

The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
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March 2009

I HAVE an important announcement to make to you. It is that Sarah Hughes and I will be married right smack dab in the middle of Lent. That's right, March 14th. We will be married at a private ceremony at the church with our children and their significant others, my grandchildren and Sarah's dad, big Al.

Being the romantic guy I am, I offered her two nights in the Dells as a honeymoon and she said, "Really, Jack?" I had to rethink that and come up with a better plan. We are excited, to say the least, and who knows what we might plan in the next few months. We do have a date for a reception to which you are all invited. It is May 8th, and more will be said about that next month.

What crosses my mind as I am rejoicing in this new commitment is that it falls smack dab in the middle of Lent. That seems a paradox to me. I mean, we are reading texts weekly about Jesus choosing to go to Jerusalem to face the powers of the world (religious authority and the Roman Empire) and offering his life in order for something new to be born in humankind, and here I am getting married. I realize, as do you, that the Christ event was lived out in a dusty, distant, backwater of the Levant 2000 years ago, but the work goes on and I choose to be a part of it. However, in this Lent I am also reminded that new life springs out of the death of the old and that life is best summed up with grace, which to me is the undeserved favor I have experienced.

You see, three years ago I felt like I had died. I was proud and full of myself and my life fell apart. I felt as if I was a motherless child. In my grief and pain, I believed I had no future. I woke up last year and realized that I had been carried by the love of this community which followed the mandate of Christ to love one another. You did not intrude in my pain and confusion, but encouraged me to get up and walk. After all, some said, Christ is with you.

Here I am, in a new reality I could not have imagined a few months ago. So in the middle of this Lent, I am marrying Sarah. I will keep Lent in mind and in the midst of it celebrate Easter.

I look forward to worship during Lent and to seeing and being with you as we live out our faith together. I will be at church the day after our wedding and will preach. The Dells deal didn't work out.

Shalom,

—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.

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!



- Jan Kohl
- Elizabeth Kraebber
- Nancy Livingston
- Dru Mansmith
- Len Ringstad



Our next newsletter will be for April, 2009. The deadline will be Tuesday, March 17 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, March 26 at 1 pm. Please mark your calendars.

First Sunday is Food Pantry Sunday

You are asked to bring canned goods and non-perishable items on the first Sunday of each month and place them in the box marked Food Pantry in the church narthex. You are encouraged to also bring your loose change that day and place it in the offering plate or in a basket by the food pantry box. Donations will go to the food pantry.



- Pastor Jack Kraaz
- Moderator Jennifer Aither
- Vice-Moderator Janet Vossekuil
- Clerk Maria Dietrich
- Treasurer Tim Aither
- Administrative Ass't Diane Falk
- Children's Choir Stephanie Cutler
- Choir Kurt Dietrich/Sarah Hughes
- Christian Ed Dir Stephanie Cutler
- Youth Group Amanda Bolan
- Church Maintenance Officer: Tom Konecny
- 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

Community Dinners Update

As I write this, our first monthly community dinner is fast approaching. Please allow me to give a special thanks to the Amsden/Williams, Parks, and Hones families for being the first guinea pigs. Also, a much deserved thanks to Janet Vossekuil, who has agreed to give me a year of her time to get this project off the ground. Janet, you have been a great help to me!

Please continue to support this ministry. If you are unable to participate at the event I offer some other suggestions:

1. Donate a non-food item. Boxes are located in the narthex as well as in the sanctuary at the exit leading into the fellowship hall.
2. Make one dessert for a dinner.
3. Sign up to donate a gallon of milk, or similar item. There will be a sign up sheet a few weeks before each planned dinner.
4. Contribute financially. Make payments to the Church and on memo line write "Ripon Community Dinner".

The March dinner is scheduled for March 24, 2009 and will be hosted by the Tim and Mary Lyke family. If you are able, please ask them if they need help. Remember, all are invited, no matter what your circumstances.

I can't wait to write the next Spire Article where I can let you all know what happened at the first dinner on February 24th!!!!!!

Respectfully,

Dale Both

Put-Luck Luncheon & Israel Travelogue

Join us for a visit to Israel and a pot-luck luncheon following church on Sunday, March 29! Karl and Diane Beres will share experiences and insights into their travels to Israel. Fellowship ministry will provide barbecues, and we ask everyone else to bring a dish to pass. The children's choir will also share a song or two with us! Don't miss a great time of fellowship!

This is a description of the program by Karl and Diane:

Reflections on Travel in Israel and the West Bank. Karl & Diane Beres participated in "A Journey of Faith" in June 2007 and Diane in an "Eco-Tour of the Holy Land and Jordan" in January 2009. In addition to visiting famous Biblical and archeological sites, the Bereses also learned about the current social and environmental situation.

All-U-Can Eat Breakfast

Sunday, March 18 • 8:30 am–noon in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall, 218 Blossom St., Ripon (Handicap accessible)

Pancakes (made on the Pancake Wheel), Breakfast Sausage, St. Catherine Eggs, Scrambled Eggs, Potatoes, Fruit, Sweet Rolls, Juice, Milk & Coffee

Adults: \$6; Children 6–12: \$3; Children 5 & under: free (with adult ticket)

This is a joint fundraising event between the Ripon Knights of Columbus and St. Catherine of Siena Christian Women.



One Great Hour of Sharing, as part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries.

The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, emergency relief, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHs also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

The 2009 One Great Hour of Sharing Dedication Day is March 22, 2009. For more information about this worthwhile ministry, visit the United Church of Christ website at www.ucc.org/oghs.

All gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing are tax deductible and 100% of designated gifts go to the designated area of response. Non-designated funds are encouraged. They allow One Great Hour of Sharing to address future hidden and forgotten emergencies around the world.

— Outreach Ministry



World Day of Prayer

Women, men and children in more than 170 countries and regions will celebrate World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 6. The women of Papua New Guinea have written the World Day of Prayer 2009 service around the theme: "In Christ, there are many members, yet one body." They welcome us to Papua New Guinea, a land of many languages, cultures, traditions and beliefs. Though many of Papua New Guinea's communities experience isolation due to rugged terrain, there is unity in diversity. The women say, "By God's grace we are able to be united."

In the Ripon area, Church Women United organizes the celebration and prayer service. It will be held at St. Catherine of Siena, at the eastern site, the former St. Wenceslaus, on East Fond du Lac St.

A greeting time from 1-1:30 pm will include coffee and juice. The program will begin with the sound of the conch shell and a slide presentation narrated by CWU president Kris Clausing.

The service will follow, led by JoAnne Adamski from the host church. It will include scripture, prayer, dramatic readings, music accompanied by pianist Carol Meyer, and include a brief period of reflection.

Following the service, all attendees will be served pumpkin soup, prepared by Mary Ellen Grahn. Pumpkin is a mainstay of the Papuan diet. It will be served with crackers and Wisconsin cheese. Copies of recipes from Papuan village women will be distributed.

Invite your friends, family, and communities of faith to join the women of Papua New Guinea in prayer and song to support women's ecumenical ministries toward justice, peace, healing and wholeness. The annual offering will support the work of World Day of Prayer and help meet the needs of families who are victims of violence and poverty worldwide.

Meditation Resumes

The spring session of the meditation group will begin on Tuesday, March 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel. Zen Buddhist based seated and walking meditation. Wear comfortable clothing; the Chapel temperature can be unpredictable. Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: no prior meditation experience required or expected.

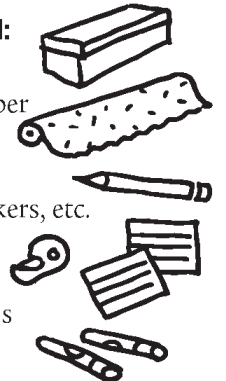
—Bob Amsden

PRAYER BOX

Family prayer time is a good habit. Make it fun with this activity for all family members. They can use this special box whenever they have a prayer request.

What you need:

- Shoebox
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Stickers, markers, etc. (optional)
- Index cards
- Pencils or pens



What you do:

1. Wrap the shoebox like a present. Be sure to wrap the lid separately so it can be removed.
2. Let the whole family help decorate the box. You can write Bible verses about prayer, draw pictures, glue on pictures or add stickers. Be creative!
3. Put the box in a prominent location of your house. Keep a pile of index cards and pencils or pens near the box.
4. Whenever a family member has a prayer request, he or she can write or draw it on a card and put it inside the box.
5. Family members can share the cards in a prayer circle, or people can take turns praying for all the requests. Throughout the week, family members can check the box for new prayer needs.



A FAMILY OF PRAYER

The book of Acts tells about a man named Cornelius. He was a Roman centurion from Caesarea who worshiped God. Through his encounter with Cornelius, Peter learned that God accepts everyone who fears him and does what is right.

Use the code below to see the example set by Cornelius and his family. Solve the math problems by using the grid. Then use the key to find the letter that matches each answer. Write the letter on the blank.

GRID	
A	B
2	4
C	D
6	5

KEY: a=7 e=8 i=10 o=9 u=11 y=6

"H e ___nd ___ll h___s f___m___l___
 A+C A+D A+D B+C A+D B+C A+B

w___r___ d___v___ ___t ___nd
 A+C A+C A+C B+D C+D A+D

G___d-f___ ___r___ng; h___ g___v___
 B+D A+C A+D B+C A+C A+D A+C

g___n___r___ ___sl___ t___ th___s___ ___n
 A+C A+C B+D C+D A+B B+D B+D A+C B+C

n___ ___d ___nd pr___ ___ ___d t___ G___d
 A+C A+C A+D A+D A+B A+C B+D B+D

r___g___l___rl___." ___cts 10:2, NIV
 A+C C+D A+D A+B A+D

Answers:
 "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." Acts 10:2, NIV

Valentine Thanks

What a joyful community party! The Valentine Luncheon and Cookied Walk on Friday the 13th was fun and also a good fundraiser for Women's Fellowship. Thanks to everyone: cooks, cookie and dessert bakers, jello makers, servers, cookie sellers, table decorators, ticket sellers, cookie weighers, customers, and the musicians who provided delightful entertainment. The Women's Fellowship Executive Committee will meet on Friday, March 13, to consider proposals for all of our church women to decide upon at our May Annual Meeting.

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



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

New Youth Group Leader

Please welcome Amanda Bolan, a Ripon College education junior, to the youth group leader position. Amanda will be meeting with students in grades 6-12 on Wednesday evenings from 7–8 p.m. in the youth lounge. Not only does she bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm, but she also has some great ideas for ways to get involved in the community. Stay tuned for dates and times of upcoming events. See you all on Wednesdays from 7–8 p.m.

Church Lower-Level Cleaning

A big thank you goes out to the church members who helped clean the three rooms in the lower level of the church Saturday morning. A number of our youth also rolled up their sleeves including Phillip and Nalani Amsden; Maggie, Lizbet and Adele Parks, and Andrea Lyke.

Dates for Your Calendar:

- Easter Sunday (April 12) Youth will serve breakfast
- Sunday, May 17 Children's Sunday
- June 7, 14, 21, 28 Vacation Bible School during worship

—Mary Lyke



Agnesian Hospice Hope seeks volunteers

Next training sessions will be held in Fond du Lac on Saturdays March 21st and April 4th from 9 am–4 pm. Application deadline is March 3rd. Volunteers are placed in their own geographic areas. Applications and interviews must be completed prior to the first class.

Hospice Hope is a specialized service for patients with a life-threatening illness who've chosen to receive palliative (comfort vs. cure) care. A team of health care professionals offers support, care, and symptom control for patients at the end of life and support for their families. Volunteers are valued team members who play a crucial role in our services by supporting patients and families in direct patient care, respite care, bereavement care, administrative work, and transport and deliveries. For more info call Cathy Wolfe, Volunteer Services Liaison, at 920-924-4662 or 800-236-4156.

Join the Choir!

Both the Youth Choir and the Adult Choir welcome new members at any time during the school year.


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.



MARCH 2009



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship with Food Pantry & loose change collection 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	2	3	4 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	5	6	7 9–11 am Girl Scouts
8 9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	9	10 11:30 am–4 pm Ripon Study Club, FH & classroom	11 7:30 am–5 pm Ripon College, FH 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	12 6:30 pm Fellowship committee meeting	13	14
15 9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	16	17 1 pm Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm Cabinet 	18 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	19	20	21 9–11 am Girl Scouts
22 9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	23	24 5–6 pm Community Dinner 7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel (Spring session begins)	25 4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 7 pm Ash Wednesday Service	26 1:15 pm Newsletter prep for mailing	27	28 9 am–noon Sanctuary Clean-up
29 9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Potluck lunch & presentation about Beres trips to Israel	30	31 7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel				

Future Events:
 Palm Sunday April 5
 Maundy Thursday April 9
 Good Friday April 10
 Easter April 12
 Children's Sunday May 17

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:

3/1 Jack Kraaz
3/8 Nancy Coles
3/15 Tim Lyke
3/22 Jenn Aither
3/29 Jack Christ

4/5 Jack Kraaz
4/12 TBA
4/19 Rick Coles
4/26 Tim Lyke

GREETERS/USHERS:

Bob & Nancy Royce
Bob & Nancy Royce
J. Williams, D. Amsden
R. & M. Eddingsaas
J. Vossekuil, Bev Christ

TBA
Tim & Jenn Aither
Rae Miller
Elvera Perr, Jean Kutz

COFFEE HOSTS:

Tim & Jenn Aither
Rick & Nancy Coles
Mary Lyke
R. & M. Eddingsaas
Dan & Robyn Volkmann

Jim & Dorothy Sargent
TBA
Tim & Jenn Aither
Jeanne Williams

FLOWERS:

TBA
TBA

TBA
TBA
TBA
Aithers

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