

Tower Notes -September 2023

Celebrating 178 years of Community Based Ministry



First Congregational United Church of Christ
An Open & Affirming and Immigrant Welcoming Church

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Pastor's Message

Dear Members and Friends of
Janesville UCC!

It is hard to imagine anything more beautiful or more important to our life than the gift of God's Creation. Our breath depends on it. Our food comes from it. Our sense of awe and wonder springs forth from it. The Earth and all that is in it makes our life possible. In Wisconsin we are watching the air quality alerts as the smoke from Canadian wildfires drift southward poisoning our air. We are experiencing summers that are too hot, too cold, and too dry. Migration patterns of birds are changing. Trees are leafing out too soon and turning colors too early. Our apples are ripening too fast and our home gardens are suffering. Yet, even as we are dealing with the effects of climate change, we know little about how the earth is groaning under the weight of these changes. What should our Christian response be?

This month we begin a six-week series on *Caring for God's Creation*. We will look at relevant scriptures, learn important information about climate justice, and explore ways we can make a difference as a church and individually at home. Our Sunday School classes will focus on Caring for God's Creation also, with activities and education on how the earth is to be shared. Our Outreach Ministry for the month is Eco Justice. The new

stained-glass window being made for our sanctuary, called *Caring for God's New Creation*, celebrates God's redeeming work after wars and natural disasters. This is the moment where we can use our Christian faith, our intelligence, and our actions to protect, heal, and work for climate justice for our world. To do that let us learn all we can and discern a way God can use us for the good earth.

Let us not be discouraged! Let us join hands and hearts and Care for God's Creation together!

Pastor Tanya

Psalm 104 NRSVUE **God the Creator and Provider**

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul.

O LORD my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,

² wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent;

³ you set the beams of your^r chambers on the
waters; you make the clouds your chariot; you ride
on the wings of the wind;

⁴ you make the winds your^r messengers

...

¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the cattle
and plants for people to cultivate, to bring forth
food from the earth
¹⁵ and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine and bread to strengthen
the human heart.
¹⁶ The trees of the field are watered abundantly, the
cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

¹⁷ In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
¹⁸ The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the rabbits.
...
²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;

Worship in September

September 3: Air/Winds/Climate: Caring for God's Creation #1
September 10: Water/Oceans: Caring for God's Creation #2
September 17: Soil/Land: Caring for God's Creation #3
September 24: Animals – Blessing Day: Caring for God's Creation #4

Thank you to our August liturgists: Diane Henrichs, Neil Deupree, Nathan Roehl and Sarah Beers.

If you would like to be a liturgist, sign-up in the Fireside Room, or logon to
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508084aaba722a0f85-fall/124247659#/>

Thank you to our August Fellowship Hour host: Diana Huckstep.

We would love to have you host Fellowship/Coffee Hour, sign up on the clip-board in the Fireside Room, or use this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508084AABA722A0F85-fellowship>

Thanks to our August ushers and to those who stepped up at the last minute to help out during the offering. Please sign up on the clipboard in the Fireside Room.

September BIRTHDAYS, Happy Day to All!

1 Molly Holtz	8 Ilah Hartung	16 Brandi Dye
3 Denise Essen	9 Kimberly Roberts	20 Aaron Bagley
3 Nishanth Sadagopan	10 Tommy Swenson	22 Tanya Sadagopan
4 Jayden Murwin	11 Kali Hemm	24 Kathy Arndt
5 Carole Kies	11 Joan Ogden	24 Ruth Robinson
6 Deanna Jensen	13 Andy Hopkins	26 Todd Myers
7 Mike Cioni	13 Ross Lalor	29 Karel Cripe
7 Kay Deupree	15 Eloise Shebesta	



September ANNIVERSARIES, Congratulations

8 Whitney & Mike Cioni	14 Dave & Deanna Jensen
13 Dave & Sonja Bagley	20 Richard & Sherry Klossner
13 Jim & Ann Hyzer	24 Aria Jaeger & Lilin Rue



If your name ever gets missed from the birthday or anniversary list, please let Becky know.

Free Community Dinner



The next Community Meal will be on Saturday, September 2 at 4:00 pm. Brown bag lunches will be available that include shredded pork sandwiches, watermelon, garden veggies, chips and Rice Krispie bars.

Guests can drive up to the back door and meals will be delivered to their vehicle. Contact Bonnie Stalker or Nancy Stabb for more information or to help.

A special thank you goes out to Thrivent and Kwik Trip for their generous donations to our Community Meal fund. It truly does help!



As we are fed at Christ's table we go out to feed others.
The first Sunday of every month is Grocery Bag Sunday.
Take one home and fill it with some items listed below.
Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

*Life is an echo...
what you send out,
you get back!*

ECHO September Needs:

Diapers (sz 4-6)	Toothbrushes	Spaghettios
Peanut butter & jelly	Feminine products	Tuna Helper
Spaghetti & sauce	Deodorant	Toilet paper
Diced tomatoes	Dish soap	Canned Tuna/Chicken
Brown paper bags	Shampoo	Laundry Soap
Hamburger Helper	Breakfast bars	Soup



Spencer LaJoye Concert on
Saturday, October 7th, 7:00 pm.



Consistory Highlights from August 8, 2023

On August 8, 2023, Consistory voted to move forward with the design and installation of two new stained-glass windows.

Consistory approved the proposed design for the *Caring for God's New Creation* window as submitted and to empower Pastor Tanya to work with the stained-glass window studio to make any minor changes deemed necessary for the construction and installation phases of the project. This window is given in honor of Richard and Joan Skyles.

Consistory also approved the proposed design of the *Our Silent Night of Refuge* window with the following changes confirmed by Consistory: three figures will show full facial features without masks and be singing, and the other three figures will show a combination of scarves and masks at the artists discretion. Consistory again empowered Pastor Tanya to work with the stained-glass window studio to negotiate these changes and see to the completion of the construction and installation phases of the project. This window is given in memory of Lillie Markham and Greg Anderson.

September Music Program

Now that both our Pianist/Organist and Director of Music have retired we will be having substitute pianists and volunteers sharing special music until we are able to hire new staff members. Given the shallow pool of talent, this process may take a while for us to accomplish. In August Pastor Tanya asked our now retired Director of Music Brian Knutson to provide music coverage to extend our summer music program for the month of September. We have a pianist for each Sunday organized for September. We also have some special music arranged for September, but not all weeks are covered. We are looking for a volunteer point person who can welcome our guest musicians on Sundays and help organize our Sunday service musical offerings until we can hire appropriate permanent staff persons. Please let the office know if you are interested in this short term volunteer opportunity. Would you like to share a musical offering as special music? Please let the office know.

In the meantime, say a few prayers for God to send us some good applications for our open music positions. Thank you!

Sunday, August 27th was Brian and Jan Knutson's last day. Brian has been choir director for over 19 years, Jan has been organist/pianist for about 2 years. Here are some pictures from our Outdoor Service that day.



To the Members of First Congregational United Church of Christ:

Thank you so much for the love and support extended to our family these past nineteen years. It has been an honor and privilege to serve in the music ministry at First Congregational. We want to express our appreciation for the many good wishes and thoughtful gifts presented to us at the outdoor service this past Sunday. We also wish to thank the many dedicated members and music scholars who have given so much to enhance our worship services through their gifts of music. You all are a blessing to First Congregational Church. Please know you will always have a special place in our hearts.

Blessings,

Brian and Jan





Our Welcome sign by the parking lot doors needed some love and attention. It was faded and rotting. It had definitely seen better days. Tabitha Ebert did all the hard work of scraping and restoring, then painted the blue to match our front doors. Desiree Halson added the colorful lettering. The result is a beautiful bright and welcoming sign. Check out the "before" and "after" photos!



What a great *Rock the Pride 2023* event on August 12 in Beloit! Thanks to our amazing volunteers for sharing how we are an Open and Affirming church!

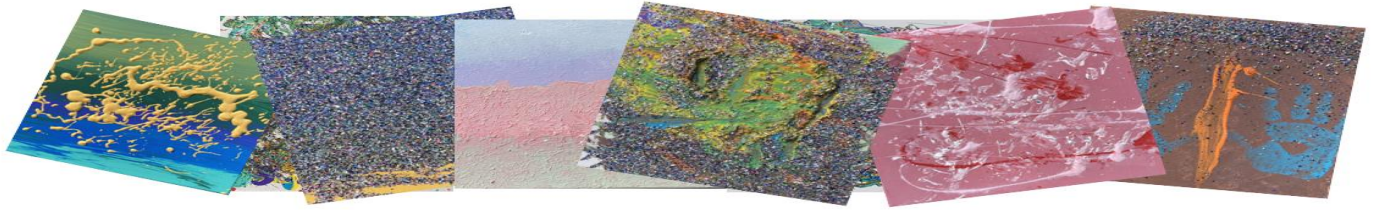


New Audio-Visual Technician Job Opening

Working closely with Darla Dernovsek and researching similar positions, we created a new Sunday only position that would be in charge of Video streaming and running the sound system based on a proposed hourly wage of \$15/hour. This is an ideal position for a high school or college aged person who has some experience with sound and/or AV equipment. Please share about this position within your community.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS

Outdoor Church was so much fun! We did some crazy art, sang along with the wonderful Jazz for Jesus, and even did a little interpretive dance. **Thanks so much** to everyone who helped make this day a success for the kids. Photos of the art are posted on Facebook.



Fall Sunday School: CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

Begins: September 10, 2023

Registration: Please see Debi Cox to make sure your child's registration is up to date.



If you have talked to me lately, you know that I am excited for Sunday School this Fall. You are too. I need your help to create the amazing experience our kids deserve. I have all the plans. I will do all the prep. I just need some of you that could help me out. Maybe 1 Sunday a month? Or just for a special event? Come in and read us the book for that day? Help with art? Pop in and do 1 thing and then go back to service? You tell me.

Talk to Debi Cox. 651-387-4552 debi@janesvilleucc.org



From OUTREACH:

Eco Justice, 2023

September is the month for our church congregation to focus on eco-justice. Many ideas and topics were presented and discussed at the Kaira Green Lake Summit in May of 2023. Kairos is an Ancient Greek term that means, “opportune moment.”

One can't help but realize when viewing the news, that NOW is truly the opportune time to care for mother earth. At the conference, we were encouraged to “start small” but think **BIG!**

Here are 2 ways we can start “small” in September, 2023, but a personal dream of mine is to “Think BIG.” Outreach Ministry can lead, but we need all to be involved.

1. **Plastics:** educate ourselves on how much energy it takes to make plastic containers as well as learning what happens next when they are thrown away or recycled.
 2. **Trash pick-ups** in selected local parks, neighborhoods or needed areas.
- *Please have conversations with your outreach committee members and let them know if you would prefer # 1 or 2 as our September focus.

Outreach Committee members:

Jill Gant, Rich Harper, Kira Myers, Dave Schollmeier, Kathy Arndt and Patti York.

SEEKERS BOOK CLUB NEWS

Seekers book discussion group meets on Thursdays from 4:00-5:30 pm on the second floor of the church. They are reading “The Gospel in Brief” by Leo Tolstoy. You can attend even if you haven't read the book. For further information, contact Barbara Bendlin at bbendlin@centurytel.net.



Thank you to Hedberg Library for visiting us during the summer months. The neighborhood children and YMCA group really benefited.

Consistory Highlights from August 29

Consistory expressed appreciation to many members:

- to Dr. Brian Knutson and Jan Knutson for their contributions to the church's music program,
- to Jean Schollmeier for her work with Pastor Tanya in organizing the farewell worship service honoring Brian and Jan Knutson as well as to everyone who helped to set up and put things away after the service,
- to Pastor Tanya for her summer sermon series and her Q & A sessions at the end of each service,
- to Gary Teubert and Nathan Roehl for their work as ushers,
- to Tabitha Ebert and Desiree Halson for their refurbishing of the sign at the parking lot entrance to the church, and
- to Patti York and Rich Harper for their work at the GIFTS shelter.

The church continued its outreach to the community through offering a week of meals for the GIFTS shelter, hosting a table at the Rock the Pride event, and providing a bounce house for the Fourth Ward's back-to-school celebration. The YMCA summer program was a success and is expected to return in summer 2024. Also, a Peruvian family will be moving to the area, and we will have the opportunity to donate household goods to help them settle into their new home.

Outreach Ministry continues to prepare for the October 7 Spencer LaJoye concert.

Volunteers are needed on Sunday mornings to host coffee hour and to serve as ushers. After the September 10 worship service, Nancy Stabb will be available to answer any questions about being an usher.

New people are being welcomed into the church staff. Debi Cox has assumed the position of Director of Christian Education. Dr. Brian Knutson, Director of Music, and Jan Knutson, pianist/organist, have retired, and Stephanie Natale has resigned as the Digital Communications Coordinator. These openings have been posted. Also, Bonnie Stalker is assisting in the church office.

Consistory approved the nominations of Darla Dernovsek to the Stewardship Committee and Neil Deupree and Joan Kalweit to Shared Ministry.

Beginning in September, Pastor Tanya will explore caring for God's creation in a six-part sermon series discussing air, water, soil, animals, trees, and food. Each sermon will include an invitation to action, and after the September 24 service, Pastor Tanya will offer a pet blessing!

Pastor Tanya and the Pastoral Care team continue to reach out through visits, calls, and messages.

Submitted by Linda Stehura

Saturday, September 16th is our LARGE ITEM PICK UP DAY!

Any 4th Ward resident can put any unwanted large items on the curb beginning Friday the 15th and ending Saturday the 16th at 7am and we will have trucks driving the neighborhood taking everything to the landfill that morning. Large items means anything that is too big to go into your garbage bin but not so big that 2 people can't pick it up and move it. We are able to take general landfill items but cannot take electronics or tires. If you have more than a couple of items that need to be moved we can help connect you with a junk hauler to see if you would like to hire them.

This means we also need volunteers! We have 10 routes throughout the neighborhood and would love to have 10 sets of volunteers in trucks/trailers. We will start at the 4th Ward Park at 7:30am and hopefully with enough volunteers will be wrapping up around lunchtime. Please let me know if you can help on the 16th!

John Mansur

608-322-2325

johnrmansur@gmail.com

On Sunday, August 27th the 4th Ward hosted a back-to-school picnic. The Janesville police brought their grill and provided the food. There were lots of games and fun was had by all. Over 200 people attended.



Immigrant/Refugee Welcoming Committee

Submitted by Kirsten Almo

Our church is proud to be an immigrant welcoming church. Along with this proclamation comes the responsibility to keep on learning and working to promote justice in our community.

In December of 2021, our church joined other local churches to help resettle Afghan families in Wisconsin. Now, almost 2 years later, our advocacy is urgently needed to help these families.

The following comes from a recent "Action Alert" from the Wisconsin Council of Churches:

"Over 76,000 Afghans who were evacuated to the U.S. a year ago have been saved from persecution in their home country. However, nearly all of them have only temporary protection, without a clear path to permanent stability and security. A bipartisan bill, the Afghan Adjustment Act, has been reintroduced that would open that path -- but our help is needed to get the bill passed into law.

Afghan evacuees were permitted to enter the U.S. under "humanitarian parole," which is time-limited. They would continue to be under threat in Afghanistan, so they need a way to find long-term safety here. Those who are eligible could apply for lawful permanent residence, but there are serious obstacles. In the chaotic evacuation, many evacuees lost the documentation they would need to prove their case. In addition, the sudden surge of so many applications would add to the massive backlog of asylum cases already in the system. Congress has passed similar adjustment acts in the past, including after the Vietnam War.

As a matter of compassion and to fulfill our nation's promises to those who have been our allies, please ask your Senators and Representatives to support the Afghan Adjustment Act!"

You can find contact information for your elected representatives at:

- <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>
- <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

The Immigrant/Refugee Welcoming Committee of our church meets on the 3rd Sunday of each month after the Sunday service. All are invited to attend!

PET BLESSING

On Sunday September 24 Pastor Tanya will offer a Pet Blessing at 12:30 outside in front of the blue doors on Jackson St. All types of pets are welcome. Dogs must be on a 6' leash and all other pets must be in appropriate carriers. You can also bring a photo of your pet.



Thought for the month: God wants full custody not just weekend visitations.



First Congregational Church
54 South Jackson Street
Janesville, WI 53548



*This page was attached
to the Tower Notes that
were mailed.*

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday mornings 9:00 - 1:00 or by appointment.

Ministers
Pastor
Christian Ed. Director
Music Director
Pianist/Organist
Secretary
Bookkeeper
Nursery Coordinator
Custodian

All Members of First Congregational UCC
Rev. Dr. Tanya Sadagopan
Debi Cox

Becky Kingsbury & Bonnie Stalker
Denise Caldwell
Gwen Charlet
Matthew Charlet

Church Leadership & Volunteers

President
Treasurer
Finance Chair
Volunteer Coordinator
Gardeners

Tom Clippert
Nancy Stabb
Mike Rundle
Diane Holtz
Nancy Stabb, Barbara Bendlin, Jeanine Fry, Tani Abendroth,
Tabitha Ebert & Josh Streeter
Mark Carlson, Dave Schollmeier, Mike Rundle, Josh Streeter,
Doug Newton, David Arndt

Lawn Mowers: