

MARCH 2026

Volume 41 - Issue 3

The Congregational COLUMNS

“Listen”

By Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith



Our Lenten journey has begun and will take us through the month of March and into the first week of April. We think of Lent as a journey we take together with Jesus. There are a variety of opportunities we will take part in together: worship, book discussions, the Grief, Loss, and Holy Hope gathering, and all that is offered during Holy Week.

Lent is also an inward journey. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus speaks of practices – fasting, giving, and prayer– emphasizing the idea that we are to practice these humbly, to look inward to the heart for meaning. We take part in these practices, not so much to get good at them, but to be changed by them.

Some of us come from a Lenten practice of giving something up (like chocolate or social media) as a way of fasting from those things. Some take up giving in a different or deeper way. For instance, there will be an opportunity to bring household and personal care items for Tosa Cares during Lent, and our monthly lunch making for St. Vincent’s. Some take up a new or deeper way of prayer, perhaps taking part in Tuesday evening’s Good Vibes gathering, or setting aside a daily time to be intentional about this, listening for God.

We are taking up the practice of listening at the beginning of our board, council, and committee meetings. Let me explain. Each time we meet we will listen to a Bible passage twice. On our second listening, each of us will be attentive to see if there is a word or phrase that catches our attention or raises a question.

We will then share what that was with another, each simply listening for what the other heard, and then share with the group what they heard the other say. This is not a time of Bible study, correcting or solving a question. The purpose is to practice simply listening for God’s Spirit and to each other, and seeing, over time, what God is bringing together within us. I hope we can take this practice of listening beyond the walls and business of the church and be changed by what we notice God seems to be saying.

I am grateful for any opportunity to listen and hear what God is pressing on your heart. Stop in, or let’s meet for coffee.

I touched on a few things earlier and, as always, please look further into the Columns for details. We are looking forward to Saturday, March 28, for a morning session facilitated by Tessa and myself called Grief, Loss, and Holy Hope. Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and, after worship, enjoy Hot Cross Buns made by a men’s group, as well as a few Make and Take craft items. Thursday evening in our upper room (Social Hall), we will gather for supper provided by the Deacons. This will be a time of special music and engaging in scripture and a liturgy that will lead us to The Lord’s Supper. We will begin at 6^{pm}. On Good Friday, scripture will guide us again to the cross, with our music ministry offering some truly incredible music beginning at 7^{pm}. Easter morning, come for a casual sunrise service in the courtyard (dress for the weather). Fellowship will provide a pancake breakfast, children will scramble for the Egg Hunt, and in the Sanctuary at 10^{am}, we will begin at the empty tomb and celebrate the joy and hope of the Resurrection. Easter is also Communion Sunday. There is no Sunday School (yes, there is Nursery), and worship bags will be available for children to take to the pews. See the Gathering Table and inside the worship bags for brief thoughts about children and communion.

Although this is news for April, I simply want to put a “save the date” in front of you. On April 18, there will be a Vicinage Council for Chip Smith. This involves ministers and delegates from other Congregational churches who come to hear from and discuss Chip’s ordination. This will take place from 10^{am} - 12^{pm} that morning. We will hear their support, questions, or advice. Lunch will be served to those attending, followed by an ordination service at 1^{pm}. You are invited to some or all of this fascinating and spirit-led day. Any questions? Ask Julie or Chip.

Blessings, Julie



THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN WAUWATOSA

Worship & Discovery

Women's Ministry

*Tuesday, March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st
from 8-9^{am} in the Library*

Feel free to join the group any Tuesday, from 8:00^{am} to 9:00^{am} in the Lounge, as we grow in our knowledge and the expression of our faith. For more information about the current book or study in which we are engaged, contact Patty Reddy at Patreddywauwatosa@gmail.com.

Adult Education: The Story

*Sundays, March 1st & 15th
from 9-10^{am} in the Lounge*

We will continue our book/video study of *The Story* at 9:00^{am} in the Lounge, and continue to meet the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

Patty Reddy, facilitator

Men's Ministry

*Wednesdays, March 4th, 11th, 18th, & 25th
from 9-10^{am} in the LL2*

The Men's Ministry at First Church is a vibrant and growing fellowship. We meet at 9^{am} in LL2 on Wednesdays.

If you are interested in joining our fellowship, please let Hank Collis know by calling the Church Office. Blessings to all!

Discovery Hour

*Sundays, March 8th, & 22nd
from 9-10^{am} in the Lounge*

Programs offer speakers from within our own congregation with experiences that illuminate issues we face in our own lives.

March 8 - Maintaining spiritual direction, and a sense of humor, in the midst of life transformations, hosted by Chip Smith

March 22 - Come and learn about the process of Lectio Divina with Rev. Julie. As many of you who serve on Boards and Committees here at First Church may have already learned or experienced, Rev. Julie is introducing an abbreviated form of Lectio into the beginning of our meetings. This process allows for the power of Scripture to speak to us and ultimately through us both as individuals and with God's guidance as a body of believers. All are welcome and encouraged to attend!

Chip Smith, facilitator

Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of January 2026

	2026	2025
Pledge Base Received	16.6%	7.0%
Pledge Income	\$36,748	\$36,509
Total Income	\$95,693	\$92,999
<u>Total Expense</u>	<u>\$49,477</u>	<u>\$31,440</u>
Net Income	\$46,216	\$61,559

Detailed financials available in the office

CONGREGATIONAL COLUMNS

A monthly newsletter produced by the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa to keep members and the community up to date on activities at the church.

www.FirstChurchTosa.org

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Like us on Facebook!

WOMEN'S CIRCLE PRESENTS: On With the Show The history of Sunset Playhouse

Speaker: Ella Walker
Executive Managing Director

Tuesday, March 10 ~12:30 pm in the Lounge

Sign up at the Gathering Table in the Atrium for the presentation, coffee & dessert!

Meet Our Moderator: Ann Steinmetz Harris

It's mid-February as I'm writing this, and it's staying lighter later every day. By the time you read this, we'll be listening for and seeing signs of Spring and new growth!

In my new role as your Moderator, I look forward to a year of continued growth of First Church, thanks to the efforts last year of Reverend Julie, Past Moderator JC Moore, Board and Committee members and our Office Staff. I want to extend special thanks to all of you who demonstrated your faith by making it possible, through your pledges, to hire an Associate Minister who will support our growth. The Long-Range Staff Planning Committee asked for and listened to your feedback on the Job Description, and a Search & Call process is being organized. Members from Deacons, Christian Education and Care Boards, as well as JC Moore, John Griffith, Reverend Julie and I, will be part of this process. We will keep listening to you and keep you informed.

Listening seems to be a theme this year. In February, Elizabeth Carger presented a Discovery Hour: "United in Faith, Shaped by Story," exploring how our personal stories influence our understanding of the world, each other and our faith. Through the practice of listening, we can grow in our understanding, not just of each other, but also of how God is present among us.

Listening is happening in our Boards as well. This Spring, Boards will gather to discuss how they have been serving our members and the community and envision how best to continue to fulfill our Covenant. All of which is to say we will be listening to each other and to where God is leading us.

More than ever, I'm impressed by all that is happening in our Church every week! There are so many ways to serve—from making Mercy Mats and Saturday Serve to keeping ourselves physically and mentally whole by listening to a speaker on decluttering our lives, learning a new sport, singing in the choir, enjoying fellowship events, knitting prayer shawls, attending Women's or Men's Ministry, joining Good Vibes for an evening of respite, or participating in a book discussion on *The Message of Jesus* during Lent.

I am excited and energized about the year ahead, and most importantly, I look forward to listening to where our Lord is leading us.

Your Moderator,

Ann



Fellowship Flips for Breakfast



Fellowship invites all ages to enjoy a delicious breakfast in the Social Hall on Easter morning.

Between 8:45 and 9:45am, you'll find pancakes on the griddle and an array of toppings to create a delicious treat. We recommend you sign up at the Gathering Table in the Atrium.

Workshop for Hope

Author Sophia Dembling, whose husband died after 28 years of marriage, wrote: "Happiness is possible, even with a side of sadness." Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith and Rev. Tesha Urban will facilitate a worship on grief and spiritual comfort on Saturday, March 28, in the Lounge, from 9am until 12 noon.

Grief, Loss and Holy Hope: Spiritual Nourishment for Life's Changes and Challenges will offer an inspiring morning of contemplation, connection and reflection as you explore the dimensions of grief and loss. Facilitators Julie and Tesha will guide us in opening ourselves to experiential opportunities that will help us encounter grief through our spirituality.

Please sign up at the Gathering Table in the Atrium if you plan to attend.



Special Easter Offering

Reach out with compassion to those in need. It's part of our covenant as a church family. Easter is about sacrifice - a time to live out our Christianity through giving.

The money collected during this year's Easter Special Offering will benefit two important missions: Tosa Community Food Pantry and the Congregational Church of Myanmar.

Tosa Community Food Pantry has served those in need for over 40 years. Supported by First Church, other local churches, and countless local organizations, the pantry distributes food to low-income individuals and families in the Wauwatosa area on an emergency need basis. It serves an average of 125 families each month and over 3,000 individuals per year. It plays a critical role in supporting families affected by the loss of employment. Our financial support allows the volunteers to buy non-perishable items to supplement the food received through food drives and donations.

First Church has been a driving force to support the **Congregational Church of Myanmar**. Faced with the challenge of living in a non-Christian country that is run by a military junta, where thousands have been displaced through ethnic cleansing, Rev. Elvis Sa Do, his wife Rev. Naw Pale Say, and other volunteers work to spread the Gospel. In a country where thousands of children are without schools, the church has created Grace Children's Ministry to provide education and health care to needy and orphaned children. They provide food, clothing, welfare and care to their mission families. Despite these overwhelming challenges, Rev. Sa Do continues to spread the Word of the Lord.

We ask that you prayerfully consider your gift for the benevolent work of First Church. Please give generously to support the Tosa Community Food Pantry and the Congregational Church of Myanmar.

Lenten and Easter Blessings,

Your Board of Stewardship and Benevolence

Palm Sunday Tradition Continues



Hot cross buns on Palm Sunday are a First Church tradition. The first Sunday in Holy Week would not seem the same without the spicy, yeasty aroma of Hot Cross Buns wafting through the halls.

The early Christian Church ate hot cross buns to commemorate Good Friday, and the practice spread throughout the Christian world. The first Queen Elizabeth limited the sale of hot cross buns to burials, Good Friday and Christmas. If you broke that law, you gave all your buns to the poor.

Traditionally, the men of First Church have made the buns for Palm Sunday's Coffee Fellowship. In recent years, volunteers (men only) gather in the kitchen at an early hour, cook themselves a tasty breakfast, bake and ice the buns. Then everyone enjoys this beloved treat following worship.

For more information or to volunteer contact Jim Harris in the Office.

Easter Flowers

Help us create a glorious Sanctuary for Easter! Our tradition of Easter flowers continues with the sale of beautiful lilies, hyacinths, tulips and daffodils.

The price is \$18 per plant (same price as last year). You'll find the order form in the Orders of Worship now through March 22nd. When you choose your flower(s) on the form, you are encouraged to provide a dedication – in honor or memory of a friend or loved one – which will be listed in the Order of Worship on Easter Day.

Following the Easter worship service, you are welcome to take your flowers home, or you may donate them to a homebound member of First Church. Please note your preference on the Order Form.

Contact the Office with any questions. Thanks!

Join Us on the Journey to Easter!

PALM SUNDAY

Sunday, March 29

Worship Services

8^{am} in the Chapel / 10^{am} in the Sanctuary

Coffee Fellowship with Hot Cross Buns and Make & Take Crafts

11^{am} in the Social Hall

MAUNDY THURSDAY SUPPER & COMMUNION

Thursday, April 2

6^{pm} in the Social Hall

GOOD FRIDAY TENEBRAE SERVICE

Friday, April 3

7^{pm} in the Sanctuary

EASTER!

Sunday, April 5

Sunrise Service

5:30^{am} on Ridge Court

Pancake Breakfast

8:45^{am} – 9:45^{am} in the Social Hall

Easter Egg Hunt

9:40^{am} on Ridge Court

Easter Worship & Communion Service

10:00^{am} in the Sanctuary

Easter Plant Order Form

Deadline: Thursday, March 22, 2026

Bring springtime into your church and home. Your plants will decorate the Nave for Easter, April 5th, and may be taken home following the 10^{am} service.

Return this form to the Church Office with your check for \$18.00 for each plant ordered.

Number

_____ Tulips

_____ Lillies

_____ Daffodils

_____ Hyacinths

_____ **Total**



Dedication Information

Given by _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

No Dedication

Check here if you would like your flower given to someone who is home-bound

Check here if you would be available to deliver flowers to someone home-bound.

JUST FOR YOUTH

March 2026



Sunday School

Sunday, March 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, & 29th
for ages 4 – 5th grade

Children will begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and dismissed to Sunday School during the service.

Faith Finders

Monday, March 9th
for 1st - 5th graders

We meet on the second Monday of the month for fellowship, games, and program time. We begin with an optional dinner at 5^{pm}, followed by activities from 5:30 - 6:30^{pm}. Friends are welcome! No cost, but donations for the meal are appreciated.

Covenant Class

March 8th & 22nd
for 9th graders 4:00^{pm}-6:00^{pm} in the Friendship Lounge.

Junior Choir

Sunday, March 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, & 29th
for K-8th grades at 9:30^{am} in LL4.

Children will sing on March 29th.

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

Sunday, March 1st, 8th, 22nd, & 29th
for grades 6-12

Teens begin in church with their families during 10^{am} worship and dismissed to PF during the service.

We will be holding monthly Youth gatherings, which will take place the first Sunday of each month from 4-6^{pm}.

We will end each gathering with dinner at around 5:30.

Secret Buddies Ready for Lent!



Easter is on April 5th and I am pleased to announce that Secret Buddies is back for the Lenten season! This intergenerational pen pal program matches interested adult members with our 1st-5th grade children, and they share four letters throughout Lent, followed by a reveal the Sunday following Easter April 12th. This program is so meaningful for all involved.

FCC Education Scholarship is Around the Corner



The Board of Stewardship & Benevolence is now accepting scholarship applications from our 2026 high school graduating seniors. First Church established the scholarship program to benefit deserving student members of our church who plan to attend college. Applicants must have been involved in FCC activities and volunteerism.

Scholarships will be awarded in the amount of \$300 per year, renewable for four, continuous years for a total of \$1,200 per recipient.

Applications are available from the Office, or email Marianne: marianne@firstchurchtosa.org.

Completed applications must be returned to the Office by April 30th. The Scholarship Committee will contact all applicants to set up a meeting in May. The names of scholarship recipients will be announced on Children & Youth Sunday, June 7th.

Save
the
Date



VBS-August 10-14, 2026

The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa
1511 Church Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53213-2593

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Just for Youth



The well attended Chili Cook-Off and Dessert Bake-Off on Sunday, February 8th offered delicious varieties of chili and desserts as well as great fellowship.