

First Congregational

United Church of Christ – Rhinelander – May 2026

April showers will (hopefully) bring May flowers—so let’s do some planting. Not literal flowers with roots and petals, but *relationship flowers*.

One of the gifts of church life is simply being together—sharing highs and lows, telling the stories of our weeks, and naming the emotions that come with them. Over time, those moments grow into something beautiful: friendships where we feel known, seen, and cared for. These “relationship flowers” often take root in simple places—the narthex before worship or around a table at brunch.

During the summer months, we’ll take a break from brunch, but we won’t take a break from connection. Instead, we’ll gather after worship in the fellowship hall for coffee and guided small-group activities:

- **First Sunday: Listening Post** – a theme and questions for table conversation
- **Second Sunday: Lectio Divina** – a contemplative reading of Scripture
- **Third Sunday: Core Value Index** – exploring the values of Banker, Builder, Merchant, and Innovator
- **Fourth Sunday: Book Club** – *Speak with the Earth and It Will Teach You* by Daniel Cooperrider (I’ll also be preaching from it that morning—read ahead or just come join the discussion)

Also this summer, perhaps we can find new ways to gather around food! *Meals That Matter* are simple, intentional gatherings built around a shared meal and meaningful conversation. You could host a lunch or supper in your home, plan a campfire cookout, or simply make a reservation at a restaurant and invite people to join you. Each gathering will include a few guiding questions to help us share stories and connect more deeply.

If you’d like to host a *Meals That Matter* gathering, email me at timgrade@gmail.com. Let’s plant some relationship flowers and watch them bloom this summer.

As Psalm 133:1 reminds us: “*How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!*”

Submitted by Rev. Tim Grade



BOARD OF TRUSTEES FINANCIAL CORNER April 30,2026

At the end of last month. our income year to date for expenses were.....\$50,608.56
 Our expenditures for the same period were.....\$59,178.40
 This amounts to a shortfall of\$8, 569.84

This has been a relatively normal period of expenditures and income. Our budgeted income for this same period is \$70,371.00 and our budgeted expenses year to date are \$70,044.00. Our investment account shows a balance of \$704,275.61 at the end of March. This reflects some down-turns in the market because of the volatility brought on by various governmental conditions. We hope this will settle down shortly. Your Board of Trustees continues to monitor these conditions.

Your Board of Trustees:

- Dave Havel, Investments**
- Pat Juday, Chair and Stewardship**
- Jane McEldowney, Stewardship**
- Gale Willcox, Secretary**
- Tom Winquist**



May Birthdays:

Jennifer Sackett	05/08
Pat Juday	05/14
Carol Wagner	05/18
Judy Thoms	05/19
LuRae Wilhelm	05/20
Brynnley Laska	05/20
Gene Chropkowski	05/22
Robert Gilmeister	05/25
Bill Dork	05/25
Mary Dahlquist	05/27
Ken Arndt	05/30
Mary Wefel	05/31

Contact Information:

Mailing Address: 135 E Larch Street,
 Rhinelander, 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
Like Us/Watch Us on Face-
book:
 1st Congregational UCC
 Rhinelander



May Lay Readers:


05/03	Beth Studer
05/10	Robyn Wartman
05/17	Beth Studer
05/24	Robyn Wartman
05/31	Tom Grade

May Greeters:

05/03	Jackie Schmieder & Everlie Jahn
05/10	Cherie Gilmeister
05/17	Des Dahlquist & Jan Winnicki
05/24	Dave Havel
05/31	Gene & Carla Chropkowski

YOU'RE INVITED TO A

Foster Care Awareness Open House



**Sunday
May 3, 2026
12:30-2pm**

The first 25 people get a free gift bag!

at Hodag Fun Zone:
51 N. Brown Street, Rhinelander

"It takes a village." Join Ours.

Spring Salad Luncheon

Sponsored by the United Women in Faith

May 13, 2026 11am - 1pm

First United Methodist Church
Enter from the carport at Entrance A on Wabash Street.



If you can help by making a salad, the sign-up sheet is on the coffee table.

For Reservations,
Please call First UMC at
715-362-2091
Tuesday - Thursday 9am - 2pm

724 Arbutus St.
Rhinelander

Please see Carla Chropkowski for tickets and answers to any questions you may have. Tickets are \$15.00 per person.



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 & Hymns** 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.



CREATION CARE CORNER



There are positive advancements in climate action. This is a report on a legal organization that is working to reverse harmful government actions affecting climate change.

Earthjustice's Clean Energy Program based in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, DC, and the Boston area, is using the law to accelerate the transition to 100% clean, pollution-free energy.

Ending Reliance on Coal and Other Fossil Fuels

They are litigating before public utility commissions and the federal Energy Regulatory Commission to stop utilities from forcing consumers to bail out aging, unprofitable coal, and demonstrating the true economic, health, and environmental costs of the power sector's continued reliance on fossil fuels. They are also trying to stop the replacement of retiring coal plants with fossil gas plants rather than clean energy. They have helped retire more than 100 coal plants to date.

Cleaning Up Coal's Toxic Legacy and Securing a Just Transition

They are working to regulate the cleanup of the more than 1400 coal ash ponds and dumps that poison communities and their groundwater.

Strengthening Federal Standards

They are working to strengthen and enforce federal air, water, and waste standards that rein in pollution from coal and other fossil fuels used in electricity generation.

Advancing Vital Reforms

They are breaking down regulatory hurdles to time-of-use programs and other clean energy program development, and securing utility investment in renewable generation, efficiency, and other clean energy resources with the goal of powering our grid with 100% clean electricity. They stopped Kansas utilities from charging more to customers who generate their own solar power, and helped 37 states, DC, and the Virgin Islands plan to curb haze-causing pollution from old coal-fired power plants. They stopped El Paso Electric from establishing a separate rate class with higher rates for rooftop solar customers. They advocated for creation of the Illinois Coal Ash Rule to create stronger cleanup regulations for coal's dirty legacy in IL. They defended the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's order which makes energy storage easier.

Ensuring Equal Access to Clean Energy

They work with other groups to expand access to clean energy for low-income families, communities of color, and Tribal communities. In Puerto Rico they are pushing for a plan for a clean, affordable, and hurricane-resistant electric grid.

-Sandy McKittrick

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGENDA -- Thursday March 26, 3:30 pm - 4:45 pm

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

Call to Order - Cecily at 3:25

Opening Prayer-Pastor Tim

Agenda Additions/Changes? Approval of minutes from 3/19. M/S Tom/Carla, passed. Minutes from 2/26 accepted with no corrections.

Pastors' report (10 minutes) Congregation response to Grades decision to end the co-pastorate seems positive. Palm Sunday, Easter celebrations are planned including decoration of the sanctuary. Easter egg hunt is planned for an undetermined number of children. Tim would like to start book study on select Sundays for May-August, as well as some other activities. He has a book in mind. He is also working with Sandy McKitrick for an Earth Day celebration for 4/19/26. Bowling was great; a good time for the 6 kids and accompanying adults.

Board Reports (Please limit questions to clarification. Save discussion and motions until Old or New Business) (12 minutes)

- A. **Spiritual Life-Sue.** Sue expressed gratitude for such a solid Board to work with. Planning with Margaret for Walter Baker's funeral on 4/7. Flowers for decorating the cross, and palms are ordered. Lilies and flowers will be ordered for Easter.
- B. **Building & Grounds-Gale.**
 1. Quote for backup handicap door battery obtained; it's expensive. Steve Dahlquist will order, pay for and install the parts.
 2. Auto shut-off valve required by insurance company will be ordered after Rappley confirms installation procedure and estimated cost. Nick is going to talk to the insurance company.
 3. Cecily heard from Oneida Chimney about our plan to obtain a second quote for sanctuary roof. They have explained the value of sticking with Oneida Chimney due to their experience with our building and the materials involved. More information to come on this.
 4. WPS easement request is still under discussion. Nick will procure quote for cost of moving from overhead to underground electric service, providing basis for Steve's negotiations.
 5. Memorial Day weekend is still the target for making room 125 available for Kids Club.
 6. Nick is pursuing a quote from ICT for 24/7 exterior lighting.
 7. We are cancelling the contract with GFL for waste pickup. We will use Howard.
 8. Confirmation received from testing lab that the tile and mastic in Fellowship Hall contain asbestos.
 9. Christmas banner relocated from garage to make room for the lawn machine.
 10. Pending B&G work: Handicap door battery, automatic flow valve, WPS easement, Room 125, contract with Howard Disposal, assess carpet in Kids Club room as it "sheds," security cameras?, possible addition to treasurer's report to show annual budgeted figures and listing of months in which services are billed, loose tiles in Narthex and Fellowship Hall, new chair and secretary to replace interim chair Cecily and Gale, respectively.
- C. **Trustees-Pat.** No March meeting. However, changes in pastoral leadership raised questions about how to think about stewardship responsibilities, obligation to church community and role as Trustees. The current Policies and Procedures for Trustees includes account monitoring, following approved projects, creating a budget, and submitting a monthly newsletter article. Trustees have begun working on a Mission Statement now that will serve as a guide to approaching stewardship and responsibility to the community.
- D. **Outreach-Carla.** Sunday, 3/29 Outreach will offer a movie after worship, *Temple Grandan*. Ms. Grandan's is an extraordinary story of working with industry as a neuro-divergent innovator. Invited youth to come as well.

- E. **Treasurer news/updates- Nick.** Not much information to report, lots to figure out. There are a number of small funds that are either not used or not used for purpose stated. Checking account is the flow through for everything both in and out. Mary Dork is phasing out in her role as Financial Secretary, Wendy taking over. Where are we in that process? Still in training? Cecily will follow up with Mary D.

Old Business (20 minutes)

- a. **WPS Easement** - Meeting on April 23. WPS representatives will attend Ex. Council that day.
- b. **Update on sound system** – Products will be ordered soon.
- c. **Update on Clean out of Room 125** – Memorial Day deadline on track.
- d. **Newsletter timing update-** Wendy was fine moving the deadline to the day after Ex Council so that approved minutes can be disseminated in the newsletter.
- e. **Constitution update: Discussion and initial planning** – What are the steps, what needs to be in a constitution (and what doesn't) to maximize function, and support healthy transparency. There are templates available from other churches. Tim has some samples for our consideration and will email to the group. Mike Southcombe at St Stephens, Merrill, might be a resource. Different documents have different emphases. Job Descriptions for Boards, lay leaders would be useful. Mary Moxon has some drafts of same from a few years ago and will share those.
- f. **Church records-updating of paper files to electronic files** – Nick working on a Google Workspace for the church that would allow for appropriate digital archiving and document sharing.

New Business (20 minutes)

- a. **Technology Committee-** Mary Moxon, would like to resign from her position on this ad hoc committee. Motion to dissolve, Sue, second Carla. Passed.
- b. **Pastoral change plans, ideas, etc discussion** - What do we need moving forward
 1. Susie leaving seems like a non-issue for the congregation
 2. Good communication, well handled. Disappointment, but no discussion at Town Hall.
 3. What are the lines for Susie for member vs. pastor?
 4. How best to support Tim? One pastor makes for clearer communication. What are Tim's priorities? Measurable goals for pastor, but also for the whole church. The congregation may need to talk about Susie leaving. Town Hall might be a good vehicle, if a more structured format was used for those conversations.
 5. Ex. Council was surprised by Susie's announcement. What is the process for issues with pastors? Congregation involvement with complex issues hasn't always been helpful for congregational cohesion. When to involve pastoral care team when issues arise for pastor? Pastoral support needs to be developed. What does Tim need? Regular meeting with Pastoral Care team? Constitution has structure for that group; it's not the role of Ex Council. Back to Constitution – who does what?
 6. Maybe we should just be the church and not be so labored about how and what we do?
 7. Trust Tim to lead. Provide clear expectations so Tim knows what he is evaluated on?
 8. Does this eliminate hoops to jump through for Tim? Respect his experience and wisdom.

9. Are Grades happy with this arrangement vs “not unhappy?” For them, it’s sad to break up the co-pastorate team. But, it is an opportunity to develop own skills in pursuit of their respective callings. Goal to be mindful of emotional strings.
10. Goal good worship, community engagement, visiting folks are high priorities.
11. Action steps: Susie’s plan/boundaries, Tim’s goals for himself and ours for him, read constitution samples.

Adjourn

(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 to congregational vote, and disposal of church property. This may not be a complete list. SM)

****NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 23, 2026, 3:30 pm**

Wisconsin UCC Annual Conference April 10-11, 2026 - Update

The conference never fails to inspire and energize me! Two very full days of song, laughter, church “business”, keynote speakers and workshops. Seeing old faces and meeting new ones! The best part of the conference to me is being together, as one, praising God. To be fully embraced in a large group, sharing His love in a profound way knowing we are united and strengthened in a community of love.

This year, Tim Grade, Pat Juday and I attended the Conference. It was a VERY busy two days.

There was so much information and inspiring speakers. I will provide just a brief rundown of speaks and workshops we attended:

Rev. Daniel Cooperrider was to speak at the opening worship but was unable to attend due to a death in the family. Someone read out what he had written. I had never heard of this Pastor before and came to find out that he introduced and developed along with his partner what they have now called The Flicker Wild Church. An exciting Eco-nature based spiritual church experience. He has written two books as well, dealing with spirituality and worship and their connection to the Earth. Oh my..I’ve already thought of ways we can invite him to agree to lead us in a “pop up” Flicker Wild Church” in our community!

Dr. Edith Guffey spoke to us as well. Her message was Cultivating Community by Building Bridges. Something we have a LOT of work to do! PFLAG is the first and largest US-based organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people, their parents, families, and allies.(efforts and Racism where church leaders need to build bridges outside the walls of the church. Edith, who is president of the board of PFLAG and former conference minister for Kansas and Oklahoma, challenged attendees to grapple with why the UCC remains an overwhelmingly white denomination.

We also heard from Rev. Franz Reigert, and a group of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Germany Church that travelled to Memphis, Birmingham and Montgomery Alabama. If you know anything about Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Marches, The Legacy Museum, or have ever heard of Bryan Stevenson, you will know how heart wrenching and educational the tour was.

On the first day we took breaks from workshops with “Wellness” Hours. Pat and Tim participated in a wellness walk, and I participated in a meditation workshop.

Workshops we attended were: Dinner Church, Healthy Conversations, Cultivating an aging community in grace, Starting a Dementia Day Program in your community and Growing In the Way of Christ: Picture the Bible's KidLit which describes a Sunday school curriculum that engages the children/teenagers in applying the Bible stories to everyday life.

In the evening the three of us attended the documentary Bad River. The movie chronicles the Wisconsin-based Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in their ongoing battle for sovereignty and environmental justice. The film highlights the Tribe's fight to shut down Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline to protect Lake Superior, alongside stories of resilience against historical injustices.

We awoke the next morning to attend a breakfast with Jan Davis who took us through the historical story of our UCC Camps in Wisconsin. Jan has spent countless hours compiling information with others of a Historical Committee in compiling such treasured information. There is still much work to be done!

We attended workshops the next day, but what Pat and I so appreciated was the time we took out for our "wellness" break with Tim. This was important to have one on one time with our Pastor. So, Pat, Tim and I went out and sat by the water, on the dock in Adirondack chairs and talked about ideas and dreams about taking some of what we had learned these last two days and bringing them back to possible fruition with our Church Community! It was an honest, inspiring discussion and was the best possible "wellness" time we could have had. Thank you Tim!

The long and short of it, do you want to know more? Are there things I have mentioned already that you might be interested in? We could meet in the Dean Theatre after worship one day if you would like to explore more about some of these things. Please let any of us three know and we will set something up.

If you are inspired by the exciting environment and information of the Conference, please know that you too can attend! The meetings have now been moved to April from June, so please let the Moderator know well in advance if you would like to attend. There are deadlines and paperwork to complete, but it is pretty easy to navigate.

Feel free to contact Tim, Pat, or myself if you would like to know more, to arrange a meeting in the Dean Theatre for a presentation.

Carla Chropkowski

Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
26	ACES Sunday (Special Collection to support ACES) 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 Chorallers Rehearsals (Sanctuary)	29	3:30pm –4:30pm Chancel Choir (last rehearsal)	30	5:00pm –6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir	1		2	
3	10:00am –11:00am Communion during worship service 10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group (Choir Songs) 11:00am –12:00pm BRUNCH 12:30pm –2:00pm Leadership Oneida County Hosts Foster Care Awareness Open House (Hodag Fun Zone) 2:00pm –4:00pm Chorallers Spring Concert (Sanctuary)	4		5	10:00am –11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 6:30pm –8:00pm Northwoods Chorallers Rehearsals (Fellowship Hall)	6		7	5:00pm –6:00pm GEM Handbell Choir (last rehearsal)	8		9	
10	Mother's Day 10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group (Bells Ringing) (dependent on volunteer availability)	11	1:00pm –2:00pm Trustees	12	10:00am –11:00am Spiritual Life (Lounge) 10:00am –11:00am TOPS (Lounge) 10:00am –11:00am Worship Service for Friendly Village at Friendly Village	13	9:30am –10:30am Building and Grounds 11:00am –1:00pm Spring Salad Luncheon (1st United Methodist Church)	14	Ascension Day 1:00pm –3:00pm P.E.O. (Dean Theatre) 4:00pm –5:15pm Northern Arts Council (Conference Room) 5:00pm –7:00pm NATH Board Meeting (Fellowship Hall)	15		16	
17	Youth 1st Campfire & S'mores of the Season 10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am –12:00pm BRUNCH 3:00pm –6:00pm 4-H Positive Youth Development (Fellowship Hall)	18		19	10:00am –11:00am TOPS (Lounge)	20		21	1:00pm –2:00pm Non-Fishin' Book Club (Lounge)	22		23	
24	10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group (dependent on volunteer availability) 11:00am –12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability) 11:00am –12:00pm "Townhall Listening Post" after Worship (Lounge)	25		26	10:00am –11:00am TOPS (Lounge)	27		28	1:00pm –2:30pm Book Bags Book Club (Lounge) 3:30pm –4:30pm Executive Council	29	Church Office Closed Today Deadline for Newsletter Articles	30	
31	10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group (dependent on volunteer availability)	1		2	10:00am –11:00am TOPS (Lounge)	3		4		5		6	