

Dec 2023/Jan 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

Web Site Address

www.fairmontucc.org

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.

December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School 11:00-noon practice Christmas play	4	5 10:00 Lakeview Communion	6 4:00 Confirmation 5:00 PRC 6:00 Worship Board 7:00 Choir	7 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	8	9
10 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School <i>Communion</i> <i>Election Sunday</i> 11:00-noon practice Christmas play	11	12 6:00 Special Council meeting 7:00 Facility Board	13 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Diaconate Bd, Mission Board 5:45 CE Board 7:00 Choir	14 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch) 5:15 Hospitality Board	15 9:00 Council agenda items due	16
17 8:30 Practice play 10:00 Worship with Children's Christmas play	18	19 10:00 Goldfinch Communion	20 4:00 Confirmation 5:45 Church Council 7:00 Choir	21 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch) <i>1st Day of Winter</i>	22 Annual Reports DUE (if not financial)	23
24 Christmas Eve 10:00 Worship/ NO Sunday School 5:30 Candlelight Christmas Eve	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i>	26	27 4:00 NO Confirm 5:30 Free Community Meal 7:00 Choir	28 9:30 Bible Study 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	29	30
31 New Year's Eve 10:00 Contemporary Worship/NO Sunday School <i>Blessing box Noisy Sunday</i>						

Church office is closed for the week.

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 	2 10:00 Lakeview Communion	3 4:00 Confirmation 6:00 Worship Board 7:00 Choir	4 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	5	6 <i>Epiphany</i>
7 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School	8	9 7:00 Facility Board	10 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Diaconate Bd, Mission Board 5:45 CE Board 7:00 Choir	11 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch) 5:15 Hospitality Board	12 9:00 Council agenda items due	13
14 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School <i>Communion</i>	15 <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i>	16 10:00 Goldfinch Communion	17 4:00 Confirmation 5:45 Church Council 7:00 Choir	18 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	19 9:00 Newsletter items due	20
21 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School	22	23 4:30-8:00 PEO (K/HH)	24 4:00 Confirmation 7:00 Choir	25 9:30 Bible Study 11:00 Newsletter assembly 11:30-2 MRCI (HH/FS) 1:00 TOPS (Ch)	26	27
28 10:00 Worship/ Sunday School Blessing box Annual Meeting in Heritage Hall	29	30	31 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Free Community Meal 7:00 Choir			

The Reverend's Ruminations - December 2023

Advent (the four Sundays leading to the celebration of Christmas) begins almost logically this year on December 3rd. You may find yourself saying, "But why do you always talk about Advent, pastor? We all know Christmas is coming, so let's get on with it!?" Sure, that might be easier; but like a child waiting to open presents, the *anticipation* of Advent is part of what makes it important to our understanding of the seasons of the church year.

It's hard to pin down exactly when Advent became an official season in the calendar of the Western Christian church, but it has been with us since at least the Middle Ages. To borrow from an article about Advent and its traditions on *Vox.com*, "...the word *Advent* comes from the Latin word for "arrival" — *adventus* — which means [even] non-Christians can celebrate it simply as a fun countdown to Christmas." But to simplify it that much risks cheapening our Christian understanding of the observance.

You may have noticed that I often open our worship services by mentioning where we are in the church calendar (Second Sunday in Lent, Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost, Reign of Christ Sunday, etc.), and that is because we progress through various seasons as a means of keeping in touch with the important events that shape our faith. To borrow again from *Vox.com*:

"The easiest way to understand the Christian church's calendar is as a sort of live immersive theater, designed by tradition to reenact the life of Jesus every year from Christmas (birth) to Easter (resurrection), with readings in traditional churches that revisit stories from the gospels each year during that time. Advent... is the part of the calendar that's all about anticipation. In Christian teaching, there are two events being anticipated. Part of the observance of Advent... is reenacting the centuries of anticipation of the birth of Jesus as written about by prophets like Isaiah in the Old Testament.

But Christian theology also contains a belief that at the end of days, Jesus will return to set things right in the world, erasing death and suffering — a concept usually called the Second Coming. So in addition to being about the anticipation of Jesus's birth (the first coming), Advent is also set aside as a time of quietness and austerity, meant to keep Christians from glossing over the brokenness of the world and to encourage them to anticipate the Second Coming."

When we realize that Advent is not just an over-hyped invitation to get all our shopping done for yet another high-pressure "season of *getting*" (er, *giving*), it can take on a much calmer, more comforting note of focus — on our faith and the true gift of Jesus our Savior, as well as a healthy anticipation of Christ's eventual triumphant return. I encourage you to take time away from the busyness of your December to read from the Old Testament prophecies and the Gospel accounts of the Advent season:

First Sunday (Dec. 3)	Isaiah 64:1–9	Mark 13:24–37
Second Sunday (Dec. 10)	Isaiah 40:1–11	Mark 1:1–8
Third Sunday (Dec. 17)	Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11	John 1:6–8, 19–28
Fourth Sunday (Dec. 24)	2 nd Samuel 7:1–11	Luke 1:26–38

*Take note that since the Sundays of Advent precede the observation of Christmas Day, **we WILL be having a worship service on the morning of Christmas Eve in addition to our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve service that evening.** I encourage you not to skip the morning service under the guise of "we'll be there later anyway," as each worship experience will have a different focus. Think of it as a rare opportunity to bring our Advent anticipation to a peak within hours of the fulfilling celebration of Christ's birth. What a party!

2024 is just around the corner, and I look forward to its many opportunities to continue serving our great God together. Alleluia, and Happy New (Church) Year!

Rev. Cory Germain



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
FAIRMONT, MN
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES FOR 11-15-2023**

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

The Council met in Heritage Hall at 5:45 PM. The meeting was called to order by Moderator Abigail Anderson. Pastor Cory led in prayer. Motion to approve the minutes from the October 18 meeting was M/S/C (Larry/Amanda).

Pastor's Report: Pastor Cory said that he has put on more miles for out-of-town visits, and he also represented the church at a special event to celebrate Chuck & Evelyn Rudolph's 50 years at Youth for Christ.

Treasurer's Report: Catherine thanked everyone involved in Stewardship Sunday. Results from the pledge drive will be available in about a week. She moved \$10,000 from the Operating Reserve to the checking account. This was a planned move. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was M/S/C (Catherine/Christina).

BOARD REPORTS:

Christian Education: Wendy said that Abby was dropping off the 57 Operation Christmas Child boxes. Christmas play practices start November 19 after Sunday school.

Hospitality: No representative.

Facilities: Larry said that they are looking for members. Security cameras were discussed for the church doors.

Diaconate: Sue reported that they are looking for members and have been sending cards.

Mission: Amanda said they are serving the November free community meal. The December meal is almost finalized. The Kids Against Hunger pack is in early February.

Worship: No representative.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Carpet: No updates.

Nominating: Joanne said they are still working on nominations.

OLD BUSINESS: Deb Adams will be the financial secretary for 1 year. The Soup Group is on track for the soup supper. Every board has submitted budget proposals. The Budget meeting is Monday, November 27. Election Day is Sunday, December 10.

NEW BUSINESS: No monetary Christmas gifts for staff. We will review our finances before submitting the 4th quarter OCWM payment. The next Special Council meeting is on Tuesday, December 12. Reviewed the Covenant and Faith statements. Medical insurance for the pastor will increase. We are looking at Christian Copyright Licensing International fees for music.

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

Respectfully submitted, Christina Hainy, Clerk

Election Sunday is Sunday, December 10th before Worship in the sanctuary. We will be voting on officers and board members for 2024.

MEMORIALS

Date	Memory/Honor of	Designation	From
22-Oct	Dean & Donna Grotte Anniversary	Capital	Jim Grotte
22-Oct	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	Starfish	Jon & Cheryl Rippke
22-Oct	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	General	Pat & Randy Rowan
22-Oct	Memory of Julie Kasten	General	Pat & Randy Rowan
22-Oct	Memory of Peggy Heinrich	Starfish	Les Heinrich
22-Oct	Dean & Donna Grotte Anniversary	Starfish	Les Heinrich
29-Oct	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	General	Larry & Carolyn Thompson
29-Oct	Steve & Janine Draper Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
29-Oct	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury		Tari Riley
5-Nov	Roman Czeck Birthday		Douglas & Kristine Fuller
5-Nov	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	Starfish	Byron & Becky Phillips
5-Nov	Memory of John Walser	Starfish	Byron & Becky Phillips
5-Nov	Dean & Donna Grotte Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
12-Nov	Memory of MaryDon Kislingbury	General	Eric & Catherine Johnson



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 Janine Draper with questions at (507) 236-3499.

Hy-Vee & Fareway Report as of 19 November 2023

During the last four weeks, \$16,938.16 (8.47%) worth of Hy-Vee slips were received. After 47 weeks, Hy-Vee is at \$190,845.42 (95.42%) toward the 16th goal which is now \$200,000.

During the same time, \$4,017.22 (2.68%) worth of Fareway slips were received. After 29 weeks, Fareway is at \$36,580.27 (24.39%) toward our 5th \$150,000 goal.

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 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

Christian Education News:



Thanks to our generous congregation, we were able to pack 57 boxes for Operation Christmas Child!!

Dorothy's Christmas Journey, written by Abby Shoen, will be performed during church on Sunday, December 17th. Practices for December are from 11:00 until noon on Sunday, December 3rd & 10th. On December 17th, we will practice at 8:30 AM. After the performance that day, we will be decorating cookies.

There is NO Sunday school on:

- ♦ Sunday, December 24th
- ♦ Sunday, December 31st.



Mission Minute:



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

January Blessing Box: Kids Against Hunger. We will be having a team again for the packing on Saturday, February 10, 2024.



The 5th Annual Community Reading of *A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story of Christmas* by Charles Dickens is on Thursday, December 7th at the Red Rock Center for the Arts at 7 PM. The performance is free and open to the public. Donations will be given to Heaven's Table Food Shelf.

Dear First Congregational UCC,

Thank you so much for your donation to Fairmont Hot Meals on Wheels. Our program is able to continue providing meals because of donations from the community.

Thank you again for thinking of us.

Hot Meals on Wheels,
Karen, Erin & JoAnn

The next PRC meeting is on December 6th.

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, Sherry Voyles, Dave Meschke and Pastor Cory Germain.



to Kathy Jorgensen, Cindy Anderson, Lorie Zoeller & Margo Weaver for assembling the November newsletter!

The newsletter is available (in color) on the church website. Upcoming events, birthdays & anniversaries and the church calendar are updated there as well. Check it out!

<http://www.fairmontucc.org>



In January, there will not be a newsletter mailing. The Annual report will be mailed instead to all members. Extra copies will be available in the office.

The Annual Meeting will be on Sunday, January 28th in Heritage Hall after worship.



Prayer Request Cards are now on the table in the Narthex. Please share your joys and concerns on the card and return it to the usher prior to the Pastoral Prayer if you would like your request included in our prayers during the worship service.

Looking for:

Someone to provide snow removal for First Congregational! This is a paid position! We have the snow removal equipment to use. Just looking for the labor! We will not be cleaning the NE entry steps this year. Please, contact Dean Grotte (507-236-0216) or Larry Lasch (507-432-8121) if you are interested.

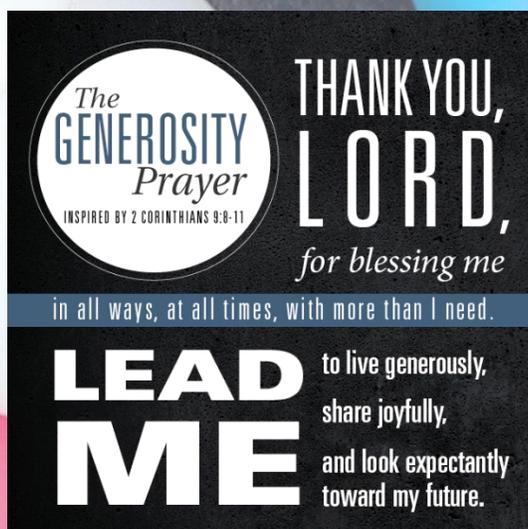


All are invited to **Kim and Jan Shaffer's Annual New Year's Day Party** on January 1st, 2024! Festivities start at 11:00 AM at the Shaffer's home located at 320 W. 10th Street, Blue Earth. Hot sandwiches, cider and coffee are provided. Bring a side dish to share if you are able. Table games, conversation & puzzles galore! RSVP at (507) 526-3979.

Thank You ~ Thank You ~ Thank You

We thank our Church Family for being so **generous** in pledging their time, talents, and treasures. **When we pool our gifts together**, when we work together, **we accomplish great things in God's name**. Thanks to everyone who helped celebrate all that we are as a church . . . all the **actions, feelings, and works** that make us a family. A **special thank you** to all who pledged their support for the coming year. If you have not sent in your pledge sheet yet, **you still have time** to commit to the works of our church family. **Send your pledge** of time, talents and/or treasures to the church office, drop it in the offering plate, or send it to the Financial Secretary, Kay Campe, at ucc319finsec@gmail.com or 507-236-9097.

Help make 2024 another year to celebrate!!



What do you celebrate? Sunday Worship, **Beautiful Music**, Bible Study, Adventure Trip, Sunday School, **Bible School**, Confirmation, Summer Camps, Right Now Media, A Safe Building to meet in and serve others in, **Family Gatherings**, Ushers, Meals, **Clean Ditches**, Easter Egg Hunt, Beautiful Flowers, Christmas Programs, Forgiveness, Kids Against Hunger Food Pack, **Readers**, Church World Services, Faith, Operation Christmas Child, IHD Activities, **Shared Ministry**, Glows Activities, Visits and Communion for Shut-Ins and Homebound, Heifer Project International, Family, **Broadcasts of our Services** via Cable TV, Facebook, Website, **Free Community Meals**, Working Together, Starfish Ministry, **Free Little Pantry**, Faith, Beautiful Building, Food Drive, Habitat for Humanity, Delivery of Hot Meals on Wheels, Communion, Pastoral Counseling, Funeral Services, **Welcoming New Faces**, Weddings, CREST support, Relay for Life, **Beautiful Grounds**, Acceptance, Community, Greetings, **Concerns for Others**, Accessibility, Newsletters, **Card Ministry**, Encouragement, Ride Assistance, Coffee Time, Contemporary Sundays, Prayer Chain, **Smiles**, **Singing in the Choir**, Playing Chimes . . .

Taco-Filled Pasta Shells

A favorite recipe of the Anderson family & the Hainy family

Total Time

Prep: 20 min. + chilling Bake: 45 min.

Makes

2 casseroles (6 servings each)

Ingredients

- 2 pounds ground beef (other similar recipes add 1 cup chopped onion)
- 2 envelopes taco seasoning
- 1-1/2 cups water
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, cubed
- 24 uncooked jumbo pasta shells
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- **additional ingredients (for each casserole):**
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 cup taco sauce (other similar recipes substitute enchilada sauce)
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack or mozzarella cheese
- 1-1/2 cups crushed tortilla chips
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 green onions, chopped



Directions

1. In a Dutch oven, cook beef (& chopped onions) over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in taco seasoning and water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Stir in cream cheese until melted. Transfer to a bowl; cool. Chill for 1 hour.
2. Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. Gently toss with butter. Fill each shell with about 3 tablespoons of meat mixture. Place 12 filled shells in a greased freezer container. Cover and freeze for up to 3 months.
3. To prepare remaining 12 stuffed shells, spoon 1 cup salsa into a greased 9-in. square baking dish. Top with stuffed shells and 1 cup taco sauce. Cover and bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with 1 cup of each cheese and 1-1/2 cups chips. Bake 15 minutes longer or until heated through. Serve with sour cream and onions.

*To use frozen shells, thaw in the refrigerator for 24 hours (shells will be partially frozen). Remove from dish. Spoon 1 cup salsa into a greased 9-in. square baking dish; top with shells and 1 cup taco sauce. Cover and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Uncover. Sprinkle with 1 cup of each cheese and 1-1/2 cups chips. Bake 15 minutes longer or until heated through. Serve with sour cream and onions.

2 shells: 492 calories, 31g fat (16g saturated fat), 98mg cholesterol, 982mg sodium, 29g carbohydrate (4g sugars, 1g fiber), 23g protein

December & January Birthdays:

Dec 1	Skylar Weber	Jan 1	Gina Jorgensen
Dec 2	Antonio Johnson	Jan 2	Matt Gozrdt
	Betty Jones	Jan 3	Ella Ziemer
Dec 3	Julie Thatz		Curt Bicknase
Dec 6	Mackenzie Brummond	Jan 4	Mariah Garlick
Dec 7	Cynthia Clander	Jan 5	Doris Thatz
Dec 10	Jenna McAllister		Kevin Kotzwa
Dec 11	Jonathon Meschke	Jan 6	Jim Draper
Dec 14	Jan Shaffer		James Norman
	Ray Campe	Jan 7	Sherry Voyles
	Christina Hainy	Jan 9	Jacob Lasch
Dec 15	Jacob Shoen	Jan 10	Kristen Simpson
	Braden Grzef		Les Heinrich
	Tabitha Wayman	Jan 11	Illa Byers
Dec 17	Kim Shaffer	Jan 13	Larry Vogel
	Tim Huset	Jan 14	Robert Thatz
Dec 20	Craig Nelson		Taylor Aukes
	Trenton Jorgensen	Jan 15	Wade Rosen
Dec 21	Izzy Cruz	Jan 16	Amber Brummond
Dec 23	Caroline Olson	Jan 19	John Norman
	Melva Tonne	Jan 24	David Cong
Dec 25	Grzehen Jorgensen		Val Johnson
Dec 26	Rev. Cory Germain		Wendy Ziemer
	Emma Huemper	Jan 25	Bill Bittman
Dec 28	Cathy Clander	Jan 27	Molly Meyer
Dec 29	Eric B. Johnson		Nathan Christensen
	Jesse Lasch		Aspen Jorgensen
	Kora Lasch		Nora Jorgensen
Dec 30	Destiny Masszy	Jan 28	Avery Guritz
	Ellen Germain	Jan 29	Jerene Zwaseka
	Tim Jones	Jan 30	Diane Neusch
			Susan Houghton
			Jeff Scholl

December & January Anniversaries:

Dec 4	Don & Shelby Marks	41 years
Dec 7	John & Donna Holsting	60 years
Dec 9	Brian & Julie Thatz	23 years
Dec 23	Robert & Diane Neusch	57 years
Dec 30	Lance & Jenny Willard	28 years

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