



MAY 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

Soles for Jesus

Camp Firelight

The Perfect Storm

7th Annual Bald Eagle
Car Show

Golf Outing

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

📍 815 S. Concord Road

📞 262-567-4461

✉ uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org



by Pastor Matt

The standard, movie-scene tearful goodbye: it happens in train stations, on suburban driveways, in airports. Hugs. Stumbling, honest words. The wiping of eyes and noses. Words you think you are supposed to say, and words you plan to say but which evaporate in the moment, and sometimes words you'd like to reel back into your throat but which slipped past the border patrol. Goodbyes are tough.

In the fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus is in a tearful goodbye with his disciples. John doesn't record tears and sniffles. But, the whole room is choked up, because this is it. The weird ending that Jesus talked about several times was really happening. As a part of this unfolding monologue, he says,

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Then, Jesus' answer also raises a question. After he says, "...my peace I give to you," he says, "I do not give as the world gives."

Does this mean that the world gives no peace? We all know that a couple of weeks at a beach, a day in the woods, a couple of hours away from active toddlers, or even a twenty minute nap can bring us back to our senses. When that reset button is hit, the chaos is pushed back and we can breathe again.

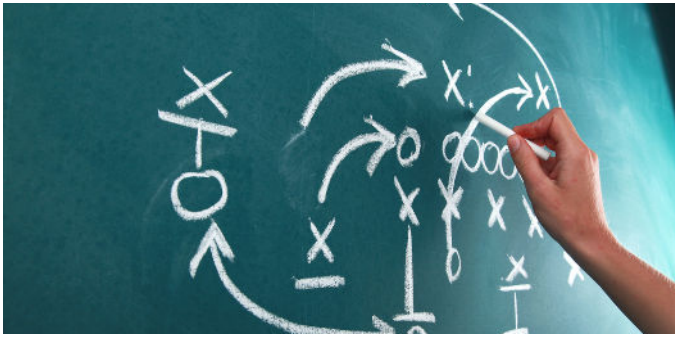
It's just that this is never permanent. Not even the perfect vacation pushes the "permanent reset" button. The noise, the chaos, the conflict, the fatigue always comes back. Jesus is talking about something more than rest, something more than a pause in the chaos. Because all of this toxic stew begins somewhere deeper. Jesus offers his peace "*not as the world gives*" - not as a temporary tonic, and not even as a solution to an immediate problem. Jesus' offer is aimed at our fear, our anxiety. It is aimed at our insidious need to overdrive our schedules so that the only free time we have is Sunday morning, or the only time we can have with our kids is the "quality time" we take with them because the "quantity time" they need is just "not realistic" anymore. It is aimed at our fear of the other who is "not like us." It is aimed at our isolation.

The peace Jesus gives, "not like the world gives," is not a magic trick that unravels the mess I made. It is about a relationship. "*We will come to them and make our home with them.*" "*The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.*" This comes from his resurrection. It is startlingly real. Jesus is no longer limited by space or time. He is with us. With us. With us. As near as the breath we take right now. As near as the hand we throw out grasping for a safety line in the flood. Passionate. Resolute. Alive.

We are not left to ourselves. We are not abandoned, left to resist alone the overdrive and "this world's" obsession with activity which eats away our souls like an acid bath. The natural boundary between our hearts and all that feeds our deep fears is Jesus - the same one who said "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*"

Because... take a deep, slow breath... We are not alone. Jesus is here. Christ is risen indeed.

Moderator Musings



Back in my high school and college playing days I was told by more than one coach that they could not make the plays themselves but could only work toward putting me in the position to make the “big” play. For myself, that meant giving me the training and opportunity to be in the right place and the right time to make that critical block (I was an offensive lineman) in order to spring the running back for a touchdown. As the church office works with our new IT computer consultant I am reminded of those same words from long ago.

The Leadership Team, for the past three years, has had for one of its goals upgrading the church’s IT infrastructure. For years prior, the church’s computer needs were attended to by multiple volunteers who unselfishly donated their time and talent to the maintenance of our computers and local area network. With the increase in computer complexity and cyber-security concerns it was decided by Leadership Team that using volunteers was no longer a viable option and so earlier this year we entered into a contract with TekOutfit Inc to review our system and implement the necessary changes to secure our computer systems.

So far, the following actions have been taken:

- Power Church (program that tracks church membership and financial giving) has been moved from our server to a cloud based application. This allows for greater security and automatic upgrades.
- Quick Books (program used by our bookkeeper to track financial accounts) has also been moved from the server to a cloud based application for the same reasons as Power Church.
- The church server has been turned off. It was outdated and increasingly vulnerable to cyber attack. This move has significantly increased the cyber security of the church’s databases.

Next steps include changing operating licenses from family accounts to charitable organization accounts which should give us more flexibility and stabilize the transfer of data between work stations. (Sometimes Pastor Matt and Amy have trouble sharing files that they are working on.) By making these and future changes we are going to be giving our church staff a robust, stable and safe computer system to work with. In other words, we are giving the office and professional staff the training and tools to be in a position to succeed. My old football coach would approve.

Yours in Christ,

Chris Mol
Moderator, First Congregational UCC of
Oconomowoc

Tabs for Ronald McDonald House



There will now be a container in Fellowship Hall in addition to the one outside the office for the pull tabs we collect for the Ronald McDonald House in Wauwatosa. All kinds of aluminum tabs, not just those from beverage cans, can be contributed such as those from pet food cans and soup cans. Thank you to everyone who contributes to this very worthwhile cause.



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, May 14

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 5/6)

Club Sandwich on Wheat toast with mayo, lettuce, tomato, ham, turkey, bacon and Cheddar, served with fresh fruit and a peanut butter rice crispy bar.

Baked Salmon Salad, with chopped greens, carrots, fresh raspberries, glazed pecans, Feta cheese and Raspberry Vinaigrette, with a peanut butter rice crispy bar.

Tuesday, May 28

NO LUNCHEON

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.



Caring Connection

Caring Connection is a network of volunteers from our congregation who send cards, help out at funerals and give meals to those in need. We also participate in a confidential prayer chain, drive members to church, visit those at home or in a retirement community and take cards and plants at Christmas time to members who are homebound, bereaved or in a retirement community.

This month we are highlighting our Transportation Group. This group volunteers to pickup a member for a Sunday church service or meeting. Unfortunately, we do not have anybody at this time. If this is something that you are interested in doing, please let Barb Moeller know—gtmbjm@aol.com

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.



Soles For Jesus

May's Singing Collection

Soles for Jesus (SFJ) will be the recipient of our May Singing Collection. SFJ (based in Milwaukee) is an organization that provides gently used and new shoes to the people in Africa who desperately need them. We will be collecting shoes for our 3rd Annual Shoe Drive this month. It costs approximately \$2 to send a pair of shoes. The singing collection will help with these costs.

SHOES. They are a basic luxury that we take for granted every day as we choose our favorite pair from our closet. Many of us are unaware that millions of people across our globe live barefoot lives. Soles for Jesus (SFJ) is a Milwaukee based organization that provides gently used and new (all sized) shoes to the people of Africa who desperately need them. Those who receive shoes also hear the message of Jesus and are given personal copies of the Gospel message written in their own language. Soooo It's May!! Time for our amazing Mission outreach opportunity.

This will be our 3rd year donating to SFJ. We have collected approximately 830 shoes from our Congregation in the last 3 years!!!!!! There are collection boxes upstairs by the church entrance and downstairs by the office.

SFJ believes that sharing shoes along with the message of Jesus has the power to change a life. Please go through your closets and donate to this World Mission. For more information go to solesforjesus.org. As with all our Mission work, let's be difference makers!

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.



May 5 & June 2

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

VOLUNTEER TO BE A

Buddy

The purpose of "Buddies" for new members of our church is to assure that new members feel welcomed for the first months of their membership. We would like Buddies to accompany new members at the time of their being received into the church family on New Member Sunday and take them to and sit with them during Fellowship hours following church services.

Buddies will be available to answer questions and address concerns of new members. They will invite new members to attend church activities and events.

The Buddie's significant role will be to serve as companions for the first six months following New Member Sunday to assure that new members feel welcome and know that they are an important part of our congregation.

To volunteer to be a Buddy, please contact Linda Davis at pldvais.pd@gmail.com or 207-985-9186. It is a wonderful way to get to know new members.



Sue Zajac & Barb Bleecker did an amazing job sorting through & organizing cupboards & drawers in the kitchen which will make using the room much more efficient. Thank you Sue and Barb for your time and effort!

Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers on the alter for a specific Sunday, please sign up [here](#) or scan the QR code below!





Mental Health

T A S K F O R C E

Our Mental Health Task Force met in April, and we're eager to share our plans and ideas with the congregation, especially as May is Mental Health Awareness Month. We have two activities planned.

On May 5, we'll distribute green ribbons during our service to show support for those with mental health challenges. Wear them throughout May to show support.

We are very excited that Brad Riemann will make a presentation to the congregation and community on May 9 about the mental health crisis in America.

More activities to come. Contact our team with questions:

Tom Stone, Amy Drewa, Deb Bursinger, Mary Krebs, Brad Riemann, Brenda Seroka, and Susan Steffens

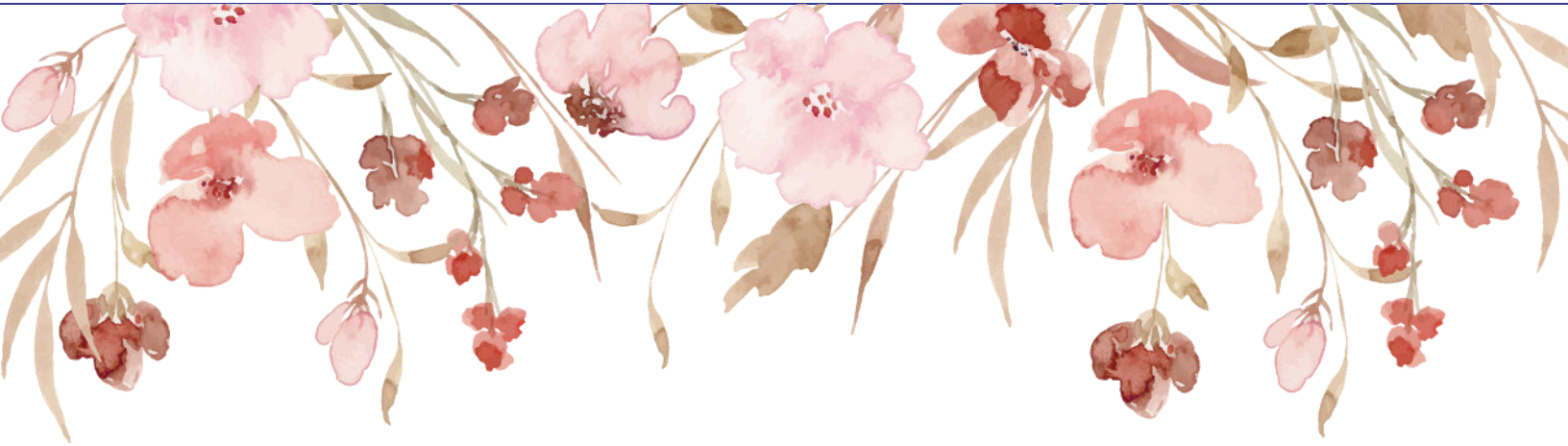
The Perfect Storm:

The Mental Health Crisis in the U.S.

May 9 from 6:30-8:00PM

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, First Congregational United Church of Christ will be hosting an event entitled "**The Perfect Storm: The Mental Health Crisis in the U.S.**" This discussion will be held **Thursday, May 9th from 6:30-8:00PM** and will include a presentation by Dr. Brad Riemann, Ph.D. a nationally recognized expert in behavioral health and former President of Philanthropy, Research and Clinical Care at Rogers Behavioral Health.

Dr. Riemann will discuss the rise in prevalence rates of anxiety, depression and addiction experienced in the U.S., the effects on youth and the impact COVID-19 had on us all. There will be ample time for questions and answers as well as audience discussion.



Welcoming Ministry

The welcoming Ministry is composed of Co-Chairs, Barbara Rux and Linda Davis, Barbara Bleecker, Sue Zajac, Kathy Frey, & Kathi Welnak. We are looking for an additional member of our ministry. Caring Connection and Membership are sub-committees of our ministry.

Our ministry is responsible for creating and providing an atmosphere of welcome for our church members and visitors. In addition to coordinating Greeters, Welcome Desk Hosts, and Fellowship Hosts each Sunday, we now have a hosted table with a Welcome sign in Fellowship Hall assigned to welcome visitors following church services.

Our Ministry helps with various church functions such as Pastor Matt's Welcome Brunch and Installation, as well as the UCC combined Southwest and Southeast Conference meeting, potlucks and other social gatherings.

This June we will sponsor a New Members Brunch for those new members who have joined our church family in the past year. This past year we coordinated efforts with Spirituality to decorate the church for Christmas.

We hold book club meetings monthly at the church.

Membership reaches out to visitors who have expressed interest in becoming members of our church who meet with Pastor Matt prior to New Member Sundays for informational meetings and a tour of the church.

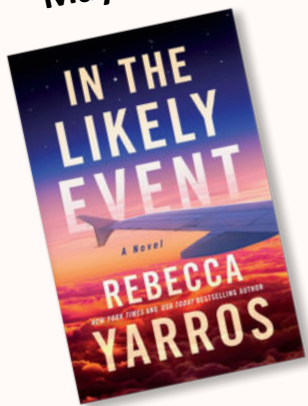
Our Ministry members maintain supplies for Fellowship hour and oversee the organization of the kitchen.

We look forward to receiving ideas to include more members of our congregation in fellowship activities.





May 16



COME AND JOIN US AT OUR

BOOK CLUB

June 20



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 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Due to
Road
Const.

This year at **Okauchee Lions Park**
N49W34400 E. Wisconsin Ave, Okauchee

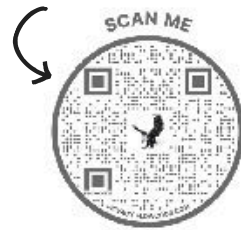
9 a.m. cars & bikes arrive

Food • Beer • Music • Raffles

Bikers Welcome



Facebook Page



First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc
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
Oconomowoc Realty

Volunteers
Sign up



First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc

invites you to join us at the

2024 Annual Golf Outing

to benefit the ministry and mission of First Congregational UCC

Monday, August 12, 2024

Where:

**Oconomowoc Golf Club
5621 Brown Street
Oconomowoc, WI 53066**

Check-In, Warm-Up, Box Lunch:

10:00-11:30 am

Shotgun Start:

11:30 am

Dinner:

6:00 pm

Entry Includes:

18 holes of golf on a private Donald Ross course

Practice range and green available before your round

Box Lunch

Golf Contests

Dinner

Silent Auction; Raffles Prizes and Live Auction

FELLOWSHIP

All are Welcome to join in the fun!

Invite family, friends, neighbors and coworkers to play.

No matter your group size or skill, we will match you up.



**To register:
visit us at oconomowocucc.org, click here,
or complete the form on the next page**

Golf and Dinner Registration

Dinner Choices: Ditka Pork Chop, Dill Sauce Salmon, Baseball Sirloin Steak

GOLF AND DINNER REGISTRATION

(Premium package includes 3 mulligans, 10 raffle tickets, entrance into the Ewald Win a Car Hole in One Contest, and a chance to win a golf shop gift certificate.)

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____ Premium Package__

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____ Premium Package__

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____ Premium Package__

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____ Premium Package__

_____ # of Golf/Dinner Registrations @ \$190 + _____ # of Premium Packages @ \$25 = \$ _____

NON-GOLFER DINNER ONLY REGISTRATION

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Entrée Choice: _____

_____ # of Dinner Registrations @ \$50 = Dinner Only Total \$ _____

Special Recognition will be made for all Sponsors

Deadline for sponsorship sign-ups and payment is August 1, 2024

Hole Sponsor \$125_____ Par Sponsor \$250_____

Birdie Sponsor \$500_____ Eagle Sponsor \$1,000_____

Ace Sponsor \$2,200_____ (includes foursome, please add names above)

Sponsor Name: _____ Contact Person: _____

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Final deadline for all registrations and checks are due by August 1, 2024. Please make checks payable to: First Congregational UCC with "Golf Outing" in the memo and mail to 815 S. Concord Road, Oconomowoc, WI 53066.

Or simply pay online at oconomowocucc.org and click on the "Give" button. There is a 3.5% convenience fee if using a credit card.

Youth News

Youth Group (3rd-12th Grade)

Our youth came together in April to help with our Annual Rummage Sale. They worked hard together to clear out the different rooms, set up rooms and haul rummage stuff to their designated area. Thank you to everyone who helped with this wonderful event!



We are very excited to kick off our May event to come together to support our community Postal Food Drive! Join us on Saturday, May 11 as we support the postal drivers and the Oconomowoc Food Pantry. Children, youth, and their families are invited to join us from 1-3 p.m. as we sort and organize all the food that the postal workers collect on their routes and drop off at the church pavilion. From 2-4 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. we could use older youth and adults to help load the truck with the packed goods and unload at the food pantry. This is a great way to help our community, come together to have fun as a church family and earn any service hours you may need for school! If you are interested in attending, please email Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.



Sunday School News

As we enter the final month of our 2023/2024 Sunday School year it is a great time to reflect upon the year. It truly has been an exciting year watching the children and youth build relationships and explore their faith through a variety of biblical stories and lessons. We had fun together learning new skills, meeting new friends, discovering new ideas, and deeply engaging in their faith through many discussions. Thank you to all who were part of our Sunday School program!

Youth News

During the month of May our children and youth, 3-year old through 4th grade will celebrate the birthday of the church while learning about Pentecost! Through engaging lessons and celebrations, they will learn about the very first birthday of the church when the Holy Spirit descended upon many creating the very first church.

As for our Middle and High School youth they will conclude their series of exploring the life and teaching of the apostle Paul. They learned about the transformation Paul went through, how he shared his words with others through many letters and how we should live out our faith. As we continue in May, they will explore the gifts they have been blessed with and how they are called to share them with others.

There will be no Sunday School for Middle and High School youth on May 5 so each of them can engage in the worship service and participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion. They will also not have Sunday School on May 19 so they can worship and celebrate with their peers who are being confirmed.

Again, thank you to everyone for your participation and support of our Sunday School program. It is a blessing to watch these children and youth grow and engage every time I see them. I look forward to seeing each of you throughout the summer and can't wait for us to come back on September 8 for the start of another exciting Sunday School year!!

God's Blessings,
Amy

Confirmation



Our 2024 Confirmands have taken the time to put into words their current thoughts and beliefs of their faith. Each of them worked very hard and are very excited to share their individual faith statements with their families on May 18 and a combined faith statement with all of you on May 19. Please mark your calendars to join us on May 19 at 9:30 a.m. for this special service and to witness these wonderful young adults reaffirm their baptismal vows through the Rite of Confirmation. We hope you will be able to join us to offer your Christian love and support.



Youth News

UCC Church Camp

It's almost time for Church Camp!!!! The UCC is very blessed to have two amazing church camps for your children and youth in Wisconsin: Moon Beach and Daycholah. Registration has opened for all campers. If you are interested in attending, make sure to register TODAY. 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.

College and High School Graduates

In honor of all our graduates, college and high school, we want to recognize you on your accomplishment! Mark your calendars to join us on June 9 during the 9:30 a.m. service as we recognize you. In addition please send an email to Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org with the name of the graduate, where you/they are graduating from, your/their future plans, a picture that can be shared on the screens and if you will be attending the service on June 9. We are very excited and proud of you and can't wait to celebrate this milestone with you!

WANTED.....Vacation Bible School Volunteers

We are very excited for our Vacation Bible School to head to Camp Firelight here on our church grounds June 25-27! However, to help make this camp successful we need several volunteers. Please [click here](#) to see how you can help.

Thank you, teachers!

As we conclude another Sunday School year it is the perfect time to recognize all our amazing volunteers who helped make our Sunday School programs possible. Each of these individuals brought their time gifts and talents to teach and build relationships with our children and youth. We are so thankful and blessed for everything they have done for our Sunday School program this past year! Join us on May 19 as we recognize each of them!

Thank you to:

Rochelle Behling, Randy Bourdo, Deb Bursinger, Darla Corbe, Pat Dempsey, Rania Dempsey, Kim Herro, Mike Herro, Bob Johnson, Bonnie Laugerman, Sara Moldenhauer, Lexi Printz, Melissa Rheineck, Grace Saxe, Emily Steckbauer, Michael Stevens, and Jenny Wallace.

We would also like to thank Leah Laufenberg for assisting with organizing all our Youth Group events this year!



2024 Youth Mission Team- Plant and Flower Sale

Thank you to everyone who ordered their plants and flowers through our Youth Mission Team Plant Sale! All orders will be ready for pick up on Friday, May 10 from 2-6. However, if that timeframe doesn't work for you, please contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org to schedule another time. If you forgot to order your plants there will be some additional plants available to purchase on Sunday, May 12 after worship.

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!!



Substitute Teachers

We are looking for substitute teachers for next school year! No experience necessary - just a love for children:) Contact Cindy Meckl to find out more info!



The daffodils at our entrance.

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.



The kids got their feet painted brown for the color books they are working on. Only a few were ticklish:)



Lainey calls this her "Jesus jacket" <3

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Spring Congregational Meeting: May 5

The Perfect Storm: May 9 (6:30-8:00PM)

Pick up Flower Orders: May 10

Postal Food Drive: May 11

Youth Group: May 11

Mother's Day: May 12

Ladies Luncheon: May 14 (11:15AM)

Book Club: May 16 (1:00PM)

Confirmation Dinner: May 18

Confirmation Sunday: May 19

Memorial Day (Office Closed): May 27



June/July articles are due no later than **WEDNESDAY, MAY 15** to Natalie Gruentzel - natalie@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 karl@execpc.com

Cindy Meckl, Hearts & Hands Preschool themeckls@gmail.com

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US AT
WWW.OCONOMOWOCUCC.ORG