

APRIL 2026

Volume 41 - Issue 4

# The Congregational COLUMNS

## A Time of Change *By Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith*



He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed! As you read this, I expect we will have experienced the excitement, the confusion, the betrayals, the forgiveness, and the hope that brings us to proclaim this with joy on Easter Sunday. Amen, amen.

Later this month, we will celebrate the Ordination of Chip Smith as a minister in the Congregational Way. I would like us to consider, together, a bit of what this means.

Chip experienced a personal a sense of God calling him to be a minister. Historically and currently, Congregationalists celebrate “raising up” a minister from within a church. First Church has participated in this. While a member here, Chip completed seminary this past December and fulfilled requirements of the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, attending the Boston Seminar course on Congregational history and polity. He has participated in a series of internships, focusing on teaching, preaching, and pastoral care.

A discernment team made up of Sarah DeYoung, John Fredrickson, Ann Harris, Richard Raymond, Cindy Walsh, and I met over several months to discuss, question, nurture, and challenge Chip as he discerns what ordination means for him. The Deacons voted to take Chip “In Care” and then license him as a lay minister for the year. With the affirmation of the Deacons, a vote toward ordination, without a call, was brought to the entire church at our Annual Meeting in January. It passed unanimously.

There is more. Gathering as a people of faith, Congregationalism expresses itself through embracing the concept of freedom and fellowship. It is a freedom bound by love (as in Jesus’ commandment to love one another as He loves us), and it carries responsibility. It is a freedom from hierarchy in which each local, autonomous church carries a voluntary responsibility to seek to follow Jesus as expressed in its Covenant.

And yet, Congregationalism embraces the goodness and purpose of Fellowship. It is a strength through which we, as Congregational Churches, bind together – not as a method of exerting doctrine or rule over the other, but to gather and lean into each other for shared mission, support, help, and discernment – including the ordination of our ministers. We will have the opportunity to witness this on Saturday, April 18th as an ecclesiastical council of the Wisconsin Congregational Association engages with ministers and delegates from the vicinity churches, who will hear and converse with Chip about his journey and statements of faith. This council will then retire for a vote on whether they “walk with” the decision First Church has made toward Chip’s ordination. Their decision may affirm this ordination as universal to other churches.

It is most common that the ordaining church also call the candidate to a role within the church. Chip will marry in May and move to Virginia, and is, therefore, not a candidate for a role here. But First Church has been privileged to have “raised up” other people into ministry who went on to serve elsewhere. You, the people who have walked with Chip on this journey, also are invited to be part of this wonderful event on April 18th, participating in some or all of the Ecclesiastical Council, with ministers and delegates bringing thoughts and questions to Chip’s presentation.

The Ecclesiastical Council begins at 10 am in the Sanctuary. Lunch will be held in the Lounge at noon. At 1 pm, a celebratory service of ordination will be held in the Sanctuary, followed by cake. We hope to see you here to celebrate with Chip.

*With Hope,*  
**Julie**



THE COLUMNS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
IN WAUWATOSA

# Worship & Discovery

## Women's Ministry

Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>  
from 8-9<sup>am</sup> in the Library

Feel free to join the group any Tuesday, from 8:00<sup>am</sup> to 9:00<sup>am</sup> 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](mailto:Patreddywauwatosa@gmail.com).

## Adult Education: The Story

Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>  
from 9-10<sup>am</sup> in the Lounge

Adult Ed will not meet on Easter Sunday. We will continue our book/video study of the Story at 9:00<sup>am</sup> in the Lounge on April 19.

**Patty Reddy**, facilitator

## Men's Ministry

Wednesdays, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>  
from 9-10<sup>am</sup> in LL2

The Men's Ministry at First Church is a vibrant and growing fellowship.

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

## Discovery Hour

Sundays, April 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>  
from 9-10<sup>am</sup> in the Lounge

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

**April 12** - As we continue in our theme of life transitions, please come join us for Discovery Hour on April 12. Long-time church member Andy Hayes will be sharing insights into the process of transitioning into life in a retirement community. His role as director of a Senior Living facility will provide us much insight and generate questions to consider when making these decisions.

**March 26** - Bill Gaertner will talk about the many benefits of playing pickleball, including health, cognitive, social and more. A retired family doctor, wellness consultant, tennis coach and pickleball instructor, Bill will explain why pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the U.S.

**Chip Smith**, facilitator

### Operating Statement Summary

Year to Date as of February 2026

	2026	2025
Pledge Base Received	14.0%	15.0%
Pledge Income	\$87,221	\$85,164
Total Income	\$148,714	\$144,130
Total Expense	\$96,465	\$84,966
Net Income	\$52,249	\$59,164

Detailed financials available in the office

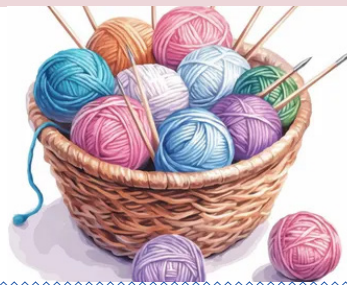
## Purls of Wisdom

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the Month • 10<sup>am</sup> in the Library

Now through May

Margie Idzikowski, facilitator

Though the focus has been on knitting prayer shawls, anyone who knits, crochets, cross stitches or does other hand work is welcome to join the group. Enjoy the fellowship as you work on a prayer shawl or your own current project.



## 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](http://www.FirstChurchTosa.org)

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Like us on Facebook!

# Care Board Reaches Out

The First Church family includes a number of members with obstacles that prevent them from coming to the church on a regular basis. Our ability to live-stream our 10:00 am Worship Service has been a blessing to those who can't be with us in the Sanctuary.

In addition, the Care Board makes a special effort to make our homebound members know they are still very much a part of our congregation. Care Board continues to be in contact with our members who are not able to be in worship with us.

We send notes, make home visits, and bring a little of First Church to people by delivering flowers at Easter and cookies at Christmas. We have also provided transportation to our homebound members so they can attend our "Stay Connected" luncheon following a worship service in November.

Among our other activities, Care Board, with the involvement of Reverend Julie, facilitates a worship service, Communion & Chat, at Harwood Place. The service is at 10am on the third Wednesday of each month. All Harwood residents are invited to attend.

**Roxanne Trump Miles**  
*Care Board Chair*

# Women's Circle is Going to the Dogs this April 14<sup>th</sup>

On occasion, you'll see Barb Dunham at the church in the company of a little canine friend. Be forewarned. You aren't supposed to pet the little pooch. It's in training to be a guide dog for someone who is blind or visually impaired.

On Tuesday, April 14th, Women's Circle will host a program featuring a speaker from Occupaws, a Madison-based, non-profit organization that trains and places guide dogs, at no charge, with Midwest adults. Volunteer puppy sitters, such as Barb, take care of puppies when their trainer must be away from their charge overnight or longer.

Learn about this important program and Barb's experiences as a puppy sitter on Tuesday, April 14th, at 12 noon in the Lounge. Lunch is available for \$5.

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



Tuscon, Barb's puppy in training



# Everything You Wanted to Know About First Church

Whether you're new to First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa or just want to refresh your knowledge, Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith is facilitating two information sessions:

## ***Congregationalism: What is It?***

Sunday, April 12 – 11:15<sup>am</sup> • in the Parlor

## ***About First Church***

Sunday, April 26 – 11:15<sup>am</sup> • in the Parlor

If, once you've attended, you would like to join First Church, please talk to Reverend Julie about your interests.



# Music Notes: *Midday Music at Lunch*

By **Rhonda Kwiecien**, Director of Music/Keyboard Artist

## **Mark Your Calendars!!**

The inaugural Midday Music & Lunch Summer Concert Series in 2025 was a huge success! The variety of musical offerings coupled with lunches for sale by our Fellowship Board proved to be a winning combination. So, we're back for a second season!

## Concert series dates for 2026

**Wednesdays**

**June 17**

**July 8**

**July 29**

**August 19**

*Concerts begin at noon*

We hope you will mark your calendars and invite your friends, neighbors, and colleagues! It's a fun way to change up your lunch routine!!

Watch for more information to come soon.

# Join Us on the Journey to Easter!

## MAUNDY THURSDAY SUPPER & COMMUNION

Thursday, April 2  
6<sup>pm</sup> in the Social Hall

## GOOD FRIDAY TENEBRAE SERVICE

Friday, April 3  
7<sup>pm</sup> in the Sanctuary

## EASTER!

Sunday, April 5

### Sunrise Service

6:20<sup>am</sup> on Ridge Court

### Pancake Breakfast & Toppings Bar

8:15<sup>am</sup> in the Social Hall

### Easter Egg Hunt

9:40<sup>am</sup> on Ridge Court

### Easter Worship & Communion Service

10:00<sup>am</sup> in the Sanctuary  
with the FCC Chancel Choir  
& Brew City Brassworks

**Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith**

*Senior Minister*

**Rhonda Kwiecken**

*Director of Music & Keyboard Artist*

**Dr. Jeremiah Cawley**

*Director of FCC Choir & Jubilation Ringers*

## Save the Date: Quiche Coffee Hour Mission Team Auction & Talent Show

**We are so excited about Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>!**

Not only will we have quiche during Coffee Hour, we will also have an Auction to benefit the 2026 Mission Team AND offer a youth talent show!!

We have some great items to be auctioned off, including two Adirondack chairs, a handmade charcuterie board, a bath relaxation basket, and three purses with gift cards and accessories. These items will be on display starting on Sunday, April 12th so you can have a “sneak peak” before the bidding that will take place on April 26th and May 3rd.

In the meantime, we have some photos to give you a sense of these awesome items. Our Mission Team appreciates your support of this fundraiser.



# JUST FOR YOUTH

April 2026



## Sunday School

Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, & 26<sup>th</sup>

for ages 4 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Children will begin in church with their families during 10<sup>am</sup> worship and dismissed to Sunday School during the service.

## Faith Finders

Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

for 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> graders

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

## Covenant Class

April 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>

for 9<sup>th</sup> graders 4:00<sup>pm</sup>-6:00<sup>pm</sup> in the Friendship Lounge.

## Junior Choir

Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, & 26<sup>th</sup>

for K-8<sup>th</sup> grades at 9:30<sup>am</sup> in LL4.

Children will sing one Sunday per month.

## Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>

for grades 6-12

Teens begin in church with their families during 10<sup>am</sup> 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<sup>pm</sup>.**

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

## Secret Buddies Ready for Lent!



Easter is on April 5<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade children, and they share four letters throughout Lent, followed by a reveal the Sunday following Easter April 12<sup>th</sup>. This program is so meaningful for all involved.

## Children, Youth & Education Sunday

### June 7<sup>th</sup> during the 10:00<sup>am</sup> worship service

Our Sunday School classes will be preparing special presentations to share with the congregation, and they are looking forward to celebrating this wonderful day with all of you. Our Junior Choir will sing, and our middle and high school youth will serve as readers, ushers, and greeters. We will be celebrating another successful year of youth programming as we move on to the summer ahead. Our youth are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes early on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and there will also be a rehearsal for the Sunday School classes immediately after worship on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. On Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, there is NO Sunday School.

**Join us on Ridge Court following this special workshop service for our annual Ice Cream Social. Enjoy a wide variety of ice cream novelties.**

Summer Sunday School begins on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Summer Sunday School is for children ages 4 through entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade, so those who have completed grades 6 and up are will to remain in church with their families. Looking ahead, Rally Sunday will take place on September 13<sup>th</sup>. I would like to invite anyone interested in teaching for the first time, or if you would like to lend a hand with our youth, please contact me: [tonia@firstchurchtosa.org](mailto:tonia@firstchurchtosa.org)

## Save the Dates

Easter Egg Hunt - April 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:40

Secret Buddy Reveal - April 12<sup>th</sup>  
in the Social Hall following worship service

Coffee Hour: Mission Team Auction & Talent Show - May 3<sup>rd</sup>

Confirmation Sunday - May 17<sup>th</sup>

Children & Youth Sunday - June 7<sup>st</sup>

Mission Trip - June 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>

Hosanna Industries, Inc. in Johnstown, PA

Wisconsin Congregational Association (WCA)

Summer Camp - July 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>

Mt. Morris Camp & Conference Center in Wautoma, WI



Vacation Bible School (VBS)

August 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

First Congregational Church  
of Wauwatosa

## Planning Your Next Step After High School? Consider Applying for the FCC Education Scholarship



The Board of Stewardship & Benevolence is now accepting scholarship applications from our 2026 high school graduating seniors.

The First Church Scholarship supports deserving student members of our church who plan to continue their education or training after high school. This includes students pursuing college, trade or technical programs, apprenticeships, or military service. Applicants must have been active in church activities and volunteerism.

Scholarships are \$300 per year, renewable for up to four continuous years, for a maximum award of \$1,200.

Applications, due April 30<sup>th</sup>, are available in the church office or by emailing [marianne@firstchurchtosa.org](mailto:marianne@firstchurchtosa.org). The Scholarship Committee will meet with applicants in May. The names of scholarship recipients will be announced on Children & Youth Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>.

**The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa**  
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