

“The Congregator”

First Congregational United Church of Christ - 110 N. Third Street - River Falls, WI

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FEBRUARY 1, 2010

Pastor's Corner

Want to be Happy? Try this simple experiment.
Which person would you rather be?

Richard is an ambitious 36-year-old white commodities trader in Florida. He's healthy and drop-dead handsome, lives alone in a house with a pool, and has worked his way through a series of gorgeous women. Richard's job is stressful, but he spent Christmas in Tahiti. Unencumbered, he also has time to indulge such passions as reading, marathon running and writing poetry. In the last few days, he has been composing an elegy about the Haiti earthquake.

Lorna is a 64-year-old black woman in Boston. She's overweight and unattractive, even after a recent nose job. Lorna is on regular dialysis, but that doesn't impede her active social life or babysitting her grandchildren. A retired school assistant, she is close to her 67-year-old husband and is much respected in her church for directing the music committee and the semiannual blood drive. Lorna believes in tithing and in the last few days has organized a church drive to raise \$10,000 for earthquake relief in Haiti.

Which one is more happy? In a new book called "The Happiness Hypothesis" psychology professor Jonathan Haidt argues that while most of us would want to trade places with Richard, Lorna is actually happier.

The research says that: men are no happier than women, people in sunny areas are not happier than those who live in the cold (take that you snowbirds!), and even chronic health problems have little effect on happiness. According to the research happy people are connected to others and engaged in their communities. In fact the single biggest predictor of happiness is altruism—doing something for someone else.

This fits with my understanding of the Christian faith and the life and ministry of Jesus, on whom we are to model our living. Over and over again Jesus called his followers to embrace an abundant life based on servanthood. This is a life that is not only holy, but happy, even joyful as well.

Pastor Chris

Annual Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting has been set for **Sunday, February 7, 2010** after the second service. A light lunch is served and childcare is provided. Please make a reservation.

In addition to the regular business of receiving reports, budgets and slates of officers, other items include:

- Request from Missionary Education Committee to change the name of their committee to the Mission Education Committee.
- Request from the Personnel and Church Council to call Stacy Johnson Myers as Minister of Christian Education
- Update from the Finance Committee about the recently passed Building Campaign
- Request for Timeline Committee to oversee and manage the Biblical Timeline Project

Want to know more about our denomination, the United Church of Christ? Come to the UCC Class on Friday, February 12. See details on page 3.

We believe...

~The Christian faith is a life-long learning process.

~Our church family aspires to be the living presence of Christ in the world.

~Our faith in Jesus is demonstrated through our lives, actions, and commitments.

~We are striving to become a congregation of life-long givers.

~Worship is the center of our life together.

MODERATOR NOTES

By Jean Smith

Read Romans 12:4-13

Postponement Problems. Many of us struggle with them--postponement problems. A professor at the University of Calgary in Alberta studied the problem of procrastination for 5 years and reported that 95 percent of us put off doing one thing or another. One estimate showed that Americans lose approximately \$400 million a year by putting off filing taxes! Because of fear of failure or other insecurities, we wait and wait before starting a project or making a decision.

Procrastination is a problem in the church too. Many of us postpone serving God. We know we should reach out to others, but we feel insecure or worried about what to do. Because we're unsure of our gifts or interests, we put off our involvement in the church. We worry *What if I do a poor job? What if I find out I can't even do it?*

Romans 12, gives us some encouragement. Serving starts with presenting ourselves to God as "a living sacrifice" (v.1). Pray and give yourself anew to the Lord and His work. Then look around at what others are doing in your church and ask if you can join in. Start small if you need to, and try a number of things. Your church needs you. Ask God to help you overcome your postponement problems.

(Taken from the devotional, Our Daily Bread)

Thought: For a healthier church, exercise your spiritual gifts.

REMEMBER: The annual meeting is Sunday, February 7, 2010 after the 10:30 service. A small lunch will be served.

TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

Financial Information for December and YTD:

	<u>December</u>	<u>2009 YTD</u>
Income	\$ 37,468.85	\$ 320,512.74
Expenses	\$ 34,438.97	\$ 318,537.41
Net	\$ 3,029.88	\$ 1,975.33

A full accounting of all income and expenses is always posted outside the church office door on the bulletin board.

Congregational Reading Project

There is still time to read the 2010 First Congo Reads selection. The book is *Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World*, by Harold S. Kushner. We will discuss the book on February 28, 2010 during the Adult Forum. The book is available in the church office for \$17.00.

Workers Needed

During the Wednesdays in Lent we will gather for family meals (February 17 & 24, March 3, 10, 17, and 24) prior to the Evening Prayer worship service. We need volunteers to cook, serve, and clean up. Please consider helping. Call the church office to volunteer or sign the list.

We Did It!

Thank you for your faithful giving in 2009. In a tumultuous economic year, your faithful giving enabled us to end the year with a slight surplus. Thank you to everyone who pledged and even gave above their pledged amount.

Update

The Finance Committee met on January 12 and are busy planning the next steps for the Capital Campaign. More to follow at the Annual Meeting.

UCC History and Polity Course

You are invited to attend a workshop about the history and organization of the UCC. The workshop will be led by Dr. Martha Baumer, former professor at Eden Theological Seminary, from **9:00 to 3:00 on Friday, February 12, 2010**, and will include a luncheon. The cost of the day is \$10.00 per person. This is an excellent Adult Education opportunity. Please register by calling the church office or signing the list on the sign up table.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. It is a time to remember who we are and whose we are. We do this in worship by receiving the ashes of our burnt palms on our heads or hands. Ash Wednesday is **February 17** and all Confirmands and their parents should be present. The Pre-confirmation class will be making and serving a pancake supper that evening from 5 until 6:15pm. Worship is at 6:30. Please join us.

Lenten Worship

Gathering together to worship during Lent is a centuries-old tradition in the Christian community. Lenten worship provides dedicated time for reflection, repentance, and evaluation of our lives and our priorities. As we started last year, Lenten worship at First Congregational will focus on the Holden Village *Evening Prayer Service*, and will include scripture and a children's story.

Ash Wednesday Schedule:

3:30 – 5:00	Wednesday School
5:00 – 6:15	Pancake Supper (Please make a reservation)
6:30 – 7:30	Ash Wednesday Worship

Wednesdays in Lent Schedule:

3:30 – 5:00	Wednesday School
5:00 – 6:15	Family Meal (Please make a reservation)
5:30 – 6:30	Bell Practice
6:30 – 7:00	Worship
7:00 – 7:30	Confirmation
7:00 – 8:00	Choir Rehearsal

Dead Sea Scrolls Trip

A traveling exhibit of the famed Dead Sea Scrolls is coming to the Science Museum of Minnesota this spring. The church has reserved 30 spots for **Tuesday, April 13, 2010**. We will leave the church at 10am, have a bite to eat, enter the exhibit at noon. Our time at the museum should end around 2pm and we will return to the church around 3pm. The cost is \$20 and includes admission to the museum, exhibit and an audio guide. We must have payment when you sign up for the trip. We will take the church van and need others to drive. Please see Pastor Chris for more info.



COFFEE MATTERS

The *Cloudforest coffee* offered for sale in the church lobby is grown by farmers in the central highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. They are some of the poorest people in this hemisphere. A reliable market for their coffee at *Fair Trade* prices is of extreme importance to them. It may even make the difference between staying in their village or deciding to make the long and dangerous trip to “El Norte” in the hopes of finding work as an illegal immigrant. If you drink coffee please consider making this excellent, **organic, shade grown** coffee your coffee of choice. Decaf coffee is available upon request, as is coffee in 5 lb. packages which sell for about \$1 less per pound.

Art and Jesus' Transfiguration

When the Board of Christian Education commissioned the biblical timeline, we knew there were holes in it. The timeline captures 32 important biblical episodes, but many others fall in the spaces between the timeline images. Soon one hole will be filled. The Board of CE commissioned a new image depicting Jesus' transfiguration. It will be "unveiled" on the day we celebrate Jesus' Transfiguration, February 14.

The image will tell this story: Jesus and his closest three disciples, Peter, James, and John take an excursion to a mountain, a place far removed from the hustle and bustle of daily life. While they were on the mountain, Jesus started to pray. While he was praying, his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Two figures appeared, Moses and Elijah, heroes from the past who were alive in the present. It was at this moment as if time knew no barrier; the past and present were melded into one. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah spoke about Jesus' upcoming "departure" (to use the English word) or "exodus" (to use the Hebrew word). This was an incredible moment for the disciples, and Peter in particular wanted to hold on to it and remain on the mountain top. Scripture tells us that while Jesus' face was still enveloped in God's glory, a cloud consumed them and a voice said: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

When you look at the image, ask yourself the following questions:

- In the story, Jesus and his disciples are clearly on a high mountain top. Why would the picture remind us that the buildings and people of the city are still close at hand?
- As you the view Jesus on the mountain top, you will see him through the eyes of the disciples. Why do you think we chose this perspective?
- Think of another point in scripture when we hear the words "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Hint: John the Baptist and the River Jordan). How do and can we listen to Jesus?
- How are Jesus' baptism and Jesus' transfiguration connected?
- How are Jesus and his death and the Hebrew exodus connected?

Words, scriptural and contemporary, can tell us important ideas about Jesus and his life, but they have their limits. Sometimes we must rely on the art to point us in the direction of understanding.

