# The Tower

*Congregational Church of Batavia*
*United Church of Christ*
*21 South Batavia Avenue, Batavia, IL 60510*

December/January 2027 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 — UCC Christmas Fund***

**December 5 — Christmas pageant rehearsal.***

**December 6 — Children's Christmas pageant***

**Acappelago Concert***

**December 13 — Chancel Choir "Mini Messiah"***

**December 21 — Longest Night service***

**December 24 — Christmas Eve services: 3 & 7 p.m.**

**December 27 — Christmas breakfast service***

**January 6 — Epiphany**

**January 13 — Annual reports due***

**January 20 — Taizé service**

**January 26 — *Tower* articles due**

***See related article**

## Church Office Hours

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday —**

**8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday — 8:30-11:00 a.m.**

**The office will be closed from December 24 through January 3, and on January 18.**

## From Our Moderator

As 2026 comes to a close, we have much to be thankful for at Congregational Church of Batavia. It has been a year of thoughtful conversations, meaningful decisions, and continued work toward strengthening our church community.

Throughout the year, our Council has focused on caring for the present while looking toward the future. Some of our highlights include thoughtful work with our membership language and process, moving forward with capital campaign projects to address important building needs, beginning conversations around our Vision 2032 and the future direction of CCOB, and continuing to look at ways to strengthen our church's leadership, governance, and ministries.

These efforts are about more than plans and projects. They are about creating a welcoming place where faith grows, relationships flourish, and we continue to serve our neighbors and community.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their time, talents, ideas, and generosity throughout the year. Our church is stronger because of the many people who contribute in ways both big and small.

As we celebrate the Christmas season, may we be reminded of the hope, peace, joy, and love that this time of year brings.

With gratitude,

*Jen Larson Angelini*, Moderator

*PS- There are still a few openings for volunteer positions in 2027. Please consider becoming an important part of what keeps our church flourishing! We're looking for a vice moderator and help with facilities. If you're interested, please contact Pastor Paige, Amy Allan, or me.*

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

# Church Life

**A memorial service for David Eddy was held in our sanctuary on October 25.**

## "Mini Messiah"




On Sunday, December 13, during 10 a.m. worship, the Chancel Choir will present a "Mini Messiah" — a highly pared down version of Handel's classic oratorio featuring scripture readings and familiar choruses accompanied by strings, brass, and organ.

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



Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

# From Pastor Paige . . .

## Sabbatical Adventures Are for Everyone!



In January I leave for my sabbatical, a three month season of train journeys around the country, weeks at home reading great fiction and journaling (as well as doing laundry between those train journeys,) and practicing the fine art of ***being***. My first train trip, to San Antonio, TX, is already booked for the beginning of January. I will let you know about the rest of those specific plans in another format soon.

This article is about ***YOU***, the members of the Congregational Church of Batavia, because the Lilly Grant we received was not just for me, but also for you, to spend those three months that I am away growing in faith, love for each other, and vision for our future. So, I wanted to take a moment to let you know the adventure that is in store for you.

First, while I am away from the pulpit, you will have the experience of both variety and constancy, as a different pastor will preach each of the three months I am away. In January you will hear from Rev. Paris Donehoo, who will bring a sermon series entitled ***"Questions Jesus Asks Me."*** Worship in February, including Ash Wednesday, will be led by Amy Allan, who is planning to preach during that time on ***The Lord's Prayer.*** And in March, which includes Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter, we see Rev. David Inglis taking the pulpit. These are all exciting preachers, with different worship and homiletic styles, and I sort of wish I could hear what they have to share, too.

But that's not the only thing that will be available to you all while I ride the rails. Each month will also have a theme, with interactive events scheduled throughout that speak to that theme.

- ***January*** is set aside to explore and celebrate our ***History.*** Already, Jean Deptolla and Leslie LeResche are hard at work on creating a timeline that will wrap around the walls of Paxton Hall, holding up some of our more interesting historical events. But there will also be space for each of you to add to that timeline, with stories and pictures, names and dates, as you share your significant events at CCoB with us. There will be a meal, some trivia, and a scavenger hunt, so keep your eyes open for more information on dates.
- ***February***, when we often have out annual meeting, will focus on our ***Present***. We plan to submit to you ***The Annual Report: Live!*** It will be on opportunity for our leaders and teams to report in real time about some of the wonderful things that have taken place this year, so that we can celebrate together.
- ***March*** we will gaze into our ***Future.*** And we will do this by reading and discussing together a wonderful book about how members of all ages and gifts can become more involved in what it means to be Church…***Church Together: An Essential Guide to All-age Ministry,*** by daughter of the congregation and all-around superhero Rev. Traci Smith. Traci will, during this month, visit us for classes and discussions on her book, as we envision what ministry that encompasses all of us might look like.

It's a jam-packed schedule, full of adventure! So keep alert in the next few months as the particulars are published, so that you can be involved in this journey.



***For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***
**Luke 2:11**



## Acappellago Concert

On Sunday, December 6, at 3:00 p.m. in our sanctuary, Acappellago will present "Escape to… Home for the Holidays." Tickets are $20 at the door ($17 seniors), but can be purchased now through November 29 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!



## Annual Reports

Annual reports for 2026 should be sent to Barb Zillgitt at bzillgitt685@gmail.com by Wednesday, January 13. We are looking for activity reports from all of our ministry teams, committees, interest groups, elected officers, and staff. Contact Barb if you have questions, need a copy of the guidelines, or would like to see last year's report.

# Worship Ministry Team



## Advent and Christmas… Back to Basics

Don't miss the many 'Basic' events planned for the coming season:

**Sunday, November 28** — Join us at morning worship as we light the first Advent candle and return to the basics of the season.

**Sunday, December 6** — a return of the annual (?) children's program during morning worship. Enjoy the simple retelling of the story of Christmas and then return for the Acappellago Concert "Escape to… Home for the Holidays" at 3:00 p.m.

**Sunday, December 13** — Come hear the Chancel Choir at 10:00 a.m. present the "Mini Messiah," with readings and accompanied by a string quartet. What can be more seasonally basic than that?

**Monday, December 21, 6:30 p.m.** — The winter solstice begins on longest, darkest night of the year, a time that can be difficult for many of us. Join us for this service of reflection that allows us space for sorrow while gently pointing toward hope and the light of Christ.

**Friday, December 25, 3:00 and 7:00 p.m.** — Celebrate the coming of the Christ Child with two identical services of scripture, carols, communion, and traditional candle lighting.

**Sunday, December 27, 10:00 a.m.** — Everyone liked it so much we're repeating last year's 'Christmas Breakfast' service! Bring a dish to pass (or not: just come). We will sit around the tables as we eat breakfast and get to know our fellow congregants a bit better while joining in a simple service of worship with carols we love to sing.

**Looking Ahead….**

- While Pastor Paige is on her sabbatical, Pastor Paris Donehoo will be leading us in worship during the month of January with the 'answers'? to "Questions Jesus asks Me."
- January 6 is Epiphany with communion and distribution of our 2027 'Star Words'
- January 9, 6:30 p.m. on Zoom — next Worship Team Meeting. We are so happy to welcome two new members: Lynnea Van Dame and Susan Cromwell.
- Taizé service on Wednesday, January 20, at 6:30 (There will be no Taizé service in December; instead there will be the Longest Night Service on Monday, December 21.)



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

*Max Lucado*

## Justice and Witness

The Justice and Witness Team is getting closer to launching our **Community Dinner Program.** Thanks to all who responded to our "help wanted" survey. Of the 21 who filled out the survey, 18 indicated they would like to help (including a few "maybes"). And many responders had good suggestions or questions.

We will probably send it out again closer to showtime, when we have more definite plans. In the meantime Jeff and Irene Crane and Heather Hamilton helped with the most recent Bethany dinner. All three were impressed with how well it went and are convinced we can handle a monthly dinner ourselves, though maybe not on the fancy scale the Lutherans do it.

Jean Deptolla went to a recent community dinner in Elgin. This city has an amazing program. In various churches there is a meal served every day, and many serve breakfast! She was particularly impressed with how each guest was treated with dignity and respect.

Three of us from **Fox River Valley Initiative** (Kane County) joined members of the other three community organizations from DuPage, Lake, and Cook for a big leadership gathering in Oak Park on November 8. Working together, we are making headway throughout the area regarding affordable housing, mental health, and safety. We are going to be meeting with Gov. Pritzker soon. There is definitely power with so many member organizations working together, including the CCOB.

Happy Holidays!

*Ann Alexander*, J&W chair

## The Outreach Team is Highlighting…..

## THE UCC CHRISTMAS FUND 2026

One of the tangible expressions of love and care is The Christmas Fund, which provides direct financial assistance to retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. The UCC Christmas Fund is one of five annual UCC campaigns the Congregational Church of Batavia Outreach Team highlights each year. This year, during the month of December, you'll find a giving link on Realm, envelopes in the pews, and a special collection box labeled "The Christmas Fund" located on the table near the little white church as you enter or leave the sanctuary by the south door.

Our beloved Reverend Art Zillgitt, who himself felt well taken care of as a retired UCC pastor, spoke of colleagues not as fortunate. Art personally knew people, often in ministry in small rural churches, whose pensions and retirement benefits needed additional support. He was a voice of support for The Christmas Fund.

We appreciate your consideration of this very important UCC campaign.

Thank you,
The Outreach Ministry Team




**Planning an event?**
**a meeting?**
**a special mission?**

Let **Lisa Youngdahl,** our Communications Manager, know! She is our go-to person for promoting all church programs and activities, but she can't help you unless you let her know what's being planned.
We don't want anyone to miss out on any of the wonderful things that are happening at CCoB.



***Christmas is a necessity. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we're here for something else besides ourselves.***
***Eric Sevareid***

# Celebrate!



## December Birthdays

| | |
|---|---|
| Natalie Mecum | 5 |
| Lisa Youngdahl | 7 |
| Charlotte Angelini | 9 |
| Karen Kosky | 10 |
| Martha Tabis | 14 |
| Carolyn Werneke | 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 |

Please check with the church office or on Realm (e.onrealm.org/news) to make sure we have your current contact information before we send out 2026 giving statements.

## Troop 43



Greetings from Troop 43! November brought some chilly, beautiful sunshine and wrapping up our outdoor activities for a bit.

Our November campout is the last outdoor campout until April next year. It was held at the Batavia VFW Post 1197. While it is mostly games, it is almost a local mini-jamboree, with all Batavia Troops and interested AOL Cub Scouts. The weather was gorgeous and the annual Flag Retirement Ceremony was appropriately solemn and respectful, giving us a quiet break in the games and hikes.

Scouts are partnering with Pack 153 at JB Nelson for courtyard cleanup.

Scouts are earning more service hours by volunteering Thanksgiving Day for the annual Batavia Turkey Trot. Fundraising for the troop is used to provide lunches to Lazarus House. The troop finished their yearly commitment making sack lunches at their November 16 troop meeting.

Please help get the word out about our troop. We meet from 7-8:15 in Paxton Hall on most Monday evenings. We welcome boys ages 10-16 to visit a meeting and consider joining! Please see **troopwebhost.org/Troop43Batavia/Index.htm** for more information.





*Christmas is forever, not for just one day. For loving, sharing, giving, are not to put away.*

Norman Wesley Brooks

# 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 |
| Lucy Thomas | 15 |
| Mary Jane McFee | 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 |

Send your February Tower articles to bzillgitt685@gmail.com by Tuesday, January 26.



# Children's Ministries

Children's programming for December includes Wednesday Youth Group, Sunday School, and preparation for the Christmas pageant on Sunday, December 6. All children are welcome to participate; just contact Laura through the church office for more information. During the pageant, we will be singing three Christmas carols which can be found **here.**

Dress rehearsal for the Christmas pageant is Saturday, December 5, at 1:00 p.m.

Upcoming Wednesday Youth Group dates are December 2, 16, January 6, 20, and February 3, 17. We will meet on Sundays for Sunday School except on December 27 when we will stay in "Breakfast Church" worship in Paxton Hall.





# Batavia Nursery School

We will welcome 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 8, in the sanctuary.

During the month of December, our families will have the opportunity to send in children's and adult socks to "decorate" our classroom trees. We reach out each year to the Batavia Clothes Closet for one specific item our little ones can bring in. We tie this in with the wonderful lesson of sharing and helping children less fortunate than themselves.

Our December field trip will again be "in house" in Paxton Hall as we welcome back Mr. Herzog's Marionette Show, with his program called CHRISTMAS CAPERS. 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 Tuesday, January 19, and is open to the public on Saturday, January 30. 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*



***The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear.***

**Buddy The Elf**

## 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**

The Men's Bible Study group is a vibrant community that enjoys fun fellowship and engaging study. We spend our time together exploring the Bible and Christian books that help us live more intentionally. We also support each other, pray with each other, and cultivate meaningful friendships. So, grab your cup of coffee: we warmly invite you to join our weekly Saturday morning online meetings. Contact the church office (office@congregationalchurch.org) for the meeting link or if you have any questions.

**Pastor**: Paige Wolfanger
**Director of Children's Ministries:** Laura Bernabei
**Director of Youth Ministries:** Suzy Daly
**Director of Music**: Vicki Linich
**Office Manager:** Laura Bernabei
**Communications Manager:** Lisa Youngdahl
**Organist:** Lily Li
**AV Manager:** Caleb Serrano
**Batavia Nursery School Director:** Pam Foelske
**Janitorial Service:** John Halters
**Nursery Attendants:** Megan Behary & Christy Roberts

**Council:**
Moderator— Jennifer Larson Angelini
Vice Moderator — Amy Allan
Treasurer — Annie Barsch
Clerk — Jean Deptolla
Members-at-Large —
Judy Jablecki • Jeff Crane

**Connections:** Susan Price
**Decorating:** Ann Alexander
**Facilities:** Dave Hummel
**Finance:**
Chair — Lane Severson
Treasurer — Annie Barsch
Financial Secretary — Matt Wicks
Ellen Field • Larry Grant • Becky Hall
Sarah Greenhagen McCrea • Lynne Potter

**Justice & Witness:** Ann Alexander
**Outreach:** Judy Lutz • Don Smith
**Worship:** Judy Jablecki
**Archivist:** Larry Grant
***Tower* Editor:** Barb Zillgitt

## Women's Connection



**6:00 p.m.**
**Church library**

**Sunday, December 20**

We will be sharing holiday treats and book suggestions.

**Sunday, January 17**

We will discuss *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi.

New members are always welcome.

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

## United Church of Christ NEWS

***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.***

The United Church of Christ, a united and uniting church, was born on June 25, 1957 out of a combination of four groups. Two of these were the Congregational Churches of the English Reformation with Puritan New England roots in America, and the Christian Church with American frontier beginnings. These two denominations were concerned for freedom of religious expression and local autonomy and united on June 17, 1931 to become the Congregational Christian Churches.

The other two denominations were the Evangelical Synod of North America, a 19th-century German-American church of the frontier Mississippi Valley, and the Reformed Church in the United States, initially composed of early 18th-century churches in Pennsylvania and neighboring colonies, unified in a Coetus in 1793 to become a Synod. The parent churches were of German and Swiss heritage, conscientious carriers of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions of the Reformation, and united to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church on June 26, 1934.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches shared a strong commitment under Christ to the freedom of religious expression. They combined strong European ties, early colonial roots, and the vitality of the American frontier church. Their union forced accommodation between congregational and presbyterial forms of church government. Both denominations found their authority in the Bible and were more concerned with what unites Christians than with what divides them. In their marriage, a church that valued the free congregational tradition was strengthened by one that remained faithful to the liturgical tradition of Reformed church worship and to catechetical teaching. A tradition that maintained important aspects of European Protestantism was broadened by one that, in mutual covenant with Christ, embraced diversity and freedom.

*Information taken from the UCC website*: **ucc.org**.



***Cheers to a gracious New Year. May we uphold one another in peace and love.***
**Lailah Gifty Akita**