



OCTOBER 2026

Branches Newsletter



Join us for Worship Sundays at 9:30 AM

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

Newsletter Highlights

Stewardship Campagin

Estate Planning

Womens Bible Study

Food Access Garden
Program

Confirmation

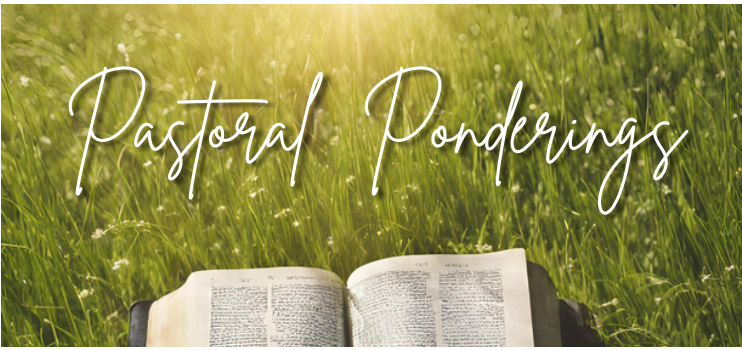
Sunday School

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

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by Pastor Matt

As a kid I learned that there is all kinds of cool stuff in the Bible: bullying giants, people thrown into pits who escape, and prisoners seen alive in fiery furnaces. I also found other parts. For example, as a kid I heard these verses as kind of cheesy, and boring:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9 NRSV

The kid said, “yawn.” But now, when our world gets its thrills from tearing each other down, when public voices encourage very personal disparaging, and as high-dose conflict grows ever more toxic in our souls, I don’t hear these words as cheesy or boring. At all. Instead, I am convicted by them, and challenged. And just maybe, by the grace of God, a certain healing begins by letting these ancient words of Paul into my poisoned innards.

We are literally living inside a miracle right now - you know that, right? The breath you just took into your lungs was created by forests, and algae, by fields of corn and alfalfa, and more. This day is brought to you by the spinning of the earth and the gift of gravity. The work you do is the result of real human needs and basic God-given creativity. The flavor of the coffee, the spaghetti, or even the PBJ for heaven’s sake, is a blessing.

That cool new song, your heartbeat, the love of others for you, and your love for them; the way you stepped out of your comfort zone and helped someone you didn’t even know, or how they helped you, with something too big to face alone – all this and more is bona fide miracle, gift right from the hand of Almighty God. Every. Single. Day.

Sure, I can spend my time mulling over whatever is not excellent, not noble, not pure, not admirable – things that do not suit me in the moment. I can eat rage, or spread it. But, every moment spent nursing disappointment is time turned away from the Lord who came that we “might have life, and have it abundantly.” Each one is a lost opportunity to be thankful for all we have been given. Each one is a moment we can never get back.

Now I see very cool stuff in Paul’s words: you and I can choose where we put our attention, what we will think about, what we say or repost or whatever. If we want to give safe harbor to negativity, we can do that. God will not stop us. But we will also have to live with the consequences - to our health, to the people around us, to our neighbors, to our future.

If there is anything excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have... heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

In tortured days, seek that peace. Give thanks for the miracles. And breathe.

Moderator Musing

By : Deb Bursinger

Our Covenantal Relationship with the Wisconsin Conference.

A covenant is generally defined as a relationship between two partners who make binding promises to each other and work together toward a common goal. The Bible references five foundational covenants between God and humanity. God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David before establishing the new covenant through Jesus. In the new covenant of Jesus, we receive the forgiveness of sins and God's empowering Spirit to help us live with each other in love. In this covenant, we partner with Jesus to renew the world.

The Wisconsin Conference UCC uses mutual covenants to guide relationships between congregations, authorized ministers, and associations. The Conference's Southern Regional Support Team is currently undertaking an initiative to strengthen the Conference's covenant with the churches.

To that end, the Support Team is meeting with all churches in the region to learn more about the strengths and needs of each church.

Through this process of discovery the Support Team will discern how the Conference and its churches can mutually support each other to grow our shared ministries. A report of the Support Team's findings will be provided to each of the churches

Our members were invited to a Covenant Conversation on Sept. 15, 2026 with representatives from the Regional Support Team. We had good attendance from our church leaders and members and a great conversation with the Support Team representatives. We look forward to receiving the Support Team's final report to learn how we can better work together with the Conference and other churches in furthering our missions and ministries. We will share that report with the members when we receive it and have discussions with the Leadership Team and our Ministries regarding the findings.



The purpose of this message is to introduce you to this year's Stewardship Campaign logo and slogan. After extensive discussions the Stewardship Ministry felt that "Rooted in Faith, Growing in Generosity" really embodied our church and its mission to the greater community. The amount of mission that is being performed both inside our church's four walls and outside in greater Oconomowoc is inspiring. To make these missions go it not only takes volunteers but monetary resources. On Sunday, November 8 th we will be celebrating "Stewardship Sunday". Prior to November 8 th members will receive their 2027 pledge cards and Time & Talent sheets. When you receive them, please give prayerful consideration to both your monetary support of the church but also how you can serve on a mission opportunity. We are all rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ, let's grow that faith by practicing abundant generosity.

Yours in Christ,

The Stewardship Ministry

ESTATE PLANNING IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

**OCTOBER 8 AT 11:30
FELLOWSHIP HALL**

SPONSORED BY THE LEGACY COMMITTEE

Our guest, Matt Loverine, a financial planner launched his career in 2004 after earning a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater. He is also a chartered Financial Consultant, Chartered Advisor in Senior Living, and Certified Fund Specialist. Specializing in tailored financial plans, Matt focuses on retirement planning for individuals and families. He collaborates with a team of specialists in tax, health, insurance, investments, and estate planning to provide a comprehensive experience.

Lunch and casual conversation will follow. Please join the Legacy Committee as sponsor of this special, informative and timely session.





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 13

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday, 10/5)

Turkey Club on a Spinach Wrap: slow roasted turkey, smoked bacon, and pepper jack cheese, with mayo, lettuce, tomato, onion. Served with fresh fruit, and a blackberry lemon bar.

Grilled Shrimp Salad: Fresh greens with spinach, carrots, tomato, and cucumbers, grilled shrimp and lemon dill dressing.

Tuesday, October 27

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday, 10/19)

Roast Beef Melt on Sourdough, with cheddar, tomato, chips and pickles, served with a cupcake.

Italian Chopped Salad with greens, Italian meats and cheeses, veggies and a side of balsamic vinaigrette, served with a cupcake.

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.

Women's Bible Study

Join us on Wednesdays from 1:15–2:00 PM in the Music Room.

We read the weekly lectionary Bible passage and spend time sharing together. No prior experience is necessary, and all are welcome!

Reminder!

November articles are due no later than
October 19 to
churchnews@oconomowocucc.org



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 realized 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.



October 4 & November 8

Food Pantry Sundays - First Sunday of Every Month

(but welcome anytime)

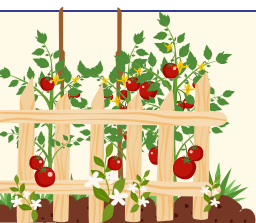
The first Sunday of every month, you are invited to bring items for the Food Pantry and put them in the baskets at the entrance to the sanctuary. These donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry during the week.

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.



Growing Food. Growing Community.



What if churches came together to grow fresh, healthy food—and share that harvest with neighbors who need it most? We are exploring a collaborative community garden initiative at First Congregational UCC that would bring area churches together to grow fresh produce in our community garden and then distribute that harvest to people in need in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties.

We're looking for people who are **excited** about gardening, growing food, food access, community outreach—or simply want to help **make a difference**—who would like to help shape this effort.

Please join us for an informational meeting on **October 27 at 6:00 PM** at First Congregational UCC. We'll learn more about food justice in Wisconsin, hear from **Food for The Journey**, a similar initiative already doing this work, and spend time imagining and brainstorming what we could do together. Chili, including vegetarian chili, and beverages will be served. **If you're able, please bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share. Please RSVP by October 20 to Rania Dempsey (raniadempsey@gmail.com or text 262-719-3037)**



We can't wait to kick off this year's Confirmation journey with our **amazing** new group of Confirmands on **Saturday, October 10!**

Our first session will be all about getting to know each other, building some solid teamwork skills, and yes, having fun! 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 **together** not just in knowledge, but in friendship, community, and faith. Let's get started!

If your youth is 9th grade or older and is interested in participating in this year's program please contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org

Youth News

Sunday School News!

What an **amazing** start to our Sunday School year! Our first month of the “Journey with Jesus: Expect the Unexpected!” adventure was an absolute blast and it flew by way too fast!

It was so wonderful to have our children and youth back together after a busy summer. September was filled with **SURPRISE** celebrations as we explored all the unexpected ways Jesus shows up and invites everyone to be part of God’s family. From fun party games and getting ready for a surprise party to learning how Jesus welcomes everyone, each Sunday brought something new and exciting. We wrapped up the month by making bread together in preparation for World Communion Sunday.

In October, we’ll **continue our celebration** as we explore how Jesus throws a party! Through fun games, hands-on activities, and a few surprises along the way, we’ll discover Jesus’ message in Luke 14 about practicing humility, extending grace, and making sure **everyone** has a place at the table.

Our middle and high school youth will be tackling a **BIG** question this month: Why Church? With all the activities, sports, schoolwork, and extracurriculars filling their lives, why does church still matter? As our youth grow toward adulthood, decisions about participating in church will gradually shift from decisions made by their families to decisions they make for themselves. Together, we’ll take an honest look at why faith community was important to Jesus and why it continues to matter to his followers today. Why church? Because Jesus never called us to do this life on our own and thanks be to God for that!

I am so excited to continue this journey with all of our children and youth! I can’t wait to see what surprises October has in store as we continue discovering new ways to come together, learn, grow, and experience God’s love as a church family.

Save The Date!

October 4

World Communion Sunday and Family Worship (No Sunday School)

Youth Group

In September, our awesome 3rd–12th grade youth came together to Unwrap their Youth Group year! Together, they created 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!

Our **High School Youth (9th–12th grade)** will be coming together for some fun around the campfire, where they’ll create ultimate s’mores and pudgy buddies. Watch your emails for more information!

Our **Junior Youth (3rd–8th grade)** will be coming together for a **Cookout, Yard Games, and Scavenger Hunt on Sunday, October 18**, right after worship. We’ll meet in the Middle School classroom to kick off the fun!

Friends are always welcome to join in the fun at any of our Youth Group events!

If your youth plans to participate in Youth Group this year, please [register here](#) so we can keep you updated throughout the year. You can also pick up a Youth Group calendar on the kiosk in the Sunday School stairwell. Be sure to mark your calendars for all the awesome events we have planned!

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.

HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Our 22nd School Year Has Begun

We are excited to welcome 29 families!

We are also proud to celebrate our dedicated staff:

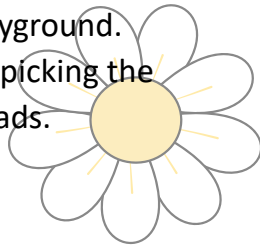
- Cindy Meckl – 21st year
- Deb Schuyler – 18th year
- Joyce McGuire – 8th year
- Nyla Morrow-Earl – 2nd year

We still have openings in most of our classes, so please spread the word to anyone looking for a wonderful preschool!



New Parking Lot Features

We love our updated parking lot! Maddie Unger (#madebymaddie07) did a fantastic job making the space safer for children walking to the playground. The kids have loved following the daisies, picking the rainbow line, and hopping along the lily pads.



Beautifying Our Grounds

The children recently had fun planting tulips by the playground and crocuses in our classroom planting beds. We look forward to a beautiful spring!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Hearts & Hands Mom Meet and Greet: October 1

RISE & Slice: October 2 (6PM)

World Communion Sunday: October 4

Estate Planning Workshop: October 8 (11:30AM)

Confirmation Class: October 10

Fall Congregational Meeting: October 11

Ladies Luncheon: October 13 (11:30 AM)

Book Club: October 15 (1 PM)

RISE Fall Harvest Adventure: October 17 (Noon)

High School Youth Group: October 18 (10:45 AM)

Junior Youth Group: October 18 (10:45 AM)

The Great RISE Halloween Bash: October 23 (6 PM)

Habitat For Humanity Work Day: October 24

Ladies Luncheon: October 27 (11:30 AM)

UCC Workshop: Marks for Faithful and Effective Ministry: November 1 (1:30 PM)

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, Minister of Faith Formation and Community Engagement amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org

Karl Kay, Music Director karlkay@execpc.com

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