

The Hilltop Chimes

JUNE 2024

First Congregational United Church of Christ
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From the Pastor's Desk

“Woe to you, [religious leaders], hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected *the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith,*” challenges Jesus in a long section of criticisms against

the religious authorities of his day (Matthew 23:23). It’s always important to understand that Jesus was not condemning a religion but was really pointing back to the heart of serving as God’s people. Jesus stood in the tradition of a long line of prophets who spent their lives trying to lead their people into understanding better that God’s message was not about merely maintaining traditional religious practices.

Time and time again, the Hebrew prophets of our Old Testament—and then Jesus and the apostle Paul—challenge their society for focusing on a false religiosity that remains silent about the suffering of people or creation. As biblical scholar Marcus Borg summarizes the work of the prophets, their messages were usually that there is no true worship without justice. Or, put in another way, worship that is not concerned with justice is not legitimate worship of the God we find in the Bible.

The way we think of our faith today may still be challenged by this critique. It means that a discipleship rooted in caring for others carries a higher priority than any of our rituals. It means that working for justice lives at the center of our faith, not something we tack on as something extra

if we think about it when we leave church. It also means—again, as the prophets and Jesus like to remind us—that neglecting justice (especially in favor of preserving “spiritual” practices) means we have failed to worship or follow God faithfully.

And this justice, of course, is not criminal justice. When the Bible speaks about justice, it is certainly social and economic justice. The prophets constantly criticize unjust economic assumptions and practices. And both Testaments are adamant about **welcoming** the stranger—whether foreigner, neighbor, enemy, or ritually “unclean.” *In fact—and scripture repeats this lesson many times—it is **exclusion** of others from holy places that leads to so-called “desecration.”*

As people always called to a discipleship that fearlessly follows Jesus, may we continuously remember the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. Our call to offering an *unqualified* welcome to those excluded elsewhere is paramount to our faith lives and remains a much “weightier matter of the law” than keeping up cultural understandings of who and what is sacred and who and what is not. That’s what **radical hospitality** looks like. We don’t exist as a Body of Christ to serve ourselves, but to serve others.

--Chris

Rev. Dr. Chris Ross, Pastor
Cell: (920) 838-5630

**Please call Pastor directly with pastoral concerns
Email: rev.fatmoses@gmail.com



Madison Mallards Baseball Game Friday, June 28, 2024

Sign up in the narthex

GATES OPEN AT 5:35 P.M. and first pitch is at 6:35 pm. We promise it will be an evening of fun, friendship, good food, and a great time.

PEPSI TAILGATE PARTY is 90 min prior to game and includes - brats, hot dogs, hamburgers and veggie burgers, cranberry walnut chicken salad, potato salad, cole slaw and chips.

(You can go back for seconds. Bottomless Pepsi products and water for duration of tailgate. Once you sit down in the stands, you will then pay for whatever you want to drink or eat.)

TICKET COST includes baseball game and tailgate
\$25 Adults (\$32 Adults if you prefer beer to soda)
\$10 Children (Children 5 and under/ free, but will sit on parent's lap)

Special Invitation: Laura and I would like to invite the congregation to an open house at our home before the Mallards baseball game on Friday, June 28. We'll be offering snacks from 3-5, and then we can plan on driving over to the ballgame. (Even if you don't plan to go to the game, you're still welcome to the open house!) Our address is 432 West Clover Lane in Cottage Grove.

--Pastor Chris



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST JUNE 15TH

Special Invitation.....

Women's Fellowship will be meeting at Two Sisters Restaurant on June 15th at 10

a.m. We will order from the menu. See you there. Sign up sheet is on the Narthex table. Feel free to bring a friend! **RSVP by Wednesday 6/12.**

Moderator's Column

At our meeting on May 19, the congregation voted to allow the Church Council to approve the building request for the Unity Project of Watertown to have its "Pride in the Park" celebration use our church building and grounds on Saturday, July 27. The vote was taken, and the congregation granted its approval to go ahead. The Church Council then officially approved the building request at its monthly meeting the next day.

I was pleased that members expressed themselves openly, both recognizing that this is a positive opportunity to show our faith and support including all, and also a challenge that must be planned carefully to assure safety to all people and to our building and grounds. I was pleased also, that there is complete positive support from the Watertown Police Department. Chief Dave Brower and Assistant Chief Ben Olsen were both present. Their professionalism and their experience from the past two Pride in the Park events put a strong framework as to how we will go about providing a space for this event.

Now we - First Congregation, the Unity Project of Watertown, and the Watertown Police Department - will be working towards a manner to safely and joyously support Unity in its celebration. I will do my best to keep you informed of the most important details as things progress.

In the Christ-spirit, Tom

Building a Welcoming Community

Hello, Welcoming Watertown people!

We wanted to make sure you can mark your calendars for our next full group gathering at the Community Room, Watertown Public Library, on **Sunday June 23 from 12:30-2:30**, a light lunch will be provided.

The group of leaders who have been listening in the community regarding housing justice will have reports to share with you all. More details to come the closer we get to the meeting.

Peace be with you. *Rev. Carina Schiltz on behalf of Welcoming Watertown*



SENIOR CHOIR is going on Summer Break

Senior Choir-Beginning June 2, choir steps back from their programming until fall. Look for startup information in the August and September chimes

If there are any who would like to provide some special music during the summer months, please contact me to get on the calendar and if you have any questions. We need to know at least a week in advance to adequately prepare hymn selection. This music can be instrumental or vocal.

Thank you to Jennie Ortega who provided special music on May 12th and to Tom Rusch who continued his faithful playing as both service musician and choir accompanist for the May services.

Juanita Edington
c.920-988-2416 (feel free to text)
jaemusiclover@gmail.com

Tech Opportunities

We record each service and are looking to expand our recorders. The primary responsibilities are to run the camera focusing on the "action at the moment" (the liturgist, acolyte, minister, choir, or special musician/s) and make microphone adjustments as needed. I am currently taking care of the editing and production.

Please contact me if you are interested and when you are available. Training is available. Thanks.

Thank you to Pamela Martin, Dale Bakke, and Bill Edington who recorded during May.

Juanita Edington
c.920-988-2416 (feel free to text)
jaemusiclover@gmail.com



Vacation Bible Event :

We have been invited to join in a Operation Restoration on June 26th, July 24 and August 21, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

People of ALL AGES are invited as we gather for monthly Vacation Bible School (VBS) events once a month on Wednesdays with activities and worship geared especially for children and families.

At Operation Restoration, we will learn to be MENDERS in God's world! We'll get together in the Multipurpose Room at Immanuel for a meal at 5:30pm before things kick-off at 6:00pm. We'll explore scripture, sing, pray, learn, and play together! Our evening will end with a time of worship from 7:00pm-7:30pm.

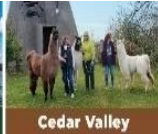
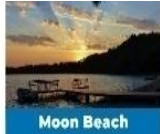
These monthly events are a partnership between First Congregational United Church of Christ and Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Watertown. Everyone, regardless of church affiliation, is welcome and encouraged to attend! If you have questions or would like to help, please reach out to Trevor at thomt.immanuel@gmail.com

Sunday School:

Sunday school is all wrapped up for the school year! We will start things back up again on September 8th! Have a wonderful summer!

Summer Office Hours;

The Office will continue normal business hours of M-TH 10-noon and 1-4
Summer worship time remains at 10 a.m.



Mission and Giving: An Opportunity to Help Your Community

JUNE LOOSE OFFERING

UCC Summer Camps - Don't miss out!

The camp schedules for 2024 at Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach are set.

The Larson Camp Fund provides scholarships of 50% to help cover the cost for children and youth attending any of the camp sessions offered.... Including grandchildren! When you choose a Family Camp the youth have ½ of their fees paid through this fund.

Please contact the church office about additional scholarship support or if you have any questions.

Information can also be obtained on-line at

<https://uccci@uccci.org/>



We are getting ready for the summer. We are planning to garden and be outside as much as we can. Our enrollment right now is 106. We are looking to enroll a few more friends for the summer. As always, if you would like to come in and read a story to us, please let me know.

We are hoping to raise some money to build a "Tot Lot". This is a playground area for one and two-year-olds. We are also collecting donations of certain items. Here is our Summer Wish List:

- 100% Juice
- Gallon Ziplock Bags
- Paper Bowls
- Financial Donations
- Gallons of water
- Small paper cups
- Walmart and Amazon Gift Cards
- Gardening supplies

Thank you all for your support of Gingerbread!

Melissa Mattke

Gingerbread Phone: 920-261-9727

Email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com

Website: www.gingerbreadchildcare.com

Hometown Missions is a fund that seeks to assist residents in need in the Watertown Unified School District. In rare situations, non-residents may also receive assistance. The top three needs of families in our community are rent assistance, energy assistance, and gas vouchers.



Several Watertown congregations, community service organizations, and individuals support Hometown Missions. This is an active ministry and its work is never complete. Funds are always needed to continue supporting our community. For more information click on the link below:

<https://www.watertownimmanuel.org/hometown#:~:text=Hometown%20Missions%20is%20a%20fund,energy%20assistance%2C%20and%20gas%20vouchers.>

THE BREAD BASKET PANTRY is located in the YMCA building in Watertown. Another amazing local resource for our community

- In addition to food items, clothing are especially needed. Many individuals and families don't arrive prepared for our seasons.
- **Bread Basket** is in need of egg cartons and plastic grocery bags with handles. Vivian Howard will get them over to them.
- There is a shopping cart in the narthex You are welcome to bring any food at any time .

- **THE BREAD BASKET HOURS ARE:**
- Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- Fridays 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY,

located in Immanuel Lutheran Church, serves the people of Watertown to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

FOOD PANTRY HOURS ARE:

Mondays 10 a.m.- 12 p.m., Tuesdays 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., Wednesdays 12 p.m. - 2 p.m., Thursdays 1 p.m.-- 3 p.m. and Fridays 10 a.m. -12 p.m.



05/30/2024

As many of you know in December, 2020, a monetary gift of \$502,000 was given to First Congregational UCC, Watertown. The anonymous donor specified no restrictions on their generous gift. The Church Council placed this gift in the United Church of Christ Cornerstone Funds. It was named the Rainmaker Fund, with the intent to set-up a committee to manage this fund at a later date. In early November of 2023 the newly formed Rainmaker Fund committee met. This committee consists of Jim Ortega, Chair, Sue Harms, Vice-Chair and Laurel Bentz, Secretary. Pastor Chris and Tom Rusch, Moderator will serve as Ex-Officio members. In our kick-off meeting, we discussed the purpose of our committee, our role, and our relationship to Church Council and our Church membership. Because it was determined that our role was to manage the Rainmaker Fund, it was important to discuss our philosophy and how this fund would function in our church. Thus, our work began for the next few months.

In our initial discussions, we all wanted the fund to be all encompassing, not just for ordinary expenses. As we reviewed other church documents, a line struck a chord with all of us - *"These funds are more than holding onto money. They are about holding onto a mission...these funds will reach beyond our own lifetimes to support our congregation as a local church with a global ministry."* We wanted this fund to be used for mission and other opportunities that might present themselves in the future. We wanted the Rainmaker Fund to empower our Church community to make a difference in our lives and perhaps impact the lives of the Watertown community.

As we continued our work, the committee agreed that the Rainmaker Fund was intended for the *future* of our church's mission. We wanted it to last well beyond our lifetimes. We determined with Church Council's advice that only the interest would be used annually for designated church projects. We also spent time discussing what elements we would take into consideration in evaluating appropriate projects. First and foremost, the project must align with First Congregational UCC's mission of our church now and into the future.

We have finalized our charter for the Rainmaker Fund and it has been approved by Church Council. We still have some final details to work through but will be ready soon to begin evaluating church project applications.

We cannot end this letter without a huge thank you and a recognition to the individual who gave our church this very generous gift! We believe the donor concurs with how their gift will be managed by our church. We are excited about the future ministries the Rainmaker Fund will help provide First Congregational, UCC, Watertown.

With grateful hearts for all God's gifts to First Congregational UCC, Watertown's mission of our church now and into the future.

The Rainmaker Committee: *Jim Ortega, Sue Harms, and Laurel Bentz*

BOOK OF LIFE



✚ **Confirmation Sunday, May 19, 2024:** we welcomed into membership Cooper Wood, son of Camie and Becca Wood..



Birthdays in June

Nora Kuehl	06/02
Donna Schmutzler	06/05
Joyce Uglow	06/08
Melissa Mattke	06/12
Bennett Quinn	06/12
Rebekah Palmer	06/16
Kathryn Driessen	06/17
Suzanne Harms	06/17
Kaye Piotrowski	06/23
Maggie Markus	06/28
Abby Miller	06/30

How to Join Us for Worship

- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from lbentz@firstcongwtnn.org. Join our mailing list.
- 2) Our church's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-United-Church-of-Christ-118640148151341/>
- 3) Watertown Cable channel 985 broadcasts the Sunday service on Thursdays at 10 am and 5 pm and then again on the following Sunday at 6 pm.
- 4) Our new church website (see 'Media'): <https://firstcongwtnn.org/Services> posted on Monday

Financial Updates

GENERAL FUND As of April 30, 2024

2024	BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	BUDGETED TOTAL INCOME	ACTUAL TOTAL INCOME	BUDGETED EXPENSES	ACTUAL EXPENSES	MONTH GAIN OR LOSS	YEAR GAIN OR LOSS
January	\$19,604	\$16,475	\$20,579	\$17,588	\$22,889	\$19,538	-\$1,950	-\$1,950
February	\$19,604	\$15,095	\$20,579	\$15,620	\$22,890	\$26,020	-\$10,400	-\$12,350
March	\$19,604	\$22,442	\$20,579	\$23,077	\$22,890	\$20,900	\$2,177	-\$10,173
April	\$19,604	\$21,334	\$20,579	\$22,153	\$22,889	\$18,755	\$3,398	-\$6,775

June 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 Holy Communion 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship. 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	3 1:00, Staff meets	4 6:00, Social Justice Learning Session	5 6:30, Gingerbread 4K graduation	6 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	7 OFFICE CLOSED Wis. Conference Annual Meeting →	8 Through Sunday →
9 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	10	11	12	13 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	14 OFFICE CLOSED	15 Women's Breakfast 10 a.m. Two Sisters
16 10:00 – WORSHIP; Graduation Recognition; Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	17 6:30, Council	18	19 JUNETEENTH	20 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	21 OFFICE CLOSED	22
23 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 12:30: Welcoming Watertown/Public Library 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	24 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 1:30, Rainmaker Committee	25 7 p.m. Gingerbread Board	26 5:30-7:30 VBS Operation Restoration @ Immanuel ELCA	27 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	28 OFFICE CLOSED 3:00-5:00: Chris & Laura Ross/Yurs – Open House MALLARD'S GAME 5:35: Gates Open 6:35 p.m. Game time	29
30 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast				Loose Offering: Hometown Mission		