

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

Volume 39 - Issue 2

# The Congregational COLUMNS

## A New Schedule for Columns

By **Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith**,  
Senior Minister



We are moving toward a new framework for The Columns and we look forward to your feedback. We intend to continue having this publication tell us about the life of the church, in a 6 times a year rotation. We will continue to have our weekly E-blast, and Green Sheet, as well as announcements to communicate pertinent information and upcoming events. We are trying out the shift publication dates with this issue, which covers February and March, including the Season of Lent through Easter. We welcome feedback if our weekly methods of communication are insufficient for you to utilize as our goal is to ensure you are fully informed. Please let Julie, Tesha, or the Office know of any questions or concerns.

And now, picture spring, and children finding Easter eggs on the church lawn. We hardy Midwesterners expect a bit of snow and ice around Valentines Day, but we optimistically hope for budding flowers by Easter. Nope, not this year. The beginning of Lent and Easter are almost as early as they can be, with Ash Wednesday on February 14, (please see Tesha's article about Ash Wednesday and other opportunities for Lent) and Easter March 31.

Lent is, for me and I hope for you, a deepening time as we contemplate, bring our questions and experiences to this season that leads us toward Easter.

As I write we are in the midst of a deep cold, yet I am excited to tell you about this Lenten season, "Sharing the Wilderness Journey." I hope you can be with us or join us online February 11 as our Chancel Choir will present the musically dynamic "Moses" by Ken Medema, interlaced with the scripture and message of God calling Moses to "throw down" stumbling blocks and "pick up" life, to journey through the wilderness toward God's promise for us all. Let me tell you a bit about some opportunities Tesha and I, through conversations with the board of Deacons, Christian Education, Benevolence/Stewardship, and Fellowship, invite you to take part in:

**Prayer:** Is there something for yourself, for others, or for the world you might ask God to help you "throw down stumbling blocks" or help you "pick up?" Please email a line or two about this to Julie. Your thoughts (although I will not attach any names to them) will help frame our prayers through Lent. Email [julie@firstchurchtosa.org](mailto:julie@firstchurchtosa.org) or call.

**Practices:** Pick up a book discussion. Using chapters from Barbara Brown Taylor's "An Altar in the World" we will consider simple practices within everyday life meeting either on Sunday after church or Wednesdays at 6pm (5:30 optional light supper). Come as often as interested or able, chapters are individual topics such as:

- February 18 and 21, The Practice of Getting Lost – Wilderness
- February 25 and 28, The Practice of Waking Up to God – Vision
- March 3 and 6, The Practice of Encountering Others – Community
- March 10 and 13, The Practice of Saying No – Sabbath
- March 17 and 20, The Practice of Feeling Pain – Breakthrough

A limited supply of books available in the church office at \$12

**Picking up Outreach:** We are working with our Benevolence/Stewardship board to determine several local organizations where we can spend a Saturday morning serving



THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
IN WAUWATOSA

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# Worship & Discovery

## Women's Ministry

Tuesdays from 8-9<sup>am</sup> in the Library

Women's Ministry invites anyone interested to join us every Tuesday morning at 8:00<sup>am</sup>. We are currently reading "Women of the Bible" by Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda. When offered, feel free to sit in on specific sessions of interest. All are welcome!

## Men's Ministry

Wednesdays, at 9<sup>am</sup> in the Lounge

Join us in the Lounge for lively conversation on interesting topics. For more information, contact Hank Collis at hcollis@twc.com.

## Adult Ministry

First & Third Sundays at 9<sup>am</sup> in Room 107

Adult Ed meets the first and third Sundays of every month at 9:00<sup>am</sup>. We are working our way through the Book of Ephesians. All are welcome. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Patty Reddy at patreddywauwatosa@gmail.com

## Women's Circle Takes a Look at Bosnia

On Tuesday, February 13, Women's Circle features Bojana Gajic, who will speak about Bosnia as it is today. The event is at 12:30<sup>pm</sup> in the Friendship Lounge.

All are welcome to hear this interesting program. Coffee and dessert will be served.

Please RSVP if you plan to attend by contacting Colleen Foster: fostercolleen1937@gmail.com or 414.425.6970.

## Throwing Down Fears, and Picking Up Life

Saturday, March 23 from 9<sup>am</sup>-Noon, followed by lunch

The workshop will explore and understand our relationship with fear and worry, especially related to death and dying.

## Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 14 from 7-8<sup>pm</sup>

We will holy gather in the Nave for a time of reflection. Personal blessings will be provided, as well, with oil and/or ashes.

## Join the Conversation!

Rev. Gerry B. Krupp, NACCC Director of Programs, along with the ministry councils, offer webinars for member churches. Each one has a learning segment and facilitated dialogue. There are different topics every month, each lasting about one hour.

Webinars are free of charge and open to members of NACCC member churches unless otherwise specified. Click the links below to RSVP for our upcoming webinars.

- January 25, 2024 at 2:00<sup>pm</sup> – Child Safety – Abuse Prevention Part 4
- Coming up: (stay tuned for the time and more information):
- February 1, 2024 – FaithTrust Institute; Professional Boundaries; improving ethical behavior among clergy.
- February 15, 2024 – Child Safety: community awareness, warning signs, how to appropriately respond to reports of abuse.
- February 29, 2024 – Youth Ministry Network; "How to connect our children and student ministries within the Association."

For more information about the above webinars, go online to: <https://www.naccc.org/upcoming-webinars-2/>

### Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of December 2023

	2023	2022
Pledge Base Rec'd	102.0%	101.0%
Pledge Income	\$501,636	\$475,472
Total Income	\$713,596	\$662,408
<u>Total Expense</u>	<u>\$641,608</u>	<u>\$590,139</u>
Net Income	\$37,665	\$72,269

Detailed financials available in the office

## 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](http://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](mailto:sdenny1-cathy@wi.rr.com)

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

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# Embracing the Journey of Lent for Spiritual Growth

By **Tesha Kathryn Urban**,  
Associate Minister



When I was in my clinical residency program for spiritual care, my supervisor engaged my cohort members, asking “What is a meaningful dimension of your faith tradition that is grounding for you?” Her question deepened our understanding of interfaith traditions and each other.

In our Christian tradition, I appreciate the liturgical calendar. The Christian year is a special rhythm that guides my footing and keeps me grounded, inspired, and connected to God, others, and myself. I love sharing the spiritual journey with fellow seekers.

Lent, especially, is my favorite season of the church year. It is an opening for intentional spiritual renewal and growth, inviting us to pause and reflect more deeply on how we carry and share crosses, and then, open to resurrected life once again.

“We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay,” wrote theologian and scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. “We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability.”

Lent is like this. Instead of skipping to Easter Sunday, we traverse through the Lenten wilderness of instability, as we are held together, with stability, as followers of Jesus Christ. Being able to journey all the way through and emerge on Easter Sunday—with deepened transformation—is worth the pilgrimage.

During this Lenten season, I join Rev. Julie with enthusiasm in opening spaces for deepened formation. I hope you might consider joining the following opportunities, and please invite your social circles! Let’s draw the circle wide and enliven the world around us with the gift of spiritual sustenance and community.

Ash Wednesday Service (Wednesday, February 14 from 7 p.m.-8 p.m.) — Ash Wednesday begins on Valentine’s Day, and what a poignant way to initiate the Lenten journey by welcoming God’s love within us and among us. If you make the commitment to your Lenten transformational journey, begin with us Ash Wednesday. We will create a sacred and special space for our holy gathering and time for

reflection. Personal blessings will be provided, as well, with oil and/or ashes. The service will be live-streamed.

Pilgrimage to Holy Hill (Sunday, March 17 from 2 p.m.-6 p.m., includes travel time to/from church and an optional dinner at The Sawmill Inn Restaurant) — The Lenten season is a meaningful time to reflect upon Jesus’ path to Calvary, and the crosses we carry too. Nestled in the woods behind Holy Hill is a beautiful arrangement of “stations” with life-size figures that depict Jesus’s journey on the day of his crucifixion. Together, these images represent the “Way of the Cross.” Join us as we walk it together with deepened understanding, prayer, and reflection of Jesus’ journey, and our own. Afterwards, we will return to the basilica for a time of contemplation before departing to The Sawmill Inn for dinner and connection. We are opening this invitation to churches of the Wisconsin Congregational Association, along with our neighboring churches in Wauwatosa. Come and meet new friends! We will carpool and leave the church parking lot at 2 p.m.

“Throwing Down Fears, and Picking Up Life” (Saturday, March 23 from 9 a.m.- Noon, with lunch afterwards) — We all carry fears and worries that limit our fullness of living life. During our morning gathering, we will explore and understand our relationship with fear and worry, especially related to death and dying. We will open to how we can live with greater freedom and enlivenment. The workshop will include a combination of presentation/lecture, experiential activities, and space for personal reflection. A light lunch will be served afterwards. We will open this invitation to churches of the Wisconsin Congregational Association, along with our neighboring churches in Wauwatosa. Join us, as we prepare to throw down our fears and pick up life!

The Lenten journey opens us to meaningful and transformational encounters with our faith together. I look forward to sharing the spiritual journey with you and welcoming to us God’s continued love.

## A New Schedule for Columns *continued from page 1*

and learning more about the people and needs they serve. Watch for updates on that.

And continuing the connection Women’s Circle began with Tosa Cares, we will launch our Personal Care Item drive with the Chili Cookoff and Dessert Bakeoff Competition (believe me it really “heats up”). Please bring personal care items such as full size shampoo, soap, deodorant. Check the table in the Atrium for a list of needs, and please “pick up” a few things to help households in need. First Church is Tosa Cares main resource for these items and what you offer makes a difference.

Join in with Bag Lunches for St. Vincent after church on March 17. Please also note the opportunity to deliver these to their Cross Roads Kitchen site at 9th and Madison.

Holy Week: Palm Sunday sings out Hosanna. Invite someone and stay after worship for Hot Cross Buns and a Make and Take activity for your homes.

Maundy Thursday we will gather in the Social Hall to imagine gathering with Jesus for the Last Supper. A casual setting for all ages as we share a meal prepared by the Deacons between readings, hymns, choral anthems, candle lighting at each table, and communion.

And Good Friday...you do not want to miss the opportunity to enter in and be moved by Jesus’ prayer, “Gethsemane” from “Jesus Christ Superstar” This deeply meaningful service carries the final journey to the cross through powerful scripture, hymns, and choral offerings that will leave you changed.

Easter morning we peer into the empty tomb and then raise our Alleluia’s together! This time is wrapped between the annual Easter Egg Hunt and abundantly Sweet Fellowship.

Explore this journey with us, invite others to consider what God may be asking, “What are you holding that you can “throw down” or let go of, and what is being offered in order to “pick up” life? And as always, let’s experience and talk more about it together.

# Moderator's Report By Mike Huitink

As I come to the end of my term as Moderator, I wanted to express my thanks to all of you for your support and your efforts this past year. I knew this church had dedicated members, but I did not fully appreciate the depth of the commitment and talents so many people bring to this church community. Congregationalism is not a "top-down" theology, and this church is true to that doctrine in that it is led by its members and thrives because of all of your efforts.

We accomplished much in 2023. We completed another chapter in our emergence from COVID, and our efforts to bring the church into a new era after Julie joined us as Senior Minister in 2022. The pinnacle was adding Tesha as an Associate Minister this fall, filling our ministerial ranks for the first time in approximately four years. You stepped up to fund and commit to that position in our 2023 pledge campaign. We completed our new worship space, our education and music programs (children and adult) continue to thrive and grow, we are making new strides to increase our presence on social media such as Facebook, and we are beginning to grow our membership, and our staff reports an outstanding working environment at the church.

That does not mean there are not challenges ahead, and we must be prepared to meet them. Our stewardship campaign met most of our needs, but we needed to place less money into our deferred maintenance reserve to provide well-deserved and needed cost of living increases for our employees. We need to support new efforts of our members, as well as initiatives from Julie and Tesha, to grow our church community. January's after-church Winter Farmers Market was a good example of that, as is Julie's current outreach to other churches in Wauwatosa to discuss and address community issues. We need to continue to expand our Christian education program, which has thrived for children for years, to our adults as well.

All of this will take a renewed commitment from all to accomplish new things, in new and different ways. Nothing I have seen in 2023 gives me any doubt about that commitment, or about our potential. I am very happy to report that the end of 2023 sees this church in a very good place, and well-positioned for growth and enrichment in 2024.



# Living Gracefully By Sarah DeYoung, Care Board Member

As I prepared to talk with this month's featured individual, Jackie Hipke, it dawned on me that, although I sensed a grace and strength in her life, I knew little about its origins. I knew Jackie had a career in nursing, but didn't know that career lasted over 30 years, and much of that time she served as a nursing supervisor at West Allis Women's Pavilion in Obstetrics. And outside of Jackie's work life there were other events that shaped her grace and strength. Here is what I learned:

Jackie Hipke (my computer spell correct keeps wanting me to use "Hipster" instead of "Hipke") was raised in the Highlands of Wauwatosa and attended Wauwatosa High School. She met her husband, Bob, in 7th grade, and they started dating their junior year after four and a half years of friendship. She occasionally joined Bob's family for activities at First Congregational Church, his family's home church. Jackie went to nursing school in Chicago after studying at Madison for three semesters. In August of 1966 Jackie and Bob were married at First Church. Bob was drafted into the Army soon after and was sent to Germany following officers training.

When Bob left for Germany, Jackie continued her work as a nurse and was to join Bob after she delivered their newborn, due several months later. On Valentine's Day 1968 it was decided that Jackie would be induced. Prior to delivery, the baby changed positions, and sadly, the baby was trapped and died prior to delivery.

Later in our discussion I asked Jackie if there was an experience with our church that was important for her faith journey. She answered, "After delivering our infant, with Bob still in Germany and my parents in Minnesota, my dad was to come the next day. While still in the delivery recovery area, a minister was notified and came to offer support to me. He stayed to pray with me and offer comfort for about 20 minutes. Those minutes I have never forgotten.

"With Bob still in Germany, I made it a point to attend First Church each Sunday if I wasn't working. Attending First Church gave me comfort. And I then started reading The Upper Room each

day. After reading it each night I would then pray to God. I still do."

I asked Jackie if there was anything she has learned from the ups and downs of life that might be helpful for others to think about. Here is her response:

"When I retired after 35 years of nursing, I felt a bit lost. I was now able to attend church on a more regular basis and am happy I seldom miss a Sunday.

"I suggest that each person get involved in the church and start with an activity that feels most comfortable. For me it was in the environment of caring for others in the church. I accepted a position on the Care Board and served two terms. I met and worked with people I previously only knew by sight. Also, if you're shy, I suggest that you wear your name tag. Others are more relaxed around you if they know your name. If you're able, attend one of the Bible studies. You can meet new church members who quickly become your friends by sharing experiences or problems.

"You know your own interests and time limits, and there are many groups needing volunteers. You just need to find the group that fits you best."

Jackie and her husband Bob raised their children Deborah and Robert in the activities of First Church. When talking about her love for time spent with her kids and six grandchildren, Jackie credits her parents with providing some of the glue that has kept them close. Jackie's parents loved to participate in the city's curling club. Many hours of family time have revolved around ice time, thanks to Jackie's mom and dad passing their curling passion on to her.

Many thanks to Jackie for sharing her experiences and passion for our church's life. While currently not an official member, she remains helpful to our Care Board. Jackie assists by spreading the word to her fellow neighbors at Harwood Place about the church's activities, like the monthly communion service that FCC provides to Harwood residents.



# JUST FOR YOUTH

February/March 2024



## Sunday School

February 4, 11, & 25 • March 3, 10, 24 & 31 for ages 4 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
Children will begin in church with their families during 10<sup>am</sup> worship and dismissed to Sunday School during the service.

## Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

February 4, 11 & 25 • March 3, 10, 24 & 31 grades 6-12  
Teens begin in church with their families during 10<sup>am</sup> worship and dismissed to PF during the service.

## Youth Service Initiative Sundays

February 18 & March 17  
High school youth will serve as liturgist, ushers, and greeters, and will remain in the Nave for Worship. Children aged 4 - 8<sup>th</sup> grade will attend a special Chapel Service once dismissed from Worship.

**Covenant Class** February 4 & 18 • March 3 & 17  
in the Conference Room for 9<sup>th</sup> graders 8:30<sup>am</sup>

## Junior Choir

February 4, 11, 18 & 25 • March 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31  
for K-8<sup>th</sup> grades Meet at 9:15<sup>am</sup> in LL4.  
Children usually sing once a month.

## Faith Finders

Monday, February 12 • Monday, March 11 for 1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> graders  
We meet on the second Monday of the month for fellowship, games, and program time. We begin with an optional dinner at 5<sup>pm</sup>, followed by activities from 5:30 - 6:30<sup>pm</sup>. Friends are welcome!  
No cost, but donations for the meal are appreciated.

## GRUB AND SCRUB

Formerly known as Chili Cookoff and Dessert Bakeoff

When the weather gets chilly it means Grub and Scrub is right around the corner. This year's event is

**February 25<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>am</sup> to 1<sup>pm</sup> in the Social Hall.**

For the first time, Fellowship Board is teaming up with Women's Circle to include a Tosa Cares drive as part of the cookoff/bakeoff. Going forward, Women's Circle will hold its Tosa Cares drive in late winter/early spring, and this is a good way to kick off the new schedule. You are encouraged to bring a personal care/hygiene item with you to the cookoff/bakeoff.

Come to compete or simply to eat! Sample competing chilis and desserts prepared by members of the congregation and vote for your favorites. Enjoy John Sgarlata's (*your favorite Italian Chef*) homemade chili with all the fixings for:

\$5 dollar per adult • \$3 for kids ages 4-12 • kids under 3 free  
Feed the whole family for \$15!

If you are entering chili or a dessert, here are your guidelines:

- Sunday, February 25: Bring your entry to the Social Hall between 7:45<sup>am</sup> and 10<sup>am</sup>.
- Chili entries must be in a crock pot to keep it warm.
- Dessert entries need to be pre-cut into small pieces.

(think 1" squares - so everyone can sample)

Voting will take place between 11<sup>am</sup>-1<sup>pm</sup>. The top three chilis and desserts will be awarded at 1<sup>pm</sup>.

Please sign up on the Gathering Table in the Atrium to let us know if you are coming to eat, compete with a chili or dessert, or doing both.

The Fellowship Board is teaming with the Woman's Circle's

TOSA  
CARES

Drive as part of the Cookoff/Bakeoff.

You are encouraged to bring a personal care/hygiene item to the event.

## Music Notes



## All Are Welcome to Join Us!

From Rhonda Kwiecien, Director of Music/Keyboard Artist

As we begin the season of Lent, we take a closer look at one of the most widely sung and played Lenten hymns.

"Were You There?" is a spiritual out of the African-American tradition, likely pre-dating the Civil War. The hymn was first published in 1899 in William Barton's "Old Plantation Hymns".

The familiar text invites us into the shared experience of Christ's final days and, ultimately, his death on the cross. Most often sung during our Good Friday service, we join Christians around the world, remembering. Our voices are filled with mourning, but also with hope, as we journey from the cross to the empty tomb on Easter morning.

Today, the well-known hymn can be found in 209 hymnals, including two Spanish-language hymnals.

Were You There? has been transcribed for organ, piano, choir, solo instruments (including oboe), and handbells.

From Roxanne Trump-Miles, Junior Choir Director

### Greetings to families of children ages 4-14!

Your children are all welcome to come and sing with the Junior Choir. We will sing on Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, waving our palms and singing Hosanna! We also sing on April 21<sup>st</sup> and, then again, on Mother's Day, May 12<sup>th</sup>. We will have one last performance for the season on Children's Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We have a great group of kids singing and there is ALWAYS room for many more. Questions? Please email Roxanne Miles [daveroxmiles@aol.com] or call 414-202-8089.

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

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## Easter Plant Order Form

**Deadline: Wednesday, March 3, 2024**

Bring springtime into your church and home.  
Your plants will decorate the Nave for Easter, April 4<sup>th</sup>, and  
may be taken home following the 10<sup>am</sup> service.

Return this form to the Church Office  
with your check for \$18.00 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.