

THE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

# CHURCH LIFE



2023 FALL EDITION

**SUNDAY WORSHIP 10 AM**  
In-Person & Online

**SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:15 AM**  
Ages 4 - 10

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THE CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH UCC—  
ROCHESTER, MN

## AT-A-GLANCE

**CELEBRATION SUNDAY**  
September 10

**FAMILY PROMISE  
HOST NIGHT**  
September 22

**CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING**  
September 24

**PICTORIAL DIRECTORY  
PHOTO SESSIONS**  
September 28-30

**165<sup>th</sup> ANNIV. POTLUCK  
& Neighbors in Need**  
October 1

**EMPTY BOWLS TO-GO**  
October 10 & 11

**TRUNK OR TREAT**  
October 29 at 11:30 AM

**ALL SAINTS SUNDAY**  
November 5

**THANK OFFERING  
DINNER**  
November 12 at 11 AM



## 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 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!



## 165<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY & POTLUCK

We're going to celebrate our church's 165<sup>th</sup> birthday! Members and friends – both old and new – are invited to join us in worship and a potluck after, on **Sunday, October 1.** We are clearing all after church activities that day, in the hope that we can all gather for a wonderful worship experience and then follow with fellowship and great food! **Bring** your favorite hot dish, side dish, salad or dessert. Also needed are buns for pulled pork, and help setting up on Saturday and room re-set on Sunday.

This is an opportunity we haven't had in a long time, and it would be wonderful if everyone would mark their calendars and be present. Our community is strengthened when we come together in celebration! Please consider setting aside this date and watch for more sign-up details soon!

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**SUNDAY,  
September 24  
at 11:00 AM**  
In-person  
& Zoom



The purpose of this Semi-Annual Planning Meeting will be to present and discuss the 2024 Plan for Ministry and proposed budget. This reviewal process provides an opportunity for your input and questions, so the Finance Committee can make any necessary adjustments for a congregational vote in January 2024.



## PHOTO SESSIONS FOR NEW DIRECTORY

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 **Thurs-Sat, Sept. 28-30** and each family photographed receives a complimentary 8x10 portrait and a church directory. **To make an appointment**, go to our church website [www.congoroch.org](http://www.congoroch.org), and **under the News & Events page**, scroll to Sign-Up Quick Links. Use Church Code **mn356** and Church Password **photos**. If you need assistance signing up, feel free to contact the church office.

**REMEMBER TO FALL BACK!** Daylight Savings ends November 5.  
Turn your clocks **back** one hour before bed on November 4!





**Family Promise** is an organization that provides housing and support services to families experiencing homelessness in Rochester. One way that we support their work is by hosting Family Nights at the church which **consists of a meal and some games and activities for the children to enjoy.** This provides a free meal to the families, space and time for recreation for the kids, and an opportunity to get to know and serve our neighbors. Our next Family Night with Family Promise is scheduled for **Friday, September 22.** **If you're able to help with dinner, provide a ride, or hang out and play with some children,** email Sarah at [church@congoroch.org](mailto:church@congoroch.org).

## CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

**continues during worship** this year. We will be studying the stories of the Old Testament from creation in Genesis through the Exodus and the prophets. We will connect these ancient stories to our lives today and imagine how we can be a part of sharing God's love in the world. We currently use a one room school method gathering all children **between ages 4 and 10** to learn together. Pastors Andrew and Shannon will continue to lead the classes, but **volunteers are always appreciated.** If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Shannon at [pastorshannon@congoroch.org](mailto:pastorshannon@congoroch.org).



## CHOIRS BEGIN FOR ALL



**Bell Choir** rehearses on Wednesdays at 5:15 PM. First rehearsal is September 6

**Chancel Choir** rehearses on Thursdays at 6:30 PM. First rehearsal September 7. **All are welcome!**

**Youth Bell Choir** (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.

**Children's Choir** (PreK-5th grade) - Rehearsal after church beginning on Sunday, October 15, 22 & 29 from 11:15-11:45 AM, and sing during worship on Sunday, November 5.

**Throughout the year, youth and children** will meet 3-4 times, ring or sing in a worship service, then take a break until the next rehearsal time works for all.

## YOUTH GROUP

**begins on Wednesday, September 13 from 6:30-8:00 PM in the Chapel.**



Pastors Andrew and Shannon will lead a weekly gathering for our **6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> graders** where we will share a pizza meal and hear about one another's lives. Friends are always welcome! Each month at least one lesson will be spent on the following: spiritual practices, service to the community, important conversations, and a fun outing into the community. If you have any questions or are interested in pitching in, contact Pastor Shannon.

## TRUNK OR TREAT RETURNS OCTOBER 29



Plan to join us in welcoming the children of Rochester to Congo Roch for Trunk or Treat on **October 29 after worship.** Our third annual trunk or treat looks to be an exciting time! **What you do:** bring candy, wear a costume, park in the lower lot, and after worship go give candy to the children. This is one of our largest attended community events of the year and always proves to be a fun time. Please plan to stick around to hand out candy. You can also **sign up** at [www.congoroch.org/news-events](http://www.congoroch.org/news-events) to help plan and execute the event at. Don't forget to invite the kids in your life!

## CONFIRMATION for our 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders

will meet on **Sundays following worship beginning September 17,** and parents are asked to join us for this first class. This important rite in our church is a time of intentional study and reflection for those who are reaching the "age of reason" to affirm the baptismal vows made by their families in infancy. Over the course of the year these young people will dig into what it means to be a Christian, how it impacts their lives, and will culminate with the option to be confirmed, affirming their baptism and choosing to join the Church. Each month, we will travel to a different Christian setting to help understand the practical implications of our beliefs and to understand Christianity more broadly than just in our congregation. If you want to sign up or have any questions, please contact Pastor Shannon.



## ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

We look forward to a strong and diverse set of adult educational offerings this fall as we seek to fulfill our adult education mission: "Equipping members and friends with relevant theological learning so they are empowered to boldly speak their faith and share their gifts for ministries of all kinds."

**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY** - We will once again have a weekly Bible study on **Tuesday afternoons at 2 PM beginning September 12. This will be offered via Zoom.** We will be reading the Acts of the Apostles together, moving through one chapter each week. To help us engage the multiple meanings of the scriptural text, we'll be framing our discussions with the four senses of scripture from the early Christian tradition: the literal, the typological, the moral, and the anagogical. This practice will help us to engage not only the past that the text describes, but also its relation to other biblical texts, its claim on our present moral life, and its proclamation about the future. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join us on any Tuesday they are available, and no prior knowledge or attendance is needed to participate and enjoy our Bible study.

**BOOK STUDY with PEACE and WINONA UCC** - Our church has been invited to join Rochester's Peace Church UCC and Winona's First Congregational Church UCC in an adult faith formation, 5-week book study series examining the newly acknowledged fifth stream of the UCC – the Afro-Christian Convention utilizing Yvonne Delk's book [Afro-Christian Convention: The 5th Stream of the United Church of Christ](#). The study will be led by Rev. Danielle Bartz and Licensed UCC Minister Jerry Locula. These sessions will **take place on Zoom, last for 75 minutes, and be on Tuesday evenings starting at 6:30 PM beginning September 26 and go through October.** There will be no session on October 17 and the last day will be Halloween, so that session will be less content focused and more about "where do we go from here now that we know more about this important piece of our denominational history?" Our church has purchased 10 copies of the book and you can reserve your copy by contacting the church office. The office will also provide you an electronic copy of the study guide. The Zoom meeting link will be available closer to September 26.

### **"HOW DID WE GET" VIDEO & DISCUSSION SERIES**

We are pleased to announce that this fall we will be using Dr. Sarah Ruble's newest video and discussion series "**How Did We Get**" on **six Sundays following worship on October 8, 15, 22; November 5 and 19; and December 10.** **The topics include:** How did we get the doctrine of the Trinity?; How did we get the doctrine that Jesus was fully human and fully God?; How did we get a church separate from Judaism?; How did we get the doctrine of original sin?; and How did we get the doctrine of justification by faith?

