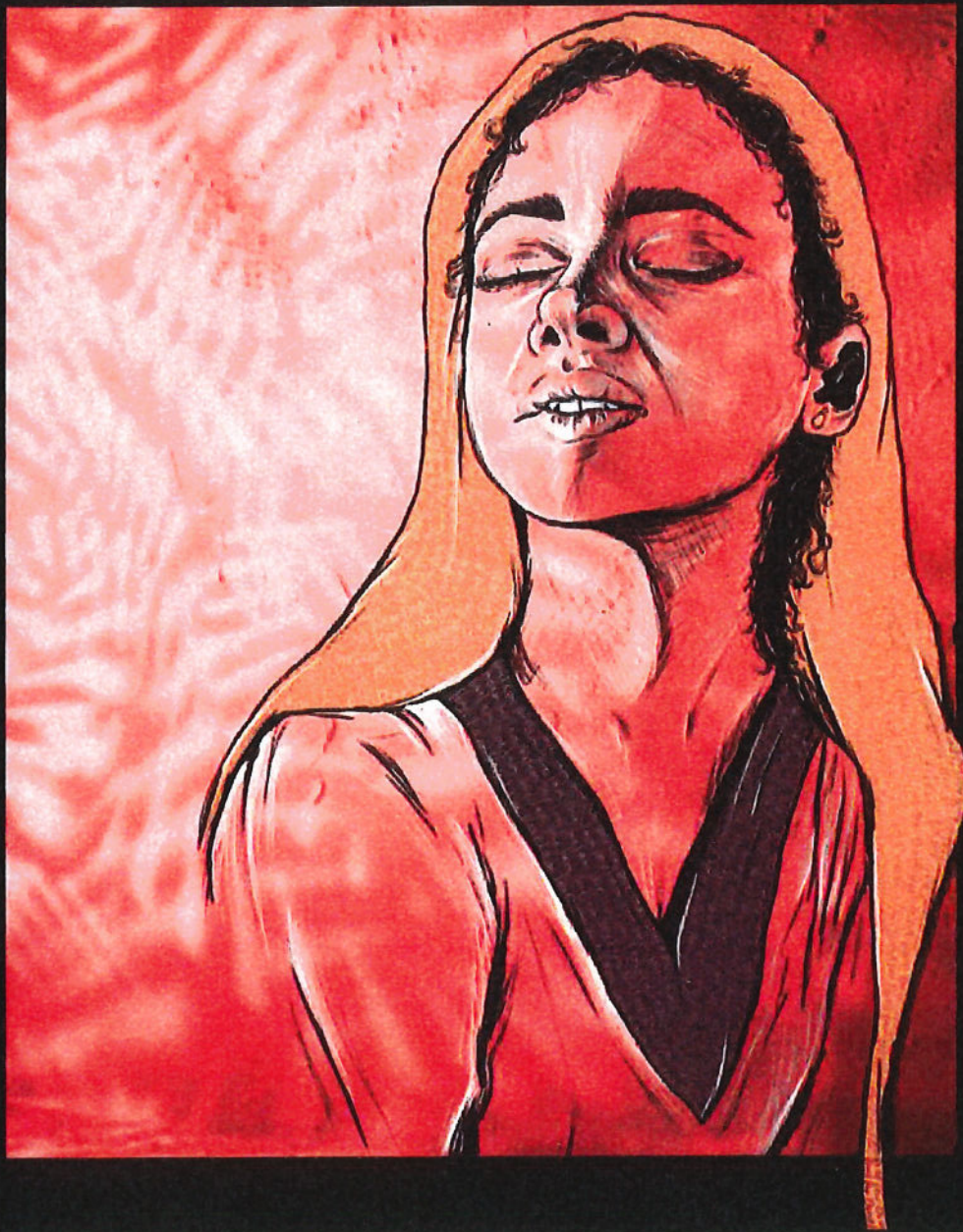




THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 14, 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 go to their classrooms after the Word for Children.

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.....	Kristi Koch
Bell Choir Director.....	Sue Retzlaff
Reading Scripture.....	Bill Ohm
Head Usher	Michael Feuerhelm
Ushers	Joan Ohm, Cam Roberts
Greeter	Tom Stolpa
Nursery.....	Zali Stanton
Fellowship.....	Creation Care

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

Gathering

in the presence of God

Gathering Music

"People, Look East"

Kristi Koch

Arr. By Dale Wood

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

"I Wonder as I Wander"

The Bell Choir

Arr. by Moglebust

*Call to Worship & the Advent Candle of Joy

Huxley & Oliver

One: In days when we feel insignificant – when the future seems fragile,
God still speaks – calling us, strengthening us.
Just as Mary heard God's voice in the angel's voice,
joy breaks into our world.

Light Bearer: O God, we light the third candle of Advent & name it Joy.

We seek the joy You give joy even when we are afraid, joy leaps in
us like Elizabeth's child leapt.

All: **Loving God, we thank you for joy that steadies us –
a joy that blooms in unlikely places.**

One: Let us raise our voices to the One who is coming:

Em - man - u - el, Em - man - u -

el, His name is called Em - man - u -

el; God with us, re - vealed in

us; His name is called Em - man - u -

1. 2. el. Em - man - u - el.

Moment of Silence

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

*Hymn 153 *(All join in singing the hymns.)*

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

Hyfrydol

*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 go to their classes after the Word for Children.

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

Bill Ohm

Jeremiah 1:4-10

The Psalter

Psalm 40:1-6 *(Reading is based on The Message.)*

*One: I waited and waited and waited for God.
At last God looked; finally, God listened.*

*Many: God lifted me out of the ditch,
pulled me from deep mud.*

One: God stood me up on a solid rock
to make sure I wouldn't slip.

Many: **God taught me how to sing the latest God-song,
a praise-song to our God.**

One: More and more people are seeing this:
they enter the mystery, abandoning themselves to God.

Many: **Blessed are you who give yourselves over to God,
turn your backs on the world's "sure thing,"
ignore what the world worships.**

One: The world is a huge stockpile of God-wonders and God-thoughts.

Many: **Nothing and no one compare to you!
I start talking about you, telling what I know,
and quickly run out of words.**

One: Neither numbers nor words account for you.

Many: **Doing something for you, bringing something to you —
that's not what you're after.**

One: Being religious, acting pious —
that's not what you're asking for.

Many: **You've opened my ears so I can listen.**

The Gospel

Luke 1:26-39

Sermon

"Scared, but Still Saying Yes"

Rev. Dr. Laura Wright

Responding

with the voice of hope

Music at the Offertory

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

The Bell Choir

Arr. by Lloyd Larson

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

"Away in a Manger/Still, Still, Still"

The Bell Choir
Arr. by Lloyd Larson

*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 523 (*All join in singing the hymns.*)

"Soon and Very Soon"

Soon and very soon

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"O Magnify the Lord"

Kristi Koch
Arr. By Tim Doran

Acknowledgements: “Emanuel,” words and music in the public domain. “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” words and music in the public domain. “Soon and Very Soon,” words and music © Bud John Songs/Crouch Music (Admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing) 1982. Hymns and music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

Cover Image: Lisle Gwynn Garrity, “Mary’s Yes,” photography with digital drawing. This image has been used as part of the Sanctified Arts devotional entitled “What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent.” Our congregation is using this devotional in worship and in our Connection Groups that meet in congregants’ homes.

*Flowers today are given by Joan Budnick
in honor of her cousin, David, on the anniversary of his birthday.*

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:

Third Sunday in Advent

Sunday, December 14

- 9:00 am Faith Forum: Blue Christmas (C)
- 10:00 am Worship
- 10:00 am Nursery
- 10:20 am JAM
- 11:00 am Fellowship (CR)
- 12:00 am Missions & Social Justice Meeting (K)
- 2:00 pm Church Wide Caroling

Monday, December 15

- 7:15 pm Christian Ed Meeting (Zoom)

Tuesday, December 16

- 6:00 pm Finance Meeting (L)
- 6:00 pm Advent Connection Group
(At the Wright/Sersch House)
Advanced Sign-up is required

Wednesday, December 17

- 10:00 am Advent Connection Group (P)
Advanced Sign-up is required
- 7:00 pm Advent Connection Group
(At Vickie's House)
Advanced Sign-up is required

Thursday, December 18

- 12:00 pm Membership Meeting (CR)
- 7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir (S)

Friday, December 19

Office Closed

- 10:30 am Bell Choir Rehearsal (CR)

Saturday, December 20

- 10:00 am Advent Connection Group
(At the McQueen/Mieden House)
Advanced Sign-up is required

Sunday, December 20

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Christmas Fund Offering

- 10:00 am Worship
- 10:00 am Nursery
- 10:20 am JAM
- 11:00 am Fellowship (CR)
- 11:00 am WISE Committee Meeting (C)
- 5:00 pm FCC at Rotary Lights

CALENDAR KEY

C = Chapel, J = JAM Rooms, L = Lounge, N = Narthex,

CR = Community Room, P = Pastor's Office, S = Sanctuary

Stewardship Update



Friendly reminder: If you haven't had a chance yet, please send in your pledge response soon! Your support helps us plan faithfully and with joy as we prepare the budget for the year ahead. To pledge scan this QR Code:

Dream with God about our church's future!

Together with joy and gratitude,

The Stewardship Committee



Today 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 Eagle 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!



Is This Yours? It was found in the Sanctuary

This little gem was found in the sanctuary about a week ago—could it be yours? It has "Henry Ford Health System" embossed on the cover, and it looks like it might be something special to someone. If it belongs to you, please stop by the office to pick it up.

Office Closing at 1:45 pm on December 15th



CHURCH OFFICE WILL CLOSE AT 1:45PM

Michelle has an appointment offsite on the afternoon of December 15th so the office will be closing at 1:45 pm. We will reopen at 10:00 am on December 16th. Thank you for your understanding.

Christmas Eve Services



All ages are invited to take part in our Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant, where we retell the story of Jesus' birth and celebrate the good news that God's child has come into our world.

What You Need to Know

Date: December 24

Participant Arrival Time: 4:15 p.m.

Pageant Start Time: 5:00 p.m.

When you arrive, you'll pick out your costume, and then at 5:00 p.m., the fun begins! Together, we'll share the amazing story of the Birth of Jesus. If this sounds like fun to you, contact Michelle in the office at (608) 784-8137 or office@firstcongolax.org



Join us at **8:00 PM** on Christmas Eve for a beautiful **Lessons & Carols** service. Experience the story of Christ's birth through scripture readings and beloved carols, as our congregation gathers to celebrate the wonder and joy of Christmas. All are welcome!

Join Us for Fireworks and Festivities

Lighting Up the Night Sky

Where:
First Congo
2503 Main St. La Crosse
When:
December 31st
Time:
5:00pm



We will gather beginning at **5:00 pm** (parking is first come, first serve!) for **pizza, lemonade, hot chocolate, and sparkling juice.**

There will be games and relay races, and we'll have plenty of **party hats and blowers** to help keep the fun going!

At **6:00 pm** we'll look to the bluff and watch the fireworks light up the night sky.

We hope to see you there for the best kind of fellowship—filled with fun and laughter!

All ages are encouraged to come!

