

January 2026

**Join us
Sundays at 10:30 AM
for Worship Service
Office Hours 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Email: office@fpcocoonto.org
(920)835-3922**



*Please give securely online at
www.fpcocoonto.org*

The Messenger

FPC Oconto Monthly Newsletter

FPC Oconto Leadership 2026 Session

Tammie McCarthy Finance Elder
OPEN P&G Elder
Michelle McDowell Ministry Elder
Jason Martin Elder at Large
Amy Peterson Elder at Large
Julie Trepanier Elder at Large
Polly Exferd Clerk of Session
Nikki Giese Session Recorder
Lynn Hollander Treasurer 2026
Stacy Suarez Administrative Assistant
& Financial Secetary

Deacons

Bert Hollander, Jennifer Wickman
Emilie Duffy, Cindy Ryswek
Wil Andersen, Sam McDowell

Worship Committee

Polly Exferd, Wil Andersen,
Pete Gabrielson, Krista Stewart

Christian Ed Committee

Michelle McDowell, Emilie Duffy,
Toni Hendzel

Mission Committee

Wil Andersen, Polly Exferd,
Rosemary Rice, Krista Stewart

Hospitality Committee

Michelle McDowell, Emilie Duffy
Toni Hendzel

Pulpit Supply Leadership

Pastor Greg Braatz 01/04/2026

Gina Struensee 01/11/2026

Pastor Greg Braatz 01/18/2026

David Rasmussen 01/25/2026

Pastor's Corner – Greetings!

I want to thank your Transition Team and session for calling me to be your pastor! I'm very excited about getting to know you, to worshipping with you and experiencing mutual growth.

You learned a little about me in the letter that was sent out, but I'm particularly interested in getting to know all of you on a more personal basis. I would love to share a cup of coffee, a chat in my office or maybe we could have lunch together. The newsletter will have the dates and times when I will be in Oconto. Call the office and set up a time for us to meet.

In the meantime, I hope to see you on January 4th, my first worship service with you. If not then, how about January 18th, the following time I will be with you. I look forward to seeing you then!

Blessings- Pastor Greg

Birthdays and Anniversaries

January

Birthdays

Jeff Mlnarik
Emily Martin
Harry Shallow
Sandy Stellmacher
David Haag
Donna Staidl
Stacy Suarez



Anniversaries

Bill & Priscilla Hermsen
Pete & Patty Gabrielson



All Military personnel & families including:

Sterling Heyrman stationed in San Diego, CA on the USS Montgomery

James Alwin stationed in Columbus MS at Columbus Air Force Base.

Local Congregations in Pastoral transition: Presbyterian Churches in Abbotsford, Marinette, Oconto, and Shawano

The families and friends of those who have passed away: **To the family and friends of Nancy Kamke**

General Prayers: Aaron, **Barb**, Debbie, **Engrid**, **Steve**, Mary Augustine, Kathy Bancroft, Bill Boesen, Joel Caulum, Margaret Dakins, Margret Drewry, Eugene Duffy, Mary Elliott, Becky Fahler, Carol Finn, Diane Fite, Betty Geiger, Carol Grose, Steve Golz, Ted Haakonson, David Haag, Brynlee Hendzel, Roger Hollander, Rosetta Lehman, Nick Loeffler, Beth Marty, **Jim McDowell**, Dick Medd, Kairos Ministry, Margie Murphy, Harlin Nowak, Joan Nowak, Paul O'Conner, Ron Palmer, Kyle Patrick, Judy Sanford, Ruth Saber, Jo Schulz, Cindy Shallow, April Steen, Sue Strandt, Jason Stewart, **Dave Struensee**, John VanLannen, Beau W., Robert & Lydia Warrichaiet, Ed Weigelt, and Melinda Witbro.

Need to add someone to the prayer list? Is an update needed on the prayer list? Please contact Stacy in the church office with additions or corrections – Thank you!

Bulletin sponsorships are still available for 2026. If interested, see the clipboard on the table in the narthex for available dates. Sponsorship is \$20 per Sunday.

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

January 4

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	?
Greeter/Usher	Tammie McCarthy
Snack Provider	?
Hostess/Close	?

January 11

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	?
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	?
Hostess/Close	?

January 18

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	?
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	?
Hostess/Close	?

January 25

Duties	Volunteer
Open Church	?
Greeter/Usher	?
Snack Provider	?
Hostess/Close	?

CE/Communications Team

The 2026 Sign-Up Genius is open & it's very important for us to have people sign up to keep the weekly service running smoothly. We would love for members of our congregation to volunteer their time and talent. Just a reminder that if you can't fulfill your duty to please find a replacement and let the office know so it can be changed. If spots need to be filled, we will update the duties by entering people in as needed. If you have any questions, please talk to Michelle McDowell.

BREAD BY THE BAY

Bread by the Bay is an on-going ministry supported by many area churches. Below is an update from them. Please continue to donate items to the shopping cart at church to help keep the patron shelves stocked.

The Pantry served the following December 2, 2025

Households: 89

Adults: 172

Children: 74

The Pantry served the following December 16, 2025

Households: 77

Adults: 135

Children: 63

Your continued support is needed and appreciated – Thank you!

From Your Clerk of Session- Just a friendly reminder that **all committee reports** are due into the office by January 5th. These reports will be presented at the **Annual Congregational Meeting** which will be held on **Sunday – January 18th, 2026**. "Your Session has approved an exception to the bylaws that states the Annual Congregational Meeting be held on the last Sunday of January of each year". "Session also approved the call for election of an Elders at this congregational meeting." "Ordination of and Installation of Elders and Deacons will take place Sunday – February 1st, 2026".

Per Capita 2026 - \$40.42 Per Member

What is Per Capita? In Essence: Per Capita is a set amount of money (apportionment) per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church (USA). Said in another way, it is a Presbyterian Covenant Community Fund – part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. It connects Presbyterian congregation and mid councils with the work of the wider church. Per Capita is how Presbyterians mutually and equitably share the cost of moving the church forward into the 21st century.

Worship Your Worship Committee would like to extend a "Thank You" to all who helped make this Advent Season, Christmas Eve and First Sunday of Christmas a true blessing for all who worshiped with us. Thanks to our organist, Pulpit Supply David Rasmussen and Gina Struensee, Advent Candlelight readers, Rejoicing Ringers, those who decorated the sanctuary, set up the tree, decorated the tree, prepared the Fireside lounge for our Causal Worship Service and those who set and prepared the breakfast we shared before the casual worship service, and anyone who helped in any way. It takes a lot of helping hands to prepare and make this season of hope, peace, love, and joy happen so we can then rejoice together with lessons and carols and good tidings of great joy. Like Pet sang, "Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is Born".



Hello Folks! The Deacon's pantry is beginning to be emptied, and we are asking for some help. Please if you are able, we are in need of canned items like soup, veggies, canned meats, pasta, pasta sauce, personal hygiene items, cleaning items, paper products, cake mixes, puddings, Jello's, rice, box dinners, even cash or gift cards. We have helped several families over the year and the shelves have been depleted so any help would be great. Thank you for any help and God Bless.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

Greg Braatz A big hello to members and friends of First Presbyterian of Oconto!

I asked for the opportunity to introduce myself to you even before we begin our ministry together. As you may have read in the church newsletter, your session has hired me to be your quarter-time pastor starting January 1, 2026, and I couldn't be more excited!

So, what does it mean to be a quarter-time pastor? Particularly, a quarter-time pastor who will continue to live in Appleton. The most visible part is that I will be leading worship two times per month. Generally, the first and third Sundays, but that may vary slightly depending on my schedule. Also, I will have two in-person administration days, generally the Wednesday before the Sunday I lead worship. I will basically be helping with all that behind-the-scenes stuff that it takes to run a church and attend committee meetings. I will also be available for hospital visits as needed.

On these admin days I would also like to get to know you as individuals. I would love it if you would stop by and chat. Or let's set a time to meet somewhere for a cup of coffee! I'm anxious to get to know all of you better! Keep an eye on the church newsletter to see when I will be in town. If I'm not in town, I'm available via zoom.

So, a little about me personally. I grew up in Minnesota. Attended Luther College, in Decorah, Iowa, and got a degree in Politics. Along the way I also attended the University of Nottingham, England (and yes, I did meet the sheriff). Got my MBA from the University of Minnesota in Marketing. My certification to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder from Dubuque Theological Seminary.

After getting my MBA, I accepted a position at Kimberly-Clark, where I worked for 30 years. I held a variety of jobs in marketing and sales support. I worked on some of KC's largest brand (Huggies and Kleenex) and called on some of the biggest retailers in the country (Walmart, Target, Sam's, Costco and Walgreen's). After retiring from KC, I worked as a Commissioned Ruling Elder at my home church in Appleton. In this position I led worship once a month, taught Adult Education and coordinated outreach programs. After retiring from that, I worked with the Presbytery, helping small churches who were without the leadership of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament. I did pulpit fill, moderated session meetings and helped sessions discern where they were headed.

On a personal note – I have been married to my wife Ellen for 42 years. We have three great children (Alex, Elizabeth and Lili) and a cat (Toffee). Things I love to do – travel: I have been to all 50 states, large parts of Europe, the Holy Land (3x) and China (3x). These days we enjoy cruising. I love to bike. It is not unusual for me to take off on a Saturday morning and go for 50 miles. I'm also a genealogist; I'm the collector of family stories.

That's me and as I said I really look forward to meeting and getting to know you much better! Hope to see you on my first Sunday – January 4!

Blessings,
Pastor Greg

Micah 6:8 "What does the Lord require of you, do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

Matthew 10:40 (NRSVA)

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."





Recipe Corner

We are going to be starting up the recipe corner again and Stacy would like anyone that has a favorite family recipe to please send it her way. This recipe is from Greg Braatz, and it is one of his kids' favorites.

Corn Spoon Bread

2 eggs 1 C. sour cream (or Greek yogurt)
½ stick of butter 8 oz. whole kernel corn
8 oz. creamed corn 1 box Jiffy Corn muffin mix

Mix it all together. Bake at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes. I like to add green chiles to the mixture.



Yack and Yarn Club

Do you enjoy crocheting, knitting, diamond painting, jewelry making, tatting, embroidery, etc.? The list is endless. Want to learn to crochet or knit? Bring your craft, hooks, yarn, and needles - relax, work on a project, share ideas, and enjoy some great conversations around the table. Bring a friend or neighbor. All are welcome. Come and join us in the Fireside Lounge at First Presbyterian Church on Thursday afternoons from 1:00 thru 4:00. Beverage and snacks available. For more information, please call the church office.



Toys for Tots campaign has come to an end. We would like to thank all that contributed to the campaign in any way. We ended up serving 210 families with a total of 567 children. We also collected a total of 6,793 toys! We could not have done this without the support of everyone. Thank you all for your generosity!

January 2026

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1 New Year's Day Office Closed	2 National Buffet Day	3	4 9:00am Deacons Greg's First Service 10:30am Worship w/Holy Communion
5 Office Closed	6 Epiphany 12:30pm Bread by the Bay Office Closed	7 Office Closed	8 1:00pm Yack & Yarn Office Closed	9 Office Closed	10	11 10:30am Worship
12 Office Closed	13 12:30pm Bread by the Bay Office Closed	14 Greg in office	15 1:00pm Yack & Yarn Office Closed	16 Office Closed	17	18 10:30am Worship
19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Office Closed	20 12:30pm Bread by the Bay Office Closed	21	22 1:00pm Yack & Yarn	23	24	25 10:30am Worship
26 National Spouses Day	27	28 Greg in office.	29 1:00pm Yack & Yarn	30	31 National Hot Chocolate Day	



Information for next newsletter is due to the office by January 23rd. If you have something you would like to see in the newsletter, please get that to Stacy by that date. Thank you!