

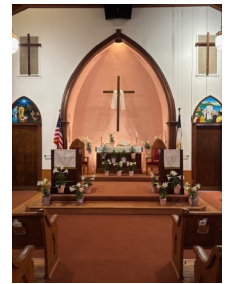


Newsletter of the First Congregational Church
Rochester, Wisconsin

September, 2026

Contents this month:

Calendar, Lectionary
Pastor's Ponderings; Congregationalism,
Council/Committee Reports; Other News
Devotional: How to Lose Your Faith



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 Choir Rehearsal 5:30	4 OCC Crafting 10-2	5
6 Sunday Service 10AM	7	8 Tai Chi 9AM Wisdom Books Bible Study 6PM	9	10 Choir Rehearsal 5:30	11	12
13 Sunday Service 10AM Communion	14 Council meeting 6pm	15 Tai Chi 9AM Wisdom Books Bible Study 6PM	16	17 Choir Rehearsal 5:30	18 OCC Crafting 10-2	19
20 Sunday Service 10AM Sunday School	21	22 Tai Chi 9AM Wisdom Books Bible Study 6PM	23	24 Choir Rehearsal 5:30	25	26
27 Sunday Service 10AM	28 Book Club 6:30 Love Inc meal 4:30	29 Tai Chi 9AM Wisdom Books Bible Study 6PM	30			

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

September Lectionary

Sept. 6: Ezek. 33:7–9, Psalm 32:1–7, Rom. 13:1–10, Matt. 18:1–20. **Sept. 13:** Gen. 50:15–21, Psalm 103:1–12, Rom. 14:1–12, Matt. 18:21–35. **Sept 20:** Isaiah 55:6–9, Psalm 27:1–9, Phil. 1:12–14, 19–30, Matt. 20:1–16. **Sept. 27:** Ezek. 18:1–4, 25–32, Psalm 25:1–10, Phil. 2:1–4 (5–13) 14–18, Matt. 21:23–27 (28–32)

Pastor's Ponderings

FCC Rochester Family and Friends,

September has a way of inviting us back into rhythm. Summer's pace begins to give way to school schedules, church programs, harvest preparations, and familiar routines. Even the changing light and cooler mornings remind us that life moves in seasons. In the midst of these changes, Scripture offers us a steady promise: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

This month, as calendars fill and responsibilities increase, I encourage each of us to pause and ask: What rhythm is God inviting me to practice in this season? Perhaps it is a renewed commitment to worship. Perhaps it is making time for prayer before the day begins. Perhaps it is reaching out to someone who has been absent, lonely, grieving, or in need of encouragement. Small acts of faithfulness often become the places where God's grace grows deep roots.

September also marks a new beginning in the life of our congregation. As ministries resume and opportunities for learning, service, and fellowship begin again, we are reminded that the church is not simply a place we attend; it is a people being formed together in Christ. Each person has a gift to share, a prayer to offer, a word of welcome to speak, and a part to play in the body of Christ.

My prayer for us this month is that we would enter this new season with open hearts. May we notice God's presence in ordinary routines. May we support our children, teachers, families, farmers, workers, caregivers, and all who are beginning something new. May we look for ways to encourage one another, serve our neighbors, and bear witness to the hope we have in Christ.

As we step into September, let us do so with gratitude for what has been, trust for what is ahead, and confidence that God is already at work among us.

With peace and hope,

Pastor Joe



The Congregationalist Church-Christian Conduct

The attitude of the Congregational Christian churches toward daily life is determined by the fundamental principle of freedom of conscience. There is no book of discipline, no canon law, and no set rules and regulations such as found in Catholicism, in the Episcopal church, Methodist church, or Presbyterian church. The educated conscience of Church members is the sole guide to conduct. If a person honestly believes in the presence of God that his conduct is proper, then the church accepts that conduct.



Because of this attitude toward freedom of conscience under Christ, many, who for years have felt they could not join a church that tells them what to do and not to do welcome the opportunity to join a Congregational church. They recognize that the only ultimate creed we have is the one shown by our conduct and that this conduct must be offered freely or it is not acceptable to God. We believe that the development of individual conviction and conscience is the essential way to produce real Christian personhood.

In preaching from the pulpits of Congregational churches, the centrality of conscience is fully recognized. This means that our ministers are free to preach the truth as God leads them to see it without any dogmatic insistence as to the conduct of church members. The appeal is to conscience under Christ and to the reasonableness of the viewpoint proposed. This attitude lifts the whole matter of Christian conduct out of the realm of controversy and personalities and draws together into one body all truth seekers who sincerely seek to live according to the pattern of Jesus Christ. --Henry David Gray

Editors Note: While Mr. Gray is right about the attitude of the Congregational church, this lack of dogmatism will inevitably lead to disagreements regarding right and wrong behavior and it is our job not to ignore or smooth them over, but to behave as the iron that sharpens iron, questioning and challenging one another, spurring one another on to love and good deeds. --JoAnne Potter

September Birthdays!

Brought to you by your Pastoral Care Commission:

Glenn Richmond	9/2
Chris Hackett	9/9
Kim Mingus	9/10
Melinda Dolphin	9/16
Theo Mingus	9/22
JoAnne Potter	9/22



Council Meeting Report, August 16, 2026

The meeting was called to order with prayer at 11:10 AM.

Present: Joe Hackett, Bev Jensen, Kelly Ball, Mark Dahms, Steve Dolphin, Ruth Frost, Brian Mingus, and JoAnne Potter

Minutes from July 19 were read with one correction: Pastor's vacation date changed from July 30 to August 30. Kelly Ball moved, seconded by Bev Jensen, that they be accepted as corrected.

Pastor's Report, Education Committee – Joe Hackett

- After August 30, the next pulpit supply will be needed between Christmas and New Year.
- Five children attended summer camp and enjoyed it.
- Sunday school teachers will be Steve, Chris, and Lisa. Background checks will be conducted for all of them.
- Following the September Bible study, Joe is considering a study covering either something regarding Advent or one about how to read the Bible.

Treasurer's Report and IT – Mark Dahms

- Income is ahead of last year, but increased expenses still caused a year to date loss. Bank account is healthy and attendance is the same as last year.
- Advertising for music in the park is in place. Concentrating on word of mouth and posters.

Worship – Pastor Joe for Rose Seeger

- Music in place through October

Fellowship – Kelly Ball

- Reception held in July for Mary Krall's birthday
- Church picnic Aug 30
- Will call for baked goods for Music in the Park. Steve and Brian managing stage and tent erection.

Building and Grounds – Steve Dolphin

- Wayne and Jay handling normal maintenance and yard tasks
- TDS fiber based internet being installed in parsonage
- Bushes housing dive-bombing birds by parsonage back door will be removed and replaced with smaller ones. Funds are set aside and available for this.

Missions – Bev Jensen

- 5 weeks until OCC packing takes place
- Rose and Bev will handle Day in the Country rummage sale. Rummage collection will begin September 1.

New Business

- Pastor will tell the village that we will still do Christmas Tree Lighting on December 4. Invitation to share wassail will take place afterward.

Kelly moved and Bev seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 11:35.

Next meeting will be held Monday, September 14, 6PM

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.

Next Love Inc Meal

The next scheduled meal we serve at Love Inc. is planned for Monday, September, 28. The menu will include Meatloaf, gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, tossed salad, dinner rolls, and dessert.

We still need volunteers to contribute:

- three meat loaves, about 2 pounds each
- green beans
- mashed potatoes

We are planning for about 45 people – this is a popular dinner.

If you can help serve or contribute, please contact Sue Pope, phone or text, at 414-587-0079 or email spopebusiness@tds.com.

Would love to see you there!

Rummage Sale, Crafters, and other Missions News

Our busiest time of the year is in full swing. Late August brought Music in the Park and the Church Picnic, then comes Day in the Country for which we will need your help. Several of you will be busy with the Cookies and Bars Sale, others with the Food Tent and then many of you mentioned you would help with the Rummage Sale. This Rummage Sale will become our only Rummage Sale during the year as we move forward. The Spring sale will no longer take place and our Missions (Love Inc and TLC) benefit from the rummage we collect and sell, which will continue to take place during Day in the Country.

As many of you know, I will be in Florida August 30-September 20, taking care of our grandboys. Rose Seeger. and Bev Jensen will be handling the Rummage Sale in my absence. Rose and Bev will be available to accept your rummage **by appointment** or on church days after September 1st or on September 4th when crafters are meeting to work on projects.

If any of you would like to help setting up and organizing tables for the sale, Bev, Rose and Christine G. will be doing that starting the Wednesday through Friday before the sale. If you would like to help during the sale, please let the ladies know. I did speak to a few of you this morning and Rose and Bev have been given your names.

Crafters, note that we will not be meeting September 18th.

If you have questions, please contact Bev J. (262-210-1401) or Rose S. (262-995-3252)
I appreciate all of you and your willingness to help. Many hands make the day run smoothly and you get to enjoy fellowship with one another as well.

Sincerely,
Sue Beach
Missions Commission

COMMUNION SCHEDULE

DATE	TABLE SETUP	TABLE SETUP	BREAD/ JUICE
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

Finance Committee and Treasurer's Report

First Congregational Church of Rochester, Wisconsin
Finance Commission Report for the period ended July 31, 2026

In July, income remained steady but higher expenses resulted in a loss of \$1,206. From January through July, total income reached \$41,900 (\$1,212 ahead of last year), while expenses totaled \$48,799, resulting in an overall loss of \$6,898; of this amount, \$3,948 was expected. Unrestricted cash dropped by \$9,162 since the end of last year, leaving a healthy balance of \$18,528 going into August. Fundraising income in August and September will add to the already healthy cash position. Additional details can be found on the reverse page.

Attendance averaged 35 in July, the same as last July. That puts the year-to-date average at 39, which is also the same as last year.

Deposits for the month included: regular offerings of \$5,070

Disbursements for the month included:

- \$713 to Brother for replacement toner cartridges for all 4 colors.
- \$284 to reimburse Wayne Ball for building and grounds supplies.
- \$316 to Village of Rochester quarterly sewer bill.
- \$60 to reimburse Claudia Williamson for pastoral care supplies.

Other Topics

1. **Investment account** – the June 30, 2026 balance of \$80,505 is up 8.3% or \$6,167 since December 31, 2025 driven by market changes; there have been no deposits or withdrawals.
2. **Music in the Park Ice Cream Social** – this year's event is scheduled for August 29 from 10am to 3pm. Last year's event raised \$775 for the church from "free will" offerings for food and beverages. That was down from \$1,186 in 2024 and \$1,418 in 2023.
3. **Painting Pastor's Office Windows** – Wayne Ball obtained a quote from Wall 2 Wall Painting to paint the windows pastor's office. The **quote of \$545** to paint the interior of 4 windows with Benjamin Moore Command Satin White includes all labor and materials.

Approved Yes X No _____

4. **Painting Parsonage Front Porch** – Wayne Ball obtained a quote from Wall 2 Wall Painting to paint the parsonage front porch. The **quote of \$738** is to power wash, scrape and paint 2 coats of Porch and Floor Paint; the quote includes labor and materials. Separately, Wayne will contact a contractor about wood replacement where it needs it.

Approved Yes X No _____

(over for financial reports)

Birthday Celebration and Thanks

In August, two (yes, two!) of our good friends, Mary Krall and Mary Paetsch, celebrated their 90th birthdays. Mary P celebrated with family and Mary K celebrated here at the church with a cake and coffee party in her honor. All the smiling faces tell the story. Congratulations, ladies!



A Note to the Congregation from the Birthday Girl

To each and every one of my church family: From the bottom of my heart I say THANK YOU! – for your gifts, cards, and good wishes on the occasion of my 90th birthday. I am truly blessed by your friendship. --Mary Krall

Community Book Club

September's Selection: *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng
A mystery in a thought-provoking mixed-race venue

Monday night, September 28, 6:30, church parlor



Bible Study: The Books of Wisdom - Harmony in Contradiction

On the Tuesday after Labor Day, the next Bible study will begin. Only six weeks, but it will be packed with the background, structure, and meaning of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. We will talk about how all of these books were written to explain the mysteries of how to lead a good life, but that they all come to very different conclusions and we'll try to find the common thread in them all.

In view that the light is still fairly long-lasting at that time of year, we are going to try to do an evening session that ends before Daylight Saving goes away so that those of us who have day jobs are able to join if they want. At this time, Tuesdays at 6 PM sounds about right. We'll start Tuesday, September 8th, then.

If you have any questions, catch me in church or give me a call or text. There should be a signup sheet at the back of the church.

JoAnne Potter, 608-604-3137, mrspotts51@hotmail.com



Le Mutt Falls into September

Hi everyone and welcome to my column for September (my second favorite month) and the month we usher in Fall(my favorite season)! A lot goes on in September with school starting. We have Labor Day, Grandparents Day, Rosh Hashana, Constitution Day, and Patriot Day (remembering 9/11) which this year hits the 25th year mark. Seems just like yesterday to most of us. And to top it off, here's some days that are apparently not talked about much, or at least I never heard of them. National hug your hound day on the 11th, followed by on the 13th Kids take over the kitchen day, International talk like a Pirate day on the 19th and one for you teachers National Punctuation Day on the 24th 🤪 Oh, and I can't forget the month of September is National Happy Cat Month 🐱🐱🐱 But I thought I would zero in on the going back to school part of the month, so here are some teacher/student one liners.

Here we go——

Teacher: Name two pronouns

Student: Who, me?

Why did the computer teacher quit his job?

He lost his drive

Why is the library the tallest part of any school?

It has the most stories.

My science teacher shows up periodically.

What's the easiest way to get straight A's?

Use a ruler

What was the English teacher's breakfast on the first day of school?

SYNONYM rolls



My Spanish professor is nacho average teacher

What is the Math teachers favorite dessert?

Pi

A teacher caught a student passing notes in class, but the student didn't get in trouble.

Why not? It was music class

But in all seriousness, we are all affected by the teachers we had sometime during our school days.

A kind word from a teacher stays with a student for a long time. A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart! 💜 Thank you teachers for your dedication!!

And here's one of my favorite quotes from Maya Angelou:

I've learned that people will forget what you said
people will forget what you did
but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Till next month, have a fantastic September, and may GOD bless and watch over till we meet again! 🐶



Thoughts – How to Lose Your Faith

- JoAnne Potter

Did you ever notice that you have been made human?

Well, of course you have. But it's a problem, isn't it? I mean, you were made human, but it seems like every time we turn around, we're being told to be something else. More spiritual, more perfect, more like Jesus. And none of these things seem to fit in to the reality of humanity. Humanity is random, very flesh and blood, and full of error. It's a thing, for sure. What exactly, then, are we to do with these two things that seem so far apart, spirit and humanity?



We are often told that the bridge between the perfection of the spirit and the imperfection of humanity is faith, but the problem is that faith only stops with the act of believing and doesn't go far enough. Believing isn't going to do it because it centers on us, not on God. Believing is what we do, not who we are supposed to be believing in. **Believing is a created thing. We create it with our mind and intellect.** And as such, it is as misguided a goal as wealth or fame. Faith is just a thing. It's God we really want, isn't it? And God isn't reached by faith or any kind of constructed belief or practice. God is reached by encounter and fellowship directly with Him.

It's kind of like believing the Bible. If belief in and following the Bible is our goal, that's one thing. But it can end up kind of like worshiping a book. A good book for sure, but it is still a book. The Bible is not God. It may be from God or about God, but it is not God. Neither is faith. The Bible and faith are both tools, means to an end, but not good final goals. The temptation is to go to church, read your Bible, learn prayers and verses, then kind of dust off your hands from all the effort (and it is an effort) and think you're done. But that's just the beginning. It's like putting a carcass on the table without meat. There's a framework to build on, but nothing of real substance to nourish.

God gave us the Bible to lead us to Him. That's it. Nothing more.

He gave us faith, and prayer, and church families for that, too. Nothing more. It's Him. It was always Him. Faith and doctrinal frameworks provide support on which those things might grow, but there's little point in growing a tomato plant if you never pick the tomatoes.

Faith is not the fruit of a well-lived life. Life in God is. Faith is temporary. You will not need it in heaven.

Knowing your Bible is not the fruit of a well-lived life. God is. You will not need someone else's idea of what God is saying in heaven.

Building a strong church is not the fruit of a well-lived life. God is. You will be part of a church with no walls, no hymns, no bake sales in heaven.

When God tells us to focus on the eternal, He means Himself.

So lose your faith, and focus on Him, where faith becomes irrelevant because He is so real.