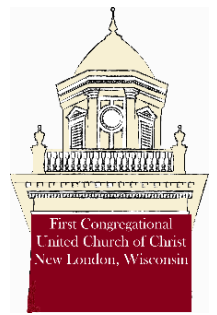




Blessing our Community



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
110 E. Hancock Street, New London, Wisconsin 54961 ~ 920-982-3731
Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Savides ~ email: Pastor@uccnl.onmicrosoft.com
Secretary: newlondonucc@gmail.com
A Stephen Ministry Church

Every good gift and
every perfect gift is
from above, and
cometh down from
the Father of lights.

JAMES 1:17

December 2025 NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

“COMING HOME”

“Planes, Trains, and Automobiles” is my favorite Thanksgiving movie. It shows Steve Martin and John Candy as two businesspeople facing weather delays and all manner of obstacles in their desperate effort to get back home in time from the holiday.

During the holiday season, most of us are just trying to get back home. That’s how it’s always been, especially for people of faith. The journey of faith is a journey towards home. The question, though, is this: What is our home?

Isaiah came to the exiles, the Israelites who had been dragged from their homes in Jerusalem and transported like cattle all the way to Babylon as slaves and prisoners. Isaiah came to those people to tell them that they were going to go home. God gave Isaiah the words to say: “*Here is your God*” (Isaiah 40:9). That’s it – “*Here is your God.*” Those are the only words necessary because if God is there, then you’re home. That’s how Isaiah answered that question.

When I was five years old, I ran away from home. We had just moved to a new town, and I missed my friends, so I ran away from home. Mom helped me pack. She even walked with me as I left the house and went on my way. She sat with me when I got scared and tired after walking about a block. And when I decided to come back home, she carried me most of the way back.

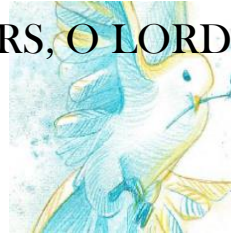
I ran away from home. But did I really? No, because Mom was always there. Mom was my home. This is just like Isaiah describes God:

*“He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep” (Isaiah 40:11).*

If we make God our home then we can be at home anywhere, on the road, at work, at school, in snowstorms, in airport terminals, in times of distress, at moments of celebration. Anywhere and anytime, God can make us feel at home. So maybe the real question is this: are you ready to come back home?

Your friend and fellow minister,
Rev. Steve Savides

HEAR OUR PRAYERS, O LORD”



Father God, we lift up all those who are facing illness today. We ask that You would bring healing, comfort and peace to their bodies. Calm their fears and let them experience the healing power of Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Of Healing and Comfort for:

- ☼ Emily Calabria
- ☼ Gaylord Hedtke

Of Celebration for:

- ☼ For the marriage of Caleb and Brooklyn Lauer
- ☼ For the baptism of Camila Jane Colchado, child of Roberto Colchado and Ariana Ort.

If you would like to be listed in the prayers, please contact the office.

WE DON'T SAY THANK YOU ENOUGH

Maybe you have someone to thank for doing things, especially behind the scenes, to make things happen here at church. If you have a thank you to offer, please submit it in writing to Kathy in the church office, or by email.

- ♥ Thank you to all those that volunteered on Sunday mornings.
- ♥ Thank you for your continuous support of First Congregational United Church of Christ.
- ♥ Thank you to those that brought soup and dessert for bible study.

Thank you for giving of your Time, Talent, and Treasure.

Our Church will use these precious resources to further our vision of “Blessing Our Communities.” Together, the efforts of our church members, friends, guests, and visitors are changing lives.

AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE FOR OCTOBER- 74

GENERAL OPERATING INCOME JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025: \$109,146.46

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES JANUARY – DECEMBER 2025: \$128,716.23

NET INCOME: -\$19,569.77

OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2026 offering envelopes will be available for you to pick up by mid-December. Please do not use them until 2026. Your name will be on the box and will be located in the narthex. Please pick up your envelope, family members and friends before January. Office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 8:30-12:30. If you do not see your envelope box, please leave Ery a note in the office and they will get you your offering envelope. If you prefer to do Automatic Giving, there will be sheets on the table by the offering envelopes. Because there is no year on the envelopes, if you have envelopes from 2025, you may use them if you do not see your offering envelope in the narthex. **If giving cash, please put your name on the envelope or it may go towards loose offering.** Thank you!

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also



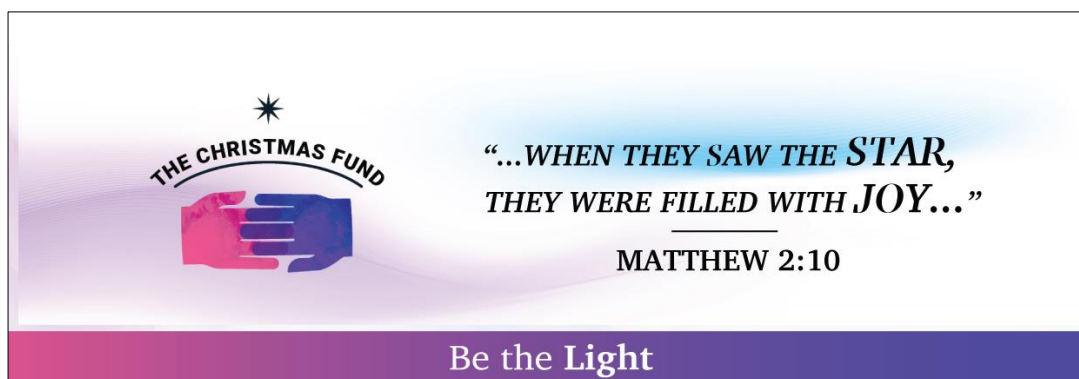
CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SCHEDULE

4:30 p.m.- Family Christmas Eve Worship Service –
Live Nativity

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP AT 4:30 PM ONLY

We are looking forward to our annual Live Nativity Christmas Eve Worship Service on December 24 at 4:30 pm. This is such a beloved and meaningful tradition of this church. Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey asking for the congregation's input about an additional Christmas Eve service at 7 pm. After looking through the responses, we have concluded that we will NOT hold a 7 pm service. There simply isn't sufficient support for the 7 pm service to justify the effort needed to quickly transition from the 4:30 service and staff the service at 7. This is a decision that many other churches are making as it reflects the cultural shift toward family Christmas Eve gatherings and away from evening Christmas Eve worship services. As our congregation continues to grow, there may be a need to reinstate a second Christmas Eve service

UCC CHRISTMAS FUND



For over one hundred years, The Christmas Fund has provided direct financial assistance to the healers in all our lives: retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. You are part of the community of The Christmas Fund, whether you donate at Christmastime, benefit directly from our grant or leadership programs, or simply believe in our mission to help secure the financial foundation of those engaged in the life of the church.

Please consider donating today to ensure more healers receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. The Christmas Fund was here for them. And regardless of who you are or what brought you to the United Church of Christ, The Christmas Fund is here for you.

Your gift is more than just a testament to your belief in the values of the United Church of Christ, it is a critical lifeline for those who depend on our grant programs for care and support. Thank you again for your generosity and I offer a closing prayer for your continued safety and peace.

GOOD-BYE TO KATHY. HELLO TO RETIREMENT

It was our privilege to host a retirement open house for Kathy Phillips on Thursday, November 20, in our Fellowship Hall.

Kathy has been our church secretary for the past 28 years. She has been far more than just our secretary.... our rock through many changes and challenges, our task master, our compass, our historian, our colleague, our confidant, our friend and a really good secretary.

Many of our congregation past and present stopped by to give Kathy a final send off into the world of retirement. The congregation, council and Pastor Steve presented her with an engraved prism cross, flowers, balloons and \$1000.00. She was very grateful for all we have done for her and her husband Rick (who was also there).

Thank you to all who donated to Kathy's retirement fund. Here's hoping she can do something special for herself as she adjusts to her new life of retirement! Now she can say.....honey I'm home forever!! We will miss you Kathy. You have been such a blessing to us!



GOOD-BYE TO REV KEVIN

On Sunday, November 23, we said good-bye and thank you to Rev Kevin Dembinski as he moves on to a new job with Pisarski Funeral Homes of Stevens Point/Plover area.

Kevin came to us four years ago as we were returning to live worship from the claws of covid-19, still without a pastor and scrambling to fill our pulpit every Sunday. Kevin offered to be our pulpit supply for as long as needed as we continued to search for our new pastor. Kevin gave us a steady Sunday presence with uplifting messages and genuine pastoral care. After we hired Pastor Steve, Kevin agreed to remain with us as pastoral support and enrich our weekly worship.

We are so grateful for Kevin Dembinski and we hope he will continue to stop in and fill our pulpit as needed in the future. We hope he finds peace and fulfillment in his new position. THANK YOU REV KEVIN. You always have a home at First Congregational United Church Of Christ in New London.



THANK YOU!

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who attended my retirement send-off and to those who so generously contributed to my retirement gift and the beautiful cross. Your kindness has truly touched me, and I feel incredibly blessed to have been a part of First Congregational for over 28 years.

As I reflect on my years with First Congregational, countless memories have come flooding back over these past few weeks. I am thankful for the privilege of working with three wonderful pastors—Pastor Luke, Pastor Greg, and Pastor Steve—as well as interim pastors Robin and Jeanne. I also remember fondly the members who became close friends and have since passed away, and I am grateful for those who have been here since I first started and quickly became lifelong friends. While some of you joined First Congregational after my journey had already begun, your presence and support have been just as meaningful. I am grateful for the connections and friendships built along the way, and I want you to know how much your kindness and encouragement have enriched my life during my time here.

A special thank you goes to Pastor Steve. Although we have only worked together for three years, it feels as though I have known you forever. Deciding to retire was the hardest choice I have ever made, especially knowing I would no longer have the blessing of working alongside you. The members and friends of First Congregational are truly fortunate to have you as their pastor.

I am also grateful to Pastor Steve and Lois Cuff for allowing me to celebrate my retirement in the way that felt right for me. Thank you, Lois, for organizing a beautiful retirement party, and to Sandy for your help in setting everything up. I cannot thank you enough for all you have done for me.

There have been many great conversations in the office with so many of you and I hope you welcome Eryka the same way you have welcomed me.

Blessings & Hugs
Kathy



LADIES! LADIES! LADIES UCC SISTERHOOD

Here is what is up for the rest of the YEAR!! Mark your calendars!

- ♥ On **December 12th** we will be going to Familiar Grounds, 206 N. Pearl St. New London. This is a Friday, and we will meet at 11:30.

As always, I NEED TO KNOW IF YOU ARE COMING BY NOON, THE MONDAY BEFORE. I need to let them know how many to expect! You've heard it before—call, shoot me a text, or throw a rock—contact me! As always, if you need a ride, let someone know—people are always willing to step up and help you!

Whether you are a “first timer” or a regular, come for the food, fun, and fellowship! No meeting, no dues, no being put “on the spot”! Call someone you haven't seen at church in a while, call a friend or neighbor! The more the merrier! And it is a given, if you find you can come at the last minute—There is always room at the table!

See you there!
Blessings,

Sandy Conradt
920-538-4114

HANDBELL AND MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS

Are you interested in hearing holiday music and/or watching handbell groups perform? Well, you're in luck! We are happy to share with you that there are two separate holiday handbell concerts in the month of December.

- Sunday December 7th – **Valley Troubadours**, a group of home-schooled students directed by Sandra Eithun and assisted by Michelle Campbell. Performing at Belfry Hall at 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday December 14th – **Fox Valley Bronze** and **Encore**, two wonderful handbell groups in the area that include a few members of our congregation. Performing at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Appleton at 3:00 p.m.

If you're interested in attending either of these concerts, please do! No sign-up required, just show up and show your love and support of handbell music!



SERRV SALE

Individual orders can still be placed online through the "SERRV and Earn" program. When you use the following web address to order, our church's Camp Scholarship program will receive 20% of your total: serrv.org?a=firstucc1. Please note that with the ordering process your items will be mailed directly to your house (shipping charges will apply). **You may order all year long.**

Wanted: Person to mow the church lawn to begin in Spring 2026. We are looking for a volunteer to keep the church lawn mowed.
If interested, contact Lois Cuff at 920-359-0531

WASHINGTON CENTER COMMUNITY CUPBOARD

Open Wednesdays 8 to noon and 4:30 to 6 pm

Happy Holidays and Thank You From The Cupboard

It continues to be crazy busy every week at the Community Cupboard. We had several weeks in November when we served over 100 families. We are happy to be able to continue to serve those that need our assistance.

The Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway went well. The Methodist Church gave out pies and cranberries. We provided the rest of the meal. Thank you to all that gave either food or money to purchase turkeys. Our church was one of the largest contributors for turkeys. Because of you we were able to make sure families had a Thanksgiving meal.

With the increase in families and the cutback of government assistance to programs such as ours, we are in need of a lot of items to keep our shelves stocked. Some items we are in need of are:

Hot or Cold Cereal
Canned Pasta
Saltine Crackers
Hamburger/Tuna Helper
Tuna

If you don't want to shop or aren't able to we will always take monetary donations to purchase items needed.

Thank you again for all your support. You are a blessing to our community.

Rita, Mike, Michelle and Jim



Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Savides
Pastor@uccnl.onmicrosoft.com
Church phone number- 920-982-3731

Secretary/Financial Secretary: Ery Lauer (newlondonucc@gmail.com)

Secretary's Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Bookkeeper: Bill Flease (billflease@uccnl.onmicrosoft.com)

Custodian: Amy Hord

Stephen Ministry Leader: Mary Schulz – mryschulz@yahoo.com

Facebook manager: Mary Schulz – mryschulz@yahoo.com

Christian Education:

Youth Group Coordinator: Dorea Brandt

Camp Scholarships: Tina Clegg

Music Coordinators:

Praise Connection Director & Organist: Lois Cuff – cufflois@gmail.com

Organist/Choir Director: Lu Ann Rupnow – luann.rupnow@gmail.com

Bell Choir Director: Billy Brandt-bilybrandtv@gmail.com

Check out our website: firstconougouccnl.com



www.facebook.com/UCCNL



Leadership Teams:

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Savides: 920-982-3731 – Pastor@uccnl.onmicrosoft.com

Church Council:

Moderator: Dave Thiel: 920-810-0865– davethiel56@gmail.com

Vice Moderator: Lois Cuff: 920-359-0531 – cufflois@gmail.com

Fellowship Chair: Sherie Bressler: 920-982-5798 – mrs.hbbressler@gmail.com

Education Ministry Chair: Tina Clegg: 920-982-7952 -tlclegg29@gmail.com

Mission Ministry Chair: Peter Lauer: 920-875-0195 – p.lauer@tractorpartsasap.com

Operations Ministry Chair: Lois Cuff: 920-359-0531 – cufflois@gmail.com

Worship Ministry Chair: Dorea Brandt: 920-875-0197 - lauerdorea@gmail.com

UCC Tech Team – Sound & Stream: Carl Sternhagen, Tim Schmidt, Billy Brandt, Caleb Lauer

Media Shout: Gary Henke, Wendy Dallman, Rod Bressler, Lois Cuff

Ministry Support Team: Debi Williams, Bonnie Wandke, Rita Thiel, and Pat Toney

DECEMBER SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m. –Adult Study

9:00 a.m. – Worship Service: in person and virtual

<https://m.facebook.com/UCCNL>

Sunday School on Traditional Worship Services (children will be excused during worship)

10:00 a.m.-Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall



Communion will be on December 7th



November 2025						
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23/ 30	24	25	26	27	28	29

First Congregational UCC

December 2025

January 2026						
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 2:00 p.m.- Christmas for Kids Drop Off 4:30 p.m.- Overeaters Anon.	2 3:30 p.m.- Christmas for Kids Drop Off	3 Noon -Bible Study 6:30 p.m.-Spirit Bells	4 6:30 p.m.-Choir	5	6 10:00 a.m.- AA in Fellowship Hall 1:00 p.m.- Bells at Cline Hanson
7 Communion 8:00 a.m.- Adult Bible Study 9:00 a.m.- Traditional Service-Sunday school, Choir 10:00 a.m.- Fellowship 10:30 a.m.- Toy Room Donations	8 8:00 a.m.- Toy Room Donations 4:30 p.m.- Overeaters Anon. 6:00 p.m. – Council Meeting	9	10 Noon -Bible Study 6:30 p.m.-Spirit Bells	11 4:00 p.m.- Toy room open 6:30 p.m.-Choir	12 11:30 a.m. – UCC Sisterhood at Palace Breakfast 4:00 p.m.- Toy room open	13 10:00 a.m.- AA in Fellowship Hall
14 8:00 a.m.- Adult Bible Study 9:00 a.m.- Praise Service 10:00 a.m.- Fellowship	15 4:30 p.m.- Overeaters Anon	16	17 Noon -Bible Study 6:30 p.m.-Spirit Bells	18 6:30 p.m.-Choir	19	20 10:00 a.m.- AA in Fellowship Hall 6:00 p.m.- Youth at Herd Game
21 8:00 a.m.- Adult Bible Study 9:00 a.m.- Traditional Service-Bells, Choir, Sunday school 10:00 a.m.- Fellowship	22 4:30 p.m.- Overeaters Anon	23	24 4:30 p.m.- Christmas Eve Live Nativity	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26	27 10:00 a.m.- AA in Fellowship Hall
28 8:00 a.m.- Adult Bible Study 9:00 a.m.- Praise Service 10:00 a.m.- Fellowship	29 4:30 p.m.- Overeaters Anon	30	31			

December Worship Volunteers

<i>Please sign up to fill the open dates.</i>	December 7, 2025 Traditional Service	December 14, 2025 Praise Service	December 21, 2025 Traditional Service	December 24, 2025, Christmas Eve	December 28, 2025 Praise Service
Lay Reader	9:00 a.m.- Karen Henke	9:00 a.m.- Deb Calabria	9:00 a.m. – Pat Toney		9:00 a.m. – Wendy Dallman
Media Shout	9:00 a.m.- Wendy Dallman	9:00 a.m. – Rod Bressler	9:00 a.m.- Lois Cuff	4:30 p.m. –	9:00 a.m.- Gary Henke
Fellowship	10:00 a.m.- Jerene Managan/Judy Priest	10:00 a.m.- Julie Manthe/Sherie Bressler	10:00 a.m.- Dave & Rita Thiel/Losi & Sandy Cuff		10:00 a.m.- Julie Manthe/Sherie Bressler

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1-Clair Herzfeldt	16-Katalina Baumgart
2-Nancy Herzfeldt	20-Yvonne Burkot
4-Jared Buschke	22-Sheri Bressler
7- Dee Savides	23-Kelly Parker
9-Tara Korth	24-Gary Prost, Ian Oberstadt
10-Robert Selle, Brent Dusek	27-Kaden Bethke
13-Sophia Techlin, Susan Weyenberg	30-Bonnie Behling
14-Blair Schulz	31-Tristen Gulbrandsen
15-Alan Manthe	

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

14-Bob & Candi Schmitz
 27-Gary Prost & Gloria Kjer
 30-Dean & Linda Peterson
 31-Dan & Mary Gould

If your birthday or anniversary is missing, or incorrect, please contact Ery at the church office.

