



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

31 W. MILWAUKEE AVE., FORT ATKINSON, WI 53538

**July 2025 First Congregational UCC
Broadcaster**

I recently had the rare opportunity to do something few people have done. I had the honor of driving Paul and Sandi Hankowitz's Model A car. With Paul at my side, of course, I was instructed about the throttle, shifting lever, no power steering, and the starter button next to the accelerator. The choke was on the passenger side, and Paul took care of that. I hadn't driven something with a clutch in 27 years since I got off the farm, but all of it came back like riding a bike.

Feeling the thrill of what I was actually doing, was a feeling of exhilaration. I was well aware of the need to pay attention because if the engine struggled, I was instructed to give it more gas! I was taught as a kid to downshift and go into lower gear. Instinctively I tried that and ground a few gears. Sorry Paul, woops. The next time this happened the polite request came, give it more gas.

There in lies the difference in how we approach challenges in life. We can either let up, ride the clutch, or downshift. Or give it more gas. What seems tough and the slog feels like it will choke, eventually makes way to more strength to get up the hill or endure the hardship.

James 1: 2-4 "My friends, be glad, even if you have a lot of trouble. You know you learn to endure by having your faith tested. But you must learn to endure everything, so you will be completely mature and not lacking in anything."

The vehicles we drive have come a long way in a hundred years. Now they practically drive themselves. All modern amenities have eliminated the need to struggle, adjust, pay attention. All of this is built in to do it for us. I would argue that with the modern invention of power steering we have become weaker because of it. Take on the hard of life. Tackle the challenge. Engage the difficulties. Embrace the need to adjust, and live life by all means- Give it some Gas!!



Pastor Sara

Council Highlights – June 2025

New Website: Office Manager, Henry, has completed the updated website. It is user friendly and has more information and updates about our church. Any feedback to Henry is welcome!

Childcare Center: Director Heidi Yngsdal welcomed Joan Fitzgerald of the 46th Assembly District. She visited Fort Atkinson Preschool and Childcare to emphasize the importance of paying childcare workers livable wages to ensure all Wisconsin families have access to safe, affordable, and equitable childcare. She will be working toward this during the Wisconsin 2025-2027 budget deliberations.

New Organ: Plans for the installation of the new organ are ongoing. It is hoped that it will be installed and ready to enhance our worship services in September!

Dream Team: As a result of Pastor Sara's "Dream Team" meetings and since we are an "aging" congregation, she will put together a task force to facilitate this. They will focus on ways to support our very valuable "vintage" members. More information to follow.

Treasurer: Our new Treasurer, Kim Lutes, is doing very well in her training with Loren Gray. She will formally take over his duties in August, but he promises that he will be around for assistance! We thank Loren for his 20 years serving our church!

Church Ministries: Many of our Ministries are taking some well-deserved vacation time this summer. They will be planning events and projects starting in September.

Creation Care: Please continue to collect your clean plastic and deposit it into the barrel in the Narthex area. This plastic will be recycled and go toward another community bench. Thank you!

The council will not be meeting in July. Next meeting is August 19, 2024.

Complete Council Minutes are available in the church office.

Sharing Chain



DO YOU HAVE A SKILL TO
SHARE?

Muscles to carry Christmas boxes, knowledge of how to connect Bluetooth, weeding, time to take someone to the doctor, interest in having a cup of coffee, patience to fix a remote, fix a curtain rod, on and on... All the things you need doing and don't want to bother your kids. The church is creating a **Sharing Chain** of SKILLS and RESOURCES to share with one another.

Please email the church office if you are willing to share your time and skill to be contacted by a member in need.

Transformation: Changing from Glory into Glory

63rd Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ

June 6 – 7, 2025

Green Lake Conference Center; Green Lake, WI

Report from Delegates Kathi Cauley and Carol Maasz

The theme of the 2025 conference was Transformation: Changing from Glory to Glory, inviting us to embrace the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit as we discern new ways of living out the Gospel in changing times.

A Transformed Structure: Delegates voted to restructure the Conference. Representatives of our four associations voted to dissolve. Then delegates voted to transfer ecclesiastical duties from the associations to a Unified Committee on Ministry; transfer stewardship of former association funds to the Conference; and amend the Conference bylaws to reflect the shift to a single statewide judicatory body. We are no longer the Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest associations. There is now a unified Committee on Ministry with the Conference Acting as an Association. The dissolution of the four Associations resulted in three regions – Eastern, Southern, Northern.

State of the Conference: Rev. Franz Rigert, Conference Minister, gave his State of the Conference Address. Amid all the pushback against DEI and the eagerness to deport immigrants, he referred us to Genesis 1, all humanity was created in the image of God. He said, “the Latin phrase is ‘imago dei.’ Spelled DEI and translated deity. Image that: The very representation of God in creation is in the expression of diversity, equity and inclusion”.

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC General Minister and President, told us transformation begins in each of us. Transformation of the wider church begins with our spiritual practices. “Our spiritual lives are not meant for ourselves... they are for the community. In much the same way we need community to nurture our faith, we need community to live the faith”.

Annual Meeting Closing Sermon: Rev. Jen Petricca Bloesch addressed the meeting’s theme – “Transformation: Changing from Glory to Glory”. She reflected on St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians “to ponder the many ways transformation will emerge in the future church”. Her question to us; “Are we prepared to receive the change in all its diversity and say yes, this is still church, this is still living out Jesus’ call to serve and love others?”

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Delegate Report

Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel: At the Annual 2024 meeting, there was an affirmative vote to embark on a year of study of a resolution stemming from the 2021 General Synod. The resolution process called for at least 30% of Wisconsin UCC congregations to report they have engaged in some study of the topic before the June 2025 annual meeting. We did not meet the required percentage (60+ churches). It was voted to extend the study which can be in the manner chosen by the local church. The vote on whether to formally adopt the resolution is now slated for the 2026 Wisconsin Annual Meeting.

Business Meetings: There were two Business Meetings with votes on the Dissolution of the Associations, Revision of Bylaws, 2026 Budget, Nominations, votes discussed above, and more.

The conference schedule offered plenary sessions, workshops, and wellness sessions. Workshops attended by our church delegates included:

Spiritual Tools for Transformation and Discernment with Rev. Holly Whitcomb

Disability and the Church with Rev. Jacob Nault

WISE Ways The WISE Team with Rev. Lisa Hart and various UCC church members

An Hour of Conversation with Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, the General Minister and President-and Chief Executive Officer-of the United Church of Christ

Musicians: Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, Rev. Andra Moran, Rev. Jacob Nault, Rev. Nathan Holst, Rev. Christopher Grundy, and Rev. Bryan Sirchio. The Wisconsin Gospelers also performed.

During breaks, hospitality was provided in the exhibit hall, where a variety of exhibitors shared information and opportunity to purchase books, Olive Oil from Palestine, or other items. The conference also provided opportunities for meeting and connecting with others from UCC congregations from around the state.

The Wisconsin Conference Life Newsletter, Annual Meeting Edition and information to review Videos from the 2025 Annual Meeting can be found at <https://www.wcucc.org>.

Thank you for sponsoring us as delegates to this inspiring UCC weekend!

Sincerely,

Kathi Cauley and Carol Maasz, 2025 Delegates



Where do microplastics come from?

Excerpted from an article by US PIRG <https://pirg.org>
Microplastics are smaller than a grain of rice, which is what makes them so easy to unknowingly ingest.

Scientific research is beginning to reveal the effects that microplastics may be having on our bodies -- organ dysfunction, metabolic disorders, altered immune responses, neurotoxicity, reproductive and developmental toxicity and more.¹

People are asking how they can reduce their exposure to microplastics. Here are some tips to help you protect yourself and your loved ones from microplastics.

Use less plastic. Plastics shed, so the more plastic in your home, the more potential shedding. Make an inventory of plastic in your home. Are your clothes, kitchen utensils, or cleaning supplies made of plastic? What plastic items in your life and home could be replaced by another material or cut out of your life altogether?

Don't heat or store food in plastic. Plastic containers leach more when heated. Use a non-plastic plate or glass container in the microwave. Try to store leftovers in glass or metal containers.

Eat whole foods. Microplastics have been found in a higher concentration in processed foods.

Filter your tap water. Filtering water can help with minimizing microplastic, but do your homework -- not all filters are the same and some can even add microplastic to your water.

Shift to reusables. Using reusable coffee mugs, water bottles, takeout containers and grocery bags can help reduce your use of single-use plastic and your potential exposure to microplastic.

Don't buy bottled water. Because bottled water is packaged in a plastic bottle, there's a risk that the plastic will degrade and flake off into the water.

As we learn more about the health effects of microplastics on our body, needing to reduce our reliance on single-use plastic will become even more urgent.

Together, we can help keep our bodies, families and communities safer, cleaner and healthier.

Submitted by your Creation Care Team.

1. Kelly Leviker, "[How to protect yourself from microplastics](#)," PIRG, September 23, 2024.

2. "[Reducing plastic waste in the states](#)," PIRG, July 26, 2022.

July Helper Schedule

Date	Greeters	Ushers	Lay Reader	Tech Support
July 6	John & Jane Wilmet	Gary & Barb Vopahl	Lynn Klug	Kurt Wesemann
July 13	Judy Brown	Amy Elvekrog and Donna Abel	Charlie Knapp	Bob Buell
July 20	Julie Ankomeus	Roger & Marsha Anderson	Mary Narkis	Kurt Wesemann
July 27	Terry Teipner	Mary Beyerly	Mike Rankin	Kevin Becker

July 6th Communion Team

Chris Reed, Brenda Reed, Pat Jung, and Bob Rose

AUGUST Coffee Chats with Pastor Sara

Join Pastor Sara for a time of coffee and conversation.

The Wednesday mornings in August
10am-11am at Langhoff Coffee

The Food Pantry items needed:

Chicken Soup

Beef Stew

Sweet Cereal

Sauerkraut

Canned Pasta



CONGREGATIONAL PEANUTS 2025!!!

The 2025 Peanut season will begin on Monday, August 25. We really need YOU to fill out our crew of dedicated peelers. If you haven't tried peeling redskins off our wonderful Super Extra Large Virginia peanuts, you are invited to join us for fun and fellowship. Peeling begins around 8:00am and finishes usually around 11:00am. **Our rule is: "Come when you can, leave when you must."** On-the-job training gleefully given. There's a lot of camaraderie, companionship and chatter that everyone shares! We need *you* to help make our peanuts season successful, so mark this starting date on your calendar. All profits support our Church and its Ministries.

SAVE THE DATES

July 10th—Church Basement Ladies Fireside Event

The Fireside has requested that we arrive around 10:30. Meal slips and theater tickets will be distributed at our tables. **BYPASS THE BOX OFFICE and SKIP THE LINE** in the DINING ROOM. Check in with the person at the front desk with our group name—**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC**.

There is plenty of time for a leisurely lunch and fellowship, perusing the gift shops, or taking a walk around the block before the doors to the theater open. Your ticket includes your meal, coffee, milk, or tea, the show, and a \$7.00 gratuity. There will be an extra charge and gratuity for bar drinks.

July 24th—Creation Care Meeting 11 AM

Lend-a-Hand members met June 12 to rewrite their group's mission and vision statements and consider future goals. The workshop, facilitated by Pastor Sara, led to Lend-a-Hand shifting from focusing on fundraising to being a group that facilitates community gathering. It also will be looking at ways to attract younger members and host community events. Lend-a-Hand next will gather for a potluck in September. Pictured here, Pastor Sara shows attendees a photo of a Lend-a-Hand meeting from decades ago.



If you would like to have an event or announcement added to the list

Please let Henry know by the 25th of each month at officefortucc@gmail.com

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC

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First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

