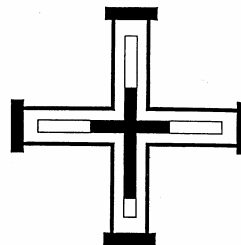


# THE OPEN DOOR

December 24, 2003



Issue 26 Volume 03

First Congregational United Church of Christ

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John T. McFadden, Senior Minister  
Kevin P. Gregory, Minister of Program Development  
Christine M. Zoesch, Director of Youth Ministry  
Paul M. Speiser, Director of Contemporary Music

Jane A. Weeden, Minister of Pastoral Care & Spiritual Life  
Kara J. Woodford, Director of Family Ministries  
Mary Kay Easty, Director of Music Ministry  
Maynard E. Beemer, Pastor Emeritus

## CELEBRATING THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN McFADDEN

On Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, First Congregational recognized John McFadden's 20 years of service to the church with worship dedicated to highlighting events of his time with us. John is the longest continuously serving pastor with our church, making him unique in our history. The sermon was offered by the Reverend Martin B. Copenhaver, Senior Pastor of Wellesley Congregational UCC, Wellesley, MA, a friend of John McFadden's for more years than either can recall. The congregation enjoyed humorous references to John's fondness for kayaking and camping, his wonderful sense of humor and a trio of youthful singers who reminded us of John's many Youth Musical compositions.

Part of the recognition of John's 20 years of service is the naming of a fund in the Endowment Trust of First Congregational the John T. McFadden Leadership Fund. This fund is dedicated to supporting the recruitment, development and education of ordained and lay staff of First Congregational and will serve as a lasting legacy of John's commitment and contributions to our community of faith.

You are invited to honor and recognize John by making an additional gift to the Leadership Fund. Pledge and donation cards are available from the church office.

### 2003 PLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS

Please keep in mind that all pledge contributions for 2003 must be received in the church office by noon on Wednesday, December 31, 2003 to appear on contributor statements for the year 2003.

## THANKS FROM JOHN

What a delight to be so wonderfully surprised with the celebration of my twenty years as your minister on Sunday, the 14<sup>th</sup>! My jaw dropped to the floor when my dear friend and colleague, Martin Copenhaver (flown in from Massachusetts for the occasion) walked into the sanctuary with a sermon tucked beneath his arm (we had a delightful visit over the next two days). And what an honor it is to have the new Leadership Fund of our Endowment Trust bear my name. I like to think that generations from now, when my ministry is a distant memory, that fund will still be giving strength to the life of this congregation. My sincere thanks to all who planned and plotted the day (even those whose tribute bordered on a roast), and to all members of First Congregational for making it such a joyous privilege to minister among you for these two decades!

## SPECIAL SENIOR HIGH YOUTH EVENT "JESUS CORE: BE STILL"

January 9-11, 2004

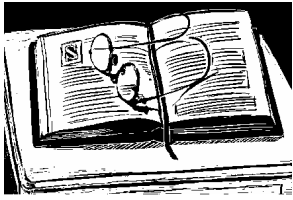
Join us as we focus on quiet and meditative ways to talk to God, listen to God's call to us, learn how to walk with Christ in the midst of our busy lives, and just be. There will be time for singing, playing, conversation, and enjoying whatever weather God gives us in Wisconsin in January! Cost is \$85.00. Scholarships are available on request. Please call Christine for more information. This event is sponsored by the Wisconsin Conference.

## CHURCH ENVELOPES

Church envelopes are available in the narthex for

members to pick up.

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE:



From the very beginning of our long-range planning process, we knew that in order to implement the vision that emerged we would need to make certain structural changes to our church. A “Structure panel” was formed to study the kinds of changes that would be required in three areas: church staffing, church governance, and the physical plant.

Since our **governance structure** is relatively new, our hope was that needed changes in this area would fall more in the category of “fine tuning” than “complete overhaul,” and I still think that will be the case. We will likely not have a proposal for these modifications for a year or so.

“**Physical plant structure**,” of course, can cover anything from rearranging the furniture to constructing a new building. Many people have worked on their “wish list” for the church building: more space in the narthex for fellowship, more meeting rooms, more office space, even the dream of a First Congo gymnasium. The one project we are moving ahead on full throttle is the renovation of our church school building. Plans are nearly complete, and over the summer months the building will be transformed into a state-of-the-art Rotation Model Church School. I cannot begin to convey my excitement about this project: every time I look at the emerging plans I find myself breaking into a grin. Other issues relating to our building are likely to be held off for several more years.

That leaves the issue of **church staffing structure**, which everyone involved in long-range planning agreed was the most pressing and immediate: innovative new programs and ambitious goals require the church to be staffed in a manner that permits us to pursue them vigorously. We have a fine staff, but it has grown over the years in a rather haphazard way. Some portfolios presently have a “patched together” feel, and reporting structures are not as clear as they should be. More importantly, for new initiatives to be carried out we will need a church staff made up of persons with the appropriate gifts and talents to

address them. With a limited number of dollars available for payroll, we need to determine what our priorities will be in staffing for a vibrant church life.

Early in the fall an enthusiastic and dedicated group that combined the Personnel Committee with members of the Structure Panel rolled up their collective sleeves and went to work. They have now drafted their recommendation for an overall staffing model and are fine-tuning position descriptions. While these changes are modest in scope, they will have a profound impact on the life of the church. In January these recommendations will be presented to Church Council for adoption and implementation. Church Council will then share this new staffing model with the full congregation at our annual meeting on January 25.

Changes in staffing structure always comprise a challenging and awkward matter for churches: because we are a community that at its best feels like a family, we are understandably reluctant to embrace needed changes that may impact staff members we value. Certainly such changes must be made prayerfully and with great sensitivity to the persons affected, which I trust this congregation will do. But our church must change if it is to remain vital and healthy, and the church cannot change unless our staffing model changes as well. The next issue of *The Open Door* will be completely dedicated to sharing the goals of these changes, as well as the process by which the recommendations being prepared for the Church Council were reached. Please read these materials with great care and an open spirit, and hold your church in prayer throughout this exciting, yet challenging, transition.

Grades 4-5 John Bears Witness John 1:19-34  
 Jesus Welcomes Disciples  
 John 1:35-51  
 Grade 6 Children attend worship Service

**WORSHIP CALENDAR**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2003**

**8:45 and 10:30 a.m.**

Sermon ..... Rev. John T. McFadden

Music ..... Congregational Carol Sing

**5:00 p.m. Contemporary Worship Service**

Meditation.....Rev. Kevin P. Gregory

Music under the direction of Paul Speiser

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2004**

**8:45 and 10:30 a.m.**

COMMUNION SUNDAY

Sermon ..... Rev. John T. McFadden

Music:

8:45 a.m. .... Sanctuary Choir

10:30 a.m. .... Small Ensembles

**5:00 p.m. Contemporary Worship Service**

Meditation.....Rev. Kevin P. Gregory

Music under the direction of Paul Speiser

**PICTORIAL DIRECTORY**

It's time to update the faces and names of First Congregational Church. The pictorial directory is a publication that comes out every five years in the life of the church. In order to have the directories printed and distributed by January of 2005, we must begin the process now. This announcement is to let you know the dates when pictures will be taken so that you can mark them on your calendar. Photo dates are: Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, to Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>; Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, to Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>; Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, to Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Weekday times will be 3:00-9:30 p.m. and Saturdays will be 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In January and February, we will have sign ups for picture times. We hope to have 100% member participation in our new directory.

**CHURCH SCHOOL BIBLE STORIES**

**JANUARY 4, 2004**

Ages 3-4 A Star Brings Good News  
 Matthew 2:1-12  
 Grades K-1 Passover in Jerusalem  
 Luke 2, 4:1-5a  
 Grades 2-3 Simeon and Anna Luke 2:22-38  
 Follow That Star Matthew 2:1-12

**JOYS AND CONCERNS  
 OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

If you have particular joys or concerns that you would like lifted up please call Reverend Jane Weeden.

**Those who need our prayers:**

Martha Elliott	Betty Patton
Mildred Danner	Lori Paulson
Sara Hoff	Ainsley Jacobsen
Phyllis Zeiss	Tom Reineck
Larry Carey	Sherri Tuttle
Rev. Vernon Tom	Teri Loveall's mother
Julie Perez	Theda Knaack
B.J. Barnes	Sarah Paul
John Harkins	Steve Dozer
Helen Wright	Gordy Anderson
Doris Schaller	Jamie Kubiak
Rita Grishaber	Julia Manier
Carol Huebner	Judy Kaddatz
Randy Dorschner	Joyce Spurlock
Dorothy Ann Evans	Dorothy Gelbke
Joe Kessler and family	Paula Ducas' father, Paul
Gene Wichman	Reed and Glynda Taylor
The Marvin Family	The Hedly Family
Kelly Peterson's brother-in-law, Dan	
The Langteau pre-mature twin nephews	
Juanita and Kathy Portmann	
Arlyss Laabs, mother of John Laabs	
Genevieve Jones, mother of Susan Jones	
Julie Sheetz, sister-in-law of Jim Sheetz	
Erik Carr's grandfather, Bill	
The Volkman family on the death of Gloria	
The Wolfinger family on the death of Ray	

**THE SPIRITUAL AGING PROJECT**

**January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004—7:00 p.m.**

**January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004—10:00 a.m.**

**Chapel—First Congregational church**

For those over the age of sixty, this is your chance to help discover what "Spiritual Life in the Aging Process" is all about. Rev. Bobbie McKay, Ph.D. and her husband, Lew Musil, M.A. have been

learning what happens to our spiritual life as we go through the aging process and discovering some exciting new information that can help all of us

navigate this challenging and inevitable part of life.

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## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION OFFERINGS**

**2004**

### **SUNDAY MORNING GROUP**

**10:00—11:30 a.m.**

**East Conference Room**

**January and early February**

**Shared leadership**

*Amazing Grace* by Kathleen Norris is the current book being studied by this group.

**February 29<sup>th</sup> – April 4, 2004**

**Leader: Laurel Filapek**

Beginning the next session, this group will study together some of the lesser biblical witnesses in scripture—ones whose lives we barely know and yet whose voices can enrich our spiritual journeys as we encounter and embrace the stories of their lives. Come join this group as together they explore the powerful testaments of people like Rahab, Shiphrah and Puah, and Baruch, Simeon, Simon Magus and Phoebe. The group discussion will be based on the book, *Neglected Voices: Biblical Spirituality in the Margins* by Rev. John Indermark. Copies will be available in the church office for purchase. Cost is \$8.50. Please sign up in the church office to indicate your interest.

### **TUESDAY GROUP**

**1:00—2:30 p.m.**

**Upper Lounge**

**February 24<sup>th</sup> – March 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Co-Leaders: Sue Toussaint and Nancy Steinike**

This group will delve deeply and personally in the sacred questions and struggles at midlife, using Sue Monk Kidd's book, *When the Heart Waits*. Copies are available in the church office for \$13.00. This book offers spiritual direction for some of life's deepest questions and fully explores the process of waiting, separation, transformation and emergence. The Lenten Journey is a journey of transformation of heart. Come and journey together through this sacred season and be open to the surprising ways God may be calling you. Please sign up in the church office to

indicate your interest.

### **PEACE AND JUSTICE GROUP**

**Thursday evenings 7:00—8:30 p.m.**

**Upper Lounge**

**February 26 – April 8**

**Leader: Steve Hirby**

This discussion group is organized around readings from *The Christian Century* and will focus on issues of justice, peace, and Christian faith in the twenty-first century. We'll be using study guides provided by *The Christian Century* for each issue and hope to approach our study and reflection in a way that will foster not only understanding but also discernment and commitment.

### **WRITINGS AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

**Tuesday evening 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Library**

**January 20<sup>th</sup> – February 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Leader: Rev. Jane Weeden**

Often in our spiritual journey, the act of writing, can be a powerful tool to better understanding ourselves, our relationship to God and one another, and to enriching what it means to live meaningfully in this beautiful and complex world. This group will explore writing as a spiritual practice, using Julia Cameron's book, *The Right to Write*, as a guide on our journey together. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$12.95. Please sign up in the church office to indicate interest.

### **WOMEN'S RETREAT**

**January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Pilgrim Center, Green Lake Wisconsin**

**Theme—Giving Back to God**

**Leadership—Rev. Jane Weeden**

**Cost--\$85.00**

**Deadline to sign up is January 16<sup>th</sup>.**

All women of the church are invited to our winter retreat at Pilgrim Center. This is a fun filled and spiritually enriching weekend. Our Theme for this year's retreat is based on Holly Whitcomb's ideas of

*Practicing our Path, by Practicing Giving Back to God.* All of us cherish our relationships to one another and to the gifts we have been entrusted? And how do we continue to hold these as sacred gifts, not

to be owned or possessed but treated with care and genuine love. Come join for this wonder-filled weekend retreat.

### **ADULT EDUCATION OFFERINGS**

#### **WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

**10:30—11:30 a.m.**

**Library**

**7:00—8:00 p.m.**

**Chapel**

**Leader: Rev. John McFadden**

The Wednesday Bible Study will resume **January 7<sup>th</sup>**. Beginning this Winter, the group will engage in a study of Paul's letter to the Romans. Content will be the same in the morning and evening sessions allowing participants to move back and forth when necessary.

#### **MEMBERSHIP EXPLORATION CLASSES**

**7:00—8:30 p.m.**

**Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup> – February 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Reception of New members on February 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Leaders: Rev. John McFadden and Rev. Kevin Gregory**

Designed for persons who are considering membership in First Congregation UCC, this four-week course will explore the history and polity of the United Church of Christ, the history and program of First Congregational Church, the faith and theology of the church, and the meaning of church membership.

#### **WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY**

**Thursday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>—February 26<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00—8:30 p.m.**

**Upper Lounge**

**Leader: Rev. Jane Weeden**

This past Fall, the Women's Bible Study was engaged in studying stories of women's lives recounted in the Old Testament. This Winter, we turn our attention to the study of biblical stories of women recounted in the New Testament. Our discussions in this group have been lively, engaging and lots of fun. Please join us for this venture together as we listen anew to these important biblical figures and what they may have to say to us in our lives. We will be using a book entitled, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, by Rev. Helen Bruch Pearson, a UCC minister and former dean of Candler School of Theology. Copies are

available in the church office for \$13.00 Please sign up in the church office to indicate your interest.

#### **LIVING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD TODAY**

**Monday 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**March 1<sup>st</sup>—April 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Upper Lounge**

**Leader: Rev. Kevin Gregory**

The Christian faith is more than a set of beliefs—it's a way of life. However, in this complex, technological age people are uncertain about how to live their Christian faith day-to-day. There are others who would like guidance in living their Christian faith outside the walls of the church. This is a course on living our Christian faith in everyday life. Participants will learn about Christian practices and disciplines that might help in carrying out their faith. There will be time to share particular ways people have already been able to put their faith into action. This is an opportunity for people to gain support and to be more intentional in following the path of Jesus Christ. The book for this course will be *Practicing Our Faith*, by Dorothy Bass. Please call the church office to sign up for this class.

#### **THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION GROUP**

**Every other Thursday,  
beginning January 15<sup>th</sup>**

**12:00 noon –1:30 p.m.**

**Restaurant of the Group's choosing**

**Shared leadership**

This group meets to discuss challenging theological questions based on a variety of books, articles, writings of spiritual leaders, both current and throughout time. It is casual, free flowing conversation, inviting to all seekers who want to deepen their faith. Please contact Rev. Jane Weeden, Steve Ware or Steve Hirby for current readings and information of meeting place.

**BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR PROGRAM  
DIRECTORY FOR INFORMATION ON THESE**

**CONTINUING OFFERINGS:**

**Men's Group**

**Women Today**

**Expressions of Faith**

**Chrysalis**

**Wednesday Morning Prayer Group**

As an Open Doors partner, you can help bring Bible Training to believers the world has forgotten or chooses to ignore. [Read more](#)  
Close. Help change the prospects for Aisha.Â With Open Doors, you can reach out to those in prison, help defend those without an advocate, and protect defenceless Christian families. It could not get worse for Ruth. Her husband threw her out of their home. He took the children, then took her to court. All because she accepted Christ. Open Doors defends her case, and many like hers.