



WEEKLY BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 28, 2024

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

974 Skyline Drive SW • Rochester, MN 55902



“THE SPIRIT CHOSE” - Learning from the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, told in the 8th Chapter of Acts, is remarkably relevant when we consider the present debate over welcoming LGBTQ+ people into the church. In this story, a eunuch from the court of the Ethiopian Queen is returning from a visit to Jerusalem. For centuries, the people of Israel had excluded eunuchs from the covenant with God. In later years however, Isaiah prophesied that one day God would welcome all the eunuchs into the covenant, into the kingdom. As this particular eunuch is passing by, the Holy Spirit commands Philip to pursue him. Philip and the eunuch read the prophet Isaiah together and Philip helps him to see the good news of Jesus Christ contained within. After learning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the promises of baptism, the eunuch, upon seeing a small body of water, asks Philip, “What is to prevent me from being baptized?” Presumably the answer is nothing, because Philip baptizes the eunuch then and there and he receives the Holy Spirit. A group of people long stigmatized and marginalized by the people of God are welcomed into the new covenant and receive the Holy Spirit.

In the last few decades, a new thing has appeared in the life of the church. This new thing is that gay and lesbian and transgender people openly living in loving committed relationships have sought to become servants of Jesus Christ and members of the church. For centuries, such relationships were prohibited by the church, and almost always existed in stigmatized secrecy either within or without the church. Yet now these people are bravely and honestly proclaiming their love for one another and their desire to serve the church. For those of us who believe that one only proclaims Christ as Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, their desire to be in the church is evidence of the Holy Spirit pursuing them, desiring their presence within Christ’s Church. Much like the Ethiopian Eunuch these people are bringing before the Church the question, “What is to prevent me from being baptized?”

To this question, the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch may serve as guidance. Just as Philip was called to welcome those that the Holy Spirit pursued, so too are we to welcome all those who seek to know and serve Jesus Christ, all those who wish to be baptized. We welcome LGBTQ+ Christians into the church not out of a spirit of innovation and schism, but out of fidelity to our tradition as expressed in this story from Acts. The new covenant in Jesus Christ broke down barriers of difference and welcomed all who would accept the grace and love of Jesus Christ- Male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, eunuch and non-eunuch. When people who have been marginalized by similar barriers of difference genuinely seek to live lives of loving service to Jesus Christ, who are we to prevent them from being baptized? The extension of the covenant to include all the nations of the earth was a cause for celebration in the early days of the church, as was the inclusion of this Ethiopian Eunuch. So too ought we today to celebrate the extension of the covenant to include our LGBTQ+ siblings whom Jesus has called and the Holy Spirit has pursued. Join us this Sunday, as we celebrate this awesome movement of God!

NEW MEMBER CLASSES - We are inviting all friends and visitors to learn more about The Congregational Church UCC, the UCC as a denomination, and how we approach church, theology, and the Bible. Classes continue **after Sunday worship on April 28 and May 5**. Childcare will be provided.

We will welcome new members into the life of The Congregational Church during worship on **Sunday, May 19 and have a Potluck during Fellowship Time**. If you are interested in joining or know someone who might be, contact pastorandrew@congoroch.org.



SHARING IN MINISTRY - Many Hands Make Light Work

Jodi Williamson

We all have unique talents that can be used to serve God, our church and the community. Through the month of April, we are asking everyone to fill out the **Sharing in Ministry survey**. Pick one, two or more areas that use your talents, or maybe you want to try something new! Drop the survey in the box in the Narthex or in the church office. You can also access the survey on our church website, under Outreach. Any questions, please let me know.

CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

Tue	4/30	2:00 PM	Bible Study - Zoom
Wed	5/1	5:15 PM	Bell Choir
		6:30 PM	Youth Group
Thu	5/2	12:00 PM	Bulletin & Announcement info due
		6:30 PM	Chancel Choir



SUMMER CHURCH LIFE - As we look ahead to summer, please provide any **articles** with updates and upcoming events happening during June-August to be included in our Summer Church Life print edition that we aim to send out by Memorial Day. Please send them to Sarah at church@congoroch.org by **Friday, May 17**. Anything submitted in advance would be most helpful. Thank you!



FOR RICK KVAM'S FINAL CONCERT WITH CHORAL ARTS ENSEMBLE, he has picked personal choral favorites: some old, some new, some serious, some lighthearted—all wonderful. We'll sing music from the Renaissance to the world premiere of a new work commissioned by Dale Trumbore. Join us to celebrate Choral Arts Ensemble's four decades of distinguished singing and its bright musical future.

7:30 p.m. - May 4, 2024

3:00 p.m. - May 5, 2024

Christ United Methodist Church

Tickets \$30/adults, \$10/students



ROCHESTER PRIDE SIGN UP: All are invited to sign up to represent our congregation at our booth at Rochester Pride on **Saturday, May 18 from Noon to 5:00 PM** (with set up and take down before and after). Sign-up using the link on our events page: www.congoroch.org/news-events. Shifts are 1 hour long but feel free to sign up for as many slots as you wish. This is a very family friendly event so children and youth are also welcome in the booth! We are considering t-shirts so sign up right away! If you have any questions, email Nancy at namzr79@gmail.com.



ATTENTION ALL GRADUATES! We want to recognize your efforts toward your education and wish you continued success. Please plan to attend graduate recognition during the worship service on **Sunday, May 19** to celebrate your accomplishments. If you are graduating from high school, vo-tech, college or graduate school, please email church@congoroch.org by noon on **Wednesday, May 15** so we can list all graduates in the worship bulletin. High school graduates, please share your school and plans after graduation. If you are a college graduate, please share the college you attended and the degree you received.

BOOK GROUP meets on the 3rd Tuesday at 10:30 AM at church, plus a Zoom option for those who wish to join us from home. Book selection for **May 21** is "Dear Edward" by Napolitano and is available in the church office.

HELP US GET READY FOR SUMMER PLAYGROUP! Come help spruce up the playground on **Saturday, May 25 from 9 AM to Noon**. (Note date and time change from May 4) Our summer playgroup starts in June and there is much to be done to make our playground as welcoming as possible. All ages can help and childcare helpers will be on hand to guide the kids in some clean up tasks. Come for as long as you are able, all help is appreciated. Among the jobs we will be doing: setting up a sun sail, filling the sandbox, hanging new swings. Snacks, water and juice boxes provided.



SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - We are always in need of ushers, lay readers, and coffee hour hosts to help with our Sunday morning services. There are three ways to sign up: at church on the Narthex bulletin board, contact Sarah in the church office, or use the Sign-Up Genius link on the church website Home page (link under Volunteer/raised hands graphic) OR News & Events page (under Sign Up Quick Links).