



APRIL 2024

# Branches Newsletter



**Join us for Worship Sundays at 9:30AM**

**Engage** and **Inspire** all generations to **Connect**  
with God through love and service.

## Newsletter Highlights

Rummage Sale

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Pastoral Ponderings

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Confirmation Retreat

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Community Garden  
Plots

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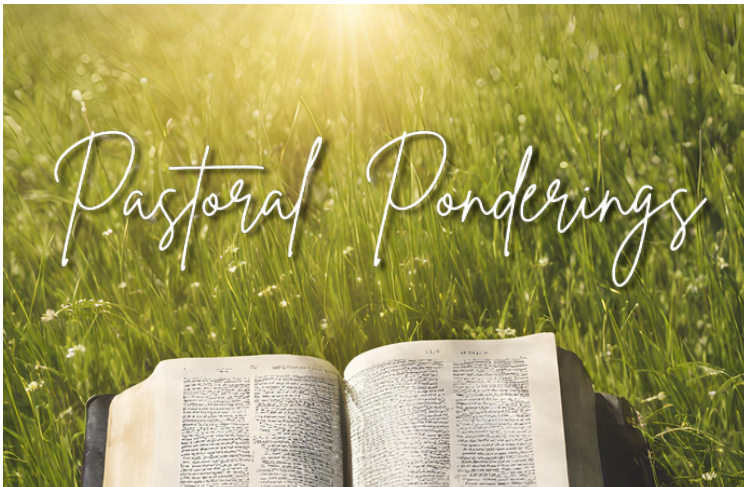
7th Annual Bald Eagle  
Car Show

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
OCONOMOWOC**

📍 815 S. Concord Road

📞 262-567-4461

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



by Pastor Matt

Y'all – despite the snow, in just over a week Easter will be here! And as big as that is, these few days between now and Easter are the only reason that Easter means anything at all. The wild joy of Jesus' donkey-back ride into The City, on a carpet of clothes and palm branches, turns sour in the next days when the crowd realizes that he is NOT leading a full-frontal insurrection against the Roman army.

On their last night together, Jesus wraps a towel around his waist and washes his disciples' feet. He shows them that a daughter or son of God conquers by serving, not by violence. He leaves them a feast of his ongoing presence in the bread and the cup. Afterward, he goes out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray that what is about to happen not happen – but for God's will to be done either way.

Instead of starting a holy war against the Romans, or pulling a fast escape out of thin air, Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried, mocked, scourged, nailed to a horrific tool of torture, dies, and is buried in a sealed tomb. This Jesus - the Anointed One – conquers our God-forsaking human cruelty and sin by absorbing it. He conquers it by trusting in the power of God's love more than in the power of God's retribution. This Jesus was not in that tomb on the first day of the week. This Jesus appeared to two disciples walking to Emmaus later that afternoon. This is the Jesus by whose promise and presence we have tasted the feast of eternity.

Jesus lives! The risen Lord lives, bringing forgiveness to lives pulled into the quicksand of bitterness or guilt; bringing healing to bodies, minds, spirits, and communities; bringing grace and a restoring welcome to people pushed to the edges because of their past, their poverty, skin color, or who they love; bringing food to the hungry and hope to the hope-starved.

Friends, this is THE Good News! With the old disciples, and as the new disciples, we must share it – share it by our actions, by our following of Jesus, share it even with words if we have to. This Good News is urgently needed in a broken and bleeding world. This Good News is the only reason church exists at all.

First, I ask you to pause, and breathe, and take the Good News to heart for yourself. He said, "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*" Breathe that in. Deeply. This LIFE is for you. Then, I ask you to invite someone you know to worship, someone for whom Jesus' touch would bring freedom, wholeness, laughter, mercy, or some other new beginning. Because this LIFE is also for them. Whoever they are. Wherever life has brought them.



In just over a week, Easter will be here. And though it is short, there is a journey from here to there. My prayer for you is that on this journey you find breathing space, a new sense of what really matters, and a reawakened yearning to follow Christ and live with the joy of his Good News – which shall be for all the people.

## Moderator Musings

At Bible study last week we talked about abundance in relation to Christ's miracle of the loaves and fishes. Many of us shared memorable stories of visiting our grandparent's home for a Thanksgiving feast. We recalled the warmth and love of family on those very special occasions. Well, coming up on April 27th our church will have the opportunity of playing the part of grandma's house for the Southeast and Southwest Associations of UCC churches in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ is divided up into 4 districts or "associations". Our church lies on the western edge of the Southeast Association. Because of our geographic location, our accessibility to I-94, and the size of our building we have been asked to host, not only this year's Southeast Association annual meeting, but also the annual meeting for the Southwest Association. So on April 27th we will be hosting close to 200 church leaders from across the entire southern tier of Wisconsin. By holding these two meetings together the Conference is hoping for increased collaboration and communication between the associations. This is a great honor and a terrific chance to showcase our church.

Welcoming Ministry will be taking the lead in hosting this Saturday event. The Conference will be reimbursing us the cost of lunch but there will be opportunities for volunteers to supply snacks for the welcome table/morning breaks as well as assisting in serving lunch and/or guiding people around the church. There will be more information shared as the date comes closer. Let's join together and make these visitors feel welcome. Just like Grandma's house.

Yours in Christ,

Chris Mol  
Moderator, First Congregational UCC of  
Oconomowoc



All are welcome to join us at our next work Saturday on **April 12th from 10:00 to 11:30**. We will be working outside getting Our Church ready for the Rummage Sale!!



## Caring Connection

Caring Connection is a network of volunteers from our congregation who direct God's healing message to church family members in need.

One of the ways we send God's message is through our Card Ministry. The Church office as well as Maggie Hollis, Theresa Snyder and Pam Van Every send cards of sympathy and celebration to members of our church family in need. A total of 47 cards were sent out in 2023 to the families of our deceased members, get well and/or thinking of you cards. If you know a church member in need of a card, or would like to be involved in this ministry, please let us know.

# Welcome New Member Sunday

Pastor Matt and the Membership Committee will hold an informational meeting for those interested in learning more about our church and for those interested in becoming members of our church family on **Thursday, April 4th at 6:30PM** in the Church Office conference room. A tour of the church will follow the meeting.

*Please contact the Church Office at 262-567-4461 to let us know if you are planning on attending to ensure that we have enough supplies.*

New Member Sunday will take place on **April 14th** at which time we will warmly welcome new members to our congregation. *Please contact the Church Office if you are interested in attending the April 4th meeting and/or in becoming a member.*

## A Book Ahead

Thanks to all of you who are sewing bags for A Book Ahead! The need for book bags for “A Book Ahead” is ongoing. In case you haven’t heard about this organization, the goal is to provide books to underserved children in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties to ensure all kids own their own books.

**WE NEED 3000 BAGS by April of 2024!** Precut kits with instructions for these easy to sew bags are located in the purple bag by the mailboxes in the office. You may return sewn bags there.

*Questions? Contact Susan Steffens.*





All are invited to have lunch and socialize at Rockwell's Restaurant (Shorehaven north Campus) The 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each Month  
Menu Options are \$15 each

## Tuesday, April 9

*(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 4/1)*

*Handouts with the menu options for April will be printed and available when the information is received.*

## Tuesday, April 23

*(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 4/15)*

## Reserve your spot for a good time!

During Fellowship or call/text Sue Zajac at 414-698-3575. At each meal your cash will be collected by Sue Zajac (or designee) in order to make one payment for the group. Sorry no checks or credit cards—CASH ONLY.



# Garden Plot



The Community Garden Opens **Early April** and Welcomes New Gardeners! Ten-foot square plots are available for \$25.00 each. Water, access to a Garden Shed, Basic Tools, Marsh Hay, and Optional Roto-Tilling are included in the price. Gardeners are asked to practice organic methods without use of insecticides, herbicides or pesticides. In addition to growing fresh vegetables, Community Gardening offers opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and meet new friends!

*To find out more, contact Tom or Shirley Depies at 262-567-7254  
or email [tvdepies@charter.net](mailto:tvdepies@charter.net).*

## Mission and Outreach



### Singing Collection

Every time we worship, loose coins in the offering are donated to a Mission Partner. The coins in the metal plates make a “joyful noise,” so we call this our Singing Collection.

The amount raised for Lake Area Free Clinic was \$708.00 in January.

### April’s Singing Collection

Our Singing Collection for April is this year’s Youth Summer Mission Trip. Our high school youth and chaperones will be traveling to Biloxi, Mississippi July 14-20 to work with Back Bay Mission, a UCC affiliation. Our youth will act out the biblical faith to

*“preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”*

(Luke 4:18)

They will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful service opportunities by helping those in need within the community through light construction work, to assisting in the local food pantry and working in the day center. We will see what God can do with our skills and time. As you consider supporting this worthy endeavor, please remember, some give by going; others go by giving! We appreciate all the support and prayers you are able to offer our 2024 Youth Mission Team.

### Food Pantry Sundays - First Sunday of Every Month (but welcome anytime)

The first Sunday of every month, you are invited to bring items for the Food pantry and put them in the baskets at the entrance to the sanctuary. These donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry during the week.

Items that the Food Pantry accepts are:

**Non-perishables:** food items, Baby items - diapers, wipes, baby food, formula;

**Personal hygiene items:** soap, shampoo, tampons, sanitary pads, deodorant, toothpaste, laundry detergent, toilet paper.



March 3 & April 7

**Please be sure before you donate that all perishable items are within their use dates and have not expired.**



# Rummage Sale

## April 20th



The rummage sale is just around the corner. Please bring us your rummage and sign up to help with the sale by clicking [here](#) or using the QR code below. If you're uncomfortable using Sign Up Genius, call or text Jill Riemann at 262-719-3823 or send her an email at [jillr480@gmail.com](mailto:jillr480@gmail.com) to let her know how you'd like to help.

### Highlights:

- We need a Room Ambassador for the Kitchen Area (we're working on it already, but need help the two weeks leading up to the sale)
- Candles and Vases needs a Room Ambassador (this area is not too labor intensive)
- We are already organizing rummage on Tuesday's leading up to the sale. Contact Jill for more details.

Thank you in advance for helping us join together to have fun and raise funds for our church.





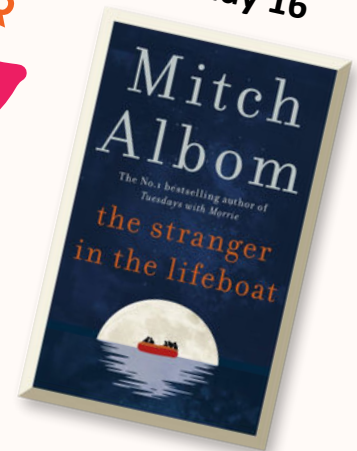
April 18



COME AND JOIN US AT OUR

# BOOK CLUB

May 16



Socialize and form friendships by joining us for an immersive experience at Book Club. Book Club gives you a chance to get to know people you may never have had contact with otherwise! We enjoy reading and respectfully discussing a broad range of viewpoints as we seek to grow in our understanding of our Lord and one another. Join us to gain knowledge, creativity, and community. Everyone in the Book Club gets a chance to pick a future book of the month. Come help us discover something new!

**Join us at 1:00PM in person or Zoom next month. If you prefer Zoom please contact Jean Vercauteren for details.**

**All are welcome to join for any book and discussion.**







at First Congregational UCC

June 25-27 from 1-4 pm

for children 3 years old - 5th grade

**Come and learn to face your fears while trusting in God.**

Through music, drama and storytelling, games, arts and crafts, science, and even snacks, children will learn ways to connect with and trust God. So come and join us at Camp Firelight! Spread the word and invite your friends and family.

*The cost for each participant is \$15.*

Click [here](#) to sign up  
or use the QR code.

*sign up*





# MISSION STOCK SHARES

Invest in our 2024 Summer Mission Trip by purchasing a share of stock. Shares are sold in any amount. By purchasing a share, you are helping a participant serve in a way God has called upon them. They are stepping out of their comfort to serve communities and to bring a helping hand and hope.



Gaining New Relationships and Skills



Life Altering Experience



**SOME GIVE BY GOING;  
OTHERS GO BY GIVING!**



Purchase your stocks today in the Church Office or after worship in Fellowship Hall.

Rain  
or Shine

# 7th Annual Bald Eagle Car Show



Saturday, June 15, 2024  
10:00AM - 2:00PM  
First Congregational UCC  
9:00AM cars & bikes arrive  
Food • Beer • Music • Raffles

Bikers Welcome



First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc  
815 S. Concord Road, Ocon., WI 53066  
www.oconomowocucc.org • 262-567-4461

**Contact:** Andy Meckl at 262-720-1876  
or TheMeckls@gmail.com



*Fundraiser for  
Youth Mission Trips  
in memory of  
Rich Behling  
"The Bald Eagle"*

## Platinum Sponsors



## Gold Sponsors

Groskopf Construction

## Youth News

### Youth Group (3rd-12th Grade)

It's spring and it's time to spring into youth group! Join us as we spring into action to help with our Church Wide Rummage Sale on **Sunday, April 7 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.** We will help clear out classrooms and sort through all the rummage sale items. This has been a popular event and is a great way for all of us to get together and have fun while we help our church! We will also have some fun challenges throughout our time together. Participants are welcome to bring their friends and family to this event. To make sure we will have enough lunch for everyone please respond to Amy Drewa at [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org) by **April 3** if you will be attending! We look forward to seeing you there!



### Confirmation

Our four amazing young adults who have been deeply exploring their faith through Confirmation class will be coming together to write their faith statements on **April 13** at Daychola in Green Lake. Please keep them in your prayers as they put their faith into words that they will proclaim in front of their families and peers on May 18. Mark your calendars and join us on May 19 as these four young adults take the next step in their faith journey by reaffirming their faith through their faith statements and the Rite of Confirmation during the 9:30 worship service.

### Sunday School News

As we concluded our journey through Lent and celebrated Easter in March, we will begin to discover that sometimes you don't always have to see it to believe it through the story of Doubting Thomas. Our children in 4th grade and younger will engage in the story through a variety of activities. They will find ways to recognize and express different feelings they may have through art; play a "see it to believe it" guessing game; and a few other activities.

Our Middle and High School youth will be learning about the different apostles and their stories. Through games and discussion they will discover that the apostles went through some of the same things they are experiencing in their lives.

It's crazy how quickly this Sunday School year is going. This year I have really noticed the children and youth are deeply engaged in the lessons and are having some amazing conversations. They are going much deeper into their faith than I have seen in the past few years. The questions being asked, and the discussions being had are inspiring and heartwarming. This stems from all our amazing parents nudging their children and youth to explore their faith more deeply by coming to Sunday School. We are also extremely blessed to have some amazing teachers who are so willing to engage in the lessons by sharing their faith journeys and God's word with our children and youth. I look forward to hearing what the children and youth discover through the lessons this month.

## Youth News

### Mission Trip Fundraisers

Our Youth Mission Team is continuing their fundraising efforts for their 2024 Mission Trip! This year 15 participants will be traveling to Biloxi, MS to work with Back Bay Mission which is affiliated with the UCC. We will serve in their housing rehabilitation, food pantry, and low-income family day center. It is always our goal to make these mission trips affordable for all who attend. With our fundraising efforts and the generosity of our church members we can do so. This month we are offering a few more opportunities for you to support our youth mission team.

Has this warmer weather helped you to think about planning your flowerpots for this summer? This year our youth mission team will be selling a variety of flats, 4 ½ inch annual pots, planted porch pots, hanging baskets and much more! These beautiful and high-quality flowers are from Shady Lane Nursery and are available for you to order and support our Youth Mission Team. Stop by the Mission Table in Fellowship Hall after church beginning March 24 through April 21 to place your order. All orders will be available for pickup on May 11.

We are continuing to sell **Stock Shares**. Please consider to become an investor in our 2024 Summer Mission Trip by purchasing a share of stock. After worship at the Mission Table, we are selling shares of stock for any amount (\$5, \$20, \$50 or more). By purchasing a share, you are helping a participant serve in a way God has called them that could potentially be life altering. By purchasing a share of stock, you will receive an invitation to a Stock Share Holders Breakfast which will be held in the summer. We pray that you will prayerfully consider Investing in our Youth Mission Team today!

During our **Annual Rummage Sale on April 20** our Youth Mission Team will be offering a food booth. They will be selling some delicious BBQ, hot dogs, chips, and drinks. So please stop by and support them.

### Church Camp

Have you finalized your summer plans for your kids yet? Have them come to Church Camp!! The UCC has two amazing church camps in Wisconsin: Moon Beach and Daychola. Registration has opened for all campers. If you are interested in attending, make sure to register before your favorite camp gets filled up. You can check out the different camps and register [here](#).

We are very blessed that our church offers a scholarship to all youth campers who fill out a service log. Please click [here](#) to access the log. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Drewa at [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org).

### Easter Bunny Brunch



Thank you to all who attended and supported our annual Easter Bunny Brunch. It was a fun and delicious morning for all who attended. We are thrilled with the support and honored to announce that our mission team was able to raise \$999 from this amazing event! This event couldn't have been possible without all of you!



# HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

## Register Now

Now registering for Fall 2024! We have a few spots available in our 2.5's class, 3's MW, 3's MWF and 4's MWF classes. Act fast as this year, classes are filling faster than ever!!

## Friday Fun Class

August Friday Fun Registration "Into the Woods" has begun! This program will run on Friday, August 2,9,16 & 23 from 9-11 am. This class is open to ALL children ages 25 months - 4 years old. Cost is \$100 for the public and \$80 for church members! Click [here](#) to register.

**There are 2 sessions left this school year:**

**Celebrating God's Creation** April 5th-19th 3 weeks \$75 This 3-week session takes the children through the creation story. God created day & night God created water, air, wind, clouds & sky God created flowers & trees God created birds & insects God created animals & people

**Our Growing Earth** May 3rd-17th 3 weeks \$75 Children in this 3-week session will learn that plants grow from seeds. These lessons will help the children understand that the new life we see in the spring comes from God.

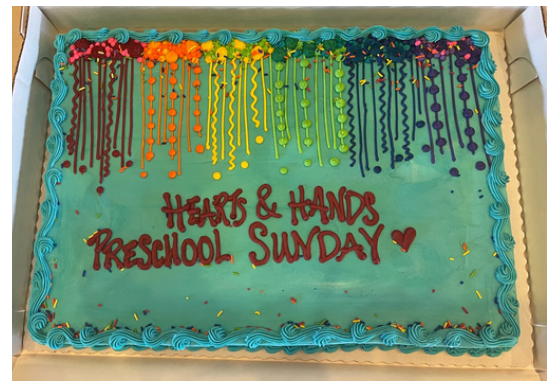
For more information about any of our classes, check out our website

[heartsandhandspreschool.org](http://heartsandhandspreschool.org) or contact Cindy Meckl, 262-567-2558 or [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com)

We had so much fun at Preschool Sunday on March 10th! Here are some pictures from the day:



All of the preschoolers who were at Preschool Sunday.



Cindy Meckl, Deb Schuyler, Joyce McGuire & Teresa Schmeling

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**New Member Informational Meeting:** April 4 (6:30PM)

**CPR-AED Training:** April 6 (9:30AM - noon)

**Youth Group:** April 7

**Ladies Luncheon:** April 9 (11:15AM)

**Confirmation Retreat:** April 13

**New Member Sunday:** April 14

**Book Club:** April 18 (1:00PM)

**Rummage Sale:** April 20 (8:00AM - 2:00PM)

**Book Club:** April 21 (1:00PM)

**Ladies Luncheon:** April 9 (11:15AM)

**United Church of Christ Southeast and Southwest**

**Annual Meeting:** April 27



May articles are due no later than **MONDAY, APRIL 15**  
to Natalie Gruentzel - [natalie@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:natalie@oconomowocucc.org)

## STAY CONNECTED AND FALL INTO CHURCH WITH US

Rev. Matt Schneider-Adams, Senior Pastor [pastor@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:pastor@oconomowocucc.org)

Amy Drewa, Director of Children & Youth [amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org](mailto:amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org)

Karl Kay, Music Director [karl@execpc.com](mailto:karl@execpc.com)

Cindy Meckl, Hearts & Hands Preschool [themeckls@gmail.com](mailto:themeckls@gmail.com)

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US AT  
**[WWW.OCONOMOWOCUCC.ORG](http://WWW.OCONOMOWOCUCC.ORG)**