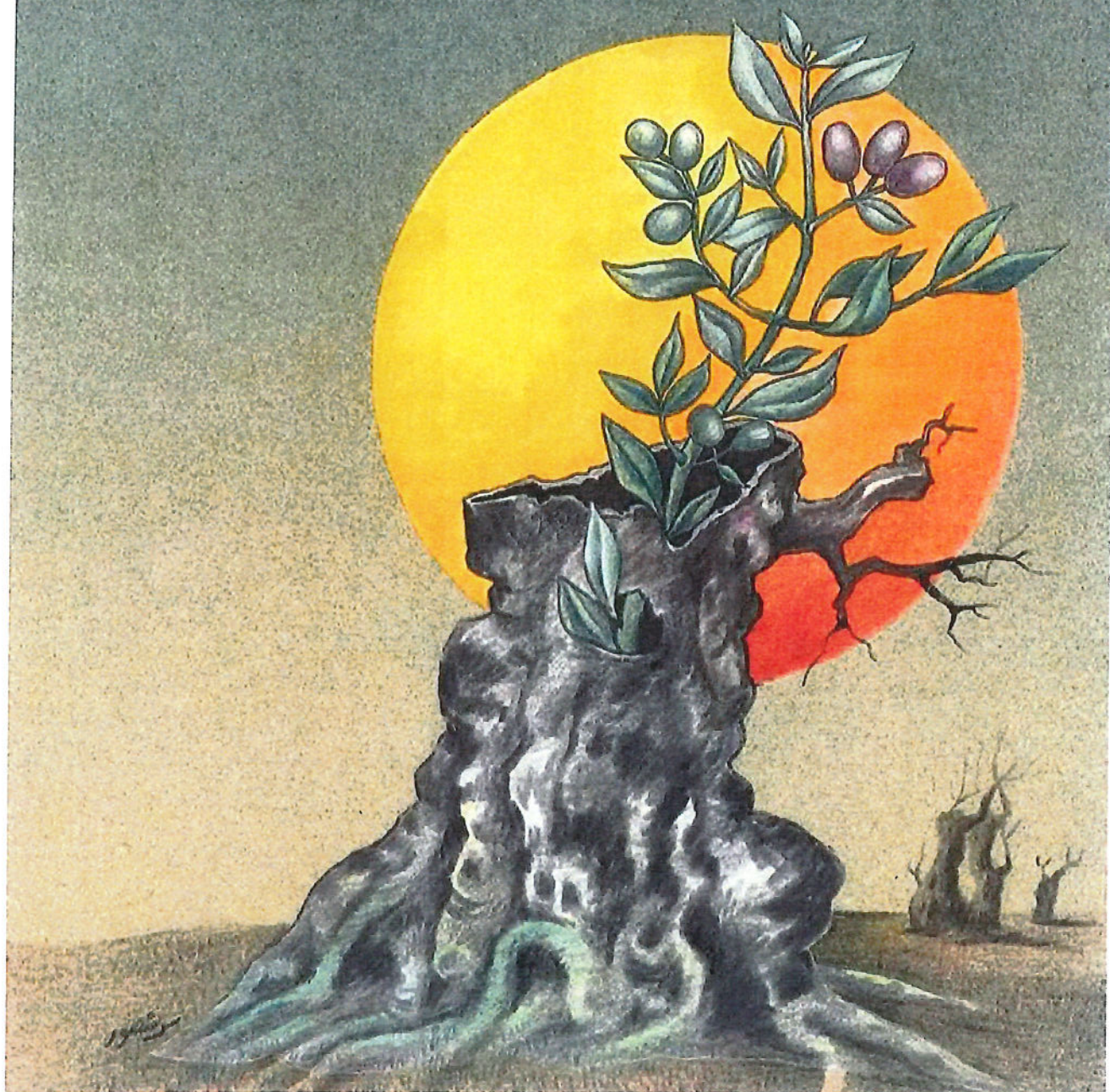




EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OCTOBER 12, 2025



Welcome! The mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is to: **Live by faith, embody love, proclaim hope, and seek justice.** If you are worshipping with us for the first time, we hope that you will find God's presence among us. When the Friendship Folder is passed during the announcements, please sign it, and then pass it back across the pew to the inside aisle.

All are welcome. Jesus called us to welcome all into God's family. Join our Fellowship Hour after worship where everyone is invited to enjoy refreshments in the Community Room. A restroom for all bodies and families is in the narthex.

Children are welcome in worship! Activity bags are available in the narthex. There is an area for parents and children at the front of the nave which allows children to be close to the action in worship. Our staffed nursery (downstairs) is an option as well. After the word for children, the kids will go to their JAM classrooms.

Livestreaming Notice for Worship. We strive for worship to be accessible for all, so we livestream our worship services on our YouTube channel, First Congregational UCC, La Crosse. Your voice and/or image may be visible in the broadcast. These recordings are publicly available at the church's discretion. If you prefer not to appear, we invite you to sit in the sanctuary's last six rows, which are not shown on camera.



Please ask an usher if you need assistance or would like a large-print or sensory-friendly bulletin. A Hearing Loop system is available.

Serving in Worship Today

Leading Worship & Preaching.....	Laura Wright
Leading Worship.....	Mary Runyon
Trumpet.....	Jon Ailabouni
Vocals.....	Ava Shively
Guitar.....	Andrew Moore
Bass.....	Paul Jewson
Drums.....	Josh Shively
Reading Scripture.....	Sue Heuer
Head Usher.....	Randy Breeser
Ushers.....	Bob Armstrong, Katie Clements
Greeters.....	Jon & Wendy Hawes
Nursery.....	Zali Stanton
Fellowship.....	WISE Committee

* In the order of service indicates all who are able, please stand.

Gathering

in the presence of God

Gathering Music

Jon Ailabouni & Ensemble

Welcome and Announcements

Thank you for joining us this Sunday where all are welcome. Please pass the Friendship Folder, share your name, and take note of those worshipping with you.

Prelude Music

"Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

Arr. by Jon Ailabouni

In the New Orleans jazz funeral tradition, "Just A Closer Walk with Thee" is often performed as a slow dirge by dozens of brass players and marching percussionists as the casket of the deceased is taken from the church to the cemetery. After the burial, the musicians and the family lead a street parade with upbeat celebratory music. The procession is followed by the "second line," which includes mourners and anyone else who joins in to dance and move along with the assembly.

*Call to Worship

Jeremiah 29

One: We gather as people who know the ache of grief,
unsettled by change, and the loss of home.

Many: **Yet God says to us: "Plant gardens where you are
and eat what the gardens grow."**

One: In every strange land, in every season of waiting,
God calls us to bloom where we are planted.

Moment of Silence

Take this moment of silence to be still and listen for God.

*Hymn 35 *(All join in singing the hymns.)*

"Morning Has Broken"

Bunnesan

*Sharing the Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Please greet those near you with a wave or bow and with words such as: "Peace be with you. / And also with you."

Listening

for the Still-speaking God

The Word for Children

Children will join the pastor in the center aisle as we walk forward for the Word for Children. Kids will then go to their JAM classrooms after the Word for Children as the congregation sings.

Acclamation *(Sung by the vocalist first and then the congregation will join in.)*

All:



The First Lesson

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

Sue Heuer

The Psalter

Psalm 66:1, 3-12 (*Read responsively from The Message.*)

One: All together now – applause for God!

Sing songs to the tune of God's glory,
set glory to the rhythms of his praise.

Many: **Say of God, "We've never seen anything like God!"**

One: Take a good look at God's wonders –
they'll take your breath away.

Many: **He converted sea to dry land;
travelers crossed the river on foot.
Now isn't that cause for a song?**

One: Ever sovereign in his high tower,
God keeps his eye on the godless nations.
Rebels don't dare raise a finger against God.

Many: **Bless our God, O peoples!
Give God a thunderous welcome!**

One: Didn't he set us on the road to life?
Didn't he keep us out of the ditch?

Many: **He trained us first,
passed us like silver through refining fires,**

One: brought us into hardscrabble country,
pushed us to our very limit,

Many: **road-tested us inside and out,
took us to hell and back.**

One: Finally, he brought us
to this well-watered place.

The Gospel

Luke 17:11-19

Sermon

"Blooming Where You Are Planted"

A Conversation with Jon Ailabouni

Responding

with the voice of hope

Anthem

"Sumud"

Jon Ailabouni & Ensemble

By Jon Ailabouni

The Community Invited into Prayer

Prayers of the People

Leader: God, in your love,

All: *Yarabba ssalami,*
 amter alayna ssalam.

yarabba ssalami.

im la'biladana ssalam.

Let your peace rain upon us,

O Living God of peace.

Let your peace rain upon us.

Lord, fill our country with your peace.

The Prayer of Jesus (Said by all. Use language that reflects your view of God.)

Our (Father / Mother / Creator) 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 trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Thanksgiving

for the gifts of God

Stories of Generosity

Music at the Offertory

"Offertory"

Jon Ailabouni & Ensemble

By Mary Lou Williams

Mary Lou Williams (1910-1981) is one of the great pianists, composers, and arrangers in the history of jazz. Williams wrote and arranged for such

bandleaders as Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, and she was friend, mentor, and teacher to Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Tadd Dameron, Dizzy Gillespie, and many others. Through the 1960s she wrote extensive liturgical and sacred music including Mary Lou's Mass. "Offertory" is a work that she played both in worship, recital, and jazz festival settings.

***As the Gifts Are Presented: Sing to the tune of Old 100th (Hymn 34).**

(All who are able are invited to stand and sing.)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low.

Praise God, for all that love has done,

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One!



Prayer of Thanksgiving

Going

to be messengers of good news

***Hymn** *(All join in singing the hymn.)*

"Guide My Feet"

Guide My Feet

"Guide My Feet" is an African-American Spiritual (also called Negro Spiritual). This arrangement cross-pollinates the Spiritual tradition with the New Orleans Second Line tradition.

Spirituals are a type of religious folk song sung by enslaved Africans and their descendants which proliferated in the 1770s-1860s. The form has its roots in the clandestine and informal gatherings of enslaved Africans in "praise houses" and outdoor meetings called "brush arbor meetings," "bush meetings," or "camp meetings" in the eighteenth century. At the meetings, participants would sing, chant, dance and sometimes enter ecstatic trances... Enslaved people were fascinated by biblical stories containing parallels to their own lives and created spirituals that retold narratives about biblical figures like Daniel and Moses. As Africanized Christianity emerged, spirituals served as a way to express the community's faith, as well as its sorrows and hopes.

1. **Guide my feet while I run this race.
Guide my feet while I run this race.
Guide my feet while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

2. Hold my hand while I run this race.
Hold my hand while I run this race.
Hold my hand while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.
3. Stand by me while I run this race.
Stand by me while I run this race.
Stand by me while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.
4. I'm your child while I run this race.
I'm your child while I run this race.
I'm your child while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.
5. Search my heart while I run this race.
Search my heart while I run this race.
Search my heart while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.

Text: African American Spiritual

*The Blessing

Postlude Music

"Guide My Feet"

Arr. by Jon Ailabouni

Acknowledgements: "Morning Has Broken," words © 1957 Harold Ober Associates and music © 1927 Oxford University Press "Guide My Feet," harmonization © 1994 GIA Publications, Inc.. *The Spirit is Moving: A Jazz Liturgy of Renewal* and hymn arrangements by Jon Ailabouni and used with permission. Published by Jon Ailabouni Music (ASCAP). Hymns and service music reprinted and streamed with permission under Onelicense.net #A-728014.

Cover Image: The cover image is by Palestinian artist Sliman Mansour, whose work since the 1970s has powerfully conveyed the Palestinian story. This piece, entitled "Perseverance" was purchased through www.slimanmansour.com.

*Flowers today are given by Cam and Carlene Roberts
in loving memory of Carlene's mom, Megan Thorstad,
& her birthday on October 11th.*

First Congregational UCC Ministry Team

All the Members Ministers
Rev. Dr. Laura Wright Senior Pastor
Rev. Mary Runyon Associate Minister of Faith Formation
Nancy Allen Organist & Choir Director
Sue Retzlaff Bell Choir Director
Michelle Logan Office Manager

Contact Information: First Congregational UCC, 2503 Main Street, La Crosse, WI 54601,
608-784-8137 or office@firstcongolax.org, or visit us on the web at www.firstcongolax.org.

What gifts did you give God this week?

Can we share your gift to God with the congregation?

Yes _____ No _____

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Week in our Church:

Sunday, October 12

- 9:00 am Faith Forum:
Prayer, Meditation, & Mindfulness
- 10:00 am Worship w/Jon Ailabouni
- 10:00 am Nursery
- 10:20 am J.A.M.
- 10:30 am MS/HS Donuts & Discussion (L)
- 11:00 am Fellowship-WISE Committee (CR)
- 11:00 am Missions & Social Justice
Meeting (L)
- 12:00 pm New Member Class
(La Crosse Distillery)

Monday, October 13

- 7:15 pm Christian Education Meeting (Zoom)

Tuesday, October 14

- 8:00 am Alternative Energy Meeting (L)
- 3:00 pm Membership Meeting (CR)
- 5:00 pm Creation Care Meeting (Zoom)
- 6:00 pm Finance Meeting (CR)
- 6:00 pm Beyond the Bridge Screening &
Discussion (Weber Center)

Wednesday, October 15

- 5:00 pm Kid's Choir Practice (S)

Thursday, October 16

- 7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal (S)

Friday, October 17

Office Closed

Saturday, October 18

- 9:30 am Chery Hanson's Visitation
- 10:30 am Cheryl Hanson's Celebration of
Life

Sunday, October 12

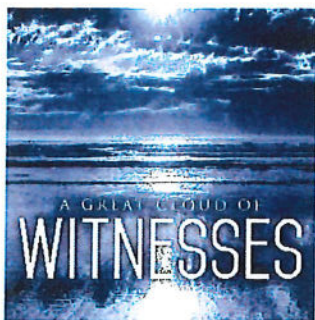
Mental Health Sunday

New Member Sunday

- 9:00 am Faith Forum:
Rev. Bev Davis Re: Bullying (C)
- 10:00 am Worship w/Rev. Bev Davis
- 10:00 am Nursery
- 10:20 am J.A.M.
- 11:00 am Fellowship (CR)
- 11:00 am WISE Committee Meeting (L)

CALENDAR KEY

CR = Community Room, C = Chapel, L = Lounge, N = Narthex, S = Sanctuary, J = JAM Rooms



PICTURES NEEDED FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY NOVEMBER 2ND

All Saints' Day is a sacred time to honor those who have gone before us — not only those who have passed this year, but also the loved ones from years past who still live in our hearts. As we gather in worship, we do so surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

If you would like to participate, please bring a snapshot of your loved ones to the church by Wednesday, October 29th. We will display these photos during the service on **Sunday, November 2nd**, as a visual reminder of the saints who continue to bless our lives. We will also take time during the service to honor all our church members who have passed within the last year.

First Congo is turning 175 Years Old!

Would you like to help us plan?



Did you know that in 2027 our church will be celebrating its 175th anniversary? A group of 12 souls came together to charter our church four years before La Crosse became a city. Anita Doering is organizing an initial meeting to brainstorm ideas of activities throughout the year, although the big day is January 22, 2027.

The theme will be focused on how First Congregational has served the La Crosse community.

Whether you want to come and contribute ideas or if you are interested in working on one or more events or elements related to this historic anniversary, please come to the church on October 11 at 10am. We will meet in the lounge.

If you have any questions please contact Anita at 608-780-1044 or abdoering@gmail.com





Join Us On October 26th For A Sunday of Special Music!

Mark your calendars for a Sunday of song and spirit! On **October 26th**, the **First Congregational Choir** will lift our hearts with a program of beloved folk and popular anthems that speak to peace, justice, and hope. They will sing timeless classics by Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. Come ready to be

moved, inspired, and reminded of the power of music to heal and transform. This will be a Sunday where the sanctuary rings with both beauty and conviction—an experience to invite friends, neighbors, and family to share in.

Sweet Street Fellowship Hour



🎃 You're Invited! WISE Committee Kids' Halloween Event 🎃

The WISE Mental Health Committee is excited to host a special Halloween event for the children of our church on Sunday, October 26th!

Our goal is to offer a joyful, uplifting experience that encourages positive thinking and reminds our kids that they are a cherished part of our church family—we want them to feel happy, included, and loved here.

Kids are invited to wear their Halloween costumes to church!

After worship, during social time, children will head to the Community Room to “trick or treat” at various decorated tables. Along with sweet treats, each table will offer a small giveaway that encourages kids to take care of themselves, each other, and the earth.

✧ *Because we all matter, and we are all loved by God more than we can imagine.* ✧
Come be part of the fun!

P.S. If you'd like to donate treats or help hand out goodies at one of the tables, please contact Jean Feeney at (740) 973-7703.