

The Hilltop Chimes

July 2026

First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor
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CHURCH WEBSITE: <https://firstcongwtttn.org/>



From the Pastor's Desk

As we have spent this summer gearing up for the semiquincentennial of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, historic reflection has naturally taken center stage in many places. Even in adult education class this summer, we focused on the role of our church tradition in U.S. *history*. The truth is, I think, when most folks think of church, the role of the past is paramount. After all, aren't we always looking *back* to scripture and history and traditions and special family moments and even holiday memories?

Although we are called to remember the past—not just to learn its lessons, but also to recall God's promises—the past is not the essential frame of mind for a living faith. When we hear the call to love our neighbor, the assumption is a response for the *present*. When the Spirit draws us into forming a beloved community, that's grounded in a vision for the *future*. When we experience assurance of God's loving presence, that's for *eternity*, for *all time*. An understanding of faith that focuses on only the past finds itself unready to respond to God's call for discipleship in the here and now.

And yet, in these days, the present is also constantly on our mind. Our eyes and ears continue to be glued to news reports of chaos abroad and injustice at home. We struggle with the present everyday, even while Jesus' reminder to love our neighbor as ourselves remains.

The prophet Habakkuk encourages putting our hope in the *future*. In perhaps that book's most well-known verses, the prophet declares that he "will stand at the watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what God will say to me... Then the LORD answered me and said: *Write the vision: make it*

plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. *For there is still a vision* for the appointed time... If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay" (2:1-3).

What is your vision for the *next* 250 years? How should we ground our republic in moving forward? What role does the church play in that vision?

When we ask these questions, we may find ourselves discerning a new calling from God, a God already present in the future to come.

Rev. Dr. Chris Ross, Pastor
Cell: (920) 838-5630

****Please CALL** Pastor directly with pastoral concerns

Office Hours

The Office does have new hours.
Open Monday-Thursday, 9am-11am & 12pm-2pm
Worship time remains at 10 a.m.



Ushers and Greeters are Needed to 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.

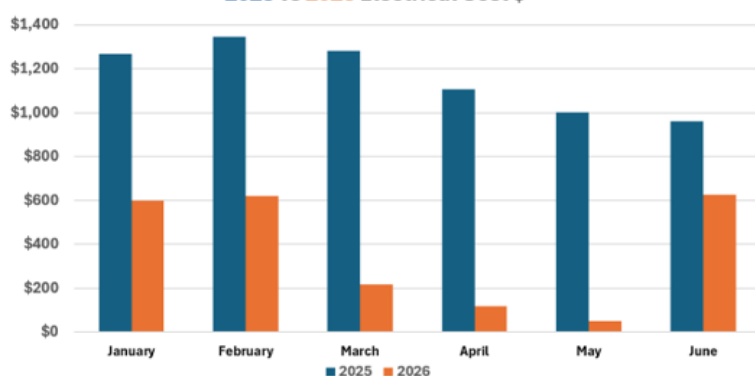
If you are interested, check in with Bill Edington on Sunday or contact Laurel in the church office (920) 261-6213 lbentz@firstcongwtttn.org.

June Solar Panel Update

We continue to reap the benefits of generating our own power. The June savings were not as high this year as we had 110 cooling degree days this period versus only 40 last year. We were also tasked with some air conditioning compressor issues that most likely increased our energy consumption for the month. We are now entering our high electrical demand period for cooling the building so we will see how the savings add up.

--Dale Bakke for the Solar Committee

2025 vs 2026 Electrical Cost \$



UCC Summer Camps - Don't miss out!

The camp schedules for 2026 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 Laurel in the church office about additional scholarship support or if you have any questions. lbentz@firstcongwtn.org

Information can also be obtained on-line at <https://ucci@ucci.org/>



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

June Schedule

July 5th: Bake: Ellen Brown

Serve: Sue Harms

July 12th: Bake: Juanita Edington

Serve: Dale Bakke

July 19th: Bake: Tom Rusch

Serve: Barb Weiss

July 26th: Bake: Lori Rhode

Serve: Cindy Stockhus



Gingerbread and Gingerbread Too are having a great start to summer. Outside time, water days and fun are all happening at both locations. The transition to having both places has been stressful and exciting. We are so thankful for the support of the congregation and the community.

Sunday School: Our small group ended our Sunday School season with laughs and dreams for fun activities over the summer! We will start again in September.

VBS: Surprise!!! We will be having a week of VBS Aug 10-Aug 13 from 6-7pm. There will be registration forms as well as online sign up on the table in the Narthex. Come join us for more surprises! Melissa Matkke

Blood Drive:

We had a full schedule at our last blood drive! It was a success! Our next drive will be in September!



Notes from the Music Director...

Special music selections continue to replace the choir anthems during the summer.

Special music is simply a solo or group, vocal and/or

instrumental, of open music genre which would be fitting for a church service. You can always check a selection with me or Pastor Chris if you aren't sure. I know that I will be gone for several Sundays during the summer, so I will not be able to fill the gap on those Sundays. Looking ahead: **Unfilled July dates** are the 5th and 12th. I will be out of town on July 5th. **Unfilled August dates** are the 16th and 30th. (August 9th will have us sharing in a Ecumenical outdoor service.) I will be out of town on August 16th. Please contact me to volunteer for any dates that you might wish to serve or if you have questions. Information is needed for bulletin preparation the Monday before you serve in worship. Thank you!

🎵 Summer Musicians Needed 🎵

Looking ahead: June dates are 7, 14, 21, 28. I will not be in church on June 28. July dates are 5, 12, 19, 26. I will not be in church on July 5. August dates are 2, 9?(this has been the Sunday of the Ecumenical service in Bentzin Square the past two years), 16, 23, and 30. I will be out of town on August 2, 9, and 16.

