



September 2020 Bell Tower

First Congregational
United Church of Christ

We Are Open and Affirming

1111 North Chicago Avenue,
South Milwaukee, WI 53172



Pastor: Rev. Beth Abbott * firstcongspastor@gmail.com * (414) 762-3121
firstcongsm@gmail.com * firstconguccsm.com * Youtube Channel: FirstCongSMUCC
Cemetery congcemeterysm@gmail.com
Like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ South Milwaukee

Dear Church,

As a child, I delighted my family (*or annoyed them?!)* with my trivial knowledge that the shortest Bible verse is “*He wept.*” (John 11:35). Jesus openly grieves his dear friend Lazarus’ death. *He wept.* Knowing the loss breaks Jesus open—gushing ugly tears—makes him deeply human to us.

The translation we use in worship (NRSV) may not be the shortest as it is “*Jesus began to weep.*” His sweeping *started* that day in Bethany (as it had many times before).

His weeping continues with families torn-apart and children caged at the border. He weeps at our country—politically fractured, stricken with this monster of a virus, brazenly unwilling to acknowledge the white supremacy that threatens our BIPOC* (*Black, Indigenous, People of Color*) neighbors’ lives.

Now, Jesus weeps with yet another black family. This time it is for our Kenosha neighbor, Jacob Blake. Jesus’ tears will not stop—especially for Jacob’s children who will carry with them their whole lives the trauma of eye-witnessing white officers shoot their father, black and unarmed, multiple times.

This news should make us weep and gush ugly tears as Jesus does. News like this will not change if we don’t change. Unless we, as predominately white, hear the weeping of our BIPOC* neighbors and ***do something*** about it, it will only be a matter of time before the weeping slays again. So...

Start now—support national or local [black-owned businesses](#) or [shops](#).

Start today—make intentional eye contact with BIPOC* in your grocery store

Start this moment—tell your elected officials systemic racism is not okay in our community nor anywhere and urge them to take meaningful action now

My pastoral prayer is that weeping will not be our sole response but that our weeping fuels our efforts toward a world where no one is wounded or killed out of systemic intolerance and hatred. May it be so.

Pastor Beth

*POC (*People of Color*)=non-whites but BIPOC “*highlights the unique experiences of & relationship to white supremacy that Indigenous & Black people have*” in the US. [The BIPOC Project](#)

As We Worship Online ‘Together’ in September:

Join us **10a Sundays** or after 6a via **FirstCongSMUCC** on youtube (‘subscribe’ if you haven’t yet), our facebook page, or the link in the weekly church email. Watch or re-watch it anytime & share it with friends/family!

- Sept. 6** **2nd Annual Ask Pastor Beth**
[Romans 13:8-10](#) Paul’s reminder that love is the ‘fulfilling of the law’
Please note: we’ll celebrate communion next Sunday (13th)
- Sept. 13** **Covenant Renewal Sunday**
[Psalm 149](#) & [Matthew 18:15-20](#)
A Baptism, Communion, Choir—all to renew our Covenant as the church!
- Sept. 20** [Exodus 16:2-15](#) God feeds the hungry wilderness wanderers with manna
For what are we hungry? What are we needing spiritually?
- Sept. 27** **Bible Sunday**
[Exodus 17:1-7](#) & [Philippians 2:1-13](#) God quenches the thirst of Moses’ desert crew
A ‘Back-to-School’ brushing up of our biblical knowledge
- Oct. 4** **World Communion Sunday**

A Bittersweet Update

We’ve received news that Tom & Debbie Payden will transfer their membership to Bethel Bethany UCC in the heart of Sherman Park. While it isn’t normative for us to announce such news in the Bell Tower, it is normative for clergy to transfer their membership upon retirement. Please join me in prayerful thanksgiving that they have found a faith community that can help nurture and nourish them at this stage of their journey. If you have further questions, contact Pastor Beth.

Farewell

Blessings

Lunches for Seniors

Are you an older adult (60 and better) who would like to receive a daily nutritious carryout lunch? Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin (SOA) provides lunches Monday-Friday from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM for pick up curbside at our senior centers. Delivery can also be arranged if you are unable to get to the center. Reservations required 24 hours in advance, please call the following SOA senior center to make a reservation:

Kelly Senior Center
6100 S. Lake Dr., Cudahy
414-483-3532



Stockbox

A Stockbox is a box of healthy foods that Hunger Task Force delivers to low-income seniors free of charge. Each box contains 16 nutritious items including rice, cereal, juice, beef stew, pasta and vegetables. Every month nearly 9,000 boxes are delivered to seniors in southeastern Wisconsin. Each of our five senior centers participate in a Stockbox distribution day once a month. Visit your site's page in this guide to learn the date or call your senior center.

In order to qualify for a Stockbox you must:

- Be 60 or better
- Live in the Milwaukee area
- Meet certain income requirements



First Congregational Church UCC South Milwaukee has been issued a **\$60.89** donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation as a result of AmazonSmile program activity between April 1 and June 30, 2020.

From the Trustees

New Roof – What we still owe

WOW! We are getting there! We need just **\$2,259.20** more to meet our total cost of \$20,765 for the new roof. The Trustees have been so encouraged by your generosity so far. *(Please indicate "Roof" on your check or e-giving).* **We are so grateful for your donations.**

Treasurers Report - Ending Aug 31, 2020

Operating Account

Beginning Bal.	\$ 8,758.97
Receipts	\$ 9,909.05
Expenses	<u>\$ 10,072.01</u>
Ending Bal.	\$ 8,596.01

Benevolence Account

Beginning Bal.	\$ 0.00
Receipts	\$ 2,411.00
Expenses	<u>\$ 2,411.00</u>
Ending Bal.	\$ 0.00

Payroll Protection Program

<u>Loan</u>	
Beginning Bal.	\$ 0.00
Receipts	\$ 0.00
Expenses	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Ending Bal.	\$ 0.00

We had to borrow \$10,000 last year to meet expenses. We now have enough to repay the loan. This amount has been deducted from the Operating Account balance.

We are thankful for your faith-filled giving!

*Whether large and small, your giving enables us to "Be the Church." Thank you for all the ways you give!
Further suggestions for supporting our faith community:*

- **Switch to E-giving (even temporarily);** visit firstconguccsm.com to sign up
- **Mail a check** (1111 N. Chicago Ave. South Milwaukee, WI 53172) or drop your offering in the secure, parking lot mail slot
- **"Bill pay" your offering** through your bank as you might with other bills
- **Use PayPal** via firstconguccsm.com
- Yearly givers (or occasional givers), prayerfully **consider a gift** by donating now instead of at year-end (or even a partial donation now)
- **Or, let us know what other means you would strongly consider utilizing** to share in your financial support of FCUCC!

*Whichever way(s) you support our ministries, **we are thankful** for your generosity and your deep passion for our church.*

Mission Opportunities

Neighbors in Need

Neighbors in Need is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of **Neighbors in Need** funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry. Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. **Neighbors in Need** grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.



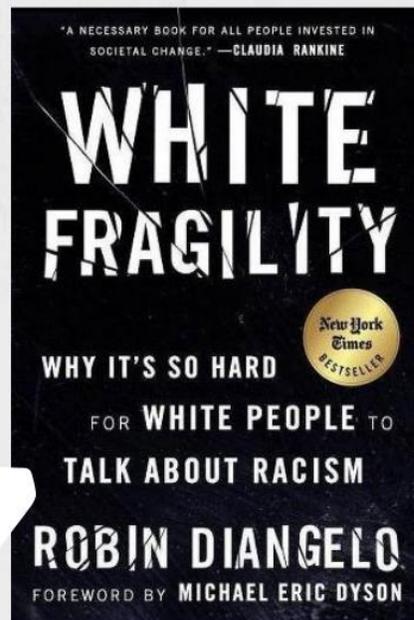
[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Our congregation generally receives the **Neighbors in Need** offering on the first Sunday in October as part of the World Communion Sunday observance. Please consider adding an extra contribution during the month of September or on October 4, 2020, marking this specific project on your envelope or add it to your e-giving.

Thank you for assisting with the **Neighbors in Need** advocacy efforts.

Coming soon!

Our Mission Committee is planning an **All-Church read & discussion:**



Stay connected for more info!

Spread the Word!

Our youtube channel **FirstCongSMUCC** retains past worship services, so **feel free to 'go back' anytime to catch any you've missed** or revisit ones you enjoyed. Feel free to also share our services with friends/family! Thanks to you, we now have people across the country worshipping with us.

Watch as a church at 10a (starting Labor Day weekend) or anytime after 6a!

Be a Part of Our Digital Worship!

Contact Pastor Beth to express your willingness to be a part of our Sunday worship! Record your assigned part at home on your own time (you're given easy-to-follow recording instructions) and be a part of what God's doing through our church.

Share In:

Longer or Shorter Reading Parts

Scriptures

Other Parts of Worship

Wilderness Covenant

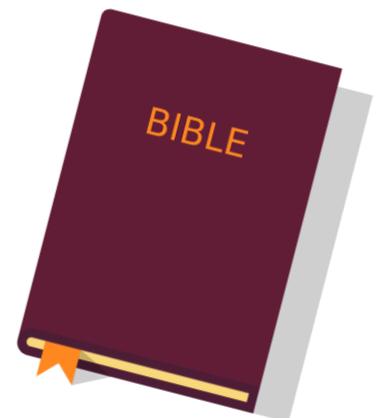
Parts with Other Voices

Or Music—we'd love your musical participation too!

Everyone can be a part of worship! Let us know!



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Faith communities provide a natural setting for suicide prevention. Spiritual beliefs and practices can help people experience greater hope and meaning in their lives. Faith communities also can provide opportunities for developing positive relationships with others and can be an important source of support during difficult times.



During Suicide Prevention Awareness Month – and year-round – faith communities can raise awareness of suicide, including its warning signs, how to support those at risk for suicide and where to access help, through flyers, posters, newsletter articles, online classes and other outlets.

Other ways faith communities can make a difference:

- Create a support group for suicide loss survivors - friends and family members affected by the suicide loss of a loved one.
- Have plans in place to respond to people showing warning signs of suicide.
- Offer support to members facing challenges with their relationships, jobs, health, or other concerns.
- Expand options for temporary help for those struggling to make ends meet.
- Encourage members to seek help, and provide referrals to mental health, substance use disorder, legal, or financial counseling services as needed.
- Apply policies that create a healthy environment and reduce stigma about seeking help.

Prayer: Guide us in caring for one another. Give us courage to reach out to those experiencing pain of mind and spirit. May we share Your comfort and love with them.

9/2020  AdvocateAuroraHealth™

NAVIGATING a mental health CRISIS



WARNING SIGNS of Suicide

- Giving away personal possessions
- Talking as if saying goodbye or going away forever
- Taking steps to tie up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Making or changing a will
- Collecting and saving pills or buying a weapon
- Saying things like "Nothing matters anymore," "You'll be better off without me"
- Withdrawing from friends, family and normal activities
- Increasing drug or alcohol use

WHAT TO DO if You Suspect Someone is Thinking About Suicide

If you notice warning signs, or if you're concerned someone is thinking about suicide, don't be afraid to talk to them about it.



START the conversation by sharing specific signs you've noticed, like:

"I've noticed lately that you haven't been sleeping, aren't interested in social activities, are posting a lot of sad song lyrics online, etc."



Then say something like:

- ✓ "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- ✓ "Do you have a plan?"
- ✓ "Do you know how you would do it?"

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," seek help immediately.

- Don't leave them alone and stay calm
- Call their therapist or other health care professional
- Remove potential means, such as weapons and medications
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-8255 or call 911
- If the situation is life-threatening, call 911 and ask for someone with mental health experience to respond, like a Crisis Intervention Team.

LISTEN, EXPRESS CONCERN, REASSURE

"I may not understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

"I'm concerned about you and I want you to know there is help to get you through this."

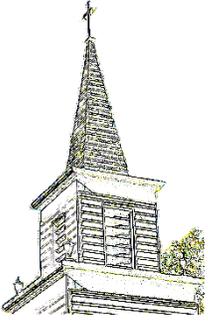
"You are important to me; we will get through this together."

  NAMI  NAMICommunicate  NAMICommunicate  www.nami.org



If you or someone you know is in crisis, or is experiencing suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.

 AdvocateAuroraHealth™



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL United Church of Christ
1111 N. Chicago Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September 2020 Bell Tower

Pastor: Rev. Beth Abbott * firstcongsmpastor@gmail.com * (414) 762-3121
firstcongsm@gmail.com * firstconguccsm.com * Youtube Channel: FirstCongSMUCC
Cemetery congcemeterysm@gmail.com
Like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ South Milwaukee

