



Wisconsin Congregationalist

A Publication of the
Wisconsin Congregational Association



A Moment with the Moderator

My term as your Moderator is almost over, and this will be my last column in the Congregationalist. This has turned out to be one of the most interesting years of my life. At last year's Annual Meeting in Mukwonago, the Executive Committee received several charges from you, the membership. We were asked to come up with a financial plan, form a Host Committee for the 2009 National Meeting to be held in Milwaukee, evaluate the job description of the Resource Person, explore the consolidation of the WCA and the Ministers' Association, and contact Hayward about hosting this year's Annual Meeting. We worked diligently this year to address all of these charges.

Our finances were the most urgent of our issues. Over the summer, I spoke with my contact at the Lilly Foundation and was told that grants were not available to fund staff salaries or ongoing general expenses. We stepped up our fund appeals, and invited individuals to contribute, which did result in a modest increase in giving. But with the NACCC Annual Meeting looming and our funds shrinking, we finally felt we had no option but to discontinue the Resource position. Since then, we have been able to publish this newsletter at a very reasonable cost, and the other functions that were handled by our staff person are being done by volunteers. The budget that we will ask you to approve at next month's meeting actually shows a modest surplus, and it will be your privilege in future years to dedicate those funds to meaningful mission, outreach, educational, and service opportunities.

The Host Committee for the 2009 NACCC Annual Meeting is up and running, with Jim Benz from Wauwatosa as our capable chair. He has already met several times with the NA office and with the Moderator of that meeting, and has some great contacts with the Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau. We can all look forward to a fine meeting in June 2009!

Early in the year, the evaluation of the Resource Position was conducted and found to be satisfactory. Unfortunately, as I have said, the funds to continue the position were not there. We are very grateful to Cheryl Stapleton for all that she did for us.

In the fall, a committee was formed to examine the constitutions for the WCA and the Ministers' Association. The committee has studied several constitutions from states in which these two functions take place in one organization, and has painstakingly come up with a new proposed constitution for our two combined associations. This will be presented in April and come to a vote at the following meeting in 2009 – there will be plenty of time for questions and comments in both associations!

And finally, though Hayward was contacted about hosting the meeting, they declined to extend the invitation, so this year's meeting will be hosted by North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. The Executive Committee has planned a wonderful theme: "How To..." be the most effective church we can possibly be. Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Les Longden, who will inspire us on how to share God's news today, and on how to lead our churches into God's future. Please see the registration form and other articles in this newsletter for more on this meeting, and send in your registration today.

In closing, I would like to thank all who have been so helpful this year. The Executive Committee has worked very hard and has taken their responsibilities very seriously. I have a lot of confidence in Rae-Ellen Preuss, who will take the Moderator's position after me. The Constitutional Committee has been diligent and passionate. Rick Hartley and his son have done a wonderful job with our website, the Youth and Camp Committee have planned and carried out experiences that our young people will never forget, and Judi in the office at Mukwonago is an amazing newsletter editor.

At our last Executive Committee meeting, we looked around the room at each face before our closing prayer, and gave thanks for all that has happened this year. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to serve you. I look forward to seeing you all on April 25 and 26!

Rev. Sue LeFeber
Moderator, Wisconsin Congregational Association



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WISCONSIN
CONGREGATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

Upcoming WCTS Meeting

The Wisconsin Congregational Theological Society has no requirements for membership, save that one come with mind and heart open and engaged. We welcome all Congregationalists – whether ordained or not – to discuss issues of importance to those who seek to walk our Way. The list of other presenters and the dates of meetings are below.

(There is one meeting left this spring ~ check the website for future dates.)

May 15

Rev. Kathy Rust

Central Congregational Church - Galesburg, IL

PURITAN PAPERS

THE READING OF THE PURITAN PAPERS MEETS APRIL 17 IN RICHFIELD AT 10:00 A.M. WE ARE DISCUSSING THE THIRD SECTION.

CONTACT RICK HARTLEY 363-7249
PASTOR@FCCMUKWONAGO.ORG
FOR MORE DETAILS.

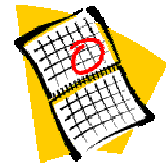
Going Green

In an effort to conserve our resources we are asking that churches receiving this newsletter by mail consider one or more of the following:

- Reduce the number of newsletters mailed to you.
- Receive one newsletter and reproduce as needed.
- Go paperless and have the newsletter sent to your e-mail address.
- View the newsletter online at www.wiscongregational.net

You can contact the newsletter staff at office@fccmukwonago.org
Thank you!

Dates
to
Note



April 4-5

Sr. High Spring Rally
North Shore Congregational

April 17

Puritan Papers Reading

April 18-19

Jr. High Spring Rally
2nd Cong. Beloit

April 25-26

WCA Annual Meeting

April 28 – May 1

NACCC Ministers Convocation

May 14

WCMA

May 15

WCTS

July 6-12

WCA Camp

Wisconsin Congregational Ministers' Association (WCMA) Schedule

(Subject to Change)

April 28 – May 1, 2008

NACCC Convocation—Mundelein, IL

May 14, 2008

Rev. Paul Ray

First Congregational Church

100 S. State St. Rochester, WI 53167

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First Congregational, Wauwatosa
414-258-7375

Looking to the Future

As we are approaching our annual meeting the end of April, we need to focus on our future plans. The WCA has developed a five year cycle to plan locations of our Annual Meetings. This spring we are invited to North Shore Congregational Church. In 2009 we anticipate being at Heritage in Madison. So, it is time to build another five year plan.

We would like to plan this schedule at our 2008 meeting. Please consider hosting a meeting over the next five years. Talk to your pastor, church council or executive committee and be prepared to make a commitment to your WCA on April 26th.

Rae-Ellen Preuss
Moderator Elect



North Shore Congregational Church

“No one has seen God at anytime. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit.” (1 John 4: 12-13) His Spirit is moving and shaking at North Shore Congregational Church. The parking lot fills up early not only with choir members but with congregants hungry for the Word of God in our education hour. Our adult Bible class had to move out of the library into a larger meeting place and relocate from there to the chapel due to congestion. Nudged by the Spirit, our congregation courageously voted to change our Sunday morning worship schedule. Emboldened by our theme, “Follow the Fire” we wanted an opportunity to grow spiritually and to worship in family units. North Shore wanted more than an easy on/easy off approach to Sunday worship. The 8 o’clock service remains the same but 9:15 to 10:15 has become an enrichment hour for adults and a Sunday school hour for the young. The worship service follows at 10:30. For me, Sunday morning has become a time away, a time to refresh and renew before the rigors of another week begin.

Following a joyous and uplifting Mazahua Sunday, planning started for next year’s mission trip to Mission Mazahua in Mexico. A *Balmy Tuscan Evening* was planned to take our minds off the freezing temperatures and the mountains of snow outside and to raise funds for next years’ trip. We ate delicious Italian food, bid on an array of auction items and shared wonderful fellowship for a worthy cause.

This Lenten season has been made holier for many by participation in a Kerygma series entitled *Hosanna*, led by Rev. Karl Schimpf and Rev. Sue LeFeber. The evening begins as we gather in prayer and enjoy the best soup this part of the world has to offer. The delicious meal is prepared by ladies who really know how to make soup! They are affectionately referred to as the super Soupers. Following our supper, sans cookies during Lent, we study the week leading up to Our Lord’s death and resurrection from the perspective of each of the gospel writers. It is a time for reflection and enrichment.

As we, a faith community, endeavor to do God’s will, we are meeting monthly to try to discern what it is that God would have us do with our talents and other gifts. We attempt to open ourselves in order to hear what the Spirit is leading us toward. Through prayer and attention we hope to “follow the fire” and perceive God’s plan for the coming days and years.

God has blessed North Shore with a parish nurse who personifies the best in ministry. Dottie Schimpf wanted to start a Stephen Ministry program at North Shore because she knew it would bless us; not only the care receivers but the care givers. The second class of Stephen Ministers has been commissioned and we are looking toward a third. A new leader has been commissioned giving us a total of five who have gone through the leadership training program. The Spirit led and many followed.

Our diaconate is reinstating a shepherding program that existed for years whereby all members are contacted and assured that this faith community cares about them and is there to help them in their walk. The trustees are in the thick of planning a new church kitchen which must delight the Soupers. The stewardship committee is overseeing our participation in the NACCC’s *Branching Out* project. And our ubiquitous seminarian Julie Smith is planning an Eggstravaganza of movies, egg coloring and hunt with dinner. Membership is growing, more and more kids are learning about the God who loves them. It is a beautiful thing to watch as North Shore drinks from a saucer because our cup is overflowing.

Arena Congregational Church

It has been a busy and very rewarding time for the members and friends of the Arena Congregational Church. Our Lenten project this year is to fill the arks for Heifer Project International. The coin banks are jingling. The Good Friday Service will be joint worship with the UCC Church in Mazomanie. The Easter Sunrise service will be community-wide with churches from Arena, Mazomanie and Black Earth held at Vermont Lutheran Church. On Easter Sunday five people will officially unite with our congregation.

First Congregational Church, Oshkosh

On February 3rd, Ralph and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder celebrated with First twenty years of ministry together. “We are truly grateful to be part of this community of faith – a group of people that are deeply committed to making a difference in Oshkosh because of their faith, always open to trying new ways of ministry. They are a remarkable congregation!” said the co-pastors. The church was gathered in 1849, and has always been known in Oshkosh as a church involved in the community, with a wonderful music program.

First Tuesdays at First Congregational is completing its fourth very successful season of wonderful music at noon, followed by a full luncheon of fresh-baked breads, soups, and salad. 125 to 200 people each month (October – December and February – April) gather in the sanctuary for classical music, barbershop, jazz, folk, and opera too – performed by local professional musicians who share their gifts at no cost – and then stay for the lunch. The whole event is free, but freewill donations more than cover the cost of the meal.

To honor those Americans who have lost their lives since the invasion of Iraq, and to remind us of the human cost of that war, we have on display in the narthex every Sunday a notebook with 155 pages of their names, and the date each died. At the center of the book are other facts about the war, including that as of March 5th of this year 81,632 Iraqi civilians have been killed (these are just the deaths that have been carefully documented). Each Sunday in worship we light our “peace candle” as we pray for peace in our world, and peace in our hearts.

First Congregational Church of Kenosha

Greetings to our sister churches of the WCA in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We are blessed at First Congregational Church of Kenosha to welcome the Rev. Shawn P. Stapleton as our new settled pastor and teacher. Pastor Shawn comes to us after seven years of ministering in Beloit, WI, and so is no stranger to our association. He officially began ministering among us in the frigid winds of January, commuting from Beloit several times a week. We pray all of you will come celebrate his installation at our meetinghouse in April!

Our day care continues to serve families of Kenosha and surrounding communities. At this writing we are serving more than 80 children, many of whom are from low-income families. We not only teach them the educational basics necessary for the students to start school, but we also share with them the glories of God’s love for them in Christ. We are truly privileged to serve these children in this way.

We also continue to serve breakfast each Sunday morning to 70 or so poor or homeless individuals and families. It breaks our hearts to see these people of God struggling, especially in the winter months. Several of the saints of our fellowship give of their time and talents to feed our neighbors, trusting that as we do so, we are feeding Christ in our midst (Matthew 25:35).

We pray that the Lord continues to bless you in your ministries!



Plan to Attend the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Congregational Association: “How To...”

This is it – our annual family reunion – and all members of WCA churches, paid and unpaid, are encouraged to come and join in. The focus of this meeting will be “How To...” be the most faithful and effective churches we can possibly be in the service of our Lord Christ.

We begin with a wonderful guest speaker, Dr. Leicester (Les) Longden, Associate Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Prior to joining the faculty there, he pastored several churches, finally serving as Senior Pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church (600 members, 700 in worship) in Lansing, Michigan. He earned his B.D. at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and his Ph.D. at Drew University in Madison, NJ. Les has significant career experience in teaching in both academic and local church settings, and is looking forward to being with us.

Les will start us off on Friday evening with a session on spreading God’s news in today’s culture. Saturday morning he will spend time with us on the topic of church leadership; all who are in any position of church leadership will find something to take home and put to use! There will be plenty of time at both sessions for your questions and comments.

Our panel discussions will also look at “How To...”, concentrating on the areas of Christian Education, Trustees and Finance, Church Marketing and Growth, and Congregational Care – there will be something for everyone! Again, there will be lots of time for questions, comments, and interactive networking with all the members of our WCA family.

Please fill out the registration (enclosed in this newsletter) and mail it in today. This is a meeting you won’t want to miss!

What: WCA Annual Meeting
When: April 25 & 26, 2008
Where: North Shore Congregational Church

WCA Directory

In a recent letter to all of our member churches we requested an updated listing of contact information. If you haven’t responded yet, please take a moment now. We would like to provide a new directory to all of our churches at the WCA Annual meeting on April 26th.

You may send your information to:

office@fccmukwonago.org

or

First Congregational Church
231 Roberts Drive
Mukwonago, WI 53149

We are looking for the following information:

- Church Name & Address
- Church Phone
- Minister / Phone
- Moderator / Phone
- Any other staff you would like listed
- Year Gathered
- Active Members
- Attendees
- E-mail / Website

WCA Donation Form

In appreciation to the WCA for the opportunities it provides its sister churches and friends to walk together in fellowship, I/we gratefully enclose the following:

Date: _____

Name of Individual or Church: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Please make checks payable to:

The Wisconsin Congregational Association

Please mail to:

WCA Treasurer
c/o Bob Noble
384 Willow Grove Dr. Unit F
Pewaukee, WI 53072



God Bless Your Contributions of Time, Talents, and Resources!