

ANNUAL REPORT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53726 | firstcongrmadison.org

Welcome!

As I near the completion of nineteen years of gratefully serving First Congregational United Church of Christ, I am awed by the commitment of members and friends to live out the Gospel in our community and beyond. Through generous financial gifts and the sharing of time and talents, the boards and staff continue to support the mission of this Church.



This year we have all had ups and downs in our personal lives, but we have also been inundated in the first six months of this year by daily news targeting marginalized people. Nothing has changed about who we are as a Church or how we act on the Gospel, but we must be louder and more attentive to providing **Shelter in the Storm**.

The prophet Isaiah reminded people of God's commitment to loving and caring for those needing refuge – to always being the Shelter in the Storm. You will note many examples of Shelter in the Storm in the pages ahead. Here are a few examples. First Cong . . .

- Provided over \$23,000 in direct assistance to individuals, including rent, utility bills, funeral expenses, car repairs, clothing or work boots for a new job. Shelter in the Storm.
- Sent over \$70,000 to the Conference and National setting of the UCC to support disabilities, mental health, ministry in the Middle East, environmental work, and new and retired clergy. Shelter in the Storm.
- Supported Restorative Justice and other programming in WI prisons. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided safe worship space for ALL of God's children. Shelter in the Storm
- Provided over 780 meals on Thanksgiving to the community. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided direct assistance to organizations including Healing House, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Mary House (which offers weekend hospitality to low-income women and families visiting inmates in the Federal Correctional Institution at Oxford-WI), Just Bakery, Girls & Boys Club of Dane County, NAMI, GSAFE, and so many others. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided education to children, youth, and adults, offering insight into the struggles and celebrations in our community, state, and national settings. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided fellowship opportunities through the Advent Workshop, Mardi Gras Festival, Newlywed Game, and Pancake Breakfast. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided food or served a meal to The Crossing students and monthly meals at Luke House. Shelter in the Storm.
- Maintained a nearly 100-year building, dedicated in 1930, that houses this Congregation but also provides space to Madison Area Concert Handbells, Stage Q, Madison Jugglers, con vivo, University Avenue Discovery Center, and many others. Shelter in the Storm.
- Provided full-time employment to five employees, and part-time employment to five more. Shelter in the Storm.
- Each of you sat with or walked difficult life journeys with members and friends of First Cong. Shelter in the Storm.

Let us celebrate how First Congregational UCC has not only lived out the Gospel but the promise of the prophet Isaiah – to be Shelter in the Storm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eldonna Hazen', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Eldonna Hazen, Senior Minister



In Memory

*"I am the resurrection and the life,"
says the Lord. "Those who believe in
me, even though they die, will live;
and everyone who lives and
believes in me will never die."*

– John 11:25-26

Carol Beaty

(December 23, 1933 — December 19, 2024)

Sue Bogen

(June 17, 1949 — July 10, 2024)

Gloria Green

(December 2, 1944 — October 22, 2024)

Kristi Mason

(August 25, 1958 — August 25, 2024)

Kathy Rabe (mother of Jeff)

(May 12, 1939 — September 12, 2024)

Judith Whipple

(December 2, 1937 — June 1, 2024)



Mission

First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC) in Madison, Wisconsin, seeks to be a radically inclusive and welcoming Christian community, nurturing and affirming God's creation and dedicated to serving all!

First Congregational UCC Ministers and Staff



Eldonna Hazen
Senior Minister



Ann Beaty
Associate Minister



Rev. Jerry Hancock
Prison Ministry Project Director



Jeff Rabe
Children & Youth Ministry
Director



Heather Yonker
Music Ministry Director



Zach Busch
Organist/Accompanist



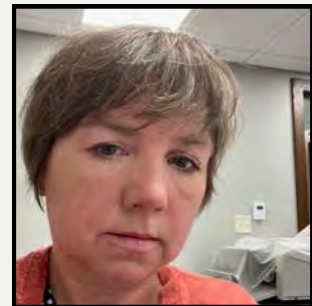
Agustin Garcia
Building Maintenance



Jennifer Flaten
Bookkeeper



Chris Rickman
Facilities Technician



Julie Sheahan
Communications Coordinator

Hourly Staff

Nursery: Levi Baumgartner, Aster Camponeschi, Gwen Flowers, Norah Taft, Mary Tishler

Livestream Techs: Alex Goff, Aiden Noth-Hazen, Ellie Scheirey, Amitabha Shatdal, Lukas Weinhold

Music: Allyson Mills, Zachary Mark, section leaders

Executive Council

The Executive Council makes policy, financial, and programmatic decisions for the Church between Congregational Meetings. Voting members include the Moderator, Moderator-elect, Chairperson (or other designated representative) of each Board, plus four At-large Members elected by the Congregation. Ex-officio members include the Senior Pastor, Church Treasurer, and Clerk. The decisions made on particular issues are delegated to the appropriate Board or Staff member for implementation.



Currently, the Council has three standing task forces: 320 Lathrop Street, Communications, and Environmental Justice (EJ).



The 320 Lathrop Street Task Force worked – literally for years – to discern the best use of the building. Due to its location in a historic district and its particular style of architecture, as well as the Church’s need for parking, their task has been difficult. After talking and negotiating with a few developers, the committee proposed, to the Property Board and the Executive Council, that the Church renovate the house to rent as affordable housing to qualifying students. The next step is hiring an architect to determine the cost to carry this plan forward.

The Communications Task Force worked diligently to address the website, newsletter, internal and external communication, and publicity. The Task Force has not met for some time, as changes have been implemented and are in the capable hands of the Communion Coordinator.

EJ provided multiple learning opportunities and worked diligently in recycling soft plastics. By keeping 1,000 lbs. of plastic out of the landfill, the Church received a new Trex bench.

It has been a smooth operating year despite the outcome of the Presidential Election and the ensuing chaos. After all, we all are in this together. This smooth operation can be attributed to (1) Eldonna’s (and the staff’s) magnificent handling of the Church’s day-to-day business, (2) the strong financial support the Congregation continues to provide to its ministry, and (3) the many volunteers who provide services to the Church, in almost every aspect of the Church’s life.

With appreciation for the chance to serve as your Moderator,
Gary Pine

Members: Gary Pine, Moderator; Beth Cannestra, Moderator-Elect; Susan Fischer, Clerk; Jane Oman, Treasurer; Paul Karch, Financial Secretary; Barbara Arnold, Betta Owens, Alyssa Schultz, Josh Wimmer, At-Large; Kweku Brewoo, Ruth Benedict, Christian Education; Anne Karch, Community Life; Judith Stephens, Deacons; Justin Hicks, Outreach; Diane Brockely-Drinkman, Property; Bill Stephen, Stewardship

Congregational Meeting Minutes

First Congregational United Church of Christ – Madison

June 23, 2024

11:11 AM via Zoom and In-Person



Moderator Levi Hagen called the meeting to order when a quorum was reached, at 11:11 AM. There were approximately 53 members participating in the Chapel and 12 participating via Zoom.

Approval of Minutes for June 25, 2023

Barbara Arnold/Cindy Graham moved to approve the June 25, 2023 Congregational Meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Report

The 2024-2025 budget is balanced. It includes an increase in revenue from building usage and parking income and a staff pay increase of 2%. The new elevator and Healing House loan are completely paid off.

The Executive Council moved that the congregation adopt the 2024-2025 FCUCC Budget as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Amendment to the Constitution and Bylaws

The church's bylaws currently have different term limits for at-large members of the Executive Council than for other members of boards.

The Executive Council moved that the congregation accept the following amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of First Congregational Church:

Constitution: Article 5: Section 2

The terms of members-at-large shall be two years, and no member-at-large shall serve more than three consecutive terms.

Bylaws: Article 6: Section 2A

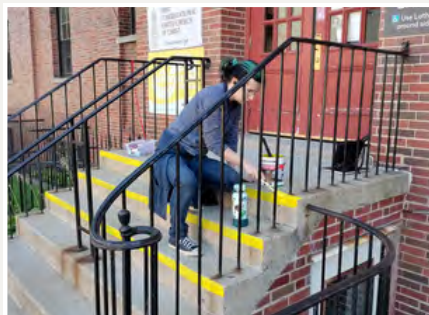
No at-large member of the Council shall be permitted to serve more than three consecutive terms in the same capacity.

The motion passed unanimously.

continued on page 20

Board of Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education (CE) supports the Church's mission by nurturing the faith development of people of all ages through educational programming and ministry. The CE Board, with its liaisons to the Accessibility and Adult Education committees, and in collaboration with the Director of Christian Education for Children and Youth, strived to initiate programming for those transitioning from youth to adult life, and intergenerational education to promote growth in faith and the understanding of conflict among religious traditions.



2024-2025 Activities and Accomplishments

Accessibility Committee

- Attended the Disability Pride Festival at Warner Park.
- Had yellow lines painted on exterior steps for visual enhancement and safety.

Adult Education

- 55 Alive! – Lenten Art; Interfaith Dialogue; From the Holocaust to Civil Rights; Pasture & Plenty
- In the Fall, James Taylor led the series “Who is Your God?”
- In April, CE hosted *The Lemon Tree* book read and discussion on the Middle East conflict
- Jeff Rabe presented seven gender workshops, “The Singular They,” for congregations across Wisconsin in support of efforts to be welcoming and inclusive.
- Men’s Fellowship, Women’s Book Study, and other regular programming continued.



Young Adult

- In April, we extended a warm welcome to the young adults with a pizza lunch after Worship.

Intergenerational

- **TRANSFORMATION!: A Community Art Project** offered artists, aged eight weeks to over 80, the opportunity to combine their talents for a massive art piece which was unveiled during the Children and Youth-led service in May.
- Assisted the Board of Community Life with activities for the Fall Harvest Festival and the Advent Workshop.



Members: Ruth Benedict, Kweku Brewoo, Pretrovnia Charles, Laurie Dennis, Kristi Mason (Posthumously), Jeanne Tyler

Board of Christian Education Children and Youth Ministries

Jeff Rabe, Director

Children, Youth, and Family ministries had a great year of fellowship, learning, and service. The Sunday School program continued to run smoothly thanks to the efforts and time of all the dedicated volunteers on the Education Team. The Youth activities – escape room adventure, pumpkin carving, lawn raking, bible study, and volunteering at Second Harvest Food Bank – worked to build community and create lasting bonds.



Family Service Projects made Valentine's Day HUG cards for elders in the community and wrapped cutlery for Thanksgiving Meal delivery.



500

sets of cutlery wrapped for the Thanksgiving Meal



The Christmas Pageant, written by a High School senior and produced by a cast and crew of 23 children and youth, shared the familiar story in a modern way by staging it in the waiting room at the DMV.



26

pumpkins carved for the youth Jack-o-Lantern sale



First Cong Youth packaged 1,760 lbs. of bulk cheese into 2-lb bags at Second Harvest Food Bank. The packaged cheese was distributed to area food pantries.



17

7th & 8th graders, nearly half not affiliated with First Cong, gathered for OWL (Our Whole Lives) Sexual Education program.



