

Tower Notes -October 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

What I appreciate most about Autumn is when the mask of uniformity falls from the trees. The bright greens of Spring are beautiful signs of renewal. The fullness of greens in the Summer speak of God's bounty. However, with shorter days, and the chlorophyll's return to the earth, the leaves reveal their true colors. It is in this diversity that I see the wonder of God's creation.

About a year ago, I began working alongside a wonderfully diverse group of people that made up your Search Committee. I remember commenting to colleagues that the group is so diverse that it could become contentious. That didn't happen. They pulled together, sharing their unique perspectives to find consensus around a single candidate to serve as your next Settled Pastor. It was no surprise to me, then, that the congregation also voted unanimously to call your Pastor Elect.

The future of First Congregational United Church of Christ looks bright. Let me give you a few examples. In addition to calling a pastor, we welcomed ten new members into the congregation, our Sunday attendance and our giving are tracking above last year. The Seekers Book Group is expanding and we're serving increasing numbers of people at our Community Meal. In many ways you are all showing your true colors.

Glory be to God!

Pastor Bob



October Worship Themes

October 5, Holy Communion, "Telling Our Story," 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

October 12, "The Sacred in the Seed," Matthew 13: 31-32

October 19, Baptisms, "The Way of the Innkeeper," Luke 10: 25-37

October 26, "Feeding Five Thousand," John 6: 1-14

October 5. Holy Communion, "A Dream Powering Generosity," Acts 10

Thank you to our September liturgists: Sarah Beers, 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.

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 "Everything is Tuberculosis" by John Green.

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



The next Church of the Wild will be held on **Saturday, October 25, at 10:00 am.** We will meet at **Big Hill Park in Beloit.** The Norway Maple trees will turn the park to gold at this time, so it will be a lovely time to celebrate the miracle of the changing seasons and the brilliant final color of the fall season. Contact Barbara for more information.

October *BIRTHDAYS*, Happy Day to All!

2 Carter Dieckhoff	15 Jo Green	23 Diana Kjendle
7 Rob Swenson	16 Matthew Knutson	28 Debi Cox
8 Jim Cripe	18 Jeanine Fry	29 Judith Anderson
15 Neil Deupree	19 Jeannine Fitzgerald	30 Dawn Endl
		31 Katsumi Neeno



October *ANNIVERSARIES*, Congratulations

18 Tony & Jamie Dieckhoff	26 Mark & Marlene Gilmore
21 Mark & Janet Carlson	28 Andrea & David McCabe
24 Richard & Colleen Eddings	



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.

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

ECHO October Needs:

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



Fundraiser Saturday October 18 11:00 – 2:00
At Woodman's Sports & Convention Center

Soup (over 30), artisan bread, beverage
\$15.00 in advance, at the door \$20



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, October 4th at 4:00. The menu is ham/cheese sandwiches, chips, fruit, veggies, rice krispie square.

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, or sign up in the Fireside Room on the clipboard.

CONSISTORY MEETING September 15

Appreciations were given for Bob for the way he helped the kids count the people in church Sunday and for the positive way he interacts with kids; Mike Rundle for moving the chairs out of the balcony, taking care of pew pieces and replacing some treads on the stairway; David Arndt for repairing some pews; Neil Deupree, George Salter, Jim Holtz, Wilhelmina Capozziello, and Dave Groth for painting the shed.

Nancy Stabb shared the financial report. There will be some additional expenses for travel for our Pastor candidate and upcoming moving expenses. There has been a personal donation to help with flight expenses. There was also an anonymous donation made for the Operating budget. A schedule was given for the weekend of September 21st for meeting the Pastor candidate and the service he will lead. The membership meeting to vote on the candidate will immediately follow the church service on September 21st.

Outreach is looking to repair or replace one of our Little Free Libraries. They are also exploring furnishing an apartment for the Next Steps Family Resilience Center located at the former Beloit Royce Elementary School which will include people from all of Rock County, including Janesville. Membership is planning a Hee Haw Halloween potluck on October 12th. Finance reported that two new benches at the doors have been donated by Bill Williams and the Mary Rockenfield memorial fund. The Pastoral Search Committee will head up a fund drive to help pay for the moving expenses for the new pastor. We are still looking for a new clerk. Neil Deupree is working with the Rock County MigraWatch Team to bring to Janesville an expert on immigration issues to do some in-person training, probably in October.

The next Consistory meeting will be on October 20, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the church.

Submitted by Jean Schollmeier

Church Financial Report

As of August 31, 2025

EXPENSES (Personnel, Building, Administration, Program/Missions)	\$215,703.70	
INCOME (Donations, Rent, Fund Raising)		\$172,202.76
FROM RESERVES		
<u>\$35,000</u>		

Expenses have exceeded income Year to date
Nancy Stabb
Treasurer

\$8,500.94

Through your generosity, we have shared \$16,000 of our total income with our denominational missions of Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM), One Great Hour of Sharing and Strengthen the Church as well as local charities, e.g., ECHO, Health Net, Yellow Brick Road, Gifts and Humane Society.

Watch for your third quarter report mid October.



Please mark your calendar for our Arts/Craft/Bake Sale on Saturday, December 13th, 8:00-2:00. This sale will be open to the public on Saturday, and again on Sunday for church members and visitors who couldn't make it on Saturday.

We tentatively have 2 vendors (there's a lot of competition from other churches, Farmers Market, and Mega Market). If you know of anyone who would like to set up a table (their own), cost is \$10.00 plus 10% of sales.

There will be a silent auction with donated or gently used items and gift baskets. There are baskets/containers in the Fireside Room for you to use, or use your own gift basket.

We will have 2 other areas, "The Attic" consisting of new and gently used items (fall/winter/Christmas themes), and a coffee/hot chocolate/water sale table sponsored by Outreach.

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.

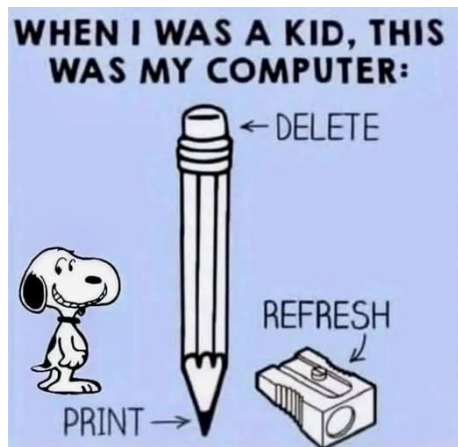
Blessings, Membership Ministry

HEE HAW HALLOWEEN POTLUCK

On Sunday October 12th we will meet in the Spirituality Arts Center after worship service for a spooktacular potluck. There is a food sign-up sheet in the Fireside Room. Please come and bring family and friends for some good fun, conversation, and food. We hope to see you there.
God Bless, Membership Ministry



Humor for the month:



A Message from the Stewardship Committee:

Your 2025 stewardship packet should arrive in the middle of October. We ask you to think about God's Dream of how your volunteer time and financial resources can make a difference. Please return your pledge card and time and talents card by mail or in person no later than November 9.

This year, we're asking you to fill out the pledge card even if you intend to leave the amount blank, so we know that you are still a part of God's Dream for our church in 2026.

Thanks for all you do to support your church and community!

Stewardship Committee members: Dave Schollmeier, Diana Huckstep, Nancy Stabb and Pastor Bob Gross

From Search Committee:

We have a new pastor! He will start January 1. We can not publish anything about him until after October 5, (when he will notify his current church) so refer to his bio you received in the mail last month. The vote on Sunday, September 12 was unanimous. He and his wife were welcomed with a reception in the Spiritual Arts Center after worship service.

Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
-Galatians 6:2



October's Outreach Mission: Neighbors In Need

The Neighbors In Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries. This mission allows us to speak prophetically to those in power and to advocate for a society where all people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. We will do this through direct service as well as advocacy.

New Members received Sunday September 14:



Janine Hahn, Kathy Craney,
Beth Noble, Deb Lalor, Nick French,
Mary Byrne, Anne Laurence,
Linda & George Salter, Sheila Marx.



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH NEWS



Fall Sunday School 2025

Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM. We will start in the sanctuary and go to the Sunday School room after the Children's Moment with Pastor Bob.

AGES 14 - 23

Winter Soulstice Retreat January 2026
Jan 16-18

Talk to Debi ASAP to reserve your place.

A weekend at Camp Daycholah for relaxation, camaraderie with friends and growing your faith. Create a deeper connection to yourself and others through heartfelt worship and music led by Andra Moran.

Watch for our weekly all ages **micro PRACTICE** on Facebook.

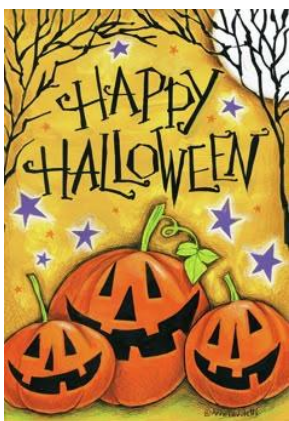




First Congregational Church
54 South Jackson Street
Janesville, WI 53548



*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