

October 2017 Pastor's Page

I took a beautiful drive one recent Sunday in the late afternoon, in no particular hurry, and was astounded once more with the beauty of our surrounding countryside. It truly is a contrast to the sandy landscape I was looking at during much of 2016, and reminded me how fortunate we are to be surrounded by such fertile soil and everything that grows in it. On this day, the sun was warming my arm as I rested it on the open window, while the sky was a brilliant blue—lending that autumn glow to the drying fields and tinges of color on the trees of our county. The air was warm, but dry with an edge of crispness. If you haven't done so recently, you really should take a laidback drive through the area before our most famous season sets in!

Autumn truly is my favorite time of the year, and I annually find myself wishing that it was this nice all year round. But all too soon it will change, so the best I could do was take a deep breath and lift words of praise God for such a wonderful creation. I hope that you have had the experience of being moved to such spontaneous prayer by our great God.

Of course fall also brings a season of busyness—school is in full swing with all its requisite extra-curricular activities, and harvest is just around the corner all across southern Minnesota. Here at First Congregational United Church of Christ, our worship service moved back to 10:30, Sunday School is back in session, confirmation will soon begin, and even the menus of upcoming free community meals reflect our tastes as the temperatures turn cooler!

There is no shortage of things to do, particularly at this time of year, and our world seems to be getting busier and less respectful of the Sabbath, but I pray that for you church and its activities are not secondary items to do as the agenda of your life allows. Even at church we can sometimes get overwhelmed if we seem to be the go-to person each time something is happening, but the beauty of a congregation is that it is a fellowship of believers. Each of us brings talents and abilities to the table, so that no single person should have to carry all the weight or responsibility.

There are opportunities now before us for you to get involved and keep this church a vibrant example of God's work in our own community: our annual Harvest Festival with its famous ham loaf dinner doesn't plan or prepare itself. Sunday School can always use extra leaders, and our older youth could benefit from someone to lead an occasional (or recurring) fun activity with a focus on Christ. Seasonal decorations are also just around the corner if you're the crafty type or have an artistic eye.

Another church year will also be ending before we know it, which will mean some of our council, board, and committee members will be finished with their terms. If you've ever considered taking your turn, or know someone who you think would be a leader within the congregation, please let nominating committee members Eric B. Johnson, Dan Thate, Donna Grotte, Sherry Larson know so that we don't scramble to find willing and able candidates as that time approaches. Please consider stepping into one of the many roles that keep this congregation such a vital and vibrant family of God!

One of the most important things you can do to help ensure the continuing success of our church and its mission is to support it financially. I will stop short of a stewardship plea in this space, but I do ask you to prayerfully consider the annual stewardship materials that should have recently arrived in your mailbox from our finance board. Pledges are a vital tool in order to budget for the upcoming church year, so please make sure your pledge card is returned, either in the included envelope or in person at church. In that spirit, I close with this inspirational poem from H.S. Rice, entitled "Just For You":

*The more you give, the more you get.
The more you laugh, the less you fret.
The more you do unselfishly,
the more you live abundantly.
The more of everything you share,
the more you'll always have to spare.
The more you love, the more you'll find
that life is good and friends are kind.
For only what we give away,
enriches us from day to day.*

Have a happy, healthy, safe, and abundant harvest season!

Reverend Cory Germain