

# The Tower

First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
Madison, Wisconsin

---

LXVIII

January 8, 2012

No. 1

---

## Prison Ministry Project and Jerry Hancock

I am writing to bring you up to date on some things that are happening between Jerry Hancock and our Prison Ministry Project (PMP) on the one hand, and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) on the other. In October, Jerry was told that he was barred from going to any Wisconsin prisons and also from having any kind of contact with prisoners. They said he was under investigation for “fraternization,” which is their term for having violated one of their rules.

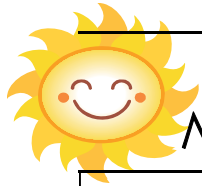
People like Jerry and other members of our church who run programs for inmates in prisons (like Restorative Justice programs, Family Connections, worship services, and others) are classified by the DOC as “volunteers”; and according to their rules, volunteers are not supposed to have any contact with individual inmates outside of the programs – no correspondence, no communication with inmates’ families, etc. People who have those kinds of one-on-one contacts are classified as pastoral visitors. According to some DOC officials, being a pastoral visitor and being a volunteer are incompatible.

After our Prison Ministry Project had been up and running for a couple of years, it became clear to Jerry that the PMP was providing both kinds of programs and services to men in prison; so Jerry wrote a letter to the then-Secretary of the DOC explaining the full range of programs and services that the PMP offered. A few months later, Jerry had a meeting with the Secretary of DOC and other officials in the department. He once again explained fully what he and the other people in the PMP were doing and took in specific examples of the programs and services we provide. There were no objections expressed at the meeting, or afterwards, to any of the actions or relationships of anyone in our PMP. In fact, members of the Department were very positive about our programs. (Prison staff have been very positive about our programs ever since we began. Chaplains and social workers who have regular contacts with inmates are some of our biggest supporters. They see the positive effect that Restorative Justice and regular visitation can have on inmates’ lives. Members of the PMP were “inside the walls” over 400 times in 2011. When you consider how infrequently inmates have contact with outside folks, that is really important.) It is important to understand that all programs, services and pastoral visits we provide are done with complete openness and with the full knowledge of prison staff. Scheduling is done through them. Nothing is secret or hidden.

In addition to barring Jerry, Janet Pugh and Gina Golding, who have also been caught up in this investigation, several inmates – including a person received into membership in our church – have been put in segregation and have had their correspondence with the PMP confiscated. I have received letters from several of those men; and the fear, loneliness, anxiety and isolation in their letters is palpable. I am not being sentimental. These are not innocent, starving Somali children; they are adult men who committed terrible crimes. But God loves them just as God loves Somali children and my grandchildren and you and everyone else. They are deserving of our care and our ministry. And they are deserving of better treatment than they are receiving right now from the DOC.

Jerry, Paul Karch and I will meet with the Secretary and senior staff of DOC on Friday afternoon, January 6. Because so much has been unexplained so far, we will go with lots of questions and concerns. We are hoping to come to some understanding and resolution at that meeting, but that is not guaranteed. We will certainly be willing to talk about that meeting, and about what has happened so far, at the Prison Ministry luncheon and program after worship on January 8. Please keep Jerry and the whole PMP in your thoughts and prayers.

Curt



## JOIN US FOR MORNING SERVICE

**Sunday, January 8, 2012**

**Epiphany Sunday**

**Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary**

**Scripture Readings: Matthew 2:1-12**

For the past five years this church has celebrated the Prison Ministry Project on Epiphany Sunday. This is appropriate because the Epiphany story is important to our understanding of the larger Christmas story. The Prison Ministry claims Epiphany as our feast day because Epiphany is the day the wider world--the world of power, prestige, science and history and even the Department of Corrections--come face to face with the reality of Jesus. Epiphany is the day the secular world recognizes that since Christmas, things have changed. There is a new source of power, accountability and justice at work in the world.

In a wider sense epiphany has come to mean a sudden insight that results in a radical change in perspective. Many of the men in our ministry come to recognize the negative effects of their antisocial behavior through understanding the ripples of harm that their crimes send out to the victim, the victim's family, their own families and the wider community. Many recognize that, based on what they learn from the stories of the victim/survivors, they can re-story their lives in a more positive way. This change in perspective is foundational to all other treatment and programs and this change in thinking is fundamental to successful reentry to the community.

It is our hope that though the message of the Gospel and our ministry of being present with people inside prison walls, they will have an epiphany and, like the Magi, choose to go home by a different road.

**Our Sympathies** to the friends of long-time First Congregational Secretary Nadine Butler. Nadine died Thursday, December 22. Graveside services were held Wednesday, December 28, a service will be held on Monday, January 16 at 2:00pm at the Chapel at Oakwood Village West..

**A Memorial Service** for Reverend Richard Wichlei, who died December 3, 2011, will be held here in the Chapel on Saturday, January 14, 2012.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Community Meals Day** is Thursday, January 5. Please have your donated items to the pink kitchen by 10:00am that day. This gets the volunteers enough time to get the Spanish rice over to Luke House in enough time to get it in the oven for the 11:30am meal service. Thank you for your contributions to Community Meals.

**Men's Fellowship** All men are invited to an hour of fellowship on Sunday, January 8, 8:30am. Gallup Coffeehouse, 1859 Monroe St. No RSVP necessary. Contact info: Tom Syring, [tjsyring@tds.net](mailto:tjsyring@tds.net), 843-2234.

**We Collect Non-perishable Food Items** the first Sunday of every month and donate them to a local food pantry. Since the first Sunday in January is New Year's Day, you may also bring them on January 8; please place them in the basket under the table in the narthex. Thank you for helping to alleviate hunger in our community.

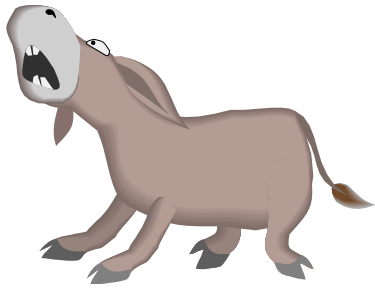
**Prison Ministry Luncheon** As we have done the past several years, worship on Epiphany Sunday, January 8, will be about our Prison Ministry Program; and there will also be a Prison Ministry Luncheon in the dining room after worship that day. The meal will be catered by Patty Brunner, who does the delicious meals for our fall and spring Gathering classes; and there will be a free-will offering to help pay for that. The program will be honoring prison ministry volunteers. There will also undoubtedly be conversation about the current status of our Prison Ministry Program's relationship with the Department of Corrections. Please be sure to attend our Prison Ministry Program luncheon after worship on January 8, 2012.

**New Member Orientation** If you are thinking about joining First Congregational UCC or would like to know more about the church, please join us for New Member Orientation sessions. The next three-week session has been scheduled for January 15, 22 and 29. We meet in the Student Lounge from 9:00-9:45 am. We will get to know each other and some current members, learn about the UCC, and more specifically about First Congregational Church. Childcare will be provided. Please let Eldonna know if you will be attending, or if you have any questions.

**Scholarship Applications Due February 15** Members of First Cong are invited to apply for college scholarships for 2012-13 from the Frank E. Page Scholarship Fund. Applicants should be planning to begin or continue education at any accredited 2 or 4-year college or university and should have a record of academic achievement and service to church and community, as well as demonstrated financial need. **IMPORTANT:** This year all applications must be filed electronically, so if you have an application form from a previous year, contact [scholarships@firstcongmadison.org](mailto:scholarships@firstcongmadison.org) for a revised application form. The deadline is February 15, 2012.

## FIRST CONG YOUTH

**Youth Musical Auditions** will be held after worship on Sunday, January 8 for this year's youth musical *DONKEY TALES!*, which brings to life three donkey stories from the Bible. (The musical will be presented in worship on Sunday, February 19) All Youth (7<sup>th</sup> –



High School) are invited to participate. Yes! Friends are welcome! Contact Jeff Rabe with questions.

### The All - Youth Winter Retreat

will be held January 20 – 22. We will leave Friday evening for a weekend at Bethel Horizons near Dodgeville. The theme for this year's retreat is *WORD!* Based on the scripture from the book of John 1:1 "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" Linda Hancock will be a guest artist at the retreat! Sign up by January 15, \$35./person.



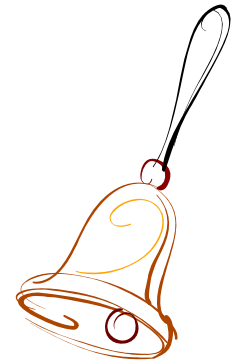
**Attention all Youth!** The dates and locations have been set for the 2012 Summer Mission Trips. Sr High Youth: July 8 – 14, Youth will work at Camp Courageous near Monticello, Iowa. Camp Courageous is a year-round respite care and recreational facility for individuals of all ages with disabilities. 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth: July 27 – 29, Youth will spend a weekend of mission in Rockford, IL. More info to come. Please mark your calendars today!

## MUSICAL NOTES



**There will be no choir rehearsals** through January 4, 2012. All choirs will resume their regular schedule starting Sunday, January 8.

**In addition,** all interested youth are invited to meet with Don immediately following the youth musical auditions on January 8, to organize the *Celebration Ringers* to play on Youth Sunday. The *Celebration Ringers* is open to any youth (grades 7 through 12) who wish to participate. If you have any questions, talk with Don or Jeff.



**The Cherub Choir** will be singing in worship on January 8. Cherubs and their parents are reminded to meet in the sanctuary for a short rehearsal at 9:30am on the 8<sup>th</sup>, before singing in worship.

**The Chancel Choir** will meet at 9:00am on Sunday, January 8 for rehearsal.

## FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

**CONFIRMATION CLASS** Confirmation class is open to all in 8<sup>th</sup> grade or older. All interested are asked to contact Jeff Rabe at the Church office and attend a Parent/Student information meeting following worship on Sunday, January 29. Classes begin in February and run through May.

## ALL CHURCH

**ALL CHURCH ICE SKATING PARTY!** All members of First Cong are invited to lace up their skates and head to the ice at Tenney Park on Sunday, January 29 from 1 – 3pm. Skates can also be rented at the new shelter. Kristin Kanitz will be hosting the party with snacks and hot cocoa rink-side along Marston Ave. (look for the church sign).



# Church Calendar January 8-15, 2012

## Sunday January 8

9:00am Chancel Choir ~ S  
 9:30am Cherub Choir ~ S  
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S  
 10:15am Sunday School  
 10:15am BBQ/BOUNCE ~ YR  
 11:15am Cherub Choir  
 ~ Room 301  
 11:30am Prison Ministry  
 Luncheon ~ DR  
 11:30am Youth Musical  
 Auditions ~ C  
 12:30pm Celebration Ringers Organizational meeting ~ Room 301

## Monday January 9

5:30pm Stewardship Board ~ FR  
 5:30pm Table Tennis Clubs ~ DR  
 7:00pm All Boards ~ Chapel  
 8:00pm SA ~ Room 301

## Tuesday January 10

12noon Bible Conversations ~ SL  
 5:15pm NA Women's ~ Room 301  
 6:30pm Boy Scouts ~YR, DR  
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 301  
 7:00pm Piano Tech Guild ~ FR

## Wednesday January 11

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS  
 10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS  
 6:30pm Coventry Ringers  
 ~ Room 301  
 7:30pm Chancel Choir ~ C

## Thursday January 12

7:00pm Mad Area Jugglers ~ DR  
 7:30pm AA ~ Room 301

## Friday January 13

5:30pm Madison Table  
 Tennis Club ~ DR

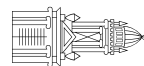
## Saturday January 14

10:30am Wichlei Memorial  
 Service ~ C, SL

## Sunday January 15

9:00am New Member class ~ SL  
 10:00am Worship ~ S  
 10:15am Sunday School  
 11:15am Cherub Choir ~ Rm 301  
 12noon SAGE ~ YR

BBQ ~ Mid High Bible Study  
 Big K ~ Big Kitchen  
 BOUNCE ~ Mid High Youth Group  
 C ~ Chapel  
 DR ~ Dining Room  
 FIGS ~ Families Including God and Stuff  
 FR ~ Fellowship Room  
 GAS ~ Sr. High Bible Study  
 LRC ~ Learning Resource Center  
 MS ~ Minister's Study  
 S ~ Sanctuary  
 SAGE ~ Sr. High Youth Group  
 SL ~ Student Lounge  
 SR ~ Salad Room  
 YR ~ Youth Room



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue  
 608-233-9751 (phone)

Madison, Wisconsin 53726

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**Worship attendance on Christmas Eve, 5:00pm service was 152 and 195 at the 9:00pm service. Christmas Day, December 25, 2011 attendance was 95. Worship attendance on Sunday, January 1, 2012 was 88.**

### Staff:

Curt Anderson, Senior Minister  
 Eldonna Hazen, Associate Minister  
 Jerry Hancock, Director of Prison Ministry Project  
 Donald J. DeBruin, Director of Music Ministries  
 Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education for  
 Children & Youth  
 Rob Eagle, Bookkeeper  
 Jill Farnsworth, Church Secretary  
 David Krantz, Building Manager

**Office Hours:** 8am-12:30pm, 1:00pm-4:00pm,  
 Monday -Thursday; 8am-noon Friday.

**Phone:** 608-233-9751

**Fax:** 608-233-7180

**E-mail:** office@firstcongmadison.org

**Web Page:** www.firstcongmadison.org  
 Facebook.com/firstcongo

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES:** Curt Anderson's phone is 836-1321, Eldonna Hazen's phone number is 241-8117 and Jerry Hancock's phone is 658-6630.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 MADISON, WI  
 PERMIT NO. 1395