

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
420 Wilson Ave.
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 235-5838

e-mail: office@menomonieucc.org
website: menomonieucc.org

The Bell

June 2026



June Activities

Sunday Services: June 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th

8:30am Contemplative Service (not on June 28th)
10am Traditional Service (in-person & livestream)

Tuesday, June 2nd

5:30pm Mission for Peace and Justice, R1

Thursday, June 4th

5pm Personnel Committee, R1

Tuesday, June 9th

4pm Executive Committee, R1

Sunday, June 14th - Bridge Sunday

Tuesday, June 16th

Pie Social, Wilson Park

Thursday, June 18th

10am Tour of Homes, R1
6pm Church Council, R1

Wednesday, June 24th – Sunday, June 28th

WallDogs

Wednesday, June 24th

6pm Christian Education Committee, R1

Church Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday, 9:00am-2:00pm
Friday – closed

Thursday's Table:

Community take-out meal each Thursday 5-6:00pm

Link to the full church calendar:

<https://www.menomonieucc.org/monthlycalendar>

Pie Social

Tuesday, June 16th

Thank you to Cathie Weissman for representing First Congregational at the Ludington Guard Band Pie Drawing! We got a date, which is Tuesday, June 16th.

Sign ups are in the Fellowship Hall for the various roles needed to make the event a success!
Funds raised go into the Loaves and Fishes Account



From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Beloved Children of God:

*May our hope linger
A chronic optimism
Painting days in light**

Bethany Wilkinson wrote this haiku poem as part of Kaitlin Curtice's "A Poem a Day" for May. Each day Curtice shares a new word as a poetry writing prompt for her readers. She shares a poem, or this year has welcomed guest writers.

That day's word was "chronic." I don't know about you, but my thoughts first went to, "chronic conditions" or "chronic illness", something not so positive.

But chronic optimism is something we all need to suffer from!

Being optimistic can be quite challenging these days when so much is out of our control and sometimes what we do think we can control is only an illusion. It reminds me the serenity prayer:

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

The three big words to focus on are accept, courage, and wisdom.

It can be hard to accept what you don't want to accept: the struggle, the reality, the diagnosis, the life you didn't imagine. Acceptance may not come right away, and that's okay. Courage is perhaps needed to accept those things beyond your control. Courage to make the call, have the conversation, and to do what must be done. Wisdom is a challenge especially as there can be too many voices – from inside and out – telling us what to do or what to believe.

Having "chronic optimism" is wise and also takes courage. For me, it states the reality that life is not all sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows 24-7-365. Yet we hold onto hope, goodness, and have the courage to do what we can to change what is in our control – including our attitude and outlook in life. There will be times when we don't feel very optimistic, and that's okay. Do what you need to do for that optimism to return once again.

And a huge THANK YOU to the many who helped with Tom Richards' Reception and especially Dr. Mike Feigal's Celebration of Life, all within a week! The many hands and voices made each event meaningful for each family. This is how we come together with and for one another, sharing Jesus' love and care in a very tender time.

I close with Mike's Guiding Principle:

*"Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can."*

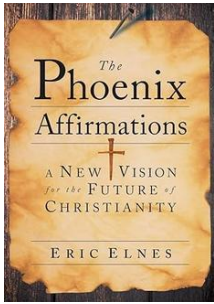
Prayers and blessings for you all~

Pastor René

* from Kaitlin Curtice's Substack <https://kaitlincurtice.substack.com/p/day-24-chronic>

From the Director of Faith Formation

Karen Miller



Affirmation Seven --

Preserving religious freedom and the church's ability to speak prophetically to government by resisting the commingling of church and state.

Hey, Pope Leo, stay in your lane, “stick to matters of morality,” and leave American public policy to the President! So sayeth Vice President JD Vance in an interview with Fox News' Brett Baier in April of this year. Great timing for an article on Affirmation Seven! Quoting from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, Pope Leo had condemned the war in Iran and asserted that God does not hear the prayers of those who make war. Oops, war is a matter of state, foreign policy, a **SECULAR** matter and, according to Vance, Pope Leo needs to stick to **SACRED** matters.

Let's assume that Vance, with Bachelor of Arts degrees in political science and philosophy, and a Juris Doctor from Yale Law School knows what constitutes a secular matter. Let's assume that Pope Leo 14th, with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, a Master of Divinity degree, and a doctorate in Canon Law knows what constitutes a sacred matter.

But did you know that the Hebrew word for “war” appears more than 300 times in the Old Testament, and the verb “to make war” occurs approximately 164 times while the noun form “war” appears about 320 times in the Old Testament? This frequency reflects how deeply embedded military conflict was in Israel's experience. War was so prevalent during the biblical period that the Bible specifically references times of peace, suggesting that conflict was the norm rather than the exceptionⁱ.

Most of Israel's wars occurred in the wilderness following the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent conquest of Canaan, or in Israel's conflicts with surrounding nations such as the Amalekites, Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Medo-Persians. The biblical narrative treats warfare as a historical reality woven throughout Israel's story. The exact number of wars is less significant than understanding warfare's theological and historical significance in Scripture.ⁱⁱ Hmm. Perhaps the Pope and the church do know something about war!

But the current Administration has its own self-serving agenda regarding interpretation of the legal and philosophical principle of separation of church and state. On one hand, they want the principle to mean no religious-based bad mouthing regarding the actions of government allowed. On the other hand, the principle is totally abandoned as the Administration pursues its **Project 2025** initiative, supported by the conservative Christian **Seven Mountain Mandate (7MM)**ⁱⁱⁱ initiative.

Both initiatives share ideological values, especially in their emphasis on **conservative Christian values and the desire to influence governance and public policy**. Both reflect a broad trend of Christian nationalism in the United States that advocates for significant transformation of societal norms and government structures. Critics say both initiatives threaten democratic norms and the separation of church and state. **Project 2025** is an “authoritarian playbook” that dismantles checks and balances within the government. **7MM** is a “religious playbook” that calls for (correctly vetted) Christians and (correctly vetted) Christian values to dominate seven key areas of society (referred to as ‘mountains’): Religion, Family, Education, Government, Media, Arts & Entertainment, and Business. The **7MM** is associated with the **New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)**, and emphasizes the role of modern-day apostles and prophets in guiding believers to achieve these goals.

Pastor Levi Secord believes that too many Christians have unwittingly embraced a false secular /sacred worldview when it comes to separation of church and state.^{iv} Pastor Levi has a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Educational Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also the author of several books on theology and politics.

Secord claims this false divide is contrary to the Gospel’s inherent political message – Christ is the King of kings. In the Book of Acts 9:15, Christ gives this reason for Ananias’ visit to Saul who was blinded by the Lord three days earlier: “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel.”

In the Gospel of Matthew 10:18, Jesus tells his disciples that they “will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles.” In the Gospel of Mark 13:9-10, “beware, for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. And the good news must be proclaimed to all nations.”^v

Confrontation with power structures is a means of advancing the gospel. So, “Keep on testifying, Pope Leo XIV, Rev. Jim Wallis, Representative James Talarico, Rev. Traci Blackmon, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Pastor René, you, and me. . . .”

May you walk on in God’s love,

Karen

ⁱ Stephen J. Andrews, “Holy War,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 774.

ⁱⁱ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2015), 28.

ⁱⁱⁱ See, *Climb Every Mountain: How Christian Nationalism Seeks to Conquer American Democracy*, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism at <https://globalextrmism.org/post/seven-mountains/>, April 15, 2026.

^{iv} Levi Secord, *The Gospel’s Irreducibly Political Message*, Christ Over All at <https://christoverall.com/article/concise/the-gospels-irreducibly-political-message/>, March 14, 2025.

^v See also, Luke 21:12-13.



What is all this talk about “Wall Dogs” and “Murals in Menomonie”?

Murals in Menomonie is a one-of-a-kind mural festival coming to Menomonie June 24-28, 2026. This 5-day event will transform the community with large-scale murals that tell the rich history of our area through art.

The Walldogs are an international group of artists who get together once a year to tell the story of a community

and create beautiful murals. They donate their time and expertise in exchange for housing, meals, and supplies, and we can't wait to show them our Menomonie hospitality. Do you love the murals we already have in Menomonie? Most of them were painted by local artists who are Walldogs!

Interested in hosting an artist, donating supplies, or providing a meal? Get in touch with [Explore Menomonie's webpage](#).

Interested in how First Congregational UCC in Menomonie will be involved?

First Congregational UCC Involvement in Mural in Menomonie: Our church was asked by Wade Lambrigtsen (local Wall Dogs artist/organizer) to be the hub for meals during the Wall Dogs Mural Event schedule for June 24-28, 2026. Presentations were made to Exec Comm and Council (January, 2025), discussions and Q/A followed. We offered our building space and South lawn and parking lot to Mural in Menomonie as the food hub for the event.

First Congregational UCC is providing: Fellowship Hall, restrooms, outdoor space (southside) for the artists and volunteers. Attention to our congregation's needs (Thursday's Table) has been part of the discussion.

Watch for E-News for how you can volunteer your time as a UCC host as we share our building with the Wall Dogs artist volunteers. While most meals will be brought in be served, two meals will be made and shared by us: Thursday evening cookout outside, and Sunday morning breakfast. Volunteers are welcome to team up to help with that, too!

EXTRAS: Watch these videos from Past Wall Dogs Festival Communities to get a feel for the experience we can expect June 24-28!

<https://youtu.be/XqQdz89hh0U?si=rMiJ01Ajn8utzW-n> (2022, The Dalles OR)

https://youtu.be/8V89vPKjWP4?si=vCeOw_3Q8_gCS5sw (2020, Keane NH)

This message is brought to you by the UCC Murals in Menomonie Organizing Team: Andrew Mercil, Nita Fitzgerald, and Pastor René Mehlberg. Ask us your questions!

May Worship Volunteers

	Flowers	Coffee Servers	Readers
June 7 th	Karen Miller	Sherry Bernick	Sherry Bernick
June 14 th Bridge Sunday, Pride Worship	Doris Win	ONA Committee	Leah Langby
June 21 st , Father's Day	Bill and June Grambo	Care Ministries Committee	Karen Miller
June 28 th	Larry and Sherry Galetka	Bill and Linda Olson	Dawn Ascher

Signup sheets are by the west entrance & near the coat closet

Announcements

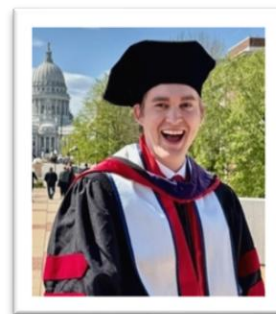
Moss Schmelzle



Granddaughter of Tom and the late Barb Schmelzle
 Graduated from Rosemount High School, Rosemount, MN
 High School Diploma
 Planning on attending the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia studying Biology.

Joshua Gienapp

Son of Lisa and Brian Gienapp
 Grandson of Toby and Marian Ellison and Gary Gienapp
 Graduated from UW-Madison on May 7
 Juris Doctorate Degree
 Accepted a job as a law clerk with a Colorado state judge



Hannah Ingram



Daughter of Robb Ingram & Laura Nyman (both deceased)
 Granddaughter of Margy Ingram
 Graduated from UW-Eau Claire
 BS in Social Work
 Planning to work until beginning a master's degree

Tehya Johnson

Daughter of Scott and Nell Johnson
Granddaughter of Don and Nancy Heifner
Graduated from Menomonie High School
High School Diploma
Planning to attend UW-Madison and major in Biochemistry



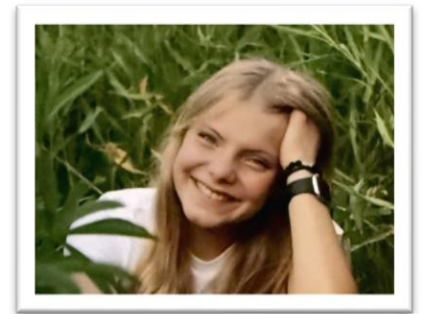
Isaac Blomquist



Son of Kim and Jon Blomquist
Graduated from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls
BS in Finance
Employed at Merchant Bank in Red Wing, MN

Mazie Brien Theorin

Granddaughter of Lee and Cindy Theorin
Graduated from Pecatonica High School
High School Diploma
Mazie will be attending UW-Madison and hopefully marching in the Badger Varsity Band with her older brother. She will be working on a degree in the Neurobiology Department.



Allie Kristine Robel



Granddaughter of Lee and Cindy Theorin
Graduated from Elk Mound High School
High School Diploma
Allie will be playing basketball and running track while attending UW-River Falls working on her Pre-Vet major.

Martha Cody

Parents: Lisa and April Cody
Graduated from Menomonie High School
Future Plans: Continuing to live her one previous life!



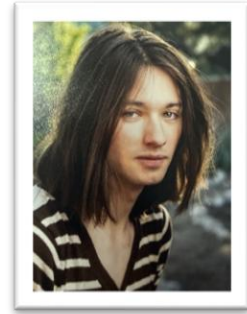
Isaiah May



Parents: Stephanie May and Carol Nies
Graduated from Berklee College of Music
Future Plans: Move to Nashville to pursue his studio music dreams

Emmett DiMauro

Son of Pamela Wesolek, Grandson of Deb and John Wesolek
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
Bachelor of Arts - English Studies



MacKenzie Flug

Daughter of Matt and Karen Flug, granddaughter of Connie Flug
Graduated from University of Minnesota
MPS in Dietetics
Will be in Durham, NC working for the Emily Project

Emma Flug

Daughter of Matt and Karen Flug, granddaughter of Connie Flug
Graduated from University of Minnesota, College of Apparel Design (cdes)
BS
Accepted a job as Assistant Manager at Hollister in MOA

Emma Mommsen

Granddaughter of Sue Mommsen
Graduated from Concordia University at St. Paul
Degree in Business Administration with sports Management Focus
Will pursue a master's degree at Concordia University at St. Paul

Mari Rudser

Granddaughter of Sue Mommsen
Graduated from Wayzata High School, MN
High School Diploma
Will attend Augsburg University at Minneapolis, MN

Clark Combault

Grandson of Susan and Pinckney Hall
Will graduate in June from Neoma Business School
Double Master's Degree in International Management

Tour of Homes

Organizational meeting - all interested people welcome! Come for the FUN!

Date: Thursday, June 18th

Time: 10:00

Where: Room 1

Coffee and Treats will be served.

Congratulations Braver Angels Of Menomonie



Congratulations to the formation committee members responsible for securing recognition as an official local alliance through the Wisconsin Braver Angels umbrella organization. It took committee members just six months to secure Braver Angels alliance status and we are extremely proud of their achievement! **Thank you** committee members from the Menomonie United Methodist Church and the First Congregational United Church of Christ: Pastor Wendy Slaback, Anna McClung, Rick Nagler, Kristen Billingsley, Nita Fitzgerald, Bonnie Trimble, and Karen Miller.

Braver Angels is a national organization devoted to bridging the partisan divide and strengthening our democratic republic. The nonprofit runs workshops, debates, and other events where "red" and "blue" participants attempt to better understand one another's positions and discover their shared values. Three workshops were held in Menomonie in September and October last year including *A Christian Response to Political Polarization*, *Depolarizing Within*, and *Disagreeing Better*. Watch for more workshops and events soon.

The first meeting of the new Menomonie Alliance will take place on Saturday, June 20, 2026, in Room 1 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at First Congregational United Church of Christ. Contact Co-Chairs Bonnie Trimble at trimbleb@gmail.com or Karen Miller at dirfaithform@menonomieucc.org for more information.

Thank You!

Thank you to the following people who helped with the spring cleanup of the Memorial Garden. Jim Collins, Nita Fitzgerald, Sue Foxwell, Ron Fry, Linda Hamm, Pixie Haug, Karen Levandoski, LaMont Meinen, Diane Mercil, Lee Nicholls, MaryJean Nicholls, Gail Skamfer, Ron Welsch, Deb Wesolek, and John Wesolek.