# **AUGUST 2023** Volume 37 - Issue 8 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN WAUWATOSA

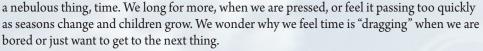
## The Congregational

# COLUMNS

# **Embracing God's Time**

By Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith, Senior Minister

Time is an interesting thing, isn't it? It is particular and can be measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days ... etc. We schedule our time, we mark time, and we talk about "taking" time when we want to place a pause on it, as if we can manipulate time. And yet it is also such



We have definitions for time such as Chronos Time, that exacting measure of time on our clocks and calendars. And there is Kairos Time (sometimes called God's time) which points toward a favorable time that is wrapped more around moments or seasons and the experience of God's presence. I hope this season of summer for you has been such a time.

During my years as a manager/buyer for a small chain of stores I became accustomed to time in a different way. For instance, I began ordering for the next Christmas in January, alongside items for "back to school."

I don't know about you, but in the beginning of July, with months of glorious weather ahead, I fret a little about summer swiftly coming to an end. And I need to remind myself to settle more in Kairos Time and simply appreciate what God is doing around and within us.

Nevertheless, it is early in July as I write this, and it is time to prepare a Columns piece that looks forward into Rally Sunday and beyond, as well as a few new ways we will gather that we want you to know about.

September 10<sup>th</sup> brings us back to worship at 10 am with the full choir, and children and teachers filling the Sunday School rooms following the Children's Message. The 8:00<sup>am</sup> Worship Service will begin again September 17. I am working with a collaboration between Deacons and Christian Education to provide a Children's Chapel every third Sunday, beginning in September. Chapel will help prepare our young ones to experience and understand the cadence and meaning of worship, as well as Communion and Baptism. This will also offer our Sunday School teachers an opportunity to worship with us in the Nave every third Sunday.

For World Communion Sunday (October 1), our "order of worship" will put Communion near the beginning so that children and families can observe or participate in this important Sacrament. In preparation for the Communion, there will be a special Sunday school lesson for the children and a mailing to all families about ages and stages of understanding to help guide their personal family decision as to when they wish their children to participate.

By no means should we skip over August with our second Hymn Sing on August 6<sup>th</sup>, Vacation Bible School filling the building August 7-11, Peggy Griffith bringing the message for us on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and so much more that you will find throughout Columns.

There is a lot ahead of us that is good and exciting, and yet, remember to open yourself to God's time, God's presence, in this moment now!

Blessings and Peace, *Julie* 



# Worship & Discovery

#### **Women's Ministry**

Tuesdays, August 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 from 8-9<sup>am</sup>

Women's Ministry is meeting on the porch on the west side (Ridge Court) of the church. Please bring a lawn chair. In the event of bad weather, we will meet in the Lounge. Everyone is welcome to join us anytime you are able.

#### **Adult Learning Hour**

Adult Learning is on hiatus during August and is set to resume on Sunday, September 17th.

Beginning October 1 and continuing on the 1st and 3rd Sunday, Adult Learning will view a video series, "The Bible for Grownups," by Andy Stanley. According to Stanley: "Most of us know some Bible stories, but very few of us know the story of the Bible. And it may be surprising to discover it's a story that doesn't actually begin in the beginning. It begins with the accounts of a few men who sat down to record the death and resurrection of Jesus. It begins with the words of his followers who were compelled to document the events that had changed everything for them--because they knew it could change everything for us."

#### CORRECTION:

Our Changing Mission To St. Vincent De Paul

(July 2023 Columns)

In putting together the article we failed to mention Kelly Bartley's many contributions to the meal program (lots of heavy lifting) during his 18 years on the First Church staff.

#### **Men's Ministry**

*Wednesdays, August 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 at 9<sup>am</sup>* 

Men's Ministry meets in the Lounge. We also set up Zoom sessions for those out of town or unable to attend in person. During August we will continue our study of *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis. Both the book and studyguide are available from Amazon.com. Thanks. And we'll see you on Wednesday!

#### **SMILE!**

You'll be happy to learn that the Board of Deacons and Office staff are in the planning stages for a new, pictorial church directory! Our goal is to create a directory that can be easily updated.

Rather than contract with a professional photography studio for the photos, we are hoping to use volunteer picture-takers from the congregation. The Office will mail you a form requesting your preferred and most up-to-date contact information, as well as your approval for being included in the published version of the directory. We will also set up convenient dates and times for having your picture taken in early fall.

Please watch for more information in the Green Sheet for planning of the 2024 Directory. Please contact Patty Reddy at patreddywauwatosa@gmail.com or the First Church Office if you're interested in serving as a photographer.

Save Mark your calendars for the the Women's Advent Tea December 2, 2023 • in the Social Hall





20 Tickets Available Includes bleacher seat with hotdog, soda & tote

Sign up in the church office.

Game Sunday, August 6 1:00pm

for \$13

# 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 chuch.

www.FirstChurchTosa.org

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#### Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of June 2023 2023

Pledge base received 47.0% 47.0%
Pledge Income \$235,106 \$223,036
Total Income \$359,505 \$343,427
Total Expense \$299,788 \$232,631

Net Income \$59,717 \$110,796

Detailed financials available in the office

## From Tesha Kathryn Urban, Associate Minister

Dear Friends.

We are in the beginning stages of forming a grief and healing support group.

Last April, some of us gathered together for a grief workshop, where we explored the journey of grief through the lens of the Christian faith. We considered how grief is a universal experience, and it is so present in each of our lives—from losing someone we love to experiencing changes in our health to bearing witness to events happening in the world around us.

During our gathered time, we also realized how meaningful and healing it can feel to encounter our grief and be joined by others who share the experience. For many people, the workshop sparked interest for continued gathering and sharing in some way.

I'd like to open space for this possibility. At this time, I'm gauging who might be interested in being part of a journeying group. If you have an interest or curiosity – or if you know of someone in your life who may be interested - please contact the church office or email me at tesha@firstchurchtosa.org. This group is open to anyone! I'll follow up with you, and we can determine particulars around timing, areas of interest, and so on.







#### **Time to Be Human**

By Tesha Kathryn Urban

One of the notable quotes I encounter, frequently, from spiritual writings is from a Christian theologian and scientist named Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience," he noted. "We are spiritual beings having a human experience." Each of us is learning how to be human, on this spiritual journey, and we are learning together!

Part of our human experience is learning how to live in relation to time. We live by our clocks and calendars and "to-do" lists, as we go from one activity to the next. We wonder where the time goes? Do I have enough time? It's time to go!

The ancient Greeks viewed "time" in special ways. They recognized time—like we typically do—in a chronological, or "chronos" way. Chronos is time measured through clocks and calendars. We are aware of our hours, days, weeks, months, and years in a quantitative way. On the other hand, the ancient Greeks also viewed time in a "kairos" way. Kairos is time viewed through a season or opportunity in a qualitative way. We see this quality used in various Gospel writings, referring to God's "appointed" season and "right time." Kairos, then, is God's dimension—not ours—and it transcends our understanding, yet invites us in.

Our concept of time is different from that of God, and this helps me deepen my trust and faith, as I return with a surrendering heart to a dimension that I don't always understand ("Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding," Proverbs 3:5). It also encourages me to break through the human dimensions of time and all its anxieties and stresses—and remember my spiritual nature.

Spiritual practices help me enter into a kairos awareness of God's dimension, rather than my own. Experiencing "deep time" with God can feel peaceful, renewing, connecting—and necessary.

One practice to consider is a Christian meditation, called "centering prayer." Centering prayer is a way to rest in God and feel cared for, much like two good friends might sit together in silence and appreciate the contentment of just being together.

#### Here is an invitation:

- Think about a sacred word that symbolizes your intention to accept God's presence and action within you and bring that word to this prayer. (Examples: God, Jesus, Spirit, Love, Faith, Trust, Peace.)
- Find a quiet place and position yourself comfortably. Consider setting a timer, so you can be fully present.
- Follow your breathing and become aware of your deepest center within you, perhaps where you imagine your soul might be within you.

Entering into reflection and deep time with God during an early morning



Photo taken beside the memory benches, nestled in our First Church gardens

- Open your heart, mind, and spirit to a power greater than yourself, a sense of God, and invite that sacred presence within your deepest center, as you silently introduce your sacred word.
- Dwell in this space and allow yourself to experience the invitation.
- Use your sacred word, repeatedly, especially when you become aware of your thoughts wandering.
- Make space for some silence for a few moments after your practice. The prayer could be up to 20 minutes, but start with what feels comfortable for you.

Our human experience opens us to explore our relationship with time. What is your relationship with time? How might you open to the possibility of being in awareness of God's dimension, rather than your own? How might you open space to experience deep time with God this month? Summer is a wonderful season to explore this.

For further thought: this is one example of a prayer practice we could experience together in our community. If you have interest, or know of someone who does, please let me know, and we can extend an invitation to anyone inside or outside of our church community to practice centering prayer.

"Prayer is the believing, hoping, loving awareness of God's creating, saving, indwelling Presence." —F. Giardini, O.P.

For over nine years, First Church has pursued three, focused renovation endeavors: upgrade the Second Floor Kitchen, remodel the Friendship Lounge, and update the Sanctuary. To that list was added the installation of a modern 12-passenger elevator to replace the 65-year-old, six-passenger elevator.

The Chancel is the last of these endeavors to be completed. When you read this, the Chancel in the 102-year-old Sanctuary building is transitioning to a new look with many safety features and a functionality fit for the 21st Century. The focus is on the worship role that the space supports, while centrally locating the communion table and giving the speaker stands a more prominent location. The organ and piano will be located near each other on the stage, and the choir area reoriented. Furniture mobility is possible, including

having the Lectern and Pulpit movable to support alternative activities at other times in the week.

During renovation, the organ and piano have been moved to safe positions. For safety reasons, the area will be off limits during this work. A 'time-lapse' video of the entire transition is being captured on camera every 20 seconds of the construction period for historical record. These weekly videos will be shown on the Atrium monitors.

On July 23rd, the 9<sup>am</sup> worship service was relocated to the Social Hall. Services will continue to be presented on YouTube, as well as in person. The transition will impact church functions for up to 12 weeks.

Thank you for your contributions of time and treasure to all of these endeavors and forgiving the dust and inconvenience.



By Marianne King

These are trying times for most churches as congregations and resources shrink. The 69th Annual Meeting & Conference of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) invited members to embrace these challenges. Churches were encouraged to seize this opportunity and rethink their mission to both their congregations and their communities. The time is here to explore ways we bring God to our own members, as well as the unchurched in our neighborhoods.

This year's gathering was hosted by the Wisconsin Congregational Association (WCA) and held at the Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield on Moorland Road. For the first time in the event's history, Sunday's activities were open to all members of WCA churches at no charge. Many First Church members convened at the Sheraton for Sunday morning worship, with our own Peggy Griffith delivering an inspiring sermon. A number also took advantage of the day's workshops.

Senior Minister Andy King and Worship Minister Molly Tomashek, along with the praise band from Pilgrim Congregational Church of Green Bay, opened each morning with songs of joy and praise to God. Their exuberance set the tone for an upbeat and optimistic event that shined light on many of the threatening situations facing members churches. Keynote speakers, Rev. Debie Thomas and Rev. Justin Berkobien, helped us recognize our church might have veered off track over the years and how it can reclaim its purpose and mission.

Rev. Debie Thomas is Minister for Lifelong Formation at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto, California. Thomas is author of Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ, a columnist, former contributing editor for The Christian Century and staff writer for Journey with Jesus: A Weekly Webzine for the Global Church. Her presentations reflected Thomas's own faith

journey from a fundamentalist Christian upbringing to a "more capacious salvation" open to all. Churches, Thomas explained, can help us develop an understanding of sin and a vision (personal and collective) of salvation... an invitation to God's Grace. She also explored the concept of grief as an integral part of our relationship with God.

Rev. Justin Berkobien is Associate Minister at Oneonta Congregational Church in South Pasadena, California. His article in the September 2022 issue of *The Congregationalist Magazine* energized a great many readers with his approach to serving young people, as well as our established congregations. Berkobien helped workshop attendees view their role through a new lens. He suggested that churches need to "explore ways of observing God at work in the world around us and consider strategies for discerning how we might be called to participate in that work." He warned against measuring churches by "business metrics," as opposed to what God wants of us. Our "mission is to be faithful to God," says Berkobien. He recommended going out into the community to share God's Word with people who don't know or really need Jesus.

Rev. Gerry Krupp, well-known here at First Church, is now Consulting Director of Programs for the NACCC. His sessions offered strategies for effective ministerial searches and the resources available to churches through the NACCC. Rev. Arlen Vernava of the Interim Ministry Network facilitated two sessions on surviving major transitions in our churches and preparing for a future in which your church is still relevant.

That just grazes the surface. The various sessions were diverse in topic, yet together provided a plan for navigating a challenging future. These are serious issues, but the event offered plenty of time for reconnecting with old friends, making new ones, and simply enjoying Greater Milwaukee. Attendees were invited to take the Milwaukee Brewery History Tour, experience a Milwaukee Milkmen baseball game, roam the Harley-Davidson Museum, and dine in the H-D Rumble Room.

The WCA Host Committee, including Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith, organized a conference that clearly broke the mold—an approach reflected by the speakers' challenge that we embrace the daring endeavors needed to flourish in today's religious landscape.

#### **Music Notes**



## Sing for Joy'

By Ellen Shuler, Director of FCC Choir

When I became the director of the FCC Chancel Choir in October of last year, I knew of the choir's talent. What I didn't know, and learned very quickly, was how wonderful and kind the choir members are. I have felt welcomed since Day One and enjoy each and every rehearsal! Not only do we work to learn anthems every week, but we are also a caring group that celebrate each other and take care of each member. This is why I encourage you to join the choir. We are always looking for people who love to sing and wish to share their talents with the church. The Chancel Choir is retuning on Rally Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Please consider joining us! There will be three rehearsals: August 27th after church from 10:15-11:15am, with a picnic following, and two Thursday evening rehearsals, August 31st, and September 7th from 7:30-8:30pm. You will not only learn two anthems for Rally Sunday but will truly enjoy the wonderful fellowship that happens in the rehearsal process. I hope to see you soon!

### Children's Choir News

By Roxanne Trump-Miles, Junior Choir Director

Does your child like to sing? Then the Children's Choir is the place to be! All children from age 4 through 8th grade are welcome to sing. We sing once a month-usually on the 3rd Sunday.

We will have a slight change to our rehearsal time this year. We will now rehearse from 9:15-9:45<sup>am</sup> in the Junior Choir Room. Parents are welcome to sit in the Atrium and enjoy a cup of coffee and a cookie while we sing.

I often send an MP4 via email, along with the lyrics to our songs, which allows you to practice at home. This really helps the youngest singers learn the words. I have set the schedule for the choir, after looking at the school schedules for the local area schools. I know that families go away for the weekends, so consistent attendance is appreciated, but not required. If you have any questions, please contact me at roxanne.trump.miles@gmail. com or at daveroxmiles@aol.com.

See you on September 17th at 9:15am

## JUST FOR YOUTH August 2023



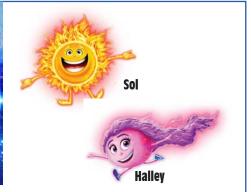
#### **Summer Sunday School**

For ages 3 - entering 6th grade Children who have completed grades 6 and up are encouraged to remain in church with their families.



Luna





August 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>
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. Registration form included. Additional copies can be found in the church Atrium.



# WCA Camp The Best Week of the Year

We had another incredible year at WCA Summer Camp! It was an amazing experience for the 47 youth and 18 staff in attendance. We



had a strong Wauwatosa presence, sending ten youth and five adults as representatives from First Church. I was honored to be Camp Administrator, Reverend Julie was the MiniKamp Director, Aubrey Moore was a counselor with the Junior High group and Jason Hayden with the MiniKamp crew, and Sandy Huitink served as Camp Nurse. The theme was ROCK SOLID? PETER'S JOURNEY, and our activities were held at Mt. Morris Camp and Conference Center in Wautoma from July 9th – 15th. The weather cooperated, with only one rainy afternoon/evening, so it was a beautiful week to be at camp!

FCC high school teens Addison McVoy-Holtz, Maura McVoy-Holtz, Bella Sanders, Gunner Sgarlata, and Riley Stern enjoyed a week of programing with director Bo Wilkinson, while Caleb Wakefield and his Junior High peers were led by Rob Fredrickson. These two groups had program twice each day focusing on the life of Peter and his journey of faith walking side by side with Jesus. The first days focused on Peter being called as a disciple, walking on water (and then sinking!), confessing of Christ, and then rebuking Jesus .... our campers could see that Peter was a stumbling block one day and a rock another!! The final program lessons included the Transfiguration, the questioning of the temple tax, Jesus washing Peter's feet and predicting his denials, the wielding of a sword and corresponding denials, and the "miraculous catch" and Peter's reinstatement. Let's just say that Peter's journey had its ups and downs! With the Senior High and Junior High camps, there are always large group presentations followed by small group time, which allows for the Scripture to be reinforced in a variety of ways.

We also had four Mini Kamp campers, including Abby Durham, Eli and Peter Jones, and Robin Thomas. Reverend Julie had a great time with this sweet group and shared the following thoughts about the week: "MiniKamp was filled with many fresh new faces, and it was wonderful to see a variety of churches represented. This entire group gelled in such a cool way, moving from activity to activity as a pack, and created long lasting friendships. We learned and sang songs about God, told campfire stories, created an amazing skit for our annual skit night, swam, crafted,



played, and showed Jesus' love for each other. We can't wait for next year! Ask any of the kids, they will tell you about it."

It is easy to share positive feedback about this transformative week as a discerning adult, so sharing testimonials from the minds and hearts of our FCC youth seems more appropriate....

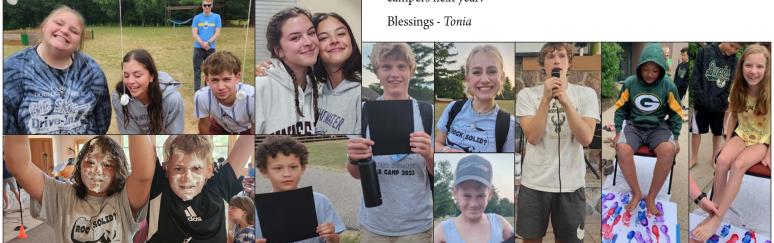
"Camp is always such a magical experience and one of the best weeks of the year. The second you step foot there you can feel the love, and it truly is one of those places where everybody belongs! Activity after activity, there's never a dull moment, and I'm always looking forward to when I can be there again." Bella Sanders

"Camp this year was a blast! It was so nice to reconnect with everyone in senior high and see everyone together again! It was also awesome learning about Simon Peter's journey and connecting it to mine, and others', lives. The activities were also so fun, and the food is always amazing!" Addison McVoy-Holtz

"It being my first time at camp, I was blown away by the people. Everyone was so nice and accepting!" Caleb Wakefield

"Camp this year was so awesome! It is always one of the highlights of my summer, and I think this year tops them all. With all of the amazing people, activities, food, and reuniting with the people we don't get to see all of the time was so great. I am already looking forward to next year!" Maura McVoy-Holtz

The welcoming nature of camp, where faith, fellowship, and fun are central to every activity, have a lasting impact on friendships and strengthening relationships with God. This continues to be one of my favorite weeks of the year, and I'm blessed to learn, grow, and connect with wonderful youth and adults. I hope to have even more First Church campers next year!



## **Mission Trip 2023**

By Tonia

Bright and early on Sunday, June 25th, our mission team gathered at FCC and headed out to Hosanna Industries in Pennsylvania for a week of

service. With a solid crew of six youth and four adult chaperones, we were able to load into two minivans for the trek eastward. We met the team from Ozaukee Congregational Church so we could caravan out together. Our team arrived at Hosanna's facility in Rochester by  $7:30^{\rm pm}$  and we were able to get settled in and prepare for our week of work in the Pittsburgh area.

On Monday, we headed into Pittsburgh to improve the home of a young man who had participated in Hosanna's inner city mentoring program years ago....he has overcome many obstacles and turned his life around. Our crew, consisting of Hosanna's "Green Shirts" and our FCC and OCC volunteers, spent the day cleaning, tearing out an old bathtub, prepping for a shower installation, painting, and tearing out carpets. It was a busy day, and we were proud of our progress.

Tuesday's project was at the same home, and so many wonderful improvements were completed. We finished painting the walls and ceilings in the dining room, living room, entry, and stairwell. A new floor was laid in the dining room and living room as well....and it looked amazing! A hot water heater was installed, along with a washer and dryer, and the basement floor was scraped and painted, too. The shower was nearly completed, which is great, because the homeowner had not had hot water since purchasing the home. And he was so appreciative of our efforts, and his smile and thankfulness made our work so worth it.

On Wednesday, we roofed a home, and with a "well-oiled machine" of a crew, completed the project in less than 5 hours! We had a busy group up on the roof and a handful of hard workers on the ground completing major yard clean up and shingle cutting. We finished so much in a short period of time, which afforded us the opportunity to return to the Hosanna campus for weeding and landscape improvements - everything looked so neat and clean!

Thursday featured another roof project, and it really needed some TLC! The homeowner had an seriously compromised roof, which had caused some damage on the inside of her home as well. Our team was again led by the awesome Hosanna staff, working side by side and learning so much along the way! We tore off old shingles and plywood, laid new board and tar paper, and applied shingles to make the roof look great again, as well as safe and dry to handle the elements. The homeowner was touched by our work and had tears rolling down her cheek as she shared her sincere appreciation during our final prayer circle together. These are the moments that make the trip so meaningful for all involved!





While it is helpful to learn about the service projects from the week, hearing directly from our volunteers has more meaning:

"With this year being my third mission trip, I have learned many things over the years while serving others. The main thing is that change is inevitable, and every group of people that you work with is different and you have to learn how to balance each other for the most fulfilling experience. After all, it's about the homeowners and not one's self. With being able to adapt to change, you can focus on others' environments and not your own, be open-minded, and make sure to remember that everybody experiences different things and learn to recognize this in any and every situation. The mission trip has made me reflect every year, and I'm looking forward to more trips to come." Bella Sanders

"This was my second year going on the mission trip, and both were great experiences. I had so much fun and grew closer to people I didn't know very well before the trip. I am scared of heights and by going on the roof and working with everyone else, I felt a great sense of achievement! I really enjoyed helping people out and seeing how we were able to change their lives in many ways. I look forward to going again next year!" Maya Hornung "I always get a good warm feeling watching the youth work as a team, knowing that they are helping others. I was proud to be part of the 3 generation team, and also enjoyed watching Drew mature. There were good positive vibes for the whole week." John Sgarlata

"It is always a humbling experience to help and serve others. This year's mission trip was no different. It was extra special to go on the trip with my son and dad. To serve God and see the expressions on the individuals' faces we helped is so rewarding." Nick Sgarlata

On behalf of the 2023 Mission Team, we want to send our most heartfelt love and appreciation to our First Congregational Church members who bought coffee and peppermint bark at Christmas time, attended the Italian Dinner & Auction, or supported the team with prayers and well wishes....it all meant the world to us!



more pictures on back page

#### The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa

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