



The Hilltop Chimes

First Congregational United Church of Christ
120 Kuckkan Lane Watertown, WI 53094

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July 2024



From the Pastor's Desk

It's no secret that the end of this month of July brings an event that has been on many of our minds (especially the minds of the congregation's leadership)--Watertown's Pride event, run by the Unity Project of Watertown, but hosted this

year at our very own First Congregational United Church of Christ. Coincidentally, this month signals the 10th anniversary of our congregation's decision to commit to the Open & Affirming message.

It's also no secret that Christians in general have quite the track record at using scripture to attack LGBTQ+ folks. Unfortunately, when verses from the Bible get used this way, they are often taken out of context and used wrongly.

So, to help us celebrate our congregation's 10th anniversary of calling ourselves Open & Affirming and to help prepare ourselves to host the Unity Project's event, we will be exploring a few important scripture passages in worship that can help inform us better about what the Bible actually says. This sermon series starts on Sunday, June 30 and will continue until the Sunday before the Watertown Pride event. We begin on June 30 to capture the end of Pride Month and to honor the UCC's "Open and Affirming" Sunday. Every year, that Sunday marks the Sunday closest to the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in 1969 that sparked the modern gay liberation movement. (That anniversary also serves as the basis for June as Pride Month.)

For four weeks we will hear about the relationship between lovers David (yes, the one who became King) and Jonathan, how the rainbow represents

God's covenant with the diversity of all creation, how the story in the Book of Acts of the Ethiopian eunuch shows the early church's welcome of folks of all kinds of sexual identities, and finally what the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was (and the surprising reveal of who keeps repeating it). Along the way, we will surely be reminded of the UCC's own history of being the first Christian denomination in the U.S. to ordain an openly gay man (in 1972) and an openly lesbian woman (in 1978). We will remember the United Church of Christ's official denominational commitment to being Open & Affirming that began in 1985.

My hope is that through recovery of some key scriptural passages from too many years of distortion by those who pretend to speak for all Christians, we can come to a renewed sense of what offering Radical Hospitality looks like.

Rev. Dr. Chris Ross, Pastor

Pastor's Note: Every few months, it seems we go through a round of someone using my name in a scam attempt. Most of these attempts have come through the form of text messages. Because of this situation, I think it's best to explain: *although my cell number is available for emergency pastoral calls, I do not use text messaging as part of my pastoral duties.* In other words, when it comes to trying to figure out if a potential scam text message is from me, it's not—***unsolicited text messages claiming to be from me are never from me, since I avoid texting.*** I hope this reminder helps avoid any confusion. But, again, please know that my *cell number remains available to receive pastoral calls.*

Contact Information:

Cell: (920) 838-5630

Email: rev.fatmoses@gmail.com

Already July. I consider summer a trick. Don't get used to it, because it will be gone as soon as you do! But for summer, we're doing a lot at the First Congregational, UCC.

Preparations for Pride in the Park (July 27) on our church campus are going very well. We're meeting almost weekly with the Watertown Police Department and the Unity Project to make sure the fest will be safe and fun.

We on Church Council are trying to make sure you know what we are up to! Approved minutes will be posted outside of the church office. Please take a look at them. *Please contact other members or me if you have questions or comments.* The slate of Church Council is also posted outside of the office.

We are very proud of our Love Fund. We are fortunate enough to have quite a bit of financial support to help our own congregation members as well as community members in need. We realized that there is a more centralized office in Watertown to serve the community as well. This is Hometown Missions which is housed at Immanuel Lutheran Church. They have trained staff or volunteers to not only supply financial support but also to provide social support to resources. Laurel and Pastor Chris have done similar work. Sometimes they have easy situations, sometimes more complex. The Council is working on a way to support Hometown Missions financially and also as an entity, to which we can refer the more complicated cases as we continue to use our own Love Fund.

July's Loose Coin will be going to SOS (Support Our Students). Already preparing for the next school year!

Enjoy your summer and see you in the pews!

Serving in the Christ-Spirit,

--Tom Rusch, Moderator

Observations From Green Lake



The 62nd Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference UCC was recently held June 7-9 at the Green Lake Conference Center. Every year I've attended this gathering I'm so inspired by the joyful music, learning more about the state of

our great Conference from our Conference Minister, Rev. Franz Rigert, listening to the inspirational messages from the keynote speaker and others, and gaining knowledge from the numerous workshop topics one can choose to attend.

