

MAY 2023

Volume 38 - Issue 5

The Congregational COLUMNS

Gratitude!

- by Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith

Maya Angelou wrote, "Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good."

You have been part of welcoming so much good, and carrying that out! It is exciting to look forward into May and the engagement and celebrations it brings. On Mother's Day you will have the opportunity to hear Cassie Speck, who will preach and share the experience of parenting a young family in Ukraine and now, here in Wauwatosa. She will reflect on the prophet Jeremiah's call so long ago to "seek the peace of your city." May 21, we gather around our Covenant students to hear their decision to confirm their faith and join the church, and celebrate with their mentors and families! Make sure to watch and listen for what we, as First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, do next.

But of course, gratitude also makes us reflect...

As I write this, we have taken part in a rich season of Lent, and experienced the depths and heights of a Holy Week that we have taken part in together. And even though you are reading this some weeks past, I must include a note of deep, deep gratitude for so many:

The **leadership** and **rich music ministry** of this church that shared their gifts in extraordinary ways!

The **Deacons** and all those who collaborated with them in making and serving the Maundy Thursday meal, in addition to hosting and welcoming members and visitors!

The **Board of Christian Education** for the energy they infused into the Church and Chow dinner, and a wonderful "make and take" after worship service on Palm Sunday, which children of all ages enjoyed!

The **three groups** that shared thoughts during The Lord's Prayer study/conversation.

The outreach from the **Care Board** and the **Deacons** who delivered Easter flowers to those unable to be with us.

The support of the **Stewardship** and **Benevolence Board** for the Saturday morning "Shaped by Service" outreach.

The efforts of the **Communications Committee** and the visitors that came to First Church, having received their postcards about Holy Week.

The **Fellowship Board** for the consistent above and beyond way they keep us hanging around together!

The **Trustees** and their quest to find the "missing column," and staying on top of – literally – this building.

And, we must ultimately offer our thanks to **God**, for the way the Spirit is moving in the life of First Congregational Church. And now it is our gift and challenge to continue being open to where that leads us!

THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN WAUWATOSA

Worship & Discovery

Women's Ministry

Tuesdays, May 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30
from 8-9^{am}

Women's Ministry meets in the Friendship Lounge. Study is *The One Year Book of Praying Through the Bible* by Cheri Fuller.

Adult Learning Hour

Sundays, May 7, 14, 21 & 28 at 8:45^{am}

The group will meet in Room 107. Topic is *Understanding the Liturgical Year*.

New Outreach Opportunity with our St. Vincent's Partnership

The Board of Benevolence is starting a new outreach opportunity that will take place once a month: making bag lunches for St. Vincent de Paul Meal Program. Volunteers will gather after Sunday worship as an extension of our Coffee Fellowship time. We will begin this outreach on May 7th as a youth group -PF gathering. During the ensuing months anyone interested (children and adults) can join in as available.

In addition to helping make lunches, please let us know if you can occasionally donate supplies for the 75 bag lunches (beginning with our May 7 event) - such as bread, peanut butter, jelly, Cuties or fruit cups, bottles of water, bars or cookies, and a salty snack. Watch for a sign up sheet in the Atrium and on 'Sign up Genius' via link through our E-blast. This is a great local opportunity that can have a huge impact. And it is a lot of fun working together making the lunches and writing notes to put in the bags! I look forward to working with you on this project. If you have any questions or want more information, please reach out to Debbie Hayden, project coordinator, at dcaiden@gmail.com

Operating Statement Summary

	Current Year	Prior Year
Pledge Base Rec'd	23.0%	25.0%
Pledge Income	\$113,459	\$116,526
Total Income	\$205,091	\$201,203
Total Expense	\$142,031	\$114,920
Net Income	\$63,060	\$86,283

Year to Date as of March 2023 • Detailed financials available in the office

Men's Ministry

Wednesdays, May 3, 10, 17 & 24
at 9:00^{am}

Meet in the Lounge for a study of the Sermon on the Mount delivered by Jesus Christ and recorded in Matthew 5:3-12.

FCC Hosts WCA May 6th



If you have not yet done so, please sign up and come to the Wisconsin Congregational Association speaker event, "The Church in Flight" (launching into these new days of church), Saturday, May 6, at First Church. Great speaker, interesting topic for us all, and an opportunity to know people from our churches around the state! Come for all or part of:

- 8:30^{am}: Continental Breakfast & Greeting
- 9:00^{am}: Speaker Sessions
- 12^{noon}: Lunch and Fellowship
- 1:00^{pm}: Business Meeting
- 2:00^{pm}: Closing Worship
- 2:30^{pm}: Depart

Registration and payment (\$30 fee covers speaker and food) can be found at wiscongregational.net. Contact Rebekah Barsch – rbbarsch@gmail.com or Rev. Julie with any questions!

DON'T BE A STRANGER

Wear Your Name Tag
in Church!



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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Trustees Update

With the elevator project complete, the Board of Trustees has been putting its efforts on the Chancel renovation project. The Chancel Renovation Committee is excited to announce that the project is moving ahead. Since the Annual Meeting, we have worked closely with our architects, contractors, and millwork designer to bring the costs in line with our expectations and requirements. With the updated pricing for the project, we are focusing on a late July start date.

While we had hoped to start the project right after Easter, our contractors could not promise that they would be finished prior to the wedding that is scheduled for July 15th. Although the start was delayed, it enabled us to bring additional cost savings into the plans. The project will now start the week following the wedding.

The final design is shown on the display boards located in the Atrium. The lectern and pulpit are positioned on the main floor of the Chancel. Both can be moved if the platform is to be used for an event.

When finished, we will bring our grand piano onto the platform and bring the organ out of its pit. Our wonderful choir will be facing the congregation to share their amazing voices with you.

Planning for the project started in 2014! It is 2023 and we are ready to begin! We will keep you posted as the project progresses.

Along the way, other projects have come up that the Trustees



needed to give a high priority, too. Our Chancel contractor had performed an exterior inspection of the building and had pointed out some areas that should be addressed. The soffit and dentil work around the roof edge of the building and a part of the steeple exterior need to be addressed. This is why, as you approach the church, you will see the scaffolding around the steeple. The work needed to wait until Spring for the contractor to do the needed repairs. The soffit and dentil work around the roof edge is being performed in stages with the contractor.

The most current project put onto our plate is the missing column at the parking lot entrance on the north side of the building. Temporary supports were put into place, as we research a column replacement.

Multiple changes to the property through the years sometimes brings hidden problems. Our HVAC contractor has been working with our staff throughout many projects and has been helping us find potential issues. They also are bringing solutions to our aging building.

We will bring you updates as projects progress. If any church member has any question about the church property or projects, don't hesitate to ask me or a member of Trustees to get updated and correct information.

- Jim Harris

Blessing of the Prayer Shawls - May 14th

Many of you may be familiar with our church's Prayer Shawl Ministry, which is one of the programs overseen by the Congregational Care Board. Started about 15 years ago, the



Ministry provides shawls as a gift of love and support to church family and friends going through significant health issues. Beautiful shawls are created by members of the Purls of Wisdom knitting group and other church members who volunteer to knit or crochet shawls, adding their love and prayers to each shawl. Patterns are shared to ensure that the sizes of the shawls are similar and work well for warming shoulders and laps. The shawls are then carefully prepared for each recipient with a loving message from the Church's Board of Congregational Care.

On Mother's Day Sunday, May 14th, during the 10:00am service, Rev. Julie will share highlights of the Prayer Shawl Ministry and lead a blessing of the prayer shawls. Following the service, at Coffee Fellowship, there will be a few of our shawl makers and Care Board members at a display table so that you can see the shawls. You are welcome to choose and deliver a shawl to a church member or loved one who is going through a health challenge or is in need of comfort.

Patterns will be available for anyone who is interested in making a shawl, and your questions can be answered by those who are experienced with the knitting and crocheting patterns.

Many thanks to all individuals who have given their time and talents over the years to create these gifts of comfort and love.

Join in a Summer Book Discussion!

Are you worn out by suggestions for how churches can re-energize their congregations? Solve all their problems? Author Alan Roxburgh, internationally renowned scholar, and leader, makes a case for turning back to the Holy Spirit in his book, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*.

Join us for a two-part discussion of Roxburgh's book. Part I is June 6 at 11:15 am; Part 2 is July 23 at 10:15 am. First Congregational Church is enjoying a deepening engagement in church life! This book will encourage discussion around an ongoing movement within a "post-Christian culture" and what has contributed to this. It also offers practices that help us enter "more deeply into the stories of the Bible, our own stories, and the lives of our neighbors."

If you would like to join the discussion or have any questions related to the book and discussions, please contact Rev. Julie – julie@firstchurchtosa.org or 414.258.7375.

If you have difficulty obtaining a book, hard copy or Kindle version, please contact the Office.





Sunday School

Sunday, May 7th, 14th, & 21st No SS 28th
for ages 3 – 5th grade

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

Junior Choir

Sunday, May 7th, 14th, & 21st

Meet at 9:15^{am} in LL4

Sing on Sunday, May 14

Faith Finders

Monday, May 8th

for grades 1 – 5

This group meets on the second Monday of the month for singing, fellowship, games, and program time. They begin with an optional dinner at 5^{pm}, followed by programming from 5:30 - 6:30^{pm}. Friends are welcome! Come and enjoy chicken tenders, french fries and fruit.

Covenant Class

Sunday, May 7th
for 9th graders

Meets at 8:30^{am} in the Conference Room.

Sunday, May 21

A special breakfast for the confirmands and their families will be held at 9^{am}.

Confirmation will be held during the 10^{am} worship service followed by a Special Coffee Fellowship honoring the new confirmands.

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

Sunday, May 7th, 14th, & 21st No SS 28th
for grades 6 – 12

Teens will begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and will be dismissed to PF during the service. On Confirmation Sunday, May 21 - PFers will help to set-up for the Special Confirmation Coffee Hour following the 10^m service.

PF End of the Year Cookout

Sunday, May 21

from 5:00-6:30

on Ridge Court

We'll celebrate the end of the school year with games, food and fun!

Contact Tonia at
tonia@firstchurchtosa.org
if you are interested.

Children, Youth & Education Sunday

June 4th during the 10:00^{am} worship service

Our Sunday School classes will be preparing special presentations to share with the congregation, and they are looking forward to sharing this wonderful day with all of you. Our Junior Choir will sing, and our middle and high school youth will serve as readers, ushers, and greeters. We will be celebrating another successful year of youth programming as we move on to the summer ahead. Our youth are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes early on the 4th, and there will also be a rehearsal for the Sunday School classes immediately after worship on Sunday, May 21st. On Sunday, May 28th, there is NO Sunday School.

**Join us on Ridge Court following this special workshop service for our annual Ice Cream Social.
Enjoy a wide variety of ice cream novelties.**

Summer Sunday School begins on June 11th. Summer Sunday School is for children ages 3 through entering 6th grade, so those who have completed grades 6 and up are will to remain in church with their families. Looking ahead, Rally Sunday will take place on September 10th. I will reach out to those who have taught Sunday School in the past. I would also like to invite anyone interested in teaching for the first time, or if you would like to lend a hand with our youth please contact me: tonia@firstchurchtosa.org

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2023



August 7th-11th
9:00-12:00

Launch kids on a cosmic quest where they'll have a blast shining Jesus' light to the world. Stellar rockets kids on an out-of-this-world adventure that's light years of faith-building fun.

Look for more information in the coming months, as well as registration forms.

Secret Buddies

– Another Huge Success!

It was so wonderful having our Secret Buddies program this spring, as the connections are incredible! The program was offered to our First Church adults and children during Lent, and once again, was an amazing experience for all involved. Secret Buddies was launched with the goal of fostering relationships between the generations of our church, and this was the 10th year of the program. This year, eleven of our adults committed to being pen pals with eleven of our 1st-5th grade youth, and the fun began once they were secretly paired up. The Buddies traded notes every two weeks that shared information about a variety of topics – from their age and city where they live to their hobbies and favorite leisure time activities. They also sent notes that talked about their favorite First Church events and programs, and finally, their favorite Easter memories and family traditions.

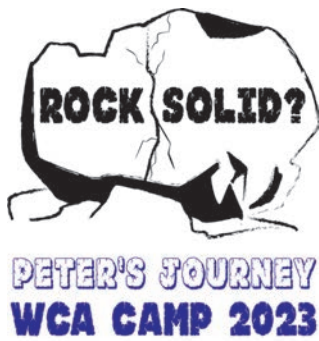
The Secret Buddies were finally able to meet in person after Worship on Sunday, April 16th, and the reveal is the most exciting part of the program! From my point of view, it is always magical to watch the meetings and the interactions that follow. The anticipation was high, and the smiles on the faces of both the adults and children were priceless. Our Buddies sat at their own tables, chatting and learning more about each other while enjoying delicious coffee hour treats. Cool connections were created, and personal and thoughtful gifts were shared. Relationships within the First Church community mean so much, and the Secret Buddies will remain friends for many years to come.

- Tonia Wallner



WCA Camp

The Wisconsin Congregational Association (WCA) summer camp will be held at Mt. Morris Camp & Conference Center, located near Wautoma, WI, from Sunday, July 9-Saturday, July 15. Camp is for youth who have completed grades 3 through 12. Our theme this year is titled: Rock Solid? Peter's Journey.



Who can come to camp?

- **Mini Kamp** – completing grades 3-5 in the spring of 2023.
- **Junior High** – completing grades 6-8 in the spring of 2023.
- **Senior High** – completing grades 9-12 in the spring of 2023.



You don't have to be an official Congregationalist to come to camp! Friends from other denominational backgrounds are always welcome. However, please understand that this is a Christian camp, and the program and activities will reflect that tradition.

What do you do at camp?

- **Faith** – worship & singing, small group discussion, campfires, cabin devotions, Bible study, communion, personal reflection
- **Fellowship** – star-gazing, nature hikes, organized activities, free time, games, random dancing, deck party
- **Fun** – swimming, volleyball, ropes course, arts & crafts, soccer, ultimate Frisbee, disc golf

What will we learn?

The apostle Peter walked on water, and then sank like a stone. Jesus called him “the Rock”, and a moment later called him a “stumbling block”. Peter experienced strong faith and paralyzing doubt – just like us. He was courageous one minute and cowardly the next – just like us. He was loyal to his friends, but not without limits – just like us. Was Peter “rock solid”? Are we? God did amazing things through Peter, despite his faults – and God can do great and amazing things through us, too! Our WCA Camp program will focus on Peter's journey – and ours.

Save the Dates

Children & Youth Sunday

June 4th

Mission Trip

June 25th - July 1st

Hosanna Industries, Inc. in Pittsburgh, PA

Wisconsin Congregational Association (WCA) Summer Camp

July 9th - 15th

Mt. Morris Camp & Conference Center
in Wautoma, WI

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

August 7th - 11th

First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa

FCC Mission Trip

We are excited to return to Pennsylvania to serve those in need! We will again be working with Hosanna Industries and will improve the homes (and lives!) of people in the Jonestown area. Our team will head out on Sunday morning, June 25th and return home on Saturday, July 1st. We are heading out to be the helping hands and open hearts that God has called us to be, and I know that we will have a positive impact on all of those we serve!

Our 2022 Mission Team making a positive impact in the Jonestown area.



A Joyous Easter Sunday Service and Egg Hunt on Ridge Court



The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa
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