GLAD TIDINGS!

August 2025

Gathered by the lake,
we are
Embraced by God
to **grow**
Empowered by Christ
to **care,**
Enriched by the Holy Spirit
to **celebrate**



Congregational United Church of Christ Neenah / Menasha

Hello Church!

Sylvia Plath's evocative line about August comes from her *Unabridged Journals*, and while it's not part of a longer poem, it stands out for its poetic resonance:

"August rain: the best of the summer gone, and the new fall not yet born. The odd uneven time."

– Sylvia Plath, The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath

This quote captures the transitional melancholy of late summer—when the vibrancy of July fades and the crispness of autumn hasn't yet arrived. It's often interpreted as a metaphor for emotional liminality, a time of reflection and anticipation.

This program year *(Sept – May)* holds opportunities for reflection and anticipation for all of us: our Appreciative Inquiry visioning process led by our trained facilitator, Bonnie Andrews. There is a small write up in this issue of the Glad Tidings from Bonnie that I suggest you read. She introduces herself and simply tells you what this process is and is not.

My description of our process goes like this: **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)** is a powerful, strengths-based approach to visioning and change that works beautifully in a church setting. When used as a **visioning process**, it helps congregations discover their core values, celebrate what's working, and dream together about God's preferred future for their community. This way of listening for God's call as a church focuses on the positive, not the negative, (leave your drama at home), and allows the very best of us, what really matters, to point us in the right direction. AI is a time for the church family to come together to see (vision), celebrate, and dream.

Why are we doing this now? Good question. Lines 38 – 43 in our bylaws refer to the charge given to the Ministry Council to develop a vision and further define a mission for the church, while establishing specific goals that will help us to achieve the high ideals, our call from God to serve and love others, inspired by the gospel.

It only makes sense that over time our vision and mission, and our goals to achieve these ends, may change as does the world we live in and the people who make up the membership of our church and community. This charge reflects the conventional wisdom that every generation must make the church its own for the body of Christ to be healthy, to thrive in its time and place. Why? Because for the gospel to be relevant, to be effective, to be real, it needs to be authentic, and that is because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is contextual.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is contextual because it is deeply rooted in the historical, cultural, social, and religious setting in which it was first revealed and continues to be shared. Jesus lived in first-century Palestine, under Roman occupation, among Jewish communities with specific expectations of a Messiah. Jesus used parables, metaphors, and symbols familiar to his audience—like shepherds, vineyards, and mustard seeds. Jesus went to where the people where and spoke to them in

Continued on next page

their time and place, dealing with their problems, in real time, in context.
While we refer to the gospels and hold dear to many traditions, hymns, sacraments, worship styles, etc., we do not organize and "do church" the way Jesus did, or Paul or his brother James in Jerusalem. We do not understand shepherds, vineyards, and mustard seeds the way they did over 2000 year ago. We don't do church the way our founding pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Walcott did either, quickly outgrowing a school-house and then moving from pub to pub! Both Jesus and Jerimiah took the time to look around and see what resources they had to work with, who they were trying to reach, and what and where God was calling them to go and do, and then they made choices, and set some goals, and moved ahead with a new vision, on a mission, with a renewed sense of purpose. This is exactly what we hope to accomplish with our AI Visioning Process this fall and spring.

This process will take commitment on behalf of both the leaders and members of the church. The old and the young, those who always show up, and those who usually say: *"I trust everyone in charge to do a good job"* and so they don't show up – we need you too. The process is 5 simple meetings over the course of 8 months. One on a Sunday after worship to define a focus, then 4 sessions on Saturdays, all events with a meal, consider them like a retreat. This may seem like a lot, but we feel this is far easier than 9 months of weekly 1-hour meetings. We also believe the process designed in this way allows us to better use our time.

What we need for this to work is:

- your commitment as leaders and members to participate in this once in a generation activity for the benefit of the church, to help us vision, celebrate, and dream
- a few more members to serve on the planning team, who will work with the facilitator to produce and execute, with other job specific volunteers, each of the 5 events
- our leadership and members to remain faithful to the process (miss one, *[it will happen and it's OK]* come to the next one), we need your voice, your point of view, your open heart
- we need our 4 committees (Spiritual Life, Service, Faith Development, Stewardship), and the Ministry Council to commit to having representatives at each meeting and especially at the Jan 31 "Dream" session (in this session the 4 ministries and exec. team will be tasked with coordinating with each other in real time to support the then identified vision, celebration, and dreams of the congregation

Our current list of dates for the process are as follows:
(Note times may finish earlier)
Define: Sunday Sept. 28 – after worship (1-2 hrs.) 11:15AM-1:15PM
Discovery: Saturday November 15 (3-4 hrs.) 3PM-8PM
Dream: Saturday Jan. 31 (5-6 hrs.) 12-5PM
Desing: Saturday March 7 (3-4 hrs.) 12-4PM
Destiny: Saturday (2-3 hrs.) 1-4PM

Please give this opportunity some serious thought and time in prayer. Ask me any questions you may have. I am eager to receive any comments you may then join us, won't you? Help us to direct the future movement of the church for the benefit of the gospel and the community we serve.

A MESSAGE FROM BONNIE ANDREWS, OUR APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (A.I.) FACILITATOR:



Appreciative Inquiry to Begin in September –
I look forward to working with you to explore what God has in store for your congregation. The A.I. process is about building on strengths, not problem solving. This 8-month process will begin with identifying the theme of the inquiry and the positive direction you want to go. From there we discover what gives your congregation life, dream about what you might be, then identify possibilities and create a plan.

The more people we have involved, the more successful the process will be – so please join us!
I am a retired nonprofit leader and have been very involved in my UCC congregation in Milwaukee, and in the work of the Wisconsin Conference. I co-managed local arrangements for the UCC Synod in Milwaukee in 2019, serve on the Conference Supportive Ministries team and have facilitated Appreciative Inquiry, Five Practices, and Communities of Practices for the Conference. I believe the need for the church in the world today is more important than ever.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



Outdoor Worship

***Aug* 17th**

Pet Blessing

Outdoor worship will be held by the Narthex doors. Please bring a lawn chair.

Folding chairs will be available .



CUCCNM is responsible for the Community Table on 3rd Tuesday every other month

August 19th *is our next Community* Table Date

Lots of opportunities to help out…..
Cook
Serve and clean up
Donate items
Thanks for all your help! Any questions please contact Gay Dickson at dickson.anne5@gmail.com



Church office Summer Hours

Monday–Thursday

8:45am-12:30pm



Pastor Rob will be at a Mediattion Skill training conference Aug 11th-15th . He will be back in the office Aug 19th. If you are in need of pastoral care please contact the church office.



8/04 Bob Nault
8/05 Nicky Banks
8/04 Joel Toeppler
8/06 Ellen Montour
8/06 Alyssa Rogoff
8/08 Dan Jischke
8/09 Leon Flesburg
8/12 Kevin Shumann
8/12 Josh Groom
8/15 Dylan L-M.
8/17 Judy Doornbos
8/20 Madison G.
8/21 Sam Chaffin
8/25 Shane Smith
Christopher S.
8/26 Stephanie Swatscheno
Callie Puguh
8/30 Evie J.
8/31 Aidan H.

August 5th
Becky and Jeff Nichols
August 13th
Denise and Jeff Stewart
Mark & Debi Brandenburg
August 16th
Erv and Sharon Wegner
August 22nd
Debra and Bruce Janda
August 26th
Ann and Chuck Luebke
August 28th
Leon and Terri Flesburg
August 28th
Mary and Ralph Liesch

We would like to wish all a happy birthday or anniversary. If your birthday or anniversary was omitted , or you would rather not have it published, please contact church office.



Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers:

Ongoing Prayers:

Marrissa Franke, Ann Luebke, Sherri Jischke, Connie Regazzi, Gay Dickson, Jill Rosenthal, Alanna Smith, Crystal Lingenhag, Larry Olson, Shirl Alix, Tiffany Williams, Dar Schuff, Jerry Hupe.

Homebound:

Judy Doornbos in California, and Carol Wilcox.

Stewardship Committee Update

A word from Jeff Nichols, Stewardship Chair/Coordinator:

December, 2024 we ended with surplus of $43,633. This Amount went into the POF/FFF per the vote at the annual meeting. This surplus was due in part to $6,000 (approx.) in estimated utility costs not being billed until 2025. Also, our giving was $41,122 over our budgeted expectation, which was an amazing blessing.

Now, in 2025 when we budgeted based on 2024 a few things have changed. 1.) Our giving income is less than expected due to not receiving as many advanced pledges as we had in the past. 2.) The $6,000 (approx.) utility expense (meant for 2024) had to be paid in 2025. 3.) $6,850 in pension for pastor's that should have been paid in 2024 were actually paid in 2025.

We confidently believe we are on track to moving into the black. So our current deficit should be more like $1,300. We surveyed our giving patterns and we realized that our pledges are on target, just on an even basis through out the year vs. in the past seeing large sums of money at one time. Please reach out to any Ministry of Stewardship member if you have questions.

Thank you, Jeff Nichols

DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE TO CUCCNM

1.Cash or check in the offering plate or by mailing it to the church.

2. Have your bank send an electronic check. (Bill Pay)

3. Use our QR Code that is linked to our website. Your giving will be taken through Pay Pal were you will use your credit card. *This option charges a fee to the church.*

If you have any questions, please contact Melanie in the church office. office@cuccnm.org or 920-725-4873

Accountant's Corner

INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE

AT THE TIME OF PRINTING.

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1511 Nicolet Blvd.
Neenah Wi 54956
920-725-4873

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Pastor
pastor@cuccnm.org

Church Office
office@cuccnm.org

Christian Education Director
ce@cuccnm.org

Wider Church Contacts:

www.ucc.org
(United Church of Christ)

www.wcucc.org
Wisconsin Conference



As August arrives, I wanted to share a few reflections and updates from the Church Council. While we officially took a break from our regular Council meeting in July, that certainly doesn't mean things slowed down! Many of us on the Council, along with various committees, have been actively working behind the scenes, tying up loose ends and planning for the exciting months ahead.

One highlight I'm particularly proud of this summer was our church's presence at **Fox Valley Pride**. It was a powerful demonstration of our commitment to being an open and affirming community, and it truly embodies the spirit of who we aspire to be. As we look to the future, **full inclusiveness** remains at the forefront of my mind. I've been reflecting on what it means for us to be not just passively inclusive, but **actively inclusive** in all aspects of our church life. How can we ensure everyone feels truly seen, valued, and celebrated within our walls and beyond?

This month also marks a special milestone: **Pastor Rob's one-year anniversary** with us! I am personally incredibly grateful for his partnership, his leadership, and his dedication. Leading this church alongside him, and with all of you, is a true privilege.

Finally, I'm absolutely thrilled about the newly formed **"Fun Committee!"** I'm eagerly anticipating all the creative ways they will help us truly come together in community, fostering deeper relationships and shared joy.

As always, if you have ideas about how we can continue to grow, serve, and be a better church, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you, and have a great rest of your summer!

Signa Meyers



CUCCNM: THE CHURCH BY THE LAKE
CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW
OCTOBER 25TH

If you or anyone you know would be interested please contact Amy at :
Amyboehnlein@gmail.com
(put craft show in subject bar)

$25 for an 8 foot table/ Event is on **Saturday, October 25 from 9am to 2pm** Or just mark your calendars and support our crafters / vendors-while getting a start on your holiday shopping!

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday School will begin on September 7th! 3k-8th grade attend Sunday School from 10:30am-11:15am, while 9th-12th grade will attend Sunday School from 11:30am-12:15pm. Youth in 3K-8th grade will start the morning off in church with their parents and will be excused to class with their teachers following **The Way**, the children's message. Youth ages 3K-5th grade need to be picked up in their classroom (room 4 & 6) by their guardian. Older youth will be excused to the lounge after class.

There are a few new changes in our Sunday School program for this year.

The 1st Sunday of every month will be **What's the Scoop?** A one-room classroom for youth 3K-12th grade, in Fellowship Hall. Youth will return to worship for Communion.

Classrooms will be divided as follows:

3K-2nd grade- in room 4, taught by high school youth, during worship
3rd-5th grade- in room 6, taught by a rotation of adults, during worship
6th-8th grade- in room 7, taught by 2 adults, during worship
9th-12th grade- in room 7, taught by a rotation of adults, **AFTER worship**

1st Sunday- No after worship class for high school
2nd Sunday- Gospel Project
3rd Sunday- Crosswalk
4th Sunday- Gospel Project or Story Corp Faith Edition

WHY THE CHANGE IN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS?

A fresh new look for High School Sunday School.

As our youth grow up and move into and out of the high school program, we realize that our teaching model needs to grow with them.

Years ago, the Ministry of Faith Development (MoFD) changed Sunday School, 3K-8th grade to during church vs before church. They did this because the Sunday School program, the families attending it, had changed. The first year was an experimental year if attendance did not grow or if it fell, they would switch back to meeting before worship. After the first year – where attendance grew by nearly 15 students each week, MoFD continued to survey families and youth to make sure Sunday School during worship was still the preference.

MoFD noticed the decrease in the High School program. Once a thriving program now has an average attendance of 2. We asked the youth what they would like the High School program to look like.

With their guidance, MoFD has put together a new High School program, running AFTER church from 11:30-12:15.

1st Sundays- No after worship high school Sunday School. However High School youth are asked to participate in What's the Scoop- A one room Sunday School, during worship, where all our students come together to learn with and from each other. (3K-12th Grade)

Crosswalk - Pastor Rob takes the high school students off campus once a month to talk about the parables of Jesus at various locations across the valley.

