

The Hilltop Chimes

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

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ross, Pastor
Cell: (920) 838-5630—Please CALL for
pastoral care needs

Church Office hours: M-TH 10-noon and 1-4
Office Phone/Fax: 920-261-6213
Website: www.firstcongwtn.org

September 2026



From the Pastor's Desk

As anyone interested in U.S. history can tell you, 2026 is quite the year for anniversaries. During the summer, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, but this month brings the anniversary of

another event much more recent in our collective memory: it's been 25 years since the attack of September 11, 2001.

As tragic and earth-shattering as that day was, the cycles of violence spun from that day into other wars. Often, those labeled as "enemies" and "terrorists" were from a particular religious tradition—Islam—which has a global following second only to Christianity in number of adherents.

In the years that followed September 11, the terms *Muslim* and *terrorist* became interchangeable in far too many conversations, and the challenges of interfaith understanding and dialogue became even greater.

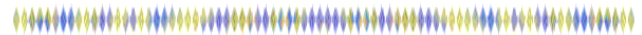
In my view, Jesus' reminder to "love our neighbors" includes not just tolerating, but welcoming folks of other religious traditions. Loving neighbor means we are called to reach out in the name of peace and understanding. To love our neighbor even means we stick up for the religious freedom of all, including those least like us.

Because of the importance of this anniversary and its effect on interfaith relations in the U.S., I will be offering a five week adult education course, serving

as a very basic introduction to the traditions of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. We will also discuss how we can understand and honor the diversity of faiths without becoming any less Christian. We will spend this time together on Wednesday evenings, beginning at 6:30, from September 9-October 7.

All are welcome to check it out as we learn together!

—Chris



Chris will be on vacation through Monday, September 7th. The Rev. Dr. Sara Rabe is available for pastoral emergencies during this time: (608) 209-2797.



**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@firstcongwtn.org.



Notes from the Music Director

Thank you to Laura Yurs, Emily, James, Jennie & Jim Ortega, and Jesse Fremont who provided special music selections during August. We welcomed Cooper

Wood for a farewell time playing the keyboard in service before he heads off to college, so thanks to Cooper and to Tom Rusch for leading our keyboard music this month.

Choir rehearsals will begin again on September 6th at 9:00 a.m. in the choir room. We are always looking to add new singers. We do not have any auditions, and the main requirements are an enjoyment of singing and a desire to help prepare the congregation and ourselves to be ready to do God's work when we leave worship. We generally work on songs for three Sundays before singing them in service and there is a wide variety of musical knowledge and experience in the choir, so I work with who we have and where we are musically.

Tech Opportunities



Thank you to our current recording team, Pamela Martin, Dale Bakke, Jerald Martinez, Bill Edington, Juanita Edington, and Laurel Bentz.

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, production, distribution to Watertown TV, and to Laurel for her further distribution to parishioners and the public via email, Facebook, and our website.

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

SEPTEMBER SCHEDULE:

- Sept. 6:** Bake:, Ellen Brown,
Serve: Fran Milburn
- Sept. 13:** Bake: Juanita Edington
Serve: Dale Bakke
- Sept. 20:** Bake: Tom Rusch
Serve: Barb Weiss
- Sept. 27:** Bake: Lori Rhode
Serve: Cindy Stockhus

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



From the
Coordinator of
Children and
Youth Ministries

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Ages Preschool - grade 5

With the school year approaching, we will be starting our Sunday School class on **September 13th from 9-9:45**. Sunday school is for anyone from Kindergarten-5th grade.

We will end at 9:45am so we can all get ready for the worship service. I am excited to see everyone and hear all about your summer!

Melissa Mattke

Or contact me or 262-719-1383

josc.mom@hotmail.com/

LOOSE COIN MISSION SEPTEMBER -OCTOBER

THE LOVE FUND: Our Love Fund is an anchor for our church's ability to care for individuals and families in need. However, *at this time*, we are severely challenged to provide for specific needs in our community. Housing, food insecurity and transportation.

(Please note that 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.)

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



Blood Drive

Thursday, September 17th

Our turn to host the Versiti Blood drive is *Thursday, September 17th from 1-5:00 p.m.*..It is so important to keep the blood supply in good standing. All of the donations stay local!

Here is the link to sign up:

https://donateblood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/11636753

Melissa Mattke

Or contact me or 262-719-1383

josc.mom@hotmail.com/

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/>

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

September Birthdays

Hungry caterpillar



09/01 Colette Kuehl
09/02 Karla Bakke
09/04 Carol Yager
09/05 Kristin Chowanec
09/06 Lori Schwager
09/09 Norm Uglow
09/18 Keegan Behlke
09/20 Dale Bakke

09/20 Owen Behlke
09/22 Daryll Boettcher
09/23 Josie Mack
09/23 Tyler Chowanec
09/24 Constance Swenson
09/25 Reed Larson
09/25 Carlee Winkelman
09/27 Alexia Asher
09/30 Jennifer Rhodes
09/30 Brody Wood

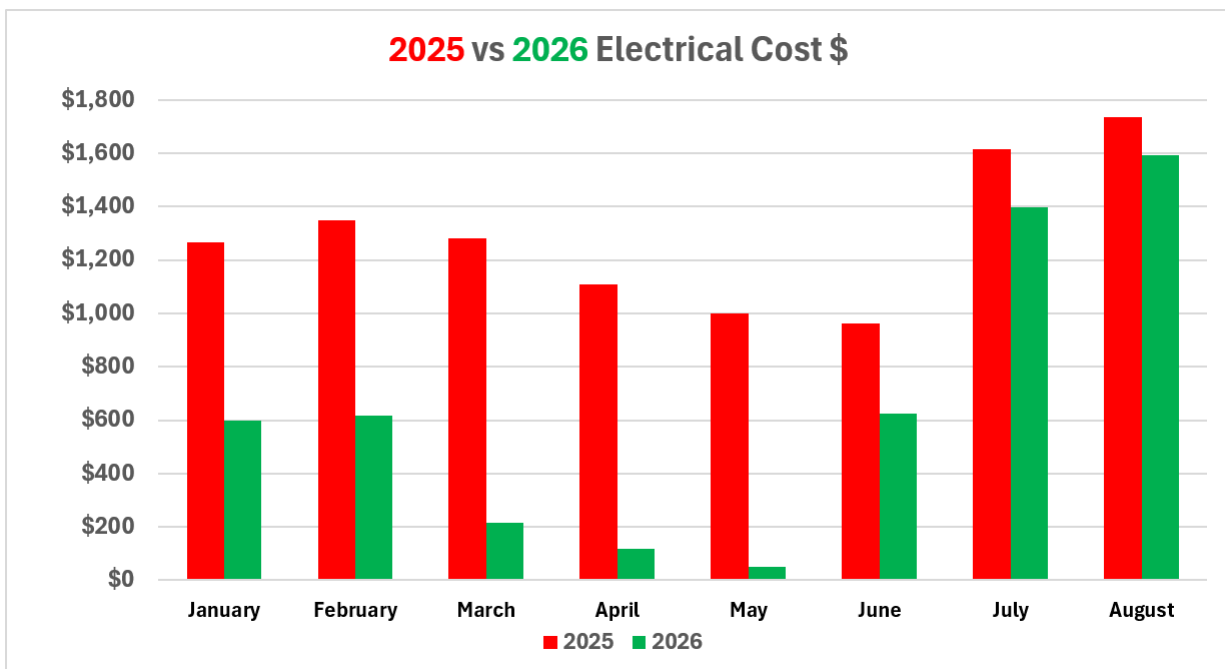
Blessing of Animals



Outdoor Worship on the Ruth Christensen Memorial Patio

On September 20, to help celebrate the beginning of the autumn season, we will be holding worship outdoors on the church patio. You are invited to bring your non-human family members, as the service will include a Blessing of the Pets! Please see Chris if you have any questions.

Solar Panel Update



Financial Report from the Trustees – As of July 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	\$18,084	\$24,219	\$23,487	-\$5,403	-\$5,403
February	\$19,604	\$26,585	\$20,579	\$30,269	\$24,219	\$23,306	\$6,963	\$1,560
March	\$19,604	\$24,011	\$20,579	\$25,339	\$24,219	\$21,026	\$4,313	\$5,873
April	\$19,604	\$14,900	\$20,579	\$15,600	\$24,219	\$22,724	-\$7,124	-\$1,251
May	\$19,604	\$17,176	\$20,579	\$17,692	\$24,219	\$21,860	-\$4,168	-\$5,419
June	\$19,604	\$14,697	\$20,579	\$14,697	\$24,219	\$38,586	-\$23,889	-\$29,308
July	\$19,604	\$21,225	\$20,579	\$21,725	\$24,219	\$18,048	\$3,677	-\$25,631



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



September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Chris will be on vacation Monday, August 31 through Monday, September 7 th . The Rev. Dr. Sara Rabe is available for pastoral emergencies during this time: (608) 209-2797.		1	2	3 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5)
6 9 a.m. Sr.Choir rehearses 10:00 – WORSHIP,Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	7 LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED 6:00, BSA troop 11 6:30, Pack 111	8 1:00, Staff meets	9 6:30 P.M.--ADULT ED. ON WORLD RELIGIONS	10 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12 5-7:30 Building Welcoming Watertown: Heritage Inn Block Party
13 9 a.m. Sr.Choir rehearses 9 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship Rainmaker Brainstorming 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	14 6:00, BSA troop 11 6:30, Pack 111	15	16 6:30 P.M.--ADULT ED. ON WORLD RELIGIONS	17 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast BLOOD DRIVE 1-5:00 in Fellowship Hall	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19
20 9 a.m. Sr.Choir rehearses 9 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 – OUTDOOR WORSHIP on the Patio w/ Blessings of the Pets! Coffee Fellowship 11:30—Social Justice Team meets 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	21 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 6:00, BSA troop 11 6:30, Pack 111. 6:30 pm, COUNCIL	22 6:00, Social Justice meeting (FH) 6:00. Gingerbread BD. (choir room)	23 6:30 P.M.--ADULT ED. ON WORLD RELIGIONS	24 10am - Cable TV Broadcast 5pm - Cable TV Broadcast	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 9 a.m. Sr.Choir rehearses 9 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 – WORSHIP; Coffee Fellowship 6 pm - Cable TV Broadcast	28 6:00, BSA troop 11 6:30, Pack 111	29 10:00—Rainmaker Fund group meets	30 6:30 P.M.--ADULT ED. ON WORLD RELIGIONS	October 1st		September and October Loose Coin: Love Fund