



First Congregational Church

Rochester, Wisconsin

April 2026 Newsletter

Contents this month:

Calendar

Lectionary

Pastor's Ponderings; Congregationalism,
Council/Committee Reports; Other News

Devotional: So It's Easter



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Spirit Bible Study 11-1 Choir practice 5:30	2 Maundy Thursday service 6PM	3 Good Friday service 1PM	4 St. Peter's Fire 7-10PM, church lawn
5 Easter Sunday Service 10AM	6	7 Tai Chi 9AM	8	9 Choir practice 5:30	10	11
12 Sunday Service 10AM	13	14 Tai Chi 9AM	15	16 Choir practice 5:30	17 OCC Crafting 10-2	18
19 Sunday Service 10AM Council Meeting after church	20	21 Tai Chi 9AM	22 Love, Inc Volunteer appreciation dinner, noon	23 Choir practice 5:30	24	25 Prayer beads 9 to noon
26 Sunday Service 10AM Last Sunday school, prayer beads	27 Book Club 6:30	28 Tai Chi 9AM	29	30		

Next month's Newsletter deadline: email JoAnne, mrsports51@hotmail.com, by April 24

April Lectionary

April 1: Is 50:4-9, Heb 12:1-3, John 13: 21-32, April 2: Ex 12:1-14, 1Cor 11:1-13, John 13:1-35, April 3: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 18:1- 19:42 or John 19:17-30 April 5: Ex. 14:10-15:1, 1 Cor. 15:1-11, John 20:1-18 April 12: Acts 5:29-42, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31 April 19: Acts 2:14a, 36- 41, 1 Peter 1:17-25, Luke 24:13-35 April 26: Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10



Pastor's Ponderings

April 2026

Church Family and Friends,

As we approach the celebration of Easter, my heart is filled with gratitude for each of you and the spirit of hope that this season brings. Easter is a time when we remember the greatest story of love—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a world that often feels uncertain, the message of Easter reminds us that new beginnings are possible, and that light always triumphs over darkness.

This year, let us renew our faith and reach out to those around us with kindness and compassion. I encourage you to reflect on the miracle of Easter and consider how you can share its joy with your neighbors, friends, and family. Whether through a simple act of service, a heartfelt prayer, or an invitation to worship, we can make a difference in the lives of others.

May the hope and peace of Easter fill your homes and hearts. I look forward to celebrating this blessed season with all of you, rejoicing in the promise of new life and the endless love of our Savior.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Joe

Congregationalism, the Holy Spirit, and Sacraments

The Holy Spirit. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to understand and apply God's word written in the Bible and experienced in our lives. The Spirit helps us develop as intelligent and joyful followers of Jesus Christ, expressing in our lives the fruit of God's Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gal 5:22)

Sacraments are Not Magic. Congregational Christians practice two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion also known as the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism of infants or adults is practiced in different ways. God's blessing of the new life in Christ is the essential factor. Christian dedication of infants relies on the parents' sacred promise to bring up children in the Christian faith. Christian dedication is a common practice in our churches. The Lord's Supper is practiced in a variety of ways. The Presence of the Living God is the essential factor. No human ritual, tradition, or practice by itself can provide the inspiration and spiritual strength which comes from God to believers in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and God's faithfulness.



Council Meeting Report, March 15

Pastor's Report – Joe Hackett

- Over 65 people attended the Lenten midweek service and \$380 was collected for Sleep in Heavenly Peace
- Children's theater presentation will take place March 23
- Palms have been ordered for Palm Sunday



- Easter lily forms are in the bulletins.
- Maundy Thursday service will be 6 pm, Good Friday at 1PM
- St. Peter's Fire to be held 4/4 from 7 to 10 on church lawn near Main St.
- Easter Sunday service at 10 AM
- Joe will attend NACCC Minister's convocation in Mundelein, IL April 13-16
- We are invited to an ordination in Wauwatosa on April 18
- We are invited to Fox River Congregational's 25th anniversary on June 6
- WCA Annual Meeting May 2, agenda, 8-4:
 - 3 50-minute morning sessions downstairs: Technology usage in your church, Kindness speaker Cindy Rowe, Protecting Places of Worship
 - Lunch downstairs
 - Business meeting and elections downstairs
 - Worship (FCCR plans) upstairs
 - We plan for coffee (DW requested), breakfast items, and sub sandwiches for lunch (covered by suggested \$25 registration fee)
- NACCC asking for contribution to Congregationalist Magazine
- NACCC annual meeting June 27-30 in Springfield, MA, airfare currently \$1500 to \$1800
- We would help work at a NACCC Annual meeting hosted in WI in 2028

Education Report – Joe Hackett

- Last Sunday school will be April 26 and include making prayer beads. Next class will be about hand, feet washing.
- WCA Camp July 12-18 registration forms coming
- VBS will be a 2 day, 2.5 hour program, Friday evening and Sat morning August 14/15 or 21/22. Galaxy theme, staff is being recruited
- Adults finishing up Spirit study, future topics being discussed
- Prayer beads will be taught Saturday April 25th 9 to noon

Treasurer's Report – Mark Dahms

- Expenses were very high, specifically for the building because of the water line break
- Higher utility bills because of cold temps and electricity to run the new gutter heat tape.
- Funds for these are available because of reserves from last year.
- Attendance average 37 in February
- Checking account \$23,187 and Investments \$74,467 at end of February.

IT/Marketing – Mark Dahms

- Looking at Facebook advertising for Easter week.

Worship – Joe Hackett

- Communion signup for May 2026-May 2027 being completed
- Discussed where to purchase Easter lilies
- Choir to purchase new chairs, received quote from Chivari for \$1312, cost covered by memorial funds and private donation
- Communion for WCA will be administered by intinction
- Joe on vacation June 14th, Lora will provide harpist for special long meditation
- Steve will preach on June 5 when Joe is gone. May need someone to preach June 14 and/or 28. JoAnne could do 28th.

Pastoral Care – Joe Hackett

- Has been meeting regularly
- Cleanup up weekly prayer concerns in bulletin and will continue to manage
- Notes and cards being sent out

Missions – Sue Beach

- Love Inc meal will be served on March 23
- Crafting is held every other Friday except for Good Friday
- Memorial Day rummage sale will accept dropoffs after May 2

Building and Grounds – Steve Dolphin

- Waiting for quotes for painting
- Plan to replace the well pump while Joe and Chris are on vacation, Maas quote is \$1800
- Setting up animal traps
- April 25 will be cleanup day
- Will check Waterford HS for student help

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.



Memorial Day Rummage Sale Dropoffs begin after May 2



Want to Join Love, Inc for lunch?

Anyone who has contributed time and/or dishes in 2025 until March of 2026 is invited to join in a luncheon of appreciation on April 22. If you want to attend, let Sue Beach know **by April 2, please**

Thank you from Children's Christian Theater following their visit to us on March 22! The Show was a success and all guests were impressed with how friendly and helpful our members were. Well Done!



Survey Response from Worship Committee

Committee will:

- submit regular monthly articles to the newsletter
- involve more people in the service by considering an additional reading and putting up a signup sheet for readers. Pastor Joe will take this over.
- Will retain monthly communion. Sue Beach currently doing a signup sheet for the coming months
- will serve communion at Maundy Thursday and at the WCA convention

Worship Committee Report

The committee discussed the following:

- Re: ordering Easter lilies for Palm Sunday. May source from Steins or Menards and get some artificial lilies to put out early
- Choir would like to exchange current wooden chairs for chairs similar to the one Pastor sits in at the beginning of the service which would have metal racks on the bottom for choir materials. Cost would be around \$1300. Will bring before the finance committee and council

- During WCA meeting on May 2, communion will be administered by dipping or intinction and eaten immediately
- Music June 14th will be given by a harpist friend of Lora's and will last as a 20 minute meditation.

Pastoral Care Commission Report

We have meet two times, have set several things in motion and would like to share them with all of you. The people are the committee are: Amanda Busateri, Anne Gorski, Pat Parr and Claudia Williamson. In the past, Mary Krall was doing the duties of the Pastoral Commission and did a great job! We would like to thank Mary, Ruth Frost and Lora Gensler for sorting out names and other things to help us get organized! The main purpose of this committee is to keep it touch with our church family to help Pastor Joe and our committee keep on top of instances where some kind of contact is needed, but another important component is welcoming people who walk though our doors while not overpowering them. A simple smile and handshake is always a good start, which brings us to our first endeavor to have greeters at the bottom of the stairs or outside in nice weather. So we will start that soon. At first it will be our committee members doing it but we will encourage some of you to do it as well. We have made up a few guest bags to give out with which we thank them for coming as well as providing an information sheet. We will also be making an activity gift bag for children, which will also be for children or grandchildren of church family. We've included pictures of them below. We will also continue to send out cards that will be signed "Blessings from your church family" and may also have an additional message depending on the situation. Of course, you can send cards on your own as well. Amanda is the contact person for cards, so if you know of someone please let her know. If you would like someone put on Prayer list in bulletin please tell us and we will see to it, and then do a follow-up with you to see if they should stay on list or if the situation no longer exists.

We plan on welcoming new church members and Baptisms with flowers that will be presented by either Pastor or Church Council. We will be working on doing something on Facebook.

Remember, we work closely with the Pastor regarding home visits, nursing home visits and what families want or don't want. We encourage all of you to offer ideas or suggestions and we will take them under consideration. We will be sending a clipboard around to update our member information and request you share your birthdate with us please. (Year not required). See you in church, the Pastoral Care Committee



Welcome gift



Child's gift

Community Book Club

First Congregational Church of Rochester

Meeting: April 27, 2026

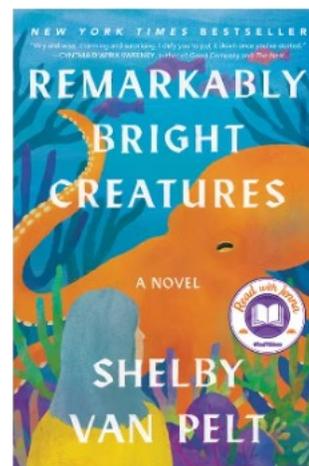
Place: Church Parlor- enter via side ramp

Time: 6:30 pm

Book: Remarkably Bright Creatures

Author: Shelby Van Pelt

All Are Welcome!



Prayer Beads

Come and learn how prayer beads can enhance your prayer life. We will unravel their history and explore the difference between Protestant and Catholic beads. You will be given some simple instruction and examples on how to use these beads. Each person will create their own prayer beads to take home. Materials will be provided. No previous beading experience is necessary...Come as you are!

Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 10:00 am - Lower Level, First Congregational Church of Rochester

No Cost; Bring a Friend; Open to All Ages; No Crafting Experience Needed

Please contact Chris Hackett (414-416-9444 or email: chackett3913@outlook.com) with any questions

And Now For Something Completely Different...Meet Le Mutt!

Hi folks! I'm new in town but I like to make people smile and maybe even chuckle a little. I'm 53 so I've been around the block more times than I want to admit and I have found that folks for the most part do like my silliness, so I hope you will too! Here are my thoughts for April. Enjoy!

What did the boy say when Jesus multiplied his lunch to feed the crowd? *I don't know but something seems fishy to me.*

What kind of phone did Delilah use? *Samson*

What is the salesman's favorite Scripture passage? *The Great Commission*

You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.

GOD BLESS till next month

Thoughts -So It's Easter

So it's Easter.

Jesus was dead and now He lives. We celebrate and, if we're lucky, are given enough vision to marvel at the wonder of it.

But sometimes, it all seems kind of ho-hum, an annual march of repetitive ritual.

And I may know why.

It's because we sing and talk a lot about Jesus being alive, but He doesn't FEEL like it. Our friends and family feel alive, we feel alive, even our dog feels alive, warm, and huggable, but Jesus not so much. Jesus hangs on the cross or holds up His hands in blessings in paintings, or stands draped in word or in statuary, but that doesn't feel real. Something else must be going on.

It's a shame, really. Not only because it makes Jesus less real to us, but because we miss half of what His resurrection was supposed to teach, the part when He wants us to be and to share with Him. He doesn't want a distant kind of worship. He wants fellowship and communion. He doesn't want us just to follow Him. He wants us to be holy like Him.

He does.

And because He does, He made us able to do it. It's not just Him who is the light of the world.

"You are the light of the world." Matt 5:14

You. Along with Christ, we are light bearers for God and our best life in this world remembers that.

Then there's this: **"Be ye holy as I am holy."** 1 Pet 1:16 We were made human like Christ but, like Him, we can also be holy. Holy doesn't mean perfect. It means belonging to God. We long to do this at our very core and Easter says to us, Look! Come! Do what I do!

And there's more: **"You are gods."** Ps 82: 6 Yup. We are not only humans. We were made like the triune God who created us. We were made to be a kind of god – not one to be worshiped, but one who imitates its maker.

"Arise! Shine! Your light has come!" Isaiah 60:1. Holy One! Light Bringer! Wake up and throw off the grave clothes of fear and discouragement! Christ has risen to show that you can, too!

Happy Easter

