



Congregational Connections

Monthly E-Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | June 2022

QUESTIONS OF FAITH

This year in Confirmation Class as I was getting the Confirmands ready to write their personal “Statements of Faith”, I asked them to each send me one question they still had as it related to the different areas of their statement: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Bible, Church, Discipleship. The questions they asked were fascinating and I did my best to answer many of them in our next class. But there were some that are incredibly difficult to answer, and are perennial questions asked through the centuries: why do bad things happen to good people? What happens after we die? If all the stories in the Bible aren’t literally true, how can we tell fact from fiction?

Confirmands always ask the best questions! They are not willing to settle for old clichés and are doing their best to work out meaningful responses to the issues they are concerned about. I thought I would spend just a little time each month of the summer attempting to respond to just a few of their questions, and probably some of the questions we still carry around with us. Often enough we adults have learned to live with the questions, even if we haven’t quite produced answers—and sometimes that is all we can do.

So, the questions for June: **“Is it more important to attend church services or act like a Christian out in public?”** and a second is similar, **“Do you need faith to be a good person?”**

I love these questions so much! The first question asks us to make a ranking of importance: is it more important to worship on Sunday or to live out our faith day to day? We are a church that believes strongly that Christian faith is tragically insufficient if it is not lived out in the way disciples treat their neighbors near and far, treat themselves and care for God's creation. At the same time, our experience is that disciples who are not regularly engaged in personal prayer and community worship quickly become worn-out, cynical, exhausted, burned out or just as often self-righteous and judgmental because we forget the ultimate resource of our strength, the guide for our actions is Jesus Christ.

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...QUESTIONS OF FAITH continued...

Worship reminds us why we are ministering, refuels our spiritual energies, and inspires the paths we take. Prayer is fulfilled in action. Worship is fulfilled in ministry. It is a “positive feedback loop” that can create real transformation in the individual disciple and in the world around us.

Honestly, I’d rather someone be a good Christian out in public (and in private) than sit in a worship service. And this is where I think the first question and the second question are linked. It is something that bothers all of us when we see it in others and something we may even worry about in ourselves: hypocrisy. The idea that there may be some people who are satisfied with attending worship and then going home and being mean, abusive or simply dismissive to the people in their lives. There are lots of folks who can “talk the talk” but do not “walk the walk”. Does one need faith to be a good person? No. There are lots of great people who have no Christian faith or any faith at all. There are lots of great people who do incredible works of service and compassion who are members of other religions, too. Are there people who claim to be people of faith, or make a good public showing of it, and are terrible people you wouldn’t want to be friends with? Yes.

Another way to see this second question, is out of a sense of the questioner’s own fear or self-doubt. Many of our young people struggle with what they truly believe, and our Confirmation Program invites them to begin sorting it all out within the community of faith. But what if the young person is uncertain about their faith? What if all they seem to express is doubt? And so, the question, then becomes a little more heartbreaking, “Do I need faith to be a good person?” Our faithful compassion is then to answer, of course you don’t need faith to be a good person. You are a good person just the way you are. We say to everyone, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome here.” A faith community is about the best place in the world for people who are struggling with doubts to work through them.

More questions from this year’s Confirmation Class to come!
Have a great month of June!

Courage and Peace, Pastor Scott

WORSHIP WITH US - SUMMER SERVICES

We have one service at 9:00 during the summer months of June, July, and August (sorry, no nursery care provided in the summer).

CLICK AWAY

Remember to be on the lookout for orange text throughout this e-newsletter. The orange text is linked up to other documents or web pages that you might find helpful and interesting.

CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NEXT E-NEWSLETTER

If you have any celebrations, concerns/prayer requests or other contributions that you would like us to include in a future e-newsletter, let us know. Please email us 7-10 days before the first day of the month.