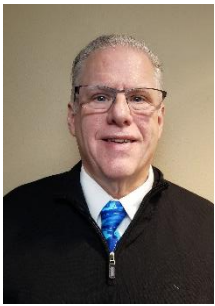


The Hilltop Chimes

FEBRUARY 2023

First Congregational United Church of Christ
120 Kuckkan Lane Watertown, WI 53094
Rev. Dr. Bob Gross, Interim Pastor

Contact Information:
Phone/Fax: 920-261-6213
Pastor's email: gbross@firstcongwtn.org



From the Pastor's Desk

Saying "good-bye" has never been easy for me, especially leaving such a vibrant community of faith. And yet, this is my last newsletter and so it's time to say "good-bye." I thought to use this space to tell you how I feel.

First, I am overjoyed about the news that you have unanimously called the Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross as your next settled pastor. Woohoo! This is an important step for a congregation in transition. May this be the beginning of a long and happy partnership that continues and expands the ministry of Christ in Watertown and beyond as you move into God's preferred future.

Secondly, I am sad to be leaving you. My time with you has been a gift to me. Some of you know that I had hoped to be here for at least four more months, to see our Confirmands through to their Confirmation. Alas, not my will, but God's be done.

We've accomplished a lot in the last five months. Together we have seen the post-covid rebound begin to happen. The choir has returned to the chancel, the Hilltop Players have enhanced our worship, and we've made significant strides towards updating the church constitution. Several of us gathered weekly on Zoom to explore Rachel Held Evans' book, *Inspired*, followed by a four-week study of *The Angels of Christmas*. With the start of the new year, we began a 12-week study, *Saving Jesus Redux*, adding an in-person group on Thursday evenings. While we remain cautious and mask affirming, we hosted the First Brigade Band, had a Wing Night, and a Mac & Cheese and Chili

Cookoff. Our worship was enhanced with the *Angels Among Us* series, we renewed our Baptismal Vows, and – beginning this coming Sunday – have returned to Communion by coming forward for intinction. All the while, we've progressed toward a 25% increase in worship attendance.

It's been great and it's time for both of us to move on. I will be leading worship throughout February and hope to offer you parting greetings in person.

I will remain apart from the congregation for at least a year. If our paths should cross, I will be happy to see you, but I will no longer be your pastor. I may inquire about your general wellbeing, and chat about anything except the church. I need to step away so that the one who follows can become and remain your Pastor.

I am confident our paths will cross. Did you know that I served on the Conference Board of Directors with Rob Harms six years ago? That I first met Melissa Mattke and shared a dorm room with Kevin Driessen at a Regional Youth Event five years ago?

I look forward to the day, perhaps in a year, or three, when I hope to return for a visit, to sit beside you in the pew, listen to a great sermon by your pastor, and to be nurtured by the worship experience. Then spend some time at Coffee Fellowship listening to your stories about all the wonderful ways, with your next pastor, you are engaging God's mission in the world. May it be so!

On the journey,

--Pastor Bob, Interim Minister

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

From the Search Committee and Council:

On Sunday, January 29th Rev. Dr. Chris Ross lead our worship service. Afterwards the congregation voted unanimously to call him to be our new pastor. (53 voting member were present .) He will begin his ministry on Wednesday, March 1st.

From Interim Church Council:

Sunday, February 12th, 2023

You are invited to our Annual Meeting at 11:00 am.

We encourage all active members to join in to approve our annual report.

The reports are available starting Sunday, February 5th. Please have your copy on hand for the meeting.

---Tom Rusch, Moderator

Join Us for Worship



Sunday, February 5th:

10 a.m. Worship service

(Holy communion)

We are an open communion church, ALL are welcome to partake. We will come forward for the elements. Pastor will serve you the bread and you will dip it in the cup (Intinction).

****Coffee Hour follows the service.**

Sunday, February 12th:

10 a.m. Worship service.

Congregational Annual Meeting after service

Sunday, February 19th:

10 a.m. Worship service

Coffee Fellowship follows the service.

February 5th: Ash Wednesday:

7 p.m.. Worship service

Sunday, February 26th:

10 a.m. Worship service – Service of Farewell to Pastor Bob Gross on his last Sunday with us.



Juanita Edington

c.920-988-2416/h.206-6111

jaemusiclover@gmail.com

Notes from the Music Director

If you like to sing and wish to help rebuild our choir, we are meeting weekly at 9 a.m. on Sundays including January 1, 2023. You are welcome to join us at any time, and drop-ins are welcome. Now that we have been singing so regularly, we will plan to sing an anthem most Sundays.

I want to thank Tom Rusch for his accompaniment of hymns and weekly selections of keyboard music. We welcomed guest singer, Sarah Gross again on Jan. 1st.

Tech Opportunities

Have you been a videographer for church in the past? Would you be willing to run the camera during the service? The responsibilities are easier than in the past as you merely need to run the camera and keep an ear out for microphone adjustments. Currently, no uploading, editing, or converting to DVD is needed as that is being done with some enhancements.

Print information such as hymn lyrics, bulletin outline, scripture readings, music information, and responses are added before uploading to Vimeo. I do this at my home and then get the link out to the cable station and church office, and finally create a DVD that is shared with Marquardt Health Center before coming back to be filed in the church archives.

Thank you to Dale Bakke, Bill Edington, and Melissa Mattke who recorded during January.

Please contact me if you are interested and when you are available. Training on the new camera is available. Thanks.

Gingerbread Preschool & Childcare

We are continuing to grow here at Gingerbread. Our enrollment is now at 33, up from 6 kiddos on September 1st!

Jefferson and Dodge counties are both considered to be in a childcare desert. This means that there is only one childcare spot for every 3 children that need childcare.

It has been a vision of Gingerbread to open our license to start accepting children under the age of two years old. To that end, we have been discussing possible renovation to the Sunday school rooms to make them available for shared use between Gingerbread and the church.

A task force was formed made up of Melissa, Gingerbread program director; Barb Lottmann, Gingerbread board chair; Adam Markus, Trustees chair; Rob Harms, Trustee; Tom Rusch, Moderator; Dale Bakke, former moderator; and Pastor Bob.

Gingerbread hired MSI General (the architectural company that built the new addition to the church in 2000) as consultants to work with the task force on this endeavor.

Both Gingerbread and the church leadership see this as a benefit to the community by offering the opportunity for families to bring infants and toddlers for quality childcare. We are excited about this possibility.

Stay tuned for more information!!

Gingerbread Phone: 920-261-9727

Email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com

Website: www.gingerbreadchildcare.com

Chili - Mac N Cheese Cook-Off

Update from Fellowship team:

Chili and Mac N cheese cook off for 2023 was a huge hit! We had 9 chilis and 4 Mac entries. Lots of delicious food shared with great company.

Congratulations to the winners Dale Bakke and Fran Milburn (Chili) and Danica Uttke (Mac N Cheese).

A very big thank you to all who brought food and who assisted in set up and clean up!

Saturday February 11th

BOOK, MAGAZINE, MEDIA SALE IN FELLOWSHIP HALL

Items: Books & Media of all kinds, magazines, movies, books on tape!

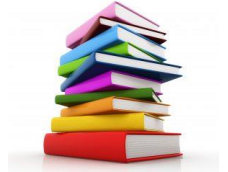
Time: from 9 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Proceeds go to the Bread Basket Pantry and Gingerbread Childcare Center.

Drop off at the church on Sundays or during office hours: Monday – Thursdays 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Set up will be Thursday, February 9th at 10 a.m.

Coordinator: Jennifer Rhodes



February Loose Coin Kennel Fund

The Watertown Humane Society is fundraising to renovate the dog kennels. They hope to complete this project within the next three years.