I have frequently wished during my attendance at this and past annual meetings, that every member of our congregation were in attendance, as they would be so proud to be a member of the United Church of Christ, ***Where God is still speaking.***

Individual articles could probably be written on multiple topics and facets of the meeting, but I have chosen to briefly highlight a few of the interesting points you may be hearing more about from the church.

- ***Part of Franz's Message*** - During these days and time we must proudly emphasize our message "all are welcome here". "Using Jesus as our model, we are called to be truth tellers who practice civil discourse - otherwise known as Christian behavior - in order to show the world that it is possible to keep our integrity to treat those with whom we disagree lovingly."
- ***Association Changes*** - We have not only seen individual UCC churches adjusting and settling into a new paradigm since the pandemic, but also many Conferences. Associations were established over six decades ago when the UCC was much larger. Recently, the Board of Directors has decided the Wisconsin Conference will move away from the associational structure. This upcoming structural change will not impact Conference staff, as our Associate Conference Ministers will remain

and continue to play a vital role in the support of individual churches.

- **New Websites** - The Wisconsin Conference and the Damascus Project will both introduce newly redesigned websites this fall. The Damascus Project is a partnership initiative between the Wisconsin and Minnesota Conferences to provide growth in faith and leadership for clergy and lay leaders.
- **How do we Connect Better** - This question is heard frequently by church lay leaders and pastors. Spiritual Connections. Engaging Relationships. Resourcing One Another. Connecting through pockets of ministry passion that will equip and inspire others to engage in such ministries. One such inspiration may come from the ten justice working groups within the Conference, providing a partial glimpse and opportunity for broader spiritual connecting relationships.
- **Dire Need** - Not surprisingly, we are facing a critical shortage of pastors. It has been stated that responsibility for raising up new pastors falls on all of us. You know how most people discern a call to authorized ministry? Not by a lightening bolt or a billboard. Not by hearing the voice of God. But by someone who loves them, sees gifts in them and taps them on the shoulder saying, "Have you ever thought about pastoral ministry?"
- **Leadership Forward Campaign** - Is a vital and important initiative through the Damascus Project to raise two million dollars for the primary purpose of equipping and training clergy and lay leaders with the skills to support and lead our local congregations in creative and meaningful ways to live out the values of Jesus.
- **Finding Wisdom in Discomfort** - Keynote speaker Shari Prestemon, Acting Associate General Minister and Co-Executive Chair of Global Ministries for the United Church of Christ primarily focused her message on two points.

First, we need to pay attention to things that make us uncomfortable. Let's harvest that discomfort for the wisdom it holds. Maybe it's somehow changing how we've always done things in our church structure, or the unwelcome realization that fewer financial resources may require uncomfortable

evaluation of church building expenses vs ministry programs.

Rev. Prestemon stated the second object of our attention should be "the ways we're called to be present for one another. One of the gifts of the pandemic period, in my view, was how it caused us to realize that we really do need each other."

- **Resolution of Witness** - During Business Meeting 1 we heard reports on multiple topics such as Andrew Warner's presentation on the Conference's financial status and John Helt's Creation Care update, but the discussion and topic of a resolution of witness created possibly the greatest interest and attention. The Wisconsin Conference Board of Directors chose to present or bring forth a resolution of witness to the Annual Meeting to adopt the 2021 General Synod Resolution Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel.

The process for adopting a resolution of witness requires an affirmative vote at the 2024 Annual Meeting, followed by one year of study and engagement by local congregations. The resolution process calls for 30% of all Conference congregations to report that they have engaged in some study. This study can be in the manner chosen by the local church. This local study calls only for some discussion; it does not require that any action be taken or decision voted on. Congregations must formally inform the Conference that a study has been conducted by the congregation by May 1, 2025. If 30% of all congregations within the Conference respond, a vote to formally adopt the resolution will be held at the Annual Meeting in June 2025. I would urge our Church Council to seriously consider offering such a study for our congregation.

- **Inspiring and Educational Workshops** - Rather than speak to a particular workshop topic, I thought you may appreciate seeing the diverse list of one hour workshops presented. Workshops were held both Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, and one could attend any workshop topic of your interest of which you would like greater knowledge. Together for Tomorrow: Planned Giving in the Local Congregation. Catalyst

Grants: Sparking Church Innovation and Mission.
It's A Small World After All (Global Ministries).
Where God Is Still Speaking on the Border.
Palestine Christians: Their Stories and Call to Us.
Leadership Forward Campaign. The New Culture
of Congregational Care. Creation Care -
Witnessing Global Climate Action at COP 28.
Conflicting to Complementary: How Medical
Models Can Work Together In Mental Health .
Finding Common Ground in Divided Times

--Rob Harms, delegate



Social Justice Learning Sessions Continue Sunday, July 21st

On Tuesday evening June 4th, Pastor Chris Ross, Pastor Carina Schiltz, and several members of Watertown's First Congregational and Immanuel Lutheran churches met in Fellowship Hall to learn about LGBTQIA terms and myths. We were joined by Pastor Jim Langreder of the Dousman and Hartland UCC churches and Darcy Sobczak, the leader of Peace House at Hartland's First Congregational Church, who shared their experience helping LGBTQIA youth.

The session was designed to encourage attendees to work together. First, attendees collaborated to complete an LGBTQIA term matching exercise. Next, we addressed five common myths about LGBTQIA people. Using a scenario, attendees discussed and learned how to respond when someone spreads fallacies.

Pastor Jim and Darcy shared their church's approach to helping LGBTQIA youth in Hartland. They discussed their safe space and the events they have hosted; such as a pot luck, PRIDE prom, Brewer's game trip, and youth group activities.

If you missed the June 4th gathering, stay after coffee hour on July 21st (11:30) to attend this learning session.

--Pam Martin



Watertown Pride
Saturday, July 27
10:00-4:00
AT OUR CHURCH
ALL ARE WELCOME!



Notes from the Music Director

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 Bill Edington, and the Ortega family- James, Jennie, Jim, and Emily who provided special music this month and to Cooper Wood, Sue Weihert and Tom Rusch who contributed as service musicians and/or accompanists for the June services.

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

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.

Thank you to Pamela Martin who recorded during June.

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

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



Summer is in full swing! We have 70-80 children attending daily. We are working hard to finish the requirements to join the Federal Food program! Our grocery bills are getting bigger and bigger!! If you are ever interested in coming in to help make sandwiches for lunch, please let me know. There are some days that our cook isn't able to come in and having some extra volunteer helpers would be great!

We have been getting outside as much as we can. The sprinklers and hoses are set up and running/playing in the water is our favorite outdoor activity. We sure hope the mosquitos don't get too bad!!

---Melissa Mattke, Director
Gingerbread Phone: 920-261-9727
Email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com
Website: www.gingerbreadchildcare.com



Vacation Bible Event :

We are partnering with Immanuel Lutheran Church for a Family VBS. **This event will be held at Immanuel for 3 nights during the summer. June 26, July 24, and August 21.** A meal will be served before the activities begin. First Congregational is preparing the meal for the July evening. Please watch your email for sign up to help.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the VBS activities. Come join us for Operation Restoration!

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





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. They no longer use plastic grocery bags. 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.



July Loose Coin Offering

*S.O.S. (Support Our Students)



Watertown schools are gearing up for a school supply demand in August. You can help students be ready to learn in September. Once again we are participating in *the Shared Community Mission's* annual school supply distribution event (SOS) Supporting Our Students by collecting school supplies and offering a FREE distribution.

The goal is to collect enough supplies so that any family in need has supplies for school. Leftover supplies are distributed to various schools as resources for students throughout the school year.

Loose Coin Envelopes are in the church pews and you can also give to this with a check made out to 1st Cong UCC Wttn (memo: S.O.S.)

DROP OFF CART :

During July watch for sales and go shopping. The collection cart will be located in the narthex if you wish to purchase supplies for this project.



From the June newsletter: *"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 are ready to begin evaluating requests! Included in this newsletter is the form that may be used.

The Rainmaker Committee:

Jim Ortega, Sue Harms & Laurel Bentz



NEARLY 1,590 UCC CHURCHES ARE!

OUR CHURCH'S OCWM WIDER MISSION

These congregations fully support Our Church's Wider Mission. They give to Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) and all four special mission offerings. *Thank you to all churches that are 5 for 5!*

Get your members on board and qualify for posters that recognize your church as a 5 for 5 church. Your congregation will also be recognized at General Synod!

Order copies at uccresources.com.

OCWM BASIC SUPPORT

Provides funding from congregations for Conferences and the national ministries of the United Church of Christ (Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General Ministries, and Pension Boards).

UCC SPECIAL MISSION OFFERINGS

Part of OCWM, these four offerings sponsor vital ministries that bring hope to people in the U.S. and around the world.

Neighbors in Need

First Sunday in October

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Fourth Sunday of Lent

The United Church of Christ responds to humanitarian and development needs in the world. Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing® carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. Through our work with local churches, conferences, international partners and organizations, One Great Hour of Sharing provides sources of clean water, food, education, health care, small business micro-credit loans, advocacy, resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, emergency relief and rehabilitation as well as disaster preparedness and response.

The Christmas Fund

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties.

Strengthen the Church

Pentecost

The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.





We, First Congregational United Church of Christ, worship God as one community in Christ and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to enliven and empower us for ministries within our local congregation, which will make a difference in our lives, and perhaps the lives of our neighbors within our hometown and, perhaps one day, within the larger surrounding community.

Please note the leading qualifying criteria below:

1. Alignment with our Congregation's mission, goals, and funding priorities.
2. Clarity, coherence, and feasibility of the proposed project.
3. The capacity and expertise of the organization or applicant to successfully implement the proposed project.

This fund is about more than holding onto money. It is about holding onto a mission. It is our hope that The Rainmaker Fund at First Congregational, UCC of Watertown will reach beyond our own lifetimes to support our congregation as a local church with a global mission.

Our Rainmaker Fund is intended to support the spiritual, social, and economic needs of those who call Watertown and the surrounding community home.

Additionally, *The Fund* supports new and innovative projects in any area of our congregation and perhaps, at a future date, will invest in the wider community at large.

Rainmaker Committee: Jim Ortega, Sue Harms, Laurel W. Bentz

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION:

First Congregational UCC
120 Kuckkan Lane
Watertown WI 53094

Phone/Fax: 902-261-6213

Office email: lbentz@firstcongwttn.org

(Request Form on next page →)

The Rainmaker Fund - APPLICATION FORM

Today's Date: _____

Contact Name and/or Organization _____

Contact person information:

Phone number: (_____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Amount needed: \$ _____

Date funds needed by: _____

Reason for request (Benefit/Advantages/History) _____

(Please attach additional pages if needed)

<div><div>For Office Use Only</div><div>Church Council Review and Decision making</div><div>Date: _____</div><div>Response: _____</div><div>_____</div></div>

BOOK OF LIFE



Birthdays in July

Tyler Oxford	07/01
Arlene Bennett	07/02
Rowan Blaszak	07/05
Jeff Nicholas	07/08
Emryn Milburn	07/11
Judy Draeger	07/18
Russell Ehnert	07/20
Evan Chowanec	07/22
Paige Driessen	07/25
Calvin Edwards	07/25
Hailey Zabel	07/27
Ryan Scheunemann	07/27



On Sunday, June 16th we celebrated our graduates!

Laura Yurs graduated from Law School and is looking forward to putting her skills to work! *Tyler Chowanec* graduated from Johnson Creek High School and will be attending college in the Fall. *Maggie Markus* also graduated from Johnson Creek High School. She will be attending college in the Fall. *Lily Kulick* graduated from Watertown High School and will be entering the workforce and exploring options for online college in the future.

Justice Fremont graduated from 4K at Gingerbread. He will be continuing his education in the Fall! Congratulations to all of our graduates.



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 May 31, 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	\$22,392	\$20,579	\$23,027	\$22,890	\$20,900	\$2,127	-\$10,223
April	\$19,604	\$21,334	\$20,579	\$22,153	\$22,889	\$18,755	\$3,398	-\$6,825
May	\$19,604	\$16,679	\$20,579	\$16,907	\$22,890	\$36,490	-\$19,583	-\$26,408

July 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 1:00: Staff meets	2 7:00, Gingerbread Bd. Meets.	3	4 Independence Day OFFICE CLOSED 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	5 OFFICE CLOSED	6
7 Holy Communion 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship; 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	8 6:30, Investment meeting with Andrew Warner	9	10	11 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	12 OFFICE CLOSED	13
14 Church's 179th Birthday 10:00 – WORSHIP; ONA 10th anniversary Coffee Fellowship; 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	15	16	17	18 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30 -Gingerbread Staff meeting	19 OFFICE CLOSED	20
21 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 11:30 – Social Justice Learning Session at church. 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	22 6:30, COUNCIL NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	23	24 VBS- @ Immanuel ELCA 5:30-7:30 Our turn to provide the meal!	25 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 Watertown Pride 10:00-4:00 At our church!
28 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	29	30	31	Loose Coin: S.O.S (Supporting Our Students)		