Please contact me to volunteer for any dates that you might wish to serve. Information is needed for bulletin preparation the Monday before. Thank you!

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

Tech Opportunities

Thank you to our current recording team, Pamela Martin, Dale Bakke, Jerrold Martinez, Bill Edington, Juanita Edington.

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

I am currently taking care of the editing and production, but Jody Reamer will be added to create a team of two who know how to do this job.

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

Loose Coin for May & June: 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/>

The Unity Project of Watertown has scheduled the
2026 Watertown Pride Event
for Saturday, July 18th, from 10am-6pm
at our church.



I want to Thank you for the continued support during time like these. Summer time things tend to slow down but it's also a time when kids are out of school.

We see people who have NEVER had to ask for help before and suddenly have fallen short in providing food and housing for themselves and their families

THE LOVE FUND (established about 50 years ago): is an anchor for our church's ability to care for individuals and families in need. We are blessed to be able provide for specific needs in our community. Housing, food insecurity, utilities and transportation.

- Housing: the biggest need in May. Includes rent/security deposits. Lack of affordable housing and the loss/layoff of employment. 2 week delays/wait for their first paycheck. Domestic Abuse victims seeking help. Housing vouchers usually covers a week in addition CAC works to help those that they can.
- In May we assisted fewer folks than last month. Assisting with utility bills..
- Extreme food insecurity: Two Grocery cards were given out in May. Food Pantries may only be able to help once a month so we are able to provide Gift cards for groceries. Referrals are made to the Bread Basket because there is no limitation on how many times you are served.
- Transportation: we have been able to provide "Fuel Only" gas cards and also Taxi vouchers for folks who don't have cars to get to work.

We continue to work with our contacts through case workers in Jefferson and Dodge County, CAC Community Action Coalition and the caseworker at the Police Department. A shout out to Char, the owner of the Heritage, who is always willing to help whenever we call on him.

"Love Offering" Envelopes are available at the entrance to the sanctuary.



Tis the season.... Would you like to help quench the thirst of our young plantings outside at the entrance to our building? Do you have spare time to join a rotation of volunteer garden stewards?

Sign up is on the Narthex table or contact the church office.

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The Rainmaker Committee needs you to help us brainstorm ideas for making it rain mission in and around First Congregational UCC, Watertown, and the world!

The Rainmaker Committee's task is to review proposals for grants from our congregation's Rainmaker Fund. According to our charter, the Rainmaker Fund is intended to help finance projects that "support the spiritual, social, and economic needs of those who call Watertown and the surrounding community home." It is an extension of our church's mission—our answer to the call to care for our neighbors and all of creation, our participation in God's expansive love and wildly wide welcome, our acts of discipleship in pursuit of God's justice and joy.

The charter of our committee states that the Rainmaker Fund "is about more than holding onto money. Is it about holding onto a mission." Right now, we have money to give, but there are no proposed projects. That's where you come in!



**Please join us for a brainstorming session
during fellowship time after worship on
Sunday, September 13, 2026.**



This brainstorm will be a time for us to do some dreaming together about how we might put some of the available Rainmaker funds to good use. As we brainstorm, we trust that the Holy Spirit will blow and bluster among us to enliven us for ministries that will make a difference in the lives of our neighbors.

Of course, if any great ideas for Rainmaker Fund projects occur to you in the meantime, please fill out the attached simple application form and return it to one of the members of the Rainmaker Committee. Additional application forms can be found on the table in the narthex.

We look forward to a brainstorm that makes it rain mission!

The members of the Rainmaker Committee:

Lee Buescher (Chair), Laurel Bentz, & Laura Yurs



RAINMAKER FUND APPLICATION FORM

Today's Date: _____

Contact Name and/or Organization _____

Contact person information:

Phone number: (____) _____

Address-----

City _____ State ____

_____ Zip Code Amount

needed: \$.....

Date funds needed by: _____

Reason for request (Benefit/Advantages/History) _____

(Please attach additional pages if needed)

For Office Use Only

Church Council Review and Decision making

Date: _____

Response: _____

BOOK OF LIFE

Birthdays in July

Tyler Oxford	07/01
Rowan Blaszak	07/05
Jeff Nicholas	07/08
Emryn Milburn	07/11
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

How to Join Us for Worship

- 1) Through the email link sent out weekly "Welcome to Worship" from ireamer@firstcongwttn.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 new church website (see 'Media'): <https://firstcongwttn.org/> Services posted on Monday

Financial Update: GENERAL FUND as of May 31 2026

2026	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	\$16,584	\$20,579	\$19,370	\$24,219	\$23,487	-\$4,117	-\$4,117
February	\$19,604	\$26,585	\$20,579	\$31,250	\$24,219	\$23,306	\$7,944	\$3,827
March	\$19,604	\$24,011	\$20,579	\$2,015	\$24,219	\$21,026	-\$19,011	-\$15,184
April	\$19,604	\$14,900	\$20,579	\$15,600	\$24,219	\$22,724	-\$7,124	-\$22,308
May	\$19,604	\$17,176	\$20,579	\$17,692	\$24,219	\$21,860	-\$4,168	-\$26,476

July 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	2	3 OFFICE CLOSED	4 Independence Day
5 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship	6 Staff Meeting 10am	7	8 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	9 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	10 OFFICE CLOSED	11
12 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship	13	14 Church Birthdate	15 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	16 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	17 OFFICE CLOSED	18 PRIDE 2026 10am-6pm
19 New Member Sunday 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship 11:30am Social Justice Team mtg	20 6:30pm Church Council mtg.	21	22 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	23 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	24 OFFICE CLOSED	25
26 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship	27	28	29 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	30 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	31 OFFICE CLOSED	