

First Congregational Messenger  
 First Congregational United Church of Christ  
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*Serving God with love and faith*



September 2023  
 Volume 5, Issue 107



Sunday School begins  
 September 10 at 9 AM.  
 During worship we will  
 celebrate the return of  
 classes.



**October 1 - Neighbors In Need**, a special offering of the United Church of Christ will be dedicated October 1, which is also World Communion Sunday. "Behold!" is this year's theme with a focus on environmental justice. As you may recall, one-third of the offering supports Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-Thirds are used by Justice and Witness Ministries to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations.

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Monday-Thursday 10-4  
 Other times by appointment  
 May be out of the office for  
 meetings or visits



**Office Hours**  
 Monday-Friday  
 8-12

## Weeds

*"A weed is only a flower in the wrong place."* – Anonymous

After the June drought, we welcomed the rains in July. Ponds and creeks began to rise, lawns greened up, and the weeds grew in abundance. Weeds found a home in the gardens and cracks of the church parking lot. In early August, Support Team had scheduled a workday to tackle the weeds, but had to wait until late August due to everyone's schedule.



At this time, friend Judy called me. "I want to tell you a story," she began. After de-weeding their business garden and parking lot, Judy had struck up a conversation with Sylvester, the man who had been recommended and then hired to remove the weeds at Ricardo's Restaurant.

Sylvester said, "The weeds at my church are very bad."

Judy asked, "Where do you go to church?"

Sylvester replied, "1102 West Norfolk Avenue".

Judy discovered that they both attended church at the same building—at Linaje Escogido Church for him, and Renewed Hope for her! Three churches share our church building: First Congregational UCC, Linaje Escogido, and Renewed Hope meets for First Sunday worship and meal in Fellowship Hall.

Sylvester said, "The weeds at my church are very bad. I could help them." Judy, happy with the work he had done for their business, agreed and gave him my contact info at the church. A couple days later, Sylvester called me, just as I was discussing the weeds in the church gardens with Book Club.



Since, Sylvester was calling from the church parking lot, I invited him to discuss the weeds with the group. He offered to volunteer to weed, and all he asked was that if we thought he did a good job, to recommend him.

As he had time between jobs, he would continue to donate many hours of his time weeding at the church. Through his work, he restored the church yard and parking lot. A number of church members hired him to weed and trim bushes at their homes. He is available for hire, and prices by the job. You may contact him at:



### **Sylvester Celis, LLC (402) 860-4276 Landscaping / De-weeding**

The following Sunday, the congregation was so moved by his kind offer and hard work, that they collected a gift of \$116 to give to Sylvester. He didn't expect the gift because he had volunteered, he said. I explained that we understood this, and wanted him to know that we were grateful.

Sylvester continues to volunteer his time at the church. If you see him out working, or between church times, stop and introduce yourselves. It's nice to know another friend and brother-in-Christ from Linaje Escogido.

In his weeding of church property, I was grateful that he left the milkweed. Most folk know by now that milkweed attracts monarch butterflies. I have been looking for monarchs or signs of them since June with little luck. A relative and I text each other when we spot them.

This week (the end of August), I decided to check the short milkweed left in the garden next to the church entrance canopy. I spotted a tiny white monarch egg under one leaf, and then (for the first time this summer), I saw a plump monarch caterpillar, munching on a leaf. I took a picture and sent it to my NY relative with happy face emojis! ☺☺ The caterpillar was a joyful discovery next to the generous gift of a care-full gardener.

"O Mystery, how wonderful you are, and holy is this day and this ground upon which we stand." --Peace, Pastor Jackie

-- from "O Mystery", Larry James Peacock, *Opening: A Daybook of Saints, Psalms & Prayers*.



**Be Prepared!** On **Sunday, September 17**, after worship the church (and before Unity Council) we will hold a brief awareness Active Shooter training. We plan to watch the FBI video: RUN, HIDE, FIGHT available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeOdxKozra0>



We recommend that you keep the 2-sided "RUN-HIDE-FIGHT" handout *included in this newsletter* outlining recommendations from the FBI and FEMA. This is advice for any public setting, not only for churches.

The hand-out and video were approved and recommended by Unity Council in 2022. We plan to hold Active Shooter reviews annually. Since 2022, the church has called Ben Uzzell to be our Safety Officer. This annual review is a reminder that we are all responsible for safety; and there are things that we can all do to survive an active shooter event (regardless of age or ability). Stay safe. Come and learn.



