

*Welcome to The Church of the Open Door.
Our door is open to you at whatever point you are in your journey of faith.*

Donating to First Congregational UCC

If you are enrolled in automatic contributions, you may still participate in the weekly offering by submitting a Giving Card, found in the pews. Pledge cards are available in the pews and may be placed in the offering plates at any time. Checks can also be mailed to the church.

You are also invited to donate via virtual offering. Please visit our webpage and click “Give” to make your weekly offering, or text FCUCC GIVE to 73256.

References to God

References to God in traditional prayers, readings, and hymns in our worship may sometimes be gender specific. As we pray and sing together, you are invited to substitute terms that reflect your understanding of the full inclusiveness of the spirit of God.

Land Acknowledgement

Our church is located on the ancestral homelands of the Menominee Nation. We acknowledge this indigenous community who stewarded this land throughout the generations and pay respect to their elders past and present.

Online Streaming and Podcasting

You can watch a live stream of First Congo services on [Facebook.com/FCUCCAppleton](https://www.facebook.com/FCUCCAppleton) or at: www.firstcongoappleton.org/worship-with-us/livestream.

Video recordings of our live stream services can be found at:
www.firstcongoappleton.org/worship-with-us/previous-livestream-services/

Written transcripts of the sermon can be downloaded at:
www.firstcongoappleton.org/worship-with-us/sermon-transcripts/

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25, 2022

9:30 AM

Rev. Dr. Susan Cartmell, Interim Senior Pastor
Rev. Nicholas J. Hatch, Pastor for Youth and Family Ministries
Pastor Mary Jo Laabs, Interim Associate Minister for Congregational Life

PRELUDE

Music of Christmas

Various

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organ*

RINGING OF CHURCH BELL

*WELCOME

*OPENING PRAYER (in unison)

Almighty God, you have wondrously revealed yourself in Holy Child of Bethlehem. By faith we kneel beside the manger-throne, hoping that somehow he will be born in us here and now. For Jesus Sake, grant that we may share in a new birth of faith. Teach us to recognize your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the realm of your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.

*OPENING CAROL #158

Good Christians All, Rejoice

IN DULCI JUBILO

SCRIPTURE READING

A Living Reading of Psalm 98

One: It's a lot to ask of a baby, isn't it -
even one who has been foretold, even one
whose parents took the word of angels -

**All: to be the savior we've longed for
all these lonely years.**

One: Shivering, we wait around the manger
beside the woman who risked it all,
who heard God's word and was glad of it,
only to end up in a drafty barn,
resting with animals and shepherds

**All: and the expectations of countless generations
swaddled and silent in her arms.**

One: Beside her stands the man who believed
a dream is real enough to stake a life on, a future, his reputation –

All: all on the ask of an angel who came while he slept.

One: He put it all into God's hands,
himself, this baby, and the woman
he pledged to marry.

**All: We are less welcome than the shepherds,
less than the little drummer boy
(and he was very unwelcome that first night),**

One: not because God's grace is withheld from us,
but because we don't take what is offered.

**All: We turn from the stable as empty handed
as the Magi, desperate for another road home.**

One: There is no other way though, no way to go but through,
where the fear lives, and where we must challenge

**All: those who want to strike down all that is good
before it has even begun.**

One: There is only this: faith in those frightening dreams of angels;

**All: hope in the desperate faces we turn from on the street and in the
mirror;**

One: joy in the strident necessary cries of babies; and love
in the face of all that seems wrong.

**All: It's a lot to ask of ourselves, isn't it,
to be as brave as the stories we tell?**

One: But after all, every character was once
born, like you, and like me, with no idea what might happen next.

*CAROL #153

What Child Is This, Who, Laid to Rest

GREENSLEEVES

BEHIND THE HYMN

“I Wonder as I Wander”

Rev. Nick Hatch

*CAROL # 156

I Wonder as I Wander

I WONDER AS I WANDER

INVITATION TO OFFERING

MUSICAL REFLECTION

Ave Maria

Bach/Gounod

Dylan Schang, *tenor*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. . .*

(During this time, you are invited to a virtual offering. Please visit our webpage and click “Give” to make your weekly offering, or text FCUCC GIVE to 73256).

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*CAROL #141 (ST. 1 & 2, ONLY)

The First Nowell

THE FIRST NOWELL

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

(You are welcome to submit your prayer requests throughout the week to the church office, email to a pastor for confidentiality.)

THE LORD’S PRAYER (In unison)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

***CLOSING CAROL #160**

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

SPIRITUAL

***CLOSING LITANY**

Leader: We gather from near and far, some of us surrounded by family and others feeling alone.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Leader: We gather as individuals who are feeling content with what we have and as people who are worried that there is not enough.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Leader: We gather, remembering Christmases of the past and wishing for the same memories to become a reality for today.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Leader: We gather, and we want to praise you. We want to see your light.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Leader: Your light is shining, Holy God. Your light has come.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

People: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never ever overcome this light.

***BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729 (In Sweet Rejoicing)

J. S. Bach

TODAY'S MUSICIANS

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organist*

Dylan Schang, *tenor*

John M. Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

The church office will be closed Monday, December 26 and Tuesday, December 27.

In order to receive a tax credit on church donations for the 2022 year, all contributions must be received in the church office by 3:00 PM on Thursday, December 29 or postmarked by December 31



JOYS AND CONCERNS OF OUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Members of our church family benefit from our prayers, support, and words of encouragement as they celebrate special times or struggle with difficulties in their lives. Please keep these people in your prayers and greet them with a loving word when you see them.

If you are in the hospital, please let the church know, as we are not always notified. In cases of a pastoral emergency, please call (920) 810-2600.

Jill Anthony
Jill Anthony's sister
Jill Anthony's nephew, Darryl
Scott Baehman
Valerie Bales
Sherry Bassett
Paul Bauman
Katie Behl
Barbara Ann Behl, Katie's sister
Aidan Bero
Nicholas Breitzman
Clair Brown
Don Brittnacher
Judy Burdick, Megan Burdick-Grade's mother
Dick Casperson
Steve Chapin
Colton and Misty, friends of Trudy Reilly
Lynn Cook
Dani, Fred's sister-in-law
Jim Edwards
Rachel Edwards
Heidi Mendonca Erstad
Erstad family friend, Silas and his family
Friend of Pat Severin
David Galow
Steve Gehrt, son of Esther
Ken Geiger
Dylan Glick
Norm Goodacre and family
Micki Guyette and her family
Margaret Hankwitz
Judy Hanson
Ted Healey, father of Sue Toussaint

Maggie Hendrick
Ken Hocking
Carol Huddleston and family
Larri Jacquart, daughter of Helen Wilson
Jean Jepson
Ray Johnson
Nancy Kandler
Rick Kramer, Richard Miller's son-in law
Family of Matt and Leslie Michelic upon the death of Matt's mom
Gerald Otto, brother of Stephen Otto
Family of Bill Radke upon his death
Sharon Radke
Steve Reinkober, brother of Chris Brittnacher
Aria Arthur Schmidt, grandson of Julie Schaller-Schmidt and John Schmidt
Jan Scheibe
Larry Schiedermayer
Pat Severin
Mike Seymour's mom, Debbie
Paul Siket
Mark Spindler
Cole Stoffel
Debra Stoner
Gloria Tate
Jack Thiel
Peter Thiel
James Totzke
Jean Van Wagenin
Mya Wardle, Brian and Lecia Wardle's daughter
Diane White

THE OPEN DOOR

December 25, 2022

“Amazing Peace” A Christmas Poem by Dr. Maya Angelou

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
Over unprotected villages.
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.
What have we done to so affront nature?
We worry God.
Are you there? Are you there really?
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,
Come the way of friendship.

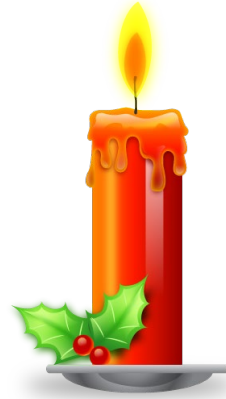
It is the Glad Season.
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.
Flood waters recede into memory.
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us
As we make our way to higher ground.

Hope is born again in the faces of children
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.

At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is Peace.

It is loud now. It is louder.
Louder than the explosion of bombs.



We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for.
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.

Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you, to stay a while with us.
So we may learn by your shimmering light
How to look beyond complexion and see community.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.

On this platform of peace, we can create a language
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ
Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.

— Maya Angelou (2005)

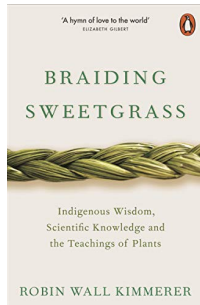
Congregational Life

*Embracing God, welcoming others,
knowing ourselves*

Chrysalis' New Book for the New Year: Join Us!

Do you want a new year's resolution that you are most certain to reach your goal?

If so, join the Chrysalis group for the reading of the book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer.



The spiritual formation group, Chrysalis, meets twice a month on the first and third Tuesdays at 1:00 PM in the Upper Lounge. They will start their new book and discussion January 3 with Pastor Mary Jo leading the discussion time. Additional questions can be directed to Trish Brehm trishbrehm@yahoo.com or Sheryl De Hart tdehart@new.rr.com. Come and share your thoughts as we discuss the book together and reach a new year's resolution as a group together.

Outdoor Fun and Fellowship and IPAC present...

We're O.F.F. to the Trout Museum of Art Sunday, January 8.

Sunday, January 8 is the last day of the *Reclaiming Identity* exhibit, guest curated by Dakota Mace.

In *Reclaiming Identity*, Indigenous artists from across the U.S. and Mexico tell

stories of identity and share what it means to take control and preserve their culture.

Meet in the lobby of the Trout Museum, 111 W. College Ave., at 1:00 PM (\$10 daily admission or \$15 annual.)

We'll walk to the Copper Rock Coffeehouse afterwards to talk about what we saw and thought.

Contact Nancy Brown-Koeller at (715) 853-6625.



Worship and Music

*A diverse community practicing faith,
finding spiritual connection and experiencing
the Holy through artful sound*

Come Serve in Music Ministry!

You are invited to make music, celebrating the joy we share in Christ!

Please contact John Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*, at 920-851-8097 or jalbrecht@firstcongoappleton.org with questions or to register.

Sanctuary Choir (high school - adults)
Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 PM

Youth Handbells (grades 7-12)
Wednesdays, 5:45-6:25 PM

Children's Choir (grades 2-6)
Sundays, 10:45-11:30 AM

LU Music Scholars (college)
Sundays, 5:00-6:00 PM

Mission and Service

*Building relationships, serving others,
pursuing justice*

Monthly Meal Serving at Pillars

Thursday, January 5

Start the New Year out right by helping to prepare and serve a meal at Pillars Adult Shelter on Thursday, January 5.

Or sign up to provide some of the needed ingredients - a kitchen is a great place to get to know each other, and the FCUCC volunteers are great people to get to know!

For questions or help signing up through the Google link below, contact Shelley Nulton at snulton@att.net or 920-202-4419.

Sign up at:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eJXNfPb2Lw_1ndBQvMBnCb4DQVlyPW1mLwoHH5tYsXI/edit?usp=sharing



2023 Back Bay Mission Trip

The 2023 Back Bay Mission Trip is scheduled for March 26 - April 1, 2023.

Please email kjahnke@new.rr.com or call Ken at (920) 427-5996 to register.

Ken will be available after worship service on both the 11 and 18 to answer questions about the trip. He would like to have the number of people who will be going on the trip by January 15 so he can give Back Bay an estimate.

The cost of the trip is \$250 per person, made payable to Back Bay Mission upon arrival on March 26. There will be additional costs for food and travel to go to Biloxi, Mississippi.

Back Bay Shrimp Sale

A big thank you goes out to everyone who made a purchase at the Back Bay Mission shrimp sale. Kathy Head was the winner of the Christmas gift basket drawing.

Donations for Back Bay Mission

The status at the Mission is difficult. Donations are down and need is up. Their Food Pantry usage has increased by 70% in 2022. As a result, they reduced the number of Christmas backpacks given to their homeless population and reduced the number of Christmas meal baskets given to families with food shortages.

If you can donate to Back Bay, your gift will be matched through the end of the year by Back Bay Mission volunteers, up to \$10,000. Send checks to church or use Realm, indicating Back Bay Mission in the memo line. Thank you.

Administration

Thank You from Carolyn

Thank you to all for the lovely tribute and celebration last Sunday! The flowers are gorgeous and the Uncle Mike's Kringle was delicious! I hope everyone enjoyed a piece of cake. You have made this time of transition to retirement very special. After Christmas I plan to take some time away from church until spring, just to give everyone time to get used to me not being on staff and available to help with issues you might have. Please be patient with the new staff as they navigate all that I used to do in the office. They will be great but remember they don't have the years of experience in the office and with you that I had.

Thanks again for everything...the love, support, patience, grace, etc. This is not goodbye. I'm just going to take time away before being "*just a member*" again.

- Carolyn Frederick



BEWARE Scam Emails!

We have again been alerted by members of the congregation that they have received an email from the Interim Senior Pastor asking them for a request. The email continues by asking you to purchase gift cards in various denominations and then get back to her with the numbers on those cards.

NO pastor or other staff member of First Congregational will ever contact you to purchase gift cards for them. If you are ever unsure, please contact the church office at (920) 733-7393 before making a gift card purchase.

Calendar for December 25 –December 31

Sunday, December 25

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Worship – *Sanctuary*

First Things First AA Meeting – *Fellowship Hall*

Monday, December 26

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

OFFICE CLOSED

Fox Valley Flute Choir - *Sanctuary*

Tuesday, December 27

6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

7:45 PM – 8:45 PM

OFFICE CLOSED

Living Sober AA Group – *Common Grounds*

Fireside AA Group - *Common Grounds*

Wednesday, December 28

12:15 PM – 1:00 PM

Loving Acceptance Meditation Group – *Upper Lounge*

Thursday, December 29

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

AA – Search for Serenity Group – *Common Grounds*

Fox Valley 94 AA – *Common Grounds*

Friday, December 30

7:00 PM – 8:45 PM

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

N.A. – *Common Grounds*

Al-Anon – *Upper Lounge*

Saturday, December 31

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Fox Valley 94 AA – *Common Grounds*