

The Reverend's Ruminations

As I sit down to reflect with you, the Minnesota State Fair has just kicked off—signifying for many a rapid downslope to Labor Day, and with it, the passing of another summer. I'm sure I'm not alone in wondering where those "lazy days of summer" went!?! Despite spurts of rain, and the recent smoky haze of distant wildfires, summer has been quite nice in Fairmont. I hope that you have had the chance to enjoy some of the sights, sounds, and activities that make summer in Minnesota so special!

With the inevitable return to school creeping up on children and parents alike, changes to the summer routine are upon us at church too. Beginning the Sunday after Labor Day (September 9) we will return to our "normal" 10:30am worship services; however, this year the start of Sunday School classes has been shifted to September 30. RALLY SUNDAY will take place on September 16, with fun activities for all ages and children's choir rehearsal in anticipation of a BIG EVENT in the life of our congregation the next week.

In case you somehow missed hearing about it, we will be celebrating the SESQUICENTENNIAL (150th anniversary) of First Congregational United Church of Christ on the weekend of September 22-23! We are looking forward to another famous (infamous?) talent/variety show that Saturday, and a great "family reunion" meal after our worship service that Sunday. We're hoping to pack the house both days with members, UCC MN Conference representatives, relatives, former pastors, former members, and friends. There's more information throughout this newsletter, so mark your calendar for an exciting weekend!

A big part of such an historical event in the life of a church, by its very nature, is looking back at the glory days of the congregation. The Sesquicentennial Committee and many of you have been adding photos and clippings to the bulletin board at the back of the narthex, and we plan to have many other items of interest for guests to peruse that weekend which will help you recall some of your favorite church memories. But more challenging than sorting through the cobwebs of our memories is the opportunity to look at our future in light of those glories of our past. We are a church family that, like many others, has had blessings as well as challenges. Much like the community around us, we may be tempted to look at a shrinking area population in rural Minnesota and wonder what the future holds. I challenge you to look not at the limitations, but at our opportunities.

In my time as your pastor so far (over a year and a half already), I've had a chance to get to know some of you fairly well, while at the same time there are still many I know very little about. Let's work together to change that, whether over coffee somewhere or with a short office or home visit! Those I've gotten to know have shared fond recollections of First Congo's heyday, clued me in to some things that have or haven't worked in the past, and expressed dreams about what the future holds.

Ideas are out there, but they are nothing if they're not shared. I would love to hear from you! One thing I've learned from years in the military is that if something needs improvement we need to present possible courses of action rather than just complaints, so that an informed decision can be made and projects can move forward. If you've noticed a need, then perhaps you have a role to play in its solution! That's part of the beauty of our Congregational form of government.

Together we will continue to make First Congregational UCC a welcoming, relevant place for people of all ages to hear the Good News of Christ Jesus. We are not defined by a beautiful historic building, or even the number of people in it, but by what we do with the faith that unites us.

Yours in Christ's service,

Rev. Cory Germain