Each video and discussion session has been designed to be independent of previous weeks' sessions so even if you must miss one that's not an issue. The topics are fascinating and encompass questions we've all likely pondered – thus, you will want to attend as many as your schedule allows. Dr. Ruble has an engaging teaching style, and her series "Race and Christianity in the United States" was well received. You will likely recall that our church is sponsoring the creation the series which will be shared broadly across the UCC and beyond.

**MONTHLY BOOK GROUP** resumes with a new day and time on the **3rd Tuesdays at 10:30 AM.** All are welcome to join in these informal discussions of each book. This year all are in library book bags so there is no need to purchase any of them. Books are distributed at each meeting and also available in the church office and returned immediately following each meeting. The fall lineup includes the following:

**Sept. 19:** [The Distant Hours](#) by Kate Morton  
**Oct. 17:** [Adult Assembly Required](#) by Abbi Waxman  
**Nov. 21:** [The Undocumented Americans](#)  
by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio

There are exciting topics planned for the winter months and we will share those as details are available. If you have specific questions about the fall offerings or if you have an idea or two for other topics, contact the Adult Education Ministry Team via either Pastor Andrew or Janet Bartz at [j.bartz848@gmail.com](mailto:j.bartz848@gmail.com).

**MEN'S GROUP** meets for fellowship on the **1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays at 7:30 AM over breakfast at Denny's on South Broadway.** If you are interested in joining, contact Mark Young to be included in email reminders.



**CHANNEL ONE EMPTY BOWLS TO-GO** will take place again this year on **October 10 & 11**.

As part of this to-go style event, participants will enjoy gourmet soups and bread from local restaurants as well as hand-painted bowls – as a reminder of those who may not know where their next meal will come from. *Bowls include those we painted on August 10 (pictured below).*

Last year's event was a huge success, raising over \$86,000 – a testament to the support of the attendees for the mission and values of Channel One. All of the funds raised from the 19th annual Empty Bowls will directly benefit those who are facing food insecurity in the 14 counties served by Channel One.

In July 2023, the Channel One Food Shelf in Rochester was visited by almost 7,000 households, 362 of them there for the first time ever. That's the highest number of new households in Channel One's history, and these records likely will continue to be broken.



**ORDERING** for Empty Bowls 2023 will be online and will begin in mid-September from

<https://www.helpingfeedpeople.org/empty-bowls/order/>

Watch for more information in future church bulletin announcements.



## CHANNEL ONE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Here are some ways you can participate in meaningful outreach ministry at Channel One Regional Food Bank and Food Shelf.

**One option** is to join our congregation's monthly group session in the Food Bank on the **second Friday of each month from 9:00-11:00 AM**. We usually repackage bulk foods into smaller packages for distribution in the Food Shelf and to Channel One's partnering agencies. Upcoming dates are **September 8 and October 13**. Volunteers must be at least 13 years old. The only way to sign up for our group is to use [our unique link: https://corfb.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need\\_id=823703](https://corfb.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need_id=823703). Hope to see you there!

**Another option** is to assist with an ongoing urgent need for individual volunteers in the Food Shelf. There are about 250 shoppers using the service each day; a lot of volunteer support is needed to keep the shelves stocked and to assist the shoppers. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old. Information and sign-up is available from [this public link: https://www.helpingfeedpeople.org/volunteer/](https://www.helpingfeedpeople.org/volunteer/) Please note that this is a different link than the unique one for our group recurring sessions. Please consider giving some of your time to this effort.



Every volunteer needs to have a sign-in account, which can be created the first time you access either of the above links. For more information, please contact Cheryl Roediger at [cnroediger@gmail.com](mailto:cnroediger@gmail.com).

## PARTNER KIDS UPDATE & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The Covid pandemic shutdown Partner Kids at Elton Hills School from the second half of 2020 into early 2022, when a few of us returned to our students. The program itself mutated to a new format for this past school year. The school is very focused on the reading skills of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers proposed that available mentors each take two students for 30 minutes, rather than one student for an hour. These would be the same two students throughout the year. The 30 minutes would be largely focused on reading. This change worked well for everyone: students, mentors and teachers. According to the principal, we played a part in an "off the charts" improvement in second grade reading levels this past year.



**This fall**, all mentors will have two 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students for 30 minutes each week, focused on reading. We will no longer be following a single student through subsequent grades at the school. An advantage here may be that new mentors can be comfortable with an initial one-year commitment. We had four mentors working in this new format, plus one mentor finishing up with a long-term relationship with a 5<sup>th</sup> grader.

If you would like to join for this school year or have any questions, please contact **Greg Caucutt** at [gcaucutt@gmail.com](mailto:gcaucutt@gmail.com) or 507-250-1760.



## SPECIAL OFFERING OCTOBER 1

On Sunday, October 1, we will collect a special offering for **Neighbors in Need (NIN)**, a

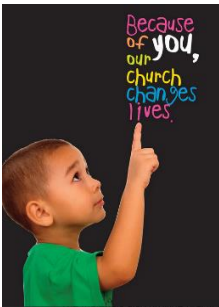
special mission of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. **One-third** of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). **Two-thirds** of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) 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. **Special offering envelopes will be available in the chair pocket, or indicate "NIN" in the memo line of your check or PayPal.**

## ALL SAINTS REMEMBRANCE

is **Sunday, November 5**. Each year we read aloud the names of friends and members of the church and ring a bell in remembrance of them. The church has a record of members that have died in the past year, but we'd like to give you all the opportunity to submit names of friends, family, or other important people in your life to be read aloud during worship. **Please send the names** of those you'd like us to remember by **Thursday, November 2** to the church office at [church@congoroch.org](mailto:church@congoroch.org).



**AWW, NUTS!** Pecan sales have been discontinued. Many thanks to **Cindy Sawyer** for all the hard work and dedication she put into organizing this traditional fall event for so many years!



## 2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN - "Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives"

This year's Stewardship Campaign theme is **"Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives"** and based on the 2023 gifting shown in the article below, it couldn't more accurately reflect a central passion of our church membership! We are excited to see how our church can help change lives in 2024. Our annual Stewardship Campaign will **begin October 13**, and we will sponsor a **Thank Offering dinner on Sunday, November 12**. Please prayerfully consider how you can help our church make a difference. We will be mailing Estimate of Giving cards and other materials soon after the semi-annual Congregational Meeting on **September 24**.

Once you receive your estimate of giving card, please return it to the church office by **November 26**.

## YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

One of the most satisfying responsibilities for the Stewardship and Benevolence Ministry Team is supporting those in need in our community and in the world at large. The funds for this support come from two sources, special offerings, and the Local Benevolence line item in the church budget. To that end our ministry team tries to select charities that are most in need, and that our church community has shown an interest in supporting. At the time of this writing, our church has gifted the following to the greater UCC charities and to local charities:

- **\$2,310** for the **Turkey and Syria disaster relief** special offering
- **\$1,240** for a **Good Samaritan** offering
- **\$1,005** for the **One Great Hour of Sharing** special offering
- **\$2,555** for **MN FoodShare** (with money going to **Channel One**)
- **\$1,000** to the **Jeremiah Program** and **\$1,000** to **Elder Network** (**\$1,979** from the Easter offering plus \$21 from the local benevolence line item to round up to \$2,000)
- **\$690** for the **Strengthen the Church** special offering
- **\$1,000** to **Family Service Meals on Wheels** from the local benevolence line item
- **\$1,000** to **The Landing MN** from the local benevolence line item
- **\$1,000** to **Community Food Response** from the local benevolence line item
- **\$1,880** to **Channel One** from the special offering, which Think Bank matched bringing that total to **\$3,760**

**Thank YOU** for sharing God's love with those in need. And, if there is a local charity that you volunteer at or that is dear to your heart, the Stewardship and Benevolence Ministry Team **WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

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