

# First Congregational United Church of Christ - Rhinelander — June 2026

Hello one year anniversary! We have made it through each of the past twelve months including the beautiful turning of all four seasons! It feels like it went so fast. I am curious how you reflect back on my being your pastor for a year?

Here are a few of my highlights.

- 1) Welcome. I can now authenticate the genuine welcome our family first experienced as summer visitors three years ago. We felt good vibes joining you on our summer vacation. And that was not a fluke, or a fake, or an engineered trick of church greeter training. You all are simply a great group of people who enjoy being with each other and including others.
- 2) Historic. Our church is alive with a force propelling us forward. I think there is a pioneering spirit written into the DNA of our church that never gives up, keeps working hard, and looks for the new opportunity. Sure...there is a tenacity that also won't easily let go of tried and true methods and practices, but that determination and grit has built three buildings, hired dozens upon dozens of pastors, and performed even more baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- 3) Bridge. Of course I will toss in the word of the year for 2026! But it is clear we are the Bridge. We are connecting years of past history to this year, today, and now on into the future.
- 4) Fun. If we are not having fun...what is the point - and that is the point! I have enjoyed being with you all in worship, in outings to Buck Lake, in Christmas singing, in planting acorns, in freezing weather as well as sweltering hot, in memorials, maybe in board meetings, in kitchen clean up, and everything in between. It has been a joy to simply be with you all through all the days of my first year as your pastor.
- 5) A cord of 3 strands is not easily broken. And sometimes...two is too much! Susie and I started out the year together as the team we have been for many years. But this church was already a strong cord made up of many people, bonded together, and carrying on the work of creating church...which has been a beautiful surprise.
- 6) Growing in God's Love. Finally, this first year has helped me grow in God's love. I have thought about God in new ways and opened up to new territory because I have been with you, learned from your stories of faith, and discovered new things from you. Thank you! And I hope the same has been true for you because of me popping into your life.

And now Summer! Hooray! Warmth! More fun! Meals that Matter! Book studies and more!

**Pastor Tim Grade**

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES FINANCIAL CORNER May 29,2026

So far during May, our income year to date for expenses was.....\$ 68,211.09  
 Our expenditures for the same period were. ....\$ 100,204.46  
 This amounts to a shortfall of ..... \$ 31,993.37

This has been a relatively normal period of expenditures and income. Our annual budget for the above listed expenditures is \$256,493.00. Our investment account shows a balance of \$728,303.07 at the end of April.. This reflects some down-turns in the market because of the volatility brought on by various governmental conditions. April was a good month for increase in our account value. 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**



Adair Sexton	06/05
Janet Winnicki	06/05
Dale Smith	06/12
Wayne Herber	06/17
Darlene Cole	06/21
Harlan Larson	06/24
Tami Graves	06/28
Jeannine Smith	06/29

**Contact Information:**

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**Call Us:** 715-365-1535  
**Prayer Chain:** 715-360-5306  
**Visit Us Online:** rhine-  
 landerucc.org  
**E-mail Us:** rhiucc@newnorth.net  
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Thank You  
**Readers**  
 & Greeters

**June Lay Readers:**

06/07	Beth Studer
06/14	Jackson Hoffhein
06/21	Beth Studer
06/28	

**June Greeters:**

06/07	Jackson Hoffhein
06/14	Larry & Sandy McKitrick
06/21	Cherie Gilmeister
06/28	Jackie Schmieder

## CREATION CARE CORNER



Have you been hearing about all the giant new data centers being planned and built by tech companies for artificial intelligence? These will be used as central computing locations for artificial intelligence. Several are planned for southern Wisconsin, and one is planned for the Green Bay area. The pattern seems to be that people find out about them after they have been approved.

These data centers are needed by big tech companies to process the extensive amounts of data needed for artificial intelligence. “A.I.”, as it is commonly abbreviated, is the new field of computer development that allows computers to learn how to do many tasks without human input. AI can summarize conversations, perform administrative tasks, make financial and weather predictions, operate self-driving cars, manage agriculture and traffic, enhance quality control, predict energy demand, detect fraud, and answer the questions that we ask our phones. As I write this, AI is suggesting changes in my text and spelling. These huge computer data centers require enormous amounts of electricity to operate. WE Energies of Wisconsin proposes 2 new gas-fired power plants to power them, a 5-gigawatt increase, enough to power 3.75 million homes. This will reverse much progress made in recent years to cut carbon emissions and reduce climate change.

This causes two main problems: climate change and water usage (by both the data centers and the new power plants).

