee, Habitat for Humanity at home and Mexico, Back Bay Mission, Samaritan Counseling, the Emergency Shelter, Leaven, Kurgan Sister City, Youth and family AGI booth sponsors that provided the creative festive flair that makes the market exciting and finally you, the ACM shopper. Together we raised \$14,023.00; \$6,783 for AGI projects and \$7,240 for church partnerships! See more good news at [firstcongoappleton.org](http://firstcongoappleton.org). Click Missions. Click Alternative Gift Market.

## ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET A NEW PERSPECTIVE

As one would expect, the blessings I've enjoyed from the perspective of the Alternative Christmas

*"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."(Matthew 25:40)*

Karen Leigh-Post

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



“Light in the Darkness”

Some good friends of ours were expecting a child shortly after Christmas. In fact, it started coming too early. And so the doctor put the expectant mother on a labor-suppressing drug and prescribed bed rest. The doctor's parting words tried to comfort the couple: *"Don't worry about a thing,"* he said. *"Everything will go just fine."* And then he added, *"But just in case the baby comes a little too quickly, here are a pair of sterile surgical gloves and an umbilical cord clamp."*

At the birth of all three of my children there was always a dark little place in the back of my mind that was filled with stark, raving fear. With a difficult pregnancy, that fear is even greater. Imagine then what it would be like to be riding on a donkey as the contractions began, unable to find a place to stay as your wife's water broke, and forced to deliver in a cave into an animal's feeding trough as the baby emerged.

There is significant darkness hovering over this story of the first Christmas. Include with the uncertain and difficult birth the cold and the dark of night, the fear of the shepherds, the stunning arrival of the magi, the dangerous madman Herod, and, finally, the flight to Egypt to save the life of the child. There is significant darkness here.

And that's why it's possible to us on Christmas Eve, we who struggle through our own dark nights, to spy the light of God coming forth; possible for us to hear once again that the age-old promises of God come true in the birth of a child. God comes again to dispel the darkness that covers our world, the darkness that has settled in our souls. God comes again to shine the light of hope into our lives. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5). I look forward to seeing you on Christmas Eve so that together we can praise God for the light that has come to us through Jesus Christ.

Your friend and fellow minister,  
Rev. Steve Savides

Thank you to everyone here at First Congo for their loving comfort and support as our family mourned the loss of Steve's mother, Katie Savides. After such a short time among you, the depth of your friendship was very moving and meaningful to us. God bless each of you. God has certainly blessed us through you and your loving concern!

*Steve and Dee Savides*

### **BEST WISHES TO PASTOR ROBIN**

Please keep in your prayers Pastor Robin Reed. As you have already heard, Pastor Robin resigned as our Interim Minister for Children, Youth, and Families on December 11<sup>th</sup>. We thank God for Robin's caring spirit and pray for God's guidance and blessing on her future ministry.

### **2007 CONTRIBUTIONS**

All contributions for the 2007 calendar year must be received at church by **December 31, 2007**. We cannot backdate any contributions. If you want to insure that your church contribution will be credited to the 2007 taxable year, then please make sure it arrives at the church by year end. Contributions received after December 31<sup>st</sup> will be credited to the 2008 tax year. If you have any questions, please contact our Church Administrator, Gene Sinner, at 733-7393. Thank you for your cooperation and continued generosity.

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**SUNDAY  
JANUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2008**

## JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

If you have particular joys or concerns that you would like lifted up please call Pastor Jane Anderson.

### Those who need our prayers:

Katie Behl  
Myrtle Bellis  
Charlotte Boone  
Trish Brehm's father  
Esther Bruyette  
Janice Carroll's father, Sylvester Sawicki  
Arlene Danz  
The family of Elaine Foth on her death  
Steve Furstenberg  
Kris Glenn's mother, Diane Otto  
Jean Harkins  
Carol Huebner  
Ethel Jesse  
Judy Kaddatz  
Anne Karch's parents, Fred and Carol Sontag  
Glenn Knaack  
The Kratzer family on the death of Carl  
Glen Lemmert's mother, Kathy  
Susan Livengood's father, Bill Yost  
Richard Miller's son-in-law, Rick Kramer  
Marilee Minahan  
Sarah Paul  
Bill Platt's cousin, Charlie  
Rev. Cathey Rennick  
Susan Robertson's nephew, Mark Andree  
Mike Ross  
Bob Scheer  
Maxine Smith  
Spiegelberg family  
Joyce Spurlock  
David Strom  
Joyce Winkler, friend of Mark Yonan  
Helen Wright  
Carol Yonan

### EMERGENCY SHELTER OPPORTUNITY

First Congregational will be serving dinner at the Emergency Shelter on Monday, December 31, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please sign up on the form in the Narthex at the Outreach Table.

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE  
OF THE OPEN DOOR IS 9:00 A.M. ON  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2007.**

My thanks go out to our dedicated Sanctuary Choir in their weekly worship commitment, as well as the extra preparation time to present the *Christmas Oratorio* on Dec. 9. We are blessed by our gifted adult volunteer singers and Music Scholars, as was again evident in the beauty of that morning.

My thanks go out to our new children's choir families for their faithfulness in attending rehearsals, as well as their spirited offering on the weekend of the season's first big snowfall. Some singers from the choir will be singing on Christmas Eve, too, (4:00 p.m. service); more new singers (grades 2-6) are invited to join us in January as we work toward a spring musical presentation in March.

My thanks go out to our new middle school handbell families, and their willingness to take the time in their busy schedules to participate in weekly rehearsals and ringing in worship.

My thanks go out to my dedicated colleagues on the church staff, as well our volunteer adult instrumentalists and handbell directors, for their shared gifts and encouragement in a time of so many new beginnings at First Congregational.

And my thanks go out to YOU -- the congregation and friends of First Congregational -- for your continued support of our music ministry.

*A most Blessed Christmas to you and yours!*

John Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

### THE GIVING TREE

#### A Girl Scout Gold Award Project

From November 26<sup>th</sup> through December 27<sup>th</sup>, you will see a small, artificial tree laden with hand-made ornaments. This is the *Giving Tree*, a project put together by a Girl Scout of the Fox Valley. It was the idea of the Girl Scout to facilitate an effective system of donation which focuses on a specific aspect of the Emergency Shelter's needs, food costs. Trees such as the one in the Narthex are being placed in churches all over the Fox Valley. On the back of the tree's ornaments are labels indicating an amount of money to be bought in the form of a grocery store gift card. These gift cards will be mailed to the Emergency Shelter and used to buy groceries. Please feel free to visit the *Giving Tree* and select an ornament. Thank you for your support!



### **A GIFT OF STOCK**

If you are going to make a gift of stock to the church, it is important to notify Gene Sinner, our Church Administrator, so he can follow up on the transaction. Normally, the donor name does NOT transfer with the stock transaction. Because of this, when we know what is coming ahead of time, it enables us to quickly identify whose donation it is. When making a gift of stock, here is the information you will need:

- Notify the Church Administrator of the impending transaction.
- Notify your broker that the gift is for First Congregational UCC, Appleton, WI and should be transferred to the church's account at Wedbush-Morgan Securities. Please contact Joan Walber at PDI Financial Group at 739-2303. PDI handles these transactions for the church. Account numbers you will need are:
  - First Congregational UCC account # 3241-6622
  - Wedbush-Morgan DTC #0103

If you have any questions, please contact Gene Sinner at the church for further information. The important thing is that we know about the donation **AHEAD** of time. Thank you for your cooperation and generosity!

### **MEMBER STATEMENTS**

Member contribution statements will be mailed in January. These statements will cover the January to December 2007 time period.

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TAX HELP**

Want to help people with special needs make sure they get their tax refund? Goodwill North Central Wisconsin is looking for 100 volunteers to help people with disabilities, those with low-to-moderate incomes and older taxpayers through VITA/TCE – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly. Volunteers are asked to commit a total of at least 20 hours between February 2 and April 15 at the Goodwill Community Center in Menasha. All training will be provided. Last year, the local program helped 1,638 people in need get federal refunds totaling more than \$1.2 million. Call Goodwill's Julie Lamers at 968-6872 by December 14 to sign up, or if you would like more information.

### **OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2008**



Please stop at the table in the narthex at your earliest convenience and pick up your new envelopes. Please do not use old envelopes. The number on the envelopes identifying your account may have changed.

### **THANK YOU !!!**

A Big Thank you to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Instrumentalists, and their families, for the two Prelude Concerts from the chapel on Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. Great ensemble sounds came from our young musicians to add to the Family Sunday Celebration—Bravo!