

The SPIRE



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

A friend of mine is writing a book on maturity and wanted stories of mature people that I might contribute. I thought long and hard about this. I know some folks that I consider mature and some I would not put in that category. I know many folks that demonstrate attributes of maturity and many more who are growing and in process. This is a tough subject and I will not ask where you are on the spectrum. You know me as well as anyone and can judge where I am on that path. I did not know how to respond to him, because I look at life through the eyes of faith and do not determine maturity simply through the eyes of the society in which we live.

I ran across a quote I have put in the church bulletin in times past that comes close to what I imagine maturity to be. However it is more a definition of wholeness, which is what I consider the truly mature person to be. It was written years ago by Morris West. I would like you to read it with me today and let me know what you think.

“Yesterday I met a whole (person). It is a rare experience but always an illuminating and ennobling one. It costs so much to be a full human being that there are very few who have the enlightenment or the courage to pay the price. One has to abandon altogether the search for security, to reach out to the risk of living with both arms. One has to embrace the world like a lover, and yet demand no easy return of love. One has to court doubt and darkness as the cost of knowing. One needs a will stubborn in conflict but open always to the total acceptance of every consequence of living and dying.”

During these days of economic crisis and uncertainty about where we are headed in the future, I believe that it will take great wisdom, steadfastness, and compassion for each of us to exhibit maturity. Friends have seen businesses go bust, are faced with responsibilities for families, coworkers, and friends with no easy answers to solve the issue of what they will do tomorrow. I did not live through the great depression, but my parents did. They told me how difficult it was during those days and talked about networks of family and friends that saw them through. They changed their living arrangements, grew their own food in their backyards, and supported one another with love and dignity. I remember my grandmother giving food to beggars while we ate little. This was following World War II when I was five or six. It was because we had more at a time when others had less.

I am asking you to consider with me what it to be mature. Can we continue to be mature people when we live in times where it is easier to turn our backs on the needs of those around us, and act like they are not there and do not count? One of the truly magnificent things our church has done in these days is to serve a community dinner for all. We bring loose change to the church on the first Sunday of the month and minister it to those less fortunate. We continue to provide food each month to the local food pantry. I know this is not easy to do because we all have less. However, as followers of Jesus to do less would be to lose our identity. It would be to say to the world that what we tell people about ourselves is a lie.

A lot of folks today are saying that we are not at the bottom of this crisis. I hope as a faith community that we can model wholeness, although it will cost us personally to see ourselves through to a new day. I appreciate your maturity and wisdom. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Pray for me too, that I might be a good model of what I say.

—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.

Summer Worship Time Change

Please be aware that we will switch to our summer worship time of 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 24. Sunday morning worship will be held at 9:30 a.m. through Labor Day weekend.

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!



Our next newsletter will be for June, 2009. The deadline is Tuesday, May 19 at noon. Please submit materials to the church office or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrichm@ripon.edu. Assembly and prep for mailing will take place on Thursday, May 28 at 1:15 p.m. Please mark your calendars.



Jan Kohl
Elizabeth Kraebber
Nancy Livingston
Dru Mansmith
Len Ringstad
David Williams

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 Kraaz
Christian Ed Dir Stephanie Cutler
Youth Group Amanda Bolan
Church Maintenance Officer: Mark Alling
Fellowship Ministry Sue Loomer
Finance Rick Coles
Historian Nedra Martz
Librarian Lois Ellis
Men's Group Len Ringstad
Organists Maria Dietrich
. & Sarah Kraaz
Outreach Robyn Volkmanns
PPRC Audrey Lyke
Women's Fellowship Liz Ringstad
. & Audrey Conant
Worship Nancy Coles

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



Happy Anniversary!

The children of David and LaVonne Butler would like to invite everyone to an open house to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Saturday, May 2nd from 2–5 pm at CJ's at the Wayside, W13201 Cork Street Road, Ripon. No gifts please.

All Are Invited to the Community Dinner!

Please join us for a free ecumenical dinner to be held on the fourth Tuesday of each month here at First Congregational Church.

This month's dinner is on Tuesday, May 26 from 5–7 pm.

No matter what your circumstances, all are welcome!

In addition to a nutritious meal, each household will receive a donated non-food item.

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who remembered my family and me during the time following the death of my father, Eugene Stindt. I appreciated all the cards, gifts of money, kind words, thoughts and prayers. Your support was very much appreciated and made a great difference!
—Janet Vossekul

Spread the Love

Dear Friends,

Each year we look forward to signs of new life as Spring takes hold and moves towards Summer. With God's strong sun to warm the earth, and a little nurturing from us, gardens bloom and thrive. We rejoice in their beauty, breathe in their fragrance, and know we have received a great gift.

It's a lot like that in our church, isn't it? Here we flourish in the warmth of God's love and nurture of our life together. Here we find welcome, acceptance, grace and love. Gathered by God, we grow, and serve, and find food for our spirits. Here we discover a gift too great to be kept to ourselves. We want to spread the love.

Each year, we receive a special offering that helps the church's love to grow and thrive. Called Strengthen the Church, this offering funds new congregations and renews existing ones. It supports programs for youth and young adults and nurtures current and future leaders. And it sends the God is Still Speaking Ministry's message of extravagant welcome and inclusivity into our world.

We will receive this offering on May 31 – the birthday of the church – Pentecost Sunday. We invite you to celebrate by giving to Strengthen the Church. Your generous gift today ensures a vibrant church tomorrow.

Spread the Love. Strengthen the Church. God is still speaking,

Peace,

The Outreach Ministry



Come Celebrate!

We are having an open house for the newly married Pastor Jack and Sarah Kraaz, Friday May 8th from 5–7 pm at The First Congregational Church of Ripon, 220 Ransom Street, Ripon.

We will have light hors d'oeuvres and beverages; we ask that you do not bring gifts. Your presence is present enough!!

Please RSVP to Jennifer Aither (jennifer.aither.jxbg@statefarm.com) or Nancy Chapin (nancy-chapin@hotmail.com).

Address Changes

Please note the recent change in email addresses. The church office is now firstucc@charterinternet.com, and Jack Kraaz can now be reached at jkraaz@charterinternet.com.

Dear Church Friends,

We have put together an ad hoc marketing committee for the church. We are looking at ways to market ourselves within the community. In our first meeting it dawned on us we should also be marketing within our own church.

We have many new members and friends of the church. We thought it would be a good idea if we could all get to know each other better. I have composed a survey which is enclosed.

We are asking that each of you, if you want to, fill it out and return it to the church office. We will be featuring a different member of the church each month in the Spire. Everyone will be spot lighted at one point or another. We will draw the filled out sheets out of a hat and feature people until everyone has had a turn.

If you are so inclined to fill out the survey, we would greatly appreciate it. If you don't want to, there is no need to. Our intent is not to pressure or make anyone feel uncomfortable. We simply thought it would be fun to get to know each other on another level.

Thank you for your consideration.

—Jennifer Aither

Member of the Month...spotlight on...

Name _____

Preferred nickname _____

Birthday _____

Favorite color _____

What is your biggest accomplishment? _____

If you could live anywhere and do anything, where would it be and what would you do? _____

What is your favorite part of this church and why? _____

What is something about you not many people know? _____

If you could ask God one question, what would it be? _____

If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be? _____

What ministries do you currently serve on? _____

Anything else you would like people to know about you? _____

Summer Guest Pulpit Leaders Welcome

We are looking for some guest pulpit leaders from May 18th through August 10, while Jack is on sabbatical. Please call Nancy Coles, Worship Committee chair, at 748-6025 to volunteer or to offer suggestions of people who you might think would like to be pulpit leaders. (The church services will start at 9:30 a.m. throughout this time period.)

Offering Envelopes

Please pick up your church offering envelopes if you haven't already done so. They are located on the bench by the side of the church altar in alphabetical order by last name. Thank you.

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Shopping in Chiapas

As you know, Jack and Sarah will spend the last part of May in Chiapas, Mexico. Jack has offered to purchase hand-crafted items from the Mayan market, with the intention of reselling the items locally. Church Outreach funds would be used to bankroll Jack, and all proceeds will be used to replenish our Samaritan Fund. (We're in luck because Sarah will be there to actually pick out the items.)

This is a great opportunity. People in Chiapas will have a market for their goods, and we will have money available for local people who come to us for help. The challenge? The Outreach account now contains \$16.00. We need your help.

If you would like to contribute, please send all donations to the church office by May 14. If writing a check, please note that it's for the Chiapas Project.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Jack or anyone on the Outreach Committee. Thank you!

Ripon Medical Center Volunteer Program

Ripon Medical Center is again looking for new volunteers to join their volunteer program. This is a perfect opportunity for people to make new friends and learn new skills, all while fostering a sense of personal pride in helping other people.

We currently have had an increase in people needing our services for our Meals on Wheels program. This program is extremely important to us as we are helping our community. These meals are delivered to people that are usually homebound, often with no family to help them. This volunteer position entails a commitment of approximately five hours per month. The meals are delivered between 11:15 am – 12:30 pm. Volunteers use their own vehicles and can claim their mileage on their taxes. So if you have room in your heart and space in your car, please consider this worthwhile volunteer position.

Other openings include: Gift Shop cashier, delivering juice/water to our patients and information desk.

For more information, please call Linda Vantaggi, Volunteer Services Coordinator @ 748-0451.





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Children's Sunday

Scheduled for May 17, this will complete our 2008-9 Sunday School year. All Sunday School students will be involved in the worship service that morning followed by an ice-cream social during coffee hour.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School will again be offered each of the four Sundays in June during the worship service. Different families will be in charge each week of the Bible School story theme, activities and snack. If your family would like to lead a Sunday, please call Mary Lyke at 748-4857.

UCC Camp Scholarships

2009 Camp brochures have arrived and are available by the mailboxes in the church office. Please feel free to take one. Many choices of camp opportunities are listed for Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach. Our Women's Fellowship group will continue to offer each student a \$100 scholarship toward each camper's tuition. Questions? Call Mary Lyke at 748-4857.

Meditation Practice On Hiatus

Tuesday Meditation sessions are on hold for now. Watch this space in future newsletters for announcements about upcoming sessions.


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



MAY 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 (April)	27	28	29	30	1	2
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship			4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6–7 pm Youth Group		8 am–1 pm May Friendship Day, Fellowship Hall 7–9 pm Ries Driving School	David & LaVonne Butler 50th Anniversary Open House, CJ's at the Wayside
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship with Food Pantry & loose change collection 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 1–4 pm Butler baby shower	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6–7 pm Youth Group 7–9 pm Ries Driving School	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	5–8 pm Wedding reception for Jack & Sarah Kraaz 7–9 pm Ries Driving School	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6–7 pm Youth Group 6:30 pm all-church committee meetings 7–9 pm Ries Driving School	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	7–9 pm Ries Driving School 8–9 pm Ripon College Baccalaureate Service	9–noon Cleaning of offices, conference room 1:30 pm Ripon College Commencement
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
9 am Choir Rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship: Children's Sunday 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	May 18–August 4: Pastor Jack on sabbatical	1 pm Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm Cabinet	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6–7 pm Youth Group	3–8 pm Women's Fellowship Annual Meeting		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
9:30 am Worship (note time!) 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship 1–5 pm Jessie Light bridal shower	6 pm Community Dinner Church office closed for Memorial Day	5–7 pm Community Dinner, Fellowship Hall	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6–7 pm Youth Group	1:15 pm Newsletter prep for mailing	7–9 pm Ries Driving School	
31	1 (June)	2	3	4	5	6
9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship						

Future Events:
 Vacation Bible School: Sundays
 June 7, 14, 21, and 28
 June 21 is Fathers' Day

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:

5/3 Jack Kraaz
5/10 Rick Coles
5/17 Tim Lyke
5/24 Norm Loomer
5/31 TBA

6/7 Rick Coles
6/14 Janet Vossekuiil
6/21 Liz Ringstad
6/28 Diane Beres

GREETERS/USHERS:

Andy Prellwitz/Stephanie Cutler
TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

COFFEE HOSTS:

David & LaVonne Butler
Lois Ellis/Anne Flasch
TBA
Audrey Conant/Ruth Birge
TBA

Rick & Nancy Coles
Jack & Gail Rohde
TBA
Len & Liz Ringstad

FLOWERS:

Butlers, Birge family
Sally Gallun
Ripon College
Ringstads
TBA

Hargrave Family
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