

The SPIRE



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

I HAVE BEEN AWAY from pastoral duties seven weeks now. I will be back in the office in a couple of weeks. By the time you read this I will be back doing what I love doing and that is being me.

The sabbatical period has been wonderful. It started with anxiety because I have not been away from parish responsibilities for more than two consecutive weeks since I began pastoral ministry thirty-six years ago. It is hard not to prepare a sermon weekly, plan worship, write newsletter articles, answer calls, make visits and participate in your lives as pastor, friend and fellow follower of Jesus' way. During this time away, I have looked at what we have not done well and what we have. I have visited many churches to see whether we could do things better at worship. I have been humbled by a couple of meaningful events but, overall pleased with not only this church but with our worship. A couple of weeks ago I began relaxing, much to Sarah's pleasure. I have been keeping a journal of joys and disappointments. For instance the State Department suggested we not go to Mexico because of H1N1 flu virus. That cut out my time being with folk who spoke only Spanish and the mission component out of the time away. Then to add insult to injury the Spanish immersion program was not filled and I did not participate in that event.

What I have been doing is reading faithfully (journals, books, and items related to doing worship with new technology). I have to say at the end of this sabbatical, I have not seen anyone use screens and video well in worship. I found a church that supposedly did use media well, but alas they were not using it that week. The worship ministry will have much to talk about. I visited two mega-churches and was disappointed at the quality of worship, and what was being preached. I wanted to leave one place, but since I had Sarah join me reluctantly that Sunday, she made me stay until the end. That was interesting and you will have to ask her about her experience there.

I have had several pleasant surprises over these weeks and one was the Colloquium held at Lakeland College with representatives from sister churches in Honduras and Germany. The dialogue among participants was uplifting and spirit-filled to say the least. I enjoyed worshipping and studying with folks who communicated through an interpreter. I loved the sense of unity represented at this three-day event. I was impressed that folks spoke English better than the Americans spoke German or Spanish.

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Community Dinner

Tuesday, August 25, 5–6:30 p.m.

Our July 28th dinner marked six months of hosting the Ripon Community Dinner. Although the number of participants remains constant at about 30, including volunteers and members of our congregation, the response is genuinely warm and appreciative.

The grass roots committee helping me would like to see more outreach to families with children. To date we have seen no children, with the exception of our own. We continue to brainstorm.

For our August dinner we are planning to offer each child a school supply item. I will also be contacting the Ripon Public Schools to ask if they will allow me to circulate our monthly flier to parents at school registration(s) in August. In addition, we are planning a 'Back to School' cook-out/picnic as our theme for the 25th. Hope you can make it.

So, once again I'm asking for your continued support. Would you please donate a school supply item and would you also sign up to help with food for the dinner?

Look for a box at both entrances to the sanctuary for the school supply item, and please sign up for help with food when the request is made during worship service.

—Dale Both

Continued from page 1

I wanted this sabbatical not only to study but to reacquaint myself with colleagues with whom I have lost touch during years of ministry that have separated us by distance. I saw my friend and fellow UCC pastor Dwight Borden who serves the Pekin IL church. He said, "You never call and suddenly you appear." We have studied together for years. I was in Michigan visiting Sarah's dad, big Al, and was told that his pastor Steve Lashbrook was talking to a ELCA Lutheran minister in his town who told him he knew Jack Kraaz. I was wondering how my name came up in a foreign country (Michigan), and according to Steve it was over ministerial dialogue about where people had been trained. The pastor had said that he was a friend from Seminary days. Finding out where he lived, I went with Sarah and knocked on the man's door. He opened the door and asked if he could help us. I said Ivan P. Nordstrand. He answered, "yes, who are you?" I said Jack and he got this time-warped grin on his face. The next words out of his mouth were "Holy Crap, come on in!" Ivan goes by Philip now. Sarah and I sat down with Phil and his wife Linda and we began the awkward dance of telling stories about how we came to be who we are. We matched stories of suffering, loss, pain, love and faith, concluding with the good news that we were still fellow pilgrims trying to tell the story of the love and grace that has walked with us through life. We spent one year together in Seminary forty years ago. Ivan had aged, however I am as young as I always have been.

There is more. I have both read and studied Spanish but am tired of memorizing verb tenses. I will continue playing with this in the fall. Right now I am thinking about seeking new balance to the work I am called to do. I want to do the very best I can for you and make our time among one another more meaningful than ever. I am sure it will be. I know the summer without a pastor to call has been difficult for the church. Having spoken to our moderator, Jenn Aither, I am told that life goes on. So I conclude this ramble with a thought ascribed to T.S. Eliot who spoke of endings and beginnings. He somewhere said, "What we call a beginning is often the end and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

That is where I am today. I look forward to meeting you again as for the first time on August 2, at 9:30 a.m. worship.

Grace and peace,

—Jack

Thank You

To Gregg and Patrick Chatterson for sprucing up the church's landscaping. They edged the sidewalks, pulled weeds, trimmed bushes, etc. It now looks very nice!





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Rally Sunday

Sunday School begins Sept. 13 at 9:30 a.m. A letter with more information will be arriving in the mail in the next few weeks.

Tra-la-la

Youth and Adult Choir begin Sunday, Sept. 13 at 9 a.m. Adults in the downstairs choir room, youth in the Chapel. All are welcome to attend and lift voices together in song!

Adult Education

Exciting new adult education offerings will be starting this fall.

Special Meeting for Church Women United

The local unit of Church Women United has scheduled a special meeting for all interested individuals to consider whether or not the organization will continue and, if so, what direction it should take.

The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 20, 2009, at the First Congregational Church, 220 Ransom Street, Ripon.

The sole purpose of the meeting is to decide if there is enough interest in the community to provide the leadership and involvement required to keep the organization functional.

CWU is an ecumenical organization with local, national and international membership dedicated to bringing together Christian women of all denominations to work together for the benefit of the community. It has been active for more than forty years in the Ripon area and has taken the initiative or been a major supporter of many projects, including the C.R.O.P hunger walk, UNICEF, assisting at Sheltered Village, providing a noon hour Lenten series, and organizing the Living Nativity at Dickens of a Christmas and the international celebrations for World Day of Prayer, World Community Day and May Friendship Day.

Without increased participation the local unit can no longer continue as a viable presence in Ripon. Therefore, all are invited to come to the meeting to provide input and/or support at the special August meeting.

A decision will most likely be made that night to either disband or continue as an organization. If you cannot attend the meeting but wish to provide your input, please contact the local unit President, Kris Clausing, at 748-4249 or 920 896-1944 or the Celebrations Chairperson, Liz Ringstad, at 748-6666.

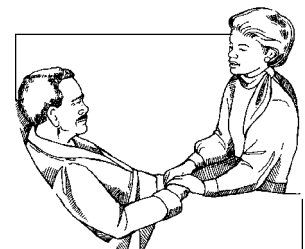
Volunteer for Hospice Hope

The next training session will be held in Fond du Lac on Saturday, September 18th and Saturday, October 3rd from 9 am – 4 pm.

If you have a desire to be of help to others, develop your ability to relate well to people during times of crisis, grow personally, give something back to your community, experience the challenges of new experiences, and have a direct personal impact on your world, please consider being a hospice volunteer.

Volunteers are valued team members who play a crucial role in hospice services by supporting patients and families in: direct patient care, respite care, bereavement care, administrative work, transport and deliveries. Training is geared for this special type of volunteer service. Volunteers are placed in their own geographic areas. Application deadline is Tuesday, September 8th.

For more information call Cathy Wolfe, Volunteer Services Liaison at 920-924-4662 or 1-800-236-4156. Application and interview must be completed prior to the first class.



AUGUST 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 (July)	27	28	29	30	31	1
9:30 am Worship; David Joyce, pulpit leader 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship			4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers			8 am-5 pm Amanda Zahn bridal shower
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9:30 am Worship; Pastor Jack returns to the pulpit! 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship hosted by Conant family in honor of Audrey Conant's 80th birthday			4:45-7:30 pm- Weight Watchers		Prellwitz/Cutler wedding rehearsal	Andy Prellwitz/ Stephanie Cutler wedding
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship			4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6:30 pm All-church committee meetings			9 am-noon Cleaning of foyer and hallways
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship 10:45 am Adult Education planning meeting		1 pm Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm Cabinet	4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers	5:30-8:30 pm Church Women United, Fellowship Hall		Ripon College students begin to arrive
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship		5-6:30 pm Community Dinner, Fellowship Hall	4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers	1:15 pm Newsletter prep for mailing 5-7 pm Ripon College/Clergy picnic		
30	31	1 (Sept.)	2	3	4	5
9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship			4:45-7:30 pm Weight Watchers			

Future Events:
 September 7: Labor Day
 September 13: Sunday School begins; worship returns to 10:30 a.m. in Sanctuary



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:

8/2 Jack Kraaz
8/9 TBA
8/16 TBA
8/23 TBA
8/30 TBA
9/6 Jack Kraaz

GREETERS/USHERS:

TBA
TBA
Chapins
Janet Vossekuil
TBA
Parks family

COFFEE HOSTS:

Conant Family
Jim & Dorothy Sargent
Chapins
TBA
TBA
TBA

FLOWERS:

TBA
TBA
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