

# The Hilltop Chimes

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

**Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor**

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\*Please call with pastoral care needs.

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Church Office Hours :

M-TH 9am-11am & 12pm-2pm

Phone: 920-261-6213

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Website: [www.firstcongwtn.org](http://www.firstcongwtn.org)

## From the Pastor's Desk



The more I read about divisions in contemporary Christianity—specifically during the current presidential administration—the more often I have been encountering a defense of current policies based on Romans 13. Although previous Attorney

General Jeff Sessions also alluded to this passage in a public statement some years ago, its use now seems to be invoked more frequently by Christian nationalists. For historical reasons, I find this citation fascinating, not the least of which is the fact that its increasing use coincides with the 250th anniversary year of the statement that formalized American rebellion against British imperial rule (but I'll save more on that for another time).

When folks point to Romans 13 in this context, they usually mean the first seven verses of that chapter from Paul's letter, verses that begin, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed" (vss. 1-2, NRSV). It is one of those "proof-texts"—verses pulled out of context to carry a theological argument. The historical precedence for relying on this passage has included condemning rebellions, supporting slavery (along with other passages, to be sure), and enforcing obedience to tyrants. (However, I never once heard the passage mentioned when public health officials

encouraged the wearing of facemasks to help save lives from COVID.)

To point out the obvious contrast, such an understanding of Christian discipleship does not fit into our Lenten journey with Jesus to confront the nexus of his culture's political, economic, and religious power on Palm Sunday and during Holy Week. That's how we know this passage serves as a mere proof-text—the witness of scripture shows something much different: Moses opposing Pharaoh, demanding that his people be let go; prophets challenging and defying their monarchs; Jesus turning over the tables in Jerusalem; and the entire Book of Revelation, which indicts the Roman Empire and envisions a graphic judgement upon imperial forces. To move even closer to the immediate context of Romans 13, neither does such an interpretation fit with the apostle Paul's own work (which routinely landed him in jail), and many interpreters point out how those seven verses neither fit well with the content of the Letter to the Romans immediately preceding the passage and that immediately following. (Check it out yourself—the end of chapter 12 makes more sense when followed by 13:8. The first seven verses of chapter 13 interrupt the flow of the material. Such a likely addition to the original text is called an *interpolation*.)

This probably feels like a lot of information. But please know that when Christian nationalists refer to Romans 13, we are called not to give in to a "might makes right" theology. The Bible is full of stories showing God's activity on the side of the

oppressed, the poor, the stranger, and the outcast. Jesus even made such an emphasis the hallmark of his ministry. But, if you ever happen to need a handy verse to counter the claims made by those pointing to Romans 13, here's a good one: "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority'" (Acts 5:29).

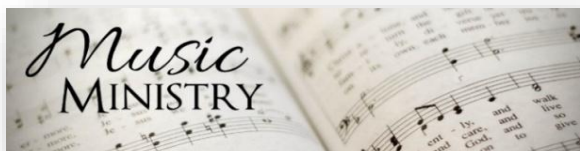
--Chris

### News from Church Council

- *The Pastoral Relations Committee* of the church includes Jennifer Bakke, Lee Buescher and Pam Martin. They are here in case anyone wants to approach them with any concerns.
- In an effort to be all inclusive, the Church Council has arranged to place a sign between the main women's and men's restrooms near the narthex stating that one may use the restroom where they feel the most comfortable. This is on a trial basis.

Please do let a church council member know if you have any specific questions, concerns or recommendations about this."

*Council Members:* Jim Ortega, Moderator; Bill Edington, Vice Moderator; Tom Rusch, Clerk; Lori Rhode, Fran Milburn, Jesse Fremont



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

In February, we continued to sing each week. My ongoing thanks goes to the mighty few who faithfully sing when able and to Tom Rusch, who serves the music program of our church in so many ways!

**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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 or special music to the service which is intended to expand upon the theme of the lectionary or the service, or provide music as a backdrop for prayerful meditation.

### BEHIND THE ANTHEMS

The choir recently sang "Set It Right Again" with the original call: "There's a great trouble in the land," based on the words of Sojourner Truth. Born Isabella Baumfree in 1797, Sojourner Truth was enslaved in Kingston, NY before she escaped in late 1826. She took the name Sojourner Truth on Pentecost Sunday, June 1, 1843. She took the name because she heard the Spirit of God calling on her to preach the truth. She lived the remainder of her life recruiting black soldiers for the union army, speaking about abolition, prison reform, human rights including for black men and all women's rights, and speaking against capital punishment. Sojourner died in 1883 in Battle Creek, MI.

Ana Hernandez wrote this song as a Call and Response, the style of so many field songs, other work songs, and African-American spirituals, but COVID interfered, so it first came out as a solo song with a walking bass accompaniment.

Tech Opportunities Videographer:

Thank you to Pamela Martin, Bill Edington and Dale Bakke who recorded during February.

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.

Wednesday Lenten Bible Study

A program called the Palm Sunday Path invites all of us to reflect more deeply this Lenten season on this kind of discipleship of action on behalf of others. We began this path together on the evening of Ash Wednesday, February 18 in worship.

The next five Wednesdays, we will dive into a single scripture passage each week selected by the Palm Sunday Path for Lenten study.

These gatherings will be held at 1 p.m. at church from February 25 through March 25.

March & April LOOSE COIN



✓ 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 is

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/

✓ 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.



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 Sue Harms at robsue900@charter.net or call her at (920) 261-7710

MARCH

Table with 3 columns: Date, Serve, Bake. Rows include 3/1, 3/8, 3/15, 3/22, 3/29 with names of servers and bakers.



From the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries

Sunday School: we continue meeting at 9 a.m. Sunday mornings.

Book of Life



March Birthdays

- 3/1 Ellen Brown
- 3/4 Kristi Scheunemann
- 3/4 Laura Yurs
- 3/4 Jovito Tomaneng
- 3/5 Audrey Wolter
- 3/6 Grady Fremont
- 3/11 Thomas Derleth
- 3/11 Thomas Rusch
- 3/20 Barbara Weiss
- 3/24 Donna King
- 3/25 John Lemke
- 3/25 Hannah Smith
- 3/26 Jami Zabel
- 3/26 Olivia Mattke
- 3/27 Maria Cruz
- 3/27 Florence Bingner
- 3/28 Liam Matthews
- 3/28 Aurora Pauli
- 3/31 Doug Budewitz



Serve in Worship

**Liturgists:** Liturgists read from a script the scripture and other responsive readings during a worship service. You will receive the script on Wednesday, arrive Sunday at 9:40 for sound check. A Printed script will be waiting for you at the podium.

**Acolytes:** The purpose of candle lighting is to “bring the light of the Holy spirit” into our worship space. Although it’s been children who serve as acolytes, people of all ages are invited. If you are interested in being an acolyte for services, please leave your name and contact information with Jody [jreamer@firstcongwttn.org](mailto:jreamer@firstcongwttn.org).



How to Join Us for Worship

- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly “Welcome to Worship” from [jreamer@firstcongwttn.org](mailto:jreamer@firstcongwttn.org).
- 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://firstcongwttn.org/> Services posted on Monday.



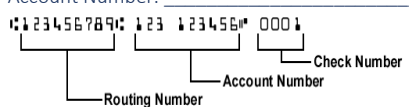
Financial Update – General Fund (not available at time of printing)


**ELECTRONIC GIVING (EFT):** giving electronically is an option we have offered for a number of years with great success. You decide how much you want to have sent and when you want it sent through our secure Vanco program. Changes can be made easily within a day or two by contacting Laurel. Records are kept secure and confidential.

If you are interested in using this convenient method for giving to the church, use this form and give to Laurel in the church office. You can direct all questions to Laurel Bentz in the church office (261-6213 M-Th) or via email ([lbentz@firstcongwttn.org](mailto:lbentz@firstcongwttn.org))

## ELECTRONIC GIVING AUTHORIZATION FORM

**First Congregational UCC  
120 Kuckkan Lane, Watertown, WI 53094**

<b>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY</b>	<b>ENVELOPE/DONOR #</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>Effective date of authorization:</b> ____/____/____		
<b>Type of authorization:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> New authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation amount <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation date <input type="checkbox"/> Change banking information <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue electronic donation		
Last Name		First Name
Address		
City		State      Zip
Email Address		
<b>Date of first donation:</b> ____/____/____	<b>Frequency of donation:</b> (please check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 <sup>st</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 <sup>th</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly (every other week) <input type="checkbox"/> One Time	<b>Amount of first donation:</b> \$ _____
<b>CHECKING / SAVINGS</b>	Please debit my donation from my (check one): Savings Account (contact your financial institution for Routing #) Checking Account (attach a voided check below)	Routing Number: _____ <i>Valid Routing # must start with 0, 1, 2, or 3</i>  Account Number: _____ 
	I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to my account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.	
Authorized Signature: _____		Date: _____

***If using a checking account, please attach a voided check at the bottom of this page.***

# March 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>1 Communion Sunday</b> 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Communion; Coffee Hour <b>1:00, Build a Welcoming Wttm at the library</b> 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>2</b> <b>1 p.m. Staff meets</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 1:00 Lenten Bible Study	<b>5</b> 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>6</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>7</b>
<b>8 International Women’s Day</b> <b>Daylight Savings Begins!</b> 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – Women’s Sunday Worship; Coffee Hour 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 1:00 Lenten Bible Study	<b>12</b> 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast <b>7 p.m. WHS Choral Concert</b>	<b>13</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>14</b>
<b>15 Celtic Worship</b> 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 WORSHIP; Coffee Hour <b>11:30, Social Justice Team</b> 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>16</b> <b>6:30, Council</b>	<b>17</b> <b>St. Patrick’s Day</b>	<b>18</b> 1:00 Lenten Bible Study	<b>19</b> 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>20</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Hour 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>23</b> <b>NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</b>	<b>24</b> <b>7:00, Gingerbread Board</b>	<b>25</b> 1:00 Lenten Bible Study	<b>26</b> 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>27</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>28</b>
<b>29 Palm Sunday</b> 9:00 a.m. Sr. Choir; Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Hour 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	 <p><b>LOOSE COIN for March &amp; April</b></p>			