**New Church Directory** available in the office. *A great way members and friends of the church can stay connected.*

### Opportunities to Serve God with Faith and Love



Do you want to make a difference in World Hunger? FCUCC is waiting to receive an **October 15**, Sunday afternoon time slot for the annual **Pack Away Hunger event**. Sign-up sheet coming soon!



**September 9**, Noon – 4pm

At Norfolk Arts Center

3rd Annual Pride Festival in Norfolk – A free family event with live music, food, vendors, and activities for all ages!

# **RUN - HIDE - FIGHT**

## **PROFILE OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER**

An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims.

Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation

### **Good practices for coping with an active shooter situation**

- Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers
- Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit
- If you are in an office, stay there and secure the door
- If you are in a hallway, get into a room and secure the door
- As a last resort, attempt to take the active shooter down. When the shooter is at close range and you cannot flee, your chance of survival is much greater if you try to incapacitate him/her.

**CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO!**

## **HOW TO RESPOND WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY**

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

### **RUN**

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.

Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave your belongings behind
- Help others escape, if possible
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
- Keep your hands visible
- Follow the instructions of any police officers
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

## **HIDE**

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door)
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- Lock the door
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)

Remain quiet If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen

## **FIGHT**

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her (don't fight fair)
- Throwing items and improvising weapons
- Yelling
- Committing to your actions

## **Additional Ways to Prepare For and Prevent an Active Shooter Situation**

- Preparedness
  - Ensure that your facility has at least two evacuation routes
  - Post evacuation routes in conspicuous locations throughout your facility
- Recognizing the sound of gunshots
- Reacting quickly when gunshots are heard and/or when a shooting is witnessed:
  - RUN - HIDE - FIGHT
- Calling 911
- Reacting when law enforcement arrives
- Adopting the survival mind set during times of crisis

**RESOURCES:** "How to Respond" from Active Shooter Desk Reference Guide, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, October 2008 available from: [https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active\\_shooter\\_booklet.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf) . "Active Shooter – What you can do", FEMA online course available at: [https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0907/curriculum/1.html](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0907/curriculum/1.html)

## “Serving God with Love and Faith”



*Jim Luellen with Jane Uzzell*

### FCUCC Donates Music

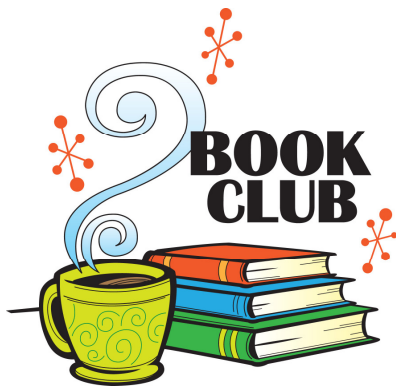
In January, an ad hoc team formed to look over closet/storage spaces in the basement for the purpose of giving storage space to Linaje Escogido Church (LE). They identified the music storage room adjacent to LE's worship space (chancel/stage). As we haven't had a choir in over 10 years, the group decided to donate items as they were able.



Dawn Rugg, Music Teacher, with Jane.

Randy Neuharth commented that FCUCC has a fine collection of choir music, much of it is out of print. Retired Teacher, Jane Uzzell, is in contact with former Choir Director/Music Teacher, Jim Luellen, who expressed an interest in his church taking the collection. Unity Council agreed that it was a good idea to donate it. Traveling from Colorado in his pick-up truck with topper, Jim returned to FCUCC August 28 and 29 to go through cartons of music, and load boxes to deliver to *Lord of the Mountains Lutheran Church ELCA* in Dillon, Colorado.

There were several musical instruments in the closet that had not been touched in over a dozen years. Jane contacted Elementary Music Teacher (West Side and Woodland Park), Dawn Rugg, to see if she would like them. Mrs. Rugg gladly accepted the gift and thanked the congregation. Mrs. Rugg said, “These instruments are excellent quality. I don’t get funds to buy things like this anymore. I use them in my concerts; and now more kids can be up on stage playing them.”



Book Club will meet September 13 at 10 AM. *This is Not My Hat* by Jon Klassen. The books can be found in Fellowship Hall or you can contact Jane Uzzell.

Do you go grocery shopping? At Lou's? At HyVee? **We have an easy way to bump up your donation to the church budget**--use a Lou's or HyVee gift card when you go shopping or get gas. You can buy them **Sundays** in Fellowship Hall. We currently get \$25, \$50 and \$100 gift cards.

See you at the table in Fellowship Hall! Please help out. The gift cards fit right in your billfold by your dollar bills, so it's even easy to remember to use them when you go to pay for your groceries. Questions? Leave a message for Jane Uzzell at (402)640-6623.



## SEPTEMBER Birthdays

- 2nd Jill Waterbury
- 4th Gene Korthals  
Candice Korthals
- 8th Jeanne Rix
- 9th Sara Wingett
- 16th Cole Uzzell  
Benjamin Wingett
- 18th Sara Putters
- 21st Rev. Jackie Perry
- 26th Lois Williams
- 28th Sandy McConnell





# September

## September 3

**Communion:** Evonne Burkink and Susan Allyn

**Ushers:** Suzan Podliska and Brian Seier

**Greeters:** Randy and Kay Neuharth

**Reader:** Randy Neuharth

**Leader:** Ben Uzzell

**Flowers:** Gene and Darlene Korthals

## September 10 Rally Day

**Ushers:** Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

**Greeters:** Gene and Darlene Korthals

**Reader:** Ben Uzzell

**Flowers:** Erik and Katie Gamerl

## September 17

**Ushers:** Jane Uzzell and Mike Synovec

**Greeters:** Scott and Lori Williams

**Reader:** Brian Seier

**Flowers:** Scott and Lori Williams

## September 24

**Ushers:** Gene and Darlene Korthals

**Greeters:** Tom McConnell and Suzan Podliska

**Reader:** Scott Williams

**Flowers:** Brian Seier



# OCTOBER

## October 1

**Communion:** Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

**Ushers:** Ed Lindsay and Susan Surber

**Greeters:** Verletta Olson and Rita Woodard

**Reader:** Tom McConnell

**Leader:** Brian Seier

**Flowers:** Ginge Dudley

## October 8

**Ushers:** Barb Koenig and Evonne Burkink

**Greeters:** Bonnie Dewell and Ed Lindsay

**Reader:** Kay Neuharth

**Flowers:** Mark and Vicki Walker

## October 15

**Ushers:** Tom McConnell and Verletta Olson

**Greeters:** Jane Uzzell and Reese Uzzell

**Reader:** Lori Williams

**Flowers:**

## October 22

**Ushers:** Bonnie Dewell

**Greeters:** Barb Koenig and Brian Seier

**Reader:** Verletta Olson

**Flowers:**

## October 29

**Ushers:** Randy and Kay Neuharth

**Greeters:** Susan Surber and Mike Synovec

**Reader:** Jane Uzzell

**Flowers:** Scott and Lori Williams

Please notify the office if you are not able to attend a service.

# August

From 8/1/23 through 8/31/23

## Checking account information

Beginning balance	-\$ 2,132.68
Transfer from Savings	\$ 2,000.00
Transfer from Scholarship Fund	\$ 500.00
Hawaii Wildfires	\$ 3,050.00
Scholarship fundraiser	\$ 226.00
<u>Weekly deposits</u>	<u>\$ 11,095.25</u>
Subtotal	\$ 14,738.57
Salary	--\$ 7,408.42
Church Maintenance	—\$ 2,895.61
Office Expenses	—\$ 1,359.05
Worship Ministry	—\$ 85.61
Faith Development	—\$ 48.80
Insurance	—\$ 1,042.20
Substitute Organist	—\$ 70.00
Edward Jones	—\$ 226.00
Mercy Meals	—\$ 260.00
Conference, Hawaii	—\$ 4,128.81
Continuing Education	—\$ 70.00
<u>Renner's</u>	<u>—\$ 500.00</u>
<b>Final Balance</b>	<b>—\$ 3,355.93</b>



# ► September 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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10:15 Worship Renewed Hope 4-7 FH	OFFICE CLOSED					
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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<b>Rally Day</b> 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	Girl Scouts 4-8 FH	5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10 Book club			
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Unity Council		OFFICE CLOSED FOR TOUR OF TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE IN OMAHA	5 PM Faith Development	Questers 7-9 FH		
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship		5:30 PM Girl Scouts				
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# ► October 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Pastor on vacation 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Renewed Hope 4-7 FH	2 Pastor on vacation	3 Pastor on vacation	4 Pastor on vacation	5 Pastor on vacation	6 Pastor on vacation	7
8 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	9	10 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	11 10 Book club	12	13	14
15 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Mercy Meals 2-3:30 PM	16	17	18	19	20	21 Girl Scouts FH 9-4 LWA fall gathering
22 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	23	24 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	25	26	27	28
29 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Potluck	30	31				