



The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
☎ 920-748-5898 • office@riponcongregationalucc.org • www.riponcongregationalucc.org

March 2023



As a young man, my grandfather attended UCLA in the 1930's where he fell in love with math, and eventually majored in Astronomy. The combination of solving mathematical dilemmas and gazing up to the stars spoke to his heart, and helped him navigate his life ahead. When World War II broke out, he enlisted in the Navy and served on a submarine. His love of math and the stars proved to be invaluable, a saving grace, as it allowed him to serve as the executive officer and navigator for the submarine.

He was a wayfinder, a seeker. His submarine navigated the waters by day and the stars by night. Navigation without GPS was an art in those days, a simple and mathematically beautiful art. My grandfather was a seeker of the stars above and used them to guide the submarine, to navigate the landscape that was constantly changing, to find a way through the unknown.

To seek is to navigate the landscapes around us, trusting in God to guide our way. During this season of Lent we are using the theme of Seeking to help us navigate the landscape in front of us. The Sundays leading up to Easter (April 9th) offer us many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: Nicodemus comes to him in the veil of night, he approaches a Samaritan

woman at a well, he heals a man born without sight. In these stories, each person is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. What unfolds is an exchange filled with questions and exploration. Often, an unveiling occurs—assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

And so, this Lenten worship series is founded on questions. Many of our weekly questions feel restorative (“Can these bones live?”). Some feel like a charge or challenge (“Who will you listen to?”).

Some questions are hopeful and curious (“How do we begin again?”). Our questions won't necessarily lead to answers,

but they can help us find clarity and a new perspective. Ultimately, we pray they lead to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as a disciple. Throughout the turbu-



(Image: to be a blessing, by Hannah Garrity, Inspired by Genesis 12:1-4a, Paper lace and pencil over oil paint on paper © 2023 A Sanctified Art)

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In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Prayers for health and healing...

Aya V. (health); **Ken Hill** (cancer & surgery); **Carla McNair, Mary Lyke's** mother, (health); **Wayne Larson** (shingles); **Merle Good** (health); **Marilyn Lehnerr** (health); **Don Amsden** (hospice); **Wendy Smith** (cancer); **Dawn Scholtens** (cancer recovery); **Loren Boone** (cancer); **Katie Del Ponte's** cousin and **Tony Reilly's** niece **Jessica** (cancer); Grandmother **Cindy** from the **Berndt/Selz's** family (cancer); **Rose Marie Freeman** (sister of Al Jarreau, health); **Susan Osteen's** sister-in-law **Chona** (cancer); all those experiencing health issues in need of prayer.

Prayers for...

Audrey Conant, who'd appreciate visitors and prayers for her health.

Nancy Davis (neighbor of **Julie Mathias**) who is receiving end-of-life care.

Prayers for peace in Ukraine and Russia and around the world.

Please note: If you wish to see your prayer request listed in next Sunday's bulletin or The Spire, please notify the church office.



Our Condolences

...to those who have experienced a recent loss:

Van Smith passed away on Friday, February 10. He was a friend of **Wendy Smith**. Our hearts and prayers go out to Wendy, and all of Van's family and friends.

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. We look forward to getting to know you and to share with you the marvelous ways God is working in our church and beyond. 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.

Prayers of Joy

Dawn Scholtens who completed chemotherapy treatments in January!

Wayne Larson, who celebrates his 98th birthday on March 3.

Our **Community Dinner** served 85 meals on February 28.

Gina Borelli has a new job. **Becca Parker** has a new job at Ripon Children's Learning Center, and will continue working with our youth.

The Cooke family celebrates **Hailey Cooke** on passing her Nursing boards and graduating as an RN! Hailey is married to **Dan Cooke**.

Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for April, 2023. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, March 15, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.



Pastor **Jeffrey Dodson**
 CE Director **Jeanne Williams**
 Moderator **Erin Ter Beest**
 Vice-Moderator. . . **Michele Wittler**
 Clerk **Justus Paul**
 Treasurer **Andy Lyke**
 Choir Director **Kurt Dietrich**
 Faith Formation . **Barb Splittgaber**
 Finance. **Judy Neill**
 Historian **Robin Patzloff**
 Maintenance Officer **Lyle Mathias**
 Membership. **Bev Christ**
 Nominating. . **J. Christ, T. Konecny**
 Organist. **Maria Dietrich**
 Outreach **Dawn Scholtens**
 PPRC **Michele Wittler**
 Women's Fellowship **Susan Osteen**
 Worship **Kathleen Hones**

Church Contact Info

Office manager **Ashley Dodson**:
 920-748-5898 or
 office@riponcongregationalucc.org
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 Cell: (719) 330-8549 or by email, at
 jeffrey@riponcongregationalucc.org
Jeanne Williams, CE Director
 jeanne@riponcongregationalucc.org
Rod & Peggy Freeman – Church
 Custodians - Cell: 920-896-2152

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lence of the past few years, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. If you are returning to church, you are probably returning with more questions and a critical lens. We hope this series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?



(Image: *Living Water*, by Lauren Wright Pittman, Inspired by John 4:5-42, Digital painting © 2023 A Sanctified Art)

This Lent, I invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking. I encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble. I hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. I pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore—to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God.

Let us be seekers together in God's realm,

—Pastor Jeffrey



seeking:
honest questions
for deeper faith

Lenten Worship Schedule

Please join us for Wednesday Night Lenten Services, every week in March at 6:30 pm.

Sunday, February 26 | First Sunday in Lent | Seeking: Who Will You Listen To?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Sunday, March 5 | Second Sunday in Lent | Communion | Seeking: How do we begin again?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Sunday, March 12 | Third Sunday in Lent | Daylight Savings (Set clocks forward one hour!) | Seeking: Will you give me a drink?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Sunday, March 19 | Fourth Sunday in Lent | Seeking: Who Sinned?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Sunday, March 26 | Fifth Sunday in Lent | Seeking: Can these bones live?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Sunday, April 2 | Palm Sunday | Communion | Seeking: Where are you headed?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Thursday, April 6 | Maundy Thursday | Seeking: Where are you headed?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

Friday, April 7 | Ecumenical Good Friday Service at Grace Lutheran Church, Ripon 6:30 pm Worship in-person and live-streamed

Saturday, April 8 | Holy Saturday
9 am–5 pm Sanctuary open for prayer and reflection

Sunday, April 9 | Easter Sunday | Seeking: Who are you looking for?
10:30 am Worship in-person | 4:00 pm Worship online

A note from Nedra Martz...

*A warm hello to my Ripon
Church friends,
Nedra
2/12/23*



Each Thursday at 10:30 AM join us for coffee or tea and lively discussions on various topics of the day using faith, politics, and the daily news. All are welcome! We meet in the Chapel.



Every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month join us for an hour of Adult Education in the Chapel. Each Chapel Chat will feature a topic or speaker on a variety of subjects. Chapel Chats are open to everyone, and we will be seeking presenters to sign up for a Sunday to share a topic they are passionate about.



Offering Envelopes Available

If you use offering envelopes to pay your pledge, and would like new envelopes for 2023, we have several boxes available in the church office.

Wednesday Night Lenten Services



Please join us for a series of Wednesday evening Lenten Services as we learn of "The Women in the Story of Jesus: Womb to Tomb." We will reflect on the women in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew, the women who show up at the tomb and preach the resurrection. These services are ecumenical and will feature Rev. Jeffrey Dodson and guest preachers who will rotate throughout the greater Ripon area.

All Services will be held at First Congregational UCC, Ripon

MARCH 1- RUTH | REV. MELISSA HRDLICKA
MARCH 8- RAHAB | REV. JEFFREY DODSON
MARCH 15- TAMAR | REV. KIMBERLY STOWELL
MARCH 22- BATHSHEBA | REV. DOUG HOLTZ
+ REV. JEFFREY DODSON
MARCH 29- MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS
REV. CRYSTAL LEE

Services will be held in the Sanctuary at 6:30 and will last about 30 min.



Register for UCCI Events and Camps!

New and exciting events are planned at the three UCCI campuses: Moon Beach, Daycholah Center (Our local camp at Green Lake!), and Cedar Valley. Check out the full event list: <https://ucci.org/events-2023/>

If you are interested in attending a UCCI summer camp or retreat, please let Pastor Jeffrey or CE Director Jeanne Williams know. There are scholarships available to help with the cost of camp.



Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars®

Eligible Thrivent Financial members who have available Choice Dollars® have until March 31, 2023, to direct them. Don't miss this opportunity to recommend that Thrivent Financial provide outreach funding to First Congregational Church of Ripon. Go to thrivent.com/thriventchoice to learn more, or call Thrivent at 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" after the prompt.



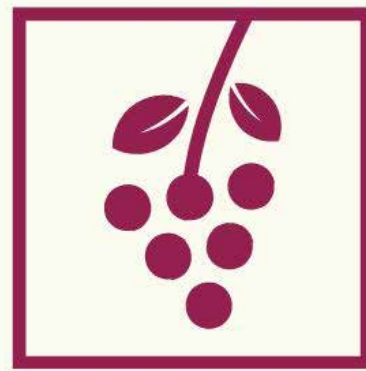
Artists, Photographers, Calligraphers, and Poets of All Ages

The Membership Committee would greatly appreciate your help collecting homemade blank greeting cards that are blank inside. We will use these cards to send greetings and remembrances to our members each month. We are hoping to get a selection of cards that have been specially made by our members. It would be very helpful if you include an envelope or if your card is a standard business or personal envelope size. If not, we will find one. On the back or front of your card, please be sure to sign your art. Thanks to Dawn Scholten for starting us off! We plan to have a convenient drop-off location soon, but cards can also be left with Ashley in the office.

Thank you from your Membership Committee. (Tina, Amber, Bev, Debbi and Jeffrey — contact one of us if you have any questions.)



SHAMROCK — St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach people about the Godhead. Holding up a shamrock, he challenged them, “Is this one leaf, or three?” Inevitably, people replied that it was both, prompting St. Patrick to draw the analogy that so, too, is God: one God in three Persons — the Holy Trinity.



FELLOWSHIP OF THE GRAPE

FIRST MONTHLY MEETING OF FOG

Saturday, May 6 from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

You may be asking what is FOG? We are glad that you asked! FOG stands for **Fellowship of the Grape** and it is a new effort by your Membership Committee to provide an opportunity for adults from our church community, to get together informally, enjoy some refreshments, and enjoy each other's company. Here's how it works:

We will gather on the first Saturday of each month from 5-6:30 p.m.

This will be an adult only social event.

There will be a host who offers to hold the gathering at their home or selects another location such as the church or Vines and Rushes or even a pontoon boat etc.

The host will notify the office to send a reminder (through the church emails & announcements). RSVPs are appreciated but not necessary.

You come and bring a bottle of wine or other beverage of your choice.

The host will provide paper products, glasses and an appetizer or two.

A couple of quests will also bring an appetizer.

Relax, chat, and get to know one another! Keep it simple!

Thanks,

Debbi Konecny



**NEXTREX
PLASTIC
RECYCLING**

**WE ARE GOING FOR
BENCH #2!**

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO DROP
OFF YOUR PLASTIC BAGS
AND FILMS IN THE
COLLECTION BOXES NEAR
THE OFFICE AND CHAPEL**

*From the
Outreach Committee*

**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
Special Offering**

One Great Hour of Sharing shows us what love is by helping others. There are many ways for us to experience love and to share that with others. Sometimes, we just need to think about love in new ways.

One of the ways we can show love is to help others. Through a special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing, we have the chance to help people we may never meet. One of the projects we have helped make possible was rebuilding a school after it was destroyed by a hurricane. Doesn't that sound like love? Would you want someone to help rebuild your school if it was destroyed?

The One Great Hour of Sharing special offering will be collected on March 19, 2023

—Anne Flasch, Outreach committee

Help Stock the Pantry

During the month of March, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of baking supplies, cooking oils, muffin mixes, and butter flavored Crisco. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such a deodorant, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Cash donations are always very much appreciated as well. Donations may also be dropped off at the church and will be delivered to the pantry. Thank you for your help!

—Outreach Committee



COMMUNITY DINNER

Our Community Dinners, held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, are temporarily in a drive-through format due to COVID-19. Our next dinner will be held on March 28.



Campbell.

"My whole family's giving up something for Lent. Mom's giving up cookies, Dad's giving up cake, and I'm giving up squash."

Faith Formation - Sunday School News



Sunday School Every Sunday at 9 a.m.

Younger Learners - Preschoolers through Grade 3 will hear the same stories in their lessons that you are hearing in our worship service. These stories of Jesus ministry ask us to think about what faith means in our daily lives. Here's a list of the stories and themes for our Lenten lessons:

Week 1 - Matthew 4:1-11 - Jesus is Tempted - Who will you listen to?

Week 2 - John 3:1-17 - Jesus and Nicodemus - How do we begin again?

Week 3 - John 4:5-42 - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman - Will you give me a drink?

Week 4 - John 9:1-41 - Jesus and the Blind Man - Who sinned?

Week 5 - John 11:1-45 - Jesus, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus - Can these bones live?

Week 6 - Matthew 21:1-11 - Palm Sunday - Where are you headed?



Older Learners - Youth in Grades 4-7 will learn about World Religions and how they are similar to and different from our Christian Faith. We have just begun our study of Zoroastrianism, a Middle Eastern, monotheistic religion. You might want to ask about their funeral practices.

Music - All children and youth will have music time each week during our Sunday School time as we prepare for our spring holidays (Palm Sunday and Easter) and for Children's Sunday in May. We are happy to welcome Summer Schleikau, a Ripon College student to our children's music staff. Summer and Morgan will be working with the children to master using the bells and hand chimes.

First Congo Kids Time - Children who attend Sunday School may return to the classrooms after the Children's Moment in the worship service for a snack and time for play and craft activities. We will bring children to the Fellowship Hall for coffee hour at the end of the service.

Stitching Crafts - Children are enjoying a variety of stitching crafts using kid-safe needles, yarn, and cross-stitch webbing. Stitching helps develop eye-hand coordination, planning skills, color sense, and patience. After a few weeks of practice, we make some cross stitch crafts to show our skills.

Nursery Care - Our Sunday School staff will provide nursery care for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers during the Sunday worship service. If no one is in the nursery when you arrive or when you need to leave the service to calm a child, just ask two staff members to accompany you to the nursery. We are very happy to have this one to one time with our youngest First Congo Kids.

March Family Activities - Look for a full schedule of family activities for Spring Semester in this issue of the Spire.

We Will Continue our Plastic Recycling!!!

Keep bringing your plastic bags and film to church so that we can earn another recycled bench. The cabinet will decide on the use of this second bench at the church or as a gift to a local organization.

Fill Your Piggy Banks for Heifer!!!

Once again this year, Faith Formation and Outreach will sponsor a collection for the Heifer Foundation during Children's Sunday on May 21st. Stash away your coins and small bills to help us help a family get the livestock or gardening supplies they need to support themselves

— Submitted by Barb Splittgaber, Faith Formation Committee Chair, and Jeanne Williams, C.E. Director



Easter Flowers

Once again our sanctuary will be filled with assorted spring flowers/Easter lilies. (See options below.)

If you would like to donate a plant in memory or honor of someone, please provide your name, their name, and your check/cash of \$15.00 for each plant. Make checks payable to First Congregational Church.

Thank you.

—Barb Mitchell

Number of plants _____ @ \$15 = \$ _____ total.

Please indicate choice and number of plant(s): ___daffodils ___hyacinths ___lilies ___tulips

Given by _____ (as you wish it to appear in the Spire)

In honor / memory / celebration of _____
(Circle one)

In honor / memory / celebration of _____
(Circle one)

Place this slip along with your cash or check in the collection plate or deliver it to the church office (locked box next to office door) no later than Wednesday, March 29. Thank you.



Worship Participation Schedule


Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Tech Booth	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
Mar. 5	Michele Wittler	Susan & Preston Osteen	Daniel Volkmann	Edwards and Flasch
Mar. 12	Tina Solberg	Bev & Jack Christ	Tim Lyke	Minch and Mathias
Mar. 19	Kathleen Hones	Katie & Nate Del Ponte	Erik Dietrich	Boscaljon and Osteen
Mar. 26	Katie Grady	Lynn Grout-Paul/Justus Paul	Katie Del Ponte	Scholtens and Scholtens
April 2	Barb Mitchell	Kathleen Hones & Tim Lyke	Gary Scholtens	Boone, Volkmann/Tumas
April 9	Dawn Scholtens	Michele & Skip Wittler	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Seidler-Halwas and Retzlaff
April 16	Deanna Boone	Janis & Cal Edwards	Tim Lyke	Andy Lyke, Solberg Family
April 23	Stephanie Prellwitz	Katie & Nate Berndt	Daniel Volkmann	Del Ponte and Reilly/Henke
April 30	Preston Osteen	Dave & Rachel Minch	Erik Dietrich	Nelson/Harper and Konecny

Thanks
for your
participation

Please try to meet this schedule. If you cannot help on the Sunday assigned...

- Please switch Sundays with someone else and then notify the church office (748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org) of the change.
- We all appreciate your participation!

MARCH 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	1	2	3	4
9 am Sunday School and World Religions 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		5:30 pm Community Dinner	Women's History Month Begins 5:30 pm Youth Group	10:30 am Discussion Group 6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs	6 pm Ripon Area Community Theater Auditions
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
9 am Sunday School and World Religions 9 am Chapel Chat 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship			5:30 pm Youth Group	10:30 am Discussion Group 6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
9 am Sunday School and World Religions 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Outreach meeting 12 pm Confirmation 12 pm Worship Committee 4 pm Online Worship		11:30 am Noon Kiwanis meeting 5 pm Sharing the Table at Grace 6:30 pm Cabinet meeting, Chapel	12 pm Spire deadline 5:30 pm Youth Group	10:30 am Discussion Group 6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs Happy St. Patrick's Day! 	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9 am Sunday School and World Religions 9 am Chapel Chat 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Membership Comm 12 pm Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		10 am STRIVE	5:30 pm Youth Group	10:30 am Discussion Group 6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs 5:30 pm Family Game Night & Pizza Party	6 pm Ripon Area Community Theater Auditions
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
9 am Sunday School and World Religions 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 12 pm Confirmation 4 pm Online Worship		5:30 pm Community Dinner	5:30 pm Youth Group	10:30 am Discussion Group 6 pm NA meeting 7 pm RC Choral Union	9 am Coffee at Mugs	6 pm Ripon Area Community Theater Auditions



Remember to set your clocks ahead!
Daylight Saving Time begins at
2 a.m. on Sunday, March 12th!

Future Events:

- April 6 - Maundy Thursday
- April 7 - Ecumenical Good Friday Service at Grace Lutheran
- April 9 - Happy Easter!

First Congregational Church of Ripon

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve

