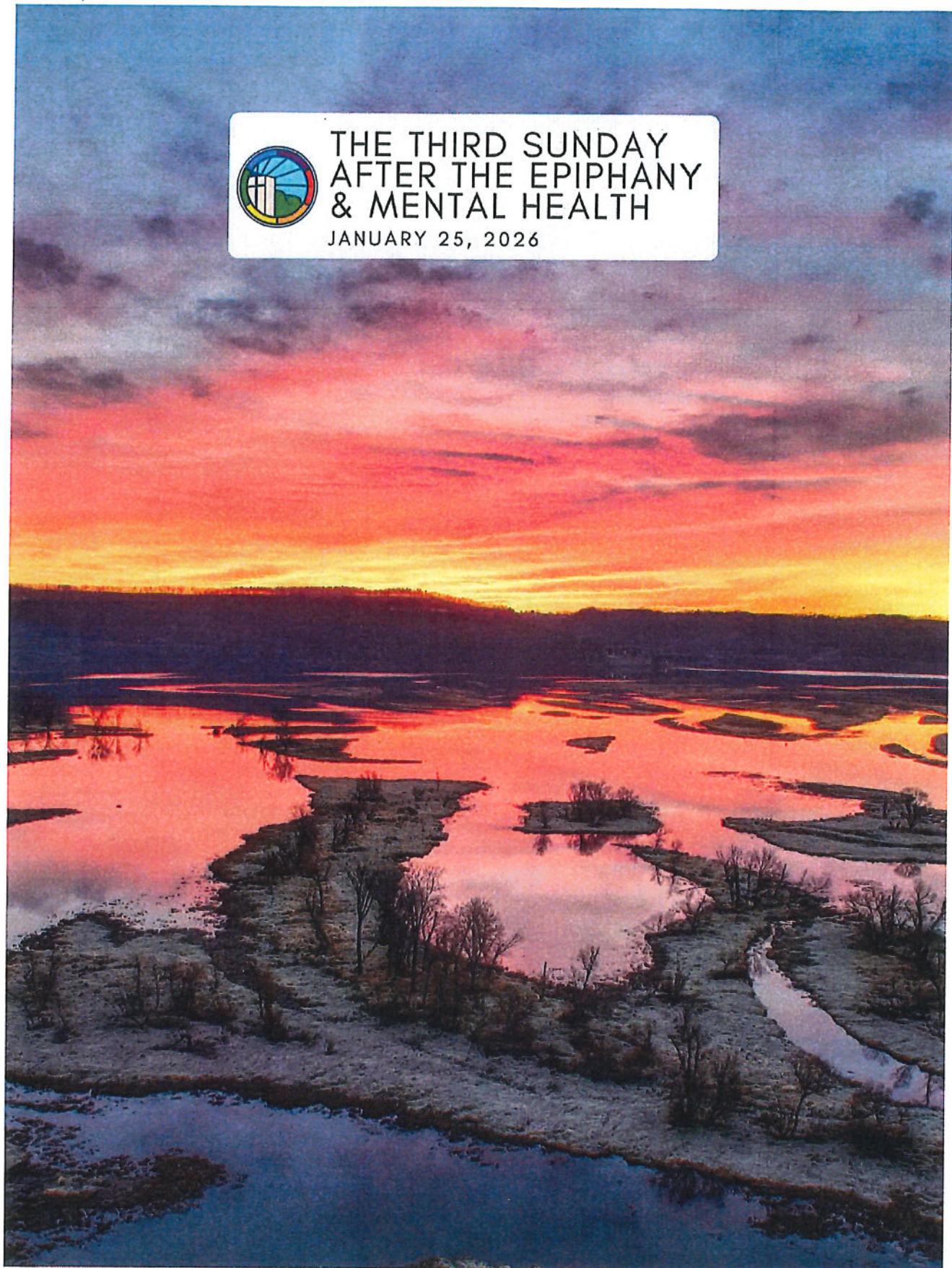




THE THIRD SUNDAY
AFTER THE EPIPHANY
& MENTAL HEALTH

JANUARY 25, 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, 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
Organist and Pianist.....	Nancy Allen
Bell Choir Director.....	Sue Retzlaff
The Bell Choir.....	Mary Ann Gschwind, Julie Larson, Charmaine and Tom Uphaus
Reading Scripture.....	Sherry Sawle
Head Usher	Shelby Webb
Ushers	Tom Stolpa, Ann Van Atta
Greeter	Gary Corbisier
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

"Voluntary in A Minor"

Nancy Allen
Anonymous

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude Music

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

The Bell Choir
Gustave Holst, Arr. Larry Sue

*Call to Worship

Gary Corbisier

One: God invites us to co-create communities of radical belonging for all.

All: We are creating communities of radical belonging for people living with mental health challenges and their loved ones.

One: Jesus shows us how to love our neighbors as ourselves.

All: We are loving our neighbors who are neurodiverse and their loved ones. We are loving ourselves no matter where we are on the spectrum of mental wellness today.

One: The Spirit empowers us to create communities of radical belonging for people with brain diseases and disorders, and people living with substance use and addictions and their loved ones.

All: We are co-creating with God communities of radical belonging and love for everyone. May our worship inspire and empower us for the journey.

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

Sue Corbisier

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 388 (All join in singing the hymns.)

"O God in Whom All Life Begins"

Noel

*Sharing the Peace

One: May the deep and abiding 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

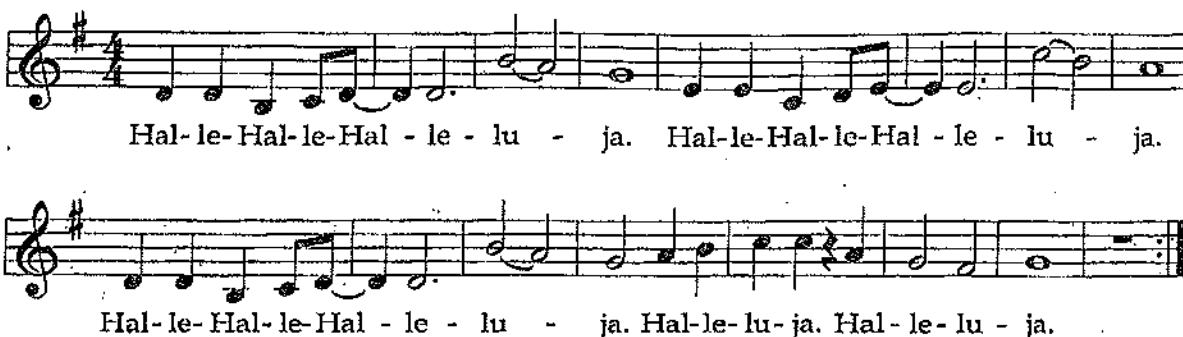
Maury Weiland

Children will join Maury and 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

Sherry Sawle

Isaiah 43:1-5

The Psalter

Psalm 42 (Reading is based on The Message.)

One: A white-tailed deer drinks from the creek; I want to drink God, deep drafts of God. I'm thirsty for God-alive.

Many: I wonder, "Will I ever make it—arrive and drink in God's presence?"
I'm on a diet of tears—tears for breakfast, tears for supper. All day long people knock at my door, pestering, "Where is this God of yours?"

One: These are the things I go over and over, emptying out the pockets of my life. I was always at the head of the worshiping crowd, right out in front, leading them all, eager to arrive and worship, shouting praises, singing thanksgiving—celebrating, all of us, God's feast!

Many: Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul? Why are you crying the blues? Fix my eyes on God—soon I'll be praising again. He puts a smile on my face. He's my God.

One: When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse everything I know of you, from Jordan's depths to Hermon's heights, including Mount Mizar.

Many: Chaos calls to chaos, to the tune of whitewater rapids. Your breaking surf, your thundering breakers crash and crush me. Then God promises to love me all day, sing songs all through the night! My life is God's prayer.

One: Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God, "Why did you let me down? Why am I walking around in tears, harassed by enemies?" They're out for the kill, these tormentors with their obscenities, taunting day after day, "Where is this God of yours?"

Many: Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul? Why are you crying the blues? Fix my eyes on God—soon I'll be praising again. He puts a smile on my face. He is my God.

The Gospel

Matthew 11:25-28

Sermon

"WISE Covenant: What am I Voting For?"

Jean Feeney & Guests

Responding

with the voice of hope

*Anthem

"Be Thou My Vision"

The Bell Choir

Slane, Arr. Larry Sue

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.*)

New Zealand Prayer Book

Eternal Spirit Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, loving God, in whom is heaven, the hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

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

"How Can I Keep from Singing?"

Endless Song

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Jason Payne

*Flowers today are given by Shirley Anderson
in memory of Charles Anderson.*

Acknowledgements: "Christ Beside Me," words © 1969 James Quinn, S.J. (Selah Publishing Co., Inc., North American administrator) and music arr. © 1989 Hope Publishing Company. "Oh God in Whom All Life Begins," words and music © 1990 Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved. "How Can I Keep from Singing?" words and music in the public domain. Hymns and music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

Cover Image: Image on the cover is of the Mississippi in the winter. It comes to us through our subscriptions to canva.com.

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 25

Third Sunday After The Epiphany

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

Monday, January 26

1:30 pm Woman's Book Club (New Location)
Call Office For Details

Tuesday, January 27

11:00 am Koffee Klatch @ Havenwood

Wednesday, January 28

10:00 am Sip & Scripture
(McDonald's, Losey Blvd & Ward Ave.)
1:30 pm Construction Management Team (L)
C = Chapel, J = JAM Rooms, L = Lounge, N = Narthex,

Thursday, January 30

7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir (S)

Friday, January 31

Office Closed

10:30 am Bell Choir Rehearsal (CR)
7:30 PM Intergenerational Speed Greeting &
Chili Cook-Off (CR)

*****RESCHEDULED DUE TO WEATHER*****

Sunday, February 1

Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany

New Member Sunday & Annual Meeting

WAFER Sunday

10:00 am Worship w/Holy Communion
10:00 am Nursery
10:20 am JAM
11:00 am Annual Meeting (S)
11:00 am Confirmation



CALENDAR KEY

CR = Community Room, 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 today, 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.

There will be childcare available at Java Vino, if you need it. Just let Pastor Laura know.

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



Let's Get to Know Each Other!

INTERGENERATIONAL SPEED GREETING & CHILI COOK-OFF

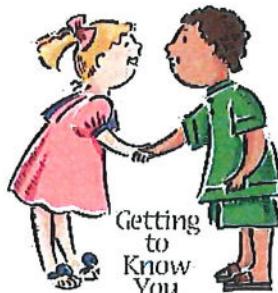
Friday, January 30 | 5:30-7:30 PM

*****RESCHEDULED DUE TO WEATHER*****

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!  



ANNUAL MEETING

When: February 1, 2026

Time: 11:00 am (Right After Worship)

Where: Sanctuary

You won't want to miss this! Our Annual Meeting is coming up on Sunday, February 1ST, immediately following worship. Together we will do the work of the church by electing our next slate of officers and ministry members, approving the annual budget, voting on a new sound system, and discussing what our Faith Formation program will look like going forward. This is an important opportunity to make your voice heard—your participation matters!



A picture of *you* is needed!

We are gathering current photos for our updated church picture directory, and we would love you to be included. If you'd like to participate, please send us a 3x5 or 4x6 photo taken within the last year. This spring, we will compile a new directory using all submitted photos, helping us better recognize and stay connected with one another. Thank you for helping us put faces to names and strengthen our church community

FIRST CONGO NEEDS YOUR HELP!

We are in need of volunteers to help support several important ministries of our church, including Worship Assistants; kitchen help for Congo Crew; assistance with Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday meals; Teachers and Teaching Assistants for JAM; and an Assistant for Confirmation.

With Pastor Mary's departure, our faith formation program is feeling a real gap, and we are leaning on the gifts of our congregation more than ever. Whether you can offer a little time or step into a more regular role, your presence and support truly make a difference. Together, we can continue nurturing faith, building community, and caring for one another.



KITCHEN HELP, VERY LITTLE
COOKING, MOSTLY WARMING
UP FOOD. THE KIDS WILL DO
THE CLEAN-UP

Worship

USHERS
GREETERS
SCRIPTURE READERS
COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

A stylized red and blue logo consisting of the letters "JAM" in a cursive, handwritten style.

TEACHERS
TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Confirmation

CONFIRMATION ASSISTANT

**IF YOU FEEL A NUDGE TO HELP WITH ANY OF THESE TASKS
—WHETHER JUST ONCE OR ON AN ONGOING BASIS—WE
WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU. EVERY GIFT OF TIME
MATTERS AND TRULY HELPS OUR MINISTRIES THRIVE.
PLEASE CONTACT MICHELLE IN THE OFFICE AT
OFFICE@FIRSTCONGOLAX.ORG OR (608) 784-8137.**

Ash Wednesday & Maundy Thursday

HELP WITH AN EASY MEAL.
SOME CLEAN-UP AFTER
WORSHIP