These massive buildings filled with computers will require 800 billion liters of water for cooling. Where are they going to get it? It looks like they want to use the Great Lakes and other water bodies, so they locate near water. The additional power plants will also cause more climate and water problems. The water will be returned at a higher temperature to the water body, so we will have more atmospheric warming. This also causes fish and animals in the water to be stressed, and aids the spread of invasive species.

There is another aspect to this. The construction and operating costs of these data centers are not borne by the tech companies alone. Local electricity customers are finding their electric rates rising quickly due to costs of building new electric plants.

I attended a Faith in Place zoom class last week with Maria Fernandez Chavez, a researcher with the Union of Concerned Scientists. They advocate for clean energy, and are holding a legislator information event in Madison. They are also working with the Public Service Commission to create regulations to control the impacts on water, electric costs, emissions, public health, and climate damage. *We should ask all our candidates their position on creating these regulations.*

**-Sandy McKittrick**

# Executive Council Meeting

## Minutes

Thursday, April 23, 2026 | 3:30–4:45 pm

1. Call to Order — Cecily, Present: Tommy Wartman, Cecily Dawson, Rev. Tim Grade, Mary Moxon, Sue Bartels, Carla Chropkowski, Steve Dahlquist, Pat Juday, Gale Willcox, Nick Church. Guests: Nick Hallas, electrician with ICT, and Bill Barr and Scott from WPS
2. Opening Prayer — Pastor Tim
3. Agenda Additions/Changes
4. Approval of Minutes from 3/26 – accept as offered
5. **PRIORITY ITEM — WPS Easement.** WPS has asked for an easement along the west side of our property to be able to bury electrical service for the church and the neighborhood along Stevens St, both north and south of Larch St. *WPS answers in blue text.*
  - a) Why is this project being undertaken? *The above ground service is problematic for outages and difficulty of repair.*
  - b) What will happen to 3 overhead street lights on the north and west side of the building? Can those overhead lines be buried with this project? *Yes.*
  - c) Can 2 more street lights be added on the east side of the building with this project? *That would be an additional cost for the church, but yes.*
  - d) Will power supply to the church be buried? *Yes. The overhead wire that crosses near the offices could be run underground with this project. Doing that would require reworking interior electric wiring. WPS doesn't do that, which is why Nick Hallas is also in attendance. Alternatively, we could continue with above ground service, raise the problem wires over the parking area, add a pole where the electric service currently enters the building, and continue to do business as we currently do. This, however would not be best practice.*
  - e) For the line along the parking lot through the woods, what trees will be removed? *Trees would not be removed unless necessary. WPS would construct a service road on the west side of the waterway, gated at both ends. This would allow appropriate service to be distributed to the homes on Stevens St. The line to serve the church would be on the church side of the waterway. The lines will be enclosed in water-, frost-, tree- and rock-proof conduit, and will be placed by underground bore. This is less disruptive to surface vegetation. There will probably be some trees and brush removed to make the service road on the west side of the waterway. The service road will be minimally maintained and that is WPS's responsibility; the area above the bore on the church side for our electrical service will not need to be cleared.*
  - f) If we allow WPS easement, do we also have to allow other utility providers access? *If we do want to allow another utility to have access, both FCUCC and WPS would have to agree.*
  - g) How deep is the bore? *36-48", probably deeper under the waterway.*

- h) Where will the access point boxes be located. *This is a multi-factorial determination. It is affected by our choice of burying the service to the building or continuing with modified overhead service, as there is only so much line they will run from the transformer to the building. If we bury the line, the transformer can be further away from the building. Wherever the transformer is placed it will be protected from accidental car and snowplow encounters, as well as ice damage. The box needs to be placed sufficiently above the high water mark for the waterway.*
- i) What is the impact to this little wetland? *Minimal.*
- j) What if we need to expand the parking area to the west? *We can pave over the bore, but not build over it.*
- k) Would we be able to add a car charging station at a later date? *Yes.*
- l) How long would the building be without power during a transition from current state to upgrade? *A day.*

**Questions not answered in the discussion:**

- 1) What if a car runs into the meter box or transformer? Who pays for repairs?
- 2) If a line under the paving needs to be repaired, would the paving be dug up, and who pays for repaving?

From discussion with Nick Hallas, electrician:

- a) *If we go underground from transformer to the church building, we need to install a new meter base on the northwest corner of the building. The meter base would need to be appropriately protected from traffic, plows and falling ice/snow.*
- b) *If we put in a new meter base, the wiring and breakers would need to be brought up to current code.*
- c) *We could continue with overhead service and then opt to bury the line and do the electrical upgrade later. But all of that would be at our expense. If we do it now, WPS pays for burying the line to the building.*
- d) *Cost for electrical work is unknown. Nick Hallas will bring the inspector and his vendor to establish what needs to be done and the appropriate materials. Then he can give us an estimate.*

Discussion and next steps – Underground is preferable if cost allows. Steve suggests that we wait for Nick H's quote and then we'll know what to ask for with easement agreement. When we get this information we can schedule a meeting of this group to address this issue specifically. Zoom would be an option.

- 6. Pastor's Report (10 min) – Met with designer re: space changes and graphic designer for logo/branding, possibly build new website. Tim provided a constitution handout that gives us a starting point. Rev. Mike Southcombe, St. Steven's Merrill, could be retained to help us get started with this. If we simplify governance to an oversight board, the current boards and other functions would be more agile and responsive. P&P is much more flexible. Tim is planning some summer programming for after church to include: a Listening Post type discussion, lectio

devina, a book club, a core values index, all in a small group format. “Meals that matter,” intentional dining with content conversation.

7. Board Reports (*12 min — clarification questions only*) **Board reports are included with and become part of these minutes.**

- Spiritual Life — Sue report included. Talking more about summer plans.
- Building & Grounds — Gale report included
- Trustees — Pat report included
- Outreach — Carla – Rev. Tim, Pat Juday, and Carla went to the state UCC Annual Conference. Exciting, invigorating experience. Carla would like to present what she learned and is excited about to Listening Post and in the newsletter.
- Treasurer — Nick – Report has been previously distributed.

8. Old Business (*time permitting*)

- Sound system — order status update. Quote obtained.
- Room 125 cleanout — Memorial Day track update. On track.
- Constitution update — review Tim's samples; assign drafting steps at next meeting.
- Church records/Google Workspace — Nick update. Have Google identity, mailing lists.
- Financial Secretary transition — Wendy training update. Mary D. and Wendy have been working together. Wendy did the last two deposits. Need some money counters for Sunday.
- Asbestos in Fellowship Hall — next steps on tile/mastic. Waiting.
- B&G Chair replacement — identify candidates. Cecily is okay continuing as chair for now.
- Howard Disposal contract — confirm ownership. Cecily signs.

9. New Business (*time permitting*)

10. Adjourn

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 28, 2026 | 3:30 pm

**Executive Council Update Meeting  
Sunday, May 17, 2026 after worship**

Summary:

Meet briefly after church

Overview

The executive council meeting focused on branding and design updates for the church. Tim Grade presented three logo designs, with preference for the modern, simplified third option. Discussions included the practicality of bright colors versus a more sophisticated palette. Design concepts for the narthex, sanctuary, and lounge areas were reviewed, emphasizing a blend of historic elements and modern touches. The group also discussed the need for functional updates like new flooring and electrical work, with higher-than-anticipated quotes from the electrician prompting a reevaluation. The meeting concluded with plans to revisit these decisions in two weeks

Images are contained in a separate document.

Submitted from transcript by

Mary Moxon, Recording Secretary

Sunday		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship, plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am –12:00pm Book Study Together 'Speak with the Earth and It Will Teach You' Author: Daniel Cooperrider 11:00am –12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability)	1	2	3	4 10:00am –11:00am Northern Arts Council (Conference Room)	5	6 11:00am –5:00pm Pride Festival (ArtStart)
7	<b>Congregational Vote on Roofing Project</b> 10:00am –11:00am Communion during worship service 10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship (Missy Miller), plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am –12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability)	8 1:00pm –2:00pm Trustees	9	10 9:30am –10:30am Building and Grounds	11 12:00pm –8:00pm P.E.O. AO Chapter Meeting & Meal (Fellowship Hall) Sue Bartels 1:00pm –3:00pm P.E.O. (Dean Theatre) renewal request sent 5-20-26 4:00pm –5:15pm Northern Arts Council (Conference Room)	12	13
14	10:00am –11:00am In-Person and Facebook Worship (Missy Miller), plus Kids Club and Youth Group 11:00am –12:00pm Fellowship Time/Coffee Hour (dependent on volunteer availability) 3:00pm –6:00pm 4-H Positive Youth Development (Fellowship Hall)	15	16	17	18 1:00pm –2:00pm Non-Fishin' Book Club (Lounge)	19	20
21	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)	22	23	24 3:30pm –4:30pm Choir Practice	25 1:00pm –2:30pm Book Bags Book Club (Lounge) 3:30pm –4:30pm Executive Council	26 Deadline for Newsletter Articles	27
28	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)	29	30	1 3:30pm –4:30pm Choir Practice	2	3	4