

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
 UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
4 MEAD ST. WALTON, NY 13856

THE CONNECTION October 2023



Connecting God's People Through Love

A Note from Janet

LOVE AND LOYALTY

‘Do not press me to leave you or turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die – there I will be buried. May the Lord do this and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’ Ruth 1:16, 17

Naomi and Ruth have come to a crossroads. We encounter them there, at the intersection of love and loyalty. As Ruth focuses on the love for Naomi, she also puts the God of Naomi as the center for her choice.

Ruth was not Jewish she was a Moabite who were not friendly with the Jews and the Jews were not friendly with the Moabites! Naomi, after the death of her husband and two sons, wishes to go back to Bethlehem where she came from before her husband fled to Moab during the famine in Judah. Her sons married Moabite women, Ruth was one of them.

When Naomi decides to return to the land of Judah, Ruth persuades Naomi to go with her back to Bethlehem. The truth was that Ruth’s love for Naomi empowered her loyalty to a vulnerable mother-in-law. Ruth’s determination to stay with Naomi was beyond loyalty, it was a call from the God of Naomi to follow her home.

Ruth goes with Naomi to Bethlehem, there she meets Boaz and marries him and in her line of succession she becomes the great-grandmother of King David, the line from which Jesus is born in Bethlehem. The love and loyalty of Ruth is what God is seeking in all of us! We are bound together in love - committing us to greater things!

Pastor Janet

Treasurer’s Report

August 2023 Offering Information

Monthly amount needed to meet the yearly budget of \$88,475: \$7,373

August Offering: **\$960**

Many thanks to all of you for not only your money but your time and talents.

Marc

Moderators' Message

Who Are We?

At the September Prudential Board Meeting, we began discussing the future of our church, our purpose, and our identity. I found the following article to be thought-provoking and informative. Best wishes for a beautiful October!

Diane Meredith

Church Branding: What Your Mission Looks Like

By Ryan Nelson

<https://www.logos.com/grow/church-branding-mission/>

Defining your church's brand is about helping people find their place in the body of Christ. It's an expression of how the passions you carry collide with the community you inhabit. **It's a physical reflection of the spiritual calling of your church.**

Sometimes it's hard to tell what that actually looks like. If you visit church websites, sign up for newsletters, and remove the church name, can you still tell which newsletter came from which church? If you heard the church name, would you know what that church is like or how they live out the gospel? If you walked into their building, would you still answer that question the same way?

The visual elements of your church should be derived from your church's mission. It's your "brand." The more familiar someone is with your church's brand, the faster they recognize your identity, purpose, and calling. **Whether you planned to establish one or not, your church already has a brand.** It might still be unclear—like a rough draft of a book—but it's there. "You can't just embrace what you like and disregard what you don't like," says Micah Ellis, design director at Faithlife. "You are who you are."

Even if it's unintentional, your church is carving out its brand with every choice it makes. Your mission, your values, who you're called to reach, and what you care about influence the decisions you make and define your brand identity. Every choice—both big, organizational changes and clumsy, incidental choices you make on the fly—shape how your church's identity is expressed. Establishing your church's brand is about aligning all those decisions, providing a point of reference for every new choice, and empowering your people to define what represents you—what you stand for.

Challenges of church branding: Micah is quick to dispel any notion that the church should be treated like a Fortune 500 company. "The church isn't a corporation, and it's not a product." In the marketplace, brands help us differentiate between hundreds of companies attempting to solve the same problems and provide the same services. They help companies identify with specific demographics and audiences. And it's completely

inappropriate to bring that “marketing” approach to church.

Companies use branding to position themselves as appealing alternatives to the competition. In the dog-eat-dog world of business, a strong brand helps lure customers away from a competitor. But branding your local church isn’t about “sheep stealing.” **Your goal is not to position your church as superior to other ministries.**

So how do we apply branding to advance the gospel, not project an image? “The church could take its cues from nonprofits,” Micah says. “They’re purpose driven, not image driven.” When people support a nonprofit or ministry, they’re becoming part of a larger story. They align themselves with the brand. People identify with your church brand because who you are and what you do intersects with who they are and what they do—not because it adds something to their image (like a new pair of shoes or a sports car).

And with every person who becomes part of your church’s story, you may discover deviations and improvisations that become part of your brand as well.

Visually expressing your church: There are so many different things being communicated on a Sunday morning. It’s hard to simplify. But if someone only remembers one thing from a service, what one thing do we want them to remember?”

Whatever it is, that one thing should be the focal point of every role. That’s why it’s important for church design to be a team effort. The process isn’t built around one person. The entire team knows what the big picture looks like, and there’s an objective guide to what fits and what doesn’t—so everyone can appeal to the agreed-upon vision and weigh each item against your brand standards.

That shouldn’t feel restrictive to your team. If you have put work into your brand and vision and mission, which most churches have done, then those pillars won’t change over time. But how they’re expressed can change with the culture and with who you’re trying to reach. “God created culture, uniqueness, diversity,” Micah says. “That should be expressed in everything from the music you hear to the design that you see.”

A special occasion could be the perfect time to stretch the limits of your brand or express a new flavor of it. Take, for example, Eleazar Ruiz’s church. “For Christmas at my church, we go all liturgical,” he says. “No slides for songs. We hand people candles when they come in. We want you to feel nostalgia like you felt when you went to church as a little kid. The bulletin that day is going to be different. The colors we use are going to be different. The stage is going to be different.”

Intentional variations help churches connect their “brand” to the rich tradition and history of the global Christian church. These variations should still align with the mission and identity of your church—they shouldn’t leave people feeling like their church has changed, but rather show that your church is capable of a wider range of expressions.

Churches have youth groups, ministries, and other sub-groups that may need to add their own flavor to your brand. It might look a little different in a new context with a new

audience. That’s okay. However flexible your brand is and however intentionally your church expresses it, remember that **church branding is about defining your church identity and remaining true to it. You’re not peddling the gospel—you’re clarifying how you live it out.**

Revised Common Lectionary

The readings used at our weekly worship service and in most Mainline Protestant Churches and in Roman Catholic Churches are from a list of assigned readings known as The New Revised Common Lectionary. In our Congregational tradition, pastors are encouraged to use the assigned readings but it is not mandatory.

I personally prefer to follow the readings and I mainly focus on the Gospel lessons for my meditation. It gives me and you a structure through which we can study and learn from the teachings of the scripture of the Word (Logos) of God in our midst.

The readings for September: (You are encouraged to read them as well)

Date	1 st Reading and Psalm	Alternate 1 st Reading and Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost October 1, 2023	Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 Psalm 25:1-9	Philippians 2:1-13	Matthew 21:23-32
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost October 8, 2023	Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 Psalm 19	Isaiah 5:1-7 Psalm 80:7-15	Philippians 3:4b-14	Matthew 21:33-46
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost October 15, 2023	Exodus 32:1-14 Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23	Isaiah 25:1-9 Psalm 23	Philippians 4:1-9	Matthew 22:1-14
Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost October 22, 2023	Exodus 33:12-23 Psalm 99	Isaiah 45:1-7 Psalm 96:1-9, (10-13)	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10	Matthew 22:15-22
Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost October 29, 2023	Deuteronomy 34:1-12 Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17	Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 Psalm 1	1 Thessalonians 2:1-8	Matthew 22:34-46

October 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 18 th Sunday after Pentecost Communion Coffee Hour Deacon's Mtg.	2	3	4	5	6 First Friday	7 Elijah's Closet 10-2 Walton Fall Market
8 19 th Sunday after Pentecost Worship 10 AM	9	10	11 Elijah's Closet Mtg. 4:45	12	13 Elijah's Closet 10-2	14 Elijah's Closet 10-2 The Gathering Table 11:30-1:30
15 20 th Sunday after Pentecost Worship 10 AM Christian Ed. Mtg. after service	16	17	18	19	20 Elijah's Closet 10-2	21 Elijah's Closet 10-2
22 21 st Sunday after Pentecost Worship 10 AM	23	24	25	26	27 Elijah's Closet 10-2 Prudential Board Mtg. 3:30	28 Elijah's Closet 10-2 The Gathering Table 11:30-1:30
29 22 nd Sunday after Pentecost Worship 10 AM	30 Church In Society Mtg. 6:30 @ Church	31 Halloween				

Sunday School

Sunday School will continue each Sunday during the worship service. Children ages 3 through 6th grade are invited to join us each Sunday!

New this year: we will be following the school calendar and won't have Sunday School over school vacations or long weekends. As such, there will be no Sunday School on October 8th.

The Gathering Table



The Gathering Table free lunch program has been well received by the community.

We have been serving 25-35 lunches every other Saturday. Lunches are held on the second and fourth Saturday of each month.

This month we will have lunches on Saturday, October 14 & 28. Please feel free to join us for lunch and fellowship, or sign up to volunteer! You can volunteer by contacting the church office at 607-865-4066 or by emailing secretary@uccwalton.com

CHAIR YOGA FOR OLDER ADULTS



Chair yoga is a form of exercise which helps older adults exercise without putting pressure on joints.

It may also help those who have difficulty with balance and may reduce the fear of falling as well as help people who are not used to exercising to begin improving their strength and balance.

Movements typically involve sitting in the chair while stretching and holding poses or standing and using the chair for balance.

Come join Jennifer LePinnet Clark, DPT and Trained Yoga Instructor, as she guides you through a series of exercises allowing you to take gradual steps toward better strength and balance.

It's never too late to start.

WHERE? First Congregational Church, UCC
4 Mead St., Walton, NY 13856
Enter using the North St., back entrance

WHEN? Tuesdays & Thursdays
October 10th - November 16th
11 am - 12 noon

FREE CLASSES - no registration required. Come to 1 or come to all.

If you have any questions call the church Secretary at 607-865-4066



The First
Congregational
Church