



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
31 W. MILWAUKEE AVE., FORT ATKINSON, WI 53538

December 2025

First Congregational UCC Broadcaster

December is the season of Advent. It is a deeply spiritual season for our faith. The darkness taking rich symbolism of God's offering the Light. The story of Jesus born of a poor young couple to bring about the unsuspected child in a manger for his bed. Such simplicity is a marvel.

I went to a store that sells everything, and walked up and down the isles of glitter, plastic and shine to find wrapping paper for an early gift. I carefully examined and was mindful that foil wrapping paper cannot be recycled so I went with plain brown paper. The cost was the same as the others, but 3 times more paper. Driving away, I thought of the ways we display our homes and lives might be counter to the ways Jesus was born. There was no glitter among the straw. It was a quiet and humble experience, yet the most profound moment in which everything was ordered.



Plain brown recyclable paper will hold the gift of meaning this year. There are no pretenses, no fluff. The gift will be what is on the inside. The gift will be slowing down, noticing the joys and burdens of loved ones and really paying attention to show up, even when it's inconvenient or a hassle. The gift will be to pause and sit in silence to hear the voice of God speaking and to feel the embrace of assurance and comfort this gives. The gift will be to listen to those whom God hears and make room in the stable for those experiencing difficult times.

The richness of life is found in all the simple times and ways we notice how connected we are to the love of others and love of God.

May your Christmas be filled with blessings in the peace, hope, love and joy that the birth of Christ brings.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

5 PM December 24th

Pastor Sara

Council Highlights – November 2025

Donations: The Council has approved donations to be given to Fort Atkinson Homeless Coalition and Fort Food Pantry. Fort Community Foundation is offering matching funds for the Food Pantry. Christmas donations received from worshipers will also be given to the Fort Food Pantry. We are grateful that our church can make these donations to our community!

Organ Update: Installation process has begun! Thanks to Jeff Woods and Bryan Green for their work cleaning the speaker screens. Allen Organ has begun the installation process. We are hoping it will be completed for the Christmas Holidays. Keep your fingers crossed! An organ fund has been established to cover these costs. If you are interested in contributing, please use the envelopes in the church pews and note that your donation is for the Organ Fund. Thank you!

Stewardship: Our Campaign goal is \$230,000. We are currently at 89% of that goal. Many thanks for supporting our church!

Winter/Holiday Market 12/6/25: We are looking forward to another successful Market this year! There are many volunteers working hard to complete the plans. Please make sure that you stop in to shop, eat lunch and enjoy the festivities!

Pastor Sabbatical: Pastor Sara is scheduled for her sabbatical in 2027. Council members are working with her to apply for a grant to assist our church financially during the time she is away. Her time away will be a period of reflection, education and rest.

Church Ministry 2026: There are many opportunities to serve your church in 2026. If you are interested in being a member of a church Ministry, please contact Linda Glendon, Vice Moderator. The Ministries are Worship, Nurture, Outreach, Church Relations, Food Pantry and Delegate.

Parking: When parking for Sunday worship, please keep the front parking spots open for people with mobility issues. We understand that parking is at a premium! Parking is available in front/side of the Hoard's building and at Badger Bank. Thank you for your consideration!

Next meeting is December 16, 2025.

Complete Council Minutes are available in the church office.

Advent Bible Study “The Christmas Letters”

December 7, 14, and 21. At 8:45 a.m. in the Werthmann Room. Ever wonder how the writers of the epistles helped their readers understand that Christ is the son of God? They didn't have the birth story yet because the gospels were written a couple hundred years later. We'll study parts of Romans, 1 John, Philippians, and Colossians, and learn how Paul, and the writer of 1 John showed how Jesus is truly the son of God.

Snow Day Worship Cancelation

In the event of inclement weather please stay tuned to your email and Facebook. The Church council will be communicating through both of those means to update the congregation on the status of cancelations. If you do not have access to a computer please call one of the Moderators. Thank you.

END-OF-YEAR GENERAL INFORMATION from the FINANCIAL SECRETARY

As in past years, I will create 2025 Contribution statements after January 1, 2026. These statements will be mailed by mid-January. Contributions to fulfill 2025 pledges must be received no later than December 27 to be included in the 2025 statements.

Contributions received in the Christmas Envelopes found in the pews will be sent to the local Food Pantry. The Christmas Envelopes will be so labeled. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity to those who have so little.

Requests to start or alter automatic fund transfers to fulfill pledges in 2026 must be received no later than December 15. This is a deadline imposed on me by VANCO, our ACH processor.

Thank you for your understanding.

Questions can be sent to the email listed below.

Blessings,
Robert “Charlie” Knapp
fin.sec.fortucc@gmail.com

If your contact information has been changed this year please inform our clerk at clerk.fortucc@gmail.com

Shoes that Fit Campaign

For 19 years, our church has partnered with Jefferson Co. HeadStart to provide kids with new shoes. Head Start works to ready children aged 3-5 for school. A child must qualify by income. This year we are providing athletic shoes and winter boots to 42 HeadStart students. Look for the Shoes that Fit bulletin board in the Narthex to sign up to help!



If you would like to donate money to help the church buy shoes on your behalf, please send money to the church by Dec. 7. Please put "Shoes that Fit" in the memo. Drop them in the offering plate or the church office. On average, it costs \$60 to purchase shoes and boots for one child.

FORT HOLIDAY WINTER MARKET

The Fort Holiday Market is being held December 6, 2025. We are working in partnership with the Fort Atkinson Farmers Market, and, along with our offerings, we will be a venue for other market participants. As in years past, we will offer cheese, our famous Congregational Peanuts, bakery, lunch, Lend a Hand soup mixes and a great selection of Raffle Baskets!

You can bring your completed themed basket, or you can bring the contents to be put together in a basket. There will be a few volunteers who will be the "basket makers". Baskets will be displayed at the Winter Market, and then on December 7th and 14th. The drawing will be on December 14th after worship.

There will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex after worship starting November 2nd.
Thank you for your generosity!

**There will be many opportunities for volunteer helpers for the Holiday Market.
Sign-up sheets will also be available for those tasks.**

We look forward to this great fundraiser for our church!

Please contact Nancy Onufer at 920-691-6106 with any questions.

Heartfelt Thanks!

Jude Hartwick would like you to share his good news and gratitude with the congregation. Jude had knee replacement repair surgery in July. A week ago he was finally allowed to put some weight on that leg. It has been a long 4 months waiting for that green light! Jude is grateful to First Congregational UCC for its ongoing support and prayers. The prayer quilt and the visits from members are greatly appreciated.

CREATION CARE TIP OF DECEMBER

Since forming the Creation Care Team and implementing more recycling, we have all been asked by many of the congregation, "Just what goes in which bin?" Stay posted for information on the most common types of things we use in church and can or cannot recycle. Our main takeaway since beginning Creation Care, is we really need to focus on reusing and reducing alongside recycling what we can. Hope you find this helpful!

Community Meal Dec. 20th

The Vasquez family and friends are preparing a community meal for the first time (hopefully not the last) on December 20, 2025. The meal will consist of baked chicken, rice or baked potato, green beans and corn, pasta salad, soda and water. We will also have Christmas karaoke to test your music knowledge, and a big surprise at the end.

Meal serving will be from 4 - 7 pm.

2026 Stewardship Campaign

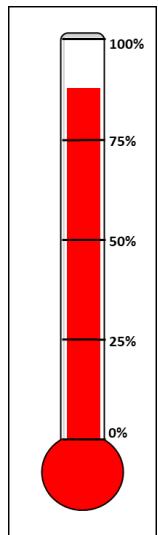
WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

Goal: \$230,000

85 pledges received

Total pledged as of Nov 17, 2025:
\$203,595

Percent of goal achieved: 89%



Request for Donations to the Homeless Coalition of Fort Atkinson

Outreach is asking for donations for the Homeless Coalition of Fort Atkinson from December 14 to January 11.

Items needed are detergent pods, body wash, underwear (adult men and women), and winter hats and gloves (adult men and women). These items are in high demand at the Homeless Coalition. Please donate new items only. Donation baskets will be in the narthex area starting December 14.

Thank you for giving to those in need!



THANK YOU to all of our Wonderful Fall Clean-Up Volunteers!

Take time from your holiday busyness to join us for a cup of hot cocoa, coffee, or tea **following worship on December 21.** Bring your favorite holiday treat or appetizer to share if you like.



Helper Schedule

Date	Greeters	Ushers	Lay Reader	Tech Support
Dec. 7 2nd Advent	Pat Jung	David & Lynn Klug Stedman	Mike Rankin	Kurt Wesemann
Dec. 14 3rd Advent	Joe and Eunice Ann Slaney	Judy Brown and Linda Fromader	Linda Glendon	Kevin Becker
Dec. 21 4th Advent	Trent and Pam Topel	John & Holly Andrews	Susan Woods	Bob Buell
Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service	Julie Ankomeus	Chris & Brenda Reed	Sharon Wisch	Kurt Wesemann
Dec. 28	Gary and Barbara Vorpahl	Hiedi Siefkes and Sandy Mittelstadt	Chris Reed	Kevin Becker

The Food Pantry items needed:

Pancake Mix

Pancake Syrup

Pork N Beans

Apple Sauce

1lb Rice

Canned Pasta

In Need of Volunteers for



Dec. 7 Communion Team

Susan & Jeff Woods,

Christine Spangler, and Bob Rose

Food Pantry Volunteers

Outreach is asking for volunteers during the month of January to distribute food at the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry. Workers are needed on Mondays and Thursdays from 2:45 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Whether you are a seasoned volunteer or new to sign up, please come and help those who need assistance during these challenging times. A sign-up sheet is in the narthex on the Outreach bulletin board.

Any questions contact the church office.

Attention Coffee Fellowship Volunteers

The sign-up sheet for coffee fellowship dates from December through February is posted in the narthex. Please sign up for the date(s) of your choice. Thank you for hosting this fun fellowship opportunity!

Dec 4—6 PM Facility Ministry Meeting

SAVE THE DATES

Dec 6—Winter Market at First Congregational Church

Cheese, peanuts, bakery, lunch, dry soups, and raffle baskets all for sale. A fundraiser for the church. Volunteer spots available. Contact Nancy Onufer (920-691-6106) for more information/volunteer opportunities.

Dec 7—2nd Sunday in Advent—8:45 Advent Bible Study

Dec 9—Dart Ball @ St. Joseph

Dec 11—Lend-A-Hand Meeting 1 PM

Dec 14—3rd Sunday in Advent—8:45 Advent Bible Study

Dec 16—6 PM Council Meeting

Dart Ball @ FCC vs St. Marks (Jeffs)

Dec 17—Prayer Quilt Ministry 9 AM—Choir Xmas Party 7 PM

Dec 20—Community Meal 4-6 PM in Plymouth Hall

Dec 21—4th Sunday in Advent—8:45 Advent Bible Study

Christmas Festivities Worship and Hot Cocoa Bar

Dec 24—Christmas Eve Worship 5 PM

Office Closures for Floors and Holidays

December 8th- Kitchen Floor cleaned

December 9th- 11th - Hallway tile refinished, Carpet repair in Narthex- No access to Office, Plymouth Hall. (Office will be open for calls)

December 24th and 25th- Office Closed for Christmas

December 31st and January 1st- Office Closed for New Years

If you would like to have an event or announcement added to the list

Please let Henry know by the 25th of each month at officefortucc@gmail.com

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC

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Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

Church Office: (920) 563-4802

Church Email: officefortucc@gmail.com

Moderator: Sandy Czech 2czechs.sc@gmail.com

Rev.Dr. Sara Rabe: revsara@fortucc@gmail.com

Church's Website: www.fortfcc.org

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

