



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

NOVEMBER 30, 2025



Welcome! The mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is to: **Live by faith, embody love, proclaim hope, and seek justice.** If you are worshipping with us for the first time, we hope that you will find God's presence among us. When the Friendship Folder is passed during the announcements, please sign it, and then pass it back across the pew to the inside aisle.

All are welcome. Jesus called us to welcome all into God's family. Join our Fellowship Hour after worship where everyone is invited to enjoy refreshments in the Community Room. A restroom for families and all bodies is in the narthex.

Children are welcome in worship! Activity bags are available in the narthex. There is an area for parents and children at the front of the nave which allows children to be close to the action in worship. Our staffed nursery (downstairs) is an option as well; all kids workers have undergone a background check. Today, the children will remain with their families after the word for children to allow our teachers to be with family on this holiday weekend.

Livestreaming Notice for Worship. We strive for worship to be accessible for all, so we livestream our worship services on our YouTube channel, First Congregational UCC, La Crosse. Your voice and/or image may be visible in the broadcast. These recordings are publicly available at the church's discretion. If you prefer not to appear, we invite you to sit in the sanctuary's last six rows, which are not shown on camera.



Please ask an usher if you would like a large print or sensory friendly bulletin, or if you need directions or any other assistance. A Hearing Loop system is available. Turn your hearing device to the "T" setting.

Serving in Worship Today

Leading Worship & Preaching.....	Laura Wright
Leading Worship & Faith Formation.....	Mary Runyon
Organist, Pianist, & Choir Director	Nancy Allen
Reading Scripture.....	Sherry Sawle
Head Usher	Allan Beatty
Ushers	Julie Mannion, Diane Schumacher
Greeter	Beth Moore
Nursery.....	Zali Stanton
Fellowship	Service & Worship

* In the order of service indicates all who are able, please stand.

Gathering

in the presence of God

Gathering Music

"Sing We Now of Christmas"

Nancy Allen
Arr. by Wagner

Welcome and Announcements

Thank you for joining us today. Please pass the Friendship Folder, fill out the information you wish to share, & note those worshipping in your pew so you can greet them by name.

Prelude Music

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

Nancy Allen
Arr. by Broughton

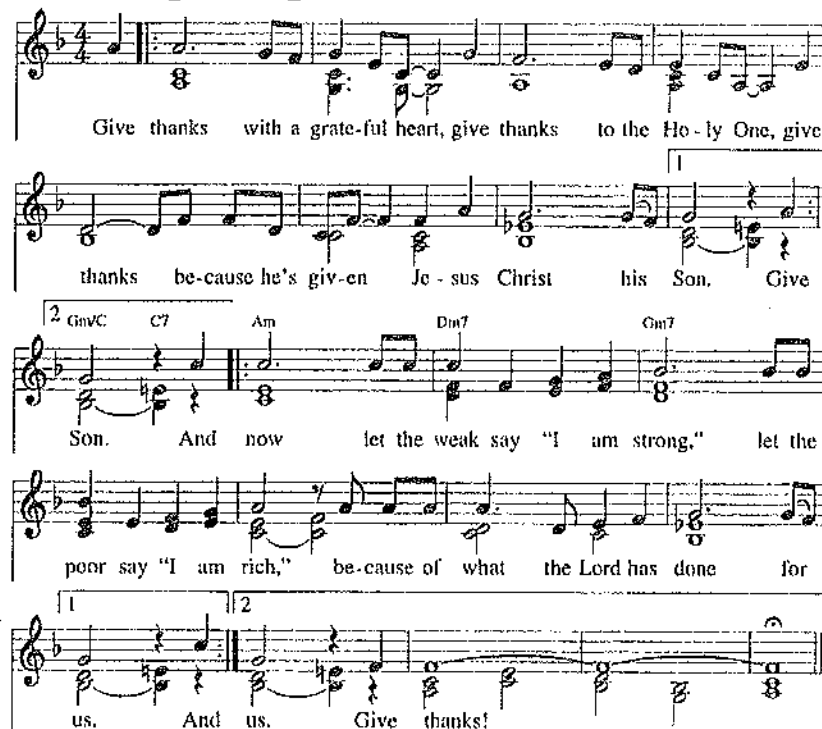
*Call to Worship & the Advent Candle of Hope

One: In days of uncertainty — in times when fear sits close & hope feels far — God's people waited for God to speak by an angel of hope.

