

# December 2022

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

**Nonprofit**  
**U.S. POSTAGE PAID**  
**Fairmont, MN 56031**



First Congregational UCC  
319 Downtown Plaza  
Fairmont, MN 56031



WHEELCHAIR  
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*First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
Fairmont, Minnesota*

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**

[www.fairmontucc.org](http://www.fairmontucc.org)

Rev. Cory Germain  
Minister

Christina Hainy  
Administrative Assist

Joyce Jorgenson  
Choir Director

**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 9:30

Sunday school 9:30

Communion the first Sunday of  
every month.

# DEC. 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				11:30 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (CH)	4:00-7:00 Christmas Cookie Walk	
4 Communion 9:30 Worship/ Sunday School	5	6 10:00 Lakeview Communion	7 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Diaconate Bd. 5:30 Play practice 6:00 Worship Bd. 7:00 Choir	8 11:30 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (CH)  5:15 Hospitality Board	9 9:00 Council Agenda Items Due	10 1:00-3:00 Celebration of life for Pastor Evalyn Carlson
11 9:30 Worship/ Sunday School Gingerbread houses after worship	12	13 5:15 Mission Board 7:00 Facilities Board	14 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Play practice 7:00 Choir	15 9:30 Bible Study 11:30 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (CH)	16	17 11:00 Memorial Service for Maurice & Shirley Iliff
18 9:30 Worship with Children's Christmas play	19	20 10:00 Goldfinch Communion	21 4:00 Confirmation 5:45 Church Council 7:00 Choir	22 11:30 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (CH)	23	24 <b>Christmas Eve</b> 5:30 Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
25 <b>Christmas Day</b> 9:30 Christmas Worship NO Sunday school Blessing Box Collection	26	27	28 5:30 Free Community Meal 5:30 Youth Movie Fun Night 7:00 Choir	29 11:30 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (CH)	30	31 <b>New Year's Eve</b>

## *The Reverend's Ruminations - December 2022*

Advent (the four Sundays leading to the celebration of Christmas) is a time of new beginnings. But as the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, you may find yourself saying, "It's December—the end of the year—not a new beginning!?! We've put away the patio furniture, brought in some extra loads of firewood, and are ready to settle down under a blanket with a good book and hibernate until at least April." And you wouldn't be wrong... year-end reports are due to many boards, organizations, and businesses. It doesn't feel like a new beginning; it feels like we're near the end!?!

But the first Sunday of Advent has just passed, signifying a "new beginning" in the life of the church—the beginning of a new liturgical season and a new church year. You may have plenty to do before January 1<sup>st</sup> arrives and begins a new calendar year, but in the Christian church we're already on our way! This year (Year A in the three-year lectionary calendar cycle that helps guide us through the church seasons) I plan to start preaching from the Old Testament lessons, after spending the last three years preaching from the Epistle lessons (and before that, the Gospels). It may prove challenging, but "new beginnings" have to start somewhere, and the story of our modern Christian faith obviously begins with the faith and writings of our Hebrew ancestors.

You're likely familiar with the fact that, during the Advent season, we frequently draw connections between the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ and the prophecies of a coming messiah recorded in the Old Testament. During December and most of January, the passages will be from the prophet Isaiah, highlighting the "new beginnings" long interpreted to be speaking directly of Jesus and his ministries. Most of them are voiced in future tense, predicting not only the birth of a tender babe, but "new beginnings" in nature, kingdoms, countries, and the broader world. For example, Isaiah 35:1-2 says, *"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing."* Isaiah 49:7 predicts, *"...Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."* And Isaiah 42:8-9 proclaims, *"I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them."*

As you prepare for Christmas this year, will everything about your decorating, meal, and gathering be exactly like it has been for years (or just like your parents or grandparents always did)? Or will there be a few "new beginnings" of your own as you celebrate Christ's birth this year? Traditions do help us remain connected to the past, but as our journey continues, don't be afraid of the newness that presents itself like a fresh coat of snow!

Of course those new beginnings will more likely be on your mind *next* month, as we roll into a new year and the ubiquitous resolutions that seem required conversation everywhere you turn. But new beginnings come in many shapes and sizes, and nowhere has that been more apparent to me lately than in the celebration of our daughter Emma's wedding. Talk about a time of new beginnings!?! Those of you who are (or were) married for many years remember well the newness of those first months and years with your spouse: new names, new family members, new bank accounts, new apartments, and new responsibilities to someone besides yourself. With all the "new" comes "old" traditions from each other's families, as well as blessings too numerable to count, and adventures that will form the cornerstone of their life together.

As 2022 does in fact wind to a close, let us celebrate the year we've shared together, giving God the glory for all we have done. 2023 is just around the corner, and we have the opportunity to continue serving our great God together. Alleluia!

Yours in Christ,  
*Rev. Cory Germain*



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC  
FAIRMONT, MN  
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES FOR 11-16-2022**

**Members Present:** Abigail Anderson, Marilyn Forstrom, Dave Adams, Cathy Celander, Catherine Johnson, Amanda Forstrom, Sue Kruse, Larry Thompson and Christina Hainy. Ex-officio members present: Dara Bliesmer, Ass't Treasurer.

The Council met in the Fireside Room at 5:45 PM. The meeting was called to order and led in prayer by Moderator Abigail Anderson. Minutes from the Oct. 19 meeting were approved as printed. Motion M/S/C (Cathy/Dave).

**Treasurer's Report:** Catherine Johnson reported that 75% of income has been received, and the year is 80% through. She thanked Hospitality for their Harvest Festival fundraising. Around \$1200 was raised. Preparations for the Budget Meeting are going well.

**Payroll Tax Rebate:** Dara had this brought to her attention by Dave M/Bank Midwest. Dara will call our bank to check on this.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Cory was absent. We were able to read his highlights for the month.

**BOARD REPORTS:**

**Christian Education:** Catherine reported that Christmas play practices have started. *Once Upon a Time Bethlehem: A Shrek Story*, written by Abby Shoen, will be performed on December 18. No Sunday school on Christmas day or on New Year's Day.

**Hospitality:** Cathy Celander reported that Harvest Festival attendance numbers were down. There was discussion about options for future fundraising. They have been baking for the Cookie Walk.

**Facilities:** Larry Thompson told us that a few projects will be carried over until next summer. We had some discussion about the steam pipe coverings in Heritage Hall.

**Diaconate:** Sue Kruse shared that Diaconate board has updated the membership list, and they are looking for glass communion cups.

**Missions:** Amanda Forstrom reported that the November Free Community Meal "Thanksgiving Leftover Caserole" will be hosted by the Missions board. They are looking for help serving the December Free Community Meal "Hot Dog Bar." The December Blessing Box Offering will be for the Christmas Fund.

**Worship:** Dave Adams reported that 2 live wreaths are decorating the front of the church for Advent, instead of a tree. Bibles are here to be put into pews. Discussion over time for worship and Sunday school and how to get member input.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Budget:** Facilities board needs to decide on Jill's pay for the budget.

**Nominating:** Marilyn reported that they are almost done.

**Update on Stewardship campaign:** Catherine stated that the pledge total is lower than expected.

**OLD BUSINESS:** The sign out front has been removed.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Abigail tabled discussion about a new laptop for Dara until next meeting. Discussed having Eric Johnson present about his Pacific Crest Trail adventures at a potluck this winter.

**OTHER:** Discussion about the broken 5-disc CD player in Heritage Hall. The Annual Meeting is set for Sunday, January 22.

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

Respectfully submitted, Christina Hainy, Clerk

# MEMORIALS

Date	Memory/Honor of	Designation	From
30-Oct	Memory of Mille Overaas	Starfish	Tim & Kay Campe
30-Oct	Memory of George Terry Aartum	Starfish	Byron & Becky Phillips
30-Oct	Ken & Joy Rachuy Anniversary	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
30-Oct	Ken & Joy Rachuy Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
30-Oct	Steve & Janine Draper Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
30-Oct	Dean & Donna Grotte Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		Tom & Joan Andersen
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		James & Judy Barke
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		Marilyn Forstrom
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		Wanda Johnson
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		MaryDon Kislingbury
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		John & Sherry Larson
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse		Kenneth & Joy Rachuy
6-Nov	Wanda Johnson Birthday	Music	Virginia Riedesel
6-Nov	Sue Kruse Birthday	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
6-Nov	Memory of Randy Kruse	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
6-Nov	Angela Vaughn Birthday	Music	Virginia Riedesel
6-Nov	Wanda Johnson Birthday		Margaret Weaver
6-Nov	Memory of Gin Mevissen	Starfish	Les Heinrich
13-Nov	Honor of Jane Kotewa	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
13-Nov	Memory of Claire Lidke	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
13-Nov	David & Lisa Meschke Anniversary		Margaret Weaver

## HyVee & Fareway Receipts Report as of 20 November 2022

During the last five weeks \$13,950.77 (9.30%) worth of Hy-Vee slips were received. After 31 weeks, Hy-Vee is at \$125,067.85 (83.38%) toward the 15<sup>th</sup> \$150,000 goal. There is a good chance that the \$150,000 goal will be met yet this year.

During the same five weeks, \$3,038.36 (2.03%) worth of Fareway slips were received. After 98 weeks, Fareway is at \$126,958.63 (84.64%) toward our 4<sup>th</sup> \$150,000 goal. It will still take about 18 weeks to reach the \$150,000.

This program started the first of March 2011, so any slips from then until now can be used. Any Fairmont Fareway and Hy-Vee food store register slip can be used. Even slips from Hy-Vee Gas, Coffee Shop, Food Service, and Pharmacy help us toward the goal. Thanks to all who bring/mail the slips to the Church, or mailing them or dropping them off at my house. Even the very small amounts help.

Reported by;  
Jim Bock

# Christian Education News and Events for December

## December 11: An Advent Tradition:



Create a Gingerbread House  
after worship in Heritage Hall.

Bring the kids, the cousins, the neighbors,  
or friends.

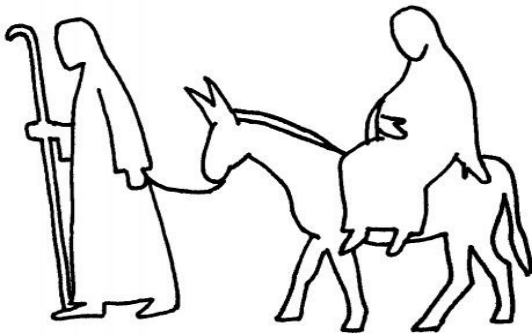
A light brunch will be served.

Free will offering for brunch and supplies.

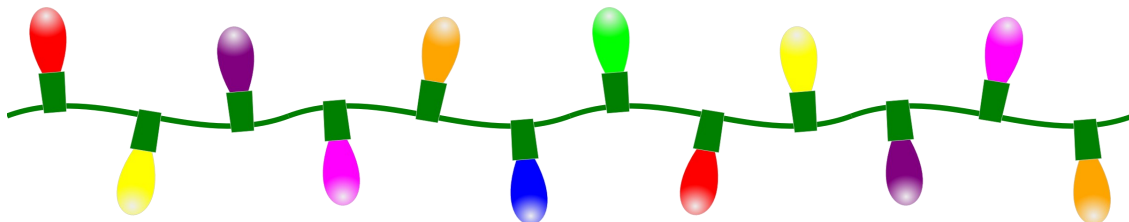
## December 18: Sunday School Christmas Program during Worship

*You won't want to miss an original performance written by Abby Shoen  
especially for the children of our church!*

### *Once upon a time in Bethlehem: A Shrek Story*



***No Sunday School on Christmas Day and New Year's  
Day!***



## December 28: School Sunday Fun Night

Sunday School Fun Night will be December 28 from 5:30 to 8 at the church.  
Join in and help serve the Community Meal, then stay for the movie and fun!  
We will be watching *Shrek*, having popcorn, drinking swamp juice, and doing  
activities.

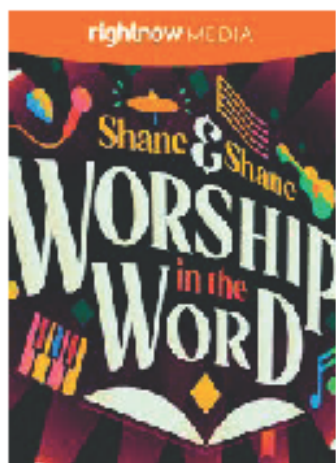
# rightnow MEDIA

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

Do you already have your plans made for multiple Christmas gatherings? Will you be driving “over the hills and through the woods to grandmother’s house?” Or will you be joining the millions of Americans flying somewhere? Most of us generally know where we’ll be *expected* to spend the Christmas holiday, so did we really need an invitation to Aunt Matilda’s annual Christmas extravaganza or the office holiday soiree? In case you were waiting for a personal invitation, [please join us on Christmas Eve at 5:30 and Christmas Day at 9:30 for worship at First Congregational!](#) But one evening in the meantime, spend a quick half-hour listening to Pastor Andy Stanley share *An Invitation to Christmas*.



By the time you read this, Christmas music will be playing 24-7 some local radio stations, and there will be “holiday” streams available on cable TV systems or various websites. But not all of them are even truly Christmas focused; at best, some of them are light takes on traditional carols—while at worst some barely even touch on more than a vague, glowing feeling experienced during holiday gatherings. Why not enjoy ten of your favorite Christmas hymns, each presented with modern instrumentation and introduced with scriptural background? Check out *Worship in the Word: Christmas* from Shane & Shane:



For years, Christian artists Shane & Shane have made Colossians 3:16 their mission: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Now that they’ve been raising kids of their own, it’s become their greatest desire for their children to know God’s Word and have a vibrant, intimate relationship with Jesus—and they want to help make that a reality for your kids as well!

In this installment of *Worship in the Word*, we travel through the narrative of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, pairing each section of scripture and its themes with a different Christmas song. Join Shane & Shane and their friends as they sing these carols together and learn about the story of the Bible, and why Jesus’ birth is significant for all of history!

\*Still need to sign up for a FREE **rightnow** MEDIA account? 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 changes 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



**CHRISTMAS  
COOKIE  
WALK**

\$12/ pound

**Friday, December 2nd**

1st Congregational UCC Church | 4PM - 7 PM

Let us do the baking for you! Come and stock  
up on all of your favorite Christmas Cookies!

319 Downtown Plaza, Fairmont MN

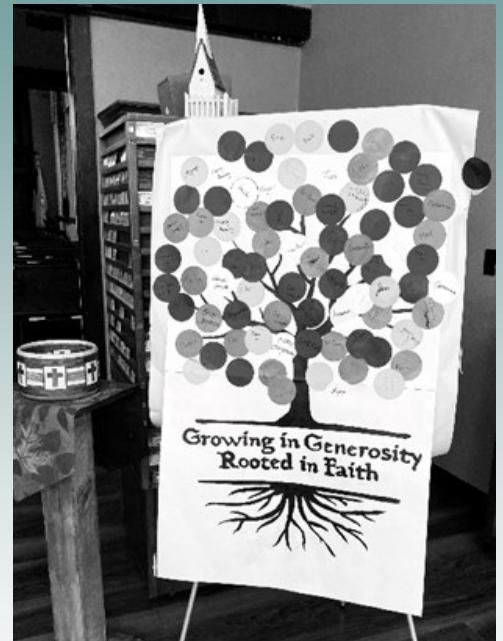


[fairmontucc.org](http://fairmontucc.org)



Thank you to all who participated in our Fall Stewardship Campaign. Our church is blessed with so many people who have pledged their time, talents, and money to expand the faith life and missions of our church!

If you haven't made a pledge of money toward the 2023 budget, please think about doing it and doing it before the end of the year. Having a good estimate of the dollars we will receive next year really help plan for staff, ministries and mission.



## MISSION MINUTE

The December Blessing Box offering is designated for The Christmas Fund.

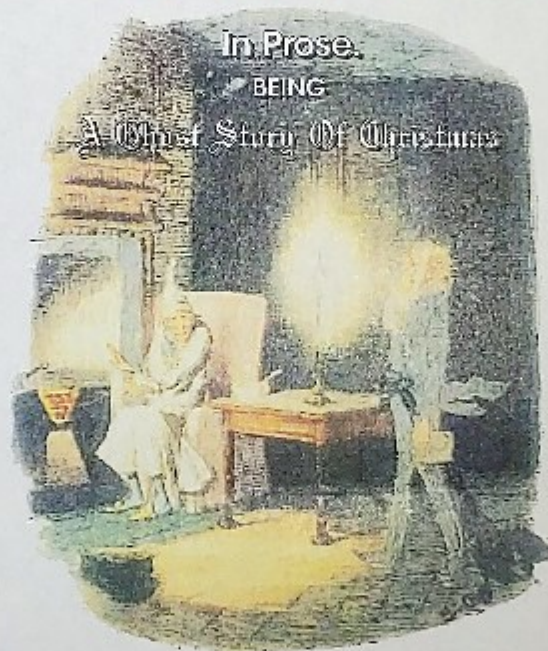
**The Christmas Fund** has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.



# Merry & BRIGHT

You are Invited to a  
Public Reading of Charles Dickens'

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



**Thurs., Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> • 7 p.m.**

**FREE & Open To All Ages**

Red Rock Center For the Arts  
222 East Blue Earth Avenue, Fairmont

*Donations will be accepted for Heaven's Table Food Shelf in Fairmont  
If you have any questions, please call (507) 848-4414*

**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**



*and*

Thank you Sherry, Sue and Margo  
for folding and sealing the  
November Newsletters!

Looking for **recipes** for our recipe  
page! Please submit your favorites to  
share in our newsletter.

**Happy New Year**  
**2023**

All are invited to the **Annual New Year's Day Party** at Kim and Jan Shaffer's house, 320 W. 10<sup>th</sup> St., in Blue Earth.

Come any time after 11:00. We'll eat around 12:30. Hot sandwiches and cider are provided. Bring your own beverage and a dish to share. Table games, football, conversation and of course, puzzles. Stay until the last puzzle is done! Please RSVP 526-3979.

**The PRC** meets quarterly each year to discuss joys and concerns regarding our pastoral leadership. If you have input for the committee, please contact any of the PRC members: Jon Neitzel, Deb Thate, Sherry Voyles, Dave Meschke and Pastor Cory Germain.

*The newsletter is available (in color)  
on the church website.*

<http://www.fairmontucc.org>



December can be a busy time! Here are two similar recipes that will hopefully save you some time for more important things this month. One recipe is for when you need something on the table quickly, and one is for when you want to start supper and leave to do other things for the day. These have been taste-tested by the Hainy family. Enjoy!

## Fast Beef Taco Skillet

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 can tomato soup
- ½ cup salsa
- ½ cup water 6 flour 6" tortillas, cut into strips
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese



Brown ground beef. Stir in soup, salsa, water, and tortilla strips. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low & cook for 5 minutes. Stir. Top with cheese.

Makes 4 servings. Optional: Can top with sour cream, black olives, avocado, etc.

## Slow Cooker Chicken Enchilada Casserole (from the [magicalslowcookier.com](http://magicalslowcookier.com))

- 1.5 lbs. boneless skinless raw chicken breasts (don't use any more than 1.5 pounds, the casserole will seem dry if you do).
- 28 oz. can Red Enchilada Sauce
- **Add these items at the end:**
- 10 corn tortillas I use a 10-12 oz. package of soft corn tortillas.
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese divided
- 3.8 oz. can black olives divided

Put the chicken breasts and the enchilada sauce in your 6 quart or larger slow cooker. Cook on **HIGH for 4 hours** or **LOW for 6-8 hours**.

Shred the chicken with 2 forks right in the slow cooker. Cut the tortillas in to strips, add to chicken and sauce. Stir. Add 1/2 cup of cheese and half the olives into the sauce and chicken mixture. Stir again. Flatten the mixture. Add the rest of the cheese and the olives on top.

Cook on low for about 40 - 60 minutes longer.

Top with sour cream (optional).

## Happy Birthday!

Dec 2 Antonio Johnson

Betty Jones

Dec 3 Julie Thate

Dec 5 Jim Hough

Dec 6 Mackenzie Brummond

Dec 7 Cynthia Celandor

Dec 10 Jenna McAlister

Dec 11 Jonathon Meschke

Dec 14 Jan Shaffer

Kay Campe

Christina Hainy

Dec 15 Jacob Shoen

Braden Grefe

Tabitha Wayman

Dec 17 Kim Shaffer

Tim Huset

Dec 20 Craig Nelson

Trenton Jorgensen

Dec 21 Izzy Cruz

Dec 23 Caroline Olson

Melva Tonne

Dec 25 Gretchen Jorgensen

Dec 26 Rev. Cory Germain

Emma Germain

Dec 28 Cathy Celandor

Dec 29 Eric B. Johnson

Jesse Lasch

Kora Kay Lasch

Dec 30 Destiny Massey

Ellen Germain

Dec 31 Katelyn Draper

## Happy Anniversary!

Dec 4 Don & Shelby Marks 40 years

Dec 7 John & Donna Holstine 59 years

Dec 9 Brian & Julie Thate 22 years

Dec 23 Robert & Diane Neusch 56 years

Dec 30 Lance & Jenny Willard 27 years