

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church
Rochester, Wisconsin

July, 2026

Contents this month:

Calendar, Lectionary
Pastor's Ponderings; Congregationalism,
Council/Committee Reports; Other News
Devotional: What God Says about Country

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 U.S. Independence Day
5 Sunday Service 10AM	6	7 Tai Chi 9AM	8	9	10 occ Crafting 10-2	11
12 Sunday Service 10AM	13	14 Tai Chi 9AM	15	16	17	18
19 Sunday Service 10AM Council Meeting after church	20	21 Tai Chi 9AM	22	23	24 occ Crafting 10-2	25
26 Sunday Service 10AM	27 Book Club 6:30	28 Tai Chi 9AM	29	30	31	

Next month's Newsletter deadline: email JoAnne, mrspotts51@hotmail.com, by July 24

July Lectionary

July 5: Zech. 9:9–12, Rom. 7:14–25a, Matt. 11:25–30

July 12: Isaiah 55:10–13, Rom. 8:12–17, Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23

July 19: Isaiah 44:6–8, Rom. 8:18–27, Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43

July 26: Deut. 7:6–9, Rom. 8:28–39, Matt. 13:44–52

Pastor's Ponderings

Dear friends in Christ,



As July arrives with summer gatherings, fireworks, and celebrations of our nation's freedom, we pause with gratitude for the blessings we enjoy and for those who have served and sacrificed for them.

As Christians, our gratitude also points us to a deeper freedom. Jesus says, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). In Christ, we are freed from sin, fear, and the burden of saving ourselves. We are forgiven, claimed, and made new.

We can give thanks for the blessings we have received in this land: freedoms of worship and conscience, opportunities to serve our neighbors, and the many sacrifices made by those who came before us. At the same time, our faith reminds us that our highest allegiance belongs to God. We love our country best when we seek the welfare of our neighbors, speak truth with grace, work for justice and mercy, and pray for leaders and citizens alike. Christian patriotism is not pride without reflection; it is gratitude shaped by humility and service.

This freedom is not for ourselves alone. Christ frees us to love God, serve our neighbors, forgive generously, speak with kindness, and share compassion with those who are lonely, burdened, or overlooked.

This month, may our celebrations lead us to thankful hearts and faithful lives. Let our homes and church be places where others can glimpse the welcome and hope of Jesus Christ.

Enjoy the Summer

Pastor Joe

The Congregationalist Church and Relationship with God

"Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" – Romans 8:39. God relates to us directly both individually and collectively. Congregationalists advocate following Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as individual conscience dictates.

In Congregationalism, where each may have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we also need the support of a loving community to grow to full maturity in Christ.



Here at FCCR, we work toward acknowledging that, while we foster a strong community, a church family, we remember that the purpose of that family is to love God and to encourage each other to grow with Him.

July Birthdays!

Brought to you by your Pastoral Care Commission:

Emilia Dahms July 2
Marilee Gloe July 2
Don Fillicetti July 7
Mary Paesch July 9 Her 90th!!
Aga Dahms July 10
Jean Thompson July 23
Lora Geask July 31
Mary Krall July 31 Her 90th!!



Council Meeting Report,

No meeting was held in June. Next meeting July 19.

Council Vacancy 2027

JoAnne Potter has completed more than 2 terms on the council as Clerk and will be rotating off to take up the newsletter and become more involved in Love Inc. This position should have candidates before October so that the new council member can be elected at the Fall Meeting. Council Clerk candidates should fill the following requirements:

- Be an active member of the church
- Commit to attending monthly council meetings and take notes
- Maintain the roll of members and keep track of significant sacramental community celebrations like funerals, weddings, baptisms, and confirmations.
- Have enough digital expertise to generate online minutes and distribute them by email
- The Clerk has a one year term and is eligible for reelection.

Anyone interested should approach JoAnne or any council member.

COMMUNION SCHEDULE

DATE	TABLE SETUP	TABLE SETUP	BREAD/ JUICE
May 2, WCA Workshop	Rose Seeger	Sue Beach	Ruth Frost
May 24, Pentecost Sunday	Lisa Hilgenberg	Sue Pope	Greta Frost
21-Jun	Brian Mingus	Kim Mingus	Melanie Mingus
12-Jul	Lisa Hilgenberg	Greta Frost	Sue Pope
9-Aug	Cher Fritchen		Chris Hackett
13-Sep	Christine Gall	Joyce Gerard	Chris Hackett
Oct 4 Worldwide Communion	Sue Beach	Tom Beach	Ruth Frost
8-Nov	Anne Gorski	Cher Fritchen	JoAnne Potter
13-Dec	Lisa Hilgenberg	Greta Frost	Chris Hackett
10-Jan	Brian Mingus	Kim Mingus	Melanie Mingus
14-Feb	Sue Pope	Lisa Hilgenberg	Greta Frost
March 25 Maundy Thursday	Sue Beach	Tom Beach	Ruth Frost
11-Apr	Christine Gall	Joyce Gerard	JoAnne Potter
May 16 Pentecost Sunday	Sue Beach	Tom Beach	Ruth Frost

Pastoral Care Commission

Pastoral Committee Update

As we said we would, the committee has started greeting people on Sunday morning outside the front door and it's a lot of fun! Any of our church members are welcome to do it. Just arrive at 9:30 with a smile and a handshake!

Just a reminder if you know of anyone who we should put on the prayer list in the bulletin please call or text me and I will see it gets done. 262-470-6122 Claudia. We want to do it this way so we can do a follow up to see if they should continue on list, or call from Pastor or anything else.

Thank you. Amanda, Ann, Pat and Claudia 🌸🙌🌸

From the Missions Committee

We are in need of a few things for Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes. If you are at Walmart or any other stores, please consider looking for these items, especially if they are at a great price.

Boys Underwear: Ages 2-4, 5-9 and 10-14. Sizes would start at 4-8, 8-10 and 12-men's small

Boys Socks: Short/Crew

Boys Shorts: Elastic Waist. No jeans/heavy material

Match Box Cars: These are packaged at a reasonable price when there are multiple cars

Our goal is to pack 150 shoeboxes in late October. More if you choose to pack your own box.

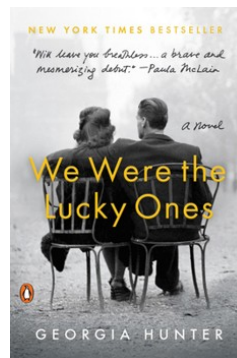
We have also started taking a collection of money for the shipping costs. You can find a collection jar just before you enter the church. Please consider donating a dollar here and a dollar there as it can add up to help the cause.

Community Book Club

Our Next Selection:

We were the Lucky Ones, by Georgia Hunter

Monday, July 27, 6:30 Church parlor



Le Mutt in July!

Happy 250th birthday AMERICA 🇺🇸🎉🎊🎈🎉 us

Hi everyone it's LeMutt again to share with you jokes you can share at a parade or picnic or how ever you celebrate this special birthday of our great country.

Did you hear the one about the Liberty Bell? Yeah it cracked me up too!

What did the colonist wear to the Boston Tea Party? Tea shirts

If you crossed a patriot and a dog with curly hair, what would you get? A Yankee poodle

Which colonists told the most jokes? The Punsylvanians!

What did Luke Skywalker say on the 4th of July? " May the 4th be with you"

What did one American flag say to the other flag? Nothing. It just waved.

How come there are no knock-knock jokes about America? Because freedom rings.

What's the difference between a duck and George Washington? One has a bill on his face and the other has his face on a bill!

To close, I thought I would share quotes about America from some famous Americans:



Never quit. We never hide from history. . We make history. - John McCain

May we think of freedom, not as a right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right.

- Peter Marshall (Chaplain)

Freedom and democracy are dreams you never give up! - Aug San Sui Kyi (Nobel Peace Prize winner from Burma) Not an American but something I thought we should hear

I wish all of you and great Fourth of July and GOD BLESS AMERICA!!! 🙏🌸 us

Thoughts – What God Says About Country

- JoAnne Potter

We often use the phrase “God and Country” as though they were one united thing. I’m pretty sure God would not agree.

The more I study this, I can't find a single place where God encourages love for country. Not one. He encourages us to obey our leaders (Hebrews 13:17) and to render unto our governments what rightly belongs to them (Matt 22:21) but beyond that, our commanded affiliation is to God and God alone. We are to love God first and then our neighbor. Period.

We all know of conflicts in which both sides claim God's preference for them and that, of course, is impossible. He can love all men equally, but to prefer one side over another when they espouse opposite aims is not who He is. He loves the humans He made. All of them. And we are supposed to do that, too. If we're honest, though, we WANT God to be on our side of whatever conflict we're in. Who wouldn't? But at the same time, we also see the impossibility of opposing forces each allied exclusively with God. This is where philosophy comes in handy, because this is a logical contradiction. God cannot logically agree with both the invader and the invaded. “A” cannot equal “not-A”. God loves all combatants equally.

But what DOES God have to say about nations?

First, that He made them all (Acts 17:26) "From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth." God's nation is not defined by boundaries, but by His creation of them.

Then that He should and will be exalted among those nations (Ps 46:10) (Ps 86:9) (Is 60:3) Also that no nation is righteous in itself but only insofar as it follows and worships God (Zech 2:11) "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people." (Gen 22:18) "And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

A nation is not favored by God because of history, heritage, location, boundaries, language, declaration or constitution. It is holy simply when its people seek and worship Him. We can and should honor those whose consciences urge them to sacrifice their own safety, well-being, and even their lives to stand up for what they believe, but as Christians, our allegiance is to be sworn to God alone. In this, all people sharing that allegiance are one. God's nation is not the United States of America or any other humans gathered within a man-marked border. We are to have but one sworn identity and that to God.

