



—The Church of the Open Door—

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

724 E. South River Street, Appleton, WI 54915

October 5, 2018

Dear Members and Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! In the midst of the storm, the voice of Christ came to the disciples saying, *“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid”* (Matthew 14:27). That same voice calls to each one of us and all of us together, in the midst of the storms and trials of life; calling us to see beyond our fears to find assurance, courage, and peace.

The political storms have been raging these past few weeks surrounding the confirmation hearings for Judge Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. At some point, a vote will be taken and winners and losers identified by the result. **As a Church of Jesus Christ, we are not called to ignore the political storms of the moment, but we are called to look at that which is deeper, often more difficult, and more lasting.**

Since Dr. Ford’s moving testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, person after person from our church and from the community have approached us as their pastors to offer their own testimony, their own account of the physical and sexual violence that has been perpetrated against them. The vast majority of these witnesses have been female whose memories of sexual violence at the hands of a man were triggered by recent events. It has become increasingly clear that many among us suffer from personal traumas that transcend the politics of the moment to shatter hearts and lives.

Our mission as a Church will not end with a vote in Washington but continue in our families, our workplaces, and in our church. **No matter our political affiliation, we face the same challenges:** how can our stories of pain and violence be heard? How can we faithfully listen to the stories of others? How can we continue to reshape our life as a church to witness to full equality, loving mutuality, and peaceful relationships? How can we teach our children and youth to celebrate God’s gift of sexuality in healthy and life-giving ways? And how can we witness in our families, workplaces, and communities to the kind of inclusive and transformed life that moved the Apostle Paul to proclaim that, in Christ, *“there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28).

We would like to invite those who have thoughts on meeting these challenges to **join Pastor Steve and Pastor Kathryn on Wednesday night, October 10, from 6:30–7:30 PM in the Upper Lounge.** We will have a chance to talk and pray together on our church’s witness amid these turbulent times. And please know that your pastors are always available to listen and counsel, particularly when painful memories are triggered and the storms come.

Yours in Christ’s love,

Rev. Steve Savides

Rev. Kathryn Kuhn

Rev. Nick Hatch