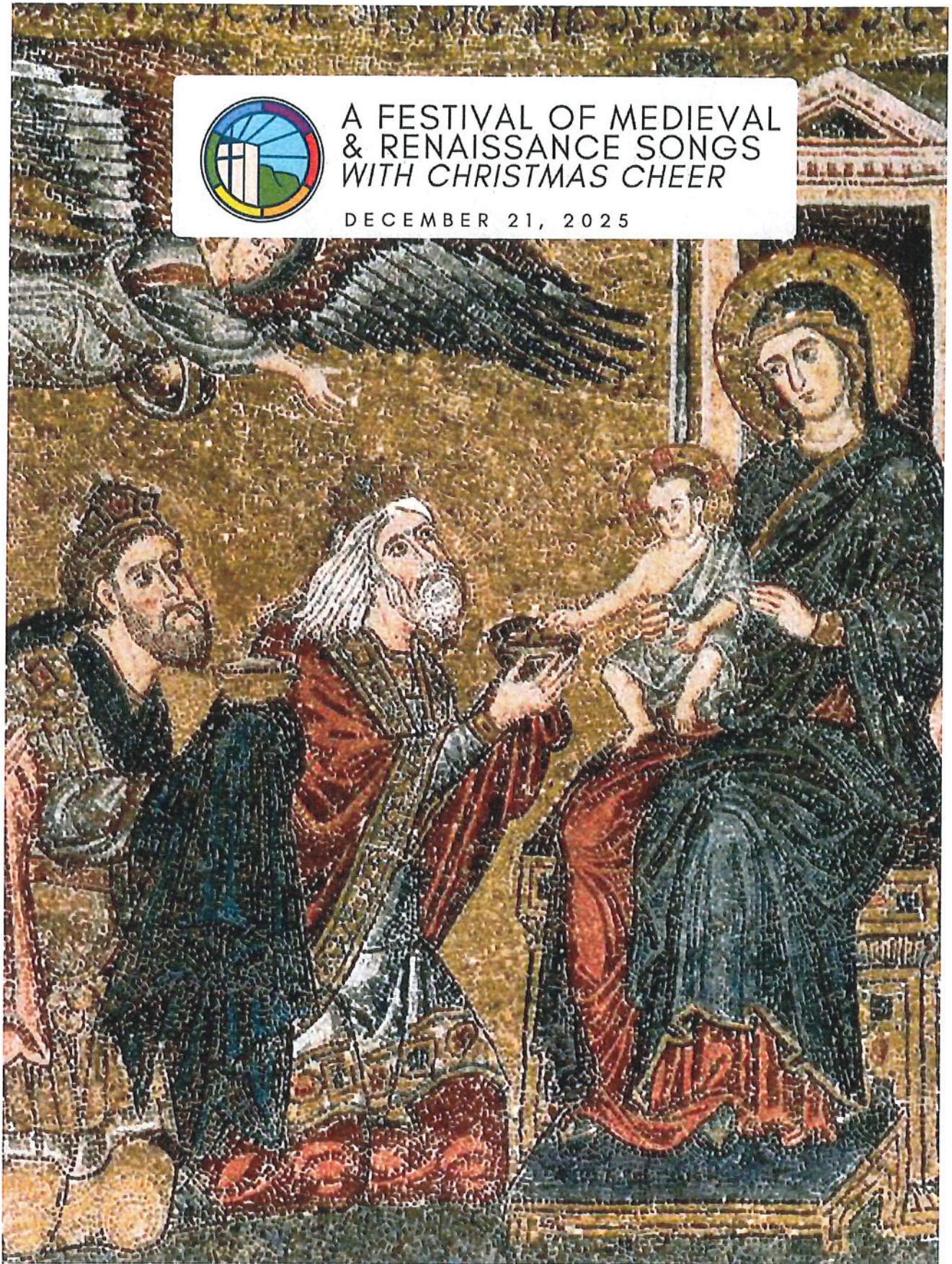




A FESTIVAL OF MEDIEVAL
& RENAISSANCE SONGS
WITH CHRISTMAS CHEER

DECEMBER 21, 2025



Special Thanks to the Sanctuary Choir and Musicians for their gift of music today!

SANCTUARY CHOIR **Nancy Allen, Director** **Kristi Koch, Accompanist**

Sarah Arthur
Katie Berkedal
Kari Bersagel Braley
Matthew Bersagel Braley
Brad Burrill
Eli Carr
Donna Christianson
Michelle Edge
Steve Fulton
Richard Gilbert
Chuck Hanson

Bridget Hill
Mary Jaeger
Mark Koch
David McDowell
Beth Moore
Julie Nelson
Roger Popelka
Victoria Ratsch
Shauna Sallmen
Sherry Sawle

Brad Seebach
Jessica Seebach
Vernon Shaw
Barbara Strohm
Randy Swenson
Ellen Ullsvik
Tom Uphaus
Joan Waniger
Rick Waniger
Sanna Yoder

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Scott Bradford
Maya Chilcote
Francisco de la Rosa, IV
Tammy Fisher
Kristi Koch
Jeff Krauklis
Maddy Larsen

Tuba
Oboe
Violin
Percussion
Piano
Trumpet
Violin

Busya Lugovier
Jodi Monerson
Keaton Purney
Robert Swerman
George Von Arx
Nancy Von Arx

Viola
Horn
Cello
Trumpet
Trombone
Flute

Special thanks to Wendy Mattison for supporting instrumental music through her annual gift in memory of Mark Mattison.

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. Our staffed nursery, located downstairs, is also available; all children's workers have undergone background checks. Today, children in 2nd grade and younger will be dismissed to their classrooms following 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.....	Laura Wright
Leading Worship & Faith Formation.....	Mary Runyon
Organist, Pianist, and Choir Director.....	Nancy Allen
Reading Scripture.....	Diane Schumacher
Head Usher	Allan Beatty
Ushers	Patty Leach, Tom Stolpa
Greeter	Gladys McLenahan, Brad Seebach
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

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Arr. by Charles Evans

Brass Quintet

"Coventry Carol"

Arr. by Thomas Quigley

String Quartet

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

"Gloria Patri"

Palestrina/Leavitt

Brass Quintet & the Sanctuary Choir

*Call to Worship & the Advent Candle of Love Juni & Ruby Ronsman

One: In days when plans feel uncertain and fear settles close,
love comes—quiet as a dream, steady as an angel's voice.

Light Bearer: O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent & name it Love.
Love finds Joseph in his confusion & asks him to trust you.

All: **Loving God, we thank you for your promise of love—a love that
is born among us when we least expect it.**

One: Let us raise our voices in gratitude to the One who comes in love:



1. Jo - seph dear - est, Jo - seph mild, help me
rock my lit - tle child.
God will give you your re - ward in heav'n a -
bove. The Son of Vir - gin Mar -
y.

Moment of Silence

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

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

"The Friendly Beasts"

Orientis Partibus

Je- sus our broth- er kind and good Was

hum- bly born in a sta- ble rude, And the

friend- ly beasts a- round him stood

Je- sus our broth- er kind and good.

I, said the donkey, shaggy and brown,
I carried His mother uphill and down.
I carried His mother to Bethlehem town
I, said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

I, said the sheep with curly horn,
I gave Him my wool for His blanket warm.
He wore my coat on Christmas morn.
I, said the sheep with curly horn.

I, said the dove from the rafters high
I cooed Him to sleep that He should not cry,
We cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I.
I, said the dove, from the rafters high.

*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

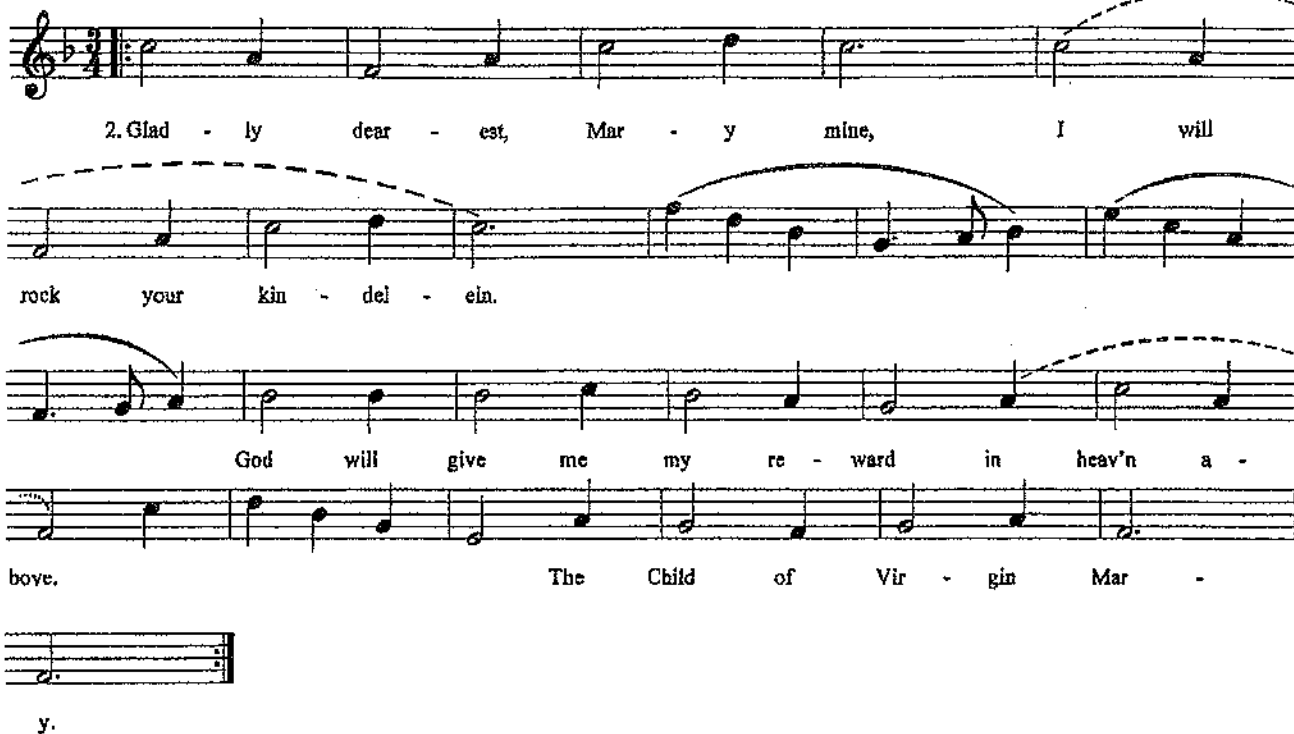
The Word for Children

Children are invited to join the pastor in the center aisle and walk forward together for the Word for Children. Following the Word for Children, kids in 2nd grade and younger, will be dismissed to their classes. Children in 3rd through 5th grade will remain in worship upstairs.

Acclamation *(Sung by all.)*

Resonet in Laudibus

All:



2. Glad - ly dear - est, Mar - y mine, I will
rock your kin - del - ein.
God will give me my re - ward in heav'n a -
bove. The Child of Vir - gin Mar -
y.

The First Lesson Isaiah 7:10-16

Diane Schumacher

The Psalter

Psalm 80:1-3 (*Reading is based on The Message.*)

One: Listen, Shepherd, Israel's Shepherd —
get all your Joseph sheep together.

Many: **Throw beams of light from your dazzling throne.**

One: So Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh can see where they're going.

Many: **Get out of bed — you've slept long enough!**
Come on the run before it's too late.

One: God, come back!

Many: **Smile your blessing smile:**
that will be our salvation.

The Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

Word in Music

Medieval & Renaissance Songs & Christmas Cheer

The Sanctuary Choir

"Personent Hodie"

Arr. by Lara Hoggard

Scott Bradford, Tuba; Tammy Fisher, Percussion; Krisi Koch, Piano;
Jeff Krauklis, Trumpet; Jodi Monerson, Horn;
Robert Swerman, Trumpet; George Von Arx, Trombone

"Wexford Carol"

Arr. by Hagenburg

Maya Chilcote, Oboe; Francisco de la Rosa, IV, Violin;
Tammy Fisher, Percussion; Maddy Larsen, Violin;
Busya Lugovier, Viola; Keaton Purney, Cello

"Verbum Caro Factum Est" ("The Word Became Flesh")

Hassler/Holmes

"Gaudate"

Arr. by Burrows

Maya Chilcote, Oboe; Tammy Fisher, Percussion;
Keaton Purney, Cello; Nancy Von Arx, Flute

"Ding Dong Merrily on High"

Arr. by Shackley

Scott Bradford, Tuba; Maya Chilcote, Oboe;

Francisco de la Rosa, IV, Violin; Tammy Fisher, Percussion;

Kristi Koch, Piano; Jeff Krauklis, Trumpet; Maddy Larsen, Violin;

Busya Lugovier, Viola; Jodi Monerson, Horn; Keaton Purney, Cello;

Robert Swerman, Trumpet; George Von Arx, Trombone;

Nancy Von Arx, Flute

Responding

with the voice of hope

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

Chuck Hanson

Music at the Offertory

String Quartet

"Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

Arr. by Paul Thompson

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

"The Holly and the Ivy"

The holly and the ivy

1. The hol - ly and the i - vy, when they are both full grown, of ____
(2.) hol - ly bears a blos - som as white as lil - ly flow'r and ____
(3.) hol - ly bears a ber - ry as red as an - y blood. And ____

all the trees that are in the wood, the ____ hol - ly bears the crown.
Mar - y bore sweet Je - sus Christ to ____ be our sweet sav - ior. } The
Mar - y bore sweet Je - sus Christ to ____ do poor sin - ners good. }

ris - ing of the sun ____ and the run - ning of the deer; the ____

1. 2. 3.

play - ing of the mer - ry or - gan, sweet sing - ing in the choir. 2. The choir.
3. The

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

Brass Quintet

Arr. by Thomas Quigley

Acknowledgements: "Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mild" words and music in the public domain. "The Friendly Beasts," words and music in the public domain. "The Holly and the Ivy," words and music in the public domain. Hymns and music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

Cover Image: Lauren Wright Pittman, “I Am with You,” hand-carved, block-printed with oil-based ink on paper. 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 Crystal Lien and Bob Armstrong
in honor of their spouses: Ron Lien and Karen Armstrong.*

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_____



The white rose on the altar is in memory of Linda Kempf, who passed away.

Please remember her family and friends in your prayers during this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Week in our Church:

Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday in Advent

10:00 am A Festival of Medieval &
Renaissance Songs
with Christmas Cheer

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

Tuesday, December 23

11:00 am Koffee Klatch @ Havenwood

2:30 pm Membership Meeting (CR)

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Christmas Fund Offering

Office Closed

5:00 pm Kids, Pageant Worship (S)

8:00 pm Lessons & Carols Worship (S)

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day

Office Closed

Friday, December 26

Office Closed

Sunday, December 28

Noisy Offering

10:00 am Worship

10:00 am Nursery

11:00 am Fellowship (CR)

Love

CALENDAR KEY

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

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

IT'S AN ALL-CHURCH EVENING AT
ROTARY LIGHTS

Today, 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!

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.

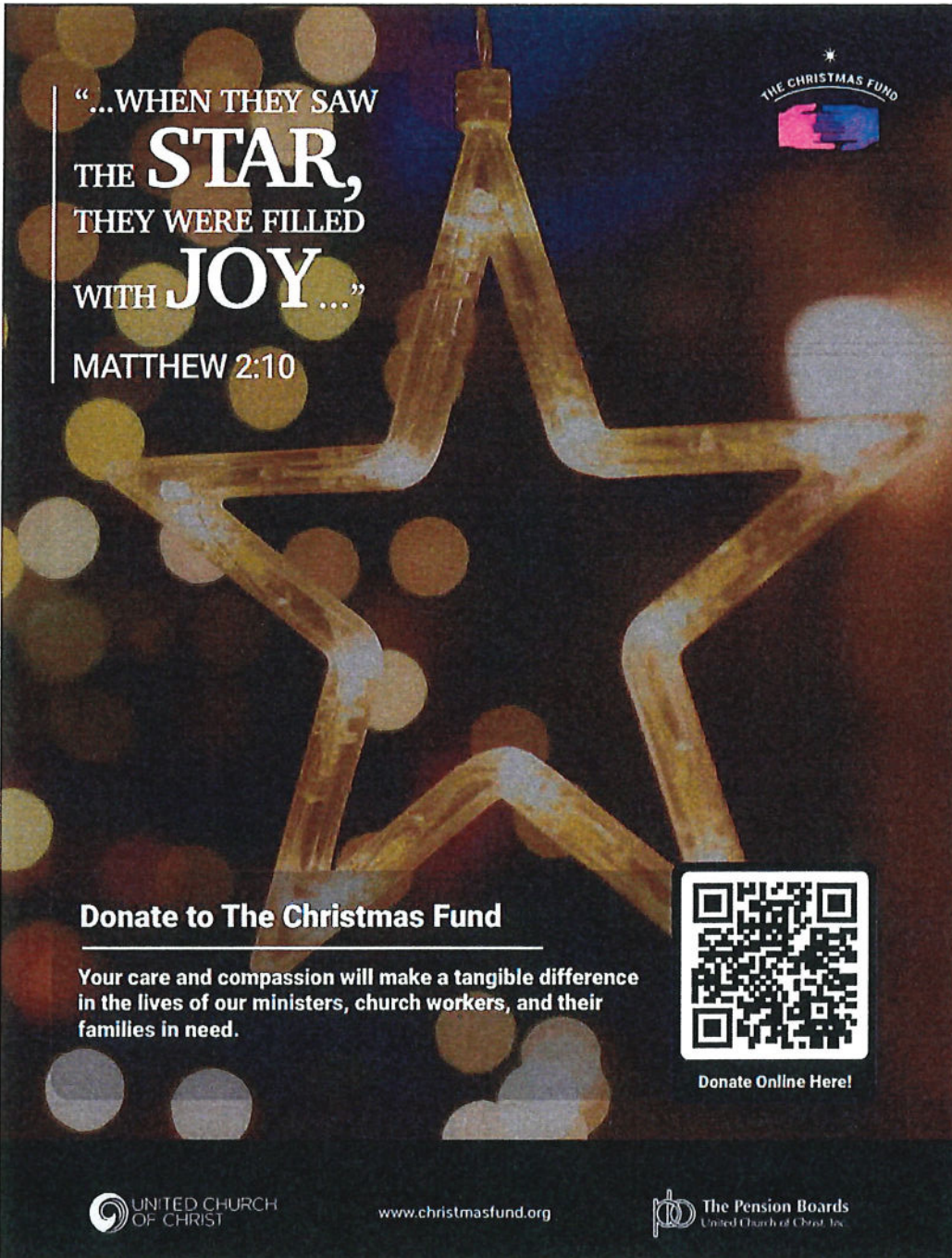
Pageant Start Time: 5:00 p.m.

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!

Christmas Fund Offering will be Received on Christmas Eve



"...WHEN THEY SAW
THE **STAR**,
THEY WERE FILLED
WITH **JOY** ..."
MATTHEW 2:10


THE CHRISTMAS FUND

Donate to The Christmas Fund


Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference
in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their
families in need.



Donate Online Here!

 UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

www.christmasfund.org

 The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.

Our UCC Christmas Fund offering will be received on Christmas Eve. Thank you for prayerfully considering this worthy ministry as you offer your gifts.

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!



SAVE THE DATE

CONGO CREW

Grades 4th & 5th

When: The 2nd & 4th Sundays of the Month

Beginning January 11, 2026

Where: First Congo

We will have fun while we make friends and explore our faith.

COME JOIN US!



COMING IN JANUARY 2026: CONGO CREW!

Congo Crew will meet twice a month at 4:30 pm. We'll share a meal, have fun, build community, and explore what it means to live a faithful life together.

Parents, more information will be sent out during the first week of the new year. Kids, keep an eye out for your postcard in the mail!

We'll kick things off on January 11 at 4:30 pm—don't miss it!





WAHER

FOOD PANTRY

Way to go, First Congregational!
On our December WAHER Sunday,
December 7th,
we donated a *record* amount of food!
232 pounds
along with \$99 in cash.

You were clearly listening to our neighbors' stories. In these hard times, WAHER needs all of our donations to help feed those who do not have the resources we do. Thank you for recognizing this need and doing what you could.

God's Work, Our Hands

