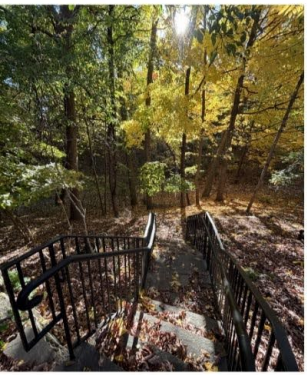
First Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

September 13, 2026
Rally Sunday



We are the Church of the Open Door.
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.

Welcome to The Church of the Open Door.

Our door is open to you at whatever point you are in your journey of faith.

New Here? Be sure to pick up a 'Welcome Bag' from the welcome desk near the front doors. It contains lot of information about our church community.

Contact Us: Scan this QR code to find our contact information, signup to receive our church and/or children's ministry e-newsletter, contact a pastor, or find out about becoming a member. Baptism Application and Room Rental forms are also available here.

Open Door Announcements can be shared by emailing opendoor@uccappleton.org or calling the office.

Online Streaming and Podcasting are available on Facebook: FCUCCAppleton or Youtube: First Congregational UCC Appleton.

Baptisms are held on the third Sunday of each month. To schedule a baptism, contact the church office six weeks before your desired baptism date.

Childcare is available for infants through kindergarteners every Sunday in summer. Guests are invited to join us anytime! A nursing room is available downstairs. See an usher for directions to either room.

Sunday School and Youth Groups Our PreK - 5th graders begin in worship. After the children's message, they walk together to the CYF wing for our Children's Ministry Sunday School. Kindergarten – 5th graders may enjoy a communion mini-lesson on the 1st Sunday of the month. Children begin in worship, leave with the director, and return to partake in communion with their families. Youth gather on Wednesday evenings.

Communion: The sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. Communion elements are gluten and alcohol free. All are welcome to join us!

References to God in our worship may at times be gender specific. You are invited to substitute terms that reflect your understanding of the inclusiveness of God.

Hearing Loop: Need help hearing our service? Ask an usher. They can help get you in the loop!

Flowers: If you would like to donate flowers for a special day or loved one, please email or sign up in the church office. Today's flowers were arranged by Cindi Ritcey Fox.

Ways to Donate to First Congregational UCC, Appleton ~ Thank you for your support.

Giving envelopes and checks can be dropped in the offering plate or mailed to the church

Visit our website at uccappleton.org and click "Give Now" for a one time gift or to sign up for automatic giving

Text FCUCC GIVE to 73256

*Messages and data rates may apply. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

September 13, 2026 9:30AM

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Rally Sunday ~ Sunday School begins ~
Blessing of the Backpacks ~ Confirmation Commissioning

PRELUDE

Selections from Trio in B-flat Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729)

Lori Murphy, *violin* Jennifer Hodges Bryan, *oboe*

**Please rise in body or spirit*

*CALL TO WORSHIP (LED FROM SANCTUARY DOORS)

One: We bow with the rolling rocks.

All: God is our strength and our salvation.

One: We sing with the roaring rivers.

All: God is our justice and our joy.

One: We will never stop telling God's story.

All: God is the hope of our ancestors.

One: With all that we have and all that we are, we say:

All: God is so good!

RINGING OF THE BELL

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN #51

All Creatures of Our God, Now Sing LASST UNS ERFREUEN

WELCOME & PEACE

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

One: We are not here to pass judgment on each other:
all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
Therefore, let us go to God as we offer our confession.

All: God our Judge, we admit we have double standards.
We seek forgiveness, but fail to forgive others.
We seek relief, but fail to seek relief for others.
We seek mercy, but fail to show mercy to others.
Forgive us, holy God, and help us to forgive, showing others the same grace and mercy that you have shown to us.

One: People of God, hear and believe:
God does not deal with us according to our sins,
but according to God's own steadfast love for us.

All: As far as the east is from the west, so far God removes our sins from us.
Thanks be to God!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: BLESSING OF BACKPACKS

(During the Children's Message, the Prayer Request and Connection Cards will be collected. After the Children's Message, the children will follow their teachers to the CYF building.)

UNISON BLESSING

God of wisdom, we thank you for a new school year.
Bless these backpacks and all the students who carry them.
Help all students discover and develop the gifts you give them.
Bless parents, school staff, bus drivers,
and volunteers who care for your children.
Give them strength, encouragement, and love.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHILDREN'S HYMN

Jesus Loves Me JESUS LOVES ME

St. 1, sung by **All**

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

ANTHEM

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (Based on Psalm 103)

David H. Williams (1919-2002)

Sanctuary Choir

SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 103: 1-13 Susan McFadden

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

SERMON *"Bless the Lord"* Pastor Katherine Willis Pershey

*HYMN (see bulletin page 7)

Ten Thousand Reasons (Bless the Lord, O My Soul) TEN THOUSAND REASONS

Refrain introduced and repeated by all.
St. 1: Solo
St. 2 & 3: All
Refrains: All

OFFERING

CALL TO THE OFFERING

(To give online please visit our website at uccappleton.org and click "Give Now" for a one time gift or to sign up for automatic giving, or text FCUCC GIVE to 73256.)

MUSICAL REFLECTION

Selections from Trio Sonata in C, RV 779 Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

*DOXOLOGY

All: Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

(You are welcome to submit your prayer requests throughout the week to the church office, or email to a pastor for confidentiality.)

One: The Lord be with you.
All: And also with you.
One: Let us pray.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

COMMISSIONING OF CONFIRMANDS

All: We celebrate the commitment you are making today.
We encourage you to be open to hearing the stories of our faith.
We welcome your questions and honor your struggles.
May you find joy in the way of Jesus,
and may God bless us all on the sacred journey of life!

*CLOSING HYMN #14

Earth and All Stars EARTH AND ALL STARS
Sts. 1, 2, 4 & 5

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Selections from Trio in B-flat Johann David Heinichen

THANK YOU TO TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pastor Katherine Willis Pershey, *Co-Pastor*
Pastor Nicholas J. Hatch, *Co-Pastor*
Susan McFadden, *Lay Reader*
Sarah Wilterdink, *Director of Children, Youth and Families*
Sanctuary Choir
Jennifer Hodges Bryan, *oboe*; Lori Murphy, *violin*;
John Aaholm, *timpani*; Joel Schlabach, *guitar*
Youth Handbell Choir
Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *Director of Music Ministries*

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USHERS/AUDIO/VIDEO

TODAY'S USHERS: Rick Detienne, Sue Detienne, Ted LaPine, Jesse Baumgart, Andy Detienne, Beth Detienne
AUDIO & VIDEO: Sue Forsythe, Shannon Glenn, Matt Feuerhelm

WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Pastor Katherine Willis Pershey
Matthew 20:1-16

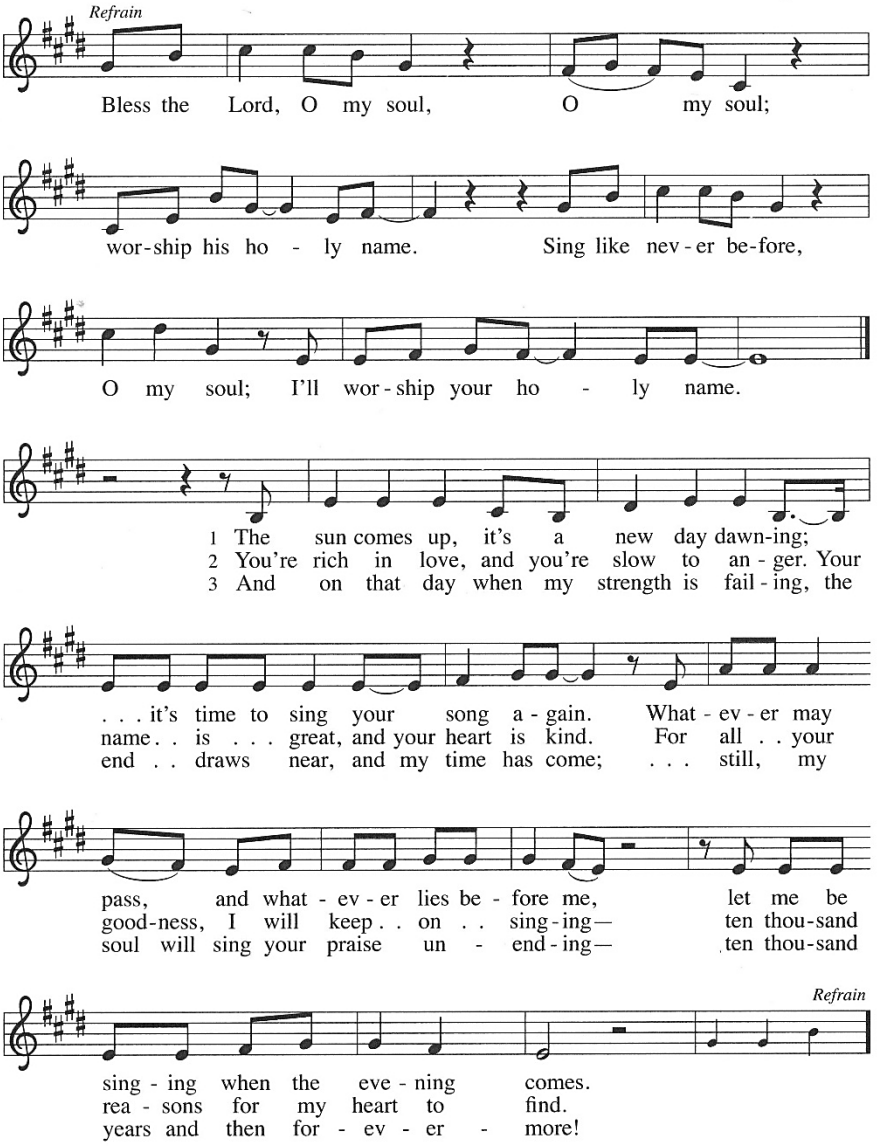
ON THE CALENDAR

October 10	9:00AM-3:00PM	Men's Retreat
October 18	5:30PM	Hope & Justice Sing-Along: An Evening of Music, Singing and Community

WORSHIP NOTES (space for your personal notes/thoughts)

Refrain introduced and repeated by all.
St. 1: Solo
Sts. 2 & 3: All
Refrains: All

Ten Thousand Reasons

Bless the Lord, O My Soul

Text: Matt Redman, b. 1974, and Jonas Myrin, b. 1982
Music: Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin
Text and music © 2011 Thankyou Music / Atlas Mountain Songs / worshiptogether.com Songs / sixsteps Music, admin. CapitolCMGPublishing.com

TEN THOUSAND REASONS
Irregular

The language in the refrain may be adapted to correspond with Psalm 103 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*: " . . . worship God's holy name."

Joys and Concerns of Our Faith Community
Please keep these people in your prayers and greet them with a loving word when you see them. Please call the church office if you have a prayer request or to request a pastoral visit, 920-733-7393. **In cases of a pastoral emergency, please call 920-810-2600.**
Prayers for peace and comfort for the loss of our grandson Baby Cooper and his family Gale Korth Phyllis Zeiss Tonya Griswold Harley Davies Victoria Williams Bill Platt's sister in relocation, Ron, with ALS, and a friend healing after knee replacement Jill Anthony and her nephew Katie Behl and Barb Behl
Unless a prayer request comes in with a request to remain in print continuously, prayer requests will be included for four weeks. Of course, you are always welcome to re-submit requests at any time.

Land Covenant

The land now occupied by Appleton, Wisconsin and surrounding areas - including the current site of this church - was the home, hunting, gathering, and farming land of the First Peoples of this territory: the Ho Chunk Nation and the Menominee Nation. Other tribes were forcibly re-located to this region by the actions of colonialism. Despite centuries of reprehensible treatment, the peoples of these sovereign nations are robust and enduring among us.

We are truly saddened by the genocide of their ancestors, the seizure of their lands, and the repression of their cultures and languages. We acknowledge that we benefit from the economic and social legacy left by settler colonialism.

We are grateful that many members of these original Nations have honorably served and defended the United States. We strive to honor their cultures and their insightful stewardship of this land and all creatures on it, recognizing our common interest in protecting its air, water, soils, and web of life for all future generations.

We commit ourselves through study and immersion experiences to learn the history and cultures of these peoples and their traditional knowledge.

The Open Door Announcements

For more information on these announcements and other events, please visit our website, weekly e-newsletters, and social media.

NAMI Walk: Join us on Saturday, **October 3**, 9:00–11:00AM at Timber Rattler Stadium. The Faith, Hope and Love team from FCUCC and ESTHER are looking for more team members to join us on our walk to support the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of the Fox Valley. It's a 5K with a great group of people and we're raising money to support the wonderful programs offered by NAMI to help those who live with mental health conditions. If you can't walk with us, please consider a donation to help support the cause. Use this link or QR code to either donate or join us on the walk https://www.namiwalks.org/foxvalley Remember our team's name – Faith, Hope and Love. For questions or more information, please contact Mary Sullivan through Realm or the church office.

September Collection for Henderson Settlement: A large group will be serving at Henderson Settlement in Frakes, KY, **October 11-17**. This year the need is for bath towels and washcloths. These items do not need to be the top of the line, however durable towels that dry and absorb are the request. We are also collecting personal hygiene items: shampoo, conditioner, men and women's deodorants, body wash, bar soap, hand soap. Items should be regular size, not travel nor extra-large. All items can be placed in the blue bin in the narthex. We realize there is a great need right here in the Fox Valley for many items due to the tornado. The need at Henderson Settlement is a continuing one. Whatever you are able to donate will be greatly appreciated!

Habitat Faith Build 2026: Do you want to improve the life of a family and make a difference in your community? This is your opportunity! On Thursday, **September 24**, First Congregational Church volunteers will be installing drywall. The build site location is 2111 East Esther Street, Appleton. We need 8 construction volunteers and several food providers. Jose and Cecillia's family would appreciate your efforts. Help represent our church in this meaningful partnership by signing up! For more information you can call or text Tim De Hart (ask office for information), or email at **tdehart@new.rr.com**.

NOAHH Requests: Items needed include a kitchen table, towels, and full-size bedding, a refrigerator, couch, recliner, kitchen table, cleaning supplies, bed, and vacuum cleaner. Call Barb Mincheff, Outagamie County Health & Human Services Volunteer Services Coordinator at 920-832-5515 for pick-up or drop-off.

Fall Fire & Faith: Join Pastor Nick **September 16, & 23** from 6:30-7:45PM in the labyrinth for a campfire fire and faith-filled conversations. We will discuss "Spirituality 101" by learning about common misconceptions and important practices in Christian spirituality. Then, we will be "Discerning What God is Doing" through a brief study of the book of Acts. This is a great way to make new connections and enjoy brisk fall weather. Join in on the weeks you are available. All are welcome to come early or stay late to walk the sacred path of our labyrinth. Our rain day location will be the chapel. Please bring: your own chair, a headlamp for reading, reading glasses if you need them, and an open heart. Dress for fall weather success! All other materials will be provided.

IPAC Event: "Building Strong Communities Through Allyship," a conversation with Bill Van Lopik about what it means to be an ally, will take place in the chapel on Sunday, **September 20** after church service. Bill is a member of the Indigenous Peoples' Allies Committee, has lived and worked in Central America addressing issues of extreme poverty, worked as a professor at the College of Menominee Nation for over 20 years, lived as a houseparent with developmentally challenged adults and worked as a community organizer with formerly incarcerated individuals. Come and join the conversation!

Library News: It's September so that means it's time for Pastors' Picks again. This year instead of having the pastors pick new books, we'll remind you of the excellent books they've picked before:

Forgive For Good by Dr. Fred Luskin **(Nick)**. A psychologist's practical guide to understanding the need for forgiveness, the harm of holding grudges, and practical methods to move into a different relationship with the hurt of our lives.

Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe **(Katherine)**. The great gift of memoir is that it gives us a window into other people's lives. Sometimes it's reassuring to read a memoir by someone whose story overlaps our own. And sometimes it expands our minds, hearts, and souls to read a memoir by someone whose story is entirely outside of our life experiences. I picked up Maia Kobabe's memoir a couple of years ago from a library display, oblivious to the fact that it is one of the most challenged books in the US – many people have tried to have it removed from many libraries. I found it to be illuminating, honest, poignant, and ultimately a profound work of art.

New Revised Standard Version Study Bible (NRSV) **(Nick)**. Many times, I am asked: what Bible should I buy, there's so many! Truly the translation you use is very important. Every English Bible has been translated and requires skillful wordsmithing as Greek and Hebrew aren't always easily directly translated in English. I prefer the NRSV Study Bible because its notes are really helpful and its choices of language are precise and carefully chosen.

Church Yard Clean Up: **September 19**, 1:00-4:00PM at Congregational UCC, 1511 Nicolet Blvd, Neenah which was damaged by the recent tornado. Tools/items to bring: rakes, shovels, leaf blowers, power washers, tarps, 5-gallon pails and gloves. Email Kevin Shumann at kevinshumann@yahoo.com, insurance waivers must be signed.

Outreach Ministries Bulletin Board: Each month the Outreach Ministries bulletin board in the narthex, across from the elevator, highlights our mission work. This month features **IPAC**, a FCUCC justice ministry, working toward Indigenous allyship. Through discussions, gatherings, education and work groups, IPAC is committed to learn and preserve the history, cultures, and traditional knowledge of Indigenous people - particularly those nations who lived in this part of Wisconsin. IPAC also seeks to provide and promote experiences with our Indigenous neighbors that celebrate their presence in the Fox Valley. To learn more, contact Barb Weyenberg at weyengrif@charter.net

CESA 6 Poverty Simulation: One Month in the Life of Someone Experiencing Poverty: On Thursday, **September 24**, 9:00AM-12:00PM at St. Joseph Parish, 404 W Lawrence St, Appleton, WI. A free-will offering will be taken and food and beverages are provided. Register with this QR code or link Poverty Simulation RSVP.

Hope & Justice SING-ALONG

First Congregational UCC – Sanctuary
724 E. South River St, Appleton

Sunday, October 18

5PM-6:30PM

ESTHER

Join us for an evening of live music, singing, and community as we come together with the band Karma's Mailbox!

Enjoy the music and purchase some delicious chili, eggrolls, and baked goods — all while supporting hope, healing, and justice for all!

All are welcome!

Together, we sing for hope.
Together, we stand for Justice.

SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

https://esther-foxvalley.org/

920-843-8083

P.O. Box 784
Neenah, WI 54957

Poverty Simulation

CESA 6 | Student Behavior & Wellness

One Month in the Life of Someone Experiencing Poverty

September 24th, 2026 | 9:00-12:00 | St. Joseph Parish, 404 W. Lawrence St., Appleton, WI

The CESA 6 Poverty Simulation is a 3 hour immersive and interactive experience.

- Location: St. Joseph Parish, 404 W. Lawrence St., Entrance 1 to Holly Hall
- Parking: East parking lot off Lawrence St. or West parking lot from Lawrence or Walnut St.
- Free will offering will be accepted to offset program costs
- Food and beverages provided
- RSVP: POVERTY SIMULATION REGISTRATION or scan QR code

PROVIDENCE PROMISE
Mike Mailand
mmmailand@sbcglobal.net
920-915-7901

Build empathy, understanding, and responsibility

This Week's Schedule

Monday, September 14

1:00-2:30PM	Prayer Shawl Ministry – *Common Grounds*
5:15-7:30PM	Mental Health Task Force – *Upper Lounge*
6:00-7:30PM	Grief Support Group – *by Zoom*
6:00-8:30PM	Fox Valley Flute Choir – *Sanctuary*
6:30-8:30PM	Prayer Shawl Ministry – *Common Grounds*
7:00-8:30PM	Scout Troop 67 – *Fellowship Hall*

Tuesday, September 15

8:00-9:00AM	Facilities meeting – *Upper Lounge*
9:00-10:00AM	ADRC Strong Bodies – *Fellowship Hall*
1:00-2:30PM	Chrysalis – *Upper Lounge*
6:30-8:00PM	Safety Committee meeting – *Upper Lounge*
6:30-7:30PM	Living Sober AA – *Common Grounds*
7:30-9:00PM	Fireside AA – *Common Grounds*

Wednesday, September 16

10:30AM-1:30PM	Usher Calendaring meeting – *Upper Lounge*
2:30-3:30PM	Peabody/Heritage Worship @ *Peabody Chapel*
5:00-7:00PM	Private meeting – *Upper Lounge*
6:00-8:00PM	Youth Outing - *Escape Room, Appleton*
6:30-7:45PM	Fire & Faith – *Labyrinth*
7:00-8:30PM	Sanctuary Choir rehearsal – *Sanctuary, Choir Room*

Thursday, September 17

9:00-10:00AM	ADRC Strong Bodies – *Fellowship Hall*
9:30-10:30AM	Adult Education meeting – *Upper Lounge*
12:00-1:00PM	AA Search for Serenity Group – *Common Grounds*
12:00-1:30PM	Theology Discussion Group @ *Holidays Pub & Grill, Appleton*
5:30-7:00PM	Family/Friends of NAMI Mental Illness Support Group – *Upper Lounge*
7:00-8:00PM	Fox Valley 94 AA – *Common Grounds*

Friday, September 18

10:00-11:30AM	Bulletin Folders – *Library*
7:00-8:00PM	Al-Anon – *Upper Lounge*
7:00-8:30PM	N.A. – *Common Grounds*

Saturday, September 19

4:00-5:00PM	St. Julia's Worship Service – *Chapel*
7:00-8:00PM	Fox Valley 94 AA – *Common Grounds*

Sunday, September 20

9:30-11:00AM	Childcare – *Childcare Room*
9:30-10:30AM	Sunday Worship – *Sanctuary, Upper Lounge, Chapel, Common Grounds (for nursing mothers)*
9:30-10:30AM	Sunday School – *CYF Wing*
9:30-11:45AM	Confirmation class with mentors – *HS Room*
10:30-11:30AM	Bill Van Lopik Presentation – *Chapel*
11:45AM-12:15PM	Confirmation mentor training – *HS Room*
5:00-6:00PM	LU Music Scholars' rehearsal – *Sanctuary, Choir Room*
7:00-8:00PM	First Things First AA Meeting – *Fellowship Hall, Common Grounds*
7:00-8:00PM	Al-Anon – *Chapel* / Alateen – *Upper Lounge*

We are thrilled to introduce Nick Aliota as our new Associate Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. Many things excite us about Nick, most notably his engaging, articulate, hard-working, and compassionate demeanor. Growing up in a nearby UCC church, he discovered how much he loved sharing God with young ones, and people of all ages, while helping direct summer camps the past few summers. Be sure to welcome Nick to FCUCC this coming Rally Sunday, or any other time you see him.

Your Interview Committee,
Lisa Grovogel
Abby Schmidt
Shari Mitchell
Sarah Wilterdink
Pastor Nick Hatch

"Hi everyone! My name is Nick Aliota, and I'm currently a student at UW-Stevens Point finishing my final year studying History and Social Science Education. For the past five years, I've served in various roles within outdoor ministry, which I have a deep passion for! I love building up youth leaders to strengthen their sense of responsibility within their community and deepen their sense of place and belonging. When I'm not working or in class, I love to explore, watch movies, spend time outside, and play guitar."

We are glad you are here today! You are welcome to worship in person with us in the sanctuary or watch it livestreamed in the upper lounge, narthex or chapel. The nursery also has livestreaming, on the other end of the building.

TODAY AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

9:30-11:00AM	Childcare – *Childcare Room*
9:30-10:30AM	Sunday Worship/Rally Sunday/Blessing of the Backpacks – *Sanctuary, Upper Lounge, Chapel*
9:30-10:30AM	Sunday School – *CYF Wing*
10:30AM-12:00PM	Rally Sunday Picnic – CYF Wing outside
5:00-6:00PM	LU Music Scholars' rehearsal – *Sanctuary, Choir Room*
7:00-8:00PM	First Things First AA Meeting – *Fellowship Hall, Common Grounds*
7:00-8:00PM	Al-Anon – *Chapel* / Alateen – *Upper Lounge*

SUNDAY SCHOOL LOCATIONS FOR TODAY			
Upstairs, to the left	**Downstairs, to the left**	**Downstairs, to the right**	**Upstairs, to the right**
Scripture Tent K & 1st graders	**Middle School Room**	**High School Room**	**Art Kitchen**
Theater 2nd & 3rd graders	**Little Angel's Room** Preschoolers	**Lower Classroom** 4th & 5th graders	
Childcare Room Infants & Toddlers			

We are proud to be an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. This designation is given to congregations that have made a public covenant to welcome fully persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Appleton, WI is a WISE congregation. This designation is given to congregations that have made a public covenant to welcome fully and promote inclusion and compassionate support for persons of all mental health experiences.

Interested in joining First Congregational? The next New Member Classes are October 25 & November 1.

724 E. South River Street | Appleton, WI 54915
920.733.7393 | uccappleton.org | info@uccappleton.org
Office hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00AM-3:00PM
For pastoral emergencies: 920.810.2600