



Congregational
Church of Batavia

THE TOWER

Congregational Church of Batavia

United Church of Christ

21 South Batavia Avenue, Batavia, IL 60510

December 2025/January 2026

630-879-1999

office@congregationalchurch.org

congregationalchurch.org

ucc.org



Join us for worship
every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.
in-person or online.

What's Happening?

**December 7 — Commitment
Sunday***

Acappellago Concert*

December 12 — BNS program*

**December 14 — Choir Christmas
Lessons & Carols***

**December 18 — Blue Christmas
service***

**December 24 — Christmas Eve
services with candlelight &
communion, 3:00 & 7:00 p.m.***

**January 11 — Capital Campaign
celebration**

**January 13 — Annual report
articles due***

**January 20 — February Tower
articles due**

*See related article

Church Office Hours

**Monday through Friday
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**The office will be closed
December 24-31,
and January 1.**



Sunday, November 23 - Hanging of the Greens

Pot luck lunch after the 10 am service, followed by decorating the sanctuary.

Music provided by Marnie and Dave Mamminga, 11 AM

Sunday, November 30 - "What Do You Fear?" Advent Begins

Advent worship, 10:00 AM

Sunday, December 7 — Acappellago Concert

"Escape to ...A Sense of Wonder," 3:00 PM

Sunday, December 14 — Lessons & Carols

Scripture readings and carols for the Advent and Christmas season, 10:00 AM

Thursday, December 18 — Blue Christmas Service

A worship service which acknowledges that the holiday season is not a joyous time for everyone.

Music and liturgy created by lark&laurel, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 24

Candlelight & Communion Services, both services
3 PM (also available online) and 7 PM

Sunday, December 28 — Breakfast Worship

bring your favorite breakfast dish to pass for a breakfast and worship in Paxton Hall, 10:00 AM

Sunday, January 4

Epiphany worship, 10:00 AM



Congregational
Church of Batavia
You Are Welcome Here

21 S. Batavia Ave., Batavia IL • 630-879-1999 • congregationalchurch.org



*Blessed is the season which
engages the whole world in a
conspiracy of love.*

Hamilton Wright Mabie

Christmas Eve Service Greeter Volunteer Opportunity!

We are seeking greeters for the 3 and 7 p.m. Christmas Eve services. This is a fun way to help out at the church: you get to smile and say hello, welcome, or Merry Christmas as people arrive! We ask that you be ready to greet by 2:40 or 6:40 as people often arrive early for these services. You may contact Karen Kosky to sign up or use [this link](#) to sign yourself up through Realm.



We are grateful for all those who have already supported the Wreath/Centerpiece Fundraiser. We do have a few extra wreaths/centerpieces available. If you missed the presale, but would still like to purchase one, please contact Suzy or Laura at 630-879-1999.

Save the Date!
Capital Campaign
Celebration on Sunday,
January 11, 2026.
Details to come in
future E-news mailing.

From our moderator

We've arrived at the closing of another year – how did we get here so quickly? In pausing to look back, I am amazed at how much we've accomplished together! The year was filled with so much important work, faithful decision-making, and examples of God's presence in our community.

This year was, without a question, a year of preparation and forward movement. A large part of that was, of course, all our Capital Campaign work. From early conversations to the feasibility study to months of discernment and questions, this congregation has shown amazing engagement and unity. When we gathered in May for a congregational meeting, we voted a *unanimous* yes to hire a consultant and move toward an official capital campaign. As the concept of the campaign turned into reality, how wonderful that so many helping hands stepped forward! With their help, timelines have come into focus, materials were created and refined, communication grew stronger, and the congregation has become more unified behind this shared goal.

Campaign planning and activities aside, it was another year to be extremely grateful for countless members of our church family who help with necessary tasks that keep our building and congregation healthy and growing. From balancing the accounts to greeting people on Sunday mornings, coordinating legal aid to organizing potlucks, reviewing policies to coordinating special mailings, many in our congregation have given their time and talent to make sure these tasks are dependably taken care of. I am also extremely thankful for our entire staff, each of whom brings their gifts to support, care for, and sustain this congregation.

