

The Hilltop Chimes

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

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor

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November 2025



From the Pastor's Desk

Many people of faith may have their favorite scripture verses, and I suppose I'm not much different. However, I usually like to talk about "key" verses. In other words, in my reading, when I come across a single

verse or few verses that sum up so well an essential aspect of the life of faith, I find myself describing it as one of those *key* verses.

Of course, I think there are many key verses. One of those comes from the prophet Micah: God "has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8)? I'm not alone in naming this one as a key verse; many theologians point to this verse as one of the best single descriptions of what God expects of us, almost as foundational as "love your God" with everything you've got and "love your neighbor as yourself," commandments of which Jesus reminds us.

Often, the first part of the Micah verse gets emphasized in sermons: doing justice, or perhaps easier to understand, *acting justly*. Without spending too much space here on this idea, justice in the Bible is not usually about criminal justice, but about social and economic justice. Acting justly, then, means living our lives in such a way that **others** may also live abundantly.

Sometimes, we may hear a sermon on the last part of this requirement: walking humbly with your

God. Such a message can serve as an important reminder to keep the God of love central to our lives, while not allowing all the idols of our age (such as money or political tribe or military domination or personal entitlement) to confuse or interfere with our priority of loyalty to God and to God alone.

Unfortunately, the middle part of the instruction—to love kindness—usually doesn't get enough attention. It should not go unnoted that loving kindness certainly relates to the other parts of this triple command: loving kindness informs acting justly, and loving kindness should share a close connection to humility before God. But *loving kindness* is more total, more holistic. To love kindness means that our love of God shows even in our day-to-day interactions with other people we encounter in our lives. It means being thoughtful about not only our actions, but also our words. It should become our spiritual practice in our relationships at home, in phone calls, in E-mails, in conversations with others outside the home, and in meetings. And it is in short supply these days, as we well know.

As we continue to grow in our discipleship, let us keep remembering what it means and what it looks like to be a worshiper of God.

-Chris



STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY Sunday, November 9th

"Each person should do as he has decided in his heart— not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver". – 2 Corinthians

Once again we will gather in gratitude to dedicate our Estimates of giving for 2026 during worship. With Sunday, November 9th approaching, please consider giving from your wallet or purse, but also of your valuable time and talents. Thank you!

On behalf of Church Council

As we prepare for Stewardship Sunday on November 9

Dale Bakke (as representative from the Financial Oversight Committee) has put in many hours to summarize how we have spent our resources during the past twelve months and what we will need to prepare for 2026. Dale will share basic charts at this Sunday's service (October 26) for us to see where we stand. If you cannot attend, some copies will be on the information table in the Narthex.

We continue to make excellent progress with our resources.

During the last week of October, you will receive an *Estimate of Giving Card*. Please give it some prayerful thought and fill it out and return it as soon as you can.

- You may place it in the basket on Consecration Sunday, November 9, on the altar during the musical offering.
- or place it in the offering plate in the Narthex that day.
- You will also find a stamped envelope to return it.
- If you feel more comfortable to email or phone Laurel or me with your information, please do so.

The Financial Oversight Committee will use this information to help develop a logical budget for 2026. Thank you in advance for your thought and cooperation.

Tom Rusch, Stewardship Committee
Vice Moderator



Community Thanksgiving Service – Sunday November 24th

4 p.m. Community Thanksgiving
Worship at the Grove – Towne Center
at Marquardt Village.

Solar Project Progress Report:

We are one last city hall permit away from beginning construction.

The last of five permit applications, "Erosion and Storm-water over flow" is in-progress, and we anticipate a positive outcome by the time you read this report! Fingers crossed!

Groundbreaking (weather permitting) could be as early as the last week of October or the first week of November!

So, if you notice activity on our North East corner lot, that's the future happening in our yard!

Grace & Peace

On behalf of the Solar Project Committee:
Dale Bakke, Adam Markus, Bill Edington, Jesse
Fremont, Tom Rusch and Jim

-Jim Ortega Church Moderator





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

My heartfelt thanks go out to our faithful choir who continued to lead the singing of hymns and provided an anthem and to Tom Rusch for providing our keyboard music and accompanying the choir each Sunday during October.

Senior Choir continues at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the choir room and meets weekly, unless noted ahead of time. We can always use more singers. There are no special requirements to be in the choir. Familiarity with music reading is helpful but not required. In the past few years, I have been choosing and adapting the music that I use to the skills and numbers of the singers that attend. We generally work on 2-3 pieces of music each week, so that we are working ahead and have several rehearsals on the same piece of music before singing it in a service. 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 (and I would consider musically enthusiastic or advanced 8th graders.) Drop-ins are also welcome. If you play an instrument, please let me know. You never know when there might be an opportunity to play.

Church musicians, vocal or instrumental, are providing ministry in another way. We not only serve as leaders of the hymns but also add an anthem to the service which is intended to expand upon the theme of the lectionary or the service.



23rd Advent Recital approaching



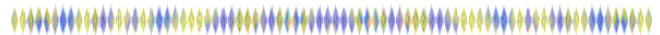
The season of Advent starts on November 30th and that means that plans have begun for our annual Advent Recital. We will hold the recital on December 6, 2025, 7:00 p.m. There are several performers already signed up, but there is certainly room for many more! We accept vocal, instrumental, solo, and ensemble sacred music of the season. We always appreciate having a variety of ages perform from the children right through our seniors. You do not need to be a member of the church to be involved. If you would like to be a part of the recital, but don't know what you would like to do, let me know and I can work with you to find some ideas.

We hope that you will schedule this event on your December calendar. It is a wonderful time to sit in our beautiful sanctuary and take in the musical gifts of our performers, while finding stillness for just a few moments.

And... there will be goodies following the recital in fellowship hall. Sue Harms has graciously volunteered to organize the reception. *If you have baking or cooking talents and you would like to volunteer an item for the reception, please contact Sue.*

Recital contact: jaemusiclover@gmail.com

Reception contact: robsue900@charter.net



Tech Opportunities

Thank you to Dale Bakke and Pamela Martin who recorded during October.

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.

Juanita Edington jaemusiclover@gmail.com

c.920-988-2416



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 call her at (920) 296-1378

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

OCTOBER SCHEDULE:

Nov. 2nd: Bake: Joyce Uglow, John & Jovi Tomaneng
Serve: Sue Harms

Nov. 9th: Bake: Brian Cowan, Jennifer Rhodes
Serve: Brian Cowan, Jennifer Rhodes

Nov. 16th: Bake: Juanita Edington, Lynda Eicher
Serve: Sue Harms

Nov. 23rd: Bake: Lori Rhodes, Jennifer Rhodes
Serve: Fran Milburn

Nov. 30th: Bake: Tom Rusch, Jennifer Rhodes
Serve: Barb Weiss



From the Coordinator of
Children and Youth
Ministries

Melissa Mattke

iosc.mom@hotmail.com 262-719-1383

Sunday School: We have been having small classes at our 9am time but learning a lot about each other and the Bible. We are talking about Noah's Ark right now. It is fun to hear all of the children's ideas and thoughts. We also get to talk about all of the good and not-so-good things that are happening in their lives.



Melissa Mattke-Administrator/director

Gingerbread email: gbchildcare120@gmail.com

Melissa Cell: 262-719-1383

Gingerbread: The school year has been in full swing and we are getting into our school time routines! Our enrollment is around 122 and have 40 on our waitlist. Our rooms are full of laughter and fun (a bit of crying too).

Our Holiday Program will be held Wednesday, December 10th/

We have some exciting things in store for 2026..stay tuned for more information!



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 1 p.m.-- 3 p.m. and Fridays 10 a.m. -12 p.m.



THE BREAD BASKET PANTRY, is 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/>



Our Love Fund

November and December the Loose Coin Mission Offering will go to the Love Fund. As we move into the winter months we continue to see “hard times” fall pretty hard on struggling families.

Today we are severely challenged and ask for your help to provide for emergency needs in our community. (Housing, food insecurity, transportation to work and utilities)

- Housing: Includes rent/security deposits. The uptick in lack of housing opportunities and the loss of employment. 2 week delays/wait for their first paycheck. Domestic Abuse victims seeking help. Winter and summer temperatures are life threatening for those whose only shelter is their car.
- Emergency Utility Assistance: we help families who have had gas & electric shut off during times of extreme heat/extreme cold. They work with We Energies on budget billing but still fall behind.
- Extreme food insecurity: Gift cards for Groceries
- Transportation to work: “Fuel Only” gas cards

(We are not alone. We work with our contacts through case workers in Jefferson and Dodge County, CAC Community Action Coalition and the caseworker at the Police Department.

In addition, we also coordinate assistance with St. Paul’s Episcopal church, the Moravian churches and Immanuel ELCA’s Hometown Missions.)

“Love Offering” Envelopes are always available at the entrance to the sanctuary. Thank you for the continued support during time like these.



Undie Sunday!

IN NOVEMBER

Sometimes children come to school without spare underwear and socks. The schools are so grateful for the donations we deliver.

We’ve become aware that school children in our local grade schools greatly benefit from our Undies Sundays drive mid-school year. Looking ahead to the winter months Council asks that we purchase underwear and socks to fill the cart! They will be delivered to the schools by Denyce.

Once again, this special drive is to collect packages of new underwear and socks for kids. All children’s sizes are welcome!

Let’s fill the Undies Collection Cart in the narthex.

--Denyce Derleth



KOATS FOR KIDS (AND ADULTS)

Drop Off new or gently used coats, scarves, mittens, gloves, snow pants at church Sunday mornings, or at the Office M-TH 10-4:00.

The drive continues through November. LEARN MORE about this annual collection visit: <https://www.cacscw.org/koats-for-kids/>

Jennifer Rhodes at 920-296-1378

BOOK OF LIFE

November Birthdays

11/04	Danica Uttke
11/06	Emily Ortega
11/07	Elijah Fremont
11/15	Alicia Boettcher
11/17	Nicholas Miller
11/19	Peter Welbourne
11/22	Owen Schwager
11/22	Kellen Schwager
11/23	Angela Howard
11/23	Nathaniel Budewitz
11/27	Lee Hyde
11/29	Ruth Martin
11/30	Diane Koch



December Birthdays

Jan Smith	12/01
Cindy Stockhus	12/01
William Piotrowski	12/02
Maverick Schumacher	12/02
Rob Miller	12/11
Lila Bocher	12/15
Lily Kulick	12/16
Paul Neitzel	12/16
Denyce Derleth	12/21
Rev. Chris Ross	12/21
Sophia Mattke	12/29
Joyce Larson	12/31



TOTENFEST - Service of Remembrance Sunday November 2nd

During 10:00 a.m. worship we will join in a special service of remembrance. Church members are invited to send the names of loved ones who have died since last year at this time to Laurel by Wednesday, October 29th.



Financial Report from the Trustees – As of September 30., 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	\$19,590	\$20,579	\$21,186	\$23,969	\$21,044	\$142	
February	\$19,604	\$18,034	\$20,579	\$18,049	\$23,969	\$19,106	-\$1,057	
March	\$19,604	\$17,964	\$20,579	\$18,964	\$23,969	\$23,574	-\$4,610	
April	\$19,604	\$16,667	\$20,579	\$16,667	\$23,969	\$19,029	-\$2,362	
May	\$19,604	\$17,096	\$20,579	\$18,311	\$23,969	\$24,117	-\$5,806	
June	\$19,604	\$15,757	\$20,579	\$17,200	\$23,969	\$33,617	-\$16,417	
July	\$19,604	\$16,524	\$20,579	\$17,524	\$23,969	\$21,741	-\$4,217	
August	\$19,604	\$21,289	\$20,579	\$21,804	\$23,969	\$17,488	\$4,316	
September	\$19,604	\$31,925	\$20,579	\$32,905	\$23,969	\$24,309	\$8,596	-\$21,415

November 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Daylight Savings Ends 1 a.m. Sunday November 2nd. Turn clock back 1 hour! 						1 Pastor Vacation
2 All Saints Day Sunday TOTENFEST Communion Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Communion Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	3 1 p.m. – Staff meets	4	5	6 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	7 OFFICE CLOSED	8
9 Stewardship Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	10	11 Veteran's Day	12	13 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	14 OFFICE CLOSED	15
16 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 11:30: Social Justice Team 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	17 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 6:30 pm, COUNCIL	18	19	20 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	21 OFFICE CLOSED	22
23 Reign of Christ Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – Thanksgiving WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 4:00, Community Thanksgiving Service at the Grove at Marquardt. 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving Day OFFICE CLOSED 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	28 OFFICE CLOSED	29
30 First Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast		Looking ahead... <u>Christmas Eve, Wednesday, Dec 24th 7:00 p.m. Candlelight service with Holy Communion.</u> <u>Christmas Day, Thursday Dec 25th There will be NO worship service held</u>				