



OCTOBER 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

Fall Congregational
Meeting

World Communion
Sunday

Neighbors in Need
Offering

Confirmation Class

Coffee with the
Pastor

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

📍 815 S. Concord Road

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✉ uccoffice@conomowocucc.org



Pastor Matt Schneider-Adams

Tacking. That's the word used for the process of sailing against the wind. Boats crossing oceans or lakes often, if not most of the time, do not get to sail with the wind. The direction a ship's cargo must head is entirely independent from whatever the weather happens to be. So, if you needed to get from point A to point B with your cargo in the millennia before steamships, your ship often needed to make forward progress with the wind blowing in its face. Every style of ship, every configuration of sails, had a specific technique for shifting direction to sail at about 45 degrees to the wind, and thereby had a way to travel in the direction they needed to go, at any given time.

For us as persons, following Jesus in any time has involved a headwind of one sort or another. Occasionally the world or national or local situation was a wind in our sails, moving us in the direction we already needed to go. But most of the time, we have had to move with the cultural winds in our face. Jesus certainly did. And after his resurrection, the apostles found out about making forward motion in spite of real headwinds. Think Jesus detained, tortured, and crucified. Think Paul being mocked on Mars Hill or held under house arrest numerous times. Or much later, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, who in the mid-1800's got a degree from Oberlin College in Ohio, then ultimately became the first protestant female ordained to ministry, in the Congregational church, in upstate New York. Headwind. Tacking.

Elsewhere in this issue of Branches, Chris Mol talks about the current status of the project to repair building damage due to a hailstorm from more than three years ago. Talk about a headwind. Resolution to this situation is like a carrot held in front of us that we can never quite reach. It absorbs creative energy like a thirsty sponge. Yet we make forward progress, finding ways to shift and plan with hope for the next steps – which WILL come!

And there are other headwinds. A growing perception among the general public that Christians are all judgmental, and disengaged from the ways of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels – so why bother going to any church? A culture soaked in violence, and fearful, in which assassination becomes one more excuse to blame whoever the opposition is, instead of being an opportunity to step back, take a deep breath, to grieve, and to listen more care-fully to each other.

When Jesus told his disciples, repeatedly, that “those who would follow me must take up their cross and follow,” this is a big part of what he meant. Rarely does the world support Christian life without strings attached. Most of the time, living an authentic faith, within the real world, means we will push forward against a headwind. Sometimes we do that straight-on. Usually we have to tack, shift directions, plan, adjust. All of this happens with prayer, with confession and forgiveness and much grace, with hard but faithful conversations that birth new understandings - which can only happen with faith and hope in the risen Lord whose promised presence and guidance are the only sure things we can trust in any headwind.

Moderator Musings

There have been a lot of questions about where our church is currently with our building repair dispute with Cincinnati Insurance as well as with the status of our capital campaign. Since they are directly related I will address them both. First, the ongoing insurance dispute.

- As many of you recall, 3-years ago our church (as well as most of Oconomowoc) was struck by a vicious hail storm that damaged the roof and the siding. We reported the event to our building insurance carrier, Cincinnati Insurance, and they came and determine the damage was worth \$260,000 and gave us a check for that amount. Convinced that this was not enough to repair all the damage the Administrative Ministry engaged a public advocate (building contractor who acted on behalf of the church). He determined that to fully repair the damage it would cost closer to \$1.3 million. The church then engaged Cincinnati Insurance in the conflict resolution process outlined in our policy. After nearly 3-years of consultants and communication back and forth we are almost at the end. The final step in this long process was the church and Cincinnati Insurance each hired an assessor who first tried to come to an agreement (didn't happen), and then picked an "umpire" who is the final, binding arbitrator between the church and Cincinnati Insurance. To give you an example of why this has taken so long, once the umpire was agreed upon the church immediately sent him a check for \$1,250 for our half of his service fee. It took Cincinnati Insurance 6-weeks to send him their half. We are now anxiously awaiting the two assessors and the umpire to make a site visit at our church and to personally view the church's exterior and roof. I am hoping that that visit can occur sometime in September or very early October. Once the visit is done the umpire will issue his ruling and hopefully Cincinnati Insurance will be writing us a very big check. Which brings me to the Capital Campaign.

- I initially envisioned the Capital Campaign to first pay for the resurfacing of the parking lots and driveway, but also to cover whatever shortfall the insurance settlement may create as it relates to repairing the church. The Capital Campaign Steering Committee has been meeting since last spring and has spoken to a number of fundraising consultants. These consultants are unanimous in stating that we cannot hold a Capital Funds drive until we know what the final insurance settlement is. And thus, as we deal with the delays in getting an insurance settlement the Capital Funds campaign gets pushed further and further back (we are now looking at early 2026).

Hopefully this answers some of your questions. The church's mission will continue. I am busy now working with Stewardship Ministry as we make plans for this fall's annual Stewardship Campaign. More details will be presented at the October 12 Fall Congregational Meeting that I hope all of you can attend. I understand that a number of you are frustrated. Believe me, no one is more frustrated than I.

Yours in Christ,
Chris Mol
Moderator, First Congregational UCC



November articles are due no later
than **October 15** to
natalie@oconomowocucc.org



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, October 14

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 10/6)

Chicken Parmesan Sandwich, with Mozzarella cheese, Marinara sauce, fresh fruit and an Oatmeal cookie.

Turkey Caesar Salad, with chopped Romaine, tomatoes, chopped turkey, parmesan, croutons and a side of Caesar dressing, served with an Oatmeal cookie

Tuesday, October 28

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 10/20)

Roast Beef & Swiss Wrap: Cold sliced roast beef, Swiss cheese, mayo, lettuce, tomato and onion on a flour tortilla wrap, with fresh fruit and a caramel blondie bar.

Chopped Chicken Salad: Mixed greens, chopped chicken, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, blue cheese crumbles, bacon and candied pecans, with a side of buttermilk ranch dressing and a caramel blondie bar.

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.



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 housebound, bereaved or in a retirement community.

This month we are highlighting our **Funeral Service Group**. Our committee and other members of our church provide grieving families a place to commune in Fellowship Hall following the funeral service. The grieving family generally has food catered in with volunteers providing baked goods and beverages. Please contact our coordinator, Barb Bleecker, if you are interested in helping out.



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.

October Singing Collection

Leadership Matters. In recognition of this the Wisconsin Conference of the UCC has initiated the Leadership Forward campaign. This campaign is to ensure that the congregations in our conference have high quality, supported leadership. The campaign, which began in 2024, is looking to raise \$2,000,000 over 5 years. This campaign offers 3 areas of support for church leaders and local congregations. One half of the funds will be disbursed as a leadership endowment to support lay and clergy leadership. One quarter of the funds will be disbursed as grants given directly to local congregations to foster innovative approaches to ministry to increase the visibility of these congregations and the impact in their communities. The final quarter will be used to support active and retired pastors in partnership with the pension boards Board for Ministerial Assistance.

The conference requested a \$10,000 commitment from our congregation. The Leadership Team has agreed and pledged the money over 5 years with the first payment made in 2024. In recognition of the value of this campaign and in support of the Leadership Team, the Mission Ministry has designated the singing collection for October to go to the Leadership Forward campaign. As we at First Congregational realize from our own recent search for a settled pastor, the availability of church leadership at this time is critical and it is just as critical that our current leaders are supported as well as those potential future leaders of the church. Please consider giving generously to this campaign to support the Leadership Forward campaign.

Summer Services Totals

Thank you to everyone who donated loose coins to the offering during our summer services! The Singing Collections truly were “Singing” with all money going to help the people of Wisconsin and beyond. Please continue to give generously as we enter the Fall months!

June: The Women’s Center of Milwaukee \$1039.81

July: Church World Service \$397.31

August: Hebron House \$575.42



October 5 & November 2

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

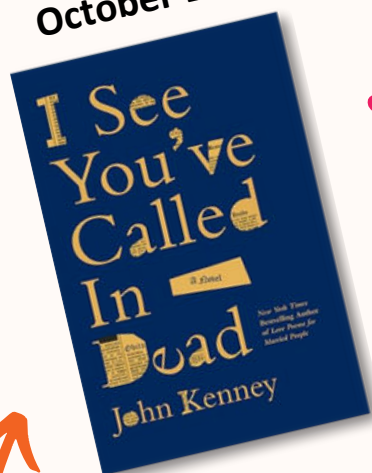
The first Sunday of every month, you are invited to bring items for the Food Pantry and put them in the baskets at the entrance to the sanctuary. These donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry during the week. Items that the Food Pantry accepts are:

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.

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



October 16



COME AND JOIN US AT OUR

BOOK CLUB

November 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.



Coffee with the Pastor

Tuesdays
1PM to 3PM

Join us at Roots Café. A time for conversation, connection, and community.

All are welcome!



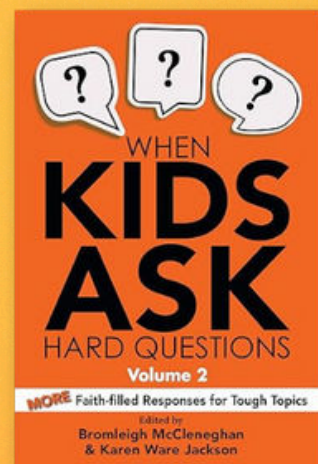
Parent BOOK CLUB

Kids can ask tough questions—about grief, injustice, gender, faith, and more. As parents, grandparents, and guardians, it can sometimes feel overwhelming to know how to respond.

We invite you to join our Parent Book Club as we read *When Kids Ask Hard Questions, Volume 2*. Together, we'll explore how to navigate these important conversations with our children—grounded in honesty, empathy, and Christian love.

We will meet monthly with flexible options; in person, online via Zoom, or through a text group or Google Chat.

Before we get started, we'd love to gauge your interest. If this sounds like something you'd like to be part of, please [click here](#) or scan the QR Code.



Youth News

Sunday School Update: Our "Adventure with God" Has Begun!

What an amazing start to our Sunday School year! Our first month on the "Adventure with God" journey was an absolute blast — and it flew by way too fast!

Our children and youth came together each Sunday to dive into the story of the Lord's Supper, learning all about the sacrament of Holy Communion in preparation for World Communion Sunday. Not only did they explore this sacred tradition through meaningful conversations and fun activities, but our youth even baked the communion bread together that will be served during the special service — and they'll help serve it, too!

We are very proud and excited for our children and youth to participate in this special service! As the children and youth will be celebrating in worship on World Communion Sunday, October 5, we will not have Sunday School.

With the fall harvest season in full swing, our children in 4th grade and younger will explore how to "harvest" the Fruits of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Together, we'll learn how to grow these fruits in our lives and share them with everyone we meet!

As we head toward Halloween, our middle and high school youth will tackle a new series on fear. Because let's be real — everyone's afraid of something: the dark, heights, spiders... or even rejection and failure. We'll talk openly about the things that scare us and support each other in finding strength, courage, and faith through it all.



Don't forget if you haven't registered your child for Sunday School yet, please [Click here](#) to register today! We're so excited to continue this journey with our amazing kids and youth. If you have any questions at all, feel free to reach out to: Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowucc.org. Let's keep adventuring together!

Save the following date:

October 5- World Communion Sunday and Family Worship (No Sunday School)

Confirmation

We can't wait to kick off this year's Confirmation journey with our amazing new group of Confirmands on **Saturday, October 11!**

Our first session will be all about getting to know each other, building some solid teamwork skills, and yes—actually having fun (we see you, eye-rollers 🙄)! Trust us, the team-building activities are better than you think.

We'll also begin diving into the Bible and start exploring some big questions—like why we're on this faith journey and what it means to walk it together.

This is just the beginning, and we're so excited to see how this group grows—not just in knowledge, but in friendship, community, and faith. Let's get started!

Youth News

Youth Group Kicked Off in Style!

In September, our awesome 3rd–12th grade youth came together for a Brunch & Build—and it was a blast! After fueling up with some delicious food, they split into two groups: Junior Youth (3rd–8th Grade) and High School Youth (9th–12th Grade). Each group worked together to create their own calendar of events for the year. It was amazing to see them taking charge, sharing ideas, and getting excited about what's to come!

Up next, our High School Youth are rolling up their sleeves to make a difference! On Sunday, October 12, they'll head to the Wildlife in Need Center to help clear out animal cages and weed the paths. Their work helps open space for new animals to receive care. 🙌 Want to join in? [Sign up here](#) And remember — friends are always welcome!

Our Junior Youth are invited to a festive fall event filled with Jack-O'-Lantern carving and lunch on Sunday, October 19, right after worship. We'll meet in the high school classroom to kick off the fun — bring your creativity and your appetite! [Sign up here](#) to reserve your spot! (Friends are welcome to join the fun too!)

Be sure to mark your calendars with all the awesome events we've got planned! You can access the Youth Group Calendars below. And don't forget — all youth must be registered to participate so please [click here](#).

We're so excited for a year full of fun, faith, and friendship. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.

Let's make it a year to remember! 🙌



Church Shirts Are Here – Grab Yours Today!

We've got fresh new church T-shirts and polos in stock — and they're looking great! Whether you're heading to a church event or just want to show your community where you love to worship, these shirts are a perfect fit.

Available Styles:

•Classic T-Shirts (Black or White):
\$17 each | \$19 for 2XL

•Black Polos:
\$23 each | \$25 for 2XL

Stop by the church office during the week or catch Amy Drewa on Sundays after worship! These shirts are not only comfy and stylish — they're also a great way to show your church spirit wherever you go! Don't miss out — grab yours while supplies last!

HS Youth Calendar

Junior Youth
Calendar

HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Our 21st School Year has begun!

On September 3rd, we welcomed in a new school year! We are so excited to welcome Nyla (Ms. Morrow) to our staff! Cindy (Mrs. Meckl), Deb (Mrs. Schulyer), and Joyce (Mrs. McGuire) continue to add onto their years of servicing our students!

Welcome Nyla

My name is Nyla Morrow and this is my first year as a teacher assistant. I am so glad to be a part of Hearts and Hands preschool. I am so excited to see our students grow during the school year and getting to know them better each day. In my life away from work, I have four pets: two dogs and two cats. I love listening to music, I love dancing, and I love hanging out with my family and friends.



Our 21st year has begun!



So blessed!



Kids Fest



Our preschool attended and sponsored Kids Fest once again this year! This year, we purchased PLINKO and the game was enjoyed by all! We gave away a record number of prizes this year as the crowd was huge!!



HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Eleanor Updates

[CaringBridge page](#)

[Apparel shop](#)

[GoFundMe page](#)

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



Eleanor Update from her Caring Bridge:
Monday, September 15, 2025

- Eleanor continues to improve
- Her 8 Month Birthday was Saturday and 3 Month Heart Birthday Sunday.
- She is on "room air" and has been doing good.
- She's doing well with the transition back to NG feeds which is amazing.
- She went on her first stroller ride with Mama around the floor this weekend. She enjoyed it and fell asleep.
- Possibly this week she can get outside to feel the sun and breeze.

Friday Fun

Come join us for one of our Friday Fun classes! These classes are open to ALL children ages 25 months - 4 years old. For more information or to register, see our website: <https://www.heartsandhandspreschool.org/programs>

2025-2026 Friday Fun Class list

<u>Class Topic</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Thankfulness	November 7th-21st	3 weeks	\$90	This 5-week session takes the children through the discovery of thankfulness :What does it mean to be thankful? What are we thankful for? What is Thanksgiving? Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?
Christmas Friday Fun	December 12th	1 week	\$40	Join us for a special day of Christmas Fun! Christmas crafts and Christmas cookie making! This class will run from 9-noon
Winter	January 9th-February 6th	5 weeks	\$150	Celebrate winter and all that makes it wonderful!
Love	February 20th-March 20th	5 weeks	\$150	This 5-week session will explore all that Love has to offer. God's love and those who love us will be some of the topics covered.
Celebrating God's Creation	April 10th-May 8th	5 weeks	\$150	This 5-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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

World Communion Sunday: October 5
Neighbors in Need Offering: October 5
Coffee with the Pastor: October 7 (1PM - 3PM)
Confirmation Class: October 11
Fall Congregational Meeting: October 12
Youth Group: October 12
Ladies Luncheon: October 14 (11:15AM)
Coffee with the Pastor: October 14 (1PM - 3PM)
Book Club: October 16 (1:00PM)
Work Saturday: October 18 (9:00AM)
Youth Group: October 19
Coffee with the Pastor: October 21 (1PM - 3PM)
Ladies Luncheon: October 28 (11:15AM)
Coffee with the Pastor: October 28 (1PM - 3PM)
Coffee with the Pastor: November 4 (1PM - 3PM)
Confirmation Retreat: November 7 - 9
Work Saturday: November 8 (9:00AM)
Stewardship Sunday: November 9
Youth Group: November 9
Ladies Luncheon: November 11 (11:15AM)
Coffee with the Pastor: November 11 (1PM - 3PM)
Rummage Sale: November 15 (8AM - 2PM)
Youth Group: November 16
Coffee with the Pastor: November 18 (1PM - 3PM)
Book Club: November 20 (1:00PM)
Church Decorating: November 23
Ladies Luncheon: November 25 (11:15AM)
Coffee with the Pastor: November 25 (1PM - 3PM)
Thanksgiving - Office Closed: November 27 - 28

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