



The Hilltop Chimes

February 2024

First Congregational UCC
120 Kuckkan Lane - Watertown WI
Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor

Church Office:
M-TH 10-noon and 1-4
Office Phone/Fax: 920-261-6213
Email: lbentz@firstcongwttn.org

Pastor's Cell: (920) 838-5630
Please call with pastoral care needs.
Email: rev.fatmoses@gmail.com

From the Pastor's Desk



As we move into February, perhaps we're used to expecting our calendars to feature groundhogs, hearts, and presidents. But, this year's a bit different—and not due to just an extra day at the end of the month. Instead of roses and candies

on February 14, at church we'll be sharing ashes.

Ash Wednesday falls on the same day as Valentine's Day this year, which invites some reflection this Lent on what Christ's passion really means, as well as what a discipleship based on the "Great Commandment" (to love God and to love neighbor) looks like. To help us focus this season, we'll be offering midweek Wednesday evening worship opportunities, in addition to Ash Wednesday. Each of these services will begin at 7 p.m. On each of the Wednesdays following Ash Wednesday, our gathering will last approximately thirty minutes. (There will be no Wednesday evening service during Holy Week.)

During our time together on Wednesday evenings, we will sing a few hymns, pray, read some scripture from the Gospel of Mark (the featured gospel in this year of the lectionary cycle), and hear of the day-by-day events of the last week of Jesus' earthly life from one of the twelve disciples—James. (The source for James' perspective comes from *The Last Week* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, New Testament scholars we've encountered in "Saving Jesus" and authors of *The First Paul*.) We will first hear from the apostle James on Ash Wednesday.

You are welcome to join us on our Lenten journey together, each week, all the way to Jerusalem.

--Chris

What's Up with these "Building a Welcoming Watertown" events?

Since last fall, you may have noticed a series of (mostly) monthly Sunday afternoon events held at the public library called "Building a Welcoming Watertown." (Many of you have even participated in these events!) But in case you're not so sure what that's all about, these sessions have been gatherings of the community, drawn primarily from four area congregations—First Congregational, Immanuel Lutheran, Saint Paul's Episcopal, and Ebenezer Moravian. People from these four congregations began coming together in response to the expressions of Christian nationalism in the Watertown community since at least last July.

Each of these gatherings has been led by a representative of WISDOM—a statewide interfaith justice-oriented organizing network. These meetings have led now to the point of clarifying what this new group's goals will be. Lay leaders from each of the four churches have agreed to undertake outreach efforts to their own congregation to listen to what motivates all of you to seek justice in our community and to discover what you think of how well Watertown welcomes all. We will commission these folks in worship on an upcoming Sunday. If they give you a call to talk, please consider giving them 20-30 minutes of your time to meet in person. They are hoping to hear from you.

If you would like to become involved with "Building a Welcoming Watertown" or would like to know more, please let Pastor Chris know.

Moderator's Message:

The Advent and Christmas season has now passed, and we are deep into 2024. Well, at least with the snow and temperature!

Looking ahead, the Congregational Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 11th at 11am. The various leaders from the Church Council and committees have already handed their reports into Laurel, who is now editing them into a cohesive and attractive booklet to serve us now and to act as a historic reference for the future. I hope you'll be at that meeting.

Besides the review of the Annual Report, we will also be voting to accept Jim Ortega as our Vice Moderator. At the last Church Council Meeting (the first of the year), we welcomed Jennifer Rhodes and Mindy Markus as our new members. With the sudden passing of Norm Hurtubise, we are looking for someone to fulfill his last year's service on Council. Could you serve? It is only a 2024 commitment.

Looking at the past year (as I write in almost every letter to you), we have accomplished a lot and have set a stronger foundation for worship and service. Briefly, the main steps forward have been:

1. We have a settled pastor.
2. We have a new constitution and a new Church Council.
3. We have remodeled our classrooms to better serve Gingerbread Preschool and Child Care.
4. We are financially stable, though we need to look into how to correct our budget deficit and to invest in our church building to better serve our congregation and community.

With those positive changes in mind, I observe and appreciate our Coffee Fellowship each Sunday. There I can witness our strong small congregation that is thriving together.

Thank you all and here is to a great 2024!

Serving in the Christ-Spirit,

Tom Rusch

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

From Church Council:

Sunday, February 11th, 2024

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 via email and in the Narthex on Sunday, February 4th. Please have your copy on hand for the meeting.

---Tom Rusch, Moderator

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Sunday, February 11th

Chili - Mac N Cheese Cook-Off

On **Sunday, February 11th** after the 10 a.m. Worship Service AND the annual meeting, our "unofficial" Cook-off team will present the Great Chili and Mac N Cheese Cook Off! These are the comfort foods everyone can find something they will enjoy.

You are invited to bring your favorite Chili or Mac N Cheese dishes to the event that day. We need everyone to bring their tastebuds and vote for their favorites.

We are just weeks past the winter solstice, the longest night, so a hot bowl of Chili and some homemade Mac N Cheese is sure to satisfy!

There are fun things planned for that Sunday so please plan to attend with your family.

Watch for Sign up sheets:

- * We need corn bread and desserts
- * Signup if you plan to attend.
- * Sign up if you are bringing a Chili or Mac N Cheese.

If you could help serve/setup Contact

Laurel in the church office: lbentz@firstcongwtn.org)

Wednesday Evening Worship

Starting Wednesday, February 21st, we'll be offering midweek Wednesday evening worship opportunities, in addition to Ash Wednesday.

On each of the Wednesdays following Ash Wednesday, our gathering will last approximately thirty minutes. Each of these services will begin at 7 p.m. (There will be no Wednesday evening service during Holy Week.)

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Basic Church History Study Sundays at 8:45 a.m.

As mentioned earlier, Chris is leading a basic church history class that covers the era between the New Testament and *Crisis in Watertown*. And to help make this class more accessible for folks' schedules, we meet on Sunday mornings at 8:45 in the office conference room.

Questions/more details: check in with Chris
Cell: (920) 838-5630

Please call with pastoral care needs.

Email: rev.fatmoses@gmail.com

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Easter Breakfast - March 31st

With Lent beginning this month (Ash Wednesday falls on February 14), it's already time to begin planning for Holy Week and Easter, believe it or not. In past years, the Easter breakfast has often been provided by potential Confirmands, their mentors, and their parents. However, this year, we're moving away from that tradition and opening it up to anyone who would like to take on the planning and oversight of this project.

If you'd like to help lead this year's Easter breakfast (before worship on Sunday, March 31), then please let Laurel or Chris know. Thank you!

Building a Healthy Community for All



Building a Healthy Community for All

Watertown Health Equity Workshop

February 4, 2024 12:00 - 4:30
Ebenezer Moravian Church
N8095 High Rd., Watertown WI 53094



<http://tinyurl.com/73m7drdt>

Watertown deserves to be a safe place where it's easy for children and their families to do healthy things and make healthy choices. Much of what makes healthy behavior easier or harder depends on what we do as a community. Things like not having access to healthy, affordable food, homelessness, or even physical surroundings like sidewalks, streets and places to bike and walk safely can impact our health.

We're asking people to come together to learn about these issues, and how they can support the health of all Watertown's children and their families. Join us to learn skills in talking and making good arguments to solve problems in a way that addresses root causes.

WHEN: 12:00-4:30 p.m., Sunday February 4th /
Snow date: Sunday March 3rd

WHERE: Ebenezer Moravian Church, N8095 High Rd.

REGISTER: <http://tinyurl.com/73m7drdt>

or follow this QR code:





Women's Fellowship Breakfast - February 10th

Join us at 10 a.m. at Two Sisters, (1300 Memorial Drive, Wttn). All are invited and, as always... Invite a Friend! We order from the menu.

We ask for your RSVP by Tuesday, FEBRUARY 7TH in order for their staff to hold a space for us.

**Two Sisters has welcomed us each time and we have enjoyed good food and fellowship.

RSVP – Sign up sheet on Narthex table

lbentz@firstcongwtttn.org

920-261-6213



Notes from the Music Director

Senior Choir meets weekly on Sundays before church. We are always looking for more singers. Time is 9:00 a.m. and while regular attendance is appreciated, please don't let an irregular schedule prevent you from participating. We accept singers at any time during the choir season.

Thank you to Cooper Wood who played piano for the service on January 7, and to Tom Rusch who continued his faithful playing as both service musician and choir accompanist for the remaining January services.

Juanita Edington

c.920-988-2416 (feel free to text)

jaemusiclover@gmail.com



"We are continuing to grow here at Gingerbread. Our enrollment is now at 33 kiddos." That was the beginning of the Chimes article last February. This month I am thrilled to report our enrollment is 95 with 15 on a waiting list!! We have 22 people on staff!

We are starting to look at our Summer program so we can begin enrolling for summer. All of our rooms are full except for the 4-year-olds and grade schoolers, just wait until summer and I am sure those will be full too! WHAT A CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO!!

Here is a wish list of items that we are always appreciative of receiving: napkins, gallon storage bags, rolls of paper towel, Kleenex, diapers of all sizes, and cash donations/gift cards. Thank you all for your continued support!

Gingerbread Phone: 920-261-9727

Email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com

Website: www.gingerbreadchildcare.com

Tech Opportunities

Videographer:

We record each service and are looking to expand our recorders. The primary responsibilities are to run the camera focusing on the "action at the moment" (the liturgist, acolyte, minister, choir, or special musician/s) and make microphone adjustments as needed. I am currently taking care of the editing and production.

Please contact me if you are interested and when you are available. Training is available. Thanks.

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

Juanita Edington

c.920-988-2416

jaemusiclover@gmail.com

"I CAN HELP" – gifts of your time....

Helping with Coffee Hour is just one of the opportunities for fellowship offered through "I Can Help"

Watch for the forms on each of the tables during coffee hour.

For those who have already turned yours in, watch for emails/mail about the schedule lists of when you are set to pitch in. Thank you .

As always, the office is a good place to reach out to with any questions or ideas.

Laurel W Bentz lbentz@firstcongwtn.org

Office Hours: M-TH 10 – 4 p.m

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Serve in Worship

Liturgists: Liturgists read from a script the scripture and other responsive readings during a worship service. You will receive the script on Wednesday, arrive Sunday at 9:40 for sound check. A Printed script will be waiting for you at the podium.

Acolytes: The purpose of candle lighting is to "bring the light of the Holy spirit" into our worship space. Although it's been children who serve as acolytes, people of all ages are invited. If you are interested in being an acolyte for services, please contact Laurel in the church office.

If you are interested , please contact Laurel at lbentz@firstcongwtn.org .

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COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Servers are needed each Sunday of the month. Prior to worship, servers get the coffee started and place the snacks out in time to attend worship

****SIGN UP during coffee hour today or AT THE NARTHEX TABLE.** Contact person is Jennifer Rhodes.

Mission and Giving: An Opportunity to Help Your Community!!

THE BREAD BASKET PANTRY, located in the YMCA building in Watertown. Another amazing local resource for our community

- In addition to food items, Coats and winter clothing are especially needed. Many individuals and families don't arrive prepared for our winters.
 - **Bread Basket** is in need of egg cartons and plastic grocery bags with handles. Vivian Howard will get them over to them.
 - There is a shopping cart in the narthex You are welcome to bring any food at any time .
 - **THE BREAD BASKET HOURS ARE:**
 - Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - Fridays 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
-

THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY

Located in Immanuel Lutheran Church serves the people of Watertown to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

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.

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First Congregational UCC will take their turn helping with Bread & Roses on **Thursday, February 8th** from 3:30-6:30 at Immanuel Lutheran ELCA.

We will provide dinner rolls and cookies for 240 folks. Plus 2 gallons of white milk. Dinner is served at tables or carry out. 6 volunteers are needed to work serving and cleanup.

Watch for a sign up sheet, or call/email Laurel in the church office: lbentz@firstcongwtn.org

February Loose Coin:

Mary's Room



Mary's Room is an Outreach Program of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Watertown WI serving the infants and children of Watertown and surrounding communities through God's abundant grace.

Mary's Room is dedicated to fostering the well-being of infants and young children through facilitating the donation, collection, and distribution of furniture, clothing, diapers, and other basic items for children to families while assisting them to achieve economic independence. *Mary's Room* focuses on families located in Watertown WI, and Jefferson and Dodge Counties.

Mary's Room is open three times a week. During our work hours, we have three volunteers to run *Mary's Room*. During our open hours, individual families come to *Mary's Room* to collect diapers, toiletries, formula, clothing, furniture, blankets, toys, books, and much more.

We accept donations of new or clean preowned clothes, toys, books, etc. . See a *Mary's Room* volunteer when dropping off donations.

On average, we currently serve about 80 households and 100 children each month. Our families are low-income parents.

To learn more visit :

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

Note: If you wish to contribute more than “coins in the plate”, you can use a “Loose Coin Envelope” and enclose the cash or check (made out to 1st. Cong UCC Wttn



From the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries

SUNDAY SCHOOL: We have been having fun meeting in person on Sunday mornings. We have had small groups when we meet, but no matter the group size we are still having fun doing projects or talking about our lives! We are looking forward to the rest of the school year!

YOUTH GROUP: Our meeting in January didn't work out. We will try again ,after Easter, in the Spring! We will then begin to meet again on the 3rd Wednesday of each month in the youth room at 6pm! Come for food and fun!

Watch for more details!!



Our community meditation group meets on Thursdays at Watertown Public Library. Church member, Pam Martin guides the group. They gather from 6:30 – 7:00 and everyone is welcome, no experience required.



February Birthdays

02/02 Sarah Miller
 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

BOOK OF LIFE

Passing: Norman "Norm" G. Hurtubise, 80, passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, January 2, 2024. Norm was one of the original members of the "altar guild" preparing the chancel for worship and could always be counted on to help.

A funeral service to celebrate Norm's life was held on Friday, January 12, 2024 at our church, with Rev. Christopher Ross officiating.

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How to Join Us for Worship

- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from lbentz@firstcongwtn.org. Join our mailing list.
- 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 church website (see 'Media'): <https://firstcongwtn.org/>
 Services posted on Monday

Financial Updates - GENERAL FUND December 31, 2023

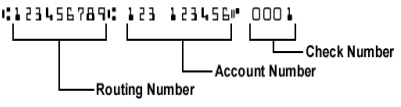
2023	BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	BUDGETED TOTAL INCOME	ACTUAL TOTAL INCOME	BUDGETED EXPENSES	ACTUAL EXPENSES	MONTH GAIN OR LOSS	YEAR GAIN OR LOSS
January	\$17,328	\$12,984	\$18,548	\$13,052	\$22,275	\$20,505	-\$7,453	-\$7,453
February	\$17,328	\$24,828	\$18,548	\$25,079	\$22,275	\$21,622	\$3,457	-\$3,996
March	\$17,328	\$16,136	\$18,548	\$16,199	\$22,275	\$26,989	-\$10,790	-\$14,786
April	\$17,328	\$17,674	\$18,548	\$17,962	\$22,275	\$24,042	-\$6,080	-\$20,866
May	\$17,328	\$22,750	\$18,548	\$23,050	\$22,275	\$28,419	-\$5,369	-\$26,235
June	\$17,328	\$14,455	\$18,548	\$16,958	\$22,275	\$22,571	-\$5,613	-\$31,848
July	\$17,328	\$20,791	\$18,548	\$22,189	\$22,275	\$17,234	\$4,955	-\$26,893
August	\$17,328	\$15,875	\$18,548	\$16,010	\$22,275	\$17,013	-\$1,003	-\$27,896
September	\$17,328	\$12,967	\$18,548	\$13,034	\$22,275	\$21,705	-\$8,671	-\$36,567
October	\$17,328	\$17,170	\$18,548	\$18,230	\$22,275	\$17,494	\$736	-\$35,831
November	\$17,328	\$21,377	\$18,548	\$23,969	\$22,275	\$17,322	\$6,647	-\$29,184
December	\$17,328	\$17,797	\$18,548	\$19,833	\$22,275	\$24,472	-\$4,639	-\$33,823

