

# The Tower

First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
Madison, Wisconsin

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LXVIII

September 25, 2011

No. 31

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## Dear Congregation and Friends:

I understand we will be worshipping together. Sometimes worship can be very hard for me. Here is some information that might help our time together be more successful and enjoyable.

You may not be aware, but I am challenged by a hidden disability called *autism* or what some people refer to as a pervasive developmental disorder (PDD). Autism/PDD is a neurodevelopment disorder, which makes it hard for me to understand the environment around me. I have barriers in my brain that you can't see. They make it difficult for me to adapt to my surroundings. Sometimes I may seem rude and abrupt, but it is only because I have to try so hard to understand people and at the same time, make myself understood.

People with autism have different abilities: some may not speak, some write poetry, others are whizzes in math, some verbally script movies, others have difficulty making friends. We are *all* different and need various degrees of support.

For me, being with lots of other people is like standing next to a moving freight train and trying to decide how and when to jump on. I feel frightened and confused a lot of the time just as you would if you landed on an alien planet and didn't understand how inhabitants communicated. This is why I need to have things the same as much as possible. Once I learn how things happen, I can get by. When you try to talk to me, I often can't understand what you say because there is a lot of distraction around. I have to concentrate to hear and understand one thing at a time. You might think I'm ignoring you—I'm not. Rather, I'm hearing and seeing everything and not knowing what is most important to respond to. I see many snap shot photos in my mind and I want to place them all together. Worship is exceptionally hard because there are so many different people, the organ, and the expectation that I be quiet. All of this is out of my ordinary realm.

Sometimes I have to get away from the commotion to calm down. I know I can spend time in our respite room. I find comfort there. If I cannot sit like everyone else in worship, please do not think I am misbehaved or that my caregivers have no control over me. Sitting in one place for even 5 minutes is often impossible for me. I feel so antsy and overwhelmed by all the smells, like others' perfume, sounds, and looking at all the different people.

People with autism have little things they do to help them feel more comfortable. The grownups call it "stimming." I might rock, hum, flick my fingers, flap my arms, spin, talk to myself, or any number of things. I am not trying to be disruptive or weird. Again, I am doing what I have to do for my brain to adapt to your world. Sometimes I cannot stop myself from talking, singing, or mimicking. The grownups call this "perseverating" which is like stimming. Stimming and perseverating make me comfortable. Please be respectful if I stim to calm myself.

My parents and caregivers are good people and need your support. The church is a busy, frantic, festive, loving place. Remember that this may be fun for you, but it's very hard work for me to conform to a typical worship. If I fall apart or act out in a way you consider socially inappropriate, please remember that I don't possess the neurological system that is required.

I am a unique person--an interesting person. I will find my place in this church that is comfortable for us all as long as you'll try to view the world through my perspective and eyes!

Your friend,

Brin Sieja, Chris Schoenwetter's cousin  
Rachel Karch, Paul's & Anne's daughter  
Emily Flogel, Sara's & Hal's daughter

(Adapted by Christina Schoenwetter from Viki Satkiewicz Gayhardt's "Holiday Letter" 11/19/99)



## JOIN US FOR MORNING SERVICE

Sunday, September 25, 2011

Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary  
Special Needs Emphasis in Worship  
Scripture Readings: Galatians 3:27-29,  
Luke 18:15-17

In this passage from Galatians, Paul says: There is no longer Jew or Greek ... slave or free ... male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Paul in his time (and we in our time) can look around and see the way society segregates and separates people by their differences. Paul says that in Christ, these differences do not separate us. We are united in Christ. In the passage from Luke, Jesus chides the disciples for trying to keep parents from bringing their children and infants to him: Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs. These passages are particularly appropriate on this day when we reaffirm our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community, especially for people with special needs.

**Women's Book Study** Women! Mark your calendars now to attend a morning of coffee (or juice), treats, and great conversation after reading *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* by Sara Miles. Sara's work has appeared in The New York Times Magazine, The New Yorker, The Progressive, La Jornada, and Salon, among others. She has written extensively on military affairs, politics, and culture. Raised as an atheist, Sara Miles lived an enthusiastically secular life as a restaurant cook and a writer. Then early one winter morning, for no earthly reason, she wandered into a church. "I was certainly not interested in becoming a Christian," she writes, "or, as I thought of it rather less politely, a religious nut." But she ate a piece of bread, took a sip of wine, and found herself radically transformed. The mysterious sacrament of communion has sustained Miles ever since, in a faith she'd scorned, in work she'd never imagined. In this astonishing story, she tells how the seeds of her conversion were sown, and what her life has been like since she took that bread.

The class will meet on Saturday mornings October 8, 22, November 12 and 26 from 8:00-9:30am in the Student Lounge and will be facilitated by Eldonna Hazen. Books are available in the office for \$11. Please let Eldonna know if you plan to attend.



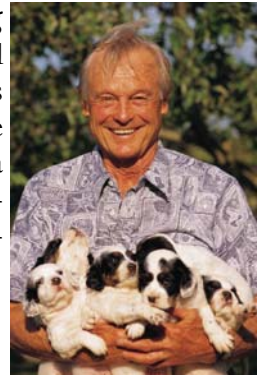
## MEET OUR FRB COW CLOVER GRACE!!!



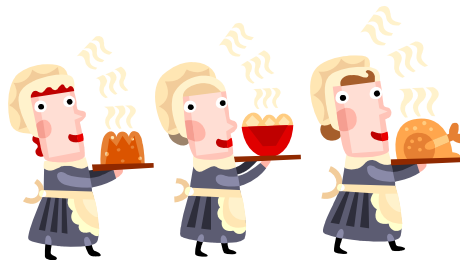
## SPEAKING OF ANIMALS...

### First Cong Animal Blessing

Saturday, October 8 at 10am. All pets are invited, and the humans who love them! If this would prove too stressful for your pet, bring a photo! Group and individual blessings plus fellowship with fellow animal lovers.



**Thanksgiving Tradition** For almost 20 years, First Congregational has been home to a free Thanksgiving meal. Will you consider helping out and keeping up the tradition? If you are interested in being on a planning committee for the event, please meet in the student



lounge following worship on October 9th. We are in need of several team leaders who could help this year or in the future. If you are interested in serving and cannot attend the meeting, please contact Jessica Flowers, 347-7716 or [jessicaflores.phd@gmail.com](mailto:jessicaflores.phd@gmail.com)

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



**REACH and RENEW Church Tours** Yes, that's right, "tours" plural. We have 3 very interesting tours of the church arranged for the end of September and into October. Carol Grogan will lead one of her always-enjoyable tours of the church on Sunday, September 25th, beginning at 8:45 in the Narthex.

These truly interesting tours are filled with information about the history of the church.

On Sunday, October 9, at 11:15, Don DeBruin will lead us in looking at, and learning about, our organ and piano. When did we get them, what are they like, and what repairs need to be done to get / keep them in top shape?

On Sunday, October 16, beginning at 9am, a member of the Space Utilization Committee will lead us on a tour of all the work that might be done in our building if our capital campaign is completely successful. For example, see how easy it would be to add a room for a Sunday School class simply by putting in a hallway.

## Madison Area CROP Walk!

Sunday, October 16 is the date for the Madison Crop Walk. First Cong is again hosting this important event. Walkers from all over Dane Co gather to raise funds to fight hunger and poverty around the world, and in the neighborhood. Last year's walk raised \$70,000! This year's goal is \$75,000.

How can you help?

1) VOLUNTEER! Help will be needed on the day of the walk; parking lot attendants, bread makers, crowd control etc. If interested contact Jeff Rabe at the church office.

2) WALK! Pledge envelopes will be available before and after worship OR set up ONLINE at [www.cropwalkonline.org/madisonwi](http://www.cropwalkonline.org/madisonwi) First Cong has an online walking team called *FirstCongWalkers*.

3) DONATE! Pledge walkers in person, or go online at [www.cropwalkonline.org/madisonwi](http://www.cropwalkonline.org/madisonwi) to find *FirstCongWalkers*.



**Worship on September 25** For the last few years, in September we have a worship service dedicated to our efforts to include all people - including people with various disabilities - in the worship and life of



our church. We also recommit ourselves to this important mission. This year we have a special treat. A drum choir from Milwaukee, made up of deaf and hard of hearing teenagers, will perform in worship. They played at the Overture Center at

the "Kids in the Rotunda" program last February, and they were terrific. We are very fortunate to have them perform for us in worship. There will be a special offering that day to cover the cost of bringing them here and to encourage their continued performing.

## The Wellness Fair, back again and better than ever!

On Sunday, September 25, your friends on the Board of Community Life will host a Wellness Fair directly after church. You will have the opportunity of learn, or refresh your memory, about different aspects of healthy living. There will be fun exercises for adults and kids, information on biking and bike safety, explanations of the new Dietary Guidelines for

Americans and the graphic "My Plate," blood pressure checks, information on vaccinations/immunizations for adults, and even chair massages by John Arms of *Beyond the Surface Massage and Body Work*. A substantial and healthy snack will be available,



along with recipes for you to take home. On the next two Sundays, a sign-up sheet for the massages will be on Eldonna's office door. Time slots include before and after worship, and two of the slots will be held and raffled off at the Wellness Fair. Plan to join us; it's fun; it's free, and it'll make you feel good!

## FIRST CONG YOUTH

**Youth Groups** (grades 7 – 12) will have an ALL YOUTH meeting **THIS** Sunday, Sept. 25, at 6pm to kick off the coming year. Contact Jeff Rabe with questions.

# Church Calendar September 25-Oct. 2, 2011

## Sunday, September 25

8:45am Historic Church  
 Tour ~ Narthex  
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S  
 10:15am Sunday School  
 11:15am Cherub Choir  
 ~ Room 301  
 11:30am Wellness Fair ~ DR

## Monday September 26

5:30pm Table Tennis Club ~ DR  
 7:00pm Campaign Awareness mtg. ~ C  
 8:00pm SA ~ Room 303

## Tuesday September 27

12noon Bible Conversations ~ SL  
 5:15pm NA Women's ~ Room 303  
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 303  
 7:00pm Boy Scouts ~ DR, YR

## Wednesday September 28

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

## Thursday September 29

5:30pm Table Tennis Club ~ DR  
 5:30pm Eating Disorders Support  
 ~ Room 303  
 8:00pm AA ~ Room 303

## Friday September 30

## Saturday October 1

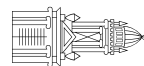
7:00pm UW football parking  
 ~ Outreach

## Sunday, October 2

10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S  
 10:15am Wee Worship ~ C  
 11:00am Capital Campaign  
 Kick-off Event ~ DR



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, September 18, 2011 was 239.**

### 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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