

# Tower Notes -August 2025

Celebrating 180 years of Community Based Ministry



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

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#Love&JusticeChurch

Rev. Dr. Bob Gross



## Pastor's Message

I'm grateful for the opportunity to attend the 35<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Synod is a unique gathering of the United Church of Christ. It's family reunion, a business meeting and a time for celebratory worship, and an opportunity for service.

It was a joy to gather with friends from across Wisconsin and the United States. It was also great to meet new people who love God and the church. There were over 1,800 people present, including delegates, staff, and guests. We welcomed 21 new or renewing congregations into the denomination.

One quote that stood out for me in Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, the General Minister and President of the UCC is as follows. *Here in the United States, nationalism is a spawn of American Exceptionalism, a toxic presence that is rooted in hatred and the glorification of whiteness. Patriotism is the love of one's country. It is possible to love country and all the people.*

Following the lead of Robin Wall Kimmerer, the themes throughout each worship service were stages in the life of sweetgrass, planting, growing, harvesting, braiding, and burning. The service project consisted of collecting copies of banned books, sorting them, and packing boxes to be sent to church libraries in areas where those books are banned in the public libraries.

General Synod 35 took on a wide range of business items. Here are some highlights:

We established Full Communion relationships between the **United Church of Christ** and **Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland** and **Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico**.

We made a declaration of **Support for Philippine Human Rights**.

We acknowledged the faithful stewardship of **Our Whole Lives** and advocacy for comprehensive sexuality education in faith communities through interfaith collaboration.

We responded to the **Federal Government's Attack on Immigrants, Migrants, and Refugees** and we called on the United Church of Christ to **Oppose the 2025 Immigration Rollbacks and Support Immigrants, Refugees, and Pacific Island Communities, while Amplifying Antiracist Work on Behalf of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color** in Response to the current socio-political backlash.

Finally, we, General Synod 35, called for an end to the genocide in **Palestine**.

If you would like to be a delegate to the next General Synod, which will be in Cleveland during the summer of 2028, let's talk.

Pastor Bob

### August Worship Themes

August 3 – *The Heart of Hospitality*, Matthew 10: 40-42

August 10 – *Living into the Promise*, Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16

August 17 – *You Have Heard It Said* (AKA Stump the Preacher!) Matthew 5: 43-45. Bring any question about God, the Bible, or the church and Pastor Bob will use his sermon time to answer them.

August 24 – *Healing Reign*, Luke 13: 10-17

August 31 – *Open Table*, Luke 14: 1, 7-14

September 7 – *A New Identity*, Philemon 1: 1-21

Thank you to our July liturgists: Neil Deupree, Barbara Bendlin, Nathan Roehl.

*If you would like to be a liturgist, sign up in the Fireside Room on the clipboard.*

*We would love to have you host Fellowship/Coffee Hour. Please sign up on the clipboard in the Fireside Room.*



Our Parish Care members provide a confidential PRAYER CHAIN. You are invited to send your prayer requests to them any Sunday by using a yellow slip found in the pews or by calling the church office.

## August *BIRTHDAYS*, Happy Day to All!

1 Jack Shebesta	9 Louise Elliott	24 Christine Hopkins
2 Joey Swenson	18 Ethan Dieckhoff	24 Mary Williams
3 Charlotte Hopkins	19 Sarah French	25 Megan Condon
5 Mark Carlson	20 Janet Carlson	28 Carole Kettle-Gardner
6 Josephine French	23 Gregg Kingsbury	31 Bill Fitzgerald
7 Declan Greer		



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

## August *ANNIVERSARIES*, Congratulations

2 Dave & Jane Lennox	8 Darla & Michael Dernovsek
7 Lyle & Judith Anderson	11 Nancy & Robert Restivo
7 Desire & Niki Halson	17 MaryJo & Jim Manus
7 Alison & Richard Madero	23 Peter & Peggy Jacobs
7 George & Roberta Tucker	25 Ed & Karen Atkins
	28 Gary & Karen Teubert



**Thought for the month: Worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles. It takes away today's peace.**



We no longer collect for Grocery Bag Sundays each month, but ECHO is always in need of food and non-perishables, which you can drop off during their business hours, or at church. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

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

### ECHO August Needs:

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

### *Pastoral Search report:*

*We have completed first and second Zoom interviews with candidates, and we are now in the process of inviting one or more candidates for an in-person interview to discern whether the candidates are a good fit for our church and the Janesville area. If in-person interviews go well, the next step is to have a candidate give a sermon to the congregation, then the congregation votes whether to offer a call to the candidate. Progress is being made, but the pace must be slow and steady so we find the right candidate that God sends our way.*

## CONSISTORY DID NOT MEET IN JULY



### Church Financial Report

As of June 30, 2025

		TOTAL
Expenses. (Personnel,Building,Administration,Program)	\$156,949.67	
Income (Donations and Rent)		\$137,531.67
From Reserves		\$ 25,000
Income has exceeded expenses		\$ 5,582

Thanks to all who contributed to making the Christmas in July Fundraiser a big success!! Look for upgrade to the parking lot next month. Nancy Stabb, Treasurer

## Rock the Pride Event 2025



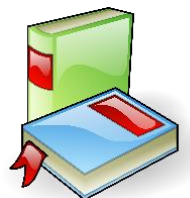
Volunteers are needed to be at our UCC table August 16<sup>th</sup> at Telfer Park Pavilion **between noon and 6 pm.** The address is 2101 Cranston Rd. Beloit 53511. The event is hosted by Yellow Brick Road of Beloit. It is a celebratory event for LGBTQ+ people and friends. It includes speakers, performers, vendors, story time, food trucks and fun activities. If you could spend two hours at our table, welcoming people who stop by, please see Patti York or Jill Gant. Outreach has supported this event in past years and will do so again with a \$50.00 donation, taken from a fund exclusively for LGBTQ support. We will not be selling items at our table, but will have information, stickers, and supportive items to give away.

## SEEKERS BOOK CLUB NEWS

Seekers book discussion group meets on Thursdays from 4:00-5:30 pm in the Atrium of the church. They are reading "Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus", by Thomas Cahill.

You are invited to attend the discussion even if you haven't read the book.

For further information, contact Barbara Bendlin at [Barbara.bendlin@gmail.com](mailto:Barbara.bendlin@gmail.com)



## FROM OUTREACH:

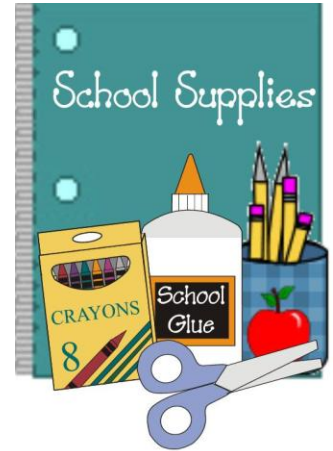
Our church's monthly mission for August is school supplies. In recent years our congregation has collected school supplies for Wilson Elementary School and Rock River Charter School. We also offer the option of making a financial donation. Both schools are located in our neighborhood and have a high number of students living in poverty. We also are collecting diapers for students at Rock River Charter School and individuals served by Project 16:49.

School supplies for Wilson School students include pencils, expo markers and cleaner, markers, crayons, scissors, glue sticks, and tissues.

School supplies for Rock River Charter School include college ruled loose leaf notebooks, single subject notebooks, pencils, pens, pink pearl erasers, tissues, disinfecting wipes, and diapers.

School supplies and diapers may be dropped off in the Fireside Room on Sunday morning or during office hours.

Any financial donations will be shared between Wilson School and Rock River Charter School. Financial donations may be made by using the envelopes found in the pews or by check with 'school supplies' written on the memo line. Easytithe <https://app.easytithe.com/App/Giving/janesvilleucc> may also be used.



## Free Community Dinner



Community Meal is an outreach that our church has participated in for over 15 years. We serve a healthy, balanced meal to those in our community who need or desire a freshly prepared meal. It is served the first Saturday of each month. We began serving it as an indoor sit-down meal but has transformed into a to-go style meal. We currently serve over 100 meals each month.

The next Community Meal will be on Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 pm. The menu is ham/cheese sandwiches, chips, fresh fruit, veggies, and Rice Krispie bar.

Guests can drive up or walk up to the back parking lot door and meals will be delivered to them. Want to volunteer for Community Meal? You can donate desserts, food prep and assist serving meals on the day of the meal. Desserts can be dropped off during office hours or a pick-up can be arranged. Volunteer by contacting Nancy Stabb, Jeanine Fry or Bonnie Stalker, directly, email [bonniebrewer17@hotmail.com](mailto:bonniebrewer17@hotmail.com), or sign up in the Fireside Room on the clipboard.





Name tags have been updated with our new logo which will be used on our new website this fall and on our letterhead paper. If you need a new name tag, check the table in the back of the sanctuary first, then let the office know.

#### FROM MEMBERSHIP:

We would like to thank everyone who helped make our "Christmas in July" potluck a success. Good food and good fellowship. We hope to have our next potluck sometime in October. God Bless, Membership Ministry



Please mark your calendar for our Arts/Craft/Bake Sale on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. This sale will be open to the public on Saturday, and again on Sunday for church members and visitors.

We hope to invite outside crafters and vendors. We will have a Silent Auction and a 'Christmas Attic' (new or gently used items and gift baskets for sale).

Ask your family and friends if they would like to participate. We should have final details by the end of September.

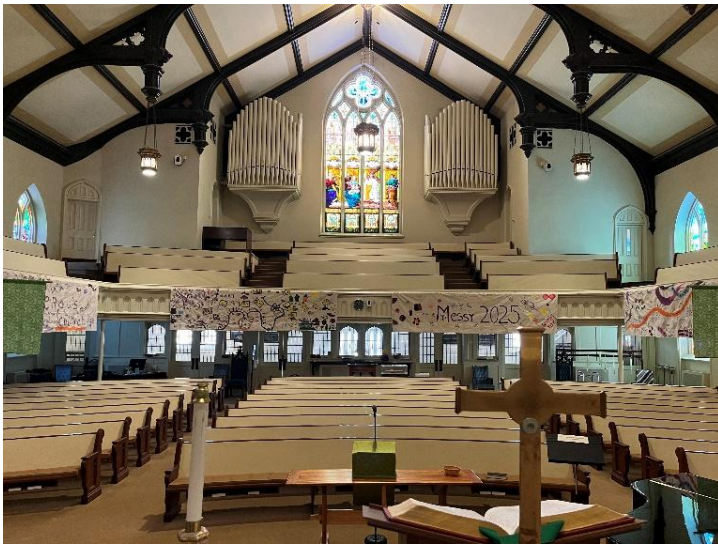
This will be our first Arts/Craft/Bake Sale opened to the public. A very exciting event for our church family. If you have questions, contact Diana Huckstep 608-774-2648.

Blessings, Membership Ministry

# SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS

Don't forget to turn in your summer bulletins! Did you miss some? Let Debi know and she will get them for you! They can be picked up at church or emailed to you. 😊😊😊😊😊

Last day to turn in bulletins will be Aug. 31.



MESSY SUMMER SUNDAY 2025 was a wonderful success. We had a **hot** day, but the enthusiasm was huge. At least 25 people participated. The banners we created are now hanging from the balconies in the sanctuary. So now it is a treasure hunt! Can you find these things on the banners:

Baby footprints? "Share Joy"?  
Peace sign? More than 1 "messy"?  
Flowers? Houses? "Generous Church"?  
Upside down words?  
Footprints? Hand prints? Sun?  
Moon? Stars? Smiley face? Kite?

FALL SUNDAY SCHOOL WILL BEGIN IN SEPTEMBER – ARE YOU READY?



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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC**  
OPEN & AFFIRMING  
IMMIGRANT WELCOMING



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First Congregational Church  
54 South Jackson Street  
Janesville, WI 53548



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

## First Congregational United Church of Christ

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

### Ministers

Interim Pastor

Christian Ed. Director

Music Director

Pianist/Organist

AV Technician

Secretary

Bookkeeper

Nursery Coordinator

Custodian

### All Members of First Congregational UCC

Rev. Dr. Bob Gross

Debi Cox

Robyn Doege-Brennan

Paul Finger

Kaydence Troia

Becky Kingsbury

Denise Caldwell

Gwen Charlet

Matthew Charlet

### Church Leadership & Volunteers

President

Treasurer

Finance Chair

Gardeners

Lawn Mowers:

Darla Dernovsek

Nancy Stabb

Mike Rundle

Barbara Bendlin, Jeanine Fry, Tani Abendroth, Nancy Stabb,

Mike Rundle, Doug Newton, Martin Huckstep, Tim Green