



The Hilltop Chimes

First Congregational United Church of Christ
120 Kuckkan Lane Watertown, WI 53094

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July 2025



From the Pastor's Desk

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just," Thomas Jefferson famously wrote when reflecting on the embedded injustice of slavery, an institution he himself practiced and from which he benefited personally. Still, he knew it was wrong, and he

knew that its sin was *collective* in nature, that this sin was not merely personal or individual, but one that belonged to the country as a whole.

We know that in our country's history, slavery was far from our only collective sin, and it certainly wasn't its last.

But there remain too many U.S. Christians who ignore both basic history and scripture itself, clinging to the problematic notion that uncritical citizenship and discipleship are synonymous, with the interests of the faith being the same as the interests of those with government power in our country, resulting in the insistence that every injustice committed for the cause of Christian nationalism is somehow made righteous via religious label.

One counter-protester at June's "No Kings" demonstration in Watertown wore clothing declaring, "Jesus Is King." I found the sentiment ironic and confused. Yes, Christians do believe that Christ is our sovereign—we may agree on some version of this statement—but evidently, we come to diametrically opposite conclusions based on this claim.

If Christ is sovereign, then the current presidential administration is not. If Jesus Christ is our Savior, then our ultimate allegiance belongs to no earthly

authority. If Jesus is our teacher, then we follow his lessons. That means we ***fear not***. It means we ***welcome the stranger***. It means we are called to ***free the prisoner***. It means we are always to ***love our neighbor***. And it means, according to one passage, that we are judged on how well we ***care for the least of these*** as if we're caring for Christ directly (Mt. 25:31-46). These Bible-based tenets don't seem to make it into the thinking of Christian nationalism or the policies of the current powers-that-be.

However we might choose to spend this July 4, remember that our Congregationalist ancestors in faith—troublemakers like Samuel Adams and John Hancock—also opposed the tyranny of monarchy, and that opposition also sprang from their faith, for at the heart of Congregationalist commitment was the theological claim that no monarch or bishop could lead God's people, but only Christ and Christ alone could be Head of the Body. And they also knew the gospel's claim that their faith would be known by its fruits.

How will we embody God's justice today?

Rev. Dr. Chris Ross, Pastor



Watertown Pride
Saturday, July 19
10:00-6:00

AT OUR CHURCH
ALL ARE WELCOME!





SPACE DAY WORSHIP ON JULY20!

July 20 marks the anniversary of when the first humans landed on the moon in 1969, with Neil Armstrong taking that first famous step. Although not much of a church-goer in his adulthood, Neil Armstrong grew up as part of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, with his family's home church in Ohio now a congregation of the United Church of Christ since the merger in 1957. In a special way, it was one of our own who had the honor of being the first human being on the moon. It is yet another item to add to the long lists of historic "firsts" connected to the UCC.

Appropriately, we will celebrate this "first" as part of a larger theme in Sunday worship on July 20. If you own any space-related attire, I encourage you to wear it to church that day!

And be prepared for worship that morning to be out of this world.

Contact Information:

Cell: (920) 838-5630

Email: rev.fatmoses@gmail.com

Report From The Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting



2025 Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting was again held at the Green Lake Conference Center, on the opposite shore of Green Lake from Daycholah. This meeting was a day shorter than past meetings, but a lot of important issues and information was shared and decisions made. This was also the best attended Conference meeting since 2018 with over 315 pre-registered attendees plus typically more pe.

The meeting began on Friday morning, June 6th with a short service. This was followed by the first business meeting which presented the proposed changes and allowed a Q & A time for topics as diverse as the Conference Bylaws, Nominee's for Conference

committees and positions, financial reports, proposed 2026 budget, UCC Pension Board report, Catalyst Team updates, Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel resolution, and presentation of scholarships. This was followed by the usual lunch at the Conference Centers Cafeteria.

The afternoon sessions began with a State of the Conference presentation from the Wisconsin Conference minister the Rev. Franz Rigert. We then broke into smaller groups for workshops where I attended the UCC Resolution "Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel" led by the Rev. RaeAnn Beebe and Beth Moore. A small group of us at First Congregational-Watertown have studied the resolution in a class led by Pastor Chris. The goal was to have at least 62 congregations study this resolution within the past year prior to the annual meeting, but only 39 congregations had confirmed that they had studied this over the past year, so the resolution will not pass at this time. There were some interesting points of view that the resolution could be seen as antisemitic by some to a lack of concern about genocide of the Palestinians. The point came up over and over that the resolution dates to 2021, well before October 7th and this must be kept in mind. The attendees that had studied the resolution lobbied for a new resolution to extend the deadline for another year before voting on the resolution. The workshop organizers agreed to take this back to the Conference Board to seek approval.

After the first workshop, there was a 45 minute break for coffee and snacks with the vendors in the trade show.

After the break I attended a second workshop on "First They Came For... Responding Faithfully in These Times" led by the Rev. Breanna Ille'ne' from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. The group discussed activities to counter the attacks on the LGBTQ+ community and what we can do at the federal, state, and local level. The overall outcome is that we must be diligent and work together to have a consistent message to our legislators.

After another delicious meal in the cafeteria, I participated in a guided walk followed by a Welcome Reception in the exhibit hall.

Saturday began with a Worship Service that led to the keynote speaker, UCC National General Minister, President, and CEO the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. She provided an inspiring sermon on "Changing from Glory into Glory", which went well with the constantly changing art theme changing caterpillars into cocoons and then butterflies. Her speech is available on the Wisconsin Conference website or at: [Keynote address: Karen Georgia Thompson at Annual Meeting 2025 on Vimeo](#)

The next session I attended was the South East Association meeting. Dissolution of the four Associations in the Wisconsin Conference was the main agenda item. Our church was a member of the South East Association even though we have been serviced by the South West Associate Conference minister for the past 8 years. The majority of the attendee's agreed to dissolve the Association and have the Wisconsin Conference take over the administrative roles that the Association provided in the past. The funds that were still at the Association will be transferred to the Conference as well to be used for projects in the old South East Association. We will now be part of the South region of the Wisconsin Conference, one of the three regions.

After a quick lunch we were back in session for a longer business meeting. Votes were held to accept the funds from each of the four Associations, Revisions to the Bylaw's removing the Associations and referring the responsibilities to the Conference, approval of the nominees for committees and boards, approval of an extension until the next Conference meeting to approve the Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel resolution, update on the Leadership Forward Campaign, Time of Remembrance, Installation of new leaders, a preview of the 2026 Annual Meeting planned for April 9-11th at the Green Lake Conference Center.

After another break in the exhibit hall for coffee and snacks we participated in the Closing Worship with the keynote speaker Rev. Jen Petricca Bloesch and communion served by the three Associate Conference ministers.

Please see me if you have any questions.

Thanks for your support,
Dale Bakke

Gaston Memorial Garden Watering Crews Needed.



The plantings have been completed in the raised bed garden in front of our church. The need now is to routinely water the new plantings over the summer months. Fortunately we have received specific watering instructions from Shawn Vieth, who designed the planting layout and installed the plantings.

It is recommended that everything be watered once per week with checking mid-week if further water is required on selected plantings. It is expected that each watering can be completed in about an hour.

It has been decided to divide a watering schedule into weeks. The week will be Sunday to Saturday with the initial watering day being Sunday. That means

EVERY Sunday all plants must be watered and mid-week (Wednesday) additional watering can be carried out if needed.

A sign-up schedule has been created and placed in the Narthex along with specific watering instructions. This allows church members to sign up for specific weeks throughout the summer. Watering will be completed by simply moving the hose from plant to plant from a few seconds to a full minute on the three trees. Therefore, it is a relatively simple task and we urge you to consider helping out with this important need.

So, **please sign up**, and if you should have any questions, you may contact Adam Markus or Rob Harms. Thank you.



Notes from the Music Director

Juanita Edington
c.920-988-2416 (feel free to text)
jaemusiclover@gmail.com

June started out with Senior Choir finishing up their season, followed by Jennie Ortega, Jesse Fremont, and myself providing special music. Thank you to Tom Rusch and Cooper Wood for providing our keyboard music and accompanying either the choir or special music during the month.

Senior Choir-is on a well-deserved break for the summer. I am so thankful for the dedication and the willingness of our singers and instrumentalists to offer their musical gifts and their time to the congregation and to their God.

Looking forward to next fall, we can always use more singers. You do not have to be a church member or make a weekly commitment to be a part of the choir. High school age and above are welcome. Drop-ins are certainly welcome. Start-up will be sometime in September. Keep a look out in the Chimes for a specific date. If you play and instrument, let me know, you never know when there might be an opportunity to play.

SUMMER MUSICIANS NEEDED:

JULY 6, AUGUST 3, 17, 24, 31

If you know that you are going to be available on any of the dates listed and have a musical gift to share, please call or email so that I can get you in the calendar. This is not restricted to church members, so if you wish to ask a friend or family member to join you, please feel free to consider sharing your love for music and God by providing special music.



Appreciating Instrumental Music in Worship

Sometimes it may seem hard to understand the place or purpose of instrumental music in worship. As a musician, first I take time to appreciate the musical gifts that they are offering to God and the congregation. I take the time to close my eyes, take time to be in the space, and meditate, pray, and just be in the moment (although it is tough for me not to think about their music and what is happening with it!)

If the song is based on a common hymn that I may know, I may be singing the words in my head, or I may pull out the hymnal and look the hymn up and read the words. There might be some who find jotting down words or phrases, or even drawing a picture that the music evokes, helps you connect to the music and how it fits in the service.

I hope you have an opportunity to explore some of these ideas.—Juanita

"Deep River"

lyrics African-American Spiritual
(Jesse Fremont's Euphonium solo 6/22)

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,

Deep river, Lord,

I want to cross over into campground.

Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast,

That promised land where all is peace?

Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast,

That promised land where all is peace?

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,

Deep river, Lord,

I want to cross over into campground.



Tech Opportunities

Thank you to Pamela Martin who recorded during June.

We record each service and are looking to expand our camera operators. The primary responsibilities are

to run the camera focusing on the "action at the moment" (the liturgist, acolyte, minister, choir, or special musician/s) and make microphone adjustments as needed. I am currently taking care of the editing and production.

Please contact me if you are interested and when you are available. Training is available. Thanks.

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Juanita Edington, Choir Director
c.920-988-2416 (feel free to text)

jaemusiclover@gmail.com



Summer is in full swing at Gingerbread. We are having fun making new friends, having water days, being outside and learning new things! We have 70-80 children here every day and still enrolling a few new friends!

We are already looking ahead to the Fall and planning for 4K, 3K and preschool. If you would like to donate anything, 1% milk, crackers, food gift cards, colored paper, or quart size storage bags would be helpful! Thank you for your continued support!

---Melissa Mattke, Director

Gingerbread Phone: 920-261-9727

Email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com

Website: www.gingerbreadchildcare.com

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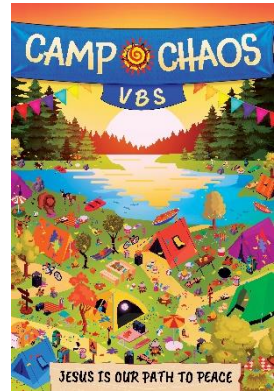
Family Fun Nights

(All Ages VBS):

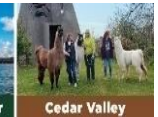
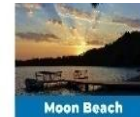
Do you ever feel like your life is chaotic? Who doesn't right? Well come join us to see how Jesus is peace in our chaotic world.

We will be meeting on **July 16**, and **August 20** at 6:00pm-7:30pm.

We will be doing crafts, having a snack and having FUN!



Come join us at our Camp Chaos!!



UCC Summer Camps - Don't miss out!

The camp schedules for 2025 are ready..

The Larson Camp Fund provides scholarships of 50% to help cover the cost for children and youth attending any of the camp sessions offered.... Including grandchildren! When you choose a Family Camp the youth have ½ of their fees paid through this fund.

Please contact the church office about additional scholarship support or if you have any questions.

Information can also be obtained on-line at

<https://uccci@uccci.org/>





**Building a Welcoming
Community**
*Hello, Welcoming Watertown
people!*

THE BREAD BASKET PANTRY



Is newly located at 208 S. 3rd St., Watertown and is another amazing local resource for our community. In addition to food items, clothing are especially needed. Many individuals and families don't arrive prepared for our seasons

There is a shopping cart in the narthex You are welcome to bring any food at any time . **There is always a need for** egg cartons

THE BREAD BASKET HOURS ARE:

- Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays 11 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Fridays 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Learn more at their website:

<https://www.breadbasketwisconsin.org/>

We wanted to make sure you can mark your calendars for our next full group gathering at the Community Room, Watertown Public Library, on **Sunday July 13 at 1:00.**

More details to come the closer we get to the meeting.



Coffee Fellowship:
Rotations of servers and Bakers are needed each Sunday of the month. Bakers provide the snacks. Prior to worship,

“servers” get the coffee started and place the snacks out in time to attend worship.

****SIGN UP to help** by contacting Jennifer Rhodes at myvibe04@yahoo.com or calling her at (920) 296-1378

****Schedules are on the narthex table, if you need to switch dates please contact one of the volunteers directly.**

June SCHEDULE:

July 6: Bake: Jennifer and Brian
Serve: Jennifer and Brian

July 13: Bake: Jennifer and Brian
Serve: Jennifer and Brian

July 20: Bake: Barb Weiss and Dale Bakke
Serve: Fran Milburn

July 27: Bake: Ellen Brown and Diane Koch
Serve: Jesse Fremont



THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY



Located in Immanuel Lutheran Church serves the people of Watertown to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

FOOD PANTRY HOURS ARE:

- Mondays 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.,
- Tuesdays 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.,
- Wednesdays 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.,
- Thursdays 3 p.m.—5:30 p.m.
- Fridays 10 a.m. -12 p.m.

Learn more at their website:

<https://www.watertownfoodpantry.org/>

BOOK OF LIFE

Birthdays in July

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Tyler Oxford | 07/01 |
| Rowan Blaszak | 07/05 |
| Jeff Nicholas | 07/08 |
| Emryn Milburn | 07/11 |
| Judy Draeger | 07/18 |
| Russell Ehnert | 07/20 |
| Evan Chowanec | 07/22 |
| Paige Driessen | 07/25 |
| Calvin Edwards | 07/25 |
| Hailey Zabel | 07/27 |
| Ryan Scheunemann | 07/27 |



MONARCH ON PURPLE CONEFLOWER
Jan Sanders Butterfly Garden

Birthdays in August

| | |
|-------|-------------------|
| 08/01 | Pamela Blaszak |
| 08/05 | Diane Scheunemann |
| 08/05 | Cooper Wood |
| 08/06 | Brian Cowan |
| 08/08 | Deanna Perschke |
| 08/09 | William Edington |
| 08/10 | Robert Harms |
| 08/11 | Aron Chowanec |
| 08/14 | Lauren Behlke |
| 08/15 | Lynda Eicher |
| 8/17 | Frank Hrasky |
| 08/21 | Shawna Hyde |
| 08/22 | Rick Scheunemann |
| 08/24 | Jim Ortega |
| 08/24 | Royal Pauli |

You Can Serve in Worship

Ushers: It's the hope that we will have a rotation of volunteers to usher and greet on Sunday mornings. Training is provided.

Ushers arrive at 9:30 to open the main entrance doors, turn the lights on and greet worshippers. In addition, you would assist the acolyte in lighting the taper of the candle lighter.

If you are interested, check in with Bill Edington on Sunday or contact Laurel in the church office (920) 261-6213
lbentz@firstcongwtn.org.

How to Join Us for Worship


- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from lbentz@firstcongwtn.org. Join our mailing list.
- 2) Our church's Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-United-Church-of-Christ-118640148151341/>
- 3) Watertown Cable channel 985 broadcasts the Sunday service on Thursdays at 10 am and 5 pm and then again on the following Sunday at 6 pm.
- 4) Our church website (see 'Media'):
<https://firstcongwtn.org/> Services posted on Monday

Financial Updates

GENERAL FUND As of May 31, 2025

| 2025 | BUDGETED CONTRIBUTIONS | ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS | BUDGETED TOTAL INCOME | ACTUAL TOTAL INCOME | BUDGETED EXPENSES | ACTUAL EXPENSES | MONTH GAIN OR LOSS | YEAR GAIN OR LOSS |
|----------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| January | \$19,604 | \$17,590 | \$20,579 | \$19,186 | \$23,969 | \$21,044 | -\$1,858 | -\$1,858 |
| February | \$19,604 | \$16,034 | \$20,579 | \$16,049 | \$23,969 | \$19,106 | -\$3,057 | -\$4,915 |
| March | \$19,604 | \$15,964 | \$20,579 | \$16,964 | \$23,969 | \$23,574 | -\$6,610 | -\$11,525 |
| April | \$19,604 | \$14,667 | \$20,579 | \$14,667 | \$23,969 | \$19,029 | -\$4,362 | -\$15,887 |
| May | \$19,604 | \$15,096 | \$20,579 | \$16,311 | \$23,969 | \$24,117 | -\$7,806 | -\$23,693 |

July 2025

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
|  | SPACE DAY WORSHIP ON JULY20! | 1 ² | 2 | 3 10am - Cable TV Broadcast NO Adult Ed. Study on Revelation 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast BREAD & ROSES 4-6:00 | 4 Independence Day OFFICE CLOSED | 5 |
| 6 Holy Communion 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship; 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 2-3:00 p.m.- Adult Ed. Study on Revelation 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast | 11 OFFICE CLOSED | 12 |
| 13 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship; 1:00: Building a Welcoming Watertown/Public Library 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast | 14 Church's 180th Birthday | 15 | 16 Family Fun Night! 6:00-7:30 VBS Camp Chaos! | 17 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 2-3:00 p.m.- Adult Ed. Study on Revelation 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast | 18 OFFICE CLOSED | 19 Watertown Pride 10:00-6:00 At our church! |
| 20 10:00 – Space Day WORSHIP; CONGREGATIONAL MEETING Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast | 21 6:30, COUNCIL NEWSLETTER DEADLINE | 22 6:00, Gingerbread Bd | 23 | 24 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 2-3:00 p.m.- Adult Ed. Study on Revelation 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast | 25 OFFICE CLOSED | 26 |
| 27 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |