



NOVEMBER 2023

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

Pastoral Ponderings
from Pastor Matt

Annual Christmas
Party

Blood Drive

New Members

Rummage Sale

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

📍 815 S. Concord Road

📞 262-567-4461

📧 uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org



by Pastor Matt

Nobody likes to face death. Not even battle-scarred veterans, on yet another sortie down a lonely desert road, backed by drones and air power on demand. Nobody wants to face death. No matter how strong the adrenalin. Death, for all our euphemisms, is still the end.

As Christians, our deepest reality is found among a people gathered by the Holy Spirit, engaged in the living Word of God, and serving a crucified and risen Lord. Whatever else makes up our lives – this is the deep, central core. Jesus lived as though death should be taken seriously for what it is. It tears you from other people, from the earth, from the life you love. Jesus took alternate routes to avoid needless confrontation with those who wanted him dead. Yet, when it WAS the right time to publicly stand for who he was in the face of big money and power, he did not flinch. In the garden, after praying “Let this cup pass from me, but nevertheless your will be done,” by faith he accepted the cost of faithful living – to take a stand against death.

In church, we too, take a stand to confront death, often in very ordinary ways. We host a funeral service, listen to family stories, keep silence together. We pray, help each other hold on through the tears, make food, set up and serve and clean up after food. We give rides. By this we set a boundary. Here, death does not reign. Fear may be real, but it’s not the only reality, nor the strongest. Here, the grieving and vulnerable will not be stigmatized or pushed aside, but instead will be embraced and healed. Here, there is God.

On Sunday November 5, we will celebrate All Saints Sunday. Together we will remember the beloved of our congregation who died in this past year. We will light candles, speak names, keep silence, and feel again the torn places, the ache of absence. Together with our risen Lord we will shout “Alleluia!” in the face of the beast. Together we will take a stand against the power of death, and claim the power of resurrection life that no tomb can hold.

I am so very grateful for all that you do as the family of Jesus to confront the power of death – for all the little things that add up to very big things. You bear witness that the tomb is empty and that Christ is risen – indeed! Death may come at us in all kinds of ways. But we don’t take that lying down, because its Christ who truly reigns.



Save the Date - Hanging of the Greens

Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas and preparing ourselves for a new year living in the presence of God through our relationship with Christ. Join us on Sunday, **December 3** for a special service of the Hanging of the Greens during the 9:30AM worship service to prepare for the beginning of Advent.

Moderator Musings

Participation

Recently members of the Leadership Team, led by Pat Evans, Bonnie Laugerman, and Rochelle Behling, hosted an All Ministry Meeting here at the church. The purpose of this biannual meeting was to give all Ministry-level team members important information about effective communication techniques, policy updates, and personnel changes. Unfortunately, over half the Ministry team members were not in attendance. Of our six Ministries (Stewardship, Spirituality, Mission, Education, Administrative, and Welcoming) two had only one member attend and one Ministry had no one present. I understand that we all are leading very busy lives but when nearly half of our church leaders are no shows I have to wonder if we have a participation problem.

I am reminded of a children's sermon that Pastor Steve gave many years ago. He presented a large jar which was half filled with sand. He then had the kids try to put 4 large stones into the jar which couldn't be done because the sand was taking up too much room. After the kids gave up he poured the sand out, put the stones into the jar, and then poured the sand back into the jar with the sand filling in the gaps left by the stones.

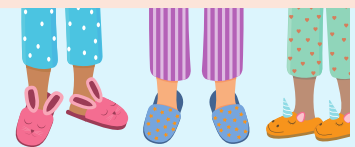
The point of the demonstration was that we, as Christians, need to determine/prioritize what is truly important (what are the stones) and what are less important (the sand).

Please take a moment and think about what the stones and sand in your life. Where does your participation in church fall?

Yours in Christ,

Chris Mol

Moderator, First Congregational UCC of
Oconomowoc



Pajama Day

November 20

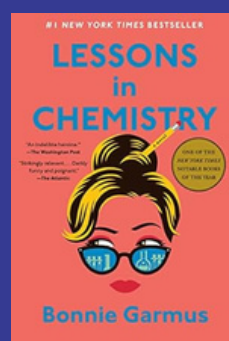
In observance of Pajama Day,
wear your pajamas to Worship
Sunday on **November 19!**



Join us at 1PM in person or Zoom.
If you prefer Zoom please contact
Jean Vercauteren for details.
All are welcome to join for any book and
discussion.

December : No Meeting

November 16



DEADLINE

December articles are due no later than
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15
to Natalie Gruentzel -
natalie@oconomowocucc.org



SCRIP (RAISE RIGHT) A FUND RAISER TO SUPPORT OUR CHURCH YOUTH PROGRAMS!!

Every Sunday in Fellowship Hall there is someone selling a variety of gift cards. These are sold to help raise funds for our youth programs here at First Congregational UCC.

The cards that are usually in stock are primarily local retailers, but it is possible for you to purchase many others. There are over 750 cards available through Raise Right, and the list is available at the table where the cards are sold as well as in the church office.

If you need a card that we do not carry, it can be special-ordered for you. The same is true if you (or your committee etc.) want a larger number of cards or a different dollar amount of a card than the one we stock.

The Holidays are approaching and if you would like to special order cards please

SUBMIT YOUR REQUEST NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 10 FOR CHRISTMAS!

If you have any questions please contact Cheryl Hoff, Scrip Coordinator

Annual Christmas Party

Hello ladies, it's time to plan our annual Christmas party. I have reserved the Rosecrans Pub at Shorehaven again. Its a fun place. The date is **Thursday, December 14, 2023**. Arrive at **5:00PM** for cocktails, dinner served at **6:00PM**. The menu choice is sliced pork tenderloin in Dijon cream sauce, with rice & mixed vegetables or baked Atlantic Salmon with chardonnay dill sauce, red potatoes, & mixed vegetables. Tiramisu for dessert. Meals include salad, rolls & coffee. The cost is \$18, cash or check **ONLY**, if you live there, it can be charged to your room. Cocktails are separate, please bring cash. Last year we made a donation to the food pantry, & Family Promise. Please select your choice of menu, & I'll be happy to collect in advance. Christmas is right around the corner, its always a fun start to the holiday.



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, November 14

Oriental Chicken Salad: Chopped greens, Napa cabbage, pea pods, carrots, cucumbers, grilled chicken, crispy wontons and Sesame Lime dressing, served with a mini cheesecake.

Beef Quesadilla: Ground beef and cheese on a grilled tortilla with salsa and sour cream, served with a mini cheesecake.

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 11/6)

Tuesday, November 28

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.

Salmon Salad: Fresh greens and spinach, with carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, crumbled bacon, seared salmon, and lemon herb dressing, served with a pecan brownie.

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 11/20)

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 direct God's healing message to church family members in need. Anyone is invited to participate in this meaningful mission, living out their faith through a variety of caring opportunities. The ways you can help are by sending cards, assisting at funerals, giving a meal, praying, knitting a shawl, delivering flowers at Christmas time, driving members to church and /or visiting those who are home bound, bereaved, or in a retirement community.

This month we are highlighting our special events group. Christmas can be a very difficult time for families that have lost a loved one especially the first Christmas after their loss. Caring Connection gives a plant to families who have lost a loved one during the current year to let them know we have not forgotten their loss and hopefully bring a little joy and comfort to them. We also send a Christmas card to the homebound to let them know they are not forgotten.

During the year we periodically send cards to anyone we feel is in need of a caring note. In addition, we are here for any special event if help is needed. Please reach out to Barb Moeller (gtmbjm@aol.com) if you are in need, we would be glad to help if we are able.



On Sunday, September 24 we welcomed 7 new members; Erica Kiser, Brad and Kathryn Seidl, Dan and Calla Craze, and Pastor Matt and Rev. Sue Schneider-Adams. We are blessed and excited for you to be apart of our church family! If you are interested in joining please contact Pastor Matt, Amy Drewa or Linda Davis. We would love for you to be a member of our church family!



Erica Kiser

After living in Arkansas for awhile Erica moved back to Wisconsin to be closer to her family. She works for a candy company - lucky gal!! Walking is her favorite thing to do with her 2 rescue dogs.

Dan and Calla Craze

Dan and Calla have three children - Layla (4), Declan (2) and 3-week old Jordyn. Dan is a mechanical engineer and loves golf, biking and archery.

When Calla has time, she loves to read, sing and hike!!

Choir, maybe in the future?!



Brad and Kathryn Seidl

Brad works at Wisconsin Public Power and Kathryn works at Children's Hospital. They have a son, Case, who is 9. Brad is a power lifter, loves gardening and delving into being a day trader. Kathryn loves to read, go to Case's sporting events, is learning to sew and speak Spanish. Brad is fluent in Spanish.

Matt and Sue Schneider-Adams

Pastor's Matt and Sue moved here from Iowa - Matt to be our churches NEW PASTOR and Sue to be an Interim Pastor at Zwingli UCC in Paoli, WI. Sue also teaches fitness classes, especially Zumba! Matt loves all sports - Brewers, Packers and Bucks! He also likes gardening and wine tasting ...are those considered sporting events??!



Legacy Committee

The Legacy Committee is the focus for November.

A Legacy is a gift, typically monetary, given in the name of a person or stated in their Will, to provide support for individuals or to an organization after a person's death.

It is a means one can use to express generosity at a level which may not have been possible earlier in one's life.

This Committee oversees the Memorial Fund and the Endowment Fund.

Gifts to the Memorial Fund are given to the church in memory of loved ones. These gifts may be restricted where the family determines its use, or unrestricted for general use. The Legacy Committee oversees the receipt and disbursement of these funds.

The intent of the Endowment Fund is that the principal remains invested while earnings are used to fund the church's mission. These funds are managed by an investment firm.

Leaving a legacy to our church is an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving towards God for that I have been given and enjoyed in my life.

The Legacy Committee meets quarterly and members consist of Barb Bjur, Dan Wiley, Bob Johnson, Chris Mol, and chair Bonnie Laugerman.

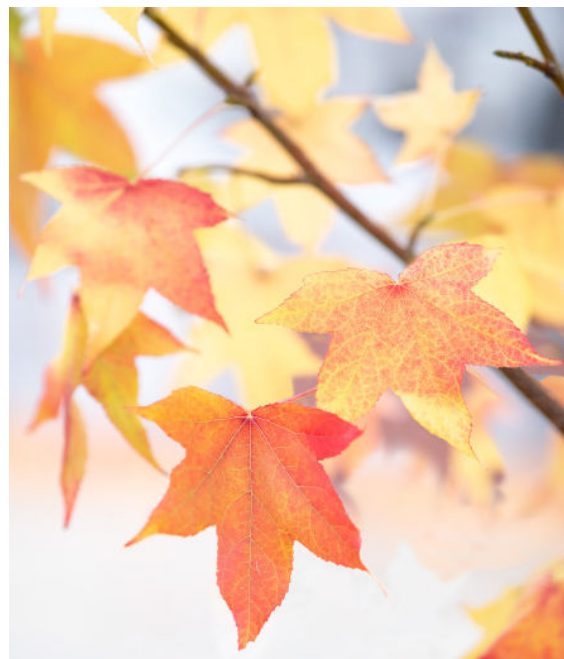
An interactive dialogue will take place during the announcements on **November 5**; the Committee will host Fellowship on **November 12**; and an information session following church will take place on **November 19** using the recently developed brochure which is attached.



RONALD McDONALD
HOUSE CHARITIES



Wow! A few weeks ago I announced that we may have 15 or 16 pounds of pull tabs to deliver to the Ronald McDonald House. My estimate was short, short by half: we delivered about 30 pounds of the tabs. Thank you to everyone who saves and brings them to church. Remember that the tabs can be from not only beverage cans, but any cans that have a tab-style opener.



SAVE THE DATE

Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 28
following Worship

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.

November’s Singing Collection

November’s Singing Collection is dedicated to Family Promise of Waukesha County. Our church has been involved with Family Promise for years. It is a staple of our mission and community outreach. Family Promise’s mission is simply worded but deep in its commitment: help low-income families and families experiencing homelessness achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response. All families deserve respect, dignity, empathy and support as they maneuver through challenging, dark times. Family Promise is there to be a beacon of hope... and First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc helps with the mission. Through the years our church has donated time, money and talents to help Family Promise thrive as it responds to those in need. They assist in rent payments, run shelters for families and single women, collect furniture and ensure that everyone is safe and comfortable. We are proud to be a part of that commitment! Let’s continue to give generously; especially as we enter the holiday season!



Family Promise

Family Promise is partnering with the Hebron House to manage the Overflow shelter in Waukesha through the winter. Details are still being worked out, but it looks like they will be asking groups to make and serve meals. If you are interested in helping with this, contact Cindy Meckl (themeckls@gmail.com and 262-567-2558) or Deb Bursinger (bursinger@gmail.com or 262-490-7902).



November 5 & December 3

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.

Mission and Outreach



**DONATE
BLOOD
SAVE LIFE
November 16
1:00 - 6:00PM**



Reserve your spot today!

Sign up at bit.ly/firstuccnov23, call 877-232-4376, or use the QR code! 40 available spots!

Appointments are encouraged, walk-ins are welcome and will be invited to take an open spot in the schedule. Save time and fill out your health screener here: bit.ly/versipass



Holiday Giving Tree

Share in the spirit of the holidays by helping those in need! Our congregation will be supporting some families this Christmas through the Waukesha County Christmas Clearing Council and seniors through Eras Senior Network. Beginning **November 19**, a Sign-Up Genius will be emailed out and available before and after worship services. Click on it to see how you can make a child/youths Christmas a little brighter. There will be gifts ranging from \$5-50. So, pick an item or two and bring it **unwrapped** to church any time before **Sunday, December 3**. If you prefer, you can also have your item shipped to the church.



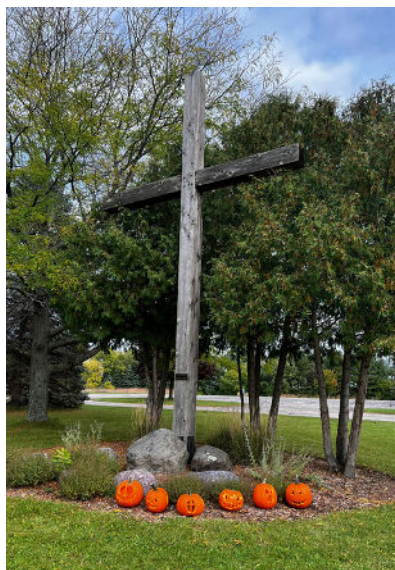
In addition to purchasing gifts, we are also looking for a few people to help deliver the gifts to the families. We will be having a **"Wrap Sunday" December 10** to wrap all the gifts and get them ready to be sent out to the families. If you would be interest in doing this or have any questions please contact Rania Dempsey (rania@wi.rr.com) or Amy Drewa (amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org).



Youth News

Our youth groups came together for a fun pumpkin carving competition in October!! They had a great time working together and utilizing their talents to create some pretty cool pumpkins that our deer seemed to enjoy.

This month our Junior Youth (3rd-7th grade) and High School (8th-12th grade) will come together to spread thanks on **November 12**. Please watch your emails for more information!



Confirmation

Our 2024 confirmands are off to an amazing start! Our first session in October was a blast! The youth had fun getting to know one another with a fun competitive pumpkin carving contest and other team building activities. They also began to look deep within themselves to answer some tough questions and explore this journey of their faith. They also explored the Bible a little deeper. We are truly excited to see where this year goes! We will be gathering again in November where we will explore the topic of God a little deeper. Please continue to keep this group in your prayers as they explore their faith a little more.

Mission Trip

We are excited to announce our 2024 Summer Youth Mission Trip will be heading to Biloxi, Mississippi, July 14-20! We will be working the UCC organization Back Bay Mission. The work will include essential home repairs, food pantry and working within their day center all while learning about poverty on Mississippi Gulf Coast. This is open to all youth going into 9th grade in 2024 through those completing 12th grade. Contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org with any questions.

[More Information](#)

[Register Online](#)

Youth News

Sunday School News!

Last month our children and youth enjoyed exploring Noah's Ark through fun and engaging lessons and activities each week. From making exploding rainbows, to air fresheners and playing 20 Ark Questions, the children and youth were busy!

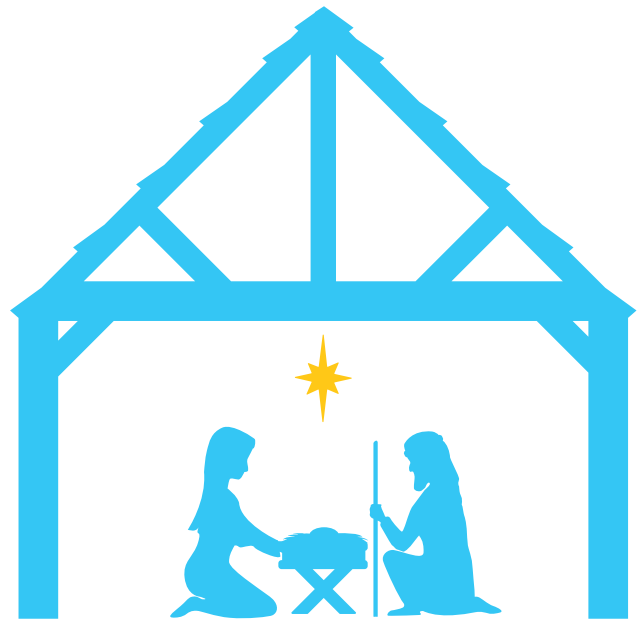
Our middle and high school youth embraced the Halloween season and explored different "Scary, Gross and Weird Stories from the Bible". They learned about some odd and crazy stories and had fun with some interesting games and activities!

As we enter a time of thankfulness, we often find ourselves sharing things we are thankful for. Many times, it's for our families, homes, food and water. Have you ever thought to be thankful for not being inside the stomach of a big fish? It sounds kind of odd but there is always something to be thankful for! This month we will be exploring the story of... you guessed it....Jonah and the big fish! Through this story we will engage in activities, games, and projects to learn more about this story and what it means to us today.

As for our Middle and High School classes they will be exploring the topic of "Thankfulness". We all have plenty to be thankful for each and every day. Through scripture our youth will explore how to have gratitude and be thankful for all that God has blessed us with.

On behalf of our amazing teachers and Education Ministry each of us are thankful for the opportunity to share in the Christian education of each child and youth. May God fill you with many blessing during this time of thanksgiving!

-Amy Drewa



Annual Christmas Pageant

*Our Annual Christmas Pageant will be held **Sunday, December 17** during the **9:30AM** worship. Rehearsals will take place **Sunday, December 10 from 10:00-1:30** (with lunch provided) for all lead/speaking roles, and on **Saturday, December 16 from 12:30-3:00** for everyone.

We are very excited for our children and youth to come together to offer another wonderful Christmas pageant! This year we are looking for several children and youth who are interested in a variety of roles. There are both speaking and non-speaking roles. We are also looking for volunteers to set up lunch/snack, costumes and supervise children the day of the pageant. Watch your emails for the sign up!

We look forward to all the help and support on the production of another wonderful Christmas Pageant! If you have any questions, please contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.

Rummage Sale News



There are some electronics that were donated that are not working and need to be recycled. Oconomowoc's electronic recycling is the same morning as the sale. We need someone who is not planning on working the morning of the sale to take these items to the recycling event. Please contact Jill Riemann if you're interested.

Many people have stepped forward to be a Room Ambassador, but we are still in need of ambassadors for these areas: Christmas and Floral. The items for these areas are already in Fellowship Hall. We need help organizing and pricing them. Many other people will help along the way. The biggest commitment is making sure your area is ready for the sale before you leave church on **Friday, November 3.**

Join us after church this **Sunday, Oct. 29** to continue setting up the church. It's a fun, multi-generational event! What a great way to work with church members you may not have met yet.

We're in need of bakers and a few more cashiers for the day of the sale.

PLEASE SHOW UP AT 2:00 on November 4 to help clean up.

The more the easier and merrier! We have 20 new small yard signs. Grab one or a packet of flyers/posters to deliver to area businesses this Sunday after the service.

Stop by when you can over the next week. If you are coming after 5:00 pm and haven't signed up on sign up genius, please text or call Jill Riemann so she makes sure someone is at church to greet you and give you an idea of what needs to be accomplished.

We have three blue "retro" UCC shirts that say "I pray @" on the front that are up for grabs. One is XXL, one XL and the other is L. If you are interested in these, just stop by the office and help yourself. They are great if you are working an event like the rummage sale or walking in the parade on Saturday.

Sign up for shifts, donations, etc. on the link below. If you prefer, call or text Jill Riemann at 262-719-3823.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ABA62CA7F9C52-44795803-uccrummage>

HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Friday Fun!

"Thankfulness" runs for 3 Fridays,

November 3 - 17. Cost is \$75

"Christmas Friday Fun" takes place on

Friday, December 8 from 9:00-noon. Cost is \$30

These classes are open to ALL children ages 25 months - 4 years old. Toilet Training is not required for any of our classes.



All it took was a little spray paint to help the kids know where to line up, where to put their baskets, and where to sit. We love thinking outside the box to help make our kiddos successful!



Muffins for Moms

We welcomed our moms to class and the kids had a blast making them muffins! This year we tried a new "dairy-free" recipe which was loved by all! Here is the recipe we used for the banana muffins:

<https://www.godairyfree.org/recipes/dairy-free-banana-muffins>

We doubled the recipe, substituted regular sugar for the brown sugar, and added 2 packages of chocolate chips to the 3's class. We got 24 large muffins out of the double batch. Enjoy!!

P.S. The secret to a perfect banana muffin is to store really ripe bananas in the freezer. We pulled them from the freezer this morning to let them thaw. I believe we used 6 bananas for the double recipe!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Rummage Sale: November 4

Youth Group: November 12

Confirmation: November 12

Ladies Luncheon: November 14

Blood Drive: November 16, 1:00 - 5:00pm

Book Club: November 16, 1:00pm


Pajama Day: November 19 Worship , November 20

Holiday Giving Tree Starts: November 19

Thanksgiving Day (Office Closed): November 23

Office Closed: November 24

Ladies Luncheon: November 28



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