

The Congregator

First Congregational Church of River Edge, New Jersey

109 Continental Avenue, River Edge, NJ 07661

a congregation of the United Church of Christ

February 2024

Volume 75 Issue 2

ANNUAL MEETING - FEBRUARY 11, 2024



The Leadership Council has called the **Annual Meeting** of the Congregation and Corporation of First Congregational Church of River Edge for Sunday, February 11, 2024 immediately following the morning worship service. The business will include the presentation of annual reports of church teams and organizations, the financial report of the church, and election of officers.

CHURCH OFFICE INFORMATION

109 Continental Avenue, River Edge, NJ 07661 / (201) 261-1712

email -office@fccriveredge.org Website - www.fccriveredge.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday, closed. Tuesday – Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Rev. Joe Medlin Pastor	revjmedlin@aol.com 808-785-4822
Slavina Zhelezova Director of Music	szhelezova@fccriveredge.org
Nicole Babington Minister for Faith Formation	nbabington@fccriveredge.org 201-956-3435
Anne Cooper Administrative Assistant	office@fccriveredge.org 201-261-1712
Linda Stark Financial Secretary	financeoffice@fccriveredge.org



Ash Wednesday Service

February 14th, 7PM

The following story has been told for many generations.

Rabbi Simcha Bunam of Pzhysha once said to his students: "Everyone must have two pockets, so that he can reach into the one or the other, according to his needs. In his right pocket are to be the words: 'For my sake was the world created,' and in his left: 'I am but dust and ashes.' "

Depending on our moods and situations in life, we need both pockets to stay grounded. They keep us humble, knowing who we are as a small part of God's creation, while also being infused with a spark of the Divine. One pocket reminds us that life doesn't revolve around us while the other is a reminder that we are uniquely special to God.

This year's Ash Wednesday service will encourage us to reach into both pockets. As a cross is marked on our foreheads, these words will be heard, "You are from the dust and to the dust you shall return. And you are also a beloved child of God, loved unconditionally."

Thus, the Lenten journey toward the cross, along with all its contradictions, begins.

A few lines from a prayer written by Thomas Merton illustrate it well, "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end." Merton begins by articulating the unknown, or the darkness inherent on the faith journey. And at the end, he offers consolation, "...I will trust You always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone."

As we journey together during Lent, may we trust that even though the cross awaits us and there is much uncertainty on the journey, there is always hope in the resurrection. As the beloved community, let us celebrate and embrace it as the end that is also the beginning. Amen.

Much love to everyone,

Pastor Joe

LEGACY OF FAITH

A meaningful way to remember/honor loved ones and friends is to contribute to the Memorial Fund, Building Renovation Fund, Music & Arts Fund, Care Ministry or the General Fund of the First Congregational Church of River Edge.



In Honor of

The Van Weterings

General Fund

Sandra Van Wetering

WORSHIP

WORSHIP *with us*

We gather together on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. greet neighbors, friends, and visitors before settling in for an hour of worshiping God in word, prayer, and song. Listen to beautiful music, hear an inspired and thought-provoking message, celebrate our children and youth, sing with vigor, pray with expectation. Experience the Holy Spirit's presence in our beautiful sanctuary.



If you can't join us in person, worship on Zoom! If you are not yet receiving the link in the Thursday email blast, send your request to be put on

the list to office@fccriveredge.org or find the link on our website, fccriveredge.org.

Links to past recorded services can also be found on our website, fccriveredge.org.



Every
Sunday is
Special!

....**all** who contributed to a beautiful and meaningful candlelight Christmas Eve service! We were blessed by the sacred liturgy, comforting message, glorious music, and familiar carols.

....the **Worship** and **Education Teams** and the many **volunteers** who stepped out Thursday, January 4 — and before and after — to help remove and store our beautiful Advent and Christmas trimmings for the remainder of the (liturgical) year.

....the many **children of the church** who came forward Sunday, January 14, to hear a special message about what our friends look like, inside and out, in celebration of the life and ministry of the **Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, and to **Dr. Janet Mason** and **Joy Jacobs** for treating us to their pitch-perfect (in harmony and message!) mother-daughter story-in-song *John Henry*.



earthly ministry.

After Christmas we enter the season of **Epiphany**, the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world and a focus on his

On **February 11** we joyously celebrate Transfiguration/Racial Justice Sunday, commemorating the experience of apostles Peter, James, and John who witnessed Jesus' radiant appearance.

"They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." - Isaiah 11:9

The season of **Lent** —
“Lengthening” — a time of
contemplation and reflection,
begins with Ash Wednesday,
this year on **February 14**.

An evening worship service at
7 p.m. includes distribution of
ashes.



Drive Thru Ashes



Pastor Joe will also
distribute ashes in the
parking lot from
9 a.m. to 11 a.m.,
so **please drive by** to
greet him and receive

your special blessing! In case of inclement weather,
he will wait for you in the sanctuary instead; dash in
and receive.

*“Deliverance belongs to the Lord; may your
blessing be on your people!” - Psalm 3:8*



Celebrating a special
occasion or honoring a
friend or loved
one? Share altar flowers
for one of our worship
services! Contact the
church office at 201-261-
1712 or

email office@fccrivedge.org to check on
available dates. The cost is \$25, and the deadline
for ordering is the Sunday prior to their being
placed on the altar.

Joys/Concerns

Each Sunday, on the table to the right of the double
doors to the Sanctuary, there is a place for you to
write **prayer requests** you want read aloud during
the service. Add your joys or concerns so that we
may celebrate with you and lift up to the Lord your
struggles and sorrows.

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

At their January meeting Leadership Council
discussed reviewing and revising our Churches
Framework for Ministry and Mission (Constitution
and By laws).

These articles were adopted by our congregation on
Sunday February 5, 2012 and they were amended
by the congregation on Sunday April 15, 2018;
nearly 12 and 6 years ago respectively.

New Mission and Vision statements have been
written and adopted by our congregation which
need to be incorporated in the revision and over the
years Team responsibilities have modified. These
are just two of the important revisions that need to
be addressed.

A five person short term Task Force will be charged
with the review and revisions.

The Task Force will consist of 2 members from
Leadership Council and 3 at large Church
members.

Please contact Russell Van Wetering if you are
interested in serving as one of the 3 at large
members of the Task Force.

Respectfully submitted.

Russell Van Wetering

Moderator

MEMBERSHIP

A Progressive Dinner is being planned for the
Spring.

Please consider hosting pre-dinner
appetizers/cocktails, a dinner (number of hosts
determined by number of guests attending) or
dessert in your home.

Sign-ups will be available for both those wishing to
host and those wishing to attend.

The dinners are a fun evening of great food,
conversations, fellowship and fun so plan on joining
us!

New Online Pictorial Directory



A new Church Directory is being considered.

In early 2020, a team of volunteers from our church were in the initial stages of

development for a new online directory with the company InstantChurchDirectory.com when Covid struck. Needless to say the directory was put on hold and then put off as our congregation was in a period of transition.

Volunteers are needed to plan and organize this new directory which should be a fun project for our members and friends.

Please contact Russell Van Wetering if interested.

New Member Inquirer's Seminar

A New Member Inquirer's Seminar is being planned for the Spring for anyone interested in becoming a member of First Congregational Church of River Edge and to learn more about our church, our history, our congregation and the United Church of Christ.

Please contact Pastor Joe or Russell Van Wetering if interested.

Thank you,

Russell Van Wetering



FELLOWSHIP TIME HOSTS & GREETERS ARE NEEDED

Greeters and Fellowship

Time hosts are always needed and appreciated. All one needs to greet is a friendly smile and a warm hello.

Hosting Fellowship Time is a wonderful time of fellowship with our members, friends and visitors. Please consider hosting as an individual, with friends, as a group or as a family. It's a fun and rewarding experience.

Hosting Fellowship Time consists of:

- * Providing pastries, cookies, fruit, vegetables or any type of light snack fare you choose to provide. These can be either homemade or store bought.
- * Making coffee and tea. Instructions are provided.
- * Setting out the coffee, tea, juice, food, cups, napkins, utensils, sugar, etc. (which are all provided). Hosts are asked to bring milk for the coffee and tea.
- * Serving coffee and tea.
- * Cleaning up afterwards.

Please contact Russell Van Wetering with any questions.

Montréal Canadiens vs New Jersey Devils



GROUP PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- \$79 per ticket in 100 Level Attack
- Block Seating
- All Under 18 Receives Devils Drawstring Bag
- Group Recognition on Scoreboard

Date: Saturday February 24, 2024

Time: 12:30pm

Location: The Rock – Prudential Center

SHAWL MINISTRY



The next meeting of the Shawl Ministry will take place on

Thursday, February 8, at 1:30 pm.

All knitters and crocheters are welcome to join us in making shawls...or bring your current yarn project and spend a relaxing afternoon in the Commons with us.

Everyone is welcome!

MISSION TEAM

Family Promise Dinner – Wednesday, February 28, 2024



We will be providing the dinner for up to 250 people for Family Promise on Wednesday, February 28th. Your help would be most appreciated - with cooking (in your home or in church kitchen), donating (desserts, water, rolls, salad greens, and other goodies). See insert in the Congregator.

EDUCATION

Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday



To continue our tradition of "Tackling Hunger," a soup collection box will be available in the Entryway until Super Bowl Sunday on Feb. 11th. Thanks to Anne, there is also a container to

collect monetary donations in the Commons. All canned soup donations will go to the Center for Food Action in Englewood and the food pantry at St. Peter's Church in River Edge. The monetary donations will go to the CFA.

Church School Volunteers

The Education Team is in need of a few church school volunteers to fill in when a teacher is not available on Sunday morning. When the youth reach a certain age, it is important to separate them from the younger youth in order to give them a more focused lesson and time to engage with each other. It's difficult to do that when we have to bring the whole group together due to the absence of a teacher. I will have some Confirmation commitments that bring me away from our church on Sunday mornings, so my Jr. Youth class will need a substitute. We have our curriculum in advance, so volunteers have time to plan if a teacher is scheduled to be off. Please consider getting involved in the faith development of our children.



Intergenerational Opportunity

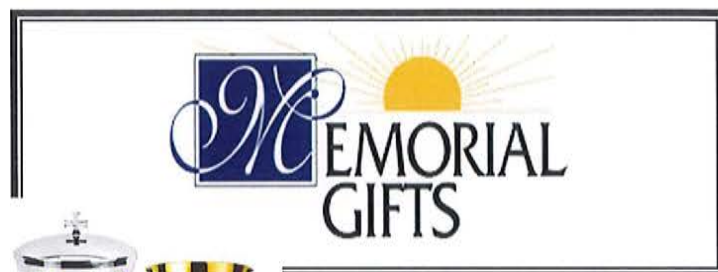
In case this has gone unnoticed, I have an admiration for children. I really believe that we are role models to them in every situation, good or bad, fun or stressful. I would love to have members of the congregation share stories or experiences about their faith development or life experiences with our children. I attempted to try this a few years back, but I had no takers. This is the perfect opportunity to engage with our youth. If you think you have a story to tell, please let me know! Keep in mind, you will be sharing during church school at 10am on Sunday morning.



NEW-Puzzle Exchange

Jigsaw puzzles are a fun activity for families to do together plus they are great for our mental health! The new puzzle exchange has been set up in The Commons where you can take a puzzle home or share a puzzle that you no longer need. I have a bunch to get us started, so join in the fun!

~Nicole



On Communion Sunday, February 4th and thereafter, we will be using two new memorial donations.

The beautiful Cup of Life Chalice and Paten feature a gold wave on the surface of the silver plate vessels which recall our Baptismal covenant. These are given in memory of our dear friends Evelyn and Robert Fialko.

The timeless design and reverent workmanship reflect the deep love Evelyn and Bob had for our church and we for them.



CELEBRATIONS



- 4 Taylor Buono
- Alexander Joseph Myers
- 5 Cheryl Chormanski
- 8 Solomon Medlin
- Carin Karyshyn
- 9 Talli Sutherland
- 13 John Rushforth
- 15 Rylie Logan Kearns
- 20 Leigh Ann (Keehn) Bertuzzi
- 25 Efren Frani
- 26 Raegan Kobbe



- 2 Laura & Patrick Hogan
- 28 Lynn & Edward Lanni

Special dates

- African American History Month
- Transfiguration of Our Lord,
February 11, 2024
- Ash Wednesday, *February 14, 2024*
- Valentine's Day, *February 14, 2024*
- Presidents Day, *February 19, 2024*
- Leap Day, *February 29, 2024*
-

A Note from
Anne

As most of you are aware, I am retiring as of February 29.

During the last five years that I have worked at First Congregational Church, I have learned a lot from all of you. It was because of your constant love, support and encouragement that I was always willing to go above and beyond. And because of this, I will always cherish FCC as one of the most satisfying phases in my career.

I have shared a special bond with all of you and I shall take away with me special memories of our time together.

Thank you for the best five years, thank you for the beautiful send off at worship service and fellowship time party and most of all thank you for your generosity. I am so blessed and am forever grateful for all your love, support and friendship.

With love,

Anne





Homeless Dinner – February 28th

On **Wednesday, February 28th**, we will provide dinner for **250+ homeless/distressed** individuals through the feeding program run by Family Promise.

We need your HELP!

**** Food preparation**

1. **Wed. Feb. 28 morning - Cook meatloaf in your home** oven and bring to church (hot and fully cooked) around noon on Feb. 28th (We will provide the meat and disposable aluminum cooking pans.)
2. **Tues. Feb. 27 morning** - Help in our church kitchen (prep work)
3. **Wed Feb. 28 morning/ mid-afternoon** – Help in our church kitchen (cooking, meatloaf slicing, packing, etc.)

**** Purchase and donate food items**

Food items need to be brought to the church by **Monday, February 26th**

Mixed Salad Greens	For about 25 servings each
Grape tomatoes	Medium containers
Cases of Water	Standard size 16.9 oz bottles, 24 per case
Dinner Rolls	Two dozen each

Sign-ups before and after church

(or call church at 201-261-1712 and sign up or ask for SignUpGenius link)

On February 28th, **we** are responsible for providing the evening meal.
For many, this will be their only meal of the day. Our neighbors are counting on us.

Let's feed them abundantly.

FEBRUARY COMMITMENT REMINDERS

Sunday, February 4, 2024

COMMUNION TEAM/USHERS – ☒ Jane Silane, Michelle Heinzinger
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Wayne Placek
ALTAR GUILD – Carole Meeks, Claudia Drummond
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Education Team

Sunday, February 11, 2024

USHERS – ☒ Janet Arena, Marvin Orendain, Janet Masiello
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Erin Smith
ALTAR GUILD – Carole Meeks, Claudia Drummond
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Orendain Family

Sunday, February 18, 2024

USHERS - ☒ Wayne Placek, Tom Rushforth, Jeff Keehn
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Jayne Wieboldt
ALTAR GUILD – Carole Meeks, Claudia Drummond
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Babington Family

Sunday, February 25, 2024

USHERS - ☒ Richard Metz, Inge Reist, Noreen Van Wetering
COUNTERS - Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Richard Metz
ALTAR GUILD – Carole Meeks, Claudia Drummond
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Pam Weiler

☒ Team Leader

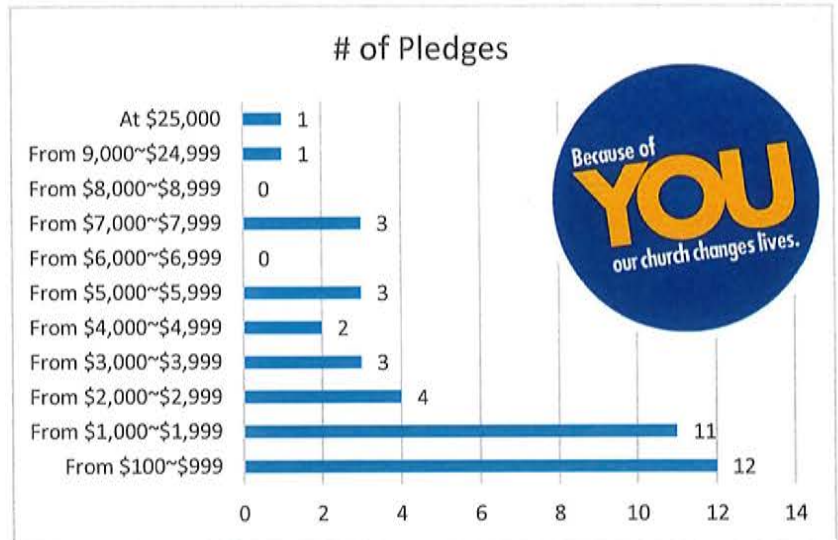
Volunteers are needed for greeting and fellowship time for upcoming weeks and months. Please contact Russell Van Wetering at 201-261-1795 or email aprilsky@optonline.net.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

The work of our church can happen because of your generous financial support! Besides all the wonderful work you may or may not see that the First Congregational Church does, it takes a lot of financial resources to keep our building functioning behind the scenes.

So far, 40 pledges have been committed for 2024 totaling \$121,195.

Amount of Annual Pledge 2024	# of Pledges
From \$100~\$999	12
From \$1,000~\$1,999	11
From \$2,000~\$2,999	4
From \$3,000~\$3,999	3
From \$4,000~\$4,999	2
From \$5,000~\$5,999	3
From \$6,000~\$6,999	0
From \$7,000~\$7,999	3
From \$8,000~\$8,999	0
From \$9,000~\$24,999	1
At \$25,000	1
	40

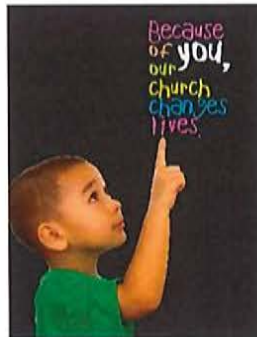


Even if we reach our Pledge Goal, this will not balance the budget. Did you know that due to unforeseen circumstances our actual expenses for 2023 exceeded the budget, which was not balanced to begin with?

The actual costs for Personnel, Church Property, Parsonage Property, Administration and Worship all went over the budgeted amounts. The teams have been working diligently to keep costs down, but in this current economic climate, it is exceedingly difficult to do so. Your pledge makes a difference!

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."






2 Cor. 7-9 ESV.



Where do you fit on this chart?
We have reached 86% of our goal.
Can we make 100%?
How about 125%?!



2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 10:30 Staff Meeting 7:00 Choir	2  GROUNDHOG DAY	3 8:30 KWIS 9:00 Seventh Day Adventist 7:00 AA
4 10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Communion/ Church School 11:00 Second Friday 11:00 Fellowship Time 12:00 NJ Giving Church	5 <u>Church Office Closed</u> 12:00 Noon AI-Anon 4:00 All The World's A Stage 7:00 Step by Step NA 7:00 Worship Team	6 7:00 Education Team	7 12:00 Brown Bags & Bible 7:00 AA	8 10:30 Staff Meeting 1:30 Shawl Ministry 7:00 AC of A 7:00 Choir 8:15 Pilgrim Ringers 7:30 RE Swim Club	9	10 8:30 KWIS 9:00 Seventh Day Adventist 7:00 AA
11  TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY 10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Church School 11:00 Annual Meeting 11:00 Fellowship Time 12:00 NJ Giving Church	12 <u>Church Office Closed</u> 12:00 Noon AI-Anon 4:00 All The World's A Stage 7:00 Step by Step NA 7:00 Worship Team	13	14  ASH Wednesday 9:00 – 11:00 Drive thru Ashes 12:00 Brown Bags & Bible 7:00 AA 7:00 Worship Service	15 10:30 Staff Meeting 5:00 River Crossing Concert Rehearsal 7:00 AC of A	16 Congregator Deadline	17 8:30 KWIS 9:00 Seventh Day Adventist 7:00 AA
18 10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Church School 11:00 Fellowship Time 12:00 NJ Giving Church	19  Presidents Day <u>Church Office Closed</u> 12:00 Noon AI-Anon 4:00 All The World's A Stage 7:00 Step by Step NA	20 7:00 Leadership Council	21 12:00 Brown Bags & Bible 7:00 AA	22 10:30 Staff Meeting 7:00 Choir 7:00 AC of A 8:15 Pilgrim Ringers	23 11:30 River Crossing Concert Rehearsal	24 8:30 KWIS 9:00 Seventh Day Adventist 4:30 Pam Weiler's Winter Recital 7:00 AA
25 10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Church School 11:00 Fellowship Time 12:00 NJ Giving Church	26 <u>Church Office Closed</u> 11:30 River Crossing Concert Rehearsal 12:00 Noon AI-Anon 4:00 All The World's A Stage 7:00 Step by Step NA	27 9:00 Family Promise Dinner Prep 7:00 Mission Team	28 9:00 Family Promise Dinner Cook & Serve 12:00 Brown Bags & Bible 7:00 AA	29 5:00 River Crossing Concert Rehearsal		

FCC MUSIC MINISTRY

FEBRUARY 2024



Hello, FCC Family!

It's hard to believe that fresh out from Christmas services and celebrations, we are already preparing to begin Lent!

There is a lot of good music we are looking forward to sharing with you in February, but I wanted to highlight one particularly moving and meaningful anthem the Chancel Choir will be performing: **"Follow the Drinking Gourd"** in an arrangement by Victor Johnson.

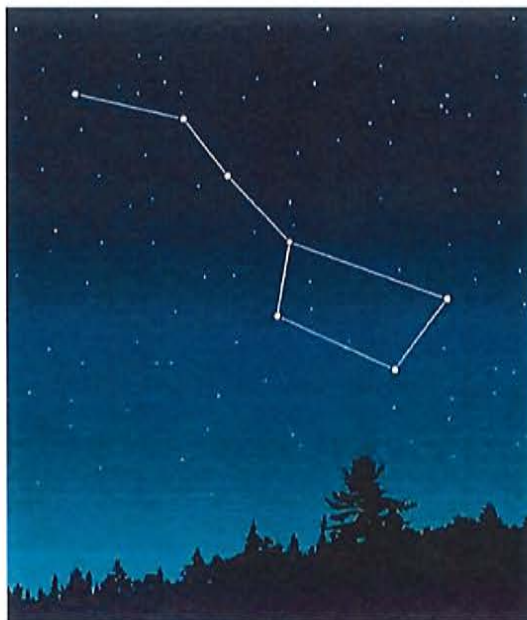
The 'drinking gourd' is another name for the Big Dipper. Asterism and legend has it that it was used by slaves as a reference in keeping them on the right path to freedom. The story goes that a conductor on the Underground Railroad (a network securing secret routes and safe houses to help slaves escape to free states) sang this song to give directions to slaves, thus turning the song into a symbolic map.

The song became popular in the Civil Rights Movement and it remains as a piece of painful history, though showing the unwavering and resilient spirit of slaves. The choir will sing this moving arrangement for you on February 11.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts on anything music!

In community,

Slavina



Dates to rememeber

Sunday, February 11

- Racial Justice Sunday

Wednesday, February 14

- Ash Wednesday Service

Thursday, February 15

- Cantata Choir returns

Sunday, March 3

River Crossing Concerts:

Classic V Winds

Sunday, March 24

- Palm Sunday Service

Thursday, March 28

- Maundy Thursday Service

Sunday, March 31

- Easter Service

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule

Thursdays

- 7-8- pm **Chancel Choir**
- 8:15-9:15pm **Pilgrim Ringers**
(every other Thursday)

Sundays

- 9:15-9:45am **Chancel Choir**
- 11:15-11:45am **Carol Choir**
- 11:45-12:15 **Nowell Choir**



February 2024

Bob Owens, Barbara Wieboldt, Tom Rushforth, Jennifer & Marty Leibowitz, Dona Berg, Tom Canzani, Judi Schmitt, Bob Drummond, Willie Jones, Diana Loeffel, Patricia Murphy, Carol & David Kuehne, Richard Smith, Barbara Carr, Hank Schroeder, Anthony Mirabile, Carol and Sue, Janet & Nicholas Post, Phil Ceppaglia, Mary Foley, Jennifer Hall, Marcia Schroeder, Bob Shrekast.

Those in Recovery, Homebound, Assisted Living Residences or Nursing homes

Jean Babington, Doris & Chet Price, Evelyn Waytowich, Phyllis Malley, Bob Owens, William Spencer, Bill Finch, Bill Lent.

Serving in the Military

Michael Shuler, Bob Bailey, Andrew Pohl, Noah Dahl, Matthew Agrusti

Mission

Welcoming all, our mission is to help nurture and grow faith in God through dynamic, creative, relevant worship and to bring God's word and work into our community. Through our action and bold outreach programs, we set an example of love, acceptance, compassion and support that will stand as a testament to our faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:7 "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Vision

We are a beacon of hope, a place to grow in love toward God and one another. With joy and energy, we share the teachings of Christ in our church, our community and our world.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid."