

# February 2024

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
319 DOWNTOWN PLAZA  
FAIRMONT, MN 56031-1776

**Nonprofit**  
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**Fairmont, MN 56031**



First Congregational UCC  
319 Downtown Plaza  
Fairmont, MN 56031



WHEELCHAIR  
ACCESSIBLE



*First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
Fairmont, Minnesota*

Rev. Cory Germain  
Minister

Christina Hainy  
Administrative Assist.

Joyce Jorgenson  
Choir Director

How to reach us....

Church Office  
507-235-5382

Hours: Tuesday—Friday  
9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

**E-mail**

[uccsecretary319@gmail.com](mailto:uccsecretary319@gmail.com)

**Web Site Address**

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**Rev. Cory Germain**

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Wednesday 12:30 p.m. through  
evening meetings & activities

Thursday 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Friday 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Rev. Cory's phone: 507-399-8282

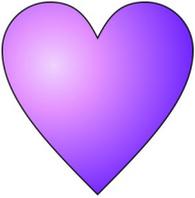
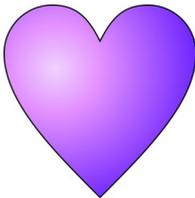
**Worship Hours**

Worship 10:00

Sunday school 10:00

Communion the first Sunday of  
every month.

# FEBRUARY 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	2	3
4 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School	5	6 10:00 Lakeview Communion  4:30 P.E.O. (HH)	7 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Mission Bd 6:00 Worship Board 7:00 Choir	8 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)  5:15 Hospitality Board	9	10 11:00 Kids Against Hunger food pack at Fairmont Armory
11 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School <i>Communion</i>	12	13  7:00 Facilities Board	14 <b>Ash Wednesday Valentine's Day</b> 12:00 Community Ash Wed. Service 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Ash Wed. Evening Service 5:45 CE Board 6:15 Diaconate Board 7:00 Choir	15 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	16 9:00 Council agenda items due	17  6:00 Nomads (HH)
18 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School 11:15 Kid's Fun Day	19 <b>Presidents' Day</b>	20 10:00 Goldfinch Communion	21 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Lenten Service 5:45 Church Council 7:00 Choir	22 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	23 9:00 March Newsletter items due	24 9:00-11:00 Women's Coffee & Conversation drop in (HH)
25 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School <i>Blessing box collection</i>	26	27	28 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Lenten Service 5:30 Free Community Meal 7:00 Choir	29 9:30 Bible Study 11:00 March news- letter assembly 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)		

## *The Reverend's Ruminations - February 2024*

*"Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing"* (Isaiah 40:21-23, NRSV). This is the call of the prophet Isaiah on the opening Sunday of the month.

As we "penguin shuffle" our way carefully across any thawed and refrozen snow or ice to a Sunday worship service or other destinations this month, where are we focusing our eyes (outside of our cautious gaze across uncertain walking surfaces)? Isaiah's original message may have been for our wandering ancestors of the Jewish nation, but we would all do well to remember that Almighty God is still living and active, working on our behalf in a world that seems inclined to run amok after the newest, shiniest, or loudest semblance of hope for an uncertain future.

Midway through the month of February is a holiday with which most of us are familiar — even if it is mostly a made-up observance seemingly meant to bolster the greeting card, chocolate, and floral industries. OK, a little mid-winter reminder to express love to those dearest to us is probably a good thing, but this year Valentine's Day also coincides with another "reminder" day within the church year: Ash Wednesday. As you likely know, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the church season characterized by soul-searching and repentance, known as **Lent**.

Unfortunately, many of us think of Lent primarily as a season of self-denial, during which you gaze longingly into the cupboard or fridge at snacks or drinks that you have sworn off until Easter. Yes, this is one way in which Christians seek to emulate the wilderness temptation and sacrifice of our Savior, and I invite you to try giving something up, especially if you have never endured such a test before. But Lent is about more than just fighting off a junk food craving like we're on some well-meaning diet. These forty days (not including Sundays) are meant to help us put away the distractions of the world around us and instead spend more time learning and emulating the words and actions of Jesus. Plan your weekly schedule to include our short mid-week Lenten services at 5:30pm on Wednesdays, spend some extra time reading in your Bible, or pick up one of the UCC daily Lenten devotionals (limited amount available, so first come, first served).

This year's devotional is entitled "Bend," and is filled with readings, reflections, and prayers for the season. It draws inspiration from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, where he writes: *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; we are perplexed, but not despairing; we are bent, but not destroyed"* (2 Cor 4:8-10, adapted).

As the description from The Pilgrim Press says, *"Jesus modeled flexibility: hardship and persecution bent but didn't break him. Change and challenge strengthened his ministry. Impossible situations yielded to healing and release... Bending can be scary, of course. Responding to pressure with flexibility can be counterintuitive... But bending can be a source of strength: Trees bend in the wind. Bows bend in order to release their arrows. The river bends around the mountain."*

How many of us could benefit from a bit of flexibility and increased resilience instead of a stiff arm from those we reach out to, or the danger of cracking under the pressures of life? No matter how you observe the forty days of Lent, you are (in some small way) seeking to identify with Jesus' withdrawal into the temptation of the wilderness. The Lenten journey is important to our Christian experience. Without experiencing its challenges, we will find ourselves ill-prepared to share in the joyous event of Jesus' Easter resurrection.

Yours in Christ,

***Rev. Cory Germain***



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC  
FAIRMONT, MN  
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES FOR 1-17-2024**

**Members Present:** Abigail Anderson, Catherine Johnson, Sue Kruse, Amanda Forstrom, Joanne Eisenbarger, Kay Campe, Cindy Huset, Jane Kotewa, Amber Brummond and Christina Hainy. Ex-officio members present: Pastor Cory, Dara Bliesmer, Ass't Treasurer. Absent: Larry Lasch, Erica Jorgensen.

The Council met in Heritage Hall at 5:45 PM. Moderator Abigail Anderson called the meeting to order. Pastor Cory led in prayer. Motion to approve the minutes from the December 20 meeting was M/S/C (Amanda/Kay).

**Treasurer's Report:** Catherine reported that the Treasurer's Report in the Annual Report is incorrect. The monthly chart is missing the month of May. A corrected version will be distributed at the Annual meeting. A motion to remove Robbin Celander and Abigail Anderson from the checking account at State Bank and add Kay Campe and Jane Kotewa to the checking account was M/S/C (Catherine/Amanda). A motion to remove Eric B. Johnson and Dave Meschke from the safety deposit box access and add Kay Campe and Catherine Johnson to the safety deposit box was M/S/C (Catherine/Abigail). There was discussion on how to manage stocks as gifts. Dan Hamlet from Edward Jones will be attending Council in February. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was M/S/C (Amanda/Amber).

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Cory mentioned visits he made over Christmas and recording the sermon for Sunday, January 14.

**BOARD REPORTS:**

**Christian Education:** Amber reported that the children will be performing music on Palm Sunday and that the last day of Sunday school will be Sunday, May 19. They have been looking at camps and will serve the March free community meal.

**Hospitality:** No representative.

**Facilities:** No representative. Snow removal was discussed.

**Diaconate:** Sue reported that discussed the visits/calls/texts Pastor Cory has done and that they will be sending Valentine's Day cards. They are discussing changing Communion Sunday to the second Sunday of each month.

**Mission:** Amanda stated that our team's Kids Against Hunger food pack is from 11 AM to 1 PM on Saturday, February 10. Also, the mission board needs boards to sign up to host 2024's Free Community Meals.

**Worship:** Cindy reported that they stored the Christmas decorations.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Carpet:** Thanks to all who helped with the removal! We had to reorder some carpet due to a defect, so it is not done.

**Nominating:** Vice moderator still needs to be filled.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Security cameras are running thanks to a generous donation of time and money by members. Talked about annual meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Discussed having Pastor Cory share his military experiences with congregation. We will have a Board of the Month that coordinates with the community meal servers. They will share a photo and write up a description of their duties for the newsletter.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** RightNow Media report of use will be given to CE board. A motion was M/S/C for Jane Kotewa to be the at-large council member (Abigail/Amber). Abigail "passed the torch" to Kay.

Moderator Abigail Anderson adjourned the meeting, and Pastor Cory closed with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Christina Hainy, Clerk

## Coming Up...

**LENT:** The season of **Lent** is soon upon us — forty days during which we take an in-depth look at our lives and turn back to God. **This time of repentance begins on Wednesday, February 14 with Ash Wednesday.** This year, Pastor Cory and several ecumenical pastors will be joining together at First Congregational UCC to host a brief **Community Ash Wednesday service at noon in our sanctuary**, including a time of confession and absolution, the imposition of ashes, a time of personal prayer, and communion. **First Congregational UCC will also be hosting our traditional Ash Wednesday evening service at 5:30PM in the sanctuary.** Come for a time of confession, reflection, imposition of ashes, and communion as we hear once more the reality of our humanness: *"you are dust and to dust you shall return."* Together let us prepare ourselves to walk this Lenten journey as we contemplate Christ's journey to the cross for our redemption.

### CE News:

A **Kid's Fun Day** is after church on **Sunday, February 18th** from 11:15–1:30 PM. We'll be eating pizza, doing crafts & watching a movie!



### Church FUN DAYS:

-On **Saturday, February 17th**, we will be having **Nomads** in Heritage Hall starting at 6:00 PM. Bring an appetizer, snack or dessert to share and a fun attitude! We'll be playing some games (possibly Cribbage!).

-On **Saturday, February 24th**, there is a **Women's Coffee and Conversation** in Heritage Hall. Drop in between 9:00 & 11:00 AM for some treats and to catch up!

### Mission Minute:

**Blessing Box: One Great Hour of Sharing.** OGHS, part of our church's wider mission, is the special mission offering of the UCC that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC responds to humanitarian and development needs in the United States and the wider world.

**Kids Against Hunger:** Our church's team will help on **Saturday, February 10th** at 11:00 AM. There is a signup sheet at the back of the sanctuary if you'd like to join us in this fun activity. You can also contact Amanda Forstrom, 507-279-1607 or [ajforstrom1@gmail.com](mailto:ajforstrom1@gmail.com).

*Happy Valentine's Day!!*

# MEMORIALS

Date	Memory/Honor of	Designation	From
19-Nov	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	Starfish	David Bishop & Nancy Rostvold
19-Nov	Olivia Seballini Birthday		Douglas & Kristine Fuller
19-Nov	Rio Czeck Birthday		Douglas & Kristine Fuller
19-Nov	Henry Fuller Birthday		Douglas & Kristine Fuller
19-Nov	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	Starfish	Judith Orr
19-Nov	Jane Kotewa Birthday		Virginia Riedesel
26-Nov	Bill & Pat Cowing Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
3-Dec	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury		Bill & Barb Bittman
3-Dec	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury		Lyle & Charlene Norris
3-Dec	Memory of Julie Kasten	Starfish	Les Heinrich
17-Dec	Kay Campe Birthday	Starfish	Margaret Weaver
24-Dec	Justin & Tara Thedens Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
31-Dec	John & Donna Holstine Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
7-Jan	Martin Czech Birthday		Douglas & Kristine Fuller
7-Jan	Memory of Tranna Urban	Capital	Stephen Urban
7-Jan	Lance & Jenny Willard Anniversary		Margaret Weaver

**Altar Flower Signup:** If there is a Sunday that has a special meaning to you and you would like to provide the flowers, please sign up on the calendar by the coat closet. Write your name and who the flowers are in memory/honor of. Please know that we appreciate you sharing your special memories/days with us! Contact Dolores Gronewald with questions at (651) 249-6236.



Our deepest sympathy and prayers to:  
The family of Doris Thate on her passing.

## Hy-Vee & Fareway Report as of 21 January 2024

During the first 3 weeks of 2024, \$16,009.46 (8.00%) worth of Hy-Vee slips were received. After 7 weeks, Hy-Vee is at \$35,365.15 (23.58%) toward the 17<sup>th</sup> goal which is now \$200,000.

During the same time, \$5,715.65 (3.81%) worth of Fareway slips were received. After 42 weeks, Fareway is at \$46,667.75 (31.11%) toward our 5<sup>th</sup> \$150,000 goal.

This program started the first of March 2011, so any slips from then until now can be used. During this time, a number of slips from 2022 were received. Any Fairmont Fareway and Hy-Vee food store register slip can be used. Even slips from Hy-Vee Fast & Fresh (Gas), Coffee Shop, Food Service, and Pharmacy help us toward the goal. Delivery slips/sheets can also be used. Thanks to all who bring/mail the slips to the Church, or mailing them or dropping them off at my house.

Reported by;  
Jim Bock

I would like to give a **HUGE Shout out to ALL** who helped on Sun. Jan 7th with the carpet removal. I think we were all amazed as to how fast things moved along. "Many hands MADE light work!" We got done in less than an hour and half. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you for your help no matter how big or small of a task you had that day.  
~Abigail Anderson



Congratulations to the Meschke family on the birth of twins, Addison Rose and Everett Michael, who were born in December in Florida.

**Thanks from the Office.....**

**Thank you to Margo, Lorie, Kathy and Catherine for assembling the Dec/Jan newsletter!**

**Thank you to Lorie, Joanne and Cindy for assembling the annual report!**

**Thank you to Marilyn, Joanne and Catherine for filling in for me in the office when I've been gone!**

**I appreciate you all!!!**

**-Christina**

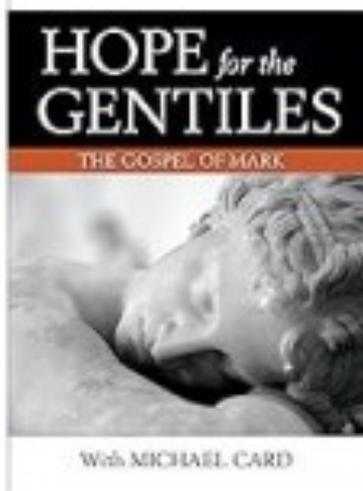
# rightnow MEDIA

\*Worship services from First Congregational UCC are available (& searchable by date) alongside the other great content on the rightnow MEDIA website & app!

In our current Sunday sermons, we are continuing our journey through the Old Testament lessons of the Revised Common Lectionary. But I'm sure you've noticed that we also always include a gospel reading in our worship services. This is because the **gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are the closest we can get to seeing Jesus in person. Each was written from the perspective of authors who were either direct eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry or received eyewitness accounts from those who were privileged to be near him.

During February, the Gospel of Mark will be featured — so I challenge you to read it over the course of the month and log into your free **rightnow** MEDIA account to learn a little more about this fundamental book. Christian singer-songwriter, author, and radio host Michael Card will lead you through several locations of historical significance to Mark in a four-part series entitled **Hope for the Gentiles: The Gospel of Mark**. Here is a synopsis of the series (each about 25 minutes long):

**Although the Gospels present compelling stories of the life, words, and works of Jesus, the gospel of Mark stands apart with a unique perspective. Written specifically for the non-Jewish believers during a climate of persecution and suffering in Rome, the gospel of Mark reveals and intimate, yet commanding side of Jesus.**



In this presentation you'll travel to Rome and Israel with host Michael Card to explore the life and character of Jesus through the experiences of Peter as captured by Mark. Gain a deeper understanding of the struggles, suffering, and pain endured by those who followed Jesus as you visit the Mamertine Prison, Circus Maximus, and the Roman Forum, as well as significant landmarks in Israel.

Find a fresh point of view on the meaning of discipleship that brings clarity not only to the joy of following Christ, but also to the reality of fear, uncertainty, and danger. Discover how you can face trials in life with confidence of finding hope, healing, and encouragement through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

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\*Do you still need your own FREE **rightnow** MEDIA account, or would you like to share this great resource with a friend?

There are 3 convenient ways: Go to <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/FCONG>  
Text **FCONG** to **49775**, or scan this QR code with your smartphone camera or code reader—>



Once logged in to your FREE account, you can click directly on "First Congregational UCC" near the top of the page to access the "Fairmont Worship Services" channel, or "Pastor Cory's Picks"—which is where you'll find videos I've recommended here, as well as others that interest me. Stay tuned... the list grows as I discover new picks! If you've discovered a show or video on **rightnow** MEDIA that you think others would enjoy, email me and I'll promote it in next month's column.

~ *Pastor Cory*

# **Creamy Four Cheese Garlic Spaghetti** from Abigail Anderson

## **Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 8 oz spaghetti
- 1 cup cooked pasta water
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 ½ cups Four-Cheese Italian White Cheese Blend Mozzarella, White Cheddar, Provolone, Asiago
- ¼ cup parsley finely chopped (or use green onions)



## **Instructions:**

1. Heat olive oil and butter on medium heat in a large skillet, add minced garlic and cook for about 1 minute on medium heat, without burning.
2. Cook pasta in a separate pan, drain. Reserve some cooked pasta water. Dissolve 1 cube of chicken broth bullion in 1 cup of hot pasta water.
3. Add pasta water (with the dissolved chicken broth bouillon cube in it), heavy cream, and cooked spaghetti to the skillet with cooked garlic. Bring to boil, stirring. Once the liquids are boiling, immediately add cheese and keep stirring everything together (spaghetti and the cream), while boiling, until cheese melts and coats pasta, for about 1 minute. Reduce to simmer and continue to cook, constantly stirring, to thicken the sauce - for another minute or two.
4. To serve, top each serving with finely chopped parsley or green onions.

## **Note:**

\*\*\*\*\*May want to make extra broth to add if it is too dry.

## February Birthdays:

Feb 1	Mark Craven	Feb 17	Vicki Bicknase
Feb 3	Faith Kotewa		Carter Rowan
Feb 4	Jim Boek		Colby Whitmore
	Joyce Jorgenson	Feb 18	Kirk Jorgensen
Feb 6	April Rachug	Feb 19	Joz Craven
Feb 10	Jenna Smith	Feb 21	Larry Lasch
Feb 13	Janine Draper	Feb 23	Lee Trunkbolz
	Remi Shoen	Feb 25	Cindy Anderson
Feb 16	Jim Marushin Sr.	Feb 27	Larry Christensen
			Henry Brummond
		Feb 28	Matt Guritz



## February Anniversaries:

February 2	Bob & Jan Cong	61 years
February 14	Jon & Cindy Anderson	26 years

If your birthday or anniversary is not listed or is incorrect, please notify the church office.