The 2024 Summer Mural Project, METAMORPHOSIS, was created by a crew of young artists and led by Amity Flogal. Metamorphosis was the theme for the 24-25 Sunday School year. A year of learning, growth, and TRANSFORMATION!



11

Amazing GRace Teams, six from area churches

Board of Community Life (BCL)

The Board of Community Life (BCL) works to foster personal and social connections among members, friends, and visitors through a variety of programs and activities. BCL encourages people to start groups or a new activity, and works with other boards to build community.



After-Worship Refreshment! (AWR). AWR is a beloved “part” of Sunday services! Volunteers provided light snacks following Worship, ensuring there was something for everyone, including gluten-free, and vegan options.

55 Alive! Meeting nearly every month, the program begins with a lunch followed by a talk on topics of interest by civic leaders or church members. This year focused on expressions of faith, and social and environmental justice. Topics included food sustainability, a family’s personal Holocaust story, community land trusts, and interfaith dialog.



Ice Cream Social. On Confirmation Sunday, in May, we celebrated with an ice cream social. Bridging generations, long-term members – 50+ years – were celebrated too!

Movie Night. In collaboration with Environmental Justice group, BCL hosted a pizza potluck with two film screenings, *Bad River* and *The Lorax*, addressing environmental issues:



Mardi Gras. For our second such celebration (the first was in March of 2020), we brought together wonderful live Cajun music and a Louisiana themed luncheon. Members of the Congregation contributed fabulous baked goods.

Advent Workshop. Working with Christian Education, this intergenerational event in December offered a box lunch and a wide array of Christmas themed crafts kids could create as gifts for family.



Harvest Fest. The popular Fall festival with a chili lunch, had a pie contest where everyone got to taste the wares! A playlist of fiddle music and the fall-themed decorations put everyone in a warm and friendly mood.

Picnic and Camping. In August, BCL sponsored an All-Church picnic at Lake Farm County Park. Fun was had by all with games, a cook-out, and smores with peep marshmallows!

Members: Melissa Baumann, Anne Karch, Cathy Noth, Melinda Pine, Amanda Ready

Board of Deacons

The Deacons continued to enhance Worship with monthly Communion by intinction; decorating the Sanctuary for Advent/Christmas and Easter/Holy Week, and welcoming members and visitors on Sundays and special services.

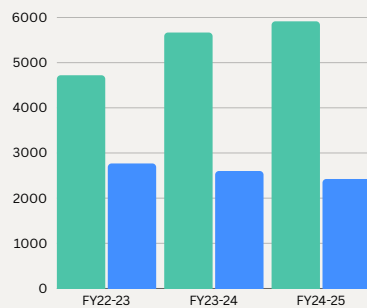


In October, for World Communion Sunday, Deacons collaborated with the Board of Outreach inviting 12 organizations the Church supports to share information at tables throughout the Sanctuary. Each table had different bread from around the world. It was truly a world Communion!



At Christmas, instead of buying two fresh-cut trees, we decorated the blue spruce in the front of the church with battery-powered lights and birdseed ornaments the Sunday School children made. The youth group hung the ornaments. By doing this, we saved trees and \$900!

Attended Worship In-person
Attended Worship Virtually




1
Baptisms


8
Confirmands

One of Deacon's ongoing projects is to make the Narthex a more welcoming space. In March, the board toured the space. The suggestions will be shared with the Executive Council.

Members: Mary Lawrence-Wehrle, Minda Mauer, Maureen McCoy, Liz Michaels, Judith Stephens, Nadine Walsten

Board of Deacons – Music Ministries

Heather Yonker, Director

“Opening the Window”

New windows were opened in music ministry during the year! More variety, diversity, inclusivity, and inspiration was brought into our worship spaces, building relationships and supporting musicians, from inside and outside our Church community.

The Family Choir sang “The More We Get Together the Happier We’ll Be” for their first service. Even the baby chimed in!



The Handbell Choir grew to 13 and rang for Worship eight times, including a collaboration with the Chancel and Drum Choirs for Palm Sunday.

The Chancel Choir typically consists of 19, singing for Worship 2-3 times per month, and for extra services during Lent and Advent.

The Recorder Group met faithfully and, for the first time, played the Prelude for Worship!



Working towards growth and expansion, Zach Busch and Heather Yonker offered alternative meditative mid-week services, “Be Still & Know.”

Unforgettable Advent Organ Reflections. The Sanctuary was transformed with lighting, candles, and projection into the night sky for an organ concert with Zach. It was a tapestry of space and wonder.



Eldonna, Zach, and Heather found sanctuary and flocked to the table at the UCCMA music conference in Greenwich, CT. It was invaluable for inspiration, ideas, and bonding. Keynote speaker Rev. Braxton D. Shelley’s plenary, titled “Deep Listening,” encouraged us to listen across traditions, promote a willingness to be changed by what we hear, know the music we are supporting, and identify the structures that govern us in worship music. Our Lenten theme of opening the church is relevant in these times. Shelley was leading us to “Open the Windows” and just because the conference and Lent have passed, does not mean we should close them.



Board of Outreach

The Outreach Board oversees a budget of \$123,700 to use for good in the community. In addition, our Congregation gave \$8,700 to the four UCC special offerings we support each year.



Meal at The Crossing. Members and friends prepared and served a meal to about 25 students at The Crossing on the UW campus. First Cong is the only church still preparing and serving a meal to the students (others provide funds to cater or order pizza).

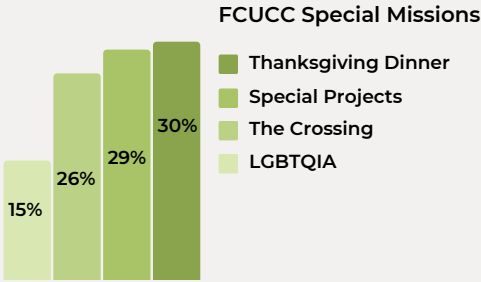
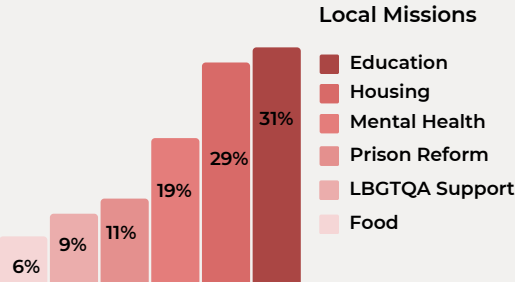
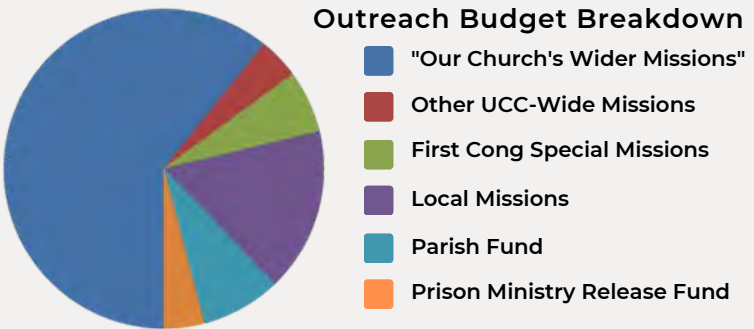


Back to School Backpacks. Through donations and the school supply drive, we filled and donated 112 backpacks to 10 area schools at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. Teachers were so thankful and sent notes of appreciation.



Thanksgiving Meal. The Thanksgiving Meal served a record number of people. 780 meals were prepared for pick up or delivery. We were the only area church that provided meal delivery.

Disaster Buckets. In November, the Congregation filled 100 5-gallon buckets with disaster relief supplies and 100 hygiene kits during Worship. The buckets and hygiene kits were donated to Church World Service (CWS).



Members: Bob Abrams, Katrina Dwinell, Justin Hicks, Kristin Kanitz, Carol Stephen, Darcy Syring

Board of Outreach

The Prison Ministry Project (PMP)

Rev. Jerry Hancock, Director

Restorative Justice

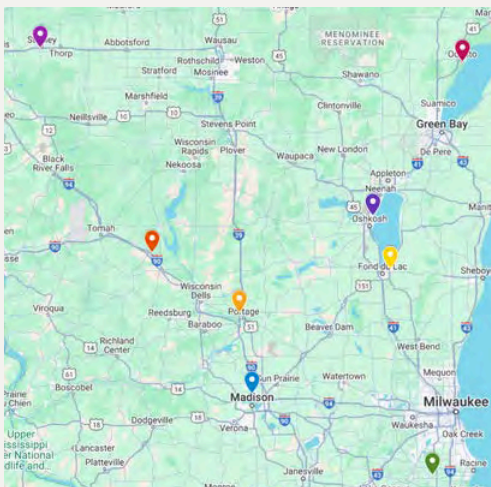
The Prison Ministry Project has been doing Restorative Justice (RJ) in Wisconsin prisons for almost twenty years. Our programs require no religious affiliation. We do not bring an evangelical perspective to the work. But it is important to understand why restorative justice is so important as a ministry of First Congregational. For us, as a Church, it starts with Jesus.

As Father Richard Rohr says in his book *The Universal Christ: Once a person recognizes that Jesus's mission (obvious in all four Gospels) was to heal people, not punish them, the dominant theories of retributive justice begin to lose their appeal and authority.*

Doing RJ in prison requires us to focus on the harm, not just the crime.

- We show equal concern and commitment to victims and offenders, involving both in the process of justice.
- We work toward the restoration of victims, empowering them and responding to their needs as they see them.
- We support offenders while encouraging them to understand, accept, and carry out their obligations.
- We provide opportunities for dialogue, direct or indirect, between victim and offender.
- We find meaningful ways to involve the community and respond to the root causes of crime.
- We encourage reintegration of victims and offenders, rather than coercion and isolation.

Where we did Restorative Justice: As you travel the state, keep in your mind and heart the people who are confined in these places. We hope this will help overcome the public policy that people in prison should be kept out of sight and out of mind.



Stanley Correctional Institution
Certified Peer Support Book Club

Green Bay Correctional Institution
Certified Peer Support Book Club

Wisconsin Resource Center
Certified Peer Support Book Club
Restorative Justice Program

Oshkosh Correctional Institution
Certified Peer Support Book Club

Taycheedah Correctional Institution
Certified Peer Support Book Club
Odyssey Behind Bars
Worship

Robert Ellsworth Correctional
Certified Peer Support Book Club
Restorative Justice Program

Mendota Mental Health Institute
Certified Peer Support Book Club
Expo Safe House
Restorative Justice Program

Columbia Correctional Institution
Certified Peer Support Book Club
Restorative Justice Program
Restorative Justice at Work
American Players Theater poetry workshop

New Lisbon Correctional Institution
Restorative Justice Program

Like Jesus, we are committed to the vision of RJ; committed to the nearly 2,000 victims, offenders, and community members we have brought together to heal.

Board of Property Management

In recent years, the Property Board had projects ranging from replacing the elevator to rehoming a couple of pesky baby raccoons. This last year, with the skills of our Facilities Technician, Chris Rickman, we focused on maintaining and improving our Church home.

You've probably noticed something different by the front entrance – in late August, a driver jumped the curve and flattened the sign that welcomes friends. Fortunately, the driver wasn't injured, but the sign was a total loss. On the bright side, the replacement will be illuminated. Keep an eye on the corner of Breese and University for the replacement that is coming soon.



Summer was a busy time on the 3rd floor finishing the updates in the Sunday School classrooms. Who'd expect to find asbestos in glue holding down the floor tile? Thankfully, a contractor did quick work on the abatement. The garden entrance also received new flooring to welcome new and old friends.

Speaking of visitors, do you realize how many groups use our space? Here's a quick run-down:

- Madison Area Concert Handbells (MACH) practiced in the Dining Room and performed their 24-25 winter and spring concerts in the Sanctuary.
- Incredible acoustics in the Chapel and Sanctuary provided concert space for con vivo, Bobby Joe Valentine, Wesley Bell Ringers (youth from Salt Lake City), and Madison Bach Musicians.
- Madison Area Jugglers could be found keeping balls aloft and passing clubs in the Dining Room when it's too cold to practice outdoors.
- First Cong provided a venue for the annual Make Music Madison event on June 21.
- Conscious Contact, an AA meditation group, met weekly in the Fellowship Room.
- Two successful efforts of the Congregation, Healing House and University Avenue Discovery Center (UADC) continue to provide vital services to the greater community.
- During the week you might have encountered a student from LaFollette learning life skills as part of the school's Vocational Transition program.
- The 2nd floor housed a freezer for UW Frozen Meals, helping students with food insecurity. The Church also provided space for two groups who packaged meals for Rally for Hunger.

These are just our visitors – we all shared our time and treasures with regular meetings, book studies, support groups, walking the labyrinth, and choir rehearsals (Chancel, handbells, drums, and recorder). With so much happening, you'd think the members of the Property Board were like one of the jugglers – constantly keeping one too many balls in the air. Instead, we relied on our collective gifts to coordinate, oversee, and get our hands dirty to ensure our church home provides a safe space for everyone. We are grateful for your support and encouragement.

Members: Pam Cramer, Diane Brockley-Drinkman, Diane Paoni, Bob Stephens, Tony Vandermuss, Dan York

The Foundation

The Foundation, as the endowment arm of the Church, receives gifts, invests them, and distributes funds to further the mission of the Church. A Board of Directors, made up of six directly elected members and five who serve ex-officio, governs the Foundation. At the end of the first quarter in 2025, the Foundation's net assets were just over \$3.4M.

Distributions to the Church in 2024

Main Fund: \$34,800

Varney Fund: \$900

Updike Fund: \$2,100

New Century Funds: \$38,900

"We are partners working together for God."

1 Corinthians 3:9

Page scholarships are available to youth in six area UCC churches. Members of those churches form an advisory committee whose recommendations are reviewed and approved by the Board. The Board approved \$22,500 in Page Scholarships for the year.



\$22,400

approved to Page
Scholarship recipients

The Board also approved the distribution of \$55,500 in Seeds of Hope grants to area non-profits for social justice projects aligned with the mission of the Church.



\$55,000

Seeds of Hope grants
distributed to area non-profits

Seeds of Hope 2024 Recipients

- Atwood Essentials Pantry
- Worker Justice
- Madison Street Medicine
- African American Council of Churches
- Uptown Sanctuary



First Congregational
Church of Madison
FOUNDATION Inc.

Members: Lance Bentley, Ellsworth Brown, Beth Cannestra, Cindy Graham, Eldonna Hazen, Mari McCarty, Lyn Macgregor, Jane Oman, Gary Pine, Donald Taft, Tricia Wheeler

Board of Stewardship

A Shelter in the Storm

The Stewardship Board selected **Shelter in the Storm** as this year's theme. It has been a tumultuous year (nationally and locally) for our members, community, and extended Church family. The Board felt that shelter speaks to many of our concerns and opportunities.

"We have never been intimidated by the size of the order. We have stood up to the task as part of our Christian mandate to feed, to clothe, to visit, to welcome and to lift-up."
—Stewardship campaign letter

Thus, our commitment to sheltering others.

Our Congregation continues to be generous in helping individuals in the community who need assistance with rent, vehicle repair, utilities, and other necessities. The Church assisted others through the Prison Ministry Project, Healing House/Just Dane, sharing the savings from the partial conversion to solar with local organizations through the Seeds of Hope grant program. Our Boards have provided programs for children and adults, and kept the property in good condition so we can share our building with community groups. We provide shelter in many ways and will continue to do so.

The Stewardship Board remains grateful for the generosity of our Congregation as we continue to provide **Shelter in the Storm**.



Members: Cindy Graham, Scott Hanson, Hanns Kuttner, Bill Stephen, Faye Whitaker
Paul Karch; Financial Secretary; Jane Oman, Treasurer

Financial Secretary Report

2024-2025

Paul Karch, Financial Secretary

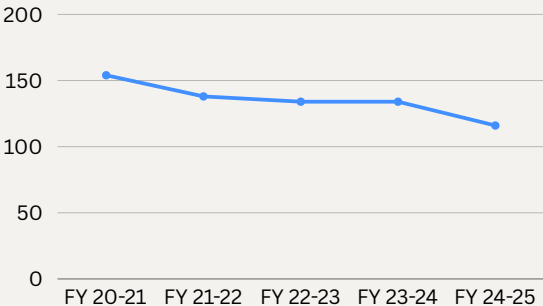
The generosity of our Congregation remained faithful and strong with a continuing trend of increased annual average pledges providing the resources we need for our missions. However . . . there are two concerning trends since 2020, shown on the following charts: 1) The number of pledgers has declined, and 2) The percentage of pledgers and dollars of pledges made by people over 60 compared to pledgers under 60 has increased. It is quite common for the bulk of a congregation’s pledges to come from people over 60, but we would like the percentages to remain about the same.

I welcome any questions, comments or suggestions.
Thank you for allowing me to serve,

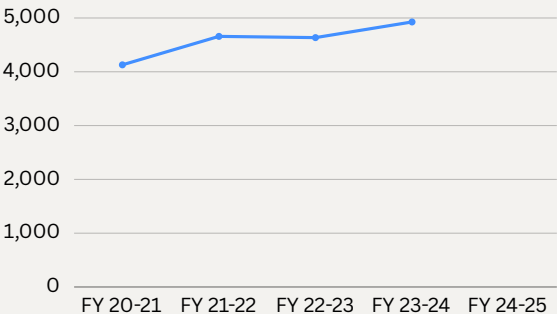
\$ Pledged



of Pledges

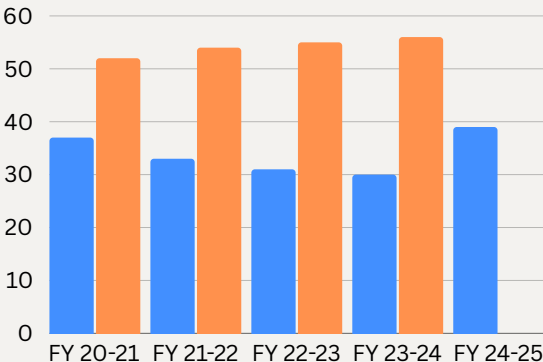


Average Pledge



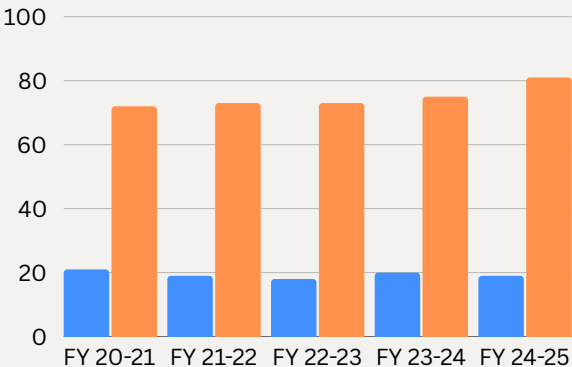
Trend - % of Pledges

Under 60 Over 60



Trend - % of Pledge \$

Under 60 Over 60



2024 Year-In-Review

Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.” Isaiah 60: 1 and 5



I write this year-end Wisconsin Conference UCC summary on Epiphany Day and send it with prayers of light and love to you and your congregation. This day happens to coincide with the certification of Electoral College votes and the formal election of the next president of the United States. Four years ago, our Capitol was under siege by people seeking to undermine a free and fair election. This year we pray that the peace of Epiphany will abide. Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, this year coincides with the holiday commemorating the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In true UCC spirit, I invite you to pray for the dignity, equality and basic human rights of all who are marginalized or poor or feel unwelcome in this country.

The Epiphany season is about Christ's incarnation through the way we embody the teachings of Jesus. The role of the wider United Church of Christ is to resource, equip and support local churches in this vital ministry of incarnation. We do this in myriad ways, from guiding the Search and Call process and facilitating pastoral authorization, care and oversight; to our Damascus Project coursework and the training we offer on “best practices” for the church; to faith formation retreats and the many justice working groups that are eager to support your church's local efforts.

Sixteen months ago, the Conference Board of Directors and staff met in a retreat setting to begin conversations about the restructuring of our Conference life. Those discussions were an acknowledgment of the challenges inherent in maintaining two midlevel judicatories – the associations and Conference – in a Conference less than half the size of our founding membership in 1962. We wondered if unburdening ourselves of the many committee slots in the current structure might allow us to redeploy volunteer time and talent according to people's passions.

Throughout our conversations with stakeholders two ideas stood out like bright epiphanies – first, our desire to nurture UCC relationships beyond the local church, and second, our desire to collaborate in the sharing of ministry ideas and resources. This reframed the question about structural change from What are we letting go of? to What are we living into? Last fall, after several listening sessions and in consultation with Association leaders, the Board and staff recommended that we dissolve our four Associations at the Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting in June. We have scheduled additional conversations in each Association in late February and early March for the purpose of sharing more details and illustrating the ways in which we might connect and support one another for greater ministry impact.

So far, we have nearly completed the proposal for a unified Committee on Ministry with regional representation. We appreciated the generous mission and scholarship support provided by the Associations and have made provisions for continuing them. We have drafted a new framework for membership dues and are preparing to streamline Association finance ledgers. And we have created a graphic that explains the Conference-wide resource web by showing the connections among our many resource hubs and active working groups. Imagine all the innovative ideas that will surface!

I feel the heart of this beloved Conference rejoicing at the advances we made in 2024:

- We launched a new website. Check it out at wcucc.org.
- We offered several marketing resources around the theme “Where God Is Still Speaking.”
- We made progress on the Leadership Forward campaign, with more than \$1.1 million pledged.
- We expanded Damascus Project course offerings and added an online Confirmation program.
- We created a volunteer Legacy Team that will accompany churches in closing decisions.
- We challenged our congregations to surface 20 new potential pastors over two years.
- We continued to strengthen our partnership with United Church Camps Inc.
- We advanced our anti-racism training through a course taken by Board and staff in the fall.

Joyfully submitted,

The Rev. Franz Rigert, Conference Minister

Members Serving the Wider Church

Ann Beaty

Executive Committee, Southwest Association
Board of Directors, Wisconsin Conference UCC
Nominating Committee, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Roger Brooks

Editor, *Shalom* Newsletter, Southwest Association

Eldonna Hazen

Co-Chair, Division of Church and Ministry, Southwest Association
Facilitator, Community of Practice (Clergy Group), Southwest Association
Commission on Ministry, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Paul Karch

Vice Moderator, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Janet Pugh

At-Large Member, Executive Committee, Southwest Association

Jeff Rabe

Facilitator, Community of Practice (Christian Educator Group), Southwest Association

Wayne Shannon

Division of Church and Ministry, Southwest Association

Don Taft

Treasurer, Southwest Association

Jessica Taft

Division of Social Concerns, Southwest Association
Catalyst Team, Wisconsin Conference UCC



Congregational Meeting Minutes

First Congregational United Church of Christ – Madison June 23, 2024

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Nominating Report and Election

Casey Newman, Chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the proposed 2024-25 slate of officers, board members, and other leaders. Newman expressed his appreciation for fellow committee members, existing board members who helped with recruitment, and all who agreed to share their leadership gifts.

The Nominating Committee moved that the slate of candidates for 2024-2025 be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Installation of Church Leadership

Senior Minister Hazen installed the 2024-2025 leaders in a brief service.

As his first act as Moderator, Gary Pine thanked outgoing Moderator Levi Hagen for his leadership. Hagen opened a gift from the church, gift cards to Rick's Eastside Pub in Whitewater and Comedy on State.

Adjournment

Minister Hazen offered a closing prayer, and the meeting adjourned.

Cindy Graham/Katrina Dwinell moved that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

~Respectfully submitted by Laura Pine, Clerk

First Cong

Fun Facts!



51
new YouTube subscribers
308 total



16
animals blessed at the annual
Blessing of the Animals



12
dozen cookies baked by 5th and 6th
graders for the Advent Workshop



32
new page likes,
705 total



14
pies entered in the
Harvest Fest pie contest



11
Performances in the
Sanctuary and Chapel

Follow the Flock



27
Summer
Sheep Sightings



16
outside groups used
the church for meetings
and activities



50
snack packs and 50
hygiene kits packaged for
Friends of State Street



7
minutes spent per table
at the Confirmation
Speed Faithing



4
Advent & Lenten
Vesper Services



Time and Talents Shared

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Acolytes

Alice Bittner
Louisa Chidylo
Eloise Delaney
Josie Delaney
James Floberg
Mikko Fystrom
Alexa Hackel
Kenna Hairgrove
John Hoffman
Emmy Schultz
Izzy Schultz
Samuel Senatori
Indigo Stetson
Evelyn Taft
Micah Taft
Will Tishler
Elliott Vandermuss
Stuart Vandermuss
Claire Ward

After-Worship Refreshments

Melissa Baumann
Ann Beaty
Ruth Benedict
Laura & Peter Chidylo
Cochran Family
Henry Collins
Robin Craig
Sasha Delaney
Maddie & Aaron Dumas
Susan Fischer
Eldonna Hazen
Andrea Hicks
Anne Karch
Sarah Kissel
Mary Lawrence-Wehrle
Katie Leitz
Janet Pugh
Kay Rock
Tracy Simonson
Carol Stephen
Jessica Taft
Brooke & Mike Ward

Baristas

Jeremy Bliss
Chuck Erickson
Sue Jones
Kay Rock
Bill Taft

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Communion Servers

Barbara Arnold
Melissa Baumann
Brenda Burke
Robin Craig
Susan Fischer
Minda Maurer
Maureen McCoy
Mary Metz
Liz Michaels
Bill Stephen
Kathy Taylor
Judith Stephens
Kathy Taylor
Nadine Walsten

Sound Team

Robert Hetzel
Jay Hoffman
Casey Newman
Aiden Noth-Hazen
Thomas Pugh

Sunday Readers

Barbara Arnold
Melissa Baumann
Ruth Benedict
Jeremy Bliss
Kweku Brewoo
Diane Brockley-Drinkman
Brenda Burke
Marlene Duffield
Elizabeth Falendysz
Susan Fischer
Scott Hackel
Julie Kramer
Paul Lorentz
Mari McCarty
Maureen McCoy
Bob Metz
Don Metz
Mary Metz
Nancy Moore
Gary Pine
Janet Pugh
Kathryn Taylor
Faye Whitaker

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Ushers

Barbara Arnold
Jeremy Bliss
Katrina Dwinell
Cindy Graham
Maureen McCoy
Bob Metz
Mary Metz
Nancy Moore
Janet Pugh
Bill Stephen
Carol Stephen
Nadine Walsten

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

Education Team

Jean Abrams
Brenda Burke
Laura Cidylo
Peter Cidylo
Emily Cochran
Patrick Cochran
Robin Craig
Chris Donaldson
Rachel Gundacker
Aaron Dumas
Maddie Dumas
Katrina Dwinell
Jessica Flowers
Barb Grajewski
Jenn Hackel
Sarah Hoffman
Kristin Kanitz
Anne Karch
Joanne Lenburg
Jane Oman
Betta Owens
Amanda Ready
Steve Sheski
Tracy Simonson
Judith Stevens
Kari Stetson
Scott Stetson
Evelyn Taft
Jennifer Tishler
Josh Wimmer

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

Amazing Grace Hosts

Ann Beaty
Ruth Benedict & Gary Pine
Kweku Brewoo
Katrina Dwinell
Kristin Kanitz
Anne & Paul Karch
Joanne & Bob Lenburg
Mari McCarty
Cathy Noth
Spencer Noth-Hazen
Jane Oman
Janet & Thomas Pugh
Jennifer Schroeder
Judith Stephens
Betty Thomson

Trunk-or-Treat Hosts

Melissa Baumann
Ann Beaty & Carol Kreuscher
Terry Christopher
Emily & Patrick Cochran Family
John & Sarah Floberg Family
Kristen & John Kehl-Floberg Family
Joanne & Bob Lenburg
Noth-Hazen Family
Carol & Bill Stephen

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Community Meals

Melissa Baumann
 Cheryl Bentley
 Robin Craig
 Pam Cramer
 Catherine Easter
 Susan Fischer
 Amy Fraser
 Gloria Green
 (Posthumously)
 Karen Gussert
 Marsha Hall
 Jerry Hancock
 Linda Hancock
 Patricia Howarth-Burns
 Suzanne Kilbort
 Jill Larson
 Mary Lawrence-Wehrle
 Joanne Lenburg
 Matthew Lenburg
 Jeanne Marshall
 Kevin McAleese
 Mari McCarty
 Robert Metz
 Sarah Nordberg
 Cathy Noth
 Marcia Olson
 Nancy Payne
 Darby Puglielli
 Dave Puglielli
 Tracy Simonson
 Bill Stephen
 Carol Stephen
 Bob Stephens
 Judith Stephens
 Darcy Syring
 Tom Syring
 Kathy Taylor
 Robert Taylor
 Jody Varney
 Nadine Walsten
 Mary Weber
 Tricia Wheeler
 Katherine Wiggins

Crop Walk

Anne Karch
 Paul Karch
 Joanne Lenburg
 Bob Lenburg
 Cathy Noth
 Janet Pugh

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Prison Ministry Project

Linda Hancock
 Rob Hetzel
 Paul Karch
 Joanne Lenburg
 Paul Lorentz
 Mari McCarty
 Janet Pugh
 Susan Shands
 Judith Stephens
 Marcia Wirt

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Chancel Choir

Dorothy Brown
 Ellsworth Brown
 Wendy Coleman
 Chuck Erickson
 Doug Erickson
 Gloria Green
 (Posthumously)
 Mike Green
 Pat Howarth-Burns
 Robert Johnson
 Sue Jones
 Trish Karls
 Bret Lortie
 Zachary Mark
 Mari McCarty
 Don Metz
 Allyson Mills
 Thomas Pugh
 Ronald Shaw
 Jennifer Tishler
 Faye Whitaker

Handbell Choir

Melissa Baumann
 Ruth Benedict
 Amy Bogen
 Sarah Bogen
 Linda Briesemeister
 Wendy Coleman
 Gloria Green
 (Posthumously)
 Mike Green
 Ronnie Hess
 Paul Karch
 Esperana Lopez
 Nancy Moore
 Sarah Nordberg
 Kay Rock
 Judith Stephens
 Jennifer Tishler
 Conner White

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Drums

Melissa Baumann
 Kweku Brewoo
 Emily Brooks
 Katrina Dwinell
 Kristin Kanitz
 Cassandra Kight
 Liz Michaels
 Marcia Olson
 Jane Oman
 Nancy Payne

Instrumentalists

Ruby Kotlarek (flutist)

GENERAL MINISTRIES

Accessibility Committee

Robin Craig
Karen Gussert
Kristi Mason (Posthumously)
Terry McLaren
Jeanne Tyler

Adult Education Committee

Melissa Baumann
Laurie Dennis
Julie Kramer
Matthew Lenburg
James Taylor
Nadine Walsten

Environmental Justice Committee

Scott Hackel
Melissa Baumann
Jessica Flowers
Maureen McCoy
Marty Simonson
Bob Stephens
Judith Stephens
Nadine Walsten
Kathy Wiggins

Event Dishwashers

Levi Hagen
Andrea Hicks
Justin Hicks
Will Hicks
Megan Senatori
Samuel Senatori
Bill Taft

Nominating Committee

Ruth Benedict
Susan Fischer
Cindy Graham
Casey Newman

Plastic Sorting & Drop-Off

Melissa Baumann
Scott Hackel
Jessica Flowers
Maureen McCoy
Liz Michaels
Marty Simonson
Judith Stephens

GENERAL MINISTRIES

SCRIP Sales

Patrick Cochran
Catherine Easter
Susan Fischer
Cindy Graham
Anne Karch
Paul Karch
Nancy Moore
Jane Oman
Bill Stephen

BUILDING MINISTRIES

320 Lathrop Planning Committee

Ruth Benedict
Hanns Kuttner
Sarah Kissel
Tom Syring

Chapel Art Curator

Linda Hancock

Garden Helpers

Lance Bentley
Wendy Coleman
Robin Craig
Gloria Green
(Posthumously)
Anne Karch
Joanne Lenburg
Maureen McCoy
Bob Metz
Jessica Taft

Office Volunteers

Melissa Baumann
Ruth Benedict
Robin Craig
Cindy Graham
Joanne Lenburg
Maureen McCoy
Betta Owens
Nancy Payne
Janet Pugh
Amanda Ready
Carol Stephen
Faye Whitaker
Fred Wileman

BUILDING MINISTRIES

PLAT (Parking Lot Attendant Team)

Kweku Brewoo
Beth Cannestra
Patrick Cochran
Matt Flowers
Levi Hagen
Paul Karch
Gary Pine
Marty Simonson
Bob Stephens

Tech Support

Jeanne Marshall

Weekly Bank Deposit

Bob Metz

Thank you to all the volunteers and donors who contributed to our Thanksgiving Meal, Advent Workshop, dinner at The Crossing, Magic Pride Festival, and numerous other community events and collections.

Thank you to those who made and donated prayer shawls.

We appreciate all you do!



First Congregational
United Church of Christ

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53726
firstcongrmadison.org