The Gospel Project - A progressive multimedia sourced, lectionary based, conversation that helps our older youth connect the text in the Bible with events in their daily lives.

Story Corps: Faith Edition – A special guest shares their faith journey with the youth.

5th Sundays - When there are 5 Sundays in a month there will be no after worship high school Sunday school.

Similar to moving Sunday School to take place during worship, this will be an experimental year. If there is no growth or attendance dwindles, we will be open to moving it back to a time prior to worship. This also goes for programming. If there is something the youth do not like, we will take their feedback into consideration. Knowing that the youth change, aging in and out of high school, this program will be fluid. We know this is a big change, and we want to thank everyone in advance for their patience with this new program.

Ministry of Faith Development



PANCAKE BREAKFAST

We will be hosting a **Pancake Breakfast September 7th from 9:00-10:00am** in Fellowship Hall. You will be able to register for Sunday School, get to know your teachers, and enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast!



Colorado Springs, CO Mission Trip- Summer 2026 for High School Youth

June14-19, 2026 the high school youth (finishing 9th grade) will be heading to Colorado Springs, CO for a Youth Mission Trip! (with travel dates: June 13-21). If your youth is interested in joining us, please contact Alanna now. Registration for Colorado Springs, CO is happening now!



YOUTH'S MUSICAL TALENTS

Does your youth have a musical talent that they would be willing to share with the congregation? We would love for them to share it,
either as an individual or as a group. Please contact Alanna or Jill at jellenrosen@gmail.com to set up a time to share their talent in worship.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

First Congregational Appleton has invited our youth to join their VBS, Galactic Blast, **9:00am-12:00pm OR August 25-28.** The youth will hear scripture, sing songs, have snacks, read stories, do a science project, play games, and more while learning about God and this amazing world! Scan the QR code or email rsalvia@uccappleton.org to register for VBS. (see poster)



ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

I would like to thank the church community for allowing me to be a delegate to the Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting. The meeting was held at the Green Lake Conference Center. The theme was "Transformation: Changing from Glory into Glory."

In a series of actions, delegates voted to restructure the Conference to place a priority on relationships among individuals and congregations and the sharing of ministry resources. First, representatives of our four historic associations voted in overwhelming numbers to dissolve. Then, in plenary session, Annual Meeting delegates voted to transfer ecclesiastical duties formerly carried out by the associations to a Unified Committee on Ministry; transfer stewardship of former association funds to the Conference; and amend Conference bylaws to reflect the shift to a single statewide judicatory body. Now, there are three Regions that replace the four Associations as previously structured. At the annual meeting I was pleased to be installed as a member of the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Conference of the UCC. I will attend quarterly meetings to help shape and coordinate the vision of the conference and carry out responsibilities as stated in the By-laws. I will represent the Eastern Region of which CUCCNM is a part of.

Our keynote speaker was UCC General Minister and President Karen Georgia Thompson.
Her message told attendees that the transformation of the wider church begins in the spiritual practices of individuals. **"**Our spiritual practices help us to heal and live into the wholeness of who we are called to be," she said. "And I believe who we are called to be is for the transformation of the church and the world. She added: "Our spiritual lives are not meant for ourselves…. They are for the community. In much the same way we need community to nurture our faith, we Delegates unanimously approved a request from the Palestine Justice Working Group to extend until Annual Meeting 2026 the period available to study the Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel adopted by General Synod in 2021. If 30 percent of Wisconsin congregations – that's 62 churches – study the issue, the 2026 Annual Meeting will vote on a resolution of witness to adopt the 2021 declaration.

For years, people have asked why we schedule Annual Meeting on a weekend that's chock-full of Pride celebrations and graduations. We hear you. Next year, with no spring association meetings, Annual Meeting will take place April 10-11 at Green Lake Conference Center. The Conference has secured April dates for the next four years – all of them after Easter.

Thank you for supporting me, Marilyn Kostrzak

Dear Pastor Rob

Samaritan sincerely thinks you and your congregation for making us a part of your mission. Your gift allows us to continue to plant seeds of hope for the future and to continue to provide mental health care for everyone who needs it.
J Noe Cross



Hello

Church staff and anyone who helped with my dad's funeral. It was a beautiful service. The luncheon was very nice too. I'm sorry this note is so late. My mom had some personal things going on. We are all still dealing with the loss of dad. We miss him very much. Thank you again for your kindness. Sincerely, Kay Franke

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

Upon receiving the schedule, please review it to ensure you are available when scheduled. If you are unavailable, please use the contact information to find a replacement for yourself. Please notify the church office **office@cuccnm.org** with the schedule change. Thanks to all for your continued support and service as volunteers! **If you would like to be added to the schedule please contact the church office. We are always looking for substitutes !**

Task	8-3-2025	8-10-2025	8-17-2025	8-24-2025	8-31-2025
LITURGIST	Mary Liesch	Marilyn Kostrzak	Sue Knuth	Arthya Puguh	Signa Meyers
HEAD USHER	Sue Dollhopf	John LaPrairie	Terri Flesburg	John LaPrairie	Sue Dollhopf
USHER 2	Nicky Banks	Laura Kleist	Mary Janness	Bonnie Pozolinski	Wayne Dickson
USHER 3	Sue Knuth	Wendy Remmel	Alan Gear	Alan Gear	Mary Liesch
USHER 4	Kerry Fox	Signa Meyers	Wayne Dickson	Marcia Fry	Laura Kleist
REFRESHMENTS	Connie Regazzi	Mary & Ralph Liesch	Scott Olson	Jack & Marcy Fry	Gay Dickson
COMMUNION PREP					

<u>YOU</u> CAN HELP SERVE!



Ministry of Spiritual Life would like to continue to offer a time for fellowship and snacks after worship during the summer . Please bring in 1 dozen cookies, bars (need not be homemade) or a gallon of juice sometime during the summer. Label the item "Fellowship" and take to the kitchen freezer/or bring them to the lounge .Your contribution is much appreciated! Questions contact Terri Flesburg .





AUGUST 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	**2** **6:00-7:00pm** Horizon II AA
3 **10:15 am** Worship	**4** **9:00am** **H.S. Graduates breakfast at Papa Cafe**	**5** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study **6:30 pm** Fundraiser Committee Mtg	**6**	**7** **6:30 pm** Ministry Council	**8**	**9** **6:00-7:00pm** Horizon II AA
10 **10:15 am** Worship	**11**	**12** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16** **6:00-7:00pm** Horizon II AA
17 **10:15 am** **Outdoor Worship** : Pet Blessings Rev. Paige Puguh preaching	**18**	**19** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **10:30 am** **Community Table**	**20**	**21** **12:00–2:00pm** **Bags to Benches**	**22**	**23** **6:00-7:00pm** Horizon II AA
24 **10:15 am** Worship	**25**	**26** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study **6:30pm** Stewardship	**27**	**28** **11:30 am** **Grief Group**	**29**	**30** **6:00-7:00pm** Horizon II AA
31 **10:15 am** Worship						



DISCUSSION GROUP
Tuesdays at 8:30-9:30 am
We meet at Four Seasons Restaurant in Neenah for breakfast and lively discussion about current events and faith trends
1104 South Commercial Street, Neenah
Everyone is Welcome!



NEEDLERS

Share Fellowship and do Needlework
All who like to do (or learn to do) any type of needlework.

Needlers are taking the summer off!
We will resume in the fall.

Sunday Worship is in person.
Services will be broadcast **live on FB** every Sunday morning and later put on our website.

Click below to find our FB page
https://facebook.com/CongregationalUCCNeenahMenasha/
It will be posted on the church website later in the day.



BOOK CLUB
HOMECOMING
BY KATE MORTON
AUGUST 10TH
at Sweet Lair after Church

BAGS FOR BENCHES
3rd Thursday of month
August 21st
12:00-2:00 PM



Want to be a part of our recycling program and have fun at the same time? Come and fellowship while we sort plastic bags for our next bench. Questions contact Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org





Ministry Council

Moderator:
Signa Meyers

Vice Moderator:
Sue Knuth

Secretary:
Chris Parson

Ministry of Faith Development
Becky Nichols

Ministry of Service:
Mary Janness

Ministry of Spiritual Life
Terri Flesburg

Ministry of Stewardship
Jeff Nichols

At Large:
Connie Regazzi
Sherri Jischke
Chuck Luebke

Church Historian:
Mowry Smith

Communication Coordinator
Marilyn Kostrzak

Time and Talent Coordinator:

Personnel Committee
Scott Olson
Marilyn Kostrzak

Pastoral Relations Committee
Kerry Fox, Patty Hoehne, Bob Nault

Rev. Rob Van Ess Pastor, pastor@cuccnm.org
Melanie Nault, Admin. Assistant, office@cuccnm.org
Alanna Smith, Christian Ed. Dir., ce@cuccnm.org

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AUG 17TH
OUTDOOR WORSHIP
PET BLESSING WITH REV. PAIGE PUGUH

AUG 19TH
COMMUNITY TABLE

AUG 21ST
12:00 PM BAGS TO BENCHES

AUG 28TH
11:30 AM GRIEF GROUP