

# Tree of Life Newsletter

First Congregational United Church of Christ  
235 Kenilworth Avenue – Elmhurst, Illinois 60126



## FEBRUARY 2023

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### FROM THE MODERATOR

Margaret Chittaro

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Annual Meeting this Sunday, February 5 immediately following service.

Our boards will review 2022 and share our budget and plans for 2023. Additionally, we will be approving a new slate of board members.

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

It has been an extraordinary year for me as your moderator.  
A year full of growth and learning.  
A big thank you to everyone at First Congregational for your support ... I felt the love!

I leave you in Jan Russell's most capable hands.  
Thank you for giving of your time Jan. We appreciate you!

Sincerely,

Margaret Chittaro

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## PLEASE JOIN US!



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

All members are asked to attend our annual meeting. Together we will review and act on the budget and reflect on last year's ministry work. Please plan on joining us at this important meeting.

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## OBSERVING ASH WEDNESDAY– FEBRUARY 22, 2023

On Wednesday, February 22, 2023 we begin the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. Our church will be participating in the community Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 p.m. It will be held at Bethel United Church of Christ located at 315 E. St. Charles Road, Elmhurst. We hope you will join us.



For the first time, our chapel at First Congregational will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for those of you that can't make the evening service. The chapel will have ashes that you can self impose (place on your own forehead) and candles you can light as you commence your Lenten journey. While in the chapel, you are encouraged to pick up the short Lenten prayer that can be a part of your quiet time.

Please share with family and friends the two Ash Wednesday observances we are offering this year. For more information, please see Martha Mendoza our Director of Christian Education.

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## WORSHIP MINISTRY

Margaret Chittaro, Martha Mendoza, Jim Molina and Claire Richter

The Worship Team continues to meet every Wednesday to plan out worship service.

We are seeking guest ministers that move and inspire us.

If you feel so moved to share your gifts with the Congregation by preaching on Sunday, please reach out to a member of the Worship Team.

Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, February 22 as we will once again share in the Ash Wednesday service with St Peter's and Bethel.

Bethel will be hosting this year and the service is scheduled for 7pm.

Look for more information on this in the coming weeks.

More information also to come on this year's Lenten Study and our full Lenten Season.

We look forward to sharing this Lenten journey together ...

... a time to renew our faith.

... a time to renew our hope.

... a time to renew our hearts.

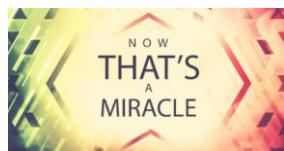
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## BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Vanessa Jackson, Martha Mendoza, Amarelis Morales-Berent, Lynette Rosen (chair), and Donna Scumaci

### Women's Fellowship Gathering @ St. Peter's UCC

We are looking forward to our fellowship night together at St. Peter's tomorrow evening. Thank you to those that have registered. If you haven't registered but are able to join us, please meet us at St. Peter's UCC at 125 W. Church Street. There will be a guest speaker, refreshments and plenty of fellowship. Hope you can join us **tomorrow night, February 3 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**



### Children's Sunday School

After Jesus was baptized, he began his ministry and public life. During this month of February, we continue with Epiphany and end the month with the start of Lent. In preparation for Lent in Sunday School, we will be learning from the miracles of Jesus. As a special treat, we will also be enjoying the beautifully illustrated book by Tomie de Paola titled "The Miracles of Jesus".

**Parents:** We are striving for two classroom groups, Preschool through 2nd Grade and 3rd Grade thru 7th. We are so looking forward to your children participating in Sunday School and growing their knowledge and faith in our Lord Jesus.

### Confirmation

Our confirmands are invited to communion Sunday and our annual meeting on Sunday, February 5 immediately after the worship.

Parents and confirmands should arrive to church at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday the 5th so the head usher can go over the lighting of the altar candles and any other tasks that confirmands may be assigned to help out with during the service.



Parents and confirmands should be on the look out for an annual meeting questionnaire that is being mailed to your homes. Each confirmand should prepare to answer all the questions during the annual meeting based on what is said and the actual reports.

We are scheduled to meet for class on February 26 immediately after the worship service till noon. Together we will be learning about and discussing the "ins & outs" of our congregation. Parents, please do everything in your power to have your youngsters present. Thank you.



## Youth Gathering—Food for the Soul Sunday, February 26, 2023 @ 4:00 p.m.

All 7<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to our February youth gathering on Sunday, February 26 at 4:00 p.m. We will be meeting at First Congregational in the Fellowship Hall kitchen (lower level). Together we will learn the many ways to feed our souls. Among them, knowing how to prepare healthy food for ourselves.

As our youth mature, they need to equip themselves to take on the challenges of managing their own schooling, and yes, being able to prepare affordable healthy meals.

Our goal for this gathering is that youth will enjoy a biblical story that feeds their soul and prepare a delicious meal they will hopefully continue to prepare for their family and themselves. Friends are welcome and all youth need to bring is their desire to learn and grow.

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### THE DIACONATE BOARD

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

A new year, a time of renewal, a time of reflection, a time of new beginnings. Such a great time to say a collective thank you to everyone for the full congregational teamwork needed to bring our service together each week. From Scripture readers to ushers to parlor hosts to hands-on holiday decorating – thank you!

We also thank everyone for grace and patience as we quickly pivoted to our chapel for service on January 29 due to a heating malfunction.

Looking ahead to rest of February, Martha has scheduled a strong guest minister rotation sure to inspire and teach God's word. And please attend service this Sunday, February 5 and stay for our important annual meeting!

*Thank you for those who volunteer to read Scripture. If you are interested, please ask any usher for more information.*

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### THE MISSION BOARD

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



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

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 15th and February 12th. Thanks for joining us in this much needed effort to serve our community.

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## MUSIC MINISTRY

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

As the cold weather continues through February, the Music Ministry hopes to warm your spirit with the sound of beautiful music each Sunday.

Look forward to the choir singing an arrangement of "How Great Thou Art" on February 5 and the haunting "Guide My Wayfaring Feet" on Feb. 26. The Music Ministry will be joining Bethel UCC for their Ash Wednesday service on February 22. Mark your calendars for February 19 as Daniel Ziesemer will be joining us with his tremendous violin playing.

And definitely mark your calendars for March 26 at 2:00 pm as Jim Molina will perform a concert to dedicate the Yamaha Grand Piano. Daniel Ziesemer will also be accompanied by Jim on several pieces. Other guests will also perform that afternoon as well. More details to follow.

Have a warm winter season and we look forward to seeing you on Sundays!

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## GREEN TEAM

Don Haraf, Carolee Luppino, Gail Ogdon, Karen Pachyn, Claire Richter, Bob Tracy

**Order Your Organic Seedlings Now!  
Orders Due By The End Of The Month**

The Organic Seedling Sale is up and running. Go to our new online store and order now: <https://first-congregational-store.square.site/green-garden-store> **Orders must be in no later than February 28!**



BAAS Greenhouses, Inc. is our new supplier of organic herbs and vegetables in 2023. 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 provide some treats for our pollinators so 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.

To order your plants and pay by credit card, please go to the website <https://first-congregational-store.square.site/green-garden-store> If you prefer, you can also print out a hardcopy of our order form from the same site (they are also available in the Tree of Live Foyer) and send it to the church office with cash or check. No orders will be accepted after our February 28 deadline. Orders will be available for pick up at our Green Garden Fair on Saturday, May 13 between 9 AM and Noon.

We need lots of help to make this all come together. Please share news of our sale with all your family and friends. A great majority of our sales come from word-of-mouth advertising so we are counting on you. Then mark your calendar to volunteer for the event. We will get our plants delivered on Thursday, May 11 and will need help unpacking the truck and organizing all the plants. We will need help to sort and prepare orders on Friday, May 12 and help with order pickups and the Green Garden Fair on Saturday, May 13. Proceeds from the sale support the church's general ministries so your time and effort will benefit us all.

Any questions or comments? Just talk to a member of our Green Team!

### Green Team Tip of the Month – February, 2023

In case you missed it, the information below about what the Green Team will be collecting in 2023 for recycling was provided to everyone who attended our January 23 Sunday Service:



### Items You Can Bring to Church for Recycling

Ongoing:

- LED and CFL lightbulbs – we take these to Home Depot for recycling. These should not be thrown in the trash because they contain trace amounts of mercury.
- Ink Cartridges – Christian Ed sends these in somewhere and receives some money back for them
- Pop tops – these get taken to Ronald McDonald House where they are converted into cash to support the homes
- Bag tags – these go to SCARCE who gives them to “Danielle Cares for Chairs”. They get converted into cash to purchase wheelchairs

- Amber colored prescription bottles, cleaned and with all labeling removed – these go to SCARCE where they are sent to help the Ukrainians distribute medication
- Wine corks (real cork ones, not plastic) – SCARCE does craft projects with these
- Used plastic gift cards (not credit cards – should have no raised letters or numbers) – SCARCE makes these into guitar picks to donate to an organization that provides guitar lessons to veterans
- Styrofoam – Mary Swanson will be taking this to a Styrofoam recycling center in Western Springs. See this flyer that explains what is acceptable: <https://www.wsprings.com/Calendar.aspx?EID=1785>
- Plastic Bags – We will be doing this until shortly before Arbor Day to support the York High School Eco Club who is competing with other high schools in the country to win the Trex challenge for the most plastic bags collected.

### Periodic Recycling Events

- Holiday lights - Lights contain many valuable materials that can be reused to prevent damaging the environment.
- Used Crayons – these will go to SCARCE who will melt down the crayons to make larger, easier to hold ones for children with disabilities
- Seashells – SCARCE will also take these. They return them to beaches in Florida
- Keys – SCARCE takes these as well. They receive money for the recycled metal which is used to fund their book rescue and help fund their environmental education programs in classrooms and the community.

Note: We will no longer be collecting used batteries as we've learned that they can create a fire hazard.

Note that the January Styrofoam collection was so successful that we are going to make it ongoing. Thanks to Mary Swanson for coordinating it. Also, we have added plastic bags to our ongoing recycling. This is to support the York Eco Club which is competing in the nationwide Trex Challenge to see who can recycle the most soft plastic. One of our youth, Adison Goble, is leading our effort with this. And a special thanks to Carolee who provided the new shelving in the Foyer to house our recycling baskets.

Thanks for helping us keep things out of our landfills in 2023.

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## 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.

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## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month  
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

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## CELEBRATIONS AND CONCERNS



1 Mary Swanson  
2 Marcia Fleming  
4 Julia Morrow

15 Ron Teuber  
22 Susan Graybill  
25 Lucias Hennen



August (Augie) Carlson  
Maxine & Wade Cassidy  
Aleta & Rhonda Dallas  
Linda Donahue and Family  
Ed Eckert  
Dawn Feldt  
Susan Graybill  
Michelle Maiers

Virginia and Jim Moss  
Chris Murray  
Joyce O'Connor  
Randy Price  
Basia Rudy  
The Stratton Family  
Bob Tracy



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February	Event	Time
2	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
3	Women's Fellowship Gathering @ St. Peter's UCC	6:30–8:30 p.m.
5	Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School	10:00 a.m.
5	Annual Meeting	11:00 a.m.
8	Heritage Bunch	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
9	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
12	Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School (Souper Bowl Sunday)	10:00 a.m.
16	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
19	Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School	10:00 a.m.
22	Heritage Bunch	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
22	Ash Wednesday– Quiet Time in the Chapel	8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
22	Ash Wednesday Service @ Bethel UCC	7:00 p.m.
23	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
26	Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School	10:00 a.m.
26	Confirmation Class	11:00 a.m.
26	Youth Gathering– Feed Your Soul	4:00 p.m.
28	Council Meeting	7:00 p.m.

## TITHE.LY



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***Partners in Christ's Service***

**Pastoral Care**

Rev. Janet Davis

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(630) 400-7747

**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

**Contact Us**

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