

MARCH 2023

Volume 38 - Issue 3

The Congregational COLUMNS

Message from the Vice-Moderator

Greetings!

I am extremely humbled to be the next Vice-Moderator of First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa. I am truly honored by this amazing congregation's trust in me to help lead our Church. I am entering this position at a fantastic time when our Church is thriving and moving forward together. Our membership is growing, and Sunday mornings are more and more full. My goal as Vice-Moderator and Moderator will be to continue that upward trend and turn the position over to the next person in an even better state than the great shape we are already in.

For those who don't know me, I am a local guy, having grown up in Waukesha and moved to Milwaukee County to attend University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for college and Marquette University Law School. Since graduating law school in 2009, I was a prosecutor in the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office for 10 years before returning to my home county in 2019 where I now serve the community as a prosecutor in the Waukesha County District Attorney's Office.

While my career path was always pretty clear to me, the path that led me to First Congregational Church was very unclear and unintentional. As a child, my family belonged to a Methodist Church in Waukesha, and I recall never feeling like I fit in. I did not feel a strong sense of community within the church membership. Something was lacking, and I attributed that lack to church not being for me. I stopped going to church all together in young adulthood, left with a feeling that it was just a box to check off, but not much more. That feeling began to change, however, in 2015 when my girlfriend, now wife, Cindy Davis, told me the importance of faith in her life and invited me to this church she had attended her whole life—First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa. Now, the number of times I have had to humble myself and tell my wife that “she was right” is an ever-growing list, but never has it been more apt than for her getting me through the doors and into the pews of this magnificent church.

Everything I had doubted and felt was lacking in a church was quickly disproven at First Church. I entered a beautiful building before the service had started, and people were spread out everywhere talking, drinking coffee, shaking hands, and catching up on the week. It was impossible not to feel a strong sense of community and friendship within the walls. Suddenly, church was not a chore or an obligation to check off each week, but a place to catch up with people to whom I had a genuine connection. That feeling has only grown as I serve on boards and meet additional church members. More recently, the We Connect events that bring the young families together have been a highlight for me. I have gotten to know a lot of new faces, and I look forward to having social time with the families, in addition to seeing the sheer chaos of having so many little kids running around the church in numbers I don't recall seeing in my short few years here.

All this is to say our church has had a profound impact on my life. My experiences here have helped me see what a great community can be formed by a church congregation, as well as the positive impact it has on my life outside the walls of the church Monday through Saturday. So a guy who didn't attend church at all for many years and who saw it as a one hour per week chore, now has served on the Board of Trustees for three years followed by another two years on the Board of Stewardship and Benevolence prior to taking on this great responsibility of Vice-Moderator. I credit that change to the energy and



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THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN WAUWATOSA

Worship & Discovery

Women's Ministry

*Tuesdays, March 7, 14, 21 & 28
from 8-9^{am}*

During the first two weeks of March, Women's Ministry will continue studying the Lord's Prayer with Rev. Julie for Lent. Following we will return to our regular study.

Men's Bible Study

*First & Third Wednesdays,
March 1 & 15 at 9:00^{am}*

Our meetings in March are devoted to the Lenten study of the Lord's Prayer.

Lord's Prayer Sunday Study Sessions

*First & Second Sundays,
March 5 and 12, at 11:15^{am}*

During the first two Sundays in March, Rev. Julie will continue to lead the discussion of the Lord's Prayer, based on the book, The Lord's Prayer: The Meaning and Power of the Prayer Jesus Taught.

Adult Learning Hour

*Sundays, March 19 & 26
at 8:45^{am}*

The group will meet in Room 107 to continue its study of the liturgical calendar.

Men's Ministry

*Second & Fourth Wednesdays,
March 8 & 22 at 9:00^{am}*

On March 8, we will continue the study of the Lord's Prayer that begins on March 1st. On the 22nd we will return to our regular study.

Women's Circle

Women's Circle invites you to "For the Birds," on Tuesday, March 14, at 12:30 pm in the Friendship Lounge. Learn about the Raptor Program at Schlitz Nature Center. These magnificent birds of prey are fascinating to watch. (*The program was rescheduled from January.*)

Please RSVP by contacting Colleen Foster:
fostercolleen1937@gmail.com or 414.425.6970.