Light Bearer: O God, we light the first candle of Advent & name it Hope. We hope for the holy child who is coming — quietly, unexpectedly — bringing light to the fearful and courage to the weary.

All: Loving God, we thank you for your promise of hope — hope that steadies trembling hearts, hope that rises in fearful times, hope that leads all nations toward peace.

One: We now sing a song of thanks to the God who has brought us hope:



Give thanks with a grate-ful heart, give thanks to the Ho-ly One, give
thanks be-cause he's giv-en Je-sus Christ his Son. Give
Son. And now let the weak say "I am strong," let the
poor say "I am rich," be-cause of what the Lord has done for
us. And us. Give thanks!

Moment of Silence

Take this moment of silence to be still and listen for God.

*Hymn 176 *(All join in singing the hymns.)*

"Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates"

Truro

*Sharing the Peace

One: The peace of the Christ child be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Please greet those near you with a wave or bow and with words such as: "Peace be with you. / And also with you."

Listening

for the Still-speaking God


The Word for Children

Children will join the pastor in the center aisle as we walk forward for the Word for Children. Kids will return to their families after the kids' message.

Acclamation *(Sung by all.)*

Halleluja

All:



Hal-le-Hal-le-Hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le-Hal-le-Hal - le - lu - ja.

Hal-le-Hal-le-Hal - le - lu - ja. Hal-le-lu-ja. Hal-le-lu-ja.

The First Lesson

Lamentations 3:55-57

The Psalter

Psalm 27:1-6 *(Reading is based on The Message.)*

One: God is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

Many: **So, with God on my side I'm fearless,
afraid of no one and nothing.**

One: When vandal hordes ride down ready to eat me alive,
those bullies and toughs fall flat on their faces.

Many: **When besieged, I'm calm as a baby.**

When chaos breaks loose, I'm collected and cool.

One: I'm asking God for one thing, only one thing:
to live with God in God's house my whole life long.

Many: **I'll contemplate God's beauty;**

I'll study God's feet.

One: That's the only quiet, secure place in a noisy world —
the perfect getaway, far from the buzz of traffic.

Many: **God holds me head and shoulders above
all who try to pull me down.**

One: I'm headed for God's place
to offer anthems that will raise the roof!

Many: **Already I'm singing God-songs;
I'm making music to God.**

The Gospel

Luke 1:5-13

Sermon

"The Angel in the Anxiety"

Rev. Dr. Laura Wright

Responding

with the voice of hope

***Hymn 154** (*All join in singing the hymns.*)

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Veni Emmanuel

The Community Invited into Prayer

Prayers of the People

Leader: God, in your love,

All: hear our prayer.

The Prayer of Jesus (*Said by all. Use language that reflects your view of God.*)

**Our (Father / Mother / Creator) who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

∞ Thanksgiving

for the gifts of God

Stories of Generosity

Music at the Offertory

*As the Gifts Are Presented: Sing to the tune of Old 100th (Hymn 34).

(All who are able are invited to stand and sing.)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures high and low.
Praise God, for all that love has done,
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One!



Prayer of Thanksgiving

∞ Going

to be messengers of good news

*Hymn 163 *(All join in singing the hymns.)*

"All Earth Is Hopeful"

Taulé

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"Lord of the Dance"

Arr. by Wagner

Acknowledgements: "Give Thanks," words and music © 1978 Integrity's Hosanna Music. "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates," words and music in the public domain. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," words and music in the public domain. "All Earth is Hopeful," words and music © 1993 Centro de Pastoral Liturgica (Admin. OCP Publications); Tr. © 1995 Madeleine Forell Marshall (Admin. Augsburg Fortress). Hymns and service music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

Cover Image: Hannah Garrity, "Zechariah and the Angel," paper lace and graphite drawing backed with cyanotype print. This image has been used as part of the Sanctified Arts devotional entitled "What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent." that our congregation is using in worship and in our Connection Groups that meet in congregants' homes.

*Flowers today are given by Don and Ginny Iverson
in honor of their family.*

First Congregational UCC Ministry Team

All the Members.....Ministers
Rev. Dr. Laura Wright.....Senior Pastor
Rev. Mary Runyon.....Associate Minister of Faith Formation
Nancy Allen.....Organist & Choir Director
Sue Retzlaff.....Bell Choir Director
Michelle Logan.....Office Manager

Contact Information: First Congregational UCC, 2503 Main Street, La Crosse, WI 54601,
608-784-8137 or office@firstcongolax.org, or visit us on the web at www.firstcongolax.org.

What gifts did you give God this week?

Can we share your gift to God with the congregation?

Yes_____ No_____

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Week in our Church:

Sunday, November 30

First Sunday in Advent

Noisy Offering

10:00 am Worship

10:00 am Nursery

11:00 am Fellowship (CR)

Monday, December 1

5:30 pm Advent Connection Group
(At the Brouwer House)

Advanced Sign-up is required

Tuesday, December 2

6:00 pm Advent Connection Group
(At the Wright/Sersch House)

Advanced Sign-up is required

Wednesday, December 3

10:00 am Advent Connection Group (P)
Advanced Sign-up is required

12:00 pm Visitation Team Meeting (CR)

7:00 pm Advent Connection Group
(At Vickie's House)

Advanced Sign-up is required

Thursday, December 4

5:45 pm Service & Worship Meeting (CR)

7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir (S)

Friday, December 5

Office Closed

10:30 am Bell Choir Rehearsal (CR)

Saturday, December 6

10:00 am Advent Connection Group

(At the McQueen/Mieden House)

Advanced Sign-up is required

Sunday, December 7

10:00 am Worship w/Holy Communion

10:00 am Nursery

10:20 am JAM

11:00 am Fellowship (CR)

11:00 am Confirmation (L)

CALENDAR KEY

C = Chapel, J = JAM Rooms, L = Lounge, N = Narthex, CR = Community Room, P = Pastor's Office, S = Sanctuary

Stewardship Update



A friendly reminder to submit your pledge—either using the paper form or you can email Deb McCoy at Financialsec@firstcongolax.org. So far, we have received *54 pledges totaling \$215,051*. Our goal is 150 pledges for \$405,000.

Let's make these dreams come true! Please turn in your pledge this Sunday.

Together with joy and gratitude,

The Stewardship Committee



Giving Tree – Sharing Christmas Joy!

Pick up Your Tag Today!

This year, First Congregational Church is sponsoring 2 families from North Woods Elementary School. Our hope is to make Christmas a little happier for the kids and a little less stressful for their parents. Any way you can help will make a big difference!

Jesus calls us to love and care for those who have less than we do—this is a beautiful way to live out that calling.

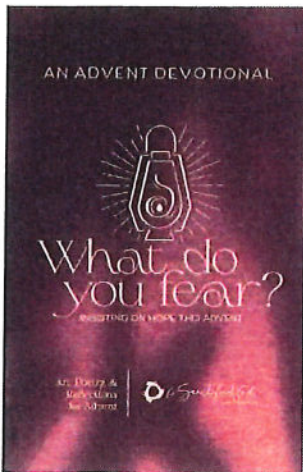
How it works:

1. Pick a tag from the Giving Tree in the Narthex.
2. Sign your tag out on the clipboard (so we can keep track of which tags are taken).
3. Purchase a gift that matches the request on your tag.
4. Bring the gift back *unwrapped* to the church by **December 10th**.

That's it – easy as pie! Thank you for helping make this family's Christmas a little brighter and filled with love and hope.

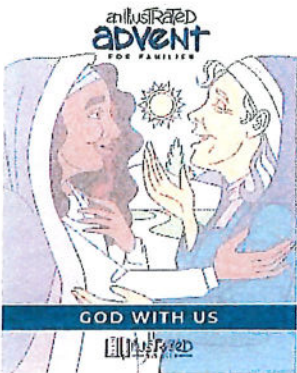


Let's Build a Community One Connection Group at a Time!



Beginning **this week** we will gather in small Connection Groups to explore the Advent Devotional "What Do You Fear?" and the Family Devotional "GOD WITH US".

"What Do You Fear?" takes seriously the angels' message of "Do not be afraid" and reminds us that Christ's arrival truly is good news of great joy for all people. "God With Us" invites your family to explore the ways in which Emmanuel, God-with-us, brings hope, peace, joy, and love to your home and community, especially during hard times. Choose which group would work best for you and your family."



Join your faith community on this meaningful journey—building deeper connections through Scripture, reflection, and conversation.

Sign up today! Choose the time and place that works best for you:

- **Monday: 5:30 p.m.** - The Brouwer House, La Crosse, Led by Dawn Kay
(December 1st, 9th, 16th)
- **Tuesday: 6:00 p.m.** - The Wright/Sersch House, La Crosse, Led by Pastor Laura
(December 2nd, 9th, & 16th)
- **Wednesday: 10:00 a.m.** - Church, Led by Pastor Laura
(December 3rd, 10th, 17th)
- **Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.** - Vickie's House, La Crosse, Led by Vickie & Eli
(December 3rd, 10th, 17th)

Let's walk through Advent together—one connection at a time.

Sign-up sheets and devotional books are on the table by the Chapel doors in the Narthex. If you choose to not sign up for a small group you are welcome to take a devotional book to read on your own.

Sunday, December 14th at 2:00 p.m.



Celebrate the season with an afternoon of **spreading holiday cheer!** We'll meet at the church and carpool to Havenwood and Eagles Crest South retirement communities and go caroling for about an hour. If you're at Eagle Crest South or Havenwood, stay put & we'll come to you with Christmas carols! Afterward, we'll head back to church to warm up with **cookies and hot chocolate.** All ages are welcome—just bring your holiday spirit

and your *singing* voices! If you have extra space in your car, please email Pastor Laura know at Laura@firstcongolax.org.



IT'S AN ALL-CHURCH EVENING AT ROTARY LIGHTS

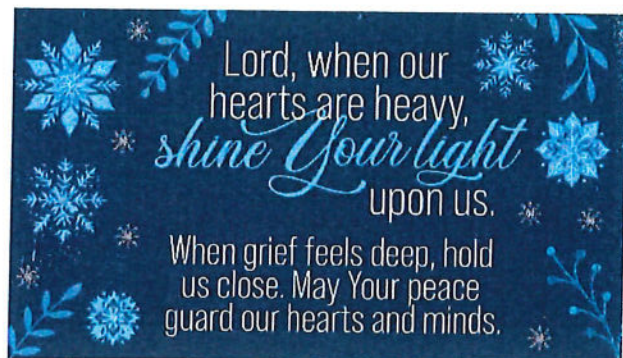
Sunday, December 21st



We'll gather at the church at 5:00 PM and carpool to Riverside Park for a festive evening of fun and fellowship. Once there, we'll stroll through the beautifully lit paths and take in the magic of Rotary Lights—twinkling displays, holiday music, and the joy of the season all around us. It's a wonderful opportunity to slow down, connect with one another, and soak in the beauty of God's Creation during this special time of year.

All ages are welcome—bring your friends and your holiday spirit!

Honoring Grief and Loss During the Holidays



When: December 14, 2025

Time 9:00 - 9:45 a.m.

Place: The Chapel

Offered by the
WISE Mental Health Committee

Christmas is supposed to be "the most wonderful time of the Year," but for many it is a time of sadness, struggle, grief and loss - a time when we feel that we are supposed to be joyful even if our hearts are aching from the loss of a beloved family member, friend, pet, job, or other lost treasure. We invite you to join us in a service that allows us to honor the "less than joyful" feelings we may be experiencing this time of year. We will hold our sadness, loneliness, anger, hopes and fears in a time of sacred prayer, reflection, and ritual. Together we will discover that hope is possible even in the darkest of times. This special service, offered by our church's WISE Mental Health Committee, will be held in the Chapel prior to the 10:00 am worship service. Please join us.

United Campus Ministry's Finals Feast



Finals are one of the most stressful times in a college student's life. Let's show our care and support by helping with United Campus Ministry's **Finals Feast!** On **Tuesday, December 9th**, UCM will be serving a hearty meal to students, and they would love our help. If you're able to contribute, please sign up on the

stone ledge in the Narthex.

They are looking for volunteers to provide a main dish, a salad, or a dessert.

If you have questions, please contact **Jill Pein** at **(608) 769-1175** or **jill7rich@gmail.com**.

Let's bless our students with a warm meal and a reminder that their church community is cheering them on!