



The SPIRE



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

September/October 2023

*“reason is a spark kindled by the beating of our hearts”
—Wisdom of Solomon 2:2*

came next was a test of patience and resilience: lighting the campfire.

If you can do this on your first try, God bless you. It may also mean that you do not have an audience of little eyes watching to see how expertly their dad can build a fire and light it, only to watch match after match spark, then flicker out. I blame the wind.

After getting out the fire-starter “clicker” which is by and far an easier way to light a flame, the campfire was glowing with licks of heat eating up the words of the editorial and sports section. A reminder that a good word can spark something incredible.

The modern-day “clicker” fire starting stick is a far cry from the early human history method of striking two rocks together to elicit a spark. We have it easy. Press a button, pull the clicker trigger, turn a knob - fire is a simple one-step process.

Our tools have evolved to help even the least fire-adept start a campfire with ease and heroics, (at least to their kids!) and enjoy the results of a simple campfire in the wilderness with their family. A simple spark ignites a fire: a source of warmth, cooking, light, family togetherness, s’mores, hope, and love.

It only takes a spark. I believe we all wish to accomplish great things in our lives. We want to feel accomplished. We enjoy being a hero, whether in a big way or small. We desire illumination or want to illuminate the way for others. The beginning of something good begins with a spark. A spark of creativity ignites new worlds, new futures, new hope.

This fall we will kick-off our new program year at First Congregational Church of Ripon with a spark. We want you to join us in feeling God’s love in your life in such a way that you will take this spark and turn it into



Spark

1. noun: an ignited or fiery particle such as is thrown off by burning wood or produced by one hard body striking against another.
2. verb: to kindle, animate, or stimulate (interest, activity, spirit, etc.)
3. prayer: it only takes a spark to get a fire going; hope kindled.

In my many years of camping, I have found that lighting a fire takes an ounce of hope. Maybe a bit of luck. And certainly an earnest prayer.

I found myself teaching our three kids how to build a campfire at our campsite at Point Beach State Park this summer. The logs were built up like a log cabin in the fire pit. Kindling and small leaves were cheerfully stuffed in between the logs. The best part was taking a newspaper (apologies to any newspaper editors who may be reading this!) and tearing it apart, wadding it up in balls, and tossing the newsprint words into the center. Even the kids enjoyed this task!

I say that the newspaper was the fun part, because what

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Prayers for health and healing...

Sarah Seidler's aunt Paula (cancer); **Jeanne Williams' brothers, Dan and Ralph** (health); **Natay Warren** (cancer); **Kevin Reilly** (stroke); **Kevin Dodson** (gallbladder surgery); **Toni McLeod** (back surgery); **Tammi Kenton** (cancer); **Gary Scholtens** (cancer recovery); **Hunter** (health); **Ken Hill** (cancer & surgery); **Wendy Smith** (cancer); **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); **all those experiencing health issues in need of prayer**

Prayers for...

For **peace in Ukraine and Russia** and around the world.

Penny Allard asks for prayer for air quality not only in our country but throughout the world. Prayer that more of us will demand more action from our government to combat climate change.

Summer staff at Daycholah: **Kaitlyn B., Grace R., Garrett M., Barb M.**

Barbara Mitchell for starting a new chapter in her life

Nate Del Ponte's cousin's son and family

Cara & Roger Cooke's friend **Sue** from Madison who lost her home and dogs in a fire.

Waiola Church UCC on Maui (Rev. Jeffrey's mother's church) lost their church building in a wildfire.

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.



Our Condolences

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

Carla McNair, mother of **Mary Lyke**, passed away June 10. Prayers for the Lyke and McNair families.

Wayne Larson passed away June 27. Prayers for all of Wayne's family and friends. A memorial service for Wayne was held on July 15 at our church.

Bernadino "Dino" Ramirez, grandfather of **Katie Del Ponte**, passed away August 13, 2023.

A friend of **Kih Bergin** lost their fiancé to suicide.

Lulu Kenton, mother-in-law of **Tammi Kenton**, passed away on July 15, 2023.

Winifred Grant, former member, passed away June 23, 2023.



Pastor **Jeffrey Dodson**
 Communications and CE Director **Ashley Dodson**
 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 Patzlaff**
 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

Director of Administration & Communications and Director of Children's & Family Ministry: **Ashley Dodson**: 920-748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org
 If not in the office, Pastor **Jeffrey Dodson** can be reached at ...
 Cell: (719) 330-8549 or by email, at jeffrey@riponcongregationalucc.org
Rod & Peggy Freeman – Church Custodians - Cell: 920-896-2152

Prayers of Joy

Armin Reinold Cooke was born to **Dan and Hailey Cooke** on August 19, 2023

Paige Jensen Dietrich was born to **Paul Dietrich** and **Jessica Jensen** on August 7, 2023

A successful 5K run/walk fundraiser for the **First We Live Foundation** in memory of **Nicole Moniz** on August 26 to support mental health

Safe travel for **Sarah Joy** and her friend Izzy who attended Missoula's Children's Theatre in Montana

Bill and Judy Neill for hosting Fellowship of the Grape on July 8

Frankie lost her first tooth!

Waiola Church UCC on Maui celebrating 200 years

Rosendale UCC celebrating 175 years

Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for November/December, 2023. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, Oct. 18, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.

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something great.

You only need a beating heart and a curious mind. God's love will be the spark that ignites a fire in your life.

This kind of spark, unlike the laborious spark of striking two hard objects together, will not flutter and extinguish. This kind of spark from God's love will come to you like a click of a lighting stick, or a flick in a turn of a knob. It will withstand the wind and elements of this world. It will burn like the heart of a star in God's celestial sky. God's spark is lasting, and eternal.

The apocryphal book Wisdom of Solomon, which is found in Hebrew scriptures, lifts up an ancient stoic concept that "...reason is a spark kindled by the beating of our hearts." (2:2) This scripture echoes what the stoics believed, that when this life is over, your spark (soul) goes out (poof!) and disappears with the wind. While the ancestors of our faith believed in reason and love like the stoics, they knew that the soul was not flimsy or fleeting: "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God... In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble." (3:1,7)

God gives you a spark. Use it for good in this life, and you will leave a lasting impression that can withstand the elements of this world.

May you dwell in the spark of God's love,

—Pastor Jeffrey



Fall 2023 Sunday Worship Schedule

9:00 am Faith Formation

10:30 am Worship in-person

11:30 am Fellowship

4:00 pm Worship online

Communion every First Sunday
of the month



**KEEP BRINGING IN
YOUR PLASTIC BAGS
AND FILMS**

**COLLECTED
125.4 LBS**

GOAL: 500 LBS



**FELLOWSHIP OF
THE GRAPE**

**Saturday, Sept. 2 from
5-6:30 p.m. hosted by
Debbi & Tom Konecny**

FOG is an opportunity for adults from our church community to get together informally, enjoy some refreshments and each other's company. We'll gather on the first Saturday of each month (or thereabouts) from 5-6:30 p.m. (adults only). RSVPs strongly encouraged for planning purposes.

Tom and Debbi Konecny will host FOG Saturday, Sept. 2 from 5-6:30 pm. Mary and Tim Lyke will host FOG on Friday, October 13th from 5-6:30 pm. RSVPs appreciated.

You bring a bottle of wine or beverage of your choice. The host provides paper products, glasses and an appetizer or two. A couple of guests also bring an appetizer.

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



As you are traveling this summer, whether it is through the national parks or on a warm sunny day at Green Lake, gather some water and share it with the church. Please label your water when you drop it off with your name and location where the water was gathered for the blessing on September 3rd!



COMMUNITY DINNER

Our Community Dinners, held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, are now in a drive-through format. Our next dinners will be held on Sept. 26 and Oct. 24, serving at 5:30 p.m.



Help Stock the Pantry

During the month of September, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of peanut butter and jelly. In October, canned soups and gravy. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such as deodorant, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Cash donations are always much appreciated as well. Donations may also be dropped off at the church and will be delivered to the pantry. Thanks for your help!

—Outreach Committee

**DISCUSSION
GROUP
Thursdays at 10:30**

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



NEW **First Congo Ripon** **Book Club**

Join our new Book Study Group on Facebook! We will be featuring great books to read, scheduling in-person times to meet up and talk about those great books, and engaging one another in our favorite quotes or recommending a new book to read. Join this group by going to our church Facebook page: [Facebook.com/RiponCongregationalUCC](https://www.facebook.com/RiponCongregationalUCC) or click here to request to join the group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/211201561811804>



Friday, Sept. 15
5:30-8:30 pm

An evening of activities, food, and games is planned for Friday, September 15, from 5:30-8:30 pm. Please register with Ashley if your child will attend.

The Pastor's Bookshelf: What is Pastor Jeffrey reading this month?

July

- When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi
- The Truths We Hold: An American Journey by Kamala Harris
- The Gifts of Imperfection: Your Guide to a Wholehearted Life (Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are) by Brené Brown
- How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi
- Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation by Kristin Kobes Du Mez

August

- Paul Among Jews and Gentiles by Krister Stendahl
- Parenting Forward: How to Raise Children with Justice, Mercy, and Kindness by Cindy Wang Brandt, Forward by Rachel Held Evans
- Tired of Apologizing for a Church I Don't Belong To: Spirituality without Stereotypes, Religion without Ranting by Lillian Daniel
- When "Spiritual but Not Religious" Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Surprising Places, Even the Church by Lillian Daniel



You're invited to join the membership committee on Thursday, October 12 between 9 am and noon for a morning of fellowship in the church kitchen. We will be baking small loaves of bread to freeze and hand out as a welcome to new visitors. If interested, please sign up with Ashley in the church office or stop by the membership table on Rally Sunday for more information.

If you can't attend bake day but would still like to contribute bread, please contact the membership committee.



Fall Church Campout

Saturday, September 30 - Sunday, October 1, 2023 at Daycholah Center. Join us for an inter-generational campout! Cook out over the campfire, eat s'mores, and stargaze. Wake up and join us for worship at Ley Chapel. Sign up to indicate interest! Cost is \$105 per room or \$150 per cabin.

On Sunday, Oct. 1, join us for worship in the Ley Chapel at Daycholah Center, W1010 Spring Grove Rd. Communion will be celebrated!

NEIGHBORS IN NEED - BEHOLD!

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive on October 1, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Through our national Justice and Local Church Ministries office, <https://tinyurl.com/2bftyatb>, you can find resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE. Here at FCC, we planted a butterfly garden, collect plastic bags to be made into benches instead of polluting landfills and support the Green Lake Association for restoration of the lake. Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hocak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska. Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S. Please consider giving generously to this year's Neighbors in Need special offering.

Thank you from the Outreach Committee



Altar Flowers

Sharing your special event, memory, or in honor of someone is special with a bouquet of flowers for our Sunday morning worship. It is also a lovely touch to our altar on Sunday morning.

Beginning September 3rd, Julie Mathias will be available to discuss an altar flower arrangement requests. We will discuss what you would like, the date you would like to reserve, and your dedication for the arrangement. IF you garden has seasonal flowers, which you are willing to share please contact Julie Mathias, lovely garden flowers are always special as well.

Contact Julie Mathias by phone or text message. 920-229-2305.

Children's and Family Ministry Fall Schedule:

September 3 - Blessing of the Waters - This summer we asked our community to collect waters during their travels this summer. We will gather the water and bless it for use in baptisms.

September 10 - Rally Sunday - This Sunday marks the beginning of our new program year! We will celebrate our education ministries during worship and offer a backpack blessing for teachers, school staff, and students. Sunday School kicks off at 9:00 AM with an Open House and free coffee/drink vouchers for parents to go to Mugs. After worship it's time to party! Grab a brat/hotdog/veggie dog and check out the Ministry Fair with tables highlighting the many ministries of our church, ways to get involved, and fun and games for kids and families. Head outside for a game of corn hole and tie-dye your pre-ordered church logo t-shirt. And don't forget to bring your backpack/school bag to worship for a special blessing!

September 15 - Parent's Night Out - Drop off your children from 5:30-8:30 PM for an evening of activities, food, and games. Dinner will be provided. Register with Ashley if your child will attend.

September 30 - Sunday, October 1 - Fall Church Campout at Daycholah Center- Join us for an inter-generational campout! Cook-out over the campfire, eat smores, and stargaze. Wake up and join us for worship at Ley Chapel. Sign up to indicate interest!

October 1 - Worship at Daycholah Center Join us for worship at Daycholah Center at 10:30 AM. Communion will be celebrated!

October 8 - Presentation of 3rd Grade Bibles - 3rd graders will be presented with a Bible and the congregation will offer a blessing during the 10:30 AM worship service.

October 21 - Corn Maze - Meet at Petals and Plows Corn Maze at 2 pm. Afterwards meet at the Minch family's home for pumpkin carving!.

October 29 - Trunk-or-Treat - A fun family event for our church community! Wear your costume to church and bring decorations for your car to church! After worship, head outside to the college parking lot to decorate your vehicles in Halloween-themed decor and pass out candy or other goodies! Other fall themed activities will also be planned. *Due to allergies and food sensitivities- please have sugar-free and gluten-free options available!

November 17 - Parent's Night Out - Drop off your children from 5:30-8:30 PM for an evening of activities, food, and games. Dinner will be provided. We will also be baking pies during this event to benefit Camp Scholarships! Register with Ashley if your child will attend.

November 19 - Pie Sale to Benefit Camp Scholarships - Purchase a pie to benefit Camp Scholarships that support our youth and families attending camp at UCCI, Daycholah Center, Moon Beach, and Cedar Valley!

November 26 - Festival of the Greens - Don your best Christmas Sweater and join us to help decorate the church for Advent! Hot cocoa and cookies will be provided!

Saturday, December 16 - Christmas Pageant Practice - Gather in the morning to finalize the Christmas Pageant!

Sunday, December 17 - Christmas Pageant - Gather for worship at 10:30 AM as the First Congo Kids present their Christmas Pageant and lead worship.

Sunday, December 24 - Christmas Eve Service at 4:00 PM





Faith Formation - Sunday School News

We wish you well, Jeanne! On Sunday, July 16, 2023, we held a Ritual of Release from Ministry for Jeanne Williams, former Christian Education Director. The Faith Formation Committee, along with the children of the church presented her with a beautiful glass vase with grapes and a vine on it. The vase was to remind Jeanne that God and Jesus are the vine and we are the branches, just as she has been the vine for all the littles who have learned and grown because of her. Everytime Jeanne adds flowers to the vase she can be reminded of the fruits that are grown and shared in this world.

Each child gave Jeanne a flower or two to add to the vase. The bouquet of flowers was in gratitude for all that she had given us and as a blessing of hope for the future. Next we gave Jeanne a beautiful metal circle of children holding hands as a reminder of her work and love in our midst with our children, as well as a reminder that our most precious resource is our children. This piece of art was hand-made in Haiti. Our fourth gift to Jeanne was a colorful disc wind chime. This colorful wind chime was a representation of the children of this church, whom she had taught, mentored, shaped, and loved. Each colorful disc reflects God's light, and not one in the same. May the colors remind Jeanne of each child, who reflects God's light and love because of her. Following the church service, we enjoyed cake to celebrate Jeanne's ministry with us. We thank Jeanne and bless her in retirement.

Welcome Ashley! We are delighted to announce that Ashley Dodson will serve as our new full-time director of children's and family ministry and director of administration and communications. Ashley began her duties on August 1, 2023. We are grateful that Ashley is willing to practice her ministry among us. We look forward to her leadership and guidance along with the many memories she is about to create with the youth of our church.

Welcome to a New Sunday School Year! (See previous page for our exciting fall schedule!)

— Submitted by Barb Splittgaber, Faith Formation Committee Chair, and Ashley Dodson, Director of Children's and Family Ministry



Worship Participation Schedule

Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Tech Booth	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
Sept. 3	Tina Solberg	Deanna & Loren Boone	Daniel Volkmann	Del Ponte and Reilly/Henke
Sept. 10	Debbi Konecny	Rachel & Dave Minch	Tim Lyke	Edwards and Flasch
Sept. 17	Justus Paul	Julie & Lyle Mathias	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Moniz and Wittler
Sept. 24	Susan Osteen	Judy & Bill Neill	Erik Dietrich	TerBeest and Dalziel
Oct. 1	Daniel Volkmann	Moniz Family	Erik Dietrich	Capelle and Manuel
Oct. 8	Judy Neill	Dan & Sarah Seidler-Halwas	AVAILABLE	Boscaljon and Osteen
Oct. 15	Janis Edwards	Amber Dalziel, AVAILABLE	Tim Lyke	Prellwitz and Solberg
Oct. 22	Mike Boscaljon	Stephanie Prellwitz, AVAILABLE	Gary Scholtens	Neill and Grout-Paul
Oct. 29	Penny Allard	Michele & Skip Wittler	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Grady and Dalziel

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!

SEPT/OCT 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Fellowship	28	29 7 am RCH Founda- tion meeting	30	31 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	1	2 5-6:30 pm FOG at Konecnys'
3 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 Outreach cmte	4	5	6	7 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	8	9
10 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Rally Sunday Wor- ship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Worship committee	11	12 10 am WCUCC Historical Comm 5 pm Sharing Table at Grace 6:30 pm Cabinet	13	14 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	15 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	16
17 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Membership comm	18	19	20	21 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	22 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	23
24 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	25	26 5:30 pm Commu- nity Dinner	27 5:30 pm Youth Group	28 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	29 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	30 3 pm Fall Cam- pout at Day- cholah
1 10:30 am Worship at Day- cholah (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	2	3	4	5 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	6 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	7
8 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Outreach, Worship committees	9	10 5 pm Sharing Table at Grace 6:30 pm Cabinet meeting	11	12 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	13 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs 5-6:30 pm FOG at Lykes'	14
15 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship 11:45 am Membership comm	16	17	18 12 pm Spire Deadline	19 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	20 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	21
22 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship	23	24 5:30 pm Commu- nity Dinner	25 5:30 pm Youth Group	26 10:30 am Discussion grp 6 pm NA meeting	27 9:30 am Cof- fee at Mugs	28
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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

