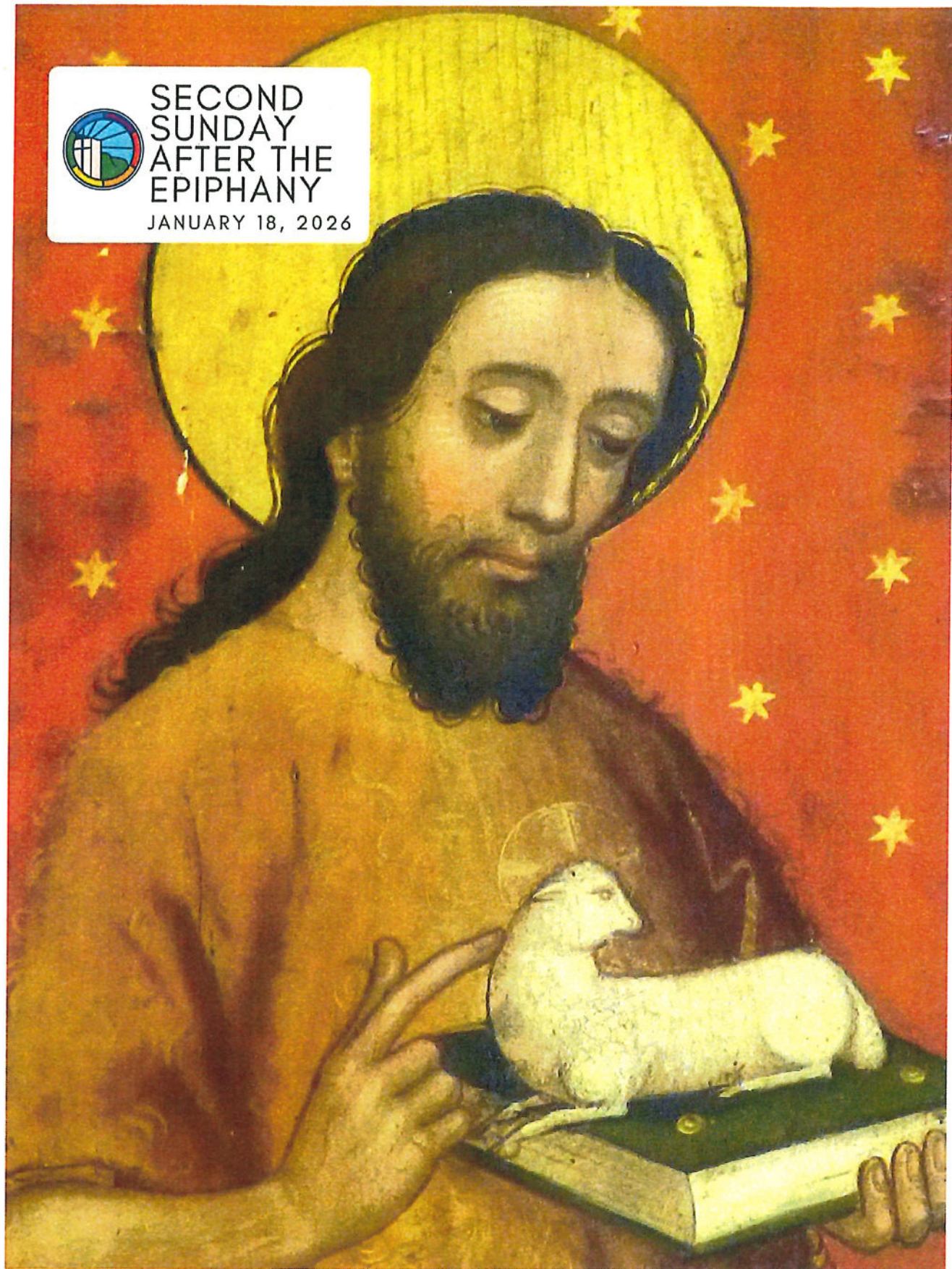




SECOND
SUNDAY
AFTER THE
EPIPHANY

JANUARY 18, 2026



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 join their age-specific classes downstairs 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, on camera we invite you to sit in the sanctuary's last six rows.



Please ask an usher if you would like a large print or sensory friendly bulletin, or if you need directions or any other assistance.

Serving in Worship Today

Leading Worship & Preaching.....	Laura Wright
Organist, Pianist, and Choir Director.....	Nancy Allen
Reading Scripture.....	Sue Heuer
Head Usher	Michael Feuerhelm
Greeter	Patty Leach
Nursery.....	Zali Stanton
Fellowship	Finance

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

Gathering

in the presence of God

Gathering Music

"Praise Him with the Sound of the Trumpet"

Nancy Allen

Arr. Lau

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

"Amazing Grace"

Nancy Allen

Hayes

*Call to Worship

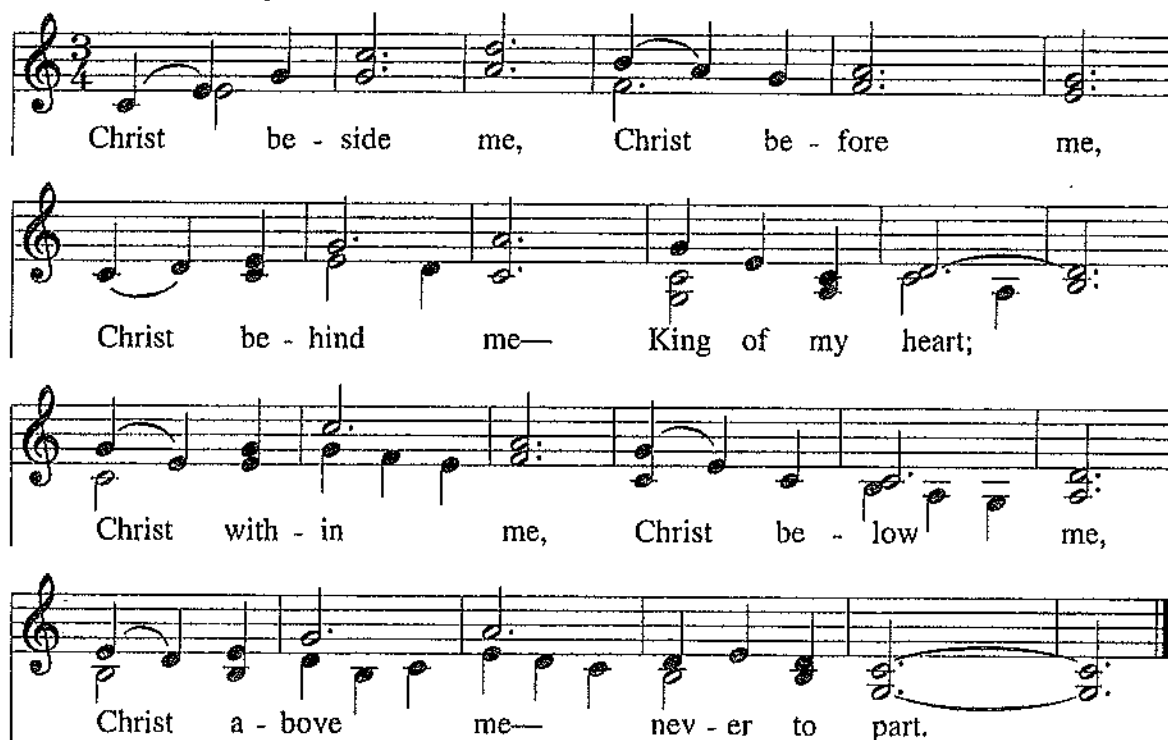
One: Look—here is the Lamb of God,
the One who takes away the brokenness of the world.

All: **We come carrying our questions, our hopes,
our wounds, and our wonder.**

One: Jesus turns to those who are following
and asks: "What are you looking for?"

All: **We are looking for love that welcomes all,
truth that sets us free, and justice that heals the world.**

One: Jesus says, "Come and see."



Christ be - side me, Christ be - fore me,

Christ be - hind me— King of my heart;

Christ with - in me, Christ be - low me,

Christ a - bove me— nev - er to part.

Moment of Silence

Take this moment of silence to grow still and attentive to God. If it helps, try breathing in and silently praying, "God of love" and breathing out while praying "I am here."

*Hymn 559 (All join in singing the hymns.)

"Here I Am, Lord"

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky

*Sharing the Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Please greet those near you with a wave or a 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 downstairs to their age-specific 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

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Sue Heuer

The Psalter

Psalm 40 (Reading is based on The Message.)

One: I waited and waited and waited for God.

At last he looked; finally he listened.

Many: He lifted me out of the ditch,

pulled me from deep mud.

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

Many: **He 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's a huge stockpile
of God-wonders and God-thoughts.

Many: **Nothing and no one compares to you!**

One: I start talking about you, telling what I know,
and quickly run out of words.

Many: **Neither numbers nor words account for you.**

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

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

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

Many: **So I answered, "I'm coming.
I read in your letter what you wrote about me,**

One: and I'm coming to the party
you're throwing for me."

Many: **That's when God's Word entered my life,
became part of my very being.**

One: Now God, don't hold out on me,
don't hold back your passion.

Many: **Your love and truth are all that keeps me together.**

The Gospel

John 1:29-42

Sermon

"Not Building a Brand — Bearing a Witness"

Rev. Dr. Laura Wright

∞ Responding

with the voice of hope

*Anthem

"Who'll Be a Witness"

The Sanctuary Choir

Arr. Drennan

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

"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"

Showalter

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"The Glory of the Spirit"

Nancy Allen

Lani Smith

*Flowers today are given by Lorie Graff in honor of
her father, Oswald Klomsten, in the month of his birth.*

Acknowledgements: "Christ Beside Me," words © 1969 James Quinn, S.J. (Selah Publishing Co., Inc., North American administrator) and music arr. © 1989 Hope Publishing Company. "Here I Am, Lord," words and music © 1981 Daniel L. Schutte and New Dawn Music. "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," words and music in the public domain. Hymns and music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

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**WORSHIP HAS ENDED
NOW THE SERVICE BEGINS**

First Congregational UCC Ministry Team

All the Members.....Ministers
Rev. Dr. Laura Wright.....Senior Pastor
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, January 18

Second Sunday After The Epiphany

9:00 am Faith Forum: Mayor Shaundel
Washington-Spivey (CR)
10:00 am Worship
10:00 am Nursery
10:20 am JAM
11:00 am Fellowship (CR)
11:00 am WISE Meeting (C)

Monday, January 19

Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

5:00 pm Monday Meals (Trinity Lutheran Church)

Tuesday, January 20

Office Closed

Wednesday, January 21

7:00 pm Church Council Meeting (CR)

Thursday, January 22

7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir (S)

Friday, January 23

Office Closed

10:30 am Bell Choir Rehearsal (CR)
5:30 pm Intergeneration Speed Greeting &
Chili Cook-Off (CR)

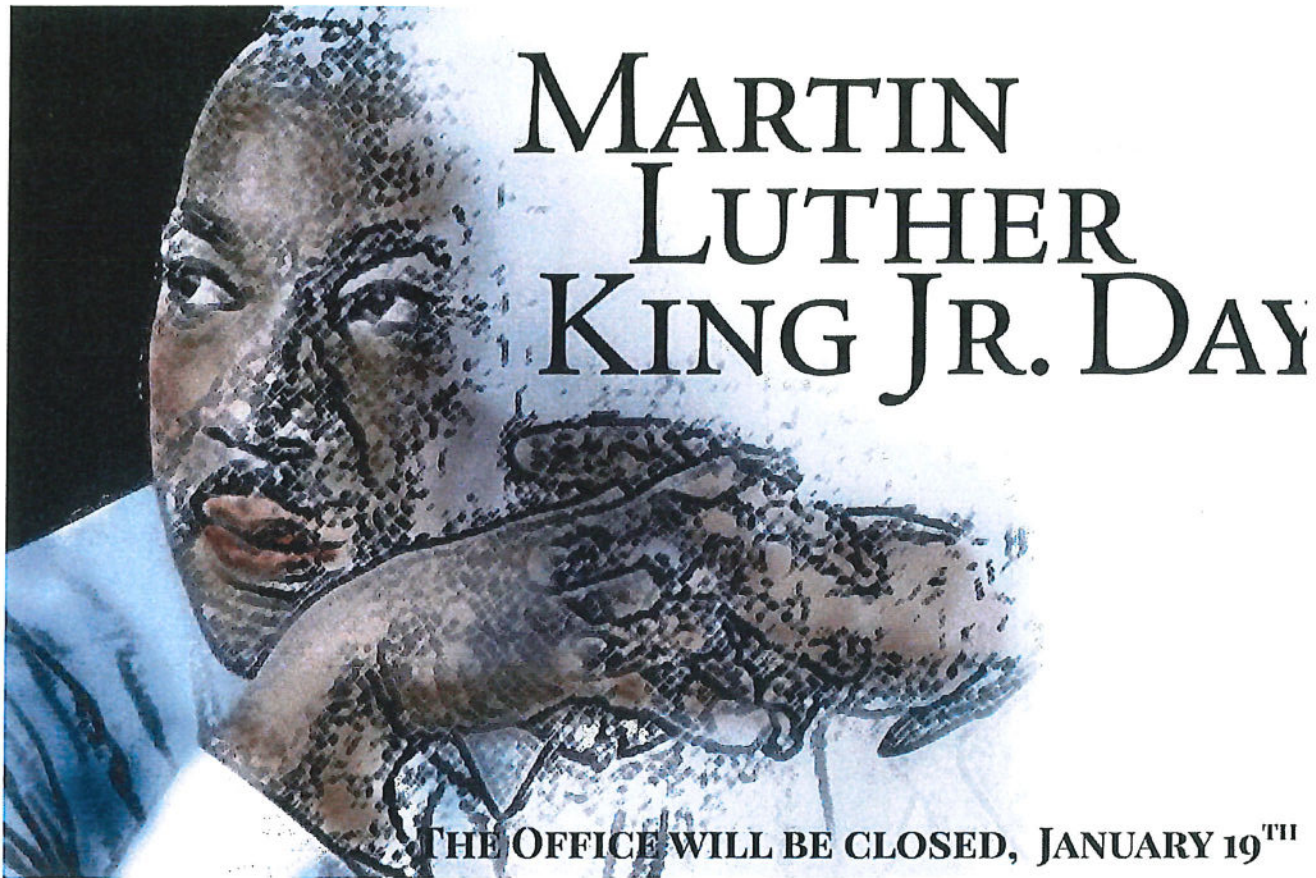
Sunday, January 25

Third Sunday After The Epiphany

9:00 am JAM Breakfast (CR)
10:00 am Worship
10:00 am Nursery
10:20 am JAM
11:00 am Fellowship (CR)
12:00 am New Member Class (Java Vino)
4:30 pm Congo Crew (CR)

CALENDAR KEY

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



If you've ever thought about becoming a member of First Congregational UCC, now is the perfect time! Those interested are invited to gather for lunch and conversation at Java Vino on Sunday, January 25, at noon. This will be a relaxed opportunity to ask questions, learn more about First Congo, and explore what membership means in our faith community.

If you decide to move forward, you will be welcomed into membership the following

Sunday, February 1, during the 10:00 a.m. worship service. New members will then be eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting immediately following worship.

If you plan to join us for lunch, please let the church office know so Java Vino can ensure adequate space. Michelle would love to hear from you at (608) 784-8137 or office@firstcongolax.org.



MONDAY MEALS



**It's not too late to sign up for our first
Monday Meal of 2026!**

 **Tomorrow, January 19**

 **Trinity Lutheran Church,
1010 Sill Street, La Crosse**

**Join us as we help our neighbors and share God's
love through service.**

We'd love to have you with us! 



Let's Get to Know Each Other!

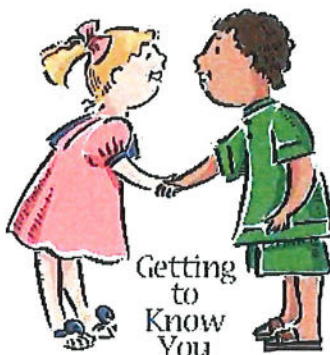
INTERGENERATIONAL SPEED GREETING & CHILI COOK-OFF

Friday, January 23 | 5:30–7:30 PM

Kick off the new year with a fun (and delicious!) evening designed to connect generations across our church family. Join us for a chili dinner and a lively speed-greeting experience where kids and adults get to know one another through play, conversation, and laughter.



- Think you make the best chili? Enter as a chili-maker!
- Love tasting chili? Come enjoy great food, fellowship, and friendly competition.



Intergenerational Speed Greeting

Adults will host activity tables – think Legos, tea parties, drawing, and more – while kids rotate through each station. Kids will use bingo cards to ask questions, make connections, and win prizes along the way!

If you're interested in hosting a friendship shuffle or being a chili chef, please use the QR code to sign up or contact Michelle in the church office at office@firstcongolax.org or (608) 784-8137.



Come hungry, come curious, and come ready to connect! 🌶️ ✨

Koffee Klatch @ Havenwood



Join us for
Conversation, Community
and yummy Coffee at
Havenwood
3770 Emerald Drive East,
Onalaska

When: Tuesday, January 27th
Time: 11:00 AM

