



The Voice Newsletter

Of First Congregational Church

A Pilgrim Church for a Pilgrim People

February 2020

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PASTOR'S PASSAGE

Winter has definitely arrived with cold and snow and sleet and slippery streets. We are blessed with those who spend their working time assisting us with snow plows and salt trucks and we often forget about all those folk who are out in the cold working. Every time the fire trucks up the street go out, I say a little prayer not just for the people they may be going to rescue, but for those fire fighters who brave the cold and ice in the worst conditions and our police officers and rescue workers who spend hours rescuing people from accidents and seeing the very best and the very worst of humanity on a daily basis. I think of our medical personnel in hospitals and medical centers who spend their time bringing comfort to those in pain and in need of comfort and re-assurance. We are so blessed.

I think that's the phrase for the beginning of this year – we are so blessed! In spite of difficulties and daily workday issues, if we are surrounded by family or friends and feel God's presence in our lives, then we have so much as compared to so many others. And it is living as a Christian that moves us to stop, take a look around us, and see the needs of others and the possibility of serving in Christ's name.

Worshiping and praying often is one way of lifting up our spirits and souls and reminding us that we are the ambassadors of Christ. It is up to us to share our worship and lives with others that they too might know and appreciate the blessings of God. As we continue to serve, let us truly
BE THE CHURCH!

My Winter Blessings,
Joy

Minister's Message

Hello

We are glad that you called

Please press 1 if you are normal press 2 if you are abnormal

If you pressed 2, please hang up

If you pressed 1, please select from the options below

1 I understand what is going on

1 I go to church every Sunday

2 I watch the news

2 I sometimes understand what is going on

1 I always go to church on holidays

2 I also go to church on dates that end in the number 1

3 I really don't care what is going on

1 I really don't know what happens in a church

2 I know only I

4 I am a Chicago Bears fan – you should have pressed 2 back at the main menu

I have been calling to make hotel reservations for two of my trips and all I hear is press this or that. On one call a human voice answered and it was so wonderful. Our world in many ways has become so dehumanized. Young people use their phone to text, because they certainly would not want to talk to someone. If people are gathered in a room, chances are that most are looking at their smart phones. Children play video games rather than play with a friend. Where is the human interaction? Perhaps the Golden Rule needs a little addition: May I treat others as fully human as I would want to be treated as a real person. Amen! Gene



Donna's Deliberations

Dear Church Family,

The New Year has begun with new problems, additional solutions, and subsequent progress. As you know, with a 20-year-old church building, things do start falling apart. We have new front doors to the church, which needed to be replaced. There are more building issues that the Council is actively working on to get repaired (Thank you Pastor Gene, Pat M., and Richard for all your work on these issues).

We are waiting on an estimate for a new sound system. We have dead spaces and too much echo in the sanctuary making it difficult for anyone to understand some of the messages spoken. This new sound system will correct much of that problem.

Our Branding Committee has already met twice and explored new concepts resulting in new developments. As a reminder in this case, branding has nothing to do with cattle! It is a way to promote our church with a consistent presentation to others on all our church communications such as our website, Facebook page, fliers, posters, stationary, etc. This incorporates colors, a logo, formatting, the tone of our messages, and much more. It helps us to be more recognizable, effective, more authentic, and more attractive to our desired audiences.

The work involves a workshop meeting six times with planned activities around six topics to help us explore and find answers. These topics include:

Who are we (church), really?

Who is our audience (demographics)?

How does our organization sound (perceived by others)?

What's our name (has to do with consistency)?

How does our church look (pictures, symbols, etc., examples that have

meaning to this church)?

Then we put it all together.

Then implementing the results will commence. Meanwhile, your prayers are much appreciated.

As the new moderator, I have some other issues to bring to the Council. Knowing our members care much about our church, I'm sure many of you may wish to talk to me or other councilor members about your ideas too.

When your talents seem lacking and you can't do more for your church, pray! When your finances are fixed and you can't give more to your church, pray! When your body is falling apart and you can't do the heavy lifting for your church, pray! Prayer is a powerful tool for whatever your situation you're in. Pray for our church family and pastors. Pray for the Council and the decisions we make. PRAY! Praying to God is the backbone of a healthy growing church. When we pray, we change too. "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16b, NIV).

Your sister in Christ, Donna



Prayer for the Church

Loving and Eternal God, you have abundantly blessed us with the power to reach out and make a difference in the world. We ask that you bless our ministry through our Church and increase our love for one another and our community. Help us honor our history and seek your will as we march into our future in Jesus' name. Amen.

COFFE HOUR HOSTS

Each Sunday, we gather after worship for a little coffee and a snack while we share our lives with each other. It's a wonderful time to meet new people, catch up with our family news and simply relax together. But **we need help** to make this happen. It's a matter of making a pot of coffee and setting out the supplies. If you are not able to make coffee and clean up, **could you possibly bring some cookies? You do not have to bake – just a few packages of cookies** from the store will be fine. Please call the Church office and let Robin know when you would be able to provide cookies. You can bring them any morning during the week and we can plan for Sunday. Thank you for your help.

BIBLE BREAKFAST DATES SET

Once a month, we share Bible and Breakfast in the Gathering Space. The dates set are: February 16, March 22, April 19, May 17 and June 21. We will continue to use the DVD programs of Saving Jesus and Living the Questions that have given us an opportunity to explore so many aspects of our faith. Mark your calendars!

OUR SOUND SYSTEM

During the past months, we have listened carefully to requests of our members to improve our sound system in the sanctuary. The Church Council has pursued various areas of expertise to receive estimates on cost. We are now awaiting the final estimate from the firm chosen to assist us, but we realize it will cost more than \$10,000 for new equipment, movement of speakers, streaming equipment, etc. We will keep you informed about our progress and offer this as an opportunity if you would like to give a special gift for this much needed improvement.

OUR MISSION OF THE MONTH – PASTOR’S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Each month, your plate offerings and funds from the change jars are sent to the mission of the month. These charities are especially vetted and chosen to assure that the funds we send are used to assist as many people as possible, whether local or world wide. February is chosen as the month we receive gifts for the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund. These funds enable our ministers to assist both members and guests with special needs. Sometimes someone needs special work boots to enable them to work, sometimes assistance with a prescription for a sick child, etc. Our Pastor’s are grateful to serve a church that cares so deeply for the poor, the homeless and those going through a difficult time emotionally or financially. As you place your mission offerings in the plate during this month, remember that you are reaching out on Christ’s behalf.



SPECIAL THANKS

Many of you have noticed that we have recently been blessed by one of our families who generously paid for the replacement of our Sanctuary doors. This kind of gift is especially appreciated when large expenditures are needed to replace or repair parts of our now 20 year old building. We thank this family from the bottom of our hearts.

February Calendar

February 2, Worship 10am The Rev Gene Van Galder, preaching

February 3, Staff Meeting 8:30am

February 5, Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm

February 9, Worship 10am The Rev. Joy A. Baumgartner, preaching

February 10, Staff Meeting 8:30am

February 12, Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm

February 16, Bible and Breakfast 10am

February 17, Staff Meeting 8:30am

February 19 Church Council Meeting 9:30am

Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm

February 23, Worship, The Rev. Joy A. Baumgartner, preaching

February 24, Staff Meeting 8:30am

February 26, Ash Wednesday Community Service TBA

Al-Anon 10am

Choir 7pm

February 29, Happy Leap Year



FEBRUARY SLU PROGRAMS



KICKOFF - FEBRUARY 5, 1:00 P.M. - Ken Regez a long time film collector and archivist will present a collection of sound and silent films. He is having a film shown on PBS in February. Free, and open to the public.

Friday - Feb 7 - 1-3 - Ellen Joyce, Assoc Prof. & Beatric McKenzie, Prof. of History, Beloit College will present a program on "Immigrants who came to Beloit in Search of factory Work.

Wednesday, Feb 12 1-3 - Copper Tooling - Dee Fischer - Artist and Crafts-person. You will make a piece of copper - Offsite. Check catalog.

Thursday, Feb. 13 1-3 - Lori Luther, Beloit City Manager will discuss Beloit growth.

Thursday, Feb 20 1-3 -Rongal Watson will discuss reparations and the implications for American Social and Political life

Tuesday, Feb 25 9-11 - Phil Chen will present "The 2020 Primaries and Caucuses"

Tuesday, Feb 25 1-3 - Galin Berrier will present "Three Famous Black Lives"

Wednesday, Feb 26 1-3 - Rob LaFleur, Professor of History and Anthropology will present "Shaping the Past".

Thursday, Feb 27 1-3 - Current Climate Change - presented by Jay Zambito, Assoc. Prof. of Geology.

Please call 608-312-2116 for further info or email slu@beloit.edu

February 2 Doug Kelley

February 9 Sherry Blakely

February 16 Pat Mc Cleary

February 22 Shelly Dyreson

February 23 Carol Glenn

February 28 Phyllis Farnum



February 5 Don and Helen Bifano

February 14 Dale and Carol Glenn

February Mike and Shelly Dyreson

DID YOU KNOW?.....

As a member Church of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, we join with churches around the country this year to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Congregationalism. If you go onto the NACCC web site, you will find much information about the history and traditions of the Congregational Way.

This summer, at the Annual Meeting in Portland, Maine, there will be a beautiful celebration of our Congregational Church Family and we hope to send a representative to Maine to share in that event.

We have been given many resources to use this year in our celebration. One of those resources is a full set of Church Bulletin inserts that will inspire us as we read about all those who have been part of founding and continuing this amazing Association of Churches.

You will have an opportunity to read about people like John Adams, our second president, whose family tradition was Congregational, or Lloyd C. Douglas, a Congregational pastor who became one of America's most successful novelists in the 30's and 40's. We find women who gave so much of their lives to the Church such as Tabitha Moffatt Brown, a social reformer, educator, and American pioneer colonist who traveled the Oregon Trail, helped found an orphanage, and was finally honored in by the Oregon Legislature in 1987 as the "Mother of Oregon."

Katherine Lee Bates is best known as the author of "America the Beautiful" but she did much more than that. She studied at Wellesley and Oxford, pioneered courses in American Literature and acted as a mentor and encourager of young women through books of poetry, travel, essays, children's and young people's literature.

Have you ever heard of John Zundal? He became organist at Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn New York and his music became al-



most as famous as his well-known minister, H.W. Beecher. One of his best loved hymns that we still sing today is “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.” And then there is Francis Clark, a congregational Pastor who founded the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor, that later developed into an interdenominational organization with members scattered throughout the United States and seven other countries.

More recently, many of our Congregational Friends have known and loved the Rev. Harry R. Butman who was an activist minister and prolific writer of theology and spiritual life. His work and leadership of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches in 1955 was life-giving and he was one of the most powerful advocates for the Congregational Way of Christian Life. His book “Serve with Gladness” inspired many ministers and in the late 1960’s, he was the editor of the “Congregationalist” which many of you see displayed today on the tables in the Gathering Space. He is remembered for his great writing, insightful thought, years of leadership and we are grateful for his love of our Churches.

The people highlighted here are just a random sample pulled from the fifty-six stories that you will see in your bulletins on Sunday morning. Be sure to take the time to read and then do a little research. Gene and I will be emphasizing many Congregationalists and the Congregational Way in our sermons during this year. We are part of a proud and wonderful heritage that was established through the brave and Christ loving hearts of so many. Enjoy being part of this wonderful legacy.

Blessings, Joy



400 YEARS OF
AMERICAN
CONGREGATIONALISM
Faith
SINCE 1620

First Congregational Church

801 Bushnell Street, Beloit, WI 53511

608-362-4821 fax 608-362-1967 Pastor: 517-899-6784

Office hours: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Worship Service – Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

Email: info@firstcon.org Website www.firstcon.org

Return Service Requested

We are especially Thankful for:

