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Stephen P. Savides, Senior Pastor
Jane B. Anderson, Co-Pastor
Maynard E. Beemer, Pastor Emeritus
Karon Sandberg, Seminary Intern
Gene Sinner, Church Administrator

Kara J. Woodford, Director for Children's Ministries
Maja Glidden, Interim High School Coordinator
Deb Burich, Director for Volunteer Ministries
John M. Albrecht, Director for Music Ministries
Jon D. Riehle, Organist

SCHEDULE OF WORSHIP

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3—MID-WEEK ADVENT SERVICE

7:00 p.m. CHAPEL.

Meditation Rev. Jane Anderson
Pianist Joan Jensen
Flutist Jane Bent

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6—SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

COMMUNION SUNDAY—CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA PRESENTATIONS IN WORSHIP

8:45 and 10:45 a.m.

THE SEVEN JOYS OF CHRISTMAS by Kirke Mechem, and THE DREAM
ISAIAH SAW by Glenn Rudolph, scored for Choir, Soloists, Chamber Orchestra,
Harp, Organ and Percussion.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10—MID-WEEK ADVENT SERVICE

7:00 p.m. CHAPEL.

Meditation Rev. Steve Savides
Music Joan Jensen and Instrumentalists

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2009—THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8:45 and 10:30 a.m.

Meditation Rev. Jane Anderson
Meditation Title "Nowhere to Lay His Head"
Scripture Readings Luke 9:57-62; Luke 3:7-18; Isaiah 12:2-6
Music: 8:45 a.m. The First Cong. Children's Choir; Vocal Quartet; Instrumentalist
10:30 a.m. The Sanctuary Choir; Instrumentalist

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17—MID-WEEK ADVENT SERVICE

7:00 p.m. CHAPEL.

Meditation Karon Sandberg, Seminary Intern
Music Joan Jensen and Instrumentalists

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2009—FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8:45 and 10:30 a.m. CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM;
Middle School Orchestra; Youth Handbells



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord

Dear Friends,

Sunday, November 29th, marked the beginning of Advent, a season to prepare our hearts, minds and lives to receive the Christ-child. Many people over the years have asked me “Just how do you do that?” There are no definitive answers, but here are some ways that I have found helpful over the years *to make room* for the Christ-child to be born, a babe who wasn’t even given that dignity as he started out his young life.

- 1) Unclutter your home – Take time to unclutter your home, to make room for the unexpected guest, the one who may need a place to stay. Now that my daughter has flown the coop, I try to keep a guest room ready and available for the unexpected but most welcomed guest. Last week, a friend and clergy colleague of mine from out of town, asked if she could stay if needed as her mother was taken unexpectedly into hospital, late one night. Fortunately, the room was already prepared. I put out fresh towels and a spare new toothbrush for her for whenever she arrived. She didn’t end up needing the room, but it was there for her, or anyone else who may unexpectedly need such hospitality. Prepare ye the way of the Lord by uncluttering our lives to receive the unexpected but most welcome visitors as guests in the household of God.
- 2) Unclutter your life – So often our holiday season is jammed pack full of activity—parties, shopping, decorating, baking, etc. that there is no time to simply be; be at one with God, be in communion with Christ, be led by the Holy Spirit to the kind of activity that most honors the season of waiting for the Christ-child to arrive. During this Advent season I try to unclutter my life, to make room for time of prayer and contemplation—more than my quick 15 minute devotions every morning and evening. This Advent season we are offering three contemplative candlelight worship services on Thursday nights in the

chapel. These 45 minute worship services may enrich your Advent experience, helping you to unclutter your life of the frenetic fast-paced preparations and give you an opportunity to prepare the way of the Lord by making room for prayer.

- 3) Unfriend the chaos of consumerism – “Unfriend” is the word of the year referring, of course, to choosing to no longer allow an individual to be your friend on Facebook. I suggest, however, that we prepare the way of the Lord by ‘unfriending’ the chaos of consumerism. In this holiday season, people will spend an average of \$700.00 on items, many of which will not be needed, to give as gifts to others. Give alternative gifts, the gifts that are needed to those who are hungry, homeless, helpless, in prison, in poverty, whose lives are chaotic because of the multitude of need. Unfriend consumerism and befriend someone who really needs your gifts. Befriend your friends with love and grace and may that love and grace befriend someone unexpectedly—a welcome surprise in a world that often turns away from real hurt and need.

These are just a few of the ways we may want to prepare our lives for the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I invite you to share with all of us your intentions and stories preparing for the birth of the Christ-child in your life by writing to us on Facebook or dropping us an e-mail. We will all be blessed by your sharing.

May you enjoy a blessed Advent Season!

Peace and Love,

Pastor Jane

**SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP IS
BROADCAST OVER RADIO STATION
WECB 104.3 FM AT 8:40 A.M.**

CHRISTMAS EVE CALENDAR



- 2:00 p.m.** Family Service with our Organ Scholars
- 4:00 p.m.** Family Service with Children's Choir and our Organ Scholars
- 7:00 p.m.** Carols by Candlelight with Chamber Ensembles
- 10:00 p.m.** Lessons, Carols and Communion with the Sanctuary Choir, and Instrumentalists

CHURCH SCHOOL SHARING PROJECT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

Please help your children to select gifts of food or new toys that will be appropriate to donate to The Salvation Army. Actually, the whole congregation is invited to be a part of our giving and may place their items in the box near the Sanctuary doors.



As you select items you may want to consider the needs of teenagers. Appropriate items for them could include backpacks, jewelry, purses, basketballs, Packer items, nail polish, hair dryers, curling irons, walkman, and CD's. Newborns need clothes and blankets. Food items in demand are instant potatoes, pasta, rice, cereal, toilet tissue, tuna, peanut butter, jelly, and pancake mix. A hint to parents of younger children: It may be easier for your child to part with their gift if they are giving something a teenager could use. Younger children may also understand the idea of giving better if they help tie a ribbon around their unwrapped gift. These gifts will be collected at the time of the children's sermon and distributed to needy children in our area by the Salvation Army.

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
OF THE OPEN DOOR IS 9:00 A.M. ON
MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2009.**

MUSIC NOTES

From Director For Music Ministries, John Albrecht

Mark your calendars for this Sunday, December 6, when our Sanctuary Choir and a chamber orchestra present two works in both services: *The Dream Isaiah Saw* by Glenn Rudolph, and *The Seven Joys of Christmas* by Kirke Mechem. Both works are sung in English, and celebrate our entry into these festive seasons of Advent and Christmas. Janet Sutter will serve as concert master, and First Congregational member Sunny Link will be our harpist. Soloists include member Karen Leigh-Post of the LU Conservatory faculty, and Cassie Glaeser, an LU Music Scholar.

Do you enjoy Christmas caroling? Mark your calendars for our *All-Church Caroling and Cocoa* event on Sunday, December 13 from 3:00–5:00 p.m. This event is open to all ages as groups of singers (and ringers) go out into the community (homebound, care facilities) to share carols with friends and members. We gather in the narthex, split up into different caroling groups to cover certain areas of town, and then re-gather for refreshments in the Fellowship Hall around 4:45 p.m. Please sign-up in the narthex to give us some idea of how many to expect.

Our Middle School Orchestra will again be preparing music for the Christmas Season. Rehearsals are Wednesdays, December 2, 9, and 16, from 7:30–8:30 p.m. at the church. Dress rehearsal is Saturday, December 19 (time TBA), and we play before the 8:45 a.m. service and between services on Sunday, December 20. (See the web for more details). Please contact Beth Vercouteren at 735-0741 to register.

Christmas Eve at First Congregational brings together singers and instrumentalists from far and near. Additional singers and instrumentalists are still welcome; please contact John Albrecht at ext. 230 (or jalbrecht@firstcongoappleton.org) with your interests!

ALL CONGREGATIONAL GAME NIGHT

Announcing an "All Congregational Game Night" with supper and games for all ages and interests. Saturday, January 30, Church Fellowship Hall. Grab a new 2010 calendar and Save the Date.



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Wanda Beemer
Heather Genke Bogacz
Judy Bowman
The Danz family on the death of Bruce's father,
Ellworth
Karen Laws
Nancy Lee Carter's father, Lee
Ingrid Fields
Alden Grade
Paul Grube's sister-in-law, Connie
Carol Huebner
Mary Hamlin
Candi Koenigs, friend of Deb Burich
Carla Oudenhoven and family on the death of
Dennis
Donald Phillips, father of Rick Phillips
The Sanders family on the death of Shirley's
mother, Leona Zwicky
The Skran/Duncomb family on the death of
Dena's father
JoAnn Shropshire
Ruth Reineck
Trina Reynolds
Phyllis Trunk
Larry Tuttle
The Waters family on the death of Chris
The Westen family on the death of Adam

CONTINUING PRAYERS:

Dee Abts' mother
Katie Behl
Cheryl Benzschawel's father
Evelyn Gelbke
Steve Furstenberg
Ken Geiger
Tony Grade's father
Sue Hasz's nephew
Barry Helms
Jean Harkins
Ethel Jesse
Sam Johnson
Judy Kaddatz
Tammy Nelson's mother, Jacki Krause
Richard Miller's son-in-law, Rick Kramer
James Marsh, father of Mae Van Driest
Bette Schmidt
Joyce Spurlock
Mya Wardle, daughter of Brian and Lecia
Wardle
Melba Webster, grandmother of Rhonda
Vanden Boogaard
Helen Wright

DECORATIONS FOR THE ADVENT SEASON

Please help fill the Sanctuary with color and celebration this Advent Season. The Flower Committee will be performing their magic and decorating the church for the festive season of Advent. Please take this opportunity to reflect and rejoice for the many blessings you have received with a gift to the Advent Display. Donations can be made in memory or in honor of a loved one or to celebrate a special moment in your life. Suggested donation is \$15.00. Contributors to the display will appear in the bulletin on Family Sunday, December 20th, along with their special message. Call the church office to sign up.



BRYAN SIRCHIO CONCERT

The high school youth group is hosting Bryan Sirchio in Concert on December 4th at 6:30 p.m. Bryan is a wonderful song writer and singer. Bryan has been to First Congregational on several occasions and we are excited to have him here again. **ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.** Please mark this on your calendars. It will be a great family fun night!

2009 CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions received by December 31, 2009, will be credited to the 2009 tax year. ***Any contributions received after December 31, 2009, will be credited to the 2010 tax year.*** If it is important for us to receive your contribution for the 2009 tax year, please do not wait until the last minute. Anytime in early or mid December are good times to send in that special gift. Thanks so much for your generosity! We truly appreciate it and thank God for these blessings!!

CHRISTIANS IN A CONSUMING CULTURE

We hope you will join us in our next discussion at *Christians in a Consuming Culture* discussion group Sunday, December 6, from 10:00-11:00 a.m. Our topic will be "Abundance versus Scarcity: How do we think and act regarding our blessings? No need to prepare, just show up and connect with friends seeking to live out their faith in a world with very different priorities.

MILLIKIN CHORAL CONCERT!

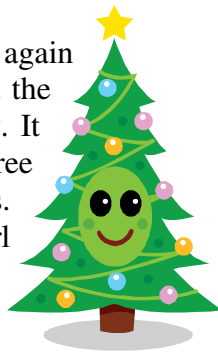
The Millikin University Choir will present a concert at First Congregational United Church of Christ on Sunday, January 10th, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

The choir, from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois will perform as part of its annual winter tour, showcasing its reputation for innovative programming and tonal variety with repertoire spanning five centuries. The choir owns an extensive touring history that includes performances all over the world. Their recent appearance at the National Convention of the American Choral Director's Association garnered new attention to the choir's approach to choral excellence.

Our own Mark Yonan is an alum of Millikin and is coordinating this very exciting event. We need host families to house two or four students over night. If you are able to participate please contact the church office or contact Mark Yonan directly.

VISIT THE GIVING TREE

The Giving Tree will once again take its place in the narthex to benefit the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley. It is a small table top Christmas tree decorated with ornament/gift card tags. This program was initiated by a girl scout from our church. Her hope was to offset one of the Emergency Shelter's greatest costs, food.



Those wishing to participate should remove an ornament from the tree. A label attached on the back will indicate an amount to be purchased in the form of a grocery store gift card. Please purchase the gift card at any grocery store, mark the back with the amount. Return the gift card to the Giving Tree's drop box located on the table next to the tree. A volunteer will make sure the cards get to the Emergency Shelter.

HOW MANY WAYS TO GIVE?

Did you know that there are several different ways you can give to our church? Of course we have our envelopes and our checks, but there are some easier ways to donate or pay on your pledge than those. Our website www.firstcongoappleton.org has a "Contribute" button on the first (home) page of our website. By using this button, you will be taken to a secure site to make your contribution. Another way of contributing on a regular basis is through our automatic withdrawal program. By completing a simple form through our church, a predetermined

amount can be withdrawn from your bank account each month. You can select mid-month or end-month withdrawals and you can stop it at anytime in case your situation changes. These electronic forms of giving enable your congregation to have a steady source of income, while simplifying your own life by making it automatic! If you want to start automatic withdrawals, or have any questions, please contact our Church Administrator, Gene Sinner, for details. If you use the web site "Contribute" button, there is nothing to fill out ahead of time. Just click on the button! What could be easier?

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. PFI handles these transactions for the church. Account numbers you will need are:
 - First Congregational UCC account # 3241-66221
 - 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.

PLEDGE CARDS ARE DUE

If you have not yet turned in a pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. It is one of the only ways our church has to determine what our income will be for the coming 2010 fiscal year. Pledge revenue is our largest and most important income. It is larger than all other sources combined! So, when there is a dip in pledges, our church feels its impact. Thank you for your continued generosity to the ministries of this church!