

# The Hilltop Chimes

## JUNE 2026

First Congregational United Church of Christ  
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### From the Pastor's Desk

As the nation spends the month of June in the run-up to the Semiquincentennial (250th Anniversary) of the Declaration of Independence, we continue to find ourselves encouraged to reflect on our history. One of the chief reasons we think about our past in a Christian context is to examine our choices and repent from wrongdoing. There is much in our country's history to consider in this category, but I want to turn specifically to not the Declaration of Independence, but that other document that looms so large in the creation of our Republic—the U.S. Constitution.

The First Amendment to that Constitution continues to be foundational. It protects freedoms of speech, the press, gathering together, and religion. It is no accident that these areas together are named in this first and foremost Amendment. I believe that the framers understood that these forces had the power to effect the most change in a nation, and the independence of their voices needed to be preserved from government control so that truth could be pursued without hindrance of those in power.

As we learn in our **Congregationalism in U.S. History** adult educational class (at 4 p.m. on Tuesdays—*plug, plug*), the Congregationalist heritage carries a mixed bag on the question of freedom of religion. While it is true that the Pilgrims and Puritans fled Britain to seek out freedom to worship as they chose—it was often for *only* them. They wanted it their way. Congregationalism was the established church of most of colonial New England (Rhode Island being the exception), and some of these state-established churches retained their official status until

the 19th century. Other forms of Christianity, however—even Protestant versions—were persecuted in New England. The most notable examples were the Baptists (who fled to Rhode Island, but insisted on a fuller understanding of separation of church and state) and the Quakers. Sometimes, these persecutions became brutal.

As a pastor serving a church in the Congregational tradition, I confess these sins as part of our shared heritage, and I seek repentance. I believe freedom of religion really did—and still does—protect a full diversity of religious expression: not just between different Protestants, not just between Protestant and Catholic, but yes—of course—including between Christian non-Christian, but also between believer and nonbeliever. In the First Amendment, the protection of religious expression is linked to the famous “non-establishment” clause. In other words, it was clear that to protect religious freedom, government bodies themselves could not engage in religious expression, because under such conditions, *neutrality could not be maintained*.

If such a discussion intrigues you, please know you are welcome to attend our weekly Tuesday adult educational gathering. But don't forget our other opportunity to engage with the country's Semiquincentennial—our **No Pharaohs, No Emperors, No Kings** sermon series in Sunday worship that lasts through July 5, focusing on a Biblical and historical look at issues of authority and justice. Come and learn and risk being challenged and transformed.

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

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

Email: [rev.fatmoses@gmail.com](mailto:rev.fatmoses@gmail.com)

## Office Hours

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

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## Report from Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference UCC

The 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference UCC was held in the Green Lake Conference Center on April 10-11. I had the pleasure of being one of the Watertown representatives along with Rob Harms. I have a brief synopsis of the conference and I have also displayed some items on a table in the Narthex. For the most part, there is only one item of information available, so please feel welcome to write down any pertinent information from the item or let me know if you wish to have a copy.

Our Conference Minister, Reverend Franz Rigert, has completed three terms and was elected for a fourth term. He stated that this will be his final term.

Dr. Edith Guffey, president of the board of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and former Conference Minister for Kansas and Oklahoma UCC, was the keynote speaker. She addressed the white supremacy that is in the country's DNA saying: **"The antidote is for members of our churches to be leaders equipped to build strong bridges outside the walls of the church. We must cultivate community inside our congregations and build bridges outside, where trust has been broken and betrayed, where wounds are deep and people have lost faith in the church. We have work to do; it's hard work, but it's also holy work."**

The conference delegates approved a plan to move the election of Conference officers and adoption of the 2027 budget to later in the year at a virtual gathering to be held by the end of November. The change became necessary when the Annual Meeting was moved to April.

The Annual Meeting marked the formal launch of the conference-wide read of "Nice

Racism," Robin DiAngelo's examination of how well-meaning progressive white people perpetuate racial harm. A three-session virtual book study will take place from 6:30-8:00 pm on Tuesdays May 5, 12 and 19. You can purchase "Nice Racism" on Amazon or wherever books are sold. Register for the book study.

Items from the Exhibit Hall are displayed on the Narthex table. There are items from Emmaus, the Palestine Justice Working Group (Dale has some experience with them), Daycholah Center and a variety of camp offerings (Barb & Chuck Weiss have a significant history with UCC camping), Sierra Club, WI Council of Churches, the Conference Meeting booklet and the Annual Report of the WI UCC are on the table.

--Bill Edington

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## Notes from the Music Director...

May, our final month of the 2025-26 choir season found us singing each week, and Laura Yurs adding her flute on two of the anthems. Tom Rusch continues to accompany our hymns on piano or organ and provides other service music as is appropriate. Many thanks for his faithful service.

**Senior Choir will take its summer break beginning in June.** So, I would like to take this opportunity to once again recognize our regular singers: Kristin Chowanec, Bill Edington, Jesse Fremont, Jennie and Jim Ortega, and Chuck Weiss, and Juanita Edington. I always appreciate our alumni, family members, or guests who stop in for an occasional Sunday: Erin Lynch, Emily Ortega, James Ortega, Jackson Palmer, Eliza Zabel, and Penelope Zabel. As always, our sincerest thanks goes to Tom Rusch for his accompanying skills and his patience with the creative challenges that I have thrown his way this year.

**Special music selections will replace the choir anthems as of June 7.** Special music is simply a solo or group, vocal and/or instrumental, of open 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.

### ♪ 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](mailto:jaemusiclover@gmail.com)

### Tech Opportunities

Thank you to Pamela Martin, Bill Edington, Dale Bakke, and we welcome Jerald Martinez, who all recorded during May.

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](mailto:jaemusiclover@gmail.com)



**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](mailto:robsue900@charter.net) or call her at (920) 261-7710

### June Schedule

**June 7th:** Bake: Fran Milburn  
Serve: Diane Koch

**June 14th:** Bake: Pam Martin  
Serve: Jesse Fremont

**June 21st:** Bake: Joyce Uglow  
Serve: Jerold Martinez

**June 28th:** Bake: Diane Scheunemann  
Serve: Lexi Davis

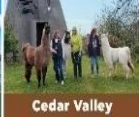
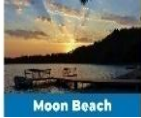
### You Can Serve in Worship



**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@firstcongwttn.org](mailto:lbentz@firstcongwttn.org).



## 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](mailto:lbentz@firstcongwtn.org)

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



From the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries

Senior Recognition: We are celebrating our graduating seniors on June 14th in our 10am worship service. Come join us as we recognize Cooper Wood, Sean Driessen and Evan Chowenec.



We are busy getting ready to open Gingerbread Two!

We already have a full staff and close to full enrollment! There are a few rooms that we are not planning to open quite yet. We are taking things slowly...but we are ready to roll! If you would like to volunteer or donate, please see Melissa!

## THE BREAD BASKET PANTRY



is newly located at 208 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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/>

## Loose Coin for May & June: THE WATERTOWN FOOD PANTRY

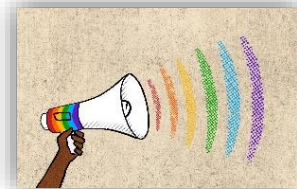
Located in Immanuel Lutheran Church serves the people of Watertown to provide fresh food for individuals and families.

### 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 18<sup>th</sup>, from 10am-6pm at our church.



**First**, I want to Thank you for the continued support during time like these.

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): Today our Love Fund 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: 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.
- Assisting with utility bills: heat, electricity, water are necessities. Children and especially the elderly suffer.
- Extreme food insecurity: 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 to work: we have been able to provide “Fuel Only” gas cards and are now looking into Taxi vouchers for folks who don’t have cars to get to work.

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 Hometown Mission.)

“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.



### Building a Welcoming Community

Hello, Welcoming Watertown people!

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 June 28th at 1pm.**

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



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





# BOOK OF LIFE

## Birthdays in June

Nora Kuehl 06/02  
 Donna Schmutzler 06/05  
 Joyce Uglow 06/08  
 Melissa Mattke 06/12  
 Kathryn Driessen 06/17  
 Suzanne Harms 06/17  
 Kaye Piotrowski 06/23  
 Maggie Markus 06/28  
 Abby Miller 06/30



## 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



Beginning May 26, we'll be studying "**Congregationalism in U.S. History**" for six weeks on *Tuesdays at 4 p.m.*, with our last session falling on June 30. Some of the information you may already know, but I bet you will find surprises in this deeper dive.

--Chris

## How to Join Us for Worship

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

## Financial Update: GENERAL FUND as of April 30 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

# June 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Adult Education 4pm	3 <b>10am Staff mtg</b> Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	4 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast  Last Day of School	5 OFFICE CLOSED	6 <b>Graduation Day</b>
7 <b>Communion Sunday</b> 10am WORSHIP, Communion Coffee Fellowship 6pm - Cable TV Broadcast	8	9 Adult Education 4pm	10 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	11 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	12 OFFICE CLOSED	13
14 <b>Father's Day</b> Graduate Recognition Sunday 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship 6pm - Cable TV Broadcast	15 6:30 pm <b>Council Mtg</b>	16 Adult Education 4pm	17 <b>NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</b> Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	18 4:00, Bread & Roses at Iglesia Aqua De Vida (Living Waters Church) 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	19 <b>Juneteenth</b> OFFICE CLOSED	20
21 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship <b>11:30, Social Justice Team Mtg.</b> 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	22	23 Adult Education 4pm	24 Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	25 <b>Anniversary of the UCC</b> 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27
28 10am WORSHIP Coffee Fellowship 1pm BWW Mtg at the Library 6:00 - Cable TV Broadcast	29	30 Adult Education 4pm (last one)	July 1 <sup>st</sup> Noon: Deadline for weekly announcements	July 2 <sup>nd</sup> 10am – Cable TV Broadcast 5pm – Cable TV Broadcast	July 3 <sup>rd</sup> OFFICE CLOSED	July 4 <sup>th</sup> <b>250<sup>th</sup> Birthday United States of America</b>