



# *The Voice Newsletter*

**Of First Congregational Church**

*A Pilgrim Church for a Pilgrim People*

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January 2020

Volume 44, Issue 1

## **PASTOR'S PASSAGE**

**As we begin another New Year in the life of the Church, celebrating Re-commitment Sunday on January 5, I find myself wondering how much each of us thinks about the Church and our faith journey in the course of a normal week. We gather for worship most Sunday mornings, and on the 5<sup>th</sup>, we will receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, remembering that we are all welcome at the table and in relationship with God through Christ's message, and then we touch the waters of Baptism, reminding ourselves of our Baptismal promises. But what did we promise? What promises were made for us at birth, and as we grew older and were confirmed or joined in membership with a Church, what did we promise?**

**When I was received into membership here at First Congregational Church and installed as your Pastor, I made promises along with others that day. We promised to follow the way and teachings of Christ as best we are able. We promised to support the mission and ministry of the Church through our time, talent and treasure. And we promised to nurture and love one another and to allow ourselves to be ministered to in our time of need. How many of us actually remember those words?**

**Susan Behrens, who is retiring as our Moderator as of January 1, wrote a prayer for our congregation. It is placed in each newsletter and bulletin that we produce. It says: "Loving and Eternal God, you have abundantly blessed us with the power to reach out and make a difference in the world. We ask that you bless our ministry through our Church and increase our love for one another and our community. Help us honor our history and seek your will as we march into our future in Jesus' name. Amen."**

**As I read that prayer, and then read the Gospels outlining the life, death and**

**resurrection of Jesus, it seems that we are attempting, in this modern age, to follow the exact trail of the disciples and followers of Jesus so long ago. Jesus taught through story. He would tell a story and then help his followers understand the meaning so that they could take ordinary life experiences and learn from them. And that is what we do with the Gospels today.**

**As we enter this New Year, what will our story be? When you tell others about First Congregational Church, your home, how will you describe us? Long after we are gone, what story will others tell about our life, love and ministry? What is our Gospel? Something to think about.**

**Happy New Year,**

**Love, Joy**



### **Minister's Message**

**We are entering into a new decade – 2020's. For many of us, the dating seems somewhat disturbing: What happened to the twentieth century? Am I really that old? Is this going to be my last new decade? What is going to happen in the next ten years? Will the technology in the next ten years change my life even more? What from the present time really endures? Am I a living anarchism? I think that you get the point- the world seems to be spinning even faster.**

**Here is my advice to handle the new decade:**

**In the living of our life, we need to be flexible. Trees with their large limbs survival because they sway with the breeze. If they were not, the limbs would most assuredly break off. We need to be flexible in thought, outlook, and expectancy. With our past, we are well prepared to handle what comes next.**

**Live in a spirit of optimism and thanksgiving. Thankful for the many**

**blessings that we have and an ongoing belief in the goodness of the future. If one embraces negativism, it clearly changes them- believing in the worst and expecting it. Let the future unfold as it will with a sense of joy to be alive.**

**The number of year, just as the number of your age, doesn't define you. There are many seventy year olds who have more energy and are more involved in life than many people in their 50's.**

**Scripture teaches that "to everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven". There will be ups and downs- all the couplets of life- joy and sorrow, good and bad, involvement and apathy, accepting and rejecting, birth and death. We are called not to value one day over another but rather to value each day.**

**I look forward to a new decade and hope that I will use my talents and abilities to make a difference in a needy world!**

**Gene**



## **MODERATOR REPORT**

With deep regret I am resigning as Moderator effective December 31.

My husband David and I are starting a new chapter in our lives. In a few months we are moving to an apartment overlooking Lake Michigan and just minutes from museums, performing arts, restaurants, parks and other activities we enjoy. About 5 years ago we found this retirement community, which was founded in 1869 by the Episcopal Church of Milwaukee. We realized it was time to downsize, but this move has come much faster than we anticipated.

While we are excited and anticipating new experiences, our move is bitter-sweet.

I will miss everyone at First Congregational immensely! Serving as your Moderator has been a privilege I cherish.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with our wonderful ministers, Joy and Gene. It is impossible for me to thank them adequately for the constant guidance they give the church and the wise advice they have given me as moderator.

At a recent council meeting, one of the council members wanted us to know that he looks forward to council meetings. He went on to say that we accomplish a lot and there is an atmosphere of happiness and sincerity. I agree. We are very lucky to have these dedicated people serving on the council. They have been a joy to work with. A huge thanks to the council for their insights, commitment and enthusiasm. Serving on church committees and boards is one way we can serve God. And it is rewarding to be in a group when everyone has a positive attitude, and willing to propose and consider new ideas, as our council members do. I will miss our meetings, too.

As moderator I have had a front row seat to observe our staff in action. Robin, Richard and Julie are always there to keep everything running smoothly behind the scenes. Thank you.

I want to especially welcome Donna Trimm as our new Moderator. We are fortunate to have her knowledge, faith and leadership abilities. She is a very special person who brings a can-do approach and creative perspective. I have enjoyed working with her on the council and during these weeks of transition.

While David and I are looking forward to our new adventure, I know I will miss you, my dear friends.

Susan

## Donna's Deliberations

Dear Church Family,

I have been honored with the responsibility of leading the Church Council starting January 1, 2020. According to the Church's Bylaws (Article 2 A & C), I will finish Susan Behrens' unexpired term, which ends June 30, 2021. We are grateful for all of Susan's leadership, especially completing the bylaws' updates and seeing through to the acceptance by the church membership. She and her husband will be moving to Milwaukee in March. While she is still here, she'll continue mentoring me into my new role as Church Council Moderator. I am blessed with a council of church members who work well together, have the best interests for our church, and the creative know-how to make things happen.

Yes, I have ideas, concerns, and updates for our church. Feel free to share with any member of the council your thoughts that you want brought to the council's attention. Meanwhile, I'll keep you informed of the council's work in each monthly *The Voice Newsletter*.

Besides needed maintenance repairs, it has been approved by the Council to begin the New Year working on branding. This has been attempted before without success, due to failure of the hired company at that time. Branding is how we are presented to others as an organization. It includes a logo, formatting, colors used, and much more to be consistent about who we are on our website, social media, posters, flyers, stationary, etc. and especially with marketing.

The Council has accepted a proposal by Meghan M.M. Trimm, who has been a fulltime marketer and taught branding to other local organizations. A small group of members has been formed to work on this issue. We are hoping for completion of this project before the end of February. At that time, we will bring the branding results to the Council and then to the church members for approval.

(continued on next page)

Meanwhile, we'll prepare for the 400-year anniversary celebration of the Pilgrims' Landing in June, continue working on church needs, and developing out-

reach marketing. One very important item I ask you to do is please pray for our church, for each other, for our pastors, and for the council. Thank you.

Your sister in Christ,

Donna Trimm



### **Prayer for the Church**

Loving and Eternal God, you have abundantly blessed us with the power to reach out and make a difference in the world. We ask that you bless our ministry through our Church and increase our love for one another and our community. Help us honor our history and seek your will as we march into our future in Jesus' name. Amen.



January 1, Donna Trimm

January 2, Ruth Lyons

January 3, Don Bifano

January 4, Marion Wanninger

January 8, Vonnie Adams

January 18, Cal Peck

January 22, Steph Schubring

January 23, Frank Rubitsky

January 26, Larry Hines

January 27, Susan Behrens

# January Calendar

January 1, Office Closed

January 5, Recommitment Sunday 10am

The Rev. Joy A. Baumgartner, preaching

January 6, Staff Meeting 8:30am

January 8, Al-Anon 10am

January 12, Worship 10am The Rev. Gene Van Galder, preaching

January 13, Staff Meeting 8:30am

January 15, Church Council Meeting 9:30am

Al-Anon 10am

January 19, Bible and Breakfast 10am

Newsletter Deadline

January 20, Staff Meeting 8:30am

January 22, Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm

January 26, Worship 10am The Rev. Joy A.  
Baumgartner, preaching

January 27, Staff Meeting 8:30am

January 29, Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm



## **Our Music at Morning Worship and MUSICA MAXIMA**

Today I heard and participated in a moving performance of the Celtic Cantata. Moved as I am, I am still proud of the singing that our choir did last Sunday, Dec. 8, as the climax of the choir's fall 2019 season before the Beloit College students headed home for the Holiday break. We enjoyed an extra enthusiastic group of students, plus locals Kay and Kendell Nordstrom, Cheryl Kitto, Steph Schubring and Matt Wick, and although we are choir-deprived for the next few weeks, we are pumped to resume choir rehearsals on Wednesday, January 22, and sing in the morning service on January 26. Choristers have expressed enthusiasm about returning in January, and we welcome new members, such as YOU.

We will say a temporary farewell to Cheryl Kitto, newly retired; she and her daughter, Sarah, will make a long visit to Ireland in January through March. We wish them the best time ever, and we look forward to welcoming Cheryl back in March. On a personal note, I will be away January 18 through 21; I will be visiting the University of Nebraska in Omaha to perform in a Bach concert on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Perhaps this is a good time to segue into the MUSICA MAXIMA series. The next two events are historic in nature, presented on period instruments, and in a different venue. Setting up in the Gathering Space as a sort of salon, we proudly present:

Sunday, February, 2, 3 pm, baroque violinist Mary Perkinson, from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, with myself at the harpsichord, in a concert of sonatas by Johann Sebastian Bach; and

Sunday, March 15, 3 pm, fortepianist, Matthew Bengtson, of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Matthew will be travelling with his replica of a 1780s pianoforte, in a concert of classics commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beethoven's birth. A piano of that vintage sounds quite different from a modern grand piano, and your opportunity to be in close range of it in this concert will be an exciting experience.

Thereafter, we go back to the modern world, and welcome two incredibly tal-

ented virtuose from Madison in a concert of most striking modern music—Iva Ugrcic, flute, and Satoko Hayami, piano. The date for these ladies is from the University of Wisconsin-Madison is Sunday, April 5, 3 pm. Spring will be upon us then, with thoughts of love, adventure and planting, and we will keep you informed of ways to celebrate the spring and summer.

Your servant,

Max



All of us at Yellow Brick Road would like to send a very special thanks to First Congregational Church of Beloit for their continued support and willingness in letting our organization use their facility. We can not thank them enough for providing us with a space to host our Thanksgiving Dinner and allowing us to use the kitchen as well. We also want to thank everyone who was able to attend on Thanksgiving and we appreciate everyone who was able to participate in the potluck.

The Yellow Brick Road Board



**Yellow Brick Road**  
— Organization —

## **Mission of the Month**

Rev. Teodoro Stricker and his wife, Teresa, have served the Congregational Church of Jardin, Argentina, for 30 years. Concerned with the plight of the thousands of poor Spanish descendants living in poverty on the outskirts of the city, Rev. Stricker began mission work ten years ago to bring the gospel as well as social concern to these people. The Mission's primary goals are: To bring the life changing news of Jesus Christ to all people through preaching the Gospel, to share the love and compassion of Christ through spiritual nurture and material assistance, and to help families become self-sufficient and gain self-respect.

On any given week, three to five hundred children and adults attend the worship services, Sunday Schools, and community outreach programs offered by the mission. Partnership Children are available for individuals and churches to support. A monthly gift of \$40 will help these children with basic needs as well as help with job training which is greatly needed. Each Partnership Child will correspond with their sponsor over the course of the year.

Asociación Civil Cristiana Congregacional – ACCC

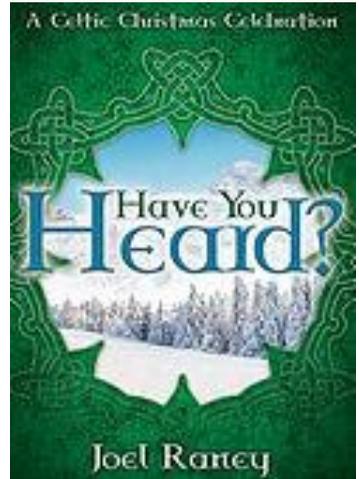
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**Please consider signing up for  
serving Fellowship after church.**

## THANK YOU

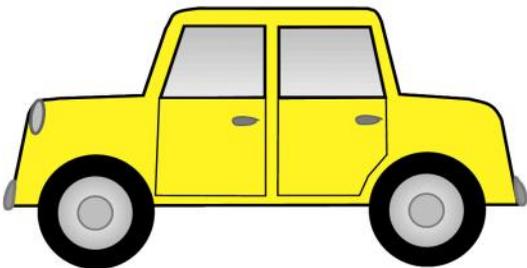
To everyone who contributed cookies and goodies for the fellowship hour of our Christmas Cantata, we are so grateful. Almost 500 people attended the two services and stayed for the fellowship. Our special thanks to Donna Trimm and Karen Adell for hosting, setting up and cleaning up following both services. We couldn't have done it without you!!!



## DO YOU PERHAPS HAVE A MISSION?

So many people have been members of our congregation for numerous years but are no longer able to drive to worship. One of our members provides rides for two people each Sunday, but we have at least four other people who need rides. These folk are mobile and would be so grateful for an opportunity to worship with their friends once more. If you feel this might be part of your mission as a member of the Church, please call Rev. Joy or Rev. Gene or Robin and let us know when you might be available. If you give us a list of when you are available or would be on call, we will then try to pair you with one of our members in need.

Thank you.





First Congregational Church

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Office hours: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Worship Service – Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

Email: [info@firstcon.org](mailto:info@firstcon.org) Website [www.firstcon.org](http://www.firstcon.org)

Return Service Requested



We are especially Thankful for: