

# Tower Notes -September 2025

Celebrating 180 years of Community Based Ministry



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

54 South Jackson Street, Janesville, Wisconsin 53548

Telephone: (608) 752-8716

E-mail: [janesvilleucc@janesvilleucc.org](mailto:janesvilleucc@janesvilleucc.org)

Website: [www.janesvilleucc.org](http://www.janesvilleucc.org)

Like us on Facebook: *Janesville UCC*

E-mail [pastor@janesvilleucc.org](mailto:pastor@janesvilleucc.org)

#Love&JusticeChurch

Rev. Dr. Bob Gross



## PASTORAL SEARCH PROCESS

There is a new pastor for First Congregational UCC Janesville on the horizon! After conducting first-and-second Zoom interviews, the Pastor Search Committee invited a candidate to Janesville on August 13-15. We conducted an in-person interview and he preached a sermon for us. We shared meals with him and showed him the

Janesville area. At the conclusion of his visit, by unanimous vote of the Search Committee, we invited him to be our next settled pastor, and he verbally accepted our invitation. He and his wife will return to Janesville the weekend of September 20/21, when the congregation will have a chance to meet him. He will officiate the order of worship on Sunday, September 21, after which the congregation members will vote whether to make the official call to him to be our settled pastor. If the congregation votes to officially call him, he would probably start January 1, 2026.

Due to confidentiality reasons, we cannot yet release his name or his state of residence. He is filled with God's spirit of compassion and inclusion, and he is committed to walk with us on our journey to be inclusive of the LGBTQ community and to safeguard our immigrant community. He and his wife were both music majors in college and they both have acting experience, so they hope to use their talents to make our church a center for music and the arts in the Rock County area. He also has many years' experience in working with youth programming. His references extol his creativity, collaborative spirit, listening skills, and passion for inclusivity. Be sure to attend church on Sunday, September 21 to participate in the vote to call him as our settled pastor.

## September Worship Themes

September 7, Holy Communion, "A New Identity," Philemon 1-21

September 14, New Members, Sunday School starts, "Growing in God's Love," 1 Timothy 1: 12-17

September 21, Candidate Sunday, Congregational Meeting following worship to vote on whether to call our candidate as our next pastor.

September 28, "Fight the Good Fight," 1 Timothy 6: 6-19

October 5. Holy Communion, "Rekindle the Faith," 2 Timothy 1: 1-14

Thank you to our August liturgists: Nancy Stabb, Nancy Hough, Neil Deupree, Nathan Roehl, and Sarah Beers.

*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.

*The endowment committee met on Tuesday, August 19th. George Tucker, Nancy Stabb, Pastor Bob Gross and Gale Rundle agreed to reconvene in the spring. This will give the new pastor an opportunity to share input and ideas.*

**Thought for the month: Hate has 4 letters but so does love. Enemies has 7 letters but so does friends. Lying has 5 letters but so does truth. Cry has 3 letters but so does joy. Negativity has 10 letters but so does positivity. Life is 2 sided, choose the better side of it.**

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

1 Molly Holtz	8 Ilah Hartung	20 Diana Huckstep
1 Tom Alwin	9 Kimberly Restivo	23 Bryan Rundle
2 Mike Piette	11 Kali Hemm	24 Kathy Arndt
5 Carole Kies	11 Joan Ogden	24 Ruth Robinson
6 Deanna Jensen	15 Eloise Shebesta	26 Todd Myers
7 Mike Cioni	18 Nevaya Greer	29 Karel Cripe



## September *ANNIVERSARIES*, Congratulations

3 Martin & Diana Huckstep	13 Jim and Ann Bidwell Hyzer
8 Whitney & Mike Cioni	14 Dave & Deanna Jensen
13 Dave & Sonja Bagley	



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



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.

## ECHO September 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

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



*Thanks to Bill Williams for providing one of the new benches. The other one by the Court Street entrance was purchased from Memorial Funds.*

## **CONSISTORY MEETING AUGUST 18**

Appreciations for donations to the parking lot, work of the Search Committee, Messy Sunday, 'Stump the Pastor', donations to Rock the Pride, prayers for Brian, condolences to Pastor Bob.

In her treasurer's report, Nancy Stabb reported that donations have increased only slightly behind expenses. She also gave a detailed report on the endowment accounts which are all doing well since consolidating with Wisconsin Foundation UCC. A meeting to discuss future endowments is delayed until 2026.

Bonnie reported possible uses for the extra funds left over from the parking lot project.

Reporting for the Pastoral Search Committee, Barbara Bendlin reported that out of 12 candidates & 8 interviews they are interested in a strong candidate.

Review of the Bylaws is complete, copies were shared and approved. Revisions to the Constitution will be presented at a special congregation meeting.

Reporting for Education, Becky Behling reported curriculum has been ordered for Sunday School starting September. August Church of the Wild was well attended and another is planned for fall.

Pastor Bob announced a special service in September to welcome new members. There are plans for a couple of baptisms also.

Patti York will replace Kathy Arndt on the Nominating Committee.  
The next Consistory Meeting will be held on September 15.

Submitted by Ruth Robinson

### **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, September 6<sup>th</sup> at 4:00. The menu is pulled pork sandwiches, chips, fresh fruit, garden veggies, pudding w/cookie crumbles.

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.

# **Church Financial Report**

Friends,  
The generosity of the members and friends of First Congregational church is remarkable. In June Finance Ministry endorsed a Fund Raiser we called Christmas in July. We asked members to contribute to the resurfacing and painting of the parking lot at the corner of Dodge and High Streets. I am pleased to report that we received over \$3300 which is more than enough to do the parking lot! The remainder collected is going toward another overdue building maintenance project, repairing floor surfaces in the area of the education wing used by our tenants. Your generosity is appreciated and has already made a difference. Have you seen the newly sealed and painted parking lot? It looks great!

As of July 31		TOTAL
EXPENSES (Personnel, Building, Administration, Program)	\$185,180	
INCOME (Donations, Rent, Fund Raising)	\$154,914	
FROM RESERVES		<u>\$30,000</u>
Expenses exceeded expenses		\$266
Nancy Stabb		
Treasurer		



## FROM OUTREACH:

For September we are asking for your help in caring for Mother Earth and the "AIR around it." Our ask is for *actions* rather than *financial*.  
Here are 3 suggestions:

1. Carpool as much as possible. (helping to reduce carbon emissions)
2. Consider replacing gas powered outdoor tools and small engines with battery powered devices. (lawn mower, weed whip, small chain saw)
3. Turn your thermostat UP a couple degrees when using air conditioning. Turn it down 1 or 2 degrees when using heat. (investigate solar panels for your living space)

## Food for thought

Listen to the words from a song in the musical 'Hair', first run in England, Shaftsbury Theater, September 27, 1968. They were on to something over 50 years ago. Here is the first stanza;

Welcome sulphur dioxide, hello carbon monoxide.  
The air, the air is Everywhere.  
Breath deep, while you sleep. Breath Deep..."

**CLEAN AIR MONTH**





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).

Baskets are available in the Fireside Room for you to fill/decorate for the raffle.

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



Thank you to our volunteer gardeners for creating and maintaining the beautiful flower gardens at our church this summer.



### 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 "The Screwtape Letters" by CS Lewis.*

*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)



*On Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, several members of our church plus Pastor Bob attended 'Rock the Pride' in Beloit. It was successful despite the weather!*



Let's dream great things for our congregation! "Dream God's Dream" is the theme for this year's Stewardship Campaign.

The 2025 Stewardship Campaign asks members to imagine what God's dream is for our church and community.

Your 2025 stewardship packet will arrive in your mailbox in October. We ask you to dream how your volunteer time and financial resources can make an impact on our congregation. How do your gifts fit into God's dream? Please return your pledge card and your time and talents card by mail or in person by November 9th.

We are asking you to fill out the pledge card even if you intend to leave the amount of your pledge blank, so that we know that your dreams are with us in this exciting time as we look forward to our new pastor.

Thank you for all you do to support our church and community!

Stewardship Committee members: Diana Huckstep, Dave Schollmeier, Nancy Stabb (treasurer), Darla Dernovsek (president) and Pastor Bob Gross

# SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS



**mini  
REVOLUTIONS**

Fall Sunday School 2025

SUNDAY SCHOOL will kick off on Sunday September 14. This Fall we will be using **mini REVOLUTIONS** from Illustrated Ministries for our basic curriculum. But, of course, we will use that to lead us into all kinds of adventures that bring us closer to God and His people (hint=that means everyone on Earth). Parents look for an email next week introducing you to the material.

Be sure to be here **Sept. 7** for the Summer Bulletin prize awards.

Last day to turn in bulletins is Aug. 31.

COLORING WITH FRIENDS

SEPT 27 1:00 – 3:00





Debi Cox  
Director of Christian Education  
[debi@janesvilleucc.org](mailto:debi@janesvilleucc.org)  
Church: 608-752-8716  
Mobile: 651-387-4552

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



54 S. JACKSON STREET, JANESVILLE, WI 53548  
[JANESVILLEUCC.ORG](http://JANESVILLEUCC.ORG)





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