



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## ROCHESTER, WISCONSIN

### February 2026 Newsletter



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15 <a href="#">Sunday Service 10AM</a> Council meeting 11:15	16	3 Tai Chi 9AM	18 Spirit Bible Study, 11-1 <a href="#">Ash Wednesday, Soup Supper 5:45 Plymouth UCC, Burlington</a>	19 Choir practice 5:30	20 OCC Crafting 10-2	21
22 <a href="#">Sunday Service 10AM</a> Sunday School Communion	23	3 Tai Chi 9AM	25 Spirit Bible Study 11-1 <a href="#">Lenten Service, Burlington UMC 7PM, Pastor Joe preaches</a>	26 Choir practice 5:30	27 OCC Crafting 10-2	28

Next month's Newsletter deadline: email JoAnne, [mrspotts51@hotmail.com](mailto:mrspotts51@hotmail.com), by February 25

#### February Lectionary

February 1: Micah 6:1–8 Psalm 15 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 Matthew 5:1–12

February 8: Isaiah 58:1–9a [9b–12] Psalm 112:1–9 [10] 1 Corinthians 2:1–12 [13–16] Matthew 5:13–20

February 15: Transfiguration of the Lord Exodus 24:12–18 Psalm 2 or Psalm 99 2 Peter 1:16–21 Matthew 17:1–9

February 18: Ash Wednesday Joel 2:1–2, 12–17 or Isaiah 58:1–12 Psalm 51:1–17 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10 Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21



## **FCC Rochester Family and Friends,**

As we step into the month of February—a time often associated with love, warmth, and togetherness—I find myself reflecting on the abundant love God shows each of us every day. In this season, let us be intentional about sharing that same love with those around us. Greet your neighbors with a smile, reach out to someone who may be feeling alone, and nurture the bonds that give us strength as a community.

Let us also remember those in need and seek out opportunities to serve and encourage others. Small gestures of kindness can have a tremendous impact, and through these acts, we reflect Christ's light in the world.

Whether you are gathering with family, spending time with friends, or reaching out to someone new, know that your actions matter. Each day is a chance to make a positive difference, and together, as a church family, we can spread hope and joy throughout our community.

May God's grace fill your hearts with peace and encouragement during this wintery month. I am grateful to start my second year at Rochester this February with you.

Stay warm and blessings

Pastor Joe

## **What It Means to be a Member of a Congregational Church**

**To be a church member** is to recognize our commitment to God as God is made known to us in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We choose to be counted with those whose purpose is to build a more Christian community.

**To be a church member** is to enter a dedicated fellowship: growing in our understanding of Christ, sharing each other's burdens and joys, and serving others in Christ's spirit. These are all part of the living fellowship of those who follow Christ.

**To be a church member** is to offer strength and encouragement through shared worship, prayer, study, and service. Each member adds time, talent, money, and prayers to the total work of the church. When we work as a team to accomplish God's purpose, we receive the joy of God's contagious inspiration.

**To be a church member** is to make real in our everyday lives the love of Jesus Christ. When Christ is alive in us, our relationships with others are deeper and truer. We rejoice as we see and experience God's love expressed in Christian fellowship around us.

**To be a church member** is to find forgiveness for sins, strength for life's tasks, and assurance of a destiny worth desiring – to know oneself as a child of the living God.

If you are already a member, may these words awaken in you a desire to serve the Lord more fully. If you are not a member, we invite you to dedicate yourself to the Congregational Christian Way.



## **A Guided Tour of our Church Website** by Mark Dahms

### **If you haven't visited our church website, you don't know what you're missing!**

Ever wondered where you could find a video of a Sunday service you missed or wanted to revisit? Do you want to learn more about our pastor, church history or church government? Are you curious about the meaning and history of congregationalism? Do you want to learn about what our church does to help the local community? Or do you want to see pictures from church events over the past couple of years?

It's all there on the church website: [www.FCCRochesterWis.org](http://www.FCCRochesterWis.org)

The website is organized into 4 main sections:

The **Home** page is updated most frequently with information about Worship Hour, links to our Facebook and the latest Worship Hour video, news about upcoming events, the latest weekly bulletin, the latest monthly newsletter, and the latest annual report. Scroll and you will find Pastor Joe's bio. Scroll further and you'll find information about our three annual summer events. Scroll down even further and you'll find a photo gallery with pictures from the last couple of years.



page

down

The **About** page is where to go when you want to learn about our church government, congregationalism or the history of church. Here you will find a link to the National Association of Congregational Christian Church's website, a fantastic resource for learning about congregationalism. Scroll further to read our church's covenant and learn about our church government – you can even download our constitution and by-laws. Scroll down further and you'll find a wonderful essay detailing how our church grew along with the Rochester community, dating back to the early 1800s.

The **Watch** page is where you can find recordings of weekly Worship Hour services since August 2024. The full service is recorded so you get all the wonderful music, insightful sermons, and prayers of thanksgiving and of concern for our community. Just click on the link; you don't need any special apps or tech to watch. You can adjust the volume, pause, rewind and fast forward.

The **Serving Others** page is all about our church Missions. Here, you will find links to local charities that benefit from our Spring and Fall rummage sales. You will also find a link to Samaritan's Purse, a national nonprofit that does great work for disaster relief and runs the Operation Christmas Child program.

Have a suggestion for the website? Email Mark Dahms at [Treasurer@FCCRochesterWis.org](mailto:Treasurer@FCCRochesterWis.org) or Pastor Joe at [Pastor@FCCRochesterWis.org](mailto:Pastor@FCCRochesterWis.org)

## **Council Meeting Report**

Council Meeting, January 18, 2026

Pastor's Report – Joe Hackett

Regarding the Lenten service series:



*Eps 10*

- All services will begin at 7PM and be centered on Jesus' "I AM" statements
- Feb 18: 5:45 soup supper at Plymouth UCC in Burlington and may include an ecumenical choir
- Feb 25: 7PM at Burlington UMC, Pastor Joe preaching
- Mar 4: 7PM FCC Mukwonago
- Mar 11: 7PM FCC Rochester, Rev. Stanton from Burlington UMC preaching
- Mar 18: English Settlement UMC
- March 25: Community Baptist Church, Honey Creek
- Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be at each congregation's church
  
- Items for the bulletin should be in on Monday morning for the following Sunday
- Newsletter items for February due January 28 in the morning. JoAnne will compile.
- Fire inspection done Jan 14. No problems found.
- New internet provider TDS is up and running with better connectivity and costing less
- March 15 Youth dramatic presentation has been confirmed.

#### Education/Youth – Joe Hackett

- Sunday school is back in session. Topics for each session planned.
- 2026 WCA Camp prices set at \$475 before May 31 and \$525 after June 1. Paperwork coming in late February
- 8-week Bible study on the Holy Spirit starts Wednesday, Jan 28, 11AM – 1PM

#### Treasurer's Report – Mark Dahms

- Reports for month ending December 2025 and for year ended December 2025 and the 2026 budget attached.
- 2025 was the highest pledge and offering total in the history of the church
- We have applied for credit cards for Joe and Mark to replace their debit cards

#### IT/Marketing – Mark Dahms

We have switched to TDS as internet supplier

All of secretary's files have been backed up to the cloud

Our MS Desktop license has been canceled in favor of the online one.

Secretary's email is still being forwarded to the Pastor

#### Worship – Rose Seeger

- There is a full schedule for Sunday music through February
- Ice Cream Social will be August 22
- They will start meeting on the first Sunday of the month and are adding Sue Beach to the committee to lend her input regarding communion.

#### Fellowship – Joyce Gerard

- There will be a coffee for the annual meeting
- Planning a Feb 8 potluck

#### Missions – Rose Seeger in lieu of Sue Beach

- Lisa Hilgenberg and Sue Pope will head up Love Inc meals going forward.
- Next Love Inc meal is the last Monday in January
- Crafting starts again in February

#### Building and Grounds – Steve Dolphin

- Committee met a week ago

- Will be posting events to include more people
- Making plans to paint the downstairs and do other cleanup before the May 2 meeting

### New Business:

Re: survey followup – several suggestions have already been implemented. The rest will be divided into the appropriate committees for consideration and subsequent action. This will be reported at the annual meeting.

### **Pastoral Care Commission, January 13, 2026**

Reviewed and amended Prayer concerns for weekly bulletin.

Amanda Busateri will send greeting cards from our church, with Claudia Williamson functioning as point person.

Pat Parr will develop activity bags for young children to use during the church service.

Anne Gorski will make phone calls as necessary.

More discussion and action are needed at our next meeting on Hospital visits, Point People, and developing church information packets for visitors. We will also be discussing Facebook information about the church. More discussion is needed regarding a new way to handle prayer concerns from the congregation.

### **Thoughts to Begin Lent – Putting on Sackcloth and Ashes**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday.

“Remember that you are but dust and unto dust you shall return.”

The celebrant rubs ashes on our forehead and we are supposed to be reminded of our sins and that we will, like it or not, eventually die. With that in mind, we then enter into six weeks of reflection that's often marked by giving something up, or sometimes taking up a new practice intended to bring us closer to God, and these are good things. Often, however, if we're honest, it's just another season in the church marked by different colors, different customs, different routines and not much else.

The dust thing is interesting, though. It's connected with feelings of disappointment or disillusionment and with the ancient practice of visible humility. Job threw ashes on himself when his family had all been struck down. It is a symbol of great mourning, often intensified by the wearing of sackcloth, an intentionally uncomfortable, scratchy garment made of goat's hair supposed to remind the wearer of their sins. It was painful on purpose.

But we are a New Testament people, forgiven in Christ. We don't do this anymore, but there is symbolism here that can be useful to us, too. Rather than concentrating on our sins, we look to our transformation in Christ. The dust and ashes, the knowledge of all the times we have fallen short and need forgiveness is still important, but not for its sense of loss or hopelessness. We bury our old lives, yes, but as we do so we look to the new one. We die to something we thought we loved for the sake of something better so that we can embrace a newer life, a more perfect life in God. There is Lent, but there is also Easter.