ELECTRONIC GIVING (EFT): giving electronically is an option we have offered for a number of years with great success. You decide how much you want to have sent and when you want it sent through our secure Vanco program. Changes can be made easily within a day or two by contacting Laurel. Records are kept secure and confidential.

If you are interested in using this convenient method for giving to the church, use this form and give to Laurel in the church office. You can direct all questions to Laurel Bentz in the church office (261-6213 M-Th) or via email (lbentz@firstcongwtn.org)

ELECTRONIC GIVING AUTHORIZATION FORM

First Congregational UCC
120 Kuckkan Lane, Watertown, WI 53094

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	ENVELOPE/DONOR #	DATE
Effective date of authorization: ____/____/____		
Type of authorization: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> New authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Change banking information </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation amount <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue electronic donation </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation date </div> </div>		
Last Name	First Name	
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email Address		
Date of first donation: ____/____/____	Frequency of donation: (please check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 th <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly (every other week) <input type="checkbox"/> One Time	Amount of first donation: \$ ____
CHECKING / SAVINGS	Please debit my donation from my (check one): Savings Account (contact your financial institution for Routing #) Checking Account (attach a voided check below)	Routing Number: _____ <i>Valid Routing # must start with 0, 1, 2, or 3</i> Account Number: _____ <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>
	I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to my account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization. Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____	

If using a checking account, please attach a voided check at the bottom of this page.

February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
LOOKING AHEAD: The Congregational Annual Meeting will be held Sunday February 11 th at 11 a.m.	Loose coin: Mary's Room			1 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <i>6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group – Wtn Public Library</i>	2 OFFICE CLOSED	3
4 Communion Sunday 8:45 a.m. – Church History Study 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School 12:00-4:30: Health Equity Workshop: at Ebenezer Moravian Church 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	5 1 :00 p.m. Staff meets	6	7	8 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 3:30-6:30: Bread & Roses 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <i>6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group – Wtn Public Library</i>	9 OFFICE CLOSED	10 10 a.m.: Womens' Breakfast at Two Sisters
11 Transfiguration Sunday 8:45 a.m. – Church History Study 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School ANNUAL MEETING Fellowship: Chili/Mac Cook Off 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	12	13 Shrove Tuesday	14 Ash Wednesday <i>7:00 -Service of Imposition of Ashes</i> 6:00, Youth Group	15 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <i>6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group – Wtn Public Library</i>	16 OFFICE CLOSED	17
18 8:45 a.m. – Church History Study 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Installation of Council Sunday School Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	19 6:30 pm, COUNCIL	20	21 Newsletter Deadline <i>7:00-7:30 Lenten Worship Service</i>	22 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <i>6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group – Wtn Public Library</i>	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24
25 8:45 a.m. – Church History Study 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	26 1:30 Rainmaker Committee	27 7:00, Gingerbread Board TBD	28 <i>7:00-7:30 Lenten Worship Service</i>	29 LEAP DAY 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <i>6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group – Wtn Public Library</i>	Friday, March 1 World Day of Prayer	