The shelter was built at its current location in 1998 and a major overhaul is necessary. The staff have identified several problems with the current kennel situation.

- * Difficulty with cleaning and sanitation has created unhealthy conditions for the dogs and the humans caring for them.
- * The housing units with the dogs facing each other creates kennel stress and aggression.
- * It also creates safety issues for the dogs and the volunteer canine companions.

The renovation will create a safer and healthier environment and enrich the lives of the dogs residing at the shelter. Pick up the Watertown Humane Society newsletter on the Narthex table for more information about this project.

Thank you for your generous support of the Watertown Humane Society.

Church contact: Barb Lottmann

Visit them on the website:

<https://www.whsadopt.org/>

Partnering for Mission and Giving
Exciting Opportunity to Help Your
Community!!

The Watertown Food Pantry, located in Immanuel Lutheran Church and **The Bread Basket Pantry**, located in the YMCA building in Watertown. These two amazing local resources are working together to serve the people of Watertown to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY HOURS ARE:

Mondays 10 a.m.- 12 p.m., Tuesdays 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., Wednesdays 12 p.m. - 2 p.m., Thursdays 1 p.m.-- 3 p.m. and Fridays 10 a.m. -12 p.m.

THE BREAD BASKET HOURS ARE:

Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Fridays 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Coats and winter clothing are especially needed. The Bread Basket also does mobile food pantries to Marquart Manor and other areas of town where people have a hard time with transportation.

WE SEEK YOUR PARTICIPATION AND

DONATION!! There are several ways to assist with this food insecurity mission.

- There is a shopping cart in the narthex with a list of items we will be collecting monthly. You are welcome to bring any food at any time but we will also have a targeted list of foods we want to focus on each month. All collected items will be split between the two pantries.
- *"You can donate monetarily by placing a check or cash donation in the offering plate using the **"Food Pantry + Bread Basket"** in the memo . "Make checks payable to "1st Cong UCC Watertown. " Any money collected will be use directly to serve the people who come to the food pantries. Again, the money will be split between the two pantries.*

Thank you for your help!!

Jennifer Bakke and Jennifer Rhodes

Pastor's Bible Study
Continues through
February 9th

Starting in January, Pastor Bob offered the "Saving Jesus Redux" video-based small group exploration of a credible Jesus for the third millennium.

The final study will conclude at the Thursday evening, February 9th group. We have wonderful conversations and look forward to what is in store when Rev. Chris Ross begins his ministry here.



From the Coordinator of Children
and Youth Ministries

Melissa Mattke

Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries
mmattke@firstcongwtn.org 920-261-6213
josc.mom@hotmail.com 262-719-1383

Sunday School:

We have been having fun meeting in person on Sunday mornings. We have been discussing "Being like Jesus". Loving, obeying and helping others. Next we will move on to a few lessons about King Solomon. We enjoy doing projects and playing games that work around our lesson of the day!

H2O Youth Group:

We are excited to start meeting on Tuesday nights (6-7:30) again this month! If anyone would like to donate food for us to eat, please let us know!



February Birthdays

02/02 Sarah Miller
 02/03 Kaycee Bocher
 02/05 Jason Schwager
 02/07 Zachariah Koch
 02/08 Troy Maas Jr
 02/10 Sean Driessen
 02/12 Robert Larson
 02/15 Juanita Edington
 02/18 Nicholas Bathke
 02/18 June Schroeder
 02/21 Sam Vogel
 02/23 Tucker Fremont
 02/25 Rebekah Wood
 02/27 Desiree Livermore

First Congregational UCC will take their turn helping with Bread & Roses on Thursday, February 2. We will provide dinner rolls and cookies for 250 folks. The confirmation class will individually wrap everything for this "carry out" food service.



How to Join Us for Worship

- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from lbentz@firstcongwtn.org
- 2) Our church's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-United-Church-of-Christ-118640148151341/>
- 3) Watertown Cable channel 985 broadcasts the Sunday service on Thursdays at 10 am and 5 pm and then again on the following Sunday at 6 pm.
- 4) Our new church website (see 'Media'): <https://firstcongwtn.org/> Services posted on Mondays

Financial Update – General Fund 12/31/2022

2022	BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	BUDGETED TOTAL INCOME	ACTUAL TOTAL INCOME	BUDGETED EXPENSES	ACTUAL EXPENSES	MONTH GAIN OR LOSS	YEAR GAIN OR LOSS
January	\$18,513	\$14,830	\$19,426	\$16,656	\$19,343	\$23,602	-\$6,946	
February	\$18,513	\$15,152	\$19,426	\$15,993	\$19,343	\$15,857	\$136	
March	\$18,513	\$17,858	\$19,426	\$18,784	\$19,343	\$17,565	\$1,219	
April	\$18,513	\$16,715	\$19,426	\$17,541	\$19,343	\$19,043	-\$1,502	
May	\$18,513	\$16,772	\$19,426	\$17,786	\$19,343	\$16,742	\$1,044	
June	\$18,513	\$17,848	\$19,426	\$19,700	\$19,343	\$25,873	-\$6,173	
July	\$18,513	\$19,410	\$19,426	\$19,688	\$19,343	\$23,595	-\$3,907	
August	\$18,513	\$15,846	\$19,426	\$15,933	\$19,343	\$20,130	-\$4,197	
September	\$18,513	\$16,783	\$19,426	\$16,834	\$19,343	\$20,896	-\$4,062	
October	\$18,513	\$18,632	\$19,426	\$18,720	\$19,343	\$29,667	-\$10,947	
November	\$18,513	\$20,499	\$19,426	\$20,564	\$19,343	\$15,626	\$4,938	
December	\$18,513	\$20,080	\$19,426	\$22,521	\$19,343	\$24,057	-\$1,536	-\$31,933
Year End Totals	\$222,152	\$210,425	\$233,114	\$61,805	\$232,113	\$252,653		

February 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
REMINDER; The Congregational Annual Meeting will be held Sunday February 12 th at 11 a.m			1 6-7:30 p.m. Confirmation Experience	2 4pm - Prayer Requests Due 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 4-6:30- Bread and Roses 6:30 Pastor's Study Group	3 OFFICE CLOSED	4
5 Holy Communion Come forward - intinction 9 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP, Baptism Coffee Fellowship SCRIPS SALE 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	6 1 p.m. Staff meets TBD	7 9am - ZOOM Pastor's Bible Study 6-7:30, Youth Group	8 6-7:30 p.m. Confirmation Experience	9 Book Sale Setup 10 a.m. 4pm - Prayer Requests Due 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30 Pastor's Study Group	10 OFFICE CLOSED	11 9-3:00 Book and Media Sale
12 9 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP ANNUAL MEETING 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	13	14 9am - ZOOM Pastor's Bible Study 6-7:30, Youth Group	15 6-7:30 p.m. Confirmation Experience	16 4pm - Prayer Requests Due 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast NO 6:30 Pastor's Study Group	17 OFFICE CLOSED	18 10 a.m. –
19 9 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 - WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship SCRIPS SALE 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	20 6:30, Council	21 9am - ZOOM Pastor's Bible Study 6-7:30, Youth Group	22 ASH WEDNESDAY 7: p.m. SERVICE	23 4pm - Prayer Requests Due 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast NO 6:30 Pastor's Study Group Confirmation Retreat →	24 OFFICE CLOSED Retreat →	25 Retreat →
26 9 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP. Service of Farewell to Pastor Bob, reception follows the service 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	27	28 9am - ZOOM Pastor's Bible Study 6-7:30, Youth Group		Special Loose Coin Offering In February is designated for the Kennel Fund of the Watertown Humane Society.		