JUST FOR YOUTH
March 2023



Sunday School

Sunday, March 5, 12, 19 & 26 for ages 3 - 5th grade

Children will begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and dismissed to Sunday School during the service.

Junior Choir

Sunday, March 5, 12, 19 & 26 for Kindergarten - 8th grade Meet at 9:00 in LL4.

Children sing once a month.

Covenant Class

March 5 & 19 Group meets at 8:30^{am} in Conference Room.

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

Sunday, March 5, 12, 19 & 26 for grades 6 - 12

Teens will begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and dismissed to PF during the service.

CONGREGATIONAL COLUMNS

A monthly newsletter produced by the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa to keep members and the community up to date on activities at the church.

www.FirstChurchTosa.org

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Like us on Facebook!

Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of January 2023

	Current Year	Prior Year
Pledge base received	8.0%	9.0%
Pledge Income	\$43,746	\$42,950
Total Income	\$119,450	\$110,575
Total Expense	\$42,615	\$36,180
Net Income	\$76,836	\$74,394

Detailed financials available in the office.

Be Shaped by Lent *Join us for the journey to Easter*

Shaped by Outreach & Service

Saturday, March 4th—8:30 am in the Atrium

Gather for coffee, donuts and prayer. Small teams will then head to TOSA Cares and Bridge to Brighter for a few hours of service, or stay at the church and make bag lunches for St. Vincent de Paul Meal Program.

Shaped by Fellowship & Communion

Wednesday, March 8th—5:30 pm to 6:30 pm in the Social Hall

Also known as “Church & Chow.” Share a simple, family-style meal and experience God shaping us through communion and fellowship.

Shaped by Prayer Retreat

Saturday, March 18th—9 am to 12 noon

Learn about and experience Lectio Divina, prayer through art, prayer in the Psalms, and walk a labyrinth.

Shaped by Grief, Loss & Holy Hope

Saturday, April 1st—9 am to 12 noon

Facilitated by Tesha Urban.

An inspiring morning of contemplation, connection and reflection as we explore the dimensions of grief and loss and open ourselves to experiential opportunities to encounter grief through our spirituality.

The Lord's Prayer Study Continues into March

There's still time to join the 3-session series on the Lord's Prayer.

Sundays, March 5th and 12th—11:15 am to 12:30 pm. The group will continue with sessions 2 and 3.

Tuesdays, March 7th and 14th—8 am in the Lounge. Women's Ministry will continue with sessions 2 and 3.

Wednesdays, March 1st, 8th and 15th—9 am in the Lounge. All 3 sessions will be covered.

Copies of the book, *The Lord's Prayer: The Meaning and Power of the Prayer Jesus Taught*, are available in the Office for \$13.00.

Please sign up for any of the above events at the Gathering Table in the Atrium.



Be Shaped by Holy Week

As you read this Lent has already begun. A season in which First Church considers, prays, and participates in a variety of ways through which God shapes and molds us as individuals, as the church, and as a people of God's world. These opportunities were outlined in the February Columns, and you are receiving E-blast and Green Sheet reminders and invitations.

Today I want to emphasize what I believe will be a deeply moving week, inviting you to come and participate - and even invite others - to be shaped by all of Holy Week. We enter in on Palm Sunday “shaped by praise” with palms waving, bells ringing, and children singing while hosanna's ring out as Jesus enters the city! Following worship on Palm Sunday come up to the Social Hall and enjoy Hot Cross Buns and an intergenerational “Make and Take” (see the photo below) to prepare your home for Easter. Maundy Thursday we are “shaped by love,” gathering in our upper room to share in a meal, fellowship, song, and communion -remembering Jesus' commandment that night to love one another. Good Friday - “shaped by darkness” - we begin by experiencing the dark night prayer of Jesus sung through a moving rendition of “Gethsemane” (from Jesus Christ Superstar) and journey from Jesus' prayer, to the cross, and the silence of the tomb as the lights darken with a Tenebrae service.

Easter morning, our organist, choir, and brass quintet help awaken us to new shouts of “He is Risen!” as we peer into the empty tomb and begin again to be “shaped by resurrection life!”

Come, see, and experience what God is shaping and molding in our lives.

- Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith



Welcome, New Members of the First Church Family!

First Church is richer by twelve new members as of January 22nd. Following the service, someone in the congregation remarked “It was like watching an event at the United Nations.” The new members do, indeed, represent various backgrounds and nationalities.

Tom Smith

Though Rev. Julie was just recently installed as First Church’s Senior Minister, she and Tom have lived in Wauwatosa for 32 years. In fact, they were married here at First Church. They have three grown children. Tom is a musician and an artist. An accomplished cellist, he has enhanced many worship services with his playing.



Cassie and Garrett Speck

Cassie and Garrett, Bible teachers who serve as missionaries, have three children – Levi, Nora, and Logan. The family was living in Kyiv, Ukraine, until February 24, 2022, when the war forced them to evacuate. They moved



around from March through June, finally landing in Milwaukee in June because, says Cassie, “This is where we could find housing!” The Specks have been in mission for 12 years, their children have been raised in missions, and they highly value community. Garret is currently working at St. Augustine Preparatory Academy as a Fellow Teacher, while Cassie home schools the two oldest children. They continue to continue to run their Bible ministry in Kyiv.

Zile Rudzitis

Zile Rudzitis and her family have lived in the area for many years. The family is Latvian, speak, read, and write the language events. They attended a Latvian Lutheran church for decades but were seeking a new way to practice their faith. Zile is a research paralegal. Her husband works at US Foods. The family enjoys campaign, traveling and participating in Latvian cultural events.



Diane O’Day

Diane moved to Wauwatosa from Waterford three years ago to be closer to her daughters following the death of her husband. She lives at Hart Park and enjoys the activities it offers, including choir, games, and cards. A good friend of Jeff Daly, she enjoys being part of a church, and loves coming to service. She looks forward to making new friends at First Church.



Casey Zoss

Casey grew up on a farm near Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He moved to Wauwatosa in 2020 to attend the Medical College of Wisconsin and is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Biophysics as part of an M.D. + Ph.D. degree program. “When I can get off campus, I like to play volleyball,” says Casey. “Because I grew up going to a Congregational church, First Congregational was the first place I attended after moving here - and I loved it!” Casey looks forward to serving the church as part of the Fellowship Board beginning this month. He wants to thank the members for their welcome and offers special thanks to the wonderful church musicians.



Robert (Rob) Newland

Rob moved to Wauwatosa in January 2021. He earned his undergraduate degree at Concord University in West Virginia. He was accepted to work as a full-time research technician at the Medical College of Wisconsin. While working as a technician, Casey Zoss “rotated into the lab.” As their friendship grew, Casey invited Rob to First Church.



Rob’s mother is Russian, born in the Soviet Union, and his father is South African, having met in Zimbabwe, where Rob was born. Rob lived in Zimbabwe and South Africa, then spent nine years in the United Arab Emirates, better known as Dubai. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology at MCW. Rob says, “The vast majority of my time is spent in the lab, learning about God’s great creation.” Among other things, he loves to play the piano and guitar and composing his own music. He also plays tennis, soccer, and a little golf.

Eric Pfenning and Marcela (Markie) Anderson

Eric and Marcela both grew up in Wauwatosa. Marcela lived in New Orleans and Eric lived in the Third Ward for a while before moving back to the local area. They are getting married at First Church in July. Marcela says they are “thrilled that we are starting our foundation as a family here.” Marcela is a former teacher and now works as a Benefits Administrator, helping clients and participants with their pensions. Eric is a Business Intelligence Analyst. Marcela says, “He’s a great cook and makes a mean pot of coffee.” Eric proposed to Marcela when they were camping. They love the outdoors and nature, as well as co-ed intramural sports, with skiing their favorite shared activity.



Chloe Galfano

Chloe lives in Pewaukee with husband, Nick, who is a long-time member of First Church. Their baby,

Hendrix, was baptized here this past December, so, as Chloe says, "It fit perfectly for our family for me to join." Chloe works in employment-based immigration for a company called Envoy Global, which is based in Chicago. She works remotely, which allows her to be in Wisconsin. She enjoys traveling with her family and is excited to take her son, Hendrix, to Denmark to see his family.



Daniel and Sophee Jones

Daniel and Sophee are parents of Eli, Pete, Rachel, John-Luke, Hannah, and Julie. "You can refer to Eli as alpha and Julia as omega

– the beginning and end," says Julia, adding that "our home and our hearts are so full!" Daniel and Sophee grew up in Wauwatosa and bought their home here a few years ago. After coming to First Church for Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), Sophee suggested that the family attend a service. The family enjoys nature hikes and have found Milwaukee offers many great spaces within the city to connect to creation and the Creator. Daniel is a Design Engineer, Project Manager. He attends a men's group that focuses on family, ethics, philosophy, and thoughtful conversation prompts. He is an avid mountain biker. Sophee is at home with the youngest three children during the week, while completing her degree in early childhood education. She enjoys painting and reading poetry. She likes to practice hospitality and create "an environment that makes people feel really seen and cared for."

(photo not available)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Crockpots!



The weather heats up in the March, and so does First Church! Decide how hot you want to go at the Chili Cook-Off and Dessert Competition on Sunday, March 19, from 11:00^{am} until 1:00^{pm} in the Social Hall. Enjoy a variety of spicy chilis and yummy desserts and enjoy good fellowship.

Amateurs and experts alike are encouraged to enter their own masterpiece for First, Second or Third place prizes and bragging rights in the chili and/or dessert categories. Bring your entry to the Social Hall between 7:45^{am} and 10:00^{am} on March 19th. Your entry will be assigned a number for the voting.

- Chili entries should be provided in a crockpot so your chili can be kept warm.
- Dessert entries should be cut into small pieces (think one-inch square), so everyone can have a taste.

The top three vote-getters in the chili and dessert categories will be announced at the end of the meal.

In addition to chili and dessert taste-testing, your reservation gets you a bowl of delicious chili prepared by John Sgarlata, rolls, vegetable sticks, hot dogs/buns, chips and assorted toppings.

Whether you come to compete or just to eat, the Chili Cook-off/Dessert Competition will warm you inside out!

Cost is only \$5 for adults, \$3 for children age 4-12, and FREE for little ones age 3 and under. Or take advantage of the family package price of \$15. There is no cost for individuals providing chili or dessert entries.

Sign up on the sheet in the Atrium or contact the Office at 258-7375 to secure your entry and/or lunch reservation.

Easter Plant Order Form

Deadline: Wednesday, March 12, 2023

Bring springtime into your church and home. Your plants will decorate the Nave for Easter, April 9th, and may be taken home following the 10^{am} service.

Return this form to the Church Office with your check for \$16.00 for each plant ordered.

Number

_____ Tulips

_____ Lillies

_____ Daffodils

_____ Hyacinths

_____ Total



Dedication Information

Given by _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

☐ No Dedication

☐ Check here if you would like your flower given to someone who is home-bound

☐ Check here if you would be available to deliver flowers to someone home-bound.

The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa
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community of this church, and for that I am truly appreciative to all of you.

I hope it is clear that our church is near and dear to my heart. It is where I married my wonderful wife. It is where I get to see our son, Will, run around each Sunday morning - excited to see all of his church friends, young, old and in between. So I revisit my previously stated goal that as great a place this church is currently in, I hope, in my time as Vice-Moderator and Moderator, I can help keep it growing and leave it to the next Vice-Moderator/Moderator in even better shape. I have had excellent role models who have come before me like Hank Collis, Peggy Griffith and Mike Huitink, who I know will help me with whatever I need. It will also be Hank's fault for anything I screw up. (One of my favorite past times I have developed at church is giving Hank a hard time as often as I can). In all seriousness though, I truly appreciate their friendship and examples, along with those of many others in the church, and I am excited and extremely honored to be the next Vice-Moderator of First Congregational Church Wauwatosa.

-Randy Sitzberger