



309 HIGHLAND ROAD, ITHACA, NEW YORK 14850

**An Open & Affirming Congregation**

The Rev. Dr. David A. Kaden, Senior Pastor

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[www.fccithaca.org](http://www.fccithaca.org)

The Rev. Dr. Douglas J. Green, Pastor Emeritus

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December 2022

Dear Members and Friends of FCCI,

Thank you for contributing in so many ways to make First Congregational Church of Ithaca (FCCI) our spiritual *home*.

We explored the theme of *home* this fall in our worship services and programs. Our church is home for you and for hundreds of people of all ages. It is also home to many community organizations, including the Community Nursery School, Scouts Troop 2 and Pack 4, choral, instrumental, and interfaith groups, and it was our sanctuary guests' home for two years.

FCCI impacts people outside of our walls, touching lives in Ithaca and beyond. We regularly welcome newcomers on Sundays as word about our church continues to spread, and each Sunday people from across the country worship with us online. FCCI's congregation on Sundays – online and in person – is now larger each week than it has been in more than twenty years. Our church home is expanding and changing, and it is exciting to see what God's spirit is doing through us.

Our church community has evolved; COVID fundamentally changed us. Lockdowns challenged us to think strategically about our future and to make changes to improve our governance, programs, and mission. FCCI is now a hybrid congregation – worship, programs, fellowship, and even pastoral care happen in person and online both locally and across the country. We are currently reorganizing staff responsibilities to better meet our program priorities in the new year. We plan to hire a staff person to manage our live streaming ministry, expand our caring and worship ministries as Susan Fast moves toward ordination in the UCC, offer more online and in-person programs and fellowship opportunities for all ages, and pursue new justice initiatives through Sanctuary Ministries and Guns to Garden Tools to make a difference both in our church and in the greater community. To sustain our Children's and Youth Ministries program, we are hiring new staff to care for our growing nursery and youth choirs.

As we budget for these initiatives, it is important for all of our members and friends to know that each year we work very hard to control our costs. The pandemic helped us focus on the essentials that keep our church vibrant. Next year we anticipate additional expenses due to inflation (now at 7.7 percent over a year ago) – particularly in energy prices and maintenance of our facilities. A single day of FCCI's ministry in 2023 will cost about \$1523. With cost controls and a modest 4.5 percent increase in pledge income, we will meet our goal. We ask you to visit <https://fccithaca.org/pledge/> to fill out your pledge card or return your paper card by December 31st. Returned pledge cards provide crucial information for final preparation of a balanced budget for presentation to the congregation for approval.

William Cowdery, Director of Music Ministries & Organist • Susan Fast, Director of Caring Ministries  
Anna Sannes, Director of Children's and Youth Ministries • Stephen Devlen, Custodian  
Mary Ellen Stewart, Finance & Administrative Manager

We are truly blessed to have such a vibrant church home and your support plays a vital role in the success of our various ministries. We ask you to prayerfully consider increasing your pledge by 4.5 percent, or pledge to cover one or several days of our ministry next year.

Thank you for being part of our community of faith and partnering with FCCI members and friends as we seek to make a difference in both our own community and in the wider world.

With grateful hearts,

Stewardship action group