



# The SPIRE



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

*March/April 2025*

Greetings to the followers of Christ at First Congregational UCC,

I am Rev. Michael Safford-Kennedy, you can call me “Pastor Mike.” I am looking forward to joining with you in our time of change, learning, and discovering Interim Ministry. I am eager to meet all of you, hear your stories and your love for our church. I begin my journey with you on Monday, March 3, with my first time in our pulpit March 9.

I come to you after serving churches in Columbus, NE, Greenwood, WI, Chilton, WI, and New Holstein, WI. More than that I bring with me all the experiences of a life lived with twists and turns, joy and sadness. I am coming to travel with you in our next adventure.

First, the basics; I am widowed, father of three adult children, stepfather to three more adult children, grandfather to two boys and step-grandfather to another three. Raising our three children with my first wife, we said they could move anywhere when they found their careers. They took us literally. They live in Milwaukee, Marquette, MI, and Elkhorn, NE. Contrast this with my wife Sue. She told her kids they also could live anywhere their careers took them...as long as they stayed within five miles of her. The three of them all live within the Fox Valley. All six of them are well established in their communities and thriving.

My early adult life centered on engineering. I spent six years in the Navy. I was stationed aboard the U.S.S. Mississippi CGN-40 a nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser where I was a reactor operator. (If I had to live

my life again, I would again join the Navy in the blink of an eye.) After the Navy I earned an electrical engineering degree and went to work for Nebraska Public Power District in Columbus, NE. While in Columbus I experienced my call to the ministry.



Rev. Bruce Carlson encouraged me to explore the call. He led me through the early stages exploring what my call might encompass. After a couple of years, I entered seminary at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN. I graduated in the spring of 2002. While at seminary I met my future wife Susan Safford-Gaul.

Sue and I were married October 16, 2006, at Faith United Methodist Church in Brillion, WI. Sadly, after

just 16 years she died on Thanksgiving Day 2022. She was just 62. She was a UMC minister serving churches throughout eastern Wisconsin. There you have it, a thumbnail telling of my life story, so far.

I have met a few of the members of our church. They have been most hospitable, filled with energy and eager to move into the interim between your previous pastor and your future settled pastor. I see this time as an opportunity to take stock of who you were, who you are now and who you want to be in the future. Interim times are gifts from our loving God. We can ask questions and gain insights regarding ourselves and the church. It is also a time to breathe, to discover new possibilities. Interim times allow us the gift of time, the time it takes to rediscover our likes and dislikes, what ministries we seek to bring forward and which, if any, we leave behind. It is a time to talk, to try new things,

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Prayers...

For Health & Healing: Lyle Mathias (hip surgery); Jack Christ (broken foot); Kaitlyn Edwards (knee surgery); Amanda Edwards (elbow surgery); Preston Osteen (cancer); Barb Splittgaber (hospitalization, knee replacement); Lavonne Butler (health); Audrey Conant (strength, healing); Kih Bergin (health); Wendy Smith's daughter, Hannah (respiratory infection, melanoma); Michele Wittler (health); Katie Del Ponte's cousin and Tony Reilly's niece Jessica (cancer); all who are experiencing health issues and are in need of prayer; all who are undergoing medical tests and awaiting results.

Concerns...

For the Solberg family who hit a deer in early November and needed to replace their vehicle; the election; for Barb Splittgaber who underwent a knee replacement and then was back in the hospital for unrelated serious health issues; for the conclusion of Pastor Jeffrey's Ministry; New Year's violence around the world and in New Orleans; for children and teachers and getting them the support they need; wildfires in southern California.

Joys...

For a Valentine's gathering with church member Audrey Conant and other church members at Markesan Resident Home (We invite you to send notes/cards to Audrey Conant, c/o Markesan Resident Home, 1130 N Margaret St, Markesan, WI 53946); for Al Sturgeon who preached on February 23;

# 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 May/June, 2025. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, April 16, 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 ...

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

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and apply those learnings. Living in the interim prepares us for, as Paul says, running the race.

Thank you for inviting me to travel with you, love you, and love First Congregational UCC.

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



## ***Special Offerings***

The Outreach Committee would like to thank our church members, friends and families for your generosity. \$609 was collected on Christmas Eve for the First We Live foundation, a mental health assistance fund established in memory of Nicole Moniz. The Christmas Fund special offering collected \$1,224. The UCC uses this offering to support UCC clergy, lay people and families in need as a thank you for their service.

The next special offering is One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). One Great Hour of Sharing® stands as a cornerstone of the United Church of Christ's special mission offerings. This Lenten initiative provides vital support for disaster relief, refugee care, and development work through Love of Neighbor ministries. OGHS will be collected on March 30, 2025.

—Outreach Committee



## ***Coffee Fellowship***

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





The Search Committee is up and running! The committee tasked with finding a new pastor for our church met for the first time on Feb. 12.

Jane Anderson, UCC Northeast Association minister, met with the newly formed committee to offer guidance and provide an overview of the process and support available from the UCC for calling a new minister. She shared that the average time it takes to call a new pastor is at least one year.

The search committee will meet next on March 2 to divide up individual responsibilities and begin to discuss the steps to take to complete our church profile. This is the document that candidates will view before they consider responding to the position at our church. The committee will be gathering input from all members of the congregation in order to create a profile that reflects views from our entire church community.

Your search committee members include: Kih Bergin, Mike Boscaljon, Anne Flasch, Mary Lyke, Preston Osteen, Meg Schwemmer, Sarah Joy Solberg, and Dan Volkmann.

## *From the Membership Committee*

It's been a busy winter with lots of good things going on!

**We Give You Our Hearts** – Our committee decided to do something special for Valentines Day. In early February several of us got together to create Scandinavian heart baskets out of felt. So cute! We filled the baskets with Valentine candy and included a special message that Meg Schwemmer hand-wrote with beautiful calligraphy. Then we delivered baskets to older members and to those we haven't seen in a while. It was a chance to reconnect. We received lots of positive feedback from those who received them, and we had fun doing it.

**We Care Coffee** (formerly known as Cookie Talk) – On Monday, February 10, we organized a trip to the Markesan Care Center where Audrey Conant currently resides. This was our second such trip, with the first one including only a few people. Now that we know that Audrey feels comfortable with a large group, we sent an email message invitation to all members of our church. Anne Flasch and Bev Christ brought home-baked cookies, and we used special Valentine-themed napkins and plates. Twelve people attended, including Norm and Sue Loomer (who drove in from West Bend)! Check out the photos on our church Facebook group page.

**Coffee at Mugs** – We continue to meet at 9:30 a.m. on Fridays. Everyone is welcome! Come join us.

**FOG** – The most recent gathering took place on Friday, Feb. 21, at the home of Jeanne Williams & Bob Amsden. Lots of good food and fun conversation. We may try something new for March. Stay tuned. And if you are interest in hosting, please contact Debbi Konecny.

**We Care Cards** – Meg Schwemmer and Deanna Boone continue to do a wonderful job sending notes of care and encouragement. If you know of someone who may welcome a card, please contact a member of the Membership Committee.

**Caring for each other**—that's what it's all about. Bev Christ and Wendy Smith have been asked to coordinate an effort to involve interested church member in supporting each other. Would you like to get involved? Soon we will pass around a sign-up form where you indicate how you'd like to help. For example, you could make a visit, give a phone call, make a meal or bake some cookies. Lots of possibilities. We look forward to meeting Pastor Mike, and working together to care for our community. Stay tuned!

—Bev Christ, Membership Committee

## ***The Chapter and Verse Book Group***

Who We Are - We are a group of First Congregational Church of Ripon members who like to read and talk about books that inspire us, challenge us, entertain us, and shed light on issues that we care about as progressive Christians--equality, fairness, love for self and neighbor, and the pursuit of lasting peace in our communities, countries, and the world. Our book choices are mostly fiction, represent a variety of cultural perspectives and historical periods, and are written by contemporary authors. Come if you have read the whole book, part of the book, or if you are curious about the book and want to hear others talk about it.

When We Meet - We meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 PM at members homes. All are welcome! The person hosting the group will lead the discussion and provide light snacks and beverages.

What We Are Reading - Each month, we choose a new book to add to our schedule. Below is a list of books we will be reading and discussing.

- Wednesday, March 19th, 7 PM - Lincoln Highway by Amor Towles, place Meg Schwemmer's home.
- Wednesday, April 16th, 7 PM - The Women by Kristin Hannah, Wendy Smith's home.
- Wednesday, May 21st, 7 PM - The Sentence by Louise Erdrich, Bev Christ's home.
- Wednesday, June 18th, 7 PM - Share a book you want others to read! Place TBD.

Happy Reading!

## ***Spring-Summer 2025 Family Events First Congregational Church of Ripon***

**Sunday, March 9th**-Welcome Interim Pastor Mike Safford-Kennedy  
Special Children's Moment during the service.  
Distribution of ashes during the service  
Soup Lunch following the service  
Parents Gathering at Mugs Coffee, Hosted by Amanda Edwards  
"Let's Talk About our Parenting Challenges" 9-10:15 am

**TBD-Confirmation Meeting** - Parents and youth will meet with Pastor Mike and Miss Jeanne to talk about the confirmation process and what they hope to gain from it.

### **Sunday, March 30th - March Madness - Elite Eight Board/Card Game Competition and Pot Luck Lunch**

Join us after the service for a potluck lunch and game competition. Bring your favorite board or card game and a dish to share. Play in intergenerational match ups to earn your place on the bracket and compete for prizes.

### **Sunday, April 13th - Palm Sunday**

Children will participate in the service marking Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and the beginning of Holy Week.

### **Friday, April 18th - Kids' Good Friday, 8 a.m.-Noon**

Kids will learn the stories of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter through activities, games, stories, and crafts. Drop them off for breakfast (You can join them if you wish.) and pick them up any time after 11 a.m.

### **Sunday, April 20th - Easter Sunday (No Sunday School today!)**

Easter Egg Hunt during Coffee Hour

### **Sunday, May 11th - Children's Sunday and Mother's Day**

Children will lead the service today as we bring our regular Sunday School year to a close. Regular coffee hour.

### **Sunday June 1st - Vacation Bible School/Summer Sunday School**

Children and their friends are welcome to join us for a VBS Summer Sunday School program that will help them to become "Earth's Guardians." As we learn about the role of water, seeds, soil, animals, and harvest, we will also do a local and an international service project. Each Sunday after the Children's Moment in the service, June 1-July 27th (except July 6th).





## *Easter Flowers*

Once again our sanctuary will be filled with Easter flowers.

If you would like to donate a plant in memory or honor of someone, please provide your name, their name, and your check/cash of \$15.00 for each plant. Make checks payable to First Congregational Church.

Deadline is Sunday, April 13. Thank you.

—Julie Mathias

Number of plants \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ total.

Please indicate number of plant(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Given by \_\_\_\_\_ (as you wish it to appear in the Spire)

In honor / memory / celebration of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Circle one)

In honor / memory / celebration of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Circle one)

Place this slip along with your cash or check in the collection plate or deliver it to the church office (locked box next to office door) no later than Sunday, April 13. Thank you.

## *Worship Participation Schedule*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lector</b>	<b>Ushers/Greeters</b>	<b>Tech Booth</b>	<b>Coffee Fellowship Hosts</b>
Mar. 2	Seiler Solberg	Deanna Boone/Tom Konecny	Daniel Volkmann	Edwards, Hones families
Mar. 9	Amanda Edwards	Susan & Preston Osteen	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Tumas/Volkmann, K. Bergin
Mar. 16	Tina Solberg	Bev & Jack Christ	Mike Boscaljon	Konecny and Mathias
Mar. 23	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Dawn Scholtens/Andy Lyke	Erik Dietrich	Wittler and Moniz
Mar. 30	Kih Bergin	Lydia Wiley-Deal & Erik Dietrich	Tim Lyke	Osteen/Edwards family
Apr. 6	Preston Osteen	Kathleen Hones/Andy Lyke	Gary Scholtens	Worship Committee
Apr. 13	Dawn Scholtens	Katie & Ben Grady	Sarah Seidler-Halwas	Minch/NEED VOLUNTEER
Apr. 20	Deanna Boone	Janet Vossekuil/Jeanne Williams	Daniel Volkmann	Andy Lyke/Solberg family
Apr. 27	Mary Lyke	Mike, Piper & Scout Boscaljon	Tim Lyke	Prellwitz/Reilly-Henke

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!

*Thanks*  
for your  
participation

# MARCH/APRIL 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>March 1</b>
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Com- munity Dinner	9:30 Prayer Shawls 12 pm Community Blood Drive	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
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	
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Daylight Saving Time begins! 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	
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
9 am 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	
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Com- munity Dinner	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>April 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
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	
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
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<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (4 pm online) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:45 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	
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
10:30 am Easter Worship 11:30 am Fellowship Hour		5:30 pm Com- munity Dinner	9:30 Prayer Shawls	6 pm NA meeting 6:30 pm FCA	9:30 am Coffee at Mugs	
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>May 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
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	

**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***

