

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH *of Western Springs*

1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs, Illinois 60558 † 708/246-1900



GATHERINGS

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH

JULY 18, 2017

COMING UP SUNDAY, JULY 23

- * 9:30am worship, Rev. Katherine Willis Pershey will lead the service.
- * The final summer concert will begin after Sunday worship. Vince Cefali and Kathy Christian will perform songs from "The Pilgrims Progress", which is an opera by Ralph Vaughan Williams, based on John Bunyan's allegory The Pilgrim's Progress. Vince will also sing music by Benjamin Britten, that is certain to be enjoyed by the children.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUNDAY, JULY 30

- * *CHURCH IN THE ROUND*
9:30am worship service in **Plymouth Hall**, led by Rev. Meredith Onion.



www.wscongo.org

The Shack

I had not read the book, "**The Shack**", by Canadian author William P. Young. In fact, I didn't know anything about the story. One of my wife Donna's colleagues had simply recommended the movie. So, when it became available for rental, we watched the movie on our 'Friday Movie Night'.

The story involves a young family, the loss of a child by abduction, the devastating effect on the family, the father's faith, and a search for answers. But, the story really has so much more to do with our relationship with God, our perception and judgement of others, and forgiveness.

I'll refrain from a critique of the acting, and focus on how the story connected with me personally. I've never lost a child, but as a father and husband, I related to the loss, the guilt, the anger, and despair experienced by Matt, the father, in the violent death of his youngest child. The child deep inside me related to the emotions of the children, each one of them; but, more importantly, as a child of God, I could relate to the loss of faith in my Heavenly Father during a time of despair and darkness. And yes, there were tears.

The questions, "How could a loving God let this happen?" and "How can God forgive the very worst of us?" are explored well in the story. I've asked these very questions myself in my life, and I hung on each word of the dialogue as Matt engages directly with God and does not cut Him any slack! Matt is challenged to make hard choices regarding the judgement and punishment of his own kids, then finds that he would choose to forgive them, out of love, rather than condemn. Further, Matt is challenged to forgive his abusive earthly father (and receive forgiveness from his father, as well!), confront the realities of the death of his daughter, and forgive the man who was responsible for her death. Very powerful stuff, indeed!

I highly recommend this story, book or movie, to my brothers and sisters in Christ. It goes to the very core of our relationship with God, how we perceive good and evil, and forgiveness.

Brian Cassin, Facilities Manager

Rich at Chautauqua Institution



Last week Clare and I were at the [Chautauqua Institution](#). We attended worship, listened to renowned speakers (Bill Moyer's, Andrew Sullivan, and many others), listened to the symphony, watched an opera and a dance company. In between those plenary type events, I listened to a lecture about Islam, sat in on Lori Harris's lecture about butterflies, went for some runs, listened to a lecture about Martin Luther, sweat in a spin class, visited art galleries, played basketball, and believe it or not, a lot more.

I went to a worship service last Monday, led by a United Church of Canada minister, Greta Vosper, who claims she doesn't believe in God. So, I've already got lots of sermon ideas that I expect to share with you in the coming year.

The [Chautauqua Institute](#)* is also incredibly beautiful. It's set on a lake, filled with Victorian homes, and when you arrive, you park your car outside of town and walk everywhere all week.

*CHQ is a not-for-profit community on Chautauqua Lake in SW New York State, where approx. 7,500 people are in residence on any day during the nine-week season, & a total of over 100,000 attend scheduled public events.

CHQ is dedicated to the exploration of the best in human values, and the enrichment of life through a program that explores the important religious, social, and political issues of our times; stimulates provocative, thoughtful involvement of individuals and families in creative response to such issues; and promotes excellence, and creativity in the appreciation, performance, and teaching of the arts.

HAPPENINGS AROUND CHURCH

ALL CHURCH PICNIC

August 27 is the All-Church picnic! 10am at Bemis Woods, the Spirit Worship Band will lead the service with Rich, Meredith, and Katherine. After worship, we'll fire up the grills, prepare the food, and celebrate the joy of outdoor worship. Games and activities will be offered for the children, and a good time will be had by all! You will receive a registration email in coming weeks that will include a link to the sign up genius. We hope everyone will be able to join us!

HONOR GUARD CELEBRATION! Two veterans at our church: Kent Taylor and Val Price, we part of the Honor Flight on July 12. The celebration started with a charter flight to Washington D.C. for a tour of the capital and memorials, and a surprise "welcome home" gathering at Midway Airport when they returned. It was a wonderful experience and we thank everyone who was there, and most of all, we offer heartfelt gratitude to Kent and Val for their service. You can find out more about Honor Flights by visiting www.honorflightchicago.org

BEDSPLUS. We provided a "home" for 10-20 clients each night during our week hosting the Transitional Summer Shelter program at BEDSPlus. A huge thank you to everyone who volunteered and to Erin Molek; it was a wonderful week.

CHURCH OFFICE SUMMER HOURS.

The office will be staffed Monday—Thursday from 9am-12:30pm, and closed on Fridays.

DUET CONCERT. July 26 at 7:30pm, Kathy Christian, Natalie Ingrisano, & Janet Mensen Reynolds will perform. Natalie, our former children's choir director, is visiting from Seattle, WA. All are welcome to a wonderful [night of music!](#)

TAI CHI. Tai Chi is a form of exercise that involves gentle movement, stretching, breath work, and rebalancing of the body's energy. Research has demonstrated a positive impact on reducing stress, enhancing physical and mental balance and in relieving the pain of arthritic joints.

A group facilitated by Faith Community Nurse, Deb Stankiewicz, meets in the Seim room every Tuesday morning from 9:30-10:30 am; there is no fee to attend. DVD's are used to guide participants in these gentle exercises, and all are welcome to join the class. Come every week, or whenever you can—you'll be glad you did! If you have any questions, please contact Deb at 708-246-1900, x218.

GOD'S GARDEN/FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE.

Please visit your new God's Garden/Fellowship Circle, located on the west side of the Education building. Experience a moment of peace in the presence of God; view the garden in full bloom as butterflies & humming birds visit their favorite flowers; be inspired by the inscribed verses. We would also like to thank those who contributed to the Fellowship Fire Circle project, through the Cooper Heinz memorial fund: Pawel Nawrocki from Carving in Stone Inc., for donating an inscribed verse, Wilson WARE Group for the 5% discount and donating an irrigation zone, & to all who made donations to God's Garden.

Many Thanks...

Dear Congregation,

Thank you so very much to the members and the staff, past and present, of this wonderful church, for the honor of serving in the ministry of welcoming the people who have walked in our doors every Sunday morning for the last 32 years. It has been an honor and a gift to serve in this way.

I so appreciate all the kind words, notes, photos and gifts presented to me on my retirement Sunday. What a perfect worship service and retirement party you all gave me. So many hands contributed to the celebration; I wouldn't change a thing about the day!

The Memory Book is a treasure full of kind and loving thoughts. Thank you for taking the time to contribute to it, and to Laurel and Rich Seidelman, who gave many hours to its creation. Anyone who would like to see it is welcome.

The beautiful bird bath has found a perfect place in our yard, and will always remind me of "adding to our flock." Of course, all birds are welcome, whether from the neighborhood, or from far away! I look forward to seeing all of you, and visitors, too, on Sunday mornings at church.

Gratefully, Linda

Summer Sunday School

The children are having a marvelous time singing and worshipping together in summer Sunday school! They have learned about amazing creatures God created, and enjoyed fellowship through games and crafts. Summer Sunday school continues until August 20, when we'll have a special celebration from 9:45 to 11:00am. All children are always welcome!

We are still in need of Sunday school teachers for the 4th/5th graders 9am. All materials (and inspiration!) are provided. Please consider being part of this ministry; it's monumentally fun, and you'll receive unending blessings from the children! Contact Hope Sabbagha if you're interested, hope@uscongo.org

Discipleship Sunday

Everyone belongs, matters, & is needed. We mean that. On August 20 after Sunday worship we will have, what used to be known as "sign-up Sunday". Really though, it's so much more. It's a time to think about how you want to be involved in church life. Do you want to be more involved with fellowship (relationships within the church)? Volunteering? Sharing your interests, gifts, or talents? All of the above?

Discipleship Sunday is an opportunity to learn more about many of the committees, fellowship groups, and on-goings at church during the upcoming school year. If you're so inclined, you can sign up for any that tickle your fancy, either to get additional information or to be involved.

We also want to stress, this is not the only time to sign up or get involved. All of our activities are open for new participants whenever you're ready.

Think of this as a way to roll up your sleeves and be God's hands at work.

a note FROM Meredith

You may be surprised (shocked!) to learn that I am an introvert by nature. I love people, especially the people of this generous and God-loving congregation, but it is often in silence where I encounter God, and my soul is refreshed. Therefore, I will be spending part of my 'summer vacation' in silence at a retreat hosted by the organization *sacred*.

www.mylifeissacred.com.

These silent retreats are open to any, and all so feel free to join me! We just won't be able to talk to one another!

"I learned that silence is the secret.

Silence your body to listen to your words.

Silence your tongue to listen to your thoughts.

Silence your thoughts to listen to your heart beating.

Silence your heart to listen to your spirit.

Silence your spirit to listen to His spirit.

*In silence you leave the many to be with **the One.**"*

- Mama Maggie Gobran,
Founder of Stephen's
Children



PASTORAL STAFF

Rich Kirchherr
Senior Minister

Katherine Willis Pershey
Associate Minister

Meredith Onion
Associate Minister

Deb Stankiewicz
Parish Nurse

Gatherings is a biweekly publication of the First Congregational Church of Western Springs. Articles for inclusion should be submitted to Erica Alletto at gatherings@wscongo.org.

Gatherings is emailed to members and posted on-line at www.wscongo.org.

JOYS & CONCERNS

BAPTISMS. On July 16 we welcomed **Lucille Clementine Prim** into the faith and family of Jesus Christ.

WEEPING WITH THOSE WHO WEEP. Our heartfelt condolences go out to **Cindy Bowhay and her family** on the passing of her father; to **Alberta Mytys** on the passing of her brother; the family and friends of **Robert Trovillion**, who passed away on June 25; **Jim Palermo** and his family on the passing of his mother; **Mary Brown** and her family on the passing of her father; and to **Al Pedersen** on the passing of his brother.

MEMORIAL. On August 5 at 11am we will have a memorial service for **Chuck Kierscht** and offer prayers for his family and friends.

CONGRATULATIONS! We offer best wishes on the marriage of Cory Seidelman to Lauren Collins.

CURIOUS about what is happening at church? Check out the church **calendar on the website** (*it's updated frequently, so check often!*)

GATHERINGS DEADLINE. Articles are due by Tuesday, **August 8**, 5pm. Please email the submissions to erica@wscongo.org (the next issue will go out on August 16).

EVERYONE 

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