Stacy Johnson Myers
Christian Education Coordinator

Adult Forum

February 7: *The Thought of Walter Brueggemann: The Absence of God—Texts that Refuse to Be Explained Away*, Stacy Johnson Myers—The forum will consider the work of Walter Brueggemann, prominent Old Testament scholar, who ponders the importance of struggling with difficult biblical texts, particularly those related to God's absence.

February 14: *Book Discussion: Getting to the Heart of Interfaith: The Eye-Opening, Hope-Filled Friendship of a Pastor, a Rabbi, and a Sheik*, Alan Tuchtenhagen—According to the authors, "too often religion seems to fuel more hatred than love, more conflict than collaboration". This session will discuss the ways we can work together to transcend the difference that have historically divided us.

February 21: *Video: Cathedral*, by David Macaulay—In a DVD, author David Macaulay discusses some of the finest architectural achievements of all time, evident in European cathedrals from the Middle Ages. The presentation includes amazing footage, and tells stories about the faith and challenges behind the construction of magnificent worship spaces.

February 28: *First Congo Reads Conquering Fear*, Stacy Johnson Myers—The discussion will focus on Rabbi Kushner's ideas about how people face fear and uncertainty in their lives. The discussion will focus on suffering, disappointment, guilt, forgiveness, growing old, and the fear of death, and resources in the religious tradition for coping with and confronting fear.

Name Change for Missionary Education Committee

The name *Missionary* Education Committee comes out of an historical perspective of the church having one outside mission, the education and support of missionaries to foreign countries. At the time the committee was formed it was prudent to have somewhere for members to turn in order to keep up-to-date on the work and needs of these foreign missionaries.

Times have changed. Our mission fields now include folks just outside our doors here in River Falls. We support our local food pantry and homeless shelter. We assist Feed My Starving Children. We buy fair-trade coffee and underwear for Simpson Shelter. Today there are mission opportunities for our members locally, nationally, and worldwide. The term “missionary” has broadened to include all of us.

The name Mission Education Committee better describes the purpose of our committee, that being, to educate the congregation about the various mission opportunities available to them and keep members informed of the many and varied ways they can assist in these missions. This will be voted upon at the upcoming annual meeting on February 7.

Summer Dates

Please keep the following dates in mind when scheduling summer activities. We will need lots of kids and lots of adults for these programs.

Youth Musical: June 21-24, 2010

Vacation Bible School: August 2-5, 2010

Confirmation Retreat

The Confirmation Retreat for 8th and 9th graders will be an Urban Immersion Service Retreat to Minneapolis, **February 5-7, 2010**. This is always a highlight of the confirmation experience.

Please make sure these dates are on your calendars.

Statements of Faith

As detailed in last month’s newsletter, the display of the various creeds and statements of faith is now up and outside the downstairs kitchen. Which one is your favorite? Write a note with your favorite and why.



From Broken Down Bikes to Rebuilt Bikes

Tim Bylander has taken over for Cecil Bjork the task of rebuilding bicycles to give away to kids and adults in our community. He is in need of used bikes or parts to repair or put together “new bikes”. If you have used or parts of old bikes you would like to donate, please contact Tim at (715) 425-7437. Thank you for your help.

Weekly Email

Do we have your current email address? The “Weekly Word” is a weekly email sent out on Thursdays that highlights upcoming church activities.

Please send the church office your updated email address at office@firstchurchrf.org.

Regular, decaf and....

During Coffee Fellowship hour on Sunday mornings we are now pleased to offer both regular and decaf coffees. These fair trade, organic coffees are freshly ground from our local co-op. Also look for the new hot water kettle which will enable the tea and hot chocolate drinkers among us to enjoy their favorite beverage as well. Come and enjoy from 10:00 until 10:30 every Sunday morning in the Fellowship Hall.

Coffee Fellowship Hosts Needed

We are in need of hosts for our Coffee Fellowship time on the following Sundays:

March 7, 14, 21, 28

The coffee is already made by Pastor Chris, all you need to do is bring some treats and serve. We even do the dishes! Training provided. Please use the sign up sheet or contact Lu in the church office for more information. This is a great family project or bonding time with a couple of friends!



Got Choir?

Chancel Choir is the place for you! Our Chancel Choir at First Congregational is open to anyone post-confirmation age and up. The choir rehearses every Wednesday from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. and performs two times per month. No previous experience is necessary, and the choir is always looking for more members of any voice part. Contact Scott Perau for more details.



YES WE ARE!!! Are you ready to begin your 2010 New Year's resolution to get in shape? If so, why not begin by building up your arm strength!! Join the 'Hands Of Faith' puppet ministry group

and not only will you strengthen your arms but also your spiritual self. No paperwork to fill out, no registration fees, and no monthly fees to participate!! Fellowship, fun, laughs, and strong arms guaranteed.

Kindergarten through Grade 5 meet Sunday mornings through Sunday, February 7th from 9:00 to 10:00 am in the 5th grade Sunday school classroom.

Middle/High School and Adults are needed to help with prop making, etc., every other Wednesday in the 5th grade Sunday school classroom.

The group will perform Sunday, February 7th - "Souper Bowl Sunday" during 'Time With Children'. Continued participation optional but you'll have so much fun you'll absolutely want to continue. Sign-up sheet available on back table.

Summer Musical

Did you enjoy Godspell last summer? Once again our church is planning on performing a musical this summer. We will need many members in order to make this a success. Whether you want to be on center stage singing a solo or a part of the chorus, we will find a place for anybody that wants to be a part of this production.

If interested, please sign up on Scott's door and/or attend an **Informational Meeting on January 31st after the second service**. Contact Scott Perau with any questions or concerns.

River Falls Relay for Life

Join us **March 26-27** at the River Falls High School. Anyone interested in joining the church's team call Marie Roe (381-1215) for details.



Feed My Starving Children Trip

Friday, January 22, 31 volunteers went to FMSC to work with 90 other people to make enough meals to feed 48 people for a year.

After working the morning at FMSC the group went to Bungalow's for lunch. All enjoyed their service time and many laughs were share by all.

Tille Quints

Please look into your hearts & calendars & find a spot to help out this very deserving and TIRED local family! The babies at 7 months are incredibly cute and alert and so extra hands to feed, hold & play are ALWAYS needed. Angela & Heath graciously rely on volunteers around the clock... with 2-3 volunteers per 3 hour shift, 24 hours a day... that is 150 opportunities for you to help out!!! Many volunteers take one or more regular shifts a week, but many more are needed to fill in the blanks, especially due to absences during this cold season.

Several members of our church have given our hearts over to this wonderful "little" family... ask us how you can help, go to their website www.tillefamily.com or call volunteer coordinator Brenda @ 426-3604.

Thanks so much! Wendy Hill, Mary Church, Maxine Sitz

New to Church? Come to the Inquirer's Class

If you would like to know more about the life and ministry of our church, please register to attend the fall Inquirer's Class on **Sunday, March 7.**



At this 90-minute gathering you will meet church leaders, other newcomers and more about the church's life and ministry. Lunch and childcare are included. Please use the sign-up sheet to register your attendance or contact Lu Lueck in the church office.

After completing this class, those who wish to join the church will be received into membership on Sunday, March 28 at the 10:30 am worship service.

Interfaith Volunteers Needed

Substitute drivers are needed through mid-March for the River Falls home delivered meals program Monday through Friday at 11:00 am. Mileage is paid and the route lasts about 1 hour. Light housekeeping and companionship requests are available. To inquire, contact Nancy or Rhonda at 715-381-4360 or email nancysa@co.saint-croix.wi.us

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

STAFF



Chris Myers - Pastor
 Lu Lueck - Parish Coordinator
 Missy Luedtke - Office Assistant
 Stacy Johnson - CE Coordinator
 Scott Perau - Music Coordinator
 Organists - Marsha Pearson,
 Barb Wall
 Tim Bylander - Building Supervisor
 Dave Mountain - Custodian
 Jean Smith - Moderator

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PASTOR'S HOME PHONE NUMBER

Chris Myers 715-426-2075
 chris@firstchurchrf.org

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

110 N. Third Street
 River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

February 1, 2010

2010 FEBRUARY 2010						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	2	3 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	4	5 Confirmation Retreat for Years 2 & 3 (8th & 9th Grades)	6
7 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 11:30 am Annual Meeting Souper Bowl Sunday	8 Kettle Bells 5:00 pm Mission Education Committee Mtg 6:30 pm	9 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	10 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th & 7th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	11	12 UCC History and Polity Course 9:00 am—3:00 pm	13
14 8:00 am Chancel Choir 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	15 Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	16 3rd Tuesday Soup 'n Sandwich 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Boards and Committees Meetings 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting 7:30 pm	17 Ash Wednesday 3:30-5:00 pm Wed School 5:30-6:30 pm Jubilee Ringers 5:00-6:15 pm Pancake Supper 6:30-7:30 pm Worship Service 7:30-8:00 pm Chancel Choir	18	19	20
21 8:00 am Jubilee Ringers 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast It Takes a Village Concert at Ezekiel 7:00 pm	22 Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	23 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	24 3:30-5:00 pm Wed School 5:00-6:15 pm Family Meal 5:30-6:30 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30-7:30 pm Worship Service 7:00 pm Confirmation Years 2 & 3 (8th & 9th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	25 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	26	27
28 8:00 am Chancel Choir 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 11:30 am Boundary Waters Trip Meeting						