

The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
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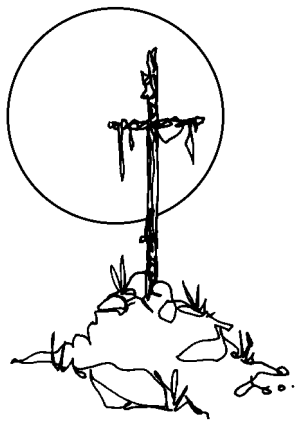
March 2010

A friend from Seattle sent me an article I had read somewhere the month before. He quoted Howard Zinn and called it Howard Zinn's Idealism.

It reads, "To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are many where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however a small way, we don't have to wait for some grand Utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

I believe at our best this is what we do in practice. The very culture of our church today embodies acts of defiance to the darkness we see about us. Whether it be hunger, poverty, powerlessness, enslavement to anything, I believe every time we act as individual women and men of faith, we change the world. I am aware that at times all of us are overwhelmed with fatigue as we attempt to be Christ bearers. And yet, day after day we witness others throwing off their fatigue, and find ourselves doing the same as we are swept up in life. I got up this morning as the old gospel lyric goes, "with my mind stayed on Jesus." I entered the fray knowing what I do is not done alone. I hope you feel that way too. Especially during this time of Lent, I think about Jesus as the gospels teach looking for a new world. I see a piece of it on Sunday morning, and in what we do all week long.

—Jack



“The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”



Community Dinner

Our next Community Dinner will take place on Tuesday, March 23, from 5–6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome!

OGHS

Our church, through its agencies for disaster relief and recovery, really can be everywhere at once if we give it the resources to do so. There are lots of ongoing disasters this winter already, especially Haiti, with recovery promising to take decades as that poor country rebuilds itself, turning disaster into opportunity. Other parts of our own country are suffering right now, too. Church World Service will be there to aid in relief work, supporting shelters and rebuilding homes and lives. One offering for Haiti isn't enough. One Great Hour of Sharing is a great opportunity to support disaster relief and recovery all year long. How about one gift per month like your regular weekly offering? Thanks.

—Gerald Bertsch
Disaster Ministries Coordinator

Community Dinner Marks One-Year Anniversary

It's hard to imagine that just one year ago this February First Congo held its first community dinner. I remember well the excitement and anticipation that evening.

The word of our mission is spreading. I have received calls from other churches interested in what we are doing and how to make it work for them.

First and foremost, I want to thank all of you, and there have been many, who have been extremely supportive not only to the continued success of this mission, but also to me personally. There were many times when I was overwhelmed with your generosity.

As I look back on this year I must reflect on those things that we have accomplished and things that could be better. On the positive side, we have developed friendships with some who I call the faithful. People who were so timid that first night yet come back each and every month. We now know them by name and are able to engage them in conversation about their day to day lives. The other positive development is how so many of you from our own congregation join us every month and that has led to another way that we can all come together for fellowship. I think I can speak for all that each evening is full of a lot of hard work, and much laughter and joy. I will never forget the night that a young single mother attended the August dinner, and told me that she was unable to financially pay for all of the school fees and supplies needed for her child. I was able to connect her with resources available through the schools, and noticed a huge sigh of relief in her expression.

Another really great thing about this mission is the support from the Crossroads program, the charter school program that rents space from our church. Students distribute our monthly flier around town and have offered to make us a permanent banner displaying the dinner for the front of the church.

On the negative, except for some special event dinners (back to school, Mexican fiesta night), our numbers are pretty stagnant.

I still ponder how this could be made better. Many of you have offered suggestions and have expressed a willingness to brainstorm on ways we could improve. For those reasons Janet (Vossekuil) and I have talked about forming an ad hoc committee. There will be more announcements on that issue in the near future. If you are able please join us.

So, if you have not attended, please consider coming. The next dinner will be held on Tuesday, March 23rd, and is held the 4th Tuesday of each month.

—Dale Both

***Cabin Fever? Come enjoy a hot breakfast.
Bring your Friends and Neighbors!!!***

St. Catherine of Siena Christian Women & Ripon Knights of Columbus

All-U-Can Eat Breakfast

Sunday, March 14, 2010 • 8:30 am–12 pm

Parish Hall & Activity Center

218 Blossom St., Ripon (Handicap accessible)

Menu

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

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

Ticket Prices Adults – \$6.00; Children ages 6–12 – \$3.00

Children 5 & Under – Free (with an adult ticket)

Tickets available at the Parish Office and at the Door.



BREAKFAST

March is Red Cross Month – Get Involved!

Help the American Red Cross prepare for the needs of patients by donating blood during March – Red Cross Month. Each year, the Red Cross collects about six million pints of blood – about half the blood needed in the United States.

March was initially declared Red Cross Month in 1943, when President Roosevelt issued the first proclamation to remind the American public that the Red Cross is committed to providing blood and blood products, disaster assistance and emergency social services across the United States and worldwide.

“Your blood is needed more than you think – one out of every 10 people admitted to the hospital needs blood,” said Greg Novinska, CEO of the local Red Cross Blood Services region. “The hour that you volunteer to donate can help save the lives of patients.”

The stability of our nation’s blood supply is in the hands of healthy, volunteer blood donors who give generously for others in need. The Red Cross seeks to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. One way you can help support this mission is to become a dedicated blood donor.

Ripon Community blood drive on Tuesday, March 9 from 11:30 to 5:30 pm at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church – 320 Mt. Zion Drive in Ripon.

Simply call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit givebloodgivelife.org to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver’s license, or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental permission in some states), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), as part of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), 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.

Through OGHS, our gifts meet compelling needs, while also bringing the blessing of compassion into our own lives. The One Great Hour of Sharing Dedication Day is March 14, 2010. Please give generously. For more information about this worthwhile ministry, visit the United Church of Christ website at www.ucc.org/oghs.

Sharing your resources, you'll change lives—including your own.

Our Saviour's United Church of Christ • 343 Scott Street, Ripon

Called to Care Ministry sponsoring

Health & Healing of Mind, Body & Spirit

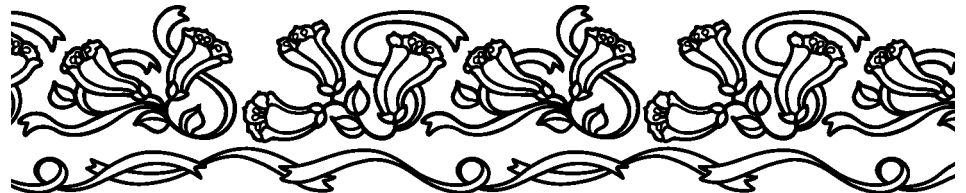
March 14, 2010 • 6–8 pm: Palliative Care: What is it and how does it help one cope with chronic illness?

Whether you or a loved one is facing a chronic illness, it is never easy. A palliative care team can help. Dr. Justin Clutter, MD, Medical Director of Hospice and Palliative Care Services at Agnesian Healthcare will present an overview of Palliative Care; what it is, why someone would seek palliative care, how Palliative Care is different from hospice and who provides palliative care.

March 28, 2010 • 6–8 pm: Childhood's Thief: Autism

Everywhere you turn, another report about autism. Autism will affect one in every 135 children. Educate yourself about this condition. The one thing we know is that early intervention improves outcomes. If you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or you just love children, join us to hear Autistic Specialist, Lisa Vircks present information about the early symptoms of autism and interventions.

Join us for one or both of the programs free of charge. Refreshments will be served and a time for sharing will follow each presentation. RSVP by calling the church office 920-748-2544.



Once again our sanctuary will be filled with Easter lilies, tulips and hyacinths. If you would like to donate a plant in memory or in honor of someone please provide that information along with your check in the amount of \$15 for each plant made payable to the First Congregational Church.

—Sally Gallun, Flower Committee

Flower plant given by: _____

In honor or memory of: _____

(circle one)

Place this slip along with your cash or check in the collection plate or deliver it to the church office no later than Palm Sunday, March 28, 2010. Absolutely no orders will be taken after this date and you cannot specify which plant you are interested in. Thank you.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Adult Education Offerings

On Sunday, March 7, at 5 p.m., First Congregational Church of Ripon will welcome Thomas Ashley-Farrand, a Vedic Hindu priest and story teller, for a dialogue regarding his beliefs and meditation. His topic will be, "True and Traditional Stories from Hinduism." Mr. Farrand is a graduate of Ripon College (class of 62), with further studies at Marquette University. He does over a dozen different workshops that have been well received across North America and London England. For biographical information concerning Thomas Ashley-Farrand see his website www.sanskritmantra.com. He will be at Ripon College on March 8 and 9. All are welcome to attend and learn more about the Hindu faith and practice.

Bring a Friend to Church

On Sunday, April 11, the Long Range Planning Committee and the church cabinet are encouraging you to bring a friend to church. That Sunday in the history of the church is known as Low Sunday. It is the Sunday after Easter, when attendance wanes. "Bring a Friend" Sunday is a way of showcasing our great church to our friends and getting the message out about First Congregational Church. We are planning a great post-Easter service that day followed by a luncheon for all. As with everything around here, it will be nothing without you. More information will be coming in the next few weeks.

April 18th Field Trip to Milwaukee

Our church hosted the fabulous gospel choir from Grace United Church of Christ in Milwaukee the last week of January. Many of you were there and know what great people came from this church. After the service, Pastor Kraaz and Moderator Jennifer Aither were talking with Pastor Washington about the idea of our possibly becoming sister churches. Pastor Washington invited us to bring our entire congregation to Milwaukee to attend their church and let the Grace people provide us a light lunch after their service. We have arranged for a motor coach to take 47 people to Milwaukee that day to worship. (We can arrange for another coach if enough folks show interest.) A bonus for this trip will be a visit after lunch to see the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the Milwaukee Public Museum. The cost for the bus ride is ten dollars and the Milwaukee Museum will be twenty-two dollars. Because we do not want any to miss out on this opportunity, the church will provide scholarship money for any for which this might pose a financial strain. You will hear more about this in upcoming weeks and we hope we can all participate. Some asked about church here in Ripon that day. Pastor Kraaz will hold a service in Ripon, for those who cannot go to Milwaukee that day, at 5 pm, Sunday, April 18th. All are invited to attend.

Valentine Thanks

Thank you to everyone who helped in any way for the Valentine Luncheon and Cookie Walk, with special thanks to those who gave many hours to make this event a success.

Women's Fellowship
Executive Committee

Missing Towels

To whoever may have taken the kitchen towels home to wash, thank you for doing so, but please bring them back — we need them in the kitchen!

MARCH 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
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			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 5 pm Adult Education 6:30 pm Confirmation class	6:30 pm Wor- ship commit- tee meeting		4:45–7:30 pm- Weight Watchers			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship		6:30 pm Cabinet	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 6:30 pm Confirmation class		1 pm Newsletter Deadline 5–6:30 pm Com- munity Dinner, Fel- lowship Hall	4:45–7:30 pm Weight Watchers	1:15 pm News- letter prep for mailing		
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
9 am Choir rehearsals 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Palm Sunday Wor- ship 11:30 am Coffee Fellowship 6:30 pm Confirmation class			4:45–7:30 pm- Weight Watchers 1:15 pm Newsletter prep for mailing	7 pm Maundy Thursday ser- vice		

Future Events:
 April 4: Easter Sunday
 April 18: Worship at Grace
 UCC, Milwaukee, and Dead
 Sea Scrolls exhibit at Milwaukee
 Public Museum.



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:

3/4 Jack Kraaz
3/14 TBA
3/21 TBA
3/28 Rick Coles

4/4 Jack Kraaz
4/11 TBA
4/18 TBA
4/25 TBA

GREETERS/USHERS:

Tim & Mary Lyke
Bob & Nancy Royce
Bob & Nancy Royce
Roger & Marg. Eddingsaas

TBA
Janet Vossekui
TBA
TBA

COFFEE HOSTS:

Elvera Perr/Diane Umbarger
David & LaVonne Butler
Audrey Conant/Ruth Birge/Merle Good
Roger & Marg. Eddingsaas

TBA
TBA
Amsden/Williams family
TBA

FLOWERS:

TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

Easter Lilies
TBA
TBA
TBA

Are you interested in being a Worship Volunteer? Sign up on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall entrance. Ripon College student Hollie Becker is handling the nursery for the duration of the school year.

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