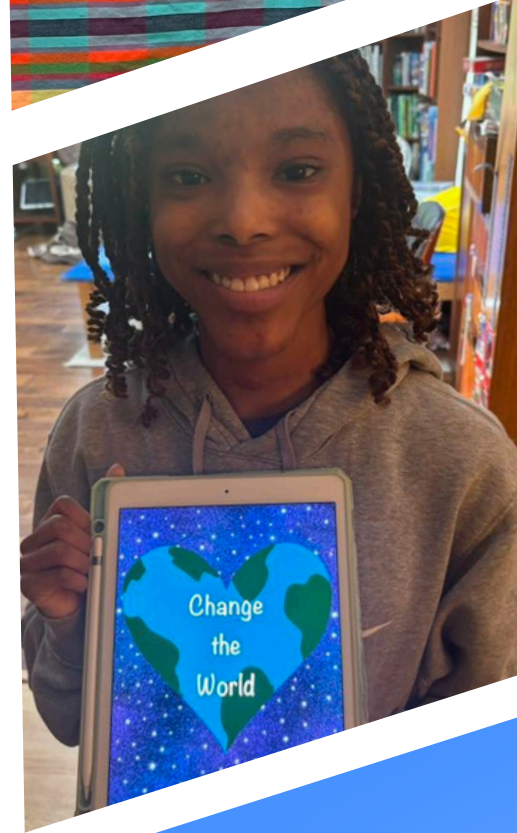
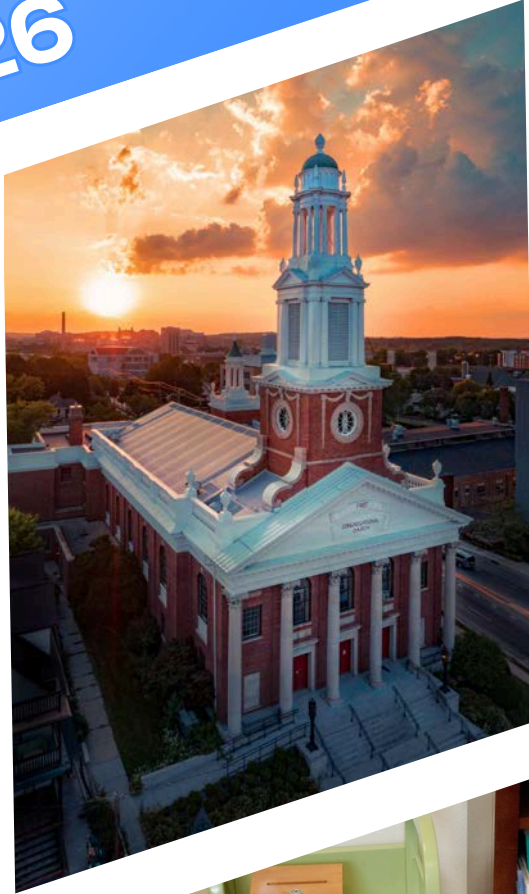


2025-2026



First Congregational
United Church of Christ

ANNUAL REPORT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53726 firstcongmadison.org

Welcome!

*From everyone to whom much has been given,
much will be required. – Luke 12:48*

Sometimes this line from the Gospel of Luke can feel a little daunting. First, have we really been given that much? Second, we often don't like being required to do something. And third, we feel as though life itself is pretty discouraging right now. Those three statements are exactly why it is so important for us to be "in community" with each other, and to "empower community" beyond the walls of First Congregational United Church of Christ.



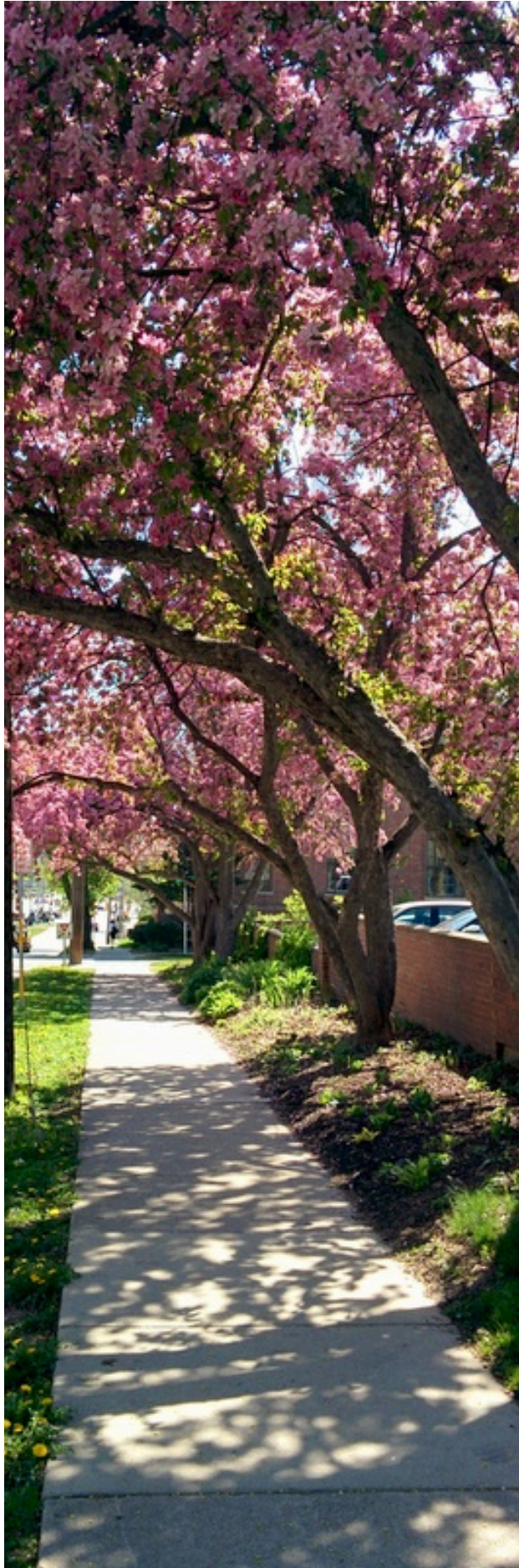
We have each been challenged over the last year, whether it is with our own personal health concerns, the health concerns of people we love, the loss of someone we loved, the loss of friends, or the challenges presented to us by a society that has become more and more divided by political views. Being in community helps us to better see what we have been given and how we can use our gifts to empower others.

Throughout the pages of this Annual Report, you will see photos and graphs, read narratives of how the members, friends, and Boards have generously shared their time, talents, and treasures in community, and how we empower the wider community and world. I see people regularly using what they have been given when they:

- Sit with others after Worship—visiting, laughing, crying
- Provide refreshments after Worship
- Care for our gardens
- Provide music in Worship
- Prepare food and volunteer for the Community Meal at Luke House
- Serve on a board
- Teach Sunday School
- Staff the CROP Walk
- Pledge to the Annual Campaign
- Read, usher, or prepare Communion
- Staff a table at the Pride events
- Give a kid a "fist bump"
- Provide financial support for the four UCC special offerings
- Provide financial resources to prevent an eviction, or relieve other stressful situations

I hope as you scroll or thumb through the Annual Report, you will celebrate this cherished community and its accomplishments. And, I hope it empowers you to widen the sense of community in the world. We have been given much, and there is much required of us: to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

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

Mary Schar

(June 5, 1928 — January 19, 2026)

Carol Toussaint

(April 2, 1929 — November 27, 2025)

John Toussaint

(October 24, 1925 — August 15, 2025)



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



Rev. Eldonna Hazen
Senior Minister



Rev. Ann Beaty
Associate Minister



Rev. Jerry Hancock
Prison Ministry Project Director



Austin Becksvort
Organist



Jeff Rabe
Children & Youth Ministry
Director



Wade Troyer
Accompanist



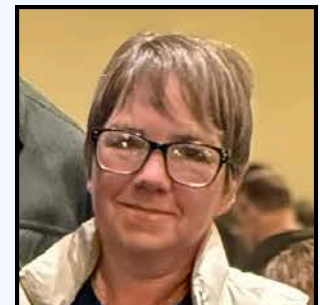
Agustin Garcia
Building Maintenance



Jennifer Flaten
Bookkeeper



Chris Rickman
Facilities Technician



Julie Sheahan
Communications Coordinator

Hourly Staff

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

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

Music: Allyson Mills, Zachary Mark, section leaders

Heather Yonker: Director of Music Ministries, 12/12/2022 - 04/21/2026

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 Members-at-large, all of whom are elected by the Congregation. Ex-officio members include the Senior Pastor, Church Treasurer, and Clerk. The Council makes decisions on broader church issues and larger expenditures, and then delegates implementation to the appropriate Board or Staff.

The Council currently has three standing task forces: 320 Lathrop Street, Communications, and Environmental Justice. This past year, a new ad hoc task force was created for developing a partnership with the UW Business School Senior Capstone Project. The ad hoc task force (Barb Arnold, Beth Cannestra, Betta Owens, Judith Stephens, and Josh Wimmer) used the priorities from the mission visioning process, completed by all Boards, to develop a proposal for the Capstone Project. The students were asked to contact various organizations, whose missions align with ours, to find out their office/meeting space needs, and to research and provide benchmarks for rental rates based on area rental and utility costs. Cathie Easter and Tom Syring provided support to the students throughout the semester-long project. We would like to continue working with the UW on other projects and build on this valuable partnership.

The 320 Lathrop Street Task Force has continued to progress with plans to develop the property with the goal of providing affordable housing for UW students. Strang was hired to complete a condition survey and contracted to complete an architectural design that Operation Fresh Start can use to rehabilitate the property. The 320 Task Force will propose another Capstone Project to develop suggested management structures for the house once it is occupied.

The Solar for Justice Grant Committee awarded its first grant to Midwest Mujeres. The \$15,000 grant funds were obtained from energy savings from the Church solar panels.

The Church continues to be a vibrant and engaged community, with many new and younger faces participating in services and activities. This bodes well for the future of our Congregation.

Members: Beth Cannestra, Moderator; Sarah Kissel, Moderator-Elect; Susan Fischer, Clerk; Jane Oman, Treasurer; Paul Karch, Financial Secretary; Barbara Arnold, Brenda Burke, Casey Newman, Josh Wimmer, At-Large; Ruth Benedict, Christian Education; Melissa Baumann, Community Life; Judith Stephens, Deacons; Justin Hicks, Outreach; Diane Brockley-Drinkman, Property; Bill Stephen, Stewardship



◀ Incoming and Outgoing Moderators

Annual Meeting June 2025 ▼



Congregational Meeting Minutes

First Congregational United Church of Christ – Madison

June 22, 2025 11:10 a.m. In-person and Zoom

Moderator Gary Pine called the meeting to order when quorum was reached. There were approximately 80 members participating. He welcomed members attending physically or virtually.

FCUCC Year in Review: A video highlighting the 2024–2025-year work of the Boards, all Church activities, worship, music, and more was presented.

Approval of 2023-2024 annual meeting, June 23, 2023:



Diane Brockley-Drinkman moved to approve the minutes from last year as written. Bill Taft provided the second. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Annual Budget: Treasurer Jane Oman presented the proposed budget. First Congregational continues to be debt free. The budget includes a modest increase in income from building use and a small pay increase for staff. Financial Secretary Paul Karch described the Pledge income process and remains confident that the budget as proposed will be supported. The EC has endorsed the budget as presented.

Barbara Arnold moved that the Congregation pass the budget as proposed. Joanne Lenburg provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

Proposal to change the Articles of Incorporation: Paul Karch

Paul Karch has been working diligently on getting First Congregational into the current century from the 1800's when First Congregational was first incorporated. Since these articles have never been updated, it has been increasingly difficult for the church to do banking and grant writing as we do not currently exist in the DFI database with the State of Wisconsin. Paul drafted an amendment to our Incorporation status which was endorsed by the EC. This change requires Congregational approval and signatures of five members. This action does not impact the constitution of our church.

Karch offered the following motion: **Move to adopt and file the Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation.** Melissa Baumann provided the second. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Report from 320 Lathrop Committee: Ruth Benedict

Ruth provided the Congregation with the recent history of use of this house. Possibilities for sale of this property are elusive for a variety of reasons. The most recent thinking of the committee is to consider using it for student housing for underserved students. Renovations would be necessary. The committee does not have a proposal to bring forth at this time but felt strongly that the congregation knows that the committee continues to look for ways to effectively use the property.

continued on page 21

Board of Christian Education

The Board of Christian Education (CE) nurtures 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, had an enlightening and fulfilling year.

Adult Education and Programming:

- In October, hosted Author, Pastor, and Activist John Pavlovitz for a community lecture on the rise of Christian Nationalism; John also preached in Worship
- Jeff Rabe continues to present “The Singular They,” a gender workshop, for congregations across Wisconsin
- Offered a training for people interested in learning CPR and using an Automated External Defibrillator (AED)
- *Hope is Here* book read and Zoom discussion with Author Luther Smith Jr.
- Men’s Fellowship, Women’s Book Study, and other regular programming continued
- Fostered young adult connections with after Worship lunches and a service project for Friends of State Street
- The Board is working on an intergenerational event for Fall 2026 on the impact of screentime, the internet, and social media on mental health



John Pavlovitz



CPR Training

Children & Families:

- Sunday School themes included Joseph in Egypt, The Nativity, Be the Change, and Jesus, the Teacher
- Unveiled the “Book Nook” in the 3rd floor elevator lobby, offering a diverse selection of titles
- Six children attended Our Whole Lives (OWL) class designed for 5th & 6th Graders



Hope is Here Book Study

Youth:

- Participated in five service projects including volunteering for the Crop Walk and Babies & Beyond
- Nurtured team-building with Escape Room outings and Youth Retreats
- Hosted two fundraisers for community organizations: The Newlywed Game: “Parent Edition” and Pumpkin Carving
- Seven youth enrolled in Confirmation Class; six joined First Cong on May 17



Young Adult Service Project

Members: Ruth Benedict, Ann Beaty (Ex-officio), Laura Chidylo, Laurie Dennis (Adult Education Representative), Matt Flowers, Rachel Gundacker, Jeff Rabe, Director of Children and Youth Ministries (Ex-officio), Jeanne Tyler (Accessibility Representative)

Board of Christian Education Children and Youth Ministries

Jeff Rabe, Director

It was a busy year for Children, Youth, and Family ministries. The Sunday School program met regularly during the school year and continued programming over summer and winter breaks thanks to a staff of dedicated volunteers. Monthly programming offered both service and fellowship opportunities for First Cong Families. Youth had a year of community building and service with bonding activities like an escape room adventure, carving pumpkins, raking lawns, Youth Bible Study, and volunteering at Babies & Beyond.



Seven adult First Cong members shared their faith stories with the Confirmation Class at the annual Speed Faithing event. To help students understand the wide spectrum of faith represented in the Congregation, they talked with each member for seven minutes.



1,500

baby diapers sorted & packaged by youth for Babies & Beyond



The Lenten Intergenerational Art Project “A Trace of Your Presence” gave folks of all ages a chance to participate in a hands-on project to create a banner that was revealed at the Children & Youth Sunday Service on May 10.



333

sq.ft. of hands traced for the Lenten art project



Offered two service projects bringing families together to wrap tableware for the Thanksgiving Meal (50+ people gathered!) and create Valentine Cards for Elders in the community.



300

dollars raised through the Youth Jack-O-Lantern sale to support the Trevor Project



A traditional Christmas Pageant, with a cast and crew of 26+, shared the story of the arrival of Baby Jesus. *The Inn Crowd* portrayed the class system and revealed its ongoing persistence today.



6

letters sent to our elected officials

Board of Community Life (BCL)

The Board of Community Life (BCL) works to foster personal and social connections among members and visitors through a variety of programs and activities. We encourage people wanting to start a new group or activity, and work with other Boards to develop community.

All-Church Potluck Picnic. A heat advisory in August relocated the picnic to the church Dining Room, but folks remained in a festive picnic mood.



Corn Maze. Participants enjoyed Alpine Ridge Farm and Corn Maze. Once participants found their way out, they enjoyed fresh cider and apple cider donuts.

Harvest Fest: Co-sponsored with Christian Education (CE), the Fest marked the start of Sunday School with a hearty chili and cornbread lunch, followed by a pie contest and the youth prepared a fun game to entertain the children.

Advent Workshop. With the help of CE and past BCL members, we prepared a pasta and salad lunch and offered a variety of Christmas-themed crafts for kids and adults to make for gifts.



Mardi Gras. The event featured live folk and Cajun music, a Louisiana-themed lunch, and fabulous baked goods contributed by the Congregation..

Game Time. In March, folks gathered after Worship for pizza, and enjoyed board games and card playing.



Ice Cream Social. In Worship, we welcomed new members – the 2026 Confirmands – and recognized our long-term members (50+ years) with an ice cream social.

After-Worship Refreshment! (AWR). BCL provides juice and gluten-free cookies/crackers, but wonderful volunteers provided sweet treats and vegan snacks, making sure there is something for everyone.

55 Alive! This popular program for people over 55 (actually, anyone is welcome!) includes lunch and a local speaker. Nine programs were held last year with topics covering faith and spiritual practice; social, environmental, and restorative justice; and music – contemporary and classical.



Members: Melissa Baumann, Levi Hagen, 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.

For World Communion Sunday, in October, Deacons collaborated once again 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!

We plan to gradually replace or refurbish “tired” or unsafe Christmas decorations starting with the glass Edison bulbs that decorate the balcony pine swags. New lights will be plastic, energy-saving LEDs.

Deacon’s ongoing project to make the Narthex more welcoming has turned into a collaborative effort drawing members from boards of Deacons, Community Life, and Property, who have formed a subcommittee.

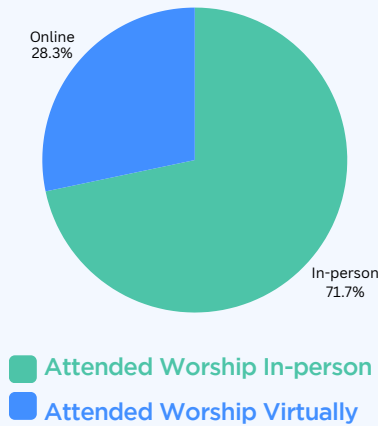
You may have noticed our ushers now wear light blue vests. Deacons spearheaded this initiative to make it easier for newcomers to identify “helpers” in the congregation.



World Communion Sunday



WORSHIP ATTENDANCE



1
Baptisms

6
Confirmands

8
New Members

Members: Kristen Kehl-Floberg, Liz Michaels, Carol Stephen, Judith Stephens, Nadine Walsten

Board of Deacons - Music Ministries

Heather Yonker, Director 12/12/2022 - 04/21/2026

Musicians shared their time and talents in Worship leading us with their voices, piano, organ, drums, bells, recorders, guitar, flute, clarinet, French horn, trombone, tuba, and trumpet. We engaged with music personally as we sang, clapped, or prayed with our voices. We fostered our greater music community providing rehearsal and concert space to outside groups.

First Cong's Recorder Group were one of several musical groups and musicians participating for All-Music Sunday.

Palm Sunday brought the Handbell and Chancel Choir together for the Postlude.



The Family of Sue Bogen donated new handbell cabinets in her memory.



The Church hosted concerts by The Wesley Bell Ringers, con vivo!, Madison Bach Musicians, UW-Eau Claire Singers, and the Association of Church Musicians (ACM) and Madison Chapter American Guild of Organists Organ Recital (AGO). In June, three groups played for Make Music Madison.

Thank you, Heather, pictured above (center), for sharing your musical vision and talents.

Board of Outreach

The Outreach Board oversees an annual budget of \$123,700 to use for serving our local community. In addition, our Congregation has contributed \$8,700 to the UCC special offerings – *Neighbors in Need, Christmas Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen The Church.*

Magic Pride Festival. FCUCC staffed an informational booth at the annual Magic Pride Festival, hosted by Outreach LGBTQ+ Community Center. It was a great opportunity to personally greet event attendees and share information about our open and affirming mission.



Magic Pride Festival

Back to School Backpacks. Through the generous donations of school supplies and monetary gifts from the Congregation, we filled and donated 105 backpacks to seven area schools and five local community organizations serving families. Teachers, social workers, and staff were so grateful to be able to share these resources with their students, from elementary through high school ages.



Backpack Collection

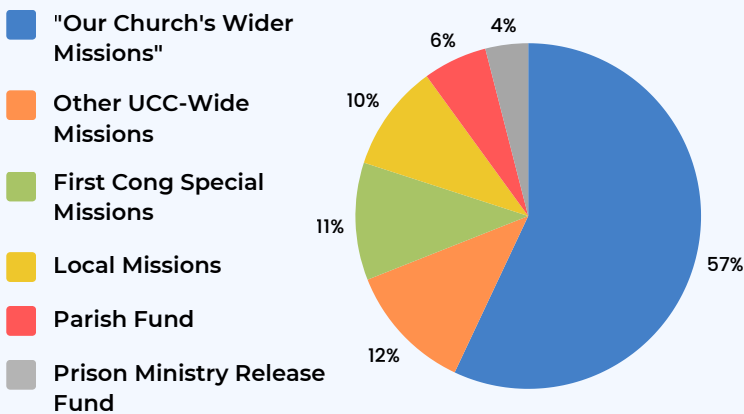
World Communion Sunday. Of the organizations the Outreach Board contributes to, eight joined us in Worship on World Communion Sunday. Each organization staffed a table that permitted the Congregation to explore and learn first-hand about the many ways our generosity benefits the community.

Thanksgiving Meal. 750 meals were prepared for pick-up or delivery throughout the community. Thank you to the leadership of the Thanksgiving Meal Committee and all the volunteers who made it a success!

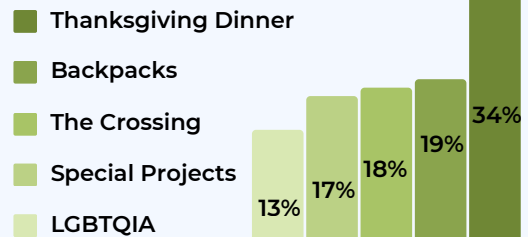


Thanksgiving Meal

OUTREACH BUDGET BREAKDOWN



FCUCC SPECIAL MISSIONS



Members: Bob Abrams, Pam Asquith, Jason Bittner, Katrina Dwinell, Justin Hicks, Kristin Kanitz

Board of Outreach

The Prison Ministry Project



This is the final annual report of The Prison Ministry Project. I will be retiring on Sunday, January 3, which is the twenty-first anniversary of First Congregational's commitment to respond to Jesus' command in the Gospel of Mathew to visit men and women in prison. In January, The Prison Ministry Project will transition to The Wisconsin Prison Partnership, a free standing charitable corporation that will continue and expand the work we have started. This is a very exciting development.

In this final report I want to share somethings we have learned in doing this ministry.

We know this ministry has been all about "going." We have done more than 100 programs (see page 14) inside Wisconsin prisons with two thousand residents and hundreds of volunteers.

We know these programs have one thing in common: they create empathy. The secret sauce of creating empathy is sharing a risk. Going to prison is a risk that our volunteers take. Being vulnerable in a restorative justice circle is a huge risk for people in prison. It is this shared risk that creates empathy, and empathy can change people's lives.

We know the importance of presence. Just showing up in prison every week is the most important thing volunteers bring to our Prison Ministry. Just showing up to show the men and women inside that they are not forgotten by people on the outside. It is how we walk the talk of being Christians.

We know the importance of listening. We know people are really good at figuring things out and changing their lives, if you give them a chance. If you just listen with compassion and take the risk of empathy.

Finally, we know how much this place—First Congregational United Church of Christ, 1609 University Avenue—matters. For twenty years it has been a beacon of hope to men and women in prison.

I am convinced that Jesus believes that going to prison is important work for Christians. This new partnership will allow us to do that work even better.

Thanks be to God.
Rev. Jerry Hancock JD M.Div.
Director, The Prison ministry Project
Director Emeritus, The Wisconsin Prison Partnership

INSTITUTIONAL VISITS BY THE PRISON MINISTRY PROJECT

2005

Columbia ('05)

2007

Columbia (Spring '07)

Columbia (Fall '07)

2008

Red Granite (Spring '08)

Red Granite (Fall '08)

Columbia (Fall '08)

2009

Red Granite (Jan. '09)

Columbia (Spring '09)

Red Granite (Nov. '09)

Columbia (Spring '09)

Fox Lake (Summer '09)

Columbia (Fall '09)

2010

Oak Hill (Spring '10)

Columbia (Spring '10)

Red Granite (Spring '10)

Fox Lake (Summer '10)

*WRC (Fall '10)

Fox Lake (Fall '10)

Red Granite (Fall '10)

2011

Oak Hill (Spring '11)

Columbia (Spring '11)

WRC (Spring '11)

Fox Lake (Summer '11)

Red Granite (Summer '11)

New Lisbon (Fall '11)

Fox Lake (Summer '11)

Fox Lake (Fall '11)

Red Granite (Fall '11)

2012

Fox Lake (Summer '12)

WRC-Men (Spring '12)

New Lisbon (Fall '12)

Fox Lake (Fall '12)

2013

Fox Lake (Spring '13)

New Lisbon (Fall '13)

2014

New Lisbon (Spring '14)

WRC (Summer '14)

New Lisbon (Fall '14)

Fox Lake (Fall '14)

2015

Fox Lake (Spring '15)

New Lisbon (Spring '15)

WRC (Summer '15)

Fox Lake (Fall '15)

New Lisbon (Fall '15)

2016

Fox Lake (Spring '16)

New Lisbon (Spring '16)

WRC (Summer '16)

New Lisbon (Fall '16)

Fox Lake (Fall '16)

2017

Fox Lake (Spring '17)

New Lisbon (Spring '17)

Fox Lake (Fall '17)

New Lisbon (Fall '17)

2018

New Lisbon (Spring '18)

Fox Lake (Spring '18)

WRC-Men (Summer '18)

Fox Lake (Fall '18)

New Lisbon (Spring '18)

New Lisbon (Fall '18)

2019

Fox Lake (Spring '19)

New Lisbon (Spring '19)

WRC-Women (Spring '19)

WRC-Men (Summer '19)

Fox Lake (Fall '19)

New Lisbon (Fall '19)

2021

WRC-Women I-Zoom (Fall '21)

WRC-Women II-Zoom (Fall '21)

Oak Hill (Fall '21)

WRC-CPS Book Club (Fall '21)

2022

WRC-Women (Spring '22)

WRC-Men (Winter '22)

New Lisbon (Winter '22)

Waupun-CPS

Book Club (Fall '22)

Waupun (Fall '22)

**WWRC-CPS

Book Club (Fall '22)

2023

New Lisbon (Winter '23)

Ellsworth-CPS Book Club

(Winter '23)

Ellsworth (Spring '23)

WRC-Men (Spring '23)

WWRC-Women (Spring '23)

Green Bay-CPS Book Club

(Spring '23)

Columbia-CPS Book Club

(Fall '23)

2024

Mendota Mental Health

Book Club (Winter '24)

New Lisbon (Spring '24)

Ellsworth (Spring '24)

Columbia (Spring '24)

WRC (Spring '24)

Taycheedah (Spring '24)

***RJ on the Outside

(Spring '24)

Oshkosh-CPS Book Club

(Spring '24)

WWRC (Summer '24)

Columbia (Fall '24)

New Lisbon (Fall '24)

2025

Columbia RJ at Work: APT
(Winter '25)

Columbia (Spring '25)

Robert Ellsworth (Spring '25)

New Lisbon (Spring '25)

Taycheedah (Spring '25)

WRC (Spring '25)

WWRC (Summer '25)

RJ on the Outside-

EXPO House (Summer '25)

Columbia-RJ at Work

(Summer '25)

Columbia-Life & Art (Fall '25)

RJ on the Outside-CHM

(Fall '25)

2026

Columbia RJ at Work: APT
(Winter '26)

Columbia RJ at Work: Ubuntu
(Winter '26)

Columbia (Spring '26)

Ellsworth (Spring '26)

Green Bay-CPS Book Club

(Spring/Fall '26)

RJ at Work-Refresher

(Spring '26)

New Lisbon (Fall '26)

Mendota Mental Health

Book Club (Spring/Fall '26)

WRC (Spring '26)

WWRC (Summer '26)

* WRC - WI Resource Center

** WWRC - Womens WI Resource Center

*** RJ - Restorative Justice

Board of Property Management

As you wait for the light at Old University and Breese Terrace, you may notice the sign (knocked down nearly two summers ago) has still not been replaced. Wonder what's up with that? The Property Board's contractor continues work to find a design that fits with the historical neighborhood. For some reason, the mirrored disco ball with rainbow LEDs doesn't meet the proper aesthetic.

Making your way up to the main entrance, you see all the perfectly tuck-pointed masonry as you enter the Narthex. A warm greeting from an usher, and you find your favorite pew – don't Chris and Agustin do a great job keeping the floors clean and woodwork polished? It's a warm Sunday morning, and everyone is thankful for the cool air from the HVAC system. When the kids come back from Sunday School, they excitedly tell you Jeff explained how the new locking classroom doors will keep them safe. As the last notes of the closing hymn resonate, you say a silent prayer, asking God to make those locks obsolete in God's house of intentional love and peace.

There's an event in the dining room afterwards – seeing the line of mobility-challenged folx, you lead your family to the back stairwell, passing the UADC daycare offices and classrooms along the way. Walking past the Fellowship Room, you see the carpet has been updated this year, and your partner notes that the room looks so inviting! The tables are filling up, so you find a seat next to Gary and Ruth and slide the chair back on the shiny terrazzo floor.



After a wonderful lunch put on by the Board of Community Life, your kids help with cleanup, joining their youth group friends at the dishwasher. Condiments and salad dressing need to go back in the reffridgerator – wow, is this new, you ask?

You make your way out via the Lathrop entrance, and wonder who oversees routine maintenance, deals with emergencies like leaking pipes, broken water heaters, well-used kitchen appliances, and makes those improvements every year.

These are the highlights of our efforts, trials, and tribulations this past year. Our collective talents take the fiduciary responsibilities with YOUR treasures seriously.

Yours in Faith,
The Property Board

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

The Foundation



The Foundation is the endowment arm of the Church. It 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 2024, the Foundation's net assets were \$3,777,775. .

Distributions to the Church in 2025

Main Fund: \$34,600

Varney Fund: \$900

Updike Fund: \$2,100

New Century Funds: \$35,800

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 \$22,000 in Page Scholarships for the year.



The Board also approved a distribution of \$56,500 in Seeds of Hope grants to area non-profits for social justice grants aligned with the mission of the church.

Seeds of Hope 2025 Recipients

- Eastmorland Community Center
- Prison Ministry Project
- Leopold Elementary School Garden
- Neighborhood House
- Purpose Grown
- Worker Justice



"We are partners working together for God."

1 Corinthians 3:9

Members: Lance Bentley, Beth Cannestra, Cindy Graham, Eldonna Hazen, Sarah Kissel, Hanns Kuttner, Mari McCarty, Lyn Macgregor, Jane Oman, Donald Taft, Tricia Wheeler

Board of Stewardship

The 24-25 campaign, *Shelter in the Storm*, captured the moment of concern and anxiety. Our generous congregation provided financial help to those needing assistance as federal guidelines changed and assistance programs were cut. We were able to help many with rental and utility assistance and provided gas and food cards to those struggling to make ends meet. This season of giving focuses on our neighbors.



For this year's theme, the Stewardship Board selected *Empowering Community*. Our outlook is forward, helping our neighbors and our community. Our goal is to offer community support through our work with Boards by offering intentional programming that fosters community. We've engaged our children through Sunday School, art projects, and the Christmas Pageant. More recently, we've encouraged community with the inter-generational production of *Our Town*.

Empowering our First Congregational community has allowed us to reach out to our neighbors. Our Congregation, through our Boards, continues to be generous in helping individuals in the community who need assistance with rent, vehicle repair, heat, electric, and other necessities. We have assisted others through the Prison Ministry Project and Healing House/Just Dane, and by sharing the savings from our partial conversion to solar through the Solar for Justice Grant. In the spring of 2026, the first grant was awarded to Midwest Mujeres. Keeping our property in good condition allows us to provide practice space for a variety of groups, and meeting rooms for civic and recovery organizations.

We are able to *Empower Community* because of you.

The Stewardship Board remains grateful for the generosity of our Congregation.



Members: Cindy Graham, Sue Jones, Hanns. Kuttner, Susan Shands, Bill Stephen, Faye Whitaker Paul Karch; Financial Secretary; Jane Oman, Treasurer

Financial Secretary Report

2025-2026

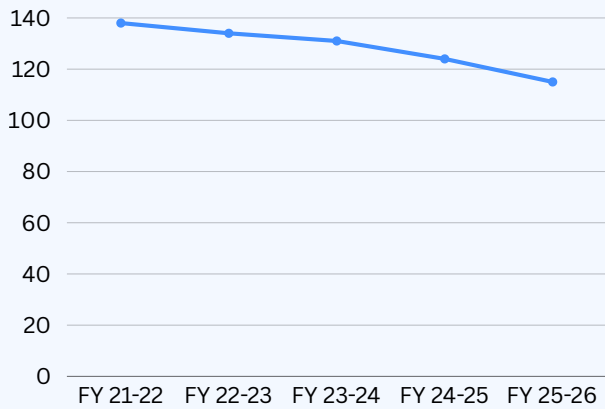
Paul Karch, Financial Secretary

The generosity of our Congregation remains faithful and strong with a continuing trend of steady contributions providing the resources we need for our missions as shown on the charts below. However, we continue to have a declining number of pledges and we would like more pledges from younger members.

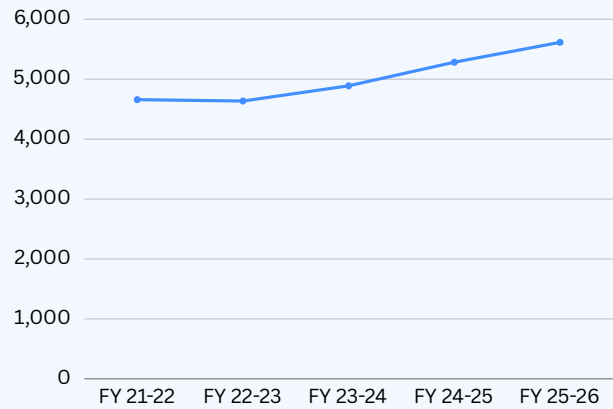
I have enjoyed and been honored to serve as your Financial Secretary for the past five years. Please let me know if you have any questions.

– Paul Karch

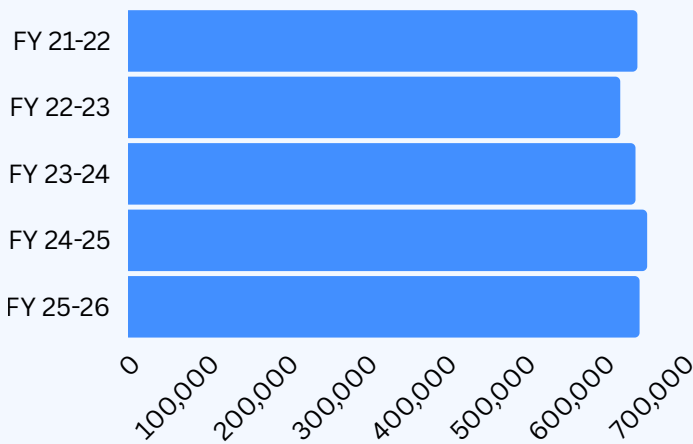
of Pledges



Average Pledge



\$ Pledged



2025 Year-In-Review

Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ



2025 was a year of transition for the Wisconsin Conference as we dissolved our four associations and shifted to a unified Committee on Ministry and single governance structure. This move followed two years of conversation around the increasing challenges of sustaining the traditional association-Conference structure.

Several other conferences had already made this change, and we knew it was important to acknowledge the end of our associations. But even more important was to ask ourselves, “What do we value and what do we most need to move forward?” Our conversations identified two priorities: We value relationships across the Conference, and we need to make it easy to share resources for ministry.

In 2026, we will launch two new initiatives. The first is a listening tour, Covenant Conversations, intended to learn the passions, successes and struggles of all our 204 congregations. These meetings in local churches will be facilitated by a combination of Committee on Ministry care team members and Conference board and staff members. We want to hear your stories and learn how we can better support one another.

Second, we will launch a digital “resource network” on our website. We see this as an efficient way to connect human and material resources needed for all sorts of ministry initiatives, such as best practices for congregations, ideas for justice and community-based ministries, and affinity groups for church treasurers, historians, pastoral relations teams, and others.

The missions and scholarships of the former associations have been folded into the Conference budget. The concept of dues is shifting in 2026 to reflect the core operating costs of the Wisconsin Conference (\$5 per member annually). These “membership dues” constitute the base commitment of every congregation. Our Church’s Wider Mission, plus special offerings, fund all the missions and ministries of our Conference life, providing every congregation much needed resourcing in the areas of search and call, conflict transformation, strategic planning, ministerial support and authorization, camps and retreat centers, and online theological education through the Damascus Project.

Beyond that, we provide disaster relief funds, global missions, peace and justice advocacy, and support for the national setting of the UCC, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Council for Health and Human Service Ministries. Additionally, our grant programs for authorized ministers offer continuing education scholarships, educational debt reduction, annual scholarships to Members in Discernment, and ministerial assistance for urgent needs. And we continue to provide more than \$50,000 annually for Catalyst grants to support innovative new ministries in local churches.

This past year marked a significant milestone for the Wisconsin Foundation UCC. Total funds invested now exceed \$20 million. These funds are managed by The Investment Fund for Foundations, or TIFF, which has achieved stellar returns with low fees while focusing on socially responsible investing. We hope your congregation will consider this investment opportunity.

We are blessed to have generous congregations, gifted pastors, committed lay people, an incredible Conference staff and a deeply dedicated board of directors. Together, by God’s grace, we will journey into the future with a bold vision and as a faithful witness to the love of Jesus.

Gratefully submitted,
The Rev. Franz Rigert, Conference Minister

Members Serving the Wider Church



First Cong Members at the 2025 WI Conference Annual Meeting

Ann Beaty

Board of Directors, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Board of Directors Executive Committee, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Nominating Committee, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Roger Brooks

Editor, *Shalom* Newsletter, Southern Region

Eldonna Hazen

Chair of the Executive Committee on Ministry, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Facilitator, Community of Practice (Clergy Group), Wisconsin Conference UCC

Jeff Rabe

Facilitator, Community of Practice (Christian Educator Group), Wisconsin Conference UCC

Wayne Shannon

Member in Discernment Team, Committee on Ministry, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Jessica Taft

Catalyst Team, Wisconsin Conference UCC

Congregational Meeting Minutes

First Congregational United Church of Christ – Madison June 22, 2025

continued from page 6

Nominating Report: Casey Newman, Chair Nominating Committee

Casey presented a proposed 2025-2026 slate of officers, board members and other leaders. *Katrina Dwinell moved that the slate be approved as presented; motion seconded by Mike Green. The motion carried.*

Installation of Church Leadership:

Incoming Moderator Beth Cannestra thanked Gary Pine for his service to our church as moderator and presented him with a gift from a grateful congregation, a beautiful piece of art by Linda Hancock with a favorite bible verse of Gary's. New officers were then installed.

Adjournment: Senior Minister Eldonna Hazen offered a closing prayer. A motion to close the meeting by Lance Bentley was seconded by Chuck Erickson. The motions passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Fischer, Clerk

First Cong Fun Facts!



700



sets of cutlery wrapped for the Thanksgiving Meal



20

chairs used in the production of "Our Town"



19

outside groups used the church for meetings and activities



45

new followers, 891 total



43

individuals attended Lenten "Dinner Church"



17

Summer Frog Sightings



15

members and friends traveled to Iona, Scotland



24

people attended the Easter Vigil



431

books sorted, checked, and available in the new Book Nook



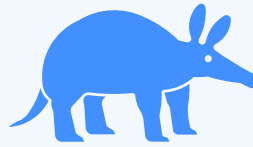
8
eco-friendly exhibits
at the Earth Fair



76
average age of a
Drum Choir member



354
YouTube subscribers
(46 new)



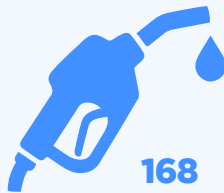
1
correct guess for
"What's in the Box?"



9
dogs blessed at the annual
Blessing of the Animals



5
art exhibits in the
Chapel Gallery



168
gas cards
distributed



3
guest preachers
in Worship



27
pumpkins carved for
the Jack-o-Lantern Sale



45
musicians
participated in
Music Sunday



200+
individuals received
assistance from
the Church

Time and Talents Shared

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Acolytes

Alice Bittner
 Ethan Brown
 Nora Brown
 Elia Cochran
 Eloise Delaney
 Josie Delaney
 James Floberg
 Marta Floberg
 Mikko Fystrom
 Mia Hicks
 John Hoffman
 Samuel Senatori
 Indigo Stetson
 Thora Stetson
 Aspen Taft
 Micah Taft
 Elliott Vandermuss
 Stuart Vandermuss
 Brynn Ward
 Claire Ward

After-Worship Refreshments

Melissa Baumann
 Ruth Benedict
 Cheryl Bentley
 Laura Chidylo
 Peter Chidylo
 Cochran Family
 Henry Collins
 Robin Craig
 Cathie Easter
 Hicks Family
 Deb Flanders
 Sue Jones
 Anne Karch
 Trish Karls
 Kristen Kerl Floberg
 Sarah Kissel
 Mary Lawrence-Wehrle
 Katie Leitz
 Mary Metz
 Gary Pine
 Janet Pugh
 Kay Rock
 Tracy Simonson
 Carol Stephen
 Jessica Taft
 Brooke Ward
 Mike Ward
 Faye Whitaker

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Baristas

Jeremy Bliss
 Chuck Erickson
 Sue Jones
 Kay Rock
 Bill Taft

Communion Servers

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

Readers

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

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Sound Team

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

Ushers

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

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

Education Team

Brenda Burke
 Laura Chidylo
 Emily Cochran
 Patrick Cochran
 Robin Craig
 Chris Donaldson
 Aaron Dumas
 Maddie Dumas
 Katrina Dwinell
 Jessica Flowers
 Barb Grajewski
 Rachel Gundacker
 Jenn Hackel
 Sarah Hoffman
 Anne Karch
 Joanne Lenburg
 Jane Oman
 Betta Owens
 Dana Parker
 Amanda Ready
 Kay Rock
 Steve Sheski
 Tracy Simonson
 Judith Stevens
 Kari Stetson
 Thora Stetson
 Rachel Syring
 Aspen Taft
 Josh Wimmer

Confirmation Speed-Faithing

Ruth Benedict
 Matt Flowers
 Julie Kramer
 Jill Larson
 Lyn Macgregor
 Gary Pine
 Nadine Walsten

Trunk-or-Treat Hosts

Melissa Baumann
 Cochran Family
 Katrina Dwinell & Jane Oman
 Barb Grajewski & Mike Slupski
 Joanne & Bob Lenburg

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Community Meals

Carol Adams
Melissa Baumann
Cheryl Bentley
Robin Craig
Pam Cramer
Catherine Easter
Susan Fischer
Amy Fraser
Dave Fraser
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
Maureen McCoy
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
Tricia Wheeler
Katherine Wiggins

Crop Walk

Katrina Dwinell
Anne Karch
Paul Karch
Joanne Lenburg
Bob Lenburg
Cathy Noth
Jane Oman
Janet Pugh

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Prison Ministry Project

Amy Bogen
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
Petrovnia Charles
Wendy Coleman
Amanda Eklund
Chuck Erickson
Doug Erickson
Mike Green
Robert Johnson
Sue Jones
Trish Karls
Zachary Mark
Mari McCarty
Don Metz
Allyson Mills
Tom Pugh
Ron Shaw
Jennifer Tishler
Faye Whitaker

Drum Choir

Melissa Baumann
Kweku Brewoo
Emily Brooks
Katrina Dwinell
Kristin Kanitz
Cassandra Kight
Julie Kramer
Liz Michaels
Betty Musick
Marcia Olson
Jane Oman
Theo Parker
Nancy Payne

Family Choir

The Dumas
The Hoffmans
Mari McCarty
The Tafts

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Handbell Choir

Melissa Baumann
Ruth Benedict
Amy Bogen
Sarah Bogen
Wendy Coleman
Mike Green
Ronnie Hess
Paul Karch
Nancy Moore
Sarah Nordberg
Judith Stephens
Jennifer Tishler
Conner White

Instrumentalists

Ruby Kotlarek (flute)
Kathy Taylor (violin)
Robert Taylor (clarinet)

Recorder Group

Ruth Benedict
Amy Bogen
Doug Erickson
Cindy Graham
Joanne Lenburg
Bob Stephens
Robin Stephens

GENERAL MINISTRIES

Adult Education Committee

Melissa Baumann
Laurie Dennis
Julie Kramer
Matthew Lenburg
Nadine Walsten

Dishwasher Team

Henry Collins
Levi Hagen
Justin Hicks
Will Hicks
Gary Pine
Megan Senatori
Samuel Senatori
Bill Taft

Environmental Justice Committee

Melissa Baumann
Jessica Flowers
Scott Hackel
Maureen McCoy
Bob Stephens
Judith Stephens
Alexis Swavern

Nominating Committee

Ruth Benedict
Susan Fischer
Cindy Graham

Plastic Sorting & Drop-Off

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

SCRIP Sales

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

BUILDING MINISTRIES

320 Lathrop Planning Committee

Ruth Benedict
Sarah Kissel
Hanns Kuttner
Tom Syring

Chapel Art Curator

Linda Hancock

Garden Helpers

Lance Bentley
Wendy Coleman
Anne Karch
Joanne Lenburg
Maureen McCoy
Bob Metz
Jessica Taft

Office Volunteers

Melissa Baumann
Ruth Benedict
Robin Craig
Deb Flanders
Cindy Graham
Joanne Lenburg
Maureen McCoy
Betta Owens
Janet Pugh
Amanda Ready
Carol Stephen
Fred Wileman

PLAT (Parking Lot Attendant Team)

Kweku Brewoo
Beth Cannestra
Patrick Cochran
Henry Collins
Matt Flowers
Levi Hagen
Paul Karch
Mary Lawrence-Wehrle
Gary Pine
Bob Stephens

Weekly Bank Deposit

Bob Metz

SPECIAL THANKS

Cast and Crew of Our Town

Barbara Arnold
Lance Bentley
John Bill
Charlotte Bittner
Aaron Dumas
Katrina Dwinell
Chuck Erickson
Barbara Grajewski
Levi Hagen
Jerry Hancock
Linda Hancock
Robert Hetzel
Kristin Anitz
Anne Karch
Paul Karch
Jill Larson
Paul Lorentz
Mari McCarty
Terry McLaren
Liz Michaels
Carlyn Noth-Hazen
Spencer Noth-Hazen
Jane Oman
Jeff Rabe
Elizabeth Ringle
Micah Taft
Jennifer Tishler
Elliott Vandermuss
Stuart Vandermuss
Nadine Walsten

Event and Special Collections

Thank you to all Volunteers,
Donors, and Contributors

Prayer Shawls

Thank you to those who made
and donated prayer shawls.

**To all our First Cong Members
and Friends,**

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