

## March 2021 Branches



*To grow closer to Christ, abide in Him, in His word, and in prayer (John 15:7).*



**WORSHIP SERVICE: 9:00 A.M.**

*Currently One Service due to COVID-19*

*Find our recorded services on YouTube. Also check out our Facebook page.*



**First Congregational United Church of Christ**

*To Engage and Inspire All Generations to Connect with God through Love and Service*

815 S. Concord Rd. Oconomowoc, WI 53066

Phone: 262.567.4461

Email: [uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org)

[www.oconomowocucc.org](http://www.oconomowocucc.org)

## **Leadership Team Update**

*from your Moderator – Bob Johnson*

Even though we are not meeting in person for Church Services there is still a lot of “Church” activity going on. Many people always used Sunday mornings to catch up with friends and church news. As your new Moderator I want to do our best to help you stay informed about the Church business.

The monthly Branches and the Weekly Update email are your best resources for current news and upcoming activities. Many times, these communications included updates from our Pastor. Our Bridge Ministers, Tom and Deb Payden, provided some information during their 8 weeks with us. Until we have an Interim Pastor in place, I will do my best to fill in with Church operations updates. Also, if you have ANY questions or concerns please contact me or any other member of Leadership. We welcome your calls and will always get back to you. So now for the updates...

### **Congregation Survey & Worship Services**

Thanks to everyone who filled out the recent survey. While I wish more people would have participated, we did hear from just over 100 of our Church families. These surveys are used to make decisions, so your responses are important. From your responses it was clear, most of the congregation is NOT ready to come back for in-person worship. The mix was ~65% said NO & 35% said they would attend in person. So, Leadership took that information & the current recommendations from our State Health Department and we ***decided to stay with Virtual only Worship Services thru the month of March.*** We are monitoring this weekly and are hoping and praying the trends continue improving.

### **Interim Pastor Search**

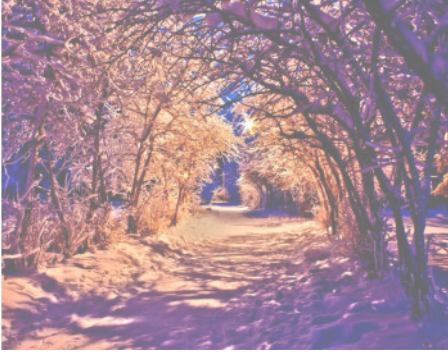
For a variety of reasons there has only been two Interim pastors that have been presented to our church from the Wisconsin Conference. Some of this has to do with our location and size of congregation along with COVID. That said we are actively working with one prospective Interim right now. We just completed a second interview. Please know this is one of our highest priorities.

### **Search Committee for our new full time Pastor**

Last week we asked all of you to provide nominations to this important Committee. Per our Church Constitution this is the 1<sup>st</sup> step in the process. I am pleased to inform you we now have a large list of people nominated – thank you for your suggestions. We will be contacting many of these people to understand their ability to serve after they fully understand the scope of this committee. Leadership is responsible for putting together a group that represents, as best as we can, a cross section of our congregation with regards to gender, age, length of time as a member and all the other characteristics we outlined with you when we asked for your nominations. Because of this & the number of people nominated not everyone you nominated will be on the team.

### **Feedback from the Annual Meeting**

Thank you for everyone who took the time to participate in our Annual Meeting. I hope it was worthwhile time for you and provided information that helps you know more about your church. We did hear back from several people who thought it was one of our better annual meetings with concise information and a good opportunity to ask questions. There was some concern about comments made by our Bridge Minister's regarding our two styles of worship and the appropriateness of that. Their opinions were formed after just a short 2 months with us and certainly they are entitled to their opinions just as we all are too. Let me be clear about Leadership's opinion – we fully support our two styles of worship and have no plans to consolidate or eliminate either service when we come back fully in person.



## Prayer Walk

A new Lent Prayer Walk is setup on the walking path on the church grounds. This is a great opportunity to walk within God's wonderful creation and to reflect on your journey through 5 different prayer stations. This is something you can do alone, with a friend, with your pet, or with your entire family of all ages. Start on the south end of the lower-level parking lot, follow the path around our property, and end at the large cross in front of the church. So.....Come, enjoy the church ground, get some fresh air while you engage in different prayer stations along the way!

## Lent Activities

In addition to our Lent Calendar and Weekly Lenten Devotions we will also be offering weekly ideas to add to your Lenten journey. Please watch your emails for these opportunities. Please feel free to partake in as many as your schedule allows. Most importantly HAVE FUN!!!

Week of February 21- [Pretzel Prayer](#)

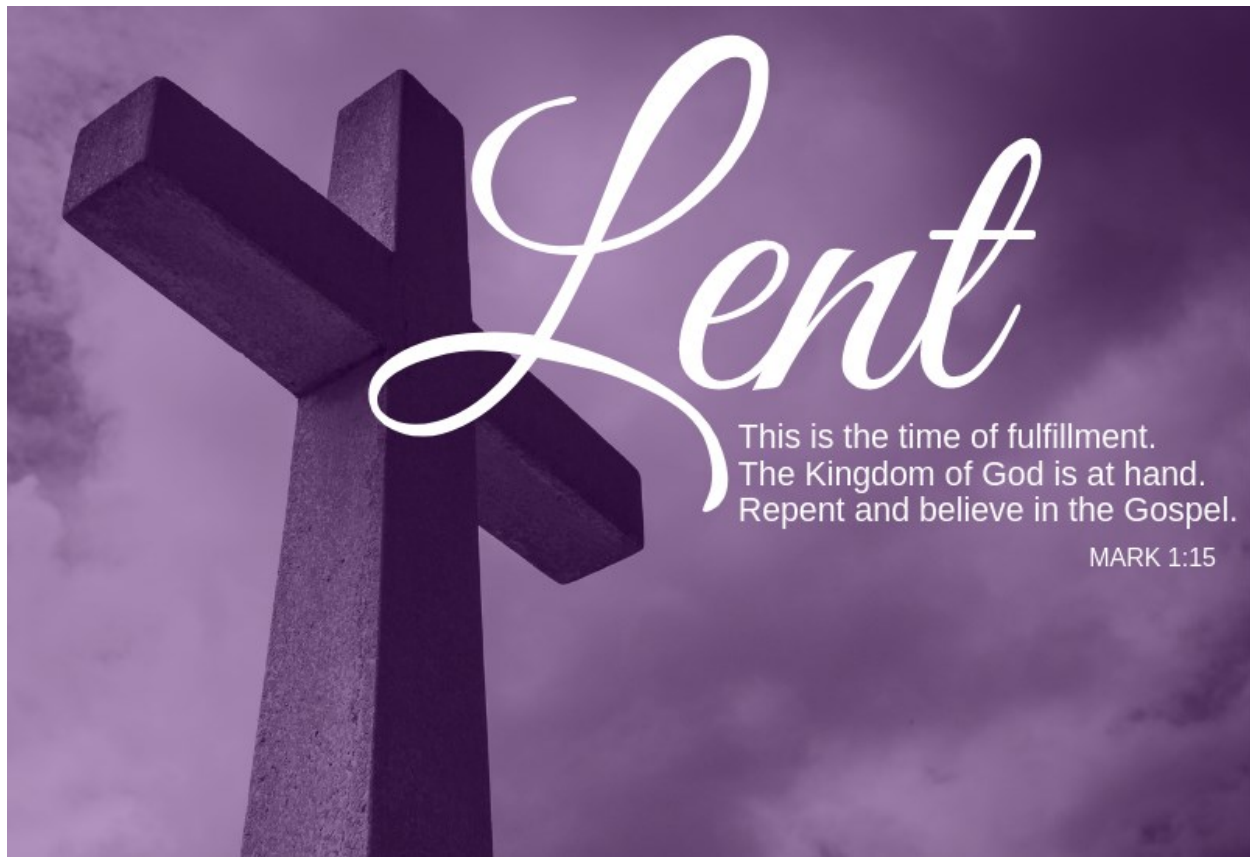
Week of February 28- [Nature Story Easter Hike](#)

Week of March 7- Creating a flower to add to our cross for the Easter Service

Week of March 14- [Guest House Cleaning Supplies Donation/Making Bag Lunches](#)

Week of March 21- "Egg" someone!

Week of March 28- Bread Making





**WHAT OUR MINISTRIES, COMMITTEES & PROJECTS GROUPS DO:**

**Mission Ministry**

This group will provide opportunities for members to become involved in programs of education, service and action directed to the betterment of society ways to help with local and global mission concerns. UCC has several special mission offerings that can include Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund and Strengthen the Church. The ministry also chooses mission organizations to be the recipient of our congregation's monthly Singing Collection which is basically when loose coins are placed in the offering plate it resembles the sound of singing! The group will also facilitate mission trips and fundraisers for youth and adults and work with the Education Ministry and the Director of Children and Youth Ministries to provide opportunities for the congregation to support mission team members.

**The Legacy Committee**

Our church acknowledges that Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given to us: time, talents, the world and financial resources. Church members have the opportunity to help assure the long-term strength of the church through gifts, bequests and Memorials. They also encourage contributions to the Endowment and Memorial Funds.

**Caring Connection**

Caring Connection is a network of 14 volunteers from our congregation who direct God's healing message to Church Family members in need. Our caring opportunities include: cards, funeral luncheons, meals, a confidential prayer chain, prayer shawls, Christmas plants and cards, transportation and personal visits to church members. Any church member is more than welcome to help out.



***Did you know we have a Prayer Chain at our Church?***

It is made up of a group of people praying for a specific person or family by request. The request is given by contacting the Church office (Pastor or Office Admin). The Pastor or Office Administrator contacts the group leader who gets the prayer chain started.

Currently, approx. 25 members are involved. The Prayer Chain is very confidential; in order to participate in the group you must sign a pledge of confidentiality.

My prayer is that our fellowship with you as believers will bring about a deeper understanding of every blessing which we have in our life in union with Christ.

Your love, dear brother, has brought me great joy and much encouragement! You have cheered the hearts of all God's people.

(Philemon 1:6-7)



## BOOK CLUB

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of  
the Month  
@ 1pm & 7pm**



**March**



**April**



**May**



**Check Weekly Announcements  
for connectivity information.**

*Questions: Jean Vercauteren  
[jeanvercauteren@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanvercauteren@yahoo.com)*

## Missing: Wooden Carved Cross

Barb Bjur is still trying to find the wooden cross that was given in October 2012 as a memorial for her husband Floyd. She has contacted several members who have helped in the effort to find the cross, but with no success.

If anyone would know where it might be, you can contact either Barb or the office.



*"Upon the death of my husband Floyd, in October 2012, a wooden carving of a cross and clasped hands was given in his memory by a group of friends. The carving was handmade by the husband of a lady in the group.*

*For years the carving was displayed on a table at the top of the stairs outside the music room. The carving has disappeared, and I would very much like to have it returned to me.*

*The carving has Floyd's name on it. I would be so grateful to locate it. Thank you. Barb Bjur"*

## BIBLE STUDY

**Join our weekly Bible study**

### Only Materials needed:

Your Bible and a way to connect  
(Zoom or phone)

### Questions:

Contact Pat at 262-337-3058  
[dpevans65@icloud.com](mailto:dpevans65@icloud.com).

Participants exchange their overwhelming life for God's overwhelming love! Each study is offered multiple times weekly until April 1<sup>st</sup>

Tuesdays @1pm:

Wednesdays@6:30pm:

Thursdays@10am:

## March 14, 2021



## Youth News

### Sunday School News



Everyone is always welcome here. God puts out a welcome mat for us at church, just like the dad put out a welcome mat for his son in The Prodigal Son. When we belong to a church, we call that place our church home. When God welcomes us here at church, God welcomes us home. No matter if you've been away for a little or long while or you've been participating every week you are always welcome here in our Sunday School program!

This month we will be exploring the biblical story of the prodigal son who went away—and came back. His father hugged him, threw him a party, and shouted, “Welcome home!” If we ever decide to leave our church home, God won't forget us. God always, always, always welcomes us back to church, no matter how long we are away. That goes for us, and our parents, and our neighbors, and our grandparents. God welcomes everyone back to our church home.

We hope you will be will join us as we explore this biblical story through fun and engaging activities that can be done at home or together during our virtual Zoom Sunday School sessions. Watch your emails every Sunday at 8 a.m. which include a link to our virtual classroom. In our virtual Sunday School classroom you can access a weekly curriculum with a new activity that you can do as a family or the children/youth can do on their own (depending upon their ages). I also offer a weekly virtual Sunday School session at 10 a.m. for all ages.

As always thank you for sharing your children and youth with us on this Lenten journey! I pray that the lessons in the virtual classroom are useful at home and you find the zoom sessions an opportunity for them to learn and engage with others. It is an honor to work and get to know all of you. If you have any questions, please don't ever hesitate to reach out. Don't forget.....you are always welcome here!

God's Blessings,  
Amy Drewa, Director of Children and Youth Ministries

### Youth Group

In February a few of our youth got together and spread “Heart Attacks” around the church to the community partners that utilize our church. The participants had fun catching up and decorating the windows to spread a little love. Thank you to all those who donated hearts and participated in this event!



Join us March 21 at 11 a.m. as we gather and prepare items that will be donated to the Guest House in Milwaukee. Watch your emails for more information.

### Young Adult ZOOM Gathering

As we journey through Lent many of our young adults are traveling through their own wilderness as they figure out their vocation. Through the month of March, we will explore what vocation is, how we are called and what we do with it. So, please join Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. You do not need to attend each session nor do you have to be at the end of your college years to explore your vocation.

[Click here](#) to access the meeting or go to the Zoom app. Enter Meeting ID: 831 3966 7415 & Passcode: 695045. Contact Amy Drewa at [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org) with any questions. We look forward to seeing you!!

## Confirmation



Our Confirmation class is still going well! In February we gathered for a fun filled day of learning and exploring the history of the UCC. We also had some fun team building time by playing some virtual tv gameshows which was a blast!!! I can't believe how quick this year has gone; the next time we meet they will be working on their Faith Statements! I am very proud of these young men and women and can't wait for them to take the next step in their faith journey by reaffirming their faith through their faith statements and Rite of Confirmation on May 23.

## Mission & Outreach

### Singing Collection



*Every time we worship, loose coins in the offering are donated to a Mission Partner. Because the coins in the metal plates make a "joyful noise," we call this our Singing Collection.*

Even though we are not meeting in person, donations to our Singing Collections can still be made via mail or on-line through our church website: [www.oconomowocucc.org](http://www.oconomowocucc.org).

The Singing Collection for the month of March is the Lake Area Club. The Lake Area Club provides a place to meet and socialize for persons affected by and interested in the arrestment of the disease of alcoholism or other addictive dependencies. Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. The number of people affected by these issues in our community is higher than most think. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

***Thank you for your generosity! Here are missions we are going to collect for this year, by month.***

<b>Mar</b>	Lake Area Club	<b>Aug</b>	Christmas Fund
<b>April</b>	Hearts and Hands Preschool	<b>Sep</b>	Mission Trip
<b>May</b>	Church World Service	<b>Oct</b>	Christmas Clearing Council
<b>June</b>	Family Promise	<b>Nov</b>	Habitat for Humanity
<b>July</b>	Lake Area Free Clinic	<b>Dec</b>	Fischer House

## Mission Trip

Have you checked out our Youth Mission Fundraising Wall yet???

Take a look at our Virtual Fundraising Wall which is basically a virtual wall with dollar amounts from \$1-\$100. An individual/couple/family can sign up for any of the available dollar amounts but only one individual/couple/family can sign up for a specific dollar amount to donate to the youth mission team. However, you can sign up for as many as you want!

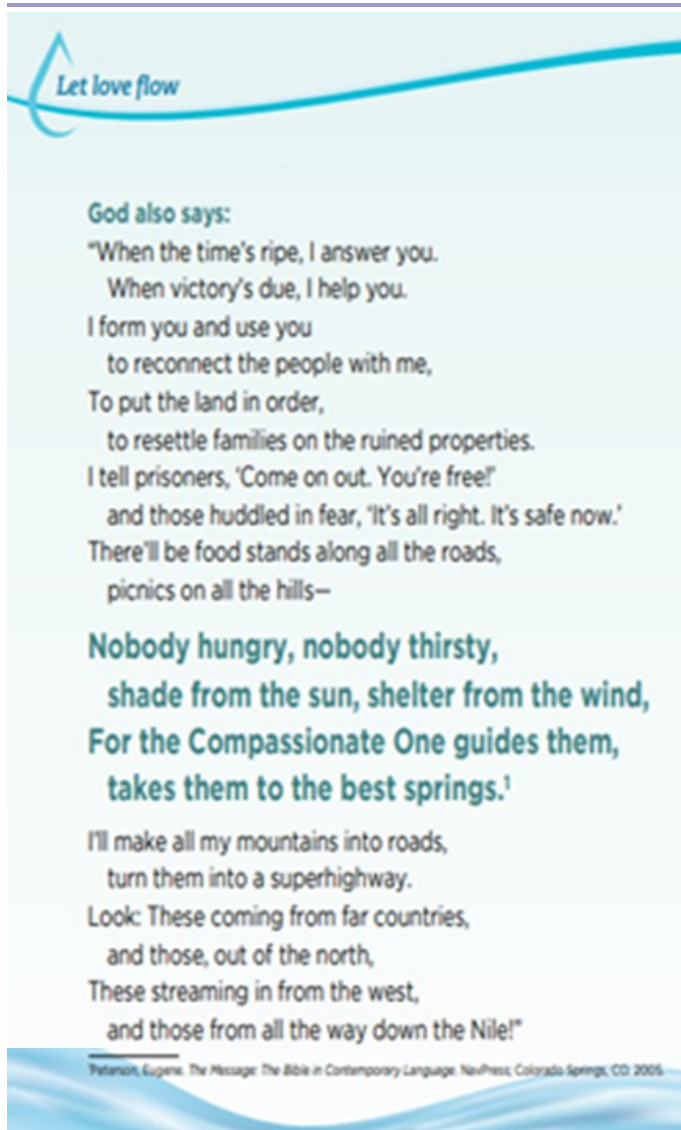
The goal is to get the wall cleared by each dollar amount; \$1-\$100 signed up for.

So please [CLICK HERE](#) and help us clear our Virtual Fundraising Wall!!!

For those who are unable to access the "Virtual Wall" and would like to participate please contact Amy Drewa at [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org).







To watch videos about OGHS:  
[www.ucc.org/oghs/oghs-oghs-videos/](http://www.ucc.org/oghs/oghs-oghs-videos/)

The One Great Hour Sharing Offering (OGHS) supports the humanitarian and disaster relief of the United Church of Christ both domestically and internationally. This offering is received annually on the fourth Sunday in Lent.

Even though we will not be in the Church building to worship, collecting the offering is on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

When we use our imaginations in the way that God does, we can begin to envision – and work for – a world where no child goes unfed, un-housed, or unloved; where no one fears abuse or violence; where clean water is not a dream but a reality for all; where survivors of natural disasters have the resources they need, now and for years to come; where all people are welcomed in Christ's name.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...." (Ephesians 3:20-21). God imagines a world where all are safe, all are loved, all are fed.



Family Promise continues to assist homeless children and their families in our community during the pandemic. Instead of using churches in a rotational model, Family Promise has leased an apartment to shelter families.

Family Promise assists in the prevention of homelessness through its Homelessness Prevention Initiative. Instead of providing meals and shelter, host and support churches are providing donations of needed items to families.

Please consider donating items in the sign-up or other items. <https://signup.com/go/gThCSuq>

Donations can be dropped off at the church office or in the bin outside the church office door.

If you have any questions, please contact Deb Bursinger or Cindy Meckl.

### Food Pantry Sundays

With worship services as virtual-only, you are invited to drop off items for the Food Pantry in barrels located just outside of the Church office whenever it is convenient vs the first Sunday of every month.

Donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry, a non-profit organization run by volunteers with no paid staff. They don't receive government subsidies. 100% of your donations go to servicing those in need.

***Please be sure all perishable donations are within use dates and have not expired.***





## Hearts & Hands Preschool

**For more information:** e-mail: [preschool@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:preschool@oconomowocucc.org)



**For information. . .**

**contact Cindy Meckl @ [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com)**

**Preschool has a Facebook Page!**

<https://www.facebook.com/heartsandhandsconomowoc>

Please "like" us on Facebook and help us spread the word by sharing our posts.

We have had a very fun and busy school year. Although we have had to change many policies and procedures due to COVID-19, we have been able to have kids back in the classroom! We are not sure who is happier about this - kids, teachers or parents:)

### **Fall 2021 Registration starting on January 31st**

We will be accepting registration forms for our 2021-2022 Classes for church members. Any church member who registers on January 31st, we are offering **25% off** of the \$60 registration fee!

**Keep in mind, that church members get 20% off of their tuition!** Here is a list of classes we offer, tuition rates, and capacity: [Please Click Here](#) We are accepting registrations on-line this year! In order to receive the registration link, e-mail Cindy Meckl at [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com).

To schedule a private tour of the classroom, contact Cindy Meckl at 262-567-2558 or [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com).

You can also check out our website for more information about what we have been doing: [heartsandhandspreschool.org](http://heartsandhandspreschool.org)

### **Our annual shaving cream skating—what fun!**



Here's an easy way to help the preschool: Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Instagram. Then, comment and share our posts!



First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc  
815 S. Concord Rd.  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066 -0273

Phone: 262.567.4461  
Email: [uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org)  
**[www.oconomowocucc.org](http://www.oconomowocucc.org)**

## Branches Information:

Please send events/announcements to:  
Jennifer at [Jennifer@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:Jennifer@oconomowocucc.org)

Articles are due by:

March 15  
April 19

April Branches  
May Branches

*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



## Staying Connected ...

**Amy Drewa, Dir. of Ed. & Youth** [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org)  
**Jennifer Arnold, Office Administration** [jennifer@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:jennifer@oconomowocucc.org)  
**Cindy Meckl, Dir. Hearts & Hands Preschool** [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com)

## Branches

**March 2021**

## Upcoming Events:

March 7	Holy Communion Pantry Sunday
March 18	Book Club
March 28	Palm Sunday
April 1	Maundy Thursday
April 2	Good Friday Ecumenical Service
April 4	Easter Sunday