

The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
920-748-5898 • Email: fristucc@dotnet.com • Website: www.riponcongregationalucc.org

January 2009

SOMEONE WROTE, “The enemy of fidelity and commitment is apathy, the inability to suffer. In order not to feel the pain of loss, we set emotional limits on our commitments. In order not to be disappointed or hurt in relationships, we set boundaries on our fidelity. In order to avoid suffering, we diminish all passion and exuberance. Apathy is the opposite of exuberance, a way of living designed to avoid pain. And so life and vitality are swallowed up by apathy and despair”.

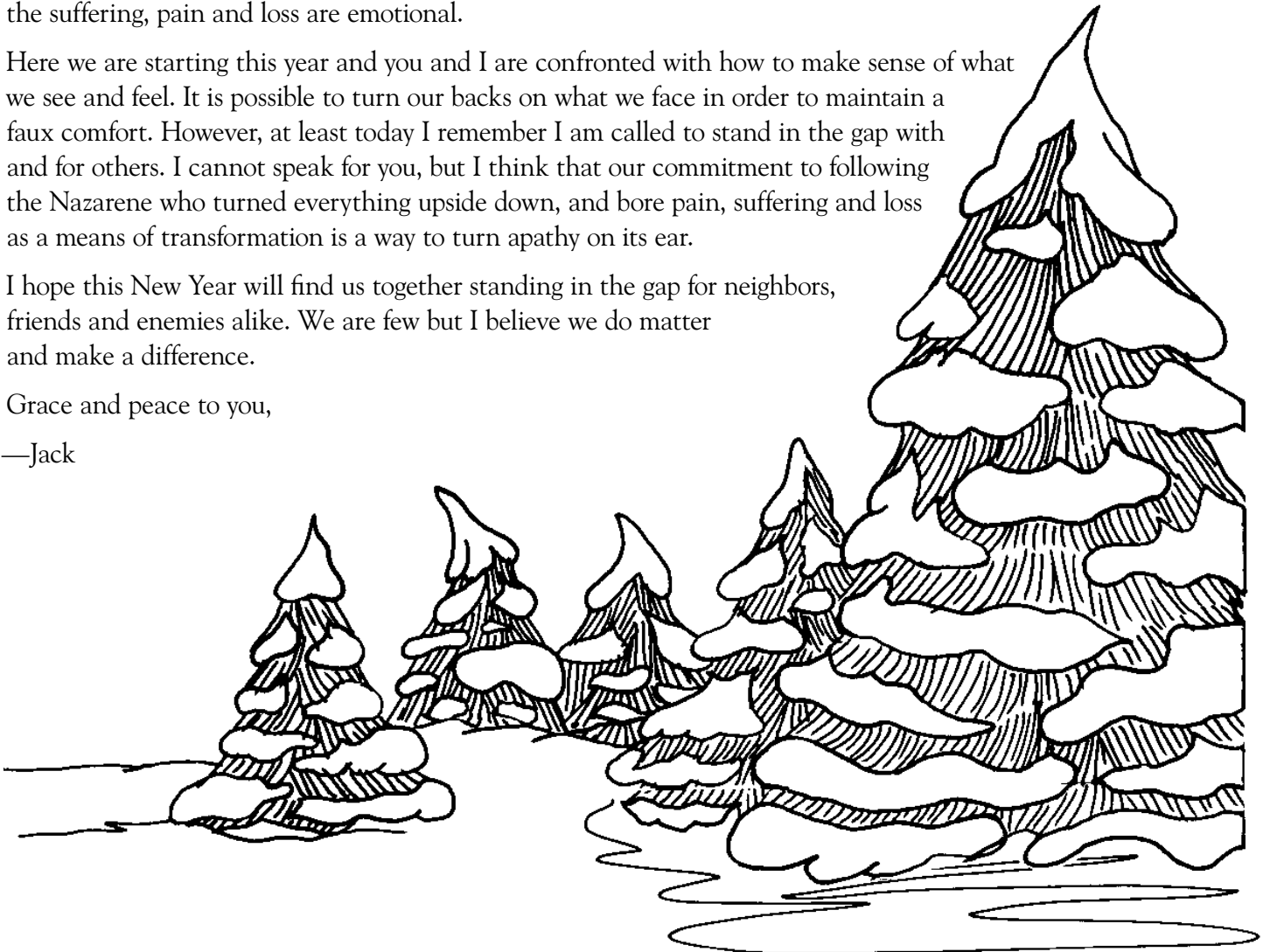
This is a small paragraph about reality in our world. My great need starting 2009 is to remember that I am called to follow Christ. It is a call to be willing at any moment to be awake in the world and choose to be present to the pain of loss while maintaining commitments. I see this as possibly the only way to make a difference. I know that most of us would choose any means to avoid suffering, loss and pain. I think it is especially true when the suffering, pain and loss are emotional.

Here we are starting this year and you and I are confronted with how to make sense of what we see and feel. It is possible to turn our backs on what we face in order to maintain a faux comfort. However, at least today I remember I am called to stand in the gap with and for others. I cannot speak for you, but I think that our commitment to following the Nazarene who turned everything upside down, and bore pain, suffering and loss as a means of transformation is a way to turn apathy on its ear.

I hope this New Year will find us together standing in the gap for neighbors, friends and enemies alike. We are few but I believe we do matter and make a difference.

Grace and peace to you,

—Jack



Welcome!

We've been anticipating your arrival! It's true, because we believe that every person who comes to join us for fellowship was sent by God. Here at First Congregational Church of Ripon, we want you to experience Christ and be greatly blessed. We look forward to getting to know you and to share with you the marvelous ways God is working in our church. It won't take you long to discover that we are truly a "church family," rich in the relationships that matter most. We grow, worship, serve, laugh, cry, learn and reach out to the world together. We reach out to you, as well. Our doors and hearts are always open.

If you've been thinking, praying, searching, or hoping for a place to belong, we would like, again, to say Welcome! We're glad you found us.



Sincere condolences to Greg and Patrick Chatterson and family upon the recent passing of their wife and mother, Jill.



Our next newsletter will be for February, 2009. The deadline will be Tuesday, January 20 at noon. Please submit materials to the church office or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrichm@ripon.edu. Assembly and preparation for mailing will take place on Thursday, January 29 at 1 pm. Please mark your calendars.



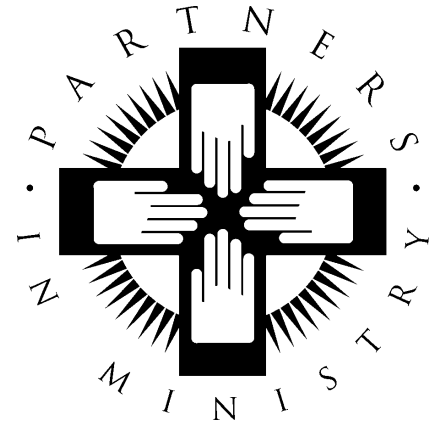
Jan Kohl
Nancy Livingston
Dru Mansmith
Len Ringstad

Annual Reports

Committee chairs: please get your annual reports to Diane in the office by January 9 so she has time to compile them for the annual meeting on January 25.

Worship Volunteers

Please sign up to volunteer for lector, greeter/ushers, coffee fellowship hosts, flowers and nursery duty. The new permanent location for the sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. We still have slots to fill for the current month and beyond. Thanks in advance for all your help!



Pastor Jack Kraaz
Moderator Jennifer Aither
Vice-Moderator Janet Vossekul
Clerk Maria Dietrich
Treasurer Tim Aither
Administrative Ass't Diane Falk
Children's Choir Stephanie Cutler
Choir Kurt Dietrich/Sarah Hughes
Christian Ed Dir Jessica Solverud
Church Maintenance Officer: Mark Alling, Assistant: how about you?
Fellowship Ministry Sue Loomer
Finance Rick Coles
Historian Nedra Martz
Librarian Lois Ellis
Men's Group Len Ringstad
Organists Maria Dietrich
. & Sarah Hughes
Outreach Ruth Jones
PPRC Roger Eddingsaas
Women's Fellowship Liz Ringstad
. & Audrey Conant
Worship Norm Loomer

Pastor Jack Kraaz
Office: 920-748-5898
Fax: 920-748-5182
Cell: 920-229-5243
Email: jkraaz@dotnet.com

Adult Education Video Series Begins January 11

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that another year has come. We are still here breathing not only air but living lives that have the potential at any moment for robust renewal which when we are through these cold months will lead us to spring. I know it is probably easier to sit at home with a warm beverage and popcorn and lament or cheer the latest football escapade, or experience cabin fever while reflecting on our failed resolutions made on New Year's Eve. Or, you may want to get up off the sofa and join friends for great dialogue and study which is sure to get your blood pumping and warm your heart.

The Adult Education committee wants to help you pass some of the time during these cold January and February days by offering a wonderful DVD series hosted by pre-eminent scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. The series is entitled, "Eclipsing Empire (Paul, Rome and the Kingdom of God)".

This series of tapes and readings follows Borg and Crossan on location in Turkey, Greece and Italy, as they trace the Apostle Paul's footsteps throughout the Roman Empire. This 12-session DVD and study explores fresh insights into Paul's message of the Kingdom of God, its challenge to Roman imperial theology, and the apostle's radical relevance for today.

When investigating this series, we felt that it would add insight to our faith and allow us to ask questions about what the scriptures actually mean in a context such as the age we live in.

We will begin Sunday, January 11th, at 3 p.m. with refreshments. We hope to see you there.

Grace and peace to you,

—Jack

Church Maintenance Officer Needed!

We are currently without an Assistant Church Maintenance Officer. We are seeking a volunteer to be trained by Mark Alling as soon as possible and to take over for Mark when his two-year term ends in January.

Our bylaws say, "The Church Maintenance Officer and assistant shall oversee the general maintenance of the church facility, repairs and service, reporting to the cabinet on a monthly basis repairs and service calls that have been done, or providing the cabinet with future service or repair call information."

Please contact Jennifer Aither or Pastor Jack if you're willing to help with this important ministry.

Gift Market Thanks

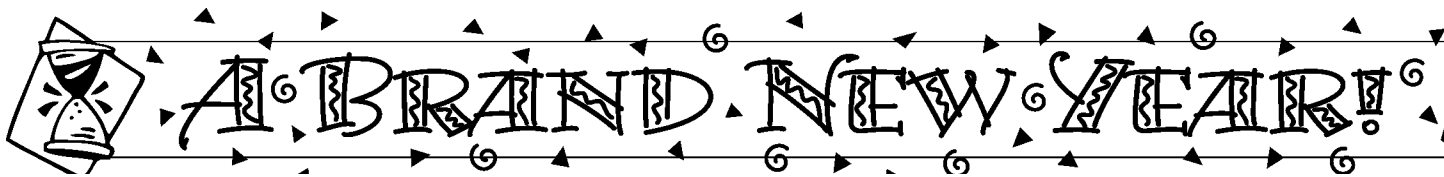
Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's International Gift Market. The Dickens of a Christmas event proved to be quite successful, earning \$1,865.90 for Green Lake's World Wide Gifts and \$470.75 for the Equal Exchange. Thanks to our friends from Prairie Lakes Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, we had plenty of volunteers to help on the days of the sale. A special thanks to Bev Christ for transforming our simple chapel into beautiful bazaar, and Ruth Jones for organizing all of our wonderful volunteers.

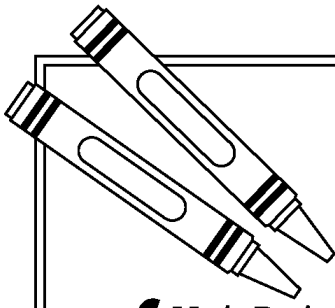
The International Gift Market is a great way for First Congregational Church to strengthen bonds with the community, help those in need and have some fun while doing it. This event would not be possible without you. For all your time and effort, thank you!

Robyn Volkmann
Outreach Ministry

*Thank
You!* 

I want to thank you as a church family for your gracious remembrances and presence in my life during this holiday season. Thank you especially for cards and gifts that have meant more to me than I have words to say. —Jack





Just for **KIDS**

CHARACTER THAT PLEASES

The New Year is a time for renewed commitments and changes in our behavior. Complete the puzzle below to see whose example is worthy of imitating or copying.

Match the blocks of spaces and letters to finish the NIV Bible verse.

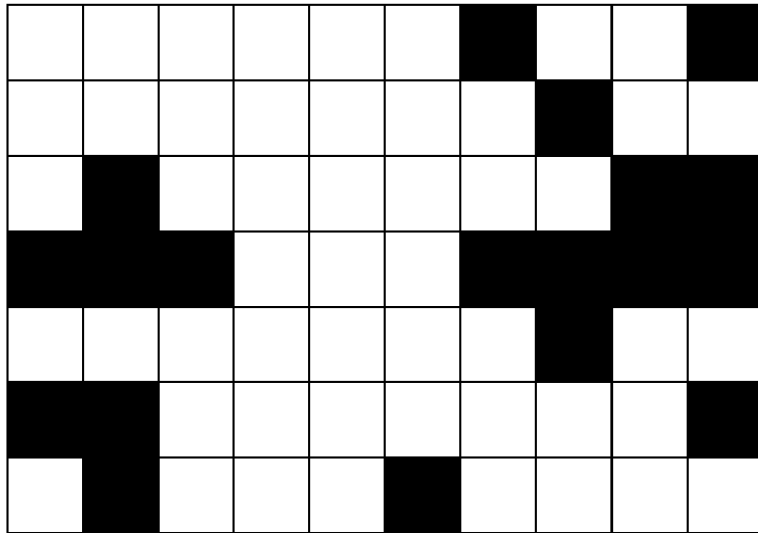
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L	L								
H	E								
P	L								
R	I								
R									

F	O								
E	X								
E	X								
1									



Answer: Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Cor. 11:1

A Covenant for First Congregational Church of Ripon

In the love of God who creates us the witness of Christ Jesus who redeems us and the guidance of the Holy Spirit who sustains us, We Covenant with one another to build a community of hope and to share its good news with neighbors near and far.

We wish to grow in spiritual insight by...

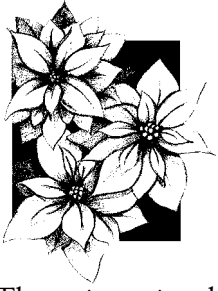
- our promise to be thoughtful in speech and action, respecting each person's journey of faith;
- our honoring of all gifts shared and all leadership offered in love, working for a partnership of laity and clergy;
- our commitment to peace and justice for God's people, seeking social awareness at home and around the world;
- our recognition of diverse background and opinions, striving to embrace and work through differences, and
- our dedication to strengthen the life of compassion in Ripon, engaging our churches, city and college.

To these ends, we pledge our lives to our fellow members of Christ's church, through...

- our regular participation when the congregation gathers for worship;
- our ongoing study of the knowledge and spiritual insight of our of faith;
- our voluntary assumption of a personal ministry on behalf of the congregation;
- our invitation to others to become part of our fellowship; and
- our support of our life together by the offering of prayer, time and treasure.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, we are not alone.

Thanks be to God.



Thanks for the Poinsettias!

The poinsettias that graced the Sanctuary this holiday season were donated by the following members and friends:
Marilyn Briese

in memory of Blaine Briese

Bonnie Brooks

in memory of Dan Brooks

Audrey Conant (2 plants)

in honor of Audrey's 2 sons, James & David and their families and in memory of Roger Conant

David, Cassie, Taylor, Catie, Kellie and Emily Conant

in honor of Audrey Conant & in memory of Roger Conant

Ken & Karen Donahue

in honor of their grandsons, Quinn & Lian Gilfillan

(Grandchildren are loving reminders of what we're really here for!)

Lois Ellis & Family (Narthex poinsettia)

in memory of Art Ellis

John & Marjorie Fleinek

in memory of Lyle & Sandra Richter

Bob & Sally Gallun

Bill, Karen, Bailey, Liz & Jake Hoch (3 plants)

in honor of those we love and in memory of those we miss

Margaret Hoorneman

in memory of Emma Lou Hoorneman

David & Lynne Joyce (2 plants)

in honor of Boyce and Frances Caudle and in memory of Marilyn Joyce Monte

Audrey Lyke & The Lyke Family (2 plants)

in memory of Doug Lyke

Milt & Martha Morris

in memory of parents

Len & Liz Ringstad

in memory of Bob & Evelyn Allen, Liz Ringstad's parents

Bob & Nancy Royce (2 plants)

in honor of the Peck Family and in honor of the Royce Family

Jeanne Williams & Bob Amsden and Family (2 plants)

in memory of Oleen Amsden and Ralph E. Williams, Sr.

Skip, Michele & Meredith Wittler

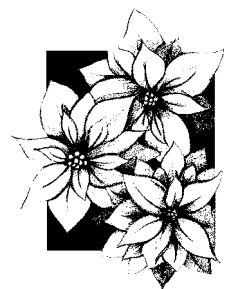
in memory of Nellie Baran and George H. Wittler, Jr.

The wreaths on the front doors of the church were given by Martha Prellwitz, Nan Bohannon, Julie Mathias, John Stein, and Carrie Bartik *in memory of their parents and grandparents*
Skip & Nancy Stein, Stuart & Florence Nash, and Anton & Hazel Stein

I would like to thank all of you who donated a plant for our Sanctuary this Christmas Season.

The poinsettias certainly enhanced our beautiful Sanctuary.

—Sally Gallun





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Happy New Year!

We look forward to all Sunday School students returning on January 5!

Thanks to all of you who participated in the Christmas program. Everyone did a wonderful job. I'd especially like to thank Stephanie and Jessica for directing and musical coordination.

We wish Jessica all our best as she travels to Italy next semester. She has done a beautiful job serving as Christian Education Coordinator the last year and a half. I will miss her innovative Sunday morning children's message, bright smile, "can-do" attitude and enthusiasm. She is an excellent role model for our children of a young, Christian woman and we will miss her! She assures me she will be back to worship with us in her Senior year.

We also want to welcome Stephanie Cutler to the role of Christian Education Coordinator for the second half of the Sunday School year. In addition to directing children's choir, Stephanie has offered to assist with the Sunday morning responsibilities of Christian Education. Thank you, Stephanie, for offering to share your time and obvious talents with our children.

Warmly,

—Mary Lyke
Christian Education Chair

Start the New Year by Joining the Choir!

Both the Youth Choir and the Adult Choir will resume after a short holiday break on Sunday, January 4.

The Youth Choir is conducted by Stephanie Cutler and meets in the chapel on Sundays from 9-9:30 a.m.

The Adult Choir is conducted by Kurt Dietrich and Sarah Hughes and meets in the choir room (in the basement) on Sundays from 9-10 a.m. All singers of high school age and up are welcome in the Adult Choir.



Meditation Resumes

The Monday evening meditation group will re-convene on Tuesday January 20, at 7:30 p.m. for the winter session (1/20-2/17).

—Bob Amsden

Help Pilgrim Center

Would you please start saving your Campbell labels? Along with Scott Street Church we are collecting labels to help Pilgrim Center obtain some needed equipment. Campbells no longer wants the front of the labels, but rather the picture of the child and the bar code from each label. If you turn in the entire label the needed part will be cut out. Remember, labels include not only soup, but things like V-8 products, dinners, chili, beans, Swanson dinners, and Pepperidge Farm cookies. (A complete list of products can be found on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room.) The collection container will be next to the water-cooler on the Fellowship Hall landing. Thank you!


—Women's Fellowship



The Cabinet has approved the First Sunday of every month to be Food Pantry Sunday.

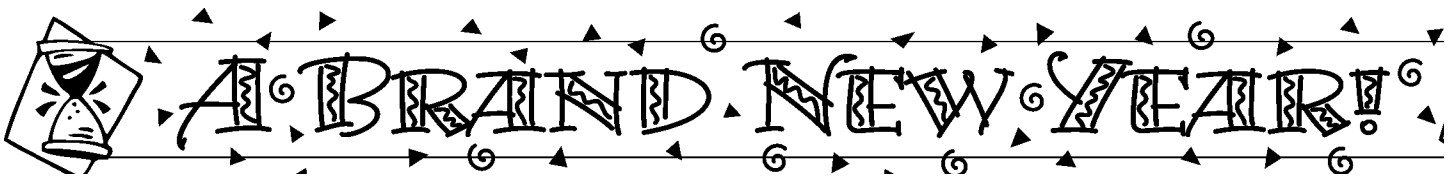
You are asked to bring your canned goods and non-perishable items and place them in the box marked Food Pantry in the church narthex. As an added incentive we are asking you to also bring your loose change that day and place it in the offering plate or in a basket by the food pantry box. We know our treasurer will love counting the coins and we know needy folks we often do not see will benefit immensely from these gifts we share.

JANUARY 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
	Church office closed Dec. 24-Jan. 4					
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship & Food Pantry collection 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship and take down the greens		7 pm Youth Group	4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6:30 pm Fellowship Ministry mtg.	7 pm PPRC mtg.	Annual Reports due!	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	12-4 pm Science Club in Fellowship Hall/Kitchen		4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship		1 pm Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm Cabinet 7:30-8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel				
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship & Annual Meeting		7:30-8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel		1 pm Newsletter prep for mailing		

Future Events:
All-church meeting night Feb. 11

The Crossroads Charter School is in our building weekdays 8-4 p.m



Schedule of Morning Worship Volunteers

Thanks
for **YOUR**
participation

Please try to meet this schedule. If you cannot help on the Sunday assigned...

- Try to switch Sundays with someone else
- Notify the appropriate Worship Committee member
- Notify the church office (748-5898)
- We all appreciate your participation!

LECTORS:

1/4 Jack Kraaz
1/11 Ruth Jones
1/18 Rick Coles
1/25 Karl Beres

2/2 Jack Kraaz
2/8 Andy Prellwitz
2/15 Diane Beres
2/22 TBA

GREETERS/USHERS:

Daniel & Robyn Volkmann
Bob & Nancy Royce
Andy Prellwitz/S. Cutler
Bob & Nancy Royce

TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

COFFEE HOSTS:

Lois Ellis
Jack & Gail Rohde
Milt & Martha Morris
LaVonne & David Butler

Jeanne Williams
Audrey Conant/Ruth Birge
TBA
TBA

FLOWERS:

TBA
TBA
TBA
Sue Loomer

TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

Are you interested in being a Worship Volunteer? Sign up on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall entrance.

First Congregational Church of Ripon

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ
220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

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Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve