

The Tower

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin

LXVI

June 21 & 28, 2009

No. 23

Generous Church, Generous People

Through Habitat for Humanity of Dane County, our church paid for and helped build a home for a family in 2006, in the Twin Oaks subdivision of southeast Madison. People who worked on the home enjoyed getting to know the family (mother and children) with whom we were building, and a few people still stay in touch with them.

Paying for a Habitat for Humanity home is a big deal. The home we paid for in 2006 in the Twin Oaks subdivision cost our church \$75,000. We raised it as part of our Capital Funds campaign which highlighted our (at that time, in 2005) 75 years in this particular building. The people of First Congregational Church moved into this new building in the fall of 1930, and we were remembering that special occasion with the Capital Funds campaign.

The house we are helping build this year will cost us \$65,000. It is in an existing neighborhood, only a block or so from a school, as opposed to a new neighborhood like Twin Oaks. The family we will be building with, who will eventually purchase the home we build together, is in the process of being chosen right now; so we can't introduce them to you. But here are descriptions of a few other families with whom Habitat for Humanity of Dane County has worked recently.

One family is a mother and a nearly four year-old son. By the time he was two, he had already lived in 4 different places. Their present location (a rental) has broken glass on the front lawn, unattended children, cars driving too fast through their parking lot and frequent visits to neighbors by the police. They are struggling to feel comfortable there, to feel like it is "home." The mother said it's hard to feel at home in any rental unit. She said, *I look forward to hanging pictures I haven't hung in several years.*

She also said this: *The timing is impeccable for us. My son will start kindergarten in just over a year. I couldn't ask for a better time for us to settle into a new home in a warm, loving community, where my son can play in a local park, hang out with friends, and have a place to say he grew up in. We have never lost hope. I constantly tell him that he can do anything and don't say can't. Sometimes we have to remind each other of these values, but they are good words to live by.*

Ground was broken for their new home two weeks ago. Tears of joy were flowing.

A second family has four members. The husband lives with disabilities and the wife's work supports the family. A high school-aged son is hoping to attend MATC next year and major in computer science and there is an elementary school-aged daughter who likes school, playing soccer, and playing in the park with friends. The mother in the family said this: *We are grateful for this opportunity to own a home. It is difficult to find disabled housing and even more difficult for our family to move. Living in the neighborhood where our house will be built gives our family the opportunity to continue the friendships we have made here. We would like to thank everyone for helping us achieve one of our dreams.*

A third family is a mom and four children. She was born in Cambodia in 1975, the year the Khmer Rouge began what is now called "the killing fields." Eventually she made her way to this country, and has recently graduated from MATC in Early Childhood Education. She works at MATC in the Child and Family Center.

These three families already qualify for HFH homes. The family we will work with will be chosen soon. Through our church's generosity, and your individual generosity, another family in the Madison area will be able to afford a home of their own.

~Curt Anderson



Join Us for
MORNING SERVICE

Sunday Morning, June 21, 2009

Worship at 10am in the Dining Room

Youth Summer Musical Presentation

Scripture Readings: Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31;

Matthew 7:24-27.

This Sunday, children from our church will lead a portion of worship with the musical presentation "Soakin' Up the Son!" The musical begins with an affirmation of the beauty and glory of God's world, God's "masterpiece," and in that light, one of our readings will be from the first creation story in the book of Genesis. We will read from the beginning of the story and the end: God's Spirit brooding over the face of the deep and the creation of light, and then the creation of humankind in God's image and God's affirmation, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." The other scripture passage which will be read is the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:24-27, the comparison of building one's home on rock versus building one's home on sand. During the musical, the youth will sing, "Don't Build Your House on Sandy Land."

Remember, we worship in the dining room this day.

Sunday Morning, June 28, 2009
Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary
Scripture Reading: Mark 5:21-43

This scripture passage contains not one but two miracle stories. One is the healing of a woman who had been suffering with hemorrhages for twelve years. The medical establishment has been unable to help her. She is at her wit's end; and she thinks to herself, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." The other healing story has to do with a leader of the synagogue, Jairus, coming to Jesus and asking Jesus to heal his little daughter, who is at home and at the point of death. It takes Jesus a while to get to Jairus' home; and when he does, Jairus' daughter is dead. The people laugh at Jesus when he suggests that something might still be done for her, but their laughter turns to amazement when Jesus says to the girl, "Tal'itha cu'mi (little girl, get up)," and she gets up and begins to walk around.

More than anything else in the gospels, these stories of Jesus raising people from the dead – Jairus' daughter, Mark 5:41-42; the widow's son at Nain, Luke 7:11-17; and Lazarus, John 11:1-44 – are a challenge. It's true, Jesus didn't raise every dying person; but how do we deal with even one dead person brought back to life. First, I guess, we rejoice with Jairus and his daughter. But what's next?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

C'mon Out and Support the Pew Warmers!

Are you looking for a great place to go on a Friday evening? If so, come on out and support our softball team, the Pew Warmers! It's lots of fun, and team members are having a great time—but a few fans would be most welcome. We haven't won a game yet this year, but the season isn't over yet. Fans of all ages are welcome. Fun for the whole family!

Games remaining on the schedule are:

June 19 at 6:30, Elver Park, field #2

June 26 at 6:30, Bowman Field, field #3

July 3, No game scheduled

July 10 at 6:30, Elver Park, field #2

July 17 at 8:30, Elver Park, field #2

Women's Book Study

Women! Mark your calendars now to attend a morning of coffee (or juice), treats, and conversation after reading *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte Taylor. Jill Bolte Taylor was a 37-year-old Harvard-trained and published brain scientist when a blood vessel exploded in her brain. Jill shares with us her recommendations for recovery and the insight she gained into the unique functions of the right and left halves of her brain. "I believe the more time we spend running our deep inner peace circuitry, then the more peace we will project into the world, and ultimately the more peace we will have on the planet."

The class meets on Saturday mornings from 8:00-9:30am on June 20, July 11, and 25 in the Student Lounge and will be facilitated by Eldonna Hazen. Books are available in the office for \$12. Please let Eldonna know if you plan to attend.

Rain Barrel Workshop

Join us on Sunday June 28th at 9:00am in the Chapel for an environmental stewardship presentation on water conservation issues and Sustain Dane's Rain Reserve rain barrel program. Sustain Dane's rain barrel system is an innovative way to harvest rainwater - it was designed by local community members with the environment and sustainability in mind. Dane County is home to some of the most precious freshwater lakes, streams, and marshes in the state, and preserving these water resources is vital for ensuring a high quality of life now and in the future. Please join us for this opportunity to learn about local stewardship opportunities and protecting God's creation. Bagels, coffee and juice will be provided. Rain barrels will be available for purchase – for information about them visit <http://rainfordane.org/>

~Board of Community Life

Four More Greeters Needed

In May we heard reports from our members who have participated in an exchange program with SS Morris Church. A common thread was how welcome our members feel at SS Morris. Greeters are the first face many visitors see at any church. They help create a positive impression for many churches including First Congregational. If you'd like to extend a gracious welcome to all who attend our church, contact Sarah Kissel at 233-5236 or SarahKissel@hotmail.com to learn more about this rewarding opportunity.

The Corn Report

June 10: The corn is now about four inches high. It is rising above the stubble of last year's crop as this is a no-till project. This approach is very good for the ground as it resists erosion. Because the tractors make fewer passes through the field it also saves considerably on gasoline consumption. Some spraying will be required. Remember those pesky weeds in your garden? Well, they are doubly present as rivals to the growing corn in no-till fields.

On June 28th the Washington Reformation congregation will have its "coffee hour" at the field along with a short blessing and prayer. We are all invited but that blessing will be at 10:30am on a Sunday which conflicts with our worship. Say the blessing in your heart and anticipate joining in the harvest celebration in the Fall.

~an update from the Foods Resource Bank Project

Ironing Backpacks

Sounds strange, but ironing backpacks is a fun activity where you get to express your creative side and help make one-of-a-kind backpacks for the school supply drive. To participate, join the Outreach Board in the Fellowship Room on June 24th at 7pm. If you have an iron and ironing board please bring them. We have a variety of patches and 97 backpacks to decorate. It should take 1-1.5 hours.

New Keys for Church Doors

As of Tuesday, June 16, we have re-keyed some of the locks in the building including the outside doors and office doors. If you have a legitimate need for keys to the building, please contact Bill Tackett at btackett@firstcongmadison.org or 608-577-4655 to make arrangements to get new keys.

~Curt Anderson

MUSIC 🎵 NOTES

Summer Singers

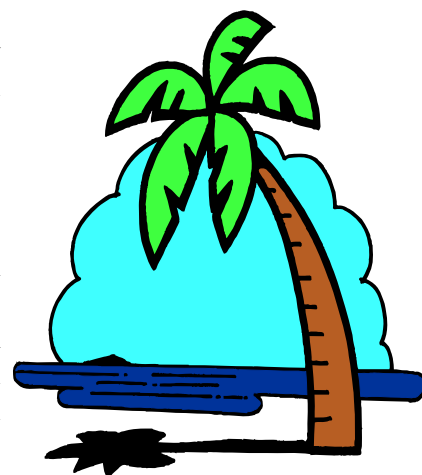
Summer Singers will sing in worship on Sunday, June 28th. All interested singers, middle-school age and older are invited to participate. We will meet at 9:00am in the Sanctuary to learn a simple introit and anthem to sing during worship that morning. If you have any questions, please contact Don DeBruin.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Soakin' Up The Son!

Summer Children's Musical ~ *Surf, Sand and the Son* are the key ingredients to this year's Summer Children's Musical.

Learning to follow the lessons and examples of Jesus and living God's unshakable truth is the mission of this *island-themed* musical experience. Presented in Worship on **Sunday, June 21** in the dining room.



Church Calendar

June 21 - July 5, 2009

Sunday, June 21

10:00am Sunday Worship &
Summer Musical ~ DR
3:00pm Sara Wilcox
Ordination ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 22

7:00pm Adult Education ~ SL
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 23

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 24

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
7:00pm Outreach Board ~ FR

Thursday, June 25

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 26

No Activities Scheduled

Saturday, June 27

No Activities Scheduled

Sunday, June 28

9:00am Summer Singers ~ Sanctuary
9:00am Rain Barrel
Workshop ~ Chapel
10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 29

12 noon *Tower* deadline
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 30

No Bible Conversations

5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, July 1

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS

Thursday, July 2

Community Meals Day

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, July 3

No Activities Scheduled

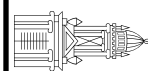
Saturday, July 4

Building Closed

Sunday, July 5

10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary

BBQ ~ Mid High Bible Study
Big K ~ Big Kitchen
BOUNCE ~ Mid High Youth
Group
DR ~ Dining Room
FR ~ Fellowship Room
GAS ~ Sr. High Bible Study
LRC ~ Learning Resource
Center
MS ~ Minister's Study
SAGE ~ Sr. High Youth Group
SL ~ Student Lounge
SR ~ Salad Room
YR ~ Youth Room



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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608-233-7180 (fax)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday worship attendance on
June 7, 2009 was 176.
June 14, 2009 was 151.

Staff:

Curt Anderson, Senior Minister
Eldonna Hazen, Associate Minister
Jerry Hancock, Director of Prison Ministry Project
Donald J. DeBruin, Director of Music Ministries
Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education for
Children & Youth
Bill Tackett, Building Manager
Lauren Nagle, Secretary
Anne Reynolds, Bookkeeper

Office Hours: 8am-noon, 1:00pm-3:30pm, Monday -
Thursday; 8am-noon Friday.

Phone: 608-233-9751

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IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES: Curt Anderson's
home phone is 836-1321, Eldonna Hazen's phone is
241-8117, Jerry Hancock's phone is 658-6630.

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The Blood Offering of Our Children

Janine Geske, Jerry Hancock's original mentor in the practice of prison ministry and restorative justice programs, and a professor at Marquette law school and former Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, sent this article to Jerry. It was written by Father Mike Kennedy, a Jesuit priest who ministers in California to children incarcerated in the criminal justice system. We have received Father Kennedy's permission to reprint it here.

~Curt Anderson

What do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam tell us about human redemption in light of sentencing youth to die in prison? For one Rabbi, Priest and Imam who routinely visit children tried as adults at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar, CA, sentencing a child to life in prison is a vehement denial of how a child, despite the seriousness of the crime, is readily redeemable. As leaders of our respective faith traditions, our pastoral visits to juvenile hall converged in the life of a 16 year old named David. David was tried as an adult and received 4 life sentences in prison, although it was disclosed in his trial that David never fired a gun and had no prior felonies. David's life imprisonment, like many others, is a result of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The victim suffered no serious injury and returned home from the hospital the same day he was admitted. As long as David spends the rest of his life locked away, he will forever be in the wrong place and do the wrong time.

Getting to know David forced us to reflect upon our faith traditions and reconsider how fundamentally common is our shared conviction that God does not want any of our children to perish. The Torah, the Old Testament and the Qur'an revere the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son; this story affirms our Abrahamic roots and conveys the consistency of this conviction that God does not require the sacrifice of our children.

Sentencing our children to life imprisonment is an idolatrous offering to the false spirit of punishment and to the evil spirit of society's indifference, which allows for simplistic policies that at best leave us with a false sense of security. Sacrificing our children is not the offering God wants. In light of our incarcerated children, our interfaith dialogue affirms that God does not require the blood offering of our children. Instead God does require our commitment to forgiveness and redemption.

The story of the sacrifice recalls how God tested Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering. In faith, Abraham follows God and builds an altar and sets the wood on it, binding his son. When Abraham seizes the knife to slay his son, God commands Abraham: "Do not lay your hand on the boy; do not harm him, for now I know that you fear God, and you have not held back from me your son."

Jews, Christians, and Muslims recognize the sacredness of this story where God commands that all our children, like Abraham's son, remain free of harm and regain an opportunity to grow. The criminal justice system has become the altar of sacrifice for youth. Life sentences have become the instrument of death that slays our youth. Life sentences for youth ignore God's command that we not harm our children. Life sentences for youth deny that our children have a greater capacity for rehabilitation. Sentencing youth to die in prison revokes our conviction in God's redemption.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims revere the story of the sacrifice and honor its message that God does not want our children sacrificed. As our faiths converged in the life of David at juvenile hall, our interfaith dialogue has become a unison prophetic proclamation denouncing the sinful idolatrous worship of the prison industrial complex that profits from incapacitating youth. As this interfaith dialogue continues, we turn to our faith communities to accompany our youth sentenced to die in prison by advocating for the reform of unfair sentencing, the mechanism for sacrificing our youth on the altar of a broken justice system.

Juvenile Justice Sabbath will take place on the weekend of May 22 - 24, 2009 throughout California where Synagogues, Churches and Mosques will pray together for an end to the unnecessary sacrifice of our youth. As God commanded Abraham to withdraw from the sacrifice of his son, we follow God's command to not let our children perish in prison. Senate Bill 399 seizes the justice system's sacrifice of our children by reviewing cases of youth under the age of 18 who are sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. SB399 would review these cases and require young people to work towards rehabilitation; they will have an opportunity to be re-sentenced.

The sacrifice of a son in the Abrahamic narrative is a story we share, and the message of God's command to save our children from unnecessary sacrifice is one we honor. The story of David is only one out of thousands of similar stories where our children are sentenced to die in prison. Like Isaac, the sacrifice of David is not necessary. Our faith communities celebrate God's redemption with the prophetic actions of advocating for our children, denouncing our criminal justice system's idolatrous worship of the punitive spirit, and dismantling the altar that unnecessarily sacrifices our children. The lives of our children are sacred and our faith traditions demand that we honor this truth.