



The SPIRE



First Congregational Church of Ripon • 220 Ransom Street • Ripon, Wisconsin 54971

☎ 920-748-5898 • office@riponcongregationalucc.org • www.riponcongregationalucc.org

November/December 2025

Light, in Every Season

Beloved church,

On these October mornings the sun seems unrushed. It doesn't shout the way July sunlight does. It arrives with that late-autumn humility—angled, amber, a little thinner, content to slip through maple leaves and kitchen windows rather than blaze overhead. I've been noticing how the light changes us. Summer light makes us bold: doors flung open, schedules loosened, energy outward and everywhere. Autumn light feels like an invitation to pay attention—to the small, to the near at hand, to what is ripening and what is ready to be set down.

We sometimes talk about the "coming darkness" of winter as though it is all lack and loss. But Scripture's story of light is much more expansive than a contest the sun must win or lose. God's light doesn't compete with the seasons; it keeps finding us inside them. In summer, light dances. In winter, light listens. Summer light fuels. Winter light focuses. And in every season, God is not far off. "Even the darkness is not dark to you," the psalmist sings. Night itself "is as bright as the day" to the One who holds us (Psalm 139).

This November we begin our sermon series "**Voices, Vantage, and Vision.**" It's a series about how God's light moves among us through time: the voices we inherit, the vantage we stand in now, and the vision we're becoming together. Each week we'll listen for the saints who carried light before us, we'll look with honesty at where we stand (our gifts and our gaps), and we'll ask God for sight—not floodlights, but the kind of lamp that guides the next faithful step.



Which brings me to an anniversary. In just a few weeks, **First Congregational Church of Ripon turns 175.** Think of that: 175 Advents of waiting light; 175 Easters of dawning light; 175 summers of bright, ordinary light on stone walls and wooden pews; 175 winters of softer light pooling across the sanctuary floor. We are part of a long procession of people who learned to love God and neighbor under the changing angles of the same Wisconsin sky. Our predecessors tended a flame that did not belong to them; it belonged to God. They carried it through wars and pandemics, baptisms and funerals, boom times and lean ones, pastors coming and going, choirs swelling and quieting, roofs repaired and re-repaired.

Anniversaries ask us to remember and to re-member—to be knit back together. What are we holding from those 175 years that is worth carrying forward? A fierce welcome, the courage to ask hard questions, a commitment to justice and generosity, a sturdy tenderness for one another. What might God be asking us to set down, so that our hands are free for something new? Perhaps assumptions that no longer serve love. Perhaps fears that keep us from trying again. Perhaps the impatience that wants summer's pace even in winter's wisdom.

I also want to honor the gifts many of you are already bringing in this interim season: the committee meetings you attend after long workdays; the music you rehearse; the children you wrangle to Sunday School;

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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.



Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays

The church office will be closed on Thanksgiving Wednesday–Friday, and all of Christmas week.

Prayer Requests

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



Introducing this year's confirmation class and mentors:

Confirmand/Mentor

Cameron Del Ponte/Jeanne Williams

Benjamin Edwards/Andy Lyke

Kirsten Edwards/Dawn Scholtens

Seiler Solberg/Amanda Edwards

Participants have explored the history and layout of the Bible, considered the liturgical year, and begun to experience various spiritual practices. Confirmands have interviewed adults about their faith, and will explore creeds that shaped the Christian faith.

Please keep our confirmands and their mentors in prayer as they continue their confirmation journey.

— Pastor Amanda

Spire Deadline

Our next Spire newsletter will be for January/February, 2026. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, December 17, at noon. Please submit materials to the church office, or email to Maria Dietrich at dietrich.maria@gmail.com.



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 *Maria Dietrich*

Women's Fellowship *Susan Osteen*

Worship *Kathleen Hones*

Church Contact Info

Office Manager: Kih Bergin

Hours: Weekdays 8 am–noon or by appointment. 920-748-5898 or office@riponcongregationalucc.org

Pastor Amanda Edwards is in the office on Wednesdays. She can be reached at pastoramanda@riponcongregationalucc.org.

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

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the meals you deliver; the snow you will soon shovel (again); the steady financial giving that keeps our mission moving. None of this is showy. All of it is luminous.

As we journey through “**Voices, Vantage, and Vision**” and turn toward our **175th Anniversary Sunday**, I’m praying we’ll let the season teach us. Let’s receive the softer light as a teacher that slows us down enough to see—and to bless—what God is already illuminating in our life together. And when the first true wintry dusk settles before dinner, may we recognize it not as a threat but as a threshold. Between the already and the not-yet, God is here. Between what we remember and what we can’t yet imagine, God is here. Between the saints we miss and the saints we’re becoming, God is here.

With gratitude for each of you,

Rev. Amanda Edwards

Interim Pastor, First Congregational UCC, Ripon

Shawl Ministry

The Shawl Ministry Team is taking a respite from meeting, but our hands are busy making confirmation stoles, prayer shawls, and baby blankets. If you would like to help with these tasks, contact Jeanne Williams, Meg Schwemmer, or Janet Voskull. Supplies are in plastic bins in the chapel, along with pattern books.

Snow Removal Needed

Rod and Peggy Freeman have decided to get out of the snow removal business. Therefore, we are looking for snow removal services for this winter and beyond. If anyone is interested in the job or knows anyone who might be interested in doing snow removal for our church, please contact Penny Alard at (920)570-2861 or email her at pen282321@yahoo.com.



Help Stock the Pantry

During the months of September and October, the food pantry would appreciate your donations of baking supplies, tuna and hamburger helper. 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!

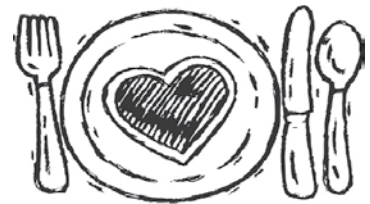
—Outreach Committee



Trivia Night! ***Every 3rd Thursday*** ***of the Month***

Thurs. Nov. 20th at 6:30pm - start showing up at 6pm.

Come join us down at Knuth’s Brewery for fun and laughs. Good food and drinks! Team “Thirsty Firsts” invites everyone to come join us. You don’t need to be smart! Just need to be willing to have FUN!!



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 Nov. 25 and Dec. 23, serving at 5:30 p.m.



Coffee Fellowship

Friday Coffee Fellowship takes place at 9:30 AM at Ripon Dough Company. We hope you’ll join us!

From the Outreach Committee

The Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ (UCC) has been providing financial support for over 100 years to active and retired clergy and lay employees facing challenging situations. It offers emergency grants, supplements small annuities and health premiums, and distributes Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to lower-income retirees each December. This fund is one of the UCC’s special mission offerings, allowing congregants to care for those who have served the church.

The Christmas Fund special offering will be collected on December 21, 2025

—Anne Flasch, Outreach



Faith Formation

Welcome to Sunday School!

Help Wanted! I am in search of a weekly assistant. Someone who can help with the classroom, class lessons and projects. This is a paid position. Please send any recommendations my way!

November/December Schedule:

November is kicking off Christmas Pageant and Church Anniversary preparations. Each week we are working towards crafts and projects to be used later in our craft store! Stay tuned!

November 175th Anniversary: displaying our crafts and classroom

December 13: Pageant practice

December 14: Christmas pageant during 1030 service

Questions: Contact Katie Del Ponte at katie@riponcongregationalucc.org

Chapter & Verse Book Group

The C&V Book Club has three meetings planned for the end of 2025 and early 2026:

1. Nov. 3rd Movie Night - 7:00 PM - **American Fiction**
at Penny Allard's home

This film based on a book by the author of *James*, which we will discuss in January, explores the ways that publishing predefined the topics, themes, and styles minority writers can explore in their work. Come watch with us!

2. December 8 - 7:00 PM - **Small Things Like These** by Clare Keegan
at Sue Leonard's home

This short novel takes place in a small Irish town. A local businessman faces a moral crisis when he discovers secrets hidden behind the walls of the local convent.

3. January 12 - 7:00 PM - **James** by Percival Everett
at Meg Schwemmer's home

This retelling of Huckleberry Finn from the slave Jim's perspective won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2025. Also available as a very effective audiobook version.

Other upcoming titles, dates, and locations will be announced soon.



FELLOWSHIP OF
THE GRAPE

FOG will be held on Friday, Nov. 21 at 5:30 p.m. at the church, as part of the 175th anniversary weekend. Want to host? December is open. Contact Debbi Konecny if you'd like to host a FOG gathering sometime!

Christmas Card treasures



Turn old Christmas cards into beautiful keepsake ornaments! It's a fun, simple way to give new life to cards you've received and add a handmade touch to your tree.

What you need:

- Christmas cards
- Scissors
- Glue
- Circle pattern (cut from cardboard or trace around object)
- Hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glitter (optional)



What you do:

1. Trace a circle onto two Christmas cards.
2. Cut out the circles and glue the backs together.
3. Decorate the edges with glitter or ribbon for extra sparkle.
4. Punch a hole at the top and thread yarn or ribbon through to hang.



175th Anniversary Celebration

First Congregational Church of Ripon

November 22-23, 2025

*Celebrating 175 years of
Worship, Service, and Community*

Saturday, November 22, 2025

Reception and Gallery Wall Dedication

4:00-6:00 PM - Fellowship Hall

Light Refreshments

Sunday, November 23, 2025

Breakfast

9:00-10:15 AM - Fellowship Hall

Anniversary Worship Service

10:30 AM - Sanctuary

Worship Leader - **Amanda Edwards,**

Interim Minister

Guest Sermon by **Rev. Jack Kraaz**





Christmas 2025 Poinsettia Order Form

You are invited to purchase poinsettia plants to help beautify the Sanctuary during the Advent season. The cost this year is \$15.00 each.

They will be on display in our Sanctuary through Wednesday, December 24. After that date, you are welcome to take your plant home, leave it for continued use at church, or use it as a gift for a friend or shut in.

Please fill out and submit this form by Friday, November 14th. You can place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church along with cash or a check.

You can contact Julie Mathias with any questions you might have.

Your name(s) as "from": _____

Quantity: _____ x \$15.00 = total enclosed \$ _____

(Optional): In honor of _____

(Optional): In memory of _____

(Optional): In memory of _____

Worship Participation Schedule

Date	Lector	Ushers/Greeters	Tech Booth	Coffee Fellowship Hosts
Nov. 2	Andy Lyke	Jeanne Williams/Justus Paul	Daniel Volkmann	M. Boscaljon, Seidler-Halwas
Nov. 9	Ruth Retzlaff	MegSchwemmer/Andy Lyke	Gary Scholtens	Kih Bergin, Christ family
Nov. 16	Julie Mathias	Dawn & Gary Scholtens	Erik Dietrich	Osteen and Volkmann fam.
Nov. 23	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Cal Edwards/Deanna Boone	Kih Bergin	Ruth Retzlaff/Kath. Hones
Nov. 30	Kih Bergin	Susan & Preston Osteen	Andy Lyke	Lyke families
Dec. 7	Sarah Joy Solberg	Konecny family	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Volkmann and Hones fam.
Dec. 14	Kathleen Hones	Seidler/Halwas family	Tim Lyke	Konecny fam., Wendy Smith
Dec. 21	Ruth Retzlaff	Dawn Scholtens/Janet Vossekuil	Andy Lyke	Lyle & Julie Mathias
Dec. 24	NEED VOLUNTEER	NEED VOLUNTEERS	NEED VOLUNTEER	NEED VOLUNTEERS
Dec. 28	No church service	No church service	No church service	No church service

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!

NOV/DEC 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	Nov. 1
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Community Dinner		6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	Daylight Saving Time ends tonight
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour	7 pm Book Group: movie American Fiction	Election Day		6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:45 Outreach, Worship mtgs		Veterans Day 6:30 pm Cabinet mtg		6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour			7 pm Book group	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA 6:30 pm Trivia at Knuth's	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	4-6 pm 175th Anniversary exhibit and reception
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9-10:15 am 175th Anniversary Breakfast 9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Community Dinner		6 pm NA meeting	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	
30	Dec. 1	2	3	4	5	6
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour				6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA)	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 3:30 pm Pastor Amanda ordination service	7 pm Book Group: Small Things Like These	6:30 pm Cabinet mtg		6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	Christmas Pageant rehearsal
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:00 am Sunday School 9:30 am Worship committee 10:30 am Worship & Christmas Pageant (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:45 Outreach committee			12 pm Spire deadline	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Community Dinner	4 pm Christmas Eve service		9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	
28	29	30	31	January 1	2	3
No Worship Service today				6 pm NA meeting	9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	

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