

First Congregational United Church of Christ - Rhinelander - April 2026

Dear First Congregational Family,

We have something we want to share with you that may come as a surprise, and I hope you will feel our hearts of love for you in this message.

Beginning June 15th, Susie will be handing over her half of the shared 3/4 - time pastor responsibilities to Tim. Tim will continue on as your pastor, and Susie will step away from the official staff role — though she will stay connected to the community in whatever ways she is able, whether that's volunteering, filling the pulpit from time to time, or simply being here alongside you.

We want to be open with you about why, because you deserve that.

We are not unhappy. We love this community deeply, and we are genuinely grateful for all the love you show our family. There is no hidden frustration here, no disappointment with any person, no story behind the story. What we have simply come to realize is that sharing a 3/4-time pastorate is not sustainable for our family long term. It has proven to be a challenge for us to stay within the boundaries of this role.

We also believe that as First Congregational grows and looks to the future, the next important investments in staff will be in areas like children and youth ministry and worship leadership. With that in mind, we feel that Tim serving as your sole pastor brings needed clarity and focus for everyone — for him, for you, for our family, and for the work ahead.

This decision was made together, prayerfully, and with so much love for this place.

Susie will be fully present and giving her whole heart right up through June 15th. And honestly? We believe the best days for this congregation are still ahead. We are so proud of who we are as a faith community.

Thank you for the gift of serving here. Thank you for your grace, your trust, and your friendship. Thank you for your kindness towards our family.

With so much love,
Tim & Susie



A Message from the Moderator:

As we head into April, I just want to say how much I've been enjoying some of the new things showing up in our church.

The gratitude board, candle lighting station, and lament wall have been really meaningful additions. They're simple, but they give us ways to pause, reflect, and connect — not just during worship, but anytime we walk through the space. I've loved seeing people engage with them in their own way.

Behind the scenes, the Executive Council has been meeting regularly, and I'm genuinely enjoying being part of this group. It's a newer team, and there's a strong sense that we're all working together to support the church in thoughtful, positive ways.

As Tim moves into a solo pastor role, we carry forward the good momentum already building here. We are grateful for all that Susie has brought to our church and the ways she has helped shape this season.

I'm really excited about where we are right now — there's good energy, and a lot to feel hopeful about.

Happy Easter, and I will see you at church!

Cecily
Moderator



April Birthdays:

Everlie Jahn	04/15
Jerry Fitzgerald	04/15
Randy Larch	04/17
Daun Larson	04/24
Susan Bartels	04/27
Gale Willcox	04/28
Allyssa Scheuermann	04/29

Contact Information:

Mailing Address: 135 E Larch Street,
Rhineland, WI 54501
Church Office Hours: Tuesday thru Friday, 8 a.m. to Noon
Call Us: 715-365-1535
Prayer Chain: 715-360-5306
Visit Us Online: rhinelanderucc.org
E-mail Us: rhiucc@newnorth.net



April Lay Readers:

04/05	Beth Studer
04/12	Mary Dork
04/19	Beth Studer
04/26	Carla Chropkowski



April Greeters:

04/05	Ted & Judy Fisher
04/12	Jackie Schneider & Everly Jahn
04/19	Carla & Gene Chropkowski
04/26	Des Dahlquist & Jan Winnicki

CREATION CARE CORNER

Algae Blooms Melting Greenland

Greenland's ice sheet is melting, and its disappearance is accelerated thanks to huge blooms of algae newly growing on top of it. With the Arctic warming four times faster than the global average, Greenland, the world's largest island, is now losing hundreds of billions of tons of ice each year. The warming has led to a feedback loop: as more ice melts, more nutrients are released from the ground, creating more algae. Then the algae in turn quicken the melting process, because the dark-colored blooms limit the ice's ability to reflect the sun's heat. A new study shows that this process is responsible for as much as 13% of the ice sheet runoff in southwest Greenland where there is a prominent algae dark zone. That study also shows that tiny traces of the photosynthetic organisms can be carried through the air- a clue to how they colonize new areas of ice. Another study shows that the nutrients the algae feed on are embedded in every layer of ice that has built up over time, so these blooms are unlikely to run out of fuel. German biogeochemist Liane Benning says, "We should change our habits and not burn so many fossil fuels."

- from *The New York Times*

Fossil Fuel Power Grab

Throughout 2025 our government repeatedly invoked emergency powers to delay or stop renewable energy projects, including five offshore wind farms already under construction. Additionally, the Department of Energy brought retired fossil fuel power plants back online, reviving dirty coal and fossilized gas facilities that increase pollution and saddle customers with higher costs. This is not helping to reduce climate change. -from *Public Citizen News*

Some Good News!

More than 99% of new electrical generation projected to come online this year in the US will be from renewable sources. Utility-scale solar generation in the US increased by 22 gigawatts, enough to power about 20 million homes, in the first 11 months of 2025 – up 33.9% since November 2024. Battery storage grew 49% over the same period. –from *The Week magazine*

A Footnote to the Above

Much of the new electric capacity will be used to power Artificial Intelligence, not homes. Electrical facilities to power AI are being constructed all over the country, including southern Wisconsin.

-Sandy McKittrick



WE OFFER OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE to all who have provided flowers to contribute to the beauty of our sanctuary on this Easter morning, and to those who have given to the special offering for the 'NATH' re-siding project. The following is a listing of donors and persons in whose memory/honor the memorials are given:

Given by:

In Honor/Memory of:

EASTER FLOWERS

The Adams Family.....	Judy and Al Adams and Pauline and Jim Heinz
Ken and Carol Arndt.....	Larry and Mary Arndt and Ellen and Leon Meyers
Sue Bartels.....	Don, Parents, and Sister
Carl and Becky Corey.....	Our Families
Steve and Deslyn Dahlquist.....	Walter Dahquist Sr.
Cecily Dawson.....	Minka Dawson
GEM Handbell Choir.....	Gladys Ekman
Vera Finses.....	Ronald Finses
Mike Hamman and Diane Lodge.....	Family and Friends
Todd and Jane McEldowney.....	Todd and Donna McEldowney
Mary Moxon.....	
Dale and Jeannie Smith.....	Daniel and Genevieve Paddock
Gary and Mary Wefel.....	in honor of our family
Jan and Ken Winnicki.....	Our Parents

DONATIONS TO 'NATH' re-siding project

The Adams Family.....	Judy and Al Adams and Pauline and Jim Heinz
Carl and Becky Corey.....	Our Families
Mike Hamman and Diane Lodge.....	Family and Friends

Spring Concert

Sunday, May 3rd at 2:00 pm

Please join us as we celebrate the 250th Birthday of the United States.

Three choral groups – **Northwoods Choraliers, Rhinelander Male Chorus, and Hymns & Hyrs** will come together and present a concert to honor the birth of our nation. Each group will perform selections depicting various aspects of our history. They will then combine to perform a final selection.

The concert will start with the presentation of flags by the **Northwoods Honor Guard.**

The program will be held at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, 135 E. Larch St., on Sunday, May 3 at 2:00 pm.

There is no charge; but a free will offering will be accepted and appreciated.



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL Agenda – Thursday, February 26, 2026, 3:30-5 p.m.

Members: Cecily Dawson, Moderator; Tommy Wartman, Vice Moderator; Mary Moxon, Recording secretary; Nick Church, Treasurer nominee; Gale Willcox, Building and Grounds Representative; Pat Juday, Trustees Representative; Sue Bartels, Spiritual Life Representative; TBD, Outreach; Pastor Tim Grade.

Call to Order – Cecily at 3:31

Opening Prayer – Pastor Tim

Introductions, Welcome, Housekeeping (**5 minutes**) Welcome Cecily! Members introduced themselves and history of association with the church.

Agenda Additions/Changes? How are minutes structured and distributed and archived.

Approval of January Meeting Minutes – accepted as offered.

Pastors’ Report (10 minutes) – Tim presented a visual intro to church structure (for all churches) in generic terms, from national to local. Some discussion about updating interior space and use of space. Lent: Creating candle station, prayer birdhouse box. Creating stations about lament, projects about offering. Kids update: 18-ish on rotating attendance.

- **Board Reports** (Please limit questions to clarification. Save discussion and motions until Old or New Business) (**10 minutes**)
 - a. Spiritual Life – Sue. Sue appreciates volunteers for Sunday tasks. Wendy will order palms for Palm Sunday. For Easter, Susie has ideas for ornamentation, Tim will drape the cross.
 - b. Building & Grounds – Gale. **Completed:** Chancel railings done. One quote rec’d for sanctuary roofing. More quotes requested. Samples of floor tile and mastic sent for asbestos testing; that will inform decisions about flooring. Rappley will submit a quote for the valve shutoff in the tunnel as required by our insurer. **Pending:** Battery back-up for handicap door, door-release-from-office button, WPS easement request, security lighting, restoring rm 125 to Sunday school, locking boxes for sanctuary for offering collection, new board chair and **secretary**. ~~sanctuary~~. Question re: safety audit of our church in crazy times (active shooter).
 - c. Trustees – Pat. New member, Gale and Pat as Chair. Tom Winqvist serving as member rather than chair. Expenditures/income normal for the time of year. Looking at simplifying account structure. Next meeting 4/13.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES FINANCIAL CORNER January 31, 2026 (Newsletter)

At the end of last month, our income year to date for expenses was\$ 32,987.28
Our expenditures for the same period were.\$ 33,255.39
This amounts to a shortfall of \$ 268.11

Additionally, the Schwab account sits at \$714,810.

- d. Outreach – TBD

Old Business (20 minutes)

- a. WPS Easement request. **WPS representatives will attend the 4/23/26 Ex Council meeting. Building & Grounds will be meeting twice before the 4/23 Ex Council; this may give Ex Council more insight before the April meeting with WPS.** ~~Meeting on April 23rd, B&G will meet with representatives from WPS, to discuss details.~~

- b. Update on sound system: Have made some improvements to sound in the last few months. Would like to upgrade sound board equipment allowing changes to improve room and online sound, rather than waiting for and paying a contractor at distance. Would also like to add 3 current generation microphones for additional speakers/musicians. Proposed spend of \$2000. Next steps would be adding a T-loop that can connect hearing aids in the room to the sound board. Gale moved to approve initial expenditures not to exceed \$9,900. Pat second. Discussion about funds available. Passed.
- c. Update on clean out of Room 125 – With Kids Club and Youth Group active (18 kids on 2/22/26), it is an elevating priority to have the children’s activities in the education hall. This will facilitate the groups working together and is a safety strategy. Tim will talk to Jackie and Amanda about what is needed to make room 125 available for kids by Memorial Day.

New Business (20 minutes)

- a. Summary of our session with John Stein, sharing information and ideas to the group – Cecily et al. Met with John Stein to learn software and tasks of treasurer so Nick knows where he is beginning as Treasurer. Looking forward to some automating and simplifying. MANY thanks to John Stein and Tom Winquist for all of their time and talent.
- b. Timing of newsletter – Mary M. Discussion about the timing of Ex Council and making minutes available to the congregation. Tommy moved to send Ex Council minutes within 36 hrs of the meeting via email, with approval by those in attendance within 3 business days of receipt. If questions or corrections, the minutes would be held for resolution at the next meeting. Otherwise they would be released in the next newsletter. Sue second. Passed. Mary will talk to Wendy about shifting the date of newsletter publication and how that impacts her other work.
- c. Constitution update process – Copies of the current constitution distributed for review. What needs to be changed? What are other churches doing? Samples of other governance structures? More to come.
- d. Church records: Collection of building repairs and contractors, electronic records – Cecily. In an effort to create records less reliant on individual memory and paper, Cecily would like to collect and digitize contracts, purchase documents. Digital files can be searched. More to come on this as well.

(Executive Council approves the Policies & Procedures of each standing board, big changes or new projects being undertaken by the boards, contracts with the church, the proposed budget, non-budget expenditures over \$10,000 before presenting those expenditures to congregational vote, and disposal of church property. This may not be a complete list. SM)

**** NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026, 3:30 p.m.**

Sunday		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	Sixth Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday 10:00am - 11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am - 12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability) 11:00am - 12:00pm Movie Dean Theater: Temple Grandin (All are welcome!)	30	31 10:00am - 11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Northwoods Choralliers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	1 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir	2 5:00pm - 6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir 6:00pm - 7:00pm Maundy Thursday (Immanuel Lutheran)	3 7:00pm - 8:00pm Good Friday at United Methodist (Combined Choir) at 7:00 pm as of 2-27-26?	4 Holy Saturday
5	Easter Youth Easter Egg Hunt 10:00am - 11:00am Communion during worship service 10:00am - 11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am - 12:00pm BRUNCH	6	7 10:00am - 11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 10:00am - 11:00am Walter Baker Visitation (1st Congregational UCC) 11:00am - 3:00pm P.E.O. Chapp-AO (Dean/Fellowship Hall) - cancelled - moving to a new location 11:00am - 12:00pm Walter Baker Service (1st Congregational UCC) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Northwoods Choralliers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	8 9:30am - 10:30am Building and Grounds 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir	9 1:00pm - 3:00pm P.E.O. (Dean Theatre) 4:00pm - 5:15pm Northern Arts Council (Conference Room) 5:00pm - 6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir	10 UCC Annual Meeting (Green Lake)	11 UCC Annual Meeting (Green Lake) 7:00am - 2:00pm 4-H Youth Creative Arts Expo (Fellowship Hall, music room, lounge)
12	10:00am - 11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am - 12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability)	13 1:00pm - 2:00pm Trustees	14 10:00am - 11:00am Spiritual Life Board (Conference Room) 10:00am - 11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Northwoods Choralliers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	15 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir	16 1:00pm - 2:00pm Non-Fishing Book Club (Lounge) 5:00pm - 6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir	17	18
19	10:00am - 11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am - 12:00pm BRUNCH	20	21 10:00am - 11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Northwoods Choralliers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	22 Earth Day 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir	23 1:00pm - 2:30pm Book Bags Book Club (Lounge) 3:30pm - 4:30pm Executive Council Meeting 5:00pm - 6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir	24	25
26	10:00am - 11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am - 12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability) 11:00am - 12:00pm 'Townhall Listening Post' after Worship (Lounge) 3:00pm - 6:00pm 4-H Positive Youth Development (Fellowship Hall)	27	28 10:00am - 11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Northwoods Choralliers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	29 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir	30 5:00pm - 6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir	1	2