

WEEKLY BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

August 6, 2023

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

974 Skyline Drive SW • Rochester, MN 55902

STRIVING WITH GOD AND OTHERS

Genesis 32:22-31

I was probably 11 the last time I tried to fight my brother. I remember being furious with him, and making the decision to walk up the steps to the porch he was standing on and punch him. I did just that. It surprised him too. He was taken aback, shook his face, and promptly threw me down the stairs.

After this rather embarrassing failure, I accepted that I was not likely to ever triumph over my brother in physical combat. If we were to get along, I'd have to find a better way to do it; I'd have to seek grace and reconciliation.



Relationships are tricky, they all have ups and downs. We hurt each other, we let each other down. When this inevitably happens, we can allow distance and alienation to grow between us. This damage to our relationships is not without its impact on our spiritual lives. Our sense of peace, wholeness, and well-being is always harmed by resentment and alienation in our relationships. Brokenness in our relationships correlates with a brokenness in our relationship with God. As 1 John says, "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen."

When God wrestled with Jacob by the river Jabook, it was on the eve before his reunion with his estranged brother Esau. Having stolen his inheritance through lies and deceit years earlier, Jacob is nearly overcome with fear at the prospect of reuniting with Esau. It is in this situation that God appears to Jacob as a man and the two wrestle until dawn. Jacob refuses to release God until he blesses him. Jacob receives the blessing and the new name Israel, for he has striven with God and prevailed. Yet this blessing is not without its cost, Jacob's thigh has been injured and he will forevermore walk with a limp.

Our lives involve us in our own struggles with our sisters and brothers, and our own struggles with God. Our choices have consequences and no life is without suffering. Yet we do not struggle through our fear, doubt, and alienation alone. God struggles with us. And though the night may be long and the struggle intense, though we will not escape this life unscathed, God's favor and blessing come to us in the midst of our striving. God's grace attacks our old selves, our resentments and grudges and feelings of superiority, and opens for us a new life made possible through grace and forgiveness. God's blessing makes possible a life in which we can ask for forgiveness from God and from another. May we seek this blessing of God in our struggles and may we seek to find pathways to grace and forgiveness. Because it is only in forgiveness that our relationships with God and others can be made new, joyful, and life-giving. Amen.

Rev. Andrew Greenhaw

COMMUNION will be served by passing of the plate. If you prefer prepackaged Communion elements, they are available in the Narthex or from an usher.

THE CARE FUND is collected on the first Sunday of the month and is used for emergency relief for our members. Please consider making a contribution so that we may continue to respond to the emergency needs of our members during difficult times.

VBS PREP MEETING ON SUNDAY - Vacation Bible School is fast approaching! We will have an organizational meeting **this Sunday, August 6, following worship**. Come and see what we have planned for the week and all the opportunities to participate in this wonderful ministry with the children of our community. We will be making crafts, organizing, and reflecting on the Good Samaritan. If you are volunteering during VBS, stop by or contact Pastor Shannon for information about the week.



CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

Sun	8/6	11:15 AM	VBS Volunteer Prep Meeting
Mon	8/7	7:30 AM	Gardening Angels
Wed	8/9	6:00 PM	Outdoor Worship & Picnic
		7:00 PM	Youth Group
Thu	8/10	12:00 PM	Bulletin & Announcement info due
		6:00 PM	Paint-a-Bowl for Channel One
Fri	8/11	9-11 AM	Volunteer Day at Channel One
Sat	8/12	10-Noon	Summer Playgroup - church playground



OUTDOOR WORSHIP AND PICNIC THIS WEEK! Join us **Wednesday, August 9 at 6 PM** on the lower lawn for a moving outdoor worship of music, scripture, preaching, and holy communion. Following worship, we all share in a delicious meal and fellowship with fun lawn games and bounce house for the kiddos!

YOUTH GROUP will meet afterwards at 7:00 PM for a campfire, s'mores and games.



PAINT A BOWL FOR CHANNEL ONE - Join us **Thursday, August 10 at 6 PM** in the church Narthex/Lobby to paint a bowl that will be included with a soup purchase at Channel One Food Bank's 19th Annual "EMPTY BOWLS" fundraiser in October. Everything is provided: unglazed bowls, all paints and supplies, firing of the bowls and pizza! **RSVP** by using the

SignUp Genius link at <https://www.congoroch.org/news-events> or email church@congoroch.org.



CHANNEL ONE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! We are resuming our monthly volunteer sessions at Channel One, and we need you!!! Our next session is **Friday, August 11, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM**. Our group will be working in the Food Bank, usually processing bulk foods into smaller packages for distribution in the Food Shelf and to Channel One's partnering agencies. We usually work hard but manage to have a lot of fun too! Channel One has recently been receiving more bulk product, which is good news, but that means an increase in their volunteer needs.

Signing up to volunteer must be done via our unique page on the Channel One volunteer site, accessible [here](#). Please click on the "Respond" button to begin. Every volunteer needs to have a sign-in account, which can be created the first time you sign-up. During account creation, you will also electronically sign a waiver and view a 5-minute civil rights video. Signing up for subsequent sessions requires accessing our page and signing in to your account.

Due to vacations and injury, we have less than our usual number of volunteers signed up this month, so now would be a great time to join in! If you'd like more information, please contact Cheryl Roediger at cnroediger@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.



VBS IS ALMOST HERE! On August 14-18 from 8:30-11:30 AM, children ages 4-11 will be studying “The Good Samaritan” through art, drama and play. Campers and volunteers can **SIGN UP** on the church website [events page](#). FREE for all!

SUMMER SATURDAY PLAYGROUP – Families of all kinds are invited to the playground on **Saturdays from 10 to Noon** for free play, coffee, and fellowship. Caribou coffee and “good” snacks will be served. Please invite anyone who cares for children to come and consider sharing with your friends. This program will run Saturdays through August 12.



Men’s Group meets on the **1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 7:30 AM over breakfast at Denny's on South Broadway**. If you are interested in joining on August 15 or in the future, contact Mark Young to be included in email reminders and more information.

HAWTHORNE HELPS COLLECTION DRIVE



Please consider assisting the Rochester community by considering a donation through the month of August. This year’s focus is Back to School and include: deodorant, hand soap, shampoo, knitted or fleece scarves, hats & mittens. **Donations by check should be made out to First Unitarian Universalist** (with "Hawthorne Helps" in the memo line).

Sandy MacLaughlin from Hawthorne Helps writes: “Know that your generous donations will make a difference to HEC adult students. We just completed our 2nd trimester distribution to 1,200 student shoppers. Because of generous supporters like UCC, we were able to distribute 4,000 essential items, 120 bags of school supplies to newly enrolled students, 300 garden plants & hundreds of books in partnership with Friends of the Rochester Public Library.”



IT'S TIME TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO HAVE YOUR PICTURE TAKEN! Whether you're in church on Sundays or watching from home, members or friends, we want you to be part of our new pictorial directory. Photo sessions are **September 28-30** and each family photographed receives a complimentary 8 x 10 portrait and a church directory.

To sign up go to our church website www.congoroch.org, and under the News & Events page, scroll to Sign-Up Quick Links. Use Church Code *mn356* and Church Password *photos*. You can also sign up before or after church each Sunday in August.



FALL ARTICLES DUE AUGUST 24 - As we look ahead to fall, we are asking groups and ministry teams to provide articles with updates and upcoming events happening during September-November to be included in our Fall Church Life newsletter. Articles are due to Sarah at church@congoroch.org by Thursday, August 24.

PECANS SALES WILL BE DISCONTINUED, unless you can help! Thanks to Cindy Sawyer for all the hard work and dedication she put into pecan sales for so many years! She has gracefully retired but if you are willing to organize this traditional fall event, contact Cindy for more information at 289-7617 or marvsawyer@yahoo.com.



MUSIC AND OUR KIDS!!



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The **children's singing choir would meet after church on Sundays from 11:15 to 11:45** and the **youth bells on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:00**. The regular Wednesday Youth Group would begin at 7:00 with the pastors on those rehearsal dates. Dates will be determined as we put together the music schedule for the year and will be published well in advance. And hopefully, with both groups, attendance will be regular to prepare for the Sunday they sing or ring. However, if someone misses a rehearsal, there is ample time for everyone to learn the songs or bell pieces. Thanks for supporting your children as they serve our church in the music ministry!

Blessings, Karmen Gusa



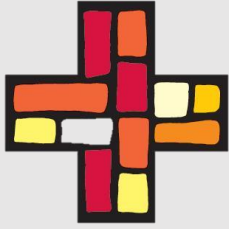
CONFIRMATION BEGINS SEPTEMBER 17 - All young people from 6th-8th grade are invited to join our year-long journey with the pastors to go more deeply into the Christian faith culminating in choosing to join (or not join) the Christian tradition, confirming the baptism that took place when they were infants. **Class will be following worship on Sundays from 11:15 to 12:15 in the Chapel, with one field trip to another Christian community each month.** This is an important rite of passage for our young members and we are excited to explore their faith with them. To sign your child up, please contact Pastor Shannon.



FLOWERS FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP - You are welcome to provide and bring a floral arrangement for Sunday worship to highlight a special occasion or "just because." If you order through Flowers by Jerry, they can be delivered to the church on Saturday. Contact the church office with your bulletin dedication and inquire about liturgical colors if desired.

Following Sunday worship, you may choose to keep the flowers or deliver them to someone special.

MONTHLY OFFERING REPORT		<u>2022 Actual</u>	<u>2023 Actual</u>	<u>2023 Budget</u>
July	Estimate of Giving	\$14,345	\$29,526	\$21,463
	Non-Estim. Giving	\$2,920	\$150	\$2,667
	TOTAL	\$17,265	\$29,676	\$24,130
Y-T-D	TOTAL	\$158,224	\$149,097	\$168,910



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August 13, 2023

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

974 Skyline Drive SW • Rochester, MN 55902



JESUS IN THE BOAT WITH US

Matthew 14:22-33

If you've ever been in the sanctuary of Christ United Methodist Church here in Rochester, you may have noticed that the interior bears a striking resemblance to a boat. Looking up at the ceiling you get the distinct impression that you're inside an upside-down ship. This is not an architectural coincidence; rather it reflects the ancient Christian practice of referring to the church as a boat that carries the faithful through the storm-tossed seas of the world.

This week's text from Matthew's Gospel tells the story of Jesus walking on the water. In the story Jesus and the disciples have been separated. Jesus has withdrawn to a mountain to pray and instructed the disciples to go on in the boat. On the water the wind begins to blow with ferocity and the boat is battered by the waves. In the midst of this storm, the disciples see Jesus walking on the water. They struggle to believe that it is Jesus who is coming towards them; initially mistaking him for a ghost. Then Peter even asks to join Jesus to confirm that it is indeed him walking on the water. After Jesus saves Peter and steps onto the boat, the storm ceases and the disciples recognize him as the Son of God.

Bearing in mind the ancient use of a boat as a metaphor for the church can help us penetrate to a deeper meaning present in Matthew's telling of Jesus' walking on the water. After the events of Easter, Jesus and his followers seemed to be separated from one another. He was no longer with them in the flesh, having ascended to the Father. Yet before he left, he promised to always be with them. How were they to believe in this promise now that Jesus was gone? The disciples headed out in the boat, the church, to face the storms of the world, struggling to believe in Christ's promise to be with them. Jesus comes to them, walking towards them on the water. Though they struggle to believe that the divine presence of the risen Lord is truly with them, Jesus saves them from their lack of faith, calms the storms around them, and joins them in the church.

We too cling to the safety of the church in a world whose waves batter us and whose storms rage around us. We too struggle to believe in the promises of God. We struggle to believe that the risen Christ is still with us in the church, that the power of God is with us and for us. Let us take comfort from this story. Let us strengthen our faith by the knowledge that the risen Christ will not let the storms of this world, nor our fear, nor even our lack of faith, keep us from his loving, gracious presence.

Pastor Andrew Greenhaw

CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

M-F	8/14-18	8:30-11:30	Vacation Bible School - "The Good Samaritan"
Mon	8/14	7:30 AM	Gardening Angels
Tue	8/15	7:30 AM	Men's Group - Denny's on S. Broadway
		6:30 PM	Cabinet - Hybrid. Please review packet before meeting.
Thu	8/17	12:00 PM	Bulletin & Announcement info due

OUT OF THE OFFICE: Sarah Struwe will be on vacation Monday-Wednesday, August 14-16.



New Time and Location: Men's Group meets on the **1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 7:30 AM over breakfast at Denny's on South Broadway.** If you are interested in joining on August 15 or in the future, contact Mark Young to be included in email reminders and more information.



HAWTHORNE HELPS COLLECTION DRIVE

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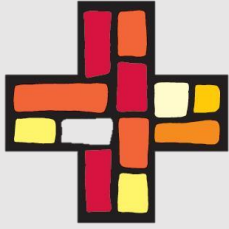


THANK YOU! - CHANNEL ONE SPECIAL OFFERING

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink." - Matthew 25:35

A huge "Thank You" to all who contributed to Channel One Regional Food Bank and Food Shelf for our special offering during the Think Bank match. Your **generous donations totaled \$1,880** - the equivalent of **\$3,760** with the match! Jessica Sund from Channel One has expressed "our gratitude to your congregation. Their support makes a difference!"

Our gifts will help Channel One with the challenges caused by continually increasing demand. Jessica has reported that unfortunately records continued to be broken in June: "Household visits increased again to over 7,000, with 341 of those households visiting for the first time ever. That's an average of 250 shoppers coming through our food shelf each day." Thanks again to all who donated!



WEEKLY BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

August 20, 2023

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

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THIS SUNDAY, August 20, Pastor Shannon Smith's message is "Lord, Help Me" and the scripture reading is Matthew 15:10-28. **Communion** will also be served by intinction. If you prefer, prepackaged Communion elements are available in the Narthex or from an usher.



HAWAI'I WILDFIRE DISASTER RELIEF SPECIAL OFFERING - According to NBC News, as of August 15th, the death toll from the deadliest wildfire in modern US history which devastated the town of Lahaina on Maui is already at 99. With only 32% of the affected area having been searched with cadaver dogs, it is expected to rise significantly. Besides the horrific loss of life, many people have lost everything that they own - their homes, their possessions, and their jobs. The Hawai'i conference of the United Church of Christ has established the **Hawai'i 2023 Wildfires Relief Fund**, and the United Church of Christ's **Global H.O.P.E. team** is working with Hawai'i Conference Disaster Coordinator Danny Tengan, in consultation with Hawai'i Conference Minister Rev. Dr. David Popham and other leaders, to assess the situation and walk alongside them.

The Stewardship and Benevolence Ministry Team is holding a **special offering Sunday, August 20** and will accept donations through **Sunday, August 27**. You can help our brothers and sisters in their time of greatest need! Make your donation out to the Congregational Church and specify "Wildfires Relief" in the memo line on your check or use the online PayPal link at <https://congoroch.org> and specify "Wildfires Relief" in "What's This For" input field. Please give generously as you are able!



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CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

Mon 8/21 7:30 AM Gardening Angels
Thu 8/24 12:00 PM Deadline - Fall Church Life & Bulletin Announcements



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Picture DIRECTORY To sign up go to our church website www.congoroch.org, and under the News & Events page, scroll to Sign-Up Quick Links. Use Church Code *mn356* and Church Password *photos*. You can also sign up before or after church each Sunday in August.



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YOUTH BELL CHOIR for 6th - 12th grade – Rehearsal on Wednesday evening, September 27, October 4 & 11, from 6:30-7:00 PM (before Youth Group at 7 PM), and ring during worship on Sunday, October 15.

SINGING CHILDREN'S CHOIR for K-5th grade or younger - Rehearsal after church beginning on Sunday, October 15, 22 & 29 from 11:15-11:45 AM, and sing during worship on Sunday, November 5.

Both groups would meet three or four times and then sing or ring in a worship service. We would do this several times throughout the year with breaks in between rehearsals. This would allow us to have them participate and share music with the congregation, but not have rehearsals every week throughout the year. Dates will be determined as we put together the music schedule for the year and will be published well in advance. Hopefully, with both groups, attendance will be regular to prepare for the Sunday they sing or ring. However, if someone misses a rehearsal, there is ample time for everyone to learn the songs or bell pieces. Thanks for supporting your children as they serve our church in the music ministry!

Blessings, Karmen Gusa

PAINT-A- BOWL UPDATE! Many thanks to the 13 creative and inspirational congregation members who came to paint 18 beautiful bowls for this worthy event for Channel One! We shared our time and fellowship together while enjoying a meal and preparing our creations! THANK YOU. Look for upcoming information for the Ch. One Empty Bowls Event on October 10 and 11!



THANK YOU TO CHANNEL ONE VOLUNTEERS! Many thanks to the 13 people who worked hard in our second group volunteer session on August 11: Vicki and Ronan Couch; Jan and Rick Kvam; Rachael, Sophie and Mason Majorowicz; LuAnn and John Nicholson; Cheryl and Bob Roediger; Cathy Swessel and David Walters! Tasks included putting labels on plastic bags, filling each labeled bag with one pound of Crunchy Oat Cereal, assembling boxes and placing 12 filled bags in each box. **We processed a total of 881 pounds/bags of cereal, or 73 boxes and 5 extra bags!**



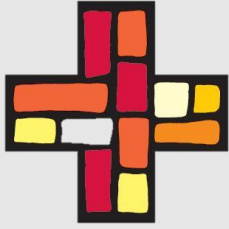
These boxes will be added to Channel One Food Bank's inventory. Some will be used locally at Channel One's Food Shelf; others will be available for the participating agencies in the 14 counties served by the Food Bank.

Our congregation's recurring group sessions in the Food Bank occur on the second Friday of each month from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM. The next one is September 8. You must use [our unique link](#) to sign up. Hope to see you there!



CHANNEL ONE FOOD SHELF VOLUNTEERS NEEDED – Channel One has asked us to pass along an urgent need for individual volunteers in the Food Shelf. There are about 250 shoppers using the service each day; that takes a lot of volunteer support to keep the shelves stocked and assist the shoppers. Please consider giving some of your time to this effort. Information and sign-up is from [this public link](#). Please note that this is a different link than the unique one for our group recurring sessions.

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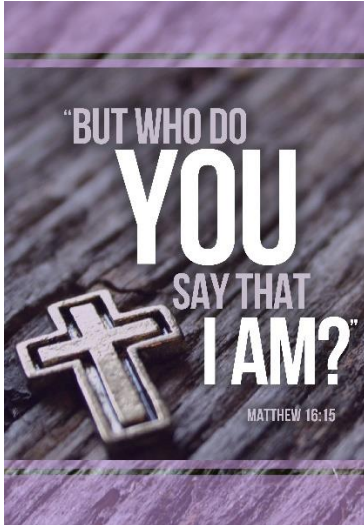
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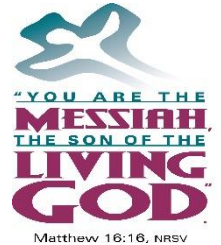
WHO IS HE AND WHAT IS HE TO YOU?

Matthew 16:13-20

There's an old Bill Withers song that my brother and I loved growing up called, "Who is He and What is He to You." In the song Bill Withers has seen his girlfriend around town with another man and so he asks the double question in the chorus, "Who is he and what is he to you?"

This is essentially the same set of questions that Jesus asks Peter in Caesarea Philippi in this week's text from Matthew. Jesus first asks, "Who do people say that I am?" To this Peter gives several answers - "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Jesus gives no comment on these answers. Instead, he makes the question more personal, "And who do you say that I am?"

Peter's response to this question goes above and beyond what the others are saying; to him Jesus is nothing less than the prophesied Messiah and the very Son of God. In the text this confession makes Peter the foundation of the church. In subsequent history the impassioned defense of this confession, and the desire to never make too little of Jesus Christ, create the foundational doctrines and universal creeds of the early church. The church across millennia has claimed Jesus as Son of God, Messiah, Savior, Word of God, and very God.



To name the confession of the church however, may only be to answer the first of Bill Withers questions, "Who is he?" There remains the second, and far more impactful question, "What is he to you?" This is the reason to come to church, to pray, to study scripture, to wrestle with your doubts- this very question- "What is Jesus Christ to you?" Do you know him as a historical personage? Do you know him as a friend? As a Savior? Can you come to trust in him as God, as beginning and end, as the Wisdom and Word of God? Wrestling with these questions is a lifelong journey and it is rarely a linear one. There is one pattern that I have noticed however. Typically, those who make the most of Jesus Christ, who open themselves up to the highest and greatest possible answers to the question of "What is he to you?" typically those people have deep and rewarding relationships with Jesus Christ. May we all open ourselves to greater and deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as we wrestle with our own answers to the Lord's question to Peter, "And who do you say that I am?"

Rev. Andrew Greenhaw

(Link to the Bill Withers song: [Bill Withers - Who Is He \(And What Is He to You\)? \(Official Audio\)](#))

CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

Mon	8/28	7:30 AM	Gardening Angels
Thu	8/31	12:00 PM	Bulletin & Announcement info due



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SAVE THE DATE for CELEBRATION SUNDAY - Let's kick off the beginning of the programmatic year together with **Celebration Sunday on September 10**. We will have a bounce house, lawn games, and an ice cream sundae bar. Please plan to stick around to hear about what we have planned for the coming 9 months and how you can be a part of it.



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