

OCTOBER 2023

Volume 37 - Issue 10

The Congregational COLUMNS

As The Season Changes

By Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith,
Senior Minister

As I write this the trees are just beginning to change, giving hints of the glorious colors of fall that we are incredibly blessed with in Wisconsin. And I am grateful for the sense of beginnings that each season brings, causing, I hope, a sense of anticipation.

Some of you may know that, although I was born in Highland Park Illinois, I lived in Southern California (Los Angeles and San Diego) from age 8 to 14, lived in Minneapolis and Baltimore until I was 18, then lived in San Diego and Palm Springs, finally coming to Wisconsin at 27.

In addition to the lure of living closer to family, I found I longed for the cadence of the changing seasons that is my spiritual home. And in this way, I feel the seasons ground me, heightening my awareness of the possibilities God continues to offer up in my life. So, while thoughtful discernment is a very good thing, change can be a purveyor of hope.

October will mark a year of doing ministry together with all of you, and I am grateful for the year we have had, getting to know each other, "listening" along the way to how and where God is moving. You are gracious, supportive, invigorated people who welcomed, as well as challenged me. I appreciate the support as well as honest questions and concerns that you have shared. I hope we continue to deepen in all these ways.

About this time last year, we enlarged our music ministry, bringing Ellen alongside Rhonda and the choirs, and we are experiencing how good this is. Now Tesha has joined us with her spirit and gifts, enlarging pastoral care and opportunities for spiritual formation for the church and the community. I pray that with our Stewardship focus this fall our generosity will include enabling the church to continue Tesha's ministry with us. And we look forward to celebrating her ordination at the end of this month. What Joy!

First Church is in the beginning of yet another season. How good it is to see the variety of ways God is encouraging and enlivening us, to embrace all that He loves. A simple yet profound thing I noticed about all of you, even before that first Sunday in October last year, was that you had decided to "be" church and step into whatever tomorrow brings with grace and hope. How grateful I am to walk this with you.

This month, after enjoying worshipping in the Social Hall in folding chairs and around tables, we will "move" back into our beautiful Sanctuary. It is breathtaking, and I encourage you to come see, if you haven't already.

There are so many other articles in this issue from individuals and boards where you will find more information and inspiration. Enjoy.

Blessings and Peace,

- Julie



THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN WAUWATOSA

Worship & Discovery

Women's Ministry

Tuesdays, October 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31 from 8-9^{am}

Over the years, Women's Ministry has studied the Bible and the works of various authors to gain a deeper understanding of God's Word and His plan for us. Together, we find hope and encouragement for our own lives and enjoy good fellowship with one another. This past year we have worked through a one-year devotional, *Praying Through the Bible*, by Cheri Fuller. Each week we reread the past week's devotional, followed by an open discussion on the prayers and text, revealing new insights, old truths affirmed, and the character of God. There is a unique richness that flows through our mornings together.

Women's Ministry invites anyone interested to join us every Tuesday morning at 8:00 a.m. Or, feel free to sit in on specific sessions of interest. All are welcome!

Men's Ministry

Wednesdays, October 9, 11, 18 & 25 at 9^{am}

Men's Ministry is currently studying the Book of Job and discussing the issue of unmerited suffering. All are welcome to join the lively conversation. For more information contact Hank Collis.

Adult Ministry's New Format

*Sundays, October 1 & 15
at 8:45^{am}*

Beginning October 1st, Adult Ministry will meet the first and third Sundays of the month at 8:45 am in Room 107. The group will watch a video series, *The Bible for Grown-ups* by Andy Stanley, followed by time for discussion. Patty Reddy is the facilitator. Please contact Patty with any questions.



*Breast Cancer
Support Group*

*Tesha Kathryn Urban
Facilitator*

Breast cancer patients, caregivers and survivors are welcome to support one another on their journey.

JOIN US

2nd Thursday of the month, October 12
11:30 am – 1:00 pm in the Parlor

PLEASE REGISTER

Contact *Healing Hearts*
262.751.0874 / info.hhwc@gmail.com
Or visit www.healingheartswisconsin.org
to submit an inquiry.

Operating Statement Summary			
Year to Date as of August 2023			
	2023	2022	
Pledge Base Received	60.0%	61.0%	
Pledge Income	\$298,053	\$286,466	
Total Income	\$438,372	\$424,024	
Total Expense	\$398,205	\$314,905	
Net Income	\$40,167	\$109,119	

Detailed financials available in the office



*Women's
Circle*

October Meeting

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

12:00 pm Lunch—\$5 per person

1:00 pm Program —All are welcome at no cost

Program: "Some of My Favorite Quilts"
Carol Pilgrim, Presenter

Carol has an extensive collection of antique and vintage quilts and will share the history of and stories about some of her favorites.

RSVP to Colleen Foster:
fostercolleen1937@gmail.com or 414.425.6970

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

Office Telephone
414-258-7375

On-Call Minister
414-258-7378

Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith
Senior Minister

Tesha Kathryn Urban
Associate Minister

Jim Harris
Administrator

Tonia Wallner
Director of Christian Education

Rhonda Kwiecien
Director of Music & Keyboard Artist

Ellen Shuler
Director of FCC Choir

Roxanne Trump-Miles
Director of Jr. Choir

Jillian Bruss
Financial Secretary

Marianne King
Office Coordinator

Cindy Walsh - Staff Support

Mark Lund - Custodian

Cathy Denny - Columns Coordinator
sdenny1-cathy@wi.rr.com

First Congregational Church
1511 Church Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53213
(414) 258-7375

Like us on Facebook!

Claiming Our Goodness

"You can learn a lot by just watching." — Yogi Berra

A few years ago, my parents and I were walking through a neighborhood, and we came upon a handwritten message that was displayed on the pavement. The words captured my attention: "love you're self."

When you read these words, I wonder if *you're* thinking what I was thinking? My mind immediately noticed what was "wrong" with the grammar. I could sense in myself that I wanted to fix the message in the way I thought it should be. I also noticed that I began judging who the messenger might be (e.g. A young child, maybe? Someone who was hurrying, and writing too fast?).

And then it dawned on me: Whomever wrote this message is actually loving *they're* selves! And then it also dawned on me: Whomever wrote this message may have done it purposefully, as an invitation for readers to embrace *they're* imperfections with a sense of love — and a sense of humor.

Life is so fascinating and sweet when I release myself from my own judgments and the need to be "perfect," or to do things the way I think they should be. In the midst of life's situations, it can be so healing and life-giving when I allow room for curiosity — and a mind of not knowing! When I do not presume to know, it helps me open with spaciousness for more love, more acceptance, and more life.

For several weeks, I encountered the message on that pavement during my walks, until one day, I noticed the rainwater had washed it away. And then I considered something more about the message — and the messenger.

When we consider the meaning of water in relation to our baptism, the sacramental ritual reminds us of our true identity in God. When Jesus, himself, was baptized, God's voice announced to the gathered ones: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17; *italics are my emphasis*)."

When I saw that the rain had washed away the message on the pavement, I considered how the messenger was also cleansed with the reminder of *they're* self as a beloved one of God.

In my own life journey, I continue to learn and find that when I love myself more and claim God's goodness in me — my baptismal identity in God — it's easier to live into the gifts of my own imperfections, and those of others, too. When God spoke humans into being, God recognized this act as "very good." And I believe we, too, are invited to claim our very own goodness. If we see ourselves as flawed, we'll be reluctant to embrace our true identity, and we will resist leaning on God, or others, or ourselves. We will resist resting in God. And, on the other hand, if we see ourselves as good, we'll be more open to resting in God, in each other, and in ourselves.



A stepping stone in the First Church garden has these words: "Jesus' Light burns the brightest." We share our belovedness with Jesus, and we can share this brightness with each other and with ourselves too.

By Tesha Kathryn Urban,
Associate Minister



Deciding to claim our goodness means accepting that God accepts us with a wide embrace of Love. When Jesus said to the weary ones, who were carrying heavy burdens, "Come to me, all," he invited everyone (Matthew 3:28; *italics are my emphasis*). Everyone is welcomed, and every part of us is welcomed—especially, it seems, the challenging, "weary" parts. Everything is worthy of God's Love. If God called us "very good" — if God is for us — can we be for us, too?

When we claim our goodness, we open ourselves to the deepest part of us that is God.* We open ourselves to embrace our true baptismal identity and our true nature in God — and that of one another. In what ways will you "love you're self" in this season of your life? And how will you help others love *they're* selves too? And for further thought: On Thursdays from 6-7 p.m., through November 2, we are gathering at church to reflect on "Leaning on God, Embracing our Goodness." If you are seeking deeper peace, self compassion, connection with others and with God, consider joining us! Each week, we will have experiential opportunities for reflection, meditation, prayer, and more, as we enliven our spirituality and deepen our love for ourselves, one another, and God. Come for part of the hour or all of it. Each week is different, and everyone is welcome, whether familiar with our church community or not. *You're* welcome to contact me with questions or a connection (tesha@firstchurchtosa.org or 262-443-8955).

**Reference to Christian mystic, Catherine of Siena, who wrote the "deepest me is God."*

Music Notes

All Are Welcome to Join Us!

By Rhonda Kwiecien, Director of Music/Keyboard Artist

We are bringing back our women's and men's choirs! Anyone who loves to sing is invited to join!

Our women's choir, Bella Voce, will rehearse on Sunday, October 1, 8, and 15 from 9:00 am to 9:30 am in the Choir Room (LL1) and will sing for the worship service on October 22.

Our men's choir, Basso Voce, will rehearse on Sunday, October 22, 29, and November 5 from 9:00 am to 9:30 am in the Choir Room (LL1) and will sing for the worship service on November 5.

Come, raise your voices in song!!

JUST FOR YOUTH

October 2023



Sunday School

Sunday, October 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29
for ages 4 – 5th grade

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

Pilgrim Fellowship class learns about Communion in preparation for World Communion on Sunday, October 1.

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

Sunday, October 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29
for grades 6 – 12

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

Junior Choir

Sunday, October 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29
for K-8th grades Meet at 9:15^{am} in LL4
Children usually sing once a month.

Covenant Class

October 1, 15 & 29 for 9th graders
8:30^{am} in the Conference Room.



Catch Up with Stewardship and Benevolence

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. - Hebrew 13:16

Scholarship Updates

This year Stewardship & Benevolence awarded four scholarships to our impressive youth:

Recipient **Katie York** is attending the University of Kentucky, and her application highlights her many activities, jobs, and clubs. Katie started a Positivity Club at her school, writing that the club is “to provide more uplifting days for others, as you never know what people are going through.” Her memories of First Church and the wonderful kids’ programs will guide her as she continues to improve her relationship with God during her college years.

Recipient **Katie Huitink** is attending Butler University in Indianapolis to study Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Her experience as a VBS Counselor, Tennis Coach, Certified Nursing Assistant and Christmas Workshop volunteer will aid her as she continues to work to help others and improve lives. Unfortunately, she was unable to follow her love of tennis due to injuries, but she found the silver lining and learned the important lessons of patience, resilience, and empathy, which will serve her well as she helps others.

Recipient **Abi Masloroff** is attending the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh to pursue studies in Psychology. One of her goals is to help the mentally disadvantaged to ensure they know they are not alone in this world. Her experience working with a child psychologist exposed her to “different communication styles of kids, temperament management, and a lot of control and patience.” The foundation and people of First Church will give her

a comfortable place to return to and keep God close as she grows in college.

Recipient **Brynn Jeide** is attending the University of Mississippi to pursue Sports Management. Her work and experience in management and yearly volunteering with the youth during VBS have given her valuable tools as she continues to grow and meet the challenges of college. She will use the foundation of First Church and the fellowship that it offers to guide her during her years in college.

Watch for the Stewardship Drive

The board is finalizing the theme and letter of appeal for this fall’s Pledge Drive. We are looking for volunteers to share testimonials regarding their feelings toward First Church and their experiences as a member of the congregation. People willing to share a testimonial will be included in a few Sunday Worship Services this fall. Feel free to reach out to the board if you feel called to share your story.

We, like other boards, are reviewing our Bylaws to benchmark and discuss whether changes are warranted for our future goals. In parallel, we are reviewing the benevolences we currently support to ensure they align with our Covenant and our members’ passions.

Finally, exciting things are coming as other boards have asked to work with us to expand our giving.

Stewardship and Benevolence,

*Fred Kingsley, Deb Hayden, Bobby Russ, Kristen Sterns,
Sharon Raymond, Dylan Thomas*

Excitement is Building

The Chancel Renovation project continues to progress according to schedule. The beautiful new floor has been installed and finished. The new lectern was delivered the week of September 10th, and the new pulpit and communion table were delivered the week of September 17th. The final trim work is being installed and will be ready for painting. The final electrical work is being completed, and the new microphones will be installed after the pulpit is delivered. The piano and organ are scheduled to be moved onto the new platform on September 28th.

For video updates on the Chancel Renovation, please go online to www.firstchurchtosa.org. On the Home Page, click on Streaming Services. You will find the latest renovation video among the Worship Service videos.

Take a peek when you are here Sunday!



Church Community, Friends, Family & Neighbors
please join us to

Celebrate the Joy of Advent
through the reading of Scripture,
singing of beloved carols and fellowship
at

First Congregational Church Advent Tea
Saturday, December 2, 2023
in the Social Hall

Doors open 2:00pm • Program 2:30pm

Consider Hosting a Table!

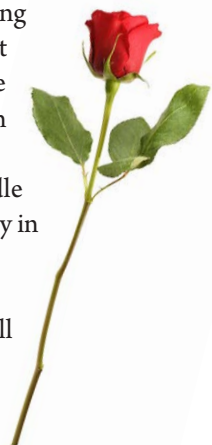
To hostess contact Patty Reddy: patreddywauwatosa@gmail.com

Sign up in the Atrium or call 414-258-7375

Remembrance Sunday

Sunday, November 5, is Remembrance Sunday. We are continuing our tradition of tolling the bell and placing a single red rose in the vase as the name of each First Church family member who passed away during the past 12 months is read. In addition, there will be an extended moment of silence during which anyone may approach the front of the church to light a candle in remembrance of anyone else who has passed away in the last year.

A list of those who died during the past 12 months is being compiled by the Office staff and will be placed on the Gathering Table in the Atrium in mid-October. You are invited to add the name of a family member or other individual who has been omitted.



The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa
1511 Church Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53213-2593

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