FROM OUR MODERATOR
Margaret Chittaro

Happy New Year First Congregational!

I know you join me in extreme gratitude for the remarkable season of Advent, our beautiful Christmas Eve service and our intimate and personal Christmas Day service in the chapel. Thank you to all who put in so much time and effort to bring us these glorious services. It was a special time indeed!

Now on to this New Year - 2023! As we start the new year, it is healthy to reflect on the good times, the difficult times, the lessons learned, and the dreams we share. It helps to shape our vision for the new year and beyond.

To that end, please mark your calendars for our Annual Meeting scheduled for Sunday, February 5.

Our boards will review 2022 and share our budget and plans for 2023. It is important you participate in this annual event; it is an important opportunity to stay informed and engaged in the ministries of the church.

Thank you to the boards and committees who have worked hard in preparation for this meeting. We are grateful for your time given and your valuable input.

Additionally, we will be approving a new slate of board members at the annual meeting. This is your opportunity to be a part of new ideas, new programs, and new ways to touch people! If you are interested in serving on a board or committee, please contact Janet Russell at russelljanet637@gmail.com.

There is no limit to what we can do ... together!
SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, February 5, 2023
Worship 10:00 AM
Annual Meeting 11:00 AM

All members are invited to attend our annual meeting. Together we will review and act on the budget and reflect on last year's ministry work. Please mark your calendars and plan on joining us.

RALLY AROUND OUR ALL-CHURCH EVENT

Annual Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser
Sunday, January 22, 2023
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Enter your favorite chili in our friendly chili cook-off competition for a chance to win great prizes. All proceeds from this event will support our youth’s 2024 summer work trip to Puerto Rico.
Adult Faith Formation:
A Special Invitation to the Women of First Congregational

Our sister church, St. Peter's has invited the women of our church to their upcoming women's fellowship gathering at their church. The guest speaker is Rev. Tracy Heilman of Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center. Tracy will present a program about spiritual practices and what makes a practice consistent, persistent and intentional.

The event is on **Friday, February 3** from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Martha Mendoza will be spearheading our delegation of women. Please find a sign-up sheet in the foyer to sign up. We are being asked to not only attend but to consider bringing a light appetizer.

At our previous two women's spiritual growth gatherings here at First Congregational, women of St. Peter's church have attended and been very supportive. So please consider joining us.


FOLLOW THE STAR- CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Christian season of Epiphany is a wonderful time to have children look for and find Jesus among us. During January, our children's Sunday School will explore the following.

- The Epiphany of who we are
- Going on a pilgrimage to seek God
- Walking together (it's not a do-it-yourself thing)
- Being attentive to the guidance God gives us
- Leaving by another route

God is calling our children and us to be the modern Melchoirs, Balthasars, and Kaspers of our day so we can live out God's mission.

**PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS:** I hope you will have your children be a part of these faith-forming lessons during this first month of the calendar year. Martha

As the new year kicks off, our Confirmation program continues. **Parents:** please mark your family calendars and have your confirmands join us for the following service projects, meetings, and classes.

Communion Sunday falls on **Sunday, January 1**, so it's important to have confirmands attend services that are carrying out the sacraments they are learning about. Understanding that it's a holiday weekend but if plans allow please have your confirmand present.

**On Sunday, January 8,** confirmands are encouraged to be a part of our ALL-CHURCH taking down the greens from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Make it a family morning together by coming to worship at 10:00 a.m and then the service project with lunch.
Immediately after the worship service on **Sunday, January 15**, we are having Confirmation Class in the Christian Education office. The class is from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

All hands on board for the Annual Chili Cook-Off on **January 22**. Confirmands are needed to help the older youth prepare Fellowship Hall, prepare the toppings of the chili, and man the chili entries. This is a SUPER fun youth event and we truly need our confirmands to participate.

Our church’s annual meeting is on **Sunday, February 5** immediately after the worship service. Confirmands are encouraged to attend the meeting and not miss out on this important event in the life of our church. Each confirmand will be equipped with a guide and questionnaire to use during this annual meeting.

**PARENTS**: As you have noticed our schedule has changed a little. Please do everything in your power as a parent to have your confirmand participate. An updated schedule is forthcoming. Thank you!

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**Youth Ministry**

As this new year begins, our youth have some great opportunities to get involved in the life of the church. On **January 8**, all youth and their friends are invited to help with taking down the greens immediately after the 10:00 a.m. worship service.

This service opportunity is a fun way to be in community with other youth and adults. Together we not only take down and put away the decorations and the Christmas trees in the sanctuary, foyer and parlor, we will also enjoy a delicious lunch together.

Our church’s biggest fellowship and youth fundraiser, our annual Chili Cook-Off, takes place on **Sunday, January 22** from 11:00 a.m. –12:00 p.m.

**Parents and Youth**: Please mark your family calendars and plan on joining us. There is a lot to get done and we can't do it without you. This all-church event is not only a lot of fun, the proceeds will support our 2024 long distance work trip to the island of Puerto Rico. Please save the date: Sunday, January 22, 2023.

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**THE Diaconate BOARD**

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

What a joyous time of the year and we have so very much to be thankful for this past Christmas season! With a busy holiday season – we are reminded of how full First Church is with community, family and joy! Our youth arranged an enchanting Christmas Pageant to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Our Christmas Cantata overjoyed all those who attended with sounds of the season. The Christmas Eve candlelight service symbolizes that the flame of Jesus is to be shared with all. And finally, with a reclaiming of or small chapel, First Church celebrated Christmas Day with an intimate gathering full of carols and holiday cheer. Joy to the world! We invite you to carry over the warmth of the season into January and celebrate each and every Sunday morning.

Finally, we are asking for help to take down the holiday decorations from the Sanctuary on January 8 after worship. Again, lunch will be served and we thank you all in advance.

*Thank you for those who volunteer to read Scripture. If you are interested, please ask any usher for more information.*
**MISSION BOARD**
Rev. Jorge Morales, Gail Ogdon, Amy Reshamwala, Jan Russell and Ann Thoele

**Our Church’s Wider Mission**
Our covenanted fair share goal of $3,200 for Our Church’s Wider Mission commitment has been completed for the year. This donation is made each year by UCC churches across the nation. Our donation specifically goes to the Chicago Metropolitan Association where over 80% is utilized within our region. With our support they are developing new churches, supporting revitalization projects, engaging in youth and young adult ministries, assisting churches with the search and call process (something we are utilizing), and providing many other developmental resources. We should take pride in meeting our commitment once again this year.

**The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross**
Many thanks to all who supported the Christmas Fund special UCC collection this year. In 2021, the fund provided over $1.6 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Along with the donations received during our special offering this month, the Mission Board will include funds received for the month of December from the Mission Ride Program when our donation is submitted. The funds go directly to the individuals in need, not to programs or organizations on their behalf. The impact of your generosity is great and much appreciated.

**Souper Bowl Sunday 2023**
Sunday, February 12 is the date of the NFL’s Super Bowl. For us that means Souper Bowl Sunday happens, the day on which our church traditionally gathers canned food to help stock the shelves of Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry (EYFP) and St John UC Food Pantry in the city.

For EYFP, this allows for the charitable distribution of food for the relief of hunger to the neighbors in need residing in the communities of Elmhurst, Addison, Bensenville, Berkeley, Hillside, Lombard, Oak Brook and Villa Park. In its effort to provide hunger relief, the Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry provides nutritious groceries, produce, dairy, meat and non-perishable products to local families. The Pantry currently distributes over 250,000 pounds of food each year to clients.

This year we have been asked to focus primarily on collecting the following items:

- Kids Cereals
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Diced Tomatoes with Chilies (Rotel)
- Tomato Paste
- Hearty Soups
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Canned Mushrooms
- Canned Green Chiles
- Refried Beans
- Canned Chili

Having difficulty getting out to shop or rather just donate cash? Direct cash donations allow them to spend $0.18 to get $1.00 worth of food through the Northern Illinois Food Bank. Cash can be sent via Venmo, Paypal, Tithe.ly or by check made out to the church with Souper Bowl Sunday in the memo line.

Please drop off your canned food donations in the church foyer anytime between January 15 and February 12. Thanks for joining us in this much needed effort to serve our community.
MUSIC MINISTRY
Gayle Dawson, Linda Donahue, Jim Molina, Nilesh Reshamwala, Carol Rihgoff, and Mary Swanson

It is hard to imagine that the year 2022 is already behind us! It has been an eventful year for the music ministry as we closed out with a Christmas Cantata and inspiring Christmas Eve service. A great thanks to all of you for your continued support through donations as the Music Ministry raised $4,000 in this last special offering.

Rev. Buckner spoke of “presence” at the Christmas Eve service. Seems such a perfect way to invite the new year. We continue to pray for the presence of music and spirit filling our sanctuary each and every Sunday and we continue to pray for "your" presence to be with us celebrating in the "word" each Sunday as well. From everyone in the Music Ministry we wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

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

Our Seedlings Store is Open!

We have launched our ninth annual organic vegetable and herb seedlings sale. The deadline for submitting preorders is FEBRUARY 28, so on a cold January day, take a few minutes to warm yourself with dreams about your summer garden by going to our website: https://first-congregational-store.square.site/green-garden-store.

You can pay by credit card on the site or you can find our hardcopy order form there. Print it out and send it to the church office with cash or check, if you prefer. Hardcopies of the form are also available on the table in the Tree of Life Foyer. Thanks to Heather Cross and Margaret Chittaro for redesigning our website on a new platform called Square.

Many of our sales come from word of mouth, so please share word of this sale with your relatives, friends and neighbors. Please email the link above to all the gardeners you know.

You can share with them that this year our organic vegetable and herb seedlings will be provided by Baas Greenhouses, Inc. Their seedlings are grown in Mokena, IL, which is just 30 miles south of Elmhurst, so we are offering a very local product. Baas has been USDA Certified Organic since 2005. They will be providing our plants in 3 1/2” – 4” containers. We will have many of your old favorites back and some new ones we think you’re going to love.

Baas doesn’t provide flowers, but we wanted to be sure to offer some treats for our pollinators to add to your garden. To do that, we are offering flower seedlings from We Grow Dreams Greenhouse in West Chicago. The floral seedlings will not be organically grown. But We Grow Dreams provides job training and employment for the developmentally disabled so we know you will want to support their mission.

We apologize but currently we do not have a provider for the organic compost and growing mix we have offered in prior years.
Your seedlings will be available for pick up on Saturday, May 13 between 9:00 a.m. and noon at the Green Garden Fair on our church grounds. While picking up your plants you will be able to stop and visit with a variety of exhibitors sharing information about living sustainably, and offering some fun things like fresh local honey, and tasty baked goods.

Please mark your calendar and volunteer to help us sort and prepare orders on Friday, May 12 and/or help with our order pickups on Saturday, May 13. It will be a busy couple of days for our church so we will need everyone’s help to pull this off in 2023. Plus, it’s always fun and a great community outreach for us. Proceeds from the sale benefit the church’s general fund.

Reminder: Next Sunday, January 8 is the last day to drop off Christmas lights for recycling. The bin is located in the church foyer. Thank you!

HERITAGE BUNCH

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

3  Jacob Bresnahan   13  Diane Wells
7  Mary Moy Greg     16  Paula Fabbri
8  Jim Mowers        23  Aleta Dallas
13 Martin Pacheco

August (Augie) Carlson    Michelle Maiers
Maxine & Wade Cassidy    Virginia & Jim Moss
Aleta & Rhonda Dallas    Chris Murray
Linda Donahue and Family Randy Price
Ed Eckert                Basia Rudy
Susan Graybill           Bob Tracy

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service in the Chapel</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Taking Down the Greens &amp; Lunch</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Confirmation Class</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Chili Cook-Off Youth Fundraiser</td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Heritage Bunch</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School</td>
<td>10:00 a.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, Illinois. Your gift is safe and secure and goes directly to our church. [https://get.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](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-2374420)

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Partners in Christ's Service

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Church Staff
Martha Mendoza, Director of Christian Education & Operations
Jim Molina, Director of Music
Heather Cross, Bookkeeper
Kim Brigman, Office Assistant

Rev. Dr. Ernest H. Huntzinger, Emeritus Minister

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