

Here's What's Happening at FCC



Have you ever been disappointed? I mean the kind of disappointment where you had already let your heart get excited, already pictured how good it was going to be, and then reality showed up and took the air right out of the room.

I have. My son Luke has too. Years ago, Luke and I were living in Stevens Point while I was serving a church south of there. One morning, right at the beginning of my day at the office, I got a call from Frieda. Now Frieda was a saint. Truly. She loved people through food. And she said, “Pastor Mark, I have good news for you. I am making you homemade spaghetti sauce with meatballs.” That was all I needed to hear.

Frieda was a Greek grandma, so she would absolutely refuse to admit that spaghetti and meatballs was an Italian dish. According to Frieda, the secret ingredient was cinnamon. And these were not going to be regular little meatballs either. These were massive meatballs, packed with fresh mint, oregano, onions, and fried in olive oil before they ever met a drop of sauce. She assured me this would be the most delicious, loving plate of pasta we had ever eaten. I was all in. I called Luke to tell him about our good fortune. Real food was coming. Not food cooked by me. Not something from the freezer section warmed up and called supper. Real food. Homemade food. Food made by a saint. He was elated.

At the end of the day, Frieda came to the church carrying what can only be described as a cast iron cauldron. I could smell the rich tomato sauce before she even got through the door. It smelled incredible. It was steaming hot. Frieda told me, “You pack up and get right home so you and Luke can enjoy this.” I thanked her. We hugged. I called Luke and said, “Our feast is on its way!”

When I got home, Luke had already set the table. He was sitting there with a fork in his hand, ready to go. I carried that overflowing cauldron into the house like I was bringing in treasure. We filled our bowls with a healthy portion of spaghetti and several giant meatballs each. We gave thanks to God and to Frieda. Then we both took a bite. It was disgusting. The moment our teeth made contact, there was no resistance. The meatball did not break apart. It collapsed. Instead of chewing meat, our mouths were suddenly filled with a lukewarm, gritty paste. And then the flavor arrived. It did not taste like beef, pork, or poultry. It tasted like an animal that had lived its whole life in a damp basement.

We tried. We really did. We tried to convince ourselves it was good because we knew Frieda had spent all day making it. We loved Frieda. We appreciated Frieda. We wanted to honor Frieda. But some things cannot be swallowed by faith alone. Luke looked at me. I looked at Luke. No words were needed. It was napkin time. We quietly evacuated the meatball, and somehow the aftertaste stayed behind for hours. Luke looked completely crushed. Like a child who woke up on Christmas morning and found coal in his stocking. We ordered pizza.

Disappointment is not always funny when you are sitting in the middle of it. Sometimes life hands you something you did not order and do not want on your plate. People let you down. Plans fall apart. Prayers seem unanswered. Hope rises in your chest, and then reality knocks the wind right out of you. When that happens, the temptation is to protect yourself by never hoping again. Keep expectations low. Do not get excited. Do not trust too deeply. Do not risk too much. That feels safe. But it is a lonely kind of safe. A life protected from disappointment also becomes protected from joy.

That is why I keep thinking about the widow in 1 Kings 17. There is a famine in the land, and Elijah meets a woman who is gathering sticks. He asks her for bread, and she tells him the truth. She does not have bread. She has only a handful of flour and a little oil. She is going home to make one last meal for herself and her son, and then, she says, they are going to die.

Elijah says to her, "Do not be afraid." He invites her to risk hope one more time. And somehow, by the mercy of God, the flour does not run out. The oil does not run dry. There is enough for today. And then enough for tomorrow. And then enough for the day after that. Hope is not looking at an empty cupboard and calling it full. Hope is trusting that God can still make a meal out of what looks like nothing.

Sometimes life hands you something you did not order. Sometimes what you hoped would nourish you leaves a bitter taste in your mouth. Sometimes you look at what is left and think, "This is not enough." But God has a way of meeting people at empty tables. Not always with everything we wanted. Not always on the timeline we would have chosen. But with enough grace for the next step. Enough mercy for the next day. Enough love to help us risk hoping again.

So, here's to hoping again, one small step at a time, and to knowing when it's okay to order pizza.

Blessing and Peace
Pastor Mark

Our Deepest Sympathy



We extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Carol Bartholomew, who has passed from this life to eternal life on July 29, 2026.

Visitation will be held on Sunday, August 9 at First Congregational Church of Mukwonago from 1:00 PM until the time of the Memorial Service at 3:00 PM.

Pastor Mark will be officiating the service and leading the family and congregation in remembering and celebrating Carol's life.



**Please Keep These Loved Ones
in Your Prayers**

Those facing illness or health concerns:

- Kathy W.
- Dorothy C.
- Sue P.
- Carol B.

Other Prayer Requests

- Lily B's Mission Trip

Those needing ongoing love and support:

- Our shut-ins and all who live with chronic health challenges
- Our church leadership, as they serve and discern
- All who are struggling or in need—seen and unseen
- The Mission School of Hope & Clinic and the communities they care for

May God's healing, strength, and peace surround each one.

***Need Prayer? Send your request to
prayer@fccweb.net***

***Would you like to be part of our
Prayer Chain?***

Please email the church office at office@fccweb.net to let us know.



**The Shared Table:
Recipes and Reflections from FCC**

Pastor Mark asked the Women's Agape Group for our help to put together a special "cookbook" from the members of our congregation. But this won't be just a standard cookbook. He wants it to reflect the people who make up the First Congregational Church of Mukwonago community!

The cookbook must be ready in time to distribute it at the potluck dinner on Giving Sunday in September, so we need to "get cookin'"! All everyone (yes, guys too!) needs to do is:

- Send us a recipe that makes your family smile.
- Include a short sentence telling what "ingredient" you love bringing to the FCC community.
- Include a short sentence relating a special memory of being at FCC. Example from Pastor Mark: Recipe for meatballs.... "I love our Sunday morning Bible studies. My first time seeing the sanctuary, the person showing me around said, 'We are glad you are here today'."
- Send your recipe, community ingredient, and memory to jlbrocker@yahoo.com. Or, drop a physical copy into the recipe box on the communication table.

We can't wait to compile your submissions and share the final book with you! Thanks in advance for bringing your unique flavor to First Congregational Church of Mukwonago!





Help Wanted: Maxwell Street Days Parking Fundraiser!

August 15-16

Friday Setup: We need a small crew to handle setup on the Friday before, starting at 3:00 PM.

Available Saturday Shifts:

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Sunday Take Down: We need help packing everything up on Sunday at 3:00 PM.

Please see the sign-up sheet on the communication table.



Backpacks Needed

Hello, church! We have received a special donation request from the Waukesha Hope Center. They need backpacks.

Many of their homeless patrons, especially men, carry their belongings in back packs. Like the household appliances, they are used by patrons as soon as they hit the shelves.

Used back packs in good condition are fine. Nancy and I found three back packs on Facebook Marketplace for \$5 each.

If you'd like to purchase a new back pack to donate, Walmart has them on sale for as low as \$5 a piece. We will collecting back packs in the same corner of the lobby as the household appliances.

Thank you so much for your generosity. The coordinator at the Center was overjoyed at the car load of appliances I delivered to them the Friday before last!



Hello, church! We have a need that we hope you will be able to fill. The Hope Center in Waukesha is asking for household appliances such as toasters, microwave ovens, and clothing irons. They said that single moms cannot afford these items, so they come into the Center looking for them.

If you have a household appliance you were planning to replace, or would like to buy a new item, please drop it off at the church office and I will make sure it gets to the Center. Thank you!.



The Missions team invites you to take a Kindness tracker chart, located below the Missions Kindness bulletin board in the Narthex.

This will be a visual reminder to you to pay attention to your good deeds. Smile & say hello to someone you pass. Share kind words. Lend a hand. Check in on someone. Donate what you can. The act of kindness can be as simple or as elaborate as you want to make them!

Catch someone else performing an act of kindness. The project will continue primarily through the summer, but we hope you continue to track your acts of kindness throughout the rest of the year and beyond!

Worship This Weekend

We will be worshipping in-person and via Zoom this Sunday at 10:00 am. Visit these links for important information:

[SONG LYRICS](#)

[ORDER OF WORSHIP](#)

To access worship via Zoom, please use the information below:

[CLICK HERE FOR ZOOM WORSHIP](#)

Phone Number: (312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 459 288 4444

Password: 2623637249

Adult Bible Study will meet before church in the large classroom at 9:00. You can access the Bible study via Zoom as well:

[CLICK HERE FOR ZOOM BIBLE STUDY](#)

Phone Number: (312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 459 288 4444

Password: 2623637249

Praise PLAYLIST

Sunday's Praise Song Sneak Peak
"Rescue" by Lauren Daigle

CONTACT US

Church Office
262-363-7249
231 Roberts Drive
Mukwonago WI 53149
office@fccweb.net



It's Easy to Give to FCC.....

Because we are flexible! There are several ways:

1. The traditional way, by putting your offering in the collection plate during weekly church services. Offering envelopes are available in the church office. Contact us at office@fccweb.net.
2. Bill Pay through your bank account. You can talk to a teller or Customer Service if you have questions about it. If you like to use Bill Pay to pay your monthly bills, you can add FCC to your list of creditors. It's quick and easy.
3. Online. You can give through Tithe.ly or Paypal ([HERE](#)) and click the "Give" Button at the bottom of the page.
4. If you prefer to make lump sum offerings, you can make a Direct Charitable Distribution from your 401(k) or other retirement fund directly to FCC. There are no income taxes on this type of distribution because the money does not come to you; it goes directly to the "charity" of your choice, i.e., FCC. Talk to your financial advisor who can set up Direct Charitable Distributions as often as you wish—monthly, quarterly, annually etc. Making a Direct Charitable Distribution actually makes your money go farther!