DECEMBER 2022

FROM OUR MODERATOR
Margaret Chittaro

I don’t want to rush 2022 away, but I can’t help but feel excited as I look to 2023.

We are an extraordinary church that has accomplished so much. Very few churches can boast the level of success we have had following a world wide pandemic. We have each other to thank. Because we all believe.

I believe we are on the brink of some amazing growth and prosperity. And I look forward to us all getting busy with new ideas, new programs and new ways to touch people! Their is no limit to what we can do!

Wishing you and your family a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with love, joy, and peace!

WORSHIP MINISTRY
Martha Mendoza, Jim Molina, Margaret Chittaro, Claire Richter

The Worship Team is still meeting joyously every Wednesday to plan out worship services.

We are excited to share in the beautiful Advent services that are upon us!

We hope this season inspires you, lifts you, and brings you peace.

We are blessed to have each other and to be able share in Sunday worship.

We look forward to experiencing all the joy of the Season ... together.
THE TREASURER  
Margaret Chittaro

Shopping at Amazon this holiday season?

**PLEASE** sign up for Amazon Smile.

A simple way to support First Congregational *at no cost to you.*

[https://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-2374420](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-2374420)

**How to use AmazonSmile on a web browser:**

1. Visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)
2. Sign in with the same account you use for Amazon.com
3. Select your charity
4. Start shopping! Remember to checkout at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to generate donations for your chosen charity.

   Tip: Add a bookmark to make it easier to shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com).
How to use AmazonSmile using the Amazon app on your mobile phone:

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app
2. Navigate to the main menu (≡)
3. Tap on Settings and then select “AmazonSmile”
4. Select your charity and then follow the on-screen instructions to turn ON AmazonSmile in the mobile app
5. Once AmazonSmile has been activated in your app, future eligible app purchases will generate a donation for the charity you have selected.
   Note: The tablet app is not yet supported. Please visit smile.amazon.com/onthego to learn more.

Let me know if you need any help. Merry Christmas!

Members of our congregation have asked we remind those that qualify, you can make tax-free distributions to First Congregational directly from your IRA.

Below are some of the general points to help you decide if this would be a good fit for you:

- A qualified charitable distribution is an IRA withdrawal that is paid directly from your IRA to a qualifying charity.
- IRA owners must be age 70 1/2 or older to make a tax-free charitable contribution.
- Those who meet the age requirement can transfer up to $100,000 per year directly from an IRA to an eligible charity without paying income tax on the transaction.
- Charitable contributions can only be made from IRAs, not 401(k)s or similar types of retirement accounts.
- An IRA charitable contribution satisfies the annual minimum distribution requirement for your IRA.

Please contact your financial advisor for more information.

THE TRUSTEES
Fritz Baumgartner, Margaret Chittaro, Treasurer; Jan Davis, Don Haraf, Mike Hennel, Carrie Stone, Chair

We have concluded our annual Stewardship Campaign with a positive response. We are blessed to welcome 3 new pledging units (an individual or household) and we know that all of our returning donors have chosen to give at the same level as the prior year or to increase their giving. All pledge information is held confidential with the details summarized and reported to the Trustees by our professional bookkeeper, Heather Cross.

We are still waiting for a few of your replies, please consider this a friendly reminder to make your pledge now! There is a private form on our website that you can use. Thank you for attending to this!
The Trustees are in the process of preparing our 2023 Operating Budget. Once finalized, we will present the budget to Council and then finally to the Congregation for approval at our Annual Meeting in February.

Each year, we work with Board Chairs to prepare annual performance reviews for staff. This is part of our professional obligation to ensure our staff is supported and our shared expectations are being met. Fritz Baumgartner leads our Personnel Committee and will ensure that all staff members receive their review before the end of the year.

Don Haraf leads our Building & Grounds Ministry Team and has set a standing monthly meeting to stay on track with various projects. Active projects include: 1) various manse interior repairs; 2) scoping out needed repairs to the church roof and gutters; 3) setting up regular, seasonal cleaning for the church gutters; and 4) ensuring the church’s heating system is in good repair and ready for winter.

THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
Vanessa Jackson, Martha Mendoza, Amarelis Morales-Berent, Lynette Rosen

**Youth-Led Service and Christmas Pageant**
“That Very First Christmas”
Sunday, December 11, 2022

There’s no better way to get into the Christmas spirit than a youth-led service and children’s pageant. It would be such a JOY to have you join us on Sunday, December 11 @ 10:00 a.m. right here at First Congregational in Elmhurst.

Our entire morning praises will be led by youngsters from our church. A lot has gone into the preparation of the pageant and we hope you can also be a part of the worship service.

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Christmas Bake Sale
Sunday, December 11, 2022

As part of the festivities on Sunday, December 11, our church will be carrying out our Christmas bake sale. Please consider donating your favorite baked goods and also buying delicious cookies and treats. The proceeds from the bake sale will help our summer work trip ministry purchase materials for the work on the Island of Puerto Rico.
Our confirmation program is making its way back from the pandemic. During the Hanging of the Greens, confirmands helped decorate one of the Christmas trees as part of their service to the church.

Youth participating in confirmation are attending worship services and meeting for classes. Please continue to pray for our confirmands.

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**THE DIACONATE BOARD**

Bridget Bixler, Brian Brigman, Calvin Jackson, Claire Richter, Raquel & William Roman

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who participated in our Hanging of the Greens decorating our sanctuary! The spirit of the season shines bright as Advent begins!

December is full of special moments to celebrate at First Church...starting on 12/4 please plan on attending and welcoming new members to our First Church family. On December 11, the youth put on the annual Christmas Pageant...and don’t forget to support their Bake Sale. December 18 is the Christmas Cantata sure to fill your soul with holiday music. Finally, our traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service is planned for 7:00 p.m. and Christmas Day will host a regular morning service.

*We are so fortunate to have so many new scripture readers involved in service...thank you and if you are interested, please ask any usher for more information.*

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**MISSION BOARD**

Rev. Jorge Morales, Gail Ogdon, Amy Reshamwala, Jan Russell and Ann Thoele

**The Christmas Fund 2022 - Overwhelmed with Joy!**

This year the annual UCC Christmas Fund collection will be held this Sunday, December 4. This offering has been used to care for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to lower-income retirees.

One of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in loving compassion, providing assistance to those who have so faithfully served our Church and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

Our members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Donations can be made online through Venmo – user @FCUCCElmhurst, PayPal – paypal.me@fcuccelm, the Tithe.Ly app or by sending a check made out to the church with “Christmas Fund” in the memo line. Thank you!
PADS Collection

Thanks to all who participated in donating goods or funds for the PADS paper goods drive we held in September/October. The donated items will be delivered this month and the monetary donations were used to purchased paper good items on their Amazon “wish list” which were sent directly to them.

Winter Gear and Coat Drive

Finding a few extras this year while bringing out your warm winter gear? We’ve got a place for those items you’re no longer needing or wanting. The Clothing Center at United Methodist Church at the corner of York and Church Sts can help you out. Opened in 1970, the center has been serving those in need directly as well as through the Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network.

The Center is staffed by volunteers and stocked solely through generous donations from the community. At this time of year, they especially welcome gently used coats, scarfs, hats, mittens and gloves for both adults and children.

Donations are accepted on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 3 pm. There is a special Donation Door to use for drop off during these hours.

- Go to SOUTH parking lot (just off Church Street)
- Enter through the single GRAY DOOR on south side of the building behind the black railing
- Place donations at the bottom of the stairwell on the tables provided
- Pick up a tax receipt for your donations

Volunteers Always Needed

If you would like to serve as a volunteer in the Clothing Center, please notify the United Methodist Church Office at 630-834-2440. You do not have to be a member of the church. Helping hands are always needed to help sort, fold, and hang clothes.

THANK YOU for your support of the Clothing Center at United Methodist Church.

MUSIC MINISTRY

Gayle Dawson, Linda Donahue, Jim Molina, Nilesh Reshamwala, Carol Ringhoff, Mary Swanson

This Christmas season will bring great music to First Congregational and to our community! We celebrate the Advent season with special music from our Chancel Choir and other ensembles and soloists.

Please join us as we spread some Christmas cheer! Young and old, everyone is invited to participate in our Christmas Caroling outing on Sunday, December 11. Info can be found on our website.
On December 18 we will present our Christmas Cantata, "The Gift". This incredible 30 minute production is sure to warm your hearts and set you in the spirit of the Christmas Story! Please invite friends and family for this amazing event. A special collection will be given to help continue supporting the Music Ministry. We look forward to celebrating the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services with you as we lead in traditional Christmas Carols. Merry Christmas everyone and to all, "Good Cheer".

GREEN TEAM
Don Haraf, Jennifer Hennen, Carolee Luppino, Gail Ogdon, Karen Pachyn, Claire Richter, Bob Tracy

**Organic Seedlings On Sale Soon!**

We are just about to open our online store to launch our 2023 Organic Seedlings Sale. Watch for a Constant Contact about it in early December. You will once again be able to preorder your flower, vegetable and herb seedlings by going to the church website at [https://elmhurstucc.org/store/](https://elmhurstucc.org/store/). When the cold December weather gets you down and you need a break from all the holiday chaos, why not take a few moments to dream about your spring garden and place an early order? Orders will be due to the church office no later than February 28.

There are some exciting changes to our sale this year.

- We have a brand-new website created on the platform “Square”. We hope to be using this for many other church applications, including De Colores registration. We’re testing the platform on the Seedlings Sale and if initial indications hold true, you’ll be seeing it used for many other things. Thanks to Heather Cross who suggested “Square” and to Margaret Chittaro who has spent countless hours transitioning us to the new platform.

- Sadly, we lost West Star Organics as our grower after three very successful years with them. But after much searching, we are excited to have found another USDA Certified Organic grower that I think you’ll enjoy. They are Baas Greenhouses, Inc. a local wholesaler from Mokena, IL. They provide organic seedlings to Whole Foods in Elmhurst for their spring sales, so you can count on their product to be first class.

- Baas Greenhouses doesn’t provide flowers so we are going to get our flowers from We Grow Dreams Greenhouse in West Chicago. WGD is not organic, but as many of you have heard me mention, they are a nonprofit, full service greenhouse that provides job training and employment for the developmentally disabled. Your purchase will help support their mission. And because their flowers are not certified organic, we are able to offer them at a substantial discount over prior years.

- We won’t have compost or growing mix to preorder, but we may have some available for purchase at the Green Garden Fair. We are still working on that. We’ll keep you posted.
And speaking of the Green Garden Fair -
I know it’s early, but calendars fill up quickly, so please mark yours for Saturday, May 13, 2023. You’ll be able to pick up your seedlings order between 9:00 and Noon. And we’ll need lots of volunteers to make the Fair a big success.

Green Team Tip of the Month - December

There are a lot of things that can be recycled this holiday season. Some that we can help you with are:

Christmas Lights Recycling
Once again we will be collecting used Christmas tree lights. You can bring your lights to church and put them in the box in the Tree of Life Foyer. We will accept Italian mini lights, traditional lights, extension cords, rope lights and LED lights in working or non-working order, from any holiday. Lights will be taken to Elmhurst City Hall to become part of a larger collection being done by the community. The last day to bring in your lights will be Sunday, January 8.

Christmas Card Recycling
Bring in used or new Christmas cards with nice, clean fronts and Martha will put them to good use in doing projects with our kids. Some will go to our shut-ins and those who may need a little extra joy for the holiday season. Look for a box to put them in in the Tree of Life Foyer.

Gift Card Recycling
Once you’ve spent all those gift cards you are going to receive as presents, bring them in and put them in the same bin where we are collecting bag tags. We will take them to SCARCE who makes guitar pics from them to provide to Veterans learning to play in various therapy programs.

Poinsettia Orders
We will once again be decorating our Sanctuary with live poinsettias for our Christmas Eve service. They will be ordered from We Grow Dreams Greenhouse and Garden Center, the greenhouse in West Chicago that provides job training and employment for the developmentally disabled. Look for a sign-up to sponsor one or more of our poinsettias which will be available to take home either after our Christmas Eve service or our Sunday service on December 25. Send your check for $16 directly to the church office or drop it in the offering plate. Just be sure to designate your donation for poinsettias.

Happy Holidays from the Green Team!
Greetings ...
We are called the Heritage Bunch
We meet 10 to Noon ...yes, just before lunch
Two Wednesdays a month and we really have fun
It’s interesting talk ... from when we start till we’re done!

We solve the world’s problems, of each other we care
We talk and we laugh and we end with a prayer.

If you’re looking for a group, but you don’t just know where
There’s nothing we’d like better than to have you right there.

Come join us ...On the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month
from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

PASTORAL CARE

Caring for One Another
Supporting our members during everyday occurrences, ailments, and even the passing away of a loved one is highest among our calling as a church. If you find yourself needing pastoral support, please contact our church office at 630-832-2580. We will reach out to Rev. Jan Davis or a member of the pastoral care support team to contact you.

CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS

December Birthdays

3  Dorothy Hamby  16  Pam McCann
6  Margaret Bixler  24  Karen Sloma
14  Carolee Luppino  25  Nicholas Bresnahan
15  Carol Ringhoff  31  Lynette Rosen
15  Dan Briggs
August (Augie) Carlson  
Maxine & Wade Cassidy  
Aleta & Rhonda Dallas  
Ed Eckert  
Susan Graybill  
Michelle Maiers  
Virgina & Jim Moss  
Chris Murray  
Randy Price  
Basia Rudy  
Bob Tracy

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children’s Christmas Pageant Rehearsal</td>
<td>11:00 – 11:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Council Meeting</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Youth-Led Worship Service</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Youth Christmas Bake Sale Fundraiser</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Christmas Caroling &amp; Lunch</td>
<td>11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch Christmas Brunch</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Christmas Cantata Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Christmas Eve Worship Service</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Chrismas Day Worship Service</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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TITHE.LY GIVING

Give with Tithe.ly from anywhere at any time. Download the Tithe.ly giving app to get started. You'll find First Congregational United Church of Christ, Elmhurst, IL. Your gift is safe and secure and goes directly to our church. Click HERE for more info on Tithe.ly https://get.tithe.ly/

Support First Congregational each time you make a purchase on Amazon. Sign up and shop at smile.amazon.com and a portion of your purchase will be donated back to First Congregational at no cost to you. This is an easy way for us to earn some extra money! Please make sure you sign up to participate. Thank you! https://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-2374420

Partners in Christ's Service

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