



AUGUST 2025

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

Oconomowoc Festival
of the Arts

Sewing Event

Outdoor Worship

Back to School Scrip

New Member Sunday

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

📍 815 S. Concord Road

📞 262-567-4461

✉ uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org



by Pastor Matt

I gotta say that I love the heat. The deep of winter is also very good, but summer is the best. As a native son of the West Coast, it's amazing to me how, once the cold begins to lift, people jump at the chance to get outside and do things, whatever the sky.

Summer can bring different rules. Even if it's infected with our need to achieve, it's still a time to wander into a slower pace. Summer creates cracks in the schedule, when we can allow fragments of our time to be claimed by grace, or healing: an afternoon at the beach; a baseball game; a nap in the shade in the back yard; a morning in a kayak, or the woods. We're taught that this "time away" is a luxury – a message which might be foisted on us by larger powers, or by ourselves. Either way, it is a lie – at least as far as the Bible is concerned:

But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:14-15)

You are who God made you to be, who Jesus Christ has redeemed you to be – fully alive and fully free to reflect the glory of Divine power and grace in this world. We are more than a small pile of minerals stirred into few gallons of water. God breathed us into being. So, what we are NOT, is *slaves*. We may well labor for our bread, but we are NOT mere units of production. We are not slaves of others' desire for wealth any more than we are slaves to our own desires, whatever they may be. That's the point of the exodus from Egypt. Humans are designed to be God's own beloved children – heirs of heaven. Thus, time is not our master. WE are the master of our time. And rest, sabbath, is no luxury. It is our birthright.

Maya Angelou observes: *"Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us."*

So, take the time. Sure, it's already August. But, there is still time. Sit on a rock – or climb one. Read a book. Lay down in the shade and look up at the sky. Be dazzled by fireflies. Find some great music and go nuts. Resist the urge to repair cracks in THE SCHEDULE – get a crow bar and pry them wider! Practice sabbath.

And, if you just can't give yourself permission to let go, know that God already has. In fact, God has commanded it. Through rest, time away, sabbath, God feeds the peace within us, so that we can bring more of it into the world around us.

Christ's peace be yours,

Pastor Matt

Moderator Musings

There are two questions that I am now routinely asked by fellow church members which I thought I should address in this newsletter.

1. The current status of our long standing negotiations with Cincinnati Insurance is in its final stages. The mediator, called an umpire, has been agreed to by both parties and should be looking at both our church building and the mountains of documentation that have accumulated over the past 3-years. I am hoping for his report and decision by the time this newsletter is published. This is a binding decision to both parties and I am cautiously optimistic that we have a strong position and should get a significant amount of additional monies. On a related issue the Administrative Ministry is still trying to determine which company to recommend for the repair of the Music Pod roof (as voted on at our last congregational meeting). Once that recommendation is made the Leadership Team will vote on it and work can be scheduled.

2. After a number of meetings, the Capital Fund Drive committee has decided to delay the roll out of the drive until early next year. It has been decided that a lot of the foundational work would not be ready by fall and that an outside consultant firm should be engaged to help with building the framework. Again, on a related issue the Stewardship Ministry will redirect some of its attention to the fall Annual Stewardship Campaign which is scheduled to open this September.

These are only two of the issues that I have been dealing with lately. Being the moderator for a church as dynamic as ours can be a distinct challenge and certainly time consuming. But, isn't that a good thing?

Yours in Christ,

Chris Mol
Moderator, First Congregational UCC



Donation from the Oconomowoc Community Choir

We are excited to share that the Oconomowoc Community Choir has made a generous donation to First Congregational UCC. We are deeply thankful for their support and their continued partnership with our church.

The Choir's commitment to sharing the gift of music enriches not only our congregation but the wider Oconomowoc community.

We are thrilled to continue this meaningful relationship and look forward to the joy, connection, and inspiration that future collaborations will bring.

Please join us in expressing our heartfelt thanks to Tracy and the entire Oconomowoc Community Choir Board for their generosity and ongoing partnership!





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, August 12

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 8/4)

Oriental Salmon Salad: Chopped greens, Napa cabbage, pea pods, carrots, cucumbers, grilled salmon, crispy wontons and Sesame Lime dressing, served with a peanut butter cookie.

Chicken Quesadilla: chopped chicken and cheese on a grilled tortilla with salsa and sour cream, served with a peanut butter cookie.

Tuesday, August 26

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 8/18)

Chicken Cordon Bleu sandwich: Grilled chicken, shaved ham, Swiss cheese, Dijon mustard sauce on a warm bun, served with fresh fruit and a pecan brownie.

Grilled Shrimp Salad: Fresh greens and spinach, with carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, crumbled bacon, grilled shrimp, and lemon herb dressing, served with a pecan brownie.

Reserve your spot for a good time!

See Sue Zajac during Fellowship or call/text her 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.

Back to School? We've Got Scrip!

School supply runs? New clothes? Fresh kicks from Nike or Adidas? We've got you covered with scrip cards available every Sunday after worship!

Need gas to get there? We've got that too! Want a gift card we don't have? We can order it!

Grab your gift cards and support the church while checking off your back-to-school list. Let's make this school year start strong—shop with scrip!





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.

August's Singing Collection



Hebron House, also known as Hebron Housing Services, has been serving the needs of Waukesha County unhoused men, women, and children for over 40 years. They provide emergency housing, warm meals, clean beds, showers, laundry facilities and a place to recoup. They also offer rental assistance as well as supportive services with caring social workers, and case managers.



They have experienced professional support staff and dedicated volunteers committed to restoring families to homes and helping build a more stable community. Please consider donating to this wonderful organization together we can “restore hope and dignity by providing services that end homelessness in our community.



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.



August 3 & September 7

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

Quarterly Contribution Statements

Quarterly contribution statements have been sent out. Please reach out to Bob Frick (bobfrick4733@gmail.com) if you have any issues or questions.



Keep Those Can Tabs Coming!

Don't forget to keep bringing in your can tabs—from soda, beer, pet food, soup, cans, and more! Help us fill the current container so we can make another big drop-off to the Ronald McDonald House.

These tiny tabs make a big impact by helping provide comfort, care, and support to families with sick children around the world.

📍 Drop your tabs in the container outside the main office or give them to Cheryl Hoff.

Let's fill it up together!



Save Your Receipts!

Be sure to turn in your **Fox Brothers Piggly Wiggly** receipts upstairs or in the main office.

A percentage of the total sales on those receipts goes directly into our Youth Fund to support trips, activities, and more. Every bit counts!



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 **Wednesday, September 10 at 6:30PM** in the Church music room.

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.

On **September 21**, New Member Sunday will be held during which time those interested in becoming members of our church family will be warmly welcomed into our membership. *Please contact the Church Office if you are interested in attending the September 10th meeting and/or in becoming a member.*

Welcome new members, Laura Slocum and Ken Young to First Congregational UCC!

Laura Slocum

Laura Slocum was baptized and confirmed in the United Church of Christ. Her faith has carried her to Koinonia Farms (Georgia), Pilgrim Pines (California), and the national offices of the United Church of Christ (Cleveland), where she assisted Susan Sanders in the Board for Homeland Ministries.

Laura is married (Chris Mason) and is mom to son, Mathis, and daughter, Maiké. Laura has degrees in Speech-Language Pathology and Higher Education Administration and Student Affairs. Most recently she was owner and clinician at a pediatric speech clinic in Oberlin, Ohio. Laura and her family relocated to Oconomowoc from Oberlin in 2024 and are enjoying getting to know Wisconsin.

Laura enjoys spending time in nature, cooking and baking, reading and writing, traveling, theater and music. She is grateful to the many communities of faith that have supported her along her way, and she is delighted to be landed now at First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc.



Ken Young

Ken and Kelly Young were married on July 20, 2019. Kelly has been a member of the church since her childhood, and Ken officially joined the church in May of 2025.

Ken was born in Appleton and graduated from MATC Milwaukee with a Commercial Art degree in 1980. He recently retired in May of 2024, after a 44 year career as an award-winning graphic artist, art director and creative director. He spends a lot of his retirement drawing very detailed B&W pencil portraits of pets and people. And, besides vacationing with Kelly and their dog Piper in beautiful Door County, Ken also enjoys spending quality time with his three grandchildren – Myah, Stella and Parker Jr.

Ken has a deep and personal relationship with Christ and has a strong commitment to help continue to grow the church while also connecting with other church members. Ken recently designed the new UCC Oconomowoc church logo and will continue to offer his creative talent and expertise to the church.

Sewing Event

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 17

1:00PM - 3:00PM

Fidget
Mats

Book
Bags

Sewing &
Chatting



It's time for another social sewing event! Let's use those threads that connect us to make book bags for Book Ahead and fidget mats for dementia patients at Summit Aurora hospital.

Book Ahead is a local nonprofit dedicated to ensuring all children own their own books. Since 2021, the organization has reached over 6,000 children in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, distributing over 20,000 books. The bags provide a safe and reusable way to supply the books. Kids love the various fabric patterns. Please bring your own thread and scissors, and a sewing machine if you have one.

People with dementia, Alzheimer's and autism often struggle with anxiety. Fidget mats and muffs can have a calming and relaxing effect. Let your creativity loose with buttons, zippers, ribbons and more. Supplies will be provided for fidget mats. If you plan to crochet a fidget mitt, directions will be given, but please bring your own supplies.

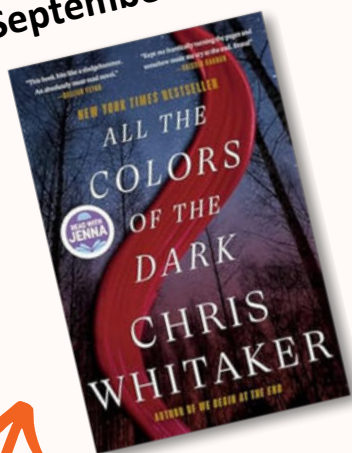
We can use many skills – crocheting, ironing, rotary/scissor cutting, machine sewing, pinning and chatting. No fancy sewing knowledge required! Bring your skills and any supplies (if you have them) on **Wednesday, September 17 from 1:00 to 3:00.**

Please sign up in the office.
If you'd like more information,
contact Susan Steffens at
262 227-9919.





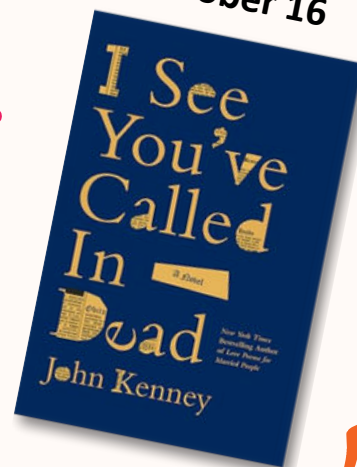
September 18



COME AND JOIN US AT OUR

BOOK CLUB

October 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.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

at Oconomowoc Festival of the Arts

This is a fantastic opportunity for us to
connect with our wider community and
share the heart of our church!

**SHIFTS ARE AVAILABLE
BOTH DAYS:**

9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

1:30 PM – 5:30 PM

August 16 & 17

If you're available and would like to be part of this fun and meaningful weekend, please reach out to Barb Bleecker at (262) 269-5663 (call or text) to sign up for your preferred shift or to ask any questions.



Youth News

VBS

We had an amazing time at our Fruits of our Labor Farm for our Vacation Bible School July 8-10. We welcomed 15 sproutlets to come to learn and grow in God's word as they explored the Fruits of the Spirit. From exciting games and creative crafts to worship, tasty snacks, and new friendships — everyone had an incredible time growing together in **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and more!**

A big THANK YOU to our amazing volunteers who helped made it possible!! Thank you to: Grace Drewa, Brayden Drewa, Tenley Knoll, Peg McCollum, Lexi Printz, Connor Steckbauer, Emily Steckbauer, Pat Witkowski, Brooke Zirzow and Deb Bursinger. This three-day adventure wouldn't have been possible without your time, energy, and heart. You truly helped bring the Fruits of the Spirit to life! Thank you to Kim Herro for all her time and donations to help bring the Fruits of the Spirit to life as well as Natalie Gruentzel and Cheryl Hoff for all their help!



Confirmation

We're excited to launch a new Confirmation class for those entering 9th grade who are ready to explore their faith on a deeper level. In the coming weeks, we'll be reaching out to our rising confirmands entering 9th grade with more details about the program.

We look forward to walking alongside these youths on a meaningful, faith-filled journey and can't wait to get started!

If you have a student in 9th grade or older who would like to participate and hasn't been contacted by mid-August, please reach out to Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.

Youth News

Sunday School News!

Can you believe it's already that time of year again?

Back-to-school season is here! Time to register the kids, find that perfect backpack (or dig last year's out from under the bed), and stock up on all the school supplies they'll need. It's a busy, exciting season full of fresh starts—and we're just as excited because it also means a brand-new **Sunday School year** is about to begin!

This August, we'll be busy getting our classrooms and lessons ready for another wonderful year of faith, fun, and friendship. Our theme this year is **"Adventure with God"**—and we can't wait to journey through amazing Bible stories together, exploring what it means to grow in faith as a community.

Sunday School is open to all children and youth ages **2 years through 12th grade**—and they're always welcome to bring a friend or family member along! Here's what to expect this year:

- **Ages 2 through 4th grade** will rotate weekly through our art, science, game, and story rooms—bringing Bible stories to life in hands-on, creative ways.
- **5th through 12th graders** will dive into real-life connections with the Bible, exploring how these ancient stories still speak to their lives today.

It's going to be a year full of discovery, growth, and lots of fun—and we can't wait to begin this **ADVENTURE with YOU!**

[Click here](#) to register for Sunday School!

Rally Sunday

Sunday, September 7

Mark your calendars to join us for a new Adventure as we kick off the start of another great Sunday School Year! There will be a special service welcoming everyone back and per our tradition, all 3rd Graders will receive their bibles during worship. Join us after worship for a special fellowship celebration and an Open House of our Sunday School classrooms.



School Year Blessing

August is here! For many families that means school is just around the corner! Shopping for school supplies, books, and fall clothes becomes a part of everyone's schedule. During our Rally Sunday Worship on **Sunday, September 7**, we will celebrate and bless the beginning of another school year. So, students, preschool through adult, bring your backpacks or lunch boxes or water bottles to worship. During the services we will lift our children and students of all ages through prayer as we begin a new school year.

Teachers, aides, principals, administrators, secretaries, cooks, librarians, janitors, and bus drivers...come to church to be blessed, affirmed in your vocation, and encouraged as you serve children and families in your daily work!

Youth News

Mission Trip

From **July 20–25**, thirteen youth and four chaperones traveled to La Center, Kentucky, where they worked tirelessly and shared God's love with the local community. With hearts full of compassion, they served with dignity, kindness, and respect, touching the lives of everyone they encountered.

This mission trip was deeply meaningful for our team. On July 27, they shared their powerful experiences during our worship service, offering a glimpse into how God worked through them and in them.

These remarkable young individuals and dedicated adults represented our church with honor and grace. As a church family, we couldn't be prouder of them.

This journey, however, wouldn't have been possible without your prayers and generous financial support. From the bottom of our hearts, our 2025 Mission Team thanks each one of you!



HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Fall Classes

We have a few spaces left in both our 2.5's program and our Friday Fun classes.

Registration information is available on our website: www.heartsandhandspreschool.org

New Staff Member

Welcome Nyla M. to the Hearts & Hands staff! More about Nyla coming in the months to come. She will bring energy, youth, and much enthusiasm for what she calls her "dream" job!

Teresa Schmeling Retirement

We had such a blast celebrating Teresa Schmeling's retirement with a tea party hosted by the preschool board at Jill Riemann's home! Reminiscing, game playing, good food, and tasty tea all made for a perfect send-off for Teresa after her 16 years at Hearts & Hands. She will be missed but we are sure she will love retirement!



[CaringBridge page](#)
[Apparel shop](#)
[GoFundMe page](#)

Whatever prayers and support you can give this family is much appreciated!

Eleanor continues to amaze everyone around her with her determination to beat all of the odds! She received a heart transplant on June 14th. What an absolute miracle this beautiful little girl is <3



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Golf Outing: August 11 (10:00AM)
Ladies Luncheon: August 12 (11:15AM)
Oconomowoc Festival of the Arts: August 16 - 17
Book Club: August 21 (1:00PM)
Hymn Sing: August 24 (9:30AM)
Outdoor Worship: August 24 (6:00PM)
Ladies Luncheon: August 26 (11:15AM)
Labor Day - Office Closed: September 1
First Day of Preschool: September 3
Rally Sunday: September 7
Ladies Luncheon: September 9 (11:15AM)
New Member Informational Meeting: September 10 (6:30PM)
Work Saturday: September 13 (9:00AM)
Sewing Event: September 17 (1:00PM - 3:00PM)
Book Club: September 18 (1:00PM)
New Member Sunday: September 21
Ladies Luncheon: September 23 (11:15AM)

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US AT
WWW.OCONOMOWOCUCC.ORG

STAY CONNECTED AND FALL INTO CHURCH WITH US

Rev. Matt Schneider-Adams, Senior Pastor pastor@oconomowocucc.org
Amy Drewa, Director of Children & Youth amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org
Karl Kay, Music Director karlkay@execpc.com
Cindy Meckl, Hearts & Hands Preschool themeckls@gmail.com

September articles are due no later than **August 15** to natalie@oconomowocucc.org

