

Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



FROM PASTOR DANA

Sunday, October 29, Chad Leonard spent time cleaning our mosaic and painting the wall behind the cross. He had a special experience you should ask him about. He let me know afterwards and I could not resist coming by seeing his progress and hearing the story. As I sat I thought the cleaned mosaic shined so much more brightly, especially the gold pieces. The Mosaic has always been beautiful to me but now they reflected the light more clearly and cleanly. I thought, aren't we like that- we may be beautiful already but as we journey in faith Christ wants to cleanse us of the dust, grime and dirt life leaves upon our soul so that we shine even more brightly and beautifully, a beauty we can not even imagine until the work is done. As we look upon the beauty of our mosaic, we may reflect upon the dust, grime and dirt that we may need to present before God to be cleansed so that we can reveal our full beauty to each other and the world.



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THANKSgiving

As many of you know I grew up in the midwest and we all say "thanksgiving" the same way- slight accent on the "giving". Well when I moved to North Carolina they say it with the emphasis on the Thanks- THANKSgiving- say it to yourself...isn't it odd? My Friend Sara McGuire Lewis is the best at saying it that way. I would hear it and physically feel startled each time I heard it, I never converted. But hearing where they put the emphasis caused me to reflect. That ThanksGiving is about giving Thanks and how our culture is not good at saying thank you, or giving people feedback on being thankful for them. Unfortunately we are even worse at giving thanks to God, we take so much for granted. So this year I would like to lovingly challenge you to take up some plan or ritual for giving thanks through the month of November. Here are some ideas- take a jar or cup and each day write is something you are thankful for on a piece of paper and place it in the cup- on Thanksgiving day empty the cup and read them out loud.or keep a journal of at least three things a day that you are



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thankful for and why and on Thanksgiving share some or all with whomever you gather with. Write notes to people giving them thanks for who they are or something they have done. (emails work as well as snail mail if you want to save on stamps).

The Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ has various opportunities to support Children and Elders around the world. I would like us as a church to consider sponsoring one Child and one Elder. These children are generally orphaned, refugees, or from low income families and can receive sponsorship up to age 18. The elders are individuals without sufficient income or family support to care for them after age 60. If we do so as a church we

will receive a brief Biography and photo of each and we could send them cards, and letters. ! 00% of the funds goes to support the individuals we choose, the cost would be \$25 to \$35 per month depending on

the location. The child and elder we sponsor will receive health care, clothing, food, other needs and sometimes housing and education through our sponsorship. We have an average attendance of 45 people and if each person could give at least \$1 a month and some \$2 or more we could fully sponsor a child and elder. If you are interested in being a part of this ministry and could commit monthly any part of either the elder or child sponsorship please let Chad or me know.



11/01 Sherry Monson
11/01 Pete Waggoner
11/05 Tom Dusek
11/10 Brady Emerson
11/12 Thelma Betzold
11/13 Bob Swank
11/16 Jake Edin
11/21 Eric Silvis
11/24 Amanda Warner
11/30 Colleen Kwong

Laugh for the day

A minister dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy who's dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans. Saint Peter addresses this guy, "Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?" The guy replies, "I'm Tom Smith and I drove a taxicab in New York City. St. Peter He smiles and says to the taxi driver, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The taxi driver goes into Heaven with his robe and staff. Then it's the minister's turn. He stands erect and booms out, "I am Joseph Snow, pastor of Calvary for the last forty-three years." St Peter says to the minister, "Take this flour-sack robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." "Wait a minute," says the minister. "He's just a taxicab driver, and he gets a silken robe and golden staff. And I get this?" "Up here, we work by results," says Saint Peter. "When you preached, people slept. When he drove, people prayed."



A THANKSGIVING TO REMEMBER

By Janet Sylvester

Originally published in the December 1998 edition of Midwest Living Magazine

Wisconsin reader Janet Sylvester reflects on one special, snowbound Thanksgiving, when her resourceful father's "old-fashioned ways" saved the day for everyone

On the day before Thanksgiving in 1950, my brother and I got off the school bus at our farmhouse with a guest from town, our cousin Danny.

We all keenly anticipated going to our grandparents' farm for Thanksgiving dinner. The meal was sure to include our favorites: lefse, a Norwegian creation made from riced or mashed potatoes, cream, butter and flour, rolled paper-thin and baked on a griddle. It was served (by purists, anyway) with a generous dollop of butter.

That night, after we did our chores - filling the wood boxes, feeding the calves and gathering the eggs - Dad announced that, by the looks of things, a "bad one" could be coming from the west. We kids took no notice. But Dad did seem to have a special knowledge of rings around the moon, sun dogs and the way the wind blew. In this case, he was right.

We woke in the morning to find the farm blanketed with snowdrifts. Blizzard winds still howled.

As the morning wore on, we looked for signs of traffic going by on the road. Surely, the milk

truck would have the plow on today, and our driveway, as well as the road, would be cleared. But when no plow came, it began to look like we'd be spending Thanksgiving snowed in.

Dad to the Rescue

Then, Dad came in from the barn about 11 a.m. "Are you ready to go?" he asked.

"How?" we asked.

"This is what Sandy and Daisy are for," he replied.



Sandy and Daisy were a pair of well-matched sorrel Belgian horses Dad worked with every day. No new John Deere tractor for him.

"Mother, dress those kids in warm clothes," Dad said.

We needed no more encouragement to get our warm coats, boots and mittens. Soon, Dad drove the sleigh up to the house, and we all climbed aboard, burrowing into the fresh straw he'd put down for us.

The horses trotted along in the invigorating cold air. The sleigh

bells jingled, and the runners sang as we skimmed the 4 miles to our grandparent's farm.

Our grandmother was the typical gentle, good grandma. Grandpa was in some ways one of the kids. He insisted that we call him Fred, never Grandpa.

He also liked to play tricks on his grandchildren. This time, he'd hidden a bag of our favorite candy. He'd give us clues as we searched for it, teasing us until we hit the jackpot.

Drifts and Cat Tracks

Our relatives in town didn't make it through the snow. After a sumptuous Norwegian-style meal, including fresh lefse, we trudged to the banks of the Apple River to look for animal tracks. We were sure we'd found signs of wolves, bears and cougars. But Dad teased us, telling us we'd only found the tracks of Grandma's tomcat.

Toward late afternoon, Grandma packed leftovers for us, and we climbed back into the sleigh and headed home. The winds picked up that night, poling up even more drifts, keeping us snowed in for days.

Late Sunday afternoon, the plow finally got through. Shortly after that, we saw the headlights of Uncle Walter's Ford stop at the mailbox. Danny left for home, vacation was over, and life went on.

The years since that long-ago Thanksgiving have passed all too quickly, but the memory remains. Whenever my brother and I reminisce, we both smile and say, "Remember the Thanksgiving Danni stayed with us?"

Embracing Gratitude: The Meaning of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving was once a grand event for us, marked by friends, family, and feasting. My husband, Dick, and I happily served dinner for over 30 guests. We would bustle around cleaning, cooking, and entertaining; however, never taking time to truly reflect on the "thanks" in Thanksgiving.

As time passed, circumstances changed; parents and siblings passed away; cousins, nieces, and nephews grew up to begin their own traditions. Our move from Minnetonka to Amery downsized our Thanksgiving gatherings to my mother, two daughters, and a few other family members - usually no more than 12 people. After my mother passed away, and our children and grandchildren moved out of state, our Thanksgiving family meal came down to our daughter, Traci and her boyfriend. Traci is a Vegan so Thanksgiving is her least favorite holiday. She'd rather dance barefoot on Lego pieces than sit at a table with a huge dead bird while her Dad makes ready with a huge carving knife.

Last Thanksgiving, even Traci deserted us. She took her boyfriend to "Herbivorous Butcher." A rather unappealing name for a restaurant, in my opinion. I admit, Traci does find interesting places that caters to her veganism. Once she had us take her to a raw food restaurant. It was housed in a Minneapolis duplex, side by side with a colon cleansing business. The jokes just write themselves.

However, with Traci and her boyfriend, Ray, choosing to have dinner elsewhere, we had the opportunity to accept a dinner invitation from our dear friend, Shanon Hayes. It was a wonderful, comfortable time with incredible food and good company. Because we were not in the midst of entertaining frenzy, we had time to breathe and reflect on the "Thankful" part of Thanksgiving.

This year, I'm not certain if Dick even plans on making a turkey. He loves cooking almost as much as he loves eating. However, I think our vegan daughter likely has her sights set on another vegan restaurant - maybe Herbie Butcher's Fake Fried Chicken, Seiten Sultan or the Tofu Gardens.

Since there will be only the two of us and I don't eat meat, Dick will have the option of ordering a turkey dinner from Fiddlehead Kitchen or roasting a turkey that will last him for approximately the next ten Thanksgivings. Turkey or no, this Thanksgiving will be quiet and reflective. It will be about counting blessings and giving thanks. The Bible encourages us to cultivate an attitude of thankfulness. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we are instructed to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." This verse reminds us that gratitude needs to be a continuous practice that shapes our hearts and minds. This is how Dick and I intend to celebrate this Thanksgiving and every other day. We will honor God with our heartfelt thanks.

Whether you are gathering with family this Thanksgiving, having a simple dinner with a dear friend, or walking hand in hand with a loved one in the crisp November air, let us remember the holiday's meaning. It's a time to reflect on God's goodness and express our heartfelt gratitude.

Blessings,
Your Church Lady

"May this Thanksgiving bring peace and gratitude into our hearts, unity among our families, and joy in our gatherings. Let us give thanks for the bounties of life, the warmth of loved ones, and the hope of tomorrow. May our homes be filled with love, laughter, and the comforting embrace of tradition. Amen."



Toward a wider web of connections

Two values stood out when we asked people about their

Dear friends,

On World Communion Sunday, I preached at the centennial celebration of Grace United Church of Christ in Kohler. I talked about the way the Holy Spirit is reshaping the Church for the future, noting that the concept of reformation is part of our spiritual heritage.

Grace UCC in Kohler was founded as Grace “Reformed” Church by German immigrants whose roots trace back to the 1500s, when Martin Luther and other protesting “reformers” brought forth new theological perspectives and worship modifications. The old saying is surely true – change is often what we least want and most need. Truth be told, the Holy Spirit has been transforming the Church since the days of Jesus.

One of my favorite old hymns evokes the biblical metaphor of God “reshaping” us: “Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou art the potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.”

If God is continually refashioning the Church, perhaps the Holy Potter toils endlessly at the spinning wheel, forever reshaping us and refusing to fire us in the kiln because God is never finished with us, nor is the Church ever complete. I imagine God sprinkling the waters of Baptism on this clay of the Church, keeping us soft and malleable.

For more than a year, we in the Wisconsin Conference UCC have engaged in conversations together, wondering about the future contours of our common life. We have acknowledged that maintaining two middle judicatory structures (a statewide Conference and four regional associations) has become burdensome. We need a nimble organizational model that better promotes connection and care.

A few weeks ago, the Conference Board of Directors unanimously endorsed a proposal that promises to lead us in exciting new directions.

wider Church connections: meaningful relationships and useful resources. Over the past decade we have made significant progress in broadening our digital connections and accelerating the sharing of resources. Thanks to Zoom, we have created several justice working groups. Additionally, we now have more than 20 Communities of Practice and several new resource networks including Supportive Ministries, Rural and Small-Town Ministries, Older Adult Ministries, worship resource conversations, Generosity webinars, and online Faith Formation, including confirmation available through the Damascus Project.

This web of interlocking connections across the Wisconsin Conference embraces in-person and online meetings. It invites individuals to align their passions with service to the wider Church, and it offers infinite possibilities for building relationships and sharing resources.

Toward a unified Committee on Ministry

Years ago, we established a Conference-wide Commission on Ministry comprising two members from each Association Committee on Ministry. The purpose was twofold: first, to establish consistent COM protocols throughout our four Associations, and second, to move toward unified processes for Members in Discernment, Licensed Ministers, Boundary Training, Annual Review Forms and Fitness Reviews.

That work has prepared us well for a shift toward handling all COM work in a unified manner. Regional representation will continue, and the Commission has proposed creation of several smaller teams, each of which would handle a portion of our ecclesiastical work.

Toward the dissolution of Associations

UCC General Counsel Heather Kimmel has reviewed the Conference bylaws and Association governing documents and determined that the process for dissolution is

straightforward. The Associations are no longer corporations, so all that is required is a simple vote to dissolve, followed by a vote of Conference-wide delegates to shift responsibility for the ecclesiastical work and vital missions and scholarship ministries of the Associations to the Conference.

We propose that the vote to dissolve the Associations take place in four breakout sessions during the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference, scheduled for June 6-7. This gathering for Association business would take the place of the traditional spring Association meetings but would not preclude regional spring programming. We anticipate robust in-person attendance at Annual Meeting 2025 and will offer Zoom options for the hour of each Association meeting.

Toward a new understanding of membership dues and OCWM

This reshaping of our wider Church life is financially neutral, assuming congregations continue their gifts to Our Church’s Wider Mission and their membership dues at similar levels moving forward. Membership dues currently are collected on a per-member basis to pay for the work of Associations. Most of these dollars are allocated three ways: to mission grants and camp scholarships, Church and Ministry, and common services provided to the Conference for staff support of Association work. These functions will be taken up directly by the Conference through OCWM funding.

Membership dues will continue. However, they will reflect core Conference operating costs such as office expenses, technology needs, and insurance. The vast majority of the Conference budget will continue to be funded by OCWM Basic Support, providing all the staffing ministry and outreach mission needed for vitality in our Conference life and beyond.

Next steps and timetable

This fall we will continue to work through the unified COM proposal, and we will create a map of the Resource Web so you can begin to appreciate the many ways we expect to increase connectivity and resource capacity. We will also work closely with the Association leadership teams to understand any concerns

and all priorities they have moving forward. It’s important to note that Associate Conference Ministers Jane Anderson, Rachel Bauman and Michael Jones will remain deployed in the regions they now serve. Although some conferences have moved away from geographical representation, we believe this model remains key to our continued ability to support pastors and congregations.

Early in 2025, we will conduct four regional conversations, with in-person and virtual options, for those who want to learn more and share ideas. We will then gather at the Annual Meeting in June around the theme of “reshaping” the Church.

The Unified COM would commence its work by late 2025, and the dues and OCWM shift would occur in 2026. In the meantime, we will continue to expand the emerging Resource Web and dream together about various working groups and ministry hubs.

As always, we welcome your questions and thoughts anytime.

With blessings and gratitude,



Franz Rigert

Conference Minister at Wisconsin Conference
United Church of Christ

Council Meeting October 20, 2024

Attendance: Chad Leonard, Marilyn Saleh, Sherry Monson, Pastor Dana Caldwell, Sandy Morris, Dave Bowman, Beth Leonard, Nyla Anderson

Meeting opened in prayer by Pastor Dana

Motion to approve September Council minutes made by Dave B & second by Sandy M. Passed.

Treasure/Financial Secretary Report: Chad L. presented a new format for the church financial performance that was easier to visually see where we should be and where we stand under each category. We continue to fall behind in our contribution but continue to control expenses. The Health and Happiness Walk/Block Party raised nearly \$5,000.00. Chad L also went over the 2025 Budget. OCWM is funded by 4% of the money brought in. Under personnel, there will be an expansion of the Administrative Assistant duties. There is an added fund allocation to provide an HSA for Pastor Dana. Under facilities they are planning to bring back a cleaning service and expecting an increase in insurance so there is an increase under this area. Overall, there is a net decrease of 10.8% from the 2024 budget. After discussion on the budget and revisions, a motion by Marilyn S was made to approve the revised budget and seconded by Sandy M. Passed.

Clerks Report: Sandy M reported no change in membership status. Currently at 146.

Board of Trustees: Dave B reported the following items, they would like to see an "informal choir" formed to sing maybe one time per month; Pastor Parish Committee is meeting on October 21; the administrative assistant, Rae W. retirement has been moved up to January 1. The trustees are meeting after worship today to work on revising the job description of the Administrative Assistant so they can start to advertise the position; the church will be trialing the use of the church in November for Peter Kwong's cooking classes.; the church has been re-imbursed by the insurance company for the finishing of the bathroom after the flood; a plumber was hired to check and clean out the roof drains; they hired a person to fix the flashing around the steeple, chimney and downspouts; the fountain has been repaired and will be re-installed soon; they have one application for the Schaefer Scholarship; they have been in contact with a lawyer regarding the Granum Memorial that was set up to support the youth and music.

Board of Christian Education: Beth L reported the following, Firestarter's continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday's; there will be a Community Youth Event today from 1-3 pm at East Immanuel; Breakfast Club for 6th through 12th grade continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Monday's; working on what they may do for a Christmas Program.

Board of Diaconate: Pastor Dana reported they are planning to do the Hanging of the Greens on Saturday, November 30 at 9:30 am. There are plans to provide a meal and have a program on that day.

Board of Congregational Giving: Marilyn S reported the Memory Book has been updated and the Memorial Leaves are done. They are waiting on a plan from the Trustee's regarding the purchase of trees for the green space. The Noisy Kettle brought in \$124.00. The Noisy Kettle in December will be designated for the Pastor Fund. They are planning to officially acknowledge to the families what the memorial money was used for. They are going to try to promote some all-church activities like hikes, pickle ball, evening bible studies. The Giving/Memorial Pamphlet is near completion.

Mission and Social Concerns:

Pastor Report: Dana C reported there were 12 people who attended the Women's Retreat. She reported she feels good about how things are going. Worship time is life-giving for her.

Monthly Calendar Reviewed.

Old Business:

- Seeking Chinese Dinner Recruits to help with plans for things like 1 or 2 seatings, decorations, etc.
- Chinese Dinner is planned for February 1 with classes scheduled on January 19th.

New Business: none

Motion to adjourn made by Marilyn S and seconded by Dave B. Passed.

Submitted by: Sherry Monson (Recording Secretary)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:00am Sun- day Worship	28 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	29 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	30 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Aca- pella Group	31 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	1 Office Closed	2
3 9:00am Diaco- nate Meeting 10:00am Communion 10:00am Sun- day Worship 11:15am Christian Ed. Mtg	4 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	5 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	6 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Aca- pella Group	7 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 1:00pm - 3:00pm Peter Kwong Cook- ing Class	8 Office Closed	9 6:45am Ruby's Pantry Volunteers 7:30am - 9:00am Ruby's Pantry Dis- tribution at SMC 10:00am Share a Share Volunteers
10 Budget and Election after the Worship Service 9:00am Mis- sion Team Meeting 10:00am Sun- day Worship	11 Rae Vacation 7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Club at Our Saviors 6:30pm Boy Scouts	12 Rae Vacation 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	13 Rae Vacation 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 6:00pm Fire Starters 7:00pm Aca- pella Group 7:00pm Trus- tee Mtg.	14 Rae Vacation 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm - 7:00pm Pray- er Service	15 Office Closed	16
17 8:00am Coun- cil Mtg. 10:00am Sun- day Worship 12:00pm - 1:00pm Com- munity Youth Event Lunch and Turkey Trot	18 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	19 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm Gaither Video	20 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Aca- pella Group	21 9:00am Minis- terium 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	22 Office Closed	23
24 10:00am Sun- day Worship	25 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	26 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	27 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Thanksgiving Community Service at St.	28 Thanksgiving - Office Closed	29 Office Closed	30 9:30am Hanging Greens