



The Hilltop Chimes

Revised

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

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor

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October 2023



From the Pastor's Desk

October has long been my favorite month of the year. In church, I usually find myself lifting up some of the most important days we celebrate during the month—World Communion Sunday and Reformation Sunday.

But some of you know that my favorite holiday also falls this month: **Halloween**. Yes, you read that right—Halloween is my favorite holiday. (Yes, even more so than Christmas...by a long shot, actually.) And I realize, of course, that's not an admission you might expect from your pastor.

Unfortunately, Halloween gets a bad rap in many churches. Some claim it's a celebration of demons or Satan or other forms of evil. I think that understanding is far too simplistic. In fact, I would argue that Halloween should be seen as one of the most *Christian* days of the year.

First, the name itself comes from Christian practice. *Halloween* derives from *All Hallows' Eve*. *Hallow* means holy or saintly or sacred, like we pray every Sunday for God's name to be "hallowed." That name, in turn, comes from the fact that the next day—November 1—is *All Saints' Day*, a time we still acknowledge in the church as when we remember the saints (the members of the Christian community) who have gone before us. We continue this tradition every year with our service of *Totenfest* on the first Sunday in November (All Saints' Sunday). In

one way, All Hallows' Eve is similar to Christmas Eve—the night before a holy day.

But, as we well know, All Hallows' Eve also carries its own set of traditions, and it's these practices that some Christians would rather avoid. However, it's exactly these practices that I would like to double-down my claim on: Halloween is no celebration of evil; rather it is the mocking of the forces of evil and fear and death, a mocking we can celebrate fully precisely *because* we are Christians. Because of our trust in Christ and in a God of love, we are even called to laugh in the face of death and fear! (Now, if I really wanted to press the case, I might point out that mocking the powers of fear, death, and evil seems much more Christian than that celebration of consumerism and commercialism we take part in during the month of December...but I'm not sure how far I'd get with most people.)

So next time you might hear that Christians shouldn't celebrate Halloween, feel free to share a different perspective on how we can see it as the *most* Christian holiday of them all.

-Chris

Pastor Chris Vacation Days:

Pastor Chris will be out of the office October 13 through November 4th.

Pastoral Emergencies: Pastor Katie Van Der Linden, Ebenezer Moravian Church can be called directly at 610-442-3790



TOTENFEST - Service of Remembrance

On Sunday, November 5 during 10:00 a.m. worship we will join in a special service of remembrance for those who have passed away since last year at this time.

Please send the names of loved ones who have died since November 6, 2022. Please include their birthdate and date of death when you send it to Laurel in the church office no later than Wednesday November 1. lbentz@firstcongwtn.org



Reflections on Advocacy and the Mission of the WCC

Dr. Peter Bakken, Justice and Witness Coordinator

I've been asked to sum up what I've learned in my 18 years as the

WCC's Public Policy and/or Justice and Witness Coordinator. That is impossible. But I will try to set down a few notes about the nature of this work as I've come to understand it, using a phrase from WCC's mission statement that has been a constant reference point for me: *We pray and work together for the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and reconciliation of the world.*

The Healing and Reconciliation of the World

Christians, and people of faith in general, aren't the only ones with a passion for justice, the common good, or the care of the earth. Nor are the church's institutional assets necessarily unique. But as Christians, our passion is one of the Spirit's gifts that makes us who we are and those assets are the tools we have at hand for helping build the beloved community.

Sometimes those outside the church see the value of those tools more clearly than many of those within. As a representative of the WCC, along with other advocates from religious organizations, I've been welcomed into secular coalitions focused on issues like hunger, poverty, gun violence, climate change, the state budget, health care, the

death penalty, and affordable housing. Members of these coalitions have recognized that we hold values and goals in common, and that participation by church members could strengthen these campaigns. They've seen that the organizational structures and communication networks in faith communities are ways to reach and mobilize people who value fairness and compassion. They've understood that churches, through their social service programs and day-to-day ministry have direct knowledge of how their parishioners and neighbors are impacted by the very laws and programs that the coalitions are trying to change or improve.

They've hoped, too, that religious leaders can be trusted messengers whose moral and spiritual language might reach a larger audience and – possibly – transcend racial, political, and geographic divides in ways that can influence policymakers. Many persons in policy advocacy and social services are driven by deeply held moral values or religious beliefs. But because of their public roles, they don't or can't wear those commitments on their sleeves. As a result, these advocates can easily be dismissed as operating purely out of institutional self-interest or political ideology. On the other hand, those of us who represent faith communities are in a sense culturally authorized, even expected, to say why a law or government action is good or bad on ethical grounds.

There's some risk that by participating in these coalitions we will be seen as just another left-leaning interest group. I'm far more concerned that a reluctance to seem partisan or a fear of alienating some segment of the congregation tempts too many faith leaders and communities into an inert silence that is as spiritually moribund as it is civically irresponsible. As faith-based advocates, we need to make explicit the moral and religious reasons undergirding the positions we take. Sometimes those reasons can be shared by all people of conscience and goodwill; sometimes those reasons are rooted in a particular religious tradition. Either way, they enhance the credibility and authenticity of our witness to both our siblings in faith and to the wider public.

(continued →)

The Unity and Renewal of the Church

This work doesn't just serve the health and wellbeing of "the world." Immersion in the trials and traumas of public life provokes us to express more clearly our identity and vocation *as the Church*. In particular, we are pressed to discern and name ideas, ideologies and movements that are manifest distortions of our faith and values.

One of the most infuriating of these distortions in public policy is moralism – the graceless, rigid and damaging imposition of moral rules and ideals of virtue without consideration of the realities and actual choices faced by people in need. Moralism infects legislation that purports to lift people out of poverty by adding to their burdens and humiliations and obstacles to accessing programs like BadgerCare, FoodShare, or Unemployment Insurance.

Underlying and exacerbating these bad policies are assumptions and stereotypes about communities of color, and obliviousness to how "colorblind" systems offering "equal opportunity" can't overcome legacies of past oppression and discrimination, and can actually widen racial disparities. But even more outrageous is the emergence of an explicitly racist "Christian" white supremacist movement and ideology and its infiltration of the mainstream of American political life and discourse.

In the name of affirming American identity and values, this movement corrupts the very meaning of democracy by defining "we the people" in exclusivist terms. It reduces Christianity to an identity marker that separates "us" from "them" and justifies hatred, violence, and the perpetuation of systems of domination — all in direct contradiction to the life and teachings of Jesus. Alongside and often in symbiotic relationships to these movements are forces undermining effective political participation through gerrymandering, "dark money," voter suppression, and using anti-majoritarian practices and institutions like the filibuster and the electoral college to achieve minority rule.

When, together with Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, we started the Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement project, the idea of strengthening civic engagement by promoting voter registration and "get out the vote" activities seemed about as nonpartisan

and uncontroversial as you could get. No longer. The bedrock democratic processes of civil conversation, elections, legislation, and administration that I've taken for granted as a public policy advocate are now under threat. The very ground is shifting under our feet.

What do these developments mean for the unity and renewal of the church? Here, I want to refer to the WCC's more recently-minted tagline, "Courage. Justice. Holy Imagination." What we confront in the public sphere today is unholy imagination. It inspires racist and authoritarian movements by offering to disoriented, isolated and frustrated people a picture of themselves and the world that seems to provide meaning, identity and hope, but which is ultimately destructive to themselves and to others because it is based on hatred and fear. And so the church is summoned to the renewal of its *holy* imagination, grounded in the Gospel of God's grace for all people and the whole creation: "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2) Pursuing that vision requires courage, but courage is not something we can generate out of our own resources: we need to draw on the resources of our religious communities and the support of our companions in faith: "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

We Pray and Work Together

Finally, I have also learned that this is work that none of us – no individual, no pastor/priest/minister, no congregation, no denomination, and certainly no WCC staff member – can do *alone*. While I've profoundly appreciated people saying "thanks for the work you do," nothing I've done has counted for much without the partnership of those who have responded to our e-alerts, visited legislator's offices on lobby days we've sponsored, signed statements or petitions we've circulated, taught from our study guides, or shared in any other way in WCC's advocacy. And all of the WCC's justice and witness work is only one tributary flowing into the great river that is fed by the efforts of those who are bringing hope and healing to a world that, though bent and broken, still shines with the grace and glory of God.



UNDIES SUNDAY IN OCTOBER

Back by popular demand! Undies Sundays are in October ! Once again, our church holds this special drive to collect packages of new underwear and socks for kids in our local grade schools.

Sometimes children come to school without spare underwear and socks. The schools are so grateful for the donations we deliver. All children's sizes are welcome!

Let's fill the Undies Collection Cart in the narthex.

--Denyce Derleth, contact person.

KOATS FOR KIDS (AND ADULTS)

What: New or gently used coats, scarves, mittens, gloves, snow pants

Where: Drop Off at church Sunday mornings, or at the Office M-TH 10-4:00.

When: Starting October 1st.

LEARN MORE about this annual collection

visit: <https://www.cacscw.org/koats-for-kids/>

Jennifer Rhodes at 920-296-1378
Chair of First Congregational Church's
"Coats for Kids" Campaign



THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY, located in Immanuel Lutheran Church serves the people of Watertown

to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

This month's Item: Mac & Cheese

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.

LOOSE COIN - MISSION OFFERING

During October this mission offering will be directed to:



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

THE BREAD BASKET HOURS ARE:

Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Fridays 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- In addition to food items, Coats and winter clothing are especially needed. Many individuals and families don't arrive prepared for our winters.
- **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 .



Report from Support Our Students (SOS)

Thank you to our generous congregation for the school supplies donated for the SOS project! Volunteers from the Shared Community Mission Group were out shopping for the lowest price possible to buy supplies and use the donated money that has been given.

On Monday volunteers packed individual grade level bags so that 447 children could receive supplies. Each child received an individual, grade appropriate, bag which was added to a large bag for the family. The number of prequalified children has increased by 60 since last year and has increased by 257 children since 2020. It takes many, many dedicated volunteers and many hours.

The SOS mission program was started by our church. Children were given their supplies in our Youth Room. In 2011 the program was expanded to include other area churches. The program is now run by the Shared Community Mission Group (SCMG), a group of 12 area churches.

Again, we thank you for your support!

--Denyce Derleth, contact person.



Tech Opportunities

Mark your calendars for **October 1**, which is the date for the first Senior Choir rehearsal after summer break. I look forward to seeing you and making music with you. Time is 9:00 and while regular attendance is always appreciated, please don't let an irregular schedule prevent you from participating.

We welcomed The 1st Brigade Band to lead the worship music on September 17th, and they joined us in a potluck luncheon between worship and their afternoon concert at the Octagon House for the Historical Society Ice Cream Social.

Thank you to Cooper Wood who played the majority of the keyboard music on September 3rd, Sue Weihert who filled in on September 10th, while Tom Rusch had well deserved time away, and of course to Tom who continued his faithful playing.

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

As the year falls into the regular programming, it seems to be a good time to find some additional people who aren't involved in Choir or Sunday School who will be willing to run tech. In the past there was a sign up with a fairly regular rotation, similar to our liturgists.

Your 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 all of the editing and production.

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

Thank you to Dale Bakke, Bill Edington, Jesse Fremont and Melissa Mattke who recorded during September.

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



COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Coffee, Tea, juice boxes and water are available as well as yummy treats. A Free Will offering helps defray costs, but volunteers are in great need..

What VOLUNTEERS do:

"Bakers" - provide homemade or store bought treats. 2 dozen (cookies, bars, muffins....) prepackaged snacks are also provided.

"Servers" - make the coffee and set out the treats.

SIGN UP: Narthex Table or call the church office.



"I Can Help"

Watch for more Volunteer Opportunities this month....

Here I am Lord, take and Use Me:

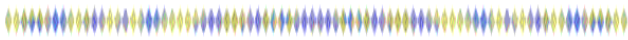


The new wing of Gingerbread sure is busy. The one-year-olds have made some adorable art projects that are hanging up in the hallway. Our infant room is growing in size, we will be full at the end of November. The two-year-olds have been busy building towers and knocking them down. Our three-year-olds are learning their letters and making squirrel tails.

The 4K program is starting to work on math and I hear them singing a lot! They put on a little play for me last week! We also have school-age friends riding the bus here after school! We are still currently enrolling for a few of our rooms, but most of them are full! Thank you all for your support and continued blessings!

Melissa Mattke-Administrator/director

Gingerbread email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com
Melissa Cell: 262-719-1383



From the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries

Sunday School:

We have had our first Sunday School and we discussed prayers! We made a "God Door" and colored things that represent reasons that we pray. If you are interested in working with the Sunday School friends and helping to teach, please let me know. I would like to set up a rotation of teachers.

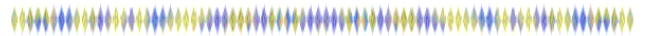
Youth Group: Middle School and High School

If you are interested in participating in Youth Group, please let me know! We would be meeting on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings, or Sundays after church.

Melissa Mattke
Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries
mmattke@firstcongwtn.org 920-261-6213
josc.mom@hotmail.com 262-719-1383



- 1) Join our mailing list: for an email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from lbentz@firstcongwtn.org.
- 2) Visit 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 church website (see 'Media'): <https://firstcongwtn.org/> Services posted on Monday



Church Newsletter Deadline

These are the new deadlines:

Oct 23 rd	for Nov newsletter
Nov. 21 st	for Dec newsletter
Dec 19 th	for Jan newsletter



CHURCH DIRECTORY

The directory will be available in hard copy only on **Sunday, October 8th** It's never too late to send me the information you wish to have listed.

Contact Laurel: lbentz@firstcongwtn.org



BUILDING A WELCOMING WATERTOWN

Community, Conversation, and Christian Welcome

Sunday, October 1, 2023

12:30p-2:30p

Community Room at Watertown Public Library

Lunch Provided

Hosted by Watertown Area Congregations

Let's build a more inclusive community – together!



Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Richard D. Shaw

The Rev. Dr. Richard Shaw is a pastor, preacher, teacher, and social activist, currently serving as pastor of St. Matthew CME Church in Milwaukee and president of MICAHA: Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope — a multi-racial, interfaith organization committed to the justice issues of greatest impact on our communities. MICAHA is an affiliate of Gamaliel Network and WISDOM.

Book of Life



October Birthdays

Jeffrey Pauli 10/01
 Jennie Ortega 10/02
 Zachary Fuchs 10/02

Lexy Davis 10/02
 William Lamp 10/02
 Greg Kulick 10/03
 John Welbourne 10/03
 Stacy Winkelman 10/10
 Louise Lemke 10/11
 Bruce Bentz 10/11
 Jack Mattke 10/12
 Pam Lohaus 10/13

Ayden Kulick 10/15
 Clarence Zabel III 10/15
 Irene Neitzel 10/15
 Easton Schumacher 10/16
 Camie Wood 10/18
 Roger Martin 10/19
 Mari Ulatowski 10/21
 Joseph Schumacher 10/21
 Janet Stangler 10/21



☞ DAILY DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS ☞

Upper Room (through October) & These Days (through November) devotional booklets are available in the church Narthex.

You can stop by during the week during office hours or pick them up on Sunday.

All are welcome to pick one up, however, \$1 donation helps to defray the cost.

*Peace and grace,
 Laurel W Bentz*

LOOSE COIN MISSION OFFERINGS

JULY: Pride in the Park Event \$303

AUGUST: Support Our Students (SOS) \$370

SEPTEMBER: Ucc Special Offering for NIN \$103.97

OCTOBER is designated for the Bread Basket pantry.

Note: If you wish to contribute more than “coins in the plate”, you can use a “Loose Coin Envelope” from the Narthex table and enclose the cash or check (made out to 1st. Cong UCC Wtn).

Financial Report from the Trustees – As of August 30., 2023

2023	BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	BUDGETED TOTAL INCOME	ACTUAL TOTAL INCOME	BUDGETED EXPENSES	ACTUAL EXPENSES	MONTH GAIN OR LOSS	YEAR GAIN OR LOSS
January	\$17,328	\$12,984	\$18,548	\$13,052	\$22,275	\$20,505	-\$7,453	-\$7,453
February	\$17,328	\$24,828	\$18,548	\$25,079	\$22,275	\$21,622	\$3,457	-\$3,996
March	\$17,328	\$16,136	\$18,548	\$16,199	\$22,275	\$26,989	-\$10,790	-\$14,786
April	\$17,328	\$17,674	\$18,548	\$17,962	\$22,275	\$24,042	-\$6,080	-\$20,866
May	\$17,328	\$22,750	\$18,548	\$23,050	\$22,275	\$28,419	-\$5,369	-\$26,235
June	\$17,328	\$14,455	\$18,548	\$16,958	\$22,275	\$22,571	-\$5,613	-\$31,848
July	\$17,328	\$20,791	\$18,548	\$22,189	\$22,275	\$17,234	\$4,955	-\$26,893
August	\$17,328	\$15,875	\$18,548	\$16,010	\$22,275	\$17,013	-\$1,003	-\$27,896

October 2023 – REVISED*

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 World Communion Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir begins! 10:00 – WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	2 1 p.m. – Staff meets	3 1 p.m. – Staff meets	4	5 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group	6 OFFICE CLOSED	7
8 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School Coffee Fellowship Signup – Women’s Breakfast 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast *CHURCH DIRECTORY PICKUP*	9 Indigenous People’s Day EUTERPE Concert Evening/TBD	10	11	12 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group	13 Pastor Vacation OFFICE CLOSED	14 Pastor Vacation 10:00 Women’s Breakfast at Two Sisters
15 Pastor Vacation 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School Guest: TBD Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	16 Pastor Vacation 6:30 pm, COUNCIL	17 Pastor Vacation	18 Pastor Vacation	19 Pastor Vacation 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group	20 Pastor Vacation OFFICE CLOSED	13 Pastor Vacation
22 Pastor Vacation 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School Guest: Rev. Tom Payden Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	23 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Pastor Vacation	24 United Nations Day Pastor Vacation 7:00 pm, Gingerbread Board	25 Pastor Vacation	26 Pastor Vacation 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast 6:30-7:00 – Meditation Group	27 Pastor Vacation OFFICE CLOSED	28 Pastor Vacation
29 Reformation Sunday Pastor Vacation 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir 10:00 – WORSHIP; Sunday School Guest: Rev. Bev Davis Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	30 Pastor Vacation	31 All Hallow’s Eve Pastor Vacation	November 1 Pastor Vacation <i>Reminder: Send Names to be included in Totenfest</i>	Pastor Chris Vacation Days: Pastoral Emergencies: Call Pastor Katie Van Der Linden, Ebenezer Moravian Church directly at 610-442-3790 October 14 – November 4th		