

The Tower

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin

LXVIII

November 6, 2011

No. 37

The Practices of Being a Christian

Being a Christian involves, among other things, living as Jesus wants us to. And because the Jesus Way is so much against the grain of our or any culture, really living as Jesus wants us to live can be extraordinarily difficult. I recently came across the following story about Bud Welch, whose 23-year-old daughter, Julie, was killed in the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995.

“The first 4 or 5 weeks after the bombing, I had so much anger, pain, hatred and revenge, that I realized why, when someone is charged with a violent crime, they transport him in a bullet-proof vest. It’s because people like me would try to kill him. By the end of 1995, I was in such bad shape, I was drinking heavily and smoking 3 packs of cigarettes a day. I was stuck, emotionally, on April 19. I just couldn’t get over it. But I knew I had to do something about it. That’s when I went down to the bombing site.

“It was a cold January afternoon, and I stood there watching hundreds of people walking where the Murrah building had stood. I was thinking about how I wanted to see nothing more than Timothy McVeigh, and anyone else responsible for the bombing, fried. But I was also beginning to wonder whether I would really feel any better once they were executed. Every time I asked myself that question, I got the same answer: No. Nothing positive would come from it. It wouldn’t bring Julie back. After all, it was hatred and revenge that made me want to see them dead, and those 2 things were the very reason that Julie and 167 others had died.

“Forgiveness is a struggle, but it’s one I needed to wage. Forgiving is not something you just wake up one morning and decide to do. You have to work through your anger and your hatred as long as it’s there. You try to live each day a little better than the one before.”

Bud Welch met Timothy McVeigh’s father and sister and they talked about the losses they were all experiencing. Welch says he was finally able to forgive Timothy McVeigh about a year before McVeigh was executed in 2001. In other words, it took him 5 years of hard, personal work to release himself (that’s how he describes it) from the hatred and revenge he felt. Is he still sad about the loss of his daughter? Of course. He misses her every day. But he has given up the hatred and in its place there is forgiveness and a willingness for reconciliation.

Forgiving someone who has committed a horrendous crime or act against you, being incredibly generous financially, befriending and helping people who are poor and hurting and needy in a variety of ways – these kinds of actions are difficult. They don’t happen overnight. We don’t just decide to do them and that’s all there is to it. They take hard, personal work to accomplish – prayer, talking to friends/family, reading, prayer, tentative starting, practice, more prayer. But they are possible.

When we start on the journey, whatever we have decided to do, the destination can seem a tremendous distance away. There is no way to cover it quickly. One has to take a step at a time, evaluate one’s progress regularly, make corrections, keep working; and finally the goal starts getting closer.

Many Biblical passages express our hope as we stare toward the distant goal. One of them is Psalm 139:12 – *Even the darkness is not dark to you, O God. The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

Curt Anderson



JOIN US FOR MORNING SERVICE

Sunday, November 6, 2011
Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary
Scripture Readings: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-15,
Matthew 25:1-13

This is the Old Testament story: Joshua is meeting with all the tribes of Israel after taking possession of the Promised Land. Before they each go to their own, allotted areas, Joshua has a meeting with them. He encourages them to serve Yahweh, the God of Israel, who led them out of Egypt and to their new home. At one point, he says to them: *Choose this day whom you will serve.* Will they serve Yahweh, or the gods their ancestors served, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land they now dwell? That is the question. That is the choice they face.

The story in Matthew is, at first glance, an odd story. 10 bridesmaids take their oil lamps and go to meet the bridegroom, who has gone to take his bride from her parent's home. The bride and groom are delayed, and the bridesmaids wait for them and fall asleep. When the wedding couple arrives, 5 bridesmaids have run out of oil for their lamps, because they didn't bring any extra. They run off to buy more while the couple and the 5 prepared bridesmaids go to the wedding banquet. When the 5 unprepared ("*foolish*") bridesmaids arrive, the doors are already closed and they are not admitted. Jesus' lesson is: *Keep awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* Being prepared and making good decisions pay off for the first 5 bridesmaids. The opposite is true for the unprepared ones.

Conservative Christians sometimes say that a "decision for Christ" is a once-and-for-all action. Jesus' final words in this parable seem to suggest that being prepared and making good decisions is regularly and always important. What kinds of preparation do you do for your Christian life? What decisions do you make in regard to your faith?

Would you like to save some trees, copier toner, and staff time, with the advantage of receiving the Tower promptly and in **full color**, anywhere in the world? Just email Jill Farnsworth at office@firstcongmadison.org and **YOU** could be the 200th person on the list for the e-Tower! (Separate copies can go to multiple email addresses in the same household.)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS this coming Sunday, November 6. Don't forget to turn your clocks back or you'll be WAAAY early for church on Sunday!



There is a poster on the bulletin board near the Lathrop Street entrance with information on the new Voter ID law. If you need further information, it includes a tear-off with emails and phone numbers where you can ask your questions.

SAVE THE DATE! Yes, it's coming! After Thanksgiving we have---the Advent Workshop! This year's event will be held Sunday, December 4 in the dining room following worship. As usual we'll have a delicious lunch provided by the Board of Christian Education, followed immediately by the Workshop, brought to you under the auspices of the Board of Community Life. There will be good things to eat and fun crafts to make for everyone, so mark your calendar now and plan to attend!

If you're interested in helping with a craft table, please contact Anne Karch, apkarch@charter.net; Joanne Lenburg, lenburgs@yahoo.com; or Liz Ringle, elizabthringle@gmail.com.

FIRST CONG YOUTH



Youth FOOTBALL PARKING First Cong Youth are responsible for football parking **THIS** Saturday, November 5, from 12:30-2:30. Please let Jeff Rabe know if you plan to work. Call the church office or email him at jrabe@firstcongmadison.org

Attention ALL 7th & 8th Graders. BOUNCE (7th & 8th Grade Youth Group) is meeting **THIS SUNDAY** from Noon to 1:30pm in the Youth Room. Lunch, followed by activities and a meeting. **ALL** 7th & 8th Graders are invited!! Contact Jeff Rabe with questions.

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

WAYS TO SERVE

Christmas Pageant Auditions Children from grades 3 – Sr High (change from last year), interested in having a part in this year's Christmas Pageant is invited to Auditions on Sunday, November 13 in the Chapel following worship. Nothing to prepare, just show up! Speaking, Solos, and Dance will all be discussed. Any questions or conflicts, please contact Jeff Rabe at the church office. (Pageant is Sunday, December 18)

MODERN FAMILY Saturday, November 19 from 10:30 – Lunch. Families of all ages, sizes and shapes are invited to this FiGS event. FiGS stands for Families Including God & Stuff. The goal is to explore the role of the Ancient Families in the Bible AND give our Modern Families a chance to shake their own family trees a bit. Family, Faith, Fellowship, Food and Fun, all wrapped up in one event! Please let Jeff Rabe or Eldonna Hazen know if you plan to attend.

UNICEF Costume Party A great time was had by all at the Sunday School kids' costume party Sunday, October 30. There were a lot of great costumes, and a demonstration by the Mad City Jugglers, who practice every week in our Dining Room. Here are some pictures.



MFIS Thanksgiving Hospitality Hosts Needed Madison Friends of International Students (MFIS) is looking for families who would like to invite international students to their homes for this year's Thanksgiving celebration. It is a wonderful opportunity to share Thanksgiving traditions, food, and family with people from around the world. The warmth and friendship shared will never be forgotten. Thanksgiving is celebrated on November 24 this year. For questions and/or to volunteer as a host, please call MFIS at 263-4010 or email info@mfismadison.org (email subject: Thanksgiving Hospitality) Deadline November 15. MFIS has served international students at University of Wisconsin-Madison for 52 years and is extending a welcome to international students at Madison College as well! Volunteers will be screened and matched through MFIS.

For further information about MFIS, visit <http://www.iss.wisc.edu/mfis/index.html>

For 25 years our church has been an active participant in the Community Meals program at Luke House/St. Paul's. A small time commitment once a month by individuals has helped to relieve hunger for many clients. There are many ways to help, and the need is great. Call Judy Whipple at 249-7773 to see what you can do. A *reminder*: the next Community Meals day is November 3. Be sure to call a sub if you are unable to participate.

Please consider helping with our annual Thanksgiving Meal! There are many ways to help: donating food and supplies, giving financial contributions, helping with the set-up of the dining room and food preparation on Wednesday, greeting guests, serving meals, cleaning up and delivering meals to the home bound on Thanksgiving Day.

Sign-up sheets are placed at the back of the sanctuary or call the church office: 233-9751 or email the Board of Outreach: outreach@firstcongmadison.org.



Church Calendar November 6-13, 2011

Sunday November 6

Daylight Savings Time Ends

9:00am Communion prep class ~ FR
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S
 10:15am Wee Worship
 11:15am Cherub Choir ~ Room 301
 12noon BOUNCE ~ YR

Monday November 7

5:30pm Table Tennis Clubs ~ DR
 7:00pm All Boards ~ Chapel
 8:00pm SA ~ Room 301

Tuesday November 8

12noon Bible Conversations ~ SL
 5:15pm NA Women's ~ Room 301
 6:30pm Boy Scouts ~ DR
 6:30pm CROP mtg. ~ SL
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 301
 7:00pm Piano Tech Guild ~ FR
 8:30pm UW Table Tennis Club ~ DR

Wednesday November 9

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
 10:00am Staff Meeting ~ MS
 6:30pm Coventry Ringers ~ Room 301
 7:30pm Chancel Choir ~ Chapel

Thursday November 10

7:00pm Mad City Jugglers ~ DR
 7:30pm AA ~ Room 301

Friday November 11

5:30pm Madison Table Tennis Club ~ DR

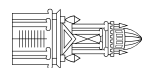
Saturday November 12

8:00am Women's Book Study ~ SL
 9:00am MOSES ~ C, S, DR

Sunday November 13

10:00am Worship ~ S
 10:15am Sunday School
 10:15am BBQ ~ YR
 11:15am Cherub Choir ~ Room 301
 11:15am Christmas Pageant Auditions ~ C

BBQ ~ Mid High Bible Study
 Big K ~ Big Kitchen
 BOUNCE ~ Mid High Youth Group
 C ~ Chapel
 DR ~ Dining Room
 FIGS ~ Families Including God and Stuff
 FR ~ Fellowship Room
 GAS ~ Sr. High Bible Study
 LRC ~ Learning Resource Center
 MS ~ Minister's Study
 S ~ Sanctuary
 SAGE ~ Sr. High Youth Group
 SL ~ Student Lounge
 SR ~ Salad Room
 YR ~ Youth Room



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue
 Madison, Wisconsin 53726
 608-233-9751 (phone)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Worship attendance on
 Sunday, October 30, 2011 was 227.

Staff:

Curt Anderson, Senior Minister
 Eldonna Hazen, Associate Minister
 Jerry Hancock, Director of Prison Ministry Project
 Donald J. DeBruin, Director of Music Ministries
 Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education for
 Children & Youth
 Rob Eagle, Bookkeeper
 Jill Farnsworth, Church Secretary
 David Krantz, Building Manager

Office Hours: 8am-12:30pm, 1:00pm-4:00pm,
 Monday -Thursday; 8am-noon Friday.

Phone: 608-233-9751

Fax: 608-233-7180

E-mail: office@firstcongmadison.org

Web Page: www.firstcongmadison.org
 Facebook.com/firstcongo

IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES: Curt Anderson's phone is 836-1321, Eldonna Hazen's phone number is 241-8117 and Jerry Hancock's phone is 658-6630.

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