



# The SPIRE

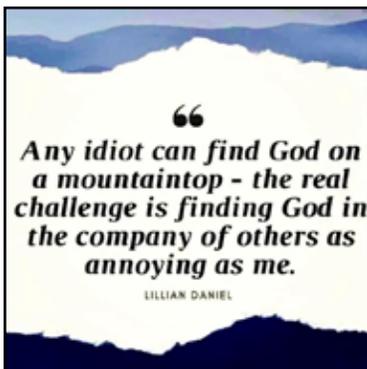


First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971  
☎ 920-748-5898 • office@riponcongregationalucc.org • www.riponcongregationalucc.org

June 2022

“...and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

— Matthew 22:35-39



Our church on the hill next to Ripon College belongs to the Northeast Association (NEA) of the Wisconsin Conference UCC. That’s just a lot of words to say we hang out with 56 other UCC churches in the greater Sheboygan/Green Bay area. They’re our neighbors, if you will.

There are 4 associations in the Wisconsin Conference totaling 214 churches, which make up the various neighborhoods of our conference.

We neighbors like to get together once a year. At the NEA Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 30, 2022 we had an insightful presentation titled “Living with Tension while Aspiring to Belovedness” by the Rev. Winton Boyd, who is with the Center for Courage & Renewal, out of the Southwest Association.

He began his talk by quoting Barbara Brown Taylor who writes in her book *An Altar in the World*:

The hardest spiritual work in the world is to love the neighbor as the self - to encounter another human being not as someone you can use, change, fix, help, save,

enroll, convince or control, but simply as someone who can spring you from the prison of yourself, if you will allow it.

Amongst clergy and church conversations I have been struck by how many of us express grief at the realization of the divisive polarization of the world, the country, and even our own local community. This polarization exists too in the church, and the COVID pandemic has strained that polarization even further. Masks, vaccines, politics, racism, even the platforms we have used for communicating as the church during the pandemic, facebook and twitter, have become polarizing during the past two years.

Perhaps you’ve felt this in your own life too. Navigating family relationships or work or school has felt incredibly stressful. How have you experienced polarization in your own life?

Many of us have people in our lives whose theology is radically different, but with whom we have authentic, abiding, and loving relationships. Who are those people in your life?

Poet Alta Gerry connects for us both the command from Jesus to “love your neighbor” and the challenge of living it in our complex world:

*loving your neighbor is all very fine when you have nice neighbors.*

*This is why people choose the town they live in.*

*we all want nice neighbors. It’s the folks in the next town who are the bad guys.*

*you’d be amazed at how citified folks hate the people in the suburbs.*

*not the suburbs, the people in them.*

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**Prayers for health and healing...**

**For Health & Healing:** Nate Berndt (new stomach surgery); Loren Boone (collar bone, cancer); Cal Edwards (foot surgery); Katie Del Ponte's grandmother (fractured hip, dementia); Rose Marie Freeman (sister of Al Jarreau, health); Aya V. (heart & lungs); Piper B. (teeth); Van Smith (stroke, heart issues); Brent Woyke, Janis & Cal Edward's son (health); Don Amsden (health); Lisa Reber, Maria's mom (cancer); Grandmother Cindy from the Berndt/Selz's family (cancer); all those experiencing health issues in need of prayer.

For the **Afghan family** we sponsor.

For the people of **Ukraine**. For the people of **Russia**. For **peace**.

The children and families of **Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas** following the tragic mass shooting that took the lives of 19 children and two teachers.

The community of **Buffalo, New York** following the grocery store shooting that took 10 lives in a predominantly black neighborhood.

**McKayla and Kyle**, whose Metomen Street home caught fire.

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



# 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.

## Congratulations

... to those celebrating new births:

**Zoey Elizabeth Pugh**, the daughter of **Maggie and Adam Pugh**, and granddaughter of **Marguerite Parks**, who arrived on April 20th in Madison WI. She joins Mom, Dad, and big sisters Ella and June.

... to our new Graduates:

- Chloe Capelle**, Ripon High School
- Xavier Manuel**, Ripon High School
- David Lyke**, Marquette University
- Ben Cooke**, Moraine Park Technical College
- Lydia Wiley Deal**, Ripon College
- Bri Cada**, Ripon College
- Abby Buksa**, Ripon College
- Morgan Krogh**, Ripon College

## Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for July, 2022. The deadline is Wednesday, June 15, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com. Please mark your calendars.



- 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. . . . . *Deanna Boone, B. Christ, M. Lyke, A. Dalziel*
- 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  
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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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*but would they want us living  
next door? i ask you.*

*& joan of arc was noisy. she  
must have made a lousy neigh-  
bor & jesus,*

*giving everything away -  
& gandhi, a walking guilt trip.*

*some people make nicer neigh-  
bors than others. but there you  
have it. city planning*

*funny how essays on politics, on  
war & peace, seem to talk about  
love*

The challenge is to live, and possi-  
bly even love, the people who make  
bad neighbors. Or as my preaching  
professor, Rev. Lillian Daniel once  
wrote, "Any idiot can find God on  
a mountaintop - the real challenge  
is finding God in the company of  
others as annoying as me."

One who has thought critically  
about building community and  
healing divides is the Quaker Park-  
er Palmer. He outlines five habits  
of healing this polarization in our  
nation in his book, *Healing the  
Heart of Democracy: The Courage  
to Create a Politics Worthy of the  
Human Spirit*:

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## June 2022 Worship Schedule

**Sunday, June 5 | Pentecost Sunday | Communion | Summer Worship Schedule  
Strengthen the Church Special Offering**

*Acts 2:1-21 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit*

**9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**

**Sunday, June 12 | First Sunday after Pentecost | WI Conference Annual Mtg  
9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**

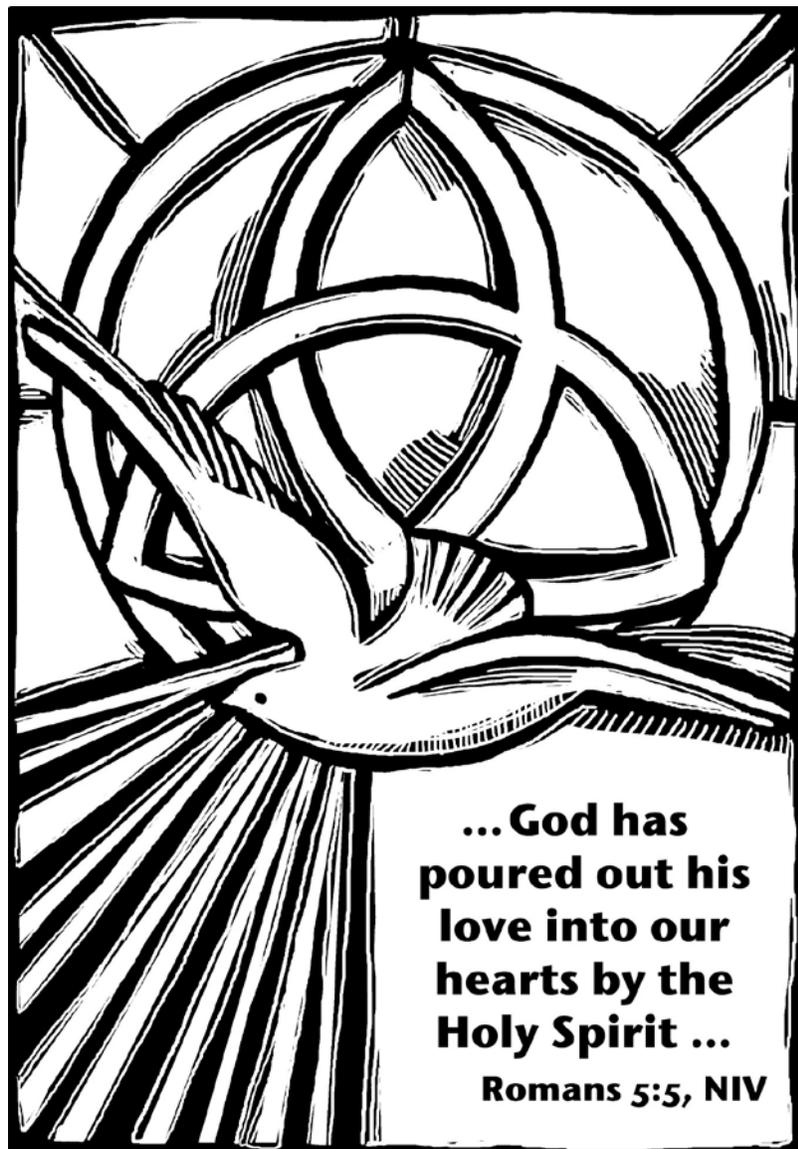
**Sunday, June 19 | Fathers' Day | Juneteenth | Second Sunday after Pentecost  
9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**

**Sunday, June 26 | Open & Affirming Sunday | Third Sunday after Pentecost |  
Special Music by Songa, featuring Sherry & Mario Friedel  
9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**

**Sunday, July 3 | Fourth Sunday after Pentecost | Communion | 4th of July  
weekend**

**9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**

**Sunday, July 10 | New Member Joining Sunday | Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
9:30 am Worship IN-PERSON | 4:00 pm Worship ONLINE**



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### **Habit #1: We Are All In This Together**

Spiritual Discipline: SEEING GOD IN THE ONE I DON'T UNDERSTAND (or respect)

“You can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.” (Anne Lamott)

Questions of Faith: 1. When the going gets rough, how do I turn to wonder?

2. How do I move from quick judgment to questions of wonder?

3. When have I been surprised by ‘angels unawares’ and could I be surprised in such a way today? (Hebrews 13:2 says, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”)

### **Habit #2: An Appreciation Of The Other**

“Us and them” does not have to mean “us versus them.”

Spiritual Discipline: LOVING AND PRAYING FOR OUR ENEMY.

Questions of Faith: 1. What do I have in common with those I deem as arrogant, ignorant, racist or liberal elites?

2. What role does my faith play in relating to these people?

3. Do I actually pray for my enemies, or the other?

### **Habit #3: The Ability to Hold Tension in Life Giving Ways**

Spiritual Discipline: TENSION & SUFFERING REFLECT THE WAY OF THE CROSS

“In Christian tradition, the broken-open heart is virtually indistinguishable from the image of the cross. It was on the cross that God’s heart was broken for the sake of humankind, broken open into a love that Christ’s followers are called to emulate. Even as a physical form, the cross--with arms that stretch left and right and up and down-- symbolizes the tension, the ‘excruciating’ tension, that can open the heart to love.” (Palmer)

Questions of Faith: 1. Do I see all tension as bad? To be avoided? How can it be life giving?

2. What is tension teaching me?

3. Are tension and suffering contributing to my own growth?

### **Habit #4: Developing A Sense Of Voice And Agency.**

Insight and energy give rise to new life as we speak out and act out our own version of truth, while checking and correcting it against the truths of others.

Spiritual Discipline: EMBRACING Both POWER and POWERLESSNESS

Depending on our social location - we may be called to step into our power - or step back and appreciate the reality of powerlessness. In ourselves and in others.

Questions of Faith: 1. How do I react when I feel powerless?

2. Are there others who have less power and influence than me?

3. How do I pray in such times?

4. Are there topics/questions that cause me to resent others’ power - or their attack of my power (white privilege, racism, sexism, etc.)?

5. Can I turn to wonder again?

### **Habit #5: The Capacity To Create Community**

“In and through community lies the salvation of the world.” (M. Scott Peck)

Spiritual Discipline: NEVER WAVERING IN THE PRACTICE OF HOSPITALITY.

Period. Full Stop.

Questions of Faith: 1. When was the last time I welcomed someone for the first time?

2. Who is hardest for me to welcome?

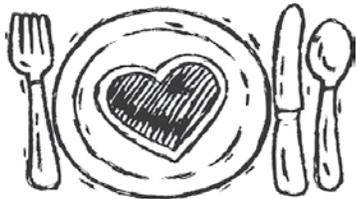
3. Are there places I’m called to go even if I’m uncomfortable?

Is there a question or two on this list that feels relevant and appropriate to your life, one that you would like to pursue or pay attention to more in the coming months?

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## From the Outreach Committee

Spring is here, and summer is right around the corner! Flowers are blooming and gardens are starting! With that in mind, fresh produce is something that the food pantry desperately needs. As we prepare our gardens for delicious produce, please consider adding a few extra plants and bring the surplus with you to church so we can donate it to the food pantry this summer! If you have any further questions, please contact anyone on the 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 June 28.

## Help Stock the Pantry

During the month of June, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of peanut butter, jelly, applesauce, canned fruit. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such as 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



## Wisconsin Conference UCC Annual Meeting

Join us at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference, to be held June 10 to 12 at the Green Lake Conference Center. This year's theme "Building up the Beloved Community," will recognize the toll that the pandemic has taken on congregations, pastors and lay leaders. We will focus on tending to both individual and congregational wellness, lift up best practices and good strategies for fostering healthy church dynamics and challenge ourselves to think in fresh ways about the Church.

For more info including agenda-at-a-glance, schedule of workshops, registration, volunteer opportunities and more, visit

<https://www.wcucc.org/about-wcucc/annual-meeting/>



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

**Daniel Berger and Stewart Berger**, whose father Ron Berger passed away in Ripon May 8. Dan and Stewart are the sons of **Julie Mathias**.

The family of **Todd Truesdale**. Todd passed away at the age of 35 on May 19. He taught at Ripon College in the music department and his wife **Hannah** teaches at Ripon High School. He also leaves two young children.

The family of **Ardis Mitchell**, who passed away on April 24. We hold the Mitchell family in prayer: **Sue & Dave Conant, Bette, Barb Mitchell, Garrett**, and other family. A memorial service is scheduled for July 9, 2022, at 1:00 pm in the Vesper Circle, at Green Lake Conference Center.



*Continued from p. 4*

Of course diverse thought and disagreement are not just out there in the world, external to our faith community, but internal as well. What does this look like within our own congregation? Healthy decision making means understanding we are not all in absolute agreement all of the time. There is diversity in the opinions and thoughts of even the simplest of decisions, and even when something is approved within the congregation. Yet the goal should be consensus in a manner by which the whole congregation can move forward. Parker Palmer demonstrates the degree to which consensus is reached within healthy decision making:

### **Gradient of Agreement**

1.	Endorsement	Let's do it!
2.	Endorsement with minor point of contention	I am on board but wish the proposal had more details.
3.	Agreement with Reservations	I like this in general but worry about what the process may do to our sense of unity as a congregation.
4.	Abstain	I don't have strong feelings either way.
5.	Stand Aside	I am not in favor but I see many are and I won't get in the way of proceeding.
6.	Formal disagreement but willing to let group move forward	I want to register my disagreement but I know we are moving ahead.
7.	Formal disagreement but asking to be absolved of consequences	I want to register my disagreement and I want the chance to step away from the consequences and fall out.
8.	Block	I cannot in good conscience let this go forward. If we are seeking consensus, we are not there.

Our work internally as a congregation is to continue working toward those points of agreement and finding consensus in any decision making process, while also acknowledging and paying attention to the diverse opinions within the body making decisions.

Perhaps these habits outlined by Parker Palmer might give you a framework for engaging those you disagree with, and assist our community at large, and our faith community in particular, in learning how to navigate divisive issues and conflict in healthy and constructive ways.

Our church is governed by democracy, unlike many other faith communities that rely on a hierarchical structure to tell them what to do. This provides challenges as well as opportunities in being a unified Christian community. Our relationality as a United Church of Christ is not in obedience, but rather in covenant and mutuality. We are all equally powerful and responsible for the ministry and life of this church. In this regard, we have a unique opportunity to engage these habits for healing the heart of democracy within our community. We are able to refine our skills in hospitality and relationship building, so that our work out in the world will benefit from the inward work, resulting in spiritually mature and thoughtful citizens.

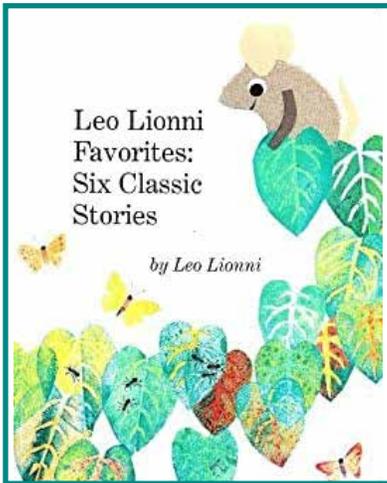
While the world around us seems chaotic and divisive at times, I am encouraged by the work of faith communities like ours to do the hard and necessary work of inclusivity and radical hospitality. Certainly our wider church leaders recognize this, and I am grateful for the presentation by Winton Boyd who highlighted these habits at our gathering at the NEA Annual Meeting.

*Continued on next page*



## Faith Formation

**Summer Church School Begins June 5th** - Beginning on Sunday, June 5th, children ages 3-11 are welcome to join Miss Jeanne and Miss Lydia for our Summer Church School program. Following the Children's Moment in our Sunday Service, children will go to the classrooms for storytime, music, and activities. Storytime will feature classic picturebooks by Leo Lionni and music will feature Old Testament songs. Activities may feature discussion of the books, arts and crafts, outdoor activities, or games related to the stories and songs in each lesson. Children will join the grownups for coffee hour at the end of the church service.



Leo Lionni is chosen as the featured author for our Summer Church School program for several reasons:

- His stories teach important lessons about being proud of your unique talents and gifts.
- His stories are good read alouds and can spark important conversations within the classroom and among family members.
- His artwork uses lots of techniques and perspectives that can be used in classroom and family art projects.
- His characters are memorable for their self-awareness and kindness.
- These are stories many of our parents may remember from their own childhood and will want to share with their children.

First Congo families will receive a book of six Leo Lionni stories to add to their family library and share with their children.

We hope you will join us for our Church School program!

—Jeanne Williams, Faith Formation

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*Continued from p. 6*

Ultimately, we are asked to grow in ways that enable us to love our neighbors as ourselves. And at times that means leaving the comfort of our own neighborhood to connect and minister to those who are different from us. Living together in love, hospitality, and community can be challenging, but so worth the work and effort. In fact, Jesus says that next to loving God, there is nothing more important that we as people of faith do.

Who knows who might walk through the doors of our church or who we may encounter on the street and be in need of the liberating and transforming love of God? Each of us is able to manifest the love of our neighbor in our words and actions. And heaven knows we are in need of such love these days.

May we love our neighbors as ourselves,

—Pastor Jeffrey





*For in Christ Jesus  
you are all children of God  
through faith.*

**GALATIANS 3:26, NRSV**

***Worship Volunteer Schedule***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lector</b>	<b>Ushers/Greeters</b>	<b>Worship Slides</b>	<b>Coffee Fellowship Hosts</b>
June 5	Ed Scholtens	Rachel & Dave Minch	Tim Lyke	Iserman and Konecny
June 12	Katie Grady	Carolyn and Braimer Capelle	Erik Dietrich	Mitchell and Kenton
June 19	Jack Christ	Katie & Ben Grady	Katie Del Ponte	TBD and TerBeest
June 26	Loren Boone	Volunteers needed	Dan Volkmann	Boone and Christ
July 3	Tom Konecny	Jeanne Williams/Janet Vossekuil	Marguerite Penick	Volkmann & Hones families
July 10	Tammi Kenton	Michele & Skip Wittler	Gary Scholtens	Moniz & Allard families
July 17	Marguerite Penick	Tony Reilly & Scott Henke	Gary Scholtens	Dietrich & Wittler families
July 24	Ruth Retzlaff	Youth/Confirmands	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Christian Education comm.
July 24	Rachel Minch	Tom & Debbi Konecny	Erik Dietrich	Edwards & Flasch families

*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!

# JUNE 2022

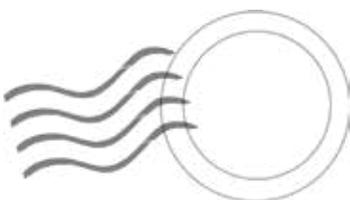
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
10:15 am First Congo Kids 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship			5:30 pm Youth	6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
8:45 am Outreach Committee 9:45 am First Congo Kids 9:30 am Worship  10:30 am Fellowship			5:30 pm Youth	6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
9:30 am Worship 9:45 am First Congo Kids 10:30 am Fellowship 	5 pm Ripon Community Theatre rehearsal (RACT)	5 pm Sharing the Table at Grace	12 pm Spire deadline 5 pm RACT rehearsal 5:30 pm Youth 7 pm Women's Sharing Table Vespers, Day-cholah Center	5 pm RACT rehearsal 6 pm NA meeting 7 pm Membership Committee	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
9:30 am Worship 9:45 am First Congo Kids 10:30 am Fellowship	5 pm RACT rehearsal		5 pm RACT rehearsal 5:30 pm Youth	5 pm RACT rehearsal 6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
9:30 am Worship 9:45 am First Congo Kids 10:30 am Fellowship	5 pm RACT rehearsal	5:30 pm Community Dinner	5 pm RACT rehearsal 5:30 pm Youth	5 pm RACT rehearsal 6 pm NA meeting	9 am Coffee at Mugs	

**Future Events:**  
July 18-21 Vacation Bible School



## Get Connected on Facebook

Want to learn more about what is going on at the church? Wish you could get updates and see photos about community outreach and other church events? It's easy! "Like" us on facebook at [www.facebook.com/RiponCongregationalUCC](http://www.facebook.com/RiponCongregationalUCC).



Paper and ink and postage - oh my! If you're getting a hard copy of this Spire and would prefer an electronic version, please give the church office your email address. Send it to [office@ripcongregationalucc.org](mailto:office@ripcongregationalucc.org). Thanks!

**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***