Woven through the congregation's actions this year were the moments that remind us why we are here: the church birthday party, Blessing Boxes, the farmer's market booth, our presence at the Block Party, Sundays full of music and welcome, and the countless small acts of service and kindness that happen behind the scenes every single week.

As I reflect on all our activities and efforts this year, I feel incredibly grateful for the community we have built. With our efforts and hearts united and working towards a shared vision, I can only imagine what we'll accomplish in 2026!

Warmly,

Lucinda Page, Moderator

PS Are you feeling inspired? Consider helping in a new way in 2026! We're looking for a Financial Secretary, Finance Team members, a Justice & Witness Leader, and help with Facilities. If you're interested, please contact Pastor Paige, Jen Larson, or me.



***The story of Christmas is the story
of God's relentless love for us.***

Max Lucado



Our church is investigating the feasibility of installing a hearing loop system in our sanctuary. A hearing loop system allows those with hearing aids equipped with a telecoil to connect directly to the sound system audio. This would make it much easier for hearing aid users to hear the service, the announcements, and follow the sermon.

Before we proceed further with this study, it would be helpful to know how many of our congregation members would benefit from this kind of a system. About 70% of hearing aids have a telecoil, and you should ask your audiologist about options for your particular hearing device.

If you think that having such a system would be helpful to you, please email Jean Stone at jean.stone@sbcglobal.net, or text her at 630 715-7881.

Annual reports for all staff, elected officers, teams, committees, and interest groups should be sent to

Barb Zillgitt

(bzillgitt685@gmail.com)

by Tuesday, January 13.

If you need to see last year's report, let Barb know.



Lessons and Carols

On Sunday, December 14, during our 10:00 a.m. worship, the Chancel Choir will present a program of Lessons and Carols, modeled upon the Festival of Lessons and Carols which takes place each year at King's College, Cambridge, England. The anthems, carols, and scriptures are based upon our Advent theme of "What Do You Fear?" and feature not only the Chancel Choir but also the children's choir, a brass ensemble, and our own Lily Li on organ and piano.

Take advantage of the opportunity to introduce friends and neighbors to our church family by inviting them to hear this inspiring music!

From Pastor Paige

A Warm, Cozy Breakfast on a Cold December Day

Let's admit it...the Sunday after Christmas can be a bit of a letdown. After all the drama and excitement of Christmas Eve, with the Nativity story and our favorite carols, candlelight and Communion; after the flurry of activity on Christmas day, opening presents and eating with family and friends, that next Sunday just seems a little...well, "blah."

Not this year, though. This year, we're having worship/breakfast. Or maybe it's breakfast/worship? Either way, A Sanctified Art, which is providing our liturgy for the Advent and Christmas season, has designed a worship service around the table, where there will be hot food, warm fellowship, and the deep joy of the Good News of God.

Sunday, December 28, instead of gathering in the sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. for worship, we will gather in Paxton Hall. There we will share-a-dish-to-pass breakfast and a casual worship service where we will sing, hear the Word, and be inspired as we stand on the edge of a brand new year.

Come in your most comfortable clothes (jammies are encouraged,) bring your favorite easy breakfast casserole or recipe, and prepare for a unique experience reminiscent of the gathering of the first Christians around food, and song, and fellowship.

See you there!



Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift.

2 Corinthians 9:15



Acappellago Concert

On Sunday, December 7, at 3:00 p.m. in our sanctuary, Acappellago will present "Escape to... A Sense of Wonder."

Tickets are \$20 at the door (\$17 seniors), but can be purchased now through November 30 for only \$15 from any singer (including Mike Fortner, Becky Hall, Susan Price, Lorinda Guenther-Wright, Gary Guenther-Wright, Juanita Rea-Dorn, Carol Collins) or from Vicki Linich, music director.

Come and get your Advent season started with some wonderful music!



Thank you to the members and friends of our church and our Men's Bible Study for your generosity to our recent special collection in support of Kay Angel Children's Home. Your generosity provided \$2,605 in support, and our Outreach Team has graciously added another \$1,000 from their budgeted funds—for a total of **\$3,605**.

An early gift to this effort was made directly through Kay Angel's website and to help them install solar power in the home. Since the time of Covid, they have had over three years of functioning with no power; and power that is now available is sporadic. Solar energy will be a major improvement for them. Other funds will help with the ongoing costs of the home and provide food and education for the children.

I am very grateful to our congregation for how we have supported and continue to support Kay Angel Children's Home.

Bob Huxtable



God of joy, let us rediscover the wonder of Your love this Advent. Help us to rejoice not just in the gifts we receive, but in the gift of Your Son. May our hearts overflow with gratitude and joy as we look forward to celebrating Your birth. Amen.

from Crosswalk.com



Outreach Ministry Team



Christmas Gift Festival



It's not too late to donate to our Christmas Gift Festival! This year we are supporting the following agencies:

- **Batavia Apartments:** Create stable, vibrant and healthy communities by developing, financing and operating affordable program-enriched housing for families, seniors and people with special needs who lack economic resources to access quality housing opportunities.
- **Batavia Interfaith Food Pantry and Clothes Closet:** Provide food, non-food household and personal items and clothing for those individuals and families residing in Batavia and Batavia Township who are in need.
- **Hesed House:** Help individuals who are facing homelessness or are currently homeless. Our mission is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and give people the chance to hope again.

Here are ways to make donations:

- **Write a check to the church with "Christmas Gift Festival" in the memo line.**
- **Give online:** <https://onrealm.org/CCBatavia/give/CGF>
Use the MEMO drop down to select the agency you wish to support, or simply give to the Christmas Gift Festival and your donation will be applied to each agency.
- **Text "CCOB CGF" to 73256 to give using your mobile device.**

Thank you for your support of our Christmas Gift Festival!



*For it is good to be children
sometimes, and never better than
at Christmas, when its mighty
Founder was a child himself.*

Charles Dickens





From Heritage to Horizon Capital Campaign Information:

- Our **Capital Campaign Commitment Day** is Sunday, December 7. We ask you to prayerfully consider making a pledge to our three year campaign that will allow us to retire our loan and make some needed repairs and updates to our facility.
- **Prayer Vigil** at 9:00 a.m., December 7. Join us for this time of prayer for our church and congregation.
- There are alternative ways to give, rather than writing a check! Learn some of these ways at our one hour **Creative Giving Seminar** on Tuesday, December 2, at 6 :00 p.m. in Paxton Hall. Lynne Potter will guide you through these options.
- Would you like **more information** about the plans for the Capital Campaign funds raised? The [campaign website and video](#) will help answer your questions. Please contact the [church office](#) with any additional questions.
- **Ready to make a pledge?** There are pledge envelopes by each campaign thermometer at the church. You can also make a pledge online through Realm. You do not need a login password in order to do so, just use [this link](#).

Justice



Since the last J&W report, the three churches (including CCOB) that had taken on the mission to ensure local law enforcement would not aid illegal ICE activities, hosted a program on November 24 at the Unitarian Church in Geneva to provide information on the rights of immigrants and bystanders. Rebecca Glenberg, a well-credentialed attorney from the ACLU, gave an excellent presentation. The main takeaways: immigrants and bystanders have the right to remain silent and are urged to document/ photograph ICE activities, as long as they don't interfere and stand at least 4 feet away. ICE search and seizure is not allowed without a judicial warrant, nor can they enter private areas of the workplace.

She explained the Illinois **TRUST ACT** forbids state and local police from enforcing federal immigration law. State and local police cannot ask about citizenship or status; or stop, arrest, search or detain someone based on immigration status; nor can they provide housing in a jail or facility for ICE. They can't assist ICE with enforcement operations without a federal criminal warrant. Need more info? Contact Ann Alexander for a link to the PowerPoint presentation.

Related to immigration protection, Irene Crane has suggested J&W work with her to hold a "**whistle mania**" workshop after church some Sunday. For perhaps an hour or less, we would assemble kits containing whistles and information on our rights, etc. for sounding a warning when ICE officers are in a neighborhood. Stay tuned.

November 15 was another **food drive** in the Tri-Cities. For the second month our parking lot was the official drop off location for Batavia. This time we took car loads of donations to the new **Batavia Food Pantry** and to a food bank in Aurora. This was our answer to helping those who weren't getting their SNAP benefits.

Fox River Valley Initiative held an "Action" (assembly) on November 8 in Elgin to highlight the **Need for Affordable Housing**. The program featured several moving testimonials of formerly unhoused speakers, and statistics on the housing situation. Several officials agreed to help expedite the development of affordable housing projects throughout the Fox Valley, and most of the audience indicated willingness to get involved. Following the Action, many of the crowd traveled to **1212 Larkin** to see the award-winning housing project that now provides 48 units, and is a beautiful example of what can come from many members of **FRVI** working together for a common cause. I invite you to check out **1212 Larkin, Elgin** on the internet.

Ann Alexander, J&W Chair



**Best of all, Christmas means a
spirit of love, a time when the love
of God and the love of our fellow
men should prevail over all hatred
and bitterness...**



George F. McDougall

Worship Ministry Team



Christmas, already??? Well, the stores have been preparing for months.

This year's Advent theme is from Sanctified Art: "What Are You Afraid Of." Other services during the season will include "The Longest Night" on Thursday, December 18, with music by lark&laurel, Christmas Eve communion services at 3 and 7 p.m. and Epiphany Sunday on January 4 with Communion and "Star" words for 2026.

As we usually have many visitors on Christmas Eve, we would like to have two or more greeters at both services. If you are planning to attend one of these services, please consider being a greeter. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside Pastor Paige's Office or you can contact the church office to volunteer....and *Thank You* (in advance).

Happy New Year! Really? It isn't even Christmas! Just wanted to give you peek at the service theme for that time between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday —"Salt and Light." Easter is early in 2026 (April 5) making the time between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday not much more than a month. Join is for services as Pastor Paige explores the significance of these words.



Advent: the first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays. The true meaning of Advent is the celebration of Christ's coming and the season of anticipation and preparation for Christmas. It's a four-week Christian liturgical season that looks back at the first coming of Jesus as a baby and anticipates his second coming. During this time, believers focus on reflection, hope, peace, joy, and love, often through practices like prayer, Scripture reading, and lighting candles.

Epiphany: a Christian holiday celebrated on January 6 that marks the revelation of Jesus to the world, specifically commemorating the arrival of the Magi (the three wise men) to the baby Jesus. It is often considered the end of the Christmas season and is also known as Three Kings Day.



*Christmas is not just a day, an event
to be observed and speedily
forgotten. It is a spirit which should
permeate every part of our lives.*



William Parks

Celebrate!



December Birthdays

Art Zillgitt	3
Natalie Mecum	5
Lisa Youngdahl	7
Charlotte Angelini	9
Karen Kosky	10
Martha Tabis	14
Nancy Hampton	15
Eugene Lasta	15
Julie Lawrence	15
Mark Weiss	15
Tracy McDonnell	20
Lynne Potter	22
Jaime Srail	22
Shelley Kibbey	23
Dale Grischow	25
Aaron Kernier	27
Alexander Linde-Marin	28
Rosemary Henders	29

December Anniversaries

Lynn & Don Smith 1

Have you changed your address, email address, or phone number? Don't forget to update your information with the church:

office@congregationalchurch.org
or 630 879 1999.

Celebrate!



January Birthdays

Eric Palmquist	2
Allison Poulos	2
Scott Srail	3
Zoe Offenbecher	4
Theo Clanton	5
Rob Knanishu	5
Carol Shaw	7
Gayle Bridger	12
Cindy Neader	12
Mary Jane McFee	16
Lucy Thomas	16
Madison Astling	18
Miles Lucas	18
Vicki Linich	20
Kris Luedtke	20
Marcia Schneider	20
Mike Straka	20
Bob Huxtable	21
Christopher Vanko	22
Amy Apperson	24
Daniel Pearson	25
Clayton Freeman	26
Jill Thompson	30
Andrew Greenhagen	31

January Anniversaries

Steve & Susan Cromwell 19

We'd love to celebrate your birthdays and anniversaries with you and your family. If your information is missing or incorrect, please contact the church office:

office@congregationalchurch.org
or 630 879 1999.

Connections Team



Connections into the New Year

As I write this, I'm in the throes of pulling together this year's Advent book, meditations, poetry, art and recipes contributed by members of our congregation. Yes, recipes. We've had a few in previous years, so this is not unprecedented, but there will be more this year because I have decided that our congregation does not have a large enough cadre of enthusiastic cooks to generate a full cookbook worth of donated recipes. However, I received plenty to fill out the Advent book, with beloved dishes to enhance our holiday feasting. I'm excited to see how they fit in with the other submissions for the book.

As the year draws to a close and a new one begins, both for the church with Advent and for the rest of the world with the changeover from 2025 to 2026 at the end of December, I encourage each of you to be alert for ways you can increase and deepen your connections within our church family, by attending and getting involved with our Advent and Christmas activities, including Sunday mornings, Christmas Eve, and the Blue Christmas worship on Thursday December 17. I encourage you to reach out to any group that sounds interesting, whether a ministry team (Worship, Facilities, Justice & Witness, Decorating, Outreach) or an activity (choir, praise band, potluck meals, Sunday morning worship leading, greeting or making coffee). If you have suggestions for more ways we could connect with each other, please let me know. Small group dinners at members' homes? Game days? Family movie nights? Something else entirely? *I love* suggestions.

I also encourage you to connect with our surrounding community as your schedules and energy allow. Whether strolling Christmas Tree Lane to appreciate all the trees local groups and businesses have decorated (scouts, our nursery school, etc.) or attending the annual community Christmas celebration at the Peg Bond Center, we need to stay aware of the life going on around us outside of the church property, too.

The Connections Team exists to help facilitate our connections with each other and our city, but actually connecting is also the responsibility of each of us individually as well. Keep that in mind as you enjoy the blessings of the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Susan Price for the Connections Team



Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.

C.S. Lewis





Children & Youth Ministries

Upcoming Midweek Elementary and Middle School Meet- Ups:

**Wednesday December 3, 17;
January 17, 28; February 11, 25;
March 11, 28; April 8, 22; May 6**

We meet from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. and offer a dinner snack. There will be fun, fellowship, activities, and learning about God, Jesus, faith and living our lives in a way that we can share God's love for us, with all.

Send your February Tower articles to
bzillgitt685@gmail.com
by Tuesday, January 20.



Children and Youth — join us in song on December 14 as we sing, "The Angel Spoke to Young Mary" during morning worship at 10 a.m. We will practice during Sunday School and Wednesday meetups.

Contact [Laura Bernabei](#) for details.



Batavia Nursery School



November Red Oak Nature Center field trip

We welcomed back our students after a long Thanksgiving weekend, which means Christmas is right around the corner! Our halls will once again be filled with angelic voices as we learn songs for our Christmas program on Tuesday, December 9, in the sanctuary.

During the month of December, our families will have the opportunity to send in children's underpants to "decorate" our classroom Christmas trees. The students will find it a little funny to put underwear UNDER our trees but will be accompanied by the great lesson of helping children less fortunate than themselves. We will deliver these items to the new location of the Batavia Clothes Closet closer to Christmas.

Our December field trip will be "in house" in Paxton Hall as we welcome back Mr. Herzog's Marionette Show, with a new program called *The Snow Show*. His marionettes are amazing, and most of our students have never seen a performance like this: a fun treat right before the holidays!

January will find us again hosting an evening open house for prospective families, as well as giving tours throughout the month. Early registration begins on Monday, January 12, with it opening to the public Saturday, February 7. Please recommend BNS if you know of anyone looking for a wonderful preschool.

So much going on, but as always we are thankful to be a partner of the church. Have a very blessed holiday season and a bright start to the new year!

Pam Foelske, Director



*Christmas is joy, religious joy,
an inner joy of light and peace.*

Pope Francis

Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

We come together on Zoom to catch up, pray, and study a book. If you are interested, please be in touch with the office, or just follow this [link](#) on Wednesday morning.

We would love to have you join us!

Men's Bible Study

Saturday, 8:00 a.m., on Google Meet

We welcome all men to join us for discussion and prayer as we come together in unity and grow in our journey with Christ. Our study includes books of the Bible and Christian books recommended by members. Men who desire to learn more about the Bible and our faith are welcome. Please email Bob Huxtable at rocketjs59@gmail.com for more information and the meeting link.

Pastor: Paige Wolfanger

Director of Children's Ministries:

Laura Bernabei

Director of Youth Ministries: Suzy Daly

Director of Music: Vicki Linich

Office Manager: Bernadine Matthews

Communications Manager: Lisa Youngdahl

Organist: Lily Li

AV Manager: Basil Bevard

Batavia Nursery School Director:

Pam Foelske

Janitorial Service: John Halters

Nursery Attendants:

Megan Behary & Christy Roberts

Council:

Moderator— Lucinda Page

Vice Moderator — Jennifer Larson

Treasurer — Annie Barsch

Clerk — Jean Deptolla

Members-at-Large —

Kristin Lasta & Judy Jablecki

Connections: Susan Price

Decorating: Ann Alexander

Facilities: Dave Hummel

Finance: Jim Otepka — Team leader

Treasurer — Annie Barsch

Finance Secretary — Phil Woolley •

Sarah Greenhagen • Becky Hall

Carlene Hougén

Justice & Witness: Ann Alexander

Outreach: Judy Lutz & Don Smith

Worship: Judy Jablecki

Archivist: Volunteer needed

Systems Administrator: Phil Woolley

Tower Editor: Barb Zillgitt

Women's Connection

Sunday, December 21, 2025

At the home of

Mary Jane McFee

700 W Fabyan Pkwy #28A

We will be sharing some of our favorite books.

Sunday, January 18, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Church library

Jean Stone will lead a discussion of

The Overstory by Richard Powers.

If you have any questions about this book discussion group, call Rosemary Henders, 630-308-9269.



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a just world for all

*United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace,
we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.
We are the United Church of Christ.*

People's Prayers for Peace

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Phil. 4:6-7

Wars and conflicts continue to escalate around the world. Injustices and inequalities manifest as racism, discrimination, gender-based violence, economic disparities, and other issues. As a communal response to uplift these sorrows and support our neighbors near and far, General Minister and President, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson calls the church to a season of prayer. Prayer undergirds our witness, ministry, and advocacy as we work for peace and a just world for all.

This is an open invitation to anyone who feels called to offer a prayer to end violence in any manifestation, and to bring about peace. Share your prayers using the [prayers for peace form](#). New prayers will be published on this page daily. Publishing is at the discretion of the National Ministries of the United Church of Christ and prayers may be edited for content and length.

Information taken from the UCC website: ucc.org.



*What is Christmas? It is tenderness
for the past, courage for the
present, hope for the future.*

Agnes M. Pharo



**Congregational
Church of Batavia**
You Are Welcome Here

December 2025/January 2026



Christmas Eve Candlelight &
Communion Services

Wednesday, December 24
3:00 & 7:00 p.m.



Join us for worship
every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.
in-person or online.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

21 S. Batavia Avenue, Batavia, IL 60510
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