



The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
☎ 920-748-5898 • office@riponcongregationalucc.org • www.riponcongregationalucc.org

May/June 2025

Thankfulness

Greetings from Pastor Mike to the faithful at 1st Congregational UCC Ripon,

I remember the church in my prayers giving thanks for your steadfast love for our God, this church, the community of Ripon, and the faithful throughout the world. The Lord is to be thanked for every one of you not just those I've met in the church but all those who have not been able to attend in-person. I hope and pray for your well-being wherever you are on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. I pray God blesses you in your work, play and relaxation.

I am blessed each day to be your interim minister. I am cared for and prayed for each day by people at 1st Congregational. I am thankful for the patience of everyone in the church office who hold my hand and forgives my mistakes using Google software. I have always used Microsoft products so I am on a steep learning curve with, for me, brand new software and a new way of thinking.

I am thankful for your smiles and warm greetings each Sunday morning. On my first day here I felt welcomed. My first Sunday service I was so nervous I could barely think straight and then I discovered a congregation eager to hear the Word proclaimed. My fears melted away over the next few weeks. Now, I look forward to each day here with anticipation of warmth, smiles, and people encouraging me.

I am at the church Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday each week. I spend Sunday and Monday nights at Daycholah



Center. The church has provided me with comfortable surroundings which meet all my needs. Daycholah is a great place to call my home-away-from home. I recharge each night allowing me to be ready for the next day. I look forward to the coming time as you search for your settled minister.

Peace and grace,

Pastor Mike

Giving

I am aware the church has been running a deficit budget for a number of years. The Cabinet is aware of this and is taking steps to address the short-term and long-term causes and remedies for this. I am confident the Cabinet will develop a plan to move the church toward a renewed sense of financial security.

Part of my ministry is to provide leadership in areas that need attention. I will be offering sermons on the importance of giving in the months to come. This is one aspect of financial leadership. A second example of leadership is to "walk the walk." I cannot preach about tithing without tithing. Traditionally tithing has meant giving 10% of income to the church. I am pledging to tithe my salary each month. I'm not tithing what is left over after taxes or after my bills have been paid. I am tithing my salary, no exceptions, no weasel words. I begin with tithing and then pay my bills.

I am aware there are many questions swirling around the finances of the country which can have a direct impact upon our individual finances as well as the church's. I cannot control the financial decisions made

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Special Offerings

The 2025 theme for Strengthen the Church is Great and Wide. This phrase, from Psalm 104, represents the diverse and playful nature of the multitude of ministries the offering supports. Whether the offering supports an outdoor worshipping community in Wisconsin or the National Ministries MESA team who builds systems to connect pastors and congregations, the movement of God is apparent. The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ. The Strengthen the Church offering will be collected on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2025.

—Outreach Committee

Welcome!

We've been anticipating your arrival! It's true, because we believe that every person who comes to join us for fellowship was sent by God. We look forward to getting to know you and to share with you the marvelous ways God is working in our church and beyond. If you've been thinking, praying, searching, or hoping for a place to belong, we would like, again, to say Welcome! We're glad you found us.



Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for July/August, 2025. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, June 18, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.

Prayer Requests

If you wish to see your prayer request listed in next Sunday's bulletin or The Spire, please notify the church office.



Pastor *Michael Safford-Kennedy*
Faith Formation . . . *Jeanne Williams*
Moderator *Penny Allard*
Vice-Moderator. . . *Maria Dietrich*
Clerk *Justus Paul*
Treasurer *Andy Lyke*
Choir Director *Kurt Dietrich*
Faith Formation *Ruth Retzlaff*
Finance. *Tim Lyke*
Historian *Robin Patzlaff*
Maintenance Officer *Gary Scholtens*
Membership. *Bev Christ*
Nominating. . . *J. Christ, T. Konecny*
Organist. *Maria Dietrich*
Outreach *Dawn Scholtens*
PPRC *Jeanne Williams*
Women's Fellowship *Susan Osteen*
Worship *Kathleen Hones*

Church Contact Info

Office Manager: Gary Scholtens
920-748-5898 or
office@riponcongregationalucc.org

If not in the office, Pastor Michael Safford-Kennedy can be reached at pastormike@riponcongregationalucc.org.

If you need to contact church custodians Rod & Peggy Freeman (or anyone else) please utilize the private church directory.

(Continued from page 1)

at the federal level. I trust God to provide us with the ability to make the best decisions for our families and our church.

I firmly believe God will open a door to the paths of balanced budgets for our church. When will we find the solution? I cannot give you a date because it will take a lot of work, prayer and discernment in a rapidly changing society whose values and priorities are being re-defined at a rapid pace. When planning church finances the only certainty we find is the presence of change. Nevertheless, we will, with the help of God, find paths forward.

As long as I am your interim minister I promise I will happily tithe my full salary.

Peace and grace,

Pastor Mike



Help Stock the Pantry

During the months of November and December, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of canned soups and boxed meals. Ongoing needs include paper grocery bags, peanut butter, and personal toiletry items such as deodorant, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Cash donations are always much appreciated as well. Donations may also be dropped off at the church and will be delivered to the pantry. Thanks for your help!

—Outreach Committee

Spiritual Disciplines

During the months of May and June I invite you to take time each week to practice a spiritual discipline which is found in the scripture reading for that Sunday.

Spiritual disciplines are many and varied. Some are famous and practiced by many such as Prayer. Some are not often recognized as a discipline such as Celebration and Silence. Some disciplines come easy for us while that same discipline, for others, is difficult. Some disciplines are practiced in the comfortable surroundings of our homes while others may be practiced in the openness of the outdoors accompanied by creepy crawly things, singing birds, and God forbid, spiders.

I recommend these readings for you for the listed weeks. Spend some time with them each day and listen for God in each selection. If you feel totally lost and never hear or feel God's presence, take heart you are beginning a practice. No one is good at a discipline when first beginning. Think back to how hard it was to first tie your shoes. How many tries did it take you before you had one success? After several more tries and fails you were able to do it without a parent watching over you. Even then you weren't accomplished. Remember the shoe laces coming untied as you walked to school? It took many tries before you were good at the task. The same is true for spiritual disciplines. Each takes practice before you might see a breakthrough. An example; try the discipline of silence. Find a comfy chair, a quiet room and sit in silence with only your thoughts to accompany you. Most people, after 10 minutes or so, are fast asleep! Practice allows you to see results (and stay awake!)

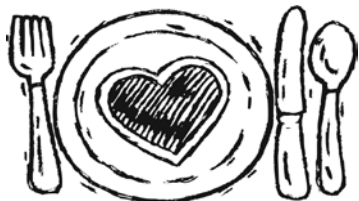
The readings and practices below are from my selected Sunday readings for the next two months (all are subject to change!). I will be preaching from these passages and probably highlighting the listed discipline. *(Continued on p. 6)*



Coffee Fellowship

Friday Coffee Fellowship takes place
at 9:30 AM at Mugs Coffee Shop.
We hope you'll join us!

From the Membership Committee



COMMUNITY DINNER

Our Community Dinners are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, in a drive-through format. Our next dinners will be held on May 27 and June 24, serving at 5:30 p.m.



Thank You

To the members of the First Congregational Church that helped make my mom's funeral and luncheon a beautiful celebration of her life - Thank You! I can never thank you enough for the love and spiritual support provided during a very difficult time.

Also, thank you for the Prayer shawl. My mom used it every day until she passed and now I use it. It provides loving comfort to me!

Sincerely, Mary (Butters) Hilbert

It's been an eventful spring!

You may remember the Valentine's Day Scandinavian heart baskets that we made and delivered in February. This went over so well that we decided to do something similar in May. As I write this, we plan to get together on Friday to make May Day baskets - something springy and fun, with candy inside. We will deliver the baskets on May 1st. Happy May Day!

On Easter Sunday we coordinated with the Faith Formation Committee to design and set up a photo background and take photos after the church service.

Fellowship of the Grape (FOG) - It's another great way to make new friends or enjoy time with the people you already know. Janet Vosskuil and Dave Gallops hosted the most recent gathering on April 11. We had a big group - so much fun. Come join us! We're looking for hosts in upcoming months. If you're interested, please contact Debbi Konecny (debbi.konecny@gmail.com, 920-279-1304).

We Care Coffee - On March 20 a small group of us got together for a tea party at Merle Goode's new residence at Tower View Care Center in Rosendale. We enjoyed good conversation and laughs, along with home-baked cookies. Now that we know there's enough room at the center, we can host a larger gathering in the future. Also, we plan to have another gathering at Rae Miller's home on Big Green Lake at some time in May. Watch for details.

We Care cards - Meg and Deanna keep this alive with thoughtful notes to celebrate, comfort and connect with church members. What a gift.

First Congo Trivia - Deanna sparked this idea, and an impromptu beginning has turned into a regular group of participants. It happens on Thursday evening at Knuth's. Come join the fun!

Coffee at Mugs - We continue to meet at 9:30 on Friday morning, and we often get an update on Trivia results from the night before. The number of people attending varies from week to week, but we enjoy a hard-core group that attends most Fridays. Everyone is welcome!

Karaoke - In the near future we'd like to join Tony for Karaoke at Pastimes. Stay tuned for details.

Called to Care - Thank you to all who signed up to participate. This is an opportunity to connect and care for each other. There are many ways to get involved in a way that works for you. In just the past few weeks people stepped up to provide rides to and from work when Kai's car was out for repair. Other recent examples: Visiting and reading to a member who has difficulty seeing. Doing the grocery shopping for someone going through health challenges. If you or someone you know could use a helping hand, please contact the church office, Pastor Mike or Bev Christ.

Our church community gives me strength and comfort through uncertain times. And this committee works to build on that community. Thank you.

—Bev Christ, Membership Committee



Shawl Ministry

The Shawl Ministry Team meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 in the Chapel. The purpose of this group is to share time together while creating knit and crochet items to support and warm members of our congregation and community. The Shawl Ministry has made a variety of small prayer squares and mini-prayer shawls to share with folks who are may be comforted by holding a tangible sign of our church's support. Small baskets of these items are in the sanctuary and at the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. In addition, we have distributed prayer shawls for ill and home-bound congregants. In addition, individuals are working on baptismal and baby shawls.

Faith Formation



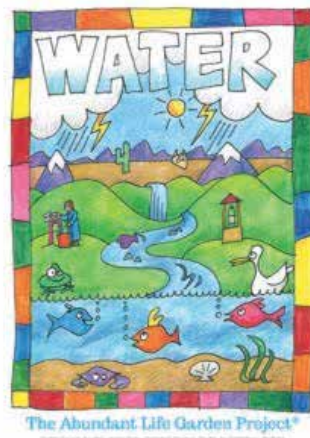
Fidgets and Toys for Young Children

To ensure a welcoming environment for families with young children, we want to create some busy bags for infants and toddlers and fill baskets of small fidget toys for older children. It would be lovely if folks could donate these items for this project:

- Sturdy rattles, teething toys, and toddler toys
- Board books
- Fidget spinners, cubes, and other items to keep hands busy
- Silicone poppers in small sizes

You can drop these by the office at any time.

Playground Mulch Needed - The mulch around our playground equipment needs to be refreshed this year. We would appreciate donations of un-dyed bags of wood chips for this purpose. Please drop off at the church before our clean-up day on May 31st.



Children's Spring & Summer Programming

We will celebrate the end of our Sunday School year with a Children's Sunday service on May 11th. Children and youth will lead the service and provide special music. Please join us at 10:30 AM.

Beginning on June 1 after the Children's Moment in the service, we will begin a church school program based on a curriculum called, "Abundant Life" that explores how water, soil, seeds, animals, and harvest all interact to create a healthy planet. Each week will include stories, songs, and hands-on activities to engage children in thinking about how God has provided us with the resources for abundant life and how we can conserve those resources. We will also complete two service projects—one for our local community and one international project through the Heifer Foundation. Our program will conclude with a celebration on Sunday, July 20th. Children's friends and family members are invited to join us for these sessions. NOTE: No session on Sunday, July 8th.

Questions? Contact Jeanne - jeanne@riponcongregationalucc.org

(Spiritual Disciplines, cont'd from p. 3)

Here is a list of readings and disciplines for each week of May and June:

May 4-10, Acts 9:1-20, Prayer

May 11-17, Psalm 23, Simplicity

May 18-24, Revelation 21:1-6, Silence

May 25-31, Acts 16:9-15, Worship

June 1-7, Acts 16:16-34, Prayer

June 8-14, Acts 2:1-12, Celebration

June 15-21, Romans 5:1-5, Worship


June 22-28, 1 Kings 19:1-15, Silence

Jun 29-July 5, 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14, Guidance

I pray you will spend May and June practicing these disciplines each day. It requires commitment and dedicated time. The reward is a deeper understanding of the scriptures and the beginnings of a "With God Life" bringing you peace and wisdom.

Peace and grace,

Pastor Mike



FELLOWSHIP OF
THE GRAPE

FOG will be held on Friday, June 13 at 5:30 p.m. at the home of Tom & Debbi Konecny. Contact Debi Konecny if you'd like to host a FOG gathering in May!

Worship Participation Schedule

Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Tech Booth	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
May 4	Michele Wittler	Kaitlyn & Amanda Edwards	Erik Dietrich	Worship Committee
May 11	Children & Youth	Ruth Retzlaff/Mike Boscaljon	Daniel Volkmann	Faith Formation
May 18	Wendy Smith	Wendy Smith/Janet Vossekuil	Gary Scholtens	Iserman and Nelson/Harper
May 25	Andrea Aul	Todd Sharp/NEED VOLUNTEER	Mike Boscaljon	Hones and Grady Families
June 1	Meg Schwemmer	Wendy Smith/Kih Bergin	Tim Lyke	Grout-Paul and Dietrich
June 8	Ed Scholtens	Janet Vossekuil/Tim Lyke	Erik Dietrich	Mary Lyke/Deanna Boone
June 15	Jack Christ	Tony Reilly & Scott Henke	Daniel Volkmann	Boscaljon and D/G Scholtens
June 22	Tom Konecny	Amanda Edwards/Ruth Retzlaff	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Mathias/NEED VOLUNTEER
June 29	Julie Mathias	Solberg Family	Gary Scholtens	Christ and Seidler-Halwas

Thanks
for your
participation

Please try to meet this schedule. If you cannot help on the Sunday assigned...

- Please switch Sundays with someone else and then notify the church office (748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org) of the change.
- We all appreciate your participation!

MAY/JUNE 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	May 1	2	3
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour			9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	11 am LWV annual meeting in FH
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour			9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA)	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:45 Outreach, Worship mtgs		6:30 pm Cabinet	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs 11 RC Bacc rehearsal	10 am RC Baccalaureate
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
NO Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour			9:30 Prayer Shawls 12pm Spire deadline 7 pm Book group	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA)	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
NO Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Community Dinner	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
June 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Fellowship Hour			9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA)	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Potluck Brunch		6:30 pm Cabinet	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Fellowship Hour 10:45 am Outreach, Worship			9:30 Prayer Shawls 8 am-12 pm PEO mtg 12 pm Spire deadline 7 pm Book group	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Community Dinner	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
29	30	July 1	2	3	4	5
9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 10:30 am Fellowship Hour			9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	

First Congregational Church of Ripon

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Enter to Worship—Go Forth to Serve

