

The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
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September 2008

I HAVE JUST FINISHED READING the Exodus account of Moses being plucked from the Nile after Pharaoh decided to commit genocide against the children of Israel. We will be reading it this Sunday and following the children of Israel into their wilderness sojourn in our Sunday lessons. The issue faced by the children of Israel is that, they were foreigners and the welcome mat was no longer out for them in Egypt as free and equal people. They were a forgotten people. They threatened the status quo of a very powerful empire. Egypt was threatened by this group of people who were worshippers of a God whose name they did not know. In North Africa today that same kind of thing is happening in the Sudan. It happens all over the world all the time, and for what?

It is in vogue today to be afraid of strangers so much so that we mighty Americans are building walls and fences around ourselves. In Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California we continue to build defenses so that those folks south of the border cannot enter our country and overrun us. Why would they want to do something like that? Maybe it is because they want what we want. Maybe it is because they want to have what we have and think we should share it with them. Today all the countries of the west, whether capitalist or socialist, face the same dilemma. What do we do with people we do not want? It is Pharaoh's problem come around to haunt us.

I do not have the answer to the problem except to look at an ancient text and see that the poor of the earth are not abandoned. They were provided a way out of living in Pharaoh's house while not being welcome at his table. Things, the Hebrew bible tell us, do change and sometimes in a radical and dynamic fashion before we are ready to respond. I invite you to look at the book of Exodus with me this next month in worship and think about what the Holy One is up to in those texts and imagine what that One might be up to today. I think whether we are ready or not, change is in the air, and something new could happen before we can click our heels twice.

When wandering through the Arizona wilderness some years ago with my sister Judy, I was afraid of the wilderness creatures like mountain lions, brown bear, wolves, coyote packs and other things that go bump in the night. She looked me in the eye beatifically and said don't be afraid. Well that didn't change much for me, but I got through it. Since then, and it was after 9/11, I try not to be afraid of change and new things. I am certainly naïve, you could say. Even though you could accuse me of that among other things, I continue looking at the world through the lens of scripture that is ancient on the one hand and as contemporary as Wednesday's Commonwealth on the other.

I invite you to read with me the book of Exodus this September and wrestle with this stuff that is all around us. I hope your summer was full and good.

Shalom,

—Jack

“What do we do with people we do not want?”

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.



Condolences to Michele, Skip and Meredith Wittler upon the death of Michele's mother, Nellie Baran, on August 18 in Milwaukee.



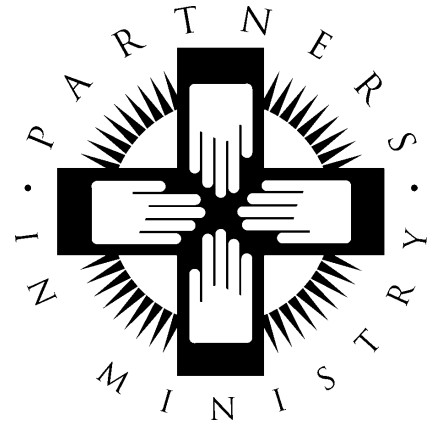
Our next newsletter will be for October, 2008. The deadline will be Tuesday, September 16 at noon. Please submit materials to the church office or email to Maria Dietrich at dietch@centurytel.net. Assembly and preparation for mailing will take place on Thursday, September 25 at 1 pm. Please mark your calendars.



Jill Chatterson
Karen Donahue
Fred & Pat Foersterling
Milt Morris
Len Ringstad
Barb Splittgaber
Alysse Zabel

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 spots to fill in 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 TBD
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

Where'd the Coffee Go?

The Equal Exchange fair trade items are now located in the church office. You can buy these items from Diane Monday through Thursday, between the hours of 1–3:30 p.m. The coffee, cocoa, tea and candy bars will also be available for purchase from an Outreach Ministry member Sunday mornings during coffee hour. If you would like to place a special order, please contact Diane or Robyn Volkmann at 748-7623. As requested, we now carry whole bean coffee in 2 lb bulk packaging. Better for the environment and for your wallet!

Fair Trade Price Increase

Due to higher organic coffee and cocoa prices and other rising costs, Equal Exchange has increased coffee, chocolate and cocoa prices. We are all feeling the rising cost of fuel. Equal Exchange is experiencing the same challenge with shipping and delivery. In addition, the US dollar has fallen dramatically against many foreign currencies. Coffee and cocoa are traded in US dollars, so farmers urgently need higher prices to cover costs. Similarly, as the cocoa and chocolate are manufactured in Canada and Switzerland, respectively, the dollar pays for less than in years past. Although costs are rising, Equal Exchange gladly continues to support its farmer partners with higher prices.

—The Outreach Ministry

Neighbors In Need Special Offering

September 14-October 5, 2008

The Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering, one of the four mission offerings of our church, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries, serving as a resource for churches and pastors on reservations. Neighbors in Need can help to make another, better, world possible, one that is free from hunger, from discrimination and oppression, from violence, and from poverty. On September 14, our church will receive contributions to NIN. Please give as generously as you can.

Become a Hospice Hope Volunteer

The next training session will be held in Fond du Lac on Saturday, September 13 and Saturday, September 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Application deadline is Friday, September 5.

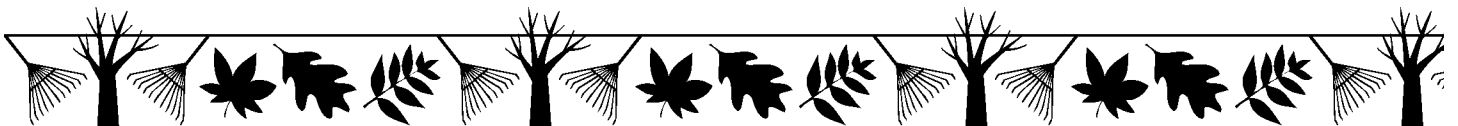
If you have a desire to be of help to others, develop your ability to relate well to people during crisis times, grow personally, give something back to your community, enjoy the challenges of new experiences, and have a direct personal impact on your world, please consider being a hospice volunteer.

Hospice is a specialized service for patients with life-threatening illness who have 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 as well as support for their families.

Volunteers are valued team members who play a crucial role in our services by supporting our patients and families in direct patient care, respite care, bereavement care, administrative work, and transport and deliveries. Training is geared to this special type of volunteer service. Volunteers are placed in their own geographic areas.

For more information call Cathy Wolfe, Volunteer Services Liaison, at 920-924-4662 or 800-236-4156.

Application and interview must be completed prior to the first class.





Maintenance Officer Needed

Due to John Rohde's recent relocation to California, we are currently without an Assistant Church Maintenance Officer. We are in need of a volunteer to be trained by Mark Alling as soon as possible and to eventually 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.

CROP Walk for Hungry People

The World Bank estimates food prices have nearly doubled in the last 3 years. We feel it. We have less to spend because of food and gas prices this year. So why should we help someone else?

The average portion of income that Riponites spend on food is 12.6%. 2/3 of the world spends 90% of their income on food. So increases in food prices affect me less than those in poverty. I can still find a way to purchase more expensive bread and cereal. But many in the world can no longer buy the tortillas made from more expensive corn. So we will raise money again this fall in Ripon's CROP Walk.

Church World Service is a cooperative ministry of 35 denominations, UCC included, which provides disaster relief, development and refugee assistance in more than 80 countries. CROP is part of it. Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty began in 1947 to gather food for the world's poorest and hungriest people. 75% of the money we raise will go to those people through Church World Service. 25% will stay here for Ripon and Green Lake food pantries.

People from many Ripon Churches will raise money and then walk.

Sunday, October 12

1 p.m. Registration at the gazebo on the village green

1:30 p.m. Walk begins

Walkers choose either a 2-mile or 5-mile course.

Walkers can obtain an instruction packet from the church office. You can help by donating to one of the walkers from our church.

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.

Adult Education Plans for Fall 2008

Book Group

Will meet on the third Thursday of each month, September through November. All members and friends of the church are invited to join this group. You're welcome to come even if you haven't finished all your reading! Books we will discuss are:

Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith by Anne Lamott

Thursday, September 18th at 6:30 p.m.

A novelist and writer for the on-line magazine, Slate, talks about how her faith has sustained her through personal crises and the ups and downs of raising a child as a single parent.

The Preservationist by David Maine

Thursday, October 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

"Think Life of Pi thousands of years earlier with a much larger cast of characters." This retelling of the Noah's Ark story is a meditation on faith and human foibles.

The Ministry of Special Cases by David Englander

Thursday, November 20th at 6:30 p.m.

Set in Buenos Aires during Argentina's dirty war. "When the nightmare of the disappeared children brings the Poznan family to its knees, they are thrust into the unyielding corridors of the Ministry of Special Cases, a terrifying, byzantine refuge of last resort. Through the devastation of a single family, Englander brilliantly captures the grief of a nation."



Both the Youth Choir and the Adult Choir will get back into the swing of things beginning Sunday, September 14.

The Youth Choir will be conducted by Stephanie Cutler and will meet in the chapel on Sundays from 9–9:30 a.m.

The Adult Choir is conducted by Kurt Dietrich and Sarah Hughes and will meet 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.

Adult Bible Study

Will meet on Sunday evenings throughout the fall. We will be using a curriculum that investigates Christian response to the continued use of torture. The first meeting will be on Sunday, September 14th at 6:30 p.m. Further dates will be determined by the members of the group at its first meeting.

Meditation Workshop

We are currently working with the folks at the Bright Dawn Home Spread Meditation and Retreat Center in Plymouth, Wisconsin about a half-day meditation workshop that would teach both walking and seated meditation practices. The dates being considered are Saturday, October 18th and Saturday, October 11th. We would leave from the church at 8 and return by 2:30 p.m. All confirmed members of the congregation are welcome to join us for this event. More information will follow as plans are finalized.





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Rally Sunday

Sunday School begins Sept. 7 at 9:30 a.m. See you soon!

A Note From Jessica

Hello, everyone! I hope everyone had a marvelous summer! I am so excited to be back and already have big ideas underway! Some members of the Youth Group have met and brainstormed ideas about the upcoming year, and everything is off to a wonderful start. We are going to do things a little differently this year, and I think the changes will allow Youth Group to fit better into everyone's busy schedules. The Youth Group will meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at church to eat some snacks and decide what activity the group should do that month. Activities could include anything from horseback riding, to sledding, to random acts of kindness, maybe even some mini-golf or something else fun! The activity that is decided upon will then serve as the second meeting of the Youth Group that month. Youth Group members are always encouraged to bring friends with them to events, and feel free to come to me with any event ideas you may have!

The Youth Group also hopes to donate our time to local and national missions including the Battered Women's Shelter in Fond du lac, Relay for Life, and soup kitchens from around the area. All of this volunteering embodies the theme quotation which has been chosen for the upcoming year. "Be the change you want to see in the world," Ghandi says, and we intend to do just that!

—Jessica Solverud



"Your sign said, 'Join the flock at Sunday school.'"

Women's Fellowship Funds Scholarships

Women's Fellowship scholarships of \$100 each helped ten of our young people (grades 1–12) attend UCC camps this summer. Thanks to many of you for all of the "pies and cookies" which made the scholarships a reality.

New Kitchen "Doors"

It is now possible to close the openings between the kitchen and the fellowship room in the new wing of our church. Women's Fellowship was able to purchase these sliding doors for approximately \$3,800, thanks to two anonymous contributors and some additional money, part of the more than \$2,000 left to Women's Fellowship by Marion Gehri. Marion's bequest was in appreciation for the work of our women's group.

Pot-luck September 17

Please mark your calendars! All members and friends of our church are invited to hear about the Bereses' visit to Israel and join all for a harvest time pot-luck supper sponsored by Women's Fellowship.



Pie Sale September 20

Women's Fellowship will hold its annual pie sale on the square during Ripon's Septemberfest celebration. Please say "yes" when Women's Fellowship members call to ask you to contribute to the effort!

SEPTEMBER 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Labor Day Church Office Closed		4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers		6 pm Carberry/Van Vreede wedding rehearsal	3 pm Carberry/Van Vreede wedding
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:30 am Sunday School begins! 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel		4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers 6:30 pm All-church committee meet- ings			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 am Choirs 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 6:30 pm Adult Bible Study	7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel	11 am–1 pm Ripon College using Fel- lowship Hall and kitchen 1 pm Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm Cabinet	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers Women's Fellow- ship Potluck	6:30 pm Book Group: Faith (Eventually)		Septemberfest Pie Sale
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9 am Choirs 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel		4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	1 pm Newsletter Prep for mailin		
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
9 am Choirs 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship	7:30–8:30 pm Meditation in Chapel		4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers			

The Crossroads Charter School is now using our building weekdays 8–4 p.m Welcome Crossroads!



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:

9/7 Jack Kraaz
9/14 TBA
9/21 TBA
9/28 TBA

GREETERS/USHERS:

Audrey & Mary Lyke
TBA
TBA
TBA

COFFEE HOSTS:

TBA
Eric Gallagher, Krista Cage
TBA
TBA

FLOWERS:

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
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Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve
